Transoceanic Radical: The Many Identities of William Duane

Nigel Little
I declare that this thesis is my own account of my research and contains as its main content work which has not previously been submitted for a degree at any tertiary institution.

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Abstract

The thesis examines the American career of William Duane (1760-1835) in the light of his earlier, and much less studied period in Ireland, England and India. It is the study of the development of one of America’s pre-eminent newspaper editors. Although Duane is not a first-tier figure of the Early Republican period such as John Adams, Thomas Jefferson or Alexander Hamilton, he certainly fits comfortably within the second-tier with men such as James Thomson Callender, Tench Coxe, John Binns and William Cobbett. He is an important figure within the historiography on the Early Republican period which has come out in recent years. He has an important role in three recent and seminal works on the period by Durey, Wilson and Pasley: *Transatlantic Radicals, United Irishmen, United States* and “The Tyranny of Printers”. This is a study of the identity of Duane measured against his political change and shifting sense of self. It seeks to answer the question: Who was William Duane? The thesis probes the question in depth by looking at Duane’s origins and then tracing his life in 1790s Philadelphia. The portrayal of Duane found in the recent historiography and in the first academic biography of Duane, Kim T. Phillips’ *William Duane: A Radical Journalist in the Age of Jefferson*, lets Duane’s version of self rest too easily, without interrogating how he constructed his identity within an American political context for an American reading audience. For example, although Duane constructed himself as a citizen of the United States by birth, the thesis maintains that he was not an U.S. citizen at all but was born in Newfoundland and was by eighteenth-century definitions a British subject.

The thesis offers a great deal more detailed archival research within the above framework. First, it develops Duane’s familial relationships in his early life in much more detail than before. I have uncovered more details on his life from numerous sources, particularly letters, and a careful, textual search for any information on Duane’s earlier career in Ireland and England in the 1780s which has been overlooked by previous researchers. The thesis then places this material in the context of the newspaper trade in 1780s Clonmel and London while building a narrative analysis of this period before moving on to India.

Second, this thesis demonstrates Duane’s links to the East India Company army. The importance of Duane’s Indian career also lies in his being part of a wider chronology of deported editors and government suppression of the press within the period from 1780 to 1799. The place of Duane within an ignored history of radical migrations to India is also dealt with as is his emergence as a pro-revolutionary editor in Calcutta after the declaration of war in 1793.

Third, the thesis uncovers a great deal more archival information on the period of Duane’s membership of the London Corresponding Society and his editorship of the *Telegraph* – a strongly pro-French newspaper in wartime London. This period was a short but crucial one for Duane as he witnessed first-hand the last real throes of a British revolutionary movement and the enactment of two important bills which sought to smother the L.C.S. and the other plebeian radical groups.

Fourth, the thesis examines Duane’s role in what has been perceived as a crucial turning point in American history – the election of Thomas Jefferson to the presidency in 1800. The thesis seeks to understand what Duane’s impact on American politics was and how his earlier career shaped his political outlook and his actions in America. It seeks to denativise the Early Republican Period by pointing out outside currents that Duane used in defining what Americanness was as opposed to his conceptualisation of Federalism and Britain.
Finally, the thesis argues that the story of William Duane is one of an eighteenth-century editor’s transoceanic search for a home.
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Nigel Ken Little, B.A. (Hons)

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Introduction

Over the past few years there has been a development of interest in the careers of the journalists and politicians who were engaged in the political struggles that marred the aftermath of the American Revolution. One of these journalists, William Duane, has received particular attention and indeed has become the subject of a book widely read beyond the confines of the circle of academic historians engaged in the study of his career.\footnote{See Richard N. Rosenfeld, American Aurora: A Democratic Republican Returns (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).} Alongside this specific interest, William Duane is often the subject of short summaries in overview histories of the Early Republic.\footnote{For example, Richard J. Twomey, Jacobins and Jeffersonians: Anglo-American Radicalism in the United States, 1790-1800, Ph. D. Thesis, Northern Illinois University, May 1974, pp. 28-9.} These summaries are largely derived from the work of Kim T. Phillips and repeat some dubious interpretations and emphases which this thesis seeks to correct.\footnote{Stanley Elkins and Eric McKitrick, The Age of Federalism: The Early American Republic, 1788-1800 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 704-5. Larry E. Tise, The American Counterrevolution: A Retreat from Liberty, 1788-1800 (Mechanicsburg: Stackpole Books, 1998), p. 24 and p. 28.} One example is the idea that Duane was an anti-imperialist in India and that he was thrown out of India because he stood against the rule of the East India Company. By refuting or modifying such misconceptions, often found within short summaries on Duane in books on the Early Republic, this thesis aims to provide an alternative source for future historians of the Early Republican period who are interested in Duane’s pre-American life.
The thesis has two direct audiences in mind. The first comprises the widening group of historians working on the radical émigré movement who have written in detail on Duane and have drawn from Phillips’ biography. The second audience is the group of historians of the Early Republic who have drawn their information either from Phillips directly or from the group of historians who utilised Phillips in their analyses of the transatlantic radicals. The thesis thus seeks to influence the Early Republican historiography by offering an alternative reading of Duane. It uses this new reading to analyse the secondary circle of writing on the radical émigrés and the Early Republican press and to contribute to historical discussion at that level. The last aim is to engage with the wider histories of the Early Republican period, which have used the inner and secondary circles of historiography on Duane to write their short summaries of his career and influence.

The thesis also seeks dialogue with historians working on radical politics in Britain and Ireland in the 1780s and 1790s. The recent works of Michael Durey, David A. Wilson and Jeffrey Pasley have considered the careers of the transatlantic radicals who left Britain and Ireland for the United States. The lives of the pro-French radicals who ventured to France during the revolutionary years have also been dealt with in detail, as have those of the radicals who stayed in the

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British Isles to take part in political life in the fraught decade of the 1790s. One aim of this thesis is to focus on a small but significant exodus of radicals from Britain and Ireland to India in this era. Duane has been termed a transoceanic radical as he is both a transatlantic and an Indian radical. The Indian group he belonged to might be described as trans-Indian radicals, a term which denotes movement from Europe, through the Indian Ocean to India, and in many cases back again. The thesis argues that Duane was part of a Low Enlightenment movement in India similar to the one Robert Darnton has charted in France or that which Iain McCalman has uncovered in Britain. Compared with the amount of research done in the three other areas of study mentioned, this area is under-researched. This thesis is the first to consider this area as a whole, particularly the nexus between radicalism, journalism and disturbance in the East India Company Army. The thesis also seeks to contribute to British imperial history and in particular to the history of eighteenth-century India and its nascent English press.

Duane and the other newspaper editors in India have often been viewed by historians as bellicose and crude. C.A. Bayly’s comments serve as one example of this attitude: ‘The Calcutta press gingered up the anti-Napoleonic rhetoric of fighting ‘tyranny and barbarism’ with free trade hostility to the monopolies and

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6 See Pasley, op. cit.

diplomatic conceit of the remaining Asian kingdoms. Although the British newspapers in India were generally bellicose in their attitude towards native rulers they were not always so towards Britain’s natural enemy – France. On the one hand the bellicosity of a writer such as Duane should be understood within the framework of marketing. His newspaper was aimed at members of the EIC army; the East India Company officers in particular were drawn to his letter pages and read Duane’s detailed account of military affairs. On the other hand, the newspaper should be seen as part of the wider Anglo-Indian community, one which showed strong loyalist and imperialist attitudes towards relations between Britain and the native kingdoms. What complicated matters was the allegiance of a not insignificant number of editors to the claims of the French Revolution. When these clashed with the pro-British sentiments of the communities they lived in, trouble for the editors was not far away. Bayly and other imperial historians have tended to bypass the Indian press as a kind of side-show. But if we are to broaden our understanding of eighteenth-century India, both colonial and non-colonial, the role of the press should be addressed. Not only were there connections between individual pressmen such as Duane and the wider Indian world of native courts and Indian bankers, but there were also very real and for the government worrying connections between the editors and malcontents in the EIC armies in all three presidencies. This thesis, in Chapter 6, views the cases of deported editors and relates the frequency of deportations to the development of a policy of censorship. The position of the EIC armies was important in this regard: was the reform cause of part of the EIC army bound up with support for revolutionary ideals or was it a separate phenomenon? In the thesis I link the EIC

officers to the Low Enlightenment and pro-revolutionary ideals of men such as Duane.

The special focus on the life of William Duane and his American newspaper the *Aurora* has had both a positive and negative impact on scholarly understanding of Duane’s historical significance. On the one hand, more attention has been paid to wider influences on the body politic of Early Republican America, particularly the role of the press in shaping public opinion and the political role of the people who wrote these newspapers. But on the other hand, there is sometimes an insufficient attention to both archival and theoretical precision. Without a strict empirical mooring, Duane can easily become a totemic radical embodying the ideas and ideals of people who consider themselves to be present-day incarnations of the radicals of the eighteenth century. In seeking to remedy this tendency, noticeable in two recent works – *American Aurora* and *The American Counterrevolution* – I attempt to set Duane more carefully in his several historical contexts.

The life of the Painite-Jeffersonian William Duane spans a number of important transitions that took place during the eighteenth century. His birth in 1760 occurred in a British Empire focused on the Atlantic ocean, with territories stretching from North America to the West Indies and across to the British Isles. During the course of his life this imperial emphasis shifted to the British possessions in South Asia. Any study of Duane will reward those searching for some understanding of the imperial reach. The life of this Painite-Jeffersonian curiously matches, in its geographical sweep, that of his more well-known political adversary – Lord Cornwallis. Like Cornwallis, Duane was to live in England, America, India and Ireland in a period spanning both the first and
second empires. Both men’s lives include the eruption of two revolutions, and the series of wars which followed them in America and in Europe. These events shaped both Cornwallis’s and Duane’s mental worlds and the politics which drove and inspired them. Here the similarity ends. For Duane, living in empire did not enhance his career but instead drove him into an embittered Anglophobia. This led him to give support, both propagandistic and military, to the anti-British camp in the United States prior to the War of 1812. Duane’s life is an important one for those with an interest in how Ireland related to empire and what the empire would mean for a strange hybrid almost-Irishman who travelled the same sea lanes as his better known contemporary, albeit sometimes locked beneath deck.

I came to Duane by a circuitous route. Starting as an Honours student researching a topic which combined eighteenth-century Britain and India and the areas of literature and history, I became curious about references to the career of a journalist and newspaper editor in Calcutta who was deported during the Governor-Generalship of Sir John Shore. As I read more about his career in India I slowly became aware of his post-Indian career in the United States and indeed his life in London in the 1780s and again in 1795-1796. I became aware that, while there were five major works focusing on his career in the United States, his career stretching from 1782-1796 was only dealt with in the first forty six pages of Kim T. Phillips’ six hundred and seventy nine page biography. These forty or so pages were essentially an introduction to his later American period. There has been a lapse of 28 years between its writing and my own research. This thesis argues that Duane had two major careers: one in India and one in America. Although the American career has been more amply dealt with, the Indian stage
has not. I would like to stress the need for a more searching and detailed account of Duane’s earlier life that does not subordinate it to his life in the United States.

The early years of his life, in colonial America, Ireland and especially in 1780s London have left relatively little trace in the official records. The sketchy record continues into his early period in India but is surprisingly intact for the period from 1791 to 1794. In all, the EIC records contain over three hundred pages of commentary and correspondence surrounding the difficulties the EIC faced over Duane’s editorial control of the two Calcuttan newspapers, the *Bengal Journal* and *The World*. Although from 1787 to 1789 the gap in the records tends to bear out Lucy S. Sutherland’s argument – that Irish adventurers are near invisible in the EIC records — the available material on Duane has been under-utilised. One example is the migration of itinerant printers to India in the eighteenth century which Duane was part of; even the exact place of Duane’s birth, an important factor in his American career, is to be found within the under-utilised EIC records.

In my analysis of Duane’s Indian period I use material concerning his newspaper businesses as well as new information on his arrest and deportation. The political reasons for the dossier on Duane being compiled are also important for any discussion of censorship in Calcutta. The Blechynden diaries, especially those from 1791 to 1795, are another excellent source for the period when Duane resided in Calcutta. As they deal with the career of a man, Richard Blechynyden, who had connections with the French at Chandernagore and was himself an editor of a newspaper, they provide in part a prosopographical context for the research. For Duane’s period in London I have used the government spy reports in the

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Public Records Office as well as the Francis Place papers in the British Library. His American period has been the most extensively researched and as such there is a wealth of secondary source material available, which has been used in the thesis. I have also used the correspondence of Duane and his family available at the American Philosophical Society and the Historical Society of Pennsylvania as well as a printed collection from the *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings* (1907) and any extant letters from the collections of Thomas Jefferson’s correspondence available. One of the disadvantages of writing on William Duane is that unlike other Early Republican figures such as Tench Coxe he did not leave behind a large amount of written correspondence. The challenge lies not in sifting through a large amount of personal correspondence but in establishing an analysis of his life and character on the basis of the fragments that remain.

I undertake an analysis of Duane’s character and self-perception and changes to his sense of identity, both his political and national identity. Different stages in his life saw him lean towards different national identities, although his enemies held his Irishness to be a constant. He changed his national identity to suit his political growth from Radical Whig to Paineite to Paineite-Jeffersonian. Political change on a national level drew him into a clearer identification with, or disaffection from, a particular country. At one stage in his life Duane identified with England; at a later stage with the United States. This shift is muted in the historiography on the Early American Republic because it does not sit well with Duane’s noted Anglophobia in America. The thesis attempts to explain this apparent paradox, Duane’s initial admiration and then hatred for England,
through the seminal event of his life – his deportation from India in 1795 – as well as his young adulthood in Ireland and his time in London during the 1780s.

I will also seek to analyse his newspapers and the impact he had on the political process. The thesis has at the core of each chapter one of the newspapers which Duane worked on during the different periods of his life. These newspapers, when combined with his biographical record and its political and social context, will mean we can reach a deeper understanding of Duane and his actions through five varying periods of his life: Ireland and the *Hibernian Advertiser*; 1780s London and the *General Advertiser*; Calcutta and the *Bengal Journal* and *The World*; 1790s London and *The Telegraph*; and Philadelphia and the *Aurora*. Duane and the above newspapers also gained the disfavour of a series of prominent figures: William Pitt (1786), Lord Cornwallis (1791), Sir John Shore (1794), William Pitt again (1795) and Henry Dundas (1795), George Washington (1797), William Cobbett (1798-1799) and John Adams (1798-1801).

Through his skill Duane rose to prominence as the leading Jeffersonian journalist of the late 1790s. Jefferson would certainly not be the last President hopeful, or once he reached the presidency, President himself, to have such a close connection to a newspaperman. In a time closer to our own we have seen President Roosevelt’s use of Walter Winchell and Jack Warner among other media associates in the era of the New Deal. His manipulation and use of these men bears a striking resemblance to that of Jefferson. As *Hollywood in Crisis* has pointed out, ‘Roosevelt chose both these associations very carefully, as he was thereafter capable of feeding information to the public through two vital channels of mass communication’.  

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Jefferson used the mass communication of his age – newspapers. To this aim Duane was a very useful political tool, although in fairness to Jefferson it was a tool for which he felt considerable fondness, if at times being exasperated by its unwieldiness. Duane’s support for Thomas Jefferson helped to usher in the Jeffersonian Presidency and reinforce Anglophobia prior to the Anglo-American War of 1812. From the rank of an East India Company private, Duane rose to become, perhaps transiently, one of the most influential people of his time. He managed this achievement through a heady cocktail of journalistic flair, publishing skill and entrepreneurship coupled with a hard-headed obstinacy. What history has managed largely to forget is how he got there.
CHAPTER 1

Identities

William Duane’s complexity as a biographical and political subject is found in the differing national identities he took at varying times in his life. At times he expediently held more than one national identity and at others dropped one owing to it being politically uncomfortable. Before we strip away these manufactured identities that Duane cleverly, and at times sincerely, wore, it would be useful to describe these masks, and when they were worn, in four vignettes. The four masks are: Duane, the American; Duane, the Irishman; Duane, the Englishman and Duane, the Anglo-Indian. The thesis will then attempt to step behind the masks of Duane’s creation and answer the question: who was William Duane?

Duane the American

Duane faced a difficult political battle during the last decade of the eighteenth century. He had arrived in America stripped of his property and fortune and as a political émigré. As a recently arrived émigré Duane had to demonstrate his trustworthiness and his right to comment on American politics. Although he was returning, pilgrim-like, to his stated place of birth and early childhood he would find himself treated as an alien, and a Irish one at that, for much of his American life. Owing to his polemical nature he would make a vast array of enemies, on all sides of politics. But by his loyalty to Jefferson, Duane helped Jefferson gain the Presidency of the United States with the defeat of President John Adams in 1800; Jefferson returned this loyalty by giving Duane limited patronage and by
establishing a correspondence with him over a lengthy period. Adams, on the other hand, said of Duane that the ‘matchless effrontery of this Duane merits the execution of the alien law. I’m very willing to try its strength upon him’.¹ For his trouble, Duane would be viciously beaten during the Federalist crackdown on the émigré press in what the Republicans termed the ‘Reign of Witches’. Although he escaped deportation under the Alien Friends Act of 1798 he did not escape the Federalist club. In turn Duane was able to play the role of martyr and consolidate his Jeffersonian and Republican credentials.²

Duane needed to establish his American identity so as to dodge the nativist barbs which Federalists were hurling at foreign Republican journalists like himself and James Thomson Callender. In the polemical context of the Alien and Sedition Acts Duane argued that he had been born and raised around Lake Champlain which made him an American. Others hostile to Duane claimed to have met Duane in Ireland, as a means of undermining his right of residency in the United States (and also to characterize him as a Jacobin United Irishman and not a trustworthy son of America). There was another rumour which, tapping into latent anti-semitism, stated that Duane was a London Jew by background. Another man accused Duane of raping and murdering a woman in Ireland and then fleeing the country.³ The accusations mainly emphasised that Duane was an Irishman, but always argued that he was not American. During the Federalist period his nationality was a constant cause of difficulty for him. So much was this so that he took great pains to establish his United States citizenship by writing to people

² Durey, *op.cit.*, pp. 251, 255.
³ *The Following Testimonials of the Conduct and Characters of Dr. Michael Leib and Colonel William Duane, are Taken from the Records of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania* (1816), pp. 11-12. The accusation was originally printed on 20 August 1801 in the *Gazette of the United States*. Duane took his accuser, Caleb P. Wayne, to court but later had to drop the action. Given his often precarious financial situation one presumes lack of funds to cover legal costs halted the action. I thank the staff of the Philadelphia Free Library for helping me to locate this tract.
who may have known his father in America as well as the Protestant and Federalist-supporting side of the family who resided in New York. His bitterness towards James Duane, the New York ‘revolutionary conservative’ judge, stemmed in part from the latter’s failure to support Duane’s claims of American nationality. Duane had corresponded with him from India but he had rejected Duane for his involvement with the democratic republicanism and his reputation for libellous behaviour.

By arguing for a Lake Champlain birth Duane cleverly placed himself on the U.S. side of the divide with Canada. He tried to use this symbolism of a Republican by spirit and birth pitted against the dark pro-British Federalists who wished to banish him and who had taken over the United States. He built on this ‘fact’ an allegiance to the American Revolution which he argued was his birthright. Duane combined the two events – his birth and the birth of the American Revolution – in a letter he sent in 1801. Duane was at pains in the letter to stress both his birth in the Lake Champlain area and the fighting that occurred there during the American Revolution. It is as though he were born of the revolution. The story is derived from his mother, which strengthens the reader’s impulse to collapse Duane and the revolution into one living being – the mother as an ur-like source giving birth to an already Revolutionary Duane:

The fact of my nativity being in New York State is established as much as it possibly can be at this remote period of 41 years. My mother’s continual theme to me when the revolution commenced, and when Burgoyne was taken, was that New York was my place of nativity and the actions then (1777) fighting on the spot, which was well and triumphantly [sic] described by her to me very often with exultation – for she loved the English government – about as well as I do!.

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1 William Duane to Tench Coxe, 13 June 1801, Tench Coxe Papers, HSP.
Duane used this textual strategy when talking of Ireland as well – locating himself as a teenage eye-witness to British oppression in Ireland\(^5\). Duane constructs an American past and gives it a Republican colouring by mentioning his life-long allegiance to the ideals of America. In an 1808 letter Duane stated that:

> It is very true that I arrived here in 1796, but if I had not left here in 1774, it would have been impossible; but it is very extraordinary that my doctrines should be dangerous, since I inculcated them from the declaration of Independence, and supported them by a publication of three Poems in 1780, one entitled Liberty and the other Independence, and third a descriptive poem in which the Spirit of 1776 breathed throughout…

Duane the American, as a political construct and persona used by William Duane in his public life, has an origin – an American birth. There is also a continuity traced through his above allegiance to ‘the spirit of 1776’ in Ireland and his return to the United States in 1796. Duane the American was formed in the public sphere of newspaper politics that Pasley has recently written about.\(^7\) To survive in the heated polemics of the late eighteenth-century newspaper wars between the Federalists and the Republicans, Duane needed to emphasise that he was an American.

**Duane the Irishman**

Duane became more of an Irishman in the United States than at any prior time in his life. He argued that the United Irish Rebellion was similar to the American Revolution and that Irish and American republicanism had much in common. It

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\(^5\) *Aurora* (1834-5), p. 60.


\(^7\) Pasley, op. cit.
was almost by default that he became Irish because earlier in life he had broken with Jacobite tradition, including his Catholicism and his mother’s Anglophobia, before embracing a Freemason and Radical Whig identity. Duane’s mother is recorded with the name Anastasia Sarsfield-Duane. From the combined surname, or more pointedly the Duane family’s perception of their past, we can trace Duane’s heavily Jacobite family roots. The family believed that they were connected to Patrick Sarsfield who fought for King James II against William of Orange; while his uncle Mathew Duane was involved in the 1750s’ and 1760s’ move by the Fingall family to overturn the outlawries, which were the result of earlier victories over the Irish Catholic gentry by Oliver Cromwell and William of Orange. Before one can understand fully Duane’s involvement in the Philadelphian United Irish movement one must consider his actual Irish background itself which is done in the next chapter. Duane was forced into a corner on the question of his Irishness in America, and pole-cat that he was, fought back using his enemies’ weapon against them.

The Federalists tried to demonise him as a ‘jacobin’ United Irishman by tying Duane’s political views in the *Aurora* to the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland. Instead of avoiding the issue Duane began using his identity as a sometime Irishman to launch a heated and virulent attack on British treatment of Ireland and of Federalist support for Britain. His Anglophobia was harnessed and given strength by the knowledge that he was the most outspoken member of a powerful voting block in Philadelphia. To appeal to this Republican-supporting group of Irish

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8 These people have also been called Radical Whigs, True Whigs, Real Whigs, Old Whigs, Commonwealthmen and early radicals. They were closely ‘connected both philosophically and politically with the Commonwealthmen of the seventeenth century’ and stood in opposition to Crown authority. Although only ever a small minority they came to prominence during the American War of Independence as both the source of the ideology of the revolution and as local supporters of the Americans. They were usually Dissenters by background. See Caroline Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, p. 7.
migrants and their descendants, the fiery Anglophobia in the pages of the *Aurora* was wound around a figure, Duane, who spoke of individual persecution and British injustice in India and who tied his own narrative to wider injustices against the Irish. By 1799 Duane was able to appeal to the scars on his body as a material and metaphorical example of himself as an embodied victim of Federalist/British persecution. Duane’s beating at the hands of a Federalist militia became written into his narrative of Federalist/British persecution. The polemical battles over the British Empire and Ireland were also mixed in with Duane’s narrative of personal ‘persecution’ in India. He created a dichotomy between cruel and ruthless Britain and virtuous and victimised Ireland. This dichotomy is equalled by his portrayal of the cruel and ruthless Federalists opposed to the virtuous and victimised Republicans. In both, Duane stands, bearing the scars of martyrdom, as the physical embodiment of Republican Ireland and America against monarchical Britain and the Federalists. This trait of locating himself as both an eyewitness to British persecution and a victim himself lasts even up to his final newspaper publication of 1834.

Duane not only became involved with the United Irish in Philadelphia but through his marriage to Margaret Bache could boast of a closer connection to the organization. As Pasley has noted:

numerous men…found a haven under *The Aurora*’s roof. Among them were refugee radicals such as the exiled journalists James Thomson Callender and William Duane [who was not strictly an exile], the United Irishman…Dr. James Reynolds, and the United Irish leader Theobald Wolfe Tone…Margaret [Bache] formed personal and political friendships with some of these men’s wives. Matilda Tone wrote in 1798 to ask how the latest pregnancy of her ‘dear Friend’ was progressing and to inquire after the health of her children. She also made a comment that shows how fully the women shared and were involved in their husband’s incendiary affairs: ‘Thank [Benjamin Bache] very much for his Aurora. I welcome it every evening as I would, a pleasant, intelligent friend. You can’t think how delightful it is, in
Duane not only formed an association with the family of the martyred Tone when he married Margaret Bache but also viewed himself as marrying into the revolution by taking the widow of Benjamin Franklin’s grandson as his bride. He wrote in one letter to Jefferson on the birth of a daughter by Margaret Bache that she too had joined this prestigious line and that he was protecting the heirs of Franklin’s legacy - thus tying himself further, in his eyes, to the legacy of the revolution. For Duane, the American Revolution and the Irish Rebellion overlapped; Tone was an Irish Washington. The problem he had was convincing Americans that this was so.

Duane the Englishman

The period from 1779 to 1794 saw Duane embrace Englishness as a cultural and political norm. He broke with his family’s Catholic Irish past by marrying a Protestant and becoming estranged from his mother. He then worked for a Freemason-Radical Whig with a deep antipathy for the Stuart cause, an Anglo-Irishman by the name of Edward Collins. Duane became further acculturated when he worked in London and joined his uncle who was connected through work with the English aristocracy. Duane felt he had become an English Whig and during his stay in Calcutta supported the British conquest of India. Nowhere in his

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10 ‘In the season of danger I laid aside personal consideration, in the return of a milder season it is incumbent upon me to make provision for my little progeny, and the little progeny of my predecessor, the descendants of Franklin who have become mine, to which another has just added by the birth of a daughter.’ William Duane to Thomas Jefferson, Philadelphia, 10 May 1800, ‘Letters of William Duane’, Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, 2nd series XX (1907), p. 262.
pre-American writing does he characterise himself as Irish, although his enemies certainly did. During an interview, held at the time of his first clash with officialdom in India, Duane wore this mask of English loyalty when he said that he considered himself to be English by adoption.\footnote{BL/IOR/H/537-9, f. 22.}

Duane’s Englishness is derived from his earlier break with his family’s Jacobitism and his adoption of Radical Whiggery with its attitude of the potential perfectability, with much reform, of English institutions and the British Constitution. That an eighteenth-century educated Irishman removed from the wider Irish-speaking communities and operating within the English language and in an empire where England was dominant, would want to call himself English should come as no surprise. But Duane’s adopted Englishness must be understood in terms of the ideals of the eighteenth-century Commonwealthman and not those of a Whig or Tory aristocrat. His Englishness was that of John Almon or John Wilkes. This Duane is certainly a different person from the United Irish member with a strong hatred for the English who we see in the Philadelphian stage of his career. Duane passed himself off as a radical Whig gentleman who transcends, in his eyes, the backwardness of both Stuartism and the Roman Catholic Church. This is far removed from the caricature of Duane found in the introduction of Rosenfield’s \textit{American Aurora} where Rosenfield’s Duane speaks of himself as a “dirty Catholic” who ‘teetered at the edge of Calcutta’s “Black Hole”’.\footnote{Rosenfeld, \textit{American Aurora}, p. 3.}
Duane the Anglo-Indian

In the United States Duane set himself up as an expert on the British empire, particularly British rule in India and the East India Company. He tried to define himself as an Anglo-Indian, a European who lived in India for a number of years and knew it in depth. He displayed his knowledge of Indian matters in a dispute over antiquarian coins and in giving detailed accounts of his life in India. In India itself he tried to become part of the Anglo-Indian community.

In Calcutta, Duane wrote in support of British imperialism and both celebrated British victories against Tipu Sultan in 1792 and justified them with the theory that Britain, through its rule, was spreading enlightenment, including print culture in Asia and particularly India. Duane wrote of himself in The World as being English - not American or Irish. At the close of the Third Anglo-Mysore War Duane’s pro-imperialism is seen in The World:

The happy termination of a war, honorable and humane in its origin, wise and vigorous in its prosecution, and distinguished from its commencement to its end, by that element bravery, which has ever characterised the British arms, and is now the general feature of the age, deserved a peculiar celebration – but by Britons who acquire new glory and firmly establish with the extent of their sway, its mildness and justice – it deserved distinguished festivity.  

It was only when he was on the verge of deportation in 1794 that he began to attack British rule as despotic. In his newspaper Duane was interested in reform in India and took part in movements to establish a ‘native hospital’ and to take better care of war widows and orphans. He also wrote of the rice speculation rife at times of famine and published on the Slave Acts that parliament passed, writing

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See, for example, Aurora, 17 July 1801.
"The World, 28 April 1792."
two moving pieces on the plight of slaves. But this was in the context of wider 
support for the empire. Thus while Duane did support imperialism, within this 
support we find a very much reform-minded individual who was part of a larger 
group of people engaged in the Low Enlightenment. While not theorising the 
High Enlightenment as Voltaire did or mapping the similarities between Sanskrit 
and Greek and the beginnings of linguistics like Sir William Jones, these smaller-

scale *philosophes* were trying to bring about real reform and were involved in the 
localised printing of the ideas of thinkers such as Tom Paine. The Low 
Enlightenment in India followed a similar pattern to the one Robert Darnton has 
marked out in France. In the context of British rule in India, the better-known 
enlightenment – the high one of a figure such as Jones – has tended to 
overshadow what Duane and his contemporaries were doing. Beneath the veneer 
of British patriotism bubbled a Low Enlightenment exported from Grub Street and 
transplanted onto Indian soil.

In America Duane was able to use India and British rule as ammunition 
against the Federalists, just as he had used Ireland. These two places became 
examples of British tyranny and warnings of what America would revert to if the 
Federalists were unopposed. Duane carried a long account of his supposed 
maltreatment in India in the *Aurora*.15 Duane used Indian examples of British 
misrule and EIC corruption so often in his writing that James Thomson Callender 
commented in a letter to Jefferson that the *Aurora* dwelt too much on India. He 
feared that Duane would have been better off publishing excerpts from Callender’s 
own *Examiner* than publishing ‘his endless trash about Arthur McConnor 
[O’Connor] and Hindustan’.16 Durey has made the point that ‘information from

15 *Aurora*, 17 July 1801.
16 Michael Durey, “With the Hammer of Truth”: James Thomson Callender and America’s Early 
“Hindustan”, in which Duane – having been thrown out of India in 1795 – had a personal interest, could be used effectively in the propaganda war against the pro-British party in America’. But one could go further in criticising Callender as he overlooked one of the seminal events of the American Revolution itself – something Duane with his publishing interests in Revolutionary memoirs and histories would not; the involvement of the EIC in the causes behind the Boston Tea Party.

By using examples of British corruption, and particularly EIC corruption, Duane was tapping into a vein of Anglophobia directed against the EIC and the North ministry’s decision to allow the importation of EIC tea into North America on special terms detrimental to the colonists. By making parallels between the Federalists and EIC rule in India, Duane drew on this latent context, the rebellion of a group of American revolutionaries dumping EIC tea into Boston Harbour. Duane strategically dressed himself up in the guise of an Anglo-Indian and located himself among the sixty American revolutionaries who had been roughly disguised as American Indians when they attacked the three East India Company ships. Through his portrayal of himself as a victim of EIC rule in India Duane aligned his experience with that of an America which had battled EIC mercantilism. Duane could thus pin another badge of martyrdom onto his Republican chest. Given that the American attack on the EIC ships led to the calling of the Continental Congress, perhaps it would be wiser to question Callender’s objection to Indian reportage than Duane’s naivety in publishing on the ‘India Question’ in America.

17 Ibid.
Identity?

From the above it becomes clear that Duane’s national identity was malleable and underwent considerable change. Although his political ideology also changed it did not do so to the same degree as his changing of national identities. Why was this? I would argue that his national identity was often a badly fitting tunic stretched over his political self, be it as a Radical Whig, Painite, or Jeffersonian, and that Duane discarded these national tunics out of political necessity and when national change fitted his political ideas. Prior to the French Revolution, England was thought to have the most enlightened political system in Europe and was the envy of Voltaire and his French contemporaries. So it was as an Englishman that Duane became a Deist who showed more sympathy for Protestantism than for Catholicism. One is reminded here of Irishmen who on asking French philosophes about Ireland, the Enlightenment and what they should do, were shocked by the reply: ‘Become Protestants’. Being English for Duane was being a Radical Whig who saw himself as part of this positive Voltairian view of an English Enlightenment and political system which, whilst needing reform, was superior to all others. With two seminal events, those of 1789 and the outbreak of war between Britain and France in 1793, this changed. Like a lot of English Whigs, Duane welcomed the revolution as a truly spectacular political change which brought about much needed reform in France and cleared the way for that nation to match England’s political development. One can see in The World how Duane’s radical enthusiasm for France grew as his respect for the British status quo waned.

As the revolution became more extreme and Louis XVI was executed, Duane did not share the revulsion of many of his Whig contemporaries. Instead, Duane’s
allegiance to England faltered and he who had been a Radical Whig became an apologist for the regicides. Then came February, 1793. With the declaration of war between the Kingdom of Great Britain and Republican France, Duane was faced with a decision which he had already all but made - where did his allegiance lie? If it was with Republican France and not a Britain ruled by William Pitt and influenced by Edmund Burke (a Rockingham Whig who had chosen the road that veered sharply away from the Revolution), Duane would find the loyalist definition of the word “English” a hard one to swallow. For Duane the Foxite Whiggery he saw on his return to London in 1795 would only have confirmed his disillusionment with England and his embrace of Painite radicalism. But if Duane could not live in France or in his family’s unruly homeland – Ireland – where would an Anglophone Republican go? The answer was an obvious one, even if America had not any of its claims on Duane’s imagination from his youth there. As one of many tunics Duane wore, his Englishness would seem the most ill-fitting at first glance. That this was not always so is one example of why a historian of Duane’s Early Republican period must have a familiarity with his entire international career, and the other national tunics he discarded before he finally picked up his American one. Duane did not appear ready-made in America, but as a thirty-eight year old man who had already mulled over much political philosophy and change in three very different countries. To know Duane more fully we must now return to these origins.
CHAPTER 2

Origins

William Duane was born into a contested land and was to bear the mark of that contestation for much of his life. Neither American nor Irish, English nor Anglo-Indian, he was to spend forty years fighting for a place where he could properly belong. Taken from America in his youth he would take more than twenty-five years to return there. In that time he would struggle as an apprentice and journeyman printer, journalist and parliamentary reporter in Clonmel and London; and then as an unwanted newspaper editor in India, London, and finally Philadelphia. He would die with a reputation for slander and demagoguery which has obscured his life. Who Duane was becomes crucial to understanding the major political role he played as editor of the *Aurora* during the Federalist period of the early American Republic. Without the beacon of his past one quickly becomes lost among the lies of the political storm which surrounded him and which threatened his integrity, questioning even his right for a place in his homeland through claimed birth and allegiance to what he called ‘the spirit of 1776’. For Duane, America was closest in his imagining to the country which would consider him a citizen of the world: a refuge for a Painite radical driven from India and without any future in wartime London. Duane would fight, at times with the strength of a bigot, for his place there. To understand his energy in editing the key Jeffersonian newspaper during a crucial period in America’s development we need to recognize what was never properly given him and which was more than

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1 William Duane to Stephen Bradley (1808), in Clark, op. cit., p. 63.
once wrenched from him – a home.

**Newfoundland**

In the middle of the eighteenth century a young Irish couple, recently married, stepped on board a ship heading for Newfoundland.\(^1\) They perhaps were following the lure of the shipping industry to Newfoundland which had a history of attracting seasonal employment from Ireland.\(^1\) But given the middle-class background of the couple it is more probable that the husband found employment in a Catholic counting house at St. John’s. The work would have been part of the ongoing trade occurring on what has been called a floating British (fish) factory off the Grand Banks: Newfoundland itself. On 12 May 1760, this couple, Anastasia Sarsfield Duane and John Duane, would receive their son into a world and land still at war.\(^4\) William Duane was born in St. John’s, a fishing town known as the earliest place in North America to be brought into the fold of European trade. In the town sailors, soldiers and fishermen from throughout Europe mixed, worked, drank and fought. St. John’s was a familiar entrepôt to the New World for the Irish immigrants who made up the bulk of the population of Newfoundland from the second half of the eighteenth century. The town itself was a frequent target for French attacks during a time when what was French and

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\(^1\) Duane, W.J. to Duane, W. Jr., 2 November 1825, APS Duane Family Papers.


\(^3\) BL/IOR/L/MIL/9/87-92, f. 223.
British had not been properly settled. It was also the destination of the schooner fleet which sailed from Waterford, the sea port which connected Clonmel, the Tipperary hometown of the Duane family, to overseas trade via the adjoining River Suir. Although Newfoundland was within the British Empire it was in a warzone and would be until the Seven Years War finally ended in 1763. The year prior to Duane’s birth had seen the capitulation of Quebec City to the British and the death on the battlefield of the leading adversaries, General Montcalm and General Wolfe. Quebec itself had not been fully conquered and Montreal would surrender four months after Duane’s birth, on 8 September, 1760. St. John’s itself would be held by the French for a few months in 1762.

It may not have been John Duane’s first trip to America, as the thirty-year-old had an interesting past fighting and being wounded in the service of the French. During this period many ex-soldiers cast on American shores in the service of the two major combatants of the Seven Years War stayed on, giving up the gun for the plough or fur trap, or returned to America after being discharged from the army in their home country. But it is also possible that his service occurred in Newfoundland at the time of the French seizure of St. John’s, 700 Irish being crucial to the short French victory of 1762.

Lake Champlain

After time at St. John’s the family sailed back to Ireland and then at an unknown date returned to North America. On their return from Ireland the family either sailed down Lake Champlain and landed on its still very much unsettled

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5 IOR/H/537, f. 22.
6 Reece, op. cit., p. 175.
western shore, or, alternatively, sailed from Ireland to New York where John Duane met his first cousin and prospective employer, James Duane, before moving overland to the Lake Champlain region. At the time James Duane was both a prominent New York attorney who dealt with boundary disputes and a landlord and property developer around the Lake Champlain area. He was to found the town of Duanesburgh, and became a member of both the Second Continental Congress and the Presbyterian Party. Unlike the 250,000 Presbyterians who migrated to America from Ulster during the period from 1717 to 1776, his own father had been from Cong, County Galway and had been a convert from Catholicism, thus splitting the Duane family into the branch that William Duane was part of and the Presbyterian branch that James Duane came from. Anthony Duane, James’s father, had first ventured to New York as a marine officer and, after a subsequent voyage back, stayed on in New York. Although the family was divided between a Protestant and Catholic side there must have been some contact between them for John Duane, William’s father, to venture to America and work on James Duane’s estate by invitation.

Recent work has also shown that the religious divisions in Irish families can often be illusory, as one member of a Catholic family might convert, generally to the Church of Ireland, so as to secure property rights for the wider family. In the Duane family’s case, however, the conversion from Catholicism to Presbyterian would not have meant freedom from restrictions, as penal laws placing restrictions on property rights and public office were applied to dissenters. Perhaps these restrictions can account for the move to America. Another possibility would be a conversion to Anglicanism before an American conversion to Presbyterianism.

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Born in New York, James Duane and three of his brothers inherited 6000 acres of wild land around Lake Champlain which was eventually to become Duanesburgh. After studying law in the office of James Alexander and becoming Attorney of the Supreme Court, James Duane devoted time to developing this property interest by sending men to manage it and settle migrants on the land. Although nominally these settlers’ landlord, he would often let the leases continue for five to ten years without demanding money. That Duane’s father settled in the area and worked for James Duane is both supported by family anecdotes and the letters which passed between the son and grandson of William Duane.⁸

The area where Duane spent his early years was in stark contrast to the urban centres of trade, culture, and governance where he was to spend the rest of his life. Even Clonmel, with its importance to the Hiberno-British agricultural trade, was a Babylon in comparison to the frontiers’ harsh regime of land clearance and sporadic warfare. Although Duane was later to idealise his frontier childhood, the fortunes of his family, and especially his father’s death, show that with stronger memories his vision of the past may have been much less idyllic. Many of the immigrants gave up and moved back to more established settlements, frustrated by crop failures and punishing conditions. James Duane’s letters attest to his having sometimes practically to bribe German immigrants with supplies so that they would not leave their plots. Sometimes they did leave, having been offered the promise of better conditions by another land developer, leaving James Duane to again bring in migrants to clear and work his land.

⁸ Duane’s grand-daughter, Elizabeth Gillespie, wrote that John Duane had been a ‘surveyor of lands on Lake Champlain’. See E. D. Gillespie, A Book of Remembrance (Philadelphia, 1901), p. 14. Duane himself wrote to Tench Coxe that his ‘father lived on the purchases of his relative James Duane and acted in fact as his agent for the purchases there’. William Duane to Tench Coxe, 13 June 1801, Tench Coxe Papers, HSP.
William Duane would be brought up in a place still in embryo: a pays d’en haute between the French and the English, the European and Indian worlds. The area around Lake Champlain was beyond the pale of the urban centres of the British colonies. He was raised in a land which left few administrative records. In an area of frequent Indian raids and hardened trappers the young family scratched themselves an existence on the back of the landed interest of their first cousins. In this contested land caught between European and Indian, British and French, competing and groping land developers and the slow plod of governmental administration, Duane’s mythical beginnings as an American are to be found.

Duane suffered the loss of his father in 1765, possibly in an Indian raid. After years wandering around America, from Lake Champlain to Baltimore then to Philadelphia, some time in the early 1770s the widow and son moved to Ireland. Two conflicting dates have been passed down for the journey to Ireland, 1771 and 1774. Duane himself gives 1774 but it is possible that he gave a later date so as to extend his youth in America in the context of the many attacks he sustained as an Alien newspaper editor. But still, the date is unclear. What is clear is that in the early 1770s Anastasia Sarsfield-Duane returned with her son to Clonmel, County Tipperary, to live with her wealthy relations. Duane was now in his early teens.

Clonmel, Ireland

Duane was entering a world quite unfamiliar to the America he had left. The state of the Irish kingdom differed greatly both in the state of the Irish Catholic

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9 William J. Duane to William Duane Jr., 2 November 1825, APS Duane Family Papers.
peasantry and the extent to which Ireland was ruled by a landed gentry that was removed from this peasantry. Duane, however, was not from the most disadvantaged in Ireland and indeed was from a group who saw a revival of their fortunes as the eighteenth century progressed. In placing Duane’s family within the land-owning Irish Catholic middle-class one needs to bear in mind that the received idea of a prostrate and bound Catholic community crippled by the Penal Laws is misleading. Although the Irish Catholic mercantile and farming communities were constrained by Penal laws, they were not crippled by them. Kevin Whelan’s study of the Catholic middle-class has revealed much about this group both as a power-holding élite within the wider Catholic community and as an intermediary group between the peasantry, small land-holders and the Protestant gentry.  

William Duane would grow to manhood within this group, in a family well-connected on both maternal and paternal sides. On his mother’s side the family argued that they were connected to the well-known Sarsfield family who served the Stuart kings and were characterized in Ireland by their strong Jacobitism. The Jacobite character of his paternal family is exemplified by the father’s military involvement with the French. When we understand Tipperary to be one of the major areas of recruitment for the French armies it becomes even clearer that Duane’s father would not have found this employment alien, particularly given Duane’s comments that his father fought for principle and not merely money.  

The political leanings of his paternal family are further shown by the legal career of William Duane’s uncle and later benefactor, Mathew Duane. John Duane’s

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12 IOR/H/537, f. 22.
brother had become well-known working for the Catholic aristocracy and the push
to secure Catholic land against the ‘outrawry’ and restrictions on Catholic land-
ownership in wake of the defeat of the Stuarts.¹³ Through Mathew Duane the
family had a connection to Lord Fingall, member of a prominent Catholic
aristocratic family.¹⁴ While John Duane had left Ireland for America in 1759, his
uncle Mathew became well-established and well-connected as a solicitor in
London.¹⁵ Mathew Duane held office in Lincoln’s Inn, London where he gained
his reputation with the British and Irish aristocracy.

But it was to her maternal family that Anastasia Duane turned when she
arrived in Clonmel and not the family of her husband. She also held property there
herself resulting from her widowhood. In the early 1770s mother and son arrived
in this small but then thriving town which was one of the principal trading centres
of eighteenth-century Ireland. Clonmel sits next to the river Suir and rests easily
between a series of hills.¹⁶ It was of importance as a centre of trade owing to its
position between two counties which were known for agricultural production.
Farmers would bring their wares to the town, and these would then be sent down-

¹³ The perception amongst Irish Catholics was that the land was illegally taken. But Thomas
Bartlett, on the other hand, has argued that ‘…[t]here is little evidence to support the contention
that there was a conscious policy of depriving the Irish of the best land, and much to suggest that if
things ended up this way, this stemmed from the failure of the native Irish to adjust successfully to
the new economic order of leases and mortgages. None the less, a failure to cope left the Irish
understandably resentful of the more successful settlers; and under the tutelage of the priests
trained in the rhetoric of the Counter-Reformation such resentment was to be transformed into a
murderous hatred that needed only opportunity to reveal itself.’ Thomas Bartlett, *The Fall and
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also, NLI Archives, MS. 8020-1, Fingall Papers.

¹⁵ See Mathew Duane’s will and mention of the Earl of Upper Ossory alongside details of his
property and wealth: PRO C104/261 Bray.

¹⁶ Clonmel retains much of its earlier architecture but has lost the vibrancy it had as a centre of
trade in the eighteenth century. Duane’s son, who grew up in Clonmel after Duane left for India,
has left this account of Clonmel: ‘You will see a town, said to have been once handsome; the
environs probably still beautiful; the river Suir always the same dear stream, smaller than our
Alleherry in width, but equally worth contemplation: on the southside of the river, you will see
hills, in my early days the scenes of my boyish rambles’. William J. Duane to George Morgan, 25
February 1861, Philadelphia, Duane Family Papers APS
river to be loaded on ships for overseas trade at the port of Waterford. With trade came a Catholic middle-class which rose partly owing to the Penal laws restricting entry into other types of employment such as public office, law, or landownership. Clonmel itself was a merchant town which attracted both prosperous Protestant and Catholic merchant classes. Through Clonmel’s water-link to Waterford the outlying agriculturally producing areas supplied both Britain and Europe. The Seven Years War and the duty-free exportation of meat products to England, the result of the relaxation of import restrictions owing to the spread of a murrain within cattle in Holland and England in 1739-40, meant that the internal entrepôts of Kilkenny and Clonmel became more prosperous during the late 1740s, 1750s and 1760s. Perhaps Duane’s family benefited directly from this agricultural boom.

We are given a small glimpse of Duane’s early Irish life from his account of an event he witnessed (written in the third person) and published in an 1834 edition of the *Weekly Aurora*:

> When in his fourteenth year he was carried to Ireland…and was placed at school in this same town of Clonmel. His path to and from school, was by this prison; and those grim heads [of Father Nicholas Sheehy, and three men Buxton, Farrell and Meehan convicted of murdering a certain John Bridge] became soon familiar to him. Passing one day, in the fall of 1775, he observed a crowd, and among them several young people of his acquaintance, of whom he inquired the cause of the crowd, and was informed that a robust, chubby, coarse, well clad man, who was the object of discourse, was that very John Bridge, for whose murder, the men whose heads were in view, had been hanged, quartered and beheaded! Incredulous to this information, the writer addressed the man himself – and being at this time pretty well acquainted with the names and characters of the gentry, put some questions to him concerning Thomas Berd, his former master, and several others, all of whom he knew, and answered concerning. He was asked where he had been, that he did not come to the rescue of those innocent men; he said he had been in Newfoundland, and that he had been shipped thither, against his
will, at the instance of the Tolers, John Bagwell, and Sir Thomas Maude.\textsuperscript{17}

The subject matter of the quote is open to question. Father Nicholas Sheehy’s execution at Clonmel in 1766 was a \textit{cause célèbre} in the eighteenth century and there were contemporary rumours that the murdered man was alive in Newfoundland. But one wonders if Duane is embellishing this story and inserting himself into what was considered a well-known British injustice to cement his place in Irish-American history. It is still useful, however, for reaching an awareness of how he perceived his earlier life.\textsuperscript{18} Duane’s knowledge of the Protestant gentry he mentions further strengthens the evidence that his family was well-connected.

We also glimpse his journey to the Franciscan school he attended. President John Quincy Adams noted in his memoirs that Duane was being trained for the priesthood and Duane’s own testimony to his religious education bolsters this.\textsuperscript{19} Through these years Duane was given a good education which he was to use with much force later in his life. His first struggle with authority, here the Catholic clergy, was the beginning of a long career clashing with institutions and figures he was unsympathetic to. He comes across in the above account as an inquisitive boy, quick to strike up a conversation and sharp in his knowledge of his surroundings. The recollection also portrays Ireland as a place that shaped his political views from a young age, in particular the perception that British rule in

\textsuperscript{17} \textit{Aurora} (1834-5), p. 60.
Ireland, and its Protestant ascendancy, involved corruption, duplicity and murder. How much this is a projection back onto his childhood is unclear.

Although for a time he had a comfortable life growing up among his rich relatives and with a mother who owned property in the town and supported his schooling, this was to change abruptly. While it is unclear that his marriage in 1779 to Catherine Corcorane, a member of a Church of Ireland family, was due to a pre-marital pregnancy, the event was enough for Anastasia Duane to remove her son from her will. Duane rebelled against his mother and his Catholic upbringing. Duane’s rejection of the clergy and his marriage to a Protestant girl would have been perceived by his mother not just in individual terms but within the moral system of the self-perpetuating caste of Catholic Irish middle-class interests. He reneged on his allotted role within this caste and in effect turned his back on her. As punishment she cut him out of her will and he was forced to find employment as an apprentice printer to support his young wife, who was soon to give birth to their first son. With no financial support from his mother and no evident support from his new father-in-law, Duane became an apprentice printer for a Clonmel newspaper.

The period of Duane’s apprenticeship, roughly from 1779 to 1782, was a turbulent one as Ireland went through four major interlinked events. From 1778 the country saw the rise and spread of the Volunteer movement. In 1779 the ‘Free Trade’ concession was reached. Two Catholic relief acts were passed, one in 1778 and one in 1782 as well as the granting of the repeal of the sacramental test for Presbyterians in 1780. And lastly, the period saw the emergence of the 1782

20 Hibernian Advertiser (Clonmel), 1-15 January 1778.
Constitution. It is unclear exactly when Duane began his apprenticeship as a printer with the *Hibernian Advertiser* but given his estrangement from his mother we can presume that it began near to that date. As Duane began his apprenticeship in Clonmel and this was the sole newspaper printed in the town, it is safe to assume that Duane started with the *Advertiser*.

In analysing the political nature of the paper it must be understood that Duane’s direct involvement in its editorials and content is difficult to judge. What we can consider is that this would have been a formative period for him and marks a break with the Catholicism of his family and the taking up of an apprenticeship with a man known for his pro-Whig newspaper and reformist ideas. He was also a member of the Clonmel Freemasons. Thus we see Duane at once married to a Protestant and working for a man who is both Protestant and anti-Stuart, with many of the attitudes towards Catholicism that marked Freemasonry in Ireland. The newspaper was also involved in promoting the interests of the Volunteer associations in the Tipperary area as well as Protestant militia groups who advertised their meetings and deeds, as for example, rescuing Protestant girls from Whiteboy gangs. Duane’s later recorded interest in Freemasonry, something he shared with the Founding Fathers of America, such as his later friend Thomas Jefferson, could stem from this period.

The man who took William Duane on as his apprentice was Edward Collins. Originally from Dublin, he was both one of Clonmel’s booksellers and the editor and proprietor of its sole newspaper. Since the 1760s regional centres such as Clonmel saw the rise of newspapers which grew in symbiosis with expanding

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23 Bartlett, op. cit., p. 82.
24 Edward Collins, Member 42, 17 January 1772, Branch No. 96 Clonmel, est. 2 December 1738, Dublin Freemason Records. See also advertisements for Freemason meetings in the *Hibernian Advertiser*.
25 *Hibernian Advertiser* (Clonmel), 1-15 January 1778.
A person such as Collins would have a newspaper as his principal business interest usually followed by the printing of books, especially chap-books. Newspaper owners would diversify as well, given the often transitory nature of their business. For example, Collins also had business interests in the Clonmel trade as well as owning land there. He was also well-connected and influential enough later to become mayor. John Almon, the well-known London publisher and newspaper editor had himself been apprenticed to a Robert Williamson in March 1751 who was a ‘bookseller and stationer, in Liverpool; who as is not uncommon with booksellers in provincial towns, exercised also the trades of book binder and printer’. Hannah Barker in her *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth Century England* has argued that ‘many wealthy and socially prominent provincial businessmen were also newspaper proprietors and…part of the reason why they were so successful may have been due to their involvement in such ventures’. This is a point worth remembering as we later consider Duane’s own career as a provincial newspaper editor in Calcutta and his successes and financial troubles there.

The *Hibernian Advertiser* was much the same as other provincial papers of the time. It carried news cut from London and Dublin newspapers as well as usually one to two pages of local news and advertisements. But as newspaper historians working on provincial papers have shown, the choice of material for a newspaper reveals much about the character of each provincial editor, and these newspapers did not blindly follow metropolitan fashions. The editorial was put to

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27 Ibid, p. 57.
good use by Collins and his inclusion of regular letters and reports on the Volunteers and America means we have a strong idea of where his political sympathies lie.

The connection between the different English-speaking sides of the Atlantic in terms of political philosophy meant that a person such as Collins would be comfortable with those ‘accounts, arguments, essays and histories, which might be dubbed the apocryphal books of the Whig Bible as it was to be read by reformers and revolutionaries all around the Atlantic world’.\(^{30}\) The *Hibernian Advertiser* showed a keen interest in continuing reports from the American conflict alongside its own editorials on the Volunteer movement. This is not surprising given the inter-connections between men such as Collins and their American counterparts, both intellectually and through meetings between London-based printers and Americans such as Franklin and Jefferson. Ireland itself, particularly its colonial relationship with England, was read in America in the context of Molyneux’s *The Case of Ireland*, a book which would become part of William Duane’s private library in India.\(^{31}\) Comparisons were then made and parallels looked for with respect to the revolutionaries’ own contemporary dispute with the British empire. The intellectual flow in the opposite direction across the Atlantic can be seen in the use of the word ‘Patriot’ which the Irish borrowed from America along with their idea of a citizen militia. The Clonmel militia was part of the larger movement in the late 1770s and early 1780s where the Volunteer movement emerged as a real political force in Ireland which the Irish élite used in


\(^{31}\) ‘The Case of Ireland’, re-printed at least eleven times in the next century, was to be cited whenever Irishmen wished to refute English claims of ascendancy. As time wore on it became the accepted manifesto of anticolonialism and of antimercantilist ideas. It was widely read by all sections of Irish opinion and found a public in America besides.’ Ibid, p. 139.
its push for a parliament which would have greater autonomy from England. This was all within the context of an on-going revolution in North America which furthered ‘the process whereby the empire became increasingly associated with authoritarian rule over subject peoples and less with largely self-governing British settlements abroad’. 32

Owing to the American Revolution there had been a considerable response to the threat of a French invasion in Ireland. It took the form of Volunteer associations whose purported purpose was the defence of Ireland from attack. But this was quickly overshadowed by the drive for greater autonomy from English rule on the part of the Protestant landed class in Ireland, coupled with Presbyterian radicalism in Ulster which saw the aims of the American patriots as being similar to the Irish. The Volunteer movement was paralleled in Holland by the Vrijcorps, the Patriots of the early 1780s and the Patriotentijd, themselves influenced by the American Revolution. 33 The idea of Volunteerism, set against the concept of standing armies and forced conscription, initially came from the bands of patriots who made up the revolutionary armies in America. Volunteerism is a phenomenon which linked the Irish response to the American revolution and to the later United Irish.

James Kelly has argued that the Volunteers gave the Patriots, a minority in parliament in 1780, the network on which their campaign was built. The Volunteers could give the Patriot minority a much louder voice in Ireland because they were a ‘paramilitary organisation with a defence and security function’ who

were ‘a natural focus for the young and politically aware’.\textsuperscript{34} As an 18 October 1779 dispatch from Dublin to the \textit{Gazette de Leyde} states, ‘the enthusiasm for forming militia associations has spread everywhere in Ireland, and every citizen, regardless of his rank, who is not dressed in some sort of uniform, is looked on as useless to the community’\textsuperscript{35}. Because of the regional basis of the Volunteers, who often met at the local, county and provincial levels, and the weaving together of military reviews, delegate meetings and broader Irish politics, the movement was a military and political training ground for the generation of 1798.\textsuperscript{36} For such a politically involved and sharp individual as Duane not to be interested in this movement would have been strange.

The question of where Duane’s militarism originated is linked to his time in Ireland and India and the fact that his father had been a soldier. Throughout his career he showed an interest in military affairs alongside his interest in politics, theology and history. Besides obtaining a colonelcy in the United States army later in his life, he enlisted as a private soldier in the East India Company army and commented in detail on military affairs both in India and America. Duane’s concept of ‘citizenship’, for example, is of a citizen who actively fights for a particular cause and also needs to fight in order to maintain his citizenship. By definition a citizen is armed. This concept of citizenship, as a politicised and militarised member of a state, is at odds with that of a subject of the British Crown who serves his king out of a duty to the Crown. This is the basic Commonwealth concept and is crucial to understanding why Duane places so much emphasis on it. Whereas citizens are armed, it may not be always wise to

\textsuperscript{34} James Kelly, \textit{Prelude to Union: Anglo-Irish Politics in the 1780s} (Cork: Cork University Press, 1992), p. 27.
\textsuperscript{36} James Kelly, op. cit., pp. 10-1.
arm a subject due to the fear of rebellion (for example, the restrictions on Irish Catholics owning weapons in the eighteenth century). The political edge to Duane’s militarism, and the relationship of politics to an interest in military affairs seen in figures such as Duane and John Oswald, is a phenomenon of the eighteenth century but one underemphasised in Duane’s case. Why did he have such strong aspirations to military glory? Where did this come from and how did his militarism and political values mesh or are they even separable? To understand part of the source of Duane’s militarism we must return to the Ireland of the late 1770s and early 1780s.

Ireland in this period was heavily militarised and with the advent of Volunteerism this became even more so. Duane reached manhood, late teens, at exactly the time when the pageantry and showiness of Volunteerism was most strong. Duane would have himself either witnessed Volunteer reviews and/or quite possibly taken part in them for although he was of Catholic background this did not necessarily mean that he was not be able to join a Volunteer association. Duane’s later interest in military affairs and his pretensions to both martial learning and rank are possibly the result of maturing in a period where militarism either in the form of Whiteboy agitation or its counter-balance – the Volunteer movement – was wide-spread in rural Ireland and middle-class towns such as Clonmel. It would be a mistake to overlook the similarities between the Volunteers, the concept of a ‘militia’ in America which it was directly related to, and the militia Duane was to form and lead in Philadelphia.

An example from the life of Duane’s own son exemplifies this: ‘The War of 1812, occasioned the formation of a number of new Volunteer companies in

Philadelphia’ and William J. Duane, ‘who, in earlier life, had been adjutant of a military body called the Legion, was one of the original members of the State Fencibles, a company which lasted until the close of the recent rebellion [the American Civil War]’.\(^{38}\) William Duane’s own 1808 statement of his unerring commitment to American Revolutionary principles throughout his life reveals this continuity.\(^{39}\) Although it would be incautious not to enter a caveat here, since William Duane gains from asserting his Americanness in an atmosphere where his Irishness is played upon (notice he does not mention Ireland explicitly as the place where he published these poems), his assertion of a continuity flowing from the American Revolution to himself in 1780s Ireland is supported by both wider events in Ireland and the specific newspaper to which he was apprenticed.

Duane also mentions in correspondence his mother’s jubilation over American victories during the War of Independence. When combined, the two pieces of information fit well with David Wilson’s comments on the increasingly important Catholic middle-class:

> the American Revolution struck a responsive chord. Catholic merchants occupied a prominent place in the transatlantic carrying trade; they had formed close connections with the American colonialists, and signed petitions against the war. Reports from Cork and Limerick spoke of widespread Catholic support for the Americans. In Dublin, a new generation of middle-class Catholics were strongly attracted to pro-American radical ideas; they included such people as Patrick Byrne and Mathew Carey, whose revolutionary politics would eventually force them to leave Ireland for the United States.\(^{40}\)

Carey was the most significant of the America-bound émigrés and an important member of the Volunteers. Carey ‘burst onto the political scene during

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the free trade campaign of 1779’ when he was nineteen, the same age as Duane.\textsuperscript{41} Although taking a much more circuitous route than Carey and more muted in the records of the Volunteers, Duane was to follow a similar radical path to America. The use of the Volunteers as a training ground for the transatlantic radicals has also been noted by Wilson: ‘During this agitation, with all its frustrations of rising expectations, many subsequent United Irish émigrés [to America] acquired their political experience and established their reputation for radicalism’.\textsuperscript{42} Duane’s subsequent career as a transatlantic radical in America saw him allied and befriended by such men. Thus the American involvement of these men – both influenced by the American Revolution and themselves influencing the aftermath of the revolution – came to full circle through the Volunteer movement.

**London Town**

In 1782 Duane left Clonmel with his wife and child and migrated to London.\textsuperscript{43} He became in eighteenth-century terms a journeyman printer. By leaving Ireland for England, Duane was following a pattern which Irish journeyman printers had set throughout the eighteenth century. It was not always an enviable or stable type of employment. The pursuit of work took many journeyman printers to the Continent, America and as far as India. Because of changes to guild structures throughout Europe in the eighteenth century and the encroachment of the early industrial revolution in Britain, opportunities for journeyman printers, for both employment and to become masters of their trade, became depressed. Levels of

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{42} Ibid, p. 17.
\textsuperscript{43} Duane said in India that his ‘strongest attachments led to England, where I lived only five years’. BL/IOR/H/537, f. 159. Counting backwards from early January 1787, when he leaves London, I reached the year 1782.
militancy rose among traditional guilds such as shoemakers as well as newer ones such as printers involved in the newspaper trade. Guilds which Duane would have been in contact with were more open to violent protest and political involvement. Tom Paine’s later writings would speak most directly to this segment of the economy that was experiencing change and difficulty. An artisan himself, he sought an alternative to the changes which were weakening the bargaining power of the artisan class. But Duane had an important advantage over other journeymen printers: a well-connected uncle.

Mathew Duane and his sister had left Clonmel for London where he forged a career as a solicitor. Letters left by Mathew Duane attest to his knowledge and connections with aristocracy and particularly the Earl of Upper Ossory: ‘I left the north something sooner than I intended on account of the death of my worthy and good friend the Earl of Upper Ossory. I have been at the Duke of Bedford’s in the country.’ He was also a known antiquarian and member of the British Museum. He had his law practice at Lincoln’s Inn and was a successful solicitor. In one case he was involved when the Earl of Fingall won a settlement of £687.4.8d. The case was an instance of the Catholic aristocracy holding onto land in Ireland

44 That this pattern crosses national boundaries and appears to be a European-wide movement is seen in a parallel from German history: ‘The most vulnerable and therefore often the volatile members of the guild structure were the journeymen. In most trades, an apprentice had to complete his training by leaving his home town and working under a series of masters elsewhere; after this tour, he could return home and apply for full admittance to the guild…As the position of the guilds deteriorated and the opportunities for journeymen to become masters decreased, journeymen became increasingly militant and their organisations increasingly prone to violent protests. Not surprisingly, a number of historians have traced the roots of the nineteenth century labour movement to these institutions, which overlapped but did not coincide with traditional corporate order’. Taken from James J. Sheehan, German History 1770-1866 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 109-110.

45 ‘For Paine’s compassion, his arrogance, his impatient contempt, even his quick and shallow verbal facility were perfectly tuned to that group in society we so struggle to define. The target Paine hit every time with unfailing accuracy, even in his subordinate clauses, were the small master, the journeyman, the small manufacturer, the shopkeeper, of questioning and ambitious temper. Universal in its resonance, The Rights of Man is in essence a manifesto of the man of small property, big aspiration and broad sympathy.’ Gwyn A. Williams, Artisans and Sans-Culottes: Popular Movements in France and Britain during the French Revolution (London: Edward Arnold, 1968), p. 18.
against land speculators hoping to gain from the laws restricting Catholic land use.

William Duane left few traces of his time in 1780s London. From his own account, he was offered a job working with his uncle which would have led to a legal career, but he turned him down. Duane’s dislike of the law is apparent in his surviving letters and those of his son William J. Duane, who says that Duane fought bitterly against his own decision to take up the law. What we do know of Duane’s employment during this period is scant. We have an account left by his son William where he has mentioned his father working as a parliamentary reporter and journalist in London which means that at some time in the early 1780s he began writing instead of only being involved in the mechanical side of the newspaper trade. In the account he mentions Duane reporting the events of the hustings:

The election in May, 1784, for two members of Parliament to represent Westminster, was the earliest event which the memory of William J. Duane could recall. This election was held at Covent Garden, and Charles James Fox and Sir Cecil Wray were two of the three candidates. He was taken by his father to the place of election and placed upon the pedestal of a column to view the scene. A serious riot occurred, during which the Irish chairmen, who supported Fox, used the poles of the Sedan Chairs in fighting against the sailors, who were in the interest of Sir Cecil Wray, and who were armed with short swords. I believe that it was at this election that the beautiful Duchess of Devonshire secured a vote for Fox by promising to kiss a butcher in return for his support, and by keeping her promise. Lord Hood was returned at the head of the poll, and Fox defeated Sir Cecil Wray by a few hundred votes.

The above election was the sort of event that a journalist would attend before penning a report for the next day’s newspaper. Duane’s involvement with

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46 Duane’s rejection of and subsequent life-long distaste for the law squares well with Robbins’ comment that: ‘Lawyers of this period were protectors of tradition and contributed little to the development of liberalism in any way’. Robbins, *The Eighteenth-Century Commonwealthman*, p. 294.

reporting occurred at a time of growth and change in the profession. Even one branch of his job, parliamentary reporting, was fairly new, dating as it did from the 1760s. During the late eighteenth century the rapid expansion of the newspaper press on the back of the emerging middle-class trading interest was coupled with the large-scale reporting of parliamentary debates. As Linda Colley has pointed out, these changes meant that those outside of parliament ‘were made aware of the language of those inside it as never before’. Duane was part of this movement inside the parliament, as a reporter, and out, as a journalist.

Perhaps for a moment we can pause and move from this wider change and focus on what parliamentary reporters did in parliament. In the 1780s there was no press gallery and the gallery which existed was quite an unorganised affair. As the stringent conditions for entry into parliament that existed in 1777 were relaxed, it became easier to be a spectator at a parliamentary session in the House of Commons. Before then it had been a requirement that the MPs accompanied their friends so as to secure them entry to the viewing gallery. During the course of the late 1770s it became sufficient to hand the doorkeeper of the gallery a written introduction from a MP, although a payment of 2s. would suffice as well. A German traveller, Carl Moritz, has left an account of his trip to parliament which sheds light on what Duane’s job would have been like at the time:

The spectators include people of all ranks and there are always ladies among them. A couple of short-hand writers sat not far from me, trying stealthily to take down the words of the speakers, which can be read in print the same night. These reporters are presumably paid by the editors of the newspapers. There are a few

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Colley, op. cit., p. 361.
Duane’s career and metamorphoses from Radical Whig parliamentary reporter to Painite is paralleled by the life of John Oswald who began as a parliamentary reporter for the London Gazetteer. See David V. Erdman, Commerce des Lumières: John Oswald and the British in Paris, 1790-1793, p. 43.
regular visitors to Parliament who pay the doorman a guinea for the whole session.\(^{50}\)

Apart from parliament, Duane would also have frequented coffee shops and other places where MPs and their friends would meet and gossip about political events and personalities. He would also have been reporting on the hustings as the family anecdote concerning the 1784 election shows. It must have been an interesting period for Duane but one with financial insecurities, for in 1786 he accepted an offer of employment as an editor of a Foxite Calcutta newspaper. It is possible, though, that he left due to other reasons, but his later reluctance to return to England points towards this period in the 1780s as one of financial difficulty. From another source we also know that Duane worked for a Mr. Andrews for a short time as a hack writer and sub-editor.\(^{51}\) Duane in his Indian newspaper *The World* tells his audience that in about 1783-4 ‘a necessity compelled me to pursue some certain profession – I had been employed in several genteel occupations, as *Clerk, Amanuesis, Scribbler*, if you will, &c. &c. but without that certainty or profit which my circumstances required:– A gentleman who knew me, recommended me to an eminent tradesman in London, as a young man with some capacity and other praise; he recommended me to Mr. Andrews’.\(^{52}\) Apart from the evidence which shows that Duane was a parliamentary reporter and ‘employed in several genteel occupations’ there is a further account of Duane working for a London newspaper in the 1780s.

The family anecdote passed on to Duane’s grandson does not mention the name of the newspaper Duane worked for in this period. It mentions the name of

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\(^{51}\) *The World*, 12 May 1792.

\(^{52}\) *The World*, 12 May 1792. In this quote and all subsequent ones the italics are Duane’s own emphasis.
the *General Advertiser* as the newspaper Duane worked on after returning to London from India but Duane himself has given clear dates for working on another newspaper called *The Telegraph* during that later period.\textsuperscript{53} There was a newspaper during the 1780s called the *General Advertiser* which was owned by John Almon, who was connected with John Wilkes and prominent Americans such as Benjamin Franklin and Thomas Jefferson. Almon was one of the first practitioners of this use of eyewitness accounts of parliamentary debates and in his autobiography he argued that he was the actual instigator of this method. Almon himself had an Irish father and worked as a journeyman printer on the Continent in his youth.\textsuperscript{54} Like Duane, he served an apprenticeship with a provincial printer (in Liverpool) and his life stands as an interesting parallel to Duane’s: ‘In the month of September 1758, he left Liverpool and went to the Continent…from thence he returned to England and went to London; where, being a perfect stranger, he at first sought employment as a journeyman printer’.\textsuperscript{55} Like Edward Collins, Almon was a Radical Whig who supported the American cause. On the basis of a muddled family anecdote, Kim T. Phillips argued that this was possibly the newspaper Duane worked for as a parliamentary reporter in 1780s London.\textsuperscript{56} Later historical writing has dropped the ‘possible’ and it has now become received wisdom that Duane worked on this newspaper based on the above family anecdote. As will be shown later, there is further circumstantial evidence to establish a tentative link between Duane and this newspaper, but Phillips’ ‘possible’ must still stand.

Although Almon had retired from press involvement, during 1783 he married

\textsuperscript{53} Duane (Jr.), *Biographical Memoir of William J. Duane*, p. 3. *Aurora* (1834-5), p. 26 and p. 44.  
\textsuperscript{54} Almon, op. cit., p. 11 and pp. 13-4.  
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid, pp. 13-4.  
\textsuperscript{56} Duane (Jr.), op. cit., p. 3.
the widow of William Parker and in 1784 took over the running and ownership of Parker’s London newspaper - the *General Advertiser*. Several months before he bought the newspaper Almon had been writing for the Treasury in support of William Pitt the Younger. After he took over the *General Advertiser* he attempted to serve the interests of both of the political parties. But in 1786 the *General Advertiser* became involved in a case of libel concerning the first minister. On 20 February Pitt brought an action against John Almon before Lord Mansfield and a Special Jury, at Westminster Hall. The *General Advertiser* had struck out at a certain Mr. P___ for stock-jobbing. With the two libels on Pitt, published in the *General Advertiser* on 20 and 27 October 1785 Almon announced that he backed the opposition and that his policy of taking support from both sides of politics was over. In return Pitt brought the action ‘against Mr. Almon, as printer of the General Advertiser, and another against the printer of the Herald for a similar paragraph’. It has been argued that ‘limiting the expression of their arguments to the press, radicals left themselves open to the effectively repressive anti-libel laws of the government’. The attorney-general in particular could issue *ex-officio* informations for libel, where the accused had to carry all the costs of the trial even when found innocent. This, though, was unlikely because ‘the attorney-general also had the right to appoint special juries which by a process of legal elimination...were bound to favour the government’. Libel and defamation under eighteenth-century English common law were not straightforward areas of law and involved extra-legal issues concerning press freedom and restrictions and

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58 Almon, op. cit., p. 126.
whether a subject had a right to criticise government and the crown.\textsuperscript{59} Almon himself expressed the fluidities of judgements in the area by stating:

\begin{quote}
[this] law of libel changes like the seasons of the year. The \textit{North Briton} was a horrid libel during one administration, and a very constitutional paper during the time of another. The writer of the Letter to the People of England, was punished by one administration, and rewarded with a pension by another. \textit{Junius’s} letter was a libel in Westminster Hall - it was no libel in the city of London. Innocent men are exposed to ruin, and often are ruined, and their families beggared, by being charged with the publication of a libel, which would have been no libel in the time of a prior administration; nor, perhaps in a succeeding one.\textsuperscript{60}
\end{quote}

Fortunately for Almon the jury in his trial departed from Chief Justice Lord Mansfield’s advice of imposing a heavy fine on Almon whilst the conviction itself was upheld.\textsuperscript{61} If Duane had been involved in the Almon case, and was the writer whom Almon mentioned in court, his position as an aspiring editor under Almon would have been ruined. It is not transparent why Duane left Britain for India. There are a number of reasons, not necessarily cancelling each other out, which can be put forward. One is that poverty drove him to emigrate. Another is that he had married too young and wished to escape the confines of his family. The trial of Almon would have given Duane reason to flee, as Almon had hinted to the court that he was willing to tell them who the author of the piece was. Duane would then have faced debtors’ prison if unable to pay the legal costs. These are possibilities. We turn now to the one reason which Duane himself gave.

\textsuperscript{59} ‘Indeed, the centrality of individualistic rights to politics and the constitution in eighteenth-century England ensured that sensitive political and constitutional issues (for example the questions of personal, electoral, and press freedom raised by the Wilkites in the 1760s and 1770s) were still frequently fought out in the courts rather than in parliament. So while formal constitutional principle meant that the courts were ultimately vulnerable to the assumption of positive sovereignty by parliament, along the lines of the theories articulated by Bentham, the persistence of traditional attitudes allowed them a significant place in the practice of government.’ David Lemmings, ‘Law’, in I. McCalman (ed.), \textit{Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age}, p. 76.

\textsuperscript{60} One is reminded of Dr. Hayter’s comments: ‘When a Printer is marked for a victim, it is almost impossible to escape; for if one kind of snare does not succeed, another will be attempted: the bait will be tried in all shapes until the purpose is effected.’ Quoted in Almon, op. cit., p. 136.

\textsuperscript{61} Phillips, op. cit., p. 11.
‘The India Question’

Duane was approached in 1786 by a Phillip Young to journey to India and become editor of a Calcuttan newspaper called the *India Gazette*. Duane explains that

at the period of conflict in England, between Fox and Pitt on the government of India, Fox’s measure was the most popular at Calcutta, and meetings were held by the European population convened by the sheriff. – That sheriff was Philip Young, Esq., a private merchant of high reputation.

In Calcutta this Philip Young chaired a meeting where Pitt’s India Bill was condemned. An account of this resolution survives. Duane goes on to mention that ‘Sheriff Young was told he was wanted in England! He took the hint, and arrived in London’.  

The implication here is that Young was subtly persuaded or cajoled into leaving India by the government there due to his involvement in Calcutta politics. By the time of the passing of Pitt’s India Bill there appears to have been a group of like-minded Whigs in London involved in the EIC debates. The resolution that Young passed in Calcutta was also advertised in John Almon’s *General Advertiser*, strengthening the argument that Duane obtained employment through Almon’s East India Company connections. Almon was privy to sources and contacts who fed him information on ‘everything from the East India Company and the Irish cotton laws to the Spanish intrusions in the West Indies’.  

Young, as the principal proprietor of the *India Gazette* ‘sought a person to take charge of that establishment; his inquiries led to the engagement which led the

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63 Rogers, op. cit., p. 69.
editor to India’. His inquiries would have been through such a connection as Almon.

Duane’s timely departure from London after the libel against Pitt may also be linked to a possible editorship of the General Advertiser at a time when Almon himself was living outside London and had delegated the editorship to someone less weary from age and the pressures of the daily press. Duane had to cut his teeth as an editor somewhere before venturing to India as potential editor for Young. Duane was later approached in India by the proprietors of the newspaper the Bengal Journal who had an offer of employment for Duane. This was done based on some knowledge of Duane’s prior experience. Being known as a junior editor of a newspaper connected to John Almon would certainly have made him more employable than if he had been solely a journeyman printer and Grub Street writer. From Young’s political persuasion a case can also be made that Young chose Duane because he was also a Real or Radical Whig who would support and aid Young’s campaign for ‘English liberties’ in Calcutta. A possible continuity is then revealed between Duane’s employment with Edward Collins, the circles he moved within in London, particularly in connection with John Almon, and his newest employer - Philip Young of Calcutta.

India had already deeply influenced British political life. As the government became more involved in the running of the East India Company and its territory in Bengal, Britain’s internal politics in turn shaped the relations between

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64 *Aurora* (1834-5), p. 43.
65 John Almon was also friends with Thomas Pownall, a civil servant, colonial administrator and writer who during the ‘stormy period of George III’s reign…published in successively enlarged versions The Administration of the Colonies, 1764-1794, and works on economics, the East India Company and antiquity.’ He was Benjamin Franklin’s friend as well as Almon’s. Robbins, op. cit., pp. 311-2.
individual EIC directors, the Court of Directors and the Court of Proprietors.\textsuperscript{66} When considering the EIC as an institution it becomes clear that it both existed as a colonial governing body in Bengal and as an institution enmeshed in eighteenth-century British politics.\textsuperscript{67} East India House on Leadenhall Street was the heart of a world-wide organisation and the EIC Directors held both political and financial powers which reached from India into the centre of British politics itself. As a centre of influence Leadenhall Street came second only to the Court and Westminster. The EIC and the Bank of England represented the twin institutional pillars of the city of London.\textsuperscript{68} Over a century the trading corporation declined from being a virile commercial body straddling the world to a nepotistic and enervated group of merchant-politicians with semi-sovereign rights in India and ‘a national monarchy at home aimed at its own citizens’. Although there had been a series of reforms directed at the EIC, the organisation still sat squarely at the centre of a huge system of patronage, nepotism and corruption, one which would not come to an end until the repercussions of the 1857 mutiny finally ended EIC power and rule.

\textsuperscript{66} This was to be paralleled in literature in ‘what Judging New Wealth describes as “a fashion for India [which] contributed much to the intense, bubble-like interest in fiction of the five years 1785-1790.” The frequent inclusion of India in novels was done so as to give them a certain contemporary currency. Numerous plays, such as Samuel Foote’s The Nabob concerned themselves with India, as did dozens of novels which during the 1780s carry dramatic Indian episodes.’ Nigel Little, ‘Hartly House, Calcutta: Phebe Gibbs and an Imperial Fiction’, Honours thesis (Australian National University, 1997) p. 14.

\textsuperscript{67} One is reminded of the career of Lauchlin Maclean, ‘one of the most remarkable adventurers of the time...at one time a surgeon in the irregular troops in America and later in London working in collaboration with John Wilkes’ and ‘his long and discreditable connexion with the affairs of the Company’. Lucy S. Sutherland, The East India Company in Eighteenth-Century Politics (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1952), p. 143.

\textsuperscript{68} East India House became in the course of the eighteenth century ‘the headquarters of an organisation with world-wide trading connections. Its directors exercised political and financial powers that were only second to the Crown itself’. Although this power had been somewhat reduced through reform, for example with the creation of a Board of Control to superintend the proceeding of the Indian House by Pitt’s India Act of 1784, which had meant more intrusion into the affairs of the company from both the ministry and parliament, the EIC remained an important vested interest in British politics. The quote is from Patrick Tuck (ed.), The East India Company, 1600-1858, Vol. IV (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 82. For more information on the organisation of the EIC see Patrick Tuck (ed.), The East India Company, 1600-1858, Vol. VI (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 2.
Sporadically appearing throughout the later half of the eighteenth century, the ‘India Question’, as Edmund Burke termed it, was a complex tussle between political factions centred around parliament, the monarchy, the EIC, Indian rulers and British private traders. After the defeat of the British in the American War of Independence, a great deal of political and pecuniary interest was brought to bear on India. Anxiety over the loss of the Atlantic empire meant that an appraisal of Britain’s ‘India Question’ was considered *sine qua non* in ensuring the American débâcle was not repeated elsewhere in the now fractured empire. Edmund Burke’s criticism of the EIC was not because he was a philanthropist impeaching Warren Hastings so as to save India from colonialism, but because he was a Whig politician who had already been heavily involved in the political struggles surrounding the EIC and its relations with the crown. For the Radical Whigs ‘the growth of the national debt and the shock of the American revolution seemed to confirm suspicions that the power of the Crown had steadily increased’. 69 This led them to the conclusion that the fine balance between Crown and Parliament had been overturned. In their view this crisis of monarchical corruption meant they had to try and strike at the power of the Crown by reducing its access to funds. This was to be done ‘by cutting the public debt or by restraining the activities of the EIC – and by reducing the size of the standing army by limiting the necessity of a recourse to war’. 70

During Duane’s period in London the Foxite coalition was ousted from government because of the failure of their India Bill. This change of ministry installed William Pitt the Younger, who would be first minister of Britain for

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70 Ibid, p. 11. ‘For Wilkes et al. the Crown had been, as it had been for all commonwealthmen; the epicentre of corruption.’ Ibid, p. 16.
almost twenty years. It was to be a time where Fox watched from the opposition benches while revolution in France changed the nature of British oppositional politics and fractured the Whigs as a political force. Because of its importance to British politics in the 1780s, interest in India was also strong within Duane’s milieu, as it covered the development of government policy on India while the Warren Hastings affair began to take place. Furthermore, a pecuniary interest cannot be separated from a political one – Burke himself had shares in the EIC as did his own bookseller Robert Dodsley. John Osley’s satire on a grub-street hack who is turned mad through writing apologetics on behalf of and paid by the interest of Warren Hastings gives us a good glimpse of why an interest in India itself was seen as important – it often paid.

The EIC was very much a London concern. The metropolitan newspapers were avid watchers of Leadenhall events and in the case of the General Advertiser covered these in detail as well as carrying advertising for the EIC. This pecuniary interest in the ‘India Question’ was consolidated in the writings of a particular set of authors, poets, parliamentary reporters, caricaturists and journalists. There were numerous novels, poems, caricatures and political tracts written with Indian themes during the 1780s and 1790s. The Hastings affair also ensured grub-street hacks and satirists an abundance of material as well as patronage by both sides of

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71 Two decades earlier, in 1766, EIC politics had even given rise to two newspapers: ‘Not only was the press deluged with pamphlets and articles, statements and letters, but at the beginning of September [one EIC faction] even went so far as to begin to issue twice a week a propagandist newspaper, called the East India Examiner, a revolutionary step which forced the directors the following month to begin publishing a rival periodical known as the East Indian Observer’. Sutherland, op. cit., pp. 144-5.

72 Erdman, op. cit., p. 65. ‘A Contemporary writer maliciously described the General Court as a “popular senate; no distinction as to citizenship – the Englishman, the Frenchman, the American; no difference as to religion – the Jew, the Turk, the Pagan; no impediment as to sex – the old women of both sexes”.’ The quote also shows the breadth of interest in the EIC in London. Patrick Tuck (ed.), The East India Company, 1600-1858, Vol. VI (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 2.
the conflict. Pasquin’s defence of Hastings is but one example of this writing. The group Duane would have been familiar with and was allied to (apart from also being an acquaintance of Pasquin’s) was very much involved in this dispute but on the opposite bench to Pasquin’s masters. The Foxite Whigs throughout the 1780s found themselves allied with the Prince of Wales against his father who supported the interests of Leadenhall and who helped Hastings escape charges during the impeachment. One of these writers – Mary Robinson – author of a 1782 poem on India, was involved in a liaison with the Prince, perhaps granting us a physical example of the connection between the Prince’s Party, the Foxite Whigs and the ‘India Question’. Eliza Ryves’ 1785 satire on Warren Hastings again highlights this link between the Prince and anti-EIC politics. In the 1780s Ryves used her skills as a satirical poet in support of the Foxite Whigs. As Burke and Fox laid the groundwork for their campaign against Warren Hastings, Ryves wrote a satirical attack on Mr and Mrs Hastings where their dubious links to the crown were attacked as well as the Hastings’ own quasi-regal status.

While the Foxite Whigs kept up their mounting attacks within the House of Commons on Hastings and EIC ‘Old Corruption’, outside, the extra-parliamentary supporters of the Foxite Whigs, whom Duane was rubbing shoulders with, sought to undermine public support for Hastings. Ryves and Robinson were part of a clique of people centred on the Foxite Whigs and the Prince’s Party who were

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actively writing on the ‘India Question’ during Duane’s own time as a journalist in London. His London contact with Philip Young gives a tantalising hint of Duane’s political involvement in the world of 1780s London, as does his own son’s anecdote. What is clear is that Duane would have written on the ‘India Question’ in 1780s London, because as a journalist and parliamentary reporter he could not have escaped the topic, even if he had wanted to. It was such a part of London politics during the 1780s, both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary, particularly in the newspapers covering the growing pressure exerted on Warren Hastings and the EIC in the House of Commons.  

Late in 1786 William Duane’s journalistic involvement with India became personal. Through Young, Duane had secured employment and before he left his family returned to Clonmel without him. Duane now had to secure a passage to India. Following a steady stream of journeyman printers who entered the service of the EIC army Duane enlisted as a private on board the ship The Rodney bound for Calcutta. Unlike the other recruits who were mostly young, raw and classed in the embarkation records as labourers, Duane was using the EIC army as passage into the wider world of eighteenth-century Calcutta newspapers. It was to be the place where Duane honed his skills as a newspaper editor and owner against the backdrop of a colonial government with grave apprehensions over the purpose and extent of press freedoms in India. In the course of his voyage Duane would become familiar with an army made up of what Lord Cornwallis considered to be

75 Joseph O. Baylen and Norbert J. Gossman argue that ‘...[t]he India issue, far too complex to gain much attention in the commons, or from the public at large, was not fertile ground for the Radicals’. This may be true for late 1790s and early nineteenth-century politics, but in the 1780s, up to and including the impeachment of Warren Hastings, the situation was different. The 1784 India Act and the beginning of the impeachment in 1788 ensured that radical journalists could not ignore the ‘India Question’. The quote from Baylen and Gossman is found under the entry for ‘Pheydell-Boverie, William’ in Joseph O. Baylen and Norbert J. Gossman (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of Modern British Radicals, Vol. 1 (1770-1830)* (New York : Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1979).
the scum of Britain and Europe. For Duane, the EIC army was to become a set of men whose cause he championed and who came close to his ideal of a citizen militia in India; an ideal with its roots in revolutionary America and the Ireland of his *Hibernian Advertiser* youth.
CHAPTER 3

“The Great Gulf of all Undone Beings”

‘…gentlemen deficient in their rents [a]lways on India turn a longing eye…’
Tom Raw, the griffin.

The Rodney and the EIC Recruits

The Indiaman the Rodney was moored at Gravesend and had been since Tuesday, 21 December 1786. As the wind swung from the east to the south-east and the sky clouded over, somewhere in London William Duane prepared for his voyage to India.¹ Before he himself was inspected for illness by an EIC army surgeon, the ship was boarded by an EIC surveyor and officers and was itself inspected. During December the ship was prepared for the voyage, with private trade brought in and 1010 bars of Company iron and copper.² On Thursday, 24 December the Indiamen’s human cargo began to arrive, the first 38 recruits of the EIC army clambering aboard. Two days later another 45 recruits made their way up the gangway and on board ship.³ The recruiting agents, crimps, had less luck during the next few days and the following batch of men, some better described as boys, arrived six days later. The agents were hampered by a 1781 Act of Parliament which enforced a quota system whereby, in peacetime, only 1000

¹ BL/IOR/L/MAR/B/442E, 21 December 1786.
² The metals were part of private and commodity exports to India. See H.V. Bowen, ‘Sinews of trade and empire: the supply of commodity exports to the East India Company during the late eighteenth century’, The Economic History Review, Vol. LV, No. 3 (August 2000): pp. 466-486.
³ BL/IOR/L/MAR/B/442E, 24 and 26 December 1786.
recruits could be held in England awaiting embarkation. Of these thousand the Crown troops took priority and the EIC were left to haggle for the Crown rejects, deserters, or those with a strong enough reason to board a ship bound for a place with a reputation for a youthful death from disease. The recruiting agents ‘did their work immediately before the departure of the Indiamen for the East. The men thus hastily recruited tumbled aboard and carried out like human ballast, often landed in India more dead than alive’. Although the recruits on board the Rodney would have been inspected by a Company officer and surgeon followed by a Crown officer, men such as Lord Cornwallis sent back heavy and frequent complaints over the stature and character of the recruits. One English caricature of 1791, at the time of a botched EIC campaign in Mysore, portrays them as a mongrel mix of European rejects: wayward Irish and highlanders, too fat or short, ugly or emaciated, mixed in with barbaric-looking foreigners from the continent. For the real recruits on board during the cold Christmas, failure to find their sea legs would send some of them back to shore and the army doctor. The next two batches of recruits arrived on 30 December 1786 and 3 January 1787. It was either with this last batch of 24 or as a straggler (as his is the last name on the embarkation records) that Duane left for India.

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4 See the Main List of BL/IOR/L/MIL/1-17, p. 129 which is taken from I.A. Baxter, ‘Recruitment for the Company’s European Corps, 1781-1812’, IOLR & OMPB Newsletter, No. 30, p. 7. The actual statute is 21 Geo III c65 s32.
5 Ibid.
6 Raymond Callahan, The East India Company and Army Reform 1783-1798 (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1972), pp. 5-6.
7 ‘But what shall I say of the Company’s Europeans? I did not think Britain could have furnished such a set of wretched objects. For God’s sake lose no time in taking up this business in the most serious manner.’ Cornwallis to the Court of Directors, 16 Nov. 1787, BL/IOR/H/85, f. 845. IOR/L/MAR/B/442E for dates of inspections. For an account of Irish soldiers in India see: Tom Bartlett, ‘The Irish Soldier in India: 1750-1947’, in Michael Holmes and Denis Holmes (eds.), Ireland and India: Connection, Comparisons, Contrasts (Dublin: Folens, 1997).
8 Catalogue of political and personal satires preserved in the Department of Prints and Drawings in the British Museum (Cambridge : Chadwyck-Healey, 1978), 11 microfilm reels (35 mm), Caricature 8090.
The *Rodney* weighed anchor on 30 January 1787, and passed the buoy on Margate Sand at 10 a.m.\(^9\) Slowly slipping by were the landmarks of Duane’s roughly seven years in England. That same morning the agent for the EIC had come on board and mustered the ship’s company and recruits. It was not until 1 February that the *Rodney* joined the *Hawke*, *Henry Dundas* and Admiral *Barrington* in a flotilla of ships headed for India. For the next five months the *Rodney* would be Duane’s floating home. The British had well-run and organized shipping routes between India and the home country and had been sailing around the cape for over a hundred years. Duane was to arrive in the wake of Warren Hastings’ long governorship and the beginning of Lord Cornwallis’. Both men’s careers give some idea of the state of the empire in this year. Gone was the large transatlantic nexus between the eastern colonies of America, Britain and Ireland. Instead, with the defeat of Cornwallis, a new country was about to turn its back on Europe, and to start a slow imperial march over the North American continent. Cornwallis, instead, was sent to govern India.

Given the deaths, sporadic outbreaks of sickness, mutinous behaviour and violence on board an Indiaman, it is no surprise that joining the ranks of the EIC army as a recruit, and not even as a cadet officer, was a last resort for a man of some education such as Duane. John Horne Tooke’s illegitimate son ‘Mr Montague’, for example, ‘attended Cambridge, but an indiscretion forced him to flee England for service in the East India Company, only returning when again he was dismissed for misconduct. He then re-enlisted as a private’.\(^10\) Either Duane had hit ultimate rock-bottom or there was another reason for his joining the EIC army as a private recruit. By his conspicuousness and his prospective job offer it

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\(^9\) BL/IOR/L/MAR/B/442E, 30 January 1787.

is more plausible that Duane was not intending to join the EIC army at all, but as others had done, was using this employment as free passage to India. If so, he intended to discharge himself on arrival, and his subsequent discharge by order of the Governor-General strengthens this possibility. Nevertheless, the voyage was made in the pay and through the means of the EIC army, and Duane witnessed first-hand the behaviour and unruliness for which the army was notorious. Yet Duane made some connection with this band of mercenaries, drawn by circumstances into the army of the most peculiar anomaly existing within the British imperium: the army of an EIC ruling semi-autonomously over a large area of India. It was an army working in tandem with, yet still proudly separate from, the Crown army in India.

Another printer, John Huddleston Wynne, soon ‘after completing his term, not choosing to follow the business of a printer,…obtained a lieutenancy in the East-India Service’. 11 With more financial backing and the clearer purpose of a military career, Duane would have followed this option. That he did not suggests other Indian goals. Duane’s social standing and work as a journalist and parliamentary reporter point towards the officer cadet class as the group with which he shared more than he did with rank and file of the EIC army. The ranks of the EIC officer class were out of the reach of the labouring poor, although the hulls of the Indiamen were more than welcoming. Instead, the officer class was filled with Duane’s contemporaries, which helps explain their attractiveness to him – they were, like he was, aspiring middle-class off-shoots struggling to make it on their own. It would be with the officer class (perhaps even the officers on the Rodney) that Duane would bond. They would have recognized Duane’s

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11 William West, Fifty Years’ Recollections of an Old Bookseller (1835), p. 73.
distinctiveness from the younger and less-educated recruits with whom he travelled. Duane formed a bond with this group which lasted beyond his time in Calcutta.

During the voyage the recruits were made to train and work; the recruits, for example, were employed picking oakum and fraying and re-winding the ship’s ropes. Alongside this they trained with small arms. Apart from a strong gale which carried away two of the front masts, the Rodney passed on into the Indian Ocean towards the safety of harbour.\textsuperscript{12} On 23 June 1787 India was first sighted. The next day the crew glimpsed the Manakatpatnam Pagoda and two days later the Rodney was met by a pilot vessel.\textsuperscript{13} Duane first saw the ships in Calcutta’s Diamond Harbour on 28 June and the next day the Rodney gave a nine gun salute to the moored ships before the Captain and passengers went into Calcutta. With fresh winds from the south and cloudy weather Duane disembarked from the Rodney on 3 July, when the captain ‘Deliver’d all the Hon’ble Comp’ys Recruits with their baggage’.\textsuperscript{14} This was the first of many days Duane was to spend in Calcutta under the rule of the East India Company and the British Crown.

\textbf{Calcutta, 1787}

Calcutta, 1787. A settlement of 170,000 people, started in the seventeenth century by the Englishman Job Charnock and continued into the eighteenth through trade

\begin{footnotes}
\item[12] BL/IOR/L/MAR/B/442E, 23, 24, and 26 June 1787.
\item[13] Ibid, 28 and 29 June 1787.
\item[14] Ibid, 3 July 1787.
\end{footnotes}
and the greed of a peculiar set of Colonialists and Indians on the make, governed now through a governor-generalship combined with the oligarchy overlooking affairs in London. The Governor-General and his council were appointed by the Board of Directors, who were themselves elected by the stockholders of the East India Company. But the Board of Control, established by William Pitt’s 1784 India Act and consisting of Privy Councillors, could remove the Governor-General and held a veto over directions sent by the Board of Directors to India. Ten months prior to Duane’s arrival, on 1 September 1786, Lord Cornwallis had arrived in the eastern city to replace John Macpherson as Governor-General. The offices of both Governor-General and Commander-in-Chief had been brought together into the one office for the benefit of Cornwallis. Because of this amalgamation Cornwallis held more power in real terms than Warren Hastings possessed at the height of his now questioned period of office.\footnote{Rosie Llewellyn Jones, \textit{A Very Ingenious Man: Claude Martin In Early Colonial India} (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 150. The ‘impeachment of Warren Hastings for misrule in India is still remembered as one of the great political trials in British history, its importance is perhaps not now sufficiently recognised…[P]erhaps because of Burke’s involvement in the affair – it seems never to have appealed to the radical and anti-colonialist public…Yet it was a quite remarkable exercise: a major attempt to institute a public inquiry into the conduct of British officials in a colonial administration, undertaken on clearly stated principles of racial equality and international justice’. Geoffrey Carnall and Colin Nicholson (eds.), \textit{The Impeachment of Warren Hastings: papers from a bicentenary commemoration} (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1989), p. 1. For a more positive view of Hastings see: Neil Sen, ‘Warren Hastings and British Sovereign Authority in Bengal, 1774-80’, \textit{Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History}, Vol. 25 (1997), pp. 59-81. In attempting to provide a more balanced account of Hastings’ career than those which focus exclusively on the impeachment, Sen states: ‘Studies of the first Governor-General of British Bengal have usually concentrated on the specific charges made at his impeachment in the House of Lords and have consequently seldom sought to establish a more general understanding of Warren Hastings’ ideas of empire and approach to administration’. Sen, op. cit., p. 59.} Although Burke tried to bring Hastings to book for his supposedly despotic and corrupt rule, the veteran of the American conflict ironically saw his actual control over the running of the Indian empire increase while the impeachment of Warren Hastings was occurring. The warrior administrator Cornwallis was to step from his honourable defeat in America during the recent revolution, to lead his Company
army into battle and defeat Tipu Sultan in the first Anglo-Mysore war which ended in 1792.

Calcutta was the second largest city of the British Empire. The city itself was divided into the Indian area called Black Town and the European settlement, White Town, the latter housing the administration and trading interests of the British. In between the two was an area called Brown Town where the non-European and non-Indian population of Armenians, Jews and Iranians lived. Calcutta was home to a disparate population of Bengalis, Indians from other regions, Armenians, Portuguese, French, Jews and British. It was a tower of babel, a living city which hummed with a variety of languages that included Bengali, Hindustani, Persian, Arabic and English. In print, it was common to see addresses in English, Persian and Bengali alongside one another. But the residing lingua franca for the city was not Bengali, English or Persian – it was trade.

Alongside the EIC proper were a set of private traders jostling for their place in the sun. They pushed for ‘English liberties’, including a reduction in the EIC monopoly. William Young is one example of a private trader with both interest and power in the community. He was not alone, as George Dallas ‘was the member of the committee appointed by the British inhabitants residing in Bengal, for the purpose of preparing petitions to His Majesty and both Houses of Parliament’. The theatre was the venue chosen for the meeting held on 25 July 1785. An advertisement of this meeting was placed in the General Advertiser on 11 January 1786 and included Philip Young as a participant. The group argued that ‘as Britons we are entitled to the protection and support of the ancient and established laws of England, in common with the other subjects of the realm’.

16 George Dallas, Speech of George Dallas Esq. Member of the committee appointed by the British inhabitants residing in Bengal (1786).
17 General Advertiser, 11 January 1786.
For its part, the government (as the Governor-General and his council will be called from this point on) sought to control the European population with a system of residency permits. ¹⁸ These were combined with the regular deportation of persons whom they took to be disturbers of the peace, sometimes criminals, sometimes newspaper editors. Europeans not in the service of the EIC were unable to journey to India before 1833 without a licence or any security from deportation. ¹⁹ Other restrictions placed on Europeans residing in India without approval are evinced in Act XXXVIII of the Bengal Regulations and Acts which provided that: ‘Europeans now possessing or who may hereafter purchase or occupy land without the sanction of the Governor General in Council, [are] liable to be dispossessed at his discretion’. ²⁰ Although the law concerned Europeans holding land outside Calcutta, it is an example of the reservations the government held towards unregulated, or unmediated, contact between Europeans and Indians and the possibility of unfettered Europeans being a destabilising interest and working contrary to the rule of the EIC. As Bayly has noted: ‘The American War and [later] the French Revolution forced the Company to take yet closer account of the dealings of Europeans in Indian courts’. ²¹ Much of the evidence gathered by Edmund Burke for the Warren Hastings’ impeachment came from the faction-riddled world of British politics in Calcutta and from private traders disgruntled with the EIC monopoly. Because of the intense competition for patronage that was part of the EIC in both London and Calcutta, there was also a degree of politicking which often outshone the petty matters being contested. A means of

²⁰ BL/IOR/Bengal Regulations and Acts (1793-1795), Act XXXVIII.
²¹ Bayly, op. cit., p. 54.
controlling these and the flow of information going back to England was to select those whom one allowed into the country, or at least, to make it less difficult to rid the settlement of troublemakers.

Although the elite was a result of the British patronage system, the company’s actual servants were socially heterogeneous. Alongside the unwanted off-spring of noble and aristocratic families, a sprinkling at best, were a large number of middle-class men from the sons of city and provincial merchants, government clerks, shop keepers and small lawyers to the children of the smaller landed gentry.  

But outside the employment of the EIC were the private Europeans who stood in an ambiguous position between the more lower-class occupations of tradesmen and soldier and the public servants and army officers of the establishment. Although a man such as William Hickey could use his standing as an attorney and his British connections to establish himself as a gentleman, Duane had a more difficult time in his Indian period persuading others that he was a gentleman. At one point he commented: ‘By what standing is gentility to be determined in India, exclusive of rank?’

When he insulted someone in his newspaper he was not challenged to a duel; instead he was struck at through the means of the government or was beaten. Although Duane thought he held the status of a gentleman, the longer he stayed in India the more he was slotted into the ambiguous third category which covered the ground between the lower-class Europeans and their social betters – the term used was the disparaging ‘European Adventurer’. Governor-General Wellesley, commenting in 1799, noted that:

The number of persons (not in the Company’s service) resident in these provinces, as well as in all parts of the British possessions in India, increases daily. Among these are to be found many characters,

23 The World, 30 June 1792.
Duane was able at times to blend into the more middle-class world of Calcutta, but could not fully shed his ambiguous position derived from his Irish Catholic past, the non-gentlemanly occupation of editor and printer, and the status of adventurer. He visited the sites where the elite displayed themselves and ruled: Government House, the Governor’s Ball, and the Calcutta Club among other institutions, but was a marginal figure. By the end of his time in India he was easily picked off from this artificial world, and like other adventurer newspapermen had been (and would be), was given an unwanted passage back to Britain.

The India Duane arrived in was anything but the formed geo-political space which the word conjures up for the modern reader. The Mughal empire had collapsed, leaving a remaining rump around Oudh, which had been brought, in all but name, within the British sphere of influence and control. British control emanated out of the East India Company state which occupied Calcutta and the Bengal hinterland, and stretched on into Northern India. To the south of Bengal was the British territory around Madras and to the West, on the other side of the sub-continent, was the British settlement of Bombay. These areas made up the three presidencies. The period of Duane’s residence in India was also to see ‘the

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company’s subcontinent-wide intelligence network’ begin to take shape.\textsuperscript{25} This colonial presence and intelligence network was backed up by one of the largest standing armies in the world, the EIC army.\textsuperscript{26} In the west, the Marathas had rebelled against Mughal rule and from their base launched raids into the other regions. In the south the French still controlled the area around Pondicherry, even after having been driven from most of their other Indian possessions. From their more important possessions in the Indian Ocean – Isle de France and Isle de Bourbon – they were able to influence the emergent Tipu Sultan in Mysore as he struggled against Britain in the 1790s. The 1780s had seen the rise of Tipu Sultan as a challenger to British hegemony in India, which led to the first Anglo-Mysore war. Six years later the young Wellington would be involved in the second Mysore war which earned him the Napoleonic nickname of ‘the sepoy general’, but it proved useful in teaching him the art of guerrilla campaigning, subsequently a factor in the Peninsular War.

Intelectually, Duane was entering a world inhabited by men such as Sir William Jones, who combined both the inheritance of the Enlightenment and the newly discovered intellectual riches of Muslim and Hindu India. Alongside British calls for reform were a group of Muslim historians and administrators who were part of a tradition which stretched back to the Afghan historian Abbas Khan Sarwani and included Mahomed Reza Khan, who had served under Warren

\textsuperscript{25} Bayly, op. cit., p. 89
\textsuperscript{26} Callahan, op. cit., p. 6.
Hastings. These men ‘preserved the ideal of political guardianship enshrined in the ‘Akbarnamah’ of Abdul Fazl’. Ali Ibrahim Khan, for example, is the unacknowledged founder of what C.A. Bayley has termed a ‘consciously modern Indian history’. Another historian-administrator, Ghulam Hussain Tabatabais, complained in his History of the Moderns (1780) ‘of the drain of wealth from India, British monopoly of public office and the impoverishment of weavers and the old nobility; he could, indeed be considered a “proto-nationalist”’. Other Muslim intellectuals denounced British rule from Hastings onwards for its violence and peculation.

With the land now held through military strength and against the threat of Tipu Sultan in the south, people residing in Calcutta and the Bengali hinterland were very much aware of the military presence that the men on the Rodney were adding to. Although there were the three British presidencies in India, with headquarters at Bombay, Madras and Calcutta, it was the Bengal Presidency which held the key to British dominance on the subcontinent. As one historian has noted: ‘The Bengal presidency was the financial and military dynamo behind the rise of British power in India’. The officers of the EIC made up an

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27 Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, The Mughal State (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 96. Some of the complexity of Muslim intellectual life can be seen from D.H.A. Kolff’s comments on Abbas Khan: ‘Chronology may have faded from their minds but the stories of how their chief [Sher Shah] acquired his gold and silver during a period when he was only reluctantly taken notice of by his fellow-Afghans, had made a lasting impression on them. To Abbas – and this is saying something about his quality as a historian – these frequent references were no bizarre tales of oriental riches. On the contrary, he emphasises the theme to tell us something essential about the polity Sher was building at the time, the so-called second Afghan empire that differed so much from the first, Lodi, Sultanate’. D.H.A. Kolff, ‘A Warlord’s Fresh Attempt at Empire’, in Alam, The Mughal State, pp. 95-6. See Abbas Khan Sarwani, Tarikh-i-Ser Sahi, trans. Brahmadeva Prasad Ambashthya (Patna: K.P. Tayaswal Research Institute, 1974).
28 Bayly, op. cit., p. 80.
29 ibid, p. 88. See also Sir H.M. Elliot and J. Dowson (eds.), The History of India as told by its own Historians, 8 Vols. (London 1867-77).
30 Bayly, op. cit., p. 88.
31 Callahan, op. cit., p. 3
important interest in the area and indeed were to threaten the stability of British rule at particular points until their eventual disbandment and absorption into the Crown Army after the end of the Indian Mutiny/Rebellion of 1857.\textsuperscript{32} Along with the King’s Army regiments, the EIC army was the military bulwark of British rule in India, upon which all future philanthropy, or liberal imperialism, was built. Without the gun there could be no nineteenth-century ‘civilising mission’.

The EIC army was split into European regiments, the rank and file members who had formed the recruits on the \textit{Rodney}, and sepoy regiments made up of Indians officered by Europeans (and in some cases men with Indian mothers such as Colonel James Skinner).\textsuperscript{33} The region around Calcutta, the Bengali hinterland, was well placed to draw from the well of military bazaars of northern India where military adventurers from as far away as Afghanistan, Persia and Central Asia offered their services – death and pillage – to the highest bidder. Owing to the successes the EIC army had in India, compared with the decline of the Mughal empire and the weak successor states to the Mughals, and to the regularity of pay, many of these men were drawn into the service of the EIC’s sepoy regiments.\textsuperscript{34} Duane was deported for pressing too readily onto the then Achilles’ heel of the British empire - an EIC army in need of disbanding and incorporation into the King’s army, but thoroughly resisting it. The government’s fear was that mutiny among the European rank and file and the European officers of the sepoy regiments would spread to the sepoys themselves. The relationship between Duane and the EIC officers tapped into this fear.

\textsuperscript{32} For an account of the conduct of the EIC officers before and after 1857 see: Peter Stanley, \textit{White Mutiny} (London: Hurst, 1998).
\textsuperscript{34} Callahan, op. cit., p. 3.
British and Irish Radicalism and the Indian armies: A Forgotten Seedbed?

William Duane was not the first or the last radical to venture to India or serve in an Indian army. One group of well-known United Irishmen had an Indian connection through past service or relatives who had served in India. Thomas Russell (1767-1803) helped Wolfe Tone organize the United Irish uprising in 1798 and in 1803 was appointed General-in-Chief of the Northern Forces (which failed to materialise) during Emmet’s Rebellion. Because of poverty Russell was unable to go to university and instead went with his brother, Captain Ambrose Russell of the 52nd Regiment, to India at the age of 15. After five years of service and a commendation for bravery from Sir John Burgoyne, he returned home. He was recognized as a capable officer by Colonel Knox and, ironically given his future career as a United Irish rebel, by Lord Cornwallis. One of Wolfe Tone’s brothers, William Tone, ‘at the age of sixteen…ran off to London and entered, as a volunteer, in the EIC’s service; but his first essay was very unlucky; for, instead of finding his way to India, he was stopped at the Island of St Helena, on which barren rock he remained in garrison for six years’. Upon his brother’s return to

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35 As R.B. McDowell has noted, ‘despite the number of Irishmen conspicuous in India during the eighteenth century, there were relatively few in the company’s civil service…The proportion of Irishmen in the military service of the company was much higher. Possibly about 15 per cent of the officers in the company’s army were Irish, and the Irish proportion of the rank and file enlisted in the company’s European regiments rose from over 10 per cent in the middle of the century to almost 50 per cent at the beginning of the nineteenth century’. R.B. McDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution 1760-1801* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979), p. 139.

36 Ambrose Russell died at Madras of natural causes on 3 July 1793. 6 May 1794, *Freeman’s Journal*.

37 See the alphabetical entry in Baylen and Gossman (eds.), *op. cit*.

England, Wolfe Tone became interested in going into the service of the EIC himself and went to watch the Indiamen moored at Deptford with his brother.

Wolfe Tone was surprised to find his brother had a deep knowledge of literature after spending time in the service of the EIC. William Duane’s own comments verify the type, autodidact EIC soldiers and officers. William Tone had met and mixed with them and had eventually become one of their brethren. Duane tells us of the men in Bengal, that there ‘is not perhaps in the world an equal number of men in any correlative body, so well informed as the officers of the East India Company establishment in Bengal, in every branch of science, in every department of letters’. 39 Tone himself came very close to being a young volunteer in the service of the East India Company. One can imagine him becoming, in time, a disgruntled, but perhaps like the examples Duane gives, enlightened, officer fighting within the confines of EIC politics in Calcutta instead of leading the 1798 Rebellion at home in Ireland. In a passage that, barring the outcome, could even serve in place of Duane’s own missing testimonial, Tone tells us that:

I determined to enlist as a soldier in the India Company’s service; to quit Europe forever, and to leave my wife and child to the mercy of her family, who might, I hoped, be kinder to her when I was removed. My brother combated this desperate resolution by every argument in his power; but, at length, when he saw me determined, he declared I should not go alone and that he would share my fate to the last extremity. In this gloomy state of mind, deserted, as we thought, by gods and men, we set out together for the India house, in Leadenhall Street, to offer ourselves as volunteers; but, on our arrival there, we were informed that the season was passed, that no more ships would be sent out that year; but that, if we returned about the month of March following, we might be received. The clerk to whom we addressed ourselves seemed not a little surprised at two young fellows of our appearance presenting ourselves on such a business, for we were extremely well dressed, and Will, who was the spokesman for us both, had an excellent address. Thus we were stopped, and I

believe we were the single instance, since the beginning of the world, of two men, absolutely bent on ruining themselves who could not find the means. We returned to my chambers, and, desperate as were our fortunes, we could not help laughing at the circumstance, that India, the great gulf of all undone beings, should be shut against us alone. Had it been the month of March instead of September, we should most infallibly have gone off; and, in that case, I should most probably at this hour be carrying a brown musket on the coast of Coromandel. Providence, however, decreed it otherwise, and reserved me, as I hope, for better things.\footnote{Bartlett, \textit{Life}, p. 26.}

One can picture Duane’s own predicament: a young wife and children, an uncle now dead (the source of an important interest for him in London), an unknown future and the call of ‘the great gulf of all undone beings’. Perhaps the difference between Duane and Tone is only in the timing.

William Tone slipped into the gulf his brother stepped away from and saw further service in the EIC army, this time in India at Madras and Calcutta. He is recorded as having put down a mutiny among the sepoys in Calcutta before becoming a mercenary in the service of the Mahrattas, rising ‘to command in second a free corps, composed of Europeans, and adventurers of all nations, raised for the Mahratta service by Colonel (now General) Boyd, of Boston, a most enterprising American officer’.\footnote{Ibid, p. 12, p. 889.} After taking over Boyd’s command of this mercenary band of soldiers William Tone was killed in the storming of a small fort, his nephew knowing of the engagement as occurring in ‘one of the Indian wars’.\footnote{Ibid, p. 12, p. 889.} Although this brother’s fate is known, Tone’s other brother, Arthur, rose to a lieutenancy in the Dutch navy before he ‘sailed soon after for the East Indies, and since that period has never been heard of’.\footnote{Ibid, p. 12, p. 889.} Either fate could easily have been Wolfe Tone’s. One final United Irish connection is found in Captain

\footnote{Ibid, p. 12, p. 889.}
William Bailey, a shadowy figure who was an EIC officer and then became involved in the insurrectionary plans of the United Irish during May 1798. He ventured to Dublin as part of a January 1798 delegation of United Britons, sent from London and carrying a LCS address to the United Irish. Like Duane, (who left London in 1796) Bailey migrated to the United States, following the failure of the rebellion.\textsuperscript{44}

Both the EIC and Crown armies in India contain traces of radicals, other than the United Irishmen, in their enlistment records. John Oswald, who was eventually shot in the Vendeé fighting for the cause of the French revolutionary army, spent time soldiering in India in the King’s army of which he wrote scathing accounts, drawing attention to British mistreatment of Indians during war.\textsuperscript{45} A later soldier, politician and pamphleteer, Thomas Perronet Thompson (1783-1869) served in the 17\textsuperscript{th} Light Dragoons in India. He learnt Arabic and interpreted for Sir William Grant Keirs in his campaign against the Wahabis of the Persian Gulf. He helped negotiate the treaty of 8 January 1820 in which England first declared the slave trade to be piratical.\textsuperscript{46} Besides these men there were numerous other faceless officers whom Duane mentions as having been well-read and who published letters and articles in Anglo-Indian newspapers. Duane tells us that for these men it was a ‘great relief to discharge upon paper the crowd of ideas which disturb the repose which cannot be slept off, & men commit their thoughts to paper as a respite from reflexion’.\textsuperscript{47} As a printer, editor and journalist in Calcutta Duane was to meet these men and provide the paper, the

\textsuperscript{44} Durey, \textit{Transatlantic}, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{45} Erdman, op. cit., p. 30.
\textsuperscript{46} “Through his activities as a soldier, a politician and especially a pamphleteer, Thompson helped to popularize such reforms as Catholic emancipation, the abolition of the slave trade and the repeal of the corn laws. He was one of the ‘philosophical Radicals’ associated with Jeremy Bentham’. See alphabetical entry in Baylen and Gossman (eds.), op. cit.
\textsuperscript{47} \textit{Aurora} (1834-5), p. 379.
newspaper, for them openly to defy the British government. It was to be his downfall.

That there was some Freemason connection to the disturbances in India should come as no surprise to anyone with knowledge of the links between Freemasonry and the radical idealism of the Revolutionary and Romantic period. The presence of such a figure such as Duane in the Calcuttan Freemason ranks points to the phalanx of radicals which often operated within the overall body of eighteenth-century Freemasonry. The links between French Girondinism and Freemasonry are clear as ‘when in London, both [Nicolas de] Bonneville and [Jacques Pierre] Brissot made a point of visiting various masonic lodges, evidently encouraging them to move on from the mesmeric principle of a “Society of Harmony” to that of extending social harmonics’.48 The first Freemason lodge to be founded in India was in Calcutta in 1728. Freemasons then spread through Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, and even reached the small cantonment at Cawnpore. By 1765 Robert Clive had organized lodges in all the Company brigades. More ‘military lodges’ were started in 1772. After the original Calcutta lodge was subdivided into six separate lodges, there emerged a number of lodges for specific professions such as artisans, sailors, merchants and soldiers.49 It is possible that a split occurred and that more radical and pro-revolutionary people combined under the shadow of the lodges and the nascent ‘military independence organization’50 which so concerned the government. Duane attached himself to India’s forgotten seedbed of radicalism: the officers of the EIC army and the shadowy world of eighteenth-century Indian Freemasonry.

49 Jones, op. cit., p. 70.
50 Ibid, p. 70.
Apart from members of the Indian armies, young surgeons with radical politics were drawn to India by the opportunities for work and discovery. As C.A. Bayley has noted: ‘Most of the Europeans’ whom the Indian rulers ‘encountered were surgeons or physicians because the medical services also provided the intellectuals of the Company’s regiments’.

Young surgeons, particularly, seem to have been liberated by their time in India, as it presented to them a vast array of medical techniques and possibly undiscovered medicinal plants. Calomel, a widely used medicine, came from India. Scottish surgeon Joseph Hume spent time working in India and amassed 40,000 pounds while there in the service of the EIC. Sir Paul Joddrell, physician to the Nawab of Arcot, was another of the band of surgeons and physicians who formed an important and under-studied group of intellectuals in the service of the EIC and indigenous rulers. Some of these intellectuals returned to Britain and became involved in radical politics, as Joseph Hume did. It is questionable how ‘radical’ was their radicalism in India. But the impact of Indian-influenced radicals on the British body politic is an area which has been skipped over. This is owing to a propensity within radical historiography to concentrate on flows of radicals within the triangle of the British Isles, America and France. There was a smaller imperial flow between India and Britain of people who left Britain because of want of opportunity, oppression or the desire for adventure. Perhaps it is a small seedbed of radicalism, but it is a forgotten one all the same.

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51 Bayly, op. cit., p. 138.
52 See alphabetical entry in Baylen and Gossman (eds.), op. cit.
53 See alphabetical entry in Baylen and Gossman (eds.), op. cit.
Migration of Pressmen and Printers to India via the EIC Army

Because of the transitory nature of much employment in the printing trade in Britain, journeyman printers made their way to India. The East India Company army embarkation lists from 1774 to 1789 offer us a rare and detailed look at the migration of a set of printers through the service of the East India Company army. Although not all the printers took up employment in the trade once they landed, their inclusion in a study of Duane’s time in Calcutta is important. In migrating they increased the knowledge, latent or otherwise, of printing at the disposal of the official and non-official European communities operating in India. The migration pattern can also help develop an understanding of the depth of retrenchment in the printing trade and the periods when enlistment was heaviest. To take note of the geographical areas from which these men enlisted is also relevant to an understanding of Duane’s situation, as is the recruitment age of the other printers. All of these factors could strengthen or weaken Duane’s own argument over his given reasons for migrating to India and need to be considered to determine whether Duane is unique in moving to India for someone of his age and background.

During the eighteenth century there was a steady flow of itinerant journeyman printers who joined the service of the East India Company army. This is seen both in the biographies of British printers and in the embarkation records of the East India Company army. Duane’s later fears of returning to the turbulent state of a printer’s life in London also attest to the often transitory lives of eighteenth-century printers. One is also reminded of his later comments that Britain’s crackdown on radical politics, when combined with economic downturns, meant the ‘emigration of many thousands of expert and experienced
artists [read here artisans], deprived of employment at home, driven to sedition by desperation, where they could not emigrate; and where emigration was successful transferring the skill of England to all the nations of Europe’.

Almon himself had spent a great deal of time on the continent as a journeyman printer, as had others of a similar background to him. Out of the artisan trades registered in the embarkation records for this period the majority were printers by training. The overall majority were labourers; the next largest group were printers (of the 189 recruits on board the *Rodney*, for example, 158 were labourers). The printers far outstripped the number of cadet soldiers from the other artisan trades. They outnumbered clerks, unemployed lawyers and doctors who made the decision to risk their lives and futures in the step into ‘the great gulf’. Why printers would be the most prevalent trade among the artisan cadets can be both understood by economic change occurring in the late eighteenth century and by the trade being open to wandering souls. An apprentice such as Duane would finish his qualification in a large provincial town such as Clonmel before often venturing to London as a journeyman printer. Having already left his localised existence, manners and habits behind, and faced with unemployment in a large and threatening city, the plying of his trade in continental Europe, or the boarding of an Indiaman, was less daunting for a journeyman printer than for more sedentary artisans. The journeyman printers who joined the EIC army tended to be around Duane’s age as well as being from the non-metropolitan areas of Britain and Ireland. Their migration itself is symptomatic of Irish and Scottish people who moved along lines of employment opened up by the empire.

The small flow of radicals and artisans changed what imperialism was in

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55 BL/IOR/L/MIL/9/91-92. See entry under *Rodney*.
India to a notable degree. Without these radicals and artisans there would not have been a critical and fledgling press to crush, and without them serving in the ranks of the army perhaps the EIC army would have been more quiescent than it was. Its importance also lies in it being a precursor to the liberal imperialism of figures such as William Bentinck. The history of this smaller radical tradition was grafted onto India from the body of its much larger British cousin but does have its own story of defeats and victories, as many lapses of faith and hypocrisy, similar stories of imprisonment and government repression. Perhaps in the shadow of P.J. Marshall’s analysis of the Anglo-Indian communities as failed Creole cultures one can see this radical strand as a failed radicalism as well. But the Anglo-Indian communities had a more symbiotic relationship with Britain than Marshall’s argument allows and this was the case with the radicals and their press as well. What went out from Britain also came back as the flotsam and jetsam of British radicalism. One of these radicals even reached America’s shores and became an important corner-post in Pennsylvanian politics and the 1800 election of Thomas Jefferson.

**Duane the Writer: 1787-1789**

When Duane arrived in India he did not find the promised job with the *India Gazette* waiting for him. Perhaps Young’s interest in the paper had been bought out or the position of editor had been filled; the time lag between India and England for correspondence meant that Duane left before word was sent or received. For whatever reason, upon arrival Duane was without employment. But

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upon being discharged from the service of the East India Company’s army he was soon to find himself working as a writer in the EIC’s Revenue department. Perhaps he gained entry through a letter of recommendation and introduction, from Young himself or another benefactor. Mathew Duane’s aristocratic connections could serve his nephew well in the notoriously nepotistic world of eighteenth-century Calcutta. But unfortunately we only know of Duane’s employment because of his later troubles with the governments of Governor-Generals Cornwallis and Shore.

Lucy S. Sutherland’s comments concerning another Irish adventurer, Laurence Sulivan, serve well in the case of his near compatriot Duane: ‘His early career, like that of many Irish adventurers of the time is hard to trace. Young Irishmen who went forth to seek their fortunes left few traces behind them, unless they were cadets of one of the great Anglo-Irish families. But their loyalty to their kinsmen if they rose to success was so strong as to be notorious even by eighteenth-century standards of family patronage’. Along with his well-connected uncle and his would be employer Young, Duane had a wider ‘family’ in the shape of the Freemasons, whose lodge he attended in Calcutta. It is also possible that there was a shortage of men of education when Duane arrived and that he helped to fill this demand, although the incidence of ‘jobbers’ and ‘adventurers’ flocking to India in search of a quick return on the risk of tropical disease would seem to weaken this argument.

During this period of employment, which overlapped with that of his first Indian newspaper, Duane became acquainted with members of the administration

58 Lucy S. Sutherland, op. cit., p. 59.
such as Edward Hay, secretary to the council. Duane told Hay that he was ‘sorry to have occasion for many indulgences; I shall never be found unworthy of them and trust to a like good nature for my excuse on the present occasion’.  

Duane both worked in the EIC administration, at a junior level, and built up enough contacts to run successful newspapers. In such a small community as the Anglo-Indian one, where such contacts would help him once he began working on the *Bengal Journal*, this period was important. From the gangplank on a cold English January to a heated government office in Calcutta, Duane had stepped into the ‘great gulf of all undone beings’ and had stepped out the other side, remade, as a junior Writer, ready to begin his first Indian newspaper.

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59 BL/IOR/H/537, f. 23.
CHAPTER 4

The Bengal Journal

The Business of the Bengal Journal: Running a Newspaper in Eighteenth-Century Calcutta

On 10 November 1789 Duane entered into an agreement with James Dunkin and Stephen Cassan to edit and manage their newspaper the *Bengal Journal*. These men owned a two-thirds share in the newspaper which included a printing office and apparatus ‘with two large and one small press, various founts of Types with the cases, Chases, Stones, Frames, Boards composing Sticks, Galleys, Rules, Leads and Furniture and every other…property and utensils used and applied to the purposes of Printing’.

1 From Duane’s account, when he ‘entered on the management, the concern was in a ruinous and losing state, and even the office rent, seven months unpaid’.

2 Duane continued in his writership in the Revenue office until some time in 1791 on a salary of 200 rupees per month while taking over the running of the newspaper. The Bengal Journal was a weekly newspaper.

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1 Extract Bengal Foreign Consultations 8th June 1791, BL/IOR/O/5/2, ff. 355-364.
2 *The World*, September 29, 1792. The information on the financial state and arrangements of the *Bengal Journal* that is available as opposed to the lack of any surviving prints from the newspaper means that in the case of the *Bengal Journal* the following comments are reversed: ‘Although those studying eighteenth-century English newspapers are blessed with an abundance of surviving copies, they are equally cursed by the paucity of other extant material concerning the newspaper press. One of the major problems facing historians of the provincial press has been the scarcity of evidence about newspaper production; in particular, a lack of financial accounts has left large gaps in our knowledge of newspaper circulation, profitability, and general business practice’. Barker, op. cit., p. 98.
3 *The World*, 29 September 1792.
4 *Calcutta Gazette*, 20 September 1792.
Duane did well over the next year as the partners offered him a ‘full and clear one third part of their...two third shares’.\(^5\) ‘This two ninths share of the overall newspaper, office and equipment amounted to the sum of 4500 Sicca Rupees.’\(^6\) The partners, on 1 January 1790, signed a contract with Duane which made him into a proprietor entitled to the profit, and subject to the expenses incurred, of the business.\(^7\) Duane had shown himself to be a competent manager and editor, enough for Dunkin and Cassan to say that they had reason to believe that through the active and judicious management of Duane, the newspaper’s ‘profits and income might be considerably increased’.\(^4\) They further added that they relied on and had confidence in Duane’s ability to run the Bengal Journal.\(^7\) In a year and a half they would be baying for his blood, and perhaps more importantly, his wallet.

The contract Duane signed attested to the esteem in which he was held as a printer.\(^10\) The glowing terms and conditions and the positive language used by the partners towards Duane suggest that the Bengal Journal had become a financial success largely owing to Duane’s hard work and ingenuity. Between January and April 1790 Duane increased the subscription list of the Bengal Journal from 130 to 300 names.\(^11\) It was a pattern that would be again seen in Philadelphia when what was considered a defunct newspaper, the *Aurora*, brought to the ground by

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\(^{5}\) Extract Bengal Foreign Consultations 8th June 1791, BL/IOR/O/5/2, ff. 355-364.
\(^{6}\) Ibid, ff. 355-364.
\(^{7}\) Ibid, ff. 355-364.
\(^{8}\) Ibid, ff. 355-364.
\(^{9}\) Ibid, ff. 355-364.
\(^{10}\) ‘In consideration of the skill of the aforesaid Mr. William Duane in the Printing art, it is agreed, that his services and superintendence shall be valued at 300 Rupees per Mensem, and in order to excite his industry and ingenuity by an immediate personal property and interest, to the increasing of the income and value of the business for his own and the mutual benefit of the other Proprietors … Duane shall be allowed to liquidate the amount of his said two month shares, by a deduction of 250 Rupees per Mensem from allowance aforesaid agreed upon as the value or compensation of his services and superintendence, constantly and till the said sum is fully cleared the remaining sum to be paid him monthly that is to say 50 Rupees’. Ibid, ff. 355-364.
\(^{11}\) *The World*, 29 September 1792.
the death of the editor Benjamin Franklin Bache, was resurrected through the skill of Duane.

As part of the agreement Duane was allowed the use of the house in which the newspaper was published and was given full authority to employ and discharge labour for the running of the business.\textsuperscript{12} The dangers for Europeans dwelling in India is succinctly made clear in the death clause relating to the liquidation of Duane’s shares: ‘in case of the decease of the aforesaid Mr. William Duane before the complete liquidation of the value of his two ninth shares aforesaid, his heirs shall be entitled to a fair proportion of the property aforesaid according to the time of his superintendence or the net sum of 300 Rupees per Mensem for that such period’.\textsuperscript{13} His already evinced immunity to tropical disease was another form of security for Duane.

The agreement was signed by Dunkin and Cassan and their new partner – William Duane. It was witnessed by the autobiographer and Calcutta barrister William Hickey and signed by Edward Hay, an important secretary at the time to government and one with whom Duane would later have unfortunate dealings.\textsuperscript{14} Duane had moved from obscurity in the service of the EIC army, as a temporary freebooting recruit, and the equally anonymous position of junior writer in the Board of Revenue, to editor of a newspaper which was to earn him both praise for his skill in the art of the press and damnation for libellous conduct that brought him close to deportation.

\textsuperscript{12} Extract Bengal Foreign Consultations 8th June 1791, BL/IOR/O/5/2, ff. 355-364.
\textsuperscript{13} Ibid, ff. 355-364.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, ff. 355-364.
Bengal Money Market

Apart from his newspaper interest Duane became financially involved in the money market which operated in Calcutta and which ran on a complex exchange of debt between individuals. Involved were Indian bankers as well as men with stakes in newspapers such as Duane, John Upjohn and Richard Blechynden. Although the received idea among many in Britain was that India was a font of wealth for any Briton brave enough to go there and tap it, the threat of poverty and gaol among the editors, printers and those involved in the debt exchange system was very real. While one waited as creditor for a bill of exchange to be given, and made into hard cash, one could be called to pay another bill of exchange as debtor and face imprisonment and bailiffs if the amount was not paid. The methods used to call on debts could be downright vicious – Duane was beaten and pulled by his hair down a street in connection with a debt and even with the protection of the legal system was cheated out of a share in the Bengal Journal.

Blechynden, who had financial dealings with Duane and was part owner in the India Gazette, the newspaper edited by Duane’s friend Upjohn, was imprisoned for debt in 1791 and has left this account: "October 21st 1791 threw myself on the Bed in a state little short of distraction, to think of receiving such treatment from a man whom I weakly thought would have gone any lengths to have served me! Here have I been 10 years in this Settlement. Always does honour to my affairs, never receiving a lawyer’s letter of demand, on my own account never prosecuted any man. Or was prosecuted in my life and now am likely to have my property seized on & my Bed sold from under me on account of"

15 In Britain 'much of the prison population…was composed of people confined for debt: “tradesmen, middlemen, shopkeepers, and small producers”’. Spence, op. cit., p. 17.
the ______ of another!'. 16 Soon the bailiffs came for him and if we can excuse Blechynden’s slightly operatic style, a feature throughout the diaries, we can glimpse the hardships waiting for the unwitting around each corner of the bill exchange system. It was a system that embroiled Duane, Blechynden and Upjohn in the whims of fair weather friendships and dubious acquaintances:

November 17th 1791…2 Baillifs came into the Room. I told them I should not move unless one of them put his hand upon my arm so as to constitute an Act of Force. One of them did so and seemed to understand me literally for he nearly pulled me upon the floor. I then went out my heart ready to burn with Indignation & was obliged to walk as far as the Durumtollah before they met their Buggy. On the way I offered them an hundred Rupees each if they would conduct me home & sit up with me all night & that I would give them the best of Wine but they said they could not as it was an Execution. I could easily have given them the slip as the night was very dark & we walked far asunder, with many byelane’s at hand but much I shuddered at the disgrace of entering a Gaol I could not think of avoiding it on those terms…at 1/4 before 10 was I ushered into the Common Gaol of Calcutta! The night I passed is easier to be guessed than described… November 18th 1791 At day-break examined my Room or rather Dungeon, it was 11 f x 9 f:4in in size in which was an other person of the name of Gready. Wrote to inform Mr. Wordsworth of my situation…My Breakfast & dinner consisted of Bread & Butter & Water’. 17

Blechynden was offered by the gaoler on the 21st to be moved ‘up Stairs to more airy apartments’, proper, we are told, for a person of his rank. 18 Blechyden was eventually discharged after an Indian banker by the name of Ramsunder Ghore took up his debts. Blechynden, and later Duane, became heavily dependent on Indian capital, bolstering P.J. Marshall’s argument that throughout ‘its history, private British business enterprise in India had been heavily dependent on Indian capital and Indian expertise, although on the surface at least the role of the Indian

16 Blechynden Diaries, 1791-1795, BL/Add Ms 45581-45592, 21 October 1791, ff. 71-2.
17 Blechynden Diaries, 1791-1795, BL/Add Ms 45581-45592, 17-18 November 1791, ff. 156-160.
as ‘banian’ or as broker was nominally a subordinate one’. Duane was part of this web of exchange during his time in India and is frequently mentioned in the Blechynden diaries for the period 1791-1794 in connection with a European by the name of Eroyd who was in debt and in connection with the Upjohn and Cooper circle that Blechynden was familiar with. In Philadelphia this loose trail of money exchanges would lead to a court case and the attempted ruination of Duane by his political opponents.

Freemasons in India

Throughout his time in India Duane was actively involved in the Freemasons which proved to be an important social network for him. As a Radical Whig and Freemason Duane was mirroring his like-minded brethren in the British Isles, the group ‘of practical politicians on the side of Reform’ who by 1790 ‘would publicly announce themselves Freemasons, constituting “The Constitutional Whigs, Grand Lodge of England, founded upon pure Revolution Principles,” and meeting – in rivalry to the London Revolution Society – on the 4 November anniversary of the Glorious Revolution’. Duane was friends with John Upjohn who was the publisher of the India Gazette and Joseph Cooper, another publisher,

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20 Blechynden Diaries, 1791-1795, BL/Add Ms 45581-45592, 5 November 1792, f. 92.
21 Duane later wrote that a ‘Tory house of Boston searched throughout India and found the executors of a Doctor Nelson with whom I had commercial concerns, and in whose hands was found an old bond for 500 Rupees (250 dollars) this bond was bought for 20 Rupees by the house in Boston, and a suit instituted against me for the amount with the interest of India 12 percent per annum from the day of the date, that is from 1791 to this time, amounting to more than $2000. This bond was in fact paid, but poor Nelson is dead, and I have ever been too indifferent about money to have been careful enough to see it cancelled. Yet I offered to pay it again, but nothing less than bond and interest too would be accepted’. ‘Letters of William Duane’, *Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings*, 2nd series XX (1907), p. 318.
22 Erdman, op. cit., p. 75.
as well as the acquaintance of Richard Blechynden, the diarist. Duane, Cooper and Upjohn were Freemasons and Cooper was the head of the second lodge. Upjohn, on the other hand, was part of Lodge No. 12 and was secretary there. From another source we know that the printer Andrew Burchet Bone ‘found employment with Joseph Cooper, his fellow Freemason, and was in The Calcutta Register for 1799 still listed as ‘printer, assistant to Mr. Cooper’. Duane attended either Cooper’s or Upjohn’s lodge as they worked and socialised together. We know that ‘in March 1790 Cooper admitted his fellow freemason Aaron Upjohn into partnership at the Chronicle Press’. Duane was also involved in Upjohn’s engineering work as Blechynden saw them measuring a road together.

William Hickey, the Calcuttan barrister who was involved with the business agreement between the proprietors of the Bengal Journal and Duane, was a member of Lodge No.2 in Calcutta. He left, however, because the lodge ‘had belonging to it several of the tradesmen of Calcutta; also two or three vagabond attorneys, to neither of which description of person did I ever speak, and was therefore considered by them as extremely proud’. Slip in a couple of printers and newspapermen such as Duane and Cooper and Lodge No. 2 begins to look suspiciously like a mirror image of a London plebeian organisation such as the

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23 In September 1792 he [Joseph Cooper] also acted, along with the auctioneer William Dring, as an arbitrator in the squabble which had arisen between William Duane and his partners over the proposed sale of the weekly Bengal Journal”, Calcutta Gazette, 20 September 1792.
25 Ibid, p. 46.
26 Blechynden Diaries, 1791-1795, BL/Add Ms 45586, 8 February 1793, f.115.
LCS or the world of the French sans-culottes.\textsuperscript{28} Given William Hickey’s high-brow disdain of his more working-class and artisan brethren, a schism within the Freemasons along the pattern that occurred in Britain and Ireland should be of small surprise. Within Freemasonry, divisions over the French Revolution caused schisms in Europe of the sort Calcutta experienced, sometimes petty but always indicative of broader social and political tensions at the time. With pro-revolutionaries and democrats in their wings such as Duane and more socially conservative men like William Hickey, Freemasonry was understood in very different terms. For Duane, the concept of Freemason brotherhood, the fraternity of Masons, was aligned with that of the fraternité of the French Revolution whereas with a figure such as Hickey the lodge was more like a gentleman’s club, a club of brotherhood among gentlemen but certainly not with tradesmen and “low-bred fellows”. He felt so strongly about mixing with the men of Lodge No. 2 – the lodge that Duane’s associates, friends and perhaps Duane were part of – that with a ‘new Lodge having been established, consisting of the principal gentleman of the Settlement’ he sent his ‘resignation for No.2, and was elected a brother of the new Lodge’.\textsuperscript{29} Clearly Hickey’s concept of brotherhood was confined to that of a group of first men.

For Hickey, his expulsion from the Calcutta freemasons in 1789 was like being expelled from a gentleman’s club that he did not like anyway and does not carry the sanctimoniousness of Duane’s contemporary Mr. Fenwick when he

\textsuperscript{28} The links between the revolution and freemasonry find their way back to Paris as well: ‘During the first years of the Revolution, what evolved from the whig and masonic circles of London in collaboration with the more public Friends of the People and Revolution Society – and various provincial “corresponding” and “revolution” societies – was a wide network of correspondence with Jacobin clubs (“Friends of the Constitution”) in Paris and hundreds of French towns. The circling was often tangled, broken, or incomplete. But near the center, in the Cercle Social and the Paris Jacobin Club, we find John Oswald struggling mightily to keep unbroken the momentum toward an ideal community of all free peoples’. Erdman, op. cit., p. 76.

\textsuperscript{29} Hickey, op. cit., pp. 347-8.
wrote to Hickey seeking a rapprochement between the warring parties of Masons:

Mr. Fenwick, too, made another attempt to work upon my feelings, in an address consisting of eight sheets of paper, containing an elaborate dissertation and panegyric upon Masonry, followed by a strong censure of my contumacious behaviour towards the Secretary of the first Lodge, whom I had wantonly and unlike a Mason offended and grossly insulted, for which offence, if I did not satisfactorily apologise, the consequence must inevitably be that I should be deprived of all the benefits of Masonry and no longer be considered a brother. To this grave and voluminous philippic I wrote a concise reply, saying, I had received his (Fenwick’s) letter, and notwithstanding the dreadful anathema it contained certainly would not make any apology either to a set of or an individual blackguard. This drove the Provincial Grand Lodge gentry half crazy from conceiving their dignity attacked, though I had not addressed or signed my letter as a Mason. The Acting Provincial Grand Master [Duane’s associate Mr. Fenwick] immediately issued an order to the Master of the new Lodge to elect a new Senior Warden in the stead of William Hickey removed for contumacious and unmasonic conduct. The Master of the new Lodge refused to obey, but not liking to enter into a personal altercation upon the question, resigned his chair, as did his Junior Warden; thus was a serious schism created amongst the fraternity in Calcutta.30

Duane’s involvement in Freemasonry suited his deistic beliefs. Freemasonry became part of his idiosyncratic religious outlook. The social importance of the Masons to Duane, as a network of like-minded people, is seen in his friendships with Upjohn and Cooper. Although even in the fraternity of Masons Duane had trouble being taken seriously – as a newspaper editor and man with an Irish Catholic background – for each Lodge that was a club of English gentlemanly culture and exclusion, there was another where his mixed ideals of Freemason fraternity and revolutionary fraternité could find a home.

Anglo-French Relations in India in the Wake of Chandernagore’s Petite-Revolution

During the eighteenth century France and Britain had fought a series of wars, often through Indian rulers, for European supremacy on the sub-continent. France had been driven out of her major possessions in India and now was contained in Pondicherry near Madras and Chandernagore near Calcutta. But when combined with her naval bases on the Isle de France and the Isle de Bourbon she still had a clear presence in the Indian Ocean and was capable of launching a fleet into the area as well as running French privateers that later harried EIC shipping. Through her control of Holland (post 1794) she also gained a window into the Dutch East Indies which would lead to a brief British interregnum in Java from 1811. In time, the British realised that France would have to be expelled from the Isle de France, which was completed in 1810 during the Napoleonic War.

With the French Revolution, the French imperial system fell into disarray. Each subsequent coup meant a series of new orders sent to the colonies and a large gap in time between when they were sent and when they were received. Time enough for domestic whirlwinds to again change the status quo and a new, and varying, set of orders to be sent. For the British, paramount importance lay in keeping France in check on the sub-continent. This was coupled in 1790 with a revolution which engulfed the small French community at Chandernagore and in the end provoked British intervention. Canaple, the leader of the French outpost, and other French royalists had sought protection under the government of the British in Calcutta because of this turmoil and the threat of public execution at the settlement under the direction of a small revolutionary assembly. The turmoil,
while small, was disturbing for the British as French troops and sepoys began crossing British territory hunting down royalists.\textsuperscript{31} The British government did not know how to react as they did not want to destabilise existing Anglo-French treaties or get involved in a French dispute. Another reason was that the government was working behind the scenes to install royalist administrations in the French territories, which could then be easily undermined and made to change allegiance if there was an outbreak of war.\textsuperscript{32} Although involved in this subterfuge, they could not be seen to be openly engaged in it at a time of peace between the two countries. The struggle over Chandernagore was soon to engulf William Duane’s first newspaper.

### The Canaple Affair

Duane’s first newspaper, the *Bengal Journal*, has not survived on public record. We have a glimpse of his editorial policy from another Calcutta newspaper detailing a Bengal Journal attack on the slave-trafficking of a British mariner who was subsequently punished.\textsuperscript{33} Another newspaper, the *Calcutta Chronicle*, also spoke against ‘the barbarous and wanton acts of more than savage cruelty daily exercised on the slaves of both sexes, by that mongrel race of human beings called native Portuguese’.\textsuperscript{34} The slavery Duane criticised was either the keeping of an African slave, as slaves passed along the same trade routes as their masters, moving from the West Indies to Calcutta, or the purchase of slaves from

\textsuperscript{31} BL/IOR/I/1/13, Unrecorded papers, Vol. 204 1790-1804, ff. 1-5.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, ff. 1-5.
the native Portuguese. The next time we come across the newspaper is an excerpt of it remaining in the EIC records which concerns the rumour in 1791 of Cornwallis’ death on campaign and the subsequent aborted order to deport Duane.

Duane published a veiled attack on French royalists, the renegade French hinted at below, which Canaple, leader (in name but not reality) of the Chandernagore settlement took to be an attack on himself. It concerned the spurious rumour that Cornwallis had been killed while on campaign, which Duane stated came from the French Royalists in Calcutta who had fled Chandernagore. The article entitled ‘Generosity Rewarded’ ran that:

A report of a nature too important not to be alarming was during the early part of this week circulated, not however so guardedly as to prevent its being traced to its source. It stated with a minuteness so specious and precise, that Earl Cornwallis had after three days illness, deceased on the 28th of last month at Bangalore, that it gained a general belief and, the more to aggravate this displeasing falsehood, that General Meadows was at the same time dispaired of the report had spread through every rank, and in the Army had caused a gloom, which while it evinced the high estimation and confidence placed in his Lordship by his Brother Soldiers, reflects honour on both, and now that the cause of alarm is done away, must be productive of a livelier pleasure in their generous minds.

This report has been traced to some particular distinguished Persons among the renegade French, now nurtured under the Wing of British generosity in this settlement that there should be a jealousy of Glory of Power or of national character between the French and English which might influence the passions and opinions of individuals of either Nation, the prejudices of ages renders no wise extraordinary, but to what base passion must we look for the foundation of this report, and how must we regard those who, aliens to their Country, and at enmity with the immortal flame of liberty, must aggravate their ignominy by wounding the peace, and disturbing the tranquility of that community, which though among the most ardent advocates of freedom themselves, yet generously protect those who are not, from harm, and support them in safety and splendor, how much more vexatious is it, if we consider whose name those ungenerous men have used so wantonly, their disinterested and zealous protector.\(^{35}\)

\(^{35}\) Extract from the Bengal Journal of the 21st May 1791 in BL/IOR/H/537, ff. 7-10.
Duane reached the verge of deportation for the above libel on the ruler (albeit in name) of the small French territory called Chandernagore which lay on the outskirts of Calcutta. The extract shows the relationship between the press and the soldiers in Calcutta and the power of rumour and why libel was fought over so ferociously. To understand why the British authorities would want to deport a British subject for libelling a Frenchman, we must consider it in the context of Anglo-French relations. Such a rumour would be the cause of great instability and concern in Calcutta and, if proven to be French-inspired, would cause tension between the two nations in India which the British did not want. Given the recent difficulties in Chandernagore the British government was also loath to inject a destabilising influence from any British subject or their newspaper. At a time of uncertainty owing to the revolution maternelle throughout Europe and the French territories it is clear that the government would have been unwise not to outwardly appease the French in India because of concern bad diplomatic reports might also cause tension in Europe. A more prosaic explanation, though, could lie in the empathy members of the Calcutta establishment may have had with the royalist Canaple, who although himself rightful leader of the French settlement, had been thrown out in a petite-revolution after he had been sent to replace another ruler who had himself been thrown out by the prior petite-revolution.

Canaple was caught up in a struggle for power in French India between monarchists, who as in Europe the British supported for their own gain, and republicans who instituted a revolution in Pondicherry and also in Chandernagore. Before Canaple took control of Chandernagore there had been a revolution on 3 May 1790 and then a counter-revolution which was supported by the British. The royalist forces in the Isle de France (Mauritius) headed by the Comte de Conway (Governor of Mauritius) nominated Canaple as governor of Chandernagore while
a Monsieur Mallet from Pondicherry was appointed as provisional leader until Canaple arrived. The Governor-General Cornwallis had actually given the counter-revolution financial support in return for ‘the Comte de Conway’s liberal assurances that the French government would observe a strict neutrality in the war between the British government and Tipoo’ and as the compilers of the republican report back to the national assembly on these events concluded this neutrality ‘operated as an additional inducement for affording the aid which has been given’. As such Duane’s attack on “the Renegade French” is here to be understood within the context of revolution and counter-revolution around the Indian Ocean and the British response to this. When Duane wrote about the revolution and attacked royalists like Canaple in his newspaper, it was not just an exercise in revolutionary debate but also a political action which drew its consequence in Canaple’s request for Duane to be punished and the ready agreement of the British government in India to do so. While it might be easy to imagine Duane writing about events in Europe from a distance it must be stressed that these events had their repercussions in India. The republican support for Tipu Sultan by the French, for example, was a means of weakening British might, and like the role the West Indies played, could draw British attention and manpower away from Europe and towards the Empire. For the British, Duane’s attack on Canaple was a nuisance because they wished to contain the French in their promised neutrality.

36 Ibid, ff. 1-5.
Duane versus the Ancien Régime

Duane left an account of his clash with Canaple which was kept and recorded in the EIC archives. It was his attempt at justifying his actions to the government. The account exemplifies Duane’s image of himself and his opinion of British rule and the French Revolution. Duane was asked to apologise in person to Canaple for the article he printed on ‘Generosity Rewarded’. What followed was an infuriating meeting for both parties which Duane then represented as a clash between Canaple, the ancien régime figure, and Duane, the standard bearer for the French Revolution and Radical Whiggery.

Duane believed the political theories of the eighteenth-century Commonwealthmen underpinned true Englishness in his struggle with Canaple. Although Duane thought of England in this way, he was surprised to see an English officer in support of Canaple and acting as translator. A wide difference of interpretation stood between Canaple’s and Duane’s understanding of events. In the letters of complaint Canaple sent to the Governor-General, Duane’s attacks and attempted apology are fitted into an aristocratic view of proper deference and position, where Duane is very much a supplicant who should accept his place in European society.37 For Duane, Canaple is represented as an ancien régime figure to be attacked and made to understand the principles of the English constitution and a free press, and the democratic revolution that has occurred in Canaple’s own country.38

The succession of events moved quickly. Duane brought out his weekly newspaper on the Saturday, 21 May, with the attack on the ‘Renegade French’

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37 BL/IOR/H/537, ff. 10-12.
38 Ibid, f. 19.
who reward British generosity by spreading false rumours of the death of the
governor-general. Canaple, leader of these renegade French and deposed ruler of
Chandernagore hits back with a letter to the Secretary of government on the
Monday, 23 May, where he complained of the libel in the Bengal Journal. Mr.
Stuart, in charge of government while Cornwallis was on campaign against Tipu
Sultan, directed the Secretary, Mr Hay, to ‘ascertain who the Editor was, and
having done so, to require him to contradict that part of the paper which had justly
given so much offence to Colonel Canaple and make a suitable apology for a
publication so highly improper’. Duane was sent for as principal editor of the
Bengal Journal and summoned to Council House where he was interviewed and
reprimanded by the Secretary, Edward Hay, on the same day as Canaple’s
complaint. Duane assured the secretary that he would try and make amends with
Canaple and would also publish a retraction in his newspaper. Between the
meeting with Hay and visiting Canaple, he was told that a deputation ‘of twelve
had been directed by an assemblage of the French Residents here [in Calcutta] to
demand satisfaction’ for the ‘odious article’ on the ‘Renegade French’. Duane
foolishly waited to meet this mob before a French friend tipped him off that the
twelve men had chosen to take ‘other steps of a less gentle nature’ than pure
conversation.

But nevertheless Duane went alone to Canaple’s residence on the Tuesday, 24
May, and instead of apologising to Canaple launched a defence of the rights of
both press and man. He had been made to wait for a lengthy period by Canaple

Ibid, f. 5.
Ibid, f. 1.
Ibid, f. 18.
Ibid, f. 18.
Ibid, f. 17.
and appears to have had his short temper goaded by a group made up of Canaple
and his friends.\textsuperscript{43} In what quickly broke down into a heated argument between the
two sides, the ‘Rights of Man’ faced off against expectations of ancien régime
defereence. In this setting Duane’s purpose in going there was lost in the flurry of
heated political argument.

Canaple wasted no time in sending a letter to the Secretary complaining of
Duane’s behaviour which was replied to in a very strongly conciliatory tone. The
government placed Canaple’s injured dignity far ahead of any attempt at fairness
in handling the dispute. For them, Duane was expendable; they did not wish to
annoy the French. Duane tried to persuade government that he was well within his
rights in arguing with Canaple and that he was just trying to be a true Englishman
upholding the British constitution and ‘English Liberties’ against an autocratic
Frenchman. The government would have none of that and swiftly sent Canaple an
assurance that Duane was to be deported.\textsuperscript{46}

On the 25 May, the government sent an apologetic letter to Canaple trusting
that he was ‘persuaded that we are penetrated with the deepest concern for the
uneasiness which you have suffered and that we received the scandalous general
reputation alluded to and in particular the daring outrage against a person of your
station and character with the contempt which it merited’.\textsuperscript{47} Canaple’s letter
reveals both an acquaintance with the Secretary of Council, Edward Hay (he had
breakfasted with Hay and had mentioned the rumour to Hay himself) and an
admission that it was possible that he had ‘asked some person if this melancholy
news was true’.\textsuperscript{48} But Canaple then argued that he was just endeavouring to ‘calm

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid, ff. 23-5.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid, f. 56.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, f. 15.
\textsuperscript{46} Ibid, f. 11.
my solicitude and alarms'. Canaple argued that Duane rudely asked him if he was the ‘first author of the account of Lord Cornwallis’s death’. Instead of answering this attack Canaple drew attention to Duane’s class and lack of official position in Calcutta. In strident terms he declared that ‘I believe I am not the subject to the tribunal of the propagator of an infamous libel’. He then attacked Duane’s ‘insolent manner’ and argued that if Duane had not been at the time of his visit under the protection of government he would have been thrown out of his house. Canaple attacked Duane for the ‘abuse which it has pleased him to load me with in his (“Dyatribe”) newspaper; abuse, which falls the heavier on me as he has not named, but particularly, described me’. There is an echo of the French Revolution also in Canaple’s letter where Duane is described as a ‘tribune’; perhaps in Duane, Canaple saw the men who had seized power in France, and from whom he had escaped, and by whom indeed he had been thrown out of Chandernagore – men who inhabited revolutionary tribunes.

Duane also saw the confrontation through a political lens, but one with a completely different focus. In his lengthy vindication to government he peppers the document with Radical Whig and Painite language. He is also quick to point out the autocratic nature of the French in India as opposed to the love of liberty which he sees embedded in Britain and by extension the British in India. In an introductory letter which framed his account of the meeting with Canaple, Duane sets down his political philosophy and position at that point. He shows a clear naivety to the reality of British rule in India and how it differs with that in Britain itself. He shows a zealous and quasi-religious tone concerning the French

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50 Ibid, f. 10.
51 Ibid, f. 10.
52 Ibid, f. 10.
53 Ibid, f. 11.
54 Ibid, ff. 10-11.
55 Ibid, ff. 11-12.
Revolution and indeed the Enlightenment. This blinds him to the danger he faces from a government which sits squarely on the side of Canaple. In a letter to be read and judged by a man in sympathy with Canaple, or at least one who understood the complexity of dealing with a diplomatic complaint, Duane shows a clear naivety of argument – he not only thinks that government will side with him over Canaple, but expects the Secretary to hold the same views on press freedom and the British constitution. He is quick to point towards his political views as being stalwartly British and opposed to Canaple’s. He stigmatises Canaple as an ancien régime conservative: ‘I know Mr. Canaple’s principles to be harshly despotic, as indeed I know the characters of almost all the French of note in India’.  

Duane expected that an English officer there, Captain Conway, would lend him support against the elderly royalist ‘supposing that he would act as a poise between the principles of the former Gentleman and mine which are the reverse nature’. Duane felt that he would be given a fair hearing but instead felt that Conway sided with Canaple over him. In a passage which alludes to the French Revolution, and indeed places Duane on the side of the revolutionary French, Duane attacks Canaple for his ‘prejudice of Education’ and his support of the ‘spirit of the Old French constitution’. He argues that these prevailed over the ‘sympathies of National love and blood’. In effect, Duane is denouncing Canaple to Hay, a man who recently had Canaple around for breakfast and conversation, as a traitor because he chooses not to side with the revolutionaries in France from whom he has fled, and the miniature National Assembly at Chandernagore who threw him out of the settlement and deposed him. All this was without knowing

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54 Ibid, ff. 18-19.
55 Ibid, f. 19.
56 Ibid, f. 19.
57 Ibid, f. 19.
58 Ibid, f. 19.
whether Hay agreed with the revolution or not. Duane often projected his enthusiasms onto those around him and was then surprised to find that they disagreed with him. Like many people, Duane assumed his version of the truth to be universal.

Duane made the claim to Hay that he was English. Duane argued that he had been ‘born and bred in the bosom of America and confirmed in my love of freedom by a long residence under the British government. I have learned to respect men as men’. Duane went on to add that ‘Principle makes me an Englishman’ and that he would depart from this principle by degrading himself before the autocratic Canaple. In his defence of ‘freedom’ and ‘principle’ Duane mimics the eighteenth-century Commonwealthmen. It is this strand of Englishness that Duane holds onto. If principle made him embrace a nationality because of politics, could it not also see him reject it on the same conditions? This is what Duane was to do as he became more aggressively anti-English after his treatment in Calcutta and the outbreak of war in 1793. Perhaps the episode with Canaple gave Duane a political lesson – the principles that made him feel English were not the same ones held by Conway and many of his compatriots. Loyalism to the British crown held as much a grip on the English as did the Radical Whig principles that Duane held to be the essence of true Englishness.

On the one hand Duane’s conduct shows a strong political commitment which is not tempered when faced with opposition. On the other hand this can be read as inflexibility and the inability to interpret political events occurring right in front of him. Instead of apologising to Canaple, Duane becomes further embroiled in a dispute which pushes the government’s hand to deport him. He tries to temper his

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60 Ibid, f. 22.
political views at particular points in his Indian career but these efforts are overcome by his radical enthusiasm which sends him crashing to the ground when faced with the government’s unbending attitudes to anything but a bound Indian press. Duane was to find out where the government stood on 1 June 1791.

The Canaple affair quickly became a cause of concern for the miniature Chandanagore government in exile in Calcutta and a minor irritant for the Governor-General and his Council. The British were guided in their attempted deportation of Duane, not so much by a desire to silence press freedoms as a perceived need to maintain the pretence of stability in the region and to appease the French in Calcutta, who were attempting to gain control of the Chandernagore settlement and had been given authority from the main French settlement at the Isle de France. Shutting Duane down was their way of doing this. The problem for Duane was that unlike Almon’s legal battle with Pitt, where although the courts were used to bankrupt Almon he still had a legal footing, Duane stood from the outset in a position of illegality owing to his lack of a bill authorising residency. He was in Calcutta because the Governor-Generalship and the EIC council allowed him to be, not because he had a right to residence. Duane also had a problem claiming United States citizenship, as his place of birth in the EIC embarkation records was registered as St. John’s Newfoundland which meant he was classed as a British subject. His Irishness was no help to him at this point either. Duane, then, was in no legal position to challenge the authority of the Governor-General in the way that Almon was able to use the courts in his dispute with Pitt. The British authorities consistently showed that where press freedoms did not impinge on their ability to govern Calcutta and on their relations with other interests in India (such as the Nizam of Hyderabad or the French) they would allow the press to function without interference; but where there was a
perceived threat to this ability or those interests government would very quickly
close down the offending source without the cushion of legal defence of
newspapers to soften the blow.

This legal buffer zone can be seen in the contrast between the case of Pitt and
the Canaple affairs. Both involved attacks on a person’s reputation and thus were
cases of libel; but where Pitt turned to the court for redress Canaple could appeal
directly to the Governor-General. While the Governor-General had to first consult
the Attorney-General at Calcutta over the legality of forcibly removing Duane
from the colony, once he had realised Duane’s extremely weak legal position he
could side-step the courts and have him deported.

Thus the picture that emerges is a newspaper which is condoned by
government up to a certain point. This picture is at odds with some of the more
wild and conspiratorial historical arguments which have emerged recently about
Duane’s Indian period. While Larry E. Tise has argued for Duane as a radical and
anti-colonial hero in the most hagiographical terms, it must be stated that Duane
was allowed to remain in Calcutta until 1794 and that the government had every
right under law to deport him much earlier than they did.61 We should not just
accept Duane’s own version of events and laud him for his political courage, but
also ask: why did the government allow Duane to carry on with his publication
even though he could have been deported at any time the Governor-General
wished? One possibility is that the *Bengal Journal* was involved in the
campaigning of the EIC officers and that the authorities were concerned that
deporting Duane would have brought further instability into the army. Given that
Duane’s later newspaper was involved in army politics it is possible that the

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Bengal Journal played a role as well.

The press was allowed to function in India within limits which were more narrow than in Britain. In India, sensitive issues concerning native rulers and other European powers were considered illegitimate items of news and direct political commentary was frowned upon. If an editor kept to printing shipping and commercial news alongside selective and conservative snippets from British newspapers, he was left alone. But any sign of an independent editorial line or any attempt to cultivate public discussion on the role of the EIC, the governor-general, the army, particularly the Bengal army, or on the position of native rulers allied to the British, was considered dangerous and open to censure. But the government had to manage its affairs with the EIC officers carefully. In the case of Duane, he was marked as a spokesman for the officers and any move against him had to take the officers’ reaction into consideration.

**Prison and Near Deportation**

The Advocate-General had already received a letter from the Bengal Council concerning the legality of their planned deportation of Duane. On 1 June the Governor General returned from the battlefield, to judge from newspaper rumours all but dead, and in council gave the order for Duane’s immediate arrest and eventual deportation.\(^{62}\) Canaple sent another letter of complaint to government but was assured that Duane was now on his way to being deported.\(^{63}\) On 3 June the government received a letter from the Town Major saying that Duane was now

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\(^{62}\) BL/IOR/H/537, f. 46.  
\(^{63}\) Ibid, f. 56.
locked in Fort William in his custody. Duane’s enemies and even one time business partners wasted no time ransacking his place as a means of recouping some of their now plummeting investment in the Bengal Journal. At 10pm on 7 June Duane wrote a pleading letter asking to be released for a short time so as to secure his property and attempt to shore up his finances. Although the government had refused a request earlier on that day, given the urgency of the matter they accepted Duane’s wishes. By June 12 he was back in prison and was attempting to be released by using a writ of Habeas Corpus and arguing that he had been unlawfully arrested.

The first attempt by his attorney, Peat, was unsuccessful as the Town Major argued that Duane was not in the care of the man on the writ, Colonel Mackenzie. The second writ, applied for and obtained on the 15th was more successful but was overturned by the power of the Governor-General when it was brought before the Supreme Court on 16 June. Duane, ‘the prisoner’ was:

brought into court from his place of confinement to abide the decision of the question…Upon the courts ordering the return to be read and filed a very long and elaborate argument ensued on the question of the authority of the Governor-General in council to pursue the measure he had thought proper to adopt with respect to Mr. Duane. The results of which was the solemn and unanimous decision of the court confirming that right and ordering the prisoner to be remanded into custody.

Again, Duane took his cell in Fort William while he waited either for a change in the policy of the Governor-General or his deportation. After being released on a form of bail, he gave bonds and the security of two Indian bankers, and waited for his deportation. But nine days before his departure the unexpected happened –

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64 Ibid, f. 55.
67 Ibid, f. 85.
68 Ibid, f. 89-92, ff. 93, 95.
Canaple died and was replaced by a new leader of the French mission who was sympathetic to the French Revolution, and to Duane. Duane has left a final sad account of his imprisonment and misfortune: ‘The letters...I have fortunately secured, from the wreck of my affairs on the 2d June, 1791, when I was removed from my house, – a bed, a desk, a rheam of paper, and an old fiddle, were the only comforts they left me, except a good stock of animal spirits, which enabled me to scribble and scrape care away for two solitary months; during that time my private rooms were ransacked, and all the little property I possessed, together with the office removed to another house!!!’.

Reprieve

In a letter dated 1 November 1791 Fumeron, the new official leader of Chandernagore, asked the government for leniency in the case of Duane and for the charges to be dropped. The political tussle between the ‘Renegade French’ royalists who despised Duane for his politics and who bristled under his newspaper ‘Dyatribe’ was over. Although Duane was allowed to stay this time, a similar type of diplomatic concern was to be one of the reasons for his eventual deportation under the next Governor-General. As a result of this political tussle on the fringes of the revolution Duane was ruined and would now have to claw his way back up the slippery slope of the newspaper business while debts were poured like oil over his path. During his imprisonment he informed government of

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69 For Canaple’s death see the entry under William Duane in BL/IOR/O/5/25. For his successor see BL/IOR/O/5/2, ff. 405-6.
70 The World, 29 September 1792.
71 BL/IOR/O/5/2, ff. 405-6.
his attempts to educate his children and of his desire to send for his family.72 There is no evidence that they arrived. He was trying to piece the disparate sides of his life together under considerable strain. He had a family in Clonmel he had to care for and a ruined business whose share he had now to recover through the courts. Duane was gaoled for his libel and lost the editorship of the *Bengal Journal*. He also suffered financial damages in a dispute with his partners over his share in the newspaper.

Any prospect of starting another printing concern was hampered by the burden of bad credit and the disapproval of government. But he had been given the chance of a new start by the very fact that he was not rotting in some Indiaman’s hull on his way to England. Even this advantage was enough to keep Duane moving forward. In a letter from his months awaiting deportation, Duane reveals the image he held of himself, one which the record of his life would show to be true. Before we move on to his second Indian newspaper – *The World* – it is fair to let Duane speak for himself for a moment:

> The path of industry which I have long trod in is open; it has been long my reliance and it cannot now fail me if under the important lessons of discretion which experience and misfortune has taught me. If I am fortunate enough to meet further indulgence from the Honourable Council my punishment has been already severe than can be known to any but myself, dependant, without money and few friends.73

In the space of six months, Duane was at the helm of a new and innovative newspaper which was the result of the indefatigable spirit and hard work which he outlines above. It is to that newspaper and its clash with government that we now turn.

72 Ibid, f. 91.
73 BL/IOR/H537, f.101.
CHAPTER 5

An Indian World

The Foundation of the Indian World

William Duane re-entered the Calcutta press scene with a newspaper called *The World*. It is unclear how he secured funds for this new venture although a loan from one of the Indian bankers he had had dealings with is not out of the question. Duane took his lead from the more well-known London newspaper of the same name which had been started by Robert Merry and Mary Wells in the 1780s. Duane was the proprietor and editor, but hired a printer. It was a weekly paper printed on Saturdays.¹ By 1794 ‘the out and inward passage’ of the business ‘paid on average £20 Sterling a month to Government’.² At its inception Duane tried to demonstrate his compliance with government attitudes towards an unwanted press by stating his desire for a newspaper which eschewed dangerous political topics. Instead of following his own advice, Duane and his newspaper became a platform for the discontented and pro-revolutionary. Before considering Duane’s newspaper and the EIC officers’ push for the same rights as those enjoyed by the King’s Army, the formation of *The World* itself needs to be examined. Continuity can then be measured between his Indian

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¹ BL/IOR/H/537, f. 117.
² Ibid, f. 221.
period and those of London and Philadelphia.

“the public arena”

Duane attempted in his newspapers to create a ‘Republic of Letters’ along European Enlightenment lines but was thwarted by the colonial settlement’s elite who still adhered to an older code built on patronage and status. In Europe, hundreds of disparate governments and governmental systems existed independently from one another which meant that ‘no state could entirely control the flow of news within its own borders, because none could count on other states to police information flows about their neighbours with genuine severity’.3 Because of this, international newspapers arose to cater to the emerging European public sphere, or bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit as Jürgen Habermas has termed the phenomenon.4 These newspapers overlapped with each other in a web of inter-and intra-national information. Even when French newspapers were under censorship the French language newspapers overseas, for example Jean Lucas’s Gazette de Leyde in the Netherlands, could cover the domestic affairs of the country for a French readership. The area controlled by the EIC in Bengal formed an entity that was disconnected from this European system and thus was more susceptible to censorship from above. Duane attempted to construct a Republic of Letters along European lines but was faced with an organization which sought to monopolise information flows as well as trade.

The historian of the eighteenth-century German-speaking world, James Sheehan, has argued that:

3 Popkin, op. cit., p. 35.
Unlike the cultures of élites and populace, literary culture was not inherently restrictive. Since it was not limited by either practical restraints of oral communication or the social barriers of status, the culture of reading and writing was theoretically accessible and potentially universal.¹

Duane’s choice of *The World* as a title exemplifies this universality as does his evident desire to create an *Öffentlichkeit*, in Habermas’ term, what he himself, using a more politically loaded phrase, would call a ‘Republic of Letters’. If one cannot yet create an actual political republic, one can still attempt to build a cultural and literary one, which does not submit to the requirements of traditional order: a ‘Republic of Letters’ that does not require knowledge of who each contributor is and by what authority that person speaks. Of course, Duane’s newspaper republic was severely limited by eighteenth-century illiteracy rates and the lack of interest of many in his political ideals; but he was able to include men such as the EIC officers who were outside traditional circles of patronage and status. He envisaged a newspaper with a readership ‘in every rank of society, and in all parts of India’ and would include these disgruntled men.⁶

Duane’s vision was of a ‘Republic of Letters’: in one particular address to his readers the word public is mentioned four times. Duane appeals to this public to regulate itself for his sake so that he can avoid governmental censure. He uses the word public in opposition to the closed form of society, of which he is critical. States built on patronage were, for Duane, in contradiction with the aims of the French Revolution; he rejected the influence and rank of well-born private individuals, and the ruling elite consisting of these individuals, in favour of a meritocracy that worked through democratic institutions. Duane’s public includes all ranks, even ‘the fool, and the ruffian’.⁷ Duane clearly states in his paper that:

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¹ Sheehan, op. cit., p. 156.
² *The World*, 9 June 1792.
³ Ibid, 9 June 1792.
every man has a right upon a justifiable cause to address the Public – a man who possesses no other patronage than such as the public may think him worthy of; who relies on that alone for support, owes to them and himself a proper notice of every attack made on him.8

For Duane, everyone had the right to the patronage of the public, as opposed to the singular patronage of powerful individuals enjoyed by the well-connected.

That Duane was attempting to set up a republic of ink and paper is clear from an address he wrote ‘TO THE PUBLIC’ on 7 January 1792, where he tried to defend his creation. Duane tells the Calcutta public that ‘the Press has been ‘The sun of science, the soul which animated and gave life, spirit and being, to all that is good, great and desirable in modern civilization’.9 The address is a defence of the concept of the public sphere and attacks the things which damage the public’s trust in the paper republic, one that in Duane’s mind takes in ‘the editor in Calcutta…the editor in London’. For Duane, the editor’s ‘creed, and his prayer embraces the whole universe!’ 10

Anonymity within the public sphere of the newspaper is important as the republic works only by default. It is a republic whose citizens must be anonymous if they want to avoid the deference, patronage, threat of libel laws and punishment of the culture outside it, with which it is caught in symbiotic ties. To gain entrance to the republic one must wear a cloak of anonymity or unknowability, either a pseudonym or a name that may be confused with others. To step outside is again to step into the glare of rank, privilege and power, and the possibility of ready legal punishment.

Duane tells us of the dangers and weaknesses which come with the security of anonymity:

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8 Ibid, 9 June 1792.
9 Ibid, 7 January 1792.
10 Ibid, 7 January 1792.
public newspapers are as subject to imposition as unsuspecting generous men – the weak, or wicked, may injure them by anonymous communications – the fool, or the ruffian, escapes – and the poor devil of an Editor, like the Statue of Pasquin, is pointed out as the vehicle of opprobrium, in a few instances, even during the short existence of the World, the Editor has experienced this unpleasing predicament.\(^\text{11}\)

Duane became obnoxious to the authorities because he was the agent of this republic, protecting the anonymity of EIC officers as they spoke on subjects which, if their identities were known, would see them stripped of rank and shipped back to England. The later hunt for Captain Thomas Williamson, dealt with more fully in a following chapter, saw him stripped of his republican anonymity until he stood before the EIC as a known figure charged with seditious behaviour for writing in the (Indian) *Telegraph* in 1798.\(^\text{12}\) Although Sheehan may argue that the German *Öffentlichkeit* ‘was not tied to a particular regional dialect, shrouded by the secrets of a guild, or locked behind the walls of a ruler’s palace’,\(^\text{13}\) Duane’s ‘Republic of Letters’ was locked and protected behind the walls of anonymity that he maintained. For this reason the editor was a target of official displeasure, punishment and eventually deportation.

The public sphere created by Duane directly challenged the ability of the administration to control debate on the EIC army and on public opinion in the settlement itself. The EIC wanted to rule public opinion but in the letter pages, articles and editorials of *The World* the ruler of that republic, the public sphere created by Duane, was the public itself. As with the *Öffentlichkeit*, the ruler of Duane’s public sphere was the ‘*Publikum*, the public, a self-selected audience whose tastes and opinions were supposed to determine success or failure. To join

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\(^{11}\) Ibid, 9 June 1792.

\(^{12}\) BL/IOR/H/537, ff. 247-287.

\(^{13}\) Sheehan, op. cit., p. 156.
the public required neither noble birth nor arcane knowledge’. This was very different from the world of EIC officialdom, which operated through patronage circles that led back to men such as Henry Dundas. Within the limits of its own press, the EIC was able, ultimately, to control the passage of any information which could have serious consequences on its ability to rule (and make a profit). Information that flowed outside of the official channels, for example financial speculation, was seen as a danger.

Speculation in the eighteenth century relied on information, and disinformation, flows. One example in Duane’s own writing and career is the Canaple case. The purported death of Lord Cornwallis in 1791, reported in the Bengal Journal, meant that ‘the public mind and the Government felt a shock, and in one day only Company’s papers suffered a depreciation of from 12 to 33 percent Discount!’ If the EIC wanted to regulate the behaviour of its officials, the army and the Anglo-Indian community, it comes as no surprise that it also wanted to force order on Duane’s republic of the mind; one that impinged on and affected the broader physical world of stock-markets, shares and vested interests. It was one which also allowed mutinous army officers a voice. Perhaps Duane overemphasised his impact at particular moments, but in this regard he was correct: the EIC administration did not want the existence of any republic in India, even one of the quill, press and private opinion, as it would have an impact on its ability to rule.

The government in India also saw itself as vulnerable to the ‘active machinations’ of its enemies on the sub-continent – the native rulers such as Tipu Sultan who stood in opposition to the British and who were under the

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14 Ibid, p. 156.
15 BL IOR/H/537-539, f. 190
16 The World, 3 December 1791.
influence of the French. From the EIC point of view, there was scarcely any point in stemming the flow of sensitive and damaging information to their enemies (which they did) when their agents in Calcutta could pick through the local newspapers to read the official mind. In his defence of ‘the arena of political opinion’, Duane forgets just how much the company did not want such an arena to exist in India. Those who, in Duane’s words, ‘possess[ed] the information’ held a monopoly in India and Britain on Indian trade. It is not surprising that they sought to hold a monopoly on information as well, particularly given that they saw a free press as undermining their control over the information flows of India at large. In printing the grievances of a set of young EIC officers Duane forgot how sensitive the government was to a free press in India when coupled with disturbance in the East India Company army.

**Duane and the Officers**

The EIC had one of the largest standing armies, but British rule in India rested upon an unstable foundation. Unrest within the European battalions, and among the European officers of the Sepoy battalions, had a lengthy history stretching back to the period of Robert Clive – to the campaigning and disturbances of 1764 and the ‘Batta Mutiny’ of 1766. As Raymond Callahan has argued: ‘Eighteenth-century Indian Army officers were mercenary adventurers, men on the make, and it should occasion no surprise that their behaviour often reflected that fact’. The mutinies of 1764 and 1766 occurred when the Europeans did not receive part of a

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17 Ibid, 3 December, 1791.
18 Callahan, op. cit., p. 6.
19 Ibid, pp. 28-9 and p. 146.
20 Ibid, xi.
settlement that they believed was owed to them. Sometimes resentment also grew because the members in the King’s service were seen to be better paid and to be serving under better conditions. The officers were always concerned by ‘anything that might change their status or financial prospects’. There were also structural reasons for discontent as India was encumbered with two officer corps: one directly in the pay and service of the East India Company and one in the pay and service of the King’s army. This problem would not be solved until the aftermath of the Indian Mutiny in 1858 when the EIC army was disbanded.

During Duane’s period in India, therefore, we find two different groups of officers who were in competition for prestige and the spoils of victory. The officers of the King’s army were drawn more from the gentry and looked down upon the EIC officers who were of humbler origins. The EIC officers were, unlike the King’s officers, under a promotions scheme where length of service was more important than buying a command and the pressure of interest. One of the attractions of service in the officer ranks of the EIC army was the army’s openness towards men who did not have the interest needed for commissions in the King’s army. The EIC offered these men the opportunity to follow a military career that did not rely on social standing or wealth. Once in service, however, they found themselves in a long queue where advancement was reliant on age and not on talent. This led easily to bitterness, resentment and mutinous behaviour. The dream of Indian spoils proved ephemeral; instead, the officers faced a difficult subsistence in India and the danger of early death while waiting for promotion. These factors, when combined with lengthy periods of stasis between campaigns, meant that the EIC officers spent much time in campaigning for better conditions, higher rank and readier promotion, and defending their unique status in relation to

\[21\] Ibid, xi.
the King’s army officers. The independence of the Company’s army was of

   crucial importance to them because they knew the status they held in the
Company’s service was not to be gained in the King’s without money and interest. ‘To preserve all this the Company’s officers were prepared to do battle with the governors of Indian presidencies or the home authorities in London.’

   Any attempt by the government to repress the quarrelsome officers, however, risked ‘disorganizing the prop of the Company’s, and Britain’s, authority in India’. Although the regular British forces were important in individual battles or campaigns, it was through the morale and ability of the EIC officers that the Company ruled and expanded its territory.

   Mutiny among the European troops, both infantry and officers, was feared by the government because it weakened Britain’s military position in India. Mutiny could, moreover, spread to the sepoys. During 1764 the mutiny of European troops had influenced the sepoys, leading to a second, sepoy, mutiny. In 1796 this threat of a flow-on mutiny from European to sepoy soldiers was again present. The officers’ activities in support of the Company army’s independence also became tarred with the brush of ‘Jacobinism’. As P.J. Marshall has explained: ‘Having caught at least faint echoes of the language of American disaffection in the petitions of the 1780s, by the 1790s the directors of the Company and their governors in India had their ears cocked for the sinister music of Jacobinism’.

The growing radicalism of the officers in the wake of the French Revolution caused alarm in government circles. William Scott, an officer himself, wrote to Cornwallis that:

22 Ibid, xi.
23 Ibid, xi.
24 Ibid, xi-xii.
a plan was forming to establish a sort of military independence organization, [and] legislative and executive committees with all the cant of modern revolution were talked of with as much freedom and self-importance as in any paper read in the National Assembly of Paris.\textsuperscript{26}

During Duane’s period the dangerous nexus between pro-French newspaper editors and mutinous officers caused alarm in the government and led to the closing down of The World.

From 1791 to 1794 a group of East India Company officers used The World as a vehicle for criticising the structure of the East India Company army and the conditions under which they served. These men, writing under pseudonyms, are crucial to Duane’s Indian career. Duane wrote that the military was where his ‘most numerous attachment lay’\textsuperscript{27} and this attachment was based on friendship with officers and a shared political outlook. The World had close connections with the officers and one of their number, C. Fenwick, acted as a war correspondent for Duane and wrote regular letters from the field. Duane mixed socially with these men and held a deep respect for them. In return they provided him with a readership by buying his newspaper. The military nature of The World’s readership is seen in the reports Duane published on various campaigns, the letters about the EIC army and other military matters that he included, and the close attention he gave to news of promotion among the officers. It was among the officers that his sympathy, readership and livelihood lay.

By his publication of letters of complaint from the younger EIC officers, Duane allowed himself to become the mouthpiece of the company army, an involvement which effectively ended his career in Calcutta. His alleged faux pas, and what he was deported for if one believes the EIC records, was an attack on the

\textsuperscript{26} William Scott to Earl Cornwallis, 20 February 1796, P.R.O. 30/11/56 in Callahan, op. cit., p. 170.
\textsuperscript{27} BL/IOR/H/537, f. 207.
British ally, the Vizier of Oudh. But an analysis of other sources and a careful search through the official records yields another explanation. Duane was the editor mentioned in Earl Harrington’s *Sketch of the History and Influence of the Press in British India*, although he was not named: ‘Lord Teignmouth [Sir John Shore] had shipped for England the editor of a newspaper, who had advertized a pamphlet on the “rights” or the “wrongs” of the army, at a time when the temper of its officers was in a very critical state’. Duane’s threat to Governor-General Shore – that he had the support of the officers – and Shore’s response – Duane’s deportation – lend credence to Harrington’s statement. The EIC officers used the services of a series of democratic newspaper editors in Calcutta, Madras and Bombay. Although the agitation of the officers has been studied by Raymond Callahan in his *East India Company and Army Reform 1783-1798*, the collusion of the newspaper editors in the agitation has not. Duane was the first of these editors to be deported.

Callahan has argued that unrest in the EIC army is ‘scantily documented’. This is partly because many officers destroyed their correspondence when they were faced with the failure of their attempted plots. The *World*, then, is an important repository for information about the motives behind the agitation. Although it cannot replace the private correspondence that has been destroyed, it is a significant source that has been overlooked. The letters and articles in *The World* document debates amongst the officers themselves and between the officers

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29 Callahan, op. cit., p. 167.
30 Peter Stanley, writing on the EIC officers of the middle nineteenth century, faced the same paucity of primary material: ‘…it is difficult to understand these men, and harder still to like them. Obtaining more than a superficial acquaintance with them necessitates ranging across sources from the entire force over the whole period. Surprisingly little of their private correspondence survives in public collections, their memoirs are hardly more representative than those of their men, while their public writing often seems, in a word expressive of the tone of Anglo-Indian society, liverish.’ Stanley, op. cit., p. 32.
and government officials. It was also a clandestine publication (hence the pseudonyms) which was not sanctioned by the East India Company. Alongside the remaining fragmentary private correspondence and official records, The World is thus an important source of information on the activity of the officers.

The period of highest alarm for the government was 1795-1796. But it was at the end of Lord Cornwallis’ governor-generalship in 1793 that the trouble began. The time of Duane’s deportation, 1794, is the subject of the next chapter, as is press involvement in the crisis of 1795-96. What follows, then, is of the period from 1791 to 1793 when the officers debated the question of reform in The World.

In 1792 a paper-war erupted in the pages of The World. Using pseudonyms, a group of lieutenant-colonels debated among themselves the benefits of reforming the EIC army. Going under the names Senex, Juvenis, Stratiotes, Subaltern, Antony and Democritus, they attacked the promotions system in place in India. Because there was always a mutinous undercurrent among the Bengal officers there is much in the period from 1791 to 1793 that is repeated in 1795-1796 and seen again in later disturbances in the Bengal army.

In a letter of 14 April 1792 Senex attacked the slow system of promotion in the Indian army, pointing out:

> the grand obstacles which at present stagnate promotion, even (as we have lately experienced) in times of war and damp the spirits of young men, who at present linger in despair, while the golden calves (daily accumulating ones) must be worshipped for every indulgence or comfort by those, to whose prosperity they are the sole impediments.\(^\text{31}\)

Senex attacks more senior officers (in rank and age) as false idols to whom the young lieutenant-colonel must pay homage if he is to survive. The letter was from an up-country address, perhaps Cawnpore, as it was signed ‘From my Budgerow

\(^{31}\) The World, 14 April 1792.
in the Jungles’.\textsuperscript{32} This was the area in which the most mutinous behaviour took place during the troubles of 1795-96. \textit{Senex} then goes on to argue that ‘no full Colonel should be permitted to remain in the service more than three years after his arrival at that rank’.\textsuperscript{33} The retirement of the colonels would allow the lieutenant-colonels to be ‘raised to situations wherein (even if they had not a cowrie before) they might with liberal economy, acquire an independence in the limited period’.\textsuperscript{34} One is given a clear picture of the frustration of the lower officers in \textit{Senex}’s letter to \textit{The World}, a frustration which continually fuelled the discontent of the Bengal army. \textit{Senex} wants ‘promotion with all its benefits’ to ‘extend to every rank’ so as to:

> cheer the minds of hundreds, whose hearts are now breaking from a painful reflection on their long servitude, and who dare not lift their eyes to encounter the dreary prospect which yet remains, and in which they must terminate their wretched existence.\textsuperscript{35}

This frustration was coupled with resentment of the better conditions of the King’s officers. As \textit{Stratiotes} complained, the subaltern ‘surveys his conditions; his present situation and his future prospects, and he compares both with others: he looks to the Company’s troops to which he belongs, and compares them with those of the King; and he finds himself immeasurably sunk below them’.\textsuperscript{36}

The letter-writers’ main complaint was that promotion beyond colonel was not possible in the Company army. In practice it meant a queue of disgruntled lieutenant-colonels waiting for the colonels to die of old age or in battle. \textit{Stratiotes} was also angry that: ‘The Commanding officer of a Company in the King’s holds equal rank with the commanding officer of a battalion in the Company’s service,

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\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, 14 April 1792.
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid, 14 April 1792.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 14 April 1792.
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, 14 April 1792.
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, 14 April 1792.
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{The World}, 18 August 1792.
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and may occasionally controil him!'. Stratiotes even mixed in the issue of the emancipation of slaves with the evening out of differences in rank between King and Company officers:

There may arise persons to argue against placing the Bengal army on a footing with his Majesty’s troops – but sinister motives or ignorance must guide them; – our country will embrace equity, and will not suffer the partial distribution of honor and fortune – where all are of one country, of one title, one profession – the basis of that profession honor – and merit in neither party more eminent than in the other. That senate, that minister, which could loose the shackles of slavery, will not hesitate to break the fetters on the mind which custom and patient magnanimity, suffers to [retard? illegible] a class of citizens eminent and important to the state by their rank, their bravery, and their attachment.

Antony further politicises his letter by a broadside directed at the patronage system that the King’s army operated under, in making use of the word ‘equality’ as opposed to that of ‘preference’:

When I wrote before to the army, I recommended union, firmness, obedience, and attachment – among ourselves and to our cause and the common good of our country; our cause is good, and our reasoning, as it has been should continue moderate; let us point out to our superiors those supercessions to which we are exposed, from the low degrees in which we act compared with the Officers of his Majesty’s service, who hold commands; to remedy the evil or shew its cruelty, we do boast of services, of wounds, fatigues, and other vaunting claims to a preference; we require justices and here equality is bare justice.

Antony further attacks the ‘INTEREST’ he sees at play in the King’s army and in a strongly-worded tirade against the patronage system lashes out at ‘Boys, basking in the sunshine of fortune – ideots of quality, and misbegotten elfs of usurers and knaves’ who are:

pushed up the ladder of rank, and become the wanton tormentors of men, who have spent their lives, and shed their best blood in an honorable profession with character – with esteem – with everything but due reward.
He ends: ‘the mind shudders at the truth of this disgusting picture and is confounded at the stupor which can leave men to crouch under such cruelty!’.

His proposed remedy is to organise the officers into a lobby group so they can further their cause.

*Stratiotes* used *The World* as the forum for his call to organise into committees which would then present the officers’ complaints to Cornwallis. In a threatening tone *Stratiotes* demands that ‘They’, the EIC:

> will take off the interdict of resignation, and by a continuance of our pay, enable us to revisit our native clime, where we may invigorate those constitutions, by the strength of which their very existence is preserved, and awaken in our breasts new zeal, from a grateful sense of benefits received.

In a call to agitation which was seen as mutinous *Stratiotes* argued that ‘if my brother officers coincide with me in these sentiments, and in the sentiment who cannot coincide, they will lose no time informing committees, and laying before the Commander in Chief a respectful representation of their wishes’.

Unfortunately for the officers, these committees were judged as too readily mirroring the revolutionary committees of the French Revolution. *Stratiotes* wanted ‘each station’ to:

> elect its own Committee, each Committee fix on some one individual at the Presidency, of which a final committee to be formed…Thus every individual would have an opportunity of judging for himself and after the final and full consideration, it might be laid at the Lordship’s feet.

In a passage already laden with the language of the Radical Whigs, *Antony* argued that ‘much may be done by collecting the opinions of the several corps, as to the persons who should form Committees; and by the 10th day of April, 1793, they

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40 Ibid, 24 November 1792.
41 Ibid, 22 September 1792.
42 Ibid, 22 September 1792.
43 Ibid, 22 September 1792.
may be appointed, for the pursuit of the object, in a manner accordant with the spirit of the British constitution’. It appears that the officers were organising themselves, or combining, in the language of the eighteenth century. Like the shipwright John Gast, an early union activist, the EIC officers wished to use their Orphan Fund as a cover for more clandestine, and from the point of view of the EIC, illegal combining, using the structure of Committees. As Antony argued, ‘I should propose, that the secretary of each Orphan Committee, do on the first day of April next, receive a list of votes from each officer at the several stations’ which should be sent him with the names of nine officers to compose a Committee’.45

The proposal for the reforming Committees was, like the early union activity of the London artisans of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth-centuries, organised under democratic principles.46 The officers were to vote for nine men at Calcutta, Barrackpore, Berhampore, Dinapore, Chunar, Cawnpore and Futtyghur. The poll was to remain open for ten days after which the secretaries of the Orphan fund were to take, open and publish by circulation the names of the nine officers chosen by ballot to become members of the Committees who would ‘enter upon that duty’ on 15 April 1793.47 Antony argued that:

The Committees should be a liberal and discretionary plan, and when they should have executed their duty; the whole should transmit their resolutions and the opinions and contributions of the several constituents to a Committee; which should be formed of the field officers in garrison.

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44 Ibid, 24 November 1792.
45 Ibid, 24 November 1792. Duane was also involved in raising money for the Orphan Fund.
47 The World, 24 November 1792.
There would thus be, under Antony’s plan, nine sub-committees at the stations and at Calcutta headed by a committee at Fort William in Calcutta. Callahan’s work has shown that the EIC officers did combine and eventually used a committee system as part of their stand-over tactics against Sir John Shore.

Although the structure of the committees is unclear in the evidence offered by Callahan, what we do find in The World are the plans for the combining, using the committees. What we are witnessing in the pages of The World, then, is the beginnings of the ‘military independence organisation’ which proved so dangerous in 1796 and which confronted the government with ‘by far the most serious military challenge to authority since 1766’. The language the officers used borrowed heavily from the lexicon of the Radical Whigs and blended well with the language of the French Revolution with its heavy emphasis on equality. The movement also owed a debt to the practices of the early union movement in Britain. It is at this point in the history of the mutinous Company army that we also find Duane.

William Duane’s friendship with the EIC officers has been shown. Duane was friends with one of the leaders of the ‘committees of correspondence’ established by ‘several corps of the company troops’. This friend, Captain Thomas Williamson, was ‘a dear friend, and a man of transcendant [sic] qualities, in all that constitutes the social and intellectual man’. According to Duane this Williamson headed a sepoy regiment and in ‘the cause of the Company’s officers, his talents came naturally into action’.

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48 Ibid, 24 November 1792.
51 See p. 72 and the quote taken from the Aurora (1834-5), p. 379.
Williamson and the correspondents in *The World* were opposed to the plan of Cornwallis and Dundas to unite the King and Company armies into one Indian army. According to Marshall, the ‘officers of all three Presidency armies felt themselves threatened by reforms that would reduce their allowances and endanger their prospects of promotion’.

Writing in an 1834 issue of the *Aurora*, Duane argues that Dundas sought to divide the officers by giving selected older EIC officers much valued royal commissions and higher rank. He also argues that when the Cornwallis plan for the Bengal army circulated among the officers, after being canvassed for the first time by Cornwallis in Madras, it was Williamson who examined and reported on it and who subsequently wrote a seventy-seven page rebuke. The officers had by now organised themselves into ‘committees of correspondence’ which Shore thought of as ‘military independence organisations’. One joint letter written to the London Board of Directors concerned money owed to the officers from the third Mysore war.

Once these committees had received Cornwallis’ reform plan, entitled ‘Queries’, they began to rebuke him, particularly his argument that the Company army should be subsumed into the service of the King. The plan was first given to Colonel John Murray of the Bengal army in 1793 but Murray did not give his own response until January 1794. Duane claims that the agitation of Williamson and the EIC officers, that is near mutiny in the Bengal army, ‘sent Cornwallis to Europe nine months before his annunciation’.

Although this statement is highly contentious, Cornwallis did bequeath a mutinous Bengal army to his successor.

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On Duane’s account, Williamson’s campaigning led to Cornwallis leaving behind a ‘proscribed list, among whom was Captain Williamson’. Perhaps Cornwallis left behind his plan, and a list of troublesome officers, so that his successor could deal with them before they attempted to sabotage any reform. According to Duane, Williamson was court-martialled and deported from India, but this did not occur until Wellesley’s governor-generalship. Unfortunately for Shore, Cornwallis did not break the connection between the officers and newspaper editors such as Duane but left the querulous pro-officer editors in place.

The EIC officers, as has been shown by men such as William Tone and Captain Bailey, were of the same background as the men who helped organize and carry through the United Irish uprising in 1798. In fact one group of contemporaries, the Madras Officers, wrote to the Court of Directors on July 22, 1794 arguing that ‘the Indian Army had become…an army of subalterns’. The frustration of people such as the EIC officers, kept out of the patronage system because of their class, was a major reason why revolutionary movements had the impact they did. Perhaps it was indeed fortunate for the British government that there existed such an organization as the EIC to siphon off resentment, the inevitable result of an entrenched patronage system.

Michael Durey in his *Transatlantic Radicals* has shown how America acted as a place of migration for such individuals and the impact they had on American society, something in which Duane himself played a crucial role. What one sees in the Indian agitation of such men is a bottled up version of the impulse to revolution that blew up in Ireland and France. In Europe the fear was always present that agitation from the disaffected would catch on amongst the peasantry.

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60 Ibid, p. 380.
61 Callahan, op. cit., p. 22.
and urban lower classes leading to revolt, as it did in France and was to do in Ireland in 1798. In India, the official concern was that the sepoys would join in a mutiny led by European officers, or that the sepoys themselves would revolt against European rule, forcing the British from India, as they almost succeeded in doing sixty years later. The East India Company officers and the military independence movement which they founded and in which they plotted should be placed alongside the wider agitation against the patronage system, with its impulse towards revolution, which was at the root of the London Corresponding Society. British rule in India could not, and would not, accept the vision of India which the officers were pursuing as it would inevitably fracture the thin veneer of what European rule in India prided itself on: a hierarchical and stable rule as opposed to the anarchy which, they argued, preceded them during the rule of the Mughal Dynasty.

In Cornwallis’, Shore’s and Wellesley’s view the democratic impulse of the East India Company army represented anarchy and undermined both the British self-image and British legitimacy in India. Authoritarian rule was increasingly enforced to transform the small Anglo-Indian community into the ruling élite which it was to become in the nineteenth century. In the eyes of officialdom, a free press did not have a place in such a community. From British official circles and from the position of the Governor-Generals, the uniqueness of the East India Company army was also seen as redundant. But with tenacity and the threat of mutiny the officer corps of the EIC army – the Indian Army – were able to stave off being subsumed into the Crown forces for another sixty years. The officers used The World as a forum for this aim, alongside their campaigning for equality

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62 Henry Dundas, William Pitt and George III were all in favour of the amalgamation of the EIC Army into the Crown Army.
in rank and service with the Crown officers. For Duane, watching the fires of war burn on the distant European horizon, perhaps the EIC offered the closest, if ill-fitting, military tunic to the revolutionary citizen militias he saw emerging in France. His American writing stresses the importance of a citizen militia against the inherent potential for tyranny he saw in a standing army. At the heart of his political thinking, then, was an animosity towards the Crown army. The EIC European corps were ill-shaped by comparison with the revolutionary militias but in their opposition to the King’s army corps they could approximate Duane’s idealised citizen militia. Duane tried to ride on the back of the Indian Army’s strength and indeed expected its support when he was faced with deportation.
Deportation was the sword of Damocles which hung over the heads of the Calcutta editors. When Duane visited Canaple in 1791 he was warned of the fate of a predecessor. After Duane himself was sent to Britain three years later, he served as a warning to the remaining editors. In all there are six recorded deportations from India for the period from 1780 to 1799. Unlike in Britain, where editors were ruined through the libel laws and forced into exile, in India the government was able to bypass the cumbersome use of courts and instead directly send editors back to Britain by revoking their right to residency. In the case of Duane, who did not have a right to residency but had been allowed to stay by sufferance, his removal was even easier to achieve as he did not have to be stripped of his rights before being deported.

The imprisonment and deportation of editors and printers falls into two periods – before and after 1799. The period before 1799 was when there was an unregulated press existing under the threat of imprisonment, deportation and the closure of government patronage and postal resources. Although editors were warned and the government intervened in the running of the press, it was not an official written policy following the guidelines of regulation but was different for each of the Governor-Generals of the period. In 1799 Richard Colley Wellesley

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1 BL/IOR/H/537, f. 36.
2 The names of four of the six are known. They were Duane, Captain Williamson, Charles Maclean and Charles King Bruce.
(Earl of Mornington) changed this by bringing in a Censorship Act by order of himself, Governor-General in Council, which was ratified by the legal branch and Board of Directors of the East India Company. He took the unofficial government policy towards the Indian press and turned it into a tightly regulated censorship where the newspapers were constantly checked and the government was aware of who was printing the newspapers and where they were printing them from. Although the pre-Wellesleyian period cannot be called one of censorship, there were ad hoc controls on the press, an ad hoc censorship, which will be discussed before moving on to the 1799 Censorship Act and its ramifications. The roots of the 1799 Censorship Act are to be found in the governor-generalship of Warren Hastings and the birth of the press in India. Duane was to play an incidental role in the emergence of press censorship in India.

**James Augustus Hicky**

The first newspaper to be printed in India was not a mouthpiece of government but was published by a person who has been down-played and even despised by historians for his temperament. James August Hicky was the son of a linen-weaver of Long Acre, Ireland.\(^3\) Although bound as apprentice on 5 February 1754 to a William Faden, of the Stationers’ Hall, London, he never took up his freedom of the company.\(^4\) He later joined *The Marquis of Rockingham* as surgeon’s mate, arriving in Calcutta in December 1772.\(^5\) From 1772 to 1775 he traded in ships’ cargoes but unfortunately met with heavy losses at sea in 1775-6 and was

\(^{3}\) Shaw, op. cit., p. 51.
\(^{4}\) Nair, op. cit., p 23.
\(^{5}\) Shaw, op. cit., p. 51.
subsequently imprisoned for debt in October 1776. Somewhat ominously, the earliest known Calcutta press was the product of imprisonment. According to William Hickey, it was while in gaol and by ‘indefatigable attention and unremitting labour’ that James Augustus Hicky ‘succeeded in cutting a rough set of types which answered very well for hand-bills and common advertisements’. With a few hundred rupees then scraped together Hicky purchased proper printing types from England. He subsequently spent two thousand rupees on constructing a wooden press sometime in 1777.

Before being released from prison Hicky printed military pay bills and batta forms for the EIC. On his release in March 1778 he began printing military regulations for Lieutenant-General Sir Eyre Coote, but his commission was never completed and Hicky never received in full the money owing for what he had printed. In January 1780 he began printing his newspaper, *Hicky’s Bengal Gazette*. As Shaw has noted, *Hicky’s Bengal Gazette* was ‘the first Calcutta newspaper and moreover the first newspaper to be published in any language in India’. *Hicky’s Bengal Gazette* frequently made scurrilous allusions to members of the Calcutta establishment. Hicky, like Duane, had a mercurial temper, and according to the attorney William Hickey, James Augustus was ‘extremely violent, yielding so much to sudden gusts of passion and so grossly abusing whoever acted for him’. According to Nair, ‘Hicky’s Gazette was not tolerated by the senior civil servants of the East India Company as it started probing their public conduct and get-quick-rich tactics, and slandered them for nefarious

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6 Nair, op. cit., p. 23 and Shaw, op. cit., p. 52.
7 Nair, op. cit., pp. 25-6.
10 Shaw, op. cit., p. 52.
11 Ibid, p. 52
12 Nair, op. cit., p. 24.
activities’. After the complaint of a particular Simeon Droze, like Canaple’s complaint against Duane addressed to the Governor-General, the newspaper was prohibited from circulating through the Calcutta General Post Office. The pronouncement against Hicky’s paper stated that:

Public Notice is hereby given that as a weekly Newspaper called the Bengal Gazette or Calcutta General Advertiser, printed by J. A. Hicky, has lately been found to contain several improper Paragraphs, tending to vilify private Characters, and to disturb the peace of the Settlement, it is no longer permitted to be circulated thro’ the channel of the General Post-Office.


Simultaneously, Hicky’s rival in business, the editor of the new Calcutta newspaper, the India Gazette, was given free use of the postage system. In one example of Hicky’s libellous pen, he implied that the India Gazette had duped Hastings through his wife. Hicky argued that ‘there was something so sneaking and treacherous in going clandestinely to fawn and take advantage of a good-natured woman’ who was drawn into ‘a promise’ of getting ‘that done which I know would be highly improper to ask her husband, though his unbounded love for his wife would induce him to comply with’. In response to the postal ban Hicky launched into a tirade and argued that he had now:

but three things to lose, his Honour in the support of his Paper, his Liberty, and his Life, the two latter he will hazard in defence of the former, for he is determined to make it the scourge of all schemers and leading tyrants, should they illegally deprive him of his Liberty, and confine him in a jail, He is determined to print there with every becoming spirit, suited to his Case, and the deserts of his Oppressors.

Hicky went even further, stating that no ‘East India Company nor King their

12 Ibid, p. 47.
14 Ibid, p. 49.
15 Ibid, p. 49.
16 Ibid, p. 52
Master can wrest out of his hands’ the power to print a newspaper because ‘it is beyond the prerogative of the British Crown to invest the Company or their servants with such power’ as Hicky was ‘a Freeman of the first City in the British Empire, and free of the Printers and Stationers Company’. Hicky styled himself after Wilkes and used the language of a Radical Whig with his emphasis on natural rights as opposed to royal prerogative.

Hicky had made many enemies through his invective and they, as in the case of Duane, did not hesitate to use brute force to silence him. In April ‘an attempt was made to assassinate him…by two armed Europeans, assisted by a Moorman’.

Hicky dodged this assassination attempt but was soon faced with another, official, response to his libel. Warren Hastings began three criminal prosecutions against Hicky for libel and one civil suit for damages. Thus in June, 1781 ‘an armed band, consisting of several Europeans, some sepoys, and between them three or four hundred peons’ was sent by the Supreme Court to arrest and confine Hicky. The arresters battered down Hicky’s gate with a sledge hammer but then were faced with an armed Hicky who agreed peacefully to attend the Judges in Court after he was shown the ‘legal authority for his arrest’. The Court was subsequently adjourned and Hicky was committed to gaol. Hicky began again to print his newspaper from prison but his types were seized and sold on 6 April 1782 by the Sherriff on the order of the Supreme Court. Upon facing the charges he subsequently pleaded *forma pauperis* and remained in prison until February 1785. He was released by Hastings on the eve of the Governor-General’s

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17 Ibid, p. 52.
18 Ibid, p. 54.
21 Ibid, p. 68.
departure from India.\textsuperscript{22} It has been thought that this was the end of Hicky’s press career, but there is evidence that he worked again stemming from material published in John Almon’s \textit{General Advertiser}, from 3 September 1786. Almon’s newspaper carried a report from the East Indies entitled ‘Further Extracts from Hicky’s Bengal Gazette of January 21. & c. 1786’.\textsuperscript{23} What this demonstrates is that Hicky was either sending material to Almon – as there is no record anywhere of Hicky re-producing his newspaper after his gaol term – or he made one more attempt at printing a newspaper but it was such a failure that no record survives. The last official record of Hicky is a letter he sent to his old nemesis Warren Hastings in 1799 asking for money.\textsuperscript{24}

Instead of judging Hicky and Duane within an imperial framework, where they are the libellous little men of empire, I aim to compare their actions with what either they themselves did in other parts of the world or what their contemporaries were doing. It is easy to condemn a journalist, who in the context of Colonial Calcutta libels important people. But it would be useful to remember that British popular culture, and the print culture of which it was a part, commonly slung mud, rumour and invective as a levelling act against those who pretended or presumed to be above it. Given the practices of the patronage state, perhaps we can overlook some of the hyperbole of Hicky as excusable. Men in high place often were engrossed in corruption as it was an inevitable result of the system in which they worked. Although Hicky had a paranoid and highly personal approach to Anglo-Indian politics, one can see a counter-culture emerging against patronage based on egalitarian enlightenment values. Of course, in practice, both

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid, pp. 68, 74.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{General Advertiser} (London), 3 September 1786.
\textsuperscript{24} J.A. Hicky to Warren Hastings, Calcutta, 13 November 1799, in BL/Manuscripts/Add. 21173.f.116.
Hicky and Duane were far from egalitarian in their own treatment and payment of lowly journeyman printers who worked for them, but in the pages of their newspapers they offered a Radical Whig alternative to the patronage system.

From the imprisonment of Hicky to the spate of deportations in 1795 there were two other deportations, Duane’s in 1794 and another prior to 1791. Because of the gap in the records, it is unclear what occurred from 1780 to 1791. In Duane’s case it is clear that there was continuity both in his deportation and in the unknown editor who was deported before him, but there is no account of this editor in the official record. As such, apart from the example of Hicky, Duane stands as the real beginning in the official mind of the seditious and libellous Calcuttan press and the use of deportation to calm it.

**The Final Call**

On 30 May 1794, Sir John Shore faced his Council and said:

> The Board cannot have failed to remark the impropriety and intemperance of various publications which have lately appeared in the Saturday Paper “the World” but I avoid any particular specification of them with an exception only of a Publication in the paper of the 12th April last, dated Lucknow, in which the Vizier is spoken of in terms most personally offensive and injurious. The Editor of this Paper is known to be Mr. Duane.25

With this statement Shore foreshadowed Duane’s financial ruin. It set him on a course that took him from India as a prisoner on board an Indiaman, finally to arrive on American shores as part of the flotsam and jetsam of empire. We are told by Shore that through ‘the act of parliament, any subject of Great Britain residing in Bengal without a legal license or authority is declared to be guilty of a high

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crime and misdemeanour’. 26 He clarifies Duane’s residence as having been one under sufferance and that this sufferance was now to be withdrawn and Duane ordered to England. 27 Shore, in a letter to Lieutenant Mouggach, Adjunct to the Calcutta Town Guard, added that Duane was ‘required to give good and substantial security for complying with the requisition’ and he directed Mouggach to ‘secure Mr. Duane’s person and detain him until he has the security required’. 28 Duane’s deportation had begun.

The outbreak of war in 1793 had hardened feelings against revolutionary sympathisers such as Duane among the more conservative members of the Anglo-Indian community. From 11 June, 1793, when news of England’s entry in the Revolutionary War reached Calcutta, the mood shifted to one of war preparation. There was fear among the Anglo-Indian community of a lack of preparedness for war and the threat of French attacks on Indian interests such as vessels plying the trade routes between Europe and India. William Hickey noted in his diary that: ‘At this period we received an account of the capture of the Pigot, an Indiaman, in Bencoolen roads by two French frigates. The enemy availing themselves of our unprotected state in point of ships of war, made sad havoc amongst the British merchant vessels’. 29

The paranoia within the community over war can be seen in Richard Blechnyden’s fears that he would be somehow implicated because of his connections with the French in India:

Rec’d a letter from Eroyd written and directed in French! Just as if he had done it on purpose to render me suspicious in the eyes of Government for he must know that War is declared. Not having heard from Tiretta any thing about the taking of Chandernagore I

26 Ibid, f. 118.
27 Ibid, f. 119.
28 Ibid, f. 120.
began to be apprehensive on his account as he is a foreigner and therefore put off a man with a short Chit to him.\textsuperscript{30}

Blechnden’s loyalist opinions also give an example of how out of favour Duane’s pro-French sympathies would be in a bellicose and loyalist settlement which now switched its eyes from targets such as the Mysore kingdom to the French Republic. A balanced view of the revolution was certainly not in favour among men such as Blechynden:

went to Grillard’s…he had rec’d a most pressing invitation for Mr. De Verinne to go up there tomorrow to celebrate the 10\textsuperscript{th} of August or 2\textsuperscript{nd} Revolution. I gave him my sentiments there on perhaps fiercer than Politeness might ever want saying that every feeling mind must rather wish to have such a day blotted out of the Calender than to call the horror of it to remembrance by feasting which bordered upon Cannibalism. I answered him [Tiretta] in English and will endeavour to leave off talking French I do so abominate that perfidious race of people not content with murdering their King but they next assassinate his unhappy Widow. I always thought that man from his Cradle to his Grave was the protector of the Fair Sex not their Burchers! “All murders past do stand excused in this: and this so sole, and so unmatchable, Shall prove all deadly bloodshed but a jest, Exampled by this Heinous Spectacle.”\textsuperscript{31}

The hardening of the government’s attitude towards the newspapers, coupled with loyalist responses to war against the French republic, can be gleaned from Blechyden. He shows both his disdain for a pro-French piece in the \textit{Morning Post} and his view that Sir John Shore was beginning to work against the press. One sees a noose tightening around Duane because of the changing political climate and an intolerance for Duane’s pro-French sentiments and his support of the EIC officers. Duane felt for the first time ‘the hand of influence fall heavy on my labours, subscribers to my paper apologised for withdrawing their names, the alternative had been given them of relinquishing that or the good Will of persons

\textsuperscript{30}Blechynden Diaries, 1791-1795, BL/Add Ms 45581-45592, 12 June 1793, f. 79.  
\textsuperscript{31}Blechynden Diaries, 1791-1795, BL/Add Ms 45581-45592, August 1794, f. 301 and 5 May 1794, f. 10.
in power, Tradesmen attached to me by personal regard, were compelled to withdraw their advertisements, they were told that to advertise with me would be to ensure the loss of Custom of the same persons and all their friends’. It was in the pressure applied to military men to give up their subscriptions to his newspaper that Duane began to see a reason, besides his pro-revolutionary and pro-French stance, for the governmental strangulation of his business.

Duane argued that the military were where his ‘most numerous attachment lay’ and they were, in a like manner to the tradesmen and businessmen of Calcutta, pressured by government to cut any ties with him. But Duane tells us this was to no effect, which fits into the pattern of the headstrong and independent EIC army. Duane was told directly by an unnamed source that the government’s pressure on Duane’s sources of income and advertising was because of the essays and letters he had printed in support of the EIC army. He argued that his paper had been the vehicle for the sentiments of the EIC officers: ‘for a long time on those subjects which formed the sum of their late petitions to you [the Court of Directors]’.

From Blechneyden’s account and Duane’s it is clear that the government was operating an informal censorship which sought to apply pressure on editors. One sees Duane slowly being pushed beyond the pale of the community in the months from his beating in March to the order for his deportation in June. He was being forcibly ostracised from the community and would have faced certain ruin even without the order for his deportation three months after his horrific beating. This picture more than matches the accounts left

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32 BL/IOR/H/537, f. 207.
33 Duane asserted this connection again in 1801 when he argued that ‘he was in the special esteem of the gentleman of the army; who had made his paper the vehicle by which their grievances were complained of, and which have since been redressed in the most ample manner’. Aurora (Philadelphia), 17 July, 1801.
34 BL/IOR/H/537, f. 207.
by Blechnyden of a paranoid outpost of British loyalty fearful of the outcome of a now inevitable period of prolonged war with France. Blechnyden’s own reaction to the execution of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette is one of a new-found British revulsion towards the Revolution and all those who supported it, be they in France or in Calcutta. Blechnyden’s glee at Duane’s eventual deportation shows the gulf between the pre and post 1793 climate in Calcutta.

Meanwhile, Duane attracted even greater official ire with his publication of the attack on the British ally – the Vizier of the Nawab of Oudh. As C.A. Bayly has noted in *Empire and Information*, the ruling authority which was able to control the flow of knowledge and the construction of image in eighteenth-century India was also the power that legitimised its rule.35 Part of the image of legitimacy was in claiming an allegiance with (or inheritance from) the Mughal empire. To allow attacks from a British stronghold on a ruler linked to this inheritance was to weaken British government claims to legitimacy as successors of the Mughals. In Duane’s framework, a democratic press criticising government was a natural right; but in the context of a *realpolitik* need for legitimacy, criticism of the Vizier and by extension the Nawab of Oudh, an ally of Britain and a Mughal-legitimised figurehead, was dangerous to British rule. In the records and correspondence surrounding the deportation of Duane three motives for his deportation are mentioned. The first is Duane’s libel against the Vizier of Oudh. The second is his support for the French Revolution and his proselytising of the writings of Tom Paine. The third is the role of *The World* in the campaigning of the EIC officers. That there was more than one reason for his deportation is strengthened by Shore’s correspondence to Henry Dundas on 31 December, 1794, at the time of

35 Bayly, op. cit.
Duane’s deportation:

Our Newspapers in Calcutta have of late assumed a licentiousness, too dangerous to be permitted in this Country. I have ordered one of the Editors to be sent to Europe; his name is William Duane, and I think You will agree with me, that his Conduct did not entitle him to the Protection of the Company: he addressed a Letter to me, in Terms of Intimidation, and as he has long been ordered to return to Europe, he was apprehended & confined to the Fort by my Directions.  

The proposition here is that the Calcutta newspaper editors had become a ‘Tribe of Editors’ who could not be reconciled to the politico-military reality of a British Empire in India. The ‘terms of intimidation’ is a direct reference to Duane’s threat to use the support of the EIC officers in his cause, at a time when Shore was struggling to keep them from mutinying. Shore undercuts the significance of Duane’s libel by explicitly mentioning the third, and strongest, motive for Duane’s deportation – his involvement with the EIC officers.

Shore’s order of the 30th of May was meant as a warning to the other Calcutta editors as much as a punishment of Duane. This is made clear by the account of a resident of Calcutta, John Kelly, when writing to Mathew Carey, a leading Republican publisher in Philadelphia, who was later to know Duane. In Kelly’s account the second motive for Duane’s deportation is spelt out fully:

We have no liberty of the Press in Calcutta. A Mr. Wm Duane Proprietor & Editor of a Paper called the World, was sent to England last month by Sir John Shore, for advocating the cause of France, and attempting to disseminate the democratic principles of

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36 Sir John Shore to Henry Dundas, 31 December 1794, in Holden Furber (ed.), The Private Record of an Indian Governor-Generalship. The Correspondence of Sir John Shore, Governor-General, with Henry Dundas, President of the Board of Control 1793-1798 (Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, MCMXXXIII), p. 63.
37 Wellesley to Henry Dundas printed in, Ingram, op. cit., p. 235.
38 John Kelly to Mathew Carey, Calcutta, 23 January 1795, Lea and Febiger Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania. This letter was first brought to my attention through an internet article by Jeffrey Pasley which has subsequently appeared as a chapter of his book, Jeffrey Pasley, “The Tyranny of Printers” Newspaper Politics in the Early American Republic (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 2001), p. 179. Perhaps it is worth commenting that while certainly Shore partly deported Duane for his support of the French Revolution and his Paineite politics these are not Shore’s words, something which Pasley’s text, possibly by mistake, does not make clear.
Tom Paine in his Paper. They did not give him a day to settle his affairs, but packed him off like a Felon on board Ship. Six other Printers were formally cautioned by Government not to insert a syllable against the Constitution of England, otherwise they should positively experience the fate of Duane. Since that intimation the Printers are shop fallen and have struck, consequently our Papers not worth having.

Kelly’s interpretation of events gives us a crucial insight into how the other editors were judging Duane’s deportation, particularly his comment that six other editors were warned from following Duane’s political lead. But Duane was not given only a day to settle his affairs; in a cat and mouse game he evaded his order of deportation by both correspondence and stealth for a further six months. Although the order was given on the 30th of May, Duane was not physically deported until early January, 1795. Duane had good reasons to avoid an early deportation; he had substantial amounts of money tied up in the bills of exchange system and could not collect this money or discharge his debts quickly. He also had in his charge three orphaned children who were the offspring of a Captain Andrews of the British Navy whom Duane had befriended in Calcutta. Duane did not want to abandon the children to the rigours of a parentless Indian life. He also did not want to face his own family back in Clonmel as a pauper, as penniless as the day he boarded the Rodney in 1787. Instead, he successfully wrote for a reprieve of the deportation order until he could settle his financial matters. He also argued, unsuccessfully, that, as he was a native of North America (a claim he had neither the evidence nor ability to substantiate) he should be allowed to choose passage on a ship bound for the United States and not Britain. Duane’s later than expected deportation was the result of a combination of luck and determination.

On 2 June, a body of armed sepoys were sent to arrest Duane by order of the Governor General. Four of the sepoys were ordered to seize Duane and pin

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him to the ground if he tried to resist and to secure him. But Duane was elsewhere. Because of the severity of the assault in March, Duane had retired to recover near the banks of the Houghly. Duane tells us that the beating had ‘rendered a change of air and tranquillity necessary to the re-establishment of my health’. While the sepoys searched the house a boat was ‘stationed at Chandpaul Ghaut with another Guard who received orders from Lieut. Mouggach to convey me on board the Boddington then lying under the Guns of Fort William ready to sail’.

Duane’s respite meant his deportation was to be postponed for another seven months. Duane was quick to act. He was warned by letter, from Calcutta, of the raid on his house. While arguing that he was not disobeying the government he tells them he wants security for his property and an explanation of the government’s displeasure. He also argued that he was prepared to go by any ship ‘appointed for the approaching season’ so that he could dispose of his property and settle his debts in the interim. He also tried to placate Shore’s annoyance by saying that he would steer away from sensitive political topics in The World, something that he had promised at the beginning of his editorship. In reply, the government was clear in their decision to deport him but tried to soothe Duane by telling him that although he would be deported to Britain by the ‘first vessel that may be dispatched…after the end of July next’, he would be allowed to return to Calcutta and remain there until the day of his deportation. It was made clear to Duane that he was under penal obligation to surrender himself anytime that the

40 BL/IOR/H/537, ff. 208-9.
41 Ibid, ff. 208-9.
43 Ibid, f. 125.
44 Ibid, f. 125.
46 Ibid, f. 129.
government required. This 6 June reprieve happened because the Indiaman meant to carry Duane had already sailed. It was also a way of coxing Duane out of hiding. His new deportation date was 18 July. If Duane had known he was to be automatically deported he would have fled inland or to another presidency.

After the revocation of his arrest warrant, Duane attempted to gain more time than a short month. On 14 June he successfully begged for a lengthier reprieve because of the state of his finances and to take care of the three orphans entrusted to him. Again, the government extended their deadline, from 18 July to the dispatch of ‘the first Indiaman homeward bound to Europe from this Country’. Duane had also argued in his 14 June letter that he had to attend hearings at the Supreme Court in lieu of the assault he had suffered in March.

Duane, always ready to project his own concerns onto those around him, argued that the ‘public at large looked forward with some hope that the laws and the verdict of an English Jury would obtain justice for me and an exemplary security for others’. When the case did appear in the Supreme Court, Duane argued that the defendant of the assault charge was closeted with the Grand Jury for three days in a row, whereas he himself (the plaintiff) and ‘ten respectable witnesses’ had been forbidden access and were not called upon to give evidence. He further adds in his account that to the public’s astonishment and ‘to the shame of British Jurisprudence in Asia’ his case was thrown out of court.

Duane turned to the head of the magistracy in Calcutta, Sir John Richardson, for advice on his ensuing deportation and to seek further common law

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48 This was not the first time Duane had to attend court. He had been involved in a court-case involving ownership of the Bengal Journal and one in 1792 stemming from a quarrel over an English actress. Michael Roworth, manager of the local theatre, was spurned by the actress and refused Duane permission to eat backstage with the actress and other actors because of jealousy. They had an argument which led to the court case. See Phillips, op. cit., p. 23.
redress over the assault. Richardson knew the particulars of the assault case and
gave Duane a straightforward answer of which Duane has left this account,
paraphrasing (and perhaps adding to) Richardson’s account: ‘you have infallible
grounds and complete evidence to maintain an action at law, with a certainty of
high damages…thro’ the Expences in which your adversaries would take care to
involve you; people in office make a common cause of it:- that is done. I advise
you to bear your injuries with as much patience as you can – the whole influence
of Government is opposed to you!’.51

Apart from the law, Duane also tried to avoid deportation by claiming he
was a citizen of the United States. Not only did he evoke the Laws of Nations,
eighteenth-century international law as it existed, but he also made representations
to Mr Jay, American consul in Calcutta, soliciting his help.52 It was not
forthcoming because Duane did not have any documents to support his claims to
American citizenship. The East India Company also had enough evidence in their
records to refute Duane’s claims to an American birth. In their records he had
written his place of birth as Newfoundland, thus Duane was contradicting himself
and the authorities were aware of this. Duane, alongside re-inventing his
American past, booked a passage on an American bound ship for April 1795 in
the hope that he would either come under the wing of Jay’s protection or the
government would grant him a reprieve. Neither occurred. Duane also planned to
sell his property on January 1 and had arranged an auction for that date. He was
not to be there. On November 3 Duane was given the order which he knew was
coming and which thwarted his career, bringing him to a complete ruin, from
which he would not recover for five years.

52 Ibid, f. 154.
On 3 November Duane was ordered to hold himself in ‘readiness to proceed to Europe by one of the Company’s Ships of the first Division to be dispatched from this presidency, and that necessary orders will be given for your being received on board’.

Because he was out of Calcutta, at Entally, he did not receive the notice until Sunday 9 November. He stalled for more time by not replying to the letter until 22 November. Duane wanted four more months to settle his affairs. He wanted to go to his ‘native country’, America, and attempted to bargain for more time. He argued that he would be willing to go to England in a fortnight’s time if he were indemnified by the East India Company for the loss of his standing property after it had been evaluated by ‘two disinterested persons’ and to take his outstanding debts at his own risk.

Duane was frightened to return to London (even though he had lived there for five years) as there was ‘every reason to think the Landing in England to me a strange country in a state of disorder, would prove extremely pernicious, and would in itself be a considerable aggravation of the hostile measure taken against me without charge, accusation or trial’.

The government’s answer to Duane was a resounding no. He must and would get himself ready and choose a ship of the first line for his departure.

In a desperate last move Duane tried two conflicting methods simultaneously: he tried to use a slight acquaintance with Shore from his time in the Revenue Department alongside straightforward blackmail, using the threat of the EIC army. In a cutting retrospective anecdote Duane tells us that:

from a slight knowledge of Mr. Shore, while I was in office under a former administration to place some reliance in his regard to his present elevated Rank and character; I could not be tempted to

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53 Ibid, f. 135.
54 Ibid, ff. 135-6.
believe that the Bosom Friend of Sir William Jones and his successor in the philosophie [sic] throne of Asia, could connive at, much less countenance actions so repulsive of British Justice, of every principle moral and amiable.  

And yet Duane leaves out of his account the clear attempt he made to use the weight of the EIC army, a group that Shore was struggling unsuccessfully to keep under control.

In a letter to the Secretary to the Governor General on 26 December, Duane warned that if he did not receive an audience with Shore he would be forced to print an inflammatory address to the army. He said that ‘if honored with a line that I shall have an interview with Sir John Shore, I shall suspend the publication of my case, altho’ it is now nearly printed off and will be removed hence before this letter can possibly reach you. I shall wait with hope for an answer till nine o’clock, or till my messenger returns’.  

In a letter to Shore himself Duane was bold enough to:

beg leave to solicit ten minutes audience of you tomorrow morning…Half and hour’s audience would save and prevent, I confidently believe, a sea of troubles, it is my purpose to publish tomorrow the state of Grievences which I have sustained under this Government, an intimation that I shall have the honor of a hearing will prevent it, this effort made, my conscience is satisfied and fate must wing her course.

Duane did not wait to publish his address to the army but published and distributed it on the days before December 27. He also printed his last World, which carried a strong attack on ‘the British Government [in India] as it is Wickedly called’. Again, Duane argued he was an American citizen who had submitted to the government’s authority ‘but protested against the violation of my property, the infringement of the laws of Nations in my person not being a British
He warned government that the sums of money he owed, which he did not have the present means to discharge, would be passed on and become the government’s responsibility. Further, he hinted that ‘extra-judicial influence was employed to prevent my obtaining justice in the Common Courts of Law’, accusing the government of perverting the course of justice for its own gain. In Duane’s last evident article in an Indian newspaper we have the final cries of a Painite increasingly isolated in a sphere of loyalist opinion:

Englishmen, I have experienced the blessing of Liberty in your country and for a time I wished to be one of you:- by all who knew me I shall be received with esteem when I arrive there again. I return without disgrace, I trust in God I shall find them free, that I may forget that slavery exists any where.

Duane as Englishman is in the past; he stands proclaiming he is an American. And yet he was thought to be Irish. In the above, politics seeps through the porous national boundaries Duane draws over his political identity. If England is ‘free’ he is English; if America is ‘free’ he is American. For Duane, ‘free’ is both any place which shares his radical vision and his by now Painite internationalist hope for a universal humanity unbound and emancipated. Whereas before this point Duane could still be labelled a Radical Whig who bordered on Painite radicalism, his rejection of all things English marks his break into ultra-Republicanism and a full embrace of the Painite inheritance. In pressing for this

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61 Ibid, f. 182.
63 See Blechynden Diaries, 1791-1795, BL/Add Ms 45581-45592, 6 January 1795, f. 24. Duane’s embrace of the French Revolution and move away from an English identity is matched with the demise of the Real Whigs which Robbins has charted: ‘Their history was one of failure and frustration. A few lived on through the French Revolution. The radicalism that began to manifest itself in the early nineteenth century, though indisputably connected with earlier movements, was strongly coloured by newly defined utilitarianism, by continental theories, and by the changed balance of town and country, of industry and agriculture. The terror of the Gordon riots, the failure of Wyvill’s associations, the outcry about the speeches and sermons which celebrated in short succession the anniversary of the English Revolution and the birth of a new order in France, marked the end of the Commonwealthmen’. Robbins, op. cit., p. 321.
universalism he forgets the power of the local, the particular, and the familiar. Although Duane thought the soldiers and officers of the EIC would rise up to protect him from deportation, they too made their choice.

The authorities found copies of one of Duane’s inflammatory notice to the army in the New Fort. Shore had known of its circulation. Shore could not give legal proof of Duane’s authorship but ‘without a moment’s hesitation’ attributed it to him as he was the only one in the settlement to whose character and situation it applied. We do not have Duane’s printed and circulated grievance for the 26 December, only an earlier one from June. Shore mentions that ‘although he long since received information of it and of its general circulation’ he had only recently come to possess it. Perhaps the reason why government was so lenient leading up to his December deportation was because the government was frightened at the extent of his influence on the army. The notice is an implicit threat of mutiny for the sake of Duane:

To the Army,

The Editor who stood forth the organ of your claim is to be sacrificed. It has been resolved to take him by force, and transport him on a ship now laying in Calcutta River, for Europe. The attempt has been made by a Body of Sepoys under the Command of Lieut. Mouggach but without success hitherto: but as the Editor is bound in honor to appear at the sessions the ensuing week, the laws are not likely to be regarded, and thus ruin must follow. His property valued at thirty thousand Rupees will repair the loss. This points out to you the opposition you are to expect by this attack made on him whose only crime is having spoken your sentiments, without mercenary stipulations, or interested view on his part, but from a conviction of their justice and your honor.

The grievances Duane published on the 26 December would have been similar in tone, if perhaps more strident, to the above address. By pushing his EIC

64 BL/IOR/H/537, f. 154.
army connection and blackmailing the government Duane got what he wanted, a meeting with the Governor-General, but it was not what he expected.

His attempts to either repatriate himself to the United States, block his deportation through legal means, or blackmail the government using the threat of a company army mutiny, were brushed aside and his deportation order was firmly maintained. On the morning of 27 December, Duane arrived at Government House for his interview with Shore, thinking his ruse had worked. Instead, he was drawn into the levee room where Sir John Shore and his secretary waited and as he approached Shore Duane was stopped by a Captain Collins who told him that he was to be committed close prisoner directly to Fort William. With a stamp of his feet, Collins summoned ‘about 30 Sepoys with naked bayonets’ who sprung upon Duane from an inner chamber where they had been hidden. With their weapons aimed at Duane, subterfuge was over. Duane continued to protest to Shore, but was quickly silenced and led into Fort William where he was kept for two days. Shore had run out of patience with Duane and took his threat of EIC army involvement seriously. At Duane’s bedside he had a guard placed as well as two at the door of the Fort William chamber. Duane was not ‘permitted for any occasion to pass; conversation and correspondence was interdicted but in the presence of an officer of the Guard whose duty immediately lay at the extremity of the Fort’. Duane also complained that his letters were intercepted, their seals broken and they were kept, a sign that Shore was careful not to give Duane another opportunity to foment mutiny in the company army’s ranks. Shore was also careful not to involve the EIC officers in any way with Duane’s arrest and deportation. Duane was ‘removed under an Officers Guard of Kings Grenadiers

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67 Ibid, ff. 217-8
69 Ibid, f. 219.
on board a sloop where another officer and Guard of Kings light Infantry received and conveyed me on board the William Pitt Indiaman’. Not an East India Company officer or soldier was in sight.

Meanwhile, word had spread through the settlement in the intervening two days that Duane had been captured and was to be deported. The looters and thieves moved in. Some of them were Duane’s former Indian servants. Duane tells us that: ‘My House distant a mile from Calcutta, without a friend acquainted with my situation to protect it and my property, was converted into a scene of pillage, those faithless assiatics [sic] who rioted in plenty and indolence during my prosperity, made away with plate, Book, etc’. Duane knew not what became of his ‘first seven years arduous, patient and applauded industry’ as ‘it had been sunk, I was torn from it and those who assailed me did not protect it’. From Duane’s account he lost 22,000 Sicca Rupees from his printing office; ‘Oriental characters’ which he had made; his newspaper, ‘valuing it at only two years profit…worth 40,000 Sicca Rupees’; and lastly household goods such as furniture, plates, books, linen and apparel, ‘which cost, upwards of 6000 Rupees’. Even with Duane’s penchant for hyperbole and his captive audience when writing the above account – the EIC Board of Directors in London – he had indeed lost a considerable amount: his home, office, and business along with the wealth he had accumulated through his hard work. He now exchanged all this for a claustrophobic room on board the waiting William Pitt.

Duane was kept locked below for the duration of the return voyage aboard a ship which earlier that year had been fighting a French fleet of the coast of the

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70 Ibid, f. 219.
71 Ibid, ff. 219-220.
72 Ibid, f. 220.
73 Ibid, f. 220.
74 Ibid, ff. 220-1.
A parting shot at Duane has been left by the arch-royalist Blechynden who connects Duane to a French spy:

Arose at 5 wrote till Gun fire then rode to the Esplanade on Bucephalus where I met Rothman. Got off and walked with him. He began upon Duane said that Sir John [Shore] has sent home very heavy charges against him. That he applied here to a notary to draw up a Protest against them sending him home as he is an American subject. The notary (who he is I know not) said he could not draw up a Protest from his mere Ipse Dixit. He must have some Documents. D, having none he asked where he was born after a little hesitation he said at Quebec. The notary said that made him clearly a British subject. He then stammered out that he was born in the Jerseys. The notary said he could not be born in 2 places. Where did he first recollect himself at Wexford in Ireland. Why they say you were born in Ireland and now you brove it yourself. Duane being thus caught said no more. Rothman assured me that Richmont made a Fool of him & actually sent him to Tamper with such of the French Prisoners in the Fort as spoke English & make them acknowledge themselves Artists, in which case they would get employment in Calcutta. On giving security, which security Richemont would furnish that whilst they were so out of confinement they were to go up to Chadernagore where Richemont would point out a very essential service they could render their Country in expedient (i.e assassinating) some Aristocrats there That to their credit they received the proposal with honor & threatened to Break Duane’s bones if he came again & related what passed to the Guard by which means it became known & Richemont was removed from Chandernagore to Ghyratty house where he has ever since remained.

For Duane the next five months would not be easy. Confined on board even when in port at St. Helena and in a state of shock from both his financial losses and his last fugitive months in India, he was to harbour a bitterness towards British rule which lasted his whole life. Instead of finding India to be a land of riches for an aspiring Irish youth, Duane had in the end found his own personal dystopia.

The warship which Duane was deported on and which was to be his prison from January to June 1795 was manned by sailors who had already seen action and death in fighting the French Indian Ocean Fleet off the Coast of Sumatra.

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24 BL/IOR/L/MAR/B/184D, 25 January 1794.
25 Blechynden Diaries, January 6 1795, BL/Add Ms 45592, ff. 24-6.
Since leaving from Portsmouth in 1793, the *William Pitt* had sailed extensively around India and South East Asia. The Captain of the *William Pitt* was a forty-one year old Scotsman by the name of Sir Charles Mitchell. He had been the *Pitt*'s captain since 1785.\(^76\) Duane made the claim that there were others, EIC officers, deported with him. There is no record of this in the EIC archives or in the ship’s log. But Shore does talk about more men than Duane, although he is not specific.\(^77\)

Duane’s ambiguous status in the settlement, an educated newspaper editor who, whilst a ‘European adventurer,’ was not a hardened and violent petty criminal, is brought out in Shore’s comments to the Court of Directors wrapping up the deportation of Duane:

> I have thought it expedient to send to England by the Ships under dispatch, some Europeans of bad character. Unless measures of this nature were occasionally adopted, the settlement and country would be overrun with profligate characters, over whom the Law has not a sufficient control.

> Without including Mr. William Duane in this description I beg leave to point him out to your particular notice. He arrived in Bengal in the character of a recruit in the Hon’ble Company’s service and has for many years been the Editor of a Newspaper called the World.

> The temper and principles of this man, may be known from his publications and some papers which I have laid before the Board and which accompany the public dispatches. I beg leave to point them out to your particular attention.\(^78\)

On Wednesday 7 January 1795 the ship unmoored and moved out towards the Indian ocean. Duane, sunk low, the opposite of the buoyant youth on his adventurous first, transoceanic, voyage on board the *Rodney*, was imprisoned in a room purchased from one of the petty officers, which was six feet by six feet and was on the gun deck.\(^79\) From the 7 January till 19 March the ship had a clear


\(^{77}\) BL/IOR/H/537, ff. 164-6.

\(^{78}\) Ibid, ff. 164-6.

\(^{79}\) William Duane, *Copy of a Memorial to Court of Directors*, Grays Inn, 26 August 1795, Duane Family Papers APS.
passage around India and Cape Hope. The weather between Calcutta and St. Helena, reached on the 19th, had consisted mainly of fresh breezes. In harbour it continued as such. But for Duane locked beneath in his cabin there was only the thought of his lost property and freedom.

We have conflicting accounts of the condition of the ship. Duane argued that he had been ‘a total stranger to every species of disease and illness until the sudden and violent charge which brought me here from every comfort that competency affords in Bengal to confinement in a wretched dear bought space in the foul air of a closed ship, to scant and to bad provision, shook my constitution’. But the Captain in his letter to the Governor of St. Helena pointed out that: ‘The ship I have the honor to command is clean, clear and healthy. If it is necessary I beg leave he [Duane] may represent his treatment before you in Council, I shall gladly meet the enquiry, conscious as I always am of performing my duty and with humanity to my fellow creatures’. Although no ship, no matter how clean or in what condition, would have been a happy place for Duane, there is ample evidence that Captain Mitchell did try to alleviate his suffering but was largely constrained by the orders he had received to take care that Duane did not escape. In a reply to Duane’s complaints and requests to visit St. Helena, Mitchell even had his own steward collect Duane’s linen to be washed. The three orphans who accompanied Duane undoubtedly suffered, as can be judged from Duane’s comments that: ‘They want air, they want milk and vegetables and bread, which tho’ plenty on shore are not to be had here for the love of humanity nor for money’. But Mitchell subsequently acquiesced to Duane’s request and had the

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80 BL/IOR/L/MAR/B/184D, 7 January-19 March, 1795.
81 BL/IOR/H/537, ff. 174-5.
82 Ibid, f. 173.
84 Ibid, f. 170.
children set up on St. Helena with private lodgings and a servant to attend them. He also tried to ease Duane’s suffering from being imprisoned by adding, ‘if there is anything you want there, I shall be happy to procure it for you, or my steward will’.\(^{85}\) Duane also reveals in an unsent letter an admission that the ship was exactly the same as other vessels in times of war: ‘as to the state of the ship I suppose it is exactly like others deeply laden with merchandise, & equipment for War and strong with men’.\(^{86}\) Duane also reminisces thirty years later that he watched American whalers circumnavigating St. Helena, which means he either had a window in his cabin or was occasionally let above board for exercise and fresh air.\(^{87}\) Mitchell tried to help Duane by suggesting that if his health worsened he should apply to the Governor in Council at St. Helena. Mitchell was constrained by his order: ‘prevent the Escape of Mr. Duane from the Ship whilst in the River, or any opportunity which may happen during the voyage’.\(^{88}\) Outside of this order, one tied to his future career, Mitchell helped Duane when he could. He certainly could not have allowed Duane to change to another ship to leave St. Helena early, which is what Duane requested for himself and the children. Duane, depressed, imprisoned, lonely and sick, would have found this impossible to understand.

Mitchell’s friendly tone to Duane can be compared with the sarcastic and heavy handed one from the Governor at St. Helena who took the opportunity to taunt Duane for his past foibles and politics. He called Duane a ‘foreign

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\(^{85}\) Ibid, f. 171-2.  
\(^{86}\) William Duane to Governor of St. Helena, (undated copy not sent), Duane Family Papers, APS.  
\(^{87}\) On a later visit to South America Duane commented that: ‘The landing at Laguayra has been held forth as unusually dangerous. Those who have had occasion to land at St. Helena or at Madras, would consider it as a matter of very little difficulty at the worst...we landed in a manner such as I had seen practiced in Sandy Cove, St. Helena, by the boats of some American whalers, one of a company who made a party of pleasure round that island in 1795, where I was detained three months’. William Duane, *A Visit to Columbia* (1826), p. 21.  
\(^{88}\) BL/IOR/H/537, f. 163.
Incendiary’ and said that Duane’s wish to reside on St. Helena ‘is not supposed to be safe or consonant to our British Laws…the many proofs exhibited in a paper called the World, published at Calcutta under your signature are esteemed sufficient’. It is questionable how dangerous Duane would have been accompanied by a guard on St. Helena for a few hours or a day to stretch his legs. Once Duane was on board the William Pitt, though, all parties – the Governor General in Council, Captain Charles Mitchell and the Governor at St. Helena – were determined that he should be sent back to England without any chance to escape. Further, the prolonged period in port at St. Helena and his confinement mark out the period from January to July 1795 as one of imprisonment and not just deportation. He was confined in a locked room, a cell, on board ship and the Pitt’s expected debarkation date at Portsmouth would have been known to the government in Calcutta. It was a confinement by the EIC and Governor-General without trial or jury. As such, it was underhanded and illegal.

On Friday 15 May 1795 the William Pitt unmoored, weighed anchor, and moved into deeper water. It joined a fleet of twenty-three ships under the command of Commodore Winston. The fleet continued towards England on watch for any French ships. On Tuesday 16 June 1795, at 4 a.m., the Commodore signalled the Pitt to chase two ships to the westward. At 6 a.m. the signal to leave off from the chase was given. The William Pitt was entering a battleground between the British and French fleets. It was the closest Duane would get to the armed revolutionary struggle he had admired from afar. After cruising for French ships, the William Pitt and the fleet moved towards the British ports and on the 23

90 BL/IOR/L/MAR/B/184D, 15 May 1795.
91 Ibid, 15 May 1795.
92 Ibid, 16 June 1795.
July 1795 with fresh gales from the westward and squally weather the William Pitt moored at the Downs.\footnote{There is conflicting information over the date on which he landed in England. The ship’s log gives 23 July, 1795 as the day on which the ship docked but Duane in his later newspaper the Aurora (1834-5) gives 1 July 1795 as the day he landed. See: BL/IOR/L/MAR/B/184D, 23 July 1795 and \emph{Aurora} (1834-5), p. 26.} Portsmouth was reached next; as the ship moved into dock, Duane was close to freedom again.

**Breaking the Link**

By breaking the connection between Duane and the EIC officers the government had rid themselves of one officer-newspaper link, but there were others. In March 1795 The editor of the \emph{Madras News} was deported by Lord Hobart, the governor of Madras, “for circulating democratic opinions” that might affect the army’.\footnote{Callahan, op. cit., p. 159.} In time, the government began to understand that it was not the newspapers themselves that were solely the problem, realising instead that it was wiser to attack the EIC officers themselves for circulating democratic opinions that might carry on into the newspapers. On 20 February 1796, David Scott, an Indian Army officer, wrote to Cornwallis of the threat of mutiny within the Indian Army.\footnote{Ibid, p. 170.} But Shore in a letter to Hobart on the 23 January gave voice to personal fears based on an even more alarming rumour. Based on the activities of men such as Captain Williamson, the rumour was that the officers of the brigades in Oudh had debated whether to seize Shore and Abercromby themselves.\footnote{Ibid, p. 170. Word reached London as well. On 9 June 1796 \emph{The Telegraph}, the newspaper Duane was to edit, reported that: ‘Private advices from India also mention, that several of the British Officers on the Company’s Establishment were in a state of mutiny; that an Officer of high rank acts as their President, and that they have a regular chain of correspondence throughout India’.}

In this heated context the government continued in its attempts to undermine the links between the E.I.C. officers and their spokesmen in the
newspapers. A series of mutinies within the ranks of the sepoys of the Indian Army further heightened fears over what was happening in the army. An account given in Duane’s newspaper in London, *The Telegraph*, 9 June 1796, actually links the concerns of the above threat, of a ‘white mutiny’, with that of sepoy rebellion, and comes from intelligence sent from India early in 1796 at the time of Scott’s and Shore’s fears:

according to a private letter received from a Gentleman high in the Company’s service in India, the 25th battalion of Sepoys, commanded by Capt. Grant, having been ordered to Batavia, the troops refused to embark; on which the Governor General and Council ordered this corps to be disbanded. The troops refusing to deliver up their arms, the 29th battalion of sepoys was ordered against them, and at length fired on them, by which several men were killed. Some days after, four other battalions of Native troops were ordered to Ganjam, on the Coast, but refused to proceed, until the 29th battalion was punished for having fired on their companions. The Native troops remained in this state of mutiny when the latest accounts left Bengal…

As a precaution against the threat of mutiny, artillery was ordered into the Fort of Calcutta for safety. The above account was juxtaposed with the following report on the threat of ‘white mutiny’: ‘Private advices from India also mention, that several of the British Officers on the Company’s Establishment were in a state of mutiny; that an officer of high rank acts as their President, and that they have a regular chain of correspondence throughout India’. Callahan is careful to point out that this particular plot against government collapsed in February 1796 and with it the insubordinate officers and their agents in London burnt all trace of their letters.

Even after fears of the kidnapping and mutiny had subsided, the

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97 *The Telegraph* (London), 9 June 1796.
98 Ibid, 9 June 1796.
99 Callahan, op. cit., p. 167.
government was wary of colonial radicalism. In July 1796 Henry McKenly was warned that his publication was dangerously close to subversion. This shows the interest and more bureaucratic involvement of the EIC in the surveillance and suppression of the newspapers. The events of late 1794, March 1795 and the near mutiny of February 1796 meant that the government was in no mood to deal benevolently or leniently with recalcitrant newspaper editors by July 1796. In July 1796 Lieutenant Henry McKenly, editor of *The Telegraph* was made to give up the author of an article on the extortion of money by the Sheriffs of Calcutta, who was subsequently made to give his source, a member of the public service. In September 1796 Mr. Hornsely, editor of the *Calcutta Gazette* was also warned by the government. These warnings were part of an ad hoc system of censorship in which the editors had to guess where the boundary lay between editorial freedom and deportation.

The deportation of Captain Williamson in 1798 showed a new development in the struggle to silence the printing of material involving the EIC army. The government had tried to frustrate the EIC officers’ ability to argue their case in the newspapers by deporting and closing down those newspapers which printed such material and were in league with the officers – men such as Duane and the Madras editor. Instead of pursuing only the editor, a cumbersome matter and not always successful as the editor could excuse himself by arguing that the piece had been sent to them anonymously, the government now began to pursue the officers themselves who were hiding behind pseudonyms in the newspapers. The first victim was Williamson writing under the pseudonym *Mentor* in *The Telegraph* on 17 March 1798. The court martial and deportation of Captain Williamson sent a

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100 BL/IOR/H/537, ff. 227-238.
101 Ibid, ff. 239-240.
102 BL/IOR/H/537, f. 247.
clear message to the other EIC officers who had written in publications like Duane’s and who continued after Duane’s deportation. The message given was that the officers could now not hide behind press anonymity and would be found out, hounded, court martialled and deported out of the EIC ranks and India by a careful study of their handwriting, against that of their pseudonyms. Any open correspondence between themselves and newspaper editors was also liable to be checked. With Captain Williamson, the bond that existed between the newspaper editors and the agitating EIC officers was struck at. Government would use all methods at its disposal, including informants like David Scott, to sever the bond of officer and editor that existed.

In 1798 two other men, Charles Maclean and Charles King Bruce, were in trouble for their involvement in the newspaper trade. McLean was made the subject of deportation orders because he had written an article critical of a public Magistrate and for refusing to apologise for his conduct. McLean was in India because he had previously jumped ship and eluded the officers sent to arrest and deport him. Charles King Bruce had already come under the eye of government for writing a speculative study and comparison of the strength of the European as to the Indian populations. Although it had been written without ill-intent, such speculation was not wanted by the authorities. Governor-General Wellesley thought the article ‘mischievous’ as it exposed to public opinion the security of the British position in India. Sir Alfred Clarke, the Commander-in-Chief and acting Governor-General while Wellesley was in Madras, was ordered to deport Bruce to Britain immediately on the next Indiaman. Wellesley added in his orders to Clarke that: ‘If you cannot tranquillise the editor of this and other

103 Ibid, ff. 312-3.
104 Nair, op. cit., p. 177.
105 Ibid, p. 177.
mischievous publications, be so good as to suppress their papers by force, and send their persons to Europe’.

We do not have Bruce on record as having had his deportation order carried out; but given Wellesley’s attitude and past readiness to deport editors we can assume that the order was carried out by Clarke. McLean, described as ‘a most audacious and turbulent demagogue’ by Wellesley, is recorded as having his deportation carried out. He was confined to Fort William beforehand as he could not give security for his embarkation to Britain. Wellesley notes that:

> a fictitious suit of debt was instituted in the supreme court, and Sir Robert Chambers issued a writ *re exeat regno*, which was served upon the town major. I executed this writ, by embarking Mr McLean on the evening on which it was served, and by conveying that gentleman on board the *Busbridge* Indiaman. I had the satisfaction to learn his safe arrival at the Cape of Good Hope, through the channel of a libel which he published against me at that place. I shall be happy if a similar intimation should acquaint me of his arrival in England.

In 1799 Lieutenant Henry McKenly, editor of *The Telegraph*, was warned again. Another article, by *Mentor* not *Nestor* this time, was banned from being published and was given to the government to be read. It was a publication which helped cement the decision, on the day it was received by government, to implement in Bengal proper censorship regulations, and not only the ad hoc system then in place. In a strange case, which highlights the frustration of the editors at the government for not allowing some semblance of free speech, the editor of *The Telegraph* passed on the address of *Nestor* not because he wanted

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106 Ibid, p. 177.
107 Ibid, p. 177.
108 Ingram, op. cit. p. 235.
the government to see him as operating within the limits of the ad hoc censorship system, but because he wanted them to read the address. In a comment that points to the case’s bizarre nature, the council noted that:

altho’ the Vice President in Council is not aware of the motives which induced him to submit the letter from Nestor for his inspection, yet he acted very properly in declining to insert it in his Paper; as the publication of so very reprehensible a production would have subjected him; as well as the author of it, to the severest marks of the displeasure of government.\(^{111}\)

That there was collusion between the editor and Nestor is seen by McKenly actually asking Nestor for permission to show the offending piece to government and receiving Nestor’s assent. Perhaps like most censorship systems, ad hoc or regulated, authors were still finding the means and ability to get their message across to the administration, only using unusual methods to do so. There was a further Indian army connection to the aborted publication. Nestor was banned from publishing anything at all in The Telegraph and the editor McKenly was ordered not to publish a work by Nestor that was a *Translation for the Formation, Field Exercise and Movements of the Bengal Army into the Persian and Hindoostani Languages*.\(^{112}\) Obviously such a work would have been highly inflammatory, in the eyes of the government, if it was to fall into the hands of enemy rulers who were able to then train battalions along European lines.

### Official Attitudes Towards the Press under Wellesley

Wellesley thought of the Indian press as a useless thorn in his side. He felt the press disrupted the real reasons for the British presence in India – trade and

\(^{111}\) Ibid, f. 336.

\(^{112}\) Ibid, f. 337.
military glory. In an article commissioned by the Governor-General in 1801, and ‘humbly submitted to the Right Honourable the Governor General, by his Lordships Command’, a plan for establishing a government printing press highlights the government’s, and especially Wellesley’s, attitude towards the Calcuttan press:

In a political view, a powerful motive arises in favor of the proposed Establishment [of a government printing press]. The increase of private printing presses in India, unlicensed, however controlled is an evil of the first magnitude in its consequences, of this sufficient proof is to be found in the scandalous outrages from the year 1793 to 1798. Useless to literature and to the Public, and dubiously profitable to the speculators, they serve only to maintain in needy indolence a few European adventurers, who are found unfit to engage in any credible method of subsistence.¹¹³

In the above damning account of ‘European adventurers’ who helped force Wellesley’s hand on Indian censorship, Duane had a shaping role. He is the first of the deported journalists to be listed in the dossier on government censorship and deportations which was compiled in the 1820s as part of the on-going dispute over censorship in India. Out of the more than 400 pages of the government file IOR/H/537, Duane’s activities and deportation take up the first 226 folio pages. Perhaps this is partly owing to his verbosity in written communication, but it is also due to him being used as a template by government as the reason why there should be press censorship in India even thirty years after he was deported.

The government justification for censorship of the press in India was that critical or radical comments might strengthen Britain’s enemies.¹¹⁴ As C.A. Bayly has commented:

In the Anglo-French wars, 1793-1815, public propaganda and misinformation played a major role. The French published captured documents which were intended to chart British intrigues against the French Empire. The British replied in kind. Official

¹¹³ Ibid, f. 362.
¹¹⁴ Bayly, op. cit., p. 146.
reports from India implicated French officers serving with Mysore, Hyderabad and the Marathas in a worldwide republican conspiracy. The Calcutta government meanwhile became increasingly secretive. More actively involved in the surveillance of its foes, it defined treason more sharply.\textsuperscript{115}

The British reports were part of a wider network of information which included the spy master William Wickham as well as senior members of both the Pitt administration – such as Henry Dundas – and the Indian Governor-Generals of this period.

The ties between the French republic and Tipu Sultan are widely known but other rulers such as the Nizam of Hyderabad already had French mercenaries in their pay who were considered to be a danger to British interests and who could spy on and infiltrate British plans.\textsuperscript{116} A further danger is alluded to in correspondence between Wellesley and Henry Dundas where Wellesley mentions information picked up by William Wickham's spy network:

\begin{quote}
The systematic introduction of French officers into the service of all the native powers of India (which Mr Wickham describes as the fixed policy of France) has been pursued with unremitting assiduity and extensive success. If Tipu should at any time be enabled to derive succour from France, his movements might be seconded by the general co-operation of large bodies of French adventurers, who are known to maintain a correspondence and concert in all part of India.\textsuperscript{117}
\end{quote}

Although Edward Ingram is correct to point out that Wellesley’s cries of “Jacobinism” were loudest when directed at those Indian states he was about to conquer (and that French mercenaries in the pay of allies were ignored), there was a definite French policy, picked up by the British spymaster Wickham, which proves that Wellesley had good reason for his concern at French espionage and

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid, p. 146.
\textsuperscript{116} Lord Wellesley feared these men were forming an ‘..armed French party of great zeal, diligence, and activity’. See, Ingram, op. cit., p. 18, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid, p. 62. ‘The American War and the French Revolution forced the company to take yet closer account of the dealings of Europeans in Indian courts.’ Bayly, op. cit., p. 54.
planning in the region.\footnote{The [intelligence] situation changed dramatically towards the end of the Second Mysore War. Hereafter, the British reorganised their military intelligence and cooperation with the civil arm improved greatly. [Col. William] Fullarton himself, a radical critic of the Company, made the breakthrough.’ Bayly, op. cit., p. 66.} As it was, a French spy accompanied Tipu Sultan’s ambassadors to the Isle de France and was recognized from reports sent by Wickham.\footnote{Ingram, op. cit., p. 53.} In return, this British intelligence, their empire of information, helped win over Ceylon, done through a Scottish agent, and furthered British military goals in India.\footnote{Aylwin Clark, \textit{An Enlightened Scot: Hugh Cleghorn 1752-1837} (Duns: Black Ace Books, 1992), pp. 104-156.} This intelligence did not operate in a vacuum but was part of an ongoing struggle between Britain and France for influence in the Indian Ocean region. C.A. Bayly seems to under-emphasise the very real threat to British India after the French invasion of Egypt, which was not fully assuaged until British victory in Egypt in 1801. What has also been overlooked is that the majority of deportations of editors and press clamp-downs are linked to unrest in the East India Company army and were part of movements to strengthen discipline in the Indian Army against the threat of French encroachment, either directly or through native intermediaries, although contemporary sources such as Leicester Stanhope (Lord Harrington) in his \textit{Sketch of the history and influence of the press in British India} (1823) did not themselves overlook this combination of interests. The compilers of the lengthy dossier on Duane and the other troublesome editors also carefully document the involvement of the EIC officers.

Anything that undermined British strategic goals in the region, especially under the post-Duane aggrandisement of Wellesley, was targeted. Wellesley’s comments on Duane’s Indian milieu (the unofficial European community in India) as being a despicable lot in whom the ‘strongest and boldest spirit of Jacobinism prevailed’\footnote{Ingram, op. cit., p. 235.} and individuals within the group which Duane was once employed by
(the civil and military service of the Company in India) as having been tainted by the doctrines of the French Revolution, underscore the political implications of Duane’s 1795 deportation as it was part of a wider ‘dejacobinizing’ of India by the British. As Wellesley himself said:

> It cannot be denied that during the convulsions with which the doctrines of the French Revolution have agitated the continent of Europe, erroneous principles of the same dangerous tendency have reached the minds of some individuals in the civil and military service of the Company in India...Jacobin principles had already made considerable progress here both in the army and civil service.  

In Duane’s case those revolutionary principles had found a fertile bed in the soil of his earlier Radical Whiggery and were to sprout up as the *Bengal Journal* and *The World*. Wellesley, on the other hand, saw it as his role, as a Tory-minded gentleman gardener, to pull out the weeds, which he did with great alacrity from 1798.

### 1799 Censorship Act

As a result of the continuing activities of Duane’s compatriots in the Calcutta, Madras and Bombay press, and their EIC officer writers, the government brought in censorship regulations for the first time in India in 1799. Although Wellesley did not close down the Calcutta newspapers he did bring into existence the use of the *Calcutta Chronicle* as a government organ from which the other newspapers were only allowed to publish news concerning military and political news which had been first vetted by the government. Wellesley wrote to Dundas that:

At Calcutta, no less than seven different weekly newspapers are published. Amongst all these persons, but particularly the tribe of editors of newspapers, the strongest and boldest spirit of Jacobinism prevailed previous to my arrival in Bengal. Since that period, this spirit has not been active; a circumstance which I cannot attribute to any sincere reform in the minds of the disaffected, and which, I flatter myself, is still less to be ascribed to my popularity among any class or description of Jacobins. I have sent home one or two libellers; not for libels upon myself, but for having attacked, with indecent respect, some of the public officers employed under government…I have also placed all the newspapers under the inspection of the secretary to government; and I never permit a line to be published which has not been previously sanctioned by him. I have established the same regulation at Madras, and mean to extend it to Bombay. Previous to my arrival, the newspapers had been made the vehicle of every doctrine and statement which could tend to subvert our establishments in this country. An insidious attempt of this nature (made at Calcutta during my absence on the Coast) was the immediate cause of my subjecting all publications to the previous inspection of the secretary of government.\footnote{Ingram, op. cit., p. 235.}

Alongside this measure, made clearer in the years after the censorship regulations were first issued from the government, were the regulations themselves. On 2 September 1799 the Bengal government sent back to the Court of Directors the news that on the 13 May they had issued regulations to curb the Calcuttan newspapers because ‘having had frequent occasion to remark the number of very improper Paragraphs, which have appeared in the Newspapers at this Presidency, we have established certain Regulations respecting their publication’.\footnote{BL/IOR/H/537, f. 339.} In a succinct two page document the regulations of 13 May 1799 stated that:

1) every printer of a newspaper must print their name at the bottom of the newspaper

2) Every newspaper editor and proprietor must give their names and addresses to
the Secretary of Government

3) No newspaper was to be published on a Sunday

4) A paper was not to be published if it did not previously pass inspection by the Secretary of Government or a person authorised by the Secretary for that purpose

5) The penalty for breaching the above four regulations was to be immediate deportation to Europe.\(^{125}\)

Because Wellesley had come from a country which had recently seen the entrenchment of William Pitt’s Two Acts, and the beginnings of the Evangelical Movement, he brought censorship regulations that even banned Sunday printing, realigning the Indian press with thinking in Britain. But these changes also have a clear Indian context and rise out of the behaviour of Duane and the other unruly ‘European adventurer’ editors who raised the ire of Hastings, Cornwallis, Shore and Wellesley. Although censorship restrictions had been brewing since the advent of Indian newspapers, and had been pursued in an ad hoc manner, Wellesley’s censorship act was the first real attempt to regulate the practice of censorship in India.

The above regulations were subsequently reinforced over the next few years. On 4 August 1801 a general letter was sent to the remaining editors and printers that they were banned from publishing any of the government’s military orders issued by the Governor-General in Council or by the Commander-in-Chief. Only through obtaining a signature of one of the governmental secretaries were they allowed to publish on such matters.\(^{126}\) For a community that thrived on the news and gossip of the Indian battle-fronts this was a serious blow to the editors.

\(^{125}\) Ibid, ff. 340-1.

\(^{126}\) Ibid, f. 365-7.
For the Governor-General and his military commanders it represented the control of information flows to non-allied native rulers and the French. They were also banned, unless permission was obtained, from publishing ‘in any Army List, Book or Pamphlet or in any shape whatever an account of the numbers or strength of the several Corps of the Army or the disposition or situation of Corps’.\textsuperscript{127}

Added to these restrictions was the general order of October 18, 1803. This prohibited the publication of articles of intelligence concerning the ‘departure of ships from any post in India during the war or any information from which a knowledge may be obtained by the enemy of the situation or strength of any part of His Majesty’s Naval Force in the Indian Seas’.\textsuperscript{128} In a business which relied on the interest of the various military men employed in the King’s and Indian armies, and naval news for the merchants in Calcutta, these restrictions would have been a harsh blow indeed. Not only did it mean less information available for the private traders in Calcutta, but also there was now no public platform for disgruntled EIC officers to protest about their pay and conditions and to threaten mutiny. For Wellesley an empire of information over India and the Indian ocean was being made more secure. His treatment of the press fits in neatly with his tightening of control over the subcontinent as a whole. His rule was a watershed which overturned the ‘anarchic patchwork of squabbling principalities and regional empires’;\textsuperscript{129} one can extend this to Wellesley shutting down squabbling newspaper editors and regional scribblers who had made up the lively press scene of India.

Given the high turn-over of many editors in the newspaper business (due to bankruptcy, disputes between partners, an over-supplied market for newspapers

\begin{footnotes}
\item[127] Ibid, f. 368.
\item[128] Ibid, ff. 377-8.
\end{footnotes}
in Calcutta and finally tropical death) in the short term ad hoc censorship was effective but in the long term a more in-depth method of censorship was needed rather than these punitive deportations. First, the administration sought to warn editors that they were close to deportation through letters and warnings not to write on particular topics. Then, with Wellesley’s censorship act in 1799 there was brought into being a written code which also meant that editors had to send their newspapers regularly to be checked for any material which did not satisfy the requirements of the act. Perhaps Wellesley’s system was harsher than that in place in England itself but it did give clear guidelines for the editors to follow which helped them steer their newspapers away from the threat of closure and themselves from deportation. But as Kelly remarked to Mathew Carey in 1795, it also made for boring newspapers and a very autocratic Anglo-Indian culture that was too scared to question its superiors.\textsuperscript{130} In an Anglo-Indian culture rife with many of the corrupt practices which were in the target sights of the reformist vanguard in Britain, and often fossilised in India when the practices were on the wane in Britain itself, the last thing India needed was a gelded press. Duane’s newspaper, the \textit{World}, for example did try to create a more rich colonial culture. His vision was not as philistine and venal as the one portrayed in the pages of other newspapers, but one which better mirrored Anglo-Indian society in its fullness, including attempts at creating an Indian Enlightenment transplanted from Europe.

But his paper fell foul of government for the same reason as the newspapers of the editors who were also warned or deported. The readers they appealed to were the men far from home who had time to read the newspapers and, as Duane remarked, had heads itching with ideas incubated in the Indian

\textsuperscript{130} John Kelly to Mathew Carey, Calcutta, 23\textsuperscript{rd} January 1795, Lea and Febiger Collection, HSP.
heat—the East India Company officers and their autodidact radicalism. By sating this desire, the editors were also saving up for themselves the displeasure of the establishment in India. For Duane, the step from editor to outlaw proved to be much quicker than the forced march that took him onto the gangplank of the *William Pitt*. But even as outlaw Duane lived on in the British settlement long after he was gone, as both a warning to pro-revolutionary editors and already wary colonial administrators. The censorship system that Duane unwittingly helped to shape held its ground until four years after the end of the Napoleonic Wars and was only officially disbanded by William Bentinck in the 1820s. Even then Duane’s name was attached to a heated debate in administrative circles over the necessity of censorship in India.
CHAPTER 7

London Interlude

Pitt’s England

Duane was unceremoniously deposited onto the docks of Portsmouth at a distance of 100 miles from the metropolis of London.\(^1\) His personal floating prison had landed an embittered radical onto a country controlled by William Pitt the Younger. In Duane’s view Pitt was a heavy and despotic arch-Tory, but by another account he was a prime minister straddling the extremes of both Edmund Burke’s anti-revolutionary stance and Charles James Fox’s liberal response to 1789.\(^2\) Duane was to spend the next ten months involved in the affairs of a group – the London Corresponding Society (LCS) – which worked towards the withdrawal of England from the war in Europe and the promotion of revolution in England and Ireland.

Duane was not without hope, however, as friends had thought to send money with the William Pitt’s purser, Mr Russell.\(^3\) With these funds Duane was able to travel to London and make contact with other people sharing a similar opinion of the state of Britain and its empire. During the next ten months he was engaged in a propaganda campaign against the EIC within the pages of The Telegraph, the mouthpiece of the LCS. It is unclear what his movements were but we do know

\(^1\) BL/IOR/L/MAR/B/184D, 23 July 1795.
\(^3\) From Duane’s account the amount was £500 although such a large sum seems unlikely. *Aurora*, p. 44.
that he was living in Gray’s Inn by 4 September, 1795. Duane was possibly given support by his cousin Michael Bray who had successfully taken over his uncle Mathew Duane’s place at the Inns of Court. We know that Division 28 of the LCS took in Gray’s Inn Road and some of the LCS ‘citizens’ also gave this area as their address.

1795-1796 LCS involvement

Alongside his work with *The Telegraph*, Duane took an active role in the LCS during 1795-1796. The LCS was one of about forty radical societies or Jacobin clubs which were organised in London and the provincial cities. Although the corresponding societies have been understood to be parliamentary reform organizations following the example of American Revolutionary societies, this overlooks the more revolutionary aims of some members within the organizations who sought to bring about revolutionary change in the British Isles following the French example. The ‘Corresponding’ in the name of the organization denotes the desire of the various branches to be connected through correspondence and exchange of visits, and to coordinate ideas and plans for agitation on a national and indeed international level. Here the influence of internationalist currents within the French Revolution is apparent. The LCS, by far the largest of the corresponding societies and the most important, had been founded in 1792 by Thomas Hardy.

At the height of its membership, in autumn 1795, it numbered between 3,000

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4 BL/IOR/H/537, f. 224.
5 PRO/PC1/23/38.
and 5,000 people, with an active core membership of 1,500. This core membership met in taverns along division lines to read and to distribute radical texts and newspapers such as their mouthpiece *The Telegraph*, as well as to debate politics and sing blasphemous and seditious songs against God, King and Country. Modest joining fees and an open structure meant, on the one hand, a more diverse background to its members but, on the other hand, real financial problems in its running and the inability to delegate authority properly from the Executive Committee to the divisional branches. The loose membership restrictions also gave rise to easy and rife factionalism, and occasional infiltration by government spies and informants into the divisional leaderships and even the Executive Committee.

Duane would have felt comfortable within the LCS’s membership given that it ‘recruited mainly articulate artisans and small shopkeepers suffering wartime erosion of real wages, as well as marginal or frustrated lesser professionals such as medical men, law clerks, attorneys, publishers, printers, preachers, and journalists’. This artisan membership and its notional desire for ‘membership unlimited’, and reasonably inexpensive membership fees, made for a large corresponding society. It was the leader among these organisations and was at the vanguard of the eighteenth-century move to democratise the British body politic. The membership of the sans-culotte movement in France, as asserted by Richard Cobb, serves as an interesting parallel to that of the LCS:

the backbone of the sans-culotte movement was supplied by master-craftsmen, small employers of labour (in eighteenth-century Paris the average size of a workshop was from four to fourteen *garçons*), small shopkeepers, publicans and *marchands*

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7 Ibid, p. 468.
de vin, the “better sort of clerks”, particularly former clerks de procureur, together with a thin sprinkling of professional men.\textsuperscript{9}

If Duane had been French one would have seen him within the ranks of the sans-culottes, working like Marat on a paper such as the Ami de peuple. Instead, he was an editor for the mouthpiece of the LCS.

Duane is mentioned in the memoir of the widow of John Thelwall, in the spy reports on the LCS, and by John Binns, a United Irishman and later political opponent who noted that he met Duane in London in 1795. The shadowy mention of Duane in spy reports is not surprising given the deep infiltration of the radical underground by the government’s spy network. Those spy reports show the shifting world Duane inhabited during this time, a dangerous one where people moved in and out of political activity, penury and trouble with authorities. What we can gather from the Place papers is that Duane (sic) was a member of the Executive Committee during October and early November 1795.\textsuperscript{10} On November 12 his resignation from the Executive Committee was received by the Committee.

Duane continued in his editorship of The Telegraph until July 1796 and is mentioned in a spy report on the General Committee meeting of 26 November under the name ‘Dwan,’ alongside those of ‘Ashley Bone Newman Evans Oxlade Oliphant [and] Galloway’.\textsuperscript{11}

Duane found himself in an organisation that was in a period of resurgence, in terms of numbers, following the aftermath of the 1794 treason trials. But it was internally divided. One of the many doctrinal splits was on religious lines.


\textsuperscript{10} PRO/PC1/23/38.

\textsuperscript{11} PRO/PC1/23/38.
Another was between those supporting a programme of violent and armed insurgency and those who supported a campaign of demonstrations only against the war effort. An example of the violence and conflict that Duane would have seen (and possibly been party to) was later retold by another ex-LCS member, John Binns, in his autobiography:

Those who were opposed to the war then waging against the French Republic, and to the administration of Mr. Pitt, put few, if any lights in their windows, which were usually broken by the loyal mobs, street-walkers, and glaziers’ boys. On the night to which I refer, Hardy would not allow his windows to be illuminated, and they were not only threatened to be broken, but the more violent royalists declared they would sack the house…[A]bout 100 men, chiefly members of the society, many of them Irish, armed with good shillelaghs, took post early in the evening in front of, and close to, the fronts of Hardy’s house.\textsuperscript{12}

The involvement of the Irish in defending Hardy’s premises fits into a wider pattern of Irish political involvement as the ‘more militant [of the United Irish] slowly began to gravitate toward an insurrectionary policy, which involved creating better links with the increasing number of societies formed by plebeian radicals in 1793-94’.\textsuperscript{13} The LCS had many Irish members apart from Duane and Binns, part of a militant section of the Irish community who had settled in London or were passing through, looking for work. One example of this link between London plebeian radical groups and the United Irish was given earlier – that of an ex-EIC officer, Captain Bailey who was later sent over to Dublin as a representative of the United Britons (an off shoot of the LCS), carrying an address to the United Irish.\textsuperscript{14} As an almost Irish-American who had already shed his allegiance to Britain and had fully embraced Painite ideology, Duane would have


\textsuperscript{13} Durey, \textit{Transatlantic Radicals}, p. 109.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid, p. 127.
been extremely comfortable, politically and culturally, settled in the nexus of these two currents of British Isles radicalism.

**Copenhagen Fields**

“Account of the Proceedings of a Meeting of the People” Oct. 26 1795.

The above document ran to 16 pages and was the clearest evidence of Duane’s involvement with the LCS. The pamphlet, which bears Duane’s name, also identifies him as one of the chairmen at the LCS Copenhagen Fields rally, at Islington, on 26 October 1795. Among the records of Francis Place it is also mentioned that on this date: ‘Citizen William Duane was appointed chairman and at one o’clock in a signal made by him the real business of the day commenced at each of the platforms’. A caricature by James Gillray of a rally at the same venue held on 12 November 1795, gives some idea of the way in which the LCS split the huge crowd up and had simultaneous speakers at different platforms. In this caricature there are speakers on three rostra with Thelwall on the foreground right, John Gale Jones on the middle distant one to the left and Richard Hodgson on the rostrum in the background. The difficulty of hearing in such a large crowd was commented upon by Lord Thurlow. He shrewdly and calmly observed, in the context of House of Lords’ debates against such meetings, that, ‘whenever he

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15 Francis Place Records, BL/Manuscripts/Add 27808.
heard of a speech made before 30,000 persons, the first thing that occurred to him was that it was impossible that one thirtieth part of the audience could hear it’. 17

Duane chaired one of the largest anti-war gatherings that the LCS was to organize before being finally broken by the Two Acts and a flood of loyalism that saw more of its leaders proceed to prison. The timing of the meeting was near to one of the final motivating factors, or excuses, for the Two Acts, an attack on the King’s stagecoach and the vivid account of it given in the House of Commons. 18 Duane’s involvement was noted by government, as alluded to in a report sent to India by the EIC that mentioned his activities in London. The Board of Directors, on which Henry Dundas sat, retrospectively supported the decision of the Governor-General in Council to have Duane deported. At Copenhagen Fields, the numbers quoted in attendance ranged from 120,000 to 250,000 people. This huge crowd listened to LCS speeches that included one by Duane affirming the natural rights of Englishman and Painite ideology. In embracing the LCS Duane was rejecting the aristocratic-Anglican Establishment which ruled England. His rejection of any establishment can be traced back to his refusal to be ordained as a priest, his rejection of a legal career and his deportation from India. All this led to him now hissing at the status quo in England. Duane’s views were similar to John Horne Tooke, who, speaking in the early 1770s, was:

fuelled by his vision of a society where he saw the poor and ignorant scarcely able to produce the necessities of life, of the likes of [John] Doyle and [John] Valline [two Spitalfields’ weavers] being sacrificed as a reminder to an intransigent electorate not to exceed their allotted station in life while an idle aristocracy rolled in luxury.19

18 For a recent work which covers this period and has a brief mention of Duane see John Barrell, *Imagining the King’s Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
19 Brotherson, op. cit., p. 64.
The formation of Tooke’s thinking also shows a striking similarity to the method Duane used:

Horne’s thinking was driven by the logic of first causes, a form of modern-day fundamentalism, where natural property (the necessities of life converted into property by labour), and natural law (the requirement of the human spirit to maintain social order and transformed into law by legislators) were combined to become ‘the laws of nature’ – his ideology.20

It was an ideology which Duane shared.

The Seditious Meetings and Treasonable Practices Bills of November 1795

Following the Copenhagen Fields meeting that Duane chaired, and the attack on the King’s stage coach, the government stepped in to stamp out the flames of revolution which remained. Although the naval mutinies at the Nore and Spithead were still two years away, the Bills did push the LCS and the other clandestine plebeian political organizations deeper into obscurity and secrecy, and indeed, into irrelevance. The Treasonable Practices Bill, introduced by Grenville on 6 November 1795 in the House of Lords, and the Seditious Meetings Bill, tabled and moved by William Pitt in the House of Commons four days later, had a two-fold motive. The Treasonable Practices Bill modified treason law by including those who ‘compassed or devised’ the death, bodily harm, imprisonment or deposition of the King. It also defined as treasonous those who:

wished to exert pressure on George III to change his measures or counsels, who plotted to assist foreign invaders, or to intimidate or overawe both houses or either house of parliament, whether such

20 Ibid, p. 64.
intention was expressed, as hitherto, by overt act, or by speech or writing.\textsuperscript{21}

Only two witnesses were to be required for a conviction. Obviously this broadening of the powers of government meant that a variety of political activities were to become potentially treasonous. The wording of the Bill also meant that the definition of what was treasonous became not only a legal one but also a political decision based on the wishes of the Pittite ministry. The line dividing ‘treason’ and ‘opposition’ had become much more blurred; groups which were previously not capable of being tried for treason, were now finding themselves on the other side of a line drawn in political legalese.

These clearly devised clauses were to remain in force until the conclusion of the next session of parliament after the death of George III. Given the threat of assassination based on the recent attack on the king, this clause gave parliament extra powers to face such an event. The second part of the Bill was even more strongly political in its scope and was aimed at LCS agitation. If the Bill was passed those who actually incited the population to hatred or contempt of George III, the established government or constitution by speech or writing, would be included in this new and enlarged definition of treason. The accused would be liable, on first conviction, to be charged with a high misdemeanour. On second conviction, the accused would be sentenced to transportation for up to seven years (this was subsequently amended to three).

The Seditious Meetings Bill, on the other hand, was clear about whom it was giving increased power to – the local magistrates. Now, those seeking public meetings of over fifty persons when convened for the discussion of public

\textsuperscript{21} Goodwin, op. cit., p. 387. See also, John Barrell, \textit{Imagining the King’s Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793-1796} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).
grievances, or for the consideration of any petition, remonstrance or address to
King or Parliament bearing on the ‘alteration of matters established in Church or
State’, would have to apply through the local magistrates for permission to meet.22
From the passing of the acts, meetings of the LCS in pubs, on public parks and in
private homes would be deemed illegal, if not passed by order of a local
magistrate working with government. These were the same local magistrates who
kept records for William Wickham’s inner office that managed espionage and
counter-espionage throughout Britain and the continent, and was involved in the
ring of spies and informants that had undermined the LCS from within. In the
provinces, the local magistrates set up their own informal networks of informants
and infiltrated the provincial branches of the LCS.

Thus, the Bill gave the men who wished to curtail LCS activities the ability to
do so more effectively. The LCS and The Telegraph along with wider pro-reform
groups and newspapers, including the Foxite Whigs, fought against the two bills,
as did John Horne Tooke in his 1796 Westminster campaign. It was to no avail;
the government was determined not to let revolutionary ideas gain a foothold in
Britain.

The Telegraph

Alongside his LCS membership, Duane was editor of the LCS newspaper The
Telegraph.23 According to Duane, he was paid four guineas a week for writing on
the newspaper.24 Spy reports highlight the connection between the LCS and The

24 Aurora (1834-5), p. 44.
Telegraph, not only in its editorial line but also in its advertisements for LCS meetings and distribution to LCS members. The Telegraph was used as a vehicle by the LCS as a way to communicate with outside political groups and to advertise particular meetings, including the one at Copenhagen Fields where Duane participated. The 24 March 1796 meeting of the Executive Committee deals at length with The Telegraph in connection with placing advertisements in it. But The Telegraph, while acting in close unison with the LCS and largely working as its mouth-piece, was still an autonomous newspaper business even if its editorial policy ran along LCS lines. In the Northern District Committee for 5 February 1796 this is clearly shown: ‘Received a bill from the proprietor of The Telegraph and members deputied to wait on them respecting it’.25

Duane’s editorship of The Telegraph in the wake of continuing hostilities between Pittite England and Republican France steered a pro-French line, having shed the ambiguity and self-censorship which constrained his writing in The World. The Telegraph was named after the invention of the manual telegraph in 1794 which meant that news could be speedily sent from battlefield reporters to printing presses and waiting ships in Calais. The hallmark of The Telegraph was its reportage on the latest news from Europe taken from packets of French newspapers sent from French ports. Duane was taking a risky editorial line considering the 1794 treason trials and the Treason and Sedition Acts. In fact at the time of the election for the borough of Westminster, the remaining radical paper in London was itself involved in a court case resulting from a nasty piece of commercial, if not governmental, sabotage.26

26 The dispute and the court proceedings are covered in detail in The Telegraph. For example, see: The Telegraph (London), 4 July 1796.
The other opposition newspaper, *The Morning Post*, which was far less strident than *The Telegraph*, had sent fake French newspapers in February 1795 from a spurious ‘Calais packet’ to the office of *The Telegraph* in an attempt to destroy their competition. It does seem strange, however, that a rival newspaper would go to such lengths to undo a competitor. Given the political nature of the newspaper and the targeting of the LCS by the government the possibility of an official role in the undermining of *The Telegraph* should not be ruled out. The fabricated accounts of French victories were relayed to the readers of *The Telegraph* and a damaging scandal ensued after the reports were revealed to be erroneous. The pro-French ship was well and truly sunk by the end of the legal dispute and, although it continued to print throughout the period of the Westminster election, its readership dropped as did its credibility. Duane would continue editing the newspaper through this difficult period until the moment he left for the United States.

**The EIC Officers in London**

*‘Letter from an Officer in India to his Correspondent in England’*

The above address was printed in Piccadilly, London by John Debrett in 1794. The letter is evidence that a group of young EIC officers were pushing for reform of the EIC army from 1794 onwards into the period when Duane was working on *The Telegraph*. While in India Duane had given these men’s Indian-based compatriots a vehicle for their reform movement; in England they used their quills, voices and printing presses to push for change from the metropolis as well.
In *The Telegraph* Duane and the other editors published the proceedings of this group of London-based officers as well as news of the state of the EIC army in India.

*The Telegraph* used the case of the EIC officers in London and included letters that were sent to *The Telegraph* from officers in India itself. It seems someone at *The Telegraph* office was part of the circle of information flowing between the officers in India and their representatives in London. The connections between Duane and members of the EIC army have been clearly established – the newspapers he wrote in India had military readerships and he was part of a web of correspondents – particularly Fenwick who sent back battlefield reportage to Duane in Calcutta. Further, *The World* had been a public arena where the officers argued for equality with the King’s army and their cause was tied to Duane’s deportation. For the period before Duane left London the theory that Duane was the mediator between the officers and the LCS newspaper can be upheld; but the reporting on the officers, and letters from them, continue to be published after Duane stopped being editor of *The Telegraph*. That William Bailey was another ex-Anglo-Indian involved with the LCS and the United Britons, and was himself once an officer, points towards a London connection between the radicalised part of the officer corps, the LCS and *The Telegraph* that goes beyond Duane.

**Attacking the EIC at the centre**

In the fluid political environment of the time Duane was also able to use the newspaper for more immediate and personal reasons than an idealist engagement in radical politics. He tried to put pressure on the EIC by publishing international
property laws listing the rights of Americans in British territories. This material, although incongruous next to reports on continental battlefield movements, was an attempt to bolster Duane’s suit for compensation from the EIC at Leadenhall for his substantial Indian losses. Duane was mistaken if he thought a letter of complaint to the Board of Directors of the EIC would end positively for himself. Henry Dundas, a member of both the Board and Pitt’s ministry, had been responsible as Home Secretary for counter-intelligence in London until May 1794. Given that Dundas was head of the Board of Directors there was not much hope for Duane in seeking compensation for the financial ruin that resulted from his deportation.

After learning that direct correspondence and requests to the Board of Directors were futile, Duane turned to his much-hated bug-bear – the law. He attempted to enlist the Whig lawyer Thomas Erskine in his cause. Duane’s anti-EIC stance sat well with Tooke and Thelwall’s view of the monopolistic and semi-independent mercantile state which led from its capital at Leadenhall, in the heart of the City of London, to its territory in Calcutta and Bengal. Erskine was involved in the legal cases of these men and their political underlings and supporters. Duane tells us that letters ‘from General Erskine, uncle of the great barrister, were forwarded to Thomas Erskine, recommending the case of the Editor of The World to that able man’s protection and counsel’. 27 Erskine, while perhaps not the great barrister of Duane’s conjecture, was certainly one involved with the radical cause. He was the lawyer for the defence in the libel case involving Pitt and Almon in 1786. 28 He was also involved in the treason trials of

27 Aurora (1834-5), p. 44.
28 See Almon, Memoirs, p. 127.
1794 and in supporting Thomas Williams, who had been charged with publishing the outlawed tract by Paine on the *Age of Reason*.29

Erskine’s refusal to help Duane was phrased as a critique of the EIC and the “Old Corruption” which it was privy to and which it helped to sustain. The underlying argument was that because of “Old Corruption,” Duane’s case was made hopeless and any windfall would be gobbled up by court costs and the nefariousness of the EIC. Duane could only accept the advice of the leading lawyer of the radical cause and walk away crestfallen. One of many Indian printers to be treated in such a manner, he was the only one to hold a burning and personal desire for revenge which would have the potential to be spread over a large reading public. Duane’s attacks on the EIC and its rule in India should be seen not so much as a carefully thought out political ideology but a personal vendetta writ large. It remained the cause behind a driven political and editorial career in America. Once defeated by ‘dark forces’ in India and Britain he would not let the same thing happen again in America.

Duane’s failure to obtain compensation must have been a heavy blow for him, given the time and funds he had invested in the newspapers he published in India. He had property outside the publishing businesses, a share in a rubber-tree plantation, as well as his own Calcuttan home and investment in Calcutta’s loans market. All were lost on his deportation. With hope finally gone for any compensation at all, Duane again heard the siren call of the country which he felt to be his true homeland – America. For a failed Englishman, America presented an opportunity to remake himself. It would also be more welcoming of his radical politics. For a brief ten months Duane was at the heart of anti-war agitation in the

metropolis of the British Empire. On 16 May 1796 he sailed to America with his family and the radical Thomas Lloyd. For a Painite radical the shores of America would have appeared a much safer place to be.

30 Clark, op. cit., p. 14 and Durey, op. cit., p. 182. Duane was in contact with a number of America-bound radicals or their family members such as Thomas Lloyd, John Binns, and the brother of the geographer Mr. Tyler. The brother of Tyler worked for the Whitehall Evening Post. See William Duane to Thomas Jefferson, 'Letters of William Duane', Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings, 2nd series XX (1907), p. 269.
CHAPTER 8.

Mythical Homeland Made

William, Catherine, and their three children, Catherine, Patrick and William J. Duane stepped from their transatlantic voyager and onto American land on a fitting day for any protean American: Independence Day, 1796. They had sailed from London on 16 May in the Chatham, captained by a Capt. Sammis and had arrived in New York harbour. Duane had his passage paid for him partly through the largesse of a friend, Thomas Lloyd, a Welsh-born radical and veteran of the war of independence who had spent several years in Newgate prison for seditious libel before accompanying the Duanes to America. For the next two years from the Fourth of July, 1796 to 1 November 1798 Duane would struggle as he had when first arriving in London during the 1780s and again in London in 1795-1796. But Duane had the resources of irrepressible enthusiasm, artisanal talent and a career of already some twenty years in the printing and press trades. He was also in the country where his political ideas could be at their most unfettered, in the land of Franklin and Jefferson and his ‘spirit of 1776’. Duane, however, had arrived as President Washington was helping to establish a Federalist ascendancy which for an ultra-Democrat and pro-French revolutionary such as Duane spelt a return for America to the political norms which existed prior to the revolution,

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1 Duane was not the only transatlantic radical to arrive on Independence Day. William MacNeven arrived on 4 July 1804 and William Sampson arrived on 4 July 1806. See Wilson, op. cit., pp. 58-9.
3 Durey, Transatlantic Radicals, p. 182.
4 William Duane to Stephen Bradley (1808), in Clark, op. cit., p. 63.
back into the arms of his now much despised Britain. During this period Duane’s anger at the British on account of his deportation, intensified by the outbreak of war with France, would boil over with the suppression of the 1798 rebellion in Ireland. He would aim his guns at the closest thing to Britishness he saw in America: the Federalists. For Duane, America was his mythical homeland. He would punish anything which stepped in the way of his vision of a Jeffersonian and Democratic America.

Duane was one of a number of transatlantic radicals to arrive on American shores. The United States had become an asylum for hundreds of British and Irish radicals and would continue to be one, especially after the failed United Irish uprising. Many of them were Unitarians who were active in the earlier Commonwealth phase of the radical movement. Alongside the Unitarians were the journalists and printers who were inspired by Painite and small-producer radicalism. When they arrived in the United States of the 1790s their dreams of a democratic, egalitarian and republican country were quickly dissipated by the reality of Federalism.

Attaching themselves to the existing ultra-Republican opposition to the Federalists they jumped ‘wholeheartedly into the political fray, their newspapers and pamphlets were the main conduits by which Jeffersonian republican policies reached a mass constituency’.5 Partly through the impact of these transatlantics the Republican party was able to adjust its political principles in the 1790s and emerge as a viable opposition force. Their usefulness as an opposition force was in their recognition that Federalist policies were uncannily similar to Pittite Britain from where they had fled. The transatlantic radicals perceived America to

be menaced with excessive governmental power, official corruption, and a state-supported financial system. Their response was to criticise the Federalists and their administrations ‘with the same mix of political arguments they had used in Britain, infusing them into the Jeffersonian party’.

The transatlantic radicals primarily aimed their message of ‘participatory democracy’ (in between direct democracy, thought to be unworkable in a large Republic, and representative democracy, considered to have reduced the influence of the people and given rise to a ‘natural’ aristocracy) at urban mechanics, small masters and shopkeepers. In doing so they attempted to revive the dormant small-producer radicalism of the 1770s and use the experience they had gained through the corresponding and popular societies in Britain and Ireland. They were committed to a democratic republicanism which actively sought to include a much wider group of men in politics and through their commitment they added a radical wing to the Jeffersonian coalition. They suggested the need for ‘constitutional revision, questioning the utility of the Senate, the mode of appointment to and tenure of the judiciary, and the powers of the President’. It was within this group that Duane could work towards re-fashioning America into the country of his democratic vision.

Arrival

But it was not only Duane who had to become acquainted with his new surroundings, or re-acquainted beyond the remaining vague imprints of an early

6 Ibid, p. 735.
7 Ibid, p. 735.
childhood in colonial America, as he brought with him a family of restless adolescents and youths. As Durey has argued:

Many of the exiles who were fortunate enough to be accompanied by their relatives found that their nearest and dearest—unfortunate victims of politics with which they may have disagreed—had great difficulty acclimatizing to their new surroundings. This was often the case for older radicals whose children were young adults, their characters and attitudes already formed before emigration.\(^8\)

William Duane’s son, William J. Duane, would certainly have agreed with this statement based on his own writings to his son William Duane (Jr.):

Dear William,

...I fear that I have erred in one way as much as my father did in another—he drew me as he desired with an iron chain, I have scarcely restrained you by a silken string; his harshness had the effect of making me take towards you the other extreme; you have so much good sense, however, as to see this, and to repair yourself any error of mine...You cannot have a more instructive lesson than my own situation presents— at the age of 34 I knew something of printing, and yet was not a good printer; I knew something of books and paper, and yet could not support a family by bookselling & stationary—my father taught me nothing thoroughly, & yet always resisted my attempting the profession of the law; and, when in opposition to his wishes in this respect, I got to the law, I found that I was destitute of that tact, which early experiences alone can give...\(^9\)

Although Duane did overcome his eldest son’s ambivalence about emigrating, the period of his absence from his family in India had estranged him from his second son, Patrick. For Duane, his son William J., was ‘the dearest of all my affections’ and his daughter Catherine was always ‘much attached’ to him but his

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\(^9\) William J. Duane to William Duane, Jr., 19 March 1826, Duane Family Papers, APS.
son Patrick showed signs of resenting the sudden disappearance of Duane in 1787 and his return in 1795. Duane had tried hard to be a good father even from a distance by writing to his family and financially supporting and organising his children’s education and maintenance. He was a concerned father, although sometimes heavy-handed, and he also tried to help his adopted children from Calcutta when he sponsored two of them to come to America once he was established there. We do not know what happened to the remaining child.

Among the many jobbing immigrants milling around the main eastern cities, Duane would have had to fight hard for a place. Not only did he have to help his elder son reconcile himself to his new homeland as he watched events in Ireland from afar, but he also had to become acquainted again with a woman he had not known for eight years as well as their younger children. He had to find work and keep them in food, clothing and shelter. He was a stranger in cities overflowing with immigrants; one, Philadelphia, was about to be struck down with an epidemic of yellow fever that was to claim his wife and drive the survivors into the countryside to escape its effects. Duane had to make the myths he held of America and its freedoms into a reality. The tension between myth and reality pervaded his American period.

Under United States law William Duane was an alien on his 1796 entry into America as he had been born in the empire, in Newfoundland, and was not a resident of America when the Declaration of Independence took place in 1776. It was imperative for Duane to strengthen his claim for American legitimacy even though he could not prove he had been born around Lake Champlain and sought

\[\text{\[12\] Phillips, op. cit., p. 46.}\]
\[\text{\[11\] Ibid, p. 30.}\]
\[\text{\[10\] For his legality see: Durey, Transatlantic Radicals, p. 366. For Newfoundland see: BL/IOR/L/MIL/9/87-92. The entry for Duane is under the ship the Rodney for 1787.}\]
to cover up his birth in Newfoundland. Unlike the other transatlantic radicals such as James Thomson Callender, John Binns and Mathew Carey, Duane did have an American past and his cousin, the Federalist James Duane, had been a member of the Second Congress in the Presbyterian Party. Not only was Duane now a poor relative but he was also on the wrong side of politics and was shunned by his New York family. For Duane, citizenship was not only the recognition of his American origins that he so deeply desired, but also a bulwark against the possibility of another deportation; one which in fact the Federalists would earnestly wish for and attempt unsuccessfully to bring about. His identity was clearly a critical matter for him; he needed to secure it through the possession of a certificate of American citizenship. For that, he would have to wait another five unstable and unsure years, which coincided with the passing of the Alien and Sedition Acts. Modelled on the British equivalent that he had seen first hand, they were designed precisely to ensnare men such as himself. Indeed, President Adams singled out Duane with his comments that the ‘matchless effrontery of this Duane merits the execution of the alien law. I’m very willing to try its strength upon him’. The law was aimed at the émigrés’ Achilles’ Heel—their lack of protection from the threat of deportation back to the uncertainties of Europe, which for many of them also meant the threat of imprisonment for past sedition in their home countries. Given these laws, America would not have been Elysium but a country which threatened to return Duane to the hostile embrace of the British empire. Without citizenship, America was as insecure for Duane as India had been.

Duane began his career in America as he did in 1780s London—as a journeyman printer and hack writer. It would take him two years of hard work again to become a newspaper editor and it is to these two years that we now turn, particularly to his writing of a piece of hack historical work on the French Revolution. We do this to clarify Duane’s view of developments in France between his writing on the revolution for the *World* and the *Telegraph* and his editorship of the *Aurora*. Between the order for Duane’s deportation from India in 1794 and his arrival in America in 1796 France had seen the execution of Robespierre and the subjection of the Republic to Thermidorean rule by the Directory.

While in New York, that great catchment of émigrés, and following three months’ initial unemployment, Duane was able to secure employment with John “Walking” Stewart, a publisher of travelogues and works of moral philosophy. Stewart was ‘famous for writing books that few read, and none can understand’.14 For Duane that mattered little, as long as he was paid. Apart from the travelogues which were based on Stewart’s own journeys, hence the “Walking”, he was busy publishing a four volume American edition of a history of France. The first three volumes were a re-print of a work by the British Tory John Gifford with the fourth volume to be added anonymously by Duane. Thus Duane was hired to write and compile a volume of French history covering the period from the

outbreak of revolution in 1789 up until 1797. As with many hack writers publishing anonymously, Duane could escape censure for plagiarising, and thus took much of his work from the Annual Register. But unlike John Gifford’s account of the revolution, Duane took a pro-French line which pitted the Girondists and Brissot, and the milder Jacobin Danton, against the excesses of the Terror under Robespierre. He also sought to salvage the reputation of the revolution by stating that the Directory of 1795 was ‘the most perfect form of republican government yet instituted’. The work was a mixture of the Annual Register, contemporary French memoirs and his own political slant. Duane included in the book his own argument on Franco-American affairs and was highly critical of the Federalists’ handling of the relationship between France and the United States. George Washington was lambasted for his proclamation of neutrality being in direct conflict with the treaty Congress signed with the French during the War of Independence. He subsequently labelled the Jay Treaty as an alliance with Britain in all but name. These opinions paralleled those of Benjamin Franklin Bache in the Aurora, although, unlike the Aurora’s wide circulation, the six hundred page work had a very small circulation and would be much less influential than Duane’s own later writings in the Aurora. Perhaps anti-Federalist invective worked well in small doses as contemporary commentary, but it was less successful as a reasoned historical account. Luckily for Duane, bad history still sometimes paid. Duane continued to work on his history from October 1796 until its publication in 1798 and meanwhile he tried to look for better and more substantial work. After securing the contract with Stewart, Duane moved to the

16 Ibid, pp. 47-8.
young nation’s capital—Philadelphia. It was to be his main political battleground and the location for his first rambunctious attack on Federalist America. ‘Jasper Dwight’ had arrived.

**Jasper Dwight**

In 1796 William Duane wrote a stinging and deeply insulting attack on the President and hero-general Washington. It was published and sold in December at the office of the *Aurora* and at Philadelphian bookstores for twenty-five cents. In return, Duane’s alter-ego and mask Jasper Dwight would be attacked as an American version of Thersites the Abuser and would be shunned and himself abused. In the 1810s he would be hounded from political influence for his long-remembered polemic.

Duane became known in wider Republican circles through this attack on Washington, and his bluster gained the admiration of the leading Republican editor at that time—Benjamin Franklin Bache. Duane in his pamphlet struck out at the power of Federalism in the embodiment of Washington. In the republican attacks on Washington, he is portrayed as an American quasi-king. Using the language of the Old Testament Duane pilloried Washington as an idol to the Israelites who need to turn away from him so they can embrace the pure and austere Mosaic faith—Republicanism. Duane wrote his ‘Letter to George Washington’,

> to expose the PERSONAL IDOLATRY into which we have been heedlessly running—to awaken my countrymen to a sense of our

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19 Ibid, p. 50.
true situation—and to shew them in the fallibility of the most favored of men, the necessity of thinking for themselves.\textsuperscript{20}

Washington is also attacked for being a slave master who has kept the Americans in thralldom, even though he peacefully relinquished power in a move which set the tone for all subsequent presidents. Washington had the support of his army and could have held onto power as a military dictator who then subsequently gaolèd men like Duane. But for the ultra-Republicans, and particularly the radical exiles, Washington embodied an aristocratic Republicanism which was allied to Hamilton, who, they claimed, represented the Anglo-American faction bent on an insidious plot to force America back into a monarchical system based on the British model of governance. James Thomson Callender’s vitriolic attack on Washington, published in the \textit{Aurora} in December, enforced this paranoid vision of Washington:

\begin{quote}
If ever a nation was debauched by a man, the American has been debauched by WASHINGTON. If ever a nation has suffered from the improper influence of one man, the American nation has been deceived by WASHINGTON. Let his conduct then be an example to future ages. Let it serve to be a warning that no man may be an idol, and that a people may confine in themselves rather than in an individual. Let the history of the federal government instruct mankind, that the marque of patriotism may be worn to conceal the foulest designs against the liberties of the people.\textsuperscript{21}
\end{quote}

Although Washington and Hamilton did share a view of America which called for a strong central government that used America’s British inheritance and legal system, this did not make them non-Republicans. It merely meant that they were not ultra-Republican. Duane would have held an admiration for Washington from afar as the general who helped secure victory for the new republic, but on

\textsuperscript{20} Jasper Dwight (William Duane), \textit{A Letter to George Washington} (1796), p. 48.

\textsuperscript{21} Durey, op. cit., p. 238.
landing in America he quickly allied himself with the loose grouping of people who stood opposed to the Federalists and to Washington himself. The period when the campaign against Washington was at its most intense, August 1795 to March 1797, was also the period of Duane’s American homecoming. To set himself up as a loyal Jeffersonian Republican who was escaping from the Pittite government which Federalists enthusiastically looked towards, Duane launched wholeheartedly into an attack on Washington. It served his goal and helped him win the confidence of Bache who then became his employer from November 1798. It secured Duane a role among the camp of Republican writers inhabiting the political world of Philadelphia and would have also brought him to the notice of the leading Republican, Thomas Jefferson. As Phillips has explained: ‘The excellence of Duane’s pamphlet, written under circumstances of unemployment and want, demonstrated to Bache and others his intellectual capacity and outstanding ability as a writer’. The pamphlet was from Jasper Dwight, Vermont, and in it Duane laid claim to both an American birthplace, Lake Champlain, and his American birthright, citizenship in an American republic. Duane’s writing throughout his American career would always rest on this fundamental and dual claim of origin and citizenship: he would constantly return to the concepts of birthplace, himself as American, and of birthright, Americaness as Republican and Democratic and not British.

Duane wrote as a ‘stranger [an American fleeing from Pittite Britain] who flies from the bondage and oppression of Europe’ whose disappointment grows when he realises American affection towards Washington is misplaced. Duane thought that Washington’s comments on American democracy had made him

22 Phillips, William Duane, p. 50.
nothing ‘short of Mr. Pitt’ because his principles went as far and his ‘sympathy of sentiment’ agreed with the much detested leader of Britain.\textsuperscript{24} Duane’s net became wider as he attacked the Federalists behind Washington’s throne who are ‘the constant and no less ardent eulogists of a British form of government. British maxims in morals as well as politics are with them the standards of perfection’.\textsuperscript{25} Because of Washington’s support for Anglo-American federalism, his reputation has slipped from that of a Republican American Solon or Lycurgus to that ‘of a Venetian Doge or a Dutch Stadholder!’\textsuperscript{26} James Thomson Callender had begun the open campaign against Washington in August 1795. His immediate goal had been the removal of Washington from office and by the time of Duane’s attack in 1796 their aim was the burial of Washington’s reputation alongside his presidency.

Duane’s pamphlet was written in response to Washington’s farewell address and Jasper Dwight was noted by a British traveller as the one man alone who ‘was hardy enough to appear the public defamer of Washington; but this man was not an American. His name is Duane, by birth an Irishman’.\textsuperscript{27} Although wrong about his birthplace, the traveller was right about Duane’s consistent hardiness when faced with a world that so trenchantly disagreed with his own view of it. Duane took Paine’s line, that Washington was ‘treacherous in private friendship…and a hypocrite in public life’, and elaborated on it, asserting that Washington declared principles which were often ‘the cloak for their violation…from Augustus to George III the profession of love has been accompanied by the sacrifice of

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{27} Phillips, op. cit., p. 52.
While elsewhere in the essay he strategically praised Washington as a military commander and as an individual, Duane undermined this praise by portraying Washington as a political hypocrite who damaged the Republic by bringing in ‘doctrines [which] bear a most obstinate resemblance of the measures and language of the British ministry a year ago!’.

He also defended Paine against Washington’s criticism of *Common Sense* with the argument that ‘to defend the religion of Christ.’ Washington had violated the Rights of Man ‘by dealing in HUMAN SLAVES!’, yet he never criticised Thomas Jefferson for being a slaveowner. This strong and personal attack on one of the founding fathers earned Duane his notoriety as well as a career in the service of Bache and Jefferson. It was even made into a poem:

And thou audacious renegade,  
With many a libellous bravadoe,  
Assail’dst Columbia’s, god-like son.  
The great, th’ immortal WASHINGTON.

Although Duane also made his claim to being a son of Columbia and not a renegade Irishman, the poet, and the Federalist camp, obviously did not believe him. Duane’s attack was read by the Federalists as part of a concerted and outrageous attempt by an alien and seditious group of foreigners and French sympathisers to destroy the reputation of their founding father. Obviously, by tarnishing the reputation of Washington, the Republicans were hoping that their own two founding fathers, Franklin and Jefferson, would be given more historical credence; and in the case of Jefferson room to develop a Republican vision for

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30 Ibid, p. 34.  
31 Phillips, op. cit., p. 52.
America. By tarnishing Washington, they hoped to raise Jefferson.

Two Interim Newspapers

Duane also secured work with two other newspapers before he began working for Bache. In 1797 Duane and Thomas Lloyd began editing the *Merchants’ Daily Advertiser* for Thomas Bradford. Lloyd was senior editor and Duane was junior. The *Merchants’* covered Irish news in detail and included plans for setting up a republican society. Duane also felt the backlash against his Washington polemic in the shape of a campaign against him in the pages of William Cobbett’s *Porcupine’s Gazette*. Cobbett was himself a political exile from Britain but one very much on the other side of the political fence from Duane. He was both the most effective political writer in late eighteenth-century America and the most deeply federalist, as a Tory writer languishing in America. Cobbett struck out at Lloyd and Duane as the political underlings of Bache and argued that they were the ‘partnership newspaper in Front street’ which politically tailed the *Aurora*. When the three newspaper editors disagreed over the handling of a letter reputed to be Jefferson’s, Cobbett helpfully suggested that ‘the merchants in partnership with Bradford would do well to appoint a committee…to wait on Bache, and get matters adjusted. The papers must act in concert, or all is ruined’.

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32 Ibid, pp. 52-3.
34 Phillips, op. cit., p. 53
and India: ‘Are not the generous prisons, Newgate and the Jail of Bengal most excellent seminaries for the education of the Conductors of a patriotic newspaper?’.

He even labelled the two as convicts and political frauds: ‘This paper contains more bloody news from Ireland than all the other papers put together… I believe the convicts fabricate a good deal of it’.

In the middle of 1797, Duane moved on to editing the Philadelphia Gazette after he was given a strong reference from Benjamin Franklin Bache. Bache had been approached by the inexperienced proprietor Andrew Brown Junior to find ‘a person qualified to conduct that paper—and Mr. Bache recommended William Duane, who was engaged and did succeed to the editorship’. This demonstrates Bache’s admiration for Duane in the year before he himself hired him. Because ‘Mr. Brown was of a temper not well adapted to agree very long with any man’, and Duane was not given to controlling his, this employment did not last long into the next year. By the spring of 1798 Duane was either dismissed or resigned from the Philadelphia Gazette and was again out of employment. His tempestuous landlady, meanwhile, was baying for rent money. Even though Duane’s wife was seriously ill, the family were abused by the ‘unconscionable foul mouthed Dutch woman’ who wanted them to leave. The landlady made it plain that she did not want Catherine to die on her premises. Duane tried to prime his publisher, Stewart, for money owed from the period of Stewart’s visit to Philadelphia in early June, but was unsuccessful.

Duane was now destitute and facing the harshness of immigrant life in America as opposed to the mythical dream. His bitterness expressed itself in a

36 Ibid, p. 53.
37 Ibid, p. 53.
38 Ibid, p. 53.
39 William Duane to James Thackara, 5 June 1798, William Wood Thackara Diary, HSP.
letter he wrote to James Thackara asking for help, ‘I am not getting money for my labor and there is upwards of 130 dollars due to me’.\(^{40}\) He sought help from Thackara, an engraver who was his first friend in Philadelphia, to ransom his property so that he could go into business, leaving the unpaid work for Stewart behind. To make his situation worse the much-hated landlady seized all Duane’s goods. He witnessed the effects of yellow fever first hand as he watched his wife slip away, confined to bed in a hovel next to a smoky and hot alley\(^{41}\). Duane was never further from his mythical homeland than when Catherine, the faithful wife who cared for three children while he worked in India, and accompanied him to a new land, passed away on 13 July 1798.

**Aurora: Benjamin Bache’s Last Days**

After a further month’s unemployment, in September Duane began working on the newspaper founded by the grandson of Benjamin Franklin. Philadelphia was still in the midst of the yellow fever epidemic which would eventually claim the life of Franklin’s grandson, Benjamin Franklin Bache, and usher in Duane’s period as editor. In the meantime Duane would watch as sixty people a day were struck dead by the fever even while the staff of the *Aurora* remained at work at their printing press. Bache had set up the newspaper in 1790 and soon alienated the Federalist ascendancy in Philadelphia, losing the good-will he had enjoyed among the upper echelons of society on account of his famous grandfather. ‘Leib, Smith, and other Republican activists had become the Baches’ circle of friends as

\(^{40}\) William Duane to James Thackara, 5 June, 1798, William Wood Thackara Diary, HSP.

\(^{41}\) Phillips, op. cit., p. 54.
well as their political allies. The Baches exchanged their “decided station in society” for this political underworld of journeyman printers, newspaper writers, and street- and tavern-level activists.\textsuperscript{42} His Republican stance and support for a wider enfranchisement of the electorate also meant that his ties with the Jeffersonian party became strong. His paper became the mouth-piece of one of the parties in the emerging party war, following the division between the supporters of Jefferson and Hamilton in the wake of the 1787 constitution. In a 1794 edition Bache stated that the \textit{Aurora} ‘shall diffuse light within the sphere of its influence, dispel the shades of ignorance, and gloom of error and thus tend to strengthen the fair fabric of freedom on its surest foundation, publicity and information’.\textsuperscript{43}

Benjamin Franklin Bache’s newspaper became a hub of republicanism in Philadelphia and the household itself sheltered and acted as a clearing room for Republican party leaders and ‘the headquarters of what has been called “the Republican party’s Grub Street”’.\textsuperscript{44} As Pasley has also noted:

numerous men…found a haven under the \textit{Aurora}’s roof. Among them were refugee radicals such as the exiled journalists James Thomson Callender and William Duane [who was not strictly an exile], the United Irishman…Dr. James Reynolds, and the United Irish leader Theobald Wolfe Tone.\textsuperscript{45}

For Duane to gravitate towards this hub was both natural and beneficial for the Philadelphia republicans. Duane was also a Freemason during his life in America. Given his sponsor’s Freemasonry—Jefferson as well as other founding fathers have a well-recorded attendance at Freemason halls—Duane sought to consolidate his position as a Republican journalist through this network of Republican Freemasons. Anthony Haswell, another Republican printer, who was gaoled under

\textsuperscript{42} Pasley, op. cit., p. 93.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Aurora}, 8 November 1794, quoted in Pasley, op. cit., p. 91.
\textsuperscript{44} Pasley, op. cit., p. 94.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid, p. 94.
the Sedition Act, attests to a fraternity of Republican editors, printers and journalists among the ranks of the Freemasons. Later in Duane’s life, and during the career of his son William J. Duane, the connection between Freemasonry and politics would trigger the formation of the Anti-masons.46

The Republicans gained a skilled printer and propagandist who, while not as venomous as the Federalist William Cobbett, was capable of powerfully scathing writing. Duane’s usefulness can be measured by his longevity: he outlasted all the other editors and remained a committed Republican even when Callender spurned the party because of anger over a loss of patronage. Bache quickly perceived Duane’s talents and promoted him to a senior position in the newspaper, making use of his managerial, printing and polemical skills. He made such a strong impression on the editor that Bache passed the newspaper into his care as he was on his death-bed. Duane took on the position with a vengeance, powered by his detestation of the Federalists and of Hamilton’s vision of America as a new nation modelled on the strengths of the British system of government.

In July the Federalist-controlled Congress had enacted the Alien and Sedition bills which sought to control the pro-French newspapers and to silence the ultra-Republicans. Under the Sedition Act one could be charged, fined and imprisoned for printing ‘any false, scandalous, and malicious writing’ aimed at the U.S. government, the U.S. Congress or the U.S. President. Any ‘intent to defame…, or to bring them...into contempt or disrepute; or to excite against them…the hatred of the good people of the United States’ would earn the accused the ire of the upholders of the act.47 The legislation shadowed closely the laws brought through

47 Pasley, op. cit., p. 120.
the British parliament by the Pitt administration considered in the previous chapter. Duane was well aware of the similarity of the two separate pieces of legislation. Both were designed to hobble the democratic and pro-French movements in their respective countries. Men such as Duane were their direct target in both cases. The newspaper he now joined was chosen as the first litmus test and target for the acts as it was the most influential Republican newspaper with a wide circulation. Bache was already under indictment for the supposed defamation of officials in the Adams administration and was under a four thousand dollar bond as he faced the pre-trial wait. But before the administration could try him for his anti-Federalist and pro-French writing, he died. Bache died on 10 September at the age of twenty-nine while facing trial under the Alien and Sedition Acts. He left behind him his widow Margaret Bache and their four children whom Duane would in time adopt as his own after marrying Margaret. The Republican mantle, *The Aurora*, was now passed to Duane as was the Federalist and legislative crown of thorns: The Alien and Sedition Acts.
Duane began editing his first American newspaper in a country whose political debate was rent by the ideological struggle and war occurring between England and France. On one side were the ultra-Federalists, who had helped in 1794 with the signing of the Jay Treaty with England, and who favoured war with Republican France and a closer alliance with Britain. On the other were the ultra-Republicans who had a deeply held Anglophobia which stemmed from the mentality of the Virginian élite and the period of the American Revolution; these men wanted the Americans to side instead with France or at least to hold on to a clear neutrality. Between the two camps was a large (majority) middle ground which they sought to persuade and which moved back and forth between the two extremes during the course of the decade. On an ideological level the ultra-Federalists and ultra-Republicans mirrored the split that was occurring in Britain, Ireland and continental Europe over the ramifications of the French Revolution. On the one hand the ultra-Federalists held a Burkean view of the democratic revolution; on the other, the ultra-Republicans a Painite understanding of events and their implications for democracy in America.

Men such as Duane viewed the ultra-Federalists as dangerous traitors to the cause of the American Revolution who were leading the country back into the arms of a tyranny against which they had fought a revolution. This struggle exploded into a nasty newspaper-war in 1795 between the ultra-Republicans and
Duane’s *bête noir*, the controversial William Cobbett. Duane would play a pivotal role in editing the leading Republican newspaper in late eighteenth-century America and as a major opponent of Cobbett’s. They would struggle over the inheritance of the American Revolution and the meaning of the French Revolution for Americans. Both aliens, they would repeat many of the ideological disputes that had been raging in Britain. They would colour their interpretation of American politics with either pro-revolutionary fervour or anti-radicalism. It would be a struggle over the Alien and Sedition Acts, legislative measures which were understood to be part of the wider battle between the supporters of France and Britain.  

The actions of Duane and his political enemies in the period from 1798 to 1801 were part of a conflict in which American foreign policy and domestic ideological disputes had become intertwined.

In between the two political extremes was an embattled presidency. John Adams became president in 1797 and after a brief period of bipartisanship faced a Republican press which argued that he was a secret monarchist who wanted the United States to declare war on France. He also faced opposition from his own loose party, particularly from the clique around Alexander Hamilton. Adams thus had to struggle not only with the ultra-Republican pressmen but also with extremists within his own ranks, who sought to push him into an open and declared war with France. Throughout 1798 the U.S. was involved in an undeclared Quasi-War with France, what Adams called his ‘war by halves’ where American ships defended themselves from French privateers and where there was an embargo on France. Against this backdrop the Federalist-controlled Congress brought in the Alien and Sedition Acts which were aimed at suspected Jacobins in

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1 Cobbett criticised the Alien and Sedition Acts from the right for not going far enough.
America. Duane and the other ultra-Republicans were the targets of this legislation, as their pro-French views were considered to be treasonous and a dangerous influence on the American body politic. The laws were passed in June and July 1798 and ‘were part of a package of measures that the extreme Federalists drove through Congress in response to the quasiwar’. The Federalists wished to muzzle, and even destroy, all domestic opposition to the administration but particularly the most extreme form—the ultra-Republican pressmen. The *Aurora*, as the leading Republican newspaper in America, was a direct target of the legislation. One of the acts—the Alien Friends Act—related only to enemy aliens in time of war, with French émigrés in mind if the Quasi-War became a total war. The transatlantic radicals were vulnerable to the Alien Friends Act if they were not naturalised owing to its deporting provisions and to the ‘imprisonment provisions of the Sedition Act if they falsely, scandalously, and maliciously criticized either the government, its officers, or the constitution, with the intention of bringing them into contempt or disrepute’. In targeting the transatlantic and ultra-Republican editors and journalists the ultra-Federalists thought they had at last triumphed over the ‘malcontents from Great Britain and Ireland’; instead the Alien and Sedition Acts ushered in the next phase of the struggle over the Republic, with the ultra-Republicans resisting attempts to silence them. As Durey has argued: ‘By so artlessly seeking to silence dissent, by embarking on a huge military buildup, and by raising direct taxes to pay for the army and navy, they opened avenues for criticism’. This meant the Republican party could ‘claw back popular support’ with the ‘radical exiles again acting as

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2 Ibid, p. 251.
3 Ibid, p. 251.
tirailleurs’. Duane, in his editorship of the *Aurora*, was directly involved in the opposition to the Alien and Sedition Acts and as a result he would face trial under the Sedition Act and would be brought before the ultra-Federalists in the senate who had framed and written it.

**Beginnings**

Between 1 November 1798 and 4 March 1801 Duane fought the most important of his vast array of political battles. With the death of Benjamin Franklin Bache of yellow fever on 10 September 1798, Duane became the editor of the *Aurora*, bringing out his first edition on 1 November. The name on the front of the newspaper, Bache, stood as a memorial to the founding editor. With the *Aurora*, Duane found his intellectual mooring in America. He was also partaking in a Republican revival in which his newspaper played a crucial role. His transoceanic blend of Painite radicalism, Jeffersonian republicanism and revolutionary sympathies made the *Aurora* the first ship of a strong Jeffersonian line of battle. He had searched for a mythical home for thirty-eight years. When he finally found what he was looking for, it turned out to be not a building of four walls, or even a city, but a newspaper and a co-partner in that newspaper—Bache’s widow—who would become his wife.

Duane was offered the editorial position by a Republican committee made up of Bache’s political allies, friends, and family members. According to Cobbett, Duane’s salary was to be eight hundred dollars per year. In 1798 the *Aurora* had

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1 Ibid, p. 252.
2 Ibid, p. 252.
3 Ibid, p. 252.
1700 subscribers making it the largest newspaper in America. In accepting the offer, which Duane argued had been set down by Bache in his will, Duane was accepting an intellectual inheritance; one that followed a line from Classical Republican ideals to Locke and the Commonwealthmen, the Enlightenment thinkers, Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson and Tom Paine. Duane thought it would be only for one year, later commenting that he had ‘intended to pass the mountains in the spring of 1799’; instead he kept editing the *Aurora*, to the detriment of the Federalist cause.9

Duane had already entered the paper-war that had erupted in Philadelphia in 1795 and which continued until 1800, the year the main protagonist—the irascible but talented William Cobbett—returned to England. The arrival of William Cobbett on the Philadelphia press scene hardened the ultra-Republicans’ prejudice, that the ‘influence of the British government was insidiously poisoning American politics and subverting the republic’.10 The experience of William Duane in India and London made him susceptible to the binary thinking of the ultra-Republicans in the United States. His two main political opponents in Philadelphia in the paper-war would be Cobbett and John Ward Fenno Jr. Fenno was American born and had taken over the running of his father’s newspaper the *Gazette of the United States*. Cobbett in his autobiography claimed that he arrived in the U.S. in October 1792 as a Republican and a Painite but Durey argues that his radicalism soured on the reception Joseph Priestley received upon his arrival in New York. Cobbett felt badly mistreated by the London reformers because of his attempt to uncover corruption in the military in Britain and his subsequent

forced exile in France when the legal case he was involved in rebounded on him. He felt that he had been double-crossed by the reformers. His period in revolutionary France ended when he was forced to flee to America in March 1792 ‘with the threat of arrest for his political activities [in France] hanging over his head’. In combination these two events, his exile in France because of the perceived duplicity of London reformers and his exile in America owing to the spate of French arrests of foreign radicals meant a sharp turn away from his previous radicalism. From 1795 Cobbett expressed in his writing ‘his hatred of revolutionary France, his contempt for American democrats and British exiles, and his strident English patriotism’. Duane was to feel the sting of Cobbett’s anti-radicalism as, too, was Margaret Bache.

Alongside the intellectual inheritance, Duane was accepting, and being expected to uphold, a Republican home: both in the pages of the Aurora, a strictly Republican ‘Republic of Letters’, and in welcoming Republican exiles and writers—as Bache had for Wolfe Tone, James Thomson Callender and William Duane himself. For someone like Duane, with intimate knowledge of London’s Grub Street, the Aurora milieu would have been easily recognisable, the Bache household having become a Republican party Grub Street. In time Duane's Republican home and inheritance would become not only metaphorical but also real. With his marriage to Margaret Bache, Duane became the adoptive father of Benjamin Franklin’s great-grandchildren and managed their financial inheritance. The building where the Aurora was published also became his real home. The Aurora home sat at 106 Market Street and Franklin Court and was where the

13 Pasley, op. cit., p. 93.
printing presses of the newspaper lay. The press-shop was also connected to a bookseller’s and stationer’s store. The house where Margaret Bache lived was just around the corner in Franklin Court. Franklin Court was a narrow street that ran out of Market Street itself and was between Third and Fourth Streets. It was in this home, surrounded by a large courtyard and near the actual printing presses and shop, that Margaret Bache’s children were born and where Benjamin Franklin died in April 1791. The area was a hub of republicanism and once Duane was stationed there he would only leave upon moving to Washington with the election of Jefferson. It was the setting for the American revolution that he had dreamed of—Franklin’s revolution. One sees in his correspondence with Jefferson that he sincerely believed that he was that Franklinian sentinel whom Jefferson later mentioned, guarding Franklin’s Republican legacy. It was not surprising that he felt this, working on the newspaper Franklin had set up for his grandson, living in Franklin’s neighbourhood and eventually becoming the stepfather of the children of Benjamin Franklin Bache. For a boy who had dreamed of a mythical homeland, hearing of distant revolutionary battles and ideological struggles, this was his homecoming par excellence.

The continuity between Bache and Duane, which Phillips has noted, becomes easier to understand when the two men are seen as successive guardians of the metaphorical and physical home of the Aurora. Duane took on Bache’s role as the leading ultra-Republican in America and continued the newspaper’s enthusiastic support of Jefferson and cutting attacks on the Adams presidency. He was taking on the burden of a newspaper that was suffering financially and was operating under the ire of the government. The leading Federalists detested the Aurora and its ultra-Republican invective. Duane was entrusted by the anti-Federalist Republicans to defend the inheritance of the American Revolution against what
they considered to be a monarchical threat. The Federalist administration judged the *Aurora* to be seditious and even treasonous in its approach to Franco-American relations. Duane successfully maintained a continuity between the editorship of Bache and his own using an ultra-Republican stance. The seam between the two editorships was so fine that some Federalist commentators found it hard to distinguish between the name of Bache and Duane.

During much of this period Duane concealed his own, true, identity behind the family name of Bache. He also manipulated various facts from his life to form an editorial identity which, while acting under anonymity and standing behind that of the Bache family, had a form and content of its own. He distorted his past and its complexities, changes of place and politics, and sold an edited and flattened version of himself as the ultra-Republican editor. For a fresh American audience Duane was what he revealed himself to be in the newspaper, not the man we have grown familiar with. In the *Aurora* he is Republican American, strongly Anglophobic and in sympathy with perceived victims of British imperialism such as the Irish and East Indians; he is not the bellicose pro-imperialist of his Indian newspapers. This is the version that has been accepted by Phillips, Pasley, Rosenfeld and others. Duane drew on this identity in recounting his life to a leading Republican, Tench Coxe, in 1801 as he sought to secure citizenship.\(^1\) In the letter Duane is born at the site of a Republican American victory. To *not* grant him citizenship would not only be cruel but also unpatriotic. An American birth was not only his mother’s continual theme, supposedly, when Duane resided in Clonmel, but also Duane’s during his period in America from 1798 to 1801. It was part of Duane’s making of himself into the mythical American, a patriot born

\(^1\) William Duane to Tench Coxe, 13 June 1801, Tench Coxe Papers, HSP.
of the flames of war and revolution wanting to claim his birthright but thwarted by
the despotism of the Federalist and ‘loyalist’ Anglo-Americans.

If one fails to recognise this crucial difference between the Duane we have
encountered in Ireland, England and India, and the American Duane of the
Aurora, then one comes perilously close to accepting Duane’s view of his own.
One example would be to accept wholesale Duane’s American account of his
Indian period. By focusing so heavily on his American career, for all its
importance in his life, previous work, particularly Phillips’s biography, has failed
to distinguish the two ‘Duanes’, collapsing them into one. If one recognises that
Duane was not strictly an American, and manufactured an identity for himself
through a distorted account of his origins, one is left with a more complex and
ambivalent sense of the man. To know why Duane shaped his Aurora American
identity is significant also for what it reveals of the broader vision the Republicans
had of what constituted American citizenship. Duane is an important example of
the process by which someone sought to be nativized in the American public
sphere and the methods one used to achieve this goal.

Duane’s hyper-nationalism was one way for him to prove his Americanness.
Another was to give the details of a manufactured past to the public. When
combined, they worked to endear Duane to a Republican readership who could

\[\text{Duane’s mendacity can be seen in the following excerpt where he leaves out any of his own wrong-doing or attempts at avoiding capture in India: ‘Mention having been made of kidnapping of the present Editor of the Aurora, by the British government in India, it may be pertinent at this time to state the facts briefly. Mr. Duane had been the proprietor and editor of several newspapers in India, but the last, which was his sole property, was “The Indian World”, by which he had realized a handsome fortune, and in September 1794, advertised his whole standing property for sale, meaning, and publishing his intention to return to Philadelphia. His property was to be sold on the 1st of January, 1795, and he had sought a passage on the Hercules of Boston, Capt. Delano, then lying at Calcutta, and to sail in all April’. Duane then goes on to narrate his capture without mentioning his threatening the Governor-General or his own trickery in resisting arrest. Instead only half of the story is given. 17 July, 1801, Aurora.}\]
see him as one of their own, but also as someone who had a widespread experience of the world. Of course the Federalists did not accept Duane’s version of himself and attacked him as a renegade and wild Irishman. We are left then with the question: if the Federalists did not accept Duane as he presented himself, why have most recent historians believed Duane? The answer appears to be that they have largely agreed with his politics and have seen him as a radical victim facing Federalist brutality and xenophobia. As a political stance this works well. As history, on the other hand, a ready acceptance of Duane’s mythical Americanness warrants criticism. Behind Duane’s ‘Aurora American’ was a real man who was an important member of the first party/media combination which the United States knew. In this light Duane’s historical complexity has been overlooked in favour of his own manufactured identity.

Duane brought to the newspaper the ingenuity of an editor who had lived in a British settlement that suffered some of the same problems which faced editors and printers in the new Republic. Like his American friends, Duane had suffered from the paucity of types and quality paper, which were largely imported from Europe, as well as staff who were not as well-trained or experienced as their British or European contemporaries. Duane held another advantage over editors who had not risen through the printing ranks in that he knew how to set type and operate a printing press. This advantage proved incalculable when faced with disputes with his own printers. Added to his experience came his well-known industriousness and ability to recover after fairly hard financial losses and setbacks, for example in 1791, 1794 and 1797-8. Measured against the record of

\[\text{16} \text{ According to Popkin, ‘most of the European newspaper editors of the eighteenth century were incapable of setting type or operating a printing press’, unlike Benjamin Franklin in 1730s America. Popkin, op. cit., p. 99. It was an advantage Duane held over some Federalist editors as well. See, Pasley, op. cit., p. 240.}\]
the average life of a newspaper, Duane’s editorship of the *Aurora* shows remarkable stamina and an unusual amount of artisanal skill. John Nicholas, a Virginian Federalist, looked back on this period and noted that the Republicans had succeeded only because of ‘their incessant industry and application…and our supineness and want of exertion’. Duane played a key role in this Republican drive as editor of the *Aurora*. He edited the paper for over twenty years. In comparison, Pasley has written that:

> Early American newspapers were proverbial for their evanescence, operating on tiny profit margins in the relatively rare cases in which they made any money at all. The high cost of obtaining basic equipment, shortages of affordable paper, and the difficulty of collecting subscription fees were only some of the conditions that meant most of the newspapers established before 1821 only lasted for three weeks or less.

One begins to see what the newspaper’s longevity would mean to an emerging Republican party. It was a well-argued and articulate Republican voice which not only failed to collapse, even when facing financial difficulty or attempts to close it down by intimidation and beatings, but was also located at the heart of the ensuing political struggle. It was a crucial part of the Republican system of newspaper exchanges. It could also avail itself of the fledgling national postal service, 72% of which consisted of the delivery of newspapers. Duane was invaluable to the campaign strategy of Jefferson and the Virginian was careful to keep a close and open correspondence with the Republican editor after 1801.

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17 John Nicholas to Alexander Hamilton, 4 August 1803 in Pasley, op. cit., p. 230.  
18 Pasley, op. cit., p. 52.  
19 ‘The combination of exemption from postage for exchanges and the low rates for papers sent to subscribers amounted to a massive newspaper subsidy, by which letter writers footed most of the bill for a postal system that by some measures was largely devoted to shipping newspapers’. Pasley, op. cit., p. 48.
St. Mary’s Riot

One useful purpose Duane served for Jefferson was his ability, with the aid of other transatlantic radicals of Irish background, to coalesce the Irish of Philadelphia into a voting block in 1799 and 1800. Ireland was in a chaotic situation when Duane took over from Benjamin Franklin Bache. America was bracing itself for an expected influx of Irish escaping from the violence and reprisals of 1798. In the 1790s alone over 60,000 Irish arrived in America. As Wilson has noted: ‘With each crackdown on radicalism in their own country, a new wave of United Irishmen swept across the Atlantic. By 1797 and 1798, when the repression was at its peak, the boats were crammed with political refugees’. Duane was able to use his Irish background in working against British interests in America and in support of Irish republicanism. Unlike Duane’s Indian newspapers the *Aurora* was primarily a propagandic vehicle for the Republican cause in America and Ireland. Duane aimed to turn an America ‘hovering between the forces of democracy and conservatism’ over to democratic republicanism.

To the Irish republicans ‘Duane was the hero and undisputed leader of the immigrant Irish’. Duane endeared himself to this group by his pro-United Irish reporting on Ireland and his constant attacks on the British Empire and the Federalists. Duane worked as the spokesman of the Irish émigré working and artisan classes in Philadelphia. He published in support of immigration, particularly from Ireland, and published poetry about the émigré experience such as a poem simply titled ‘THE EMIGRANT’ which appeared in the 7 December

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20 Wilson, op. cit. p. 2.
21 Ibid, p. 34.
22 Ibid, p. 2.
1798 issue of the *Aurora*. Duane was careful always to tie the interests of the Irish to those of Americans and to make Americans recognise the United Irish Rebellion as a thwarted American Revolution:

> It is a fact, which should be known to every citizen of the United States, that though the Irish Nation exceeds *four millions* of persons, yet ninety men choose more than two-thirds of their House of Commons. In pondering this truth in our minds, let us remember, that *the object* of the American War with Great Britain was to maintain and establish, that “*Taxation and Representation are inseparable*”.\(^{23}\)

Duane portrayed the United Irish Rebellion not as a ‘desperate reflex response to repression’ shaped ‘by local conditions, conflicts and personalities’ which ‘unleashed traditional communal antagonisms that had already been growing in intensity’;\(^{24}\) but as a clearly defined struggle comparable to the American Revolution in its root causes and political aims. He did not mention sectarian divisions when giving his version of the Rebellion. In Duane’s version there is no trace of the Protestant-Catholic divide, nor is there an acknowledgment that there were in reality three very different rebellions in the one: a Catholic rising (the south-east—Kildare, Wicklow, Carlow and Wexford), a Presbyterian rising (the north-east—Antrim and Down) and a rising inspired by French invasion (the west—County Mayo).\(^{25}\) Instead, in Duane’s accounts there is only one division: between the Irish and the English.

As part of Duane’s support for the Irish in the United States Duane campaigned against the Alien and Sedition Acts in the *Aurora* and helped create a petition with James Reynolds which was to be placed before Congress in opposition to the Alien Friends Act. The petitioners argued that the Alien Friends

\(^{22}\) *Aurora*, November 5 1798.
\(^{23}\) David Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States*, p. 30.
\(^{24}\) Ibid, p. 30.
Act was not only unconstitutional and impinged on the rights of states, but was also unjust, as the Irish had supported the Americans in their struggle with England. They believed that Congress in making the act was taking extraconstitutional powers unto itself as they did not perceive ‘by what clause or section, a power over the mere residence of alien friends is vested in Congress’.\(^{26}\) They also argued that the ‘right to receive persons migrating into every state seems to us to be expressly reserved to the several members of the American Union, till the year 1808’.\(^{27}\) They further argued that the ‘mere power to receive emigrants, if they might be instantly ordered to depart under a federal law would not only be useless, but might produce dissatisfaction in the states’.\(^{28}\) There was also the danger of the doctrine of double jeopardy being ignored as: ‘An alien…may commit an act for which he may be fined by the judicial power…Yet the same offence may be rendered the foundation of a second punishment in the grievous form of banishment, under the act of which we complain’.\(^{29}\)

The petitioners stated that Irish had fought for the U.S., and that there was much similarity in the causes of the two countries. They also drew attention to and quoted from John Adams’ 1775 *Address…to the People of Ireland* in which Adams had asked for support and common cause with the Irish.\(^{30}\) They began by describing themselves as a ‘number of the Natives of Ireland’ who found themselves with ‘great anxiety on account of their situation under “the laws governing Aliens”’.\(^{31}\) They addressed the legislature of the United States, in order to procure the repeal of the Alien Friends Act, which according to them, had laid

\(^{26}\) *Aurora*, February 13 1799.

\(^{27}\) Ibid, February 13 1799.

\(^{28}\) Ibid, 13 February 1799.

\(^{29}\) Ibid, 13 February 1799.

\(^{30}\) Wilson, op. cit., p. 52.

\(^{31}\) *Aurora*, 13 February 1799.
aside the ‘wholesome forms of examination, indictment, trial and judgement, and those approved and inestimable principles of liberty and law which protect the citizen’ and instead granted ‘much of the judicial powers of courts and jurors…into the hands of a single executive officer’.\textsuperscript{32} They thus argued that the law gave the president arbitrary power and did not allow due process to the accused.\textsuperscript{33}

Duane and his friends decided that because ‘the great body of the Irish in Philadelphia’ were ‘persons who obtain their bread by manual industry, & are widely dispersed’ it was expedient to gather signatures at local churches as it ‘would be the most ready way to advertise the Irish of the different christian congregations, of the petition, and to request their attendance for a few moments after divine service’.\textsuperscript{34} Duane argued that the 'Irish inhabitants of this city, had framed a petition to be presented to Congress’ and that it ‘was intended to be circulated thro’ the city and suburbs’ during the week, but that a motion being made on Friday 8 February in the House of Representatives on the ‘subject of the Alien Bill’ meant that Duane and his political allies wished to present their petition to the House on Monday 11 February.\textsuperscript{35} This meant that they only had two days to obtain signatures. The petition was published on Saturday 9 February and on that day, according to Duane, ‘a vast number of signatures’ were obtained.\textsuperscript{36}

On Sunday, 10 February 1799 Duane and three other radicals—James Reynolds, Robert Moore and Samuel Cumings—went to St. Mary’s Catholic Church in Philadelphia, to register signatures of protest against the Alien Friends

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\textsuperscript{32} Ibid, 13 February 1799.  \\
\textsuperscript{33} Wilson, op. cit., p. 52.  \\
\textsuperscript{34} *Aurora*, 12 February 1799.  \\
\textsuperscript{35} Ibid, 12 February 1799.  \\
\textsuperscript{36} Ibid, 12 February 1799. 
\end{flushleft}
Act from the predominantly Irish parishioners. In the process some more conservative members of the Church began a protest of their own. Duane and the other transatlantic radicals posted small hand-bills outside St. Mary’s and waited for the service to end. They began to obtain signatures when the ‘gentlemen who had the petitions were assaulted and abused’. Duane argued that the petitioners did not return blows. But after Reynolds, who was on top of a tombstone putting their case to the parishioners, was ‘openly and declaredly on purpose assaulted in a crowd,…having been under the necessity of guarding against a threatened assassination for some time’, he was ‘compelled in his own defence to draw forth a pistol’. According to Duane the pistol ‘was taken out of his hand by a gentleman who was solicitous to prevent ill consequences to either party’. By another account, Reynolds’ pistol was wrenched from him and then he was wrestled to the ground and kicked. The radicals were subsequently arrested by constables and marched to the mayor’s office to be charged with riot and assault. Reynolds faced a second indictment for assault with intent to kill due to the pistol incident.

Duane and the others were released on bonds of two thousand dollars each. Because the Republican chief justice, Thomas McKean, who was at the time running for state governor, quickly covered the bail money, all except for Samuel Cumings were released later that day. Meanwhile, the Federalist newspapers used the riot as propaganda to attack the Republicans and the support they were

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37 Wilson, op. cit., p. 53.
38 *Aurora*, 12 February 1799.
39 Durey, op. cit., p. 253 and *Aurora*, 12 February 1799.
40* Aurora*, 12 February 1799.
41 Wilson, op. cit., p. 53.
42 Ibid, p. 53.
43 *Aurora*, 12 February 1799.
receiving from the United Irishmen in America: ‘That there is such a banditti, organized for the subversion of government, and the establishment of a system of terror and anarchy, cannot longer be doubted by the most incredulous’. The high-profile trial was heard on 21 February with Alexander Dallas as defence counsel, and all those charged were found not guilty. This was not the last time Duane would be involved in a violent fracas. On the next occasion Duane would pay dearly for his political commitment in an event which resulted from the Fries Rebellion of Northampton County.

**Fries Rebellion**

In March 1799 the German-populated southeastern counties of Pennsylvania began to protest against Federal taxation, leading to an armed revolt that became known as Fries Rebellion, named after its leader. After the Irish, the Germans were the second-largest ethnic minority in the United States. Most of the Germans were native-born and were concentrated in the farming belt of south-eastern Pennsylvania where they spoke only German and kept to their own communities. A majority of the Germans had supported the American Revolution. Given the remainder who did not—Moravians, Mennonites, and Quakers—there was a division in the German community which became exacerbated in 1798 in response to the Federalists’ war legislation. The Alien and Sedition Acts, the military appropriations and especially the taxes which made up the war legislation

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44 *Gazette of the United States*, 11 February 1799, quoted in Wilson, op. cit., p. 54.
45 Durey, op. cit., p. 253 and Wilson, op. cit., p. 53.
‘struck the southeastern counties of Pennsylvania with a special force, hitting the Germans of that region both in their pocketbooks and in their prejudices’.46 By the winter of 1798 Federal property tax assessors began appearing in the counties. The supervisor of revenue who was appointed in August for Luzerne, Wayne and Northampton counties was a Moravian. He in turn appointed other Moravians to help him, thus exacerbating sectarian tensions and creating the spectre of “Tories” persecuting the Lutheran and Reformed Church majority. Republican propagandists stepped in and from late summer began ‘telling the farmers that the “tories” and the powers at Philadelphia were preparing to lay crushing taxes in order to possess themselves of their farms and send them into serfdom’.47 In the October elections in the south-eastern counties the Republicans were victorious, the Federalists complaining of the credulity of the Germans. The Germans next flocked to the petition campaign against the Alien and Sedition Acts, the taxes and military preparations. They were the single largest signatories from any area. By early 1799 the Germans had held noisy public meetings and through roving bands and local militias began intimidating the tax assessors and stopped them from working. In response the United States Marshall arrested suspects and prepared them to be escorted to Philadelphia for examination. This was the fuse that lit the rebellion; on the 7 March 1799 140 armed men under John Fries’ leadership compelled the Marshall to release the eighteen prisoners he held who were confined at the Sun Tavern in Bethlehem. This action was to lead to the dispatching of federal troops into the area.

On 12 March President Adams issued a proclamation against the rebellion which his cabinet advised amounted to treason. The proclamation declared that

the United States would ‘call forth military force to suppress such combinations’ because these combinations were acting against the ‘execution of the laws’ in the counties. Owing to Adams leaving for Quincy on the same day as the proclamation and to delays in organising troops, the force raised did not set off for the disaffected counties until four weeks later. It was a mixture of both militia and regulars with the Federalist William McPherson as brigadier-general over them. Adams also accepted the ‘proferred services of “McPherson’s Blues,”’ a Pennsylvania regiment of volunteer militia commanded by Brigadier-General William McPherson and composed largely of companies of young Philadelphia Federalists’.48 These were the men whom Duane was to upset with his newspaper. McPherson blustered that the Germans’ ‘punishment may serve as an example’ for obstructing the law ‘in so treasonable a manner’.49 Between 7 March and the setting off of the Federal troops the counties had already began to quieten down again. Even before news of the military force arrived in the counties a general agreement was reached among the Germans. They agreed that the rebellion had to stop, that the law must be submitted to and that the tax assessors should be allowed to continue their work without any obstruction from Fries and his followers. Fries himself declared that if the assessors arrived on his doorstep he would welcome them warmly and give them dinner. But the Federalists were determined to make an example of the Germans.

When the Federal troops arrived they quickly began to move through the countryside hunting down suspects. As Elkins and McKitrick have noted, ‘the army hurled itself upon the populace’ appearing ‘less “like a Hercules”’ and more

48 Phillips, op. cit., p. 70.
49 Elkins and McKitrick, op. cit., p. 698.
‘like an overgrown bully’. Many of the arrests were based on nothing stronger than local rumour and the troops gloated over their terrified captives and made themselves odious to the population wherever they went. By the time the hunt was over even some of the officers involved were disgusted with what they had done. One wrote that he couldn’t describe ‘the scenes of distress which he had witnessed’ with men dragged in the dead of night by bodies of armed men from their wives and screaming children. In the end another complained that ‘these poor, well-meaning, but ignorant Germans’ were ‘treated in no respect like citizens of the same country’. At the close of the military action some sixty German prisoners were led back to Philadelphia, of whom about half were indicted and were to face trial for treason and lesser offences. In an area which had been loyal to the Federalists, if not their taxes, the aftermath of the suppression was to see the counties ‘sweepingly converted to Republicanism’. By 6 April John Fries and the other leaders of the rebellion were imprisoned in Philadelphia. The cavalry units from the city remained in Northampton for three weeks longer, ‘although the region was quiet except for the minor disturbances caused by the militiamen themselves’. In Duane’s reporting on the rebellion in the *Aurora* he showed sympathy for the German farmers caught in the struggle and began to criticise the government’s handling of the dispute and particularly drew attention to the unruliness and pettiness of the Philadelphian militia sent to the region. Duane charged that some units of the militia had been guilty of exploitation and mistreatment of the local populace. His criticism drew more ire

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50 Ibid, p. 698.
51 Ibid, p. 698.
52 Ibid, p. 698.
53 Ibid, 699.
54 Phillips, op. cit., p. 71.
than an angry letter to the editor as the young members of the militia returned to Philadelphia with Duane and vengeance in mind.

**Duane meets the “McPherson’s Blues”**

As the “McPherson Blues” began streaming back into Philadelphia again their violent humour had moved from German farmers to the writings of William Duane in the *Aurora*. Duane was not called out by the officers but was instead treated like a lower-class rogue and was paid a visit at his printing office. Matters quickly became violent as Duane faced an enraged group of 30 militia on 15 May. The gang of militia gathered at Hardy’s Tavern before noon and then marched together to the *Aurora* office. The captain of each company of “McPherson’s Blues” was to ask Duane if their troop was intended in Duane’s charge of misconduct. Captain Joseph McKean, surprisingly the noted Republican Thomas McKean’s son, was to begin the interrogation. The officers crowded into the second floor printing room and kept a watch on Duane’s son William John and the pressmen there. Others waited on the stairs and in the courtyard below. McKean was shoved forward and upon asking Duane whether his company was intended in Duane’s report Duane answered that ‘he ought to have been last man to come forward…that those who surrounded him had duped him, and made him an instrument to defeat his father’s election [to the governorship]’. McKean answered by slapping Duane across the face and calling him ‘a damned liar’.

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56 Ibid, p. 72.
Duane struck back but the officers pounced on him, held him tight and then dragged him down the stairs out into the courtyard.

They formed a ring around Duane and began to beat him with McKean giving the first blow. Peter Meircken, who had studied under a well-known boxer beat him the most while superintending the beating generally. Duane was continually knocked down and kicked. The officers beat Duane methodically while questioning him about the source behind his reporting on them. In the confusion of the beating Duane’s son slipped down the staircase and attempted to shield his father from attack. He was knocked away with a violent blow to his head and kicked to the edge of the ring surrounding Duane, who tried to stagger to his son but was struck down again. After being beaten senseless the officers began to whip Duane with a cowskin as each captain ‘for his troop,…gave him a cut’.57 Although some of the officers wanted to carry Duane to the city market and strip him there and flog him, and had brought a trumpeter for this purpose, others had had enough. They left Duane lying in the courtyard, his body bruised and lacerated, and departed.

The Federalist newspapers tried to defend the action of the officers but the ‘outrage upon Duane electrified the Republican party in Philadelphia, and ultimately it proved a major turning point in public opinion of the two parties’.58 The beating of William Duane meant that he and his allies could portray him as a Republican martyr who had suffered to sustain republicanism and the values of the American Revolution. Duane in the years 1799-1801 was part of a rising movement which was increasingly gaining public support; they were ‘…anni mirabiles for the radical journalists, when their effectiveness reached new

57 Ibid, p. 74.
58 Phillips, op. cit., p. 75.
heights’. 59 James Jefferson Wilson of New Jersey was another Republican editor who had to face the threat of a Federalist beating. Like Duane he was deemed unworthy to be called out into a duel. A Federalist gentleman, Richard Stockton, had called on Wilson’s printing office with a whip in hand but was faced with Wilson, who had a pistol in his pocket, and Wilson’s co-workers who hauled Stockton out onto the street. When Wilson later challenged Stockton to a duel the challenge was rejected as ‘unworthy his notice!’ because Stockton did not consider Wilson to be a gentleman. 60 The Republican editors were in a difficult position. Not only were they seen as fitting and inviting targets for Federalist violence but they were not allowed to seek redress through the system of duelling. After his beating Duane took steps to rectify this unenviable position through the formation of his own militia.

**Republican Militia**

Within one week of the assault on Duane, ‘considerable accessions of strength’ had ‘already been made to the Militia Companies; and...a band of Jacobins mount guard every evening at his office’. 61 Duane was to be captain of a new infantry company—the Republican Greens. Alongside protecting Duane from Federalist assault, the Republican militia which he helped form was seen by the ultra-Republicans as a counter to the perceived threat of a Federalist standing army. An army which Duane and the other transatlantic radicals believed Hamilton had organised before he was removed from office. The ultra-

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59 Durey, op. cit., p. 252.
60 Pasley, op. cit., p. 321.
61 Phillips, op. cit., p. 75.
Republicans considered the militia to be a counterguard to the perceived Anglicisation of American institutions and life. The militia were to be called the Philadelphia Militia Legion consisting of a series of companies. Duane was made captain of the infantry company called the Republican Greens, the green demonstrating the Irish make-up of this volunteer militia. Duane argued in the _Aurora_ that a militia served as a Republican bulwark against the threat of Federalist tyranny. Besides now making Duane appear almost a political martyr, the beating resulted in the formation of this Republican militia, which now rivalled the McPherson’s Blues. In reaction to the assault on Duane, the Republicans organized their own volunteer regiment.

The citizen militias would counter the threat of pro-Federalist officers who attacked the printing presses of the Republicans and intimidated them. They were also a means of strengthening republicanism by creating Jeffersonian cells which would be used for extra-congressional purposes such as rallies and protecting Republican candidates (and newspaper editors). Jefferson had this in mind when he wrote that republicanism among the residents of his micro-Republican wards would include the ‘care of the poor, their roads, police elections, the nomination of jurors, administration of justice in small cases, elementary exercises of militia and all those concerns which being under their eye, they would be better manage[d] than the larger republics of the county or state’. Like the American Revolutionary militias, the Volunteers and the United Irish, Duane’s citizen militia was by definition half martial and half political. The citizen aspect defines

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62 Ibid, p. 75.
63 Wilson, op. cit., p. 46.
64 Phillips, op. cit., p. 75.
the groups as not being subjects or peasant soldier conscripts but men who have chosen to participate and are part of a republic. Phillips has argued that: ‘Indirectly the militia was as valuable as Tammany and its brother clubs, for the Philadelphia Militia Legion was plainly a Democratic political army’. 66 Although all armies are in some sense political, it is true that Duane envisaged a more direct role for his militia in the political process. In fact, ‘within a short time militia office and political ambition were equated in the public mind, and the list of regimental officers read like a roster of the Democratic party’. 67 Even during a time of war Duane was to use the militia for political purposes. Alongside the militia, Duane considered a free press another essential safeguard of republicanism in America. Over the looming Pickering Affair, however, the government perceived Duane not as a champion of press freedom but as a dangerous libeller who had to be punished and contained by the means of the Sedition Act.

Pickering Affair

In July 1799 the Aurora published extracts from secret documents that threatened the reputation of Timothy Pickering, the Secretary of State. 68 Through misadventure the British Ambassador Robert Liston entrusted his dispatches destined for Canada to a traveller who was wanted for breaking the law. Using this as their pretence ‘some violent democrats in the Northern parts of Pennsylvania’ seized this man and captured the documents. The Republicans then

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68 Ibid, p. 77.
forwarded the material to Duane, hoping that he would publish it. The documents showed that Liston, in his words, was ‘employed… to produce a rupture between this Country and France, and to promote such an intimate union between the United States and Great Britain as must end in the total annihilation of American independence’. Further, Liston held ‘that this country had given a degree of provocation to France (in the business of St. Domingo) which was likely to lead to a formal rupture’. Pickering was to admit that to the Republicans this was unquestionable proof ‘that the members of the present Government are determined at all events, to go to war with the French Republick, and that they are united with the monarchs in Europe in the plan for banishing all genuine liberty from the face of the earth’.  

Duane’s publication of the dispatches strengthened the administration’s already jaundiced view of his newspaper. Duane even went so far as to argue that Liston was bribing the Federalist administration. On 24 July 1799 Pickering sent Adams a copy of that day’s Aurora and told Adams that he intended to send a copy of the offending article to the federal District Attorney for Pennsylvania to see if he thought it libellous and whether to prosecute the editor. Duane was held to be Irish by the Federalists from the president and his ministers down to the loose political axeman, William Cobbett. The administration’s view of Duane, without the colour and invective of Cobbett, was succinctly given in a letter from Secretary of State Pickering to President Adams: Duane ‘pretends that he is an American citizen,’ as he says he was born in Vermont, but ‘I understand…that he went from America prior to our revolution, remained in British dominions till after the peace’, went to India where he found himself in trouble, and only came

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69 Ibid, p. 78.
70 Ibid, p. 79.
to the United States ‘within three or four years past,…to stir up sedition and work other mischief. I presume, therefore, that he is really a British subject…and, as an alien, liable to be banished from the United States’. Adams replied that ‘the matchless effrontery of this Duane merits the execution of the alien law…I am willing to try its strength upon him’. George Washington was no less vehement when he wrote from the heights of Mt. Vernon to James McHenry on 11 August 1799:

There can be no medium between the reward and the punishment of such an Editor, who shall publish such things as Duane has been doing for some time past. Can hardihood, itself be so great as to stigmatize characters in the Public Gazettes for the most heinous offences and when prosecuted, pledge itself to support the alligation [sic], unless there was something to build on? It will have an unhappy effect on the public mind if it be not so. Perhaps he was still feeling the sting of Jasper Dwight.

Expressions of the Federalist view of Duane are more coloured the more one slips down the loose Federalist ranks. Once one reaches the level of the press war that was going on in Philadelphia (between Cobbett, Fenno and the Republican editors) Duane’s character is reduced to that of a criminal: ‘To the Philadelphia Federalists, William Duane was merely an obscure hired journalist, yet a person who was potentially dangerous because he was Irish. In the opinion of Fenno’s and Cobbett’s readers, “as well might we attempt to tame the Hyena as to Americanize an Irishman”’. Cobbett’s attacks on Duane’s Irishness and lack of American citizenship were ironic given that he himself was English. In a British context one commentator has argued that Cobbett’s ‘pronounced antisemitism…revealed a darker, xenophobic strain within British radical

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\(^71\) Ibid, p. 79.
\(^72\) Ibid, pp. 79-80.
\(^73\) Washington to James McHenry from Mt. Vernon, 11 August 1799, in Clark, op. cit., p. 50.
populism’. In the case of Cobbett in the United States, while he still hit out at Jewish friends and political allies of Duane in racial terms, his main target was Irish Catholics. Cobbett tore at the American face Duane gave himself in the *Aurora* and revealed Duane’s Irishness. Duane’s charge of Anglophilic sycophancy on the part of the Federalists would have been even more galling to people who considered him to be an Alien, a wild Irishman in need of curbing. Their instrument in attempting this was the Sedition Act.

**Duane and the Sedition Act: First Attempt**

On 30 July 1799 William Rawle the District Attorney began proceedings against Duane for arguing that English secret service money had been distributed to federal officials in the United States. It was not until 15 October 1799 that Duane came to trial upon the charge of seditious libel. Duane stood before Associate Justice Bushrod Washington of the United States Supreme Court and District Judge Richard Peters. Duane ‘appeared not only to stand trial for his story about British influence, but also to face a second indictment which charged that he had violated the Sedition Law on August 3 with some offensive remarks about the conduct of federal troops’. But in his defence Duane claimed that he had a letter from President Adams which discussed British influence on American politics. It was a letter from 1782 in which Adams had written that he suspected ‘much British influence in the appointment’ of Thomas Pinckney as ambassador to England.

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75 McCalman, op. cit., p. 563.
When Duane offered to stand trial instantly on whether he had such a letter the proceedings dramatically changed. After the judges learnt that Duane did have a letter from Adams in his possession Judge Washington admitted that it could be used as evidence. Duane’s counsel then asked for a postponement of the trial until the next term due to the absence of the material witnesses Timothy Pickering, James Monroe and Tench Coxe. Thus after sitting for a week the court suddenly adjourned and bound over all the witnesses and prisoners to the next circuit at Philadelphia. One week after his postponement Duane again printed the charge of British influence yet he was not indicted for this repetition of his original charges. In fact Duane was to inform his readers that the trial was now ‘withdrawn by order of the President’. Phillips argues that William Duane ‘had closed down the session by announcing that he would use the testimony of President Adams to prove the truth of his alleged libel’. In reality the District Attorney Rawle withdrew the prosecution rather than embarrass the president and instead was waiting for a more favourable time to suppress the *Aurora*.

**The Ross Bill**

The first attempt to muzzle Duane with the Sedition Act had failed. Duane continued to attack the Federalist administration and widened his attack to a group of Federalist senators who sought to narrow the electoral vote and establish a secretive committee to decide Presidential races. Their plan would gain notoriety, thanks to Duane, as the Ross Bill. On 19 February 1800 Duane published the Bill,

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77 *Aurora*, 3 October 1800.
78 Phillips, op. cit., 81.
revealing ‘a Federalist plan to manipulate the electoral college system so as to capture the presidential contest between Adams and Thomas Jefferson’.80 “The Constitution provided that the votes be counted by the Speaker of the House, but Senator James Ross of Pennsylvania proposed on 23 January 1800 the speaker’s substitution by a special committee of thirteen which would be fully empowered to accept or reject votes. Its secret decision would be final, according to the proposed bill.”81

Fifteen members of the Senate had assembled and drafted the plan for altering the constitution. But according to Phillips one of them, probably Charles Pinckney the southern Republican senator, leaked the information to Duane, giving him a copy of the bill. Smith argues that three Republican senators, who were convinced that the bill was a Federalist attempt to control the election of 1800, gave Duane copies of the bill. The *Aurora* first ‘exposed the partial caucus, and on 19 February it published the complete text of the bill, which set off a reaction equal to that incited by Bache when he published the Jay Treaty’.82 The bill was preceded by Duane’s comments that it was ‘an offspring of this spirit of faction secretly working’; this enraged the Federalist senators and would lead to their attempt at bypassing the Sedition Act by muzzling Duane themselves.83

**An Incensed Senate**

On 25 February 1800 Senator Jonathon Dayton of New Jersey proposed that a standing committee of privileges be established with the objective of targeting

80 Phillips, op. cit., p. 84.
81 Ibid, p. 84.
82 Ibid, p. 85.
83 Ibid, p. 85.
Duane for publishing the Ross Bill and commenting on it. ‘The aroused Federalist senators were so chagrined at these charges [in the Aurora preceding the Ross Bill] that they sought a way to punish the editor for his audacity in publishing a report of their proceedings and commenting on their conduct.’\textsuperscript{84} The Senate established a five-member committee that was to determine if Duane’s publishing of the Ross Bill breached the privileges of the Senate. The committee was also to uncover by what authority he had published the Bill and had stated that Senator Pinckney had not been consulted. The committee was also given a blanket authorisation to uncover ‘the origin of sundry assertions in the same paper’ concerning the Senate.\textsuperscript{85} The committee reported to the Senate that the 19 February Aurora article was:

false, scandalous and malicious, tending to defame the Senate, to bring it into contempt and disrepute, and (in the language of the sedition law) to excite against it the hatred of the good people of the United States. The Senate in a party vote found Duane guilty of “…a daring and high-branded breach of the privileges of this house.” They then sent for the editor to appear before them, to speak in excuse or extenuation of his crime, before the legislative body passed sentence.\textsuperscript{86}

On 21 March 1800, Duane received his summons to appear before the Senate. Three days later Duane appeared. He had two prominent Republican lawyers defending him—Alexander James Dallas and Thomas Cooper. The lawyers were not allowed to conduct themselves as though they were in a judicial body and Duane was ordered to return on 26 March. Duane refused further voluntary attendance before the Senate.\textsuperscript{87} The day after his senate ‘trial’ Duane published in the Aurora letters from Dallas and Cooper arguing that they would not appear

\textsuperscript{84} Smith, op. cit., p. 289.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid, p. 290.
\textsuperscript{86} Phillips, op. cit., pp. 86-7.
\textsuperscript{87} Ibid, p. 87.
before the Senate under these conditions, that is, if the Senate did not follow legal process. Duane was ordered to appear before the Senate again on 26 March but failed to comply. The Senate found him guilty of contempt and ordered his arrest by the sergeant at arms.\textsuperscript{88} ‘The warrant required that all federal marshalls, deputy marshalls, civil officers of the government and “every other person”, aid and assist in his capture.’ One source claims Duane was hiding in Stenton, the estate of George Logan lying outside the city.\textsuperscript{89} Duane said he was in the city, mostly at his house and had even been on parade with his militia. He printed in the \textit{Aurora} that all letters would reach him within 48 hours.\textsuperscript{90} In the meantime Thomas Cooper, was arrested on a charge of seditious libel for an essay on John Adams which was written five months previously. He was convicted before District Judge Richard Peters and Associate Justice Samuel Chase of the Supreme Court on 16 April 1800 and sentenced to six months in prison and a four hundred dollar fine.\textsuperscript{91} Duane continued to remain in seclusion and on 10 May 1800 a petition of remonstrance on Duane’s behalf, signed by three to four thousand people, was presented to the Senate.\textsuperscript{92}

\textbf{Duane and the Sedition Act: Second Attempt}

The attempt by the senate to silence Duane had failed. By 14 May William Duane was still at large. The Senate abandoned the warrant for contempt and

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid, p. 88. \\
\textsuperscript{89} Ibid, p. 88. \\
\textsuperscript{90} Ibid, p. 88. \\
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, p. 90. \\
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid, p. 89.
instead requested that Duane be prosecuted for seditious libel, suggesting that the
president ‘institute a process against this man’. On 16 May 1800 President
Adams sent duplicate letters to Charles Lee, the Attorney-General of the United
States and to Jared Ingersoll, the federal district attorney in Philadelphia ‘directing
them to commence legal proceedings against the editor of the *Aurora*’. Duane
would not appear before a court for a further four and a half months. Meanwhile
the public mood began to swing further against the Adams administration and the
Federalists. In the Pennsylvanian gubernatorial election the Republicans were
victorious. While Duane waited, he was married to Margaret Bache in June. Both
events would have sweetened the bitterness of the impending trial.

**Duane and the Sedition Act Continued**

On 17 October 1800 Duane was indicted by the federal grand jury. Duane and
Dallas his counsel appeared before the court on that day before Associate Justice
William Paterson of the United States Supreme Court and Judge Peters. Dallas
said he needed to interview senators in Duane’s defence. Ingersoll agreed to a
mixed commission going to Washington (where the Federal government had now
moved from Philadelphia). The government prosecutor was to nominate two
commissioners and Duane two more. Duane requested the commission to function
on 15 February 1801, when his counsel Dallas would be in Washington. Before
the next Circuit Court convened in May 1801 Jefferson replaced Adams as
president, a change which would in time lead to the expiration of the Sedition Act

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93 Ibid, p. 90.
94 Smith, op. cit., p. 301.
and the freeing of Duane from prosecution. Jefferson said that once he was elected he would treat the Sedition Law as a nullity whenever he met it in his line of official functions. After his inauguration in 1801 he asked Duane for a list of prosecutions against him and promised that if the prosecution recommended by the Senate was based on the Sedition Law he would issue a *nolle prosequi*. But Jefferson did not dismiss the case because Duane failed to give him the requisite information at the time. Subsequently in May 1801 the Circuit Court met and the case against the *Aurora* was called up for prosecution. Duane’s attorneys Thomas Cooper and Mahlon Dickerson argued that they needed more time to gather evidence from the committee questioning the senators. The case was then to be tried peremptorily at the October term while Duane was gaoled for a month. On 10 May 1801 Duane wrote to Jefferson telling him of events and explaining that he had not expected the case to arise because any trial under the Sedition Law would validate the law and he knew the president considered it a nullity. Jefferson responded quickly by discontinuing the prosecution. With the charge against Duane dropped the Sedition Law ceased to function although state sedition laws still continued to exist. Duane was vindicated in his view of the role of the press, and in his actions. His stand against the Federalists had earned him popular support which was converted into votes for Jefferson, who would never forget his contribution to Republican victory in 1800. Duane’s struggle with the Federalists over the Sedition Law gained him and the Republicans popularity and added impetus to the country’s shift away from Federalism.

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95 Ibid, p. 303.
96 Ibid, p. 305.
The Tide Turns

By August 1799 the public mood had already begun to swing behind the Republicans. In a letter to Jefferson on 4 August Elijah Griffiths noted the impact Duane had on this political development:

the republican interest has gain’d rapidly the last 6 months in this State…If the Aurora finds its way into your neighbourhood, the whiping [sic] business which follow’d the Northampton expedition…Mr Liston’s recent dispatches (found on the horse thief)…together with many other things of the same stamp must be known to you. Those things must have taken place through want of policy…[as they]…very sensibly lessen’d the popularity of the party in Pennsylvania & New Jersey…[and]…may probably have that effect elsewhere.

In the opinion of Griffiths, there appeared ‘no doubt of Mr McKean’s being elected to the Governor’s chair by a very respectable majority’.97 Two months later, with the Aurora political machine firmly behind the Republican candidate, Griffiths’s prediction was proven to be correct. In what was also a litmus test for the May 1800 Republican victory in the New York state election, there appeared to be a drain away from Federalist America. To further the woes of the Federalist administration, the New York election saw a clear indication within the Federalist camp of the fissure that had opened up between Adams and Hamilton in the past year and the pressure brought to bear on the party because of their defeat in Pennsylvania. The split led to the Hamiltonians fielding their own presidential candidate against both Jefferson and Adams.

The election which broke the Federalist back was not so much the presidential one as the Pennsylvania gubernatorial election of October 1799. After

97 Phillips, op. cit., p. 95.
that election the fissures widened as the Federalists faced a shrinking support base among the populace and a deeply divided party. Duane’s role in this election is clear. He was located at the heart of the political struggle in support of McKean, in Philadelphia and in the office of the Aurora. Of course it would be wrong to overemphasise Duane’s role in these elections—he did not hold the voter’s hand in the ballot box; but he did help shape voters’ attitudes. Recent criticism of newspaper history and research on this particular election, has emphasised the multitude of influences on electoral decisions. This notwithstanding, we should not overlook the burgeoning role the press had in the late eighteenth century, or the fact that the newspapers were a very democratic medium in the hands of men such as Duane. Not only did they make people feel connected to a wider and disparate body of voters, both regionally and nationally, but they also served to create a democratic public sphere. It was one where people wrote letters in support or criticism of policies, advertised political meetings and groups and claimed a democratic voice for themselves. In so far as newspapers informed voters’ choices, they were capable of having significant impact. We cannot, in assessing an age where there was no pre-election polling system and little possibility of retrospective psephological research, begin to judge why people voted as they did. Instead we must rely on the information, and misinformation, available to them for their decision-making, for example newspapers, public rallies, gossip, personal bias etc, and the informed judgement of people involved and affected by the elections.

The role of a historian of late eighteenth-century newspapers is not to quantify the impact the newspapers had—given the records available, this borders on the impossible and even an attempt is certainly beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, it is to survey and judge the qualitative material available, weighing up
the evidence of the newspapers themselves with that of the wider judgements of the political agents involved. One cannot argue that Duane’s editing and printing of the *Aurora* led to the Republican shift. But one can argue that Duane had a considerable impact on the gubernatorial elections of 1799 and 1800 and the presidential election itself of late 1800. This is evinced in the comments of key Republican and Federalist commentators at the time. Jefferson noted the debt the Republicans owed to Duane’s editorship in a letter to Mr. Wirst, thirteen years after Duane’s *Aurora* began to be published:

That paper has unquestionably rendered incalculable services to republicanism through all its struggles with the federalists, and has been the rallying point for the orthodoxy of the whole Union. It was our comfort in the gloomiest days and is still performing the office of a watchful sentinel. We should be ungrateful to desert him, and unfaithful to our own interests to lose him.98

Against the claim made during the period that the *Aurora* under Duane’s editorship was ‘the bible of democracy’, others asserted that Duane was ‘the leader of what is termed the Jeffersonian Mobocracy’.99 It was that ‘mobocracy’ which propelled Jefferson into power in 1801 but not before the election was almost derailed due to the electoral system and the competition of Aaron Burr for the presidency.

**Jeffersonian Victory**

In 1800 the various states used different methods to decide who their presidential electors would be. Some were directly elected by the people; others

98 Jefferson to Wirst, Monticello, March 30 1811 in Clark, op. cit., p. 53.
through the state legislatures; and a few by the decision of the state governor. On 3 December these electors gathered in the sixteen separate states to decide on the president and vice president of the United States. In the Executive Mansion in Washington, still in the process of being built, and in a boarding house near Capitol Hill, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson waited to see which of the two would be the next president of the United States. On 16 December 1800 Jefferson defeated Adams seventy three to sixty five when the electoral vote was completed. But there was a problem: because the vice-presidential candidate Aaron Burr had the same number of votes as Jefferson the election was submitted to the House of Representatives to decide between the two. The defeated Federalists now had a chance to spoil the Republican victory and stop Jefferson becoming president.

The House of Representatives met on 11 February to begin the process. William Duane went to Washington after the opening of Congress to report on the ballot in the House of Representatives. It took 35 ballots and five days to break the deadlock between the Federalists and Republicans. Finally Federalist representative from Delaware James Bayard decided to give his vote to Jefferson. Being the only representative for Delaware he could carry the whole state and break the deadlock. In the end he cast a blank vote but his pre-ballot decision broke the intransigence of the Federalist caucus. On 17 February Federalists from the Maryland and Vermont delegations agreed not to vote, which meant that these states now became Republican and therefore Jefferson’s. On the same day the 36th Ballot was held which broke the electoral deadlock and brought in the Jeffersonian presidency. John Adams blamed Duane and the other transatlantic

radical editors for his defeat. Reflecting on his defeat in the weeks after his retirement from the presidency he wrote that the influence of these foreign meddlers showed that there was ‘no pride in American bosoms’. He asked whether American hearts would endure ‘that Callender, Duane, Cooper, and Lyon, should be the most influencial men in the country, all foreigners and all degraded characters?’. He further blamed his own party who, he argued, would not have been overthrown by a ‘group of foreign liars, encouraged by a few ambitious native gentlemen’ if they had been blessed with any common sense.

On 4 March 1801 the inauguration of Thomas Jefferson as President of the United States of America took place. Duane’s prominence in the marches and dinners celebrating the victory marks this as the high-tide of his American career. Never again would he have as much influence as in the year leading up to Jefferson’s victory. Of course he remained an important Republican editor, but one among many. Soon after the victory Duane was to be given a sharp lesson in just how quickly and easily his contribution to American politics could be forgotten.

**Aftermath**

Duane was one of a number of men, ultra-Republicans, who sought to enter the circle of Republican patronage which they thought awaited them. For these men, Republican victory was an elixir from which they drank heavily but which

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101 Ibid, p. 100.
102 Ibid, p. 100
103 Duane fits the pattern which Durey has noted, marking 1800 as the high-tide of political influence for the ultra-Republicans: ‘For some [transatlantic radicals], life under the new U.S. Constitution represented perfection; their political activism subsided into a complacent support for Jeffersonian Republicanism or a benign disinterest. For many others, however, the realities of political warfare in America in the 1790s came as a shock. Alexander Hamilton’s program of political economy and the Federalists’ pro-British foreign policy seemed to signify a desire to return to the stratified, hierarchical society they had left behind in Britain. They accordingly threw themselves into party conflict, forming within the Jeffersonian party a radical phalanx dedicated to the defeat of Federalism and the promotion of a democratic, egalitarian society. Their impact on national and state politics for a time was to be profound, but after Jefferson’s election success in 1800 their influence waned’. Durey, op. cit., p. 10.
ultimately deceived them. As Durey has noted, ‘the Pennsylvanian Republicans [not Duane’s ultra-Republicans but the hierarchy] had used the radicals—Duane, Leib and the *Aurora* penmen—in their march to victory’.¹⁰⁴ According to Roland M. Baumann, these men were ‘at heart conservatives who had a real aversion to popular politics, and believed that the talented, wealthy, and virtuous should govern’.¹⁰⁵ For this Republican élite, therefore, the Jeffersonian Compromise—whereby Jefferson sought to seduce moderate Federalists—was not a matter of shaking hands with the devil, as the Ultra-Republicans believed, but an embracing of their fellow brothers, keeping them warm from the cold of Federalist defeat. Mixed in with the ‘aristocratic Republican’ push to smooth over a false fissure caused in their ranks by the Federalist/Republican divide was the ideological split that had been emerging in the Republican camp, ignored for reasons of political expediency in order to defeat the Federalists.¹⁰⁶ ‘The further the Federalist party shrank after 1800, the further the Republican party became riven, at times dividing into various forms of third-party “Quiddism”, as Tench Coxe first termed the process.’¹⁰⁷ James Thomson Callender was one editor who crashed heavily to the ground and took his revenge in deep gouges out of the reputation of Jefferson. Callender’s revenge on the Republicans and Jefferson has been so far-reaching that the debate over Sally Hemings continues to capture the imagination of the broader public today, claiming as much attention as Jefferson’s authorship of the Declaration of Independence. Duane, on the other hand, gained more than Callender by the election, and perhaps did not take Jefferson’s apparent shunning

of their contribution to victory as personally as did Callender. Duane made the fatal mistake of moving to Washington because he thought he would be given work through the Jeffersonian patronage system. Instead, he was to incur staggering debts that would leave him hamstrung for the rest of his life.

Duane encumbered himself with a $22,000 debt in Washington and by 1809 he still owed $18,000 to his bank. This was largely owing to his failure to secure the expected government contracts for printing. But he gained some work through his role as printer to the Senate. Although he was not awarded high office, he was given governmental work as J.H. Powell has pointed out:

Duane was receiving the lion’s share of the Senate business, yet this was still not enough for him to make a windfall. His bills for “printing, folding, & stitching” list all the items he handled by name, and the number of copies he issued. For the Eighth Congress, first session, his account in March, 1804, was $4,655.50. For 1805 it was $2,265.108

In his expectation of receiving more printing contracts he had opened a store in Washington. The store was dramatically unsuccessful and left him in serious debt.109 Politically Duane was on the winning side, but financially he was one step away from debtor’s prison. Even his much sought-after American citizenship would not be able to cure him of his financial woes.

Citizenship

Duane had found his home: America, Republican, Democratic, and Jeffersonian; the Aurora, his wife Margaret, his new Republican family and a

place in the political life of his mythical homeland. And yet he was still vulnerable to Federalist attack. In December, 1801 he brought a charge in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania against Caleb P. Wayne over a malicious libel that had been printed in his newspaper *The United States, & Daily Advertiser* on September 22, 1800. This was the libel alluded to previously concerning the accusation of rape and murder in Ireland that the newspaper had brought against Duane. This court case would continue until January 1812 when it was discontinued ‘non pros. secundam regulam’ either because Duane gave up or because he ran out of the money to pursue it. The Federalists (and by then the Quids, the New Democrats and Duane’s long list of personal enemies) were still able to use these malicious charges in a political tract printed in 1816 and based on the court reports of the defendant’s witness testimonies.

Although Duane had escaped the Sedition Act during the Federalist period it is ironic that it was during the early years of Jefferson’s presidency that there was an attempted trial of him under the same act, which Jefferson ordered stopped, as well as an imprisonment of one month for libel. In spite at his role in helping Jefferson secure the presidency, the embittered Federalists Levi Hollingsworth and Jared Ingersoll brought an action for libel against Duane with the hidden motive of having him declared an alien.\footnote{Pasley, op. cit., p. 288.} As Pasley argues, the ‘circuit court judges, all Federalists, took the sophistic route of admitting that the editor was born in New York but advising the jury to strip him of citizenship rights anyway, because he and his mother had returned to Ireland before the Declaration of Independence.’ But Duane turned his one month imprisonment for libel to his advantage. The numbers of people at his trial showed that he had become a

\footnote{Pasley, op. cit., p. 288.}
‘genuinely popular leader in the streets and taverns of Philadelphia’ even if he was held in low esteem by many high-brow Republicans.\textsuperscript{111} Duane without hesitation used the appellation ‘democrat’ and ‘republican’ and sought to turn popular support for him into a power base. With Congressman Michael Leib, Duane built ‘a political organization that reached deep into Philadelphia’s neighbourhoods, a strong advantage in a city where the electoral rules greatly magnified the importance of ward-level elections’.\textsuperscript{112} Even with this power, however, it was only with American citizenship finally granted to him in 1802 that Duane’s security in the new Republic was assured. Having earlier unsuccessfully claimed American citizenship he now quietly became naturalised. Although he could still be gaoled on dry land he could not be deported by ship to a cold welcome in Europe, or have his property stripped from him. He would still have to countenance unsubstantiated Federalist slander directed at his murky beginnings, the charge of murder and rape in Ireland and of being an escapee from Calcutta’s notorious ‘Black Hole’. But once he was granted citizenship he could thumb that notoriously pugnacious nose at his opponents. Duane’s transoceanic search for a political and spiritual home was now over. It no longer mattered if the Federalist leaders, their hack writers, or any curious British onlookers believed that he was Irish; under the letter of the law Duane had been given his desired nationhood on a slip of paper which now made him William Duane, the American.

\textsuperscript{111} Ibid, p. 289.
\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, p. 289.
CHAPTER 10

Towards 1812

The Founding Father and William Duane

Duane’s relationship with Thomas Jefferson and their written correspondence over twenty years helped him psychologically cement his place in America. At the time of Jefferson’s retirement from the presidency, Duane wrote to Jefferson that he would not while he lived perhaps ever find a man like Jefferson whom he could ‘speak with the freedom and the confidence of integrity reposing in the bosom of wisdom and benevolence’. The correspondence began in 1801 after Jefferson was elected to the presidency. Duane opened up to Jefferson in a manner that revealed his view of Jefferson as the one good man in a world of liars and cheats. As a result of the in-fighting in the Republican party after 1801 this view was to become even more entrenched. At one point Duane wrote to Jefferson that:

On political transactions of a domestic nature I do not mean to trespass on you. My opinions and sentiments on particular men and circumstances I know cannot be agreeable to you, tho’ from my soul I believe that in so doing I am acting more faithful to my attachment to you, than if I forbore from scotching the snakes that trouble your path. I have no favor to ask, nor motive for uttering my sentiments of any public men, but public motives; and if I should be mistaken, in any particular, the mistake will be my own, for I am neither to be led nor driven from the path of principle.

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Thomas Jefferson’s championing of William Duane reinforced the radical editor’s American legitimacy. Not only did Jefferson rescue Duane from the Alien and Sedition Act in 1801 but he also helped him secure a printing contract with the Senate in Washington D.C. and passed on editing and public work to him. He also raised subscriptions to the *Aurora* for Duane among his immediate friends. Duane’s relationship with Jefferson also secured him a colonelcy in the U.S. army during the 1812 war.¹ Alongside this limited patronage, which was never enough to keep Duane from penury, was a close written correspondence; one where that ultra-Republican corner of Jefferson’s mind could be given free rein in an otherwise more pragmatic political career. For unlike Duane, Jefferson actually had to get along with people and while he may have admired, up to a point, the former’s fiery ultra-Republicanism for its strength of conviction, he had long mastered the art of compromise, through which he secured the presidency in 1801. Far from ushering in the second American Revolution in 1800, as Duane liked to argue due to his own personal escape from the briar-patch of Federalist legislation, the election may be regarded as another compromise on Jefferson’s part.

In the correspondence between Duane and Jefferson there emerges a relationship that shares much with other non-Republican examples of traditional eighteenth-century patronage. Because both men were strongly against traditional eighteenth-century socio-political relations this seems curious. But as Duane later realised, revolutions do not by themselves wholly create new world orders but tend to follow the structure of the previous political élite. However much against the

¹ Duane was not the sole editor to receive a commission. Sellecy Osborne of the Boston *Democrat* received a junior officer’s commission from Jefferson. He returned to editing a newspaper after the war which was ‘sharply critical of postwar efforts to minimize the differences and end the conflict between Republicans and Federalists’. See Pasley, op. cit., p. 281.
intentions of the revolutionaries, revolutions, after an interim period of uncertainty, often end with a new elite on top and only the displacement of the old. As Pasley has argued: ‘The Jefferson administration appointments policy, dominated nationally by Albert Gallatin and in Pennsylvania by Gallatin’s friend Dallas, closely followed the double standard that Dallas’s career exemplified. The spoils of victory were not considered such if the recipient happened to be a man of wealth, gentility, or what Gallatin called “superior weight and talents”’.\(^4\) Less weighty men who demanded removals or solicited offices, however, were condemned as ‘men under the influence of passions or governed by self-interest. Duane and his fellow editors thus fared rather poorly under the administration they helped erect’.\(^5\) Gallatin, Dallas and Jefferson were part of this new Republican American élite in its southern form; Duane, on the other hand, would never belong, but this would not stop him from seeking patronage.

Patronage in the eighteenth century worked on the ideals of classical learning where a strong political figure or prominent person would groom a younger man for either higher office, a literary career or a public role. The patron would secure the protegé subordinate employment and contacts in exchange for loyalty and status. There was also the gain of nurturing a political or cultural ally who would give the patron help or succour when called for. Because we are dealing with the Republican and Jeffersonian patronage system, there are some crucial differences from the traditional system, stemming from American republicanism’s implicit critique of the British patronage system. This irony meant that Jefferson had to be careful in operating a much more muted patronage system than, say, the one then operating in Hanoverian England; a system held up by the ultra-Republicans as the

\(^4\) Ibid, p. 295.  
\(^5\) Ibid, p. 295.
The impression one could easily form of Republican hypocrisy over patronage can perhaps be tempered when one remembers how embedded concepts of patronage were in the eighteenth-century mind. Not only was it acceptable but it was considered inevitable that men of rank and status would use their positions of power to help secure places for their political allies, friends and family members. Most modern Americans are well aware of the ubiquity of patronage in their system. The real difference between eighteenth-century British and American societies does not lie in any radical dismantling of patronage but in the identity of those who came to expect it. In England and Ireland the working and lower-middle classes and their Grub Street hacks, E.I.C. army officers, newspaper editors and democrats were largely excluded from the play of ‘interest’ and patronage which secured their more well-born or well-made compatriots positions of relative power. But in America, the equivalent classes came to expect that as democrats they would be the recipients of patronage or reward in a democratic state and society. That this was the case is clear from the reactions of the various ‘alien actors’ in the 1798-1801 political struggle to their reception under the Jeffersonian administration. One sees their political arguments, against the corrupt patronage states of Europe, thwarted by a strong cultural impulse towards the norms of patronage brought by the radicals to American shores.

The most useful example of the reaction of the ultra-Republican supplicants who were left in the chill of the 1801 Compromise is that of James Thomson Callender. He attempted to destroy Jefferson’s reputation through the Sally Hemings affair over a slight as viewed through his patronage-focused eyes. As a democrat, Callender expected democratic patronage and became enraged when he
was passed over; Duane also expected rewards for his role during the ‘Reign of Witches’ but chose to vent his spleen on the men surrounding Jefferson and not on Jefferson himself. In a parallel with a technique used by critics of government in absolutist monarchies, he argued that Jefferson was surrounded by bad advisers. Duane was to argue in 1806 that: ‘The *Aurora* has not altered its opinion of THOMAS JEFFERSON. The *Aurora* has altered its opinion for several years of certain members of what is called sometimes the *administration* and with equal absurdity the *cabinet*.’

Duane would not blame Jefferson for not including him in the Republican inner circle. Neither Callender nor Duane could ever be fully incorporated into the American élite’s patronage system. Jefferson may have kept up a correspondence with Duane and passed him some work occasionally, but this did not amount to a full embrace of Duane and was certainly far from any move to draw him into the circle which he reserved for nativist scions of respectable élite families. Duane and the other ultra-Republicans attempted to apply pressure to Jefferson so he would eject Federalists from government positions and replace them with themselves. In reply to an address written to him by Duane and the other ultra-Republicans through the Philadelphia Ward Committee, Jefferson argued that while he could listen to individual remonstrances, he could not constitutionally accept advice from groups. He argued that while pressure groups, in this case the ultra-Republicans, were ‘as revolutionary instruments (when nothing but revolution will cure the evils of the state)…necessary and indispensable, and the right to use them is inalienable by the people; but to admit them as ordinary & habitual instruments as a part of the machinery of the

*Aurora*, September 4 1806.
Constitution’ was not sanctioned by the constitution itself. Jefferson thus accepted the ultra-Republicans as individuals but not as a group, unless they were useful in a time of revolutionary struggle such as during the American Revolution or the ‘Reign of Witches’. In addressing Duane, Jefferson succinctly gave his view of the proper place of the ultra-Republicans: they were a revolutionary instrument which was to be discarded once he gained power. Afterwards he would keep in contact with them only as individuals.

The correspondence between Jefferson and Duane meant much to the Republican editor and was continued until Jefferson’s death. In turn, Jefferson responded to Duane’s letters with real warmth and partly tried to use his influence both in office and out of office when Duane was facing acute financial difficulties. In these letters Duane reveals a less jaundiced side of himself, treating Jefferson as patron, friend and as a kind of father figure whom he can confide in, complain to and ask for guidance and help. In February 1809 he wrote: ‘You will soon have to retire from office, and I shall not while I live perhaps ever find a man like you to whom I can speak with the freedom and the confidence of integrity reposing in the bosom of wisdom and benevolence’. In the letters Duane frequently tells Jefferson of his financial troubles as well as of the joys of parenting his two combined families of Bache and Duane. If Duane considered America to be his Republican home, then his relationship to this founding father of that Republic was one marked by respect and awe. Duane was able to suggest political ideas on domestic and international affairs to Jefferson. He argued that African-Americans should be incorporated into the United States army along the lines of the sepoy

regiments that the East India Company army used. He also wrote to Jefferson that Native Americans should be given representation in Congress. Although Duane did not argue these points from a position of altruism towards Blacks and Indians or from racial equality, he was trying to address contemporary problems. He constantly argued in his letters to Jefferson for direct confrontation with and a sentinel attitude towards Britain. In one letter he talked to Jefferson of ‘the little flock of innocents around’ him as he recollected ‘the traditionary [sic] history of three generations of my ancestors – I have seen in three quarters of the earth beside my country the policy of England – the national character of its policy’.  

Perhaps by keeping a correspondence with the ultra-Republican, Jefferson could feel that he had not compromised with the Federalists as much as he actually did in 1801 in order to get into office and smooth over ruffled Federalist feathers. Jefferson was constrained by a society and political system that were more conservative than he. Duane, a Catholic turned Deist, a member of the Deist Society in Philadelphia, shared an unorthodox religious outlook with the founding father and offered a willing ear to a fellow Republican and Freemason. This would have been welcome to a president who was surrounded by federalist pens quick to point out any ‘atheistic’ or ‘Jacobin’ proclivities in their newspapers. Duane argued that the religious education he had undertaken before his rejection of his mother’s wish for him to join the priesthood had not ‘closed up’ his understanding or made him ‘superstitious’.  With the advent of the burgeoning evangelical movement, the pool of people sharing the same religious outlook and beliefs as Duane and Jefferson began quickly to dry up, furthering the

commonality between the two men. During the political upheavals that Duane went through over the next decade, his correspondence with Jefferson was a constant. His relationship and correspondence with Jefferson helped him in his attempt to Americanize himself in a country where his enemies held him to be irredeemably Irish.

1803-1811

Although Duane was an influential newspaper editor and political figure from 1803 to 1815, by 1811 his direct political role had been reduced by a series of political mishaps and failures on his part. It is to these years that we now turn as we consider the decline of Duane, both financially and politically. The division in the Republican party between moderate and radical Republicans was apparent even before the fault-line erupted between the Quids and the Democrats. The two, separate, 1801 inauguration day dinners were harbingers of the split. These two dinners, held in Philadelphia to celebrate Republican victory, mirrored the class differences between the later Quids and Democrats: one was a high society ball of the type Gallatin attended and the other a low brow tavern celebration where we find Duane.\(^{11}\) By 1806 Duane was to argue that the only real republicans were democratic republicans:

We mean by a republican, one whose principles of policy and government, are founded on the sovereignty of the people – the elective right of every man who is under obligation of law or duty to fight or pay for the defence of the country and its liberties…such and such only do we consider republicans – democratic republicans.\(^{12}\)


\(^{12}\) *Aurora*, September 5 1806.
The nascent division between republicans would grow into factional fighting which would damage Duane’s career and poison his view of the world.

The division was to widen over the next ten years and become personal as much as political. In 1804 Albert Gallatin and Duane engaged in a quarrel which brought to an end any friendly relations between them. When Duane visited Gallatin at Washington in February, the latter suggested to him that the *Aurora* should accept the political downfall of Duane’s political ally Congressman Leib. Duane’s reply ‘made use of highly indecent and insolent language to a secretary’. Duane was deeply insulted by Gallatin’s insinuation that his loyalty and integrity were malleable.\(^\text{13}\) As Phillips has argued, ‘Leib was devoted to increasing the people’s role in politics, and from Duane’s viewpoint an attack on him was an attack upon the best aspects of republicanism’.\(^\text{14}\) Gallatin on the other hand felt that ‘Duane, intoxicated by the persuasion that he alone had overthrown federalism, thought himself neither sufficiently rewarded nor respected; and possessed of an engine which gives him an irresist[ible] control over public opinion’.\(^\text{15}\) Thus in the election of 1804 the Philadelphian Republican schism became a publicly bitter struggle between Duane and Gallatin.\(^\text{16}\) From this election came the terms Democrats and Quids, which demarcated the two factions of the Philadelphian Republicans. Duane’s “chequered life” in Calcutta, his British spells, “a certain history in two acts” in Britain, and his alleged perjury in court when securing United States citizenship were all vehemently raised. ‘I have often asked

\(^{13}\) Phillips, op. cit., p. 158.

\(^{14}\) Ibid, p. 158.

\(^{15}\) Gallatin to John Badollet, October 25 1805, Gallatin Papers NYHS, quoted in Phillips, op. cit., pp. 164-5.

\(^{16}\) Phillips, op. cit., p. 165.
myself...how it came to pass’, said one Quid essayist, ‘that William Duane, a stranger, without fortune, illiterate, nay, without a single adventitious circumstance to usher him into public notice, possesses such influences in the state, and control over the democratic portion of the community?’.

Leib won the election by a mere 300 votes and Duane felt betrayed by his erstwhile Republican friends who were now turning Quid. Duane and A.J. Dallas severed relations because of the campaign. Governor McKean was implicated in the Quid split and turned against Duane as the Republican nativist élite sought to ‘de-Duanize’ and nativise the Republican party. Dallas further warned the other Republican leaders of the ‘tyranny of the press’. Duane in return struck out at the nationalist platform of the Quids, and particularly an old bug-bear from his Calcutta days, banks and bank reform, in a pamphlet he wrote in 1804 entitled, On Banking. This was to be a continual theme in Duane’s political writing and that of his son, and his son’s political career, until William Duane’s death. It would also be a whet-stone on which he sharpened his blade before attacking Gallatin in 1810 and 1811, and would be an important cause in his American political agenda.

The Democrats worked on a platform of judicial, political and banking reform. During 1805 ‘the issue which divided Governor McKean and the Democrats and revealed their differing philosophies was that of judicial reform’. Duane’s view of common law was that it was an ‘incoherent and inscrutable code’ formed from a ‘collection of precedents derived from times of darkness and superstition’ and ‘no part ought to be adopted to times which no longer carry respect for the intelligence

18 Ibid, p.168
19 Ibid, pp. 170-177.
21 Phillips, op. cit., p. 175.
Duane also hit out at the unelected judiciary: ‘The power of judges to impose the unwritten code, selecting at will from among contradictory decisions, made ‘our boasted liberty’, he thought, ‘a mere sound dependent on the mercy – the discretion – the caprice – the malice – or the family interests of any men vested with juridicial authority’. He criticised the judiciary for being a branch of government independent of the ballot box and thus the supervision of the people. In Duane’s view it was

the essence of representative government, that all its acts and measures – all the acts of its agents and officers – the operation and the effects of its laws; should be governed by two great and undeviating principles, one of which is only the necessary consequence of the other: 1. That the happiness of the whole body of the society should be the object of the laws and the agents who are entrusted with the execution of them. 2. That the will of the majority should establish those laws, and govern the agents in their execution, for the end for which they were instituted and the agents appointed.

As an ultra-Democrat, Duane argued for an elected judiciary answerable to the voting public. In pushing this radical reform the next opponent he would face would be the governor himself, Thomas McKean, as Pennsylvania moved towards the 1805 gubernatorial election.

McKean was returned to office on 8 October 1805 through a combination of the Quids (the Constitutional Republicans) and Federalists, which led Gallatin to remark that ‘McKean owes his re-election to the federalists’. As a consolation to McKean’s apparent apostacy Duane argued that ‘our democracy and frequent

23 *Aurora*, February 22 1806.
elections, provides (sic) a peaceable and certain remedy’.  

The McKean election demonstrated that the unity of 1800 was gone and a welter of fair-weather friends took its place as McKean publicly sided with Federalists against the Duane-Leib, Binns-Snyder Democrats. In attacking their political opponents and former allies, the Quids were not afraid to use old Federalist propaganda against Duane. This invective was part of a wider nativist push in Philadelphia and New York, a reaction ‘against the rising influence of foreign-born voters’. In 1806, for example, Mayor Clinton of New York had to stop an anti-Irish riot at St. Peter’s Catholic Church, and during city elections in 1807 a nativist ticket ran. 

The ticket itself was in response to the campaign of the United Irish leaders in New York against the Federalist candidate, Rufus King, who had been the American minister in London in 1798 and who had rejected overtures that some United Irishmen be allowed to settle in the United States. The Republican party in Pennsylvania, split now along Quid/Democrat lines, was to become further fractured when the Binns-Snyder faction made a power-grab for the Duane-Leib support base in Philadelphia. But before this occurred, Duane would make a bold move at direct political power himself.

**A Citizen on Paper, An Alien off Paper**

By October 1806, Duane and McKean’s mutual fear of each other was more fully realised. McKean began to try and contain the power of the pressman using methods that would have sat comfortably with the Federalists of 1798.  

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26 *Aurora*, December 23 1806.

27 Phillips, op.cit. p. 211.

28 Ibid, p. 211.
Governor began three libel suits against the *Aurora* and attempted unsuccessfully to censor it by forcing the editor to post bond for his future good behavior. When that failed McKean proposed general legislation on newspaper libels, to provide prior censorship when a paper was judged to be turbulent.\(^{29}\) Duane replied by arguing in the *Aurora* that: ‘The press must be pure and superior to the influence or the terrors of offended and angry iniquity – or there is an end to the superstructure and the base – and the lofty and sublime fabric becomes the mausoleum of human liberty and happiness’.\(^{30}\) As a demonstration of what Duane meant by press freedom he began a smear campaign against the Quids over the Burr Conspiracy.\(^{31}\) On 3 December 1806 Duane was to argue that he had:

received the names of several persons in this city, who we are sorry to hear were implicated, by agency or pecuniary concerns, with the conspirators – as we believe many of them to be innocently so, we do not communicate names at present; but it is with peculiar pride and exultation, we can say that the name of a democratic republican is not to be found in the long catalogue, which is composed of federalists and quids, or third party men, a peculiarity that speaks to the feelings, and for the principles of political parties, more than a thousand volumes of rhetorical professions.\(^{32}\)

The men targeted in this attack were able to avenge themselves in the following year when Duane made his most direct attempt at influencing American politics. He stood as a candidate for the state legislature but failed to gain the seat because of a nativist campaign against him. After years of holding political power through proxies and the strength of the Irish-German vote that he and Leib were able to muster, Duane stood for a political position in his own right as a state senator. But Duane had made many enemies through his invective and ill-judged

\(^{29}\) Ibid, p. 223.  
\(^{30}\) *Aurora*, September 4 1806.  
\(^{31}\) *Aurora*, 13 October 1806.  
\(^{32}\) *Aurora*, 3 December 1806.
temper. Once out in the political open, shed of the armour of his immigrant voting bloc, he felt the slings and arrows of nativism rain down on him. As he was to learn, he may have been a citizen on paper but to his ‘fellow Americans’ he was very much still Irish. Muster ing an alien voting bloc was one thing; standing in his own right as a politician was another. Phillips has argued that the 1807 campaign against Duane was the most intensively nativist in spirit since the Federalist crackdown of 1798: ‘It was the most serious, open expression of such feelings since the United Irish rebellion of 1798 had inspired the legislation of the alien laws’.33 It was also the first Federalist victory in Duane’s district since the election of Thomas Jefferson to the presidency.34 Duane was humiliated and stung by the ferocity of the attack on him and by the unleashing of the stored-up hatred towards him for his role in Republican politics. He was so injured that he chose to retire from political journalism and handed the reins of the Aurora over to his eldest son William J. Duane, subsequently publishing it in his son’s name. He was also in serious debt because of that constant Achilles’ heel of eighteenth-century newspaper editors – the inability to collect money owed by subscribers. He was in arrears by $10,000 because of the non-payment of subscription fees and now tried to recover his losses by selling his almost worthless property in Washington.35 But it was not only his personal income that was weakened, his political reputation was also under siege.

Duane had already seen his political influence wane due to the Leib-Boileau fall out. A supporter of Snyder argued that after Leib left Philadelphia for

33 Phillips, op.cit. p. 231.
34 Aurora, 15 October 1807.
35 Duane’s financial troubles would continue to plague him. In 1811 the Aurora almost folded under the weight of Duane’s debts. First he turned to Jefferson but finally Michael Leib stepped in and helped Duane transfer a debt over from the Farmers and Mechanics Bank to the Bank of Pennsylvania. See Phillips, op. cit., p. 342-343.
Lancaster, support for Duane and his newspaper had been halved. As Phillips argues, ‘the prestige of the Aurora as the party newspaper for the whole state inevitably suffered from the Leib-Boileau quarrel’.\textsuperscript{36} Given Duane’s vote-rigging and vote farming it is hard not to feel there was some justice in his defeat. As Wilson has argued, Duane ‘had no compunction about forging documents or spreading lies for the higher purpose of winning an election. “Morality,” he said on one occasion, “is not a necessary qualification in a legislator”’.\textsuperscript{37} Although Duane had an injurious year in the direct political arena he still published three works during the year, two on politics and one on military affairs. He published his version of Jeffersonian Republicanism as a tract called, \textit{Politics for American Farmers}. He also wrote a broader series of essays on politics as he saw it post-1801, titled \textit{Experience the Test of Government}. In \textit{Experience the Test of Government} Duane attacked the Pennsylvania executive, senate and judiciary in what Twomey has described as the clearest expression of ‘the Jacobin attitude toward democracy and class’.\textsuperscript{38} Duane then began publishing a two volume edition of military writing called an \textit{American Military Library} (1807-1809).

Duane’s career can usefully be compared with that of Mathew Carey, a radical who chose not to take the ultra-Republican path once he was in America but settled for quiddism. Carey was a journalist who at the age of nineteen was involved in the 1779 Volunteer agitation against unfair trading laws existing between England and Ireland. He left Ireland in 1779 and worked for a while in France at Benjamin Franklin’s printing press.\textsuperscript{39} He was the same age as Duane but

\textsuperscript{36} Phillips, p. 221.
\textsuperscript{37} Wilson, op. cit., p. 176.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, p. 17.
unlike Duane when he arrived in America he chose not to be as deeply involved in newspaper politics, instead becoming wealthy by selling Bibles and other non-political publications. Like Tench Coxe he became a promoter (after the political wrangling of 1800 was over) of the economic development of the United States through his support of the recharter of the national bank, protective tariffs, and political reform (of both sides of politics). Carey was deeply critical of the newspaper politics of Duane and others and saw it as an unprofitable dead-end; the neediness of editors such as Duane was ‘an unanswerable argument in favor of his own decision to abandon political publishing’. By 1814 he had become further wearied by party politics and wrote his successful The Olive Branch which argued for a postwar sweep of American politics. It went through ten editions. As one path Duane could have taken, Carey’s decision not to lend his soul to a corrupting business, where one was used by higher-ranking Republicans and then went unrewarded, makes much sense. Carey, a radical Volunteer in Ireland and a moderate Republican in America after 1800, serves as an interesting comparison for someone of Duane’s background. He was an observer who did not see the political struggle in Early Republican America in terms of a Manichean fight between the forces of darkness and light; instead, he was critical of the political process itself. Carey’s career is an example of what Duane’s could have been had he not carried his Manichean outlook to its logical extreme.

The New and Old Democrats and the Return of John Binns

The demise of the Aurora’s influence left room for another Republican

Pasley, op. cit. p. 357.
newspaper to encroach on Duane’s territory. In setting up his paper, the Democratic Press, John Binns was used by Duane’s enemies. This led to a bitter feud between Binns and Duane that in turn led to a wider split in the Republican party between the New and Old Democrats (or New and Old School Democrats) of the previously named Democrat faction.

Now, part of an ever-shrinking ultra-Republican rump, the Old Democrats, Duane was to watch while his political enemy became stronger through the patronage system and attracted a more wealthy and politically powerful type of Republican voter. Duane then became caught in a States’ rights struggle between President Madison and Governor Snyder which ended with another reduction of his direct political influence through the demise of his militia and a split in the Irish/German ethnic bloc which Michael Leib and Duane had crafted together. This meant that Duane’s influence in the Pennsylvanian counties shrank. He was left with a Philadelphia Irish support-base in the poorer quarters of the city, which had already been reduced due to the influence of John Binns and the New Democrats, and his newspaper, which now was constantly under challenge from Binns’ newspaper. Moreover, Duane’s influence suffered during the Embargo period because the rump Irish bloc which voted for his Old Democrats was the most economically disadvantaged by the trade embargo (which Duane supported) and the depression among low-skilled workers that it brought.

By 1811 Duane’s direct political influence was much smaller than it had been in the last ten years. Although he was still able to influence people with his newspaper, the political support-base and machinery he had built on the back of the Jeffersonian victory had largely crumbled or been transferred to the control of the New Democrats. As Pasley argues: ‘Though Duane had many years and several political comebacks left, most notably a rollicking tour as federal adjutant
general for Pennsylvania during the War of 1812, his power broker days were mostly over after 1811. Duane had held enough influence during the 1808 Presidential election for the presidential hopeful Clinton to approach him and attempt to persuade him to give his support. Once Jefferson had given the nod in Madison’s direction, Duane supported the eventual president in his newspaper. As Gallatin was to discover, Duane’s bite still carried much venom even if not the strength of 1800. But even this influence would largely wane in the face of John Binns and the Democratic Press. The psychological impact of political infighting and debt over the last ten years is shown in a letter Duane sent to Jefferson on 15 March 1811:

I am brought to the verge of a precipice, from which it is not possible to say whether I shall escape being dashed to pieces…the cruel infidelity of the Republicans to a faithful sentinel [sic] left it [his Washington business] next to useless, and compelled me to abandon it to another for a sum not one third of what it cost me. As my credit was derived from Banks, I was obliged to have indorsers [sic], and I have during these ten years been in the situation of a man who in a small company saw himself exposed to the volleys of a numerous enemy, and the little band either sinking one by one into the slumber of death or flying into the arms of the enemy and turning their weapons upon me, until at length I find myself without ever once abandoning a principle or betraying any confidence ever reposed in me, standing almost alone.

Duane is almost alone, a tragic Caliban on the political stage who has been used and then abused by Republicans but snarling his principled stance to them in this letter to Jefferson.

Duane also took a very different line to criticism of the sitting president than he had in 1797 as Jasper Dwight against Washington or as Aurora editor during

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41 Ibid, p. 317.
the Adams presidency. After ten years of Republican rule Duane begins to sound very much like his Federalist critics in 1798 who attacked him for weakening the presidency and America by creating division. Now Duane attacked his own largely Republican opponents for the same offence. Partly this was the result of his growing concept of American uniqueness in the face of France turning Napoleonic and moving away from any semblance of democracy, and partly because it was now not the Federalist inheritance that needed protection but the Jeffersonian one. On March 28, 1811 Jefferson wrote to Duane that:

The last hope of human liberty in this world rests on us. We ought, for so dear a state, to sacrifice every attachment and every enmity. Leave the President free to choose his own coadjutors, to pursue his own measures, and support him and them, even if we think we are wiser than they, honester than they are, or possessing more enlarged information of the state of things. If we move in mass, be it ever so circuitously, we shall attain our object; but if we break into squads, every one pursuing the path he thinks most direct, we become an easy conquest to those who can now barely hold us in check. I repeat again, that we ought not to schismatize on either men or measures. Principles alone can justify that if we find our government in all its branches rushing headlong, like our predecessors, into the arms of monarchy, if we find them violating our dearest rights, the trial by jury, the freedom of the press, the freedom of opinion, civil or religious, or opening on our peace of mind or personal safety the sluices of terrorism, if we see them raising standing armies, when the absence of all other danger points to these as the sole objects on which they are to be employed, then indeed let us withdraw and call the nation to its tents. But while our functionaries are wise, and honest, and vigilant, let us move compactly under their guidance, and we have nothing to fear. Things may here and there go a little wrong. It is not in their power to prevent it. But all will be right in the end, though not perhaps by the shortest means.\(^{43}\)

Jefferson argues that a Federalist government could legitimately be attacked and undermined because it was Federalist; a Republican one, on the other hand,

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\(^{43}\) Thomas Jefferson to William Duane, Monticello, 28 March 1811, in ‘Excerpts from the Correspondence of Thomas Jefferson’, *School of Cooperative Individualism*, at http://www.cooperativeindividualism.org/jefferson_u_01.html
could not, because by its very nature a Republican government was just. For Republicans who believed in the long litany of supposed Federalist crimes against the Republic, the so-called “Reign of Terror” or “Reign of Witches”, this argument would have held water. For an outsider, on the other hand, it sounds baldly like an arch-Federalist from 1798: you are not allowed to attack our system of government because it is the best one, it ensures America is made stable against outside threats, such as France (in the Republican case, Britain), and reduces cross-class tension and internal animosity. In short it is the best one because it is ours and it is right. To a Federalist observer who remembered the 1800 election it must have smacked of hypocrisy on a massive scale. Either way the impending war would give Americans impetus to support the president, and would consolidate conformity on the Republican side. Both of these outcomes would please Duane, partly because they would grant him a reprieve from the attacks he himself faced. With the United States at war his nemesis Binns would have to keep his silence, even over Duane’s misuse of his colonelcy.

**War**

**Duane and Binns: Banging the War Drum in Unison**

During the war years the Republicans patched up their differences in order to defeat the anti-war Federalists. Before the war there had been a strengthening of party rhetoric as the New and Old Democrat editors began to hammer out a bellicose message to their audiences. Duane also tried to resurrect his direct political influence during the 1812 war through securing military contracts for Old School Democrats, who supported him and who were mostly Irish. His
military positions meant that Duane obtained the means to support his own patronage system among the Old Democrats through the help of his own patron, the Secretary for War, John Armstrong Jr. This later backfired, leaving Duane facing charges of embezzlement of war funds and facing lengthy litigation after 1814. Throughout the period he continued to hammer away at his Anglophobic anvil, and as America drifted towards confrontation with Britain the sound of that anvil, began to resonate more meaningfully and ominously with the wider American public. This is not to suggest that Duane did not have an effect on the drift itself. In an about-face from the Federalist period, the United Irish were now able to avail themselves of a renaissance of public and political hatred towards Britain, which had not been seen since the War of Independence.

It has been thought that Duane began studying ‘the art of war intensively, with the goal of broadening the public’s knowledge’44 after the Chesapeake crisis of July 1807. This interpretation, however, rests uneasily with Duane’s strong military connections with the EIC army and his role as a spokesman for their cause. His enthusiasm for the 1812 War, both in his writing in the Aurora and in his colonelcy and publication of the Handbook for Infantry should be aligned more closely with the facts of his previous involvement with the military, his joining of the E.I.C. army (and his friendships with many of its members) and the Republican Greens. One is also reminded of the heavily martial content of The World and the fact that his deportation from India was due to his links with mutinous EIC officers. Alongside this, we have the highly militaristic nature of the Volunteer movement in Ireland, and of some sections of the London Corresponding Society during 1795-6. Duane believed that militias meant

44 Phillips, op. cit., p. 351.
freedom from standing armies and as such his version of a republic had a militaristic element at its heart: a citizen militia which upheld the individual freedoms of its members against the power of the state. For Duane, 1812 was not so much a war between two sovereigns, as understood in early modern terms, as one between one group of men, citizen soldiers, under the banner of the United States and those under an English monarch who used a standing army. The war was not a break with his past but a continuation and fulfilment of his belief in citizenship tied to military strength.

But the war and the Jefferson-granted colonelcy were also useful for Duane politically. He was able to use his military position and relationship with the Secretary of War John Armstrong Jr. to procure appointments for friends and political allies. He was appointed ‘adjunct general for the Delaware river region, and ensured that his Old School allies [that is Old Democrats] were rewarded with contracts and positions’. 45 Binns, who was the aide-de-camp of Governor Snyder during part of the war, ‘with major responsibilities for ordnance, watched the progress of his rival with a mounting sense of frustration and fury. He tried to control his “personal indignation” in the interests of wartime unity, but became increasingly critical of both Duane and his patron, the Secretary of War John Armstrong, as the American army failed to make any headway in Canada’. 46 Duane also published during the war A Handbook for Infantry and A Handbook for Riflemen which became set handbooks for the United States Army, although noted Federalist and Republican officers sometimes refused to use them because of their author’s dubious political past.

By the end of the war, America had a higher international standing and a

45 Wilson, op. cit., p. 84.
46 Ibid, p. 84.
boosted national pride. An important foreign policy issue which had been a persistent bone of contention between the Republicans and the Federalists – how they should deal with Britain – had been removed from the political agenda. The old party system was disintegrating, differences over States’ rights, federal power and banking rights were no longer the stumbling blocks to a one party system that they had been before and during the war. As Wilson has noted, ‘American politics became characterised by a maze of shifting allegiances centred on questions of power and personality. Even those who participated in this species of jockeyship, as Paine might have called it, were disgusted by what they saw as the degeneration of American politics’. Duane was one of these people. The war can be seen as Republican Anglophobia coming home to roost. Opposition to Federalism had united the Republicans prior to 1801. Being in office disunited them and splintered them to the extent that the unthinkable occurred: Republican incumbents made deals with Federalists to stay in power in place of rivals from their own party. War united them once more but after 1814 Federalism had been buried forever; this left behind a slippery and mercurial political surface that was not divided into two clear and distinct camps as during the years 1798-1801. This was disadvantageous for a political personality such as Duane; one that thrives on a Manichean outlook and a polarised political context. His example suggests that radicals are good at defeating an opponent through sheer force of will, but ultimately founder, if they are not willing to compromise once their battles have been won. Duane needed the security of a drawn-out enemy to hate. Once this was lost he cannibalised his own party, undermining his political support-base, and further, his own influence on American republicanism. Once that was gone

he turned to hating everyone bar his mentor and confidant, Jefferson, who always owed Duane a large debt due to the 1800 presidential race.

Not only was Duane marginalised from his previous influential position, both as the newspaper voice of Republican America and as a prominent ‘borough boss’ in his own right with authority at state and national levels, but his personal psychology rendered the fluctuating political situation difficult to bear. Without the impetus towards Anglophobia, and by extension, ‘Federalophobia’, Duane became more and more what Callender had been once the Republicans rejected him: an unwieldy and unpredictable cannon who often went off in the face of his friends. Where once the Federalists had been the half of humanity that Duane chose to hate, now, with the virtual exception of Jefferson, it was misanthropy that drove Duane’s pen forward.
Chapter 11

The Later Years: 1815-1835

Duane Limps On

At the end of the war Duane returned to the *Aurora*. He was now stripped of most of his direct political power and again took up the position of an independent newspaper editor, an honest maverick, rather than a member of the Republican establishment. But Duane, as Wilson has commented, became ‘something of a political misanthrope’, as Callender had after the halo fell from the Founding Father.¹ Duane reached his nadir at the close of the war as one of his political enemies, Alexander Dallas, was made secretary of the treasury and then helped to establish a new Bank of the United States.² Duane even allied himself with reformed Federalists in his hatred towards and desire to destroy the New School Democrats.³

Even by 1806, he wrote in his letters to Jefferson of the ‘particular men and circumstances’ who were attacking Jefferson and whom Duane described as snakes troubling Jefferson’s path.⁴ Duane’s view of political life grew more bitter although for him, unlike for Callender, the halo never fell from Jefferson. Instead of turning on Jefferson, by 1811 Duane began talking to him of the ‘cruel infidelity of the Republicans to a faithful centinel’. Duane had already decided

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¹ Wilson, United Irishmen, United States, p. 90.
² Phillips, op. cit., p. 373.
³ Ibid, p. 373.
that Washington D.C. had ‘become a theatre of intrigue’ as ‘it resembles the frippery and frivolity of a monarchical court rather than the capital of a republic’. The dim view he held of his American Republic became even more pronounced, until one year before leaving for South America he wrote to David Bailie Warden that: ‘Your knowledge of men and things formerly would not enable you to comprehend things now’, as one ‘could have no comprehension of the extent to which meanness and treachery is daily carried’, even with Warden’s knowledge of the ‘knaves & hypocrites’ that inhabited the political world.

Although Duane had become a citizen and the Hibernocentricism of the United Irish had found a place in American public life because of the war, to his political enemies he was still an alien. In an 1816 attack on Duane, anonymous enemies published an account of a litany of horrible crimes he was meant to have committed in Ireland prior to fleeing the country. We saw these in 1800 in the original newspaper, in the witness testimonials for the libel case that Duane brought against the newspaper, and in the various Federalist representations of him, which picked at the scabs of his past. Now, sixteen years later, these accusations still held currency against his claim to Americanness, showing that for large segments of Philadelphia opinion, Duane was, and always would be, Irish.

Between 1814 and 1822 Duane launched a detailed critique of the emergent American banking system and enlisted the help of his eldest son William and a journalist by the name of Simpson. Together this Republican triumvirite blasted away at anything moving on the range of American politics, whether Republican, Federalist, Quid, Old School or New School. Perhaps this was an indication of the

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6 Duane to Warden, May 7 1821, Papers of David Bailie Warden, Maryland Historical Society, MS. 871, quoted in, Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States*, p. 90.
waning influence of the *Aurora*: that he longer held any party dear because his view was in the minority and so was his support. But the *Aurora* still played a role as sentinel to the Republic. Simpson and William J. Duane were the political heirs to Duane, and the latter was complimented on his balanced writing—seen as a departure from his father’s fiery style. With Simpson, Duane was continuing his own tradition of giving young Republicans a start on his newspaper, a role which served the grandfather of President Wilson, James Wilson, well, one of his sons being named William Duane Wilson in the editor’s honour.7

In the years after the war the *Aurora* was caught in the struggle over the banking system and the Panic of 1819. Although Duane withdrew from the newspaper more and more, leaving it in the hands of his two younger workers, the issue was an important one, which he was still arguing about close to his death, at the time of his final editorship of the *Aurora*. Duane’s son was eventually to be head of the United States Bank for a brief and turbulent time under President Jackson and this period saw him writing regularly on the issue. Alongside banking, Duane’s newspaper took a renewed interest in state politics after a long break from local political struggles which tired and embittered him over the years as he saw the political structure he helped to build gradually shut him out.

**South American Friends in Philadelphia and Washington: An Exiled and Emerging Elite**

Apart from these two areas, Duane’s noted expertise in foreign affairs was brought to bear on the question of the nascent Republican states to the south of the

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United States. The *Aurora* was one place in the public debate where one could find information and regular articles about events in Latin America. Duane also wrote in support of the Lousiana Purchase in 1803 and Monroe’s attack on Spanish territories. By 1803 Thomas Jefferson had mended bridges between the United States and France sufficiently for Napoleon to offer the French province of Louisiana to the Americans—for a price. Jefferson secured the port of New Orleans and thus the trading route that stretched from Upper New York, with its trapping and fur country, through the Appalachians and back country and down into the river system that emptied into the Gulf of Mexico. Duane wrote a political tract on the subject, entitled *The Mississippi Question*, which was printed in instalments in February 1803.

Over the years Duane met and supported many political refugees from the Spanish Empire, and now watched closely as his former acquaintances became directly involved in the anti-colonial movements started by Simón Bolívar. Prior to the revolutions in South America, which ushered in the formation of the nascent republican, and national, governments, a series of political exiles came to live in the United States. These men formed bonds of friendship and political fidelity with their Northern counterparts and were to remember their help in their memoirs and later writings. On his travels to South America, Duane was warmly greeted there, more so than his reputation in the United States at the time might have led one to expect. In his *A Visit to Columbia* (1826) Duane tells the reader:

> Thirty years ago I became acquainted with some of the men of virtue and intellect, who were preparing the way for that revolution in South America, which is now realized. Those intimacies had, by exciting my sympathies, led me to bestow more
earnest attention on the history, geography, and the eventual destiny of those countries.\footnote{William Duane, \textit{A Visit to Columbia} (1826), i.}

Duane had also met with the ire of the Spanish ambassador to the United States, who involved him in a lengthy libel suit that would have endeared him to these Latin American dissidents. During these years Duane began to plan a trip to visit the emergent South American Republics, surely influenced by his lingering Painite universalism and the internationalist outlook of the French Revolution. He had tried to use what influence he had left in unsuccessfully applying for the position of United States ambassador to the new Columbian republic. It did not help matters that one of the key figures in deciding the appointment was none other than the son of John Adams, who harboured a strong dislike for Duane. In time Duane ventured to Columbia not to take up an official position but on the invitation of old friends who still remembered his support from their time as political refugees in Philadelphia.

Duane was not the only American radical with an Irish past who became involved with the South American radicals. One John Devereux had been a ‘rebek general’ in the 1798 uprising and had loosely controlled two thousand rebels at New Ross. He moved to Philadelphia and became a merchant trading with South America.\footnote{Wilson, \textit{United Irishmen, United States}, pp. 60-1.} As Wilson has noted, ‘Combining ambitions for military glory, wealth and fame with an anti-colonial outlook and republican ideology, D’Evereux would eventually return home in 1819 to raise an Irish Legion for Simón Bolívar’s army in Venezuela’.\footnote{Ibid, pp. 60-1.} On September 20 1822 Duane printed the \textit{Aurora} for the final time as a national newspaper and prepared more fully for his journey. On 2 October 2 1822 he left New York for Caracas with his daughter Elizabeth.
and his step-son Richard Bache. The last time he had sailed was to remove himself from his version of tyranny, Britain under William Pitt the Younger and George III. Now he sailed in an embrace of the southern Republics. This move was symptomatic of a wider pattern: the United States was starting to turn its gaze southwards and westwards instead of only looking eastwards towards the European homelands and their battlefields.

**Duane Among Friends**

Duane’s account of his voyage, written as a political travelogue of the emergent Latin American Republics, means that we have a record of an American Republican’s view of Columbia and the nascent foreign policy framework which Monroe was constructing. From the beginning Duane couched his travelogue in the language of the Monroe Doctrine as he perceived the ‘future commercial and political importance of South America to the United States’. Duane left for South America one year before Monroe gave the message to Congress which gave rise to the doctrine. The Monroe Doctrine suited Duane politically as it called for non-interference by European powers in the fledgling South American states and in the region as a whole. It was aimed at Spain and England and sought to curtail their regional influence to the advantage of the United States. In letter, language and form the doctrine looks remarkably like the Duane doctrine hammered out in the pages of the *Aurora*. Duane’s suspicion of ‘priest-ridden’ and imperialist Spain and his support of one of the steps endorsed in the doctrine—the Louisiana Purchase—evince a wider integrationist current at the time of the Monroe

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Doctrine’s launch. If anything, the doctrine was the sum of the aspirations men such as Duane held for American ascendancy in the region. For the former Republican exiles from Latin America, the Doctrine acted as a protective shield against the threat of further encroachments by Spain.

Duane’s strongly anti-Spanish stance is rhetorically similar to his arguments against the British Empire. The Spanish Empire is understood as another British Empire, likewise having drained the resources of these sister colonies now turned republics. His argument against Spanish mercantilism could be inserted into any Jeffersonian passage where Duane argues against the British Navigation Act, with only a change in the name of the mercantilist empire in question. This emphasis on free trade between republics echoes his earlier arguments of 1798 concerning the relationship between the French Republic and the Helvetican and Italian Republics. Here, Duane talks about Columbia and her sister Republics: ‘A new creation springing out of chaos; inviting the republic, which had only a few years preceded, to communicate its institutions, exchange its useful products, and promote a family of republics, whose institutions must eventually regenerate humanity’. Humanity becomes perfectible, but only when encouraged by republican institutions.

Another reason why Duane had such a strong interest in the nascent South American Republics was the role of freemasonry in their creation: The “spiritual mother of the revolution” was the freemasonry movement, originating in the Enlightenment. Founded by the Venezuelan Francisco de Miranda (1754-1816), the freemasonry lodges (Lautaros) spread over the continent’. Even a cursory glance at *Life in the Argentine Republic in the Days of the Tyrant*, by one of these republicans, D.F. Sarmiento, confirms the imprint of freemasonry on the southern revolutions. In the United States, alongside the freemason lodge, a hub of South
American politics in exile was the *Aurora* office. In the same way that it had been for a generation of exiled United Irish the *Aurora* stood as a beacon to the Latin American exiles. In the pages of the *Aurora* the turmoil in their home countries was recorded with a sympathetic eye to their cause.

**An Impecunious Return**

In 1823 Duane returned from South America to a distressing financial situation. He was to find he had no employment and no income and would be forced to move from his house to a very poor area of Philadelphia. He would also fight to regain any semblance of character he had in American society and to this end published a *Letter from the Secretary of War*, a refutation of embezzlement charges he was continuing to face in court and in public resulting from his tapping of the patronage system during the war. From 1823 to 1829 Duane and his family survived off the largesse of his now successful son who later cautioned his own son against repeating the pattern of his grandfather’s financial ruin and the subsequent fate of the Franklin (Bache) family. Duane’s family situation became more difficult as the toll of abject poverty gradually demoralised them. His relations with his family became strained. Duane's character was complex and contradictory at the best of times. He tended to oscillate between real warmth towards people and sheer fury. Throughout his life, he had developed an embattled view of the world, in which he was facing a vast array of enemies on his own; now some of these supposed enemies came from within the ranks of his own family. In 1825 Duane quoted Margaret as saying in front of their neighbours
that she wished she had never picked him out of the kennel she found him in.\textsuperscript{12} But she was present at the signing of his will and they seem to have become reconciled. In another melancholic letter from 1825 Duane complained to his daughter Elizabeth, his closest daughter, that his children had all abandoned him.

But politically, by 1824 Duane had also been brought back into the Old Democrat fold, just like the French Revolutionaries who were rehabilitated in celebrations marking the 1848 uprising in Paris. Duane found it ironic that after nearly 30 years before the public…my son and myself should hold the place of preference among those who adhere to the principles of 1776 and 1800. But altho a Republic now means something, the rights of man is no longer a paradox and Democratic government is no longer Jacobinism; and those who formerly reprobated now use the language and profess the doctrine they reviled twenty four years ago; they do not thank those who aided in reforming their modes of speech; and I was an idle spectator in the transactions which produced this revolution in speech, the very same men opposed me on this occasion who were opposed to you [Thomas Jefferson] at that period and since. They do justice to my social character, but tho they profess to be all Republicans, all Federalists—they are not forgetful that I had shared in their conversations.

In a more than hubristic statement in this letter to Jefferson, Duane even said that:

‘No man in the Union stand[s] better in moral and mental estimation than I do with men of all parties in Philadelphia’.\textsuperscript{13} Duane was popular enough to be nominated by his Old Democrat party as a candidate for Congress: ‘Such are the strange vicissitudes of life; and it is in such circumstances that I was taken up as the Candidate of the Old Republicans in the recent Election for members of

\textsuperscript{12} A series of letters from William Duane to Franklin Bache have been deposited in the APS Bache Family Papers collection. The last of these letters is W[illiam] Duane to Franklin Bache, 18 July 1825, APS Bache Family Papers. Other private letters are deposited in the APS Duane Family Papers collection.

\textsuperscript{13} William Duane to Thomas Jefferson, ‘Letters of William Duane’, \textit{Massachusetts Historical Society Proceedings}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} series XX (1907), 257-394, p. 382.
Congress’. He came fourth in the nominating ballot. He also brought his wide experience of foreign affairs, as a jaundiced outsider and not a player, to the ongoing question of America’s relationship to Britain and the restored monarchs of post-Napoleonic Europe in a pamphlet called, *The Two Americas. Great Britain and the Holy Alliance* (1824). His readmission into the Republican fold notwithstanding, Duane continued to face financial difficulties. In the search for employment, he used every last Republican friendship, connection and acquaintance remaining to him (even turning to some former enemies), but by now even the influence of Jefferson in Washington had waned. Duane also attempted to raise funds through the publication of his South American travelogue, *A Visit to Columbia* (1826).

After six years of unemployment Duane was given a clerkship at the age of 69 as prothonotary of the Supreme Court for the eastern district of Pennsylvania through the benevolence of a retiring judge, John A. Shulze. In the years prior to the appointment his family suffered due to their harsh living conditions and Duane had to watch as all his striving, work and sacrifice in America came to nought. In retrospect there was the success of his lawyer son, who had moved into fashionable Walnut Street after securing well-paid work, and the marriages of his three daughters in 1827. But for Duane himself the years were hard and barren. His health declined but after 1829 it slowly improved and he began to play a small mentoring role in relation to the men of the Working Men’s Movement who saw him as the founding father of American radicalism, although Duane himself did not share their class-based view of American politics. He recovered enough of an interest in politics to write a hard-money tract entitled *Notes on Gold and Silver* in

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By 1834 Duane’s strength of will had returned enough for him to send forth one last blast of his editorial trumpet as he began to print the *Aurora* and raise subscriptions single-handedly.

**An 1834 Epilogue**

In the twilight of his life, Duane returned to the *Aurora*. He happily wrote lengthy anecdotes drawn from his past and kept up his attacks on the American banking system and his old bugbears—the law and ‘Federalism’. As the final newspaper he produced, the *Aurora* of this period is an interesting document in itself and rare for the age of its editor, who produced it unaided on a single press. Duane had by now more than fifty years of printing experience and forty-three years as an editor behind him. He had lived through a tumultuous period of human history stretching from the first real global conflict—the Seven Years War—through to the American and French Revolutions, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and the Federalist, Jeffersonian and Jacksonian Periods of the United States. Moreover, he lived a varied life in four countries which for an eighteenth-century figure was a feat of endurance and forbearance – America, Ireland, England and India. Now all this experience was brought to bear on a small bi-weekly newspaper where the old man recollected his past and pondered the future after he would be gone.

By 1817, Duane had come to recognize a cyclical view of history which by its nature seems to have blunted the militant revolutionary enthusiasm that marked his earlier life. He wrote that there has always been a clear division between élites

and the masses underneath them, as in 1776 and 1800 but that when ‘the mass resolved to put things to right once more…as soon as these few were displaced there arose another few from amongst the old mass’. Although Duane recognised that ongoing struggle was the only means to drag the new few down to serving the new mass, he appears to have attained a deeper understanding of the nature of élite formations in the wake of revolutions, coming from within the revolutions themselves. He also continued to hammer away at his old bête noir—the banks. In addition, he focused his energies on analysing foreign affairs, articulating his vision of America’s role in the world. From time to time, he took to reminiscing about England, India and Ireland and the people he had befriended in those countries. His was a small bi-weekly newspaper printed at his Elizabeth Street home, and the fact that he handled subscriptions himself meant that his readers were all inhabitants of Philadelphia. The newspaper carried no advertisements and readers brought their subscription payments to the editor in person. But a newspaperman until near his death, Duane only stopped printing when in January 1835 a lack of subscribers forced him to. Ten months later, on 24 November 1835, Duane passed away at home.

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16 Ibid, p. 432
Conclusion

No other eighteenth-century journalist or editor had the same transcontinental experience and length of career as William Duane. His was a life lived beyond the geographical confines to which most eighteenth-century people were restricted. His search for identity spanned the world and found its fulfilment, after a period of difficulty, in the United States. Having achieved American citizenship he was to find, but would never admit, that financially and politically it was fool’s gold.

Duane’s birth in Newfoundland and childhood in Upper New York meant that he could loosely be called a North American. But the subsequent fissure in the British Empire meant that the question of his birth, and national identity, became a complicated one, particularly as he left North America before the American Revolution. Although brought up as a teenager in Ireland he would as an adult identify not as Irish but as English. Here his political identity—as a Radical Whig—was supported by a Commonwealth ideology with roots in English politics and nationhood, however much viewed through the prism of the English Civil War and the American Revolution. While in London, Duane was part of the political world of the Radical Whigs and his voyage to India was an extension of this world. But events in 1789 in France began a process which radicalised his politics further and made Duane question his allegiance to England.

For it was in India that Duane became an adherent of the French Revolution and wrote in support of it in his newspaper *The World*. He attached himself to likeminded people in Calcutta among the EIC army and other newspaper editors. His near deportation in 1791 must have shaken his English resolve further until in 1794 he renounced completely any ties he felt he had with England. His growing
support for the ideology of the French Revolution, in the form of Painite radicalism, came at the expense of his former attachment to England. For Duane, personal attachment to a nation and to a political ideology were entwined. With his rift from England complete, his Painite radicalism drew him towards the only Anglophone republic existing and one he had an attachment to from childhood, if not strictly from birth. His interlude in London over and his pessimism about English politics seemingly confirmed, Duane embarked for that part of North America where he thought Painite radicalism had found a home—the United States. He would find, however, that his claim to American citizenship by birth, having told people that he was born near Lake Champlain and not in St. John’s Newfoundland, was contested by the Federalists. According to the existing law, they argued that even if he had been born in what was now the United States his departure before the outbreak of the American Revolution nullified his claim to citizenship. Duane did not counter this argument but instead continued to maintain that he was an American. The Federalists, on their part, had a keen interest in the question, for as long as Duane remained an alien there was the possibility of deporting him through the Alien Friends Act.

Duane sought security from the Alien Friends Act by attempting to become naturalised, a process that was not completed until 1802. In the newspaper wars and political disputes of the period, however, naturalisation on paper was no guarantee of being perceived as an American. Instead, Duane had continually to counter accusations that he was an Irish criminal who had fled Ireland and India. His response to these largely, but not exclusively, Federalist charges was a hyper-American nationalism which sought to marginalise Federalists as stooges who were quasi-monarchists in the pay of the English. In asserting that he was a rightful American while the Federalists were really English, Duane sought to
politicise Americanness as a Republican citizenship that one could only claim if one shared Duane’s political outlook.

Alongside Duane’s quest for national identity was his search for financial security and a political role in his new country. His attempt to secure citizenship, stable money and a place in American politics were all involved in his ambition to be an important Republican newspaper editor who, once the Republicans gained power, would be rewarded with a well-paid job as recognition for his political role. Duane’s life therefore has three strands that must be appreciated if we are to judge whether he was finally successful or not. His search for an identity compatible with his politics was, broadly speaking, successful. His efforts to attain financial success in his Republic were an abysmal failure, leading to constant appearances in court, entrenched debt and poverty. His ambition to be a major powerbroker and political player in the United States met with most success between 1798 and 1800, but was eroded by infighting among the Republicans after Jefferson’s election. His inability to tap Republican patronage meant that he had to continue as a political newspaper editor even though this was not a lucrative career path, one littered with the wrecks of men less talented than Duane. Yet Duane was a survivor and continued to publish the *Aurora* in the teeth of financial failure. His main contribution to American politics was his editorship of this newspaper and his involvement in the democratic movement in Philadelphia.

Three of his surviving newspapers—*The World, The Telegraph* and the *Aurora*—have been used extensively, particularly the *Aurora*, for the wealth of information they give about the period and countries in which they were written. This is due to Duane’s originality: unlike most editors of the time he generally avoided the technique of extensively copying from other newspapers. Instead, his newspaper was one from which other editors copied. Also, Duane was usually
very well-informed. In America, for example, he drew on information from the countries he had lived and worked in and applied it to the particular political problems at hand. He became for a time the populist voice of Republican America and in that capacity helped Jefferson considerably during the presidential campaign of 1800. When he saw a weakness in an opponent he was ruthless in attacking it. Moreover, in his American newspaper he was far more dogmatic and propagandistic than he had been in India. In a sense this was due to context and his idealistic vision of America. For Duane, America was not only his mythical homeland but also the last bastion of freedom in a world quickly becoming dominated by a monarchy in Britain and Ireland (albeit constitutional but this distinction was lost on him after 1794) and the rise of Napoleonic power in France. The *Aurora* became synonymous with a particular vision of the Enlightenment, that of an artisanal, intellectual and farming brotherhood, which for Duane was a marriage of freemason fraternity and revolutionary fraternité. He derived the artisanal element of his ideology from Paine; from Jefferson’s agrarian republicanism he gained the concept of the citizen farmer; and from enlightenment *philosophes* he extracted an intellectual and religious framework that included Deism. His was a democratic vision expounded in the pages of a newspaper rather than the academies of the High Enlightenment. For Duane his enlightenment, the Low Enlightenment, had the smell of ink and press about it.

Another significant concept for Duane was that of an armed citizen militia. With its roots in seventeenth-century Commonwealth ideology, the concept can be traced intellectually through the militias of the American Revolution to the Volunteer movement in Ireland; the Dutch *Vrijcorps* movement; the *esprit de corps* of the European regiments of the EIC army; the United Irish militia and *les armées revolutionnaires* of France; and finally to the democratic militia which
Duane tried to bring into being with mixed success in Philadelphia prior to and during the War of 1812. His view was that the Republic should consist of citizen militias, in contrast to the use of standing armies, which he believed were an instrument of despotism. As part of this vision of a Republican citizen army he wrote and developed his military handbook, which eventually fell from favour because of his involvement in the polemics of the 1790s paper-war, an association he was never to shake off.

The impact of Duane’s writing cannot be quantified in a psephological study. But in our media-soaked contemporary world it would be erroneous to think that the eighteenth century was our mirror image and that his *Aurora* was just another soundbyte. Newspapers played a significant role in late eighteenth-century politics. The eighteenth century saw the real birth of the modern newspaper in recognisable form, especially with the ‘leader’ which Duane and Cobbett helped to promote in the United States. It also saw the development of the public printing of parliamentary reports and the forming of a public political arena where views were exchanged in print. It linked quite separate communities. As we have seen, Duane not only exchanged newspapers when he was in Calcutta with editors in Madras and Bombay, but received news from London and Europe as well. Even as far from India as Clonmel there are re-printed reports from Duane’s *Bengal Journal* among other Indian newspapers. Through these editors a web of extra-official and extra-governmental information stretched from Calcutta to London and Philadelphia. Although such connections between the disparate parts of the world at that time would be unrecognisably slow to a modern world caught in the rapidity of email use, the revolutionary element to this eighteenth-century information network should not be downplayed. In eighteenth-century terms, the
printing press and the newspaper were the most advanced form of information technology.

Duane, by the end of his career, was a master of this form of technology and could survey his career and reflect on its varied twists and turns which were as differentiated as the types he used. In attempting here to do the same one has only the advantage of distance in judging his life. Duane’s bequest to American political culture has not been as exclusively beneficial as historians such as Phillips, Tise, Rosenfeld and Pasley have claimed. His strain of Anglophobia helped to incite Republican feelings that led to a pointless war in 1812. His fervour for the French Revolution overlooked real human horror that occurred during the September massacres, the Terreur and in the Vendée. In damning Britain, Duane too easily overlooked French aggrandisement and imperialism and the difficulties faced by the Federalist administration when dealing with the complex political and international scene from 1793. He condemned British imperialism without conceding that he had once whole-heartedly supported it, and did not adequately criticise the American version that was growing in his own backyard. For a strong critic of slavery in India to print advertisements for runaway slaves in his Aurora years, and to write to Jefferson that slavery in the south suited the temperament of Negroes, shows both a failure of conscience and is an indictment of the political culture of the Early Republic. It also demonstrates that Duane was part of his era. The issue of slavery became firewood in the Aurora to kindle the flames of Anglophobia as Duane tried to point out perceived hypocrisies in the British championing of the anti-slavery and emancipation movement. This also relieved pressure on slave-owning Jefferson. Once Duane had identified an enemy, or circumstances had made him turn against an
individual or a group – or in this case a whole country – a monofocalled moral view was generally the result.

But there was another side to William Duane. He had an intense loyalty and a strong sense of friendship. To the country that gave him political refuge, notwithstanding the “Reign of Witches” and his disillusionment with the Republican party, he devoted himself fully when he could have turned his back on his core Republicanism and written a newspaper along strictly business and financial lines. Instead, he put extraordinary energy into producing a daily newspaper which he edited from 1798 to 1822. He remained committed to the cause despite suffering a severe beating from Federalist thugs in 1799 and despite the negligible financial gain it brought him.

Duane’s character can best be understood in relation to his family. On the one hand, he was a devoted father. Even while under the strain of financial difficulties he showed strength of character with his handling of the estate of the Franklin family. According to his son William, Duane and ‘Margaret…nobly agreed to make the [one-seventh part of the estate owing to them] over to the four boys—an act voluntarily & greatly to their honour ’. William J. Duane wrote that he never loved his father more than ‘when he came & told’ him ‘of his resolution, not to take that which under the law he certainly was entitled to’.1 William J. Duane ended this letter by noting: ‘I am sure you will rejoice with me at this new evidence that my father deserved any thing but the ill opinion of this family’.2 This is one example of Duane’s familial devotion. But even this could curdle under the heat of political life and failure. Duane’s temper was not unknown to his loved ones, and as the divisions between himself and his step-sons attest, he could

1 William J. Duane to Deborah Duane, August 16 1811, Duane Family Papers, APS.
2 William J. Duane to Deborah Duane, August 16 1811, Duane Family Papers, APS.
be a difficult man to be reconciled with when he felt injured. As Jefferson commented: ‘I believe Duane to be a very honest man, and sincerely republican; but his passions are stronger than his prudence, and his personal as well as general antipathies render him very intolerant’.¹

What was apparent in his personal life was even more pronounced in his relations with political allies and friends. The tendency towards a mercurial temper was worsened by the divisions that occurred among the Republican rank and file after the 1800 election. For a man used to a clear distinction between Republican and Federalist, the divisions of Quid-Democrat and Old School-New School were more difficult to understand and added to a growing misanthropy, from which it seemed, Jefferson alone was excluded.

Duane saw men who had sacrificed much less in the struggle between Federalist and Republican gain lucrative appointments in the post-1801 Jeffersonian political and administrative machinery. His pained surprise, expressed to Jefferson in letters, betrays a flawed understanding of the whole message of Jeffersonian republicanism in power: compromise. Jefferson compromised over slavery to win votes in the south, and over native gentleman Federalists continuing in government positions. The foreign, and Republican, zoon politikon, on the other hand, was kept at bay. He compromised over the fully democratic vision of men such as Duane. While allowed to occupy an ultra-Republican corner of Jefferson’s mind, and do battle for him, Duane and the alien editors were not fully embraced, in order to keep his gentlemanly status intact and free from stain. In response, Duane harboured only a deep loyalty, remaining true to Jefferson until his death. Duane’s monofocalled view worked in reverse as

well. Jefferson was the “Father of His Republic” to Duane as surely as historians have traditionally treated Herodotus as “Father of History”. It is a pity that Duane could not have also understood Jefferson in terms of the other epithet of Herodotus—“The Father of Lies”—if only for the sake of a realistic and balanced portrayal of Jefferson. As an individual he would have certainly suffered less if he had held a more complex view of the Founding Father. He perhaps would have had a less jaundiced view of the Federalists (and their sense of themselves as Americans rather than British stooges). Perhaps, however, the last word on Duane should be given to a man who had little sympathy for him. The man in question was still smarting from the savage treatment Duane had meted out to his father in the years 1798-1801. For it is John Quincy Adams who leaves us with the impression that Duane was a man of talent and indefatigable industry who had much knowledge crammed into his head, for all that it was without order or method. If these are sentiments of an enemy, perhaps there was some good in Duane.

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