PLACE AND MOBILITIES IN THE MARITIME WORLD: THE ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY IN THE CARIBBEAN, C. 1838 TO 1914

Anyaa Anim-Addo

Royal Holloway, University of London
PhD Human Geography

Declaration of Authorship

I, Anyaa Anim-Addo, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

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Abstract

The empirical subject of this thesis is the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company (RMSPC), a British-based steamship company that served the Caribbean from 1842, and extended operations into South America in 1851. I construct a postcolonial historical geography of the RMSPC as it operated in the 'expanded' post-emancipation Caribbean. By analysing the steamship service as a network rather than as a 'tool' of empire, I foreground the mobilities constructed by this Company, and explore how these mobilities impacted upon maritime places in the Caribbean. In so doing, I develop a 'tidalectic' approach to the RMSPC's past, by expanding upon Kamau Brathwaite's concept. I argue that tidalectics, in intersection with the 'new mobilities paradigm', contributes to an advance in understandings of maritime history, since together they facilitate mobile examinations of the relationship between sea and shore.

To develop analysis of the RMSPC's maritime mobilities, four substantive case studies are presented. The first case study focuses on the RMSPC's ports-of-call, as mapped by the scheme of routes. The second such chapter considers the steamship itself as place, particularly with reference to social and cultural dynamics. The coaling process is the focus of the third case study, and in the final chapter I add to the analysis the RMSPC's two main tourist routes through the Americas. The thesis proposes that steamship mobilities in many ways escaped and exceeded the original intentions of company directors and managers. As complex networks rather than straightforward imperial 'tools', steamship mobilities were subject to the influence of multiple places. In the case of the

RMSPC, Caribbean influences overlooked in previous studies have been reconstructed and offered on the basis of archival research.

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Introduction

The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company (RMSPC) was a steamship service that transported mail, passengers and cargo between Britain and the Caribbean from 1842 onwards, and extended operations into South America in 1851. Although the name is no longer widely recognized, the RMSPC was a major maritime presence, similar to the Cunard line, in the nineteenth-century Atlantic world. As a recipient of a British Government mail contract, the RMSPC was at once a transportation service and a communications system linking Europe and the Americas.

This study examines the steamship service not as a 'tool of empire', but as a mobile network that facilitated imperial and colonial interactions.[1] My way of advancing this argument is to shift analytical focus from London and Southampton (where its management decisions were taken) to the 'expanded' Caribbean, the Company's first region of operations.[2] I focus on the places constituted by the RMSPC's service at different scales, and consider how these places were shaped by imperial and colonial mobilities. Although this study is ordered thematically, its chronology covers the period from the Company's establishment to the eve of the First World War, which disrupted its operations.

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[1] Daniel R. Headrick, *The tools of empire: technology and European imperialism in the nineteenth century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

[2] Peter Hulme has developed the concept of the 'expanded' Caribbean, which encompasses southern plantation areas of the United States, as well as north-eastern Brazil. In this thesis I do not strictly adhere to Hulme's geographical boundaries, but draw on his precedent by examining an area wider than that which is traditionally understood as the Caribbean. The RMSPC's initial scheme of routes covered the Caribbean, the northern coast of South America, Central American ports, and extended into North America and Canada, with stops at New Orleans, New York and Halifax. This scheme, however, was quickly scaled back, with the result that the 1843 scheme of routes included the northern coast of South America, Central America and the Caribbean. The 1851 extension of service developed operations along the east coast of South America, with stops in Brazil and Argentina.

As a postcolonial examination of the RMSPC, I draw on networked concepts of empire, and adopt Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler's precedent in placing 'metropole' and 'colony' within a single analytical framework. [3] Yet in contrast to important precedents in 'new imperial' history and historical geography that have examined personal interconnections, the focus here is upon a steamship company as a 'materially "grounded"' imperial network.[4] In addition to adopting a networked approach to the study of empire, I also follow 'new' or 'critical' imperial studies in its concern with the social construction of difference, and its desire to examine multiple subjectivities and experiences of empire. I do so by engaging a mobile perspective, which considers different places and peoples with which the RMSPC interacted. In other words, this study considers 'metropolitan' and colonial maritime spaces together, and explores the steamship company from multiple locations. Furthermore, this thesis develops a postcolonial impulse to critique imperial discourses and practices, and to search for evidence of contestation of the same.[5] To this end, I offer new archival evidence and a fresh theoretical approach to writing the RMSPC's historical geography.

In theoretical terms, the thesis engages with and develops the concept of 'tidalectics', a perspective that has thus far been used as a framework for postcolonial literary analysis. Tidalectics, as articulated by Caribbean historian

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[3] *Tensions of empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world*, ed. by Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 4. Alan Lester argues similarly for the simultaneous examination of metropole and colony. See Alan Lester, 'Constructing colonial discourse: Britain, South Africa and the empire in the nineteenth century', in *Postcolonial geographies*, ed. by Alison Blunt and Cheryl McEwan (New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 29-48 (p. 29).

[4] Alan Lester, 'Constructing colonial discourse', p. 30.

[5] James D. Sidaway, 'Postcolonial geographies: survey-explore-review', in *Postcolonial geographies*, ed. by Alison Blunt and Cheryl McEwan (New York: Continnum, 2002), pp. 11-28 (p. 13).

and writer Kamau Brathwaite, was subsequently developed in the work of Elizabeth DeLoughrey. [6] In the latter's interpretation, tidalectics underscores the relationship between the land and the sea, critiques imperial representations of island spaces, and offers a cyclical model that resists linear historiographies of colonial progress. Importantly, tidalectics is a framework that has emerged from recognition of the importance of the ocean in making Caribbean experiences. Since a tidalectic perspective privileges oceanic connections, allowing for an emphasis on island histories, it is useful for examining an operation such as the RMSPC, with a maritime service including islands and regions belonging to more than one empire. I argue that a tidalectic framework lends itself to the writing of maritime histories and geographies, because of its centralizing of ocean spaces, and its emphasis on dynamic interactions between the land and the sea. Yet despite its utility for the writing of maritime historical geographies, I suggest that tidalectics might be further materialized and substantiated in a theoretical intersection with the 'mobilities turn' or 'new mobilities paradigm'. [7]

The study of mobilities examines movements, and representations of movement, within their contexts of power. A mobilities perspective foregrounds human and material displacements, both voluntary and forced, and the corresponding 'moorings' that enable these flows. [8] Whereas this theoretical framework has thus far been used predominantly to examine twenty-first century and twentieth-

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[6] Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots: navigating Caribbean and Pacific island literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007); Kamau Brathwaite, *conVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey* (Staten Island, NY: We Press & Xcp, 1999).
[7] Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm', *Environment and planning A*, 38:2 (2006), 207-226; Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings', *Mobilities*, 1:1 (2006), 1-22; Tim Cresswell, *On the move: mobility in the modern western world* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), pp. ix-x.
[8] Hannam, Sheller and Urry, 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings'.

century mobilities, here I consider nineteenth-century steamship mobilities, and what these signified in the context of the Caribbean's transition from slavery to freedom.

The RMSPC commenced operations after the abolition of slavery in the British West Indies. James MacQueen, who played a key role in establishing the service, had personal experience of the Caribbean sugar industry during the period of slavery, and expressed the hope that during the transition to freedom, the RMSPC would ensure the speedy transmission of intelligence between Britain and the islands, and stimulate commerce. Although the RMSPC's British ports-of-call were in post-slave societies, the system of slavery remained intact in other places that the steamers visited. The RMSPC thus began operations in the Caribbean at a crucial time of transition and emerging post-emancipation contexts. While previous studies of the RMSPC have largely ignored this broader Caribbean history, this thesis interrogates steamship mobilities in the context of slavery, and the geographies of freedom.[9]

At the heart of this thesis lie three key research questions:

1) What does a consideration of the geographies of the RMSPC reveal about its operations and how does this challenge existing Company histories?

2) In what ways were the RMSPC's material and abstract places shaped by British and Caribbean influences?

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[9] Rodney Baker and Alan Leonard, *Great steamers white and gold: a history of Royal Mail ships and services* (Southampton: Ensign Publications, 1993); Stuart Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy: a history of the Royal Mail line*, 2 vols (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2001); Jeffrey D. Pardue, 'Agent of imperial change: James Macqueen and the British Empire 1778-1870' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Waterloo, Canada, 1996).

3) How did the RMSPC's service enable and influence representations of the Caribbean in this period?

Chapter one provides a review of the literature that has informed this study, and chapter two sketches the historical contexts that shaped the RMSPC's operations. Chapter three outlines the sources on which this research is based. The first substantive chapter (chapter four), examines the RMSPC's ports-of-call as mapped by the Company's scheme of routes. I analyse the routes as a set of spatial relations, and argue that the steamship service was repeatedly revised as it was negotiated between multiple locations. In chapter five, I argue for a mobile understanding of the ship as a dynamic place that changed as it moved through the Americas. Chapter six considers the Caribbean coaling process through a focus on infrastructural systems, and explores the immobilising practices that underpinned steamship flows. Finally I turn to mobilities in the Company's two main tourist regions to argue that mail contract steamship services contributed to shaping modern Western practices of touring the Caribbean.

Chapter one

A postcolonial historical geography of the RMSPC

In this thesis, I present a postcolonial historical geography of the RMSPC.[1] The focus of the thesis is upon the RMSPC's central and marginalized places across different scales, and how these places were shaped. I ask who and what was made mobile by this service, and what had to be fixed in place so that vessels could move. I also interrogate the politics of these 'mobilities', particularly in terms of the Caribbean's transition from slavery to freedom. What might a postcolonial historical geography of a steamship service look like? What might be its approaches and subject matter? How would a postcolonial geography relate to maritime themes? This chapter begins with a disciplinary exploration of the approaches and questions that have characterised postcolonial historical geographies and postcolonial histories of empire. I then proceed to consider recent historical approaches to writing about the Atlantic Ocean and the maritime world. I attempt to develop a framework for analysing oceanic experiences by drawing upon Kamau Brathwaite's concept of 'tidalectics'.[2] I explore how the 'new mobilities paradigm' can usefully inform the writing of maritime histories, particularly in theoretical intersection with tidalectics.[3] Finally, I propose

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[1] The term postcolonial is contested. I opt for 'postcolonial' rather than 'post-colonial' to suggest ambiguity in the relationship between colonial pasts and present day situations. In this thesis I do not engage with postcolonial literary theorists, and as such will not elaborate on the postcolonial literary debate. Instead I work from the central notion that postcolonial geographies challenge imperial geographical discourses and practices, including constructions of place. See James D. Sidaway, 'Postcolonial geographies: survey-explore-review', in *Postcolonial geographies*, ed. by Alison Blunt and Cheryl McEwan (New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 11-28 (p. 13).

[2] Kamau Brathwaite, *conVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey* (Staten Island, NY: We Press & Xcp, 1999), p. 34.

[3] Keith Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings', *Mobilities*, 1:1 (2006), 1-22.

tidalectic mobilities as a perspective that would begin to allow for a regionalised geography of mobilities.

That research tracing the shifting regional, imperial and extra-imperial maritime connections of places can extend our understanding of transnational and global processes is important to this thesis. I contend that while examination of a steamship company may reveal one set of mobile historical relationships, many others may be usefully explored. Specifically, I suggest that a theoretical intersection between mobilities theory and tidalectics is a particularly appropriate framework through which to examine maritime island connections and the RMSPC. This is because tidalectics emphasizes the importance of island histories, whilst mobilities theory provides an approach through which to analyse material and embodied relationships connecting places to a global beyond. Together, the two theories facilitate an analysis that moves across different spaces, and traces the relationship between sea and shore. I argue here for the utility of a tidalectic mobilities framework, and by overlapping these two perspectives, I seek to open up space for a postcolonial historical geography of the RMSPC.

Postcolonial histories and geographies of empire

Postcolonial histories and geographies of empire have in many cases been shaped by so-called 'new imperial' approaches.[4] In contrast to an earlier emphasis on

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[4] See, for example, Roxanne L. Doty, *Imperial encounters: the politics of representation in north-south relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Mrinalini Sinha, 'Britain and the Empire: toward a new agenda for imperial history', *Radical history review*, 72 (1998), 163-174; *A new imperial history: culture, identity, and modernity in Britain and the*

economic and political themes, new imperial history has particularly stressed the cultures of empire, with culture broadly defined, by Kathleen Wilson, as 'networks of people, practices, values, and ideas spanning continents and oceans'.[5] This is evidenced, for example, in Catherine Hall's edited collection *Cultures of empire: colonizers in Britain and the empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (2000). Hall argues in this key work that 'rethinking imperial history in postcolonial times requires reconnecting race, nation and empire', and suggests that 'decolonizing' the cultures of empire is an important aspect of critiquing imperial representations.[6] New imperial history is centrally concerned with the construction of difference, and particularly the social constitution of difference as framed by categories of race, ethnicity, gender and class.[7] This focus on difference is paralleled by an interest in uncovering the experiences of those framed as different. Thus new imperial history wants to 'recognize alternative modes and sources for understanding the past, to probe at the limits of historical knowledge, and to make the "subaltern" – from indigenes to women, and all others rendered silent or invisible by the historical archive – "speak"'.[8]

Empire, 1660-1840, ed. by Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004). The application of postcolonial theory to the study of imperial history has faced some hostility from imperial historians. Dane Kennedy, however, argues in defence of dialogue between postcolonialism and imperial history. See Dane Kennedy, 'Imperial history and post-colonial theory', *The journal of imperial and Commonwealth history*, 24:3 (1996), 345-363.

[5] Kathleen Wilson, 'Introduction: histories, empires, modernities', in *A new imperial history: culture, identity, and modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840*, ed. by Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) pp. 1-28 (p. 18). Wilson points out that imperial history has often focused on politics and economics, and that this is less the case in critical imperial studies. See Kathleen Wilson, 'Old imperialisms and new imperial histories: rethinking the history of the present', *Radical history review*, 95 (2006), 211-234 (p. 213).

[6] *Cultures of empire: colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, ed. by Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 2.

[7] *Ibid*, pp. 16-20. Hall argues similarly that constructions of difference were part of the cultural work of empire in Catherine Hall, *Civilising subjects: metropole and colony in the English imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), p.16.

[8] Wilson, 'Introduction: histories, empires, modernities', p. 2.

Wilson has alternatively styled these revised approaches to writing empire 'critical imperial studies', and emphasizes the influence of feminist theory, literary studies, and non-Western perspectives, as well as postcolonialism, in shaping critical imperial approaches. Wilson argues that:

> [T]he goal of critical imperial studies seems less to replace conventional narratives of politics, administration, and policy than to reconfigure them by conceptually rethinking what empire meant from the point of view of their different partisans and opponents, the variegated logics of their divergent strategies and cultural technologies of rule, and the possibilities they offer for transnational and comparative scholarship.[9]

The 'critical imperial' interest in analysing different subject positions allows for nuanced understandings of empire, and I adapt this recognition of multiple subjectivities through a mobile approach, which moves through different places and perspectives on the steamship company. The 'new imperial' or 'critical imperial' thematic concerns with the construction of difference, particularly in relation to race, gender and class, are also adopted in my analysis of the RMSPC. I examine the steamship service as one imperial project amongst many, and explore its cultural 'networks of people, practices, values, and ideas'.[10]

Postcolonial histories and geographies of empire have followed Frantz Fanon in acknowledgement of the fact that 'metropole' and 'colony' each created the other.[11] Thus Ann Laura Stoler and Frederick Cooper, amongst others, insist on examining 'metropole and colony in a single analytic field'.[12] The two-way influence between metropole and colony is articulated in this thesis through a

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[9] Wilson, 'Old imperialisms and new imperial histories', p. 212.

[10] Wilson, 'Introduction: histories, empires, modernities', p. 18.

[11] Catherine Hall, *Civilising subjects: metropole and colony in the English imagination, 1830-1867* (Cambridge: Polity, 2002), p. 13.

[12] *Tensions of empire: colonial cultures in a bourgeois world*, ed. by Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), p. 4. Alan Lester argues similarly for the co-constitution of metropole and colony. See Alan Lester, 'Constructing colonial discourse: Britain, South Africa and the Empire in the nineteenth century', in *Postcolonial geographies*, ed. by Alison Blunt and Cheryl McEwan (New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 29-48 (p. 29).

tidalectic recognition that 'tropical island cultures have helped constitute the very metropoles that have deemed them peripheral to modernity'.[13] My shift of geographical perspective away from the RMSPC's management offices in Southampton and London and towards Caribbean island spaces forms part of an attempt to consider the reciprocal nature of steamship interactions rather than confining analysis to centrifugal understandings of management decisions taken in Britain.

New imperial approaches have been strongly informed by spatial concepts, particularly networks and webs.[14] Networked interpretations of empire have provided a key means through which metropole and colony have been unified in a single analytical frame. David Lambert and Alan Lester describe the utility of this concept:

> Scholars who have recently proposed a networked conception of empire generally consider it more useful to try to examine multiple meanings, projects, material practices, performances and experiences of colonial relations rather than locate their putative causes, whether they are 'economic', 'political' or, indeed, 'cultural'. These relations were always stretched in contingent and non-deterministic ways, across space, and they did not *necessarily* privilege either metropolitan or colonial spaces.[15]

I apply this networked approach to analysis of the RMSPC, and particularly develop this concept in chapter four on the RMSPC's scheme of routes. Although personal networks are increasingly examined by historians and geographers, as Lester argues, 'it remains to develop a more detailed and

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[13] Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots: navigating Caribbean and Pacific island literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), p. 4.

[14] Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and race: Aryanism in the British Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial connections, 1815-1845: patronage, the information revolution and colonial government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); Kerry Ward, *Networks of empire: forced migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[15] David Lambert and Alan Lester, 'Introduction: imperial spaces, imperial subjects', in *Colonial lives across the British empire: imperial careering in the long nineteenth century*, ed. by David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-31 (p. 8). Emphasis in original.

materially "grounded" understanding of the intricately fabricated imperial networks that actually linked colony and metropole together'.[16] The RMSPC functioned as one such materialized network, linking colony and metropole, colony with colony, as well as sites outside of the British Empire.

I draw, in this thesis, on the new or critical imperial networked approach to empire. In contrast to company histories that analyse the RMSPC as a British business concern, I approach the service as a network that tied places into webbed relations. In constructing this postcolonial historical geography, I follow the 'new imperial' impulse to analyse 'metropole' and 'colony' together, as well as a postcolonial concern with the construction of racialized and gendered difference.

Yet an attempt to construct a postcolonial geography is necessarily marked by its own disciplinary limitations. As James Sidaway reminds us, 'any postcolonial geography "must realise within itself its own impossibility" given that geography is inescapably marked (both philosophically and institutionally) by its location and development as a western-colonial science'.[17] Furthermore an historical geography, reliant as it is on archival records, is constrained by unequal erasures. Thus whilst this thesis takes a postcolonial approach in that it seeks to expose and challenge 'the cultural and broader ideological legacies and presences of imperialism', I recognize that this project is in some respects paradoxical.[18]

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[16] Lester, 'Constructing colonial discourse', p. 30.
[17] James D. Sidaway, 'Postcolonial geographies: survey-explore-review', in *Postcolonial geographies*, ed. by Alison Blunt and Cheryl McEwan (New York: Continuum, 2002), pp. 11-28 (p. 11).
[18] *Ibid*., p. 13.

Atlantic and maritime histories

By adopting a single analytical framework, new imperial histories and geographies of empire have at times been transnational in approach; a similar impulse has marked oceanic studies.[19] Most relevant to this project is the sub-discipline of Atlantic history, or Atlantic studies.[20] The ocean as a scale and unit for analysis has been justified through a rationale that from the early modern period onwards, the Atlantic Ocean was an integrated system.[21] Bernard Bailyn emphasizes:

> The clockwise circulation of winds and ocean currents, sweeping westward in the south and eastward in the north and linked by deep riverine routes – the Elbe and the Rhine, the Amazon and the Orinoco, the Niger and Congo, the Mississippi and St. Lawrence – to immense continental hinterlands, drew the Atlantic into a cohesive communication system.[22]

The RMSPC can be understood as constituting a formalized part of this communication system, although in a later period than that usually studied by Atlantic historians. The RMSPC was on the one hand a product of the British Atlantic world and on the other hand exceeded this world. Partially funded by the

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[19] As Jerry Bentley points out, it is a fruitless exercise to deconstruct myths of continental, national or civilizational unity in order to replace these with new myths of oceanic unity. See Jerry H. Bentley, 'Sea and ocean basins as frameworks of historical analysis', *The geographical review*, 89:2 (1999), 215-224.

[20] See, for example, Bernard Bailyn, 'The idea of Atlantic history', *Itineraria: European journal of overseas history*, 20:1 (1996), 19-41; Nicholas Canny, 'Atlantic history: what and why?', *European review*, 9:4 (2001), 399-411; Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, 'Some caveats about the "Atlantic" paradigm', *History compass*, 1:1 (2003), 1-4; Barry Cunliffe, *Facing the ocean: the Atlantic and its peoples, 8000 BC-AD 1500* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Emyr E. Evans, *Ireland and the Atlantic heritage: selected writings* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1996); *Beyond the black Atlantic: relocating modernization and technology*, ed. by Walter Goebel and Saskia Schabio (Oxford: Routledge, 2006); David Lambert, 'The counter-revolutionary Atlantic: white West Indian petitions and proslavery networks, *Social and cultural geography*, 6:3 (2005), 405-420; Peggy K. Liss, *Atlantic empires: the network of trade and revolution, 1713-1826* (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1983); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, *The many-headed hydra: sailors, slaves, commoners and the hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic* (London: Verso, 2000).

[21] *The British Atlantic world, 1500-1800*, ed. by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002).

[22] Bernard Bailyn, *Atlantic history: concepts and contours* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), p. 83.

British government and intended to serve British imperial needs, the Company nevertheless encompassed territories of the French, Spanish and Danish empires. I build, within the thesis, on the understanding that the Atlantic was a coherent and integrated system by the eighteenth century, and that the ocean space as a unit for analysis enables the writing of trans-imperial and transnational histories.

Miles Ogborn has schematized the survey, the network and the trace as three approaches to Atlantic geographies.[23] The 'network' model is most applicable to this thesis, and emerges in Atlantic studies in a similar manner to its treatment in new imperial history. Ogborn explains:

> In understanding the networks that made the Atlantic world, the accent is on the changing web of social relations and material connections between people, places and objects that bound together the margins of the Atlantic and bounded the ocean itself.[24]

The RMSPC's ships over-wrote existing Atlantic ties of sailing vessel trade and government mail packets. The vessels sustained, but also altered configurations of people, objects and place. My examination of the RMSPC as a network develops insights from Atlantic history as well as new imperial approaches.

Like new imperial or critical imperial studies, Atlantic history has frequently highlighted the experiences of indigenous peoples, as well as people of African descent.[25] Paul Gilroy's work has been particularly influential in foregrounding the experiences of African diasporic peoples. Situating his argument for a counterculture of modernity in the 'black Atlantic', Gilroy's concern with routes,

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[23] Miles Ogborn, 'Atlantic geographies', *Social and cultural geography*, 6:3 (2005), 379-385 (p. 380).

[24] *Ibid*., p. 382. David Featherstone takes a geographical approach to examining Atlantic networks in David Featherstone, 'Atlantic networks, antagonisms and the formation of subaltern political identities', *Social and cultural geography*, 6:3 (2005), 387-404.

[25] Trevor Burnard, 'The British Atlantic', in *Atlantic history: a critical appraisal*, ed. by Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 111-136, (p. 122).

flows and diaspora in the black experience also invites questions about the relationship between steamship services and cultures of modernity. Writing of two sailors, Wedderburn and Davidson, Gilroy suggests that, '[t]heir relationship to the sea may turn out to be especially important for both the early politics and poetics of the black Atlantic world'.[26] Gilroy's analysis is important to my argument not only because he underscores black experiences in the Atlantic, but also because he highlights the Atlantic as central to travelling cultures. Although this thesis is not a black Atlantic analysis of the RMSPC, it is influenced by this current of Atlantic history that places black Atlantic experiences, for example of sailors and the enslaved, into dialogue with traditionally scrutinized subjects such as colonial administrators. A poignant example of this approach can be found in Marcus Rediker's *The slave ship: a human history*.[27]

I build, within the thesis, on Atlantic history's understanding that the Ocean was a coherent and integrated system by the eighteenth century, and that the ocean space as unit for analysis enables the writing of transnational, and trans-imperial histories. However I challenge the chronology that orders much Atlantic history. David Armitage considers there to be a 'reasonably clear chronology' of Atlantic history beginning in 1492 and ending in the early nineteenth century.[28] Thus my

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[26] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 12. There is a connection between Robert Wedderburn and the RMSPC, as Wedderburn was Andrew Colvile's half-brother. See Iain McCalman, 'Introduction', in *The horrors of slavery and other writings by Robert Wedderburn*, ed. by Iain McCalman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), pp. 1-42 (p. 2). Colvile became the Deputy Chairman of the RMSPC.

[27] Marcus Rediker, *The slave ship: a human history* (London: John Murray, 2007); Joseph Roach's circum-Atlantic history also underscores the experiences of people of African descent. See Joseph Roach, *Cities of the dead: circum-Atlantic performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996).

[28] David Armitage, 'Three concepts of Atlantic history', in *The British Atlantic world, 1500-1800*, ed. by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 11-27 (p. 12). Canny argues along similar lines that global rather than Atlantic history is appropriate for the nineteenth century onwards. See Canny, 'Atlantic history: what and why?'.

nineteenth-century project could not comfortably fit Armitage's understanding of the sub-discipline. Bentley argues the point with a different emphasis, describing that during the nineteenth century, 'European peoples increasingly pursued mercantile and colonial interests in Asian and African lands, while Euro-American peoples turned their attention to the development of interior continental regions'.[29] Bentley's words illustrate the fact that this argument for 'global' as opposed to 'Atlantic' history in the nineteenth century is largely a reflection of the European and 'Euro-American' experience.[30] Trevor Burnard suggests that limited chronologies in some respects diminish Atlantic histories of the United States.[31] A similar point could be made for histories of the Americas. While trading and communication systems did become more integrated across the world during the nineteenth century, the immediate shaping context of some of these links remained the Atlantic, as the RMSPC itself demonstrates.

Since the Atlantic undoubtedly became integrated from the early modern period, I argue that the ocean retains relevance as a scale for analysis in the modern era. The RMSPC, which operated in the Atlantic but formed interconnections and alliances with businesses such as the Pacific Steam Navigation Company serving other parts of the world, is a powerful example of why in the nineteenth century we might continue to think at an Atlantic scale, whilst simultaneously recognizing that the Atlantic world intersected with a global beyond.

Burnard highlights that as a result of Atlantic history, '[w]e now pay much more attention than formerly to the sea and to the people who made their livings upon

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[29] Bentley, 'Sea and ocean basins as frameworks of historical analysis', p. 217.
[30] *Ibid*.
[31] Trevor Burnard, 'The British Atlantic', p. 128.

the sea. Pirates, sailors, and, above all, merchants played a prominent part in the British Atlantic world'.[32] Sailors, merchants (and to a lesser extent pirates) may now be more mainstream subjects of general historical enquiry, but it must be borne in mind that such peoples were the subjects of maritime research even before taking centre stage in Atlantic history. On the other hand, it might be argued that recent approaches to the study of maritime history have much in common with currents in Atlantic studies, and have brought new subjects to the forefront of maritime enquiry. David Killingray argues that:

> Although an established tradition of maritime history continues, mainly concerned with ships, commerce and naval strategy, some of the more recent work has been informed by new developments and ideas from social, economic and particularly cultural history. The agenda is now much broader and includes history from below as well as micro-histories that bring into focus the lives of sailors, women on board and those left on land, the processes of migration, and the activities of ports and of overseas communities.[33]

Some of these revised approaches to writing maritime history have been informed by feminist and postcolonial theory, in similar ways to the new imperial history.

In the work of Lisa Norling and Margaret Creighton, gender and, to a lesser extent race, have been strongly underlined as analytical categories for consideration in future maritime research. Investigating sailors' masculinities on the one hand, and women's involvement in seafaring on the other, Norling and Creighton expand focus beyond the sea and challenge a 'view of the ocean as a

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[32] *Ibid.*, p. 123.

[33] David Killingray, 'Introduction. Imperial seas: cultural exchange and commerce in the British Empire, 1780-1900', in *Maritime empires: British imperial maritime trade in the nineteenth century*, ed. by David Killingray, Margarette Lincoln and Nigel Rigby (Suffolk: The Boydell Press in association with the National Maritime Museum, 2004), pp. 1-12 (p. 1).

single-sex masculine space' inherited from nineteenth-century bourgeois ideas.[34]

Norling, in particular, makes an argument of geographical import, as she invites us to 'turn our attention away from the ship itself to the broader community of which the ship was just a part, and examine how the notion of separate gendered spheres structured the American whaling industry through both a particular set of female images and the substance of women's work'.[35] She argues that by integrating spaces on shore within maritime analysis, issues of gender can be brought into sharp focus. Just as 'the fruits of women's labour were often unacknowledged, devalued, or obscured' in the context of American whalefishery, so too has discursive interpretation of steamship modernities obscured the crucial role of women in providing coaling labour (see chapter six for further discussion). Norling's emphasis on including the shore concords with Elizabeth DeLoughrey's call to relate the sea to the land, a core idea of tidalectics. In this way, Norling unwittingly approaches a tidalectic vision of maritime history.

In a similar vein, Laura Tabili investigates questions of race and gender within the steamship context of the early twentieth century. Highlighting interconnections between these two categories, she writes that '[u]nderstanding how assumptions about gender structured ship-board relations can illuminate the connections between the racial division of labour and racial hierarchies aboard

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[34] Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling, 'Introduction', in *Iron men, wooden women: gender and seafaring in the Atlantic world, 1700-1920*, ed. by Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. vii-xiii (p. ix).
[35] Lisa Norling, 'Ahab's wife: women and the American whaling industry, 1820-1870', in *Iron men, wooden women: gender and seafaring in the Atlantic world, 1700-1920*, ed. by Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 70-91, (p. 71). Reginald Byron set an important precedent for work focusing on life on shore by underscoring the role played by fishermen's wives within maritime communities in Europe. See Reginald Byron, 'The maritime household in northern Europe', *Comparative studies in society and history*, 36:2 (1994), 271-292.

ship and the multiple inequalities, including class, race, gender, age, skill, and region, undergirding Britain's global empire'.[36] Tabili analyses black men's roles on board steamships and asserts that their 'assignment to shipboard women's work and their relegation to unskilled work were not parallel processes but part of the same process. The gendering of work and the gendering of skill mutually reinforced and were built into the racializing of work and the racializing of skill'.[37] Similarly, W. Jeffrey Bolster's research highlights the intersection of racialized and gendered constructions of maritime work in his analysis of what maritime employment and culture represented to American men of colour.[38] Recent work in maritime history highlighting categories of race and gender has set a strong precedent for my analysis of the RMSPC.[39] I seek here to bring these trends at sea into tidalectic relation with realities on Caribbean shores during the era of emancipation.

Alongside maritime and oceanic histories, research on steamship lines has provided important precedents for this thesis. Daniel Headrick's book *The tools of empire* (1981) has importantly shaped broad understanding of steamship services. By Headrick's analysis:

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[36] Laura Tabili, '"A maritime race": masculinity and the racial division of labour in British merchant ships, 1900-1939', in *Iron men, wooden women: gender and seafaring in the Atlantic world, 1700-1920*, ed. by Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 169-188, (p. 170).

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 173.

[38] W. Jeffrey Bolster, *Black jacks: African American seamen in the age of sail* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997); W. Jeffrey Bolster, '"Every inch a man": gender in the lives of African American seamen, 1800-1860', in *Iron men, wooden women: gender and seafaring in the Atlantic world, 1700-1920*, ed. by Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 138-168.

[39] Alan Gregor Cobley, 'That turbulent soil: seafarers, the "Black Atlantic," and Afro-Caribbean identity' in *Seascapes: maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges*, ed. by Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), pp. 153-168; Risa L. Faussette, 'Race, migration, and port-city radicalism: West Indian longshoremen and the politics of empire, 1880-1920', in *Seascapes: maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges*, ed. by Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), pp. 169-185.

In the penetration phase, steamers and the prophylactic use of quinine were the key technologies. The second phase – that of conquest – depended heavily on rapid-firing rifles and machine guns. In the phase of consolidation, the links that tied the colonies to Europe and promoted their economic exploitation included steamship lines, the Suez Canal, the submarine telegraph cables, and the colonial railroads.[40]

Such a perspective casts the RMSPC in the 'consolidation' phase and it is in these terms that James MacQueen's 'Plan' was originally promoted. By Headrick's analysis, in the consolidation phase, steam power was used in conjunction with other technological advances such as the telegraph and new medicines to enable exploration and communications, as well as to maintain imperial institutions. Through analysis of the steamship network at different places and from different perspectives, I seek to nuance this interpretation of the steamship as an imperial tool of consolidation. Such a view, I argue, is problematic in two respects. Firstly, it is a centrifugal argument that emphasizes above all what the steamship service signified to metropolitan 'centres', and ignores how such a service might have operated within or between colonies. Secondly, this view seems to be one that largely reflects the rhetoric of steamship promoters, such as MacQueen. This interpretation must be balanced against acknowledgement of the failures, alterations, and unexpected developments bound up in steamship operations.

Social relations have, at a macro-scale, been considered in discussion of steamships and empire. Freda Harcourt underlines the imperial context of steamship services in her monograph on P&O, *Flagships of imperialism.*

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[40] Daniel R. Headrick, *The tools of empire: technology and European imperialism in the nineteenth century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), p. 12; see also Robert Kubicek, 'British expansion, empire, and technological change', in *The Oxford history of the British Empire, volume III: The nineteenth century*, ed. by Andrew Porter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 247-269 (p. 248).

Harcourt points out that 'the history of P&O to 1867 is not merely a self-contained company history but a point of intersection of company history and imperial politics'.[41] Harcourt's assessment of political imperatives shaping the company in its early years is interwoven with economic analysis, as she charts P&O's involvement in the opium trade.[42] Yet Harcourt's focus on high politics necessarily centres her analysis of P&O on imperial elites and their diplomatic counterparts. Like Harcourt, I too seek to situate the RMSPC's history within a network of imperial relationships. Unlike Harcourt, my examination focuses predominantly on social and cultural themes. Alternatively, the RMSPC's trading involvement in South America has been documented, particularly by Robert Greenhill.[43] What has not hitherto been explored is what it meant for a British steamship company to be established in the Caribbean during the British post-emancipation period. I argue that the RMSPC's history was not only shaped by imperial networks, but also by geographies of slavery and freedom. By shifting geographical focus from Britain into the Atlantic and Caribbean spaces, I move, to the extent allowed by the sources, to consider colonial perspectives and experiences of the RMSPC.

My approach to writing steamship company history is closely aligned with the work of Frances Steel. Whereas Harcourt's work on P&O centres on political and economic questions, Steel has set a precedent in writing a social history of the steamship that considers micro-scale relations between non-elites. Steel stresses the importance of analysing 'places of passage' and in this way

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[41] Freda Harcourt, *Flagships of imperialism: the P&O Company and the politics of empire from its origins to 1867* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 1.
[42] *Ibid*. See chapter three in particular.
[43] Robert G. Greenhill, 'British shipping and Latin America 1840-1930: the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Exeter University, 1971).

examines the social meanings of steamship travel in the Pacific.[44] Steel implies, also, that steamship histories are simultaneously relevant on more than one scale, resonating on the scale of local and global, nation and empire.[45] In a similar fashion to the RMSPC, the Union Steam Ship Company of New Zealand was envisaged as a means of conveying 'benefits of "civilization" to the surrounding islands'.[46] Furthermore, Steel interrogates questions of gender and race in her analysis, and has asked, for example, what the presence of women passengers and crew members meant in terms of the social regulation of the steamship.[47] Steel reminds us that 'a ship of the line was one of the defining images of modernity'.[48] If this was so, I ask, what did the steamship signify about Caribbean and Atlantic modernities?

This postcolonial historical geography of the RMSPC is informed by Atlantic studies, which treats the ocean as a coherent unit of analysis. Thus the thesis adopts an Atlantic historical interest in the experiences of maritime peoples, and people of African, as well as European descent. Building on recent approaches to maritime history, I consider the categories of class, gender and race, and the way in which these shaped social and cultural relations at sea, as well as on shore. Furthermore, my analysis of oceanic and coastal relations is crucially framed with reference to the theory of 'tidalectics'.

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[44] Frances M. Steel, 'Oceania under steam: maritime culture, colonial histories 1870-1910s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Australian National University, 2008), p. 14.
[45] Steel, 'Oceania under steam', p. 26.
[46] *Ibid.*, p. 54.
[47] Frances Steel, 'Women, men and the Southern Octopus: shipboard gender relations in the age of steam, 1870s-1910s', *International journal of maritime history*, 20:2 (2008), 285-306 (p. 291); See also Frances Steel, 'Suva under steam: mobile men and a colonial port capital, 1880s-1910s', in *Moving subjects: gender, mobility, and intimacy in an age of global empire*, ed. by Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009), pp. 110-126.
[48] Steel, 'Oceania under steam', p. 35.

Tidalectics

I draw, in this thesis, on a theoretical intersection between 'tidalectics' and the 'mobilities turn', or 'new mobilities paradigm'. Tidalectics, I argue, is a useful framework through which to examine the oceanic histories of island spaces, and particularly Caribbean island spaces, since the genealogy of the idea is born out of Caribbean islands' experiences of colonisation and creolisation. Yet the concept of tidalectics risks remaining in some respects abstract, and it is for this reason that I insist upon a theoretical intersection with the 'new mobilities paradigm' to produce a tidalectic mobilities perspective. [49] The framework emerging from this enables us to materialize tidalectic histories, by providing a set of tools with which to examine oceanic flows and their corresponding 'moorings' in colonial and postcolonial island regions.[50]

In her book *Routes and roots: navigating Caribbean and Pacific island literatures*, Elizabeth DeLoughrey deploys a tidalectic perspective in order to frame a postcolonial analysis of Caribbean and Pacific island literatures. [51] DeLoughrey develops 'tidalectics' by drawing and building upon the term as invoked by Caribbean poet and historian Kamau Brathwaite. Brathwaite's adjectival use of the word implies that tidalectics is a form of experience contrasting with, and even oppositional to Western experience. Yet Brathwaite

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[49] Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm', *Environment and planning A*, 38:2 (2006), 207-226.
[50] Keith Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings', *Mobilities*, 1:1 (2006), 1-22.
[51] DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots*, p. 4.

refrains from explicitly theorizing the term, retaining discussion within the realm of the poetic as he ponders:

> *What is the origin of the Caribbean? How do we come from? Where do we come from? And why are we as we are? Why are we so leaderless, so fragmented, so perpetually caught up with the notion of hope and still at the same time Sisyphean? Why is our psychology not dialectical – successfully dialectical – in the way that Western philosophy has assumed people's lives should be, but **tidalectic**, like our grandmother's – our nanna's – action, like the movement of the ocean she's walking on, coming from one continent/ continuum, touching another, and then receding ('reading') from the island(s) into the perhaps creative chaos of the(ir) future...[52]*

Brathwaite's discussion of tidalectics, suggestive in its emphases on oceanic rhythms and an alternative non-Western experience, remains highly ambiguous though politically charged. Elsewhere, Brathwaite writes of 'rhythmic tidalectics' as 'the islands' own sound, not taken or borrowed from no where else'.[53] Paul Naylor notes how Brathwaite explained tidalectics in relation to his creative writing, in an interview at the University of Memphis. Here, Brathwaite said, '[t]he one that rules me more than others is the rejection of the notion of dialectic, which is three – the resolution in the third. Now I go for a concept I call "tide-alectic" which is the ripple and the two tide movement'.[54] As alternatively articulated by Brathwaite's sister, Mary Morgan, tidalectics is 'a way of interpreting our life and history as sea change, the ebb and flow of sea movement'.[55] I argue that moving beyond the metaphorical to human and material 'sea movement', and particularly examining these sea movements with reference to the new mobilities paradigm, allows for a productive tidalectic

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[52] Brathwaite, *conVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey*, p. 34. Emphasis in original.

[53] Kamau Brathwaite, *Barbajan poems* (New York: Savacou, 1994), pp. 118-120.

[54] Paul Naylor, *Poetic investigations: singing the holes in history* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1999), p. 145.

[55] Maru Morgan, 'Highway to vision: the sea our nexus' in *Questioning creole: creolisation discourses in Caribbean culture*, ed. by Verene A. Shepherd and Glen L. Richards (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2002), pp. 3-11 (p. 4).

reading of maritime pasts that, in line with Brathwaite's formulation, does not lose sight of the political.

DeLoughrey describes tidalectics as a 'methodological tool that foregrounds how a dynamic model of geography can elucidate island history and cultural production'.[56] Without explaining the tidalectic methodology in any great detail, DeLoughrey notes that a combination of tidalectics and 'etak', a Pacific wayfinding system, foregrounds 'maritime vessels' and 'their contributions to the formation of island history', as well as the 'island seascape'.[57] DeLoughrey deploys the twinned concepts throughout the monograph to facilitate comparative readings of Caribbean and Pacific island literatures, and refers to cyclical ocean-borne relationships between apparently oppositional terms as tidalectic relations. [58] In particular, DeLoughrey stresses the tidalectic relationship between the land and the sea. In line with DeLoughrey, this thesis draws upon tidalectics to develop geographical elements of the idea underscored but under-developed in DeLoughrey's work. I read tidalectics less as a methodology than a framework or perspective through which to analyse social and cultural interactions. In contrast to DeLoughrey, I utilize theories of mobilities in order to materialize and substantiate the tidalectic framework.

Crucially, the idea of tidalectics has emerged from Caribbean historical experience and sensitivity to processes of creolisation. Brathwaite's book, *Contradictory omens: cultural diversity and integration in the Caribbean*, has

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[56] DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots*, p. 2.
[57] *Ibid*., p. 3.
[58] For example, DeLoughrey writes of the tidalectic relationship between routes and roots, between settlement and migration, and between the land and the sea. See DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots*, pp. 45-48.

constituted a major theoretical influence on interpretations of Caribbean culture and society, and creolisation is an idea engaged with here, particularly in analysis of the steamship (see chapter five). Brathwaite argues that creolisation is a dynamic cultural process that takes place 'within a continuum of space and time', and interprets creolisation as comprised of two discrete processes: acculturation and interculturation.[59] Whereas the former is a forced 'yoking' of African to European culture, the latter is a spontaneous and reciprocal dynamic that takes place in Caribbean spaces. O. Nigel Bolland's revision of Brathwaite's creolisation theory in the paper 'Creolisation and creole Societies: a cultural nationalist view of Caribbean social history', stresses dialectic elements within the process. Bolland suggests that 'our understanding of creolisation as a central cultural process of Caribbean history should lead to a reconceptualisation of the nature of colonialism and colonial societies, as social forces and social systems that are *characterised by conflicts and contradictions and that consequently give rise to their own transformation*'.[60] For Bolland, creolisation is 'a process of *contention* between people who are members of social formations and carriers of cultures'.[61] It is this revised definition of the process that I foreground in this thesis. At the same time, I seek to move from Bolland's dialectic emphasis to a tidalectic interpretation, by specifically interrogating how processes of creolisation may have related to maritime spaces and the dynamic between the sea and the shore, and by allowing for and revealing unresolved elements in socio-cultural exchange, at times related to race and gender.

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[59] Edward Brathwaite, *Contradictory omens: cultural diversity and integration in the Caribbean* (Mona: Savacou, 1974), pp. 5-6.

[60] O. Nigel Bolland, 'Creolisation and creole societies: a cultural nationalist view of Caribbean social history', in *Questioning creole: creolisation discourses in Caribbean culture*, ed. by Verene A. Shepherd and Glen L. Richards (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2002), pp. 15-46 (p. 19). Emphasis added.

[61] *Ibid*., p. 38. Emphasis in original.

Tidalectic analyses of coastal spaces can draw usefully, I suggest, on Doreen Massey's 'extroverted' sense of place.[62] Massey invites us to conceive of space as a 'meeting up of histories' and in this way challenges notions of place as bounded and static.[63] Massey's description of place is apt, for example, for thinking about the Caribbean. One might read the following description of place as a description of the islands in the nineteenth century:

> Their 'local uniqueness' is always already a product of wider contacts; the local is always already a product in part of 'global' forces, where global in this context refers not necessarily to the planetary scale, but to the geographical beyond, the world beyond the place itself.[64]

This is an approach to place substantiated by the mobilities turn. As Cresswell argues, 'places are never complete, finished or bounded but are always becoming – in process'.[65] It is by looking to the 'beyond' of the Atlantic, as well as to the internal, that I approach the examination of Caribbean island spaces. Equally, I build on Pedro Welch's invitation that we examine coastal spaces as important sites of enquiry.[66] Tracing maritime networks coursing through coastal spaces, I suggest, emphasizes extroversion, and highlights relations between the local and the global.

Two of DeLoughrey's elaborations on the tidalectic perspective are developed here. Firstly, DeLoughrey uses tidalectics as a way of developing postcolonial readings. As already indicated, my analysis, which treats metropolitan and

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[62] Doreen Massey, *Space, place and gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 154-5.
[63] Doreen Massey, *For space* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 4.
[64] Doreen Massey, 'Places and their pasts', *History workshop journal*, 39 (1995), 182-192 (p. 186).
[65] Tim Cresswell, 'Introduction: theorizing place', in *Mobilizing place, placing mobility: the politics of representation in a globalized world*, ed. by Ginette Verstraete and Tim Cresswell (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002), pp. 11-31 (p. 20).
[66] Pedro Welch, *Slave society in the city: Bridgetown, Barbados 1680-1834* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2003), p. 52.

colonial spaces in a unified analytical framework, and which seeks to challenge the 'ideological legacies and presences of imperialism', is a postcolonial examination of the RMSPC, in the manner of new imperial geography. [67] Secondly, DeLoughrey underscores tidalectics as an '"alter/native" historiography to linear models of colonial progress'. [68] This is because the tidalectic contrasts with Hegel's dialectic, and offers alternative cyclical 'epistemologies to western colonialism and its linear and materialist biases'. [69] As a tidalectic historical geography, this thesis presents an alternative to existing company histories organized along broadly chronological lines. [70] Most histories of the RMSPC are structured in such a way as to present an over-arching narrative of business growth, turmoil, consolidation, and (in the twentieth century) decline. This thesis, by contrast, is organized in geographical terms, moving between the Company's places at different scales. I do not seek to present a linear narrative of an imperial project envisaged by MacQueen, implemented, and subsequently consolidated. Instead I interrogate the RMSPC's network and its effect on different places and peoples, including those in the Caribbean.

In short, I develop a tidalectic perspective in this thesis for geographical analysis in three key ways. Firstly, I draw on a tidalectic sensitivity to the relationship between the sea and the land, and its role in shaping island histories. Tidalectics, I insist, invites recognition of the 'extroverted' nature of island spaces, and thus

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[67] Sidaway, 'Postcolonial geographies', p. 13.
[68] DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots*, p. 2 .
[69] *Ibid*.
[70] See chapter two for further discussion of company histories.

underscores the importance of these spaces to world history.[71] Secondly, I follow

the tidalectic impulse to construct postcolonial 'alter/native' histories of island

spaces.[72] Thirdly, like DeLoughrey, I seek to resist writing linear narratives of

colonial progress in this account of the RMSPC. Whereas in DeLoughrey's

usage, tidalectics remains a somewhat abstracted notion, I argue that the new

mobilities paradigm helps us to substantiate and materialize the 'worldliness of

islands'.[73] The new mobilities paradigm provides a language and approach

through which to analyse the relationship between the sea and the (is)land, and

between routes and roots. In contrast to DeLoughrey, I therefore draw on

tidalectics in conjunction with the 'new mobilities paradigm' in a tidalectic

mobilities approach.

Mobilities

By Tim Cresswell's definition, mobility is 'the entanglement of movement,

representation and practice'.[74] The 'new mobilities paradigm' invites analysis of

diverse forms of material and human movement, as well as the 'moorings' that

enable these flows.[75] A mobilities perspective seeks to challenge notions of

rooted authenticity ('sedentarist metaphysics') on the one hand, and uncritical

celebrations of nomadism on the other.[76] As Keith Hannam, Mimi Sheller and

John Urry highlight, it entails analysis of the relationship between power,

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[71] Massey, *Space, place and gender*, pp. 154-5.
[72] DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots*, p. 2.
[73] *Ibid*.
[74] Tim Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', *Environment and planning D: society and space*, 28:1 (2010), 17-31, (p. 19).
[75] Hannam, Mimi and Urry, 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings'.
[76] Cresswell, 'Introduction: theorizing place'.

movement, stasis and representations of mobility.[77] Stemming from a recognition

of the centrality of mobilities in the twenty-first century, the new mobilities

paradigm invites analyses of new and historical forms of global movement. The

broad term 'mobilities' encompasses various types of movement under

discussion in this thesis – material and human, mobilities as communication, as

well as travel and tourism. A mobilities perspective allows for an analysis which

substantiates, and engages reflexivity about tidalectic island interconnections.[78]

The mobilities paradigm challenges assumptions of scale, questioning terms such

as 'local/global'.[79] This approach informs my tracing of processes at the scale of

the island, region, coaling station and ship. For Cresswell, it is meaning that

connects mobilities at different scales.[80] In addition to representations tying

mobilities at different scales, I suggest here that material mobilities and

immobilities also existed in networked connection to each other. It was through

movements at the scale of the ship that islands and regions were connected, and

these shipping movements were in turn enabled by infrastructural arrangements

such as the coaling station.

While research on mobilities has thus far focused more on contemporary than

earlier periods, as Tim Cresswell argues, 'new mobilities' cannot be analysed

without some historical understanding.[81] It must be recognized also that hitherto,

mobilities theory has been used predominantly to interrogate Western

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[77] Hannam, Sheller and Urry 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings', pp. 3-4.
[78] Sheller and Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm'; Hannam, Sheller, and Urry, 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings'; Tim Cresswell, *On the move: mobility in the modern western world* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), pp. ix-x.
[79] Sheller and Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm', p. 209.
[80] Cresswell, *On the move*, p. 6.
[81] Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', p. 29.

experiences. Interlinking the paradigm with tidalectics constitutes a move towards the examination of mobilities in non-Western island spaces. Steamship services (and particularly large government-funded lines such as the RMSPC) enabled institutionalized patterns of movement shaped by imperial and colonial power relations. In light of the mobilities paradigm, appropriate stresses upon processes of 'mobility, fluidity, or liquidity' go hand in hand with examination of the opposite processes of fixity and exclusion.[82] I adopt Cresswell's insistence that we consider both material movements and representations of movements.[83] Whilst mobilities have been implicitly questioned in research on slavery and freedom, the analysis can be expanded through dual interrogation of movements and their meanings in slave and post-slave societies. In other words, a mobilities approach prompts further questions about island influences and colonial and imperial interconnections. Such themes are further contextualized by a tidalectic perspective.

Cresswell's notion of 'constellations of mobility' contributes to my development within the thesis of understanding of slavery, freedom and maritime movements.[84] In his paper, 'Towards a politics of mobility', Cresswell outlines six constituent parts of mobility.[85] The first of these is motive force, which causes a person or thing to move. The second is velocity, rhythm is a third important factor in mobility, and route is a fourth element in the equation. The experience of mobility, or what it feels like, is a fifth aspect. Finally friction, which slows down or causes movement to stop, is the sixth and final facet of

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[82] Sheller and Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm', p. 210.
[83] Cresswell, *On the move*, p. 4.
[84] Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', p. 17.
[85] *Ibid*.

mobility. Cresswell argues that these different elements combine to create 'constellations of mobility' at particular times.[86] Engaging Cresswell's argument, it is possible to consider a particular post-emancipation constellation of mobilility, in which 'physical movement, representations, and mobile practices' were combined in distinctive ways in response and in relation to the preceding era of slavery.[87] In adding to the debate a focus on particular practices characterised by post-emancipation concerns, I hope also to contribute to the theorising of 'mobilities' in the 'new mobilities paradigm'.

In one sense, discussion of 'mobilities' has been a long-standing though latent theme in post-emancipation historiography, particularly through scholars' focus on the so-called 'flight' from the estates and withdrawal of enslaved workers from plantation spaces.[88] Such analyses centre on the 'empirical reality' of human mobility, or the observable fact of human displacement.[89] For the formerly enslaved, rights over their own movements were an important meaning of freedom. For example, historian Verene Shepherd stresses that mobility was a key means through which low income women expressed agency in the post-slavery Anglophone Caribbean.[90] Equally, Bolland highlights that, '[f]reedom of movement was vital, for its symbolic value and also because former slaves sought to be reunited with family members and friends'.[91] The struggle to control mobility in the post-emancipation Caribbean reflected conflicting definitions of

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[86] *Ibid.*

[87] *Ibid.*, p.27.

[88] See Douglas Hall, 'The flight from the estates reconsidered: the British West Indies, 1838-42', in *Caribbean freedom: society and economy from emancipation to the present*, ed. by Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1993), pp. 55-63.

[89] Cresswell, *On the move*, p. 3.

[90] See Verene A. Shepherd, *I want to disturb my neighbour: lectures on slavery, emancipation and postcolonial Jamaica* (Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2007), p. 157.

[91] O. Nigel Bolland, *The politics of labour in the British Caribbean: the social origins of authoritarianism and democracy in the labour movement* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2001), p. 25.

freedom held by planters and the formerly enslaved. Since the presence or absence of the formerly enslaved on the estates, as well as the rhythms with which they laboured were contested areas over which the planter class struggled to retain control, the mobility of labouring bodies was an important dynamic in the post-emancipation era. As Mimi Sheller argues with reference to the Caribbean, '[g]reater attention to bodies and their (im)mobilities can help to show the intertwining of circuits of production and consumption with processes of gendering, racialization, and domination'.[92] Developing Sheller's important precedent, I examine mobilities in a Caribbean context. Thus I draw on the new mobilities paradigm in this thesis to interrogate the material, embodied and represented movements of the post-emancipation era, alongside the 'moorings' associated with the RMSPC's service.[93] By examining the flows and stasis associated with the company, in different places and operating at various scales, I seek also to substantiate the tidalectic relationship between the sea and the shore and its effects, and to materialize extroverted island connections as they stretched out across oceanic space. In order to do so, I combine insights from tidalectics and the new mobilities paradigm.

Tidalectic mobilities

A combination of tidalectics and mobilities − tidalectic mobilities − provides a framework that allows for regionalizing mobilities and materializing tidalectics.

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[92] Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: from Arawaks to zombies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 27.
[93] Hannam, Sheller and Urry 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings'.

In this way, tidalectic mobilites facilitate an interrogation of islands' maritime pasts, whilst relating these maritime pasts to broader socio-cultural contexts.

Brathwaite's discussion of tidalectics states that there is a '*psychology*' holding Caribbean peoples back and keeping them '*fragmented*'.[94] Brathwaite's use of the term is thus somewhat pessimistic, as it suggests that a tidalectic mindset is limiting or destructive. At the same time, Brathwaite's question: '[*w*]*hy are we so leaderless, so fragmented*', implies a critique of colonial power relations, and points to Caribbean experiences having belied Western assumptions of how '*people's lives should b*e'.[95] Yet Brathwaite subsequently develops this pessimism into a source of potential hope by indicating that '*nanna's* […] *action*', the '*movement of the ocean*', might lead to a '*creative*' (albeit chaotically creative) future.[96]

Like Brathwaite, DeLoughrey also engages with tidalectics in terms of a Caribbean imaginary or outlook. Although she foregrounds a maritime world more explicitly than Brathwaite (who invokes an oceanic, but not *necessarily* maritime imaginary), DeLoughrey's focus is upon vessels and oceanic spaces as represented in literature. Her argument seems to invite an additional step that will seek to account historically and materially for the kind of archipelagic imaginary that she describes. After all, if oceanic relations have produced particular kinds of cultural expression, as Brathwaite and DeLoughrey's work suggests, the associated reasons for this outlook, and for the form this cultural output takes, remain to be interrogated. In this thesis, I seek to take a materializing step.

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[94] Brathwaite, *conVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey*, p. 34. Emphasis in original.
[95] *Ibid*. Emphasis in original.
[96] *Ibid*. Emphasis in original.

Materializing tidalectics requires recognition of the material maritime ties and networks between places. Instead of a focus on a Caribbean imaginary, materializing tidalectics underscores a set of regional oceanic mobilities, including (but not limited to) the movement of people, goods, and natural elements. This regional account of mobilities lends further nuance to our understanding of the historical geographies of the post-emancipation Caribbean. My particular focus in this thesis highlights a material maritime infrastructure and its associated mobilities. Broadly speaking, however, a tidalectic mobilities framework underscores the role of the ocean not as a metaphorical or symbolic space, as in Brathwaite's or DeLoughrey's account, but rather as a material space marked by historical processes.

In contrast to Brathwaite's use of the term tidalectics, I focus on tidalectics as '*the movement* [in] *the ocean',* which involves not only mobilities, but also a creolising turn or re-turn. In effect, I ask: what kinds of historical processes produce tidalectic places? To address this question, I analyse materialized steamship connections, and argue that by materializing oceanic mobilities, we can further account for the specificities of Caribbean experiences, and can better address why these have been different from the way that *'Western philosophy has assumed people's lives should be'*.[97] As I propose to illustrate, a tidalectic mobilities framework helps to provide an historical context for an alternative and resisting world view, and provides a material counterpart to an archipelagic

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[97] *Ibid*. Emphasis in original.

imaginary. Materializing tidalectic mobilities enables a rooting of Caribbean people's experiences through the history and context of Caribbean routes.

While Brathwaite's account of tidalectics seems implicitly sensitive to colonial power relations, materializing tidalectics does not, I suggest, detract from this. Rather, it is precisely by materializing tidalectics that colonial power relations become more apparent or might more clearly be seen in tidal play. At the same time, while they remain metaphorical, oceanic flows can potentially seem rather benign. However, as in this thesis, when a particular steamship company is examined, along with its surrounding discourse and rationale, the specific kinds of power relations coursing through the Company become evident. I would therefore argue that substantiating tidalectics does not erase, but enables the highlighting of distended power relations.

Similarly, while it is clear that oceanic flows brought cultures into contact within the region, the emphasis has until recently mainly concerned cultural contact on land, principally on the plantation. I argue in this thesis that processes of creolisation occurred in maritime spaces. As on the plantation, maritime creolisation was a more complicated process than a straightforward mixing of cultures. By detailing oceanic mobilities through a tidalectic mobilities framework, I would suggest that the kinds of cultural contests inherent in Bolland's definition of creolisation begin to emerge (see for example chapter six). [98] Moreover, the tidalectic aspect of tidalectic mobilities lends specific

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[98] Bolland, 'Creolisation and creole societies', p. 38.

regional sensitivity to analysis of these maritime processes, and helps to relate contests at sea to those on island shores.

Further, in this thesis, I consider ships, routes, coaling stations and timetables in the expanded Caribbean in order to analyse a particular set of movements and frictions, rhythms and representations within the region. In this respect, I am examining a regional 'constellation of mobility', rather than tracing individual mobilities, or making universal claims for the maritime mobilities discussed.[99] The steamship mobilities under consideration in this thesis were constructed in the Caribbean as part of a modern project deemed necessary in the aftermath of abolition. This was, then, a time of transition in the region's historical geographies. I focus on a set of oceanic mobilities within the Caribbean region and seek to contribute to our understanding of the Caribbean during this crucial time of transition from slavery to freedom, by widening spatial focus beyond inland spaces to include important coastal and maritime sites of enquiry. I contend that materializing tidalectics affords recognition of a regional experience that is specific to the Caribbean and creolised maritime spaces. Thus even if tidalectics becomes a paradigm that is subsequently used to write about other island regions, the process of tracing specifically Caribbean tidalectic mobilities will allow for a distinction between the Caribbean and other archiplagoes. Indeed, even while tidalectics may float to other regions, tidalectic mobilities can account for difference as well as sameness.

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[99] Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', p. 17.

Tidalectic mobilities comprise one framework through which we might interrogate the historical geographies of colonial and postcolonial archipelagoes. It represents an approach to empire that recognizes connections and journeys between places, but is distinct from the personal or biographical approach that has animated many networked approaches to empire. The postcolonial and creolisation undercurrents that animate tidalectics lend to mobilities a perspective that is particularly appropriate for examining non-Western places, while mobilities help to materially ground a tidalectic approach.

Tidalectic mobilities, I would argue, demand the study of mobilities through a postcolonial framework, particularly through a focus on island regions. In line with Brathwaite's critical reflection, tidalectic mobilities imply a recognition of power relations in colonial and postcolonial contexts, with all their complexities and resistances. In contrast to work focusing on late-twentieth, and early twenty-first century mobilities, tidalectic mobilities can contribute to the agenda of historicizing Caribbean mobilities, by examining past material and embodied mobilities in the region, on ship and on shore.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed postcolonial approaches to writing the histories and geographies of empire, as manifested in 'new' or 'critical' imperial studies. I have also examined recent approaches to writing Atlantic and maritime histories, as well as the two key theoretical frameworks that inform this thesis: tidalectics and the mobilities turn, or new mobilities paradigm. Finally, I have outlined the

tidalectic mobilities framework that informs this research. By drawing on these theories and important precedents in the literature, I seek, in this thesis, to develop a nuanced postcolonial historical geography of a steamship company. I understand a postcolonial historical geography to be firstly, one that examines 'metropolitan' and 'colonial' spaces in a unified framework, in this case through a networked approach to empire. Secondly, I consider that a postcolonial historical geography critiques imperial representations and practices. Thirdly, I envisage a postcolonial historical geography as examining multiple subjectivities and experiences of empire. Tidalectics, which interprets island histories as interplays between the land and the sea, is a key means through which I construct this postcolonial approach, and I seek to materialize this historical geography of the RMSPC by engaging with the new mobilities paradigm to focus on a particular maritime 'constellation' within a tidalectic mobilities approach.[100] By writing a tidalectic and mobile historical geography of the Company, I interrogate how the meanings of steamship mobilities and immobilities intersected with questions of slavery and freedom in the Caribbean. I also propose to contribute to historical geography through a combined theorisation. This combined framework tests the analytical possibility that an intersection between mobilities and tidalectics might allow us to draw out the creolising turn involved in maritime connections. In the next chapter, I will explain what the RMSPC was, and consider the context in which the Company began operations, namely, the post-emancipation Caribbean.

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[100] *Ibid*.

Chapter two

The politics of mobility in the post-emancipation Caribbean[1]

The RMSPC commenced operations in the Caribbean during the British post-emancipation period, and in this chapter, I sketch out the historical contexts that shaped the Company's operations. During much of the nineteenth century, slave and post-slave societies coexisted in the Caribbean. As Bridget Brereton and Kevin Yelvington point out, the Maroons of Jamaica and Suriname won emancipation and a measure of independence as early as the 1730s and 1760s.[2] Yet emancipation at the island scale only became a reality at the end of the eighteenth century. A successful slave revolt in 1791 on the island of Saint Domingue brought the region's first revolutionary emancipation, resulting in Haitian independence in 1804. Although Saint Domingue had been the world's largest sugar producer, production in Haiti rapidly declined within a decade of independence.[3] Following this early example of emancipation from below, the French Assembly abolished slavery and the slave trade in Guadeloupe in 1794, but re-established slavery on this island in 1802.[4] British emancipation was ushered in some three decades later, with the abolition of slavery in 1834, and

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[1] The title of this chapter refers to Tim Cresswell's recent work on mobility. See Tim Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', *Environment and planning D: society and space*, 28:1 (2010), 17-31.

[2] Bridget Brereton and Kevin Yelvington, 'Introduction: the promise of emancipation', in *The colonial Caribbean in transition: essays on postemancipation social and cultural history*, ed. by Bridget Brereton and Kevin Yelvington (Barbados: The Press University of the West Indies, 1999), pp. 1-25, (p. 3).

[3] Herbert Klein and Ben Vinson III, *African slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 85-86.

[4] *Ibid*., pp. 98-99. This also affected French Guiana. Martinique, on the other hand, was temporarily under British control and was thus unaffected by these French imperial measures.

the end of the British apprenticeship period in 1838.[5] A decade later still, slavery was abolished on the French and Danish Caribbean islands in 1848.[6] Although the British, French and Danish islands were formally post-slave societies by mid-century, it was only in 1886 that enslaved peoples in Cuba gained their freedom. Thus emancipation in the Caribbean had a complex geography. This was partly because British West Indian islands experienced a different chronology of emancipation from the French, Spanish, Dutch and Danish colonies. Yet even within individual imperial regimes, the experience of emancipation varied depending on the state of sugar production on a given island, the availability of uncultivated land, and the relative attraction of regional migration.

As well as manifesting a complex geography, the post-emancipation Caribbean's 'constellation of mobility' was characterised by contest.[7] As I will argue here, mobility, and the politics of mobility were central issues in negotiating the meaning of freedom. The withdrawal of a significant proportion of the labour force from plantations to independent villages and to urban centres was of crucial concern in this period. It was, in fact, the subject of conflicting 'narratives about mobility', as the formerly enslaved interpreted control over their location as a core meaning of freedom, while planters constructed a narrative of economic crisis on the basis of these same movements.[8] Accompanying this planter discourse of labour crisis, a series of post-emancipation practices sought to tie newly emancipated labourers to plantation spaces, through systems of debt

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[5] Antigua skipped the apprenticeship period. See Douglas Hall, *Five of the Leewards 1834-1870: the major problems of the post-emancipation period in Antigua, Barbuda, Montserrat, Nevis and St Kitts* (Barbados: Caribbean Universities Press, 1971), p. 23.
[6] In the case of the Danish West Indies, emancipation resulted from slave rebellion.
[7] Cresswell defines these as particular combinations of movements, narratives about mobility and mobile practices. See Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', p. 17.
[8] *Ibid.*

peonage, restrictions placed on migration, and the organized importation of indentured workers. Yet despite these efforts to immobilise labour, the post-emancipation period was marked by internal and inter-island migration. The formerly enslaved deployed mobile practices, seeking out the best terms of employment in different spaces, and where required, took the routes of seasonal and temporary employment to better establish land-based roots.[9] Of particular significance to this research was the wave of Caribbean migrants who sought employment constructing the Panama Canal between the 1880s and 1914.[10] Although the formerly enslaved did not necessarily equate freedom with movement, they nevertheless asserted a right to determine their own location. It was in this context of social and economic dynamism and, in many cases, turmoil, that the RMSPC commenced operations in the region (see figures 2.1 and 2.2 for the RMSPC's area of operations). Thus the post-emancipation period ushered in reconfigured internal and inter-island mobilities, and steamship flows brought new kinds of maritime movements into relation with this already dynamic regional context.

In analysis of the RMSPC's operations, I examine ports-of-call which fall outside standard definitions or maps of the Caribbean. In this respect, I adopt Peter Hulme's postcolonial impulse to challenge imperial geo-historical categories.[11] Thus in *Colonial encounters: Europe and the native Caribbean,*

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[9] Karen F. Olwig, 'Cultural complexity after freedom: Nevis and beyond', in *Small islands, large questions: society, culture and resistance in the post-emancipation Caribbean*, ed. by Karen Fog Olwig (London: Frank Cass, 1995), pp. 100-121 (p.101).

[10] Verene A. Shepherd, *I want to disturb my neighbour: lectures on slavery, emancipation and postcolonial Jamaica* (Jamaica: Ian Randle, 2007), p. 164.

[11] Peter Hulme, 'Writing the other America: comparative approaches to Caribbean and Latin American literature', paper presented at the Postcolonial Research Group, Royal Holloway, 28/03/08. Other examples could be drawn of scholarship that seeks to re-map the Caribbean. Gail Saunders, for example, argues for the inclusion of the Bahamas within historiography of the West

1492-1797, Hulme defines the Caribbean as Immanuel Wallerstein's '"the extended Caribbean", a coastal and insular region that stretched from what is now southern Virginia in the USA to the most eastern part of Brazil'.[12] The Caribbean is 'defined ecologically or meteorologically, rather than astronomically, as say, the most suitable area for growing the "tropical" crops of cotton, tobacco and sugar'.[13] Elsewhere, Hulme refers to an 'expanded' Caribbean similarly mapped.[14] There are weaknesses to the 'expanded Caribbean' definition, in that the concept necessarily obscures stark topographical, environmental and demographic contrasts between even neighbouring Caribbean islands. Yet the RMSPC extended its service to the 'expanded' Caribbean and beyond, so although I do not adopt Hulme's expanded Caribbean geographical boundaries, I draw on his precedent by examining an area broader than that traditionally defined as the Caribbean.

Indies in Gail Saunders, *Bahamian society after emancipation* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2003), p. xiii.
[12] Peter Hulme, *Colonial encounters: Europe and the native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), p.4.
[13] *Ibid.*, p. 5.
[14] Hulme, 'Writing the other America', p. 13.
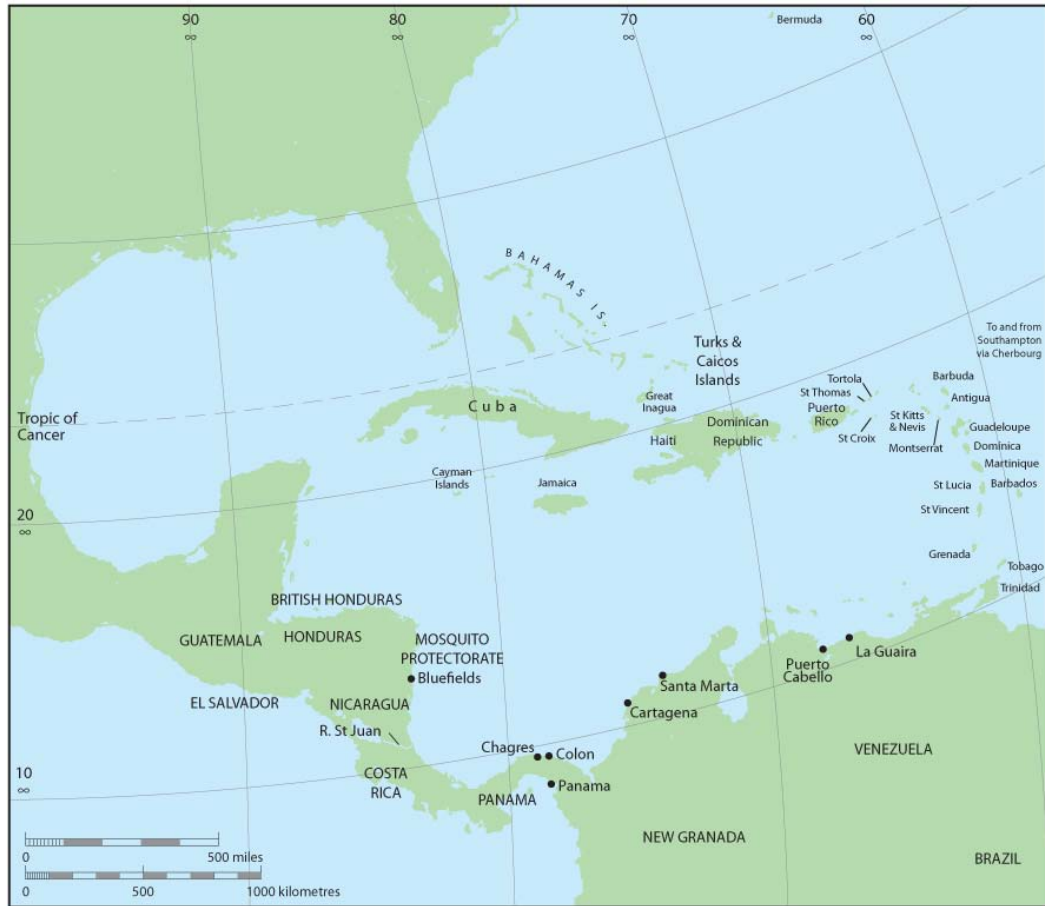
Figure 2.1 The Caribbean and Central America in 1842.

Figure 2.2 The Atlantic, the RMSPC's region of operations.

I argue here that the politics of mobilities were contested in the post-emancipation expanded Caribbean, and that the RMSPC constructed a series of maritime mobilities in an already dynamic regional context. To advance this

position, I explore, firstly, the socio-political conflicts over the meaning of freedom that shaped post-emancipation societies. Secondly, I turn to the economic trends that lay behind post-emancipation mobilities and pre-emancipation experiences in the RMSPC's ports-of-call. Finally, I sketch a chronology of the RMSPC and the intentions behind the service, contextualizing this discussion with reference to existing research on the Company.

Withdrawal from the estates

A central strand of post-emancipation conflict centred around planters' fears that the formerly enslaved would refuse to work on the plantations, or might refuse to work at a price that suited planters' interests. Although this varied by island, in the aftermath of abolition, a significant proportion of the formerly enslaved withdrew from the estates.[15] As Michael Craton highlights, '[e]xcept in the few areas where they were able to command satisfactory wages and conditions, the ex-slaves fled the plantations for the life of full-time peasants if they could'.[16] Douglas Hall's influential essay, 'The flight from the estates reconsidered', argues that the newly-emancipated withdrew from the estates because of the 'inequities of early "freedom"'.[17] Hall therefore emphasizes factors which served to push workers away from the estates. Alternatively, interpretations stressing

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[15] The land to labour ratio has been used as one framework through which to explain the varying movements of the formerly enslaved on different islands. In Guiana, Trinidad, Dominica and St Lucia, there were early indicators of a labour shortage prior to emancipation, whereas Barbados, Antigua and St Kitt's were islands of a small size with dense populations. See Woodville Marshall, 'The post-slavery labour problem revisited', in *Slavery, freedom and gender: the dynamics of Caribbean society*, ed. by Brian Moore, B. W. Higman, Carl Campbell and Patrick Bryan (Kingston: University of the West Indies Press, 2001), pp. 115-132 (p.122).

[16] Michael Craton, *Empire, enslavement and freedom in the Caribbean* (Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers, 1997), p. 422.

[17] Douglas Hall, 'The flight from the estates reconsidered: the British West Indies, 1838-42', in *Caribbean freedom: society and economy from emancipation to the present*, ed. by Hilary Beckles and Verene Shepherd (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1993), pp. 55-63 (pp. 62-3).

pull factors argue that the formerly enslaved had a longstanding hatred of the plantation due to their experiences of slavery.[18] As Woodville Marshall suggests, however, push and pull factors may have forcefully combined:

> In other words, while there is probably no simple linear progression from proto-peasant activity in slavery to full peasant existence in full emancipation, the possibility does exist that the desire for economic activity and a lifestyle free from constant hassle and conferring full choice over the allocation of labour time may have impelled those who could afford to make the conversion to do precisely that as soon as full emancipation provided options in residence and employment. Others not so well placed may have followed suit when cash and land became available to them.[19]

Thus one of the ways in which the formerly enslaved exercised their new-found freedom was through internal mobility: moving away from estates to land that they could independently cultivate. That being said, freedom did not simply mean freedom to move. The era of slavery had, after all, been characterised by forced displacements through the international slave trade, through the separation of family members as property to be sold, and through practices of hiring out labour. Thus slavery had involved enforced displacement as well as the tying of labourers to land. Correspondingly, after emancipation, formerly enslaved people exercised their freedom to move, but also to put down roots in a location of their choice.

Thus withdrawal from the estates led to the growth of independent villages and agricultural production away from plantations. The Jamaican experience was particularly significant to the British imperial context, since in 1834, twenty-four per cent of the region's enslaved peoples lived on that island.[20] During the slave

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[18] Marshall, 'The post-slavery labour problem revisited', p.117.

[19] *Ibid.*, p.127.

[20] B. W. Higman, 'Jamaican port towns in the early nineteenth century', in *Atlantic port cities: economy, culture, and society in the Atlantic world, 1650-1850*, ed. by Franklin W. Knight and Peggy K. Liss (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1991), pp. 117-148 (p. 120).

era in Jamaica, the norm was for estate labourers to combine plantation work with small-scale growing on provision grounds. Surplus provision ground produce was transported, mostly overland, to port towns, or to interior marketplaces, while penkeepers sold their livestock to plantations or for meat in towns. [21] In the post-emancipation period, by contrast, withdrawal from the estates led to an increase in the freehold farming of crops for export.[22] In fact, Hall classifies the agricultural population in post-emancipation Jamaica in three groups: small farmers, peasants, and labourers. Small farmers were those who owned and worked freeholds, and this group in particular produced food for local markets. Labourers continued to work on the estates, and rented provision grounds from estate owners. Peasants were between the two groups, in that they owned a small plot of land but also occasionally worked on the estates. [23] Peasants and labourers offered their labour irregularly, and planters, with a seasonal need for workers, offered irregular employment. Yet demand and supply did not necessarily correspond harmoniously, resulting in dissatisfaction on both sides. By 1865, Hall argues that small farmers were an important economic group in Jamaica, and that peasants and labourers, while facing several financial disadvantages, nevertheless contributed significantly to the establishment of villages, market-places, and interior towns on the island.[24] The ability to move, and establish land-based roots away from the plantations, was a practice of freedom exercised by formerly enslaved individuals. This practice, characteristic of the post-emancipation period, and a crucial element in the post-

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[21] Higman, 'Jamaican port towns', p. 128.
[22] Douglas Hall, *Free Jamaica, 1838-1865: an economic history,* 2nd edn (University of the West Indies: Caribbean Universities Press, 1969), p. 158.
[23] *Ibid.,* p. 158.
[24] *Ibid.,* p. 264.

emancipation 'constellation of mobility', was narrated as a source of economic crisis by planters struggling to source cheap labour.[25]

Parallel to the rise of interior villages and towns, the introduction of free labour stimulated the growth of port towns. As Barry Higman notes, in the early-nineteenth century British Caribbean, capital towns were predominantly port towns, and major towns usually offered port services.[26] Kingston, for example, was characterised by its maritime and commercial functions, with the enslaved population concentrated near the wharves and merchant warehouses. [27] Bridgetown, Barbados was also an important trading hub.[28] During this period, large ships would anchor in Carlisle Bay, and 'droghers' (or lighters) manned mostly by enslaved peoples, transported cargo and passengers ashore.[29] Inter-island trade meanwhile was enabled by small locally-owned vessels. [30] Post-emancipation withdrawal from the estates impacted upon both interior and coastal towns, as skilled and semi-skilled labourers sought higher wages in urban centres.[31] Yet it was port towns that were specifically affected by import and export volumes after abolition. In pre-emancipation Jamaica, for example, imports and exports passed through coastal towns on their way to and from the estates. [32] After the introduction of wage labour, imports increased, and the export of peasant produced goods was simultaneously enhanced. [33] Thus port towns were significant sites of commerce both in the pre- and post-emancipation

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[25] Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', p. 17.
[26] Higman, 'Jamaican port towns', p. 117.
[27] *Ibid*., p. 137.
[28] Pedro Welch, *Slave society in the city: Bridgetown, Barbados 1680-1834* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2003), p. 52.
[29] *Ibid*., p. 59
[30] *Ibid*., p. 61.
[31] Hall, *Free Jamaica*, p. 217.
[32] *Ibid*., 209.
[33] *Ibid*., p. 11.

period. It must be noted, however, that enslaved peoples' experiences in port towns could contrast starkly, with some enjoying a large measure of independence, while others existed in close proximity to their owners.[34]

Such variety characterised the enslaved experience in port towns of St Thomas (in the Danish West Indies), a central location in the RMSPC's scheme of routes. Charlotte Amalie, in St Thomas, became the 'free port crossroads' of the Caribbean after 1782.[35] In Charlotte Amalie, the presence of enslaved peoples was substantial in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but free port status also provided economic opportunities for freed and white peoples.[36] Acting as hubs of distribution and commercial exchange, free ports generated demand for labour, such as porters and stevedores.[37] Carpenters were particularly in demand, as well as seamen, who could be hired out as crew.[38] While enslaved and free men would occupy roles such as carpenters, enslaved women were more numerous than men in Christiansted and Frederiksted (St Croix), and Neville Hall suggests that the same was probably true for St Thomas.[39] In addition to domestic service, the itinerant retail trade generated income in such urban areas. Neville Hall goes so far as to describe itinerant retailers, who sold items such as bread, fruit, vegetables and cushions, as 'the lifeline of an internal marketing system'.[40] This urban context was an additional milieu in which the ability to

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[34] Higman, 'Jamaican port towns', pp.140-141.

[35] Neville A. T. Hall, *Slave society in the Danish West Indies: St Thomas, St John, and St Croix*, ed. by B. W. Higman (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), pp. 91-92.

[36] Neville Hall, *Slave society*, pp. 87-88. Shipping was subject to lower charges in free ports than elsewhere.

[37] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[38] *Ibid.*, pp. 91-2.

[39] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

[40] *Ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

exercise internal island mobility was significant in the economic empowerment of enslaved, and formerly enslaved individuals.

Withdrawal of formerly enslaved peoples from plantation spaces in the aftermath of abolition altered island geographies, as new independent villages emerged, and urban centres grew as marketing hubs. In removing themselves from estates, formerly enslaved individuals exercised a new-found right to determine their own location. Such acts of voluntary displacement were thus simultaneously deeply personal reflections of individual choice, and political acts of mobility, resented by planters in need of estate labour.

Free labour, slave labour, indentured labour, and the sugar industry

i. The British West Indian context

During the British post-emancipation period, planters eagerly sought to reduce the cost of sugar production. In Jamaica, for example, estate owners introduced equipment such as the plough, and experimented with different kinds of fertilizers in attempts to increase yield. However the 1846 Sugar Duties Act dealt a severe blow to British West Indian planters in reducing the price of sugar on the British market. Crucially, the Act damaged creditors' confidence and made it harder for planters to secure loans.[41] Although the Act did not provoke an immediate decline in sugar production, for many, a gradual reduction and winding up of plantation operations was the only viable course.[42]

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[41] Hall, *Free Jamaica,* p. 40.
[42] *Ibid*., p. 118.

The impact of the Sugar Duties Act had a variant chronology on different islands. Only a minority of estates remained prosperous in post-emancipation Jamaica.[43] In Antigua, on the other hand, crisis was kept in abeyance for many years. Antigua had little land available for independent peasant cultivation, and as a result, labourers could not withdraw to the same extent as on some other islands. In addition, planters transferred the burden of taxation onto the labouring classes through increased taxation on consumer goods, as well as taxing huts.[44] Yet eventually on this island as on others, estates gradually began to change hands. By the end of the century the majority of Antiguan plantation owners were absentee, and few estates remained the property of those who had owned them on the eve of emancipation.[45]

In response to the falling price of sugar and a desire to source cheap labour, an additional strand of mobility was introduced into the Caribbean through indentured labour schemes. An 1842 Select Committee of the House of Commons investigated the state of the West Indian colonies and provided for African immigration. The following year, West India interests complained that African immigration was insufficient and requested Indian immigration, with the result that by 1844, the recruitment of immigrants from India and China was allowed, as well as African recruitment.[46] Between 1860 and 1863, almost six and a half thousand immigrants arrived in Jamaica under labour schemes.[47] Such

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[43] *Ibid.*, pp. 229-235.
[44] Susan Lowes, 'They couldn't mash ants': the decline of the white and non-white elites in Antigua, 1834-1900', in *Small islands, large questions: society, culture and resistance in the post-emancipation Caribbean*, ed. by Karen Fog Olwig (London: Frank Cass, 1995), pp. 31-52 (p. 33).
[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.
[46] Hall, *Free Jamaica*, p. 52.
[47] *Ibid.*, p. 111.

large-scale immigration constituted one element in the post-emancipation constellation of mobility. Indentured labourers found their mobility severely restricted by the terms of their contracts. As Verene Shepherd notes, they had to obtain passes to leave the estate, faced harsh penalties for desertion, and were obliged to contribute to their return passage home.[48] Indentured labourers constituted one strand in the post-emancipation constellation of mobility, but indentured labourers also had their own particular internal island mobilities due to the terms of their contracts.

In the context of these shifting economic fortunes and conflicting definitions of freedom, the post-emancipation period was typified by social unrest, prompted by grievances over wages, the justice system, and fears of re-enslavement.[49] Protests arose, for example, against the census in Dominica in 1844, riots erupted in Jamaica in 1859, a labour strike troubled St Vincent in 1862, and further riots broke out in Tobago and Barbados in 1876. Arguably most important of the British post-emancipation disturbances was the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica. Hall points out that between 1860 and 1865 in Jamaica, 'a rapid succession of economic and political catastrophes, each of which by itself would have raised serious problems, had hit the island'.[50] Not least amongst these was the fact that the American Civil War had caused another drop in the price of sugar in Britain, and planters tried to reduce wages as a result. Meanwhile an increase in indentured immigrant labour reduced the availability of estate

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[48] Shepherd, *I want to disturb my neighbour*, p. 169.
[49] Gad Heuman, 'Post-emancipation resistance in the Caribbean: an overview', in *Small islands, large questions: society, culture and resistance in the post-emancipation Caribbean*, ed. by Karen Fog Olwig (London: Frank Cass, 1995), pp. 123-134.
[50] Hall, *Free Jamaica*, p. 237.

employment for Caribbean workers. [51] At the same time, a revival amongst Moravian churches in Manchester (later known as the Baptist revival) was gathering force. In May and June of 1864, heavy rains caused floods which damaged crops. This flood was followed by a period of drought, which drove up the price of provisions. [52] In 1865 the Morant Bay rebellion gathered force. [53] Morant Bay was simply one indicator of the fact that for the British Caribbean islands, the decades following mid-century were economically and socially turbulent times. Meanwhile, British West Indian planters' experiences of emancipation were exacerbated by the swinging fortunes of rival empires.

ii. The French and Spanish West Indian contexts

As already noted, Caribbean emancipation had a complex chronology. Thus while the British West Indies struggled to maintain profitable sugar production, production levels elsewhere in the region, and particularly on the Spanish islands, remained buoyant. Economic crisis was at first resisted in the French West Indies, but these islands eventually found their position undermined by rival sugar producers. The Haitian revolution initially sent shockwaves through the French West Indian possessions. The events of 1791 provoked turmoil on the *habitations* in Martinique and Guadeloupe, sparking labour unrest and reduced planter financing. Subsequent increased sugar production in Cuba, Puerto Rico and Brazil posed a threat to French West Indian sugar, as to the British islands, since Cuban sugar entered the market at a lower price than French Caribbean

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[51] *Ibid*., p. 240.
[52] *Ibid*., p. 242.
[53] In the aftermath of this rebellion, the Jamaica Assembly was abolished and Jamaica became a Crown Colony.

produce.[54] The cessation of hostilities with Britain in 1815, and the restoration of both Guadeloupe and Martinique to the French, ushered in the Bourbon Restoration period. During the next fifteen years, the slave trade was revived and sugar production increased, so that the 1820s and early 1830s were relatively prosperous times for French West Indian producers. Acreage of sugar producing land increased in Martinique and Guadeloupe between 1817 and 1834.[55] Yet by the 1830s, the French Caribbean was increasingly feeling the competition of beet sugar, and by the end of this decade, the French Caribbean islands were experiencing reduced sugar production. In 1836, Martinique produced 34,100 tons of sugar, and Guadeloupe 41,900 tons. Just over a decade later, in 1847, Martinican production had fallen to 23,900 tons, and Guadeloupe stood at 38,000 tons.[56] Slavery was finally abolished in Martinique and Guadeloupe in April 1848.[57] Abolition temporarily caused a dip in sugar production, but by 1854, the French possessions had returned to production levels equal to those of 1846-7.[58] As on the British Caribbean islands, planters responded to the withdrawal of the formerly enslaved from the estates with a series of measures designed to tie labourers to the land, and through recourse to indentured labour schemes.[59] As of 1860, the sugar industry in Guadeloupe began to fall into a state of decline, yet sugar plantations in Martinique remained in a healthy state as late as 1870.[60] During the 1870s, however, sugar production on this island became increasingly

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[54] Paul Butel, *Histoire des Antilles françaises XVIIe – XXe siècle* ([Paris]: Perrin, 2002), pp. 247-248.
[55] *Ibid*., p. 252. With the establishment of the July monarchy, the slave trade was abolished in 1831.
[56] *Ibid*., p. 259.
[57] '*Ibid*., p. 281.
[58] *Ibid*., pp. 291-292.
[59] *Ibid*., pp. 291-292 and p. 299.
[60] *Ibid*., p. 300.

problematic, as it had become on the island of Guadeloupe a decade earlier.[61] On the French Caribbean islands, as on the British, the withdrawal of the formerly enslaved from the estates, and the introduction of indentured labour characterised important strands of a post-emancipation constellation of mobility.

In contrast to the gradual contraction of French West Indian sugar production, Cuba enjoyed a sustained period of sugar industry growth during the nineteenth century. Between the 1830s and the 1860s, the combined impact of railroads and steam mills enhanced Cuban sugar production.[62] Rising to prominence during the first half of the nineteenth century, Cuba emerged as the largest sugar producer in 1840, churning out 41 per cent of world output by 1870.[63] As Rebecca Scott stresses, '[e]mancipation in Cuba was prolonged, ambiguous, and complex, unfolding over an eighteen-year period through a series of legal, social, and economic transformations'.[64] Furthermore, human mobilities shaped the Cuban agricultural workforce during this period. Immigrant indentured labourers arrived in Cuba just as in the British post-emancipation islands: enslaved rebel Mayan Indians in the 1840s, and subsequently labourers from China and India.[65] As a result, by the 1860s, Cuban estate labour was a combination of enslaved and indentured workers. Refined sugar passed through Havana on its way to markets in Europe and the Americas, and enslaved labour supported commercial operations and shipping services in Havana, one of the RMSPC's ports-of-call.

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[61] *Ibid.*

[62] Klein and Vinson III, *African slavery*, p. 91. The collapse of sugar production in Haiti similarly encouraged sugar production in Puerto Rico. By the late 1840s, Puerto Rico was one of the world's biggest sugar producers, but competition with European beet sugar, as well as Louisiana and Cuban produced sugar, pushed the industry into decline by the 1880s.

[63] *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88.

[64] Rebecca Scott, *Slave emancipation in Cuba: the transition to free labor, 1860-1899*, 2nd edn (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000), p. x.

[65] Klein and Vinson III, *African slavery*, p. 91.

Enslaved peoples worked in similar roles to the recently emancipated in other port towns, as stevedores, carpenters, masons, and itinerant retailers.[66] Although Cuban sugar production was exceptionally successful during the nineteenth century, labour patterns in coastal and plantation spaces had much in common with those on other islands.

As in post-emancipation contexts elsewhere, pre-emancipation Cuba was subject to political upheaval. Cuban planters, small farmers and merchants who desired an island government with greater autonomy eventually revolted openly in 1868, setting off a civil war (the Ten Years' War), with the eastern region at its heart.[67] In need of military manpower, elites in this area resorted to manumission of enslaved labourers. Imperial Spanish forces destroyed plantations in the east, and when victory was finally secured, did not attempt to re-enslave workers.[68] The eastern region in Cuba therefore came to be dominated by peasant agricultural production, while large modernized sugar producing plantations, reliant on enslaved labour, were dominant in Western Cuba.[69] As well as across the region, emancipation had a complex geography also on individual Caribbean islands.

As in Cuba, the decline of Haitian production gave a renewed impetus to the sugar industry in north-east Brazil, particularly in Bahia and Pernambuco.[70] Yet in contrast to Cuba, few technological changes were introduced in Brazil, although the country was a major producer in the Americas.[71] After the 1820s,

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[66] *Ibid*., pp. 93-4.
[67] *Ibid*., p. 92.
[68] *Ibid*., pp. 92-3.
[69] *Ibid*.
[70] *Ibid*., p. 102.
[71] *Ibid*.

the regions of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo shifted focus to coffee production. Coffee, which had been a minor crop in Brazil during the eighteenth century, became the main crop grown by enslaved labour during the nineteenth century. It was Brazil that provided the final chapter of emancipation in the Americas, with abolition coming late in the century in 1888.

In the British context, a post-emancipation constellation of mobility was shaped as formerly enslaved individuals exercised new-found rights to determine their location, thus bringing them into conflict with the planter class. Planters, in turn, responded by introducing indentured labour schemes. As a result, there were varying degrees of freedom and mobility amongst the workforce. French West Indian sugar production began to contract from the 1880s, and here the planter class faced some of the same challenges as their British counterparts. In the Spanish territories, meanwhile, the institution of slavery was dismantled much more gradually and sugar production remained strong into the latter decades of the nineteenth century. During the RMSPC's first decades of Caribbean service, some ports-of-call were marked by a post-emancipation constellation of mobility, while others were shaped by the system of slavery. While pre- and post-emancipation Caribbean societies overlapped in the nineteenth century, the region was typified by a certain dynamic volatility, which formed the backdrop of the RMSPC's operations.

Steamship salvation?

Within this context of economic transition and socio-political upheaval in the Caribbean, James MacQueen proposed an ambitious steamship service that would link eastern and western parts of the British Empire.[72] As David Lambert stresses, MacQueen, who had worked as an overseer of Westerhall estate in Grenada from 1797 until the early nineteenth century, was a scathing critic of abolitionists during the 1820s and 1830s.[73] Having known and made a living out of the British Caribbean under slavery, MacQueen hoped that steamship communication between Britain and the Caribbean would mitigate post-emancipation instabilities in the region, particularly by promoting commerce. In a letter addressed to Francis Baring, MP, MacQueen argued in favour of his scheme, and wrote that, '[s]tartling as the subject of connecting China and New South Wales with Great Britain, through the West Indies, may at first sight appear, both as regards time and expense, still few things are more practicable'.[74] This expansive project was to be effected through the use of 'steam-boats carrying mails and passengers'.[75] Prior to the RMSPC's service, mail was transported across the Atlantic under sail from the packet station at Falmouth. Larger West Indian islands were served with mail by ten-gun brigs converted to steam through the addition of one hundred horse-power engines.[76] Passenger travel on board these brigs was particularly uncomfortable due to a lack of ventilation, the small size of the saloon (thirteen by ten feet), and a need for

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[72] James MacQueen, *A general plan for a mail communication by steam between Great Britain and the eastern and western parts of the world; also, to Canton and Sydney, westward by the Pacific: to which are added, geographical notices of the isthmus of Panama, Nicaragua, &c. with charts* (London: B. Fellowes, 1838).

[73] David Lambert, 'The "Glasgow king of Billingsgate": James MacQueen and an Atlantic proslavery network', *Slavery and abolition*, 29:4 (2008), 389-413.

[74] MacQueen, *A general plan*, pp. v-vi. With alternative schemes being proposed by rivals, MacQueen wrote this letter to defend his scheme from criticism.

[75] *Ibid.*, p. x.

[76] T. A. Bushell, *"Royal Mail": a centenary history of the Royal Mail line 1839-1939* (Trade and Travel Publications: London, 1939), pp. 3-4.

frequent coaling, during which procedure passengers either sought shelter in a hot saloon, or remained on deck to be covered in coal dust.[77] MacQueen's vision represented a considerable change from this hybrid arrangement.

MacQueen explained that within his scheme, the West India station would be 'one of the most important, and extensive, and complicated of the whole, and one where steam-vessels [could] be employed with the most beneficial effects'.[78] In support of his vision, MacQueen pointed to the fact that existing Government mail packets were slow, and that correspondence tended to arrive faster in Britain on board private merchant vessels. Equally unsatisfactory, for MacQueen, was the fact that intelligence frequently reached Britain via the United States. He insisted that the steamship service would promote British commerce, arguing that:

> It is not befitting that the first commercial country in the world should remain dependent upon the private ships of another commercial and rival state for the transmission of commercial correspondence. If such a deficient system is persevered in, the result will most infallibly be, that that country which obtains, and which can obtain, the earliest commercial information, will, in time, become the greatest and most prosperous commercial country.[79]

A scaled-down version of MacQueen's plan, initially only serving the West Indies, was funded by the British Government in the form of a mail contract subsidy, worth £240,000 a year. Thus the Company secured Government backing in a similar manner to contemporary lines such as P&O, and Cunard.

A number of individuals involved with the RMSPC had links with slave-owning, and received slave compensation money in the aftermath of abolition.

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[77] *Ibid*.

[78] MacQueen, *A general plan*, p. 28.

[79] *Ibid*., p. 3.

MacQueen, in his own words, 'became possessed of slaves' during the late 1820s, and jointly received compensation along with his partner Alexander MacDonnell.[80] A number of Company directors had similarly received slave compensation money. Thomas Baring, for example, was an early director, and Baring Brothers had lodged counter-claims for slave compensation for estates in British Guiana.[81] George Hibbert, a prominent member of the City, agent for Jamaica, and Chairman of the West India Dock Company, was another recipient of slave compensation money who sat on the RMSPC's board.[82] Andrew Colvile, Deputy Chairman of the Company (and later Company Chairman), 'participated in the slave-economy on an opportunistic basis'.[83] The Company's bankers, Messrs Robarts Curtis & Co., similarly received compensation 'as mortgagees of slave-property'.[84] Thus a significant number of prominent individuals directing the RMSPC in its first decade of service had benefitted directly from the slave economy, and it may have even been the case that slave compensation money helped to finance their purchase of RMSPC shares. Thus the Company, which entered service in the British post-emancipation era, was tied, through a number of personal financial interests, to the preceding era of slavery.

The RMSPC began full operations, encompassing ports-of-call in the British, French, Spanish and Danish Caribbean, in 1842. The Company's initial fleet consisted of fourteen paddle steamers for transatlantic service, and three

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[80] Nicholas Draper, *The price of emancipation: slave-ownership, compensation and British society at the end of slavery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 33.
[81] *Ibid.*, pp. 246-7.
[82] *Ibid.*, pp. 250-251.
[83] *Ibid.*, p. 242.
[84] *Ibid.*, p. 244.

schooners for inter-colonial operations in the Caribbean.[85] Almost immediately, the first working scheme of routes had to be revised to render it manageable (see chapter four, figures 4.2 and 4.3). As Stuart Nicol suggests, '[h]aving a schedule of routes was one thing, but maintaining it was another matter. The printed schedule meant little from the moment services started. Ports were omitted because the schedule couldn't be maintained − and sometimes non-scheduled ports were visited in attempts to patch up the problems'.[86] By May 1842, MacQueen had developed a revised schedule, with Halifax and Dutch Guiana removed, and reduced calls on the coast of Central America (at Tampico, Vera Cruz, Cartagena and Chagres).[87] This was only the first set in a number of alterations: the RMSPC's scheme of routes was repeatedly revised over the course of the century.

After considerable teething problems during the early years of service, which particularly related to timetabling difficulties, but also included accidents and natural disasters, the RMSPC extended operations into South America in 1851 (see figure 2.3).[88]

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[85] The Company used wooden hulled ships for the first decade of service, at the insistence of the Admiralty. It was only in the aftermath of the *Amazon* disaster of 1852 that the RMSPC introduced vessels with iron hulls. The initial fleet was the *Clyde*, *Tweed*, *Thames*, *Forth*, *Solway*, *Tay*, *Medina*, *Medway*, *Dee*, *Trent*, *Teviot*, *Isis*, *Actaeon*, *City of Glasgow*, and the schooners *Larne*, *Lee* and *Liffey*. Paddle steamers *Avon* and *Severn* came into service in 1842.

[86] Stuart Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy: a history of the Royal Mail line*, 2 vols (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2001), I, p. 54.

[87] *Ibid*.

[88] The RMSPC considered the possibility of extending into South America on several occasions during the 1840s, but a mail contract for South America was only signed with the Company in July 1850. The mail service to South America was inaugurated by the *Teviot*'s sailing from Britain in January 1851.

······ 1851 route number 8
······ 1851 route number 9

Figure 2.3 The RMSPC's Brazil and River Plate extension of service. Source: NMM RMS 36/3.

With the expansion of service in the 1850s, larger steamships were built, with increased coal and passenger capacity, and more powerful engines. Although named after South American rivers (*Orinoco*, *Amazon*, *Magdalena*, *Parana* and *Demerara*), these new vessels were intended for the West Indian service. Yet the *Demerara* was damaged before entering service, and the *Amazon* was lost in a disastrous fire on her maiden voyage. The *Magdalena* and *Parana* were

subsequently switched to the South American service.[89] In contrast to the gradual stabilization of operations in the West Indies, Nicol suggests that the South American service met with 'immediate success' because passengers and freight shippers trusted the RMSPC.[90] Thus from the middle of the century, the Company developed its operations and enjoyed higher profits.[91] As well as passengers, vessels carried gold from Britain for the establishment of a commercial bank in Rio de Janeiro, and returned with smaller quantities of gold, silver, diamonds, fruit and coffee.[92]

The RMSPC enjoyed growth during the 1850s and 1860s. Despite oscillations of fortunes, government mail contracts were renewed, albeit with smaller subsidies, throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.[93] Yet during the 1870s, the Company's fortunes began to turn, and by the latter decades of this century, were in decline. This demise has been variously attributed to disease on the South American route, or, by Nicol's analysis, stemmed from conservatism and poor policy decisions.[94] The 1870s and 1880s brought an end to the regularity of sailings on the South American route, as the Company experimented with new services, and responded to quarantine arrangements. Whereas the RMSPC's vessels had compared favourably with those of P&O and Cunard in the 1840s, by

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[89] Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy*, p. 67.
[90] *Ibid*., p. 63.
[91] R. G. Greenhill, 'British shipping and Latin America 1840-1930: The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 1971), p. 6.
[92] *Ibid*., p. 64.
[93] A. J. Arnold and R. G. Greenhill, 'Business, government and profit: the management and regulation of overseas mail contracts, 1836-90', *Accounting, business & financial history*, 5:3 (1995), 334-359.
[94] Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy*, p. 80. Specifically, Nicol suggests that the failure of the Panama, New Zealand and Australian Royal Mail Company (PNZA), with which the Company was involved, caused a policy shift towards conservatism.

the end of the century, the state of the RMSPC's fleet lagged behind that of the other two companies.[95]

After a late nineteenth century decline, the chairmanship of Owen Philipps in the early twentieth century provided proactive dynamism, which temporarily appeared to reverse flagging fortunes. The chronology of this thesis runs to the eve of the First World War, which is sometimes used to mark the end of a long post-emancipation period by Caribbean scholars. [96] This final decade under consideration in the thesis were prosperous times for the Company. Nicol goes so far as to describe the 1910s as the 'halcyon years for Philipps and the RMSP'.[97] On the eve of the First World War, which is the cut off point of this thesis, the Company was profitable. It must be noted, however, that in the inter-war period, which is beyond the scope of this research, the Company was again to find itself in troubled waters, as Philipps was prosecuted for misleading information published in the Company's prospectus during the 1920s.[98] During the year following the 1931 trial of Lord Kylsant (Philipps), Royal Mail Lines Ltd took over the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company.

I take a thematic approach to exploring the Company's geographies in this thesis, and pose questions about its impact on people and places, mindful of the 'new mobilities' impulse to insert 'social relations' into analysis of travel.[99] By

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[95] *Ibid.*, p. 84.
[96] Bridget Brereton, 'Recent developments in the historiography of the post-emancipation Anglophone Caribbean', in *Beyond fragmentation: perspectives on Caribbean history*, ed. by Juanita De Barros, Audra Diptee and David V. Trotman (Princeton: Markus Wiener Publishers, 2006), pp. 187-209 (pp. 187-188).
[97] Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy*, p. 97.
[98] *Ibid.*, pp. 103-109.
[99] Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm', *Environment and planning A*, 38:2 (2006), 207-226 (p. 208).

contrast, Company histories dominate existing published work on the RMSPC. Official Company publications such as *Twelve decades of maritime history* are complemented by monographs which focus exclusively on the Company's dealings and share a broadly chronological structure. In the absence of extensive debate between authors, recurrent and well-explored themes in the historiography include the origins of the Company, route alterations, shipwrecks and accidents, and expansion into South America.[100] Yet existing company histories are not fully socially contextualized, in that they either ignore the implications of the service beyond its consequence to high-ranking and prominent employees, or are in some cases characterised by technological or logistical fixation.[101]

Stuart Nicol's work is the most extensive published account of the Company's history. In contrast to this thesis, the focus of Nicol's two-volume text is on the RMSPC's South American service. In his analysis of the RMSPC's origins, Nicol affirms that the Company's establishment helped to consolidate steam technology, since P&O and Cunard did not have ships of similar tonnage or a fleet of comparable proportions in the 1840s. Robert Greenhill's thesis on the RMSPC and British shipping in Latin America provides an important alternative contribution to analysis of the Company in the broader context of maritime commerce. In contrast to my research, and as indicated by the title of his thesis,

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[100] Rodney Baker and Alan Leonard, *Great steamers white and gold: a history of Royal Mail ships and services* (Southampton: Ensign Publications, 1993); Bushell, *"Royal Mail"*; Phil J. Kenton and Harry G. Parsons, *Early routings of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company 1842-1879* (Surrey: The Postal History Society, 1999); H. W. Leslie, *The Royal Mail war book: being an account of the operations of the ships of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, 1914-1919* (London: William Heinemann, 1920); M. H. Ludington and G. Osborn, *The Royal Mail steam packets to Bermuda and the Bahamas 1842-1859* ([n.p.]: R. Lowe, 1971); Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy*; Michael Rego, *Steamship lines to the Caribbean volume one: history, routes, agents, ship markings, ships, fleet lists* (Alicante: British West Indies Study Circle, 2005).
[101] See, for example, Leslie, *The Royal Mail war book*.

Greenhill's work, like Nicol's, predominantly focuses on South American operations. Greenhill rehabilitates the Company's nineteenth-century economic performance to some extent, noting that, '[t]erms like "gross mismanagement", "jobbery" or "ignorance", probably exaggerations when applied in the 1840's, were quite inappropriate by the end of the century when the company had adopted a more professional approach'.[102] In contrast to the South American service, which from the outset was marked by competition, Greenhill points to the lack of early competition on the Caribbean route as one reason for a lack of innovation on this branch of operations. Greenhill and Nicol thus privilege the RMSPC's operations in South America in their analysis, for this was the branch of operations that would eventually come to dominate at the end of the nineteenth century. Crucially for this research, none of the existing work on the RMSPC takes seriously the post-emancipation Caribbean context in which the Company commenced service, which is a theme of central concern in this thesis.

Conclusion

Mobilities, then, were a central issue in the post-emancipation Caribbean, with the newly emancipated exercising their freedom to move away from plantations to interior and coastal spaces, and seeking out migrant labouring opportunities where available. Planters, on the other hand, used indentured labour schemes to tie a new set of workers to the estates. In this regional context, the RMSPC brought a new kind of mobility to the post-emancipation era: industrialized

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[102] Greenhill, 'British shipping and Latin America 1840-1930', p. 182. Jeffrey Pardue's thesis on James MacQueen also discusses the RMSPC, particularly in chapter four. See Jeffrey D. Pardue, 'Agent of Imperial change: James Macqueen and the British empire 1778-1870' (unpublished thesis doctoral thesis, University of Waterloo, Canada, 1996).

oceanic transport. In chapters four to seven, I will turn to explore what these mobilities meant in different places in the expanded Caribbean, as well as how these mobilities related to the geographies of slavery and freedom. Before doing so, however, I will reflect in the next chapter upon the sources and interpretive strategies that formed the basis of this research.

Chapter three

The RMSPC's archive – sources and interpretive strategies

[W]e must concede the fundamental liminality of the archive: its porousness, its permeability, and the messiness of all history that is made by and from it.[1]

This research resulted from an Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) Collaborative Doctoral Award, for which the archival starting point was the RMSPC manuscript and object collections at the partner organization, the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich.[2] The official archive of the RMSPC has previously been used to inform narrative-based company histories, as well as research into maritime business in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. By contrast, this project sought to use interpretive strategies in the RMSPC archive to analyse maritime places in the Company's history, and the mobilities coursing through these places.

The RMSPC's archive presented a series of challenges. As Verne Harris underscores, '[t]he archival record is but a sliver of social memory. It is also but a sliver of the documentary record'.[3] This inherent partiality of surviving evidence is perhaps the single most important limitation of archival methods. Furthermore, Antoinette Burton emphasizes the 'porousness' of archives and thus warns that they are not clearly delimited.[4] Yet the norms of historical academic discourse render the process of writing an illusory one, a trick of

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[1] Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the archive: women writing house, home and history in late colonial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 19-20.
[2] A central project aim was to explore the National Maritime Museum's under-utilized Royal Mail Steam Packet Company collections.
[3] Verne Harris, 'The archival sliver: power, memory, and archives in South Africa', *Archival science*, 2:1-2 (2002), 63-86 (p. 64).
[4] Burton, *Dwelling in the archive*, pp. 19-20.

making the 'porous' appear air-tight. Before proceeding to the analytical threads in the chapters that follow, here I reflect first on the archival grains that informed my research. Using archival research methods, I worked ultimately along, against, and beyond the grain of the official RMSPC archive.

Along and against the archival grain

Ann Laura Stoler poses a challenging question: '[h]ow can students of colonialisms so quickly and confidently turn to readings "against the grain" without moving along their grain first?'[5] As Stoler's words suggest, in order to construct historical analyses that might challenge the ordering logics and discourses of imperialism, these same discourses must first be carefully examined and understood. Thus in the first instance, I worked 'along' the grain of the RMSPC's archive. The Company's official archive is mainly held at two London repositories: the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, and University College London's Special Collections. For the period under consideration in this thesis, the latter repository is particularly strong on legal and financial documents. Some printed material (such as annual reports) is held at both locations.[6] The National Maritime Museum has the largest collection of Company records, and contains administrative files, correspondence, memoranda, and reports.

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[5] Ann Laura Stoler, 'Colonial archives and the arts of governance', *Archival science*, 2:1-2 (2002), 87-109 (p.100).

[6] The archives of the Royal Mail Association have recently been deposited at Southampton City Museums. This archive contains twentieth-century records and ephemera relating to Royal Mail Lines, however there is less nineteenth-century material on the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company. At the time of writing, the object collections and much of the ephemera in this archive remained closed to public consultation.

What kind of logics structure the RMSPC's archive? As Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook stress:

> Like archives collectively, the individual document is not just a bearer of historical content, but also a reflection of the needs and desires of its creator, the purpose(s) for its creation, the audience(s) viewing the record, the broader legal, technical, organizational, social, and cultural-intellectual contexts in which the creator and audience operated and in which the document is made meaningful, and the initial intervention and on-going mediation of archivists.[7]

The RMSPC's official archive is primarily a business archive, and much of the logic structuring documentary survival is the logic of capital, management, and bureaucracy. Financial records (annual accounts, reports on investments, registers of title deeds, trade agreements and cash books) abound. Equally, the archive contains a comprehensive run of directors' minutes, minutes of general meetings, and annual reports for the period under consideration in this thesis. Such records were of direct interest to, or had a bearing upon the financial interests of shareholders. In addition, committee books, managers' minutes and memoranda were structured according to logistical and bureaucratic concerns. Financial and bureaucratic imperatives determined the creation of such documents, and it is a 'sliver' of these business and administrative records that has survived for research use.

Even at the level of individual documents, the broader logic of the RMSPC archive can be glimpsed. As Schwartz and Cook stress, '[t]hrough archives, the past is controlled. Certain stories are privileged and others marginalized'.[8] The index of the minutes of the court of directors is revealing about those stories privileged by the logic of the Company. The three column headings in the index of minutes 1889-1893 are 'ships', 'persons' and 'other matters'. All Company

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[7] Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook, 'Archives, records, and power: the making of modern memory', *Archival science*, 2:1-2 (2002), 1-19 (pp. 3-4).

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 1.

ships are referenced in the index but only 'persons' of a certain status count for inclusion. Company agents and officers who can be looked up in the minutes' index are, in Schwartz and Cook's terms, 'privileged' to have their stories included. Individuals such as Caribbean coal bearers are, of course, absent from this list. This hierarchy of inclusion, I suggest, gives a sense of the 'grain' of the RMSPC archive.

At the start of my archival search, I turned to the comprehensive records within the RMSPC archive, such as directors' minutes (for which there is an uninterrupted run between 1839 and 1936) and annual reports and accounts. I began by searching 'along' the grain of the archive, surveying and sampling these abundant documents. It quickly became apparent, however, that these minutes, while richer for the earliest years of operation, provided thin summaries for later events in the century. The archive thus had internal unevenness: records were stronger for the earliest years of service, and correspondence with public departments was much more visible than exchanges with private individuals. The lack of letter-books, managers' minutes and committee books for the latter decades of the nineteenth century constitutes a significant limitation to the official material. Records which do exist for the later nineteenth century, such as directors' minutes, are often pared down in comparison with the earliest years, reflecting the way in which forms of recording information and decisions became standardized within the Company over time.

Furthermore, a distinction must be drawn between external and internal Company records. Annual reports and accounts, and minutes of general meetings

were necessarily treated with caution since they were the most public documents. Annual reports sought to present the Company in the best possible light, and were printed in contemporary newspapers. Similarly, general meetings took place at the public face of the Company. For these reasons, the most abundant forms of manuscript material were ultimately of limited use to this project, particularly given its concern with social and cultural geographies of the service.

In contrast to the comprehensive sets of manuscript material, letter-books, managers' minutes and committee books provided details that were absent from directors' minutes, and enabled insight into social and cultural themes. Minutes of the board of managers contained vessels' inspection reports, and thus gave a sense of the Company's priorities in shaping the ship as place, as well as the extent to which those priorities were met. Managers' reports also included disciplinary investigations. Although investigations only occurred when rules had been broken, and were therefore unrepresentative of the daily workings of the ship, these procedures nevertheless provided evidence of the behaviour of the crew, and the dynamics between different ranks and departments on board. As the managers dealt, in large measure, with the logistics of coaling, these records were also central to my analysis of the coaling station (see chapter six).

Letter-books proved to be a key source, providing insight into how the Company was viewed by other bodies and interests, particularly the Admiralty. There were, however, two limitations on the utility of the letter-books. Firstly, only letters covering the first decade of service remain in the archive, and secondly letter-books (both for incoming and outgoing correspondence) have only been

preserved for correspondence with 'public departments'. In most cases, this meant correspondence with the Admiralty, the Treasury and the Foreign Office. On several occasions I came across intriguing references to letters received by the managers or directors from private individuals or groups, but was unable to find the letters themselves in the archive. Nevertheless, as Frances Steel has demonstrated the utility of reading letter-books to uncover gendered histories of steamship services, I followed this method to the extent allowed by the sources.[9]

In addition to letter-books and managers' minutes, timetables (and their accompanying maps) were a key source for this thesis. Timetables were particularly central to analysis in chapter four, but also informed examination of the ship, the coaling station, and tourist services. Log books and progress books, both of which were available for a select number of RMSPC journeys, were used for reference, although the tight structure and formulaic nature of entries in such records meant that they were informative but not particularly rich sources for this study.

The uneven nature of the RMSPC's official archive has necessarily shaped the use of sources in this thesis. Whereas my analysis of the Company's early years of service is heavily dependent on the official RMSPC archive, I have drawn to a greater extent on 'unofficial,' ephemeral and literary material in discussion of the Company during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[10] A second impulse to move away from the archival grain stemmed from the aridity of some

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[9] Frances M. Steel, 'Oceania under steam: maritime culture, colonial histories 1870-1910s' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Australian National University, 2008).

[10] It is notable that Company histories such as Stuart Nicol's *Macqueen's legacy* have uneven chronological sections, reflecting the lacunae of the RMSPC archive. See Stuart Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy: a history of the Royal Mail line*, 2 vols (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2001), I.

of the business manuscript material. As Nicholas Cox writes, historians have to step 'into the dry world of official archives'.[11] Cash books and summaries of directors' decisions do not easily lend themselves to nuanced readings of peoples or places. The impersonal nature of much of the official archive urged a move beyond readings 'along' the archival grain. Furthermore, the research questions at the heart of this project perhaps meant that readings along the archival grain would never suffice. Once familiar with the archival grain, I began to work both along and against it.

Germaine Warkentin highlights how 'other voices' might speak through texts, and suggests that:

> [S]killed reading can unlock the subtexts they did not recognize, and give utterance to the other voices – women, natives, labourers – which speak through them. Even in the partial and limited way which these essentially European texts permit, what emerges is a picture of great richness and complexity.[12]

Managers' minutes and letter-books were sources in the official RMSPC archive in which such 'other' voices and experiences emerged. Women's voices could be glimpsed in minutes that documented wives' requests to the Company for financial support. Such cases occurred when women's husbands had been injured or become ill as employees of the Company. On rare occasions, managers' minutes also referenced the actions of Caribbean labourers. In reading these texts against the grain, I adopted Lata Mani's insistence that colonial texts should not be read simply to analyse the coloniser. She describes her approach to texts on *sati*:

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[11] Nicholas Cox, 'National British archives: public records', in *The contemporary history handbook*, ed. by Brian Brivati, Julia Buxton and Anthony Seldon (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), p. 253.

[12] Germaine Warkentin, 'Introduction to the first edition', in *Canadian exploration literature*, ed. by Germaine Warkentin, 2nd edn (Toronto: Dundern Press, 2006), pp. 19-34 (p. 22).

> As a woman, as a feminist, it is impossible for me to read descriptions of sati in this way, simply turning the glare of analytic scrutiny back on the colonizer. It is the burning of women's bodies that is being described.[13]

Mani's interest in the 'burning of women's bodies' rather than the coloniser leads her to emphasize women's actions at the funeral pyre. Mani highlights this evidence in order to undermine authors' 'construction of women's words' and 'evidence to the contrary' of what they themselves describe.[14] Following this precedent where possible, I considered, for example, the reported actions of coaling labourers, and not just MacQueen's representations of these workers.

The official RMSPC archive contains a limited amount of printed promotional material for the pre-First World War period. These sources heavily informed chapter seven, on the Company's tourist passenger service. This material was produced for public consumption in order to promote the RMSPC's service, and I adopted the methods of colonial discourse analysis in approaching these texts. Colonial discourse analysis provides a means of critically analysing imperial and colonial texts and images. As Peter Hulme emphasizes:

> Underlying the idea of colonial discourse […] is the presumption that during the colonial period large parts of the non-European world were produced for Europe through a discourse that imbricated sets of questions and assumptions, methods of procedure and analysis, and kinds of writing and imagery, normally separated out into the discrete areas of military strategy, political order, social reform, imaginative literature, personal memoir and so on.[15]

Crucially, the RMSPC's promotional texts represented and produced the Caribbean as a place for European tourist consumption. In this way, they provided evidence of the Company's construction and re-presentation of the

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[13] Lata Mani, 'Cultural theory, colonial texts: reading eyewitness accounts of widow burning', in *Cultural studies*, ed. by Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 392-405 (p. 395).

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 403.

[15] Peter Hulme, *Colonial encounters: Europe and the native Caribbean, 1492-1797* (London and New York: Methuen, 1986), p. 2.

region during the post-emancipation period. In working with such material, however, I was acutely aware that each text was 'deeply marked by its own positionality, its own historicity, its own ideology, and [had to] therefore be read with due care'.[16]

Beyond the grain

In addition to RMSPC material held by the National Maritime Museum and University College London Special Collections, I also consulted documents at The National Archives. Colonial and Foreign Office records were used most extensively in this analysis, because although several records exist in the Post Office, Admiralty and Treasury series, many of these duplicated information that was available in the RMSPC collections. I also examined material at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, particularly sources relating to the West India Committee, as well as relevant records in the Royal Mail Association archive. As part of an attempt to consider the RMSPC from beyond British shores, I visited the National Archives in Barbados and in Grenada to consult administrative records.

These other repositories were also official archives, albeit not of the RMSPC. For altogether alternative records, however, I sought to expand the archive. Anjali Arondekar writes that '[e]ven as the concept of a fixed and finite archive has come under siege, it has simultaneously led to an explosion of multiple/

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[16] Peter Hulme, *Remnants of conquest: the island Caribs and their visitors, 1877-1998* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 5.

alternate archives that seek to remedy the erasures of the past'.[17] I was not seeking, in the turn to alternate sources, to 'remedy' such erasures. Rather, I was only too acutely aware that new sources would simply interlace a new set of silences over those of the official archive. Yet there was important value in moving 'beyond' the grain, in order to locate richer cultural sources for analysis of the steamship service. This move was, in some ways, problematic, because, as Burton stresses, '"properly" archival sources are still considered the standard against that all other evidence must be verified, or at least against which it must be measured.'[18] Yet in response to this, Burton argues that we might re-think hierarchies of evidence:

> In any event, the presumption that memory is closer to fiction than history is to "truth" can disqualify it - or at the very least, call it into question - as *evidence* and, therefore, as an archival source, technically speaking. Such reasoning is in danger of obscuring the historical processes through which "facts" and evidence became the grounds of professional history. It prevents us from appreciating, in short, the extent to which what emerged as "the archive" itself was the preoccupation of a modernizing, Western, bourgeois, Victorian professional class. Equally obscured is how the hierarchical relationship between memory and history is embedded in the epistemological genealogy of the modern Western social science disciplines – a genealogy rooted, of course, in the history of colonialism.[19]

Burton's argument implies a necessity to move beyond the grain and beyond the values of the official archive. Similarly, in light of Schwartz and Cook's emphasis upon the problematic workings of power within archives, to remain within the official realm would have run the risk of reproducing the logics of that realm. Instead, I followed Burton in recognizing 'a variety of materials as archival and *reading* them accordingly'.[20]

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[17] Anjali Arondekar, *For the record: on sexuality and the colonial archive in India* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009), p. 2.
[18] Burton, *Dwelling in the archive*, pp. 21-22.
[19] *Ibid*., p. 22.
[20] *Ibid*., p. 25. Emphasis in original.

A key means through which I supplemented sources in the RMSPC's official archive was by drawing on printed travel narratives. There is nothing new in such a method: in Arondekar's estimation, historians 'often turn to the transformative space of the literary to somehow remedy, fill in, or rupture what their official documents cannot seem to produce'.[21] Such historical flirtations with literary forms require a typically cautious approach. Travel narratives are partially shaped by memory, and as Michael David Kandiah stresses, 'memory is nearly always inaccurate - events may be conflated or distorted beyond all recognition'.[22] Furthermore, travel narratives cannot, of course, be read as accurate accounts of journeys, and are embellished with various literary norms of the genre. Yet an alternative conceptual deployment of literary texts might follow Mike Crang in stressing that '[l]iterature is not flawed by its subjectivity; instead that subjectivity speaks about the social meanings of places and spaces'.[23]

In contrast to the restricted RMSPC manuscript material covering the late nineteenth century, there are several travel narratives from this period, particularly published between the 1880s and the 1910s. This can be understood both with reference to an expanding print industry during the course of the nineteenth century, and in terms of the greater number of passengers travelling on steamships after the introduction of marine compound engines, first incorporated into the RMSPC's fleet in 1869. Susan Clair Imbarrato makes a distinction between travel narratives on the one hand, and the more polished

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[21] Arondekar, *For the record*, p. 15.

[22] Michael David Kandiah, 'Books and journals', in *The contemporary history handbook*, ed. by Brian Brivati, Julia Buxton and Anthony Seldon (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 311-325 (p. 318).

[23] Mike Crang, *Cultural geography* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 44.

'travelogues and memoirs' written self-consciously after the event, sometimes on the basis of travel notes.[24] For Imbarrato, 'the travel narrative focuses on the rudiments of travel and is written in a plain, descriptive style'.[25] While it is undoubtedly important to distinguish between different forms of travel writing and to recognize that some accounts are more self-consciously written than others, Imbarrato's classification is not one that I have found useful to adopt in this research. Most of the texts cited would fall under Imbarrato's second category of 'travel writing' rather than travel narrative, written in often intentionally literary style, for publication purposes. Yet it is striking that an unpublished manuscript account of a journey on the RMS *Forth* in 1847 contains many of the same tropes as later writing by literary figures such as Charles Kingsley.[26] Whilst it is necessary to be sensitive to the exaggerations of travel writing, experiential qualities of the journey can, to an extent, be discerned from such works. Travel writing provides insight into that which Crang terms '"subjective" experiences of place, how people come to understand places, and to thus identify a human geography filled with emotions about places − where places have meanings beyond their statistical expression'.[27] In drawing on travel writing as a source, I have been sensitive to the fact that '[l]iterature (along with other more recent media) plays a central role in shaping people's geographical imaginations'.[28]

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[24] Susan Clair Imbarrato, *Travelling women: narrative visions of early America* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), p. 36.

[25] *Ibid*., p. 52.

[26] NMM JOD/13 Journal of a visit to the West Indies. This is an anonymous journal, which does not form part of the RMSPC's archive, but is held in the National Maritime Museum's broader manuscript collections.

[27] Crang, *Cultural geography*, p. 43.

[28] *Ibid*., p. 44.

Yet such texts must be read in historical context. Works such as Charles Kingsley's *At last: a Christmas in the West Indies* and James Anthony Froude's *The bow of Ulysses, or the English in the West Indies* were strongly shaped by political and cultural agendas.[29] They were partially reflective of a Victorian white male bourgeois subjectivity, but more specifically sought to reflect on the success or failure of post-slave societies in order to advance particular arguments about the British Empire. The prejudices accompanying such writing are often so apparent as to render their words offensive to twenty-first-century readers. These texts speak with 'the voice of committed colonialism'.[30] Yet the subjects that they choose to include, those that they omit, and the manner in which they tackle particular questions are instructive about social interactions on and around the ship, as well as gendered and racialized assumptions. Such texts are marked, in Guha's words, by 'a duplex character linked at the same time to a system of power and the particular manner of its representation'.[31]

Alongside travel narratives, the press and visual sources were drawn upon, to a limited extent. Chadrika Kaul writes of the press that '[i]t provides a window on to the past, a witness of the times, conveying something of the intangible "atmosphere" which surrounds events'.[32] I turned to newspaper sources for evidence of private perspectives on the RMSPC's service that were missing from letter-books. Shipping announcements (alongside notes in managers' minutes)

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[29] Charles Kingsley, *At last: a Christmas in the West Indies*, 4th edn (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874); James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies* (London: Longmans, 1888).
[30] Ranajit Guha, 'The prose of counter-insurgency', in *Culture / power / history*, ed. by Nicholas B. Dirks, Geoff Eley and Sherry B. Ortner (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), pp. 336- 371 (p. 346).
[31] *Ibid*., p. 340.
[32] Chandrika Kaul, 'The press', in *The contemporary history handbook*, ed. by Brian Brivati, Julia Buxton and Anthony Seldon (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 298-310 (p. 299).

recorded the value of goods travelling on particular vessels and the arrival dates of journeying vessels. Advertisements in newspapers also demonstrated prosaic counterparts to the colourful official RMSPC promotional publications, and provided a strong reminder that booklets such as *Tours in the West Indies* (discussed in chapter seven) reached only a limited audience.

A range of visual sources − mainly drawings and paintings − have also been consulted for this study. Brian Harrison writes that '[h]istorians tend to be coy about visual evidence. They feel more comfortable with written records, especially archival material. If they use illustrations at all, it is usually only to adorn their prose'.[33] Many of the images under discussion here, however, are not simple illustrations. Similarly to the travel writing, they produced particular colonial discourses about the Caribbean, or, in the case of steamship portraits, speak to a wider rhetoric surrounding modernity and industrialized transport. While Krista Thompson has particularly examined nineteenth- and twentieth-century visual representations of the Caribbean, visual sources that speak to specifically maritime themes might be further explored in future research.[34]

In working beyond the grain of the official RMSPC archive, I consulted alternative governmental and administrative records in national and institutional repositories. Furthermore, moving beyond the grain entailed consulting different

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[33] Brian Harrison, 'Photography', in *The contemporary history handbook*, ed. by Brian Brivati, Julia Buxton and Anthony Seldon (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996), pp. 383-393 (p. 383).

[34] Krista Thompson, *An eye for the tropics: tourism, photography, and framing the Caribbean picturesque* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006).

kinds of sources, including those placed more precariously within 'archival hierarchies', such as travel narratives, prints and drawings.[35]

Conclusion

The 'messiness' of archival work sits in tension with the conventions of academic discourse. As Alice Yaeger Kaplan explains, 'conventional academic discourse requires that when you write up the results of your archival work, you tell a story about what you found, but not about how you found it. The less the seams of your findings show, the better your discoveries lend themselves to use by others'.[36] In addition to what is hidden by the 'seams' of one's findings, there is also, of course, much that has been cut out of the cloth altogether. A number of objects in the National Maritime Museum's RMSPC collection have not been discussed in this thesis because they do not speak strongly to my research questions. There are also objects in the official and unofficial archive which fall outside the chronological focus of this work. At the same time, certain manuscript items and objects marginalized in this thesis may, in future exhibition and digital media projects with the National Maritime Museum, occupy a more central space in analysis of the RMSPC.

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[35] Burton, *Dwelling in the archive*, p. 22.
[36] Alice Yaeger Kaplan, 'Reading the archive: on texts and institutions', *Yale French studies*, 77 (1990), 103-116 (p. 103).

Chapter four

The steamship network and the RMSPC's ports-of-call

Introduction

The RMSPC's scheme of routes timetabled trajectories across and around the Atlantic, and this webbed network was subsequently negotiated and revised between different ports-of-call during the course of operations. Like other forms of schedule, the scheme of routes was 'responsible for the establishment and maintenance of temporal regularity' in steamship mobilities (see figure 4.1), but what routes were mapped by this document?[1]

TABLE No. 1.—ATLANTIC AND COLON ROUTE VIÂ BARBADOS.
ONCE EVERY FORTNIGHT.

Arrive.	Depart.	Places.	Distance in Miles.	Steaming.		Stops.		From Southampton.	
				D.	H.	D.	H.	D.	H.
——.	Thursday, 6 p.m. ..	Southampton........	—	—		—		—	
Wednesday, 7 a.m. ..	Thursday, 9 a.m. ..	Barbados (Bridgetown) ..	3,635	12	13	1	2	12	13
Sunday, 7 a.m. ..	Sunday, 9 a.m. ..	Jacmel	812	2	22	0	2	16	13
Monday, 8 a.m. ..	Tuesday, 8 a.m. ..	Jamaica (Kingston)	255	0	23	1	0	17	14
Thursday, 7 a.m. ..	Sunday, 9 a.m. ..	Colon	550	1	23	10	2	20	13
Tuesday, 8 a.m. ..	Wednesday, 4 p.m. ..	Jamaica (Kingston)	550	1	23	1	8	32	14
Thursday, 3 p.m. ..	Thursday, 7 p.m. ..	Jacmel	255	0	23	0	4	34	21
Sunday, 5 p.m. ..	Monday, 5 p.m. ..	Barbados (Bridgetown) ..	812	2	22	1	0	37	23
Saturday, 10 p.m. ..	——	Plymouth	3,513	12	5	—		51	4

Figure 4.1 A page from the RMSPC's 1885 scheme of routes. Source: NMM RMS 36/4. Courtesy of National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

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[1] Eviatar Zerubavel, *Hidden rhythms: schedules and calendars in social life* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1981), p. xiii.

James MacQueen drew up the original plan for performing the West India mail contract before the commencement of operations in 1842, however the first ambitious scheme of routes was replaced in 1843 by a revised timetable. This modified schedule provided one steamer every fifteen days from Falmouth to Madeira, Barbados and Grenada (an estimated journey of twenty-two days), with inter-colonial routes departing from Grenada and St Thomas (see figures 4.2 and 4.3).[2]
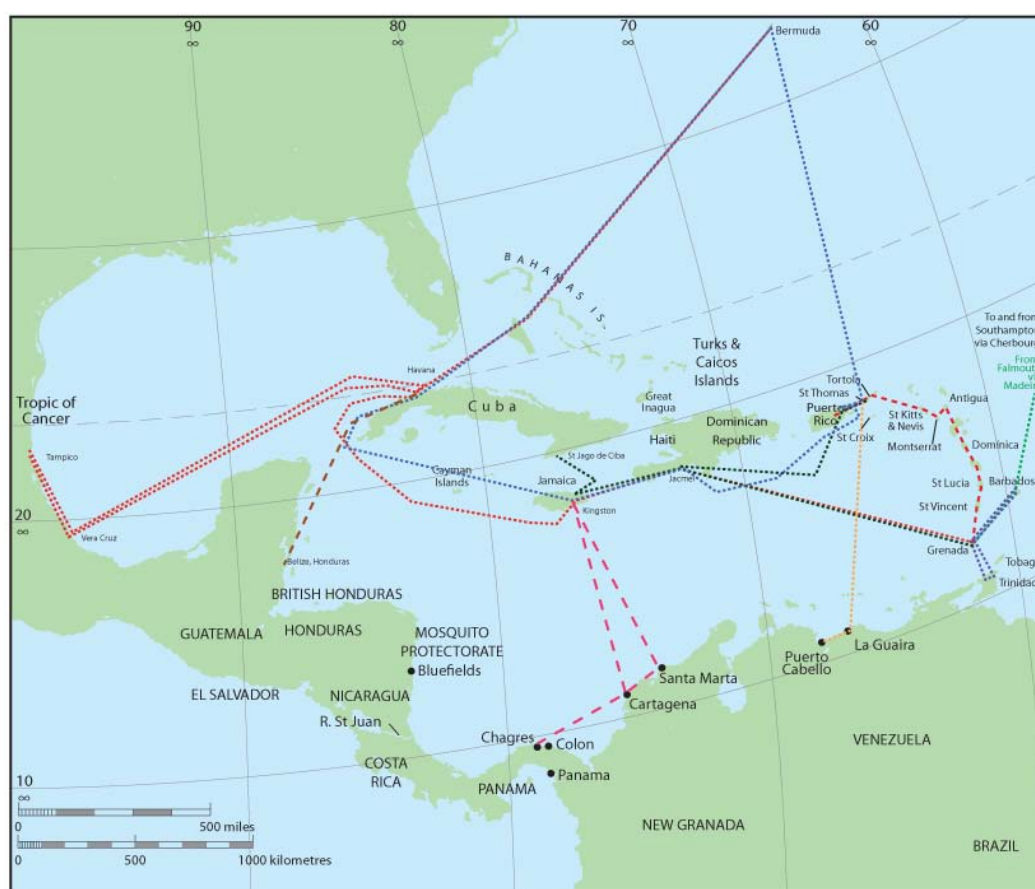
Figure 4.2 The RMSPC's May 1843 scheme of routes, routes 3 and 8 not shown. Source: NMM RMS 36/2. Southampton subsequently became the British port of departure and arrival for the RMSPC's steamers.

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[2] NMM RMS 36/2 Modified plan for performing the West India mail packet service, May 1843.

Figure 4.3 The RMSPC's May 1843 scheme of routes, showing routes 3 and 8. Source: NMM
RMS 36/2.

The Admiralty expected ships to move in strict adherence to the scheme of
routes. Thus in response to the Company's superintendent at Grenada altering the
timing of route number two (Grenada − Trinidad − Grenada − Barbados −

Grenada), the Admiralty indicated in unequivocal terms that the scheme 'should not be deviated from or experimented upon'. [3] Yet despite Admiralty expectations, the scheme of routes was dynamic. Thus between January and December 1844, the RMSPC deviated from the printed scheme on nine separate occasions. Ships were delayed, for example at Havana in April 1844, but vessels also left their destinations too early (without waiting for the connecting line), as occurred in the same month at Nassau. The Admiralty's desire for calculable and perfectly regular travel therefore failed to correspond with the working realities of an intricately interconnecting service. [4] Even those familiar with the West Indies were inexperienced in piloting large steamships through those waters. Imperfect knowledge of the Caribbean seascape resulted in the grounding of ships, and thus delays. If the train remained 'alarmingly susceptible to the irrational rhythms of pre-modernity', this was even more so for the steamship, which could sail against the winds but was vulnerable to extreme weather such as storms and hurricanes, a regular feature of the Caribbean. [5] In a first important sense, the scheme of routes was dynamic because working realities could not always correspond to the timetabled ideal. In addition to these logistical challenges, however, the scheme of routes was also under frequent negotiation.

This chapter examines the RMSPC's timetable as a web of relations between places. I read the scheme of routes tidalectically, as 'island regions in a dialogue', which means attending simultaneously to contexts and interests in

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[3] NMM RMS 6/3, 13 January 1844. See also NMM RMS 36/3, scheme of routes from 1843 onwards.

[4] NMM RMS 7/2, 4 March 1845.

[5] Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman, 'Introduction: tracks to modernity', in *The railway and modernity: time, space, and the machine ensemble*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 13-43 (p. 13).

multiple ports-of-call, and I consider what the timetable meant to different places in the network.[6] By situating the scheme of routes at the heart of the discussion, I seek to engage with that which David Lambert and Alan Lester term the 'complex spatiality of empire'.[7] The scheme of routes was a spatial document that scheduled trajectories between places, seeking to fix them in time and space, thus steamship timetables ensured that numerous ports-of-call in the Atlantic were 'routinely implicated in distant connections and influences'.[8] Moreover, the RMSPC's service formed one amongst many material 'networks connecting multiple colonial and metropolitan, as well as extra-imperial, sites'.[9] While the scheme of routes brought places into relation with each other through iterative journeys, these iterations were changed for and by the places involved.

Drawing broadly on networked concepts of empire, I specifically follow Tony Ballantyne in deploying the 'metaphor of the web' to examine a steamship service.[10] As Ballantyne argues, a webbed conceptualization of empire offers several advantages. Most salient amongst these for the purposes of this discussion are three key factors. Firstly, the web metaphor reminds us that empire was 'a *structure*, a complex fabrication fashioned out of a great number of disparate parts that were brought together into a new relationship'. Secondly, 'the image of the web emphasizes that the structure of empire was constantly reworked and remade', and thirdly, the web helps to highlight 'horizontal

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[6] Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots: navigating Caribbean and Pacific island literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), p. 22.

[7] David Lambert and Alan Lester, 'Introduction: imperial spaces, imperial subjects', in *Colonial lives across the British empire: imperial careering in the long nineteenth century*, ed. by David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-31 (p. 3).

[8] Ash Amin, 'Regions unbound: towards a new politics of place', *Geografiska annaler. Series B. Human geography*, 86:1 (2004), 33-44 (p. 33).

[9] David Lambert and Alan Lester, 'Introduction: imperial spaces, imperial subjects', p. 10.

[10] Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and race: Aryanism in the British empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 15.

linkages between colonies'.[11] These notions of fabrication, improvisation and relationality shed light on our understanding of steamship services, and the tidalectic processes through which the sea and the shore shaped each other.

I argue that the RMSPC mapped places into relation with one another through its scheme of routes, and that this abstract mapping was subsequently altered and improvised so that steamship routes would fit with localized needs. Lambert and Lester underscore 'the danger of imagining imperial networks as reified and ossified infrastructures, rather like a road or rail network at any given point in time'.[12] Steamship services are susceptible to being interpreted as solid and enduring infrastructures of empire. Yet I argue that the RMSPC's steamship service must be understood as 'provisional and contingent'.[13] In the language of the mobilities turn, this examination of the scheme of routes foregrounds 'the implicit relativity, the inherent relatedness of things through which places actually *take* place.'[14] The network's routes were revised in relation to the needs of the Company's ports-of-call. I argue, then, that the steamship network was dynamic, and continually in process. This process was sometimes fast and sometimes slow. Nevertheless, the scheme of routes was 'altered, updated, and constructed in ways that [altered] sociospatial relations'.[15] The endurance of steamship technology in empire should not obscure the fact that steamship

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. 25.
[12] Lambert and Lester, 'Introduction: imperial spaces, imperial subjects', p. 13.
[13] *Ibid.*
[14] Peter Adey, 'If mobility is everything then it is nothing: towards a relational politics of (im)mobilities', *Mobilities*, 1:1 (2006), 75-94 (p. 78).
[15] Martin Dodge and Rob Kitchin, 'Code and the transduction of space', *Annals - Association of American Geographers*, 95:1 (2005), 162-180 (p. 172).

services, like other forms of infrastructure, were 'modified, repaired, redesigned'.[16]

Although my consideration here is of the steamship service as a webbed network, it is worth noting that the steamship operation could equally be read as a transport infrastructure system. Susan Leigh Star and Karen Ruhleder argue that 'infrastructure is a fundamentally relational concept. It becomes infrastructure in relation to organized practices'.[17] This perspective on infrastructure highlights relations, and therefore echoes relational understandings of networks. Yet Star and Ruhleder suggest that '*[a]n infrastructure occurs when the tension between local and global is resolved*'.[18] The RMSPC's schedule of routes did not 'resolve' the relationship between the local and the global, rather it was processual, and repeatedly adapted and adjusted to the dynamism of this relationship.

Taking several cuts through the service, I argue that the steamship network was kept in process through negotiation from the margins and from the centre, as well as through the unpredictable dynamism of mobilities within the web. Firstly, through discussion of the margins of the network, I argue that the RMSPC's service was seen by interest groups as potentially subject to revision. Secondly, I analyse how the steamship service was gradually adapted to its central spaces by the Company's directors and managers. Thirdly, I examine the synchronization

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[16] *Ibid*.

[17] Susan Leigh Star and Karen Ruhleder, 'Steps toward an ecology of infrastructure: design and access for large information spaces', in *Information technology and organization transformation: history, rhetoric, and practice*, ed. by JoAnne Yates and John Van Maanen (London: Sage, 2001), pp. 305-345 (p. 308).

[18] *Ibid*., p. 309. Emphasis in original.

of networks at nodal ports-of-call. In a final cut, I suggest that more-than-human elements subjected the network to an alternative unpredictable dynamism.

The limits of the network: marginalized places and merchants' pleas

Interested but marginalized parties in the expanded Caribbean viewed the scheme of routes not as 'reified and ossified', but as a provisional arrangement that they could petition to change.[19] As discussed in chapter two, Tim Cresswell considers motive force, velocity, rhythm, route, experience and friction as strands that coalesce to form a constellation of mobility.[20] If the steamship network is considered in these terms, it would seem that while the web's routes were not particularly flexible, steamship rhythms were somewhat easier to alter.

From the perspective of the RMSPC's managers and directors, the Company's webbed network seemed extensive. When asking the Treasury for additional financial support in 1845, the RMSC pointed out that its scheme comprised twenty-five ports of call in the eastern Atlantic, compared to the British and North American Company's four.[21] Yet as comprehensive as operations appeared from London, the limitations of the network were only too apparent to those just beyond the steamers' reach. In the same year that the Company stressed the expansive nature of its operations in correspondence with the Treasury, the Admiralty received a letter that took an antithetical view.

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[19] Lambert and Lester, 'Introduction: imperial spaces', p. 13.
[20] Tim Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', *Environment and planning D: society and space*, 28:1 (2010), 17-31.
[21] NMM RMS 7/2, 4 March 1845.

In September 1845, petitioners from Carriacou, an island north of Grenada, wrote to the Admiralty to express the frustration of living just beyond the limits of the steamship service. As Lambert and Lester note, imperial webs were usually superimposed on existing pre-colonial or earlier imperial networks, and in this case, the RMSPC's arrangement replaced a network of mail packets that had included Carriacou.[22] Yet under the RMSPC's 1843 modified plan, the island found itself marginalized.
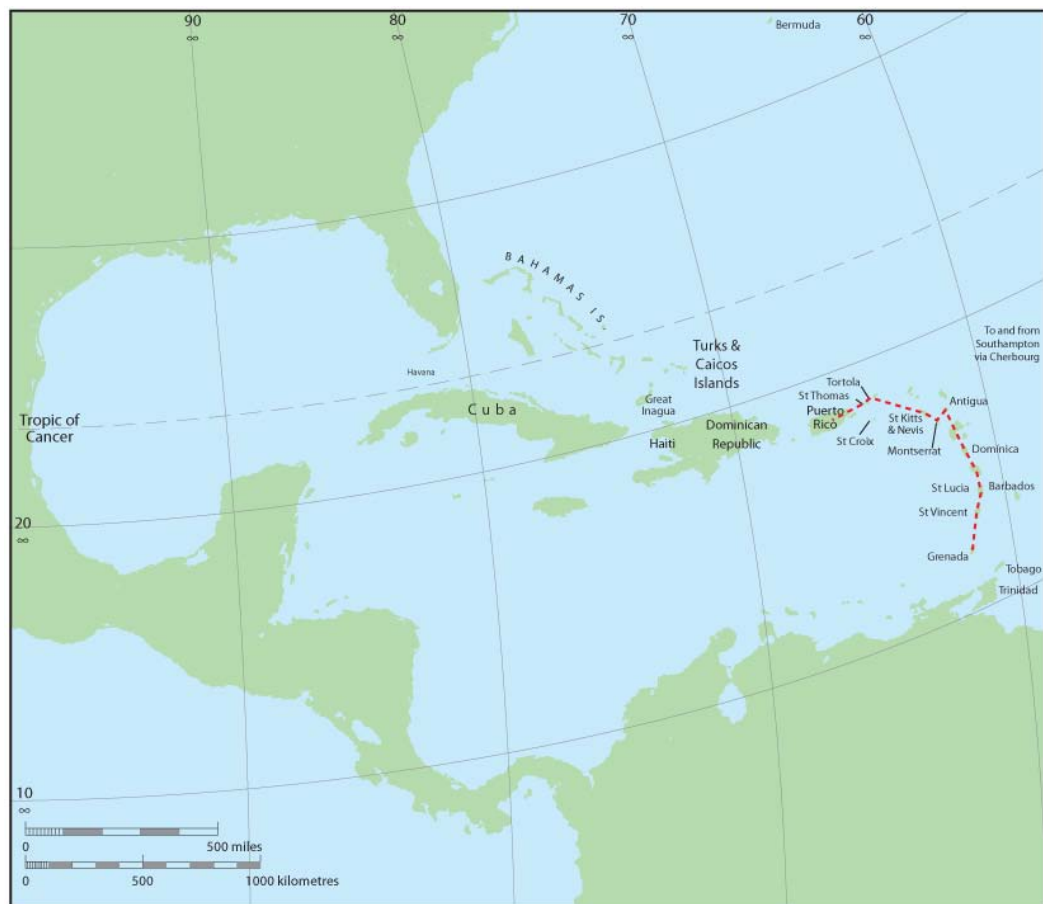
Figure 4.4 The RMSPC's 1843 Northern Islands route. Source: NMM RMS 36/3.

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[22] Lambert and Lester, 'Introduction: imperial spaces, imperial subjects', p. 12.

Travelling from Grenada to St Vincent, the steamer on the 'Northern Islands route' passed within a mile of Carriacou, but only landed the Carriacou mail on arrival at St Vincent (see figure 4.4). Writing to the Admiralty to request a modification to this service, petitioners from Carriacou cannily pointed out that they had been incorporated in the earlier packet network, but also humbly acknowledged that full inclusion might be 'incompatible' with the RMSPC's arrangements. Instead, the residents of Carriacou pragmatically suggested a flexible measure that would allow access to the postal network through deployment of their own resources. They proposed that the steamer, when passing Carriacou at 11am, might drop the Carriacou mail bag into a waiting boat, which they would finance and furnish.[23] The Admiralty consulted the RMSPC on the proposal, and the Company acquiesced. As a result, the Admiralty appointed a postmaster at Carriacou, and informed the RMSPC in June 1846 that a separate mail for that island could henceforth be deposited in the waiting boat as the steamer passed from Grenada to St Vincent.[24] In this way, Carriacou gained an *ad hoc* and partial form of inclusion in the postal element of the network. The petition successfully altered the RMSPC's network for two reasons: firstly, it involved but 'trifling delay' to the pre-existing arrangements, and secondly it burdened the Company with no additional expense.[25] The RMSPC's response to Carriacou's marginalized mail illustrates that the steamship network was provisional insofar as it could be altered to suit local needs. Although this adaptation did not fundamentally change the shape of the

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[23] NMM RMS 6/4, 19 January 1846, enclosure dated 2 September 1845. In the event that the boat was not present on schedule to meet the steamer, or if weather prevented the exchange, the steamer would proceed to St Vincent as usual to deliver the mail. See NMM RMS 7/2, 22 January 1846.

[24] NMM RMS 6/4, 30 June 1846.

[25] NMM RMS 7/2, 22 January 1846.

network, since the steamers' route was not altered, the transfer of correspondence to the Carriacou mail boat nevertheless affected the rhythm of journeys, as the steamer slowed between Grenada and St Vincent to deposit the post. The steamship network was adapted, in this case, to the needs of a small island on the margins of an inter-colonial branch line. Thus the steamship network's 'constellation of mobility' was altered in terms of rhythm.[26]

Although the example of the Carriacou mail indicates that the rhythms of the network were subject to adaptation, a Caymanian request for inclusion in the postal service in 1854 illustrates that the RMSPC's scheme of routes was far from endlessly flexible.[27] Slavery came to an abrupt end on the Cayman Islands in 1835, and was followed by a period of socio-economic transition.[28] During this post-emancipation era, formerly enslaved individuals exercised the kind of localized mobility discussed in chapter three, and re-located to the northern and eastern areas of Grand Cayman. Simultaneously, Cayman Brac and Little Cayman were settled, mostly by white residents.[29] While migration and relocation were key localized internal island mobilities, inclusion in the steamship service offered the prospect of regional migration from further afield.

Two magistrates, William Eden and John Wood, wrote to Governor Sir Henry Barkly in January 1854, arguing that the Cayman Islands should be included in the RMSPC's routes. These men suggested that the islands were fertile but

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[26] Tim Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', p. 26.

[27] The RMSPC had received previous requests along similar lines from the Cayman Islands, for example in 1848.

[28] Michael Craton, *Founded upon the seas: a history of the Cayman Islands and their people* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2003), p. 89.

[29] *Ibid*., pp. 124-5.

underdeveloped, and would benefit from inclusion in the steamship service.[30] Eden and Wood's arguments aligned strongly with the rhetoric surrounding the RMSPC. The Company, after all, had been funded partially in the hope that it might economically strengthen the post-emancipation Caribbean.[31] Yet the Company turned down the request. The RMSPC's response illustrates the kinds of concerns that prevented it from including a place within the scheme of routes. The Company pointed to the dangerous navigation of the Cayman Islands, due to lack of light and soundings. These safety concerns would lead to delays, as vessels might be forced to heave to during the night in dark or cloudy weather, so that they could call at the port by daylight. Furthermore, the Company stressed that including Grand Cayman in the network would increase its steaming by more than two thousand miles per annum, adding to already heavy expenditure.[32] The RMSPC's response to the Caymanian request suggests that expenditure, safety, and a risk of delays were key concerns determining the shape of the scheme of routes. When faced with major reservations in these areas, the Company opted for stability rather than network change.

Another unsuccessful request from Bluefields in Central America reveals how inter-colonial ties signified strongly for marginalized places. In 1847, Britain declared the Mosquito Kingdom a protectorate, and the following year, a lengthy and eloquent plea from HM Consul in the Kingdom of Mosquito argued that the

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[30] *Ibid*., p. 148.

[31] James MacQueen, *A general plan for a mail communication by steam between Great Britain and the eastern and western parts of the world; also, to Canton and Sydney, westward by the Pacific: to which are added, geographical notices of the isthmus of Panama, Nicaragua, &c. with charts* (London: B. Fellowes, 1838).

[32] TNA CO 137/325 Jamaica Public Offices, Letter from the Admiralty, 18 April 1854.

steamer on the Jamaica, Chagres, Cartagena route should call at Bluefields.[33]

William Dougal Christie, who had briefly served as private secretary of Lord

Minto at the Admiralty, was appointed consul-general of the Mosquito territory

in 1848.[34] Christie insisted that the inclusion of Bluefields would not disrupt the

RMSPC's timetable, and would involve little expense. The steamer already

called at St John's (Grey Town), sixty miles from Bluefields. Yet Christie

asserted that emigration from Europe or the West Indies would be to Bluefields

rather than St John's, since this latter place was 'low and swampy, and infested

with mosquitos and sand-flies'.[35] Unlike other requests, Christie stressed that his

plea was not an attempt to ease mail communications with that place, since a

canoe could easily be sent to receive mail from the steamer. The problem,

however, was that the canoe was 'not suitable for passengers or goods'.[36] A

trading vessel from Jamaica occasionally came to Bluefields, but having

travelled to St John's and further south, these vessels would not return along the

coast, due to adverse winds.[37] As a result, Christie lamented, Bluefields was, 'for

all purposes of intercourse, *almost as far from Jamaica as from England*, and

from St Johns as from Jamaica'.[38] He then went on to outline the 'wretched

condition' at the place, articulating familiar colonial concerns with the activities

of formerly enslaved individuals:

> There are no skilful artisans of any kind; the African and Creole
> inhabitants of the place are a lazy apathetic set, content to live on
> plantains, and there is no one here to turn to account, according to the
> modes of European civilization, the abundant gifts of nature; the bush

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[33] This was not the first time that Britain had declared the area a protectorate. The British had appointed Bluefields the capital of the Mosquito Coast in 1678, however Britain agreed to leave the area in 1786 after the logwood trade fell into decline. See Clifford L. Staten, *The history of Nicaragua* (California: Greenwood, 2010), p. 20. See also NMM RMS 6/5, 9 October 1848.

[34] *Dictionary of National Biography* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1887), X, p. 289.

[35] NMM RMS 6/5, 9 October 1848.

[36] *Ibid*.

[37] *Ibid.*

[38] *Ibid*. Emphasis added.

> comes down to the settlement which stretches about a mile along the lagoon with an average width of about a hundred yards; and we want labour to clear it; there are no regular supplies of any kind, and everything is very dear. A steamer coming here regularly once a month would open Bluefields to Jamaica, and, by the St John's River, to central America.[39]

A steamship service, Christie argued, would allow immigration from Jamaica, from where he believed 'many persons' were thinking of emigrating to Bluefields.[40] Thus Christie was interested, above all, in the advantages of linking Bluefields not with Britain, but with Jamaica and Central America. As Christie's petition reveals, the steamship network was significant through its ability to create regional linkages in the Americas, as well as ties with Europe.

Interest groups treated the RMSPC's service as provisional through their petitions and requests for network change. [41] These petitions did not automatically transform the network; several suggestions were turned down, and the RMSPC was resistant to transforming its routes. The network was adapted and altered only insofar as was financially viable and logistically manageable, and in this respect the network's rhythms proved more flexible than its routes. Thus Carriacou successfully petitioned the Company by offering to bear the expense of a mail boat, and slowed the steamer down without altering its course. Yet although the RMSPC's scheme of routes did not prove to be endlessly flexible, it was certainly *perceived* as a working document that could be potentially revised. Furthermore, petitioners' requests are in and of themselves instructive of the service's various meanings. Inclusion in the postal service was significant to petitioners at Carriacou, but the prospect of regional migration was

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[39]*Ibid.*

[40] *Ibid.*

[41] An additional example of this can be seen in the case of Mobile, Alabama. Through determined diplomacy during the late 1840s, representatives of Mobile succeeded in gaining incorporation into the network, as the RMSPC withdrew from Ship Island, and called instead at Mobile.

key to Christie's request. A view from the limits of the network illustrates, therefore, that the steamship network signified different things in different places.

Central sites in the RMSPC's network

While marginalized places petitioned the RMSPC (often unsuccessfully) for change, central spaces of the network were slowly and gradually adapted. St Thomas in the Danish West Indies, a free port located conveniently within the archipelago, occupied a prominent position in the scheme from the commencement of operations, and remained a central station during the first three decades of service. Yet although St Thomas endured as the Caribbean hub during this sustained period, an alternative central transfer station was under consideration as early as the 1860s. In 1867, the General Post Office sent the RMSPC a report from the Admiralty's hydrographer outlining the 'capabilities of certain places in the West Indies as the rendezvous of the intercolonial mail packets'.[42] This report suggested that the station at St Thomas might potentially be exchanged for one at the Gorda Islands or Antigua.[43] Yet such a transfer would entail considerable expense. The report estimated that to adopt Gorda Sound, which would have to be widened, would require an investment of £100,000. Falmouth in Antigua, which was 'not so conveniently placed' as the Virgin Gorda islands, would also require a substantial outlay of £50,000. Alternatively, if a new scheme of routes could be constructed, the

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[42] NMM RMS 6/17, 20 February 1867
[43] *Ibid*.

recommendation was to adopt Castries Harbour on the west side of St Lucia.[44]
Even though St Thomas was a central transfer station for many years of the
RMSPC's service, this stability was somewhat provisional, as the Company was
actively considering alternative central stations even while retaining St Thomas
as the Caribbean transfer point.

It was not only the Company that had alternative central stations in mind. Interest
groups voiced their opinion on the network's hubs, as they did on its
marginalized places. In June 1868, the West India Committee received a
memorial drawn up by seven men at Demerara and backed by the colony's
legislature. H. J. Bascom, Robert Smith, John S. Hill, George H. Oliver, J. J.
Gilbert, W. H. Campbell, and John McConnell had formed a committee to
recommend St Lucia as the central transfer station, instead of St Thomas.
Members of the West India Committee disagreed with these petitioners,
however, and wrote to the Treasury in July 1868 to state that they were
'unanimous in thinking that the best central depot for the West India Packets
would be Barbados'.[45] The following year, having failed to make headway in
shifting the transfer station, the West India Committee resolved 'to make an
application to reopen the question of the West India Mail Packet Station, with a
view to the adoption of Barbados in lieu of St Thomas'. Mr Macgregor and Mr
Chambers of the Committee attended a meeting with Mr Stansfield at the
Treasury on 11 January 1869, and decided also to meet with the RMSPC's
directors in order to 'urge upon them the advisability of selecting Barbados as the

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[44] NMM RMS 6/17, 20 February 1867.
[45] ICS M915 Reel 16, WIC letter book and memoranda 26th October 1866 - 4th April 1870, WIC
10 July 1868.

central packet station in the West Indies'.[46] Yet the Treasury, obliged to extend the RMSPC's contract if it demanded a change in transfer station, cited expense as a compelling reason to retain St Thomas, and declared this place 'satisfactory so far as the convenience of the postal service [was] concerned.[47] Expense was once again a key factor that stabilized the network's routes, yet at the centre as well as at the margins, alternatives were being actively considered and discussed.

Since St Thomas lay at the heart of the network, when the change did eventually come, it was a gradual one. The March 1872 timetable promoted Barbados to a partial position of strategic importance, with the transatlantic steamer departing on the 2nd of each month calling at St Thomas, and the second steamer of the month, departing from Southampton on the 17th, calling at Barbados (see figure 4.5).[48] Inter-colonial routes to Jacmel, Jamaica and Colon departed alternately from St Thomas and Barbados.[49] This double dependency on St Thomas and Barbados as transfer points was sustained by the contract of 1875. The network was eventually altered, then, but in a gradual and piecemeal fashion.

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[46] ICS M915 Reel 16, WIC letter book and memoranda 26th October 1866 - 4th April 1870, WIC 7 January 1869 and 11 January 1869.

[47] ICS M915 Reel 16, WIC letter book and memoranda 26th October 1866 - 4th April 1870, letter from the Treasury, received 23 January 1869. By the terms of the British Government's 1868 contract with the RMSPC, the Government could request that the central transfer station be changed from St Thomas to another port. Yet if the request caused the RMSPC an additional outlay of capital, the Postmaster General was obliged to grant an extension of the contract as a form of compensation for this additional expense.

[48] NMM RMS 36/4, Table of routes commencing from Southampton January 1864, corrected to 18th March, 1872.

[49] Ibid. The Barbados and Demerara route also alternated in departure points. The Trinidad route, which had previously departed from St Lucia, and travelled through to St Vincent; Grenada; Trinidad; and Tobago, now departed once a fortnight from St Lucia, and once a fortnight from Barbados.

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Figure 4.5. The RMSPC's routes via Barbados and St Thomas. Source NMM RMS 36/4.

In the build up to change, the increasing burden of financial responsibility for the mail service on colonial administrations in the West Indies meant that local interests had to be taken increasingly seriously. In June 1883, it was proposed that the West Indian colonies should pay a proportionate share of the loss incurred on the mail service between the United Kingdom and the West Indies, in addition to what they already paid for entry into the Postal Union.[50] The committee of the Chamber of Commerce at Barbados made it clear to the Colonial Secretary in September 1883 that with the new West Indian contract, Barbados should be the first port-of-call at least once a month, as under the

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[50] TNA CO 321/62/47.

existing contract.[51] When the postal contracts were under consideration the following year in 1884, the Postmaster General suggested that if one of the RMSPC's proposals were accepted (which would cost an additional fifteen thousand pounds), Britain would pay half of the additional cost, and the other half would be borne by British Guiana, Trinidad and Barbados, which were the colonies to 'derive most benefit from the improved service'.[52] British Guiana was to pay three thousand pounds, Barbados three thousand pounds, and Trinidad one thousand five hundred pounds. The Colonial Office rejected this proposal, preferring to spread the costs proportionally across the colonies, however the response from Barbados remained key. For example, when the RMSPC proposed moving its establishment to Barbados, but retaining its engineers' workshops at St Thomas, the Colonial Office feared that Barbados might use this as a 'pretext' to repudiate its contribution to the postal service.[53]

Barbados finally became the primary central transfer station by the scheme of routes of July 1885.[54] This timetable scheduled vessels on the Atlantic and Colon route to travel from Southampton to Barbados, and then on to Jacmel, Jamaica and Colon. Further routes connected Barbados with Demerara, the Windward and Leeward Islands.[55] Although alternative central transfer stations were under consideration as early as the 1860s, the financial and logistical impact of altering and transferring central spaces in the network ensured that such revisions took

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[51] *Ibid.*
[52] TNA CO 318/275/9.
[53] TNA CO 28/221/46. The RMSPC suggested that Barbados should be satisfied, as by the new arrangements the transatlantic packets arrived at Barbados four times every four weeks.
[54] NMM RMS 36/4, Table of routes commencing from Southampton 2nd July 1885.
[55] *Ibid.*

place slowly, and in stages. If the steamship network was a process, it was often a slow one.

Central steamship routes were gradually altered, but steamers' rhythms were also adapted to specific ports-of-call. Eviatar Zeruvabel's work indicates the way in which schedules construct daily, weekly, monthly and annual rhythms.[56] Additionally, Tim Cresswell has highlighted the significance of rhythms from a mobilities perspective, and as Tim Edensor underscores, a 'focus on the rhythms of mobility is sustained by the insistence that places are ceaselessly (re)constituted by flows and never reified or bounded'.[57] Steamship rhythms differed from the rhythms of sail, and Jamaica's relationship to the network had to be re-negotiated when the timetable of 1885 brought the steamer to Kingston with what was deemed to be inappropriate timing. Although the timetable of 1885 scheduled the transatlantic steamer to arrive in Jamaica on a Monday morning, in practice, the mail steamer usually arrived at Kingston on a Sunday.

The Governor of Jamaica pointed out that 'the arrival of the mail steamer from Southampton is the great event of the fortnight and when it comes in on Sunday there is a general interruption in Kingston of the quiet and rest of the Sabbath'.[58] Since the postal and customs departments had to work, a special train was run on the railway, and 'the cart men and drivers of public conveyances' were required to labour, the arrival of the mail steamer gave the town 'a regular week day

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[56] Zeruvabel, *Hidden rhythms*, p. 33.
[57] Tim Edensor, 'Introduction: thinking about rhythm and space', in *Geographies of rhythm: nature, place, mobilities and bodies*, ed. by Tim Edensor (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 1-20 (p. 5).
[58] TNA CO 137/522, 28 July 1885, enclosure dated 3 September 1885.

appearance'.[59] A memorial on the subject was addressed to the Governor, presented by a deputation of ministers from different religious denominations, and bearing four hundred and ninety-six signatures.[60] While the memorial was led by the actions of religious ministers, they claimed that 'even those who do not object on religious grounds still feel that it is undesirable to have a fortnightly disturbance of the ordinary Sunday quiet'.[61] In this way, the rhythms of Kingston were affected by those of the industrialized oceanic transport network.[62] The objections of colonial elites ensured that the transportation network was forced to adapt in deference to religious observance. While it was understood that the extra time allowed more letters to be answered, this steamship rhythm nevertheless provoked 'great dissatisfaction' in Kingston. In this way, the steamship service affected the routine rhythms of Kingston.

When the RMSPC responded to Jamaican complaints by instructing vessels not to arrive at Jamaica until the timetabled day (Monday at 8am), the Company faced further outcry.[63] While the Sunday arrival was 'objected to', the altered arrangement which brought the steamers in on schedule on Monday mornings was 'even more strongly objected to' as providing insufficient time to answer correspondence.[64] At this point, the RMSPC informed the colonists that their complaints would be borne in mind when the timetable was next subject to alteration.[65] The problem was rectified, but only during the course of the next

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[59] *Ibid.*
[60] *Ibid.*
[61] *Ibid.*
[62] The importance of everyday rhythms has been highlighted by Tim Edensor. See Edensor, 'Introduction: thinking about rhythm and space', p. 2.
[63] TNA CO 137/523, 12 November 1885.
[64] TNA CO 137/523, 23 October 1885.
[65] TNA CO 137/523, 12 November 1885.

mail contract. The timetable of 1890 brought the transatlantic steamer to Jamaica on a Friday, and this vessel left Jamaica on a Saturday. Unlike the 1885 timetable, the 1890 scheme of routes scheduled no arrivals or departures in the Americas on Sundays.[66]

The RMSPC adapted its steamship routes through the network's central spaces, but did so slowly over the course of several years. There was a bureaucratic and logistical drag on the network's dynamism that caused route alterations to occur in a measured fashion. Meanwhile, interest groups were vocal about the network's hubs, as they were about its limits, and organizations such as the West India Committee approached the scheme of routes as a working document that was subject to alteration, in much the same way as Christie at Bluefields, or petitioners from Carriacou. The example of Jamaica, like that of the central station at Barbados, illustrates how the steamship network, when changed, was gradually adapted to fit the needs of multiple places, yet the case of Jamaica again underlines the fact that the network's rhythms could be altered much more quickly and easily than its routes.

The place of Panama in the RMSPC's network

Places were altered by the RMSPC's steamship network, and the steamship network was, in turn, influenced by the maritime mobilities that gathered through place. In this section, I examine Panama's changing role in the RMSPC's scheme of routes to explore how a place could be strategically constructed as a hub, and

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[66] NMM RMS 36/4, Tables of routes for the packets of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company commencing from Southampton 9th July 1890.

how the construction of nodal points in turn impacted upon steamship usage.
While some historians rightly stress the incorporation of the Atlantic into global
trading networks during the nineteenth century, the case of Panama indicates
how the Atlantic might retain relevance as a unit of analysis. In this case, a
nineteenth-century global hub was managed with reference to regional
frameworks: the Pacific Steam Navigation Company (PSNC) transported
currency and bullion across the Pacific, and the RMSPC conveyed it across the
Atlantic.[67] In order to render Panama a hub in the scheme of routes, the RMSPC
sought to adapt and synchronize local infrastructures. Subsequently,
interdependent layers of infrastructure constructed at and around Panama
intensified mobilities in the region, and heightened migrant use of the RMSPC's
service. Alongside petitioners' pleas for network change, the shifting strategic
importance of ports-of-call constituted an additional factor that kept the scheme
of routes in process.

The strategic significance of Panama in the RMSPC's scheme shifted over time.
Although the Panama region was included in the timetable from the outset of
operations in 1842, with Mr Perry acting as agent at the Isthmus of Panama, and
Don Julian Ramos his deputy at Chagres, the 1843 revised scheme of routes only
provided one schooner each month from Kingston to Santa Martha, Cartagena,

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[67] The Pacific Steam Navigation Company (PSNC) was founded by an American, William
Wheelwright, who had served as the first U.S. Consul at Guayaquil, Gran Colombia, and initially
hoped that the company would gain the financial backing of the United States. Wheelwright had
a maritime background, having trained as an ordinary seaman at the age of sixteen, before
working in the merchant shipping industry. Unable to secure American financing for his project,
in 1837 Wheelwright published a pamphlet in England on introducing steam to the Pacific, and
the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's first official meeting was held the following year.
Beginning service in 1840 on the west coast of South America, the company's earliest years were
difficult, and the PSNC only secured a British Government mail contract in 1845. See J. Valerie
Fifer, *William Wheelwright (1798-1873): steamship and railroad pioneer* (Newburyport,
Massachusetts: The Historical Society of Old Newbury, 1998).

and Chagres.[68] A few years later, however, this arrangement was adapted when the RMSPC's service was synchronized with the mail contract operations of the PSNC. In 1845, the RMSPC sent Colonial Superintendent Captain Liot to report on the advantages of a trans-isthmian route. Crown Surveyor of Jamaica, Mr McGeachy, joined Liot, and the two men proceeded together to Chagres. The joint report that resulted from this trip led to the establishment of a Royal Mail overland route in 1846, which consisted of travel by canoe and mule.[69] In the same year, the PSNC began to carry the British mail from Panama, connecting with the RMSPC's service to Colon (see figure 4.6).[70]

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[68] NMM RMS 36/2, Modified plan for performing the West India mail packet service, May 1843, Table No. VI; NMM RMS 36/3 May 1843 timetable, Table No. X; TNA FO 289/3, 13 February 1842.

[69] T. A. Bushell, *"Royal Mail": a centenary history of the Royal Mail line 1839-1939* (London: Trade and Travel, 1939), p. 87.

[70] In 1846, the Pacific Steam Navigation Company extended the Valparaiso service via Guayaquil to Panama. This service connected with the RMSPC's Southampton to Colon route, and created an overland Panama route to Valparaiso, which took forty days, instead of four months travelling via Cape Horn. See Duncan Haws, *Merchant fleets 8: Pacific Steam Navigation Company* (Hereford: Travel Creatours, 1990).

Figure 4.6 Map showing the Panama region.

Panama was constructed as a nodal point between steamship networks through the establishment of local infrastructures, and the synchronization of systems. The timetables were coordinated, but supporting mechanisms were also adapted to facilitate smooth flows between the services. This enabled the circulation of capital between the Pacific and the Atlantic oceans, as the Californian gold rush heightened the demand for steamship services (not only the services of the RMSPC and the PSNC, but also American companies such as the United States Mail Steamship Company). Gold, silver and specie travelling eastwards from

California were frequently routed through Panama, and this impacted upon the freight usage of both land-based and maritime transportation concerns.[71]

Writing and accounting practices proved key to routing freight, as quantities and values had to be accurately checked and recorded as they moved between the two companies' services. Freight was charged from the west coast of America at 2¼ per cent to the Bank of England, 2⅛ per cent to British Guiana, 2 per cent to Jamaica and Cuba, and 1⅞ per cent to Santa Martha and Cartagena. These charges were payable at the place of delivery.[72] The PSNC earned ⅞ of the freight money on treasure shipped through Panama, and the RMSPC was entitled to the final ⅛. When transporting such freight, the PSNC packed bars of bullion, specie, jewellery and precious stones in wooden or iron cases on board its vessels. Five copies of the bills of lading for such freight were drawn up: three copies retained by the shipper, one part kept by the PSNC's agent, and the final copy handed to the RMSPC's representative at Panama.[73]

Having transported treasure as far as Panama, the PSNC delivered it to the RMSPC's agent, and any treasure was to be examined and weighed on scales supplied from London. If an item appeared to differ from the bill of lading, the freight had to be opened in front of the commander of the vessel landing the package (or the PSNC's agent) as well as the RMSPC's agent. The package was then to be certified on an accountable receipt, which was handed by the

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[71] Aims McGuinness, *Path of empire: Panama and the California gold rush* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008), pp. 6-7.

[72] 2 ⅛ per cent was also charged to Bermuda, Vera Cruz, Tampico and Fayal. 2 per cent was charged to Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico, St Thomas, the Windward Islands, Venezuela, Honduras and Nassau, and 1 ⅞ per cent was charged to San Juan de Nicaragua.

[73] NMM RMS 82/1, agreement 10 November 1846.

RMSPC's agent to the PSNC's agent. In this way, the ability to quantify and produce written records of the treasure *in situ* became crucial to profits. This, in turn, depended upon matching standards. Thus in June 1848, at a meeting with the PSNC, Captain Liot pointed out the inconvenience that would result if treasure on the west coast were measured by steelyard instead of using scales, as was the practice by the RMSPC's agent at Panama.[74] Not only did steamship routes have to coincide, but the infrastructure supporting material flows also had to correspond, with matching measuring and accounting mechanisms. As Bowker and Star indicate with reference to infrastructure, 'the depths of interdependence of technical networks and standards' become apparent, and this was certainly in evidence in the synchronization of steamship services.[75]

The cooperation of the two companies, and the strategic integration of their networks via Panama was not a straightforward process. It was only through 'frequent and tedious' meetings between Captain Liot and the directors of the PSNC in Liverpool that an agreement between the two companies on the transit of treasure could be drawn up.[76] For example, the ⅞ - ⅛ division laid out in the November 1846 agreement was the result of negotiation. In January 1846, after the PSNC refused to accept a ¾ share of 2½ per cent on currency shipped from the Pacific to the Bank of England, the RMSPC offered an improved ⅞ of the share on currency delivered at Panama.[77] The two networks were thus carefully synchronized not only through the production of written records, and through the

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[74] UCL RMSP 7, 27 June 1848.
[75] Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting things out: classification and its consequences* (Massachusets: MIT Press, 2000), p. 34.
[76] UCL RMSP 6, 8 December 1846.
[77] UCL RMSP 6, 12 January 1846. At this meeting Captain Liot also recommended that the PSNC send flat-bottomed boats to Panama, similar to those that the RMSPC had at Chagres for landing freight, passengers and cargo.

measuring, weighing and tracking of items in transit, but also by negotiating the division of profits. A great deal of preparatory work went into creating the Panama region as a site of steamship cooperation.

In addition to diplomatic negotiations and synchronized technical standards, the RMSPC's network required localized heavy infrastructure. I will discuss coaling station infrastructure in detail in chapter six, but at Panama, a key element of the supporting infrastructure was a road. In 1838, William Wheelwright of the PSNC wrote that there were:

> [T]wo roads or mule paths to Panama; the one from Gorgona and the other from Cruces; the former is somewhat longer, but in the dry season it is mostly good galloping ground and may be rode over easily in six or seven hours; during the rains, it is muddy; the latter is broken, stony and precipitous; it was formerly a paved road but, being neglected, the stones are very annoying; the mules, however, are sure-footed and there is no danger; the muleteers having their relations and friends at Cruces, endeavour to persuade passengers to take this route in preference to that of Gorgona.[78]

In February 1848, the RMSPC informed the British Government of its intention to loan 21,000 dollars to the Republic of New Granada for repair of the road between Panama and Cruces.[79] Captain Liot was then dispatched to Bogota to pursue negotiations, and enter into conditional arrangements for the commencement of the work.[80] The RMSPC appealed to the Foreign Office for diplomatic assistance, and the Foreign Office instructed Mr O'Leary, HM Chargé d'affaires at Botoga, to persuade the New Granadian government to accept the RMSPC's proposal for the road repairs.[81] On 20 May 1848, Mr O'Leary agreed to sign a contract with the New Granadian Government on

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[78] Statement by Wheelwright, quoted in Arthur C. Wardle, *Steam conquers the Pacific: a record of maritime achievement, 1840-1940* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1940), p. 71.
[79] UCL RMSP 7, 15 February 1847.
[80] UCL RMSP 7, 16 February 1847.
[81] NMM RMS 6/5, 17 February 1848.

behalf of the RMSPC, for repair of the road between Cruces and the city of Panama.[82]

The contract was signed on 24 May 1848. The first article of this agreement required the RMSPC to provide 180,000 reals, or the equivalent of 90,000 francs for the work. The road was to be completed by January 1851, and from this time, the RMSPC was to provide 10,000 reals annually for three years to mend and improve the road. The New Granadian government was to repay this money, at an interest of 6 per cent annually, in monthly instalments. The payments would be made to HM General Post Office, deducted from the sums owed to the New Granadian government through the postal convention of May 1847. The laws of New Granada allowed all articles needed for repair of the road to pass through the custom houses free of duty.

Just as at the coaling station, a local workforce was required, and at New Granada, this workforce was maintained by the RMSPC. The New Granadian Government agreed to keep at the disposal of the directing engineer at least two hundred 'sappers', unless prevented by unforeseen circumstances, and Daniel O'Leary reported that the local authorities of Panama would provide more than the 'stipulated number of sappers'.[83] The RMSPC paid the expense for these labourers, and was refunded by the New Granadian authorities.[84] 'Unforseen circumstances' occurred however in July, when the RMSPC wrote to the Foreign Office remonstrating against the fact that the 'sappers' had been disbanded. On investigation by O'Leary, it was discovered that this was due to an outbreak of

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[82] NMM RMS 6/5, 7 July 1848.
[83] NMM RMS 6/5, 9 August 1848, enclosure dated 30 May 1848.
[84] *Ibid*.

cholera. The Foreign Office assured the RMSPC that they would put pressure on the New Granadian government to replace the workforce. [85] The RMSPC's construction of Panama as a nodal port-of-call was thus partially dependent upon land-based infrastructure, provided by a group of local labourers in the Americas. [86]

Infrastructural elements were constructed and financially supported by steamship services such as the RMSPC, and the connectivity of places such as Panama impacted on the steamship network. In the later era of the Panama Canal, individuals migrating for labour purposes transformed the use of the RMSPC's service in this region. The canal had two phases of construction, and the first was from 1880 to 1889. [87] During this first period, Robert Woolward, an RMSPC officer, wrote of his voyage on the RMS *Don* in October 1881 when he 'had to board the first of the people who went out to commence work on the Panama Canal'. Woolward described these as follows:

> The party consisted of forty-four, mostly Belgian mechanics, a very rough lot, [...] I don't think any of them lived to return to their native country. [88]

Woolward explained also that: '[f]or the next five years the principal business of the ship was to carry people to Colon for service on the canal works'. He claimed that, '[o]n more than one occasion [he had] landed over a thousand people at Colon', explaining how, 'Negroes flocked there from all parts of the West Indies,

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[85] NMM RMS 6/5, 29 December 1849.

[86] As well as providing a loan for the construction of the road, the RMSPC also lent financial backing to the transformation of Panama through the construction of the railroad. When the venture was struggling with a lack of funds in 1850, the RMSPC loaned the Railroad Company 125,000 dollars (£25,000). See Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, *A link of empire, souvenir of the 70th year of incorporation of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company* (London,1909), p. 76.

[87] F. P. Davidson and K. L. Brooke, *Building the world: an encyclopedia of the great engineering projects in history* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2006), I, p. 315. The second phase of construction was from 1904 to the canal's opening in 1914.

[88] Robert Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years at sea* (London: Digby Long & Co, [1894]), pp. 264-265.

attracted by the promise of high wages'.[89] In this way, the construction of another kind of transportation infrastructure (the Panama Canal) impacted upon the use of the RMSPC's steamship service, so that the RMSPC was characterised, during this later period, by transatlantic and migrant labour mobilities through the Americas.

In his trademark style, James Anthony Froude wrote of his inter-colonial journey from Barbados on the Jamaica, Vera Cruz and Darien canal route:

> This wonderful enterprise of M Lesseps has set moving the loose negro population of the Antilles and Jamaica. Unwilling to work as they are supposed to be, they have swarmed down to the isthmus, and are still swarming thither in tens of thousands, tempted by the dollar or dollar and a half a day which M. Lesseps is furnishing. The vessel which called for us at Dominica was crowded with them, and we picked up more as we went on. Their average stay is for a year. At the end of a year half of them have gone to the other world. Half go home, made easy for life with money enough to buy a few acres of land and "live happy ever after."[90]

Froude travelled at a period of intense Isthmian travel during the 1880s. Between January and October 1885, for example, 11,867 people travelled from Jamaica to Colon, and 10,572 were recorded as having returned.[91] Woolward noted that principal amongst migrants to Panama were Jamaicans, many of whom died, but, he insisted, 'much the larger number returned with sufficient money to enable them to become small settlers on a bit of land of their own'.[92] Whereas Woolward suggested that Jamaicans enjoyed favourable prospects in the Isthmus during the 1880s, Colonial Office records suggest that Jamaicans could experience hardship in that place, not only susceptible to disease, but also violence.[93] As Risa Faussette has pointed out:

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[89] *Ibid*.

[90] James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies* (London: Longmans, 1888), p. 155.

[91] CO 137/523, correspondence on labourers at Panama.

[92] Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years*, pp. 264-5.

[93] See TNA CO137/522, 28 July 1885, enclosure dated 6 July 1885.

> Although West Indian workers were commonly viewed as shiftless, ignorant, and unreliable tropical laborers, they performed the lowest paid and most dangerous assignments on the isthmian canal project. Subject as they were to exhaustion, disease, explosions, and landslides, an estimated 15,000 West Indians perished in Panama during the canal construction era.[94]

Nevertheless, the temporary numeric significance of regional travel to Panama − an example of individuals having recourse to steamship routes in order to better establish land-based roots − illustrates how steamship networks affected and were affected by the dynamics of place.

As Ballantyne emphasizes, by conceptualizing the empire 'as a complex agglomeration of overlapping webs, it is possible to envisage that certain locations, individuals or institutions in the supposed periphery might in fact be the centre of intricate networks themselves'.[95] Panama, just after mid-century, can be considered a location over which other powers jostled to exert influence, but also as the centre of an intricate web of steamship lines emanating eastwards and westwards. The RMSPC's network of routes was one that overlapped and intersected with numerous other lines running through Panama in the late 1850s. These included the Pacific Mail Steamship Company (between New York and China), the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique (between St Nazaire and Aspinwall); the West India and Pacific Steamship Company (between Liverpool, South and Central America and Aspinwall); the Panama, New Zealand, and Australian Royal mail Company, the British Pacific Steam Navigation Company (between Panama, New Granada, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Chile), the Panama

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[94] Risa L. Faussette, 'Race, migration, and port-city radicalism: West Indian longshoremen and the politics of empire, 1880-1920', in *Seascapes: maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges*, ed. by Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), pp. 169-185 (p. 169). See also Velma Newton, *The silver men: West Indian labour migration to Panama 1850-1914* (Kingston: Institute of Social and Economic Research, UWI, 1984).

[95] Ballantyne, *Orientalism and race*, p. 15.

Railroad Company's Central American line of steamships; and the California, Oregon, and Mexico Company's steamships from San Francisco, through to the Island of Vancouver.[96]

Thus Panama was a regional hub as well as a hub in the RMSPC's network. The process of altering the place of Panama in the network was partly infrastructural, involving the appointment of an agent, an investment in a road, and the synchronization of its service with that of the PSNC. The changed place of Panama in the network also affected regional usage of the RMSPC's routes, as high-value freight was shipped on RMSPC steamers during the 1840s and 1850s, and labourers used the steamers to travel to the Panama Canal during the 1880s and 1900s. The emergence of strategic transportation hubs such as Panama was an additional aspect of the steamship network's dynamism.

The network in crisis: yellow fever at St Thomas

Ballantyne reminds us that webs are 'fragile, prone to crises where important threads are broken or structural nodes destroyed'.[97] With this in mind, I turn now to consider St Thomas and the natural dynamism of the webbed steamship network. Specifically, this case study centres on more-than-human elements affecting the service − namely the mobility of viruses and resulting health fears. As Sarah Whatmore argues, we might consider '"livingness" as a modality of connection between bodies (including human bodies) and (geo-physical)

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[96] F. N. Otis, *History of the Panama Railroad and of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1867), p 55.
[97] Ballantyne, *Orientalism and race*, p. 15.

worlds'.[98] The steamship network, as a 'hybrid' geography of human and non-human elements, was characterised by such 'livingness'.[99]

The yellow fever virus is spread by the Aëdes Aegypti mosquito when the insect ingests diseased blood from an individual and then injects the virus into a healthy person. The mosquito is mostly found in urban areas, and prefers to breed in standing water.[100] During the nineteenth century, the cause of the spread of yellow fever remained mysterious. Medical opinion was divided with some attributing yellow fever to atmospheric, miasmatic and meteorological influences, and others stressing sanitation and hygiene.[101] One school of thought attributed yellow fever to local conditions, while another considered it to be contagious.[102] As Philip Curtin indicates, despite the different emphases in medical understanding, 'the standard defense against the disease in the West Indies had been flight from wherever the outbreak occurred'.[103] Yet flight was not a viable response for the Company, as the RMSPC's contracted commitment to maintain communication with the West Indies required that ships continue to pass through either St Thomas or an equivalent site where transfer could be made between transatlantic and inter-colonial steamers. Health crises at St Thomas repeatedly impacted upon the RMSPC's service and affected staffing, velocity,

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[98] Sarah Whatmore, 'Materialist returns: practising cultural geography in and for a more-than-human world', *Cultural geographies*, 13 (2006), 600-609 (p. 603).

[99] Sarah Whatmore, *Hybrid geographies: natures cultures spaces* (London: Sage, 2002).

[100] Jo N. Hays, *Epidemics and pandemics: their impacts on human history* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC Clio, 2005), p. 179.

[101] C. De Paolo, *Epidemic disease and human understanding: a historical analysis of scientific and other writings* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2006), p. 222.

[102] Place was at the heart of the debate, since as Hays points out, 'Yellow fever was one of the central diseases at stake in nineteenth-century discussion of the relative importance of contagion and environment'. See Hays, *Epidemics and pandemics*, p. 262.

[103] Philip Curtin, *Disease and empire: the health of European troops in the conquest of Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 64-5; Katherine Arner, 'Making yellow fever American: the early American republic, the British Empire and the geopolitics of disease in the Atlantic world', *Atlantic studies*, 7:4 (2010), 447-471.

rhythms and routes of operations. In this way, the natural dynamism of the steamship network kept the scheme of routes in process.

Concerns relating to health at St Thomas were circulating by the 1850s. Woolward wrote about the occasion of a yellow fever outbreak in the West Indies in 1852, when the epidemic led to his promotion to commander of the *Great Western*. Yellow fever was an unpleasant disease, and during this period, doctors recognised patients from the jaundiced appearance of their eyes and skin, black vomit, and a high fever that could cause delirium.[104] Woolward explained that upon the outbreak of the illness, he 'immediately sent all the white men left of the crew to England, and filled up their places with blacks', after which, he claimed he had 'no more yellow fever troubles'.[105] This racialized understanding of bodies' immunity operated similarly in other imperial contexts. On a British expedition in West Africa in the 1870s, for example, expedition leaders decided that if yellow fever spread aboard their vessel, they would replace the European crew of the hospital ship nearby with African sailors recruited in Liberia, because they believed Africans to be immune to the disease.[106] Yet black and white employees of the RMSPC together suffered the effects of yellow fever.[107] The more-than-human mobility of yellow fever vectors could mean the difference between life and death within the steamship network.

During the nineteenth century, those who attributed the disease to environment rather than contagion associated yellow fever with particular places and the

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[104] Hays, *Epidemics and pandemics*, p. 180.
[105] Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years*, p. 97.
[106] Curtin, *Disease and empire*, pp. 64-5.
[107] NMM RMS 6/17, 16 January 1867.

conditions to be found there. The harbour at St Thomas was perceived as being alarmingly stagnant, and thus in February 1857, RMSPC Captain Charles Edward Mangles forwarded a report on the unhealthiness of St Thomas harbour to Henry Labouchere MP. The report was authored by George Abbott, master of one of the RMSPC's contract packets. Abbott had a proposal to 'alleviate in some measure the extent of fever and loss of life at St Thomas harbour', from which the RMSPC's vessels had been suffering. Abbott suggested that the quantity of ships constantly in the harbour, and the number of people employed around the coal wharf, added to the drainage from the town and burial ground, meant that 'the Harbour water must be very impure, and this, acted upon by a tropical sun, very injurious to the health of those living and sleeping in the vapor arising therefrom'.[108] In addition, the winds, which blew from east-northeast to east-southeast, prevented 'any thing in the shape of filth or decayed vegetation, ever leaving the Harbour that has once found its way in'.[109] Abbott recommended that the Danish Government should make an outlet to the harbour, to 'relieve the harbour of the surface filth'.[110] Mangles suggested that a communication on the subject should be made to the Danish Government, a measure that was subsequently taken.[111]

Within this context of discussion and negotiation, the RMSPC adapted an infrastructural element in its steamship network. As the coaling station was believed to be insalubrious, the Company moved to occupy a former coaling premises. Yet despite this adaptation, the RMSPC came under attack for the

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[108] TNA CO 318/217, 28 October 1857, enclosure dated 31 August 1857.
[109] *Ibid*.
[110] *Ibid*.
[111] TNA CO 318/217, 28 October 1857, enclosure dated 10 October 1857; TNA CO 318/217, 28 October 1857.

speed of its response, and reluctance to withdraw to Jamaica for coaling instead. James Williams wrote to Henry Merivale on the subject of mortality at the St Thomas coaling station, and more specifically, the RMSPC's explanations to the Admiralty about the health crisis. Williams questioned the RMSPC's decision not to take this measure sooner, asking 'why are so many lives sacrificed, when the disease, and its causes, were apparent for so long a period before?' [112] Williams questioned the RMSPC's surgeons' judgement also, asking why, if these gentlemen's views that the disease arose as a result of 'the malaria arising from the putrescences floating about the harbour', the inhabitants or visiting Europeans were not more seriously affected. Williams was equally unconvinced by the RMSPC's claims that it was successfully trying to prevent yellow fever at St Thomas. Whilst not accusing the RMSPC's directors of 'inhumanity', Williams insisted that 'sufficient precaution, or care, was not hitherto paid to the evidence of the insalubrity of their station at St Thomas'. [113]

A decade later, similar concerns surfaced once again as during the winter of 1866-1867, the RMSPC's crew and employees suffered devastatingly high mortality at St Thomas. George Gibon, staff commander and naval agent, wrote to the Company in January 1867 to report 'a most poisonous malaria in the atmosphere' of the place. 'Most of the native labourers and the crews of the collieries employed there in discharging coals, and coaling the Company's mail packets', he wrote, had died. Gibbon had arrived in St Thomas in command of a barque bringing coal for the Company's use. He reported that his crew were in good health until he 'went along the *Shannon*, which vessel was coaling at the

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[112] TNA CO 318/217, 28 October 1857, enclosure dated 14 September 1857.
[113] *Ibid.*

wharf', after which he 'lost all [of his] crew alongside the wharf', except for one boy. In Gibbon's opinion, the disease had been spread through 'contact with infecting malaria arising from the coals lying so long on the wharf'.[114] Gibbon described the coaling wharf at St Thomas as 'a dirty filthy hole' at which 'no English Doctor or men of science' were allowed to practice.[115] In addition to Gibbon's alarming rhetoric, the Company received the news that the RMS *La Plata* had sailed from St Thomas harbour on 31 December 1866 with more than fifty of the crew sick, and that twenty-three of these were now deceased.[116]

This epidemic at St Thomas was neither the first nor the last of such health crises experienced in the Caribbean. John Booker points to the fact that yellow fever 'had long decimated the crews of warships newly arrived in the West Indies'.[117] Furthermore, as Katherine Arner has argued, the West Indies was a key site of knowledge about yellow fever in the Atlantic world.[118] Nevertheless, the weekly reality of the RMSPC's routes passing through and intersecting at this nodal point in the network forced the Company (as well as the Privy Council) to negotiate and respond, at this time, to the connection between Southampton, St Thomas, and the 'expanded' Caribbean.[119] The steamship network enabled intended and unwanted mobilities, and the consequences of the latter necessitated moments of revision and improvisation in the network.

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[114] NMM RMS 6/17, 16 January 1867.
[115] *Ibid*.
[116] NMM RMS 6/17, 7 January 1867 and 16 January 1867.
[117] John Booker, *Maritime quarantine: the British experience, c. 1650-1900* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p. 256.
[118] Arner, 'Making yellow fever American', pp. 447-8.
[119] During the 1860s, the RMSPC's transatlantic steamers were timetabled to travel to St Thomas, where they stopped over for two weeks, taking on coal and preparing for the homeward voyage to Southampton. St Thomas was also the point of departure for six inter-colonial branch routes across the 'expanded' Caribbean towards Grey Town, Tampico, Honduras, Demerara, Tobago and Nassau. See NMM RMS 54/2, 24 April 1867 and NMM RMS 36/3, 1851 scheme of routes.

In response to this more-than-human network dynamism, quarantine measures on both sides of the Atlantic were imposed by local and Government authorities, which altered the velocity and rhythms of the steamship network. In 1844, the Privy Council agreed to move a floating lazaretto (the *Menelaus*) from Stangate Creek to The Motherbank for use by steamship services.[120] When yellow fever or any other 'highly infectious distemper' was prevalent in America or the West Indies, the Privy Council could require every vessel that had called at an infected port to anchor at a specified place, where the vessel would be visited to ascertain the health of the crew, before the ship was allowed to proceed to the port to which it was bound.[121] When steamers reached Southampton with sick passengers on board, the norm was to hold such vessels in quarantine until the sixth day after the last patient had become ill. For longer periods of quarantine, steamers anchored at The Motherbank, close to the lazaretto. Under such conditions, only those who could swear that they had previously suffered from yellow fever were allowed to leave.[122] As John Booker's work indicates, steamship services played an important role in facilitating the mobility of diseases.[123]

Quarantine measures altered steamship rhythms by forcing vessels to pause along their route. After a health crisis on board the *Hecla* at Swansea, it could no longer be assumed (as it previously had been) that the cold climate would

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[120] John Booker, *Maritime quarantine*, pp. 498-9.
[121] NMM RMS 6/17, 16 March 1867.
[122] Booker, *Maritime quarantine*, pp. 531-532.
[123] *Ibid.*, p. 515.

prevent the spread of yellow fever.[124] The Privy Council thus began to treat vessels inbound from the West Indies with extreme caution. The RMS *Atrato*'s journey in the winter of 1866 demonstrates how health scares caused vessels to pause. In November 1866, news of the *Atrato*'s imminent arrival in Britain from St Thomas was greeted with an electric telegraph message to G. R. Cassé, Superintendent of Quarantine at The Motherbank. The Superintendent was instructed to prepare to receive sick passengers.[125] The *Atrato* arrived off the coast of Southampton on 12 November, with fourteen of the ship's crew deceased from yellow fever. All of the passengers, on the other hand, were in good health, and no cases of the illness had appeared in the latter days of the voyage. Those sick on board the vessel were sent to the *Menelaus*, while the healthy passengers were transferred to the *Parana*. The *Atrato* then had to be fumigated before luggage could be transferred to the *Parana*.[126] While in quarantine, the vessels were guarded by gunboats.[127] On 23 November, after a ten day delay, the *Atrato* and the *Parana* were released from quarantine, along with convalescing individuals on board the *Menelaus*.[128] Thus quarantine measures altered the rhythms of steamship journeys by creating pauses in a steamer's journey.

These steamship pauses were tricky to negotiate, as the same vessel's trajectory indicates. One of the *Atrato*'s passengers wrote to *The Times*, subjecting the Privy Council to embarrassment, and provoking debate on whether or not yellow fever was contagious, but also prompting the newspaper to publish an article

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[124] *Ibid*., p. 535.
[125] *Ibid*.
[126] *Ibid*., p. 536.
[127] *Ibid*.
[128] *Ibid*.

stating that 'the unfortunate passengers were long kept shivering in their light tropical clothing, until the Privy Council was made certain that they would not infect the British people amid the chills of a very cold November'.[129] As well as implying ill-treatment of the passengers, the article cast doubt upon the scientific rationale for yellow fever quarantine by suggesting 'strong doubts as to Yellow Fever being contagious at all'.[130] The newspaper suggested that the sick should have been sent to a lazaretto, and the healthy should have been sent 'at large', while the vessel itself ought to have been 'kept from contact with other vessels' for a longer time.[131] In the absence of clear medical consensus about how best to manage yellow fever, or indeed about how mobile the disease might be, even with lives at risk, the Privy Council faced criticism for slowing down passages in the network. It was a delicate balancing act. If ships were not subjected to quarantine, then British vessels would risk being quarantined in foreign ports.[132] Quarantine measures created temporary pockets of stasis in the network, and altered the experience of the journey.[133] As Edensor points out, '[j]ourneys have a particular rhythmic shape'.[134] Mobile infections, viruses, and other 'non-human' elements impacted on the rhythmic shape of steamship journeys.[135]

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[129] *The Times*, 24 November, 1866.

[130] *Ibid*.

[131] *Ibid*.

[132] When on the receiving end of other countries' quarantine regulations, the RMSPC was liable to complain. In 1848, for example, the Company wrote to the Admiralty about the stringent quarantine that Spanish officials in Cuba had instituted, which was causing disruption to the Company's operations. See NMM RMS 6/5, 12 December 1848.

[133] The potentially distressing nature of quarantine can be partially inferred from the dispute which erupted between Dr Wood, on board *La Plata*, and Dr Wilson, the medical superintendent of quarantine at Southampton. A passenger tried to commit suicide on board the *Parana*, which was placed in quarantine, and Wood wrote that the passenger's attempt was partially a result of quarantine measures. Dr Wilson disputed this, and suggested that the passenger was suffering from mental health problems.

[134] Edensor, 'Introduction: thinking about rhythm and space', p. 6.

[135] *Ibid.*, p. 7.

Quarantine changed the velocity and speed of the RMSPC network in 1866-1867, but routes were also adapted in response to the crisis. Once the yellow fever epidemic became apparent, the RMSPC took a first limited step towards managing the crisis by instructing its transatlantic steamships to remain outside of St Thomas harbour and to transfer passengers, mail and cargo to the inter-colonial branch vessels just outside of the harbour.[136] Yet the deaths raged on. In the light of continuing mortality, a letter to *The Times* highlighted the Company's decision, over the years, to retain St Thomas as the central transfer station.[137] The correspondent accused the Company of being 'morally guilty of murder'.[138]Although the RMSPC failed to respond immediately to the crisis of 1866-1867, it adapted the network some months in, at the end of January 1867. The Council Office at Whitehall invited a representative of the RMSPC to a meeting on 23 January to discuss 'the possibility of devising some means of lessening the next mortality from Yellow Fever, which has lately taken place on board the Company's vessels arriving in this country from St Thomas'.[139] After writing to the Post Office in late January and officially obtaining permission, the Company established an alternative transfer point at Peter Island, approximately twenty-five miles from St Thomas.[140] The alternative arrangements, as well as the need to conform to quarantine regulations at the ships' ports of call, lumbered the Company with additional expenses, and also slowed down passages. In this way, yellow fever – rendered highly mobile by the concentration of RMSPC

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[136] NMM RMS 54/2, 24 April 1867.
[137] *The Times*, 21 January 1866.
[138] *Ibid*.
[139] NMM RMS 6/17, 19 January 1867.
[140] NMM RMS 6/17, 31 January 1867. Arrangements for coaling the steamships were adjusted so that as far as possible, ships could take on coal at other islands along their routes. NMM RMS 54/2, 24 April 1867. There is some evidence to suggest that Puerto Rico was used as an alternative coaling station. See NMM RMS 6/17, 23 March 1867.

employees and crew around the coaling wharf and harbour at St Thomas –
disrupted the intended movement of people, goods and information in the
network and altered the steamship routes. Those vessels that travelled were
forced to pause at several points along the way in accordance with quarantine
requirements, and, as might be surmised, passengers were less willing to travel
due to the perceived risk to their lives.[141] In the case of the yellow fever virus, a
more-than-human agency acted dynamically upon the network.

The Post Office gave its approval for the RMSPC's routes to revert to the normal
scheme in late April 1867.[142] Yet by June, the Court of Directors received a letter
from the Privy Council announcing the reappearance of yellow fever at St
Thomas. While the Company responded with temporary measures to manage
these moments of crisis, arguments against the permanent use of St Thomas as a
central station continued. By the end of the year, new more-than-human
mobilities – this time the movement of currents and weather systems – had
brought further chaos to the network. A combination of a hurricane in October
1867, and an earthquake in November brought death, destruction and further
disruption to the Company's service.

Since the RMSPC's ports-of-call were, to return to Massey's terms, 'extroverted
places', open to the world and tied into connections that extended far beyond the
local, they were subject not only to constructed human mobilities and mobile
capital, but unintended more-than-human mobilities: in this case,

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[141] NMM RMS 54/2, 23 October 1867.
[142] RMS 1/1, 1 May 1867.

contamination.[143] This latter type of mobility was more difficult to predict, and to control, and in the case of yellow fever, the perceived mobility of the virus disrupted the velocity, rhythms and routes of the steamship network. Health crises in the network indicate another form of dynamism that characterised the scheme of routes. The web was subject to change due to crises in management, as well as during carefully planned and slow alterations.

Conclusion

The scheme of routes was a printed document, yet steamship routes were dynamic.[144] They were perceived as alterable by vested interest groups, and thus on Ballantyne's terms were made and re-made.[145] Furthermore, the scheme was subject to revision and adaptation at moments of opportunity and crisis, as well as at times of gradually planned change. Thus the scheme of routes, like Ballantyne's web, was occasionally improvised. The RMSPC was reluctant to alter its steamship routes, since this entailed considerable logistical, bureaucratic and financial upheaval, but nevertheless did so at moments of expansion and opportunity, such as at Panama. Yet even when the shape of the routes was not altered, rhythms of the steamship service had to be finely tuned to the needs of place. Dynamics of place impacted upon the Company's service, and notably so in the case of Panama. In this way the steamship service was 'reworked and remade' through transatlantic negotiations, even if these negotiations were

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[143] Doreen Massey, *Space, place and gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 154-5.
[144] Even formalized printed versions of the RMSPC's scheme of routes were revised continuously, as there were numerous 'corrected' versions of the scheme of routes, such as the 1851 scheme of routes 'corrected to May 10th 1858'. See NMM RMS 36/2 and NMM RMS 36/3.
[145] Ballantyne, *Orientalism and race*, p. 25.

subject to uneven distributions of power. [146] At moments of either intense planned and spontaneous activity, nodal points could dramatically impact on the Company's profits in a positive sense (as at Panama), or in a negative fashion (as at St Thomas). In addition to external political and economic circumstances, such as those which remade the place of Panama in the network, carefully constructed steamship passages were subject to the threat of destruction through unintended movements, particularly more-than-human mobilities.

Ballantyne writes of the 'inherently relational nature' of the web. [147] The inauguration of the RMSPC's service made marginalized places acutely aware of their relationship not simply to Britain, but equally to other places within the RMSPC's network. Thus Carriacou sought to exchange its dependent relationship to St Vincent and receive mail directly from the steamship, and William Christie at Bluefields petitioned the Company because he wanted the town to be brought into relation with Jamaica. The RMSPC's network was incorporated as a new element in the Caribbean regional imagination, shrinking and lengthening distances across the 'expanded' Caribbean as well as across empires. [148] The scheme of routes was mapped firstly by MacQueen. The service in operation, however, was a webbed network in process, influenced simultaneously by multiple places. As a tidalectic reading of the steamship timetable, one that highlights influences from multiple shores, this chapter has underscored how the steamship service impacted upon ports-of-call, while the

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[146] *Ibid.*, p. 15.
[147] *Ibid.*
[148] Peter Hulme, 'Writing the other America: comparative approaches to Caribbean and Latin American literature', paper presented at the Postcolonial Research Group, Royal Holloway, 28/03/08.

realities of local places also altered the steamship network. The process worked in both directions, from shore to ship and from ship to shore.

Chapter five

Tidalectics in motion: the RMSPC ship as place

Introduction

The place of Panama in the network has been discussed in chapter four. During the period of Panama Canal construction, individuals were liable to join the RMSPC's vessels at Barbados as stevedores, and remain on board as stowaways in an attempt to reach Colon. T. A. Bushell narrates Captain Gillard's attempts to tackle this problem on the RMS *Thames* in the summer of 1911:

> Each man on detection had his woolly head plentifully daubed with a quick-drying red composition, normally used to paint the underwater parts of the ship.
>
> When they arrived at Trinidad, the inhabitants were surprised to see a stream of red-headed negroes sorrowfully descending the accommodation ladder and entering the lighters for transport ashore. Unfortunately the painting operation had not been completed when the ship dropped anchor, and a clever negro lawyer in Trinidad persuaded some of the victims to summon the Captain for assault. Captain Gillard had to go out in the "Thames" as a passenger on her next voyage, and although he ably defended himself, the case was given against him.[1]

This incident encapsulates a number of themes of relevance to this chapter. The presence of stowaways on board vessels indicates the fact that their ships were used in ways unintended by MacQueen and those running the RMSPC. Captain Gillard's decision to paint the transgressors' hair red represents an attempt to impose order on the ship, but the subsequent charge of assault suggests that such attempts were constrained. I deliberately begin with a subversive vision of the RMSPC ship as place, because in this chapter I argue that while the Company's directors, managers, and the Admiralty sought to order the ship, this ordering

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[1] T. A. Bushell, *"Royal Mail": a centenary history of the Royal Mail line 1839-1939* (Trade and Travel Publications: London, 1939), pp. 197-198.

was fractured, resisted and disrupted in various ways. The ship's meaning was unstable, and the steamship was a dynamic place.

The focus of this chapter, then, is upon the RMSPC steamship as place. New imperial historians have explored the constitution of identities within colonial spaces.[2] Other research within the sub-discipline has begun to uncover how identities and relations operated *across* imperial spaces.[3] Yet further understanding of imperial networks would seem to necessitate an examination of the ships that connected colonial sites. After all, as David Lambert and Alan Lester indicate, the 'travel of ideas that allowed for the mutual constitution of colonial and metropolitan culture was intimately bound up with the movement of capital, people and texts between these sites, all dependent in the last resort on the passage of ships'.[4] In order to uncover the ship's contribution to imperial and colonial relations, vessels must be considered not simply as a means of transportation but also as places in their own right. As a form of transportation and a means of communication, ships can be usefully examined through the lens of mobility. The ship, 'constantly changing its location', is a mobile place.[5] Furthermore, steamships, like railroads, contributed to 'the effective shrinking of the globe by ever-increasing mobility at speed enabled by innovations in

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[2] See, for example, *Cultures of empire: colonizers in Britain and the empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries,* ed. by Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000); *A new imperial history: culture, identity, and modernity in Britain and the Empire, 1660-1840*, ed. by Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[3] For instance, see Roxanne L. Doty, *Imperial encounters: the politics of representation in north-south relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1996); and *Colonial lives across the British Empire: imperial careering in the long nineteenth century* ed. by David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

[4] David Lambert and Alan Lester, 'Introduction: imperial spaces, imperial subjects', in *Colonial lives across the British empire: imperial careering in the long nineteenth century*, ed. by David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-31, (p. 10).

[5] Susanne K. Langer, *Feeling and form: a theory of art developed from philosophy in a new key* (London: Routledge, 1953), p. 95.

transportation and communications technology'.[6] David Armitage writes of the Atlantic 'as a particular zone of exchange and interchange, circulation and transmission', and in Tim Cresswell's terms, it is specifically *on board ship* that the Atlantic becomes 'reconfigured' as such a space.[7] Thus this chapter analyses the RMSPC's steamships (see figure 5.1) as mobile places.

Figure 5.1 *The RMSP Trent dedicated to the Royal Mail Steamship Company*, by W. Jefferson.

© National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.[8]

The RMSPC sought to order the steamship as a modern mobile place. As Cresswell notes, '[m]obility seems self-evidently central to Western modernity.

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[6] Tim Cresswell, *On the move: mobility in the modern western world* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 4.

[7] David Armitage, 'Three concepts of Atlantic history', in *The British Atlantic world, 1500-1800*, ed. by David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 11-27 (p. 16); Cresswell, *On the move*, p. 204.

[8] This lithograph is undated. The *Trent* (I) was in service between 1841 and 1865. The RMSPC later purchased a vessel in 1878 which was renamed the *Trent* (II). The *Trent* (III) operated between 1899 and 1922. See Stuart Nicol, *MacQueen's legacy: a history of the Royal Mail line*, 2 vols (Stroud: Tempus, 2001), I, pp. 222-231.

Indeed the word *modern* seems to evoke images of technological mobility – the car, the plane, the spaceship'.[9] Whereas the application of steam technology to land transport resulted in the railway, its oceanic equivalent was the steamship. Furthermore, steamships and steamship lines might be seen to embody what Anthony Giddens identifies as the institutional dimensions of modernity, that is surveillance, military power, industrialism and capitalism.[10] All four of these concepts relate to the RMSPC's service. Shareholders invested in the Company as a capitalist venture that sought to exploit industrialized maritime technology. The Government's ability to requisition ships in times of war rendered the vessels sources of military power. The Company's managerial inspection regime was matched by Admiralty surveillance of the ships and those on board. While the Admiralty Agent on board mail-contract steamships supervised the ship space 'directly', a bureaucratic thirst for information is illustrated by the quantity of documents required for submission after each voyage.[11] The RMSPC's service might be interpreted as an attempt to ease post-emancipation instabilities in the West Indies through the application of a modern mobile institution, yet the contrast between railways and steamships invites us to pluralize our understanding of nineteenth-century transportation. Miles Ogborn suggests that we approach modernity 'by acknowledging the ways in which there are different

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[9] Cresswell, *On the move*, p. 15. Emphasis in original.

[10] Anthony Giddens, *The consequences of modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 59.

[11] Giddens draws a distinction between 'direct' supervision, such as that which occurs in prisons, schools and workplaces, and 'indirect' supervision through the control of information. See Giddens, *The consequences of modernity*, p. 58. After completion of a journey, commanders of transatlantic steamers were instructed to send from abroad the abstract of journal and coal returns, returns of passengers and freight, passage tickets, lists of passengers, receipts of specie, parcels and freight, and a cash account. In addition to these items, on the ship's return to Britain, no less than twenty-three sets of documents had to be submitted to the superintendent at Southampton, including log books, manifests, receipts, tickets, letters and account books. Commanders of inter-colonial steamers and schooners had to submit a smaller number of these documents. See RMS 38/1, Company regulations 1850.

modernities in different places'.[12] The RMSPC's ships offered an alternative modernity to the railway but also, as mobile places, provided a shifting experiential modernity at various points along the ship's routes.

Specifically, the RMSPC's ordering of its steamships was a careful kind of modern ordering reliant on spatial divisions and the hierarchical organization of subjects. In this respect, the project of ordering vessels sought to create something analogous to a 'heterotopia of compensation'. Michel Foucault writes of a particular kind of space: the 'heterotopia'. Unlike 'unreal' utopias, heterotopias are 'a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted'.[13] Notably, Foucault casts the ship as the 'heterotopia *par excellence*'.[14] Foucault's concept of heterotopias is, however, problematically broad and vague. More useful to this analysis is his sub-category, the 'heterotopia [...] of compensation', the function of which is 'to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled'.[15] The Company attempted to create just such a 'meticulous' and 'well arranged' space on board. The directors' discourse, in particular, provides evidence of their aspirations for the vessels. The ideology of steam power carried with it associations of efficiency, predictability and regularity. By aspiring to create on board ship something like a heterotopia of compensation, the Company sought to match the

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[12] Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of modernity: London's geographies 1680-1780* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1998), p. 17.
[13] Michel Foucault, 'Of other spaces', trans. by Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics*, 16:1 (1986), 22-27 (p. 24).
[14] *Ibid*., p. 27. Emphasis in original.
[15] *Ibid*.

ship to the discourse of steam. Foucault speculates that 'certain colonies' may have functioned as heterotopias of compensation.[16] The RMSPC sought to make the ship, a space that connected 'certain colonies', function in this way. Although the Company conceived of the ship as an ideally ordered space, human realities disrupted the regularity that the Company desired.[17]

The RMSPC's attempt to order its steamships was frustrated by the 'messy, ill constructed, and jumbled' nature of practices on board.[18] In other words, the ordering project was frustrated by the steamship's function as a 'living system'.[19] That is to say that the ship was a place with changing social relations, both because of the internal characteristics of the ship, and because of the influence and impact of place on the moving vessel. The ship was, in Paul Gilroy's terms, 'a living, micro-cultural, micro-political system in motion'.[20] For the RMSPC's directors, practices on board the steamship proved problematic. The RMSPC's directors as well as the Admiralty sought to make the steamship safe but were faced with a spate of accidents, particularly during the first decade of service. In attempting to secure the steamship, they fought the crew's and passengers' temptations to smuggle. The Company tried to mould its ships into meticulously ordered spaces, but human decisions and mistakes subjected the ship to disorder. Ultimately, then, the ship resisted totalising control.

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[16] *Ibid*.
[17] *Ibid*.
[18] *Ibid*.
[19] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: modernity and double consciousness* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 4.
[20] *Ibid*.

Not only were practices on board liable to fracture and disrupt idealized orderings of the ship space, these practices were also dynamic. The mobile nature of this living system meant that the ship was changed externally and internally by its changing location. The steamship has been considered in relation to nineteenth-century globalization, but mainly in terms of increased commerce and connectivity. [21] Focusing specifically on the speed of information transmission, for example, Yrjö Kaukiainen sketches a positive correlation between the steamship and globalization and argues that 'shipping played a key role in the development of global connections until about 1860'.[22] In reference to the South Atlantic-Caribbean route, however, Kaukiainen suggests that the speed of information transmission developed slowly prior to the telegraph age.[23] According to Kaukiainen's analysis, the RMSPC's contribution to improving commercial communication was limited. Yet MacQueen's desire to 'infuse' the Caribbean with 'European energy and regularity' indicates that the service was intended to do more than rapidly convey commercial information.[24] His words suggest an intention that the Company act as a tool of cultural globalization. MacQueen aspired to carry 'European energy' to the West Indies in RMSPC steamships in the hope that this might encourage commercial activity, thus boosting the islands' economies. Yet instead of simply acculturating the West Indies to European norms, the ships functioned as floating contact zones, where more complicated patterns of cultural globalization emerged.

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[21] See D. S. Jacks and K. Pendakur, 'Global trade and the maritime transport revolution', NBER Working Paper Series (Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2008), 1-42.
[22] Yrjö Kaukiainen, 'Shrinking the world: improvements in the speed of information transmission, c. 1820-1870', *European review of economic history*, 5 (2001), 1-28 (p. 21).
[23] *Ibid.*, p. 19.
[24] James MacQueen, *A general plan for a mail communication by steam between Great Britain and the eastern and western parts of the world; also, to Canton and Sydney, westward by the Pacific: to which are added, geographical notices of the isthmus of Panama, Nicaragua, &c. with charts* (London: B. Fellowes, 1838), p. 56.

The RMSPC ship changed as an internal place in relation to its external location. The ship on the shores of Southampton was translated as a place when travelling across the Atlantic. In the Americas, the ship was translated again as particular practices, knowledge and customs marked the spaces on board. Susanne Langer argues that 'a ship, constantly changing its location, is none the less a self-contained place'.[25] Langer therefore indicates that the ship is a place *despite* its mobility. In contrast, I argue that the RMSPC steamship was a place *because of* its mobility. Whereas Langer's interpretation of the ship is perhaps appropriate to services with linear trajectories that move backwards and forwards across an oceanic divide, the RMSPC's routes should be considered as tidalectic. As Elizabeth DeLoughrey indicates, the 'tidal dialectic' is a 'cyclical model'.[26] In contrast to Hegel's dialectic, the tidalectic is an unresolved cycle. The cyclical nature of the tidalectic, '*coming from one continent/ continuum, touching another, and then receding*' corresponds to the routes of the RMSPC.[27] Each transatlantic steamer departed from Britain, travelled through the Americas, and then returned to Britain. In so doing, a key element of the RMSPC steamship as place was that its meanings were perpetually in tidalectic flux.

This chapter takes five cuts into examining the RMSPC ship as place. In the first section, 'Maintaining order on board', I examine the way in which the Company sought to order the ship through regulation, inspection, and hierarchies, and how this was disrupted by practices on board. The second section, 'Safe and secure

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[25] Langer, *Feeling and form*, p. 95.
[26] Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots: navigating Caribbean and Pacific island literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), p. 2.
[27] Kamau Brathwaite, *conVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey* (Staten Island, NY: We Press & Xcp, 1999), p. 34. Emphasis in original; DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots*, p. 2.

ships', explores the Company's ideals for the ship space, and their relationship to Admiralty and Government priorities for vessels' integrity. Attempts to secure the ship strained against the fact that travelling vessels were places at risk, and were also frustratingly permeable. The third section, 'Overlapping order: Admiralty Agents', analyses how the Company and the Admiralty had differing visions for the ship space that sometimes resulted in dispute between the Admiralty Agent and the ship's captain. The fourth section, 'Civility on board: saloon culture', examines the Company's attempts to foster an official cultural style on its ships, and the final section, 'Steam creolised: deck and other cultures on board', suggests that official culture was fractured and contested by alternative temporary cultures that emerged on the travelling vessel. In this way, I argue that a cyclical relationship existed between ordering strategies deployed around and on board the ship, and the dynamism that disrupted these regulative practices.

Maintaining order on board

The RMSPC held an ordered vision for its fleet, and for individual ships. A hierarchy existed between service on transatlantic vessels and the inter-colonial branch routes, with officers promoted from inter-colonial to transatlantic vessels, and promotion through the ranks being possible at a faster rate on inter-colonial than on transatlantic ships.[28] A similar hierarchy was extended to passengers. For the Company, '*mere* inter-colonial passengers' contrasted with those travelling

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[28] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 40. When new ships were under construction for the South American service between 1850 and 1851, they were offered to the RMSPC's captains according to their length of service with the Company. See UCL RMSP 10, 6 February 1851.

the transatlantic route.[29] Inter-colonial passengers paid less money, as they were travelling shorter journeys, but were also often of a different social class. All of the Company's ships, however, were highly regulated spaces from the moment of their conception and throughout their service. The Company sought the Admiralty's approval before vessels were constructed, and ships were frequently inspected to ensure that they adhered to Admiralty standards.[30] The Company matched regulation of the ship's materiality with attempts to shape other aspects of life on board.

Regulation on board RMSPC steamers ran parallel to, and in cases ahead of naval norms. The mid-nineteenth century was a period of transition for the Royal Navy, with reforms affecting recruitment, discipline, personnel training and 'habitability' on board.[31] Continuous service was introduced, corporal punishment was gradually phased out, a formal naval uniform was established for all continuous service men, and disciplinary procedures were standardized. Special reports to the court of managers indicate that the RMSPC used confinement as a means of on-the-spot punishment in preference to corporal measures. Formal disciplinary proceedings, meanwhile, were reminiscent of courts-martial, with the Company's captains acting as judges. Officer

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[29] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 137. Emphasis added.

[30] The Company was originally to construct fourteen vessels, but when the scheme of routes was revised to a more manageable size, this was reduced to twelve. The Admiralty communicated their views on appropriate ship specifications to the Company. On 13 August 1844, for example, the Admiralty wrote to the Company about the service between Jamaica and Chagres, suggesting that 'steamers adapted for the service should be built of iron of about 600 tons and about 200 horses power to enable them to overcome the strong winds which prevail between Jamaica and the Coast'. See NMM RMS 6/3, 13 August 1844.

[31] Michael Lewis, *The Navy in transition, 1814-1864. A social history* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965); Eugene L. Rasor, *Reform in the Royal Navy: a social history of the lower deck 1850 to 1880* (Connecticut: Archon Books, 1976); Lionel Yexley, *The inner life of the Navy: being an account of the inner social life led by our naval seamen on board ships of war, together with a detailed account of the systems of victualling and uniform in vogue during the latter part of the nineteenth and the opening years of the twentieth century* (London: Sir Issac Pitman & Sons, 1908).

transgressions were met with demotion or dismissal from service.[32] The third officer of the *Trent* was dismissed in 1843, for example, for 'inefficiency', and the stewardess for 'neglect'.[33] The RMSPC's reliance upon confinement and use of punishments that affected career progression anticipated mid-century naval approaches. Interestingly, the 'discipline' section of the RMSPC's regulations was dominated by officers' responsibilities. None of the regulations advised on responses to unruly behaviour.[34] The Company's refusal to formally concede the possibility of misconduct on board can be interpreted as a manifestation of an idealized vision of the ship.

Alongside disciplinary structures, inspection was a key mechanism through which the Company sought to order the ship. In this respect also, there was a strong continuity between naval vessels and merchant services such as the RMSPC. Captains were expected to muster the ship's company at least twice a week and inspect the decks, engine room, storeroom, officers', engineers', seamen's, firemen's and coal trimmers' berths as well as empty passenger cabins.[35] The Company desired the ships to be places of 'order, cleanliness, and efficiency' and the superintendent at Southampton inspected vessels with these requirements in mind.[36] The *Medway*, when inspected in October 1843, was deemed to be in 'fair' order with a 'sober and apparently well chosen crew'.[37] Captain Liot's inspection of the *Severn* in December of that year found the upper deck and after-cabin saloon to be clean, the rigging in 'good order', but the

[32] UCL RMSP 10.
[33] UCL RMSP 4, 17 July 1843.
[34] NMM RMS 38/1.
[35] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 19
[36] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 172.
[37] UCL RMSP 4, 17 October 1843.

engine room and engines, he noted, were 'very dirty indeed'.[38] Captain Mangles, inspecting the *Teviot* in January 1844, wrote that the servants 'appeared efficient in their departments'.[39] A managerial inspection regime therefore worked to keep RMSPC employees in order.

Within each particular ship, the Company's desire for an ordered social space necessitated consistent support of hierarchical authority. An investigation into the *Medway* engineers' complaints against Captain McDougall in September 1843 found in favour of the captain.[40] An October investigation into disputes between Captain Hayden and his officers, while conceding that Hayden's conduct towards clerk Mr Brown was 'unjustifiable', nevertheless found against Brown for insubordination.[41] When Hayden's conduct was called into question in February 1844 due to passenger and a colleague's complaints about provisions, attendance, and the condition of his ship, the managers once again acquitted Hayden, the blame being attributed instead to the ship's providore.[42] A highly ordered space on board RMSPC vessels required hierarchies, and the Company's disciplinary procedures reinforced those in positions of authority against the grievances of their inferiors.

The RMSPC's normative ordering of the ship also extended to the institution of racial hierarchies. As John MacKenzie suggests, we 'have to think rather more

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[38] UCL RMSP 4, 2 December 1843
[39] UCL RMSP 4, 2 January 1844.
[40] UCL RMSP 4, 25 September 1843.
[41] UCL RMSP 4, 21 October 1843. Mr Brown's insubordination took the form of a letter written against Captain Hayden. Mr Brown was dismissed from the Company's service for his conduct. The special court also transferred the third officer of the *Tay* in consequence of his 'disrespectful' manner towards Hayden.
[42] UCL 4, 29 February 1844.

about issues of race and ethnicity in imperial maritime history'. [43] White and black servants were employed on the RMSPC's inter-colonial ships, supporting passengers' needs and comfort. These employees served in a ratio of approximately one servant to every seven adult passengers. In 1876, in a move that sought to lend to the inter-colonial ship the 'meticulous' divisions of a heterotopia of compensation, the Company standardized the racial hierarchies of its servants. The RMSPC instructed that the chief steward, head waiter, second waiter, additional stewards, and the storekeeper who waited at the table should be white, alongside the barman, saloon cook, baker, and butcher. The third and fourth waiter, extra waiters, the saloon boy who attended the surgeon, the pantry-man, boots who waited at the table, scullion and ship's cook (who assisted the chief cook) were to be 'coloured'. [44] The Company allowed for a slight flexibility in this division by indicating that 'Very good Coloured Servants occasionally fill some of the situations mentioned above as allotted to White Men.' [45] The Company's attempt to standardize racial divisions amongst servants paralleled other forms of modern transportation. Similarly to railways in the Americas and in Africa, racial stratification occurred in the RMSPC's use of servants on board. [46]

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[43] John M. MacKenzie, 'Lakes, rivers and oceans: technology, ethnicity and the shipping of empire in the late nineteenth century', in *Maritime empires: British imperial maritime trade in the nineteenth century*, ed. by David Killingray, Margarette Lincoln and Nigel Rigby (Suffolk: The Boydell Press in association with the National Maritime Museum, 2004), pp. 111-127 (p. 113).

[44] It would seem that in using the term 'coloured', the Company probably meant that such servants should be of dual heritage, with one black and one white parent, because by contrast they referred to other labourers in the Caribbean as 'negroes'.

[45] NMM RMS 38/5, p. 20.

[46] Jeffrey Richards and John M. MacKenzie, *The railway station: a social history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 139 and p. 152.

Although the Company recruited former naval men as officers, the racial balance amongst crew members was less clear. On the *Avon*'s journey from Southampton to the Caribbean between January and May 1845, the majority of the crew joined the vessel at Southampton on 14 and 15 January. These included twenty able seamen, earning two pounds and five shillings per month. Two such seamen, M. Taylor and Charles Saunders, joined the vessel at Jamaica in April. John Renoff, a waiter, also joined the ship at this island. The following day, a second waiter and a coal trimmer came on board. At Grenada, J. Popper, an able seaman, joined the vessel.[47] The ethnicity of individuals, particularly those who joined the ship in the Caribbean, was not recorded. Yet, as already discussed in chapter four, during crises such as yellow fever outbreaks, an entire crew could be replaced with black employees. The RMSPC's racial ordering was therefore occasionally subject to disruption. Further research, however, is needed to establish the typical racial balance of crew on RMSPC transatlantic and inter-colonial vessels during different periods, particularly in light of Alan Gregor Cobley's argument that 'the rise of steam was accompanied by a rise in the proportion of non-British seafarers, including West Indians, serving in British ships'.[48]

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[47] NMM RMS 37/1, Log book of the RMS *Avon*.

[48] Alan Gregor Cobley, 'That turbulent soil: seafarers, the "Black Atlantic," and Afro-Caribbean identity' in *Seascapes: maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges*, ed. by Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), pp. 153-168 (p. 158). Further research on the RMSPC's crew could prove illuminating, as while Cobley suggests that 'on steamships, black seafarers were [...] found in disproportionate numbers in the inhospitable surroundings of the stokehold as firemen and trimmers, largely because of a racist belief on the part of shipowners that blacks worked better in the stifling heat than whites', this is based on a 1901 census return. *Ibid*., p. 159. Anecdotal evidence from a former employee of the RMSPC would suggest that during the twentieth century, the Company was heavily reliant on black firemen and coal trimmers, but further research is needed to establish figures on the nineteenth century. After all, as Cobley also points out, 'the best opportunities for Afro-Caribbean and other black seamen were not on the large passenger and cargo liners of the major companies, but on tramp ships'. *Ibid*.

Despite hierarchical structures and inspection regimes, one thing that repeatedly threatened to disrupt the desired order and efficiency of the ship was alcohol consumption. The *Trent*'s surgeon, for instance, was dismissed in 1843 for drunkenness.[49] Mr Anstey, assistant purser of the *Conway*, was called upon to leave the Company's service after he was found on his cabin floor 'disgracefully the worse for liquor': a state for which he had developed a habit.[50] Mr Loft, fourth officer of the *Forth*, was demoted to midshipman in 1846 for being intoxicated twice during the ship's voyage.[51] Similarly, the managers judged in 1847 that it would be unwise to re-appoint Mr Simon, clerk on board the *Reindeer*, after he was sent home for being intoxicated and insulting a Government passenger.[52] Mr Hodge, assistant purser of *Atrato* was dismissed in 1861 for excessive drinking.[53] Similarly Mr Newcombe, Mr White and Mr Woone, officers on board the *Parana*, were suspended for six months without pay in 1862 for causing a disturbance on the ship by their drunken socialising.[54] Excessive alcohol consumption had long been associated with the Royal Navy, and it is perhaps therefore unsurprising that the merchant navy fought to control similar habits on board. Rasor describes that 'one problem existing in the Royal Navy which indiscriminately cut across the dichotomy between the lower deck and the quarterdeck was alcoholism.'[55] While the Company actively encouraged

[49] UCL RMSP 4, 17 July 1843.
[50] UCL RMSP 12, 16 September 1859.
[51] UCL RMSP 10, 1 July 1846.
[52] UCL RMSP 10, 15 July 1847. A further example occurred the following year, when an inquiry of August 1848 deemed Mr Ludgate, surgeon of the *Teviot*, not to be a sober person. Managers Captain Mangles and Captain Barton accordingly recommended that Ludgate be called upon to resign from the Company's service. See UCL RMSP 10, 2 August 1848.
[53] UCL RMSP 12, pp. 126-127. In his defence, Hodge explained that the passengers on board had offered him a glass of grog and he 'unfortunately took a glass too much'.
[54] UCL RMSP 12, pp. 141-142.
[55] Rasor, *Reform in the Royal Navy*, pp. 80-1. On the other hand, this relationship between maritime labour and drink should not be overstated. As Peter Padfield stresses, 'despite a system designed to encourage rum as the safety valve for bare conditions and harsh discipline, and in an

the continuation of some Royal Naval norms such as hierarchical structures and naval uniforms, intemperance was an unwanted naval inheritance that spilled into the merchant service, and disrupted the regulative ordering of the ship.

Yet like the Royal Navy, the RMSPC sanctioned a controlled drinking culture on board its vessels. In fact, steam technology and the resultant specialization of sailors' labour resulted in increased alcohol distribution on board. When a ship was in harbour, warrant officers, the captain's and Admiralty Agent's servants, seamen and firemen were entitled to one gill of rum per day, but firemen and coal trimmers were entitled to half a gill extra when the steam was up.[56] This extra ration can be understood in relation to the physically arduous conditions in which firemen and coal trimmers worked. As Laura Tabili, amongst others, has stressed, '[s]toking a steam engine with coal was indeed heavy, hot, dirty work'.[57] According to Denis Griffiths, '[n]ot all firemen and coal trimmers were drunkards but many were hard drinkers, their interest in alcohol being heightened by the hard and hot nature of their work'.[58] An additional quantity of rum was one means by which coal trimmers and firemen were encouraged to endure uncomfortable labour conditions. Thus on the one hand, excessive alcohol consumption amongst the crew put the ship at risk and disrupted the vessel's order, but on the other hand increased alcohol consumption was deemed

age when drunkenness was fashionable for men', many drank with moderation or remained sober. See Peter Padfield, *Rule Britannia: the Victorian and Edwardian Navy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 25.

[56] NMM RMS 38/1, Company regulations, 1850.

[57] Laura Tabili, '"A maritime race": masculinity and the racial division of labor in British merchant ships, 1900-1939', in *Iron men, wooden women: gender and seafaring in the Atlantic world, 1700-1920*, ed. by Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 169-188 (p. 179). Firemen and coal trimmers worked watches that lasted for four hours, and laboured under the supervision of an engineer in charge of the watch. See Denis Griffiths, *Steam at sea: two centuries of steam-powered ships* (London: Conway, 1997), p. 132.

[58] Griffiths, *Steam at sea*, p. 132.

necessary to maintain the specialized labour on which the Company's steamships depended. In trying to achieve an elusive balance of moderate drinking, the Company demanded of the crew a finely tuned conduct that might match its ordered vision for the ship.

Aside from alcohol-related misconduct, mundane realities of human error and impulse (the 'messiness' of the world) ran contrary to the Company's quest for order and regularity.[59] Things could and frequently did go wrong on board. For example, the *Thames* grounded and was delayed in April 1844 due to the unexpected absence of a local pilot.[60] On another occasion, the commander of the schooner *Liffey* fell ill and the chief mate of the *Tay* was redeployed to assist the *Liffey*, leaving the *Tay* short of officers.[61] Despite the existence of extensive regulations to order the ship, experience brought to light officers' ignorance of Company regulations. Thus the RMSPC deemed it necessary to request from 1850 onwards that commanders examine officers on their knowledge of these.[62] The Company's ordering strategies worked against the counter-current of human idiosyncrasies and irregularities. Simultaneously on board any given ship, the directors' and managers' desire for order strained against individuals' liabilities to act irregularly, spontaneously, or against the Company's regulations.

The RMSPC's vessels, intended to bind the Caribbean colonies to Britain and to contribute to the maintenance of order across the British Empire, ideally had to be constructed as ordered spaces. To this end, the Company imposed extensive

[59] Foucault, 'Of other spaces', p. 27.
[60] NMM RMS 7/2, 15 July 1844.
[61] NMM RMS 7/2, 3 October 1844.
[62] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 19.

regulation in a bid to secure control over the ship. In supporting order, the Company repeatedly reinforced the right of those in authority over their inferiors. The RMSPC attempted to ensure, through such measures as the racial stratification of servants, that its ships reinforced British imperial social hierarchies. At the same time, the role of the mail-contract steamship demanded a new, modern ordering of the ship-as-place. The requirements of a merchant naval service called for a palatable set of disciplinary structures based on confinement, demotion and dismissal rather than corporal punishment. Yet despite the Company's efforts to order the ship, the space, as a 'living system', tended towards unpredictability.[63] The Admiralty and the Company held a static vision of the ship, but much about this place was mobile.

Safe and secure ships

As well as seeking to order the ship, the RMSPC and the Admiralty were preoccupied with notions of safety and security. A. J. Arnold, Robert Greenhill, and Freda Harcourt have pointed out that the award of Government mail contracts caused steamship companies to function like private-public partnerships.[64] In 1837 the Admiralty gained administrative control over the mail contracts; in this capacity, from 1840 onwards they dealt with Cunard's steamship line, the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company, and the RMSPC.[65] The Admiralty negotiated as the 'public' to the RMSPC's 'private' in

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[63] Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 4.

[64] A. J. Arnold and Robert G. Greenhill, 'Business, government and profit: the management and regulation of overseas mail contracts, 1836-90', *Accounting, business & financial history*, 5:3 (1995), 334-359; Freda Harcourt, 'British oceanic mail contracts in the age of steam, 1838-1914', *Journal of transport history*, 3rd series, 9 (1988), 1-18.

[65] This was the case until 1861 when the Post Office took control of the mail contracts.

the working relationship. In practical terms this entailed continuous communication and the provision of finance. The terms of the mail contract allowed the RMSPC £240,000 annually during the first decade of service and £270,000 after the inauguration of the Brazil and River Plate extension in 1851. Due to this public funding, the Company's service to the British Government and Empire was mediated through the Admiralty.

When the RMSPC was formed during the 1830s, steamship engineering was in its infancy.[66] The fledgling status of the technology was a key motivation for Government backing. Having funded these services, the Admiralty's primary concern was that mail-contract vessels were safe spaces. The safety of passengers (including those on official Government business) had to be ensured, and ships had to be safe to requisition in times of war.[67] The terms of the 1840 mail contract stipulated that the Company's fleet should consist of fourteen steamships with engines of at least four hundred horse power. These vessels were to be capable of carrying the largest calibre of guns used on HM vessels of war.[68] Once vessels were constructed, the Admiralty's approval was required before ships entered or re-entered service.[69] Furthermore, the Admiralty frequently requested surveys in response to ships grounding or reports of disrepair. During 1844, for example, the Admiralty requested a survey of the *Severn*'s machinery and boilers in March. In April they ordered surveys of the *Teviot* and the *Trent*.[70] May brought Admiralty requests for the *Tweed* to be surveyed due to a leaky

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[66] In April 1838, the *Sirius* was the first ship to cross the Atlantic entirely powered by steam.
[67] RMSPC vessels were used as transports, for example during the Crimean War, and served again during the First World War.
[68] UCL RMSP 3, contract of 22 May 1840.
[69] See NMM RMS 6/3, 1844-1845.
[70] The *Teviot* had grounded and the *Trent* had a sprung beam.

mail room and the *Medway* for general disrepair. The grounding of the *Medway* was the occasion of another survey request in November 1844. In this way, the Admiralty held the Company accountable for maintaining safety standards on its vessels.

Accordingly, RMSPC regulations were dominated by attempts to promote safety on board. The requirement that the ship never be left without an officer on the spar deck in charge of the watch can be understood in these terms, as can the stipulation that different coloured lights be displayed at different ends of the ship to avoid collisions.[71] However the Company's excessive, or idealized, ambitions for the ship are in evidence in unrealistic regulations such as the demand that, '[i]n all cases of emergency or danger, the Captain is to seek counsel of the Chief and Second Officers obtaining (where time admits) their opinions in writing, and causing the same to be inserted in the Log Book.'[72] The use of parentheses indicates that the managers were aware that such a regulation would most likely not be feasible, and yet this rule was still included in the regulations. As with the East India Company, the RMSPC also used writing as a mechanism for controlling the ship space.[73] The Company's insistence on the production of textual records, and particularly those reports that were fed back to the Admiralty, expanded the bureaucratic structures that Giddens casts as crucial to modern institutions.

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[71] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 16 and p. 19.
[72] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 25.
[73] See Miles Ogborn, *Indian ink: script and print in the making of the English East India Company* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 50 on how the East India Company attempted to 'secure' the ship partially through writing.

The Admiralty's fervent preoccupation with the safety of the steamship relates to Schivelbusch's notion of the 'the technological accident'.[74] Schivelbusch draws a distinction between 'preindustrial catastrophes' and the 'technological accident':

> The preindustrial catastrophes are natural events, natural accidents. They attack the objects they destroy from the outside, as storms, floods, thunderbolts, hailstones, etc. After the industrial revolution, destruction by technological accident comes from the inside. The technical apparatuses destroy themselves by means of their own power. The energies tamed by the steam engine and delivered by it as regulated mechanical performance will destroy the engine itself in the case of an accident.[75]

The accidents endured by the RMSPC's vessels resist this easy categorisation. Accidents were at once 'technological' and 'natural'. Ships could, for example, strike reefs, be damaged in earthquakes, collide, or catch fire.[76] Whereas Schivelbusch suggests that by the mid-nineteenth century, 'anxieties' about potential railway disasters had 'vanished', fears surrounding steamships remained, and justifiably so.[77] The combination of technological and natural uncertainties bolstered a preoccupation with safety. This in turn fuelled the Admiralty's stringent inspection and survey regime.

Accidents were a regular feature of the RMSPC's experience. During the first decade of its service, the Company lost ten ships; thus despite Admiralty and Company attempts to secure the ship's safety, steamship travel remained risky.[78]

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[74] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The railway journey: trains and travel in the 19th century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), p. 132; Ernst Bloch, *Traces*, trans. by Anthony Nassar (California: Stanford University Press, 2006), p. 125.

[75] Schivelbusch, *The railway journey*, p. 133.

[76] The RMSPC experienced major accidents with the *Isis*, *Solway*, *Medina*, *Tweed*, *Forth*, *Actaeon* and the *Amazon*. The fact that the RMSPC's service was menaced by the natural world can be considered another example of the 'livingness' of the network. See Sarah Whatmore, 'Materialist returns: practising cultural geography in and for a more-than-human world', *Cultural geographies*, 13 (2006), 600-609 (p. 603).

[77] Schivelbusch, *The railway journey*, p. 132.

[78] For example thirty-five people died when the *Solway* was lost near Corunna in 1843. See NMM RMS 54/1, Reports and accounts, 1843-1844.

This was poignantly illustrated by the directors' report on the *Amazon* disaster of

1852:

> [O]n the 2nd of January, as anticipated, the "Amazon," the first of the Company's new Steamers, left England with the West India mails; being as ably commanded, as efficiently officered, as numerously manned, as well constructed, and (as may be verified by comparison) more amply provided with means of safety than any other Steam Ship upon the ocean, public or private.[79]

Nevertheless, in the directors' own words, 'calamity' ensued.[80] The *Amazon*,

carrying one hundred and sixty-two people (including fifty passengers) caught

fire entering the Bay of Biscay.[81] As the smoke and heat meant that the engines

could not be stopped, the ship was abandoned. One hundred and fifteen lives

were lost in the disaster (see figure 5.2). Curiously though, the 'technological

accident' of the *Amazon* has been understood as prompting a technological

response, for the *Amazon* disaster is largely credited with precipitating the shift

to iron-hulled steamships.[82]

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[79] UCL RMSP 13, 15 April 1852.
[80] *Ibid.*
[81] Michael Rego, *The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company* (Newbury: Cocrill, 1987), p. 9.
[82] For example see T. A. Bushell, *"Royal Mail" A Centenary history of the Royal Mail Line 1839-1939* (Trade and Travel Publications: London, 1939), p. 71.

Figure 5.2 *Destruction by fire of the Amazon mail steamer of 2250 tons burden in the Bay of Biscay January 4th 1852 on her first voyage from Southampton to Chagres, with 50 passengers and 106 crew & attendants, the greater number of whom were lost. Engraved from a sketch made by one of the survivors*, engraving by Read & Co. © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

Despite Admiralty and Company attempts to promote safety, the steamship in motion was a place that was perpetually at risk. Furthermore, the crew were at the testing face of steam technology, and the frequency of accidents was increased by bullish confidence in this. By 1850 the Company was forced to lament that:

> Several recent instances have shewn, that where doubts existed as to the exact position of the ship, and nothing but the order to 'STOP HER' till daylight, was required to ensure safety,– *where a sailing vessel would certainly have 'hove t,'* and where, moreover, no great object was to be gained by rashly proceeding, – the speed has been maintained, and the most disastrous consequences have followed. Indeed there can be no question that a few hours

occasional stoppage at night, or keeping a wider offing in rounding capes and shoals, would have prevented every accident that has occurred to this Company's ships.[83]

In the Company's view therefore, captains frequently resorted to hubristic risk-taking and endangered the space of the ship. The Company attempted to mitigate this by stressing the responsibility of the chief officer and by warning captains not to consider themselves relieved of responsibility when the vessel was in the hands of a coasting pilot.[84] In the Company's view, the incidence of steamship accidents was increased by officers' counter-intuitive confidence in an unknown technology.

Equally troublesome was the RMSPC's attempt to secure the ship. In writing of the East India Company ship as 'accounting space', Ogborn describes that the ship had to be 'defended against the defrauding of the company'.[85] Similarly, the RMSPC sought to secure vessels against actions that might defraud the Company or the Government. Goods moving legitimately on board vessels presented tracking problems, and illegitimate goods posed a challenge in that they needed, ideally, to be intercepted. Yet the RMSPC was unable to gain total control over goods brought on board. Passengers could detract from the Company's profits by carrying large quantities of currency in their luggage rather than declaring it and paying appropriate charges.[86] The Company deemed the problem of passengers concealing currency to be particularly prevalent between Jamaica and the Spanish Main, and between Havana and the Gulf of Mexico.[87] As well as money, other items moved illegitimately on board. In the 1850 regulations, the RMSPC

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[83] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 22. Emphasis added.
[84] NMM RMS 38/1, pp. 19-20.
[85] Ogborn, *Indian ink*, p. 50.
[86] Freight charges on specie and treasure were an important source of revenue for the Company, with gold and silver charged at a rate of 1 per cent.
[87] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 136.

indicated that 'several cases' had recently occurred that had caused it to be fined by the Board of Customs when smuggled tobacco, cigars and tea were discovered on board ships. [88] Passengers could imperil not only the ship's profitability but also, on rare occasions, its safety too. Such an instance occurred when combustible acids were brought on board the *Orinoco* in 1852 concealed inside a passenger's luggage.[89] The RMSPC lamented the limits of its ability to secure the ship space as it pointed out to the Admiralty that it had no legal right to search passengers' luggage. [90] Yet even goods that the Company knew were on board could pose tracking challenges. During the 1840s, for example, the Company conceded that 'delays and losses' to the delivery of merchandize and luggage were 'continually occurring'.[91] As the Admiralty and the Company discovered in relation to safety and security, the ship was a space that resisted totalising control. Instead, its boundaries were frustratingly permeable. The dynamic nature of the ship belied the extensive bureaucratic framework through which the Admiralty and the Company regulated the space.

Control over employees' actions proved likewise elusive. In response to pressure from the Admiralty in 1842 to improve security, the Company explained that 'the strictest orders' had been given to their officers not to allow letters to travel on ships if they had not passed through the Post Office systems.[92] The Company also stressed that it had 'constantly inserted a caution upon this subject' in its

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[88] *Ibid*., p. 29.
[89] NMM RMS 1/2, 24 June 1852.
[90] NMM RMS 7/1, 23 September 1842.
[91] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 32. Although this damaged the Company's reputation amongst the mercantile community and the RMSPC was frequently forced to explain its failings in correspondence with the Admiralty, the Company was not routinely fined for such losses. The relative lack of competition on the Caribbean route also saved the RMSPC from losing clients to rival lines.
[92] NMM RMS 7/1, 23 September 1842.

public advertisements.[93] Despite rules forbidding the practice, captains habitually took their own wine on board the ships, forcing the Company to further stress this regulation in 1844.[94] Regulations forbade smuggling and promised the immediate dismissal of any persons smuggling goods, currency or letters. Yet the practice thrived. The Admiralty complained to the Company in April 1844, for example, when William Pringle smuggled letters to Britain on board the *Severn*. However Pringle, a steward on board ship, was only 'seriously' cautioned against repetition of the offence.[95] Mr Greaves, commander of the *Lee* was convicted of smuggling goods in the latter part of 1845. On calling the Company's attention to this incident, the Admiralty stressed the frequent occurrence of smuggling by officers on board the *Lee*.[96] In January 1843 the Admiralty forwarded a similar complaint from the Post Office department in the West Indies about letters destined for non-British colonies brought to the Caribbean by officers of the RMSPC's ships.[97] In opening up official circuits of trade and communication, the service also supported unofficial transactions and exchanges.

The RMSPC's vessels, subjected to scrutiny and surveillance, nevertheless repeatedly proved themselves to be unsafe. The Company's directors and managers also found the boundaries of their vessels to be more permeable than they hoped as they struggled to prevent the ship's use for unofficial purposes. While the Company imposed bureaucratic structures to promote the safety and security of vessels, the ship space resisted total control.

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[93] *Ibid*.
[94] NMM RMS 1/2, 18 July 1844. For the rule forbidding officers, crew and passengers from taking their own alcohol on board, see RMS 38/5, p. 35 and p. 138.
[95] NMM RMS 6/3, 30 April 1844.
[96] NMM RMS 6/3, 18 October 1845.
[97] NMM RMS 6/2, 13 January 1843.

Overlapping order: Admiralty Agents

> The great amusement of the day was the fussiness of the three naval officers – old lieutenants – over the transfer of the mails; one would have thought there was a conspiracy on foot to rob the bags, seeing that each of these old parties had his sword on, to protect them if necessary.
>
> It would also appear their education had been neglected, by the number of mistakes that were made in the accounts of the bags. One officer had to furnish a list of the bags to the officer in the other ship, keeping a duplicate, as he termed it, "for the information of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty."
>
> The making out of these lists had taken the old gentleman all the time he could spare from playing whist during the passage, and had it not been for the second officer's help, I doubt if they would have been ready in time![98]

I have already indicated that the RMSPC's vessels were subject to orderings both by the Company and the Admiralty. Whereas the RMSPC's ordering on board relied upon the crew and officers, the Admiralty's interests were supposedly protected by the figure of the Admiralty Agent.

Freda Harcourt and Jeffrey Pardue have noted, in general terms, the potential for conflict to arise between commanders and Admiralty Agents.[99] It is worth considering the Admiralty Agent in some detail since he was the mediator of the Admiralty's interests on board. The Company's accountability to the Admiralty was upheld by a limited number of sanctions. One of these was the Admiralty's ability to cease renewing the mail contract: a decision that would throw the Company into financial turmoil. Yet despite the RMSPC's chequered record on punctuality during its early years of service, the Admiralty never resorted to this

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[98] Robert Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years at sea* (London: Digby Long & Co, [1894]), pp. 53-54.
[99] See Jeffrey D. Pardue, 'Agent of Imperial change: James Macqueen and the British empire 1778-1870' (unpublished thesis doctoral thesis, University of Waterloo, Canada, 1996), p. 172 and p. 184.

measure. This can be understood both in terms of the fledgling status of the steamship industry and the substantial investment required to establish the RMSPC. Once the RMSPC had built the fleet and supporting infrastructure needed to run the service, it hardly made sense to start afresh with another company. Alternatively, the Admiralty had the power to fine the Company for breaching terms of the contract, but rarely did so.[100] Although the RMSPC was accountable to the Admiralty, no Admirals sat on the Company's board of directors until 1854, so the Admiralty's interests, on a daily basis, were interpreted and reported on by the Admiralty Agents.[101] Admiralty Agents frequently submitted observations or complaints. If dissatisfied with the Company's explanation of an incident, the Admiralty typically instructed the Company to implement change. On a daily basis, then, the coexistence of Admiralty and Company visions for the steamship manifested itself through interactions between Admiralty Agents and commanders.

The Admiralty Agent occupied a peculiar position and was expected to serve a bureaucratic and surveillance function on board the steamship. Woolward's account (above) casts Admiralty Agents as comic figures. Indeed, the Admiralty's complaints to the Company indicate that Agents on board were frequently treated if not as a joke then at least as a nuisance. Awkward contradictions arose from the presence of these officers on a merchant service. In fact, since Admiralty Agents were often retired naval lieutenants, a parallel can be drawn between Admiralty Agents and early provincial police offers. Both

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[100] This happened, for example, in 1843, when two of the Company's ships (the *Clyde* and the *Tweed*) were damaged by dry-rot and the Company was fined £3,500 for not having a ship ready to receive the mail at Falmouth. See NMM RMS 54/1 Reports and Accounts, 13 March 1843.

[101] In 1854 Admiral W. G. H. Whish of the Royal Navy became the Company's Chairman (and later Deputy Chairman in 1874). Admiral H. B. Young joined the board of directors in 1856.

were order-enforcing agents who derived from a pre-reform system. Victor Bailey notes that old night-watchmen and day constables were often appointed to roles in the reformed provincial police force. Mass unemployment in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars affected officers to a greater extent than seamen. Michael Lewis discusses the fate of 'slump lieutenants' after the war, and narrates the career of Michael Turner. Turner was born in 1799, passed his lieutenant's examination in 1818, but was only made lieutenant in 1828. Lewis writes of Michael Turner that, '[a]fter one very brief visit to Acre in a steam-vessel in 1839, his only other appointment thereafter was (1842-1847) as Admiralty Agent in a contract mail-steamer – as we saw, a complete back-water'.[102] Michael Lewis's description of employment on a mail-steamer as 'a complete back-water' indicates the lack of glory attached to the position. Admiralty Agents were naval officers whose careers had been frustrated. In light of this, it is perhaps unsurprising that they stubbornly asserted their authority on board the mail steamers. Yet the Admiralty Agent's presence created overlapping streams of authority over the space of the ship and therefore the Agent, who was present to promote order, simultaneously subjected the ship to disorder.

Admiralty Agents held responsibility for the post on board RMSPC steamships, and they were to be 'consulted in everything connected with the landing, embarking, transhipping, and stowage of the public mails'.[103] In exceptional circumstances, when the Admiralty Agent was ill or absent from the ship, responsibility for the mail devolved to the captain. The Agent was provided with

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[102] Lewis, *The Navy in transition*, p. 94. I have not found any references to Michael Turner in the RMSPC's records, but his employment in the mail contract service from 1842 coincides with the start of the RMSPC's service.

[103] The Company's schooners did not carry Admiralty Agents (see RMS 7/2, 7 October 1844); NMM RMS 38/1, p. 4.

a cabin and also prevailed over the mail room.[104] A rowing boat and a crew of four men were appointed for the Admiralty Agent's use in landing and collecting mail on shore.

In addition to acting as post-master, the Admiralty Agent functioned as a surveillance mechanism. According to RMSPC rules, the Admiralty Agent was able to request the ship's log book or other information he required in order to report on the Company's service. While the log book contained routine information about the weather and navigational conditions, water and coal supplies on board, it was also the official record of the voyage. In cases of disaster or dispute, ships' log books were consulted. As the ship's journey was recorded as a fixed narrative in this document, surveillance of the log book held significance. The Admiralty Agent also had recourse to other forms of writing in order to exert power over the ship space. It was predominantly through Admiralty Agents' written reports that the Admiralty received intelligence of the progress and practices of the Company's ships. For example, extracts from an Agent's journal reported the *Actaeon*'s deviation from the timetable in May 1844.[105] Similarly a letter from the Agent attached to the *Tweed* reported that ship's grounding in the same month.[106] The grounding of the *Thames,* as well as the *Tay* later that year were reported to the Admiralty by Agents' letters. Agents' production of textual records allowed for indirect supervision as it bolstered the Admiralty's 'control of information' about the Company's service. [107]

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[104] UCL RMSP 4, 19 June 1843. The mail room presented specific problems in terms of securing the space of the ship. Mail rooms had to be fitted with wire doors to prevent damage by rats, and cats were employed on board to prevent destruction of the post.
[105] NMM RMS 6/3, 7 May 1844.
[106] NMM RMS 6/3, 14 May 1844.
[107] Giddens, *The consequences of modernity*, p. 58.

Correspondingly, the Admiralty Agent's surveillance role could provoke disputes, and yet access to information was far from guaranteed. For example, Agent Wilson complained in 1844 that he was unable to be 'up at all hours' to note the ships' average speed and that when he requested the average speed and ship's work for four days, Captain Hutt refused to provide this information.[108] Thus although written records were key means through which the Admiralty Agent could function as a surveillance mechanism, this arrangement was, at times, constrained by working practices on board.

The Admiralty Agent fitted awkwardly into shipboard hierarchies. The Company insisted that the Admiralty Agent on board each steamship was to be treated 'with every respect' and that captains were to ensure officers' adherence to this rule.[109] The inclusion of this statement within the Company regulations is of itself indicative of the Admiralty Agent's anomalous position within power structures on board. After all, no equivalent regulation was necessary to state the captain's authority.[110] However the Company's regulatory insistence on respectful conduct towards the Admiralty Agents was reinforced at a managerial level. When the managers wrote to Captain Boxer to introduce him to Lieutenant Brereton in 1843, for example, they pointed to the importance of 'maintaining a good understanding' with Brereton, the latter being the Government's representative on board.[111] Company officials and regulations reinforced the authority of the

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[108] NMM RMS 6/3, 14 November 1844.
[109] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 3.
[110] On the contrary, the 1850 regulations encouraged chief officers to be less accepting of the captain's authority and to vocalise their concerns if they disagreed with them on questions of safety. See NMM RMS 38/1, p. 22.
[111] UCL RMSP 4, 10 July 1843.

Admiralty Agent; they had to do this, since the Admiralty Agent's role was a new one, born out of Government funding of private shipping lines.

The ideal was to achieve a harmonious relationship between captains and Admiralty Agents. If the timetable was disrupted and a ship was in the wrong place at a particular time, Agents were to be consulted and if possible their approval of the course adopted was to be obtained in writing.[112] When relations between the Admiralty Agent and the captain were cordial, joint decisions could be used in the Company's defence against Admiralty complaints. This was the case, for example, when the *Avon* arrived at Bermuda behind schedule in 1845. The Admiralty Agent and the captain agreed to curtail their stay at Bermuda, and the Company cited this joint decision to the Admiralty in order to exonerate the captain's actions.[113] This was the ideal working arrangement between the Company and the Admiralty as it provided dual accountability for that which transpired on board. On paper this presented a neat bureaucratic arrangement. In practice, the applicability of the rules was open to question.

There is evidence to suggest that the RMSPC would have preferred to be rid of the Admiralty Agents. The Company recognized that overlapping authority over the space of the ship contributed to inefficiency. Thus in August 1842, the RMSPC wrote to the Admiralty suggesting that 'to prevent the constant interruptions and delays arising from differences between the mail agents placed on board by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty and the Captains appointed by the Court of Directors', it would be preferable to remove Admiralty

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[112] NMM RMS 38/1, pp. 3-4.
[113] NMM RMS 7/2, 3 October 1845.

Agents altogether from the service.[114] In defence of this proposal, the Company referred to occasions when the *Medway* and *Actaeon* had travelled without Agents on board, and insisted that this arrangement 'was found to accelerate materially the receipt and delivery of the mails'.[115] The Company's request was rejected and the continuation of the Admiralty Agent's role meant that the management of the space of the ship was caught, sometimes conflictingly, between two individuals and two sets of priorities.

In fact, confrontation with Admiralty Agents frequently resulted from differing understandings of the limits of Admiralty Agent authority. The Admiralty Agent on board the *Medway* in October 1844 submitted a written complaint when Captain Revett returned to St Vincent to pick up a passenger's forgotten luggage. Revett explained his autonomous decision with reference to the fact that the ship was ahead of schedule and did not fall behind the timetable by doubling back for the luggage.[116] Thus Revett considered himself to have authority over the ship except in circumstances of deviation from the timetable. The Admiralty Agent interpreted the situation differently and felt that he should be consulted before any change to the ship's course. As an alternative example of conflict over the Admiralty Agent's authority, Lieutenant Brereton launched a complaint when Mr Hayden, master of the *Tay*, refused him the use of a boat to land at Fayal in September 1844. [117] Although the Company was unable to investigate Mr Hayden's reasoning in this matter, it highlighted the *Tay*'s sinking state at the time of the dispute. It would have been dangerous, they pointed out, to send crew

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[114] NMM RMS 7/1, 29 August 1842.
[115] *Ibid*.
[116] NMM RMS 6/3, 2 January 1845 and 20 February 1845. The luggage in question contained substantial sums of money.
[117] NMM RMS 6/3, 20 September 1844.

members away from the ship in a mail boat when passengers and crew alike were engaged in pumping and bailing water out of the ship.[118] Although this situation of danger contrasts with Captain Revett's return for a passenger's luggage, in both cases the Company's employees understood the Admiralty Agent's authority not to apply. Differing interpretations of the Admiralty Agent's role meant that this figure's presence, intended to ensure the efficiency of the service through accountability and surveillance, could undermine the ship's efficiency by confusing streams of authority on board.

Furthermore, the spatial limits of the Admiralty Agent's authority were tested in the Americas and in Britain. In 1845 Lieutenant Bellairs was frustrated by what he felt was a lack of assistance from the RMSPC's Agent at Dominica in landing the mail. He complained that several postmasters in the West Indies were also reluctant to 'exert themselves on [his] behalf'.[119] Although the Company tried to uphold the Admiralty Agent's authority in the ship, this authority did not necessarily translate onto shore. Closer to Britain, Lieutenant Oldmixon clashed with the Company's superintendent Captain Barton at Southampton in 1845. The two argued over the exact timing of when a small steam tug (that was there for Barton's use) should depart to land the mail (over which the Admiralty Agent had authority). Both parties wrote different accounts of the incident, but it is clear that again the limits of the Admiralty Agent's authority were under question. Oldmixon reported that Barton thought himself in control of the mail while Barton insisted that Oldmixon said, 'when the mails were on board the

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[118] NMM RMS 7/2, 7 October 1844.
[119] NMM RMS 6/3, 12 May 1845. See also February 1845.

steamer was under my orders'.[120] The neat regulation that the Admiralty Agent had authority over the mail while the Company's employees controlled the ship was not, in practice, a clear demarcation. It created layers of authority over the space of the ship and these overlapping priorities led, on occasion, to conflict, subjecting ships to disorder. The Company relied upon temporary measures to diffuse tensions such as apologetic letters to the Admiralty and the transferral of personnel from one vessel to another. Ultimately, however, the Admiralty Agent fitted uneasily into shipboard hierarchies.

Jeffrey Richards and John MacKenzie note the influence of naval and military officers on the railway companies and point out that 'former naval and military officers figured extensively among the superintendents and general managers of the Victorian railway companies of Britain'.[121] Mail contracts allowed naval officers influence over the railway's oceanic equivalent. The example of the RMSPC indicates that traditional naval and military influence in shaping 'modern' transportation ought to be further stressed. The Admiralty Agent's role stemmed from public-private cooperation over the mail contracts. The presence of the Admiralty Agent on board provided an alternative and occasionally conflicting source of authority to the commander. The status of the Admiralty Agent sat uneasily with established norms of the captain's absolute control over the space of the ship. For this reason the Admiralty Agent was liable to render the ship as inefficient a space as an efficient one. The Admiralty Agent was a bureaucratic mechanism, providing the Admiralty with written reports, letters and journals through which they could monitor the ship. The Admiralty Agent

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[120] NMM RMS 6/3, 23 September 1845 and RMS 7/2, 3 October 1845.
[121] Richards and MacKenzie, *The railway station*, p. 99.

also functioned as a direct surveillance mechanism. In these respects, the Admiralty Agent's role was a modern one (in Giddens's terms). It was, however, a modern function that sat awkwardly in the space of the ship.

Civility on board: saloon culture

Whereas the preceding sections have focused on how the Company and Admiralty sought to maintain shipboard order and regularity during the first decade of the RMSPC's service, this section is concerned with attempts to produce a particular cultural style on board. Doing so requires consideration of a later period, and this examination of culture is largely based on travel narratives and memoirs from the late 1860s to the 1880s. When the Company proposed building a new steamship for general use in November 1844, it estimated that the ship should accommodate fifty-four officers and men, and fifty passengers.[122] By the late 1860s developments in the compound engine reduced the amount of coal consumed by ships and consequently increased the amount of space available for cargo and accommodation. The *Elbe*, *Tagus* and *Moselle* were launched in 1869 as the first RMSPC ships with the new compound engines.[123] Other vessels such as the *Medway* followed (see figure 5.3). These steamships contributed to cultural globalization more significantly than their predecessors, as is partially reflected by the relative abundance of RMSPC travel narratives during this later period.

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[122] NMM RMS 7/1, 1 November 1844.

[123] Prosper Dowden, *Ships of the Royal Mail lines*, 2nd edn (Southampton: Adlard Coles Ltd, 1954), p. 33.

Figure 5.3 The RMSPC's Steam Ship *Medway*, 3235 tons register, 600 horse power nominal, courtesy of National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London. The *Medway*, which entered service in 1877, was a later era steamship with greater passenger capacity and engine power than its predecessors. By the 1880s the RMSPC was constructing vessels to accommodate more than two hundred and fifty first-class passengers, and around thirty second- and third-class passengers respectively.[124]

The RMSPC sought to foster a particular culture on board its vessels. This was a representation of respectable British culture appropriate for exportation to the colonies and suitable for attracting first-class transatlantic passengers. A guide for migrants, *The River Plate (South America) as a field for emigration*, advised that whereas the RMSPC charged £70 for a single cabin to Buenos Aires, £55 for a berth in a cabin and £45 for a smaller berth on the lower deck forward, Liverpool steamers charged £35 for a saloon cabin, £25 for second class and £16 for third class, making the Liverpool line a more attractive option for artisans.[125]

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[124] NMM RMS 34/5, p. 19.

[125] *The River Plate (South America) as a field for emigration* (London: Bates, Hendy & Co., [1865]).

The RMSPC thus consciously adopted a pricing structure geared towards the means of wealthier passengers, as indeed was the culture fostered in the ship space. That which I term 'saloon culture' was a culture that met with Company approval and was perhaps the closest thing to an official Company style existing on board the steamships. The Company fostered saloon culture through the use of uniforms, particular décor, the deployment of servant labour, spatial divisions on board and saloon dining practices.

The RMSPC encouraged its officers to behave according to upper-class English norms – a fact that is perhaps hardly surprising given the kinds of men who served on the board of directors. These were men such as Thomas Baring, banker, politician and grandson of the founder of Baring Bros & Co., and retired naval officer Benedictus Marwood Kelly. [126] Accordingly, the Company stipulated that the commanding officer of each ship was to supervise the junior officers, 'especially the Midshipmen' and was to 'encourage, as far as practicable, an observance of moral principle, and a gentlemanly, officer-like deportment'.[127] When a Company inquiry at St Thomas found the aptly named Mr Savage, second officer of the *Conway*, guilty of hitting the third officer on that ship, Savage was reprimanded for 'unofficerlike' conduct.[128] In attempting to mould 'gentlemen' to serve on its ships, the Company privileged upper-class values as appropriate for positions of power in a stringently regulated ship space.

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[126] *Dictionary of National Biography* <http://www.oxforddnb.com> [accessed 1 November 2010]; Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy*, p. 40.
[127] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 81.
[128] UCL RMSP 12, 7 September 1860.

Uniforms were one means through which the Company could instil behavioural expectations in officers and crew. Captains wore a 'blue cloth frock or dress coat' and 'trousers of blue cloth or white duck'.[129] When on board the Company's ships they were permitted to wear a double-breasted jacket of blue cloth. Officers' uniforms were variations on the captain's but had narrower bands of gold lace around their collars in accordance with their rank. RMSPC officers' uniforms were therefore reminiscent of the navy, whose ornamental uniforms included such items as double-breasted blue cloth jackets.[130] RMSPC midshipmen wore single-breasted blue cloth jackets. Petty officers, firemen, coal trimmers, seamen and apprentices were required to wear black ribbons on their hats and blue Guernsey frocks with the Company's lettering on the breast.[131] The Company fostered a culture amongst its officers shaped by naval influences and this was reflected in its ordering of employees' appearance.

Yet steamships were not naval vessels. As places that accommodated paying passengers, a balance had to be struck between naval discipline and passenger satisfaction.[132] The Company desired officers to attend to passengers' needs and also maintain naval self-restraint. The fourth officer in particular was expected to attend to passengers and answer their enquiries.[133] All officers of the watch were 'civilly to answer any question put to them by passengers' but were to avoid 'entering into prolonged conversation with any person'.[134] That these boundaries

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[129] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 75.
[130] Yexley, *The inner life of the Navy*, p. 153.
[131] NMM RMS 38/1, pp. 76-77.
[132] During the mid-1840s, first-class passengers typically paid between £40 and £65 for a single fare.
[133] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 31.
[134] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 140.

operated differently in practice is hinted at by Froude's description of officers on board the *Moselle*, who 'flirted mildly with the pretty young ladies'.[135]

'Lady' passengers were promised a gender-bounded space on board. The ladies' saloon was a separate space that could be used between nine in the morning and nine o'clock in the evening.[136] In an attempt to maximise profits, the Company also sold sleeping berths in this space for use during the night. This arrangement did not always translate into a smooth operational routine, and this provoked passengers to complain to *The Times* in December 1842. A family of two ladies, an infant and a female servant were occupying 'one half of the ladies' saloon' and the other half 'had no less than seven sleeping in it'.[137] As the letter pointed out, when those occupying the saloon were seasick, the space was unavailable as a general ladies' sitting room. Those lucky enough not to be sleeping in the ladies' saloon had been promised 'comfortable apartments' and were disappointed to find that many of their berths were 'near the slaughter-house, the engine-house, and the men's berths; and the ladies complain bitterly of the smell, the filth of the passage, and the language they hear'.[138] F. M. L. Thompson describes the Victorian aristocratic household in which 'ladies were to be protected from seeing or doing anything unseemly, unfitting, or upsetting'.[139] For the women and men writing to *The Times* to complain, ladies' private space on board was not adequately protected from the proximate spaces of working-class men. They wrote, '[w]e do not mean to say that the company can prevent the

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[135] James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies* (London: Longmans, 1888), p. 23.
[136] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 134.
[137] *The Times*, 8 December, 1842.
[138] *Ibid.*
[139] F. M. L. Thompson, *The rise of respectable society: a social history of Victorian Britain*, 1830-1900 (London: Fontana Press, 1988), p. 157.

men talking; but they ought not to put ladies where they cannot help hearing them.' [140] In terms of gendered spaces on board, the theoretical order and divisions of the ship failed to correspond with the working realities of the service. Yet RMSPC steamships, similarly to trains, were 'depicted as public spaces in which women could maintain their respectability beyond the home'.[141] Through the provision of separate spaces for women, the steamship, like the railway station's waiting-room, indicated 'the desire of their male designers and operators to protect women'.[142] Carefully assigned spaces were one element of the RMSPC's officially implemented passenger travelling experience.

In addition, servants on board vessels played a role in fashioning saloon culture. By the nature of their duties, servants necessarily had a high degree of contact with passengers. Passengers' comfort (and therefore their willingness to travel on the ships again in the future) was dependent on the presence of these workers. Waiters and saloon servants on the ship were required to dress 'in a decent and *uniform* manner,' be clean-shaven and to wear clean clothes.[143] Servants wore dark grey cloth coats and trousers in winter and white duck or other light material jackets and trousers in warm latitudes.[144] By 1876, the stipulation was that they should be 'well dressed in livery' when attending at table.[145] During the four days prior to a ship's departure, waiters, saloon servants, cooks and bakers cleaned plate and glass as well as the saloon galleys, its cooking implements,

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[140] *The Times*, 8 December 1842.
[141] Amy G. Richter, *Home on the rails: women, the railroad, and the rise of public domesticity* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005), p. 4.
[142] Richards and MacKenzie, *The railway station*, p. 158.
[143] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 119. Emphasis in original.
[144] NMM RMS 38/1, pp. 76-77.
[145] NMM RMS 38/5, p. 18.

fires and floors.[146] The bedroom steward, steward's storekeeper and waiter in charge of glass and crockery could earn an extra five shillings a month for taking good care of these smaller material goods belonging to the Company.[147] Servant labour was necessary to render the saloon and its material objects comfortable and attractive to first-class passengers.

Servants contributed to bodily comforts on board, and in this way shaped the first-class passenger experience. After complaints in the early years of service, one servant on board was placed exclusively in charge of the water closets. This servant cleaned the water closets three times a day, dried and aired them, ensured that the roofs did not leak, and that they were supplied with sufficient water at all times and light at night.[148] Another servant was appointed to attend particularly to the needs of fore-cabin passengers; this duty fell heavily in the mornings when sick passengers remained in their cabins. The officially sanctioned culture of the steamship was shaped around upper-class values and highly dependent upon servant labour on board. Thompson describes the relationship between working- and middle-class Victorian women in consciously over-simplistic terms: '[o]ne very large group, the domestic servants, worked so that another group of women, chiefly middle-class wives, could be leisured'.[149] On the steamship, working-class men (with the exception of the stewardess) laboured as domestic servants so that another group of men, predominantly aristocratic and middle-class, could enjoy leisured travel in comparable comfort to their domestic arrangements at home. The recruitment of servants also reflected the nature of the RMSPC

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[146] NMM RMS 38/1, pp. 119-120.
[147] NMM RMS 5/1, p. 59.
[148] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 143.
[149] Thompson, *The rise of respectable society*, p. 247.

steamship as a multi-lingual space. In order to attend to the varying needs of their passengers, each steamer was required to employ at least one francophone servant. This same individual, or another servant, had to speak Spanish. The bilingual servant acted as a bedroom steward on board and also waited on 'foreigners' when dining.[150] Furthermore James Froude and George Morant recall the presence of signs in Spanish on board the steamers.[151] The plurality of languages on board reflected the European diversity of saloon passengers.

Material culture on board was indicative of officially sanctioned RMSPC norms. The saloon of the *Nile*, which entered the West Indies service in 1869, was 'to be fitted with maple or other fancy woods inlaid, as required, French polished, with chaste relieving in carved and gold work'.[152] Crockery and dining implements purchased by the Company during the 1840s for use in the saloon included soup tureens, fish sauce stands, mustard spoons, butter knives, soup ladles, salt spoons, egg spoons, fish knives, tea pots and toast racks. The Company also used double damask tablecloths bearing the Royal Arms and the Company's name.[153] In material terms, the saloon suggested sumptuous dining.

As an opulent and privileged space, the saloon was a place of exclusion. Only senior Company officers such as the captain, the chief officer, the chief engineer and surgeon could eat or spend time in the saloon.[154] Saloon passengers paid the highest fares, and second-class passengers were not allowed to dine with them.

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[150] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 120.
[151] Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, pp. 18-19; George C. Morant, *Chili and the River Plate in 1891: reminiscences of travel in South America* (London: Waterlow & Sons Ltd, 1891), pp. 23-24.
[152] NMM RMS 34/1, p. 8.
[153] NMM RMS 1/1, 4 March 1841.
[154] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 26.

Junior officers were invited into the saloon at the Captain's request, thus as fourth officer of the *Tweed*, Robert Woolward's introduction to the Captain took place at dinner in the saloon.[155] When the Company was still in its infancy, the managers and directors saw the ships off at Southampton with grand lunches, and sometimes speeches, in the saloon.[156] By the 1870s ships might have more than two saloons. The large saloon, however, was used for the purposes of dining and recreation.[157]

The centrality of food to the passenger's experience of steamship travel is indicated by Anthony Trollope's narrative, in which the first glimpse of RMS *Atrato* includes reference to 'half iced' claret and a scene around the dinner-table:

> "This comes of monopoly," said a stern and eloquent neighbour at the dinner-table, holding up to sight a somewhat withered apple. "And dis," said a grinning Frenchman from Martinique with a curse, exhibiting a rotten walnut – "dis, dis! The give me dis for my moneys – for my thirty-five pounds!" And glancing round with angry eyes, he dropped the walnut on to his plate.[158]

The RMSPC's cooks were therefore key to shaping saloon culture. Since the Company's passengers were not necessarily from Britain or the British colonies, the Company had to encourage a certain degree of cultural — albeit European — diversity on board ship in order to secure profits.[159] The saloon was a dining space that catered to French and Spanish as well as to English culinary culture. During the 1850s it was served by a French as well as an English chef.[160] The

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[155] Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years*, p. 45.

[156] *Ibid*.

[157] T. A. Bushell, *"Royal Mail"*, p. 129.

[158] Anthony Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1859), pp. 3-4. For a sense of the day being structured around mealtimes, see also L. Dillon, *A twelve months' tour in Brazil and the River Plate with notes on sheep farming*, (Manchester: Alexander Ireland and Co., 1867).

[159] This can be best understood with reference to the Company's routes. After 1851, these included French and Spanish colonies as well as stops in Portugal and Brazil.

[160] NMM RMS 38/1, pp. 120-121.

French cook was paid a minimum of five pounds a month whereas the English cook was guaranteed at least seven pounds a month. The Company directed that French soup should be available daily as well as a minimum of four French dishes for dinner.[161] In the saloon, 'coffee, chocolate, sugared water, and other articles of food, used principally by foreign passengers' were also freely available, and the Company instructed that 'their comfort and tastes [were] always to be consulted, and indulged'.[162]

Furthermore, the Company's Brazil and River Plate route ships were carefully adapted to the requirements of Portuguese passengers. During the 1850s, water on these vessels was stored and kept cool in porous earthen jars called 'moringues' procured at Lisbon. The saloon table was always, amongst other items, to include 'feijão', black beans with a piece of pork or dried beef of Rio Grande, and 'malho de pimento' a sauce of bruised hot peppers. On the Brazil route coffee was served straight after dinner, and 'palitos' (toothpicks made from wood of the orange tree and purchased at Lisbon) were to be on the dinner table at all times.[163] The Company maintained this practice of catering to cultural preferences. George Morant's narrative *Chili and the River Plate in 1891: reminiscences of travel in South America*, recalled a voyage on board the *Magdalena*, departing from Southampton in February 1891. He wrote that 'Spanish and Portuguese emigrants, however comfortable they may be on board an English steamer, do not take kindly to English food, and consequently there

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[161] Saloon passengers on board RMSPC ships during the 1870s were served for dinner one soup and fish or oyster patties, two entrées, one roast and one boiled joint served with salad and two kinds of vegetables, two kinds of pastry and tapioca, or bread and butter pudding, cheese and biscuits, and four kinds of dessert followed by coffee.
[162] NMM RMS 38/1 p. 118.
[163] *Ibid*.

came on board at Lisbon a Portuguese cook, specially retained to prepare the delicacies to which they were accustomed'.[164]

Despite the permitted limited (European) diversity, Trollope criticised the Spaniards as 'bad fellow-travellers' on account of their customs at the table.[165] Froude commented on the smoking habits of the Spanish colonists on board. He complained that they 'smoke everywhere, with the usual consequences'.[166] Morant was similarly critical in his description of the 'offspring of the Brazilians, Portuguese, and Spanish South Americans'.[167] Morant concluded the Brazilians' manners to be 'objectionable'.[168] In this way, cultural customs could cause friction between passengers. Even within the context of 'saloon culture', therefore, cultures met and, to use Mary Louise Pratt's terminology, 'clashed'.[169] Yet 'saloon culture' was still sufficiently unified so as not to undermine, or contend with the Company's official culture. Sources of starker cultural contention stemmed from spaces other than the saloon.

The European culinary habits cultivated by the Company were altered once the ship arrived in the Americas. While the pervasiveness of the exotic in the following depiction by Kingsley is somewhat overwhelming, it is nevertheless clear that the passenger's culinary experience on board ship widened beyond saloon dining in the course of the ship's journey:

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[164] Morant, *Chili and the River Plate,* pp. 7-8.
[165] Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, p. 9.
[166] Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, pp. 18-19.
[167] Morant, *Chili and the River Plate,* pp. 23-24.
[168] *Ibid.*
[169] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial eyes: travel writing and transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 4.

> At St. Thomas's we had been introduced to bananas (figs, as they are miscalled in the West Indies); to the great green oranges, thick-skinned and fragrant; to those junks of sugar-cane, some two feet long, which Cuffy, and Cuffy's ladies, delight to gnaw, walking, sitting, and standing; increasing thereby the size of their lips, and breaking out, often enough, their upper front teeth. We had seen, and eaten too, the sweet sop – a passable fruit, or rather congeries of fruits, looking like a green and purple strawberry, of the bigness of an orange. It is the cousin of the prickly sour-sop; of the really delicious, but to me unknown, Chirimoya, and of the custard apple, containing a pulp which (as those who remember the delectable pages of Tom Cringle know) bears a startling likeness to brains. Bunches of grapes, at St. Kits, lay among these; and at St. Lucia we saw with them, for the first time, Avocado, or Alligator pears, alias midshipman's butter; large round brown fruits, to be eaten with pepper and salt by those who list. With these, in open baskets, lay bright scarlet capiscums, green coco-nuts tinged with orange, great roots of yam and cush-cush, with strange pulse of various kinds and hues.[170]

Similarly, Froude wrote of breakfast on board the steamship when anchored

outside of Kingston, Jamaica:

> The fruit was the chief attraction: pineapples, of which one can eat as much as one likes in these countries with immunity from after suffering; oranges, more excellent than even those of Grenada and Dominica; shaddocks, admirable as that memorable one which seduced Adam; and for the first time mangoes, the famous Number Eleven of which I had heard such high report, and was now to taste.[171]

Given the central importance of eating as a sociable and culturally marked

practice on board, the altered culinary experience in the Americas was of no

small significance and mirrored a wider trend of cultural fracturing as the ship

progressed on its journey through the Americas.

The RMSPC sought to foster a cultural style on board its ships by designating

gender-specific spaces, by deploying servant labour, and a material and sartorial

aesthetic, as well as through particular expectations of its officers. Food and

eating were central to officially sanctioned 'saloon culture', and it is notable that

this culinary culture was marked by a degree of European diversity. The dining

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[170] Charles Kinglsey, *At last: a Christmas in the West Indies*, 4th edn (London: Macmillan and Co, 1874), pp. 32-33.
[171] Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, p. 199.

experience was, however, altered on a ship's arrival in the Caribbean, and in this respect, eating practices on board paralleled other mobile cultural trends.

Steam creolised: deck and other cultures on board

Charles Kingsley recalled that travelling on board the *Neva*, under the command of Captain Woolward, the passengers and crew staged a 'wild-beast show' for their own entertainment. The doctor 'contributed an alligator' and the chief engineer exhibited a 'live Tarantula'. As the ship approached Europe, the passengers 'began to lose' their pets to the cold.[172] The wild beast show is for three reasons an apt image with which to begin consideration of social and cultural interaction on board RMSPC steamships, beyond the limited interactions and minor conflicts of the dining table. Firstly, this form of entertainment was a way of learning through observing the unknown (or barely known). In other words the show was a spectacle of difference. RMSPC passengers on board a ship in motion frequently found themselves in a space in which they could observe cultural difference. Secondly, the wild beast show was a form of imperial exhibition in miniature: it was a bringing together of creatures from different places within and beyond the British Empire. Finally, the fact that several of the pets died out as the ship approached European waters neatly reflects the way in which the RMSPC steamship changed as a social and cultural space. The ship was characterised by a limited degree of diversity as it left Europe, became culturally fractured and creolised in the Americas and receded into relative uniformity on the ship's homeward leg. Culture on board the ship

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[172] Kingsley, *At last*, p. 396.

can therefore be understood as operating in a tidalectic structure, '*coming from one continent/ continuum, touching another, and then receding*'.[173] Once the steamship arrived in the Americas, cultural practices were creolised. Cultural contention and reconfiguration on board ship constituted part of the vitality of the ship as a 'living system'.[174]

The steamship in motion was a multi-racial space. Woolward recalled landing 'a very fair young lady, newly married to a coloured gentleman' at Kingston.[175] Froude described 'a small black boy' amongst the passengers with whom the officers on board and some of the ladies played.[176] Further into his journey, the ship on which he was travelling picked up 'boatloads of people', 'ladies young and old, white, black and mixed, who were bound I know not where'.[177] Trollope recalled the 'lady' who handed him a rose at St Thomas before revealing that 'she was as black as [his] boot' and that 'she had come to look after the ship's washing'.[178] Contact across races took place on and around the ship. This contact could potentially lead to surprising alliances. Froude stated that the captain of an RMSPC steamer 'had become acquainted with the present black President of Hayti', who 'seemed to be a favourite of the captain's'.[179] Regardless of the truth of this claim of friendship, the inclusion of the statement in his narrative is suggestive of the ways in which RMSPC steamships brought races into contact on ship and on shore.

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[173] Brathwaite, *conVERSations with Nathaniel Mackey*, p. 34. Emphasis in original.
[174] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 4.
[175] Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years*, pp. 74-75
[176] Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, pp. 24-25.
[177] *Ibid*., p. 100.
[178] Trollope, *The West Indies and the Spanish Main*, pp. 7-8.
[179] Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, p. 181.

The ship's function as a contact zone also brought together individual 'carriers of culture'.[180] Pratt describes contact zones as 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination'.[181] During the 1890s, the Brazil and River Plate ships served as contact zones that brought together different classes and nationalities. Morant recalled the presence of hundreds of emigrants who boarded the *Magdalena* in 1891 at Vigo, bound for the River Plate. His narrative contrasts the cultural activities of the saloon passengers who staged concerts in 'a capital music-room', with the musical activities in other spaces on the ship. He wrote that 'among the emigrants were several who had brought with them musical instruments, varying between the tin whistle and the "*bandurra*" or Portuguese guitar, an instrument with six wire strings played by the finger-nails, and very effective, especially in conjunction with the ordinary guitar and the mandoline.'[182] This idea of a musical transformation of the deck is further reinforced by recollections of Edward A. Williams who served as a Company purser. Williams described passengers singing, noting that, 'the negroes appeared to have a great liking for the hymns of Sankey and Moody'.[183] The ship's function as a contact zone across class, race and nationality produced a fractured plurality of sub-cultures on board.

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[180] O. Nigel Bolland, 'Creolisation and Creole Societies: a cultural nationalist view of Caribbean social history', in *Questioning creole: creolisation discourses in Caribbean culture*, ed. by Verene A. Shepherd and Glen L. Richards (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2002), p. 38.

[181] Pratt, *Imperial eyes*, p. 4. Although Pratt suggests that '[t]ransculturation is a phenomenon of the contact zone', her interpretation of transculturation, Ortiz's term, is limiting. This is because transculturation, as Pratt emphasises, is about 'how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture'. *Ibid*., p. 6. Knowledge on board ship did not flow straightforwardly from the 'dominant' to the 'subordinated', and it is for this reason that I engage instead with concepts of creolisation.

[182] Morant, *Chili and the River Plate in 1891*, pp. 11-12.

[183] Edward A. Williams's account as quoted in Bushell, *"Royal Mail"*, p. 136.

Figure 5.4 *St Thomas (Parti af Byen og Havnen)*, by H. Hansons © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

Above all, the RMSPC steamship functioned as a contact zone at the point of arrival in the Americas. Lighters and local traders, often recorded in travel narratives as 'negro boats', rowed out to meet the ships. At this point, further cultural contact occurred. Kingsley described the *Shannon*'s arrival at St Thomas (see figures 5.4 and 5.5):

> The engine had hardly stopped, when we were boarded from a fleet of negro boats, and huge bunches of plantains, yams, green oranges, junks of sugar-cane, were displayed upon the deck; and more than one of the ladies went through the ceremony of initiation into West Indian ways, which consisted in sucking sugar-cane, first pared for the sake of their teeth.[184]

That Kingsley describes this as a cultural 'initiation' is indicative of the two-way cultural exchange or creolisation that occurred on the deck; however it must be noted that this exchange was played out in the context of unequal power relations. The 'ladies' being initiated were at leisure, while those initiating them

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[184] Kingsley, *At last*, pp. 16-17.

were doing so for the purpose of earning money.[185] Froude hinted at similar cultural contact around the ship at St Vincent. He cast the scene as 'entertaining' and described 'the bustle and confusion in the ship, the crowd of boats round the ladder, the clamour of negro men's tongues, and the blaze of colours from the negro women's dresses'.[186] Woolward also recalled the 'boatmen' at Barbados who collected passengers from the steamship and landed them on shore. Again, the presence of non-Europeans who came out to meet the steamship derived from needs to earn a living. Yet similarly to Froude's consideration of 'entertainment', Woolward credited the 'amusement' to be derived from the boatmen 'as they go along'.[187] New experiences and sights on the ship were interpreted by the more privileged passengers as entertainment, even when they were observing others at work.

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[185] A similar trend was in evidence on the South American route. Edgcumbe recalled that boats came to meet the steamship at Bahia, Maceio and Pernambuco with birds and animals for sale. See E. R. Pearce Edgcumbe, *Zephyrus: a holiday in Brazil and on the River Plate* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1887), pp. 20-21.

[186] Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, p. 51.

[187] Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years*, p. 51.

Figure 5.5 *Royal Mail Steam Ship Shannon, 3472 tons, 800 horse power*, by Thomas Goldsworth

Dutton © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

Cultural contention occurred not only at the boundaries of the ship but also on

board, notably due to the presence of deck passengers. Deck passengers paid ⅕

of the rate of cabin passengers. They could not travel on the transatlantic route:

only inter-colonially. 'Only troops, common sailors, labourers, and others not

superior to those classes of society' travelled as deck passengers.[188] Woolward

estimated that he transported up to three hundred deck passengers a month from

Cartagena to Colon when the Panama railway was under construction.[189] A

similar wave of migration followed when the Panama Canal was being

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[188] NMM RMS 38/1, p. 134. It should be noted that servants of cabin passengers could not be booked as deck passengers.

[189] Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years*, p. 217. This railroad foreshadowed the Panama Canal project. Railroad construction began during the 1850s, and workers migrated from Europe, Africa and China; however when malaria destroyed the labour force, the Railroad Company focused its recruitment in Jamaica. By the end of 1855 almost five thousand adult males had left Jamaica for Panama. See Matthew Parker, *Panama fever: the battle to build the canal* (London: Hutchinson, 2007) p. 29.

developed (see chapter four). The presence of deck passengers in large numbers translated the RMSPC's steamships as social microcosms. These passengers were far removed from the first-class European privilege for which the service was initially intended. In fact, Woolward provides a particularly stark example of the RMSPC steamship's function being translated from the directors' cultural vision for the place. At Havana, 'liberated' slaves from HM schooner *Pickle* were transferred to the *Tweed* for passage to Jamaica. Woolward describes his experience of travelling with these 'savages' on board: 'a fine time we had with them. We were six days going to Jamaica, and several births took place on the passage'.[190] The presence of recently enslaved Africans on an RMSPC steamer illustrates how the ships could become a cultural vector for something very different to the 'European energy' that James McQueen envisaged.[191]

The cultural practices of deck passengers routinely contrasted and contended with those of the saloon. Froude, with characteristically racialized discourse, noted the presence of deck passengers on an inter-colonial steamer:

> Forward there were perhaps two or three hundred coloured people going from one island to another, singing, dancing, and chattering all night long, as radiant and happy as carelessness and content could make them.[192]

Froude's description is problematic in its insistence that deck passengers were 'happy', 'careless' and 'content', since travelling as a migrant labourer was unlikely to have been experienced in this way. Yet it is evident from Froude's description that deck passengers re-inscribed the space of the ship with their own cultural practices, quite separate from those of the saloon. Since deck passengers could not eat in the saloon, they were excluded from the space of official 'saloon

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[190] Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years*, pp. 65-66.
[191] MacQueen, *A general plan*, p. 56.
[192] Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, pp. 48-49.

culture'. Instead, deck passengers brought their own food, bedding and culture on board. The ship was culturally fractured as practices on board contested the dining and leisure customs of the saloon. Cultural practices on the deck contended with those officially sanctioned by the Company. By 'performatively' 'constituting' their identities on the deck, inter-colonial passengers transformed the culture of the steamship.[193]

The RMSPC sought to court first-class passengers and constructed a gentlemanly culture on board to appeal to such travellers. Yet the Company's vessels were characterised by cultural diversity for two key reasons. Firstly, the presence of European transatlantic passengers necessitated that the Company appeal to more than British tastes. Secondly, the ship became culturally fractured as it moved, since deck passengers joining vessels in the Americas brought their own cultural practices which contested Company culture, and the ship in port came into contact with cultural norms at the ship's temporary location. The official culture was thus creolised when the ship travelled through the Americas, as a number of cultures contested and transformed the space of the ship.

Conclusion

This thematic exploration of the RMSPC's steamship as a 'living system' has presented an 'alter/native' interpretation to the linear narratives of technological progress found in many Company histories.[194] The RMSPC's vessels were brought into existence partly to promote order across the British Empire. It is in

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[193] For the performative constitution of identity, see Judith Butler, *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity* (Routledge, 1990), p. 25.

[194] Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 4; DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots*, p. 2 .

this light that the directors' desire for highly ordered, 'meticulous [...] well arranged', ship spaces can be interpreted.[195] Yet extensive regulation failed to compensate for human irregularities that subjected the ship to disorder. Furthermore, and in spite of directors' priorities, the RMSPC steamship, designed to connect disparate locations, underwent a process of translation as it moved. This translation led to the modification, distortion and, in some cases, loss of the Admiralty and Company's aspirations for the ship.

The example of the RMSPC invites us to pluralize our understanding of modern transportation. Undoubtedly the RMSPC steamship was surrounded by extensive administrative practices, which made the space institutionally modern. The Company responded to safety and security concerns by expanding bureaucratic structures. Written notices to the public warned against smuggling and officers were required to take exams on regulations. The steamship was a space framed by bureaucracy and writing practices. Yet if the steamship is to be understood as a modern institution, characterised by surveillance and written reports, the modern experience of steamships was not a uniquely European phenomenon. It was through its function as a contact zone, a place of social hybridity and cultural creolisation, that the distinctive modernity of the RMSPC steamship was made. Notably, this experiential dimension of steamship modernity was not constructed by the Company's directors and has been largely overlooked. While the directors and the Admiralty attempted to shape a modern institution that might be

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[195] Foucault, 'Of other spaces', p. 24.

understood on Giddens's terms, what emerged was a modernity of 'the hybrid relationships and connections between places'.[196]

In an attempt to mould the ship into an appropriately ordered space, the RMSPC's directors sought to cultivate that which I have termed saloon culture. This necessitated ordering the material and human body of the ship to cater to the comforts of 'imperial careerists' and their families.[197] Instead of the ship's external places becoming acculturated to internal saloon culture, the extroverted nature of the ship and its mobility ensured that the space was characterised by cultural exposure and contest. As the ship moved through the Americas, deck and other cultures creolised the RMSPC steamship. Most importantly, though the steamship was created as a modern institution through bureaucratic frameworks and practices imposed from above, a key experiential aspect of the steamship's modernity emanated from below.

DeLoughrey argues that a 'dynamic model of geography can elucidate island history and cultural production'.[198] Specifically, I would stress that a mobile geographical perspective contributes richly to this agenda, and brings to the foreground 'extroverted' relationships between port-of-call and oceans.[199] These extroverted relationships hinged, in this period, on ships such as the RMSPC's. Examination of the RMSPC steamship indicates that it was not only a mobile place, but also a place characterised by a dynamic mobility. The ship was shaped according to directors', managers' and Admiralty ideals on the shores of

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[196] Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of modernity: London's geographies 1680-1780* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1998), p. 17.
[197] Lambert and Lester, 'Introduction: imperial spaces, imperial subjects', p. 2.
[198] DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots*, p. 2.
[199] Doreen Massey, *Space, place and gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 154-5.

Southampton, but was socially and culturally transformed as it travelled through the Americas. In this way, the ship's mobility ensured a 'complex and shifting entanglement between sea and land'.[200]

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[200] DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots*, p. 2.

Chapter six

'This operation is carried on by coloured "ladies"': mobilities, immobilities and the coaling process[1]

Introduction

At the start of a transatlantic journey to England in 1842, Captain Franklin was ordered to load the *Tweed* with as much coal as the vessel could carry. In response to this instruction, he resorted to filling even the mail room with fuel. Although Admiralty Agent Lieutenant Davies was consulted about this decision at the time, the unusual storage arrangements later led to investigation.[2] On receiving complaint from the Admiralty, the RMSPC instructed Franklin to report fully on the matter, 'taking care not to state anything which may not be transmitted to the Admiralty and being guarded of course not to injure the character of the ship'.[3] Ultimately the Admiralty declared Franklin's explanation unsatisfactory, and issued a warning that such a measure should not be repeated.[4] Franklin's movement and storage of coal on his vessel was deemed to be injudicious. As this disagreement demonstrates, the storage and consumption of coal on board ship mattered to the RMSPC. At the scale of the ship, the coaling station, and the Company, the mobilisation of coal and coaling equipment is a particular focus of this chapter. This chapter also examines some key implications of coaling practice in the Caribbean as gendered and racialized.

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[1] Robert Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years at sea* (London: Digby, Long & Co., [1894]), p. 53.
[2] NMM RMS 7/1, 1 August 1842.
[3] NMM RMS 6/1, 28 July 1842.
[4] NMM RMS 6/1, 12 August 1842.

In February 1847, five years after Franklin was reprimanded for his coaling storage decisions, another coal-related incident provoked a Company investigation. The *Trent*, voyaging through the West Indies, ran short of fuel and stopped at Grand Cayman to take coal on board − a call that was dangerous and risked throwing the Company's timetable into chaos. A lengthy inquiry ensued. At the centre of this proceeding lay a disagreement between Captain Revett, the ship's commander, and Mr Dixon, the chief engineer. There was no love lost between these two men. On its passage through the West Indies, the *Trent* had stopped at Havana as scheduled to take coal on board. Exactly what happened next was disputed. Captain Revett claimed that he had ordered ninety-one tons of coal to be loaded onto the ship after consultation with the chief engineer. Mr Dixon, the chief engineer in question, denied that this conversation had ever taken place and reported that eighty-one tons of coal had been loaded on board instead of ninety-one. He insisted that as the ship set off from Havana, he had mentioned this shortage four times, but not to the captain, since he thought that approaching the captain would earn him an earful of abuse.[5] Once it became clear that the ship was short of fuel, a hazardous stop at Grand Cayman was made. In the wake of this incident, Captain Revett and Mr Dixon were suspended from the Company's service.[6] As both Captain Franklin's and Captain Revett's bunkering decisions indicate, coal could cause a great deal of trouble. By turning to the coaling process, and 'foregrounding the truly backstage elements' of steamship travel in this period, I intend to highlight the way in which mobilities

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[5] UCL RMSP 10, 3 February 1847.
[6] *Ibid*.

and immobilities at the coaling station underpinned mid-century steamship networks.[7]

David Evans casts the coaling stations of the Royal Navy as 'strategic concerns', but how else might we conceive of these spaces?[8] Bruno Latour writes:

> Is a railroad local or global? Neither. It is local at all points, since you always find sleepers and railroad workers, and you have stations and automatic ticket machines scattered along the way. Yet it is global, since it takes you from Madrid to Berlin or from Brest to Vladivostok. However, it is not universal enough to be able to take you just anywhere. It is impossible to reach the little Auvergnat village of Malpy by train, or the little Staffordshire village of Market Drayton. There are continuous paths that lead from the local to the global, from the circumstantial to the universal, from the contingent to the necessary, only so long as the branch lines are paid for.[9]

Latour's consideration of the railroad highlights patterns of interconnection between the 'local' and the 'global' that are equally applicable to steamship networks. The coaling station might be considered analogous to a railway shed, 'scattered along the way' of steamship routes.[10] Like a railway shed, the coaling station was a place where the steamship paused and was maintained, often overseen by a superintendent who might reside nearby.[11] Yet unlike a railway shed, the coaling station was a public place of contact between passengers and shore-based company employees. In this chapter I examine the coaling station's role in constituting a path between the local and the global, and I analyse the mobilities and 'moorings' that underpinned the coaling process.[12]

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[7] Susan Leigh Star, 'The ethnography of infrastructure', *American behavioural scientist*, 43:3 (1999), 377-391 (p. 380).

[8] David Evans, *Building the steam navy: dockyards, technology and the creation of the Victorian battle fleet, 1830-1906* (London: Conway Maritime Press, 2004), p. 9.

[9] Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern*, trans. by Catherine Porter (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 117.

[10] *Ibid.*

[11] See P. N. Townend, *Top shed: a pictorial history of King's Cross locomotive depot* (London: Ian Allan Ltd, 1975).

[12] Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings', *Mobilities*, 1:1 (2006), 1-22.

The new mobilities paradigm underscores the fact that 'all places are tied into at least thin networks of connections'. [13] This chapter will consider such connections with reference to the coaling station. Typically, the coaling wharf was marked by '[i]ssues of movement, of too little movement or too much, or of the wrong sort or at the wrong time'. [14] The RMSPC particularly articulated concerns about the movement of coal and the movement of Caribbean coaling labourers. The Company's establishment of depots demanded 'mobilisations of locality and rearrangements of the materiality of places', as particular coaling stations were selected due to advantages of physical geography and an accommodating local economy. [15] Representations were also mobilised at the coaling wharf, as understandings of appropriate labour divisions travelled from Britain to the Caribbean and contributed to a racialized and gendered discourse on coaling within steamship travel literature.

Coaling stations comprised part of an infrastructure that allowed steamships to travel along and across imperial sea-lanes in an era of industrialized oceanic transport. [16] As Holger H. Herwig notes, '[j]ust as surely as steam freed ships from the eternal reliance on wind and tides, so surely it also tied them to docks, coal depots and colliers'. [17] In this way, the geography of the RMSPC's coaling stations facilitated specific routes for the Company's ships, and with it, the

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[13] Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The new mobilitiies paradigm', *Environment and planning A*, 38:2 (2006), 207-226 (p. 209).

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 208.

[15] *Ibid.*, p. 210.

[16] Bernard D. Cole writes of 'sea lines of communication' with reference to twentieth-century energy imports to Asia. In a nineteenth-century context, the distribution and management of coal supplies around the ocean enabled steamship lines of communication. See Bernard D. Cole, *Sea lanes and pipelines: energy security in Asia* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger Security International, 2008), pp. 83-94.

[17] Holger H. Herwig, 'Series editor's preface', in Donald Mackenzie Schurman, *Imperial defence 1868-1887*, ed. by John Beeler (London and Portland: Frank Cass, 2000), pp. vii-viii.

'capital, people and texts' travelling on board these vessels.[18] An examination of practices at the coaling station allows consideration of the means and measures that rendered it possible, in the Caribbean context, to 'create zones of connectivity, centrality, and empowerment in some cases, and of disconnection' in others.[19] I contend that the RMSPC coaling station was a place '"of in-between-ness" involved in being mobile but immobile', but was also a place of in-between-ness involved in being enslaved and free.[20] The RMSPC sought to fix structures and peoples in place at the coaling station to enable smooth steamship flows. Furthermore, the coaling station served to fuel ideas, as the steamship's pause at these places set in motion debates about empire, slavery and freedom. Nevertheless, the coaling station remained subject to negotiated power dynamics.

As already indicated, coaling stations formed part of steamship transport infrastructure. Susan Leigh Star and Karen Ruhleder define infrastructure against eight key markers.[21] Four of these are particularly relevant to the coaling station. Firstly, the RMSPC's coaling station infrastructure was embedded in steamship technology. Secondly, in terms of transparency, coaling arrangements were to an extent (though not entirely) invisible in supporting steamship mobilities − an exception was the coaling process itself, which was often keenly observed by

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[18] David Lambert and Alan Lester, 'Introduction: imperial spaces, imperial subjects', in *Colonial lives across the British Empire: imperial careering in the long nineteenth century*, ed. by David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-31 (p. 10).
[19] Sheller and Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm', p. 210.
[20] *Ibid.*, p. 219.
[21] Firstly, they stress that infrastructure is embedded inside other structures. Secondly, infrastructure is transparent and does not have to be repeatedly reinvented. Thirdly, infrastructure has either temporal or spatial scope. Fourthly, infrastructure has to be learnt by outsiders. Fifthly, infrastructure is shaped by conventions of use, and also shapes these in turn. Infrastructure embodies standards, is overlaid on pre-existing systems, and finally, it becomes visible upon breakdown. See Star, 'The ethnography of infrastructure', pp. 381-382.

passengers. Thirdly, the chain of coaling stations had 'reach or scope,' as the network stretched across several sites around the Atlantic.[22] Fourthly, coaling infrastructure became visible at moments of disruption or malfunction.[23] To this, however, it should be added that coaling infrastructure was also visible when being first established, and that these records of infrastructural establishment exist in archival traces.

The original scheme of routes was based upon the assumption that the Company's steamers would be coaled at Southampton, Corunna, Demerara, Grenada, St Thomas, Kingston, Jamaica, Havana, New Orleans, Vera Cruz, North America, Halifax and Bermuda.[24] The modified scheme of routes of May 1843 allowed for coaling at only Southampton, Madeira, Grenada, St Thomas, Jamaica, Havana, Bermuda and Fayal (in the Azores) (see figure 6.1).[25] The South American routes introduced in 1851 coaled at Southampton, Lisbon, St Vincent (Cape Verde), Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and Monte Video.[26] St Lucia was later added to the Company's chain of depots.[27]

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[22] *Ibid*.

[23] Susan Leigh Star, 'The ethnography of infrastructure', p. 382; Stephen Graham, 'Preface', in *Disrupted cities: when infrastructure fails*, ed. by Stephen Graham (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), p. xi.

[24] NMM RMS 36/1, Scheme of routes, 1 January 1842.

[25] MMM RMS 36/3, Modified plan, May 1843.

[26] NMM RMS 36/3, Scheme of routes, 1 January 1851 (corrected to May 1858).

[27] By the end of the nineteenth century the Colonial Office deemed Castries Harbour, St Lucia, to be the 'chief coaling harbour of the West Indies'. See TNA CO 321/186, 31 May 1898. In 1889 the Company negotiated with the Colonial Office in an attempt to move its coaling depot at St Lucia to a more convenient premises. See TNA CO 321/118.

Figure 6.1 The RMSPC's Caribbean coaling stations according to the 1843 scheme of routes.
Source: NMM RMS 36/3.

As coaling infrastructure was debated during the moment of initial creation, the
first two sections of this chapter ('The RMSPC's management of a mobile
coaling infrastructure' and 'Immobilising strategies at the coaling station')
focus on the Company's early years of service. Many of the problems associated
with the coaling process were articulated and tackled by the Company during this
period. In the third section of this chapter ('Coaling and the circulation of debate
in the late nineteenth century'), by contrast, I examine the second half of the

nineteenth century, when gendered and racialized bodies became a focus for debates on routinized labour. The bodies of coaling labourers and the process of coaling labour made coaling infrastructure visible, rather than invisible, in some respects.

Regarding the early years of service, I turn now to analysing how the RMSPC mobilised coal for use at its coaling stations. I explore specifically how the RMSPC sought to fix material and human resources at the coaling station to promote smooth steamship journeys. Although the coaling station can be seen as a 'mooring' that enabled steamship passages, as I will demonstrate in this chapter, the coaling station was itself characterised by interconnecting patterns of flow and stasis.[28]

The RMSPC's management of a mobile coaling infrastructure

Examining the 'backstage' processes that allowed for a mobile steamship network, I argue that the RMSPC established testing at sea and on shore, and put in place a number of direct and indirect surveillance mechanisms to enable the management of coal.[29] Notably, these were accompanied by trial-and-error approaches to establishing the Company's coaling infrastructure. The mobile support network was established tentatively, by adapting responses to changing knowledge and circumstances.

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[28] Hannam, Sheller, and Urry, 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings', p. 2.
[29] Star, 'The ethnography of infrastructure', p. 380; Anthony Giddens, *The consequences of modernity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), p. 58.

Although the coaling station, perhaps like certain Caribbean islands, might be figured 'a small place', costs associated with the coaling process were substantial.[30] To illustrate, the *Medway*'s thirty-fourth voyage in February 1857 required a total of £5716 of expenditure on such items as wages, provisions, equipment and port charges.[31] Yet just over £3500 (more than sixty per cent of the cost of the voyage) was attributed to coal and coaling.[32] The sums associated with the process placed coaling at the heart of the Company's logistical concerns. Since the efficient management of coal on every journey had significant financial implications, in September 1843 the managers even recommended that they should be authorized to 'recommend premiums or rewards occasionally to the Captains and engineers, where striking cases occur, evincing unusual care and economy in the arrangement of stores or expenditure of coals'.[33] Financial incentives were one means through which the Company considered exerting centralized control over coal consumption. Indirect surveillance, via log books, also allowed the Company to investigate unusually high levels of coal usage on individual journeys. Similarly to the ship (see chapter five), coaling arrangements were surrounded by frameworks of direct and indirect surveillance instituted by the RMSPC in an attempt to promote control over the costly but crucial coaling process.

Miles Ogborn insists that we consider how and why 'objects move around the world', as well as 'the social relations that are constituted around and through

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[30] Jamaica Kincaid, *A small place* (London: Virago, 1988), p. 80.

[31] UCL RMSP 21, Memoranda, *Medway's* 34th voyage, February 1857.

[32] *Ibid*.

[33] UCL RMSP 4, 26 September 1843. In this vein, they recommended Captain McDougall of the *Medway* for such an award 'for his great attention to the expansive working of the steam and other means of economizing fuel'. UCL RMSP 4, 26 September 1843.

them as they are made, made mobile, transferred, and make the world'.[34] The key material constituent in the coaling process, and the first thing that I consider as 'made, made mobile' and 'transferred' across the Atlantic, is coal. In order to manage the coaling process, the RMSPC sought to ascertain which forms of the fuel provided the best forms of energy and cost efficiency, and tried to exert control over the quantities shipped to its coaling depots. Coal was what kept the Company's steamships mobile, and thus in order to ensure the circulation of its vessels, the RMSPC first had to mobilise coal.

In February 1841, MacQueen wrote to the Company from Grenada with a warning relative to the coal on the island that was used by the Government's steamers. MacQueen reported that the coal at the depot 'though from Wales' was of the 'worst description' he ever saw, 'perfect refuse' and 'sulpherous to an extent' that he had 'scarcely ever witnessed'.[35] MacQueen explained that 'it would be utterly impossible for any steamer to perform her work' using that coal. He advised that in order to 'guard against the possibility of being thus served and thus injured it [would] be necessary for the Company to have a proper judge stationed at the place or places at which the coals are shipped in England in order to see that the quality of them is of the best description'.[36] MacQueen's words of warning point to a first consideration for the Company: the quality of its coal.

The RMSPC had no designated preferred type of coal from the outset of operations, but instead came to establish a preference based on notions of

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[34] Miles Ogborn, *Indian ink: script and print in the making of the English East India Company* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 32.
[35] NMM RMS 7/1, 18 February 1841.
[36] *Ibid*.

efficiency. During the early 1840s, the Company sought (amongst others) West Hartley coal, Carr's Hartley coal, Ravensworth Hartley coal and Whitehaven coal.[37] In March 1842, the store committee decided that Welsh coal should be accurately tested on outward voyages, as it was claimed that one third less Welsh coal would be consumed compared with the best Newcastle coal.[38] The prospect of saving on fuel presented a double economy for the Company, since it meant not only reduced expenditure on coal but also increased space in the ship that might be occupied by freight. The store committee (which dealt extensively with the management of the coaling process) found Llangennech coal and Risca coal to be the two best qualities of Welsh coal tested, and ordered these types to be put on trial in the Company's ships. The evidence 'in favour of the greater economy of Welsh coal' was found to be 'very conclusive,' where it could be supplied directly to the steamers.[39] As B. R. Mitchell describes, after 1840, the shipping industry's demand for smokeless South Wales steam coal sharply increased.[40] South Wales coal exports of approximately 63,000 tons in 1840 rose to almost 4,000,000 tons in 1874 and Welsh coal became the main source of bunker fuel, notably also for the Royal Navy.[41] Whilst designating South Wales coal suitable for use on transatlantic vessels, the RMSPC's store committee members judged Troon coal to be the most 'desirable' for intercolonial work, since this coal was 'less liable to deteriorate or waste than any other'.[42] However

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[37] NMM RMS 5/1, 23 May 1842.

[38] NMM RMS 5/1, 1 March 1842.

[39] *Ibid*. The Company also had a coal committee, but this was disbanded in June 1850 because the committee had scarcely acted. See UCL RMSP 10, 20 June 1850.

[40] B. R. Mitchell, *Economic development of the British coal industry 1800-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 20. As R. H. Walters notes, the Welsh steam coal industry benefitted from its North American and Caribbean market during its early years. See R. H. Walters, *The economic and business history of the south Wales steam coal industry 1840-1914* (New York: Arno Press, 1977), p. 325.

[41] Mitchell, *Economic development*, p. 20.

[42] NMM RMS 5/1, 1 March 1842.

Troon coal was declared dangerous for transatlantic voyages, as it burned 'so fiercely that it might be hazardous to trust it'.[43] The RMSPC entered into an agreement with Mr John Russell of Risca collieries, in Wales, to be supplied with Rock and Black Vein steam coal.[44] In the Company's estimation, Risca's coal was 'of a quality peculiarly calculated to resist the action of a tropical climate'.[45] Russell supplied not only the RMSPC, but also P&O, and the South Western Steam Navigation Company.[46] The decision in favour of Welsh steam coals ensured that a 'thin network' of material connection was established, via the RMSPC, between the Caribbean and South Wales.[47]

Tests and reports on land and at sea were key mechanisms through which the RMSPC managed the quality of its coal. For example, an engineer's report on the quality of Black Vein coal used for a transatlantic journey on the *Thames* was submitted to the store committee in early 1843 and then forwarded to Mr Russell.[48] Presumably on the basis of this report, when the *Mozambique* was loaded with three hundred and ninety-eight tons of Russell's Black Vein coal, the store committee stipulated that this was to be 'hand-picked'.[49] In June 1843 the RMSPC's managers visited Millbrook foundry and saw Black Vein coal burning in a furnace. They noted that the coal burned with a fine, clear flame, producing little smoke and a moderate amount of white ash.[50] The managers also reported the consumption of Black Vein coal at one hundredweight per hour as opposed to

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[43] *Ibid*.

[44] This was not an exclusive contract. When Russell could not supply the requisite amount, the Company looked elsewhere. However the RMSPC's contract with Russell was renewed repeatedly during this period.

[45] NMM RMS 7/2, 22 October 1842.

[46] Evans, *Building the steam navy*, p. 170.

[47] Sheller and Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm', p. 209.

[48] NMM RMS 5/1, 9 January 1843.

[49] *Ibid*.

[50] UCL RMSP 4, 23 June 1843.

the one and a half hundredweights per hour of Rock Vein or Troon coal.[51] Two months later in August 1843, the managers received a report from Captain Hast of the *Thames* on the quality of Risca Black Vein coal. Hast's report attested to the superior quality of the coal, which burned without loss by ash or cinders, and which produced very little clinker.[52] Consumption of Black Vein coal in the *Thames* was at a low rate of twenty-one tons and eighteen hundredweights per hour. Captain Symons of the *Clyde* similarly reported of the Black Vein coals that they 'burnt very well, making but little clinker and averaging about 25¼ tons per day' in contrast to the ship's former average consumption of thirty-four and a half tons per day.[53] The question of coal quality was intimately linked to notions of efficient consumption and effective cost-management. Observation and written reports guided the Company's decision-making in this respect.

As well as relying upon tests and written reports, which might be considered indirect surveillance mechanisms, the RMSPC also sought to promote centralized control over its coal shipments. The Company hired Mr Brown at Newport as inspector of coal, in line with MacQueen's early suggestions that the Company employ a 'proper judge' of coal quality.[54] In addition to this appointment, the Company sought to assert control through negotiations with Mr Russell, the supplier. The store committee, for example, expressed displeasure with Russell in October 1842 when they discovered that he had shipped coal not sanctioned by them. Requesting a description of the coal shipped, they informed Russell that the coal would only be paid for if the captains reported it to be of an

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[51] *Ibid*.
[52] Clinker is ash and residue that is produced when a coal fire burns. As large deposits of clinker prevent air from passing through a fire, it has to be periodically cleared away.
[53] UCL RMSP 4, 4 August 1843.
[54] NMM RMS 7/1, 18 February 1841.

equal quality to Black Vein coal.[55] Similar negotiations took place in November 1842, when the Company withheld payment for some of the coal supplied by Russell on account of its quality.[56] Again in October 1843, the managers sought to exert authority over the coal supply and informed Russell that unless the Rock Vein coal shipping for Southampton was thoroughly screened and selected or certified by Mr Brown the inspector, it would be rejected by the Company.[57] Thus the Company established a coal inspector as a mechanism of direct surveillance, but also asserted and reinforced his authorisation of coal shipments in its dealings with Mr Russell.

Coal supplied by Russell was transported on sailing vessels to the Company's Caribbean depots. During the course of just one month in 1842, the Company chartered the following vessels:

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[55] NMM RMS 5/1, 17 October 1842.
[56] NMM RMS 5/1, 28 November 1842.
[57] UCL RMSP 4, 16 October 1843.

Vessel	From	To	Coal (tons)	Price (shillings per ton)
Industry	Newcastle	Grenada	275	18
Horn	Newcastle	Havana	266	20
Juno	Newcastle	Havana	270	20
Crusader	Newcastle	Jamaica	204	19
Essex	Newcastle	Jamaica	211	19
Adelganda	Newcastle	St Thomas	250	20
Mary	Newcastle	St Thomas	300	20
Adonis	Newport	St Thomas	142	20
Chieftain	Newport	St Thomas	399	20
Ohio	Newport	Havana	248	20
Lavinia	West India docks	Havana	301	27/6

Figure 6.2 Sailing vessels chartered by the RMSPC from 4 March 1842 to 4 April 1842. Source NMM RMS 5/1, March to April 1842.

Thus while the Company's contract with Russell developed interconnections between South Wales and the Caribbean depots, the chartered vessels' ports of departure also meant that steamship routes as mapped by the scheme (see chapter

four) were enabled by a secondary network of routes between Newport, Newcastle and the Caribbean. South Wales and north-western ports in Britain were drawn into commodity-driven 'thin networks of connection' with the Company's coaling depots at St George's, Havana, Kingston and St Thomas.[58] Furthermore, the RMSPC's desire to economise also developed connections between the Caribbean and other European countries. During the early 1840s, the Company, through instructions to its agents at Hamburg, sought to charter vessels from Bremen and Hamburg.[59] When informed that rates of charter from Hamburg were the same price as charter from England, the Company responded that it would only charter ships from Hamburg 'at lower rates' than could 'be procured in England'.[60] This ruthless pursuit of low charter rates brought the Company under critical scrutiny from the *Morning Chronicle* in January 1842. The newspaper reported the 'startling' fact that the RMSPC had 'entered into contracts for ten or a dozen Bremen vessels to proceed to Sunderland and Newcastle, there to take in cargoes of coals, and to proceed with them to the Company's stations in the West Indies'.[61] Thus the RMSPC's transatlantic transportation of coal created networks of commodity connections between Newport, Newcastle, Bremen, Hamburg, and the Company's Caribbean coaling stations. To provide industrialized, theoretically modern and efficient, steam transport, the RMSPC was utterly reliant on pre-industrial transportation, as sailing vessels harnessing wind power transported its fuel across the Atlantic.

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[58] Sheller and Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm', p. 209.

[59] NMM 5/1, 11 April 1842 and 18 April 1842.

[60] NMM RMS 5/1, 13 February 1843.

[61] *The Morning Chronicle*, 25 January 1842 and 4 February 1842. The *Chronicle* reported that the Company had chartered German vessels at a freight rate of fifteen shillings per ton and stated that British vessels could not have afforded to sail at less than twenty-five shillings a ton. Whilst ostensibly claiming that the RMSPC was not to blame for acting in a way that would benefit shareholders, the paper simultaneously implied a betrayal of the national interest.

In addition to mobilising sailing vessels and coal, the RMSPC exploited diplomatic networks to facilitate fuelling operations. In January 1842, the Company renewed its request to the Admiralty to be allowed to call at Corunna and Madeira *en route* to the West Indies. The RMSPC wanted to mitigate the danger of coal supplies running low if vessels encountered severe weather at the start of a voyage. Coaling in Spain would also leave less labour to be performed on the ship's arrival at Grenada.[62] The Admiralty granted this request.[63] In September 1842, however, the RMSPC was forced to call upon Lord Aberdeen to intercede on its behalf when the Spanish authorities at Corunna proved uncooperative with the Company's coaling arrangements. The Company had sent out the coal hulk *North Britain* to the port and the Spanish authorities, refusing to allow the Company's steamers to coal from the hulk, issued orders that the *North Britain* should leave Corunna. The Company stated that if such an order were carried out, it would 'withdraw [its] steam ships entirely from all communication with Spain'.[64] Lord Aberdeen instructed the Government's minister at Madrid to 'smooth away the difficulties' standing in the way of the Company's establishment of a coal depot there.[65] In this case, the Company exploited its relationship with the Admiralty to enable a suitable material infrastructure at Corunna, although the 1843 timetable later removed Corunna from the chain of coaling stations. At those islands which the Company used as coal depots, such as Cuba, the RMSPC requested exemption or reduction of duty on coals imported, and also asked that vessels importing coal should be exempt from

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[62] NMM RMS 7/1, 10 January 1842.
[63] NMM RMS 7/1, 23 February 1842.
[64] NMM RMS 7/1, 30 September 1842.
[65] NMM RMS 6/1, 8 October 1842.

tonnage and harbour dues. When the Government of Spain failed to grant this exemption, the Company sought the assistance of Lord Aberdeen to secure a reduction in charges.[66] A similar situation arose in 1849, when the RMSPC requested that the Admiralty exert their influence with the Brazilian Government to allow the Company certain privileges (which it sought at all of its ports-of-call).[67] One of those requested was exemption from paying duty on coal imported solely for steamship use.[68] Although the Company was not always successful in securing a full exemption from charges, Government intervention facilitated negotiations for reductions. Diplomatic networks were one set of crucial relationships that enabled coaling operations.

As a corollary to requesting diplomatic favours from the Government, the RMSPC exercised diplomatic tact in its coal dealings with the Admiralty. The Admiralty and the RMSPC assisted each other with coal supplies on exceptional occasions. Thus when the *Forth* was at Bermuda in February 1844, an application was made to the Naval storekeeper for a small quantity of coal to fill the ship to its maximum capacity. In defence of this action the Company pointed to the reciprocal 'spirit of accommodation' between HM officers and Company agents abroad in cases of emergency.[69] In line with this spirit of reciprocity, in June 1851 the Admiralty enquired whether the Company would be able to provide HM steam vessels about to proceed to the Cape of Good Hope with coal

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[66] NMM RMS 7/1, 19 February 1849.
[67] The Company requested the same privileges as previously enjoyed by the Government's mail packets. The RMSPC also requested that its steamships be exempted from charges that usually applied to merchant vessels (such as port charges, tonnage duties and custom house entries), and that passengers, specie and goods be landed under the supervision of the relevant authorities immediately following the steamer's arrival, at any time of the day or night.
[68] The RMSPC also asked that ships delivering coal should be exempt from tonnage and wharfage dues, when leaving in ballast. NMM RMS 7/2, 19 February 1849.
[69] NMM RMS 7/2, 13 March 1844.

and patent fuel from the newly-established depot at St Vincent, Cape Verde.[70] The Company, whilst pointing out that it would be quicker to load coal at Funchal, agreed to provide the five hundred tons at St Vincent. When the Admiralty also requested that the Company maintain a stock of five hundred tons of coal at St Vincent, and allow HM steam vessels to coal there, the directors replied that they would 'most readily keep at that depot, an extra quantity of coal available for Her Majesty's steamers'.[71] The directors suggested that they might arrange 'an understanding that the supplies to Her Majesty's ships should not exceed the rate of say, 200 tons per month as this would afford some criterion to govern the shipments of coal from this country'.[72] Although the Company estimated that the cost of coal at St Vincent (including transportation and landing) was twenty-eight shillings per ton, as this sum did not include 'insurance, storage, waste, wear and tear of sacks, baskets, shovels' or 'reshipping', it decided to charge the Admiralty thirty-three shillings and seven pence per ton for coal supplied.[73] The Admiralty wrote in grateful acknowledgement of the Company's accommodation, agreed to the price suggested, and informed the Company that they would probably require no more than eighty tons of coal a month.[74] Diplomatic networks involving trust, cooperation and compromise were developed and maintained in order to keep coal moving to the right places.

Although chartering arrangements, reporting mechanisms and diplomatic negotiations were mobilised to manage the coaling process, at particular

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[70] NMM RMS 6/6, 25 June 1851.
[71] NMM RMS 7/2, 3 July 1851.
[72] *Ibid*.
[73] *Ibid.*
[74] NMM RMS 6/6, 9 July 1851.

moments, the coal network stretching from South Wales to the Caribbean depots faltered. In November 1847, for example, the RMSPC's managers reported that due to a fire-damp explosion, Russell's shipments of coal had 'sunk to almost nothing' and consequently twelve chartered ships short of more than three thousand tons of coal were waiting to load at Newport.[75] On such occasions, the Company responded by sending the secretary to Newport with discretionary power to secure alternative coal shipments.[76] Exceptional circumstances such as these rendered the RMSPC's coal management somewhat improvisational.

In fact, the Company's fuel choice was always provisional to an extent, because although South Wales coal was used consistently by the RMSPC, such was the Company's desire to seek out possibilities to reduce costs, it was constantly on the lookout for alternatives. Patent fuel, a combination of coal dust and combustible material, could theoretically be used as a coal substitute, and between 1842 and 1843 the RMSPC received offers for various types of patent fuel.[77] In response to one such offer from Krutz and Co., the store committee declared that although 'very desirous of introducing the use of patent fuel, there was insufficient 'evidence before them to justify them in purchasing any large quantity'.[78] The store committee nevertheless sought out such evidence. Case and Co.'s patent fuel, for example, was tested on board the *Forth* in April 1843,

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[75] UCL RMSP 10, 18 November 1843.

[76] The previous year, in January 1846, a firedamp explosion in Russell's Black Vein pits and the effects of after-damp killed thirty-five men and boys. See Alan Victor Jones, *Risca − its industrial and social development* (Bognor Regis: New Horizon, 1980), pp. 25-26. It seems highly likely that the Company responded with similar measures in response to this earlier crisis.

[77] These included patent fuel offers from Mr Stirling, another from Mr Ellward of the Llanggennech colliery, and an offer from Krutz and Co.

[78] NMM RMS 5/1, 30 January 1843.

but was found to be unequal to even the lowest quality of Welsh coal.[79] Later that year, the Company experimented with Dobree's patent fuel.

Samuel Dobree was based at a patent-fuel manufactory on John Russell's land in Risca, Wales. Dobree's patent fuel 'consisted of a mixture of coal-dust, breeze and cinder in pitch or other bituminous substances which were mixed into a paste'.[80] This paste was then poured into moulds, heated, dried and cut into blocks for use.[81] Twenty tons of Dobree's patent fuel were tested on board the *Actaeon* in October 1843. The following month, the managers authorized Dobree & Co. to ship one hundred tons of their patent fuel in the *Trent* and *Severn* at the same price paid for coal at Southampton − seventeen shillings per ton.[82] In December, sixty tons of Dobree's patent fuel was loaded on board the *Severn*, but this was found to burn at a higher rate of consumption than Risca coal. As an alternative to Dobree's fuel, four hundred and sixty-two tons of Lyon's patent fuel were tested on board RMSPC ships in May 1844 and was found, at one and a half hundredweights per hour, to have a higher rate of consumption than coal. The fuel produced a great deal of dust and occupied a large amount of stowage space. It also produced an excessive amount of clinker. As a result, coal bearers in the Caribbean 'refused to labour at the fuel from the dust injuring their eyes'.[83] Lyon's patent fuel was again tested on board several of the Company's ships in June 1844, but the reports were so critical that the RMSPC sold on the remainder of its stock. Despite the Company's desire to identify a different source of fuel, it

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[79] Forty-six tons of Case and Co.'s patent fuel were tested on board the *Forth*.
[80] Jones, *Risca*, p.7.
[81] *Ibid*.
[82] UCL RMSP 4, 10 November 1843
[83] NMM RMS 7/2, 12 May 1845.

was unable, in this early period, to find a preferable alternative to Risca Black Vein coal that could be convincingly proved efficient on board ship.

During the early years of operations, the RMSPC sought to tackle the question of fuel quality by testing fuels on ship and shore, but a trial-and-error approach characterised the Company's management of coal *quantity*. After consultation with MacQueen and others, in March 1842 the store committee estimated that seventy-six thousand tons of coal would be supplied annually from their depots. By the following month, the Company had revised its estimated annual coal consumption. As the steamers consumed more coal than anticipated, MacQueen now named forty-three thousand, one hundred and fifty-five tons as the annual figure required at Havana alone.[84] By July 1842 the store committee again adjusted their opinion of the Company's coal requirements, this time downwards, noting that 'for most of the places especially for St Thomas and Havana' the quantity of coal shipped had been 'excessive'.[85] On 25 July 1842, the store committee gave further detail as to the excess shipped to Havana and St Thomas, noting that:

> [A]ccording to the consumption from 15th January when the first ship coaled at the Havana until the 31st May up to which date returns of the supply have been received, the total quantity shipped and shipping to the Havana, and bought there is equal to the quantity required up to the 15th July 1843 the consumption continuing the same as during the first four months of the year, − and applying the same principle to St Thomas, the supply is equal to the consumption to the end of April 1843.[86]

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[84] NMM RMS 5/1, 18 April 1842. The need to amass such large quantities of coal at Havana necessitated American purchases of coal as well as transatlantic shipments. Mr Arrieta, the Company's agent at Havana, purchased four hundred tons (Spanish weight) of coal at an equivalent of fifty-three shillings and six pence in May 1842. Spanish weight was equivalent to about ninety-three per cent of English weight. The Company also arranged for coal to be shipped from Halifax to Havana. See RMS 5/1, 16 May 1842 and NMM RMS 5/1, 30 May 1842.
[85] NMM RMS 5/1, 18 July 1842.
[86] *Ibid*.

Although an excess of coal had been shipped to St Thomas and Havana, the store committee found other stations had been supplied 'amply [...] but not in excess'.[87] Adjustments were continually required, so that in August 1843 the managers directed that coal loaded at Newport bound for Grenada should sail to St Thomas, since consumption at St Thomas had been greater than anticipated.[88] Under the 1843 scheme of routes, figures were adjusted. St Thomas would now need twenty-four thousand tons annually instead of the initial eight thousand figure offered by MacQueen, but Grenada would need half its earlier stock, consuming just four thousand tons a year.[89] Jamaica was also revised upwards to twelve thousand tons annually. Estimation, experimentation and adjustments were required in order for the Company to organize the necessary quantity of coal shipments without over-supplying the Caribbean depots.

The RMSPC's understanding of the key material component of its coaling process was shaped by a combination of scientific and quasi-scientific experimentation and trial-and-error experience on ship, on shore, and in the deliberations of the store committee. The Company deployed financial resources in order to manage the coaling process, but also invested in less tangible systems such as the cultivation of diplomatic ties, in discussion and correspondence with the Admiralty. The RMSPC's management of coal was a management of the mobility of coal, since coal had to be transported to the right coaling stations in the right quantity and at the right time, and this involved sail power. Furthermore, the process of moving coal occurred in various places. It took place when the store committee met, it took place on ships when captains recorded

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[87] *Ibid*.
[88] UCL RMSP 4, 7 August 1843.
[89] NMM 5/1, 5 September 1842.

consumption, it also occurred when managers watched fuel burning in factories, or corresponded with the Admiralty. The steamship network as a mobile network of communications was dependent upon the prior mobility and management of a network of coal, and the management of this infrastructural system was worked out gradually over time.

Immobilising strategies at the coaling station

Having demonstrated in the previous section how supply and diplomatic networks were mobilised to support the steamship network, I will examine in this section how the Company tried to make resources available in the right place at the right time, and how this involved immobilising practices as well as strategic mobilisations. The focus is Grenada, one of the RMSPC's early coaling stations. In this instance, the establishment of the coaling station illustrates how the movement of steamships was enabled through fixed material forms and stabilising labour practices at such places.

In February 1841, MacQueen wrote to the Company directors on the subject of coaling at Grenada to inform them that he had 'concluded a bargain for premises every way eligible commodious and convenient for the great coal depot at this place'.[90] Situated on the Carenage (see figure 6.3), the premises were bounded on the south and west by Government fortification land, on the east by the harbour, and on the north by Government commissariat stores. MacQueen

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[90] NMM RMS 7/1, 22 February 1841. The premises had formerly belonged to the Thorntons, and most recently to Harper, Bruce and Davies. Situated on the west of the Carenage, the depot was on the southern side of St George's. The Carenage in St George's is a sheltered strip by the waterfront.

reported that the premises had an extensive store as well as a house above the stores that might be converted into 'dwellings for the labourers that may be attached to the depot'.[91] In MacQueen's estimation, on the south and the west, 'neither at sea nor on shore' could the Company's vessels or coaling station 'be interfered with or disturbed by any neighbours'.[92] MacQueen also reported that the 'fortifications which protect[ed] the harbour' were 'very strong and the finest in the West Indies'.[93] Thus 'in case of war the place where the steamers would lie would be completely protected from every hostile force so long as the British flag could wave over the ramparts'.[94] MacQueen secured the depot for four hundred pounds of rent per annum. Barely able to contain his self-satisfaction, he wrote that, 'the general opinion is that I have made a good bargain and this certainly is my own'.[95] In contrast to the RMSPC's coal, a highly mobile material, the materiality of the coaling station was conceived with reference to the provision of 'dwellings', the existence of strong fortifications, and was valued for the local sedentarism, safety and stability that it could promote.[96]

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[91] NMM RMS 7/1, 22 February 1841.
[92] *Ibid*.
[93] *Ibid*.
[94] *Ibid*.
[95] *Ibid*.
[96] *Ibid*.

Figure 6.3 The Carenage in St George's, Grenada in 2010. Photographed by Anyaa Anim-Addo

On the other hand, the coaling wharf at Grenada was shaped by a mobility of ideas, as practices from Britain were transferred onto this space. By the terms of the Company's lease, the owner Mr Davies agreed to extend the wharf to a depth of eighteen feet of water, although the extension was eventually finalised at a depth of fourteen feet of water.[97] The wharf was forty feet in length along the sea front. In order to facilitate simultaneous coaling from more than one part of the ship, Captain Maclean proposed a substantial extension of one hundred additional feet, but the store committee rejected this suggestion. In order to prevent vessels' paddle floats from being damaged, the store committee recommended a measure adopted at Liverpool. This consisted of erecting two upright bulks of timber outside the wharf at each corner. Liverpool's docks were

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[97] The store committee approved this because fifteen feet away from the end of the wharf there was a depth of eighteen feet of water. The keel of the ships could not be brought closer than twenty-eight feet. NMM RMS 5/1, 28 February 1842.

developed during the first half of the nineteenth century, with Canning Dock completed in 1813, Union Dock established between 1816 and 1817, and Albert Dock opened in 1846.[98] Adrian Jarvis notes that Liverpool, like other ports, sought to devise ways in which ships and goods could be handled fast enough for maximum trading.[99] The RMSPC adopted and adapted aspects of this technical knowledge for use on the other side of the Atlantic.

Knowledge from Liverpool also influenced the organization of labour practices at Grenada. Referring to advice from there and St Thomas, the store committee advised Captain Maclean that 'manual means' of coaling had 'hitherto proved more expeditious than any machinery'.[100] Edward Chappell wrote to report that:

> At Liverpool where all coaling is done by hand from barges alongside or otherwise, one gang of men passing baskets along which contain half a cwt each, will clear on an average 8 tons per hour and if pressed strongly, could clear 10 tons. Two gangs therefore working out of the same barge or wharf would clear 16 and might clear 20 tons per hour, supposing a barge or wharf upon each bow & one upon each quarter of a steam boat as is often the case, and working two gangs from each it is possible to ship 80 tons an hour.[101]

The store committee, mindful of the time that might be wasted transferring coal from the sheds to the ships, suggested that 'as much coal should always be collected at the end of the wharf previous to the steamers' arrival as may be practicable, but a quantity may be wheeled down on trucks or in sacks from which the baskets can be filled as they arrive'.[102] The committee reported that when coal ships were in port, the steamers would be coaled directly from colliers, and suggested that those involved in unloading the colliers would also

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[98] Adrian Jarvis, *Docks of the Mersey* (London: Ian Allan Ltd, produced in association with the National Museums and Galleries of Merseyside, 1988); W. R. Cockcroft, *The Albert Dock and Liverpool's historic waterfront* (Shropshire: S. B. Publications, 1992).
[99] Jarvis, *Docks of the Mersey*, p. 10.
[100] NMM RMS 5/1, 28 February 1842.
[101] *Ibid.*
[102] *Ibid.*

assist in loading the steamers. The twenty tons per hour alluded to by Chappell was apparently achieved in the Caribbean, suggesting perhaps that the workers were 'pressed strongly' with some frequency.[103] When the *Avon* arrived in Grenada on 11 February 1845, for instance, local labourers began to load the steamship with coal at one o'clock in the morning, and worked for an hour. Coaling then resumed between six and ten o'clock in the morning. One hundred and ten tons of coal were loaded on board over the course of this five hour period.[104] In this way templates from Liverpool and St Thomas were translated and applied at the Grenadian coaling station.

The coaling station at Grenada was characterised both by movement and stasis: employees were attached to the premises, and were expected to remain locally available so as to facilitate the passage of ships, whilst equipment was shipped in from British shores. Maclean served as the Company's agent at Grenada.[105] He had the use of the house on the Company's premises, and a clerk to support him in his duties. A boatswain, carpenter and a messenger were also attached to the establishment.[106] Maclean was responsible for the secure and appropriate storage of coal and its availability in convenient positions for loading on a steamer's arrival. The agent was also to ensure that a proper look-out was kept when a steamer was expected and, on the sounding of a signal to indicate the steamer's arrival, he was to be at his post with a sufficient workforce to coal the ship as

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[103] NMM RMS 5/1, 28 February 1842.

[104] NMM RMS 37/1, Log book, *Avon*, 11 February 1845. By comparison, in 1850, at Woolwich 105 tons of coal could be put on board each vessel in 24 hours (with up to six vessels coaling at a time), and 30 men were required to coal each vessel, who were relieved by relays. At Devonport, where up to four ships could be coaled, it took 120 men 5 hours to coal a vessel, or it took 80 men 24 hours to coal a vessel. See David Evans, *Building the steam Navy*, p. 171.

[105] Maclean earned £600 a year in this role, and also hired a clerk for £125 pounds a year. However Maclean later increased the clerk's salary to £150 without the Company's permission. Maclean was replaced by Captain Leese at Grenada when he submitted his resignation in 1843.

[106] NMM RMS 1/2, 21 September 1843.

rapidly as possible. The store committee recommended that various material objects be sent to Maclean for use at the Grenada depot: two iron baskets in which to burn coal and light the wharf at night, a lantern to distinguish the wharf at night when steamers were expected, six cannon lanterns for lighting the sheds, a ship's bell for calling labourers to work, mooring anchors, mooring buoys and a chain, three gangboards (twenty feet long and three feet six inches wide), five hundred coal baskets of a capacity of half a hundredweight each, a thousand coal sacks with a capacity of two hundredweights each, six trucks for wheeling the coal sacks, and one weighing machine.[107] The shore-based labour and materials at the Grenada coaling depot were expected to complement the specialized coaling labour-force based on the ships.

In contrast with shore-based labour, on board ship, the use of coal required specialized labour, consisting of twelve firemen and a further dozen coal trimmers engaged in the hot and physically demanding work of monitoring the fires and shifting coal around the stokehold.[108] The difficulties attendant upon integrating this new branch of specialized industrialized labour into the shipboard hierarchy have frequently been noted.[109] The RMSPC sought to reduce the cost of these essential labourers on board. Thus in July 1843 the managers applied to Mr Miller to find firemen at three pounds and ten shillings per month and coal trimmers at two pounds and ten shillings per month for the *Trent* after

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[107] NMM RMS 5/1, 28 February 1842.

[108] The RMSPC's firemen earned three pounds and ten shilling a month while at sea for this work, and coal trimmers earned two pounds and five shillings a month.

[109] See, for example, J. J. Ewald, 'Crossers of the sea: slaves, freedmen, and other migrants in the northwestern Indian ocean c. 1750-1914', *The American historical review*, 105:1 (2000), 69-91 (p. 85).

men at Southampton had declined these terms.[110] In the same month, the managers issued cost-cutting orders that firemen should not in future be required to assist in coaling the ships and that they should receive no extra pay for such work. The managers also instructed that firemen and trimmers in future should be entered in the ship's articles as trimmers and receive extra pay when employed as firemen.[111] Yet in August 1843 concession was made to coal trimming costs. The managers recommended that provision be made in the ship's articles to pay the crew sixpence per ton for striking down and trimming coal put on board by Caribbean coal bearers.[112] The Company initially attempted to minimise the cost of ship-based coaling labour, but subsequently enacted a compromise to facilitate coal trimming on board.

The RMSPC took a similar economising approach to managing shore-based coaling labourers. As Mimi Sheller argues with reference to the Caribbean, '[b]odily (im)mobilities [...] are a crucial nexus of the systems of transatlantic exchange that depend on embodied relations of distance, proximity, and co-presence at different moments in the processes of production and consumption'.[113] For the RMSPC, the 'bodily immobilities' of coal bearing labourers were deemed essential to enabling the RMSPC's transatlantic communications network. The RMSPC's concern to secure regular and predictable mobilities for its ships, passengers and cargo caused the Company's

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[110] UCL RMSP 4, 12 July 1843.

[111] UCL RMSP 4, 10 July 1843.

[112] UCL RMSP 4, 8 August 1843. Firemen attended to the furnaces on board, while coal trimmers moved coal from bunkers to furnaces when the ship was at sea, and assisted in clearing away ashes. [Walter Manning], *Below and above the water-line. By seafarer* (Melbourne and London: Whitcombe and Tombs: Christchurch, NZ, [1908]), pp. 2-7.

[113] Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: from Arawaks to zombies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 27.

managers to circumvent the mobility of Caribbean coaling labourers. Initially it was thought that shore-based labourers, like equipment, might be imported to be deployed at the depots. In February 1841, MacQueen wrote from Barbados to the Company's secretary in Britain with the suggestion that, 'it would be a good thing for the Company to send out three or four European labourers to each of their principal depots in this quarter, men accustomed to such work as they would have to perform at them, and who would teach and excite to activity the Negro labourers, which to a certain extent it may be necessary to have additional'.[114] MacQueen therefore initially planned to have European and Caribbean coal bearers working together at the coal depots, with the Caribbean bearers supplementing a small European core. Yet by 18 February, MacQueen had changed his mind about the practicality of such an arrangement, and proposed that 'instead of having a few active Europeans at the depot in this quarter it would be better if the Company had a few extra hands accustomed to such work say from six to ten on board each of their vessels where they might in various ways be useful'.[115] This balance of 'European' to 'Negro' labour, MacQueen assumed, would ensure that the ships could be coaled with the utmost 'speed and regularity'.[116] In MacQueen's opinion, then, the presence of labourers from elsewhere was necessary to promote efficient working rhythms at the Caribbean coaling station. This assumption is comparable with those made by the planter class in the Leeward Islands, who desired to import white artisans and farmers in the hope that these might set an 'example' to recently emancipated

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[114] NMM RMS 7/1, 5 February 1841.
[115] NMM RMS 7/1, 18 February 1841.
[116] *Ibid*.

peoples. [117] For MacQueen, the importation of European labour perhaps represented one practical means through which to bring the 'European energy and regularity' to the West Indies that he so desired.[118]

By employing a greater number of Europeans on board ship, MacQueen hoped that the Company could avoid a heavy reliance on Caribbean labourers, whom he stated could not 'be depended upon to continue steadily at the work'.[119] Yet while European immigrants were expected to influence Caribbean labourers with their working rhythms, MacQueen decided that there was an equal danger of Europeans falling into 'habits' associated with their new location. On reflection, MacQueen decided that it would be safer for Europeans to be based on board ship, since there 'these extra European hands would always be kept in a proper state of discipline whereas such persons living constantly on shore are apt in this climate to get into habits of intemperance and thus to shorten their days'.[120] The initial proposal for land-based European and Caribbean coal bearers working at the depots was replaced by a dichotomous arrangement in which Europeans working with the coal were predominantly based on ship, and Caribbean coaling labourers largely remained on shore.

An alternative proposal for minimising reliance on recently emancipated labourers turned not to European, but to African shores. Within a Caribbean

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[117] Douglas Hall, *Five of the Leewards 1834-1870: the major problems of the post-emancipation period in Antigua, Barbuda, Montserrat, Nevis and St Kitts* (Barbados: Caribbean Universities Press, 1971), p. 32.
[118] James MacQueen, *A general plan for a mail communication by steam between Great Britain and the eastern and western parts of the world; also, to Canton and Sydney, westward by the Pacific: to which are added, geographical notices of the isthmus of Panama, Nicaragua, &c. with charts* (London: B. Fellowes, 1838), p. 56.
[119] NMM RMS 7/1, 18 February 1841.
[120] *Ibid*.

context in which, by Keith Ormiston Laurence's analysis, labour importation was seen as a way to restrict wages and increase competition amongst employees, the RMSPC, like planters in the region, considered importing 'African immigrants' to Grenada. [121] The possibility, put forward to the Company in a report by manager Maclean, was rejected by MacQueen, and managers Captain Strutt and Mr Carr as 'wholly out of the question', presumably due to the financial and logistical imposition of arranging such an undertaking. [122] In rejecting the proposition of immigrant labour at the coal wharf, and by instructing Captain Maclean to see what work could be accomplished by 'Negro' − by which they meant black Caribbean − men and women, the RMSPC's managers took a step towards conceiving of its Caribbean coal bearing labour force on localized terms. [123] After more than one suggestion to import coal bearing labour, the Company instead came to rely on labourers resident in the Caribbean to fuel the steamships. Yet even after accepting the need to operate within the Caribbean region, the Company avoided a full engagement with post-emancipation labour arrangements by constructing an archipelagic chain of coaling stations that took advantage of conditions beyond the British Empire.

From the outset, the RMSPC expressed discomfort at operating within a post-emancipation labour context on the island of Grenada. In early February 1841, travelling through the Caribbean to make arrangements for the RMSPC's operations, MacQueen reported that the 'Negro labourers' were 'slow in all their

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[121] Keith O. Laurence, *Immigration into the West Indies in the 19th century* (St Lawrence, Barbados: Caribbean Universities Press, 1971), p. 7; NMM RMS 5/1, 27 November 1842. Under the Company's revised scheme of routes that came into operation in 1842, just under 4,000 tons of coal were required annually to be loaded onto ships at the Grenada depot. See NMM RMS 5/1, 5 September 1842.
[122] NMM RMS 5/1, 27 November 1842.
[123] *Ibid*.

movements and moreover under the existing state of things uncertain in their attendance while in several places their demands for wages is too frequently exorbitant, especially when they perceive that they can with impunity take advantage of the party which stands in need of their labour'.[124] Thus MacQueen articulated the local mobility of Caribbean coal labourers as problematic and as potentially threatening to the regular passage of the Company's ships. Although the RMSPC secured Government funding precisely with reference to post-emancipation realities in the British Caribbean, MacQueen, the principal advocate of the service, immediately expressed alarm at the financial and logistical implications of those realities for the Company's operations.

Indeed, the question of coal bearers' wages generated conflict at the coaling station. As the Company's managers soon discovered, coal bearers were liable to disrupt a ship's passage through both individual mobility (the 'uncertain attendance' feared by MacQueen), and collective immobility.[125] To illustrate, the *Tay* travelled from England in January 1842 bound for Havana. This was the first of the RMSPC's ships carrying mail from Europe to the West Indies. The ship arrived at Barbados in seventeen days and was coaled on the eighteenth day of its journey. It then proceeded to Grenada, where it fell a further two days behind time because the coal depot was ill-prepared for the steamer's arrival, 'but chiefly because the Negro labourers refused to work at even high wages especially during the night'.[126] The Admiralty Agent on board reported that although the *Tay* arrived at the coal wharf at seven o'clock in the evening,

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[124] NMM RMS 7/1, 5 February 1841.
[125] *Ibid*.
[126] NMM RMS 7/1, West India service remarks, 1842, pp. 212-213.

coaling did not commence until seven o'clock in the following morning.[127] At St Thomas the ship lost a further day, and coaling labourers' unwillingness to work was again cited as the reason for the delay. In response to the *Tay*'s experiences, the directors expressed hope that the coal depots would in future be better organized but also that they would be prepared with a sufficient labour force 'for which no expense [would] be spared'.[128] The Company, realizing the ability of Caribbean coaling labourers to throw its communications network into disarray, committed to a higher level of expenditure. Whilst, in terms of mobilities, power was unevenly distributed at the coal wharf, the Company implicitly acknowledged that this power was negotiable when it raised coaling labourers' wages to secure the smooth passage of its ships.

Yet where the Company could find coal bearers whose legal status ensured a circumscribed social and geographical mobility, it sought to engage these forms of labour in preference to free-wage alternatives. In this way, the RMSPC established its Caribbean coaling stations on differentiated socio-economic terms and drew maximum advantage from constructing an archipelagic chain of coaling stations cutting across imperial boundaries. The enslaved population in the Danish West Indies increased during the course of the eighteenth century until Denmark's decision (taken in 1792) to abolish the transatlantic slave trade in 1802.[129] From this time onwards, the enslaved population slowly diminished on the islands until the abolition of slavery in July 1848. St Thomas, although

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[127] NMM RMS 6/1, 26 January 1842. See chapter five for further discussion of the Admiralty Agent's role.
[128] NMM RMS 7/1, West India service remarks, 1842, pp. 212-213.
[129] Neville A. T. Hall, *Slave society in the Danish West Indies: St Thomas, St John, and St Croix* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 3.

sugar-producing, was not as important in this respect as the island of St Croix.[130] By the 1830s, the urbanization of St Thomas meant that three-quarters of the island's population was concentrated in Charlotte Amalie (by St Thomas Harbour).[131] Exploiting this urban concentration of enslaved labour in order to minimise coaling costs, the RMSPC contracted out responsibility for coaling its ships in St Thomas to a Mr Stubbs, who, while the slave system remained intact, hired enslaved labourers from their owners to carry coal on board (see figure 6.4).[132] By employing labourers whose legal circumstances allowed them the least forms of control over their own mobility, the Company facilitated British industrialized oceanic mobility partially through the immobility of enslavement.

Figure 6.4 *Coaling the RMSP Trent at St Thomas*, 1844, by Captain J. F. Boxer, R.N. © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

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[130] *Ibid*.
[131] *Ibid*., p. 87.
[132] NMM RMS 32/2, 12 December 1843; Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years*, pp. 61-62.

An alternative possibility for coaling station labour was pursued at Bermuda, where the RMSPC identified a labour-force whose mobility was similarly circumscribed. Bermuda was not included in the Company's original scheme of routes because it was considered hazardous to land at the island and because the Company did not anticipate any significant revenue from calling there, but after alterations to the routes during the first few years of service, Bermuda was included at the request of the Admiralty. The Company believed that the vessels' coal capacity would allow them to safely cover the distance from Bermuda to Britain but that this would not be possible from any of the other West Indian islands.[133] However there were safety concerns about the suitability of Bermuda as a coaling depot. The Company's attempts to use Castle Harbour proved so dangerous to the *Tweed* when the ship grounded that the directors issued orders for no other ship to attempt the same process.[134] The Admiralty offered the Company use of the Royal Dock Yard at Antigua, but the RMSPC instead suggested that the Admiralty might afford it an equivalent facility at Bermuda.[135] The Company therefore began to use the Government's wharf at Ireland Island for coaling.

At Bermuda, the Company worked hard to secure an alternative source of bodies in bondage and made the utmost efforts to avoid entering the competitive labour market. In September 1843, the Company's directors decided that the 'whole subject of coaling' at Bermuda 'both as relates to the situation of the depot and the labour is so expensive, perplexing and unsatisfactory that it can only be

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[133] NMM RMS 7/1, 30 August 1842.
[134] *Ibid.*
[135] *Ibid.*

settled by an arrangement with the Admiralty'.[136] In August 1843 the Company asked the Government whether it might employ convict labour at Bermuda.[137] These labourers from England worked at the naval base strengthening defences and carrying out construction work. The RMSPC asked for '100 of the lowest class of convict labourers three days in each month' and offered to pay the Government wages for their hire.[138] Although the request was declined, the RMSPC's attempt to secure alternative bodies in bondage to carry out its coaling labour reflects a determination to avoid entering into a wage-labour market.[139]

The coaling station was, then, a place that enabled the mobility of steamships, and thus the smooth passage of travellers, texts, money and goods on board, but labour relations at RMSPC coaling stations reflected a more complex set of mobilities, as the geography of the RMSPC's coaling stations created a hybrid network of enslaved and free labour. Furthermore, by drawing on an extra-imperial geography in designating its chain of coal depots, the Company partially mitigated the economic effects of emancipation in the British Caribbean colonies. In shaping its coaling stations as places, the RMSPC sought out, where possible, labourers whose mobility was circumscribed by bondage, and thus circumnavigated questions of freedom. The Company's determination to avoid paying full wages in a free labour market meant that the coaling station, as a place enabling an industrialized oceanic mobility, was characterised, at least in

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[136] NMM RMS 1/2, 21 September 1843.

[137] Convict labourers were deployed in Bermuda to speed up the construction of the naval base between 1824 and 1863. These were convicts of the criminal justice system in England, as well as military and naval offenders. Approximately 9,000 prisoners were transported there, but in batches of no more than 1,500 at any one time. See Roger Willock, *Bulwark of empire: Bermuda's fortified naval base, 1860-1920*, 2nd edn (Bermuda: Bermuda Maritime Press, 1988), p. 44.

[138] NMM RMS 7/1, 17 August 1843.

[139] NMM RMS 6/1, 6 September 1842.

the Caribbean, by legally inscribed bondage, as much as by the liberty to move. By choosing to exploit enslaved labour, the RMSPC constructed the coaling station as a place underpinned by shore-based immobilities, and these were exploited to facilitate the reliable and smooth passages so desired by the Company's directors and managers. The RMSPC's management of its Caribbean coaling stations in the first decade of operations therefore reinforces Sheller's insistence that 'with the mobility of some, comes the production of the immobility of others'.[140] Yet, as coal bearers demonstrated, through their own mobilities and immobilities, they could disrupt the Company's plans.

Coaling and the circulation of debate in the late nineteenth century

In addition to facilitating the passage of steamships, the coaling station was equally a place that set ideas in motion. Coaling infrastructure was in some ways 'transparent', but was in another sense highly visible, and rendered particularly visible through the bodies of Caribbean coaling labourers.[141] The coaling process came to be routinely recorded by steamship travellers. In fact it would seem that coaling became a kind of spectacle of infrastructure, a marked contrast to travel in the age of sail. Thus, even as the process of fuelling transformed vessels into 'contact zones', coaling station contact mobilised transatlantic commentaries on Caribbean labourers.[142] In the early post-emancipation years it was hoped in Britain that '"civilization" would stimulate tastes and habits in the black worker

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[140] Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, p. 30.
[141] Star, 'The ethnography of infrastructure', p. 381.
[142] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial eyes: travel writing and transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 4.

that could only be satisfied with a monetary income'.[143] Planters were simultaneously expected to change their habits by adopting scientific agricultural procedures to boost sugar production.[144] However Thomas Holt sees the 1865 Morant Bay Rebellion in Jamaica as a key turning point and an event interpreted 'as an explicit demonstration of the failure of British emancipation policy and as evidence of the former slaves' incapacity for responsible citizenship'.[145] In the aftermath of Morant Bay, 'the perceived failure of West Indian emancipation resonated with and helped sustain the rise of a virulent official racism, which in turn helped give shape and focus to the racial thought of the larger public'.[146] It is in this context that steamship travel narratives of the late nineteenth century must be interpreted.

As was explained in the previous chapter, contact zones are spaces of cultural mixing.[147] The coaling wharf, a place of tidalectic relation between the sea and the land, and between mobility and immobility, was also a place of contact across class, 'race' and culture. Charles Kingsley's *At last a Christmas in the West Indies* (1871) described the coaling process at St Thomas, the ship's first Caribbean port of call, as well as at Grenada. Kingsley strikingly depicted the coaling station as contact zone, as his writing emphasized contrasts between the passengers (and author) on board the ship and the coaling labour taking place around them. At St Thomas, Kingsley wrote, 'we got back to the ship, but not to

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[143] Thomas C. Holt, 'The essence of the contract: the articulation of race, gender, and political economy in British emancipation policy, 1838-1866', in *Beyond slavery: explorations of race, labor, and citizenship in postemancipation societies,* ed. by Frederick Cooper, Thomas C. Holt and Rebecca J. Scott (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 33-59, (p. 51).

[144] *Ibid*., p. 51.

[145] *Ibid*., p. 56.

[146] *Ibid*.

[147] Pratt, *Imperial eyes*, p. 4.

sleep. Already a coal-barge lay on either side of her, and over the coals we scrambled, through a scene which we would fain forget'.[148] He then described how:

> A lad, seeming the poet of the gang, stood on the sponson, and in the momentary intervals of work improvised some story, while the men below took up and finished each verse with a refrain, piercing, sad, running up and down large and easy intervals. The tunes were many and seemingly familiar, all barbaric, often ending in the minor key, and reminding us much, perhaps too much, of the old Gregorian tones.[149]

By this means, Kingsley emphasized a cultural dichotomy between:

> [T]he scraps of negro poetry which we could overhear; while on deck the band was playing quadrilles and waltzes, setting the Negro shoveller dancing in the black water at the barge-bottom, shovel in hand; and pleasant white folks danced under the awning, till the contrast between the refinement within, and the brutality without, became very painful.[150]

Joanna de Groot points out that theories of 'race' and 'sex' in the nineteenth-century were partly grounded in supposedly 'observable' points of physical difference.[151] By availing themselves of the opportunity to observe while the ship was being coaled, steamship travellers found fuel for their polemics.

Debate generated at the coaling station was highly gendered, and formed part of what Elseth Locher-Scholten terms 'multiple colonial discourses often expressed in gendered language, masking hidden motives'.[152] The authors of the steamship narratives under discussion here took a particular interest in the presence of women coal bearers around the vessel. The female presence amongst coal workers can be understood with reference to post-emancipation labour patterns,

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[148] Charles Kingsley, *At last: a Christmas in the West Indies*, 4th edn (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874), p. 20.
[149] *Ibid*.
[150] *Ibid*., p. 21.
[151] Joanna de Groot, '"Sex" and "race": the construction of language and image in the nineteenth century', in *Cultures of empire: colonizers in Britain and the empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, ed. by Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 37-60, (p. 40).
[152] Elsbeth Locher-Scholten, *Women and the colonial state: essays on gender and modernity in the Netherlands Indies 1900-1942* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2000), p. 27.

but equally fits regional patterns of coal mining in Britain. In the Caribbean context, as Janet Henshall Momsen reminds us, 'both men and women carried out the full range of farming tasks in the field and divisions of labour were based more on age than on gender'.[153] Yet women's presence in the coal industry was far from unique to the Caribbean. Although in the British context overall, Roy Church estimates that in 1841, the proportion of women employed at collieries in the U.K. was probably as low as 3.5 per cent, he notes that in 'Eastern Scotland coal bearers carrying bags of coal from surface to face and back were almost always women or girls, as miners regarded the jobs too degrading for men'.[154] Yet Chloe Chard underscores the value of otherness in travel writing, and reminds us that several authors 'imply that the travel writer who finds a lack of evidence of otherness within the foreign can always invent such otherness'.[155] Although a strong female presence was characteristic of the coal industry in certain parts of Scotland, when confronted with female presence at the Caribbean coaling station, Kingsley wrote that, '[b]lack women on one side were doing men's work, with heavy coal-baskets on their heads, amid screaming, chattering and language of which, happily, we understood little or nothing'.[156] Thus Kingsley cast the women as barbaric through the terms in which he described their communication (screaming, chattering, incomprehensible language), and conflated this racialized interpretation with an accusation of an inappropriate sexual division of labour. Joanna de Groot has argued that 'nineteenth-century

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[153] Janet Henshall Momsen, 'Gender roles in Caribbean agricultural labour', in *Labour in the Caribbean: from emancipation to independence*, ed. by Malcom Cross and Gad Heuman (London: Macmillan, 1988), pp. 141-158, (p. 142 and p. 154).

[154] Roy Church, *The history of the British coal industry*, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), III *1830-1913 Victorian pre-eminence*, p. 191.

[155] Chloe Chard, *Pleasure and guilt on the Grand Tour: travel writing and imaginative geography 1600-1830* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 2.

[156] Kingsley, *At last*, p. 20.

representations and discourses of sexual identity and difference drew upon and contributed to comparable discourses and representations of ethnic, "racial", and cultural identity and difference'. [157] Representations of coaling labourers in steamship travel narratives such as Kingsley's drew upon just such intertwined ideas of racial and sexual difference (see figure 6.5 for a visual representation of coaling labour). As Holt underscores, by the time of British emancipation, the bourgeois class had articulated a notion of separate domains for women and men.[158] This ideology of gendered spheres, interlinked with racialized thought, shaped steamship travellers' responses to Caribbean coaling station labour.

Figure 6.5 *Coaling a steamer at Kingston, Jamaica*, sketch by Melton Prior, leaf from *The Illustrated London News*, 6 October 1888. Caribbean coaling labourers were depicted not only in texts, but also in images such as this one. Notably, there are two women quarrelling in the middle of the image. The publication of the image in *The Illustrated London News* speaks to an interest in coaling labour at this time. Reproduced courtesy of History Miami.

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[157] Joanna de Groot, '"Sex"' and "race"', p. 37.
[158] Holt, 'The essence of the contract', p. 38.

The presence of women coal bearers might be understood in terms of financial incentives. MacQueen began complaining about 'exorbitant' wages demanded by Caribbean labourers even before the inauguration of service. In February 1841, MacQueen had reported from Grenada with dissatisfaction that labourers on that island demanded a dollar a day to coal steamships, and sometimes more for such work. [159] The women coal bearers in the Caribbean possibly represented a cheaper source of labour to the Company than their male counterparts. [160] While the Company's employment of these women perhaps reflected a desire to keep wages at a low level, it must be considered that employment as a coal bearer provided women with a certain degree of agency, albeit circumscribed, since this was an alternative to agricultural labour on an estate, and also represented a flexible form of employment that could be combined with other productive activities. [161]

Yet the post-emancipation depiction of Caribbean people, as re-mobilised by coaling station contact, did not acknowledge these economic realities and was

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[159] NMM RMS 7/1, 18 February 1841. By comparison, in the 1840s, labourers on Grenadian sugar estates are estimated to have earned between ten pence and a shilling a day.

[160] It was not necessarily the case that women were paid less than men for equivalent tasks in the post-emancipation Caribbean, but rather this varied by island. While 'first class' labouring women working on the estates in Berbice were paid at the same rates as men, in parts of British Guiana, women were paid less than men. See Bridget Brereton, 'Family strategies, gender and the shift to wage labour in the British Caribbean', in *The colonial Caribbean in transition: essays on postemancipation social and cultural history*, ed. by Bridget Brereton and Kevin A. Yelvington (Barbados: The Press University of the West Indies, 1999), pp. 77-107, (p. 85).

[161] Pedro Welch has written of how in pre-emancipation Bridgetown, the urban environment offered 'room-to-manoeuvre options not widely available in the rural milieu'. This flexibility, compared with rural choices, might be considered as one factor in coal bearing labour on post-emancipation islands such as Grenada. See Pedro L.V. Welch, 'Post-emancipation adjustments in the urban context: views from Bridgetown, Barbados', in *In the shadow of the plantation: Caribbean history and legacy*, ed. by Alvin O. Thompson (Kingston: Ian Randle, 2002), pp. 266-282 (pp. 267-8). As Bridget Brereton has argued, 'different kinds of family strategies' framed the post-emancipation withdrawal of women and children from estate labour, in cases where this took place. Brereton, 'Family strategies', p. 78.

largely Carlylean in strain. Thomas Carlyle's notorious *Occasional discourse*, first published in December 1849, was centred upon the 'Colonial and Negro question', and attacked abolitionists in polemic style. Carlyle depicted the West Indies as a place where black men sat feeding easily on pumpkins, whilst 'the sugar-crops rot round them uncut, because labour cannot be hired'.[162] Most diabolically depicted by Carlyle was the character of the 'idle Black gentleman, with his rum-bottle in his hand [...] no breeches on his body, pumpkin at discretion, and the fruitfullest region of the earth going back to jungle round him'.[163] These charges of idleness and irresponsibility, specifically laid at the door of black Caribbean men, and a preoccupation with labourers' refusal to work to pre-emancipation daily rhythms (that is, as enslaved peoples) were notions re-mobilised and reinforced at the coaling station. Holt has noted that concurrently with the publication of Carlyle's text, 'there emerged an official rhetoric indicting the freedpeople's work ethic, family life, and sexuality, sometimes even their very humanity, all part of a general condemnation of their capacity to participate in civil society on the same basis as whites'.[164] Carlyle's rhetoric was also found in other unofficial voices that entered the debate after coaling-station contact.

Carlylean tropes emerged in response to coaling station contact, and foregrounded alleged wages and working patterns of coal bearers. Kingsley reinforced such notions in his discussion of coal bearers at Grenada, writing, 'I can well believe the story that beggars are unknown in the island. The coalers,

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[162] Thomas Carlyle, *Occasional discourse on the nigger question*, 2nd edn (London: Thomas Bosworth, 1853), p. 5.
[163] *Ibid.*, p. 13.
[164] Holt, 'The essence of the contract', p. 54.

indeed, are only too well off, for they earn enough, by one day of violent and degrading toil, to live in reckless shiftless comfort, and, I am assured, something very like debauchery, till the next steamer comes in'.[165] By referring to this lifestyle of 'reckless shiftless comfort' enjoyed by the coalers between working days, Kingsley invoked echoes of Carlyle's idle and hard-drinking black men. Thus, under the pen of men such as Kingsley, coaling labourers came to signify the broader problem of securing regular labour in the post-emancipation Caribbean. Kingsley's description of irresponsible coal bearers, and, by extension, Caribbean men, might be interpreted as one of the many ways in which, as Ann Laura Stoler stresses:

> [R]acial discourse reverberated between metropole and colony to secure the tenuous distinctions of bourgeois rule; how in this "management of [bourgeois] life", middle-class distinctions were made not only in contrast to a European-based working class, but through a racialized notion of civility that brought the colonial convergence of − and conflict between − class and racial membership in sharp relief.[166]

The 'civilizing mission' as 'a bourgeois impulse directed not only at the colonized, as often assumed, but at recalcitrant and ambiguous participants in imperial culture at home and abroad' can be glimpsed in the similarities between reforming depictions of women coal miners in the Britain and women coal bearers in the Caribbean.[167] Church writes of how in the 1840s in the British investigation into coal-mining, '[r]eports of women who drank, swore, and worked naked in the pits, who were believed to be sexually immoral and unfit to be wives and mothers' produced a 'sensational reaction' in public opinion.[168] These same bourgeois notions of appropriate gendered behaviour framed

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[165] Kingsley, *At last*, pp. 62-3.
[166] Ann Laura Stoler, 'Cultivating bourgeois bodies and racial selves', in *Cultures of empire: colonizers in Britain and the empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, ed. by Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 87-119, (p. 88).
[167] *Ibid*., p. 95.
[168] Church, *The history of the British coal industry*, p. 193.

responses to coaling station contact on the other side of the Atlantic. Yet on arrival in the Caribbean, these British bourgeois ideas met with a contrasting labour context in which estate managers 'attempted to coerce [women] into continued labour after [emancipation]'.[169]

James Anthony Froude's *The English in the West Indies* (1888) indicates how the coaling station as contact zone, as a place of unequal and globalized power relations, mobilised and bolstered a Carlylean discourse. [170] Similarly to Kingsley, Froude discursively constructed the coaling station as a place in which black Caribbean men demonstrated their irresponsibility and a failure to fulfil European bourgeois male ideals. In Froude's case, a gendered interpretation of the coaling station resonated with a wider pro-imperialist plea for England not to turn its back on paternalistic duties to the Caribbean islands.

Froude found evidence in support of this argument in various Caribbean spaces, and the coaling station was one of these. At Kingston, Jamaica, he wrote:

> Two planks were laid down at a steep incline from the ship's deck to the yard. Swinging their loads on their heads, erect as statues, and with a step elastic as a racehorse's, they marched up one of the planks, emptied their baskets into the coal bunkers, and ran down the other. Round and round they went under the blazing sun all the morning through, and round and round they would continue to go all the afternoon. The men took it comparatively easy. The women flew along, laughing, clamouring, as if not knowing what weariness was − willing beasts of burden, for they had the care upon them of their children; the men disclaiming all responsibilities on that score, after the babies have been once brought into the world. The poor women are content with the arrangement, which they prefer to what they would regard as legal bondage. They earn at this coaling work seven or eight shillings a day. If they were wives, their husbands would take it from them and spend it in rum. The companion who is not a wife can refuse and keep her earnings for her little ones. If black suffrage is to be the rule in Jamaica, I would take it away from

[169] Brereton, 'Family strategies', p. 90.
[170] John J. Thomas, *Froudacity: West Indian fables by James Anthony Froude* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1889), p. 12.

the men and would give it to the superior sex. The women are the working bees of the hive.[171]

In a similar fashion to Kingsley, Froude highlighted the wages earned by coal bearing labourers. It should be noted, however, that in comparison to Froude's claims of luxurious excess, during the 1890s (just a few years after Froude's text was published), at Castries, St Lucia, coal bearing women earned two cents for five baskets carried, or approximately three shillings a day.[172] In comparison to Kinglsey's focus on coal bearing women, Froude was particularly at pains to labour the irresponsibility of black men who 'took it comparatively easy' and disclaimed 'all responsibilities' for their children. In Froude's writing also, then, we see echoes of Carlyle. But his depiction of women coaling labourers resonated equally with longstanding pro-slavery tropes. Hilary McD. Beckles outlines with reference to the period of slavery:

> As the labour gangs became increasingly female in composition, and the fertility of black women was propelled into the market economy as the key to an internal reproduction of labour, frequent references appeared in texts to the black women as superordinate Amazons who could be called upon to labour all day, perform sex all night, and be quite satisfied morally and culturally to exist outside the formal structures of marriage and family.[173]

Such depictions, resonant with ideas in circulation during the era of slavery, were re-deployed with slightly altered political import during the post-emancipation period.

Froude utilized the moment of coaling station contact to reinforce a broader argument by implying that Caribbean men could not be trusted with suffrage. As

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[171] James A. Froude, *The English in the West Indies*, pp. 174-5.

[172] Bohnam C. Richardson, *Economy and environment in the Caribbean: Barbados and the Windwards in the late 1800s* (Barbados: UWI press, 1997), p. 113. According to Richardson, these coal bearers tended to assemble 'under a single foreman or 'crier', and were usually paid in coal tickets or coal tokens, a currency accepted by merchants and market women in Castries. *Ibid*., p. 115.

[173] Hilary McD. Beckles, *Centering woman: gender discourses in Caribbean slave society* (Kingston: Ian Randle, 1999), p. xx.

De Groot notes, in controversies over the rights of colonial subjects 'examples of "naturally"/ "normally" unreliable or irrational behaviour were given as evidence that women or "natives" were by nature unfit for public life and achievement in work, politics, or creative activity'.[174] Strikingly, Froude claimed to have found such examples as the ship was coaled, before even setting foot on shore at Kingston. Thus the coaling station, in Froude's text, was a space discursively mobilised in order to promote a broader pro-imperial political agenda. Douglas Hall suggests that the question being asked across Britain and the British empire in the wake of abolition was, '[w]ould the Negroes, set free after two hundred years of slavery, follow the docile, thrifty, and industrious habits which were then expected of labourers in Britain?'[175] Writers such as Charles Kingsley and James Froude thought that they saw the answer to this question at the coaling station. In their minds, the answer was a resounding 'no'.

Although less polemical than Froude's work, the 1890s memoir of Robert Woolward, a longstanding officer and captain of the RMSPC, also afforded the coaling process prominence. Similarly to Froude, Woolward highlighted a division of labour surprising to European bourgeois sensibilities. 'The men,' he commented 'only fill the baskets and lift them on to the ladies' heads'.[176] *Nigh on sixty years at sea* represented the coaling station dichotomously along the axis of slavery and emancipation. Whereas Woolward framed the coaling process at Grenada in terms of contentment, he invoked pathos through his description of coaling at St Thomas. Woolward's description of coaling at Grenada was, in fact, constructed almost as a comical scene:

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[174] Joanna de Groot, '"Sex" and "race"', pp. 44-45.
[175] Douglas Hall, *Five of the Leewards*, p. 35.
[176] Woolward, *Nigh on sixty years*, p. 53.

> This operation is carried on by coloured 'ladies' (there are no women in the West Indies except white women), who transport the coal in baskets containing 80lbs. on their heads, and march along with it with a carriage that a countess might be proud of, singing all the time.[177]

The use of parentheses creates a mocking aside between author and reader, and the suggestion of the coaling women marching proud as a countess sits in contrast to a very different kind of condescension in Woolward's description of the St Thomas coaling station. Of pre-emancipation St Thomas, Woolward wrote, '[w]e did not get coaled any quicker here than we did at Grenada, if so quickly, and it was a sorry sight to see women driven like cattle'.[178] Thus in post-emancipation Grenada, Woolward presented coaling as a contented, if remarkable (in gender terms) labour arrangement. In the context of slavery, however, Woolward invoked humanitarian pathos dominant in Britain, especially before Carlyle's intervention, and also implied that enslaved labour was inefficient. Without explicitly engaging in political debate, Woolward's textual representation of the coaling station nevertheless gestured towards an advocacy of free labour, and therefore spoke not only to long-standing abolitionist rhetoric, but also chimed with debates on the efficiency of free labour that had resonated through British politics in the mid-century.[179] Given that slavery had been abolished throughout the Americas (ending with Brazil in 1888) by the time that Woolward was writing, his focus upon the contrasts between these two coaling spaces seems suggestive also of an attempt to present 'evidence of Britain's national identity as the embodiment of liberty'.[180]

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[177] *Ibid*.

[178] *Ibid.*, pp. 61-62.

[179] British abolitionism concerned itself firstly with abolition of the slave trade and slavery in the British colonies, and then shifted focus towards an international context. See Howard Temperley, *British antislavery 1833-1870* (London: Longman, 1972), pp. ix-xvii. See also Seymour Drescher, *The mighty experiment: free labor versus slavery in British emancipation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), chapter ten, for analysis of free labour debates.

[180] David Turley, *The culture of English antislavery, 1780-1860* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 230.

The coaling station fuelled not only steamships, but also debate. This debate particularly centred on the state of labour in the British post-emancipation islands, but also touched on corresponding questions and examples of slavery. Coaling labourers in the Caribbean were depicted as representative of a problematic post-emancipation labour force, and black men were cast in Carlylean tropes as irresponsible, while black women were de-humanized in steamship travellers' representations. In this way the coaling station enabled travellers on board ship to represent what they thought they knew about life on shore.

Conclusion

The coaling station gathered mobile materials and templates of practice, but these were then locally fixed into place. Moreover, coaling processes were shaped by practices both transatlantic (from Liverpool) and regionally adapted (from St Thomas). While mobile elements coalesced at the coaling station, the site at Grenada illustrates how the security, safety and fixed material qualities of these places were also valued. In human terms, the RMSPC sought out bonded forms of labour in a bid to manage costs, and thus sought to circumscribe the social mobility of shore-based coaling labourers. Later on, the presence of these same individuals around the vessels fuelled debate amongst steamship travellers about slavery, freedom and the consequences of emancipation in the British Empire.

A coastal space between the sea and the land, the coaling station existed precisely to serve the relationship between the land and the sea. As such, the coaling station seems an ideal site through which to examine dynamic sea to shore interactions. As Jeremy Taylor has suggested of the 'bund' in East Asia, coaling stations might be considered 'littoral spaces of empire', thus calling to mind Doreen Massey's emphasis on the 'meeting up' of local histories with those of an oceanic beyond.[181] This focus on coaling stations, under-examined spaces between the land and the sea, allows rich scope for exploring tidalectic relations. The coaling process foregrounds a 'dynamic and shifting relationship between land and sea' and thus contributes to a tidalectic interpretation of the Company's history.[182] Tidalectics between land and sea, mobility and immobility, and local and global networks were bound up in the coaling process. DeLoughrey stresses the tidalectic model as a 'dynamic' interdependence between the land and the sea.[183] The coaling process captures this interdependence. Coaling stations were constructed to serve the needs of oceanic vessels. They were also 'extroverted' kinds of places, constantly characterised by flows of coal, ships and people brought in by the sea.[184] The steamship and its oceanic mobility were entirely dependent on these spaces on shore. Furthermore, the material and human resources available at a coaling depot at any one moment had immediate consequences for a ship's ability to move.

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[181] Jeremy E. Taylor, 'The bund: littoral space of empire in the treaty ports of East Asia', *Social history*, 27:2 (2002), 125-142; Doreen Massey, *For space* (London: Sage, 2005), p. 4.
[182] Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots: navigating Caribbean and Pacific island literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), pp. 2-3.
[183] *Ibid*.
[184] Doreen Massey, *Space, place and gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), p. 154.

DeLoughrey writes of tidalectics as a 'feminized vision of history', and indeed the tidalectic framework lends itself to scrutiny of the gendered division of coal bearing labour. [185] The Company's desire to circumscribe the mobility of (predominantly female) Caribbean coal bearers in order to ensure the punctual mobility of its ships and (predominantly male) passengers is a tidalectic process that can be identified around the ship. Ginette Verstraete, writing of the railroad and 'technology as cultural performance', comments on the railroad's 'involvement in racial, gendered and class-related inclusions and exclusions'. [186] The steamship, like the railroad, had 'gendered and racialized labour and leisure'. [187] Moreover, there is an important point to be made about RMSPC historiography. Verstraete notes the 'displacement' of Chinese migrant labour in representations of the North American transcontinental railroad. [188] Similar to the Chinese migrant labourers who were asked to step aside before the railroad was photographed, Caribbean coal bearers were central to the mobility of the RMSPC's ship but continue to be displaced by historical accounts of the Company that have ignored their role in enabling steamship mobilites. My analysis has sought to address this historiographical silence.

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[185] DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots*, pp. 2-3.
[186] Ginette Verstraete, 'Railroading America: towards a material study of the nation', *Theory, culture and society*, 19 (2002), 145-159 (p. 147).
[187] *Ibid*., p. 146.
[188] *Ibid*.

Chapter seven

'Winter in the West Indies': the RMSPC's tourist spaces, c. 1869 to 1914

Introduction

> The Caribbean is consumed both in travelling representations (texts, images, signs) that bring the Caribbean to the consumer, and by travelling consumers who organise their experience and perceptions of the Caribbean through existing visual regimes.[1]

In the latter decades of the nineteenth century, the RMSPC began to promote leisure tours to the Caribbean, and offered this service to an elite group of passengers. In this chapter I propose to closely examine the Company's touring practices to show the particularly paradoxical way in which the RMSPC fostered tourist 'consumption' of the region.[2] The appeal of maritime Caribbean tourism was to last the course of the twentieth century, so that at the start of the twenty-first century, Robert Wood writes of the Caribbean as having the 'largest regional cruise industry'.[3] Polly Pattullo similarly highlights the popularity of contemporary cruise tourism, describing that '[i]n the Caribbean itself, cruise tourism has grown much faster than land-based tourism − from 7.8 million passenger arrivals in 1990 to 14.5 million in 2000, an increase of 8.6 per cent per year, compared to an average annual increase of 4.7 per cent for stay-over

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[1] Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: from Arawaks to zombies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 38.

[2] *Ibid.*

[3] Robert E. Wood, 'Caribbean cruise tourism: globalisation at sea', *Annals of tourism research*, 27:2 (2000), 345-370 (p. 168). Although Caribbean cruise tourism is now declining relative to the market share of other regions, in 2004, Wood wrote of the Caribbean as having 'by far the most significant cruise market'. See Robert E. Wood, 'Cruise ships: deterritorialized destinations', in *Tourism and transport: issues and agendas for the new millennium*, ed. by Les Lumsdon and Stephen J. Page (Boston and London: Elsevier, 2004), pp. 133-145 (p. 136).

arrivals'.[4] Such contemporary cruise tourism is embedded in a longer history that has constructed the Caribbean as 'an effect, a fantasy, a set of practices, and a context'.[5] Cruise tourism in particular seems emblematic of practices within Caribbean tourism as a whole, which are 'not simply about a relation to the landscape, but also [...] about a relationship to Caribbean people'.[6] After all, cruise itineraries often prevent sustained engagements with places and peoples on shore. In this chapter I examine the RMSPC's late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century tourist service and argue that the Company's firmly established status within the region by the final quarter of the nineteenth century allowed it to play a significant role in promoting modern cultures of cruising the Caribbean.

The RMSPC launched the first of its vessels featuring the new marine compound engines in 1869. The increased efficiency of these engines allowed for greater passenger accommodation and cargo space on board, and thus altered the terms on which the Company's business could be conducted. From this time until the onset of the First World War (which disrupted services) the RMSPC sought, in the face of decreasing mail contract subsidies and increased competition from rival lines, to bolster revenue from cargo and passenger services. This period, during which the RMSPC was forced to take seriously its transatlantic passenger trade as a source of income, is the focus of this chapter. The relationship between nineteenth-century improvements in transportation and the availability of travel

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[4] Polly Pattullo, 'Sailing into the sunset: the cruise-ship industry', in *Tourists and tourism: a reader*, ed. by Sharon Bohn Gmelch (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2004), pp. 339-358 (p. 341).
[5] Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, p. 5.
[6] *Ibid*., p. 62.

to a broader social group has repeatedly been noted.[7] The development of the RMSPC's passenger traffic during the latter decades of the century formed a part of this trend, as upper- and middle-class individuals were increasingly likely to travel to the Americas for pleasure. Yet it must be stressed that in contrast to initiatives such as Cook's tours, which opened up the option of travel to a broader social sweep, the RMSPC's journeys to the West Indies or Brazil and the River Plate demanded high levels of time as well as financial expenditure and remained an elite travel option rather than a service for the masses. Indeed, Caribbean tourism was to remain the preserve of elite social groups until the latter decades of the twentieth century.

Tim Cresswell describes tourism as a 'mode of mobility' and, as an organized form of travel, it has been argued that tourism should be studied within a broad mobilities context.[8] C. Michael Hall, for example, insists that tourism should be theorised and analysed in relation to other kinds of mobilities; Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry develop a similar argument.[9] The RMSPC's promotion of tourist mobilities emerged from the facilitation of movements between colonies and across empires that I have discussed in chapter four. This long legacy led the Company to operate as a tourism intermediary when the

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[7] Maxine Feifer, *Going places: the ways of the tourist from imperial Rome to the present day* (London: Macmillan, 1985); Frank Fonda Taylor, *To hell with paradise: a history of the Jamaican tourist industry* (Pittsburgh and London: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1993); Lynne Withey, *Grand tours and Cook's tours: a history of leisure travel, 1750 to 1915* (London: Aurum Press, 1997); A. J. Stockwell, 'Early tourism in Malaya', in *Tourism in South-East Asia*, ed. by Michael Hitchcock, Victor T. King and Michael J. G. Parnwell (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 258-270; J. K. Walton and J. Smith, 'The first century of beach tourism in Spain: San Sebastián and the *Playas del Norte* from the 1830s to the 1930s' in *Tourism in Spain: critical issues*, ed. by M. Barke, J. Towner and M. T. Newton (Oxford: CAB, 1996), pp. 35-61.

[8] Tim Cresswell, *On the move: mobility in the modern western world* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 207.

[9] C. Michael Hall, 'Reconsidering the geography of tourism and contemporary mobility', *Geographical research*, 43:2 (2005), 125-139 (p. 134); Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller, and John Urry, 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings', *Mobilities*, 1:1 (2006), 1-22 (p. 10).

opportunity arose. As Urry suggests, '[m]obility depends upon the development of trust in professional experts who have developed systems of mass travel and transport which limit the risk involved'.[10] The Company's claim to 'expert' status derived from its longstanding mail contract role. In this chapter, I analyse the material and discursive strategies that the Company deployed to promote and provide for leisured transatlantic mobilities.

As a process of human mobility, tourism also speaks to questions of modernity and globalization. If globalization intensifies relations between places, and reconfigures (or 'compresses') the relationship between time and space, then human mobility forms a part of this narrative.[11] As Urry underlines with reference to the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, 'part of this sense of compression of space has stemmed from the rapid flows of travellers and tourists physically moving from place to place'.[12] In the nineteenth century, steamship services such as the RMSPC's contributed less of a flow, and more of a trickle of travellers and tourists between Europe and the Americas, but this was substantial enough to impact upon tourism infrastructure in the region, and to consolidate modified conceptualizations of the Caribbean as place in the Western tourist imagination. Crucially in the twentieth century, the trickle increased to a flow, rendering tourism ever more significant to the island economies. Tourism relates, then, to globalization, but equally the theme returns us to questions of modernity. Urry argues that 'acting as a tourist is one of the defining characteristics of being "modern" and is bound up with major transformations in

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[10] John Urry, *The tourist gaze*, 2nd edn (London: Sage, 2002), p. 143.
[11] See, for example Sharon Bohn Gmelch, 'Why tourism matters', in *Tourists and tourism: a reader*, ed. by Sharon Bohn Gmelch (Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press, 2004), pp. 3-22 (p. 5).
[12] John Urry, *Consuming places* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 141.

paid work'.[13] It must be noted that the modernity of the Caribbean tourist experience was a modernity born of colonial precedents, with the passenger service enjoyed by 'imperial careerists' subsequently serving a broader group of upper class and upper-middle class patrons.[14] As A. J. Stockwell writes of South East Asia, though of relevance to the Caribbean also, 'empire − and the security, amenities and gadgetry associated with it − in turn enabled the development of tourism'.[15] In addition to providing an infrastructure that would later facilitate tourism, colonial regimes also produced epistemologies of the 'Other'. As Tim Edensor stresses, '[t]he ways in which contemporary tourism is typified by a technology of representation whereby objective and authoritative description can capture "reality" has its roots in colonialism'.[16] The RMSPC was implicated in these kinds of representational practices, providing apparently authoritative descriptions of the expanded Caribbean in its promotional literature.

In examining the RMSPC's promotion and management of tourist mobilities, I engage with Urry's conceptualization of tourism, in tension with the theoretical advances of David Crouch. On the one hand, Urry's insistence on the centrality of the 'tourist gaze' is highly pertinent to this discussion.[17] Whilst insisting that there are multiple tourist gazes, rather than a single monolithic gaze, Urry nevertheless stresses the primacy of the visual, reminding us that '[w]hen we "go away" we look at the environment with interest and curiosity. It speaks to us in

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[13] Urry, *The tourist gaze*, p. 2.
[14] David Lambert and Alan Lester, 'Introduction: imperial spaces, imperial subjects', in *Colonial lives across the British empire: imperial careering in the long nineteenth century*, ed. by David Lambert and Alan Lester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-31 (p. 2).
[15] Stockwell, 'Early tourism in Malaya', p. 260.
[16] Tim Edensor, *Tourists at the Taj: performance and meaning at a symbolic site* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 22.
[17] Urry, *The tourist gaze*, p. 2.

ways we appreciate, or at least we anticipate that it will do so. In other words, we gaze at what we encounter'.[18] For Urry, the 'tourist gaze is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience' and the tourist 'gaze is constructed through signs'.[19] The RMSPC's promotion of the Caribbean, and the discursive construction of the region in steamship travel narratives, sought to fashion anew a tourist gaze on Caribbean landscapes that had only recently been characterised by intense agricultural production for the purpose of sugar exports during the era of slavery. As S. Britton has pointed out with reference to the contemporary era:

> Small, often isolated communities with narrow land-resource-based economies can suffer major trauma from prolonged depressed commodity prices, the closure of a processing plant, or the depletion of an extractive resource. In such instances tourism-related activities can provide a means of economic survival.[20]

This process has been a long reality for many Caribbean islands, developing steadily from the late nineteenth century into the twentieth century. Although the RMSPC did not begin to offer tourist services to the Caribbean in order to shift the economic base of the region, it was no coincidence that the promotion of the West Indies as a tourist destination expanded at a time when the sugar economy had entered into decline.[21] The RMSPC's commodification of the West Indies as a place for leisured touring and consumption was predicated upon the promotion of Caribbean landscapes as views of picturesque curiosity rather than intense agricultural production.

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 1.
[19] *Ibid.*, p. 3.
[20] S. Britton, 'Tourism, capital, and place: towards a critical geography of tourism', *Environment and planning D: society and space*, 9:4 (1991), 451-478 (p. 473).
[21] In a buoyant market, the RMSPC would perhaps have placed greater stress on freight earnings.

Urry's conceptualization of tourism, then, informs the analysis in this chapter. Yet in contrast to his emphasis on sight and tourism as engagement with signs, David Crouch interprets tourism 'as a form of seduction [or] flirting with space'.[22] For Crouch, it is 'over-reductive to interpret tourism as sightseeing', and he argues that people 'practise and perform places'.[23] Crouch presents tourism as 'an encounter', and underscores that 'being the tourist, encountering space [...] amounts to more than a mental engagement and reflexivity; instead, it is all of these and embodied encounter'.[24] Sheller's interpretation of nineteenth-century ways of knowing and moving through the Caribbean also seems to accord with this emphasis on embodied encounters, as she argues that in the post-emancipation context of the nineteenth-century Caribbean, a Romantic vision of the region 'was constructed around experiences of moving through Caribbean landscapes and of experiencing bodily what was already known imaginatively through literature and art'.[25] In this chapter, I contend that the RMSPC promoted nineteenth- and early-twentieth century Caribbean tourism as both visual engagement and embodied encounter, stressing the visual appeal of the places visited, whilst simultaneously providing and promoting embodied comforts on board the ship.

I begin the chapter with a contextual section that examines the shifting fortunes of the RMSPC's passenger service during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The second section, 'Promoting place: the RMSPC's marketing of its

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[22] David Crouch, 'Flirting with space: tourism geographies as sensuous / expressive practice', in *Seductions of place: geographical perspectives on globalization and touristed landscapes*, ed. by Carolyn Cartier and Alan A. Lew (London and New York: Routledge, 2005), pp. 23-35 (p. 23).
[23] *Ibid.*
[24] *Ibid.*, p. 28.
[25] Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, p. 38.

tourist regions', analyses the RMSPC's official efforts to market its two main tourist routes to leisure travellers. The third section, 'Imaginative geographies: non RMSPC views of the expanded Caribbean', explores unofficial representations of the regions that emerged out of RMSPC steamship travel, and the final section, 'Flirting with space', examines embodied passenger encounters on ship and on shore. I argue that the RMSPC promoted the ship at sea as the primary space of the tour, a space of dwelling and embodied comforts, while tourists 'flirted' with spaces on shore. [26] In this way, the RMSPC's reconfiguration of spaces and spatial practices in the expanded Caribbean developed modern modes of touring the Caribbean. Specifically, within the RMSPC's nineteenth-century passenger service, patterns of mobility, patterns in the usage of spaces on ship and on shore, and strategies for promoting the destinations visited are identifiable as trends which, in the Caribbean context, persist into the twenty-first century.

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[26] Crouch, 'Flirting with space: tourism geographies as sensuous / expressive practice', p. 23.

A long-term view of the RMSPC's passenger trade
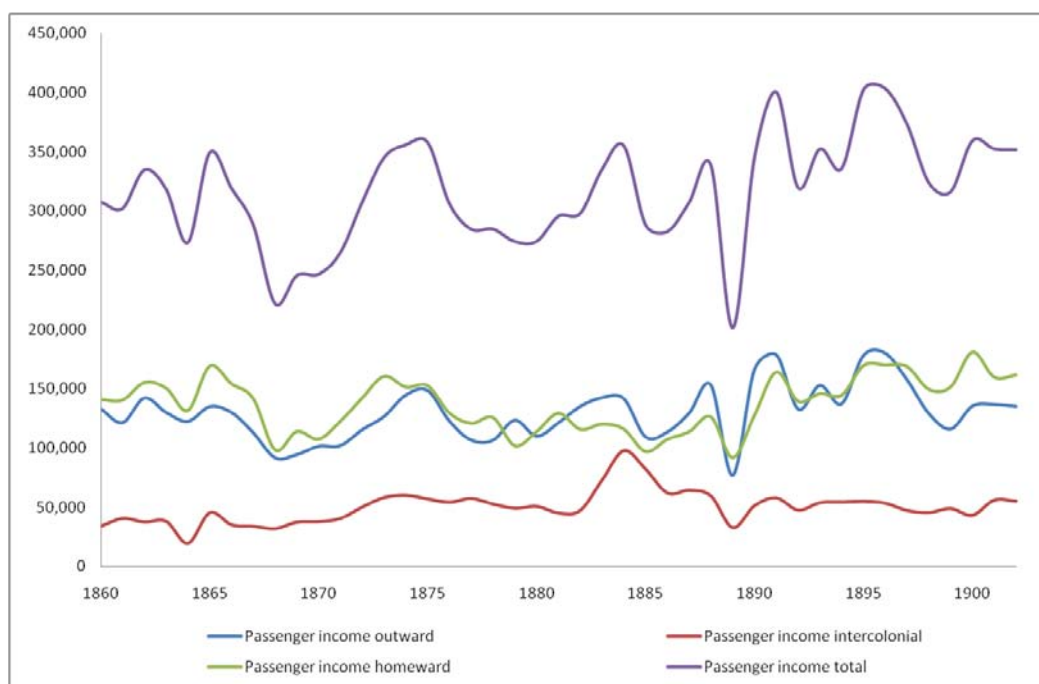
Figure 7.1 The RMSPC's passenger income 1860-1902. Sources: NMM RMS 54/2, NMM RMS 54/3, NMM RMS 54/4, NMM RMS 54/5, UCL RMSP 14. 'Outward' journeys were transatlantic passages from Britain to the Americas, and 'homeward' journeys were those from the Americas to Britain. 'Intercolonial' journeys were those that neither began nor ended in Britain.

As can be seen from figure 7.1, the RMSPC was unable to secure consistent growth in its passenger trade during the second half of the nineteenth century. The Company's passenger traffic fluctuated throughout the period rather than increasing steadily as the years progressed. The RMSPC's 1862 earnings from passenger fares, for example, were reported at £334,739. This figure is comparable to the 1894 earnings of £336,062. Nevertheless, in the overall context of the Company's service during the century, the 1890s saw a relatively high volume of passenger traffic, with the RMSPC enjoying revenue of more than £400,000 from this source in 1891, 1895 and 1896. It is within this context

that campaigns to promote tourism at the end of the century must be understood. Although the Company temporarily secured healthy passenger income during the 1890s, several factors undermined the RMSPC's attempts to secure linear growth in its passenger trade over the course of the nineteenth century, including competition, political instability and quarantine regulations.

The RMSPC faced international competition even during the early decades of operations. The Company's annual reports, which tended to refer to 'competition' in general terms rather than pinpointing specific rival services, nevertheless blamed French steamship lines, on several occasions, for damaging profits.[27] The rival service of the Messageries Maritimes on the Brazil Line was cited as a reason for decreased outward passenger traffic during the first half of 1861 for example, and the Company referred again to the detrimental effect of this competition in 1862 reports. Similarly the Company commented that passenger traffic in 1865 might have been higher had it not been for the French line's extension of service in the West Indies during the second half of that year.[28] The increasing efficiency of engines (and the resulting potential for increased profits) combined with the decrease in once generous government subsidies weakened mail contract holders such as the RMSPC and encouraged competition from rival steamship lines. During the late 1860s the RMSPC was under particular pressure on the South American route. In 1867, Tait and Company inaugurated the short-lived 'London, Belgium, Brazil and River Plate

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[27] French steamers ran between St Nazaire and Mexico, with stops at Martinique and St Jago de Cuba.
[28] NMM RMS 54/2 and UCL RMSP 13, 25 April 1866.

Royal Mail Steam Ship Company', but this was dissolved in 1870.[29] Lamport and Holt introduced the 'Liverpool, Brazil and River Plate Steam Navigation Company' in 1868, offering a rival service between Liverpool, Bahia, Rio de Janeiro, Montevideo and Buenos Aires.[30]

On the Caribbean route, the West India and Pacific Steam Ship Company offered passages, in the 1870s, from Liverpool to Barbados; La Guaira; Puerto Cabello; Santa Martha and Colon on the 5th of each month, from Liverpool to Port-au-Prince; Kingston; Vera Cruz and Tampico on the 10th of each month, and to St Thomas; Santa Martha; and Colon on the 20th of each month, with calls at Curaçao and Cartagena every six weeks.[31] More directly threatening to the RMSPC's attempts to foster a tourist trade was the Orient Line's promotion of pleasure cruises to the West Indies in the 1890s. Thus on 27 October 1893, the Orient Line advertised that the *Garonne* would steam out of London on 22 November on a sixty-six day cruise bound for Madeira, Teneriffe, Barbados, Trinidad, Grenada, St Lucia, Martinique, St Kitt's, Santa Cruz, Jamaica, Cuba, Nassau, St Michael's and Lisbon.[32] At the turn of the century, the Imperial Direct Line's service to Jamaica also offered tourists the opportunity to spend two weeks ashore on a single-destination holiday. Although British companies did not replicate the service of the RMSPC, they nevertheless created competition for passengers and, to a company that had initially operated on a

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[29] Rev. J. N. T. Howat, *South American packets: the British packet service to Brazil, the River Plate the west coast (via the Straits of Magellan) and the Falkland Islands, 1808-1880* (York: Postal History Society in association with William Sessions Limited, 1984), p. 181.
[30] *Ibid*., pp. 162-164.
[31] *The Liverpool Mercury*, Advertisements, 26 February 1870.
[32] Under Owen Philipps's leadership, the RMSPC bought up the Pacific Steam Navigation Company's ownership of the U.K. to Australia Orient-Pacific service in 1905 and thus became temporarily involved with the line.

near monopolistic basis in the region, represented a commercial challenge. Reporting on the overall accounts for 1880 (a year in which the RMSPC's mail contract subsidy was reduced), the Company pointed to high levels of competition and the consequent need to keep fares low as one of the reasons underlying decreased passenger income.[33] Similarly in 1885, the Company reported an aggregate loss of almost £23,000 on the Company's receipts in the full-year accounts for 1884, and attributed this loss partially to 'increased competition'.[34] Although the RMSPC showed some initiative in adapting and increasing routes, and promoting tourist tickets to counteract the effects of competition, the Company was unable to overcome definitively the impact of rival operators, and was largely reactive in shaping operations until the first decade of the twentieth century.

As well as competition, the changing economic climate and cycles of trade impacted on the Company's operations. There were moments in each of the final decades of the nineteenth century when the Company pointed to commercial depression to explain falling receipts. For example, although able to report an increase in receipts from freight and passenger money in 1875 (as compared with 1874), the Company nevertheless noted a depression of trade and a 'diminution of travelling'.[35] In the first half of 1876, the Company reported a decrease in passenger receipts across all lines, and on the Brazil and River Plate route attributed this to a depression of trade. The following year the Company reported a further reduction in earnings from passenger money receipts and cited the 'dullness of trade' as well as vague 'other causes' for reduced movement of

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[33] UCL RMSP 14, 27 April 1881.
[34] UCL RMSP 14, 29 April 1885.
[35] NMM RMS 54/3 and UCL RMSP 13, 26 April 1876.

passengers. A decade later, the RMSPC was faced with a similar challenge, and pointed to 'commercial depression' as one reason for losses in 1885.[36] In particular, the Company emphasized financial depression in the West Indies, and reported that the low price of produce had restricted the resources of those who usually travelled on its vessels, thus damaging passenger profits.[37] By 1891 (when passenger receipts were high), the Company's concern had shifted to the economic climate in South America, and the directors pointed to continued depression in Argentina and Brazil as a reason for reduced profits from freight. A difficult economic climate in the Company's regions presented a more disruptive challenge to the RMSPC's operations than the undertakings of rival lines, and the Company's fortunes were subject to rise and slump in accordance with this external factor.

A dynamic political context (principally on the Brazil and River Plate route) proved similarly disruptive to the Company's operations.[38] In May 1865 a Triple Alliance (Brazil, Argentina, and the new government of Uruguay) was formed against Paraguay, in what David Bushnell and Neil Macaulay describe as 'Latin America's biggest war', a conflict that was to last five years.[39] In 1869, the Company reported that 'the continuance of the war carried on by [Brazil] and her allies in the River Plate against Paraguay' had impacted seriously on the Company's profits.[40] Just over a decade later, in 1880, conflict on the west coast of South America was offered as a reason for reduced passenger receipts (war

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[36] UCL RMSP 14, 29 April 1885.

[37] UCL RMSP 14, 28 October 1885 and 28 April 1886.

[38] This dynamic political backdrop continued to unfold in the aftermath of the Spanish American revolutions for independence earlier in the century.

[39] David Bushnell and Neil Macaulay, *The emergence of Latin America in the nineteenth century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 253.

[40] NMM RMS 54/2 and UCL 13, 28 April 1869.

had broken out between Chile and Bolivia in 1879).[41] Five years later, the Company suffered the effects of the revolution in the United States of Colombia, and the destruction of Colon by fire (which disrupted traffic travelling via the Isthmus of Panama).[42] In 1890, passenger income was damaged by 'anti-British feeling developed in Portugal (which caused Passengers from that Country and Brazil to avoid English steamers), the Revolution in Brazil, and the high premium on Gold at Buenos Ayres'.[43] As with shifting economic fortunes, there was little that the RMSPC could do to counteract the temporary troughs in receipts experienced at moments of political crisis on its routes.

As already indicated in the discussion of port towns (see chapter four), quarantine regulations created sticky points in the RMSPC's network and slowed down a ship's passage. Health scares and the resultant isolation arrangements also damaged the Company's passenger receipts, as at such moments individuals were less willing to travel. In 1881 quarantine measures specifically affected inter-colonial passage money, while in 1885 the Brazil and River Plate route suffered the effects of quarantine. In 1888, quarantine systems plagued the West Indies service, and the following year the confinement of ships travelling from Spain affected the Brazil route. The Company pointed to quarantine measures again in 1892 in partial explanation of the low takings on the Brazil and River Plate line. On this occasion, confinement arrangements excluded the Company's vessels from Colon altogether, and ships could only call at the northern ports of Brazil if they first diverted their course by a thousand miles to pass through the

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[41] UCL RMSP 14, 27 October 1880. See also Bushnell and Macaulay, *The emergence of Latin America*, p. 246.
[42] UCL RMSP 14, 28 October 1885 and 28 April 1886.
[43] UCL RMSP 14, 29 October 1890.

quarantine station at Ilha Grande.[44] Health scares were usually cited by the Company in combination with either financial or political factors in explanation of low passenger receipts. In comparison with financial depression, health scares could be overcome in a matter of months, and so this factor caused short-term, but nevertheless notable reversals of fortune for the RMSPC.

In contrast to health problems which temporarily depleted the Company's passenger receipts, momentary international interest in particular places (for financial or cultural reasons) could render the Company's service unusually attractive to passengers. During the first half of 1884, the Company enjoyed increased traffic due to the operations of the Panama Canal Company, but the RMSPC was fully aware that this was an unreliable income stream, and stated that this was a 'source from which the Receipts may be expected to vary considerably from time to time'.[45] Although numbers did not remain consistently high, the RMSPC nevertheless enjoyed revenue from migrants journeying to and from the Panama Canal during the second half of the 1880s. Even more fleeting were moments of cultural interest centred on international and imperial exhibitions. On the occasion of the 1886 Indian and Colonial exhibition, the RMSPC decided to 'afford the Public special facilities for visiting this Country, by issuing Return Tickets at reduced rates' during the first half of the year, and noted with satisfaction that this discounted fare was 'largely availed of'.[46] Yet international exhibitions were equally liable to draw revenue away from the Company. A decade earlier, the Company ascribed reduced passenger travel on the West India line partly to the Philadelphia Exhibition, which had led clients to

[44] UCL RMSP 14, 26 October 1892.
[45] UCL RMSP 14, 29 October 1884.
[46] UCL RMSP 14, 27 October, 1886.

travel to the Caribbean via New York.[47] In 1889, on the other hand, the Paris exhibition impacted favourably upon the Company's receipts, and by 1890 the Company referred to the first half of 1889 as a period in which receipts were 'exceptionally good from both the West Indies and South America owing to the Paris Exhibition'.[48]

As well as altering ticket structures, the service was adapted on several occasions to promote travel. Thus in 1869, the Company announced an improvement to the Brazil and River Plate service which it hoped would lead to 'greater popularity' for the new line.[49] This consisted of a through service to the River Plate, instead of the arrangement whereby Atlantic steamers took passengers as far as Rio de Janeiro where they then transferred into a branch steamer.[50] When the failure of the Panama, New Zealand & Australian Royal Mail Company (with which the RMSPC was involved) left the RMSPC with three ships, the Company initiated a 'B' route to South America in 1872, thus providing additional voyages.[51] In 1872 the Company also introduced a West Indies route alteration, allowing one transatlantic steamer a month to call first and last at Barbados. In April 1884 the Company reported an intention to offer, starting in July, an accelerated Brazil and River Plate service on the 9th of the month. This faster service was intended to maintain 'the estimation in which the Company's Line [was] held by the

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[47] NMM RMS 54/3 and UCL 13 RMSP, 18 October 1876.
[48] UCL RMSP 14, 29 October 1890.
[49] NMM RMS 54/2 and UCL RMSP 13, 27 October 1869.
[50] *Ibid.*
[51] The Panama, New Zealand and Australian Royal Mail Company was a new company that won a U.K. to Australia mail contract in 1866. It was arranged for the RMSPC to provide a service from England to Panama, and the PNZA to continue the journey from the Pacific. The RMSPC provided substantial financial support to the PNZA when the company experienced financial troubles. Yet within the burgeoning steamship services market, the PNZA collapsed.

travelling public'.[52] Furthermore, during 1891, the RMSPC undertook extra voyages (principally on the Brazil and River Plate line).[53] After the first half of the year, passenger income had increased and consequently the directors were buoyant, insisting that the increased passenger earnings derived not merely from the fact of extra journeys, but also from 'the increasing prosperity of the Company's Ships'.[54] The alteration of services allowed for slight improvements in the Company's fortunes but the RMSPC only became proactive in re-positioning itself within the industry once Owen Phillips came to head operations at the start of the twentieth century.

In 1902, the Company's fortunes were such that, against a backdrop of low receipts and rising costs, it endured a failed takeover bid by Sir Christopher Furness. In the aftermath of this crisis, Owen Philipps became a director, and subsequently chairman of the Company. Philipps brought the Company direction and new steamships.[55] Amongst Philipps's many initiatives, some had particular significance for the passenger trade. For example, in 1905 Philipps travelled to New York where he made infrastructural arrangements to facilitate the expansion of the passenger trade between New York and the West Indies.[56] After election to the position of Managing Director in 1905, Philipps also advocated the RMSPC's expanding its migrant passenger trade from Spain and Portugal to Brazil and the River Plate. In 1907, Philipps negotiated a West Indies contract

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[52] UCL RMSP 14, 30 April 1884.
[53] Between 1884 and the middle of 1885, the Company offered a service from Brazil to New York, but after a spate of accidents, this route was suspended. Between the late 1870s and 1885 (as well as during the 1890s) the Company also tinkered frequently with the South American routes.
[54] UCL RMSP 14, 28 October 1891.
[55] Stuart Nicol, *MacQueen's legacy: a history of the Royal Mail line*, 2 vols (Stroud: Tempus, 2001), I, p. 91.
[56] *Ibid*., p. 93.

for the Company, which had coped without government money for two years. By the 1910s, the RMSPC's status and successes were much improved, to the extent that Nicol styles this decade the 'halcyon years for Philipps and RMSP'.[57] Yet the advent of the First World War disrupted the foundations that had been built by steamship companies offering pleasure cruising. Furthermore in 1915 the RMSPC ceased to serve the West Indies altogether, having signed a final five-year West Indies mail contract in 1911.[58] These shifting fortunes, then, provide the oscillating Company context within which I turn to consider the RMSPC's tourist operations.

Promoting place: the RMSPC's marketing of its tourist regions

Since the RMSPC's profits rested upon passenger earnings as well as freight and mail contract income, the Company had a vested interest in selling the expanded Caribbean to travellers on reconfigured post-emancipation terms. As Pramod Nayar stresses, the 'act of communicating about another place is a public cultural act, since it promotes another *public space through a shared set of attributes, values and signs*'.[59] The RMSPC promoted the expanded Caribbean with reference to translated European notions of the picturesque, and in so doing, strengthened specific understandings of this place in the Western touristic imagination. Crouch argues that the body 'provides a significant object of desire through which tourists are themselves seduced to visit places'.[60] The RMSPC's

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[57] *Ibid.*, p. 97.

[58] Trinidad was the main contributor to this contract, which made Trinidad the central transfer station. Although services stopped in 1915, the RMSPC later resumed sailings to the Caribbean.

[59] Pramod K. Nayar, *Reading culture: theory, praxis, politics* (New Delhi: Sage, 2006), p. 181. Emphasis in original.

[60] Crouch, 'Flirting with space: tourism geographies as sensuous / expressive practice', p. 26.

seduction of passengers in this period can be understood as bifurcated. The RMSPC promoted the expanded Caribbean as place primarily through appeal to the visual, which reinforces Urry's preoccupation with the centrality of the 'tourist gaze'. Yet simultaneously, the Company sought, insofar as was possible, to seduce passengers through the space of the ship, and the promise of embodied comforts on board.

Before turning to examine the RMSPC's promotional strategies, it is informative to briefly consider the social status of the Company's transatlantic cabin passenger clientele. It was, after all, towards this group that the RMSPC's marketing efforts were directed. Passenger lists suggest bourgeois and aristocratic occupancy of transatlantic cabin berths during the 1890s. The *Medway*, for example, arrived in Southampton on 18 January 1890 with five steerage and twenty-seven cabin passengers on board.[61] These consisted of nine married men, four married women, six single men, three single women, three boys and two girls.[62] The occupation of fifteen men was listed, and amongst these were one planter, three agents, two gentlemen, two medical men, a merchant, two clergymen, a chemist, a civil engineer, a solicitor, and an astronomer. When the *Medway* returned to Southampton in March 1890 from Savanilla via Colon, Callao, Jamaica, Trinidad, Grenada, St Vincent, and Demerara, fifty-one cabin passengers and five steerage were on board. Planters, merchants and gentlemen were prominent amongst cabin passenger occupations.

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[61] TNA BT 26/7/15. Four of the five steerage passengers listed were men between the ages of twenty-seven and forty-four. Four of these men were noted as 'English', the one 'foreigner' being 'Mr Sheik Ameer Alley', a single man and dispenser by trade, who had embarked at Trinidad. Miss Pike, an English servant of twenty-six years, also travelled in steerage from Jamaica to Southampton.

[62] Passengers between one and twelve years of age were listed as children.

Evidently some of these travellers would have been resident in the Caribbean (most notably the planters), but particularly on the voyage arriving in March, a number of these may have also visited the region for pleasure, travelling on a tourist ticket. Peter Bailey points to the greater availability of middle-class Victorian disposable income during the second half of the century, suggesting that 'even when growth and prosperity seemed to suffer a more general contraction from the mid-1870s onwards, the finances of a substantial element in the Victorian bourgeoisie proved solid enough to resist serious curtailment of expenditure and consumption'.[63] It was precisely this sort of disposable income that the Company sought to capture by luring leisure travellers to the Americas.

Although these two passenger lists from the *Medway* suggest that the Company's transatlantic ships, even in the 1890s, were liable to travel with fewer than thirty cabin passengers on board, the passenger capacity of these vessels was considerably higher. The *Nile* and the *Danube*, sister ships constructed for the South American route between 1893 and 1894, had a capacity for 215 first-class, 36 second-class, and 350 third-class passengers. The *Tagus* and the *Trent*, launched in 1899 for the West Indies route, could accommodate 230 people in first and second class, and 250 in third class. The significantly smaller third-class capacity of West Indies route vessels reflects the fact that the Company carried large numbers of migrants from Spain and Portugal to South America but had no equivalent long-term transatlantic migration on the West Indies route.[64] Yet passenger numbers varied considerably throughout the year. During 1872,

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[63] Peter Bailey, *Leisure and class in Victorian England: rational recreation and the contest for control, 1830-1885* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 69.
[64] The RMSPC advertised its third-class passages in Spain and Portugal in order to secure migrant passenger traffic.

individual ships could carry anything between the 22 passengers who travelled on the *Ebro* on the route to Buenos Aires, to the 177 individuals who travelled on the *Elbe* to St Thomas, Jacmel, Jamaica, Colon and Greytown with Captain Moir.[65] In 1899 Admiral Chatfield, the Company's chairman, stressed the seasonal fluctuation of passenger numbers in response to the proposed new direct Jamaican service. Arguing against the need to introduce any such operation, Chatfield wrote that there were 'not sufficient passengers and goods to fill the ships of the Company's entire present West India Service, and at the busiest time, which is brief, there is no difficulty in taking all the passengers offering'.[66] Charles Kingsley set off for his voyage to the West Indies in December, and James Anthony Froude also travelled during December, departing at the end of 1886. William Drysdale left a North American winter for Nassau, and H. Walker explained that although late November was often touted as the best time to travel, he found it too hot, and therefore recommended arriving in the Caribbean in January.[67] The RMSPC's transatlantic service was, from its inception, subject to seasonal fluxes, with heavier passenger use on the outward leg during the European winter, and a corresponding flow to Europe during the spring and early summer.

In order to capture this seasonal mobility, the RMSPC evolved a suitably structured ticket for travel. During the 1870s, the Company advertised passenger services in such newspapers as *The Liverpool Mercury*, *The Glasgow Herald*,

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[65] RMS 35/2, Details of service transatlantic and inter-colonial, 1872-1875.
[66] NMM RMS 27/1, Jamaica Direct Service, 13 January 1899.
[67] William Drysdale, *In sunny lands: out-door life in Nassau and Cuba* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1885), p. 4; Charles Kinglsey, *At last: a Christmas in the West Indies*, 4th edn (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874), p. 2; H. de R. Walker, *The West Indies and the Empire: study and travel in the winter of 1900-1901* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1901), pp. 233-234.

and Dublin's *Freeman's Journal and Daily Commercial Advertiser*. A typical advert, such as that appearing in the *Liverpool Mercury* on 26 December 1879, opened by listing the steamers' destinations — in this case the 'West Indies, Colon or Aspinwall, Mexico, Belize, Central American & South Pacific ports, San Francisco, and British Columbia' — and proceeded to state regular dates of departure. Specific ports-of-call were listed for recently introduced services. In this advert, for instance, it was noted that an additional steamer would 'leave Southampton, on the 11th of each month, for Barbados, St Lucia, St Vincent, Grenada, Trinidad, La Guayra, Porto Cabello, Curaçao, Savanilla, Carthagena, and Colon'.[68] Yet in contrast to the complex pricing system in operation during the first few decades of service, by 1884 the Company advertised 'tourist, and family tickets' as well as single and return fares.[69] Passengers travelling from Britain could cross the Atlantic and transfer, on arrival, into inter-colonial vessels. The *Eden*, *Esk* and *Solent*, vessels performing the inter-colonial mail service in the West Indies, provided (in the eyes of the Company's directors) an 'unequalled means by which Passengers [could] visit or make Passages among the West India Islands at the best season, and avoid the winter of this country at a very moderate expense'.[70] The production of a simplified ticket structure, and the evolution of a specific 'tourist ticket' was a key development in the RMSPC's promotion of its tourist services.

The tourist ticket was heavily promoted during the European winter. In the Victorian period, escape from the English winter was routinely advocated, for those who could afford it, on health grounds. John Pemble writes that, '[b]elief in

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[68] *The Liverpool Mercury*, 26 December 1879.
[69] *The Glasgow Herald*, 25 August 1884.
[70] UCL RMSP 14, 30 October 1895.

the therapeutic value of Mediterranean climates had drawn English invalids to the Riviera during the eighteenth century; and in the Victorian era 'ordering south' became a standard medical prescription for the well-to-do'.[71] Various destinations were in vogue until the 1860s, when British invalids and medical advisors began to manifest a firm preference for the Riviera.[72] Consumptives were a particular category of patient often ordered abroad. As Pemble explains, 'it was widely believed in medical circles that the only serious hope of recovery lay in transferring the patient to a Southern climate for the winter months'.[73] In addition to the perceived medical benefits of warmer climates, water was associated with health. James Walvin notes that '[t]he popular drift to the seaside had become noticeable by the late eighteenth century and in common with the earlier history of the spas it was partly stimulated by the joint example of royalty and medical opinion. Doctors came to regard sea water as having the medical properties they had previously proclaimed for mineral waters'.[74] The RMSPC sought to tap into this interest in escape to sunnier climes, as well as the perceived link between health and sea water, in its winter tourism campaigns.

During the 1890s, the Company began to offer specifically promoted winter tours, and advertised the West Indies route in such newspapers as *The Daily News*, *The Graphic*, and *The Glasgow Herald*. A typical advertisement read:

> WINTER IN THE WEST INDIES.
> Special Tours 65 days for £65, by magnificent vessels of the ROYAL MAIL STEAM PACKET COMPANY.

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[71] John Pemble, *The Mediterranean passion: Victorians and Edwardians in the south* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 84.
[72] *Ibid.*, p. 86.
[73] *Ibid.*, p. 88.
[74] James Walvin, *Leisure and society 1830-1950* (London and New York: Longman, 1978), p. 13.

For particulars, apply at 18, Moorgate-street, or 29 Cockspur-street, (West-end), London[75]

The RMSPC's promotion of its tourist ticket during the 1890s stressed value with reference to time: each pound corresponded to a day of leisured touring, and the question of which islands were covered was relegated to secondary importance, a matter for further enquiry. What these adverts underscored was the leisured time on offer, at a correspondingly attractive price in the Company's 'magnificent vessels'. These adverts referenced the West Indies in undifferentiated terms, and, as such, reflected broader trends in the RMSPC's promotion of Caribbean tourism. Such efforts to incite passengers to 'winter' in the West Indies met with success. Despite a problematic start to the decade, the Company noted in the report of April 1893 that the 'numerous Passengers who have left England in the winter months on the Special West India Tour, arranged by the Company at the rate of £65 for 65 days, have borne additional testimony to the attention shewn to Passengers by the Captains and Officers, and to the discipline and comfort on board the Vessels of the Company'.[76] Within the turbulent fortunes of the late nineteenth century, the tourist trade provided one area for optimism.

These special winter tourist arrangements were further developed in the first decade of the twentieth century. 'Winter in the West Indies', the 1904 poster exhorted, the blue capital lettering of 'winter' contrasting with the bold red used for 'the West Indies' (see figure 7.2). Also in red, the Company announced that

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[75] *The Daily News*, 7 November 1894. See also, for example *The Graphic*, 20 and 27 January 1900.

[76] UCL RMSP 14, 26 April 1893.

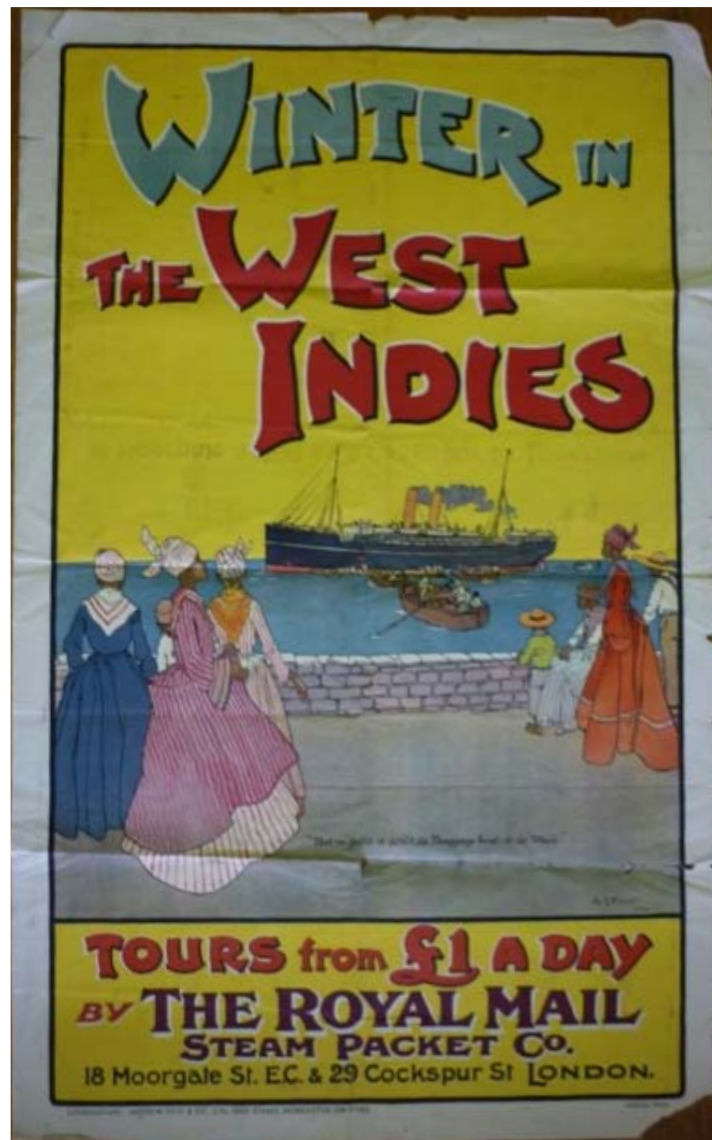tours were available 'from £1 a day' by the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company.[77]

Figure 7.2 'Winter in the West Indies': a 1904 poster advertising the RMSPC's tourist services.

Courtesy of National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

[77] NMM RMS 93/7. A signature on the corner of this poster suggests that it is possibly by an individual called A. Forrest.

The slogan 'winter in the West Indies' is set against a yellow background where a sky might naturally have been. The yellow is used, presumably, as a more direct incarnation of sunshine. In the background, a steamship sits on the waters, with several rowing boats in the middle ground going out to meet it. Inside the boat, black men are distinguishable, dressed in white and pale outfits. In the foreground, four women are standing, framing the view, and one woman is seated. A girl's face can just be made out behind one of the women's dresses. A boy in a hat watches the steamship and the rowing boats, with his back to the viewer. A final boy or man, also in a hat and facing away from the viewer, watches the scene on the waters. But the foreground is dominated by the women in bright colours − one in orange, and one in pink stripes. All wear patterned or coloured headscarves, thus ensuring that they are part of the vibrant colouring used for the poster as a whole, and contribute to a sense of the exotic picturesque. Intensifying the notion of the exotic, a legend is written beneath the scene: 'But m'frens it don't de baggage boat, it de mail'. This inclusion of creolised language on an unspecified but West Indian island neatly illustrates the undifferentiated but exotic sense of place that the Company mobilised in order to promote late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century tourism to the Caribbean. The 'Winter in the West Indies' poster is suggestive of the way in which the RMSPC constructed a tropical representation of the West Indies 'as something to be seen − a view to be had or a vision to be experienced'.[78]

As well as developing visually striking advertisements with which to promote winter tours, towards the end of the century the RMSPC also began to produce

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[78] Felix Driver and Luciana Martins, 'Views and visions of the tropical world', in *Tropical visions in an age of empire*, ed. by Felix Driver and Luciana Martins (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2005), pp. 3-20 (p. 5).

guidebooks to the West Indies and South America.[79] Although travel narratives had a much longer history, it was John Murray's guidebooks that 'set the standard for the modern travel guide' from the 1830s.[80] Murray's publications were soon joined in the market by Baedeker's. As a standard format, Murray's guides began with a history and description of the region along with practical information (such as currency, transportation and lodging), followed by suggested itineraries and then chapters detailing different sub-regions.[81] The RMSPC's publications loosely fitted into this model, blending practical information with historical and geographical points of interest, and possible itineraries. It also formed part of a transportation publication trend. The transportation industry, by enabling travel, increased the demand for such printed material, and often catered to this very demand itself. In the context of the American railroad, for example, the construction of the Union Pacific/ Central Pacific line was quickly followed by the publication of *The Great Transcontinental Railway guide* by a Denver businessman, which sold 350,000 copies in the course of a decade.[82] In contrast to necessarily brief newspaper adverts, the RMSPC's official guides to the West Indies and South America provided a sustained representation of its main tourist regions.

The booklet *Tours in the West Indies*, season 1907/8 foregrounded the 'luxurious accommodation' available on board the RMSPC's vessels, the 'healthfulness'

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[79] In 1901 the Company recommended its publication, *A guide to the West Indies*, explaining that 'proprietors of this Company, or their friends, who are going to the West Indies, can have a fully illustrated Book of the Tours sent to them on application'. See UCL RMSP 14. Mimi Sheller has written of how the RMSPC promoted Caribbean tourism at the turn of the century, and discusses the Company's 1901 guide. See Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, p. 63.
[80] Withey, *Grand tours*, p. 70.
[81] *Ibid.*, p. 71.
[82] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

afforded by a sea voyage, and the opportunity to gain personal knowledge of the Empire.[83] Preceding the main text of this booklet was a small, postcard-like image entitled 'Botanical Gardens, Dominica' (see figure 7.3).
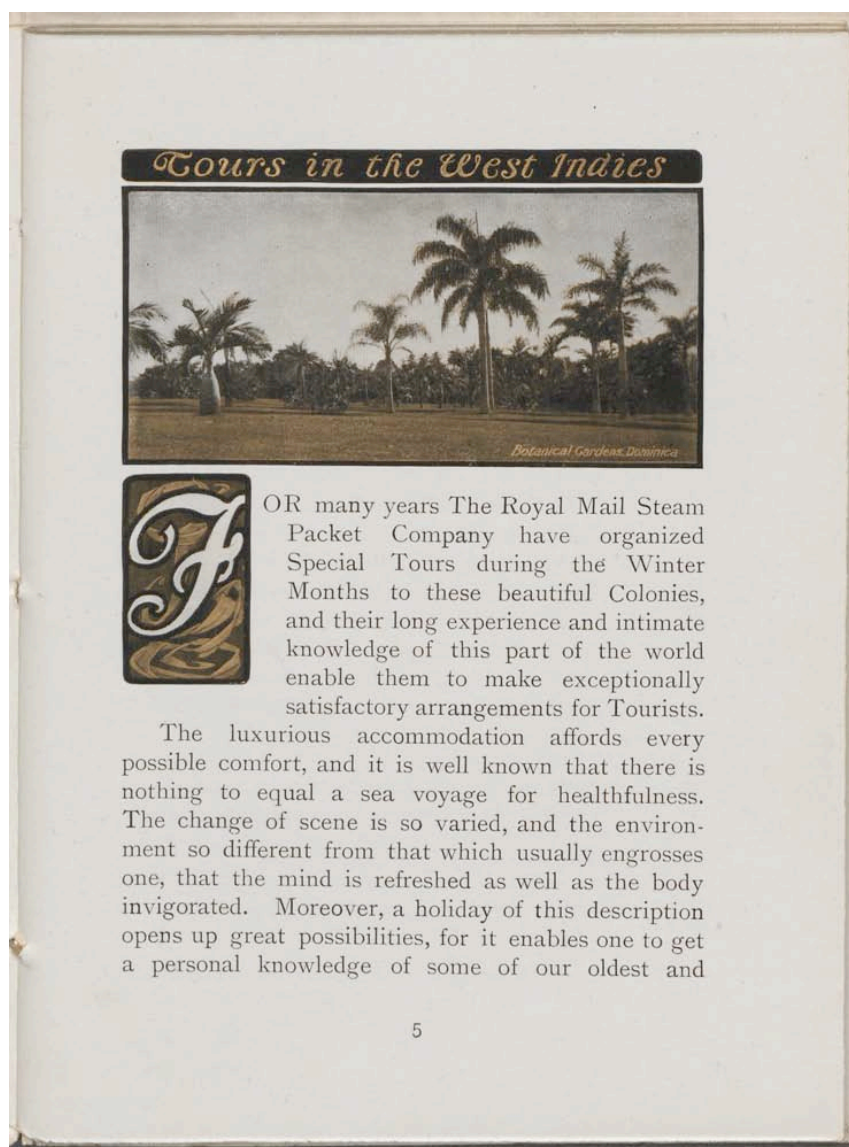

Figure 7.3 The first page of the RMSPC's publication *Tours in the West Indies*, season 1907/08. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library. Source: Buckley.e.1, *Tours in the West Indies*.

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[83] RMSP *Tours in the West Indies*, season 1907/8 (London: The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, [n.d.]).

This image was dominated by coconut trees, and thus framed the tourist experience with reference to tropical vegetation and natural scenery. [84] The Company suggested that 'a holiday of this description opens up great possibilities, for it enables one to get a personal knowledge of some of our oldest and most interesting Colonies and to study first hand the manners and customs of their people'. [85] In this respect, the Company drew upon 'that post-Reformation spirit of inquiry which valued empirical knowledge over abstract speculation or book-learning derived merely from tradition'. [86] The RMSPC, then, promoted West Indian tours with reference to an accumulation of knowledge of the natural and human world, and through the promise of physical rejuvenation.

The tourist was offered the possibility of undertaking one of four types of Caribbean tour (see figures 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6). The 'A' tours, at the most expensive rate of £75, and lasting for approximately seventy-five days, covered the Northern Islands, the Spanish Main and Jamaica. [87] 'B' tours, costing £65 and lasting approximately sixty days, involved a return trip from Southampton to Cherbourg, Barbados, Trinidad, La Guaira, Puerto Colombia, Colon and Jamaica, with two weeks spent ashore in Jamaica before the tourist returned

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[84] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[85] *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

[86] Ian Ousby, *The Englishman's England: taste, travel and the rise of tourism*, 2nd edn (London: Pimlico, 2002), p. 9.

[87] A tourist on the 'A' route would travel from Southampton to Barbados (via Cherbourg), and would then transfer to an inter-colonial steamer, where they would continue to Grenada, St Vincent, St Lucia, Dominica, Montserrat, Antigua, Nevis, St Kitt's, and back through the islands to Barbados. At this point they would transfer to a transatlantic steamer to travel to Trinidad, before continuing to La Guaira, Puerto Colombia, Colon and Jamaica. They would then spend two weeks in Jamaica, before returning through Colon, Puerto Colombia, La Guaira, Trinidad and Barbados to Cherbourg and Southampton.

home on the same transatlantic steamer.[88] 'C' tours, lasting for thirty-three days and costing £55, covered the Northern Islands (Barbados, Grenada, St Vincent, St Lucia, Dominica, Montserrat, Antigua, Nevis and St Kitt's). 'D' tours covered the Spanish Main, Jamaica, Cuba and Mexico, but were undertaken independently by the tourist and therefore did not follow a specific itinerary.[89] In contrast to the graduated pricing structure of the earlier steamers, tourists were offered the choice of any berth in any steamer, all berths being charged at the same price.[90] Where tourists broke their journey as part of the printed itinerary, for example on the 'A' tours, the Company bore the expense. At Barbados, for instance, where the 'A' tourist spent a few days ashore, accommodation was provided either on the inter-colonial steamer, or the Company paid for board and lodging ashore.[91] Similarly at Jamaica, where the tourist spent approximately twelve days, the Company provided coupons to stay in any of the hotels of the island.[92] The stratification of 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'D' tours provided clients with a simple and accessible pricing structure. The set of tours also offered a central tourist position to Jamaica (where 'A' and 'B' tourists stayed for a fortnight). Unlike the trans-imperial trajectories of earlier decades, 'C' tours offered a strictly Anglophone British colonial mini-tour. In this way, by the first decade of the twentieth century, the RMSPC had developed a small but differentiated set of itineraries mapping out specific tourist routes through the Caribbean.

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[88] RMSP *Tours in the West Indies*, season 1907/8, pp. 60-1.

[89] 'D' tours did not follow a specific itinerary, and therefore are not included in figures 7.4 to 7.6.

[90] Berths charged at a different price were the two-bedded cabin-de-luxe in the *Magdalena*, which offered its own private bath and lavatory, and four two-bedded rooms in the same ship, where an extra charge was made for the extra beds. RMSP *Tours in the West Indies*, season 1907/8, p. 7.

[91] *Ibid*., p. 15.

[92] *Ibid*., p. 9.

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Figure 7.4 The route of the RMSPC's 'A' tour. Source: Buckley.e.1, *Tours in the West Indies*.

The journey between Barbados and Trinidad was made in a transatlantic steamer.
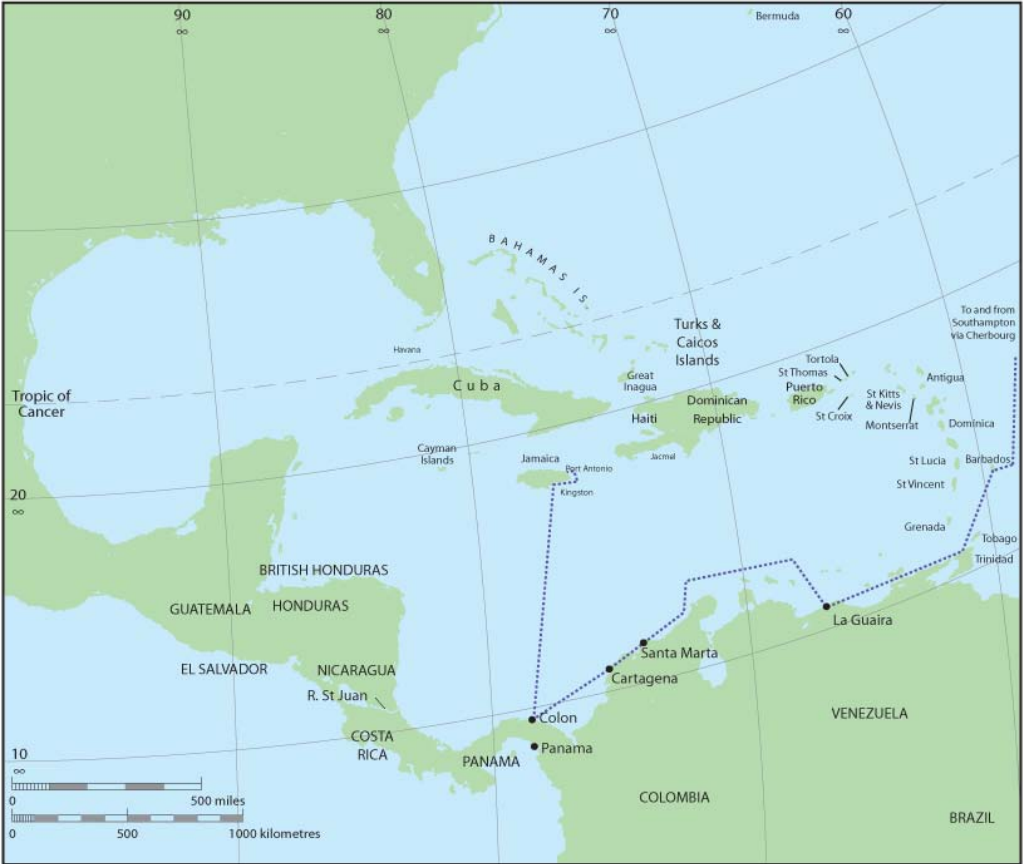
Figure 7.5 The route of the RMSPC's 'B' tour. Source: Buckley.e.1, *Tours in the West Indies*.

Mountain High Maps® Copyright © 1993 Digital Wisdom, Inc.

Figure 7.6 The route of the RMSPC's 'C' tour. Source: Buckley.e.1, *Tours in the West Indies*. The journey between Southampton and Barbados was made in a transatlantic steamer.

The RMSPC's marketing associated the Caribbean with picturesque landscapes and attractive spectacles. The first words about Grenada, for example, were that '[b]y many people this island is considered to be the most beautiful of the Caribbees'.[93] The booklet noted the 'splendid view' of the harbour that could be enjoyed from the vantage point of Richmond Hill. The preoccupation with the Caribbean landscape's appeal to the visual was particularly foregrounded by the booklet's commentary that, '[f]or photographers Grenada presents endless opportunities of recording the most lovely tropical sea and landscapes that can be

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[93] *Ibid*., p. 16.

imagined'.[94] Although picturesque aesthetics reached the height of popularity in Britain during the first decade of the nineteenth century, the RMSPC invoked these same terms one hundred years later in presenting the Caribbean. Such travelling ideas had a long history. During the era of slavery a 'plantation picturesque' style had emerged, in which '[l]andscape paintings, often reproduced in print media, conveyed to the British public the picturesque beauties of the Jamaican countryside using tropes of representation familiar from paintings and engravings of European landscape scenery'.[95] As Tim Barringer stresses, the 'aesthetics of the picturesque continually informed visual and verbal representations of the Jamaican landscape, and especially of the plantations, throughout and beyond the period of slavery'.[96] Malcom Andrews writes of the term picturesque, that the 'word is a valuable coin in the currency of tourism. It means "like a picture" and implies that each scene fills some pictorial prescription in terms of subject-matter or composition'.[97] Towards the end of the eighteenth century, tourists pursued the picturesque in North Wales, the Lake District and the Scottish Highlands.[98] The RMSPC suggested that similar pleasures might be sought further from Europe. While writer William Gilpin's essays on the picturesque stressed the distinction between beautiful scenes, which were pleasing 'in their *natural state*' and picturesque scenes, which were pleasing due to 'some quality, capable of being *illustrated in painting*', the

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[94] *Ibid*., p. 17.

[95] Tim Barringer and Gillian Forrester, 'Introduction', in *Art and emancipation in Jamaica: Issac Mendes Belisario and his worlds* (New Haven and London: Yale Center for British Art in Association with Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 1-6 (p. 5).

[96] Tim Barringer, 'Picturesque prospects and the labor of the enslaved', in *Art and emancipation in Jamaica: Issac Mendes Belisario and his worlds* (New Haven and London: Yale Center for British Art in Association with Yale University Press, 2007), pp. 41-64 (p. 41).

[97] Malcom Andrews, *The search for the picturesque: landscape aesthetics and tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1989), p. vii.

[98] *Ibid*., p. viii.

RMSPC invoked the expanded Caribbean as both beautiful *and* picturesque.[99] Yet picturesque theory validated natural, irregular, even 'wild' forms, and it was primarily these visual notions to which the RMSPC appealed.[100] Arguably, a picturesque aesthetic 'translates the political and the social into the decorative', and in repeatedly casting Caribbean landscapes and peoples as picturesque, the RMSPC presented complex post-emancipation socio-economic realities as pleasing pictures for leisured consumption.[101] As Sheller argues, '[t]hrough visions of the picturesque, travellers constructed and put into practice a relation of colonial domination'.[102]

Krista Thompson has examined the influence of the camera on tourist practices in the Caribbean and argues that photography played a key role in the re-invention of Jamaica.[103] It might be stressed that steamship companies contributed to this photographic engagement with the landscape by investing in material facilities on board ship which supported the production of post-emancipation views of the Caribbean. By 1907, the RMSPC boasted of dark rooms on board their vessels. Thus the ability to gaze was privileged through a promotional emphasis upon spaces that enabled travellers to frame and produce representations of the post-emancipation Caribbean. While the RMSPC sold visual appeal in its booklets, passengers on tour benefitted from material access

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[99] *Ibid*., p. 57. William Gilpin is described by the Dictionary of National Biography as a 'miscellaneous writer'. Gilpin published a number of essays on the picturesque. See the *Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. by Leslie Stephen (London: Smith, Elder and Co, 1890), pp. 383-385.

[100] Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, 'Introduction', in *The politics of the picturesque: literature, landscape and aesthetics since 1770*, ed. by Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 1-12 (p. 3).

[101] *Ibid*., p. 6.

[102] Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, p. 62.

[103] Krista Thompson, *An eye for the tropics: tourism, photography, and framing the Caribbean picturesque* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 10 and p. 29.

to equipment and dark room space. The visual regime was thus supported by the RMSPC's provision of a '"sensuous immediacy"' of material culture to tourists'.[104]
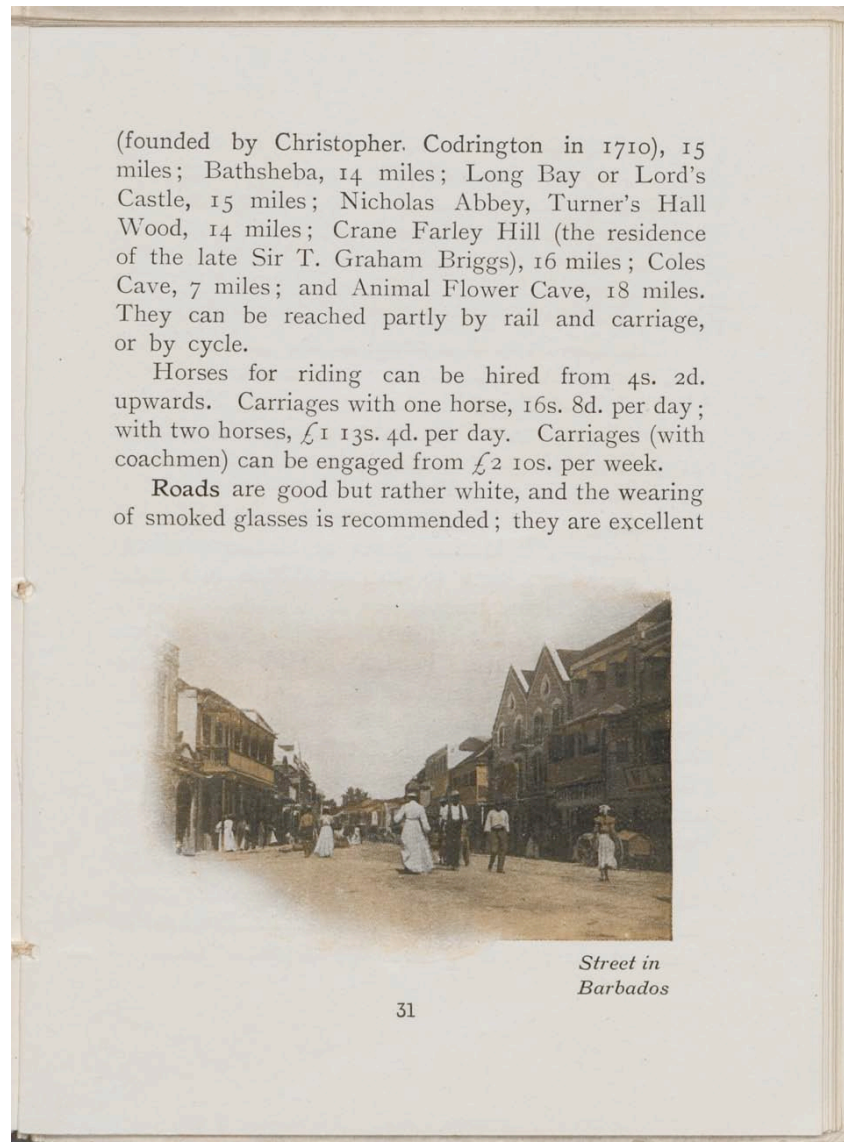

Figure 7.7 One of several 'Street' images in *Tours in the West Indies*. Reproduced by kind permission of the Syndics of Cambridge University Library. Source: Buckley.e.1, *Tours in the West Indies*.

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[104] Michael Haldrup and Jonas Larsen, 'Material cultures of tourism', *Leisure studies*, 25:3 (2006), 275-289, (pp. 275-276).

Despite stressing the opportunity to 'study first hand the manners and customs' of Caribbean peoples as a key opportunity afforded by the tours, *Tours in the West Indies* obscured Caribbean people into a general picturesque frame, by providing small illustrations in which they were portrayed in bright clothes but with small and indistinct faces (see figure 7.7 for an example of one such picture). A similar image entitled 'Street in Grenada' showed black men and women dressed in white, presented at such a scale as to be almost indistinguishable the one from the other, and thus rendered them part of the scenery.[105] The RMSPC's promotion of place in *Tours in the West Indies*, centred as it was on a region, and necessarily packaged into an easily-digestible amount of information, contributed to the construction of an undifferentiated sense of the Caribbean amongst potential tourists, as the Company provided an impressionistic, rather than specific view of the region. Thus the RMSPC's commodification of place in *Tours in the West Indies* implicated the RMSPC in what Sheller has termed a 'politics of the picturesque', in which 'moving through the islands and viewing 'the scenery' was not simply about a relation to the landscape, but also was about a relationship to Caribbean people'.[106]

Similar emphases shaped the RMSPC's promotion of the South American route. The Company's *Guide for the South American route* was produced 'for the information of tourists and passengers' and published in 1904. Reminding the reader that 'it is part of one's education to visit other countries, and those who have only seen their own country, will find themselves considerably behind the times', the *Guide* was intended 'give in a condensed form a concise idea of what

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[105] RMSP *Tours in the West Indies*, season 1907/8, p.17.
[106] Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, pp. 61-2.

is best to be done at the ports called at, on the voyage from Southampton to Buenos Ayres'.[107] The *Guide* suggested that tours might last between eight days and seven weeks, but could be extended by staying at individual ports for up to a year.[108] Return trips to Rio de Janeiro could be undertaken in a minimum of five weeks, at a cost of forty-five pounds, and River Plate trips, which required at least seven weeks of travelling, were priced at fifty-two pounds and ten shillings.

The Company's 1904 publication described the South American route as 'an excellent opportunity for voyages of a long or short duration to those requiring rest or change'.[109] Whereas the West Indies was noted for the 'lovely scenery of the Islands of the Caribbean Sea', South America was promoted as unequalled as a journey 'for health and fine weather'.[110] The *Guide* foregrounded the weather as a key attraction of the South American route, detailing that 'one of the chief points of value in a trip to South America is the fine weather which almost invariably prevails, the temperature rarely becoming oppressive, and then only when crossing the Equator.'[111] Thus health occupied a more central position in the marketing of South American touring than on the West Indies route.

The promotion of place in the *Guide* was upheld partly through invocations of racial difference at various points along the tour. Notably, the *Guide* promised a spectacle of racialized difference on both sides of the Atlantic. Following instructions for passengers to make themselves comfortable in their cabins, were

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[107] NMM RMS 56/1 *Guide to Brazil and the River Plate* (London: The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, 1904), p. 11.
[108] *Ibid.*
[109] *Ibid.*, p. 7.
[110] *Ibid.*, p. 11.
[111] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

two full-page photographs, the first entitled 'Portuguese Peasant' and the second 'Portuguese Peasants'. Both images were credited to Emilio Biel & Co. of Oporto. The images presented a romanticized and exoticized image of the Portuguese Other. There were five 'Portuguese peasant' images in the *Guide* in total. The *Guide*'s interest in 'peasant' images followed picturesque aesthetics, typically interested in such figures as 'gypsies, beggars and banditi'.[112] The promotion of place through the framing of 'native' bodies occurred at several points in the *Guide*. Of Funchal, for example, the *Guide* commented that the 'streets of Funchal are very interesting and picturesque, so also are the natives seen in them.'[113] At St Vincent (Cape de Verde) the *Guide* reassured the passenger that, '[v]ery little inconvenience is caused by the coaling operations to those stopping on board the vessel, but a run on shore is desirable, though there is not much in the way of sightseeing to be done. By the amateur photographer, many amusing groups may be taken of the coloured people, and the numerous children amongst them. The boys come off to the ship, and dive for silver coins, and it will be noticed that many boats are engaged in dredging for the coals which fall from the lighters alongside'.[114] Urry's insistence that bodies are subject to the tourist gaze is pertinent to the *Guide*, where some of the 'coloured' women of Bahia 'who may be seen in the markets and streets selling fruit' were advertised as 'fine specimens of humanity as regards physique'.[115] People then were to be viewed for entertainment. Yet the promise of human spectacle was emphasized strongly with reference to Spain, Portugal and St Vincent, more so

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[112] Stephen Copley, 'William Gilpin and the black-lead mine', in *The politics of the picturesque: literature, landscape and aesthetics since 1770*, ed. by Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 42-61 (p. 56).

[113] NMM RMS 56/1 *Guide to Brazil and the River Plate*, p. 39.

[114] *Ibid*., p. 50.

[115] *Ibid*., p. 59.

than other locations on the tour. Images of South America were predominantly harbour views, views looking out from the harbour at ships, or landscape shots and thus contrasted with the earlier 'peasant' portraits (see figure 7.8). By avoiding pictorial representations of people in images of South America, the *Guide* conformed to the pattern that Tim Edensor describes, in which 'certain Western practices of pictorially representing places in the colonised realm often entail the writing out of people from the landscape'.[116]

GARDENS, RIO DE JANEIRO.

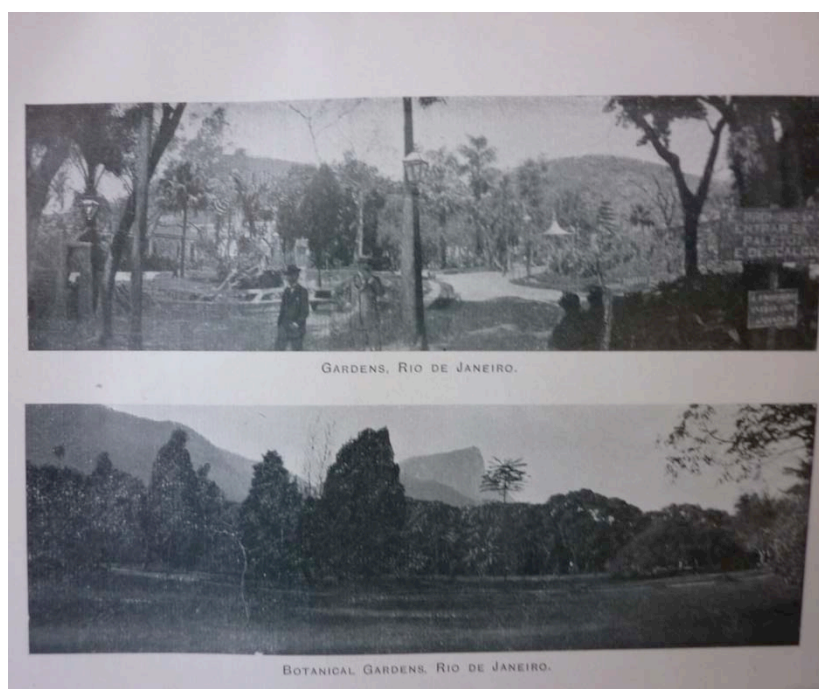BOTANICAL GARDENS, RIO DE JANEIRO.

Figure 7.8 A page from the *Guide for the South American route*, showing the Botanical Gardens in Rio de Janeiro. Courtesy of National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

Just as with the West Indies, South America too was cast as picturesque. Fernando de Noronha, two hundred and ninety-three miles from Pernambuco,

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[116] Tim Edensor, *Tourists at the Taj,* p. 23.

and the 'first glimpse of South America', was summarized as being 'extremely picturesque in appearance'.[117] Similarly Pernambuco, the first South American port-of-call, was written of as 'picturesque, especially to the traveller who has not seen tropical scenery before.'[118] Bahia, or Sao Salvador, situated on the Bay of All Saints, had a 'beautiful harbour, surrounded with picturesque scenery.'[119] Rio de Janeiro, the *Guide* described, had 'the finest harbour in the world, Sydney being the only other which lays claim to surpass it.'[120] Contributing to the construction of the picturesque within the *Guide*, the use of fold-out photographs provided the reader with panoramic landscape views. The first such panoramic view produced was of Vigo, followed by one of Oporto and one of the Madero docks in Buenos Aires. The *Guide* therefore associated the steamship journey with the panoramic viewing experience, selling this visual mode as an experiential advantage of steamship travel.

Ana Vadillo and John Plunkett write of the 'mobile gaze' of the railway traveller. The 'mobilized or mobile gaze' to which they refer had a long tradition in maritime travel and was extended into steamship ways of seeing.[121] Exploring the relationship between railway travel and optical entertainments, Vadillo and Plunkett argue that 'the moving images of panoramas and dioramas provided a paradigm for the experience of the railway passenger'.[122] The applicability of the

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[117] NMM RMS 56/1 *Guide to Brazil and the River Plate*, p. 51.

[118] *Ibid*., p. 54.

[119] *Ibid*., p. 57.

[120] *Ibid*., p. 60.

[121] Ana Parejo Vadillo and John Plunkett, 'The railway passenger; or, the training of the eye', in *The railway and modernity: time, space, and the machine ensemble*, ed. by Matthew Beaumont and Michael Freeman (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2007), pp. 45-67, (p. 47). Vadillo and Plunkett consider the 'mobile gaze' in terms of 'the adaptation of the human eye to the transient and the transformation of the observer into a transient figure'. Both of these elements of vision had long been experienced on ships.

[122] *Ibid*., p. 51.

paradigm to steamship travel is evidenced by Charles Kingsley's comment that 'day after day, the steamer carried us past a shifting diorama of scenery'.[123] Yet there were key differences between the steamship gaze and the railway passenger's vision. Wolfgang Schivelbush argues that it is the 'machine ensemble that interjects itself between the traveler and the landscape. The traveler perceived the landscape as it [was] filtered through the machine ensemble.'[124] The steamship traveller had a similarly mobile gaze, although there may be a distinction to be drawn between observing from the deck, and looking through a porthole. In a steamship, landscape and seascape could be observed from, though not necessarily through 'the machine ensemble'. The steamship gaze was a continuation, rather than a disruption from scenic appreciation under sail. As David Bissell has highlighted, experiences of viewing the landscape on train journeys vary according to the time of day and the places being traversed. The 'diversity of visual practices' that Bissell highlights with reference to train travellers is equally applicable to steamship journeys.[125] It should be noted, though, that steamship travellers continued to gaze rather than 'glance' at views.[126]

The RMSPC maintained the promotion of steamship views in its 1913 publication in collaboration with the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, *Tours to South America: including a few notes on points of interest in the various*

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[123] Kingsley, *At last*, p. 26

[124] Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The railway journey: trains and travel in the 19th century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1977), p. 27.

[125] David Bissell, 'Visualising everyday geographies: practices of vision through travel time', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, NS 34:1 (2009), 42-60 (p. 57).

[126] Jonas Larsen has drawn a distinction between the gaze and the glance. See Jonas Larsen, 'Tourism mobilities and the travel glance: experiences of being on the move', *Scandinavian journal of hospitality and tourism*, 1:2 (2001), 80-98.

localities.[127] The booklet listed the 'attractions' of the continent as comprising 'climate, scenery, costume, social and economic conditions' all of which, the booklet claimed, contrasted with the 'state of affairs in Northern Europe'.[128] 'Matters of historical interest' were said to be 'thickest on the West Coast'.[129] The East Coast, which the RMSPC served, was said to appeal to the 'sense of observation'.[130] Once again, therefore, the RMSPC tourist experience was associated with the visual. More specifically, the booklet offered a long list of economic and agricultural attractions:

> The great coffee plantations, the tobacco farms, the sugar districts of Brazil; the magnificent city of Rio de Janeiro, set in the midst of the most gorgeous harbour in the world; the great meat centres of Montevideo; Buenos Aires with its crowded docks; the estancias of the Argentine hinterland, where the scale of farming is truly gigantic; the mighty falls of Igazú, which far exceed those of Niagara, and the frigid beauties of the Magellan Straits, backed by the snow-clad peaks of Andes ranges, are typical examples of the wonders to be seen on the eastern side'.[131]

By framing centres of economic production and activity as 'wonders to be seen', the RMSPC promoted its tourist experience as a series of 'distant views'.[132]

Photographs reproduced in this booklet foregrounded a rural and 'primitive' view of the continent that was presumably to contrast not only with 'modern' Northern Europe, but also steamers and industrial technology. Images were entitled 'Brazil − Primitive country carts', 'Llamas crossing willow bridge in the "Land of the Incas"', 'Dipping Sheep − Province of Buenos Aires'. Even in an urban image, attention was drawn, through the title, to the natural backdrop, as

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[127] NMM RMS 93/7, *Tours to South America* ([n.p.]: The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company and the Pacific Steam Navigation Company, 1913).
[128] *Ibid*., p. 3.
[129] *Ibid*., p. 5.
[130] *Ibid*.
[131] *Ibid*., p. 7.
[132] David Crouch, 'Surrounded by place: embodied encounters', in *Tourism: between place and performance,* ed. by Simon Coleman and Mike Crang (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002) pp. 207-218, (p. 211).

the photograph was called 'Avenida Rio Branco, Rio de Janeiro, with the "Sugar Loaf" mountain behind it.'[133] South America, like the Caribbean, then, was predominantly promoted through an appeal to the visual. On the South American route, natural and rural elements were particularly strongly underscored.

The RMSPC's promotion of place in the expanded Caribbean indicates that an appeal to 'the tourist gaze' was central to nineteenth-century maritime tourism.[134] The landscape was routinely represented as picturesque, and material provision was made for travelling tourists to reproduce such views in dark rooms on board. The place of Caribbean peoples within this scheme, however, was ambivalent, as people were alternately incorporated into a frame of visual entertainment or, in the case of South America, removed altogether from view. In this respect, the RMSPC's promotion of the expanded Caribbean foreshadowed twentieth-century modes of marketing the region.

Imaginative geographies: non RMSPC views of the expanded Caribbean

> Let us embark on a short paper-voyage to these delightful and distressful lands. Steaming south-west for nearly 4000 miles, through an atmosphere that grows warmer every day, till the ocean is yellow with the mysterious floating sargassum weed and the air is alive with the long skimming leaps of the flying-fish, we anchor one cloudless deep-blue night in Carlisle Bay. The houses, glistening white in the moonlight among the dark green palms, are those of Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados.[135]

This invitation to undertake a 'paper-voyage' formed the opening not of a travel narrative, but an historical work: Arnold Kennedy's *The story of the West*

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[133] NMM RMS 93/7, *Tours to South America*, p. 4.
[134] Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*, p. 1.
[135] Arnold Kennedy, *The story of the West Indies* (London: Horace Marshall & Son, 1899), p. 4.

Indies.[136] The opening to Kennedy's text is indicative of the relationship between steamship services and imagined geographies of the Americas. In a context of expanding transportation networks and cheaper printing technologies, the late nineteenth century witnessed a proliferation in the publication of travel narratives. In the post-emancipation period, steamship services fuelled imaginative geographies of the expanded Caribbean. Simultaneously, steamship companies benefited from the circulation of these imaginative geographies, as published texts incited people to tour the region.

Travel writing based on steamship journeys could serve as a form of unofficial advertising for companies such as the RMSPC, and this relationship between travel advertising and steamship literature indicates the wider discursive contexts that the RMSPC drew on and contributed to in selling tourism. In 1905, the RMSPC donated Frank T. Bullen's *Back to sunny seas* to the West Indian Club, of which Owen Philipps, the RMSPC's chairman, was a member.[137] Philipps had good reason to choose this publication for donation to the library, since Bullen's narrative was dedicated to Owen Philipps himself.[138] Bullen's text described a journey on board the RMSPC's vessels as a guest of the Company, and roundly praised the service. The act of gifting the text to the West Indian Club cannot be considered a mere act of vanity on Philipps's part. As an astute businessman, Philipps doubtless recognized the role of steamship travel literature in promoting tourism. The utility of travel writing to the tourist industry is further highlighted by steamship advertisements that quoted travel narrative authors in order to construct a seductive imaginative geography. The Orient Line, for instance,

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[136] This text formed part of the 'Story of the Empire' series.
[137] ICS 96/3/10/1, West Indian Club Reports & Accounts, 1898-1906.
[138] Frank T. Bullen, *Back to sunny seas* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1905).

advertised a pleasure cruise to the West Indies in 1899 by quoting Charles Kinglsey's *At last: a Christmas in the West Indies*, as well as two other authors.[139] Following a similar logic, the RMSPC's tourist guides provided bibliographies which listed Charles Kingsley's, Frank Bullen's and James Froude's work.

Kingsley's 1871 publication *At last: a Christmas in the West Indies* was prominent and perhaps the most cited amongst texts based on RMSPC journeys. Indeed, inter-textual references found within travel narratives indicate how imaginative geographies operated to persuade passengers to undertake these steamship journeys. Kingsley's own narrative began by underscoring the role played by texts in fostering his desire to travel. He wrote of the West Indies and the Spanish Main that:

> From childhood I had studied their Natural History, their charts, their Romances, and alas! their Tragedies; and now, at last, I was about to compare books with facts, and judge for myself of the reported wonders of the Earthly Paradise.[140]

Washington C. Eves's 1897 publication *The West Indies* referred, in turn, to Kingsley and Froude's journeys.[141] Hastings wrote of his first encounter with the tropical beach, which he had tried, since childhood, to visualize 'from Kingsley's vivid descriptions of the histories of the early explorers'.[142] In a similar vein, Amos Fiske boldly suggested that, '[n]o one can think of the "Lesser Antilles" without having scenes from Charles Kingsley's *At Last* come vividly to his

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[139] NMM OSN 22/1. As discussed in chapter five, Kingsley's text narrated a journey with the RMSPC.

[140] Kingsley, *At last*, p. 1.

[141] Washington C. Eves, *The West Indies* (London: Sampson Low, Martston & Co, 1897), chapter two.

[142] Edward Aubrey Hastings Jay, *A glimpse of the tropics or, four months cruising in the West Indies* (London: Sampson Low, 1900), p. 38.

mind'.[143] For Walker, 'Kingsley in "At Last," and Froude in "The English in the West Indies," [had ...] made it presumptuous on the part of any subsequent visitor to seek to emulate them'.[144] As Sheller notes, '[b]ooks like Kingsley's were extremely influential in framing how tourists conceived of, perceived, and experienced the Caribbean'.[145]

As in the RMSPC's official tourist literature, the promotion of the Caribbean as place in travel writing appealed predominantly to the sense of sight. Edward Aubrey Hastings Jay, author of *A glimpse of the tropics*, wrote of his first impression of Barbados in picturesque terms, '[t]here before us lay the Island of Barbados, glimmering in the sun, a long low strip of land, gorgeously green, with houses which had bright red roofs and no chimneys, and quaint, stiff-looking trees, standing out like sky-signs against the horizon'.[146] In Bathsheba, by contrast, he found a 'wild and grand' romantic landscape.[147] Kingsley, somewhat surprisingly (given the nature of coal), described the coaling wharf at Grenada as an 'animated and picturesque spot'.[148] More generally, he was bound up in superlatives when describing the visual appeal of the islands, and wrote 'among all these beautiful islands, St. Lucia is [...] the most beautiful'.[149] Hastings Jay engaged in this mode of panoramic viewing as he described 'St George, the capital, which is beautifully situated and suggests a coast town on the Riviera as

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[143] Amos Kidder Fiske, *The West Indies: a history of the islands of the West Indian archipelago, together with an account of their physical characteristics natural resources, and present condition* (New York & London: The Knickerbocker Press, 1899), p. vi.

[144] Walker, *The West Indies*, p. 229.

[145] Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, p. 61.

[146] Hastings Jay, *A glimpse*, pp. 24-5.

[147] *Ibid*., pp. 48-49.

[148] Kingsley, *At last*, pp. 62-3.

[149] *Ibid.*, p. 43.

seen from the steamer'.[150] Similarly he wrote of the moving panorama enjoyed from the ship, '[w]e had been steaming lazily along an exquisite coast, white sand and cocoa-nut palms lining the edge of the blue water, while the spurs of the mountains sloped upwards from the shore till they ended in fantastic peaks intersected with rich valleys, in which sugar and cocoa plantations were visible in the distance'.[151] Travel writing resulting from steamship journeys cemented a re-evaluated sense of the Caribbean as a picturesque place for leisured consumption in the British geographical imagination.
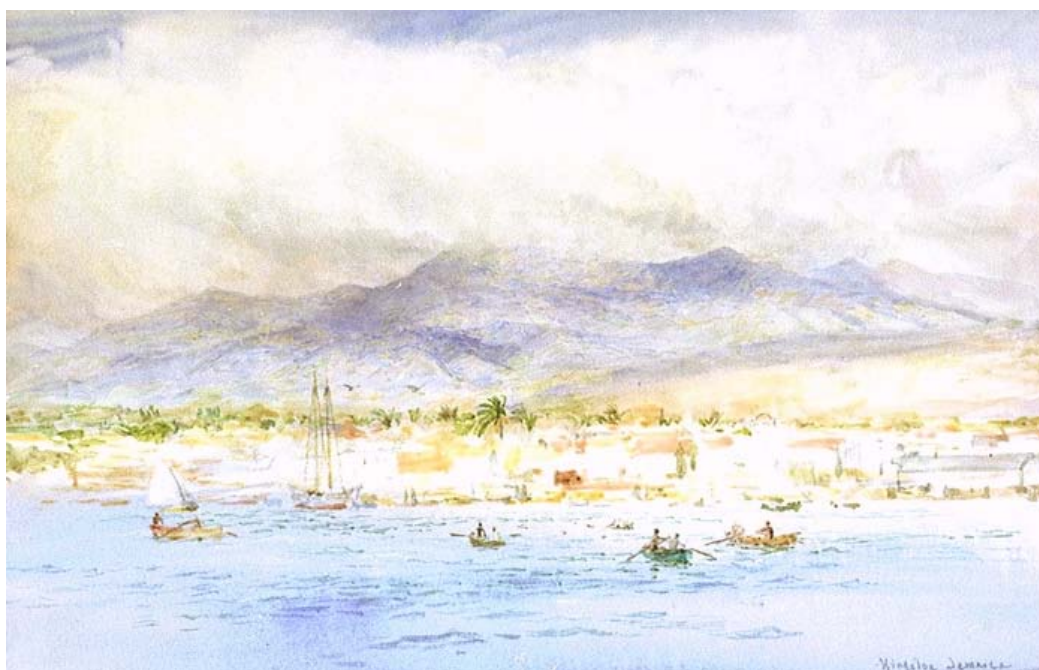
Figure 7.9 *Kingston, Jamaica* by William Lionel Wyllie, 1893. The artist Wyllie travelled on the Orient Line to the Caribbean, but the journey was cut short when an epidemic broke out on board. Wyllie's images of the Caribbean provide a visual counterpart to the picturesque descriptions found in travel narratives such as Kingsley's, Froude's, Bullen's and Walker's, although they were not disseminated in the same way as travel narratives. © National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

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[150] Hastings Jay, *A glimpse*, p. 71.
[151] *Ibid.*, p. 107.

Travel narratives also seemingly contributed to shaping an Atlantic consciousness in the British geographical imagination. The first illustration in Sady Brassey's 1885 edition of *In the trades, the tropics & the roaring forties*, was a fold-out map of the North Atlantic ocean with added lines to chart the 'track of the yacht "Sunbeam" from Sep to Dec 1883'.[152] *A glimpse of the tropics or, four months cruising in the West Indies*, published in 1900, contained a narrative prefaced by a large fold-out map of the North Atlantic ocean. This map was marked with major steamship lines and their distances, such as Liverpool to Halifax, Glasgow to New York, New York to Liverpool, New Orleans to Liverpool, Colon to Liverpool, St Thomas to Liverpool, and Barbados to Southampton.[153] Similarly, the text of Walker's *The West Indies and the Empire: study and travel in the winter of 1900-1901* was preceded by a fold-out map of 'The West Indies and Central America' with railways and submarine telegraph cables marked.[154] Cartographic representations of the trans- and circum-Atlantic journey were a familiar feature of British steamship travel narratives. The popularity of fold-out Atlantic maps within this niche area of literature indicates that despite the globalized interconnections developing throughout the nineteenth century, a more specifically Atlantic consciousness was articulated, and circulated, in maritime travel narratives.

Alongside official steamship promotional material, travel narratives foregrounded transatlantic journeys and offered textual representations of the

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[152] Sady Brassey, *In the trades, the tropics & the roaring forties* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1885). As James Ryan notes, the *Sunbeam* 'left important textual and cartographic traces within Lady Brassey's journals and Lord Brassey's logbooks and naval reviews'. See James R. Ryan, 'Our home on the ocean: Lady Brassey and the voyages of the *Sunbeam*, 1874-1887', *Journal of historical geography*, 32:3 (2006), 579-604 (p. 589).
[153] Hastings Jay, *A glimpse*.
[154] Walker, *The West Indies*.

Caribbean that appealed to the potential traveller's sense of sight. Like travel guides and steamship adverts, the imaginative geographies constructed around the RMSPC's service suggest that the expanded Caribbean was promoted, primarily, as a beautiful place to be viewed (see figure 7.9). Travel narratives offered representations of the expanded Caribbean that formed a circular relationship with official steamship marketing. Individuals, potentially lured by official steamship advertising or by travel narrative authors, produced accounts of place that were shaped by steamship travel experience, and reproduced tropes from the official steamship marketing. Both official and unofficial promotion of Caribbean tourism underscores the sense of sight as a primary means through which people were seduced, in this period, to tour the Americas.

Flirting with space

While the preceding sections have stressed the way in which the RMSPC and travel narrative authors directed the Caribbean tourist's gaze upon landscapes and peoples, promotion of the 'tourist gaze' formed only part of what Crouch terms the 'seduction' of tourists.[155] Crouch insists upon tourism 'as something people do in spatial encounters', and has theorised the embodied and subjective elements of tourist practice as a form of 'flirting with space'.[156] For Crouch, 'the tourist flirts with space in ongoing practice, where space is performed rather than merely arrived at as the product of seduction by others'.[157] Crouch relates 'flirting' to 'spacing':

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[155] Urry, *The tourist gaze*, p. 2.; Crouch, 'Flirting with space: tourism geographies as sensuous / expressive practice', p. 23.

[156] Crouch, 'Flirting with space: tourism geographies as sensuous / expressive practice', p. 23.

[157] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

> Spacing offers a way to rethink how and where landscape relates in life. This more explorative, uncertain and tentative way in which spacing can occur suggests a character of flirting: opening up, trying out, unexpected, multiply affected and embodied.[158]

In borrowing Crouch's concept of 'flirting with space', in this section I examine the RMSPC tourist encountering spaces of the tour in an embodied and subjective manner. In addition to this, Crouch's use of the term 'flirting' is particularly suggestive to my argument because RMSPC tourist encounters with spaces on shore were typically swift and casual in nature. To deploy Crouch's terminology, the ship was the primary '"close-up" space' of the RMSPC's tourist experience, and spaces on shore tended to be 'foreshortened space' and 'distant views', engaged with to a lesser degree.[159] I argue that the RMSPC's nineteenth- and twentieth-century passenger service encouraged travellers to dwell in the space of the ship, and 'flirt' with the spaces on shore.

The RMSPC's scheduling of journeys configured a distinct relationship between the passenger experience of space and time. From the 1840s, the Company's vessels existed and operated 'for the purpose of conveying [...] all Her Majesty's mails'.[160] Accordingly the Company was liable to pay a fine 'if any vessel employed in the performance of this contract, having the mails on board, shall stop, linger, or deviate from the direct course on her voyage'.[161] The mail had to keep moving, and ideally post on board inter-colonial branch vessels departed from and returned to the relevant interchange locations to connect with the transatlantic steamers in a timely manner. As the Company held the West Indies mail contract for the duration of the second half of the nineteenth century, a mail

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[158] David Crouch, 'Flirting with space: thinking landscape relationally', *Cultural geographies*, 17:1 (2010), 5-18 (p. 13).
[159] Crouch, 'Surrounded by place', p. 211.
[160] UCL RMSP 3, Mail contract 1840.
[161] *Ibid*.

contract logic remained at the heart of Company scheduling. The timetable in operation during the 1870s, for example, involved a steamer leaving Southampton on the second of the month, and arriving in St Thomas on the sixteenth. This transatlantic route connected with an inter-colonial service that left St Thomas on the sixteenth and travelled through Jacmel, Jamaica and Colon.[162] Transatlantic mail destined for the Windward and Leeward islands transferred to a route departing on the 16th from St Thomas and bound for several destinations, including Antigua, St Lucia, Guadeloupe and Dominica.

This latter 'Barbadoes and Demerara route' illustrates how the practice of fleeting island visits in rapid succession derived from the demands of the mail contract and came to characterise RMSPC tours in the West Indies. The vessel on the Barbados and Demerara route left St Thomas after the arrival of the transatlantic steamer, and returned to St Thomas on the 14th of the following month, in time to transfer mail to the steamer which would leave for Britain on the 16th.[163]

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[162] NMM RMS 36/4, Scheme of routes 1872.
[163] *Ibid*.

TABLE No. III.
BARBADOES AND DEMERARA ROUTE.
ONCE A FORTNIGHT.

Arrive.	Depart.	PLACES.	Distance.	Steaming.		Stoppages.		From Southampton.	
				days.	hours.	days.	hours.	days.	hours.
—	16, 1 p.m.	St. Thomas	—	—	—	—	—	13	19
17, 5 a.m.	17, 6 a.m.	St. Kitts	150	—	16	—	1	14	11
17, 1 p.m.	17, 3 p.m.	Antigua	70	—	7	—	2	14	19
17, 9 p.m.	17, 10 p.m.	Guadaloupe	68	—	6	—	1	15	3
18, 4 a.m.	18, 5 a.m.	Dominica	53	—	6	—	1	15	10
18, 10 a.m.	18, 11 a.m.	Martinique	49	—	5	—	1	15	16
18, 5 p.m.	18, 10 p.m.	St. Lucia	45	—	6	—	5	15	23
19, noon	19, 6 p.m.	Barbadoes	108	—	14	—	6	16	18
20, 9 a.m.	20, 11 a.m.	Tobago (Scarborough)	135	—	15	—	2	17	15
22, 7 a.m.	26, 5 p.m.	Demerara *	315	1	20	4	10	19	13
28, 9 a.m.	28, noon	Tobago (Scarborough)	315	1	16	—	3	25	15
29, 7 a.m.	—	Barbadoes	135	—	19	—	—	26	13
—	1, 6 p.m.	Barbadoes	—	—	—	—	—	14	—
2, 9 a.m.	2, 11 a.m.	Tobago (Scarborough)	135	—	15	—	2	14	15
4, 7 a.m.	8, 5 p.m.	Demerara †	315	1	20	4	10	16	13
10, 9 a.m.	10, noon	Tobago (Scarborough)	315	1	16	—	3	22	15
11, 7 a.m.	11, 6 p.m.	Barbadoes	135	—	19	—	11	23	13
12, 7 a.m.	12, 2 p.m.	St. Lucia	108	—	13	—	7	24	13
12, 7 p.m.	12, 8 p.m.	Martinique	45	—	5	—	1	25	1
13, 1 a.m.	13, 2 a.m.	Dominica	49	—	5	—	1	25	7
13, 8 a.m.	13, 9 a.m.	Guadaloupe	53	—	6	—	1	25	14
13, 5 p.m.	13, 8 p.m.	Antigua	68	—	8	—	3	25	23
14, 4 a.m.	14, 6 a.m.	St. Kitts	70	—	8	—	2	26	10
14, 10 p.m.	—	St. Thomas	150	—	16	—	—	27	4

		*		†	
		Days.	Hours.	Days.	Hours.
Time Out to Demerara		19	13	16	13
Time Home from ditto		17	16	20	16

Figure 7.10 Table number 3 in the 1872 scheme of routes. Source NMM RMS 36/4. Courtesy of National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

As can be seen from figure 7.10, this itinerary allowed for only brief stoppages at most of the islands: two hours were spent at Antigua, and five at St Lucia, but only an hour was spent at St Kitt's, Guadeloupe, Dominica and Martinique respectively. Demerara and Barbados were the only places to which (relatively) sustained visits were made, at ten and six hours on the outward leg. A second feature of this timetable was its iterative nature: each location was visited once on the way to Barbados, and once on the way back from Barbados. The combination of brief and repeated stoppages to ten locations in quick succession was evidently likely to leave visitors with an impressionistic rather than acute sense of place. A similar timetabling pattern persisted into the early twentieth century. The *Magdalena*, on the 'A' tour, was scheduled to leave Southampton on Christmas day of 1907, arriving in Barbados on 7th January 1908. Here tourists could transfer to an inter-colonial steamer. On the 8th of January they

would visit Grenada and St Vincent, on the 9th, St Lucia and Dominica, on the 10th Montserrat, Antigua and Nevis, and on the 11th they would reach St Kitt's, whereupon the vessel returned through Antigua, Monsterrat, Dominica, St Lucia and Barbados. [164] The Company admitted that the 'A' tourist visiting the Northern Islands would lack the time to explore the destinations in any depth, explaining that 'not much time for sightseeing inland is afforded owing to postal contract requirements, yet the few hours spent at each Island will be found full of interest and to well repay the Tourist'.[165] Almost as a form of reassurance, the Company stressed that at Barbados, 'ample opportunities for sightseeing are given'.[166] By offering Barbados as a form of compensation for an inability to see other islands, the Company rendered one island equivalent, as place, to another.

In accordance with the logic of mail contract timetabling, those touring the Caribbean with the RMSPC engaged with many of the islands visited in a repeated and fleeting fashion. Frank Bullen stated explicitly that 'some of the same places are visited again and again' and qualified this reality by acknowledging that these visits were 'usually *en passant*, but still fresh impressions of the same place are continually imprinting themselves upon the sensoria'. [167] H. de R. Walker was explicit in criticising this aspect of the trajectories, and wrote, 'I do not think a proper idea is formed of the English islands. It is true that most of them are touched at, but how much can be seen in a

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[164] RMSP *Tours in the West Indies*, season 1907/8.
[165] *Ibid*., p. 15.
[166] *Ibid*.
[167] Bullen, *Back to sunny seas*, p. 32. Emphasis in original.

stay of a few hours?' [168] Thus the restrictions of the RMSPC timetable lent themselves to only brief flirtations with the spaces on shore. [169]

A second practice deriving from the brevity of stoppages at several of the islands was the tourist tendency to remain on board ship upon arrival at a destination. Bullen's description of his journey helps to explain how the doubling-back itineraries contributed to a stay-on-board culture amongst RMSPC travellers. He wrote that, 'on my first visit to Trinidad the vessel only remained in port from 6 a.m. until 1 p.m., and as I was going to return [...] I did not feel inclined to go ashore for so brief a stay'. [170] When Kingsley travelled, St Thomas was still the central transfer point, and he remarked that while he was out exploring the island, some had 'stayed stifling on board'. [171] Yet it was not only the nature of the itinerary that encouraged passengers to spend time on board when ships were in port, but also the pricing structure of the winter tour tickets. The Company's tourist tickets included an allowance for passengers to sleep and eat on board the steamships except at particular locations such as Venezuela or Jamaica, where travellers disembarked. It is notable that although Walker was critical of the island-hopping nature of the RMSPC's tours, he praised the all-inclusive aspect of the service in that it freed tourists from 'shortcomings in the respect of hotels'. [172] The combination of brief island stoppages (in accordance with mail contract demands), repetitive journeys, and all-inclusive tickets encouraged RMSPC tourists to dwell in the ship as the primary space of the journey whilst in the Caribbean, and 'flirt' with the spaces on shore.

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[168] Walker, *The West Indies*, pp. 230-233.
[169] Crouch, 'Flirting with space: tourism geographies as sensuous / expressive practice', p. 23.
[170] Bullen, *Back to sunny seas*, pp. 39-40.
[171] Kingsley, *At last*, p. 25.
[172] Walker, *The West Indies*, pp. 230-233.

As a corollary to the brief stoppage time at each island, the RMSPC promoted the steamship as a place in which to dwell, and as a space of embodied comforts. Perhaps one of the reasons why this emphasis was necessary was to counter familiar steamship traveller tropes of vessels rolling, causing seasickness and a great deal of *discomfort*. Vessels on both the West Indies and South American route were conceived of and promoted in similar ways. For example in 1914, when two ships (the *Essequibo* and *Ebro*) were built for the West Indies route, they were modelled on the 'A' steamers from the South American route.[173] As Crouch stresses, 'people are lured to go touring [...] Spaces and the cultural use / content [...] are important in these processes and can be used to entrap desire'.[174] In this respect, first-class passenger spaces must be particularly emphasized, for example the state rooms, ladies' room, dining saloon, smoking room and music-room on board vessels in the 1880s.[175] Such spaces were promoted to passengers not only in official tourism literature but also in press reports of ship launches. Spaces of the ship, then, were deployed and used to 'entrap desire'.[176]

Technologies that enhanced embodied comforts were advertised to passengers.[177] The *Orinoco*, launched in 1886, was the first amongst the fleet to feature electric lighting.[178] After the introduction of this vessel, the provision of electric lighting

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[173] Rodney Baker and Alan Leonard, *Great steamers white and gold: a history of Royal Mail ships and services* (Southampton: Ensign, 1993), p. 97. The *Essequibo* and *Ebro*, 8,500 ton sisters, were requisitioned by the Admiralty for war duties in 1915.
[174] Crouch, 'Flirting with space: tourism geographies as sensuous / expressive practice', p. 23.
[175] An example of a vessel with luxurious first-class spaces was the *Magdalena*, built in 1888-9.
[176] Crouch, 'Flirting with space: tourism geographies as sensuous / expressive practice', p. 23.
[177] In October 1883 the directors reported that the *Tagus* had been fitted with a cold air machine and chamber for the storage of provisions for passengers' meals. The popularity of these cooling facilities led the Company to fit the *Neva* and *La Plata* with similar refrigerating systems the following year. UCL RMSP 14, 30 April 1884.
[178] Baker and Leonard, *Great steamers*, p. 64.

to other ships became a preoccupation worthy of inclusion in the Company's annual reports.[179] Given the popularity with passengers of the electric lights in not only this vessel, but also the *Tamar* and *Trent*, in October 1887 the directors announced an intention to extend the improvement to their other vessels in order to 'maintain the popularity of the Company's ships'.[180] The availability of electric fans on board was similarly stressed, with the Company writing in 1909 that the 'distribution of fans throughout the ship is most complete, and the effect is most cooling'.[181] Before suitable technologies were available to provide such embodied comforts, similar sensations were produced by alternative means. Prior to the introduction of electric fans on vessels, for example, punkahs waving over passengers at dinner provided similar bodily comforts on the West Indies route.[182] Edensor's notion of the 'touristscape' can be applied to the touring steamship, as he stresses that 'touristscapes are organized to enable continuity and stability, so that the *materialities and sensualities of space* act to minimize disruption of normative performances and help to cajole the body into enacting [...] regular practices'.[183] It was thus 'techniques and technologies' mobilised on board the ship that helped to constitute the RMSPC tourist experience.[184]

In marketing this ship space to potential passengers, the RMSPC appealed to multiple senses. For example, the 'A' class of RMSPC steamers, built for the

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[179] UCL RMSP 14, 27 April 1887. In April 1887 the directors reported that the *Orinoco* had performed her work well, and was 'highly spoken of by Passengers' after the introduction of electric lights into the vessel.

[180] UCL RMSP 14, 26 October 1887.

[181] Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, *A link of empire, souvenir of the 70th year of incorporation of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company* (London: Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, 1909), p. 84.

[182] James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies* (London: Longmans, 1888), p. 48.

[183] Tim Edensor, 'Mundane mobilities, performances and spaces of tourism', *Social & cultural geography*, 8:2 (2007), 199-215 (p. 207). Emphasis added.

[184] *Ibid*., pp. 202-203.

South American route, were in operation during the pre-war era, and as already noted, West Indies vessels were later modelled on 'A' class steamers.[185] The 1908 *Asturias* from amongst this class boasted two social halls, three smoking lounges, a swimming bath on the after deck, and three promenade decks of two hundred and fifty feet. By 1909, the Company also made known that it provided a vaulting-horse and parallel-bars on the decks of transatlantic steamships for exercise purposes. In addition to kinaesthetic desires fulfilled by such facilities, there was also an appeal to the gustative, with seven usual mealtimes: early tea, breakfast, soup or ices, lunch, afternoon tea, then dinner, rounded off with sandwiches at ten o' clock. Thus the RMSPC promoted the touring steamship through an appeal to the senses: aural, gustative, and kinaesthetic comforts were on offer, enhanced by 'modern' technologies. As the Company wrote of the 'smoking and card rooms' on board vessels in the first decade of the twentieth century, '[t]hese comforts are accentuated by the charming verandah extensions which form an annex to each of these rooms. As soon as the sunny seas are reached, palms and ferns are hung, and passengers may sit and smoke, and chat, and play their game *en plein air*, protected from the wind as the good ship goes ahead, but yet in the midst of the delicious coolness of the sea breeze'.[186] The passenger vessel thus can be conceptualized in terms of Edensor's argument that tourism 'is constituted by an array of techniques and technologies which are mobilized in distinct settings'.[187] Sensuous comforts were staged on board once the ship reached 'sunny seas'.

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[185] The *Aragon*, *Amazon*, *Araguaya*, *Avon*, *Asturias* and *Arlanza* were 'A' class steamers.
[186] Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, *A link of empire*, p. 82.
[187] Edensor, 'Mundane mobilities', p. 202.

Spaces of the ship were promoted not only in written advertisements, but also at launches, and at imperial and international exhibitions. [188] Alongside the promotion of the Caribbean as a place of picturesque scenery, the Company insistently promoted the space of the ship as a healthy space, and as a space of embodied pleasure. Yet if the RMSPC promoted the ship as a space of embodied comfort, what of embodied encounters on shore? Edensor writes about enclave tourist spaces as 'total institutions' that regulate the performance of tourists.[189] Steamship companies such as the RMSPC were involved in the establishment and promotion of such spaces on shore, in which passengers could appropriately consume and encounter the Caribbean. For example, Elder, Dempster & Co. (which provided a direct service between Bristol and Jamaica) offered an integrated Caribbean tourist experience, as in 1901 the Company purchased the Myrtle Bank Hotel in Kingston as well as the Constant Springs Hotel, and the RMSPC provided passengers with details of approved hotels such as the Myrtle Bank (see figure 7.11). [190]

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[188] In 1886 the Company arranged for shipbuilders Caird & Co. to prepare a model of one of the Company's vessels for inclusion in the 1886 Indian and Colonial Exhibition.
[189] Edensor, *Tourists at the Taj*, p. 52.
[190] RMSP *Tours in the West Indies*, season 1907/8, p. 17, p. 32, p. 55. Other approved hotels included The Home at St George's Grenada and the Marine hotel in Bridgetown.

Myrtle Bank Hotel.

Figure 7.11 The Myrtle Bank Hotel, Jamaica, after the 1907 hurricane. Jamaica suffered badly in this hurricane and the Myrtle Bank Hotel sustained considerable damage. Reproduced with the permission of Senate House Library, University of London. Source: ICS 96 2/2/1.

Elizabeth Pigou-Denis confirms the 'regulation' of the Myrtle Bank Hotel as a social space, writing that in the immediate aftermath of the period under consideration, the Myrtle Bank Hotel was 'second only to King's House in status as a social meeting place for the upper class' in Jamaica and a place characterised by exclusivity based on 'social standing and colour'.[191] Under Elder, Dempster's management, at the Constant Springs and Myrtle Bank hotels, 'English managers and clerks, French and Swiss chefs, etc., also a staff of experts in the culinary department from Poland Spring House and other famous

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[191] Elizabeth Pigou-Dennis, 'The Myrtle Bank Hotel and Jamaica's upper class 1914-1945', *The Jamaican historical review: culture in 20th century Jamaica*, 20 (1998), 1-6 (pp. 1-2).

hotels of the United States, were employed to take up the various duties of running the hotels after the most approved modern methods'. [192] Steamship companies such as the RMSPC encouraged passengers to move from the space of the ship to enclave tourist spaces on shore, where appropriate leisured consumption could take place. Other enclave spaces were similarly associated with the consumption of food and drink. The Ice House at Barbados was frequently described by steamship travellers, as Washington Eves wrote:

> The visitor at first has a confused notion of trade, trees, warehouses, and cocktail: the latter a delicate and aromatic mixture of rum, sugar, lime juice, Angostura bitters, all stirred into a lively froth by a swizzle stick. [193]

Hastings Jay, also describing the tastes on offer at the Ice House in Barbados, noted his 'delicious breakfast, consisting of fried flying-fish, cutlets, sweet potatoes, and yams' and offered a more detailed description of the flying fish, 'beautifully hot, crisp, and tender'. [194] Although not yet dominant in the Caribbean economy, hotels and restaurants nevertheless served as enclave spaces during this period.

On the other hand, steamship travellers recorded experiences when they had been forced outside of enclave spaces. The wharf was a particularly problematic space in this respect (see chapter six for further discussion of the coaling station as a place of contact). Eves considered the noise and coal dust to be endured on arrival at Jamaica. [195] Bullen similarly complained of the 'very serious grievance' of landing at Kingston to be confronted with 'clouds of coal-dust, sweltering

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[192] Dr Jas. Johnston, *Jamaica the New Riviera: a pictorial description of the island and its attractions* (Brown's Town, Jamaica: printed by Cassell and Co. for the proprietor Dr Jas. Johnston, 1903), p. 11.
[193] Eves, *The West Indies*, p. 15.
[194] Hastings Jay, *A glimpse*, p. 34.
[195] Eves, *The West Indies*, p. 43.

heat, noise, and smells'.[196] The wharf at Kingston was depicted as a difficult space for tourists to negotiate, since there were no spatial demarcations for different races or classes and it contrasted starkly with the regulated space of the ship. For Bullen, for example, this was intolerable. 'Worse', he wrote, than the dust and the noise, was the fact that 'the wharf on sailing days for a hundred feet from the gangway [was] thronged, packed with negroes of both sexes, clean and unclean, through which crowd it [was] necessary to bore one's way, subjected to ribald remarks in volleys, and in absolute danger of personal violence'.[197] Where the trajectory from enclave to enclave broke down, and controlled consumption spilled over into unwelcome smells and glancing touches, the tourist in the region could become somewhat affronted. As Edensor stresses, within tourist perfomances, 'while the confrontation of alterity is desired, the disruption this creates can engender self-doubt or self-consciousness, not conducive to having a good time'.[198] The RMSPC sought to construct an 'enclavic touristscape' on board its vessels, 'keeping strong smells, loud noises and rough textures at bay', but this enclave experience was subject to disruption on the move between ship and shore.[199]

The mail contract legacy of the RMSPC's service meant that passengers were constrained into brief encounters with the spaces on shore. Since time on shore was limited, and destinations were visited in rapid succession, the ship became a primary space of the RMSPC tour. Accordingly, the Company sought to

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[196] Bullen, *Back to sunny seas*, pp. 51-2.

[197] *Ibid*. Bullen's remarks are more interesting than more consistently prejudiced observers, because at other points in his narrative, he challenges a stereotypical view of black people. Bullen wrote of the Barbadian boatmen who worked very hard and 'should inspire a wholesome respect'. *Ibid*., p. 26.

[198] Edensor, 'Mundane mobilities', p. 202.

[199] *Ibid*., p. 208.

construct and market this space as one of embodied comforts, providing a sensuous experience for elite travellers through material provisions on board. Equally, steamship companies contributed to the development of tourist enclaves on shore, places where colonial and imperial elites were welcomed and catered to as they were on the ship. Yet this provision of tourist enclaves was subject to disruption at moments of unwanted contact. The wharf was particularly hard to regulate. Passengers' complaints at coming into contact with Caribbean peoples reinforces the fact that the RMSPC sold expanded Caribbean views, scenes and culture as distant ones. They were not to be engaged with too closely.

Conclusion

By promoting the ship as a place of embodied comfort, in which tactile pleasures and sensuous luxuries could be enjoyed, the RMSPC went some way towards rendering the steamship itself, paradoxically, a main destination of the tour. Places visited, 'en passant' were to be visually consumed, and at times literally consumed in appropriate hotels and eateries.[200] As Crouch insists, embodied comforts were significant to RMSPC tourism, but these were primarily on offer on board the ship. Interest on shore, meanwhile, was directed largely through appeals to the visual. Thus the RMSPC promoted consumption of the Caribbean, but it was a swift kind of consumption that would fit the RMSPC's relentless timetable.

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[200] Bullen, *Back to sunny seas*, p. 32.

The RMSPC's model of tourism was not the only mode of leisured steamship travel in this period. The Jamaica Direct Line, which began operations at the start of the twentieth century, offered a straight line trajectory between Bristol and Jamaica with two weeks spent ashore in Jamaica. This pattern of tourism encouraged a different kind of passenger experience. The single destination model, for example, had the effect of making Jamaica stand in for the region as a whole. The RMSPC's model, by contrast, was a multiple destination experience, but one which left little time to explore the variety on offer. It is this latter model that has come to dominate Caribbean cruising in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. It must be recognized that maritime tourism is not as culturally dominant across twenty-first century South America as it is in the Caribbean narrowly-defined. Yet in South America too, the RMSPC has played an important role in fostering tourism. Although the RMSPC had produced smaller pamphlets and guides to South America in the late nineteenth century, Royal Mail took over production of the *South American handbook* in 1924. The *South American handbook* is still being produced as an authoritative tourist guide at the start of the twenty-first century.[201]

The role of mail contract steamship services such as the RMSPC can be somewhat obscured in accounts of Caribbean tourism that focus on so-called 'banana boat' tourism at the turn of the century.[202] Mail contract steamship services played a longer role in fostering leisure passenger travel to the Americas during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. The oceanic model of Caribbean

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[201] Ben Box, *South American handbook 2005*, 81st edn (Bath: Footprint, 2005).
[202] Frank F. Taylor and Krista Thompson, for example, both focus on fruit steamship lines in their accounts of the rise of Caribbean tourism. See Taylor, *To hell with paradise*, and Thompson, *An eye for the tropics*, chapter one.

tourism developed by the RMSPC allowed for paradoxical tourist engagements with place, whereby passengers voyaged to lands that were simultaneously kept at a distance. The ship was at first a destination in itself, a part of the seduction of place that lured passengers on holiday. The ship subsequently became an enclave of modern luxury and embodied comforts, a space of familiarity in which one dwelled, and a space to which one retreated to view the shifting panoramas, having briefly flirted with the spaces on shore.

Conclusion

In 1838, James MacQueen wrote of his desire that the RMSPC would 'infuse' the Caribbean 'with European energy and regularity'.[1] In this way, he proposed a modern project: a technological fix for the complex transitions taking place in the British post-emancipation islands. Without necessarily repeating MacQueen's precise words, existing Company histories have nevertheless framed their accounts of the RMSPC along similar lines, by offering narratives that present a technological enterprise projected from British shores, a narrative of progress and development over time. This thesis has revised this interpretation, offering a counterpoint to MacQueen's vision. He had a particular kind of modern project in mind: one that would be ordered, efficient, and regular. The service that emerged was modern, but it was characterised by a modernity of mobile interconnections and dynamic ship-to-shore relations. It was a tidalectic modernity produced by shifting movements between sea and multiple shores.

In presenting a postcolonial historical geography of the RMSPC, this thesis has mined archival sources, in order to interrogate most effectively the Company as a network and to examine different places in its past, mindful of the postcolonial impulse to critique imperial projects and discourses. Here I reflect upon the key contributions of my analysis, considering, firstly, what insight a geographical focus has added to interpretations of the Company; secondly, the implications of

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[1] James MacQueen, *A general plan for a mail communication by steam between Great Britain and the eastern and western parts of the world; also, to Canton and Sydney, westward by the Pacific: to which are added, geographical notices of the isthmus of Panama, Nicaragua, &c. with charts* (London: B. Fellowes, 1838), p. 56.

this research for historiographies of oceans and of travel; and thirdly, what a tidalectic postcolonial approach offers to understandings of the imperial past.

Geographies of the RMSPC

The RMSPC's geographies have not hitherto formed the subject of sustained analysis.[2] Yet the steamship network was established to connect places through regularized maritime mobilities. As such, space and movement were key to the undertaking. A central research aim of this project was to interrogate what a consideration of the RMSPC's geographies might reveal about the Company's operations, and how this might challenge existing Company histories. I have examined the RMSPC in geographical terms by foregrounding four spatial concepts in particular: place, mobility, network, and infrastructure. By highlighting these, I have sought to reveal the relationships between maritime sites and steamship movements at different scales. Examination of the RMSPC's geographies has indicated that the steamship service was shaped simultaneously across different scales and by diverse places. Thus the RMSPC was made at the scale of individual travelling vessels, at the scale of the coaling station, at the scale of regional operations, and at nodal points such as Panama.

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[2] Rodney Baker and Alan Leonard, *Great steamers white and gold: a history of Royal Mail ships and services* (Southampton: Ensign Publications, 1993); T. A. Bushell, *"Royal Mail": a centenary history of the Royal Mail line 1839-1939* (London: Trade and Travel Publications, 1939); R. G. Greenhill, 'British shipping and Latin America 1840-1930: The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 1971); H. W. Leslie, *The Royal Mail war book: being an account of the operations of the ships of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, 1914-1919* (London: William Heinemann, 1920); M. H. Ludington and G. Osborn, *The Royal Mail steam packets to Bermuda and the Bahamas 1842-1859* ([n.p.]: R. Lowe, 1971); Phil J. Kenton and Harry G. Parsons, *Early routings of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company 1842-1879* (Surrey: The Postal History Society, 1999); Stuart Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy: a history of the Royal Mail line*, 2 vols (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2001); Michael Rego, *Steamship lines to the Caribbean volume one: history, routes, agents, ship markings, ships, fleet lists* (Alicante: British West Indies Study Circle, 2005).

Chapter four examined the RMSPC's network as a whole, which was constituted by timetabled steamship movements between the Company's ports-of-call. I argued that this scheme of routes was viewed quite differently in particular places. The Admiralty's expectation of mathematical precision and exact timings constituted one kind of engagement with the scheme, while interest groups in marginalized places sought inclusion within the network. In response to these different impulses and pressures, steamship rhythms were adapted to the needs of several places. Thus the relationship between the network and its ports-of-call was dynamic.

I demonstrated in chapter five that the steamship, as a mobile place, was equally dynamic. Although the ship compares with other kinds of modern institutions with strict regulations, hierarchies, and systems of surveillance, social and cultural contact aboard ship was equally significant in shaping the modernity of the steamship experience. If we recognize the maritime modernity exemplified by the steamship, this complicates chronologies and geographies of the modern era. As Miles Ogborn stresses, there are 'localised geographies of modernity', and these include mobile modernities at sea.[3] Examination of the ship, as well as the Company's tourist routes, suggests that steamships contributed to processes of social and cultural globalization, and should not only be considered in terms of their economic impacts.[4]

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[3] Miles Ogborn, *Spaces of modernity: London's geographies 1680-1780* (New York and London: The Guilford Press, 1998), p. 19.

[4] Yrjö Kaukiainen, 'Shrinking the world: improvements in the speed of information transmission, c. 1820-1870', *European review of economic history*, 5 (2001), 1-28.

Chapter six turned to the RMSPC's coaling process. Littoral sites such as the coaling station, as places of arrival and departure, speak to concerns with a globalized and interconnected world. I emphasized in this chapter that the RMSPC's coaling infrastructure was constituted by mobile equipment and resources as well as the promotion of social immobilities of local workers, and architectural stability and fixity. Although mobilities depend upon moorings, as the new mobilities paradigm argues, coaling station infrastructure did not sit in a directly dichotomous relationship to mobilities. Instead, as Peter Adey suggests, immobilities at the coaling station were 'relative' to the maritime mobilities of the steamship.[5]

Finally, chapter seven interrogated the RMSPC's tourist service to show how the Company's model of Caribbean tourism was a mode of taking the 'consumption' of the Americas off-shore.[6] The strict timetabling of steamship journeys kept RMSPC tourists on the move, except at particular destinations such as Jamaica, where a protracted shore-based stay was available. The journeying became as important as the destination visited, and the tourist experience was, to a large extent, separate from spaces on shore. This mode of tourism, with its exchangeable destinations, luxurious travelling and embodied comforts remains characteristic of the contemporary cruise tourism industry. It also renders tourist economies fragile, as fashionable destinations are exchanged for one another—tour operators move elsewhere, and places are left behind. Ironically it was the mail contract, which tied the RMSPC to the region while demanding a particular

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[5] Peter Adey, 'If mobility is everything then it is nothing: towards a relational politics of (im)mobilities', *Mobilities*, 1:1 (2006), 75-94 (p. 77).
[6] Mimi Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean: from Arawaks to zombies* (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 4.

kind of regular ship, that encouraged a superficial RMSPC tourist engagement with place.

This research posed the question: in what ways were the RMSPC's material and abstract places shaped by British and Caribbean influences? I have argued that the RMSPC's network was mapped and managed through negotiation between decisions taken in Britain and interested parties in the Americas. The Company's material places, meanwhile, were equally shaped from both sides of the Atlantic. During the first decade of service, coaling station labour arrangements were marked by the legacies of Caribbean slavery, but working templates and equipment was transferred to these places from Britain. Meanwhile the ship, another key material Company place, was literally constructed on British shores and was subject to centralized regulation and inspection in Southampton, but was shaped, particularly on social and cultural terms, by its American ports-of-call.

Beyond the individual chapters, by applying a 'new imperial' networked approach to the study of steamship technology, I have presented a novel analysis that is less metropolitan-centred than existing Company histories.[7] This is not to say that all places could equally shape the network, but the service responded to

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[7] Rodney Baker and Alan Leonard, *Great steamers white and gold: a history of Royal Mail ships and services* (Southampton: Ensign Publications, 1993); T. A. Bushell, *"Royal Mail": a centenary history of the Royal Mail line 1839-1939* (London: Trade and Travel Publications, 1939); R. G. Greenhill, 'British shipping and Latin America 1840-1930: The Royal Mail Steam Packet Company', (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 1971); H. W. Leslie, *The Royal Mail war book: being an account of the operations of the ships of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company, 1914-1919* (London: William Heinemann, 1920); M. H. Ludington and G. Osborn, *The Royal Mail steam packets to Bermuda and the Bahamas 1842-1859* ([n.p.]: R. Lowe, 1971); Phil J. Kenton and Harry G. Parsons, *Early routings of the Royal Mail Steam Packet Company 1842-1879* (Surrey: The Postal History Society, 1999); Stuart Nicol, *Macqueen's legacy: a history of Royal Mail line*, 2 vols (Gloucestershire: Tempus, 2001); Michael Rego, *Steamship lines to the Caribbean volume one: history, routes, agents, ship markings, ships, fleet lists* (Alicante: British West Indies Study Circle, 2005).

the needs of different places at different times. In particular, nodal points such as St Thomas were pivotal to the workings of the whole scheme. Furthermore, the ability to affect either front or 'backstage' elements of the system afforded bargaining power, as coaling labourers' negotiations for higher wages demonstrate.[8] Ann Laura Stoler argues that '[c]olonialism was not a secure bourgeois project'.[9] I suggest that colonialism was particularly insecure as it travelled and was reconfigured in mobile places, as illustrated by the RMSPC in this study.

The four main chapters of this thesis have examined different kinds of places− the abstract networked places of the RMSPC's timetable, the Company's vessels, coaling stations, and places of the tourist geographical imagination. By moving between places invoked as 'fantasy', infrastructural sites, mobile, and networked places, I have indicated the relationship between steamship 'moorings' and mobilities, between local ports-of-call and the network as a whole, between individual journeys and the production of imagined geographies.[10] Ships and coaling station infrastructure, for example, fuelled the production of imaginative geographies, and these in turn increased the number of leisure travellers journeying on board RMSPC vessels, thus impacting upon movement between the Company's networked places.

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[8] Susan Leigh Star, 'The ethnography of infrastructure', *American behavioural scientist*, 43:3 (1999), 377-391 (p. 380).
[9] Ann Laura Stoler, 'Cultivating bourgeois bodies and racial selves', in *Cultures of empire: colonizers in Britain and the empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries*, ed. by Catherine Hall (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 87-119 (p. 90).
[10] Sheller, *Consuming the Caribbean*, p. 5; Keith Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'Editorial: mobilities, immobilities and moorings', *Mobilities*, 1:1 (2006), 1-22 (p. 2).

As well as analysing various places in this thesis, I have considered the geographical concept of mobility, and have followed Tim Cresswell's insistence upon historicizing this term.[11] In a world in which, as the new mobilities paradigm stresses, people, things, places, ideas and more-than-human elements such as viruses seem 'to be on the move', attention to historical forms of communication, and physical and imaginative travel may shed light upon contemporary experiences.[12] Steamship networks were presented as comprehensive and reliable, but the RMSPC's service indicates that we must be mindful of the spatial limitations of these operations, their fragility and tendency to slow down and be disrupted, as well as their capacity to sustain the movement of people, ideas and goods. Many places were excluded from such networks, things could go wrong on journeys (as yellow fever or accidents underscore), and passages could be disrupted at coaling stations. It is important then, not to over-emphasize historical connectedness, but to recognize the ways in which this was nuanced and tempered.

Historicizing mobilities necessarily entails considering maritime movements, but what emerges from a focus on traditional maritime, rather than 'new' (i.e. late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century), mobilities? Firstly, analysis of the RMSPC's places has revealed how rhythms of the network changed, were suspended, or reconfigured, depending on whose needs were met at any given moment. Secondly, the example of the RMSPC has underlined the ways in which networks designed to promote one kind of connection set in motion unintended

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[11] Tim Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', *Environment and planning D: society and space*, 28:1 (2010), 17-31 (p. 29).
[12] Mimi Sheller and John Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm', *Environment and planning A*, 38:2 (2006), 207-226 (p. 207).

movements too. For example, letters and goods were smuggled on board the Company's steamers, and viruses were rendered alarmingly mobile. Thirdly, the RMSPC's network was constantly altering, even if at times it changed remarkably slowly. One contribution of an historical perspective on mobilities is, therefore, an emphasis on what moves and changes gradually due to bureaucratic inertia, as well as what is high-tech and high-speed.

Thus my geographical examination has offered a revised interpretation of the RMSPC's service and has underlined the need to analyse different scales and speeds of networks. It would seem, then, that networked approaches have much to offer 'new' maritime histories. [13] Although Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra has critiqued Atlantic history's tendency to remain within *'North* Atlantic' confines and to privilege 'Eurocentric cultural geographies for North America', analysis of the RMSPC suggests how consideration of Atlantic networks might carry studies in different directions across imperial boundaries.[14] Places discussed in this thesis include Panama, St Thomas and Barbados. A number of other sites such as Southampton, Lisbon, or Rio de Janeiro could equally have been subjected to scrutiny. Networked approaches also provide a means to bring maritime history and broader imperial histories into dialogue, as they are not always considered in relation to one another. Despite these strengths of networked approaches, three further questions about the interdependence of mobilities in different places and at different scales arise from this work. My

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[13] This can be seen, for example, in Kerry Ward's work on the Dutch East India Company. See Kerry Ward, *Networks of empire: forced migration in the Dutch East India Company* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

[14] Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, 'Some caveats about the "Atlantic" paradigm', *History compass*, 1:1 (2003), 1-4 (pp. 1-2).

discussion of the ship and ship-to-shore relations invites further research about the coastal Caribbean perspective. This might be developed in future work, as the way in which local tradespeople on individual islands were affected by the RMSPC's operations seems pertinent to developing a regional perspective on the Company. Steamship travellers' attitudes towards coaling labourers in the Caribbean raise questions about gender and the maritime world in the Caribbean context. Finally, the relationship between maritime mobilities and shore-based Caribbean mobilities might be interrogated further.

The RMSPC and historiographies of oceans and travel

I have sought to provide a novel analysis of the RMSPC, not only by an explicit focus on its spatialities, but also through approaching its histories and historical geographies in different ways. Thus I have produced an account that is mindful of the complexities of the steamship service. My historical interpretation of the Company has two notable implications for the way in which broader oceanic histories and histories of travel might be approached.

Firstly, this examination of an historical networked service has suggested that the regional / oceanic scale retains core relevance even when considering 'global' processes. Although individuals have advanced various chronologies for Atlantic history, there is broad consensus that 'by the middle of the nineteenth century, the region was being drawn more fully into a world system'.[15] The Atlantic as a unit for analysis is not therefore embraced as a paradigm for nineteenth-century

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[15] Alison Games, 'AHR Forum. Atlantic history: definitions, challenges, and opportunities', *American historical review*, 111:3 (2005), 741-757 (p. 748).

histories to the same extent as for the eighteenth century. I have suggested, by contrast, that analysis across different scales— including the local and oceanic, offers insight into steamship networks that were at once part of regional and global nineteenth-century networks of trade, communications and travel.

The RMSPC's operations at Panama provide a poignant illustration of the simultaneous relevance of the local, regional and global in the nineteenth-century maritime world. Specific infrastructures, personnel and systems were established locally at Panama, with the RMSPC maintaining responsibility for the Atlantic leg of the journey, while the PSNC operated in the Pacific. This kind of cooperation and synchronization of regional services enabled the circulation of specie, goods and passengers across the world. Thus, I stress that acknowledgement of growing global networks during the nineteenth century does not negate the significance of ocean-specific analyses.

A second point of historiographical import emerges from my third research question: how did the RMSPC's service enable and influence representations of the Caribbean in this period? The RMSPC's promotion of passenger travel existed in a cyclical relationship with broader European imagined geographies of the Caribbean. The Company both drew on such representations, and fuelled their circulation through its transportation network. Thus, on the one hand, official marketing efforts tapped into imagined geographies of the Caribbean that stressed picturesque qualities of place, while on the other hand, steamship journeys fuelled the reproduction and circulation of such travelling representations.

This relationship between travelling steamers and travelling representations can be used to bridge the divide between imperial history, with its interest in economic and political themes, and new imperial history's cultural bias. Economic enterprises and material investments might productively be examined for their social and cultural import. Steamship services were, after all, one of the 'cultural technologies' of empire.[16] Heavy material things such as ships and coaling stations have formed the subject-matter of this research, but I have also discussed forms of writing. This has included writing that helped to produce steamship travel, such as regulations and inspection reports, and also travel writing that was produced by steamship journeys. In this way, I have asked questions of the relationship between travelling representations and the technologies of travel. Scholars such as Inderpal Grewal have argued for the importance of studying 'travel and empire'.[17] While Grewal's analysis focuses on narratives and discourses of travel, she acknowledges that '[t]here is much on the culture of travel that needs examination'.[18] One aspect in need of further examination, I would contend, is the relationship between the material networks that produced mobilities, and the kinds of travelling representations analysed by literary and cultural scholars.

Cultural historians of technology examine the writing of technological experts, such as engineers and scientists. However such work does not necessarily engage

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[16] Kathleen Wilson, 'Old imperialisms and new imperial histories: rethinking the history of the present', *Radical history review*, 95 (2006), 211-234 (p. 212).
[17] Inderpal Grewal, *Home and harem: nation, gender, empire and the cultures of travel* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996), p. 10.
[18] *Ibid*., p. 232.

with writing outside of scientific and technological communities.[19] On the other hand, postcolonial literary critics examine travelling texts, without necessarily taking seriously the material networks that enabled such textual representations. In 2002, Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs commented that 'the amount of scholarly work on travel writing [had] reached unprecedented levels'.[20] They argued that interdisciplinary approaches would 'allow the full historical complexity of the genre to be appreciated'.[21] Although travel writing has been explored from a number of disciplinary perspectives, analysis of such work frequently remains de-materialized.[22] In other words, the writing is taken seriously, but the travelling is subject to less analytical scrutiny. When transportation technologies are referenced, this is done in broad brushstrokes. Thus in discussion of John Taylor's *The pennyless pilgrimage*, Hulme and Youngs briefly note that '[w]aterways and stagecoaches were at this time increasing the ease and reliability of travel within the kingdom, just as improvements in ship technology and navigation had– more partially – increased those to other shores'.[23] This failure to engage more fully with the process of travel means that travelling representations remain analytically separated off from the 'mobility as a brute fact' that enabled such representations to exist.[24]

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[19] See, for example, Crosbie Smith, *The science of energy. A cultural history of energy physics in Victorian Britain* (London: Athlone Press, 1998); Crosbie Smith, *Energy and empire: a biographical study of Lord Kelvin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

[20] Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, 'Introduction', in *The Cambridge companion to travel writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 1-13 (p. 1).

[21] *Ibid.*

[22] Kirsty Reid's work provides a recent example of an approach that takes seriously both the material and the literary. See Kirsty Reid, 'Ocean funerals: the sea and Victorian cultures of death', *Journal for maritime research*, 13:1 (2011), 37-54.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[24] Tim Cresswell, *On the move: mobility in the modern western world* (New York and London: Routledge, 2006), p. 3.

In contrast, this thesis has presented readings of the textual through the material. Analysis of organizations such as the RMSPC provides one route into illuminating the relationship between travelling ideas and material networks of travel. I have underscored, for example, the relationship between the material steamship network, the RMS *Shannon* on which Charles Kinglsey travelled, and Kingsley's publication *At last: a Christmas in the West Indies*. Recognizing the significance of travelling representations and ideas, I have equally underlined the infrastructure, material networks and mobilities that allowed for their circulation. Examination of material historical networks offers rich potential to analyse both a 'changing web of social relations *and* material connections between people, places and objects'.[25]

Postcolonialising the RMSPC's past

Glen O'Hara writes that in recent maritime research, the 'sea and the coast have moved closer together, a testament to hydrography's interest in changing views and ideas of the ocean'.[26] Although as a social historian rather than a hydrographer, Lisa Norling has argued, along similar lines, for the importance of considering the shore together with the sea.[27] A tidalectic perspective allows for productive analysis of the sea and the shore in a unified frame. After all, as Kären Wigen undercores, '[m]ost current categories of social analysis were

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[25] Miles Ogborn, 'Atlantic geographies', *Social and cultural geography*, 6:3 (2005), 379-385 (p. 382). Emphasis added.

[26] Glen O'Hara, 'The sea is swinging into view: modern British maritime history in a globalised world', *English historical review*, CXXIV: 510 (2009), 1109-1134, (p. 1128).

[27] Lisa Norling, 'Ahab's wife: women and the American whaling industry, 1820-1870', in *Iron men, wooden women: gender and seafaring in the Atlantic world, 1700-1920*, ed. by Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 70-91, (p. 71).

initially developed to understand land-based societies' and these might need to be 'stretched, bent, and reworked to accommodate ocean-centered realities'.[28] Tidalectics offers one way to 'stretch' a land-based socio-cultural framework and, in the case of the Caribbean, recognizes the centrality of the sea as a creative, dynamic and destructive force in islands' pasts. Particularly given the importance of the sea to the Caribbean imaginary, the maritime world ought to be placed in full relation with analyses of land-based spaces such as plantations and free villages.

Tidalectics brings the sea and the shore closer together, and offers 'new' maritime history two further advantages. It provides a theoretical framework which centres the sea, and it also constitutes a non-Eurocentric perspective. While DeLoughrey suggests that island history and geographies can help us to understand the literary output of archipelagos, I stress that the tidalectic concept, although elaborated initially in the literary context by Kamau Brathwaite and DeLoughrey herself, can be developed as I have deployed it, to understand regional historical geographies. It would seem, in fact, that tidalectics provides an inversion of Massey's 'extroverted' sense of (terrestrial) place.[29] Where Massey's concept looks from the shore out towards the world, tidalectics provides an extroverted view that starts in the ocean. On the other hand, the limitations of tidalectics must be recognized. Firstly, tidalectics is an abstract perspective, and is best brought into dialogue with other frameworks in order to

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[28] Kären Wigen, 'Introduction', in *Seascapes: maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges*, ed. by Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2007), pp. 1-18 (p. 17).

[29] Elizabeth M. DeLoughrey, *Routes and roots: navigating Caribbean and Pacific island literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawaiʻi Press, 2007), p. 2; Doreen Massey, *Space, place and gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 154-5.

substantiate the maritime connections that the concept invokes. Secondly, a tidalectic perspective is more useful for interrogating coastal and oceanic places than interior spaces. Thirdly, tidalectics may not be endlessly translatable across the globe, as it is importantly situated in recognition of Caribbean experiences of forced migration and stark socio-cultural contention. At the same time, it would be premature at this stage to seek to confine its applicability.

Despite the possible limitations of tidalectics, this thesis has used the framework to resist the linear and ask questions of the relationship between the land and the sea. In order to do so, I shifted focus from British centres of management and oversight to the Caribbean. From this perspective, the RMSPC's service appears less of a straightforward 'tool' of empire, and more a series of nuanced interactions.[30] My tidalectic examination has also brought Caribbean peoples and representations of coaling labourers into the frame. As such, I have contributed empirically to knowledge of the Company's past, particularly by highlighting attitudes towards Caribbean labourers and strategies for managing the coaling station. In this respect, this thesis contrasts starkly with existing Company research and also adds to work on race, empire and maritime history as advanced by scholars such as W. Jeffrey Bolster, Alan Gregor Cobley, Risa Fausette and Laura Tabili.[31] From British shores, one nineteenth-century steamship company

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[30] Daniel R. Headrick, *The tools of empire: technology and European imperialism in the nineteenth century* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).
[31] W. Jeffrey Bolster, '"Every inch a man": gender in the lives of African American seamen, 1800-1860', in *Iron men, wooden women: gender and seafaring in the Atlantic world, 1700-1920*, ed. by Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 138-168; Alan Gregor Cobley, 'That turbulent soil: seafarers, the "Black Atlantic," and Afro-Caribbean identity', in *Seascapes: maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges*, ed. by Jerry H. Bentley, Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), pp. 153-168 ; Risa L. Faussette, 'Race, migration, and port-city radicalism: West Indian longshoremen and the politics of empire, 1880-1920', in *Seascapes: maritime histories, littoral cultures, and transoceanic exchanges*, ed. by Jerry H. Bentley, Renate

might seem very much like another, but a tidalectic perspective has highlighted a distinctive set of hitherto hidden Caribbean contexts and relations of the RMSPC.

The Company was made at sea and on multiple shores in the Americas and in Europe. The scheme of routes was adapted to incorporate the needs of Caribbean places, such as Jamaica and Carriacou, as well as Britain. Likewise the ship was influenced by multiple places, and although the RMSPC's directors and managers sought to shape the place of the ship through regulation, inspection and surveillance, it changed socially and culturally on arrival in the Americas. During the first decade of service, the RMSPC's coaling process was marked by geographies of slavery and freedom in the Caribbean, which differed by island and by empire. Finally a pattern of touring the Caribbean promoted by the RMSPC was simultaneously about visiting the Caribbean and dwelling in the enclave of the ship. Characteristics of Europe as well as the Caribbean were thus invoked for the leisure traveller. Overall, the RMSPC's service was made, re-made, and adapted in, for, and by many places.

MacQueen hoped that the RMSPC would 'infuse' the Caribbean 'with European energy and regularity', a hope that came to be shared − albeit in modified form − by Company directors and management, the Admiralty and the British state.[32] Yet the postcolonial geography I have developed here has provided rather

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Bridenthal and Kären Wigen (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2007), pp. 169-185; Laura Tabili, '"A maritime race": masculinity and the racial division of labour in British merchant ships, 1900-1939', in *Iron men, wooden women: gender and seafaring in the Atlantic world, 1700-1920*, ed. by Margaret S. Creighton and Lisa Norling (London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1996), pp. 169-188.
[32] MacQueen, *A general plan*, p. 56.

different perspectives on the Company and, in so doing, has revealed the significance of moments and events rarely included in its histories. For example, we might think back to how petitioners from Carriacou altered the RMSPC's mail delivery practices to that island, or to how Captain Gillard sought to clamp down on black stowaways on board the RMS *Thames* by painting their hair red and was subsequently charged with assault. Alternatively, it is useful to recall how coaling labourers refusing to work could slow down a steamship's passage through the Americas. These three examples indicate that the RMSPC was altered by its Caribbean context. As much as the RMSPC's service was characterised by 'European energy and regularity', it was marked by Caribbean energies. [33] In excess of MacQueen's hopes and expectations, the steamship service produced creolised rhythms and places.

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[33] *Ibid*.

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CO 28/212 Despatches from Rawson, Governor of Barbados, July - December 1870
CO 28/212/533 Delay of the inter-colonial steamer from St Thomas, 11 December 1870
CO 28/221 Barbados, original correspondence, 1886
CO 28/221/46 RMSPC's establishment at St Thomas, 1886
CO 28/264 Barbados, original correspondence, 1905
CO 28/264/72 West Indian Mail Service (Elder Dempster and RMSPC), list of passengers, 1905
CO 28/269 Barbados, original correspondence, 1907

CO 37/138 Bermuda, original correspondence, 1851
CO 37/246 Bermuda, original correspondence, 1909

CO 37/246/1 Request that Elder Dempster provide more facilities for tourists

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CO 111/575 British Guiana, original correspondence, 1910
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CO 137/522 Jamaica, original correspondence, July - September 1885
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CO 137/624 Jamaica, original correspondence, 1901
CO 137/625 Jamaica, original correspondence, 1901
CO 137/654 Jamaica, original correspondence, 1906
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CO 301/10 Turks and Caicos Islands original correspondence, 1852

CO 318 Colonial Office West Indies original correspondence
CO 318/158 Letters on matters relating to the West Indies, 1843
CO 318/217 Letters on matters relating to the West Indies, 1857
CO 318/273 Letters on matters relating to the West Indies, 1874-1879
CO 318/275 Letters on matters relating to the West Indies, 1884
CO 318/275/9 Report by the postmaster general on RMSPC tender, 11 January 1884
CO 318/281 Letters on matters relating to the West Indies, 1891

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CO 318/333 West Indies original correspondence, 1914
CO 318/333/3 Forwards correspondence with Owen Phillips on increased W.I passenger fares, 1914

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RM 38/L Various loose letters
RM 48 Royal Mail deck, 19th century
RM 82 Ledger labelled 'miscellaneous', containing articles, mail and abstracts on pay, policy and maritime matters, 1909-1961

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RMA 0378 Card report of 1860s. Largest amount of specie brought by Royal Mail Steamers
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RMA 1222 Leather album with RMSP badge *Orca* on West Indies cruise (c. 1900) 100+ postcards

The Wellcome Library Archives

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