



# Scandal of Colonial Rule (Critical Perspectives on Empire)

*James Epstein*

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In 1806 General Thomas Picton, Britain's first governor of Trinidad, was brought to trial for the torture of a free mulatto named Louisa Calderon and for overseeing a regime of terror over the island's slave population. James Epstein offers a fascinating account of the unfolding of this colonial drama. He shows the ways in which the trial and its investigation brought empire 'home' and exposed the disjuncture between a national self-image of humane governance and the brutal realities of colonial rule. He uses the trial to open up a range of issues, including colonial violence and norms of justice, the status of the British subject, imperial careerism, visions of development after slavery, slave conspiracy and the colonial archive. He reveals how Britain's imperial regime became more authoritarian, hierarchical and militarised but also how unease about abuses of power and of the rights of colonial subjects began to grow.

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