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from Medieval to Modernity*

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Cover image, Callum Colvin, 'Blind Ossian', from 'Ossian: Fragments of Ancient Poetry' (2002). The face of the poet is based on an etching by Alexander Runciman (1736-85).

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EDITORIAL

Irish-Scottish Studies as an area of modern academic concern began in the 1970s and 1980s in a series of symposia supported by the Social Science Research Council and focused on the economic histories of Ireland and Scotland. In the proceedings of the first of these – *Comparative Aspects of Scottish and Irish Economic History 1600–1900* (1977) – the editors T. C. Smout and L. McCullen say that ‘the idea for a seminar to compare aspects of Scottish and Irish economic and social development 1600–1900 occurred to the editors at a meeting at Trinity College, Dublin, in 1973’, and it is worth quoting at length the issues that inspired their initial discussions:

Both countries within the period have exchanged populations in the Scottish movement to Ulster in the seventeenth century and the equally significant movement of Irishmen to Scotland in the nineteenth. In both countries the cattle trade was a leading commercial sector in the seventeenth century and the linen trade was the main manufacture of the eighteenth; both countries attempted a cotton industry, which was much more successful in Scotland in the nineteenth century; both countries are famous for whisky (or for whiskey); both countries had important growth in their foreign trade before the American War of Independence, but Scotland was granted direct access to the colonies and Ireland denied it; both countries were affected by the improving landlords of the eighteenth century and the Highlands like Ireland were obsessed by the movement for tenants’ rights in the nineteenth. In both countries economic development was threatened by recurrent imbalances between food supply and population growth; most of Scotland escaped the trap but Ireland, in 1846, failed to do so.

The driving force behind this agenda, as Rosalind Mitchison and Peter Roebuck put it in their introduction to the published version of the third symposium – *Economy and Society in Scotland and Ireland 1500–1939* (1988) – was ‘why did the Scottish and Irish economies diverge so markedly in the

years after c.1780?’ The Irish-Scottish comparison represented, as it were, a test bed for explaining ‘economic take-off’ and the processes of modernisation. The differences between them were subsequently to feed into the reconceptualisation of Scotland as the nation which, as in the notable subtitle to Arthur Herman’s *The Scottish Enlightenment* (2001), ‘created our world and everything in it’. As T. M. Devine – a regular participant in the symposia and editor (with David Dickson) of the second collection of essays, *Ireland and Scotland 1600–1850* (1983) – was to put it in *The Scottish Nation* (1999), Scotland, rather than England, was the country in which ‘there truly was an Industrial and Agricultural Revolution’ (107). Scotland’s leading role in ‘modernisation’, together with the impact of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers on the understanding of the dynamics of historical change, gave a new significance to a history that had often been presented as simply the after-echo of events in England.

Ironically, perhaps, it was in the very years of these discussions of the differences between the historical experiences of Ireland and Scotland that Ireland’s contemporary economy was preparing for its own spectacular economic take-off, one that would give the ‘divergence’ in the performances of the Irish and Scottish economies a very different contemporary significance. As the BBC’s James Helms has commented, many in Europe ‘feel that Ireland is Europe’s shining success story, a place transformed during its EU membership from one of the continent’s poorest members to the top of the league’ and, therefore, a model for all the other small countries which ‘enlargement’ has brought into the European fold. Ireland’s Presidency of the European Union also gave its political class a status in Europe to which Scottish politicians could not aspire – except by going through Westminster. Where Ireland had once been offered in Scotland as proof of the irrelevance of political independence to economic development, Ireland now regularly outmanoeuvred Scotland in the attraction of the ‘inward investment’ on which Scottish economic development had been premised. If Irish studies had been fuelled in part by the major achievements of its writers in the twentieth century, from Yeats and Joyce to Heaney and Muldoon, and in part, too, since the 1960s, by the media visibility of the Troubles in the North, they gained an international impetus in the 1990s that Scottish Studies could not begin to emulate.

Those early meetings of economic historians took place around the time of the failed Scottish devolution referendum of 1979, and the condition of modern Scotland was then the cause of widespread despair. If Tom Nairn’s influential *The Break-up of Britain* (1977) held out the prospect of Scottish

political independence as a consequence of the collapse of the British state, it did so on the basis of presenting Scotland itself as nation in terminal decline: ‘one can of course say that modern Scotland has its own unmistakable “identity”. Is it right to refuse “identity” to a hopeless neurotic, because he is different from others, and unhappy about the fact?’ (173). But Scotland itself was to undergo a transformation just as significant in its own way as the economic transformation of Ireland – not a political revolution but a revolution in its cultural self-perception, founded on the reinterpretation of the richness of its cultural past as presented in studies such as Alexander Broadie’s *The Tradition of Scottish Philosophy* (1990), Duncan Macmillan’s *Scottish Art 1460–1990* (1990) and John Purser’s *Scotland’s Music* (1992). At the same time the creative achievement of writers such as Alasdair Gray, James Kelman, Kathleen Jamie and Janice Galloway, reached heights that for some suggested we were living in a ‘second Scottish Renaissance’. If the new Scottish Parliament, voted for in 1997 and opened in 1999, was indeed, in John Smith’s famous phrase, ‘the settled will of the Scottish people’, that ‘will’ had been given purpose by what had amounted, in the years since the first Thatcher government, to a declaration of cultural independence.

The movement towards devolution in Scotland made Irish-Scottish relations not merely a matter of significance to the nations’ past but of potential future significance to both countries. Partnered in a European Union rather than opposed to each other by their different histories in relation to Union with England, sharing very similar economic challenges in civil societies no longer dominated by religion, increasingly dominated by the so-called ‘knowledge’ economy, Ireland and Scotland had much to learn from each other – not least in relation to the issues posed by the apparently unresolvable crisis in Ulster. As the province edged towards peace in the 1990s, the issue of cultural recognition – recognition of Scottish traditions in Ireland, recognition of Irish traditions in the territory of the United Kingdom – became a crucial component in the building of bridges between communities divided by thirty years of violence. London and Dublin might have taken the political lead in negotiating with the parties in Northern Ireland but what was being negotiated was very centrally about Ireland and Scotland – as indicated by the status given to Ulster Scots by the Good Friday agreement.

That these changes in the cultural and political environment had radically extended the agenda for Irish-Scottish studies was clear from the first conference of the Irish-Scottish Academic Initiative – involving initially the Universities of Aberdeen and Strathclyde together with Trinity College Dublin – which was

held in the University of Strathclyde in 1997. Under the title of *Celebrating Columba* it sought to explore ‘Irish-Scottish Connections 597–1997’ and to address ‘the full range of Irish-Scottish cultural, religious, political and literary connections over the many centuries from his death to the present day’ (iii). In this perspective the ‘divergences’ on which the earlier symposia had been focused were reoriented towards the *convergences* of the *longue durée*, in which ‘historic affinities with both communities’ in Northern Ireland gave Scotland a key role ‘not simply to strengthen north-south but also east-west links’ (vii). The second ISAI conference, held at Trinity College Dublin in 2001, underscored the changing political landscape for Irish-Scottish studies: the keynote speaker was Donald Dewar, Scotland’s first First Minister who noted that ‘one of the by-products of recent developments in Scotland, and indeed the United Kingdom as a whole, is a broader, more understanding concern and appreciation for the Irish connection’ (1). If the title of the conference in that year – ‘Ireland and Scotland: Nation, Region, Identity’ – underlined continuing differences in the political status of the two countries, the following conference in Belfast in 2002 set a tripartite agenda in its title: ‘Ireland (Ulster) Scotland’ in which Ireland and Scotland were equal contributors to the ‘problematic ground’ on which the conference itself was being held.

The impetus of Irish-Scottish studies – both in terms of its historical and disciplinary reach and in terms of its contemporary significance – achieved institutional status consolidation in both Ireland and Scotland in 1999. In that year Trinity College in Dublin established its Centre for Scottish Studies (now the Centre for Scottish and Comparative Studies), and the University of Aberdeen established the Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies (promoted originally by George Watson and Allan Macinnes). Aberdeen had a long history of being in the forefront of Scottish studies – the Association for Scottish Literary Studies was founded there by Tom Crawford and David Hewitt in the 1970s and George Watson’s chair in Irish Literature was the first of its kind in the UK. The Research Institute was then fortunate in acquiring as its Director Professor Tom Devine from Strathclyde. Devine, as noted above, had been involved in the original symposia on the economic histories of Ireland and Scotland and had been a leading force in the establishment of ISAI, so that he was well placed to secure for Aberdeen major AHRB funding for a Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies. The success of the Centre’s many projects was acknowledged in its rating of ‘outstanding’ at the completion of Phase 1 in 2006 and in its achievement of a second phase of AHRC funding. The new institutional significance of Irish-Scottish studies was also marked by a joint

project between the Universities of Strathclyde and Edinburgh funded by the Leverhulme Trust (2001–2004), and by the establishment of the Irish-Scottish Studies programme at the Stout Research Centre at the Victoria University of Wellington in New Zealand (2003), as well as by new programmes in Irish-Scottish studies at universities such as Manchester, England.

These rapid academic developments in Irish and Scottish studies went hand-in-hand with the political and social changes initiated by the Good Friday agreement in 1998. The historical questions were no longer about why the Scottish economy had diverged so significantly from the Irish c.1780 but about how the two countries had between them contributed so significantly to the transformation of European culture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The increasing attention given to the Scottish Enlightenment as a key moment European intellectual history – a moment which owed much, of course, to Ireland, both in the person of Francis Hutcheson, whose major books were written in Dublin before he transferred to the University of Glasgow, and in the work of George Berkeley, from which David Hume took his philosophical starting point – was reinforced by the increasing recognition of Ireland and Scotland's key role in European romanticism, as explored, for instance, in Katie Trumpener's *Bardic Nationalism* (1997). And if many of the developments in European culture in the nineteenth century could be traced back to Macpherson's Ossianic poems, or to the influence of Burns and Scott, then, equally, Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* were the inspiration for much of what happened in European intellectual life between 1922 and the end of the century – Jacques Derrida, for instance, spent his time at Yale reading Joyce rather than reading philosophy.

This 'cultural turn' in Irish-Scottish studies was underlined both in the topic of 'Cultural Exchange' adopted for the fourth ISAI conference at the University of Edinburgh in 2004 (from which many of the papers in this first issue of the *Irish-Scottish Studies Journal* derive) and in the increasingly diversified range of disciplines – politics, sociology, theology, philosophy as well as history, literature and language studies – involved in Irish-Scottish comparisons. The expanding disciplinary base for exploring relations between Ireland and Scotland was matched, however, by the expanding geographic reach of Irish-Scottish studies. Only Norway exported as many of its people in the nineteenth century as did Ireland and Scotland, and emigration continued to be a major factor in the national experience of both countries until the late years of the twentieth century. Both Ireland and Scotland are countries whose 'national identity' has enormous numbers of participants who are not citizens

of their states: the significance of this diasporic identification – increasingly evident as ‘identity’ politics becomes the currency of political development around the world – has added a further dimension to the comparative study of two nations whose diaspora have often lived cheek by jowl with each other around the world. In California, for instance, the American nobel-prize winning novelist John Steinbeck, whose mother’s family was from Bally Kelly in Northern Ireland, grew up close to an area which had been named ‘Bonny Doon’ by its Scottish settlers, and Steinbeck was to quote Robert Burns in the title of his most famous story – *Of Mice and Men* (1937) – as well as adapting the title of Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Travels with a Donkey* in his account of the America at the beginning of the 1960s, which he called *Travels with Charley in Search of America* (1962). The exploration of the experiences of these diasporic communities, of their continuing influence on each other and on the cultures to which they migrated – and also of their continuing influence on the places they left – has extended the scope of Irish-Scottish studies far beyond the territories of the modern nations.

Instead of being test cases for how ‘modernity’ began, Ireland and Scotland are now, perhaps, test cases for how small, apparently marginal countries can have a profound impact on world development, and for how, in the contemporary world, small nations, with very substantial diasporas that continue to identify themselves with their homelands, should manage the processes of European political integration and economic globalization. These are issues which future issues of this *Journal* will aim to address.

On the appearance of this first issue, I would like to thank, for their financial support, both the Leverhulme Trust, which in part funded the ISAI conference in Edinburgh in 2004, and the Arts and Humanities Research Council, whose Phase 2 funding of the Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies at the University of Aberdeen has made possible the publications programme of which the *Journal* is one outcome. My thanks, also, to the College of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Aberdeen for its sustained and ongoing commitment to Irish-Scottish Studies. At a more personal level, I would like to thank Aaron Kelly, now of the University of Edinburgh, and Eleanor Bell, now of the University of Strathclyde, for their organisational work for the Edinburgh-Strathclyde Leverhulme project, and Jon Cameron of the AHRC Centre in Aberdeen for his assistance in the production of this issue.

Cairns Craig
Aberdeen, August 2007

What's the 'Matter?': Medieval Literary Theory and the Irish Campaigns in *The Bruce*

R. D. S. Jack

As Arestotill, giff as men redis
He had folowyt his kindly dedis,
He had bene fals and covetous,
But his wyt maid him virtuous
(*Bruce*, IV, 740–3)

I 'Strange Lines'

John Barbour's *Bruce*, composed in the mid 1370s, is the first long poem in the Scots vernacular. It contains twenty books, the first thirteen of which trace the Wars of Liberty from their origins until triumph at the Battle of Bannockburn. At this point the Irish 'matter' enters the poem. Chronologically, this is understandable. After all, when Bruce won control of Scotland, the 'opening up of a second front in 1315 could have come as little surprise to Edward II'.¹ Most modern readers, however, find Barbour's treatment of that campaign an unwise artistic choice.

When one analyses the Irish material in more detail these worries are confirmed. Barbour does not just give a parenthetic nod in the direction of chronology and chronicles. The entirety of Book XIV (554 lines) is devoted to Edward's embarkation in Ireland and the early battles in his campaign. The first 265 lines of Book XV continue the description. A resounding victory over the Anglo-Irish army suggests success for his endeavour. But while the opening to Book XVI (334 lines) continues the victorious tale and brings King Robert I to the island, doubts begin to dominate. Divisions between the two brothers and flaws in Edward's character anticipate failure. This possibility is realised in Book XVIII. In the first 242 lines of that book an adventure which began with victory over the Anglo-Irish forces ends with defeat at the same hands. Edward Bruce dies, his failure gives new hope to Edward II of England (XVIII, 229–31) and the Irish 'matter' ends.²

¹ Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London, 1991), 125.

² References and quotations follow *Barbour's Bruce*, ed. Matthew McDiarmid and James

The topical and structural implications raised here are serious. Topically, Barbour's critics wonder why, in a poem about liberty, the clear lesson taught by Bruce's victory over English power is blurred by extended analysis of a failed Scottish attempt to deprive another land of its freedom. Structurally, they believe the first Scottish 'makar' or 'word builder' is creating a poor edifice. Either it should end with Bannockburn and eliminate the Irish material or that material should itself be re-organised. Why, for example, does Barbour move backwards and forwards from Ireland to Scotland, from Edward Bruce to (predominantly) Sir James Douglas in a poem about Bruce? (See Books XV, 319–574; XVI, 335–510; XVIII, 259–436.) Can he not decide on his hero or his topic?

Factual criticisms follow. As Barbour's editors highlight,³ he promises historical 'suthfastnes' in Book I (1–20) yet his account includes four different kinds of 'lie'.

- (1) Events: He simplifies events, for example merging Edward Bruce's two campaigns into one (XIV, 1 > XV, 265).
- (2) Characters: He simplifies characterisation. Stereotypes dominate with all candidates for heroism (and particularly Edward Bruce) being measured against criteria of courage and wisdom. The historical cast list is also reduced. For example, Richard Clare's dominant role as English leader is achieved by granting him positions he did not hold and placing him in battles he never attended (e.g. XIV, 254–7: as Lieutenant of Ireland; XIV, 389–91 as Earl of Ulster).
- (3) Anecdotes: He adds unauthorised anecdotal evidence. One example is when Bruce halts his entire army until a pregnant washer-woman has been safely delivered (XVI, 275–96).
- (4) Structures: The linear calendar of chronicles sometimes gives way to other patternings of history. Mythically, in Book XIV, 312–16 Edward Bruce is compared with Judas Maccabeus. In terms of Christian history the dates and events surrounding the siege of Carrickfergus (Book XV, 98–108; 243–53) are manipulated to place them within Easter week. Mysteriously, numerological patterns, mostly associated with the fortunate number three, are introduced (e.g. XVI, 1–4; 49–52).⁴

Stevenson, Scottish Text Society, 3 vols. (Edinburgh and London, 1978–81). I have normalised 'y' to 'th'; 'w' to 'v'.

³ A.A. M. Duncan's edition, *John Barbour: The Bruce* (Edinburgh, 1997) has excellent historical notes.

⁴ The direct ontological signing power of numbers was, in medieval times, based on Job

At best, such critics damn Barbour with faint praise. The origins of Scottish literature are bound to be naïve, even when the author concerned is a learned archdeacon and university graduate. This study proposes a different approach. Modern concerns about the poem derive from modern critical expectations. How do these criticisms fare when approached from a diachronic perspective?

To begin with, the different kinds of 'lie' noted only exist if one's criterion for accuracy is mimetic and naturalistic. That these 'errors' are all measured against political evidence also reflects a predominantly realistic or materialistic world vision. The structural issues, for their part, derive from supposed imbalances within the natural story line. But are these, realistic, mimetic, political and naturalistic assumptions shared by Barbour? What was *his* training? How did *he* define the 'truth' of his poem? For if he worked from different artistic premises, we may still find his work synchronically dissatisfying but we cannot dismiss him as a naïve artist.

The biographical evidence concerning Barbour is at best patchy but one fact provides a secure basis for examination. As McDiarmid has convincingly argued, he was a learned man with a Scottish degree followed by study in Paris, then the centre of European Aristoteleanism.⁵ This effectively removes the assumption of early critical naivety. As Christian and Aristotelian, Barbour lived at the time of Chaucer's 'newe science' (*Parlement of Foules*, 24–5) when Greek theory met Scholastic refinement. As Minnis has demonstrated, this period saw the full flourishing of the twelfth century renaissance in literary theory: 'From the thirteenth century until the end of the Middle Ages, Aristotle was *the* Philosopher.' He concludes that 'no other branch of poetic theory would have so long and prestigious a history in Western Europe'.⁶ Using only the most basic motifs within that tradition—the causal line and the categories of allegory—I shall re-consider the critical problems outlined above.⁷

38.4–7 and the Apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon 11.17–20. See John MacQueen, *Numerology* (Edinburgh, 1985), 1–46 [14].

⁵ McDiarmid I, 4–5.

⁶ *Medieval Literary Theory and Criticism*, ed. A. J. Minnis and A. B. Scott (Oxford, 1988), 1–11 [9]. In this Introduction as in his *Medieval Theory of Authorship* (London, 1984) Minnis convincingly refutes the idea that medieval literary theory was at once peripheral, naïve and conducted on rigorous theological premises.

⁷ A summing up of these premises, and of the 'causal line' is provided by Timothy A. Robinson in *Aristotle in Outline* (Indianapolis and Cambridge, 1995). For accounts of the causal line and allegoresis in the commentating tradition see *Medieval Literary Criticism* 12–64 and 321–4, 396–8 respectively.

What, then *are* the basic tenets of this ‘new science’? Dante (1265–1321) arguably the greatest Scholastic poet provides a valuable guideline. For him the problems we have encountered at the literal level of interpretation are not the end of the matter. Instead he asks his readers to see such ‘versi strani’ (strange lines) as signs that fiction has translated truth in different terms, accessible only to those who seek them out (*Inferno* IX, 61–3). With this in mind, I shall reconsider the factual, topical and structural problems encountered in both the Irish matter of the *Bruce* and, where apposite, the poem as a whole. To do this, I shall concentrate on Aristotle’s position classically while employing Hugh of St Victor (c1096–1141) Geoffrey of Vinsauf (fl 1198–1216) and Dante as touchstones for the Scholastic approach.

II Medieval Poetics: ‘The Final Cause’

The first factual difficulty noted is, in Dr Johnson’s terms, Barbour’s sin ‘against the faith of chronicles.’ The Irish campaign as described in the *Bruce* merges Edward Bruce’s first advance to Ardee in September 1315 with his later, November campaign into Leinster, Kildare and Leix. The many historical inaccuracies which result dominate the notes of his editors. Nor is the Irish section alone in offering apparent lies of this kind. Throughout the poem, obvious perversions of fact are presented from the outset. In Book I, Edward I is lengthily condemned for returning viciously from a crusade he never went on (I:139–48) while Douglas’s father, against all evidence is transformed into a patriotic martyr figure. (I:282–5) Nor should it be forgotten that these are knowing lies. The *Bruce* reveals that its author had read many of the texts whose evidence he denies including Fordun, Guido de Columnis and Gualterus Anglicus.

The major assumption here is that Barbour’s prime aim is imitation of the actual. But the most basic categories of Scholastic thought propose a different end. Aristotle, as Scholasticism’s prime source, proposed an essentially causal account of knowledge which was applied in different ways across all disciplines. When the final cause (*causa finalis*) in that line was applied to Rhetoric and Poetics effective moral persuasion of a given audience emerged as the aim rather than mimesis *per se*, ‘It is . . . the hearer that determines the speech’s aim and object.’ (*Rhetoric* I.3.1358b1). The same view is mirrored by Dante when reflecting on his *Divina Commedia*. The poet, he

comments, aims 'to remove those living in this life and bring them to a state of happiness'.⁸

Therefore the pertinent question is no longer 'Does the poem represent life accurately?' It becomes 'Which audience was Barbour addressing?' A reasonably clear answer is available. Records indicate that Barbour wrote under the patronage of Robert II and was paid for writing the poem.⁹ That the *Bruce* looks forward to a golden age under that King is consistent with this evidence as is its warning that an alliance between king and nobles is needed to fulfil this 'Stewart Myth.' Interestingly, it is in Book XIII, after the account of Bannockburn and immediately before the Irish campaign is described that Barbour looks forward to the sixth year of Robert II's reign and prophesies in this way.

God graunt that thai that cummyn ar
Off his ofspring manteyme the land
And hald the folk weill to warand
And mayteyme rycht and leawte
Als wele as in his tyme did he. (XIII, 718–22)

Only if the weak figurehead nobles of Richard II's time listen to the poem and follow the example of their predecessors under Robert I will that golden age emerge.

This hypothesis is clearly supported in Aristotelean and Scholastic thought. For Aristotle the end of poetry as branch of Rhetoric is not only affective, it is affective within the area of practical morality. Thus its aim is 'to urge us either to do or not to do something' (*Rhetoric* I.3.1358b1). Dante agrees. Poetry belongs to the 'branch of philosophy (dealing with) morals or ethics . . . not for speculation but with a practical object' ('Can Grande' §16). To understand why this is so, the first cause in the line of analysis must be introduced.

III Medieval Poetics: 'The Efficient Cause'

Once the 'end' of medieval making is understood in persuasive terms, it is easier to see why characters as well as events may be understood as factual lies

⁸ Dante, 'Epistle to Can Grande' §15 (Cited in Minnis, 462).

⁹ McDiarmid I, 7–11 [10].

which point to moral truths. To make this clearer, the first—authorial—cause has to be drawn in. The poet/orator in Aristotelean terms is called the ‘efficient cause’ (*causa efficiens*) in two senses. The first highlights artificiality—he is ‘effective’ within the disciplinary code of rhetorical persuasion; the second signs the presence behind him of the Original Cause (God) outside of time and text. The latter will be discussed more fully later. At this point it may be noted that it explains the most frequently noted ‘lie’ of all, Bruce’s genealogical transformation into an unhistorical amalgam of grandfather (Competitor), father (Earl of Carrick) and self (I: 37–478) mysteriously signs the Christian God, three in one.

The more basic authorial issue of effectiveness demands further changes of perspective from the modern reader. Poetry in that time was defined artificially as a verbal signing system whose categories were assumed to differ from those of the world and, therefore, make accurate, naturalistic imitation impossible. (Aristotle, *Rhetoric* I.2.1357b1; *Poetics* I.1.1447a10). Even if it were obliquely available to the ‘maker’ it was always viewed as an easier (and therefore inferior) option. Geoffrey of Vinsauf in his *Poetria Nuova* for example, calls the line of nature ‘sterile’ and compares it unfavourably with the ‘fertile’ invented endings of art. (97–102)¹⁰

It was also defined aurally and memorially as the opening to the *Bruce* reminds us (I: 1–6; 13–16). These considerations make simplification of events and characters not an aberration but the appropriate aim of a morally persuasive art. As Hugh of St Victor had noted, ‘memoria’ is only effective when ‘reducing to a brief and compendious outline things which have been written or expressed at great length.’¹¹ Another agreement between memorial and poetic theory is relevant here and highlighted by Mary Carruthers. Both simplify for the same, tropological end—‘the formation of moral virtues.’¹² Barbour’s simplification of the two Irish campaigns and his deployment of Clare as a conveniently malevolent English anti-type to Scottish virtue would, therefore, recommend themselves memorably and morally.

By defining himself as a writer of Romance (I: 446) rather than chronicle, however, he assumes to himself another non-realistic freedom. While, like the historian, he must pay attention to the particular and the actual, his specialised

¹⁰ Ernest Gallo, *The Poetria Nuova and its Sources in Early Doctrine* (The Hague, 1971), 21. Quotations follow this text.

¹¹ *The Didascalicon of Hugh of St Victor*, ed. and trans. Jerome Taylor (New York, 1961), Book III, Chapter 3:11, 93. Quotations follow this text.

¹² See Mary J. Carruthers, *The Book of Memory* (Cambridge, 1990), 156–188 [156].

talent should be directed towards kinds and potentiality. The poet's prime function goes beyond what actually happened to embrace what *might* happen (*Poetics* 9.1451a).¹³ That is, instead of concern with actuality, mimetic realism, and politics as expressed in writing, the medieval writer highlights potentiality, aurality, artifice, and practical morality. How does this affect our reading of his 'lies'?

Most obviously an affective piece of oratory designed to move the figure-head nobles of Robert II's court to courageous action would account, in the Irish section, for Douglas being set up as the major counter-type to Edward Bruce. More broadly, it explains why a lengthy passage (I: 274–444) confirming that nobleman as a type of courage, loyalty and prudence and containing the 'lies' about his father's martyrdom precedes any detailed description of the king himself. But if the poet wants to establish an easily memorable moral icon of chivalric perfection against which lesser men may be measured, both length and historic inaccuracy become justified. The poem, then, does have two heroes as the opening suggests (I: 29). And at the end, it is Douglas who completes his king's desired crusade and Douglas's death which leads into the dénouement via another long and explicit statement of his knightly virtues. Those who thought of poetry as a set of signs destined to instil good action would have applauded the artist for pointing to higher truths rather than cavilling about factual errors.

The modern concern that Barbour fails to present real people and instead measures his heroes and villains against the twin classical ideals of wisdom (*sapientia*) and courage (*fortitudo*) (e.g. I, 22; 2, 263 etc.) would not have been shared in the Middle Ages either. Aristotle, after all, had given poetry philosophical primacy over the historian precisely because 'its statements are of the nature of universals, whereas those of history are singulars' (*Poetics* 9, 1451b1). As a result it imitates not 'a given individual. but . . . a given type' (*Rhetoric* I.2.1356.b1). As a vehicle for presenting Ideas, the humourised character was also more evidently a product of artifice and more easily assimilated in the memory. Stereotypes were, therefore, highly regarded within the commentating tradition.

Nor are Barbour's heroic types confined to Homer's qualities of courage and wisdom. He adds Virgil's test of 'pietas' (moral goodness). Thus, while Edward I may match Bruce in martial wisdom and bravery, his character and motivations are overtly evil, with any historic evidence suggesting the

¹³ Quotations follow *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 2 vols, ed. Jonathan Barnes (Princeton, NJ, 1984).

contrary being omitted or re-written to keep that opposition persuasively clear.¹⁴

Viewed in aural, artificial and affective terms, the Irish matter confirms this simplified, moralised methodology. Historians stress the difficulty in determining 'the motives which lay behind the Irish expedition'.¹⁵ In Barbour's poem only one reason is presented for its ambitious initiation and ultimate failure. Edward Bruce anticipates Shakespeare's Hotspur in his pride and immoderate ambition (XIV, 1–7; XVI, 325–34). The Shakespearean example underlines the fact that we are here concerned with simplified mythic patterns of history.

It is important to remember, at this point, that many medieval historians also felt free on these grounds, to pattern and even invent facts so that the higher aim of moral 'suthfastnes' be clearly transferred to their audience. As Goldstein and others have demonstrated, when Barbour deserts the faith of chronicles, he need not always claim the freedom of the poet to justify himself; he need only define which side he has joined in the Historiographers' War.¹⁶

And in that context, the apparent loss of focus, moving attention from Edward Bruce to Douglas in three of the 'Irish' books can be seen in a more positive light. The opening account of Douglas's youth established him as Hotspur's counter-type, the wise, courageous Henry Bolingbroke. If Shakespeare, in his fictive presentation of the Tudor myth, contrasts Henry IV's wisdom against the intemperate rashness of Hotspur, so Barbour in his much earlier Stewart myth concentrates on Edward Bruce's lack of restraint in selfish pursuit of honour. Chronicles are denied or manipulated to present his listeners with two clearly contrasted alternative models for their own behaviour. To make that choice even easier the underlying selfishness of Edward Bruce's conduct is explained in the same vicious terms – pride (XVIII, 83) reserved elsewhere in the poem for Edward I and the devil.

Both Barbour and Shakespeare extend analysis beyond individuals to relationships and the ability to accept good counsel. The challenge of liberty is not dependent on the king alone; it involves all levels of society with the nobility having, once more, a key medial position in maintaining the hierarchical harmony. Rather than criticising Barbour for his lack of psychological nicety one should perhaps praise him for patterning his extended oration in such a way

¹⁴ Edward's genuine claims to the throne for example are played down while his Christianity is called into question by his return from the invented crusade.

¹⁵ Lynch, *Scotland: A New History*, 125.

¹⁶ R. James Goldstein, *The Matter of Scotland* (Lincoln, Neb., 1993). Chapters 2, 3.

that these qualities are repetitively, and therefore effectively, recommended in action.

IV Medieval Poetics: 'The Material Cause'

This naturally draws in both the second stage of the causal line and introduces the third kind of anecdotal 'error' factually. What is the causal 'matter' (*causa materialis*) of the *Bruce* and how (if at all) does the Irish material contribute to it? As it is in this context that the Irish section is singled out uniquely for criticism this part of the argument is crucial.

The naturalistic, political argument which produces these problems can be swiftly summed up: 'The theme, as presented in Book 1 is a simple one which may be encapsulated in the single line, "A fredome is a noble thing". The 13 books which lead to Bannockburn not only illustrate that theme clearly and triumphantly, they also suggest that, politically, the *Bruce* anticipates a democratic approach to government, fitting for a nation later to be defined in terms of the democratic intellect. The Irish section, however, is at odds with this model. Even if one sees it in Goldstein's terms as 'another war of liberation urged by a Gaelic people united against English oppression' (197) rather than a dubious attempt to enforce Scottish power in a foreign land—the aim remains less clearly libertarian. Tonally and structurally the Irish expeditions are also unsatisfactory. The major hero, Bruce, loses and passes from defeat to death. Douglas then carries his heart on crusade before himself dying. And although a new order is promised by one of Edward Bruce's wise counsellors—Randolph — the work ends on a whimper.'¹⁷

Again, a medieval Aristotelean would find these premises unconvincing. As a philosopher, his views on liberty differ markedly from those advanced by Barbour's critics. For him, liberty was anything but a clear and absolute concept. Linking it with justice and defining it contingently, he concluded that no system of social justice could offer freedom to all. The idea of democracy did not appeal either; he preferred hierarchical systems, and opted for benevolent leadership as the best, failed model available.¹⁸

¹⁷ Duncan, *John Barbour: The Bruce* regards the final holy section of Book XX as such a 'perfunctory obit' that he does not even print lines 607–30 of the poem.

¹⁸ This discussion of Liberty in the *Bruce* is presented at greater length in my earlier article "(A!) Fredome is a noble thing!", *Scottish Studies Review*, I (2000) 26–38, [29–31]. See also Curtis N. Johns, *Aristotle's Theory of the State* (Basingstoke, 1990).

As a poetic theorist, the stolidly political premise of the argument would have troubled a man who had quidditatively allowed the poet freedom to range persuasively across the entire allegorical range. For although he believed that the end of poetic persuasion *was* limited to the practical and the ethical, mimesis remained the means to that final cause. And here, uniquely, the poet could range across the entire sentential hierarchy. For Aristotle and the Scholastics, the literal/historical level of application was part of this but only as the foundation of a poetic building whose medial verbal courses concerned moral practice and theory and which rose at its highest levels to religion and anagogy. Constructing these allegorical levels of application remained the true task for the 'word builder's artistry'.¹⁹

And where in this topical hierarchy did the political vision come? It stood below the philosophical, the divine and the ontological. At these higher levels alone absolute values might exist. Political themes were lower simply because they were humane or 'trivial' in the terms of the Seven Liberal Arts. As Aristotle himself noted, 'It would be strange to think that the art of politics or practical wisdom is the best knowledge since man is not the best thing in the world' (*Nichomachean Ethics* VI.7.1141a1).

So what precisely is the libertarian theme which frames the Irish material? Far from simply stating that liberty is a noble thing, Barbour admits that its definition is humane and therefore contingent. Only those who have known the contrary state of thralldom, can understand freedom, because politically speaking, 'contrar thingis ever-mar, Discoveringis off the tother ar.' (I: 241–2). He is now on the verge of Boethius' hydra theme as described in Book IV Pr. 6 of *De Consolatione Philosophiae*. The hydra's body is human free will; its innumerable tentacles, the different questions human liberty raises in all disciplines from politics to metaphysics. In medieval times, this problem was related to the question of justice human and divine.²⁰ It was also in this context, that the feudal vow's value as a microcosm for dialectical analysis was recognized. The strengths and limitations of that bond could be variously examined across all levels of application from the personal and the marital via politics and morality to the Old and New Testaments.²¹

And that is precisely what Barbour does. In true Scholastic fashion, he follows his contingent (unclear) Aristotelean premise by testing it against the

¹⁹ Hugh of St Victor outlines the architectural metaphor and discusses its implications in *Didascalicon*, Books V and VI.

²⁰ See Charles S. Singleton, *Journey to Beatrice* (Baltimore, 1958) 57–69.

²¹ See Beatrice's speech in Dante's *Paradiso* V, 16–84.

most difficult case possible. Kings and nobles may talk of liberty but what of the lowest ranks? How can even the most just society guarantee liberty to a serf when he is feudally bound to obey at once his wife and his lord, whose demands may be instantaneously invoked yet be mutually exclusive? The length of this exemplum—it covers thirty two lines (I, 243–74)—as well as the openly admitted failure to solve it other than mysteriously (I, 243–74) indicate its importance and confirm the broad allegorical context within which liberty is introduced.

Nor should the sympathy shown to the thrall be taken as a sign that Barbour advocates political democracy. While the first Book foresees Scotland's success in the wars of liberty and attributes it to all levels of society placing country before self, the reason for that is not political but mysterious. God, ineffably, has decided Scotland's fate beyond time (I, 34–6; 131–4; 176–7; 606–9). Barbour, therefore, is not a hypocrite as some critics suggest. He did own serfs but he did not advocate a level society. Throughout the Romance (IX, 64–72; also II, 170–4; 504–10; III, 755–62) and in the Irish section particularly (XIV, 101–3; 330–1 XVI, 1–14; 305–17), he consistently sides with Aristotle's favoured mode of government—hierarchy under a benevolent leader.

The Christian God's position as 'original cause' also explains many of the anecdotal additions to the poem, including the example of Bruce and the washer-woman. Its unauthorised presence is consistent with the medieval view of history which accepted that its subject was at best a repository of illustrative examples rather than a record of facts. It is necessary to show that Bruce possesses the defining New Testament virtue of mercy and so the washerwoman enters the tale.

V Medieval Poetics: 'The Formal Cause'

It is within these parameters of difference that the remaining formal issues have to be considered. Do the broad criticisms raised at the outset concerning the Irish matter's structural ineffectiveness and topical irrelevance remain when the '*causa formalis*' comes under scrutiny? Does the last link to be considered in the causal chain remove those doubts about confused chronology outlined in the fourth group of 'lies'?

Certainly, the criteria used to define these problems have already been discredited. The natural line of organisation is, for Aristotle and the commen-

tators only the foundation of the poetic structure. More difficult, more varied and more artistic are the artificial orderings of 'matter' which reflect hidden, allegorical truths. As Hugh puts it, 'After the reading of history, it remains for you to investigate the mysteries of allegories' (*Didascalicon*, Book VI, Chapter 4). On these grounds different kinds of patterning reflect its polysemous nature. They are not signs of confusion but of the verbal architect's precision because 'History follows the order of time; to allegory belongs more the order of knowledge' (*Didascalicon*, Book VI, Chapter 6).

The fullest account of the various 'ordines artificiales' possible is found in Vinsauf's *Poetria Nuova*. With it as authority, how might the linear and patterned courses of the *Bruce* have appeared to a fourteenth century audience?

The major artistic advantage of artificial construction is its freeing of the story line from the single order of time. For example, the centre of the tale may become the major focus. 'The high point of the work does not radiate only from the very end, but has a double glory: the end of the work and the middle, Art can draw a pleasant beginning out of either' (*Poetria Nuova*, 118–20). This bias might be signed by 'amplificatio'. Within the artificial structuring of the *Bruce*, therefore, Bannockburn *has* a major focus – as centre of the construction (Books X– XIII) – and this is signed by making it the longest single episode.

The Irish episode's valid structural and topical relationship to the story of Liberty is further confirmed. Ireland enters that story as the first example of liberty's obverse side, thralldom, within the subtle Aristotelean argument, 'As Walis was and als Ireland, That he put to swilk thrillage' (I, 100–1). The Scots learn from this negative example and oppose Edward I, winning a triumphant, series of victories which are absolutely guaranteed being God-determined. The question of how liberty may be maintained, without necessary divine aid, is considered after Bannockburn in the Robert II passage. It is in this context as an examination of the limits of 'actual' rather than 'absolute' liberty that the Irish passage is needed to carry the libertarian argument forward.

This contrast between divine and humane in a poem whose final cause is an open-ended challenge to Robert II's nobles determines the other 'strange' structural choices. The movement of focus from Ireland to Scotland, from Edward Bruce to faithful followers like Douglas was seen to set an imperfect knight against his perfect counterpart rather than reflecting authorial indecision. The 'truth' taught at the end underlines this contrast. Anagogically, where harmony alone exists, Bruce and Douglas close heroic lives with holy

deaths. In the uncertain political world where divine protection is not guaranteed an open-ended story line reflects the uncertain future faced by Scotland's present rulers. These contrasted structures effectively offer the clearest possible challenge to these 'auditouris'; in the disparity lies both 'matter' and motivation.

Is there a means of checking this? As Hugh of St Victor argues, only the highest, spiritual courses of the verbal building reconcile all others. 'The deeper meaning admits no contradiction; it is always harmonious, always true' (*Didascalicon*, Book VI Chapter 11). Further, the good word builder only lays down the bricks of the story line *after* he has decided upon an appropriate form. The 'causa formalis' thus becomes a sign of the topic chosen.

So what would that form be in the *Bruce* if the diachronic hypotheses advanced so far have substance? Aristotle had no doubt that the unmoved mover had circular form and ruled the spheres (*De Caelo* I–II; *Physics* VIII; *Metaphysics* XII).²² Boethius popularised the idea and Vinsauf highlighted that form within his list of artificial orderings, 'The part which comes first in order awaits outside the door of the work; but let the ending enter first, a fitting precursor, and let it pre-empt the seat, like a more worthy guest, or almost like the host itself. Nature has placed the ending last, but the veneration of art defers to and, lifting up the lowly, raises it on high' (112–7).

When the hermeneutic issue is posed in this way, the structural 'lies' which opened this study become self-evident proofs. Mythically, a circular ordering is suggested. By comparing the Scots to the Maccabeans Barbour invokes the Christian parallel with Israel and a journey which led from Spain via Ireland to Scotland. The latter half of the poem with its Irish passage in which Edward Bruce is compared to Judas Maccabeus (XIV, 312–6) and Douglas goes to Spain in the holy cause offers a historical pattern which returns to its origins.

If this pattern is only suggested, the allegorical and anagogical circles are much clearer. Numerologically, the 630 lines of Book 20 exactly mirror the 630 lines of Book 1. The final verse paragraph of Book 20 echoes the end of the first verse paragraph in Book I and each celebrates that God outwith time who knows the end of the narration before it began. (I, 129–35). Prophetically too, Bruce's victory is announced, alpha within omega, at the outset (II, 85–90).

²² Lindsay Judson's article, 'Heavenly Motion and the Unmoved Mover' in *Self-Motion: From Aristotle to Newton*, ed. by Mary Louise Gill and James G. Lennox (Princeton NJ, 1994), 155–71 offers a good account of this area in Aristotle's thought.

Even the 'strange' factual 'lie' of Edward I's non-existent crusade is explained when artificial circularity is contemplated. That invention allows a perfect exemplary antithesis to be presented. At the start, the English king gives up a holy war for materialistic reasons; at the end, Bruce defeats death to complete *his* crusade.

Even the last group of factual lies associated with the Irish episodes are explained by this account of structure. Christian history and, most significantly, the relationship of the Easter week to its penitential cause, the fall of Adam, may defy chronicles. But when the auditouris hear that a truce was called 'in sic tyme as on Pasche day/Quhen God rais for to sauf mankin/Fra wem of auld Adamys syne' (248–50) they are reminded of those higher spiritual values and immutable ontological 'facts' which are part of the poem's persuasive end. Similarly the substitution of significant dates and numbers for actual ones point beyond contingency and facts to divine ordering and the mysteries of the Wisdom of Solomon—'Thou hast ordered all things by number and weight'.

Every one of the 'strangenesses' noted at the start of this study has now been re-translated in alternative 'truthful' terms. This has been done while confining diachronic evidence to the most widely held ideas and most influential writers within the medieval commentating tradition. In particular, the relevance (in artistic, topical, structural and persuasive terms) of the most frequently criticised section of all, 'the matter of Ireland,' has been demonstrated. It is, therefore, perhaps time to stop blaming Barbour for doing badly things he wasn't attempting in the first place.

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Voices of the Vanquished: Echoes of Language Loss in Gaelic Poetry from Kinsale to the Great Famine

Tom Dunne

The first part of my title acknowledges a debt to Wachtel's great study of Inca understanding of the Spanish conquest—*The Vision of the Vanquished*.¹ His main sources were the folk dances that originated in that traumatic time; difficult to interpret, but nearly all that survives from an Indian perspective. The manuscript sources for the Gaelic Irish response to conquest and colonisation, particularly in its most crucial and rebarbative phases, from the late sixteenth century to the Williamite settlement, are, by contrast, rich and varied. Yet the largest and richest Gaelic source, the political poetry of the Gaelic elite, has been ignored by nearly all modern historians of the period (the most important exception being Nicholas Canny). Their historical contexts have also been largely neglected by literary scholars (again with some exceptions, notably Breandán Ó Buachalla), who, when they have commented on them, have been content with scholarly editions, more linguistic than historical.² Even more remarkably, the most profound cultural revolution in Irish history since the coming of Christianity—the replacement of the Gaelic language by English, initially as the language of power and elites, but ultimately as the language also of ordinary life—this dramatic and traumatic shift scarcely features in modern Irish historiography. It is, of course, a complex story, and even its main features are difficult to discern clearly. It was a long drawn out process, with still unmapped local as well as class variations, from the gradual abandonment of Irish by the indigenous elites (and indeed the first generations of New English) and its divorce from power—to the far more rapid abandonment of the language by the rural poor in the decades before and after the Famine: millions of individual decisions responding to the harsh realities of economic survival, status and influence. It was a process mediated through—and doubtless softened by—shifting patterns of bilingualism. It was made further invisible by the official policy of

¹ Nathan Wachtel, *The Vision of the Vanquished. The Spanish Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes* (Brighton, 1977).

² See, especially, Nicholas Canny, *Making Ireland British, 1580–1650* (Oxford, 2001); Breandán Ó Buachalla, *Aisling Ghéar* (Dublin, 1996).

what Patricia Palmer has described as ‘occluded translation’. The process she describes continued into the modern period, that is, the official production of monophone texts—e.g. of state trials, or evidence before parliamentary commissions—which has everyone speaking English, even when the evidence shows that Irish was spoken.³

This is one reason why Irish historians, who tend to rely so heavily on official sources, have been largely deaf to the voices of Irish speakers. Another is that most of them have difficulty with the use of literary sources, and especially of Gaelic poetry, as historical evidence, despite the fact that it articulated communal rather than individual perspectives. In the form of Bardic court poetry, it was the main political discourse of the old Gaelic and Gaelicised elites, and later, in Jacobite Aisling or vision poetry, it articulated initially the hopes and aspirations of the dispossessed lords, and ultimately those of the rural poor, to the extent that it became a core element of folk culture. As Geoffrey Keating pointed out in his landmark history, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (equally neglected, though a more conventional source) it makes no sense for historians to ignore the poetry, ‘do bhrí gurab i nduintaibh atá cnáimh agus smior an tseanchusa’ [because in the poems are the bone and marrow of the ancient record].⁴ While due account must be taken of issues of *genre* and literary convention, the poetry discussed below gives insights into Gaelic culture and its response to the traumas of colonisation available nowhere else.

It is, above all, the neglect of such sources, and the over-reliance on the official record, that makes possible the current remarkable and depressing fashion among historians of early modern Ireland not only to ignore, but also vehemently to deny, the colonial dimensions of Irish historical experience, during that radically revolutionary period. Instead there have been various attempts to normalise that experience, using *ancien regime* models, or ‘modernisation’ theories, and culminating in the now ubiquitous ‘new British history’, launched by Pocock in 1975, which, at its crudest, reduces Ireland to one among the various ‘regions’ of these islands as they were absorbed into the centralising British state.⁵ Like the earlier models, this has produced important

³ Patricia Palmer, *Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland: English Renaissance Literature and Elizabethan Imperial Expansion* (Cambridge, 2001), 54–7.

⁴ Geoffrey Keating, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn. The History of Ireland* (4 Vols, London, 1902–14), Vol. 1, 91.

⁵ For a good discussion of the Pocockian revolution, see the introduction to D. J. Baker and W. Maley (eds), *British Identities and English Renaissance Literature* (Cambridge, 2002).

new insights, but its approach, always artificial and myopic, has become as crude and disabling an orthodoxy as the old-fashioned, polarised black and white version of colonialism it posits as the alternative. Many of the most vocal proponents of the New British History dismiss the relevance of any colonial model to Ireland—and even more of the insights of postcolonial theory—as if nothing had changed since the early crude formulations of Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi. This ignores the fact that modern writing emphasises above all the evolution of complex hybrid cultures from colonial encounters, featuring assimilation and adaptation, rather than simple rejection and alienation—something not that dissimilar from the better insights of the “New” British History.⁶ My work has long been indebted to modern postcolonial scholarship, particularly to Ashis Nandy on hybridisation,⁷ and to the insights into the lost voices of the dispossessed or the illiterate rural poor developed initially by Indian Marxist historians in their journal, *Subaltern Studies*.⁸ In what follows, I will try to apply some of these insights to a range of Gaelic texts, from the mid seventeenth to the early nineteenth century, which reflect or respond to the slow-burning linguistic revolution I’ve described—the key cultural aspect of that wider colonial revolution, which transformed virtually every aspect of Ireland during this period. Rather than simply talk about ‘voices of the vanquished’, in abstract terms, I want to allow some snatches, at least, of what they had to say to be heard.⁹

Of course, in the official record Ireland was never described formally (though often it was informally) as a ‘colony’, the relationship to England being masked by a series of convenient legal fictions—‘Lordship’, ‘Kingdom’—ultimately ‘United Kingdom’. Likewise the radical, violent process by which most of the indigenous elite were dispossessed, transported internally or allowed into exile and their land given to foreigners, was done ultimately in the form of due legal process and title, so that only the bowdlerised Gaelic place names in the new title deeds pointed to the earlier obliterated reality. And so, for example, we can have modern histories of the Ulster and Munster plantations that ignore Gaelic sources and deny that they were colonial schemes, but instead reduce them to established patterns of population

⁶ For an important overview of the transformation of post-colonial studies, see, Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London, 1993).

⁷ Especially, Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: loss and recovery of self under Colonialism* (Delhi, 1983).

⁸ Ranajit Guha, *et al*, (eds), *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asia History and Society* (11 Vols, Delhi, 1982–2000).

⁹ My examples are mainly from Munster, and from texts that are in print.

movement and an evolving market economy.¹⁰ The brutal reality is clear, however, in literary texts, such as the colonialist writing of Spenser and other New English settlers or officials, much studied by literary scholars.¹¹ It is also painfully clear in the Gaelic poetry, initially that produced by professional or would-be professional poets for aristocratic patrons; later in the poetry produced by part-time poets for wealthy farmers and priests, and ultimately in the folk poetry, or ‘amhráin na ndaoine’ of the Irish-speaking poor before the Famine.¹² Throughout, the dominant theme was that of dispossession—the loss and hoped-for restoration of land—and also to the fore was the related theme of religious persecution. The enemy, described often in extreme language throughout the period, was, interchangeably, the Englishman and the Protestant. It may seem strange that the theme of language loss in the poetry was a secondary and intermittent one, though I believe that the patterns of assimilation and bilingualism referred to provide an answer. Nonetheless it is a crucial thread running through this evolving corpus of poetry and song, and it offers indispensable evidence of a key cultural aspect of a profound colonial experience.

Finally, by way of introduction, I should define what I mean by ‘colonialism’, having been accused recently by Sean Connolly, of a ‘casual characterisation’ in this regard.¹³ I am happy to use the definition that echoes and re-echoes through the Gaelic texts, as in Keating’s account of ‘gabáltas pagánach’ (Pagan conquest)—‘léirscrios do thabhairt ar an bhfoirinn claidhteair leis, agus foireann uaidh féin do chur d’áitiughadh / na críche ghabhas le near’ (to bring destruction on the people who are subdued by him, and to send new people from himself to inhabit the country which he has taken by

¹⁰ Michael McCarthy-Morrogh, *The Munster Plantation* (Oxford, 1986); Philip Robinson, *The Plantation of Ulster* (Dublin, 1984).

¹¹ See, for example, Palmer, *Language and Conquest*; Andrew Hadfield, *Spenser’s Irish Experience* (Oxford, 1997); Willy Maley, *Salvaging Spenser: Colonialism, Culture and Identity* (New York, 1992); For a discussion of the debate sparked off by his foregrounding of Spenser in *The Elizabethan Reconquest of Ireland* (1976), see Nicholas Canny, “Debate: Spenser’s Irish Crisis: Humanism and Experience in the 1590’s”, in *Past and Present*, No. 120 (1988), 201–9

¹² Tom Dunne, “The Gaelic response to Conquest and Colonisation: the evidence of the Poetry”, *Studia Hibernia*, No. 20 (1980), 7–30; “‘Tá Gaedhil bhocht cráidhte’; memory, tradition and the politics of the poor in Gaelic poetry and song”, in T. Dunne and L. M. Geary (eds), *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland* (Dublin 2001).

¹³ Sean Connolly, “Tupac Amaru and Captain Right: a comparative perspective on Eighteenth Century Ireland”, in D. Dickson and C. Ó Gráda, (eds), *Refiguring Ireland: essays in honour of L. M. Cullen* (Dublin, 2003), 108.

force).¹⁴ Or, in the words of ‘An Síogaí Rómhánach’ some years later, around 1650, castigating James I, ‘d’órdaigh a dtalamh do thamhas le téadaibh/do chuir Saxanaibh i leabaidh na nGaol nglan/is *Transplantation* ar chách le chéile’ (who ordered their land to be measured, who put Englishmen in place of the native Irish, and transplantation of everyone together’).¹⁵ The emphasis, time and again, in the poetry is on forced dispossession of the indigenous elites and colonisation of their land by foreigners—a fairly obvious, basic definition—and one underlined by the reiterated hope or prophecy in the poetry right down to the Famine, again to cite the ‘Síogaí Rómhánach’, template for much that was to follow, ‘Goill d’ionnarbadh is Banba ’shaoradh’ (to drive out the foreigners and free Ireland).¹⁶ Some of the cultural dimensions of that core definition—and reiterated hope—will be explored in what follows. And lest the vehemence and anger of much of what I will cite gives the impression that I am endorsing or resuscitating a polarised, black and white view of colonialism, I want to make it clear that my argument, instead, is that side by side with rejection of the culture of the new colonists and the colonial state went cultural assimilation and ambivalence, and that the poetry also reflects this.

As Patricia Palmer has shown convincingly in her important book on *Language and Conquest in Early Modern Ireland*, there was a powerful linguistic dimension to the Elizabethan re-conquest of Ireland. ‘Anglicisation was neither incidental to the conduct of conquest nor a mere spin off from it. Language was intimately bound up with the ideologies that legitimised colonisation and shaped its unfolding’.¹⁷ This was recognised in its immediate aftermath by Geoffrey Keating, who anathemised Stanihurst for his support for the new official policy of replacing Irish by English. Using the example of William the Conqueror, he contrasted this policy with the ideal of a ‘gabháltas Críostúil’ or ‘Christian conquest’ which respected the indigenous language—‘óir ní féidir an teanga do dhíbirt, gan an lucht d’ár teanga í do dhíbirt’ (for it is not possible to banish the language without banishing the folk whose language it is).¹⁸ By ‘folk’ Keating meant the Gaelic and Gaelicised elites, many of whom were, indeed, banished, while most of those who stayed quickly assimilated, and Joep Leerssen has shown how later in

¹⁴ Keating, *Foras Feasa*, 136–7.

¹⁵ Cecile O’Rahilly (ed), *Five Seventeenth Century Political Poems* (Dublin, 1977), poem 2, lines 91–4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, line 312.

¹⁷ Palmer, *Language and Conquest*, 14.

¹⁸ Keating, *Foras Feasa*, 1, 36–7.

the seventeenth century, the blame for the decline of Irish was put by the poets not on the English so much as on the Gaelic nobility. In the words of the poet Diarmuid Mac Muireadhaigh, ‘Ní hí an teanga do chuaidh ó chion acht an dream dár dhual a dídion’ (it is not the language which has come into disesteem, but those who should defend it).¹⁹ Keating’s classic text, *Foras Feasa ar Éirinn* (a basis of knowledge about Ireland) was itself a proof and product of an abrasive colonialism, defining itself specifically as a response to the misrepresentations of Gaelic history and culture by colonialist writers from Giraldus Cambrensis to Spenser. It was to be the bible of the antiquarianism that formed an important part of the native elite’s response to language loss, and underpinned an important strain of ‘patriot’ sentiment in the eighteenth century. This has been shown in great detail in Leerssen’s seminal work, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael*, and in Clare O’Halloran’s, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations*.²⁰ My concern is to seek for traces in the poetry of how the new colonialism, particularly after Cromwell, was experienced culturally.

This has to be seen, as the Gaelic literati saw it, against the background of the earlier phase of colonisation from the neighbouring island since the twelfth century—and going back further, indeed, to the series of earlier invasions, historical and mythological, around which Gaelic history and literature were organised. A twelfth century compilation of texts detailing resistance to the Vikings, while designed as dynastic propaganda, became emblematic of the way that history, from the Normans onwards, came to be perceived as *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh* (the war between the native Irish and the foreigners).²¹ Yet, as Keating in particular was at pains to point out, the Normans were absorbed culturally, and to a considerable degree politically, producing a hybrid society.²² But it was a two-way process. To quote *Tuireamh na hÉireann* again, ‘Do bhí an Gaeul gallda ’s an Gall Gaeulach’ (the Irish took on foreign ways and the foreigners Irish ways).²³ Bardic poetry reflected that cultural interpenetration, but even when written for Norman families, and

¹⁹ Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: studies in the idea of Irish nationality, its development and literary expression prior to the nineteenth century* (Amsterdam, 1986; Cork 1996. Quotations are from the Cork edition), 204 ff.

²⁰ Clare O’Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations: Antiquarian Debate and Cultural Politics in Ireland, c.1750–1800* (Cork, 2004).

²¹ J.H.Todd (ed.), *Cogadh Gaedhel re Gallaibh; the War of the Gaedhil with the Gaill* (Dublin, 1867).

²² See, in particular, Keating, *Foras Feasa*, 1, 35–41.

²³ O’Rahilly, *Five Seventeenth Century Poems*, “Tuireamh na hÉireann”, 1. 280

giving them Gaelic antecedents and connections, it never lost the sense of the core distinction between Gael and Gall. This remained true of the poetry that celebrated the alliance of the Gaelic Irish and Old English, as they now became, against the New English. While praised as ‘seanGhaill séimhe’ (gentle old English, they were still, after 400 years, emphatically Gall/foreign).²⁴ Thus, the reiterated use of this Gael/Gall division in the poetry under discussion here reflected a very old literary and political convention.

While significant, it should not be exaggerated, however. Many years ago, I argued that the intense dislike of the new colonists by the poets should be seen more in terms of class, culture and religion rather than ethnicity, much less nationalism.²⁵ This dislike came to focus strongly on their language, in ways that combined the traditional emphasis on the foreign with a new emphasis on the non-aristocratic background of the newcomers. The word ‘béarla’ had originally meant simply ‘language, speech, dialect’, to quote Dineen, but from the mid-seventeenth century, as will be clear from most of the texts I will cite, it came more and more to mean the language of the newcomers, i.e. English. For Dáibhí Cúndún, they were ‘bodaig an Bhéarla/ *Scum* na Sagsan is na bailtibhba thréine’ (English speaking serfs, the scum of the English and the principal towns) and ‘bastardaibh Béarla’ (English speaking bastards).²⁶ They were low bred, artisans, ‘brosán brocach do bhodachaibh céirde’ (a filthy rabble of churls in trades) in *Éamonn an Dúna*.²⁷ Dáibhí Ó Bruadair, the Gaelic world’s most passionate and graphic witness to the period between the Cromwellian settlement and the aftermath of Aughrim, constantly emphasised their gross materialism, and in his 1652 poem, *Créacht to dháil mé*, he made their language part of this. After the banishment of the native lords, he wrote,

Biaid féin ’na ndeághaidh go másach magaidh
d’éis a seárnta i mbláith a mbailte
go péatrach, plátach, prásach, pacach,
béarlach beárrtha bádhach blasta.

(His editor, MacErlean, translates this, rather loosely—‘To take their places then will come the fat-rumped jeerers, after crushing them,

²⁴ Ibid., l.

²⁵ Dunne, “The Gaelic response”, 23.

²⁶ O’Rahilly, *Five Seventeenth Poems*, “Aiste Dháibhí Cúndún”, lines, 34–5, 207–09.

²⁷ Ibid., “Éamonn an Dúna”, lines, 299–304.

their culture and their cities, laden with packs and plates and brass and pewter, with shaven jaws and English talk and braggart accent’.)²⁸

English—and English speakers—were often seen as ugly, animal-like (bears and wolves, for example). Ó Bruadair described an English-speaking boor who insulted a female relative of his patron, Lord Barrymore, as having ‘truidireacht Bhéarla pléasca is plubaireacht phluc’ (his stammering, jabbering English exploding from blubbing jaws).²⁹ And language was also associated with the other key aspect of the new colonists’ cultural abrasiveness—their religion; in the ‘Síogaí Rómhánach, for example, the enemy are ‘lucht Bhéarla / is Chailbhin chleasaigh bhadaigh bhréagaigh (English speakers and Calvinists, dishonest, thieving and false). In this poem the two are connected in concrete terms, with resentment at the obligatory use of the vernacular in church, ‘a n-agallamh glafarnach Bhéarla’ (their noisy English).³⁰ But the main emphasis in the later seventeenth century poetry is on the foreignness and low class origins of the new colonists (‘coilínigh’, a term used by Keating), satirised by Ó Bruadair in listing their strange plebian names,

Gúidí Húc is Múdar Hammer/Róibín Sál is Fádur Salm/Fear an bhríste ag díol an tsalainn, / geamar Rút is Goodman Cabbage, / Mistress Cápon, Cáit is Anna, / Ruiséal Rác is Máistir Geadfar.

(Judy Hook and Mother Hammer, Robin Saul and father Psalm, the man in breeches salt a-selling, Gammer Ruth and Goodman Cabbage, Mistress Capon, Kate and Anna, Russell Rake and Mister Gaffer!)³¹

This is a humorous example of a feature of this poetry—the use of loan words from English—that most clearly, perhaps, reflects, even enacts, the linguistic dimensions of an abrasive colonialism. Patricia Palmer writes of ‘the role of the sword in advancing the policies of the word’, but in the Gaelic poetry you find, instead, examples of the role of the word in advancing the policies of the sword.³² The poem *Éamonn an Dúna* has the most memorable and sustained

²⁸ J. C. McErlean (ed.), *Duanaire Dháibhí Uí Bhrúadair: the Poems of David Ó Bruadair* (3 Vols, London, 1910–16), Vol. 1, No. 5, verse 23.

²⁹ Ibid., No. 9, verse 6.

³⁰ O’Rahilly, *Five Seventeenth Century Poems*, “An Síogaí Rómhánach”, lines 297–8, 70–6.

³¹ MacErlean, *Ó Bruadair*, Vol. 1, No. 5, verses 25–6.

³² Palmer, *Language and Conquest*, 122.

example, after a long litany of executions, banishments and injustices in the Cromwellian period.

Transport, transplant, mo mheabhair ar Bhéarla (my understanding of English)

Shoot him, kill him, strip him, tear him

A Tory, hack him, hang him, rebel

*a rogue, a thief, a priest, a papist.*³³

English is thus the language of power, violence, abuse, and religious persecution, and such phrases recur in the poetry, for example in Diarmaid MacSheáin Bhuidhe Mhic Chárthaigh's 'Céad Buidhe re Dia'. Rejoicing that the accession of James II has turned the tables on the Cromwellians, or as he calls them in another common reference to cultural difference, 'bodaigh an cháise' (cheese eating churls), he wrote, 'D'éis transplant is gach feall dár cheapadar / d'éis transport le seol tar fairge / . . . Go hiaith Jamaica' (after all the transplants and deceits that were planned by them / after all the transports in sailing ships overseas / . . . to the land of Jamaica.) The conflict between the Cromwellians and native Irish is dramatised in this poem in the stereotypes of colonists 'Seón' and 'Ráif' and their Gaelic counterparts 'Tadhg' and 'Diarmaid'. Indeed it refers directly to the use of the latter names by petty officialdom as terms of abuse, remembering the 'gach méara chéirde ceachartha . . . gan focal san dlíge, is nach scríobhfadh ainm duit / adúirt Téigs is Diarmaids riamh go tarcuisneach' (those base merchant mayors, who knew not a word of law and could not write their names for you, but called us Teagues and Dermots derisively.) He focused on the connection of power to language, particularly on the challenges called out by sentries. Now that the Catholic Irish have the upper hand—and the poem proclaims divine approval on 'gach aon is Éireannach dearbhtha / is tá gan cheist don chreidiomh chatoilce' (everyone known as a tried and proved Irishman, and who is in faith without question a practising Catholic)—now Seón and Ráif, 'prinntísigh dhíoblaidhe na cathrach' (diabolical city apprentices) can no longer challenge with 'Popish rogue', but are themselves now greeted by 'Cromwellian dog'—as well as 'Mise Tadhg' (I am Teague).³⁴

Ó Bruadair echoes this in the poem he wrote in answer to Mac Cárthaigh, 'Cathréim Thaidhg' (The Triumph of Tadhg), who turns the tables linguisti-

³³ O'Rahilly, *Five Seventeenth Century Poems*, "Éamonn an Dúna", lines, 129–33.

³⁴ MacErlan, *O Bruadair*, Vol. 3, No. 14.

cally by challenging ‘Cia súd’ instead of ‘Who’s there’. And in another example of the bilingualism operating even at the level of the common soldier,

adeir Niall Óg re Seoirse, ‘Seachain *me* / Advance your pike, léig Tadhg fairíomsa. (Says young Niall to George—get out of my way, advance your pike / let Tadhg in beside me.)

Listing further Gaelic Christian names—ordinary people, rather than the noble roll calls of the traditional ‘Caithréim’—he portrays them ‘i dtig na gárda (the guardhouse)—‘ag seacaireacht / i gcanmhain nach taigiuir le Sacsanaibh’ (chatting in a language that is not pleasant to English ears).³⁵ These poems endorse the characterisation of the conflict between ‘native and newcomer’ in ‘An Síogaí Rómhánach’, as a clash of cultures and languages. Among the crimes of Charles I was ‘leis do hiarradh Dia do thréigean / ’s gan labhairt i dteanga na Gaeilge / ’s gan ‘na háit ag cach acht Béarla’ (that he required that we abandon God, and not talk in Irish, but in its place only English.) But Eoghan Ruadh Ó Néill, the hero of this poem, ‘do rug sé creach gan chead don Bhéarla’ (he plundered without permission of English)—and the ludicrously inflated list of his triumphs ends, ‘Eoghan Ruadh ar ghuillibh Gaodhal / dá chur suas are uachtar an Bhéarla’ (Eoghan Ruadh on the shoulders of the Gael being elevated above the English-speaking nobles).³⁶

The Gaelic poets were very conscious of the role played by law in the process of conquest and colonisation, and English (and Latin) legal terms appear more prominently in the poetry from the mid-seventeenth century (earlier occasional references in Bardic poetry, while reflecting the expansion of the Tudor State apparatus, lacked the same sense of persecution). Some of the most visible and interesting ways in which the state power impacted on the literature in Irish were the satires on parliament, notably *Pairlement Chloinne Tomáis* of the mid-seventeenth century, that is the parliament of the Gaelic lower orders who were free to indulge their social pretensions with the collapse of the aristocratic ruling families.³⁷ It is also evident in the mock legal summons, or *Barántas*, a feature especially of comic Munster verse in the mid-eighteenth century.³⁸ But references to law in the poetry produced in the bitter years of the Cromwellian wars and plantation saw it as a prime instrument of

³⁵ Ibid., No. 20.

³⁶ O’Rahilly, *Five Seventeenth Century Poems*, “An Síogaí Rómhánach”, lines 102–4, 182–3.

³⁷ N. J. A. Williams, *Pairlement Chloinne Tomáis* (Dublin, 1981).

³⁸ Pádraig Ó Fiannachta, *An Barántas* (Maynooth, 1978).

alien rule and persecution. Thus, in the widely copied and profoundly influential synoptic history ‘Tuireamh na hÉireann’ – which brought Keating’s schema into the mainstream of popular culture – it was the Reformation ‘d’osgail an geata chum peaca do dhéanamh’ (opened the gates of sin), but after religious persecution came that of the law:

Is docht na dlithe do rinneadh dár ngéarghoin:/siosóin cúirte is
tearmaí daora,/ *Wardship livery* is *Cúirt Exchequer*/Cíos coláisde in
nomine poenae:/ *greenwax, capias, writ, replevin*/bannaí, fineáil, díotáil
éigcirt,/ *provost, soffré, portré, méara*./sirriam, sionascáil, marascáil
chlaona./Dlí beag eile do rinneadh ar Ghaeulaibh / *surrender* ar a gceart
do dhéanamh.

(They devised tough laws to persecute us / court sessions and severe law
terms / *Wardship livery* and courts of *Exchequer* / *College* (i.e. Trinity
College) rent by sub *poena* / *greenwax, capias, writ, replevin* (legal ter-
minology), bans, fines, false accusations / *provost, sovereign, portreeve*,
mayor / sheriff, seneschal, crooked marshals. / And another little law
made for the Irish – that they surrender their rights.’³⁹

Particularly noteworthy in this list are the laws – some of them recent – through which land transfer was facilitated – the surrender and regrant system, above all, but also the Courts of Wards, established in 1622 and the provisions made for Trinity College in the Munster and Ulster Plantations. Similarly, Cecile O Rahilly pointed out that the description in the poem *Éamonn an Dúna* of the schoolteachers gathered up after the Cromwellian victory, ‘iad mar gha-daithibh ceangailte ar théadaibh / ’s ag dul ó phórt go pórt *convey* ortha’ (tied together like thieves, going from port to port under convoy) is a translation of the official order, that prisoners ‘bee sent with sufficient convoy from garrison to garrison’.⁴⁰ Colonial law was dangerous; it could cost you your land, your freedom, even your life. Hence the obsession with it and the attempts also to deflect it with humour. The fact that the courts operated only in English put the Gaelic Irish in double jeopardy, and was a major incentive to learn the language. This was captured best by Dáibhí Ó Bruadair in his ‘Caithréim an dara Séamus’ (The Triumph of James II) – who gave Irishmen ‘éadai is airm óirleachais’ (deadly weapons and uniforms) and so freed them ‘ar fhórléanaibh’

³⁹ O’Rahilly, *Five Seventeenth Century Poems*, lines 312–22.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 169.

(from tyranny). Under him the true clergy live in peace, and the Irish speaker need no longer fear the courts:

atáid ar binnse Dálaigh, Rísigh / 'sdá n-áileadh aoi do Nóglacaibh / le
héisteacht agartha an té nach labhrann / béarla breaganta beoiltirim

(On the Bench now are seated the Dalys and Rices, and a sage of the
Nagles is urging them to listen to the plea of the man who can't speak
the lip-dry and simpering English tongue.)⁴¹

In an earlier poem he satirises the pretensions of the upstart Irish, who, though they have but a feeble command of the language, insist on speaking 'gósta garbhbhéarla' (a ghost of rough English).⁴² These themes, and the pressures and dilemmas of language change, especially in relation to the law, are still a core concern of novelists from a Catholic background—Gerald Griffin, John and Michael Banim, and William Carleton—from the 1820s to the 1840s.⁴³

In considering Ó Bruadair's fulminations against the role of English, it is important to bear in mind that he also wrote and doubtless spoke the language, and could even boast of his 'Béarla glic' (dextrous English), although also at times expressing insecurity about his ability 'dochan an ghoillbhéarla do labhairt go líofa' (to speak the foreign tongue fluently).⁴⁴ Virtually every important poet after Ó Bruadair was also bilingual, though the reflex continued of apologising for an inability 'to write correctly in the *English* language', as Aodh Buí Mac Cruitín wrote in the preface to his important synoptic history, *Brief Discourse in Vindication of the Antiquity of Ireland*, published in 1717.⁴⁵ The poets lived in a world that was ever more monolingual in terms of power and status. Their craft was tied to a language that was rapidly marginalised, and as the patronage they depended on contracted to nothing, their main concern

⁴¹ MacErlean, *Ó Bruadair*, Vol. 3, No. 14, v. 19.

⁴² Ibid., Vol. 1, No. 3, v. 1.

⁴³ See Tom Dunne, "Murder as metaphor: Griffin's portrayal of Ireland in the year of Catholic Emancipation", in O. MacDonagh and W.F. Mandle (eds), *Ireland and Irish-Australia* (London and Sydney, 1986); "The insecure voice: a Catholic novelist in support of Emancipation", in L. M. Cullen and L. Bergeron (eds), *Culture et Pratiques Politique en France et en Irlande, xvie-xviii siècle* (Paris, 1989).

⁴⁴ MacErlean, *Ó Bruadair*, Vol 2, No.7, v. 3; Vol. 1, No. 10. See Vol. 2, No. 5, for his poem in English, "To all my friends in Kerry".

⁴⁵ Vincent Morley, *An Crann os Coill: Aodh Buí Mac Cruitín, c. 1680–1755* (Dublin, 1995), 39.

for much of the seventeenth century was, in the words of Mathgamhain Ó hIfearnáin, ‘Ceist, cia do cheinneochadh dán?’ (who will now buy a poem?)⁴⁶

As the case of Ó Bruadair illustrated so graphically, the poets were pushed down the social scale, from a privileged elite to menial or marginal positions, as farm labourers or itinerant teachers, in what he called, ‘An Longbhriseadh’, or shipwreck of the Gaelic world.⁴⁷ While there are many poems fulminating at the failure of the remnants of the Gaelic and Old English aristocracy to protect the literary heritage and the language, there were many others attacking the pretensions of those among the lower orders who were upwardly mobile in the more fluid society that followed the collapse of the highly aristocratic Gaelic system.⁴⁸ The colonial revolution may have destroyed the old elites, but it created opportunities for others, and one of the most interesting ways in which Gaelic poetry reflected the anglicisation process was its focus on the use of English by this socially ambitious group. They are also satirised mercilessly in a remarkable prose work, *Pairlement Chloinne Tomás*, which features a meeting in the 1630s of rural landowners in Kerry, using a crude version of parliamentary procedure, and dedicated to promoting their economic interests. Their leaders are those with ‘teanga mhaith Bhéarla’ (good English), as they imagined or those who could impress the assembly with a garbled version of it, like Tomás, who negotiates with an itinerant pedlar in tobacco, a new luxury item to which they are addicted. This dialogue is a remarkable early example in an Irish language text of the comic Hiberno-English, which was already a staple of the English stage.⁴⁹

The sense of a connection between the poets’ loss of power and status and the rise of English-speaking peasants can be seen in Brian Mac Giolla Phádraig’s poem ‘Faisean Chlár Éibhir’, from the mid-seventeenth century:

Is cor do leag me cleas an phlás-tsaoilse: / mogh in gach teach ag fear
an smáil Bhéarla / ’s gan scot a neach le fear den dáimh éigse / ach ‘hob
amach is beir leat do shár-Ghaelgsa’

—which Joep Leerssen translated as: ‘The situation that brought me down is a trick of this deceitful world / with a churl in each house that is owned by a

⁴⁶ Osborn Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry* (Dublin, 1970), No. 37. See also, Nos 28, 30 etc.

⁴⁷ MacErlan, *Ó Bruadair*, Vol. 3, No. 25.

⁴⁸ Dunne, ‘The Gaelic Response’, 24, 28–9.

⁴⁹ Williams, *Pairlement*, especially lines 1240–63; J. O. Bartley, *Teague, Shenkin and Sawney: being a study of the earliest Irish, Welsh and Scottish characters in English Plays* (Cork, 1954).

speaker of nasty English, and/ no one paying any heed to a man of the poetic company/ save for “Get out and take your precious Gaelic with you”.⁵⁰ For Ó Bruadair, whose distrust for the Cromwellians as ‘Bodaigh an Bhéarla’ (English-speaking churls) clearly had a class as well as cultural basis, those of ‘céadta áta dá rádh mar ghallaibh’ (hundreds proclaiming themselves English), who are mouthing ‘garbhbhéarla’ (rough English), were mainly those ‘le mór-tas maingléiseach’ (full of ostentatious pride). Such a ‘scoturra glic’ (cute Irish yeoman), he wrote in another late poem, would say ‘nach doirche Dutch’ (that Dutch was no more obscure), if he encountered ‘éigse chothrom’ (correctly written Irish verse).⁵¹ This is also a complaint of Aodh Buí Mac Cruitín in a 1716 poem,

Má éirgheann bathlach go beachtaithe in éadach nua/ is go bhféadfadh hata do cheannach má daor a luach/ is Béarla a labhairt is gairid go ndéarfadh an fuad/ dar *faith* má mhairim, beidh gairim Uí Néill dom ua.

Tá an éigse balbh ós acu tá scéal gach slua,/ ní fhéadaid camadh ’na teangain chun Béarla a lua;/ tá an méid seo mhaireas do mhaithibh na nGael, monuar,/ gan spéis in aiste nó in aithris na n-éacht do chuaigh.

(If a rustic rises all done up in new clothes, and can buy a hat, however, expensive, and speak English, before long the thief will say, by faith, as I live, my grandson will have the title or name of O'Neill.

The poets are dumb as they have the news of all those who can't twist their tongues to speak English. Those that live of the Gaelic nobility, sadly, have no interest in a poem or an account of past heroic deeds.)⁵²

By then, as Vincent Morley has shown in relation to Mac Cruitín's early verse, and Éamonn Ó Ciardha has established across a remarkable range of texts, Gaelic literature had, quite literally, gone underground.⁵³ The poets

⁵⁰ Leerssen, *Mere Irish*, 203.

⁵¹ MacErlean, *Ó Bruadair*, Vol. 1, No. 5, v. 7; No. 3, v. 1; Vol. 3, No. 30, v. 3.

⁵² Morley, *An Crann os Coill*, 27.

⁵³ Éamonn Ó Ciardha, *Ireland and the Jacobite Cause, 1685–1766: a fatal attachment*. (Dublin, 2000).

may have been ‘dumb’ in relation to the dominant English culture, but they had become active propagandists, even recruiters in the Jacobite cause. Ó Ciardha’s work has demonstrated once and for all, the importance and potential of Gaelic literary texts as historical sources, as well as establishing that Jacobitism, up to now little regarded by Irish historians, was ‘the main political culture on the island’ down to the late 1760s. In two recent contributions I have tried to show that, while Jacobitism began as a conservative aristocratic ideology of ‘return, renewal and restoration’, to quote Breandán Ó Buachalla, the ‘powerful millennial message of individual and communal liberation’⁵⁴ at its core was embraced by the rural poor in the fifty years before the Famine, to articulate their grievances against landlords, tithe proctors and the local agents of the imperial power—and that this is evident particularly in the popular folk songs, or *Amhráin na nDaoine*.⁵⁵ The bridge from aristocratic to popular was the coded, mystical and prophetic form of the ubiquitous *Aisling* or vision poetry, the dominant form of political verse in Irish, from its aristocratic formalisation by Aogán Ó Rathaille to the demotic of Raftery and his contemporaries. In the *Aisling*, a ‘spéirbhean’ or spirit woman appears to the poet, explains that she represents Ireland and gives (usually) a message of hope that her Prince, the Stuart Pretender, was on his way with an army to demolish the colonial settlement and restore the old lords and the Catholic clergy and the learned classes—later amended to the establishment of fair rents, or even the abolition of rents, and of tithes and the tyranny of petty officialdom. Clearly it developed new and evolving elements of what has come to be called a ‘subaltern culture’, but my concern here is with the remarkable continuities it displays with the seventeenth-century political verse we have been considering. In particular, the persecution it rails against is described not only in colonial terms, but in terms of cultural and linguistic conflict, and the golden future it prophecies is not only specifically a Gaelic but a de-Anglicised one. And yet, in the early nineteenth century, the poets also have to acknowledge that Anglicisation has progressed inexorably to the point that the very existence of the Irish language itself is in doubt.

Perhaps the most remarkable continuity in the way conflict was described in Ireland from the twelfth century to the Famine and beyond was the contin-

⁵⁴ Breandán Ó Buachalla, “Irish Jacobite Poetry”, *The Irish Review*, No. 12 (1992), 40–9.

⁵⁵ Dunne, “Tá Gaedhil bhocht cráidhte” (see above); “Subaltern voices? Poetry in Irish, Popular Insurgency and the 1798 Rebellion”, in *Eighteenth Century Life*. Vol 22, n.s. 3, November 1998, 31–44.

ued use of the key formulation ‘Gael re Gall’ – native against foreigner. Thus, it could be used both by Máire Bhuí Ní Laoire to describe an affray between local Whiteboys and Yeomen at Céim an Fhia, and by Raftery to describe the achievement of Catholic Emancipation, which he defined as ‘Cead ag an nGaedhealbheith chomh h’árd le Gaill’⁵⁶ (permission for the Irishmen to be as important as the foreigner). Seán Ó Braonáin characterised the sense of persecution, a constant in Gaelic poetry since the mid-seventeenth century – and a rich vein in O’Connellite rhetoric – in terms of the lot of the ‘Gaelfhuil’ (those of Gaelic blood) being ‘gráin is galar is Gallaibh dá dtraochadh’ (hatred and disease and foreigners wearing them down).⁵⁷ Reverting to the theme of law and persecution, one poem even claimed, ‘Beidh ann seisiúin ceathrúnach idir Gaeil is clanna Gall’ (the Quarter Sessions will be held there between the natives and foreigners).⁵⁸ In this period also, there is an interesting shift from the use of the traditional ‘Sacsan’ (Saxon) to ‘Sasanach’ (Englishman) in describing the foreigner. In a well known *aísling* by Máire Bhuí, the ‘spéirbhean’ proclaims, ‘go bhfuil Sasanaigh is a n-áltha as an áit seo le ruagairt / Agus Clanna Gael ’na n-áitreabh’ (the English and their brood will be driven from this place and the native Irish replace them).⁵⁹ Likewise, a poem, possibly by Raftery, in praising the Ribbonmen, promised, ‘Beidh talamh ina luach agus Clanna Gael suas / Agus Sasanaigh buartha cráite’ (land will have its true value, the native Irish triumphant and the English sad and distressed).⁶⁰ An even more marked feature of the pre-Famine period is the greater frequency and virulence by which the ‘Gall’ are anathematised in sectarian terms.

But the categorisation of the foreign enemy in terms of language also continues throughout this period. For Aogán Ó Rathaille they were ‘dream an Bhéarla’; for Eughan Rua Ó Súilleabháin, ‘gallaibh an bhéarla’; for Ó Braonáin the task of the Stuarts was ‘díbirt aicme an Bhéarla’ (the expulsion of the English-speaking tribe) and so on.⁶¹ Such usage took on new meanings as the pressure for language change filtered down to the rural poor, ever more aware of the

⁵⁶ D. Ó Donnchú (ed.), *Filíocht Mháire Bhuí Ní Laoighaire* (Dublin, 1931), 55–8; Douglas Hyde, *Ambráin atá leagtha ar an Reachtúire, or Songs ascribed to Raftery* (Dublin, 1903), 266–71.

⁵⁷ P. de Brún, *Filíocht Sheáin Uí Bhraonáin* (Dublin, 1972), No. 17, v. 2.

⁵⁸ Tomás Ó Concheanainn (ed.), *Nua-Dhuanáire, Cbuid 111* (Dublin, 1978), No. 13, v. 4.

⁵⁹ Ó Donnchú, *Máire Bhuí*, 59–60, ‘An Crúiscín Lán’, v. 5.

⁶⁰ Ciarán Ó Coigligh, *Raiftearaí: Ambráin agus Dánta* (Dublin, 1987), 105–6. See 8–9 on the authorship of this poem.

⁶¹ P. S. Dinneen, *Dánta Aodhgháin Uí Rathaille* (London, 1900), No. xxxv, lines, 177–8; P. Ó Duinnín, *Ambráin Eoghain Ruaibh Uí Shúilleabháin* (Dublin, 1901), No. 13, line, 1060; de Brún, *Ó Braonáin*, No. 15, v. 3.

encroachments of the rapidly bureaucratising colonial state. It was particularly marked in those poets still connected to the learned tradition, and fearful for the very survival of the language itself—a theme I return to. It recurs constantly in the work of Micheál Óg Ó Longáin, for example, who castigates ‘aicme an Bhéarla’ (the tribe of English), ‘búir-bhoirb Bhéarla’ (rough English speaking boors), ‘Daoscar an Bhéarla’ (English speaking rabble), ‘fanatics an Bhéarla’ (the fanatics of English), ‘gramaisc an Bhéarla’ (low-bred English speakers). In one of his 1798 poems he has ‘aicme an bhéarla bhracaigh bhréin / ag tachtadh Gael le claonta dlí (the foul corrupt crew of English speakers, choking the native Irish with crooked laws)—again that key connection. In a formulaic piece, reflecting his sense of hopelessness after the collapse of the rebellion, he urges ‘Clanna Gael’—‘múchaidh, millidh, brisidh, réabaidh, / dúnta is tithe chine an Bhéarla’ (extinguish, destroy, break the forts and houses of the English speakers).⁶²

Ó Longáin also exemplifies an interesting development in the *Aisling*, or vision poem, that is, the connection of the language issue with the ‘spéirbhean’ or vision woman, representing Ireland—and hence associating it with patriotic sentiment. Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin, in the middle of the eighteenth century, had emphasised in several of his well known *Aislingí* that the *spéirbhean* spoke Irish—in one case, indeed, she answered ‘i labharthaibh Gaeilge séimh gan coimhitheacht’ (in sweet Irish, without foreign influence).⁶³ This is an interesting formulation by a man who composed verse in English as well as Irish, and in his occasional role as schoolteacher proclaimed his expertise in teaching English. By Ó Longáin’s time this formulation had become a commonplace, and in a late poem, after emphasising that the ‘spéirbhean’ spoke ‘i dteangain deas Ghaeilge’ (in nice Irish), he records as her first complaint that she was ‘greadaithe ag graithin an Bhéarla’ (scourged by the English-speaking mob).⁶⁴ Seventeen years later, in an *Aisling* written to commemorate Daniel O’Connell’s release from prison, in September 1843, Aodh MacDomhnaill, has the *spéirbhean* complain of the Irish people, ‘mar thréig siad an teanga Ghaeilge’ (how they abandoned the Irish language)⁶⁵—something even the

⁶² Tadhg Ó Murchú, “Micheál Óg Ó Longáin; a shaoghal agus a shaothar” (M.A. Thesis, and edition of Ó Longáin’s poems, University College Cork, 1946), 181, 191, 199, 206, 217, 181 (the 1798 poem); Rónán Ó Donchadha, *Micheál Óg Ó Longáin: File* (Dublin, 1994), 103.

⁶³ Dineen, *Eoghan Ruadh*, No. 44, line 3133. See also No. 5, line 457.

⁶⁴ Ó Murchú, “Ó Longáin”, 213–4. See also, Ó Donchadha, *Ó Longáin*, 70; James Fenton, *Ambráin Thomáis Ruaidh* (Dublin, n.d.), No. xxi, v. 4; de Brún, *Ó Braonáin*, No. 42, lines 26–8.

⁶⁵ Colm Beckett, *Aodh Mac Domhnaill: Dánta* (Dublin, 1987), No. 8, v. 2.

hitherto monoglot rural poor were doing in very large numbers, with the encouragement of both Church and State, as catastrophe threatened and emigration was already a way of life. But the *Aisling* itself had long reflected the relentless spread of bilingualism in the development of macaronic versions—indeed one of Ó Longáin's early political poems, 'Lá is me ag taisteal', which he linked to a Whiteboy outbreak, is an *Aisling* which alternates between verses in Irish and English⁶⁶.

Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin could also switch suddenly to English—and, indeed, Latin—as in the humorous 'Barántas' or mock-legal challenge to the person who stole his hat, in a verse that captures very well the sense of threat that was associated with legal English:

As I am informed that pilfering roving / Rakes gan dearmaid (without
doubt) Juris quoque contemporas / fé mar mheasaim-se (as I suppose) /
Nightly strollers haunt these borders / Déanaidh faire ceart (keep a
good look out) / To apprehend aon chladhaire faolchon (wolf-like
ruffian) / Claon-sprot cealgach (deceitful rabble)

He also managed in a series of dazzling verses the remarkable feat of marshalling the rebarbative names of the Cromwellians and Williamites to fit the baroque internal rhymes that were his signature—for example:

Lysaght, Leader, Clayton, Compton is Coote, / Ivers, Deamer, Bateman,
Bagwell is Brooks, / Ryder, Taylor, Manor, Marrock is Moore / Is go
bhfeicim-se traochta ag tréin-shliocht Chaisil na búir. (And may I see
the Boors subdued by the mighty descendants of Caiseal)⁶⁷

Now the foreign names are not of the comical Cromwellian rank and file mocked by Ó Bruadair, but those of local Protestant landlords. Máire Bhuí echoes this in describing the enemy faced by 'Clannaibh Gaeil', or the local Whiteboys at 'Cath Céim an Fhia':

Is gairid dúinn go dtáinig lámh láidir ár dtimcheall / Do sheol amach ár
ndaoine go fíor-mhoch f'ín gceo, / An Barrach 'na bhumbáille, Bárnet
agus Beecher, / Hedges agus Faoitigh is na mílte eile leo.

⁶⁶ Ó Murchú, "Ó Longáin", No. B1. See also, Diarmaid Ó Muirthe, *An tAmbráin Macarónach* (Dublin, 1980).

⁶⁷ Dineen, *Eoghan Ruadh*, No. 39, No. 17.

(Before long a strong force surrounded us and sent our people out in the early fog—Barry the bum-bailiff, Barnet and Beecher, Hedges and White and thousands of others besides.)⁶⁸

The evolution of the *Aisling* from being a vehicle for the hopes of the dispossessed Gaelic elites for a restoration of the *status quo ante* by the dismantling of the new colonial order, to being a voice for the smaller ambitions of the rural poor in terms of rents, tithes and justice, can be seen in the way that Ireland after a Stuart victory was imagined. For Aogán Ó Rathaille at the start of the eighteenth century, restoration focussed strongly on the ambitions of the learned class—including, ‘Gaodhailg ’gá scrúdabh ’n-a múraibh ag éigsibhi/Béarla na mbúr ndubh go cúthail fá néaltaibh’ (Irish studied in their fortresses by wise men and English of the black boors hidden under a cloud).⁶⁹ Over a hundred years later, Máire Bhuí Ní Laoire reflected the interests of her class in telling the ‘spéirbhean’ that if her promises were true, ‘Beidh talamh gan chíos, gan íoc, gan cháin is gan phléidl/Beidh cruithneacht is im is saill ar an gclár againn féin (We shall have land without rent, without tax or dispute. We shall have wheat and butter and fat meat on the table for ourselves).⁷⁰ In her part of West Cork, even among the relatively prosperous farmer class to which she belonged, Irish was still the language of the community, differentiating it from ‘aicme an Bhéarla’. They did not perceive the language itself to be under threat, as the dynamics of the market economy accelerated the pace of anglicisation.

Concern for the survival of Irish was confined to the remnant learned class, like the scribe Micheál Óg Ó Longáin, whose passionate advocacy of the language was mainly on the basis that it was the depository of a great literary tradition. I have argued elsewhere that the revivalist movement he was associated with, led by the first professor of Irish at Maynooth, Pól Ó Briain, had little interest in the popular culture of the living language, and can be seen, together with the contemporary vogue for manuscript collection and translation as part of the commodification of Irish, at the very time that its last significant communities of speakers faced virtual extinction.⁷¹ Yet, though dedicated to the protection of the literary tradition, the process of revivalism and translation developed instead in ways that

⁶⁸ O Donnchú, *Máire Bhuidhe*, 55–8, v. 3.

⁶⁹ Dinneen, *Ó Rathaille*, No. xxviii, lines, 13–16.

⁷⁰ O Donnchú, *Máire Bhuidhe*, 37–8, v. 7.

⁷¹ Dunne, “Tá Gaedhil bhocht cráidhte”, 109–10.

seriously distorted it, particularly when that process became part of a diffuse project of cultural nationalism. A key text in this was James Hardiman's *Irish Minstrelsy* (1831), in which so-called 'translations', especially of Jacobite verse by various hands, turned its visceral anti-foreign, anti-settler, anti-Protestant sentiments into a bland pastiche of romantic patriotism that owed more to English than Irish literature.⁷² Thomas Davis, generally regarded as the father of Irish cultural nationalism, approved of this approach, believing that the Jacobite originals were 'too despairing', 'their religion bitter and sectarian'.⁷³ Pondering Davis's view that 'the vehemence and tendencies of the Celtic people' might be better represented, Douglas Hyde, founder of the Gaelic League and collector of songs in Irish, and Father Dinneen, lexicographer of the revived Irish and first editor of *Aodhán Ó Rathaille* and *Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin*, among others, determined that what Hyde called 'the Celtic poetic genius' was 'essentially a lyric one'.⁷⁴ A complex, largely inadvertent process of distortion and denial culminated in Daniel Corkery's *The Hidden Ireland* (1924), in which this staunch Republican, who rejected the compromises of the Treaty, systematically excluded the aristocratic, pragmatic political tradition of the Bardic poetry, and the royalist, equally pragmatic perspectives of the Jacobite poets and songsters, and turned the literary tradition once again into a miasma of lyricism and sentimental nostalgia.⁷⁵ None of this will surprise those familiar with modern post-colonial scholarship, which has demonstrated time and again that nationalism has not been an answer to colonialism but a product of it, offering not an explanation or antidote, but a distortion. The fate of the Irish language can be seen as the most significant consequence and proof of the Irish colonial experience. Its suffocating embrace by nationalism has both accelerated its decline and distorted its political and cultural contexts—but, *sin scéal eile* (that's another story).

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⁷² James Hardiman (ed.), *Irish Minstrelsy, or Bardic Remains of Ireland, with English poetical translations* (2 Vols, London, 1831). See, for example, Vol. 2, 32–63.

⁷³ Thomas Davis, "Songs of the Nation", in *Thomas Davis: Essays and Poems, with a Centenary Memoir, 1845–1945* (Dublin 1945), 97.

⁷⁴ Ó Duinnín, *Eoghan Ruadh*, Introduction, xxxvi–vii; Douglas Hyde, "Gaelic Folksongs", in B. Ó Conaire, (ed.), *Douglas Hyde: Language, Lore and Lyrics* (Dublin, 1986), 104–21, especially, 114.

⁷⁵ Tom Dunne, "Daniel Corkery's *The Hidden Ireland*, and the politics of the Gaelic world", in T. Dunne and L. M. Geary (eds), *History and the Public Sphere: essays in honour of John A. Murphy* (Cork, 2005), 161–75.

Irish Political Verse and the American Revolutionary War

Vincent Morley

The political sentiments of the Catholic population in eighteenth-century Ireland have attracted comparatively little attention from historians. This neglect can be partly explained by the exclusion of Catholics from the political nation in the aftermath of the Williamite revolution. The state papers for the eighteenth century provide little first-hand information about Catholic attitudes and Catholics rarely engaged in political controversy in print during the period. Furthermore, what little they published tended to be of an apologetic nature: authors such as Charles O'Connor, John Curry and Arthur O'Leary addressed their arguments to an English-speaking and Protestant readership and sought to portray the Catholic community as an innocuous and traduced body that could be safely entrusted with greater rights without endangering either the religious or political establishments. But Catholic authors were not restricted to either print or the English language, and a large corpus of unpublished political verse in Irish was composed by and – what is no less important – *for* Catholics during the eighteenth century.

Historians have been notably reluctant to employ the evidence of this vernacular literature. Indeed, some members of the profession contend that the political verse of the period cannot be accepted as an expression of popular opinion. In a recent discussion of my *Irish Opinion and the American Revolution*, Professor S. J. Connolly invoked arguments that were advanced by Professor Louis Cullen in an influential but mistaken article originally published in 1969.¹ He summarised Cullen's key points as follows:

The first was that the resentment of the political and social order expressed in so much of the vernacular poetry should be read as representing the grievances, not of an oppressed peasantry, but rather of a relatively 'well-to-do' group whose complaint was the loss of a former privileged status. The second was a reminder of the importance

¹ Louis Cullen, 'The hidden Ireland: reassessment of a concept' in *Studia Hibernica*, 9 (1969). The article was issued as a pamphlet in 1988.

of genre. ‘The *aisling*’, he pointed out, ‘was a literary form; not a message for the people.’²

The second of these propositions was contested by Professor Breandán Ó Buachalla in a ground-breaking article on the *aisling* which appeared as long ago as 1983:

Nuair a deir an tOllamh Louis Cullen mar shampla, ‘*The aisling was a literary form, not a message for the people*’, ní amháin go dtugann sé le tuiscint nach bhféadfadh teachtaireacht a bheith ag aiste litríochta ach go gceileann sé príomhfheidhm na haislinge: foirm liteartha a chur ar an teachtaireacht, réaladh liteartha a chur ar ráiteachas na tairngreachta. Mar is chuige an aisling go bunúsach, ní chun go raghadh an file ag válcaereacht dó féin cois abhann, cois coille, nó cois leasa dó go huaigheach; ná ní chun go bhfeicfeadh sé an spéirbhean agus go dtabharfadh tuarascáil chalcaithe phréamhaithe uirthi; is chuige an aisling chun go dtiocfadh an file ar an spéirbhean agus go bhfaigheadh uaithi an teachtaireacht, an tairngreachta i dtaobh na ríochta.³

(When Professor Louis Cullen says, for example, ‘The *aisling* was a literary form, not a message for the people’, not only does he imply that a literary composition cannot have a message but he conceals the principal function of the *aisling*: to give literary form to the message, to give literary expression to the prophetic statement. For the essential purpose of the *aisling* is not for the poet to go wandering alone by river, wood or fairy fort; nor for him to see the *spéirbhean* and to give an ossified, conventional account of her; the purpose of the *aisling* is for the poet to encounter the *spéirbhean* and to receive from her the message, the prophecy concerning the kingdom.)

I am not aware that this argument has been controverted in the twenty years since it appeared in print and it seems to me to be incontrovertible. Not only

² S. J. Connolly, ‘Jacobites, Whiteboys and republicans: varieties of disaffection in eighteenth-century Ireland’ in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland: Iris an dá Chultúr*, 18 (2003), 75.

³ Breandán Ó Buachalla, ‘An mheisiasacht agus an aisling’ in P. de Brún, S. Ó Coiléain and P. Ó Riain (eds), *Folia Gadelica* (Cork, 1983), 82. All translations in this article are mine.

can messages be conveyed as effectively by the *aisling* as by most other literary genres, but there is no essential linkage between the *aisling* and any particular viewpoint. While it is true that the bulk of the *aislingí* composed during the first half of the eighteenth century were Jacobite in sentiment, the same can be said of Irish political literature in general. The *aisling* evolved in tandem with popular opinion, however, and by the time of the American revolution it expressed a wider range of attitudes. Of the eight *aislingí* in an anthology of Irish verse from the years 1775–83 that I edited, five are Jacobite works, two make no reference to the Stuart pretender, and one might be described as a post-Jacobite composition.⁴ The literary form of the *aisling* was not an ideological or a conceptual straightjacket; rather, it was a familiar and convenient vessel that could be infused with whatever message suited the circumstances of the day.

The first leg of the historians' thesis remains to be considered. If the ostensibly political verse of the eighteenth century really was political, it is certainly valid to ask whose views it expressed. This question, like all historical questions, cannot be answered by theoretical speculation but only by empirical study of the primary sources. My anthology contains twenty-one works by thirteen named and one anonymous author. Two of these, Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin and Aindrias Mac Craith, are well-known poets with around sixty compositions each to their credit. Ó Súilleabháin was born near Killarney in obscure circumstances but received a hedge-school education and established a school of his own in the locality; having been condemned by the local clergy for sexual misconduct he became an itinerant teacher while working at times as an agricultural labourer. On his own testimony, he was impressed into the marines during the American war—a circumstance indicative of low social status—and he died as a result of injuries received in a drunken brawl in 1784.⁵ Aindrias Mac Craith was one of the 'Maigue poets', a literary coterie centred on the village of Croom, Co. Limerick, where he taught school.⁶ Tomás Ó Míocháin, the author of more than twenty extant compositions, was also a school teacher but was more successful in his profession than either Ó Súilleabháin or Mac Craith: the son of a tailor, he established a 'mathematical school' in Ennis, the county town of Clare, and his death in 1804 was noted in

⁴ Vincent Morley (ed.), *Washington i gCeannas a Ríochta; Cogadh Mheiriceá i Litríocht na Gaeilge* (Dublin, 2005). See numbers 2, 3, 8, 12 and 13; numbers 7 and 14; and number 19 respectively.

⁵ Máire Ní Mhurchú and Diarmuid Breathnach, *1782–1882 Beathaisnéis* (Dublin, 1999), 134–5.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 63–4.

the local newspaper.⁷ Seán ‘Máistir’ Ó Coileáin is the only other figure among the thirteen identified authors in my anthology to enjoy a significant literary reputation; although he was not as prolific as the three mentioned above, a few of his dozen or so compositions became exceptionally popular. Ó Coileáin was the son of a tenant farmer and spent some time as a clerical student at Coimbra in Portugal before returning in 1775 to establish a school near Skibbereen in west Cork.⁸ Another four of the authors can be described as minor literary figures who have left small bodies of work. Séamas Ó Dálaigh was a tailor from Mungret on the outskirts of Limerick city. Éamonn Ó Flaitheartaigh lived at Ballynoe in east Cork, a rural area close to the Waterford border, but I have failed to discover any information about his occupation. Uilliam Ó Linnáin, a scribe as well as an author, was a Kerry-born tailor but lived at Sixmilebridge in Co. Clare. Seán Ó Muláin, a very prolific scribe, was a native of Passage West in Cork harbour and spent much of his life in Cork city; the available evidence suggests that he was quite poor and one of his works was composed *‘iar bhfáil ejectment nó foláireamh a chaitheamh amach as a thig ag Sasanaigh’* (‘after receiving an “ejectment” or a notice of his eviction from his house by *Sasanaigh*’).⁹ Of the five remaining named authors in the anthology, Philip Fitzgibbon and Ceallachán Mac Cárthaigh each left a solitary manuscript in which the only known copies of their songs occur.¹⁰ While Fitzgibbon was a teacher who established a ‘mathematical school’ in Kilkenny city and whose death was noted in the national press, I have failed to discover any biographical information about Mac Cárthaigh.¹¹ The three others, Uilliam Ó Dábhóireann, Seán Mac Cathail and Maoilsheachlainn Ó Dúill, are entirely unknown apart from a single composition attributed to each of them—an obscurity suggestive of low social status.

This brief survey of the authors’ diverse backgrounds provides little support for the thesis that the verse of the period represents ‘the grievances ... of a relatively “well-to-do” group’. As for the argument that they were inspired by ‘the loss of a former privileged status’, it may be noted that only two of the authors in my anthology, Ó Dálaigh and Mac Craith, have surnames sug-

⁷ Ibid., 122–3.

⁸ Ibid., 87–8.

⁹ Breandán Ó Conchúir, *Scríobhaithe Chorcaí 1700–1850* (Dublin, 1982), 166. ‘*Sasanaigh*’ might be translated as either ‘English’ or ‘Protestants’.

¹⁰ Ms. 23 D 8 in the Royal Irish Academy and Ms. G 6 in the Burns Library, Boston College, respectively.

¹¹ For notes on Fitzgibbon by Séamus Ó Casaide see *Irish Book Lover*, IX (1918), 74–5 and XXII (1934), 65.

gesting descent from professional bardic families. Crucially, the fallen status of individual families does not feature as a theme in political verse from the period of the American revolution. References to the defeat and oppression of the Milesians and Catholics are common, but they are general and collective rather than specific and particular in nature.¹² They embrace the native community as a whole and complement equally generalised abuse directed against the English and Protestants.¹³ The political literature of this period invokes communities rather than individuals, *ethnies* rather than noble lineages, and kingdoms rather than localities. It can still be argued that these compositions are not the voice of the 'peasantry', that their authors, although they belonged to neither a hereditary caste nor a social élite, were at least a few steps removed from the mud cabin and the potato patch. One might therefore contend that the literature should be seen as the voice of the Catholic middling sort: of tenant farmers and priests, of retailers and craftsmen, and especially of school teachers. This representation is true enough as far as *production* of the verse is concerned, but its *consumption* is another matter. No cultural 'fire-break' existed between the landless labourers and those rural Catholics who were a couple of rungs above them on the social ladder: they worshipped at the same mass-houses ("tithe pobail" or 'parish houses' in Irish), attended the same fairs and *pátrúin* (celebrations to mark the feast-days of local saints), spoke the same language, and shared a literary culture that was primarily oral.¹⁴ It is reasonable to assume that they would also have sung the same songs and recited the same poems. In the case of one of the 'American' songs—Seán Ó Coileáin's composition—this hypothesis can be proved because the work survived in the repertoire of traditional singers in west Cork until the early years of the twentieth century.¹⁵ If the political songs were not composed by the illiterate, they were sung by them.

One final objection by supporters of the historians' thesis can be anticipated. It may be allowed that the authors were men of the middling sort, that they

¹² Morley, *Washington*, number 1, line 10; number 2, line 30; number 7, line 19; number 9, line 9; number 11, line 13; number 15, line 9; and number 18, line 14.

¹³ *Ibid.*, number 2, line 31; number 2, line 40; number 3, lines 53–4; number 6, line 41; number 13, line 61; and number 15, line 20.

¹⁴ One observer reported that public readings from Irish literary manuscripts were 'considered by the peasantry a treat of the highest order, and large numbers will assemble on a winter's evening around the turf fire of a farmer's cabin for the purpose'. According to the same writer, the manuscripts were 'usually the products of the leisure hours of the schoolmaster'. See T. Crofton Croker, *Researches in the South of Ireland* (London, 1824), 331–2.

¹⁵ Peadar Ó hAnnracháin, 'Filidhe ó Chairbre' in *Irisleabhar na Gaedhilge* 18 (1908), 265.

are as likely to have been rising as falling in social status, and that their compositions circulated among the illiterate. None the less, it may still be argued that the sentiments they articulated were neither original nor genuine but were copied uncritically from the literature of the 1690s and the early decades of the eighteenth century, a time when members of the dispossessed Catholic gentry still entertained realistic hopes of a Stuart restoration and the recovery of their attained estates. In this way, compositions from the era of the American revolution which articulate a partisan viewpoint can be discounted as 'part of a society's folklore rather than its politics'.¹⁶ But the argument strains credulity to breaking point. It presumes to relegate talented and (by the standards of the time) educated men to the role of inanimate echo chambers, mindlessly intoning the mantras of a lost war, a vanished class and a bygone age. Furthermore, if one could believe that such a mechanistic model was possible, one would expect the attitudes expressed in the literature to be static and uniform; in reality, they are dynamic and varied. We hear in the vernacular verse, not the monotone voice of a fossilised tradition, but personal reactions to topical events: the siege of Boston, Spanish invasion preparations, the British evacuation of Boston, France's entry to the war, an anticipated French invasion of Ireland, the campaign for 'free trade', Yorktown, the 'renunciation' campaign, opposition to the Fencible regiments, etc.

It is almost certainly the case that a great many of the political songs and poems composed during the American war have been lost, but the extant corpus is sufficiently large to allow the evolution of opinion to be traced over the course of the conflict.¹⁷ The remainder of this article will attempt to give a brief summary of that evolution.

II

A work composed by Uilliam Ó Dábhóireann during the first months of the war when General Gage's army was trapped in Boston displays an intense hostility to Britain but contains no overt indication of sympathy for the colo-

¹⁶ S.J. Connolly, *Religion, Law and Power: the Making of Protestant Ireland 1660–1760* (Oxford, 1992), 248.

¹⁷ It is striking that of the twenty-one compositions edited in Morley, *Washington*, as many as seven (numbers 1, 5, 11, 16, 17, 18 and 20) appear to be found in only one manuscript. The line between survival in a single copy and non-survival is a perilously thin one.

nists whom it describes as ‘Presbyterians’. The piece begins with an ironical expression of concern for the besieged British forces:

Is trua liom na scéalta do chuala go déanach,
 im’ chluasa do chéas mé le sealad,
 ar scuaine seo an Bhéarla do ghluais uaim le tréimhse
 as cuanta na hÉireann go Boston;
 le fuadar, le faobhar, dá bhfuadach le chéile
 is dá scuabadh ins na spéarthaibh ina gceathaibh
 le fuaim torann piléaraibh ag slua *Presbytérian*
 – cé gur mhuar ar féasta iad is ar bainnis.¹⁸

(Grieved am I by the stories I’ve lately heard, that have pained my ears for some time, about this English-speaking herd which set out some time ago from the harbours of Ireland for Boston; with energy and arms being driven together and being blown to the sky in showers, to the sound of roaring bullets by a *Presbyterian* army – though they’d be great at a feast or a banquet!)

Ó Dábhóireann made no distinction between the English and the Anglo-Irish, and identified the members of the besieged army with the oppressors of the Gaels: ‘*ba bhuartha agaibh Gaelaibh*’ (‘the Gaels were tormented by you’). Amid much non-specific rhetoric about the oppression to which the native Irish were subjected (‘*dá suaitheadh le claonadh is le cleasaibh*’ – ‘being shaken by deceit and trickery’; ‘*i gcrua-shnaidhm an daorbhroid*’ – ‘in the harsh fetter of bondage’) the Penal prohibition on Catholics leasing land for long terms was selected for particular mention (‘*gan buaineacht ’na saolaibh / a lua do na Gaelaibh ar thalamh*’ – ‘with no permanence in their lives assigned to the Gaels for land’).¹⁹ Ó Dábhóireann showed no interest in the matters at issue between Britain and its colonies and his work gives no indication of any sympathy for the Americans *per se*, but the mere fact that the oppressors of the Irish had suffered heavy casualties at the battles of Concord and Bunker Hill and were now hemmed into the town of Boston was itself a cause for celebration – irrespective of either the merits of the dispute or the identity of Britain’s enemy.

Early in the war, Seán Mac Cathail reworked the well-known Jacobite song ‘Síle Ní Ghadhra’ (one of many personifications of Ireland in the literature of

¹⁸ Morley, *Washington*, number 1, lines 1–8.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, lines 9, 10, 21 and 19–20 respectively.

the period) by incorporating contemporary references, not only to American events but, more importantly from his perspective, to well-publicised Spanish preparations for an overseas expedition. This song was as forthright as Ó Dábhóireann's composition in its hostility to Britain:

Tá an fhoireann so Luther dá dturamh i ngach bóthar
Prussia 's a chomplacht ag tnúth le *Hannover*,
 Gage bocht i gcúngach dá bhrú ag *Bostonians*
 Putnam á rúscadh is gan súil le teacht beo aige.
 Ar bóchna atá an gasra in arm agus i bhfaobhar
 a seol-bhrata ar leathadh 's is maiseach a scéimh
 chun fóirthin ar Bhanba ó anbhroid dhaor,
commander ceart Gaoidheal orthu, *sweet Captain Reilly*,
 agus beidh an lá leis an mbuíon seo ag Síle Ní Ghadhra.²⁰

(This crew of Luther's is being vanquished on all sides, Prussia and its forces are longing for Hanover, poor Gage is in battle and being crushed by Bostonians, Putnam is pelting him and he doesn't expect to escape alive. At sea the soldiers are armed and keen, their sails are spread and beautiful is their appearance, to rescue Ireland from cruel oppression, a true commander of the Gaels at their head, sweet Captain Reilly, and victory will belong to this band of Síle Ní Ghadhra's.)

This Spanish expedition was described by the *Annual Register* as 'the most formidable in its preparations, of any in the present age' and was commanded by General Alejandro O'Reilly, a County Meath-born veteran of the Hibernia regiment in the Spanish service. Mac Cathail's hope that the force might be intended for Ireland was not entirely unreasonable—Britain and Spain had come to the brink of war over the Falkland Islands only five years before—but the expedition was in fact directed against Algiers.²¹ None the less, Mac Cathail's updated version of 'Síle Ní Ghadhra' testifies to the prevalence of the idea that 'England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity'.

It is clear that the possibility of war in Europe, rather than the existing rebellion in North America, formed the principal theme of the political literature even during the first phase of the conflict—predictably enough as the Bourbon powers alone seemed capable of upsetting the *status quo* in Ireland.

²⁰ Ibid., number 2, lines 46–54.

²¹ *Annual Register*, 1775, 144.

While Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin lauded Benedict Arnold's advance into Canada at the head of an American army his reference to the war in North America was little more than a rhetorical device to increase the credibility of the imminent overthrow of the existing régime, as predicted to him by a *spéir-bhean* personifying of Ireland:

‘Le sámh-thoil Dé fuair páis is péin
 tá an báire ag téacht ’na gcoinne ar buile,
 fágfaid, séanfid, rithfid sin
 as caomh-chríoch Eoghain,
 atá Arnold, laoch nár stán i mbaol,
 ag fáil an lae ar an bhfoirinn uile,
 an mál so ag maodhmadh, ag milleadh-bhriseadh
 an chlaon-dlí nó;
 tá ag téacht i mbarcaibh sár-dhíon go magh mhín Chuailgne
 ag traochadh an tsleachta chráigh sinn, na táinte rí-ghas óg,
 ’s go crích mo shaoil ní shínfeadh féin
 le smírle caoitheach cuil in iomaí
 ar tigheacht mo Chaesar dhil, is guibhidh
 é ’shuí i gcoróin.’²²

(‘By the calm will of God who suffered passion and torment, the contest is turning against them [the British] rapidly, they’ll leave, they’ll quit, they’ll flee the beautiful land of Eoghan [Ireland]; Arnold, a hero who never shirked danger, is vanquishing the entire crew, this hero is bursting and shattering the perverse new law; they are coming in stout ships to the smooth plain of Cuailnge [Ireland], wearing down the race which tormented us, hosts of majestic young warriors; and until the end of my life I’ll never lie abed with a horrible foreign villain when my darling Caesar [Charles Edward Stuart] arrives—and pray you for his coronation.’)

But however warmly they applauded American victories, Catholic authors gave no indication of support for the Whig ideology of colonial patriots. Military commanders like Arnold and Washington were praised but political leaders such as Hancock or Adams attracted no attention. The sympathy

²² Morley, *Washington*, number 3, lines 57–70.

of the Catholic populace for the Americans was superficial and rested on the pragmatic calculation that ‘my enemy’s enemy is my friend’.

An *aisling* by Éamonn Ó Flaitheartaigh, which appears to have been composed sometime between Spain’s entry into the war in June 1779 and Admiral Rodney’s relief of Gibraltar in the following January, reveals that an element of ambivalence persisted in popular attitudes towards the Americans for some time after their conclusion of a French alliance. On the one hand, Ó Flaitheartaigh numbered them among those who were fighting against Britain and extolled Washington’s prowess as a military leader; on the other hand, he recognised the colonists’ British ethnicity and portrayed the war in North America as a civil war among the traditional enemies of the Gaels. The usual personification of Ireland addressed the poet:

Ba chiúin tais cneasta a bréithre líofa, gasta, léirghlic,
 ag maíomh na startha léifid san saothar so romham,
 ar sí ‘tá an aicme chraosach d’fhúig Gaoidhil le seal fá dhaorbhroid
 ag cloí ‘s ag creachadh a *chéile* is ní réidhfid go fóill;
 atá an taoiseach fear go fraochta idir naimhde ba thaca déanach
 i gcoimheascar catha is éirigh mar aon lena shlóigh –
 Washington ‘sa laochra, is nach tím i dtaisteal taobh leo,
 is cúinse ar bith ní méin leis go ngéillfid dá ndeoin’.²³

(Quiet, tender and kindly were her fluent, quick and perceptive words, relating the accounts that will be read in this composition below, she said ‘the voracious class which kept the Gaels in bondage for a time are destroying and plundering *each other* and won’t settle yet; the leader of men is ferocious among enemies who were recent allies, in a violent and deadly struggle along with his army [are] Washington and his heroes, and he’s not slow to march at their side, and he’s unwilling that they should concede any terms voluntarily’.)

The Americans were still seen as *Gaill*—as anglophones and Protestants, the progeny of Calvin and Luther. Strangely, however, they were now also ‘*laochra*’ (heroes). This is an entirely new perception in Irish political literature, a perception that I have not encountered in any work dating from before the period of the American revolutionary war. For the first time, the view was expressed in

²³ Ibid., number 7, lines 17–24. The emphasis is mine.

the vernacular literature that English-speaking Protestants were not necessarily the invariable allies of Great Britain. Before long, this new perception would be applied closer to home.

The American war precipitated an economic depression in Ireland which worsened when fighting spread to European waters. The resulting economic crisis provided the stimulus for a campaign against British mercantilist restrictions on Irish trade, a campaign which won the support of all sections of the population during 1779. As the demands of Anglo-Irish patriots for 'free trade' became more clamorous and their rhetoric more populist and anti-British in tone, it became increasingly easy for Catholics, familiar as they were with a vernacular political literature in which England's oppression of Ireland formed a central theme, to lend their support to the campaign for free trade. In another novel development, prominent members of the parliamentary opposition were lauded in Irish literature. Tomás Ó Míocháin composed a song in praise of the leaders of the parliamentary opposition—Henry Grattan, Walter Hussey Burgh and Barry Yelverton. The song was written, as Ó Míocháin explained, '*ar bhfuascailt na nÉireannach ó dhaorchuing na Sacsan le saorarm sáirmhianach na Banban, dá ngoirtear Volunteers*'—that is, 'on the liberation of the Irish from England's oppressive yoke by the high-minded free army of Ireland, called *Volunteers*'. The opposition leaders were extolled in extravagant terms:

Ar Ghrattan ba náir gan trácht go taitneamhach,
 cáidhfhear ceanamhail, cáilmhear, ceannasach,
 seol scoip is trealamh gan tím;
 is ba dheacair dá bhfágfainn bláth-Bhurgh beachtaithe,
 ráib ler tagaradh cás na Banba,
 i nglór beoil ba bheannaithe binn.
 Ligeam 'na ndiaidh go dian gan dearmad
 Yelverton fial ag fiach na bhfealladh-chon,
 sciath gheal-tseasamhach, íodhan acmhainneach,
 rialach, rabairneach, triathach, teanga-chlis,
 lann óir is luiseag na nGaoidheal.²⁴

(Grattan it would be shameful not to mention with affection, an excellent amiable man, reputable and commanding, a spirited well-equipped guide without timidity; and harsh would it be were I to omit

²⁴ Ibid., number 10, lines 12–22.

polished and precise Burgh, a champion by whom Ireland's case was asserted, in diction that was blessed and sweet. Let us admit quickly after them without fail, generous Yelverton hunting the treacherous dogs, a bright and steadfast shield, a sturdy spear, regular, unstinting, lordly, quick-tongued, the golden blade and the knife-point of the Gaels.)

This novel praise for members of a Hanoverian parliament by a Jacobite author represented a frank recognition of the equally unrestrained and unprecedented nature of the rhetoric employed by opposition leaders during the critical month of November 1779 when a short money bill and the demand for free trade were in agitation. Hussey Burgh made the most memorable contribution to the debate on the short money bill when, referring to the Volunteers, he observed that 'the English sowed their laws like serpents' teeth, and they sprung up in armed men'; a contemporary report states that the House of Commons 'broke out in a burst of applause, which was echoed by the gallery'.²⁵ It is not too fanciful to hear in Ó Míocháin's song a more distant echo of that burst of applause.

With the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown in October 1781 it quickly became apparent that American independence was a *fait accompli* and that formal British recognition of the new reality was only a matter of time. In the interim, the Franco-American victory was celebrated in Irish verse, both as a welcome event in itself and also as an indication that the long-predicted end of British rule was finally at hand. In an *aisling* composed by Seán Ó Muláin the *spéirbhean* personifying Ireland rejoiced at the downfall of her oppressors and lauded the hero of the hour, George Washington:

Tá Hannover séidte le tréimhse ag Washington
 is na méirligh mhallaithe dá dtraochadh ar feo,
 tá Holónt gan ghéill go fraochmhar feargach
 's is taomach treascartha atá [tréad] Liospóin;
 geallaim daoibh gan chúinsí go bhfúigfidhear cathracha
 ina múrthaíbh lasrach gan géilleadh don chóip,
 beidh scriosadh ceart ar champaí an chamdhlí chealgaigh
 'na gcamluí ar machaire ag téacht don fhómhar.²⁶

²⁵ *Hibernian Magazine*, August 1780, 452.

²⁶ Morley, *Washington*, number 13, lines 49–56. The metre indicates that a word is missing before 'Liospóin' and 'tréad' (gang) is my guess. The Portuguese yielded to a Franco-

(Hanover has been finished off by Washington for some time, and the accursed plunderers are subdued and decaying, Holland hasn't yielded and is furious and angry, and the Lisbon [gang?] is moody and prostrate; certain is the grim prospect that England will be left in a sea of flame unless it surrenders to the band, the camps of the crooked treacherous régime will be completely destroyed and lie twisted on the battlefield with the coming of autumn.)

For Ó Muláin, the importance of Washington's victory lay in the fact that the power which vanquished Catholic Ireland in 1691 and triumphed over the Catholic powers of Europe in 1763 had finally been humbled. He recognised that one of the British empire's most important possessions had thrown off its dependency and anticipated a repetition of the process closer to home.

Britain's defeat in North America and the weakened position of Lord North's ministry encouraged Anglo-Irish patriots to press their demand for 'legislative independence', a development which was applauded and associated with Britain's military reverses in the vernacular literature. Ceallachán Mac Cárthaigh praised the Volunteer delegates of Ulster and Connacht who attended provincial meetings at Dungannon and Ballinasloe in the months of February and March 1782 respectively:

Ag Baile na Slógh atá na slóite fearchoin –
 beoga, calma, óga, groí,
 is tuilleadh dá sórt atá ag pórt Dún Geanainn –
 mórdha, macánta, cróga a ngíomh;²⁷

(At Ballinasloe are hostings of heroes, vigorous, valiant, youthful, spirited, and more of their kind at the fort of Dungannon, noble, upright, brave their deeds.)

But the same author's gleeful anticipation of a Bourbon descent on Ireland would have horrified the delegates whom he applauded:

Ciodh fada atá Seoirse brónach feargach
 ag comhrac Washington, Jones is Lee,
 is gur leagadh go leor dá chróntoir leathana –

Spanish ultimatum and closed their ports to British warships in November 1780.

²⁷ Ibid., number 17, lines 17–20.

srónach, cealgach, glórach, groí;
 atá Laoiseach fós ag tabhairt gleo dó is anfa,
 Holónt á ghreadadh 's an Spáinneach buí,
 is fé thosach an fhómhair atá Fódla dearfa,
 a chomhachta leagtha go deo nó á gcloí.²⁸

(While George [III] has long been dejected and furious, fighting Washington, [Commodore John Paul] Jones and [General Charles] Lee, and many of his bloated swarthy boars have been felled—big-nosed, treacherous, clamorous, stout; Louis [XVI] is still giving him tumult and terror, Holland is lashing him, and the swarthy Spaniard, and by the beginning of autumn Ireland is assured, his power will be overthrown forever or worn down.)

This recognition of the challenge which anglophone patriots on both sides of the Atlantic now posed to the constitutional *status quo* existed alongside—but did not supplant—older forms of disaffection, and Mac Cárthaigh also deployed the stock Jacobite image of ‘*Carolus Rex mar Caesar calma*’ (‘King Charles [Edward Stuart] like a valiant Caesar’).²⁹

We are not restricted to the literary sources for evidence that popular attitudes were changing. In 1787, four years after the end of the American war and at the height of the Rightboy disturbances in Munster, an alarmed pamphleteer reported that a group of Rightboys in west Cork had paraded behind ‘a fifer playing the White Cockade’, while an equally alarmed MP declared in a parliamentary debate that another body of Rightboys had paraded behind a more modern symbol of disaffection, the Stars and Stripes.³⁰ It would be difficult to envisage a more striking example of the way in which living political traditions can combine elements of continuity and change—of the way in which novel ideas can be absorbed without displacing older attitudes. The anglocentric student of political thought may be inclined to dismiss the Rightboys’ medley of republican and Jacobite symbolism as evidence of the political ignorance of the Irish masses; if so, the error lies in the attempt to bring English perspectives to bear on a very different society and culture.

²⁸ Ibid., lines 1–8.

²⁹ Ibid., line 27.

³⁰ *The O’Leariad. Translated into English Verse, and Illustrated with Notes* (Dublin, 1787), 9 (footnote) and *Faulkner’s Dublin Journal*, 24 February 1787, respectively.

III

One message, one ‘prophecy concerning the kingdom’, was reiterated in Irish verse throughout the American revolutionary war. The outcome foretold time and again by the authors—and therefore, it is safe to assume, the outcome desired by their audiences—was that Britain would be defeated and the Catholic nation would be restored to the rights of which it had been stripped by the Williamite Revolution.³¹ This was a traditional aspiration but it was also part of an evolving world-view, for the vernacular literature leaves no doubt that popular attitudes changed fundamentally during the course of the American revolutionary war. If the conflict was seen as a British civil war when it began, by the time it ended English-speaking Protestant republicans—Generals George Washington, Nathanael Greene, Charles Lee, Commodore John Paul Jones, among others—were being extolled in Irish verse. More importantly still, Anglo-Irish patriots were praised when they were perceived to be acting in defence of Ireland’s interests.

These developments, which would have been inconceivable in the period before the American revolution, were pregnant with possibilities.

³¹ Morley, *Washington*, number 2, lines 86–90; number 5, lines 19–20; number 6, lines 37–40; number 13, lines 59–62; number 17, lines 25–28; number 21, lines 61–4.

The oral tradition and literature in Ireland and Scotland: Popular culture in Robert Burns and Charles Maturin

Jim Kelly

In a much recounted anecdote, the writer James Hogg recalled a meeting between Sir Walter Scott and Hogg's mother. Responding to Scott's interest in whether a particular song she had sung had ever been printed, Mrs Hogg scolded Scott's interest in printing what were orally transmitted ballads:

[There] war never ane o' my sangs prentit till ye prentit them yoursel', an' ye have spoilt them awthegither. They were made for singin' an' no for readin'; but ye hae broken the charm noo, an' they'll never sung mair.¹

The anecdote serves perfectly to show the uneasy relationship between the enthusiastic antiquarian, eager to 'preserve' remnants of an oral culture, and an actual practitioner of that culture, suspicious of someone who transposes, and thereby destroys, songs from an oral culture into a textual one.

The fault lines between an oral tradition and a modern print culture were felt particularly strongly in Ireland and Britain in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As I hope to show through readings of examples of Robert Burns' poetry and Charles Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*, the interface between a modern (print) culture and a primitive (oral) one could be a remarkably ambivalent thing, raising issues of audience and reception that were central to how authors positioned themselves in the literary marketplace. Far from being clear, the opposition between oral tradition and print culture, primitive and modern, was contingent upon a whole set of assumptions about social class and national identity.

The concept of what constitutes an 'oral tradition' can be quite hard to define. As Penny Fielding writes;

The oral is never simply one thing and what orality signifies in nineteenth-century writing cannot be understood without considering its

¹ James Hogg, *Domestic Manners of Sir Walter Scott* (1843) (Stirling, 1909), 53.

uses as an agent in the creation and re-creation of cultural norms and values. The oral is always the other: of writing (speech), of culture (the voice of nature), of the modern (a pre-modern past).²

The oral thus becomes more significant for what it stands against than for what it actually is. The idea of an oral tradition becomes a marker for modernity, “an ever-moving point marking off our own present (whenever that might be) from a long past.”³ The term ‘oral tradition’ had been used as early as the first half of the seventeenth-century when it denoted all the practices of the Catholic Church that existed outside of Holy Writ.⁴ Its modern sense comes from the late eighteenth-century when the distinction broadens to that between popular practices and secular (written) authoritative discourses. While the term retained some of its associations with Catholicism, it broadened out into a general descriptive term describing the method of transmission of practices and beliefs of the (predominantly rural) lower-classes. As George Denis Zimmermann points out,⁵ John Brand was one of the first writers to use it in his republication of Henry Bourne’s *Antiquitates Vulgares* (1777) to describe the customs and beliefs of an illiterate rural populace. In his preface to the re-issue, Brand specifically sets the oral tradition against a more public authoritative written word:

These [folk customs], consecrated to the Fancies of Men, by a Usage from Time immemorial, though erased by public Authority from the *written Word*, were committed as a venerable Deposit to the keeping of *oral Tradition*.⁶

While there is a residual linking of the oral tradition to popular religious practices Brand extends the remit of the phrase to include a whole set of cultural practices.

² Penny Fielding, *Writing and Orality: nationality, culture, and nineteenth-century Scottish fiction* (Oxford, 1996), 4.

³ Fielding, *Writing and Orality*: 5.

⁴ The term had been used since the counter-Reformation to denote unwritten Catholic practices. See Nicholas Hudson *Writing and European Thought 1600-1830* (Cambridge, 1994), 188, n. 39. The OED lists a use of the term ‘oral tradition’ from as early as 1628.

⁵ George Denis Zimmermann, *The Irish Storyteller* (Dublin, 2001), 168.

⁶ John Brand, *Observations on popular antiquities: : including the whole of Mr. Bourne’s Antiquitates vulgares, with addenda to every chapter of that work: as also, an appendix, containing such articles on the subject, as have been omitted by that author* (Newcastle upon Tyne: 1777), iv. Emphasis in the original.

Whether Brand uses the term ‘oral tradition’ or ‘popular antiquities’, there is, as Diarmuid Ó’Giolláin points out, a distancing of what is being described from the people who are describing it:

All of the terms [to describe practices and beliefs] were based on distance between the observer and the observed—distance in time (‘antiquities’, ‘survivals’) or distance in social class (‘folk’, ‘popular’).⁷

Brand’s distinction between a written public authority and oral tradition is a useful starting-point from which to compare the treatment of oral culture in Burns’ poetry and in *Melmoth the Wanderer*. Brand’s distinction carries with it the sense that the written, textual word has a greater claim to public agency and yet is fundamentally unable to erase all forms of popular tradition from the national record. It neatly prefigures a public sphere that is resolutely textual, yet it also acknowledges that there are alternative forms of knowledge and cultural transmission outside that sphere. The oral tradition becomes a ‘deposit’, a national storehouse, for folk customs.

Yet while this seems to give some residual agency to the oral as repository of popular memory, the written word is the form in which these folk customs will eventually survive (namely, in Brand’s reissue of Bourne’s book). Folk culture goes through a sort of ‘double authorisation’, therefore. It is, on the one hand, consecrated through memory, becoming authoritative through its survival outside of the modern world of a public print-media. On the other hand, the only way in which it can be appreciated by the modern audience is to be recuperated from being merely ‘a venerable Deposit’ through the means of the public authority of the written word. It is authorised, in other words, by being both outside print-media yet only knowable to a polite audience by the authority of print-media. Colin Graham’s remarks about Yeats’ *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888) might prove useful in observing the relationship between the ‘authentic’ folktale and the ‘authorising’ medium in which it is presented to the public:

Yeats’s ambiguous control over the authenticity of his material reveals in its triple-level of authentication (tales, storytellers, folktale-collectors) that authenticity thrives on the textuality and substance of its medium. . . . Textuality seems to provide the material existence which

⁷ Diarmuid Ó’Giolláin. *Locating Irish Folklore: tradition, modernity, identity* (Cork, 2000), 32–3.

authenticity needs in tandem with its resistance to definition—its mystique is maintained and *evidenced*, while what is actually ‘authentic’ is filtered through further authenticating processes (folk tales are themselves authenticated democratically by their tellers, then approved and re-authorised by their collectors/editors).⁸

The authenticity of folk customs therefore exists due to both its status as an alternative to print-media, and its subsequent absorption into and ultimate legitimisation by/of print-media. They provide an alternative form of knowledge yet that form of knowledge can only be activated and transmitted to a wider audience by means of the very form outside of which it is supposed to operate. The textual authority of the book is needed to reincorporate oral tradition into the national imagination as ‘at once a troublesome site of contested authenticity and a figure of national origin’.⁹ The oral tradition, then, is an alternative system of knowledge yet paradoxically it is always already contained as an object within the system that it is an alternative to. The ‘vulgar’ practices of the common people, recuperated by an enlightened form of ethnography ‘could be used to certify the specificity of a nation, and to justify the restoration of its rights if they seemed endangered’.¹⁰

We can see a distinct role that the peasant culture plays within the modern social sphere. By the act of being published it confirms both an organic base for the national community, and in its appropriation by the very medium to which it is seen as a counterpoint, i.e. print-media, it gives the nation a sense of its own modernity. These incongruous positions (organic tradition and commercial modernity) are only seemingly incongruous. The urge that leads to an ethnographic recuperation of peasant culture in effect credits that culture with its organic national connotations. An amorphous body of stories, songs, and practices can only become an ‘oral tradition’, that is, something somehow uncontaminated by a commercial modernity, through its definition in print. As Diarmuid Ó Giolláin writes on the relationship between folklore and nationalism:

There was a liberating and validating dimension to the discovery of folklore, legitimising the traditions of a population that had usually been

⁸ Colin Graham. *Deconstructing Ireland: Identity, Theory, Culture* (Edinburgh, 2001), 144. Italics in original.

⁹ Fielding, *Writing and Orality*, 9.

¹⁰ Zimmerman, *Irish Storyteller*, 168.

denigrated, giving them the status of culture, and allowing ordinary people to participate in the building of a nation. Folklore archives were ideologically informed, but represented the cultural production of the common people and formed a unique body of documentary evidence, which by their very existence offered an alternative to a view of history and culture as the work of 'great men'.¹¹

When we come to examine how folk customs appear in writers as different as Burns and Maturin, therefore, we need to examine not only how they appropriate folk beliefs into their text, but also how they comment on the very process by which material from an oral tradition is presented within a textual artefact.

Towards the beginning of *Melmoth the Wanderer*, Maturin gives a description of a local Wise Woman and some of the methods by which she entrances the local population. It is the longest sustained description of folk superstitions given in any of Maturin's works:

[I]f there were no lives to be shortened, there were fortunes to be told;—she worked 'by spells, and by such daubry as is beyond our element.' No one twined so well as she the mystic yarn to be dropt into the lime-kiln pit, on the edge of which stood the shivering inquirer into futurity, doubtful whether the answer to her question of 'who holds?' was to be uttered by the voice of demon or lover.

No one knew so well as she to find where the four streams met, in which, on the same portentous season, the chemise was to be immersed, and then displayed before the fire, (in the name of one whom we dare not mention to 'ears polite'), to be turned by the figure of the destined husband before morning. No one but herself (she said) knew the hand in which the comb was to be held, while the other was employed in conveying the apple to the mouth,—while, during the joint operation, the shadow of the phantom spouse was to pass across the mirror before it was performed. No one was more skilful or active in removing every iron implement from the kitchen where these ceremonies were usually performed by the credulous and terrified dupes of her wizardry, lest, instead of the form of a comely youth exhibiting a ring on his white finger, an headless figure should stalk to the rack, (*Anglicè*, dresser), take

¹¹ Ó'Giolláin, *Locating Irish Folklore*, 76.

down a long spit, or, in default of that, snatch a poker from the fire-side, and mercilessly take measure with its iron length of the sleeper for a coffin. No one, in short, knew better how to torment or terrify her victims into a belief of that power which may have reduced the strongest minds to the level of the weakest . . .'¹²

What seems to be a straightforward piece of auto-exoticism listing peasant customs becomes more complicated if we look at the source for these beliefs. For unlike a novelist like Lady Morgan, who took pains to present interpolated recordings of Irish customs as coming straight from the local cottage, we are not getting something 'authentic' in this passage. Maturin had a negligible interest, or opportunity to interact with, the rural populace. This is not popular culture mediated to the literate public from some reservoir of archaic folk customs. What we have instead is a straightforward prose rendition of folk customs mentioned in Robert Burns' poem 'Halloween'. When we look closer at the text of 'Halloween', it becomes apparent that even that provides a more complicated account of the relation between a literary work and the customs it describes.

The introduction Burns provided for his poem locates the peasant's desire for knowledge of futurity in the 'rude' state of society, showing the influence of Scottish Enlightenment social theorists:

The passion of prying into futurity makes a striking part of the history of human nature in its rude state, in all ages and nations; and it may be some entertainment to a philosophic mind, if any such honour the author with a perusal, to see the remains of it, among the more unenlightened in our own.¹³

Burns is presenting to an enlightened audience these practices as ahistorical, and thus recovering folk practices into an enlightened historicity. The ethnographic listing of folk customs is proffered to the reader as perhaps being of 'some entertainment to a philosophic mind'. Its entertainment value lies in the fact that it grants the reader an insight into a more natural, pre-civilised stage of mankind. It returns the reader, therefore, to the savage stage, the 'rude state' that precedes

¹² Charles Maturin. *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), ed. Douglas Grant (Oxford, 1968), 11. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

¹³ Robert Burns, 'Halloween'. *The Canongate Burns*, ed. Andrew Noble and Patrick Scott Hogg (Edinburgh, 2001), 74.

the enlightened audience of the poem. The idea that one is returning to a more natural state that is to be valued for the insight it gives into a universal human nature is vitally important. Yet Burns does not preclude the possibility that to some of his readers the folk customs will already be familiar:

The following poem will, by many readers, be well enough understood; but for the sake of those unacquainted with the manners and traditions of the country where the scene is cast, notes are added.¹⁴

Burns' ideal readership, therefore, will contain *both* those who recognise the customs described as well as a more (modern) philosophical reader who will be able to place such beliefs within a larger framework of comparative historical concepts.

A good example of this ambivalent position of audience and text can be seen in a less well-known poem; 'Address to the People of Scotland, Respecting Francis Grose, Esq; the British Antiquarian' which appeared in *The Northern Star*, April 14, 1792. While there is no direct evidence that Maturin might have read this, the presentation of folk material and the processes by which it is presented are relevant to the strategies employed in *Melmoth the Wanderer*. The poem was introduced by the enlightened editorship of *The Northern Star*:

The following address to the People of Scotland, was written by Mr Robt. Burns, the Ayrshire Poet, when Capt. Grose, the British Antiquarian, was on his peregrination in Scotland, in the year 1791, collecting materials for his publication of the antiquities of that country.

The ideas in this, like the rest of Mr Burns's productions, are singular and eccentric, and exhibits a just picture of the sentiments of the low peasantry of Scotland, respecting any gentleman who is professedly an Antiquarian—He is deemed to be in colleague with SATAN, and to be a dealer in magic and the BLACK ART, a vulgar prejudice, which all the light and learning of the present day, have not yet been able totally to eradicate.¹⁵

This is followed by Burns' poem, written in dialect:

¹⁴ Ibid. 74.

¹⁵ 'Address to the People of Scotland', *The Northern Star*, April 14–16 (1792), 7. Hereafter cited parenthetically in the text.

sentiment as it was of ethnographic observation. As Marilyn Butler points out when discussing the antiquarian Joseph Ritson's reprinting of English oral tales and ballads, such forms were seen as full of 'democratic implications'.¹⁶ In Burns' case, a poem about the danger to a community by a soldier turned antiquarian is itself transformed by the preface into a poem worthwhile because of its veracity as an ethnographic document in its own right.

We can see in 'Address to the People of Scotland', then, some of the issues of audience that are brought up in the poem that Maturin plagiarises. The dichotomy between an address to an organic community and a modern readership is represented in Burns' poem 'Halloween' by the presence of footnotes describing in Standard English the customs presented in Scots in the poem itself:

Wee Jenny to her Graunie says,
 Will ye go wi' me, Graunie?
 I'll *eat the apple* at the glass,
 I gat frae uncle Johnie:'

Take a candle and go alone to a looking glass; eat an apple before it, and some traditions say, you should comb your hair all the time; the face of your conjugal companion, *to be*, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder.¹⁷

At least for part of Burns' readership, then, the customs mentioned are part of a living tradition. Unlike, for example, the Irish originals of Ossian that are mentioned in *The Wild Irish Girl* but are nowhere directly presented, Burns presupposes that some of his readership will have had direct contact with these customs, if not having practised some of them themselves.

Maturin's plagiarising of Burns' poem implies quite a different readership. Instead of the quasi-communal aspect of Burns' introduction, we have the folk customs presented to an audience who will have encountered them in a prior published text rather than in real life. If the reader of *Melmoth* recognises the customs mentioned, therefore, it is not because s/he is a Scottish peasant (presumably) but because s/he might have read of those customs previously. We are therefore presented with a subtle intertextuality that locates these cus-

¹⁶ Marilyn Butler. *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Cambridge, 1984), 203.

¹⁷ Burns, 'Halloween', 78.

toms as belonging to a community of *readers* rather than of practitioners. This separates the listing of folk customs in Maturin's novel from similar auto-exotic moves in novels like *Castle Rackrent* or *The Wild Irish Girl*. Whereas they were involved in 'the tendency to employ footnotes and digressions in order to represent a 'real Irish' local or historical background',¹⁸ Maturin's deployment of folk culture draws attention to the whole process by which that culture is absorbed and legitimated by the very print culture outside of which it is supposed to operate. The 'priority' of the folk customs in terms of their ahistoricity in relation to the 'enlightened' text is deconstructed, leaving them presented as bound up within that historicity, as part of a recognisable series of literary tropes already before the reader.

As such, the 'local colour' in *Melmoth the Wanderer* can be seen to be reducing the authenticity of the Irish oral tradition that would make it of moral and cultural value to the nation. Biddy Brannigan, the old woman who is characterised as 'witch-like' seems to be portrayed solely in a negative light along with the cultural traditions that she supposedly represents. She lives a 'squalid existence by practising on the fears, the ignorance, and the sufferings of beings as miserable as herself' (10). There are suggestions, though, that her role as local witch is not exclusively negative. What is important though, is to note how her practices vary according to the class she is addressing:

Among the better sort, to whom she had sometimes had access by the influence of servants, she tried the effects of some simples, her skill in which was sometimes productive of success. Among the lower orders she talked much of the effects of the 'evil eye', against which she boasted a counter-spell, of unfailing efficacy; and while she spoke, she shook her grizzled locks with such witchlike eagerness, that she never failed to communicate to her half-terrified, half-believing audience, some portion of that enthusiasm which, amid all her consciousness of imposture, she herself probably felt a large share of . . . (10)

In other words, Brannigan has a sometimes restorative effect on the 'better sort', while her relationship with her own class is characterised by both imposture and 'enthusiasm'—she practices a form of spiritual enslavement.

It is possible that we have here the central problem involved in appropriating folk customs into polite literature in both Ireland and Scotland in

¹⁸ Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth-Century* (Cork, 1996), 37.

the early nineteenth century. The fundamental misunderstanding between Sir Walter Scott and Mrs Hogg is strategically investigated by both Burns and Maturin in their very different texts. On the one hand is the beneficent effect of introducing a polite readership to peasant culture, while on the other is the enlightened recognition that such practices when performed among the classes from which they come, 'the lower orders', are a purely negative. Maturin's version of folk culture and the oral tradition operates in that liminal space suggested by Burns in the introduction to 'Halloween' between enlightened observers and credulous practitioners. We have here both a celebration and censoring of folk customs, a recognition that the appeal and function of folk customs varies in type across class boundaries. As such, the appropriation of folk material into polite culture as relics of a 'venerable deposit' can be construed as a process with definite class implications. As the ideological battles of the 1790s had demonstrated, certain practices and popular traditions could be recuperated for specifically radical ends. Folk customs, in other words, become invested with social and political capital not *a priori* but through their mediated appearance before 'the better sort'. What invests the oral tradition with symbolic capital is not some essential quality it possesses, but the manner in which it is appropriated by modernity.

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Setting His Own Standard: James Orr's Employment of a Traditional Stanza Form

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The close engagement of the eighteenth-century Ulster-Scots radical poets with the works of Burns has recently attracted scholarly interest,¹ but as John Hewitt pointed out over thirty years ago an Ulster tradition of writing in Scots began well in advance of the Burns era:

[. . .] the first printed verses by a local author in Scots figure in a broadsheet from Strabane, about 1735, in the stanza sometimes called after Burns, but far older than his practice, and more accurately known as Standard Habbie [. . .] A little later than the Strabane broadsheet, our first anthology of prose and verse, *The Ulster Miscellany* (1753) has a section of seventeen pages under the heading of Scotch Poems, several of which specifically relate to the Scots-planted pocket in east Donegal.²

Several generations after the Ulster Plantations, the descendants of former colonists appear to have remained hungry for Scots reading material. Certainly, even before Allan Ramsay began producing contemporary vernacular works, literary masterpieces of the Middle Scots period were being re-printed in Belfast. These included Alexander Montgomerie's *The Cherrie and the Slae*³ and the *Works* of Sir David Lindsay.⁴ Also popular were *The Bruce* of John Barbour, Blind Harry's *The Life and Acts of Sir William Wallace* and lurid tales in English relating the experiences of persecuted Covenanters.⁵ Reading habits suggest that throughout the eighteenth century, the Ulster-Scots identified with Scotland's heroic, independent past and her national

¹ Liam McIlvanney, *Burns the Radical: Poetry and Politics in Late Eighteenth Century Scotland* (East Linton, 2002), 220–40.

² John Hewitt, *Rhyming Weavers and Other Country Poets of Antrim and Down* (Belfast, 2004), 3.

³ Re-printed in Belfast in 1700.

⁴ Re-printed in Belfast, 1714.

⁵ J. R. R. Adams, *The Printed Word and the Common Man: Popular Culture in Ulster 1700–1900*, (Belfast, 1987); Appendix I, "Ulster Publications, 1699–1800", 175–81.

and religious martyrs. The appetite for potentially subversive texts can only have been sharpened by those aspects of the Penal Laws, such as tithes and Test Acts,⁶ to which Presbyterians were subjected. Those Ulster poets who produced vernacular verse, therefore, were responding to local demand and supplying a well-established market.

Naturally, once a branch of the Scots literary tradition had taken root in Ulster it developed its own character, not least through close engagement with specifically Irish issues and the exploration of these from a northern dissenting viewpoint. In the hands of the best poets, such as the United Irish radical, James Orr of Ballycarry, the result is a unique exploitation of traditional Scots genres and language which expresses a too-long unacknowledged aspect of Irish identity.

John Hewitt credited Orr with 'a craftsman's authority' in his manipulation of the great Scots stanza forms.⁷ Undoubtedly his handling of standard habbie is both fluent and secure, but he followed in the wake of the three Scots masters, Ramsay, Fergusson and Burns, each one of whom, in diverse ways, made this form his own. This essay will explore James Orr's employment of standard habbie and his success in finding expression for his unique voice within this familiar structure. In this respect, Orr's work may also be seen to represent a further stage in the stanza's evolution.

The general effect of the stanza's pattern is friendly to satirical verse. The initial three rhyming iambic tetrameters permit an idea to be set out and apparently concluded in the following dimeter, but lines five and six, which echo the rhyme scheme of three and four, may be utilised for the addition of a satirical rider or cynical afterthought. Robert Semphill of Beltrees exploited some of the possibilities of the form in his mock elegy 'The Life and Death of Habbie Simpson' in which the re-iteration of the fact that 'Habbie's dead', with minimal variation throughout thirteen stanzas, progressively generates a reductive effect that undercuts the professed grief of the speaker.

While the roots of the form may be traced to troubadours who performed in a courtly setting, Alan Ramsay successfully employed standard habbie to voice the thoughts of tavern and brothel keepers, or of their clients. Furthermore, he sited it firmly within the poetry of the city, revealing an alternative Edinburgh that could be both riotous and irreverent, as the following lines from his 'Elegy on Maggie Johnson' illustrate:

⁶ The Test Act required any person wishing to hold public office to take the sacrament in the Anglican Church.

⁷ Hewitt, *Rhyming Weavers*, 94.

Despite the apparent subversion of propriety, however, the conclusion of Ramsay's 'Elegy' offers a reminder of a more conventional moral framework. The uncomfortable issue of judgement in the afterlife is raised, while in an echo of 'Habbie Simpson', the speaker grimly stresses the irrevocable finality of death:

Robert Fergusson, in "The Daft Days"¹⁰, also chooses to celebrate the tavern culture of the capital, but builds on Ramsay's achievement to produce a work of far greater complexity and sophistication. The opening meditation, an atmospheric representation of the countryside in 'mirk December', allows him to incorporate elements of pastoral, but as a prelude to the speaker's rejection of the fields in favour of the vigorous conviviality of city life on dark winter evenings. The poem effectively voices the drawing power which the city continually exercises, particularly over young people, in every generation, while the celebratory mood thus engendered is further extended to accommodate cultural nationalism. His scenes of 'mirth' and 'social cheer' never attain the level of excess depicted in Ramsay's anarchic cameos, but the stanza's association with insubordination and dissidence is perpetuated in Fergusson's mocking finale. Here, with assumed piety, he supplicates the 'great god of Aquae Vitae', for protection from the forces of law and order whom he disrespectfully designates "that black banditti, / The City-Guard".

⁸ Allan Ramsay, 'Elegy on Maggie Johnson' in A.M. Kinghorn and A. Law (eds), *Poems by Allan Ramsay and Robert Fergusson* (Edinburgh, 1974), 4.

⁹ Ibid., 6.

¹⁰ Ibid., 121–3.

his own multi-faceted verse persona. His dramatic monologue, 'Holy Willie's Prayer', is potentially as shocking as Ramsay's 'Lucky Spence's last Advice', but exhibits a much more finely-tuned form of satire as Burns exposes the deception of others and of self that typifies the religious hypocrite. Donald Low has commented that 'It is difficult to over-estimate the significance of 'stand-art habbie' in the case of Burns',¹¹ pointing out that Burns greatly extended the range of its possible applications. As examples Low cites the 'Elegy on Captain Matthew Henderson', in which the stanza is shown to be suitable for the expression of genuine grief, and 'The Vision' which widens its range still further to 'include the communication of serious ideas'.

Certainly, all the major themes of Burns's *oeuvre* are explored in the standard habbie poems: religion, his poetic calling, Scotland and its symbols, regional identity, natural beauty, friendship, sexual conquest and radical opinions. The richness of this component of his work is in large part due to the variations in voice he achieves within and between poems. He speaks as Rab the Ranter, Robin Ruisseaux, Robert Burns, as the libertarian, the passionate lover, the predator, the rationalist, the guid billie, the tease, the penetrating satirist, the inspired visionary, the irreverent rhymers. Through this series of skillfully-adopted poses, it becomes clear that Burns the poet is determined to resist pigeon-holing by remaining elusive, uncommitted and apart.

Consider first of all those verse epistles in which Burns himself appears to speak through the medium of a first person narrator. Liam McIlvanney argues that these are genuine, intimate letters which 'put the reader in a subordinate position, looking over Burns's shoulder at verses meant principally for the eyes of another [. . .]. The epistles shut us out [. . .]. The result is a self-regulating community that requires no corroboration, no endorsement from the outside world'.¹² McIlvanney also characterises the epistles as a kind of 'pub talk or blether',¹³ an evaluation borne out by reference to much of the content. Such talk is rarely noteworthy for its sensitivity or diffidence and, certainly, the voice in the 'Epistle to John Rankine'¹⁴ is that of a swaggering sexual predator, 'a rovin with [his] gun [. . .] of guns the whale'. The same poem expresses the speaker's exasperation with the busy-bodding of the moral guardians from the 'Poacher-Court' and 'all their blethers', independent sentiments which many

¹¹ Donald Low, *Robert Burns* (Edinburgh, 1986), 47.

¹² Liam McIlvanney, *Burns the Radical*, 103.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 102.

¹⁴ Robert Burns, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. James A. MacKay (Darvel, Ayrshire, 1997), 82–4.

twenty-first century readers would endorse. It must be acknowledged, however, that the objectifying and belittling of the woman as 'a paitrick', 'it' and 'a poor wee thing' achieves a less than timeless resonance. The poet's welcome to his illegitimate daughter demonstrates a more responsible treatment of the consequences of sexual adventures even as it challenges conventional attitudes. Here the impression created is of a man of intense tenderness, courage and natural justice:

And if thou be what I wad hae thee,
 An tak the counsel I shall gie thee,
 I'll never rue my trouble wi thee –
 The cost nor shame o't –
 But be a loving father to thee,
 And brag the name o't.¹⁵

'Adam Armour's Prayer' appears to have been written in disgust, to expose bullying which is masquerading as the enforcement of high moral standards. Burns effectively captures a narrative voice of gloating, thuggish bravado and sexual sadism, showing how the process of mob 'justice' allows free rein to the worst aspects of human nature:

[. . .]we stang'd her through the place,
 An hurt her spleuchan [. . .].
 As for the jurr –puir worthless body!
 She's got mischief enough already;
 Wi' stanget hips and buttocks bluidy
 She suffer'd sair;¹⁶

As the speaker lingers with satisfaction over the intimate details of the humiliation and of the wounds to the female parts, one suspects that the suffering inflicted has contributed to his own arousal. The poem provides further evidence of Burns's capacity to stand apart from his community, at odds with its judgementalism and its licensed brutality.

While on some occasions Burns seeks to give the impression of carelessness in composition, claiming that his verses come 'rattling at ither's arses',¹⁷ in the

¹⁵ Ibid., 113.

¹⁶ Ibid., 198–9.

¹⁷ 'To A Haggis', *ibid.*, 264–5.

case of 'The Vision' he is very deliberate in setting a tone and atmosphere that make a prelude to a deeply significant and spiritual experience. In this work of exceptional gravitas Burns proposes his poetic calling, demonstrating a sense of his own ability and purpose that sets him far apart even from the bardic fraternity of the epistles. Through references to rhyme, ploughing and 'my bonie Jean' Burns constructs a persona clearly intended to be understood as his own. Though initially startled by the appearance of his Muse, typically, when confronted by a female presence, his brashness quickly reasserts itself:

And such a leg! My bonie Jean
 Could only peer it;
 Sae straught, sae taper, tight an clean –
 Nane else came near it.¹⁸

The whole encounter, including the Muse's revelations, her instructions and Burns's implicit acceptance of the commission, makes evident his remarkable self-confidence. However, the audacity (as some might consider it) of his claim to be writing in obedience to the commands of Scotland's presiding poetic genii, is ingeniously embedded within a rich, rhetorical, sensuous composition that cannily includes very proper-sounding allusions to his own rusticity and lowliness:

'I taught thy manners-painting strains
 The loves, the ways of simple swains
 Till now, o'er all my wide domains
 Thy fame extends;
 And some, the pride of Coila's plains
 Become thy friends. [. . .]

Then never murmur nor repine;
 Strive in thy humble sphere to shine;
 And trust me, not Potosi's mine,
 Nor king's regard,
 Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
 A rustic Bard. [. . .]¹⁹

¹⁸ Ibid., 116.

¹⁹ Ibid., 120–1.

The work may appear contrived to cash in on Burns's popular image as ploughman-poet/rustic genius, but as the Muse's theme develops no hint of irony is permitted to disturb the mood. Rather, the dignity and consequence of the poet's status and calling are thoroughly enhanced. In this respect, despite massive differences in register and subject, 'The Vision' discloses the poet's isolation, his sense of separateness from the mindset of 'simple swains', every bit as much as does 'Adam Armour's Prayer'.

Undoubtedly, Burns brought unprecedented sophistication and variety to composition in standard habbie, exploiting its flexibility to the full. What more could possibly be achieved by any following poet who chose to employ it? Would not any work produced inevitably appear imitative of something Burns had already accomplished? If one explores the Scots poetry produced in Ulster, however, it becomes clear that new light could indeed brighten an old window.

James Orr's handling of standard habbie, which he employed in seven poems, is more than merely competent. In these works he effortlessly adopts the stance of a man rooted within his community and closely identified with it. He evokes its life, acts as its spokesman, and, when appropriate, gently satirises. Linde Lunney of the Royal Irish Academy has written of Orr's 'intimately structured community where everyone is known', and of his 'almost mystic perception of rootedness'.²⁰ It is in the vernacular standard habbie poems that this inter-connectedness between his life and the lives of his neighbours becomes most apparent.

With the exception of some months beginning in the autumn of 1798 which he spent in Philadelphia, James Orr lived the whole of his life (1770–1816) in the village of Ballycarry. The village, in the east Antrim hills, was situated in a district that had been settled by Scots in the late sixteenth century and the Scottishness of its language, customs and culture remained evident to observers more than two hundred years later.²¹ The Reverend Edward Brice established Ireland's first Presbyterian congregation there *circa* 1613 and by the time of Orr's birth Ballycarry was almost exclusively Presbyterian. Literacy was of a good standard in the area for the Scots had quickly founded a school in the

²⁰ Linde Lunney, 'The Nature of the Ulster-Scots Language Community' in John Erskine and Gordon Lucy (eds), *Cultural Traditions: Varieties of Scottishness* (Belfast, 1997), 113–27.

²¹ A. Day, P. McWilliams and N. Dobson, (eds), *Parishes of County Antrim 10, 1830–1, 1833–5, 1839–40* (Belfast, 1994), *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland*, XXVI. References to the Scottish speech and cultural traditions of many among the Ulster population may be found throughout the Memoirs for Antrim and Down.

parish, though Orr's father, a handloom weaver, personally educated his son at home. The village economy rested on small farming and the (then) cottage-based processes of the linen industry.

Local tradition holds that during the United Irishmen's Rebellion of 1798, all the men of Ballycarry turned out in support.²² While they were no doubt influenced by the United Irish democratic agenda that had been inspired by Tom Paine's *The Rights of Man*, many of the Ballycarry contingent may in the main have wished to strike a blow against the requirement to pay tithes to the alien but established Anglican church. Orr's writing, however, reveals the genuinely global scope of his own radicalism. It was this that led him to command a troop of Ballycarry men at the rebels' mustering ground on Donegore Hill in County Antrim, on June 7, 1798, and it was for his active role in the failed Rising that Orr was forced to go on the run, eventually as far as America, until an amnesty permitted his return to Ireland after some months. His relief at being home again is recorded in a verse epistle to his fellow poet, Samuel Thomson:

For me, we' a' that's come an' past,
I'm at my ain fire-side at last,
Fu' blythe, [. . .]²³

Orr settled back into village life, supporting himself by following his father's trade as a weaver. While he never married, he was active in the Masonic Lodge, the local Reading Society and in the writing of verse. As a young man he had composed political pieces for the United Irish newspaper, *The Northern Star*, and while in America he continued to publish. Following his return the Ballycarry community acknowledged his gifts by according him the status of village Bard.

If the bardic fraternity in Burns's locality was a self-regulating, rather exclusive society, in the Ulster of the Long Eighteenth Century the Bard had a public, quasi-official status. Throughout the Province, from County Down to Donegal, many village and townland communities honoured certain gifted individuals with this title. These individuals would employ their poetic skills to

²² Orr's *Christis Kirk* poem 'Donegore Hill' presents a different picture, alleging that some of the men hid themselves to avoid taking part in the Rising.

²³ James Orr, *The Country Rhymes of James Orr, the Bard of Ballycarry (1770 – 1816)*, J.R.R. Adams and Philip Robinson (eds), Volume 2, in *The Folk Poets of Ulster* (Bangor, 1992), 72.

entertain, commemorate, and sometimes to castigate. They would comment on local affairs, but also on national and international events. Many bards, Orr among them, published their works by raising subscriptions from their friends and neighbours.

Orr produced poetry in English and in the 'Braid Scotch' vernacular. Much of his work, written from the viewpoint of an 'insider', celebrates life in the rural community which he frequently portrays as a sociable, supportive environment. This is particularly true of the seven poems he wrote in standard habbie. His most well-known work in this stanza is his ode 'To the Potatoe', from which Hewitt included an extract of verses in the anthology section of *Rhyming Weavers*. Hewitt's desire to highlight distinctive regional culture led him to choose those stanzas which describe the varied, wholesome, local dishes that were created using potatoes. Orr is actually following a Scots tradition of celebrating regional food which, in the eighteenth century, stretches back to Fergusson and Ramsay, but in other ways 'To the Potatoe' is a work of far greater intricacy than Hewitt's anthology suggests. It incorporates Orr's most open and defiant expression of radical sentiments, while asserting Ireland's capacity for self-sufficiency and resistance to oppression, with England specifically portrayed as a bird of prey. It also provides insight into Orr's preferred means of challenging injustice: non-violent direct action. In addition, Orr powerfully evokes community life within the poem, showing that the potato serves as a focus for its every aspect, domestic, social or labouring:

The weel-pair't peasants, kempin', set ye;
 The weak wee boys, sho'el, weed, an' pat ye;
 The auld guid men thy apples get ay
 Seedlin's to raise;
 An' on sow'n-seeves the lasses grate ye,
 To starch their claes.²⁴

Drawing on his insider's knowledge, he presents the figures and seasonal activities he observes, investing them with archetypal or ritualistic qualities. While keenly aware that the locality represents the nation in microcosm, Orr is clearly writing as the Bard of Ballycarry, committed to the village community and sharing in its life.

²⁴ Ibid., 2.

'Tea', a comic monologue, portrays Orr himself in his role as local entertainer, declaiming a mock eulogy in praise of the popular beverage. The piece is supposedly addressed to a group of friends who have just called and are now waiting for the kettle to boil. With tongue firmly in cheek he depicts himself as a 'rude' rhymer and his audience as habituated to 'strains sublime'.

Once the guests are settled comfortably Orr extols tea's virtues, in a series of humorous cameos from which its importance to rural life may be inferred.²⁵ It has intrinsically soothing properties, effective against 'weed' and 'head-ach', but more importantly, a present of tea can deflect a wife's wrath from her late-returning, 'sot' of a husband. At this point in his narrative, in an effortless transition to mock heroic mode, Orr vigorously denounces the secretive, selfish streak which love of the beverage can develop in a wife:

But blast the smuggler, fause an' fell,
Wha brews't in tinfu's by hersel;
An, bribes the sma-craft no to tell
 Their drudgin' daddy;
Deel nor he'd ay bounce in, pell-mell,
 Just when 'tis ready.²⁶

The quotation provides an example of Orr's poetic craftsmanship in which he speedily sketches a minor domestic crisis, exhibiting a dry (bachelor's) cynicism regarding the marital relationship. The alliteration employed in 'fause and fell' augments the melodramatic tone, while the imagery points to a conspiracy in which the wife is exposed as the corrupter of her innocent children. The 'echo' lines, five and six, allow the voice to modulate from that of the scandalised narrator to the affronted tones of the wife, while the eagerness of the industrious but hoodwinked husband for a reviving cup is vividly conveyed by the energetic 'bounce in pell-mell'. As he lampoons the wife's selfishness and betrays sympathy for the man's naivety, Orr is clearly confident of amusing an audience whose sense of humour he understands and endorses.

As the poem develops, the spae wife who reads the tea leaves, the girls who seek 'The story o' their future match', the gossips who gather round 'the auld delft nipple' to savage the neighbours, the youth 'tortur'd' by some 'slee jilt' are presented in turn and affectionately mocked. While irony is undoubtedly

²⁵ D.H. Akenson and W.H. Crawford, *James Orr, Bard of Ballycarry* (P.R.O.N.I., 1977), 60.

²⁶ Orr, *The Country Rhymes of James Orr*, 5..

present, its purpose is to delight the audience as they recognise themselves and their neighbours. No shock, disgust or offence is intended.

Several of Orr's standard habbie poems adopt the format of verse epistles within which he continues to give prominence to conviviality and friendship in a community context. The verse epistle addressed to Thaunie, a talented local blind fiddler, allows him, mindful of his bardic role, to honour individuals who played an important part in village life, in Thaunie's case as a musician and story-teller:

Frae ilka neuk the spunkies stauncher
 To hear your stories;
 The roof re-echoes ev'ry nicher,
 An' every chorus.

Orr records the poor's capacity to enjoy themselves with unsophisticated but lively pleasures that can briefly dispel the hardships and poverty of rural life:

Let us be tir'd or barley-sick,
 Or crav'd for debts, wad cove auld Nick, [. . .]
 Ae flourish O' your fiddle-stick,
 Sen's care to Cloutie.²⁷

The poem is of particular interest in that it provides a clear example of the extraordinary oppositions, the sensitivity and bluntness, that are characteristic of the Ulster-Scots psyche. Thus Orr can address, without a hint of patronising, Thaunie's blindness, praising his fine 'bairntime' and his canny choice of an exceptionally attractive wife, despite his regrettable inability to see her. In the next breath, however, he comically deplores the 'jads as gruesome as my grannie/Thraun reestet deels' that are inexplicably courted by many 'seein' chieils'.

In addition to his musical skills, Thaunie the fiddler excelled in theological debate as is made clear through the poem's reference to the 'New Licht' controversy. Another verse epistle, *To Mr A******, *Carrickfergus* also points up the strong influence of the Kirk in local life. Orr never fell foul of the 'unco guid' as Burns had done, but he did not always welcome the ministrations of

²⁷ Ibid., 67–9.

the covenanting or more conservative Presbyterians. As he recounts with some engaging self-mockery the details of a long illness he suffered and the various visitors who arrived to bring him comfort, he does not accuse 'the grunterns, grave' of hypocrisy but in some frustration and astonishment he exclaims against the gloominess of their conversation when they quoted texts 'again' me' or 'Discours'd O Nick'. Irritated and perplexed he adds, 'Deel rive their jaws! What can dispose them to scare the sick?'²⁸ The sudden and appropriate curse provides a clear example of the natural talent for invective possessed by most Ulster-Scots speakers.

Orr frequently functioned as the voice of protest on behalf of his community, and thereby on behalf of all the poor. His 'To a Sparrow' invites comparison with Burns's 'To A Mouse' or 'To a Mountain Daisy'. Its opening is very similar to that of the former:

Wee, wanton, little thought o' birdie!
Pert, keen an' crouse, an' unco wordie [. . .].²⁹

The poem arose out of an incident in which he observed some boys robbing the bird's nest and he muses on a universal lesson that may be drawn from the experience. His compassion for the creature's helplessness is as tender as is Burns's for the mouse or the daisy, but the Scots bard's guilt, self-pity and fearfulness are entirely absent. Orr's concern for the oppressed and his abhorrence of cruelty are to the fore; his attention is focused on man's inhumanity and its effects rather than on his own experience. First, he compares the sparrow's fate to that of a poor widow suffering eviction, whom 'rich, rude ruffians tease and taunt', then to a poor man robbed by violent house breakers of his few possessions scraped up 'wi' mickle pains'. His chief concern is about the devastating effect on the individuals involved and thus on the security and harmony of community life. His moral, underlined with a Biblical reference, sites true courage alongside compassion for the weak:

Thou needna think this outrage odd,
For man's to man, like goose an' tod,
But still the brave will rapine, blood,
An guile bewaur o'

²⁸ Ibid., 66.

²⁹ Ibid., 11.

An spare the creature o' their god,
 Tho' but a sparrow.³⁰

A much more personal work in standard habbie is 'A Fragment: Of an Epistle to Mr W. H. D.' in which Orr begins exploring directly his poetic persona and reveals his self-doubt. In the 'Address: To Mr A *****', Carrickfergus', he had referred self-deprecatingly to his 'scraps o' metre'. In 'A Fragment: Of an Epistle to Mr W. H. D.' he goes much further, expressing frustration at what he considers his inability to match his words to his soaring vision: 'I *see* an *feel*! But canna sing'. As he discusses the types of poetry at which he would wish to excel he demonstrates a keen appreciation of each genre named: sensuous nature poetry, patriotic verse and 'manners-painting rhymes', an overt allusion to Burns's 'The Vision'. A restrained but lyrical opposition, expressed in the third person and thereby avoiding the impression of self-pity, articulates the conflict Orr senses between his achievement and his desires: 'The cuckoo sings obscurely low/ The lark aspires'. The poem is indeed a fragment and remained undeveloped, but perhaps here Orr is more disingenuous than he seems, for despite his expressed dissatisfaction with his own efforts, the poem's conclusion appears to privilege verse that arises, as he claims his own does, in an unstudied way from simple observation combined with an innate passion for rhyming. He may be hinting that a work such as 'The Vision' is rather contrived and grandiose:

Coy science spurn'd me frae her knee,
 An fortune bad my shuttle flee;
 But all the while, smit strangely wi'
 The love o' sang,
 I rudely rhyme the scenes I see,
 Whar'er I gang.³¹

The effect is to promote and enhance his status as the unpretentious rustic bard, for in those final lines he cuts a lonely, sensitive, attractive and romantic figure.

Orr's standard habbie poems provide revealing insights into northern community life in eighteenth-century Ireland. They also reveal Orr's adroitness in developing his role as the Bard of Ballycarry, who celebrates and participates

³⁰ Ibid., 12.

³¹ Ibid., 71.

in village life while reserving for himself some private, meditative space. Of all the vernacular poets discussed here, it is Orr who appears most affirming of the poet-community relationship and of the community itself, an outcome that at least in part arises from the semi-official status of the Ulster village bard. One never doubts, however, that Orr's commitment to his own people, 'warts and all', is genuine and deep-rooted. While never entirely losing the satirical edge associated with standard habbie, Orr's essays in this traditional form represent a welcome, gentle and affectionate modulation of the authorial voice.

University of Glasgow

Dugald Stewart and the Problem of Teaching Politics in the 1790s¹

Michael Brown

I A Conundrum in Correspondence

In the surviving correspondence of Dugald Stewart, Professor of Moral Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh from 1785 to 1810, there exists a strange conundrum. It is created by two communications that point in contradictory directions. The first is an exchange with a friend he first encountered during the academic year 1771–2, which he spent as a student at the University of Glasgow. The second was generated by a contretemps between Stewart and a Lord of Session. The puzzle these two bouts of letter writing embody illuminates and complicates our understanding of three interrelated stories: the political development of Dugald Stewart; the possibilities for free expression in the 1790s; and, finally, the fate of the Scottish Enlightenment itself.

Six months younger than Stewart, his college friend William Drennan was a founder member of the United Irishmen.² While he had avoided direct involvement in the rising of 1798, he had already stood trial for his radical opinions in 1794.³ Yet, after the year in Glasgow, Drennan and Stewart clearly maintained a friendship that involved some sympathy in political opinions. As early as January 1778, Drennan approvingly recounted to his sister and confidant, Martha McTier of how he found, upon visiting Edinburgh:

Nothing is going on here at present but raising regiments, to be devoted to destruction in America. Every order of men from the highest to the

¹ I wish to acknowledge the assistance provided by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences. Early versions of this paper were delivered to a Conference on ‘Scotland, Ireland and the Romantic Aesthetic’, University of Aberdeen, 7 July 2002 and a Conference on ‘Enlightenment, Law and Lawyers: Scottish Enlightenment Legal Thought and its International Impact’, School of Law, University of Glasgow, 23 May 2002.

² On Drennan, see Ian McBride, ‘William Drennan and the Dissenting Tradition’ in David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *The United Irishmen: Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion* (Dublin, 1993), 49–61.

³ See John Larkin (ed.), *The Trial of William Drennan* (Dublin, 1991).

lowest are emptying their pockets (and what more could be asked from Scotchmen?) in the support of the war . . . The greatest part of the professors have given ten guineas, Stewart but two.⁴

While the relationship was to be sporadic, it was no less intimate for that. On 22 November 1813, three years after Stewart had retired from active teaching, his second wife Helen D'Arcy Stewart wrote from Kinneil House to Drennan of how Stewart had an 'unconquerable' dislike for correspondence, and 'wears himself out with writing . . . [being] constantly occupied with the second volume of the *Philosophy of the Human Mind*', which appeared the next year.⁵ None the less, she assured Drennan that 'no day passes in which he does not reproach himself bitterly for his silence to you'.⁶ D'Arcy Stewart told Drennan of how 'we are always planning a visit to Ireland' (a journey they never took) and that 'all that you did and said and thought at Glasgow together will serve us with this evening's chat'.⁷ However, this was far more than a mere reminiscence. That D'Arcy Stewart assured Drennan that Stewart recalled a meeting of minds, as well as more traditional student pleasures, is indicative of Stewart's attitude.

A letter from 31 December 1807 furthers this picture of fraternal feeling. D'Arcy Stewart wrote to Drennan of how 'it is above seventeen years since I became his [Dugald's] wife, and your name, your verses, all you ever did or said, I feel as well acquainted with as if you were my brother'.⁸ Stewart himself reiterated his wife's sentiments in a letter dated 20 September 1808, telling of how 'we have a project of proceeding as far as Port Patrick in the hope of meeting with you and Mrs Drennan and of spending some days *emptying our minds* to each other'.⁹ In the meantime, Stewart offered to send Drennan 'a collection of all that I have hitherto published and shall be anxious to know how far our philosophical views coincide'.¹⁰ More remarkable still was D'Arcy Stewart's recollection in December 1807 of how it was 'with . . . anxiety and agony we at one time felt for your much-injured country . . . It was one of

⁴ William Drennan to Martha McTier, 20 January 1778 in Jean Agnew (ed.), *The Drennan-McTier Letters: Volume I: 1776–1793* (Dublin, 1998), 32–3.

⁵ Helen D'Arcy Stewart to William Drennan, Kinneil House, 22 November 1813, EUL, Dc.1.100 f1A.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid., f2A.

⁸ Helen D'Arcy Stewart to William Drennan, 31? December 1807?, EUL, Dc.1.100, f3B.

⁹ Dugald Stewart to William Drennan, EUL, Dc.1.100, f6B.

¹⁰ Ibid., f7A.

the strongest claims on Mr Stewart's heart that *your* happiness was involved in its welfare or misery'.¹¹

It is this expression of sympathy with the fate of the United Irish rebellion and its actors that stands in apparent contrast to a second brief exchange of letters which Stewart conducted in 1794 with a Lord of Session, William Craig. Craig was an occasional contributor to both the *Mirror* and the *Lounger* periodicals and a regular visitor to the Stewart household. Stewart had asked Craig to investigate a new coolness in the manner of a colleague on the bench, Alexander Abercromby. Craig reported back on that the professor's suspicions were well founded:

Without being able to give precisely the words of the gentleman whom it was your wish I speak to, I find his impressions are of the following nature. That when he first read a certain chapter in a certain book, he considered it as an attempt to introduce the opinions of some late philosophers into Great Britain, and what was still more, to point a practical application of them to the political institutions and government of this country. That even allowing the principles in that chapter, however erroneous, to be written with the most innocent intention at the time, that after the massacres in France, and the dreadful actings such principles had produced, and after the consequences of them had been expressed in such horrible and bloody characters, it could not only not be innocent to maintain those opinions, but that that conduct could not be innocent which did not disavow them; and endeavour to correct their pernicious operation in the most explicit manner . . . Having read the chapter alluded to, *after* the massacre of Paris, he flattered himself, from the high opinion he entertained of your character, that you would embrace the earliest opportunity of retracting in an open and manly manner, every sentiment you had ever entertained, and every word you had ever uttered, in favour of doctrines which had led to so giant a mischief; and above all, he trusted that you would have exerted all your talents, to impress upon the minds of our youth, a love and a veneration for the British constitution, upon the preservation of which it is now too evident, that not the public welfare alone, but the safety and happiness of every individual in his little domestic circle necessarily depends. Disappointed in those hopes, and knowing with absolute certainty that there exists at this moment a party among us, who wait

¹¹ Helen D'Arcy Stewart to William Drennan, 31? Dec. 1807?, EUL, Dc.1.100, f3B.

only for a favourable opportunity to repeat here the same scenes of horror which have been acted in France, he owns he cannot esteem any man, be his talents what they may, who in any shape whatever gives the smallest countenance to opinions which, in *these times*, and under the *circumstances* in which we are now unhappily placed, tend directly to destroy the peace and happiness of society, and to deprive us of everything that is valuable and dear to us in life.¹²

In the subsequent literature, Stewart's desire to placate Abercromby by allaying his fear that he harboured radical sympathies has been read as tantamount to abject apology for a slight political offence. Thus, for example, in a highly dismissive passage concerning Stewart, Bruce Lenman has written of Stewart that,

[d]espite his lack of philosophical originality . . . [he was] a very important figure, for this eloquent charismatic teacher was not only the supreme exponent of the Scots' 'Common Sense' school of philosophy stretching back in impeccable social respectability to Thomas Reid, but also a convinced Whig. If he was the most cautious of Whigs, capable of a cringing apology to a Noble Lord for having inadvertently mentioned an infidel French philosopher like Condorcet in one of his writings without explicitly condemning him, that too merely enhanced the influence of a man whose books were accepted at once, in the United States of America as much as in Britain, as an authoritative summary of the philosophical school which had given the lie to the atheistic Hume.¹³

So too, for Richard Sher the common sense philosophy Stewart espoused was of a piece with the turn towards intellectual caution and the end of the high phase of the Scottish Enlightenment. In the hands of Thomas Reid and even more glaringly, James Beattie, it was to Sher 'a sort of Aberdonian aberration', only gaining social and intellectual respectability with 'the common sense revolution of 1785'.¹⁴ That year saw the first substantial work by Reid

¹² William Craig to Dugald Stewart, Edinburgh, 15 February 1794, quoted in John Veitch, 'Memoir of Dugald Stewart' in William Hamilton (ed.), *The Collected Works of Dugald Stewart* (11 vols., Bristol, 1994), x, lxxi–lxxii.

¹³ Bruce Lenman, *Integration, Enlightenment and Industrialisation: Scotland 1746–1832* (London, 1981), 110.

¹⁴ Richard B. Sher, *Church and University in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Moderate Literati of*

published for more than two decades, the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, and, crucially, the appointment of Stewart to the chair of moral philosophy at Edinburgh. Stewart, Sher further asserts, transformed the intellectual reputation of the school of thought by inculcating a pragmatic acceptance of the social order and limiting intellectual and cultural investigation. To Sher, Stewart's

moral philosophy lectures . . . were explicitly designed to highlight, clarify, refine and systemise – but not vulgarise – Reid's complex metaphysical investigations and to render them applicable to the practical business of life . . . By the time that book [*Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind, Volume One*] appeared [in 1792] the Edinburgh intellectual establishment had been won over to the Reid-Stewart camp – just in time to do battle against the perceived onslaught of French revolutionary ideas.¹⁵

In other words, the progressive liberal Enlightenment Sher depicts within his book, which treats of the generation from 1745 to 1785, is abandoned with the rise of the drab common sense philosophy. And it is Stewart's domestication of Reid's 'complex metaphysical investigations' that prepares the ground for the historiographical commonplace that Scotland was a stable bastion of British loyalism in the 1790s.¹⁶ In this pessimistic reading, the Scottish Enlightenment's final legacy was to import a kind of hard-headed economic Whiggery to the Liberal party in the early 1800s through the pages of the *Edinburgh Review* – a periodical significantly founded, edited, and shaped by students of Stewart.¹⁷

This assessment seems final, setting up Stewart as the harbinger of a pedantic political orthodoxy of British loyalism and anti-French commitment. Yet in that, it propels the correspondence with Drennan into interpretative

Edinburgh (Edinburgh, 1985), 312.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 312–3.

¹⁶ The most influential statement of this thesis is T.M. Devine, 'The Failure of Radical Reform in Scotland in the Late Eighteenth Century: The Social and Economic Context' in T.M. Devine (ed.), *Conflict and Stability in Scottish Society, 1700–1850* (Edinburgh, 1990), 51–64.

¹⁷ On this see Donald Winch, 'The System of the North: Dugald Stewart and his Pupils' in John Burrow, Stephan Collini and Donald Winch, *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Intellectual History* (Cambridge, 1983), 24–61; Anand C. Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment and Early Victorian English Society* (London, 1986), 20–8.

prominence. Which Stewart was the authentic one – the intellectual radical or the cringing Whig? Or might both these personas be accurate and authentic? Were Abercromby's suspicions well founded? And what then does Stewart's retreat in the face of criticism reveal about the context in which he worked?

What is proposed here is three-fold. First of all, this paper will document the development and trajectory of Stewart's political development, using his negotiation of the 1790s as a case study of Enlightenment politics in the decade. This will identify the pressures under which he operated, highlighting how he responded to the radicalisation of the atmosphere by renegotiating and, on occasion, recanting some of its beliefs. Secondly, this biography of belief will highlight how the different modes of communication enabled some vestiges of radical sympathy to survive despite the necessity of providing a suitably loyal veneer on political expression. What follows is therefore structured to illustrate how different modes of communication – the published book, the lecture and the letter – enabled the articulation of differing political attitudes. Thirdly, and finally, the case of Stewart will lead to a wider proposition concerning the fate of the Scottish Enlightenment.

II Who was Dugald Stewart?

The literary flirtation with Condorcet does seem at odds with the characterisation of Stewart that has been handed down to us.¹⁸ Born on 22 November 1753, he was educated at the High School in Edinburgh from 176–5, before taking his degree at the city's university. He also took the opportunity to attend a course at the University of Glasgow, where he heard the celebrated Thomas Reid (1710–96) discourse on morals. Upon his return to Edinburgh in the autumn of 1772, Stewart replaced his ailing father in the Mathematics classroom, showing sufficient aptitude to have the professorship conferred formally in 1775. In 1778, he was also engaged in teaching moral philosophy upon the temporary removal of Adam Ferguson and was again seconded to teach moral philosophy in the 1784–5 session. With the resignation of Adam Ferguson in the early months of 1785, Stewart was installed in the chair.¹⁹

¹⁸ The fullest account of Stewart's life and works is Gordon Macintyre, *Dugald Stewart: The Pride and Ornament of Scotland* (Brighton, 2003).

¹⁹ This chronology is suggested by the marginalia to Stewart's copy of Ferguson's *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1773). These are dated from November 1784. See EUL JA 4001.

A successful and popular teacher, Stewart's class size grew steadily during his tenure, until his powers waned through old age and ill health.²⁰ Many of the sons of the gentry were under his direction, including such notables as Henry Peter, Lord Brougham (1778–1868), Henry John Temple, 3rd Viscount Palmerston (1784–1865), Lord John Russell (1792–1878), Sir Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, 3rd Marquis of Lansdowne (1780–1863) and the novelist Sir Walter Scott (1771–1832). In this, as Arthur Herman has noted, Stewart was a central figure in the creation of the British political élite of the early nineteenth century.²¹

In a series of writings, Stewart expounded a form of 'common sense' philosophy. Although he disliked the term, he defined 'common sense' as something which 'seems nearly equivalent to what we in Scotland call *moth-erwit*, that degree of sagacity derived partly from natural constitution, but chiefly from personal experience, by which one is able to conduct one's self with propriety in the affairs of common life'.²² 'Common sense', or the ordinary responses of humans to social circumstances, provided people with the knowledge they needed to live successfully and virtuously. These responses also gave philosophers the empirical evidence required to reveal the workings of the mind, thereby revealing the 'science of man'. Stewart argued that through a process of intensive introspection, the philosopher was able to determine the essential truths, necessary for the minds of men to operate. Philosophy only failed in its duty when the philosophical urge to understand exceeded the boundaries imposed by empirical observation.

Crucially, for Stewart, the world was made up of more than the sum of individual experiences, leaving mysterious aspects of the workings of the universe which could only be taken on faith. The danger with this was that common sense philosophy could be read as an argument for the unthinking acceptance of the appearance of things. Uncritical in its vulgar manifestation, common sense philosophy could be used as a social salve, an intellectual justification of unchanging social hierarchy and an unenlightened defence of popular myths and superstitions. The question remains as to why the astute and sensitive Stewart mentioned Condorcet? Have we here

²⁰ See Richard B. Sher, 'Professors of Virtue, The Social History of the Edinburgh Moral Philosophy Chair in the Eighteenth Century' in M.A. Stewart (ed.), *Studies in the Philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1990), 123.

²¹ Arthur Hermann, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Scots' Invention of the Modern World* (London, 2002), 227–46.

²² James Bridges, 'Notes from Mr Stewart's Lectures on Moral Philosophy read in the University of Edinburgh', Winter 1801–2, EUL, Dc.8.143, 70.

uncovered something more revealing than a political blunder on the part of an unworldly academic? It is time to examine the source of Abercromby's consternation.

III The Published Works: Stewart as a Conformist

In the *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, the contentions reference to Condorcet's thought arises in a section of the *Elements* concerned with 'The Use and Abuse of General Principles in Politics'. In treating of political economy, Stewart attempted to dissuade his readers of a series of misconceptions concerning its validity as an intellectual discipline. He argued 'that the object of the economical system ought by no means to be confused (as I believe it commonly is in this country) with that of Utopian plans of government, which have, at different times, been offered to the world'.²³ It was, he asserted, safely grounded in an understanding of the power of nature over nurture and in the limitations of human action. Recognising this refuted

another mistaken idea . . . that it is founded entirely upon theory, and unsupported by facts. This may be the case with respect to some of its doctrines; but in general it may be safely affirmed, that they rest on a broader basis of facts than any other political speculations which have been yet offered to the world; for they are founded, not on a few examples collected from the small number of governments of which we possess an accurate knowledge, but on those laws of human nature, and those maxims of common sense, which are daily verified in the intercourse of private life.²⁴

Stewart then remarked further that 'there is yet another mistake (of still greater consequence than any of those I have mentioned)'. This concerned the political implications of the economical system. He had already observed that, unlike the faith in the transforming power granted to education by the Utopians, the economists realised that education was best suited to reconcil-

²³ Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* in Hamilton, *Works of Stewart*, ii, 232. For an uncontroversial use of Condorcet's writings in Stewart see *ibid.*, 473.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 234.

ing people to the political system. This helped Stewart defend the economists from the accusation that ‘it was meant to exhibit a political order, which is really attainable in the present state of Europe’ and, consequently, that the economists were covertly forwarding a revolutionary programme.²⁵ In fact, Stewart protested,

its principles appear highly favourable to the tranquillity of society, inasmuch as, by inspiring us with a confidence in the triumph which truth and liberty must infallibly gain in the end over error and injustice, it has a tendency to discourage every plan of innovation which is to be supported by violence and bloodshed.²⁶

It was in proof of this position that he quoted a lengthy passage from Condorcet: “If we attack oppressors before we have taught the oppressed,” says one of the ablest of its present supporters’, which Stewart identified as Condorcet in a footnote,

we shall risk the loss of liberty, and rouse them to oppress the progress of reason. History affords proofs of this truth. How often, in spite of all the efforts of the friends of freedom, has the event of a single battle reduced nations to the slavery of ages!

And what is the kind of liberty enjoyed by those nations which have recovered it by force of arms, and not the influence of philosophy? Have not most of them confounded the forms of republicanism with the enjoyment of right, and the despotism of numbers with liberty? How many laws, contrary to the rights of nature, have dishonoured the code of every people which has recovered its freedom during those ages in which reason was still in its infancy!

Why not profit by this fatal experience, and wisely wait the progress of knowledge, in order to obtain freedom more effectual, more substantial and more peaceful? Why pursue it by blood and inevitable confusion, and trust that to chance which time must certainly, and without bloodshed, bestow? A fortunate struggle may, indeed, relieve us of many grievances under which we labour at present; but if we wish to secure the perfection and permanence of freedom, we must patiently wait the period when men, emancipated from their prejudices, and

²⁵ Ibid., 235.

²⁶ Ibid., 236.

guided by philosophy, shall be rendered worthy of liberty, by comprehending its claims.²⁷

Ultimately, Stewart bowed to the pressure somewhat. In the second edition of the *Elements*, published in 1802, the offending passage was reprinted; yet it had appended to it a footnote in which Stewart distanced himself from Condorcet by reiterating the central plank of his defence in the correspondence with Craig:

To some of my readers it may appear trifling to remark, that in availing myself of an occasional coincidence of sentiment with a contemporary author, I would not be understood to become responsible for the consistency of his personal conduct with his philosophical principles, nor to subscribe to any one of his opinions, but those which I have expressed my assent by incorporating them with my own composition.²⁸

Despite Stewart's apparent recantation, it should be noted that the tone of this footnote suggests he still thought Abercromby's political sensibilities rather too developed for the full discussion of his reservations to be merited. In this, he may have had just cause for his views. In Henry Mackenzie's encomium, read to the Royal Society of Edinburgh shortly after Abercromby's death, Mackenzie, himself a cultural advocate for and agent of the Dundas administration, hinted that the stress of adjudicating over criminal law in a period of political unrest might have contributed to Abercromby's untimely demise:

The anxiety and application he bestowed on the duties of a very laborious profession might contribute to exhaust the strength of his constitution; and if mental affections are to be allowed such force, the uneasiness which for some years he experienced on the subject of public affairs, and the political state of his country, might impair and weaken his health and spirits. Deeply impressed himself with the excellence of the British constitution, and of the happiness derived from it, he saw with horror and indignation (at a period considerably earlier than that which excited the apprehensions of most other people) the efforts of desperate

²⁷ Ibid., 236–7.

²⁸ Ibid., 237.

and designing men to overturn it; he lamented the delusion of those who were misled to join them; and he trembled for the effects of that delusion in estimable and benevolent but visionary minds, who might indulge the pride of political theory and speculation, to the danger, as he conceived, of all good order and regular government, of all social happiness and social virtue.²⁹

Into this last category, the 'benevolent but visionary minds', Stewart clearly fell.

Whatever the case of Abercromby's character, Stewart's retraction is of a piece with the trajectory of his other published writings during the decade of the 1790s. For example, in 1793, in the midst of a period of increasing political tension in Scotland, Stewart published *Outlines of Moral Philosophy*, a synoptic account of his lecture course, highlighting central tenets and enabling him to expand upon and illustrate those ideas to which the students now had access. The text provided a standard and authorised account of his philosophical system, a secure and stable foundation for their learning. It also provided a guarantee to anxious observers, parents or public officials, that the tenets inculcated in Stewart's class were at once mundane and politically orthodox. Those who sought subversion were being told to look elsewhere.³⁰

Yet, intriguingly, Stewart pointedly refused to do anything more than supply the most cursory of headings in his treatment of political philosophy. In the preface he claimed that this was inspired by his desire to rework the course by removing politics from the course and expand its treatment into a distinct course:

The branch of moral philosophy which relates to the principles of politics, being less abstract than the others, I have contented myself with a simple enumeration of the most important articles treated of in the third

²⁹ Henry Mackenzie, 'Account of the Life of Lord Abercromby from the Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh', 132–3. On Mackenzie's counter-revolutionary work for Dundas see David J. Brown, 'The Government Response to Scottish Radicalism, 1792–1802' in Harris (ed.), *Scotland in the Age of the French Revolution* (Edinburgh, 2005), 104; Andrew Noble and Patrick Scott Hogg (eds), *The Canongate Burns: The Complete Poms and Songs of Robert Burns* (Edinburgh, 2001), xlviii–l.

³⁰ This is in line with my assessment of the series of public lectures Stewart delivered to the Royal Society of Edinburgh on the Scottish literati, Adam Smith, Thomas Reid and William Robertson, as a defence of his moral philosophy course. See Michael Brown, 'Creating the Canon: Dugald Stewart's Construction of the Scottish Enlightenment', *History of Universities*, xvi/i (2000), 135–54.

part of my course. It is scarcely necessary for me to mention that, in this enumeration, I have not aimed at anything approaching to systematical arrangement; and that, in illustrating the titles it contains, I am obliged, by the term prescribed to my academical labours, to confine myself to very general sketches. As soon as my other engagements allow me sufficient leisure for such an undertaking, I shall attempt a separate course of lectures on this very extensive and difficult topic.³¹

The suspicion remains, however, that the decision to leave the political section of the *Outlines* as perfunctory as possible was also politically expedient given the trouble he was in over his reference to Condorcet a year earlier.³² This suspicion gains weight from the evidence concerning how Stewart updated the *Outlines* in 1801. This chore was ostensibly undertaken in the light of his decision finally to offer a distinct course on political economy, separate from moral philosophy, in the autumn of 1800. In a postscript to the preface added to the 1801 edition he revealed his relief at having finally made good his promise of eight years previous. ‘Having of late’, he remarked,

carried into execution (at least in part) the design announced in the foregoing preface, by way of an annual course in political economy, I have omitted, in this edition of my *Outlines*, the articles which I formerly enumerated under that general title; substituting in their stead a few others, calculated to illustrate the peculiar and intimate connection between this department of politics and the more appropriate objects of ethics. The observations which these articles are meant to introduce may be useful, at the same time, in preparing the minds of students for disquisitions, the details of which can scarcely appear to appear uninviting to those who are not aware of the important conclusions to which they are subservient.³³

Yet, despite this appeal to pedagogy to justify his actions, Stewart made significant alterations in the positive content of the course that went beyond the removal of the material pertinent to the political economy course. The

³¹ Dugald Stewart, *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1793), vii.

³² This is further confirmed if we credit Anand Chitnis’s observation that, ‘after 1790, Stewart always read his lectures from a script rather than extempore from notes so as to minimise the political risks he ran’ (Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment and Early Victorian English Society*, 25)..

³³ Dugald Stewart, *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1801), viii–ix.

headings that the *Outlines* offered under the rubric of political philosophy were now increasingly historical in their content. Instead of the sections 'of population', 'of national wealth' and 'of the instruction of the lower orders and of the prevention and punishment of crimes', Stewart now discoursed under rubric like 'the writings of Grotius and his successors on natural jurisprudence and their influence in suggesting the modern speculations concerning political economy', and 'the connection between just views of political economy and the intellectual and moral improvement of mankind'.³⁴

This tendency to place more emphasis on the historical development of political thinking would appear to be of a piece with Stewart's work on the series of biographies of Scottish literati, which he undertook from 1793 to 1802; with the greatly de-politicised biography of Thomas Reid coming out in that last year. As Paul Wood has detailed, Reid was therein portrayed as an a-political philosopher; self-consciously withdrawn from the cut and thrust of active life.³⁵ Stewart himself made the connection between this image of the scholarly don and the political heat of the period in which the portrait was drawn. 'The life of which I am now to present to the Royal Society a short account', Stewart opined,

although it fixes an era in the history of modern philosophy, was uncommonly barren of those incidents which furnish materials for a biography. It was spent in the obscurity of a learned retreat, remote from the pursuits of ambition and with little solicitude about literary fame,—unembellished even by that epistolary intercourse with the world, which has formed the relaxation of many studious men, and in which they have themselves transmitted to posterity the most faithful and pleasing portraits of their own characters. After the agitation, however, of the political convulsions, which Europe has witnessed for a course of years, the simple record of such a life may derive an interest even from its uniformity, and, when contrasted with the events of the passing scene, may lead the thoughts to some views of human nature, on which it is not ungrateful to repose.³⁶

³⁴ Dugald Stewart, *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1793), 300; Dugald Stewart, *Outlines of Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh, 1801), 322.

³⁵ Paul Wood, 'The Hagiography of Common Sense: Dugald Stewart's *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid*' in A. J. Holland (ed.), *Philosophy, Its History and Historiography* (Lancaster, 1983), 305–22.

³⁶ Dugald Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of Thomas Reid* in Hamilton, *Works of Stewart*, x, 245.

Yet, for all that the passage brought to mind an ivory-tower academic, unsullied by the political realities beyond, when it came to the classes Stewart taught, the environment he here eschewed infiltrated and informed his work as a teacher in interesting ways. In particular, he was to use the occasional aspect of the lecture as a cover to disseminate more radical ideas than he could safely espouse in print.

IV The Lectures: Stewart as a Subversive

To map the evolution of Stewart's political understanding is a complex task. Unfortunately, his son, Colonel Matthew Stewart, significantly hampered us by destroying many of Stewart's private papers. Included in the blaze was '*The Philosophy of Man as a Member of a Political Association (Incomplete)*'.³⁷ One can only speculate as to the contents of this text, and the intentions of his son in deciding upon this act of destruction. According to Matthew Stewart, the motives were pecuniary:

Finding myself getting on in life, and despairing of finding a sale for it at its real value, I have destroyed the whole of it. To this step I was much induced by finding my locks repeatedly picked during my absence from home, some of my papers carried off, and some of the others evidently read, if not copied from, by persons of whom I could procure no trace, and in the pursuit or conviction of whom, I could never obtain any efficient assistance from the judicial functionaries.³⁸

It may be to over-interpret Colonel Stewart's actions to suggest that this passage also suggests other possible motivations. He might have been prompted to destroy the documents for fear that their content might prove deleterious to his father's reputation. Fear of their unauthorised publication certainly surfaces in his explanation.³⁹ Equally, mental instability may have played a

³⁷ *Notes and Queries*, xi (1855), 261. Also put to the flame were Stewart's most complete manuscript of the lectures on political economy and 'one hundred and seventy pages of the continuation of the *Dissertation prefixed to the Encyclopædia Britannica*' (Ibid., 261).

³⁸ Ibid., 261. In a footnote to this passage added by the recipient Mr Henry Foss observed that 'I believe there was not any foundation for the Colonel's suspicions respecting his locks having been picked' (Ibid., 261).

³⁹ Ironically, Dugald Stewart bemoaned Adam Smith's destruction of his own papers. He argued this act constituted an 'irreparable injury to letters' motivated by 'an

part.⁴⁰ His fear that his house was being broken into by government authorities suggests that paranoia was overcoming common sense.⁴¹

Despite the missing documents, two things help us in our attempts to uncover Stewart's political affiliations. First, as part of his teaching of moral philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, he concluded his course with a consideration of political philosophy. Secondly, the attempt to puzzle out the narrative of Stewart's teachings is aided by the survival of a number of the notebooks students transcribed in his class, which date from throughout his period in the chair.

The earliest of the notebooks dates from the year that Stewart first replaced Adam Ferguson in the task of moral philosopher. Across the course of the academic year 1778–9, Stewart drew heavily on his predecessor's lectures, the headings of which Ferguson had published in 1773 as the *Institutes of Moral Philosophy*.⁴² Stewart's copy of this text includes a minimal amount of marginalia from the 1784 session, but its content—dates of lectures, emendations to the phrasing and the occasional additional topic heading, all indicate that Stewart was grounding his course in that of Ferguson.⁴³ Stewart's treatment of politics offered a scheme which ran from jurisprudence, through property, contracts, domestic slavery, laws of defence, casuistry, politics, population, riches, political law, liberty, penal law and national happiness. Similarly, Ferguson offered a diet that moved from jurisprudence through property, contracts, defence, casuistry, politics and national happiness.

Notably, while those headings used solely by Stewart—domestic slavery, liberty and penal law—are all suggestive of a more radical political flavour, he left to one side such offerings as 'the distribution of office fitted to the constitution' and the 'importance of political institutions' as well as shortening

excessive solicitude in the author about his posthumous reputation' (Stewart, *Life of Smith* in *Hamilton Works of Stewart*, x, 74). On Smith's concern for posterity, see Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750–1834* (Cambridge, 1996), 35–56.

⁴⁰ On Matthew Stewart's illness see Macintyre, *Dugald Stewart*, 215–16, 230–3.

⁴¹ Further evidence of Matthew Stewart's paranoia in this regard can be seen in his admission that the tenth destroyed item he lists is 'A work on which I have been labouring for the last four years and of which I had completed as much as would have printed 2000 quarto pages. It was very nearly finished; and was in my humble appreciation of more real literary value than all the rest I have destroyed. I long since (in consequence of finding my locks picked and my papers read), destroyed all that I had put on paper on government, legislation and political economy, which were for many years almost my exclusive study' (*Notes and Queries*, xi (1855), 262).

⁴² Adam Ferguson, *Institutes of Moral Philosophy* (London, 1994).

⁴³ EUL JA 4001.

Ferguson's extensive discussion of virtue and duty under the general heading of casuistry. The content of Stewart's meditations was predominately descriptive, with the mechanics of political association being outlined, and the thinking of a number of pre-eminent thinkers being summarised.⁴⁴ Even when it came to treating of his predecessor's work, it was the descriptive side of Ferguson, the reader of travelogues and writer of conjectural history, and not the prescriptive moralist, who exerted his audience to avoid luxury and celebrated military valour, Stewart dwelt upon.⁴⁵

More important for our concerns here are the records the student Josias Walker kept of Stewart's sallies into current affairs. Most current of all was the American crisis, then in progress, and one can only be startled, given the current picture of Stewart's political hue, to find him vociferous and enthusiastic about the progress of the rebellion. In a series of digressions from the central thrust of his text, Stewart became dramatically prescriptive. Under the rubric of contracts, for example, he noted how: 'At the origin of political societies, the people stipulate, on the one hand, to yield obedience to one individual and he stipulates, on the other, to preserve as far as lies in his power, their rights and privileges'.⁴⁶ This led him to assert that

the sovereign, as an individual, in no other instance, possesses a right to the obedience of his subjects, but only from this, that society has transferred to him the power competent to them for preserving regularity and order in the state, so that it is absurd to say the right of a sovereign is at all founded either on original compact or virtual consent.⁴⁷

In opening up the thorny question of the origin and extent of a sovereign's power Stewart was consciously entering a long running debate within political thought. However, this debate had more than theoretical interest. It was a debate with direct and obvious implications in the wake of both the 1745

⁴⁴ Among the central figures from which Stewart drew were Montesquieu and David Hume.

⁴⁵ On Ferguson, see amongst much else: Lisa Hill, *The Passionate Society: The Social Political and Moral Thought of Adam Ferguson* (Dordrecht, 2006); Christopher J. Finlay, 'Rhetoric and Citizenship in Adam Ferguson's *Essay on the History of Civil Society*', *History of Political Thought*, 27 (2006), 27–49.

⁴⁶ Josias Walker, 'Abbreviations from Lectures on Moral Philosophy, Delivered by Dugald Stewart, professor of Mathematics, vol. 2, 1778/9', EUL, Gen.2023, 350–1.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 352.

Jacobite Rising and the recent convulsions in the colonies.⁴⁸ That Stewart was fully aware of the immediate context in which he was speaking was made apparent when he explained that, to his mind:

when we have a persuasion that the present state of government is inconsistent with the natural liberty of men and that society would be better by being thrown into anarchy it is not only lawful, but it is incumbent on us to resist the reigning power. Perhaps the rebellion of our own American colonies is the only instance where people have taken arms merely on speculative grounds.⁴⁹

He ended this observation by stating his optimism in the rationality of political activism. In his view, 'There is very little danger that men should err on the side of rebellion without a just cause'.⁵⁰ He was therefore using the office Ferguson's engagement with the American colonists afforded him to support the revolutionaries.

Stewart did not end his controversial remarks there. Instead he tempted controversy by linking the cause of the American separatists with the actions of the celebrated parliamentary upheavals of the seventeenth century. He argued that the historical legitimacy offered to the early events could not be discarded in casting judgement over the actions of the latter. However, in doing so, Stewart apparently could not resist courting further outrage, by fusing the Whiggish article of faith, that 1688 represented a victory for British liberty, with the far more contentious assertion that the Interregnum period of Cromwellian dominion was also justifiable in the circumstances. For Stewart, history told of how, 'One of our tyrannical monarchs was slain by his subjects; another, on account of his stretch of power, was deprived of his crown. It is the Revolution from which we may date the era of British liberty'.⁵¹

Stewart elucidated this reading of history by dwelling on the shared thematic of Stuart absolutist pretensions:

During the reign of James I of England, it was a fashionable doctrine to say that the power of the king was immediately derived from God and that to God alone he was answerable for the discharge of his duty. This

⁴⁸ On the importance of the Jacobite Rising of 1745 in shaping the political views of the Moderate party see Sher, *Church and University*, 37–44.

⁴⁹ Walker, 'Abbreviations, 1778/9', 353.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 354.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 355–6.

childish opinion runs through all the writings of that truly contemptible monarch. Such doctrines are too absurd to be believed by any but those who think that the deity intended that the subjects of a state should be transferred from king to king as the cattle of a farm from proprietor to proprietor. But it is our fate to live in an age when the rights of men are better known. To the allowance of resisting despotic kings we owe our freedom.⁵²

This served not only to fuse 1649 with 1688 but also placed Stewart within the fold of the Whig party in its resistance to the, albeit by 1778 impotent, Jacobite threat. Moreover, it linked 1688 to the American colonies' assertion that their British liberties were being intruded upon by Westminster's brand of parliamentary absolutism. The implication was clear: to resist Stuart claims to absolute power was to side with the American Revolution.

Instead of the absolute pretensions of either monarch or parliament, Stewart offered a contractual theory of the state, in which the association of governed and government served the interest of both parties. Either side could, however, renege on the contract through deserting their responsibilities in favour of greater power. As these remarks came within a lecture series, Stewart used the analogy of the teacher-student relationship when trying to explain to his students the form of enlightened, disinterested leadership he looked for in politicians. For Stewart, political leadership 'rather resembles the right of a tutor to command his pupils for the good of the latter'.⁵³ In the context of the upheavals in the British Empire, Stewart's radical vision of the state as a continuing contractual association linked him with rebellion. He was not to shake off this inclination in the years that followed.

By 1789–90, the political ebullience evident in his earlier remarks on America had given way to apparent enthusiasm for the English constitution.

In the theory of our constitution, the three powers which comprise the legislature are always supposed different from one another and in constitutional language it is understood that the king may put a negative upon any bill he thinks proper, but this in practice can't be done now where the parliament agrees to or wishes a particular law.⁵⁴

⁵² *Ibid.*, 354–5.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 353.

⁵⁴ Anonymous, 'Lectures on Moral Philosophy delivered by Professor Dugald Stewart Session 1789–90', EUL Gen.1987–9, 1989, n.p.

Stewart's political affiliations were by no means so simplistically patriotic however, and Stewart was faced with the question of how to handle political philosophy in the light of the events across the Channel. By the time he turned from teaching epistemology and ethics to political philosophy, it was already early 1790 and the French crisis had taken a distinctly violent turn. By the spring of 1790 Paris had already seen the October days and the rise of popular unrest. Within the context of the lecture course, Stewart was far from wholly complimentary about the British system. He drew a crucial distinction between the constitution as it was to be understood ideally, and the actuality of its application. In fact, he identified a crucial development in the eighteenth century that confused any simple loyalism. As the anonymous student noted:

The above are the notes from Mr Stewart's lectures in which he gives us the theoretical view of our constitution to be found in the works of De Lolme, Blackstone and other speculative politicians, which notes however are not regular or full as these authors have treated the subject at such length. But the above is only the theory, as it by no means applies to our government as presently constituted.⁵⁵

As he then rhetorically inquired: 'What then do we mean by our constitution, or is it merely a chimera?'⁵⁶

In raising this question Stewart was following Hume and Montesquieu, arguing that the abstract distribution of power was complicated by the empirical evolution of power brokerage. Crucial for Stewart was the rise in the power exercised by the House of Commons, which had grown dramatically since the seventeenth century. As he explained to his students:

Our constitution does exist compounded of three parts and these all influence one another, but this is done in a different manner from

⁵⁵ Anonymous, 'Lectures by Dugald Stewart', n.p. The reference to De Lolme is to Jean Louis de Lolme (1740–1806), self-proclaimed 'citizen of Geneva' (perhaps an echo of Rousseau) who published *Constitution de l'Angleterre ou État du gouvernement anglais comparé avec la forme républicaine et avec les autres monarchies de l'Europe*, translated into English as *Constitution of England: or an Account of the English Government in which it is Compared both with the Republican Form and the other Monarchies in Europe* (1775). Stewart owned a copy of the 1777 edition. This work is also referenced, and quoted, in Adam Ferguson's pamphlet on Price: *Remarks on Dr Price's Observations on the Nature of Civil Liberty &c.* (London, 1776), 53–4. I would like to thank Dr Seán Patrick Donlan for this reference.

⁵⁶ Anonymous, 'Lectures by Dugald Stewart', n.p.

that which is described above. They are all connected in the House of Commons, which is the great theatre of business and where they operate effectively though imperceptibly and silently.⁵⁷

The division and separation of powers into legislative, judicial and executive was meaningless when influence over the Commons determined the effective shape of legislation. Thus, it was incumbent on the other powers to enforce their will through influence, patronage or, to be even more provocative, corruption:

The king's influence in this House is supported from the seats in Parliament, which he has it in his power to bestow from his patronage. The great and wealthy peers of this kingdom have influence here from their family connections and the patronage which they have, and the aristocratical [sic.] ideas preferred by many of the members themselves who are men of great wealth lend also to support the aristocracy.⁵⁸

This development had undermined the independence of the Commons itself and had radically altered its internal composition. As Stewart remarked:

The aristocracy, then, is not to be found in this House [of Lords]. Let us on the other hand attend to the House of Commons. This has also undergone a very great change since former times. In it are now to be found the most wealthy subjects and men of the most ancient families. It consists of men of large fortune and the eldest sons of dukes are admitted members of it because they in the eye of the law are reckoned only Commoners. There are also in it a few wealthy merchants, some aspiring lawyers, some of the younger sons of noble families and a few men of splendid abilities.⁵⁹

Stewart was thereby comparing the operation of the constitution with a theoretical ideal, wherein the balance of powers between executive, judiciary and legislature equated to the offices of monarch, peerage and commoner. But the actual constitution was subverted by influence and patronage.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Faced with external threat, such internal criticism could seem subtly subversive. However, this was not Stewart's announced intention. In what seems to be a self-conscious turnabout, he proposed that the rise of the Commons to political pre-eminence and the concomitant search for influence over that chamber by the other elements of the constitution was not a negative development. Rather,

This is much more preferable as it prevents those harsh shocks, which would be the direct consequence of the use of the checks which have been specified. England has from its insular situation a particular safeguard of her liberties. The executive power has no such strength to oppress the subject as it would have were it necessary to keep always on foot large standing armies to defend the nation against foreign enemies. Our country is chiefly defended by our fleet and the armies therefore which we keep need be but small.⁶⁰

Stewart's conclusion that the rise of the House of Commons to a position of centrality within the system might protect the state from the kind of shocks to the system that destroyed their French neighbour may be read in a number of ways. It may quite simply be an attempt to hide his political loyalties, even in the classroom. In this, he is laying claim to loyalism, even while undermining its justification. Less suspiciously, we might understand Stewart to have been arguing in favour of creating a parliamentary system in which all the interests of the nation come together in a unicameral system and argue their case, as had occurred in France with the creation of a National Assembly. In this, the French were more than catching up with British developments; they were overtaking them, if only in the realm of constitutional theory. Vitally, this reading precludes the necessity of a revolution in Britain as it had in practice developed a similar unicameral system. This second reading rests upon Stewart understanding the British constitution as intrinsically reformist in character. It sees Stewart less as the advocate of real Whiggery, although his fear of standing armies echoes that political rhetoric, or as a proponent of contractarianism as he was in 1778; rather he here propounds an gradualist theory of political change.

Whichever way we read the conclusion of the 1790 lectures, by 1793 the compromise between French radicalism and British constitutionalism was no longer available to Stewart. January saw the epochal event of the execu-

⁶⁰ Anonymous, 'Lectures by Dugald Stewart', n.p.

tion of Louis XVI, an event that had a seismic effect on public opinion.⁶¹ Development in Scotland equally precluded temporising. Harvests had failed in 1792, as they were to do again in 1795 and 1796, creating the impetus for a radicalisation of political opinion.⁶² Even before this, January 1792 saw the foundation of the London Corresponding Society and, in June of that year, a wave of popular unrest. This reached its zenith in Edinburgh on 4–6 June, with an extensive riot spawned from celebrations of the King's birthday. The crowd targeted the Lord Advocate, Robert Dundas, surrounding his house in George Square. The discontent spread to Aberdeen, Dundee, Lanark, Peebles and Perth with effigies of the loathed Dundas being publicly burnt.⁶³ The reforming movement, the Friends of the People in Scotland, was founded on 26 July 1792. The first National Convention was held in Edinburgh on 11–13 December; itself occurring on the cusp of a second wave of unrest which saw Trees of Liberty planted in Perth, Aberdeen and Dundee, as well as a number of smaller hamlets and villages. Although the Friends were publicly moderate in their demands for reform of the voting system, elements were more volatile. These found expression at the Convention, with the temperamental Thomas Muir taking the lead. He read out an address from the United Irish movement, in all probability drafted by Stewart's college friend, William Drennan. Above all, the opening paragraph caused consternation:

We [the United Irish movement in Dublin] take the liberty of addressing you in the spirit of civic union, in the fellowship of a just and common cause. We greatly rejoice that the spirit of freedom moves over the face of Scotland; that light seems to break from the chaos of her internal government; and that a country so respectable for attainments in science, in arts, and in arms, for men of literary eminence, for the intelligence and morality of her people, now acts from a conviction of a union between virtue, letters and liberty, and now rises to distinction; not by a calm, contented, secret wish for a reform in parliament, but by openly, actively and urgently *willing* it, with the unity and energy of

⁶¹ John Barrell, *Imagining the King's Death: Figurative Treason, Fantasies of Regicide 1793–1796* (Oxford, 2000), assesses the impact of this event in Britain.

⁶² The best overview of the 1790s political scene in Scotland in print remains Henry W. Meikle, *Scotland and the French Revolution* (1912; London, 1969). See also, John D. Brims, 'The Scottish Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution', Ph.D. (University of Edinburgh, 1983).

⁶³ On the wave of rioting in Scotland sparked by events in Edinburgh, see Bob Harris, 'Political Protests in the Year of Liberty, 1792' in Bob Harris (ed.), *Scotland in the Age of the French Revolution*, 49–78.

an embodied nation. We rejoice that you do not consider yourselves as merged and melted down into another country, but that in this great national question you are still Scotland – the land where Buchanan wrote, and Fletcher spoke and Wallace fought.⁶⁴

In the wake of the Convention, the authorities sanctioned a policing crack-down of which Muir was an early victim. He was arrested on 2 January 1793 and charged with reading this address (a charge he admitted while denying it was criminal in intent), with making seditious and inflammatory speeches and with circulating Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man* (both of which he denied). A bill favouring County Reform was defeated in the House of Commons the following month, but this only aided the radical cause. Those who were sympathetic to reform were forced to accept that the Pittite administration had little or no desire to meet their demands, and many were driven to the conclusion that only a more forceful expression of discontent would alter the government's mind. By the time of the second National Convention, held in Edinburgh at the end April 1793, there were some 116 delegates representing twenty-eight towns and villages. There had only been twelve represented at the first convention. Nor did this radical mobilisation go unnoticed in more conservative circles. The foundation of the Friends was countered by the creation of the Goldsmith Hall Association; an ultra-loyalist organisation, the declared intention of which was the defence of the established constitution.

The tension was heightened further by the trials of the radicals subsequently known as the 'Scottish Martyrs'. They began by dealing with Muir, the case occurring in Edinburgh on 30 and 31 August 1793. Many of the city's notables expressed serious reservations concerning the trial's procedure. Lord Cockburn, for example, remarked 'this is one of the cases the memory whereof never perisheth. History cannot let its injustice alone'.⁶⁵ But despite these sentiments, Muir was found guilty on all counts and sentenced to transportation for fourteen years.⁶⁶ Further trials followed in September

⁶⁴ [William Drennan], 'Address from the Society of United Irishmen in Dublin, 1792' in Elaine McFarland, *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution* (Edinburgh, 1994), 248. The full text is reproduced in *Ibid.*, 248–52. On the response to this address and the manner in which it opened fissures over the nationalist-unionist divide within the reform movement, see John D. Brims, 'The Scottish "Jacobins"', *Scottish Nationalism and the British Union* in Roger A. Mason (ed.), *Scotland and England, 1286–1815* (Edinburgh, 1987), 247–65.

⁶⁵ Henry Cockburn quoted by Ken Logue, 'Thomas Muir' in Gordon Menzies (ed.), *History is my Witness* (London, 1976), 25.

⁶⁶ On Muir's highly picaresque subsequent career see Marjorie Masson and J.F. Jameson,

1793 and into January and March of 1794, with Thomas F. Palmer, William Skirving, and the English representatives at the Scottish convention, Maurice Margarot and Joseph Gerrald, all following Muir into banishment. These trials marked a tragic watershed in the development of radical politics in Scotland.⁶⁷

In the lectures of the academic session 1793–4, Stewart abandoned the distinction between theory and practice that characterised his earlier reflections. The student Archibald Bell only recorded a brisk and uncontroversial analysis of the working of the British constitution (it should be noted that only in this set of notes was the constitution referred to as British rather than English).⁶⁸ Although again acknowledging his debt to Montesquieu, Stewart's rhetoric now implied that even a celebrated French thinker, and an enlightened author, thought the British constitution exemplary. It was a model upon which French politics could and should draw:

Indeed, one is at a loss to discover the tendency and scope of this celebrated author's [Montesquieu] observations upon the government of his own country. Sometimes he seems to be actuated by a sincere admiration and respect for it, acquired probably by early education and prejudice. And sometimes one would imagine that he meant to suggest to his countrymen the idea of a better, by his describing many of its defects, suggesting amendments and contrasting it with the numerous excellencies of the British constitution.⁶⁹

If even the French thought well of the British constitution, the subtext might read, the British authorities need not fear revolution. In this vein, Stewart offered an analysis of the French Revolution as a consequence of a specifically

⁶⁷ 'The Odyssey of Thomas Muir', *The American Historical Review*, xxix (1923), 49–72.

⁶⁷ As W. Hamish Fraser has written: 'The authorities' response was devastatingly harsh. There was a series of arrests of reformers in the Spring of 1793, and when that failed to deter continuing demands for reform, leading activists, Muir, [Thomas Fyshe] Palmer and [William] Skirving, together with London reformers who had ventured north of the border, [Maurice] Margarot and [Joseph] Gerrald, were despatched to Australia. The tiny group of insurrectionists around Robert Watt was easily broken up and imitators were further deterred by his public hanging. The political reform movement was effectively nipped in the bud'. W. Hamish Fraser, 'Patterns of Protest' in T. M. Devine and Rosalind Mitchison (eds), *People and Society in Scotland, Volume One: 1760–1830* (Edinburgh, 1988), 284–5.

⁶⁸ Arch Bell, 'Lectures on Moral Philosophy delivered in the University of Edinburgh by Professor Dugald Stewart in the years 1793–4', EUL Dc.4.97, 350.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 348.

French variant of absolutist politics confronting French mores of liberality. 'The authority of the king of France', he announced, 'is not restrained by law more than the most absolute despotism, but merely by the particular customs, manners, institutions and fortuitous circumstances of the country which form but a weak bulwark against the encroachments of arbitrary power'.⁷⁰ Whether this amounted to an argument for the irrationality of British Jacobinism or against the state repression of political expression fuelled by a silly fear of revolution is again a matter for interpretation.

The second possibility is given credibility by Stewart's reaction to the suspension of Habeas Corpus in April and May 1794. In the weeks that the Habeas Corpus law was being debated, Stewart deferred the normal course of his observations on the workings of the constitution to reflect upon the importance of that law in sustaining the liberty of the British subject. He saw three central planks in the constitutional defence of the subject's happiness: 'first, the right of private property, secondly, the right of personal security and thirdly, the right of personal liberty'.⁷¹ Of this final element, he observed that 'the great preservative of it in England is the famous Habeas Corpus Act passed in the 31st year of the reign of Charles II'. In a footnote he then cited the equivalent Scottish legislation, namely, 'the Act for preventing wrongous imprisonment . . . 1700 c6'.⁷²

This was not the first time that Stewart had noted the importance of the law. In 1790, in the midst of the initial crisis created by the French Revolution, Stewart had pronounced that: 'The Habeas Corpus Act is most important to the liberties of England'.⁷³ He even fired a warning shot across the bows of the political nation, recalling that while:

On great emergencies the Habeas Corpus Act may be suspended, as the laws of Rome were by the appointment of a dictator; but our constitution is superior to Rome in this respect: that the king's ministers are accountable when that Act has been suspended by the sovereign whereas the Roman dictators were never accountable.⁷⁴

This rhetorical tactic, celebrating the constitution in a manner that implied the

⁷⁰ Ibid., 348.

⁷¹ Ibid., 357.

⁷² Ibid., 359.

⁷³ Anonymous, 'Lectures on Moral Philosophy delivered by Professor Dugald Stewart Session 1789–90', EUL Gen.1987–9, 1989, n.p.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

validity of radical opinion, was a central ploy in Stewart's avoidance of political censure.

Despite this precedent, the political circumstance at the time of speaking in 1794 ensured that Stewart was taking a serious risk in placing such importance on the existence of a Habeas Corpus Act. More than that, he did not limit himself to describing the Act's operations, quoting Blackstone as he did, but availed of the moment to offer some observations on its suspension. He informed his students that:

This act can never be suspended except in cases of the most urgent necessity by a solemn act of the legislative body, which sometimes, for a very limited space, permits the executive power to imprison suspected persons at will, and without assigning any reason for so doing. This measure is similar to the 'Senatus consultum ultima necessitatis' of the Romans, which preceded the election of a dictator and is adopted with similar caution.⁷⁵

These remarks were given a more acceptable gloss when Stewart again cited Blackstone, this time on the dangers implicit in suspension of the Act. Stewart noted that "the experiment ought only to be tried," says Blackstone, "in cases of extreme emergency, and in these the nation only parts with its liberty for a while in order to preserve it for ever".⁷⁶

In the eyes of the authorities, however, that emergency was already upon the state. In October 1795 Treason and Sedition Acts were passed and a further crackdown on reforming organisations followed. As John Brims has stated:

The prompt and hard-headed response of the authorities, in forcibly dispersing the [British] Convention, arresting its leaders, partly suspending the operation of the Act anent Wrongous Imprisonment of 1701, and encouraging the loyalist well-to-do to form Volunteer Companies in defence of the constitution, produced its intended result. A dispirited, harassed and apparently divided Scottish radical movement broke up in disarray. The extension to Scotland of the infamously repressive 'Two Acts' of 1795, which greatly expanded the scope of the treason laws and placed draconian restrictions on the right of political assembly, was therefore not only politically unnecessary but also dangerous in that it

⁷⁵ Bell, 'Moral Philosophy', 360

⁷⁶ Ibid., 360.

virtually forced any future revival of radical activity in Scotland to be directed along revolutionary lines. And so it fell out.⁷⁷

It was not until 1797 that the government became aware of a renewed threat of subversion, when they identified the emergence of United Scotsmen.⁷⁸ Yet, although tremors from the French Revolution had shaken British politics as far back as 1789, it was in Ireland that the political ground really shook.

Although the United Irishman had gone underground in the wake of their suppression in 1794, they had radicalised in the darkness. Re-emerging into the political daylight on the morning of 23 May 1798, the mail-coaches running out of Dublin were halted as a signal to countryside cells that the long-impending rising had begun.⁷⁹ Although the assault on Dublin was an aborted failure, the rebellion in the southeast of the country was born vigorous and violent. To British observers it was clear that the United Irish rising indicated how Jacobinism was rupturing the fabric of loyalism. The bloody turmoil of the uprising, and the late intervention of a French invasion force, highlighted the threat Jacobinism posed to the security and prosperity of the ruling élite, and although the rising was repressed, the impact of that summer of discontent and disaffection was profound, leading to the collapse of the Irish executive and the Anglo-Irish Union of 1800.⁸⁰

Throughout this most tempestuous of periods, a student named J. Small was attending Stewart's classes. Small attended three successive sessions, those of 1796–7, 1797–8 and 1798–9, and kept lengthy notes on what he heard. It would seem that Stewart was unusually reticent on matters of political import. The notes under the heading 'Of the English Constitution' are extremely short and record Stewart as observing that: 'It is unnecessary here to discuss this subject as it has been treated at so great a length by Montesquieu, Blackstone

⁷⁷ Brims, 'The Scottish "Jacobins"' in Mason, *Scotland and England*, 260.

⁷⁸ For a brisk assessment of the United Scotsmen, vis-à-vis their Irish counterparts, see Elaine W. McFarland, 'Scottish Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century: The Thistle and the Shamrock' in T. M. Devine and J. R. Young (eds), *Eighteenth-Century Scotland: New Perspectives* (East Linton, 1999), 287–92.

⁷⁹ For a recent and comprehensive survey of the event and the scholarship which now surrounds it, see Thomas Bartlett, David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *1798: A Bicentennial Perspective* (Dublin, 2003).

⁸⁰ For two rather different attempts to connect the Anglo-Irish Union of 1800 with the Anglo-Scottish Union of 1707 see Alexander Murdoch, 'Henry Dundas, Scotland and the Union with Ireland, 1792–1801' in Harris (ed.), *Scotland in the Age of the French Revolution*, 125–39 and Michael Brown, 'The Injured lady and her British Problem' in Michael Brown, Patrick M. Geoghegan and James Kelly (eds), *The Irish Act of Union, 1800: Bicentennial Essays* (Dublin, 2003), 37–49.

and De Lolme'. Stewart was thus falling back upon the published authorities, venturing only to proclaim 'the English constitution is unquestionably entitled to a preference to all that have been realised among mankind. It has given birth to wise systems of political economy'.⁸¹

This lacuna fits the pattern of Stewart's increasing need for caution in expressing radical ideas. In the most intemperate of political climates, he was forced into a diplomatic silence, merely pointing to the most orthodox of authorities before quickly proceeding to the safer ground of political economy. Indeed, this increase in prudence was implicit in his decision to offer a series of lectures on political economy in the academic year 1800–1, the political implications of which he explained to his class some three years later. As he told George Strickland's class in 1804:

It occurred to me during the political changes in Europe that the lectures in which we are about to be engaged would form a useful addition to the studies of this place. The subject has for some years engaged a considerable share of my attention, not only as a branch prescribed to me by my academical duty, but as being peculiarly adopted to the days in which we live.⁸²

In the notes taken in the academic session 1801–2, James Bridges supplied further evidence of this trend towards political discretion. Typically, where Stewart did risk a controversial assertion, he placed it carefully within the context of a critique of a French thinker. Thus, Stewart assailed Montesquieu for collapsing the distinction between a limited monarchy and an absolute one. Organising governments into the categories democracy, aristocracy and monarchy, rather than Montesquieu's division into republic, monarchy and despotism, he remarked: 'Montesquieu here distinguishes monarchy from despotism, and the distinction is solid and important. It may, however, bear dispute whether limited monarchy (which is Montesquieu's meaning in the word monarchy) should have a place among the simple forms of government'.⁸³ The consequence of such punctilious rearrangement was dramatic. As Stewart explained, in his subsequent lectures he 'shall employ the word monar-

⁸¹ J. Small, 'Class of Moral Philosophy, 1796/7, 1797/8, 1798/9', EUL MS Dc.8.143, 157.

⁸² George Strickland, 'Notes on Political Economy from Professor Stewart's Lectures at Edinburgh, November 1803–April 1804', NLS MS 3771, 4.

⁸³ James Bridges, 'Notes from Mr Stewart's Lectures on Moral Philosophy read in the University of Edinburgh, Winter 1801–02', EUL Dc.8.143, 387.

chy to express *despotic* monarchy'.⁸⁴ He remained, in other words, sympathetic towards the French Revolution.

Stewart protested, however, that rather than favouring the regicide and the republic, he supported the mixed constitution that he saw in operation in Britain, claiming for it 'a preference over all the governments which have yet been realised in the history of mankind'.⁸⁵ His rationale for this assessment was, paradoxically, offered in an extended criticism of the idea of the division of powers found in Montesquieu's celebration of the English constitution. For Stewart, the constitution was to be celebrated not on theoretical grounds but on practical ones, for an error 'seems to arise from too literal an interpretation of the theory of our government'.⁸⁶ Indeed, were Montesquieu's division of powers fully effective it would have fallen foul of the fate its critics proposed for it:

Several foreign political writers [urge] that this division must be a mere nullity or that it must expose the political system to perpetual shocks and convulsions. To those who live under this government and have an opportunity of seeing the futility of this objection [however] it would be unnecessary to enter into a formal examination.⁸⁷

Instead of a formal division of powers, Stewart again suggested that the constitution operated through a system of informal influence upon the House of Commons:

in the House of Commons, there are individuals of the eldest families in the country. We there find men who are superior to some of the members of the House of Peers . . . a few of the most eminent merchants, a few lords, a great many sons and younger brothers of peers, many country gentlemen of independent fortune, a few individuals of splendid abilities who are introduced through the influence of the king or of the great families. Thus, the king and the peers must possess a great degree of indirect influence.⁸⁸

The double meaning of this defence of patronage and hidden influence was made immediately clear in a revealing analysis. For Stewart, 'if . . . the king

⁸⁴ Ibid., 387.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 416.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 412.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 412.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 415.

and peers had no influence over them, the government would be a democracy'.⁸⁹ Britain therefore was already close to the desired outcome of the French revolutionary activists.

By this stage, the revolution itself had lost much of its radical impetus and Britain was readjusting its internal relations in response to the threat posed by the United Britons in their various manifestations. On 1 January 1801, the parliamentary unification of Britain and Ireland came into force, creating the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In such a context, this kind of political analysis, celebrating the English constitution for failing to live up to its ideals was about as polemical as a public figure such as Stewart might attempt. However, by the session of 1806–7, when John Borthwick was attending the class and taking copious notes in his untidy hand, Stewart was apparently feeling more secure in his treatment of politics. Borthwick certainly believed that his task of transcribing the notes was of value and, significantly, he drew the reader's attention in particular to the political observations concluding the course:

I have the vanity to hope that here and there throughout the following manuscript (especially after page 282) [the section of political society starts on page 283] many hints at least will be found, which tho' incompetent to familiarise him with the subject, will afford suggestions for the establishment of speculations concerning it.⁹⁰

In this section Stewart provided a series of observations on the peculiar advantages of the English constitution. He once again denied that the English constitution was non-existent, comparing it to the rules of grammar in the English language: although the rules might change over time through common usage, this did not imply that there were no rules. Linguistic chaos was as improbable as political anarchy.

Most substantially, Stewart used this series of lectures to reflect on the nature of the social stability underpinning the English political system. By this time, he was sounding increasingly conservative in his treatment of politics and society. He recognised the importance of rank and station and contended that 'that intimate and regular connection which subsists between the different ranks in society in England constitutes another excellence of

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 416.

⁹⁰ John Borthwick, 'Notes from a Course of Lectures on Moral Philosophy delivered by Dugald Stewart', EUL Gen.843, inside cover.

the constitution'.⁹¹ This was more than a sociological observation, for he pronounced that this social stability was in large part a product of the legal circumstances surrounding nobility:

As we remarked before, it is only the single representative of a peerage that is in the eye of the law considered noble. In the course of a few generations the descendants of the other parts of the family are soon lost in the body of the people and form a link betwixt these two parts of the inhabitants. In some other countries all the branches of the family are supposed noble, which forms an insurmountable barrier between the two classes.⁹²

Stewart was here critiquing the French system of nobility, and by implication, pronouncing in favour of the English alternative. Yet, he was also subtly justifying the French Revolution. The nobility there had produced social division and political disaffection. Though well disguised, there still existed a radical hue to his thought.

The echo of his youthful enthusiasm was also to be heard in Stewart's observation on the legacy that England had granted to its former colonies in America. 'Some of the new states beyond the Atlantic', he remarked, 'have shown great wisdom and sagacity in forming their new constitutions. The legislators have made some good observations on the English constitution from which they have certainly borrowed a great deal'.⁹³ Here, once again, a statement apparently in line with orthodox celebration of the English system might be read differently, offering support to revolutionary ambitions. That the United States had made actual the ideals of the English constitution was one of the stock arguments of the defenders of the American Revolution.

Stewart was careful not to leave the matter there, arguing that the English system was the actualisation of an ideal, for as he extolled it: 'it is the first [constitution] which has realised the theoretical government of the most sagacious of the ancient philosophers'.⁹⁴ He concluded his treatment in a similar vein, offering a grand peroration on the value of the political system then found in Britain. 'It was an observation of Mr Hume fifty years ago', Stewart recalled,

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 438.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 438–9.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 339.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 428–9.

and we may now repeat it with that confidence that experience warrants, that the rigours of monarchy, the deceit and oppression of aristocracy, the tumult and violence of democracy have not been felt, but under the mild, uniform and equitable act of our great constitutional machine, learning, arts, and general improvement have astonishingly flourished and agriculture, commerce and manufacture have been practised and advanced with unparalleled success.⁹⁵

It would seem then that Stewart was, over the course of the 1790s, systematically retreating from his youthful enthusiasm for radical politics. It was a stately withdrawal, temporising and qualifying his opinions, omitting and avoiding ignitable issues. Even now some of his original attitudes could be found hidden in the thicket of orthodox opinion. The advocate of regicide in the 1770s and the sympathiser of the French Revolution in the 1790s, had, by the early 1800s, become an able defender of the status quo, a soft-spoken adherent to the British system of government.

In this, Stewart would appear to be in line, not with the idea of a stable, homogenous, and undiluted Scottish loyalty to king and country, but with Mark Philp's identification of the frailty of political radicalism.⁹⁶ This offers us a reading of an increasingly reactionary Stewart, withdrawing his favour from the French Revolution as it radicalised, committed regicide and resisted Britain at war. Yet, even this picture requires revision however, for as Annabel Patterson has rightly recognised,

people whose lives have been dominated by principle will often, at some stage, make moves that show them to be captives of self-interest in one of its most naked forms . . . But imperfect agents of principle do not render principle itself non-existent or nonviable. On the contrary, their behaviour tends to clarify principle's longevity and rigour.⁹⁷

So it is with Stewart.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 441–2.

⁹⁶ Mark Philp, 'The Fragmented Ideology of Reform' in idem (ed.), *The French Revolution and British Popular Politics* (Cambridge, 1991), 50–78.

⁹⁷ Annabel Patterson, *Nobody's Perfect: A New Whig Interpretation of History* (Yale, 2002), 18–19.

V The Correspondence: Stewart as a Radical

All this caution was not without its purpose. While as Anand Chitnis recognises, 'Stewart's politics were openly Whig', the expression of this view needed to be carefully controlled if his more radical instincts were not to lead him into trouble.⁹⁸ Indeed, as evidence from the student notebooks from the period indicates, this caution was not complete, and Stewart occasionally alluded to his sympathies for the radical cause in the semi-formal environment of the classroom. This was even more obviously the case when it came to the private realm of personal correspondence.

This is hinted at in the account we have of Mathew Stewart's destructive bonfire of his father's papers. Among the documents engulfed by the flames was

an account of the life and writings of Dugald Stewart, together with all his correspondence. Among others with Madame de Staël, La Fayette, Jefferson and many other literary and well-known characters, French and English; with anecdotes from his journals kept during his residence in Paris, before and at the commencement of the Revolution, and during his visits to that city with Lord Lauderdale, during the Fox administration.⁹⁹

As this suggests, Stewart was both in contact with a number of central political figures in the era, and a witness in the early 1790s to a number of crucial events in Paris, which he regularly visited during the summer months. For example, he spent the summer and early autumn of 1789 in Paris, where he kept the august company of Thomas Jefferson, for Jefferson later reminisced how, 'it is now thirty-five years since I had the great pleasure of becoming acquainted with you in Paris, and since we saw together Louis XVI led in triumph by his people through the streets of his capital' – a reference to the October days.¹⁰⁰

From Paris, Stewart reported to his Scottish friends on the tempestuous turn in political events with a mixture of anxiety and enthusiasm.¹⁰¹ On 10

⁹⁸ Chitnis, *The Scottish Enlightenment and Early Victorian English Society*, 23.

⁹⁹ *Notes and Queries*, xi (1855), 261–2.

¹⁰⁰ Thomas Jefferson to Dugald Stewart, Monticello, 26 April 1824. It would appear that the two men engaged in a correspondence of some duration, as in *Notes and Queries*, ix (1855), his son listed Jefferson among the authors whose letters he had destroyed. See also Hamilton, *Works of Stewart*, viii, xi.

¹⁰¹ On this trip see Macintyre, *Dugald Stewart*, 71–4.

May 1789, he wrote to Archibald Alison, author of the celebrated *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste* (1790), of his concern at

the injudicious choice which the *Tiers Etat* have in general made of their deputies. By far the majority of them are lawyers, who are by no means respected by the people of rank in this country, and who are certainly of all men the least qualified for new-modelling a constitution. Besides these, however, there are a few very respectable men of letters, and a considerable number of the most enlightened and liberal among the nobility.¹⁰²

Ironically, given the trouble mention of the man was later to cause Stewart, he here told Alison of his regret that ‘the marquis de Condorcet was not returned by the noblesse, and it is doubtful whether he will be able to obtain a seat at all’.¹⁰³

By 27 November 1791 Stewart was informing Alison that ‘the affairs of France . . . are going on more and more every day to my satisfaction’. He explained how a peculiarly French set of circumstances had produced the Revolution, and that it now demanded patience and understanding from foreign observers. In a passage echoing the theories of Montesquieu, Stewart relayed to Alison how he believed that

in a country where the manners have been formed under an arbitrary government, and where some time must elapse before the ideas of the people are completely changed, I am not certain if it is not fortunate, on the whole, to secure to the executive power such a weight as may consolidate the different parts of so vast a system, and may preserve the people in that tranquillity which is necessary to enable the constitution to produce its full effects on their industry and their morals.

However, he was still able to assert, in the face of the gathering evidence, that ‘The little disorders which may now and then occur in a country, where things in general are in so good a train, are of very inconsiderable importance’.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Dugald Stewart to Archibald Alison, Paris, 10 May 1789 quoted in Veitch, ‘Memoir’, cxxiv.

¹⁰³ Ibid., cxxv. Condorcet was successful in his attempt to gain a seat.

¹⁰⁴ Dugald Stewart to Archibald Alison, Edinburgh, 27 November 1791, in Veitch, ‘Memoir’, cxxxiii. This might with profit be contrasted with his above-quoted remarks in the *Elements* distancing himself from the use of political violence. It

In January 1793, the same month as Thomas Muir's arrest and the execution of Louis XVI, Stewart wrote to Alison, congratulating him on the birth of a son. He admitted that, 'I don't know what duties your church imposes on a godfather, but I promise to do all I can to make him a philosopher and an economist; and I engage, as soon as he begins to snuff (which I suppose he will do in a dozen years hence), to make him the present of a very handsome box which I received lately, with the *Rights of Man* inscribed on the lid'.¹⁰⁵ Just the month before Stewart wrote these words to Alison, in December 1792, the trial of Thomas Paine for seditious writings was opened in London.¹⁰⁶ In this context, Stewart's remark to Alison was a politically dangerous rhetorical flourish.

War with revolutionary France now loomed, polarising opinion further; a prospect, Stewart admitted to Alison, in January that left him fearful:

I tremble at the thought of war, because it appears to me to be risking the prosperity and tranquillity of this country on the throw of a die. If we engage in it, it will open a new source of political events, the final issue of which is beyond all calculation; but I think, in general, we may venture to predict, that it will not be agreeable to the wishes of those who are most anxious to promote it. Is it not melancholy that the occurrences of the last twenty years should have taught statesmen so little wisdom? The infatuation of this part of the country is beyond all belief. A few weeks have turned the tide most effectually, and all freedom, both of speech and of the press, is for a time suspended . . . The late shocking barbarities at Paris have furnished the means of inflaming the popular passions; but if order were established in that country, or if the events of the next campaign should be as contrary to their expectations as those of the last I am afraid to look forward to the consequences.¹⁰⁷

The anxiety that this letter reveals helps us to comprehend the context in which we must read Stewart's demure surrender to Abercromby, when challenged

would seem that even in the *Elements* of 1792, although it got him in trouble, Stewart was differentiating between his private opinions and his public expressions.

¹⁰⁵ Dugald Stewart to Archibald Alison, January 1793, in Veitch, 'Memoir', cxxxv.

¹⁰⁶ An account of the trial and the political pressure on Paine that prompted his embarkation to France can be found in John Keane, *Tom Paine: A Political Life* (London, 1995), 334–48.

¹⁰⁷ Dugald Stewart to Archibald Alison, Paris, January 1793, in Veitch, 'Memoir', cxxxvi.

over his citation of Condorcet.¹⁰⁸ The political circumstances were rapidly conspiring to make even the slightest whisper of political disaffection the cause of profound suspicion. In that light, what is striking about Stewart's reply to Craig's missive is less the tactical retreat, which has resulted in the caricature of Stewart as a 'cringing' Whig, than the way in which the letter was cast so as to offer a wary defence of his political probity. Writing from Stewartfield, he began with a guarded *mea culpa*:

That I differed widely from some of my friends, in rejoicing at the prospect of an extension of our own political happiness to other nations, I am not ashamed to acknowledge; but the chapter your Lordship alludes to bears ample testimony in my favour, that even in the most despotic governments in Europe, I was aware of the mischiefs to be apprehended from the spirit of innovation and from sudden changes in established institutions.¹⁰⁹

Stewart's admission of support for the early days of the French Revolution was cleverly constructed to inoculate him from the charge of political heresy, for even Henry Dundas had welcomed the onset of turmoil in what was, after all, Britain's traditional enemy.¹¹⁰ Next, Stewart offered a disavowal of Condorcet, distancing himself from the Frenchman, without however relinquishing the principles they had both espoused:

I shall ever regret that I dishonoured some of my pages by mentioning with respect the name of Condorcet; but when my papers were sent to the press, he was quite unknown in any public capacity, and he enjoyed the friendship of the most respectable men in Europe. The passage I

¹⁰⁸ Stewart was not alone in worrying about the toxic political atmosphere developing in Scotland in the 1790s. His colleague at Edinburgh University, Andrew Dalzel, wrote to William Adam in July 1794 of how, 'such an infatuation prevails here among most of those whom one used to look upon as sensible people, that every thing coming from a member of opposition in parliament though abounding in the most forcible arguments, is reprobated with a degree of keenness that amounts to absolute frenzy. I believe the delusion and absurdity of the higher ranks of society here has proceeded much farther than it has done in England'. Cited in Emma Vincent MacLeod, 'The Scottish Opposition Whigs and the French Revolution' in Harris (ed.), *Scotland in the Age of the French Revolution*, 83.

¹⁰⁹ Dugald Stewart to William Craig, 20 February 1794, quoted in Veitch, 'Memoir', lxxiii.

¹¹⁰ See Michael Fry, *The Dundas Despotism* (Edinburgh, 1992), particularly 155–206.

have quoted from him (considered in its reference to the old French government) breathes a spirit of moderation, which, if it had proceeded from any other pen, would be read not only with censure, but with high approbation. It is for this passage alone I am responsible, and not for anything else in his writings—far less in his subsequent conduct.¹¹¹

Stewart then referred Craig and Abercromby to the fourth section of his *Life and Writings of Adam Smith*, claiming it was inspired by the need ‘to guard against the possibility of such misapprehension’.¹¹² Therein Stewart had written of how Smith’s ‘doctrine concerning the freedom of trade and of industry coincides remarkably with that which we find in the writings of the French economists’.¹¹³ At the time of penning this passage, he was concerned with proving Smith’s originality. Thus he continued:

But it surely cannot be pretended by the warmest admirers of that system, that any one of its numerous expositors has approached to Mr Smith in the precision and perspicuity with which he has stated it, or in the scientific and luminous manner in which he has deduced it from elementary principles. The awkwardness of their technical language, and the paradoxical form in which they have chosen to present some of their opinions, are acknowledged even by those who are most willing to do justice to their merits.¹¹⁴

Now, this assertion helped Stewart give a conservative gloss on his espousal of ideas associated with the French school, by offering them a stalwart British comparison.¹¹⁵

Finally, Stewart proclaimed himself to be at the forefront of the counter-revolutionary movement in Britain, claiming the position of prophet of the disasters emanating in France from the adoption of pernicious ideas. As he reminded Craig,

¹¹¹ Stewart to Craig, 20 February 1794, quoted in Veitch, ‘Memoir’, lxxiv.

¹¹² Ibid., lxxiii.

¹¹³ Dugald Stewart, *Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith* in *Hamilton Works of Stewart*, x, 65.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 65.

¹¹⁵ The conflict over Smith’s political legacy in the 1790s is treated in Emma Rothschild, *Economic Sentiments: Adam Smith, Condorcet and the Enlightenment* (Cambridge MA, 2002), 52–66, where the conundrum of separating Smith’s concentration on economic liberty from its concomitant political manifestation is understood to have vexed interpreters, including Stewart. On Stewart in particular, see *ibid.*, 57–9.

as to the French philosophers in general, and the tendency of their sceptical doctrines to corrupt the morals, and to poison the happiness of mankind, your Lordship will do me the justice to acknowledge that I opposed them with zeal, at a time when the profession of scepticism was not quite so unfashionable as it is at present. Whoever may be called upon to retract their former admiration of these principles (which have indeed *led to a giant mischief*) I am certainly not among the number . . . I shall only add, that ever since I was Professor of Moral Philosophy, I have concluded my course with a set of lectures on the English constitution, the peculiar excellencies of which I have always enlarged upon them in the warmest and most enthusiastic terms.¹¹⁶

This is disingenuous, at least in relation to the context of the lectures, and in that it is suggestive of the pressure Abercromby placed upon Stewart. Caution was required when treating with a man who was increasingly to be understood as a political opponent.

It is this then that makes sense of our original conundrum. While Stewart was a fellow traveller with the radical ideas of the 1790s, the political climate in Scotland was not so conducive to these ideas, leaving him in a very exposed situation. Only occasionally, in correspondence with trusted conferees such as Alison or, much later, with William Drennan, might Stewart's sympathetic interest in the possibility of political revolution be aired. In effect, the evidence amassed here questions the traditional picture of Stewart as a cautious and cringing Whig. Instead, what it finds is a man who was oftentimes forced to temporise because of the precarious position he held in Scottish intellectual society. It is certainly true that Stewart was being deceptive in his response to Alexander Abercromby's allegations, when he told Craig that:

In treating of this subject [the excellencies of the English constitution], I have been so uniformly impressed with a sense of the importance of my situation, that among all the interesting questions which have, during the last nine years [since 1785], divided our political parties, I have not introduced the slightest reference to any of them excepting in the single instance of the African trade, on which I formerly expressed myself with some warmth;—and even these expressions I dropped from my course, as soon as it became a matter of public discussion.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁶ Stewart to Craig, 20 February 1794, quoted in Veitch, 'Memoir', lxxiii–lxxiv.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., lxxiv. This is a reference to the Abolition Movement.

In fact, Stewart was covertly expounding on political developments throughout his term of office. And, as the letter from Helen D'Arcy Stewart to Drennan makes plain, when people in the British Isles embarked on revolutionary action, he was a covert supporter.

When assessing Stewart's political opinions it is necessary to consistently distinguish between the public statements of a printed book, the semi-private utterances of the lecture hall, and the even less guarded reflections found in his private correspondence. As the correspondence with Drennan and Abercromby indicates, if Stewart was to negotiate the choppy waters of Scottish political life in the final decades of the century, he had to remain conscious of and responsive to the demands of his different personae. Identifying the private political commitments of any figure is nigh on impossible, and with the context of the revolutionary wars blurring the issue further, prudence should remain a watchword. However, the evidence does suggest that Stewart was not the 'cautious Whig' of Bruce Lenman's portrayal. Certainly, while Stewart protested that 'I have long enjoyed, and that I continue to enjoy, every testimony of approbation which the public can give', that was not how Lord Cockburn recalled the situation.¹¹⁸ While admitting that 'we had wonderfully few proper Jacobins; that is, persons who seriously wished to introduce a republic in this country, on the French precedent,' Cockburn recognised that 'there were plenty of people who were *called* Jacobins; because this soon became the common nickname which was given, not only to those who had admired the dawn of the French liberation, but to those who were known to have any taste for any internal reform of our own'.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, 'such real *Whigs* were [also] extremely few' for 'self-interest had converted some, and terror more'.¹²⁰ Yet, of these, 'Stewart in particular, though too spotless and too retired to be openly denounced, was an object of secret alarm'.¹²¹

VI Conclusions

What then does the case of Dugald Stewart tell us about the wider context in which he operated? First, the clarity of Stewart's public fate needs to be tinged with an awareness that political affiliations did not necessarily dissolve under

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time* (Edinburgh, 1971), 80–1.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 83.

¹²¹ Ibid., 85.

the psychic pressure of the circumstances of the 1790s. Rather, they oftentimes went underground, finding expression in less formal and stable landscapes than that afforded by the print culture of the day. In the case of Stewart we can clearly document an awareness of the differing possibilities afforded by the printed book, the semi-formal lecture and private correspondence. What was acceptable in one format could not be uttered in another. This is what Stewart's correspondence with Drennan clearly indicates: a sympathy that chimed with occasional remarks in the lecture hall could not find its way into print, yet was expressed in the realm of a private letter.

Secondly, and following on from this first point, it becomes apparent by looking at Stewart's case that the limitations inherent in differing modes of communication in the period impinge on our understanding of the Scottish Enlightenment and its fate. In as much as the Enlightenment is commensurate with the free and transparent public expression of ideas—and the unhindered debate of culture and politics in an accessible public sphere—the Enlightenment was increasingly undermined by the restrictions placed upon discussion in the 1790s.¹²² The desirability of political consensus in opposing the French Revolution and its ideals imposed a kind of mental censorship upon the expression of political ideas. And when, as was the case with Stewart's citation of Condorcet, an author overstepped the mark, social censure (if not formal punishment) followed. The correspondence with Craig thus becomes emblematic of a collapse in the cultural norms that underpinned the development of the Scottish Enlightenment in the wake of the Jacobite Rising of 1745. The crisis of the 1790s, it is here proposed, destroyed the climate of trust that enabled the culture of unhindered discussion, which was itself intrinsic to the flourishing of the Scottish Enlightenment. So too, counter-intuitively, the exchange with Drennan supports this thesis, for, set in its proper context, it shows how private sentiments became increasingly disconnected from public utterances. And without the ability to argue openly about political life free from the threat of public punishment or private contempt, the Scottish Enlightenment was fated to fade. One of the unintended consequences of the crisis of the 1790s, therefore, was the end of the Scottish Enlightenment.

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¹²² This Kantian definition of Enlightenment informs the highly influential study, Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, 1992). See also, from a vast literature, James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe* (Cambridge, 2001).

Dissolving the Dream of Empire: Fratrism, Boswell, Byron and Moore

Murray Pittock

Both the Scots and the Irish have a long diasporic tradition as soldiers of fortune, Jacobites, servants of empire, economic and forced migrants, merchants and traders. Despite the absence of a home state of their own in the period before 1918 (after which, of course, the Irish position altered), both maintained a distinctive sense of a Scottish or Irish self abroad, and particular ways of performing and promoting the community of such selfhood. Major scholarly attention is now being paid to the distinctiveness of the Scots and Irish in the British Empire by Scottish and Irish (on the whole not British) historians, in books such as Michael Fry's *The Scottish Empire* (2001), Stephen Howe's *Ireland and Empire* (2002), Kevin Kenny's *Ireland and the British Empire* (2004), and Tom Devine's *Scotland's Empire* (2003), though these studies focus largely on involvement and participation in empire rather than its role in beliefs and attitudes. The latter is, by contrast, the subject of this essay. What was the state of mind in which a separate self was maintained without being absorbed by the international Britishness of empire? How was Scottishness or Irishness performed when its existence was a mere matter of geographical locality, not nationality, when England expected armed forces who were up to 50% Irish and well over 50% Irish and Scottish combined,¹ to respond with common purpose to the military, civil and public service commands of a state which excluded them in most cases from its very name (usually 'England'), while relying on their joint sacrifices to maintain its status and expand its power? Understanding of the personalities and functionality of the Irish and Scottish diasporas in the early modern period has (particularly in the Irish case) a scholarly history behind it, and with regard to Scotland new work is emerging rapidly: but more could often be said about mentalities, and the culture of diasporic groups, or those who served Empire's needs abroad.

This is of course a huge field of enquiry, and one which, in the Irish case in particular, is acknowledged although less often explored in detail: indeed, it has at times become almost a commonplace. As Terry Eagleton remarks:

¹ Fintan Cullen, 'Union and display in nineteenth-century Ireland' in Dana Arnold (ed.), *Cultural Identities and the aesthetics of Britishness* (Manchester, 2004), 111–33 (117–18).

If the pre-independent Irish took a lively interest in Egypt, India and Afghanistan, it was not because they could think of no better way of frittering away their leisure time . . . a society which has suffered colonization . . . has only to consult its own 'local' experience to feel solidarity.²

Similarly, Tom Bryan in *Twa Tribes* (2003) argues that 'Scots . . . might feel that their own strong cultural sense, along with a troubled history of displacement and emigration, should result in tolerance and mutual respect for different cultures'.³

It may be objected that these readings are too positive, and too redolent of liberal wish-fulfilment which seeks postcolonial attitudes *avant la lettre* in the participation of the Scots or Irish in the British Empire. Such participation was often after all enthusiastic enough: from Culloden to Amritsar, Scottish and Irish officers evinced their share of brutality and contempt for those on whom they turned their fire. Nor, surely, could it be otherwise when they formed, as outlined above, such a large proportion for so long of the British Army's operational force abroad. Irish songs condemning those who took the 'Saxon shilling' or Scottish songs mocking Black Watch recruiting sergeants for only managing to enlist 'forty an twa' (the Black Watch were the 'fighting 42nd', so the number is a joke as well as a gibe) were at odds with the reality of the situation. An attempt to retreat to the suggestion that at least Irish Catholics were different has its own difficulties, both with the significantly Protestant nature of much developed Irish nationalism up to the death of Parnell, and also with the need to provide evidence that the operational performance of Irish Catholic privates and NCOs (and from the 1760s, officers) was markedly inferior or less enthusiastic in combat against colonial peoples on a consistent and widespread basis. This is a challenge indeed. The case for a consistent Irish and Scottish political dissent within the Imperial sphere in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries seems almost impossible to maintain.

And yet, and yet. Eagleton, Bryan and many others are responding to a real phenomenon: the strong engagement of Irish and Scottish theory and practice with the dispossessed in the age of Empire. Sometimes some of the views they held were held also by English radical Whigs, particularly in the Romantic era: but the strength of the connection of Scottish and Irish figures with global liberation struggles, and the very distinct talent they were held

² Terry Eagleton, *The Idea of Culture* (Oxford, 2000), 48.

³ Tom Bryan, *Twa Tribes: Scots Among the Native Americans* (Edinburgh, 2003), 13.

to have in sympathetic engagement with native peoples is sufficiently widespread and distinct to make us pause. The idea that Irish or Scots are always of one mind is an essentialist prejudice which disrupts the possibility of assessing real phenomena, and one of the most important reasons for studying Ireland and Scotland together is that similarities of experience have been distorted for us by competing essentialisms. Scottish Jacobitism before 1750 has tended to be underestimated because it was defeated, and Britishness triumphed; in reviewing 1798, the subsequent triumph of Irishness has arguably led to overestimating the support commanded by the Rising, and certainly led to the distortion of it as a Catholic peasant revolt, just as the '15 and '45 are distorted as Highland clan revolts.

Essentialism of this kind demands that the history of small nations should be consistent, univocal and reducible to a common denominator. Students (and indeed sometimes even critics) of Scottish literature can regard texts set outwith Scotland by Scottish authors as not really Scottish in a way they never would regard *The Plumed Serpent*, *Hamlet* or *Robinson Crusoe* as un-English. We should be asking the question why Scotland or Ireland should be required to express themselves through an essentialist cultural representation of stereotyped aboriginality, and why some of us expect this of small national cultures, while readily accepting diversity of practice in large ones. Cultural beliefs, performances and networks are complex things, not shorthand for a universal imagology of small nations as reducible to simple structures, while only large ones remain diverse. Scotland is no more an egalitarian nation now than Ireland was thirled to the Gaelic language in 1922: both are flags of convenience for cultural practices which exist and are shared but are not ubiquitous. Once we can see this clearly, it becomes easier to identify the Scottish and Irish dissenting tradition in Empire: distinctive in culture, network and expectation, seeing self in the other. That reflection itself is a recognition of something shared amid much that is different: and such is the nature of culture.

This essay can only offer a beginning in identifying one aspect of this performance of a politically dissonant Irishness or Scottishness abroad: a set of beliefs widely held among many prominent figures, spread through networks, and complicit in yet defiant of imperialism.

'Fratrism' is the term adopted here for the adoption of colonized nations and cultures as a means of expressing reservations concerning the nature and development of empire. Fratrism affects not only the British, but also other empires, for example that of Spain, where many expatriate Scots and Irish (often identified with Native Americans in British propaganda) took an

active role in the liberation of Latin America. In the argument which follows, I will offer some reflections on the nature of this phenomenon, outline the principle kinds of networks which supported it, and end by examining three cases in some detail: those of Lord Byron, Thomas Moore and James Boswell. These three stages will amplify what are taken here to be the deep structures of the fratriot mindset, and how they communicate themselves as what Robert Darnton, following Clifford Geertz, termed 'social dimensions of meaning'.⁴

Fratriotism is a mindset which arises from conflicting loyalties generated by inclusion in a state with which one does not fully identify. We think we have outgrown the eighteenth and nineteenth century history which pandered to the creation of a national narrative and even mythology, but the tendency to write political history according to the geography and power structures of our own day is still strong, as Jeremy Black and others have pointed out.⁵ Cultural history has provided space for interpretations of culture which are hybrid, dialogic and complex, and consequently has pushed back the traditional claims of historiography both with regard to its hierarchy of sources and claims to objectivity (Chartier, 58–61); but problems remain. If we acknowledge culture to be a matter more of deep mental categories than social arrangements, why do we divorce this from national identities: why are we happier on the broad historical stage exploring past cultural moments such as episodes of well-poisoning and cat-killing than examining the performance of Scottishness in the long eighteenth century? Is it more of a threat? Or is it because nationality is perceived as a fiction, with its 'culture . . . a kind of Romantic symbol, as the infinite takes on a local incarnation' (Eagleton, 53)? Does the architecture of theory militate against the differentiation of the particular, or tend to lead (as with Ireland in Colley's thesis of Protestant Britishness) to its exclusion? Whether we overdetermine the past to serve a presentist narrative or revisit it with irony, it is at least arguable that in neither case are we likely to pay it the close and defining attention its own sense of itself deserves: and that sense of self resides in the past's material, imaginative and in the end active definitions of its own environment through the cultural performance of that self.

The cultural performances I am identifying are those of writing, speaking, singing, group dynamics, and engagement with one's own material culture, habits and practices and the material culture of others who are viewed as cognate: culture as the 'determinant' of communication. In the long eighteenth century (as indeed at other times), such a view of culture has to embrace

⁴ Roger Chartier, *Cultural History* tr. Lydia G. Cochrane (Oxford, 1988), 96.

⁵ V. Jeremy Black and Donald McRaid, *Studying History*, 2nd ed., (Basingstoke, 2000).

process as well as particularism, and core to fratritism as a concept is the transmutation of patriot discourses from the first to the third person, 'neither structure nor event but the incessant conversion of one into the other'. This is not to essentialize culture as a transmissible product (the means by which it is converted into the 'straw man' of those who want to identify it with ethnic particularism, at odds with diversity), nor the space in which it occurs, but national literatures and cultures exist as such in the minds of those who perform them, although the ownership of those performances can be defined in several ways.⁶ National cultures in this context are usually either adoptive or domestic: German national culture often absorbs Swiss-German and Austrian (and in the earlier nineteenth century, Hungarian) literature and culture, just as Rousseau is taken as belonging to France: domestic cultures are categorized by adoptive ones as localist and self-consciously ethnic (once again a means of marginalizing them by means of essentializing them). They respond in three main ways: active (national resistance: the Gaelic League in Ireland), defensive (imperial localism: the *locus amoenus* of Barrie or the conversion of self to the tourist gaze (Scott's Loch Katrine, Moore's Wicklow) and passive (identity surrender, becoming adopted except in the celebration of very local and particular processes (not events because of the risk of political inference): childhood, landscape, even sport. Scotland and Ireland in the long eighteenth century by and large are locales of defensive cultural performance, though of course with episodes of armed active resistance.⁷

Fratritism is primarily defensive: the performance of nationality displaced into a reading of the other as the unachievable self; cultural alterity as a response to political defeat. At times before that defeat was certain, it took a more active form, as when in 1689 'the "Irish papists" in Saint Kitts drove out the English and handed over the English part of the island to the French',⁸ or in the conspiratorial and military politics of the Jacobite era. Later, it took the form of frequent and sometimes striking demonstrations of sympathy and cultural,

⁶ Aletta Biersach, 'Local Knowledge, Local History: Geertz and Beyond', in Lynn Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, 1989), 72–96 (91). See also, Hunt, 'Introduction', 1–22 (7). John Smolenski, 'Introduction' to Parts I and III, in John Smolenski and Thomas J. Humphrey (eds), *New World Orders: Violence, Sanction and Authority in the Colonial Americas* (Philadelphia, 2005), 7, 131.

⁷ For Scott and Moore in this context, see Murray Pittock, 'Scott and the British Tourist', in Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes (eds), *English Romanticism and the Celtic World* (Cambridge, 2003), 151–66; also Matthew Campbell, *Jeremiah Joseph Callanan and 'The Last Home of the Bards'* (Cork, 2004), 4.

⁸ R. B. MacDowell, *Ireland in the Age of Imperialism and Revolution* (Oxford, 1979), 136.

political or even military support for colonized or dispossessed nations seeking to establish a recovered or fresh autonomy for themselves, a displacement of Scottishness or Irishness (in the cases under discussion here) from the first to the third person, the conversion of domestic cultural structures by a process which domesticated disparate historical events in other national struggles as reflecting on the performance of self. As such, it could be found in surprising places. Even the apparently most loyal imperial servants could express it as a form of double-mindedness, as when General Charles Napier opined 'We have no right to seize Sind, yet we shall do so . . . a . . . useful piece of rascality', or when Mountstuart Elphinstone, governor of Bombay, commented on the Indian peasantry's proverbial lack of honesty by saying that these 'inoffensive, amiable people' are 'often obliged to resist force with fraud'.⁹ Whose force is not stated: it does not need to be, being part of what Napier termed 'the usual Anglo-Saxon process of planting civilization by robbery, oppression and murder'. In similar terms, the Madras Scottish Society linked the plight of the Indian peasantry to the Highland Clearances.¹⁰

The Madras and similar societies played a key role. In order to start to place fratritism in a culturally theorized context, the risk of making a list of individual (and perhaps therefore unrepresentative) Irish and Scottish 'good guys' is one to be avoided. Thus, although the essay which follows will discuss three prominent writers, it must be understood that fratritism was very much a matter of networks, and I hope to give a sense of this also: for only in this can its claim to a distinctive existence rely. These networks were of varied kinds. More than sentimental and not always less than radical, fratritism depended on group dynamics as well as notable individual statements and actions. There is something profound in the collective realization of a language of sympathy and often of action among self-defining exiled groups: a deep-seated motivation arguably deriving from the position of Scottish and Irish culture in the British Empire and the need to internalize them to preserve them.

There are perhaps four enabling and indeed interconnected factors in fratrit networks. First and foremost, there is a long tradition of foreign service by Scottish and (especially after 1691) Irish officers. Leaving aside the fame of James Francis Keith (1696–1758), General Charles O'Donnell, whose Irish

⁹ Napier, cited in Richard Holmes, *Sahib: The British Soldier in India 1750–1914* (London, 2006; 2005), 60; Mountstuart Elphinstone, *The History of India: The Hindû and Mahometan Periods* (Allahabad, 1966), 195, 197.

¹⁰ H. T. Lambrick, *Sir Charles Napier and Sind* (Oxford, 1952), 32; Michael Fry, *The Scottish Empire* (Edinburgh, 2001), 93.

officers mourned Keith on the field where they had killed him, Thomas Gordon, Peter the Great's admiral, Marshal MacDonald, Duke of Taranto, who served Napoleon, or even Barclay de Tolly, who masterminded his defeat, there are many forgotten figures such as the admirals Christopher O'Brien and John O'Dwyer in Russia, Admiral Lord Daniel O'Kuoney and General William de Lacy of Spain and General William Graeme of Venice.

Secondly (and this is connected to the first point), Jacobite exiles and their descendants played a significant role: particularly those who had spent their exile in Continental Europe rather than the British colonies, where many (though not all, as Washington's officers such as Hugh Mercer bore witness) inclined to the loyalist side in 1776. Jacobite Ireland also had links with radicalism abroad: as Vincent Morley has shown, Jacobite *aisling* poetry switches to American subject matter in Ireland by the beginning of the 1780s, while United Irish rhetoric draws significantly on Jacobitism.¹¹ Many prominent fratriots, such as Boswell, Elphinstone, Sheridan and Burke had Jacobite connections.

Thirdly, networks between both Scottish and Irish and European culture remained important. Scottish networking and emigration continued in Continental Europe long after 1707, and not only among Jacobites either: it is important to recognize this in the context of an emerging orthodoxy which identifies a direct switch from Europe to the British Empire in the post 1707 Scots diaspora. To take only one example, Adam Armstrong (1762–1818), the grandson of Robert Riccaltoun, early influence on the writings of James Thomson, emigrated to Russia in the 1780s as tutor to Samuel Greig's family: Greig had, along with other Scottish officers, enlisted in the Russian navy in 1764, after the end of the Seven Years' War, and by 1775 was a Vice-Admiral. Armstrong's own son Robert left Russia to study at Edinburgh University, but then returned to Russia, eventually serving as Lieutenant General and Director of the St Petersburg Mint. In other words, Scottish European migration and back-migration continued well into the age of Empire, both for military and technological reasons: it was a Scottish engineer who oversaw the construction of Russia's first armoured ships in the immediate aftermath of the Crimean War, and many Scots worked for him. It is hard to recover his politics, but to aid Russia militarily within months of the Crimean War is at the least an interesting decision.¹²

¹¹ David Dobson, *Scottish Emigration to Colonial America, 1607–1785* (Athens, Georgia and London, 1994), 120; Vincent Morley, in this volume; Kevin Whelan, *Fellowship of Freedom: The United Irishmen and 1798* (Cork, 1998), 6, 26–7.

¹² Dmitry Fedosov, *The Caledonian Connection* (Aberdeen, 1996), 4, 48–9, 80.

Douglas Catterall has analysed the way in which 'Scottishness, in the form of norms and institutions' was made 'portable . . . within the diaspora' by marrying 'enclaves to highly structured kin networks' and that 'Scottishness, in the form of wanting to defend Scotland as a *patria*' was widespread:¹³ there was, in Steve Murdoch's words, 'a genuine conviction that common place or nation is enough to secure an open or trusting dialogue'.¹⁴ The question is, how far did this state of affairs disappear after 1707 or 1745? Not, perhaps, as completely as has been supposed. Douglas Hamilton has remarked on the 'clannishness' of Scots networks in the Caribbean in the later eighteenth century: the Campbells were a major 'political force' in managing Jamaican, as well as Scottish, politics, and Grenada even boasted a 'branch of the Beggar's Benison'.¹⁵ In terms of mentalities and the performance of self (and here we are back with the Madras Scottish society) one of the most important features of Scottish experience after 1707 is that Scots were able, even when 'North Britain' dominated as a descriptor of their country at home and 'England' prevailed abroad, to be 'Scottish', and to organize themselves into formal and informal groupings which clearly expressed a persisting sense of self and (however mildly expressed) a dissonance from merging into imperial Britain. Bluntly, to be 'Scottish' outside the British Isles after 1707 was ultimately, however weakly and defensively, a political act, in that it projected a national space abroad where there was no national existence at home.

Fourthly, there were intellectual networks. Jane Rendall has pointed out the systematic adoption of pro-Hindu and pro-nativist attitudes to India by a group among the lesser figures of the Scottish Enlightenment, including Mountstuart Elphinstone (1779–1859), James Mackintosh (1765–1832), Alexander Hamilton (1762–1824) and William Erskine (1773–1852), all of whom 'had some connexion with the University of Edinburgh' and were influenced by Dugald Stewart or Alexander Fraser Tytler, son of the Marian patriot historian William who influenced Boswell.¹⁶ Mackintosh and Erskine founded

¹³ Douglas Catterall, 'The Worlds of John Rose: A Northeastern Scot's Career in the British Atlantic World, c. 1740–1800' in Angela McCarthy (ed.), *A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and Identities Since the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York, 2006), 67–94 (69); 'At Home Abroad: Ethnicity and Enclave in the World of Scots Traders in Northern Europe, c1600–1800', *Journal of Early Modern History* 854 (2004), 319–57 (322, 327, 329, 340, 353).

¹⁴ Steve Murdoch, *Network North: Scottish Kin, Commercial and Covert Associations in Northern Europe, 1603–1746* (Leiden and Boston, 2006), 83.

¹⁵ Douglas J. Hamilton, *Scotland, the Caribbean and the Atlantic World 1750–1820* (Manchester, 2005), 5, 49, 143.

¹⁶ The Marians were historians who favoured Mary Queen of Scots: in doing so,

the Bombay Literary Society in 1804, and Mackintosh was later responsible for arranging the settlement of Scots in newly independent Venezuela, where the existing network consisted of those who had fought for or supplied Bolivar. Elphinstone became governor of Bombay and 'maintained the influence of the Brahmans . . . opposed the general introduction of English . . . opposed direct Christian teaching' and 'argued strongly against . . . annexing Indian states' to the extent of being a 'Hindu supremacist' (ODNB), as well as looking forward to the end of Empire.¹⁷ Gilbert Elliot was also among the pupils of Stewart who favoured native Indian ways, and Lord Cochrane, who was Boswell's cousin, himself attended Dugald Stewart's lectures at Edinburgh. Stewart was far more of a sceptic about empire than other Enlightenment figures such as William Robertson: indeed Stewart criticized Robertson's failure to look the atrocities of empire squarely in the face in a preface to the latter's *Charles V* written around the time that Cochrane was attending Stewart's lectures.¹⁸

Among fratriots, family, Jacobite and intellectual networks intersected and often complemented each other. Allan MacLean's 'Royal Highland Emigrants' were raised in Canada: as a British unit, they could be a law unto themselves, and MacLean wore the Jacobite white cockade to lead his men into battle, and even flaunted it to General Burgoyne's face.¹⁹ MacLean's nephew Lachlan Macquarie (1761–1824), who fought alongside MacLean (and was also a friend of Boswell), later befriended the aborigines in New South Wales during his tenure as governor there from 1810 to 1821, as well as emancipating convicts, most intriguingly perhaps radical transportees from Scotland: 'Macquarie freely admitted that he viewed the colony as an asylum, a place of sanctuary or refuge in which he offered hope to the downtrodden by trying to raise them from subjection'.²⁰ Brought up in Ireland, Charles Napier's aunt was Lord Edward Fitzgerald's mother; Octavian Hume (who helped to found the Indian National Congress) was the son of Joseph Hume, a Philhellene radical from

they adopted a quietly jacobitical reading of Scottish history in the older patriot historiographical tradition, at odds with that of Hume or Robertson, though Robertson, unlike others such as James Mill, opposed westernization of India: see Fry, *The Scottish Empire*, xxii, 89.

¹⁷ Jane Rendall, 'Scottish Orientalism: From Robertson to James Mill', *Historical Journal* 25:1 (1982), 43–70; Arthur Herman, *The Scottish Enlightenment* (London, 2003 (2001)), 338.

¹⁸ See Dugald Stewart's introduction to William Robertson, *The History of Scotland During the Reigns of Queen Mary and of King James VI*, 18th ed., 2 vols (London, 1809); Donald Thomas, *Cochrane: Britannia's Sea Wolf* (London, 2004; 1978), 76.

¹⁹ Mary Beacock Fryer, *Allan MacLean: Jacobite General* (Toronto, 1987), 150–1.

²⁰ John Ritchie, *Lachlan Macquarie: A Biography* (Melbourne, 1986), 160.

the 1820s Greek Committee, who 'urged Britain to give up her colonies' right up to his death in 1855.²¹ In Canada, William Lyon Mackenzie was the grandson of two Jacobite soldiers, and was a friend of the same Joseph Hume, who wrote him a famous letter in 1834, which looked forward to 'Canadian rights independence and freedom from the baneful domination' of Great Britain. Mackenzie replied hoping that Canada would be 'relieved of her shackles', and in 1837 led a rising to achieve just this: it was compared by his first biographer to the Irish Rising of 1798. Mackenzie cited Wallace, Charles Edward Stuart and Lord Edward Fitzgerald in his rhetoric, and later Kossuth replicated some of Mackenzie's tactics in Hungary.²²

One of the features associated with fratritism was what might be called defensive orientalism, whereby the experiences of the Empire in the east were described by fratrits in terms that adopted the eastern colonies as versions of self. This was apparent as early as the Warren Hastings impeachment and Burke and Sheridan's growth of interest in 'the Indian cause' in the 1780s, and is found also in Hugh Mulligan's 1788 collection of poems on *Slavery and Oppression*. Sometimes the comparison was specific: 'I think I can hardly overrate the malignity of the principles of the Protestant ascendancy, as they affect Ireland; or of Indianism, as they affect . . . Asia' as Burke wrote in 1795. Conor Cruise O'Brien and Luke Gibbons have argued that Edmund Burke's passionate interest in Indian (and, indeed, American) affairs was an indirect means of representing the hidden self, a repressed expression of the Irish cause, while Fintan O'Toole claims that for both Burke and Sheridan, the importance of Warren Hastings' impeachment lay in its status 'as a great moment in the history of international law': parity of esteem for the colonial subject was Ireland's claim advanced by other means.²³ In a retrospect on the Hastings impeachment, Byron recalled in his 'Monody' on Sheridan's death in 1816 how 'the loud cry of trampled Hindostan/Arose to heaven in her appeal from Man',²⁴ and Byron's own *Ostpolitik* paralleled the adoption of Easternness by Irish writers seeking a Phoenician origin for the Gael, itself a profoundly distinctive form of orientalism, an attempt to incorporate the categories of British imperial rep-

²¹ Fry, *The Scottish Empire*, 127–8, 353.

²² Charles Lindsey, *William Lyon Mackenzie* (Toronto, 1912; 1862), 26–7, 36, 212, 263, 290, 399, 445.

²³ Conor Cruise O'Brien, *The Great Melody* (London, 1993; 1992), 322, 356–7, 459; Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2003), 167; Fintan O'Toole, *The Traitor's Kiss: A Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (New York, 1998; 1997), 230.

²⁴ George Gordon, Lord Byron, *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. Jerome J. McGann, 7 vols (Oxford, 1980–93), IV, no. 295, ll. 41–2.

resentation into the Irish formulation of self, and in so doing to repel the sneers of the British entanglement (e.g. Southey's comparison of the Irish 'to African kings notorious for their savagery' or the comparison of Catholicism to *sati*) by embracing them.²⁵

Defensive Irish orientalism drew on the 'shared Gaelic culture' of Ireland and Scotland, just as the Teutonism which was opposed to Irish 'Phoenicianism' in the 1800s echoed the Germanization of Lowland Scotland by Enlightenment historiography in the preceding century.²⁶ The Scottish origin myth which saw the country as descending from Scota, the daughter of Pharaoh, was shared by the Irish, who in the early modern period drew on Scottish patriot historians such as Hector Boece to promote it. Examples of this include Charles Vallencey's (b. 1726) argument for the Irish as of Phoenician origin, the analogy of Ireland and Carthage facing imperial Rome/Britain, and texts such as William Drennan's *Letters of Orellana, an Irish Helot* (1785) or the inclusion of Hindustani music in Edward Bunting's 1796 *General Collection of the Ancient Irish Music*. This kind of interpretation, in decline by the 1830s, survived best in 'patriot circles'. Scots (whose origin myth had been exploded in the early eighteenth century) continued to use this discourse, as the Earl of Buchan did in 1787, or as Scott did in his analogy between the Afghans and Scots in a *Quarterly Review* article of 1816.²⁷ Byron's dedication of *The Corsair* (1814) to Thomas Moore as a patriot clearly alluded to Moore's forthcoming *Lalla Rookh* as an allegory of the Irish situation, while Byron's own *Hebrew Melodies* have been seen as exemplifying a similar trend, as did his paralleling of Scotland and Albania, and the passages in *The Island* where he links Eastern and Scottish patriotism:

Long have I roamed through lands which are not mine,
Adored the Alp, and loved the Apennine,
Revered Parnassus, and beheld the steep

²⁵ Tim Fulford, 'Romanticism and colonialism: races, places, peoples, 1800–30', in Tim Fulford and Peter Kitson (eds), *Romanticism and Colonialism* (Cambridge, 1998), 35–47 (38).

²⁶ Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination* (Cork, 1996), 91ff; Murray Pittock, 'Historiography' in Alexander Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 2003), 258–79.

²⁷ Mary Helen Thuente, *The Harp Re-strung: The United Irishmen and the Rise of Irish Literary Nationalism* (New York, 1994), 8, 35, 45; Clare O'Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations: Antiquarian Debate and Cultural Politics in Ireland, c1750–1800* (Cork, 2004), 13, 15, 16, 25, 41, 43, 55, 58, 183; *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 28 vols, (Edinburgh, 1835/6), XX, 1–93 (10).

Jove's Ida and Olympus crown the deep;
 But 'twas not all long ages' love, nor all
Their nature held me in their thrilling thrall;
 The infant rapture still survived the boy,
 And Loch-na-gar with Ida look'd o'er Troy,
 Mix'd Celtic memories with the Phrygian mount
 And Highland linns with Castalie's clear fount.²⁸

As Stephen Cheeke observes, 'Scotland won't go away, especially when Byron is furthest from its shores',²⁹ while Andrew Nicholson suggests that in Byron's writing 'Scotland and Greece do not merge, nor do they become interchangeable; they are distinct, and yet the same; we see Scotland *in* Greece, Greece *in* Scotland'.³⁰ In similar vein, Caroline Franklin argues that 'Byron's Philhellenist and proto-Zionist poetry of 1814–15 fantasized the idea of the nation by focussing on dispossessed peoples . . . a new notion of nationalism, arising out of a *reaction* to imperialism'.³¹ Byron himself compared Greece to Scotland as early as 1809, when he likened both Greeks and Albanians to 'Scott's description of Branksome Castle in his lay' (*The Lay of the Last Minstrel*). This was the culmination of several years of interest in the country in which he had been bred. In 1807 alone, Byron was reading Macpherson (whom he imitated in his juvenilia), Burns, Ramsay, Scott and John Home, as well as George Buchanan and Hector Boece, a voice of the patriot historiographical tradition who had also been important to Boswell in his own understanding of the performance of self abroad. In 1808, Byron had the idea of collecting material for a book of translations from Gaelic.³²

²⁸ Jeffery W. Vail, *The Literary Relationship of Lord Byron and Thomas Moore* (Baltimore and London, 2001), 11, 60, 64, 85; see also Byron, *Poetical Works*, III, Nos 249–72, VII, 392; *The Island II*: XII. For Scotland and Albania, see *Lord Byron: Selected Poems*, ed. Susan J. Wolfson and Peter Manning (Harmondsworth, 1996), 131; for a postcolonial reading of *Hebrew Melodies*, see Caroline Franklin, "'Some samples of the finest Orientalism': Byronic Philhellenism and proto-Zionism at the time of the Congress of Vienna", in Fulford and Kitson, *Romanticism and Colonialism*, 221–42 (240–1).

²⁹ Stephen Cheeke, *Byron and Place* (Basingstoke, 2003), 36.

³⁰ Andrew Nicholson, 'Byron and the "Ariosto of the North"', in Gerry Carruthers and Alan Rawes (eds), *English Romanticism and the Celtic World* (Cambridge, 2003), 130–50 (133).

³¹ Franklin in Fulford and Kitson, *Romanticism and Colonialism*, 240–1.

³² Lord Byron, *The Complete Miscellaneous Prose*, ed. Andrew Nicholson (Oxford, 1991), 1, 3; John Galt, *The Life of Lord Byron* (London, 1830), 11; Marchand *Byron: A Biography* (London, 1957) 3 Vols, I, 42; Bernard Beatty, 'The force of "Celtic memories" in Byron's thought', in Carruthers and Rawes, *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*,

Like Boswell before him, Byron loved to dress up, both in local dress and in the kilt as the dress of liberty, in which cause he wore the Gordon tartan 'on his first expedition to Greece'. Where Boswell had appeared in public as a Corsican bandit chieftain, Byron dressed as an Albanian one, and dressed as a Greek hero for the Greek war,³³ visible signs of the eastern-ness of his sympathies, his domestication of the alien, the realization through othering himself in their garb of his sympathy with nations and nationalism not his own. In particular, the dress of the 'chieftain' adopted by both Boswell and Byron was arguably a reprise of the iconography of the Jacobite era, celebrated by Byron in his elegiac aside on the Gordons in 'Loch na Garr'. The dress of the chieftain was not now a sign of that direct resistance, but of the defensively oriental strategy of fratritism. In Canto II of *Childe Harold* (1813), the comparison between the Albanians (particularly the mountain Suliotes) and the Scots is made explicit, their speech even being compared to Aberdeenshire Scots: the fact that Alba was a name for Scotland 'can hardly have escaped Byron's knowledge', as Andrew Nicholson remarks. The warsong of the Albanian highlanders ends 'Ye mountains, that see us descend to the shore, / Shall view us as victors, or view us no more!': its applicability to the Scottish cause was neatly recognized by Scott, whose song of Rory Dall, edited by Flora to seduce Edward Waverley (1814), concludes 'Burst the base foreign yoke as your sires did of yore, / Or die like your sires, and endure it no more'.

In 1825, the Scottish commander Thomas Lord Cochrane, who had helped the Irish expatriate Bernardo O'Higgins liberate Chile against the wishes of the British Government, and had subsequently served in the interests of Peru and Brazil, took up the post of Admiral of Greece at the invitation of the Greek Committee, which included such supporters as George Finlay, Thomas Gordon (in 1827 brigadier and director-general of the Greek army) and Joseph Hume. Finlay had met Byron in Cephalonia in 1823, and had been with him at Missolonghi. Byron had been recommended to go to Cephalonia by James Hamilton Browne, a Scot 'dismissed from service in the Ionian islands because of his Hellenic sympathies', and Cephalonia had recently become a refuge for the Albanian Suliotes, whose 'eastern Scottishness' was already paradigmatic to Byron. Once there, the poet became friends with Henry Muir and James Kennedy, and read Scott: the Resident, with whom Byron also became friends, was at that time none

103–16 (103).

³³ John Nichol, *Byron* (London, 1880), 18; Leslie A. Marchand, *Byron: A Biography*, I: 291, III: 1078–9.

other than Charles James Napier, whose *Colonization* (1835) was to attack British imperial practice very roundly. Byron's use of eastern experience to reflect western is of a piece not only in practical terms with the significantly Scottish network of the Greek Committee and Brigadier Gordon, but also in imaginative ones with the defensive orientalism already established in Ireland, which he probably knew of through his friendship with Moore. Byron himself was adopted as an 'upholder of liberty' in Bulgaria, Georgia, Norway and Poland among others.³⁴

As Moore put it in the Preface for *Lalla Rookh* in his *Works*, 'the spirit that had spoken in the melodies of Ireland soon found itself at home in the East', and it was in the east in particular that origin myths and the plight of the colonized coalesced most readily for Irish writers: Nigel Leask and others have pointed this out in Moore's case.³⁵ In *Lalla Rookh* itself, the orient is combined with the images of Gothic as the native repressed argued for by Luke Gibbons and others: the Gheber (Catholic) religion of ancient Iran (=Erin)³⁶ is signified first by the 'ruins of a strange and awful-looking tower, which seemed old enough to have been the temple of some religion no longer known, and which spoke the voice of desolation in the midst of all that bloom and loveliness' (*LR*, 143). The landscape is ruined by 'Bigoted conquerors' who have bound the 'ancient faith in chains' (*LR*, 144, 168). Moore repeatedly uses the term 'bigot' to describe the Arab conquerors in the poem, and indeed invites a double interpretation of it as referring to Ireland in a footnote. The words 'saint', 'sainted' and 'altars', are used repeatedly of the Iranians whose 'only spell-word' (surely an ironically dismissive reference to supposed Catholic superstition) is 'Liberty!' (*LR*, 170, 173, 205). The Ghebers' last stand against the Arabs is on 'that Fiery Mount . . . where Freedom stood/In her last hold of flame and blood', a locale which is more than a little reminiscent of Vinegar Hill in 1798 in the way it is presented and described, just as the torrent among crags in which Hafed and his patriots fight the Arab invader is set in a landscape which is almost exactly that of the Jacobite landscape in Chapter 22 of *Waverley*, published three years earlier (*LR*, 185, 227). Moore also seems to echo his own 'Minstrel Boy' and 'Dear Harp of my Country' in the references to chains in the poem

³⁴ Leslie Marchand, *Byron*, III: 1093, 1102–6, 1145; Richard Cardwell (ed.), *The Reception of Byron in Europe*, 2 vols, (London and New York: Continuum, 2004), I: 8.

³⁵ Thomas Moore, *Lalla Rookh* (London, n.d.), x; cited in the text as *LR*; Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East* (Cambridge, 1992), 113.

³⁶ Mary Helen Thuente, *The Harp Re-strung: The United Irishmen and the Rise of Irish Literary Nationalism*, 188.

(*LR*, 168, 217).³⁷ The doomed romance of Hinda and Hafed parallels that of Moore's friend Sydney Owenson/MacOwen's *The Missionary*, published six years before, both suggestive of the possibility of hybrid identities between colonizer and colonized.

Much of the primary research on even the key points of Fratriotism remains to be carried out. But to take our last case in detail, that of James Boswell, the primary evidence significantly expands our understanding of the altermentality, the otherness of self preserved and propelled by the fratriot mindset. Like other figures in this group, Boswell preferred the patriot historiography of Barbour or Boece to the Enlightenment figures of his own day. His Continental network was, in addition, very different from his London one. Boswell corresponded *poste restante* with Andrew Lumisden, the private secretary to James and later Prince Charles at Rome via the Scots College in Paris, as Jacobite agents did. Lumisden, who acted as a financial agent for Alexander Runciman, brought in Scottish paintings through Leghorn, where the British consul, Sir John Dick, supported Boswell's efforts to liberate Corsica even against the express policy of the British government. Sir Alexander Dick, Boswell's close friend in Edinburgh had (after declining the Secretaryship to Prince Charles in 1745) recommended his cousin Lumisden to the post. Lumisden had a longstanding interest in not only Scottish patriot historiography (including Anderson, Abercromby, Barbour and Tytler) but also Corsican independence, to judge from his library.³⁸

Boswell's 1768 *Journal of a Tour* famously opens with a quotation from the Declaration of Arbroath, which was the same passage as had been picked out in bold type by the Marian Walter Goodall in his 1759 edition of *Scotchchronicon*.³⁹ The stress on 'libertatem' was one which belonged not to the Latin of the title-page alone, but continually echoed through the rest of Boswell's writing on Corsica. William Siebenschuh, a leading commentator on Boswell's *Account of Corsica*, not knowing this tradition, rather paradoxically identifies it as a 'party history' of pre-Enlightenment days, yet one devoted to Enlightenment concepts of liberty. In fact, both Boswell's historiography and his notion of liberty were traditional ones,⁴⁰ for Boswell relentlessly highlighted the features of Corsica which implicitly reflected on Scotland (and in *A North Briton*

³⁷ *The Poetical Works of Thomas Moore* (London and New York, 1891), 225, 235.

³⁸ National Library of Scotland MSS 14262 ff. 7, 38; 14265.

³⁹ Moray McLaren, *Corsica Boswell: Paoli, Johnson and Freedom* (London, 1966), 19–20, 27, 28.

⁴⁰ William R. Siebenschuh, *Form and Purpose in Boswell's Biographical Works* (Berkeley, 1972), 11.

Extraordinary, a piece of Boswellian apocrypha, the comparison is made very explicit). Some people got the point: the Corsican Academy described Boswell as an emissary 'of the most prosperous kingdom of the Scots' (which in fact did not exist),⁴¹ while in England, Anna Laetitia Barbauld's poem 'Corsica' compared Pasquale Paoli, the Corsican leader, to Wallace.⁴² The Scottish poet William Julius Mickle (1734–88) planned to pay tribute to the Corsican struggle and Boswell's role in it in his unfinished 'Prospects of Liberty and of Slavery', which eventually was subsumed by another fratriot project, *The Lusiad* (1776).⁴³ In Ireland, links were made in the press between Ireland and Corsica: 'the Irish by virtue of their own history should especially sympathize with nations struggling for freedom' noted *Exshaw's Magazine*; the same note appeared in the *Belfast News-Letter and General Advertiser*. A Corsican appeal in *Freeman's Journal* for 17–20 June 1768 was authored by a 'Free Hibernian': quite possibly a persona of Boswell's own.⁴⁴

As the Corsican cause faded in the 1770s and 1780s, Boswell found others which satisfied this apparently unfocused, apparently disinterested, call for freedom. In 1768, Giuseppe Marc' Antonio Baretti had written to Boswell to say that

If they [the Corsicans] prove successful (as is most probable) they will be no rebels, and this will likewise be the case, when your Americans set up for themselves; not to say that it had been likewise the case, if your Scotch had succeeded in their last rebellions.⁴⁵

This went to the heart of Boswell's own set of political equations, as Baretti may have known.

Shortly after the Scottish commander John Paul Jones (1747–92) sailed up the Firth of Forth in a French squadron under the American flag in 1779,

⁴¹ *The General Correspondence of James Boswell 1766–69 Volume 1 1766–1768*, ed. Richard C. Cole with Peter S. Baker and Rachel McClellan, assisted by James J. Caudle (Edinburgh and New Haven, 1997), 270.

⁴² David Fairer and Christine Gerrard (eds), *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 2003).

⁴³ Mickle was also a man of Marian sympathies in the veiled Jacobite controversy between Mary Queen of Scots' supporters and her detractors, as his 'Mary Queen of Scots. an Elegiac Ode' indicates; National Library of Scotland MS 15934 ff.86, 97.

⁴⁴ *The General Correspondence of James Boswell 1766–69 Volume 2 1768–1769*, ed. Richard C. Cole with Peter S. Baker and Rachel McClellan, assisted by James J. Caudle (Edinburgh and New Haven, 1997), 179n.

⁴⁵ *The General Correspondence of James Boswell 1766–69, Volume 2*, 34.

Boswell, as usual rather evasively, confided to James Murray of Broughton that 'were it not for what we must feel as Britons, we might now be companions in triumph' in having prophesied American victory. On 30 November 1781 (St Andrew's Day), Boswell heard with 'joy' of Cornwallis' surrender at Yorktown (Boswell to Paoli 8 January 1782).⁴⁶ Boswell's pro-Volunteer and ant-Unionist sentiments concerning 1780s Ireland are also worthy of note, as is his comparison of Scotland to Corsica (and, unfavourably, to Grattan's Ireland) in his patriot *Letter to the People of Scotland* (1785), which stands in the tradition of Swift's Drapier and Scott's Malagrowther, as a document of defensive patriotism which seizes on a relatively small issue as a synecdoche for the survival of national peculiarity itself.⁴⁷ Publication of the *Letter* ruined what was left of Boswell's career: it permanently damaged him. Most extraordinary perhaps is the double correspondence Boswell carried on with Dundas and Paoli in 1794, requesting from the first the office of British minister in Corsica, while encouraging the second thus: 'shall the blood of so many heroes who have sacrificed their lives for the freedom of Corsica serve to tinge only the purple of a foreign Prince',⁴⁸ a remarkable sentiment to express about George III in the era of the French revolutionary wars, a year after Nelson had lost an eye at the siege of Calvi in Corsica while helping to make it British. Boswell goes on to implore Paoli 'never to yield . . . upon any pretence, or any specious offer'. Great Britain is tyrannical, duplicitous and specious: these are the terms used by Boswell in defence of Corsican independence.

Boswell's Corsica was a fratriot obsession. Fratriotism is a significant phenomenon in defining empire and its limits in the Scottish and Irish imagination: its global reach should be evident even from the framework discussion provided by this essay. Born from Scottish and Irish traditions of professional soldiering, from Jacobite expatriate and other diasporic networks, and from the distinctive intellectual and imaginative approaches of some among the servants of empire, fratriotism carries an intellectual implication worthy of our consideration: that people from small countries incorporated into large ones may understand others in the same position, even if they themselves are part of that position. Fratriotism as a concept is likely not to be restricted to Scotland

⁴⁶ Boswell: *Laird of Auchinleck 1778–1782*, ed. Joseph W. Reed and Frederick A. Pottle, (New York, 1977).136n1; Private Papers of James Boswell at Yale L980, 1001, 1004, 1011.

⁴⁷ James Boswell, *A Letter to the People of Scotland on the State of the Nation*, (London, 1785), 72, 91.

⁴⁸ The Private Papers of James Boswell, Yale C2181, L1025, 1026, 1027.

and Ireland but to be present where similar structures are found elsewhere, and indeed there is some evidence of this in New Spain. The British Empire was an international polity whose development was accelerated by the rapid centralization of the British state, some of whose constituent parts had independently sophisticated sets of cultural ideas, beliefs and practices which could not be incorporated overnight, which preserved and even developed distinctive public spheres, and which indeed contributed to political resistance. This empire is thus likely to be a prime candidate for discussion in a fratriot context, but is not the only candidate for such discussion. Nor, as I trust has been clear from the preceding pages, are Boswell, Byron and Moore the only writers who merit examination in fratriot terms.

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Radical Satire, Politics and Genre: The Case of Thomas Moore

Jane Moore

The aim of this essay is to examine *The Fudge Family in Paris* (1818), the political verse satire by the Irish wit and poet Thomas Moore (1779–1852), not just for its obvious historical importance and the vividness which it imparts to the political panorama of a lost era, but also for its formal and generic significance. Understandably, given the decades of relative inattention to the poet's satire, recent Moore criticism, and my own included, has focused on restoring the political resonances of that verse, especially in relation to the plight of nineteenth-century Erin under British rule. Ireland, indeed, is the theme and impetus of much of the satire Moore wrote throughout his long career. He returned repeatedly to the troubles of his country, both before and after the granting of Catholic emancipation in 1829. Ireland had a defining impact on Moore's satire, whether as the point of explicit focus or, as in the satire under examination in this essay, as an important informing context and circumambient presence. However, though Moore engaged closely with radical ideas of emancipation, liberation, and freedom in his satire, he also endorsed a notion of formal satirical excellence in the Horatian tradition, the genre that he reinvented and in which he made his name as a satirist. Whilst Moore scholars have addressed the political-historical interest of his satire over the last decade, they have paid rather less attention to the formal and stylistic aspects of that rich body of work.¹ My essay seeks, through an analysis of Moore's mature epistolary Horatian satire, *The Fudge Family in Paris*, to discuss issues of form and genre and Moore's position in a long-standing satirical tradition of Pope and Anstey. As well as an outspoken Whig critic of British politics, Thomas Moore was a self-conscious participant in an established Horatian tradition, a tradition which he simultaneously utilized

¹ Landmark studies of Moore's satirical verse include Gary Dyer, *British Satire and the Politics of Style, 1789–1832* (Cambridge, 1997), Jefferey W. Vail, *The Literary Relationship of Lord Byron & Thomas Moore* (Baltimore and London, 2001), my own edition of *The Satires of Thomas Moore*, Vol. 5, *British Satire: 1785–1840*, 5 vols, gen. ed. John Strachan (London, 2003). An earlier work worth citing here is Irene B. Lurkis's unpublished PhD thesis, *Moore and Moderation: A Study of Thomas Moore's Political and Social Satires*, University of Southern California, 1979.

and renewed to serve his ideological purposes, fusing combative liberal politics with sprightly comic satire.

Publication of *The Fudge Family in Paris* on 20 April 1818 quickly confirmed Thomas Moore's reputation as the best-known liberal Whig satirist, Byron apart, of his day. Moore wrote the work under his pseudonym 'Thomas Brown, the Younger', which he had used earlier for the publication of his first extended Horatian satire, *Intercepted Letters; or, The Twopenny Post-bag* (1813), a hugely successful radical comic assault in a series of eight letters on the anti-Catholic Tory government and the apostate Regent, who, in 1812, had unexpectedly abandoned his commitment to Whig politics, betraying with it the great oppositional cause of Catholic emancipation. As with *Intercepted Letters*, *The Fudge Family in Paris* quickly became known as Moore's work and easily rivaled the popularity of its predecessor, reaching a ninth edition within the year.

The twelve verse epistles that comprise *The Fudge Family in Paris* recount the adventures in post-Waterloo Paris of an Irish but British-identified Protestant family keen to take advantage of the travel opportunities provided by the peace. The oleaginous father, Phil Fudge, a former rebel whose political opportunism now leads him to side with the British Tory government, heads the family party. He is in Paris at the behest of his mentor, the Irish hate figure Lord Castlereagh, to write a book in defence of the Holy Alliance. Joining Phil are his flighty teenage daughter Biddy, her elder brother Bob, a gourmand with pretensions to dandyism, and their third cousin, Phelim Connor, employed as Bob's private tutor. Connor's earnest Catholicism and tub-thumping Irish patriotism form a marked contrast with the decadence of his cousins, making him an unlikely mentor for the self-indulgent Bob and throwing into comic sharp relief the vacuity of his cousin's values. Moore also introduces an editor figure, and whose preface and mock-scholarly footnotes to the epistles add substantially to the satiric humour.

Biddy is the most fully developed of the characters; her letter opens the series, and, through providing information about the other family members, she comments indirectly on the political situation. A quixotic eighteen-year-old, who dreams of romance and adventure, Biddy's innocence is exploited by Moore to satirize her father's politics, her naivety proving an excellent foil for his cynicism. Her first letter, written to her friend Dolly back home in Ireland, reports on her father thus:

As to Pa, what d'ye think?—mind, it's all *entre nous*,
But you know, love, I never keep secrets from you—

Why, he's writing a book—what! a tale? a romance?
 No, ye Gods, would it were!—but his Travels in France;
 At the special desire (he let out t'other day)
 Of his great friend and patron, my Lord C—STL—RE—GH,
 Who said, 'My dear FUDGE'—I forget th' exact words,
 And, it's strange, no one ever remembers my Lord's;
 But 'twas something to say that, as all must allow
 A good orthodox work is much wanting just now,
 To expound to the world the new—thingummie—science,
 Found out by the—what's-its-name—Holy Alliance,
 And to prove to mankind that their rights are but folly,
 Their freedom a joke (which it *is*, you know, DOLLY),
 There's none', said his Lordship, 'if I may be judge,
 Half so fit for this great undertaking as FUDGE!'

(Letter I, 67–82)²

In contrast to the ill-tempered assaults of his early Juvenalian satires, where Moore rails at his targets, evoking moral outrage in his American 'Epistles', for instance, over the well-founded rumour that Jefferson kept a slave as his mistress, or ranting at Castlereagh's iniquities in *Corruption and Intolerance* (1808), Moore's mature Horatian works see him developing the use of fictional character as means of attacking his targets by a more indirect mode than hitherto.³ Biddy's letters in *The Fudge Family in Paris* enable Moore to ridicule Castlereagh's brand of anti-Irish Toryism through the irony of the praise awarded him by a young woman who is essentially ignorant of politics, her girlish innocence contrasting with the grotesque injustices taking place at the hands of her father's hero and the despised Holy Alliance. The Popean device of zeugma is used extensively here: in her naivety, Biddy links 'rights' and

² This and all subsequent references to *The Fudge Family in Paris* are from my edition *The Satires of Thomas Moore*.

³ Moore's volume of poems on America, entitled *Epistles, Odes and Other Poems* (1806) includes the vitriolic satires, 'Epistle VI' and 'Epistle VII', which assault what he saw as Jefferson's hypocritical brand of democratic politics. 'Epistle VI' seizes on the rumour that he kept a black slave, Sally Hemings, as his mistress. The epistles are reprinted in *The Satires of Thomas Moore*, 6–17. *Corruption and Intolerance* (1808) takes the form of a savage reply in heroic couplets by an Irishman to an English *adversarius* who has been boasting of 'Britain's glorious rights'. The second satire, 'Intolerance', attacks British misrule in Ireland, damning Hawkesbury (later Lord Liverpool), Castlereagh and Camden for their part in Ireland's religious persecution. See *The Satires of Thomas Moore*, 22–45.

'folly', 'freedom' and 'joke', and greatness with 'Fudge' (her father). Similarly, Phil's moral bankruptcy turns his own praise for Castlereagh into its opposite, condemnation.

The jaunty anapaestic tetrameter lines used for Biddy's epistles create the appearance of a lighter feminine mode of speech, emphasizing her girl-ish playfulness. Her brother Bob's epistles are also in anapaestic tetrameter, and here the lightness of metre effectively ironizes his status as a representative of that class of young men destined by breeding, or, as in Bob's case, by paternal influence, to become pillars of the British establishment. Phil's first sycophantic missive to Castlereagh sneaks in a parenthetical reference to Bob: '(My son, my Lord, a youth of parts,/ Who longs to be a small place-holder)' (Letter II, 104–5). The gourmandizing, wine slugging, dandified Bob shares Biddy's blindness to the bleak reality endured by the French masses. As the representative of his class of hedonistic young gentlemen, and as a youthful caricature of that most royal dandy the Prince Regent, Bob is emblematically indifferent to the injustice of France's despoliation by the Holy Alliance. The obsequious Phil affects to worship his Tory lords and masters, his daughter Biddy bows before French fashion, her patriotic cousin Phelim vows allegiance to his country, whilst Bob genuflects at the high altar of French cuisine. Letter VIII in which Bob scornfully describes the foreignness of the Parisian boulevard

Green-grocers, green gardens—one hardly knows whether
'Tis country or town, they're so mess'd up together!
(Letter VIII, 24–5)

culminates in a mock-epic appeal to the 'Holy Allies' to save the one aspect of French culture Bob does appreciate, her cuisine:

Forbid it, forbid it, ye Holy Allies!
Take whatever ye fancy—take statues, take money—
But leave them, oh leave them, their Perigueux pies,
Their glorious goose-livers, and high pickled tunny!
Though many, I own are the evils they've brought us,
Though Royalty's here on her very last legs,
Yet, who can help loving the land that has taught us
Six hundred and eighty-five ways to dress eggs?
(Letter VIII, 58–65)

The satire works of course through the elevation of Bob's favourite French dishes above the country's statuary and her currency, the two latter presumably being of debased value in the wake of wartime defeat. Moore undoubtedly is drawing on the influence of Pope in his use of antithesis, juxtaposition, and anti-climax. But he also borrows the Popean mock-epic model in the introduction of an editorial figure who annotates Bob's epistles, and those of the rest of the party, with comic solemnity. Thus Bob's mock-epic salute to a land that has 'taught us six hundred and eighty-five ways to dress eggs' prompts the over-scrupulous editor to vouchsafe the accuracy of Bob's information: 'The exact number mentioned by M. de la Reynière—"On connoît en France 685 manières différentes d'accommoder les oeufs; sans compter celles que nos savans imaginent chaque jour".'

The editor exists in *The Fudge Family in Paris* as a separate character who, though not as fully developed as Bob or Biddy, has his own identity—appropriately, that of the self-important, moralizing pedant. He writes a preface to the satire, signed 'Thomas Brown, the Younger', which distinguishes him from the various purported writers of the letters collected in his book, and from their actual author, Thomas Moore, in which he regrets having to omit some part of Bob Fudge's third letter on account of titillating references to contemporary French dancer: 'Marinette's thin drapery, which, it was thought might give offence to certain well-meaning persons'. Yet at the same time as the editor censors the racier parts of Bob's account, he admiringly annotates Bob's and Biddy's whirl of social activity (diligently footnoting the names of dressmakers, dining halls, theatres, pleasure gardens, and so on) which inadvertently calls into question both his own judgement and that of the characters epitomizing the values he professes to share. As Irene B. Lurkis observes:

The editor's solemn footnotes serve to the highlight the foolishness of Bob's excessive enthusiasm for French dining customs and his accompanying disdain for those of the English. Thus, when Bob extols the virtues of 'dejeuner à la fourchette':

There, DICK, what a breakfast!—oh, not like your ghost
Of a breakfast in England, your curst tea and toast;

the editor points out assiduously:

Is Mr. Bob aware that his contempt for *tea* renders him liable to a

charge of *atheism*? Such, at least, is the opinion cited in *Christian, Falster, Amoenitat. Philog.*—⁴

The original footnote is at twice as long as the snippet quoted here, and is replete with Greek and Latin tags together with a mock ode to tea, translated from the Greek. Whilst the editor busily annotates Bob's frivolous predilections, he lets slip by him a number of the young buck's more off-colour remarks, including a comparison of his fashionable neck-cloth with the noose that circles a condemned man's neck, a statement verging on the licentious.

I rise—put on neck-cloth—stiff, tight, as can be—
 For a lad who *goes into the world*, DICK, like me,
 Should have his neck tied up, you know—there's no doubt of it—
 Almost as tight as *some* lads who *go out of it*.
 With whiskers well oil'd, and with boots that 'hold up
 The mirror to nature'—so bright you could sup
 Off the leather like china . . .

(Letter III, 31–7)

Bob is quoting from the advertising copy used in Robert Warren's famous contemporary campaign for his boot polish, which was illustrated with a cat jumping in fright at her reflection on a boot polished to a fine lustre. The jumbling of colloquial detail (neck-tie fashions and advertising campaigns for boot polish) with the reference to capital punishment, signals Bob's misplaced values and, by extension, those of the editor. It also hints at a nastiness lurking beneath Bob's apparently harmless hedonism, an attribute that is developed in *The Fudges in England* (1835), Moore's late sequel to *The Fudge Family in Paris*, which sees him having grown into a gouty, boorish and bad-tempered clergyman.

Moore's use of character and the verse epistle to construct a series of first-person satiric narratives has a formal antecedent in Christopher Anstey's witty eighteenth-century verse satire, *The New Bath Guide* (1766). Anstey's work is a good-natured satire on the follies of high society related in a series of fifteen verse-letters, eleven written almost entirely in anapaestic tetrameter, by a family of country innocents from the North of England during a visit to the fashionable spa town of Bath. So popular was Anstey's work that anapaestic

⁴ Lurkis, *Moore and Moderation*, 147.

tetrameter couplets became known in the late eighteenth century as 'Anstey measure' or 'Bath Guide Verse'; similarly the success of *The Fudge Family in Paris* established that metre as Moore's trademark during the first half of the nineteenth century. As with Anstey, Moore uses the measure to create a lively conversational tone within the discursive framework of the verse epistle. Both satirists exploit the expansive nature of the anapaestic line in their development of entertaining characters, immediately recognizable as social types. And both rely too upon the use of external detail to create the effect of verisimilitude of character. The reader engages with Bob and Biddy Fudge, for instance, primarily through the detailed, almost theatrical, descriptions of their social activities, rather than through psychological narrative. Bob and Biddy whirl through Paris as through a fairground hall of mirrors, exaggerating and distorting, but also reflecting a truth about human character. In the context of satire that truth is invariably a social and political one, so that politics and social history, rather than forming the backdrop to the action, actively impinge upon and shape the lives of the characters. To borrow Maud Ellmann's description of character in the Anglo-Irish novels of Elizabeth Bowen, it is as if material objects and events take the place of psychology.⁵ Character in *The Fudge Family in Paris* is shaped by descriptions of dresses and dances, gardens and romance, in Biddy's case, and pâté, and stays, wine and cutlets, boulevards and theatres in Bob's.

Moore's achievement in *The Fudge in Family in Paris* and his advancement on Anstey's *New Bath Guide* is to develop character as a means of giving his satire a radical point and a political focus. Whereas Anstey satirizes a social type, without singling out for scorn or ridicule a named or known individual, or providing serious moral condemnation, Moore deploys character to supply a radical analysis of the peace following the Napoleonic wars. The name of his chief political target, C—STL—RE—GH, is individualized by means of the long dash, or series of dashes, leaving the reader in little doubt over his identity. The much despised Castlereagh is one thing, innocent or foolish characters such as Bob and Biddy, however, are quite another, and I would argue that it is in the use of such minor anonymous characters to convey radical political meanings that Moore finds his forte as a radical Horatian satirist. Through experimenting with fictional personas and ironic voice, Moore blends combative liberal politics into light Horatian Satire. A character like Biddy, for example, is used to entertain and engage

⁵ Maud Ellmann, *Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow Across the Page* (Edinburgh, 2003), 42.

the reader (she has an independent existence as one of the satire's cast of *dramatis personae*) but she is also a conduit for the radical analysis of the political situation in post-Waterloo Paris. Indeed, I would argue that Moore's strength as a radical satirist lies in his almost novelistic use of portraiture and character to create political meaning.

The Fudge Family in Paris sees Moore borrowing the techniques of prose fiction imaginatively to reconstruct as poetic satire a set of messages and morals that are provocatively deferred, inferred, or ironized. It is a work with a strong novelistic vision. Ronan Kelly, in an important recent essay, has argued that Moore moved towards the novel form in the mid 1820s with the publication of his agrarian prose satire *Memoirs of Captain of Rock, The Celebrated Irish Chieftain* (1824).

Moore regularly turned to prose express complex arguments. Indeed, from 1823, the mid-point of his writing life, he largely abandoned his career as a poet, and from this date became a prose writer of considerable repute.⁶

Moore did indeed move to the novel in the post-Napoleonic age, but this trend, I would argue, is already apparent in his decision to write satire in a novelistic tradition (evident in the vivid panorama of *The Fudge Family in Paris*). Moore was already displaying a novelistic vision in co-opting the tropes and techniques of prose fiction for verse Satire as early as 1819 in *The Fudge Family in Paris*. Furthermore, Moore did not reject verse in favour of prose for the expression of complex arguments post 1823. Indeed, he continued to contribute occasional verse satire (in the precise sense of that term) to *The Times* and the *Morning Chronicle* for another two decades and he returned to epistolary verse satire in his final extended narrative poem, *The Fudges in England* (1835), his sequel to *The Fudge Family in Paris*.

Moore himself is on record as saying that Ireland was a subject uniquely suited to the novel form, and it is worth quoting at length from his essay on 'Irish Novels', published in *The Edinburgh Review* in February 1826, for its retrospective illumination of the novelistic tropes and techniques deployed in *The Fudge Family in Paris*. The essay, which opens with an acknowledgement of Scott's influence on the 'impulse towards Novel-writing which is, at present, all over Europe', proposes the thesis that Ireland, of all countries, is uniquely

⁶ Ronan Kelly, 'Another Side of Thomas Moore', *History Ireland* (Autumn 2003), 39–43; 42.

suited to the novel.⁷ Indeed, Moore had demonstrated this point in a mutated form in *The Fudge Family in Paris*. He argues, wryly, that the novel, the inferior sister of epic poetry, is in its debased literary standing better fitted to Ireland's 'wretched history', as he puts it:

The same causes, however, that have embittered and degraded the history of Ireland, so as to render it incapable of furnishing any safe or worthy theme for the poet, have brought the character of its people, both moral and social, to a state which is eminently favourable to the more humble inspirations of the novelist. Though the nobler quarry of the Muse is wanting, there is plenty of small game for the satirist and observer of character. The anomalies necessarily engendered throughout the whole frame of society by the inverted and unnatural position of all the institutions of that country; the influence which such a state of things must have upon all ranks—those of the higher, in whose hands the execution of unequal laws is placed, being forced, by the very nature of the instrument which they wield, to be bad judges, bad magistrates, and bad citizens, in spite of themselves; while those of the lower class, placed by the same causes in habitual opposition to the law, seem, by riot and plunder, but to fulfil their allotted destiny, and to perform *the base*, as it were, in that great concert of discord which reigns throughout;—the vulgar arrogance of the small gentry, so long encouraged by the despotism thus *put in commission* among them;—the low, circumventing cunning, which is the only peaceable weapon left to their victims, and, which is so observable among the Greeks and other trampled-down nations, substituting the serpentine line of the slave for the straight-forward course of the freeman;—those habits of thoughtless and tasteless extravagance, which a long monopoly of the public purse engenders in the master, and that recklessness of comfort, and even of life, to which a long despair of justice reduces the slave!—all these are features, but too prominent in the condition of Ireland, to which a novelist might, in his portraitures of them, give unbounded variety of play.⁸

This exhaustive list, with no sentence break, of all that's corrupt in Ireland and corrupting of its people, brings to mind the powerful, metaphorically

⁷ Thomas Moore, 'Irish Novels', *The Edinburgh Review*, Vol. 43 (February 1826), 356–72; 356.

⁸ Moore, 'Irish Novels', 358–9.

extravagant denunciation of the Chancery with which Dickens opened *Bleak House* twenty-six years later. Unlike Dickens, Moore did not turn to the novel proper to inscribe the wrongs of his country but he does pre-empt some Dickensian techniques in his satiric representation of character. Dickens's comedy is often dependent upon grotesquerie and so too is the social criticism of his fiction. There is a similar use of grotesquerie in *The Fudge Family in Paris* in the figure of the odious Phil Fudge in his role of Lord Castlereagh's fictional surrogate. Biddy, meanwhile, is the embodiment of charming, sentimentalized femininity, the flip side of the Dickensian grotesque. Notwithstanding the putative parallels between the treatment of character by Moore and Dickens, I am not of course suggesting that the former writer directly influenced the latter. But I do wish to suggest that the two writers inhabited the same cultural orbit of late Georgian satire, that Dickens, if you will, is as much a late Georgian in terms of his literary humour as he is a Victorian social realist in his depiction of the horrors of contemporary London.

Both the earlier and the later Fudge satires adopt and adapt the tropes and techniques of prose fiction (the creation of a clearly delineated cast of characters who interact realistically within in a unified plot to produce the semblance of verisimilitude). Rather like the master of historical fiction, Scott, Moore uses little people to unfold a grand historical narrative. His narratives of political corruption in Ireland and Europe are told through the satirical portraiture of inconsequential figures: Biddy and Bob are representatives typical of their class; Phelim is an impoverished tutor, and Phil, though having pretensions to statesmanship, is a risibly pale imitation of his patron, Castlereagh. The historical novel, as described by Georg Lukács, developed in the hands of Scott through the narration of 'small encounters'; it can be said similarly of Moore's *Fudge Family in Paris* that the keen political-historical thrust of the narrative occurs in the 'small skirmishes' between the so-called little people.⁹

Phil Fudge is one such character. Indeed, he is a kind of hybrid character, existing as the inconsequential father to the fictional Fudge family, and serving as a fictional version of two actual historical figures, his hero, the former Chief Secretary of Ireland Lord Castlereagh on the one hand, and, on the other, the notorious informer Thomas Reynolds, who spied on the United Irishmen organization in 1798 and who testified in the ensuing treason trials, for which he was rewarded handsomely by the British government. The letters of Phil Fudge develop Moore's use of character to generate radical political sat-

⁹ Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. Hannah and Stanley Mitchell (London, 1962), 43.

ire, which works by establishing Phil as Castlereagh's fictional surrogate (Phil's letters ape his mentor's well-known tendency to garble his words) so that in ridiculing the fictional character of Fudge Moore equally condemns his mentor. The editorial commentary is once again important here. When Phil copies his patron's habit of speaking in a thickly metaphorical style, saying of the political state of play in Paris, this ' "Demoraliz'd" metropolis'

Where (still to use your Lordship's tropes)
The *level* of obedience *slopes*
Upward and downward as the *stream*
Of *hydra* faction *kicks the beam!*
(Letter II, 8–11)

the editor informs us:

'This excellent imitation of the noble Lord's style shows how deeply Mr. Fudge must have studied his great original. Irish oratory, indeed, abounds with such startling peculiarities. Thus the eloquent Counsellor B——, in describing some hypocritical pretender to charity, said, "He put his hand in his breeches-pocket, like a crocodile, and," &c. &c.'

The satire on Castlereagh works through the editor's representation of Fudge's (and Castlereagh's) metaphorically confused oratory as the desirable norm, and the political comedy of the situation is sharpened by the use of a sprightly iambic tetrameter that is inappropriately matched to Phil's aspirations to statesmanship, serving to draw attention to his fraudulent or 'fudged' politics, his inherent lack of gravitas or political integrity, and damning by association the ravening flock of Tory leaders he professes to admire.

The editor's misplaced approval of Fudge the elder and the latter's equally suspect respect for Castlereagh continues the theme of mistaken values, of post-war turmoil and disorder, which coheres the letters of the individual Fudge family members and lends a novelistic unity to the whole. In his treatment of that theme, Moore ensures that condemnation of British policies and the Holy Alliance remains at the forefront of the work and in this way he moves beyond the gentle social satire of his predecessor Anstey, who targets the follies of fashionable society without offering serious moral judgement. By contrast, even when *The Fudge Family in Paris* appears at its most humor-

ous, it never restrains the political anger aroused by what Moore sees as the injustice of British rule. Gary Dyer points out that Moore's Horatian satire is distinguished by an 'angry playfulness', so that whilst *The Fudge Family in Paris* is Horatian in tone and form, it is 'far from being as amicable as the term "Horatian" would suggest'.¹⁰

Indeed, Moore's achievement in the creation of the characters Biddy, Bob and Phil Fudge lies in retaining the political force of the satire without sacrificing the interests of character and dramatic action. An example is the treatment of the theme of mistaken identity, which is writ large in Biddy's story in a plot that is at once personal and political. In keeping with her character of the sentimental, quixotic heroine familiar from generic circulating-library fiction, Biddy sets out to find romance in Paris, the idea of a mysterious and foreign stranger appealing to her sense of adventure. Her dreams are shattered, in one of the funniest scenes in the satire, on the discovery that her Romeo is not the King of Prussia traveling incognito, as she had fondly imagined, and not even a Colonel, but a mere tradesman, a linen draper called Monsieur Calicot, meaning of course callicot, which she misreads as Colonel. She reports to her friend Dolly that it was nightfall when she received his card,

the *name*, rather creas'd—
But 'twas CALICOT—something—a Colonel, at least!
(Letter X, 120–1)

In an earlier moment, Calico's 'Corsair expression' (a nod by Moore to the Byronic hero of that name, at which Byron reportedly took umbrage) is compared to that of a hyena. Biddy first meets her hero during an evening's entertainment at the Beaujon, a Paris pleasure ground, with a roller coaster. Breathless with excitement, she writes:

There came up—imagine, dear DOLL, if you can—
A fine fallow, sublime, sort of Werter-fac'd man,
With mustachios that gave (what we read of so oft)
The dear Corsair expression, half savage, half soft,
As Hyaenas in love may be fancied to look
(Letter V, 97–101)

¹⁰ Dyer, *British Satire and the Politics of Style, 1789–1832*, 41.

Moore uses the romantic sub-plot to satirize contemporary sentimental fiction and its effect on young women readers who are incapable of distinguishing the figure of a Werter from a Corsair and a Corsair from a hyena, or, indeed, a shopkeeper from the King of Prussia. He also uses Biddy's inability to see the reality of her romantic hero as a metaphor for the more serious blindness of her father and brother to the injustices of the Holy Alliance. Indeed, Biddy's hero provides the opportunity for a political jab at the Alliance, as follows. Biddy reports in a postscript that her father, on spying her lover seated in one of the Beaujon roller-coaster cars, decides on the basis of his erect posture that he must be the King of Prussia:

Nota Bene.—Papa's almost certain 'tis he—
For he knows the Legitimate cut, and could see,
In the way he went poisoning and manag'd to tower
So erect in the car, the true *Balance of Power*.
(Letter V, 146–9)

The upright posture of the linen draper, suspected the King of Prussia, visually represents what Moore took to be tyrannical powers of the Holy Alliance, punning on the word 'Legitimate' to mean the very opposite.

Phelim Connor, cousin to the younger Fudges, although represented by the morally confused editor represents him as the black sheep of the family, stands for political right and justice. In Connor, Moore presents a national hero for Ireland, who typically in this narrative of mistaken identities is not recognized as such. In her first letter Biddy innocently compares him to Napoleon:

His nose and his chin—which Papa rather dreads,
As the Bourbons, you know, are suppressing all heads
That resemble old NAP's, and who knows but their honours
May think, in their fright, of suppressing poor CONNOR'S?
(Letter I, 97–100)

Connor's epistles reverberate with a political fury captured in thundering Juvenalian couplets that the editor is compelled to censor, as in the following attack on the arch-enemy of Ireland, Castlereagh, whose betrayal of those in his country who loved him is likened to the treachery of Hercules' jealous wife Hera who gave him a deadly shirt spread with the Centaur's blood believing this would act as a love ointment and keep her husband faithful to her. Unknown

he puts it: 'The difficulties in establishing a framing narrative, ordering the disparate elements in a story or picture and subjecting them to a unified point of view, presented itself not simply as an aesthetic difficulty but as an intractable political problem'.¹⁴ This interpretation of Moore's exploitation of a variety of forms and tones in *Captain Rock* makes questions of form and tone questions of ideology and politics.

Moore's technical achievement, which is the political strength of his satire, lies to a large degree in the hybridity of form (the combination of aspects of the novel and poetry together, the mixing of Horatian and Juvenalian tones, the creation of characters that are plausible and entertaining but are used as satiric objects). Whatever Moore's fondness for entertaining, captured in the popular image of him as the darling of English drawing rooms, in his role of author of the *Irish Melodies*, there is no question that in his satires he is passionately committed to addressing the wrongs of Ireland and of Europe savaged by the Tories and the Holy Alliance. His radical friend and poet Leigh Hunt once hymned him as

A maker of sweets, busy, sparkling, and singing,
Yet armed with an exquisite point too for stinging.¹⁵

neatly encapsulating the poet's practice of composing both drawing-room song and sharp political satire. In his Horatian satire too, Moore tickles while he stings, as it were. The satiric brilliance of *The Fudge Family in Paris* resides in the creation of entertaining characters and a compelling plot whilst sustaining a cutting narrative irony that keeps the larger radical political themes of the satire (the despoliation of Europe and the tyranny of government and, indeed, the wrongs of Ireland) firmly in view.

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¹⁴ Gibbons, 'Between Captain Rock and a Hard Place', 30.

¹⁵ Leigh Hunt, 'To Thomas Moore', *The Selected Writings of Leigh Hunt*, gen. eds Robert Morrison and Michael Eberle-Sinatra, 6 Vols (London, 2003), Vol. 5, *Poetical Works, 1799–1821*, ed. John Strachan, 133–4.

Away with the Faeries (or, It's Grimm up North): Yeats and Scotland

Willy Maley

Yeats and Scotland is a coupling that might at first glance seem odd or awkward, but with the recent rise of Irish-Scottish studies it appears less so. According to Cairns Craig: 'The Irish Revival that Yeats led was profoundly shaped by the example of Scotland's acquisition of cultural capital a century before, and constructed on its theoretical foundations'.¹ Yet despite Yeats's Celticism, and his open, if uneven, admiration for the poetry of Robert Burns there are fewer clear connections between his vision of Ireland and his vision of Scotland than might be expected. Yeats, like Joyce, arrived at a negative and pessimistic view of Scotland, and this perspective derived from a despairing vision of the Scottish legacy in the North of Ireland.² Unlike Joyce though, Yeats came to this conclusion only after a lengthy effort to build bridges with Ulster, and, by extension, Scotland, through a common Celtic spirit, and, more concretely, through his admiration for the achievements of a series of Scottish writers. Scotophobia in an Irish context is far from being the province of modern writers, and has been a recurrent feature of Irish culture at least since the Ulster Plantation.³ Attridge and Howes' collection of essays in 2000 addressed *Semicolonial Joyce*, yet Joyce is a writer who complained of struggling under a double yoke of Roman and British imperialism, and was thus doubly colonized, or double-colonial. In 'Ireland, Island of Saints and Sages' (1907), Joyce declared: 'I do not see what good it does to fulminate against the English tyranny while the Roman tyranny occupies the palace of the soul'.⁴ Yeats, by contrast, can be seen to be 'semicolonial', yet he has recently been the subject

¹ Cairns Craig, 'National Literature and Cultural Capital in Scotland and Ireland', in Liam McIlvanney and Ray Ryan (eds), *Ireland and Scotland: Culture and Society, 1700–2000* (Dublin, 2005), 38–64, [57].

² Willy Maley, "'Kilt by Kelt Shell Kithagain with Kinagain": Joyce and Scotland', in Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes (eds), *Semi-Colonial Joyce* (Cambridge, 2000), 201–18.

³ Christopher Fox, 'Swift's Scotophobia', *Bullán: An Irish Studies Journal*, 6 (2002), 2, 43–65.

⁴ Richard Ellmann and Ellsworth Mason (eds), *The Critical Writings of James Joyce* (New York, 1959), 173.

of a series of interventions, including a major collection of essays, promoting his 'postcolonial' status.⁵

In this essay, I want to argue for a Scottish context for Yeats and to show the extent to which his image of Scotland was touched and tainted by Ulster. I do not intend to establish such a context through a reading of *On Baile's Strand*, although the repeated references there to 'hungry Scotland' are worth noting,⁶ nor do I propose to trace the fugitive and furtive figuring of Scotland in the poetry. I found just one odd instance of the word 'Scot', in 'Nineteen-Nineteen', where the verse runs as follows:

Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery
Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,
To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free;
The night can sweat with terror as before
We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,
And planned to bring the world under a rule,
Who are but weasels fighting in a hole.⁷

The drunken soldiery going scot-free, are they the weasels? In Shakespeare's *Henry V*, an English Lord invokes 'a saying very old and true: / "If that you will France win, / Then with Scotland first begin"'. He goes on to rehearse a standard fear of the time:

For once the eagle England being in prey,
To her unguarded nest, the weasel Scot
Comes sneaking, and so sucks her princely eggs,
Playing the mouse in absence of the cat,
To 'tame and havoc more then she can eat.'⁸

These are weasel words, for the fear of the Scots is bound up with an imperial

⁵ Deborah Fleming, (ed.), *W. B. Yeats and Postcolonialism* (West Cornwall, 2001); Marjorie Howes, 'Postcolonial Yeats: Culture, Enlightenment, and the Public Sphere', *Field Day Review* 2 (2006), 55–73; Jahan Ramazani, 'Is Yeats a Postcolonial Poet?', *Raritan* 17 (1998), 3, 64–89.

⁶ J.P. Harrington, (ed.), *Modern Irish Drama: a Norton Critical Edition* (New York, 1991), 15.

⁷ W. B. Yeats, *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (London, 1983), 233.

⁸ *Henry V*, 1.2.169–73.

enterprise elsewhere—ostensibly France, allegorically Ireland—and the speech captures beautifully the extent to which Scotland is the key to containing Ireland, and vice versa.

I will be exploring the Yeats and Scotland connection largely by author, through his encounters with Burns, Scott, Stevenson, and MacDiarmid. When I came up with the idea for a discussion of Yeats and Scotland, I was thinking of a short text reprinted in *Mythologies*, entitled 'A Remonstrance with Scotsmen for having soured the disposition of their Ghosts and faeries'. An earlier version, 'Scots and Irish Faeries', had appeared in the *Scots Observer*, on 2 March 1889. In this text, Yeats accused his Celtic country cousins of demonising the little people:

In Scotland you are too theological, too gloomy. You have made even the Devil religious. 'Where do you live, good-wyf, and how is the min-ister?' he said to the witch when he met her on the high-road, as it came out in the trial. You have burnt all the witches. In Ireland we have left them alone. To be sure, the 'loyal minority' knocked out the eye of one with a cabbage stump on the 31st March 1711, in the town of Carrickfergus. But then the 'loyal minority' is half Scottish. You have discovered the faeries to be pagan and wicked. You would like to have them all up before the magistrate. In Ireland warlike mortals have gone among them, and helped them in their battles, and they in turn have taught men great skills with herbs, and permitted some few to hear their tunes. Carolan slept upon a faery rath. Ever after their tunes ran in his head, and made him the great musician he was. In Scotland you have denounced them from the pulpit. In Ireland they have been permitted by the priests to consult them on the state of their souls. Unhappily the priests have decided that they have no souls, that they will dry up like so much bright vapour at the last day; but more in sadness than in anger. The Catholic religion likes to keep on good terms with its neighbours.

Yeats thus uses his argument about Ireland being a friendly host to spirits in order to forge an alliance with Catholicism. Protestantism wants facts, not faeries or folklore. That puts Yeats and Protestant Ireland, north and south, in a slightly problematic position. Although he is drawing a distinction between Ireland and Scotland, Yeats is also speaking to a division within Ireland, as witness the unsporting behaviour of 'the "loyal minority"', explained by the fact

that 'the "loyal minority" is half Scottish', and not neighbourly and tolerant like the true Catholic Irish:

These two different ways of looking at things have influenced in each country the whole world of sprites and goblins. For their gay and graceful doings you must go to Ireland; for their deeds of terror to Scotland. Our Irish faery terrors have about them something of make-believe. When a countryman strays into an enchanted hovel, and is made to turn a corpse all night on a spit before the fire, we do not feel anxious; we know he will wake in the midst of a green field, the dew on his old coat. In Scotland it is altogether different. You have soured the naturally excellent disposition of ghosts and goblins.⁹

A few years after the first appearance of this piece in the *Scots Observer*, Yeats visited the North of Ireland and lectured to the 'loyal minority' in Belfast on faeries, a difficult enterprise at the best of times. Apparently it was not very well received. Yeats later remarked: 'I have been away in County Down, looking almost in vain among its half-Scotch people for the legends I find so plentiful in the West'.¹⁰ Whether half Scottish or half-Scotch, the inhabitants of the North had a problem with the kind of Celtic mysticism expounded by Yeats.

Liam McIlvanney has shown how the work of Robert Burns was intimately bound up with the Ulster-Scots Literary Revival of the 1790s.¹¹ If Ulster had a Romantic streak, it owed it to Burns, so it is no surprise that Burns was the basis of Yeats's admiration for, and antipathy towards, Scotland. Burns occupied an awkward place in Irish culture, and not just for Yeats. Even admirers were unsure if the ploughboy-playboy could or should be imitated by Irish writers. Yeats often invoked Burns as a breath of fresh air bursting out of the gloom, and was especially fond of comparing J. M. Synge to Burns in terms of their use of dialect and earthy topics. But at other times Burns is resisted and represented as a writer of limits. According to Yeats, 'the fruit of Robert Burns and Scott with their lack of ideas, their external and picturesque views of life, has been to create not a nation but a province with a sense of the picturesque . . . The

⁹ W. B. Yeats, *Mythologies* (London, 1959), 107–8.

¹⁰ Denis Donoghue (ed.), *W. B. Yeats: Memoirs: The original unpublished text of the Autobiography and the Journal* (London, 1972), 45, fn. 6.

¹¹ Liam McIlvanney, 'Robert Burns and the Ulster-Scots Literary Revival of the 1790s', *Bullán: An Irish Studies Journal*, 4 (1999/2000), 2, 125–43.

external and picturesque or political writer leaves the strongest intellects of their countries empty (and in the case of Scotland, England has crowded into this emptiness), and is content to fill with kilts and bagpipes, newspapers and guidebooks, the days of the least creative'.¹²

Yeats, like other Irish critics, envied Burns's status and admired his language, but occasionally expressed doubts about the very popularity which at other times he praised and envied. Other Irish commentators were wary of the Scottish comparison. John Eglinton, writing in 1899 in *Literary Ideals in Ireland*, observed:

[A] well-known Scotch Professor once said that Ireland was not a nation because it had never had a Burns or a Bannockburn. It is, however, as reasonable to think that these glorious memories of Scottish nationality will form a drag on its further evolution as that the want of a peasant poet, or of a recollection of having at least once given the Saxons a drubbing, will be fatal to an attempt to raise people above themselves in this country by giving expression to latent ideals. Ireland must exchange the patriotism which looks back for the patriotism which looks forward.¹³

Yeats wanted to champion Ireland's peasant poets, Synge, the playwright Burns, and William Carleton, the prose Burns, but he had misgivings too. Carleton himself, in the preface to *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1830), had written of avoiding 'intolerable Scoto-Hibernic jargon' (p. xi). D. P. Moran, another Irish critic, cautioned against a wholesale buying into Burns and the brogue:

[T]hough certain classes of ballad and lyric poetry can be written in dialect, as Burns has proved, you cannot rise to dignity or poetry on 'begors' and 'bedads'. There is something essentially mean about the corrupt English of the Irish peasant, particularly when put into cold print; it passes the power of man to write literature in it.¹⁴

Moran blamed Yeats for sponsoring 'The Celtic Note'. Moran's criticisms

¹² Denis Donoghue (ed.), *W. B. Yeats: Memoirs*, 248.

¹³ John Eglinton, from *Literary Ideals in Ireland* (1899), cited in Seamus Deane (ed.) *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing* (Derry, 1991), Vol. 2, 957.

¹⁴ Seamus Deane (gen ed.), *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, 3 Vols (Derry, 1991), Vol 2, 555.

would apply to Synge, but Yeats wanted to defend Synge while acknowledging the difficulty of writing in 'dialect'. There is a long and involved debate around the language question in Irish and Scottish literature. While Burns was often invoked as a positive role model by Yeats, Edwin Muir held Yeats up as an example for Scottish writers to follow. Muir argued that Yeats does more for Irish literature by writing in English than Scottish writers do for Scotland by writing in 'dialect'.¹⁵

Synge, for Yeats, was Burns at his best. Yeats pointed out that while 'Scotland left Burns in the Excise; the world has mocked her for it', Ireland must prize its writers, whatever language they chose.¹⁶ Defending William Carleton against neglect and abuse, Yeats hoped that Ireland wouldn't likewise constrain its writers. But Burns was also for Yeats a universal writer. Moran had urged Yeats to do for Ireland what Burns had done for Scotland. Yeats—though he encouraged the comparison between Synge and Carleton and Burns—did not do 'dialect'. Though he liked to bend it like Beckett, Yeats preferred Posh. Yeats saw Burns's Irish following in this case as based on a hankering after the obvious, the popular. Perhaps the finest and funniest illustration of Yeats's double take on Burns, half admiring, half envying, can be seen in the episode I mentioned earlier. Ezra Pound had a laugh at Yeats's efforts at reciting Burns. 'Years ago', says Pound,

Yeats was struggling with rhythms and saying they wouldn't do. I got him to read a little Burns aloud, telling him he cd. read no cadence but his own . . . I had a half hour of unmitigated glee in hearing 'Say ye bonnie Alexander' and 'The Birks o Averfeldy' *keeened*, wailed with infinite difficulty and many pauses and restarts to *The Wind Among the Reeds*.¹⁷

His inability to recite Burns notwithstanding, Yeats imagined what he'd wish for if granted an audience with the King of Faery: 'I would say "I do not ask even a fiftieth part of the popularity Burns has for his own people, but I would like enough to help the imagination[s] that were most keen and subtle to think of Ireland as a sacred land"'.¹⁸

¹⁵ Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (Edinburgh, 1982; 1936), 111–12.

¹⁶ John Kelly, and Eric Domville (eds), *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats, Volume One 1865–1895* (Oxford, 1986), 206.

¹⁷ Daniel Albright, *Quantum Poetics: Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and the science of modernism* (Cambridge, 1997), 148.

¹⁸ John Kelly, and Eric Domville (eds), *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats, Volume One*

Yeats admitted his shortcomings when it came to dialect, but praised the efforts of Synge and Lady Gregory—who wrote in an ‘Irish’ that was ‘as true a dialect of English as the dialect that Burns wrote in’.¹⁹ In ‘What is Popular Poetry’ Yeats could say: ‘Despite his expressive speech which sets him above all other popular poets, [Burns] has the triviality of emotion, the poverty of ideas, the imperfect sense of beauty of a poetry whose most typical expression is in Longfellow’.²⁰ Yet in his Nobel Prize speech Yeats rejoiced in Synge’s ability to do for Ireland what Burns did for Scotland: ‘Burns himself could not have more shocked a gathering of Scotch clergy than did he our players’.²¹ Burns, then, was a writer who divided Ireland, and divided Yeats too. For while Yeats wanted to support the Irish tradition that drew on Burns, it was not one that he himself could follow—and although he admired Burns’s status he also resented it. I have argued elsewhere that a lot of this debate about ‘dialect’ has to do with class and religion, and similar conclusions can be drawn with regard to the ways in which Yeats shifted his ground on Scotland and Ulster.²²

Walter Scott is another major Scottish writer about whom Yeats had mixed feelings. Yeats’s father—‘Papa’—read *Redgauntlet* to the young Yeats, and Yeats later read Scott to his own children. Yeats, in Celtic mode, drew analogies between ‘defeated’ races. The ‘Highlanders’, he said, were like the Irish, ‘of one stock with ourselves’. But Scott was a shadow as well as a shaping influence. Yeats asserted that: ‘Scott made a single lowland Scottish dialect serve for all Scotland’, and he resented the fact that Scott was seen as a national and international writer while Irish authors like Synge and Lady Gregory were viewed as parochial or provincial.²³ The same combination of grudging respect and admiration coupled with envy and disdain marks Yeats’s attitude to both Burns and Scott. Roy Foster describes Yeats’s shift from Scottish models to Irish mores with typical terseness: ‘His reading is related to his own early work; Scott gives way to Sligo county histories’.²⁴

1865–1895, 388.

¹⁹ William H. O’Donnell, (ed.), *W. B. Yeats: Prefaces and Introductions* (London, 1988), 225.

²⁰ W. B. Yeats, *Essays and Introductions* (London, 1961), 6.

²¹ Yeats, ‘The Irish Dramatic Movement’, Nobel Lecture 15 December 1923.

²² In ‘“Kilt by Kelt Shell Kithagain with Kinagain”: Joyce and Scotland’, in Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes (eds), *Semi-Colonial Joyce*.

²³ John P. Frayne and Colton Johnson (eds). *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats*, 2 Vols (London, 1975), II, 468.

²⁴ R. F. Foster, *W.B. Yeats: a life, I: The Apprentice Mage, 1865–1914* (New York, 1997), I, 530.

Robert Louis Stevenson fares rather better. Yeats is more positive about a writer who is his contemporary. Stevenson wrote admiringly of Yeats's work, and Yeats returned the compliment. 'I need hardly tell you', he told Stevenson,

that your praise of 'The Lake of Innisfree' has given me great pleasure. After all it is the liking or disliking of one's fellow craftsmen, especially of those who have attained the perfect expression one does but grope for, which urges one to work on—else were it best to dream ones dreams in silence. My grandfather a very passionate old retired sailor—quite the reverse of literary—read 'Treasure Island' [sic] upon his death-bed with infinite satisfaction. It is well nigh the only book I ever heard of him reading. I wonder at the voice, which while delighting studious and cloistered spirits, can yet hush into admiration such as he, much as I wonder at that voice which stilled the waves of old.²⁵

Again, what Yeats admires in Stevenson is what he found enviable in Burns and Scott—the ability to cross over between privileged and popular audiences and to 'go global'. This is what Yeats wanted for Irish literature, but he felt that Scotland took its 'mature' tradition for granted, while Irish critics failed to appreciate the emerging apprentice work of Ireland. Crossing swords with Professor Edward Dowden, Yeats bristled at being accused of endorsing literature 'that raves of Brian Boru'. Yeats countered that none of the books on his recommended reading list "raves of Brian Boru" half as much as Burns did of Bruce and Wallace, or has an "intellectual brogue" more "accentuated" than the Scottish characteristics in Scott and Stevenson'.²⁶ Dowden subscribed to the Anglo-Irish tradition of Swift and his successors—to which of course Yeats belonged—but Yeats said that those works 'will be substitutes for the books I have named only when the books of Hume are considered Scotch literature in the same sense as the books of Burns and Barrie'.²⁷ J. M. Barrie was another Scottish writer who saw and supported the new Irish drama. But are we living in Cloud Cuchulain Land, the Never Land of Peter Pan Celticism?

This brings me to two more minor Scottish figures that crossed Yeats's path: MacGregor Mathers, or Samuel Liddell Mathers, and William Sharp, also known as Fiona Macleod. Yeats explains how he first met Synge in Paris,

²⁵ John Kelly and Eric Domville (eds), *The Collected Letters of W. B. Yeats, Volume One 1865–1895*, 404.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 440.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 448.

and had a strange encounter with MacGregor Mathers—the Eminem of his day—concerning Fiona Macleod:

I saw Mrs Sharpe [sic] the other day and know a great deal more about the Fiona Macleod mystery. It is as I thought. Fiona Macleod was so far as external perception could say a secondary personality induced in Sharpe by the presence of a very beautiful unknown woman whom he fell in love with. She, alas! has disappeared from everyone's sight, no one having set eyes on her except George Meredith who says she was the most beautiful woman he ever saw. Whether there was more than this I do not know but poor Mrs Sharpe, though generous and self-sacrificing as I can see does not want to enlarge that unknown woman's share. A great deal, however, which Sharp used to give in letters as an account of Fiona's doings were she insists a kind of semi-allegorical description of the adventures of his own secondary personality and its relation with the primary self. For instance in one letter to me he had said 'I will leave your letter where Fiona will find it when she wakes', and by this he meant that the secondary personality when it awoke in him would answer the letter which it certainly did in a much more impassioned way than that of the rest of the letter. I don't think there would be much of all this in the official biography for when I said to Mrs Sharpe that she should tell the whole truth, she answered 'How can I! Other people are so much involved.' She never talked quite openly about things, except it being a secondary personality, but told things in a series of hints and yet, at the same time, quite clearly. I noticed that each time she said this personality was awakened in him by a beautiful person she would add as if to lessen the effect, 'and by beautiful scenery'. She was evidently very fond of him and has sent me his birth date and her own to find out how their horoscopes interlocked. I would be rather glad if you would keep this letter, for I am fresh from seeing Mrs Sharp (I saw her a week ago) and this will be a record. Put it in a safe place and I may ask you for it again some day for it is a fragment of history. She told me that the morning William Sharp died she heard visionary music and indeed a good deal of one sort and another about the supernatural side of his talent.²⁸

²⁸ Terry L. Meyers, *The Sexual Tensions of William Sharp: A Study of the Birth of Fiona Macleod, Incorporating Two Lost Works, 'Ariadne In Naxos' and 'Beatrice'* (New York, 1996), 19–20.

This is a bizarre passage—haunting, hallucinatory, hilarious. Did the Scots put Yeats off Celticism, having helped put him onto it?

Some Ulster writers changed their names to move closer to Yeats's vision, but one Scottish writer went further. Yeats admired Fiona Macleod, and corresponded with her, before he found out that 'she' was in fact a 'he': William Sharp, prominent critic, biographer, poet and Whitmaniac. In 1894 Sharp assumed the persona of Fiona Macleod, and so began a split-level writing career. Writing as Fiona Macleod, Sharp was able to get in touch with his feminine side, which came in handy if you were Victorian and Scottish. As Fiona, William published visionary Gaelic poetry, fiction and drama. She was considered a better writer than the man who gave birth to her. Folklore was her forte. Yeats said of her that she 'had in her hands the keys of those gates of the primeval world, which shut behind more successful races, when they plunged into material progress'.²⁹

Fiona was the Celtic Tigerlily who put the prim into primeval, but she got on less well with Oscar Wilde than she did with Yeats. Isobel Murray argues that Sharpe's *Children of To-morrow* is a source for *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, but whoever heard of a Scottish writer influencing an Irish one?³⁰ In fact, going back to Burns and Carleton, Edgeworth and Scott, there is a constant two-way traffic. In Yeats, Fiona Macleod found a soul mate. He understood 'The strain of life—the strain of double life'.³¹ Fiona was fond of quoting Yeats to the effect that 'the arts have become religious', by which I assume Yeats meant mythical and spiritual, though they remained 'religious' in other ways. When Yeats first met William Sharp, before he had assumed the alter ego of Fiona Macleod, he was not impressed: 'I was introduced to Sharp of the *Sonnets of This Century* and hated his red British face of flaccid contentment'.³² When Sharp went on to lead a double life, getting in touch with his feminine side, in the form of the fair Fiona, Yeats warmed to him/her, to the 'secondary personality' as he called it. Some contemporaries had even surmised that Yeats was Fiona Macleod. Yeats had written to Sharp at one point—in 1896—urging an alliance between 'Scotch Welsh and Irish Celts'. Yeats, repulsed by Sharp's 'Britishness', seduced by Fiona Macleod's cod Celtic femininity, eventually rejected both as two sides of the same (debased) coin.

²⁹ Frayne and Johnson (eds), *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats*, II, 45.

³⁰ Isobel Murray, 'Children of To-morrow: A Sharp Inspiration for Dorian Gray', *Durham University Journal*, n.s. 49 (1987), 1, 69–70.

³¹ Richard J. Finneran, George Mills Harper, and William M. Murphy (eds). *Letters to W. B. Yeats*, 2 Vols., with the assistance of Alan B. Himer (New York, 1977), I, 52.

³² Donoghue (ed.), *Memoirs*, 129, fn. 1.

Lady Gregory famously looked back on the setting up of the Irish National Theatre as an exercise in bad faith:

I think the word 'Celtic' was put in for the sake of Fiona Macleod, whose plays however we never acted, though we used to amuse ourselves by thinking of the call for 'author' that might follow one, and the possible appearance of William Sharp in place of the beautiful woman he had given her out to be, for even then we had little doubt they were one and the same person. I myself never quite understood the meaning of the 'Celtic Movement', which we were said to belong to. When I was asked about it, I used to say it was a movement meant to persuade the Scotch to begin buying our books, while we continued not to buy theirs.³³

There is nothing worn under the Kiltartan, it's all in perfect working order. We have come a long way from Yeats's envious reaction to the popularity of Burns and Scott to the superior taste of the Irish.

If Sharp was a Scotsman on the make, James Connolly was a different proposition, yet Sharp and Connolly were connected, as Murray Pittock explains: 'By most measures of nationality, James Connolly was a Scot: described as "Scotto-Hibernian" even in Dublin (where he came from Edinburgh at the age of 28), he spoke with a Scots accent and named his daughter, born in 1907, "Fiona" after William Sharp's alter ego'.³⁴ Yeats encountered Connolly in a dramatic and memorable context, as he recounts in *Autobiographies*:

Is our Foundation Stone still unlaied when the more important streets are decorated for Queen Victoria's Jubilee?

I find Maud Gonne at her hotel talking to a young working-man who looks very melancholy. She had offered to speak at one of the regular meetings of his Socialist society about Queen Victoria, and he has summoned what will be a great meeting in the open air. She has refused to speak, and he says that her refusal means his ruin, as nobody will ever believe that he had any promise at all. When he has left without complaint or anger, she gives me very cogent reasons against the open-air meeting, but I can think of nothing but the young man and his look of melancholy. He has left his address, and presently, at my persuasion, she drives to his tenement, where she finds him and his wife and his

³³ Harrington, *Modern Irish Drama*, 378–79.

³⁴ Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester, 1999), 77.

children crowded into a very small space—perhaps there was only one room—and, moved by the sight, promised to speak. The young man is James Connolly who, with Padraic Pearse, is to make the Insurrection of 1916 and to be executed.

Yeats then describes being caught up in a street protest with Connolly and reflects on whether he is implicated in the violence that follows:

Connolly carries in procession a coffin with the words 'British Empire' upon it, and police and mob fight for its ownership, and at last, that the police may not capture it, it is thrown into the Liffey. And there are fights between police and window-breakers, and I read in the morning papers that many have been wounded; some two hundred heads have been dressed at the hospitals; an old woman killed by baton blows, or perhaps trampled under the feet of the crowd; and that two thousand pounds' worth of decorated plate-glass windows have been broken. I count the links in the chain of responsibility, run them across my fingers, and wonder if any link there is from my workshop.³⁵

After that Sharp exit, and the jettisoning of the Union Jack-draped coffin, Hugh MacDiarmid brings us back to the majors. MacDiarmid enjoyed his stay in Dublin in the summer of 1928. Although he chiefly admired Joyce, MacDiarmid was grateful for the respect and support of Yeats.³⁶ MacDiarmid had an ulterior motive for exploiting connections with Yeats and other Irish writers. After that Dublin trip he claimed that he was 'able to make certain arrangements which will help the Scots National Party to the Irish vote at the General Election'.³⁷ MacDiarmid scholars have recognised his role in 'fighting Irish parochialism towards Scotland', but I am not sure how successful MacDiarmid was.³⁸ I have written elsewhere on Joyce's lasting antipathy to Scotland³⁹ but Yeats certainly did act as an advocate of MacDiarmid—much more so than did Joyce, the writer MacDiarmid most admired. Yeats included

³⁵ W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London, 1966), 366–8.

³⁶ Edwin Morgan, 'James Joyce and Hugh MacDiarmid', in W. J. McCormack and Alistair Stead (eds), *James Joyce and Modern Literature* (London, 1982), 202–17.

³⁷ Dorian Grieve, Owen Dudley Edwards and Alan Riach (eds), *Hugh MacDiarmid: New Selected Letters* (Manchester, 2001), 34.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, xxvi–xxvii.

³⁹ In "'Kilt by Kelt Shell Kithagain with Kinagain": Joyce and Scotland', in Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes (eds), *Semi-Colonial Joyce*.

four of MacDiarmid's poems in the 1936 *Oxford Book of Modern Verse*. Yeats knew that a lot of Scottish input had gone into the making of modern Ireland, in terms of writers and thinkers, and in terms of the Scottish influence in the North in the wake of the Ulster Plantation. But he was ambivalent about both those Celtic connections.

In the last few years, critics like Edna Longley, Owen Dudley Edwards, and John Wilson Foster have focused on the 'North' as key to understanding the Irish-Scottish avenue or impasse.⁴⁰ Vexed issues of class, religion and language as well as an attachment to empire, affect the Irish writer's attitude to Ulster and to Scotland. According to John Wilson Foster: 'Social class and religious denomination would have early instilled in Yeats a distaste for the bulk of his co-religionists in what in his lifetime became Northern Ireland'.⁴¹ Yeats wanted to keep the baby of Burns but throw out the bathwater of bigotry, though he arguably succumbed to some doom and gloom of his own. Again, according to Foster:

Yeats wished Ulster to mean an inspired peasant Carleton and an aristocratic Ferguson in the real world, and Cuchulain in the unreal world, a place that had produced the figures that mattered most to Yeats: peasant, artist, aristocrat and hero. But such a view of modern Ulster could not be sustained and Yeats gave up on the north as a bad job. Scots Ulster, Presbyterian Ulster, became indeed a kind of antithetical cultural self.⁴²

Yeats's discomfort with the North goes back well before Partition. Ulster is caught up in his mind with a negative notion of Scotland, or perhaps Scotland is caught up in his mind with a problematic perception of the North. Either way, Yeats gave up on both as bad jobs. Yeats defended Synge's use of 'dialect' but when the Ulster-born Daniel Deeney used some 'Northern' pronunciation in his 1900 volume, *Peasant Lore from Gaelic Ireland*, Yeats was less sympathetic. It is John Wilson Foster's contention that Yeats's Ireland excluded the

⁴⁰ Edna Longley, 'Including the North', *Text & Context* 3 (1988), 17–24; Owen Dudley Edwards, 'Scotland, Ulster, and You', in Ian S. Wood (ed.), *Scotland and Ulster* (Edinburgh, 1994), 173–82; John Wilson Foster, 'Getting the North: Yeats and Northern Nationalism', in Warwick Gould and Edna Longley (eds), *That Accusing Eye: Yeats and His Irish Reader*, *Yeats Annual* 12 (1996), 180–212.

⁴¹ Foster, 'Getting the North', in Warwick Gould and Edna Longley (eds), *That Accusing Eye: Yeats and his Irish Reader*, *Yeats Annual* 12, 180–212, 181–2.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 183.

North. The Faeries had been driven out of Ulster as well as Scotland. As Foster says, 'many a celebrated Southerner . . . found the [North] galling'.⁴³

Joyce could be added to the list. In Ireland, the Scottish North did not measure up to the English South. This is about more than snobbery, but not much more. Edna Longley finesses the parting in the Celtic fringe: 'In fact, Joyce and Yeats shared an anti-Ulster prejudice with implications for Irish-Scottish literary intercourse. This prejudice marks regional and religious (not just Catholic/Protestant but also Anglican/Presbyterian) partitions in Ireland'.⁴⁴ Yeats hoped that the South would come to stand as a good example to the North. In 1924, speaking in the Irish Senate, he declared: 'I have no hope of seeing Ireland united in my time, or of seeing Ulster won in my time; but I believe it will be won in the end, and not because we fight it, but because we govern this country well. We can do that, if I may be permitted as an artist and writer to say so, by creating a system of culture which will represent the whole of this country'.⁴⁵ Yeats really was away with the faeries. But being away with the faeries—or blue-sky thinking—has its uses. In his study of MacDiarmid, Alan Riach remarks: 'A homogeneous image of Ireland was proposed by the Celtic Revival and the Anglo-Irish Yeats'.⁴⁶ It could be argued that Yeats tried hard to incorporate conflicting elements of Irish culture into a single vision. He certainly developed a very gloomy and one-sided view of Scotland, seeing in it a fulcrum of all that was conservative, Unionist, imperialist: in short, 'British'. Yeats had warned the South not to get too Catholic if it wanted to get the North. He might have warned the North, with an eye on the 'loyal minority', not to get too Protestant.

The same prejudice that made Scotland a hard sell in Ireland and especially the South—because of the North—is what makes it so easy for Scottish critics to plump for stateless Joyce over Free State Yeats, the latter dismissed, either unsubtly in Terry Eagleton's terms in his 'Ballad of English Literature'—'Willy Yeats was a fascist'—or more delicately in the slightly subtler but no less problematic terms of critics like Seamus Deane and George Watson.⁴⁷ Yeats gets short shrift, or shorter shrift than Joyce. The fact that

⁴³ Ibid, 183.

⁴⁴ Edna Longley, 'The Whereabouts of Literature', in Gerard Carruthers, David Goldie and Alastair Renfrew (eds), *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature* (Amsterdam and New York, 2004), 151–65 [157].

⁴⁵ John Wilson Foster, 'Getting the North', 184–5.

⁴⁶ Alan Riach, *Hugh MacDiarmid's Epic Poetry* (Edinburgh, 1991), 88.

⁴⁷ Seamus Deane, *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature, 1880–1980* (London, 1985); G. J. Watson, *Irish Identity and the Literary Revival: Synge, Yeats, Joyce and O'Casey*

Yeats was a Protestant who trailed his coat of many colours through the mud and blood of politics has nothing to do with it, just as the reason the Dublin audiences rioted against plays of Synge and O'Casey was nothing to do with their religion. It is all objective and above board. Nothing to see here: no faeries or demons. Scotland gets a bad press in Ireland because of Ulster, and a bad press in the South because of the North. Yeats gets looked at sideways and with suspicion because of the very North at which he looked sideways and suspicious. Scotland and Ulster get brushed with the same tartan. In a sense, Yeats *is* the North.

Recently, postcolonial readings of Yeats have gained ground, most famously that of Edward Said, who read Yeats's Celticism in relation to *negritude*.⁴⁸ Yeats's Irishness in Said's account was set against a monolithic Britishness. Said had little to say about Scotland, and like most postcolonial critics tended to see 'Britain' as one flat homogenous and ahistorical whole, interchangeable with 'England', but Jahan Ramazani, in 'Is Yeats a Postcolonial Poet?', argues that: 'Yeats is completely out of luck if the postcolonial era dawned when the Republic of Ireland was officially founded in 1949 or, for that matter, when the partition might one day be dissolved between the Six Counties of the North and the lower Twenty-Six'.⁴⁹ According to Marjorie Howes: 'Yeats and postcolonial studies conducted some of their most sustained and important arguments with the Enlightenment through its opposite: a romantic culturalism'.⁵⁰ Howes goes on to argue, among other things that 'September 1913' is a Protestant poem born out of a growing frustration with Catholic Ireland.⁵¹ My argument here is that Yeats slowly relinquished his wish to build bridges between Ireland and Scotland and, because of the Scottish legacy in the North, and its 'half Scottish' people, this meant abandoning his unionism. If Howes wanted to explore Yeats's Romanticism she might usefully have drawn on his attitude to Burns and Scott.

The man who famously declared that there was 'more enterprise / In walking naked'⁵² had a rude awakening on the fashion front at the height of his Celticism:

(Washington, D.C., 1994; 1979).

⁴⁸ Edward Said, 'Yeats and Decolonization', in Seamus Deane (ed.), *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, (Minneapolis, 1992), 69–95.

⁴⁹ Jahan Ramazani, 'Is Yeats a Postcolonial Poet?', *Raritan* 17 (1998), 3, 64–89; 66.

⁵⁰ Howes, 'Postcolonial Yeats: Culture, Enlightenment, and the Public Sphere', *Field Day Review* 2 (2006), 55–73; 55.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 66–70.

⁵² Yeats, *Collected Poems*, 142.

On the issue of clothing, the Irish Irelander stood firm. *The Leader* urged the wearing of Irish cloth, tailored in Ireland and Yeats attempted to follow this model: 'I believed myself dressed according to public opinion, until a letter of apology from my tailor informed me that "It takes such a long time getting Connemara cloth as it has to come all the way from Scotland"' . . . Yeats's public engagement with the dress question came at the Dublin Pan-Celtic Congress of August 1901, when the issue of an Irish national costume was debated: Yeats temporised, arguing for the very gradual adoption of national dress; he pointed out that they all had to cope with the reactions of 'the small boy', who could be evaded if they 'started first in evening dress'. Irish Irelanders did not advocate a national costume.⁵³

Ireland got from Scotland more than Connemara cloth. It got a key component of its colonial make-up, and not just its romantic culturalism, but also its lasting bastion of Britishness. Including the North—if not getting the North—means thinking about the Scottish contribution and the Scottish undercurrents in Irish life.

According to George Boyce, 'Irish nationalism in the nineteenth century was engaged not only in political agitation; it was concerned also to make good its claim that it had a fundamental right to exist, and was not, as its arch-enemy A. J. Balfour claimed, merely a congeries of grievance, with less foundation in history than the nationalism of Scotland, that noble, patriotic and yet contented member of the United Kingdom'.⁵⁴ Boyce underplays connections between Ulster and Scotland until his conclusion, when he comments: 'This is not intended as a piece of advice to Ulster Unionists that they should seek to invent a culture, or embark on a search for a Yeats of their own (Robert Burns, perhaps, who could combine the myth of Ulster Scottishness with an excellent literary pedigree?)'⁵⁵ For a time, Ulster had a Yeats of its own: Yeats. But the Scottishness of a political hate-figure like Alasdair Balfour did not help build bridges between the North and South of Ireland. As for 'the myth of Ulster Scottishness', the Ulster Plantation and partition are not wished away so easily.

⁵³ Deirdre Toomey, 'Moran's Collar: Yeats and Irish Ireland', in Gould and Longley (eds), *That Accusing Eye*, 45–83, 49.

⁵⁴ George Boyce, '"They Have Got Yeats": Asking some more of the right questions about Literature and Politics in Ireland', *Text & Context* 3 (1988), 39–54, 43.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 50.

The half Scottish North, like its whole Scottish neighbour, may in one jaundiced vision look like a faerie-free zone, intolerant of others, and more prone to gritty realism than cultured romanticism, but the big picture is arguably a less gloomy one than that painted by Yeats, and less galling too. The Irish-Scottish connection is a vexed one, and the North is where the lines of conflict are most tightly drawn. In his open-ended conclusion to an important essay entitled 'Scotland, Ulster, and You', Owen Dudley Edwards observes: 'Neither Ulster nor Scotland is the thing it seems to be, and we have to make long journeys to understand home'.⁵⁶

This essay has offered some snapshots, images or instances of Yeats and Scotland, portraits in plaid, moments to mull: first, Yeats's father, reading Sir Walter Scott's *Redgauntlet* to his twelve-year old son. Have you ever seen such cruelty? Is this the key to Yeats's adult antipathy to Scotland? Second, Yeats's grandfather, an old sailor reading *his* first book on his deathbed. The book? *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson. Then arguably one of the most influential Scots in an Irish context, James Connolly, an ordinary 'working-man', as Yeats portrays him, as he persuades Maud Gonne to visit Connolly at his modest lodgings, and then gets caught up in a street protest that ends in violence after the Edinburgh-born future Irish martyr throws a coffin bearing the words 'British Empire' into the Liffey. Yeats wonders if he was somehow to blame for his charged advocacy of Connolly. Next up, Yeats standing shoulder-to-shoulder with Hugh MacDiarmid on a Dublin street in the wee small hours of the morning, after a night on the tiles. What are they doing? Playing see-who-can-pee-the-highest. 'I crossed swords with him', as MacDiarmid put it, a living stream that ended in the gutter. Then comes the butt of someone else's joke. Yeats, under instruction from Ezra Pound, tries to recite Burns, fails miserably much to his auditor's amusement, proving to Pound in the process that Yeats, deaf to other cadences, can scan no verse but his own. The final image in these fleeting glimpses is of Yeats, at a time when Irish national dress was being debated, proud as punch of his own habits in this regard. Until he gets a letter from his tailor telling him good Connemara cloth takes time to get delivered these days, as it has to come all the way from Scotland. Dressing in Scots garb while searching for something distinctively Irish—that's a suitable way of thinking about Yeats and Scotland.

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⁵⁶ Edwards, 'Scotland, Ulster, and You', in Ian S. Wood (ed.), *Scotland and Ulster*, 182.

Reshaping Scotland: Ireland, Europe and the Interwar Scottish Literary Renaissance Movement

Margery Palmer McCulloch

What made the early twentieth-century literary renaissance outstanding among Scottish cultural movements was the belief of those involved that any revival in the nation's artistic culture could not be separated from regeneration in its social, economic and political life. This was something quite new in Scottish affairs, ideologically different from the turn-of-the-century 'renaissance' associated with Patrick Geddes and that of the Celtic revival; and different too from earlier patriotic attempts by Walter Scott and Robert Louis Stevenson to preserve in their writing something of a vanishing Scots language and its traditions. In contrast, the objective of the interwar reformers, in literature and in everyday life, was to create a Scotland which would throw off its acquired dependent status as a North British province and move forward to retake its place as a self-determining European nation. For engagement with Europe, and with the artistic and intellectual ideas of the modern period, was an equal priority for these interwar writers. Nationalism, internationalism and modernity were seen as complementary and interactive parts of an ambitious national renewal project.

In addition, the recent history of Ireland, with its political achievement of self-determination in the Irish Free State and its literary successes through the poetry of Yeats, the Abbey Theatre and the contemporary fiction of James Joyce, provided an inspirational exemplar for many activists; and during the interwar years, this Irish inspiration was adapted to suit the changing needs of the Scottish context. For example, before his conversion to literary Scots as the language of a modern revival, C. M. Grieve (Hugh MacDiarmid) looked to Ireland for validation of a literary revival conducted through the medium of the English language, arguing in the *Aberdeen Free Press* in December 1921 that 'Synge, Yeats, and other great Irish writers found no difficulty in expressing themselves in an English which they yet made distinctively Irish'. At the same time he attacked what he called the 'perfervids' of the London Burns Club and their newly established Vernacular Circle which aimed to promote the use of the Scots language in speech and writing. At this point, Grieve had ambitions to lead an avant-garde, European-influenced revival and he consid-

ered that the Vernacular Circle's attempt 'to create a Doric "boom" just now or even to maintain the existing Vernacular cult in anything like its present tendencies' could be seen only as 'a gross disservice to Scottish life and letters'.¹ Even as late as 5 August 1922, a few weeks before the launch of his *Scottish Chapbook* periodical on 22 August and his reincarnation in its third issue as the Scots-language poet Hugh MacDiarmid, he was still insisting on a Scottish literary revival through the medium of English and looking to the Irish for support. Writing this time in the *Dunfermline Press*, he emphasised that such an English-language revival 'would be no more English in spirit than the literature of the Irish Literary Revival, most of which was written in the English language, was English in spirit'.² In its first issue, the manifesto of the *Scottish Chapbook* proclaimed an intention to 'bring Scottish Literature into closer touch with current European tendencies in technique and ideation', but it is noticeable also that, despite Grieve's recent *Dunfermline Press* article, the attitude towards the Scots language appears to have softened a little. Now the 'campaign of the Vernacular Circle of the London Burns Club for the revival of the Doric' is included among the activities to be given support. By February 1923 when, as Hugh MacDiarmid, Grieve had proved through a modernistic lyric such as 'The Watergaw' that an avant-garde poetry could indeed be written in Scots, James Joyce has replaced Yeats as the Irish model, with the *Chapbook's* editorial proclaiming that 'we have been enormously struck by the resemblance—the moral resemblance—between Jamieson's Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish language and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. A *vis comica* that has not yet been liberated lies bound by desuetude and misappreciation in the recesses of the Doric: and its potential uprising would be no less prodigious, uncontrollable, and utterly at variance with conventional morality than was Joyce's tremendous outpouring'. And in March 1923, Ireland and Europe come together as inspirational forces when the Russian Dostoevsky joins the Irish Joyce as a symbol of the new linguistic potential to be found in Scots, with the Vernacular now being seen as 'a vast storehouse of just the very peculiar and subtle effects which modern European literature is assiduously seeking'.³

¹ C. M. Grieve, letters of 13 December 1921 and 27 January 1922, published in *Aberdeen Free Press* 15 December 1921 and 30 January 1922; see also Margery Palmer McCulloch (ed.), *Modernism and Nationalism: Literature and Society in Scotland 1918–1939* (Glasgow, 2004), 21–23. For convenience of access, quotations will also be referenced where relevant from this collection of primary source documents.

² C. M. Grieve, *Dunfermline Press* 5 August 1922, 6; *Modernism and Nationalism*, 23.

³ *The Chapbook Programme*, *Scottish Chapbook* inaugural issue August 1922 and subsequent

Although Joyce was to remain a literary and linguistic inspiration to MacDiarmid himself, culminating in the long ‘vision of world language’ poem *In Memoriam James Joyce*, published in 1955 but rooted in the 1930s, the Irish influence on Scottish cultural affairs shifted in the later 1920s and early 1930s to a more general preoccupation with the Celtic heritage of the Scottish Highlands and a shared Gaelic language; and, among some activists, to the possibility of adopting a Celtic identity for a regenerated Scotland as a whole. Whether those attracted to the Celtic identity idea saw it as an imaginative symbol or—as Ruaridh Erskine of Marr argued in his book *Changing Scotland*—saw the adoption of the Gaelic language throughout Scotland as a marker of an identity distinct from England, all were united in their insistence that this new Celtic revival would have no connection with the late nineteenth-century Celtic revival promoted by William Sharp and his *alter ego* Fiona Macleod. *Lyra Celtica*, an anthology of Scottish and Irish Gaelic poetry edited in 1896 by Sharp’s wife Elizabeth with an Introduction and Notes by Sharp himself, was reprinted in 1924, thus bringing it into back into currency alongside the new ideas about the reshaping of Scotland. However, Sharp’s belief in ‘the re-birth of the Celtic genius in the brain of Anglo-Celtic poets and the brotherhood of dreamers’ and his characterisation, via Mathew Arnold and Ossian, of the Celts as a people ‘who went forth to the war, but they always fell’,⁴ were not positions acceptable to the new Celticists, as one angry letter in the correspondence pages of the *Scottish Educational Journal* in January 1926 made clear. Reminding readers that ‘it was a Celt who acted as tutor to Julius Caesar’, Donald A. Mackenzie from the Black Isle provided a roll-call of his distinguished countrymen, among them explorers, statesman and military men as well as the geologists Hugh Miller and Sir Roderick Murchison and the ‘great translator’ Sir Thomas Urquhart. For this modern Black Isle Celt, ‘the nineteenth century nonsense about the “Celtic temperament”, the “Celtic gloom” and “Celtic dreamers” should be flung into the nearest ashbin with other rubbish’.⁵

What was perceived as being more relevant to the needs of contemporary Celticists was Daniel Corkery’s *The Hidden Ireland*, published in 1924, a book which drew parallels between Irish and Scottish Highland Clearances

issues; 1.7 February 1923, 183; 1.8 March 1923, 210. *Modernism and Nationalism*, xii, 27–28.

⁴ William Sharp, ‘Introduction’, *Lyra Celtica: An Anthology of Representative Celtic Poetry* (1896: Edinburgh, 1924), xxxv, xliii.

⁵ Donald Mackenzie, ‘A Celt’s Protest’, *Scottish Educational Journal* 15 January 1926, 77–8. *Modernism and Nationalism*, 276.

and argued for a national and a vernacular literature as opposed to traditions derived from the classical Renaissance, an influence Corkery saw as inimical to the development of an indigenous culture. Such a view fitted well with the new emphasis in Scotland on the importance of both Scots and Gaelic, while Corkery's discussion of the Irish *aisling* tradition provided MacDiarmid in particular with background material for the Celtic sections of *To Circumjack Cencrastus*, the long poem which in 1930 followed *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*.

Although he was not himself a Gaelic speaker, the Highland novelist Neil M. Gunn was also a keen defender of Scotland's Celtic heritage, drawing for his imaginative recreations of Highland life not only on recent Scottish history but on Corkery, on the Irish folk legends of Finn MacCoul and on the Celtic material in Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* which was re-issued in a one volume edition abridged by the author himself in 1922. Gunn was positive about developments in Ireland, believing that Dublin could provide Scotland with the motivation to work for 'the continuance of a living Gaelic spirit'.⁶ Gunn is best known for his fiction writing, but during the 1930s in particular his factual investigations of economic and social conditions in the Highlands, published in articles in the *Scots Magazine* under the editorship of J. B. Salmond, brought these conditions to a wider audience, interacting with and corroborating other Highland studies of the time. Other writers took up the question of the decline of the Gaelic language, with Fionn MacColla, himself a Gaelic learner, pointing the Scots towards Wales for an active policy to halt decline. MacColla's article 'Welshing the Scottish Race' was published in the *Free Man* in March 1933 and this periodical, independent of party affiliations but sympathetic to the movement for a new Scotland, frequently provided a platform in the early 1930s for discussions of the situation of Gaelic, with contributions from well-known language activists such as Erskine of Marr and from pseudonymous contributors who advocated the teaching of Gaelic in both Highland and Lowland schools. Had there been the political will and the governmental power to put even some of these language proposals into action, then we might not today be looking towards the demise of Gaelic as a spoken language. In the interwar period, however, while the Irish experience might have encouraged political aspirations and inspired practical investigations of a Celtic Scottish Highland region more often ignored by Lowlanders, without

⁶ Dane McNeil [Neil M. Gunn], 'President of Eire: The True Value of Tradition', *Scots Magazine* 29 June 1938, 180; reprinted in A. McCleery (ed.), *Landscape and Light* (Aberdeen, 1987), 187.

a considerable measure of political self-determination it was well-nigh impossible to put positive proposals into action and so effect change.

In the artistic sphere also, the practical difficulties of attempting to adopt a Celtic identity were significant. MacDiarmid's *To Circumjack Cencrastus* is the outstanding example here with its attempt to substitute the 'Brightness of Brightness' of the Irish *aisling* tradition for a Lowland Scots language and Muse. In the end, the *Cencrastus* poet has to admit defeat with his acknowledgement that:

Fain through Burns' clay MacMhaigstir's fire
To glint within me ettled.
It stirred, alas, but couldna kyth,
Prood, elegant and mettled.⁷

Yet, despite his lack of competence in the necessary Gaelic and his inability to move his own poetic identity into a Celtic context, for MacDiarmid the 'Gaelic Idea' remained a 'great creative idea', 'a dynamic myth', as he described it in the essay 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea', published in the *Modern Scot* in 1931. As early as 1923, he had written in the *Dunfermline Press* of the need to recover and teach Gaelic as well as Scots and thus encourage the kind of literature in each that might have developed had the influence of English not driven both to the margins. As editor of the *Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry*, published in 1940, he, unusually for the time, included a number of poems translated from the Gaelic 'with the assistance [. . .] of Mr Somhairle Maclean', some of which he himself had adapted.⁸ That we now take it for granted that the tradition of 'Scottish Poetry' means poetry in all three of Scotland's historical languages is to a large extent due to the renewed interest in exploring Scotland's Celtic heritage during the interwar period, an interest fuelled by what was seen as the success of Ireland in achieving self-determination and cultural realisation. Even if the everyday condition of Ireland itself was not as paradisaical as the Scottish reformers in their imaginations believed it to be, politically and culturally the example of Ireland provided them with an inspirational vision of what *might* be.

⁷ Hugh MacDiarmid, *To Circumjack Cencrastus* in A.J. Aitken (ed.), *The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid* (London, 1978), 225.

⁸ C.M. Grieve, 'The Caledonian Antisyzygy and the Gaelic Idea', *Modern Scot* 2.2/2.4 Summer/Winter 1931; reprinted in Duncan Glen (ed.), *Selected Essays of Hugh MacDiarmid* (London, 1969), 56–74; Hugh MacDiarmid (ed.), *The Golden Treasury of Scottish Poetry* (London, 1946; 1940), x.

And what about the European dimension of the revival movement? Scottish artistic culture had of course already been in 'closer touch with current European tendencies in technique and ideation'⁹ in the early years of the century when the artists Margaret and Francis Macdonald were exhibiting with Charles Rennie Mackintosh and Herbert MacNair at the Vienna Secession Exhibitions; when J. D. Fergusson was painting in the south of France under the influence of Cubism and the Fauve movement; and wealthy Glasgow businessmen and art dealers such as Alexander Reid were collecting French Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings, thus bequeathing a fine legacy to Kelvingrove Art Gallery. In the visual arts at least, Scotland in the pre-1914 period had the European dimension to its culture which the interwar literary revival movement sought to recover. And although World War One made direct contact with continental Europe difficult, European artistic and intellectual ideas continued to be disseminated in Britain as a whole through books and periodicals.

The New Age, edited in London by A. R. Orage, was an especially fruitful source of cultural information for autodidacts such as Edwin Muir and MacDiarmid. Both became contributors to the magazine which also provided MacDiarmid with a model for his own periodicals, the *Scottish Nation* in particular. Muir's first book, *We Moderns*, published in 1918 under the pseudonym of Edward Moore, began life as a series of aphorisms or short essays in the *New Age* and is notable for the way in which it communicates modernity while simultaneously struggling against it. Muir and MacDiarmid were both attracted to Dostoevsky, 'this great genius who is beginning to permeate our lives so curiously', as Virginia Woolf described him in 1917; and both were also influenced by the philosophy of Nietzsche: Muir as a means of overcoming personal tragedies after his family's move from Orkney to Glasgow in the early years of the century; MacDiarmid in relation to his mission to effect national self-determination, arguing in his *Scottish Chapbook* 'Causerie' that Nietzsche's 'Become what you are' must be the slogan of a Scottish literary revival.¹⁰

From the beginning of the revival movement, therefore, Europe was not merely a potential inspiration but already an actual presence in the minds and activities of those who were to become the leading literary figures of the interwar period. Of all the Scottish Renaissance writers, Edwin Muir was probably the one most immediately involved with Europe, both in his life and

⁹ *The Chapbook Programme, Modernism and Nationalism*, xii.

¹⁰ Virginia Woolf, 'More Dostoevsky', *Times Literary Supplement* 22 February 1917, 91; C. M. Grieve, *Scottish Chapbook* 1.8 March 1923, 24; *Modernism and Nationalism* 162, 174.

in his poetry. As a result of a contract with the American *Freeman* magazine after the success of *We Moderns*, he and his wife Willa were able to travel on the continent in the early 1920s, thus adding personal experience to knowledge derived from reading. Their stay in Germany and Austria at this time introduced Edwin to the poetry of Hölderlin, an interest which remained life-long. He was the first critic to introduce Hölderlin to an English-speaking readership through his article on the German poet in MacDiarmid's *Scottish Nation* periodical in September 1923. As a result of this first European journey, the Muirs began to earn their living by translating from German, their translations including the fiction of Franz Kafka and Hermann Broch's trilogy about the disintegration of Europe, *Die Schlafwandler* (*The Sleepwalkers*). As with his earlier contact with Hölderlin's poetry, contact with the work of Kafka and Broch had its influence on Muir's own writing, although his poetic imagery of lost ways and obscure journeys was recognisably 'Kafkaesque' before he encountered Kafka's fiction. He was strongly affected by the ideas in Broch's trilogy and by Broch's need to flee Nazi Germany, when he stayed for a time with the Muirs in St Andrews. Similarly, Muir's later wartime work with European servicemen and refugees in Edinburgh in the 1940s and the harrowing stories they brought with them fed into poetry collections such as *The Narrow Place* and *The Voyage*. Muir's late poetry in *The Labyrinth* and *One Foot in Eden* was again influenced in imagery and idea by his contact with Europe: by his experiences in Czechoslovakia after the end of the war when he was sent to Prague by the British Council; and by his subsequent, and happier, period of employment at the British Institute in Rome. Although such experiences followed after the principal interwar period of the Scottish Renaissance movement, they show the continuing importance to a writer such as Muir of his early European influences.

Others too experienced the influence of Europe in the period after World War One. MacDiarmid was always up-to-date with current artistic and intellectual ideas, many of which found their way into his long poem of 1926 *A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle*, together with adaptations of European poetry. His Scots-language lyrics demonstrate formally the combined influence of Symbolist practices and Ezra Pound's insistence on a clear, hard image. MacDiarmid admired the French poets Paul Valéry and Stéphane Mallarmé, writing at least two essays on the former and quoting Mallarmé's dictum: 'Ce n'est pas avec des idées qu'on fait des vers, c'est avec des mots' – a maxim that on the surface at least seemed to fit with his own insistence in the *Penny Wheep* poem 'Gairmscoile' that 'it's soon' no' sense that faddoms the herts

o' men'.¹¹ The musician Francis George Scott had been interested in avant-garde European composers such as Schoenberg since the pre-World War One period and the settings of MacDiarmid's Scots lyrics he composed in the early 1920s show the influence of modernist musical forms. In painting, William McCance and his wife Agnes Miller Parker, although working in England in the interwar period, were drawn into the Scottish movement, supporting the idea of a national but modern new Scottish art. William McCance's work in particular shows the influence of the French Cubists and the machine-oriented compositions of Fernand Léger.

In addition to such specific interests and influences, awareness of the new psychological ideas of Freud and Jung is present explicitly or implicitly in much of the best writing of the period by both male and female writers, as is Bergson's writing on duration and memory and Proust's fictional representation of this in *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In a late essay, written in 1962, Neil Gunn remembered 'reading the Parisian magazine *Transition* in the Highlands when James Joyce's "Work in Progress" was appearing in its pages', while Catherine Carswell had written on 'Proust's Women' as early as 1923.¹² It is a Frenchman, Professor Denis Saurat, friend of the Muirs, F.G. Scott and MacDiarmid, who is usually credited with giving the literary revival movement its name through his essay 'Le groupe de "la Renaissance Écossaise"', published in the *Revue Anglo-Américaine* in 1924 – although Grieve/MacDiarmid had himself used the phrase 'Scottish Renaissance' in a comparison with the Belgian Literary Revival in the first issue of his *Scottish Chapbook* in 1922. And in contrast to the contemporary, avant-garde European connections described above, Alexander Gray's Scots-language translations of German and Danish ballads and folk song made manifest a shared European folk tradition which stretched back into the pre-print world.

While the 1920s were on the whole dominated by the literature and language debates of the literary revival movement, in the later years of the decade and in the 1930s discussion turned more and more to the condition of Scotland and to economic, social and political affairs through periodical articles and books such as George Malcolm Thomson's *Caledonia* and *Scotland: That Distressed Area*, Andrew Dewar Gibb's *Scotland in Eclipse*, Edwin Muir's

¹¹ C.M. Grieve, 'Paul Valéry', *New Age* 1 December 1927, 54, *Modernism and Nationalism*, 181; Hugh MacDiarmid, 'Gairmscoile', *Complete Poems*, 74.

¹² Neil M. Gunn, 'Scottish Renaissance', *Scottish Field*, August 1962, 34, *Landscape and Light*, 97–98; Catherine Carswell, 'Proust's Women' in *Marcel Proust: An English Tribute* (London, 1923), 66–77; *Modernism and Nationalism*, 195–98.

Scottish Journey, David Cleghorn Thomson's *Scotland in Quest of her Youth* and many others. As mentioned earlier, this was also an important period for the investigation of Highland decline and the decline of the Gaelic language. In a way this deluge of writing about the condition of Scotland— even if many of its findings were negative—could be seen as confirming a considerable degree of success in the literature-based revival of the 1920s. Many of these 'condition of Scotland' books emanated from London publishers and in October 1933, for example, the *Spectator* magazine announced an editorial policy of regular coverage of Scottish matters because 'developments are in progress in Scotland that are far too little understood or discussed outside Scotland'. While some of these 'developments' were literary— 'the cultivation of Gaelic and the conscious development of a modern Scottish literature are movements demanding not only observation but discussion'— others included the growing concern about the economic and social governance of the country.¹³ Scottish affairs generally appeared to have moved into a higher position on the British agenda as a consequence of the literary revival and its post-North British objectives.

Yet, with MacDiarmid in Whalsay for much of the 1930s and the small magazines he had initiated in the 1920s having ceased publication, it might seem as if in Scotland itself the literary renaissance had entered a quieter phase. On the other hand, in the early 1930s in particular, the *Modern Scot*, edited in St Andrews by the American James Whyte, took over the avant-garde role played earlier by Grieve/MacDiarmid's periodicals, re-emphasising the complementary connection between nationalism and internationalism and declaring its intention to strengthen contacts with Europe directly by publishing translations of works by contemporary foreign writers. It was the *Modern Scot's* successor, *Outlook*, which in the summer of 1936 published pre-publication excerpts from Edwin Muir's controversial *Scott and Scotland*, thus re-igniting the language arguments of the 1920s and causing a breach between Muir and MacDiarmid which was never healed—a quarrel detrimental to Scottish criticism, for Muir had been one of the few critics to write with understanding about MacDiarmid's modernist poetry.

European concerns took a darker turn after the coming to power of Hitler in 1933 and this was reflected in cultural as well as political publications. As early as the summer of 1931, an anonymous review of Wyndham Lewis's *Hitler* in the *Modern Scot* criticised what the reviewer saw as the irresponsibility of Lewis's attitudes towards the Nazis; and in the Winter 1932 issue, the editor

¹³ Editorial article, *Spectator*, 6 October 1933, 434.

himself contributed an interesting analysis of the implications of *nationalist* as opposed to *national* art. Writers who in earlier years had found themselves inspired by the intellectual and artistic ideas of the continent, now found themselves involved in its political crises. In May 1932 Willa Muir wrote to Helen Cruickshank, secretary of Scottish PEN, about the conditions she and Edwin had found when they went as delegates to the International PEN conference in Hungary. She told of a man tortured for distributing socialist pamphlets before the start of the conference and wrote: 'the general atmosphere is filled with hatred, revenge and cruelty [. . .] I spent Thursday afternoon of Congress week in roaring and greeting in my bedroom over the state of Central Europe'.¹⁴ In 1934, Catherine Carswell was one of a group of women asked to go to Berlin to help look after the mother of the communist leader Dimitroff when he was on trial in relation to the Reichstag fire, and in 1938 she was attempting to organise a settlement scheme in the Scottish Highlands for Austrian refugees from Nazi persecution. In 1938 also, MacDiarmid dedicated his anti-Chamberlain poem about the Munich Agreement jointly to Carswell and the Czech writer Karl Čapek, while Eric Linklater and Willa and Edwin Muir wrote an open letter about the shame of Munich and called for a return to the pledges of the League of Nations. The Muirs, Linklater, Carswell, MacDiarmid, William Soutar and Naomi Mitchison were among sixteen prominent literary Scots who wrote a joint letter to several newspapers in July 1938 appealing for funds for the 'ancient peoples of Catalonia and the Basque country' in the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War.¹⁵ More controversially, perhaps, Neil Gunn's defence of his decision to allow the translation of his novels into German appeared to follow the PEN organisation's belief that literature 'should remain common currency between nations in spite of political or international upheavals'. In May 1938, Gunn wrote to the novelist James Barke who had attacked the translation of *Butcher's Broom* into German:

If I honestly feel that there is something of our common humanity in *Butcher's Broom*, should I not want Germans and other peoples to read it as well as my own people? For the Germans as a people, a folk, I have always had a deep respect, and feel that I owe them something for the hours of intense delight I have got out of their music alone. How on earth are we to let the Germans or the Russians or other peoples know

¹⁴ Willa Muir, letter to Helen Cruickshank 26 May [1932] in P. H. Butter (ed.), *Selected Letters of Edwin Muir* (London, 1974), 74.

¹⁵ See e.g. 'Spanish Relief Appeal', *Scotsman*, 16 July 1938, 15.

that we believe we are all of the common people unless we contrive to let them know?¹⁶

A commitment to nationalism and internationalism was no idealistic, abstract theory in these difficult years, but a belief demanding difficult decisions in both creative work and everyday life.

In conclusion, what I personally find so stimulating about interwar writing—both creative writing and non-fiction prose writing—is the commitment, intellectuality and imaginative vitality of its debates. Yes, these writers were often contradictory thinkers, sometimes even *daft* thinkers; but their capacity to respond to new ideas, to utilise the dynamic of change to engage fully and idealistically with both literature and politics was an essential ingredient in their attempt to reshape their country. And as we have seen, for these writers nationalism and internationalism were not polarities, but were two sides of the one coin. Their ideological position—or positions, for there was a spectrum of colours within their overall belief system—has been much misunderstood by cultural commentators in our own time who persist in seeing the interwar revival in terms of narrow nationalism, or an attraction to fascism or a retreat from historical reality into some mythical golden age of the past. Yet even a modest perusal of the primary sources for the period—both creative and discursive writing—should demonstrate that this is a falsification of ideas and perspectives which were coming freshly to these Scottish writers from the cultural revolution we now call the modernist period, and which they were assimilating, analysing and reinterpreting in relation to their own needs and traditions. And in the political sphere, it is important to remember that terms such as ‘fascism’ or ‘communism’ did not mean the same to those living in the period immediately after the end of World War One as they do to us whose historical understanding includes the Hitler War and the Cold War. We ourselves need to learn to read historically, as opposed to putting the imprint of our present times on the past.

With regard to the influence of Ireland and Europe in interwar Scotland, it seems to me that the cultural and political influences of Europe probably played a more actual and more lasting part in the shaping of the ideas of those associated with the Scottish Renaissance movement and their imme-

¹⁶ Charter of International P.E.N., adopted by Scottish Centre when formed in 1927 and included in official publications of the Centre; letter from Neil M. Gunn to James Barke, 21 May 1938, James Barke archive, Mitchell Library, Glasgow; *Modernism and Nationalism*, 322, 372.

diate successors than did admiration of the achievements of Celtic Ireland and the inspirational vision of a possible Celtic identity for Scotland—a vision which did have a partial success in the new focus it encouraged on the Scottish Highlands and on the need to halt the decline of Gaelic, but which in wider practical terms posed problems which could not readily be overcome. Yet as we begin a new century, it appears as if the southern Irish, with their success in Europe and at home, might once again act as an inspiration to the Scots to find confidence in ourselves as a self-determining nation; and to find confidence also in our membership of a European community of nations to which we culturally and politically belong, yet to which—as with British responses as a whole—we seem reluctant to commit ourselves unreservedly. We present-day Scots have still much to learn from the interwar period, its writers and their contemporaneous influences, about how to engage more actively both with the condition of Scotland and with relationships in the wider world.

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‘Crossing Swords with W. B. Yeats’: Twentieth Century Scottish Nationalist Encounters With Ireland

Bob Purdie

About fifteen years ago, on occasional Sunday afternoons, I would appear on the platform of the London Branch of the Scottish National Party at Speakers’ Corner, Marble Arch. One of our regular hecklers was an old Irishman and whenever he appeared I would declaim, ‘we are committed to entirely peaceful methods, the SNP would rather fail to achieve its objectives than ever to use violence’. He would splutter in outrage; ‘yer a bunch of cowards, ye’ve no guts’, and on one occasion ‘they’ll partition ye’. He was experiencing what, I believe, is called ‘cognitive dissonance’ by trying to read Scottish nationalism through an Irish prism. This paper is about cognitive dissonance the other way round; about how Scottish nationalists misunderstood Ireland.

Scotland and Ireland are alike in many ways and Scots and Irish have settled in each other’s countries and influenced each other for centuries, but there are also significant differences. Both have a Celtic cultural heritage; both have had a land question; both have been deeply divided on religious questions; both have an unresolved problem in their political relationship to the United Kingdom. But in Scotland land agitation took place in the geographically and economically marginal Highlands and most speakers of Gaelic are Calvinists not Catholics. The Irish union was made in the colonial era and was complete with a Viceroy; the Secretary of State for Scotland was a member of the Cabinet and an MP for a Scottish constituency. The Irish Union was often perceived as a conquest. Objections to Scotland’s union were that the spirit and letter of the Treaty were ignored by an English dominated government and parliament. In both Ireland and Scotland, the terms ‘independence’ and ‘Home Rule’ were often used interchangeably, but in Ireland it was Unionists who did so, to try to block constitutional change; in Scotland nationalists elided the terms, to get momentum for constitutional change.

In middle of the nineteenth century the most important religious conflicts in Scotland were within Presbyterianism, not between Catholics and Protestants. And Episcopalians were not a privileged establishment, they were a remnant of Jacobitism only recently freed from penal laws. Most Catholics were immigrants, not dispossessed natives. The potato famine of 1845–9

struck the Highlands but assistance was continued when aid to Ireland was cut off and serious levels of mortality were averted. The Highland famine was a trigger for clearing estates, but the landlords were native, in fact often the chiefs of the clans who were being sent into exile. So that the Highland Clearances were remembered as a class more often than as a national grievance.

By the end of the nineteenth century the overwhelming majority of the population of Scotland lived in an industrial and urban society. The leaders of the Scottish Labour Movement had created a united front with industrial communities in England and Wales, often taking leading positions in London. Scots were helping to expand, administer and defend the British Empire. Liberal Unionists had united with paternalistic Tories in a Scottish Unionist Party which usually did not exploit sectarian issues. And between 1850 and 1950 there were five Scottish Prime Ministers of the UK, Liberal, Tory and Labour.

Scotland was British in a way that many Irish Unionists saw as a model for their country. But a nationalist movement began to grow in the 1920s and now, in the three hundredth year of the Act of Union, Scotland has never been closer to leaving the UK. Scottish nationalism can be read as a counter-factual version of Irish nationalism. Most nationalists are Protestants; Nationalism and Unionism are two points on a continuous spectrum; cultural nationalism is, for the most part, outside politics. Language has not been a divisive issue and Scotland's territorial boundaries are not in dispute. Fenianism never existed. Few Scottish nationalists have been republicans and Jacobites have been more prevalent than Jacobins.

This paper will examine some of the ways in which Scottish nationalists responded to Irish nationalism in the first half of the twentieth century. I will show that Ireland had an important influence before 1922, but that the Scots had great difficulty in interpreting events after the Treaty. Even when Scottish nationalists directly copied Ireland, different conditions led to different outcomes. I will be looking at the first half of the twentieth century, when the weakness of the national movement in Scotland made Ireland an important inspiration and example. I will look at five aspects:

1. The Scots National League, the National Party of Scotland and Sinn Féin
2. James Connolly, John MacLean, Erskine of Mar and 'Celtic Communism'
3. Hugh MacDiarmid and Irish writers
4. Wendy Wood, Cumann na mBan, the IRA and the Stone of Destiny

5. Scottish nationalist perceptions of Northern Ireland and partition.

I ought to say at the outset that Ireland is only one external influence. Scotland looks east as well as west, and it has longstanding cultural links with Scandinavia. It has been influenced by France, because of the Auld Alliance against England, and Scots have traded with and lived in a wide swathe of northern Europe. And of course Scotland shares an island with England and Wales. But my paper is justified because the political influence of Ireland has not been thoroughly investigated by Scottish and Irish historians.

Modern Scottish nationalism began in London in 1910 when former members of the Highland Land League launched 'Comunn nan Albanach Lunnainn', named in English 'the Scots National League, London'. It declared:

The Gaelic spirit must be revived within us. The fire and enthusiasm that should characterise the dweller among the hills must be welded with the sturdiness and perseverance of the peasant farmer of Lowlands. For this union we must work. Our aim, our ideal should be a Scottish Scotland.

It ended:

Had we the spirit of the men of the Covenant, or of those who followed Montrose or Tearlach Og, we should made short work ere this of the iniquitous and alien land system which has converted millions of acres of cultivated land into a domain for wild beasts. Finally we must set up once more a Scottish Parliament for the conduct of Scottish affairs. It is only by working on these lines that Scotland can become A NATION ONCE AGAIN.¹

The phrase 'A Nation Once Again' and the design of its programme for a bi-lingual concert in 1912, shows how deeply an Comunn was influenced by the 'Irish Ireland' movement. By 1914 it was no longer active, but the Land Settlement Act of 1919 broke up many large Highland estates and distributed land to the crofters, releasing energies that had previously been channelled through the Highland Land League. In 1920 two of the founders of an Comunn, William Gillies and the Hon. Ruairidh Erskine of Mar, were founders of the London Branch of a new Scots National League, which had

¹ Kensington, Kenneth MacKenzie, *The Booklovers' Resort* n.d. 1910.

seven branches, of which London was by far the largest and Gillies and Erskine were President and Vice President of the SNL as a whole.

Gillies was born in Galloway and was taken to London as a child by his businessman father. He taught himself Gaelic and wrote under the name 'Liam Mac Gille Iosa'. He had been active in the Highland Land League, through which he had formed a friendship with Art O'Brien of the Irish Self Determination League; the largest Irish exile nationalist organisation. Erskine was a Catholic from a Highland recusant family and a fervent Jacobite. He was born in Brighton and brought up in Edinburgh where he learned Gaelic from his Hebridean nanny. At the age of 23 he had become President of the Scottish Home Rule Association, but soon moved to a pro-independence stance. He too had close ties with Irish nationalism and claimed to have accompanied Parnell on his last speaking tour. Both men moved to the left in the 1920s, influenced by the Bolshevik revolution in Russia.

The London Branch held its first public meeting on 26 February 1921. 'There in the heart of imperialist England', it was reported, 'Scotland's blue banner was unfurled. The audience assembled to the inspiring strain of the bagpipes'. Speakers included the Secretary of the London Branch of the Highland Land League and Cathal O'Shannon, the Irish socialist, trade unionist and comrade of James Connolly, who was described as an Ulster Scot and called for unity among the Celtic peoples. The meeting ended with 'Scots Wha Hae' and 'Auld Lang Syne'.² The Glasgow and Edinburgh branches were not formed until a year later and since the SNL only ever had seven branches, the London Branch provided the bulk of the League's finance as well as some of its leading members.

In August 1921 William Gillies responded to the Irish truce with a plea for Scots to act; 'Let the SNL move, or for that matter any other league that has for its object the Independence of Scotland, but for God's sake move, be up and doing'.³ The fervency of his call was not matched by clarity about what, exactly, the action should be. But it is known, from correspondence in the papers of Art O'Brien, that he and Erskine were promoting a secret military organisation called 'Fianna na h-Alba'. However they dropped the idea when Michael Collins advised them that they were far too weak to have any hope of success.⁴

In October 1921 the 'Irish-Ireland' societies in London invited leading members of the SNL to attend a rally in the Albert Hall, to greet the

² *Liberty*, April 1921.

³ *Liberty* August 1921

⁴ <http://www.siol-nan-gaidheal.com/gillies.htm> 17/01/07

representatives who had come to over to negotiate with the British government.⁵ The SNL welcomed the Treaty, with reservations, as a much greater offer than anything the Irish had hitherto achieved. Some members responded by becoming more intransigent; 'we who have done so little, shall reap much from the sacrifices of our compatriots in Ireland', wrote H. C. MacNeacail in January 1922. 'England's offer to them has sent our national movement forward by leaps and bounds. IT HAS KILLED HOME RULE FOR SCOTLAND ONCE AND FOR ALL . . . As for Dominion status, faugh! the thought is ludicrous'.⁶ Lewis Spence wrote a passionate plea for independence in the *Edinburgh Evening News*. He claimed that only fear of an extended conflict in Ireland had moved the British government. He warned against assuming a benign attitude to Scottish demands. England needed Scotland as a dump for its surplus population and 'only the threat of separation will avail if we are to obtain even a minimum of self-government'.⁷

However Scottish nationalists could make little sense of a Civil War over a Treaty, which gave more than they had dreamed possible for their own country and the emphasis of the SNL swung from Highland to Lowland and from Gaelic revivalism to political action. It adopted a strategy of trying to get a majority of nationalist MPs elected, who would withdraw from Westminster to set up a Scottish parliament; on the model of Sinn Féin in 1918. But it was claimed that the idea was first put forward by Lockhart of Carnwath, a Jacobite opponent of the 1707 Union. Fighting elections needed a political party and, in 1928, the SNL merged with the Scottish Home Rule Association and other groups to create the National Party of Scotland.

The SNL had imitated Sinn Féin; but in Ireland the electoral competition was between nationalists, while in Scotland nationalists were vying for votes with Unionist parties, particularly Liberals and Labour. They found that the only effective way to maximise their vote was to respond to the issues that concerned voters; and these were rarely those that obsessed the nationalists. So the leadership of the NPS was taken over by douce Presbyterian Lowlanders and the flamboyant Highland, or would-be Highland, romantics were pushed aside.

The new party fudged the difference between independence and Home Rule and divisions appeared in 1932, when a group of Scottish notables launched the Scottish Party. The leadership of the NPS considered that its members,

⁵ *Liberty*, December 1921

⁶ *Liberty*, January 1922

⁷ 2 January 1922

which included the Duke of Montrose and a clutch of professors and businessmen, had the social standing and contacts that could boost the influence and credibility of nationalist politics. But the Scottish Party was devolutionist and much more right wing than the NPS. This created a suspicion in the minds of many NPS members that the leadership intended to coax them into the fold by making significant political concessions.

The London Branch was in the forefront of opposition to a merger and at the 1933 NPS conference it was disbanded and two of its leading members, Angus Clark, (a Highland Land League veteran) and W. D. McColl, were expelled. They had campaigned against a new form of words about the Empire. The Scottish Party wanted Scotland and England to have joint responsibility for running the Empire and the NPS adopted the statement: 'Scotland shall share with England the rights and responsibilities they, as Mother Nations, have jointly created and incurred within the British Empire'. For Clark and McColl this would reduce Scotland to the status of Ulster. They accused the leadership of a mistaken assumption that 'any form of government for Scotland must include this higher executive or Imperial control', which had been rejected by dominion governments such as Canada.⁸

In his autobiography the leader of the NPS, John McCormick, claimed that the London Branch and those NPS members who shared their outlook, 'seemed to me to look at Scotland through green spectacles and despite a complete lack of historical parallel, to identify the Irish struggle as their own'.⁹ But by this time Erskine of Mar had dropped out of politics and William Gillies was dead, so that the leaders who were closest to Ireland had left the scene. It seems more likely that McCormick and the leadership found it useful, in convincing the rest of the Party, to associate the London Branch with its Sinn Féin enthusiasm of 1910–22.

As for the Scottish Party, some of its key members came from a split in the Glasgow Cathcart Unionist Association and it wanted, as the Beaverbrook journalist, George Malcolm Thomson, put it, 'nationalism for Tories'. His book *Caledonia*, published in 1927,¹⁰ imagined a Scotland of the future that has been taken over by Irish immigrants who have extinguished Scottish culture and driven out the native Scots. He shared his anti-Irish sentiments with Andrew Dewar Gibb who, in his *Scotland in Eclipse* of 1930, described Irish immigration as a, 'national evil of the first importance' and claimed that the

⁸ *Scots Independent*, April 1933

⁹ *The Flag in the Wind* (London, Gollancz, 1955), 67

¹⁰ George Malcolm Thomson, *Caledonia* (London, 1927)

Irish were responsible for most of the crime in Scotland and for, 'dirty acts of sexual baseness'.¹¹ They were:

. . . immeasurably inferior in every way, but cohesive and solid, refusing obstinately, at the behest of obscurantist magic-men, to mingle with the people whose land they are usurping; unaware of, or if aware, disloyal to all the finest ideals and ambitions of the Scottish race: distinguished by a veritable will to squalor which is mainly responsible for Scottish slumdom.¹²

Other nationalists argued that the Irish were victims of poverty and discrimination. For the poet Christopher Murray Grieve, better known by his pen name 'Hugh MacDiarmid', they had the potential to return Scotland to its Celtic roots. Catholics like Erskine of Mar and Compton Mackenzie, but also MacDiarmid, who nearly converted to Catholicism during his army service, thought they were a useful counterpoint to Scottish Calvinism. It is worth noting that, if you replace the term 'Irish' in the above quotations with 'English', it would strongly resemble Lewis Spence's fulminations against immigration from south of the Border.

The price of unity with the Scottish Party was a secret deal to expel or exclude those SNL members who were deemed to be associated with pan-Celtic nationalism and this included MacDiarmid, who was suspected, probably unjustly, of fomenting opposition behind the scenes.¹³ In fact the merger did not boost the SNP's electoral fortunes and most former Scottish Party members drifted away, so that the SNP was composed, very largely, of former NPS members. But by then the influence of Irish nationalism had, for the most part, been purged from the party's system.

Home Rule had been part of the programme of the Scottish Labour Party of 1888. In this period the labour movement straddled two different strategies. The first was an alliance with other Scottish social groups on issues such as freedom of the Kirk from state interference, restrictions on the licensed trade, women's suffrage, and trade union rights. The land question in the Highlands was one of the most important unifying issues and

¹¹ Andrew Dewar Gibb, *Scotland in Eclipse* (London, 1930), 55.

¹² Quoted in Bruce Armstrong, (ed.) *A People Without Prejudice?: The Experience of Racism in Scotland* (London, 1989).

¹³ R. J. Finlay *Independent & Free, Scottish Politics and the Origins of the Scottish National Party 1918–1945* (London, 1994), 109.

it connected Scottish radicalism to Irish nationalism, with another common link in Home Rule. But Labour's main strategy came to be the construction of an urban working class alliance within the UK and this was implicitly Unionist.

In 1893, when the Scottish Labour Party merged with the newly formed Independent Labour Party, this strategy won out. Labour had made bigger political advances in England and Wales and Keir Hardie argued that the Liberal government was using its conflict with the Lords over Irish Home Rule as an excuse to withhold social reform. The Executive of the Scottish Labour Party reported in 1893:

Without deprecating the importance of Home Rule to the people of Ireland, it is of minor importance to the people of this country, and not to be compared with social legislation in the interests of the unemployed, and any attempt to make this latter question subserve the convenience of Home Rule or anything else will be bitterly resented.¹⁴

In any case Irish immigrants had been a block vote used to pressurise the Liberals and Labour got very little support from them before 1922. After the Treaty the hierarchy and community leaders decided that Labour was the best vehicle for Irish and Catholic interests. So, although Hardie never repudiated Home Rule for Scotland, it was sidelined and this was one reason for the emergence of a nationalist party in 1928. Scottish nationalists often dreamed about getting the Irish vote on their side, but as Labour became more Unionist the Irish community became more solidly Labour.

One strategy for appealing to the Irish was to imitate Irish social republicanism. After the Civil War, left wing Irish nationalists like Constance Markievicz, J.R. White and Roddy Connolly wrote in the Glasgow socialist newspaper *Forward* and in Scottish nationalist periodicals like the *Standard* and the *Scots Independent*. They often cited James Connolly and his Edinburgh origins. But he had never endorsed Scottish self-government and his influence on Scottish social republicanism was posthumous. The main influence was the Glasgow Marxist of Highland descent, John MacLean.

MacLean had been imprisoned for his stand against the war and he had defended the independence movements in Ireland and India, as well as the

¹⁴ Quoted in David Lowe, *Souvenirs of Scottish Labour* (Glasgow, 1919), 117.

Russian revolution. He was appointed Soviet Consul in Glasgow, but developed an independent Marxist interpretation of Scottish conditions, which made him refuse to join the infant Communist Party. The late Walter Kendall explained his thinking:

MacLean's strategical view formed a unified whole. Scotland dominated by the industrial heartland of the Clyde valley was nearer to socialism than England. Glasgow then should strike the first blow . . . Scotland was by culture, history and tradition a separate nation. The revolution then must begin with the formation of a specifically Scottish Communist Party which would initiate the Scots revolution and set off the powder train in the rest of Britain.¹⁵

In 1920 he issued a leaflet headed 'All Hail the Scottish Workers Republic!' and in 1923 he founded the Scottish Workers Republican Party. The following are key passages from the leaflet:

For some time past the feeling has been growing that Scotland should strike out for national independence, as well as Ireland and other lands. This has recently been strengthened by the English Government's intention to rely mainly on Scottish troops to murder the Irish race. . . .

. . . Scotland must again have independence, but not to be ruled over by traitor chiefs and politicians. The communism of the clans must be re-established on a modern basis. (Bolshevism, to put it roughly, is but the modern expression of the communism of the *mir*.) Scotland must therefore work itself into a communism embracing the whole country as a unit. The country must have but one clan, as it were – a united people working in co-operation and co-operatively, using the wealth that is created.

We can safely say, then: back to communism and forward to communism.¹⁶

And he reminded the Irish in Scotland that 'communism prevailed amongst the Irish clans . . . ' so that by allying with Scottish socialist republicans they would be 'carrying forward the traditions and instincts of the Celtic race'.¹⁷

¹⁵ *The Revolutionary Movement in Britain 1900–21* (London, 1969), 286.

¹⁶ Nan Milton (ed.), *John MacLean, In the Rapids of Revolution* (London, 1978), 217–8.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

This was an imaginative reworking of ideas Connolly had expressed, inspired by Alice Stopford Green:

In the re-conversion of Ireland to the Gaelic principle of common ownership . . . the worst obstacles to overcome will be the opposition of the men and women who have imbibed their ideas of Irish character and history from Anglo-Irish literature. . . . One of these . . . is a belief in the capitalist system of society; the Irishman frees himself . . . when he realises the truth that the capitalist system is the most foreign thing in Ireland.¹⁸

Connolly was actually making a propaganda point against the claim that socialism was a foreign importation and he was not advocating a form of 'Celtic Communism'. MacLean and Connolly had not been close before 1916, because they were in different Marxist factions and MacLean was mainly influenced by his friend Erskine of Mar. He had a short lived alliance with the SNL but he died in 1923 and his party did not long survive him. Most Scottish left wingers were hostile to nationalism and most Scottish nationalists were not socialists. The departure from the scene of MacLean, Mar and Gillies meant that Celtic Communist ideas died out for a decade until they were revived in the 1930s by Hugh MacDiarmid.

As pupil teacher in Edinburgh before the First World War, he had known some of Connolly's former comrades and encountered his writings. But after the war he was more influenced by French right wing nationalism than by Scottish socialism. In 1928 he argued that a 'Gaelic Commonwealth' was 'more in keeping with our national genius' than a 'Workers' Commonwealth'. The term 'Gaelic Commonwealth' came from the title of a book by William Ferris, a Catholic Priest and chaplain to the Free State Army. He was a right wing opponent of parliamentary democracy and advocated a decentralised monarchical system based on the political structures of Celtic Ireland.¹⁹

By 1934 MacDiarmid had joined the Communist Party and the 'Gaelic Commonwealth' had been transmuted into 'Celtic Communism'. In his 1966 autobiography *The Company I've Kept*, he cited Ferris as the originator of ideas put forward in Scotland by John Maclean. He had been given copies of her father's writings by Nan Mercer (later Nan Milton), Maclean's daughter. They were the basis for his 'Red Scotland' manifesto of 1935. In it he quoted Lenin's

¹⁸ James Connolly, *Labour in Ireland* (Dublin, n.d.), 6.

¹⁹ *The Gaelic Commonwealth* (Dublin, 1923).

statement that a British socialist who does not support the right of secession for Ireland and India is a 'chauvinist and annexationist', and went on 'that is absolutely unequivocal and necessarily applies to Scotland as much as to Ireland, India and etc'.²⁰

The Communist Party, he claimed, had an opportunity to absorb the oppositionists who had been excluded from the SNP, most of whom were left wingers, and to take leadership of the national movement. But the leading Scottish Communist, Peter Kerrigan, insisted that in the event of an imperialist war, unity with the workers of England and Wales would be the priority. And he claimed that Scotland was not a nation, because it failed to meet all of Stalin's criteria for nationhood. MacDiarmid did not foresee how resistant his comrades, schooled in the anti-nationalism of the Scottish left, would be to his nationalist programme, but he also misunderstood the Comintern's position on nationalism. It backed national struggles and proclaimed the right of national self-determination; but this was predicated on nationalist movements having a social base in the peasantry, who could be won over to the side of the working class, as allies in the struggle against imperialism. It was not meant to apply to nationalism in the advanced capitalist countries, where such movements were seen as reactionary.²¹

Ireland and Scotland, despite their many similarities, fell on different sides of the Comintern's dividing line. Nationalism was acceptable in Ireland because it was assumed that it was a peasant society and because of the long tradition of support from Marx, Engels and Lenin. Scotland was mainly a capitalist country. Scottish socialists had never insisted, as their Irish counterparts had done, on separate national representation at international level and, unlike the Irish socialists, the Scots had not been allies of the Bolsheviks against revisionism and reformism before 1914. Irish social republicanism was an answer a problem that did not exist in Scotland, namely how to win a new social base for an onslaught on the Treaty settlement. And for the non-Republican Irish left, it offered a way out of isolation in a profoundly anti-socialist culture. But in Scotland socialists did not need a nationalist cover and, while most nationalists were left of centre, they preferred to appeal to an idealised classless Scotland of small towns and rural communities.

MacDiarmid was expelled from the Communist Party but he did inspire

²⁰ National Library of Scotland, MS27035.

²¹ See, e.g. 'Theses on the national and Colonial Question Adopted by the Second Comintern Congress, 28 July 1920', in Jane Degras (ed.), *The Communist International 1919–1943, Documents* (London, 1971), Vol. 1, 138–44.

a minor strand of Scottish nationalism. One example was a review of Noelle Davis's *Connolly of Ireland* written in the Scots language, which appeared in the *Scots Independent* in 1946: 'Lenin was richt in walin oot Connolly in Ireland an John MacLean in Scotland as the anely significant warkin-class leaders o the 1914–18 war'. But Celtic Communism had almost been forgotten when it was fitfully revived by sections of the Scottish far left in the late 1960s and, more recently, by the Scottish Socialist Party.

MacDiarmid was the most important writer of the Scottish Renaissance, the movement of the 1920s which sought to rescue Scottish literature from the parochialism and sentimentality of the Kailyard writers of the late nineteenth century. He visited Dublin for the Tailteann Games of 1928, invited by Oliver St John Gogarty. During his stay he was mindful of possibilities for advancing the Scottish cause and thought he had made links which would get Irish votes for the NPS and an agreement with Count John McCormack to do a benefit concert. Nothing came of either project.

He was influenced by a number of Irish writers but his friendships were not predictable on the basis of politics. He met W. B. Yeats and their evening together gives me the title for this paper. In a 1977 interview he recalled walking through Dublin streets late at night with Yeats, who said:

"Well if you'll excuse me. . . I must urinate" – which he did in the middle of the road . . . And I thought to myself, well what an Irish Senator can do there's no reason why a Scottish magistrate can't do, so I crossed swords with him and we became very friendly after that.²²

He also befriended Æ who wrote a foreword for his 1931 collection of poems *First Hymn to Lenin*. But his greatest friendship was with Gogarty, who had been one of the first critics to champion his poetry and for many years after was a friend, helper and counsellor. The extent of their friendship can be measured by the fact that in 1945 Gogarty wrote a poem in Scots in his honour. MacDiarmid was doing wartime service in the Merchant Navy and, on a visit to Scotland, Gogarty made a dash to Greenock, where he just failed to get to his friend before his ship sailed. The first stanza was:

MacDiarmid fren', I sought you sairly,
And speered about you late and early;

²² Alan Bold (ed.), *The Thistle Rises* (London, 1984), 291.

Until one day I very nearly
 Met your Marine
 Wha could have told where sic a ferlie
 As you hae been.²³

Gogarty, of course, was not an opponent of the Treaty—in fact he had nearly been assassinated by the IRA. The Irish writer with whom MacDiarmid might be supposed to have most in common was Sean O’Casey, but Gogarty had been an adviser during his bitterly contested divorce case, while O’Casey gave evidence for the other side. Relations between them remained hostile until the 1960s.

MacDiarmid was grateful that Gogarty took him round the pubs in which he used to drink with James Joyce. Joyce, whom he never met, was the Irish writer who had the most important influence on MacDiarmid’s Synthetic Scots, his literary language which brought together words and phrases used in different dialects of Scots at different times, to express meanings that could not be precisely conveyed by English. As Alan Bold explains:

To MacDiarmid, dialect Scots was contaminated by the kailyard and he used Synthetic Scots, quite deliberately, as an indigenous equivalent of Joycean prose or the poetic idiom associated with Pound and Eliot. The fact that the pseudonym Hugh MacDiarmid was first used, and the first MacDiarmid lyric published in 1922 is of crucial importance: MacDiarmid’s appearance came in the creative interval between the publication of Joyce’s *Ulysses* in February and Eliot’s *The Waste Land* in October . . .²⁴

The logic of his politics might have led him to become a Gaelic revivalist, but as a Lowlander he had no Gaelic and he did not have time to learn. It was much easier for him to extend his existing Borders Scots vocabulary. But this was not, ultimately, why he chose to write in Scots. He was a philosophical essentialist and he believed that the recapture of any part of Scotland’s national essence must lead to the recovery of all of it. Scots contained many words that were derived from Gaelic and the psychological effect of using it as a literary medium would lead Scots back to their heritage, which had been stifled under

²³ *The Voice of Scotland*, June 1948, 23

²⁴ Alan Bold, *Hugh MacDiarmid: The Terrible Crystal* (London, 1983), 8–9.

the blanket of English civilisation. In effect he thought that a literature written in Scots would lead to the kind of national revival that had been advocated by the Irish language revivalists.

Making Gaelic the first official language of Scotland would have required a revolution even more sweeping than that of Ireland. It would have opened up divisions between Lowland and Highland and created enormous practical difficulties. But the Scottish Renaissance did not ask Lowlanders to supplant English as the language of everyday life. And it also implied linguistic plurality, not competition, between Scots, Gaelic and the Norn of the Orcadian and Shetland writers. MacDiarmid's literary revolution helped to blunt the political edge of the language issue and, much against his will, this strengthened the moderation of Scottish nationalism and reinforced the division between the political and the cultural.

In 1942 John McCormick took nearly half the SNP membership into his Scottish Convention, a Home Rule pressure group. After the war he had some success with the cross-party Scottish National Assembly and the Scottish National Covenant, which was signed by two and a half million Scots. Just before the war ended the SNP's electoral strategy appeared to have been vindicated, when Dr. Robert MacIntyre won the 1945 Motherwell by-election; but he was heavily defeated in the general election a few months later and in the subsequent decade nationalist candidates scored derisory votes. The SNP ploughed on, organising branches and fighting elections, but other nationalists resorted to stunts to try to attract the attention of the public. The most celebrated of these was the recovery of stolen property, at Christmas 1950, by a group of young people who liberated the Stone of Destiny from Westminster Abbey. And when the new Queen adopted the title 'Elizabeth II' shop windows decorated with these digits were broken and pillar boxes blown up. Songs about these exploits, with lyrics in broad Scots, were sung in the pubs and howffs where nationalists gathered.

Ian Hamilton and the others who retrieved the Stone were supporters of McCormick, but the most consistent perpetrators of stunts were the Scottish Patriots led by Wendy Wood. For example they burned assisted emigration forms outside the Australian consulate in Edinburgh and danced an eightsome reel on the ashes. In 1959, when the GPO refused to bring out a commemorative stamp for the bicentenary of the birth of Robert Burns, she had her own stamps printed and perforated them on her sewing machine. In 1972 she went on hunger strike demanding Home Rule, but gave way to pressure from her friends to abandon it.

She first became aware of Irish nationalism in the Basutoland bush in 1913, where she and her newly-wed husband trekked with Roger Casement's brother Tom, and she decided that the same principles must be applied to Scotland.²⁵ In 1932 she was arrested for leading a group that pulled down the Union Flag from Stirling Castle and replaced it with a Scottish Lion Rampant. As a result she was invited to Dublin by Cumann na mBan. She was thrilled by the Celtic designs on the currency, the Gaelic street names, observing a debate in the Dáil and attending a Cumann na mBan meeting, at which she understood the discussion in Irish. But she seems not to have thought it significant that she was the guest of an organisation which aimed to overthrow the political institution she had just been admiring from the gallery. She was like an amnesiac, wandering around not understanding the history of what she was seeing, but judging only on the basis of immediate impressions.²⁶

In the mid-1930s she fell in love with Amhlaidh Mac Aindreas, who was half Irish and half Scots and had, she claimed, 'served his other country actively against our common enemy'.²⁷ They shared a croft in Moidart, from which they organised a group called Comunn Airson Saorsa na h-Alba. They visited London and made contact with Jimmy Joe Reynolds, who was in charge of IRA operations in England. (He was a bomb maker whose last words, in 1938, were; 'stand back John James—there's a wee mistake'.)²⁸ They hatched a plot to liberate the Stone of Destiny with the help of the IRA, but the plan was vetoed by HQ in Dublin.²⁹ What they didn't realise was that their allies considered the Stone to be Irish and intended to take it to Ireland.³⁰

In June 1939 Comunn Airson claimed to have accepted a pact of peace between the IRA and Scotland and that the Scottish police had acknowledged that it was being kept. But they warned: 'guard should be kept in case of *agents provocateurs*. In such an event the Intelligence Department of the Organisation would be pleased to co-operate with the Police'. Mac Aindreas wrote:

We regard the Scottish police as Scots, like ourselves, whose first duty is to Scotland. We look to them as an essential part of the machinery

²⁵ Wendy Wood, *I Like Life* (Edinburgh, 1938), 141.

²⁶ Ibid., 271–7; see also Wendy Wood, *Yours Sincerely for Scotland* (London, 1970), 183–5.

²⁷ Wood, *Yours Sincerely for Scotland*, 125.

²⁸ J. Bell Boywer, *Secret Army a History of the IRA 1916–1970* (London, 1970), 153.

²⁹ Information supplied to the writer by James Monaghan, Dublin.

³⁰ Information supplied to the writer by Gery Lawless, London.

of normal life, though at present they are being forced to serve, not the Government of Scotland, but an alien legislature.³¹

Even on the furthest fringe of Scottish nationalism the forces of the state were not looked upon with a Fenian mindset. They regarded Police officers and soldiers in Scottish regiments as mistaken in serving the London government; but they were not enemies to be eliminated, they were potential allies to be persuaded.

The next encounter involved Scottish nationalists from the opposite wing of the movement. In the summer of 1934 a delegation of eight senior SNP members visited Northern Ireland, the Irish Free State and the Isle of Man, to report on the workings of their government structures. They noted that Stormont was able to keep Harland and Wolff's going while Greenock yards were closed. They were impressed by the progressive education system of Northern Ireland and its provisions for Catholic schools. The Stormont MP, George Young, told them: 'we have the shaping of our destinies as a people in our own hands, and we will never be foolish enough to go back to Westminster'. Lord Craigavon was quoted praising the benefit of a Senate and House of Commons, 'manned by Ulster stalwarts'.³²

In Dublin they contrasted the Land Commission favourably with Westminster provision for the Highlands. They praised the Vocational schools and aid to the Gaeltacht. They saw no evidence of persecution of Loyalists and quoted the Bishop of Ossory on the good relations that prevailed, between Catholics and Protestants. The Independent Senator, Colonel Sir John Keane, told them that the old Unionists no longer looked to Westminster but ranged themselves with those whose interests they shared. 'Out of this', he said, 'has emerged a new and different loyalty—a loyalty not to Westminster or to British rule, but to the larger conception of King and Commonwealth'.³³

Summing up, the delegation reported that:

The intense loyalty of Northern Ireland and the Isle of Man disposes completely of the suggestion that Self-Government involves any idea of separation from the British Commonwealth of Nations or from the Crown as the symbol of Unity. We were interested to learn from President de Valera that the Irish Free State did not wish to cut herself

³¹ *Scots Independent*, June 1939.

³² *Scots Independent*, September 1934.

³³ *Ibid.*

adrift from the British Commonwealth and that, in his opinion, the grant of Self-Government to Scotland would help in settling matters between the Free State and the United Kingdom.³⁴

They resembled nothing so much as a delegation of earnest Fabians, investigating collective farm nurseries and workers' sports centres in the USSR, and finding exactly what they went there to see. But the interesting question is, not the selectivity of their perceptions, but why they emphasised continuing loyalty to the Crown and the Commonwealth. The answer is clear when we look at the composition of the delegation.

The most prominent member was James Graham, the old Etonian Sixth Duke of Montrose who held five other hereditary titles. He was a member of the Royal Company of Archers, the Monarch's bodyguard in Scotland; he was hereditary Sheriff of Dumbartonshire; Lord Lieutenant of Buteshire; a former naval ADC to the King and a Commodore in the RNVR. He had been an Assistant Private Secretary to Chancellor of the Exchequer in the House of Lords in 1905 and president of a trade mission to Canada in 1932.³⁵ The group also included Sir Alexander MacEwen, a former Provost of Inverness who was a member of various bodies concerned with development in the Highlands.³⁶ Another was Ex-Ballie William Thomson, who later left the SNP and tried to re-establish the Scottish Home Rule Association because of his opposition to the Party's reaffirmation of independence.³⁷ And J. Kevan MacDowall, a former member of the Cathcart Unionist Association and a founder of the Scottish Party. He had been Chairman of the Imperial Union Association since 1932 and described himself as a 'Scottish Home Ruler and British Imperialist'.³⁸

So a number of them were far closer in culture and outlook to Craigavon than to de Valera. They illustrate a crucial difference with Ireland. In Scotland unionism and self-government were not polar opposites, both positions depended on a prudential calculation of what was in Scotland's interests at any given time.

Once most of the former Scottish Party members had drifted off and McCormick had defected, the door was opened for many of the expelled radicals to return and the SNP tilted back towards sympathy with Irish nation-

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ *Scottish Biographies 1938* (London, n. d.), 566.

³⁶ Ibid., 464–5.

³⁷ Jack Brand, *The National Movement in Scotland* (London, 1978), 234.

³⁸ *Scottish Biographies 1938*, 464.

alism. In 1944 a resolution was put on the agenda of the annual conference supporting the Irish campaign against partition, but it was deferred to the next conference and was then overtaken by the outbreak of war.³⁹ In the 1950 general election the charismatic nationalist Oliver Brown, stood in Greenock as a joint Scottish Nationalist and Irish Anti-Partition candidate, but gleaned only 1.77% of the vote. J. R. Campbell, the Communist candidate, got 3.3% in this chilly period of the Cold War.⁴⁰ Hugh MacDiarmid criticised Brown for alienating Protestant voters without winning Catholic support.⁴¹

In 1951 the future leader of the SNP, Arthur Donaldson wrote, under the heading 'Partition Bedevils Irish Politics', that no-one in the South now thought that force would settle the issue and that there was practical co-operation across the border.

What does annoy the Eire people and a good many in Northern Ireland too, is that they can have no real meeting as equals so long as Northern Ireland has such limited powers of self-government. On anything that's really important both have to act through London on matters which only concern the two sets of Irish. Had Northern Ireland really been given self-government—the status of self-respecting state instead of an oversize County Council—many of the problems of Partition would have been solved in fact if not in appearance.⁴²

For Donaldson, partition was a practical question that could be solved by co-operation amongst the Irish themselves, on the merits of the case. And he assumed that, once they had thought it through, Ulster Unionists would realise that they too needed real self-government and not Westminster control. He entirely missed the fact that the Irish Anti-partitionists wanted Westminster to hand over Northern Ireland to Dublin sovereignty, not to negotiate with the Unionists. And that the Unionists would have regarded any dealings with the Republic as a betrayal.

What conclusions can be drawn from all of this? First that Scottish conditions drew nationalists towards pragmatism and moderation because Scotland's perceived grievances were less extreme and the movement existed in a society in which the political structures were robust and widely accepted.

³⁹ *Scots Independent*, June 1944.

⁴⁰ www.psr.keele.ac.uk/area/uk/ge50/i10.htm 24/01/07

⁴¹ *National Weekly*, 4 March 1950.

⁴² *Scots Independent*, October 1951.

Second, because no constituency within Scotland was irrevocably opposed to self-government, not even English immigrants, all who lived in Scotland were potential allies. This meant that there was always scope for broadening support through compromise. Third, Scottish nationalism, originating in the Highland Land League was supplemented by social radicals from the Labour Movement. It was a splinter of nineteenth century Scottish Liberalism and its line of descent was from Whig opposition to absolutism. So it shared common values and methods with its main opponents. Fourth, its main grievance was constitutional. The Act of Union had allowed Westminster governments to override Scottish interests and they were ineffectively checked by a Parliament in which English votes would always prevail. The remedy was political, the return of the sovereignty surrendered in 1707. This did not require a fundamental cultural revolution and, in twentieth-century conditions, it was best pursued through existing democratic structures.

Until the 1920s the existing political parties offered channels through which these grievances might be redressed. In the late 1920s changed circumstances created a new party, which brought together cultural nationalists who imitated Ireland with devolutionists who had moved to a more radical position. But most Scots continued to think that the existing political structures offered adequate remedies. The consequence, for the nationalists, was marginality, frustration, splits and futile experiments. But all of these led them back to the conclusion that the only hope of success was through electoral activity and democratic persuasion. The strategy finally began to pay off in the late 1960s, but that falls outside the scope of my paper.

Does this history tell us anything about Ireland? I would suggest that, first, the comparatively greater support for extreme movements and strategies in Ireland must reflect its different status within the UK. Second, Ireland could not have been seen as a model by Scots if there had been no common factors. The most significant of these was alienation from London government and a Westminster Parliament that served other interests and was impervious to their protests. Thirdly, the gulf between nationalism and unionism was much wider than in Scotland because political divisions were based on religious identity. Fourthly, the fact that a stable parliamentary democracy did emerge in the 26 Counties implies that the undertow of Whig and Liberal values must also have been present within Irish nationalism. Fifthly my conclusions suggest the scope of the work that still has to be done if we are to construct a properly comparative history of Ireland and Scotland.

The Abbey: National Theatre or Little Theatre?

Nicholas Grene

In July 1906, Karel Mušek visited Ireland. Mušek, actor and regisseur with the Bohemian National Theatre in Prague, had become interested in the work of Synge, had translated *The Shadow of the Glen*, and was to play the Tramp in a production of the play at the National Theatre the following year. He spent a day walking in the Wicklow hills with Synge, met members of the Abbey company, and was packed off down to Galway to stay with Lady Gregory. At Coole he paid 'a visit to a Kiltartan cottage with Gregory' before attending 'a dinner at Tullira Castle with [Edward] Martyn and Yeats. The dinner featured a long discussion concerning the Czech and Irish national theatres'.¹

The subject was to return later in the year in a debate between the Abbey Directors on the future direction of the theatre. Yeats, dissatisfied with the acting in his verse plays, proposed an ambitious long-term plan for a theatre with a full classical repertoire:

We should keep before our minds the final object which is to create in this country a National Theatre something after the Continental pattern. This Theatre should be capable of showing its audience examples of all great schools of drama . . . Such a Theatre must [. . .] if it is to do the educational work of a National Theatre be prepared to perform even though others can perform them better representative plays of all great schools. It would necessarily look to a National endowment to supply it with resources before its work could be in any way completed upon all sides.²

¹ Karel Mušek, 'V zapadlém kraji. Črty z Erina, ostrova hoře' [In Distant Countryside. Sketches from Erin, the Isle of Sorrow], *Zvon* Vol. 7 (1907), No. 23, 362–65, No. 24, 378–81, No. 25, 388–92. I owe this reference and a summary of the contents of the article to Ondřej Pilný. A further extended article by Mušek describing his 1906 Irish visit was published in *Zlatá Praha* in 1916, prior to the Czech première of *The Playboy*.

² Ann Saddlemyer (ed.), *Theatre Business: the Correspondence of the First Abbey Directors, William Butler Yeats, Lady Gregory and J.M. Synge* (Gerrards Cross, 1982), 169–70.

Yeats dangled before his fellow Directors the prospect of an endowment of £25,000 that their patron Annie Horniman was prepared to invest in the company 'under certain circumstances'.³

Neither Gregory nor Synge rose to the bait. Synge opposed Yeats's plans particularly forcefully in his reply:

I think we should be mistaken in taking the continental Municipal [sic] Theatre as the pattern of what we wish to attain as our 'final object' even in a fairly remote future. A dramatic movement is either a) a creation of a new dramatic Literature where the interest is in the novelty and power of the work rather than in the quality of the execution, or b) a highly organised executive undertaking where the interest lies in the more and more perfect interpretation of works that are already received as classics.

He left no doubt that the Abbey should continue in category (a) and pointed out that even with the proposed new investment of capital they would still have nothing like the resources of Prague: 'Miss Horniman's money [. . .] is quite insufficient for anything in the nature of a Municipal Theatre. The Bohemian Theatre has £12,000 a year and all scenery. The interest on the £25,000 would be I suppose £800 or £900, so that for us all large schemes would mean a short life, and then a collapse'.⁴ Synge and Gregory won out, Yeats had to make do with the importation of an occasional actor and a business manager from England, an arrangement that soon fizzled out.

For James Flannery, passionate advocate of Yeats's drama, this was a tragic wrong turning for the theatre, for which he blames Gregory and Synge:

One cannot help concluding that, as much as any single cause, the intransigence, theatrical ignorance, and downright selfishness of Lady Gregory and Synge thwarted Yeats's ambitions for the early Abbey Theatre. By blocking Yeats's efforts to widen the theatrical scope of the Abbey, they effectively limited the repertoire to Irish peasant plays. In so doing, they also destroyed Yeats's hopes of receiving satisfactory productions of his own poetic plays.⁵

³ Ibid, 175.

⁴ Ibid, 178.

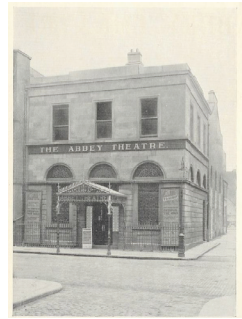
⁵ James W. Flannery, *W. B. Yeats and the Idea of a Theatre* (New Haven and London, 1976), 225.

This is a partisan reading and ignores the practical good sense of Synge's contrast between the Bohemian National Theatre and their own. A comparison of the size and scale of the two may bring home the point.

The Czech National Theatre had its origins in the mid-nineteenth century. The neo-Renaissance building, designed by Josef Zíték, took thirteen years to build. When a fire destroyed much of it after a first opening in 1881, such was the public enthusiasm that a million florins was raised for its restoration in 47 days. Its grand opening in 1883 featured the première of a specially commissioned opera by Smetana. By contrast with this enormous investment in a



purpose-built auditorium, the Abbey Theatre was created by converting the humble Mechanics Institute, previously used as music-hall, at a cost of £1300 supplied by Annie Horniman. The Abbey's tiny stage, as Chris Morash points out, 'was completely unsuited to the monumental transformations of light and space Yeats was beginning to discover in the work of Edward Gordon Craig and Adolphe Appia, but was ideal for the claustrophobic box-set of a play like *Riders to the Sea*'.⁶



But it is not only that the Abbey was a small theatre unsuited to a classical repertoire, and had nothing like the resources of the Czech National Theatre or its public support. The Abbey was in its origins a self-consciously 'little' theatre with a mission that fundamentally conflicted with its aims as a national theatre. We can see this already in the famous statement issued in 1897 by the founders of the Irish Literary Theatre, Yeats, Gregory and Edward Martyn.

We propose to have performed in Dublin in the spring of every year certain Celtic and Irish plays, which whatever be their degree of excellence will be written with a high ambition, and so to build up a Celtic and Irish school of dramatic literature. We hope to find in Ireland an uncorrupted and imaginative audience trained to listen by its passion for oratory, and believe that our desire to bring upon the stage the deeper

⁶ Christopher Morash, *A History of Irish Theatre, 1601–2000* (Cambridge, 2002), 128.

thoughts and emotions of Ireland will ensure for us a tolerant welcome, and that freedom to experiment which is not found in the theatres of England, and without which no new movement in art or literature can succeed. We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of all Irish people, who are weary of misrepresentation, in carrying out a work that is outside all the political questions that divide us.⁷

The main thrust of this is anti-colonial, nationalist rhetoric: the rejection of misrepresentation and stereotyping, the rediscovery of the national spirit – ‘the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland’ – the rejection of English cultural hegemony. But this manifesto (initially for a ‘Celtic Theatre’) was first drafted by Yeats, and Roy Foster makes it clear where he was coming from: ‘The idea derived from WBY’s acquaintance with avant-garde French theatre, a literary enterprise, expressing the ascendancy of the playwright rather than the actor-manager *à l’anglais*, like Beerbohm Tree and his “vulgar pantomime”’.⁸ Both Yeats and Martyn had had plays rejected by London theatre managements, and there was some personal animus in the phrase about the ‘freedom to experiment which is not found in the theatres of England’. That ‘freedom to experiment’, however, is perhaps better understood if we see the Irish Literary Theatre and the Abbey that was eventually to succeed it, in the context of a number of other ‘little’ theatre movements in the thirty year period before and after 1897 (see Fig 1).

The Abbey: National Theatre or Little Theatre?

Fig 1

Theatre	Directors	Playwrights	Place	Date
Théâtre Libre	André Antoine	Ibsen, Strindberg	Paris	1887
Independent Theatre	J.T. Grein	Shaw	London	1891
Moscow Art Theatre	K.S. Stanislavski	Chehov	Moscow	1898
Irish Literary Theatre	W.B. Yeats, A. Gregory	Synge	Dublin	1899
Intimate Theatre	August Falck	Strindberg	Stockholm	1907
Provincetown Players	George Cram Cook	O’Neill	New York	1916

⁷ Lady Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre* (Gerrards Cross, 3rd ed., 1972), 20.

⁸ R. F. Foster, *W. B. Yeats a Life, I The Apprentice Mage* (Oxford, 1997), p. 183.

Many of these theatres were small-scale, if not amateur affairs. The Moscow Art Theatre began rehearsing in a barn; the Irish Literary Theatre, and its successor the Irish National Theatre Society in the pre-Abbey days, performed in small halls. *Cathleen ni Houlihan* was first staged in St Teresa's Hall, normally used for temperance lectures. Some of the audience who came along for their usual demonstration of the evils of drink must have been taken aback by Yeats and Gregory's intoxicating patriotic play.⁹ The Provincetown Players started out as an amateur group doing summer seasons in the Rhode Island seaside resort that gave them their name. This was not just a matter of humble beginnings on modest resources. The 'little' theatres chose to be little by the standards of the very large auditoria that were the norm in the nineteenth century. This is most obviously the case with the Intimate Theatre, set up in 1907 in Stockholm, specifically to put on the chamber plays of Strindberg that would have been lost in the mainstream theatres.

The naturalistic plays of Ibsen and the earlier work of Strindberg were crucial to the repertoire of both Antoine's Théâtre Libre and to its London counterpart the Independent Theatre. Antoine's *Ghosts* was famous—it is one of the very few plays we know J. M. Synge actually saw in the Paris theatre—and its English-language première by the Independent Theatre in 1891 produced the deluge of critical abuse that Shaw took pleasure in collecting in his *Quintessence of Ibsenism*. To achieve the naturalistic effectiveness of plays such as these, with low-key acting and realistic mise-en-scène, small venues were needed where minimal movements and sounds could be made to count. This was the period also at which it began to be normal to dim house lights and insist on silence during the performance, revolutionary practices on which the Abbey Directors were to insist. A relatively small audience were gathered together in darkness to watch with rapt attention the intense spectacle that appeared before them on the stage. It was a far cry from the noisy, gregarious social occasion that had been the norm for visits to the theatre for most of the nineteenth century.

The ILT manifesto claimed for itself that 'freedom to experiment' that is not found in the theatres of England. 'Freedom' is another key value for all these groups: the Théâtre Libre, the Independent Theatre. The Free Theatre did not mean that one could enter without paying for a ticket. On the contrary, Antoine's theatre depended on subscriptions, just as the ILT was to depend

⁹ See Nicholas Grene, *The Politics of Irish Drama: Plays in Context from Boucicault to Friel* (Cambridge, 1999), 275.

on patrons: their manifesto was, like so many manifestoes, effectively a fund-raising letter. What these theatres were to be free of, independent of, were the demands of the market-place, the commercial ethos represented by the actor-manager—Beerbohm Tree and his ‘vulgar pantomime’. Eugene O’Neill’s father is a good case in point—James O’Neill, who starred for almost thirty years in a touring version of *The Count of Monte Cristo*. He came to hate it, but the public continued to love it, and it cleared him thirty-five to forty thousand a year, if we are to believe *Long Day’s Journey Into Night*. It was the visit of the Abbey company to New York in 1911 that helped to turn Eugene O’Neill into a playwright: ‘My early experience with the theater through my father really made me revolt against it. As a boy I saw so much of the old, ranting, artificial, romantic stage stuff that I always had a sort of contempt for the theater. It was seeing the Irish players for the first time that gave me a glimpse of my opportunity’.¹⁰

These were arthouse theatres, rejecting the popular appeal and the crass sensationalism of the commercial stage. The Moscow Art Theatre, the Irish Literary Theatre, proclaimed their values in their titles. The play in production was to be an integrated work of art, not merely a vehicle for the ego of the star actor or an occasion for the scene-designer’s ingenuity. The plays produced were to have lasting value as part of a ‘school of dramatic literature’, not just hackwriting churned out to put bums on seats. The agenda was not always the same for all of these theatres. Yeats and Gregory opposed the naturalism of Ibsen that had been the radical new style of the theatre movements in France and England. The freedom of experiment to which all the little theatres were committed involved experimentation with poetic and symbolic as well as realistic styles. The Moscow Art Theatre, spearheaded by Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko as a revolution in acting and production, had significantly different priorities than the Irish Literary Theatre, controlled and directed by the writers Yeats, Gregory and Martyn. What they all shared was the determination to pursue artistic excellence rather than box-office success as their main objective; these were elite rather than popular theatres.

The Abbey, when it was finally established in 1904, was a little theatre in every sense of the term. It had 562 seats, compared with 1400 in the Gaiety, 1950 in the Queens, two of its Dublin rivals. The cheapest seat in the house when it first opened was a shilling, twice the price of the cheap seats

¹⁰ Louis Sheaffer, *Eugene O’Neill: Son and Playwright* (London, 1968), 205.

in the other theatres, and this was a deliberate policy insisted upon by Annie Horniman, the Abbey's patron, in order to ensure a refined clientele. Chris Morash has argued, in fact, that it was the introduction of sixpenny seats and the class of people who could afford them, shortly before the production of *The Playboy* that contributed to the riotous reaction to that play.¹¹ But from the beginning, there had been a mismatch between the 'little theatre' spirit of the Irish Literary Theatre and its claims to national status. There was, for example, trouble with the Irish language lobby at its very first season in 1899. A young Padraic Pearse wrote in to *An Claidreamh Soluis*, organ of the Gaelic League, in loftily dismissive terms: 'Against Mr Yeats personally we have nothing to object. He is a mere English poet of the third or fourth rank, and as such he is harmless. When he attempts to run an "Irish" Literary Theatre it is time for him to be crushed'.¹² At this stage of course, not only were these allegedly Irish plays being produced in English, they were being acted by a company of English actors.

More fundamentally, there was the claim of the Irish Literary Theatre to 'bring upon the stage the deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland'. What were these deeper thoughts and emotions? And who was to judge what they were, the small group of upper-middle class Anglo-Irish writers running the movement, or the audience of Irish people who came to see the plays? This was at issue in the early controversies over Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* in 1899, and Synge's first staged play, *The Shadow of the Glen*, in 1903. Yeats treated the legend of the countess who sold her soul to devils to buy food for the starving peasants as a fit subject for romantic drama, in the manner of Goethe's *Faust*. But for Irish people, just half a century after the Famine, with folk-memories of soupierism, the attempted conversion of Catholics in the Protestant soup-kitchens, it was an inflammatory subject. Synge heard the story on which he based *The Shadow* from a shanachie in the Aran Islands, about as authentic a source as you could get from an Irish cultural nationalist point of view at the time. But his treatment of the young woman who finally goes off with a tramp after her old husband has pretended to be dead to catch her out in infidelity was judged a decadent, corrupt, product of the Parisian quartier Latin. For Irish middle-class nationalists the iconic figure of the peasant woman had to be shown to have middle-class standards of sexual probity.

¹¹ Morash, *History of Irish Theatre*, 130–8.

¹² Quoted by Richard Kearney, *Myth and Motherland*, Field Day Pamphlet no. 5 (Derry, 1984), 15.

In the past, the standard interpretation of these rows over the early productions of the Irish national theatre movement was to see it as a clash between the innovative drama of the playwrights and the philistine reaction of their narrow-minded nationalist audiences. As Yeats put it with spectacular offensiveness in the wake of the Playboy riots, 'the people who formed the opposition had no books in their houses'.¹³ But it can equally be seen as having its origins in the very fact of an elite, arthouse theatre setting out to fulfil the role of a national theatre. The cultural nationalism of Yeats, Gregory and Martyn was not in doubt. They all in their different ways opposed the dominance of England, looked forward to the independence of Home Rule, if not a more radical republican separatism. Still, in their manifesto, with all its nationalist rhetoric, they sought the support of Irish people 'in carrying out a work that is outside all the political questions that divide us', in other words liberal unionists as well as nationalists. Again and again, Yeats resisted the demands for a greener Abbey: 'in our theatre we have nothing to do with politics: they would only make our art insincere'.¹⁴ In the winter of 1901–2, while planning the production of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, he was still considering involvement with a London-based group called the Masquers and a project for a 'Theatre of Beauty' there.¹⁵ In 1919 Yeats addressed an open letter to Lady Gregory, sardonically entitled 'A People's Theatre', in which he publicly renounced the achievement of the Abbey. He famously declared that for the future: 'I want to create for myself an unpopular theatre and an audience like a secret society where admission is by favour and never to many'.¹⁶ This is often seen as a spectacular volte-face, associated with Yeats's switch of dramatic style to the esoteric plays for dancers modelled on the Japanese Noh. But equally it can be regarded as the emergence from latency of the values of the little theatre that had always been there in Yeats's theatrical enterprise, only masked by its national ideology.

The Czech and the Irish national theatres, on the face of it, might seem to have had a lot in common. Both were products of a cultural nationalism struggling to assert its separate identity within Empire. A theatre was one key way of expressing such a national aspiration: 'in the theatre', as Yeats was fond of misquoting Victor Hugo, 'the mob became a people'.¹⁷ Yet there were crucial

¹³ Quoted in Foster, *The Apprentice Mage*, 360.

¹⁴ Ibid, 367.

¹⁵ Ibid, 257–8.

¹⁶ W. B. Yeats, *Explorations* (London, 1962), 254.

¹⁷ See Marjorie Howes, *Yeats's Nations: Gender, Class and Irishness* (Cambridge, 1996), 71–2.

differences. In the case of the Czechs, language was central. A main objective of the Bohemian National Theatre was to provide a venue for performances entirely in Czech, where previously German-language theatre had been predominant. It was therefore not liable to attacks like that of Pearse on Yeats for using the language of the colonial power in the supposedly national theatre. More significantly, though, when Yeats proposed for the Abbey the model of the continental municipal theatre, he was reaching out to a sort of institution that had no precedent anywhere in the United Kingdom. The tradition of court theatres so common across Europe was not established in Britain. Instead there was the compromise, worked out originally by the frugal Queen Elizabeth, by which the royal household gave its countenance but not financial support to what remained a commercial entertainment industry. It was not until the 1960s that Britain belatedly got its own National Theatre, some thirty-five years after the Abbey had become the first state-supported theatre in the English-speaking world. When the Czechs set about creating a national theatre, it had to have a monumentality to match the theatres and opera-houses of the imperial centre in Vienna. To claim a separate national identity, the Czechs had to show that they too could produce the high performance art, opera and ballet as well as drama, that was the cultural indicator of nationhood, and provide the appropriate venue to stage them with due magnificence. By contrast with this situation, it was against the commercial managements of London that the Irish Literary Theatre defined itself.

This accounts for the curiously self-deprecatory tone of the manifesto. Their 'Celtic and Irish plays . . . whatever be their degree of excellence will be written with a high ambition'. Don't expect from us, they seem to be saying, the polished productions you see in London. Synge strikes the same note in the passage (quoted earlier) when he talks of the Abbey's work as 'a new dramatic literature where the interest is in the novelty and power of the work rather than in the quality of the execution'. In fact, from very early on, London critics admired the Abbey players for the freshness, simplicity and integrity of their interpretation of the Irish plays. Their reaction was like that of Eugene O'Neill, marvelling at the contrast with the barnstorming of the standard professional theatre of the time. The Abbey thus fulfilled the function of an avant-garde 'little' theatre, as a dramaturgical alternative to the mainstream. And from an international point of view what differentiated it from other theatres was its Irishness. In a sense, therefore, it could be argued that the Abbey was most successfully a national theatre when it was outside Ireland rather than within Ireland. Where Irish audiences at home might challenge the status of this small

elite group to express the 'deeper thoughts and emotions of Ireland' as a whole, in Britain and beyond, their otherness could be credited as expressive of their national difference. The little theatre in Abbey Street became a national theatre most fully and unquestionably when it staged its plays outside Ireland.

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Playing National: The Scottish Experiment

Donald Smith

This paper begins with a health warning or at least disclaimer. I can make no claim to academic detachment in relation to the process through which a National Theatre of Scotland emerged.

Having been a long-standing advocate I actively coordinated the campaign for a National Theatre of Scotland between 1992 and 1997. In 1999–2000 I co-chaired a Federation of Scottish Theatre working party on the issue and, in 2000–1, I chaired the official working party established by the Scottish Arts Council (SAC) to make recommendations to government on the form and policy of a National Theatre.

Although since July 2000 the devolved government of Scotland had been committed in principle to establishing a National Theatre, the presentation of the official report in May 2001 was followed by delay; I was asked by the SAC and the theatre organisations to convene a steering group that would be responsible for overseeing arrangements until the new organisation could be established. This happened finally in early 2004, with generous governmental funding.

Although my personal involvement is now very much scaled back, I am a Board member of the new organisation, enabling in the early stages a degree of continuity with its genesis.

Some might describe this as a journey from terrorist to cabinet member. However, the reality was more complex, presenting on many fronts Yeats' 'fascination of what is difficult'. At some points I was forced reluctantly to take the stage as a public actor; at others I grappled like a dramatist with concept and plotlines while, more often, I felt like a director struggling to make the chemistry of competing personalities and interests cohere. Throughout, however, I hope that I was guided by a number of key principles that will emerge in the course of this narrative, as Scotland moved towards playing National.

Act One: National Dramas

This is not the place to rehearse the long historical quest in Scotland for some form of National Theatre.¹ It is, however, important to recognise from the outset that this long and often frustrated search was motivated by the desire for a national drama. Various points of theatrical development have been identified with the incarnation of this holy grail, ranging from the sixteenth century achievement of Sir David Lindsay to the Theatre Royal of J. H. Murray in nineteenth century Edinburgh, to the combined efforts of Glasgow's Citizens and Edinburgh's Gateway theatres in the nineteen forties and fifties.

The national drama would by definition embody in dramaturgy, acting and production styles that which is culturally and historically distinctive about Scottish society, so imposing a weight of political as well as artistic expectation on its periodic flowerings.

The scale of such expectation in its turn exposed the lack historically of any consistent tradition of playwriting in Scotland and the weakness, or often absence, of the financial, social and political support necessary to sustain the theatrical framework for a national drama.

With the onset of state support for the arts after World War II a professional theatre that was not solely swayed by commercial pressures did emerge in Scotland. But the paradox was that the new subsidised companies were more interested in the professionalisation of theatre than they were in developing a Scottish national drama.

Such competing aspirations made twentieth century Scottish theatre an arena of conflict, though also one of considerable artistic achievement. Restless natives and changing international influences sometimes clashed and sometimes coalesced in ways that seemed to chime with Scotland's own changing cultural and political circumstances.²

A guiding influence in these developments from the nineteen sixties was the Scottish Arts Council exercising the powers of state patronage with a minimum of public political accountability. But the artists could be turbulent and, from the nineteen sixties on, what happened on Scotland's public

¹ See passim. Bill Findlay (ed.), *A History of Scottish Theatre* (Edinburgh, 1995) and Donald Campbell, *Playing for Scotland: A History of the Scottish Stage 1715–1965* (Edinburgh, 1996).

² See Cairns Craig, and Randall Stevenson (eds), *Twentieth Century Scottish Drama* (Edinburgh, 2001).

stages carried an edge of creative excitement and political risk or challenge.³

In the late eighties, tensions collided around the short lived Scottish Theatre Company which had been established to tour specifically Scottish plays. At the same time, John McGrath's 7:84 Theatre Company was embroiled in political and artistic controversy as its reaction to Thatcherism became increasingly strident.

In 1987 the Advisory Council for the Arts in Scotland, an offshoot of the Saltire Society, convened a conference in Edinburgh to push the case for a National Theatre. This was addressed by national theatre directors from Finland and Iceland and also by David Daiches who eloquently expounded the literary and cultural role that a National Theatre could play in Scotland. The core argument was that these long-term objectives could not depend solely on the fluctuating choices of individual artistic directors or the financial fates of individual theatre companies; there had to be a sustaining cultural policy if the full artistic potential of Scottish theatre were to be realised.

The conference was attended by approximately two hundred people and sign-posted increasing support among actors, writers, technicians, individual directors and literary commentators for a National Theatre.

However, the key funders, The Scottish Arts Council for central government and local authorities, remained unmoved. Then, in 1992, under its new director Seona Reid, The Scottish Arts Council, in partnership with other national cultural bodies and local government, launched the largest ever public consultation on culture to be undertaken – the Charter for the Arts in Scotland. This reported a strong desire on the part of audiences to see more Scottish drama and, in consequence, a working party was established in 1993 to examine the feasibility of 'a National Theatre resource'.

Act Two: Stalemate

Able chaired by Professor Sally Brown of Stirling University, the working party revealed a chasm between representatives of the theatre, artists and public bodies on the one hand, and the existing theatre managements on the other. The first group favoured the cultural, educational and potentially economic benefits of a National Theatre to Scotland. The latter portrayed a National Theatre as centralising, potentially conservative and, in a narrow sense, nationalistic.

³ Bill Findlay (ed.), *Scots Plays of the Seventies* (Edinburgh, 2001)

It was, of course, also perceived as a funding threat to an already struggling theatre sector.

However, the Charter process followed by the working party sparked significant public interest, and an active campaign for a National Theatre was set in motion. This campaign was effectively an alliance between the Advisory Council for the Arts in Scotland (with the Saltire Society behind it) and Equity. It was based in my office at the tiny Netherbow Theatre in Edinburgh's Royal Mile.

One of the first actions of the campaign was to publish a list, first of one then of two hundred modern Scottish plays.⁴ This was intended initially to scotch the argument from ignorance that Scotland had no dramatic tradition on which to base a National Theatre but it had, in the event, a much wider impact. The list demonstrated not just the vitality of Scottish theatre but its artistic and linguistic diversity. The relative neglect of Scottish writers by the theatre institutions as a whole (there were notable exceptions) was exposed, but so was the argument that a National Theatre need be narrow or nationalistic.

The playlist received wide and sympathetic press coverage. The public argument for a National Theatre was won in 1993–4 in a way that offered a potentially unifying artistic case. Yet the institutional politics remained in gridlock and, despite Sally Brown's best efforts, the working party ended in stalemate. Its deliberations evoked an SAC promise to create an undefined 'National Theatre Resource'. This promise was never acted upon and the working party's report remained unpublished.

Act Three: Enter Devolution Stage Left

The context of this stalemate was dramatically altered by the Devolution Referendum of 1997 with its positive vote for the establishment of a Scottish Parliament. This was followed with the Scotland Act of 1998 and the first Scottish election in 1999. Among the many consequences of these events was direct democratic and political accountability for governmental public bodies such as The Scottish Arts Council.

The new Parliament's Standing Committee on Education, Culture and Sport instituted an early inquiry into Scotland's national performing arts

⁴ See Donald Smith (ed.), *The Scottish Stage: A National Theatre Company for Scotland*, 36–46 (Edinburgh, 1994).

companies, including the non-existent national theatre. The paradox that Scotland possessed a national opera company, orchestras and a national ballet but no national institution for its socially rooted theatre appeared glaring. In fact, from this point the National Theatre seemed to attain its own 'virtual reality' in public and media perceptions.

The existing theatre managements thought quickly on their feet. Some artistic directors such as Kenny Ireland of Edinburgh's Royal Lyceum, were long-standing supporters of 'national drama', but all could recognise that new public investment might depend on resolving the paradox. Led by their Chair Hamish Glen of Dundee Rep, the Federation of Scottish Theatre appeared at a parliamentary hearing to pledge their support for a National Theatre that would be created by combining the best artistic achievements of the existing theatre companies. As the Parliamentary Committee proceeded towards a positive recommendation on creating a National Theatre, the Federation hastily convened a working party to flesh out their new idea.

I was invited to join the Federation working party as a member who had actively participated in the public campaign and I chaired most of the meetings. Strong personalities were involved and differing emphases, but it was clear that a National Theatre, which commissioned work from the existing theatre companies for both touring and site specific productions, commanded majority support. For some this was a case enthusiastically espoused; for others it was a matter of the least worst option. The process was more political than practical but nonetheless necessary to prevent squabbling disunity spiking the external case. The Working Party's conclusion was duly presented to the Scottish Arts Council and to government. Some of those who had fronted the campaign, such as Paul Scott of the Saltire Society, did not see the Federation's proposal as the best way forward.

Act Four: Squaring the Circles

The Scottish Arts Council was now left in a delicate position. Despite the Charter process of 1992–3 and the subsequent working party, it had blown cold on the idea of a National Theatre, confident that there was little support among its client theatres. At heart the Arts Council did not want another troublesome and expensive national company that had to be resourced and placated. Now, however, the Scottish Arts Council had new political masters and the theatre sector pushing its federal proposal. At the same time the Arts

Council was acutely aware of the overall financial weaknesses of the existing theatre infrastructure, as well as its inconsistent standards.

With the agreement of the Scottish Executive, the SAC opted for a further, more widely representative Working Party that would be charged with examining potential models and making detailed recommendations based on feasibility rather than aspiration

The resultant committee, which I also chaired, embraced competing views of what a National Theatre of Scotland should be. So the task was to build consensus and to model something that had a realistic hope of succeeding in the real world. It had become necessary to chart the process by which the National Theatre which was now a betting likelihood, could move from virtual reality to operational capacity.

The Working Party had its own very capable independent administration, in the shape of Morag Ballantyne, and was therefore able to carve out its own strategy. We agreed that this should be founded on the widest possible consultation and that it should seek to articulate, from first principles, the need for a National Theatre. Only then would we proceed to recommending an appropriate model.

The needs quickly emerged:

- to provide sustainable career patterns for writers, actors and other theatre professionals in Scotland
- to provide a coherent interface between theatre and education at all levels
- to increase international profile
- to reach the parts of Scotland that were not included in present theatre provision, and all age groups
- to harness and celebrate the collective memory and achievement of Scottish theatre
- to provide a laboratory of experiment for Scottish ideas and identities in the twenty-first century
- to revitalise theatre in its relationship with changing Scottish audiences.

The campaign for a National Theatre had argued that these needs were best met by a permanent theatre ensemble. I had supported and articulated that idea in earlier essays.⁵ The Federation of Scottish Theatre argued for a whole that would be the sum of the parts.

⁵ See Smith (ed.), *The Scottish Stage*: 13–18 and 22–29.

Through the consultation process and the ongoing debate I personally became convinced that no single theatre building or company could meet the challenge. At the same time I felt strongly that a National Theatre would need to create new combinations and chemistries and not solely depend on existing theatre configurations for future challenges. It would need full creative freedom to initiate and develop, while using commissions, collaborations and studio or site specific experiments as its methodologies for sustained creative development.

Though sometimes frayed at the edges, a consensus formed around these principles and detailed work was undertaken to demonstrate that this was feasible, given adequate investment. All else depended on this because, if the new model did not attract genuinely new investment, then it could not achieve things which were not possible for the existing theatre ecology; it might, in fact, diminish or undermine what Scotland had already.

The report was published in May 2001⁶ and widely welcomed. We now had an agreed model and plan; could funding be secured to translate it into action?

Act Five: Delayed Gratification

A two year delay ensued. The Scottish Arts Council welcomed and approved the Working Party's recommendations, while signalling anxiety about the financial health of the present infrastructure. The report calculated that the National Theatre needed £3.5m of new annual investment, but the Scottish Executive had set aside £1.5m to establish a National Theatre.

In the event, that money was diverted to the existing theatres. As a Scottish election loomed in 2003 the then culture minister, Mike Watson, fell out of political favour due to his support for a campaign against hospital closures in Glasgow.

This is the part of a long difficult process for which I can claim some personal credit. The rest was responding objectively to process and need. There was a huge temptation at this point, egged on by a supportive press, to attack the Scottish Executive for prevarication but I refused to do this. Instead, in my new role as Chair of the National Theatre Steering Committee, I publicly sympathised with the need to invest in the existing theatres while urging the

⁶ *Scottish National Theatre: Report of the Independent Working Party* (Edinburgh, 2001).

politicians to honour their pledge to establish the National Theatre. As a theatre historian I knew in my bones that it was better to have no National Theatre than one without the means to be successful.

In due course, patience was rewarded and, at the end of 2003, Richard Findlay was appointed Chair of the National Theatre with an initial budget of £3.5m. A Board was quickly formed and in 2004 Vicky Featherstone was appointed the Artistic Director.

It took a further year to establish the full staff team with its first commissions, projects and education programme. In February 2006 an ambitious artistic programme was launched for the year ahead, with ten site specific theatre events across Scotland under the theme of 'home'.

Postscript

This is not the place or time to evaluate the new artistic programme or to begin to measure the achievements of the National Theatre of Scotland against its original objectives. A promising start has been made, but plenty of legitimate debate remains to be had about methodology and purpose. The National Theatre of Scotland is clearly an experiment and its value will lie on what both its failures and successes will tell us about the future.

It is my own belief that the National's overall success depends on recognising the social, cultural and political roots from which the new institution has emerged. If its artistic innovations can respond to these contexts and not solely to cultural fashions, then the foundations of genuine artistic achievement have been laid, not just for Scotland but for drama as a truly international artform. Scotland's writers will be central to that process.

What this account confirms is the socio-political character of theatre as an artform, both in its organisation and creative process, and in its sensitivity or perhaps exposure to context. For my own part, I wish that the theatre community had been able to lead the way into devolution with an innovative National Theatre imagining Scotland's futures, just as theatre had maintained a space for creative resistance during the years of minority Conservative rule in Scotland. The historical reality is that devolution set the pace for change in the theatre sector.

I hope that what was brokered has preserved the space for creative experiment, and for the expression of diverse national dramas which explore past and present, and look to the future, without predetermining outcomes. That might

be a model for participative democracy in the twenty first century as well as theatrical collaboration.

Netherbow Theatre, Edinburgh

Relations and Comparisons between Irish and Scottish Poetry: 1890 to the Present Day

Edna Longley

This paper sets out the way in which we¹ conceive one of the comparative projects being undertaken as part of Phase 2 of the AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies. It mainly concentrates on the broader rationale for exploring 'relations and comparisons' between modern Irish and Scottish poetry. The project's intellectual seed was the possibility of linking two fields in which we are interested: modern poetry and Irish-Scottish studies. Its institutional seed was the possibility of linking the Seamus Heaney Centre for Poetry, established three years ago in the School of English at Queen's University, with Phase 2 of the AHRC Centre at Aberdeen. The Heaney Centre, directed by Ciaran Carson, runs poetry readings and conferences. It sponsors research by staff and graduate students, and is home to the School's Creative Writing MA. The idea behind the Centre, founded in celebration of Heaney's Nobel Prize, was to promote the writing and reading of poetry in conjunction with critical thinking about modern poetry.

As regards poetry in English – to which the project is not confined – much of that thinking has been dominated by the Anglo-American academy. Recently I gave a talk in Cambridge on the theme 'Anthologising (Modern) British and Irish Poetry'. My talk involved a critique of certain aesthetic concepts associated with contemporary 'neo-modernist' poets such as 'the Cambridge School': concepts that derive from a particular version of literary history. In this context I argued that American constructions of modernism have frequently led to skewed or restricted narratives of modern poetry. I noted, for instance, that modernist narratives often misrepresent W. B. Yeats by assimilating his work to the theory and practice of Ezra Pound or T. S. Eliot. In fact, as the Preface to his *Oxford Book of Modern Verse* (1936) indicates, Yeats's relation to these poets, and to what was later dubbed 'modernism', is dialectical at best, oppositional at worst. To get a sense of alternative narratives, let us recall a literary-critical

¹ This paper was written by Edna Longley in consultation with Fran Brearton in March 2006; they are the project leaders for this strand of Phase 2 of the AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, being undertaken in Queen's University, Belfast.

moment in 1919 when American, Scottish and Irish perspectives on poetry briefly intersected.

In *Devolving English Literature* (1992) Robert Crawford shows that Eliot's influential essay, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', was itself influenced by G. Gregory Smith's *Scottish Literature: Character and Influence* (1919), which he had recently reviewed, and which stresses 'the debt of each poet to his predecessors, individually and corporately'. Eliot had also just reviewed Yeats's *The Cutting of an Agate* (1919), a volume that includes Yeats's 1907 essay 'Poetry and Tradition'. This essay, among other verbal parallels with Eliot, speaks of 'seeing all in the light of European literature'. So it was cheeky of Eliot to begin 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' with the sentence: 'In English writing we seldom speak of tradition'. Perhaps, however, the suppressed remnant of that sentence is: 'but in Scottish and Irish writing they often do'. More probably, as Crawford argues, Eliot as an American in London, is conscious of competing 'provincial' claims to metropolitan authority. Hence the way in which his Anglo-American 'we' appropriates 'English writing'. Hence the fact that his Smith review is headed 'Was There a Scottish literature?' and his Yeats review 'A Foreign Mind'. Eliot speaks as self-appointed defender of a 'powerful literature with a powerful capital' ('Was There a Scottish Literature?').

There would be further twists and turns in the Eliot-Yeats relationship, and Hugh MacDiarmid would make selective use of both. But my point is that retrospect on poetry and poetry criticism *circa* 1919 could have various tilts. Of course, this equally applies to 'English' poetry understood in a stricter sense. Anglo-American critical models have not necessarily touched all the interpretative bases for modern English poetry. An Irish-Scottish orientation could open up perspectives inherent in MacDiarmid's fine phrase about literature 'broad-basing itself on all the diverse cultural elements and the splendid variety of languages and dialects in the British Isles' ('English Ascendancy in British Literature', 1931). Thus there might be questions about Crawford's splicing of Eliot, Pound and MacDiarmid under the rubric 'Modernism as Provincialism'. This is not to reject an interesting argument, but to observe that it retains 'modernism' (a term whose instability has been exposed from other angles) as a fixed point of reference unmodified by Irish or Scottish poetic practice, while it also occludes aspects of that practice. Perhaps the language questions associated with Irish or Scottish poetry do not neatly map on to the language questions associated with American-defined modernism—even if MacDiarmid did take inspiration from identifying Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language* with *Ulysses*: actually an Irish-Scottish 'relation', including

its problematic aspects. In Crawford's thesis the metropolitan critical magnet pulls MacDiarmid, as it does Yeats. Similarly, I wonder about the title of Margery Palmer McCulloch's invaluable assemblage of 'source documents for the Scottish Renaissance' (2004): *Modernism and Nationalism*. The actual documents open up many fissures between the title's components. Patrick Crotty has already done some bracing comparative work on what he calls the 'fetishisation of modernism' ('a kind of streetwise variation on cultural nationalism') in criticism of Irish and Scottish poetry: i.e., a strategy for transcending and outflanking 'the English lyric'.²

I began with that moment in 1919 because we envisage this project as potentially having significance for readings of modern poetry, beyond the re-readings of Irish and Scottish poetry that a comparative frame might promote. As for comparison itself: it seems time for Irish-Scottish literary studies to move into a more consistently comparative phase. Despite shining exceptions, our unscientific impression is that historians have done more strictly comparative work than literary scholars. The programme for the Crosscurrents conference at Queen's University in April 2006 shows that graduate students still largely stick, or are kept, to separate national slots. And at the last Irish-Scottish Academic Initiative (ISAI) conference (University of Edinburgh, September 2004) there was a shamefaced parade of senior Irish critics who said they had meant to read some Scottish texts but hadn't quite got round to it. I admit I have plenty of homework to do myself, especially in the criticism of modern Scottish poetry. Without comparative enquiry, and given the temptation to easy analogy-spotting, dominant categories of Irish and Scottish literary studies will survive their encounter intact, rather than mutually complicate one another.

There is a warning in a recent book on the visual arts edited by Fintan Cullen and John Morrison: *A Shared Legacy: Essays on Irish and Scottish Art and Visual Culture* (2005). The book's not unexpected topics include nationality, 'political space', and land. Reviewing *A Shared Legacy* in *Irish Studies Review*, John Turpin keeps saying things like: '[Luke Gibbons's study of] Ireland and colonial identity in the self-portrait of James Barry and his portrayal of Edmund Burke . . . would have benefited from a study of Scottish artists in London'; and, regarding Murdo McDonald's 'fine analysis of portrait images of Burns': 'A comparison to the portraits of Tom Moore and images of his

² See Patrick Crotty, 'Shameless Bards and Mad, Abandoned Critics', in Edna Longley, Eamonn Hughes and Des O'Riordan (eds), *Ireland (Ulster) Scotland: Concepts, Contexts, Comparisons* (Belfast, 2003), 77–85.

poetry would have opened up Irish visual Romanticism'. Rather desperately, Turpin suggests that 'readers [will] have to make whatever shared connection they can identify, depending on their existing knowledge'. And he ends by pointing to 'the potential of comparative visual studies where the issues of convergence and divergence can be explored'.³ The terms convergence / divergence seem apt. Evidently, no comparative Irish-Scottish project should take 'sharing' for granted. 'Comparison' is about difference, about distinctiveness, as well as identity. But what do they know of Scottish or Irish poetry who only know these rather shaky canons? Has Scottish or Irish exceptionalism been the enemy of Scottish or Irish particularism? Academics are often interested in poetry because it is 'Scottish' or 'Irish', not because it is poetry.

This does not apply to the two most recent surveys of modern Irish and Scottish poetry: John Goodby's *Irish Poetry since 1950* (2000) and Christopher Whyte's *Modern Scottish Poetry* (2004). Nevertheless, these books inhabit largely different universes, and this despite similar trajectories whereby both critics point, and see the poetry they discuss as pointing, outwith a national base. Indeed, 'beyond Scotland!' or 'out of Ireland!' is now the common cry of Irish and Scottish literary studies more generally. But while Whyte and Goodby again fetishise modernism, there is relatively little detail about relations to American practice, to any Celtic 'other', or to contemporaneous English poetry. Whyte quotes Russian and French poets, and stresses that 'Comparative readings, readings which step across the boundaries between national or linguistic traditions, are of particular importance within the field of Scottish literature'. Yet he makes few textual comparisons, not even in the Gaelic sphere, although he provocatively proposes that, 'for the past four centuries . . . the significant intertext, rather than writing elsewhere in Scotland, would be writing in the Irish language of the same period'.

Of course, nobody can cover all the angles. But in preparing this paper, we have noticed a pattern whereby some Scottish commentators—on cultural politics too—rhetorically invoke Ireland, only to move on fast. Meanwhile, most Irish commentators don't mention Scotland. Lady Gregory's joke still seems relevant: when asked about 'the meaning of the Celtic movement we were said to belong to', she 'used to say it was a movement meant to persuade the Scotch to begin buying our books while we continued not to buy theirs'.⁴ In the context of poetry, a passage in the introduction to Douglas Gifford's and Alan Riach's anthology *Scotlands: Poets and the Nation* (2004) might illustrate

³ *Irish Studies Review*, 14, 1 (February, 2006), 154–6.

⁴ Lady Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre* (1913; Gerrards Cross, 1972), 21.

Scottish rhetorical use of Ireland, and perhaps subtextual frictions also noticeable elsewhere. Having said that ‘comparisons make it clear’ that the theme of Scotland is more pronounced in Scottish literature than the national theme in any other literature, Gifford and Riach continue: ‘Comparison with Ireland may be particularly instructive. The feminised nation, Kathleen ni Houlihan or Mother Ireland, is an idea so potent that many songs were made, and motives forged, that would send men and women to martyrdom for it. Scotland too shares some of that, particularly in its Jacobite legacy, but the modernising trend towards imagining Scotland as a possible state (a ‘Dream State’ perhaps) is a recognition of the pluralism the country is capable of encompassing, not a call for constricting uniformity.’ That appears to leave Irish poetry in a perpetual archaic posture of Jacobite political incorrectness, and may even carry a trace of the pro- and anti-enlightenment tensions evident both between and within Irish and Scottish literary studies. In fact, a poem praised by the editors is a contemporary Gaelic version of Kathleen ni Houlihan. And it would now be difficult for anyone outside Sinn Féin or Notre Dame to publish an Irish anthology entitled ‘Poets and the Nation’, even if Ireland were pluralised and the island’s internal tensions emphasised. I note that Robert Crawford and Mick Imlah also highlight Scottish poetry’s exceptional devotion to Scotland in their introduction to the *New Penguin Book of Scottish Verse* (2000): ‘Scottish poetry radiates, to a degree unmatched by any other substantial national literature, a passionate love of country, a sense of joy in its belonging’.

Such expressions of exceptionalism have parallels in Irish quarters, and could be another focus for genuinely ‘instructive comparison’. This brings me to the word ‘modern’ in our project’s title. Another unscientific impression is that comparative or relational Irish-Scottish literary studies are taken a bit more for granted where earlier periods are concerned, where they fold into seventeenth-century, eighteenth-century or Romantic studies, for instance. Here, forms of ‘New British literary history’, archipelagic criticism or ‘Atlantic’ textual cartography are fairly well under way, even if approached or theorised in diverse terms. To frame the modern period in the same manner appears a more problematic enterprise. That period has been critically demarcated by how the Irish and Scottish revivals asserted the link between literature and nationality: or asserted it in a new way—according to the premises of European cultural nationalism. And perhaps latterday identity politics and multiculturalism have actually reinscribed habits of national segregation. Thus the anthological and critical formula now usually applied to the contemporary poetry of these islands, ‘British and Irish’ or ‘From Britain and Ireland’, has

not brought poetry criticism much further. For example, Sarah Broom's recent book, *Contemporary British and Irish Poetry* is structured according to cultural themes and along the lines of 'There was an English poet, an Irish poet and a Scottish poet'. Similarly, Broom's insistence that poets are 'constantly working within and against . . . systems of representation' occurs in a chapter where Benjamin Zephaniah, Jackie Kay and Moniza Alvi are grouped under 'Race and Ethnicity'. Obviously there are issues here not just of critical categories but also of critical values and criticism as value or evaluation.

If academic attention to intercourse between Irish and Scottish literature rises in proportion to periods when the countries cohabit in some kind of union, there can be problems here too. In *The Cultural Roots of British Devolution* (2004) Michael Gardiner darkly refers to the 'over-adaptive Enlightenment moment'. And Liam McIlvanney and Ray Ryan remind us in their introduction to *Ireland and Scotland: Culture and Society, 1700–2000* (2005), an outcome of phase 1 of the AHRC Centre: 'To advocate an Irish / Scottish framework is to establish a political—and in some eyes, a polemical—framework for debate. Within Irish studies, the Irish / Scottish comparison is viewed by some as unionism's answer to post-colonial studies.' But conflict between unionist and nationalist models of literary criticism—and, perhaps, conflict based on the perception of such models—is part of the historical story. And politics of whatever stripe should be able to take Cairns Craig's point that concepts of nationality, in these islands and elsewhere, do not stand alone but are shaped by 'a much more complex process of identity formation in . . . cultural exchange between nations'.⁵ This has implications for how we read modern poetry on an archipelagic or international front.

From my viewpoint as a poetry critic, national independence, whether partial or 'dreamed', has written and rewritten rather too much literary history. It has closed some literary borders and closed off some crucial data. Since the Irish Revival and Scottish Renaissance were both spearheaded by poets, this has particularly affected the criticism of poetry. In bearing large national responsibilities, poetry has been simultaneously prominent—relative to its status elsewhere—and neglected. In 'Shameless Bards and Mad, Abandoned Critics' Patrick Crotty raises two related questions: how the 'very different legacies of Yeats and MacDiarmid' have affected poetic practice; and how, in both countries, 'the critical urge has become confused in recent years with the patriotic impulse'. A comparative study of poetry criticism would again

⁵ Cairns Craig, 'National Literature and Cultural Capital in Scotland and Ireland', in *Ireland and Scotland: Culture and Society* (Dublin, 2005), 45.

be 'instructive'. But a glance tells us that its weaknesses, similarly lamented by Irish and Scottish poets, critics and poet-critics over the years—that is, by those who desire a value-based criticism—are correlated with the fact that the 'patriotic impulse' in Scotland has largely run with MacDiarmid, whereas the 'patriotic impulse' in Ireland has largely run against Yeats. Hence the way in which Yeats's poetry was for decades handed over to non-Irish critics. Hence, too, the persistence of academic criticism such as Declan Kiberd's which conscripts poetry for a national narrative. Crotty describes Kiberd's approach to poetry in *Inventing Ireland* (1995) as 'less an investigation of the ways poets have invented their country than a process of making up chauvinistic arguments as he goes along, and sneaking a quick—a very quick—glance at the text every now and again to keep the fantasia fired up'.

There is revisionist literary criticism in Scotland as in Ireland. Witness the introduction to *Beyond Scotland: new contexts for twentieth-century Scottish literature* (2004), edited by Gerard Carruthers and David Goldie, where the editors speak of 'the damage wrought by an over-determined, self-defeating essentialism fostered by Scottish criticism's overweening desire for cultural self-determination'. Poetry, of course, can be conscripted for revisionist as for nationalist purposes. No doubt I have done this myself. Whyte's *Modern Scottish Poetry*, like Eleanor Bell's *Questioning Scotland: Literature, Nationalism, Postmodernism* (2004), is avowedly revisionist. Thus Whyte seeks to shift the emphasis from Scottish to poetry. Yet he also says that his book is 'designed to balance, counterpose and counteract', and concludes his chapter on 'Alternative Approaches' with the reconciliatory caveat: 'The concepts of nation, national belonging and national identity demand that our relationship to them should also be one of play, of imagination, invention and paradoxical renewal and reversal'. Bell is more interested in the broader field of theoretical paradigms, and here she regards Scottish literary studies as under-theorised in comparison to Irish literary studies—although some might find the latter either over-theorised or selectively theorised.

As regards poetry, there is interesting convergence between Whyte and Bell. Just as MacDiarmid's cry was 'Not Burns—Dunbar', so Whyte and Bell seem to cry 'Not MacDiarmid—Morgan' (a comparable Irish cry might be 'Not Heaney—Muldoon'). Both quote Morgan's revision of MacDiarmid's 'white rose'. With regard to Morgan, Bell resembles Whyte in talking about 'linguistic play and freedom to re-explore the familiar'. In some critical narratives, then, Irish poetry and Scottish poetry have reached the same 'playful' place: a space where internal difference or dissidence is recognised; where poetry is defined

as 're-visioning' in Paul Muldoon's sense; where multiple external links—even with English poetry—are admitted. Changes in the critical fortunes of Louis MacNeice and W.S. Graham would be another 'instructive comparison' or critical barometer. But poets and poems may still outpace academic paradigms—including the 'Not X–Y' structure. On the evidence so far, the role of poetry criticism in Irish and Scottish studies, and the question of how it might 'revise' such studies, remain unsettled.

The basic stimulus to comparative study is the complex of relations between the terms 'Irish', 'Scottish' and 'poetry' in the modern period: a period that has witnessed significant currents of influence and interchange—sometimes strong, sometimes fitful: what I have elsewhere called the 'revival roundabout'.⁶ Other elements in the rationale for this project, beyond the wider rationale for Irish-Scottish studies, include the Yeats/MacDiarmid legacies; language questions—not only as regards Gaelic and Scots; common cultural factors that condition poetry, such as religion and its metaphysical fallout; inescapable awareness of the historical 'English lyric'; efforts to escape that awareness; consequent contest over poetic 'traditions'. There are many directions that a comparative approach might take: some have already been opened up; we hope to lay other trails. This paper has touched on the possibility of re-aligning perspectives on modern poetry; the issue not just of 'traditions' but of 'tradition'; comparisons between poetry criticism in each country, and between critical or theoretical paradigms; critical values; the problematics of 'internationalism' and 'modernism'; anthologies; above all, the need for closer comparative and intertextual readings across these islands. Form and genre are obviously central to any study of poetry: other topics on our wish-list are translation practices; poetic migrations; intellectual contexts; influences from elsewhere; relations with song and folk-tradition; relations with the visual arts; regional horizons; poetic topographies; reception and audience; material contexts, including magazines, publishing, reviewing, readings, institutional support, the academy, metropolises. Contributors to the project will bring their own suggestions and interests to an evolving enquiry rather than an initially fixed agenda. We also hope to discover what kinds of comparison are most productive in the Irish-Scottish context.

Over the project's three years, we plan to work towards a collection of comparative essays, partly by means of themed symposia in Belfast and Aberdeen. To involve people in the project, beyond a final essay, we will disseminate the

⁶ Edna Longley, 'The Whereabouts of Literature', in *Beyond Scotland* (Amsterdam–New York, 2004), 159.

position papers, given at these symposia, as critical and theoretical work-in-progress. A central element in the project is the appointment of a post-doctoral fellow, Peter MacKay, of Glasgow University and Trinity College Dublin. A translation study conducted separately from the book will be Hugh Magennis's comparison of Edwin Morgan's and Seamus Heaney's translations of *Beowulf* (Heaney's *Beowulf* papers are lodged in the Library at Queen's University). Finally, given the creative as well as critical objectives of the Heaney Centre, and the annual Word festival in Aberdeen, we want to combine the symposia with poetry readings, and to associate poet-critics with the project. Ideally the book would include comments from contemporary Irish and Scottish poets on their sense of the 'other' poetry.

Thus far no poems have been quoted, no poetic comparisons drawn. So, to finish, I will juxtapose poems by Edwin Morgan and Louis MacNeice. Both employ the 'island' trope—an undoubted common resort of modern Irish and Scottish poetry. Eleanor Bell highlights Morgan's sonnet 'Outward Bound', in which 'Scotland begins to move', and thus eludes efforts to pin it down: 'Like a sea-washed log/ it loved to tempt earnest geographers, / duck down and dub them drunk hydrographers, / shake itself dry, no longer log but dog'. There are parallels here with MacNeice's 'No More Sea', written forty years earlier, a postwar poem that derives from a sojourn on Achill Island. 'No More Sea' celebrates 'Islanders whose hearts themselves are islands'. It ends with a retrospect from a darker future condition, in which 'some atavistic scholar' might conceive 'a vague inaccurate notion / Of what it meant to live embroiled with ocean / And between moving dunes and beyond reproving / Sentry-boxes to have been self-moving'. It's possible to read these island-parables as figuring a fluidly diverse, rather than monolithic, Scotland or Ireland. But it's also possible to read them, where they meet out at sea, as warnings about attaching poetry to predetermined academic categories—including Irish / Scottish relations and comparisons.

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Kelman * Deleuze * Beckett

Michael Gardiner

Although accelerated by the questions of being and becoming which accompanied the cultural push for determination in the 1980s and '90s, much of the intellectual backbone of James Kelman's work corresponds to a longer intellectual tradition based in Glasgow. Scottish existentialism particularly became politicised in the mid to late 1960s in terms of post-Sartrean thought and anti-psychiatry, typically associated with in R. D. Laing. Still under-discussed is the fact that many of Laing's concerns predate those of Deleuze, and indeed are, mostly positively, referred to by Deleuze as pre-dating many of his concerns.¹ By 1972, when the links between capitalism, subject-interpellation in the Althusserian sense, and paranoia, were sketched in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, Laing had been hinting at similar clinical/critical connections for over a decade; just over a decade later again in Laing's Glasgow, Kelman's *The Busconductor Hines* (1984) signalled a new direction in narration in its shifting—in Deleuzian terms, a schizoid shifting—between first and third persons, and correspondingly between dialects, later more confidently reconfigured as languages—an exaggeratedly correct English and a non-Synthetic Scots. This narratology of recovering action by unsettling voices was perfected by Kelman for a further decade, to *How Late It Was, How Late* (1994), the book for which he won the Booker Prize, and the one which I am here describing as his most Deleuzian.

This novel describes, to the tune of almost 400 pages, a protagonist determined to 'batter on' in the face of imprisonment, breakup, and inexplicable blindness. Its hero, Sammy Samuels, has typically been described as 'hardy' or 'stoic'; I think we can take this more seriously and describe how Sammy's walking round the streets blinded, ceaselessly present and ceaselessly in action, shows an unwillingness to accept lack. Deleuze and Guattari's argument in

¹ Cf. Craig Beveridge and Ronald Turnbull, 'Recent Scottish Thought', in Cairns Craig (ed.), *The History of Scottish Literature Volume 4* (Aberdeen, 1987), 61–74; Gardiner, *The Cultural Roots of British Devolution*, 90–6; Claire Colebrook, *Deleuze* (London, 2002), 5; Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Minnesota, 1983; 1972), 84 *et passim*.

Anti-Oedipus is that lack is not, as Freud describes it, an originary state which creates desire, but a *blockage* to desire, produced by capitalism working through the law (of the father and of the state):

To a certain degree, the traditional logic of desire is all wrong from the very outset: from the very first step that the Platonic logic of desire forces us to take, making us choose between *production* and *acquisition*. From the moment that we place desire on the side of acquisition, we make desire an idealistic (dialectical, nihilistic) conception, which causes us to look upon it as primarily a lack: a lack of an object, a lack of the real object.²

In *How Late* there is no sense of acquisition, that is, in the production of surplus capital as a guard against loss, merely in what is needed to deal with the contingent. Thus:

[i]ts a game but so it is man life, fucking life I'm talking about, that's all ye can do man start again, turn ower a new leaf, a fresh start, another yin, ye just plough on, ye plough on, ye just fucking plough on, that's what ye do, that was what Sammy did, what else was there I mean fuck all, know what I'm saying, that's what ye do, that was what Sammy did, what else was there I mean fuck all, know what I'm saying, fuck all.³

The law enacts various types of violence, physical and epistemological, on Sammy, who remains unaware of any 'original' reason for this, having blacked out and then co-operated with the police to the best of his abilities. The Law works here very much as it does in the work of Beckett: Sammy has built up a resistance to seeking any transcendental metaphor to explain the law's behaviour:

Ye cannay make contact with them; all you would have got was sarcasm and wee in-jokes . . . [a]nd it was always them, these bastards, always at their convenience, every single last bit of time, it was always them that chose it; ye never had any fucking choices . . .⁴

² Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 25, 58–61, 306–307.

³ James Kelman, *How Late It Was, How Late* (London, 1998; 1994), 37.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 19, 32.

Trying to get him to understand that there is something originally wrong with him, preventing physical contact with the world in all its contingency, the law tries to force upon Sammy a sense of lack. He has, it tells him, no fucking choices. Rather than simply acting by walking to his next goal, he is required to be on a quest for something missing, to be 'normally dysfunctional' in the Oedipal sense of having experienced a deflection of his desire by law. He is even pre-Oedipalised by a beating which has blinded him, like Oedipus, at some 'traumatic' point before the start of the action. But while the law sends him on a quest to search for something wrong with himself, Sammy frustrates the law by registering the unknown origin of his blindness without any great wish to return to a primal scene and 'solve' the problem:

He studied roundabout, looking for chinks of light, to where the screw would be watching, the flash of the eye maybe; but nothing. He reached his hand over the bunk and felt about the floor and found something, a shoe; he lifted it to in front of his face. He fucking smelled it man it was fucking ponging, but he couldnay see it; whose fucking shoes were they they werenay fucking his, that was a certainty. He was definitely blind but. Fucking weird. Wild. It didnay feel like a nightmare either, that's the funny thing. Even psychologically. In fact it felt okay, an initial wee flurry of excitement but no what you would call panic-stations. Like it was just a new predicament. Christ it was even making him smile, shaking his head at the very idea, imagining himself telling people; making Helen laugh; she would be annoyed as fuck but she would still find it funny, eventually, once they had made it up, the stupid fucking row they had had, total misunderstanding man but it was fine now, it would be fine, once she saw him.

Now he was chuckling away to himself. How the hell was it happening to him! It's no as if he was earmarked for glory!

Even in practical terms, once the nonsense passed, he started thinking about it; this was a new stage in life, a development. A new epoch!⁵

The law in response sets up endless series of questions designed to undermine Sammy's sense of humanity. He shuffles around blinded, and in a way which strongly recalls Beckett's Molloy—as also discussed in various places by Deleuze—is asked unanswerable questions about time he has forgotten, by

⁵ Ibid., 10–11.

those under the umbrella of the law: '[a] fag got put in his hand. The auld psychology. The one place they acted like people was when they were in their own wee office going about their own wee bits of business, wage-earners, time-servers, waiting for the fucking tea-break'.⁶

In the early stages of *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guattari describe the questioning of Molloy, and the police's similarly relentless demand that Molloy should 'clarify' things by saying and fixing names, even when the repetition of names undermines sense—producing a lack in the apparent move toward completeness.⁷ The law's aim of course, in neither Sammy's nor Molloy's case, is to get information anyway—it has all the information it needs, indeed is in control of the very conditions via which information is legitimised—but rather to place the anti-hero, to *subject* him. Sammy would be obeying the law, like Kafka's Josef K in Deleuze and Guattari's *Kafka*, by becoming an unfaithful recorder, sticking to one voice or register as the story.⁸ Instead, the speaker-actor is, as Timothy Murphy points out of the Deleuzian reading of Beckett's anti-heroes (and like Alan Warner's Kelmanesque *The Man Who Walks*), the one without lack, who proactively paces, resiting lack, striding uphill.⁹ Sammy is disarmingly straight and un-metaphorical: he will partake of no lack as he will partake of no metaphor.¹⁰ *Anti-Oedipus*, and more so, Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, are known for breaking the law by breaking down generic categories; here the literary is concerned with effects stripped of metaphor, of the need to automatically naturalise. All narrative, all law, begins in fiction.¹¹

But *pace* Deleuze, and despite the claim Kelman makes at the outset of his later long essay on Kafka, the majority of critics do not attempt to provide meanings for literary texts, and most haven't done so since the 1960s.¹² The claim itself, though probably directed at academics Kelman feels are misrepresenting his stories, shows a disappointing bad faith in a fencing off of the literary (as 'novel', 'poem', and so on)—even in the middle of an essay

⁶ Ibid., 15.

⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 12–14.

⁸ Franz Kafka, *The Trial*, trans. Edwin and Willa Muir, in *The Complete Novels* (London, 1999 (1935)), 11–128.

⁹ Timothy S. Murphy, 'Only Intensities Subsist: Samuel Beckett's *Nohow On*', in eds. Ian Buchanan and John Marks, *Deleuze and Literature* (Edinburgh, 2000), 229–50: 231; Alan Warner, *The Man Who Walks* (London, 2002).

¹⁰ Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 38–41.

¹¹ Cf. Jacques Derrida, trans. Avital Ronell and Christine Roulston, 'Before the Law', in ed. Derek Attridge, *Acts of Literature* (London, 1992), 181–220: 191–9.

¹² James Kelman, 'A Look at Kafka's Three Novels', 265.

he would himself plainly view as 'critical'. As Deleuze realised, the literary does not work in terms of an opposition of the creative and the critical: what makes a text literary is its effects rather than its typology, what it makes happen in the world rather than its signification of something absent. But it is precisely this proactiveness of the literary that prevents any one writer from bracketing off her own work *as* literary—a problem nevertheless remaining where Scotland and Ireland still seem eager to be remembered in terms of 'schools', with writing and criticism clearly separated. As the two nations gather confidence post-imperially, post-Good Friday, post-devolution, the categories can surely only collapse to proactive writing—an outcome of which Beckett would have approved. The closing down of the literary possibilities of *all* writing—rather than only those texts which have passed through a publishing filter for generic approval—is in Deleuzian terms itself classically bourgeois.

Sammy Samuels, far from classically bourgeois, rather than accepting his lack and seeking a Freudian cure, takes each of the innumerable problems the law hands him as another starting-point for an endless *becoming*. He is not in search of any final signified—or, to put it into a more Scottish historical context, of the dream of a 'correct English', an enabling Scotto-British rhetoric, via which Scots haunted themselves from Adam Smith's *Lectures on Rhetoric* through James Beattie and Thomas Carlyle and Lord Reith's BBC to the anti-theory-squads of the 1980s. (Nor, indeed, is Kelman interested in Synthetic Scots or 'correct Scots', whose moments have certainly passed and which was itself classist). Where lack would interpolate Sammy, it doesn't strike him to think of himself as being in debt. He is indebted to no-one, the bold Sammy, the bold yin, and, taking step by step in the present, itself a postcolonial phenomenon, refuses to swallow the idea that a solution to an interpolated lack would allow him one day to get back to square one, wherever that was.¹³ Square one is for squares.

Sammy's having to pay for his black-out with his sight, though, is also a terrible playing out of the two Renaissances' (1920s-30s, 1950s-60s) sponsorship of drunkenness and the nationalist punting of 'Scotch whisky'—most obviously in the MacDiarmid of 'A Drunk Man Looks at the Thistle', but also in the second-renaissance prose of David Daiches and others into 'our' national drink—a critical tendency which we can see at its peak pre-1979. The contradiction here is that alcohol is a corporeal form of debt *par excellence*, not only in the

¹³ Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 247; the debtor must also be kept alive to keep the debt alive—see Deleuze, 'To Have Done With Judgment'.

Kelman-anecdotal sense of owing folk rounds and navigating Glasgow by pubs (like Beckett's any-space-whatever, Sammy's space is physical but also fucking mental),¹⁴ but also in that alcohol acts with a depressant effect, one which is always paid for later at extortionate rates of interest. Societies which rely heavily on alcohol as an everyday social drug are also likely to be ones which rely heavily on debt (note, for example, the United Kingdom's disposition towards credit cards and heavy mortgaging). The reliance on alcohol disappears, most obviously, in Irvine Welsh, Alan Warner, and other writers falling under the idea of a 'chemical generation' (a concept partly behind Christie March's flawed argument that these writers have somehow overtaken Kelman),¹⁵ and in other rave-influenced aesthetics, in which there is a sense of looking back over the ecstasy revolution, which promoted touch, an eternal concern in the prose of Kelman, and reflected in *How Late* from the outset in the 'pat-a-cake-games' necessary for him to feel his way around. Writers influenced by the aesthetics of ecstasy simply tend to be much more interested in the tactile than the what-are-you-looking-at culture of vision. The cultural value of alcohol is subtly critiqued throughout Kelman's *oeuvre*, where talk of pubs and carry-outs is as first glance crass, but on closer inspection increasingly subtle and sometimes despairingly proactive, especially in his later work.

In Sammy's proactively schizo narrative, in the Deleuzian terms used of Kafka, first person often takes the form of third-person talk.¹⁶ Kelman writes in an extreme form of Deleuzian free indirect style, meaning that he 'uses the third person to describe single characters from the point of view of a received and anonymous language'.¹⁷ Through this narrative technique, whose sophistication is missed by critics who see his 'demotic' prose as a simple downward identification,¹⁸ Kelman takes advantage of a habit of third-person address in Scottish English speech ('up he gets'; 'he's off and running'; 'the bold Sammy') to enact a prose not fixed to the first person, but always *becoming* a nominal third person who never reaches omniscience. Cairns Craig's detailed account of

¹⁴ Cf. Deleuze, 'The Exhausted', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 152–74.

¹⁵ Cristie L. March, *Rewriting Scotland: Welsh. McLean, Warner, Banks, Galloway, and Kennedy* (Manchester, 2002).

¹⁶ Cf. the plateau 'Memories of a Haecceity', in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London, 1987; 1980), 260–5.

¹⁷ Colebrook, *Deleuze*, 114; in Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 'the essential thing, precisely in free indirect discourse, is to be found neither in language A, nor language B, but "in language X, which is none other than language A in the actual process of becoming language B"', 106.

¹⁸ On the dangers, perceived or real, of a counter-Thatcher proletarianisation of culture, see Petrie, *Contemporary Scottish Fictions*, 19.

how Kelman 'translates' between persons and dialects can be read in this sense: Sammy is 'resisting arrest' by resisting placement in any one normative neurosis, by being, as it were, a walking schizophrenic—the character with whom Deleuze and Guattari start their 1972 study.¹⁹ Like Kafka, Kelman takes on and temporarily occupies 'other' registers, rendering them strange and discordant, always 'translated'.²⁰ And as in Wilhelm Reich, an identification with the individual leader, father of the familial or State law—or in Deleuze, with the abstract 'man' as such—and the need to get back to a perfect form or an abstract law, is rejected in the endlessly contingent schizo stroll.²¹ Sammy votes with his feet.

Where lack fixes the person to a life of working for some final purpose, of earning her way back to normality (in Freud, the 'normally neurotic'), for Sammy, as for Deleuze's schizoids and for Beckett's oddly contextless somnambulists, the only thing that really never changes is that things are always changing. Sammy continues to batter on without any nostalgic or clinical wish for things to be as they once were, or as the law in its many forms may want him to believe they once were. Nor even does he view his blindness as a lack, rather seeing it as part of a continuous process of transition—without metaphor. For Sammy there is no question of a hidden referent. His speech doesn't relate to something which is missing, in an effort to recover it; rather, he is constantly *becoming* through his speech; that is, he is aware (as Kelman writes it out, in Scottish existentialist terms) that his language is more about effect than it is about reference. He is more interested in what his communications cause to occur than in whether they place him satisfactorily within any given social narrative. Nor is his track of time any too reliable: where Beckett tends to spread the present out until it is too thin to carry normal narration, Sammy often, as in both *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, imports memory into the present in an irreducible doubleness.²² Sammy's aims change throughout

¹⁹ Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 99–106; Cairns Craig, 'Resisting Arrest', 99–114; Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 1–8.

²⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (Minneapolis, 1986; 1975), 19; cf. Deleuze and Guattari, the plateaus 'Memories of a Haecceity' and 'Memories of a Molecule' in *A Thousand Plateaus*, 260–86; cf. Colebrook, *Deleuze*, 126–9; Craig, *The Modern Scottish Novel*, 99–106. Kelman makes this 'translation' absolutely explicit in *Translated Accounts* (London, 2001); cf. Drew Milne, 'Broken English: James Kelman's *Translated Accounts*', *Edinburgh Review* 108 (2001), 106–15.

²¹ Wilhelm Reich, *The Mass Psychology of Fascism*, trans. Vincent R. Carfagno (Harmondsworth, 1975; 1933).

²² Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 291–8; Gilles Deleuze, *Cinema 1: The Movement-Image*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Barbara Habberjam (London, 1986); cf.

according to what is happening to him; he doesn't hold one single ideal of returning to any teleology promising to take him back to some originary position.²³ His experience is a constant process of repetition with difference, a distancing himself from what he once was and what he is supposed to be, in order to become something slightly different and thus to acknowledge the personal nature of his participation in history. Even his name, Sammy Samuels, enacts this Deleuzian difference-with-repetition and stands as a kind of affront to the nomenclature of respectable, lack-carrying persons.

Moreover, in *How Late*, impressions are registered on a *recording surface*. Blinded, Sammy has to feel the grain of his environment; he is reliant on the pure contingency of present contact, of being *in touch*. Like Deleuze's Kafka's Josef K, Sammy is out of touch with a law which is material yet unknowable, being perpetually pushed from one inadequate explanation to the next.²⁴ His given role is to forever try to recover a stable place before the law; yet his struggle as a participant in history is to create difference from this given position.²⁵ His personal future as underwritten by the law of lack is always *avenir*, to come, always postponed and requiring a wait which is itself acknowledged by your man as an action, during which he goes on becoming something slightly different.²⁶ And since he is blind, the world is inscribed, historically, on his body. He records like a record²⁷—unlike, for example, a CD. (And, as Uwe Zagratzki argues, the rhythms and themes of black American blues voice, familiar from scratchy old vinyls, echoes throughout *How Late*).²⁸ Both *Anti-Oedipus* and *How Late* have a record-like spiral structure:²⁹ where *Anti-Oedipus* introduces concepts briefly and then returns to them periodically in modified forms, *How Late* allows personal concerns to arise, be forgotten, and reappear as if for the first time after some event has moved Sammy into some other situation.³⁰ This post-Humean

Claire Cloebrook, *Deleuze*, 33.

²³ Cf. Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (London, 1994; 1968), 291–3.

²⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 14.

²⁵ Cf. Kafka, 'Before the Law'; Jacques Derrida *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London, 1992), 181–220.

²⁶ Cf. Jacques Derrida, *Voyous: Deux Essais sur la Raison* (Paris, 2003).

²⁷ Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 76–9.

²⁸ Uwe Zagratzki, "'Blues Fell This Morning': James Kelman's Scottish Literature and Afro-American Music", in *Scottish Literary Journal* 27–1 (Spring 2000).

²⁹ Cf. Deleuze on Beckett in 'The Greatest Irish Film (Beckett's "Film")', in Deleuze, *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 23–6.

³⁰ Cf. Michael Hardt, online guide to *Anti-Oedipus* taken from his own university guide:

process shiftily removes Sammy from the state-happy police/*polis*: as Paul Patton and John Protevi put it, 'reading strategies and interest in institutional powers have an affinity'.³¹

In this sense Kelman and Deleuze are modernist in the manner of Gertrude Stein (rather than Eliot or even Joyce); leitmotifs appear throughout their texts without any overall structuring principle to them, making them 'difficult'.³² But this needn't imply an Adorno-esque division of high and low culture.³³ Nor, however, does it mean that Kelman is playing class-hero by identifying with the 'bottom'. Such perspectival, hands-off topographies are done away with if one takes seriously Deleuze's ideas on *becoming* rather than identifying a place of being.

And, as in Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of Kafka, Kelman can be perfectly described as a *minor* writer. His is a literature of affect and becoming, rather than a majoritarian one which represents something assumed to be already there. In the Deleuzian sense Scotland as a whole is a minor nation, having no state citizenship and always having to 'become' out of, or to create a repetition with difference from, essentialist images, since there is nothing else of substance. In Deleuze's *Essays Critical and Clinical*, literature is no less than the creation of a people.³⁴ Here of course 'minor' does not imply unimportant, or somehow small,³⁵ though Kelman's work is also 'minor' in the less Deleuzian sense of a refusal to court marketability. Rather, Deleuze and Guattari define the minor thus:

A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language. But the first characteristic of minor literature in any case is that in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialisation . . . The impossibility of not writing because national consciousness, uncertain or oppressed, necessarily exists by means of literature . . . The second characteristic of minor literatures is that everything in them is political . . . The third

www.duke.edu/~hardt/Deleuze&Guattari.html.

³¹ See introduction to Paul Patton and John Protevi (eds), *Between Deleuze and Derrida* (London, 2003), 3.

³² As in, for example, Gertrude Stein, *Three Lives: Stories of the Good Anna, Melanetha, and the Gentle Lena* (New York, 1994; 1909).

³³ Cf. Theodor Adorno, 'Perennial Fashion: Jazz', in Brian O' Connor (ed.), *The Adorno Reader* (Oxford, 2000), 267–79.

³⁴ Deleuze, 'Literature and Life', in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, 1–6: 4.

³⁵ Cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 291.

characteristic of a minor literature is that in it everything takes on a collective value.³⁶

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, 'major' and 'minor' are even separated out as two treatments of the same language, or further as two functions of language as such, where the two terms are in relation.³⁷ And the minor writer can '[u]se the minor language to *send the major language racing*' (an apt term given the frequency of betting-shop chancers in Kelman's early stories).³⁸ Kelman is at a proactive tangent to 'English Literature', where this phrase means not 'literature from England' or 'literature in English', but a literary discourse of moving towards a central authority relying on an 'English' which has given up its borders on assuming empire (see Dilke and other late nineteenth-century writers on the mobility of the English *polis*) and traditionally working via characters looking towards a major socio-historical centre.³⁹

English Literature has in the main been marked by this activity of pointing towards a pre-existent subject—for example Georgianism, a reaction to urbanisation and multiculturalism, was, it is strange to reflect, contemporary with Kafka, and Claire Colebrook rightly exemplifies Rupert Brooke's 'The Soldier' as major literature—language pointing back to a self-pre-existing the language used, further stabilised by an un-playful obedience to the metre most connoting correct English Language as it has been fixed in tradition.⁴⁰ A more extreme example of this would be the poetry of the even more Georgian Enoch Powell, Tory power-broker behind the coming to power of Thatcher, metrically perfect in a Latinate way (and late-imperial prescriptive grammars typically assumed Latin constructions as being more authoritative than English ones),⁴¹ pathologically averse to reversing a metrical foot, whose poetry is murder *polis*. Powell stands for an idea of England so 'prior' that its Thatcherite echoes necessarily split a British union which looked almost nothing like England at the time Kelman came to prominence.⁴² Britishness in the '80s and '90s

³⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka*, 16–17.

³⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 103–5.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 105.

³⁹ Cf. Edward Said, 'Jane Austen and Imperialism' and 'The Cultural Integrity of Empire', in Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York, 1994), 80–97 and 97–110.

⁴⁰ Colebrook, *Deleuze*, 119–20.

⁴¹ Cf. Lynda Mugglestone, "'Proper English'" and the Politics of Standard Speech' in Kevin Robins and David Morley (eds), *British Cultural Studies* (Oxford, 2001), 181–94.

⁴² Cf. Anthony Barnett, *This Time: Our Constitutional Revolution* (London, 1997).

pressed ahead with increasing puzzlement in its role of building on a prior subject always undefined (because major), and preventing the becoming of Britain's 'minor' nations—including England itself.

How Late is not the only Kelman story to have a highly Kafkaesque turn; another example is his brilliant short story 'The Block', which again shows marked similarities to the interpolated guilt or lack of *The Trial*, and sees a milkman witness a man fall from the sky, to find that this act of bearing witness puts him in some unspecific way in trouble with the police.⁴³ A further irony is the fact that in Glasgow pronunciation 'block' can be very close to 'bloke'—did he see a thing or a man? Is he really somehow involved? A further significance comes in the Deleuze/Guattari notion of the block in *A Thousand Plateaus*, in which 'every becoming is a block of coexistence',⁴⁴ a block being formed by two asymmetrical movements.⁴⁵ Kafka's obsession with the guilt of witnessing the grey area between human and inhuman, the omniscient and experiential, is a recurrent theme in inter-referendum Scotland. Irvine Welsh's story 'The Granton Star Transfer' (1994), for example, candidly pinches the idea of Kafka's 'The Metamorphosis' by turning its speaker into a bluebottle.⁴⁶

So, sensitised to the problems of representation in a city of a nation with no state, one in which learning a foreign dialect/language had become a requisite of passing into a realm of global success,⁴⁷ Kafka, like those immediately before him, was deeply concerned with the relationship between representation and effect, and this returns in Scottish Literature of the 1970s to 1990s which overturns the British ideas of global success of the post-union period. In Edwin Morgan's celebrated 'The First Men on Mercury', travelling earthlings with broadly well-intentioned imperialist designs, far from having their desired effect, are gradually corrupted by meaningless sound in a face-off with native Mercurians, whose phonetic nonsense appears more and more meaningful until the groups exchange places,⁴⁸ and the Mercurians even seem to have a phonetic affiliation with Glasgow speech.⁴⁹

⁴³ James Kelman, 'The Block', in Kelman, *Not Not While The Giro* (London, 1989; 1983), 99–106.

⁴⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 292.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 293–4; the section on blocks is 291–309.

⁴⁶ Irvine Welsh, 'The Granton Star Transfer', in Welsh, *The Acid House* (London, 1995; 1994), 120–36.

⁴⁷ Cf. a number of essays in Robert Crawford (ed.), *The Scottish Invention of English Literature* (Cambridge, 1998).

⁴⁸ Edwin Morgan, 'The First Men on Mercury', in Morgan, *Collected Poems* (Manchester, 1990), 267–8.

⁴⁹ W. N. Herbert, 'Morgan's Words', in Robert Crawford and Hamish White (eds), *About*

The Glasgow movement of concrete poetry / sound poetry, inaugurated by Morgan and Ian Hamilton Finlay in 1963, in which the idea of representation is central, has no real equivalent in English Literature, at least until the 1970s, and even then in a de-politicised form.⁵⁰ This Scottish movement of concrete poetry, moreover, is also exactly coincident with Laing's refusal to accept the placement of the solid subject, again predicated on lack, in capitalist societies, a thinking that would feed into *Anti-Oedipus*. Laing's 1967 prosepoem 'The Bird of Paradise' can also be seen as having a Morgan-like concern with the sliding affective image over the 'vertical' or connotative metaphor.⁵¹ One of Laing's most significant early (co-written) works was a guide to the thought of Jean-Paul Sartre;⁵² and Kelman, as I have suggested, belongs to the same tradition, read via a Sartrean and post-Sartrean existentialism signalled by a close relationship with French literature, and domesticated by figures like Alexander Trocchi, Glaswegian-Italian writer resident in Paris and relentless champion, in his 1950s journal *Merlin*, of the then little-known Samuel Beckett.

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Edwin Morgan (Edinburgh, 1990), 65–74.

⁵⁰ Cf. Michael Gardiner, 'Towards a Post-British Theory of Modernism: Speech and Vision in Edwin Morgan', *Pretexts: Literary and Cultural Studies* 11.2 (November 2002), 133–46.

⁵¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, 265–6; R.D.Laing, 'The Bird of Paradise', in Laing, *The Politics of Experience and the Bird of Paradise* (Harmondsworth, 1967), 171–90; Gardiner, *The Cultural Roots of British Devolution*, 90–6.

⁵² R. D. Laing and David Cooper, *Reason and Violence: A Decade of Sartre's Philosophy* (London, 1964).

Stateless Nation / Nationless State: History, Anomaly and Devolution in Scottish and Northern Irish Writing

Aaron Kelly

Both Scotland and Northern Ireland have long been the site of dominant, sedimented discourses claiming their historical anomaly within a broader framework of the normal development of the nation state. It is devolution in both cases which supposedly helps wrestle Scotland and the North of Ireland toward a liberal, democratic historical norm. For example, with regard to Scotland, David McCrone's work is paradigmatic in establishing a sense of a pre-devolution Scotland without its own political institutions as a *stateless nation*, a nation without a state. By implication, then, Scotland stands as an anomaly, a miscarried version of the normative process by which historical development reconciles nation with state, state with nation. By extension, devolution permits at least some democratic redress. And in relation to the normal model of the nation state, so too Northern Ireland appears anomalous. For is Northern Ireland a nation? Not really, it is rather, at the very least, the collision of two nations, and, in the Peace Process, the duty of care of two nation states (the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic). So the Northern Irish state, according to the normative model of historical development, is a state without a nation, a *nationless state*. Perhaps most notably, David Lloyd deems the 'post-colonial moment' of collision to produce an *anomalous state* in regard to the North.¹ This essay seeks to contest the effort to regard Scotland and the North of Ireland in terms of peculiarity and anomaly and suggests instead that specificity and intensity should be the terms of engagement. In particular, I challenge the democratic credentials of mainstream devolution by first undermining the normative historical paradigms upon which its enfranchisement is based. Such paradigms of historical development, I suggest, both maintain and repress specific sets of social inequality that are perpetuated rather than restituted by institutional devolution of power in contemporary Britain. By examining the live antagonisms of Scottish and Northern Irish writing it is also possible to resist peculiarising both cultures and societies, and in doing so, to refract instead the questions they raise back upon the codes of historical

¹ David Lloyd, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Dublin, 1993),

normality against which they are judged and to undermine those paradigms of normalcy.

In terms of Scottish writing, the sitting of a devolved parliament on 12 May 1999 and the onset of the twenty-first century have elicited numerous re-positionings and re-periodizations of Scotland and its culture. In an example that is typical, Catherine Lockerbie, director of the Edinburgh International Book Festival, has commented in conversation with Alan Massie that

now devolution has been achieved, people don't have to prove they are Scottish writers anymore . . . I think we've moved on from the days of the stereotypical writer. Young writers don't have to write those quasi-political novels. I think we'll find something more interesting and individual from them, rather than following that old path. The chip on the shoulder has been turned into a twiglet if you like and the Scottish cultural cringe has certainly diminished.²

There are a number of complacent assumptions in this statement concerning the relationship of culture, pre- and post-devolution, to politics and socio-economics which need to be unpacked. Firstly, the designation of pre-devolution writing as 'quasi-political' seems disingenuous given that the standard critical narrative positions the post-1979 cultural realm as the space wherein authority and identity are devolved in a manner that actually adumbrates the institutional devolution of power in 1998 through the Scotland Act.³ Secondly, Lockerbie's comment raises a question as to precisely what that 'quasi-politics' might be. Lockerbie's assertion explicitly suggests that it was the *national* question which so pre-occupied culture before devolution and, even more mechanistically, that writers such as James Kelman (who is Lockerbie's main target) were primarily engaged in proving their Scottishness in a fashion that confirms some pre-ordained and 'stereotypical' paradigm. Implicitly underpinning Lockerbie's views is a teleological narrative which avers that devolution demarcates some (vaguely defined) normativity that has now been broached and which may set aside, in some new dispensation, those former 'quasi-political' antagonisms. And the

² Massie, Alan. 'Sir Walter's Scoterati', *Scotland on Sunday* 16 June 2002. *Review*, 1

³ The most brilliant and nuanced analyses of such cultural politics are proffered by Cairns Craig's *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and British Culture* (Edinburgh, 1996) and *The Modern Scottish Novel: Narrative and the National Imagination* (Edinburgh, 1999); and Michael Gardiner's *The Cultural Roots of British Devolution* (Edinburgh, 2004).

consequence of such normalization, for Lockerbie, is to be the re-issuing of the 'individual' untainted by a now resolved Scottishness.

Similarly, Christopher Whyte, in an essay specifically on masculinity in contemporary Scottish culture, has maintained that 'In the absence of an elected political authority, the task of representing the nation has been repeatedly devolved to its writers . . . one can hope that the setting-up of a Scottish parliament will at last allow Scottish literature to be literature first and foremost, rather than the expression of a nationalist movement'.⁴ The main, and indeed laudable, purpose of Whyte's analysis is to critique violent masculine paradigms but it is notable that the reactionary crisis of gender identity perceived by Whyte is located in a broader national malaise and disempowerment that, once more, may be resolved by devolved political power. Both Lockerbie and Whyte assume that pre-devolution culture compensates for some national democratic deficit that is redressed by devolution so that, with the nation restored and political institutions returned, literature may also reclaim its privileged autonomy. Herein resides a misguided reduction of the *political* to the *national* and a concomitant advocacy of a disengaged, individualised art. According to such a proposition, just as Scotland attains a normative model of national development that confirms yet paradoxically obsolesces its nationhood, so too its literature tautologically reproduces itself as literature in an economy of normalcy beyond politics and history.

It is this literary concern with wrestling Scottish writing from a supposedly anomalous 'quasi-politics' that is embedded in the long-established sedimentation of sociological, socio-economic and political discourse positioning Scotland as peculiar, as the miscarried version of a European national developmental norm, that I have sought to identify. David McCrone formulates Scotland's peculiarity thus:

In terms of its structural position in the historical development of the capitalist world economy Scotland is doubly unique. Britain as a whole was the first state to have a thoroughgoing capitalist revolution; second, Scotland's capitalist revolution occurred within a country lacking the political and institutional structures of statehood. Further . . . such a transformation occurred before the ideological input of nationalism which was to inform the political and economic features of capitalist industrialisation in much of Europe . . . Scotland crossed 'the great

⁴ Christopher Whyte, 'Masculinities in Contemporary Scottish Fiction', *Forum for Modern Language Studies*, Vol. 34, no. 3 (1998), 274–85, 284.

divide' to become an industrialised society without the benefit or hindrance of nationalism, which usually acted as a political or ideological vehicle for much of the European bourgeoisie. Further, Scotland's economy was rarely if ever self-contained and independent. It was an open economy, reliant on external capital and technology, and subject to the vagaries of the broader economic and political environment, whether of Britain or a wider European capitalist economy.⁵

So, according to the teleological narrative of this argument, where England developed and matured organically, Scotland retarded and splintered. Equally, Tom Nairn also perceives Scotland as an anomaly outside the norms of historical progress and concludes that 'an anomalous historical situation could not engender a "normal" culture'. In this kind of interpretation, the politics of Scottish culture are never experienced in the terms of their own specificity and intensity, for live, disruptive and constitutive antagonisms, such as social class, instead become the depleted tokens of someone else's normality. Nairn comments: 'The opposite of mature all-roundedness is presumably infantile partiality, or fragmentariness'.⁶ In a confirmation of the bourgeois narrative underpinning the progressive model of historical development, the insinuation ghosting such pronouncements is that Scotland would have been normal if only it had evolved a mature and well-rounded middle-class. The implication is that nations, peoples, individuals or classes which do not produce culture in its normative form are not merely different but abnormal, aberrant and, according to the bourgeois narrative of historical development, immature or not fully formed social subjects or constituencies. For Theodor Adorno, the effort to diagnose a social formation according to a grammar of health and normalcy itself betrays a bourgeois narrative of historical development: 'the dichotomy of healthy/sick is as undialectical as that of the rise and fall of the bourgeoisie, which itself derives its norms from a bourgeois consciousness that has failed to keep pace with its own development'.⁷ Adorno's account of the bourgeoisie's periodic incapacity to plot its own historical dynamic of perpetual change permits a fundamental revision of the bourgeois narrative

⁵ David McCrone, *Understanding Scotland: The Sociology of a Stateless Nation* (London, 1992), 35.

⁶ Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and Neo-Nationalism* (London, 1981), 155, 157.

⁷ Adorno, Theodor W. 'Reconciliation Under Duress'. *Aesthetics and Politics: Debates Between Bloch, Lukács, Brecht, Benjamin, Adorno*, trans. Ronald Taylor (London, 1977), 151–76, 156.

underscoring the disposition of Scotland according to historical paradigms of prior malformation and belated normalcy. The effort by both Lockerbie and Whyte to reaffirm the return to good health of both the individual and literature in Scotland assumes its proper context and significance in a vast bourgeois realignment more globally. The critical and historical positions adopted by Lockerbie and Whyte, and Nairn and McCrone, should not be regarded, as they ostensibly and locally appear, as a remedial struggle against a deformed nationalism. Rather, they gain their full meaning and belie their deepest affinities by signalling a wrangle to thread the final and telling stitch to the suture of bourgeois hegemony.

That said, Kelman's post-devolution fiction is notably set outwith Scotland: the fragmentary reports of *Translated Accounts* seep through the confines of an undesignated regime that is possibly Turkey or somewhere in Eastern Europe, whilst *You Have to be Careful in the Land of the Free* addresses the experiences of the Scottish migrant Jeremiah Brown in the United States. In the terms of analysis established by Nairn and McCrone in relation to Scotland and history, and Lockerbie and Whyte with regard to Scottish literature, it is highly tempting to concede this re-orientation of Kelman's work as an admission that Scottish matters have finally been resolved, that devolution constitutes a paradigm shift from which it is time to move on. Lockerbie's appraisal that Kelman's 'writing is angrier than ever, but I think that course has run'⁸ seeks to dismiss Kelman on the basis that he is out of synch with this national resolution and the temporal and spatial closure of its narrative, yet it is also troubled by the persistence and indeed intensification of political energies that Lockerbie's model of a new literature can neither explain nor periodize. The refusal of Kelman's work to be placed by a Scotland made normal by these narratives of pre- and post-devolution society is highly instructive for it signals that the politics and aesthetics of his writing are incommensurate with both the nationalist appropriation of culture before 1999 and the post-nationalist arrogation of culture thereafter. In particular, it is the stringent class politics of Kelman's writing which remains recalcitrant to such co-option. It is the ideological task of nationalism to assert the primacy of the nation in abeyance of identifications such as class, and hence to seek to annex the voice of a writer such as Kelman as a *national* one rather than a precisely situated *class* articulation. And the post-nationalist literature anticipated by Lockerbie and Whyte should not be regarded as the rebuttal of the ideological work

⁸ Quoted Massie, 'Sir Walter's Scoterati', *Scotland on Sunday* 16 June 2002. *Review*, 1.

undertaken by nationalism but rather its ultimate outcome: according to such logic, the nation as an already agreed concept and the normal *telos* of historical development permits the expression of the autonomy of both literature and the individual. If nationalism betrays its bourgeois hegemony in its effort to sublate and recode the working-class politics of a writer such as Kelman in its own terms, then such a stratagem achieves not its negation but its apotheosis in post-nationalism. For post-nationalism pursues the final repression of class in its discourse of cultural difference, its normative society of differentiated individuals. Therein, class antagonism is rewritten as cultural diversity, a revalued sign of the post-nation's healthy polyphony, so that, divested of its own terms and context, the language of class becomes simply one register amongst others of a cultural relativism that rewords bourgeois hegemony as social pluralism.

So how might Kelman's work facilitate a reconsideration of the democratic credentials of the newly devolved Scotland? Well, Kelman's work has always been driven by the social inequalities and fracture of late capitalism, the disruption of traditional working-class communities and solidarities and an attendant loss of meaning from the world and its events and institutions. In analyzing the predicament of Kelman's characters, 1979 is a crucial watershed since it signalled not only the contentious defeat of the first referendum on Scottish devolution but also, compounding the Scottish working class's lack of democratic control over its own future, the British General Election victory of Margaret Thatcher. Thatcher's neo-liberal economic policies set about a vigorous assault upon the organised labour of Britain's industrial heartlands—a campaign that was never endorsed by a democratic majority in Scotland (or for that matter Wales or large areas of working-class England). Significantly, then, state power and its institutions, which decimated the lives and communities of working-class Scotland, were beyond the immediate understanding or experiential grasp of its victims; it was very much absented and elsewhere (literally hundreds of miles away). Kelman observes in Kafka's work that 'society can be regarded as a labyrinth of authorities whose powers are functional'.⁹ So too in his own historical moment, Kelman must confront a labyrinthine state and bureaucracy that is rendered extremely difficult to map, comprehend or resist due to the dialectic of the *presence* of its oppression and the *absence* of its anonymous and unaccountable institutions. Kelman's project in his novels and short stories is an attempt to piece together a renewed sense of the disparate

⁹ James Kelman, *And the Judges Said: Essays* (London, 2002), 279.

remoteness of state power, to reconvene an oppositional social tribunal that interrogates the state's various apparatuses: coercive, welfare, educational and so on. It is therefore highly apposite that Kafka should remain such an influence of Kelman's writing since Kafka was perhaps the first twentieth-century writer to comprehend fully how power functions in terms of discrepancy between the presence of the lived, daily grind of its effects and enforcements and the absence of the locus and source of its vast systemic reach. Hence, Deleuze and Guattari assert:

If Kafka is the greatest theorist of bureaucracy, it is because he shows how, at a certain level (but which one? it is not localizable), the barriers between offices cease to be 'a definitive dividing line' and are immersed in a molecular medium that dissolves them and simultaneously makes the office manager proliferate into microfigures impossible to recognize or identify, discernable only when they are centralizable: another regime, coexistent with the separation *and* totalization of the rigid segments.¹⁰

Similarly, Kelman's work confronts the interminable and banal microfigures and microeffects of power and yet also attempts to discern the causal structures behind these proliferations. However, with devolution, one would expect—according to the national teleology of democratic redress—that this gap of representation (both cultural and political) would be reduced, that power returns to the nation and its people (and hence the historical forces which lead to devolution coincide with the *telos* of national self-determination). But Kelman's post-devolution fiction is, if anything, inflected with even more disjuncture and displacement than before. In answering why this might be so, it is useful to return to the terms of Deleuze and Guattari's work on Kafka and specifically the theory of minor literature that they establish from Kafka's position as a Czech Jew writing in German. Deleuze and Guattari argue: 'A minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language . . . in it language is affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization'.¹¹ In these terms, if Kelman's work contains a devolving dynamic then it does so by *deterritorializing* Standard English through a working-class Glaswegian constituency and not through a Scottish or national

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (London, 2004), 235–6.

¹¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *Franz Kafka: Towards A Minor Literature*, trans. Dana Polan (London, 1986), 16.

lens. By contrast, the devolution of political institutions within Britain can be understood in terms of a fundamental *reterritorialization* of power: namely, the dominance free-market economics which underpins the move to create a European super-state portioned into highly rarefied neo-regional units.

Hence, the supposed political and national emancipation institutionally offered by devolution may also be interpreted in terms of the micro-economic restructuring and realignments of global capitalism. Certainly devolution is irreducible solely to the peremptory logic of global capitalism but nor is it indissociable therefrom. So the context of Scottish devolution requires circumspection given that the re-imbrication of British political institutions shares its historical moment with vast forces that run counter to popular-democratic energies: particularly, the collapse of popular belief in the efficacy of representative or parliamentary democracy. Kelman's post-devolution fiction confirms that in institutional terms what is ostensibly a deterritorialization is ultimately a profound reterritorialization. That is, not a democratizing movement towards an eventual national *independence* or regionalized and micropolitical enfranchisement but rather a shift to an increased *interdependence* of economic micro-units within global capitalism and its shadowy institutions. Indeed, it is therefore highly symptomatic that in an effort to reconcile nationalism and globalization in an official party document, Kenny MacAskill, the Justice spokesperson of the Scottish National Party, seeks to try and balance competing and ultimately contradictory demands in proposing 'Independence in an Interdependent World'.¹² In MacAskill's terms, a reconstituted nationalism for the post-devolution SNP recognises and endorses 'the internationalisation of the world economy'¹³ and seeks to place Scotland with welcome complicity in a coalition encapsulated by his chapter heading: 'Devolution, Globalisation, and a New World Order'. It is the deterritorializing energy of social class in Kelman's fiction that stands defiantly outwith the global reterritorialization of a devolved Scotland. To that end, the radical shift in Kelman's style in *Translated Accounts* does not offer some sense of a Scotland at home with itself, the homecoming of some authentic voice as nationalist appropriations of his work would have had it, but instead very boldly displaces his work across what the broken language of that novel terms the 'territories'¹⁴ of global space. *Translated Accounts* does not proffer

¹² Kenny MacAskill, *Building a Nation: Post Devolution Nationalism in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 2004), 23.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁴ James Kelman, *Translated Accounts: A Novel* (London, 2001), 175.

a Scotland made normal by a democratic redress but instead forces Scottish culture to consider its own implication in globalized networks of power and injustice, and it casts profound doubt on the representative limits of freedom and democracy by filtering through its fragmentary languages the constitutive oppressions that haunt a new global dispensation.

Additionally, in *You Have to be Careful* Jeremiah suffers a terminal displacement: 'I had a home, I had another home, maybe homes are ten a penny, I have had fucking millions of them. Except in the land of my birth'.¹⁵ Interestingly for Kelman, since he does not usually use quotation marks in his work, even for dialogue, the word 'hame' is used in inverted commas in the novel on occasion. In contrast to Lockerbie and Whyte's reconciled Scotland or Nairn and McCrone's Scotland made institutionally and historically normal, 'hame' is for Jeremiah always displaced and his repeated attempts to define and claim it only serve to defer it still further, for its normative global codes of belonging are inaccessible to his class experience. Tellingly, the Scots vernacular 'hame' signals only its own deferral and displacement rather than its belonging and accommodation in some reconciled national language and culture.

In addition to the spatial and linguistic displacements of *Translated Accounts* and *You have to be Careful* that unsettle the celebration of a newly reconciled Scotland, both novels also exhibit a profound temporal disjuncture. *Translated Accounts* asks: 'Is there a curfew for dead spirits?'.¹⁶ Both novels articulate the persistence of historical ghosts or unfinished business, the refusal of injustices to be reconciled in the terms of the power that has produced them in the first place. As such, both books remain resolutely out of step with what Francis Fukuyama terms *the end of history*. Fukuyama regards the present as the fulfillment of history and its reformist, ameliorative promises, and he naively equates post-cold war global capitalism (and indeed American imperialism) with democracy, to create, in his own terms at least, a utopia of a world supposedly beyond political division, ideological conflict or historical change.¹⁷ Echoing such sentiments in his conversation with Catherine Lockerbie, Allan Massie proclaims that in Scotland now 'there isn't much interest in writing for a cause because there isn't much of a cause worth fighting for'.¹⁸ This effort to periodize post-devolution Scotland in accordance with a more global doctrine of history as culminated progress and reconciliation is forcefully lacerated by

¹⁵ James Kelman, *You Have to be Careful in the Land of the Free* (London, 2004), 68.

¹⁶ *Translated Accounts*, 25.

¹⁷ See Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London, 1992).

¹⁸ Alan Massie, 'Sir Walter's Scoterati', *Scotland on Sunday* 16 June 2002. *Review*, 1.

both *You have to be Careful* and its journey to the heart of American imperialism and by *Translated Accounts*, wherein the discourse of historical progress is exposed as a reassuring fantasy of self-determined autonomy that displaces the acknowledgement of real horror: 'We progress. I also would progress. A comfort came from this. I again was aware of the bodies but as in a dream, or dream-like, my own state'.¹⁹ Hence, Kelman's post-devolution fiction, with its focus on class and the global injustices that systemically connect the world, gives the lie to the spurious dream of a Scotland reconciled in its own state.

Dietmar Böhnke, the author of what is not only the first full-length critical study of Kelman's work but also a well-judged and considered one, is keen to situate Kelman's work in relation to devolution and to a new and specifically *national* dispensation:

this recent development and what will follow from it can indeed be regarded as an—at least indirect—outcome of the more confident mood in Scottish culture and especially literature of the past years and decades . . . the concern of Kelman (and other contemporary writers) with Scottish national identity, which I found to be at the centre of his work, certainly played a part in bringing about this new situation.²⁰

In this kind of interpretation Kelman's work coincides with a national and institutional devolution that is to be understood in terms of historical 'development' and progress. Specifically, Böhnke equates postmodernism with this 'devolutionary process'²¹ and he invokes as a definition of the postmodern the work of Linda Hutcheon. Hutcheon formulates postmodernism as fundamentally *ex-centric*: that is, a deterritorialising liberation of difference from the constraints of power, metropole, hierarchy, totalising unity and so on: 'The local, the regional, the non-totalising are reasserted as the center becomes a fiction—necessary, desired, but a fiction nonetheless'.²² In such terms, devolving power from the centre to the margin or periphery appears an intrinsically postmodern emancipation and enablement, thus conjoining postmodernism and popular-democratic fulfilment. This essay, on the other hand, has sought to affirm the resistance of Kelman's work to the institutional

¹⁹ *Translated Accounts*, 1.

²⁰ Dietmar Böhnke, *Kelman Writes Back: Literary Politics in the Work of A Scottish Writer* (Berlin 1999), 6–7.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

²² Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (London, 2000), 12.

devolution of power in Scotland; rather than contributing to that devolution of power, his recent work confirms his continuing resistance to the global realignment and reterritorialization of bourgeois, liberal democracy. Perhaps the canonical advocacy of postmodernism's supposed emancipatory credentials is proffered by Jean-François Lyotard through his lauding of micro-narratives over a putatively repressive meta-narrative, and his account of the individual as a node where social practices intersect yet cannot be mapped onto one another or integrated into the social totality.²³ In this kind of analysis, society is heterogeneous and non-totalizable and any attempt to consider the individual in terms of problematics such as social class (or nationality or gender for that matter) become reductive of that complexity. A. J. P. Thomson, for example, uses Lyotard to question the attenuation of Scotland's complexity by a nationalist narrative: 'This circumscription of Scotland's political prospects is also a wrong done to politics itself, when politics is considered to be not the implantation of pre-determined political programmes but, as it is for Lyotard, the space of conflict and debate itself'.²⁴ Conversely, Kelman's writing demonstrates implacably that social class does reductively impede some celebration of the heterogeneous and autonomous individual but rather it exposes how class is the very structural and constitutive ground upon which such bourgeois identities are formed. Kelman's work tries precisely to reconvene a sense of the global totality producing these new micro-political codes, hybridities, and structures. In postmodernism's Lyotardian heterogeneity of individual and event, and in Lockerbie's and Whyte's post-nationalist accounts of devolution, we find ultimately not a popular, democratic *deteritorialization* but instead the *reterritorialization* of that most mainstream of things, the individual, the formative ideological building block of bourgeois society.

In terms of the North of Ireland, devolution of necessity is wedded to the Peace Process—the involvement of the British and Irish governments with multinational investment and US interventions. As with Kelman's work, key moments in post-devolution Northern Irish culture also retain fundamental suspicions and negations of the dominant assertion of the opening of the North

²³ See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester, 1988); *The Inhuman: Reflections on Time*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Cambridge 1991); *Libidinal Economy*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant (London, 1993).

²⁴ A. J. P. Thomson, 'Phrasing Scotland and the Postmodern', in Eleanor Bell and Gavin Miller (eds), *Scotland in Theory: Reflections on Literature and Culture* (Amsterdam, 2004), 69–81, 80.

to a new liberal-democratic global dispensation. Alan Gillis' poem 'Progress'²⁵ offers a succinct but sustained meditation on the ethical aporias of the narrative of historical development and it is worth quoting in full:

They say that for years Belfast was backwards
and it's great now to see some progress.
So I guess we can look forward to taking boxes
from the earth. I guess that ambulances
will leave the dying back amidst the rubble
to be explosively healed. Given time,
one hundred thousand particles of glass
will create impossible patterns in the air
before coalescing into the clarity
of a window. Through which, a reassembled head
will look out and admire the shy young man
taking his bomb from the building and driving home.

The poem neatly undermines the linear narrative transporting a society deemed to be 'backwards' into a present dispensation of progress. By cleverly reversing the linear narrative Gillis indicates the ethical absences of such a teleology of history, the unresolved injustices that cannot be undone by moving backwards and forwards along its temporal continuum. The understated and resigned refrain, 'I guess', signals simultaneously the dominance of this doctrine of progress and a deep circumspection as to its merits. The ironised 'we can look forward' divests the phrase of its easy complicity with the readymade futurity offered by the state-sponsored aspects of the Peace Process. The poem loads the phrase with irony by overdetermining its seemingly everyday, common sensibly true anticipation in the terms of that overarching march of progress. This looking forward is exposed as an act of fundamental forgetting, an effort to repress the restive *adikia* that troubles and haunts the linear narrative of development. And that teleology of progress anticipates its healing will be fulfilled 'given time', where time is a given, where this temporal narrative enthrones its own inevitability.²⁶ Where this narrative of progress offers 'clarity' it does so

²⁵ Alan Gillis, *Somebody, Somewhere* (Oldcastle, Co. Meath, 2004), 55.

²⁶ In *Specters of Marx*, a book which takes as its epigraph Hamlet's complaint that 'The time is out of joint', Derrida reworks Martin Heidegger's concept of *adikia* to suggest that we inhabit a disjuncture in history that is not only *temporal* but also *ethical* and to stress the need to reconvene a historical tribunal that comprehends our phantasmagoric present and its injustices, to 'set things right', as Hamlet would have it. There is a

only by remaking and 'reassembling' events in its own terms and voiding them of their own ethical and historical import and context. But whilst the poem ends with 'home' it is evident that the linear model of history as progress cannot finally reconcile nor resolve the historical events that it seeks to order in an ultimately 'impossible' manner. The poem's deep irony insists that another means of doing justice to the past is painfully necessary since otherwise ethical displacement and injustice must inexorably continue their *revenant* or return seeping through the aporia of the movement of progress even as that dominant narrative of history wishes to trammel or repress them.

The fact that the poem proceeds from what 'they say' not only permits the poetic voice to dissociate itself from the doctrine of progress and pursue its task of brushing that history against the grain with biting irony, as it also indicates that the dominant management of the Peace Process and its supposed democratic redress is conducted by 'they' whilst the victims are disallowed by such a narrative from being subjects of the historical events in which they are involved. In terms of this arrogation of events by the narrative of history as progress, Derrida's account of the archive is illuminating. Drawing upon the etymology of the word 'archive' in the Greek *arkhē*, Derrida formulates the archive as at once *commencement* and *commandment*, as entailing the principles of history, of where things commence, and of commandment and law. In the second, determining sense of the *arkhē*, Derrida argues that the law can be found in the archive: 'there where men and gods command, there where authority, social order are exercised, in this place from which order is given'.²⁷ Most particularly, Derrida asserts that it is the *archons* who have the primary power to interpret the archive: 'it is at their home, in that place which is their house [*arkheion* as 'house,' 'domicile,' 'address'] . . . that official documents are filed'.²⁸ In Gillis' poem 'Progress' it is therefore telling that the 'home' arrived at is produced by 'they', by the *archons* and guarantors of a narrative of history as progress that records and re-orders the ethical dilemmas of events in the history of the North which denies those events and their participants their own context and specificity. Derrida neatly avers: 'Effective democratization can always be measured by this essential criterion: the participation in and access to the archive, its constitution, and its

profound fear in the end of history narrative of the ghostly return, what Derrida terms the *revenant*, an insecurity that history is not dead and buried and cannot simply be co-opted to secure the encirclement of the present state of affairs.

²⁷ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago, 1995), 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 10.

interpretation'.²⁹ Gillis' 'Progress' similarly gauges and indicts the democratic credentials of a devolved Northern Ireland by uncovering the state-sponsored aspects of the Peace Process and its model of progressive history as serving the interests of the *archons*, the keepers of this history of the powerful that would re-member, re-order and forget the voices of the vanquished.

Comparable issues of the claims of ethics and archives are distilled in Robert McLiam Wilson's 'The Dreamed', a magic realist tale in which an old man becomes accustomed to the dead combatants, initially from the Second World War and then from all wars, returning to life through the portal of his bed at night. The old man had escaped fighting in the Second World War through his working as a researcher in the War Office Research Unit. Embedded in the bureaucracy of war, he became inured to the mechanized, economic costing of war and death:

He had grown used to casualty figures and projections of all kinds. He had seen economic breakdowns of casualty figures. How much British casualties cost the economy, how much it cost on average to kill Germans. He was perturbed in only a minor way . . . He had a great gift for not thinking. He distrusted empathy, he distrusted the way his eyes could fill with reasonless tears. Why weep over suffering that didn't belong to him? What was the possible use of such a habit? . . . When the Americans dropped two of their spectacular new ideas on Japan he felt the blast a little more . . . When he started to read government documents about the Jews, he found it harder to avoid reflection. When accounts appeared in newspapers, his head itched again. When he saw photographs, his mouth dried for what felt like forever.³⁰

The story in a very meaningful way does serve to pass sentence on that bureaucratization of war and society as its ghosts return to trouble the promise of history's progress, a spectral return of the departed and their unpaid ethical debt. However, as the war dead miraculously return to life and seek a setting things right, an ethical realignment, there is also a more troubling structure to Wilson's story. The first returnee from the dead, a French soldier named Sylvain, takes it upon himself with the old man's assistance to see to it that all

²⁹ Ibid., 4.

³⁰ Robert McLiam Wilson, 'The Dreamed', in Ian Jack (ed.), *Granta* 81 (Spring 2003). 303–22, 308.

of the soldiers who return to life are provided for and reintegrated into society. And whilst the story on one level allows for a utopian return and redress for history's victims, there is an unavoidable and iterative parallel between the economics and bureaucratization of war and death felt by the old man in his job in the War Office and Sylvain's ordering of the redrafted lives of the returned war dead:

As the years passed the bureaucracy of the departed had become magnified, monstrous. Much of it was in the form of open, charitable trust. Fundraising mostly took place within the group of departed but several investment companies were set up and increased the proceeds judiciously. Businesses run by the departed burgeoned. No man leaving the old man's house needed to look for work . . . By 1952, almost all the returnees were paying a semi-formal tariff on their income to one of Sylvain's organizations. By 2001, the old man made a guess that the simple income of the returnees must amount to a minimum of 192 million pounds. That did not count the investment accounts and various businesses.³¹

'The Dreamed' harbors a tension between the desire to reclaim lost lives, to set right injustice, and the ordering of the archive, the return of the men to a world that has not been systemically transformed and which, in the above passage quoted, co-opts all things to its economic and historical progress, including justice, so that it is profits which are accrued 'judiciously'. Sylvain's archive and its bureaucratic order confirms Derrida's point that 'archivization produces as much as it records the event'.³² The return of the dead, in Sylvain's system, recodes injustice and reorders the departed lives in the ongoing, self-perpetuating history that had sent them to war and killed them in the first instance. Hence, the story says of the Old Man:

One thing he particularly abhorred was Sylvain's habit of documentation. Sylvain had kept scrupulous archives . . . he knew all the numbers, all the fractions. He knew the exact total of returned men. He knew the monthly rate of returnees, their nationality predominances and sequences, costs per man.³³

³¹ Ibid., 316.

³² Derrida, *Archive Fever*, 17.

³³ Wilson, 'The Dreamed', 317.

That the story's more utopian, ethical urges are attenuated by the order of history may be viewed as pessimistic; yet it may also be redeemed in the light of Fredric Jameson's sense of the *diagnostic* and *critical-substantive* role of what he deems as the *negative* modality necessary to properly utopian thought: 'the system would have to be already transformed'.³⁴ This negative sense of utopia, Jameson maintains, is strongly political so that 'it is most authentic when we cannot imagine it. Its function lies not in helping us to imagine a better future but rather in demonstrating our utter incapacity to imagine such a future—our imprisonment in a non-utopian present without historicity or futurity—so as to reveal the ideological closure of the system in which we are somehow trapped or confined'.³⁵ In this light, the utopian urge for redress in 'The Dreamed' is disappointed by, yet also therefore utterly indicts, the ideological closure of developmental history, the selfsame iteration of its paradigm. And the story is, in some way, able to flow through the aporias and repression of that history. We are informed of the old man:

He still wondered how these documents read. What kind of literature did they represent? What kind of testament? He knew that the vastness of the bureaucracy was Sylvain's attempt to dilute the occult strangeness of the whole phenomenon. He knew that the Frenchman had always hoped that double-entry book keeping would render everything more thinkable . . . The only statistic that the old man could quote verbatim from this strange archive was that nearly two hundred of the men had ended up long or short term in psychiatric institutions for trying to tell the truth.³⁶

So the departed are allowed jobs, careers, social advancement, profits, economic success—anything, in fact, but their 'truth'. They have been archived in both past and present in terms of a historical order that will allow anything but an acknowledgement of their experiences and the ethical questions which they raise in their own terms and context. Yet their truth, what the story itself recognizes as their 'trace', remains and rightly and insistently voices a restive disquiet with the dominant order and its requisition of their lives.

If Wilson's 'The Dreamed' castigates the *archons*, the keepers of history's dominant order of things, and demonstrates that nothing has changed ethically

³⁴ Fredric Jameson, 'The Politics of Utopia', *New Left Review* 25 (Jan–Feb 2004), 46.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

³⁶ Wilson, 'The Dreamed', 318.

in the systemic closure of that order despite the return of the dead, then Eoin McNamee's *The Ultras* is a post-devolution novel that sharply focuses such critique directly on the state itself. As with much of McNamee's work, the novel weaves its fictions in and out of real events, in this case the life and death of Robert Nairac, an SAS soldier killed on active service in Northern Ireland. The police officer, Agnew, who retrospectively investigates the activities of the secret services and their involvement in murder in the North during the conflict uncovers a shadowy intelligence group whose very existence is denied: 'The forsworn brethren, the Ultras. Ultra meaning beyond. Ultra meaning extreme. The word had a cabbalistic tone to it . . . They created secrets and forced everyone else to live in them'.³⁷ Indeed, according to the *OED*, *ultra* connotes both 'lying spatially beyond or on the other side of', and 'going beyond, surpassing, or transcending the limits of'. As with the 'they' in Gillis' poem 'Progress', *The Ultras* implies that, in spite of its efforts to map the injustices and morally unfinished business of the past, the official archive, its *archons* and its law override ethical remembrance. McNamee's penumbral, conspiratorial milieu and its 'ghostly infrastructure'³⁸ returns us also to Kelman's fiction and the sense that power is fundamentally non-representative in the new North. As with Kelman's Kafkaesque mappings, so too McNamee must seek to straddle a 'moral void' in history and the new dispensation yet retain a commitment that 'everything was connected', that a historical tribunal must be established capable of passing judgment on inequality and ethical aporia.³⁹ The ethical, utopian yearning in the work of Gillis, Wilson, McNamee and Kelman undermines the dominant account of devolution as the culmination of a history of progress, and the unrealized nature of that ethical desire further serves to condemn the systemic history which makes such an ethical redress impossible. As such, this writing offers a stringent confrontation with post-devolution power in all its forms, even as those forms seek simultaneously to overwhelm us and to withdraw from our grasp and understanding completely. Such work deterritorializes itself from the complacent modification of a post-devolution, liberal-democratic Scotland, and from a Northern Ireland progressed beyond history, and it both anticipates and demands a more fundamental and revolutionary transformation. As *You Have to be Careful* insists: 'There are times when the world changes'.⁴⁰

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³⁷ Eoin McNamee, *The Ultras* (London, 2004), 216.

³⁸ *Ibid*, 10.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 150; 10.

⁴⁰ Kelman, *You Have to be Careful*, 90.

The Revival Of The Ulster-Scots Cultural Identity At The Beginning Of The Twenty-First Century

Linda M. Hagan

*The Scotch and Irish friendly are,
Their wishes are the same,
. . . Our historians and our poets
They always did maintain
That the origin of the Scottishmen
And Irish are the same. . .*

(From 'The Social Thistle and Shamrock' partly attributed to
Henry Joy McCracken)

These sentiments from 'The Social Thistle and Shamrock', partly attributed to Henry Joy McCracken, a leader of the United Irishmen, a Presbyterian and an Ulster-Scot, reflect the close links which have existed between Ireland—especially the north-eastern part of the island—and Scotland. It is perhaps at least partially because of these links it is still possible to differentiate on a cultural basis between the inhabitants of its northern and southern parts. The province of Ulster has always been unique and distinct. ' . . . there has been an otherness to the region and its people that has mystified strangers and created difficulties . . . with its neighbours'.¹

One aspect of this 'otherness' is the influence of the Ulster-Scots, who at the beginning of the twenty-first century have an increasing awareness of their own language and cultural traditions. A sense of cultural identity is becoming increasingly important in a world of globalisation, since 'it provides a sense of belonging. It is a root in a rootless age . . .'.² Increasing interest in all things Ulster-Scots could be seen as part of a much wider global search for meaning and identity rather than simply as a political reaction to demands for the revival of a specifically Irish culture.

The popular 'understanding' of who the Ulster-Scots are and when and where they originated tends to focus almost solely on the Plantation period. However, 'Ulster was always close to Scotland both physically and culturally

¹ John Killen, *The unkindest cut: a cartoon history of Ulster 1900–2000* (Belfast, 2000), 1.

² A. Alcock, 'Ulster-British Identity and Ulster', in *W.F.Marshall Summer School, 2001* (Coleraine, 2001).

and this was merely reinforced during the plantation in the seventeenth century'.³ The people of Ulster have always tended to look eastward to their Scottish neighbours more readily than southward. From 'Mesolithic settler and missionary saint to migrant seasonal worker and twentieth-century medical student—the narrow waters of the North Channel have witnessed and carried a constant traffic of people and ideas between the two coasts'.⁴

Until a few years ago, mention of the term 'Ulster-Scots' outside of academic circles would probably have received the response, 'What cultural tradition or language?' Professor Michael Montgomery of the University of South Carolina asserts that 'for a long time . . . information on Ulster-Scots could be found only in a few scholarly tomes and academic journals, and these were usually published abroad'.⁵ Since the Belfast Agreement of 1998, however, the term 'Ulster-Scots' has been heard more frequently. In this document all parties acknowledged the 'importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity . . . the Irish language, Ulster-Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities, all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland'.⁶ It established a North South Language Body to promote both the Irish language and the Ulster-Scots language and culture. In recent years there have been significant moves made to overcome the dearth of knowledge about this cultural tradition and to promote an interest in the spoken language. The founding of the Ulster-Scots Language Society in 1992, the Ulster-Scots Heritage Council in 1995 and the Ulster-Scots Agency in 1999 have played significant and important roles in promoting interest and informed opinion about Ulster-Scots language and culture. But, in spite of official acknowledgment, popular and media references have often continued to ridicule the very notion of such a language or cultural identity; to poke fun at the people who would claim this culture or to level accusations of solely political motivation at its proponents.

There has been much debate over the status of Ulster-Scots and controversy persists as to whether it is a language or a dialect of Scots. However, in

³ J. Dingley, 'Unionist Contra Nationalist Identity', in *W. F. Marshall Summer School, 2001* (Coleraine, 2001).

⁴ J. Erskine, and G. Lucy (eds), *Cultural Traditions in Northern Ireland Varieties of Scottishness* (Belfast, 1997), 1.

⁵ M. Montgomery and A. Smyth (eds), *A Blad O Ulster-Scotch Frae Ullans* (Belfast, 2001), 15.

⁶ Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland, *Agreement Reached in the Multi-party Negotiations* (Belfast 1998).

the matter of the revival of an Ulster-Scots culture and the facilitation of a discrete sense of identity, such linguistic debate is somewhat irrelevant. The fact is that Ulster-Scots has been awarded status as a minority language under Part 2 of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and this is an important but not crucial component in the encouragement of interest in Ulster-Scots culture and the revival of an Ulster-Scots cultural identity. It is, however, interesting to note that Gerry Adams argued from a nationalist perspective that 'the restoration of our culture must be a crucial part of our political struggle and that the restoration of the Irish language must be a central part of the cultural struggle'.⁷ It is hardly surprising therefore that attempts to promote the Ulster-Scots tongue have been met with the criticism that it is a politically-motivated movement to counter the Irish language revival.

This paper is not concerned with the language issue, however, but with the increasing sense of identification with Ulster-Scots culture—a phenomenon which encompasses more people than those who would claim to speak Ulster-Scots. It examines their perceived communal or ethnic characteristics and explores how the Ulster-Scots present themselves through looking at some humorous writing in both Ulster-Scots and English. It also examines how others outside the Ulster-Scots community have used humour about the people, the culture and the language as a weapon against them.

When we think of humorous writing we automatically think of something designed to entertain. Humour, however, can equally well be used to criticise and ridicule or provide an opportunity for political comment. Whenever we consider the great writers of Irish or Anglo-Irish literature such as Sean O'Casey or Oscar Wilde we do not only think of their stunning comic creations but also of the vivid picture of a society they portrayed or the jibe beneath the veneer of humour which lambasted the accepted norms of behaviour in that society.

Those who form the butt of humour—depending on their self-esteem—may either feel threatened or be able to join in the laughter. The language of a play such as *The Plough and the Stars* is an important element in creating the comedy but the language is being used to develop the comic situation or character, not as a means of poking fun at the language per se. Herbison, however, has described the Ulster-Scots language and literary tradition in the latter years of the twentieth century as 'downgraded to a pseudo-literary or sub-literary dialect, the object of satire and ridicule'.⁸ In an audit and needs analysis prepared

⁷ Gerry Adams, *Free Ireland: towards a lasting peace* (Dingle, 1986), 147.

⁸ I. Herbison, *Language, Literature and Cultural Identity: An Ulster-Scots Perspective* (Ballymena, 1989), 7.

for the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (2004), 22% of the Ulster-Scots groups questioned cited marginalisation and the questioning of the legitimacy of Ulster-Scots culture resulting in low self-esteem as a major issue for them and it is easy to understand why this should be so. Popular perception has remained that Ulster-Scots is merely a dialect, or even in extreme cases has been dismissed as merely a funny accent, and few would even be aware of its fine literary heritage dating back beyond Robert Burns' influence on the Weaver poets to Francis Boyle from County Down and *The Ulster Miscellany* published in Belfast in 1753, the latter including nine 'Scotch Poems' written in the Laggan area of east Donegal.

The media has played its part in the denigration of Ulster-Scots cultural identity. A SWOT analysis compiled to inform future planning in the Arts defined 'the perceived open hostility to Ulster-Scots including from the media' as a major threat to progress.⁹ A couple of newspaper articles will exemplify this hostility. *The Sunday Herald* of 16 May 1999, under the punning headline 'Europe says it's good to talk with Irish ayes', reported the decision of the then Secretary of State, Mo Mowlam, to protect the Ulster-Scots language. 'Or rather a decession o tha Narlin Airlann secretar o stat cud weel scug tha oulriife Ulster-Scotch leid an gie it a heft in Euraip'. It then went on to refer patronisingly to the 'eccentric voice of the Glens of Antrim', perpetuating the myth of an isolated and somewhat ludicrous or archaic group of people. Similarly, in his weekly column in the *Irish News*, Tom Kelly, as recently as 29 October 2002, described Ulster-Scots as gibberish. He wrote: 'I've always had the impression that Ulster-Scots was the remnant of the dialect of my grandparents generation held together today by those reminiscing over a few pints. A sort of John Pepper's guide to Ulsterisms'.

However, growing popular interest in the language and the culture, the promotional work of the Ulster-Scots Agency and academic research have all helped to create a more measured response to any debate about the language. In an *Irish News* editorial of 15 November 2002, the writer acknowledged that in the past the language's detractors had ridiculed Ulster-Scots as 'a DIY language for Orangemen', but concluded that 'The hostility experienced by the Ulster-Scots linguistic and cultural community and the ongoing disparagement of the Ulster-Scots language are clearly breaches of both the letter and the spirit of the Belfast Agreement'. There is a need to redress a situation where native Ulster-Scots speakers have been encouraged, if not actually forced, to

⁹ Arts Council of Northern Ireland, *The Arts of Irish and Ulster Scots* (Belfast, 2004), 11.

give up their own way of speaking in favour of some perceived more acceptable or standardised Ulster English. One such experience is vividly described in 'Thae Tuk mae Ain Tung' by Charlie Reynolds:

Hooiver whun wae moved tae tha toon things changed for iver. A wus lached at deh an nicht aboot tha wye A ta'ked. Tha maist o tha wains at tha schuil thocht A wus a kinna o an oddity frae tha garry boag, naw that thae micht hae kent whaur tha boag wus onywee.

Things went frae bad tae worse an owre tha years wae tha tants o mae plae-mates an tha goulin' o ha aul' teachers, thae tried tae tak mae ain tung aff mae. Even mae ain yins wha still tak tha aul tung thocht it wus better that their aff-spring got redd o it in tha name o progress.¹⁰

Reynolds' experience is in no way unique. Scots speakers will be only too familiar with it. The speaking of Ulster-Scots and the validity of this cultural tradition is beginning to build up momentum but it takes time to restore self-esteem and pride in one's own heritage.

When discussing the print media we should also consider political cartoons. On 7 February 2003 a cartoon featuring Lord Laird of Artigarvin, at that time Head of the Ulster-Scots Agency, appeared in *The Irish News*. Lord Laird was pictured at 'Cairnryan Immigration' with a disparate group of farming folk pictured huddled behind him. The caption read:

Customs man: I canny onderstand these yins.

Lord Laird: They're trying to tell you that they're seeking asylum to escape persecution for speaking their native Ulster-Scots.

Customs Man: Seeking asylum! I thought they'd escaped from one.

This might well be dismissed as a bit of fun but it might be difficult to see the funny side when it can seem to Ulster-Scots proponents that this is one attack among many. In this cartoon the implication certainly seems to be that those involved in the Ulster-Scots revival are crazy. Much more controversial was the cartoon of May 2004 after the premiere of the Ulster-Scots musical 'On Eagle's Wing'. The cartoon featured Hitleresque dancers in the chorus line of the show and seemed thereby to be making an association between Ulster-Scots cultural identity and the Nazis or Fascism. The show's cast, if

¹⁰ M. Montgomery, and A. Smyth, (eds), *A Blad O Ulster-Scotch frae Ullans* (Belfast, 2003), 229.

not by implication the audience, seemed to be equated with the public rallies of Hitler's Germany. The editor of *The Irish News*, defending the cartoon on the BBC Radio Ulster Talkback programme, pointed out the reference to *The Producers*, a Mel Brooks' film which would have been lost on the vast majority of readers. In such circumstances it is perhaps hardly surprising that the Ulster-Scots are defensive and feel under attack.

Of course there is nothing new in poking fun at the Ulster-Scots and their language. Robinson has traced the tradition back to that greatest of satirists, Jonathan Swift.¹¹ 'The North Country-Man's Description of Christ's-Church, Dublin In A Letter to a Friend' of 1731, which was purportedly written from Portaferry in County Down by an Ulster sailor who had been laid over in Dublin on a Sunday and wanted to attend a Presbyterian church but by mistake ended up in the Anglican cathedral, was originally published along with four other pieces all caricaturing dissenters.¹² We can clearly recognise Swift's comic presentation of the narrow-minded and ill-educated Ulsterman and the ridicule the author wished to pour upon him as being typical of the Ulster-Scot. This tradition of mocking the Ulster-Scots speaker continues in its most modern incarnation on the internet. The *Ballygobackwards* website features spoof 'news' articles poking fun at a wide range of people and events in Northern Ireland. The July 2002 edition of 'Northern Ireland's alternative look on life' featured a piece entitled 'The Ulster Scots Corner/ Da Carnear fir Ullah Scot': 'One of the features of this online magazine is a unique column where you can learn, yes learn, ten new Ulster Scots sentences each edition! Think of it, you can now travel to Glenarm and converse in comfort with the locals'. The article then goes on to offer ten phrases which are 'translated' as being exactly the same in both English and Ulster-Scots, the implication being that there is no such language.

The September 2002 edition of *Ballygobackwards* featured an article entitled 'Good News for Latin Lovers' which took another swipe at Ulster-Scots. The report was of a decision of Queens University to translate Horace's Odes from Latin into Ulster-Scots. Names given to characters in the report included Professor Bill McTattie, John O'Scetpic and Billy McSack o' Spuds. The report stated that 'There's a huge demand for classics in Newtownards and night classes in Greek and Latin are oversubscribed'. Billy McSack o' Spuds

¹¹ P. Robinson, 'Jonathan Swift: His Early Writings in Ulster-Scots?', *Ullans*, Number 3, Spring 1995.

¹² P. Fitzgerald and M. Montgomery, 'An Early Letter in Ulster-Scots', *Ullans*, Number 2 (Spring 1994).

was quoted as saying, 'We're more into Greek in this area, we were really hoping that they would translate Homer's Illiad fair ye. This is typical of the Council, they've always favoured the Romans and what the hell have they ever done for us?'

Today Ulster-Scots are portrayed as serious—even humourless—hard-working, verging on the puritanical and of course Protestant—a caricature which completely overlooks the significant number of Catholic Ulster-Scots speakers in the Glens of Antrim and especially in East Donegal. But is the 'dourness' ascribed to the Ulster-Scots a defence mechanism to protect against the criticism and attack under which they have lived? Paton posited, in relation to the Ulster actor Stephen Rea, that '... one can see a good reason for the self-protective dourness that he sometimes wraps around him like a cloak.'¹³ Have the Ulster-Scots used dourness to protect themselves? Or is there, rather, a myth of 'soda farl chauvinism' which has been perpetuated by Ulster-Scots writers and humourists themselves?¹⁴ For instance, a photograph of Harry West, one-time leader of the Unionist Party, offers an image which may seem simply to reinforce all the characteristics which critics have employed to describe the 'typical Ulster-Scot'. He looks a forbidding and dour character indeed. We find, on reading the caption¹⁵ however, that West had deliberately posed in this way to fulfil the stereotype for the photographer and had burst out laughing afterwards, appreciating the joke. Does such humour pander to the tendency 'to elevate folksiness into an art form—a kind of macho parochialism or inverted snobbery'¹⁶—and has such an outlook allowed the Ulster-Scots language and culture, albeit unwittingly, to be marginalized and to be prevented from taking its rightful place in contemporary society? Has the content and style meant that both the language and the culture could be sidelined as outdated, restricting Ulster-Scots to a predominantly older rural audience that is fast disappearing?

The finest writing in the Ulster-Scots Literary tradition is acknowledged to be that of the Rhyming Weavers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. While much of their work was serious in tone reflecting the economic and political upheavals of their time they could take a humorous look at contemporary society too. Porter's self-teasing 'On seeing His Name In Robinson's Book of Poems, with 'Esq.' Added to it' illustrates the ability to laugh at oneself.

¹³ M. Paton, 'Stephen Rea . . . the actor, not the star', *Belfast Telegraph*, April 16, 2004.

¹⁴ I. Knox, *Culture Vultures—Political Cartoons 1990–1999* (Belfast, 1999), 79.

¹⁵ The photograph featured in Brian Turner (ed.), *Merely Players—Portraits from Northern Ireland by Bobbie Hamey* (Newtownards, 1999). The caption reads 'Give me a real dour Protestant look, Harry. And he did. I said, 'Practice makes perfect'. And he roared laughing'.

¹⁶ Knox, *Culture Vultures—Political Cartoons 1990–1999*, 79.

Poems such as Orr's light-hearted 'Address to Beer' where he describes himself as 'The Bardie whom thou fill'd yestreen', along with Porter's humorous epigrams and epitaphs all offered light-hearted amusement for their subscribers. Such light and amusing topics are balanced by serious poems addressing issues of social and political concern. It could be argued that it is this interspersing of the comic and the tragic and their concern to address contemporary life and problems that is at least part of their greatness.

Among the extensive writings of W. F. Marshall, 'The Bard of Tyrone' in the early twentieth century, is an unpublished three-act country kitchen comedy entitled *The Corduroy Bag*. His writing was rediscovered by a modern audience in 1983 when Blackstaff Press published a collection of his poems *Livin' in Drumlister*. Marshall's poetry has elements of Ulster-Scots but also of Ulster English. In his comic poetry did he offer a realistic picture or a nostalgic look at a culture already disappearing? Is Marshall's work, as Herbison suggests, 'regressive', because in it, 'acute social comment [is] replaced by comic caricature, sympathy by ironic distance'.¹⁷ His best-known poem 'Me An' Me Da' is a humorous tale of the speaker's two romances with 'Wee Margit' and Brigit who 'tuk the pock disayse' and pokes fun at the farmer whose procrastination led him to miss his chance with Margit only for him to be, in his turn, rejected by Brigit. 'John the Liar' similarly turns the tables on the narrator. The colloquial conversation used in the poem has the ring of authenticity and shows Marshall's genuine affection for these country folk among whom he was brought up.

Sez he,
*'Be gomentays, I went an' killed two pigs,
 Ye niver seen the like of them two pigs,
 Throth they wor tarra: jist the five months out!'*
*'The deil a hair I care,' sez I, 'ye killed
 A score of pigs; stan' out the road!'*

The business acumen, or lack of it, of McFadden in 'Bad Luck' demonstrates again one of the recurring themes for Ulster-Scots humour—the wheelin'an' dealin' of the countryside where to strike a hard bargain is the sign of success, while 'Sarah Ann' picks up another theme—rural courtin'. The narrator's practical bargaining for the girl he wants—' . . . a neighbour man an' tuk him

¹⁷ I. Herbison, 'The Rest is Silence': Some Remarks on the Disappearance of Ulster Scots Poetry', in J. Erskine, and G. Lucy (eds), *Cultural Traditions in Northern Ireland: Varieties of Scottishness* (Belfast, 1997), 138.

down to spake for me' – reminds us of bygone days and practices. The sequel poem, 'The Runaway', finds the narrator's plight even more difficult when the ensuing wedding party descends into an all-out knockabout brawl which has more of the comic stage Irishman about it than the traditional dour Ulster-Scot. The pragmatist, however, is always the success: his choice of Liza Jane and belief that he really is better off with the one who 'diz what she's bid' bring us back to a familiar version of the Ulster-Scot.

John Wier, author of 'Bab McKeen on Things in General', a regular feature in the *Ballymena Observer* for over thirty years up until 1910, used his column to reflect on contemporary events. He was part of a new style of writing where fictional characters in local newspapers were the *vox populi* for their area, expressing local concerns and interests. A simple comic story such as 'An Expensive Vote', pokes fun at local parliamentary candidates as well as acknowledging the business acumen of the locals.

A when years ago a Scotch candidate was luckin' for a sate in Parlymint, an' ca'd at a hoose whur an auld couple lieved. Finnin' the auld wife on her lane, he begun tae crack wi' her, an' axed hir tae try an' get the auld man's vote, an' while they wur crackin', he spies a kitlin' haein' fun wi' a bit o' string on the flure, an' offered £5 for it, an' the auld woman closed the bargain immediately, an' on leein', the man said he hoped she wad secure the vote for him. 'Weel,' quo she, 'as I said afore, John's a man o' his ain min', an' juist daes what strecks in his ain noodle; but at ony rate, sir, ye hae got a real chape kittlin', for yer opponent who was in nae farer nor yesterday, an he gaed me £10 for its brother.¹⁸

Wier's keen wit and wry observations on local and world news offered a unique Ulster-Scots voice. His writing, although invariably light-hearted in tone, often dealt with quite serious topics. Robinson in his foreword to *Bab McKeen, The Wit and Wisdom of an Ulster Scot* states that this writing 'tended to be more realistic and less romantic than . . . kail-yard books',¹⁹ thereby offering a less nostalgic presentation of the Ulster-Scots than Marshall.

The ulster-scotsrhymes internet site states that it 'haes bain gathered tae gither bae tha Poocher tae pit forrit Rhymes, Yarns an' Sangs in tha aul Ulster-Scots tongue'. The collection includes the work of both contemporary writers

¹⁸ Jack Adams (ed.), *Bab McKeen, The Wit and Wisdom of an Ulster Scot* (Ballymena, 2002), 23.

¹⁹ Ibid, 1.

and poems collected from newspapers and passed down through the oral tradition. The contents include 'Poor Wee Aggie', 'How Pat soul' the pig', 'Coortin' in the Plantin' and 'Lukin Bak'—poems which appeal mainly to an older generation and once again deal with country matters and customs. Interestingly however it also includes some older poems such as 'Smokin Weans' by Bab McKeen where he laments:

When I was young it ustae be
That naew yin smoked till thirty-three
Or thereabouts, but noo the weans
Maun puff awa' their bits o' brains,
An' think it manly exercise
Their Maker's work tae Darwinise

Among the contemporary poet/humourists featured on the site is Charlie Gillen, The Wizard, a well-known County Antrim storyteller. His performances of poems such as 'Wavin' Guidbye'—the tale of his receding hairline:

At this sure I riz in a panic
Tae tell ye the truth I feel't strange
Oor Tracey seys sit doon tae I finish
For ye luk lake a doag wae the mange

entertain packed halls up and down the country. He writes about his own experiences growing up in County Antrim with poems such as 'Tha Pratas, Ach! I miss them', and 'Scartin' Midges'. His verses are about rural life but a life which The Poocher concedes is: ' . . . aboot tha moss an tha cutting o' tha peats, something that naw ower mony ken any thing about noo a dehs'.

There is of course a place for remembrance and reflection but Herbison was correct to identify Ulster-Scots cultural identity as having been based on a sense of belonging to stable rural communities—and the fact is that these are fast disappearing. The Ulster-Scots language and culture will only be able to flourish if its literary tradition, including its humorous writing, can find relevance to life in the twenty-first century. To gain parity of esteem and status in an increasingly culturally-diverse and culturally-enriched society, the Ulster-Scots need contemporary writers who can build on their eighteenth-century 'golden age'; writers able to recover their radical Scots literary past who will use humour not just to entertain an aging audience but to make relevant social

comment, and to reflect the concerns of their own and the wider community. Whatever the political and legal developments that have given Ulster-Scots an enhanced position in contemporary Northern Ireland, to hark back constantly to a way of life long gone, or to find identity solely in events and experiences from the past, will not prevent a culture from becoming merely a historical relic.

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Identifying Another Other

Cairns Craig

In this essay I want to try to step across several geographic and disciplinary boundaries: first, to explore the ways in which contemporary philosophy and literary theory in Ireland (in the work of Declan Kiberd and Richard Kearney) has been engaged by conceptions of ‘self’ and ‘other’ which derive from ‘continental’ philosophy and from Freudian psychology; second, to explore how, retrospectively, such arguments have been used to justify a radical opposition between science and art (using W.B. Yeats as an exemplary instance), as well as, at a philosophical level, between knowledge and action; and third, to use these interconnections as an example of the potential value of Irish-Scottish studies, by looking at the ways in which the resources of Scottish philosophy and psychology might offer an alternative – and possibly more productive – conception of ‘the other’ than those deriving from the ‘continental’ tradition. In doing so I hope to exemplify how Irish-Scottish studies can help reconfigure our understanding of our cultural pasts, of the ways in which we comprehend our contemporary cultural dilemmas, and of how they might open up alternative possibilities from which we can develop our future cultural and research agendas.¹

I

In *Strangers, Gods and Monsters* (2003),² Richard Kearney set out on an ambitious exploration and critique of the role of the ‘Other’ in Western thought, and especially as it has developed in modern ‘continental’ theory. Though it is not crucial to the overall scope of his argument, the opposition of England and Ireland offers a defining instance of ‘othering’:

¹ This essay derives from the opening plenary lecture of the 2006 AHRC ‘Crosscurrents Conference’ for graduate students in Irish and Scottish studies, held in Queen’s University, Belfast. My thanks to the organisers for challenging me to produce a justification of ‘Irish-Scottish Studies’.

² Richard Kearney, *Strangers, Gods and Monsters: Interpreting Otherness* (London, 2003), hereafter cited in the text *SGM*.

Most Western discourses of identity . . . are predicated upon some unconscious projection of an Other who is not 'us'. At the collective level of politics, this assumes the guise of an elect 'nation' or 'people' defining itself over against an alien adversary. Witness the old enmities between Greek and Barbarian, Gentile and Jew, Crusader and Infidel, Aryan and non-Aryan. Even modern 'civilized' nations have not always been immune to such stigmatizing practices. For example, the English defined themselves for colonial purposes as an elect people (*gens*) over against the Irish considered as a 'non-people' (*de-gens*). And this strategy of separating pure from impure was subsequently employed with regard to the subject races of overseas colonies in Africa, Asia and the Americas. (*SGM*, 72)

England as 'self' and Ireland as 'other' is, in this interpretation, the foundation of all later forms of the colonial construction of the 'other' stemming from British imperialism. In *Inventing Ireland* (1995),³ Declan Kiberd had made a similar claim:

In centuries to come, English colonizers in India or Africa would impute to the 'Gunga Dins' and 'Fuzzi-Wuzzies' those same traits already attributed to the Irish. The fact that the Irish, like the Indians, can on occasion be extremely cold, polite and calculating was of no great moment, for their official image before the world had been created and consolidated by a far greater power. (*II*, 15)

Such constructions of England and Ireland as mutually defining 'others' have been fundamental to the assertion of the 'postcolonial' significance of modern Irish writing. If Ireland, historically, is the first modern nation to overthrow colonial rule, then the Ireland-England opposition represents a defining version of the opposition of 'self-other', 'same-different' within colonial and postcolonial writing. This 'universalising' of the Ireland-England opposition is then completed by being read through the lens of Freudian psychology, so that the ways in which 'the national *We* is defined over and against the foreign *Them*' (*SGM*, 65) produces a complex process of mutual exchange in which, Kearney suggests, 'we find creatures of our own repressed unconscious returning to haunt us as phantom "doubles"—*frères ennemis*. The divided self

³ Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland* (London, 1995), hereafter cited in the text as *II*.

seeks to protect itself against its own inner division by projecting its “other self” onto someone other than itself’ (*SGM*, 74). Similarly, Kiberd suggests that ‘every great power evolved its own opposite in order to achieve itself’ (*II*, 37–8), so that, ‘if England and Ireland had never existed, the Irish would have been rather lonely. Each nation badly needed the other, for the purpose of defining itself’ (*II*, 2). What this implies, for Kiberd, is that ‘Ireland also began to appear to English persons in the guise of their Unconscious’, so that ‘the effect of official policy was the creation of a secret England called Ireland’ (*II*, 15). Ireland is both England’s ‘other’ and its ‘double’, a repressed sameness masked by the assertion of difference. And the process of repression and projection means that no one is closer to us than those from whom we claim the greatest distance: ‘identity’, Kiberd suggests, ‘was dialogic; the other was also the truest friend, since it was from that other that a sense of self was derived’; thus it was that ‘Wilde loved England as genuinely as Goethe loved the French’ (*II*, 48). England-Ireland is both a fundamental binary of opposites and, at the same time, a comprehensive totality—‘self’ and ‘other’, ‘conscious’ and ‘unconscious’—in which each both negates and completes the other.

It is an argument that has significant parallels with Jacques Derrida’s autobiographical meditation on otherness in *Monolingualism of the Other* (1996),⁴ in which he presents himself as both ‘other’ to French—an Algerian Jew who had never visited France—and, at the same time, as a ‘self’ constituted by the French language; and yet also one for whom, paradoxically, it was metropolitan France which was ‘other’: ‘First and foremost, the monolingualism of the other would be that sovereignty, that law originating from elsewhere, certainly, but also primarily the very language of the Law’ (*MO*, 39). From the perspective of the colonial Algerian, the Other is the French Law under which he lives, and yet it is the French language which constitutes the ‘self’ who is Derrida. Before beginning to speak about oneself, Derrida insists, ‘it is necessary to know already in what language *I* is expressed, and *I am* expressed’ (*MO*, 28). For Derrida, whatever his ethnic or national origin, the language of the self is French:

My attachment to the French language takes forms that I sometimes consider ‘neurotic’. I feel lost outside the French language. The other languages which, more or less clumsily, I read, decode or sometimes speak, are languages I shall never inhabit . . . Not only am I lost, fallen,

⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Monolingualism of the Other, or, The Prosthesis of Origin*, trans Patrick Mensah (Stanford, Ca., 1998; 1996), hereafter cited in the text as *MO*.

and condemned outside the French language, I have the feeling of honoring or serving all idioms, in a word, of writing the 'most' and the 'best' when I sharpen the resistance of *my* French, the secret 'purity' of my French . . . its relentless resistance to translation. (*MO*, 56)

At the same time, of course, as always for Derrida, one can never be 'at one' with a language because language precedes its speaker, escapes a writer's or speaker's control, and is always more than (any)one can manage: 'I have only one language and it is not mine; my "own" language is, for me, a language that cannot be assimilated. My language, the only one I hear myself speak and agree to speak, is the language of the other' (*MO*, 25). The colonial subject who is 'other' to the French becomes 'self' *in* French but in doing so reveals that French is always already other to itself, and its speakers inevitably 'other' to it: French may be Derrida's home, but we are all homeless in language.

From the perspective of postcolonial resistance to the imposed languages of imperialism, one might expect such a deconstructive transformation of self into otherness, otherness into self, to be the opening for a displacement of the power of the language of the coloniser. But for Derrida the colonial experience re-inscribes the difference—not to say the *différance*—that separates French from other languages. Indeed, Derrida (however gently) mocks those Algerian-French writers who still claim to have a 'mother' tongue that is not French:

Abdelkebir Khatibi speaks of his 'mother tongue'. It is certainly not French, but he speaks about it. He speaks about it in another language. In French, precisely. He makes this little secret public. He publishes his words in our language. In order to say of his mother tongue that—and that is a little personal secret!—it has 'lost' him. (*MO*, 35)

Derrida can claim no such 'mother tongue' because French, the language of the 'other' rather than the mother (though it was, in fact, the language of his mother), cannot perform for him the role of a lost origin, of a displaced innocence in which language and world are one. Those who indulge themselves in the 'bilingualism' of writing in French about their lost mother tongue are enacting not so much the defeat of the colonised by the hegemony of the coloniser (however painful that might be) but the metaphoric loss of a language in which one can be 'at home'. Such nostalgia is, of course, for Derrida an illusion: there is no such language, and the (sentimental) bilingualism of the colonised simply encourages the false conception of a language which one might

'inhabit' as though one were truly 'at home' within it. The 'monolingualism of the other' is the condition in which one is forced to confront the ultimate fact that language itself, even a language which is one's only habitation, will always be a place in which one can never be at home. It is therefore the condition, one might say, of Irish people who speak only English—a condition characteristic of many of the most influential Irish writers in the twentieth century and the driving force behind many of their most spectacular achievements.

By deconstructing the supposed opposition between (native) 'mother tongue' and (learned) 'written language', and therefore the supposed superiority ascribed to the 'hybrid' in postcolonial theory, Derrida effectively reinscribes the monolingualism of the French speaker/writer as superior to the bilingualism of the colonised, because it is a condition which is not haunted by a false sense of language's ability to redeem one from otherness by cocooning oneself in 'motherness'. The colonial from the margins for whom French is the first and only language is redeemed from the falsehoods of believing in a language of 'origins' while continuing to be able to make use of the power of cultural tradition to which a language like French gives one access. Whatever the ontological status of all languages in terms of their relationship to the 'real', French remains the language of power, not only the colonial power to which Derrida was subject in Algeria but the power of the cultural capital which that colonial domination made possible. And Derrida has acquired that cultural capital by assimilating himself to what, as an Algerian Jew, was 'other' to him in his childhood: 'one entered French literature only by losing one's accent' (*MO*, 45), he declares, and with all the insistence of a convert acknowledges, 'I cannot bear or admire anything other than pure French' (*MO*, 46). However 'other' French might be, in other words, it is an 'otherness' which reinscribes and retains a perfection—the purity of the medium—to which 'other' languages cannot aspire, and it is the repository of a completeness (even in its necessary incompleteness) which other languages are incapable of matching. However 'other' Derrida might have been to French, however 'other' French might be to itself (as all languages are), nonetheless French remains central to culture-in-general in a way that other languages cannot be: Derrida is the inheritor of a power which, if embraced, is able to turn other into self:

The obscure chance, my good fortune, a gift for which thanks should be given to goodness knows what archaic power, is that it was always easier for me to bless this destiny. Much easier, more often than not, and even now, to bless than curse it. . . . Everything I do, especially when I am

writing, resembles a game of blindman's buff: the one who is writing, always by hand, even when using machines, holds out his hand like a blind man seeking to touch the one whom he could thank for the gift of a language, for the very words in which he declares himself ready to give thanks. (*MO*, 64)

A 'mother tongue' requires an act of translation between self and other, but for Derrida, French self-other, his own writing has to be so French that it not only resists translation into other languages but resists translation even into 'another such French' (*MO*, 56). The power of powerlessness, the centrality of being marginal: writing—writing as deconstruction—is only made possible by the power of a French which can give access to the tradition of Western culture — the canon by which our identity has been constructed — and, at the same time, makes possible its deconstruction, its transformation into otherness. Within French, in other words, self and other can endlessly change places in a series of deconstructive inversions: like Kearney and Kiberd's 'Ireland-England' they form a union (no matter what the politics) in which each mimics the other, in which 'otherness' is simply a projection of an unacknowledged version of the self. Algeria-France and Ireland-England are binaries in which opposition turns out to be sameness, in which otherness turns out to be selfhood, and—ironically—in which the superior power of the dominant language is relentlessly reasserted no matter how often its works are subject to deconstruction, precisely because it makes that deconstruction possible.

It is for this reason—and against the grain of much Irish criticism—that Kiberd's hyphenated version of Ireland-England lays so much importance on the role of the Anglo-Irish, both in Irish literature and in the construction of modern Irish identity: if Ireland-England are mutually reflecting others, then it is the Anglo-Irish who most richly fulfil in themselves and in their writing the 'othering' by which the Irish self comes into existence. They, more than any other, perform in their very personalities the Ireland-England dialectic by which both countries are defined: 'The project of inventing a unitary Ireland is the attempt to achieve at a political level a reconciliation of opposed qualities which must first be fused in the self' (*II*, 124). As with Derrida, the colonial 'other' becomes, through being *at one* with the language of the coloniser, the equal of, if not a projection of, the colonising self. Self and other exchange places, and exchange cultures in an economy in which apparent loss (otherness) becomes profit (a new assertion of selfhood), in which apparent opposition (self-other) becomes unity (self-reflection). The

self-other opposition is transformed—‘After a while, neither the colonizer nor the colonized stood on their original ground, for both—like Prospero and Caliban—had been *deterritorialized*’ (II, 279)—and is revealed to be fundamentally illusory: self and other, as in Derrida, turn out to be versions of the same, allowing the colonised to acquire the powers of the coloniser (pre-eminence in literature in English) without losing their identity as the colonised.

It is by such an exchange that W. B. Yeats becomes, for Kiberd, the first truly modern poet, because he is the first decolonising poet to accept his monolinguality within the imperial language. The consequence is that Yeats’s poetry is a poetry without reference: it is directed at an object—Ireland—which does not yet exist or, later, when it does exist, does not correspond to the Ireland that Yeats wishes to address. The outcome is a writing that asserts its nationality through the refusal of past traditions, through the creation of a new style which has no foundation either in the self or the nation:

Synge wrote as if he were Adam and this the first day of creation: so did Whitman and so, at times, did Yeats. Their problem was that the worlds which they created existed only as linguistic constructs and solely for the duration of the text. Each artist had, strictly speaking, no subjective self preceding the book as predicate; and so the text had no time other than that of its enunciation. (II, 126)

The danger of such a style is that it might not be able to ‘reproduce itself in the material world’ and ‘may become an end in itself’ (II, 127): formal invention thus becomes a means to ‘celebrate the nation’s soul, while at the same time insisting that it has yet to be made’ (II, 128). The nationalist poet of the nation-yet-to-be-invented must work, therefore, with a language which has no content: ‘it is possible to fake a nation into existence via a style’ (II, 308). Poetry (in English) that addresses the (Irish) nation as an ‘imagined community’ which never, in the past or the future, can have the status of a real referent, thereby prefigures Derrida’s ‘monolingualism of the other’: ‘The monolingual of whom I speak speaks a language of which he is *deprived*. The French language is not his. Because he is therefore deprived of *all* language, . . . he is thrown into absolute translation, a translation without a pole of reference’ (MO, 61). Yeats’s Irishness and his monolingualism, his composite English-Irish self, his nationalism without a national referent, his traditionalism without a nation which shapes his tradition, makes language itself the

object of his art, and thus transforms the marginal, nationalist poet into the archetypal 'modernist' poet in whose work we can see a prefiguration of the 'linguistic turn' in modern thought that made deconstruction itself possible.

II

Yeats's status as the first modern poet might be justified, on this account, because his contentless style—resulting from the specific historical circumstance of his 'monolingual otherness'—confirms what came to be, in the very years when Ireland as a nation was turning into a real referent, the basis of the most influential account of the nature of poetry in the modern critical tradition—C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards's *The Meaning of Meaning* (1923).⁵ For Ogden and Richards poetry is language to which 'reference' is irrelevant: poetic language and scientific language are as 'other' as Ireland and England since, for poetry, 'the truth or falsity' of a statement 'matters not at all', for 'provided that the attitude or feeling is evoked the most important function of such language is fulfilled' (*MoM*, 259). Since poetry represents 'the *emotive* use' (*MoM*, 257) of language, we cannot test it by the referential procedures of science; we can test it only by how it fits within the attitudes which structure our response to the world:

As science frees itself from the emotional outlook, and modern physics is becoming something in connection with which attitudes seem rather *de trop*, so poetry seems about to return to the condition of its greatness, by abandoning the obsession of knowledge and symbolic truth. It is not necessary to know what things are in order to take up fitting attitudes towards them . . . (*MoM*, 271)

Ogden and Richards's argument is one which has been regularly used to justify Yeats's work since the 1920s. From W. H. Auden's famous elegy which defended the poet from his politics—'For poetry makes nothing happen/ . . . it survives/A way of happening, a mouth'⁶—to deconstructive analyses of Yeats's poems which assume that there is 'no outside to text', Yeats's 'mythologies',

⁵ C. K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning: A Study of the Influence of Language upon Thought and of the Science of Symbolism* (London, 1923), hereafter cited in the text as *MoM*.

⁶ W. H. Auden, *Collected Shorter Poems 1927–57* (London, 1966), 142.

his belief in magic and spiritualism, his encounters with ghosts, have been condoned on the basis that they require no 'truth content', that they belong to a different order of discourse from those which can be scientifically or logically tested. Poetry is the expression – or the creation – of the self; science its reference-bound other.

Yeats himself gave credence to the Ogden and Richards view when he suggested that the mythology presented in *A Vision* was designed primarily as 'stylistic arrangements of experience comparable to the cubes in the drawings of Wyndham Lewis',⁷ but if one looks back to the science in which Yeats grew up in the last quarter of the nineteenth century the opposition between Yeats's theories and scientific reality is not as great as this argument would suggest. Take, for instance, what is often considered to be Yeats's most 'anti-modern' statement, his essay on 'Magic', first published in 1900. In it, Yeats makes three key assertions:

- (1) That the borders of our mind are ever shifting and that many minds can flow into one another, as it were, and create or reveal a single mind, a single energy.
- (2) That the borders of our memories are as shifting, and that our memories are a part of one great memory, the memory of Nature herself
- (3) That this great mind and great memory can be evoked by symbols.⁸

The apparently arcane nature of such beliefs have led critics to see Yeats as deliberately constructing theories in defiance of contemporary science, and indeed Yeats dramatised himself as determinedly opposed to modern thought: '... if some philosophic idea interested me, I tried to trace it back to its earliest use, believing that there must be a tradition of belief older than any European Church, and founded upon the experience of the world before the modern bias'.⁹ But the ideas proposed in 'Magic' are in fact very closely based on theories that were at the forefront of late-nineteenth-century empirical psychology.

First, the notion of minds that 'flow into one another' can be traced in the most important contribution by a British thinker to the development of the discipline of 'psychology' – James Ward's article on 'Psychology' in the ninth

⁷ W.B. Yeats, *A Vision* (London, 1962; 1925), 25.

⁸ W.B. Yeats, 'Magic', *Essays and Introductions* (London, 1961), 28.

⁹ Yeats, 'Hodos Chameliontos', *Autobiographies*, 265.

edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1871–88). Ward's article is sometimes claimed to initiate the discipline of psychology, and what is distinctive about it (and which also reflects on contemporary philosophical dilemmas) is its effort to find a way of combining the empirical approach of the British tradition (in which everything in the psyche derives from sense experience) with the transcendental theories of German philosophy (for which everything derives from the categories which shape how we experience the world). Ward's response was to treat the mind as a historical and evolutionary phenomenon, whose content in its contemporary manifestation was produced neither from a Lockean *tabula rasa* nor as the outcome of transcendental categories. In *Heredity and Memory*, a lecture delivered in 1912, he argued that, 'provided we look at the world from what I would call a spiritualistic and not from the usual naturalistic standpoint, psychology may shew us that the secret of heredity is to be found in the facts of memory'.¹⁰ Memory, for Ward, was not merely personal: the workings the 'law of habit' – that is, the gradual mechanization of action by repetition until it becomes a skill which needs no conscious reflection – makes possible 'the inheritance of the permanent achievements of one generation by the next'.¹¹ Evolution works by transforming the acquired skills of one generation into bodily and mental capacities that are passed on to succeeding generations. As Ward explains it in his article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*,

What was experienced in the past has become instinct in the present. The descendant has not consciousness of his ancestors' failures when performing by 'an untaught ability' what they slowly and painfully found out. But if we are to attempt to follow the genesis of mind from its earliest dawn it is the primary experience rather than the eventual instinct that we have first of all to keep in view.¹²

Ward proposed that we should think of the whole of humanity as being like a single Lockean individual: it began in a *tabula rasa* but gradually acquired habits which became unconscious abilities. Kantians are, therefore, correct in believing that the mind is structured by categories which have never been part of the (modern) individual's experience; they are wrong in thinking, however,

¹⁰ James Ward, *Heredity and Memory, being the Henry Sidgwick Memorial Lecture delivered at Newnham College, 9 November 1912* (Cambridge, 1913), 6.

¹¹ Ibid., 12.

¹² James Ward, 'Psychology', *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Ninth Edition, Vol XX (Edinburgh, 1886), 44–5.

that these are universal and transcendental categories to which the human mind is necessarily subject. Those categories are, rather, the historical and contingent habits produced by memories which are passed on from one generation to another. These psychological inheritances Ward called 'engrams'¹³ – memories written into the body and which had been laid down by the 'sensational' experiences of our distant ancestors. The 'doctrine of the inheritance of acquired characters' is, Ward insists, 'not only Aristotle's and Lamarck's, but Darwin's as well',¹⁴ and Ward accuses evolutionary theorists of having neglected this fact. This 'psychological or mnemonic theory of heredity'¹⁵ underpins the notion of an 'organic memory'¹⁶ inherent in the body. In this context, Yeats's 'Great Memory' is no myth: it is that evolutionary deposit which allows each of our minds access to a much greater experience than our own limited lives can accumulate; so, too, his symbols are 'engrams' and his 'Anima Mundi' the storehouse of hereditary capabilities. Yeats's use of 'magic', therefore, disguises in an apparently anti-scientific formulation an account of the mind which is largely consistent with the most advanced empirical psychology at the end of the nineteenth century.

Secondly, critics have regularly pointed to Yeats's rejection of the materialism of Huxley and Tyndall – 'I am very religious, and deprived by Huxley and Tyndall, whom I detested, of the simple-minded religion of my childhood, I had made a new religion, almost an infallible Church of poetic tradition'¹⁷ – as proof of his rejection of contemporary science. Such an argument fails to take account, however, of the fundamental debates going on within nineteenth-century science. Huxley – 'Darwin's bulldog' – may have adopted a thoroughgoing materialism as the consequence of the Darwinian account of evolution but the co-discoverer of the theory of natural selection, Alfred Russel Wallace, had, within seven years of the announcement of that theory, declared that natural selection could *not* account for the higher faculties of human beings and that these were produced by an alternative spiritual influence. Wallace's theories in effect paved the way for the kind of panpsychism that Madame Blavatsky was

¹³ Ward attributes the term 'engram' to 'Professor R. Semon of Munich' in *Die Mneme als erhaltendes Prinzip im Wechsel des organischen Gebehens* (1908), though the notion of 'organic memory' he attributes to 'Professor Ewald Hering in a lecture, *Concerning Memory as a general function of Organized Matter*, delivered at Vienna in 1870' (*Heredity and Memory*, 27).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 42–3.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 43.

¹⁷ W. B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London, 1955), 116.

to popularise and that underpinned Yeats's own experiments in spiritualism. That this dualistic theory of humanity's relationship to evolution was not simply Wallace's individual eccentricity is clear from the fact that Tyndall's materialism was equally opposed by William Thomson (later Lord Kelvin) and Peter Guthrie Tait, co-authors of the ground-breaking *Treatise on Natural Philosophy* (1867), which was designed to replace 'Newton's *Principia* of force with a new *Principia* of energy and extrema', exemplifying 'the ONE GREAT LAW of Physical Science, known as the *Conservation of Energy*'.¹⁸ Thomson and Tait believed this new physics of 'energy', including its prediction of the universe ending in an entropic death, was consistent with scripture: 'dark indeed would be the prospects of the human race', they wrote in a popularising essay on 'Energy' 'if unilluminated by that light which reveals "new heavens and a new earth"'.¹⁹

That this 'energy' was fundamentally spiritual, however, was to be the argument of Tait's *The Unseen Universe*,²⁰ co-authored with another physicist, Balfour Stewart: 'energy', they stated, 'has as much claim to be regarded as an objective reality as matter itself [for] while matter is always the same, though it may be masked in various combinations, energy is constantly changing the form in which it presents itself. The one is like the eternal, unchangeable Fate or Necessitas of the ancients; the other is Proteus himself in the variety and rapidity of its transformations' (*UU*, 115). Agreeing with Wallace, they believed that mind-energy indicated 'that there exists now an invisible order of things intimately connected with the present, and capable of acting energetically upon it—for, in truth, the energy of the present system is to be looked upon as originally derived from the invisible universe, while the forces which give rise to the transmutations of energy probably take their origin in the same region' (*UU*, 199). The consequence is a psychical universe running parallel to the physical one:

Each thought we think is accompanied by certain molecular motions and displacements in the brain, and parts of these, let us allow, are in some way stored up in that organ, so as to produce what may be termed our material or physical memory. Other parts of these motions are,

¹⁸ Quoted Crosbie Smith and M. Norton Wise, *Energy and Empire: A biographical study of Lord Kelvin* (Cambridge, 1989), 352, 353.

¹⁹ Thomson and Tait, 'Energy', *Good Words*, 3 (1862), 606–7; cited Smith and Wise, 535.

²⁰ P. G. Tait and Balfour Stewart, *The Unseen Universe; or Physical Speculations on a Future State* (London, 1875), hereafter cited in the text as *UU*.

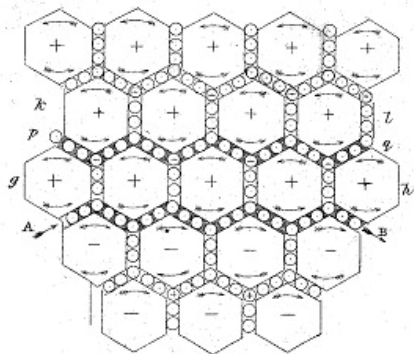
however, communicated to the invisible body, and are there stored up, forming a memory which may be made us of when that body is free to exercise its functions. (*UU*, 200)

From such a physics of energy could be derived a justification for the immortality of individual personality because, 'thought conceived to affect the matter of another universe simultaneously with this may explain a future state' (*UU*, 199–200). These were the arguments not of mystical cranks but, as in case of Wallace, of serious scientists. Yeats's 'spiritualism' would, in the 1870s and 1880s, not have been 'other' to science but at one with some of science's own most radical speculations. If the 'reference' of such scientific theories have since proved illusory—like ether—that does not mean that they were not *intended* referentially, and the parallel between Yeats's poetic reference to similar entities would bring Yeats's poetry—at least in its historical context—much closer to science than the Ogden-Richards view would imply.

Thirdly, one of the consequences of this revision of Newtonian physics was a re-envisioning of the nature of the atom by Tait's most brilliant pupil, James Clerk Maxwell: developing Kelvin's theories on energy, Maxwell presented the atom as a vortex of liquid energy and matter as the product of these vortices spinning in opposite directions and generating electrical flows:



Clerk Maxwell's diagrammatic representation of the atom as vortex (left) and of the interaction of atoms as intertwining vortices generating energy (right)



Ezra Pound's 'vorticism' of the 1910s gets its metaphorical energy from Clerk Maxwell's reconstruction of the universe's energy as produced from these vortices, and their structure is replicated in Yeats's own theory of the 'gyre'. However individualistic Yeats's theories may seem, they had in fact much in common with contemporary scientific speculation.

Whether the particular texts mentioned above had a direct effect on Yeats I cannot say (though *The Unseen Universe* was one of the most successful books published by Macmillan, who became Yeats's publisher), but the conception of the universe that they invoked did lie directly behind a text with which he *was* deeply familiar—another Macmillan publication, J. G. Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (first published in 1890). Frazer had attended Thomson's lectures at Glasgow as an undergraduate, taking from them, 'a conception of the physical universe as regulated by exact and absolutely unvarying laws of nature expressible in mathematical formulas', and that conception he declared to have been 'a settled principle of my thought ever since'.²¹ It was then James Ward who encouraged Frazer towards anthropology (Frazer was a classicist) and it was Ward's psychological theories which underpinned Frazer's analysis of the primitive mind. A key element in Ward's psychology was its incorporation of the theory of the 'association of ideas', an account of the mind that had been given renewed impetus as a result of the work of John Stuart Mill and Alexander Bain. Their associationist explanation of the mind was to provide the basis of the new and influential evolutionary psychology of Herbert Spencer. For Frazer, magic could be explained scientifically as a product of the the association of ideas, while the theory of psychological association gave Yeats an empirical basis for the operation of spiritual powers: 'All sounds, all colours, all forms,' he declared in 1900, 'either because of their pre-ordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions, or, as I prefer to think, call down among us certain disembodied powers, whose footsteps over our hearts we call emotions'.²² Yeats and Frazer, coming from opposite directions, are both engaged in translating magic into psychological association, association into magic: 'long association' becomes for Yeats a 'disembodied power' while, for Frazer, homeopathic and contagious magic are nothing else but 'different misapplications of the association of ideas'.²³

Yeats's engagement with Frazer, and with the scientific contexts of *The Golden Bough*, was not, however, simply an engagement with a science which was far from poetry's 'other', it was an engagement with the specifically *Scottish* thought of the late nineteenth century, since *The Golden Bough* was one of the most distinctive products of a group of Scottish thinkers²⁴ which included John

²¹ Robert Ackerman, *J. G. Frazer: His Life and Work* (Cambridge, 1990; 1987), 14.

²² W. B. Yeats, 'The Symbolism of Poetry', *Essays and Introductions*, 156–7.

²³ Frazer, *Golden Bough* (1922), 12.

²⁴ For an account of this group, see my 'Introduction' to the Canongate Classics edition of Frazer's *The Golden Bough* (Edinburgh, 2004).

Ferguson McLennan, who introduced the notions of 'totem' and 'taboo' into anthropological discussion; William Robertson Smith, who developed those theories into an evolutionary account of Biblical religion and whose editorship of the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* produced one of the intellectual landmarks of Victorian culture; as well as Clerk Maxwell, who was a contributor to the *Britannica*. Maxwell worked closely with Thomson and Tait and would resort to Robertson Smith for Arabic terms for new mathematical formulae, while it was to Robertson Smith that Frazer dedicated the first edition of *The Golden Bough*. The ways in which Yeats's thought shadows the work of these thinkers confirms, I believe, what I have argued elsewhere:²⁵ that far from Ireland-England being 'self' and 'other' in Yeats's 'Anglo-Irish' project, Scotland played a crucial role, representing 'another other', one that offered an alternative way of envisaging both the Irish past and an Irish future. Scotland's status in Yeats's conception is clear from his account of the Scottish writer with whom he might seem to have the least in common—Thomas Carlyle:

When once a country has given perfect expression to itself in literature, has carried to maturity its literary tradition, its writers, no matter what they write of, carry its influence about with them, just as Carlyle remained a Scotsman when he wrote of German kings or French revolutionists, and Shakespeare an Elizabethan Englishman when he told of Coriolanus or of Cressida. Englishmen and Scotsmen forget how much they owe to mature traditions of all kinds—traditions of feeling, traditions of thought, traditions of expression—for they have never dreamed of a life without these things. They write or paint or think or feel, and believe they do so to please no taste but their own, while in reality they obey rules and instincts which have been accumulating for centuries; their wine of life has been mellowed in ancient cellars, and they see but the ruby light in the glass.²⁶

Carlyle, as much as Shakespeare, is for Yeats the inheritor of 'traditions of feeling, traditions of thought, traditions of expression' which 'have been accumulating for centuries', and the fact of such an independent culture existing

²⁵ 'National Literature and Cultural Capital in Scotland and Ireland', Liam McIlvanney and Ray Ryan (eds), *Ireland and Scotland: Culture and Society*.

²⁶ 'Irish National Literature, I: from Callanan to Carleton', *The Bookman*, July 1895, in John P. Frayne (ed.), *Uncollected Prose by W.B. Yeats, 1, First Reviews and Articles 1886–1896* (London: 1970), 360.

on England's doorstep is what makes the Ireland he dreams of creating a real possibility. In Scotland, Yeats identified another other to England, one whose different 'otherness' interrupts the self-other binary of the England-Ireland to which Kearney and Kiberd attempt to return Irish writing.

III

If there is indeed, for Yeats, the possibility of identifying 'another other' in a Scotland which is differently antithetical to England, what does this imply about the theories within which Kiberd and Kearney construct their Ireland-England binary? It is notable that Scotland is not mentioned in the index of Kiberd's book: Walter Scott receives one passing reference as does a 'Celtic' David Hume; Burns receives none and there is no mention of the Fiona MacLeod with whom Yeats was initially besotted in the 1890s. Ireland-England, it would appear, exhausts all possible relations, reducing even American developments to mere imitations of the hyphenated totality in which 'Irish experience seems to anticipate that of the emerging nation-states of the so-called "Third World"' (II, 4). Neither self nor other, Scotland becomes invisible even when Scottish traditions are being lived—as in the poetry of the Ulster Weavers—on the island of Ireland, and even when one of the political and intellectual heroes of Kiberd's narrative—James Connolly—was born and brought up in Scotland.²⁷ Instead of Derrida's 'monolingualism of the other', Kiberd's account is a 'monoculism of the other' in which Ireland stands as representative of all others over against whom the imperial centre is defined.

For Kearney, such binarism is inscribed in all accounts of otherness because they derive from fundamental structures in the whole tradition of Western thought: 'ever since Western thought equated the Good with notions of self-identity and sameness, the experience of evil has often been linked with notions of exteriority. Almost invariably, otherness was considered in terms of an estrangement of the pure unity of the soul' (SGM, 65). If estrangement of an original 'pure unity' means that the Other was once a portion of the Self, it also means that the Other is necessarily as singular as the self-identity

²⁷ Connolly's Scottish origins are mentioned only indirectly: 'Even more depressing was the fact that an otherwise advanced thinker such as James Connolly did not develop a generalized anti-racist or anti-imperialist philosophy. Immediate realities in Scotland and Ireland were just too pressing' (II, 259). The fact that Scotland is introduced only in the context of *failings* in Connolly's otherwise laudable ideology is significant, as is the reference to the fraudulent tradition of kilt-wearing (II, 151).

from which it emerged. It is a partition of the world which is replicated in that founding move of the modern Western tradition, the Cartesian *cogito*, in which the world is divided between the 'I think' and everything else over against which it is counterposed. As Kearney notes,

This definition of alterity in relation to sameness is revisited by the modern movement in phenomenology . . . In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel historicizes the problem in terms of the master-slave dialectic. Here, he argues, the self only expresses itself as a sovereign subject in so far as it struggles with, and is eventually recognized by, its Other (*das Andere*). But it is Husserl who brings the phenomenological dialectic to its logical conclusion in the Fifth *Cartesian Meditation* when he claims that the other is never absolutely alien but is always and everywhere recognized as other precisely as other-than-me, that is, by analogy and appresentation. (*SGM*, 16)

It is an opposition that was to be reinforced in Sartre's philosophy of the nothingness of the self, since the self is an act of negation which ensures that whatever the self is confronted with is simply *not-self*: 'the Other is the one who is *not-oneself*'.²⁸

For Kearney, this absolute opposition of 'self' and 'other' is the 'problematic' which 'informs . . . the entire metaphysical paradigm of self-and-other running from Plato and Aristotle to Hegel and the modern philosophy of consciousness' (*SGM*, 16), and his own work represents an effort to find a way through the 'enigma of the other' as presented in 'religious anthropology (Eliade, Girard, Lévi-Strauss) and psychoanalysis (Freud/Lacan/Kristeva), and running on into deconstruction (Derrida/Lyotard/Caputo), phenomenology (Husserl/Heidegger/Levinas) and hermeneutics (Gadamer/Greisch/Ricoeur)' (*SGM*, 11–12). Kearney believes that we can escape the oppositions that haunt the Western tradition if we give primacy to the fact that 'the human self has a narrative identity based on the multiple stories it recounts and receives from others' (*SGM*, 231), and by foregrounding the fact that 'we are narrative beings because the shortest road from self to self is through the other' (*SGM*, 231). As a result, he insists, there are 'certain narrative footbridges which may help us negotiate both the dizzy peaks of alterity and the subterranean chasms of abjection' (*SGM*, 231) and thereby 'make us more hospitable to strangers, gods

²⁸ William Ralph Schroeder, *Sartre and his Predecessors: The Self and the Other* (London, 1984), 239.

and monsters without succumbing to mystique or madness' (*SGM*, 18). If we start, however, on this particular ground, and within this particular tradition, the binary of the self-other opposition is always going to be waiting at the other end of the bridge, whichever end one decides to make for—since, as Derrida insists, every route 'is repetition, return, reversibility, iterability, the possible reiteration of the itinerary' (*MO*, 58). The (anti-)metaphysics of the self-other opposition as invoked by this tradition is so insistent and so wide-ranging that it makes Kearney's project of being 'able to critically discriminate between different kinds of otherness' (*SGM*, 67) almost impossible. However much he may insist on the importance of finding a way 'between the *logos* of the One and the *anti-logos* of the Other' in order to discover a 'practice of dialogue between self and other' (*SGM*, 18), he finds it impossible to escape from these extremes except by mere assertion: 'It simply doesn't have to be like this. All or nothing' (*SGM*, 187). There is no *theoretical* way out of the same-other dialectic, only a refusal to submit to its consequences by asserting that 'the ultimate response (though by no means solution) offered by practical understanding is to *act against evil*' because 'action turns our understanding towards the future in view of a *task* to be accomplished' (*SGM*, 101), transferring 'the aporia of evil from the sphere of theory (*theoria*)—proper to the exact knowledge criteria of logic, science and speculative metaphysics—to the sphere of a more practical art of understanding (*technē/praxis*)' (*SGM*, 100–1).

Kearney's choice of the so-called 'continental' tradition as both the ultimate expression of the (post)modern condition and the context for developing his own theoretical position is, of course, itself part of a 'binary' which pits the English language tradition of modern philosophy (the 'Anglo-American' tradition) against the 'continental' tradition: they are, in effect, philosophical 'others'. And Kearney's choice of where he locates himself, as an Irish philosopher, just like Kiberd's situating of his criticism within a postcolonial framework, is the expression of a resistance to 'English' hegemony. Continental theory and postcolonial criticism define philosophy and literature in Ireland as not-England. But if, as I have suggested in relation to Yeats, Scotland might represent for Ireland another other, then in the Scottish philosophical tradition there might be also be another other, an alternative starting point for confronting Kearney's dilemma of how 'to acknowledge a difference between self and other without separating them so schismatically that *no* relation at all is possible' (*SGM*, 9). In his introduction, Kearney quotes approvingly the words of Julia Kristeva, that today 'the media propagate the death instinct' and that 'nationalisms, like fundamentalisms, are screens in front of this violence, fragile

screens, see-through screens, because they only displace that hatred, sending it to the other' (*SGM*, 8–9). The 'death' instinct, of course, is a fundamental element of Freud's later psychology, but it is one which was the target of an influential book—*The Origins of Love and Hate*²⁹—published in 1935 by Scottish psychologist Ian D. Suttie, in which he disputed Freud's account of the mind because it 'postulates conflict, struggle and repression as inevitable and indeed as the welder of society' (*OLH*, 116).

The inadequacy of Freud's theories, Suttie argued, derived from his insistence on 'a primary, independent, instinct for destruction—a hatred stimulated from within like hunger, and having no reference to external provocation or purpose' (*OLH*, 198), which results in a view of society as 'absolutely broken up into individuals each seeking its own ends exclusively' (*OLH*, 239). Suttie finds it difficult to believe that 'any successful species can be born with useless and even self-conflicting dispositions' (*OLH*, 238) and proposes an alternative: 'The important thing to remember, however, is that consciousness of *self* as isolated from and independent of the rest of the world is probably associated with some measure, however trivial, of anxiety and resentment from the very beginning, but on the other hand (in my view, as against Freud's) it is also associated with loving feelings towards others as well as with angry claims upon them' (*OLH*, 27). For Suttie, love is the foundation of identity because he regards love 'as social rather than sexual in its biological function, as derived from the self-preservative instincts not the genital appetite', so that sociability is fundamental to the individual psyche—rather than 'an aim inhibited sexuality'—and culture, the defining context of human life, is 'derived from love as a supplementary mode of companionship (to love) and not as a cryptic form of sexual gratification' (*OLH*, 36). Where the tradition of Western thought has begun from the self as thinker, to which the world is other, Suttie begins from a situation in which 'the bodily self acquires a value over and above its capacity for yielding sensory satisfactions *in so far as it is the object of the mother's interest*, and the first plaything *shared* with her' (*OLH*, 37). We begin, in other words, as the 'other', and become a 'self' through *sharing*: the 'self' does not project 'the other' from its own autonomous individuality, but learns its selfhood through sharing its otherness. The failure of Freudian psychology lies in its 'obstinate determination to leave out of account social situations and hypothetical social motives. They wish to account for the whole process of mental development in

²⁹ Ian D. Suttie, *The Origins of Love and Hate* (London, 1935), hereafter cited in the text as *OLH*. This is a tradition which has been analysed by Gavin Miller, see his *R. D. Laing* (Edinburgh, 2004).

terms of what goes on within the individual mind itself' (*OLH*, 40). Freudians fail to acknowledge the fundamentally *social* nature from which individual experience begins.

I consider that the germ of goodness or of love is in the individual (of every species which has evolved a nurtured infancy) from the very beginning, and that our traditional method of upbringing frustrates this spontaneous benevolence and substitutes a 'guilt-anxiety' morality for natural goodness. I consider further that the traditional attitude is so deeply ingrained in Freud and Adler's outlook on life that they cannot admit the existence of love as other than a prudent avoidance of the anger of others. (*OLH*, 52)

We do not begin in self-assertion: the baby 'not only starts life with a benevolent attitude, but the Need-to-Give continues as a dominant motive throughout life' (*OLH*, 53); our psychoses are not the product of the frustration of sexual instincts but of the frustration of our need to love, and be loved, so that psychotherapy in practice is 'nothing but the *overcoming of the barriers to loving and feeling oneself loved*, and not as the removal of fear-imposed inhibitions to the expression of innate, anti-social, egoistic and sensual desires' (*OLH*, 53–4).³⁰

Suttie was one of several Scottish psychologists who challenged Freudian theory, a challenge climaxing in the 1960s and 70s in the anti-psychiatry of R.D. Laing. Laing's most famous book was *The Divided Self*,³¹ a phrase invoked in Kearney's discussion of Julia Kristeva: 'the stranger is neither a race nor a nation . . . we are our own strangers—we are divided selves' (*SGM*, 76). For Kristeva, the 'divided self' 'expresses the universal experience of a deep unconscious malaise with "others" arising from our repressed rapport with the internally housed "primal scene" that informs our psyche' (*SGM*, 76). That 'primal scene' – Freud's account of the original killing of the father by his sons as the origin of the Oedipus complex – is for the Scottish tradition a fiction, the outcome of Freud's refusal to engage with human beings as social, and, therefore, as caring beings: as Suttie summarises it, Freudian psychology

³⁰ This had been the anti-darwinian argument of Patrick Geddes' and J. Arthur Thomson's book on *Evolution* (London, 1911), which argued that the success of human beings as evolutionary creatures was their capacity for co-operation based on love.

³¹ R.D. Laing, *The Divided Self* (Harmondsworth, 1990; 1959), hereafter cited in the text as *DS*.

‘ignores the mother for the father’, ‘denies tenderness—filial and parental—and universalises sex’, ‘interprets socialization in man as *merely* the overcoming of *sex* jealousy by coercion and fear’, ‘regards hate as spontaneous, ineradicable appetite and all motive as egoistic’ (*OLH*, 235). By putting the mother back into the story of the psyche the primal scene is transformed from one of violence and destruction to one of love and mutuality. Kearney’s discussion is focused on ‘Strangers, Gods and Monsters’, because these are terrifying versions of an Other from which one is estranged, but for Suttie the real monsters are the creations of modern psychology – ‘these “mythical monsters”, independent individuals’ (*OLH*, 112), who can be believed to exist only in the conceptions of theorists who ignore that human life is characterised from its beginning by dependency on one another. As the Scottish philosopher John Macmurray put it³² in developing Suttie’s ideas, ‘the most obvious fact about the human infant is [its] total helplessness’ (*PR*, 47): it ‘is, in fact, “adapted” to being unadapted, “adapted” to complete dependence on an adult human being’ (48). The primal scene is that a human child ‘is made to be cared for . . . born into a love-relationship which is inherently personal’ (*PR*, 48). As a consequence the Other is, for Macmurray, the very antithesis of the alien and the monstrous:

We have seen that the form of the child’s experience is dependence on a personal Other; and that this form of experience is never outgrown, but provides the ground plan of all personal experience, which is constituted from start to finish by relation to the Other and communication with the Other. (*PR*, 154)

The self, for Macmurray, is not the isolated ego of Cartesian or Sartrean tradition: the self is a person in relation with others. Neither is the self the narrative self that Kearney invokes: the self is an *agent* and it is precisely through its agency in the world that it is in contact with the other:

in acting I am not ‘over against’ an object, but in contact with the Other. In acting I meet the Other, as support and resistance to my action, and in this meeting lies my existence. Consequently, I am aware of the Other, and of myself as dependent upon and limited by the

³² John Macmurray, *Persons in Relation* (London, 1961), hereafter cited in the text as *PR*. This forms Volume II of *The Form of the Personal*, based on Gifford lectures given at the University of Glasgow in 1953–4. Volume I, *The Self as Agent* was published in 1957. Macmurray acknowledges Suttie’s work, *PR*, 45.

Other. This awareness is knowledge, for it is awareness of the existence of the Other and of my own existence in dynamic relation with the Other. (*PR*, 209)

Starting from the self-reflective 'I', the thinking self, the Western tradition has projected the 'Other' as unknowable and therefore alien, and in so doing has created the Other as monstrous: Suttie, Macmurray and Laing, on the other hand, start from the 'I and you' as the fundamental structure of experience. As Laing puts it in attacking traditional Freudian psychology:

Instead of the original bond of *I* and *You*, we take a single man in isolation and conceptualize his various aspects into 'the ego', 'the superego', and 'the id'. The other becomes either an internal or external object or fusion of both. How can we speak in any way adequately of the relationship between me and you in terms of interaction of one mental apparatus with another? (*DS*, 19)

'The science of persons', Laing argues, 'is the study of human beings that begins from a relationship with the other as person and proceeds to an account of the other still as person' (*DS*, 21). The phrase 'divided self', which Laing took from Macmurray, has a very different significance in this context than in Kristeva's (or Kearney's) usage: it is the self which seeks autonomy and independence that is sick; the healthy self knows both its dependence on the other and the necessary inner division that comes from being, in part, a part of the other: 'It is out of the earliest loving bonds with the mother that the infant develops the beginnings of being-for-itself. It is in and through these bonds that the mother "mediates" the world to the infant in the first place' (*DS*, 190). The individual self, as a product of (m)othering, always remains dependent on the other and, in developing, on many another, thereby beginning to answer Kearney's quandary about how we can avoid treating 'the other as so exterior or estranged that it becomes utterly alien'.

IV

For Richard Kearney, the problem with which the philosophical tradition leaves us is that of the passage between 'speculative theory' and the need to 'act against evil' (*SGM*, 101), and the fact that 'speculative theory' gives us no

basis for that action. In the end, Kearney offers us as a middle way the possibility that we can ‘muddle through’ with ‘a certain judicious mix of phronetic understanding, narrative imagination and hermeneutic’ (*SGM*, 187). From the perspective of the Scottish tradition that I have been outlining, however, Kearney’s dilemma is unresolvable precisely because it begins from the priority of ‘speculative theory’. For John Macmurray, on the other hand, ‘the Self exists only as an Agent’ and, therefore, ‘the Self exists only in dynamic relation with the Other’ (*PR*, 17). If ‘speculative theory’ is a *consequence* of action rather than its foundation, if engagement with the other has priority over the effort to recognise the other, then it may be possible to construct an alternative ‘middle way’ which is not simply a ‘muddle way’.

In this sense, the Scottish traditions outlined above³³ do not constitute merely an alternative to or a supplement to the Ireland-England binary – or, indeed, to the opposition between Anglo-American and Continental philosophy – but a critique of the very bases on which the self-other dialectic has been constructed within those traditions. The practical task of how we can encounter and deal ethically with the Other, of how we can resist reducing the Other to the irredeemably alien, is given philosophical and psychological grounding by challenging the fundamental isolation of the self-as-thinker from which the Cartesian tradition begins. The argument of this Scottish tradition is that we do not encounter the world as alien and subsequently try to find a way of relating to it: ‘the personal conception of the world’, as Macmurray puts it, ‘is not the result of personifying what is first recognized as non-personal’ (*PR*, 221). We begin as other-related creatures and thus ‘the personal conception of the Other is original’ (*PR*, 221), in the sense that it has an existential and logical priority over all other forms of understanding. Since ‘the Self is constituted by its relation to the Other’ (*PR*, 17) there can be no isolated ‘ego’ to which the Other is inherently alien: it is only through the Other that the Self exists, and the most important component of the Other is ‘other persons’: ‘Persons, therefore, are constituted by their mutual relation to one another’ (*PR*, 24). Otherness in the personal world is, in other words, always plural: if it is the case that “I” exist as only one element in a complex “You and I”, the ‘you’ in that ‘you and I’ is not ‘you’ as in the ‘I-Thou’ of Buber’s version of our relation with God. That can only ever be an address to one unique individual, whereas the ‘I-You’ of the infant’s relationship with the mother is an opening out on to a multiplicity

³³ For an account of how this tradition developed from previous Scottish philosophy, see my ‘Beyond Reason: Hume, Seth, Macmurray and Scotland’s Postmodernity’ in Eleanor Bell and Gavin Miller (eds), *Scotland in Theory* (Amsterdam, 2004).

of 'I-you' relationships: 'I exist as an individual only in a personal relation to other individuals' (*PR*, 28). The binary of Self and Other is a linguistic illusion: in the real world there are only 'selves and others', selves whose very being and identity as selves is defined in their relations with multiple others.

Three things follow from this in relation to the issues explored in this paper. First, the world as revealed by science from which the young Yeats recoiled, may be threatening and disturbing but it is not the *antithesis* of our ordinary human experience: science is a subtraction from the world of the personal, a deliberate reduction of the world of the personal by the elimination of what is defining of persons – their intentions. For science the world is a place in which 'everything in it *happens*; nothing is ever *done*; and none of its constituent elements is capable of reflection' (*PR*, 219). Science treats the world as though it were without intentions but can do so only on the basis of the unacknowledged intention of the scientist. From this perspective, we can see in Yeats's grappling with the science of his time (as, indeed, in the speculative work of scientists like Tait and Stewart) an effort to bring the scientific and the personal back into relation, and by resisting the reduction of the personal to the scientific to give the personal again priority in our encounter with the Other.

Secondly, the historical perspectives opened up by the anthropological theories that lie behind *The Golden Bough* provide an alternative to the Freudian account of why human beings are as they are. In this version, Strangers, Gods and Monsters are not symbols of the threat of the unreachably alien but of the potential of love to regain the relationship with the other on which all selfhood was originally based. It is a perspective whose evolutionary significance had already been explored in the theories of 'totem and taboo' developed by J. F. MacLennan and Robertson Smith, which emphasised how different were the value systems of societies which were matriarchal rather than patriarchal. The flaw in Freud's account of the mind, in Suttie's view, comes from the fact that he is insufficiently historical – or anthropological – in his understanding of the psyche; he accepts the structures of his own culture as universal and 'dismisses the great and mysterious Mother-cults of antiquity' (*OLH*, 137). In so doing he loses sight of the real evolutionary impetus of human communities and, unlike those 'Mother-cults', is 'unwilling to admit the existence of any positive, primary, "other-regarding" feeling' (*OLH*, 116). In the Freudian animus against 'other-regarding' feeling we can descry, perhaps, 'a puritan intolerance of tenderness' (*OLH*, 96) which resists recognition of our indebtedness to the other—an attitude all too familiar in many areas of our nation-based cultural studies.

Thirdly, if we think of our national 'self' as being like our individual self, then we can think of it as defined not by its confrontation with a hostile Other (even if some others are hostile), or determined by an exclusive Self-Other binary (even if a particular other weighs heavily on us), but as constituted by the (many) crossing points of our other-relatedness. Adding Ireland-Scotland to Ireland-England (and, indeed, Scotland-England) then provides us with 'another other' that can release us not only from the repressions of past history, but from some of the repressions and distortions of modern theory. We might then take as an emblem of the aim and purpose of Irish-Scottish studies Suttie's account of the difference between Celtic Christianity and its mainstream alternatives:

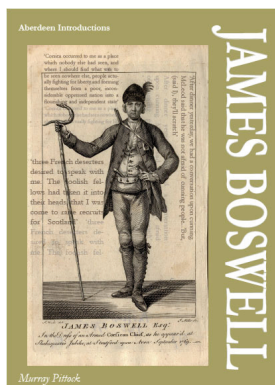
Pelagius, who resisted the Augustinian doctrine of eternal damnation of unbaptized infants, was an Irish monk. Duns Scotus, who later upheld similar views, was, as his name indicates, a Scotsman. The spread of Christianity in these regions and early times was by persuasion (i.e. mission work) rather than by conquest and coercive 'conversion'. The tolerance of this strain of Christianity was further indicated by their treatment of pagan myth and festivals—new saints borrowing the harmless celebration (and sometimes even the names) of the old deities (*OLH*, 153).

As Macmurray puts it, 'the fear of the Other is, at bottom, the fear of life' (*PR*, 165)—and if we are to do justice to the nature of our cultures as living and creative environments, we have to accept how dependent they are on otherness, and accept that their identity develops not by resistance to or withdrawal from otherness but precisely from the complexity of their relatedness to many others. We have to cease constructing them as binary engagements of Self and Other and accept that that their identity depends always on Another Other.

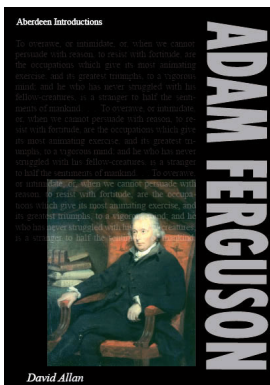


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