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By focusing on the theme of ‘frontiers’, this issue of the *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies* invites discussion of transfer and transformation in the Irish and Scottish diaspora. What aspects of their culture did Irish and Scottish migrants transfer from their homelands to the settler societies of North America and the Antipodes and to British colonies such as India? And how were they themselves transformed by the new environments and diverse peoples that they encountered? Were the contributions made by Irish and Scottish migrants and cultures in any way ‘exceptional’?

On the one hand, the theme of ‘frontiers’ draws attention to the interactions of Irish and Scottish migrants with natural environments that they had not previously encountered, as well as with indigenous peoples and other European groups. The first six papers in this volume tackle this agenda, focusing on imperial and environmental frontiers (John MacKenzie, Lindsay Proudfoot and Dianne Hall, Tom Brooking, Jan Oosthoek), frontiers of cultural encounter, of conquest and of settlement (Patrick Griffin), and frontiers of mission (Rosalyn Trigger). As illustrated by the papers in the second half of this collection, frontiers can also be conceptualised as political boundaries, enabling an exploration of the processes of transfer and transformation that occurred when individuals or groups crossed from one jurisdiction to another, whether it be across the Irish Sea (Kathleen Middleton), the Cabot Strait (Peter Ludlow), or the Atlantic Ocean (David Wilson, Stephen Dornan, Melodee Beals, Patrick Walsh).

In adopting these approaches, the authors draw on the double meaning of the term ‘frontier’ as either ‘the border or advance region of settlement and civilisation’ or as ‘that part of a country which fronts or faces another country’. As the first definition—purposefully chosen for its outmoded reference to ‘civilisation’—suggests, the term ‘frontier’ is weighed down by a tremendous amount of historical freight. As a result, it has become fashionable in recent

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1 Fulmer Mood, ‘Notes on the History of the Word “Frontier”’, *Agricultural History*, 22 (1948), 81. This definition comes from *Webster’s New International Dictionary of the English Language*, published at Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1909.
years to avoid its use and instead refer to settlement frontiers as ‘contact zones’ or ‘transactive borderlands’—terms deemed to be less imbued with a ‘European expansionist perspective’. While there are contexts in which the use of these terms is indeed more appropriate, their adoption fails to reflect the ways in which Europeans in particular have projected their power into the lands and lives of other peoples around the world over the past five hundred years. Thus, in my own contribution to the collection, I refer to ‘frontiers of mission’ not out of a desire to endorse a European expansionist perspective, but because the phrase effectively evokes the way in which Scottish Canadians of the late nineteenth century viewed distant regions only just coming into contact with western missionaries. John MacKenzie provides a more detailed exploration of these issues in his paper in this collection.

In terms of the second definition of frontier as ‘that part of a country which fronts or faces another country’, there is debate as to whether it is appropriate to regard the sea as a frontier. C.B. Fawcett’s classic treatise, *Frontiers: A Study in Political Geography* (1918), unequivocally states, however, that ‘of all the breaks in the continuity of the human population of the earth the sea is the largest and most prominent’, pointing out that ‘the Englishman feels far less severed from his own country when he goes to Scotland or Wales than when he crosses to Ireland; though he is less likely to hear a strange language in Ireland than in Wales or the Highlands, and the greater part of England is actually nearer to Dublin than to Edinburgh’ (simultaneously demonstrating that this use of the term frontier can be just as ethnocentric as its aforementioned counterpart). Fawcett nevertheless emphasised that the sea was also ‘an open road’ with no natural barriers, in keeping with his understanding of frontiers as areas of transition capable of serving both as ‘zones of separation’ and as ‘zones of intercourse’ between two or more regions or states.

Discussion of the relative importance of cultural transfer and transformation in establishing the national character of settler societies has

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3 In his famous *Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1755), Dr Samuel Johnson, for example, defined the word ‘frontier’ as ‘the marches; the limit; the utmost verge of any territory; the border: properly that which terminates not at the sea, but fronts another country.’


5 Ibid., 32, 34; also 24.
deep roots. In his much-cited article on ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History’, first published in 1893, Frederick Jackson Turner argued that the advance of the frontier had ‘meant a steady movement away from the influence of Europe, [and] a steady growth of independence on American lines.’ While not fully rejecting the ‘Germanic germ theory’ that was prevalent amongst his contemporaries, Turner nevertheless felt that historians had paid too little attention to American factors such as ‘the existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of … settlement westward’ in fostering a rugged individualism and the rise of democracy. Given that settler societies have continued to be diversely characterised as ‘drastically simplified versions of European society’ (R. Cole Harris), as stunted ‘fragments’ of the European societies from which they were derived (Louis Hartz), and as ‘a fertile seedbed for many different cultures, nourishing a dynamic pluralism more complex than any Old World society had ever been’ (David Hackett Fischer), a resolution to this issue is likely to remain elusive.

While the decisive nature of the break with Great Britain as well as controversy over the theory of ‘American exceptionalism’ has given these discussions a particular resonance in the United States, debates over the relative importance of transfer and transformation are no less relevant in the context of other British settler societies. Theories regarding the formation of ‘national character’ have especially important implications for the study of Irish and Scottish communities in countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand, where the relatively early arrival of these groups meant that they participated in the ‘nation-building’ process in a way that was not open to later immigrant groups. Donald Akenson has argued, for example, that the popular image of English-speaking Canada as ‘a congerie of ethnic groups’… ‘elides the central historical fact that in Canadian history a process occurred… that created a central set of political, social, legal, and cultural conventions within which all the allegedly separate multicultural groups

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7 Ibid., 1; also 3. This interpretation of Turner’s work follows intellectual historian Gilman M. Ostrander’s critique of the more prevalent view amongst historians that Turner’s paper was presented as ‘a direct alternative to the reigning belief in the transmission of Germanic racial germs from Europe to America’. See ‘Turner and the Germ Theory’, *Agricultural History*, 32 (1958), 260.

operate.' At the same time, he questioned the conventional historical narrative in which a transplanted ‘British’ homeland culture, modified by exposure to new physical environments and reinforced through participation in imperial wars, established the basis for new English-speaking Canadian, New Zealand and Australian identities. Instead, Akenson concluded that a much more variegated range of Anglo-Celtic cultures made their way to the New World, where they contributed to the *in situ* formation of ‘a new and synthetic “British” culture’ as well as to the development of national identities and institutions. While not discounting the transformative influence of new cultural and natural environments, Akenson’s interpretation nevertheless places considerable emphasis on the role of cultural transfer from the Old World.

Amongst those who approach the study of Irish and Scottish communities abroad from an ethnic studies perspective, there have been similar debates between those emphasising the importance of pre-migration culture and those focusing on conditions in the host country. Kevin Kenny, for example, has drawn attention to the polarised way in which historians of Irish America have tended to emphasise either the role of ‘transplanted pre-migration culture’ in determining Irish behaviour abroad, following Oscar Handlin and Kerby Miller, or else, as in Malcolm Campbell’s more recent work, to argue that ‘immigrant adaptation to the particular social, economic, and political realities in the host countries was the key determinant.’ Despite their differences, both approaches nevertheless remain focused on explaining the perceived ease or difficulty with which Irish immigrants became culturally, socially and economically integrated into their host societies.

In contrast, ethnic histories of Scottish-origin groups in the diaspora have tended to highlight cultural continuity and the preservation of Scottish identity, as well as Scottish influence and impact on the societies in which they settled, rather than engaging in more detailed explorations of the ways in which the Scots and their descendants were transformed through their encounters with new environments and peoples. This can largely be

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10 Ibid., 397; also 396.
12 This has led Marjory Harper to suggest that ‘perhaps more scholarly attention should
accounted for—though not necessarily justified from an historiographical perspective—by the fact that integration has typically been less of a concern for Scottish (and particularly Lowland Protestant) migrants, whose early arrival, Protestant (albeit PresbyterIan) faith, and role as partners in the Union held them in good stead in British settler societies. This tendency has also perhaps been encouraged by the existence of the long-established tradition in Scotland (dating back to the second half of the nineteenth century) of highlighting the achievements of diaspora Scots, and in particular their contribution to the British Empire, as a means of asserting the ongoing significance of the Scottish nation.13

While J.M. Bumsted is undoubtedly correct in his assertion that the question of the extent to which immigrant groups such as the Scots and Irish have ‘assimilated to the dominant culture and the extent to which that culture has taken on their values’ is ‘ultimately unanswerable’, essays in this volume nevertheless suggest a number of strategies for dealing with such issues.14 One method is to go against the grain of Irish and Scottish diaspora studies by—in the case of the Irish—focusing greater attention on the broader impact of Irish institutions on British settler societies, as Peter Ludlow does by looking at the profound influence of ‘Cullenite’ Irish Catholicism on Scottish Roman Catholics in Cape Breton. In the case of the Scots, more detailed studies of the processes of acculturation and assimilation, such as the paper by Melodee Beals on eighteenth-century Scottish merchant families in Virginia, also have much to offer.

In terms of the more general issue of transfer and transformation within the Irish and Scottish diaspora, transnational approaches with their emphasis on ‘movements, flows, and circulation’15 draw attention to the importance of ongoing contacts with the homeland as well as the reciprocal impacts that settler and other colonial societies had on Ireland and Scotland, as discussed, for example, in Jan Oosthoek’s paper on forestry in British India.

now be paid to the other side of the coin—namely, the desire and ability of numerous Scots to assimilate imperceptibly and successfully into their host societies.’ See Adventurers & Exiles: The Great Scottish Exodus (London, 2003), 362.

13 Despite distancing themselves from the hagiographic nature of earlier accounts, recent work by Scottish historians has continued to draw attention to the export overseas of distinctive aspects of Scottish culture and civil society. See John M. MacKenzie, ‘Irish, Scottish, Welsh and English Worlds? A Four-Nation Approach to the History of the British Empire’, History Compass, 6 (2008), 1248 – 9.


A focus on the lives of individual migrants serves as a reminder of the sheer diversity of responses elicited by the need to negotiate between old and new worlds. In David Wilson’s paper on Thomas D’Arcy McGee, we encounter a protean individual in constant dialogue with his changing geographical and politico-religious surroundings, providing a contrast with the seemingly more stable Ulster-Presbyterian affinities of Irish-American author James McHenry, as discussed in the contribution by Stephen Dornan. The articles by Kathleen Middleton and Peter Ludlow in turn examine group migrations over relatively short distances (Scotland to Ireland and Newfoundland to Cape Breton respectively) that produced two very different regions of Irish-Scottish interaction.

Another strategy for exploring cultural transfer and transformation is to consider those of Irish or Scottish origin in relation to other groups, as in my own paper which examines both Scottish and American influences feeding into the evangelical Chinese Sunday School movement in Montreal. Likewise, by exploring the experiences of Irish and Scottish migrants alongside one another—an approach adopted by Tom Brooking, Lindsay Proudfoot and Dianne Hall, and Patrick Griffin in their papers—it becomes easier to discern which specifically Irish or Scottish cultural traits established themselves in New World settings, and what impact these traits may (or may not) have had in terms of encounters with new environments and relations with indigenous peoples. Questioning the validity of culturally-deterministic and ‘exceptionalist’ explanations for the behaviours of specific groups such as the Scots-Irish on the American frontier, Patrick Griffin argues that ‘our focus…should not be on groups, but on processes’. This is an important reminder of the pitfalls awaiting those who engage in overly-blinkered attempts to provide cultural and ethnic explanations of the activities of Irish and Scots in the diaspora, and suggests the benefits to be derived from placing Irish and Scottish studies alongside each other, as well as within more broadly-defined research agendas.

This volume is an outcome of the AHRC-sponsored research project on the Irish and Scottish Diaspora since 1600 which runs out of the University of Aberdeen, and is a companion volume to the September 2008 issue of the Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies entitled Gallic Connections: Irish & Scottish Encounters with France. The papers that appear in this issue are derived from a series of three conferences held between February and June 2008. We would like to thank our keynote speakers—Patrick Griffin, John MacKenzie, Lindsay
Proudfoot and David Wilson – for their participation in these events, as well as all those who presented papers and contributed to discussion.

Rosalyn Trigger
Aberdeen, September 2009
Scots and Imperial Frontiers

John M. MacKenzie

Frontiers come in many different forms. There are conceptualised frontiers of thought and of the imagination, frontiers of politics and of policies. There are geographical frontiers apparently drawn upon the ground, beaconed and mapped, frontiers that are imprecise, like mountain ranges and deserts, and ones that are as reasonably precise as the course of rivers (which may, however, sometimes change course). There are also frontiers that have been major and sometimes extensive contact zones, frontiers of group interaction, where the key conditioning characteristic is ethnicity. Such frontiers invariably symbolise either freedom or thraldom, the pioneering frontier of romantic and heroic endeavour which is also the frontier of violence and dispossession. And still the categories are not exhausted. Frontiers should also be demarcated in economic and environmental terms. Here we can identify a frontier of exploration and of hunting, a forestry frontier, and, as the borderlands are settled, the frontier of commodities, both pastoral and agricultural, and perhaps more unusually we should also consider a maritime frontier. As we progress, if progress is the right word, through these different frontiers, the balance between subsistence and commerce constantly changes. As the frontier is pulled more closely into international exchange, so the environmental transformations proceed apace. And finally as the frontier is conquered by modern infrastructures, by railways, steamships—ocean-going, riverine and coastal—the telegraph, roads and ultimately the internal combustion engine, so are the ecological changes speeded up.

That is a lot of ‘frontiers’ for one paragraph. But frontier is a difficult word for which to find a substitute since ‘border’ and ‘borderlands’ do not entirely cover the same range of meanings and implications. Frontier is certainly a highly emotive and potent term that has long meant many different things both in the virtual world of the mind and the supposedly real world of landscapes, peoples and nations. Of one thing we can, however, be sure and

1 This paper was delivered as a keynote address at the conference on ‘Irish and Scottish Migration and Settlement: Environmental Frontiers’ hosted by the AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies at the University of Aberdeen on 21 June 2008.
that is that both conceptual and actual frontiers are immensely dynamic, never fixed, always moving. And these dynamic processes are of course constantly shaped by the environment. This interaction of the dynamism of the frontiers and the environmental contexts in which they occur will be the main theme of this paper. Our focus here will be on frontiers of European, and more specifically Scottish, overseas settlement in the modern period. The word frontier is therefore used here in a manner defined largely from a western perspective. Of course indigenous peoples also have concepts of frontiers, progressively overtaken by the new imperial dispensation.

Imperial frontiers of settlement were perhaps the most dynamic of them all, although dynamic means shifting rather than speedy. When Jan van Riebeck created his ‘Tavern of the Oceans’ at the Cape of Good Hope in the 1650s, he planted a thorn hedge round his settlement, supposedly to keep out the lions which still infested those latitudes, but also marking out territory, however tiny, and conveying to the local Khoesan people a strange new concept of the frontier. As it happened, Scots soon joined the Dutch, both because of Scots communities in the Netherlands and because of their well-established role as mercenary soldiers in other European armies. But the Dutch frontier in southern Africa would become British within 140 years. There, the frontier of settlement and white dominance took almost 250 years of constant onward marching to reach first the Limpopo and then the Zambezi and beyond in the 1890s. That moving frontier crossed the territories of many African peoples, occupying both lush and drier lands, where manifold flora and fauna were to be found.

When in 1788 the initial settlers and convicts at Botany Bay first drew a line in the sand, ordering Aborigines not to cross it, we already had a new frontier, thoroughly insubstantial yet deeply ingrained in notions of security, the self and the other, the fundamental and arrogated right of possession. That simple line in the sand effectively declared that within the invading European’s conception, the terra nullius was no more, at least in terms of the piece of ground encircled by that line. In Australia, there were many more metaphorical lines in the sands to come, as the vast arid interior was slowly invaded and partially understood, pressing upon the lands of Aboriginal peoples who had marvellously adapted to the testing conditions of the great Outback. What had started in 1788 was only completed with the trans-continental telegraph line from Adelaide to Darwin, an infrastructural frontier all of its own, in 1872 and the many expeditions which criss-crossed the continent in the decades up to the First World War.
North American frontiers were similarly slow moving, taking from the seventeenth century to the 1890s to be fully worked through. By the time Frederick Jackson Turner formulated and published his celebrated thesis of the frontier as the basis of all American culture, social relations and politics in 1893, the frontiers of the North American Indians (or Native Americans), geographically, economically and culturally, had been seriously constricted. In Canada, as in the United States, the frontier distinctively moved through a whole sequence of geographical zones, from some of the gentle lands of Lower and Upper Canada (later Quebec and Ontario) and the Maritimes to the more rugged great Canadian Shield and on to the Prairies, the Rockies, the Pacific, and finally the frozen north. New Zealand, though smaller, had frontiers constituted by ecological zones and by ethnic distinctions, but because of the size of the two main islands, the processes were greatly speeded up. The multiple frontiers of New Zealand had almost all been embraced by settlers within fifty years of the Treaty of Waitangi of 1840. Thus the 1890s were, intriguingly, a decade of closing frontiers almost everywhere. I shall shortly return to this theme of closure.

There were other imperial frontiers than those of settlement, though these concern us less today—notably the ramparts of the Indian Empire in the North West, in the Himalayan foothills, and between the presidencies and provinces of British India and the princely states. It was this kind of frontier which Henry John Newbolt characterised as a zone of romantic and patriotic heroism in his poem ‘Clifton Chapel’ with the resonant line ‘The frontier-grave is far away—’ implying that a piece of an exotic frontier would be forever England.4

Inspired by Frederick Jackson Turner, historians have often used the concepts of the ‘open’ and the ‘closed’ frontier.5 The ‘open’ frontier is one

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2 Turner’s thesis was published as a short paper, but has probably received more citations than almost any other work, certainly in American history. It first appeared in ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History’, The Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893 (Washington, 1894), 199–227, and has been reprinted many times since.
3 So-called Native Americans themselves prefer ‘American Indians’ as the Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC, has made clear. The term ‘Native Americans’ was always foolishly politically correct, not least because ‘American’ is itself an imported concept. The Canadian ‘First Nations’ is both more sensible and more widely accepted.
5 A useful survey of all these issues can be found in Howard Lamarr and Leonard Thompson (eds), The Frontier in History: North America and Southern Africa Compared
that has yet to be demarcated and mapped. It is therefore a frontier where the incomers’ knowledge is incomplete, a frontier where settlement is tentative, tenuous and frequently tested by warfare or natural disaster. It is a frontier where peoples, invading and indigenous, invariably interpenetrate each other’s territory. It is also a frontier where the control of the state is light, where the western concept of the rule of law has been scarcely established, and where, additionally, environmental carrying capacity for human settlement is scarcely understood. Another characteristic is that it is a frontier where the most effective forms of economic exploitation have not yet been established, and where wild animals may well vie for possession with humans. Moreover, at this stage the invaders are predominantly male. Yet we should stress that the open frontier is a place of negotiation as well as of confrontation. Incomers and indigenous may co-operate in economic exploitation as in the hunting and fur trading frontier of Canada. Indigenous leaders struggle to incorporate the newcomers as well as confront them. Attempts are made to pull them into social and political relationships through marriage alliances and other forms of association. Often, these relationships occur outside such formal efforts: the frontier is a place of sexual negotiation and exploitation, a zone of miscegenation—the Métis of Canada (a mixture of First Nations people, Scots and French) are the result of just such processes, as are people of mixed race in South Africa, Australia and New Zealand—and Scottish genes always had a significant input into this. In some cases, indigenous chiefs succeed in turning invaders into clients. Occasionally, an invader could even become a chief himself. But these sorts of relationships occur relatively briefly as the frontier inexorably moves towards a state of closure.

This happens precisely because the open frontier pulls the colonial state outwards, wherein the endemic violence, the roving individualism and group action of settlers forces government to send in troops and administrators. Almost all colonial frontiers end up on a spectrum between the primarily raw open condition and the processes of closure produced by the very problems of openness. Hence the ‘closed’ frontier is one where white dominance has been established, often after long periods of skirmishing and open warfare, where the writ of the state runs more effectively, where towns are created, and where infrastructures begin to penetrate. The gender balance of the invaders is righted and miscegenation comes to be frowned upon. Since all frontiers should be seen as double, that is both from the point of view of settlers

and from the perspective of the indigenous peoples, the closed frontier is one where the indigenous predecessors of the whites have either been driven further out into a new open frontier, have been defeated and constricted into reserves, or have begun to be forced into patterns of labour migration associated with advancing capitalist enterprise—the latter is perhaps more an African phenomenon than a North American or Australian one. And as you will have gathered from this exposition of the open and closed frontier, what invariably happens is that the open frontier has simply been pushed further out. Eventually, barriers such as impassable mountain ranges, the sea, effective indigenous resistance or diminishing marginal returns bring a halt to the outward movement of the frontier in specific regions.

What of the environmental transformations wrought by this progression from the open to the closed frontier? The frontier is frequently a place of excess. Animal species are often rendered locally extinct. In Africa, for example, it is possible to chart the creation and progression inland of species frontiers as hunters cleared the land. The great pachyderms—elephants, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses—retreated ever further into the interior. So did the big cats, regarded initially as vermin and wholly incompatible with human settlement. The quagga was rendered extinct. Giraffe, antelope all retreat and it is an immense irony that the vast migrations of the hugely fecund springbok, destined to become the emblem of South Africa, were eliminated. These processes were driven onwards by the desire for ivory, for horns of every kind, for meat as a subsidy to exploration, railway building and settlement, and simply because the humans of the settled closed frontier had no desire to share their territory with large and dangerous animals which had a keen interest in their stock or their crops. All of this was only arrested with the creation of national parks in the later nineteenth century. This was also, of course, a characteristic of North America, driving bison close to extinction and beaver into remoter places. Whereas indigenous peoples had lived in a


state of comparative, if uneasy, balance with such animals, often deriving their sustenance from them, Europeans wished to establish economies where great wild mammals, dangerous competitors, had no place.

If that is the fate of the fauna of the frontier, the flora also comes under threat. Settlers are usually regarded as hating trees—though it has now been shown that this is not universally the case. Generally, trees and pastoral or agricultural settlement seldom go together. The clearing of the land becomes one of the great heroic—and supposedly positive—attributes of the frontier, as we should note, it had been at the time of Iron Age agriculture too. One of the most moving Bushmen paintings I know depicts a man wielding an iron implement upon a tree—inconceivable to the Stone Age artist. Thus, forests and woods often retreated like the animals that invariably inhabited them. Lesser flora also came under threat from clearance, from the creation of pasture, from fencing, and above all from the invasion of introduced species. The closing frontier is a place of settlement not just for humans, but also for introduced flora, fauna and pathogens, as well as for grazing animals.

If the expansion of Europeans created these vastly complex frontiers everywhere, what can be said of the Scots’ relationships with these phenomena? Scotland was, of course, itself a frontier and one which contained other geographic, ethnic and cultural frontiers of its own. It might be said that this is also true of Ireland. Scotland has always been one of the ultimate frontiers of North-West Europe, Ireland the Atlantic frontier to the West. The Romans vacillated as to where the frontier should be, whether at Hadrian’s Wall between what is now Tyne and Solway or Antonine’s Wall between Forth and Clyde, or yet further north at the signal stations of the Gask Ridge or great legionary fortresses like Inchtuthil in Perthshire. The Romans were trying to accommodate landscape and ethnic features as best they could and they made some, if relatively light, environmental changes.

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8 This cave painting is in the McIlwaine National Park just south of Harare in Zimbabwe.
to the frontier. They may have helped in some processes of long-distance exchange, though these should never be underestimated in both pre- and post-Roman periods. Moreover, Scotland was still a frontier more than 1,500 years later when the British state in the shape of General Wade set about building frontier defences which inherited much from the Romans—roads, bridges, garrison forts and other features—throughout the Highlands. Within Scotland itself, there was a geographic and mental frontier between the supposedly civilised, commercial South, Central Belt and East and the allegedly wild and barbaric lands to the North West. Yet the British Empire served to iron out these severe cultural frontiers by placing Scots in overseas communities where the need for a supportive and almost defensive critical mass led them to submerge the apparent differences of home in churches, societies, social, sporting and cultural events in which they could view themselves as Scots rather than Borderers, Lowlanders, Highlanders or Islanders.

At least in the case of the last two categories, Highlanders and Islanders, Scots were marginal people struggling with marginal lands. It is perhaps significant that in the Empire, Scots were consequently typecast as being the people who could most cope with marginal places on the frontier. This was, of course, an extraordinarily interactive process. Clearances, the agricultural revolution, industrialism and attendant urbanisation fundamentally changed the full range of Scottish environments and in doing so sent migrant peoples to transform environments elsewhere. As small-scale crofting and relatively small-scale farming gave way to the running of sheep, migrant Scots paradoxically came to run sheep in distant climes, though the sheep were often different—such as the hugely influential Spanish merinos, a vital component of several colonial frontier economies—and the environments were certainly drastically different. As sheep in their turn gave way to shooting grounds for grouse and stag, Scotland became the classic instance in Europe of a frontier land where the elite could pursue their ‘sport’, creating whole new patterns of employment, architectural forms, and heather-clad hill environments as they did so. This is perhaps why Scotland became—often incongruously—the standard landscape comparator for travellers and hunters throughout the British formal and informal empires.

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10 Charles W.J. Withers, Geography, Science and National Identity: Scotland since 1520 (Cambridge, 2001) deals with some of these issues.
12 Willie Orr, Deer Forests, Landlords and Crofters (Edinburgh, 1982).
We should, however, inject a note of caution. Scots were far from alone upon the frontiers of empire. But we should think, it seems to me, in terms of reputation, of myths that were both self-generated and also imposed by others. Clearly the Dutch in South Africa thought of themselves as classic frontiers people, creating one of the most notable world myths of migration, ultimately celebrated in the astonishing Art Deco Voortrekker Memorial in Pretoria. Here was a people for whom the myth of their frontier endeavour was central to their identity, even if the majority of them actually inhabited towns and gentler lands that ended up well to the rear of the frontier. The same could be said of the French in North America, whether in Canada or on the Mississippi: they too established a national and ethnic myth of the frontier, once again germinated from a group of people who were actually in a minority. And in each case, this was in many ways a surprising development. The Dutch in the Netherlands were closely packed in a land where the frontier was only the sea, where civilisation was urban and settled. If the French situation was more environmentally, geographically and economically complex, still the metropolitan territory gave no hint of providing a model of surviving and training in frontiersmanship. The intensive pastoralism of home was sometimes transformed into the extensive grazings of the frontier. Only the Scots, perhaps, had some experience of a more extensive hill pastoralism. They certainly put this into practice in very different environments, on the plains of New South Wales and what became Victoria, in the Canadian Maritimes, and upon the southern African veld. Everywhere they were active and influential as graziers. But sometimes frontier environments came close to defeating them—areas of South-West Ontario, for example, were too wet for them, as they discovered to their cost. Grazing districts in Australia were so dry that the search for water became the major resource requirement.

Yet all this was nothing new. Scots had already been at the forefront of the hunting frontiers. Their role in the fur trading frontier of Canada requires no exposition. They were among the most prominent hunters in southern Africa—we need only mention Andrew Smith in the 1820s, Roualeyn Gordon Cumming, Mungo Murray and many others. They usually combined their hunting exploits with natural history fascinations, with a desire to trade ivory, horns and skins to finance their exploits, with a yearning for publication.

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and for memorialising their exploits in donations to museums. Scots seem to have had an advanced sense of a culture of print capitalism, as well as a desire to develop scientific and pseudo-scientific concerns. They were also highly trained in practical subjects, thereby contributing to mineral and other discoveries.

This reveals the extent to which the frontier is indeed a place of discovery. Here I mean the whole range of scientific and meteorological discoveries relating to newly-discovered colonial ecologies. The environmental historian Richard Grove, who had no reason to issue propaganda for the Scots, pointed to the ways in which Scots observers and theorists were more in touch with European ideas than the English in the eighteenth century and consequently wrote of problems of deforestation, declining rainfalls and attendant desiccation. He also observed the manner in which Scottish missionaries took up these and related issues in the nineteenth century.

The creation of colonial infrastructures opened up opportunities for environmental knowledge. When Sandford Fleming, born in Kirkcaldy, embarked upon his great survey of the route of the trans-Canada railway in the mid-1870s, he took with him a historian and a naturalist to complement his own extensive interests in the natural world. Whenever such parties headed inland towards and beyond the frontier, geologists, botanists, artists, entomologists and zoologists had a tendency to accompany or to follow. Soon anthropologists were among this number and indigenous artefacts came to be collected, as well as much else about frontier societies which were considered doomed to extinction in the aftermath of conquest. As telegraph lines, railways and roads carved their way across the landscape, they everywhere caused the bleeding out of geological samples, of palaeontological mysteries and of archaeological remains. The frontier became a place where the intellectual disciplines framed in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, partly out of the Scottish Enlightenment, discovered laboratories that would transform their


\[\text{16 Clark Blaise, } \text{Time Lord: Sir Sandford Fleming and the Creation of Standard Time (London, 2000), 112.}\]

\[\text{17 For a wider discussion of these effects, see John M. MacKenzie, Museums and Empire: Natural History, Human Cultures and Colonial Identities (Manchester, 2009).}\]
study. Landscapes and what lay beneath them became the subjects of intensive investigation. Soon government departments like geological surveys, newly-developed museums and educational institutions were, in effect, feeding off these frontiers. Often botanical, geological, fossil and archaeological samples were transferred to the metropole to fuel the rapidly developing natural and human theories of the age. They also promoted the development of colonial museums, soon seen as a prime marker of the advance of civilisation into the colony.

The frontier, in other words, was transmitted almost piece by piece back to the imperial mother country and to the cities and towns of the colonial region where the processes of closure had given way to the replication of the supposedly civilised characteristics of the advancing state and its attendant urbanisation. Among the influential metropolitan figures generating these interests were Charles Lyell of Kinnordy in Perthshire. He is credited as a founder of the discipline of geology\textsuperscript{18} while Roderick Murchison, born in Tarradale, Rossshire, the immensely influential president of the Royal Geographical Society, was another geologist who produced global, overarching theories of the formation of the earth and of geological zones.\textsuperscript{19}

Related to these intensive studies were the mineral discoveries promoting the rapid growth of colonial economies. Diamonds and gold, copper and other minerals prompted almost explosive transformations of colonial frontiers in Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Such mineral discoveries sucked in white settlers in ever-growing numbers, and also pulled in non-European peoples both from across the frontier and from overseas, such as the Chinese in Australasia. All these contributed to mushrooming urbanisation, with all the environmental consequences that that implies, particularly the destruction of timber resources, excess extraction of water supplies, and the rapid overwhelming of indigenous flora and fauna.\textsuperscript{20}

Beyond the zone of urbanisation, it is also instructive to look at some typically Scots professions of the frontier. I am going to start, perhaps unexpectedly, with plant hunters, both because there can be little doubt that the proportion of these frontier botanists that came from Scotland bore little relation to the balance of population within the British and Hibernian Isles.

\textsuperscript{18} Charles Lyell’s \textit{Principles of Geology}, published between 1830 and 1833, reached Charles Darwin while he was still on his \textit{Beagle} voyage and greatly influenced him.


\textsuperscript{20} One account of these processes is \textit{William J. Lines, Taming the Great South Land: A History of the Conquest of Nature in Australia} (St Leonards, NSW, 1991).
and because looking at them allows me to make a number of significant points about the interaction between Scotland and imperial frontiers. It seems to me that the reason for the high number of Scottish plant hunters—Francis Masson, William Paterson, David Douglas and George Fortune to name but a few—was because of the well-established combination of gardening and forestry traditions on Scottish estates. Most of them were indeed practical gardeners by origin rather than academic botanists and they generally learned their trade on a Scottish estate—an alternative might be a university botanic garden. Eighteenth-century Scottish landowners were in the business of tree planting and they often developed an interest in exotica. The botanic gardens at Scottish universities were invariably auxiliaries to the pharmaceutical concerns of medical schools; in other words they too had an interest in exotic botanical pharmacologies.

Such plant hunters ranged out into frontiers outside the British Empire. Francis Masson, a garden boy from Aberdeen, who worked at Kew, arrived at the Cape in 1772 and penetrated further into the interior of southern Africa than any other Briton of the time. William Paterson, another lowly gardener from Kinnettles in Angus, who worked at the Chelsea Physic Garden, was funded by the extraordinary Mary Eleanor Bowes, countess of Strathmore. Both men published and helped to reveal the remarkable botanical riches of the region. It is intriguing that the Dutch East India Company became very suspicious of their activities, worrying that they were actually engaged in imperial espionage under the cloak of botanical study, insisting at one stage that they should stay inland and never work on the coasts. Invasion anxieties ensured that an interior frontier was safer than a maritime one.

David Douglas and Robert Fortune came later, with Douglas collecting on the west coast of North America between 1824 and his death in 1834, and Fortune travelling and botanising in China and Japan in the 1840s. Douglas’ formative years were spent on the Mansfield estate at Scone, Fortune’s at a nurseryman’s establishment in Berwickshire and then at the Royal Botanic Gardens in Edinburgh. All of these plant hunters provided images of frontiers in southern Africa, North America and the Far East. They were all destined to change the environments of Scotland as well as England, Wales and Ireland.

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with the trees, shrubs and plants they brought home. A visit to any arboretum, any country estate or urban park, almost any residential garden, reveals the extent to which they transformed the appearance of the Scottish frontier. They reveal not only the importance of the Scottish estate and of botanical institutions in relation to exotic frontiers—a theme to which I shall return—but also the interactive fashion in which one frontier could influence another.

A closely related frontier profession is that of forestry. In India, forests constituted a vast internal frontier, available to be exploited for the hard woods required for railway sleepers and telegraph poles. The forests were seen as wild and untamed, the residence of the so-called tribes, Aboriginal peoples unrelated to the great religious ethnicities of the sub-continent, and also as the place where the best hunting could be found. The Indian Empire required a forestry service and it is striking that up to the late nineteenth century, the senior figures in the Indian Forest Service were all either German, with names like Brandis, Ribbentrop, and Schlich, or Scots—such as Alexander Gibson who came from Stracathro or Hugh Cleghorn from Stravithie near St Andrews. Once again, Scottish foresters first cut their axes, as it were, on the traditions of Scottish forestry developed on the great estates in the eighteenth century. This was not only an Indian phenomenon. John Croumbie Brown, who was also a Presbyterian minister, was the most important forester and colonial botanist in the nineteenth-century Cape whose many publications helped to develop forestry as an academic subject in Britain. He insisted that colonial forestry services could best be developed by Scots who were particularly amenable to training. Though he suffered many administrative setbacks at the Cape, he nevertheless helped to establish the system of forest reserves there. Scots who had experience of India and of South Africa fanned out into many other colonial territories to help found their forest services. This eventually happened in parts of Canada, but there the forests seemed so vast that almost unbridled exploitation was often the order of the day. Almost inevitably, Scots became important in the lumber industry there.

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23 There is now an extensive literature on forestry. See Grove, *Green Imperialism* and Gregory A. Barton, *Empire Forestry and the Origins of Environmentalism* (Cambridge, 2002), among many other works.

If plant hunters and foresters are characteristic visitors to the open frontier, so too are missionaries. Here Scots were to play a really major role. Although the Church of Scotland was famously hesitant about establishing missions, Scots clerics were appearing on the frontier, certainly in southern Africa, from at least the second decade of the nineteenth century. By the 1820s they were well established on the highly disturbed eastern frontier of the Cape. This was very much a violent military frontier and was to remain so for at least another fifty years. Missionaries had a highly ambivalent relationship with the military and colonial authorities, often deprecating the violence of the frontier, sometimes advocating the cause of African authorities even though it was ultimately the break-up of African political systems which helped to swell the numbers of their adherents and converts. What is intriguing about this is the extent to which missionaries set about replicating some of the environmental and social conditions of Scotland at their mission stations. For one thing, they swiftly abandoned the use of wood and thatch in their building techniques. It is quite clear that they considered building in stone to be a marker of civilisation. The Scottish superintendent of the London Missionary Society, John Philip, specifically suggested this. They then set about creating villages that had a distinctly Scottish appearance, with cottages along a street frontage and long gardens laid out behind. Many visitors remarked that they would have thought they were in Scotland but for the black faces.

The 1843 Disruption provided a tremendous burst of energy on several colonial frontiers as many mission stations, like churches at home, were doubled with the arrival of the Free Church, itself more eagerly evangelical, in a mission sense, than its established predecessor. Education, printing, technical training, gardening, all became vital aspects of many of the missions, themselves repeatedly moving out further beyond the frontier in search of fresh souls to save, as they would have seen it. At this point, it seems to me, you can see the appearance of the forms of the Scottish estate on a remote colonial frontier. Missionaries were great tree planters. The mission community, like that of the estate at home, had its church, its school or college, its arboretum, its saw mill, its experimental garden, even its own brick works, with more substantial residences inhabited by the missionaries, and the humbler ones by their adherents. When you look at the design of so many Scottish mission stations, at the plans which the missionaries sometimes lovingly drafted, this analogy seems to me to emerge clearly.

from the documents. Some of the missionaries themselves, like the plant hunters, had backgrounds associated with such estates. One such was James Stewart who, like David Douglas, came from Scone and was described as ploughing with his rifle to hand and his Bible in his pocket. This was useful experience for Africa and he described the moment when he received his ‘call’ to missionary work on the frontier in a field so carefully that its location on the edge of Scone is readily identified.

Of course, the true paradigm, not to mention paragon, of the missionary frontier was David Livingstone of Blantyre. None of Livingstone’s biographers has ever adequately noted the ways in which he was truly a child of his environment. He himself described the intense natural historical interests of his childhood, the manner in which these fed into his medical studies, his botanical interest in pharmacology, and his concern with mission and garden on the southern African frontier. Both he and his father-in-law Robert Moffat saw the mission garden as a prime marker of civilisation, something which distinguished them from both Africans and Afrikaners. When on his explorations Livingstone reached the Victoria Falls, his first instinct was to lay out a garden on an island in the Zambezi. His great work, Missionary Travels and Researches in South Africa (1857), underestimated by a biographer like Tim Jeal, is significantly dedicated to Sir Roderick Murchison and famously displays an image of the tsetse fly on its title page. Livingstone placed stress on the ‘researches’ of the title. He viewed himself as a scientist and was hailed as such by such notable scientific figures as Adam Sedgwick and William Whewell. Livingstone, the classic Scots frontier explorer and investigator, inspired an entire generation who sought to put his scientific as well as his religious principles to good effect.

If this sounds a little like a celebration of Scots achievements on the frontier, I draw back: celebration is never part of academic discourse and

26 For a plan of a mission station, see W.P. Livingstone, Laws of Livingstonia: A Narrative of Missionary Adventure and Achievement (London, 1921), plate opposite 209.
should certainly be avoided in writings about Scots overseas. Robert Knox, doctor, anatomist and influential racist, always stands as a reminder of the great variety of Scots in the Empire. Knox was also a figure of the frontier. A military doctor, like so many other Scots medics of the time, he served on the Eastern Cape frontier. His book *The Races of Man* of 1850 and his notion of ‘the war of the races’ were unquestionably influenced by his frontier experiences. There can be little doubt that pseudo-scientific racism and the experience of empire were closely connected. Intriguingly, Knox argued in an article of 1869 that white settlement in the tropics was a failure. Anglo-Saxons in particular, he suggested, unlike the Celts, were incapable of acclimatising there.30 He was proved wrong, as on almost everything else, but his view of the distinction between Anglo-Saxon and Celt was a common one at the time.

Knox offered some racial justification for the intrusion of settlers, and their appearance on frontiers is often described in contemporary records as being the ‘planting’ of people. It is a powerful environmental metaphor intended to convey parallel notions such as the planting of grasses to hold sands together, the planting of trees to prevent erosion and avoid desiccation. The planting of peoples was indeed designed to consolidate territory and, supposedly and hopelessly unrealistically, produce peace. The 1820 settlement at the Cape was designed to do all of these things: consolidate a frontier, exclude the Dutch from dominance upon it, create better relations with indigenous people, and produce new commercial relationships with both Africans beyond the frontier and in the colony itself, thereby enhancing production and trade, incidentally contributing to hard-pressed colonial revenues. Scots constituted about 10 per cent of the settlers and the Governor decreed that they should be ‘planted’ to the north and west of the settlement in hilly country, with English and Welsh to their South and East.31 The suspicion that the geographical relationships of the United Kingdom were being reproduced on this distant frontier seems irresistible. In this settlement, as elsewhere, Scots liked to think that they were different and the English—and others—sometimes found it convenient to play upon and exploit these differences.

One of the settlers, the writer and journalist Thomas Pringle, whose party had been sponsored by Sir Walter Scott, was convinced that Scots made the better frontier settlers. He wrote that the ‘sublimely stern’ aspect of the country filled the English with ‘a degree of care approaching to consternation’, as they were used to what he described as the ‘rich tameness’ of their

own landscape. But the Scots, on the other hand, were activated by ‘stirring recollections of their native land … vividly called up by the rugged peaks and shaggy declivities of this wild coast’, exciting them to ‘extravagant spirits’, while some ‘silently shed tears’. Pringle continued to think that Scots made the best settlers, that they were more practical, more inured to hardship and more capable of coping with the environment. In 1823 a writer, identified only by initials, wrote to the *Daily Chronicle* urging that more Scots, particularly Highlanders, should be sent to the frontier as only they were able to cope with the conditions there.

The Scots in South Africa, as on other frontiers, developed a twin reputation: they were as violent as the next frontiersmen, swept up as commandos and volunteers in the frontier wars. But they were also said to be willing to learn from their Dutch and Khoe neighbours on the frontier. They observed, investigated and followed their techniques for coping with the environment, using seeds they secured from the Boers and following their stock-rearing practices, as well as learning pharmaceutical techniques (for example in dealing with snake bite) from the Khoe. Livingstone too had studied the African pharmacopoeia. Perhaps marginal men and women took an interest in others who lived on the margins.

This raises the question of whether Scots were indeed more adaptable to new environments, more willing to learn from indigenous peoples than other Europeans. The Orcadian Arctic explorer John Rae may well have been more successful than so many of the failed Franklin research expeditions because he learned from the Inuit and was prepared to follow their practices. It has been suggested that Scots settlers in New Zealand were more willing to learn from Maori agricultural techniques, thereby coping better with a new environment in the process. We also know that Scots administrators in India adopted different techniques of ruling the Indian peasantry, and that Scottish-born William Farquhar, the first British Resident and Commandant of Singapore, was regarded as being much more sympathetic towards native authorities than his more autocratic boss, Stamford Raffles. But we always need to check

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33 Quoted in ibid., 55.
35 Interestingly, the National Museum of Singapore has a feature in which this characteristic of Farquhar is prominently asserted.
ourselves. Examples of sympathy with indigenous peoples can readily be found, but Scots whether in North America, Africa, Asia or Australasia were often endowed with as much arrogance and disdain, running of course to violence, as any other settler group.

Still it seems to me that in order to understand frontiers and other aspects of the so-called British Empire, we should take a four-nations approach. The fact of the matter is that it is possible to identify, in effect, four empires: Irish, Scottish, English and Welsh. Moreover, each of these ‘empires’ had a reciprocal effect upon the nationalities of the United Kingdom. As I have pointed out before, it is a huge paradox that the British Empire, far from submerging the different ethnicities of the British Isles, actually served to emphasise and enhance them. Imperial studies, it seems to me, should pay more attention to these effects in the future. And perhaps the best route into this is an expedition towards a new historiographical frontier. A number of the papers in this issue of the *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies* attempt to do just that.

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I Introduction

The conventional narrative of European settlement in nineteenth-century Australia is well-attested, as is the role played within this by Irish and Scottish settlers. The growth of the white population (to approximately 3.7 million by 1901), its increasingly urban character, the expansion of pastoralism, the complex property negotiations which accompanied this, and the social and economic transformations effected by the discovery of gold in the 1850s, have all been represented in an extensive Whiggish historiography that has emphasised national progress, improvement and modernity. Since the 1970s, however, this has given way to anxious introspection, as scholars have debated the ecological damage and destructive indigenous relations that characterised European settlement, and have questioned the ethical legitimacy of the modern Australian state. Similarly, the filopietistical certainties of earlier ‘contribution histories’ of the Scottish and, particularly, the Irish role in this nation-building have been challenged by more nuanced accounts which have recognised the fractured identity constructions that were central to these and other ethnic diasporas in Australia as elsewhere.

Despite this reframing by modern scholarship, these settler engagements remain grounded in a contemporary encounter between discursive European environmental knowledge and experience on the one hand, and the physical realities of the (then) unknown continent on the other. Consequently, as

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Joseph Powell and others have shown, the history of European settlement in Australia was characterised by a sometimes steep and often painful learning curve, as the country’s non-indigenous population slowly acquired some of the environmental competencies necessary to sustain agricultural and pastoral production. Thus, regional and seasonal variations in climate, soils, hydrology and vegetation, not to mention specific hazards such as bush fires and insect plagues, all demanded constant reappraisal in the light of the settlers’ accumulating colonial experience. The question we ask here is whether this constant environmental re-imagining also invoked something more. In coming to terms with ‘Australian nature’, did settlers seek the reassurance of their own remembered past as the basis for their engagement with a seemingly fickle and uncertain colonial present? Their European environmental knowledge and experience may have been of limited utility, but in the face of these physical uncertainties, did they nevertheless attempt to ground their identities in the colonial landscape by imprinting it with the self-sustaining signatures of their own cultural memory?

We explore these issues in the context of Irish and Scottish involvement in the expansion of pastoralism into the Port Phillip District from the late 1830s onwards. Following the pioneering journey of Major Thomas Mitchell, Surveyor-General of New South Wales, along the Murray River into the region in 1836, increasing numbers of pastoralists from New South Wales overlanded their flocks and herds in the Port Phillip District, preferring the uncertain status of (illegal) ‘squatter’ to the prospect of paying artificially high prices for inferior land in the founding colony. By the time the Port Phillip District was proclaimed as the separate colony of Victoria in 1851, the focus of this movement, the new colony’s Portland Bay District (Figure 1), had been more or less fully claimed by squatters, though by no means completely settled. During the next fifty years, despite periodic vicissitudes of drought and insect infestation, and the sometimes unintended effects of the 1860s Selection Acts (which were intended to open up pastoral areas for agricultural settlement but instead allowed many squatters to secure a title to their land), the Portland Bay District (or Western District as it was later known) emerged as one of Australia’s pre-eminent pastoral regions. The number of pastoral runs or


stations in the area rose from 282 in 1847 to 463 in 1880, as the boundaries of settlement were pushed northwards into the drier Wimmera, and the vast areas originally claimed by some of the earliest pioneering squatters became subject to increasing regulation and subdivision.

Scottish settlers were particularly prominent in this process. In her classic account of the Western District’s pastoral society, *Men of Yesterday* (1961), Margaret Kiddle suggests that as many as two-thirds of the area’s pioneer squatters may have been Scots. Surname and biographical analyses of the Crown Land Licences extant in 1851 indicates that her estimate represents an absolute maximum, and that a more likely figure for early Scots involvement in the Portland Bay/Western District was around 40 per cent, with Irish-held runs accounting for no more than 20 per cent at most (Figure 2). This was still a considerable and, in terms of the overall numbers of Scottish migrants to

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8 ‘Crown Land Leases’, Return to Address, 8 June 1855 (tabled 18 March 1856), *Votes and Proceedings*, Legislative Council, Victoria. In Figure 2 the white areas were occupied by non-Irish/Scottish squatters who were, for the most part, English. The ‘Settled Area’ was reserved under colonial legislation for agricultural rather than pastoral settlement.
Victoria, disproportionately large figure. In 1851, the Scots born constituted just over 10 per cent of Victoria’s population. Moreover, the Scottish proportion among the Western District’s landowners does not appear to have altered significantly over time, even though the pattern of run occupation was generally unstable. Paul de Serville’s monumental biographical analysis of the pastoralists listed in the 1879 Return of Landowners in Victoria indicates that 41 per cent of the 360 who held runs of over 5,000 acres were Scots, compared to 12 per cent who were Irish.9

Clearly, this disproportionate Scottish presence requires some explanation, but specific causes are difficult to pinpoint. Differences in human and financial capital are one possibility, but this hypothesis requires qualification. For one thing, many early Anglo-Irish pastoralists (part of the ‘Port Phillip Ascendancy’) were, individually, at least as well capitalised as their Scottish counterparts. We must also take account of the legendary efficiency with which the district’s Irish migrants facilitated their absorption into colonial society through the creation of supportive transnational chain migration networks from the 1840s onwards. And finally, the argument that the sheep walks of

Highland Scotland provided a better grounding for would-be emigrants than
the labour-intensive potato and dairying peasant agriculture of pre-Famine
Ireland depends on the greater transferability of this particular experience to
Australia’s environment.10 We are left, nevertheless, with the conclusion that
the relatively small number of Irish pastoralists was most probably a function
of the relative poverty of the Irish migrant stream in general. Despite the fact
that throughout the later nineteenth century, there were approximately twice
as many Irish born as Scots born in Victoria, fewer Irish were able to invest in
land acquisition than their Scottish counterparts; individually, however, those
who did so might be spectacularly successful.11

While it is clear that Scottish squatters played a disproportionately important
role in creating the colonial pastoral geographies of Western Victoria relative to
their overall numerical presence in the colony, the extent to which they invoked
their imagined past while doing so remains to be established. Here, we argue
that prior to the 1850s the general insecurity of pastoral tenure ensured that the
squatters’ imprints on the landscape were ephemeral. They were characterised
by the acquisition of often hard-won local environmental knowledge rather than
by permanent material inscriptions of ethnic identity. Only latterly, as tenures
and wealth improved and the pastoral frontier ‘closed’, did some Scottish and
Irish pastoralists acquire the means and opportunity to memorialise their sense
of selfhood in the landscape in social or ethno-cultural terms. We pursue our
argument by first exemplifying the public discourse of improvement in the Port
Phillip District during the 1830s and 1840s, and then contrasting this with the
local environmental appraisals of individual squatters. We argue that the latter
were framed by a common experience of the unexpectedness of the Australian
climate and landscape. This transcended settler origins, demanded new
thinking and made old knowledge and practice largely redundant. We envisage
these individual appraisals as part of a cumulative process whereby the initially
decidedly optimistic public discourse of environmental improvement and

10 de Serville, Pounds and Pedigrees, 456–502; David S. MacMillan, Scotland and Australia
(Melbourne, 1987), 39–41; Lindsay Proudfoot and Dianne Hall, ‘Points of
Departure: Remittance Emigration from South-West Ulster to New South Wales in

11 Victorian censuses between 1851 and 1891 show a progressive fall in the proportion
of Irish born from 18.8 per cent of the population in 1851 to 7.5 per cent in 1891;
and in the Scots born from 11.3 per cent in 1851 to 4.4 per cent in 1891. The
absolute numbers of both groups also fell from 1871. See Jupp and York, Birthplaces
modernity was moderated by private experience. We continue by considering examples of the ways in which, latterly, the proprietorial gaze of some Scots and Irish pastoralists in the Portland Bay/Western District invoked a sense of their origins. We explore the ambiguities inherent in these inscriptions, and conclude that for many Irish and Scots pastoralists, grounding their sense of identity and belonging in the landscape was as much a matter of social practice as of material ethnic inscription.

II Public Discourse and Private Learning

However ephemeral the initial pastoral settlement patterns may have been, they were nevertheless a function of a newly-introduced agrarian capitalist ideology which attempted to reorder the landscape in terms of externally-derived economic values. These held no meaning in the complex social, cultural and environmental negotiations which had characterised the relationship between the continent and its indigenous inhabitants for, perhaps, 40,000 years. Consequently, the spaces created by pastoralism, the property boundaries, the naming strategies, even the early attempts at environmental management, were the outcomes of a European appraisal which did not simply see the landscape (however imperfectly) as it existed, but also saw it in terms of what it was thought it could become. In short, the landscape was seen in imaginative terms that allowed for its unilateral reordering in line with the (presumed) requirements of effective agrarian capitalism.

A flavour of this sort of imaginative appraisal is given in Major Thomas Mitchell’s report describing the Port Phillip District in 1836:

The territory, still for the most part in a state of nature, presents a fair blank sheet, for any geographical arrangement, whether of county divisions—lines of communications—or sites of towns, etc etc. The growth of the colony there might be trained according to one general system, with a view to various combinations of soil and climate, and not left to chance, as in the old countries—or, which may perhaps be worse, to the partial or narrow views of the first settlers.

This approach to colonial planning offered an opportunity for the material inscription of cultural identities in the landscape which might act to memorialise and reinforce the discursive links between the settlers’ colonial present and their origins (for the most part) in the spaces of European capitalism. This, in effect, blanket re-imagining of the Australian landscape encouraged the creation of symbolic cultural meanings that could, in some cases, act to tie settler identities to their imagined past. Not all settlers found it necessary or appropriate to create such symbols, but the imagined nature of the colonial landscape facilitated the efforts of those who wished to do so.

One of the unspoken assumptions underpinning this landscape re-imagining was the idea of property. Bounded, demarcated, allocated, valued and identified, under colonial capitalism property commodified the landscape. The settlement patterns created by pastoral expansion represented the codification of these ideas of property, and their imposition on the landscape as an alien cultural rubric. But these settlement patterns were also highly unstable and contested. Prior to 1880, the average length of occupancy of pastoral runs in Western Victoria was just under four years, reflecting not merely early insecurities of tenure, but also the impact of climatic and other environmental variation, and economic conditions generally. The economic depression of the early 1840s, for example, acted as a major ‘Darwinian’ selector of the fittest and most able to survive among the pioneering generation of squatters. The size, environmental resource endowment, and consequent viability of these runs were also subject to increasing bureaucratic ratification in the 1840s through the activities of Boundary Commissioners such as Captain Foster Fyans. Charged with responsibility for arbitrating disputes between neighbouring squatters and for establishing fixed run boundaries generally, the Commissioners wielded extraordinary local delegated authority. As the pastoral frontier closed and the demand for land increased, they became increasingly important as the arbiters of the capitalist agrarian imagination which underpinned the creation of the material places through which the narratives of the self were enacted. But underpinning the ways pastoralists exploited the land lay their steep

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14 Calculated on a 5 per cent sample of runs listed in Robert Spreadborough and Hugh Anderson, *Victorian Squatters* (Melbourne, 1983).

15 For example, see the entries for 1 August and 5 November 1844, ‘Diaries of Andrew and Robert Scott, 1843–1847’, State Library of Victoria (hereafter SLV), Scott Family Papers, MS 8853, MSB 438, Box 915/1.
environmental learning curve. How well informed were Irish and Scottish pastoralists about the environmental potential of the areas they occupied?

Conventional wisdom has it that in its early stages at least, the British colonial enterprise in Australia was led by environmental optimism grounded in environmental ignorance. This gave rise initially to the almost fatal assumption that European agricultural practices and knowledge could be easily and effectively transposed into the colony. While it is true that it was already becoming apparent well before 1820 that pastoralism rather than agriculture was likely to be the mainstay of the colony’s future economy, a fundamental ignorance remained. This was particularly true, for example, of Australia’s soils. Many of these are regoliths, meaning that they were formed under climatic and hydrological conditions that no longer exist. Many are also characteristically deficient in organic content and minerals like potassium. While they remain undisturbed they remain stable, though potentially fragile. None of this was appreciated during the pioneer period or indeed until much later. Instead, the economic potential of the landscape was appraised through a discourse of civilising European modernity. This interpreted the apparent verdure of the natural vegetation (itself also an unknown) as a providentially-ordered sign of fertility and productivity, ripe for European practices of exploitation.

This type of optimism is evident in Major Mitchell’s account of the south-western part of the Port Phillip District, which prompted the subsequent grassland rush of pastoralists into the area:

We had at length discovered a country ready for the immediate reception of civilised man; and destined perhaps to become eventually a portion of a great empire. Unencumbered by too much wood, it yet possessed enough for all purposes; its soil was exuberant, and its climate temperate; it was bounded on three sides by the ocean; and it was traversed by mighty rivers and watered by streams innumerable. Of this Eden I was the first European to explore its mountains and streams—to behold its scenery—to investigate its geological character—and, by my survey, to develop those natural advantages, certain to become, at no distant date, of vast importance to a new people.

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17 Young, *Environmental Change*, 34–64.
Similar enthusiasm was evident five years later in a propagandist emigrants’ guide published in Melbourne in 1840 by the editor of the leading local newspaper, the *Port Phillip Gazette*:

Over a large tract southward and westward of the Grampians on the Rivers Wannon and Glenelg the most beautiful park-like scenery presents itself to the eye; the trees, unlike those of New South Wales and Van Dieman’s Land, have a fresh green foliage; the natural grass rivals the sward of Old England … the general characteristics of fertility, including richness of soil and abundance of pasture, place it far above the older districts in those advantages which immigrants naturally seek for.\(^\text{20}\)

No mention here of the drought of 1837–9, when major rivers in the Port Phillip District like the Murrumbidgee ran low and stock losses were enormous.\(^\text{21}\) Thirteen years later, with the publication in 1853 of William Westgarth’s influential *Victoria: Late Australia Felix or Port Phillip District of New South Wales*, the tone, although slightly more circumspect following the renewed droughts of 1841–2 and 1850–1, was still generally optimistic:

The park-like open forest with its grassy carpet beneath forms a striking and unique aspect of the country, which affords pastoral facilities, ready-made, as it were, at the hand of Nature … [These] explain the rapid progress of these colonies … and more particularly of Victoria, which abounds in these pastoral lands. Despite the problems of over-grazing in the years of drought, the colony of Victoria is favourably distinguished as comprehending within its boundaries the greatest comparative extent of available soil of any of the other large sections of Australia.\(^\text{22}\)

As these examples indicate, the early push of pastoral settlement into the western Port Phillip District was framed by a ‘bullish’ public discourse of environmental opportunity and expansionism.

\(^{20}\) George Arden, *Latest Information with Regard to Australia Felix, the Finest Province of the Great Territory of New South Wales* (Melbourne, 1840), 32.


\(^{22}\) William Westgarth, *Victoria: Late Australia Felix or Port Phillip District of New South Wales* (Edinburgh, 1853), 31–2, 41.
Surviving station diaries and journals from the period make clear, however, that for individual squatters the environmental realities of both initial run selection and subsequent daily station life were altogether less certain and more demanding. The key factor in run selection was water security, both during the initial land grabbing free-for-all and later, when Boundary Commissioners arbitrated the subdivision of many of the earliest claims. Significantly, Thomas Ham’s celebrated distribution map of squatting homesteads in Victoria, published in 1853, shows that the vast majority of these were located on the banks of creeks and rivers, however ephemeral some of these eventually proved to be. Concern over water resonates as a leitmotif in many station journals. For example, in 1843 when Scottish pastoralist Charles MacKnight occupied his newly licensed run, Dunmore, near Portland in the far south-west of the Port Phillip District, his first concern was to dam the local creek. This was not altogether surprising: family memory recalls that he had been forced out of his previous run, Strathlodden, in the drier Wimmera district to the north, by the drought of 1841–2. After six months’ effort, during which MacKnight struggled not only to make his dam watertight but also to quell dissatisfaction among his men—(March 1843: ‘men grumbling a little, I told them if they didn’t like the work they could go and be damned, which they said they would’)—the project was finished in July 1843. Two months later, two days of torrential rain flooded the river and destroyed the dam, prompting this philosophical entry in MacKnight’s diary:

Dam carried away, a cut having been made to let more of the water out. This ill-fated occurrence is calculated to teach many valuable truths, touching the vanity of human wishes and endeavours in general. But in particular it should check that tendency (so incident to frail humanity) to an over-weaning confidence in the success of scheme and operation, before time has justified some confidence. As a corollary from the former moral we may also learn the folly of repining, and we may read another inference, although perhaps not so obvious as the preceding,


24 Dunmore Station Journal, vol. 1, entry for 20 March 1843, SLV, Charles MacKnight Papers, MS 8999, Box F1839.
from the circumstance of labour of weeks and months having been dissipated in a short hour, viz., that the first wicked action—the first plunge into the downward stream, may burst the barriers which it has taken a long course of good action to erect. Lastly, however zealously you may labour to effect a particular object, your labour will be unavailing unless you employ the true and legitimate means.\textsuperscript{25}

Charles MacKnight’s reaction appears at this distance to have been remarkably stoical, particularly given the amount of collective effort that had been invested in this enterprise and its importance to the future success of the run.

MacKnight’s reaction is also informative insofar as it suggests that a sense of providential purpose may have imbued the way in which he approached his various colonial encounters. It is hard to ascertain how widespread this sense of the divine—if that indeed is what it was—may have been among Scots Presbyterian settlers generally.\textsuperscript{26} But with or without the aid of ‘providence’, Scottish pastoralists, like others, faced the task of exploiting country that was environmentally unknown. For example, in 1839 Andrew Scott and his sons, originally from Edinburgh, were able to acquire a licence for 16,000 acres of heavily timbered country at Mount Boninyong, near Ballarat, precisely because earlier squatters had dismissed the country as ‘too dry for sheep’.\textsuperscript{27} In fact, experience subsequently showed that this district was too exposed, cold and wet for a successful sheep run. Six years later, in 1845, in the sort of move that characterised more enterprising squatters, the family overlanded 1,500 sheep north to a second run at Warracknabeal, in the drier Wimmera near Nhill. They held this until 1887, when it was forfeited under the Selection Acts and subdivided for agricultural settlement.\textsuperscript{28} At Warracknabeal, the Scotts’ hydrological experience was decidedly different. The relative aridity of the

\begin{footnotes}
\item[25] Dunmore Station Journal, vol. 1, entry for 16 September 1843, SLV, Charles Macknight Papers, MS 8999, Box F1839.
\item[27] Anonymous, ‘Mount Boninyong, 1839–1989’, SLV, Scott Family Papers, MS 13178, Box 3840/11(c).
\item[28] Ibid. ‘Diaries of Andrew and Robert Scott, 1843–1847’, SLV, Scott Family Papers, MS 8853, MSB 438, Box 915/1.
\end{footnotes}
region required the construction of numerous dams and bore holes throughout the 1850s and 1860s, the latter being completed by groups of itinerant miners from the nearby gold mining town of Stawell.29

As Charles MacKnight’s and Andrew Scott’s experiences demonstrate, the squatters’ initial appraisal of their prospective runs, whether in terms of water supply or forage quality, told them nothing about the day-to-day environmental conditions they would subsequently encounter. Extreme climatic events, whether flooding or drought, periodic outbreaks of disease like sheep scab, or summer bush fires, all compounded the problems squatters already faced from livestock depredation by dingoes and the local indigenous people. All figure ubiquitously in surviving station diaries and all formed an essential component in the place narratives which were enacted by squatters in terms of the mundane routines and practices of station life.30

Unpredictable though these environmental encounters were, they nevertheless offered the possibility of formative learning. Some may even have had an unexpectedly beneficial immediate effect, as suggested by the Reminiscences of William Moodie. These were written as an autobiographical account of his life in the Western District, and were compiled some time shortly before his death in Melbourne in 1914.31 Moodie was born in Glasgow in 1840, a year before his family emigrated to Australia on account of the health of Moodie’s father, following in the footsteps of an uncle who had already established himself on a run at Muntham, in the Western District. Moodie’s Reminiscences are typical of the many ‘Pioneer Autobiographies’ that appeared during the early decades of the twentieth century, and which found a ready market at a time when many Australians were renegotiating their own sense of national identity and heritage within the Empire.32 Moodie described his early working life and station routine on the 19,000 acre run at Wando Dale, adjacent to Muntham and north of Heywood, which his father bought in 1853. Recalling the effects of one particularly extensive bushfire in the vicinity, he wrote:

30 A point made in Roberts’ classic but now dated *The Squatting Age in Australia*, 272–349. For a particularly extensive account of these practices by an Anglo-Irish squatter, see Mary Anne Bunn, *The Lonely Pioneer: William Bunn, Diarist, 1830–1901* (Braidwood, 2002).
Springvale lost its woolshed and fencing but not many sheep. Xongbool lost all its fencing and yards and about 1,800 sheep were badly scorched. Willis lost 100 miles of brush fencing, several sets of yards and 5,000 sheep were burnt. The fire was at its height on Sunday 23rd January, we called it Red Sunday, but the effect was black enough. The fires were very severe in the early settlement of the country but they had their good side in keeping the country free from plagues, even to the latest, the blowfly that causes so much loss and damage amongst well bred flocks of sheep. There is no doubt that the country is much sweetened by a good heavy fire and I saw the proof of that very plainly in the effect of the fire above mentioned... On the 2,000 acres that were saved, Mr Willis put the best of his whethers expecting to sell them fat. They had grass enough for double that number but in spite of that they fell away, while those in the burnt country put on condition. The lambs were the finest I have ever seen before or since... The same fire had deprived them of their woolshed but the improved sheep and lambs would make full compensation in one year.33

Moodie went on to imply that so quickly were these benefits realised, that many squatters in the Western District developed the practice of controlled burning to ‘sweeten’ the vegetation—just as aboriginal people had been doing for thousands of years—much to the consternation of their more newly-arrived and closely-settled neighbours.34 In short, Moodie’s account contains a clear subtext of environmental learning, even though it is one which is recounted through the lens of memory with all its possible distortions. It provides evidence, nevertheless, of the power and immediacy of local experience as squatters sought to translate the hegemonic colonial discourse of improvement into personal reality.

Accounts by other squatters make it clear that local environmental problems sometimes reinforced wider economic downturns to form ‘a perfect storm’ with the potential to overwhelm any pastoralist. This is more or less what happened to Andrew Suter in 1875 on his run at Yambuck, near Warrnambool, when falling sheep prices and outbreaks of disease among his flocks signalled the start of a progressive decline in his financial situation. This ended in the seizure of his property during the banking crisis of 1890.
as a result of unpaid debts.\textsuperscript{35} Suter came from an Inverness family which had strong military connections with the British Raj in India.\textsuperscript{36} He had emigrated to Melbourne in 1845 on health grounds, where he joined George Mercer, a relative by marriage and one of the original Port Phillip pioneers.\textsuperscript{37} Relatively well capitalised, Suter had invested in a series of pastoral runs in the Western District before buying Yambuck, and also helped finance the purchase of a station by one of his sons at Hughenden in North Queensland.\textsuperscript{38} Writing to his aunt in Inverness he summarised his situation in 1875 thus:

This year has been a very disastrous one to me. Sheep fell in price and are almost unsellable. I held on [to] those I had to sell until I could hold no longer for want of grass, I got a low price and the remainder of my sheep lost condition. The lice disease broke out and numbers died for want of sufficient food, the wool deteriorated and the clip turned out a very remarkably bad one. My wool of last year did not realise the price advanced upon it and the wool of this year will not cover the advance upon it. My family expenses for the year are in a great measure still unpaid and my interest and rents become due at the end of this year… Again the dam at the sheep wash has burst, the spring has been a most unusually wet one and I have to keep… men waiting a favourable chance to close the gap and getting the machinery into working order. If I delayed too late the grass seed will get into the wool and reduce its value, and if I shear without washing I must accept £200 less for my wool. There was a small mutiny amongst the men yesterday but I think it will all blow over.\textsuperscript{39}

Suter’s letter reminds us that the environmental frontiers facing squatters were subjective as well as objective, and perceptual as well as physical. The

\textsuperscript{35} RHSV, Suter Family Papers, MS 000656, Boxes 155–164.
\textsuperscript{36} Letters, Peter Suter, RHSV, Suter Family Papers, MS 000656, Box 157/2; Letters, Georgina Blunt Suter, RHSV, Suter Family Papers, MS 000656, Box 157/3; Letters, Lt Andrew Mackintosh Suter, RHSV, Suter Family Papers, MS 000656, Box 157/4; Letters, James Suter (senior), RHSV, Suter Family Papers, MS 000656, Box 157/5.
\textsuperscript{37} James Suter (junior) to Andrew Suter, 20 July 1845, James Suter Personal and Business Letters, RHSV, Suter Family Papers, MS 000656, box 158/1.
\textsuperscript{38} Letters, James Vernon Suter to Andrew Suter, RHSV, Suter Family Papers, MS 000656, Box 159/1a.
\textsuperscript{39} Andrew Suter to Miss Suter, 30 November 1875, ‘Miscellaneous correspondence to Andrew Suter and others, 1844–1888’, RHSV, Suter Family Papers, MS 000656, Box 160/5.
problems facing Suter, which were caused by the unpredictability of the climate and the incidence of disease, were exacerbated by the financial practices of the pastoral economy within which he operated. Arguably, all were made worse in his own mind by his despondency and sense of impending crisis. But even in this situation, there is still a sense that however limited Suter’s options were, and however dire the probable economic consequences of his current difficulties, there were still choices he could make on the basis of experience: when and how to shear his remaining sheep, for example, or when to repair the dam.

The fact remains, however, that neither Suter’s newly-acquired environmental knowledge, nor Moodie’s, nor Scott’s, nor McKnight’s was in any way uniquely ‘Scottish’. As Stephen Roberts observes, similar environmental encounters are described in the journals of pastoral stations across Australia. All formed part of a cumulative private experience of the Australian environment which was shared by pioneers of all ethnicities and nationalities, and which acted, however slowly and unevenly, to mediate the over-optimistic founding public discourse of seamless ‘Enlightened’ improvement and modernity. Within the spaces created by this dialectic, individual squatters were nonetheless able to take advantage of the developing discourse of property ownership to imprint their sense of personal identity and belonging on the landscape. And it is here, in the spaces created by the squatters’ environmental interrogations rather than in the interrogations themselves, that we may find evidence for a reflexive memory that linked past cultural origins with the colonial present.

III Memory, Identity and Landscape

When we examine the evidence for the ways in which Irish and Scottish squatters imprinted their identities on the landscapes of Western Victoria, it very quickly becomes apparent that material significations of ethnic belonging or cultural origin were by no means ubiquitous. Where they existed, they were frequently ambiguous, hard to decipher, and often blurred by more widespread renditions of class and status. The pastoral stations constructed by Irish and Scottish squatters provide a case in point. Australian historians have long recognised that the pastoral boom of the 1870s and 1880s, together with contemporary improvements in title, provided both the means and incentive

for some squatters to rebuild their homesteads in lavishly ornamental styles. Occasionally houses would be graced with pleasure grounds in colonial imitation of the English country house and park.

In Western Victoria, Irish and Scottish squatters engaged wholeheartedly in this sort of activity, but preliminary research suggests that very few commissioned houses were intentionally ‘Scottish’ or ‘Irish’ in style. Ercildoune, near Ballarat, and Overnewton Castle at Keilor, were two rare exceptions, both of which were built in 1859 in the Scottish Baronial style. At Ercildoune, the Scottish Learmonth family erected a bluestone house which, in a particularly deliberate act of memory, incorporated a copy of the Pele tower which formed part of their ancestral home on the Scottish borders. At Keilor, following a visit to Scotland, William Taylor commissioned Scottish craftsmen to reconstruct his existing single-storey homestead. The newly-extended house incorporated iconic architectural features such as stepped gables and spired turrets to such effect that it was regarded locally as a convincing example of ‘the oldest Scottish architecture’.

Yet such deliberate architectural invocations of memory appear to have been the exception rather than the rule. More commonly, Irish and Scottish pastoralists commissioned houses which, architecturally speaking, were statements of wealth and standing in the colonial present, rather than memorials to a remembered past. But even where this was so, it was still possible for other forms of cultural memory and ethnic belonging to be enacted through the material spaces of these properties. Two examples must suffice. On the Monivae run, near Heywood in the Western District, the present house (Figure 3) was built in the mid 1870s by James Thompson, a Scotsman who had bought the property following the death of its original Anglo-Irish owner, Acheson Ffrench. Ffrench was a scion of a landed family with extensive estates in counties Galway and Roscommon, who arrived in Australia in 1839. In 1841 he acquired 17,000 acres in the Grange District, which he named Monivae after the family’s ancestral seat in Galway.

42 Susan Priestley, _The Victorians: Making Their Mark_, vol. 3 (McMahons Point, NSW, 1984), 92–5.
44 Ian McClelland, ‘Worlds Apart: The Anglo-Irish Gentry Migrant Experience in
Neither Ffrench’s original house—a sixteen room, prefabricated corrugated iron building he imported from England—nor Thompson’s replacement reflected anything about their builders’ respective origins. Indeed, the broad verandas surrounding Thompson’s house indicate an entirely pragmatic response to the intense heat of the local summer climate. Consequently, the run name—Monivae—takes on added significance as an intentional act of commemoration which was presumably designed to signal Ffrench’s Irish origins, if not to those for whom the name would have no meaning, then at least to other expatriate Irishmen in the circles in which he moved. There is evidence, moreover, to indicate that the informal Irish networks which flowed through Monivae had a particular social vitality in Ffrench’s day, and gave the place an ethnicised identity which its external appearance belied. Writing in 1917, Cuthbert Fetherstonhaugh, another Anglo-Irish pioneer settler, recalled his first encounter with Acheson Ffrench and Monivae in 1854:

At Hamilton I made the acquaintance of Acheson Ffrench of Monivae, and his large family, and spent a few days with them. Ffrench was the

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type of the well-bred Irish gentleman—a most delightful man, and clever, and none more hospitable. At Monivae you got a real Irish welcome; if you were not at home and happy there it was your own fault. Monivae was run on the old generous Irish lines; there were plenty of horses, children galore, boys and girls—all fearless and good riders.\(^{45}\)

Fetherstonhaugh’s friendship with Ffrench continued until the latter’s accidental death in 1870.\(^{46}\) Their relationship typified the wider social networks that were articulated by pastoral stations and connected Irish and Scottish pastoralists alike in a regional web of family relationships, mutual hospitality, shared commercial interests and common cultural and social institutional affiliations.\(^{47}\) Moreover, these networks frequently extended much further, and connected settlers with their previous lives in Scotland, Ireland or elsewhere. And while these discursive ties might remain mute in terms of overtly ethnicised material imprints on the landscape, they could still imbue homesteads with a reassuring sense of place-based cultural belonging in the face of the uncertainties of colonial life.

Mount Boninyong provides a further example. The existing house (Figure 4) was built in 1884 by Robert Scott, the son of the original settler Andrew Scott, as a replacement for the earlier homestead. Unlike Ercildoune, it makes no architectural statement about the family’s Scottish heritage, but testifies instead to the substantial prosperity they eventually achieved as pastoralists. Moreover, its size and grandeur obscures the family’s sometimes perilous earlier financial history in Australia, and says nothing about the abiding Presbyterian faith that sustained them through this, nor about the increasingly close ties they maintained with their immediate relatives in Scotland. Yet all of these factors shaped the Scotts’ colonial experience, and contributed largely to their continuing Scottish identity in Australia. Successive generations remained active Presbyterians, and the family was responsible for introducing the first (Scots) Presbyterian minister into the district in 1847, as well as for helping to finance the first Presbyterian church at Boninyong in 1860.\(^{48}\) Following Andrew Scott’s death in 1853, his son Robert Scott ran Mount Boninyong, while Andrew Scott Sr’s other

\(^{45}\) Fetherstonhaugh, _After Many Days_, 62.

\(^{46}\) Ibid., 115.

\(^{47}\) Hamilton, _Pioneering Days_, passim; Moodie, ‘Reminiscences’, passim; Kiddle, _Men of Yesterday_, passim.

\(^{48}\) Anonymous, ‘Mount Boninyong, 1839–1989’, SLV, Scott Family Papers, MS 13178, Box 3840/11(e).
son, Andrew Jr, ran the Warracknabeal station referred to above. By this time, Robert Scott and his wife Sarah (whom he had married in 1857) were engaged in an active correspondence with Sarah’s mother in Glasgow. This was characterised not only by detailed accounts of the Scotts’ social milieu in Victoria—which contrasted starkly with the emphasis in earlier journals on environmental learning and routine station practice—but also by mutual expressions of a warm and close relationship, culminating in an invitation to Sarah’s mother to emigrate.\textsuperscript{49} This did not eventuate, but the strength of the family’s continuing connection with Scotland is attested to by the career of Robert Scott’s own son Robert Scott Jr. By 1884 he was studying medicine at Glasgow University, and only returned to take charge of the Mount Boninyong property on the death of his father in 1896.\textsuperscript{50}

But like Monivae, Mount Boninyong stands testimony to the elusive quality of whatever Scottish and Irish ethnic symbolism is present in the landscapes of settler colonialism in Australia as elsewhere. Whereas Ercildoune and Overnewton Castle were conscious representations of a selectively imagined

\textsuperscript{49} Sarah Mitchell, Glasgow, to Sarah Scott, Mount Boninyong, 18 February 1862, ‘Letters from Robert Scott and Sarah Scott (nee Mitchell) to Sarah Mitchell, Glasgow, 1859—1862’, SLV, Scott Family Papers, MS 13178, Box 3840/12.

\textsuperscript{50} ‘Letters to Robert Scott, Glasgow, from Robert Scott (senior), Mount Boninyong, 1884—85’, SLV, Scott Family Papers, MS 13178, Box 3840/11(b).
material past, designed by their owners deliberately to invoke a ‘Scottish’ sense of place in the Australian bush, Monivae and Mount Boninyong were rendered architecturally in terms appropriate to the colonial wealth and status of their owners. Ostensibly, cultural memory played no part in their creation, save in the Irish run name at Monivae. Yet as we have seen, closer inspection demonstrates that both these properties were the locus of social practices that were actively imbued with a sense of ethnic identity that was tenacious and long-lived. At Monivae, Fetherstonhaugh’s comments imply an unreflective expression of ‘Irishness’ by the Ffrench family, whereas at Mount Boninyong the connection with Scotland and the continuing affiliation with local ‘Scottish’ institutions such as the Presbyterian Church seem to have been more pro-actively maintained. Either way, Monivae and Mount Boninyong both emplaced ethno-cultural identities which, despite being expressed in non-material ways, were as central to the social construction of these places as the more materialised expressions of Scottish identity were to Ercildoune and Overnewton Castle.

IV Conclusion

In the final analysis, all the pastoral stations discussed in this paper reflected the discursive localism and conditional nature of settler experience in Australia, as elsewhere in the colonies of white settlement. All were grounded in a continuing narrative of environmental learning and adjustment as their Irish and Scottish owners learnt, like other pioneer settlers, what was and was not possible in terms of environmental management and exploitation. Whether Learmonth, MacKnight, Moodie, Scott, Suter or Taylor possessed the Scottish squatter’s allegedly more appropriate livestock skills is unknown. Scott’s early difficulties and the collapse of Andrew Suter’s enterprise at Yambuck suggests that, like all settlers, these men remained vulnerable to environmental ignorance and, at times, sheer bad luck, during what was a painfully steep and fractured learning process. But with the gradual acquisition of more appropriate environmental skills came the opportunity to create more permanent material inscriptions in the pastoral landscape. As pastoral tenures improved, and pastoral property occupation became more secure, many stations like Ercildoune, Monivae, Mount Boninyong and Overnewton sustained an increasingly clear ‘gaze of ownership’ that framed the process of landscape inscription. In each case, this ‘gaze’ was a matter of individual
perspective, reflecting who the owners thought themselves to be. And in this subjective projection of the imagined self, a sense of belonging—whether to the colonial present, or to the remembered past, or perhaps, in truly diasporic fashion, to both of these—played a major part.

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The impact of Scottish and Irish settlers upon New Zealand’s environmental history, whether in its pioneer or more settled stage, has not been studied in any depth. Historian of the New Zealand environmental movement David Young, building on the work of Richard Grove in relation to ‘green imperialism’, has recently speculated that because some prominent Scots-born politicians, naturalists, scientists and activists played a leading role in early efforts at conservation and preservation, Scots led the slow greening of New Zealand. Drawing on Erik Olssen’s work on New Zealand as a ‘post-enlightenment’ experiment, Young also tries to establish some rather tenuous links between the Scottish Enlightenment and New Zealand environmentalism.\footnote{David Young, Our Islands, Our Selves: A History of Conservation in New Zealand (Dunedin, 2004), 68–72; Richard Grove, Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860 (Cambridge, 1995); Erik Olssen, ‘Mr Wakefield and New Zealand as an Experiment in Post-Enlightenment Experimental Practice’, New Zealand Journal of History, 31 (1997), 197–218.} Environmental historian James Beattie and historian of science and religion, John Stenhouse, in their discussion of ‘dominion theology’ (or the notion that God’s injunction to establish ‘dominion’ over the earth also contained the obligation of guardianship of the earth’s resources) have added some support to Young’s hypothesis.\footnote{James Beattie and John Stenhouse, ‘Empire, Environment and Religion: God and the Natural World in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand’, Environment and History, 13 (2007), 413–46.} Otherwise, apart from a little work on gardening and farming discussed later in this article, few scholars have bothered to investigate the topic. The neglect is even more serious for Irish settlers.

What follows, therefore, is a very preliminary set of observations that will need to be subjected to more rigorous examination by scholars from various disciplines. This set of ruminations will hopefully assist that endeavour by doing five things: first, explaining the relative neglect of the topic by discussing the trajectory of New Zealand historiography; second, rehearsing the ‘green Scots’ hypothesis; third, critiquing that hypothesis...
by demonstrating that Scots were as enthusiastic transformers of the New Zealand environment as everyone else; fourth, examining the Irish contribution along similar critical lines while conceding that their impact was probably more modest due to their smaller numbers; and, fifth, suggesting some ways in which we might resolve this unsatisfactory state of affairs through collaborative and trans-disciplinary research involving New Zealand, Scottish, Irish and English historians.

I Why the Neglect?

The lack of investigation into the nature and extent of the environmental impact of Scottish and Irish settlers, let alone differences in that impact, results in part from the way in which the study of history has developed in New Zealand. Initially, the writing and teaching of New Zealand history emerged as a nationalist enterprise in the 1960s when Keith Sinclair and others at the University of Auckland replaced the old dull red Imperial model with a shiny new, if rather lightweight, New Zealand First model. The New Zealand-born Sinclair—a man who strenuously refused to have anything to do with his Caithness and Orcadian origins—adopted an essentially Turnerian approach by arguing that the European, and particularly the British, encounter with the indigenous people and environment of New Zealand shaped the country’s history far more than background British cultural, social and political influences. Having rejected Louis Hartz’s vision of settler societies as transplanted ‘fragments’ of their European homelands, Sinclair then turned his back on the important environmental part of Turner’s influential theory with its emphasis upon the capacity of the American environment to reshape inherited European institutions and patterns of social organisation. Instead, Sinclair wrote his story in such a way that once Maori encountered the outside world culture apparently subsumed nature. The environmental dimension, which received so much coverage in the pre-historical part of his narrative, disappeared as permanent settlers replaced highly transitory sealers and whalers. Despite being the biographer of William Pember

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Reeves—New Zealand’s leading Fabian socialist, architect of compulsory industrial conciliation and arbitration, poet and historian—Sinclair rejected the attention to environmental transformation which graces the first part of Reeves’ highly influential popular history, *The Long White Cloud*, first published in 1898.\(^5\)

The environment then largely disappeared from view in most subsequent general histories, Guy Scholefield’s *New Zealand in Evolution* (1909) excepted, until the publication of *Environmental Histories of New Zealand* in 2002.\(^6\) Only visiting North American academics seemed to notice that environmental factors remained important long after British settlers began to arrive in increasing numbers from 1840.\(^7\) Michael King then picked up on these insights and incorporated key findings from the *Environmental Histories* collection into his popular *Penguin History of New Zealand* published in 2003.\(^8\)

My former professor W.H. Oliver, writing from Anglo-centric Christchurch rather than Auckland, provided a Hartzian challenge to Sinclair in his *Story of New Zealand*, published in 1960. Oliver suggested that the timing of the settlement of New Zealand held vital keys to understanding the colony’s development and attributed major influence to British background and mindsets.\(^9\) Yet Oxford-trained Oliver treated the British as a largely homogenous whole. It took the full, frontal assault of an outsider like Donald Akenson, surprised by the homogenisation of New Zealand society into two undifferentiated lumps labelled ‘Maori’ and ‘Pakeha’, to break down such thinking. As an authority on the Irish diaspora, Akenson found that such lumping had both disguised ethnic difference and distorted New Zealanders’ understanding of their European heritage.\(^10\) At the same time as Maori historians turned their attention to tribal history rather than writing about a mythic, pan-Maori New Zealand, social historians had to admit that they too had overdone homogenisation.\(^11\) James

\(^7\) For the contributions of leading North American historical geographers and historians Andrew Clark, Alfred W. Crosby, Stephen Pyne and Tom Dunlap see Pawson and Brooking (eds), *Environmental Histories*, 4–5.
\(^11\) Joe Pere, ‘Hitori Maori’ in Colin Davis and Peter Lineham (eds), *The Future of the Past:*
Belich, in 1996 and again in 2001, for example, paid far more attention to
distinctive Scottish contributions than had writers of earlier general histories,
while several specialist collections of essays on the Irish and Scots began
to appear from the late 1990s. Modern New Zealand’s increasing diversity
has heightened awareness of the need to acknowledge diversity within the
Pakeha world as well as within the rapidly expanding Polynesian and Asian
communities.

At the same time as New Zealand historians began to rethink the
evolution of their society some, influenced by Fernand Braudel, and also
by visiting North American scholars and the so called ‘new western’ history,
also realised that the role of the environment had been neglected for too
long. This realisation pushed them into a more meaningful conversation
with historical geographers, ecologists, botanists, agricultural scientists,
anthropologists, academic lawyers and others concerned with environmental
matters. The outcome of these developments has been the transformation
of a rather introverted nationalist history into more of a transnational
enterprise, as well as the incorporation of human relationships with the
natural world back into major historical narratives. A chapter in the New
Oxford History of New Zealand by Paul Star on environmental history and a
short piece by myself in the Dictionary of Transnational History, both published
in 2009, stress this point.

Themes in New Zealand History (Palmerston North, 1991), 29–48; Danny Keenan,
12 James Belich, Making Peoples: A History of the New Zealanders from Polynesian Settlement to
13 See Pawson and Brooking (eds), Environmental Histories, xii–xiii, 1–5.
II Green Scots?

The ‘green Scots’ hypothesis, modelled on the work of Richard Grove and John MacKenzie, emerged out of the reconsideration discussed above. Following Grove’s and MacKenzie’s revision of the ‘declensionist’ or apocalyptic model of destructive colonialism, David Young focuses on the special contribution made by several major players in the early conservationist movement who happened to be Scots born. In combination they constitute a diverse group of farmers, explorers, scientists and politicians from various parts of the spectrum.

Young starts with the Deans family, who settled in Canterbury before the major English group of ‘pilgrims’ arrived in 1850, and who saved an important remnant of native forest or ‘bush’ from the ravages of both rural and suburban development. John Deans and his wife Jane McIlraith, both from Ayrshire, and their descendants ensured this reserve’s survival against the grasping avarice of generations of short-sighted speculators. Today the reserve is highly prized by ecologists and botanists for its rare plants and trees.

Young also singles out Sir Thomas Mackenzie, the son of an Edinburgh gardener who went on to explore Fiordland and champion its conversion into a national park, for special mention. Even though Fiordland National Park did not come into being until 1953, long after his death, Mackenzie promoted the special qualities of the area well before tourist operators discovered the appeal of its wildness. Like other early surveyors and explorers Mackenzie developed a deep appreciation of the special qualities of the remnant, ancient areas of New Zealand that had not been transformed by farming. The dominant developmental ethos in New Zealand kept governments of both pinkish and bluish hue interested in the hydro-electric power potential of this wild, remote region. This did not deter Mackenzie, a centrist politician, from championing

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15 Environmental history can be very gloomy and judgemental, offering no hope for the future and ruling out any possibility of finding solutions to environmental problems. John M. MacKenzie and Richard Grove have challenged this propensity. See MacKenzie, ‘Assurance and Anxiety: The Imperial Condition’ in idem, Empires of Nature and the Nature of Empires: Imperialism, Scotland and the Environment (East Linton, 1997), 31–58; and Grove, Green Imperialism.
16 Young, Our Islands, Our Selves, 68–9; Gordon Ogilvie, Pioneers of the Plains: The Canterbury Deans (Christchurch, 1996), 245.
its preservation from development, while also helping to establish the Native Bird Protection Society after World War I.\(^\text{18}\)

Sir James Wilson, a great estate owner of some 6,848 acres at Bulls in the southern part of the North Island, born in Hawick, Roxburghshire, joins the select group because he founded the New Zealand Forestry League in 1916 and advocated the replanting of native forests. It is noteworthy that he promoted long-term preservationist strategies despite his prominence as a farmer-politician who served as foundation president of the New Zealand Farmers’ Union. He differs from the others in that he held views typical of many substantial British land owners in wanting to plant both exotic and native trees for the enjoyment of far distant generations, especially his own family whom he presumed would still own the same property.\(^\text{19}\)

George Malcolm Thomson, Indian born and Edinburgh educated, earned his livelihood as a high school science teacher, but is remembered as a kind of ‘proto-ecologist’ because he provided damning criticism of Darwin’s displacement theory through careful observation of the natural world over many years. Thomson retains a special place in the history of New Zealand ecology for producing his classic study *The Naturalisation of Plants and Animals in New Zealand* (1922). This timely book forced a dramatic change to acclimatisation practice which had until this time been predicated upon a rather naïve attempt to remake New Zealand as a kind of newer Britain. Some authors also attribute his environmental sensibility to his committed Presbyterianism.\(^\text{20}\)

Yet another member of the House of Representatives, this time a conservative like Wilson, bearing the iconic name of Robert Bruce, joins the select band. The Kelso-born seafarer and farmer from the southern Wairarapa left a bequest to establish a native bird sanctuary near his home farm, which survives until this day.\(^\text{21}\) The Peebles-born Alexander Bathgate, a rather utopian figure who founded the Dunedin Amenities Society (based on Edinburgh models) to protect areas of forest and vegetation through the

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\(^{20}\) Young, *Our Islands, Our Selves*, 72, 113, 120; Ross Galbreath, *Scholars and Gentlemen Both. G.M. & Allan Thomson in New Zealand Science and Education* (Wellington, 2002).

\(^{21}\) ‘Robert Cunningham Bruce’ in Guy Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography*, vol. 1 (Wellington, 1940), 107.
creation of reserves, also receives mention. Somewhat dubiously, Young adds Perrine Moncrieff—born in London, niece of the famous English naturalist J.G. Millais, and founder of the Abel Tasman National Park in 1942—as a kind of honorary Scot. Moncrieff, who also assumed a high profile within the Native Bird Protection society from 1914, and the Forest and Bird Protection Society from 1933, is only included in the Scottish camp because she developed her love for nature during childhood holidays in the Scottish Highlands.

An earlier Scottish leader can be added to Young’s motley crew. Captain William Cargill, civilian leader of the Otago settlement in 1848, developed a fear of the consequences of rapid deforestation from his time as a soldier in India and insisted on timber preservation in Dunedin. The town belt, which still curls through the hill suburbs, resulted from this concern. Cargill also clashed with the self-consciously Anglo-centric settlement of Canterbury to the north over boundaries, fearing the loss of vital timber resources in the western corner of his large province.

The problem with such listings, as Young himself concedes, is that other important early conservationists, including liberal politicians Harry Ell and William Pember Reeves, were locally born, while others such as T.H. Potts were English naturalists deeply imbued with the need to maintain Vicar of Selborne type traditions. The famous botanist and English-born pioneer ecologist Leonard Cockayne, who won an international reputation for his work on the importance of habitat, shared many similar ideals with Potts.

Then there is the problem of how to categorise the early New Zealand environmentalist who is best-known internationally, Herbert Guthrie-Smith. His classic study of environmental change, *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station* (1921), won international accolades from the likes of William Cronon and Richard White, both of whom concede that this book more than any other persuaded them to become environmental historians. Yet Guthrie-Smith was a hybrid—half Scots and also Irish and English. He expressed this sense of multiple heritage—or was it rather schizophrenia?—by comparing his Irish side to the little lady on a Victorian ‘barometrical device’ who comes out of her ‘Swiss rustic home’ when the sun shines, and contrasting it with his Scottish ancestry, represented by the heavily-coated man who appears when it rains. In the masterful piece of writing that prefaced the 1953 edition of *Tutira*, Herbert Guthrie-Smith put it this way:

A grandmother from South Ireland has been invaluable to me. A resilience that could only emanate from County Cork especially crops up in dealing with solemn, almost holy things—balance sheets, banks and station accounts… Overdrafts have ever seemed natural to the dear lady. Her bright spirit has never quailed at impecuniosity, never been dashed by lack of credit… To such Celtic levity do the author’s Lowland Scots ancestors listen with dour distrust. Sad, grim in grain from age-long struggle with unpropitious soils and weeping skies, far otherwise breathe forth the voices of his Stirlingshire progenitors… ‘Heed not the Irishwoman’s call. A man’s first duty is to the soil, the station must be first and foremost, consideration of its flocks and herds; there is bracken to be destroyed, undergrowth to be cleared, pastures to be renovated, weed growth to be eradicated.’

Such delectable ambiguity not only challenges stereotypes but renders Young’s hypothesis problematic, as does the inconsistent approach to the environment of New Zealand’s most prominent northern Briton and longest serving Prime Minister, Richard John Seddon. This masterful politician, who frequently claimed that ‘every tree felled meant the improvement of the public estate of the country’, also passed a Scenery Preservation Act in 1903 which set out to protect highly scenic areas of old New Zealand, fast disappearing

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28 Pawson and Brooking (eds), *Environmental Histories*, 4.
29 Herbert Guthrie-Smith, *Tutira: The Story of a New Zealand Sheep Station* (1921; Auckland and Seattle, 1999), xxi–xxii.
before fire and axe. Such seemingly contradictory action has bamboozled most commentators, but may be explained not only by his boyhood wanderings around the great estates of the earls of Derby, who were famous for their large menageries, but also by his engagement with the poetry of Robert Burns—instilled into him by his Scottish mother—with its powerful call for humans to engage in a more organic relationship with the natural world.\(^{30}\)

### III Transformers in Trousers rather than Kilted Conservationists?

The ‘green Scots’ hypothesis is all very romantic, but is brought into further question by Jim McAloon’s analysis of *The Cyclopedia of New Zealand*, a six-volume work containing subscribed biographies of the ‘great and the good’ which was published between 1897 and 1908. McAloon shows that the Scots staring contentedly at the camera on page after page were heavily overrepresented amongst successful farmers, the group engaged most directly in the great transformation of New Zealand. Scottish farmers had a particularly significant impact in Otago/Southland, the Otago Peninsula, the Rangitikei district in the southwest of the North Island, and in Hawke’s Bay further east, although Scandinavians—mainly Danes—and English agricultural labourers also played a key role in removing the so-called ‘Great Bush’ of southern Hawke’s Bay and Taranaki.\(^{31}\)

This contribution seems consistent with the role played in the development of early Otago by the settlement’s religious leader and nephew of Robbie, the Reverend Thomas Burns. Burns wanted more rapid development so that workers could earn a living wage, and acted as a dynamic and progressive farmer set upon transforming the heavily forested hills around Dunedin into

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farms typical of Lowland Scotland. His enthusiasm for such development brought about many clashes with the more conservation-minded Captain Cargill and tension between the two set in motion a dialectic which still lies at the heart of Otago history. Burns’ typically nineteenth-century commitment to improvement though was tempered by the notion that thriving, bucolic agricultural settlements would prevent the emergence of large, heavily industrialised cities.32

As important seed merchants, Scots likewise had a major impact on the landscapes of New Zealand. By importing English grass seeds and supplying them to farmers to sow in the warm ash of the smouldering forests, these merchants played a direct role in the transformation of one of the world’s greatest rain forests into a giant, grassland farm. The seeds may have been English, and seed merchants undoubtedly came from a variety of backgrounds: Arthur Yates in Auckland, for example, was English, while Adolf Moritzon in Dunedin was Danish. Nevertheless, Glaswegian-born Robert Nimmo and John Blair, Seed Merchants of Dunedin, acted as part of this imperial web of plant exchange, importing grass seeds from England and re-exporting them to Britain, Australia and the rest of the South Island. They thereby made a very significant contribution to converting the forests, swamps and tussocks of Otago, Canterbury and Nelson into British-style pasture lands.33

Scots were also overrepresented amongst the agricultural machinery manufacturers who developed heavier and tougher ploughs to turn over the rough soils and matted vegetation of Otago, Southland and Canterbury for wheat and oat growing. Manufacturers like Reid and Gray of Dunedin developed horse-drawn labour saving machinery to open up vast areas of


plains and downland for stock farming. Furthermore, land development companies and stock and station agencies with strong links to Scottish banks, shippers and woollen mills provided much of the capital for this extraordinary transformation. The Glasgow-based New Zealand and Australian Land Company played the leading role in developing the frozen meat industry, with William Soltau Davidson to the fore as its general manager and John MacFarlane Ritchie as its attorney. The Reverend Thomas Burns’ son Arthur also contributed to the advance of this ground-breaking industry, as well as promoting woollen milling by establishing a large factory at Mosgiel near Dunedin.

Robert Peden, in a recent prize winning Ph.D. thesis, has shown that high country farming methods from the Highlands and borders of Scotland, as well as the moors and high country of Lancashire, Cheviot and Yorkshire, shaped early sheep farming much more than techniques brought in from arid Australia. The Romney and Lincolnshire sheep may have been as English as the rye grasses, cocksfoot, white and red clover, and timothy, but many of the shepherds and managers were Scots. Scots were also overrepresented within the ranks of the ‘runholders’ who operated high country leasehold properties. This overrepresentation increased in the early twentieth century as Scottish shepherds and managers climbed up the agricultural ladder to run properties of their own, often replacing English families who were vacating the high country under the combined attack of rabbits, bad weather, low prices and government attempts at subdivision.

In short, Scots played critical roles in the great transformation, whether in the high mountainous country of the South Island or in the more heavily forested areas in both islands. Under the combined onslaught of Scots, Irish and English settlers, with some assistance from Scandinavians and Maori, forests by the 1930s covered only half the area they had done at the time of European arrival. Even more spectacularly, over 85 per cent of swamps—highly prized

34 B.L. Evans, *A History of Farm Implements and Implement Firms in New Zealand* (Feilding, 1956).
by Maori for their rich food sources—had been drained by the 1970s, probably the highest rate of drainage on earth. The grassland farms and fields covered in oats and wheat that replaced forests and wetlands looked little different from those of Lowland Scotland or England.37

Scots burned, drained and sowed pasture and planted crops as enthusiastically as anyone else. An examination of the letters and reminiscences of Scottish settlers shows that they paid more attention to the environment on a day-to-day basis than anything else, concentrating on the most immediate aspects of their encounter with a new land: the weather, the mud, the search for warm and comfortable housing materials, and sorting out which land was best suited to British-style farming.38 As farmers, the Scots seem to have fared slightly better than their English counterparts, in part because of their willingness to pay attention to Maori environmental learning. A few early Dunedin settlers, for example, copied the local Kai Tahu people in planting their potatoes in Maori style atop little raised mounds.39 Likewise, Scots settlers around Clutha, fifty miles south of Dunedin, concluded that land covered in fern was not sour as in Scotland, having observed Maori cultivators using it after burning and digging out the fern roots.40 In contrast, English settlers elsewhere in New Zealand tended to reject fern land until much later.41 The only obvious reason for this difference was that Scots, having come from a harsher environment, were more attuned to paying close attention to which practices worked and which should be jettisoned.

The other notable Scottish contribution to the great transformation occurred through their skills in developing both suburban and botanical gardens. George Matthews and his son Henry from Aberdeenshire became Dunedin’s most successful nurserymen, along with William Martin from

39 Edmund Smith, Early Adventures in Otago, edited by W.D. Stewart (Dunedin, 1940), 52.
Lanarkshire and James Gebbie (whose precise Scottish origins are unknown). George Matthews, the son of a farmer, spent nine years in County Dublin as the head gardener at Knockmaroon Lodge—the home of the Reverend Thomas Burns’ younger brother Gilbert—before migrating to New Zealand in 1850 and establishing what was to become Dunedin’s leading nursery.\footnote{Allan Hale, \textit{Pioneer Nurserymen of New Zealand} (Wellington, 1955), 71.}

Following a similar trajectory, William Martin served his apprenticeship in the Edinburgh Horticultural and Botanical Gardens prior to sailing for Otago in 1847. James Gebbie, who trained in modern Scottish nurseries such as Dickson and Sons before migrating to Dunedin in 1849, began to lay out the city’s botanical gardens in the 1860s. Following in his father’s footsteps, James Gebbie Jr embarked on the creation of the Oamaru Public Gardens in 1889. Meanwhile, Andrew Duncan, who had been born in the west of Scotland, played an equally important part in the development of Christchurch’s fine examples of both private suburban gardens and civic botanical gardens, while his son James headed north to Taranaki to form Duncan and Davies, one of New Zealand’s largest nursery operations.\footnote{On Duncan and Davies see Thelma Strongman, \textit{The Gardens of Canterbury: A History} (Wellington, 1984), 53 and Hale, \textit{Pioneer Nurserymen}, 107–11. On George and Henry Matthews see Hale, \textit{Pioneer Nurserymen}, 71. On James Gebbie Senior and Junior see Hale, \textit{Pioneer Nurserymen}, 82–3. On all these nurserymen and their contribution to horticulture in Dunedin see Louisa Shaw, \textit{Southern Gardening: A History of the Dunedin Horticulture Society} (Dunedin, 2000), 17–47.}

In Dunedin, Alexander Campbell Begg from Edinburgh and David Tannock, son of an Ayrshire ploughman, who had trained at Kew gardens in London, built upon the earlier work of Martin and Gebbie and leading scientist James Hector of Edinburgh to develop Dunedin’s gardens along the lines of many other botanical gardens around the British Empire featuring all kinds of exotics mixed with indigenous plants.\footnote{Allison Evans, ‘David Tannock’ in Orange (ed.), \textit{New Zealand Dictionary of Biography}, vol. 3, 497–8; Grove, \textit{Green Imperialism}, passim; John M. MacKenzie, ‘Empire and the Ecological Apocalypse: The Historiography of the Imperial Environment’ in Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin (eds), \textit{Ecological Imperialism: Environmental History of Settler Societies} (Edinburgh, 1997), 215–28.}

New Zealand may have lacked large deposits of fertile soils, but Scots—used to even harsher environmental conditions—soon learned how to cover the new land with both familiar and exotic trees, shrubs, flowers and pasture.

Some historians though have argued that not all Scots migrants wanted to transform and improve the New Zealand environment as quickly as possible. James Beattie, for example, has shown that many Scottish settlers actually liked
the indigenous forest and birds and deeply regretted their passing. A poem by John Blair, ‘the lesser Burns’ of early Otago, entitled ‘New Zealand for Me’, neatly catches this somewhat mixed response to the New Zealand environment:

I love Bonnie Scotland and England’s blest shore
But I love the new land of the Maori more,
Where labour’s a blessing, and freedom’s supreme,
And peace and contentment endears every scene.
With its flax, and its fern, and rare cabbage tree,
Its freedoms, its blessings—New Zealand for me.

Subtle gender differences also appear in these responses because women, who generally had less direct contact with the bush, tended to most regret its passing, seemingly because they found forested hills more aesthetically appealing than burnt over paddocks or underdeveloped farms.

Furthermore, Scots played a critical role in beautifying cities through their establishment of Suburban Reserves Conservation Societies (later renamed Amenities Societies) and maintenance of town belts. Paul Star’s work on acclimatisation shows that Scottish Otago’s introductions tended to be more practical than those of English Canterbury with Otago concentrating on trout and salmon rather than tiny game birds such as partridge.

The Orcadian builders of dry stonewalls also left this attractive reminder of their origins amidst the remnant of luxuriant forest atop the craggy and steep Otago peninsula. The famous Edward Immyns Abbot painting of early Dunedin labelled ‘Little Paisley’, with its bucolic representation of an orderly and improved version of Lowland Scotland, suggests that the early Scots settlers strove to achieve some kind of harmonious relationship with their new world, even if the painter removed forest two decades before it

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46 James Barr, *The Old Identities: Being Sketches and Reminiscences During the First Decade of the Province of Otago* (Dunedin, 1879), 363.
47 Beattie, *Lusting After a Lost Arcadia*, 50–2, 117.
50 West, *An Environmental History of the Otago Peninsula*, passim.
actually happened.\textsuperscript{51} Yet, despite Beattie’s and Young’s sympathetic efforts, it seems that the great majority of Scottish settlers were set upon transforming New Zealand’s environment to be more like Scotland whether through making farms, establishing gardens, building stone walls, introducing salmon or beautifying cities.

IV The Golden Irish Stereotype?

Little attention has been paid to Irish settlers and environmental transformation because they were not as prominent either as conservationists or as leading farmers. Whatever stereotype attaches to this group in relation to environmental impact is, therefore, rather fuzzy. Given their pronounced role in the extractive activity of gold mining, their dominance of rail and road building gangs, and their relative lack of formal education they are generally associated more with ‘quarrying’ rather than transformation or conservation of the new colony. We know that Irish were overrepresented amongst gold-miners and that the environmental disturbance caused by goldminers in New Zealand was particularly severe because of the country’s permissive mining legislation. Generally debris could be dumped anywhere once a river had been declared a sludge channel.\textsuperscript{52} This is why I manufactured the title of ‘Golden Irish’ as a kind of hypothesis to be tested. Straight away the hypothesis is challenged by the fact that gold miners were also English, Cornish, Scottish, Welsh, Scandinavian and Chinese, especially in the Otago and Thames fields.\textsuperscript{53}

It is only on the West Coast of the South Island, where the Irish made up as much as a quarter of the population, that we can single them out for removing bush, building endless wooden sluices and tram tracks, and dumping large amounts of debris from dredges—probably a New Zealand invention—into the Teremakau, Arahura, Ross and Grey rivers. They continued to act in this environmentally cavalier manner down to the 1940s.\textsuperscript{54}

\textsuperscript{51} Tom Brooking, \textit{And Captain of their Souls: Cargill and the Otago Colonists} (Dunedin, 1984), 148.

\textsuperscript{52} Lyndon Fraser, \textit{Castles of Gold: A History of New Zealand’s West Coast Irish} (Dunedin, 2007), 53–78; Terry Hearn, ‘Mining the Quarry’ in Pawson and Brooking (eds), \textit{Environmental Histories}, 86–8.


We also know that the Irish were overrepresented amongst the Brogden navvies (although they were recruited in England) who built railways all over Britain’s formal and informal empires. The North Island Main Trunk line, in particular, involved many spectacular engineering feats including the erection of large viaducts across precipitous gorges and the building of an impressive spiral to enable trains to negotiate the steep grade at Raurimu. Irish manual labourers also seem to have been heavily overrepresented in cooperative work gangs used by Seddon and the Liberal government to build many of the country’s roads and bridges in the 1890s and early 1900s.\(^55\)

Yet Irish settlers, like their Scots counterparts, wanted to be more than mere labourers. Many, in fact, became modern-style capitalist farmers by taking advantage of the various leasehold schemes trialled by both provincial and central governments, or else by committing themselves to paying off large mortgages. Sean Brosnahan’s and Basil Poff’s research on the large Southern Irish knot of closely-related families that constituted Canterbury’s Kerrytown community, makes it clear that they were little different from Scots or English settlers in this respect.\(^56\) Irish migrants rejected any notion of becoming a peasantry. Some may have had to subsist during the establishment period of farms, or the hard years of the 1880s, but so too did many smaller farmers of Scottish and English origins. Once the New Zealand economy recovered from 1896 onwards they behaved pretty much the same as all other would-be farmer groups. After all, the man who provided them with the capital to carry out the great transformation, Sir Joseph Ward, was of Irish Catholic ancestry.\(^57\) It seems too that Irish Catholics, who provided a key element of Seddon’s support, agreed with his government’s rejection of mini-fundia and supported its commitment to farms large enough to be viable in terms of capitalist agriculture.\(^58\)


Zealand including possums, wallabies and ostriches. At the same time he recorded much about the natural history of New Zealand, knowledge that he shared with Charles Darwin and Joseph Hooker at Kew. Grey, the most famous of New Zealand’s governors and collectors, also introduced several exotic plants including grapefruit and olives and promoted seri-culture because he hated extensive sheep farming and wanted New Zealand to become a colony which used its land intensively. He presented this Mediterranean vision of a land covered in citrus orchards, olive groves, vineyards and silk farms as an alternative to the development of New Zealand as a giant grassland farm. He would, no doubt, be delighted if he returned to New Zealand today to see such Mediterranean-style diversification of land use, especially in warmer parts of the country.59

Although less prominent amongst the early New Zealand conservationists there were a few ‘green’ Irish, most noticeably one eco-hero in the form of Charles O’Neill. The founder of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia, he supported T.H. Potts and Julius Vogel in their efforts to establish large reserves of native forest in the 1870s, acting as a kind of honorary green Scot.60 No doubt more of his ilk will be found when historians examine groups of local conservationists more carefully.

No one has yet trawled through the poetry, short stories and novels written by New Zealanders of Irish extraction, but such research is certain to reveal considerable interchange with and reaction to the strangeness of the remnants of ancient New Zealand. Julian Kuzma’s doctoral research has shown that much colonial literature can be read as environmental text which comments on both the great transformation and the ‘pristine’ areas. This claim seems likely to apply as much to Irish or English writers as to Scottish-born writers like Alexander Bathgate, who waxed lyrical about the beauties of unspoilt


New Zealand in both his novels and poetry.\(^{61}\) Certainly the novels of Dan Davin, analysed so successfully by Donald Akenson with regard to their sense of history, could be re-examined for their references to the bush settlements of Southland in which they are set.\(^{62}\)

V Conclusions and Future Research Strategies

To advance our understanding of the Scottish and Irish environmental impacts in New Zealand historians need to do several things. First, they must pay much closer attention to Scots and Irish farming practice as well as to their contributions to the development of gardening in both town and country. Second, historians need to undertake more detailed studies of the places and regions of New Zealand with particularly strong Scottish and Irish associations. While the Otago Peninsula has received extensive coverage in Jonathan West’s recent doctoral dissertation, back country and downland farming areas of Southland in which there were heavy concentrations of Scots, including Catholic Highlanders, and Irish Catholics demand urgent attention.\(^{63}\) So too does South Canterbury and the Waikato (home of New Zealand’s horse racing and dairy industries) in the case of the Irish. Third, scholars need to interrogate the ‘green Scots’ hypothesis more systematically and examine Scots and Irish, as well as Presbyterian and Catholic, variations on ‘dominion theology’. Such examination should also extend to the analysis of literary texts. Kirstine Moffat’s work on Scottish-born novelists such as Alexander Bathgate will help in this respect because Julian Kuzma in focusing on environmental comment paid little attention to the subtleties of ethnic variation.\(^{64}\) Fourth, all investigations must develop more English controls for the simple reason that the English constituted the single biggest grouping of Britons in New Zealand at around 55 per cent of nineteenth-


\(^{62}\) Such an exercise would add to Donald Akenson’s fascinating analysis of Davin as Celtic story-teller and historian. See Akenson, *Half the World from Home*, 89–122.

\(^{63}\) West, *An Environmental History of the Otago Peninsula*.

century immigrants. Fifth, scholars have to examine Maori responses to the environmental change brought about by Scottish, Irish and English settlers. After all, although Maori had prized the swamps and forests so altered by the new arrivals, they also helped carry through the great transformation by digging ditches, clearing bush, erecting fences and sowing grass.

Finally, New Zealand historians cannot accomplish a proper assessment by themselves so I end by challenging Scottish and Irish historians to learn more about the environmental attitudes and practices of the Scots and Irish ‘at home’. What was distinctive about their practice as farmers, builders, city improvers and manufacturers and how did their attitudes towards the environment change over time? T.C. Smout and others at St Andrews and Stirling universities in particular must be thanked for starting such investigations, but we need a lot more research in relation to farming practice and city life. Cabbage trees proliferating on the west coast of the Highlands suggest that some New Zealand plants flowed back to Scotland and produced a kind of reverse impact, but such matters require more systematic investigation.

The project emerging out of the University of Stirling on the environmental impact of Scottish settlers in Canada and New Zealand represents a useful start, as does Liam McIvanney’s project on the ‘imagining of the diaspora’ to be carried out from the University of Otago. Somehow we need to find the energy to broaden and sustain transdisciplinary research on a topic that has much to reveal about both the two-way project of British colonisation and the relentlessly advancing processes of globalisation. Moving past romantic but rather facile generalisations about ‘green Scots’ and ‘golden Irish’ is vital if this endeavour is to succeed. Then, and only then, can we begin to answer the call of John Pocock and John MacKenzie to develop a truly four-nations approach to the study of ‘British’ history and of ‘British’ settler societies overseas.

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65 Phillips and Hearn, Settlers, 68–106.
It has been suggested that from the late eighteenth century Scottish botanists and scientists helped to transmit climatic, botanical and forestry ideas to India. Many of these botanists were in the colonial service and had observed at first hand the combined impact of imperial and indigenous overexploitation on tropical forests. They believed that there was a direct relationship between deforestation, climatic change and environmental degradation. Alarmed by these real or perceived environmental problems, the colonial government of British India established the Indian Forest Department in 1864. As there was limited scientific forestry training available in Britain or its Empire, and little or no experience of running a centralised forestry service, British authorities in India sought out German foresters, many of whom had been formally trained in Prussia or other German states, to occupy senior positions in the new organisation.

In the early days of the Indian Forest Department, officials were recruited from the ranks of botanists and surgeons, some of whom were new arrivals in India while others had previously worked for the East India Company. Many of these men had been trained in medicine or botany at Scottish universities, in particular the Universities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen. These men brought a unique expertise to India, combining a firm grounding in the study of botany with a methodological approach derived from their medical backgrounds. Understanding how these Scots botanists worked alongside
foresters trained on the continent to initiate and shape forest conservation in India is crucial if we are to understand the development of forestry services not only in India, but also in Britain and other parts of the world. This paper therefore examines the various European forestry traditions in more detail, considering how they merged in the Indian colonial context and exploring, in particular, the specific contributions made by Scottish-trained botanists and foresters.

I The Continental Forestry Tradition

When the Indian Forest Department was established in 1864, British officials possessed little knowledge of continental scientific forestry. Determined to organise along the same lines as forestry departments in Germany, they therefore appointed German forester Dietrich Brandis as the first Inspector-General of Forests to the Government of India. Brandis, in turn, recruited forestry officers from Germany to fill posts in the upper echelons of the Indian Forest Service. Among the appointees were William Schlich and Berthold Ribbentrop, who were later to follow in Brandis’ footsteps as Inspector-General of Forests in 1883–8 and 1888–1900 respectively. These two Germans were preferred for high office over local British forestry officers because of ‘the thorough professional training which [they] had received in their own country.’

A cadre of forest officers trained in Germany and France was swiftly recruited to fill the ranks of the newly-established Forest Service, leading to the creation of a forestry system in British India which was in the first instance based on continental models of forest management.


As an economic system, modern forestry emerged in eighteenth-century Prussia. It consolidated earlier practices of traditional woodland management and adopted a more scientific resource management regime. By the early nineteenth century, German forestry had developed into a systematic science of measuring, predicting and controlling the growth of forests and the production of wood mass in order to secure resources for the future and extract a maximum sustainable yield (Nachhaltigkeit) and profit. The German forestry tradition was a centralised scientific enterprise based on statistical models of tree growth and the creation of single-species, even-aged forest plantations.\(^7\)

The second important continental influence on forestry in India was the French forestry tradition. Forestry in France was centralised by the government as early as 1669 with the introduction of the Forest Ordinance. After the revolution of 1789, the state confiscated large areas of forested land and by the early nineteenth century it controlled the majority of forests in France. For strategic and economic reasons, anxiety over wood shortages led to the creation of the École nationale forestière at Nancy in Southern France in 1824. This school educated a cohort of professional foresters, among them Dietrich Brandis, who were trained in a forestry tradition that was a cross between French and German forest management traditions.\(^8\) Between 1867 and 1893, eighty-one British foresters were trained at Nancy in preparation for their service in India.\(^9\)

The French forestry tradition, although scientific and heavily influenced by German forestry practice, left room for traditional forms of forest management. Due to economic and political pressures, French forestry was characterised by a more flexible approach with attention being given to broadleaves, coppices and mixed stands, as well as to the natural regeneration of forests and traditional user rights. At the same time, even-aged forest plantations managed on scientific principles were also established in France and its colonies and exported to British colonial possessions through foresters who had been trained at the French forestry schools.\(^10\)

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\(^10\) Ciancio and Nocentini, ‘The Forest and Man’, 43–6; Gregory A. Barton, *Empire*
II The Scottish Forestry Tradition

Scotland had been at the centre of forestry in Britain since at least the seventeenth century. While German forestry followed the example of late eighteenth-century Prussia in favouring state intervention at the expense of the independent, privately-owned estate, in Scotland the opposite happened and from the seventeenth century landowners started to experiment with new modes of forestry, without any form of centralised state intervention. From the early 1600s, tree planting on Scottish estates increased steadily, while ‘improving’ Scottish landowners began to introduce tree species from continental Europe such as sycamore maple, Norway spruce, larch and European silver fir, none of which were native to Scotland.11 The availability of considerable ‘wastelands’ in the Scottish Highlands facilitated these experiments with new species and planting methods.12

Scottish landowners were interested in using the forest resources on their estates more efficiently to increase revenue. This went hand in hand with the ideal of aesthetically improving their estates and of securing a sustainable yield to support future generations. This latter aspect shared similarities with the German ideal of Nachhaltigkeit.13 The difference with the German mode of thinking was that the Scottish ideal combined both aesthetic and profit-driven elements to create a kind of early multiple-use forest resource.14 Furthermore, the traditional woodland management system of coppicing was maintained in tandem with the new forestry plantations, catering to the needs of a wide range of traditional users, while preserving game and aesthetic values.15

John Murray, the fourth duke of Atholl, who was nicknamed ‘Planter John’, embraced this perspective when he wrote that forestry operations should be carried out for ‘beauty, effect and profit’.16 The efforts of John Murray and other plantation schemes in Scotland during the eighteenth century were the

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12 Rajan, Modernizing Nature, 111.
13 Ibid., 41.
14 Multiple-use forestry became fashionable among forestry services in the western world during the 1950s and 1960s with the rise of the automobile and increasing numbers of visitors to the forests. This type of forestry aimed at combining recreational use and nature conservation with wood production.
16 Quoted in House and Dingwall, ‘A Nation of Planters’, 135.
first attempts anywhere to establish major plantations of conifer trees *ab initio*, as opposed to the conversion of natural forests or coppices that took place in continental Europe. The most notable of these forest plantations emerged in Argyll, in Perthshire and on the Moray coast in the North East of Scotland. The earls of Moray and Fife and the dukes of Atholl and Argyll planted millions of trees to ‘improve’ their landholdings, and by the last quarter of the eighteenth century smaller landowners had begun to imitate their grander neighbours. The emergence of forestry plantations as a core aspect of Scottish estate management was associated with patriotism and good taste, as well as with making better and more profitable use of the land. By the end of the eighteenth century, tree planting was regarded as a respectable and progressive activity, and a shared vision of what constituted appropriate forest management was widely accepted throughout Scotland.

Much of the knowledge acquired on the Scottish estates from these early experiments and planting activities was disseminated through the learned societies in Edinburgh, such as the Botanical Society of Scotland, as well as through botany and other courses at the university. Particularly important in the spread of modern forest management practice was the creation of the Physic Garden in Edinburgh in 1670, which is now known as the Royal Botanic Garden. In 1723 the Honourable Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland was established by a group of influential landowners whose aim was to improve the management of the land, including forestry.

Encouraged by these developments, Scottish seed collectors—of whom David Douglas is the most famous—introduced many North American tree species to Europe. In the late 1820s Douglas introduced the Douglas fir and Sitka spruce, trees that were to form the backbone of Scottish forestry during the twentieth century. After Douglas’ untimely death in 1834, other Scottish seed collectors continued to introduce new species such as the lodgepole pine, western hemlock and western red cedar. Scottish landowners, driven by the desire to improve their plantations for both profit and pleasure, enthusiastically embraced these trees. This formed an effective breeding
ground for practical foresters whose experience was further disseminated through the publications of learned societies and other outlets.\textsuperscript{21}

A book written by James Brown, a professional forester on the Arniston estate in Midlothian, was of particular importance. Published in 1847, \textit{The Forester} provided practical advice on how to create and manage a forest in the Scottish landscape based on scientific principles. It became a popular and influential work that marked the rise in status of estate foresters in Scotland.\textsuperscript{22} James Brown also served as the first president of the Scottish Arboricultural Society, which was established in 1854 by a group of landowners and foresters who were determined to ‘place Scottish forestry on a sounder basis as an important section of rural industry.’\textsuperscript{23} The formation of the new society signalled the emergence of a body of professional estate foresters in Scotland, from which the Indian Forest Service was to draw so many of the forest officers who ultimately populated its middle and higher echelons. These men brought with them a forestry tradition that was decentralised, open to experimentation, and which combined aesthetic planting and game management with commercial timber production.

\textbf{III Fusion of Traditions}

Before the creation of the Indian Forest Department, forestry regulation and legislation in India had been implemented in an ad hoc and piecemeal fashion. The East India Company had tried unsuccessfully to control the production and trade of timber around the turn of the nineteenth century. This left the British with little choice but to rely on the local timber market to meet their needs and by the late 1820s any attempt to regulate the trade had been abandoned. It was this private trade which led to the over exploitation of certain forest areas in India, generating fears that there would be negative environmental impacts such as soil erosion, climate change and water shortages.\textsuperscript{24}

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\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{22} House and Dingwall, ‘A Nation of Planters’, 155.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Michael Mann, ‘Timber Trade on the Malabar Coast, c.1780–1840’, \textit{Environment and}
Alarmed by these developments, in 1850 the British Association meeting in Edinburgh set up a committee to study forest destruction and its impacts at the behest of Hugh Cleghorn, a medical doctor working in India. A year later the committee presented its report, which was based on the testimonies of forest administrators in India who were worried about the potential long-term environmental effects of deforestation caused by indiscriminate logging. The committee advised the colonial authorities in British India to introduce tighter controls over the forests, but stopped short of proposing the creation of a central forestry authority.25 It was in this context that Lord Dalhousie, the Governor-General of India, issued a memorandum of the Government of India on forestry in 1855, later dubbed the ‘Charter of Indian Forestry’. This memorandum was based on reports submitted by John McClelland, who was Superintendent of Forests in Burma, and formed the basis for the Forest Act of 1865.26

The management of forests in India proved challenging for European foresters coming from the scientific forestry tradition developed in Germany and France. This tradition was reductionist in nature and did not take account of varying environmental and social conditions, leading continental foresters to believe that a direct transfer of forestry practice from the temperate zone to tropical forests would not be too problematic. It soon became apparent, however, that the significantly different and highly variable environmental conditions to be found in India required the development of new forest management regimes.27 An infusion of Scottish knowledge and experience was to assist in their development.

During the nineteenth century Scotland lacked the capacity to absorb its well-educated workforce, a large number of whom found employment in Britain’s expanding colonial services. That Scots occupied many senior professional

26 Barton, Empire Forestry, 57.
positions as engineers and doctors is well known, but their importance as foresters is much less widely appreciated. Indeed, just as the Scots dominated the operational, scientific and technological aspects of British activity in India, forestry was no exception.28 In the preface to the Indian section of the catalogue for the 1884 International Forestry Exhibition in Edinburgh, Sir George Birdwood, a senior administrator in India, gave Scottish botanists the credit for ‘having first called attention to the necessity for forest conservation in India’.29 As mentioned earlier, many officers in the early Indian Forest Service were Scottish-trained surgeons and botanists who had been recruited from other parts of the colonial service.30 During their education in Scotland they had been exposed to the Scottish Enlightenment traditions that connected medicine with knowledge about botany, climate and geology. This led them to adopt a holistic approach that advocated rigorous field observations and flexible tree-planting programmes that took into consideration local variations in soils, climate and vegetation. Colonial authorities drew upon the expertise of these naturalist surgeons to gain knowledge about India’s natural and agricultural resources. Hugh Cleghorn, who held one of the top positions in the early Indian Forest Service, was a prime example of such a surgeon turned botanist, having originally been appointed to the Indian Medical Service.31 Cleghorn and other Scottish-trained surgeons were likely to have been familiar with estate forestry practices in Scotland. The Indian colonial authorities, like their counterparts in Australia, also drew more directly on the experience of estate forestry in Scotland by recruiting foresters who had been trained on Scottish estates.32

Middle and higher ranking officers recruited for the Indian Forest Service had to pass a competitive exam in order to be admitted to the forester training programme. Early recruits were sent to forestry schools in Germany and France, but after 1871 considerations of cost and convenience resulted in

29 ‘The International Forestry Exhibition’, The Scotsman, 7 July 1884, 5.
31 For an in-depth discussion of Hugh Cleghorn and Scottish-trained foresters, see Pallavi Das, ‘Hugh Cleghorn and Forest Conservancy in India’, Environment and History, 11 (2005), 55–82.
in all instruction being concentrated in France.\textsuperscript{33} In addition, forestry recruits were also required to train for several weeks under the supervision of an approved forester on a Scottish estate before they were sent out to India.\textsuperscript{34} It must be noted that after the introduction of the competitive exam in 1855, the number of Oxbridge graduates in the ranks of the Indian Civil Service rose quickly and that this lessened the dominance of Scotsmen in the Forest Service.\textsuperscript{35} Nevertheless, the fact that forestry recruits were trained in both France and Scotland ensured that the ideas and principles of continental forestry were unquestionably inter-mixed with those of Scottish forest management.

The blending together of continental and Scottish forestry management regimes, as well as adaptation to Indian environmental conditions, led to the creation of a distinctive Indian branch of scientific forestry. While rendering the forests profitable remained the primary goal, the conservation of existing forests was also undertaken in order to counter negative environmental effects such as desiccation, flooding and soil erosion. In addition, it was observed that forestry knowledge had to be applied to ‘entirely new conditions of climate, and deal with trees and plants not known [in Scotland]’.\textsuperscript{36} The limited numbers of commercially useful trees in Indian forests was a particular concern, with teak trees, for instance, making up only about 10 per cent of the so-called teak forests. The diversity and mixed nature of the Indian forests therefore required a management regime that favoured ‘valuable commercial species’ while ‘eliminating the less valuable and those interfering with the growth of the former.’\textsuperscript{37} The variety and density of Indian forests, as well as their extensiveness, also encouraged the use of natural regeneration. Berthold Ribbentrop concluded that the ‘average cash revenue per acre [was] too insignificant’ to justify clearance of the jungle and the creation of plantations.\textsuperscript{38} The creation of forestry plantations was therefore less important than in Europe, although a considerable number of

\textsuperscript{33} F. Bailey, ‘The Indian Forest School’, \textit{Transactions of the Royal Scottish Arboricultural Society}, 11 (1887), 155–6. It should be noted that individuals such as Hugh Cleighorn never worked on Scottish estates, nor were they sent to forestry schools. Only new recruits after the establishment of the Forest Service followed this route.

\textsuperscript{34} ‘Advertisement for Recruitment of Officers in the Indian Forest Service’, \textit{The Scotsman}, 15 November 1869.


\textsuperscript{36} ‘India As a Field For Our Educated Youth’, \textit{The Scotsman}, 11 December 1869, 7.


\textsuperscript{38} Berthold Ribbentrop, \textit{Forestry in British India} (Calcutta, 1900), 166.
Teak plantations, especially in Burma, were created in places where no forests had previously existed.  

The adaptation of German and French models of scientific forestry to the Indian environment was aided by the Scottish experience of decentralised estate forestry. The introduction of exotic tree species in the variable and often extreme environmental conditions of the Scottish Highlands and Islands had led Scottish foresters to develop an experimental approach to forestry, with a strong emphasis on observation. This resulted in an adjustment of planting and management practices in order to encourage these newly-introduced trees to grow in different environments. To some extent they found a similar situation in the varied environments of the Indian subcontinent, ranging from tropical to semi-arid to alpine, though on a very much greater and more complex scale.

The success of the fusion of continental forestry and Scottish practice in India was recognised at the time. In 1891 it was noted in The Scotsman that ‘Scottish ideas and Prussian experience have combined to produce [successful forestry] in India.’ The decentralised model of Scottish estate forestry was to some extent replicated in India, and applied on the much larger scale of the provincial forestry districts which were essentially run as large estates. It was at this regional level that Scottish estate and Enlightenment forestry merged with continental European and local traditions to form hybrid practices that were continually and creatively adapted to the varied political, economic and ecological circumstances of different locales in India. Thus, while India differed from Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom in having a central forestry policy by 1865, this did not prevent the development of local forest management practices because the policy provided general guidelines rather than prescribing how individual forests or districts were to be managed.

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40 ‘The Indian Forest Service and its Founders’, The Scotsman, 17 August 1891, 8.
41 ‘Forestry Districts’ or ‘Forest Circles’ were formed in each province in British India and each was run by a Conservator of Forests. For further details see R.S. Troup, The Work of the Forest Department in India (Calcutta, 1917), 9.
43 Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom would have to wait until 1919 for the creation of a central forestry service.
IV Influence of Returning Foresters

Following their service in India, many of the botanists and foresters who created these hybrid forestry practices returned to Scotland. Sharing the desire of other Scottish foresters, as well as Scottish landowners, to make better use of the country’s forest resources, these individuals lent their voices to growing calls for universities to establish lecturerships and forestry courses for the education of professional, scientifically-trained foresters who would help to increase the revenue from estates in Scotland. The Scottish Arboricultural Society did its part by inviting prominent Indian forestry officials to give talks about forestry practice, policy and education on the Indian subcontinent. Invitees included Dietrich Brandis and Hugh Cleghorn as well as Colonel Frederick Bailey, the first director of the Indian Forestry School in Dehra Dun. In their talks, these individuals championed the creation of forestry schools in Scotland and England and even the creation of a central forestry service for Britain. The return to Scotland of lesser-known foresters who had served in India likewise contributed to the dissemination of the new ideas of scientific forestry. In 1910, A.C. Forbes, Chief Forestry Inspector to the Department of Agriculture for Ireland, described this process in his book *The Development of British Forestry*:

Since about 1860, when Cleghorn and Brandis inaugurated the Indian Forest Service, a small stream of continental trained youths has been going out to India, and an equally small stream of retired Indian foresters, on furlough or pension, has been returning from it. Whatever the exact practical results of this intermixture of British and Anglo-Indian ideas may have been, there is little doubt that fresh ideas were instilled into British foresters and proprietors, and a wider knowledge of forestry as an industry instead of a hobby resulted.

The calls for formal forestry education in Scotland were successful and by the late nineteenth century a forestry degree had been established at the University of Edinburgh with a curriculum that included the measuring

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and valuation of woods, forest utilisation and forest policy, silviculture, pathology and zoology. Courses were often taught by foresters with a colonial background, such as the aforementioned Colonel Frederick Bailey, who occupied the first chair in forestry at Edinburgh after his return from India in 1906. In 1892 a special course for forest workers was established at the city’s Royal Botanic Gardens. In the years that followed, the three Scottish Agricultural Colleges in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen introduced both evening and day courses in forestry. These courses ceased when the Scottish Education Department stopped funding them in 1918 in anticipation of the Forestry Act of 1919, which established the British Forestry Commission and conferred it with responsibility for educating forest workers below university level throughout the United Kingdom.

Although the continental and Indian models of a central forestry service had been around for a long time, the government in London had previously deemed it unnecessary to establish such a service in Britain because it was believed that the country could rely on a safe timber supply from Scandinavia, Canada and other parts of the Empire. This assumption was undermined by the wood shortages of the First World War and in response the British Forestry Commission was created. The Forestry Commission copied the organisation and many of the practices of the Indian Forest Department without much modification, but failed to retain the flexible practice of matching trees to local physical conditions as practised in India. This was due to pressure to create a standing timber reserve and, as a result, large single-species plantations managed on scientific principles started to appear in the Scottish landscape. Although Forestry Commission foresters wanted to create more diverse forests, they were straight-jacketed by a forest policy that regarded trees as a crop that could be grown as a monoculture, like wheat. The single-minded objective of creating a standing timber reserve makes it difficult to assess the true nature of the forestry re-imported to Scotland from India. We can perhaps conclude that the policies and organisation were copied from India, but that different practices were required to meet the unique political and strategic demands of post-World War I Britain. Nevertheless, more than fifty years after the creation of the

Forest Department in India, centralised scientific forestry had finally made a real breakthrough in Britain.

V Summary and Conclusions

Scientific forestry was first transported to India from continental Europe because of a lack of expertise in the British Empire. It was for this reason that the Indian Forest Service employed German foresters and sent forest officers to be educated in Germany and France. In India itself, the French and German forestry traditions were blended and transformed under local environmental, political and economic pressures. In addition, a third strand of forestry practice contributed to the evolution of colonial forestry in India: namely, the experience of Scottish estate forestry, which had developed since at least the seventeenth century. The adaptation of all three traditions to the diverse environments of the sub-continent ultimately led to the creation of a distinctive Indian branch of scientific forestry.

Scotland played a founding role in modern forestry because of the availability of ‘wilderness’ for afforestation and the presence of landowners who wanted to ‘improve’ their privately-owned estates. Scottish Enlightenment traditions in turn encouraged experimentation with plantation forestry and the introduction of exotic tree species, and the combination of these factors created a decentralised and adaptive forestry tradition in Scotland.

The experience of Scottish estate forestry was disseminated through publications and scholarly societies such as the Royal Scottish Arboricultural Society, the Royal Society of Edinburgh and the Botanical Society of Scotland, as well as at the Scottish universities. In addition, British recruits for the Indian Forest Service were trained both on the continent and on Scottish estates before they were sent to India. In the Indian context the Scottish forestry tradition worked as a catalyst to stimulate the adaptation of more rigid continental forestry practices to India’s diverse vegetation and environments. In India, colonial forestry practices were being made and remade in multiple sites, influenced not only by the various European models but also by professional foresters’ creative accommodations to local political, economic and ecological circumstances. For this reason it is hard to define the nature of the forestry model that was re-imported to Scotland by retired foresters in

49 See also Rajan, Modernizing Nature, 62, 110–1.
50 See also Vandergeest and Peluso, ‘Empires of Forestry’, 384.
the late nineteenth century. However, the idea of a centralised forest policy and a central forest authority to carry it out was strongly advocated by the returning foresters. This met with the desire of Scottish landowners to make more efficient use of their forests and to increase revenue from their estates. It also formed the basis for the forestry education system that emerged in Scotland and England in the last decades of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century. With the knowledge and experience of foresters returning from India and other parts of the British Empire, forestry in Scotland had come full circle and this formed the foundation on which the British Forestry Commission was established after the First World War.

University of Edinburgh

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51 The first forest training school in England was established at the Royal Indian Engineering College at Coopers Hill in Surrey in 1885. It was headed by William Schlich, the second Inspector-General of Forests in India. When the College closed in 1905, its forestry branch was transferred to Oxford University.
If the Irish and the Scots had not journeyed to the American colonies, American historians would have had to invent them. This is the case because both groups have been and continue to be so useful to historians, especially to those studying the frontier regions that many Irish and Scots peopled over the course of the eighteenth century. In a word, the ways in which historians have portrayed each group reflect how different sets of historians have characterised the frontier. The Irish and the Scots serve as exemplars of either its cultural fluidity or its racist rigidity.

For those searching for fluid social relations or indications of cultural understanding across lines of race, the Irish and Scots have produced some notable individuals. In many cases, these frontiersmen embraced both Indian ways and the traditions of white polite culture, allowing them to act as cultural brokers between two groups—Indians and Euro-Americans—who at times shared a great deal in common. As such, the experiences of both Irish and Scottish settlers point to the eighteenth-century frontier as a place where it was still possible to create a middle ground between Indian and European cultures. Less a hardened line than a zone of interaction, such borderlands were made by people who could cross boundaries. From this vantage point, we should think of people from the marchlands of the British Isles as being perfectly suited to the rigours of a world that required fluidity. These people were either formed by their Old World experience as liminal characters living on the edge or else were shaped by the New World realities of pluralism, a world they fit into quite well.

But the Scots and Irish have also been viewed as prototypical frontiersmen, the ‘shock troops’ for white civilisation in America. People from these borderland regions played a formative role in creating a frontier that would become with time a hardened line defined by rigid notions of race. In fact, the one group of people that historians single out as epitomising the brutal realities of race hatred on the frontier are none other than the hybridised group that bears the name of both peoples: the so-called Scots Irish or
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‘Scotch-Irish’. There is little question that some of the most notorious acts of violence during the colonial and revolutionary eras—episodes that define the ways scholars conceive of anti-Indian prejudice, race hatred and even ethnic cleansing—were perpetrated by members of this group. Some have even argued that the Old World experiences of these people prepared them for life on a violent frontier where only a thin line separated the ‘savage’ from the ‘civilised’. Fighting ‘Papists’ in Ireland hardened this militant group that had originally migrated from Scotland, allowing its members to translate one set of hatreds premised on religion and culture to another set based on race and culture. Or perhaps the American frontier created them. The brutality and violence of a place so far removed from the conventions and standards of the metropole compelled these people to ‘go native’. In a violent world they became violent. In a world of hardened identities, theirs were hardened still further. Either way, the sorts of attitudes this group embraced, some historians tell us, define the way that we should conceive of the frontier.

In this paper, I would like to explore the issue of how these people could have played both roles at once: angels of the middle ground and devils of the frontier made famous by the American historian Frederick Jackson Turner. The answer I would posit does not lie in either the Old or the New World. Nor in fact does it have much to do with the Irish and the Scots at all. The answer lies in the stories that we, as American historians, have held fast to about the frontier. In a word, the Scots and the Irish are not schizophrenic. We are.

1 On terminology, see Kerby Miller et al., Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan: Letters and Memoirs from Colonial and Revolutionary America, 1675 – 1815 (New York, 2003); and Patrick Griffin, The People with No Name: Ireland’s Ulster Scots, America’s Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World (Princeton, 2001).

2 This had been a point hagiographers were proud to make a century ago. Nonetheless, others still cling to this view. For an especially egregious example of the older version, see Maude Glasgow, The Scotch-Irish in Northern Ireland and in the American Colonies (New York, 1936). Mainline scholars also adopted this perspective. A good example would be Carl Bridenbaugh, Myths and Realities: Societies of the Colonial South (New York, 1966). An example of the newer interpretation, really a modern variant of the old ‘germ’ thesis, would be David H. Fischer, Albion’s Seed: Four British Folkways in America (New York, 1989). For historical understandings of the group, see Maldwyn Jones, ‘The Scotch-Irish in British America’ in Bernard Bailyn and Philip Morgan (eds), Strangers Within the Realm: Cultural Margins of the First British Empire (Chapel Hill, 1991), 284–313.

3 This take on the frontier is best exemplified by Bernard Bailyn’s The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction (New York, 1985).

American historians have created models of the frontier that have one thing in common: they all propose a date or moment or event as being the critical watershed when cultural understanding breaks down for good. The Irish and the Scots are almost inevitably implicated in these stories, as they tended to have a strong presence in frontier regions when a number of these critical moments occurred. But the behaviour of these men and women was not distinctive. Indeed, the frontiersmen and women who feature in seventeenth-century accounts of the ‘great transition’ from more fluid understandings of social relations to increased rigidity and racialised conceptions were mostly of English origin.

Our focus, therefore, should not be on groups, but on processes. Only then can we understand how people acted. In fact, when we look at the frontier over the longue durée as a process, a very different picture of these groups begins to take shape. From the early seventeenth century until the American Revolution, borderland regions fluctuated, sometimes rapidly, between phases of settler-Indian cooperation and phases of conflict. Indeed, the colonial period was defined by this dynamic. The period of the American Revolution, however, represented a significant shift in this process. This period did not prove distinctive in terms of the ways in which Indians were perceived by settlers or because during the revolution the violence meted out against Indians was worse than in other periods; rather, unexceptional things happened at an exceptional time. Violence lasted over an especially long period, and settlers embraced more consistently-articulated racist attitudes, transforming the ways in which the broader white society conceptualised Indians within the newly emerging American state. As we shall see, the shift from fluid backcountries to hardened frontiers is more complex, yet a great deal simpler to explain, than we have been led to believe. The extent to which the Scots and Irish were implicated in this shift had a great deal to do with contingency and less to do with their so-called ‘cultural baggage’. They happened to live in the wrong places at the wrong times.

I The Search for the ‘Turnerian Moment’

One of the most important and interesting debates in early American history remains the nature and significance of the frontier. Truth be told, this is not much of a debate. Although scholars disagree vigorously about specifics, all are engaged in a common pursuit that I call the ‘Search for the Turnerian
moment’. For better or worse, the ghost of Frederick Jackson Turner still haunts the frontier. No doubt, elements of his thesis have been dispatched with good reason and great justification. Turner thought of the frontier as a line separating ‘civility’ and ‘savagery’, which moved progressively westward during the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries from the ‘fall lines’ along which the Appalachians descend steeply to the coastal plain, over the mountains and then on to places like the Ohio River Valley. He also thought of the frontier as a place that created certain typically American attributes such as individualism and resistance to authority. Since his time, scholars have come up with all kinds of redefinitions of the frontier as a zone of interaction, a site of encounter, an intercultural process, or a ‘borderland’ standing between empires, nations or societies. As Turner’s idea of frontier as ‘line’ fell out of fashion, scholars bridled in particular at his racist notions of Indian culture and his aggressively Euro-centric understanding of ‘civilisation’. We have at times been told to reject the term ‘frontier’ entirely, only to be instructed to use it once again but with all kinds of caveats. In fact, to discuss ‘frontier’ is to become caught in a thicket of semantics.5

For all the condemnation of Turner, when we step back and see how early Americanists have of late conceived of this thing conventionally called ‘frontier’, a new story that looks very much like the old story is beginning to emerge. Most historians now subscribe to an idea of frontier that goes like this: After the phase of initial encounter, Indians and colonists entered a period characterised by both conflict and accommodation, in which no one had the upper hand and people strove to make sense of one another. These were times in which contingency reigned, Indian agency mattered, and colonists did not have sole control over their own destinies. Fluidity defined these places and times. Using the preferred contemporary word for such places, we refer to them as ‘backcountry’. These were areas far removed from established regions, in which the parameters of social relations were not yet locked into place.

According to these same models, however, change was inevitable.6 Over


6 See, for instance, Andrew Cayton and Fred Anderson, *The Dominion of War: Empire and Liberty in North America, 1500–2000* (New York, 2005); Eric Hinderaker and Peter Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (Baltimore,
time, colonists came to view Indians as being irredeemably inferior or marginal to their needs, while embracing the conceit of Euro-American superiority. At this point, fluid worlds gave way to uncrossable cultural lines. All then entered into a world of frontiers. Within this world of hardened boundaries, crossing became more difficult, the imperative to understand became less insistent, and conflict usually became endemic. What many studies of the frontier that use this narrative line also have in common is their explanation of the transition from backcountry to frontier. While acknowledging that external pressures such as war or settler land hunger pushed the process forward, many scholars today posit that the ideal way to gauge this transition is to study how Euro-Americans viewed Indians. In the earlier, fluid backcountry setting, they argue, settlers saw Indians as inferior, but culturally so. By the time backcountries were transitioning into rigid frontiers, settlers tended to think of Indians in essentialist, and often racialised terms.

Historians of early America rarely recognise the degree to which they nearly all cling to this model, and it is because of this myopia that groups such as the Irish, Scots and Scotch-Irish are cast as exceptional peoples. For eighteenth-century American historians, the transition takes place in the eighteenth century. Fair enough. It is, perhaps, natural for any given group of historians to argue that the period they study is the period that sees the most meaningful action. And because the most provocative and persuasive studies explore the eighteenth-century phenomenon, the Scots and Irish feature. But for seventeenth-century American historians, the great shift occurs in the seventeenth century, a period that preceded mass migration to the colonies of the Atlantic seaboard from Scotland and Ireland. What all of these scholars have not reckoned with, however, is the possibility that the transition they present as being definitive in fact happened anew every few generations. In looking for Rubicons, we have missed ebb and flow. In other words, early American history is more accurately conceptualised as encompassing a series of ‘Turnerian moments’.

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7 The classic work that makes this assumption is Richard White, The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815 (New York, 1991).
8 The now classic work, that challenged White’s work and that took this tack, is Merrell’s Into the American Woods.
10 I elaborate on this point more fully in ‘Reconsidering the Ideological Origins of Indian Removal: The Case of the “Big Bottom” Massacre’ in Andrew Cayton and
II The Seventeenth Century

The seventeenth century offers a prime example of the phenomenon. In fact, historians working on this period have picked a number of dates to mark the great transition from backcountry to frontier. Some have argued for a date of around 1600, in the midst of the Nine Years’ War in Ireland (1594–1603), or perhaps even earlier in the Elizabethean era when English adventurers ran roughshod over the Irish kingdom. It was here, we are told, that the English finely honed their attitudes toward the alien other, crossing at times the critical line of considering the Irish essentially different, a view that they then transferred to North American Indians. Others suggest that the transition took place at the end of the so-called third Anglo-Powhatan War in 1646, when Sir William Berkeley, governor of Virginia, established a boundary line between English settlers and the Powhatans which the latter could not transgress without a passport. In this instance, a physical boundary line literally and figuratively stood for a cultural frontier. Further north, historians have cited the Pequot War (1637), when the Pilgrims and Puritans ‘conquered’ one of the more powerful Indian groups in the region by massacring innocents, as marking the transition from backcountry to frontier.

The problem with 1637 or 1646 is that although colonists demonised certain groups of Indians, they still believed—as a general principle—that Indians could be civilised. Settlers, moreover, had decent relations with ‘friendly’ Indians. The English notion of civility, based on achieving a certain level of social and cultural development and corresponding manners, was undoubtedly patronising. The English of both New England and the Chesapeake believed that, with time and effort, Indians could—in theory—be ‘reduced to civility’, abandoning hunter-gatherer lifestyles and savage manners to become more like the English. Although at times a brutal process—English adventurers, for example, tended to kill the Irish to make them civil—the understanding of what made people civilised was based on an early-modern

Stuart Hobbs (eds), The Center of a Great Empire: The Ohio Country in the Early Republic (Athens, OH, 2005), 11–35.


sensibility that posited that even those with foreign customs and traditions shared a basic humanity.  

The most persuasive arguments—and the most fashionable right now—for a critical seventeenth-century shift revolve around the years 1675 and 1676. In these years, the English—now becoming increasingly ‘American’—were able to impose their authority fully and unambiguously over indigenous peoples in the backcountry.  

They did so by employing racial notions of classification, resorting to perceptible physical characteristics, such as skin colour, as an indication of inherent capacity. In New England, the process of creating race involved writing Indians out of the story during and after the conflict known as Metacom’s, or King Philip’s, War (1675–6). This war represented a desperate final attempt by Wampanoags and Naragansetts in the New England region to stop English encroachments, which were rapidly growing in number. As Indians from allied groups attacked the towns and outposts of the New England colonies, capturing and killing both settlers and livestock, the colonists struck back in horrific ways. As they did so, they began to believe that Indians did not only differ from themselves in terms of culture but also in terms of physical characteristics. Colonists were becoming ‘white’. This profound shift took place on the ground and in print, further inscribing racial difference and creating a wall between the two groups.

As war raged in New England in the 1670s, poorer settlers in Virginia—down on their luck in a society that presented few bright prospects—were moving west into Indian lands, intimidating and killing Indians who, in turn, retaliated. This multitude, now incensed, then turned its fury on Governor Berkeley’s administration, which was doing little to protect common people in the backcountry. Indeed, some officials and wealthy planters were even trying to exploit the situation to make money. Nathaniel Bacon, the self-appointed leader of the multitude, and his companions would eventually burn Jamestown to the ground in an event known to us as Bacon’s Rebellion. In so doing, they would also burn the past of its fluidity. By boasting that they wanted to ‘extirpate’ all savages, these individuals interjected the dynamic of race into

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a society in which culture and ‘civilising’ the savages was what determined status. In fact, Bacon’s rebels and other Virginians began at this point to blur different conceptual frameworks. Tellingly, the idiom of race created strange hybrid terms such as ‘Christian white servants’ to distinguish English settlers from Indians, illustrating how colour, now believed to be a marker of essential difference, was beginning to animate an older framework of understanding based on cultural markers such as religion.16

We have recently discovered how and why colonists during the fateful years of 1675 and 1676 interjected an ‘idiom of race’ into the early-modern sensibility of civility. Earlier on, settlers acknowledged the humanity of Indians even as they stripped them of their land. These ‘civilised’ Christians from England may have believed themselves to be further along some developmental path than the ‘savage’, literally wood-dwelling, ‘heathens’ they encountered in the Americas, but they nevertheless retained the belief that Indians were essentially human, however depraved their culture. Sickness brought an unwitting end to such a sensibility. As Indians died from the invisible bullets of European childhood diseases, settlers began to rethink their ideas about essential equality. If Indian bodies fell so easily to sickness in an environment also peopled by Europeans and Euro-Americans, perhaps they were not equals after all. The Indians had flawed bodies, settlers reasoned, allowing them to essentialise difference as they sought to vanquish the indigenous people once and for all in both New England and Virginia. In so doing, the settlers subverted earlier understandings of human nature, replacing them with something far more pernicious and thereby dooming Indians to a marginal existence. In other words, violent backcountries had become frontiers.17 Or so scholars tell us.

Scholars of seventeenth-century America suggest that the reformulations that occurred in this period shaped subsequent American history, and that a century of hardened lines and rigid notions of race lay on the horizon. It is worth noting that a few Scots and Irish lived in both New England and the Chesapeake during the violent years of 1675 and 1676, and that even more Irishmen had endured the violence of the Anglo-Powhatan wars. But truth be told, this is an English story.18

18 Patrick Griffin, ‘The Irish in the South: A Plea for a Forgotten Topic’ in Nicholas Allen and Bryan Giemza (eds), Lost Colonies: Ireland in the American South (Chapel Hill,
III The Eighteenth Century

The tragedy is that eighteenth-century historians have explained things in the same ways without taking on board the implications of seventeenth-century studies. Upon entering the eighteenth century, we should be in a world of darkness, certainly given the logic of the great transition of 1675–6. In fact, a very different picture emerges. What should be a dark time appears instead as a ‘golden age’ of the backcountry, if we use that term to suggest fluidity, contingency and boundary crossing. It is here that the Irish and Scots begin to take centre stage in the drama, not as Indian killers but as shape shifters at home in a fluid world.

The eighteenth century was a period of large-scale migration from the marchlands of Britain and the European Continent. Whereas the seventeenth century in North America was dominated by the movement of adventurers to the Chesapeake and the establishment of a ‘New’ England by Puritans, the eighteenth-century story is one populated by Irishmen and women, Scots, Germans and, of course, Africans. Most of the free migrants and indentured servants would head toward the Middle Colonies. As a result, the backcountry shifted from New England, which saw minimal amounts of migration, and the Chesapeake, which also slowed as a destination for European migrants, to places like south-east Pennsylvania and then to the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia and the backcountry regions of the Carolinas. Irish immigrants dispersed throughout all of these regions. Scots, on the other hand, tended to settle in the Carolinas and sections of Georgia to the south.19

At first glance, many of the peoples who settled these regions had what seemed to be ingrained prejudices against ‘others’. Lowlanders hated Highlanders and vice versa. Peaking in the 1750s, the movement from Scotland to the colonies would bring 50,000 people prior to the American Revolution.20 In the case of the Irish migrants who would come to dominate some of the new backcountry regions, many harboured a violent hatred against ‘Irish

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Papists’. From 1717 until the eve of the revolution approximately 200,000 Irish immigrants came over, many to Pennsylvania’s Susquehanna River Valley and down the Great Wagon Road that headed south from Pennsylvania into the Virginian highlands and then on to the Carolinas. Most were Protestant. These people, some have surmised, were primed to hate Indians, who could usefully be compared to the ‘savage’ Papists of the Old World.21

As a rule, these settlers saw Indians as inferior. Significantly, however, their sense of superiority had a cultural and, more specifically, a religious basis rather than being defined by race. They did not even essentialise difference as many Protestants had done during the bloody Irish uprising of 1641. Furthermore, we know that Indians complained of these settlers squatting on their land time and time again, and that the Irish in particular had—as one official put it—‘no regard for Indian claims’. But how did the Irish try to justify their behaviour? When officials complained of their taking land that belonged to Indians, settlers claimed that ‘it was against the laws of God and Nature that so much land should lie idle, while so many Christians wanted it to labor on and raise their bread.’22 To these settlers, ‘savage’ Indians did not improve the land, and therefore the land was forfeit to Christians who would do so because they had already achieved a higher degree of civility. But the obverse was also true. If Indians changed their ways, they could be considered relatively civilised. In 1737, the Pennsylvania Gazette carried a letter from an Irishman in America to his countrymen. The unnamed writer was Presbyterian—he speaks of his minister in Ulster—and he extolled the virtues of America, proclaiming enthusiastically that it was ‘a bonny country’. He also wanted to assure his countrymen that the Indians were not a threat. ‘There is a great wheen of native folks of the country turned Christian’, he asserted. ‘They sing songs bonnily, and appear to be religious, and give their minister plenty of skins for his stipend.’23 He exaggerated, certainly. But his exaggeration is telling. In his world—and by extension in the world of his readers—there was still a place for Indians at the table of humanity.

The period of eighteenth-century migration did not represent a golden age of inter-cultural harmony. Settlers at times treated Indians cruelly, took their land and plied them with alcohol. But the period was not marked by

21 On numbers and historiography, see the introduction to Miller et al., Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan, 3–10.


23 Pennsylvania Gazette, 27 October 1737.
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essentialised hatreds and violence. Settlers saw Indians as inferior. But they admitted that Indians were human. Non-Christian Indians were ‘savages’, ‘heathens’ and ‘brutes’. But since such terms referred to cultural manners that could be improved, Indians were redeemable. These terms were used over and over again, suggesting that the framework of understanding human difference was one rooted in civility. It is fair to say that the Irish were not exceptional. In New England and Virginia, the places where the idiom of race had first been unleashed, what we find is much the same. The terms or idioms of difference are once again rooted in culture. The race genie, in other words, had not left the bottle. Either that, or settlers had somehow reverted to an earlier understanding.

In fact, historians regard the period between the late seventeenth century and the 1750s as a time called the ‘Long Peace’, a period when stable relations between the groups prevailed along the extended frontier on the eastern edge of the Appalachians. Many things sustained it: the so-called ‘covenant chain’, a multiparty alliance between the English colonies of the Atlantic seaboard and the Iroquois and their tributaries; the availability of land for settlement in places such as Virginia—much of it ceded by the Iroquois at the expense of their tributaries; and the fact that even the poorest Europeans could find land down the Great Wagon Road. Together, these factors kept simmering tensions from bursting through the surface.

The early eighteenth century marked the high point of influence for cultural go-betweens in the backcountry. These individuals strove to keep the peace by straddling two worlds. George Croghan, for example, was born a Catholic in County Tyrone, converted to the established church, migrated to America in the midst of the Irish famine of 1741, and settled on the frontier. Here he became known as the ‘King of the Traders’. He had an Indian wife, and was considered by the Shawnees of the Ohio Valley to be the most highly regarded official with whom they worked. Throughout the period of the

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24 On this theme, see Patrick Griffin, American Leviathan: Empire, Nation, and Revolutionary Frontier (New York, 2007), chapters 1 and 2.


27 On Croghan, see Merrell, Into the America Woods, passim; Nicholas Wainwright, George Croghan: Wilderness Diplomat (New York, 1959); and Griffin, American Leviathan, passim. Also see Miller et al., Irish Immigrants in the Land of Canaan, 471.
Long Peace, Croghan was one of those men who comfortably seemed to inhabit two worlds, gliding between the two, keeping the peace, and in the process becoming a man of some influence and esteem. William Johnson had a similar experience. Born into a Catholic Jacobite family in Ireland—in this case County Meath—he too converted, and settled near the Mohawk River in the colony of New York. Here he fathered children with an Indian woman and came to be known by the Iroquois as one of their own. Arguably one of the most powerful men in eighteenth-century America, Johnson was at home with both the Mohawk and British officials. Johnson invited other Irish immigrants, both Catholic and Protestant, to settle in the regions around Johnson Hall. A sizeable contingent of Scots, largely Highlanders, also settled on or near lands he held in the Mohawk River Valley. He seemed to be most comfortable with people from the margins of the British Atlantic world.

To be sure, these men defrauded Indians out of land; they also defrauded Euro-American settlers and financial syndicates, as well as the British government. Like all good eighteenth-century men, they saw their opportunities and they took them. Croghan and Johnson thrived on early-modern understandings of human difference. In fact, this sensibility explains their success. As former Catholics, now esteemed men and Protestants, they themselves had lived the reality of civility in moving up the rungs of the developmental ladder. And although they short-changed Indians from time to time, they also liked, esteemed and respected them.

Scots, too, seemed to excel at shape shifting. One need only think of two prominent examples. The first, John Stuart, a Highland migrant who worked his way up to become the British superintendent for Indian affairs south of the Ohio River, was right at home with the Cherokee. Stuart lived amid other Scots in the Carolinas and employed Scots as his deputies. He proved as adept as Croghan and Johnson in working with Indians. The Cherokees esteemed him as an honest broker, and they were right to do so. Although he speculated in land and served the Crown, he also did what he could to secure the rights of Indians against encroachment. The second example is Lachlan McGillivray, a trader who migrated from Scotland and married a Creek woman. He was the father of an even more remarkable man, Alexander McGillivray, who was educated in Charleston in Latin and Greek and who became a leader of the

28 On these aspects of Johnson's life, see Fintan O'Toole, White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America (New York, 2005).
29 For this reading of the eighteenth century, see Gordon Wood, The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin (New York, 2005); and Griffin, American Leviathan.
Creek nation around the time of the American Revolution. Like Croghan and Johnson, these men believed that Indians could become subjects. After all, they themselves had made the transition from barbarous inhabitants of the marches—Irish Catholics and Scottish Highlanders—to civilised, Protestant Britons in America.\footnote{Claudio Saunt, \textit{A New Order of Things: Property, Power, and the Transformation of the Creek Indians, 1733–1816} (New York, 1999). On this view of Stuart, see Linda Colley, \textit{Captives: Britain, Empire and the World, 1600–1815} (New York, 2002), 186.}

No doubt, the Irish and Scots played prominent roles as go-betweens during the Long Peace. The list of traders from both places is especially long.\footnote{See, for instance, ‘List of Traders Killed by Indians’, December 1763, in Louis M. Waddell (ed.), \textit{The Papers of Henry Bouquet}, vol. 6 (Harrisburg, PA, 1994), 317.} But then again, the Long Peace happened to coincide with mass migration from Ireland and the shift to steady in-migration from Scotland. Old World marginalisation may have prepared these peoples for the rigours of living on the margins in America. But people born as Irish Protestants—those who did not convert—also exhibited these sensibilities. The list of so-called Scotch-Irish traders would be a long one as well. And Conrad Wesier, perhaps the most honest and effective frontier diplomat of the eighteenth century, did not come from the borders of the British Isles at all. He was German. In short, even if the Irish and Scots were well prepared to understand Indians, contingency can explain a great deal.\footnote{This suggests that the interpretation found in David Hackett Fischer’s \textit{Albion’s Seed} does not stand up to scrutiny. Fischer argues that a culture of violence on the ‘borders’ in the Old World shaped the culture of the frontier in the New World.}

\section*{IV The Critical Period?}

Scholars tell us that this early eighteenth-century era of fluidity came to a crashing halt, and that the Scotch-Irish were the cause. If 1676 stands as the critical date when backcountries became frontiers in the seventeenth century, 1763 stands as the ‘Turnerian moment’ for the eighteenth century. With heightened immigration, more bitter imperial rivalry between Britain and France, less affordable land, and rapacious speculators looking to make a killing, lands which Indians considered their own became increasingly vulnerable. The period of the Seven Years’ War (1756–63), during which Indians attacked backcountry communities and settlers repaid Indians in kind, brought a bloody end to the Long Peace. No sooner had the war ended than
the British—now freed of their worries about the French—instituted a garrison government and discriminatory policies in the west, driving Indians to lash out in what is now called Pontiac’s War (1763–6), leading to another round of killing in backcountry regions.33

During this period, settlers and Indians entered a world of ethnic cleansing, as historian Daniel Richter persuasively argues.34 The one event historians point to as the watershed moment is the Conestoga Massacre of 1763. During the Seven Years’ War, the colonial government in Philadelphia sent little aid to the backcountry or, at best, was stingy in doing so. Unable to do anything against Indian raiders, a group of men—largely from Ireland or the descendants of Irish immigrants—from a settlement near a place called Paxton, which had been attacked a number of times in the preceding years, found a group of Indians they could decimate. In December 1763, this group of settlers, dubbed the ‘Paxton Boys’, travelled to Conestoga Manor, an area from which squatters had earlier been evicted while Indians were permitted to stay. Ostensibly, they were after an Indian who was rumoured to have given information about local settlements to western Indians. They did not find him there, but they did find six peaceful Conestogas, all with Christian names and well known to the raiders. The Paxton Boys butchered these innocent people in almost unimaginable ways. The rest of the Indians from Conestoga Manor were shepherded by Quaker government officials into the Lancaster workhouse for safekeeping. Undeterred, the Paxton Boys rode to Lancaster where they brutally killed fourteen more Indians. They hacked off arms and legs, scalped, smashed in skulls and blew heads to smithereens. They even mutilated two three-year old boys.35

Colonial officials were aghast by what had happened. How could these men kill men, women and children whom everyone knew were innocents? The Paxton Boys had no such qualms, describing Indians as ‘perfidious’ and as being the ‘vilest race of savages’. The most famous apologist for their butchery, an Irish-born minister named Thomas Barton, summed up the logic that had gripped backcountry enclaves. According to Barton, nine-

35 The literature on the massacre is vast. For a summary, see Griffin, *The People with No Name*; and Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*. 
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tenths of the frontier folk supported the actions of the Paxton Boys, who had justifiably slaughtered ‘perfidious villains’. These Indians were, in his words, ‘cruel monsters’, a parcel of ‘treacherous, faithless, rascally’ savages, and ‘idle vagabonds’ who gloried in ‘inhuman Butcheries’.36

In the wake of the Conestoga Massacre, colonists realised they had nothing in common with Indians. Perhaps a true vein of racism deep beneath the surface had finally erupted.37 Or maybe, as some have recently argued, Pennsylvanian settlers had discovered their whiteness and longed for ‘lines’ to be drawn between Indians and themselves. Anxious about their social position in American society and the broader British Empire, settlers projected their inner anxieties onto Indians as a whole. Liminality created anxiety which spurred whiteness. Skin colour now determined human difference, creating a violent frontier world of ‘red’ against ‘white’.38

We could regard this as the Irish, or perhaps even the Scotch-Irish, ‘Turnerian moment’. Certainly, some scholars do. Contemporaries, after all, branded the Paxton Boys a parcel of ‘O’Haros’ and ‘O’Rigans’, ignoring the fact that nearly all the butchers were Protestant. Resorting to old stereotypes of Irish perfidy, Quaker officials and opponents of the Paxton Boys tapped into a deep and resonant well.39 If the prejudices of Pennsylvanians do not stand up to scrutiny, perhaps the methods of the Paxton Boys are more convincing. The men who killed the Conestoga Indians acted much like Irish rural insurgents. Indeed, an argument could be made that they simply adapted Irish practices to the New World. Leaving aside the fact that many of those living on the margins of the British Atlantic world—be they Scottish, English, Irish or Pennsylvanian—used similar tactics, the argument that the Paxton Boys were employing Irish tactics would seem to hold water. Maybe, in other words, this was an ethnic incident after all.40

If methods can be explained by ethnicity, the reasons why the Paxton Boys did what they did cannot. In fact, to focus on the ethnicity of the

36 Thomas Barton to the Secretary, 16 November 1764, in W.S. Perry (ed.), Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church, vol. 2 (New York, 1871), 369; Thomas Barton, The Conduct of the Paxton-Men, Impartially Represented (Philadelphia, 1764), 6, 8, 14, 29.

37 This dynamic is suggested in Merrell, Into the American Woods.

38 Jane T. Merritt, At the Crossroads: Indians and Empires on a Mid-Atlantic Frontier, 1700–63 (Chapel Hill, 2007).


40 This is a theme that Kevin Kenny suggests in Peaceable Kingdom Lost: The Paxton Boys and the Destruction of William Penn’s Holy Experiment (New York, 2009), 186-7.
perpetrators is to miss the point. Settlers indeed used the term ‘white’ to define themselves. But they did so in much the same way that Virginians or New Englanders had done in 1676. In fact, to look backward to the seventeenth century, rather than to look ahead to the dark inevitabilities of the nineteenth century, is the best way to explain what motivated the Paxton Boys.

This entails a careful dissection of this event and its aftershocks. When we look at the ways in which the Paxton Boys and their apologists sought to justify the killing of peaceful Indians, what we find may perhaps surprise the eighteenth-century historian but not the seventeenth-century historian. In fact, I would argue that the Paxton Boys and their apologists continued to operate within the very cultural framework that many historians tell us they had rejected wholesale. They too shared the sensibility that had defined the encounter between settlers and Indians from day one. But in the context of ongoing violence they could not wait for Indians to develop more civilised ways, even if they had made the transition to becoming Christian. Although settlers claimed that officials were ‘maliciously painting’ them ‘in the most odious and detestable Colours’, they did not demonise Indians as ‘reddish’, as Benjamin Franklin suggested. In fact, they claimed that of all involved in the sordid events surrounding the killings—Quakers, Indians and settlers—only the Paxton Boys had acted in the ‘character of a good Subject.’ While they referred to themselves as ‘White People’, they accepted the same cultural assumptions that led Quakers to defend Indian ‘custom’. For example, they agreed that the French had ‘instigated the Indians’, suggesting that they too saw Indians as empty vessels. Moreover, they did not see Indian societies as monolithic, nor did they view all Indians as enemies. For instance, they regarded the Iroquois as a group which had ‘ever retained some reputation for Honour and Fidelity’ as allies. Although the Quakers had called into question their own civility by refusing to defend the frontiers, even these savages, the apologists argued, had the good sense to make war on the Delawares in the West and had ‘shook them by the Hair of the Head, as they express it.’ Indians were still capable of improving; but settlers could not afford to wait. And so they killed because the government would not. This frightening variation on the old civility model emerged in backcountry regions during times of profound stress, war and demographic change, giving settlers what they regarded as a justification.

41 Silver, Our Savage Neighbors.
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for killing Indians that would at least be understood by others. What they were doing was revealing the dark, evil side of the early-modern sensibility that allowed those from ‘superior’ cultures to smash those from ‘backward’ cultures.43

In 1763, as in 1676, the old cultural model began to strain, suggesting another hallmark of these backcountry crises. Benjamin Franklin, as he often did, hit the nail on the head in explaining what was going on. He judged these people the ‘Christian white savages’ of the backcountry.44 Franklin’s formulation almost exactly echoes the terms bandied about by Virginians in 1676, who had distinguished Indians, no matter what their status, from ‘Christian white Servants’. Pennsylvanians on the 1763 frontier also mixed an idiom of race—the term ‘white’—with terminology that denoted cultural difference, namely the words ‘Christian’ and ‘savage’. Settlers employed racial idioms but—and this is the critical point—they did so within the bounds of the older framework. We can hardly regard the use of such mixed metaphors as a discursive shift. Settlers and Indians had, in effect, moved back to the future, or forward to the past. During these moments of profound crisis and violence, understandings of human difference did not, in fact, become clearer, but rather became increasingly blurred.

V Ebb and Flow (and Ebb Again)

This world of blurriness would come to an end. After the Seven Years’ War, Pontiac’s War and the butchery of the Paxton Boys, places to the west of the Appalachian mountains such as the Ohio River Valley became America’s new backcountries. While the crises of the late seventeenth century had been followed by a cooling-off period in the backcountries during the first half of the eighteenth century, the same did not happen after 1763. Indeed, tensions in regions west of the mountains, especially in the Ohio Valley, began to increase in the years after the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763. And violence between settlers and Indians continued.

Nonetheless, the period after 1763 also represents a highpoint for the old civility model. When the British tried to figure out how to make sense of the immense holdings gained after their victory over France in the Seven Years’

43 Griffin, American Leviathan, chapter 2.
44 Benjamin Franklin, A Narrative of the Late Massacre in Lancaster County (Philadelphia, 1764).
War and in the wake of Pontiac’s War, they embarked on a ‘civilising mission’. Indeed, this sensibility would animate the ideology of their territorial American empire west of the Appalachian mountains. Not only did the British divide their holdings with a line running along its eastern continental divide—the so-called Proclamation Line of 1763—to carve out no-go areas west of the mountains for settlers and speculators in an effort to protect Indians, but they did so on the basis of the civility model. While men on the ground such as Johnson and Croghan argued that the west—or at least those areas they were not investing in—should be left unmolested so that Indian societies could develop over time, officials in London began to adopt the language of Scottish Enlightenment thinkers to rationalise their treatment of Indians living in the American West. Embracing ideas espoused by ‘stadial’ theory or ‘conjectural’ history, the chief architects of the Proclamation Line argued that if left alone, Indian societies would eventually emerge from their savage state, move through a barbarous/pastoral age and then graduate to a level of civility commensurate with a fully-developed culture. Such arguments stemmed in part from a fiscal crisis at home and a shortage of troops in the West; nonetheless, however expedient, the very basis of the new empire was premised upon older sensibilities now systematised by Scottish thinkers and embraced by British statesmen, as well as by their Scottish and Irish officials on the ground. Indeed, so prevalent was this line of thinking that just a few years after the Proclamation Line was laid out, Principal William Robertson of Edinburgh University—who had written a history of Scotland replete with stadial notions—contacted the barely lettered Irish Indian trader George Croghan for his take on stadial theory and the prospect of civilising Indians, notions both men believed in. Ideologies make strange bedfellows.45

The period of fluidity and ebb and flow between conflict and cooperation was coming to an end, however. From the mid-1760s until the mid-1790s, the men and women in the Ohio Valley—Indian and settler, wealthy and poor—lived through a prolonged period of uncertainty, chaos and violence. British, American, Virginian and Pennsylvanian government officials alike paid scant attention to western grievances. When they did, it was to exploit the uncertainty of this long period of turmoil in order to further territorial or speculative aims. The period after the Seven Years’ War can therefore be viewed as merely forming one phase of a broader pattern of ebb and flow. What made it exceptional, however, was the duration of hostilities. In some

regions, men and women—both Indian and settler—dealt with the spectre of violence for upwards of forty years. And as we would expect, the older civility model or sensibility of understanding human difference was straining. Indeed, it would crack.46

VI Crossing the Rubicon?

One infamous incident indicates that a critical shift had taken place. In the early 1780s, at a place called Gnadenhutten on the Muskingum River in Ohio, Moravian missionaries ministered to a flourishing community of Delaware Indians. These Indians had remained neutral throughout the American Revolutionary War (1775–83) and were by all accounts Christians who had adopted ‘civilised’ ways. In 1782, a body of militia from Washington County, Pennsylvania—once again largely Irish—entered the mission town of Gnadenhutten and condemned the Indians there to death. Their crime? They possessed goods that only ‘whites’ were deemed capable of using, such as clothing, tea kettles and axes. The men from Washington County argued that the Delawares must have plundered these items from whites they had killed, for Indians could never use them. Condemned, the Indians sang psalms throughout the night, and were executed in brutal fashion the following morning with tomahawks and wooden mallets. Over ninety men, women and children, whose only crime had been that they were not ‘white’, were murdered in cold blood. These views, we know, were shared by common people up and down the backcountry.47

Once again, if we focus on ethnic identity, we miss the point. Massacres even on this scale were, alas, not new. But note the rationale. Settlers killed Indians because they could never use the types of things a white person would use. Settlers had moved far beyond idioms. They made no mention of ‘savagery’, ‘civility’ or having to wait for Indians ‘to develop’. The explanation for this sort of violence is complex, but has little to do with Irishness, Scottishness or life on a violent border in the Old World. Nor does it lie in the inherently violent nature of the New World. Again, the answer lies in process. Whereas the Paxton

46 A number of scholars now view what used to be seen as discrete episodes on the frontier as part of a much longer struggle that would last for decades. On this, see Cayton and Anderson, The Dominion of War.

Boys had justified their actions by referring to the older model—suggesting that Indians were redeemable even as they killed them—by 1782 settlers as a rule refused to admit the capacity of Indians to improve their status even if they were Christians. The corresponding connection between level of development and manners had been sundered once settlers argued that inherent racial characteristics defined what made Indians different from whites. By 1782, the backcountry was not only violent but was in fact defined by bloodshed. In this Hobbesian world of all against all, settlers seem to have degenerated. By the time of the massacre at Gnadenhutten, many Indians had reined in the terror of their raids. Settlers had not. Indeed, white violence against Indians had become so relentless, cruel and brutal that officials had come to regard the settlers as ‘white savages’.\(^{48}\)

Settlers naturally contested the labels applied to them. Significantly, they did so not by shying away from the appalling things they had done or by downplaying their significance, but by rejecting the very model officials employed on the grounds that it failed to explain their social reality. In times of intense violence that extended for many years, and after repeatedly being challenged, the older civility model no longer made sense. The old sensibility of human difference became irrelevant, as it failed to reflect what was happening on the ground. And the attacks against it, as Indians fell, were unrelenting. The killers at Gnadenhutten and their ilk up and down the Ohio Valley killed Indians because they saw Indians as inherently inferior and animal-like. Religion made no difference. Nor did time. Indians would not nor could not develop. They could never be as whites. The violent world that the settlers had created taught them that.

Such attitudes, of course, did not only hinge on violence and discourses, just as earlier transitions did not hinge on idioms alone. Bloodshed and essentialised hate were part and parcel of frontier ebb and flow. At the time of the American Revolution, however, the role of the state was critical. Likewise, the duration of violence, the nature of warfare practised in the west, as well as rivalries between social classes and between patriots and loyalists, fed into this new sensibility. The broader patterns of frontier creation were the same as in 1676 and 1763, but in this instance appalling violence occurred as a nation was born. This ‘Turnerian moment’ would be different to the others.

Thomas Jefferson, we know, did not regard Indians in the same way that common settlers did. Neither did most of the federal officials who manned

\(^{48}\) Griffin, *American Leviathan*, 170–3. For a similar explanation, see Silver, *Our Savage Neighbors*. 
the new American government, which included people such as Secretary of War Henry Knox. They still believed, or at least they claimed to believe, in the older formula. Jefferson embraced a variation of the stadial vision when it came to understanding Indians. This led him to argue that Indians equalled whites in terms of capacity and that with the right influence, their societies could develop over time. Yet, however much he entertained the idea that Indians and whites were inherently equal, the point was moot in these years. For even as Jefferson reflected on the basis of Indian equality while compiling his *Notes on the State of Virginia* in the early 1780s, frontiersmen absolutely certain that they were essentially superior to Indians would settle for nothing less than to have their frightening vision define the way the new government regarded the west. Throughout the 1780s and early 1790s, both wealthy and poor settlers in the west argued that they would not rest, and that revolutionary violence would not cease, until the state acted on their behalf.

The state response is well known and does not merit repeating in detail here. But suffice it to say that after a few abortive attempts to chastise Indians, the government would send a substantial force to conquer Indians, and would draw up a line through present-day Ohio, not far from Gnadenhutten, to hive off Indian lands from white lands. Eventually, Jefferson would become the first president to imagine an America east of the Mississippi River free of Indians. Unlike Governor William Berkeley’s line, established in 1646, those of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries would be impermeable. And unlike the British Proclamation Line of 1763, American lines were put in place not to protect Indians from the bad influence of degenerate settlers, but to safeguard white society from an implacable enemy. Jefferson may have come up with an ideological rationale for taking the west and for carving out new states, but the immediate impetus for doing so came from a racist rabble hungry for land, many of whom were


Irish, Scottish and Scotch-Irish. It was the great misfortune of the Indian tribes whose territory lay in the path of America’s westward expansion that they were confronted by a rabble that refused to be constrained by a civility discourse at the very moment a new nation was coming into being. It was the combination of these two factors that makes the Revolution the critical moment.

VII Conclusion

To appreciate this point means focusing less on people and their folkways and more on process. If we look at the longue durée, there is an ebb and a flow to Indian hating in America’s backcountries. Each generation of settlers, with the exception perhaps of that of the early eighteenth century, discovered this poisonous attitude anew, thereby sustaining the cycle of the backcountry-frontier dynamic. Lines were created over and over again, hatreds were rediscovered, sensibilities were strained, and violence ensued. Language represents a critical feature to watch. But context proves critical as well. Frederick Jackson Turner, unfortunately, was right. Turner may not help us to understand the fluidity that defined the nature of the early American backcountry, but he was right about the line that would emerge. Those historians who champion the Irish and the Scots as exemplars of the middle ground or who demonise them as representatives of the racist frontier err equally in not stepping far enough back to see the whole. They are therefore unable to see how the experiences of Irish and Scottish settlers fit into a broader pattern, one that is much larger than the groups on which they focus.

In many ways, the Scots, Irish and Scotch-Irish were well suited to this world of ebb and flow. The worlds they left behind were defined by such dynamics. Their Old World experiences had been shaped by moments when hatreds took on a racist quality and strict lines existed between groups, as well as by moments of accommodation when inter-cultural boundaries proved porous and even the barbarous and savage were seen as redeemable. This history, however, did not make these people exceptional, any more than any particular period on the early American frontier was exceptional. Ebb and flow, hatred giving way to accommodation, and violence occurring during critical moments of state formation defined life on the margins of the British Atlantic world. The Scots and Irish just happened to inhabit two corners of a
dynamic and troubling world during a dynamic and troubling period, whether those margins were in Derry, Culloden or Paxton. This was their blessing and their curse. This is why we remember them, and this is why if they did not exist, we would have had to invent them.

*University of Notre Dame*
Canadians of Scottish origin were major participants in the Chinese Sunday schools established by both Presbyterian and Congregational churches in Montreal in the late nineteenth century. The most visible outcome of this endeavour was that it led to cordial interactions between Protestant women and Chinese men at a time when large segments of North American society had become deeply hostile to Chinese immigrants (Figure 1).² Shored up by social Darwinism, this hostility reflected a growing acceptance within the English-speaking world over the course of the nineteenth century—and particularly from mid-century onwards—that innate and fixed physical, moral and intellectual disparities existed between different human groups.³ In this context, it is tempting to see Montreal’s Chinese Sunday schools as progressive institutions that anticipated the mid-twentieth century’s firm rejection of biological racism. Yet a growing body of literature suggests that this type of mission work instead remained committed to an earlier view of

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¹ Initial research for this paper was completed while holding a Fonds Québécois de la recherche sur la société et la culture Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the University of Waterloo, and I would like to thank Jeanne Kay Guelke for the helpful insights that she provided at this stage in the research.


human nature that was firmly rooted in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century evangelical and Enlightenment thought.4

This paper will explore these ideas further, focusing in particular on the pathways and mechanisms by which understandings of human difference were carried forward through space and time. As it will demonstrate, the published life stories of pioneering foreign missionaries with personal connections to Montreal, such as Henry Lyman and William Chalmers Burns, served as an inspiration for the city’s Chinese Sunday school work and as a bulwark against the rise of racial biological determinism in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In adopting this approach, an attempt is made to respond to Brian Stanley’s suggestion that it is not enough simply to assert the purported influence of ‘the epistemological method characteristic of the Scottish Enlightenment’ on the Protestant missionary movement. Instead,

Stanley calls for an examination of the diverse ways in which this tradition ‘intersected both with long-established Christian traditions of thinking about barbarism and civilisation and with the “facts” thrown up by the new experience of evangelisation along and across the extending imperial frontier of the nineteenth century.’

Scottish-Canadian participation in a pan-denominational phenomenon of American origin such as the Chinese Sunday schools also provides an opportunity to investigate what John MacKenzie has described as the ‘heterogeneous religious arrangements in empire’. Scottish Presbyterianism served as an important means of maintaining the ethnic distinctiveness of Scots in Canada, and yet there is also a need to consider the extent to which shared evangelical commitments broke down boundaries between different denominations and national groups. Such explorations are especially relevant in a city such as Montreal, in which Protestants from a variety of different national backgrounds came into contact with one another.

I Origins of the ‘Chinese Sunday School’

Montreal’s Chinese Sunday schools existed as part of a wider North American phenomenon. As Chinese immigrants fanned out across the continent in search of employment in the second half of the nineteenth century, Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists and Congregationalists rapidly established Sunday schools to reach out to this largely adult male population. The earliest Chinese missions had been initiated by Presbyterians in California in the 1850s, with Chinese Sunday schools operating in cities such as New York and St Louis by the late 1860s and in Boston by the late 1870s. A survey of Chinese Sunday schools in North America dating from 1892 lists 271 schools, heavily clustered on the eastern seaboard and in California, with 6,229 adult Chinese ‘regularly under Christian instruction’.

In Canada, as the Canadian Pacific Railway neared completion in 1884–5, many laid-off Chinese workers moved eastwards in search of new employment rather than returning to China. Perhaps not coincidentally, it was in 1884 that Emmanuel Congregational Church became the first church in Montreal to open a Chinese Sunday school, and soon after invited the nearby American Presbyterian Church to assist it in this work. It was not until the early 1890s, however, that the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada decided to become involved, hiring the experienced Scottish-American missionary Dr Joseph Clarke Thomson to supervise its Chinese mission work in Canada. Having organised Chinese Sunday schools in New York during his years as a student at the Union Theological Seminary in the late 1870s, Thomson had gone on to work as a medical missionary in South China. His fluency in Cantonese was an asset and by 1904 there were as many as seventeen schools under his supervision in Montreal alone, each associated with a different Presbyterian congregation.

Montreal’s predominantly male Chinese population, large numbers of whom came from the Guangdong region and worked as laundrymen, were drawn to the schools primarily by their desire to learn English—although for some the social and spiritual dimensions may also have grown in importance over time. Within each school, the regular church members who served

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8 This led the Canadian federal government to impose a $50 head tax in 1885 (raised to $100 in 1900 and $500 in 1903) in order to discourage further immigration from China. Jiwu Wang, ‘His Dominion’ and the ‘Yellow Peril’: Protestant Missions to Chinese Immigrants in Canada, 1859–1967 (Waterloo, 2006), 11–2.

9 Emmanuel Church Outlook, 2 (December 1909), 5.


11 Overpopulation, political unrest and natural catastrophes encouraged Chinese emigration from Guangdong province during this period. The fact that the provincial capital Canton [Guangzhou] had been the only Chinese port open to
as teachers saw their goal as instructing Chinese immigrants in the English language, western ways and the Christian gospel. As a result, just over half of the approximately 800 Chinese Montrealers listed in the 1901 census of Canada identified themselves as Presbyterian. This number does not reflect actual conversions, which were relatively few in number. It does imply, however, that the Sunday school movement succeeded in creating a large number of what John Tchen has described as ‘missionary-associated’ Chinese.12

The volunteer teachers, many of whom were middle-class women of Scottish origin, were only partly motivated by a desire to acculturate Chinese immigrants to Protestant Canadian society. Instead, anticipating that the vast majority of Chinese men who attended the schools in Montreal would eventually return to their home villages in Guangdong, they fervently hoped that their efforts would assist missionaries working on the front lines in China. The volunteer teachers were aware, for instance, that returned migrants often enabled foreign missionaries to gain access to villages where they would not otherwise have been welcome. Some returnees also served as colporteurs and evangelists in their home districts, while others sought out more formal theological training at institutions such as the American Presbyterian Seminary in Canton [Guangzhou].13 These transnational connections became

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13 See, for example, *The Acts and Proceedings of the Thirty-Ninth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Toronto, June 4–11, 1913* (Toronto, 1913), 128–30; *Knox Church Montreal Annual Reports 1912* (Montreal, 1913), 17–8, The Presbyterian Church in Canada Archives (Toronto), Knox, Crescent, Kensington & First Presbyterian Church (Montreal, Quebec) Collection, 1978–4001–6–5; *Thirty-First
increasingly important once the Presbyterian Church in Canada officially inaugurated its Macao Mission (later known as the South China Mission) in the early years of the twentieth century.\footnote{Becking, \textit{A History of the United Church of Canada’s South China Mission}.} Family commitments may have bound the city’s Chinese Sunday school teachers to Montreal and to their homes, but their efforts nevertheless enabled them to participate vicariously in what was happening on the missionary frontier in China.

\section*{II The Missionary Frontier through Space and Time}

The ambitions of Montreal’s Presbyterian and Congregational churches in relation to the city’s Chinese community can be seen as a product of the Protestant commitment to foreign missions that had taken root in Britain in the late eighteenth century, in close association with the rise of evangelicalism.\footnote{On Britain’s entry into the Protestant missionary awakening, see Andrew F. Walls, ‘The Eighteenth-Century Protestant Missionary Awakening in its European Context’ in Stanley (ed.), \textit{Christian Missions and the Enlightenment}, esp. 34–5.} A significant development within the historiography of evangelicalism in recent years has been the recognition that evangelical Christianity—which had traditionally been seen by historians ‘as an enthusiastic, heartwarming, and experiential reaction against the aridity and skepticism of the Age of Reason’—in fact owed an important debt to the culture and thought of the Enlightenment.\footnote{Brian Stanley, ‘Christian Missions and the Enlightenment: A Reevaluation’ in Stanley (ed.), \textit{Christian Missions and the Enlightenment}, 2. Colin Kidd expresses a similar idea from a different perspective when he writes that ‘many participants in the Enlightenment, not least within the Protestant Atlantic Enlightenment of the British Isles and North America, aimed not so much to make the world anew as to effect a reconciliation between the best of the new philosophy and the core truths of Christianity’. See \textit{The Forging of Races: Race and Scripture in the Protestant Atlantic World, 1600–2000} (Cambridge, 2006), 83.} As George Marsden explains, what lived on—particularly in the United States—during the nineteenth century ‘was not any explicit commitment to the “Enlightenment” as such, but rather a dedication to the general philosophical basis that had undergirded the empirically-based rationality so confidently proclaimed by most eighteenth-century thinkers.’\footnote{George M. Marsden, \textit{Understanding Fundamentalism and Evangelicalism} (Grand Rapids,
This confidence in ‘the elevating and illuminating capacity of knowledge and rational argument’ was clearly visible within the early missionary movement, although evangelicals deemed such things to be of little value unless accompanied by faith in Jesus Christ.18 Despite intense debates between Moderates and Evangelicals within the Church of Scotland in the early decades of the nineteenth century over whether education or preaching should be emphasised by missionaries, in practice both aspects became integral to Scottish Presbyterian missions.19 Enlightenment thought also reinforced the sustaining ideology of the foreign missionary endeavour through its emphasis on the psychic unity of humanity.20 While a diversity of opinion existed amongst Enlightenment thinkers regarding the nature of human difference, it was the Scottish Common Sense philosophy—embraced by individuals such as James Beattie who argued, contra Hume, that all people shared the same capacity for civilisation—that exerted the greatest influence amongst English-speaking evangelicals in Britain and North America.21 Evangelicals may have placed less faith in the underlying goodness of human beings than many Enlightenment thinkers, emphasising instead the sinfulness of humanity, yet this did not prevent them from sharing in the optimistic belief ‘that humanity enjoyed great potential for improvement’.22

20 The doctrine of psychic unity posited that ‘all human groups shared the same general kind and level of intelligence and the same basic nature, although it was recognized that individuals within groups differed from one another to some extent.’ See Bruce G. Trigger, Sociocultural Evolution: Calculation and Contingency (Oxford, 1998), 32.
22 David W. Bebbington, Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s (London, 1989), 60.
As suggested above, publications that recounted earlier exploits on the frontiers of mission may have served as one means of propelling these ideas into the latter part of the century, thus providing a buffer against the rise of racial biological determinism. In order to explore how this actually worked in practice, this paper will now proceed with an examination of the way in which the missionary philosophies of two early nineteenth-century missionaries—American Congregationalist Henry Lyman (1809–34) and Scottish Presbyterian William Chalmers Burns (1815–68)—continued to inspire the much later Chinese Sunday school movement through published accounts of their endeavours. Both Lyman and Burns had experienced conversions during the evangelical revivals of the 1820s and 1830s, and both had personal ties with Montreal which made their life stories of particular interest to the city’s Congregational and Presbyterian communities.

III Henry Lyman: Martyr of Sumatra

We turn first to Henry Lyman, whose niece Grace Lyman initiated the first Chinese Sunday school in Montreal, at Emmanuel Congregational Church, in 1884. The Lyman family had originally emigrated from England to New England in the 1630s. In the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of members of the family moved north to Montreal, including Grace’s father Theodore Lyman, a silversmith and jeweller. Grace’s aunt, Hannah Willard Lyman, also moved to Montreal where she became a well-known ladies educator prior to taking up the position of first Lady Principal of Vassar College in 1865.23 The member of the family most closely associated with the missionary frontier, however, was Grace’s uncle Henry Lyman.

Born in Northampton, Massachusetts, Henry Lyman had a conversion experience in 1827 during the Second Great Awakening while studying at Amherst College. Having completed his theological training at Andover Theological Seminary, Lyman embarked on an exploratory mission to Sumatra in 1833 on behalf of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He had a strong desire to go where no missionary had gone before, and excitedly wrote in his diary on 9 May 1834 that he and his companion

Samuel Munson now stood ‘on the verge of civilisation, just poising for a leap among the untamed savages, and the perils of exploring a new country.’ While Lyman survived for only a few months in Sumatra before being killed and devoured by cannibals, two book-length accounts of his experiences on the missionary frontier transmitted the story of his life and death to subsequent generations. The first to appear was the Reverend William Thompson’s *Memoirs of the Rev. Samuel Munson and the Rev. Henry Lyman, Late Missionaries to the Indian Archipelago, with the Journal of their Exploring Tour* (1839). This was followed in 1856 by *The Martyr of Sumatra: A Memoir of Henry Lyman*, an anonymous work commonly attributed to Hannah Willard Lyman.

It seems reasonable to assume that these accounts, as well as family stories about Henry Lyman, were familiar to his niece Grace. While it is impossible to track the wider circulation of these works within Montreal’s Protestant community, some suggestive evidence is available. The copy of *The Martyr of Sumatra* that is currently housed in the Victoria University – Emmanuel College Library at the University of Toronto, for example, appears to have belonged during the 1860s to Mary Helen Dougall, the daughter of John Dougall—the Paisley-born editor of the evangelical *Montreal Daily Witness* newspaper. The Dougall and Lyman families attended Henry Wilkes’ Zion Congregational Church together for many years, with members of both families subsequently moving to Emmanuel Congregational Church in the more desirable uptown part of the city in the 1870s. It is therefore possible to state with some certainty that *The Martyr of Sumatra* was read beyond the confines of the Lyman family, while it also seems likely that the book circulated within the evangelical Congregational community in Montreal.

*The Martyr of Sumatra* draws extensively on Lyman’s personal diaries and correspondence to emphasise his belief in the compatibility of Christian proclamation and the elevating capacity of rational knowledge. In one instance, the book quotes a letter written by Henry Lyman to his parents in

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1830 from Andover Theological Seminary in which he argued that missions not only bring religious benefits to the heathen and raise standards of piety at home, but also give ‘an impulse to science, literature, the arts, and the business of life’. Elsewhere, the book quotes a letter written by Henry Lyman to his cousin Charles in January 1831. Having ransacked the bookstores and libraries of Boston in search of facts related to ‘the woes and miseries of paganism’ in order to write a dissertation on ‘The Condition of Females in Heathen Countries’, Henry Lyman reported that he had emerged ‘fully confirmed in the missionary faith.’ He attributed what he viewed as the degradation and immorality of women living in heathen countries to ‘the ignorance in which they are kept’, with most unable to either read or write.

Other than through his reading, Henry Lyman’s New England upbringing provided few opportunities for encounters with those of backgrounds and cultures different to his own. The sole exception to this was his work as a teacher in a ‘colored’ Sabbath school, which Lyman described as having given him a ‘foretaste of missionary labor’. Thus, it was only during his missionary travels that Lyman had the opportunity to put his beliefs to the test regarding the transformative potential of Christianity and education on those of other cultures and religions. *The Martyr of Sumatra* shares with its readers Lyman’s impressions of encounters with Chinese, Malays and Javanese, as well as with members of the Nias and Batak tribes. He described Nias emigrants living on the Batu islands, for example, as being fairer in skin color than the Javanese or Malays and as having a ‘cast of countenance … far superior to any other Asiatics I have met, many of them reminding me strongly of friends

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27 Ibid., 177–8. Henry Lyman delivered an address based on this research to a Montreal audience when visiting his sister in the spring of 1832. It was also published as a tract entitled *The Condition and Character of Females in Pagan and Mohammedan Countries* (2nd edition, Boston, 1831). As this publication makes clear, Henry Lyman consulted the works of authors holding views very different to his own in composing his dissertation. One footnote, for example, references the Jesuit and early French ethnographer Abbé Jean-Antoine Dubois. Dubois was a follower of Montesquieu whose *Letters on the State of Christianity in India; In which the Conversion of the Hindoos is Considered as Impracticable* (London, 1823) caused controversy in England for suggesting that large numbers of conversions were unlikely to take place in India because of the difficulty of undermining Hindu beliefs. See Paul Hockings, ‘The Abbé Dubois, An Early French Ethnographer’, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, 11 (1977), 330, 334, 338–40. Lyman did not, however, draw attention to these doubts in his own publication.

28 *The Martyr of Sumatra*, 61.
at home.'29 He also praised them for their ‘superiority of mind and elevation of character, their present exemption from vice, the looseness of their bonds to heathenism, their respect for foreigners, their love for the English,’ all of which he thought made them ‘white for the harvest.’30 During his later visit to the Nias islands off the west coast of Sumatra, Lyman was so surprised to discover Malays who ‘in point of intelligence and vivacity’ approach ‘so much nearer than the Malays of Java to Europeans’ that he found it difficult to persuade himself that they were indeed ‘pure Malay’.31

While such comments showed an awareness of skin colour, as well as a tendency to stereotype entire ethnic groups both positively and negatively, they did not reflect a belief in fixed and immutable racial hierarchies. Instead, they were a product of Lyman’s mandate to discern which groups offered the best prospects for future mission work by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. Schools and education were an integral part of this vision, and The Martyr of Sumatra leaves its readers with every reason to believe that Henry Lyman shared his missionary companion Samuel Munson’s vision of mission schools as ‘the engines with which God designs to break down the strongest bulwarks of superstition and idolatry’.32 Similar sentiments were embedded in the Chinese Sunday schools in Montreal, and it is perhaps not surprising that Grace Lyman should have been inspired by some of the same ideas that led her uncle, fifty years earlier, to an early and memorable death on the missionary frontier.

Despite the pronounced American influences on the Chinese Sunday schools in Montreal, the ethnically-diverse character of the city’s Congregational community meant that these ideas diffused rapidly amongst individuals of varied national origins. The important role played by such national synergies within the Congregational Church in Montreal is exemplified by the life of Henry Wilkes, the long-time minister of Zion Congregational Church. Born in England, Wilkes emigrated to Upper Canada with his parents in 1820 and moved to Montreal a few years later to take up a career in business. In the absence of a Congregational place of worship, he attended the American Presbyterian Church, which in 1825–6 participated in a northern extension of the revival responsible for Henry Lyman’s conversion. Determined to enter

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29 Ibid., 353.
30 Ibid., 359. Lyman was quoting Jesus’ words from John 4:35: ‘Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for the harvest’.
31 Ibid., 383.
the Congregational ministry as a result of this experience, as ‘a loyal British subject’ Wilkes decided to undertake his studies in Scotland rather than the United States and enrolled at the University of Glasgow as well as the Glasgow Theological Academy. In the latter institution, Wilkes came under the tutelage of Greville Ewing and Ralph Wardlaw, individuals credited with having shaped ‘a Scottish school of mission theory that combined evangelical zeal with confidence in the capacity of reason to support the claims of revelation.’

Having lived in England, Canada and Scotland, and having been exposed to American influences, Wilkes was well placed to minister to First Congregational Church (later known as Zion Congregational Church) – a mixed congregation containing evangelicals of American, Scottish and English origin – upon his return to Montreal in 1836. Emmanuel Congregational church, which was an off-shoot of Zion, was an equally diverse congregation, with a membership in the late 1870s that was approximately 42 per cent Scottish, 41 per cent English, 12 per cent Irish and 3 per cent American. For Congregationalists of Scottish origin in Montreal, this situation meant that their churches served as places of fusion and exchange between evangelicals of various national backgrounds to a much greater extent than was the case for their Presbyterian counterparts. It was in this environment that the city’s earliest Chinese Sunday schools took root.

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35 1881 Manuscript Census of Canada in digital format; *Yearbook of Emmanuel Church Montreal, for 1878, with Reports for 1877* (Montreal, 1878), 21–2, Archives nationales du Québec, Fonds Conférence de l’Eglise unie du Canada, Emmanuel Congregational Church, P603 S2 SS13, contenant 157, doc. EMM/6. The percentage of Americans is likely to have been somewhat higher, given that many would have claimed to have been of English, Irish or Scottish origin. This is confirmed by the fact that approximately 8 per cent of the membership was born in the United States.
IV William Chalmers Burns: Scottish Revivalist and Missionary to China

In establishing their much larger network of Chinese Sunday schools in Montreal from the 1890s onwards, members of the Presbyterian Church in Canada—like their Congregationalist counterparts—drew inspiration from biographical accounts that connected the Montreal churches to earlier, and in this case Scottish, undertakings on the frontiers of mission.36 One such narrative was to be found in the Reverend Islay Burns’ exhaustive biography of his missionary brother, William Chalmers Burns, entitled Memoir of the Rev. Wm. C. Burns, M.A., Missionary to China from the English Presbyterian Church (1870).

A son of the manse, William Chalmers Burns grew up in Kilsyth before pursuing further studies at the Aberdeen Grammar School and Marischal College. He subsequently moved to Edinburgh intending to become a lawyer, but a conversion experience in 1831 led him instead into the ministry. After returning to Aberdeen to complete his degree, Burns studied divinity at the University of Glasgow and developed a strong desire to devote himself to the foreign mission field. While awaiting a posting abroad, he became renowned for the great revivals that followed his preaching in Dundee and Kilsyth in 1839. After a number of years working as an evangelist in Scotland, Ireland, England and Canada, Burns finally received the foreign posting he had been longing for when he was appointed as the English Presbyterian Church’s first missionary to China in 1847. An exceptionally dedicated missionary, he remained in China until his death over twenty years later.37

While Burns had less of an enduring family connection with Montreal than did Henry Lyman, he nevertheless devoted considerable attention to the city during his two years in Canada as a Free Church missionary in the wake of the Great Disruption in 1843. During his time in Montreal, he preached to

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36 The Presbyterian Church in Canada was formed in 1875 and brought together Church of Scotland and Canada Presbyterian Church congregations. The Canada Presbyterian Church had itself been formed in 1861 as a merger of the Canadian Synods of the Free Church of Scotland and the United Presbyterian Church in Canada.

a number of congregations including the newly-established Coté Street Free Church as well as to Henry Wilkes’ congregation. His uncle, the Reverend Dr Robert Burns, also became well-known in Presbyterian circles in Montreal, having played an important role in the development of the Free Church in British North America. The family connection was maintained into the early 1870s, when the Reverend Robert Ferrier Burns—Robert Burns’ son—served as minister of the Coté Street Church for a five-year period. During his time in the city, Robert Ferrier Burns observed that, despite having left Canada over a quarter of a century earlier, his late cousin W.C. Burns had nevertheless left ‘footprints’ wherever he had preached, such that ‘in many part of the backwoods eyes will yet fill, and hearts heave, and voices become solemn and tender, when his name is spoken.’ W.C. Burns’ association with Montreal was still remembered as late as 1897 when Presbyterians in the city commemorated the fiftieth anniversary of his appointment to China alongside the ninetieth anniversary of the arrival in China of pioneer Protestant missionary, Dr Robert Morrison.

Given Burns’ personal and family connections with Montreal, as well as his ability to make an enduring impression, the Memoir published by Islay Burns in 1870 seems likely to have been read with some interest within Presbyterian circles in the city. In doing so, those seeking to resist the racist ideologies of the later nineteenth century would have found much to reassure them. Prior to his departure for China, W.C. Burns accumulated considerable experience working on what might be described as the internal missionary frontiers of Scotland, Ireland and Canada. As well as evangelising French Canadians, Highlanders (in Scotland and Canada) and Irish Catholics (in Ireland and Canada)—picking

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38 Burns, Memoir of the Rev. Wm. C. Burns, 262–3.
42 The Acts and Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Montreal, June 8–17, 1898 (Toronto, 1898), 205; Crescent Street Presbyterian Church, Montreal (Presbyterian Church in Canada)—Annual Reports for the Year Ending 31st December, 1897 (Montreal, 1898), 27. A notable feature of the Morrison-Burns celebration was the participation of local Chinese Sunday school scholars.
up some French and Gaelic as he did so—Burns also preached to First Nations people in Sarnia (Canada West) as well as to former American slaves in Amherstburg (also in Canada West). Thus, in stark contrast with Henry Lyman, Burns had extensive intercultural experience and a proven facility with language upon which to draw when faced with China’s varied regional cultures and dialects. By juxtaposing these encounters with one another and with his brother’s later work in China, Islay Burns’ narrative implicitly reinforces a belief in a universal humanity by implying that all peoples are equally capable, and in need, of conversion to Protestant Christianity.

Likewise, the narrative emphasises that all converts, regardless of whether they are Highlanders or Cantonese, must expect to abandon elements of their culture not seen as being compatible with evangelical Protestantism. Citing the testimony of the Reverend Alexander Cameron of Ardersier, who had worked among the Highlanders of Glengarry (Canada West) just after W.C. Burns’ visit in the 1840s, the Memoir describes how Burns’ preaching contributed to the demise of ‘old customs and inveterate habits’ such as balls, merry-making and New Year’s festivals. More dramatically, it relates how ‘some of the leaders in such things with their own hands cast their fiddles and bagpipes into the fire; and instead of the sounds of revelry the voice of praise and spiritual melody began to be heard in their dwellings.’

Burns’ letters to his mother back in Scotland, which are extensively quoted in the Memoir, nevertheless demonstrated an awareness that the work of an evangelist in China differed considerably from that of an evangelist in Scotland. This was not because Chinese people were fundamentally different in any way, he suggested, but because they lacked prior knowledge of God, the Sabbath and the Bible.

As was the case with Henry Lyman, Burns described some groups as more barbaric and less morally advanced than others. He had a low opinion of Malays, for example, who he considered to be ‘awfully deceitful’ and ‘a simple people, rather fitted to obey than to rule’. Likewise, he found the people in the district around Swatow [Shantou] in eastern Guangdong ‘more blind and hardened in idolatry and sin’ than any others he had encountered bar the denizens of Canton [Guangzhou], and was critical of the way in which local fishermen, boatmen and people working in the fields ‘pursue their work in summer in a state of savage nudity’. The Memoir even relates how, during

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43 Burns, Memoir of the Rev. Wm. C. Burns, 284.
44 Ibid., 359.
45 Ibid., 318.
46 Ibid., 452.
his stay in Canton [Guangzhou] in 1850–1, Burns had been tempted ‘to
doubt if the Chinese were in their present state even susceptible of those
deep spiritual impressions which he had seen in former days and longed
to see again’. This was not a rejection of his belief in the convertibility of
all peoples, however, but rather a reflection of his willingness to consider
the possibility that cultural and religious obstacles might make necessary ‘a
lengthened period of preparation, and the long and patient sowing of many
labourers’.47 Ultimately, however, the biography leaves its readers with a more
encouraging description of Burns’ participation in a successful awakening
at Pechuia (near Amoy [Xiamen]) in 1854. Largely the initiative of Chinese
convert Ong Chhiengchoan, the awakening resulted in many converts publicly
destroying their idols and ancestral tablets.48 ‘What I see here,’ wrote a
reinvigorated Burns, ‘makes me call to mind former days of the Lord’s power
in my native land.’49 Scots and Chinese were not so different after all. Years
later, the participation of Chinese Sunday school scholars in events such as
the Morrison-Burns commemoration of 1897 served to reaffirm this belief
within Montreal’s Presbyterian community.

Given the sizeable Scottish Presbyterian community in Montreal, it is
not surprising that they derived much of their foreign missionary impulse
from Scottish sources. An 1854 tour of British North America by Scotland’s
famous missionary to India, Dr Alexander Duff, played an important role in
raising the profile of foreign mission. Duff’s visit inaugurated the movement
that eventually led to George Leslie Mackay (who also studied under Duff
while pursuing postgraduate studies in Edinburgh) being sent as the Canada
Presbyterian Church’s first missionary to China in 1871.50 Duff’s influence
was not, however, confined to Canada’s Scottish Presbyterian community.
He presented his three-hour address at the St James Street Methodist Church
in Montreal to an audience composed of Protestant Montrealers of all

47 Ibid., 374.
48 Ibid., 407. For more on the Pechuia awakening, see David Cheung (Chen Yiqiang),
Christianity in Modern China: The Making of the First Native Protestant Church (Leiden,
49 Burns, Memoir of the Rev. Wm. C. Burns, 410.
50 John S. Moir, Enduring Witness: A History of the Presbyterian Church in Canada (Toronto,
1987), 149–50. On the lives of Alexander Duff and George Leslie Mackay, see
vfs34m2, accessed 25 March 2009.
denominations, including the Reverend Henry Wilkes of the Congregational Church. Likewise, however significant the Scottish missionary impulse may have been, Montreal’s Presbyterians were not immune to American influences. Their commitment to missionary work in China not only led them to participate in the pan-denominational Chinese Sunday school movement, which had its origins in the United States, but also to look to Joseph Clarke Thomson, an American—albeit one of Scottish origin, when seeking an experienced missionary to lead their Chinese mission work in Montreal in the 1890s.

V Looking Backwards: Chinese Sunday Schools in the late Nineteenth Century

Henry Lyman’s and William Chalmers Burns’ experiences on the missionary frontier lived on, not only in the published accounts of their lives, but also in the work of the Chinese missions in Montreal. An important strand of their influence can be found in the active efforts of those involved in Chinese Sunday school work in Montreal to counter racist attacks on Chinese Canadians, accompanied by their continued adherence to a conversionist outlook. In many other sectors of society, faith in the ability of missionaries to serve as agents of civilisation had been undermined by mounting evidence that even sustained efforts to educate and convert indigenous peoples did not necessarily lead them to embrace European ways. For some, this lent credence to the belief that pronounced biological differences existed between different human groups, a view which—when combined with the much longer time frame of Darwinian evolution—could now be adopted without having to abandon a monogenic theory of human origins. While the idea

51 Wood, Memoir of Henry Wilkes, 165.
52 See Harris, Making Native Space, 10–4; Alan Lester, ‘Review Article: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies’, Journal of Historical Geography, 29 (2003), 280; Porter, Religion versus Empire?, 283; and Trigger, Sociocultural Evolution, 64.
53 Trigger, Sociocultural Evolution, 63–4. Such beliefs reflected the understanding of human evolution that existed in the late nineteenth century. As archaeologist Bruce Trigger explains, ‘No one realized in the late nineteenth century [just] how long human evolution had taken and hence how wide was the gap between all living apes and humans. It is now accepted that what human beings are today, both intellectually and emotionally, has been shaped by natural selection operating for millions of years on scavengers and hunter-gatherers who lived in small groups. Hence it is not surprising that the biological basis for human behaviour is everywhere much the same, even if human beings in different parts of the world have come to look different from one
that such differences were insurmountable was incompatible with missionary
endeavour, the attitudes of missionaries who had come to the conclusion that
‘lesser’ peoples could only be improved over very long periods of time were
often virtually indistinguishable from those of scientific racists.54

Even within the Presbyterian Church in Canada there were those who had
come to the conclusion that Chinese immigrants were effectively unassimilable.
Thus, in his influential 1912 publication, Our Task in Canada, Presbyterian
minister Roderick George MacBeth presented a range of arguments favouring
the $500 head tax designed to prevent Chinese from entering Canada. While not
abandoning his belief that it would ultimately be possible to turn immigrants
belonging to ‘inferior races and lower civilizations’ into ‘Christian citizens
of Canada’, MacBeth nevertheless feared that uncontrolled immigration
would prove overwhelming.55 Such arguments contributed to the eventual
implementation of the exclusionary Chinese Immigration Act in 1923 just as
much as the more explicit racism of biological determinists.

In contrast, those participating in the Chinese missions in Montreal were
some of the most vocal critics of discriminatory policies. They criticised
and in some cases protested against the Canadian government’s head tax, as
well as a municipal water tax designed to put Chinese laundrymen out of
business. They also condemned violent attacks on Chinese Montrealers and
on their property, and took a stand against anti-Chinese advertising in local
newspapers.56

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54 For further discussion of the impact of changing attitudes towards ‘race’ on Protestant
missionary thought in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see Ross,

55 Roderick George MacBeth, Our Task In Canada (Toronto, 1912), 21; for his arguments
in favour of severely restricting Chinese immigration, see 80–3. For further
discussion of MacBeth’s views, see Wang, ‘His Dominion’, 97–8.

56 Examples can be found in the following sources: Minutes Monthly Congregational
Meetings including Committee Reports 1899–1902, 21 January 1901, Archives
nationales du Québec, Fonds Conférence de l’Église unie du Canada, Emmanuel
Congregational Church, P603 S2 SS13, contenant 155, doc. EMM/1/7/3; Presbytery
of Montreal (Presbyterian Church in Canada), Minutes of Meeting of the Presbytery of
Montreal (of the Presbyterian Church in Canada) 1884–1900 (Montreal, 1884–1900),
December 1895, March 1896, September 1896, June 1899 (a copy of these minutes
can be found in The Joseph C. McLelland Library, Presbyterian College, Montreal);
American Presbyterian Church Men’s League Minutes 1912–1920, 18 February 1915,
23 February 1915, 3 March 1915, Archives nationales du Québec, Fonds Conférence
de l’Église unie du Canada, American Presbyterian Church, P603 S2 SS14, contenant
168, doc. AME/15/3 A65.
At a congregational level, such activities rarely led to the recording of profound reflections on issues of race, culture, evolution or theology, with racist actions frequently being denounced primarily on the basis of the negative impact that they had on the mission work itself both at home and abroad. Nevertheless, there is evidence to suggest that these actions in defence of Chinese reflected active resistance to the doctrines of biological racism. Speaking of the mission work among Chinese in nearby Toronto in 1904, the Reverend A.B. Winchester attributed the ‘bright promise’ of this field to the community at large not being ‘tainted with the heresy that the Chinese are made of a different kind of clay from the Anglo-Saxon’.57 Those involved in Chinese mission work in Montreal received a similar commendation from an unnamed ‘distinguished Chinese official’: ‘I am fully convinced,’ he reported, ‘that towards the Chinese they truly practice the precept “Love thy neighbour as thyself”, and do not discriminate on account of difference of race.’58

Underpinning such behaviour was an ongoing commitment to the value of human beings as individuals. Addressing the Montreal Women’s Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in 1900, Vice President Mrs R. Campbell reminded her audience that while social scientists might be preoccupied with the rights of individuals in relation to the nation or to the state, Christian thinkers and workers were instead concerned with the value of the person as ‘an individual soul which can only be saved or lost’.59

While those participating in the Chinese Sunday schools refused to endorse the idea that Europeans were biologically superior to other human groups, their belief that all people were capable of benefiting from cultural and religious development along western lines nevertheless remained profoundly ethnocentric. Evidence of this included a tendency to view Montreal’s emerging Chinatown as highly objectionable, although for different reasons than their mainstream racist counterparts. Mission workers were particularly upset when a Chinese temple containing what was described as a large gilded ‘idol’ was established in Montreal’s Chinatown in 1899. Having called a special meeting, they expressed regret that a ‘heathen place of worship’ had been opened in their midst and called upon the city’s Chinese population to have the

57 The Globe (Toronto), 16 February 1904.
58 The Acts and Proceedings of the Twenty-Fourth General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, Montreal, June 8–17, 1898 (Toronto, 1898), 206.
temple closed. In other words, Chinatown was seen as undesirable because it was understood as a rejection of western cultural and religious influences. In contrast, the Presbytery minutes of 1902 waxed lyrical about a special gathering of Chinese at Knox Presbyterian Church, recounting how their ‘neat, cleanly appearance, their intelligent looking faces, [and] their appreciation of the exercises, showed them to be men capable of great usefulness, were they truly enlightened and regenerated by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Similar tensions can be found in the missionary literature on the plight of women in China, a genre that was consumed avidly by members of the women’s missionary societies in Montreal. Despite attempting to contradict some of the worst stereotypes that existed in western minds about Chinese women and their family lives, books such as China’s New Day (1912) by American missionary Isaac Headland portrayed even educated Chinese women as lacking developed faculties of reason. As was the case in Henry Lyman’s much earlier publication on The Condition and Character of Females in Pagan and Mohammedan Countries (1831), such caricatures were necessary because they left vital space for the gospel and western civilisation to liberate Chinese from their perceived backwardness. While Chinese Christians and missionary-associated Chinese in North America are known to have publicly expressed their objections to the way in which some western missionaries portrayed their home culture, the attitudes that had underpinned Protestant missionary endeavour for over a century proved highly resistant to change.

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60 The Montreal Daily Witness, 2 June 1899.
63 For further discussion of this idea, see Stanley, ‘Christianity and Civilization’, 170.
VI Conclusions

American historian Peggy Pascoe has argued that mission work very similar to that performed by the Chinese Sunday schools served in the United States as a bridge between the liberal-evangelical humanitarianism of the early nineteenth century and the mid-twentieth-century attack on biological determinism.\(^{65}\) Those involved in the Chinese Sunday school work in Montreal did indeed promote anti-discriminatory policies that would gain more widespread support during the second half of the twentieth century. From a nineteenth-century perspective, however, they are perhaps more accurately seen as having fallen behind the times, holding onto an earlier understanding of human nature largely derived from evangelicalism’s reconciliation of the core truths of Christianity with the insights of the Scottish Enlightenment. It was their belief in the doctrine of universal salvation, combined with their commitment to the unity of humankind and the illuminating capacity of rational knowledge, which made them optimistic that they could transform those deemed to be backward and heathen into civilised Christians very much like themselves. This perspective commendably resisted more racist formulations, but has been described by Canadian historical geographer Cole Harris as ‘allowing next to no room for continuing cultural difference, and hardly a hint of the idea that there were different forms of civilised human societies.’\(^{66}\)

As has been demonstrated above, narratives of pioneering endeavours on the missionary frontier, such as *The Martyr of Sumatra* and the *Memoir of the Rev. Wm. C. Burns*, helped to perpetuate this vision. Such narratives carried additional weight due to the fact that both Lyman and Burns were personally known to members of the Congregational and Presbyterian communities in Montreal. This suggests that personal, familial and denominational networks may have played an important role in ensuring that older beliefs about a common humanity and the convertibility of all peoples remained strong in the face of the growing racism of the nineteenth century.

Finally, this study raises the question of whether past research on Scottish diaspora communities may not have been overly-committed to identifying the realms in which both authentic and inventive expressions of ‘Scottishness’ can be found. This has led to emphasis being placed on overtly ‘ethnic’ expressions of Scottish identity such as Caledonian Societies and Highland Games, and on the isolation of explicitly Scottish contributions to overseas communities.

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\(^{65}\) Pascoe, *Relations of Rescue*, 117.

\(^{66}\) Harris, *Making Native Space*, 9.
societies. In doing so, however, it has diverted scholars from also exploring the myriad ways in which Scottish Canadians were themselves transformed by their encounter with North America and with the wider world. The present study has drawn attention to the importance of transatlantic evangelicalism in spurring interactions across national and denominational borders. Despite living in the United States, Scotland and Canada respectively, young men such as Henry Lyman, William Chalmers Burns and Henry Wilkes went through very similar conversion experiences during the evangelical revivals of the 1820s and 1830s. The ministries of these individuals then contributed to the further convergence of Protestant evangelicalism within a transatlantic context, with Lyman preaching in Canada, Burns evangelising in Ireland, Canada and England, and Wilkes advocating a more American style of revivalism during his time in Scotland. Ethnically and religiously mixed communities such as that in Montreal provided further opportunities for migrants of Scottish origin to exchange ideas with those of other national backgrounds. This was especially true for Scottish Congregationalists in Montreal who, in contrast with their Scottish Presbyterian counterparts, generally found themselves worshipping in churches in which no single ethnic group formed a clear majority. These transnational and interethnic interactions played a vital role in creating the common ground that enabled later North American evangelical undertakings such as the Chinese Sunday schools to secure support across denominational, ethnic and national boundaries.

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67 While the emphasis of this paper is on interaction and mutual transformation rather than assimilation, Edward Cowan has identified ‘the Scottish desire to assimilate’ as ‘a subject which has received far too little attention’. Edward J. Cowan, ‘The Myth of Scotch Canada’ in Marjory Harper and Michael E. Vance (eds), Myth, Migration and the Making of Memory: Scotia and Nova Scotia c.1700–1990 (Halifax and Edinburgh, 1999), 66.

68 Based on his experience at the American Presbyterian Church in Montreal, Henry Wilkes published a series of articles in The Christian Herald (a Scottish Congregationalist publication) in order to inform Scottish readers about the revivals of religion then taking place in North America. See The Christian Herald, April 1829, 138–9, and May 1829, 175–6. I would like to thank Dr William D. McNaughton, historian of Scottish Congregationalism and minister of the West End Congregational Church, Kirkcaldy, for providing me with photocopies of these articles.
Celticism, Catholicism and Colonialism: 
The Intellectual Frontiers of Thomas D’Arcy McGee

David A. Wilson

In August 1850, Thomas D’Arcy McGee, a Young Ireland exile living in Boston, penned what became one of the best-known poems of the Irish diaspora, ‘A Salutation to the Celts’—a celebration of the unity and glory of a scattered and despised people, with its oft-quoted first verse:

Hail to the Celtic brethren, wherever they may be
In the far woods of Oregon, or o’er the Atlantic sea—
Whether they guard the banner of St George in Indian vales
Or spread beneath the nightless North experimental sails,
One in name, and in fame
Are the world-divided Gaels.¹

The poem was published in the first issue of McGee’s latest publishing venture, the American Celt. ‘In choosing the name this paper bears,’ he explained, ‘we meant to adopt the opposite side of a popular theory, namely: that all modern civilization and intelligence—whatever is best and most vital in modern society, came in with the Saxons or Anglo-Saxons.’ Against this view, and to foster a ‘decent self-respect’ among the Irish in America, McGee asserted the values of the Celts—‘a People brave, zealous for liberty, jealous of religious rites, capable of the highest discipline, and wielding the divinest powers of mind.’²

The central purpose of this paper is to discuss McGee’s construction of a reactive Celticism as a unifying myth for the world-divided Irish, and the way in which that Celticism intersected with two other central themes in nineteenth-century Ireland and beyond, Catholicism and colonialism. In doing so, I would like to move beyond the view of historians such as Noel Ignatiev that Irish immigrants to the United States asserted their own

² American Celt, 31 August 1850.
‘whiteness’ as a means of dissociating themselves from simian stereotypes and being accepted into mainstream American society. Such an interpretation rests on doubtful assumptions and dubious logic, and fails the test of Occam’s Razor; the ‘simianized Irish’ image has been exaggerated on both sides of the Atlantic, the Irish never saw themselves as anything but white, and there are more comprehensible reasons for Irish racism towards Afro-Americans, such as competition for jobs and houses, and a conviction that American national unity should not be jeopardised by campaigns for the abolition of slavery. Moreover, the focus on ‘whiteness’ has shifted attention from the much more important question of how the Irish came to racialise themselves as Celts, and what that meant in practice. In McGee’s case, it meant exploring new frontiers, in both an intellectual and geographical sense—moving from liberalism to ultramontanism, and from radical Irish nationalism to enlightened British imperialism, as he travelled through the North Atlantic triangle of Ireland, the United States and Canada.

I Personal ‘Frontiers’

Although he is largely forgotten today, McGee was a household name in the mid-nineteenth-century Irish-American-Canadian triangle of the Irish diaspora. Born in Carlingford in 1825, and raised near Cushendall (in County Antrim) and then in Wexford, McGee was well known as a journalist, poet, orator, historian and politician. In 1844, two years after he and his sister had emigrated from Wexford, he became the editor of America’s leading Irish-American newspaper, the Boston Pilot; he was nineteen years old and had already written his first book, with another one on the way. Returning to Ireland in 1845, he became the parliamentary correspondent for the O’Connellite Freeman’s Journal, and a journalist with the Young Ireland newspaper The Nation. After the failure of the Rising of 1848, he escaped to the United States, where for

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the next two years he edited the New York *Nation*, in 1850, he started up the *American Celt* in Boston—a newspaper that he moved to Buffalo from 1852 – 3, and to New York during the mid 1850s. When in 1857 he left the United States for Canada, he continued his newspaper career as the editor of the *New Era* in Montreal. By the time he became a Member of Parliament for Montreal in 1857, and subsequently folded the *New Era* to focus on his political career, McGee had established a reputation as one of the most talented journalists in the Irish diaspora.

Equally striking was his reputation as a poet. McGee published his first poem at the age of fourteen—a paean of praise to Father Mathew’s temperance campaign and an ironic prelude to McGee’s subsequent serial alcoholism. Later in the century, Samuel Ferguson would come to describe McGee as ‘the greatest poet of them all’ among the Young Irelanders (in a field that included James Clarence Mangan), while Charles Gavan Duffy regarded McGee’s historical poems as the best in Ireland. By modern standards, his poetry does not hold up. But his best poetry was embedded in his speeches, which have remarkable emotive and intellectual power, and which still have the capacity to grip and engage when read aloud.

McGee’s contemporaries generally regarded him as one of the greatest orators—for some, the greatest—of his generation; there are countless testimonies, from allies and enemies alike, of his brilliance as a public speaker. Consider, for example, the reminiscences of Sandford Fleming, the Scottish Canadian who not only served as Chief Engineer of the Canadian Pacific Railway, but also brought us Standard Time. During the winter of 1861 – 2, Fleming was waiting for McGee to speak at a packed St Lawrence Hall in Toronto. The train from Montreal had been delayed, and the crowd was getting impatient. Suddenly, a man wrapped in a buffalo coat strode onto the platform. ‘The first impression was anything but pleasant’, wrote Fleming. ‘Those around me thought that the uncouth looking person was a cab-man who had rushed on the stage to make known some dire calamity which had happened to Mr McGee.’ ‘All this was dispelled so soon as the unknown individual spoke a few sentences’, he continued. ‘It was the silver tongued McGee himself who charmed all present by his eloquence.’

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4 *Wexford Independent*, 11 April 1840.


And then there was his historical writing, which was enormously influential during the nineteenth century. McGee’s *History of the Irish Settlers in North America* (1851)—which could easily have been entitled ‘How the Irish Saved North American Civilisation’—was the first history of the Irish in America and pioneered a long historiographical and hagiographical tradition dedicated to popularising Irish achievements in the United States.\(^7\) His *Popular History of Ireland* (1863), which took him five years to write, became a major influence on Alexander Martin Sullivan’s *Story of Ireland* (1867) and was still being read in early twentieth-century Irish classrooms.\(^8\) It is worth noting that the younger McGee anticipated Kerby Miller’s argument about the sense of Irish alienation and ‘exile’ in the United States.\(^9\) ‘We are a primitive people’, he wrote in 1849, ‘wandering wildly in a strange land, the Nineteenth Century.’\(^10\) Yet he later rejected the notion of exile, and adopted a position that beat Donald Harman Akenson to the punch by well over a century in arguing that most Irish-Catholic Canadians lived in the countryside, that their single most important occupation was farming, and that they were much better off economically, socially, politically and religiously than their counterparts in the United States.\(^11\)

Above all, though, McGee was known as one of the most important—and unquestionably one of the most controversial—political figures in Ireland and North America. Against the background of famine and revolution in Ireland, immigration and nativism in the United States, and ethno-religious conflict and nation-building in Canada, his career moved through four different phases, each of which corresponded with a major component of nineteenth-century ideology—constitutional nationalism (before and after the Young Ireland Rising of 1848), revolutionary republicanism (in Ireland in 1848, and in the United States until the spring of 1849), ultramontanism (in the United States during the early 1850s), and liberal-conservatism (in Canada after 1857).

\(^8\) Thomas D’Arcy McGee, *A Popular History of Ireland, From the Earliest Period to the Emancipation of the Catholics* (Montreal, 1863).
The career of McGee is, in some ways, analogous to that of the twentieth-century author, scholar and diplomat Conor Cruise O’Brien. Both men were first-rate writers and formidable polemicists who lived by their wits. They both rejected their early nationalism to become conservative admirers of Edmund Burke; indeed, McGee’s interpretation of Burke prefigures many of the arguments advanced in O’Brien’s biography of Burke, *The Great Melody* (1992). And they both emerged as uncompromising opponents of revolutionary Irish republicanism, with each becoming known in his own time as England’s favourite Irishman. Nor is it coincidental that O’Brien and McGee should have been subjected to virtually identical attacks. Both were accused of being more interested in winning arguments than in seeking the truth, of being able and willing to make a speech on either side of any question, of adopting a confrontational approach that was ultimately counterproductive, and of drinking to excess. There were, of course, significant differences between the two men, not least in the area of religion; O’Brien was an agnostic, while McGee became a devout Catholic. And while O’Brien outlived numerous republican death threats, McGee manifestly did not.

This brings us to the last thing for which McGee was well known, namely his assassination on an Ottawa street on the night of 6 – 7 April 1868, a week before his forty-third birthday. By that time, the revolutionary of 1848 had become a Liberal-Conservative cabinet minister, a father of Canadian Confederation, and one of the most articulate advocates of a ‘new Canadian nationality’ characterised by unity-in-diversity, mutual respect, minority rights and balancing British order with American liberty. His assassination, at the hands of a man with strong Fenian sympathies, turned him into ‘a martyr to British Loyalty’ and ‘Canada’s martyred Celt’. McGee’s funeral brought

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13 See, for example, Thomas D’Arcy McGee, ‘The Future of Canada’ in *New Era*, 22 October 1857. See also, *Ottawa Citizen*, 1 December 1863.

80,000 people onto the streets of Montreal, and has only been surpassed in Canada by those of George-Etienne Cartier, Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the hockey player Maurice ‘Rocket’ Richard.\textsuperscript{15} But if McGee was on the right side of Canadian history, he was on the wrong side of Irish nationalism. ‘In reading his book of poems,’ wrote the Fenian Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa, ‘I find a few verses where he prays for a dog’s death should he ever desert the cause of Ireland; he did desert it, and a dog’s death he got.’\textsuperscript{16} And that is the single most important reason why hardly anyone outside Irish Canada now knows of Thomas D’Arcy McGee. He was ‘unsound on the national question’, and was quietly but effectively written out of Irish and Irish-American history.

II Celtic ‘Frontiers’

Yet McGee’s career repays careful investigation, not least because of its relationship to the larger diasporic themes of Celticism, Catholicism and colonialism. As we now know, the Celts arrived in Britain and Ireland in 1707 through the pages of Edward Lhuyd’s \textit{Archaeologia Britannica}, and became a medium through which people who had been denigrated as primitive speakers of obscure languages could re-imagine themselves as heirs of a great and glorious civilisation that had once towered over Europe.\textsuperscript{17} To identify oneself as a Celt was to invert negative stereotypes of savagery and superstition, and to assert the self-worth and superiority of traditional Welsh, Scottish, Cornish and Irish culture against English or American cultural arrogance.\textsuperscript{18}

As a young man in the United States, McGee found such positive images appealing, attractive and useful. During the early 1840s, he countered American nativism by connecting the Irish with a magnificent Celtic past, as well as contending that the Celts were inherently republican and anti-imperialist. In


\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Irish World}, 2 February 1878.

\textsuperscript{17} Edward Lhuyd, \textit{Archaeologia Britannica, Giving Some Account Additional to What Has Been Hitherto Publish’d of the Languages, Histories, and Customs of the Original Inhabitants of Great Britain: From Collections and Observations in Travels through Wales, Cornwall [sic], Bas-Bretagne, Ireland and Scotland} (Oxford, 1707).

this reading of history, the Anglo-Saxons were addicted to monarchy and
conquest, while the ‘Celtic spirit’ was ‘too proud, restless and intelligent in
the masses, to bear with willingness the rule of kings.’ ‘The more truly Irish
or Celtic we are,’ he asserted, ‘the more truly republican we must be, and
consequently the more American.’[^19] It was the kind of argument that an Irish
Catholic looking for acceptance in the United States would want to cheer
home.

But as McGee’s circumstances and attitudes changed, so too did his
concept of the Celts; McGee’s Celts assumed a concertina-like quality, in
which the meaning of the term was expanded and contracted according to
the melody that he was playing. In his effort to establish a united Irish front
against American nativism during the early 1840s, he defined Celtic as Irish
minus the Orange Order. As a Young Irelander, however, he narrowed the
definition in the service of pluralistic nationalism, arguing that the Celts were
only one ‘race’ among many within the Irish population and that the Irish
should define themselves instead by their common cultural heritage.[^20]

Although this argument fitted perfectly with the ecumenicalism of Young
Ireland, it could not withstand the shock of 1848, when the failure of the
revolutionary movement exposed the persistence of deep divisions within
the Irish people. Back in the United States, this time as a republican refugee,
McGee expanded the concertina once again; his Celts now embraced everyone
in Ireland, including the ‘Scotch-Irish’ (and, by implication, the Orange Order),
whether they wanted to be embraced or not. Reacting against comments in
London newspapers that the Celts were ‘white savages’, McGee countered
that they were actually the ‘original inhabitants of Europe’, adding for good
measure Charles Gavan Duffy’s statement that Cicero and Michael Angelo
were ‘Celts with the O at the wrong end of their name.’[^21]

This position failed to blunt ‘Anglo-Saxon’ attacks that equated the Celts
with Irish Catholics, and which portrayed them as ignorant, superstitious and
backward peasants. Under these circumstances, McGee drew in his lines of
defence and prepared for battle. ‘A state of social hostility exists between
citizens of Saxon and Celtic origin in the old Atlantic states’, he declared in
1851. Neutrality was out of the question; the Irish were indeed Celts, the
Celts were indeed Catholics, and they must break the Anglo-Saxon conspiracy
before it broke them. ‘Catholicism’, he asserted, ‘is the mark of the Celtic

[^19]: *Boston Pilot*, 8 February 1845.
[^20]: *Nation [Dublin]*, 19 September, 28 November 1846, 9 January 1847.
nations, and in proportion to their purity from admixture is their loyalty in faith.\textsuperscript{22}

As long as McGee viewed Irish Catholics as an embattled minority fighting for survival in a hostile American environment, this image of the Celt would prevail. But when he moved to Canada, the prospect of uniting different ethno-religious groups within a common national framework meant that the politics of ethnic reaction gave way to an emphasis on harmony, compromise and cooperation. Each ‘racial’ group had its own distinguishing characteristics, McGee now argued; it was more important to concentrate on their different contributions to the greater good than ‘to promote a dogged nationality’. ‘The standard of conduct of these representatives of the Celtic element’, he wrote, ‘should be that God had made of one blood all the nations of the earth.’\textsuperscript{23} In some respects, this marked a return to the position of his Young Ireland years, except of course that the Celts were now socially conservative liberals rather than radical democrats.

J.R.R. Tolkien famously wrote that ““Celtic”… is a magic bag, into which anything may be put, and out of which almost anything may come.”\textsuperscript{24} This certainly applies to McGee’s use of the term, as he repeatedly redefined ‘Celtic’ to correspond with his changing political outlook. At various points, McGee’s Celts were naturally anti-authoritarian or naturally law-abiding; they were a distinct ‘race’, or they were a political or linguistic grouping; they were associated with Irish Catholicism, or they embraced just about everyone in Europe; they included Irish Protestants, or they defined themselves against Irish Protestants. Beneath these different definitions lay a common cluster of images. McGee consistently described the Celts as being passionate, energetic, adventurous, courageous, spiritual, artistic and impulsive, and as a people who found it easier to begin projects than to follow them through. If his oscillating political interpretation of the Celts followed the trajectory of his career, McGee’s description of the ‘Celtic character’ was remarkably similar to his sense of self. On both the political and the personal level, McGee had created the Celts in his own image.

This has wider significance. McGee was far from the only person who thought and felt this way, and Celticism became contested ground among other Irish people who were making their own political and personal

\textsuperscript{22} American Celt, 17 May 1851, 8 January 1853.
\textsuperscript{23} New Era, 9 January 1858; True Witness [Montreal], 12 February 1858.
projections onto an imagined Celtic past and Celtic character—a vast array of individuals ranging from United Irishmen such as John Daly Burk to Young Irelanders such as John Mitchel and Thomas Davis, and Fenians such as John O’Mahony, not to mention just about everyone involved in Ireland’s permanent revolution of Celtic revivals since the eighteenth century. The very act of conducting extra- and intra-Irish conflict within a Celtic framework could only contribute to the dissemination of a more general Celtic consciousness in North America. This consciousness was sufficiently vague and nebulous to encompass a wide range of contradictory concepts, while retaining generally positive connotations among its Irish adherents, almost all of whom were Catholics.

The term ‘Celt’ was loose enough to have a broad appeal amongst North America’s Irish-Catholic immigrants, but existed in an ambiguous relationship to Irish Protestants. Such ambiguity was symptomatic of deeper dilemmas within Irish nationalism. The Protestants could be seen as an alien ‘Anglo-Saxon’ presence, as Celts with a false consciousness, or as Celts insofar as they were Irish nationalists. McGee at different times adopted each of these positions. But whatever the word ‘Celt’ meant, most (but by no means all) Irish Protestants wanted nothing to do with it. Given this situation, the concept was hardly conducive to national unity in Ireland. McGee, in common with other self-described Celts, was caught in the contradiction.

III Catholic ‘Frontiers’

If McGee’s Celticism intersected with his Catholicism, his relationship to religion was as complex as his relationship to ‘race’. During much of his early career, McGee shared the Young Ireland view that there should be a clear line between politics and religion. ‘A man may be free and a Christian at the same time’, he wrote in 1849; ‘… in all things temporal he may assert his private judgment, and yet be an irreproachable Catholic. And, among these things temporal, I include his domestic affairs, the education of his children, his manners, his temporal opinions, and his politics.’ From this perspective, he could assert his intellectual independence and criticise the Church’s counter-revolutionary pronouncements, while embracing its spiritual and moral teachings. As a Young Irishman, he supported non-denominational
education and saw no contradiction between his Catholicism and his plans to study law at Trinity College in Dublin. ‘If Catholics cannot separate the politician from the priest’, he asked, ‘should we not be governed by priests? … If this be so, Theocracy, not Democracy, is the most perfect form of human government.’

And yet, beneath the surface, McGee was struggling to reconcile his Catholicism with his nationalism; it was, he later wrote, his ‘hardest internal battle’. As an exile in New York, he had blamed the Catholic Church, along with the British government, for the failure of the Rising of 1848. In response, Bishop John Hughes of New York singled him out as a dangerous and destructive influence, and banned his newspaper, the New York Nation, from parish reading rooms. Conservative Catholic journalists denounced his writings as ‘sources of eternal damnation to all concerned’ and described him as that worst of all Catholics, a ‘Protestant Catholic’. Although he remained outwardly unmoved, there are signs that he was personally troubled by such attacks and was beginning to have intellectual difficulties with a compartmentalised approach to Catholicism.

What tipped the scales was the resurgence of anti-Catholicism in the United States after the Famine. Because he had publicly challenged Bishop Hughes, McGee was widely admired by American Protestant liberals. But many of those liberals viewed the Catholic Church as a threat to American liberty, at the very time that American nativists and Irish-Protestant immigrants were making common cause against Catholicism in general and Irish Catholicism in particular. Meanwhile, in Britain, Lord John Russell, the leader of the Liberal party, was supporting the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill and dismissing Catholicism as full of the ‘mummeries of superstition’; to many Irish Catholics, including McGee, it seemed as if the dark days of

26 Thomas D’Arcy McGee to Bella and Charles Morgan, 13 August 1845, Concordia University Archives, Thomas D’Arcy McGee Collection, HA 256, Folder 7.
27 Nation [New York], 25 August 1849.
28 American Celt, 14 April 1855.
29 Boston Pilot, 2, 24 February 1849, 15 February 1851.
Celticism, Catholicism and Colonialism

the Penal Laws were returning.\footnote{Donal A. Kerr, ‘A Nation of Beggars?’ Priests, People and Politics in Famine Ireland, 1846 – 52 (Oxford, 1994), 241 – 81; for Russell’s ‘mummeries of superstition’, see 247.} Putting all this together, McGee became convinced that Anglo-American Protestants were waging an undeclared but very real war against Irish-Catholic Celts.\footnote{American Celt, 30 November 1850, 11 January 1851, 19 April 1851.} And, as a liberal nationalist whose newspaper was financially backed by Protestants who admired him for taking on the most important Irish Catholic bishop in America, McGee increasingly felt that he was on the wrong side of the battle lines.

The tension snapped in the spring of 1851, when McGee went through a profound conversion experience and wound up as one of the leading ultramontanists in Irish America, entering the mental universe of Jaime Balmez and Orestes Brownson.\footnote{American Celt, 17, 31 May 1851, 11 March 1854. Balmez (often spelled Balmes) was a Catalonian priest whose Protestantism and Catholicism Compared in their Effects on the Civilization of Europe (Baltimore, 1850) became one of the most influential Catholic books of the nineteenth century. A convert to Catholicism and the editor of the Quarterly Review, Brownson was the leading Catholic intellectual in the United States during the mid-nineteenth century.} The liberal McGee had recoiled against what he called ‘slavish ultramontane dogmas’ on the grounds that they would culminate in theocracy rather than democracy.\footnote{Thomas D’Arcy McGee to David Urquhart, 8 September 1847, Balliol College Oxford, Urquhart Papers, I/J6; see also American Celt, 12 January 1850.} Now, the ultramontane McGee used exactly the same logic, but concluded that theocracy was precisely what Ireland needed. For McGee during the 1850s, Home Rule in Ireland really would mean Rome Rule, and no bad thing either.\footnote{See, for example, American Celt, 26 March 1853.}

In the very different political and religious climate of the United States, his ultramontane ambitions were necessarily more modest. There, McGee believed, the Catholic Church could provide the critically important function of saving the Republic from the consequences of Protestantism and private judgment, which manifested themselves in a variety of ways—a constant state of nervous excitement; the breakdown of the family; in prejudice and proselytising; and in the exploitation, degradation, squalor, violence, corruption, materialism and nativism of urban America.\footnote{On the role of the Catholic Church in saving the United States from the consequences of Protestantism, see American Celt, 20 November 1852. For examples of his critique of American values, see American Celt, 14 April 1855, 12 May 1855, 23 June 1855, 27 October 1855, 10 May 1856.} In fact, McGee’s public criticisms of American life were very similar to those of other Irish-American nationalists, most of whom secretly despised American society even
as they held up the American political system as a model for Ireland. But McGee shouted from the rooftops what others only whispered in private, and McGee was unique among the exiles of ’48 in that his criticisms of American life were expressed through the medium of extreme right-wing Catholicism.

McGee’s conversion to ultramontanism did not imply any softening of his position towards Britain; on the contrary, it produced an intensification of his Anglophobia, with Britain now being viewed as the centre of a Protestant conspiracy against Catholics, or—to use McGee’s own words—as the hub of the ‘Revolution of Antichrist’. But in the longer run, McGee’s ultramontanism had a profound and unexpected impact on his relationship with the United States and the British Empire. As he became increasingly disillusioned with American life, and as he despaired of reforming it from within, McGee embraced the idea of establishing Irish-Catholic colonies in the American west or the Canadian north. This, he hoped, would make it possible to rescue anywhere between 50,000 and 200,000 Irish immigrants from the degradation and corruption of urban America and to inoculate them against the contamination of Protestantism and revolutionary republicanism. In these rural colonies, McGee looked forward to inscribing his ideal image of Ireland on what he perceived to be a ‘blank’ slate of new territory in North America.

The project, which he named ‘Shin Fane’, attracted significant support from sections of the Catholic Church, but was roundly condemned by Bishop Hughes and by McGee’s ultramontane mentors such as Orestes Brownson. ‘Moses McGee’, as he was called, was attacked for running away from American problems, for exaggerating the difficulties facing Irish Catholics in the United States, and for being unpatriotic and quixotic. And why on earth was this man advocating Catholic colonies in Canada, of all places, the home of the Orange Order and part of the British Empire? Catholic journalists like Father John Roddan were amazed that McGee, who

37 For some examples, see John Mitchel to his sister, 5 March 1849, National Library of Ireland, Hickey Collection, MS 3226; Richard O’Gorman to William Smith O’Brien, 1 January 1859, National Library of Ireland, William Smith O’Brien Papers, MS 446, f. 3082; Thomas Meagher to Charles Gavan Duffy, 17 January 1853, National Library of Ireland, Charles Gavan Duffy Papers, MS 5757, f. 387; Michael Doheny to William Smith O’Brien, 20 August 1858, National Library of Ireland, William Smith O’Brien Papers, MS 446, f. 3058.
38 Nation [Dublin], 4 September 1852.
39 American Celt, 27 January 1855, 3 February 1855, 8 September 1855.
40 American Celt, 23 June 1855.
41 Boston Pilot, 6 October 1855.
had been ‘the most cordial hater of the English flag we ever saw’, and ‘an almost insane hater of the British government’, could endorse colonisation in a place like Canada.\textsuperscript{42}

**IV Colonial ‘Frontiers’**

To understand why, we have to chart the connection between McGee’s Catholicism and his colonialism, the way in which someone who once described the British Empire as ‘a vast conspiracy against human rights’ became, in the words of Lord Mayo, ‘one of the most eloquent advocates of British rule and British institutions … on the face of the globe.’\textsuperscript{43} Although McGee remained hostile to the British Empire during the early 1850s, his attitude towards the Province of Canada began to change with his conversion to ultramontanism. In the United States, he believed, Catholics had little or no political power, and could not provide their children with a Catholic education free of attempts to convert them to Protestantism. But in Canada, things looked rather different; the large French Roman Catholic population guaranteed the ‘powerful position of the Catholic Church’ and ensured that all Catholics, including the Irish, could educate their children in separate schools. Shortly after his conversion, McGee began to recommend the Canadian educational model for the United States.\textsuperscript{44}

Now, there was an apparent paradox here. On the one hand, his ultramontanism intensified his hostility to the Protestant British Empire; on the other, within one pocket of that Empire it seemed that Catholics were actually better off than they were in the Great American Republic. Initially, from 1851 to 1854, he managed to have it both ways, praising the Canadian educational system while criticising just about everything else in the Province of Canada, including its Orangeism, its colonial status and its bigotry.\textsuperscript{45} But with the rise of the nativist Know-Nothing movement in 1854, and his deepening sense of alienation in the United States, he decided to conduct a firsthand investigation of Canada East, or present-day Quebec. He liked what he saw, describing in his newspaper, the *American Celt*, the ‘glitter of a hundred

\textsuperscript{42} *Boston Pilot*, 7 July 1855.

\textsuperscript{43} *Nation* [New York], 14 July 1849; *Daily News* [Quebec], 14 April 1868.

\textsuperscript{44} *American Celt*, 8 November 1851, 8 January 1853.

\textsuperscript{45} See, for example, *American Celt*, 18 June 1853, 20 August 1853, 15 April 1854, 24 June 1854, 5 August 1854.
crosses crowning the tin-covered domes and spires’, the respect shown to priests (‘even … Protestants … lift their hats whenever a priest passes’), the family values, the pace of life, the moral and physical health of the population, as well as the availability of good farming land in the Eastern Townships. All in all, it was a much more promising place for Irish-Catholic immigrants than the United States. ‘The British flag does indeed fly here,’ he wrote, ‘but it casts no shadow.’

But that still left Canada West, present-day Ontario, the Orange heartland of North America. During the summer of 1855, he spent three weeks in the province on a fact-finding mission and concluded that the narrow ground had become broader in Canada. The relative abundance of resources meant that there was less economic competition between Orangemen and Irish Catholics. And the variegated nature of Canadian politics meant that Canadian Orangemen had to form alliances with other groups, including French Catholics, if they wanted to move from the margin to the mainstream. ‘The Canadian Order’, McGee wrote, ‘is largely modified; is far more political than religious, and (except on the 12th, when they go mad, of course), I am assured by the most respectable Catholics in Canada West, that they have no better neighbours all the rest of the year, than these same Orangemen.’ There were indeed some strange new alliances in Canada; a few years later, in 1861, the Irish Catholic bishop of Toronto, John Lynch, encouraged his flock to vote for John Hillyard Cameron, the Grand Master of the Orange Order, on the grounds that his party, the Conservatives, would introduce improved separate school legislation. The folks back home in Ireland would have been shaking their heads in disbelief.

There were also, it must be recognised, serious Orange and Green tensions on the streets and all was far from sweetness and light in nineteenth-century Irish Canada. Indeed, after McGee moved to Montreal in 1857, he spent the next six years fighting the influence of the Orange Order, before forming an alliance with moderate Orangemen—‘the right kind’ of Orangemen, as he put it. But the key point is that by 1857, his disillusionment with the United States, together with his reading of the situation on the ground in

46 *American Celt*, 9 December, 16 December 1854.
47 *American Celt*, 4 August 1855.
Canada, had forced him to modify and ultimately reject his earlier sweeping anti-colonialism.

In Canada, he reasoned, the French fact would continue to ensure Catholic power and influence; even the Orangemen had to accommodate themselves to this basic political reality. Meanwhile, the proximity of the United States to Canada acted as a check on British oppression and the dangers of excessive power; if Britain pushed too hard, the Province of Canada would react by joining the United States. On the other hand, Canada’s connection with Britain acted as a check on American annexationism and the dangers of excessive liberty; if America pushed too hard, Britain would be at Canada’s back.50

The imperial connection, then, provided the gravitational pull that prevented Canada from being drawn into the United States. But Britain was 3,000 miles across the Atlantic, while the rising American empire dominated the continent and constituted the greatest long-range threat to Canada. One way to counter that threat, McGee suggested, would be to invite a member of the Royal Family—the prince of Wales, perhaps, or one of his brothers—to found a British North American branch of the monarchy, and sit on a Canadian throne.51 Another would be to work for Canadian Confederation—a project that he advocated shortly before he moved to Montreal, and that remained a central preoccupation throughout his Canadian career.52

If Canada was to work, McGee believed that it not only had to become an equal partner in the British Empire, but also had to secure good relations among its various ethno-religious groups. On these grounds, the former anti-colonialist became one of the sharpest critics of the Little Englanders, or anti-colonialists, in Britain; without the imperial connection, Canada would cease to exist.53 And on these grounds, he attacked both militant Fenianism and Orangeism in Canada. Both organisations were bringing Old Country animosities into the New World, and both organisations threatened the position of Irish Catholics in Canada. McGee objected to Fenianism not only on account of its anti-clericalism and its unattainable goals, but also because he feared that it would create a Protestant backlash against the Irish-Catholic

50 American Celt, 21 April 1855; New Era, 25 May 1857.
51 New Era, 19 January 1858; see also 16 February 1858.
52 McGee first articulated his ideas about British North American union in the American Celt, 26 July 1856, and elaborated upon them in the New Era; see, for example, New Era, 22 October 1857.
53 See, for example, Thomas D’Arcy McGee, ‘Canadian Defences’, 27 March 1862, Speeches and Addresses Chiefly on the Subject of British-American Union (London, 1865), 199 – 205.
minority in Canada. The dangers posed by Orangeism, with its long history of anti-Catholicism, were self-evident. Moderate Irish Catholics, McGee believed, should attempt to expand the middle ground between these two extremes, and should use their shared Celtic heritage with the Highland Scots and the French Canadians to promote ethno-religious harmony. The result, he hoped, would be a Canadianised version of Young Ireland nationalism in its constitutional phase before the French Revolution of February 1848. A new confederated British North American state would demonstrate that Irish Catholics were loyal when their civil and social rights were respected, and would stand as a powerful argument for land reform and disestablishment in Ireland—and possibly for a federal arrangement with Britain as well. Catholicism, Celticism and colonialism, after all, had been brought into harmony in Canada; the task ahead, in McGee’s view, was to transpose the melody to Ireland.

V The Final Frontier

McGee’s career is a fascinating example of the interplay between environment and ideas; between, if you like, the frontiers of the mind and frontiers of space. This took the form of a series of reactions against prevailing circumstances, and against ideological orthodoxies. After his first emigration to the United States in 1842, McGee increasingly criticised key aspects of Irish-American culture—what he saw as the hyperbolic patriotism of St Patrick’s Day celebrations, the pervasive victim mentality, and the resistance to self-criticism. At the same time, he responded to American nativism with a combative Catholicism that was intended to face down Protestant prejudice. Had McGee stayed in the United States, it is likely that this trajectory would have propelled him towards the minority clerical-conservative strand of Irish nationalism in the United States.

Instead, he returned to Ireland, where his involvement in the Young Ireland movement meant that he moved away from prospective clerical-conservative traditions and towards the ecumenical nationalism of Thomas Davis. Under the pressure of new circumstances, in the context of Famine and the French

55 *True Witness* [Montreal], 12 February 1858.
56 Thomas D’Arcy McGee to the earl of Mayo, 4 April 1868, Library and Archives Canada, Charles Murphy Papers, MG27 III B8, f. 21586.
Revolution, he embraced revolutionary nationalism, and adopted ideas that were indistinguishable from those of the Irish Republican Brotherhood a decade later. Although he subsequently repudiated revolutionary politics, he sometimes defended his actions in 1848 by saying that if he should face the same circumstances again, he would act no differently than he had done before.

McGee’s career can be likened to a series of chemical reactions, in which the same environment produced the same results. Back in the United States between 1848 and 1857, he resumed the trajectory that had been interrupted by his return to Ireland. Reacting first against his revolutionary nationalism (on the grounds that it was impractical and thus counterproductive), he moved through moral force politics to an ultramontane position that was defined as much by what it was against as what it was for—against nativism in the United States, against aggressive forms of Protestantism, against the moral degradation of ghettoised Irish Americans, against the secular republican and revolutionary aspects of Irish-American nationalism. It was precisely this reaction that prompted his colonisation project, and which brought him to Canada.

There, geo-political realities—in which Britain counterbalanced American influences, the United States counterbalanced British imperialism, and French Canada counterbalanced Orangeism—produced an environment which complemented the balances in his own thought. In Canada, he believed, it was possible to reconcile order and liberty, Catholicism and Protestantism, tradition and modernity. It was, from his perspective, an environment that was ideally suited to the ideas of Edmund Burke, whom McGee had long revered as a fellow Celt, as a closet Catholic and as a spokesman for enlightened empire. In Canada, it seemed, geography had met history, and McGee had finally found a home.
In 1823, James McHenry published a novel entitled *The Wilderness; or Braddock’s Times*, set during the expansion of the North American colonies in the mid-eighteenth century.¹ The action of this recondite novel gravitates around the patriotic Irishman and Scots-speaking Ulster Presbyterian, Gilbert Frazier who, along with his wife, is abducted during an Indian raid and carried far into the western wilderness of the continent. The intrepid and stoic Fraziers proceed to build an oasis of order and industry, and to raise their family in harmony with nature and in peace with the indigenous tribes, until they become embroiled in the encroaching colonial conflicts between Britain and France. Frazier’s national identity is complex; he favours the British side in the colonial dispute and is also a patriotic Irishman. Furthermore, his identity is explicitly composite as his Irishness is tinctured by his Scottish inheritance which is tangible in his character, religion and dialect. His status as an emigrant and his long sojourn in a wilderness where the European concept of nationality is largely irrelevant further ensures that his national identity defies easy categorisation.

In some senses Frazier’s composite identity reflects that of his creator. McHenry was born in Larne, County Antrim, in 1785 and died and was buried in the same town in 1845. But this symmetry belies the numerous geographical frontiers that he crossed during his life. He studied medicine in Glasgow, then practised as a doctor in Belfast for some years. He emigrated to America in 1817 and settled in Philadelphia where an Irish community was already well established.² He published most of his literary work there, including all of his novels, although he eventually returned to Ireland in 1842 to serve as the American consul at Londonderry. McHenry was, therefore, an Ulster-born writer with a Presbyterian background, who became an American citizen, and published mostly in America whilst drawing on both Irish and American subject matter.

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² For background see Maurice J. Bric, *Ireland, Philadelphia and the Re-invention of America* (Dublin, 2008).
This essay will begin by giving an overview of the limited critical attention that McHenry’s work has received and demonstrate that this lack of recognition is largely due to the inability of prevailing paradigms in the study of literature to assimilate his work. The main body of this essay will argue that McHenry’s oeuvre problematises national frontiers in two major ways. First, because of the Irish, Scottish and American influences that forged his writing, it sits uneasily within any given national canon; his literary output reflects his transatlantic life and international outlook. Second, in his novels set in Ireland, there is a strong focus on Ulster, which is depicted as being different to the rest of the island. By arguing for the cultural diversity of Ireland, and insisting on the particularity of Ulster, McHenry’s work acts as a conscious challenge to essentialist representations of Irish national character and identity in Irish fiction of the early nineteenth century.

I

James McHenry produced a substantial body of work that ranged from poetry, novels and drama to literary criticism and journalism and yet he is largely forgotten. In the nineteenth century he attained a fair degree of popularity on both sides of the Atlantic. His most famous novel, *O’Halloran* (1824), is the story of a young Dublin loyalist called Edward Barrymore, who finds himself amongst radical Ulster Presbyterians during the 1798 rebellion and who falls in love with the granddaughter of O’Halloran, the leader of the insurgents. This novel and McHenry’s long poem *The Pleasures of Friendship* (1822) went through numerous editions in America, the British Archipelago and continental Europe. Despite this degree of popularity in the nineteenth century, however, he was and is seldom mentioned in twentieth- and twenty-first century criticism. In a sense McHenry has been unfortunate in ending up on the wrong side of a number of important histories. His republicanism was perhaps unpalatable to the British and Irish establishment and to later potential readerships in Presbyterian Ulster. Equally, his championing of Presbyterianism may have proved irksome to nationalist Irish and Irish-American audiences, who increasingly identified with Catholicism. But the most surprising aspect of his neglect is his marginalisation from studies and surveys of nineteenth-century Irish fiction.

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Critics who do mention McHenry are often quick to point out perceived artistic shortcomings usually pertaining to his reliance on stock novelistic devices; however, such criticism could equally be levelled at much better known Irish and non-Irish novelists of the early nineteenth century. McHenry’s neglect is as much to do with difficulties of categorisation as with artistic shortcomings, as his work has tended to fall between national literary traditions. Liam McIlvanney’s argument that the neglect of Ulster poet James Orr ‘has less to do with purported artistic shortcomings than with the tendency to organise the study of poetry along rigidly national lines’ equally applies to McHenry’s novels.5

The one extended piece of writing on McHenry’s work derives from a thesis written in America in the 1930s by Robert Blanc. It is useful on a factual and biographical level, though it is scant on literary analysis and intellectual context. Indeed, Blanc’s work also plays down McHenry’s importance. He hardly inspires the prospective student of McHenry with enthusiasm as he bestows only the faintest of praise on his subject when he concludes that McHenry ‘is not altogether a negligible figure’.6

Although McHenry has terse entries in dictionaries and encyclopaedias of Irish writing, his work is generally overlooked by literary historians and critics working on early nineteenth-century Irish fiction.7 In the 1980s James Cahalan complained of a general critical neglect of Irish fiction writers of the nineteenth century who ‘have traditionally been surveyed briefly and compared unfavourably to the great eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English novelists’, but despite this a fairly settled canon had already been constructed by nationalist critics.8 The foundational text in this respect was Thomas Flanagan’s The Irish Novelists, 1800–1850 (1959) which constructs a tradition that originates with Maria Edgeworth’s Castle Rackrent (1800), and which includes the work of Sydney Owenson, John and Michael Banim, Gerald Griffin and William Carleton.9 Subsequent critics have tended largely to accept this delineation. John Cronin’s The Anglo-Irish Novel (1980) features the

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same authors, with the exception of Owenson who he excludes on aesthetic grounds.\textsuperscript{10} James Cahalan and Barry Sloan discuss a greater array of novels and broaden the scope of the debate in their respective studies, although the general shape of the canon has remained largely unaltered by their work.\textsuperscript{11}

That the predominance of Edgeworth, Owenson, Banim, Griffin and Carleton still has some currency is demonstrated by Kersti Tarien Powell’s recent introduction to Irish fiction, which closely replicates Flanagan’s construction of the tradition.\textsuperscript{12} This narrative of Irish fiction adroitly reflects political developments in Ireland as Catholic voices came increasingly to the fore towards the middle of the nineteenth century culminating in the rise of Daniel O’Connell. It has fundamental problems, however, in terms of accommodating McHenry, as he disrupts the proposed trajectory of the novel from the Ascendancy big houses of Edgeworth and Owenson, through the Catholic middle orders, represented by the Banims and Griffin, to the Irish peasantry represented by William Carleton. McHenry was a strong cultural nationalist, but his Ulster Presbyterian culture sits awkwardly with a narrative that sees Irish society as characterised by struggles between Big House Protestantism and Catholic populism. The category of ‘Anglo-Irish’ novel is inherently not conducive to McHenry’s American, Scoto-Irish novels and indeed by some standards, though certainly not his own, his status as an ‘Irish’ novelist is questionable because of the transatlantic nature of his work and because of his focus on Presbyterian, Scots-influenced Ulster. Furthermore, his inclusive vision of Ireland clashed with twentieth-century Irish nationalist configurations of Irish identity which tended to be based on ethnicity and inclined towards Catholicism.

So, even though the study of Irish fiction has been revitalised and to a degree reconfigured by a resurgence of interest in the genre of the Irish national tale in recent decades, McHenry’s work has remained neglected. Katie Trumpener’s influential \textit{Bardic Nationalism} (1997) is a key text, but she mentions McHenry only in a footnote.\textsuperscript{13} Again McHenry has been sidelined due to unfavourable critical paradigms. Much of the work of Trumpener, Ina Ferris and others has been informed by post-colonial studies, which tends to construct binaries between Ireland and England, the colonised and the

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\item John Cronin, \textit{The Anglo-Irish Novel}, vol. 1 (Belfast, 1980).
\item Barry Sloan, \textit{Pioneers of Anglo-Irish Fiction, 1800 – 1850} (Gerrard’s Cross, 1986); Cahalan, \textit{The Irish Novel}.
\item Katie Trumpener, \textit{Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire} (Princeton, 1997), 327.
\end{thebibliography}
Irish and American Frontiers in the Novels of James McHenry

The binaries constructed in many national tales between Saxon and Gael, Anglo-Irish Protestant and Milesian Catholic, lend themselves to analysis from a post-colonial perspective. But such paradigms leave little space for the complicating Scottish Presbyterian dimension so prominent in the work of McHenry.

Of the few recent literary critics to acknowledge McHenry, two have been scholars whose work delineates hyphenated or composite traditions. Charles Fanning affords McHenry a pioneering position in the tradition of Irish-American writing as his was ‘the first significant body of Irish American fiction by an individual’. Despite this, Fanning is critical of McHenry’s artistic shortcomings and is overly zealous in finding instances of Protestant prejudice and Unionist sentiment in his writing. The other major work in which McHenry has featured recently is Frank Ferguson’s canon-building anthology of Ulster-Scots writing. McHenry and his Irish novels certainly epitomise and celebrate the intimate historical, cultural, religious and linguistic connections between parts of Ireland and Scotland. The increased attention that such links have received through the rise of Irish and Scottish Studies means that a more sympathetic critical framework now exists for the study of McHenry and writers like him. The general trend towards archipelagic thinking may also provide a space for the work of culturally-hybrid writers such as McHenry who have been caught between the binaries of the prevailing critical paradigms in Irish Studies.

II

We turn now to an examination of those aspects of his work that have proved most problematic in terms of McHenry’s inclusion in the Irish literary canon. The first is the extent to which McHenry’s novels refuse to fit neatly into a national mould and are instead coloured by a transatlantic political consciousness.

An enthusiasm for politics and an ability to cultivate controversy are tangible in his writings; for example, McHenry enthusiastically participated...
in inclement literary debates regarding the Lake poets and their American followers, who he regularly lambasted in the pages of his journal, the *American Monthly Magazine*. He also found that his literary endeavours sat uncomfortably with conservative religious authorities within the Presbyterian Church. When his Irish tragedy, *The Usurper*, was performed in Philadelphia in 1827, the kirk session of his local Presbyterian Church reacted angrily, although not atypically for the period. As the minutes of its meetings (unearthed by Robert Blanc) reveal, the church elders took the view that theatre was ‘ruinously opposed to Christian Faith, Hope and Charity’ and ‘an unlawful species of revelling’, and concluded that those who countenanced the stage were deserving of ‘ecclesiastical censure’. Consequently the session resolved that Dr James McHenry be ‘suspended from the Communion of the Church until he give satisfactory evidence of repentance’, an outcome that would not have been taken lightly by a man of McHenry’s religious convictions.\(^{18}\) This willingness to challenge authority is reflected in his fiction, which often depicts favourable characters in conflict with unreasonable or tyrannical forces.

His opinions on Ireland were also controversial. McHenry was active in Irish patriotic circles in Philadelphia and his enthusiastic cultural nationalism and political activism would have been regarded with suspicion by the British and Irish establishment had he remained in Ireland. He became involved in a number of groups and committees that engaged with Irish political matters; for example, he was an active member of the Association of Friends of Ireland and served as chairman of a committee set up to arrange celebrations for the achievement of Catholic Emancipation in 1829, on which occasion he wrote a celebratory poem entitled ‘The Champion of Erin has Broken her Chains’.\(^{19}\) In 1827 he had been appointed to another committee, formed to draft a letter of condolence to Thomas Addis Emmett’s family after his death. This connection with a former United Irishman was fitting, as his fiction—particularly *O’Halloran*—showed an understanding of the motivations of the insurgents of 1798 and sympathy for their cause. Indeed, back in Ireland this novel was deemed to be so politically sensitive that a dramatisation of it was reportedly suppressed by a magistrate in Belfast ‘owing to its local and political interest…and to the fact that some of the characters were still alive and resident in the vicinity.’\(^{20}\)


\(^{19}\) See Blanc, *James McHenry*, 109, 121.

\(^{20}\) Ibid., 30.
McHenry’s political opinions were republican and liberal, and at times radical. Blanc observes that in the ‘political retrospect’ sections of the *American Monthly Magazine*, McHenry always took ‘the liberal side’ and was noted for supporting such things as ‘the Monroe doctrine, [and] the Greek struggle for independence’ while ‘attacking monarchism and the holy alliance’. He was keen, therefore, to link political struggles in Ireland with events in America and around the globe. His transatlantic, and at times international, political outlook was reflected in his consistent interest in the theme of governance, and the relationship between those who rule and those who are ruled. These themes recur in his novels set during the American Revolution as well as those set in Ulster, and the similarities between the novels suggest that McHenry was deliberately drawing parallels between the political cultures of the two places.

The American Revolution was clearly a key moment in history for McHenry. His first major novel, *The Wilderness* (1823), features a young George Washington as a character. McHenry uses Washington’s journal as an intertext and describes the adventures and frustrations of the future champion of liberty in the wilderness to the west of the American colonies. The young Washington is presented in awed and reverential tones, and at the conclusion of the novel a tangible link is forged between Ulster and revolutionary America when Paddy Frazier—the son of the Ulster Presbyterian frontiersman Gilbert Frazier—becomes Washington’s right hand man. In the introduction to one of his later novels, entitled *Meredith* (1831), McHenry invokes the America Revolution with unbounded enthusiasm. In the opening passage, apparently speaking in his own voice, he is transported by his reflections on its achievement:

The American Revolution!—What a world of glorious ideas are comprehended in that phrase!

The history of nations affords no other great commotion among mankind, so singularly impressive and satisfactory in all respects. It is not the example of successful resistance to arbitrary taxation; it is not the signal defeat given to a powerful and haughty faction, exercising despotic authority, and attempting tyrannical measures; nor is it even the establishment of a pure and equitable system of government in an extensive and flourishing country, that chiefly excites our enthusiasm and challenges admiration... But the American Revolution did more. It

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sent abroad the voice of freedom and of truth; it proclaimed to all men that they were equal—that tyrant and slave were anomalies in nature, inconsistent with the dictates of reason and the ordnances of God.

He concludes that:

Disenthralled millions have moved in their might, and shaken the foundations of arbitrary rule. A moral earthquake, proceeding from the elements engendered in this country, by the spirit of liberty which animated the patriots of 1776, is in action; and it will not cease until the thrones of despots, together with their authority and their doctrines, be overthrown, and banished for ever from the precincts of emancipated humanity.22

In celebrating the American Revolution McHenry intimated that its significance was not merely national, but that it had universal repercussions that were still being played out in the 1820s. The impact of this conflict, according to McHenry, was felt far beyond Britain and America, with the victory for liberty that it represented serving as an inspiration for a universal movement against tyranny and despotism. This American political language of liberty and equality, and the rhetorical defiance of tyranny and despotism, reverberated in the radical political culture of Ulster in the 1790s with which McHenry was familiar.23

The issue of oppressive or despotic governance recurs throughout McHenry’s work. Collectively his American and Irish novels imply that the American Revolution and the 1798 rebellion in Ireland were comparable reactions to misgovernment. Indeed, his enthusiasm for the ideals of the Irish insurgents is articulated in the preface to O’Halloran. Regarding the rising of 1798 and the United Irishmen, McHenry boldly opines that ‘had it succeeded, and the designs they had formed for the advantage of their country been realised, what epithets of praise would have been considered too high for their deserts. Their cause would have been called holy, and their efforts glorious’.24 Throughout O’Halloran, McHenry’s narrator and characters repeatedly draw

22 James McHenry, Meredith; or the Mystery of the Meschianza. A Tale of the American Revolution (Philadelphia, 1831), 3.
23 See Kevin Whelan, ‘Introduction to Section One’ in Thomas Bartlett et al. (eds), 1798: A Bicentenary Perspective (Dublin, 2003), 11.
attention to the oppressive and unjust measures adopted by the government and the role these played in engendering the 1798 rebellion. They criticise the coercive measures used against the United Irishmen during Lord Camden’s viceroyalty from 1795 to 1798, and allude to numerous instances of ‘oppression’ or ‘tyranny’—including the destruction of the Northern Star newspaper offices in 1797, the execution of four militia men at Blarismoor in 1797, and the execution of William Orr under the Insurrection Act in 1797.25

In the opening chapter of the novel, the hero, Edward Barrymore, who is convalescing after an accident, overhears the elderly couple that are nursing him in conversation. The man, named William Caldwell, tells his wife that he has donated money to a subscription for the benefit of Orr’s family, and relates how he was initiated into the United Irish Society at the behest of its leader, O’Halloran. Caldwell responds to his wife’s concern about him becoming a United Irishman by telling her how, when O’Halloran mentioned the government’s treatment of Orr and the Blarismoor militia men, ‘I felt my blood get warm, and I tauld him I would tak’ the oath, let what like come o’t.’26 This passage and others like it are designed to demonstrate the extent of popular grievance and the degree to which unjust government can provoke resistance from reasonable and decent people.

This is something that Edward Barrymore, a young ascendancy Dubliner from a powerful loyalist and establishment family, comes to understand over the course of the novel. Early in the narrative his inherent antipathy towards the United Irishmen is problematised by the Recluse, a mysterious character renowned for his wisdom and who is, it later emerges, the heroine’s father in disguise. He informs Barrymore of the political turmoil in Ulster and explains that the people have been petitioning the government for several reforms: ‘namely, a reform in the representation of the commons, emancipation of the catholics, and a melioration of the tythe system’. He adds that ‘these are just and constitutional demands for the people to make; and had the government granted them to the solicitations of the volunteers, we should

25 Orr was a County Antrim farmer who was accused of administering illegal oaths. His fortitude under these tribulations, and a widely held belief that his trial was corrupt, ensured that his execution aroused popular indignation and was a factor in provoking the Ulster rising of 1798. The cry ‘Remember Orr’ was used by the insurgents in 1798, and during the rising in Antrim, its leader, Henry Joy McCracken, is reputed to have worn a ring engraved with this slogan. See A.T.Q. Stewart, The Summer Soldiers: the 1798 Rebellion in Antrim and Down (Belfast, 1995), 50.

26 McHenry, O’Halloran, I, 22.
never have heard of United Irishmen.\textsuperscript{27} The Recluse goes on to critique the government’s response to these demands by pointing out that ‘Instead of a redress of grievances being granted, oppression is increased, under the plea of suppressing treason, until numbers have actually been irritated into treason, who would otherwise have remained peaceable and loyal.’\textsuperscript{28} In other words, the authorities have exacerbated rather than ameliorated political dissent in Ulster by using legitimate calls for reform as an excuse to curtail existing freedoms. Although McHenry did not explicitly advocate Irish separatism, and although he critiqued the extremism and impetuosity of some of the insurgents, he nevertheless had considerable sympathy for their cause. His attitude seems to chime with that of O’Halloran, his fictionalised leader of the Antrim rising, who reflects that ‘it is hard to remain inactive, and see an unoffending populace becoming every day more and more the victims of a wanton and cruel tyranny.’\textsuperscript{29}

At the end of the novel McHenry returns to the theme of governance. Recognising the benefits of responsible and clement rule in times of crisis, Edward Barrymore praises the leniency of Lord Cornwallis, Camden’s successor as viceroy of Ireland, and summarises the novel’s central message on the theme of effective government:

[H]e was forcibly struck with this proof of conciliation over coercion in securing the tranquillity of a country. Here he saw men whom Camden’s oppressive policy had rendered bitter enemies to the government, now, in consequence of Cornwallis’s clemency, manifesting by every expression of sincerity, their resolution to live and die its friends and supporters.

‘Ah!’ thought he, ‘how happy it would be for society, if governments would hearken to the lesson taught by such an example! But pride and passion too often blind them to their own and their people’s interests.’\textsuperscript{30}

In this passage, a reflection on the government’s reaction to a specific political crisis in Ulster assumes a much wider significance and becomes emblematic of the consequences of irresponsible government. McHenry’s novel acknowledges that a section of the populace has been guilty of treason,

\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., I, 49.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., I, 50.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., I, 173.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., II, 133.
but suggests that this is an understandable response to a government that has broken the contract between rulers and ruled by ignoring ‘their people’s interests’. As McHenry puts it in his introduction, the events described in O’Halloran should persuade the great ‘not to be too rigid and harsh with those in subjection to them, but to treat them with kindness and good nature, and leniently overlook their faults.’

In McHenry’s other novel set in Ireland, Hearts of Steel (1825), similar themes appear. The novel suggests that the establishment encouraged corrupt practices in the distribution of leases during the third quarter of the eighteenth century, and that this was instrumental in fermenting agrarian violence in Ulster. This interest in the relationship between the rulers and the ruled is, in one sense, a universal issue. But in another sense it is symptomatic of the Ulster Presbyterian tradition to which McHenry belonged, which was deeply concerned with issues of governance, the responsibilities of rulers, and the rights of the ruled. An important manifestation of this was Francis Hutcheson’s political thought, which espoused a belief in a contractarian model of government and a firm conviction that the people have a right, and indeed a duty, to resist tyranny. Such ideas informed the political culture of America in the 1770s and Ulster in the 1790s, and McHenry’s work demonstrates that these issues retained currency for strands of Ulster Presbyterianism into the nineteenth century.

There are several reasons, therefore, why the novels of James McHenry do not fit easily into existing national canons, including the fact that his subject matter oscillates between Irish and American concerns, and his tendency to blur national boundaries by envisaging the struggle for liberty in universal terms. It can be argued, however, that McHenry’s interest in universal issues was, paradoxically, typical of a strong regional tradition in Ulster Presbyterianism in the eighteenth century. His belief in the importance of transatlantic and international political forces certainly coexisted with a strong regionalism that undermined concepts of Irish identity that were being promoted in the Irish novels of the vast majority of his contemporaries. It is to the issue of regional identity in McHenry’s work that we will now turn.

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31 Ibid., I, xv.
33 For background on Hutcheson see Michael Brown, Francis Hutcheson in Dublin 1719–1730 (Dublin, 2002).
McHenry’s passionate interest in Ulster Presbyterian culture and identity is evident in his novels. The use of Scots dialect is perhaps the most obvious technique that he used to distinguish his work from Irish predecessors and contemporaries. All of the most visible early nineteenth-century Irish fiction writers—Maria Edgeworth, Sydney Owenson, Gerald Griffin, the Banim brothers and William Carleton—overwhelmingly associate the Irish peasantry with a rural, and either southern or supra-regional variety of Hiberno-English. Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth remarked in their Essay on Irish Bulls, originally published in 1802, that:

There are but a few variations of the brogue, such as the long and the short, the Thady brogue and Paddy brogue, which differ much in tone, and but little in phraseology; but in England, almost all of our fifty-two counties have peculiar vulgarisms, dialects and brogues, unintelligible to their neighbours.34

The implication is that in contrast to their counterparts in England, the Irish lower orders display a degree of linguistic homogeneity. Such attempts to elide difference were obviously anathema to McHenry, whose Scots-speaking characters represent a complicating, if neglected, voice in the Irish novel.

For McHenry, Scots was the linguistic manifestation of the regional specificity of a Presbyterian-dominated Ulster. In an introductory note to The Wilderness he insists that Ulster Presbyterians are ‘a distinct people from the inhabitants of the other Provinces of the island’, while also asserting that, when compared to the Scots, ‘their manners, feelings, views of propriety, habits of industry, and their religious rites and opinions, are similar, or differ in only as slight a degree as their dialects’.35 This impulse to enlighten non-Irish, and particularly American, readers as regards Ulster Presbyterian identity seems to stem from a frustration, articulated in the introduction to The Wilderness, that ‘any picture of the Irish character, that has yet been given in a work of fancy’ has been taken from the inhabitants of the island who are ‘chiefly Catholics, accustomed to speak the vernacular language, and

35 McHenry, The Wilderness, I, ii.
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are emphatically called the native Irish’. McHenry’s novels therefore resist what he, with some justification, perceived to be an homogenising impulse in the representation of Ireland and the Irish which was designed to elide and occlude regional variation. His assertion of the cultural, religious and linguistic distinctiveness of Ulster was a conscious subversion of this process. Indeed, the 1820s saw the birth of the Ulster novel in the work of McHenry and his equally neglected contemporary John Gamble. Both McHenry and Gamble problematised their readers’ expectations regarding Irish national character and identity by depicting Ulster as regionally distinct in terms of religion, culture and dialect. Furthermore, both were interested in the 1798 rebellion in Ulster as an expression of regional, Presbyterian identity.

McHenry’s dissatisfaction with literary depictions of Ulster was also expressed in the preface to O’Halloran, where he articulated the motivations that led him to write this novel. He claimed that an eccentric, bookish aunt, dissatisfied at existing representations of Ulster and its people, bequeathed him £150 per year on the condition that he write a narrative of the 1798 rising. McHenry describes his aunt as an avid reader of works on Irish history, antiquities and topography, who became irked as ‘amidst the multitude of volumes which she had perused on these subjects, she was surprised to find none that gave anything like an accurate account of the people among whom she had spent her whole existence.’ He continues:

she was much chagrined with the carelessness with which even professed travellers through Ireland have uniformly mentioned its northern province. Some, she would say, seem to treat the people of Ulster as altogether beneath their notice; others take delight in making them the objects of misrepresentation and slander; while none manifest for them that sympathy and respect, to which, from their spirit of enterprise and industry, they are assuredly entitled.

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36 Ibid.
37 John Gamble (1770–1831) was a travel writer and novelist born in County Tyrone. Much of his writing was aimed at educating British audiences about the distinctiveness of the north of Ireland. See, for example, Chariton, or, Scenes in the North of Ireland (London, 1823).
38 Both McHenry and Gamble distance events in Ulster from the Wexford rising in 1798. Indeed, both intimate that reports of sectarian atrocities from Wexford contributed to the failure of the Ulster rising.
40 Ibid.
McHenry makes his point by attacking Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806). One of Owenson’s characters, a priest from the household of a dispossessed Gaelic family, describes Ulster as ‘beyond the pale of Milesian hospitality’ and a place where ‘the cead-mile faíta of Irish cordiality seldom lends its welcome home to the stranger’s heart’. In Owenson’s text, the culturally Scots inhabitants of Ulster are depicted as cold and materialistic in contrast to the warmth and hospitality associated with Milesian culture, and her hero eagerly hastens back to Connaught. Although Owenson alludes to the regional specificity of Ulster, she depicts this difference in terms of deterioration from genuine Irish standards caused by the grafting of aspects of Scottish culture onto the Milesian. Indeed, in another of her novels, *O’Donnel* (1814), Owenson again draws unflattering attention to the northern province when she writes in a footnote that ‘among the lower orders of the natives of all the other provinces, Ulster is always mentioned slightly and generally called the “Black North”’. Reacting to Owenson’s general representation of Ulster, McHenry tartly remarks in his preface to *O’Halloran* that Owenson ‘ought not to have been so willfully and unjustly abusive of any portion of her countrymen, even if they did not happen to be descended from Milesian ancestors, and were unable to speak the original language of the country.’

McHenry felt that Owenson was perpetuating a negative stereotype of the dour, inhospitable and cold Presbyterian, and it was precisely this type of representation that he sought to challenge in several of his novels. In *The Wilderness*, for example, Gilbert Frazier welcomes the son of a former acquaintance with great enthusiasm. When the polite and anglicized Charles Adderley, who stumbles upon the Fraziers’ abode in the wilderness, expresses a disinclination to ‘obtrude’ on Gilbert’s hospitality, the word is seized upon by the zealously hospitable Ulsterman: ‘“Obtrude sir!” interrupted Gilbert. “Obtrude! I’m no’ very muckle learned sir but I think that word means comin to whar yen’s no’ weelcome … Ye’ll no think o’ ganging hame this six months, at ony rate. The winter’s sae near-han it wadna be possible”.’ These protestations, articulated in Scots, are intended to illustrate the warmth and cordiality of the Ulsterman, in contrast to Owenson’s less favourable characterisation. A similar point is made in *O’Halloran*, when

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Edward Barrymore, a Dubliner, comes to acknowledge the generosity of spirit of the northerners. In *The Wilderness* McHenry further highlights the distinctiveness of the northern Irish by drawing a contrast between the Ulster Presbyterian Gilbert Frazier and the Irish Catholic Peter McFall. Frazier is intrepid, industrious and canny, whereas McFall is courageous, loquacious, hot headed and blundering. Again, these differences are encoded linguistically as Frazier and his wife speak Scots, in contrast to McFall’s southern Irish English. Also, McFall’s Catholicism is evident through his frequent invocations of saints, whilst Frazier’s Presbyterianism manifests itself through his knowledge of biblical stories, particularly those of the Old Testament. These contrasts might suggest Ulster’s cultural affinity with Scotland; however, McHenry’s Ulster characters are proudly Irish and often fiercely patriotic. The cultural autonomy of Ulster Presbyterians within the larger Irish context does not dilute their patriotism. McHenry instead implies that Irish national identity should not be associated with a particular religion, race or language, nor should it be seen as a binary dialectic between Gaelic and Anglo-Irish cultures. As Trumpener points out, McHenry circumvents the ‘tendency to present Ireland as a society polarised between Anglo-Irish interests and Milesian claims’. McHenry’s version of Irishness is therefore one in which homogenisation and essentialism is resisted and in which national identity encompasses a variety of cultures and dialects.

Charles Fanning misreads McHenry’s argument with Owenson as pertaining to the representation of Protestants generally. McHenry’s argument with Owenson is not, however, over the depiction of the Anglican ascendancy; instead, he is referring very specifically to Owenson’s representation of Ulster Presbyterians. McHenry saw Irish society not in terms of a binary between Protestant and Catholic, but rather as divided in triangular terms between Anglicans, Roman Catholics and dissenters. He was annoyed at Owenson’s wilful exclusion of the dissenting element from the moment of resolution in *The Wild Irish Girl*, in which Anglican ascendancy Ireland is symbolically united and reconciled to ancient Catholic Gaelic Ireland through the marriage of Horatio and Glorvina. The Anglican and Catholic traditions are symbolically reconciled, whilst the Presbyterian tradition is acknowledged by Owenson, but ultimately excluded.

45 McHenry, O’Halloran, II, 267.
46 Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, 327.
47 Fanning, *The Irish Voice in America*, 47.
McHenry challenges this outcome by manipulating the conventions of the Irish national tale. The hero (sometimes also the narrator) of these tales is normally a stranger, usually an English traveller or Anglo-Irish absentee, whose unfavourable preconceptions concerning Ireland are challenged and exploded through first-hand exposure to the country. In crossing a geographical frontier, the hero begins a journey from ignorance and prejudice to knowledge and sympathy which leads to increased concord. Literary critic Joep Leerssen, for example, comments that:

In [Sydney Owenson’s] *The Wild Irish Girl* the first person narrator and sole focalizer of the story is English; he approaches Ireland as a strange, uncouth country in a direction that takes him from the familiarity of his domestic English background to the increasing exoticism of the West of Ireland.\(^{48}\)

In McHenry’s *O’Halloran*, however, the hero is not an Englishman, nor an absentee. Edward Barrymore is ‘a young Dublin gentleman’ and member of the Anglican ascendancy, who at the beginning of the novel is touring the coast of Antrim. It is not Ireland, therefore, that is the strange country that must be discovered and understood, but the island’s northern fringes. Ulster is thus presented as an internal ‘other’ for Ireland; an alien space which must be discovered, understood and accepted by the hero. In this way, McHenry subverts the received formula of the genre of the national tale and the binary that it creates between England and Ireland.

Mary Jean Corbett argues that the ultimate aim of the Irish national tale is to use the hero’s changing opinions ‘to offer English readers an affirmative version of their new partner in Union, the neighboring but distant island about which they had heard so much bad and so little good.’\(^{49}\) In *O’Halloran*, the Dublin hero comes to a similar appreciation of the Ulster people. In the effusive style that is typical of the genre, Barrymore articulates his new understanding in the following terms:

How much have I been deceived in the character of these people! Are these the cunning Scotchmen, the bigoted, ignorant, Presbyterians,


whose study is to cheat, and whose business is to grow rich, that have been said to inhabit Ulster. They deserve a character the very reverse... These people are indeed Scottish in their industry and intelligence; but they are altogether Irish in their manners and feelings. I am in reality proud to call them my countrymen.50

Barrymore’s ignorance and misconceptions are challenged through his sojourn in the alien space of Ulster. The enthusiastic endorsement of Ulster Presbyterians from the mouth of a member of the Dublin ascendancy acts as a rebuff to Owenson’s aspersions. The Ulster Presbyterians in McHenry’s fiction are a favourable hybrid of stereotypical Scottish and Irish national traits, displaying Scottish industry and economic competence mixed with Irish warmth and cordiality.

McHenry also reworked another important convention of the Irish national tale: the culminating marriage which acts as a resolution and serves to symbolise unity between England and Ireland. In McHenry’s novel, Edward Barrymore, the eldest son of a fiercely loyalist and establishment family, marries Ellen Hamilton, whose grandfather led the United Irish insurgents. This symbolises concord between the recently warring factions of Ireland, with Barrymore representing the Anglo-Irish tradition, whilst Ellen Hamilton’s name suggests the Scots influence.51 However, McHenry has already informed the reader in the opening chapter of the novel that Ellen goes by two surnames due to the influence of her guardian and grandfather, O’Halloran: ‘she should be called Miss Hamilton, but her grandfather will let her be called nothing but Miss O’Halloran’.52 This name evokes an Irish Gaelic dimension and Ellen, therefore, seems to embody a fusion of both Irish Gaelic and Lowland Scottish elements. Thus McHenry manufactures a curiously triangular marriage in contrast to Owenson’s binary one.

The marriage motif is central to the resolution of national tales, but can carry overtones of power and subordination. Some critics have argued that the marriage of Horatio and Glorvina in The Wild Irish Girl subordinates the Gaelic element, which is feminised through the figure of Glorvina, who is rather passive during the resolution.53 On the surface, the marriage between

50 McHenry, O’Halloran, II, 267.
51 The name ‘Hamilton’ has particular resonance as that family was amongst the first Scots settlers to plant Ulster in the reign of James I/VI.
52 McHenry, O’Halloran, I, 25.
53 See Corbett’s discussion of the marriage in Allegories of Union in Irish and English Writing, 61 – 70.
Edward and Ellen in *O’Halloran*, with its feminisation of the Scottish and Gaelic dimension, similarly seems to indicate that the Scots and Irish element is subordinate. However, the emphasis that McHenry places on the marriage ceremony being conducted ‘according to the form observed by the reverend ministers of the Synod of Ulster, being nearly the same as that prescribed by the Church of Scotland’ suggests otherwise.\(^5^4\) Barrymore is subsumed into Ellen Hamilton’s religious community. Ulster Presbyterianism is the vehicle for reconciliation within Ireland and becomes central to the symbolic resolution of *O’Halloran*.

**IV**

As this evidence suggests, the novels of James McHenry challenged the frontiers of Irish fiction when they were published. They complicated the presentation of the religion, culture, language and character of the Irish peasantry in national tales by asserting the regional distinctiveness of Ulster, and by placing Ulster’s recent political turmoil in the context of a universal struggle for liberty. In subverting and manipulating the conventions adhered to by most of his contemporaries, McHenry helped to create a distinct Ulster voice within the novel form; a voice which has been consistently overlooked by contemporary literary historians and literary critics working on early nineteenth-century Irish literature. Criticisms of McHenry’s artistic shortcomings obfuscate the fact that McHenry’s work poses a challenge for an Irish critical tradition that has been dominated by paradigms that are ill-equipped to deal with his work. Certainly his texts, rooted in both America and Ireland, and displaying not only a transatlantic and international political awareness, but also a stubborn Ulster regionalism, call into question the traditional national frontiers constructed in scholarship on nineteenth-century Irish fiction.

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\(^{54}\) McHenry, *O’Halloran*, II, 324.
Some historians have characterised the American Revolution as a political and economic process that evolved over many decades, rather than merely seeing it as a single event—albeit one of great significance—that occurred in 1776. While many colonists already felt physically and culturally distanced from Britain prior to the Revolution, with some having departed explicitly to effect this separation, merchant families in particular remained entangled in a web of personal, political and economic relationships that connected them to the greater British Atlantic world. Within this dynamic environment, local and regional loyalties vied for influence with both British and American identifications. Recognising how and why these connections and loyalties were either maintained or discarded during and after the Revolution is vital to understanding the changes wrought by American political independence in 1776.

This article proposes to explore these processes through an examination of the Jerdone kin-network, an extended family boasting relations and connections throughout Britain and America. The family papers, containing business records and personal correspondence over the generations preceding, encompassing and following American independence, have been carefully preserved by generations of Jerdones and offer insights into the formation and dissolution of transatlantic ties in this period. They are even more valuable owing to the fact that, at any point between 1740, when Francis Jerdone first immigrated to Virginia, and 1841, when his last surviving child died, at least one branch of the extended family lived in Scotland, in England and in Virginia, and that each branch chose to maintain regular communication with

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1 The author would like to acknowledge the encouragement and assistance of Wim Klooster of Clark University while researching this article.
the others. The ability to explore how often those in Virginia corresponded with friends and relations in England and Scotland, as well as the frequency of transatlantic visits and return migrations, enables us to gauge the ways in which commercial and personal relationships changed over time. Moreover, how and when members of the Jerdone family chose to don either British or American national or cultural identities, and the rapidity or reluctance with which these identities were later discarded, reflects changing loyalties during and after the Revolution.

The story of one merchant family can only be suggestive. Nevertheless, the case of the Jerdone family indicates that long-standing transatlantic friendships and business associations, as well as British identities, were not simply cast aside wholesale at the signing of the Declaration of Independence (1776), with the Peace of Paris (1783), or even in response to the growing American nationalism of the early republican period.\(^4\) While some bonds between Britain and America were, indeed, severed in the mid-1770s, many had been cut much earlier, while others were maintained until the following generation. Ties with Britain did eventually dissipate, along with any sense of British identification, but this, I suggest, did not occur in the first decades after independence, but well into the nineteenth century and after the deaths of the last generation to be raised in the colonial period. Furthermore, it occurred not through a slow acculturation and assimilation, but rather from a series of definable events that prevented the continuation of transnational identities.

I The Historiographic Plight of Merchant Identities

Merchants—in this case merchants of Scottish origin—have left migration historians with a rich corpus of information. Because of the need to maintain detailed records, their papers generally provide a clear narrative of their transatlantic connections. Furthermore, the tendency of merchants to discuss both business and personal affairs in their letters provides information of interest to cultural as well as economic historians. However, despite the lengthy period for which such records exist, discussions of eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Chesapeake merchants tend to fall into one of two temporal categories: either the colonial period dating from the early eighteenth century to 1775, or else the republican period from 1783 until the late 1810s.

Discussions of Virginian merchant families such as that of Francis Jerdone (1721–71), for example, generally focus on the colonial period and halt abruptly at 1775. This is particularly true of early studies by Jacob Price and James H. Soltow, but also of more recent works such as Alan Karras’s *Sojourners in the Sun*, whose study of the Chesapeake concludes in 1775. Studies that do encompass the revolution, such as Kenneth Morgan’s discussion of the Bristol trade or T.M. Devine’s work on Glasgow’s ‘tobacco lords’, continue just beyond the end of the American Revolutionary War but tend to focus primarily on economic history rather than personal experiences and questions of identity. On the other hand, discussions of the early republic begin with the close of the Revolutionary War in 1783, or with the ratification of the United States Constitution between 1787–90, and continue into the Napoleonic era without significant reference to the colonial economy by way of contrast or comparison. Joseph Shulim’s book *The Old Dominion and Napoleon Bonaparte*, for example, hints at continuing British loyalties and identities in Virginia in its analysis of the Napoleonic Wars and the War of 1812, but fails to recognise the extent to which personal relationships were maintained in addition to practical economic arrangements. Thus, while there are a number of excellent studies of transnational networks in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, they consistently restrict their focus either to the colonial or to the post-independence period, and thus have yet to address the difficulties faced by this transitional generation of American citizens.

Our understanding of Virginia’s merchants and first-generation planters during the late colonial and early republic periods is also hindered by the fact that most migration narratives for the southern colonies tend to deal with national identity as a progressive acculturation process whereby culturally Scottish, Irish or German migrants dispersed and integrated into a more homogenous colonial or American population. While this is in some cases a

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8 See, for example, Patrick Griffin, *The People with No Name: Ireland’s Ulster Scots, America’s Scots Irish, and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689–1764* (Princeton, 2001);
wholly accurate description, the model is difficult to reconcile with the highly-mobile lifestyle of the merchant class in the British Atlantic world. Several studies have provided compelling narratives of the economic and personal lives of these merchants and their families, but the bulk of such research has focused on Caribbean networks rather than those in Virginia.9

The Jerdone papers enable us to bridge the pre- and post-revolutionary periods, as well as to further our understanding of the merchant class in the British Atlantic world by looking at a family with strong ties to Virginia. The historical value of these papers was already recognised in the early twentieth century when The William and Mary Quarterly published numerous genealogical sketches of the Jerdone family and related lines.10 More recently, historians such as James H. Soltow have drawn upon the Jerdone papers—and in particular upon account books and similar documents—to reconstruct the role played by Scottish merchants in the mid-eighteenth century Virginian economy.11 Thus, the voluminous and insightful nature of the Jerdone family’s correspondence, combined with the existing wealth of historical analysis of the Jerdones’ business records, provide a strong foundation upon which to build an understanding of their transatlantic personal and business networks, and of the ways in which family members in Virginia, Scotland and England

Gwyn A. Williams, The Search for Beulah Land (New York, 1980).


viewed themselves and their contemporaries in the larger world. To explore these issues, the discussion that follows will construct a narrative of the development of the Jerdone kin-network and of its progressive transformation from a single British family into a multi-polar transatlantic network, and finally into separate and distinct English, Scottish and American branches.

II The Evolution of a Transnational Mercantile Family

Each of the wars of the mid-eighteenth century fundamentally shifted the dynamics of the British Atlantic world.\(^\text{12}\) Although Britain was able to maintain its naval supremacy, conflicts with Spain and France significantly hampered London’s maritime trading networks and allowed competing ports such as Bristol, Liverpool and Glasgow to emerge as powerful competitors. As each port rose in prominence, regional firms sent their own factors to establish colonial storefronts, creating a series of independent ties between America and Britain. As insurance rates escalated during times of maritime conflict and as new business models were developed in the tobacco-sundries trade, certain firms flourished and others failed. This led to the shifting of men and resources back and forth across the Atlantic Ocean, creating and strengthening some ties while severing others.\(^\text{13}\)

Francis Jerdone was an active participant in this process. In early 1735, the fifteen-year-old Border Scot from Jedburgh was apprenticed to Neill Buchanan, a Glaswegian tobacco merchant and partner in the London-based tobacco firm Buchanan & Wilson. Although Glasgow would become Britain’s leading tobacco importer by 1758, and Buchanan himself held partnerships there, in the early eighteenth century London still dominated the market.\(^\text{14}\)

After living and working with the Buchanan family in London for a number of years, Jerdone was sent as a roving factor to Virginia in 1740, his first assignment being to the backwater port of Hanover. Only a few months after his arrival, the resident factor died of dysentery and Jerdone took up the management of the store. Through the maintenance of close ties with his fellow Scots stationed throughout the firm’s territory, as well as a stream

\(^{12}\) These conflicts included the War of Jenkins’ Ear (1739–43), King George’s War (1744–8) and the Seven Years’ War (1756–63).


of correspondence with colleagues in London, the young factor attempted to revive the store’s flagging trade and prove himself an asset to the company. While the personal connections Jerdone created between Hanover, Virginia, and London in the 1740s are easily identified through the firm’s letterbooks and business records, the regional and national identities he chose to espouse at this point in his life are harder to discern. However, the way in which the young factor pursued his business interests provides several clues. First, despite being owned by a Glaswegian and locally managed by Scottish factors in Virginia, Buchanan & Wilson operated in accordance with accepted London-centric business practices. Like most London tobacco firms, its owners could not see beyond the original tobacco markets of Virginia’s Tidewater region, nor did they recognise that their London goods were being handily outsold by those manufactured in the western port of Bristol. Seeing the realities on the ground, Jerdone implored his employers to purchase their goods from Bristol rather than London and to upgrade their cargo ships to compete with newer vessels from the other ports. Furthermore, he encouraged Buchanan & Wilson to move away from the London standard of consignment to the newer Glasgow model of buying tobacco outright. His advocacy of the Scottish system was not, however, a product of ethnic chauvinism. On the contrary, Jerdone frequently took issue with what he felt were the unfair business practices of ‘Scottish’ merchants, some of them Buchanan’s own relatives. Instead, loyalty to London and established practice was simply not sensible. Thus, Jerdone appears to have been more concerned with economic realities than with regional and national allegiances.

Over time, Francis Jerdone generated an ever-more complicated and flexible web of connections and loyalties. When his apprenticeship ended in

18 See, for example, Francis Jerdone to Neill Buchanan, 3 November 1740, in MacDonald, ‘Young Francis Jerdone’, 36–9. Scottish factors representing firms such Buchanan & Wilson of Glasgow (the Buchanan in this instance being the brother of Jerdone’s employer) were offering Virginian planters deeply-discounted prices on sundry goods in order to purchase Virginian tobacco outright. As these offers were made at the start of the season, business was effectively ruined for consignment traders such as Jerdone who relied on lengthy negotiations over commission.
1742, he neither permanently returned to Britain, nor severed his London connection. Instead, he took up employment as the Virginian supercargo for George Buchanan, the son and heir of his original employer. However, finding his salary insufficient, he soon decided to dissolve this relationship and proceeded to establish his own sundries business and develop Jerdone Castle in Louisa County, the estate he had purchased shortly after the conclusion of his apprenticeship. He began to trade on his own account with John Norton & Sons of London, and at some point prior to his death took up a partnership with George Pottie, a Londoner who had immigrated to Louisa County. He also strengthened his ties with two other regions in the British Atlantic world. First, in 1753 he married a Virginian woman named Sarah Macon, with whom he quickly began a family. Then, in 1771 he used profits from his tobacco crops and his continuing sundries trade to purchase a share of a plantation at Providence Forge, and invited his young nephew, William Douglass, to come over from Scotland to help him manage it. In doing so, Jerdone rekindled his links to his former home through renewed correspondence with his Douglass cousins. Thus, with his strong familial and economic links to England, Scotland and Virginia, Francis Jerdone serves as an excellent example of a mid-eighteenth-century transnational merchant. The complexity of these early transatlantic links would pale, however, in comparison with the ones created by the Jerdone family through marriages and friendships in the second generation.

Although Francis Jerdone died in 1771 at the relatively young age of fifty, seven of his children survived into adulthood, each of whom contributed to the transnationalism of the family. By sending their two sons to school in Britain, the Jerdones managed to reinforce the family’s ties with both

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20 George Pottie to John Norton & Sons, 3 September 1771, Special Library Collections, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, John Norton and Sons Papers (hereafter JNSP), Folder 46. Although this letter refers to Jerdone’s death in 1771 and the subsequent dissolution of their partnership, or joint account, it is unclear when their partnership began, as all transactions with Norton & Sons before this were addressed to Jerdone alone. It is not until 1773 that they refer to Jerdone & Pottie, presumably referring to a partnership between Jerdone’s widow and Pottie. Considering Pottie’s age at the time of Jerdone’s death (roughly twenty five) it is possible he had been a junior partner or employee.
22 Francis Jerdone and Sarah Macon Jerdone had nine children in total, with one son, William, and daughter, Martha, dying in early childhood.
Scotland and England. Despite the anti-Scottish comments that appeared in Francis Jerdone’s early business correspondence with Buchanan & Wilson, he nevertheless appears to have had a deep respect for his homeland. Before his death, he had made arrangements for his eldest son, Francis Jr, to be sent to Jedburgh to stay with his Douglass cousins and attend school in his home parish. Having completed his primary education in Scotland and a short apprenticeship with John Norton & Sons in London, Francis Jr returned home in 1773. In 1775, Francis Jr returned to London accompanied by his younger brother John, where their mother hoped they would be safe until ‘the present unhappy disturbance subsides.’ According to Pottie’s instructions to John Norton, the boys were to be sent on to Scotland to reside with their grandmother, Joanna Douglass Jerdone, in Jedburgh for two or three years, as John was still very young. At that time, John was to return to London to begin school under Norton’s care, his mother ignoring her late husband’s wish to have all his sons educated in Scotland. Francis, meanwhile, had already rejected a career in the London transatlantic trade, and thus remained in Jedburgh until 1780, when he travelled to the West Indies with its more familiar climate. A year later he returned to Virginia to take up the management of his father’s estates, which had been secured for him by his mother following threats by the Virginian authorities to confiscate them on the grounds that his departure for Britain identified him as a Loyalist.

Despite the escalating conflict between the United Kingdom and its colonies, there is nothing in the two boys’ letters to suggest that they were treated with suspicion or even negatively as ‘ provincials’ during their time

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24 George Pottie to John Norton, 10 August 1775, JNSP, Folder 125.
25 Protested bill of exchange from Francis Jerdone, Jedburgh, on John Norton & Sons, 26 July 1779, JNSP, Folder 141. Francis Jr inherited all of his father’s land, except his holdings in Spotsylvania County, which had been allocated to John, and certain slaves and sums of money, which were allocated to his sisters. However, because Jerdone’s will also gave his wife control of his estate at Jerdone Castle during her widowhood, and she never remarried, she remained on the estate with her son for the remainder of her life, managing the plantation and continuing in the tobacco trade on her own account and in partnership with her son and sons-in-law. According to family legend, it was Sarah Jerdone’s friendship with Martha Washington (who like Sarah was raised in New Kent County, Virginia) that finally saved her son’s inheritance. There is no surviving correspondence to link these two women, but their shared place of birth and the fact that George Washington visited Jerdone Castle in June 1791 seems to provide at least tenuous support for this legend. See Malcolm Hart Harris, *History of Louisa County, Virginia* (Richmond, VA, 1936), 154; and Coleman, ‘The Will of Francis Jerdone’, 7–10.
abroad. On the contrary, John wrote to his mother from Islington in 1777 that ‘My [school] Master the Revd Mr Darues is very kind to me, and often calls me’, we can assume affectionately, ‘his Little American Rifleman.’\(^{26}\) As for Francis Jr, the only indication of dissatisfaction was his distaste for his studies. Despite returning to Virginia in 1781, Francis Jr nevertheless maintained a long-lasting relationship with the Douglass cousins, as did his younger brother John, who remained in Britain to study medicine at Edinburgh University.

Meanwhile, the five Jerdone daughters extended the family’s transnational reach still further through their marital choices. Mary, the eldest, married one of Jerdone’s business partners, George Pottie, in 1771. Sarah and Elizabeth also married transatlantic merchants—Sarah wed George Braikenridge, originally of Bristol, c.1772, while Elizabeth tied the knot with Alexander MacAulay, originally of Glasgow, in 1782. Isabella, on the other hand, cemented the family’s Virginia-planter ties by marrying Thomas Mitchell in 1783, as did Ann with her marriage to Charles Thompson in 1778.

Though these connections may appear a bit too convenient—the Jerdones were, after all, in the tobacco-sundries trade—there are several indications that at least two of these were love matches rather than parentally-arranged economic courtships. In the months preceding Ann’s wedding, there was an ‘unnatural dispute between the Mother and the Daughter’ suggesting that the engagement of teenage Ann caused Mrs Jerdone considerable worry.\(^ {27}\) The match between Elizabeth and Alexander MacAulay was also contentious owing to his intention to immediately whisk her away to New York for the sake of his trade.\(^ {28}\)

Yet, while all these marriages may not have been inspired primarily by economic motives, they did have the effect of deepening the Jerdone family’s ties with the Virginian planter community, while also broadening its connections with Britain. It is important to note that of the three British-born merchants who married into the Jerdone family, each had arrived in Virginia as part of a different migratory wave and each had connections with a different British port city. Pottie had migrated in his childhood in the 1740s or 1750s and shared Francis Jerdone’s London connection. Braikenridge, on the other hand, had arrived after 1763 by which point his home port of Bristol had gained greater prominence during the hostilities with France and Spain. Lastly,

\(^{26}\) John Jerdone to Sarah Jerdone, 21 March 1777, Swem Library, The College of William and Mary, Jerdone Family Papers (hereafter JFP), Box 1, Folder 1.

\(^{27}\) Ibid.

young MacAulay had come to Virginian shores in the 1770s, most likely in 1775, as Glasgow was enjoying the height of its tobacco trade thanks to its relatively safe sea route and the outright purchase of tobacco. Thus, as wave after wave of British-born merchants arrived in the Chesapeake in search of monetary gain, the web of personal and economic connections grew ever-more complicated and diverse. Given the marriage choices of the Jerdone daughters, one can hardly resist speculating that the family was hedging its bets as to which port would maintain prominence in the future.

III The American Revolutionary War: A Turning Point?

This brings us to our supposed turning point. Did the Revolutionary War, either at its inception or at its conclusion, sever these personal and economic ties between Virginia and London, Bristol, Glasgow, Jedburgh and Edinburgh? As had been the case during earlier eighteenth-century conflicts, the American Revolutionary War encouraged many to return to Britain either temporarily or permanently. Although some men, such as Alexander MacAulay, were accused of being Loyalists and forced to return home temporarily in 1775, many Britons departed during the conflict and immediately after it for non-political reasons. After the war, for example, both the Potties and the Braikenridges decided to return to England in 1785 and 1788 respectively, having been severely hit by the post-war depression and climate-induced illness. Meanwhile, MacAulay sold his quarter-lot in Hanover town and moved northward in 1780 to take advantage of the new market of supplying British soldiers in New York.

Despite their migrations, these men and women nevertheless remained part of a single expansive kin-network. They joined in, or continued, a transatlantic trade that had existed for over a century, supplying the Virginian family branches with British manufactured goods in return for agricultural products. By being flexible they were able to maintain the business and personal relationships that had been established prior to the Revolution. Rather than destroy the network, the war merely changed the balance of

29 ‘In Committee for Hanover County, June 6’, Purdie’s *Virginia Gazette*, 5 July 1776, 2.
power between ports and hinterlands and shifted the locations of the players involved. However, because the Revolution was such a watershed event for those residing in Virginia, and because the shift of trade routes away from Virginia and towards the ports of New York and Philadelphia was sudden and near complete, it created a host of new ties in a very short period of time. The movement of family members to Britain and New York, and the decision to continue transatlantic trade through these family members, stretched the existing network but did not sever the ties that held it together.

Sadly, George Pottie never made it to London. When he and Mary reached Kirkcudbright in 1785, George died of a prolonged illness leaving Mary widowed in a foreign land. She made brief contact with her son, who was studying in London, before returning to Virginia. After completing his studies, George Pottie Jr rejoined his mother in the United States. Tragedy also hit the Braikenridges. Only a few years after their arrival in Bristol in 1788, and despite surviving a minor shipwreck in the Bristol Channel, Sarah and her two daughters died of scarlet fever in 1793. With the loss of his Virginian wife, and thus of his most prominent personal connection to the Chesapeake, George Braikenridge seemed to have little reason to continue in the Anglo-Virginian trade; economically, he was much better placed to engage in the Bristol-West Indian sugar trade with John Fisher Weare, the wealthy West-Indian merchant to whom his sister was married. Lastly, John Jerdone, Sarah Jerdone’s youngest surviving son, contracted tuberculosis while studying in Edinburgh and died in 1786. Yet despite these deaths, the extended Jerdone family managed to maintain its transnational networks.

One reason for this was the continued viability of existing economic ties. Upon returning to Virginia, Francis Jerdone Jr took up his late father’s plantations and tobacco business. Through a Scottish agent in Richmond named James Gairdner, and their brother-in-law Alexander MacAulay who had returned from New York in 1783, the planter branches of the family continued to carry out their Atlantic business dealings with George Braikenridge in Bristol. This business partnership was to last until Braikenridge’s death in 1827. This relationship, however, was based on far more than pecuniary gain and generated a correspondence that placed great emphasis on maintaining affective ties amongst family members.

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31 There were direct sailings between Richmond, Virginia, and the Scottish port of Kirkcudbright during this period, making it a desirable route to London.
33 Mary Pottie to Francis Jerdone Jr, 14 March 1786, JFP, Box 1, Folder 5.
George Braikenridge sent his sisters-in-law gifts of lace and dress patterns and Francis Jerdone Jr and Charles Thompson sent their nephew, George Weare Braikenridge, sea-shells and other American trinkets, initiating a lifelong passion.\textsuperscript{34} Even in Scotland the family connections remained strong, with frequent letters being exchanged among Francis Jerdone Jr in Virginia, George Braikenridge in Bristol, and Joan Douglass (Francis Jerdone Jr’s cousin in Jedburgh). In fact, the personal tragedies in the Jerdone kin-network may have served to strengthen, rather than weaken, these transatlantic ties. A study by Melinda Buza notes that same-sex friendships and regular friendly correspondence were often used to ‘alleviate sadness of unpreventable tragedies’ and were crucial to the development of lasting, companionate marriages, the bedrock of extended kin-networks.\textsuperscript{35} Also relevant is T.H. Breen’s assertion that long-term business commitments, such as those between the Virginian and Bristol branches of the extended Jerdone family, were generally matters of friendship first and economic gain second.\textsuperscript{36} There can be no doubt that business provided additional impetus for continuing their correspondence, but the language of the letters suggests that the links between all the family members, male and female, were decidedly emotional in nature.

When it came to political loyalties and personal identity, Francis Jerdone Sr’s two sons, as well as his older grandchildren, George Pottie Jr and George Weare Braikenridge, had a unique perspective, having spent time growing up in both colonial Virginia and Great Britain. But whether a transnational upbringing translated into a transnational sense of identity is less clear. Though Francis Jerdone Jr, John Jerdone and George Pottie Jr had spent their adolescent lives in Britain, and were by all accounts welcomed there, they regarded themselves as Americans and had always intended to return home to North America when their educations were complete.\textsuperscript{37} In a similar fashion, individuals who had been born in Britain, such as George Pottie Sr and George Braikenridge, continued to refer to Britain as their home long after they had settled down

\textsuperscript{34} George Weare Braikenridge to Francis Jerdone Jr, 9 February 1804, JFP, Box 4, Folder 5.


\textsuperscript{37} John Jerdone to Francis Jerdone Jr, 27 June 1783, JFP, Box 1, Folder 2; John Jerdone to Mary Pottie, 2 December 1785, JFP, Box 1, Folder 4.
happily in Virginia. Unlike Francis Jerdone Sr’s two sons and George Pottie Jr, however, these two men later returned to the country of their birth more by force of circumstance than by their own volition. When he did so, George Braikenridge was accompanied by his Virginian-born wife, Sarah (Jerdone) Braikenridge, who—shortly before her death—wrote to her mother and sisters of her longing for familiar Virginian sights and stated that she felt isolated in English society. At their core, these men and women did have loyalties to the regions of their birth.

Nonetheless, the Revolutionary period remained a time of high—even heightened—transatlantic mobility, in which both personal and economic drivers demanded migration across geographic and political frontiers. Moreover, because of the nature of their careers, merchants did not feel that these borders were particularly solid, even after the American colonies had won their political independence from Britain. With children continuing to be sent to Britain for their education and with British firms continuing to send factors to the storefronts in North America, there was little reason to believe that the shuffling of families between Britain and Virginia would soon come to an end.

IV British and American Divergence

By the turn of the nineteenth century, however, the family tree had begun to splinter. Although Francis Jr considered Virginian schools inferior to those in Britain, unrest in Europe, notably the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, made him wary of sending his young sons abroad as he had been; instead, John, William and Francis Jerdone attended a boarding school in Virginia. Likewise, Alexander MacAulay wanted to send his children to Scotland, disliking the ‘French principle’ being taught in the United States, but lacked the finances to do so. There is no correspondence to suggest where William Douglass Jr, the son of Francis Jerdone Sr’s emigrant nephew, sent his children for their education, but as late as 1828 his Scottish aunt, Joan Douglass, was still advocating that they be sent to Scotland, apparently in
vain. In contrast with their parents, the younger members of the Jerdone and MacAuley families were educated in the United States, while the Braikenridge cousins were educated and established themselves in Bristol and London.

By the time it was again safe to undertake travel and education abroad following the conclusion of the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, the opportunity to create another generation of transnationals had passed. Francis Jr’s children had taken up his various land holdings in Virginia, while George Braikenridge’s children had followed their uncle, John Fisher Weare, into the sugar trade in Bristol or had taken up the practice of law in London. Though the younger generations of Jerdones and Braikenridges kept up communication for a while, by the 1840s their home affairs took precedence over family they had never actually met, and the last transnational links faded away.

What is perhaps most telling is the selection of correspondence which has survived. Francis Jr kept nearly every letter that reached his hands. His sons, however, were less devoted. While there are indications in their domestic correspondence that they exchanged letters with their cousins in London and Bristol, none of these letters has survived. This is in contrast to a significant collection of letters and papers from Virginian friends and family. Their failure to retain these letters suggests that they may have attached less importance to their connection with the British cousins than to more local ties.

Furthermore, the economic links through which the family had maintained its various networks were beginning to break down. Though correspondence between William and George Mitchell (the sons of Isabella Jerdone and Thomas Mitchell) and their Braikenridge cousins in England continued, it appears to have been purely personal rather than business-related and seems to have dwindled over time. For years, Francis Jr and George Braikenridge had complained of the weakening Bristol-Virginia trade and its effect on their family correspondence. By the time their sons and nephews had grown up,

41 Joan Thomson (née Douglass) to Francis Jerdone Jr, 10 March 1828, JFP, Box 7, Folder 1.
42 Francis Jerdone Jr to James Innes, n.d. 1827, JFP, Box 7, Folder 1; George Braikenridge to Francis Jerdone Jr, 22 February 1812, JFP, Box 5, Folder 5. George Weare Braikenridge remained in Bristol throughout his life, while his brother John took up a legal education and career in London.
43 Notes between correspondents on the latest news they had heard from various branches can be used to create a catalogue of letters sent and received. From this, it is clear that Francis Jerdone saved almost all his business and personal correspondence.
44 These letters are referred to by various family members in letters to Francis Jerdone Jr and his sons, but have not themselves been retained in the Jerdone Family Papers.
45 George Braikenridge to Francis Jerdone Jr, 10 April 1797, JFP, Box 3, Folder 2.
Liverpool and New York had usurped the trade that had helped for so long to sustain the family connection.

In general, it appears that it was the disruption of transatlantic migration patterns and the loss of economic ties, rather than political independence, that was most responsible for the weakening of Anglo-American networks and identities. In fact, of all the wars of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the American Revolution may have done the least to destroy the transatlantic bonds of these planter-merchant families. By prompting a large number of return migrations, directly and indirectly, strong friendships and extended family networks were stretched across the ocean. It was not until the height of the Napoleonic Wars, and the War of 1812, that the world seemed to change. The dynamic nature of the Atlantic trade in the eighteenth century had brought a continual flow of new contacts, new factors, new agents and, most importantly, new friends to men like Francis Jerdone Jr. In the years immediately following the American Revolution, merchants, students and agricultural labourers had continued to migrate across the ocean. With a fundamental change in port dominancy from Virginia to the mid-Atlantic and the heightened risks associated with sea travel—resulting as much from British impressments as the threat of French attack during the Napoleonic Era—these personal and economic bonds could no longer be renewed and adapted as they had been in the past. Instead, they faded away over the years of war that engulfed Europe between 1793 and 1815. By the time peace descended, the younger generations on both sides had put down more permanent roots in their respective continents. The children of Virginia drifted westward, settling as far away as Texas and Mexico, and the children of Britain became involved in the new British Empire and India.\footnote{Joan Thomson (née Douglass) to Francis Jerdone Jr, 10 March 1828, JFP, Box 7, Folder 1; Isabella Mitchell to Francis Jerdone Jr, 22 March 1823, JFP, Box 6, Folder 5.} With such weak links between them, American and British identities diverged sharply.

Considering the physical distance, it is perhaps surprising that these fluid identities and flexible networks lasted as long as they did. And yet, there were many reasons for this. One, certainly, was business. These were men of acumen and skill who had carved out an economic niche for their family in the tobacco-sundries trade. Though none of them came from truly humble beginnings, they did rise to impressive heights thanks to the burgeoning Atlantic trade. Another, perhaps more important, reason was family loyalty. For colonial Virginians, business was a way of maintaining a family link, not the other way around. Economic and personal obligations worked hand in
hand and created a support structure that endured a century of economic and political upheaval and allowed for a fluid sense of identity, one tied much more to the network itself than to the geographic locations of its members. Family loyalty, at least in the case of the merchant class, was far stronger than regional or national loyalties.

Looking, however, at the correspondence of subsequent waves of Scottish immigrants to North America—those arriving after 1816 for permanent settlement—one becomes acutely aware of a change in regard to personal identity.\(^47\) Men and women from the same parish as Jerdone and Douglass now wrote lengthy epistles flaunting their Scottish identity through ostentatious Presbyterian rhetoric and the habit of name dropping—informing those back home of every Scot they had encountered since emigrating, and being informed of every Scottish acquaintance that had followed after them. None of this had been apparent in the sixty years of eighteenth-century Jerdone correspondence, and it was only obliquely referred to in that of the first decades of the nineteenth century. Despite the importance of Scottish merchants in the tobacco-sundries trade, no real evidence can be found of a ‘Scots-Virginian’ identity in the so-called ‘long’ eighteenth century. Beyond pride in their native education system, such overt expressions of national identification were of little use to those whose commercial and familial ties were so intricately woven across the Atlantic. It was the nineteenth century that saw the creation of a Scottish-American identity, one that in many ways developed in isolation from Scotland itself. It is this identity, re-enforced by romantic nineteenth-century narratives, that has strengthened in the centuries since.\(^48\)

As for the explicit national identities of this transnational generation, Francis Jr maintained his ambivalence till the end. This is most evident in his final letters to his sons. What concerned him near his death was not business. That had been passed on to his children decades before. Nor was it family matters, for he was the last of his generation to die. Instead, it was news of British North America, where a confrontation between the United States and Great Britain over the boundary between the state of Maine and the province of New Brunswick—dubbed the ‘Aroostook War’ (1838–9)—was causing tensions. In his last years, he feared that war with Great Britain was on the


\(^{48}\) Gibson, ‘Self-Reflection’, passim.
horizon and prayed that differences could be settled ‘before blood is shed’. He had felt the effects of war with Britain all his life and wished only for a lasting peace between the two countries. It is clear from the mutual affection and shared interests expressed in the correspondence between Francis Jr and his brother-in-law George Braikenridge that, had circumstances allowed, they would have wished their transatlantic kin-network to have continued well beyond their deaths in 1841 and 1827 respectively. The men of Jerdone’s world were true transnationals, to whom geographic distinctions were less important than the integrity and strength of their familial networks.

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Irish and Scottish migrants played an important role in the development of communities in what would later become known as Atlantic Canada, settling land and actively participating in the formation of colonial life. Bundled with their meagre personal possessions came the values and traditions of their native societies which they painstakingly transplanted to these new locales. One component of this ‘baggage’ has received considerable scholarly consideration, namely sectarianism. Recently, however, more attention has been devoted to conflicts that arose between co-religionists of different national origins, who, despite sharing a common faith, did not always display the same religious habits, or who were unwilling to accept religious leadership from those of ethnic or linguistic backgrounds different to their own.¹

Taking as its example a chapter from the expansion of Roman Catholicism in Atlantic Canada, this paper explores the intra-communal friction that arose when Irish-Catholic migrants from the British colony of Newfoundland encountered their Scottish co-religionists on Cape Breton Island, part of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia, in the period between 1880 and 1914. Through a particular focus on the Catholic press and education, this study will illustrate that although the Ultramontane leadership in Cape Breton welcomed the Newfoundland Irish into the diocese, many Scottish clergy, influenced as they were by Gallican² traditions and already in a protracted battle against their leadership, felt threatened by both the conservative ethos of


² The term Gallican is used here to describe the temperament of Cape Breton’s more liberal Scottish Catholics, despite the fact that—during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—the term was primarily deployed by Ultramontanes such as Bishop John Cameron of Antigonish to discredit those who did not conform with their views.
the Newfoundlander and the use of Irish issues to foster a more aggressive Catholicism in Cape Breton.

I Roman Catholicism in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland Prior to 1880

Unlike the United States where complaints of the existence of a ‘hibernarchy’ were heard as early as the 1860s, no single ethnic group came to exert a hegemonic influence over the Catholic agenda in British North America. In Nova Scotia, the Scots and Irish who settled there during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries tended to establish insular communities in relative isolation to one another, allowing dominant ethnic groups to reign supreme at the diocesan level. While Halifax, the capital of the colony, was firmly Irish, in north-eastern Nova Scotia and on Cape Breton Island a ‘tartanarchy’ of Scottish priests prevailed.

As a result, the history of Roman Catholicism in Nova Scotia in the nineteenth century is a narrative of factionalism and ethnic tension. In the Apostolic Vicariate of Nova Scotia, which had been created in 1817, Irish and Scots clashed over administrative and philosophical issues to such an extent that it became impossible to administer. In an 1844 letter to the Propaganda Fide, Monsignor Antonio De Luca, a special Roman investigator, claimed that the two communities had brought with them ‘their divergent characteristics

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4 The term ‘tartanarchy’ is the author’s own. While the French-speaking clergy who ministered to the Acadian population, as well as a few Irish priests, served within the diocese of Antigonish, the overwhelming majority of the clergy was Scottish. Between 1880 and the Great War, there were 179 appointments as pastor in Cape Breton, of which 131 went to those of Scottish origin. In the industrial sector of the island during the same period, twenty-eight of thirty-three appointments went to Scottish clergy. Archives of the Diocese of Antigonish (hereafter ADA), Bishop John Cameron Papers (hereafter BJCP), Diocesan Statistics, 1880 – 1910; A.A. Johnston, *Antigonish Diocese Priests and Bishops 1786 – 1925*, edited by Kathleen Mackenzie (Antigonish, 1994).

and inclinations and the customs and prejudices of their native lands’. As a result, the Scots and Irish who formed the majority of the colony’s population were ‘keeping up their inborn mutual hostility’. ‘The identity of religion among the Catholics of these two nationalities’, De Luca observed, had not ‘availed to extirpate this primitive germ of discord in Nova Scotia, for each group is anxious to live as far away as possible from the other’. In 1844 the decision was therefore made to separate Nova Scotia into two dioceses. The Scottish diocese of Arichat (renamed Antigonish in 1886) had charge of the mainland counties of Pictou, Antigonish and Guysborough as well as all of Cape Breton Island, while the Irish-dominated diocese of Halifax covered the rest of the colony. Despite the division of the province, tensions between Halifax and Antigonish nevertheless persisted.

While the Irish in Halifax looked to Archbishop Daniel Murray of Dublin for clergy and financial support, in the heavily-Scottish island of Cape Breton the Catholic leadership was determined to create a native-born clergy. This led to the emergence of a ‘locally-born but foreign-bred intelligentsia’, with the Scots College in Rome becoming the unofficial conduit between the diocese and the Vatican. As Jack Bumsted has argued, Scottish Catholicism in British North America was caught between ‘the dominant francophone Catholicism’ and the emerging ‘anglophone Irish Catholic’ community. In this environment, the survival of Scottish Catholicism ‘owed far less to ecclesiastical authority from above than to the individual and collective efforts of priests and their congregations’. Consequently, it was the Scottish clergy who ‘led the way in the dismemberment of the control of the Quebec Church over the ecclesiastical affairs of the other colonies’ of British North America.

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7 The diocese of Arichat was renamed as a result of the transfer of the bishop’s seat to Antigonish. To avoid confusion, this study will use the name Antigonish throughout.

8 For example, in 1879—just as the trickle of migration from Newfoundland was beginning—the proposed merger of St Francis Xavier College in Antigonish and St Mary’s College in Halifax into one university was vetoed by a number of Antigonish priests who felt that Irish control of the college from Halifax would lead to a spirit of ‘national bigotry’. See James Cameron, *For the People: A History of St Francis Xavier University* (Montreal, 1996), 67.


from the Highlands of Scotland also recognised that they could strengthen their position in Nova Scotia by taking a Gallican approach that emphasised the limits to Rome’s jurisdiction in civil matters, and by stressing their loyalty to the British crown.\footnote{11}

Perhaps more importantly, in the colonial context of Nova Scotia Catholic and Presbyterian Scots soon became aware that they had greater reason to make common cause than would have been the case in their country of origin. This was especially true of the Gaelic-speaking Highlanders who, despite religious divisions, were united by their language and culture.\footnote{12} Although not immune to incidents of sectarianism, Catholics and Seceder Presbyterians routinely collaborated to resist the ascendancy of the Church of England, and to a lesser extent the Church of Scotland.\footnote{13} Together, for example, they opposed the government’s determination to fund King’s College, an Anglican establishment which required students to take an oath assenting to the thirty-nine articles of the Church of England. Although purely symbolic, as early as 1832 a Catholic bishop also sat on the board of trustees of Pictou Academy, the region’s most influential Presbyterian college, thus fostering conciliation and ‘harmony among good people of other creeds’.\footnote{14} In addition, Scottish Catholics were pragmatic enough to recognise the importance of having a

\footnote{11} Despite organisational difficulties in the early nineteenth century, due partially to the residue of the British penal laws, the progress of Catholicism in Nova Scotia proceeded apace. In 1820, Laurence Kavanagh, a merchant in St Peter’s, Cape Breton, who was the son of an Irish immigrant from Newfoundland, was elected to the Legislative Assembly in Halifax. He took his seat in the assembly in 1823 after taking the oath renouncing all claims of the Pope to temporal power; however, he was exempt from taking an oath against transubstantiation. Thus, Catholic emancipation was effected in Nova Scotia six years before Daniel O’Connell achieved it in Ireland. See Duncan J. Rankin, ‘Laurence Kavanagh’, \textit{Canadian Catholic Historical Association} (hereafter \textit{CCHA}) \textit{Report}, 8 (1940–1), 51–76.


\footnote{13} In 1817 Burghers and Anti-Burghers united to form the Presbyterian Church of Nova Scotia. They were known as Seceders while the Kirk Presbyterians called themselves the Church of Scotland. See P.B. Waite, \textit{The Lives of Dalhousie University}, vol. 1 (Montreal and Kingston, 1994), 13.

voice in the Legislative Assembly, and—unable to elect one of their own as a member in the large and religiously-mixed County of Sydney—they relied on their Presbyterian countrymen instead. Given that a Catholic was unable to secure the seat, Bishop William Fraser of Antigonish felt that a Presbyterian representative, as a ‘brither Scot’, would best serve the interests of his flock.

Having heard of the level of fraternisation between Catholics and Protestants in Nova Scotia, as well as the intolerable conditions that prevailed amongst some clergy in Newfoundland, in 1870 Irish prelate Paul Cardinal Cullen took steps to bring the Maritime provinces of Canada and the colony of Newfoundland into what Colin Barr describes as the wider ‘neo-ultramontanism’ of Hiberno-Romanism. Cullen had received various appalling reports from both locales, including a letter alleging that the bishop’s palace in St John’s, Newfoundland, had been ‘converted into a drinking club’. Using his authority at the Propaganda Fide he ensured that the dioceses of St John’s and Antigonish were filled by suitable ‘Roman’ candidates. Thomas Joseph Power, a former rector of Dublin’s Pro-Cathedral, and rector of Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, was appointed as bishop of St John’s, while a Scot from rural Nova Scotia, John Cameron, was consecrated as coadjutor for Antigonish. Cameron had a brilliant mind and was considered a prize student while at the Urban College of the Propaganda Fide. In his final year in Rome he was asked to serve as secretary to Alessandro Cardinal Barnabo, secretary to the Propaganda. Although Cameron was qualified for the position, it is likely that the post came as a result of his friendship with Cardinal Cullen, of whom Cameron said he owed more ‘than to any other man living or dead’. Soon after receiving their new appointments, Power and Cameron took their seats at the Vatican Council and ‘stoutly supported the majority judgement on the question of papal infallibility’.

Cameron, who became bishop of Antigonish in 1877, was a controversial

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15 It was not until 1847 that a resident Scottish Catholic was elected in the County of Sydney. This was due chiefly to the freehold electoral system. Many Highland Catholics in north-eastern Nova Scotia were tenants and therefore did not have the right to vote. See Brian Cuthbertson, *Johnny Bluenose at the Polls: Epic Nova Scotian Election Battles 1758–1848* (Halifax, 1994), 5–9, 258–72.
17 Barr, “Imperium in Imperio”, 612.
18 Ibid., 624.
figure from the beginning. He immediately tried to strengthen his authority in the region and attacked those who opposed him as being infatuated with vanity, ‘into which the Gallican bishops had decoyed them’. Catholics in Cape Breton were leery of Cameron’s Ultramontanism, not because of conventional theological objections, but because they feared the transfer of parochial authority from local priests to their bishops and from the bishops to Rome. While parish priests were not totally stripped of their authority, they were ‘at the mercy of their bishop, and subject, under Rome, to his untrammelled authority.’ As much as some prelates objected to their complete subordination to the pope, so too did the laity object to the loss of traditional influence within their own parishes. ‘Middle-class laity could still play a role’, argues Terrence Murphy, ‘but only to the extent that they accepted clerical supervision’. Cameron reacted with disdain to the protracted battle waged against him by Scottish and Acadian farmers, once advising a priest to discontinue the forwarding of petitions from parishioners because ‘they would be utterly ineffectual.’ Those who stood up to episcopal bullying faced excommunication and censor.

22 Bishop John Cameron to Patrick Power, 27 August 1870, ADA, BJCP, Fonds 3, Series 2, Sub Series 1, Folder 28.
23 Colin Barr, “Imperium in Imperio”, 613.
24 Terrence Murphy, ‘Trusteeism in Atlantic Canada’ in Murphy and Stortz (eds.), Creed and Culture, 145.
25 MacLean, Piety and Politics, 122. Although autocratic, Bishop John Cameron was an able and important figure. Most of Cameron’s fame and notoriety came from his involvement in politics, and in particular his zealous support of the Conservative politician, Sir John S.D. Thompson. Although Thompson’s achievements as both the first Roman Catholic Premier of Nova Scotia and Prime Minister of Canada were far-reaching, the bishop’s conspicuous meanderings into party politics fostered strong misgivings about the use of his episcopal authority to influence the secular decisions of his flock. The people never grew accustomed to official circulars demanding that Catholics support Thompson, nor to the use of the pulpit to issue personal attacks on Thompson’s opponents. See P.B. Waite, The Man From Halifax: Sir John Thompson, Prime Minister (Toronto, 1985), 141; D. Hugh Gillis, ‘Sir John Thompson and Bishop Cameron’, CCHA Report, 22 (1955), 87–97; D. Hugh Gillis, ‘Sir John Thompson’s Elections’, Canadian Historical Review, 37 (1956), 23–45; P.B. Waite, ‘Annie and the Bishop: John S.D Thompson Goes to Ottawa, 1885’, Dalhousie Review, 57 (1977), 605–16; Johnston, A History of the Catholic Church, vol. 2, 548–53; MacLean, Piety and Politics, 113–30.
26 During the 1896 Canadian federal election, the male members of the parish of Heatherton, a small rural village in the mainland county of Antigonish, ‘stampeded’ out of the church instead of listening to a circular from Bishop Cameron telling them to vote for a specific political candidate. The ‘stampedes’ were denied the sacraments and had to sign a humiliating apology to Cameron. Some ‘held out’ and travelled to Newfoundland to attempt to receive Holy Communion, but were denied. See Cameron, For the People, 107; MacLean, Piety and Politics, 156–9.
While Cameron battled with Nova Scotia’s Gallicans, the situation was entirely different within the coves and bays of Newfoundland. Although Bishop Thomas Power was the first non-Franciscan to take office in St John’s, he encountered little resistance within a diocese that had already been strongly influenced by ‘Hiberno-Roman’ Catholicism through its close ties with Ireland.27 Firmly entrenched in a system in which sectarianism was ‘stationary, institutionalised and non-violent’, Newfoundland Catholics belonged to a church which offered a ‘cradle-to-grave, social, cultural and economic framework.’ Consequently, they viewed the church as the guardian of ‘the state and of their spiritual, cultural and social identity’.28 Although not as nationalistic or political as his predecessors, Power continued to emphasise Irish authority on the island by engaging the services of the Irish Christian Brothers and fighting to secure political positions for prominent Irish Catholics.29 Although most Canadian dioceses were influenced at some level by European Catholic institutions, in Newfoundland’s intensely sectarian environment the strong influence of Cullenite Ireland led to the forging of an especially powerful fusion of Irish, Roman and Newfoundland identity. It was this insular and aggressive Catholic ‘baggage’ that the Newfoundland Irish took with them across the Cabot Strait in the 1880s.

II The Migration of the Newfoundland Irish to Cape Breton

In the midst of the turmoil within Antigonish caused by Cameron’s Hiberno-Romanism, thousands of Newfoundland-Irish Catholics poured into the industrial towns of Cape Breton. There was a long history of Irish migration


from Newfoundland to Nova Scotia, with John Wentworth, the governor of the colony, rather curtly complaining in 1806 of the ‘useless Irishmen who pass annually from Newfoundland through the province’.30 However, the level of migration after 1880 was unprecedented. During this period, a decline in the price of salt cod and the failure of the Conception Bay seal fishery led thousands of migrants from Newfoundland to cross the Cabot Strait in search of employment in Cape Breton’s rapidly developing coal and steel industries.31 Large numbers of Irish Catholics swelled the ranks of parishes staffed mainly by Scottish priests, reawakening as they did so the ‘primitive germ of discord’ that had helped to bring about the separation of Nova Scotia into two dioceses in the first place.32

Given the history of antagonism between Nova Scotia’s Scottish and Irish communities, it is perhaps not surprising that negative stereotypes of Irish immigrants were prevalent in Cape Breton society. Even Protestant communities made a clear distinction between Scottish and Irish Catholics. One correspondent to the Presbyterian Guardian emphasised that ‘it wasn’t Catholics he feared, so much as Irish Catholics’. The French, Scottish and English Catholics were acceptable, he argued, but, ‘from dear-bought experience, let us ask to be delivered from the bullying, boisterous, agitating Irish ecclesiastics.’33 Despite the fact that the cramped living conditions and the exigent economic reality of the colliery towns challenged order and sobriety amongst all communities, contrasting perceptions of the moderate Scot and the intemperate Irishmen were widely popular. ‘If it comes to a comparison,’

31 By 1921, over 50 per cent of Newfoundlanders living in Canada were residents of the province of Nova Scotia. Ron Crawley, ‘Off to Sydney: Newfoundlanders Emigrate to Industrial Cape Breton, 1890–1914’, Acadiensis, 17 (1988), 31.
32 In 1871 the diocese of Arichat (Antigonish) had a population of nearly 105,000. According to James D. Cameron, largely Gaelic-speaking Scots comprised 66.7 per cent of the diocese’s population in 1871, while the Acadians made up 10.7 per cent, the Irish 10.6 per cent, the English 8.4 per cent and the natives (First Nations) 0.5 per cent. He also states that ‘Catholics composed 44.7 per cent of the population and formed majorities in Antigonish, Inverness, Richmond, and Cape Breton counties.’ See ‘“Erasing forever the brand of social inferiority”: Saint Francis Xavier University and the Highland Catholics of Eastern Nova Scotia’, CCHA Historical Studies, 59 (1992), 53.
wrote Fr Donald MacAdam of Sydney’s Sacred Heart Parish, ‘between the work done for the Church and for Catholic education by the sons of the Scottish farmers of the diocese of Antigonish and that done by the sons of the Irish rumsellers of Halifax, we have little to fear’.34 The denigration of the Irish as ‘rumsellers’ by some clergy was a reaction not only to the perceived loss of influence which accompanied foreign migration into Cape Breton, but also to the threat that ‘Irishness’ posed to their Gallican traditions.

Between 1908 and the Great War the question of national parishes dominated ecclesiastical discussions in Cape Breton. Separate parishes were given to Italian, Polish and Lebanese communities, but not to the Newfoundland Irish. There were a number of reasons for this. First, spread out among the various parishes in the industrial sector, Newfoundlanders were not concentrated in one area, and thus lacked the critical mass necessary to establish parishes with a predominantly Irish character. Secondly, they were ineligible to form national parishes because they did not share the language barriers of other migrants, nor did they pose a ‘schismatical’ threat to the diocese.35 But most importantly, Bishop Cameron and his successor Bishop James Morrison coveted the type of aggressive Catholicism which the Newfoundlanders often displayed, and believed that it might counter the liberal nature of some of the Scottish Catholics as well as the liberalism brewing within labour circles.36 Thus, despite the fact that the number of parishes within the industrial sector of Cape Breton increased from three in 1879 to thirteen by 1914, the Newfoundland Irish built no churches of their own and had no parishes to serve as focal points for their community.

Yet, while some members of the Scottish clergy welcomed the influx of a group of migrants whose allegiance to their church was equalled only by that

34 Donald M. MacAdam to Bishop James Morrison, 29 March 1921, ADA, Bishop Morrison Papers (hereafter BMP), incoming letter no. 8070.
35 Roderick MacInnis to Bishop James Morrison, 21 January 1913, ADA, BMP, incoming letter no. 161. In other Canadian dioceses misinformation about ethnic populations and unpopular immigrant clergy frequently caused tension within immigrant communities and sometimes led to schism and abandonment of the church. Speaking of Polish immigrants, Morrison wrote, ‘From what I know of these people, the end of this agitation will be that they will open their own church, if not in the regular way, then some schismatical manner’. See Bishop James Morrison to Roderick MacInnis, 16 January 1913, ADA, BMP, letter no. 173.
36 Although some Newfoundlanders were involved with radical politics as part of the Cape Breton working class, the Antigonish hierarchy remained firm in its mistaken belief that eastern Europeans, and especially ‘polish interpreters’, were responsible for ‘misleading their fellow workers’. Bishop James Morrison to D.H. MacDougall, 8 July 1914, ADA, BMP, letter no. 1255.
of their French Canadian counterparts in Quebec, other Scottish Catholics remained fearful that their own religious traditions would be undermined by the newcomers. The Irish may not have secured parishes of their own, but—as the remainder of this article will demonstrate—this did not prevent them from finding other ways of exerting an influence within the diocese of Antigonish, nor from clashing with Scottish Catholics as they did so.

III The Catholic Press

By the 1890s, there was evidence in Cape Breton of growing interest in Ireland’s social and political issues. In an 1889 letter to the *Freeman’s Journal* in Dublin, Bishop Cameron wrote of those in his diocese who had been ‘stirred to indignation by the proceedings of the past three years in Ireland’, referring to the treatment of Irish political prisoners. Despite being of Scottish origin, Cameron’s strong Hiberno-Roman sympathies meant that Ireland’s causes were as dear to him as to any Irish prelate. One of the chief ways in which he attempted to raise awareness of both Irish and Catholic causes amongst the laity was through the pages of *The Casket*, Nova Scotia’s most important Catholic newspaper. Launched in Antigonish in 1852 by John Boyd, the son of a Scottish émigré, *The Casket* had traditionally served as a distributor of local news in both English and Scottish Gaelic, and as a mouthpiece for the Scottish clergy. Despite operating under the watchful eye of Catholic authorities, the paper maintained a reputation for taking pride in its ‘respect for the other man’s point of view’. In Cameron’s inflexible mind, however, there was no room for dissenting opinion.

In 1890, Michael Donovan, the son of Irish immigrants and a native of St John, New Brunswick, took over the management of the newspaper. Cameron expected that under Donovan’s ownership the paper would become a ‘Catholic and Conservative journal’. The deference exhibited by *The Casket* towards the bishop’s office, coupled with the rising numbers of Irish in the

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37 Donald M. MacAdam to Bishop James Morrison, 13 February 1913, ADA, BMP, incoming letter no. 241.
38 *The Freeman’s Journal*, 12 June 1889.
40 Ibid., 132.
41 Bishop John Cameron to John Thompson, 31 December 1889, ADA, BJCP, letter no. 11356.
industrial sector, made some Scottish priests very uneasy. Moreover, within a short period, there was a noticeable transformation of the paper’s coverage. The most discernible change was an increase in reporting of the events and politics of Ireland. Enormous space was given to stories of Irish interest from both sides of the Atlantic. In the spring of 1905, the paper described the Irish services at Westminster Cathedral in London, celebrating the fact that it ‘was the first time in the history of the new Cathedral that an Irish bishop preached in Irish to an Irish congregation’. An increasingly anti-British agenda was also evident, particularly in the paper’s editorials which, for example, criticised the coronation oath of King Edward VII as a ‘relic of religious barbarism’.

Although by the early twentieth century The Casket had developed a national reputation and its articles were reprinted in a number of Canadian Catholic newspapers, not everyone was pleased with its progress. The loss of the Gaelic paper Mac-Talla in 1904 (which had been published in Sydney), and the rise in attention given to Irish issues in The Casket, quickly induced some of the Scottish clergy to complain, although many others waited until after Cameron’s death in 1910 to do so. When Cameron’s successor, Bishop James Morrison, arrived in Antigonish in 1912, he was soon facing protests that The Casket was spending too much of its space defending the ‘cause of Irish Nationalism’. One correspondent had grown weary of reading editorials which were devoted to ‘Home Rule’. According to others, the paper was publishing too many articles on ‘the history of hatred and Orangeism’, which were inflammatory and threatened the generally good relations between Scottish Catholics and their Protestant neighbours. Another subscriber who had migrated to Boston years before wrote: ‘Scotch men from Cape Breton and Eastern Nova Scotia, whom I meet abroad, appear to look upon The Casket as their bible … I am sorry that The Casket is so pro-Irish’.

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42 Cameron wanted The Casket to support his Conservative politics and to come to his defence when he was publicly attacked, something which one editor, the Reverend Dr Neil McNeil, refused to do. Consequently, Cameron had McNeil, the future archbishop of Toronto, transferred to a remote Cape Breton parish in 1891. Cameron dismissed McNeil’s supporters, who wished the The Casket to remain non-partisan and moderate, as ‘amateur theologians’ who would soon annoy the paper’s readers. MacLean, The Casket, 60.

43 The Casket, 18 May 1905.

44 The Casket, 13 March 1902.


46 All quotations in this paragraph come from MacLean, The Casket, 124.
By the start of World War I, the Irish influence on *The Casket* inspired some priests to consider starting a rival Scottish journal. One of the principal promoters of this idea was the influential Harvard-educated Sydney priest, Fr Donald MacAdam. In resigning his place on *The Casket*’s Board of Directors, he complained to Bishop Morrison that the paper’s pro-Irish position had rendered it inadequate for the Scottish community. The rise in Irish influence had, he argued, begun to threaten the very identity of the Scottish majority:

> Since seeing your lordship I have been talking to a few of our Scottish priests and layman, and they all recognize the urgent necessity of having a Scottish Catholic paper if we are to preserve our identity as a distinct race. In the province of Nova Scotia we have a greater percentage of Scottish Catholics then in any part of the world, and yet we have not a single senator, whilst the Irish have four and the French one… With our well-earned reputation for loyalty a Scottish Catholic paper would have more influence than either an Irish or a French paper.47

Moreover, MacAdam reasoned that a Scottish paper would improve relations with Presbyterians by providing Catholics with a means of defending themselves against bigotry. The introduction of a Gaelic column, he argued, could be used to attract Presbyterian subscribers as ‘hundreds of them read Gaelic and are intensely interested in the language… there would be great possibilities for good in this fact alone’.48

Bishop Morrison, while Conservative and Ultramontane, did not share his predecessor’s ‘Hiberno-Romanism’. Heeding MacAdam’s warning, he forced Michael Donovan to sell his shares to the diocese and took control of *The Casket* in 1919, providing editorials which read more like Sunday sermons as opposed to aggressive stories highlighting Catholic grievances in other countries.

**IV Catholic Education**

As was the case in England after heavy Irish migration in the nineteenth century, a Roman Catholic renaissance occurred in Cape Breton which

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47 Donald MacAdam to Bishop James Morrison, 25 June 1917, ADA, BMP, incoming letter no. 4343.
48 Ibid.
culminated in the building of chapels, churches and Catholic schools.49 Although the Newfoundland Irish were unable to assert their ethnic distinctiveness within the Catholic parishes of Nova Scotia, their importance to the economic well-being of the diocese and the province is without question.50 Bishop Cameron used these growing financial resources to construct convent schools, which were instrumental in achieving his Ultramontane goals. In 1864, Nova Scotia had passed the Free Schools Act which centralised the administrative system and promoted the principle of free public education. Although officially non-sectarian, schools in heavily-Catholic areas were allowed to operate with a Catholic ethos so long as they observed the regulations and followed the required course of study, while religious minorities in these locales had the option of applying for funding to establish their own ‘separate’ schools.51 However, Cameron believed that this did not go far enough in protecting Catholics from ‘godless education’ and in the 1880s he invited the Sisters of Charity of Halifax and the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre Dame of Montreal into the diocese to construct convent schools ‘with the least possible delay’.52 Convent schools were particularly contentious, as public funds were used to rent their facilities, financing both separate Catholic education and the presence of the congregation in the community.

While there was widespread support for the existing system of unofficial denominational education, many of the Scottish Catholic clergy feared that an increase in convent schools would damage relations with Protestants and lead to a rise in sectarianism.53 Moreover, they believed that the hierarchy’s

50 One significant means of raising funds involved a ‘check-off’ system agreed to by the Provincial Workman’s Association, and later the United Mine Workers of America, with the Dominion Coal Company, which ensured that a portion of each labourer’s wage went directly to the respective church to which the employee belonged to pay for the social infrastructure. ‘Statement of Funds Received from Parishes’, 1 January to 31 December 1915, ADA, BMP. See Cameron, *For the People*, 135.
51 Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid, *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History* (Toronto, 1994), 373. As an example, in 1872 Protestants in the overwhelmingly Catholic town of Antigonish petitioned for a ‘separate’ school for their children. They were successful and a small four-room school house was constructed for them. See H.M. MacDonald, *Memorable Years* (Antigonish, 1964), 60–1. Catholics living in heavily-Protestant communities also had the opportunity to establish their own ‘separate’ schools.
52 Bishop John Cameron to John Thompson, 13 February 1882, ADA, BJCP, letter no. 2435.
53 During the Canadian federal election of 1896, Cameron attempted to convince
resolve to open more convent schools within the industrial sector, in the face of stiff Protestant opposition, illustrated the unremitting determination of Ultramontanism. Some clergy, such as Fr John Fraser of New Aberdeen in Glace Bay, supported denominational education but openly resisted the introduction of convent schools into their parishes. Fraser’s arguments were two-fold. First, he believed that such an institution would harm relations between the Catholics and Protestants in his community. But more pragmatically, he was opposed to the importation of the teaching services of the sisters on the grounds that it took employment away from the young girls who were working as instructors.\textsuperscript{54}

While priests such as Fraser attempted to obstruct the diocese’s efforts at founding convent schools, Newfoundland migrants were keen supporters of such institutions. Newfoundland had an extensive history of religious teaching orders. As a young curate in Ireland in the 1820s, Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming of St John’s had witnessed the dramatic educational impact of a school established by the Christian Brothers, an experience that led him to recruit the Presentation Sisters of Galway to come to Newfoundland in 1833.\textsuperscript{55} When Thomas Power was appointed to Newfoundland, one of his first acts was to bring over the Irish Christian Brothers. John FitzGerald maintains that ‘the influence of the Irish Christian Brothers upon Roman Catholic education, and the impact this had upon Newfoundland society cannot be underestimated’.\textsuperscript{56} Moreover, as Daire Keogh has argued, the Irish Christian Brothers were ‘the Jesuits of Ireland’s counter-revolution’, of which the ultramontane Cameron and Power were a part.\textsuperscript{57} Consequently, teaching orders were integral to the connection between Catholicism and Newfoundland-Irish self-determination.

his flock that they should vote for the Conservative party in an effort to secure the rights of minority Catholics in Manitoba to operate Catholic schools. Despite Cameron assuming a national profile on this issue, most of his Scottish flock voted against the Conservatives. In the heavily-Scottish rural ridings of Antigonish and Inverness, Cape Breton, Liberal Candidates were victorious; however, in the ridings encompassing industrial Cape Breton, Conservatives were returned. See MacLean, \textit{Piety and Politics}, 150–60.

\textsuperscript{54} Congregation of the Sister’s of Charity to Bishop James Morrison, n.d. 1915, ADA, BMP, incoming letter no. 2054.

\textsuperscript{55} J.B. Darcy, \textit{Fire Upon the Earth: The Life and Times of Bishop Michael Anthony Fleming, O.S.F.} (St John’s, 2003), 34–5.


By 1914, as Newfoundlanders again debated the merits of union with Canada, the Catholic leadership on that island highlighted the preservation of Catholic education, and by extension the Christian Brothers schools, as a rallying point against confederation. In 1915 the newly appointed archbishop of St John’s, Edward Patrick Roche, used his inaugural address to equate confederation with the loss of such institutions. ‘Unless our educational terms are acceded to’, he said, ‘we will be forced to give it our most pronounced and uncompromising opposition’.58 Although Roche was chiefly concerned with the Catholics of Newfoundland, the Irish residing in Cape Breton, many of whom were seasonal residents of both islands, took such warnings seriously and wholeheartedly supported convent schools in their Cape Breton parishes.

By the Great War, the Sisters of Charity and the Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre Dame were assuming more and more of the Catholic teaching load in Cape Breton. Distressing to some of the native Scottish-Canadian clergy was the growing opposition within Protestant circles, as well as the more overtly sectarian language being deployed by Antigonish’s Roman Catholic hierarchy. Bishop Morrison commenced a campaign of circulars and public announcements alluding to aggressive sectarian malice on the part of Protestants in the industrial sector. A veteran of sectarian warfare on Prince Edward Island, Morrison echoed Cameron’s educational philosophy and believed that the Newfoundland Irish might aid in the creation of more convent schools.59 In a letter to the Glace Bay School Board he blamed the opposition to denominational and, more specifically, convent schooling, some of which came from his own clergy, on ‘rank Orangemen’.60 Such language was intended to appeal especially to Newfoundlanders who, to a greater extent
than their Nova Scotia counterparts, had a history of sectarian clashes with that organisation on their native island.\textsuperscript{61}

As the rhetoric on both sides of the debate took on a more hostile tone, Fr Fraser lamented that Catholic and Protestant hard-liners had infiltrated various levels of government, including school boards throughout the industrial sector, making a solution to the education issue more difficult.\textsuperscript{62} The Orange Lodges were not without influence; in fact, Orange representatives from Cape Breton were granted a formal meeting with the provincial government in 1914 to protest the amount of government monies spent on Catholic education. Likewise, in the weeks leading up to the 1917 municipal election in the city of Sydney, the Orange Lodge ‘lit the fires of sectarian strife’ when it released a document calling on members to ensure that ‘the silent vote of the Orangeman’ would have a hand in deciding the education issue.\textsuperscript{63}

Convent schools in industrial Cape Breton ultimately survived because the voters, many of them ‘fair minded Protestants’, supported denominational schooling, and thus by extension convent schools, in successive municipal elections in the industrial sector during the Great War. The votes of Newfoundland migrants, both Catholic and Protestant, were also instrumental in upholding the existing system of education. Such support from the Newfoundland community ‘set at rest any uncertainty’ as to the status of the convent schools, wrote Bishop Morrison, ‘until such time when the rest of the Catholic community would regard convent schools as their best educational asset’.\textsuperscript{64}

The festering concern of some influential Scottish priests over the decline in their influence, the influx of Irish Catholics, and the advent of a more
aggressive Catholicism was nevertheless partly responsible for the establishment of one of the most influential Catholic organisations in Canada.\(^65\) The Scottish Catholic Society (SCS) was formed on 1 July 1919 at a meeting of Scottish clergy in Iona, Cape Breton. Organised under the motto ‘Gloi Dhe Agus Math Ar Cinnidh’ (The Glory of God and the Good of Our Race), the society proclaimed four main goals: the preservation of the Catholic faith amongst Catholic Scots; the propagation of a more accurate knowledge of the history of Scotland; the advancement educationally, morally and socially of peoples of the Scottish race; and the preservation and study of the Gaelic language and literature.\(^66\) Holding a high view of its own calling, the SCS considered itself to be a guardian of the Scottish and Gallican traditions of Nova Scotia. It had councils in almost every parish of the diocese of Antigonish, and counted most of the influential clergy within its ranks, including two future Canadian bishops.\(^67\)

Scholars of the region, such as Anne Alexander, have argued that the SCS was primarily an anti-modern reaction to the rapid urbanisation of what had previously been a largely rural diocese.\(^68\) While this partially explains the basis of the organisation, one cannot help but point out the obvious exclusion of the second largest Catholic ethnic group from such an important corridor of power. The Irish priests of the diocese, some holding key academic appointments at St Francis Xavier College, were not blind to the obvious ethnic overtones of the society. Being denied access to an organisation that wielded such influence within the diocese created obvious discomfort. One of the most prominent of these men, Fr James J. Tompkins, a native of Cape Breton and of Irish descent, often cited ethnicity as the determining factor in the insular attitude he felt many in the diocese possessed.\(^69\) For

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\(^65\) By the early twentieth century there was also a marked increase in Irish societies such as the Ancient Order of Hibernations. The A.O.H. was organised in Sydney in 1902 and in New Aberdeen in 1905 and was a constant reminder of the Irish presence in the colliery towns. See [Anon.], *St John the Baptist Glace Bay, 1903–1993: Remembering and Giving Thanks* (Glace Bay, 1993), 47; A.A. MacKenzie, *The Irish in Cape Breton* (Halifax, n.d.), 100–1.


\(^67\) Archbishop John Hugh MacDonald (Victoria, 1934–6; Edmonton, 1938–64) and Bishop John R. MacDonald (Peterborough, 1943–5; Antigonish, 1950–9).


\(^69\) James Tompkins to Archbishop Edward P. Roche, 24 October 1922, AADSJ, ABRP, 107/21/3.
many Scottish priests, such as Donald MacAdam, wounding the pride of some esteemed priests was a small price to pay for the reassertion of Scottish influence in Antigonish.

V Conclusion

Although the Newfoundland Irish who settled within the colliery towns of Cape Breton between 1880 and the First World War could simply be seen as having ‘bridged the Cabot Strait’, their migration also involved crossing a frontier which took them into a foreign and often hostile Catholic community. They constituted the largest Irish assemblage within a Scottish diocese that owed its very existence to ethnic tensions between Irish and Scottish immigrants. Moreover, they arrived during a period of great turmoil, as Scottish clergy, firmly entrenched in their Gallican traditions, fought against the Ultramontane tendencies of their Hiberno-Roman bishop, who was keen to use Ireland and her political causes as fodder for the pursuit of an aggressive Catholicism in his diocese. The Newfoundlanders’ presence as due-paying Catholics was welcomed, but their support for contentious issues such as convent schools put them at odds with Cape Breton clergy who wanted to preserve moderate and amicable relations with their Protestant neighbours. The insular characteristics of the Newfoundland migrants, honed within the sectarian confines of that colony, worried the large segment of native Scottish-Canadian clergy that had little sympathy either for the struggles in Ireland or for Hiberno-Roman philosophies. The reaction of many Scots to the arrival of the Newfoundland Irish illustrates not only the variety of philosophies amongst Catholics in the North Atlantic World, but also the enormous impact that religion and ethnicity had along Canada’s Atlantic seaboard years after the initial migration from Europe had ceased.

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70 Studies on the relationship between Newfoundland and Canada have been written as a response to a challenge by David Alexander to ‘bridge the Cabot Strait’ in order to better understand Newfoundland’s position within a North American context. See David Alexander, ‘Economic Growth in the Atlantic Region 1880 to 1940’, Acadiensis, 7 (1978), 47.
Migration between Lowland Scotland and Ulster is one of the most commonplace patterns of the late seventeenth century and one of the most elusive. The very ease of the short Irish Sea crossing guaranteed frustration for governments then and for historians now, since it was possible to make one journey or many without encountering the restricting or recording efforts of officialdom. At the time of the Revolution of 1688–9, the inhabitants of these two regions were already well aware that the proximity of the two states could be convenient. In the following twenty-five years, migration continued to be used as a means of temporary escape or as a way of bettering individual circumstances, so much so that the unprecedented volume of movement prompted intense debate, at least in Ireland, about its political and economic implications.

Clearly the physical barrier was not very intimidating, and the demarcating channel could indeed double as a nexus of interaction within a single
cultural region. However, this does not mean that the political boundary was insignificant, but only that contemporaries perceived it in a range of different ways. It was no accident that much of the controversy about migration after the Revolution centred on religion. From 1690, crossing the border also meant encountering a difference in the relationship between Presbyterianism and the state. On the Ulster side, although the legal situation was apparently much less advantageous to Presbyterians than in Scotland, members of Presbyterian communities learned to manipulate a new range of ambiguities in their relationships with neighbours and local authority. In the process they were feeling their way toward a more voluntarist idea of religion.

The first two sections of this paper examine the convenience of the geographical frontier from the perspective of migrants, who are broadly categorised as evasive or opportunistic. The third section considers the political implications of the frontier for Protestant Ireland, particularly the fears about national loyalties which were raised by the permeability of the border. The final section compares the fortunes of organised Presbyterianism in each kingdom in the aftermath of the Revolution settlement. With hindsight this period emerges as part of a chronological frontier, or untidy transition zone, between confessional and voluntarist assumptions about religion.

I Evasive Migration

After the Revolution the motive of flight from persecuting governments (or from royal justice, depending on one’s perspective) became far less common among Presbyterians. The best-known exceptions were two Ulster ministers who refused the oath of abjuration imposed in Ireland in 1703. Even their strategic retreats to Scotland on a series of occasions between 1703 and 1714 were hardly clandestine. The Belfast minister John MacBride took up a temporary but high-profile charge at Glasgow Blackfriars from 1705 to 1709, while his colleague Alexander McCrackan, minister of Lisburn, made several journeys from his alternative base in Kirkcudbrightshire to lobby prominent politicians in London.4 In 1704, members of McCrackan’s Ulster flock were

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criticised for their defiantly public gesture in accompanying him on the first stage of his journey to Scotland. A fellow minister allegedly complained, ‘you of Lisburn are a pretty Parcel of People, for such a caballing of you in conveying your Minister to Scotland, which was the worst Sight ever the Ministry of the North of Ireland saw’ and claimed ‘it made a greater Noise than any Retinue Presbyterian Ministers have had’. As this critique implied, unsympathetic neighbours may have seen the behaviour of the Lisburn congregation both as a tacit boast about the ease of shedding an inconvenient citizenship and as a challenge to the authority of unfriendly magistrates. Admirers of McCrackan and MacBride probably thought their kingdom-hopping conferred a sort of distinction, reminiscent of the heroic era of the ‘sufferings’.6

Rather than political upheavals directly stimulating migration, a more ordinary impetus may have been the reinvigorated discipline of the Scottish Kirk, now in theory enforced by its ally the Williamite government.7 Not surprisingly, cases of fleeing sinners were commonly recorded along the Ayrshire coast and near the Clyde ports.8 Paisley presbytery recorded the departures to Ireland of six adulterers, one incestuous couple and one suspected accessory to murder between 1691 and 1705.9 This list does not include any of the people accused as witches in the same presbytery between 1695 and 1699, some of whom also escaped in the same direction. In 1699, hoping to obtain a second round of witchcraft trials, the synod of Glasgow and Ayr petitioned the king’s advocate ‘to discharge the transporting of

326, 425–6.

5 Records of the General Synod of Ulster (3 vols, Belfast, 1890–8), I, 84–5.
6 The ‘sufferings’ era was defined in Robert Wodrow, The History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1721–2).
7 Several historians have stressed that discipline at the parish level was not necessarily interrupted by the reintroduction of bishops at the Restoration. Rosalind Mitchison and Leah Leneman, Girls in Trouble: Sexuality and Social Control in Rural Scotland 1660–1780 (Edinburgh, 1998), 11; Alison Hanham, The Sinners of Cramond: The Struggle to Impose Godly Behaviour on a Scottish Community, 1651–1831 (Edinburgh, 2005), 43–65; Walter Roland Foster, Bishop and Presbytery: The Church of Scotland 1661–1688 (London, 1958), 60–88; Tristram N. Clarke, The Scottish Episcopalians 1688–1720 (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1987), 2–4. However, practical continuity was arguably weakest in the region of this study, where the episcopal regime was most seriously challenged.
8 Almost no registers of the three Galloway presbyteries of Kirkcudbright, Stranraer and Wigtown have survived for the 1690s. Some Dumfries offenders went to Ireland, while others preferred to cross the border into England.
9 Paisley Presbytery Registers 1660–99 and 1699–1707, National Archives of Scotland (hereafter NAS), CH2/294/4 and CH2/294/6.
any out of the kingdome to Ireland or other places without testimonials’, and to instruct the magistrates of Renfrewshire, Ayrshire and the south of Clydesdale to detain any suspects ‘to prevent their running away, as som of them have already don’.10

Both saints and sinners were well aware of this utility of the border, which for Lowlanders dated at least as far back as the union of crowns and suited a wide range of predicaments.11 Rumour sometimes placed elusive offenders in Ireland when, in fact, they had merely left the parish. For instance, in 1698 the Lochwinnoch session informed the presbytery concerning Margaret Braidon, who was suspected of adultery, that ‘it was reported she was lurking in the bounds & not fled to [Ireland] as was formerly represented’.12 A stubborn fornicator, called in by Irvine presbytery to explain why he had not satisfied the session, angrily retorted that ‘he would leave Scotland before he appeared in the place of repentance’, but two months later had resigned himself to the usual series of public appearances.13 The stereotypical flight from justice might even appear in insults. Witnesses in a Dumfries slander case confirmed that William Charters had called his neighbour’s wife ‘a filthy Hostler Bitch, a Beggar, a Theif and come of Theives’. According to Charters’ own account, he had then declared that ‘her Grandfather fled to Ireland for thift’.14

The apparent finality of the common phrase ‘gone out of the kingdom’ often proved deceptive. Unfortunately for runaways, Ulster Presbyterian congregations had taken the Revolution as a signal to exercise discipline more openly and systematically. The system of testificates, by which newcomers to any congregation were required to furnish references from their previous ministers, could function quite efficiently on both sides of the Irish Sea, though it was hardly infallible.15 A Scottish Presbyterian wishing to vanish

10 Glasgow and Ayr Synod Register 1687–1704, 5 April 1699, NAS, CH2/464/1, 217.
11 For Ireland as a destination for riffraff under James VI/I and Charles I, see Michael Perceval–Maxwell, Scottish Migration to Ulster in the Reign of James I (reprint ed., Belfast, 1990), 23–5; Andrew Stewart, ‘History of the Church in Ireland Since the Scots were Naturalised’, appendix to Patrick Adair, A True Narrative of the Rise and Progress of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, edited by W.D. Killen (Belfast, 1866), 313–4. For Scots irregular marriages in Ireland and England, see Mitchison and Leneman, Girls in Trouble, 55–7.
12 Paisley Presbytery Register, 26 October 1698, NAS, CH2/294/4, 318 (pagination of digital version).
13 Irvine Presbytery Register 1687–1699, 6 June 1694, NAS, CH2/197/2, 175.
14 Dumfries Presbytery Register 1695–1703, 31 March 1696, Dumfries and Galloway Archive (hereafter DGA), CH2/1284/3, 23.
completely in Ireland would thus have been well advised to avoid the lure of the familiar, in the shape of cross-channel kinship networks and organised congregations. Of the nine Renfrewshire offenders mentioned above, only three seem to have disappeared without trace. Three more were located in Ireland and then were pursued with bad references and warnings of impending excommunication. Two others returned after several years, more or less voluntarily, to do penance. The last man made no secret of his emigration in the first place, but asked his presbytery for a testimonial to an Irish congregation. Because his reputation was ambiguous—he was popularly believed to have been accessory to a murder although civil charges had been dropped—the document was granted with some qualifications. As easy as it might have been in practical terms to abandon one legal system for another, the gravitational field of religious culture was harder to escape.

Miscreants might flee in either direction, so that in Irish Presbyterian communities, too, the stereotypical attempt to outrun scandal could be deliberately invoked either to strengthen evidence of guilt or to lend plausibility to a smear campaign. A servant in Burt, Donegal, anxious to prove that her master had raped her, quoted his supposed advice when she became pregnant: ‘go over the water till she should see what god would do with her’. Vague allegations of misdeeds during a past residence in the other kingdom could serve the same purposes as a formal process. Richard Berry, a young layman who had returned to Burt after several years at the university in Glasgow, was so concerned about the effect of such a rumour on his reputation that he pestered his session to hear evidence about ‘that business he should have done in Scotland’. The session book does not disclose the nature of the charge, although the elders’ reaction was rather noncommittal: ‘seeing no body prosecuted him for it they did not condemn him’, but if Berry really intended ‘instantly going abroad’ he would have to do so without a testimonial. As this incident followed unsuccessful attempts by a rival family to have Berry prosecuted for duelling, drunkenness and sexual perversion, the whispers of unsavoury deeds across the sea probably had been strategically deployed.


17 Burt Session Book, 26 May 1710, Union College, Belfast (pagination is inconsistent).

18 Burt Session Book, 3 October 1712, Union College, Belfast. Background events from 27 December 1711.
II Opportunistic Migration

For the majority of migrants, those who were not running away from the bailiwick, from political reversals or from their own damaged reputations, it is not nearly so easy to determine how individuals viewed the transfer from Scotland to Ireland or vice versa. In the southwest of Scotland between 1689 and 1690, contact with crowds of refugees from Ulster and with regiments passing through to join Schomberg’s army in Ireland intensified interest in the dramatic events leading up to the Battle of the Boyne.\textsuperscript{19} The Revolution was a moment when common danger briefly blurred boundaries among the three kingdoms and highlighted their interdependence. Williamite accounts constantly reiterated, for instance, that the resistance of Derry had prevented a Jacobite invasion of Scotland, and by extension England.\textsuperscript{20}

Wartime publicity generated after the relief of Derry, as the main theatre of conflict moved south, may have helped to heighten awareness of Ireland as a place of relative economic opportunity. Certainly there were already worries in late 1691 about population loss from Scotland. In November the magistrates of Stranraer pleaded that the financial position of the burgh ‘is now become more insupportable by the withdrawing of many persones to Ireland’.\textsuperscript{21} The Privy Council complained to the Irish Lords Justices about ‘those who run away from their landlords without giving satisfactione for what they are due to them … and are receaved to duell and take land ther to the great prejudice of this kingdome’.\textsuperscript{22} The Scottish government may have regretted its role in peddling propaganda about Ulster, like the following excerpt from an August 1689 newsletter published in London for a British audience:

\textsuperscript{19} The siege of Londonderry was followed with special interest. John R. Young, ‘The Scottish Response to the Siege of Londonderry’ in William Kelly (ed.), \textit{The Sieges of Derry} (Dublin, 2001), 53–74.

\textsuperscript{20} Some examples are John Mackenzie, \textit{A True Narrative of the Siege of London-Derry} (London, 1689), preface; [Anon.], \textit{A True Account of the Present State of Ireland} (London, 1689), 13; [George Story], \textit{A True and Impartial History of the Most Material Occurrences in the Kingdom of Ireland} (London, 1691), 5; [Anon.], \textit{Some Reflections on a Pamphlet Entituled, A Faithful History of the Northern-Affairs of Ireland} (Dublin, 1691), 6–8; [Anon.], \textit{Ireland’s Lamentation} (London, 1689), 30; G[eorge] P[hillips], \textit{The Second Apology for the Protestants of Ireland} (London, 1690), 4, 8.


\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 651–2.
That the Countrey was not near in so bad a condition as was reported… That the Corn was all standing, and great Plenty of Forage; the Countrey bringing in all sorts of fresh Provisions. The hearing of so agreeable Tidings, encourages all the British Protestants who fled hither for Shelter and Relief to hasten their return thither again in great multitudes.23

This Scottish exodus was only the beginning of a phenomenon that would continue throughout the decade and perhaps into the following one, driven partly by famine and economic crisis. Contemporary estimates varied widely, as more recent ones still do.24 In 1698 an anonymous pamphlet claimed that eighty thousand families had arrived since the Boyne, while Tobias Pullen, bishop of Dromore, contented himself with a reference to ‘many Thousand Families’ between 1692 and 1697.25 Another Anglo-Irish estimate from around the same time may be considered fairly conservative, ‘That the last yeares want of corne in Scotland brought over not lesse than 20 thousand poore, & not lesse than 30 thousand before, since the Revolution’.26


26 ‘Q[ue]ry if true’, unsigned memorandum, British Library (hereafter BL), Sloane MSS 2902, f. 218.
The concern of the Ulster General Synod to distance itself from nominally Presbyterian vagrants indicates both that rising immigration was not purely a figment of Scotophobic imaginations, and that not all the new arrivals were notably pious. In 1701 it was proposed that all ministers collect handwriting samples from their colleagues in order to prevent the use of forged testificates. As late as 1705 the Synod discussed an overture ‘That those who come among us, [and] profess to be of our Communion, give Account of themselves by their Testimonials’; otherwise ‘these in the Bounds whither they came are prudently to apply to the civil Magistrate to relieve the place of such Vagrants … they who entertain such Vagrants shall be judg’d disorderly’.27

III Perceptions of National Identity

Although migration diluted cultural distinctions, contemporary language often suggests a border which had not, after all, conceptually disappeared. Scottish attempts at labelling their Ulster cousins show that the difference was not necessarily ignored. The university categories of *Hibernus*, *Scoto-Hibernus* and *Anglo-Hibernus* are well known, though they were sometimes applied rather erratically.28 Local discussions in Scotland of relief for refugees during the Revolution usually settled for the less elegant ‘Ireland people’, while Privy Council documents and pamphlet accounts preferred ‘Irish Protestants’ or ‘British Protestants’—both better suited to the fashionable myth of Protestant solidarity.29 In a petition by William Ainslie of Blackhill about his property dispute with Thomas Harvie, a minister recently arrived from Ulster, Blackhill remarked that Harvie’s behaviour was only understandable through his ‘being a stranger and not knowing the custom of the nation’.30 Yet Harvie

27 *General Synod of Ulster*, I, 49–50, 100.

28 In matriculations and laureations at Glasgow, the same person can occasionally be found with two different labels. Cosmo Innes (ed.), *Munimenta Alme Universitatis Glasguensis: Records of the University of Glasgow from its Foundation until 1727* (3 vols, Glasgow, 1854), III.

29 For ‘Ireland people’ see Paisley Presbytery Register, 22 August 1689 and 15 January 1690, NAS, CH2/294/4, 29, 32–3. For ‘British Protestants’ see quotation above at n. 23 and Balfour-Melville (ed.), *Proceedings of the Estates*, I, 170. ‘Irish Protestants’ is the usual phrase in references to the collection for the 1689 refugees (who were religiously mixed), e.g. in Henry Paton (ed.), *RPCS*, 3rd series, vol. 14 (August-December 1689) (Edinburgh, 1933), passim.

had inherited his claim because of his kinship ties to Scotland. Did it follow
that Scots moving into Ireland automatically added a new layer of national
identity?\textsuperscript{31}

The views of Ulster Presbyterians themselves on the nature of national
membership are rarely recorded in any detail, particularly in the case of
the non-elites and laity who made up the majority. One of their better-
documented spokesmen is the Belfast minister John MacBride, who argued
strenuously against Pullen and his fellow bishop Anthony Dopping of Meath
that Presbyterians, far from constituting a competing third interest, were
an integral part of ‘the Nation’, clearly referring to Protestant Ireland. The
‘experience of the whole Nation’ during the Revolution had demonstrated
that dissenters ‘maintained no separated Interest from the common; for as
our Civil Interests are imbarked in the common, so we cannot desert the one,
without destroying the other’.\textsuperscript{32}

MacBride’s claim to be a committed stakeholder in one kingdom cannot be
seen as any kind of disavowal of the legacy of the other, especially considering
that significant stretches of his own career were spent in Scotland.\textsuperscript{33} In
a later exchange with the Belfast vicar William Tisdall about the political
reliability of Ulster Presbyterians, he made no attempt to disentangle their
story from Scottish covenanting history, but rather chose to answer every
charge his opponent had levelled against Presbyterians (and even their Puritan
predecessors) in all three kingdoms. The result was a massive tome full of
lengthy explanations of past events in Scotland and even in England.\textsuperscript{34} On the

\textsuperscript{31} ‘Identity’ is used somewhat reluctantly here on the assumption that identities of
migrants were multiple and to some degree fluid, rather than composed of a static
collection of characteristics; cp. Linda Colley, Britons: Forging The Nation 1707 – 1837
(New Haven, 1992), 5 – 7; Patrick Griffin, The People with No Name: Ireland’s Ulster Scots,
America’s Scots Irish and the Creation of a British Atlantic World, 1689 – 1764 (Princeton,

\textsuperscript{32} John MacBride, Animadversions on the Defense of the Answer to a Paper, Intituled, The Case of
the Dissenting Protestants of Ireland (n.p., 1697), 21.

\textsuperscript{33} In addition to the time he spent at Glasgow between 1703 and 1714, MacBride served
as minister of Borgue, Kirkcudbright, under a temporary arrangement in 1689 – 92.
Galloway Synod Register 1689 – 1712, 14 May 1689 and 19 April 1692, NAS,
CH2/165/2, 1, 19 – 20.

\textsuperscript{34} John MacBride, A Sample of Jet-Black Pr___tic Calumny (Glasgow, 1713). The simpler
strategy of narrowing the debate to events in Ulster had been followed by Daniel
Defoe, The Parallel: or Persecution of Protestants the Shortest Way to Prevent the Growth of
Popery in Ireland (Dublin, 1705), 9 – 14, and challenged in William Tisdall, A Sample of
Trew-Blew Presbyterian-Loyalty in all Changes and Turns of Government (Dublin, 1709), the
work to which MacBride was replying.
most controversial episodes, like the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 or the General Assembly’s denunciation of the 1648 Engagement, MacBride made some effort to historicize the Kirk’s actions, but stopped short of admitting that covenanting leaders had overstepped the proper limits of ecclesiastical authority. Likewise, he stoutly defended the most recent Scottish religious settlement, which had re-established Presbyterianism without doing much to broaden its appeal. For him, the Scottish role in the settlement of Ulster and in the extension of Presbyterianism to Ireland was cause for unqualified celebration.

Nevertheless, MacBride’s account of Ulster Presbyterianism did not portray a subordinate branch of the Scottish Kirk. On this point he seems to have shared the views of many of his colleagues. The Irish ministers who took refuge in Scotland between 1688 and 1691 were exceedingly careful to maintain their own status as representatives of an autonomous jurisdiction. They held separate meetings as a body, though they also attended Scottish presbyteries and synods, and as a rule they would only accept temporary Scottish charges after recording disclaimers about their prior commitments to the Irish church. One such disclaimer was worded ‘salvo jure Ecclesiae Hibernica’, terminology consistent with references by the Antrim meeting to the (Presbyterian) ‘Church of Ireland’.

Well before the unexpected reversal of 1688–9 and more openly thereafter, several Ulster ministers were at work framing narratives of Presbyterian progress in Ireland which were more or less deliberate exercises in collective self-definition. In an account written before 1671, Andrew Stewart, minister

35 MacBride, Sample, 25–35, 145–6, 211–3; idem, Animadversions, 34.
36 MacBride, Sample, 11–6, 174–8.
37 On the meeting of ‘Ireland ministers’, see Dumfries Presbytery Register 1687–1695, 28 August and 10 September 1689, DGA, CH2/1284/2, 37, 39; Minutes of the Antrim Meeting, 5 November 1689 and n.d. June 1690, Presbyterian Historical Society, Belfast (hereafter PHS) typescript, 463, 481; ‘Letter of the General Session to the Ministers of Ireland about Mr[s] Craighead & Kennedy’, n.d. c.1689, National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Wodrow Collection, quarto xxviii, no. 27, f. 77. On reserving the claims of Irish congregations, see Ayr Presbytery Register 1687–1705, 17 and 24 September 1689, NAS, CH2/532/2, 22; Galloway Synod Register, 14 May 1689, NAS, CH2/165/2, 1; Paisley Presbytery Register, 22 August 1689, NAS, CH2/294/4, 32.
38 Paisley Presbytery Register, 22 August 1689, NAS, CH2/294/4, 32; Minutes of the Antrim Meeting, 10 January 1687/8, PHS typescript, 381–2.
39 Adair, True Narrative; Andrew Stewart, ‘A Short Account of the Church of Christ’, NLS, Wodrow Collection, quarto lxxv; James Kirkpatrick, An Historical Essay upon the Loyalty of Presbyterians in Great Britain and Ireland from the Reformation to this Present
of Donaghadee, drew on elements of the work of James Ussher and David Buchanan in order to incorporate St Patrick, St Bridget and Irish monastic missionaries into a distinctly Presbyterian story, just as MacBride later appropriated the Irish saints Colman, Finian and Aidan as ‘Scots Presbyters’. This way of structuring the Irish past explains the otherwise ill-assorted trio of books that MacBride donated to the College library at Glasgow, no doubt with a view to the instruction of Ulster divinity students. These were his own un-ecumenically titled *A Sample of Jet-Black Prelatic Calumny* (1713), the churchman Sir James Ware’s *Antiquities & History of Ireland* (English translation, Dublin, 1704), and the Franciscan John Colgan’s two volumes on Irish saints, *Acta Sanctorum Veteris et Majoris Scotiae seu Hiberniae Sanctorum Insulae* (1645) and *Vitas et Acta Divorum Patricii Columbae et Brigidae* (1647). The inclusion of Ware and Colgan would not have seemed incongruous to those Presbyterians who saw themselves as heirs of a *de jure* national church in Ireland, just as Scottish Presbyterians saw no irony in appropriating the culdees.

For many of the Irish Anglican elite, however, any Presbyterian identification with Ireland was negligible. Citing the efficiency of inter-kingdom trade and communication networks, as well as similarities in religious culture on both sides of the Irish Sea, a number of hostile writers assumed that the Scottish-Irish boundary was more or less missing from the mental furniture of Scots Presbyterians. As one pamphlet put it, ‘in their Interests, ’tis plain, they are link’d with their Friends in Scotland … whom they imitate both in their Ecclesiastical and Civil Affairs, and from thence they take all their Measures which concern either Religion or Commerce’. Others reiterated the two main spheres of perceived rivalry, trade and religion. Broadly speaking, churchmen favoured language that targeted a dissenting party or interest, while some political economy writers were more prone to fret about national cliquishness.
among Scots. However, this was by no means a tidy distinction. Instead, the dual themes of Presbyterian loyalties and Scottish loyalties were blended in different proportions according to the needs of the lobbyist and the moment.

During the late 1690s controversy over restrictions on Ireland’s wool trade, several pamphleteers for the Irish lobby argued that to forbid the export of their woollen manufactures would weaken the position of sheep-raising Englishmen in relation to the linen-weaving Scots.\footnote{E.g. [John Hovell], \textit{A Discourse on the Woollen Manufactury of Ireland} (Dublin, 1698), 10–13. [Anon.], \textit{Some Thoughts on the Bill Depending Before the Right Honourable the House of Lords} (Dublin, 1698), 12–13, modifies the scenario slightly, projecting that the Scots will profit by smuggling wool to France. At least one English respondent was not convinced, remarking in a recapitulation of the debate, ‘And then again, the Bugbears of Scotland and France are set up’. [Anon.], \textit{The Substance of the Arguments For and Against the Bill} (London, 1698), 5. Tisdall later claimed that the dire predictions had been fulfilled; [William Tisdall], \textit{The Conduct of the Dissenters of Ireland, with Respect both to Church and State} (Dublin, 1712), 17–18.} An anonymous letter-writer warned his English correspondent of imminent commercial disaster if such a policy were followed:

> In short the whole Bulk of the Trade of Ireland is gotten into the hands of Scotch Merchants, who joyne with those that drive on the Affrican & Indian designe of their owne Countrey by the New Act. They reckon that they have 10000 Seamen in the shipps of England, and not fewer in those of Holland and France, besides what they have yet at home. And if halfe they say be true, yett with such hands & the Com[m]odities of Ireland, they may doubtlesse make pretty worke. Nay even the English here will be apt enough to piece in with them to gett a Penny, if they find England to treat them as Enemies.\footnote{Extract of a letter from Dublin, 17 April 1697, BL, Sloane MSS 2902, f. 138.}

These were partly scare tactics, of course, intended to turn English annoyance over the fledgling Company of Scotland to the advantage of Anglo-Irish wool merchants. This strategy highlights the writer’s confidence that his portrayal of interlinked Scots unfazed by other nations’ boundaries was a credible one. Such people, in supposedly single-minded pursuit of a Greater Scotland, could hardly be expected to have any regard for an Irish commonwealth, especially one defined in relation to an English metropolis.

The 1698 pamphlet \textit{A Discourse Concerning Ireland and the Different Interests Thereof} employed the same basic framework: Scots Presbyterians constituted
a third interest in Ireland, or alternatively, one of ‘three several kinds of People’, set against both the native Irish (portrayed as pro-French) and the Anglo-Irish settlers. Though ostensibly contributing to the trade debate, this writer was keen to highlight the implications for the established church. At one point he described a Belfast scene in which a ‘parcel of Demi-Tarrs in blue Bonnets’, having just landed for a market visit, felt enough at home to ‘belch out, I know not how many Scotch Curses and opprobrious words’ in public after a passing army chaplain, ‘not considering that they were not in Scotland’ where such behaviour had become usual. More seriously, he tried to demonstrate the eagerness of Ulster Presbyterians to duplicate the Scottish religious revolution. Not to recognise that they would gladly do so, should the opportunity arise, ‘would be as unreasonable as to imagine, that off-sets will not bear the same Flowers with the main Roots, from whence they are divided, or that Trees will produce Fruit of a different Species, by being transplanted from one soil to another.

A variation on the organic metaphor appears in Tobias Pullen’s argument for the sacramental test. Asserting that many recent Scottish immigrants were Cameronian extremists who had rejected even the post-Revolution Kirk as hopelessly moderate and erastian, Pullen asked, ‘Can we Reasonably expect … that by their being Transplanted into another Soil, and by a kind and Indulgent Cultivation of them, we may gather Figs off this sharpest sort of Thistles?’ The double connotation of the thistle here, heraldic as well as biblical, is surely not simply fortuitous. The intense suspicion which the sacramental test debate brought to the surface generally found expression, with monotonous predictability, in reflections on the Solemn League and Covenant—not merely as an event some fifty years past, but as shorthand for one very memorable way of defining the Scottish nation in relation to the neighbouring kingdoms.

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46 Ibid., 33.
48 [Tobias Pullen], *An Answer to a Paper Entituled, The Case of the Protestant Dissenters of Ireland* (Dublin, 1695), 2. The biblical reference is to Matthew 7:16, ‘Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?’
Pullen and his fellow clergymen Anthony Dopping, Edward Synge and William Tisdall, there could be little doubt that the religious revolution in Scotland represented a worrying resurgence of covenanting expansionism. From these nervous outsiders’ viewpoint, the most fanatical Presbyterians could be taken, quite logically, as the most aggressively ‘national’ of the Scots.

IV The Revolution and Diverging Church-State Relationships

The more paranoid clergy of the established church in Ireland might not have been surprised to learn that their rivals had designs on St Patrick himself. Fears that the Presbyterians’ ultimate objective in Ulster was not merely legal toleration, but some form of establishment, surfaced more than once during the reigns of William III and Anne. Above all, it was the dramatic turn taken by the Revolution ecclesiastical settlement in Scotland that made anything seem possible. An Irish observer had only to look across the channel for a vision of how Ulster might appear, were the roles of state church and dissenting sect to be reversed.

For many of the religiously committed in western and southwestern Scotland the recapture of establishment status was a providential signal to resume an experiment broken off in 1661: namely, enlisting state authority to help create a uniformly godly nation. Although obstacles to this project were almost immediately apparent elsewhere in Scotland, it proved more successful in the Presbyterian heartland where ministers and sympathetic local authorities were relatively abundant. In many parishes there, sessions enjoyed close collaboration with burgh magistrates or rural heritors. Recalcitrant sinners could be imprisoned until a confession was forthcoming, or summoned by the sheriff to give bonds for their future cooperation. Even at the national level the Kirk very often got the official action it

50 [Anthony Dopping], *The Case of the Dissenters of Ireland Consider’d, in Reference to the Sacramental Test* (Dublin, 1695), 1–3; [Pullen], *Defense of the Answer*, 8–9, 24; [Edward Synge], *A Peaceable and Friendly Address to the Non-Conformists* (Dublin, 1697), 8–10; [Tisdall], *Conduct of the Dissenters*, 2, 23.


52 Dumfries Presbytery Register 1687–1695, 5 January 1692, DGA, CH2/1284/2, 128; Hamilton Presbytery Register 1695–1719, 23 May 1699, NAS, CH2/393/2, 111–2.
wanted, such as the series of laws against profaneness, stronger regulations about schools and poor relief, regular proclamations of fasts, and more infamously, the prosecutions of Thomas Aikenhead for blasphemy in 1697 and of several dozen people accused of witchcraft in Renfrewshire between 1696 and 1700. Aikenhead and seven of the alleged witches were actually executed.\(^53\) Ulster ministers might well have envied this level of secular support. Ironically, a group of them who had fled to Galloway in 1689 constituted a majority at the first, rather informal meeting of the revived Presbyterian synod of Galloway, which called for a return to ‘imposing of Civil mulcts and bodily punishments’ on the scandalous.\(^54\) This was a luxury to which Scottish ministers quickly became accustomed. Some years later the future historian Robert Wodrow, newly ordained in Renfrewshire, sent a fellow minister in Down a rather wide-eyed inquiry about ‘quhat you doe with your delinquents, since I suppose you have no legall establishment to oblige them to compear’.\(^55\)

Regardless of inclination, the Scots in Ulster after 1690 were not in a position to translate their ‘measures which concern religion’ wholesale from the mother country, as one pamphleteer alleged that they did.\(^56\) This was one sense in which the political boundary did undoubtedly matter. Whatever legal position they had envisioned immediately after their ‘late glorious deliverance’, it was not the precarious status they eventually acquired—a position contemporaries called ‘a mere connivance’.\(^57\)


\(^{54}\) This meeting was recorded at the beginning of the post-Revolution register, though with a disclaimer that in the absence of ruling elders those present did not officially constitute a synod. Galloway Synod Register, 14 May 1689, NAS, CH2/165/2, 2. The episcopalian synod of Galloway, if it still existed in theory, seems to have ceased to meet by this time.


\(^{56}\) [Anon.], *Discourse Concerning Ireland*, 33; fuller quotation above at n. 42.

Still, until near the end of Queen Anne’s reign in 1714 the lack of official toleration did little to hinder the planting of new congregations and the growth of existing ones, or to prevent presbyteries’ and synods’ increasingly efficient supervision of discipline and finances. The impressive burst of energy in activities which remained technically illegal under the Elizabethan Act for Uniformity alarmed Church of Ireland leaders and led to a few highly politicised clashes. Such events, like the harassment of supply ministers at Drogheda in 1708–9 and the arrest of the whole Monaghan presbytery for attempting to settle a minister at Belturbet, Cavan, in 1712, have provided the outline for a traditional history of Presbyterianism in Ulster largely structured around the toleration debate. Institutional developments such as the creation of a more efficient governing structure and the improvement of record-keeping have also attracted attention.

However, it is possible that outside the elite group of ministers and the more ideologically-orientated of the elders and gentry, most Ulster Presbyterians were normally more concerned with the functions their church filled within the community than with denominational disputes and structural evolution. The exclusively ‘Scottish’ cultural world that Anglican polemic claimed they inhabited was not so impermeable in reality. Baptism or marriage in the familiar form of their own communion was far preferable, but if a shortcut was wanted or parents disapproved, there was also the option of going to a clergyman of the established church or even to a Catholic priest. Multiple cases of marriages by priests appear in all the surviving session minutes from Ulster, often, but by no means always, involving one partner who was native Irish. Attempts to resolve disputes and scandals sometimes revealed

62 A few examples are in Carnmoney Session Book 1686–1715, 4 January 1698, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI), MIC 1P/37/4, 39; Templepatrick Session Book, 25 January 1704, PRONI, CR 4/12B/1, 207; Lisburn Session Book 1688–1709, 2 October 1692, PRONI, MIC 1P/159/6–10; Dawson’s Bridge Session Book 1703–29, 23 June 1704, PRONI, MIC 1P/450C/1, 11;
equally casual attitudes to confessional boundaries. In the absence of clear evidence, the session could accept an oath as proof, but usually only as a last resort after several exhortations about the peril of perjury.\textsuperscript{63} William Johnson from Carnmoney, Antrim, like others of his co-religionists, discovered that a bishop’s court would administer an appropriately impressive oath without taking so long to deliberate over the danger to the swearer’s soul. To Johnson, the theological point about the authority of bishops was less urgent than the need to clear his reputation.\textsuperscript{64}

Interaction with secular authorities could also take unpredictable turns. Scots Calvinist tradition distinguished between ecclesiastical offences, defined by the scandal caused among one’s fellow believers, and civil offences, which were the province of the magistrate.\textsuperscript{65} A single action, such as theft, might well be both; hence the ideal of close cooperation between church and state. In Ulster, however, most magistrates belonged to a rival confession and laws against nonconformity remained on the statute books. Nonetheless, local cooperation might still be possible. The earl of Donegall’s factor was happy to leave a case of attempted abduction of a bride to be resolved by Burt session, assuring the elders that should their arbitration succeed, he would not prosecute the offender in the manorial court.\textsuperscript{66}

The fact remained that ministers and sessions had to avoid contradicting secular verdicts if they wished to prevent potential awkwardness. Members learned that, effectively, one chose to acknowledge the jurisdiction or combination of jurisdictions likely to produce the best result. James Russell, an elder in a thorough mood, had two men who accused him of stealing a heifer ‘apprehended & taken to the County Gaole and put them to considerable expence’ on defamation charges, and then hauled them before the session in order to have them repent publicly as well.\textsuperscript{67} Sometimes a strategy like this backfired. James O’Diny decided to take revenge on his neighbour Henry

\textsuperscript{63} In one such incident, a man who offered to swear to his innocence still had not been given the oath over eighteen months later. Templepatrick Session Book, 13 April 1711 and 9 November 1712, PRONI, CR 4/12B/1.

\textsuperscript{64} Carnmoney Session Book, 11 January 1707, PRONI, MIC 1P/37/4.

\textsuperscript{65} For one explanation of the civil/spiritual demarcation see First Book of Discipline, reprinted in The First and Second Booke of Discipline (n.p., 1621), 23–70, sect. vii, 50–4.

\textsuperscript{66} Burt Session Book, 24 February and 9 March 1707/8, Union College, Belfast.

\textsuperscript{67} Carnmoney Session Book, 15 May 1707, PRONI, MIC 1P/37/4.
Wark by describing to the elders Wark’s suspicious activities with a girl under a bush during afternoon sermon. After months of hearings, the session was about to discipline Wark when O'Diny went to the Lifford assizes and swore to an even more lurid statement about the same incident. In the end Wark got off without punishment because the two stories contradicted one another.\(^{68}\)

Is there anything remarkable in this kind of petty manoeuvring? After all, some degree of adaptation to a new environment with different power structures was no more than might be expected. Going to the competition, whether secular, Church of Ireland, or Catholic, was not so much a vote against a Scots Presbyterian culture or system as a lever for making the system work the way the members expected that it should. When Margaret Campbell asked for a testimonial to which she did not quite have a right, mentioning in passing that otherwise she could get one from an ‘Episcopall’ employer, her session explicitly acknowledged this leverage. They gave her what she wanted, ‘not being willing to disown her, she [being] professedly of our Communion and not willing to give her any [rea]son to withdraw from us she being bread up’ as a Presbyterian.\(^{69}\)

Yet in spite of the lack of innovative intent behind them, in these small, everyday concessions to plurality there were the beginnings of a transition. Soon, views like those expressed by the second-generation Scottish immigrant James Trail would become far more common. Trail described his choice, on coming of age, between his mother’s Presbyterianism and his father’s adherence to the Church of Ireland: ‘I then joined to the Society of the Dissenters, the true Cause of my leaving one society of Christians & joining w[ill]h another I can not give a rational accoun[t] of for I was very much a stranger to the principles of Either the one or the other … the greatest motive to my conduct at th[at] time was the great Esteem I had to the young Lady above named’. He remarked almost as an afterthought that this decision was ‘possibly Contrary to my worldly Interist’ because of the sacramental test, ‘a most Iniquitous Law’. As for the theological issues, ‘though I by no means like the form of admission of Clergy into the Church, used among Discenters yet I think the form used in the Established Church is by much worse’, and he personally preferred the Presbyterian form of worship despite its ‘Inconvenien[c]es’, ‘absurdities’ and ‘Imperfections’.\(^{70}\) Trail’s church, as far as he was concerned, was a voluntary organisation that had no need to monopolise kingdoms or even ethnic groups.

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\(^{68}\) Burt Session Book, 31 July, 27 August and 13 December 1711, Union College, Belfast.

\(^{69}\) Carnmoney Session Book, 20 February 1711, PRONI, MIC 1P/37/4.

\(^{70}\) Autobiography of James Trail, PRONI, D/1460/1, written between 1718 and c.1735.
The contrast between this development and the simultaneous trajectory of Presbyterianism in Scotland should not be overstated. With hindsight, the national reform programme of the Kirk after the Revolution is easy to dismiss as having been doomed to fail spectacularly, despite the best efforts of a dedicated minority to stamp out swearing, Sunday wife-beating and drinking after nine o’clock at night. Even in the west and southwest, the confessional state model was compromised by the persistence of radical dissenting groups, not to mention episcopalian concentrations elsewhere. Social and economic conditions also undermined discipline, as the pressure of famine and military disbandment increased the numbers of poor and vagrants around the turn of the seventeenth century. In such circumstances both geographical and mental alternatives demanded consideration. Ulster offered a contiguous identification that was reassuringly familiar, while almost imperceptibly different.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the inhabitants of Ulster and the southwestern shires of Scotland had become accustomed to the inconsistencies produced by a highly permeable political frontier. The boundary between Ireland and Scotland sometimes seemed a rather theoretical one. It had never done much to restrict migration, with the result that in terms of religious culture, the political border cut through the middle of one cultural region rather than separating two. At the same time, it was just this situation that gave this political frontier its significance. The rapid expansion of the Scots community in Ulster after the Revolution raised vital questions about what constituted membership of the nation, and whether state authority could coexist with religious plurality.

Trinity College, Dublin

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Free Movement of People?
Responses to Emigration from Ireland, 1718–30
Patrick Walsh

No. 67 Whether a country inhabited by a people well fed, clothed and lodged would not become every day more populous? And whether a numerous stock of people in such circumstances would not constitute a flourishing nation? And how far the product of our own country may suffer for the compassing of this end?

George Berkeley, The Querist (1735)¹

In December 1729 legislation to halt emigration from Ireland to North America was introduced in the Irish House of Commons. The heads of bill were welcomed by many sections of the Irish Protestant community who had become increasingly worried about the record levels of emigration to the American colonies during the previous three years, which had seen an annual average of 4,000 migrants cross the Atlantic. This dramatic increase provoked intense debates about the effects of emigration, as Ireland for the first time in over two hundred years experienced net out-migration.

These debates and their contexts are explored in this article. The study will begin by examining the background to the initiation of this legislation, looking at the reasons, both practical and ideological, which led to its introduction. This will include revisiting the historiographical debate over the motivations for the large-scale migration of Ulster Presbyterians in the 1720s. The traditional view that religious grievances played the decisive role has been challenged by more recent historians such as Graeme Kirkham and R.J. Dickson, who point out that just because ‘most northern emigrants were dissenters does not necessarily prove that they departed because of religious reasons’.² Patrick

¹ George Berkeley, The Querist, edited by J.M. Hone (1735; Dublin, 1935), 30. I would like to thank Dr Kevin O'Sullivan and the two anonymous referees for their helpful comments on this article. I also wish to acknowledge the financial support provided by the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Griffin has, however, highlighted the importance of the Ulster Presbyterians’ position on the cultural margins of the greater British polity and argues that their ‘religious difficulties illustrated just how far and to whom Britishness extended’. He nevertheless acknowledges that religion was not the sole factor motivating their emigration. This article develops these arguments further, suggesting that religious issues played their part but that economic conditions provided the tipping point during the periods of exodus at either end of the decade.

Having established the reasons that eighteenth-century contemporaries believed were driving this ‘strange humour’, this article will move on to examine their intentions in raising barriers to emigration, looking not just at high politics, but also at the role played by Arthur Dobbs. A vocal economic thinker and promoter of Ireland’s part in the British Empire, Dobbs’ contribution will be analysed in light of the economic patriotism current in Irish political thought and activity in the late 1720s and early 1730s. Official attitudes to Catholic Irish military migration to the continent will also be considered, showing that attempts to prevent the people leaving were not limited to preserving the ‘Protestant interest’, but instead crossed confessional and cultural boundaries.

The imposition of such barriers by government action was not a new idea. There were already restrictions on Irish Protestant participation in the British army, which had been introduced specifically to prevent the reduction of the Protestant population in Ireland. In Scotland, attempts were made to curtail emigration to Ireland during the demographic crises of the 1690s. The Alien Act passed by the English parliament in February 1705, ‘which specified that unless a union treaty was in train or the Hanoverian succession accepted by Scots, except those already domiciled in England or her possessions, would be treated as aliens’, can be seen as a similar attempt to close an existing frontier or border. None of these measures were particularly effective but they reflected a willingness to close off borders in this period. The proposed legal barriers to emigration, both to North America

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3 Patrick Griffin, *The People With No Name: Ireland’s Ulster Scots, America’s Scots Irish, and the Creation of the British Atlantic World* (Princeton, 2001), 35.
and to Continental Europe, were a response to a wave of out-migration which was motivated not only by economic circumstances, but also by legal restrictions blocking full participation in the political and social life of the Irish polity.

I Migration Patterns

Substantial Irish migration to the North American colonies only began in the years 1717–20, following successive harvest failures and a severe economic depression partly caused by the effects of a Treasury-imposed quarantine on European trade and the ripple effects of the collapse of the Mississippi and South Sea schemes. Ireland’s experience of net immigration since the late sixteenth century had been unique in Western Europe, with up to 50,000 Scots alone arriving in the three decades after the Williamite revolution. The settlement of the majority of these in Ulster in the 1690s had helped to stimulate the post-war boom in the province, itself a major contributor to Irish economic growth in the early years of the new century. Net out-migration was therefore a novelty when it occurred in 1717–20. As such, it did not arouse much negative contemporary commentary, apart from occasional complaints from landlords about defaulting creditors. Many of those departing were Scots who had been attracted by the very favourable leases available on Ulster estates in the post-war environment. These leases mostly expired in the late 1710s, and sharp increases in rents encouraged many of these Scots Presbyterians who had few ties to Ireland to move onwards to North America where bargains were still plentiful. The transitory nature of so many of these migrants meant that little official effort was expended trying to keep them in Ireland. Indeed, the failure of attempts to repeal the sacramental test clause (imposed in 1704 as part of the infamous Act to Prevent the Further Growth

6 Up to 7,500 emigrants departed for the American colonies during these years. See Kirkham, ‘Ulster Emigration’, 96. For the causes of emigration see Dickson, Ulster Emigration to Colonial America, chapter 2; Griffin, The People With No Name, 67–70; and Marianne Wokeck, Trade in Strangers: The Beginning of Mass Migration to North America (Pennsylvania, 1999), 171, who sees it as the first Irish instance of ‘homeland disaster’-inspired migration.


of Popery) in 1709 and 1719, despite the support of the British government, only added to the motivation for many Presbyterians to abandon Ireland.\textsuperscript{9} The hostile opposition of the overwhelming majority of Irish Anglicans to their Presbyterian neighbours did little to encourage prospective migrants to stay, while it also meant that few of those who departed were missed, at least during this initial wave of migration.

By the end of the decade things had changed. The numbers emigrating had increased, with over 4,000 departing from Ulster alone in 1728.\textsuperscript{10} The economic situation had deteriorated dramatically, leading most commentators to view events with a more negative attitude than in the opening years of the decade.\textsuperscript{11} Growing pessimism about the Irish economy was reflected in the flurry of publications on Irish political economy produced in the closing years of the 1720s, a veritable ‘golden age’ for such writings.\textsuperscript{12} This alarmist reaction informed official circles through the redoubtable figures of Speaker William Conolly, and the archbishop of Armagh, Hugh Boulter.\textsuperscript{13} Both had strong Ulster connections and derived much of their respective incomes from the province, leading to an increased awareness of the gravity of the situation on the ground. The majority of the migrants were again Ulster Presbyterians, but this time not only were their numbers more significant but most came from longer-established communities with greater ties to Ireland. Softening political attitudes to dissenters meant they were more likely to be included within the Protestant nation even if most legal barriers remained intact (despite the imposition of a Toleration Act in 1719). All of these factors led to increased official interest in the emigration phenomenon in 1727–30.

\textsuperscript{9} The imposition of the test had restricted Presbyterian participation in public life by disqualifying dissenters from most state and local government employments. See Griffin, \textit{The People With No Name}, 23–4, 60–4; and David Hayton, ‘Exclusion, Conformity and Parliamentary Representation: The Impact of the Sacramental Test on Irish Dissenting Politics’ in Kevin Herlihy (ed.), \textit{The Politics of Irish Dissent} (Dublin, 1997), 52–73.
\textsuperscript{11} On the economic crisis which engulfed Ireland in these years, see James Kelly, ‘Harvests and Hardship: Famine and Scarcity in Ireland in the late 1720s’, \textit{Studia Hibernica}, 26 (1992), 65–106.
Reports submitted by various interested parties to the Dublin Castle administration sparked additional concern. In 1727 the Protestant dissenters of Dublin and the South of Ireland submitted an address to the king outlining their complaints, especially with regard to the sacramental test. The writers of this address observed that the grievances under which many dissenters laboured meant that ‘they had in great numbers transported themselves [to] the American plantations for the sake of the liberty and ease they are denied in their native country’, adding that ‘we have too much reason to fear that many more will follow their example, if this occasion of their grievances should not be timely removed, greatly to the weakness of the Protestant interest in general and the prejudice of the linen manufacture, which is the principal support of this nation.”

While the purpose of the writers of this address was to obtain a relaxation of the penalties under which the dissenters suffered, the use of the prospect of emigration and the ensuing security and economic repercussions showed they were aware of the perception of emigration in official circles, especially regarding the diminution of the ‘Protestant interest’.

Another government correspondent, this time a Belfast ship’s captain, Thomas Whitney, informed the Dublin Castle administration in 1728 ‘that 40,000 people out of Ulster and the low part of Connaught had gone to the colonies these past eight years’. Such exaggeration of emigration statistics was common, with one astute English official, Charles Delafaye, commenting that the numbers emigrating ‘are perhaps not as many as has been represented, for on these occasions are magnified usually and nowhere so much as in Ireland’. The magnification of the numbers does, however, indicate the contemporary perception of the issue. Whitney suggested that rising rents were the crux of the problem and that many landlords had a great rent roll ‘and don’t receive half the money.” Higher rents encouraged emigration, while the disparity between the expected revenue and the actual rent paid further extended the impact of non-payment of rents by departing tenants by increasing indebtedness amongst landowners.

It was not just the Irish administration (and landlords) who were concerned about rising levels of emigration. In December 1728 the duke of Newcastle...
wrote to the archbishop of Armagh referring to the ‘infatuation that has of late prevailed amongst the common people in the north of Ireland of removing from whence to the Plantations’.\(^{18}\) Newcastle’s attitude that it was nothing more than an ‘infatuation’ was echoed by Irish Lord Justice Thomas Wyndham who remarked in a letter to a member of the British cabinet that ‘nothing remarkable has happened here since my last, except the spreading of a humour among the tenants of Ulster, of quitting their lands here and transporting themselves to America’. In the same letter he referred to the harvest failures in Ulster, but failed to connect them to the departures. Instead, he ascribed the rising emigration levels to rising rents.\(^ {19}\)

Wyndham and his fellow Irish Lord Justices, William Conolly and Archbishop Boulter, conducted their own investigation into the reasons for emigration in early 1729, at the request of the lord lieutenant, Lord Carteret.\(^ {20}\) In March of that year they wrote to Carteret describing their findings. Drawing on the testimony of dissenting ministers to support their conclusions, the Lord Justices stressed the Presbyterian character of the emigrants and warned that a failure to halt their departure would have fatal consequences for the ‘Protestant interest’ in Ireland.\(^ {21}\) Presbyterian ministers, they suggested, could admonish their congregations and attempt to persuade them not to leave for America: ‘such admonitions would very much contribute to put a stop to it.’\(^{22}\) Their belief that the Presbyterian clergy could help prevent emigration suggests that religious grievances were not the primary motivation for emigration. This is confirmed in a report drawn up for the Lord Justices by two Presbyterian ministers, Francis Iredell and Robert Craghead, which outlined the reasons why so many Ulster Protestants were departing for America. High rents, the inequities of the tithe system, and bad harvests were all cited, as well as the effects of the sacramental test. Economic factors, or what they termed the ‘poverty to which that part of the country is reduced’, were seen as the primary reasons for emigration.\(^ {23}\)

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\(^{18}\) Duke of Newcastle to Archbishop Hugh Boulter, 5 December 1728, PRONI, TSPI, T659, f. 59.

\(^{19}\) Thomas Wyndham to a Lord, 11 January 1728/29, PRONI, TSPI, T659, ff. 64–6.

\(^{20}\) Griffin, The People With No Name, 65.

\(^{21}\) Lord Justices (Boulter, Conolly and Wyndham) to Lord Carteret, 8 March 1729, in W.T. Latimer, ‘Ulster Emigration to North America’, Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, 32 (1902), 388.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.

\(^{23}\) Memorial by Francis Iredell and Robert Craghead to their Excellencies, the Lord Justices and General Governors of Ireland, n.d. 1729, in Latimer, ‘Ulster Emigration to North America’, 389. See also Archbishop Boulter to the duke of Newcastle, 13
The conclusions reached by Iredell and Craghead were confirmed by two members of the Irish judiciary who reported back to Dublin Castle following their travels in the north of Ireland on the legal circuits in the spring of 1729. Their reports stressed economic grievances related to the bad harvests of the previous two years as well as rising rents. The religious grievances were also acknowledged, but they pointed out that ‘in the counties they passed through they did not hear of any prosecutions against that [the Test Act] or any other penal laws’. This reflects the difference between the letter of the law and the real practice of penal legislation in eighteenth-century Ireland. The two judges also stressed the attractions of the colonies and the influence of former emigrants and shipping agents on prospective migrants. It may be significant in this regard that Nathaniel Crouch’s *The English Empire in America: Or a View of the Dominions of the Crown of England* was re-published in Dublin in 1729. It had first been published in 1685, with the sixth edition appearing in London in 1728, but this was the first Irish edition. Certainly, in April 1728, one prospective emigrant in County Westmeath cited the evidence of a ‘history of America which gave me a very honest account of all your country’ as a motivating factor for considering the voyage across the Atlantic.

Dispatching the judges’ reports to Carteret in June 1729 the Lord Justices expressed the view that if the ‘approaching harvest proves good, it may contribute very much to abate this humour in the people’, but if not ‘we are humbly of the opinion that an adequate remedy cannot be had from the laws now in being to put a stop to this evil’. The concerns of the Irish administration and in particular Conolly and his fellow Lord Justice Archbishop Boulter can be seen in their charitable contributions for the benefit of the Ulster poor. In January 1729 Boulter established a public subscription to purchase grain to feed the poor in the ‘northern part of the country’, to which both he and Conolly donated £500 each to encourage further donations. The purpose of this concentration on the northern province, as one astute Vatican

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24 See ‘Report of Judges of the Northern Circuits’ in Lord Carteret to the duke of Newcastle, 26 June 1729, PRONI, TSPJ, T659, ff. 74–9. For the promotional activities of shipping agents, see Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*, 160–1.


26 Lord Justices (Boulter, Conolly and Wyndham) to Lord Carteret, 8 March 1729, in Latimer, ‘Ulster Emigration to North America’, 388.
correspondent observed, ‘pointed to the necessity of stopping the defection from the province of Ulster of so many Protestant families … to America.’ Conolly’s generosity in this instance was motivated by more than just charitable instincts; instead, it reflected the ‘alarmist response’ to the significantly greater outflow of population during 1728 and 1729. Conolly, who had landed interests in three of the worst affected counties—Donegal, Fermanagh and Londonderry—was particularly sensitive to the effects of the crisis. Since 1727 his land agents had been supplying him with information on the depressed state of the economy and the hardship suffered by his tenants, many of whom had chosen to emigrate. In July 1728 Thomas Dickson (Conolly’s brother in law) wrote from Ballyshannon, County Donegal:

[T]here is a ship in Killybegs that is taking passengers for New England, several tradesmen and young men, some about this town is going with him but none of the tenants although there is several of them that intends going there the next time. I know there are many families already gone there this year out of Laggan.

The departure of tradesmen and young men suggests a general economic recession affecting not just crops but also other aspects of the local economy dependent on profits and other outputs from the land. The situation in Ballyshannon had been deteriorating since 1727 when Dickson had written to Conolly warning him that it was ‘likely to be a hard year for the poor’ and that the price of ‘bread grain is extravagant’, suggesting a harvest failure.

Conolly’s Ballyshannon estate was not his only estate affected by harvest failure in these years. The Manor of Newporton in neighbouring County Fermanagh suffered even more than Ballyshannon. In 1728 the Newporton


28 See Richard K. MacMaster, Scotch-Irish Merchants in Colonial America (Belfast, 2009), 6–8; Kelly, ‘Harvests and Hardship’, 83. See also Bishop Henry Downes to William Conolly, 26 November 1728, for another instance of a northern bishop’s charitable intervention (Trinity College Dublin, Conolly Papers, MS 3984/12).

29 Thomas Dickson to William Conolly, 16 July 1728, Irish Architectural Archive, Dublin (hereafter IAA), Castletown Papers, 97/84 C28/1. See also Walsh, ‘The Differing Motivations’, 326.

30 Thomas Dickson to William Conolly, 12 March 1727, IAA, Castletown Papers, 97/84 C28/2.
tenants dispatched a petition to Conolly outlining their plight: ‘the common calamity of Ulster has been grievously felt by your petitioners’. They made reference to the ‘excessive prices’ they had been forced to pay for their leases, a common complaint across the province at this time. This, however, was not the principle cause of their trouble; that honour was reserved for a higher cause. ‘God in his anger’, wrote the petitioners, ‘has for these three years past after the seasons blasted their labours and withheld the ground from issuing its usual increase’. These religious undertones indicate the sense of despair that the petitioners felt, and were continued in their appeal to Conolly, in which they desired him to share in the ‘misfortune that no human prayer can remedy’. Reference was also made to those who had fled to the new world instead of seeking Conolly’s ‘compassion’, implying that the petitioners still viewed emigration as an option of last resort.

It is notable that in all these representations, whether made in public or by private channels, economic factors rather than religious grievances were seen as decisive. Large numbers of Presbyterians emigrated because large numbers of Presbyterians lived in the areas worst affected by economic disasters. These disasters included, as we have seen, three successive harvest failures in Ulster, which in turn led to a credit crisis as tenants struggled to pay their rents, which had been rising throughout the decade. The crisis in credit led to the stagnation of local markets, which even the embryonic linen industry, largely concentrated in Ulster, could not overcome. The regional dimension of the crisis explains why Presbyterians were disproportionately affected, and why Irish Catholics did not emigrate to the American colonies in the same numbers at this juncture.

31 Petition sent by James Crawford (agent) and tenants of Newporton, n.d. 1728, IAA, Castletown Papers, 97/84 C/20/1.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 Ibid.
II Legislative Intentions

In May 1729 Conolly’s Londonderry agent Robert McCausland wrote to him, calling for legislation to be introduced in the Irish parliament to hinder the departure of emigrants. In his reply to McCausland, Conolly wrote: ‘as to what you mention about Government preventing passengers going to America two weeks before they go, this cannot be done without an act of parliament which I hope will be taken care of next session’. Such a response did not, however, meet with universal approval. Wyndham’s reaction was lukewarm. He believed that it was ‘an affair of too private and particular [a] nature for the government to interpose in: at least no scheme of that sort has yet been offered, which had the appearance of a proper adequate remedy’. Archbishop Boulter shared his concerns, writing to the duke of Newcastle that ‘whatever can be done by law, I fear it may be dangerous to forcibly hinder a number of needy people from quitting us.’

Despite these objections, heads of bill entitled An Act to Prevent Persons from Clandestinely Transporting Themselves to America in Order to Defraud their Creditors were introduced in the Irish House of Commons in December 1729, six weeks after Conolly’s death. The scope of the bill was broader than the title suggests, with one government official accurately describing it as a bill to ‘prevent the people going to America’. The heads of bill gave powers to local magistrates to grant or refuse licences for prospective migrants. Without such licences or certificates legal departure would be impossible. Giving such a role

37 This was McCausland’s second letter on this theme in six months. See Robert McCausland to William Conolly, 23 November 1728, Trinity College Dublin, Conolly Papers, MS 3984/9.
38 William Conolly to Robert McCausland, 27 May 1729, IAA, Castletown Papers, 97/84 C/27/83.
40 Hugh Boulter, archbishop of Armagh, to the duke of Newcastle, 23 November 1728, in Boulter, Letters to Several Ministers of State, I, 211.
41 See Dickson, Ulster Emigration to Colonial America, 186. For similar legislation in Scotland, see I.C.C. Graham, Colonists from Scotland: Emigration to North America 1707–1783 (London, 1956), 90. For earlier Scottish attempts to restrict emigration to Ireland in the 1690s, see Scottish Privy Council, A Proclamation Discharging People to Travel to Ireland Without Passes (Edinburgh, 1695), and Scottish Privy Council, A Proclamation Discharging the Transportation of Persons to the Plantations of Foreigners in America (Edinburgh, 1698). I am indebted to Kathleen Middleton for pointing me in the direction of these proclamations.
42 Marmaduke Coghill to Edward Southwell, 3 January 1730, in D.W. Hayton, Letters of Marmaduke Coghill, 1722–1738 (Dublin, 2005), 84.
to the county magistrates, in practice local landlords, would have imposed a ‘legal stranglehold on emigration had it become law’ because most landlords were opposed to the departure of their tenants. Their concerns included fears that they could not replace the migrants, as well as the stated focus of the bill—the fear that departing tenants were defrauding their creditors, the majority of whom were these same landlords.

The focus on the non-payment of creditors, however, also reflected concerns about the outflow of specie that accompanied emigration. The influx of Lowland Scots in the 1690s with badly needed specie had made an important contribution to the rapid economic growth of these years. The possibility of an outflow of capital to the American colonies added to broader worries about the lack of money circulating in the Irish economy in the late 1720s, worries that were being articulated in the voluminous economic critiques of the period. These critiques included the works of writers on trade and money like David Bindon and John Browne, Thomas Prior’s famous work on absenteeism, and Arthur Dobbs’ influential Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland, published in late 1729. These works were famously satirised by Swift in his Modest Proposal (1729), which turned the popular conception that a nation’s wealth lay in its people upon its head, a trope that Swift had himself subscribed to in his Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture nine years earlier.

It was Arthur Dobbs, MP for Carrickfergus, who introduced the heads of bill to restrict emigration into the Irish House of Commons on 11 December 1729. He also managed the heads of bill through the committee stage, reporting on the progress made to the whole house on 31 December. It is unclear whether his actions were motivated by personal interest—as well as

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43 Dickson, Ulster Emigration to Colonial America, 187.
44 Green, “The ‘Strange Humours’”, 117.
45 Cullen, An Economic History of Ireland Since 1660, 29; David Dickson, New Foundations: Ireland 1660–1800 (Dublin, 2000), 115.
46 David Bindon, An Essay on the Gold and Silver Coin Current in Ireland … (Dublin, 1729); Sir John Browne, Essay on Trade in General and on that of Ireland in Particular (Dublin, 1728); Arthur Dobbs, An Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland (Dublin, 1729); and Thomas Prior, A List of the Absentees of Ireland … (Dublin, 1729).
being a writer, he was an Ulster landowner—or by a particular political role, possibly linked to his membership of the committee of trade. He certainly used his membership of the trade committee to his advantage in the writing of his *Essay*, citing unpublished revenue statistics which had been laid before the committee.\(^{50}\) In his *Essay*, an extraordinary piece of social and economic analysis, Dobbs discussed the effects of the falling balance in trade resulting from the late harvest failures, and argued that the lack of manufactures combined with the harvest failures were behind the departures of the Protestant poor to America and the ‘papists’ for the Irish regiments in France and Spain.\(^{51}\) He also cited the short-term leasing practices of many landlords as the reason for the departure of the richer farmers.\(^{52}\) For Dobbs, manufacturing was key as it would increase ‘our numbers’, a sentiment which suggests that he subscribed to the prevailing orthodoxy regarding the relation of population to the wealth of the country.\(^{53}\) The logical next step to this argument was to encourage the population to remain in the country, and if this did not work to prevent them from leaving even for other parts of the Empire.

Ireland’s position within the British Empire was beginning to emerge as an issue within political discourse, particularly in relation to her economic participation in the lucrative colonial trade, and Dobbs’ *Essay* should be seen as making an important contribution to this debate. He argued persuasively for greater Irish participation in the trade with the American colonies, demonstrating both the advantages it would bring to Ireland’s balance of trade, but also the important role that Ireland already played in the Empire. Here he was arguing for greater access to imperial trade, which had been restricted by the English navigation acts of 1661 and 1663. These acts, as well as later legislation enacted in the 1680s and 90s, limited Irish participation in trade with the American colonies by specifying which goods could be exported from Ireland. These included horses and ‘all sorts of victuals of the growth or production of Ireland’. Under the aegis of this legislation indentured servants were also permitted to travel to the colonies. In 1705 linen was added to the commodities permitted to be exported.\(^{54}\)

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\(^{50}\) For his use of the Custom House records to prepare his pamphlet while a member of the Committee of Trade, see Dobbs, *An Essay on the Trade and Improvement of Ireland*, 4.


\(^{52}\) Ibid., 80.

\(^{53}\) Ibid., 14.

Ireland, for Dobbs, was ‘no inconsiderable member’ of the Empire. Irish men had made an important contribution to Britain’s armies during various foreign wars, he argued, as well as ‘peopling her colonies’.\(^{55}\) This suggests that the proposed bill to ‘prevent persons from clandestinely transporting themselves to America’ was aimed at reducing emigration at this particular juncture, when the sheer volume of individuals joining the diaspora was causing such concern, rather than halting Ireland’s peopling of the plantations entirely. In this regard it was not dissimilar to the attempts made by the Scottish Privy Council in the 1690s to reduce the flow of emigrants to Ulster and North America. These legislative initiatives, like the Irish proposal in 1729, reflected real concerns about the outflow of population to other parts of the Empire.

The heads of bill passed through the House of Commons with little trouble, before being transmitted to London by Lord Lieutenant Carteret for the British Privy Council to scrutinise and decide whether to send them back as a bill. These heads of bill never returned. There are two possible reasons for this. First, the crisis had begun to abate with the bumper harvest of autumn 1729. Secondly, there were serious qualms about the propriety of the proposed legislation. It has already been noted that neither Boulter, the dominant figure in the Irish administration now that Conolly was dead, nor Lord Chancellor Wyndham were particularly enamoured by the idea when it was first mooted. More importantly, they had the support of the best legal opinion in London. In a letter to the duke of Newcastle, the attorney general, Philip Yorke, questioned the legality of preventing travel ‘to our own colonies’, adding an imperial dimension to the problem.\(^{56}\) Acting on Yorke’s advice, the Privy Council rejected the heads of bill and thus ended the only legislative attempt to impose such restrictions on emigration from Ireland. Their failure also demonstrated the desire for free movement of peoples within the Empire.

The imperial dimension to Yorke’s advice is clearer still when read in the context of the rest of his letter, which dealt with the recruitment of Irish Catholics by the French army, reminding us of the other great Irish eighteenth-century diaspora.\(^{57}\) Recruitment for French service was formally forbidden in the 1720s, but about 1,000 men on average were leaving


\(^{56}\) Philip Yorke to the duke of Newcastle, 14 April 1729, PRONI, TSPI, f. 70.

\(^{57}\) On Irish migration to Europe, see Cullen, ‘The Irish Diaspora’, 124–6, and Thomas O’Connor (ed.), *The Irish in Europe, 1580–1815* (Dublin, 2006).
each year during that decade driven both by Irish economic conditions and French needs for manpower. In 1730, the London government gave permission to a Colonel Richard Hennessy to recruit 750 men from Ireland, but this was later revoked because of the negative reaction from the Dublin administration. The primary reason for this response was the ‘draining’ effect it would have on the population, accentuating the ‘desertion’ of large numbers of Ulster Protestants to America. In contrast, the under-secretary of state and former Irish chief secretary Charles Delafaye saw the foreign recruitment of Catholic soldiers as balancing the Protestant emigration from the north:

Those who have deserted … are for the most part, if not all, Protestants from the north of Ireland. It might have the appearance of right policy to diminish on that account the number of the popish inhabitants.

But this seems to have been a minority view. Instead, the preferred government policy on both sides of the Irish Sea was to maximise the population of Ireland, regardless of creed. The legal barriers, in the form of the penal laws, which partly motivated the emigration of Catholics to Europe and Presbyterians to America, nevertheless remained in place. Attempts to repeal the sacramental test, a major bone of contention for Presbyterian migrants, failed in 1733. This failure did not lead to increased emigration, however, as the economic situation had improved, again suggesting the primacy of material factors.

This was confirmed when legislative attempts were made to resolve some of the structural problems affecting the Irish economy, which had contributed to the surge in emigration. These efforts led to a number of British restrictions on Irish trade with the American colonies being lifted in 1731. Again, Arthur Dobbs played a key role in ushering the bill through parliament, while Carteret’s recommendation for such a bill could have been taken straight out of Dobbs’ Essay:

For these and many other reasons they allege that it is evident that commerce between Ireland and the American plantations for goods

58 Cullen, ‘The Irish Diaspora’, 120.
59 Ibid.
60 Charles Delafaye to the duke of Newcastle, 23 October 1730, NLI, TSPI, MS 9613, ff. 30–3.
61 For a detailed discussion of these restrictions and their lifting, see Truxes, Irish-American Trade, 29–33.
not enumerated will greatly contribute to the benefit of His Majesty’s subjects of Ireland and the said plantations without detriment to the commerce of Great Britain.\textsuperscript{62}

The bill to restrict emigration had been introduced not only to maintain the ‘Protestant interest’, but also to protect the Irish economy and prevent the departure of some of the most productive members of Irish society. The lifting of some of the restrictions on trade with the colonies was similarly designed to boost the economy, particularly in the light of the recent demographic and subsistence crises. In his \textit{Essay}, Dobbs prescribed the lifting of such barriers as essential for future development, while he also outlined a utopian vision of a yeoman society in which the Ulster Presbyterian freeholders would play a substantial part, thereby negating the need for them to emigrate. His vision, like that of his contemporaries John Browne, Thomas Prior and George Berkeley, focused on an industrious society with full employment and the maximisation of the potential of the existing population. Any further reduction in population would be seen from their perspective as symptomatic of a wider failure.\textsuperscript{63}

Irish economic conditions improved in the 1730s and the numbers emigrating fell substantially, at least until the severe winter of 1740–1, when famine once again gripped much of the country. Further legislative initiatives to prevent migration across the Atlantic frontier were not attempted. Instead, as William Smyth has argued, as the eighteenth-century progressed the frontier moved westward as Ireland changed from being a colony to being a coloniser. Emigration to the New World became a feature of Irish life, eventually coming to be seen as a ‘safety valve’, and ‘America itself became Ireland’s western frontier’.\textsuperscript{64} Amongst those attracted across the Atlantic was Arthur Dobbs himself, who became governor of North Carolina in 1754, having already purchased a substantial estate there in 1745. In a further irony, he encouraged Presbyterian tenants from his County Antrim estates to emigrate to his American holdings, building up his own Ulster colony in the New World. Here on the frontier of the British world he hoped to create the yeoman society

\textsuperscript{62} Lord Carteret to the duke of Newcastle, 23 February 1730, NLI, T3PI, MS 9613, f. 7.
\textsuperscript{63} Berkeley, \textit{The Querist}, 30.
he had earlier envisaged for Ireland. In the long run, extending the frontier across America proved more sustainable than maintaining ‘a numerous stock of people’ in Ireland.

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Notes on Contributors

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Stephen Dornan has recently completed a Research Fellowship at the AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies at the University of Aberdeen and is now an independent scholar based in Stonehaven, Scotland. His research focuses on the political and aesthetic importance of dialect in Irish and Scottish fiction and poetry.

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