



Introduction

Kinship, Violence and the Colonial State

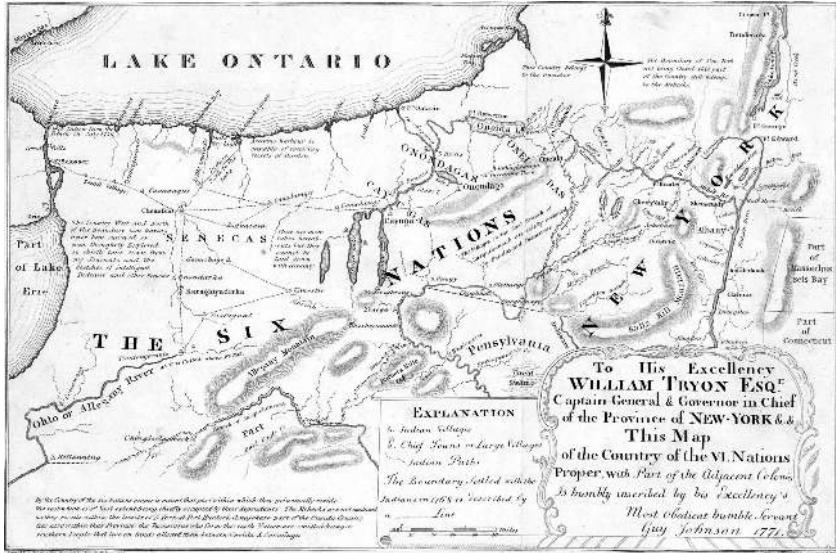
North-Eastern North America, 1779: The Sullivan–Clinton Expedition and a War of Households

In 1779, at the height of the American Revolution, the American high command decided to destroy the power of the Six Nations in north-eastern North America. The contiguous territories of six allied Haudenosaunee nations, the Seneca, whose lands lay furthest from European settlement, the Onondaga, the Tuscarora, the Cayuga, the Oneida and the Kanyen'kehà:ka (Mohawk; Kanienke'há:ka), 'keepers of the Eastern door', whose territories were closest to those of Europeans and indeed overlapped with them, lay in the western and northern regions of what is today in American terms the state of New York. In 1771, before what he would come to see as the great disasters of the American Revolution, Guy Johnson, son-in-law of local magnate and Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the northern district of the Indian Department, Sir William Johnson, drew a map (Map I.1).

Commanded by Major General John Sullivan and Brigadier General James Clinton, the American forces aimed to destroy the homes and food supplies of the hitherto more insulated western Six Nations in order to drive them from their homelands and to neutralize the Six Nations as a whole as a military threat to frontier settlements. This was part of the bitter frontier warfare of the opening years of the Revolution in New York and in Six Nations lands, which had included attacks on settlements and on civilians, and in which both sides committed human rights abuses. Nonetheless, the Sullivan campaign was of a different order of magnitude. It was consonant with American removal policy elsewhere during the Revolution, and with the settler quest to gain more land.¹ The campaign drove into the lands of the Senecas, Cayugas and Onondagas.² At least forty settlements were destroyed. The invaders

¹ Colin Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 47–48.

² Susan Hill, *The Clay We Are Made Of: Haudenosaunee Land Tenure on the Grand River* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2017), 128.



Map I.1 Guy Johnson, ‘Map of the Country of the VI Nations’ (1771). From the collections of the New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections, Albany, New York

killed domestic animals and burned all the crops they could find, including at least 160,000 bushels of corn.³

The campaign was not merely another raid but a major engineering effort. It required building roads in order to move supplies, horses and several thousand troops into densely forested regions. It also demanded the construction of a fort and of dams to facilitate the large-scale movement of shipping.⁴ This was a slow-motion invasion, pioneered by engineers. As such, the expedition could be and was seen by many white observers as a movement of ‘civilization’ into the ‘wilderness’.⁵ It was the construction of roads and forts, and not only the ethnic cleansing of the campaign, that opened Iroquoia to white settlement,

³ Calloway, *American Revolution*, 51; Frederick Cook (ed.), *Journals of the Military Expedition of Major General John Sullivan against the Six Nations* (Auburn, New York: Knapp, Peck, Thomson, 1887)

⁴ William W. Campbell, *Annals of Tryon County; or, The border warfare of New York during the Revolution* (London: J. & J. Harper, 1831), 121–125.

⁵ Chad Anderson, ‘The Built Landscape and the Conquest of Iroquoia, 1750–1820’, in Carole Shammas (ed.), *European Expansion and Indigenous Response: Investing in the Early Modern Built Environment: Europeans, Asians, Settlers and Indigenous Societies* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 265–294.

and eventually facilitated the subsequent westward movement of the nascent American republic after the end of the war, even if it was British betrayal at the negotiating table that sealed the fate of the lands of the Haudenosaunee.⁶

Despite the ideas many held about civilization and wilderness, the soldiers were surprised to find that the Six Nations had built many houses that blended Haudenosaunee and European styles, that their dwellings were often wealthier than those of frontier settlers, and that they had well-stocked orchards and rich fields of corn and vegetables. ‘Their houses are large and elegant; some beautifully painted; their tombs likewise, especially of their chief warriors, are beautifully painted boxes, which they build over the grave, of planks hewn out of timber’, Lieutenant Charles Neukerk observed about the ‘fine town’ of Kandaia on 5 September 1779, for example.⁷ The Haudenosaunee were fighting on both sides of the revolution, so this invasion was also an attack on the British and on joint white-Haudenosaunee forces; guides included some American-allied members of the Six Nations, and armies on both sides adopted some Indigenous fighting techniques.⁸ Distinctions between groups were hardened by warfare, and yet also at times more blurred both culturally and politically than the racialized ideology of civilization against wilderness would suggest.

Neukerk described in bureaucratic detail the burning of towns and food. On 15 September 1779, for example:

[t]his morning the whole army paraded, at 6 o’clock to destroy the corn &c about this place, which could be done no other way but by gathering the corn in the houses & setting fire to them. Here we likewise found a great quantity of corn gathered in houses by the savages. At 3 o’clock in the afternoon we completed the destruction of this place [...].⁹

American lawyer and amateur historian W.W. Campbell reprinted Neukerk’s journal in his own 1833 history *Annals of Tryon County*. ‘To a person reading the foregoing journal,’ he remarked with some evident discomfort, ‘it may seem that too much severity was exercised in the burning of the Indian towns, and that corn, &c was wantonly destroyed.’¹⁰ Such actions were, however, he argued, necessary to bring an end to a war that had become a war of households: ‘their towns were their retreats, and from thence they made incursions into the settlements’.¹¹ The New York/Iroquoia campaigns of the American Revolution were in part about different groups trying to destroy each other’s homes in a

⁶ Allan Taylor, *Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).

⁷ Campbell, *Annals of Tryon County*, 125.

⁸ Barbara Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1972), 197.

⁹ Campbell, *Annals of Tryon County*, 127.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 135.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 135.

bitter contestation over land ownership. Their impact would be long-lasting: the campaigns resulted in a Six Nations exodus to British-held territory, turning the Haudenosaunee into refugees, while ironically opening the door for British negotiators to abandon Six Nations country to the Americans in 1783.¹²

The invasion might, then, be seen as part of a war of households, triggered by the outbreak of the Revolution, in which tropes of difference needed to be mobilized to justify dispossession and in which ideas about families and domesticity played an important role. The ethnic cleansing of the Sullivan campaign sought to eradicate Haudenosaunee dwellings from the landscape and to destroy the traces of Haudenosaunee cultivation of the land. It stands, however, as only one example among many of the way in which warfare entrenched divisions between ‘white’ and ‘Indian’ in colonial New York during the frontier wars of the Revolution, in part through creating a sense of each as constituting incompatible households that needed to be destroyed. The white states that emerged on both sides of the new border from the ashes of conflict would frequently imagine whites and Indians as racially distinct and as at different levels of development. Difference was nonetheless fragile and needed to be constantly reinvented.

The Sullivan campaign was a small element, if a particularly brutal one, of a much larger process that lies at the heart of this book. From the late eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, settlers under the aegis of the British empire (or, in the case of the Americans, escaping the British empire) laid claim to what they often described as undeveloped ‘wastelands’ that would be transformed by settler colonialism. In the process, they steadily displaced people who have come to be referred to as ‘Indigenous’ – a term that contains within it a prior claim to invaded lands. These groups included numerous North American Indigenous peoples such as the Haudenosaunee; Australian Aboriginal peoples, including (to name just some whose members bore the early brunt of invasion and who will be discussed in this book) the Noongar of Western Australia, the Eora and Wiradjuri of New South Wales, or the Palawa of Van Diemen’s Land; the San and Khoekhoe in southern Africa; and the Maori in New Zealand. As this brief list suggests, groups were highly diverse, and their relative degrees of power varied. Nonetheless, the British often claimed that they had common characteristics, such as relying on hunting for subsistence or vulnerability in the face of ‘civilization’, and frequently described them as ‘aborigines’. Many descendants of these groups would by the twentieth century embrace a common identity as Indigenous. This book examines the entangled history of the conquest of Indigenous lands and the development of linkages

¹² Hill, *Clay We Are Made Of*, 134–137.

between these very diverse peoples through the experience of colonialism between the 1770s and the 1830s.

How, however, to analyse such complicated processes? A key focus of this book is on family and kinship. More particularly, I trace the entangled lives and imperial careers of three families whose members played important roles, from a variety of subject positions, in the forging of new colonies and in interaction between Indigenous people and settlers in the British empire from the 1770s to the 1840s, particularly on colonial borderlands. One was a prominent North American Six Nations family, the Brants, who supported the British during the Revolution and later spearheaded migration to Upper Canada. Another was a British family, the Bannisters, a group of restlessly mobile siblings closely involved in colonial administration and settler expansion as well as in documenting violent abuse in the 1820s. A third, the Buxtons, were a prominent British political family who, in addition to fighting for the abolition of slavery, tried to reform the settler empire from its centre before supporting a form of colonialism in West Africa in the name of humanitarianism in the 1830s and early 1840s. I use evidence from the lives of family members to illuminate the entrenchment of settler colonialism, examining themes such as violence, the changing politics of kinship, the role of family networks in empire, debates about land and sovereignty, the relationship of humanitarianism to colonialism, and the emerging conception of ‘aboriginal’ as a transnational identity. The lives of individuals are also ways into closer examination of particular territories, as I follow family members from revolutionary America, to Upper Canada, Australia, southern Africa, Sierra Leone and Britain.

The Sullivan campaign was not only a turning point in this history in its own right, but also raises a number of themes pertinent to the period as a whole. First, the violence of the Sullivan campaign was typical of the wider history of settler colonialism over this period, not least in its attacks on civilians, including driving civilians from their land. We will see a significant repetition of such tactics, particularly by the police and the military, as we follow the empire through time and from one frontier to another. In all of the places covered by this study, from colonial North America to Australia to southern Africa, there was warfare as well as more quotidian conflict over land between commercial farmers and those prior occupants of the land who depended on hunting, pastoralism and/or subsistence farming. And in all places the line between civilians and combatants would be blurred.

At the same time, the British military also often either had Indigenous allies or hired Indigenous soldiers and policemen once the earliest phase of conflict was past. This is not to argue that there was consent to the occupation of land. On the contrary, the British empire’s appetite for soldiers and the lengths to which the empire went to obtain ‘loyal’ marksmen were part of wider patterns of violence. In the case of the Sullivan campaign, for example, Six Nations fighting on the side of the British were punished for a war that almost none of

them wanted and in which they fought mostly to protect their own lands – and, as Barbara Graymont points out, the empire was not able to defend the lands of the Six Nations that alliance had put at risk.¹³ Furthermore, loyalists might not remain loyal when pushed too far.¹⁴ The painful complexity of loyalty and military allegiance will also be a key theme in this book, despite its difficulty.

Second, the exile of many of the Six Nations to Lachine or to Niagara, as well as the flight of many settlers from rural New York during the war, were part of wider patterns of disruption and mobility that scattered people like migrating birds across newly desolate landscapes.¹⁵ There are many ironies in terms such as ‘settler’ and ‘Indigenous’, as settlers moved restlessly and Indigenous people were subject to removal. There is a further irony that the fluid ways in which many Indigenous societies moved over land, formed new groups and sought to incorporate outsiders would all be rendered difficult by the later intrusions of colonial states, the bureaucratic requirements of which came to require fixity and an imagined statistical precision. The themes of mobility, disruption and struggle over land will recur throughout this book.

A third crucial issue highlighted by the Sullivan campaign is that of economic transformation and associated ideological claims. Lands from which the Six Nations were displaced were commodified and turned into cash and credit in a growing capitalist economy. At the same time, these were already farmed and clearly embedded in an existing regional economy, and many houses were legible to western eyes as European-style dwellings. We will see that at least some among the Haudenosaunee wanted (however controversially) to invest in the London stock market, to get the best possible price for their lands and to derive rental income from former hunting grounds. They were often blocked from doing so. The colonial economy was racialized and marked by a drive to racial exclusion in most parts of the world examined by this study. It cannot, however, completely be understood in binary terms.

This does not mean, however, that the liberal responses to a racialized economy that we shall examine throughout this book, as colonial violence and racial discrimination were heatedly debated, were innocent of imperial intent. Several key figures in this study, including the former Attorney-General of New South Wales Saxe Bannister and the reformist MP Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, vigorously argued that the only way to have a moral colonialism without the warfare and ethnic cleansing typical of the American Revolution was to manage a consensual and non-violent transfer of sovereignty and to extend the benefits of a liberal state to all its inhabitants, including equal economic access. This was, I will

¹³ Graymont, *Iroquois in the American Revolution*, 199.

¹⁴ For example, Robert Ross, “Hermanus Matroos aka Ngxukumeshe: A Life on the Border”, *Kronos: Journal of Cape History*, 30(1), 2004, 47–69.

¹⁵ On scattering: Kristina Ackley, “Haudenosaunee Genealogies: Conflict and Community in the Oneida Land Claim”, *American Indian Quarterly*, 33(4), Fall 2009, 462–478.

argue, a key part of a blueprint for ‘moral colonialism’ that emerged by the end of the period under study in this book, and that would in turn become an important part of the justification for late nineteenth-century imperial expansion.

Family, Place and Settler Colonialism

How then does this book seek to accomplish its objectives? I structure the book both by family and by place, with some areas of overlap. The book is divided into three sections, turning around the three families studied. In turn, different chapters explore different locations within each section. The book moves across North America, Australia and Africa before turning in its final chapter to Britain.

We begin in the borderlands of New York/Iroquoia in the late eighteenth century before and after the Revolution. In starting in colonial America, I hope to bring the United States into conversation with other British settler colonies while also acknowledging the artificiality of national boundaries for North American Indigenous communities.¹⁶ Joseph Brant (Thayendenaga) and his sister Mary or Molly (Konwatsi'tsiaienni) were part of a Kanyen'kehà:ka or Mohawk community that was, not without significant internal controversy, in a military alliance with the British. The Brant family included white members. Most importantly, Molly Brant and her partner, Sir William Johnson, the Superintendent of Indians for the northern district of the Indian Department of the British military, had eight children. Johnson used household power to control the frontier; this was, however, a type of power that would be rejected by settlers during the Revolution. Although many of the Six Nations fought on the British side during the American Revolution, others, particularly the Oneida and some Seneca, supported the Americans, with great costs in both cases, including the shattering of the Confederacy.

Joseph and Molly Brant and William Johnson are all well-known and indeed controversial historical figures. Their lives have been extensively studied, as has the complex role of the Haudenosaunee in the American Revolution.¹⁷ I am

¹⁶ Compare Karl Hele (ed.), *Lines Drawn Upon the Water: First Nations and the Great Lakes Borders and Borderlands* (Windsor, ON: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2008). On the value of considering the early United States as a settler colony in conversation with other white settler colonies, Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous Peoples in America and Australia, 1788–1836* (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2011).

¹⁷ Among others, James Paxton, *Joseph Brant and His World: 18th Century Warrior and Statesman* (Toronto, ON: James Lorimer & Company, 2008); Alan Taylor, *The Divided Ground: Indians, Settlers, and the Northern Borderland of the American Revolution* (New York: Alfred K. Knopf, 2006); Fintan O'Toole, *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2005); Lois M. Huey and Bonnie Pulis, *Molly Brant: A Legacy of Her Own* (Youngstown, NY: Old Fort Niagara Association, 1997); Isabel Kelsay, *Joseph Brant, 1743–1807: Man of Two Worlds* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1984); Graymont, *The Iroquois in the American Revolution*.

not trying to write new biographies. Nonetheless, this work serves as a springboard for what follows, particularly given the importance for later events of competing historical memories of the Brants, of the Six Nations alliance with the British, and of Six Nations' conceptions of sovereignty. A key contrast with later borderlands is the different nature of kinship relationships in a context in which Indigenous groups held greater power and were in closer diplomatic contact with the British than would be the case elsewhere. This analysis also requires asking about Haudenosaunee family structures, concepts of relationality and ways to incorporate new people, reflecting the stress on kinship placed by many scholars coming from an Indigenous studies perspective.

Although I am looking at elite and well-studied figures, I use sources such as oral histories recorded in the nineteenth century, wartime memoirs and local gossip in order to try to place them into the wider context of an uneasy borderland. I use family stories, for example, to argue that while on the one hand Joseph Brant's participation in attacks on border settlements was taken as justification for ethnic cleansing and as proof of the impossibility of Indigenous-white coexistence, on the other hand other family memories from the New York borderlands suggest closer ties and imply that Brant himself may have tried to play to multiple audiences.¹⁸

In Chapter 3, the book moves to Upper Canada. This follows the post-war movement of many Haudenosaunee to Upper Canada after the British Empire rewarded their allies by trading their lands to the new-born United States of America. Molly Brant's daughters married prominent white men, as 'white' and 'Indian' increasingly became identities perceived as incompatible, despite the persistence of intermarriage. Joseph Brant, and later his son John, tried to negotiate what they saw as more 'modern' economic solutions for the Six Nations, although they were also entangled in a corrupt economic environment and were embroiled in community debates over the best path forward, including how far to engage with the white state. It may be telling that one of Joseph Brant's other sons, Isaac, passionately opposed his father's policies, tried to kill Joseph and was himself killed in the struggle. Through these vicissitudes, the

¹⁸ I draw on stories recorded by Lyman Draper and others in the early nineteenth century from both Haudenosaunee and white perspectives. Although the political valence of using white settler stories is clearly different from the politics of drawing on Anishinabeg stories and settler communities used stories in different manners, the collection edited by Jill Doerfler, Heidi Kiwetinepinesiik and Nigaanwewidam James Sinclair, *Centering Anishinaabeg Studies: Understanding the World Through Stories* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2013) is nonetheless inspirational. The politics of white ventriloquizing of Indigenous stories will recur throughout the book as an issue. Compare also R.A. Innes' call to use Cree stories to understand expectations about kinship relationships among the Cowessess First Nations: "Elder Brother as Theoretical Framework", in Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien, *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 135–143.

Brants remained relatively elite. They were not typical, but many of the dilemmas and difficulties they confronted were, including the declining viability of strategies oriented to incorporation and management of colonists and the loss of Indigenous sovereignty. In Chapter 4, I analyse how Brant family members John Brant and Robert Kerr took their claims for land in Grand River directly to London in the early 1820s, strategically performing an identity as Mohawk warriors despite the fact that Kerr in other contexts presented himself as a Scottish businessman.

In making land claims, Brant and Kerr were assisted in Upper Canada and in London by two members of the Bannister family. In the second section of the book, I shift gears and move to focus on the imperial activities of three Bannister brothers and to a lesser extent of their sisters. Originally from Sussex, the Bannister siblings were dedicated to the pursuit of colonial fortune overseas throughout the early nineteenth century. Saxe, John William and Thomas Bannister, three restlessly mobile brothers, carried out colonial activity of one kind or another in the 1820s and 1830s in Upper Canada, New South Wales, Van Diemen's Land, Victoria, Western Australia, southern Africa, and Sierra Leone; Harriet and Mary Anne accompanied Saxe to New South Wales and then settled in Van Diemen's Land. The Bannisters had their own conceptions of kinship as a gentry family in financial peril: they believed they should collectively have more status than they actually did, and they looked to the new opportunities opened up by settler colonialism to make up the gap. In doing so, Saxe and John William tried to claim authority as men who knew and could help Indigenous peoples. The siblings chased financial advantage across the far-flung imperial world even as the eldest, Saxe, penned important attacks on British policy towards Indigenous peoples. He uncovered abuses in New South Wales and South Africa, not least the murder of an Indigenous man in police custody that locals tried to cover up. The Bannisters sought to ride the waves both of settler colonialism and of liberal reform, not seeing them as incommensurate. In that sense, they provide a case study of the interaction between liberalism and empire, which, as my work suggests and as others have argued, proved eminently compatible in the early nineteenth century.¹⁹ We will see that Saxe Bannister in particular hoped that new and better versions of empire

¹⁹ Compare Saliha Belmessous on Saxe Bannister as a proponent of imperial assimilation: Belmessous, *Assimilation and Empire: Uniformity in French and British Colonies, 1541–1954* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). On the contradictory entanglements of empire and liberalism: Karuna Mantena, *Alibis of Empire: Henry Maine and the Ends of Liberal Imperialism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010); Richard Price, *Making Empire: Colonial Encounters and the Creation of Imperial Rule in Nineteenth-Century South Africa* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Jennifer Pitts, *A Turn to Empire: The Rise of Imperial Liberalism in Britain and France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000)

could end the genocidal tendencies of settler colonialism, even as he actively and fervently promoted the annexation and colonization of Natal.

In the third and final section of the book, I turn to the Buxtons, a more securely elite British family involved in reformist politics in the late 1820s and 1830s. The family patriarch, Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, was a Whig MP and a key advocate for the abolition of slavery. Most crucially, he piloted the bill for the abolition of slavery through the House of Commons in 1833. Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton's work was enabled by the support and activism of his family, particularly his daughter Priscilla, his wife Hannah and Anna Gurney, the partner of his sister Sarah Maria.²⁰ It is on Priscilla that this final section focuses most closely. In contrast to the scattered and combative Bannisters, the Buxtons drew on interconnected family networks that amplified the power of particular families: they were key players in a wider network of elite humanitarian families in Britain, many with Quaker roots, who fought for the abolition of slavery in the 1820s and early 1830s, and whose female members formed crucial bonds. From the mid-1830s to the early 1840s, the Buxtons took up Indigenous rights as they understood them as a political crusade, influenced by their previous work on abolition. In looking at the information networks in which Priscilla and other Buxton family members were involved, I trace the movement of information about frontier killing in South Africa from Xhosa activists or Khoekhoe soldiers to the imperial centre; I also trace the counternarratives that colonial settlers and officials produced in response as the politics of information exploded in hearings before the House of Commons Select Committee on Aborigines.

In the final chapter of the book, I use the example of the Niger Expedition of 1841–1842, an act of would-be humanitarianism enthusiastically sponsored by the Buxtons, to illustrate the ways in which early nineteenth-century humanitarianism in many respects came to serve the ends of colonialism. At the same time, lands of the Haudenosaunee in Upper Canada were 'reduced' as the colonial state reimagined military allies as dependents in need of civilization. These two examples illustrate, I will argue, crucial trajectories in the history of settler colonialism and illuminate the paradoxes of imperial reform.

Connected Lives, Entangled Colonies

Overall, then, this book uses microcosmic analyses to illuminate a macroscopic process: the project of British settler colonialism as it sprawled across time and space during this critical period of the creation and consolidation of settler states. The lives of many of the people that I discuss were often only peripherally linked (and contrasts are often revealing). Their lives nonetheless intersected in multiple and multifaceted ways, brokered by colonialism.

²⁰ Kathryn Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens: Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain, 1915–1867* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).