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**Newby, Andrew**

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# CONTENTS

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Editorial	v
Carlo Denina, ‘Mylady Mackenzie’ and the Enlightenment Construction of Scottish and Irish Literature <i>Ian Campbell Ross</i>	1
Thomas Wilson (1758–1824) of Dullatur, the Scottish Second Husband of Matilda Tone: The Unravelling of a Mystery <i>Jane Rendall and C.J. Woods</i>	25
Louis MacNeice’s Irish and Scottish Pasts, 1935–9 <i>Paul Robichaud</i>	51
‘The Cold Northern Land of Suomi’: Michael Davitt and Finnish Nationalism <i>Andrew G. Newby</i>	73
The Subscription Controversy of the 1820s, ‘a religious form of imperialism’ and John Mitchel’s Early Influences <i>Michael Huggins</i>	93
‘What is my country?’: Supporting Small Nation Publishing <i>Alistair McCleery and Melanie Ramdarshan Bold</i>	115

New Cosmopolitanism, Democracy and the Place of Scottish  
Studies 133  
*Scott Lyall*

Notes on Contributors 155

## EDITORIAL

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This issue of the *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies* speaks across a range of disciplines and centuries, comparatively and nationally, to address the question of cosmopolitanism. Irish-Scottish Studies is in many ways embedded in a specific national context, but chooses to inform that internal discussion through reference to a comparative case. Setting Ireland and Scotland side by side has helped shed light on such vexed questions as the economic modernisation of the two countries and the fate of the national literary revivals. The comparison still informs political debates about these matters—be it the economic crisis in Ireland or the independence question in Scotland. But the purpose and value of cosmopolitanism in scholarly discussion is not frequently placed at the heart of the discussion as it is here. A central theme in the essays collected here is the power of cosmopolitan perspectives and national comparisons in shaping agendas and articulating solutions.

Thus while the essay by Ian Campbell Ross for instance constitutes an important contribution to the study of the development of English Literature, it also has an important international aspect. Since Robert Crawford's *Devolving English Literature* (2000), attention has been given to the role of the Scots in shaping the literary canon taught in Universities from the late eighteenth century. Campbell Ross here opens up the possibility that the canon was a partial creation of an Italian commentator on the wider creative writing of the Celtic countries: at once a more intricate and cosmopolitan inheritance, but one which connects to Crawford's study through the formative role of the Earl of Bute in fashioning a British cultural inheritance through adept patronage. The interconnectivity of Ireland and Scotland (and the defining context of France) again appears in the study of Matilda Tone supplied by Jane Rendall and Christopher Woods. In an inventive addition to the work of Elaine MacFarland (whose study *Ireland and Scotland in the Age of Revolution* (1994) remains central to our understanding of how radical movements in the two countries provided mutual support during the revolutionary age), the authors excavate the history of Tone's Scottish second husband, Thomas Wilson. Breaking ground in the highly gendered history of this period of

activism, the article also asserts, by its nature, the value of collaboration across the scholarly disciplines and national literatures: exemplifying what the *Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies* endeavours to promote.

Domestic politics is also a concern in Michael Huggins' exploration of the intellectual inheritance of John Mitchel, although religion not politics is the dominant theme. Huggins is however rightly careful not to make too much of the lineage he uncovers back to the writings of Francis Hutcheson – that foundational Ulster-Scottish philosopher – and the radical positioning of Mitchel. Supplying a corrective to the work of A. T. Q. Stewart (*A Deeper Silence*, 1995) which built a high road from New Light Presbyterianism to the United Irish Rebellion, Huggins here suggests a tangled pathway from the 1720s to the 1840s. In proposing that Mitchel was antagonistic to his father's liberal theology, it also sets the question of Irish nationalism into that most nineteenth century of genres – the argument of father and son. This was in part shaped by the younger man's awareness of developments in Europe and the United States – his attraction to the 1848 rebellions in the first case and his revulsion at the Great Awakening in the second.

The sources of Irish political radicalism are again evident in Andrew Newby's contribution, which uncovers a resonant place for Finland in the experience and understanding of Michael Davitt. For Davitt the capacity to visit Helsinki concretised the parallel he drew between Finland's relationship to Russia and that of Ireland and Britain. In arguing this case Newby helpfully contributes to a rendering of Irish nationalism in a European context – one which sets it alongside the programme of the Young Italians and the dilemmas posed inside the Austro-Hungarian question. This broad contextual understanding also inflects Paul Robichaud's treatment of Louis MacNeice, although here Iceland, not Finland, is the relevant parallel. While MacNeice sees Iceland as a haven of 'communal life' he is equally aware that 'no European island, however remote, could provide even a temporary escape from the pressures of modernity and history.'

The economic pressures of modernity inform Alistair McCleery and Melanie Ramdarshan Bold's overview of the conditions of publishing in Ireland and Scotland. As the transnational conglomerates centralise publication and web purchasing closes local outlets the need for small nations to protect and provide for cultural capital is increased. Educational systems provide one crucial buttress to this ambition as do the Arts Councils that exist in both Ireland and Scotland. However the efficacy of both of these protectionist structures is questioned here, particularly when the Irish and Scottish cases

are placed alongside the example of Canadian publishing which has been a significant beneficiary of the federal system of governance and national cultural ambition.

If the economics of Irish and Scottish cultural expression look bleak, the final essay here, that of Scott Lyall provides a more optimistic gloss to the condition of Scottish Studies. Again cosmopolitanism is the crucial thematic, with Lyall identifying a fundamental tension between the internationalist ambitions of much literary criticism and the nationalist content of the country's political culture. Arguing for a reassertion of the national context in the treatment of Scottish literature and a reconnection with the place of composition, Lyall sets himself against a trend to de-territorialise creative writing. As he polemically enquires 'what if literary art is dying...because different—not discrete—national cultures and traditions are being worn away by globalisation?'

*Michael Brown, University of Aberdeen*



# Carlo Denina, ‘Mylady Mackenzie’ and the Enlightenment Construction of Scottish and Irish Literature

Ian Campbell Ross

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The birth of Romanticism, for the most part in Germany, also coincides with the birth of the modern nation state, the modern university and...with the founding of Comparative Literature (*vergleichende Literaturwissenschaft*) as a discipline.

Françoise Meltzer<sup>1</sup>

The importance of Romanticism, and particularly the role of the Schlegel brothers and the Jena Circle,<sup>2</sup> in the creation of the study of literature and criticism, as regards both national traditions and comparative literature, has been so often argued and restated that it is largely forgotten today that the first theorised study of comparative literature was the product of Enlightenment. Its author, as René Wellek briefly noted many years ago,<sup>3</sup> was Carlo Denina, born and educated in Piedmont, who worked variously in the Kingdom of Savoy and at the court of Frederick II of Prussia, before finishing his life as (titular) private librarian to Napoleon Bonaparte. The significance of Denina’s many contributions to the studies of literature, linguistics, history, and politics was acknowledged in his own day, both by the numerous published and frequently revised editions of many of his works, and by their translation into the principal languages of contemporary intellectual discourse.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Françoise Meltzer, ‘What’s Wrong with National Literature Departments?’, *European Review*, 17 (2009), 161–72; repr. with revisions in Theo D’haen and Iannis Goerlandt (eds), *Literature for Europe?* (Amsterdam, 2009), 43–60.

<sup>2</sup> Françoise Meltzer, for instance, draws heavily on Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Jean-Luc Nancy, *L’absolu littéraire* (Paris, 1978), translated by Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester as *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism* (Albany, NY, 1988).

<sup>3</sup> See René Wellek, ‘The Name and Nature of Comparative Literature’ in idem, *Discriminations: Further Concepts of Criticism* (New Haven, 1970), 1–36.

<sup>4</sup> For general accounts of Denina, see Giulio Natali, *Il settecento* (2 vols, 4<sup>th</sup> rev. ed. Milan, 1955), esp. Vol 1, 452–5; Franco Venturi, ‘Riformatori lombardi, piemontesi e toscani’, *Illuministi italiani* (Milan and Naples, 1958), 701–13; Domenico Consoli and Giorgio Petrocchi, *La letteratura Italiana: Arcadia, illuminismo, romanticismo*

This essay will concentrate on one aspect of Denina's work: his pioneering account of comparative literature, with particular reference to the circumstances that gave rise to his engagement with both Scottish and, more briefly, Irish literature in English, understood and theorised as bodies of writing related to, but distinct from, the English literature of England itself. Such a consideration will take into account elements of biography; local cultures (Piedmontese, Scottish and Irish) within a European context; political theory; and the state of practical politics in Great Britain and Ireland, during the period of geopolitical realignment that followed the 1707 Act of Union between England and Scotland and preceded the 1801 Act of Union between Great Britain and Ireland.

Carlo Denina was born in Revello, near Saluzzo, in the Kingdom of Savoy, in 1731. Graduating from the University of Turin in 1753, he took up a post in the royal school at Pinerolo. Disappointed in his hopes of a diplomatic career, Denina entered the priesthood the following year. Having been dismissed from his teaching position for encouraging his students to take part in a verse play he had written on the subject of contemporary education, which the Jesuits (probably correctly) thought directed at themselves, he was sent to be elementary schoolmaster at the small Piedmontese town of Cuorné, where he spent two years, before taking up a similarly modest post in Barge. Denina took advantage of his changed situation to obtain a doctorate in theology and in 1759 he was appointed to a post in the royal school 'Presso la Torre' in Turin. There he came into contact with intellectual circles in the capital that included such distinguished figures as the mathematician, Giovanni Lodovico Lagrangia (Joseph-Louis La Grange), the physician and physicist Giovanni Cigna, and the chemist Count Angelo Saluzzo, who in 1757 had set up the Società Scientifica Torinese (1757), re-founded as the Accademia delle Scienze di Torino in 1783.

It was in the Savoyard capital, in 1760, that Denina published the first version of his pioneering work on comparative literature, under the title *Discorso sopra le vicende della letteratura* [*Discourse on the vicissitudes of literature*]. Subsequently he extracted from the *Discorso* a version of his account of Italian literature, which he revised and published separately as the *Saggio sopra la letteratura italiana*

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(Florence, 1973), esp. 75–6; G. Fagioli Vercellone, 'Carlo Giovanni Maria Denina' in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, 38 (Roma, 1990), accessed at [http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/carlo-giovanni-maria-denina\\_\(Dizionario-Biografico\)/](http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/carlo-giovanni-maria-denina_(Dizionario-Biografico)/), accessed 12 April 2013; and Enrico Malato (ed.), *Storia della letteratura italiana*, (14 vols, vi: *Il settecento*, Roma, 1998), esp. 408–11.

italiana con alcuni altri opuscoli, serventi di aggiunti al Discorso sopra le vicende della letteratura (Lucca, 1762). Denina's subsequent career was a notable one. Among the best known of the author's subsequent works was the three-volume *Delle rivoluzioni d'Italia* (Turin, 1769–70), offering an account of Italian history from the Etruscans to the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, eventually extended to 1792, in an edition of the book published in Venice in 1793.<sup>5</sup> The success of the first edition of *Delle rivoluzioni* led to Denina's appointment to the chairs of Rhetoric, of Italian Eloquence (*Eloquenza italiana*) and of Greek at the Royal University.

Having written a four-volume *Istoria politica e letteraria della Grecia* (Turin, 1781–2), Denina travelled to the Prussian court at the invitation of Frederick II where, following the king's death in 1786, he penned the *Essai sur la vie et le règne de Frédéric II, roi de Prusse* (Berlin, 1788), designed to serve as a preface to Frederick's own work, and the three-volume *La Prusse littéraire sous Frederic II, ou Histoire abrégée de la plupart des auteurs, des académiciens, et des artistes qui sont nés ou qui sont vécus dans les Etats prussiens* (Berlin, 1790–91). Among his prodigious output, Denina also wrote an ambitious work of philology: the three-volume *La clef des langues, ou Observations sur l'origine et la formation des principales langues qu'on parle et qu'on écrit en Europe*, published in Berlin in 1804, the year in which Napoleon appointed Denina his personal librarian. Despite the extent and diversity of his output, only hinted at above, Denina continued to work on,

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<sup>5</sup> The work appeared in an English translation by John Langhorne as *A Dissertation, Historical and Political, on the Ancient Republics of Italy: from the Italian of Carlo Denina* (London, 1773). The translation includes a dedicatory epistle to the Rt Hon. William, earl of Radnor, in which Langhorne offers an account of the development of both Rome and the English nation in terms drawn from Denina: 'it is a melancholy truth, that the best of human institutions must share the fate of those that formed them. Government, like Science, has its brighter and darker periods—has its infancy, maturity, and decay. In the first state, rude and uncultivated, weak and imperfect; in the second, perfecting and acting upon the principles of enlightened reason; in the last, losing sight of those principles, and sinking under the accumulating corruptions of time. Regal, Consular, and Imperial, Rome passed thro' these several stages, till she became what Lucan says of Caesar MAGNI NOMINIS UMBRA. The English Nation, about the beginning of the fourteenth century, seems to have approached the second stage. The genius of that age pierced the dark veil of Popery, and formed the first conception of rational Government. The birth was slow and painful, the growth interrupted by frequent and dangerous distempers. It arrived to perfection at last... To prevent its decline nothing can more effectually instruct us than a due attention to the causes of that decline in other States'. *Ibid.*, vi–ix. *Delle rivoluzioni dell'Italia* appeared in French and German translations in 1771–5 and 1771–3, respectively; it was also published in Constantinople, among others, and continued in print until at least 1876.

and expand, his *Discorso*. The second full edition of the work appeared, in Italian, in Glasgow in 1763, and a continuation was published as *Vicende della letteratura* (Berlin, 1784–85; Venice, 1788), with a final supplement, *Saggio storico-critico sopra le ultime vicende della letteratura* (Carmagnola, 1811), appearing two years before Denina's death at the age of eighty two.

This is not the place to examine in full detail the complicated textual history of Denina's *Discorso*, which appeared in two French translations (1767; 1786–90) and in English (1771) and Spanish (1797) translation in the eighteenth century. As we have seen, the first edition of the *Discorso* was published in Turin in 1760, under the title, *Discorso sopra le vicende d'ogni letteratura*, while the second, expanded edition, which included for the first time independent accounts of Scottish and Irish literatures, appeared under the slightly different title, *Discorso sopra le vicende della letteratura*, from the Foulis Press in Glasgow in 1763.

The 1763 edition of the *Discorso* prompts questions both general and particular. How did the Italian Denina come to offer pioneering accounts of Scottish and Irish literature in this edition, whose original publication had taken place only three years earlier? Why was a modern Italian-language work published by the celebrated Foulis Press in Glasgow, at all?

For answers, we need to return to Turin in 1759. There, Carlo Denina met the British envoy to the court of Savoy, a Scotsman, the Hon. James Stuart Mackenzie, and his wife Elizabeth. It was Denina who tutored Elizabeth, more usually Eliza, Mackenzie, in the Italian language.<sup>6</sup> And it was to his aristocratic Scottish pupil that Denina dedicated the second edition of the *Discorso*, whose publication by the Foulis Press was, as we shall see, arranged by his patron.<sup>7</sup>

Elizabeth (Eliza) Mackenzie was a daughter of John Campbell, second duke of Argyll, a prominent supporter of the 1707 Act of Union between Scotland and England, who also distinguished himself as a soldier and a diplomat. In 1747, Eliza married James Stuart Mackenzie, second son of the second Earl of Bute. In 1759, her husband was appointed ambassador to the court of Turin, where he remained until 1762. In the following year, he was appointed Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal in Scotland, thanks to the influence

<sup>6</sup> Denina had previously taught Italian to other British notables visiting Turin, including the future dukes of Portland and Marlborough.

<sup>7</sup> In an advertisement appended to a Foulis Press edition of George Buchanan, *Paraphrasis Psalmorum Davidis Poetica* (Glasgow, 1765), Denina's work is noted as 'lately printed', along with three other titles, Tasso's *La Gerusalemme liberata*, and *L'Aminta*, and Guarini's *Il Pastor Fido*, in a list dominated by Greek and Roman classics. Fagioli Vercellone is wrong to suggest that this edition was a simple reprint ('ristampa').

of his brother John, third earl of Bute, close advisor to the future George III and, since 1761, prime minister.

Eliza Mackenzie was nothing if not well connected.<sup>8</sup> But that she really had the literary and philosophical interests Carlo Denina would ascribe to her in his dedication seems highly likely. Eliza grew up in an intensely intellectual environment. While her father, John Campbell, second duke of Argyll (1680–1743), was a soldier and Whig politician of some distinction, her uncle, Archibald Campbell (1682–1761), earl of Ilay, who succeeded his elder brother, as third duke of Argyll, was not only an important politician but also a renowned scholar, who played a prominent role in Scottish intellectual and academic life. At his death, he had amassed so considerable a personal library that a catalogue of it, *Catalogue librorum A[rchibald].C[ampbell].D[uke].A[rgyll]*, was printed at Glasgow by the Foulis Press in 1758.

It is in this context that we might find it significant that Carlo Denina dedicated the *Discorso sopra le vicende della letteratura* not to the British ambassador but to his wife, 'The Right Honourable the Lady Eliza MacKenzie'. The dedication in fact suggests that his praise of his patron was in no way at variance with the truth. Among many other (admittedly elaborate) compliments, Denina asserts that he had wished to dedicate the first edition of his work to her but that modesty had persuaded him to leave the book without dedication of any kind. Whether or not this last assertion is to be taken at face value, there is good reason to be glad that the first edition of the *Discorso* was not dedicated to Eliza Mackenzie, since Denina indicates that the changes he made in the second edition were largely intended as an appropriate compliment to the dedicatee, made in gratitude for the favour she had shown to him, to Italian literature, and to comparative literary history itself:

Sia parzialità verso l'autore, o propensione alle opere italiane, e a questa sorta di materiale, che vi abbia indotti a ristampare questo libro mio, io ve ne debbo saper buon grado, e ringraziarvene vivamente. Per corrispondere alla premura, che mostrate di celebrare le cose mie, ho procurato di accrescere, e migliorare quest'opera quanto la brevità del tempo mi ha permesso, e di fare quelle aggiunte, che giudicai più necessarie, più adatte al paese, dove l'opera dee ristamparsi.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See 'The Argyll Family' in Karl W. Schweizer (ed.), *Lord Bute: Essays in Re-interpretation* (Leicester, 1988), 118.

<sup>9</sup> Carlo Denina, *Discorso sopra le vicende della letteratura* a cura di Carlo Corsetti (Roma: Libreria Editrice Universitaria Tor Vergata, 1988), 5. All translations from this work

[Whether it be partiality towards the author, or a predisposition to Italian works, and to this sort of material, that induced you to reprint this work of mine, I must let you know it gives me great pleasure and I thank you for it most warmly. In order to return the kindness you have shown in promoting my work, I've taken care to enlarge and improve it, insofar as time has allowed, and to make those additions I adjudged most necessary, and best adapted to the country where the work was to be reprinted.]

That Denina was motivated by a desire to praise not only his patron but also her family is clear from the passage that follows. Quite apart from the desire to give a more complete account of Scottish literature, Denina writes, he is guided by knowledge that the Scots recognised:

in gran parte gli avanzamenti de' loro studii dal favore, e protezione dell'immortal Archibald Campbell Duca d'Argyle, che emulò in questo modo la Gloria del Duca Giovanni suo maggior fratello, padre degnissimo di Mylady, il quale per le chiare sue imprese e per l'egregie virtù politiche e militari onde fu adorno, viene annoverato fra i primi eroi del suo tempo.<sup>10</sup>

[that a great deal of the advance in knowledge was owed to the favour and protection of the immortal Archibald Campbell, Duke of Argyll, who in this manner emulated the glory of his elder brother John, Duke [of Argyll], the most worthy father of your Ladyship who, by his illustrious efforts and the eminent military and political virtues that adorned him, is to be counted among the leading heroes of his day.]

Denina's pioneering study of comparative literature is marked by several noteworthy features, including both an emphasis on modern, vernacular literatures—Italian, French, Spanish, English, Scottish, Irish and German—at the expense of classical literature, and an early attempt to offer a modern (and, at times, proto-Romantic) definition of 'literature' to refer to works of the imagination.

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, 'literature' meant simply 'learning' (*erudizione*) and, later, 'a body of written works', this latter usage

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are, unless otherwise noted, my own.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 7. Archibald Campbell, third duke of Argyll had died in 1761.

becoming current in French from around 1730 and was soon to become common in English.<sup>11</sup> But Denina goes further, stressing his intention to employ the term in a still more restricted sense. His subject will be, he says: 'lo che appartiene al buon gusto, ed alla eloquenza, vale a dire alla Letteratura [what belongs to good taste, and to eloquence, that is to say Literature].'<sup>12</sup>

All this allows us to reconstruct with some confidence the intellectual context within which Denina was writing, and to see 1760 as a key moment in Enlightenment culture in Turin. It was in Turin that Denina came to know Joesph-Louis de la Grange, Giovanni Cigna and Giuseppe Saluzzo who, in 1758, had founded the *Società scientifica di carattere privata* that would be the basis of the Accademia delle Scienze di Torino, and there that he met, among others, Louis Dutens, who in 1766 would publish *Recherches sur l'origine des découvertes attribuées aux modernes* (1766).

Although, in the *Discorso*, Denina privileged modern over classical literature, arguing that the latter was already so well known as to make a more extended account of his own redundant,<sup>13</sup> he opens his work by asserting that even such great modern scientists and philosophers as Copernicus, Galileo, and Descartes *rediscovered* truths already known to the ancients:

Coloro che con esquisita, e profonda cognizione dell'antica Filosofia si volgono a riguardare i vari sistemi, che uscirono negli ultimi secoli, trovano ragione di giudicare, che i moderni Filosofi per la più parte, anzi che altro fare, rinovellarono le opinioni obbliate, e sepolte degli antichi, sotto altro aspetto, rappresentandole, e con più chiarezza spiegandole. Copernico, e Galileo, principali ristoratori delle Matematiche nel secolo XVI, richiamarono alla luce le antiche sentenze di Pitagora, et di Aristarco di Samos. Cartesio, più di questi due celebrato, come autore di nuova filosofia, pure, per avviso di molti, non forse tanto inventò di proprio, quanto rinnovò delle opinioni e di altri Filosofi, e di Platone<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See Wellek, 'The Name and Nature of Comparative Literature', esp. 5–8.

<sup>12</sup> Denina, *Discorso*, 11. Compare, for example, Edward Gibbon's exactly contemporary *L'essai sur l'étude de la littérature* (Londres [Paris?], 1762), translated into English as *An Essay on the Study of Literature* (London, 1764). For a broader consideration of the changing use of the term 'literature' in the eighteenth century, see Wellek, 'The Name and Nature of Comparative Literature', *passim*.

<sup>13</sup> For a brief justification of his intention to privilege modern over classical literature, see Denina, *Discorso*, 6; Denina does, nevertheless, devote the first three chapters of the *Discorso* to Greek and Latin literature.

<sup>14</sup> Denina, *Discorso*, 9. Compare Denina's phrase with the full title of Louis Dutens's *Recherches sur l'origine des découvertes attribuées aux modernes: ou l'on démontre que nos plus*

[Those writers who with exquisite and profound knowledge of the philosophy of the Ancients turn their attention back to the various systems that have emerged in recent centuries, find reason to judge that, for the most part, modern philosophers, more than anything else, give new life to the forgotten and buried opinions of the Ancients under a different appearance, presenting and explaining them more clearly. Copernicus and Galileo, chief restorers of Mathematics in the sixteenth century, brought back into the light the Ancient sayings of Pythagoras and Aristarchus of Samos. Even Descartes, yet more celebrated than they, as the author of the new philosophy, did not perhaps, according to the views of many, so much invent a great deal himself, as bring up to date the opinions of Plato and other philosophers.]

Furthermore, in defining the subject of his enquiry in the *Discorso*, Denina makes it clear that he will not concern himself with the progress of arts and sciences, which he declares to be not properly part of 'literature'. If it is necessary to deal with these in the course of his work it will be because of the way in which others have considered these as part of 'literature'.<sup>15</sup>

Despite rounding off his introductory epistle in this manner, Denina opens chapter one by returning to a broader understanding of literature: 'Or egli è il vero, che la felice, o la rea ventura della Arti, e delle Scienze nasce le più volte dalle disposizioni interne, e dall'ingegno di chi le coltiva; ma molto spesso ancora dipende dallo stato estrinseco delle cose' ['Now it is true that the success or failure of the arts and sciences arises more often from the internal disposition and genius of those who cultivate them, yet still very often depends on external factors'].<sup>16</sup> Here, Denina follows other Enlightenment writers, including Montesquieu and, particularly, David Hume who, in his essay 'Of National Characters', distinguished between physical and natural, moral and political causes. *Physical* causes include those 'qualities of air, and climate, which are supposed to work insensibly on the temper, by altering the tone of the body and giving a particular complexion [to individuals]' while *moral* causes are those 'circumstances which are fitted to work on the mind as motives or reasons, which render a particular set of manners habitual to us'

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*célèbres philosophes ont puisé la plupart de leurs connoissances dans les ouvrages des anciens* (1766).

<sup>15</sup> 'Non parleremo, fuorché di passaggio, dei progressi delle scienze, e delle arti, che propriamente non sono parte di letteratura; e quando ci occorrerà di accenrarli, sarà piuttosto per rispetto al modo estrinseco, onde furon trattate', Denina, *Discorso*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> Denina, *Discorso*, 12.

and, among these, Hume includes 'the nature of government, the revolutions of public affairs, the plenty or penury in which the people live, the situation of the nation with regard to its neighbours'.<sup>17</sup>

David Hume's work seems to underlie a good deal of Denina's thinking about history and historiography in general. Certainly, the Italian's praise of Hume in the *Discorso* is unstinting:

Chi è mai tra letterati Europei, che non conosca, e non celebri le opere del Signor Hume? chi è che non legga, e non ammiri spezialmente le sue storie?<sup>18</sup>

[Who, among the learned of Europe, does not know, and does not celebrate the works of Mr Hume? who does not read, and does not admire his histories, in particular?]<sup>19</sup>

Denina himself seems to have taken especial note of Hume's observation, in the *History of England*, that 'The rise, progress, perfection, and decline of art and science, are curious objects of contemplation, and intimately connected with a narration of civil transactions'.<sup>20</sup> Accordingly, he indicates his primary objective as follows: 'osservare per varii essempli le cagioni, onde procedono i progressi, e la decadenza dell'eloquenza, e delle lettere' ['to observe by means of various examples, the reasons for which rhetoric and belles-lettres advance and decay'].<sup>21</sup>

Following three chapters on the literatures of Greece and Rome, and though he specifically disclaims any attempt at comprehensiveness in his accounts of modern literature, Denina offers histories of Italian (ch. iv–vi), Spanish (ch. vii), and French (ch. viii–ix) literatures, before arriving at his tenth chapter, which treats of English literature. Even his brief enumeration of the headings of this chapter provide a good indication of how Denina understood the course of English literary history—and here we should bear

<sup>17</sup> David Hume, 'Of National Characters', *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* (London and Edinburgh, 1758), 119.

<sup>18</sup> Denina, *Discorso*, 109.

<sup>19</sup> When David Hume died in 1776, the Edinburgh magazine, *The North-British Intelligencer: or, Constitutional Miscellany* quoted at some length Denina's estimate of the historian, indicating its presumption that the account of a 'celebrated foreigner' must be 'equally free from prejudice and flattery'; II, 288.

<sup>20</sup> David Hume, *The History of England*, (8 vols, London, 1767), iii, 312.

<sup>21</sup> Denina, *Discorso*, 6.

in mind that Denina was writing well over a decade before Thomas Warton published the first edition of what is often considered to be the pioneering work of English literary history, his *History of English Poetry* (1774):

*I. II. Della letteratura Inglese, e suoi principii. III. Prima età della lingua e della poesia Inglese sotto Odoardo terzo. IV. Degli scrittori, che fiorirono sotto la Regina Elisabetta. V. VI. VII. Vicende, e progressi della letteratura Inglese sotto I successori di Elisabetta. VIII. IX. Aurea età della letteratura Inglese sotto la Regina Anna. X. Perché il vigor delle lettere durò più lungamente in Inghilterra, che altrove. XI. Del carattere degli scrittori Inglesi. XII. XIII. Qual vantaggio ritraggono dalla costituzioni dello stato. XIV. Della libertà della stampa. XV. Della critica. XVI. Osservazioni sopra la mutabilità della lingua Inglese. XVII. Dell'educazione de' nobili.*<sup>22</sup>

[I. II. Of English literature and its origins. III. First age of the English language and English poetry under Edward III. IV. Of the writers who flourished under Queen Elizabeth. V. VI. VII. The vicissitudes and progress of English literature under Queen Elizabeth's successors. VIII. IX. Golden Age of English literature under Queen Anne. X. Why the vigour of letters lasted longer in England than elsewhere. XI. Of the character of English writers. XII. XIII. What advantages they drew from the political constitution. XIV. Of the freedom of the press. XV. Of Criticism. XVI. Observations on the mutability of the English language. XVII. Of the education of the nobility.]

As is clear, the history of English literature is closely related to the history of the English language itself and Denina had in fact begun his account of Italian literature in similar fashion; he would, much later, interest himself in historical linguistics, notably in his *Clef des langues* (1804). In the *Discorso*, Denina particularly notes Edward III's insistence that all laws passed in French, or Anglo-Norman, be made in future in English, and emphasises the importance of the translation of the Bible into the vernacular. It was, however, the poetry of Geoffrey Chaucer and John Gower that gave real impetus to the emergence of English literature, with Denina here evidently—though silently—drawing in certain passages on John Dryden's criticism, especially the preface to *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700). Many of Denina's judgments are, as he would doubtless have acknowledged, the judgments of his age, so

<sup>22</sup> Denina, *Discorso*, 91.

that while he admires Shakespeare, he could wish that Shakespeare's England had boasted a Richelieu or a French Academy, in which case Shakespeare might have equalled Sophocles and Corneille. Alas, he added, Shakespeare 'was completely in the dark about the Rules of the drama [era affatto al bujo delle regole teatrali]', before turning to paraphrase Alexander Pope's preface to Shakespeare.<sup>23</sup> Among other seventeenth-century poets, John Milton, Edmund Waller and Dryden are highly praised, while the earl of Buckingham and the earl of Rochester are dismissed for their obscenity. Among the writers of his own century, Denina praises John Gay, Ambrose Philips, and Pope. Denina also expresses particular admiration for Joseph Addison, most especially for *The Spectator*. In fact, Denina's *Assemblea degli osservatori italiani* [*Assembly of Italian Spectators*] appeared at Lucca in 1763, the year before Alessandro Verri, his brother Pietro, and Cesare Beccaria founded *Il Caffè*, generally noted as the first Italian newspaper modelled on the periodicals of Addison and Richard Steele, in Milan.<sup>24</sup> In pulpit oratory, Francis Atterbury, John Tillotson, Thomas Sherlock, John Sharp and Isaac Barrow are singled out, as is Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke for his philosophy and political writing. In the case of this last writer, however, Denina seems to have been influenced not only by Pope's praise of St John in the opening lines of *Essay on Man* which Denina quotes in Italian prose translation but also by the high esteem in which Bolingbroke's idea of the patriot king was held by the earl of Bute and, under Bute's influence, by the young King George himself.

What is most striking in this account of eighteenth-century writing, conventional enough in many respects, is to be found in the particular and growing importance attributed to Scottish writers. So, praise of Clarendon's celebrated *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England* (begun in 1641 but not published until 1717) is matched by that accorded William Robertson's *The History of Scotland* (1759), a work long in the making but published only four years previously. Other named 'modern authors' include Colin MacLaurin and Hume. MacLaurin, a figure notable by his absence even from the three-volume *Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature* (2006), is praised for his defence of Newtonian philosophy (the rapidity with which the Scots took up Newtonianism has been seized on by some historians of science as an important dimension of a Scottish Enlightenment). If the naming of Hume is, from a modern perspective, unsurprising, it should be remembered that

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>24</sup> Denina's work is better known in its later version, published as *Il parlamento ottaviano, ovvero le adunanze degli osservatori italiani* (1769).

Hume's reputation in 1759 was by no means what it later became, and Hume's radical scepticism in the field of morals as well as epistemology was in no way shared by Denina (any more than by his patron and her family); when he praises Hume it is primarily as an historian, and certainly not as a sceptical philosopher.

Although a reader of the *Discorso* who had passed over the dedication would not have realised the fact, Denina's introduction of such writers as Robertson, MacLaurin and Hume into his account of contemporary English literature serves as a rhetorical strategy designed to underpin the dominant argument of the following chapter, chapter XI, of his work. 'Riflessioni sopra i progressi delle lettere nella Scozia' ['Reflections on the progress of letters in Scotland'] reveals Denina to be an Italian *illuminista* offering to European readers at large an early version of an argument for the existence of a Scottish Enlightenment. In comparison to the relatively familiar story he tells of English literature, Denina's account of Scottish writing has few if any contemporary parallels. A Scottish contemporary of Denina like Tobias Smollett, writing in his *Continuation of the Complete History of England* (1768–9) of the 'advances which mankind are daily making in useful knowledge',<sup>25</sup> may have been putting forward a view of wider intellectual progress similar to Denina's, but Smollett's discussion of what he termed 'Genius in writing' under George II, while it includes praise of many of his fellow-countrymen, makes no *national* distinction between these and other members of the 'British Nation'.<sup>26</sup> The emphasis on the importance of Scottish writing in contemporary historiography, however, leads to what today seems one of the most innovative parts of Denina's work: his chapter devoted to Scottish literature.

The chapter opens under the heading 'Riflessioni sopra i progressi delle lettere nella Scozia' ('Reflections on the progress of literature in Scotland'), and proceeds with the observation that while scholarship and learning had flourished for a longer period of time in England than in other nations, the situation was now quite different:

[S]e noi separiamo l'Inghilterra propria dagli altri regni, che compongono la Gran Bretagna; è forza di confessare, che vi si vedono pure i vestigi dell'inevitabile destino delle umane cose.

<sup>25</sup> Tobias Smollett, *The Present State of all Nations* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London, 1768–9), I, v.

<sup>26</sup> Tobias Smollett, *Continuation of the Complete History of England* (5 vols, London, 1762–5), iv, 125–9.

[If we separate England properly so-called from the other kingdoms that make up Great Britain, we are forced to confess that there we see the vestiges of the inevitable destiny of all human things.]<sup>27</sup>

If one were to consider only the work of contemporary English authors (i.e. writers born in England), then the number of good writers would be considerably diminished in comparison to the situation of thirty years previously, and literature itself would be diminished, ‘se la parte, che venne mancando in Londra e nelle provincie Britanniche di quà del Tweed non germogliasse prosperamente nelle contrade di Scozia’<sup>28</sup> [if the part lacking in London and in the provinces this side of the Tweed were not sprouting profusely in the fair lands of Scotland]. Though put to very different effect, this idea, complete with its organic metaphor, may have been suggested by David Hume’s conclusion to his essay, ‘Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences’, where he writes that ‘the arts and sciences, like some plants, require a fresh soil; and however rich the land may be, and however you may recruit it by art or care, it will never, when once exhausted, produce any thing that is perfect or finished in the kind’.<sup>29</sup>

It is, Denina adds, only because, since the Act of Union of 1707, Scotland and England have become (politically) a single nation, writing in a common language, that the decline of English letters and learning is not more immediately apparent to the eyes of outsiders from other nations. Closer acquaintance with the complex cultural realities of the British Isles, he argues, will reveal a situation at odds with that more generally perceived in continental Europe. For centuries, it is true, Scotland could boast few writers of renown—Robert Henryson, William Dunbar and Sir David Lindsay, for

<sup>27</sup> The precision of this remark strongly suggests that Denina had been taking lessons in geography from Eliza Mackenzie; compare the reference to such phantasmal late-eighteenth-century ‘nation states’ as ‘England/Britain’ in the work of a notable Italian comparatist of the present day in Franco Moretti, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800–1900* (1997; trans. London: Verso, 1998), 17.

<sup>28</sup> *Discorso*, 107.

<sup>29</sup> David Hume, ‘The Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences’ in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects* (London, 1758), 86. John D. Scheffer suggested Hume to have been the first eighteenth-century writer to have articulated the notion of the inevitable decline of arts and sciences, though he noted that the idea can be found in the *Historia Romanæ* of Velleius Paterculus, written c. 30 A.D., two English translations of which appeared in the early-eighteenth century, the second by James Patterson in 1722. See ‘The Idea of Decline in Literature and the Fine Arts in Eighteenth-Century England’, *Modern Philology*, 34 (1936), 155–78, esp. 157. I am grateful to Richard Holmes for drawing this essay to my attention.

instance, were evidently quite unknown to Denina—though he makes an exception for the historian George Buchanan, noted as author of the Latin history of Scotland, the *Rerum Scotticarum Historia* (1582).<sup>30</sup> It is in modern writing that Scotland excels. And here Denina praises contemporary writers that, for the most part at least, he must have known through his contacts with Eliza Mackenzie. In *belles-lettres*, Thomas Blacklock, David Mallet, John Home, and William Wilkie are mentioned, with especial praise given to the last writer's *Epigoniad* (1757), though not without some critical reserve.<sup>31</sup>

Among 'modern' writers, two writers are especially singled out: James Thomson, who had died over a decade previously, and Hume. Of Thomson, Denina writes: 'Il nome di Tompson poeta non meno eccellente nel tragico, che nel didattico, sarà un giorno come quello di Pope, chiaro e famoso'.<sup>32</sup> ['The name of Thomson, a poet not less excellent in tragic than in didactic poetry, will one day be as illustrious and famous as that of Pope'].

Though the stature of Hume is taken for granted (his work known by all educated readers throughout Europe), Denina suggests that Hume's reputation would stand still higher had he not been so anxious to put forward his sceptical religious views—though here it is uncertain to what extent Denina was familiar with, say, *Essays Moral and Political* (1741; 1743; 1748), the reworking of the *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739–40), *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), later *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1752), or *An Essay Concerning the Principles of Morals* (1752) or whether he had in mind Hume's 'Natural History of Religion', published in *Four Dissertations* (1757). It is equally unclear whether Denina, who praises Hume's *History of Great Britain* (1754–6), was familiar with the 1759 or 1762 additions, in which Hume famously concerned himself with *English*, rather than British, history.

<sup>30</sup> Translated into English as *History of Scotland*, George Buchanan's work appeared in many editions in Latin throughout Europe, including Frankfurt (1584 and 1594), Antwerp (1583), Amsterdam (1643), Utrecht (1668 and 1697), and Aberdeen (1762).

<sup>31</sup> How unusually up-to-date Denina was is suggested both by the praise of Wilkie's *Epigoniad* (Edinburgh, 1758), admired by David Hume, who arranged for the publication of its second, London edition in 1759 and by the fact that while John Home's *Douglas* had enjoyed great renown in Edinburgh on its first performance in 1756, its European-wide reputation would have to wait for the various translations into German (1769), French (1822) and Italian (1822). For *Douglas*, see Paul Barnaby and Tom Hubbard, 'The International Reception and Literary Impact of Scottish Literature of the Period 1797–1918' in Ian Brown (gen. ed.), *The Edinburgh History of Scottish Literature* (3 vols, Edinburgh, 2006), ii, 34.

<sup>32</sup> *Discorso*, 108. While Thomson's *The Seasons* had been translated, complete, into German as early as 1745, and while the first of several French translations appeared in 1759, the first Italian translation was delayed until 1793.

When Denina accords William Robertson an enthusiastic accolade in asserting 'ben merita sincera lode, ed immortale il Sig. Robertson' ['Mr Robertson well merits sincere and everlasting praise'] it is certainly a response to Robertson's recently-published *History of Scotland during the reigns of Queen Mary and of King James VI* (1759), again, singled out for mention by name.<sup>33</sup> Indeed, in its own way, Denina's *Discorso*, with its attempted integration of social, cultural, linguistic and literary change, suggests the influence of Hume's view of history as expressed in his essay, 'Of the Study of History'—with its emphasis on observing

human society, in its infancy, making the first faint essays towards the arts and sciences; To see the policy of government, and the civility of conversation refining by degrees, and every thing which is ornamental to human life advancing toward its perfection? To remark the rise, progress, declension, and final extinction of the most flourishing empires; the virtues which contributed to their greatness; and the vices, which drew on their ruin.<sup>34</sup>

Denina's estimate of history writing as the supreme form of modern prose literature leads him to reflect negatively on Tobias Smollett, however. Smollett, he declares, 'una grand'opera in genere di storia avrebbe per avventura partorito alla sua nazione il Signor Smolett, quando avesse preferito, come è proprio de grand'ingegni, la perpetua Gloria al presente guadagno, e un nome onorato al contante degli stampatori'.<sup>35</sup> ['might have given birth to a great work of history writing for his nation, had he only preferred, as great wits should, perpetual glory to present gain, and fame to bookseller's ready money'.] Denina would have been as surprised to learn that Smollett's modern reputation is based on his prose fiction as to discover that, among his contemporary Scottish writers, it was not the novelist Smollett but the historian William Robertson who would make a fortune from his writing for the booksellers, receiving the immense sum of £5000 for the copyright of his *History of Charles V* (1769).

Further detail of this kind is beside the point, however, for whatever the limitations of Denina's account of Scottish writing—and Denina was scarcely alone in his ignorance of, for example, the Scots Chaucerians—it is

<sup>33</sup> *Discorso*, 109. The most celebrated of Robertson's other histories, *History of Charles V* (1769) and *History of America* (1777) were of considerably later date.

<sup>34</sup> David Hume, 'Of the Study of History' in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, 27.

<sup>35</sup> *Discorso*, 109.

the first sustained, and theorised, account of Scottish writing as a distinct national literature. Like other of his contemporaries, Denina understood the advancement of learning in terms of natural growth, extending this organic metaphor to encompass not merely the flourishing of different societies but also their eventual decay (decay being understood relative to the recent past and not as terminal decay). It was in such terms that Denina endeavoured to explain what he perceived as a shift in the balance of literary power between England and Scotland in the mid-eighteenth century. The particular praise of Henry St John, Lord Bolingbroke, may have been influenced by his patron, since her brother-in-law, Lord Bute, was (as noted above) a great admirer of Bolingbroke's political philosophy, in which he had, none too successfully, educated the young George III. It seems more likely, though, that Denina was influenced not only by personal considerations but also by Bolingbroke's account of historical cycles, in which as Bolingbroke wrote: 'physical and moral systems are carried round in one perpetual revolution, from generation to corruption, and from corruption to generation'.<sup>36</sup> More particularly, Denina understood the flourishing of intellectual activities to be intimately linked to the growth of economic prosperity. Uncontrolled prosperity, however, Bolingbroke had argued, inevitably led to excessive refinement, characterised as 'luxury', which brought with it decline and retrogression.<sup>37</sup>

In this account, mid-eighteenth-century England has already entered into decline, while Scotland flourishes. Blinded by luxury, the English are unable to see their own errors, among which Denina singles out, the mistaken belief of those who live in a metropolis that they alone are capable of speaking a language correctly—a belief that, he asserts, both ancient and modern history prove to be wrong. Indeed, in seeing the state of society and the state of the language to be reciprocally important in bringing about progressive change, Denina was very much a man of his time: in 1759 the Royal Academy in Berlin had offered as the subject of its essay competition 'Influence of Opinions on Language and of Language on Opinions'.<sup>38</sup> In eighteenth-century Britain, however, a shift was taking place in the balance of linguistic power, and at

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<sup>36</sup> Henry St John, 'Essay the Third', *Essays addressed to Mr Pope*, in *The Works of the Late Right Honorable Henry St John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke*, David Mallet (ed.) (5 vols, London, 1754), iv, 235–6.

<sup>37</sup> David Hume's essay 'Of Luxury', by contrast, opens by emphasising that luxury 'may be taken in a good as well as a bad sense'. See *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, 165.

<sup>38</sup> See David Spadafora, *The Idea of Progress in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New Haven, 1990), 194–210.

the present time, Denina insists, it is observable that it is not merely possible but actually and frequently the case that men born outside of the principal seat of a language—i.e. the metropolis, here variously understood as London and England more generally—are capable of true excellence in writing that language.

While Denina's account of the present eminence of Scottish letters is founded in global explanations of human progress and retrogression, the writer also offers a local explanation, in the persons of two individuals. They are 'a noble and generous duke' ['un nobile e generoso Duca'] and a philosopher, 'destinati dal Cielo, a far germogliare, e fiorire in quelle fredde, e boreali contrade ciò, che scioccamente si credeva alter volte, che allignar non potesse, fuorché nel tepido clima dell'Asia Minore, della Grecia, e dell'Italia' ['destined by Heaven to make letters sprout and flourish in those cold northern climes that in former ages were foolishly believed incapable of sustaining what could only live in the warmer climates of Asia Minor, Greece and Italy']—a view that accords with Hume's privileging of 'moral' over 'physical' causes of social change.<sup>39</sup>

Who are the duke and the philosopher? Unsurprisingly, perhaps, the nobleman is none other than the duke of Argyll—uncle of Eliza Mackenzie, to whom the work is dedicated. Yet this is not simply the elaborate courtesy it might appear for the duke took a considerable interest in university appointments in Scotland generally<sup>40</sup> and was, in particular, the patron of the philosopher whom Denina singles out for special praise: Francis Hutcheson. It was the third duke of Argyll who acted as patron to Hutcheson when he left his native Ireland for Scotland, Denina asserts, and it is to the zeal and teaching of Hutcheson as professor of philosophy and letters at Glasgow University, under Argyll's protection, that Scottish intellectual and literary culture first reached its current heights.<sup>41</sup> Denina recounts that Hutcheson was as much esteemed for his lecturing—he was the first professor in Great Britain or Ireland to lecture in English, rather than Latin—as for his published works,

<sup>39</sup> Hume, 'Of National Characters' in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, 128–38.

<sup>40</sup> For the family's continuing interest in university appointments in Scotland, see Roger L. Emerson, 'Lord Bute and the Scottish Universities 1760–1792', in Schweizer (ed.), *Lord Bute*, 147–79.

<sup>41</sup> The praise of 'the never to be forgotten Dr Hutcheson' as Adam Smith would call him, accords closely with contemporary estimates of Hutcheson's intellect and influence; however, although Denina seems to have been familiar with several very recently published works, the absence of the name of Adam Smith suggests he had not read Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1759).

the latter revealing him to have been possessed of a ‘*gli studi filosofici e letterarii*’<sup>42</sup> [‘lively genius for philosophical and literary studies’.]

What impact did Denina’s *Discorso* have in eighteenth-century Scotland or in Great Britain and Ireland more widely? Since it was published in Italian—albeit in Glasgow—the *Discorso* would seem destined to have had only limited readership and influence. In fact, the earliest Scottish readers made almost instant use of Denina’s work for political purposes. The Scottish section of the work was very quickly translated into English in pamphlet form, as *Extract from an Essay on the Progress of Learning among the Scots, annexed to an Essay on the State of Learning in Italy, published lately* (1763). This translation, moreover, contains both a preface and some additional prefatory observations by the translator, who signs himself ‘Scotus’ and dates his work from Berwickshire on 16 April 1763 (perhaps not coincidentally the anniversary of the Battle of Culloden). Taking its lead from the pen-name he has adopted, the writer opens with prefatory material that is decidedly national in tone, despite incorporating some prudential praise of the 1707 Union and of the English people. Above all, the translator is aware of the historical moment in a way that Denina almost certainly was not—whatever about his patron, Eliza Mackenzie. ‘It is not meant by this publication to inflame any national distinction’ says ‘Scotus’, who almost certainly intended to do just that, a national distinction ‘which, *at this time*, perhaps, has been unnecessarily awakened, and is indecently treated’ (my emphasis).<sup>43</sup>

The phrase ‘at this time’ requires some explanation. As noted above, Denina’s patron, Eliza Mackenzie was sister-in-law to Lord Bute, who had become Prime Minister to the young George III in May 1762. In the following months he not only became personally unpopular in England but attracted considerable English animus towards Scotland and the Scots generally, as the result of the alleged preferment of too many of his fellow-countrymen to positions of power and profit. A sick man, he eventually resigned his position as Prime Minister on 9 April 1763, just one week before ‘Scotus’ dated his translation of the Scottish section of Denina’s *Discorso*. ‘Scotus’ ostentatiously affects to deny any political purpose in publishing his translation. ‘The keenest satyre, when gilded with wit, may be swallowed or even found palatable’ he begins, before strenuously denying that that any implication that his translation

<sup>42</sup> *Discorso*, 108.

<sup>43</sup> *Extract from an Essay on the Progress of Learning among the Scots, annexed to an Essay on the State of Learning in Italy, published lately in the Italian Language, by Carlo Deanina [sic], a Piedmontese* ([Glasgow?], 1763), [iii].

might smack of 'scurrility', which far from being a weapon of 'reason or virtue' would be 'like every instance of barbarity ... a disgrace to human nature'. He hopes, he continues, surely disingenuously, that 'the praises of ingenuity can give no occasion to jealousy or chagrin, nor have any other effect than to excite a thirst of learning, and promote an innocent and useful emulation'<sup>44</sup>.

The substantial extract translated by Scotus is in fact shot through with anti-English sentiment, with the author reading Denina's praise of *Scottish* literature as evidence of a more general European attention to Scottish letters which, he writes in his *Preface*, 'reflect an honour on the genius and improvement of our countrymen, and may be thought to have some effect in exciting a noble emulation, and encouraging the pursuits of literary fame'.<sup>45</sup> And, 'Scotus' adds, Denina cannot even know, or has not yet had a chance to read, some of the most recent of important works to come out of Scotland, among which he singles out James Macpherson's *Fingal* (1762) – the first of the Ossian poems – and Lord Kames's *Elements of Criticism* (1762).

Exactly to what extent Lady Eliza Mackenzie was aware of the peculiar value of praising Scottish literature while her brother-in-law was Prime Minister in a political climate generally hostile to the Scots is unclear, since the precise chronology of the additions made by Denina to his first edition is uncertain.<sup>46</sup> In any case, Denina's ambitions as an historian of literature, and the perceived relevance of his work, go far beyond the particular historical moment. The enduring value of his work to eighteenth-century Scottish patriots was made clear eight years later when the complete 1763 edition of the *Discorso* was finally translated into English. The translator was, again, a Scotsman and, in this case, not one hiding behind a pen-name; he was, in fact, John Murdoch, best known today as the schoolmaster who played a considerable role in the formation of the young Robert Burns. English reviewers of his translation, published under a title, *An Essay on the Revolutions of Literature* (1771), drawn from two of Denina's works, tended to omit the Scottish section of Denina's work altogether, when introducing the *Discorso* to English readers,<sup>47</sup> while those

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> See, however, Richard B. Sher, "'The Favourite of the Favourite': John Hume, Bute and the Politics of Patriotic Poetry' in Schweizer (ed.), *Lord Bute*, 181–212.

<sup>47</sup> See *The British Magazine and General Review, of the Literature, Employment and Amusements of the Times* (3 vols, London, 1772), i, 433–7 quotes the account of English literature at length, without mention of Denina's reflections on the shift in the balance of literary power, while *The Annual Register, or a view of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the year 1771* (London, 1772), 162–7, concentrates on the French and Italian sections

writers who cite it approvingly were often, as in the case of James Beattie, Scottish themselves.<sup>48</sup>

The decline of English literature and the rise of Scottish literature serve to illustrate a more general shift in human affairs. For all the reasons Denina has previously advanced, he declares it should not appear strange but rather ‘naturale e conforme all’ordine delle cose’ [‘natural and in accordance with the order of things’] that within Great Britain it is now among the Scots that eloquence is to be found in greatest abundance.<sup>49</sup> Significantly, however, and here it is hard to know whether he goes beyond anything that might have pleased the dedicatee of his work, Denina suggests that this shift in the balance of cultural power will not stop with the current dominance of Scottish letters.

Since Hutcheson’s role in what came to be known as the Scottish Enlightenment was an important one (both he and the third duke of Argyll have been called ‘the father of the Scottish Enlightenment’),<sup>50</sup> it is surprising to find that Hutcheson is always and only described by Denina as Irish—though Irish he was, having been born and brought up in Co. Down. This ‘dotto irlandese’ [‘learned Irishman’], as Denina describes him, studied in Scotland, at the University of Glasgow, as did many Presbyterians from the north of Ireland but he returned to Ireland, founding a private school in Dublin, where he taught for ten years, before moving back to Glasgow where he was Professor of Moral Philosophy from 1729 until his death in 1746.

It seems to have been the thought of the importance of Hutcheson that led Denina to move from his description of the flourishing of Scottish letters in the present to a putative, and possibly imminent, future, in which Ireland might become equally prominent.

Sarebbe da credere che un dì ancor l’Irlanda, divenisse la sede principale degli studii, e delle belle lettere; quando il lusso, che si dice essere in

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of Denina’s work.

<sup>48</sup> See for instance James Beattie, *Essays* (Edinburgh, 1776), ‘On Fable and Romance’, 558, and James Beattie, *Dissertations Moral and Critical* (London, 1783), 170, 232. Beattie cites Denina from an Italian-language edition of the *Discorso*, presumably that published in Glasgow by the Foulis Press.

<sup>49</sup> *Discorso*, 110.

<sup>50</sup> T.D. Campbell, ‘Francis Hutcheson, “Father” of the Scottish Enlightenment’ in H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner (eds), *The Origins and Nature of the Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: John Macdonald, 1982); Roger Emerson, ‘The Contexts of the Scottish Enlightenment’, in Alexander Broadie (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, (Cambridge, 2003), 16.

Dublin, portato a piú alto segno, che in Londra stessa, non fosse ostacolo insuperabile ai progressi della letteratura, e del buon gusto.<sup>51</sup>

[It seems likely that one day Ireland might become the principal seat of learning and literature, so long as luxury, which is reportedly carried to a higher pitch in Dublin than in London itself should not provide an insuperable obstacle to the progress of literature, and taste.]

Here, we see Denina employing what Dugald Stewart would call 'theoretical' or 'conjectural' history.<sup>52</sup> The supremacy of Irish literature in English has not yet occurred but knowledge of English and Scottish history, understood in terms of progress and inevitable decline, allows for the reasonable supposition that such supremacy may well occur soon, if the dangers of luxury can be avoided: a version of history very much in line with ideas that Denina would later develop—in his *Delle rivoluzioni d'Italia* (1769–70)—and that gained considerable currency in Great Britain in the 1760s and 1770s.

To support his argument, Denina looks to James Ussher, Jonathan Swift ('il celebre Swift'), George Berkeley and Hutcheson, arguing that, without going further, their example sufficiently demonstrates that the Irish may equal all other northern nations in making themselves celebrated both for their immense body of erudition and for the agreeableness [*amenità*] and fine eloquence and style, as for the solidity and profundity of their criticism and philosophy. Denina's conception of a distinctively Irish literature in English is, it goes without saying, restricted in scope, both through his own apparently limited acquaintance with contemporary Irish writers and, we may surmise on the basis of his comments on Smollett, by his limited imaginative sympathies.<sup>53</sup> Yet if we look elsewhere in the mid-eighteenth century we find no account of Irish literature in English nearly so ambitious in conception as that Denina offers in the *Discorso*. In the 1720s, Swift had lamented Irish

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<sup>51</sup> *Discorso*, 110.

<sup>52</sup> Dugald Stewart, 'An Account of the Life and Writings of Adam Smith, LL.D', *Essays on Philosophical Subjects the the late Adam Smith, LL.D* (London, 1795), xlii–xliii; *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind* (3 vols, London, 1792–1827), iii, 48.

<sup>53</sup> In his late *Saggio storico-critico*, however Denina wrote positively on the prose fiction of writers from Samuel Richardson, Henry Fielding and Lawrence Sterne to Ann Radcliffe, Regina [Maria] Roche and Maria Edgeworth and, with some historical inaccuracy, accounted Sterne along with Swift and Richard Steele, as one of 'tre celebri Irlandesi' [the three celebrated Irish writers] of the early part of the eighteenth century; *Saggio storico-critico sprá le ultime vicende della letteratura* (Carmagnola, 1811), 4.

deference to the literary productions of English writers, at the expense of native talent, and James Arbuckle had complained that Irish authors were too easily accommodated within an indiscriminating conception of ‘English’ writing.<sup>54</sup> In *The Hiberniad* (1754), Paul Hiffernan had offered for consideration a broader range of Irish writers, distinguished both by his inclusion of male and female writers; poets; philosophers; and even the blind Irish bard, Carolan, as an indication that a truly ‘Irish’ literature would be still more inclusive and not necessarily monolingual.<sup>55</sup> Yet Hiffernan offers scant justification of his selection of writers or theoretical underpinning of this notion of a national literature though, by emphasizing that the writers he names should give rise to ‘national pride’, he anticipated by some years the work of the Swiss Johann Georg Zimmermann whose *Vom Nationalstolz* (1758) would be translated into English only in 1771.<sup>56</sup>

What is distinctive about Denina’s account of Irish literature is that it is coherent with his understanding of the processes of history and by his Enlightenment conception of what constitutes a nation, the latter epitomised by the definition offered in Ephraim Chambers’s *Cyclopaedia* (1728): ‘A Collective Term, used for a considerable People, inhabiting a certain extent of Ground, enclosed within certain Limits, and under the same Government’, a definition later translated verbatim into the *Encyclopédie*.<sup>57</sup>

In eighteenth-century Ireland, Denina’s work seems to have passed unremarked in print—though copies of John Murdoch’s translation of the *Discorso* certainly circulated in the country.<sup>58</sup> Yet the *Discorso* offered the first theorised account of Irish literature in English and if Denina’s prediction that Ireland might one day become the seat of literature in English was considerably premature—by more than a century—it was a prediction ultimately to be fulfilled during the Irish Literary Revival: a possibility that few if any contemporaries would have entertained. Moreover, just as Denina suggested that in order for the arts to flourish luxury must be kept in check, many of those associated with the Irish Literary Revival, including W.B. Yeats and J.M.

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<sup>54</sup> See Jonathan Swift, ‘Proposal for the Universal Use of Irish Manufacture’ (1720) in Herbert Davis (ed.), *Jonathan Swift: Irish Tracts and Sermons* (Oxford, 1948), 17–18, and James Arbuckle, *Hibernicus’s Letters* (2 vols, Dublin, 1729), i, 3.

<sup>55</sup> Paul Hiffernan, *The Hiberniad* (Dublin, 1754), 29–31.

<sup>56</sup> Johann Georg Zimmermann, *An Essay on National Pride* (London, 1771).

<sup>57</sup> Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopaedia; or an Universal Dictionary of Sciences and Arts* (2 vols, London, 1728), ii, 616, ‘Nation’.

<sup>58</sup> [Luke White], *Luke’s Sale Catalogue, for the year 1784* ([Dublin], [1784]), lists two copies of John Murdoch’s translation, *Revolutions of Literature*.

Synge, were animated both by a profound anti-modernity and by literary and social ideals that emphasised the desirability of an imaginative return to earlier historical moments.

Outside—and perhaps even within—departments of Comparative Literature, the complexities of relations between England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, especially before Romanticism, are too often smoothed away in the interests of the study of English Literature or, more recently, of Scottish literature, Irish literature, Welsh literature. John Kerrigan's *Archipelagic English* (2008) argues in favour of offering a 'devolved, interconnected account of what went on around these islands'.<sup>59</sup> Reconceptualising literary space within the archipelago, as it had done two hundred and fifty years previously, Carlo Denina's *Discorso sopra le vicende della letteratura* could be said to have offered no less.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> John Kerrigan, *Archipelagic English: Literature, History, and Politics 1603–1707* (Oxford, 2008), vii.

<sup>60</sup> A shorter version of this essay was delivered as a paper at the Irish Studies Seminar, in the Institute of Advanced Studies, University of London, on 4 November 2011. I am grateful to the organisers of the seminar for the invitation and to those present, including Ian McBride and Richard Holmes, for their constructive suggestions.



**Thomas Wilson (1758–1824) of Dullatur,  
the Scottish Second Husband of Matilda Tone:  
The Unravelling of a Mystery**

**Jane Rendall and C. J. Woods**

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Hidden in the middle of a long letter, dated 11 February 1797, from Theobald Wolfe Tone in Paris to his wife Matilda in Hamburg, is a casual mention of a ‘Mr Wilson’ who was evidently then in Mrs Tone’s company. This letter was first published in 1826, by their son William, in *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*.<sup>1</sup> Two months previously, with her three small children and her unmarried sister-in-law, Matilda Tone had arrived in Hamburg from Princeton, New Jersey, where her husband had left them in December 1795 to make his way to Paris to seek the support of the French government for the revolutionary United Irish movement in their native Ireland.<sup>2</sup> The couple had married in Dublin in 1785, he twenty-two, she barely sixteen. Though Tone soon left his bride in Ireland to go off to London and read for the bar, and though, between his return to Ireland in December 1788 and the family’s departure for America in June 1795, he was often away from home on legal and political business, they were entirely devoted to each other. Of this there is ample evidence in Tone’s frequent, long and affectionate letters to Matilda and in the regular journals he wrote, whenever absent, for her to read on his return.<sup>3</sup> Yet in the letter written from Paris, despite their long separation and the likelihood that they would remain separated for several weeks more, Tone is uninquisitive about his wife’s Hamburg companion. There is no trace of curiosity or jealousy. Although his diaries are full of elucidating detail about men and women whom he met, and Wilson is mentioned in two other

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<sup>1</sup> *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone ... edited by his son William* (2 vols, Washington, 1826), II, 391.

<sup>2</sup> An article on Matilda Tone (1769–1849) by C.J. Woods is in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (9 vols, Cambridge, 2009), IX, 406–8.

<sup>3</sup> Tone’s life and career are treated definitively in Marianne Elliott, *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence* (New Haven, 1989), extensively revised edition (Liverpool, 2012). Over fifty letters from Tone to his wife are to be found in T.W. Moody, R.B. McDowell and C.J. Woods (eds), *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone, 1763–98* (3 vols, Oxford, 1998–2007), which is the complete edition of his writings (letters, journals, autobiography and other documents).

letters printed in the *Life*,<sup>4</sup> nowhere does Tone seek or give any information about him. And in the third of these letters, dated 10 November 1798, his last before his expected death—he had been taken prisoner after the capture off Lough Swilly by the British of a French warship, the *Hoche*, removed to Dublin and there tried by a court-martial on a charge of high treason, convicted and sentenced to death—the mention appears in a postscriptum: ‘I think you have a friend in Wilson, who will not desert you’. Who was this mysterious Mr Wilson?

William Tone identifies him in his *Life* of his father as ‘Mr Wilson of Dullatur, a Scotch gentleman’, and goes on to explain how eighteen years after Tone’s death Wilson became Matilda Tone’s second husband.<sup>5</sup> In the same volume Matilda Tone recounts the fate of herself and her family after 1798. Wilson was ‘a second Providence’ who:

from Scotland watched over me with care which might be called paternal. He had purchased a large sum in the French funds and left it to M. Delessert the banker’s hands for my use, to use, sell or dispose of as I pleased . . . To Scotland I wrote how things stood with me, and received an answer urging me in the strongest manner not to lose a moment, when my son’s term at the Lyceum expired, but to take the money necessary and enter him a pensioner in the School of Cavalry.<sup>6</sup>

Tone’s confidence in Wilson could not have been better placed. The son referred to here, William, who left the Lycée Impérial in 1809 or 1810 and entered the École de Cavalerie at Saint-Germain-en-Laye on 13 November 1810,<sup>7</sup> writes further that Wilson:

was, to my mother, a brother, an adviser and a friend; he managed her slender funds, and when sickness and death hovered over our little family, when my sister and brother were successively carried off by slow and lingering consumptions, and I was attacked by the same malady, he was our sole support. On his departure from France, our correspondence continued, and he left to his bankers in that country,

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<sup>4</sup> *Life of Tone*, II, 394, 538.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 563.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 576.

<sup>7</sup> An article on William Tone (1791–1828) by C.J. Woods is in *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, IX, 417–19.

the enlightened and liberal MMs Delessert of Paris, unlimited orders to supply us whenever we should require it.<sup>8</sup>

On how Wilson came to make Matilda Tone's acquaintance, on how he came to have Tone's confidence, on what he was doing in Hamburg, on why and when he moved to France, on what a Scot was doing there during a war between France and Great Britain, William Tone is silent. Just when Wilson left France is unclear from his statement. He could have left conveniently in 1802 or 1803 during the peace of Amiens. William Tone implies that he remained until after the death in 1806 or 1807 of his younger brother, Frank Tone. Clearly, from Matilda Tone's account, Wilson was back in Scotland by 1810 if not long before. The two accounts put together show that he returned to France from Scotland in July 1816 to marry Matilda at the chapel of the British ambassador in Paris on 19 August.<sup>9</sup>

In 1825, in the *New Monthly Magazine*, an unknown writer signing himself 'C.E.', perhaps William Henry Curran, a son of Tone's friend John Philpot Curran, published an account of a visit made to Matilda Tone, by then Matilda Wilson, nine years earlier on the evening of that wedding, describing her as 'alone, ... unusually sad, ... and dressed in white'. On catching sight of the portrait of Wolfe Tone, he said, she had retired, 'in silence and in tears'.<sup>10</sup> In an appendix in the *Life* Matilda Wilson impugned C.E.'s reliability and expressed her annoyance at the 'hackneyed and commonplace novel scene' represented by him. If he had arrived early he might have found her in her wrap: but there were no tears at all. Nearly fifty, she was 'past the age for those *prettinesses*' and had 'accepted the protection of, and united my fate with that most pure and virtuous of human beings', meaning Wilson, and Tone in heaven and his son on earth were approving witnesses.<sup>11</sup> But, tantalisingly, neither William Tone nor his mother disclosed Wilson's forename.

That piece of information, like Wilson himself, was to remain a mystery until long after the very name of Theobald Wolfe Tone, eldest son of a Dublin

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<sup>8</sup> *Life of Tone*, II, 563.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 563, 593, 673.

<sup>10</sup> 'Some Further Particulars of the Widow and Son of Theobald Wolfe Tone', *New Monthly Magazine*, 13 (1825), 271; C. J. Woods, 'The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone: Provenance, Publication and Reception', unpublished paper read at a seminar on Theobald Wolfe Tone at the Royal Irish Academy on 5 April 2008.

<sup>11</sup> 'Narrative of my Mother's Interview with Napoleon, Written by Herself', *Life of Tone*, II, 591–2; see also Catriona Kennedy, 'Republican Relicts: Gender, Memory and Mourning in Irish Nationalist Culture, c. 1789–1848' (unpublished paper).

coachmaker, and his courtship of and marriage to Matilda Witherington, a daughter of a Dublin woollen merchant, had (thanks largely to their son's publication of Tone's literary remains) become legendary. It escaped even R. R. Madden, the historian of the United Irishmen who had a great flair for unearthing biographical detail. In 1846, Madden brought out the first of two volumes featuring Tone in his multi-volume *United Irishmen, their Lives and Times* (1842–60).<sup>12</sup> It was not until after another Irishwoman, Alice Milligan, went to America half a century later and spoke to the Tones' descendants that devotees of the Tone legend learned the first name of the Scotsman who married Tone's widow — Thomas. This appeared in Alice Milligan's *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone* (published in 1898) together with a few details of his burial in Washington and reburial in New York.<sup>13</sup>

The mystery of Thomas Wilson has remained. Marianne Elliott, in the final edition of her well-researched biography of Tone (published in 1989), offered little or no new information on Wilson and, referring to his marriage, comments that 'Matilda Tone, her son and later Irish nationalists were at pains to depict it as a marriage of friendship', thereby implying that Wilson was regarded by them as being of little or no public interest.<sup>14</sup> Nancy Curtin, writing on Matilda Tone a few years later, has to admit that 'little is known about the Scotsman Thomas Wilson'.<sup>15</sup> Work on the third (and final) volume of a new edition of Tone's writings by one of the present writers,<sup>16</sup> and on women moving in Scottish radical circles in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by the other,<sup>17</sup> has uncovered information on the

<sup>12</sup> R.R. Madden, *The United Irishmen, Their Lives and Times* (11 vols in 4 series, Dublin and London, 1842–60). The 'memoir' of Tone appears in the 3rd series (1846), I, 121–84; it reappears in a revised version in the so-called 'second edition' (really a fourth series, partly new, partly revision), II, 1–173. For Madden's treatment and the complicated arrangement of his material, see C.J. Woods, 'R.R. Madden, Historian of the United Irishmen' in Thomas Bartlett, David Dickson, Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan (eds), *1798: A Bicentenary Perspective* (Dublin, 2003), 497–512.

<sup>13</sup> Alice L. Milligan, *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone* (Belfast, 1898), 118–21.

<sup>14</sup> Elliott, *Wolfe Tone* (1989), 406.

<sup>15</sup> Nancy Curtin, 'Matilda Tone and Virtuous Republican Femininity' in Dáire Keogh and Nicholas Furlong (eds), *The Women of 1798* (Dublin, 1998), 42.

<sup>16</sup> Moody, McDowell and Woods (eds), *The Writings of Theobald Wolfe Tone*.

<sup>17</sup> Jane Rendall, "'Friends of liberty and virtue': Women Radicals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1789–1848' in Caroline Bland and Máire Cross (eds), *Gender and Politics in the Age of Letter-Writing, 1750–2000* (Aldershot, 2004), 77–92; idem, "'Women that would plague me with rational conversation": Aspiring Women and Scottish Whigs, c.1790–1830' in Sarah Knott and Barbara Taylor (eds), *Women, Gender and Enlightenment* (London, 2005), 326–48; idem, 'Prospects of the American

mysterious Thomas Wilson of Dullatur allowing this biographical article to be written.

Briefly, something must be said of what has been known until now of Wilson's married life. He and his bride, after spending a few months in Scotland, including presumably some time at Dullatur, emigrated to America. They did so for no other reason than that William Tone, a Bonapartist officer who had given allegiance to the restored Bourbons but unwisely (as things turned out) changed it again after Napoleon's return from Elba, was obliged to leave France after Waterloo; and, as a native of Ireland bearing an illustrious name likely to inspire disaffection, he was refused permission to reside either in Ireland or in Great Britain. Not long after Waterloo, Wilson had advised Matilda and William Tone to try and obtain permission to resettle in England; the British ambassador, Sir Charles Stuart, was sympathetic, but their application for a passport proved futile.<sup>18</sup> Mr and Mrs Wilson settled in New York in 1817, but moved, in or before 1820, to Georgetown, District of Columbia, where Matilda Tone Wilson (as she sometimes called herself) lived until her death in 1849. The couple visited Scotland again in 1822, this time with William Tone.<sup>19</sup> Thomas Wilson died in Georgetown on 27 June 1824, and was buried in the Maybury Burying Ground there.<sup>20</sup> His remains were removed, with those of his wife and William Tone, from Georgetown to Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn, New York, in 1891, when the Maybury Burying Ground was sold; their gravestones were transferred some months later.<sup>21</sup>

The identity of Thomas Wilson has however been illuminated through a closer look at an unduly neglected autobiography which throws much light on early nineteenth-century Edinburgh society, by Eliza Fletcher. Born Eliza Dawson in Yorkshire in 1770, she married in 1791 Archibald Fletcher, a lawyer and an active leader of the Scottish burgh reform movement of the 1780s. Her autobiography, published by her daughter in 1875, records her lively and varied familial and political life over nearly seventy years until her death in

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Republic, 1795–1821: The Radical Politics of Robina Millar and Frances Wright' in Peter France and Susan Manning (eds), *Enlightenment and Emancipation* (Lewisburg, 2006), 145–59.

<sup>18</sup> *Life of Tone*, II, 671–2.

<sup>19</sup> *Autobiography of Mrs Fletcher with Letters and Other Memorials, edited by the Survivor of her Family* [Mary Richardson] (Edinburgh, 1875), 154–5.

<sup>20</sup> Some of the information in this paragraph is taken from J.J. St Mark, 'Matilda and William Tone in New York and Washington after 1798', *Éire-Ireland*, 22, no.4 (1987), 4–10.

<sup>21</sup> Milligan, *Life of Tone*, 118–19. The author's informant was Catherine Maxwell, a great-granddaughter of Matilda Tone.

1858. The National Library of Scotland holds not only the manuscript of her autobiography, from which key passages were omitted by her daughter, but copies of a series of thirty-two letters between herself and Matilda Tone Wilson, dating from 1821 to 1848.<sup>22</sup> The letters contain much political discussion and many memories of the past, and also news and gossip of the Wilson family into which Matilda married. With the clues drawn from this material, and the use of standard works of reference, it became very easy to identify the man who married Matilda Tone and to understand why Eliza Fletcher and Matilda Tone Wilson had come to know each other so well.<sup>23</sup> For Thomas Wilson had come from the heart of the Scottish legal establishment. In the rest of this paper we reconstruct between us what we have been able to trace of his unusual biography. He was one of a group of young Scottish lawyers committed to the politics of reform in the late 1780s and early 1790s, and also an Atlantic traveller, an investor and an improving landowner.

Thomas Wilson was born on 20 October 1758. He was the eldest son of William Wilson (1710–87), a Writer to the Signet, of Howden, Midlothian, and his second wife, Margaret Young, daughter of an Edinburgh merchant; the physician William Cullen, then Professor of Medicine and Chemistry at the University of Edinburgh, and John Home, an Edinburgh coachmaker and Margaret Young's brother-in-law, witnessed his baptism in the Old Kirk, St Giles, Edinburgh.<sup>24</sup> The Wilson family owned the property of Wester Howden, including Howden House, in Mid Calder in Midlothian from 1753, with other small properties elsewhere, in the parish of Torphichen, then in Linlithgowshire, and another in Shotts in Lanarkshire.<sup>25</sup> William Wilson had a

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<sup>22</sup> 'MS of part of the autobiography of Mrs Eliza Fletcher (1770–1858)...', National Library of Scotland (NLS), MS Acc. 3758; typescript copies of the correspondence between Eliza Fletcher and Matilda Tone Wilson, 1821–48, from the Dickason papers, NLS MS Acc. 4278.

<sup>23</sup> Particularly useful sources have been: Scottish Record Society, *The Faculty of Advocates in Scotland, 1532–1943, with Genealogical Notes*, CXLV, ed. Sir Francis Grant (Edinburgh, 1944); *Register of the Society of Writers to Her Majesty's Signet* (Edinburgh, 1983).

<sup>24</sup> This and subsequent information on dates of birth and on baptism is drawn from <http://www.scotlandsppeople.gov.uk/> [accessed 23 July 2010]; *Register of the Society of Writers to Her Majesty's Signet*.

<sup>25</sup> Hardy Bertram McCall, *The History & Antiquities of the Parish of Mid-Calder* (Edinburgh, 1894), 149–50; Saisine of William Wilson, 1 March 1780, National Records of Scotland (hereafter NRS), RD 27/250, ff. 76–79; Abridged Register of Saisines, Lanarkshire, 1781–1820, NRS; Abridged Register of Saisines, Linlithgow, 1781–1820, NRS; Abridged Register of Saisines, Edinburgh 1781–1820, NRS. We are grateful to Janet Brown for further information on the Wilson and Young families.

well-established legal practice in Edinburgh. He appears in the diaries of James Boswell, with whom he worked on several cases.<sup>26</sup> And since the early 1750s he had been the man of business and close friend of William Cullen, who witnessed the baptism of all his children. Thomas Wilson had two younger brothers, John (born 28 June 1761) and William (born 22 September 1767), and a sister, Margaret (born 4 December 1762). He matriculated at the University of Glasgow in 1771, and attended the University of Edinburgh between 1772 and 1777, going to the classes of Andrew Dalzel in Greek, John Robison in natural philosophy, Adam Ferguson in moral philosophy, and Hugh Blair in rhetoric. His classmates included John Clerk of Eldin, and the young Lord Lauderdale, then Lord Maitland, and his brother Thomas Maitland. Andrew Dalzel was later, in a letter of recommendation for Thomas Wilson, to write of his particularly close friendship with John Clerk, who later became a judge of the Court of Session.<sup>27</sup>

In 1780 Thomas Wilson became a member of the Speculative Society, a society which had a limited membership, only thirty in that year, and which was a forum and training ground for young advocates, politicians and academics. Other members then included John Clerk, the Maitland brothers, and Dugald Stewart, the future Professor of Moral Philosophy. Wilson appears to have been active in the society between 1780 and 1782, delivering a total of three discourses, and regularly participating in debates.<sup>28</sup> Once he had submitted his legal thesis, he was admitted to the Faculty of Advocates on 24 July 1781.<sup>29</sup> Two years later, on 17 July 1783, he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn, London, two months after his brother John.<sup>30</sup> From the mid-1780s to the early 1790s

<sup>26</sup> Charles McC. Weis and Frederick A. Pottle (eds), *Boswell in Extremes, 1776–8* (London, 1971), 142, 206, 208; Joseph W. Reed and Frederick A. Pottle (eds), *Boswell, Laird of Auchinleck, 1778–1782* (New York and London, 1977), 27 and 52.

<sup>27</sup> W. Innes Addison, *The Matriculation Rolls of the University of Glasgow. From 1728 to 1858* (Glasgow, 1913), 97; [Typescript] Matriculation Roll of the University of Edinburgh. Arts, Law, Divinity. Transcribed by Dr Alexander Morgan, 1933–1934, Edinburgh University Library (hereafter EUL). On Andrew Dalzel, Clerk and the Maitland brothers, see entries in H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (60 vols, Oxford, 2004); Andrew Dalzel to Robert Liston, 15 March 1796, National Library of Scotland (hereafter NLS), Liston Papers, MS 5589 f. 53.

<sup>28</sup> *History of the Speculative Society, 1764–1904* (Edinburgh, 1905); Microfilm of MS Minute Book of the Speculative Society, vol. 2, 1775–1787, EUL, Mic. M.1077.

<sup>29</sup> Stair Society, *Minute Book of the Faculty of Advocates, vol. 3, 1751–83* (Edinburgh, 1999), 322; Thomas Wilson, *Disputatio juridica, ad tit. XX. Lib. XLIII Digest de aqua cottidiana et aestiva ...* (Edinburgh, 1781).

<sup>30</sup> Grant (ed.), *Faculty of Advocates; Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn, vol. I*

Thomas Wilson took his place as an advocate at the Scottish bar among his legal contemporaries.<sup>31</sup>

Andrew Dalzel, the Professor of Humanity at Edinburgh, was to be a helpful patron of Thomas Wilson, and their association also indicates a developing network of reforming affiliations. Dalzel had in the early 1770s been a private tutor to the Lauderdale brothers, taking them to hear the lectures of John Millar in Glasgow, where they later also studied. The Maitland brothers were to be among the leaders of the Foxite Whigs both in Scotland and in the House of Commons and with others took the initiative in founding the Association of the Friends of the People in London in 1792.<sup>32</sup> Also, the Wilsons' association with the Cullen family indicates a link with reforming politics. Though William Cullen himself had never been politically active, his son Robert, also an advocate, had drafted the bill for the reform of electoral representation in Scotland in 1785 and was to remain active in Whig and Foxite politics until the mid-1790s.<sup>33</sup> Robert's brother Archibald, another lawyer, at the Middle Temple in London, was a strong supporter of Charles James Fox.<sup>34</sup> And by the early 1780s, if not before, Thomas Wilson would have been acquainted with his contemporary John Craig Millar, the radical son of the Whig Professor John Millar of Glasgow, who was admitted as an advocate in December 1783, who married William Cullen's daughter Robina in 1790.

These associations came together through Wilson's involvement in the understudied but significant burgh reform movement of the 1780s, in which Archibald Fletcher, Eliza's husband, was the moving force. Fletcher had been an apprentice to Thomas' father, William Wilson, before he was himself admitted as a Writer to the Signet on 4 July 1783. A fortnight later, on 17 July, on the same day as Thomas Wilson, he was admitted to Lincoln's Inn; theirs are the only two admissions recorded for that day. The two men would have been well known to each other some time before Fletcher's marriage to

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*Admissions from A.D.1420 to A.D. 1799* (Lincoln's Inn, 1896), 506–7; *Register of the Society of Writers to Her Majesty's Signet*.

<sup>31</sup> Andrew Dalzel to Robert Liston, 15 March 1796, NLS, Liston papers, MS 5589 f. 53.

<sup>32</sup> Lucyle Werkmeister, *A Newspaper History of England, 1792–93* (Lincoln, NE, 1967), 74–5; Patrick O'Leary, *Sir James Mackintosh: The Whig Cicero* (Aberdeen, 1989), 28.

<sup>33</sup> Archibald Fletcher, 'Paper X. Memorial of the General Committee of Delegates of Scotland', in Christopher Wyvill (ed.), *Political Papers, chiefly respecting the attempt of the county of York... to Effect a Reformation of the Parliament of Great Britain*, (6 vols, York, 1794–1802), III, 34; Henry Cockburn, *Memorials of his Time* (Edinburgh, 1856), 144–5.

<sup>34</sup> John Ewart to Henry Cullen, January 22 1788, Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, Cullen MSS, vol. 32, box 1774–90.

Eliza Dawson.<sup>35</sup> In March 1787, Thomas Wilson, with seven others, including Archibald Fletcher, Robert Cullen and the leading Whig advocate Henry Erskine, signed a letter to the man they identified as the leader of the burgh reform movement, Robert Graham of Gartmore, calling for the introduction of a bill for burgh reform into the House of Commons.<sup>36</sup> Thomas Wilson's brother John, who by that date had opted for a legal career in England as a London solicitor, was the London secretary of the burgh reform movement. He canvassed Scottish members with little success before he turned to lobbying opposition members from all constituencies.<sup>37</sup> By late 1788, John Craig Millar was giving Archibald Fletcher powerful support in the drafting of reform proposals.<sup>38</sup> Thomas Wilson's friend John Clerk of Eldin was also a supporter, and consultant on the legal aspects, of burgh reform.<sup>39</sup> This group of young lawyers, with a few others, in the 1780s and early 1790s formed what Robert Cullen, who was one of them, called 'a whig cabinet' around Henry Erskine, the Whig Dean of the Faculty of Advocates.<sup>40</sup>

This commitment to reform continued, as did the campaign for burgh reform, into the years dominated by the impact of the French Revolution. On 14 July 1791, leading Foxite Whigs organised a commemoration of the taking of the Bastille at the Fortune's Tavern in Edinburgh. Seventy-three attended. Of these, writing of the event forty or more years later, Sir James Gibson Craig could remember the names of only twelve. These included John Clerk, John Craig Millar, Archibald Fletcher and Thomas Wilson, together with three other lawyers besides himself. It was this group, wrote Gibson Craig with hindsight, who were to become 'the nucleus on which the liberal party of Scotland was founded'.<sup>41</sup> The twelve included three later judges of the Court

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<sup>35</sup> *Register of the Society of Writers to Her Majesty's Signet; Records of the Honourable Society of Lincoln's Inn.*

<sup>36</sup> Henry Erskine, Robert Cullen, John Dickson, James Sommers, Gregory Grant, William Dunbar, William McIntosh, Thomas Wilson, Archibald Fletcher to Robert Graham of Gartmore Edinburgh, 5 March 1787, NRS, GD 22/1/315/4

<sup>37</sup> 'Excerpts from Mr Wilson's Letter of the 24<sup>th</sup> March 1787', attached to Archibald Fletcher to Robert Graham, 27 March 1787, NRS, GD 22/1/315/6–7.

<sup>38</sup> John Craig Millar to Robert Graham, Edinburgh, 27 November 1788 and 5 February 1789, NRS, GD 22/1/315/21 and 30; Grant (ed.), *Faculty of Advocates.*

<sup>39</sup> Archibald Fletcher to John Wilson, 13 April 1792, NRS GD 22/1/315/48(3); John Wilson to Archibald Fletcher 10 April 1792, NRS, GD 22/1/315/52.

<sup>40</sup> Robert Cullen to William Adam, 19 January 1794, Blair Adam MSS, quoted in Nicholas Phillipson, *The Scottish Whigs and the Reform of the Court of Session, 1785–1830* (Edinburgh, 1990), 20.

<sup>41</sup> J.D. Brims, 'The Scottish Democratic Movement in the Age of the French Revolution' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Edinburgh, 1983); Sir James Gibson Craig, Bart., to

of Session, two future MPs, two future sheriffs, John Allen, later of Holland House, and John Thomson, later professor of surgery and biographer of William Cullen.

In the spring of 1792 there was constant communication between Archibald Fletcher and John Wilson in London, as the latter briefed Richard Brinsley Sheridan, who had finally been persuaded to introduce the bill for burgh reform.<sup>42</sup> In June 1792, Archibald Fletcher wrote to Robert Graham of Gartmore of the need for a society for the reform of political institutions in Scotland and of ‘about a dozen [sic] of advocates with whose sentiments I am acquainted’ as being in favour of establishing a society similar to that of the Association of the Friends of the People in London, but only if they were supported by ‘a concurrence sufficiently respectable, especially of landed gentlemen of weight and consideration’.<sup>43</sup> By December that year the conservative George Home could write from Edinburgh to a correspondent:

You will be surprised to find the associations more numerous and more formidable here, than in the manufacturing counties — but this is the Paris of Scotland, and the Parliament house has become a hotbed of sedition. There are a parcel of Advocates and writers, some of them not without abilities, who collect little knots of people at different houses of rendezvous and harangue them upon the rights of man and the new doctrines of equality.<sup>44</sup>

Although John Craig Millar did for a time play an active role in the Scottish Society of the Friends of the People in late 1792, there is no direct evidence of Thomas Wilson’s doing so. Yet all his associations suggest that he might be thought of as one of this ‘parcel of Advocates’.

However, he was also, after the death of his father in 1787, responsible for the care of his family. He had, as eldest son, inherited the family properties. Between 1788 and 1791 he sold the small properties in Torphichen and Shotts; in December 1788 he purchased from an Edinburgh builder a two-storey tenement, number 5 South Frederick Street, in the rapidly rising Edinburgh New Town, and in May 1790 he borrowed £800 to buy another tenement in

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Major-General Fox, n.d., in ‘Biographical Notices of the Author’, prefixed to John Allen, *Inquiry into the Rise and Growth of the Royal Prerogative in England...* (London, [?1854]), xi–xviii. We are grateful to Emma Macleod for this reference.

<sup>42</sup> NRS, GD 22/1/315/44–52.

<sup>43</sup> Archibald Fletcher to Robert Graham, 17 June 1792, NRS, GD 22/1/315/55.

<sup>44</sup> George Home to Patrick Home, 3 December 1792, NRS, GD 267/1/16.

North Frederick Street.<sup>45</sup> From 1793 to 1795 he lived with his mother, and probably other members of his family, at 5 South Frederick Street, joining the many other advocates and writers moving to the first streets of the New Town. He was close to the Fletchers in Queen Street, and the Millars at 2 North Frederick Street.<sup>46</sup>

But in August 1793 Wilson's fellow advocate, Thomas Muir, was tried for treason, and sentenced to transportation. John Clerk of Eldin defended Muir's associate Thomas Fyshe Palmer at his trial in September 1793, but the two men were transported together in February 1794.<sup>47</sup> The political climate had been dramatically transformed. Not only did lawyers of even moderately reforming opinions, like Archibald Fletcher, find it hard to get employment, but for the first time one of their own had been subject to the full and brutal penalties of the law. Muir's trial had a major impact on the young Francis Jeffrey, who attended it and 'never mentioned it without horror'.<sup>48</sup> However, Wilson was a man of some resources. In May 1794 he sold the old family home at Howden, having earlier, in May 1792, sold a part of the tenement in North Frederick Street.<sup>49</sup> In March 1795, in a document drawn up at the office of his brother John, now a London solicitor, he appointed his mother, his aunt Katherine Young, his brothers John and William and sister Margaret, and two Edinburgh Writers as commissioners for his affairs 'considering that I mean to be for some time absent from Britain'.<sup>50</sup> Between March and September 1795 he travelled to the United States.

In March 1796, Andrew Dalzel wrote to the British representative in Philadelphia, Robert Liston, to recommend his former pupil, already in the United States: 'He was bred an Advocate and practised for a good many years at the bar here, till becoming fond of America from the accounts he heard of it, he was tempted to make a voyage to that hemisphere merely to take a view of the ground; & either to remain there or return, as he should conceive it to

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<sup>45</sup> Abridged Register of Saisines, Lanarkshire, 1781–1820, NRS; Abridged Register of Saisines, Linlithgow, 1781–1820, NRS; Abridged Register of Saisines, Edinburgh, 1781–1820, NRS.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Aitchison, *A Directory for Edinburgh, Leith, Musselburgh...* (Edinburgh, 1793), and volumes for 1794 and 1795; A.J. Youngson, *The Making of Classical Edinburgh, 1750–1840* (Edinburgh, 1966).

<sup>47</sup> Brims, 'The Scottish Democratic Movement', 540.

<sup>48</sup> Lord Cockburn, *Life of Lord Jeffrey, with a Selection from his Correspondence* (2 vols, Edinburgh, 1852), I, 58.

<sup>49</sup> Abridged Register of Saisines, Lanarkshire, 1781–1820, NRS.

<sup>50</sup> 'Commission granted Thomas Wilson, Advocate, to John Wilson and others', NRS, RD 3/270, ff. 796–801, 12 March 1795.

be agreeable, or the contrary.’ He emphasised that Wilson was ‘master of an independent fortune & may act as is most agreeable to himself’.<sup>51</sup> This tactful introduction surely masked the political attractions of the United States. In travelling there, Wilson was part of a transatlantic migration by radicals, including Thomas Cooper and Joseph Priestley, from all parts of the British Isles in the 1790s.<sup>52</sup> Among those who had been persuaded by the attractions of Pennsylvania were John and Robina Craig Millar, who chose for both political and financial reasons to emigrate rather than remain in Scotland. They had landed, armed with good introductions from Edinburgh, in Philadelphia on 7 May 1795.<sup>53</sup> Benjamin Rush introduced them in August 1795 to Henry Drinker, a leading Philadelphia Quaker, shrewd, wealthy, and philanthropic, deeply engaged in land speculation, suggesting Millar as a likely land agent in the development of land around the headwaters of the western branch of the Susquehanna River, purchased by Drinker and his land company in 1794.<sup>54</sup> It is now just north of the small town of Ebensburg, on the borders of Cambria and Clearfield Counties, Pennsylvania. On 28 September 1795, Drinker wrote to another of his agents, John Canan, to tell him that ‘my friend Millar has some prospect of having in this journey the company of a gentleman of the name of Thomas Wilson who is also from Scotland, and my information is that he is a person of merit, of respectable connections and of considerable property, and to whom I wish they [?] friendly attention should he come your way.’<sup>55</sup>

Millar was hoping to build a Scottish community on Drinker’s lands, a community which would include a school and a Presbyterian meeting-house and minister, which ‘would give an eclat to the settlement in Scotland particularly that would repay the expense tenfold’.<sup>56</sup> Millar was accompanied

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Dalzel to Robert Liston, 15 March 1796, NLS, Liston Papers, MS 5589 f. 53.

<sup>52</sup> Richard J. Twomey, *Jacobins and Jeffersonians: Anglo-American Radicalism in the United States, 1790–1820* (New York, 1989); Michael Durey, *Transatlantic Radicals and the Early American Republic* (Lawrence, 1997).

<sup>53</sup> *Aurora and General Advertiser*, 12 May 1795.

<sup>54</sup> Benjamin Rush to Henry Drinker, 5 August 1795, Drinker papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania (hereafter HSP), Correspondence and business papers, 1794–1796; Robina Craig Millar to Henry Drinker, 23 July 1796, Drinker papers, HSP, Folder, John Craig Millar July 1796–November 1796; for further discussion of the Millars’ project, see Rendall, ‘Prospects of the American Republic, 1795–1821’.

<sup>55</sup> Henry Drinker to John Canan, 28 September 1795, Drinker papers, HSP, Letter-book, 1793–6, 359–60.

<sup>56</sup> ‘Copies of papers & proposals respecting J.C. Millar and the Company’, Henry Drinker to John Craig Millar, 17 November 1795, HSP, Drinker papers, Correspondence 1793–1802.

throughout his journeys to the back country by two Scottish friends, and mentioned to Drinker other prospective settlers from Scotland.<sup>57</sup> Archibald Hamilton Rowan, the Irish radical who had visited Edinburgh to attend the radical convention there in 1793, had arrived in the United States in August 1795 and was also briefly tempted by the possibility of this settlement.<sup>58</sup> Rowan, who had been a neighbour of Theobald Wolfe Tone in County Kildare, and a close associate in the Dublin Society of United Irishmen, socialised with him in the United States, at Philadelphia and at Princeton.<sup>59</sup>

Wilson was clearly following his friend's progress. Robina Millar's sister Margaret wrote to her that a mutual friend had heard 'by a letter from Mr Wilson [that] ... you were well at German Town with Mr & Mrs Liston the 12th of Aug[us]t. Mr W. gives also an agreeable acc[oun]t of Mr Millar's situation & says that you were to join him in a fortnight.'<sup>60</sup> It is not known whether Wilson rejected the opportunity offered, or whether it was the news of John Craig Millar's sudden and unexpected death on 25 August 1796 that made him leave the United States and return to Europe.<sup>61</sup> Before he did so, he sent the news of Millar's death home to his family. Fenella Cullen, Robina Millar's sister-in-law, wrote to her from London that she had heard the dreadful news only through 'a few lines from John Wilson'.<sup>62</sup>

During the period that Thomas Wilson and Matilda Tone spent in America, there is clear evidence that they had at least two acquaintances in common. One was Robina Millar, who met Mrs Tone in 1795 or 1796. The evidence is a letter Mrs Millar wrote to her friend Frances Wright, who was visiting Matilda in New York after her return to America as Wilson's wife: 'tell Mrs Wilson that I do remember Mary Town with much interest'.<sup>63</sup> 'Mary Town' was surely Matilda's daughter Maria or her sister-in-law Mary, both her constant

<sup>57</sup> John Craig Millar to Henry Drinker, 28 July [1796] and 'Notes—for Mr Drinker's information since my last,' [12 and 14 August 1796], HSP, Drinker papers, Land correspondence.

<sup>58</sup> Archibald Hamilton Rowan to his wife, 20 February 1796, William H. Drummond (ed.) *The Autobiography of Archibald Hamilton Rowan* (Dublin, 1840; repr. Shannon, 1972), 290–91.

<sup>59</sup> Tone, *Writings*, esp. I, 188, 273, 505–08, 512–16, II, 14, 57, 73, 224, 255, 336–7, 339–40.

<sup>60</sup> Margaret Cullen to Robina Millar, 13 October 1796, Folder, John Craig Millar July 1796–November 1796, HSP, Drinker papers.

<sup>61</sup> *Philadelphia Gazette*, 21 September 1796.

<sup>62</sup> Fenella Cullen to Robina Millar, 31 October 1796, Folder, John Craig Millar, July 1796–November 1796, HSP, Drinker papers.

<sup>63</sup> Copy of letter from Robina Millar to Frances Wright, endorsed 'received Nov. 19th' (1818?), Cornell University, Theresa Wolfson papers, Box 41/17.

companions in America. Maria Tone, aged ten or eleven when in America, died in Paris in 1803. Mary Tone, having accompanied her to Hamburg, married there, lived in France for a while and died in the West Indies about 1800.<sup>64</sup> Matilda Tone's acquaintanceship with Robina Millar, herself an acquaintance of Wilson, is at least circumstantial evidence that she came to know Wilson before leaving for Hamburg.

The second friend in common was a Scottish radical, John Maclean, to whom Matilda Tone recalled, writing to him when revisiting America in 1807, 'the placid and amiable days I spent at Princeton'.<sup>65</sup> Maclean had studied chemistry and medicine at the universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh and then in London and Paris, returning to Glasgow in 1790. Like his good friends John and Robina Millar, he left Scotland for America for political reasons in April 1795. With the help of an introduction to Benjamin Rush—who apparently also befriended Tone's fellow exile and confidant James Reynolds<sup>66</sup>—he was by October the newly-appointed professor of chemistry and natural history at Princeton College. It is clear that the Millars spent some time at Princeton and knew Maclean. The Tones were there from late October 1795; Matilda Tone, after her husband's departure, remained there until she left for France in October 1796. It is quite possible that Thomas Wilson encountered Matilda Tone at Princeton, a very small town in the 1790s.<sup>67</sup>

On the evidence of Tone's letter of 11 February 1797, mentioned at the beginning of this paper, it is likely that Wilson met both Matilda Tone and Tone himself while still in America. If he met Tone, it must have been between August 1795 when the Tones arrived in Delaware and the following December when Tone left New York for France. Tone's closeness to Hamilton Rowan in America suggests that he knew something of the Susquehanna project. Moreover the existence of a memorandum on the possibilities of a pioneering agricultural settlement which Tone wrote shortly after arriving in America suggests that he would have given it serious con-

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<sup>64</sup> 'Genealogy of Theobald Wolfe Tone' in Tone, *Writings*, III, 490.

<sup>65</sup> Matilda Tone to John Maclean, n.d., John Maclean (ed.), *A Memoir of John Maclean, M.D.* (Princeton, 1876), 40–42. The editor of this volume, Maclean's son, is confused about the chronology of Matilda's stay at Princeton and the date of this letter. Internal evidence combined with evidence of her visit to Irish friends in New York indicates that it must have been written at the beginning of October 1807. See William Sampson, *Memoirs* (New York, 1807), 413–16.

<sup>66</sup> *The Autobiography of Benjamin Rush*, ed. G. W. Corner (Princeton, 1948), 322.

<sup>67</sup> *Memoir of John Maclean*, 17–20.

sideration.<sup>68</sup> It can be inferred, from a letter Tone wrote to his wife on 2 December 1796,<sup>69</sup> that he had received no letter from her since leaving New York, which makes it even more likely that Wilson met him in America and gained his confidence there.

There remains at least the possibility that the acquaintance of Thomas Wilson and Matilda Tone began on the slow voyage from New York to Hamburg,<sup>70</sup> in which case the discovery by Mrs Tone of the existence of friends in common would have provided her with some assurance of his respectability and permitted her to be regularly in his company. On the same voyage, apparently, Mary Tone struck up a friendship, with a Swiss merchant, Jean Frédéric Giaouque, which soon resulted in marriage.<sup>71</sup> If, as is most likely, he was already socially acquainted with Mrs Tone and her family, it is at least plausible that he embarked on the same ship in order to afford Matilda, Mary Tone and Matilda's three young children — the eldest, Maria, was only ten — protection from the kind of incivility that had occurred on their outward voyage when their ship was stopped and boarded by a British warship.<sup>72</sup>

Why was Wilson making for Hamburg? It seems likely that he wanted to reach the European continent, not his native island of Britain, for he could easily have found a ship sailing for a British port. His reason for leaving Scotland—pressures being placed on democrats by the authorities—was also a reason for not returning. Another reason may have been the prospect of making money in a neutral city that was trading without discrimination with Britain, France and other belligerent states and which had the reputation of welcoming political émigrés. Whatever the reason for the destination, Wilson would have disembarked, like Matilda Tone's party, at Cuxhaven, at the mouth of the tidal Elbe, towards the middle of December, and made his way by road to Hamburg, very low temperatures having made access by river impossible. Wilson presumably remained in the German imperial city until he moved to France.

On 8 January 1798, Wilson was in Paris, staying at the Hôtel Taranne in the Rue Taranne. From there he wrote formally to the minister of police describing himself as a 'patriote écossois' who had 'été forcé de se réfugier

<sup>68</sup> Tone, *Writings*, III, 458.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 403–08.

<sup>70</sup> This is stated as fact by 'C.E', regarded by Matilda Tone however as an unreliable authority (see above, 3).

<sup>71</sup> Giaouque is even more mysterious than Wilson. Both remained in Hamburg for some months before moving to Paris. Were they associates? See Tone, *Writings*, III, *passim*.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, II, 1, 335.

en France pour se soustraire à la persécution du gouvernement anglais' and explaining that he had just arrived in Paris by virtue of a passport issued by the French ambassador in Hamburg authorised by a letter of 27 brumaire 6 (17 November 1797), from the French foreign minister. Wilson uses on this and later occasions, a pseudonym, Theodore Wilkins, a wise precaution for a British subject in France at that time. He requests the minister to 'accorder telle protection que vous jugerez à propos pour sa sûreté pendant son séjour à Paris'. The letter is endorsed by Tone stating that he knows 'Wilkins' and answers for 'son patriotisme et son intégrité'.<sup>73</sup> The wording of the letter is similar to others endorsed by Tone ('adjudant général'), who probably supplied it; the handwriting appears, from the signature, to be that of Wilson. His claim to have been forced out of Scotland by persecution was a necessary exaggeration if he was to be permitted to remain; Tone's recommendation was almost a guarantee. On 26 January the minister informed Tone that he had authorised a *carte d'hospitalité* to 'Théodore Wilkins'.<sup>74</sup>

No evidence has been found of any interest by Wilson in political matters whilst in France. Nowhere else does Tone refer to Wilson as a patriot, reformer, democrat or republican. A search of the series Correspondance Politique Angleterre in the archives of the Département des Affaires Étrangères uncovered some letters from or to Thomas Muir, in exile in Paris in 1798, concerning other Scottish democrats in France.<sup>75</sup> Wilson is not among them. If Wilson had attempted to get in touch with Muir, Tone, who considered Muir to be doing more harm than good to the United Irish cause, would surely have discouraged him.

Among the papers of Lord Castlereagh, who was Irish chief secretary in 1798, is a 'List of patriots emigrants at Paris with some anecdotes concerning them', undated but evidently about May 1798 and apparently supplied by Samuel Turner, an active United Irishman who became a government informer and was trusted by United Irish exiles in Hamburg and Paris.<sup>76</sup> Turner mentions Wilson briefly but significantly as being an associate in France of John Tennent,

<sup>73</sup> Théodore Wilkins to minister of police, 19 nivôse 6 (8 January 1798) (Archives Nationales, Paris, Police Générale, F<sup>7</sup>, 7293, dossier B<sup>4</sup> 2671). We are grateful to Dr Sylvie Kleinman for a copy of this letter.

<sup>74</sup> Tone, *Writings*, III, 195–6.

<sup>75</sup> Archives des Affaires Étrangères, Correspondance Politique Angleterre, cote 592, ff. 204, 209, 217–19.

<sup>76</sup> Turner's reports from Hamburg and elsewhere are in C.J. Woods (ed.), 'Samuel Turner's Information on the United Irishmen, 1797–8', *Analecta Hibernica*, 42 (2011), 181–228.

a Belfast United Irishman, in connexion with a financial matter: ‘Tennent received £2,500 of remittance; he instantly cut his countrymen and went with one Thomas Wilson to [BLANK], where they have made a purchase’.<sup>77</sup> The significance is that ‘one Thomas Wilson’ was unknown to Turner and that Wilson was pursuing a business opportunity. Of Wilson’s association with Tennent (though not of its nature) there are indications in some of Tone’s letters to his wife.<sup>78</sup> A document in the police files at the Archives Nationales tells us that Wilson sought, and apparently obtained, permission in March to go to Carcassonne to purchase ‘des biens nationaux’.<sup>79</sup>

An answer to the question just when Wilson left France is provided in another document in the police archives. On 11 June 1802, ‘Théodore Wilkins’, described as a ‘négoiateur’—meaning ‘broker’—domiciled in Paris, was granted permission to travel, for family reasons, from Paris to London.<sup>80</sup> This was ten weeks after the signing of the peace of Amiens, an effect of which was to give British subjects in France an opportunity to return conveniently to Britain. By then Wilson may have found France disappointing for the business opportunities it offered. Tennent had moved to Hamburg, from where he wrote letters to his brother Robert in Belfast between December 1799 and January 1802 concerning prospects there.<sup>81</sup> It seems highly likely that Wilson returned to Britain in 1802. If the family reasons were genuine, he would most likely have made for Edinburgh, where his mother was still living as late as 1804.<sup>82</sup>

William Tone’s mention of the Delesserts, the Paris banking family, may be a clue to Wilson’s financial affairs in France. Étienne Delessert (1735–1816) flourished under the Directory, lending to the régime, and in 1801 established sugar-beet and cotton factories at Passy not far from Paris. A business partner from an early age was his son Benjamin (1773–1847).<sup>83</sup> Benjamin Delessert,

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 218.

<sup>78</sup> Tone, *Writings*, III, 228, 236, 326, 339.

<sup>79</sup> Archives Nationales, Police générale, AN F<sup>7</sup> 7293. The ‘biens nationaux’ were lands and other property seized and confiscated during the revolution.

<sup>80</sup> Police générale, AN F<sup>7</sup> 3504.

<sup>81</sup> Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Tennent papers, D1748/C/1/210/8–11.

<sup>82</sup> *Denovan & Co.’s Edinburgh and Leith Directory, from July 1804... to July 1805, etc* (Edinburgh, 1804).

<sup>83</sup> For the Delesserts, see *Dictionnaire de biographie française*, x (Paris, 1965), cols 804–07; for Benjamin Delessert’s visit to Scotland see Gordon Macintyre, *Dugald Stewart. The Pride and Ornament of Scotland* (Brighton, 2003), 70, 73 and for his career as a banker, Romuald Szramkiewicz, *Les régents et censeurs de la Banque de France nommés sous le Consulat et l’Empire* (Geneva and Paris, 1974), 78–84.

with his brother Stephen, had attended classes at the University of Edinburgh in 1784–5.<sup>84</sup> He joined the French revolutionary army in 1793 and at the sieges of Maubeuge and Ypres was aide-de-camp to Charles Jennings de Kilmaine, an Irish-born general whose acquaintance Theobald Wolfe Tone made in April 1798, Kilmaine having command of the *armée d'Angleterre*, the force that embarked on the fateful expedition to Lough Swilly—he wrote to the Directory in November in a futile attempt to save Tone's life.<sup>85</sup> Demobilised in 1796, Benjamin Delessert rejoined his father's business and in 1802 was appointed *régent* of the Banque de France. Possibly Wilson, or one of his Edinburgh circle, had become acquainted with Benjamin Delessert in Scotland and Wilson was able to draw advantage from this connexion on arriving in France. It is evident from William Tone's statement that Wilson had, at the very least, a substantial deposit with the Delesserts at the time of Tone's death; the common bond which both Benjamin Delessert and Tone had with Kilmaine, whose own fortunes rose with the rise of Napoleon Bonaparte, may have given Wilson greater confidence that Matilda Tone could continue to rely on the Delesserts. It is even conceivable that Wilson was connected with the Delesserts' industrial and commercial enterprises.

On his return to Scotland, probably in 1802, it would appear that Wilson did not again practise as an advocate, but kept a cautious and fairly low profile. It is evident from the statements of Matilda and William Tone given above that he was in correspondence with Matilda Tone; there is evidence that in 1811 he was writing to her care of the American consul general in Paris, David Bailie Warden.<sup>86</sup> Wilson's interests in Scotland turned in a different direction, towards farming and agricultural improvement. Between June and August 1809, he purchased a small estate, Lower Easter Dullatur, of around 141 acres, in the parish of Cumbernauld, then in the detached part of Dumbartonshire, today in North Lanarkshire.<sup>87</sup> There is evidence that Wilson either partially owned or

<sup>84</sup> EUL, Matriculation Roll of the University of Edinburgh.

<sup>85</sup> Tone, *Writings*, III, 226–8, 424–5.

<sup>86</sup> Matilda Tone to D.B. Warden, 25 September 1811, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Warden papers, microfilm pos. 8436 at the National Library of Ireland.

<sup>87</sup> Register of Saisines, Dumbartonshire, 1781–1820, NRS; 'Procuratory of Resignation, 24 December 1833', RD 5/497 ff. 427–33, NRS; the co-ordinates of the estate are 55° 58' 0" North, 4° 1' 0" West and the National Grid reference is NS 747772. Maps which show the estate include: 'Sketch of the Canal and Mr Wilson's adjacent Lands West end Dollatur Bog (1827)', North Lanarkshire Archives (hereafter NLA), Russel & Aitken Papers, UT/149/2 (9); 'Plan of the Estate of Dullatur in the Parish of Cumbernauld, County of Dumbarton. Taken from the Ordnance Survey 1881', NLA, Russel & Aitken Papers, U107/1/2 (2).

rented this land from 1805, taking up what may well have been a much earlier interest.<sup>88</sup> In 1784, he had been one of 128 original constituent members of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, along with several of the future members of the burgh reform committee — Archibald Fletcher, Robert Graham, John Clerk, and Henry Erskine.<sup>89</sup> The transactions of the society suggest that its interests were by no means limited to the Highlands.

The land at Dullatur would have presented him with some problems. The Forth and Clyde Canal ran through his land, on the northern boundary of the parish of Cumbernauld, its edge marked by the Kelvin Water. The estate included a substantial section of what was known as the Bog of Dullatur, along with sections of the Roman Antonine Wall. The canal had been completed in 1790, although the bog had presented its engineers with major difficulties.<sup>90</sup> In 1811, the *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dumbarton* recorded Thomas Wilson's 'extensive and apparently successful essay in bog improvement' of land originally in a miserable state as having been achieved since 1805.<sup>91</sup> He had ditched and drained, with a drain running in a tunnel under the canal, into the Kelvin Water, and then levelled, ploughed, and cultivated hitherto moss-covered land, to produce profitable crops by 1810. Nevertheless the land flooded again from the south side of the canal in 1810, 1812 and 1815, causing significant damage. Only in 1822, in a deed witnessed by Tone's son, William Theobald Wolfe Tone, 'Lieutenant of Artillery in the service of the United States of North America', did the proprietors of the Forth-Clyde Canal commit themselves to building embankments and providing drainage to preserve Wilson's land from flooding.<sup>92</sup> Most of the land to the east of the estate is now a nature reserve.

We assume that Wilson lived quietly on his estate in this period, although he does not appear to have played any significant part in the life of the locality. He was represented by an agent at the heritors' meetings of the church at Cumbernauld.<sup>93</sup> There is no record in Edinburgh directories of the

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<sup>88</sup> Rev. Andrew Whyte and Duncan Macfarlane, D.D., *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dumbarton* ... (Glasgow, 1811), 174.

<sup>89</sup> Alexander Ramsay, *History of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland* ... (Edinburgh, 1879), 539–46.

<sup>90</sup> James Hopkirk, *Account of the Forth and Clyde Canal Navigation, from its Origin to the Present Time* (Glasgow, 1816), 24–5; Jean Lindsay, *The Canals of Scotland* (Newton Abbot, 1968), 24–30.

<sup>91</sup> Whyte and Macfarlane, *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Dumbarton*, 174–7.

<sup>92</sup> NRS, RD 5245 ff. 284–99

<sup>93</sup> Cumbernauld Heritors Minute Book, 1809–40, NRS, HR 27/1

period that he ever returned to live in the city, and he identified himself after this point as ‘of Dullatur’ or ‘of Ealan’ (after Ealan Wood on his estate). In February 1813 he bought more land in the vicinity.<sup>94</sup> Dullatur appears to have been his home until he went to France to marry Matilda Tone in 1816, and he continued to keep a watchful eye on its affairs after his departure. Between 1817 and 1821 the rental income from his property at Dullatur ranged from £300 to £400, though by 1823 it had fallen to £217.<sup>95</sup> This suggests that he paid a purchase price of several thousands in 1809.

Thomas Wilson’s marriage contract of 1816 has survived and records that the couple had long ‘entertained a mutual affection, and the most perfect esteem’ for one another.<sup>96</sup> Some months after the marriage, which took place on 19 August, Matilda Wilson (as she now was) wrote to Tone’s barrister friend Peter Burrowes about her new husband: ‘I lament that Mr Wilson is not personally known to you; one would think that two men like you were formed by nature to be friends’. She told Burrowes, ‘on our marriage, Mr Wilson & I signed an act making over to William all that belonged or might belong to me’.<sup>97</sup> Having agreed to move to the United States, Wilson wished not only to settle his business affairs in Scotland but to introduce Matilda to his family there. In Edinburgh towards the end of 1816 Matilda Tone met for the first time her sister-in-law Margaret, her brother-in-law William Wilson and his family, her husband’s friends Archibald and Eliza Fletcher, their daughter Grace and other children, and probably renewed her acquaintance with the widowed Robina Millar; the newly married couple remained in Edinburgh at least until early April 1817.<sup>98</sup> Many years later, writing in 1844, Eliza Fletcher paid tribute to Matilda as ‘one of the most remarkable persons I have ever known with great energy, great talents and uncommon quickness of parts and the most intrepid public spirit. She united the warmest private affections and the gentlest heart ... I admired and loved her for the union of magnanimity and gentleheartedness that she possessed’.<sup>99</sup>

<sup>94</sup> Register of Saisines, Dumbartonshire, 1781–1820, NRS.

<sup>95</sup> ‘State of Rent received for Dullatur since 1817’, NRS, GD 1/1367/11.

<sup>96</sup> ‘The Marriage Contract of Thomas Wilson and Matilda Witherington, August 8, 1816’, Office Register of Wills, Clerk of the Probate Court, United States District Court for the District of Columbia, quoted in St Mark, ‘Matilda and William Tone in New York and Washington’, 4.

<sup>97</sup> MW to Peter Burrowes, 21 South Castle St, Edinburgh, 27 December 1816, Royal Irish Academy, Burrowes papers, MS 23/K/53.

<sup>98</sup> EF, ‘Memoir of Grace Fletcher’ in Richardson (ed.), *Autobiography of Mrs Fletcher*, 354–7.

<sup>99</sup> ‘Autobiography of Mrs Eliza Fletcher (1770–1858) ...’, NLS, Acc. 3758, ff. 88–9;

The Wilsons kept in touch from the United States with friends in Scotland. In 1819, Robina Millar sent her young protégée, the future utopian socialist Frances Wright, travelling with her sister to New York, into the safekeeping of the Wilson household. William Tone helped and encouraged the radical young woman, supported her in the performance of her first play, *Altorf*, on the New York stage in 1819, and introduced her to the radical publisher Matthew Carey in Philadelphia, where her play was also performed and published.<sup>100</sup> But both Matilda Wilson and Eliza Fletcher watched Wright's later career, and her foundation, at NRShoba, Tennessee, of a short-lived community, notorious not only for abolitionist sentiments but for its defence of free love, with considerable apprehension and ultimate disapproval.<sup>101</sup>

Thomas Wilson appears at all times to have maintained a responsibility for his family in Scotland. In 1820, his brother William, now a Writer to the Signet, acted for him in the purchase of the superiorities or feu-duties of the estate at Dullatur.<sup>102</sup> In October 1821 Matilda and Thomas Wilson, with William Tone, visited Scotland again, shortly after the death of Thomas' brother William in July 1821, no doubt partly out of concern over the welfare of his brother's orphaned family, his nephews William, Thomas and James and nieces Margaret, Elizabeth and Catherine; he was appointed one of their curators, or guardians.<sup>103</sup> Eliza Fletcher recalled in Matilda at that time 'the same vigour and originality of mind' as in their earlier intimacy, and her happiness at being with her son.<sup>104</sup> She gave the Wilsons an introduction to Robert Owen at New Lanark, writing to Owen of her friends: 'You will find them full of candour, benevolence and liberality. They are remarkably well inform'd, and they cannot think of quitting Scotland, Mr Wilson's native country, without seeing an institution of which they have heard so

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Fletcher, *Autobiography*, 143 and 354, in which the full text of Eliza Fletcher's tribute to Matilda Wilson is omitted.

<sup>100</sup> William Tone to Matthew Carey, 30 March 1819, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection, Matthew Carey correspondence, no. 381 and other letters in this correspondence; Frances Wright, *Altorf: A Tragedy First Represented in the Theatre of New-York, Feb. 19, 1819* (Philadelphia, 1819); Celia Morris Eckhardt, *Fanny Wright: Rebel in America* (Cambridge, 1984), 27–30.

<sup>101</sup> EF to MW, 19 July 1826 and 16 October 1834; MW to EF, 29 April 1827, NLS, MS Acc. 4278.

<sup>102</sup> 'Papers relevant to the purchase of the superiority of the lands of Easter Dullatur by Thomas Wilson through his brother, William Wilson, WS acting as his commissioner', NRS, GD 1/1367/11.

<sup>103</sup> EF to MW, 10 October 1821, NLS, MS Acc. 4278; NRS, RD 5/296 ff. 460–75.

<sup>104</sup> Fletcher, *Autobiography*, 154.

much as that at New Lanark.<sup>105</sup> On 2 October 1822, Thomas Wilson reappointed commissioners, including his sister Margaret, his nephew William, now apprenticed as a writer, and two Writers to the Signet, to deal with his business affairs in Scotland.<sup>106</sup> Two years later, Margaret Wilson visited her brother in Georgetown, just before his death, after a brief, unpleasant illness, on 27 June 1824.<sup>107</sup>

In his will Thomas Wilson provided an annuity of £200 annually for his wife, with a specific legacy of all 'household furniture ... and all horses and carriages which may belong to me at the time of my decease'. He also left to her and to her son William \$1,000 each. The estate of Dullatur and the Edinburgh property still remaining in South Frederick Street went to his eldest nephew William, and his other effects and capital first to his sister Margaret and then to be equally divided between his nephews and nieces.<sup>108</sup> Among others, a James J. MacDonnell is named in the will as the assignee of \$6,855 of loans repayable to Wilson's estate; this was probably the former United Irishman, James Joseph MacDonnell.<sup>109</sup> William Wilson sold 5 South Frederick Street in 1825, and gradually sold off the estate at Dullatur after 1840. In spite of the bog, Dullatur proved to have been an excellent investment, situated as it was on the major transport corridor between Edinburgh and Glasgow. In 1840, and again in 1841, William Wilson sold portions of the land to the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway Company.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> EF to Robert Owen, 16 February 1822, NLS, MS Acc. 4278.

<sup>106</sup> NRS, RD 5/245 ff. 576–80.

<sup>107</sup> EF to MW, 28 October 1824, NLS MS Acc. 4278.

<sup>108</sup> 'Last will and testament of Thomas Wilson, January 16 1823', Office Register of Wills, Clerk of the Probate Court, United States District Court for the District of Columbia, Washington, D.C., quoted in St Mark, 'Matilda and William Tone' (a copy of this will also survives in the Linplum papers, in private hands, National Register of Archives for Scotland 2720/859); 'Disposition of William Wilson to Robert Strachan WS', RD 5/296 ff. 460–475; EF to MW, 27 December 1845, NLS, MS Acc. 4278.

<sup>109</sup> James Joseph MacDonnell (1766–1848?) joined the French force that landed on the Mayo coast in 1798; he fled to Paris after its defeat, was friendly towards Matilda Tone there, married a Scottish woman, Henrietta Mackie, by whom he had a daughter, Josephine, and moved to New York, c. 1806. Josephine also married a Scot, Robert Hutton. Very little is known of MacDonnell's life in America. See *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, V, 952–3.

<sup>110</sup> Abridged Register of Saisines, Edinburgh, 1821–6, NRS; Abridged Register of Saisines, Dumbartonshire, 1821–45, NRS; 'Papers relevant to the building of a cottage "proposed to be built" at Dullatur by Miss Margaret Wilson, 1828 ...', NRS, GD 1/1367/1/11.

The continuing links between Matilda Tone and the Wilson family in Scotland, even after Thomas Wilson's death in 1824, can be traced through the surviving thirty-two letters between Matilda Tone and Eliza Fletcher, from 1820 to 1848. Eliza Fletcher gave her friend very regular reports on the wellbeing of Thomas Wilson's family, to whom she remained close.<sup>111</sup> There was much news of the children, but also sad news, of the deaths of Thomas Wilson's niece Catherine in 1831, of his sister Margaret in 1833, and of his sister-in-law Mrs William Wilson in 1837.<sup>112</sup> Matilda Wilson also clearly shared her husband's affection for his old Edinburgh friends and Eliza Fletcher continually sent news and gossip of all those in their common circle, including Robina Millar, and the Listons. Of John Clerk, Thomas Wilson's old friend, she wrote in 1828 that 'Poor Lord Eldin whom you knew as John Clerk is quite superannuated and unable to perform his duty as a judge'.<sup>113</sup> Matilda Wilson sent news of the family of John Maclean.<sup>114</sup>

In 1837 Matilda Tone was contemplating retirement to Edinburgh close to her husband's family, since after the death of her son William, her daughter-in-law, Catherine, with her family the Sampsons, was considering moving to Ireland. However, she clearly had reservations about this. Eliza Fletcher defended the Wilsons, if in terms which recognised the justice of these reservations: 'I believe William and Marg[are]t to be affectionate and of a refined nature, but then it is Scotch refinement which piques itself in never using one expression of ordinary kindness or endearment'. One of Thomas's nieces, Elizabeth, or Bessy, had become an evangelical Protestant, in a way which Matilda might well think 'ascetic, bigoted, and illiberal'. Eliza urged her old friend to live with her, rather than enter 'en famille' till she had made up her own mind. But 'you being in or near Edinburgh may be, and will be (if they know how to appreciate it), a great benefit to these young people...'<sup>115</sup>

This plan clearly never materialised. By 1840 however Eliza Fletcher feared Matilda Wilson was in some financial difficulties. She offered her £50 herself immediately but also urged her to get in touch with William Wilson, of whom she wrote, 'William Wilson is as good and kindhearted a man as your Mr

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<sup>111</sup> For a full discussion of this correspondence, see Rendall, "'Friends of liberty and virtue'".

<sup>112</sup> EF to MW, 15 December 1827, 26 December 1831, 29 July 1833, 24 July 1837, NLS, MS Acc. 4278.

<sup>113</sup> EF to MW, 12 June 1828, NLS, MS Acc. 4278.

<sup>114</sup> EF to MW, 15 December 1827 and 12 June 1828, NLS, MS Acc. 4278.

<sup>115</sup> EF to MW, 25 November 1837, NLS, MS Acc. 4278.

Wilson was<sup>116</sup>. Again, in 1845, she urged her to confide her plan to settle in New York to the newly married William Wilson. As his uncle's heir, he would ultimately inherit the proceeds of the Georgetown property, and would, Eliza Fletcher believed, happily split the proceeds with her or allow her the life-interest.<sup>117</sup> In her last surviving letter, of March 1848, Eliza Fletcher celebrated the news of the revolution of 1848 in France: 'have you and I slumber'd since 1798 to be awaken'd once more by the tocsin sounding in the streets of Paris?' She concluded by urging her friend, as she had never ceased to do, to visit her once more, giving her news as usual: 'The Wilson family are all well. William most happy with his charming wife.'<sup>118</sup>

Thomas Wilson's nephews all achieved some success, William as a Writer to the Signet, like his father and grandfather, and Thomas as a rear-admiral in the Royal Navy. James, born in 1813, took Anglican orders and in 1851 travelled with the Canterbury Association to New Zealand. In the following year he built himself a house in Christchurch called Dullatur; in 1871 he became Archdeacon of Akaroa, and died in 1886. The whole family benefited from their legacies from their uncle.<sup>119</sup> The family name and legal tradition survive to the present day, in Dundas & Wilson, a major British commercial law firm.<sup>120</sup> But there are no longer any family members with the firm or any archives held.

Much of the mystery surrounding Thomas Wilson remains. His career may be seen in the context of Emma Macleod's argument for the development of a significant body of Foxite Whig opinion among the lawyers and landed classes of Scotland in the late 1780s and early 1790s.<sup>121</sup> His life also points to the potential internationalism and cosmopolitanism of that movement;

<sup>116</sup> EF to MW, 4 February 1840 and 11 March 1842, NLS, MS Acc. 4278.

<sup>117</sup> EF to MW, 27 December 1845, NLS, MS Acc. 4278. Eliza Fletcher may have been mistaken in her belief that Thomas Wilson had owned a property at Georgetown; after his death Matilda lived for many years at Kalonama, the former Georgetown home of the radical Joel Banlow (1754–1812), who had been resident in Paris 1797–1805 and again 1811–12.

<sup>118</sup> EF to MW, 19 March 1848, NLS, MS Acc. 4278.

<sup>119</sup> Accounts of Admiral Thomas Wilson and Archdeacon Wilson with Messrs Dundas and Wilson, NRS, GD 1/1367/20/; G. H. Scholefield, *A Dictionary of New Zealand Biography* (2 vols, Wellington, 1940).

<sup>120</sup> The subsequent history of the firm can be traced in David M Burns, *Dundas & Wilson: The First Two Hundred Years* [privately printed, 1987]; see also their website at <http://www.dundas-wilson.com>, accessed 23 July 2010.

<sup>121</sup> Emma Vincent Macleod, 'The Scottish Opposition Whigs and the French Revolution' in Bob Harris (ed.), *Scotland in the Age of the French Revolution* (Edinburgh, 2005), 79–98.

his story has been told here in relation to Irish revolutionary politics, the opportunities presented by revolutionary and imperial France, and the attractions of American republicanism, as well as the growth of reforming opinion in Scotland. Yet there is much that remains unknown. We do not know the extent or source of the ‘independent fortune’ he possessed when he left Scotland for America, or why he chose in 1796 to sail to Hamburg and then move to Paris. We have no information on the nature of his business in France, or on how he was able to purchase the estate at Dullatur. No political statement by him has been found, no reported conversation, and only one letter bearing his signature. His reforming loyalties have been traced, and were rooted in, his associations with family and friends, and occasional presence at political meetings; these loyalties and friendships drew upon shared political ideals across national boundaries. Nevertheless, until we began our researches into the life and career of Thomas Wilson, the contrast between the paucity of information on him and the richness of the detail of the life and career of his wife’s first husband was striking. We have at least reduced that contrast and rescued ‘Mr Wilson of Dullatur’ from obscurity. And we can offer readers the fine epitaph which Matilda Tone Wilson inscribed on her second husband’s tombstone: ‘A true philanthropist. His life was consecrated to deeds of benevolence, and his wishes and endeavour all tended to the happiness, information and freedom of mankind.’<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> ‘Graves of the Wolf [sic] Tone family’, *Nation* (Dublin), 7 August, 1869, 3.



## Louis MacNeice's Irish and Scottish Pasts, 1935–9

Paul Robichaud

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Louis MacNeice is a profoundly retrospective poet, with his best known work, *Autumn Journal* (1939), taking a backward glance at an entire decade. The personal past in MacNeice's writing is always linked with other, more communal histories. Born in Belfast, but educated and domiciled for most of his life in England, it is the Irish past—national and personal—that most persistently haunts MacNeice. As a classicist, he was also professionally immersed in the ancient past common to Europe as a whole.<sup>1</sup> During the 1930s, however, the poet's travels to Iceland and the Hebrides confronted him with other small communities with their own unique histories, experiences reflected in *Letters from Iceland* (1937; written with W.H. Auden) and *I Crossed the Minch* (1938). These travels altered MacNeice's perspective on contemporary Europe and his sense of Irish identity. His encounter with Scotland, particularly with the recent history of the isle of Lewis, suggested the impossibility of finding an authentic Celtic community resistant to the pressures of capitalism and modernity. This sense of futility in turn informs MacNeice's engagement with Ireland in part XVI of *Autumn Journal*, which rejects both unionist and nationalist versions of Irish identity.

MacNeice's first mature collection, *Poems* (1935), shows the poet already rejecting fixed, essentialist versions of personal and cultural identities. The poem 'Valediction', which appears second in the collection, after 'Christmas Eclogue', is meant to be a farewell to Ireland, portrayed as a country paralyzed by its own cultural memories, where 'history never dies.'<sup>2</sup> As MacNeice's speaker recognises, however, Irish history lives on within himself as well, in an intimate, familial way. He tropes his relationship to the North as one of mother and child; Belfast is his 'mother city', its surrounding mountains his 'paps'.<sup>3</sup> MacNeice would come to view the mother-child bond as shaping Irish

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<sup>1</sup> For a suggestive discussion of MacNeice and the classics, see Robert Crawford, 'The Classics in Modern Scottish and Irish Poetry' in Peter MacKay, Edna Longley and Fran Brearton (eds), *Modern Irish and Scottish Poetry* (Cambridge, 2011), 131–46.

<sup>2</sup> Louis MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, Peter McDonald (ed.) (London, 2007), 7.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

national feeling more generally. In his 1941 study of Yeats, he suggests that Cathleen Ni Houlihan – the symbolic female embodiment of Ireland – might be viewed ‘as a mother image, and so refer much of Irish nationalism to a mother fixation, even to an Oedipus complex, England representing the father’.<sup>4</sup> This Freudian model also makes sense of the way MacNeice’s personal history is inescapably entwined with that of Ireland throughout his writing. Despite the scathing critique that ‘Valediction’ offers of Irish society, the speaker acknowledges the feelings of guilt such criticism provokes: ‘Cursèd be he that curses his mother. I cannot be / Anyone else than what this land engendered me’.<sup>5</sup> Self-authenticity requires an acceptance of his own personal Irish past, regardless of how bogus he thinks Ireland’s national self-image may be:

I can say Ireland is hooey, Ireland is  
 A gallery of fake tapestries,  
 But I cannot deny my past to which my self is wed,  
 The woven figure cannot undo its thread.<sup>6</sup>

MacNeice’s use of the verb ‘wed’ is particularly telling in this context, given the implicitly Oedipal relationship between speaker and country presented in the poem, and the later, more explicitly Freudian diagnosis of Irish nationalism in *The Poetry of W.B. Yeats*.

The self is married to a past that is intrinsically Irish and maternal, a bond likened to that between a ‘woven figure’ and the very thread of which it is made. This metaphor raises the question as to whether leave-taking of our origins is ever really possible, as it is ostensibly woven into the fabric of who we are. As a result, ‘Valediction’ hovers uneasily between wishful thinking and linguistic performance, with the accomplished separation displaced into the future tense:

I will exorcise my blood  
 And not have my baby-clothes my shroud  
 I will acquire an attitude not yours  
 And become as one of your holiday visitors,  
 And however often I may come,  
 Farewell, my country, and in perpetuum.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Louis MacNeice, *The Poetry of W.B. Yeats* (1941; London, 2008), 124 n2.

<sup>5</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 8.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

This final farewell, 'in perpetuum', nonetheless leaves open the option to return on holiday, albeit with a foreign 'attitude.' What this passage makes clear is that the speaker's valediction is not so much about physical separation as self-transformation—or at least the wish to be transformed. It is an unreflective, deadening version of Irishness that blocks change and eradicates personal freedom: 'in the cemetery / Sham Celtic crosses claimed our individuality'.<sup>8</sup> The self is absorbed into a collective identity expressed through derivative forms; it is this earlier, passively formed self the speaker wishes to change through his farewell to Ireland.

*Poems* foregrounds this disparity between fixed, totalising forms of identity and more flexible selves open to otherness and change. One of the volume's most anthologised poems, 'Snow,' acknowledges that 'World is crazier and more of it than we think,' celebrating 'The drunkenness of things being various'.<sup>9</sup> Peter McDonald's edition of the *Collected Poems*—as John Kerrigan has noted—allows us to see 'Snow' in its original placement beside 'Belfast', setting up a contrast that is 'typical of MacNeice'.<sup>10</sup> In the context of *Poems*, MacNeice's placement of 'Belfast' after the secular revelation of 'Snow' has the effect of dramatising the freedom afforded by imaginative vision against the entrapment of the individual in prejudice and unreflective tradition: 'The hard cold fire of the northerner / Frozen into his blood from the fire in his basalt / Glares from behind the mica of his eyes'. Whereas the speaker in 'Snow' apprehends the wonder and multifariousness of the world, the northerner merely 'Glares', a word implying a hard stare, a way of looking at without seeing into things. His hardness is both cause and consequence of northern industrialisation, which has contaminated nature as well as man, tainting the 'lurid sky' and 'stained water' of Belfast Lough. The physicality of labour in the Belfast shipyards shades into sectarian brutality—'hammers clang murderously' and the gantries are compared with 'crucifixes'. The Catholic minority is represented in the poem by the figure of a 'shawled factory woman' lying in a chapel porch 'before a garish Virgin', itself an image of static religious identity.<sup>11</sup>

To his credit, MacNeice acknowledges his own place in the social and sectarian divide, as one of those who simply pass the factory woman by,

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 8–9.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>10</sup> John Kerrigan, 'The Ticking Fear', *London Review of Books*, 30/3 (2008), 15–18, <http://www.lrb.co.uk/v30/n03/john-kerrigan/the-ticking-fear>, accessed 5 February 2010.

<sup>11</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 25.

walking ‘so buoyantly and glib’. These divisions have made Northern Ireland a ‘country of cowed and haunted faces’ where even the setting ‘sun goes down with the bang of Orange drums’. In the final two lines, MacNeice alludes to the way an ethos of violence has impacted women, as ‘the male kind murders each its woman / To whose prayer for oblivion answers no Madonna’.<sup>12</sup> What maintains the fixed brutality of sectarian identities in Northern Ireland is an ideology of violence that is ultimately directed at women, who seek only ‘oblivion’. Suppressed by such an ideology, in Chris Wigginton’s view, ‘neither the Virgin or Madonna of Catholicism, nor the Orange drums of Protestantism is able to escape the silencing’.<sup>13</sup> The powerlessness of the Madonna to answer their prayers suggests that even those nurturing, maternal qualities she embodies have been nullified by male violence.

‘Valediction’ and ‘Belfast’ portray Northern Ireland as a society at odds with itself, in which the possibilities for authentic selfhood and community are eclipsed by totalising versions of Irish identity that seek to erase difference through violence. MacNeice’s 1937 journeys to Iceland and the Hebrides are ironically inflected searches for a traditional, sustainable community in which the individual can find fulfilment in society. In ‘Letter to Graham and Anna Shepherd,’ MacNeice sees the virtue of his Iceland trip in the flux of travel itself, characteristically identifying movement with life and stasis with death: ‘we must keep moving to keep pace / Or else drop into Limbo, the dead place’.<sup>14</sup> The alternative to movement is the personal and cultural stagnation he wishes to leave behind in Ireland. MacNeice is under no illusions about Iceland itself, but celebrates its smallness as a precondition for communal life. Though it lacks natural, cultural, and economic wealth,

this nation  
 Enjoys a scarcity of population  
 And cannot rise to many bores or hacks  
 Or paupers or poor men paying Super Tax.<sup>15</sup>

Iceland’s small size and relative economic equality enables a democratic way of life to flourish. Further, the apparent absence of modernity from the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Chris Wigginton, *Modernism from the Margins: The 1930s Poetry of Louis MacNeice and Dylan Thomas* (Cardiff, 2007), 62.

<sup>14</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 51.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 50.

island allows for a cultural continuity with the Icelandic past. For MacNeice, the Icelandic past is the world of the sagas. That its 'literature is all about revenge' clearly resonates with the poet, who in 'Eclogue from Iceland' dramatises a dialogue between the saga hero Grettir Asmundson, Craven (Auden), and Ryan (MacNeice). The poem is included in *The Earth Compels* (1938), a collection that intersects with *Letters from Iceland* and *I Crossed the Minch* in meaningful ways.

In 'Eclogue from Iceland', Grettir asks Craven and Ryan if there are 'men now whose compass leads / Them always down forbidden roads' and how things are in their own homelands.<sup>16</sup> While Craven emphasises the cramped conditions in England, Ryan stresses the social disparity of a country in which 'nothing stands at all / But some fly high and some lie low', an image that at least partly echoes the indifferent strollers passing the factory woman on the church porch in 'Belfast'. Grettir is taken aback by a modern world in which there are simply 'Too many people' and pegs his hope on the way of life possible on an island. Ryan dispels this illusion forthwith:

I come from an island, Ireland, a nation  
 Built upon violence and morose vendettas.  
 My diehard countrymen like drayhorses  
 Drag their ruin behind them.  
 Shooting straight in the cause of crooked thinking  
 Their greed is sugared with pretence of public spirit.  
 From all of which I am exile.<sup>17</sup>

Peter McDonald notes that MacNeice's account of himself is an 'admission of exile rather than a declaration of escape'.<sup>18</sup> Far from providing the potential hope of a small island nation, a divided Ireland breaks up community by driving its inhabitants abroad. Its endemic violence and 'morose vendettas' suggest a world 'close to that of the sagas'.<sup>19</sup> Exile is the flipside of the kind of travel celebrated in 'Letter to Graham and Anna Shepherd'. As an outlaw, Grettir is himself a kind of exile in his own land, travelling by night. In Robyn Marsack's view, 'MacNeice is not interested in idealising the past, yet through Grettir he conveys the strangeness, superhuman action, and magnitude of

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 72–3.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 73.

<sup>18</sup> Peter McDonald, *Louis MacNeice: The Poet in His Contexts* (Oxford, 1991), 71.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

scale of Icelandic life'.<sup>20</sup> Whereas the self-imposed exile of Ryan and Craven is also a form of self-alienation, Grettir's internal exile still enables him to pursue 'the daily goods / The horse-fight, women's thighs, a joint of meat'.<sup>21</sup> Instead of such 'daily goods', once home the visitors can only expect the same daily routine and attempt to escape from cosmopolitan ennui.

Despite the potential alienation of exile, the example of Grettir inspires Ryan to idealise those who have followed their own lights rather than be bound to an oppressive and unsympathetic society:

Let us thank God for valour in abstraction  
 For those who go their own way, will not kiss  
 The arse of law and order nor compound  
 For physical comfort at the place of pride:  
 Soldiers of fortune, renegade artists, and sharpers<sup>22</sup>

Freedom is here identified with an individuality that is markedly liminal, in the anthropological sense of being outside society's accepted structures; MacNeice privileges such individuality over the law-abiding comforts of bourgeois life. Community as embodied by Iceland is an ideal in MacNeice's writing, but where community prohibits the individual from flourishing, the exile rather than the citizen becomes a model of individual freedom.

Much of the dramatic interest in 'Eclogue from Iceland' derives from the tension between Grettir's archaic but meaningful way of life and Ryan's and Craven's cosmopolitan but empty experience of modernity. The travellers express a sense of powerlessness and dread in response to the crises of 1930s Europe, but Grettir counsels them:

Minute your gesture, but it must be made—  
 Your hazard, your act of defiance and hymn of hate,  
 Hatred of hatred, assertion of human values,  
 Which is now your only duty.<sup>23</sup>

While this acknowledges the poets' relative lack of power—a 'gesture' is not the same as an action—it also suggests a vital role for them in a society that

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<sup>20</sup> Robyn Marsack, *The Cave of Making: The Poetry of Louis MacNeice* (Oxford, 1982), 30.

<sup>21</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 75.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 77.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 81.

cannot offer the individual a sense of meaningful community. The 'assertion of human values' may be an odd phrase in the mouth of a medieval Icelander, but it positions the poet as an individual custodian of those values from which authentic community derives.

MacNeice's next collection, *The Earth Compels* (1938), opens with the retrospective 'Carrickfergus', a poem that articulates MacNeice's isolation from the larger Irish community, an isolation culminating in his being sent away to school in Dorset. Its opening stanza emphasises his origins as being between country and city: 'I was born in Belfast between the mountain and the gantries / To the hooting of lost sirens and the clang of trams'. The Belfast of his birth hovers midway between the Irish countryside and the shipyards, dominated by the sounds of an urban modernity not rooted in any particular place or culture. Carrick itself is characterised by harsh division between the 'line of residential houses' in the Scotch Quarter and 'a slum for the blind and the halt' that comprises the Irish Quarter. These divisions are reflected in the physical geography of the town, which from the beginning was meant to be a world apart from the countryside. MacNeice's language shows how the founding of Carrickfergus is a point of origin for the cultural and political divide that continues to haunt the Northern Irish present: 'The Norman walled this town against the country / To stop his ears to the yelping of his slave'. Just as Norman construction creates a physical barrier between their settlement and the surrounding Irish culture, so MacNeice, 'born to the anglican order' is 'Banned forever from the candles of the Irish poor'. Their poverty contrasts with the carved marble effigies of the Chichester family in his father's church, 'With ruffs about their neck, their portion sure'.<sup>24</sup> These figures are, in Louis Marsack's analysis, 'secure in their earthly glory founded on their exploitation of precisely the Irish poor'.<sup>25</sup> The poem then shifts to memories of British soldiers training for the Great War. As harbingers of violence, they follow thematically from the earlier Normans, but their real work in the poem is to set the stage for the child's departure for school in England. From a divided country, the young MacNeice grows into an awareness of a divided world. Far from being a time of innocence, at Sherborne school 'the world of parents / Contracted into a puppet world of sons'.<sup>26</sup> What MacNeice concentrates on in this closing stanza is the extent of his displacement and the continuing awareness of his own origins, even in 'exile'.

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<sup>24</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 55.

<sup>25</sup> Marsack, *Cave of Making*, 14.

<sup>26</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 56.

MacNeice's search for community had continued in his 1937 tour of the Hebrides, undertaken for a travel book commissioned by Longmans, Green, and Company, published the following year as *I Crossed the Minch*. A hybrid text combining poetry, travel journal, fictional dialogue and camp correspondence, *I Crossed the Minch* nonetheless encompasses much acute social observation within its ironic and engagingly personalised narrative. An undergirding preoccupation is, as John Kerrigan notes, 'the question of how far the Hebrides had, and could, resist anglicisation and commercialisation, the two forces striking him as inextricable. He was fascinated by the insularity which made the islands exemplars (he agreed) of independence.'<sup>27</sup> This fascination is balanced by scepticism. In the introductory chapter, MacNeice recognises the quixotic romanticism of his seeking out an authentic community in the Islands: 'I went to the Hebrides partly hoping to find that blood is thicker than ink—that the Celt in me would be drawn to the surface by the magnetism of his fellows. This was a sentimental and futile hope'.<sup>28</sup> His lack of Gaelic excludes him from the indigenous culture he sought to be drawn into, but that culture in any case no longer offers a viable alternative to cosmopolitan modernity. Instead, MacNeice finds the ancient culture of the Islands being visibly eroded by their ties to international capitalism. Hebrideans have become alienated from their traditional ways of life without yet becoming fully modern:

The Hebrides are now being invaded by commerce, which means that they are falling to the foreigner. This process is inevitable, but I should prefer to watch it somewhere where it is further advanced, where differences of wealth are long standing and where, though the primitive culture has gone, a sophisticated culture has succeeded it. More than one generation is required before a man can be a capitalist with grace.<sup>29</sup>

Drawn to the Hebrides in the hopes of participating in a shared Celtic identity, MacNeice is confirmed in his status as an outsider from a society dominated by the very commerce that has already reached the Islands ahead of him. The more communal culture of the Hebrides is giving way to 'differences of wealth,' while ways of life rooted in crofting and fishing become less and less viable.

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<sup>27</sup> John Kerrigan, 'MacNeice among the Islands' in MacKay, Longley and Brearton (eds), *Modern Irish and Scottish Poetry*, 62.

<sup>28</sup> Louis MacNeice, *I Crossed the Minch* (1938; Edinburgh, 2007), 7–8.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

This culture nonetheless possesses considerable residual strength, and a sense of unity that finds political expression in a general commitment to Scottish independence. MacNeice is ambivalent towards Scottish nationalism. On the one hand, he dismisses it as 'a precious affectation of bright young men with a distaste for real politics'.<sup>30</sup> In the case of the Islands, however, Gaelic 'needs no artificial cultivation, their population is small enough to allow of a genuine community feeling, their social life is still homogeneous (though commercialisation may soon drive rifts through it), lastly the sea still separates them from their neighbours'.<sup>31</sup> Those same features that made Iceland such an attractive escape from the crises afflicting the rest of Europe also hold true for the Hebrides. Commenting on the close imaginative connection the Islands had with MacNeice's Irish memories, John Kerrigan writes that the Hebrides 'were tied for him genealogically and experientially, as well as culturally and symbolically, to the islands of the west of Ireland'.<sup>32</sup> Within *I Crossed the Minch*, the question of Scottish nationalism immediately raises that of Ireland. MacNeice initially sees an irreconcilable conflict between local nationalisms and the international socialism espoused by the thirties left: 'With the World Revolution and the Classless Society waiting for a midwife, why take a torch to the stable to assist at the birth of a puppy?' Nonetheless, he recognises that this irreconcilability is reflected in his own changeable attitudes: 'When I am in Ireland I find myself becoming Nationalist. If I lived in the Hebrides, I should certainly plump for the puppy'.<sup>33</sup> Identifying what specific 'puppy' MacNeice has in mind, Kerrigan sees its meaning slipping here from 'the Hebrides to something more like Scotland', suggesting a temporary identification of the Hebrides with the whole Scottish nation.<sup>34</sup> MacNeice himself acknowledges that his shifting political allegiances and grow out of his participation in a particular community; lacking permanent membership in such a community, his allegiances fluctuate.

The word MacNeice uses to describe the value of small communities and cultures like those of the Hebrides is 'differentiation'. This emphasis on difference reflects the coherence in his thought and poetry, recalling as it does 'the drunkenness of things being various' celebrated in 'Snow'.<sup>35</sup> Differentiation has both a political and ethical imperative. MacNeice is

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 13–14.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>32</sup> Kerrigan, 'MacNeice among the Islands', 62–3.

<sup>33</sup> MacNeice, *I Crossed the Minch*, 14.

<sup>34</sup> Kerrigan, 'MacNeice among the Islands', 66.

<sup>35</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 24.

sceptical towards those who would level all differences to bring about ‘the co-operation of one with the other in forwarding the march of history and singing the one creed in unison’, citing instead the example of Lenin, ‘who saw clearly that differentiation was necessary; only it must not be founded on the irrelevant accident of birth or the luck of money’.<sup>36</sup> In an economically just world, local differences would flourish alongside one another. This leads MacNeice to a critique of the kind of cultural uniformity imposed by Fascism:

A world society must be a federation of differentiated communities, not a long line of robots doing the goose-step. In the same way the community itself must be a community of individuals. Only they must not be fake individuals—archaizers and dilettantes—any more than the community must be a fake community, a totalitarian state strutting in the robes of Caesardom.<sup>37</sup>

Authenticity and community are here set against their opposites, fakery and totalitarianism. The ‘community of individuals’ is not a paradox for MacNeice, for it is only through community that individuals achieve authenticity. The ‘archaizers and dilettantes’ (perhaps an allusion to reactionary modernists like Ezra Pound) are fake individuals because their individuality is rooted not in community, but in adherence to nostalgia and whimsy. Similarly, the Fascist donning of ‘the robes of Caesardom’ marks its totalitarian society as ‘a fake community’ created by an imposed uniformity. Valentine Cunningham sees MacNeice here ‘resisting the current masses rhetoric because of the goosestepping Caesar tendencies of “Collective Man”’.<sup>38</sup> Like many on the left during the 1930s, MacNeice tentatively holds up the Soviet Union as an exemplary ‘federation of differentiated communities’, but his wording betrays a certain scepticism: ‘The Soviet Union, I am told, encourages the maintenance of local traditions though in subservience to the new order’.<sup>39</sup> While ‘the maintenance of local traditions’ is clearly an important element in cultural differentiation, the Soviet example is introduced as hearsay, and ‘subservience’ suggests an awareness of Moscow’s own totalitarian tendencies, further re-enforced by the phrase ‘new order,’ in the 1930s more usually applied to Fascism.

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<sup>36</sup> MacNeice, *I Crossed the Minch*, 15.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>38</sup> Valentine Cunningham, *British Writers of the Thirties* (Oxford, 1988), 272.

<sup>39</sup> MacNeice, *I Crossed the Minch*, 16.

In Chapter VI, 'Potted History,' MacNeice offers a critique of the effects of capitalism on traditional communities through a short account of Hebridean history, culminating in a satire on Lord Leverhulme, the twentieth-century soap manufacturer and landlord who attempted to reform the Isle of Lewis. In documenting the islanders' resistance and survival, MacNeice offers a kind of counter-history in miniature, challenging the easy assimilation of the islanders' story into larger British narratives of social or economic progress. The chapter begins with a hesitant privileging of isolated, marginal societies: 'How lucky, they say, are the people who have always been out of the way.'<sup>40</sup> In this 'potted history', however, the position of Lewis between cultures and centres of political power means that it has always been an object of depredation by outsiders. MacNeice quotes Leverhulme as intending to manage Lewis 'on business lines' before situating him in a long line of raiders seeking to exploit the island. The modern capitalist is successor to such figures as 'Ketil Flatnose from Norway' and, even earlier, 'Finn with the Feine'.<sup>41</sup> Such figures form part of the island's ongoing history, which began with successive rule by Iberians, Celts, Norse, and Scots, creating a hybrid identity. Cultural mixing has thus always been a part of the Hebridean experience, and MacNeice does not idealise the pre-capitalist past. Clan warfare, despotic rule, and bloody revenge characterise centuries of the island's history. What endure are the people and, for a time, their ancient customs: 'Men walked out into the sea invoking the sea-god Shony offering him a cup of beer and asking him to send them seaweed. Old women sold the sea to sailors'.<sup>42</sup> Eighteenth-century Jacobitism temporarily invigorates the culture, finding in the figure of Charles Edward Stuart 'a permanent focus for the nostalgia of Gaeldom', whose defeat would result in government efforts to destroy Gaelic culture altogether.<sup>43</sup> Despite the deaths of many, the people nonetheless survive nineteenth-century Clearances and conscription during the Great War. He concludes his history with an account of a tragic shipwreck in which servicemen from Lewis are drowned returning to the island.

MacNeice follows his potted history with an untitled ballad that appears under 'Uncollected Poems' in Peter McDonald's edition of the *Collected* as 'The Life of Lord Leverhulme'.<sup>44</sup> The figure of Leverhulme is portrayed—accurately enough—as an ambitious capitalist reformer, whose hopes for the Hebrides

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 81.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>44</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 754–9.

are undone by the tenacity of the islanders. The ballad thus works as a kind of parable of the confrontation between capitalism and tradition, but unlike in the contemporary Hebrides visited by MacNeice, tradition emerges the temporary victor. His choice of the ballad form is significant here; of all verse forms, the ballad most fully expresses popular and communal tradition. As a counterpoint to the potted history offered in the first part of the chapter, the ballad celebrates popular resistance to the powerful forces shaping modern western history beyond the Hebrides.

Despite his modest origins as ‘a grocer’s son’, Leverhulme achieves business success with his patent on Sunlight Soap, which generates enough capital to enable him to buy up his competitors.<sup>45</sup> From there, his friendship with Gladstone leads to a seat in parliament. After weathering libel in the press, Leverhulme expands his business empire to America and the tropics. In MacNeice’s cagey depiction, Leverhulme is driven in his later years by a desire to be remembered by posterity, commissioning portraits ‘By Sir William Orpen and Augustus John.’ The desire for posthumous remembrance is explicitly linked with Britain’s imperial presence in Africa: ‘He sailed the Niger black as night / And he left his name on a jungle site’.<sup>46</sup> This capitalist, imperialist context sets the stage for Leverhulme’s purchase of Lewis as the object of his reforming zeal:

He bought up Lewis and then he began  
To chart and build and kipper and can;  
Every item was to run to scheme,  
There’d be no hitches in the new régime.

He took the roof off over his bed  
And he founded MacFisheries Limited  
That the British householder might get  
The northern herring fresh from the net.

Leverhulme’s ‘scheme’ to turn a traditional, semi-feudal society into a modern fishery brings in new values emphasising planning and efficiency, ultimately driven by the market demands of ‘the British householder’.

What Leverhulme does not count on is the devotion of the island’s inhabitants to Lewis and its culture:

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<sup>45</sup> MacNeice, *I Crossed the Minch*, 85.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

But Lever's totalitarian plan  
 Was caviare to the Lewisman;  
 Our lands, they said, to us belong  
 And raided the farms at Gress and Tong.<sup>47</sup>

MacNeice's use of 'totalitarian' is telling here, echoing as it does his dismissal of the totalitarian state's claim to embody an authentic, lived community. It suggests that the kind of paternalistic capitalism imposed by Leverhulme is a forerunner of totalitarian politics. His treatment of the island as private property contrasts dramatically with the sense of communal ownership expressed by the first-person plural of 'Our lands ... to us belong'. Despite Leverhulme's appeals to the Minister of Scottish Affairs, the islanders refuse to back down, and he is forced to admit defeat. He donates the Parish of Stornoway to the people of Lewis, but sells off the rest of the island in parcels of land 'To people who wanted a shooting box'; in a sense, Leverhulme has the last laugh by dividing up the island into blocks of private property for wealthy shooters.<sup>48</sup> After another island failure on Harris, Leverhulme dies and MacNeice imagines him introducing an advertising campaign into heaven, one that is so successful it puts the Devil out of business. In the poem's final stanza, however, 'The moors were quiet on the Hebrides / The crofters gossiped in Gaelic speech / And the waves crept over the lonely beach'.<sup>49</sup> Landscape, culture, and people survive Leverhulme's capitalist scheming. This peaceful image of a rooted people carrying on their way of life is disturbed, however, by its context in *I Crossed the Minch*, which portrays that way of life as it is being eroded by capitalism and modernity several decades later.

By MacNeice's own admission, *I Crossed the Minch* is 'the book of a tripper, a person concerned with the surface', rather than a serious attempt at sociological observation and analysis.<sup>50</sup> Nonetheless, his commitment to cultural differentiation informs the poetry that emerged out of his Hebridean experience in important ways. Reprinted in *The Earth Compels*, 'Bagpipe Music' is a darkly comic masterpiece in its own right, but when read in the context of *I Crossed the Minch*, the satirical bite of the poem is much more apparent. Its satire is directed at the threat posed by capitalist modernity to the principle of

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 88.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 18.

differentiation. Unlike a vibrant (or even a stagnant) local tradition, capitalism continuously renders its products and pastimes obsolete, manipulating human desire for novelty and sensation: 'It's no go the merrigoround, it's no go the rickshaw, / All we want is a limousine, and a ticket for the peepshow'. MacNeice explicitly satirises the grotesque effect of capitalism on Hebridean culture in the second stanza:

John MacDonald found a corpse, put it under the sofa,  
 Waited till it came to life, and hit it with a poker,  
 Sold its eyes for souvenirs, sold its blood for whiskey,  
 Kept its bones for dumb-bells to use when he was fifty.<sup>51</sup>

Motivated by profit, John MacDonald comically (or chillingly) refuses to perform the most basic act of human culture, burying the dead. Instead, he murders the resurrected corpse, selling its eyes to tourists and its blood as authentic island whiskey. The keeping of the 'bones for dumb-bells to use when he was fifty' suggests a stereotypical thrift, but also hints at the cult of youth and fitness that accompanies capitalism in its twentieth-century ascent.

The poem makes short work of the kind of spiritualism advocated by W.B. Yeats as an alternative to Victorian materialism: 'It's no go the Yogi-Man, it's no go Blavatsky, / All we want is a bank balance, and a bit of skirt in a taxi'.<sup>52</sup> Money and sex are what motivate modern man; the debased spiritual cravings of the nineteenth century have become a 'no go,' giving way to the more frankly sensual appetites of the twentieth. Woman is commodified in the colloquial synecdoche 'a bit of skirt', a phrase significantly placed between 'bank balance' and 'taxi', the object of male desire poised midway between capital and paid-for service. Another source of readerly unease in the poem is MacNeice's persistent use of the pronoun 'we', which includes both poet and audience within the field of potential speakers, who are never identified. The bardic role assumed by Yeats, in which the poet comments on society from a position of independent and inspired privilege, is itself a 'no go'; poet and reader, as much as the cast of unsavoury characters presented in 'Bagpipe Music', are all implicated in the capitalist modernity satirised by the poem.

In place of the traditional culture and economy of the islands, the inhabitants come to depend upon modern addictions and public charity: 'It's no

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 163.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

go the Herring Board, it's no go the Bible / All we want is a packet of fags when our hands are idle'. Their aspiration now is simply to 'Sit on your arse for fifty years and hang your hat on a pension'.<sup>53</sup> Deprived of its social significance within the immediate community, work has become merely time serving. Ironically, in eradicating their traditional ways of life, capitalism has increased the dependence of Hebrideans on government assistance, undermining those very values of self-reliance and thrift promoted by Lord Leverhulme.

The final poem in *The Earth Compels*, following 'Bagpipe Music,' is 'Postscript to Iceland,' dedicated to W.H. Auden. In it, MacNeice rejects the 'Idyll on a mythic shore', admitting his preference for 'a fancy turn, you know, / Sandwiched in a graver show'. His island excursions are haunted by an uneasy awareness of the 'graver show' being played out in mid-thirties Europe, from which there can be no real escape in Iceland or the Hebrides. Events on the continent seem to promise a future 'hell':

Down in Europe Seville fell,  
Nations germinating hell,  
The Olympic games were run –  
Spots upon the Aryan sun.<sup>54</sup>

The Olympics are only 'spots' on the sun of Nazi totalitarianism, no more an actual escape than MacNeice's brief sojourn abroad. Looking back fondly on his holiday from the seclusion of his study, he becomes increasingly aware of his own isolation and uncertainty:

For the litany of doubt  
From these walls comes breathing out  
Till the room becomes a pit  
Humming with the fear of it

With the fear of loneliness  
And uncommunicableness;  
All the wires are cut, my friends  
Live beyond the severed ends.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 164.

<sup>54</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 96.

At the end of his search for authentic community in Iceland, MacNeice finds himself, ironically, marooned on the island of his own isolated self, cut off from society just as Iceland is apart from the rest of Europe. The final two stanzas of the poem voice admiration for Auden's prolix vitality, closing with a toast offered 'before / The gun-butt raps upon the door'.<sup>55</sup> Instead of friendship restoring MacNeice to society, the anticipated gun-butt threatens to force violence into the confines of his own private study, a nightmare inversion of the quest for community undertaken in *Letters from Iceland* and *I Crossed the Minch*.

In *Autumn Journal* (1939), MacNeice offers both a poetic record and sustained reflection upon his life during the previous decade. As such, the poem looks back upon his problematic relationship with England and Ireland, picking up and developing themes explored earlier in 'Belfast' and 'Valediction'. There is often a sense of displacement in MacNeice's references to England that is markedly different from its portrayal in Auden's poetry, even in the deliberately estranging perspective of 'On This Island'. In section VIII, for example, MacNeice looks back upon the early, care-free days of his failed marriage, when 'the map of England was a toy bazaar' for the couples' motoring expeditions 'into the green / Fields of English history'.<sup>56</sup> England is the site of rural holiday pursuits, immured in its own past: a tourist's vision of the country, rather than home. In section XVI, MacNeice acknowledges that even though he has been 'educated and domiciled in England', Ireland's 'name keeps ringing like a bell / in an underwater belfry'.<sup>57</sup> This image figures the poet's relationship to Ireland as a submerged awareness evoked by its name, while the 'underwater belfry' suggests the flooded cities of Celtic legend. The Anglo-Saxon surface of MacNeice's English milieu merely conceals Gaelic depths of memory, feeling and imagination.

Section XVI of *Autumn Journal* begins with an admission of jealousy towards those who are decisive enough to take action without being hampered by fear and self-doubt, in contrast with the nightmare-ridden poet. It is as though Yeats's best who 'lack all conviction' in 'The Second Coming' confess to being jealous of the 'passionate intensity' of the worst:<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 98.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 117, 118.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>58</sup> W. B. Yeats, *The Poems*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York, 1997), 189.

And I envy the intransigence of my own  
Countrymen who shoot to kill and never  
See the victim's face become their own  
Or find his motive sabotage their motives.<sup>59</sup>

The absence of liberal equivocation among Irish extremists enables action, but violent action that quickly becomes an end in itself. In considering the life of Maud Gonne, for example, MacNeice realises that 'a single purpose can be founded on / A jumble of opposites', a somewhat pained recognition that motive need not make sense to be effective. The attempt to make sense underlies much of MacNeice's poetry of the 1930s, but making sense of a situation may be less likely to inspire action than a partial view strongly insisted upon. Such partiality characterises Belfast as remembered by MacNeice, where the threat of imminent violence colludes with historical memory to create a régime of fear. Within his own family household, he recalls 'the fear / Banded among the servants / That Casement would land at the pier / With a sword and a horde of rebels'; this particular panic is answered by 'the voodoo of the Orange bands / Drawing an iron net through darkest Ulster'. The diction here is striking, and displaces these twentieth-century threats into the domains of the pre-modern past (sword, horde) and the modernist primitive (voodoo, darkest). The adjective 'darkest', conventionally followed by 'Africa', suggests a parallel between the African colonies and the status of Northern Ireland following partition.<sup>60</sup> Violence in MacNeice's vision of Ulster represents the resurgence of the archaic and the repressed, an echo and refutation of Yeats' insistence that 'some revelation is at hand'.<sup>61</sup> A resurgence of archaic feeling here produces no revelation, merely violent motive. The 'jumble of opposites' that characterises sectarian conflict in Ulster results in stalemate, a society in which 'one read black where the other read white, his hope / The other man's damnation'.<sup>62</sup>

As in 'Valediction', MacNeice challenges traditional ways of framing Irish identity, questioning the assumptions, language, and symbolism of both loyalist and nationalist discourses. Terence Brown observes that MacNeice was 'alienated from both versions of Irish identity that had so violently asserted themselves in his lifetime'.<sup>63</sup> His critique of the way Ireland is imagined

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<sup>59</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 137.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>61</sup> Yeats, 'The Second Coming' in *The Poems*, 189.

<sup>62</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 138.

<sup>63</sup> Terence Brown. *Louis MacNeice: Sceptical Vision* (Dublin, 1975), 12.

typologically (as ‘land of scholars and saints’ or through the figure of Kathleen ni Houlihan) contrasts these images with other ‘types’ drawn from modern Irish society. It might be objected that in doing so MacNeice simply engages in a fresh form of stereotyping that works against the journalistic observation of the poem as a whole. MacNeice’s ‘grocer drunk with the drum’ is as much a figure of ridicule as Yeats’ Paudeen, but whereas Yeats conjures Paudeen to mock the Catholic lower-middle class, MacNeice’s Orange grocer belongs with ‘The landlord shot in his bed’ as symptomatic of a society crazed by violence.<sup>64</sup> Such diagnostics are characteristic of *Autumn Journal*, as well as of 1930s poetry in general. ‘The shawled woman weeping at the garish altar’ immediately evokes the figure of Kathleen ni Houlihan, prompting reflection on the gendered way Ireland has been imagined:

Why

Must a country, like a ship or a car, be always female,  
 Mother or sweetheart? A woman passing by,  
 We did but see her passing.  
 Passing like a patch of sun on the rainy hill  
 And yet we love her for ever and hate our neighbour  
 And each one in his will  
 Binds his heirs to continuance of hatred.<sup>65</sup>

The initial rhetorical question draws attention to the way such naming transforms possessions into objects of (male) libidinal desire. As he notes in *The Poetry of W.B. Yeats*, MacNeice thought an Oedipus complex lay at the very heart of Irish nationalism. Although he here portrays the figure of Kathleen ni Houlihan as ‘A woman passing by’, rather than ‘Mother or sweetheart’, in doing so he remains complicit in the gendered nationalism he attacks. Chris Wigginton suggests that ‘it is MacNeice’s uncanny (in this sense literally *unheimlich*, or unhomely) hybridised, post-colonial status that allows his disruption of the masculine inscription of the nation as female’.<sup>66</sup> However, MacNeice’s attempt to imagine Kathleen as an actual woman, not simply the product of masculine fantasy, continues to inscribe Ireland as female. Glimpsed rather than gazed upon, she still elicits a passionate and dangerous devotion that excludes friendship between neighbours. MacNeice

<sup>64</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 138.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 138–9.

<sup>66</sup> Wigginton, *Modernism from the Margins*, 61.

includes himself in the 'we' who fall in love with her, acknowledging his own complicity in the Irish family romance. His comparison of Kathleen to 'a patch of sun on the rainy hill' suggests she is both fleeting and as natural as the Irish weather. Her beauty, however enchanting, cannot justify the binding of each new generation to 'continuance of hatred'. The paradox of nationalist passion, for MacNeice, is that such fervent love of country can inspire such fervent hatred between its citizens.

Having reflected upon the icon of republican Irish nationalism, MacNeice turns to the symbolic expression of Orange identity in Ulster, the commemoration of the Battle of the Boyne. The insistent Orange drumming virtually brings the dead back to life, as the image of King William marshals his supporters to relive the historic battle:

King William is riding his white horse back  
To the Boyne on a banner.  
Thousands of banners, thousands of white  
Horses, thousands of Williams  
Waving thousands of swords and ready to fight  
Till the blue sea turns to orange.<sup>67</sup>

The reproduction of William's image mirrors the re-enactment of his arrival at the River Boyne, a seemingly endless iteration of a sectarian identity frozen in its mythologised moment of inception. As Robyn Marsack notes of 'Valediction', when MacNeice imagines Ireland, he sees 'the whole nation trapped by its past'.<sup>68</sup> In the context of Section XVI of *Autumn Journal*, the figure of William balances that of Kathleen ni Houlihan. Conquering hero and long-suffering mother, lover and victim both inspire violent passion in their followers, but remain elusive examples of what Peter McDonald calls 'the Irish myth of Irishness, with its menacing, but ultimately empty, phantom of national "identity"'.<sup>69</sup> Both are projections of communal identity and desire that cannot fully be realised in the historical present without the exclusion or submission of the other.

In attempting to answer the question, 'Why do we like being Irish?', MacNeice initially draws attention to the 'hold' the Irish have 'on the sentimental English / As members of a world that never was, / Baptised

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<sup>67</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 139.

<sup>68</sup> Marsack, *Cave of Making*, 11.

<sup>69</sup> McDonald, *Louis MacNeice*, 1.

with fairy water'. The English remain spellbound by the otherness of Ireland, even though that otherness as imagined by England is largely 'a world that never was'. Like Iceland or the Hebrides in MacNeice's travel writing, Ireland appears to offer the jaded modern a residually pre-capitalist society and economy. The smallness of Ireland allows it 'To be still thought of with family feeling'. MacNeice initially seems to accept the binary of industrial England and rural Ireland. As an island, it is 'split' by the Irish sea from the 'more commercial culture' of England. Its apparent isolation from the forces of global capitalism allows for unalienated labour, the opportunity to 'Do local work which is not at the world's mercy / And that on this tiny stage with luck a man / Might see the end of one particular action'. Whereas work under modern capitalism alienates workers by separating them from the ultimate ends of production, Ireland seems to hold forth the possibility of work that is both locally meaningful and which the worker will see through to completion. As he saw in the erosion of local crofting and fishing in the Hebrides, however, MacNeice realises that this possibility too is a 'no-go':

It is self-deception of course;  
 There is no immunity in this island either;  
 A cart that is drawn by somebody else's horse  
 And carrying goods to somebody else's market.<sup>70</sup>

Capitalism and the division of labour manifest themselves in even the most rudimentary village economy, binding the worker to 'somebody else'.

Having dispelled the illusions of Ireland's symbolic identities and its apparent isolation from global capitalism, MacNeice launches an all-out assault on what he perceives as the narrowness and squalor of life in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. He begins by condemning the violent republican tradition: 'The bombs in the turnip sack, the sniper from the roof, / Griffith, Connolly, Collins, where have they brought us?'. Ireland's insularity now appears in a different light, with the distinctly Yeatsian symbol of 'the round tower' holding itself 'aloof / In a world of bursting mortar'.<sup>71</sup> There is a fundamental disconnection between the artillery powered violence of modern Ireland and its self-mythologising through artefacts of the ancient Irish past. If there is an implied critique of Yeats' cultural politics here, MacNeice's criticism of life in the republic echo Yeats' own:

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<sup>70</sup> MacNeice, *Collected Poems*, 139.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

Let the school-children fumble their sums  
 In a half-dead language;  
 Let the censor be busy on the books; pull down the Georgian slums;  
 Let the games be played in Gaelic.<sup>72</sup>

The first lines conflate the language of Yeats' 'Among School-Children' and 'September 1913', but in ways that make it difficult to determine if they do so as conscious parody or unconscious echo. There are clear affinities in the two poets' outlook. In Edna Longley's view, 'Despite his different brand of "Anglo-Irish" hybridisation, his half-way house between the conditions of Anglo-Irishman and Ulster Protestant, MacNeice is the major Irish poet after Yeats who follows him in broad cultural orientation'.<sup>73</sup> Yeats' 1926 visit, as 'a smiling public man', to a Wexford school, emphasises its modernity, as the pupils learn 'to be neat in everything / In the best modern way'.<sup>74</sup> In contrast, MacNeice draws attention to the resurrection of 'a half-dead language' as an ineffective medium for modern instruction. MacNeice's choice of 'fumble' to describe the pupils' efforts to perform addition in Gaelic cannot but evoke Yeats's image of the calculating Paudeen who 'fumble[s] in a greasy till / Adding the half-pence to the pence'.<sup>75</sup> Both poets criticise the *petite bourgeois* values dominating modern Ireland, but for MacNeice such values are symptomatic of the global ascendancy of western capitalism, with nationalism and culture pressed into its service. The Catholic state's censoriousness and assault on Georgian architecture manifest a parochial rejection of both ideas and history, those engines of 1930s poetry.

At the end of the decade, MacNeice's retrospective critique of Irish identities seems not so much to have changed or come full circle as to have intensified in anger and frustration. His failed search for community animates the rejections of received versions of Irishness in *Autumn Journal*, and would later find partial resolution among the citizens of fire-bombed London during the war. MacNeice's writing recognises that no European island, however remote, could provide even a temporary escape from the pressures of modernity and history. These are pressures that reach not only traditional island communities, but also act upon and divide the poet's sense of self. These divisions reflect those of Britain and Ireland, and John Kerrigan is

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., 139–40.

<sup>73</sup> Edna Longley, *Louis MacNeice: A Critical Study* (1988; London, 1996), 28.

<sup>74</sup> Yeats, *The Poems*, 219.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 107.

surely right when he writes of MacNeice that ‘so many more of his qualities are visible if he is thought about in the context of what the Good Friday Agreement calls “the totality of relationships among the peoples of these islands”’.<sup>76</sup> While he struggled to come to terms with the divisions in his inner and outer worlds, MacNeice articulated that struggle in poetry and prose that directly engages our own contemporary concerns over cultural survival and the struggle for community in a globalising world.

*Albertus Magnus College*

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<sup>76</sup> Kerrigan, ‘The Ticking Fear’.

# ‘The Cold Northern Land of Suomi’: Michael Davitt and Finnish Nationalism<sup>1</sup>

Andrew G. Newby

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*-Paris, past and present, he said. You look like communards.  
-Like fellows who had blown up the Bastille, J.J. O'Molloy said in quiet mockery.  
Or was it you shot the lord lieutenant of Finland between you? You look as though  
you had done the deed. General Bobrikoff.  
[...] -We were only thinking about it, Stephen said.<sup>2</sup>*

James Joyce's imagined exchange between O'Molloy and Dedalus took place in the offices of the *Freeman's Journal*, just as news was breaking of a political assassination on the other side of Europe. *Ulysses* eventually made 16 June 1904 one of the most celebrated days in Irish history. The fatal shooting in Helsinki of the Governor General of Finland, Nicolai Bobrikov<sup>3</sup>, ensured that the date also achieved notoriety in the Finnish national narrative. As a man roughly equivalent to the British viceroys of Ireland, news of Bobrikov's death reverberated around Europe, and it was in this context of political violence, reminiscent of the Phoenix Park assassinations of Burke and Cavendish in 1882, that Michael Davitt found himself in Finland for the first time. If he required any confirmation of the febrile political atmosphere, it arrived less than a year later. On the same morning that Davitt arrived in Finland for a second visit, 6 February 1905, the Finnish Chancellor of Justice, Eliel Soisalon-Soininen was killed by an assassin's bullet in downtown Helsinki.

Both of Davitt's visits to Helsinki followed on from more extensive tours of Russia, where he was particularly keen to investigate the pogroms

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<sup>1</sup> Quotations from the Davitt Papers are reproduced by kind permission of the Board of Trinity College Dublin. Translations are the author's own unless stated otherwise. Some of this material has been developed from an earlier Swedish-language article: See Andrew G. Newby, "The Manly Spirit of Finlanders": Michael Davitt, Finland och irländsk nationalism åren 1905–1905' in Peter Stadius, Stefan Nygård and Parkko Havtamäki (eds), *Opera Et Dies: Festskrift till Lars-Folke Landgren* (Helsingfors, 2011), 131–46.

<sup>2</sup> James Joyce, *Ulysses* (1922 edition, Oxford, 1993), 129.

<sup>3</sup> In transliteration from Cyrillic, contemporary English-, Finnish- and Swedish-language sources tend to use the spelling Bobrikoff. I have used the modern form Bobrikov in this article, other than in direct quotations.

against the Jews in Bessarabia, as well as the more general question of labour relations in the Russian Empire. For Davitt, social and political activist, and investigative journalist, Russia in 1904–5 was a fascinating land of contrasts.<sup>4</sup> He made comprehensive notes on the state of Finnish society, and filed reports to various newspapers about the relationship between Finland and Russia. On returning to Ireland, Davitt then used Finland as an explicit comparator in political speeches: he highlighted the strength of the Finnish people in developing and defending their constitutional rights, and of the hypocrisy of the British establishment in supporting the Finns whilst denying self-government to the Irish.

### Davitt's Background

Details of Davitt's early life are well known, his family emigrating from Straide, County Mayo, during the Great Famine, and settling in Lancashire. Davitt lost his arm in an industrial accident at the age of eleven, and thereafter attended school and worked as a printer's mate.<sup>5</sup> He was attracted to revolutionary Irish nationalism, joining the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and becoming a very active Fenian in England. In 1870 he was arrested while waiting for an arms supplier in Paddington Station, and subsequently suffered seven and a half extremely arduous years in Clerkenwell Prison. In the period immediately after his release on a 'ticket of leave' from Clerkenwell, he was one of the prime movers of the Irish 'New Departure', allying Fenianism, parliamentary agitation, and the nascent land movement in Western Ireland; an initiative that earned Davitt the title 'Father of the Land League'. This period also saw Davitt attain an elevated place in Irish history, but a long and varied career still lay before him, and after 1882 he fought not only for Irish self-government and land reform, but championed the labour movement and various causes throughout the world, including the Scottish crofters, the Russian Jews, and the Boers.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Antti Kujala, 'Finland in 1905: The Political and Social History of the Revolution' in Jonathan D. Smele and Anthony Heywood (eds), *The Russian Revolution of 1905: Centenary Perspectives* (Abingdon, 2005), 79–93.

<sup>5</sup> Theodore W. Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution, 1846–82* (Oxford, 1981), 1–185; C. King, *Michael Davitt* (Dublin, 2000), 10–14; Francis Sheehy-Skeffington, *Michael Davitt: Revolutionary, Agitator and Labour Leader* (London, 1908), 1–13; L. Marley, *Michael Davitt: Freelance Radical and Frondeur* (Dublin, 2007), 17–33.

<sup>6</sup> Fintan Lane and Andrew G. Newby (eds), *Michael Davitt: New Perspectives* (Dublin,

## Finland and Ireland in the Late Nineteenth Century

Britons are friends of liberty, the strenuous supporters of self-government in every country in the world. Just at present their generous hearts are aflame with indignation because the emperor of Russia proposes to invade the Home Rule of Finland. But prejudice is as a bandage binding British eyes when they look westward over Ireland.<sup>7</sup>

For much of the nineteenth century there were considerable differences between the constitutional relationships between Finland and Russia on the one hand, and Ireland and Great Britain on the other. Anthony Upton's summary of nineteenth-century Finnish history, that 'the 120-years [sic] relationship between Finland and the Russian Empire was one in which for more than three-quarters of the time, virtually down to 1899, the relationship was a positive one and in an overall sense trouble-free ...' does not, even in revisionist historiography, reflect the Irish case.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, with debates over Home Rule in the 1880s, and increasing tension in the light of Russification in the 1890s, Davitt had a familiar context in which to situate his observations.

The historical and constitutional parallels between Finland and Ireland were well-known on both sides, and frequently employed as rhetorical devices in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Like Ireland, Finland had undergone fundamental changes in its constitutional status in the first years of the nineteenth century. In 1800, Ireland's parliament was abolished and the island was ruled from London. Nine years later, amidst the turmoil of the Napoleonic Wars, Finland was removed from Swedish control under the terms of the Treaty of Frederikshamn, and became a Grand Duchy of the Russian Empire.<sup>9</sup> Within these constitutional frameworks, and in the wider context of European nationalisms in the nineteenth century, several superficial

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<sup>7</sup> 'The One Thing Needed', *Freeman's Journal*, 29 May 1899, being a commentary after a speech by Michael Davitt at Knock, County Mayo, May 1899.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony F. Upton, 'Epilogue' in Michael Branch, Janet M. Harley and Antoni Mączak (eds) *Finland and Poland in the Russian Empire: A Comparative Study* (London, 1995), 283.

<sup>9</sup> For a useful summary, see Bill Kissane, 'Nineteenth-Century Nationalism in Finland and Ireland: A Comparative Analysis', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 6 (2000), 28. See also Stein Rokkan, 'Mass Politics and Political Mobilisation: Reflections on Possible Models of Explanation', *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 5 (1970), 65.

points of comparison emerged between Finland and Ireland.<sup>10</sup> These points of comparison came into particularly sharp focus during the debates over Irish Home Rule in the 1880s, when the relationship between Finland and Russia was presented by Home Rule advocates as a perfect accommodation between a larger and smaller power, allowing the growth of native ingenuity and identity, within an imperial framework which then benefitted from these developments. Thus, in the early 1890s, Finland was championed by Home Rulers as ‘assuredly the best-governed country in Europe’, and ‘probably the happiest instance in the world of a Home Rule country governed thoroughly well.’<sup>11</sup> Irish nationalists used Finland as an example that Home Rule was not only possible, but desirable; that it could strengthen, rather than dissolve, the union of Great Britain and Ireland, and consequently the British Empire; and that British support for the rights of a ‘small nation’ like Finland exposed considerable hypocrisy.

Finland’s constitutional status was covered in many of the important current affairs journals, and Davitt, naturally, was aware of these international comparisons.<sup>12</sup> At a meeting in Kingstown in 1883, he was present as Thomas Sexton argued that Irish Home Rulers could ‘show that the people of Finland, with their bleak sky and sterile land, are happy and free, even under the domination of the Czar of Russia...’<sup>13</sup> Davitt again heard Sexton idealise Finland at the height of the first Home Rule crisis in 1886, at a combined meeting of the Liberals and Irish National League: ‘Perhaps the most significant case of all is the case of Russia and Finland. Russia itself is honeycombed with conspiracies. The lives of its rulers are placed in daily peril, while all the time the relations between the imperial crown and the Grand Duchy of Finland are harmonious and peaceful because the Imperial rulers in St Petersburg have had the wisdom to allow the people of Finland to manage their own affairs.’<sup>14</sup> William Gladstone himself stressed that Finland’s ‘legislative independence’ had provided ‘complete satisfaction in Finland, and [had] made Finland most loyally attached to Russia.’<sup>15</sup>

Exasperation among Irish Nationalists at Britain’s reluctance to accept

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<sup>10</sup> Tony Griffiths, *Scandinavia: At War with Trolls* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., New York, 2004), 6, 26, 81, 84 makes various brief allusions in this regard.

<sup>11</sup> *John Bull*, 17 January 1891; *Manchester Guardian*, 11 February 1891.

<sup>12</sup> Peter Kropotkin, ‘Finland: A Rising Nationality’, *Nineteenth Century* 17 (March, 1885), 527.

<sup>13</sup> ‘Ireland’s Cause and the Irish Party’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 23 September 1885.

<sup>14</sup> ‘Great Home Rule Meeting in St James’s Hall’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 24 June 1886.

<sup>15</sup> ‘Mr Gladstone at Midlothian’, *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 October 1890.

Home Rule for Ireland, even in the face of apparently workable examples from Europe, was increased by the concern shown by Britain that Finland's constitutional liberties were coming under increasing threat from St Petersburg. For the British, however, there was no apparent awareness of double standards. British constructions of the Finns and the Irish were divergent, and instructive in the light they shed on Britain's own self-image, international and imperial priorities, and supposed values during the Victorian period. While British reactions to the Great Irish Famine were more nuanced than implied by the nationalist historiography, there seems no doubt that the British press helped to confirm negative attitudes about the ability of the (Catholic) Irish to embrace modernity and become self-sufficient.<sup>16</sup> A decade later, as Finland and neighbouring Sweden suffered from famines, the British public donated considerable relief funds. While the British navy may not have differentiated between Finland and 'Russia Proper' during the Crimean War, British popular opinion most certainly did, and there was a great deal of sympathy for the Finns, not least because of economic ties and Britain's own fluid ideas of race and ethnicity.<sup>17</sup>

When it came to creating divisions within the Russian Empire, the British press were happy to construct Finns as 'Scandinavians', deserving home rule or independence, to allow them to exist alongside other Scandinavian states.<sup>18</sup> The British believed that, within the United Kingdom, the Irish were benefitting from civilising influences. Conversely, however, they also thought that Finnish Home Rule allowed the Finns to distance themselves from the perceived backwardness of Slavism and draw closer to the higher civilisations of Scandinavia. This was the clear implication when, for example, the *Daily News* argued in 1890 that 'there might be little or nothing to say against a Russification of Finland if it were a case of a free, civilized, highly cultured and humane Power endeavouring to raise an inferior one to its own level.'<sup>19</sup>

British distaste for the way in which Russia seemed to be limiting Finnish autonomy grew through the 1890s, and reached a crescendo with

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<sup>16</sup> Michael de Nie, 'The Great Famine and the British Press', *Irish Studies Review*, 6 (1998), 27–35.

<sup>17</sup> Anssi Halmesvirta, *The British Conception of Finnish 'Race', Nation and Culture, 1760–1918* (Helsinki, 1990), 158–65.

<sup>18</sup> Andrew G. Newby, "'One Valhalla of the Free': Scandinavia, Britain and Northern Identity in the Mid-Nineteenth Century' in Peter Standivs and Jonas Harvard (eds) *Communicating the North's Media Structures and Images in the Making of the Nordic Region* (Farnham, 2013, forthcoming).

<sup>19</sup> 'A Word for the Finns', *Daily News*, 22 July 1890.

the February Manifesto of 1899.<sup>20</sup> The manifesto laid down strict limitations on Finnish state institutions: from this point, Tsar Nicholas II demanded that language, religion, and currency in Finland were Russified, that the press should be censored, and that the Finnish army should be made subject to Russian regulations.<sup>21</sup> Journals supporting the Finnish cause were edited from London, a means of mobilising international public opinion and of circumventing the regime of censorship.<sup>22</sup> The idea that Russia's policies were self-defeating was also presented regularly, especially as far as this related to military recruitment. The resentment created by the Russification policies actually helped to engender the sense of antipathy that St. Petersburg had feared in the first place, and even though the demands on Finns to participate in the Russian army were limited, the strong reaction made the new arrangements impracticable.<sup>23</sup> Still, however, descriptions of the Finns as 'peaceable, governable, hard-working [and] loyal' differentiated them in British minds from the Irish, and allowed a clear collective conscience in denying that Home Rule would have the same happy effects in Ireland as it had had in Finland.<sup>24</sup>

The 'Finnish Military Service Law' of 1901 sought to 'harmonise' the military apparatus of Finland and Russia, and—importantly from the Russian perspective—increase the Finnish military financial commitment.<sup>25</sup> Finns, previously able to maintain their own regiments as part of their devolved administration, were now supposed to serve as part of an integrated Russian

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<sup>20</sup> See, inter alia, 'A Constitutional Crisis in Finland', *The Times*, 6 October 1898; 'The Russification of Finland', *The Times*, 30 January 1899; 'The Russification of Finland', *The Times*, 25 February 1899; 'A Word for the Finns', *Daily News*, 22 July 1890; 'The Russianisation of Finland', *Daily News*, 29 July 1890; 'Lovers of Freedom!', *The Storm-Bell*, 1 March 1899; 'Poor Finland!', *The Storm-Bell*, 1 March 1899; *Punch*, 5 April 1899; *The Manchester Guardian*, 5 February 1900.

<sup>21</sup> 'Press Censorship in Finland', *The Times*, 10 April 1899; 'Russian Press Regulations in Finland', *The Times*, 15 January 1900; 'Press Restriction in Finland', *The Times*, 6 April 1900; David G. Kirby (ed.), *Finland and Russia: From Autonomy to Independence* (London, 1975), 69–70.

<sup>22</sup> *Finland: An English Journal Devoted to the Cause of the Finnish People* (London, 1899); *The Finland Bulletin* (London, 1900). Copies of these journals are held at the British Library's Newspaper Library, Colindale, London.

<sup>23</sup> John E.O. Screen, 'The Finnish Army, 1881–1901: A National Army in a Russian Context', *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 70 (1992), 472.

<sup>24</sup> 'Discontent in Finland', *The Morning Post*, 31 December 1898. Syndicated from Reuters.

<sup>25</sup> Screen, 'The Finnish Army, 1881–1901', 472; John E.O. Screen, 'The Military Relationship between Finland and Russia, 1809–1917' in Branch et al, *Finland and Poland in the Russian Empire*, 259–70.

army. One British newspaper pondered the apparent folly of the Tsar in following this course:

The prospect of serving in what to him is a foreign land, with comrades and under officers who do not speak or understand the only language he knows, is to the young Finnish peasant so distasteful that he will rather, with or without leave of the authorities, quit the land of his birth for ever and make a new home for himself in a new country ... the emperor and his advisers are pursuing no novel course in seeking to impose a 'dominant' language on a 'subordinate' race.<sup>26</sup>

This question of military service, in particular, captured Davitt's imagination when employing Finland as an example for the Irish, and would become an increasingly important aspect of more general Irish nationalist rhetoric in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Political and constitutional news did not, however, flow only from east to west. Ireland, and the Irish situation, was well covered in the Finnish press during the 1880s and 1890s. It is also possible to argue that, as censorship in the Finnish newspapers prevented direct criticism of St Petersburg, news of the Irish situation could sometimes be used as a metaphor for Finland. In the spring of 1889, for example, *Wasa Tidning* carried a detailed description of Davitt's early life and career from what might be called a traditional nationalist perspective, as part of a series of articles entitled 'Irländarnes kamp för fädernesland och frihet' ['Ireland's Struggle for Fatherland and Freedom'].<sup>27</sup> As a major figure in late-Victorian Britain, Davitt seems to have been reasonably well-known in Finnish political circles.<sup>28</sup> The developing perception of Davitt from a radical firebrand to a more moderate social reformer reflects his own developing career, as well as British press discourse. For example, reports during the Land War period saw him described regularly as the Land League's true founder and driving spirit, and as a Fenian convict and agitator with a burning sense of injustice, even hatred, against England.<sup>29</sup> After another arrest in 1881 – for violating the terms of his 'ticket of leave' from prison by consistently speaking out in public against the government – *Åbo Underrättelser*

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<sup>26</sup> 'The Finnish Question', *The Morning Post*, 22 September 1900.

<sup>27</sup> *Wasa Tidning*, 17 March 1889.

<sup>28</sup> 'Parnell ja Davitt', *Wiipurin Sanomat*, 2 April 1891.

<sup>29</sup> *Helsingfors Dagblad*, 27 November 1879; *Uusi Suometar*, 1 February 1881; *Morgonbladet*, 7 February 1881; *Oulun Lehti*, 9 February 1881; *Helsingfors*, 17 March 1881.

gave an account of Davitt's transgressions against the British state.<sup>30</sup> As Davitt became involved more with labour politics in the 1880s, he took on the aspect of 'an energetic veteran agitator'.<sup>31</sup> After unhappy spells as a Member of Parliament in the 1890s, Davitt—remaining an outspoken supporter of Irish nationalism and of the labour movement—turned to professional journalism, and was an experienced, widely-travelled reporter by the time he arrived in Helsinki.

### Davitt's 1904 Visit to Helsinki

Davitt's journalism, especially his writing on the Anglo-Boer War—published in 1902 as *The Boer Fight For Freedom*—had given him a renewed international profile, and his first visit to Russia took place in 1903, when he was asked by the *New York American* to investigate the anti-Semitic pogrom in Kishinev.<sup>32</sup> His findings were well-reported, and also formed the basis of another book—*Within the Pale* (1903)—which sought to give a balanced account of the situation in Bessarabia.<sup>33</sup> The international situation in May 1904, when Davitt was again sent by the *New York American* to report on Russian affairs, was complex for someone who remained a committed and instinctive Irish nationalist. The Tsar, in his advocacy of Russification, was behaving in a way which would remind Irish observers of their subordinate relationship to London, and provoke sympathy with the Finnish nationalist cause. Conversely, there was an instinctive desire to puncture British establishment orthodoxy—which incorporated often virulent Russophobia—and to take seriously any threat to Britain's international standing as an opportunity to promote a domestic 'Home Rule' agenda in Ireland.<sup>34</sup>

Davitt's purpose in 1904 was specifically to investigate and, if possible, counter claims being made in the British press that Russia's military capability

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<sup>30</sup> *Åbo Underrättelser*, 13 February 1881. See Lewis P. Curtis, *Conciliation and Coercion in Ireland, 1880–1892: A Study in Conservative Unionism* (Princeton, 1963); Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution*, 463–5.

<sup>31</sup> *Finland*, 23 December 1890.

<sup>32</sup> Marley, *Michael Davitt*, 256; King, 'Michael Davitt and the Kishinev Pogrom', 24.

<sup>33</sup> Michael Davitt, *Within the Pale: The True Story of Anti-Semitic Persecutions in Russia* (London, 1903).

<sup>34</sup> There was, for example, strong Irish support for Russia during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–5, during which time Davitt attacked the Japanese for 'playing England's game' in the Far East. Marley, *Michael Davitt*, 261.

against the Japanese was being weakened by the necessity of quelling worker rebellions in European parts of the Russian Empire.<sup>35</sup> Davitt held extensive interviews, including one with Leo Tolstoy at Yasnaya Polyana, during which Davitt admonished the famous author for conflating ‘English’ and ‘Irish’ nationalities. His overall conclusion was that the British were, indeed, exaggerating the state of industrial and political unrest in Russia at this time. After three weeks in St Petersburg, Davitt left by sea on Wednesday 29 June, 1904. Travelling overnight, first-class, on board the *Torneå*, he spent a few hours in a chilly but bright Helsinki, before re-embarking and proceeding to Stockholm.<sup>36</sup> After an intensive schedule in Russia, Davitt enjoyed his passage through the Baltic, praising the *Torneå* as ‘an ideal little steamboat, as light as a yacht ... with all necessary conveniences. Fitted better for the comfort of the passengers than an average English boat.’<sup>37</sup> Arriving in the port of Helsinki early on the morning of Thursday 30 June, Davitt described the ‘very picturesque’ approach, and the impressive fortifications of Suomenlinna—claiming that ‘not even Kronstadt is as safely defended.’<sup>38</sup> Although only a brief pause, Davitt enjoyed Helsinki: ‘we remained three hours in this pretty little city before starting again for Stockholm, which just gave enough of time to “do” this city in the most expeditious globe-trotting manner.’ Alighting, he noted the ‘scores of small boats’ being run by ‘big muscular women’, selling fish. He also pondered the effect that this fish diet seemed to have on the Finns’ fertility—‘every other woman met in the street appeared to be in the family way.’ More noteworthy, though, seems to have been the public hygiene of the city. Strolling through Helsinki’s market square, adjacent to the harbour, Davitt remarked: ‘Place most scrupulously clean—though meat, fish, vegetables, butter + bread sold here wholesale and retail. The cleanliness strikingly manifest from floor to the dress of the dealers, not a particle of dirt or garbage seen anywhere ... Have had no similar experience of public virtue of dirtless people anywhere.’<sup>39</sup>

From here, Davitt took a ramble around the city centre, climbing the steps to Helsinki Cathedral, noting the statue of the Tsar and ‘the Senate House, where Governor Bobrikoff was assassinated a fortnight ago.’ After a stroll down Aleksanterinkatu, he headed down Bulevardi—which he compared with

<sup>35</sup> For a fuller account of Davitt’s visit to Russia, see Carla King, ‘Michael Davitt and Lev Nikolaevich Tolstoy. Meetings 1904, 1905’, *Irish Slavonic Studies*, 20 (1999), 71–88.

<sup>36</sup> Davitt’s Diary, May–June 1904, Trinity College, Dublin (hereafter TCD), DP DN 9579.

<sup>37</sup> Davitt’s Notebook, 29 June 1904, TCD, DP DN 9581.

<sup>38</sup> Davitt’s Notebook, 30 June 1904, TCD, DP DN 9581.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*

Berlin's Unter den Linden—before taking a ‘neat little breakfast with a small cognac for about a shilling’.<sup>40</sup> As someone whose whole mode of thought had been shaped by Irish nationalism, Davitt paid particular attention to the statue of Johan Ludvig Runeberg, Finland's national poet, and believed its location to be a strong statement about Finland's constitutional relationship with Russia: ‘The statue of the poet in the ... gardens. Far more prominent position than that of Emp. Alex II, a verse from the poet's song on Suomiland engraved on tablet on pedestal, with female figure, Suomi, placing a wreath upon the composition.’ An observation of a military drill in Senate Square also impressed the Irishman: ‘Two companies of soldiers drilling. Men of one height about 5.10, all light hair and Swedish-looking, evidently Finns. Fine strapping fellows. Perfect in drill, in every particular. Drill officer a Russian.’<sup>41</sup>

Continuing the journey to Stockholm, Davitt was enchanted by the coastline of southern Finland, describing the ‘very pretty effect’ created by the fir trees, and the ‘beautiful fjords’, which were negotiated by the *Torneå*. Although some of his fellow passengers compared the scenery with the Hudson River, Davitt preferred to recall the River Tamar in Tasmania, and the voyage to Launceston which he had undertaken in 1895.<sup>42</sup> At several points between Helsinki and Hanko, Davitt's boat passed squads of Russian torpedo ships, ‘very formidable’ in ‘coats of black paint’, ready for ‘instant action’ against any potential British attack on the Baltic fortress at Kronstadt. After an extremely thorough investigation of the boat by customs officials at Hanko, the voyage continued into the archipelago, leaving Davitt to ponder: ‘How on earth Russia and Sweden have terms to an agreement about the ownership of these small islands is a problem I am not to (sic) anxious to solve.’<sup>43</sup> Davitt took the opportunity to spend time in Stockholm, Christiania (Oslo) and Copenhagen on the journey back to Britain, and from an Irish political perspective he was naturally very interested in the rapidly disintegrating relationship between Sweden and Norway. He also noted that Swedes looked ‘aggressively healthy, with their blonde hair and blue eyes. Women much better looking than the Russians.’ Perhaps surprisingly for the founder of the Land League, and possibly underlining Davitt's own changed priorities in his later life, he seemed to enjoy the metropolitan sights of Stockholm and Copenhagen

<sup>40</sup> This breakfast was taken at Restaurant Kappeli, which remains at the same location today.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>42</sup> *The Mercury* (Hobart), 28 June 1895; Michael Davitt, *Life and Progress in Australasia* (London, 1898), 313–14.

<sup>43</sup> Davitt's Notebook, 1 July 1904, TCD, DP DN 9581.

to the more earthy milieu of Christiania. He seemed less than impressed with Norway—often held up by contemporaries as the democratic peasant state *par excellence*—and indeed complained: ‘Women not attractive.’<sup>44</sup>

### Davitt’s 1905 Visit to Helsinki

Davitt’s second visit to Helsinki followed his third visit to Russia, when he was asked to return in order to investigate shooting of peaceful demonstrators in St Petersburg on what became known as ‘Bloody Sunday’ (22 January 1905).<sup>45</sup> As well as filing for the *Irish Independent*, he had accepted a commission from W.R. Hearst’s *American*, and various other Hearst papers in the United States, for news on the political and social state of the Russian Empire.<sup>46</sup> Although he had been aware of the political context in Finland a year earlier, the brevity of his stay in Helsinki at that time tended to limit his diary entries to cultural and ‘tourist’-type observations. In the intervening period, he had maintained or made several contacts in Finland—including un-named ‘nationalists’—from whom he received details of Finland’s recent history. He was also acquainted with other prominent citizens of Helsinki, such as Viktor Ek, the shipping magnate, who in turn introduced Davitt to Janne Thurman, of *Helsingfors Posten*.<sup>47</sup> During his stay in Hotel Kämp, Davitt also encountered, amongst others, Albert Edelfelt, the renowned Finnish national romantic artist.<sup>48</sup>

He was immediately taken with the lights shining in the windows of the city, a result of Runeberg’s Day one day earlier. This, he was informed, was also a response to the way in which Bobrikov had attempted to prevent such illuminations a year earlier—on the centenary of Runeberg’s birth—and he noted that, on that occasion, the ‘whole city’ had ‘resolved [to] defy [the] stupid order.’<sup>49</sup> For the most part, Davitt’s private thoughts on Finland in February 1905 were similar to those which he expounded in public. Just as he had arrived in the aftermath of Bobrikov’s assassination in 1904, he now arrived on the same day as Eliel Soisalon-Soininen, the Finnish Chancellor of

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Marley, *Michael Davitt*, 261–4.

<sup>46</sup> ‘Dagens eko’, *Helsingfors Posten*, 8 February 1905.

<sup>47</sup> ‘Photo of Victor Ek, Helsingfors, Finland’, TCD, DP DN 9649/88.

<sup>48</sup> ‘Anmälde resande’, *Helsingfors Posten*, 7 February 1905; *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 7 February 1905 (‘hr Davitt fr. Paris’); ‘Russia Jan. Feb. 1905’, TCD MS9582, 34.

<sup>49</sup> ‘Russia Jan. Feb. 1905’, TCD MS9582, 28.

Justice, was shot dead. This in itself gave Davitt an insight into the censorship which had been imposed at this time—in seeking to wire a telegram about the incident, he discovered that he was not permitted to make any mention of Soisalon-Soininen's murder. Having 'stormed' at the telegraph officer, Davitt was required to seek permission from Mikhail Nikiforovitsch Kaigorodoff, Governor of the Province of Uusimaa.<sup>50</sup> On arrival at Kaigorodoff's residence, Davitt was told that the governor was at the palace of Ivan Mikhailovitch Obolenskii, the Governor General.<sup>51</sup> After being asked to return and await a decision at the Hotel Kämp, Davitt was eventually given permission to write about the assassination, a decision he attributed to his having received support from Robert Sanderson McCormick, the US Ambassador in St Petersburg.<sup>52</sup> In attempting to piece together the day's events, Davitt linked the assassination to the aftermath of the workers' protests in January, which Soisalon-Soininen had borne the responsibility of policing. The costs of the police operation, and the overly zealous response of Cossack militiamen, thought Davitt, had created a situation of great tension around the city. After a stressful day, Davitt at least seemed satisfied with his accommodation in Hotel Kämp, and noted that he attended a pleasant evening concert before going to bed.<sup>53</sup>

Davitt spent the next day examining the background and aftermath of the large-scale workers' demonstration which had taken place in Helsinki on 24 January, and reported in the context of wider riots—indeed a 'blood bath' in the Russian Empire. In relation to the demonstrations, he was convinced that the initial parades—in sympathy with the strikers of St Petersburg—had passed off peacefully.<sup>54</sup> Subsequently, however, 'youths and roughs' created some unrest, smashing windows and fighting with the militia. His report matched the tone of previous dispatches on Russia—that any widespread unrest existed only in the minds of some London journalists:

<sup>50</sup> Uusimaa is the southern Finnish province in which Helsinki is situated. See, e.g., Tuomo Polvinen, *Valtakunta ja rajamaa: N.I. Bobrikov Suomen keeraalikuvernöörinä 1898–1904* (Helsinki, 1984), 189; Tuomo Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland: Bobrikov and the Attempted Russification of Finland* (London, 1995), 147.

<sup>51</sup> Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland*, 267.

<sup>52</sup> *New York Times*, 17 April 1919.

<sup>53</sup> See advertisements for Hotel Kämp's 'middag- och aftonmusik', *inter alia*, 'Nöjen i Dag', *Häfnudstadsbladet*, 8 February 1905. Attractions included, for example, two young singers who would later find considerable fame in theatre and film: Sigrid Eklöf-Trobäck, and an 'English' opera diva, Daisy Dumont, in fact a young American. An additional draw was a 'humorous' female impersonator called Hr. Lanzette

<sup>54</sup> Antti Kujala, *Venäjän hallitus ja Suomen työväenliike 1899–1905, Historiallisia Tutkimuksia* 194 (Helsinki, 1996).

They drew their sabres, charged and dispersed the crowd, and ended the whole disturbance. Fifteen persons received cuts from sabres, but there were no serious casualties. No military force intervened, and this was the whole extent of the ‘scenes of bloodshed,’ of ‘conflicts between Cossacks and people,’ which featured so prominently in the reports published in the London papers.<sup>55</sup>

Despite the implicit criticism of London’s anti-Russian agenda, it must also be acknowledged that Davitt’s own newspaper, the Dublin-based *Irish Independent*, had commented upon the situation in Finland rather excitedly only a few days before his own report, raising the possibility of a ‘revolt in arms’.<sup>56</sup>

Davitt also spent time visiting the House of the Estates, although he found that the only business being enacted concerned motions condemning the assassination of Soisalon-Soininen—which by 7 February was already being dismissed as the act of a disturbed individual, rather than as symptomatic of wider plotting.<sup>57</sup> He noted the relative positions of Finnish and Swedish languages in the Chambers, as well as the presence of ‘lady reporters’. He also implied that Russia feared Swedish designs on Finland, and that Sweden was actively conspiring with Norway to bolster Finnish nationalism.<sup>58</sup> In addition to these observations on high politics, Davitt made notes on the replacement of a ‘native’ Finnish police force with a Russian system after 1899, on the composition of the Finnish Diet, on its schools and poor laws, the nature of the franchise, and also the laws relating to prostitution.<sup>59</sup>

If he did not wish to give succour to British prejudices about Russia, however, Davitt still wrote approvingly of Finland’s former constitution, and the struggle to reassert its autonomy:

The political situation in Finland is most interesting. Up to February 1899, the old National Finnish Constitution existed. It secured autonomy in its broadest sense. The Emperor of Russia was the

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<sup>55</sup> *Irish Independent*, 25 February 1905.

<sup>56</sup> *Irish Independent*, 21 February 1905.

<sup>57</sup> ‘Russia Jan. Feb. 1905’, TCD MS9582, 31.

<sup>58</sup> For example, see the contemporary leaflet, ‘Skandinavien och Finland. En lösning af svenska-norska frågan’ (1905), presented in translation as ‘Scandinavia and Finland: A Solution to the Swedish-Norwegian Question’ in Kirby, *Finland and Russia*, 102–3.

<sup>59</sup> ‘Russia Jan. Feb. 1905’, TCD MS9582, 32–4.

head of the little nation, but the Diet (Parliament) was virtually supreme in all domestic affairs. The fullest freedom for the 2,000,000 of people who had prospered and flourished in their cold, northern land of 'Suomi'—the Land of Lakes, the ancient and poetic name for Finland—was guaranteed by the Constitution and by the solemn oath of the Russian Emperors to respect and protect it.<sup>60</sup>

Davitt promoted the idea that Russia was pursuing a temporary, counterproductive policy, and that the Finns retained a basic desire to return to the former Grand Duchy constitution with no recourse to an outright separatist revolution. Indeed, he recounted to his Irish audience that although there was rightful indignation and resistance in Finland, he had been assured by 'the highest nationalist authority in Helsingfors' that extremist parties such as 'the Finnish Party of Action' did not exist, and dismissed as irrelevant the presence of Konni Zilliacus<sup>61</sup> at a 'so-called gathering of Extremists in Paris last autumn.'<sup>62</sup> This attitude is once more indicative of Davitt's own personal journey since his Fenian days. Despite the stirring clarion call of his *Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*, published in 1904 between his Helsinki visits, he was keen not to give any indication of support for political assassinations.<sup>63</sup> Rather, although he understood the circumstances which led to events such as the murders of Bobrikov and Soisalon-Soininen, he feared that such actions would be self-defeating, leading to repression such as that seen in Ireland in the 1880s. The abolition of the constitution by the February Manifesto was dismissed by Davitt as 'stupid to the last degree of bureaucratic blundering', and he highlighted its counterproductive nature in alienating Finns who had

<sup>60</sup> *Irish Independent*, 25 February 1905.

<sup>61</sup> Zilliacus, along with Mechelin and other nationalists, had been one of the returning exiles in January 1905. Davitt believed that the return of men who had been banished was a sign that Russia was returning to its senses. See *inter alia*, 'De landsförvisade få återkomma', *Helsingfors Posten*, 23 January 1905; 'Maasta karkotetut saavat palata takaisin', *Helsingin Sanomat*, 24 January 1905. For Davitt's views, *Irish Independent*, 25 February 1905.

<sup>62</sup> This refers to *Suomen Aktiivinen Vastustuspuolue* (Fin.) / *Finska Aktiva Motståndspartiet* (Swe.). See *Irish Independent*, 25 February 1905. For details of the programme of the Finnish Active Resistance Party, founded in November 1904, see Kirby, *Finland and Russia*, 99–100. For the Paris meeting, see Antti Kujala, 'Attempts at fostering collaboration among the Russian Revolutionary Parties during the Russo-Japanese War', *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, ix (1991), 137; Shmuel Galai, *The Liberation Movement in Russia, 1900–1905* (Cambridge, 1973), 214.

<sup>63</sup> Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland; or, The Story of the Land League Revolution* (London and New York, 1904).

been, hitherto 'loyal in every sense'. The rejection of the Russian army by Finns fascinated Davitt. Constantly writing with Irish parallels implicit in his prose, he also observed the soured military relationship between Russia and Finland:

Some 20,000 Finns joined the Russian Army voluntarily when required. No anti-Russian or revolutionary party existed, and no rational explanation has been offered from any Russian source that can justify in any sense this outrage upon the freedom of a brave, sober, and industrious little nation... All party and political difference vanished in Finland in face of this violation of its liberties. No Finns would enlist in the Russian Army. Twenty thousand young men emigrated to the United States rather than wear Russia's colours after this treacherous act of the Emperor's. The whole country, with a fine patriotic spirit, resolved itself towards all Russian authority, and this was the situation now obtaining in what was up to sixteen years ago probably the most loyal part of all of the Tsar's vast Empire... Nothing will move this gallant little nation to be in any sense a consenting factor in the work of its own national spoliation, and in this resolve and attitude it will stand resolute and unflinching until reason returns again to Russia's rulers, and they undo the fatal decree of February, 1899.<sup>64</sup>

Davitt's assessment of the position in Finland was recorded with approval by some of the Helsinki newspapers, especially in regard to the moderate nature of the Finnish workers' protests, and Davitt's countering the prevailing voices from London.<sup>65</sup> His position on Finland was not, therefore, straightforward. While he was squarely behind the restoration of Finland's national rights, and was more than prepared to use Finland as a comparative case for Ireland, there was a long-standing distrust of British newspaper reporting on Russia. Furthermore, during his time as a Fenian prisoner in the 1870s, the apparent inevitability of a long and arduous war between Russia and Britain in the Balkans was seen as a potential opportunity for a Fenian attack on Britain—the enemy of Ireland's enemy being constructed in this instance as an ally.<sup>66</sup> Davitt was convinced, nevertheless, that Russification was a foolish policy, alienating a Finnish

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<sup>64</sup> *Irish Independent*, 25 February 1905.

<sup>65</sup> *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 3 March 1905; *Helsingfors Posten*, 2 March 1905.

<sup>66</sup> Moody, *Davitt and Irish Revolution*, 136–7.

population which had been, prior to the February Manifesto, appreciative of the autonomy granted under the umbrella of the Russian Empire. He saw strong echoes of the situation in Ireland, especially the ‘conciliation and coercion’ policies which had characterised the 1870s and 1880s and feared that the assassinations of Bobrikov and Soisalon-Soininen would ‘still further postpone return of Russia to reason + withdrawal Decree Feb. 1899.’<sup>67</sup>

### **Finland and Ireland c. 1905–1920 – Comparisons and Inspirations**

In the months after his visit, Davitt was keen to demonstrate the inconsistency of the British press and politicians as they promoted Finland’s claims to autonomy, and condemned Russia’s aggression, while at the same time denying Irish home rule. A specific example was on military recruitment. At a speech in Tullow, County Carlow, for the unveiling of a memorial for Father John Murphy, one of the most storied leaders of the Rebellion of 1798, Davitt recalled the ‘murders and brutalities’ of the British forces in Ireland in 1798 and linked this to the idea of Irishmen joining the British Imperial forces in 1905. He explained that the February Manifesto had marked a drastic decline in Finnish participation in the Russian army, implying further that it was one of the reasons behind an imminent restoration of the former constitution. ‘Why’, he asked,

should any Irishman join the English army? Can any honest, self-respecting countryman offer a solitary reason why the same army is or ought to be less objectionable to young Irishmen than the Russian army is to the men of Finland? ... When Irishmen learn to emulate the manly spirit of the Finlanders and let the army of their foreign rulers severely alone, believe me the time will have arrived when England will be willing to take her hands off Ireland, and for the peace and welfare of both nations, allow the Irish people of north and south, as Irishmen, and not as rival sects or sections, to rule their own country without foreign interference of any kind.<sup>68</sup>

Alongside Davitt’s concrete example of military cooperation or collaboration with the Imperial power, other Irish writers highlighted the apparent hypocrisy

<sup>67</sup> ‘Russia Jan. Feb. 1905’, TCD MS9582, 32.

<sup>68</sup> *Anglo-Celt*, 5 August 1905; *Irish Independent*, 1 August 1905.

of the British political classes' support for the 'small nations' of the Russian Empire. Davitt's optimism that Russification was coming to an end seemed to be confirmed by the events of November 1905. General Strikes, which characterised the 1905 Revolution throughout the Russian Empire, took place in Finland.<sup>69</sup> In response, the regime in St Petersburg accepted the November Manifesto, framed by Leo Mechelin, leader of the Constitutional Nationalists, which curbed the excesses of Russification, and led to the replacement of the Finnish diet and Estates with a new parliamentary system, based on universal suffrage.<sup>70</sup> These momentous events had a strong resonance in Ireland. An editorial piece in the *Irish Independent* complained about Britain's reaction to the November Manifesto:

The national struggle in Ireland is for the restoration of her ancient rights. This equitable demand has been resisted with a vehement bitterness by organs like the 'Times' and 'Globe.' These papers are, however, foremost among the English journals in congratulating the Finns on the re-establishment of the constitutional government in their country by the Czar, and in pointing out to Russia how much more advantageous to her is a well-governed and contented Finland than a Finland mis-governed and disaffected. 'The restoration of Finland's ancient liberties,' says the 'Times,' 'will be welcomed with enthusiasm by the whole civilised world.' Referring to the resolve of the Czar to maintain the connection of Finland with the Empire, as indicated by the despatch of warships to Helsingfors, the 'Times' considers the best hope for the unity of the Empire is the conferment of Russia herself of a measure of constitutional government.<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, at a meeting in Battersea, London, in December 1905, Davitt employed the nationalist rhetoric which had characterised his speeches of the 1880s, demanding for Ireland 'what England unanimously asks Russia to give to Finland and to Poland; what she has unanimously lauded Sweden for having done for Norway', thus ending the 'criminal misrule of Ireland by England.'<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> 'The November Manifesto Granted by the Tsar, 1905' in Kirby, *Finland and Russia*, 115–6.

<sup>70</sup> 'An Appeal from Finland to the Czar', *Freeman's Journal*, 7 October 1905; 'The Rising in Finland', *Freeman's Journal*, 3 November 1905; 'Finland Free', *Irish Independent*, 6 November 1905.

<sup>71</sup> 'Home Rule for Finland', *Irish Independent*, 7 November 1905.

<sup>72</sup> Speech in Battersea, *Irish Independent*, 4 December 1905.

Thus, although Davitt's own attitude to Russia may have been somewhat ambivalent—suspicious of the imperialism on show but also instinctively suspicious of the Russophobia of the British establishment—there is no doubt that he saw parallels in the constitutional positions of Finland and Ireland. Michael Davitt died, rather suddenly, after a failed operation to remove a troublesome tooth, on 31 May 1906.<sup>73</sup> His death was the cause of national mourning in Ireland, but it was also widely reported in the Finnish press, which wrote in terms which would be familiar to a nation defending its own constitutional status.<sup>74</sup> *Åbo Underättelser* referred to him as 'one of the veterans of the Irish independence movement.'<sup>75</sup> In a retrospective article some weeks after his death, *Turun Sanomat* concluded that 'he maintained his love of his fatherland until the moment of his death.'<sup>76</sup> *Uusi Suometar*, in a longer appreciation, commented that: 'Davitt's attention was not taken solely by Ireland, but more generally all countries under oppression, and for this reason he tried to learn as many languages as possible. He was especially fond of the labour movement.'<sup>77</sup> Thus, just as Davitt was able to use the 'manly' example of Finnish nationhood in his later speeches on Irish freedom, so some elements of the Finnish press were able to recognise a kindred spirit in the struggle to re-establish a true nation in Finland.

The parallels between the two countries continued to be exploited by Irish nationalists. Michael Collins, for example, recognised in the Finns a 'quiet race' who did not 'specialise in talk', but who nevertheless defended their national identity and rights fiercely. He saw a direct benefit arising from the murder of Bobrikov, in the concession in late 1905 by a fearful Tsar of free elections, wide adult suffrage and the establishment of a national parliament.<sup>78</sup> The young Collins seemed inspired by these events: 'The analogy between Finland and Ireland is almost perfect', he wrote in his notebook during the Third Home Rule Crisis, '... they won against the might of Russia. Cannot we go and do likewise?'<sup>79</sup> When Finland achieved full independence, rather

<sup>73</sup> *Inter alia*, *Irish Independent*, 31 May 1906, which reported: 'Irish Nation Plunged into Grief Today'.

<sup>74</sup> Marley, *Michael Davitt*, 286.

<sup>75</sup> *Åbo Underättelser*, 3 June 1906. A briefer obituary in *Hufvudstadsbladet* focused on his earlier career. *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 3 June 1906.

<sup>76</sup> *Turun Sanomat*, 29 June 1906.

<sup>77</sup> *Uusi Suometar*, 7 June 1906.

<sup>78</sup> T. Ryle Dwyer, *The Squad and the Intelligence Operations of Michael Collins* (Cork, 2005), 64–5.

<sup>79</sup> Draft writings by Michael Collins, 1910–15 (Copybook containing draft articles / speeches and minutes of a Geraldine Club meeting). University College, Dublin,

suddenly in 1917, in the context of the Russian Revolution, Irish polemicists and politicians<sup>80</sup> were again eager to explore the lessons which could be learned for their own case, and expose British sophistry in their support for the Finns.<sup>81</sup> Though Asquith and Lloyd George were reluctant, there was an increasing pressure from the British military in 1917 to extend conscription to Ireland.<sup>82</sup> Nationalists responded with their own arguments, with Finland once more a prominent example. Finland was sometimes referred to as ‘the Ireland of Russia’,<sup>83</sup> was used by Eamon De Valera in *Ireland’s Case Against Conscription* (1918),<sup>84</sup> and by George Bernard Shaw, who claimed that ‘we have politicians here more unscrupulous than Bobrikoff ...’<sup>85</sup>

## Conclusion

It was Stein Rokkan who first pointed out the similarities between the histories of Finland and Ireland in an academic context: ‘both of them at the periphery of Europe, both of them for centuries subject-territories under representative regimes, both grown out of a long struggle for national identity against powerful oppressors, both latecomers to the community of sovereign political systems.’<sup>86</sup>

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UCD Archives, P123/40, [http://hdl.handle.net/10151/OB\\_0002041\\_AR](http://hdl.handle.net/10151/OB_0002041_AR), accessed 24 May 2012.

<sup>80</sup> For discussions in the House of Commons, see for example, *Hansard*, HC Deb 20 February 1917 vol 90, col. 1190 (Charles Trevelyan); *Hansard*, HC Deb 26 April 1917 vol 92, col. 2707 (H. Dalziel); *Hansard*, HC Deb 10 April 1918 vol 104, col. 1510 (John Dillon). Laurence Ginnell, the United Irish League veteran and vociferous Independent Nationalist MP for Westmeath North, asked of Arthur Balfour in April 1917 ‘will British Government follow, with regard to Ireland, the example of the Russian government?’ *Hansard*, HC Deb 2 April 1917 vol 92, col. 885.

<sup>81</sup> F.P. Jones, *History of the Sinn Féin Movement and the Irish Rebellion of 1916* (New York, 1916), 50.

<sup>82</sup> David Fitzpatrick, ‘Militarism in Ireland, 1900–1922’ in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffrey (eds), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996), 396–7; P. Karsten, ‘Irish Soldiers in the British Army 1792–1922: Suborned or Subordinate’, *Journal of Social History*, 17 (1983), 47.

<sup>83</sup> *The Spectator*, Vol 119 (1917), p. 407.

<sup>84</sup> Eamon De Valera, *Ireland’s Case Against Conscription* (Dublin, 1918), 7.

<sup>85</sup> George Bernard Shaw, *John Bull’s Other Island* (New Ed., London, 1918), 8. See also Sinn Féin, *Ireland’s Request to the Government of the United States of America for Recognition as a Sovereign Independent State* (Dublin, 1919), 103. Quoted in Kissane, ‘Nineteenth-Century Nationalism in Finland and Ireland’, 29

<sup>86</sup> S. Rokkan, ‘Mass Politics and Political Mobilisation: Reflections on Possible Models of Explanation’, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 5 (1970), 65. Also quoted in Kissane, ‘Nineteenth-Century Nationalism in Finland and Ireland’, 25.

More generally, Joep Leerssen has encapsulated the internationalist context in which Irish nationalist thought operated: ‘Irish nationalism at one point was inspired by philhellenism ... at another by Hungarian nationalism ... The point needs to be stressed: a national movement in a given country is not just the result of the circumstances obtaining within that country, but also inspired by the crisscrossing traffic of ideas all over Europe.’<sup>87</sup>

Although Bill Kissane notes that nationalism in Finland and Ireland had different characteristics in the nineteenth century—he classes Irish nationalism as a predominantly ethnic movement whereas Finland arguably had far more elements of civic nationalism—there were nevertheless enough superficial similarities that politicians and activists on both sides were able to look to each other for inspiration.<sup>88</sup> Although Davitt was only one of many Irish nationalist leaders to be inspired by the case of Finland, he was unique in that he was able to visit Helsinki in person, albeit briefly. During these visits he was able to get a sense of an atmosphere of resistance which pervaded Finnish society in the months leading to the November Manifesto. He was not so much impressed by the political murders of Bobrikov and Soisalon-Soininen, but by the determined way in which Finns appeared to be seeking to restore their constitutional autonomy. While Russia was seen as a guiding light during the first Home Rule crisis of the 1880s, there was great frustration on Davitt’s part that Russia sought to limit and extinguish Finland’s organs of self-government, and it is clear that he thought this was a foolish and ultimately self-defeating act on the part of the Tsar. Davitt’s great admiration for the Finns’ refusal to accept Russia’s new military strictures, in particular, reflected his frustration at the continued failure of the Irish population to stand firmly against the British Empire.

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<sup>87</sup> Joep Leerssen, *National Thought in Europe: A Cultural History* (Amsterdam, 2006), 169.

<sup>88</sup> Kissane, ‘Nineteenth-Century Nationalism in Finland and Ireland’, 40.

# The Subscription Controversy of the 1820s, 'a religious form of imperialism' and John Mitchel's Early Influences

Michael Huggins

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A cherished narrative of Irish nationalism has been one of continuous resistance to oppression and the consistent assertion of Irish liberties. Diverse and specific forms of opposition to London have been integrated into a master-narrative in which figures like Jonathan Swift, Henry Grattan, Wolfe Tone, Daniel O'Connell, Thomas Davis, Charles Stuart Parnell and Patrick Pearse have co-existed. One example of the construction of such a continuous narrative is Thomas Davis' explicit adoption of the mantle of Tone. In his notes for a history of the United Irishmen Davis sketched a frontispiece which depicted Tone's grave. Adjacent to the drawing Davis scrawled the caption 'Liberty takes down the sword suspended from the ivied wall over Tone's grave and hands it to *me!*' Aside from suggesting an egotism and vanity with which Davis is not usually credited, the association of the Young Ireland movement of the 1840s with the United Irishmen in the 1790s could scarcely be made more obviously.<sup>1</sup>

That association and continuity has, however, been defined with more precision in an essay suggesting that Davis' enthusiasm for Tone was on account of Tone's personal and not his political qualities. For Sean Ryder, Davis' construction of the memory of 1798 was romantic and heroic, rather than ideological. Within the Young Ireland movement it was only in the hands of John Mitchel that the United Irishmen were politically constructed. Following the death of Davis in September 1845, Mitchel's influence on *The Nation* grew. According to Ryder, the heroic dimension of the United Irishmen was retained but they also provided increasingly explicit contemporary lessons.<sup>2</sup>

In the case of Mitchel, then, an ideological connection with the United Irishmen appears to exist, complying with the nationalist story of continuity. Furthermore, there is superficial evidence that Mitchel's radicalism developed

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<sup>1</sup> Notes of Thomas Davis on the United Irishmen, National Library of Ireland, Ms 1791.

<sup>2</sup> Sean Ryder, 'Young Ireland and the 1798 Rebellion' in Laurence Geary (ed.), *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), 143 and 145.

congenitally. His mother's father was said to have been a United Irishman and Mitchel's father had also been associated with them, although Mitchel's pleasure in telling people that his father had been 'out' in 1798 was later qualified by his official biographer, William Dillon. Mitchel's father, also named John, later became a Presbyterian minister and Dillon (whose main source for Mitchel's early life was Mitchel's brother) noted that the fourteen-year-old future minister had been made to swear the United Irish oath after accompanying a party of insurgents with an ammunition cart during the summer of 1798.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, this apparent connection echoes one hagiographic work on the more famous Mitchel which claims that he was 'filled with the holy spirit of freedom' by the liberal Presbyterian doctrines learned in childhood from his father. Such hagiography (in the first biographic portrait of Mitchel following his death) views Mitchel as one link in an unbroken transmission of the nationalist faith from the United Irishmen to Young Ireland and, beyond that, to Fenianism. Its purpose was to justify a particular reading of Irish history that legitimised a radical political present. This reading, placing Mitchel in a pantheon of heroes with Tone and Emmet, was also to inspire twentieth-century republicanism. It hardly needs to be stated that such a view of a consistent linear transmission of the nationalist faith does not accord with the ways in which nationalists always engaged in rhetorical, ritual and symbolic re-imaginings that re-shaped and re-invented their political convictions in order to deal with contemporary contingencies.<sup>4</sup>

However, this suggestion of continuity does not occur only in the pages of militant nationalist hagiography. While much of Mitchel's early life is undocumented, his family was involved in an important controversy during his early teens that placed him in a critical narrative in Irish history long before he became famous for his call to revolution in 1848. The story is, in itself, a remarkable one, and turns on the heterodox beliefs of Mitchel's father. Those beliefs led the older John Mitchel into conflict with the Synod of Ulster and ultimately to his withdrawal from it after the General Synod of 1829. Robert Mahoney has claimed that the young Mitchel's experience of a 'religious form of imperialism' in the campaign against his father was a direct influence on his later radicalism. This essay scrutinises the intellectual world of father and son in order to consider the idea of continuity from liberal Presbyterianism (whether in its most radical political expression in the United Irishmen or in

<sup>3</sup> William Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel* (2 vols, London, 1888), I, 8.

<sup>4</sup> John Bannon, *Life of John Mitchel* (Liverpool, 1882), 2.

its most radical theological and ecclesiological expression in ‘New Light’) to the politics of the better-known John Mitchel.<sup>5</sup>

The son’s ideas later went far beyond the liberal Presbyterianism that informed his father’s beliefs. A fuller explanation of the younger Mitchel’s intellectual and revolutionary development requires a consideration of other influences, most importantly that of Thomas Carlyle. Indeed, it may be that in the younger Mitchel’s later insistence on revolutionary purity, his intolerance of disagreement and his self-righteousness, he inherited some dimensions of the Presbyterian legacy by a less direct route than that of paternal influence. A.T.Q. Stewart’s description of one form of Presbyterianism politicisation as evincing a ‘difficult and cantankerous disposition which is a characteristic of a certain kind of political radicalism’ seems appropriate in respect of the younger John Mitchel.<sup>6</sup> James Quinn has recognised the younger Mitchel’s lack of liberalism, noting that ‘taken in its entirety, his outlook is in fact one of the most *illiberal* of any nineteenth-century Irish nationalist’, and in his short biography of Mitchel he suggests that Mitchel represented a break with the Presbyterian radicalism of the United Irishmen.<sup>7</sup>

The older John Mitchel can be identified with the urbane, articulate New Light variant of Presbyterianism that had flourished from the early eighteenth century in Ulster in opposition to the imposition of the doctrinal orthodoxy of the Westminster Confession on Presbyterians. That orthodoxy (and one of its central tenets, the doctrine of the Trinity) was, according to New Light thought, an imposition on the liberty of individual conscience of the believer. As J. Thompson has suggested, there is ‘a kind of tension between acceptance of such a considerable statement as the Confession itself and the personal obedience of conscience to God alone’.<sup>8</sup> This tension was manifested in the subscription controversy of the late 1820s in Ireland, a controversy that involved Mitchel’s father directly.

New Light opposition to subscription first emerged in the 1720s, when ministers claimed that subscription to the Westminster Confession infringed the fundamental right of private judgement. This first wave of New Light opposition to subscription remained confined, on the whole, to matters of

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<sup>5</sup> Robert Mahony, ‘“New Light” Ulster Presbyterianism and the Nationalist Rhetoric of John Mitchel’ in Geary (ed.), *Rebellion and Remembrance in Modern Ireland*, 155.

<sup>6</sup> A.T.Q. Stewart, *The Narrow Ground* (London, 1977), 83.

<sup>7</sup> James Quinn, ‘John Mitchel and the Rejection of the Nineteenth Century’, *Eire-Ireland*, 38 (2003), 97; James Quinn, *John Mitchel* (Dublin, 2008), 34.

<sup>8</sup> J. Thompson, ‘The Westminster Confession’ in J.L.M. Haire (ed.), *Challenge and Conflict: Essays in Irish Presbyterian History and Doctrine* (Baird, 1981), 15.

ecclesiology, notwithstanding the inspiration it was to offer later to a broader Presbyterian radicalism. The dispute remained unresolved and non-subscribers were all placed in one Presbytery, that of Antrim, in 1725. Thereafter for almost 100 years the tensions between orthodoxy and non-subscription remained in abeyance, despite the orthodox position being formally reaffirmed on a number of occasions.<sup>9</sup>

The most politically radical New Light of this period was John Abernethy. Writing in the 1730s, he had derived from John Locke a contractarian view of the relationship between civil society and personal religious belief in which, as long as no ‘threat to the public good’ was posed, any limitations imposed by the state on individual religious belief were an infringement of Christian liberty. Abernethy deduced from these speculations that those whose consciences were oppressed had a right of rebellion against government when it had exceeded its powers in relation to freedom of the individual conscience. There are clear continuities between Abernethy’s perspective and the radicalism that was to inform dissenting criticism of the Irish political system in the late eighteenth century.<sup>10</sup>

The roots of John Mitchel senior’s doctrinal and apparent political liberalism may also be found in the development, out of the first wave of New Light opposition to subscription, of a liberal current in Irish Presbyterianism that was most associated with its primary training ground, the University of Glasgow. Unable to attend Trinity College, Dublin, many Irish Presbyterians attended Glasgow for training in the arts, medicine and divinity (indeed, the older Mitchel was educated at the University of Glasgow). By the mid-eighteenth century the university had become a notorious crucible of ‘heretical doctrines’. The most famous exponent of such doctrines was a friend of Abernethy, the Irish Presbyterian Francis Hutcheson, who was professor of moral philosophy at Glasgow from 1730 to 1746. In Hutcheson’s time it was reckoned that almost a third of the students at Glasgow were Irish Presbyterians. Hutcheson’s radicalism encompassed New Light theology and opposition to subscription to the Westminster Confession. However, in his best-known work, *A System of Moral Philosophy* (1755), Hutcheson dealt with a wide range of matters, including the rights of women, servants, slaves, animals, colonies, conquered nations and the right of an oppressed people to

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<sup>9</sup> J.M. Barkley, ‘The Arian Schism in Ireland, 1830’ in D. Baker (ed.), *Schism, Heresy and Religious Protest: Studies in Church History ix* (Cambridge, 1972), 328.

<sup>10</sup> Ian McBride, ‘“When Ulster joined Ireland”: Anti-Popery, Presbyterian Radicalism and Irish Republicanism in the 1790s’, *Past and Present*, 157 (1997), 75, 76.

rebel against the sovereign. Furthermore, he advocated a contractarianism in which 'all political authority must be founded on the consent of the people'.<sup>11</sup>

Hutcheson's views landed him in trouble first in Dublin and later at Glasgow, where he was accused in print of heresy in 1738. However, the facts of his life are less interesting for present purposes than his place in the transmission of a 'configuration of ideas', at the centre of which lies 'the classical opposition of virtue and corruption'. In this respect, Hutcheson himself worked on foundations laid in the seventeenth century by James Harrington and others, those advocates of a classical republicanism who emphasised public virtue, the practice of citizenship and the subordination of private interest to the public good. These ideas were fused with Hutcheson's version of contractarianism in a conflation that was to provide a renewed impetus to Presbyterian radicalism in the age of the American and French revolutions.<sup>12</sup>

Hutcheson's influence was to persist after his death in the growth of Volunteering and ultimately in the radicalism of the United Irishmen of Ulster. This continuity has been noted by Marianne Elliott and, in particular, Ian McBride, who detects 'an impressive continuity ... between Hutcheson's circle of friends and the leading Belfast reformers of the revolutionary era'. By the late eighteenth century Hutcheson's influence in Irish Presbyterianism was apparent in a vigorous radical pamphlet culture. The Volunteer convention that met in Dungannon in February 1782 was Presbyterian-dominated and its radical resolutions led to the issue of Ireland's unrepresented Catholic majority. Already some radical Presbyterians had proposed the admission of Catholics to the ranks of the Volunteers. One historian has noted the ways in which prominent Volunteers such as William Crawford were influenced by Samuel Pufendorf, Locke and Hutcheson and began to distinguish between the personal devotion of Catholics and the public authority of popery.<sup>13</sup>

The American Revolution and the work of Thomas Paine added further elements to the process of Presbyterian radicalisation in the late eighteenth

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<sup>11</sup> Ian McBride, 'The School of Virtue: Francis Hutcheson, Irish Presbyterians and the Scottish Enlightenment' in D.G. Boyce, Robert Eccleshall and Vincent Geoghegan (eds), *Political Thought in Ireland since the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1993), 84–5; Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel*, I, 3; McBride, 'The School of Virtue', 87, 86.

<sup>12</sup> McBride, 'The School of Virtue', 80, 81, 75, 76; Ian McBride, *Scripture Politics* (Oxford, 1998), 89–90.

<sup>13</sup> Marianne Elliott, *Watchmen in Sion: The Protestant Idea of Liberty* (Derry, 1985), 12; McBride, 'The School of Virtue', 91; McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 154; Norman Vance, 'Volunteer Thought: William Crawford of Strabane' in D.G. Boyce, Robert Eccleshall and Vincent Geoghegan (eds), *Political Discourse in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Basingstoke, 2001), 262, 265.

century. Indeed, the language of Paine and of the rights of man was absorbed into the sermons of the theological radicals, smoothing their evolution into political radicals. As McBride has noted, in the sermons of William Steel Dickson 'New Light arguments for liberty of conscience had been transformed into the universalist idiom of the inalienable rights of man'. By the 1790s, New Light (or, more properly, its descendant) was once more shining brightly.<sup>14</sup>

The influence of the French Revolution on United Irish thought was once taken as axiomatic, but more recently the influence of this compound of indigenous Presbyterian radicalism has been considered more significant. Yet there is one important respect in which the French Revolution was to have a profound impact on radical Presbyterianism. Notwithstanding the New Light enthusiasm for liberty of conscience, there were many Irish Presbyterians for whom popery remained a real concern. This was particularly so in rural areas where secessionism and covenanting remained powerful, but even theological liberals like William Bruce had profound misgivings about the political consequences of admitting Catholics to the rights of citizenship, particularly fearing claims for the return of land confiscated during the seventeenth century. These fears deepened after the events of 1798. Yet before the rebellion of that year, the French Revolution appeared to demonstrate to liberal Presbyterians that Catholics could be freed from their servile spiritual condition; this was the beginning of the end of the papal Anti-Christ. In the atmosphere of the 1790s, such excitement put liberals in the ascendant. The General Synod of the Irish Presbyterian church went so far as to petition Westminster on behalf of the Catholics over the head of the Dublin parliament. The new developments from the American war onwards inclined many Presbyterians to reconfigure their political views but also influenced their future perspectives on theology and ecclesiology. Indeed, when the future anti-slavery campaigner James McKinney wrote *A View of the Rights of God and Man* (1793) he was consciously reconciling Paineite politics with Calvinist theology.<sup>15</sup>

If the 1790s were a decade in which liberal Presbyterianism appeared to be in the ascendant, the period after the rebellion of 1798 saw a counter-attack by the conservative forces in Irish Presbyterianism. In theological terms, the new dispute was between the orthodox, evangelical Presbyterians and an 'Arian minority who were direct descendants of the New Light party'. Historians of

<sup>14</sup> McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 118, 119, 10, 100.

<sup>15</sup> McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 169; Elliott, *Watchmen in Zion*, 21–2; McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 219, 12; Elliott, *Watchmen in Zion*, 22; McBride, 'When Ulster joined Ireland', 86, 82.

the schism of the 1820s have tended to see the dispute in political, as well as doctrinal and ecclesiological, terms. For Finlay Holmes, the schism in Ulster Presbyterianism in the 1820s was the result of the convergence of several conflicts—theological, ecclesiological, political, economic and personal. J.M. Barkley noted that Cooke's biographer (and son-in-law J.S. Porter) had made explicit Cooke's political purpose. Indeed, British governmental strategy had been to encourage conservative elements within Ulster Presbyterianism and Barkley suggests that Cooke's 'primary motive' was to forge an alliance between Presbyterianism and the political establishment.<sup>16</sup>

However, recent scholarship has emphasised the theological roots of Cooke's attack on the non-subscribers. Cooke and the evangelicals saw the 'the central issue of the person and work of Christ' as fundamental and the Unitarians as heretical. Furthermore, just as McBride has warned against a mechanical association of radical Presbyterianism with an emergent Ulster bourgeoisie (he points out that Presbyterian participants in the 1798 Rebellion came from both New and Old Light traditions), it has also been noted that during the subscription controversy many scrupulously orthodox ministers were nevertheless profoundly uneasy at Cooke's attempts to align Presbyterianism with conservative political forces. Some may merely have been unwilling to push the issue of subscription but others objected strongly to his politics. Nevertheless, Andrew Holmes has acknowledged that evangelicalism was a compound of religious sincerity, social conformity and political conservatism.<sup>17</sup>

The extent to which the battle was a conscious political engagement entered upon by Cooke is, then, perhaps open to some debate, but there seems little doubt that there was, at the very least, a significant political dimension to the attack on non-subscribers. Finlay Holmes has suggested that anti-Trinitarianism had appealed to the bourgeois intellectuals among the Presbyterians of north-east Ulster, men who were influenced by the Enlightenment and critical of what they considered archaic restrictions on freedom in business, religion and politics. This certainly accords with McBride's view of the development of

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<sup>16</sup> Andrew Holmes, *The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice, 1770–1840* (Oxford, 2006), 4; R.F.G. Holmes, 'Controversy and Schism in the Synod of Ulster in the 1820s' in Haire (ed.), *Challenge and Conflict*, 127; Barkley, 'The Arian Schism in Ireland', 323–4, 326, 336.

<sup>17</sup> Holmes, *The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice*, 306; McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 63; Gerald Hall, *Ulster Liberalism, 1778–1876: The Middle Path* (Dublin, 2011), 78; John Bew, *The Glory of being Britons: Civic Unionism in Nineteenth-Century Belfast* (Dublin, 2009), 13; Holmes, *The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice*, 39.

Presbyterian radicalism during the eighteenth century and suggests continuity from the original New Lights to the Unitarianism of the 1820s.<sup>18</sup>

Following the rebellion of 1798 ‘in an unstable and rapidly changing world, many in all classes were turning to the certainties of evangelicalism and Old Light’. The evangelicals believed that the ideas of the French Revolution were hostile to Christianity, and Cooke expressed both religious zeal and political loyalty. Nineteenth-century conservatism and evangelicalism, personified in Cooke, was the descendant of the seceding strain in Presbyterianism, which emphasised an internalised, personal religion in which the experience of faith, conversion and grace were the key components, while the liberals saw their religion as a public affair, guided by reason and evident in good works (an emphasis that brought accusations of an unlikely Arian affinity with popery through ‘the merit of works’). In their rearguard action in defence of liberty of conscience and their liberal attitude to Catholicism, it may be best to see the older Mitchel and the remonstrants as the inheritors of the eighteenth-century New Light tradition.<sup>19</sup>

It seems unlikely that the Rev. Mitchel remained a United Irishman for long. There is certainly no hint in his published sermons or prayers that in adulthood he remained among the rapidly-diminishing number of unreconstructed Presbyterian republicans. Indeed, recent scholarship on the political trajectory of Ulster liberalism in the early nineteenth century suggests he may well have been a liberal unionist. The work of John Bew and Gerald Hall has shown that there was a relatively seamless transition among the reformers of the 1790s to liberal unionism during the first half of the nineteenth century, in which the Union was believed to have satisfied many of the demands of the early United Irishmen by ridding the polity of a species of Irish ‘old corruption’. This liberalism was distinguished by a concern for ‘private judgment’ that accorded with the principles of the non-subscribing element within Presbyterianism and, insofar as the older Mitchel did address political matters, it was to hint at political motives in the attack by Cooke on non-subscription, as will be seen.<sup>20</sup>

The networks of family and political relationships within the relatively narrow, parochial world of *bourgeois* Ulster society also foster the impression of a shift towards a liberal unionist perspective. John Bew has demonstrated

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<sup>18</sup> Holmes, ‘Controversy and Schism’, 120.

<sup>19</sup> Finlay Holmes, *The Presbyterian Church in Ireland: A Popular History* (Dublin, 2000), 88–9; McBride, *Scripture Politics*, 108, Holmes, *The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice*, 140–1.

<sup>20</sup> Hall, *Ulster Liberalism*, 27.

the ways in which these relationships functioned to create politically liberal networks in Ulster during the late eighteenth and first half of the nineteenth centuries. For example, Francis Hutcheson was a cousin of William Bruce's father; the editor of the important liberal mouthpiece, the *Northern Whig*, was Henry Joy, a relative of the executed rebel of 1798, Henry Joy McCracken. Henry Montgomery was a subscriber to the autobiography of another 1798 rebel, Archibald Hamilton Rowan, which had been edited by the Unitarian minister William Hamilton Drummond.<sup>21</sup>

Cooke's chosen battle ground in the early 1820s was the Belfast Academical Institution. Founded in 1810, it was ostensibly an ecumenical venture in which students would be admitted without regard to faith and would be taught by members of their own communion. Viewed with suspicion from the outset by both government and conservative Presbyterians, the institution came under fire from Cooke when an Arian minister of the Antrim presbytery, Rev. William Bruce, was appointed to teach Latin, Greek and Hebrew. Cooke feared that an Arian influence at the Institution would lead to a revival in radical politics. At the General Synod in 1822 Cooke found little support but he persisted and, after he became Moderator in 1824, was able to persuade the General Synod at Coleraine to support his position. During 1826 Cooke was again rebuffed, but he returned to the issue at the General Synod in Strabane in 1827, broadening the offensive against theological and political liberalism and demanding an affirmation of the synod's Trinitarianism.<sup>22</sup>

When battle recommenced it was over a requirement that all candidates for the ministry ought to be required to uphold the Westminster Confession, and in particular, its Trinitarianism. In the doctrine of the Trinity the assembly reaffirmed 'the essential Christian conviction that God himself was acting in Christ to save mankind'. It appears that the doctrine of the Trinity became an important point of conflict between the liberals and Cooke not only because there had been a history of Arianism within Irish Presbyterianism but also because Cooke reflected the conservative and centralising tendency (theologically and politically) within Presbyterianism in Ireland during the early nineteenth century.<sup>23</sup>

The argument over the doctrine of the Trinity was seen as important by the latitudinarians and Unitarians because the dispute in the early church between the followers of Arius (those who did not believe in the Trinity)

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<sup>21</sup> Bew, *The Glory of being Britons*, 33, 34, 62.

<sup>22</sup> Barkley, 'The Arian Schism in Ireland', 327, 328, 329.

<sup>23</sup> Holmes, 'Controversy and Schism', 120.

and Athanasius (the Trinitarians) had been resolved at the Council of Nicaea (325) in favour of secular intervention to define and circumscribe theological orthodoxy. For the liberals, Nicaea was a symbolic moment when secular rulers had first legislated on church matters, coinciding with the establishment of the Trinitarian doctrine as Christian orthodoxy.<sup>24</sup>

It was at this point in the developing rupture that the older Mitchel joined battle. It is worth noting, in passing, that while Henry Montgomery has been usually identified as the leader of the remonstrants, the Rev. Mitchel was a significant figure within the Irish Presbyterian church at the time. Not only had he been Moderator of the Synod of Ulster in 1822–3, he had preached at the General Synod of 1823 and was also the preacher at the first gathering of the Remonstrant Synod. In 1831 his sermons were the subject of a counter-offensive by Trinitarians, to which he replied in a series of published letters. In 1836 he was to compile an ‘official volume’ of prayers at the invitation of the Remonstrant Synod.<sup>25</sup>

In March 1828 a collection of sermons by the Rev. Mitchel was published to counter the Cooke offensive. The sermons were delivered to his Newry congregation but were ordnance for the wider battle against ‘coercion’ that had then been joined. The sermons were preached over eight successive Sundays in January and February 1828. In the published volume, they were supplemented by a sermon he had preached at the general synod in 1823 and by an ‘address of the Presbyterian congregation of Newry’ penned by the session clerk Isaac Glenny, assuring their minister of the congregation’s ‘unshaken attachment and continued support’. In the introduction the Rev. Mitchel asserted that he had been required to make an ‘explicit declaration’ of his beliefs, and that ‘in matters of faith, I shall call no man master’. These sermons were the beginning of something of a pamphlet war between the older Mitchel and Newry’s senior Episcopalian clergyman, Daniel Bagot. Bagot was to defend the doctrine of the Trinity in a reply to these sermons, occasioning a further response by the Rev. Mitchel.<sup>26</sup>

The published sermons assert time and again the right of private judgement, the ways in which the Westminster Confession denies that right,

<sup>24</sup> McBride, ‘When Ulster joined Ireland’, 89.

<sup>25</sup> W.G. Strahan, *First Newry (Sandys Street) Presbyterian Congregation: Its History and Relationships* (Newry, 1904), 27; Rev. J. Mitchel, *Helps to Christian Devotion: A Collection of Prayers for General Use, sanctioned by the Remonstrant Synod of Ulster* (Newry, 1836); Holmes, *The Shaping of Ulster Presbyterian Belief and Practice*, 288.

<sup>26</sup> J. Mitchel, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and other Subjects connected therewith. In a series of Sermons* (second ed., Newry, 1830), ix, x–xi.

and the primacy of scripture. Yet the tone adopted by the Newry minister was at first warm and conciliatory. He referred explicitly to the requirement of candidates for the ministry to subscribe, claiming that once the candidate accepts ‘those formularies of human devising’, henceforth ‘he dares not enquire’. If the requirement of subscription was formalised it would ‘establish a human criterion of orthodoxy’ and ‘to this yoke must all candidates for the sacred office of the Christian ministry among us bow their necks’.<sup>27</sup>

In the sermons, the Rev. Mitchel presented himself as a moderate, steering a course between the extremes of Athanasianism and Arianism in an argument that had been manufactured over a matter that was ‘comparatively unimportant’. He had been driven into this dispute against his own inclination and did not want to argue over ‘non-essentials’. He was irked by misrepresentations of his actual position, which was not one of pure Arianism, as he considered that Jesus was God, although the exact nature of that godliness was unclear. He personally had ‘no doubt of the divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ’ but refused to judge those who consider Jesus ‘in no higher character than that of humanity’. After this series of sermons was over, he wished to return to ‘that quiet and unobtrusive ministration of the gospel’ which he did previously and which he found more congenial. It is worth noting, in passing, that the Rev. Mitchel appears to have been converted to Arianism some time after the publication of these sermons. By the time two 1835 sermons were published he was content to be considered a Unitarian.<sup>28</sup>

However, some remonstrants considered that their advocacy of Catholic emancipation had been the real reason for the attack upon them and for the renewed insistence on subscription to the Westminster Confession. Indeed, the evidence of the 1828 sermons suggests that this was a significant factor, thus confirming the political dimension of the dispute. In the first sermon the Rev. Mitchel asserted that, while he opposed Rome, ‘we form part of the same community with them’. Catholics were not to be led to discard their prejudices and enlighten their minds by ‘persecution, reproach, or violence’ nor by ‘misrepresentation, and calumny, and casting out their names as evil’. He added that there had been ‘some woful impolicy in the civil treatment of these people’. Penalties and civil disabilities had been tried and did not deserve to succeed. After Catholic emancipation in 1829 and the remonstrants’ withdrawal from the General Synod, the Rev. Mitchel was to tell their first assembly

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 160, 161, 164.

<sup>28</sup> Mitchel, *The Scripture Doctrine*, 154, 68, 150, 36, 38, 180; Rev. J. Mitchel, *The Sect ‘everywhere spoken against’*. *Two sermons preached at Newry in 1835* (Newry, 1835).

that he thanked God that the Protestant churches, which had imposed ‘the heaviest penalties which the arm of civil power could inflict’ upon ‘those who conscientiously differed from them’, no longer had the civil power ‘so much at their beck’. In a sermon preached in 1835 to his Newry congregation, he again appeared to refer to Catholic emancipation (and possibly the marginalisation of the Orange Order), applauding ‘the increasing light and liberty of this age, and the consequently improved spirit of legislation and civil government’, which had ‘put the maniac of religious intolerance, as it were, into a straight-waistcoat; and if they have been unable to imbue him with a meekness of heart, have at least tied up his hands from doing all the mischief that he could desire’. In a second sermon published in 1835, the older Mitchel noted that he had been accused of having no objection to the establishment of a ‘Popish ascendancy’ in Ireland. His reply was that the authors of such calumnies knew that his differences with Catholicism were greater than theirs. Significantly, he added, ‘Unitarians . . . regard themselves as the most consistently Protestant Christians in the land:—but their Protestantism does not consist in hatred and abuse of Papists.’ Furthermore, all classes and denominations should enjoy civil and religious liberty. He hoped that soon all sections of the Christian community in Ireland would be ‘on a footing of perfect equality’ in respect of their religious rights and liberties. Indeed, religious liberty and political progress were connected, and the older Mitchel declared that until such religious equality was established, ‘there can be no such thing as equal and impartial government’. In such pronouncements it is evident that the Rev. Mitchel was among the heirs to William Steel Dickson’s ‘scripture politics’ in its liberal post-union manifestation.<sup>29</sup>

Although there were no direct references to him in the published sermons, it can safely be deduced that Cooke was the object of much of the criticism directed at men in the General Synod who were ‘determined to anathematize, to consign to perdition, all who do not conform to their own views’. It was surely no accident that an earlier sermon, preached at the General Synod at Armagh in June 1823, was included in the collection published in the spring of 1828 when the battle was at its height. In the 1823 sermon the Rev. Mitchel suggested that some ministers had become too ‘deeply embedded in secular affairs’ and ‘the passing party politics of the day’. In respect of the theological dimensions of the argument, he said it was apparent from the New Testament that Christian principles and practice, faith and works, ought to go hand in

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<sup>29</sup> Holmes, *The Presbyterian Church*, 93; Mitchel, *The Scripture Doctrine*, 11, 68, 240; Mitchel, *The Sect ‘everywhere spoken against’*, 8, 29, 30.

hand. While this assertion appears to suggest that it may be right to suggest that the dispute was not wholly political, it seems impossible in this affair to confine politics, ecclesiology and theology to hermetic categories. In a number of the sermons published before the secession of the Unitarians, the Rev. Mitchel referred to ambitious, narrow-minded, 'rash and aspiring men'. Afterwards, in the inaugural sermon of the Remonstrant synod, he continued to speak in such terms, referring to a 'virtual pretension to infallibility among uninspired men'.<sup>30</sup>

It was after the publication of the 1828 sermons that the conflict came to a head. In 1830 seventeen ministers and their congregations withdrew from the General Synod of Ulster to form the Remonstrant Synod. The Rev. Mitchel was prominent among these, having averred in October 1828 that he had 'no higher ambition' than that his son should become a minister, yet he could not consent to him entering the Synod of Ulster in the present circumstances. The Rev. Mitchel was also a preacher at the first assembly of the Remonstrant Synod. A second edition of the 1828 Newry sermons followed during 1830, in which it was lamented that the General Synod of Ulster 'has followed up and completed that system of spiritual coercion which they had previously commenced', so that the 'spirit of religious freedom' in the synod had been silenced, if not 'utterly extinguished'. Rev. Mitchel rejoiced that he had tried to stem the tide of intolerance. In this statement it is perhaps possible to discern some of the personal satisfaction in martyrdom of which the minister's son was later to be accused.<sup>31</sup>

It seems clear that the older Mitchel was respected not only by his own congregation but also by other Christian denominations in Newry. In 1833 the Rev. Mitchel was chosen as first president of the Newry Literary Society, and his inaugural address used terms that reflected his liberalism. He hoped that the newly-formed society would 'endeavour to advance with the progress of society' and suggested that 'The general intellect seems shaking itself as from a slumber of ages—A spirit of inquiry has gone abroad, & men are opening their eyes & having to think for themselves. We seem to have arrived at something like the manhood of the human intellect.' In his connections with the town's literary society, Mitchel senior appears to have been part of an established liberal tradition in the vicinity that cut across confessional allegiances and had been successful in mounting a political challenge to the local landed interest as

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<sup>30</sup> Mitchel, *The Scripture Doctrine*, 7, 246.

<sup>31</sup> Holmes, *The Presbyterian Church*, 92; Strahan, *First Newry (Sandys Street) Presbyterian Congregation*, 30; Mitchel, *The Scripture Doctrine*, iv, v.

recently as 1828. His personal standing does not appear to have diminished, despite the split in his ‘numerically large and strong’ congregation occasioned by his 1828 sermons, which had led to the establishment of a theologically orthodox Presbyterian congregation in the town.<sup>32</sup>

The conclusion must be that Mitchel’s father was a classic product of an age of Presbyterian radicalism. The provenance of that radicalism is clear in the continuities between the political deductions of Abernethy, the moral philosophy of Hutcheson, the ‘scripture politics’ of the Presbyterians among the United Irishmen and the post-union liberalism of the non-subscribing ministers. It seems also, in his address to the literary society, that cosmopolitan influences had enthused Mitchel’s father. That was made explicit in one of the 1835 remonstrant sermons, in which he self-consciously placed himself in the tradition of Locke, Newton, Milton, Nathaniel, Lardner and Samuel Clarke, ‘men who brought unusual talent, and unusual learning, to the investigation of Christian truth’ and who had freed the gospel from ‘the rubbish of ages’. His political tendencies were enlightened, liberal, pluralist and tolerant.<sup>33</sup>

To what extent was the younger Mitchel an inheritor of this tradition? The superficial evidence—the younger Mitchel’s republican nationalism, the use of the title *United Irishman* for his revolutionary newspaper, his antipathy to the developing sectarianism of mainstream Presbyterianism in the nineteenth century—suggests a connection. However, the younger John Mitchel’s political views cannot be equated with his father’s beliefs or experiences of Cooke’s conservative offensive. While it seems plausible that aspects of Mitchel’s thought could have been the product of his upbringing in a most dissenting of dissenting households, there is only limited evidence of these connections through Mitchel’s political life.

For example, his attitude to the conversion of two of his daughters to Catholicism has often been cited by nationalists as solid evidence of Mitchel’s inclusive, pluralist liberalism. In December 1859 during his first period of residence in Paris, he wrote in an ironic tone to John Blake Dillon’s wife that ‘there is a kind of hankering in all our family for the “errors of Romanism”’. A little more than a year later, after his daughter Henrietta announced her intention to convert to Roman Catholicism, he wrote to his sister that ‘I

<sup>32</sup> President’s address at the opening of the Newry Literary Society, 4 June 1833, Ms. Coll. Meloney-Mitchel, Box 4, Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscripts Collection, New York, hereafter Ms. Coll. Meloney-Mitchel; Bew, *The Glory of being Britons*, 7; Hall, *Ulster Liberalism*, 98–102; Strahan, *First Newry (Sandys Street) Presbyterian Congregation*, 35.

<sup>33</sup> Mitchel, *The Sect ‘everywhere spoken against’*, 15.

have not thought it right to interpose the smallest obstacle to it, & think it a matter of small consequence one way or other'. A number of years later, commenting on the conversion of a second daughter, Isabella, to Catholicism, he wrote (again to Mrs Dillon) that 'toleration is the rule in our family'. In such statements it is perhaps possible to discern the influence of Mitchel's father, and lessons learned at an early age.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, his revulsion at the introspective, internalised, emotional religion of evangelical revivalism in the United States appears to reflect the antipathy of the enlightened, liberal Presbyterianism of his father to those who would make Presbyterianism a matter of faith and grace alone. His father's sermons had specifically opposed that variant of Presbyterianism. In the course of a sermon against the imposition of a subscription test for ministerial candidates preached in early 1828, Mitchel's father had expressed his dismay at 'enthusiasts' and the 'workings of a fanciful or fanatical mind'. His son, likewise, on encountering religious revivals while living in Tennessee, expressed some distaste for emotional expressions of faith. In letters to his sister and to John Blake Dillon he described a religious revival in Knoxville in the summer of 1856 and again the following year. Mitchel noted that many of the people in the town belonged to 'the most benighted religious sects', including Presbyterians. While such revivals were not 'mere hypocrisy', they were a 'species of religious intoxication'. He told Dillon that during the summer every church in Knoxville stood open all day, every day, with 'preaching and psalmody going on morning, noon & night, interrupted only by the groans & howls of penitents in the very agonies of new birth. Confound them!' Mitchel continued:

Walking through the streets at any hour, you were liable to be startled and shocked, hearing through the doors of some conventicle hysterical shrieks & piteous outcries, which the preacher endeavoured to drown by roaring appeals for help to Jesus... And to what think you they ascribe it?—Why to the Comet. I don't altogether laugh at all this—because I know much of the roaring repentance proceeds from real excitement—not pure hypocrisy in every case.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> John Mitchel, Paris, to Mrs Dillon, 22 December 1859, Bigger Collection, Z 314 (5), no number, Belfast Central Library, (hereafter Bigger Collection); John Mitchel, Paris, to Henrietta (sister), London, 2 January 1861, Bigger Collection, Z 314 (5) 14; John Mitchel, Paris, to Mrs Dillon, Killiney, 15 March 1866, Bigger Collection, Z 314 (5), no number.

<sup>35</sup> Mitchel, *The Scripture Doctrine*, 167; John Mitchel, Noxville (sic), to Henrietta,

Mitchel concluded that the revival was ‘a spiritual drunkenness or mania’. Now, while he did not suggest that this was a purely Presbyterian affair, there is a sense here that such proceedings were not entirely unfamiliar and were almost as distasteful to him as emotional religion that rested solely on faith and grace had been to his father.<sup>36</sup>

Yet a comparison of tone and diction between father and son reveals few similarities. In an 1835 sermon, preached in his own church at Newry and published in defence of the Remonstrant cause, Mitchel’s father used an expression that sounds rather like the kind of thing his son might have written. Speaking of the withdrawal of the Latitudinarians and Arians from the Synod, he referred to them as victims of ‘the tricks and jugglery of the designing calumniator or the canting knave’. Cant was a favourite word of the son when attacking his enemies, but this is the only place it appears in the published sermons of the father, whose tone is almost always softer and conciliatory. While there appears to have been a hardening of that tone after his departure from mainstream Presbyterianism, there is little to suggest a direct temperamental or ideological connection between father and son, particularly the son who emerged in the pages of the *United Irishman* in the winter and spring of 1848.<sup>37</sup>

While the older Mitchel became involved, as a leader of the Remonstrants, in a polemical pamphlet war during the Arian schism, away from these matters he lived the ordinary life of a provincial minister. His involvement in the Newry Literary Society offers evidence of his interests and of his preferred ideological territory. For, as well as the inaugural presidential address alluded to earlier, a small amount of other material has survived. In 1835 he delivered a lecture to the society on ‘The Druids’, concluding that their knowledge had elevated them and that as a consequence they could not resist the temptation to impose on other people. It seems likely that in this lecture he was making another attack on Cooke and the turn taken by mainstream Presbyterianism, but his subjects were not always of such direct contemporary relevance. In August 1836, for example, he delivered a lecture to the society on the antiquities of Newry. Another surviving lecture, on meteors, demonstrates that spirit of interest in natural science that is often considered

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Gloucester, Mass., 20 June 1856, Bigger Collection, Z 314 (5) 4; J. Mitchel, Knoxville, to John Blake Dillon, 30 May 1857, Bigger Collection, Z 314 (5), no number.

<sup>36</sup> J. Mitchel, Knoxville, to John Blake Dillon, 30 May 1857, Bigger Collection Z 314 (5), no number.

<sup>37</sup> Mitchel, *The Sect ‘everywhere spoken against’*, 10.

to have typified the enquiring, rational religion of the Unitarians in the early nineteenth century.<sup>38</sup>

It should not be altogether surprising that the young Mitchel's thinking was shaped to some extent by his father. It is easy to imagine a politically-charged atmosphere in the Mitchel household, as the respected minister made his rearguard stand against the increasing intolerance of Cooke's faction within Presbyterianism. The political overtones to the theological conflict seem apparent. However, the older Mitchel's were the politics of Presbyterian liberalism, theological in origin and reaching back across more than a century. They were a politics of toleration and Protestant liberty of conscience. In the Rev. Mitchel's sermons, the roots of such political radicalism as he did endorse are plainly in the eighteenth century, inspired by one particular tradition in Presbyterianism and probably by encounters with enlightened liberalism beyond that tradition. In some ways the younger Mitchel was the heir to this tradition, and a liberalism occasionally surfaces in his words and deeds before his final conversion to revolution in early 1848, after he drew the line at the Coercion Act. In late 1847 Irish landlords demanded coercive rather than ameliorative measures to deal with the agrarian crisis caused by famine, leading Mitchel to the 'renunciation of any further hope of combination of classes in this country'.<sup>39</sup>

Yet there remains a problem. Historians such as Marianne Elliott and Ian McBride have now traced non-subscription and New Light through to the radicalised Enlightenment-inspired republicanism of the 1790s, and the recent historiography of early nineteenth-century Presbyterianism offers evidence of the post-union liberal trajectory of that tradition. Yet there is a discontinuity in the intellectual development of the young John Mitchel from these origins, a discontinuity that cannot be masked by his use of the *United Irishman* name, nor his tolerance in matters of his daughters' conversion to Catholicism, nor his distaste for evangelical religion. The minister's son did not extend tolerance and respect to those who disagreed with him. Most certainly, his political deductions did not originate in the scripture politics of eighteenth-century New Light Presbyterianism. Indeed, it is much easier to see Mitchel's father

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<sup>38</sup> Rev. J. Mitchel, *Helps to Christian Devotion*, 161; 'The Druids', lecture given to the Newry Literary Society, 1835, Ms. Coll. Meloney-Mitchel, Box 4; 'Antiquities of Newry, read in the literary society of Newry, August 1836', Ms. Coll. Meloney-Mitchel, Box 4; Rev. J. Mitchel, 'On meteors', no date, Ms. Coll. Meloney-Mitchel, Box 4; Bew, *The Glory of being Britons*, 78–9.

<sup>39</sup> Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel*, I, 190; Quinn, *John Mitchel*, 18; *United Irishman*, 12 February 1848.

as a consistent liberal. Perhaps his father's death in 1840 was a watershed in Mitchel's development.

The Rev. Mitchel's son may have left Newry for Dublin and his new career as a writer for *The Nation* in late 1845 with his father's spirit of tolerance and Christian charity, but thereafter there was a growing divergence. Gavan Duffy and others suggested that the Mitchel who arrived in Dublin in late 1845 was, in personality, very different from the man who departed on the prison ship for Bermuda in May 1848. While any judgement passed by Gavan Duffy on Mitchel must be treated cautiously, William Dillon did note that Mitchel was, by nature, much more conservative than radical. He was, indeed, by no means fanatically opposed to Irish landlordism. Mitchel started his full-time career at *The Nation* as a relatively moderate repealer, prepared to work as a committee man within the mainstream of the Repeal Association. Indeed, even after the secession of the Confederates from the Repeal Association in late 1846, Mitchel was still willing to write in *The Nation* 'in such a way as to alarm landed proprietors as little as possible' and as late as 1847 was 'under the impression that the landlords were wavering and might still be won'.<sup>40</sup>

However, by the spring of 1848 he was pouring invective on the government and scorn on those within the Repeal movement who sought piecemeal reform or strategic caution. He was demanding immediate rebellion, armed revolution and an independent Irish republic. While the formation of his outlook and political views may owe something to the influence of his father, to the experience of growing up in a household that was the object of an ecclesiological and political witch hunt, it is going too far to describe that experience as 'a religious form of imperialism', a formulation that makes a direct connection between the subscription controversy of the 1820s and the younger Mitchel's politics during the year of revolutions.

The transformation in the younger Mitchel appears to have taken place as a consequence of a number of factors, including the influence on him of Davis and *The Nation*, his acquaintance with Carlyle and his experience of the great famine. He was also a wide reader and familiar with European thought. The change was sealed in the heady atmosphere created by the European revolutions in the spring of 1848.

Mitchel's acquaintance with Carlyle's work began some time before the two men met in London and Dublin in the mid-1840s. While still in his early

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<sup>40</sup> Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel*, I, 142, 149.

twenties Carlyle became a 'great object of ... worship' for the young Mitchel and he read Carlyle's *French Revolution* (1837), corresponding about it with John Martin. Indeed, his first real contribution to the repeal movement was his *Life of Aodh O'Neil* (1845), a work that some of his new friends from *The Nation* objected to on the grounds that some of it was 'too unmistakably Carlylean in sound'.<sup>41</sup>

Furthermore, in his attitude to race and slavery, Mitchel's views seem to be derived much more from Carlyle than from the liberal tradition in Presbyterianism to which his father so evidently belonged. Francis Hutcheson had argued for the rights of slaves in *A System of Moral Philosophy*, 100 years earlier and the connection between Hutcheson and the beliefs of Mitchel's father is evident enough. While no specific evidence exists of the view of slavery taken by Mitchel's father, one notable United Irishman among the Presbyterian ministers, the Covenanters, James McKinney, fled to America in 1793 and became an ardent opponent of the institution. As an inheritor of liberal traditions, it is difficult to imagine the devout minister advocating slavery. While it has been pointed out that the younger Mitchel's racism did not altogether preclude him from being a liberal in nineteenth-century terms, it is going much further to suggest, as has occurred, that he was 'committed—in the extreme, as befitted his personality—to individual liberty, the key element in nineteenth-century liberalism'. Indeed, Mitchel's political development appears to have been ever less liberal.<sup>42</sup>

There are few mentions of Mitchel's profound racism before his arrival in the United States, where it appears to have developed more fully than hitherto. Yet Gavan Duffy had already been uneasy about Mitchel's views on race during his time at *The Nation*. He recalled many years later that while the two men were in the midst of their split over the newspaper's future editorial policy in the late autumn of 1847, Mitchel had written articles that 'tried my patience sorely by defending negro slavery, and denouncing the emancipation of the Jews as an unpardonable sin against God'. Gavan Duffy said he had removed the articles from the proofs as he could not allow the newspaper 'to be carried over to the side of oppression on any pretence'. Gavan Duffy explicitly blamed Carlyle for this development.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., I, 36–7, 75–6.

<sup>42</sup> Holmes, *The Presbyterian Church in Ireland*, 81; Steven Knowlton, 'The Politics of John Mitchel: A Reappraisal', *Eire-Ireland*, 22 (1987), 41, 40.

<sup>43</sup> Charles Gavan Duffy, *Four Years of Irish History* (Dublin, 1887 ed.), 178–9; Charles Gavan Duffy, *Conversations with Carlyle* (New York, 1892 ed.), 117.

Mitchel's debt to Carlyle over race is clear, for example, in this passage from the *Jail Journal* (1854), in which Mitchel described the Brazilian slaves he saw from the ship taking him across the ocean following the sentence of transportation: 'These slaves in Brazil are fat and merry, obviously not overworked nor underfed, and it is a pleasure to see the lazy rogues lolling in their boats, sucking a piece of sugar-cane, and grinning and jabbering together.' In a similar vein Carlyle wrote of black men in Jamaica, 'Sitting yonder with their beautiful muzzles up to the ears in pumpkins, imbibing sweet pulps and juice; the grinder and incisor teeth ready for ever new work.' Similar images of contented indolence, fecklessness and inferiority recur in Mitchel's writings. He was aware that some of his associates in the national movement found his position distasteful, but he told one Dublin friend that he was 'perfectly assured ... that you (& the majority of the civilized nineteenth-century world) are altogether wrong on the question, & I absolutely right on it'. While living in Knoxville he wrote a letter to his sister that was intended to shock and amuse. In the letter he described himself as an 'inveterate southerner' who looked forward to the re-opening of the African slave trade, so that he could 'buy ... negroes at \$300 a piece'.<sup>44</sup>

Mitchel also shared with Carlyle a distaste for nineteenth-century conceptions of progress and reform. 'I have contracted (owing to an exaggerative habit) a diseased and monomaniacal hatred of "progress", & would rather like to go back and see people go back', he wrote to a friend in Ireland in 1855. This theme recurs in Mitchel's correspondence across many years. In Mitchel's case the past was not only a resource for the construction of imagined national communities but also an antithesis to the capitalist present. Frequently his correspondence and journals reveal a loathing for the progress symbolised by the extension of railways to the west and the enslavement of man to machine in factory capitalism. He often contrasted these with an idealised pastoral life. Mitchel was living in east Tennessee at the time he wrote this comment on 'progress', attempting to build an independent yeoman's life for his family on a farm outside Knoxville, a life he had fantasised about for some years. In the same letter he noted that the extension of the railways meant that 'people from the more eastern states will press in, bringing with

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<sup>44</sup> John Mitchel, *Jail Journal* (London, 1983 ed.), 66; Thomas Carlyle, *The Nigger Question* (Whitefish, Mt., 2006 ed.), 4; Mitchel, *Jail Journal*, 333; John Mitchel, New York, to Marie Thomson, 24 April 1854, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast (hereafter PRONI), T413/4; John Mitchel, Knoxville (sic), to Henrietta, Gloucester, Mass., 20 June 1856, Bigger Collection, Z 314 (5) 4.

them all the improvements & elegancies of life, wherein you know this Yankee nation whips the airth (sic)'. In his *Jail Journal* he confessed that he had long admired the independent farmer, 'a rural pater-familias'. This motif recurred when Mitchel attempted to justify the institution of slavery. It was part of an idealised vision of rural harmony in which the independent yeoman was the head of a family that included slaves. In this fantasy, slaves were cared for much more than the white wage-slaves of Manchester. The advent of industrial capitalism and the commercial vigour of Britain and the northern United States appalled him. These developments—and the identification of progress with these new economic arrangements—led to some of Mitchel's purple patches. For example, in the *Jail Journal* he grumbled that 'this world is ruled now by Order and Commerce (Commerce, obscenest of earth-spirits, once named Mammon, and thought to be a devil)', that 'your English and Yankees go too much ahead—hardly giving themselves time to sleep and eat, let alone praying—keep the social machinery working at too high a pressure' and that Britain and the northern United States inspired him to 'despise the civilization of the nineteenth century, and its two highest expressions and grandest hopes most especially'. The stylistic and tonal debt to Carlyle is particularly evident in these passages. It was a *petit-bourgeois* individualism that characterised Mitchel's thinking, not a quintessential nineteenth-century liberalism, and certainly not an inherited Presbyterian radicalism.<sup>45</sup>

In his attitudes to the other criminals with whom he had regular contact during his years of transportation, Mitchel also demonstrated a decidedly illiberal attitude. His regular descriptions of the physiognomy of the criminals reveal a familiar mid-nineteenth century belief that physical characteristics revealed something of the moral and spiritual status of the person. On a close look at the convicts on board the Bermuda prison ships, he saw 'evil countenances and amorphous skulls...burglars and swindlers from the womb'. His solution to the problem of crime and punishment was the gallows, and in another familiar discourse he said that society had 'no right to make the honest people support the rogues'. Later, in Van Diemen's Land, he came one day across a convict work detail, and noted that 'they gave us a vacant but impudent stare... I wish you well my poor fellows, but you all ought to have been hanged long ago'. Reformers like John Howard and Cesare Beccaria were 'genuine apostles of barbarism'.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> John Mitchel to Marie Thomson, 1 November 1855, PRONI, T/413/1; Mitchel, *Jail Journal*, 136, 265; Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel*, II, 218.

<sup>46</sup> Mitchel, *Jail Journal*, 63, 100, 236.

It is as if Mitchel deliberately sought to oppose every tenet of reason, rational enquiry, scientific analysis, social progress and political reform that is associated with the enlightened liberalism of New Light and Unitarian thought in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The distinction between him and his father can be summarised (albeit crudely) in the contrast between the forward looking liberalism of the father, and the backward-looking romanticism of the son. While his father had urged his audience at the Newry Literary Society to ‘endeavour to advance with the progress of society’, his son saw in progress a threat to the independent, self-reliant yeoman. The confluence of a romantic reaction to the Enlightenment and an over-enthusiasm for Carlyle created a man who, in his own words, had ‘an intolerant & reckless habit of devouring everybody who does not agree with myself’. Mitchel concluded, not without some humour, ‘I cannot help it. Whoever does not agree with me is an idiot you know’.<sup>47</sup>

Finally, it appears that Mitchel was aware of the gulf in attitudes that separated him from his father. In April 1849, while a prisoner on the Bermuda prison ships, Mitchel learned that he was to be moved to the Cape. He asked himself if the person undergoing these things could indeed be the same John Mitchel who had so recently lived in Upper Leeson Street, Dublin. This reflection set in mind a train of memories, which seemed to grow more vivid in comparison with his becalmed present consciousness. The conclusion to this reverie was to invoke the ghost of his father, rebuking him for his ill-spent life: ‘I wish the mild shade of my father wore a less reproachful aspect—and I wish he had less reason’. Mitchel, then, perceived his father to have been a gentle, virtuous man, and an example that he had failed to match. The question remains, how did Mitchel make the transition from his father’s school of liberal, tolerant, Christian virtue to the feisty, combative personality who issued a direct challenge to British rule in Ireland during the revolutionary spring of 1848? His career and influences after he moved to Dublin in late 1845 must be the starting point for an answer to that question, rather than his early experiences of the conservative offensive in Irish Presbyterianism.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> President’s address, Ms. Coll. Meloney-Mitchel, Box 4; J. Mitchel to Henrietta, 2 January 1861, Bigger Collection, Z314(5) 14.

<sup>48</sup> Mitchel, *Jail Journal*, 111.

# ‘What is my country?’: Supporting Small Nation Publishing

Alistair McCleery and Melanie Ramdarshan Bold

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## Introduction

In 1996 Craig Brown, the then Manager of the Scotland football team, took his players to the cinema to see *Braveheart* (1995) in the hope that the film of Scottish victory in the fourteenth-century Wars of Independence would inspire them to success on the pitch. The film traced the career of William Wallace, chiefly from the point where he had returned from Rome, fluent in the universal language of clerical hegemony, Latin, and included his victories against the armies of Edward I, before his capture and death by being hung, drawn and quartered in London. More apocryphal incidents in the film included the impregnation of the French wife of the Crown Prince by the doughty Scotsman; while the more historically accurate account of the Scottish nobles sharing a common heritage with their English counterparts, and indeed owning estates in both countries, provided a key motivation to the narrative’s depiction of upper-class pusillanimity and desertion.

The film was based on a book by Randall Wallace, an American academic of Scottish ancestry; William Wallace was played by Mel Gibson, an Australian born in the USA where he now lived and worked; most of the action was shot in Ireland with the collaboration of the Irish army; and *Braveheart* is owned, reflecting the production investment, by an American studio, Twentieth Century Fox, part of News Corp., itself a media conglomerate and the fiefdom of Rupert Murdoch, an Australian of Scots origins who has taken American nationality. The Scotland football team, mainly composed of Scots playing in English teams as opposed to Scottish teams comprising players from everywhere except Scotland, failed to make much progress in Euro ’96 but, unusually for those in such an occupation, Craig Brown remained in post until he resigned after failure to qualify for the 2002 World Cup. He was succeeded by Berti Vogts, a German whose contract as Manager of the Kuwaiti national side was bought out by the Scottish FA.

Globalisation, in this sense of disregard for the boundaries of the nation state, has a long pedigree; even globalisation, in the sense of the

spread of specific cultural narratives and icons, has an extended history; but perhaps globalisation, in the sense of transnational ownership of the media, is a phenomenon more clearly associated with the second half of the twentieth century and beyond. It is also a phenomenon that particularly affects publishers in small nations and national regions. Such publishers find themselves in competition with much, much larger enterprises that know no national or regional allegiance or responsibility. For example, Scotland is a national region of roughly five million inhabitants; like Ireland, situated on the northern periphery of Europe. It has formed since 1707 a political union with England and Wales, its neighbours to the south who constitute a population of fifty-five million. In turn, it now forms part of the European Union with its commitment to free movement of goods and labour across national borders. Within the larger English-language community, Scotland, again like Ireland, has been both an embattled minority culture and a leading influence thanks to its imperial diaspora (as the ancestry of those involved in *Braveheart* showed). A separate Scottish history and culture existed before and after the Union: during Scotland's period as an independent nation state, the status Wallace fought for, but also in its later incarnation as a stateless nation or national region.

### **Scotland and the World**

Scotland not only has its own political history but a continuing distinctive social and cultural history, including many of the institutions of civil society: the legal system, the educational system, and its post-Reformation predominant church. These institutions shaped over time the nature of the Scottish book trade and shared something of their distinctiveness with it. However, defining publishing in Scotland has long involved the disentangling of what is the Scottish-based industry from the aggregated UK profile of a metropolitan (i.e. London-based) industry and, since the mid-twentieth century, from the profile of a transnational industry.<sup>1</sup> Disentangling can be more difficult in this

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<sup>1</sup> In terms of data sources, it often also involves disentangling printing from magazine publishing from book and journal publishing. Standard forms of UK and Scottish government data collection and aggregation fail to make those distinctions and even to recognise amongst all the trades and professions delineated from bookbinder to journalist that of 'publisher'. See, for example, DC Research, *Economic Contribution Study for the Arts & Creative Industries* (Edinburgh, 2012), <http://www.creativescotland.com/resources/research>, accessed 23 October 2012. When we

context as a Scottish publisher can be the imprint of a UK or transnational group with its performance data hard to disaggregate. Such a group is now more likely to have general media interests of which book publishing will be only one. The disentangling involves distinguishing between media products and their role within the group, the book of the film as opposed to the film as opposed to the film of the book, education as opposed to reference books, for example, every bit as much as it does seeking separate profiles for member companies within the group.

Instead of disentangling, however, we can cut through the Gordian knot. There is an easier way of answering the question: what really is Scottish publishing? This is not merely an 'academic' question as it provides the basis upon which a more focussed cultural policy and form of support can be developed and allocated. A rough distinction can be made on the basis of output between those firms that publish for Scotland and those that publish in Scotland. The former are founded to reflect a cultural nationalism and its literary or historiographical expression. Many of these small presses fail after initial success or remain relatively stagnant. Where success is consistent, these firms can lose their independence through merger with or acquisition by larger, London-based, houses. (A similar migration can often be noted in the place of publication of Scottish writers: early work published in Edinburgh, later work in London.) The number of Scottish publishers covered by our periodic surveys of the industry rose from ninety in 2003 to 110 in 2011, currently producing some three thousand titles a year.<sup>2</sup> This confirms the ease of entry into the sector rather than a core robustness. Those firms that publish in Scotland, though not necessarily for it, have been even more vulnerable just because of their dependence on markets outside Scotland—particularly those

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use the term 'publishing' throughout this essay, it is to refer to book and journal publishing, whether print or screen-based, but not printing or magazine or newspaper publishing. Consequently, we use our own periodic surveys of publishing in Scotland in preference to government data.

<sup>2</sup> The first of these surveys was used as the foundation of Marion Sinclair, Alistair McCleery and Mark C. Graham, *A Review of Scottish Publishing in the Twenty-First Century: Summary Report* (Edinburgh, 2004); the second was summarised in the course of Alistair McCleery, et al., 'Publishing in Scotland: Reviewing the Fragile Revival', *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 24 (2008), 87–97; and the 2010 survey formed the basis of Melanie Ramdarshan Bold, 'The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices in the Scottish Publishing Industry', *Publishing Research Quarterly* (2012) DOI: 10.1007/s12109-012-9293-0. The figure for the current total number of publishers in Scotland comes from Publishing Scotland at <http://www.publishingscotland.org/about-publishing/about-the-industry/>, accessed 23 October 2012.

firms whose success pre-1950 was based on the imperial enterprise. We can quote two detailed illustrations of this.

In 1962, Thomas Nelson & Sons merged into the Thomson Organisation in an effort to sustain its educational publishing interests on a global scale. The production plant remained in Edinburgh while the editorial offices moved to London. The firm also began to seek competitive quotations for production work from printers in the UK, and more frequently abroad. The printing division was sold off in 1968; the works, in 1880 the epitome of forward-looking investment, were razed to the ground to make way for the headquarters of an insurance company. In 1969, the successful US division was sold off to a Tennessee publishing firm which retained the name Thomas Nelson & Sons. The earlier move of the editorial offices to London represented the first in a number of changes of address indicative of the imprint's role as a building block in international merger and acquisition strategies. Thomson merged the imprint with its acquisition of Pitman and it moved to Walton-upon-Thames. Thomas Nelson & Sons made a further migration from Walton-upon-Thames to Cheltenham as a result of its sale by Pearson, which had only just bought it from Thomson, to the Dutch conglomerate Wolter Kluwers. Kluwers merged the imprint in 2000 with Stanley Thornes to form a new division, Nelson Thornes. Nelson Thornes is now (2012) part of Infinitas Learning, an international company specialising in multimedia educational publishing. (The US Thomas Nelson & Sons, specialising in Bible and other Christian publishing, has just been taken over by HarperCollins.) All this is itself a local consequence of global realignments in educational publishing.

Oliver and Boyd represents a less clear-cut illustration in terms of its development but not of its outcome. It began as a distinctly cultural publisher in 1798, issuing Burns' 'Holy Willie's Prayer', for example, in 1801 as well as the poems of Ramsay, Fergusson and many anthologies of Scottish song. It published for Scotland. The company published the *Edinburgh Almanac* from 1812 until 1932 and the *British Ready Reckoner* in 1812. From the middle of the nineteenth century, its educational and medical lists dominated and provided the basis for strong export revenues. It had become a publisher in Scotland. This position persisted until the second half of the twentieth century when the company retrenched to serve the distinctive Scottish educational market. It became again a publisher for Scotland. The company was sold to the *Financial Times* in 1962, itself to be absorbed by Pearson. The university and general publishing departments were immediately closed but the schools division continued to thrive. Its textbooks designed for the then new Scottish Standard

Grade examinations anticipated the change from O-level to GCSE in England and Wales and captured some of the market south of the border. However, Oliver and Boyd was closed down completely by the then Pearson Longman in 1989 with a turnover of £2.75 million and a net profit level of 10 per cent. Its closure left Scotland at that point without an educational publisher to supply the needs of its distinctive schools system (although the gap was eventually filled by Leckie and Leckie, now part of HarperCollins, Gibson, now Hodder Gibson and part of Hachette UK, and Bright Red—still independent). The Oliver and Boyd list was transferred to Longman in Harlow and allowed to expire in time. The group into which Oliver and Boyd sank, never to reappear, Pearson (Education), with currently about forty thousand employees, serves over seventy countries through Pearson International with its headquarters in London and Pearson North America based in New Jersey, which accounts for over 60 per cent of total group sales. Pearson's gaze remains outwards to a global market rather than on local needs.

We could have quoted a third illustration: that of Chambers, its Edinburgh operation closed in 2009 by its parent Hachette UK and existing now only as an imprint administered by Hodder Education (also Hachette-owned) from London. Or even a fourth in the withdrawal of Churchill Livingstone and Wiley Blackwell ending a tradition of medical publishing in Edinburgh since 1728 and progressing through a sequence of conglomerate takeover from Pearson to Harcourt to Elsevier. However, the point is surely now well evidenced. The operation of globalisation upon publishers providing a successful and needed service within small nations and regional nations can be detrimental to the economic, social and cultural interests of those nations and regions.

So the model, or models, based on the operations of the global information economy emerge: dominance on a local scale succeeded by absorption by global players; a continuing creation and disappearance of small publishing houses to provide outlets for a Scottish cultural output falling in and out of fashion on a UK and international stage. This instability must then be also set against increasing competition from other sources of information and other forms of expression, often backed by the deep pockets in research and development, and trialling, of transnationals such as Google. In the case of Oliver and Boyd, another key aspect of the process may be seen in the closure by the centre of a reasonably healthy branch. Oliver and Boyd's 10 per cent net profit failed to meet the corporate targets of Pearson while, on the other hand, it did represent a strong and solvent position within a limited local market that many current enterprises would envy. The stress on making targets like this

not only makes publishers search for larger markets than the small nation or national region but it also makes them risk-averse. They need to search for the 'sure thing' and this leads in turn to moving into educational and academic publishing or to copying the latest trade publishing success—more boy wizards or vampires—or to the offer of huge advances to celebrities of all kinds whose fame might be expected to deliver the necessary sales and margins. In order to make the sure thing more secure, the conglomerates expend large advertising budgets, employ huge sales forces, and exploit strong media connections (often within a sister company). Even if the book does not sell, and the public is on occasion perverse enough to assert its own tastes, it is not without want of promotion and publicity. Globalisation not only leads to the loss of local publishers but it also severely limits the range and diversity of content being actively promoted and distributed.

Of particular relevance to Scotland are the large advances offered to authors whose work produced by an independent publisher has demonstrated the 'surety' of its sales. Literary agents do not tend to deal with Scottish publishers because the latter are unwilling, and cannot afford, to pay the level of advances agents demand. Just under a third (28.6 per cent) of publishers here do not pay their authors an advance; just over a quarter (26.1 per cent) base their advance payments on sales expectations; just over three-tenths (30.4 per cent) say their advance payments fluctuate, and less than a tenth (8.69 per cent) pay a flat fee. Not surprisingly, those publishers who do not pay their authors an advance also do not deal with literary agents. This is also reflective of the 2010 survey of authors we undertook, in conjunction with the Society of Authors Scotland, where just under two-fifths (39.1 per cent) of authors did not receive an advance. However, less than two-fifths (39.3 per cent) of the publishers questioned published fiction, which also provides a partial explanation of the lack of author advances. Of the publishers who produced fiction, just under half (45.5 per cent) dealt with literary agents: another partial explanation of the lack of author advances. A third of the publishers who published fiction did not pay an advance, leaving their authors without any initial financial support from them. The survey of authors, and subsequent interviews, found that advances are more important to authors than, for example, rights sales.<sup>3</sup> It might be reasonable to conclude that authors will constantly be lured away from Scottish publishers by higher advances.

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<sup>3</sup> See Bold, 'The Rights and Wrongs of Operational Practices'.

This issue of the ability to pay competitive advances may not necessarily be compounded by present general economic circumstances. The recent (2012) Economic Contribution analysis commissioned by Creative Scotland took into account the impact of the recession when calculating that the extremely broad-brush Writing & Publishing sector of the Scottish economy contracted 1.8 per cent from 1971 to 2010. However, because the sector data included the rapidly declining area of printing and the slowly declining area of newspaper publishing, this negative figure may in fact conceal a real growth over this period as far as book and journal publishing is concerned.<sup>4</sup> This view may be reinforced by the actual increase in the number of publishers operating in Scotland through that period.

### **The World and Scotland**

The 2003 survey of Scottish Publishing that we undertook found that 77 per cent of Scottish publishers' turnover came from sales in Scotland with the larger companies more likely to look outwith the domestic Scottish market for sales. By comparison, the 2010 survey we undertook found that just under a third (32.1 per cent) of the surveyed publishers said that less than a fifth of their sales are in the domestic Scottish market, nearly half of the publishers said that over 51 per cent of their sales are in the domestic market, and just under three-tenths (28.6 per cent) said over 71 per cent of their sales are in the Scottish market. Both the 2003 and 2010 surveys revealed that a number of Scottish publishers are the imprints of a larger UK-based or international company, so they have a more international outlook and interest in other media. However, in 2010 this type of publisher accounted for just over a tenth (10.2 per cent) of Scottish publishers. Unfortunately, they are the ones, as evidenced by Nelsons, Oliver and Boyd, Chambers and Churchill Livingstone above, that are both most significant in terms of publishing diversity and most vulnerable in terms of closure from the centre (whether London, Paris or New York). The remaining 90 per cent of publishers do not have in the main such easy and automatic access to different, external markets and of course to the financial backing of a larger company.

These processes have left contemporary Scottish publishing, defined as both publishing for Scotland and publishing in Scotland, in a fragile and

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<sup>4</sup> DC Research, *Economic Contribution Study for the Arts*.

fragmented state. The Scottish book publishing industry, as noted above, consists of some 110 publishers. The 2010 survey found that there is the same number of relatively new companies, established since 2000, as there are older companies, established before 1960. The largest percentage of publishers were established between 1981 and 2000, which could be as a result of the rejuvenation of Scottish literature in the 1970s and 1980s and/or in response to the growing nature of the UK publishing industry itself during this period. Further down the supply chain, the retail and library supplier sectors in Scotland have suffered major casualties with closures and takeovers. The overall picture is one of a loss of control, with independent Scottish businesses being acquired by larger UK-based companies, a trend found in the UK publishing industry in general and one echoed on a larger scale as non-UK owned companies have taken over large parts of the UK publishing industry. The Scottish publishing industry (in common with those in other countries) is characterised by a small number of larger publishers and a relatively large number of medium, small and micro companies.

These two constituencies within the industry were defined within the 2004 *Review of Publishing* as the 'Key Group' of larger companies in terms of turnover and employment, and the 'Lifestyle Group' comprising smaller companies whose main objectives are not necessarily focused upon profitability.<sup>5</sup> The two clusters roughly correspond to the publishing in Scotland and publishing for Scotland categories identified above. Most of the Key Group published little that is aimed specifically at a Scottish market and for some of those publishers less than 55 per cent of their turnover came from that market. The five largest publishers averaged between them 10 per cent of their total sales in the Scottish market. This contrasted with a minority of publishers in the group whose turnover in Scotland accounted for between 70 per cent and 99 per cent of their total sales, a position echoed strongly in the Lifestyle Group. The rise in the overall number of publishers between 2003 and 2010 might conceal a disproportionate loss in the number of Key Group publishers and the corresponding fall in importance of markets beyond Scotland. As already noted, the 2010 survey found that just under a third (32.1 per cent) of the surveyed publishers said that less than a fifth of their sales are in the domestic Scottish market, nearly half of the publishers said that over 51 per cent of their sales are in the domestic market, and just under three-tenths (28.6 per cent) said over 71 per cent of their sales are in the Scottish market.

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<sup>5</sup> Sinclair et al, *A Review of Scottish Publishing*.

To summarise, the Scottish publishing industry is characterised by: a diverse set of independent companies; domination—in sales terms—by a few large commercial players, based mainly outside Scotland and even outside the UK; high levels of competition, both from within Scotland and from other English-language publishers; a limited set of product formats, mainly print with small evidence of e-book production; in some cases, decreasing markets (minority-language publishing); retail markets that are consolidating across the UK, leading to the increased power of any remaining intermediaries, particularly Amazon; and proximity to London, one of the world's major publishing centres, leading to a 'drain' of successful authors. All of these elements are, to some extent, shared by other small publishers in the UK and by other industries in small countries. Publishers in other small countries, while many are currently protected internally by a linguistic firewall, at least as far as trade publishing is concerned, are also operating within wider European and global spheres of influence and are not immune to the mechanisms described above.<sup>6</sup>

Two questions require to be addressed: is it possible to redress the balance between these local minnows and the global sharks to ensure that a range of cultural and educational needs are met; and how can support of whatever kind be targeted to be most effective in terms of the no doubt limited resources available? One possible answer, adopted in both the UK and Ireland, is fiscal; books in Scotland are rated as zero for VAT purposes along with other 'public benefits' such as children's clothes. Books do attract reduced rates of VAT in most of the other countries of the EU: zero only in the UK, Ireland, Poland and Croatia. By contrast in Denmark the full rate of VAT of 25 per cent is paid on books. There is no discernible impact on book sales. Some might even propose that to tax books generally, no matter the genre or point of origin, would create funds to focus on the support through library purchase schemes, for example, of those titles that are culturally or educationally important. Dan Brown pays for Robin Jenkins! However, scepticism is the order of the day here as, first, hypothecation of tax revenue is a principle most governments shun and, secondly, today more than ever, governments are more likely to use these revenues at national and EU levels to fill the holes left elsewhere by the present economic conditions. Independence for Scotland would result in fiscal autonomy, the ability to create tax regimes that benefit specifically

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<sup>6</sup> See Alistair McCleery, 'Legions, Laws and Languages: Book History and English Hegemony' in Simon Frost and Robert Nix (eds), *Angles on the English-Speaking World 10* (Copenhagen, 2010), 39–54. This discusses the increasing dominance of Anglophone publications within Europe.

the Scottish economy, such as a lowering of corporation tax. However, given current policies, and the longstanding consensus on zero-rating for books, it seems implausible that a Scottish government would introduce VAT on books.

It might also be appropriate to link at this point resale price maintenance (RPM), aka the recommended retail price, aka in the UK the Net Book Agreement (NBA), to the question of VAT. Both are indiscriminate mechanisms. RPM has been abolished now for some seventeen years in the UK and Ireland where it had only the force of a voluntary agreement. However, it still exists in Denmark, Germany, France, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, Spain and Portugal: either as a statutory condition or in the form of business-to-business agreements, as with the NBA, normally agreed on behalf of their members by trade associations of publishers, booksellers, and authors. Where it still exists, that is, in most of Europe outside the British Isles, RPM applies to all titles; or where there are exceptions, those exceptions are just those educational and academic books that are likely to be of greatest cultural value. What RPM does, in other words, is to prevent the consumer from buying Ian Rankin in Tesco (two for £7) – or anywhere else at a discount for that matter. What it may not do is maintain a level playing field in terms of retail price between the ‘non-net’ products of local publishers, particularly non-fiction and educational books, and those of the global conglomerates. Again, it has been argued cogently that if our concern is that people read, without concern for what they read, then the abolition of RPM, certainly in the UK, has made books available at lower prices through more retail outlets such as Tesco or online through Amazon. There is less evidence, however, to show that this has actually increased the number of active readers rather than shifting the point of purchase from booksellers to superstores and the internet. We should have a concern for what people read if we are to sustain and grow, rather than conserve and display in museums, the patchwork of distinctive cultures, histories and narratives across Europe and the rest of the world.

## **Supporting Publishing**

When such a sermonising statement results in support for writers who express that diversity, it draws little flak; but when it results in state support for publishers, it more often provokes the criticism that it creates ‘lazy’ publishers who persist in producing a larger number of titles than the market warrants. It is true that contemporary book sales across Europe demonstrate the long tail:

most sales at any given point are generated by the top 100 titles. The remaining titles—and about 110,000 were published in the UK last year, six thousand (English-language) in Ireland—sell few copies and then over a longer period. The objections to this situation are economic, based on the presumption that publishers should only produce what most people want, presumably Dan Brown, and to a lesser extent environmental, based again on a market-led presumption that the low-selling titles will eventually be pulped rather than stored and distributed over a longer period. However, all we are describing here is increased consumer choice, the costs of which are increasingly mitigated by print-on-demand, online selling, and of course e-books. The alternative, to make available to consumers only the top 100 titles at any point, identified in advance through celebrity authorship or success elsewhere, would be to limit them to a diet of Katie Price and Niall Ferguson, Michael Palin and James Patterson—not necessarily bad in itself but relatively bland and lacking local ingredients. The interests of authors—in being published and read—and of readers—in having a wider choice—underpin the support by Creative Scotland for publishers.

The issue remains how best to offer this support. The devolution settlement that led to the re-establishment of a Scottish parliament in 1999 gave greater control over cultural policy to Scotland although, as noted above in the case of VAT, it continued to centralise the key area of fiscal regulation within the Westminster government. This led to an increasingly frenetic search for new administrative mechanisms through which a distinctive national culture could be stimulated, sustained and promoted while remaining within the restraints of that devolution settlement. The then Scottish Arts Council initiated a series of strategic reviews of different art forms, including the review of publishing from which the 2004 Report was derived; the then Scottish Executive produced a national cultural strategy; an independent but consensual Cultural Commission reported on the topic; and a Culture Bill was suspended pending the 2007 Scottish parliamentary election; its major innovation was a new funding body, Creative Scotland, which subsumed both the SAC and Scottish Screen. This was reintroduced by the new Scottish Government after much debate, changing of course, and expenditure of consultants' fees; a further Literature Working Group reported in February 2010 making recommendations affecting writers and publishers. Since 2010 Creative Scotland has invested over £700,000 in Scottish publishing; and it plans to review the Literature Sector in 2012–13 to consider again appropriate mechanisms of support.

What all contributors to the search for administrative mechanisms in Scotland share to date is a willingness to examine policies and processes within other small countries and assess the potential for the import of good practice into Scotland. The only qualification to this within a devolved government remains, as stressed earlier, the inability to use the tax regime as one of the mechanisms available to comparator nation-states.

Two countries tended to be quoted consistently: namely Ireland and Canada, given the similarities in their industry structures and the need to address issues related to dual and/or minority languages. In particular, the range of support programmes and initiatives offered to support and encourage the development of their creative, including publishing, industries were the subject of acute analysis within Scottish (overlapping) cultural and political circles. Ireland represents the closest (in all senses) analogue. There were some 100 publishers in Ireland in 2010, a fall from the 120 noted in 2004.<sup>7</sup> These 100 publishers were responsible for six thousand titles, double the number of their Scottish peers, and four out of the top five served primarily indigenous educational markets. However, Irish publishers between 2007 and 2010 had reduced average prices and increased sales volume by over 1.5 million copies but received some €5 million less in sales income. That the industry in Ireland has not suffered more as a result of the recession there may be a factor of the stability of those educational, as opposed to consumer, markets. Canada has around 471 publishers for a population of 34.5 million.<sup>8</sup> The publishing industry in Canada has experienced some contraction between 2007 and 2010 to a turnover of CAN\$2 billion but sales of educational titles, which accounted for 45.1 per cent of total sales in 2010, increased by 4 per cent from 2008. As in Ireland, the stability of the educational market offered a buffer against a general decline in income. The other significant factor was ownership: 69.8 per cent of Canadian publishers were Canadian-owned in 2010, a small increase over 2008, and had been showing, since 2006, a steady increase in turnover and profit margin. Exports accounted for only 11.9 per cent of sales by these Canadian publishers. They are publishers in Canada publishing for Canada.

There are other similarities between the Canadian, Scottish and Irish publishing industries in that all exist alongside larger English-language

<sup>7</sup> The Booksellers Association produces a digest of statistics (2010) at <http://www.booksellers.org.uk/BookSellers/media/SiteMediaLibrary/News%26Industry/Irish-Book-Industry-Statistics.pdf>, accessed 23 October 2012. The 2004 figure comes from Sinclair et al, *A Review of Scottish Publishing*.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/87f0004x/87f0004x2012001-eng.pdf>, accessed 23 October 2012.

publishing industries and all have other language publishing: French-language and First Nations in Canada, Gaelic and Scots in Scotland and Gaelic in Ireland. The French language has equal status with English in Canada and the fate of the French language itself is not wholly dependent on speakers in Canada, unlike the example of Scottish Gaelic where the number of speakers is in decline. Quebec publishers have a potential other market in selling to French readers in France and elsewhere, a market that is not paralleled in the Scottish or Irish Gaelic case. There is a market in producing educational French-language titles for the curriculum throughout Canada. However, government support for publishing in both Canada and Ireland is not confined to minority-language publications.

The best known of the support mechanisms in Ireland is the artists' exemption from income tax upon earnings derived from creative works of cultural merit. However, the exemption currently covers only the first €40,000 of any such earnings.<sup>9</sup> Its steady reduction has been a result of the recession in Ireland and the consequent need to increase government revenue. (The publishing sector in Ireland does not receive any preferential tax status.) The emphasis upon support for artists, including writers, rather than publishers, colours much of the work of the Arts Council Ireland; in 2010 only €307,000 was spent to support publishing directly from a total budget of €68.65million.<sup>10</sup> The Arts Council in Ireland supports publishing primarily as a means of securing a strong and stable Irish literary culture: writing for Ireland, rather than publishing in Ireland. While its financial assistance may reflect the belief that Irish writers are likely to be better served by editors in Irish publishing houses, this is not a restriction on its investment. Irish publishing suffers, however, from the same phenomenon as its Scottish neighbour: indigenous companies may nurture and develop authors but local success will bring more lucrative advances from London-based publishers. From the Arts Council's point of view, this presumably benefits Irish literature in providing it with a wider readership—as well as providing authors with a larger income. From this narrower cultural perspective, the economic consequences for the Irish publishing industry may be of less significance. Indeed, the latter's underpinning by its successful educational output may seem to balance the industry's overall books, if not those of individual companies.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.revenue.ie/en/tax/it/reliefs/artists-exemption.html>, accessed 23 October 2012.

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/Arts\\_Council\\_Annual\\_Report\\_2010.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/Arts_Council_Annual_Report_2010.pdf), accessed 23 October 2012.

To summarise, Ireland's trade publishers, in common with their Scottish counterparts, face strong challenges from the London-based publishing industry in terms of competing for authors, for sales in the home market, and for the primary role in promoting their distinctive literary culture overseas. Ireland's particular advantage is the strength of its educational publishing base, accounting for over two-thirds of total publishers' revenues. This is in sharp contrast with the situation in Scotland where the educational publishing base has been eroded in terms of the number of companies and the lack of Scottish ownership of these companies. However, the more limited cultural ambitions of the Arts Council in Ireland contrast strongly with those, cultural and economic, of Creative Scotland – and certainly with those of the Canadian agencies involved in supporting publishing.

A recent study of support mechanisms in Canada concluded that the nationalist impetus that had driven them since the 1970s, when 70 per cent of books sold in Canada were published by foreign-owned companies, had achieved its aim in securing the dominance of Canadian-owned companies within Canada.<sup>11</sup> These mechanisms, ranging from interest-free loans to publishing houses through grants to start-up publishers to an overall Canada Book Fund (from 2009), were enacted at both Federal and Provincial levels of government. The predecessor of the Canada Book Fund, the Book Publishing Industry Development Program (BPIDP) had as its aims: to offer financial aid to publishers; to make the supply chain more effective through targeted investment; to underwrite collective initiatives such as trade bodies; and to provide specific international marketing assistance. The move from this intensive support to the Canada Book Fund embodied a recognition that the Canadian-owned industry was by 2010 needing mechanisms that were more focused on stability than development (as well as reflecting the political outlook and policy of the Conservative government after the 2008 federal election). Support for publishers within the Canada Book Fund is more limited than the BPIDP in both its inward-facing scope and the funds available; it supports 'the ongoing production and promotion of Canadian-authored books through financial assistance to Canadian-owned and -controlled publishers'.<sup>12</sup> The Canadian government is also currently reviewing the policy on foreign investment in book publishing and distribution and it is anticipated that this

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<sup>11</sup> J. Boggs, 'An Overview of Canada's Contemporary Book Trade in Light of (Nearly) Four Decades of Policy Interventions', *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 26 (2010), 24–45.

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.pch.gc.ca/eng/1290024798836/1290024798838>, accessed 23 October 2012.

will lead to higher levels of foreign ownership of Canadian publishing and bookselling. The Canada Council for the Arts also 'provides financial assistance to Canadian publishers to offset the costs of publishing Canadian trade books that make a significant contribution to the development of Canadian literature. This assistance is made available through Emerging Publisher Grants (for emerging publishers) and Block Grants (for established publishers)'.<sup>13</sup> In other words, support is available only to publishers for Canada whose independence may in turn come under threat, as in Scotland, if barriers to foreign takeover are weakened or removed.

At provincial level in Canada, broader programmes of support have survived although they vary in nature and scale from province to province. In Quebec a great deal of investment has been made in the publishing industry both as an instrument of asserting cultural sovereignty—much like Scotland—and as a means of renewing the local economy that has in places been much affected by the collapse as here of traditional industries such as textiles.<sup>14</sup> That is also an objective of the provincial government in Ontario (through the Ontario Media Development Corporation) where the chief tool is fiscal: a tax credit plan that enables publishers to gain tax credits (or cash) for eligible Canadian-authored titles.<sup>15</sup> Funds there for marketing and digital transformation are more markedly aimed at revitalising a post-manufacturing economy. The province of New Brunswick launched a Book Policy in 2009 and has initiated support programmes for publishing to add diversity to a local economy over-dependent on tourism.<sup>16</sup> British Columbia in the west has concentrated on supporting local publishers, including first-nation publishers, through book-purchase programmes for schools and libraries.<sup>17</sup> All these programmes and policies to support the production, distribution and promotion of Canadian books, magazines and newspapers reflect a belief in Canada's distinctive culture(s). They are based on the premise that Canadians must have access to Canadian voices and Canadian stories. However, the

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<sup>13</sup> <http://www.canadacouncil.ca/grants/writing/ap127723094273982142.htm>, accessed 23 October 2012.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.sodec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/programme/route/livre>, accessed 23 October 2012.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.omdc.on.ca/page3259.aspx> and <http://www.omdc.on.ca/Page3397.aspx>, both accessed 23 October 2012.

<sup>16</sup> [http://www.gnb.ca/0131/art\\_book-e.asp](http://www.gnb.ca/0131/art_book-e.asp), accessed 23 October 2012. The Book Policy document is available from <http://www.gnb.ca/0131/pdf/a/BookPolicyE.pdf>, accessed 23 October 2012.

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.bcartsCouncil.ca/documents/guidelines/pdfs/Project%20Assistance/guidelines\\_title\\_asst\\_nov2011.pdf](http://www.bcartsCouncil.ca/documents/guidelines/pdfs/Project%20Assistance/guidelines_title_asst_nov2011.pdf), accessed 23 October 2012.

defensiveness that characterises some of these measures is balanced by the capacity-building nature of others available to the publishing sector through a general desire to grow the creative economy in Canada. These initiatives to date (and that is an important qualification) have sustained not only publishing for Canada—a cultural mission—but also publishing in Canada—an economic one.

## Conclusion

The three aspects of globalisation identified initially—increased transnational flows of media products; increased commonality of transnational culture; and increased transnational ownership—are not discrete elements but aspects of a cyclical, reinforcing process. The consolidation of publishing within media groups, through take-over, merger and integration, leads to a concentration of the book market. Such a concentration results, despite perceptions to the contrary, in a decrease in consumer choice and an increase in the commonality of transnational culture (in turn, exaggerated by the integrated marketing of a range of media products within the one group noted above). The emphasis here is not on non-Scottish (or Irish, or Canadian) ownership in itself but on the effects of that non-Scottish (Irish, Canadian) ownership. Ultimately the concern is not just with the economic vulnerability of publishing in small nations or non-indigenous ownership of the booktrade *per se* but with the effects of that upon the small nation's sense of itself, upon its cultural identity.

Increased transnational flows of books are a challenge to an open marketplace, particularly in the sense that economies of scale will nearly always enable larger publishers, with the cooperation of larger booksellers, to supplant the smaller. Government, directly or through its agencies, must then take up the responsibility for maintaining the open marketplace by preventing the development of cartels, both those that seek to dominate the entire cycle and those that operate across media; and ensuring freedom of expression for writers and a concomitant freedom of choice for readers. There is a nexus here of economic, social and cultural responsibility through which national governments must ensure diversity by applying mechanisms to fill the gap between social and cultural benefits and market viability. If, at national or regional level, governments cannot affect the power of transnationals directly, then indirectly they can counterbalance that power by privileging national and regional companies and products without infringing statutory commitments

to a free market. The chief defence of this form of intervention—in Scotland, in Ireland, and in Canada as elsewhere—is a cultural one. A commonality of transnational culture, including media integration of product development and marketing, threatens small nation linguistic and cultural diversity—to our global detriment.

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# New Cosmopolitanism, Democracy and the Place of Scottish Studies

Scott Lyall

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There are forces at work in the world, of many kinds and different intentions, directing our thoughts to what are called the evils of nationalism in order that our sight and our reason may get suitably befogged.<sup>1</sup>

## Space: Cosmopolitanism in Theory and Practice

Cosmopolitanism is the hippest new theoretical 'ism' on the academic block. From Sociology to Political Philosophy, International Relations to the study of Literature, there is currently a wealth of academic capital invested in cosmopolitanism theory.<sup>2</sup> Cosmopolitanism, for many intellectuals, offers a progressive global solution to the continued problem of what they see as the aggressive and irrational atavism that is nationalism. Stan van Hooft, for instance, claims that 'nationalism is one of the chief enemies of cosmopolitan societies', and he cites Ulrich Beck, the guru of cosmopolitanism theory, to substantiate his assertion.<sup>3</sup> For van Hooft cosmopolitanism is the theoretical expression for the exercise of a truly 'global ethics'.<sup>4</sup> He defines cosmopolitanism as 'the view that the moral standing of all peoples and of each individual person around the globe is equal', and with somewhat Manichean zeal states plainly that, while 'nationalism is a dangerous ideology', 'Cosmopolitanism is a virtue'.<sup>5</sup> But if, as Fredric Jameson has suggested persuasively, postmodernism signifies

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<sup>1</sup> Neil M. Gunn, 'The Essence of Nationalism', *Scots Magazine*, 37 (June 1942); reprinted in Alistair McCleery (ed.), *Landscape and Light: Essays by Neil M. Gunn* (Aberdeen, 1987), 144.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance, Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (London, 2006); Ulrich Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Vision* (Cambridge, 2006); Gillian Brock and Harry Brighouse (eds), *The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism* (Cambridge, 2005); Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins (eds), *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (Minneapolis and London, 1998).

<sup>3</sup> Stan van Hooft, *Cosmopolitanism: A Philosophy for Global Ethics* (Stockfield, 2009), 21.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 4, 38, 8.

the ‘cultural logic of late capitalism’,<sup>6</sup> then contemporary cosmopolitanism is surely the socio-theoretical cracked looking glass of recent neoliberal politico-economic attempts at global cultural convergence. Current is a ‘new cosmopolitanism’ espoused by postnational and anti-nationalist critics influenced by ‘post’-theories, particularly poststructuralism. Whilst many of these often Left-leaning academic ‘new cosmopolitans’ distrust cultural and political borders, they are, nonetheless, no doubt in earnest in their opposition to the ill-effects of globalisation. I would suggest, however, that their cosmopolitanism is not substantially different in its theoretical aims and intellectual inheritance from the radical neoconservatism that they might like to believe their position contests. As David Harvey argues, the ‘universal claims’ of ‘Liberalism, neoliberalism, and cosmopolitanism’ – for Harvey, interrelated concepts and political practices – ‘are transhistorical, transcultural, and treated as valid, independent of any rootedness in the facts of geography, ecology, and anthropology’:

Theories derived from these claims dominate fields of study such as economics (monetarism, rational expectations, public choice, human capital theory), political science (rational choice), international relations (game theory), jurisprudence (law and economics), business administration (theories of the firm), and even psychology (autonomous individualism). These universal forms of thinking are so widely diffused and so commonly accepted as to set the terms of discussion in political rhetoric (particularly with respect to individualism, private property rights, and markets) in much of the popular media (with the business press in the vanguard), as well as in the law (including its international human rights variant). They even provide foundational norms in those fields of study – such as geography, anthropology, and sociology – that take differences as their object of inquiry.<sup>7</sup>

Although not mentioned by Harvey, the study of literature, particularly under the guise of critical theory, is also informed by a neoliberal-inflected cosmopolitanism.

From Francis Fukuyama’s ‘End of History’ and its neoliberal project we emerged into the branded neon-signed glare as post-Enlightenment

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<sup>6</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991; London and New York, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom* (New York, 2009), 98.

consumers.<sup>8</sup> Yet this is a project premised precariously, and paradoxically, on an Enlightenment faith in the neutral Kantian subject, and its political aims continue to be the ultimate dismemberment of distinct and troublesome nationalities and cultural traditions by US-centric Westernisation. The cosmopolitan ideal goes back to the ancient Greeks, most famously Diogenes of Sinope's supposed statement when questioned on his origins that he was a 'citizen of the world': *kosmopolites*. The influence of the cosmopolitan thinking of the Greek Cynics can be found in the Roman Stoics, for whom, according to Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, 'there are discoverable laws of nature and ... through human reason, we can locate and comply with these laws. The implication is that if there are universal laws of nature and if we can understand these axioms through the universal capacity for reason, then it is also possible to generate universal human laws that are in harmony with these natural laws'.<sup>9</sup> As Wallace Brown and Held go on to point out, this Stoic tradition of using human reason to seek alignment between nature's laws and universal human law, justice and right is pivotal to the Enlightenment project.

In this regard, Immanuel Kant is seminal to modern cosmopolitanism.<sup>10</sup> In 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' (1795–6) Kant argues for 'a constitution based on *cosmopolitan right*, in so far as individuals and states, coexisting in an external relationship of mutual influences, may be regarded as citizens of a universal state of mankind (*ius cosmopoliticum*)'.<sup>11</sup> For Kant, Enlightenment reason will lead to a republican confederation, a league of nations grounded in cosmopolitan law. The perfection of this cosmopolitan constitution, the perpetual peace of universal Enlightenment rationality and cohabitation, is a reflection of nature's laws, and is indeed guaranteed by 'the actual mechanism of human inclinations'.<sup>12</sup> In his earlier essay 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose' (1784) we see even more clearly Kant's Enlightenment belief that history is moving towards its consummation in line with the laws of nature. The essay's Eighth Proposition

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<sup>8</sup> Francis Fukuyama, 'The End of History', *National Interest* (1989), and *The End of History and the Last Man* (New York, 1992).

<sup>9</sup> Editors' Introduction, Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held (eds), *The Cosmopolitanism Reader* (Cambridge, 2010), 5–6.

<sup>10</sup> For instance, Garrett Wallace Brown and David Held, as well as David Harvey, begin their respective volumes, *The Cosmopolitanism Reader* and *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, with sections on Kant.

<sup>11</sup> Immanuel Kant, 'Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch' in H.S. Reiss (ed.), *Kant: Political Writings*, H.B. Nisbet (trans.) (Cambridge, 1991), 98–9 (italics in original).

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 114.

begins: ‘*The history of the human race as a whole can be regarded as the realisation of a hidden plan of nature to bring about an internally—and for this purpose also externally—perfect political constitution as the only possible state within which all natural capacities of mankind can be developed completely.*’<sup>13</sup> According to Kant, ‘enlightenment gradually arises’, and, in a phrase which foreshadows contemporary neoliberal arguments for the universal diffusion of Western democracy, he claims: ‘It is a great benefit which the human race must reap even from its rulers’ self-seeking schemes of expansion, if only they realise what is to their own advantage.’<sup>14</sup> Kant’s Enlightenment eschatology finds ‘the highest purpose of nature [in] a universal *cosmopolitan existence*, [which] will at last be realised as the matrix within which all the original capacities of the human race may develop’.<sup>15</sup> In the Ninth Proposition of ‘Idea for a Universal History’ Kant finds the seeds of this glorious cosmopolitan end-of-days in the Greeks. Indeed, since the ancient Greeks we have seen ‘a regular process of improvement in the political constitution of our continent (which will probably legislate eventually for all other continents)’.<sup>16</sup> History, for Kant, begins with the Greeks: ‘Beyond that, all is *terra incognita*’—otherly, Barbarian, unknown territory.<sup>17</sup> And history, by ‘*providence*’, has a ‘cosmopolitan goal’.<sup>18</sup>

David Miller, a critic of cosmopolitanism, hints at the historical connections between cosmopolitanism and imperialism when he says that ‘Stoic philosophy played an influential part in the ideology of the Roman Empire, and it is easy to see why: if what really matters is one’s membership in the cosmic city and not the territorially bounded human city, then imperial conquest—at least by the wise and the good—does no wrong, and may do some good’. Miller asks: ‘Does cosmopolitanism, then, have implications for worldly politics, and might it be said always to lend support to (benign) forms of imperialism?’<sup>19</sup> For Harvey, thinking specifically of Iraq, there has been nothing benign about U.S.-led, neoliberal imperialism, and there is a disastrous disparity between the ethics of Kant’s cosmopolitan ideal and the realities of its neoliberal, on-the-ground ‘application’—a flaw fundamental to

<sup>13</sup> Kant, ‘Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose’ in Reiss (ed.), *Kant: Political Writings*, 50 (italics in original).

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 51 (italics in original).

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 51 (italics in original).

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 52 (italics in original).

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 53 (italics in original).

<sup>19</sup> David Miller, ‘Cosmopolitanism’, in Wallace Brown and Held (eds), *The Cosmopolitanism Reader*, 377.

‘all universalizing projects’.<sup>20</sup> The term ‘globalisation’ – perhaps not a synonym of cosmopolitanism, but a close relation nonetheless – is, for Harvey, an ideological front for the manner in which ‘Neoliberalism became ... hegemonic as a universalistic mode of discourse’ – not least in the critical industry of the humanities.<sup>21</sup>

As John Gray states, ‘A global free market is the Enlightenment project of a universal civilization.’<sup>22</sup> Gray is perhaps the most notable metropolitan writer in Britain to recognise that we now inhabit a post-Enlightenment age. Clearly, academic ‘post’-theories have also identified this paradigm shift, one that was underlined heavily by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Gray, however, is arguably unusual in his willingness to subordinate theory to the lessons of history and to point out that those who pursue an Enlightenment consensus are seeking a perfectibilism against nature which frequently entails tragic human and environmental costs and consequences. Whilst Gray acknowledges that particular national histories helped to fashion different national Enlightenments – the sceptical, ‘more modest’, Scottish Enlightenment; the revolutionary idealism of the French – he believes that an overarching grand Enlightenment narrative can still be identified: ‘In the political theories of the Enlightenment, the universalist content of classical political rationalism reappears as a philosophy of history which has universal convergence on a rationalist civilisation as its *telos*. The idea of progress which the Enlightenment project embodies may be seen as a diachronic statement of the classical conception of natural law. This is the modern conception of human social development as occurring in successive discrete stages, not everywhere the same, but having in common the property of converging on a single form of life, a universal civilisation, rational and cosmopolitan.’<sup>23</sup> Gray shares with much postcolonial theory the understanding that the ‘philosophical anthropology’ of the Enlightenment project seeks the transcendence of ‘cultural difference’, seeing such diversity as ‘an ephemeral, even an epiphenomenal incident in human life and history’.<sup>24</sup> For Gray, though, ‘human identities are always local affairs’; indeed, ‘cultural difference belongs to the human essence’.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 8.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>22</sup> John Gray, *False Dawn: The Delusions of Global Capitalism* (1998; London, 2002), 100.

<sup>23</sup> John Gray, ‘Agonistic Liberalism’, *Social Philosophy and Policy*, 12 (1995); reprinted in *idem*, *Enlightenment’s Wake: Politics and Culture at the Close of the Modern Age* (1995; London and New York, 2007), 100, 97.

<sup>24</sup> Gray, *Enlightenment’s Wake*, 98.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 119; Gray, *The Undoing of Conservatism*, (London, 1994); reprinted in *Enlightenment’s*

Whilst Gray's criticism of neoconservatism is valuable, his pessimism, or '*anti-universalism*' as he calls it, is founded on traditional conservatism.<sup>26</sup> Yet he is right, I would argue, to point to national and cultural identities—and he sees the two as being decidedly bound together—as irremediably part of the human make-up and, for better or worse, not something, as the 'post'-theorists and 'new cosmopolitans' would have us believe, that we can change like a suit of clothes. According to Gray, under current market philosophy,

cultural difference is seen through the distorting lens of the idea of *choice*, as an epiphenomenon of personal life-plans, preferences and conceptions of the good. In the real world of human history, however, cultural identities are not constituted, voluntaristically, by acts of choice: they arise by inheritance, and by recognition. They are fates rather than choices. It is this fated character of cultural identity which gives it its agonistic, and sometimes tragic character.<sup>27</sup>

That 'tragic character' of particular inherited identities being confronted by totalitarian identity politics has been at no time more prevalent than in the twentieth century. For Beck, 'cosmopolitanism has been forgotten... transformed and debased into a pejorative concept', due to 'its involuntary association with the Holocaust and the Stalinist Gulag'.<sup>28</sup> As Beck points out,

In the collective symbolic system of the Nazis, 'cosmopolitan' was synonymous with a death sentence. All the victims of the planned mass murder were portrayed as 'cosmopolitans'; and this death sentence was extended to the word, which in its own way succumbed to the same fate. The Nazis said 'Jew' and meant 'cosmopolitan'; the Stalinists said 'cosmopolitan' and meant 'Jew'. Consequently, 'cosmopolitans' are to this day regarded in many countries as something between vagabonds,

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*Wake*, 161.

<sup>26</sup> Gray, *Enlightenment's Wake*, 161 (italics in original).

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 187 (italics in original). Whilst he does not allude to her here, Gray, like Simone Weil, understands the human need for cultural and national roots: 'To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognised need of the human soul', Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind* (first published in French as *L'Enracinement*, 1949, then in English, 1952; London and New York, 2003), 43.

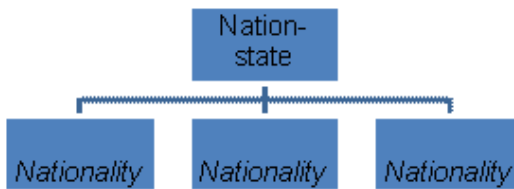
<sup>28</sup> Ulrich Beck, *The Cosmopolitan Vision*, Ciaran Cronin (trans.) (2006; Cambridge, 2012), 3.

enemies and insects who can or even must be banished, demonised or destroyed.<sup>29</sup>

In Scotland, the clash between cosmopolitanism and its foes has been mercifully non-violent. But when, at the 1962 Edinburgh Writers' Conference, the poet Hugh MacDiarmid allegedly called the novelist and heroin addict Alexander Trocchi 'cosmopolitan scum', thus sounding his own bleak Stalinist note, a cultural split was revealed between rooted nationalism and exiled cosmopolitanism, tradition and individualism, that arguably continues to inform Scottish literary criticism today.<sup>30</sup>

### Place: The Question of 'Scotland'

For 'new cosmopolitans' such as van Hooft, nationality is to be worn lightly. 'One's nationality', he argues, 'is nothing more than one's membership of the nation-state of which one is a citizen.'<sup>31</sup> What van Hooft neglects to understand, however, is that the nation-state carries the historical co-ordinates of the cultural, educational, institutional particularity of the nation which its state represents; this is something none of its citizens can ignore, running as such particularity does through the national lineaments of their identity. Van Hooft writes as if the traditional top-down nation-state 'produces' nationality:



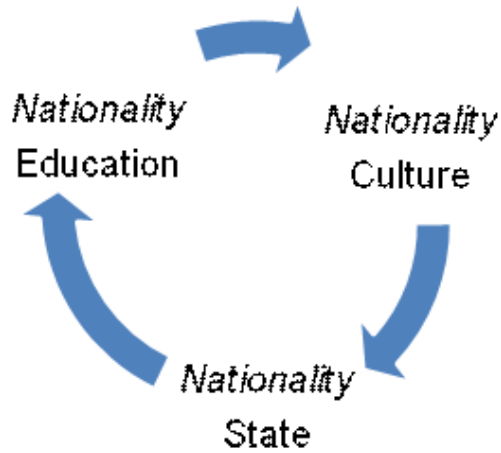
Actually, nationality and its aforementioned various vectors, of which the state is only one, informs/deforms/reforms statehood and, indeed, nationality itself:

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>30</sup> See Andrew Murray Scott, *Alexander Trocchi: The Making of the Monster* (Edinburgh, 1991), 108; Trocchi gave as good as he got, calling MacDiarmid an 'old druid', *ibid.*, 107.

<sup>31</sup> Van Hooft, *Cosmopolitanism*, 37.



This second model of nationality has been identified by Alex Thomson as belonging in its intellectual heritage to the Herderian romantic nationalism that categorises the literary in distinct national histories: ‘A nation is a spiritual and explanatory principle, to be deduced in circular fashion from those institutions and the imaginative writing that best exemplify it.’<sup>32</sup> In his online article “‘You can’t get there from here’: Devolution and Scottish Literary History’ Thomson seeks to distinguish between the disinterested critical-aesthetic task of the literary *critic* as an interpreter of an autonomous art and the ‘interpretative framing’ of literature in a national canon instigated by the literary *historian*, a framing which in the Scottish context has drawn strong links between literature, politics and the state of the nation—explicitly, the absence of a nation-state: ‘The writing of historiography in the national style does not describe the reaffirmation of national identity: it hopes to enact it.’<sup>33</sup> The danger of the second model, although by no means its inevitability I would argue, is, certainly, the potential over-determination of identity and an attendant exclusivist identity politics. Thomson points out correctly that this has been acknowledged by those Scottish theorists who, whilst determined to historically imagine a distinctly Scottish narrative tradition, have emphasised the supposed hybridity, Bakhtin-infused or otherwise, of ‘Scottish’ imaginative

<sup>32</sup> Alex Thomson, “‘You can’t get there from here’: Devolution and Scottish Literary History’, *International Journal of Scottish Literature*, 3 (2007) <http://www.ijsl.stir.ac.uk/issue3/thomson.htm>, accessed 6 November 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Thomson, ‘You can’t get there from here’.

products.<sup>34</sup> In his ‘Phrasing Scotland and the Postmodern’, however, he censures Cairns Craig and David McCrone for their loose use of a postmodern nomenclature, ‘which serves to elide the decision which has been taken in advance and presumed by both writers, as to the legitimacy of the [Scottish] nation itself, a decision which is both epistemological and political’.<sup>35</sup>

For Thomson literary history that is written within the parameters of a single national culture can only ever be *nationalist* literary history, however much it may exhibit its approval of multicultural heterogeneity; and a nationalist literary history can never be truly critical. Thomson claims that ‘The paradox of being “national” yet “anti-nationalist” is the challenge faced by any national literary history which seeks to face up to its political responsibilities’.<sup>36</sup> What exactly are these ‘political responsibilities’? Thomson does not say, yet clearly part of the critical remit is to be ‘anti-nationalist’ – a critical position that is no more objective and neutral than that which Thomson regards as the largely nationalist framework of Scottish literary history. Continuing his conflation of national with nationalist, Thomson, like the cosmopolitan van Hooft, writes of ‘the potential violence of nationalist literary histories’, as if the denial, suppression or mere neglect of a national literary culture represents a more democratic critical position, and one that is in itself any less potentially violent.<sup>37</sup> Responding to Liam McIlvanney’s contention that novelists in contemporary Scotland have acted as ‘unacknowledged legislators’ in a stateless nation, Thomson claims that in fact ‘it is the critic whose interpretative framing “invents” the nation’: literary art is autonomous, while literary history, written in what Thomson calls the ‘Scottish style’, is ideological.<sup>38</sup> Thomson rightly points out ‘that there is nothing natural about the national narrative’, and that an over-emphasis on national literary history can sideline other important angles of critical inquiry, such as class, gender and form.<sup>39</sup> He objects to the “national style” in literary historiography’ in Scotland, seeing this as a means of ‘smuggling in political principles masquerading as aesthetic categories’,

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<sup>34</sup> Thomson is here concerned primarily with Cairns Craig and Robert Crawford.

<sup>35</sup> A. J. P. Thomson, ‘Phrasing Scotland and the Postmodern’ in Eleanor Bell and Gavin Miller (eds), *Scotland in Theory: Reflections on Culture and Theory* (Amsterdam and New York, 2004), 81.

<sup>36</sup> Thomson, ‘You can’t get there from here’.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Thomson, ‘You can’t get there from here’. McIlvanney’s argument is from ‘The Politics of Narrative in the Post-War Scottish Novel’, in Zachary Leader (ed.), *On Modern British Fiction* (Oxford, 2002), 181–208.

<sup>39</sup> Thomson, ‘You can’t get there from here’.

these political principles being nationalist.<sup>40</sup> Yet his own preference in “‘You can’t get there from here’” is for a British critical context, disguised as critical neutrality, that in actuality is no less fraught with political principles and the idea of a particular national/historical narrative.

Thomson contrasts Robert Crawford’s *Scotland’s Books: The Penguin History of Scottish Literature* (2007), for Thomson an example of nationalist literary historiography, with Richard Bradford’s *The Novel Now* (2007), which ‘is explicitly concerned with British fiction’.<sup>41</sup> Thomson argues that ‘Bradford’s approach is certainly more sympathetic towards the views of Scottish writers themselves’ because it refuses to place authors such as A.L. Kennedy in a specifically Scottish tradition, seeing this as delimiting to their art. However, as Thomson quotes Kennedy citing the influence of ‘Chekhov, Ibsen, Shakespeare, Dostoevsky, Eliot, magic realism, and Irish writers’, surely the label ‘British’ is just as misleading as that of ‘Scottish’.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, does ‘British’ apply to the Scottish Republican Alasdair Gray, or the libertarian socialist James Kelman, also examined in Bradford’s book? Britishness also constitutes a national and nationalist narrative, as well as a political decision, and Thomson, who has argued for a British as opposed to a Scottish Modernism, indulges in a well-worn sleight-of-hand in seeking to cast Britishness as a wider realm of critical disinterestedness, whereas the ‘Scottish style’ is critically Luddite, stuck in a narrow and oppositional marginality and obsessed with history.<sup>43</sup> Ironically, it is this very approach, with its bias towards a conservative and elitist Anglo-British and upper-middle class cultural hegemony – a status quo ante that many people within the United Kingdom, not least in Scotland, are steadily rejecting – and its disregard of under-studied Scottish traditions, which has led many Scottish critics to reject a British context for a Scottish one. Thomson seeks in both articles to weaken the link between literary culture in Scotland and the drive by many Scottish cultural intellectuals, particularly in the decade after the 1979 devolution referendum, for political devolution and independence – surely, itself, as much a political decision as a critical or theoretical one. Thomson actually wants a critical theory in and of Scotland that ultimately resists the political capture of Scotland. Like many ‘new cosmopolitans’ Thomson is here

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Alex Thomson, ‘Hugh MacDiarmid, Wyndham Lewis and the Differentiation of British Modernisms’, a paper delivered at the Scottish Network of Modernist Studies symposium, ‘Scottish Modernisms: Relationships and Reconfiguration’, University of Strathclyde, 8 October 2011.

reflecting Derrida's 'impossible-possible'; as defined by Philip Leonard, 'this cosmopolitanism acts as [a] non-predicative concept that seeks to hold open the futurity of the future'.<sup>44</sup>

Whilst the public in Scotland have voted to establish Scottish devolution with, currently, a Scottish National Party-controlled Scottish government, some recent cultural critics have embarked on what they see as the necessary task of de-essentialising Scottish identity, a tactic often involving the placing of Scotland in inverted commas. Thomson's essay 'Phrasing Scotland and the Postmodern' appears in Eleanor Bell and Gavin Miller's edited volume *Scotland in Theory*, a title which plays with the idea of theory being practised in Scotland as well as indicating that the nation itself is a theoretical concept—Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community'—with a future that is open to debate. 'Scotland in theory' means that Scotland's potential futures in political or cultural terms are up for grabs and should rightly be subject to theoretical analysis; however, also under speculation is Scotland's very being as a legitimate polity or cultural reality.<sup>45</sup> When Scotland and Scottish are put in quotation marks these scare quotes are designed to alert us to the instability, indeed the ontological non-existence, of nation and identity. Thomson believes that those critics who argue for a Scottish tradition are in the double-bind of framing literary art in Scotland within a make-believe national(ist) narrative that only exists because they invent it. Yet surely those 'new cosmopolitans' who question the very existence of Scotland are in an equally absurdist, perhaps even hypocritical situation of putting in inverted commas the country of their birth and/or domicile, and through which, as an object of cultural enquiry at, in many cases, a Scottish university, they earn their livings.

In her *Questioning Scotland* (2004) Eleanor Bell (who imagines that Benedict Anderson, theorist of nationalism, is a nationalist<sup>46</sup>) argues that 'this ability to

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<sup>44</sup> Philip Leonard, *Nationality Between Poststructuralism and Postcolonial Theory: A New Cosmopolitanism* (Basingstoke, 2005), 46.

<sup>45</sup> This is not to claim that all of the book's contributors fall in behind the implications of the book's double-edged title.

<sup>46</sup> See Eleanor Bell, *Questioning Scotland: Literature, Nationalism, Postmodernism* (Basingstoke, 2004), 56. Benedict Anderson's position is, admittedly, difficult to pinpoint: a post-Marxist Marxist, sympathetic to postcolonial forms of revolutionary nationalism, is arguably closest. In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, 2003) he describes Tom Nairn as 'heir' to the 'vast tradition of Marxist historiography and social science'. *Ibid.*, 3. This would be a valid description of his own, and brother Perry's, intellectual lineage. Like Nairn and others of the original *New Left Review* generation, since the first publication of *Imagined Communities* in 1983 Anderson has seen the theoretical claims of Western

postpone the definitive “capturing” of the nation ... is an ethical imperative’.<sup>47</sup> (‘Capture’, a word I used above, specifically the resistance to political capture, is a concept employed by poststructuralists Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.) But this theoretical openness to plurality and radical freedom, armed with cosmopolitan ethics akin to van Hooft’s, actually implies closure for on-the-ground public democracy, firstly, because power is always captured by some particular political grouping, however much the theorists may wish to rise above such taking-of-sides, and secondly, because those who vote presumably do not want anarchic openness and theoretical non-capture but rather a particular political party to govern a particular and existent state in law. Scotland as ‘Scotland’ implies not the liberation of the nation from nationalist ideology, but rather the imperialist imprisoning of a culture within a globalised, transnational cosmopolitan theory. This is ironic, given the sympathy many ‘new cosmopolitans’ feel for ‘post’-theories such as postcolonialism that critique Enlightenment universalism. Bell, for instance, wishes Scottish critics to be more open to postmodernism, but finds herself in the contradictory position—a contradiction which haunts her whole argument—of inviting Scottish Literary Studies to come to terms with the idea that ‘distinctive forms of national identity are under erasure in the postmodern world’ whilst clinging in her enquiry to the cultural framework of Scottishness, a framework that would be decimated by the complete acceptance of postmodern relativism.<sup>48</sup> Scottish literature, *Questioning Scotland* argues paradoxically, should embrace postnational theories that intellectually spell its demise in order to broaden its horizons and grow as a specialism, in order, as Bell argues in ‘Postmodernism, Nationalism and the Question of Tradition’, to ‘avoid further marginalisation’.<sup>49</sup> The marginalisation of Scottish Studies is, however, substantially intrinsic to the power relations of the United Kingdom, something an anti-nationalist position could not hope to seriously rectify.

In *Questioning Scotland* Bell argues for an ‘ethics of deterritorialisation’ which will ‘strive for a condition where borders eventually become less problematic, where territory, in becoming less centred, is also less violently contested’.<sup>50</sup> Bell

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academic Marxism crumble with the historical collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the recrudescence of a supposedly irrational nationalism anomalous to Enlightenment progress.

<sup>47</sup> Bell, *Questioning Scotland*, 5.

<sup>48</sup> Bell, *Questioning Scotland*, 43.

<sup>49</sup> Eleanor Bell, ‘Postmodernism, Nationalism and the Question of Tradition’ in Bell and Miller (eds), *Scotland in Theory*, 94.

<sup>50</sup> Bell, *Questioning Scotland*, 131.

sees such deterritorialisation as being necessary in a postmodern landscape of globalisation. Citing Ulrich Beck, Bell writes of the ‘detraditionalisation’ that follows from globalisation, a detraditionalisation that, along with a growing individualism, signals that we inhabit a postmodern, global consumer society.<sup>51</sup> For Bell, the detraditionalisation of postmodernism ‘may prove inconvenient and problematic to cultural nationalist readings’ in Scottish Studies.<sup>52</sup> Bell argues that ‘The concept of deterritorialisation may be closely linked to postnationalism, referring to broad changes now taking place in the understanding and organisation of communities at national and transnational levels. Deterritorialisation, therefore, refers to the ways in which identity can no longer be taken for granted, taking into account the effects of globalisation and cosmopolitanism.’<sup>53</sup> The definition of key terms here—globalisation, postmodernism, cosmopolitanism—remains blurry. One unfortunate side effect of this lack of definitional clarity is that it sometimes appears that Bell is merely arguing that Scottish Studies should adopt such discourses in order to keep up with contemporary developments; there is very little committed sense of why this might be beneficial, other than the rather vague argument that it may help to open up or undermine traditional nodes of (Scottish) identity. The often brutally violent realities of neoliberal globalisation and the enforced deterritorialisation of those living on the so-called peripheries of Western power are passed by in silence. Bell hopes that Scottish Studies will seek ‘a way of negotiating between the discourses of nationalism and cosmopolitanism, [in] a form of ethical interrogation that will critique the seeming binary opposition between the two’.<sup>54</sup> But her argument often seems to be moving in two different, perhaps mutually exclusive directions at once, as when she says ‘The general move into postnationalism and deterritorialisation that is being advocated here is consequently one that will be able to critique previous formulations and structures of nationalism, without abandoning either the foundations of national identity or that of the nation-state’.<sup>55</sup>

Such contradictions, the ‘cultural contradictions of capitalism’ examined by Daniel Bell, are rife in a theoretical industry that likes to believe that it is intellectually and politically in the radical vanguard, but actually grows almost solely in the hothouse of the contemporary corporate university.<sup>56</sup> McKenzie

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>56</sup> Daniel Bell, *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976; New York, 1996).

Wark, lamenting the breach between the high theory now ubiquitous in academia and genuinely anti-establishment political and cultural action, states: theory ‘found its utopia, and it is the academy’.<sup>57</sup> Wark goes on to mock the crudely opportunistic multiculturalism and the fossilisation of radicalism in the theory pursued in the contemporary neoliberal university:

In the United States the academy spread its investments, placing a few bets on women and people of color. The best of those—Susan Buck-Morss, Judith Butler, Paul Gilroy, Donna Haraway—at least appreciate the double bind of speaking for difference within the heart of the empire of indifference. At best theory, like art, turns in on itself, living on through commentary, investing in its own death on credit. At worst it rattles the chains of old ghosts, as if a conference on ‘the idea of communism’ could still shock the bourgeois. As if there were still a bourgeois literate enough to shock. As if it were ever the idea that shocked them, rather than the practice.<sup>58</sup>

For Wark, the very presence of theory in the academy instantiates its uselessness as a radical political tool: the institutionalisation of theory marks the end of theory.

Rather than being ahead of the game, academia is often decades behind in its theoretical formulations (and deformations) of what others have achieved (or failed to achieve) in history. For example, postcolonial theory entered the academy in the 1970s with Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (1978), establishing itself in the 1980s and 1990s during the rise to power of the New Right in America and Britain. Yet post-colonial nationalist movements—truly oppositional historical moments that much postcolonial theory’s opposition to nationalism intellectually de-legitimises—happened in history mainly between the wars and immediately after the Second World War. Referring to the revolution manqué that was Paris, May 1968, Wark writes of theorists (presumably poststructuralists) who belong to ‘those groups which made a profession of turning failed revolutions into literary or philosophical success’.<sup>59</sup> Theory, in academia, typically does not precede practice, but follows fitfully

<sup>57</sup> McKenzie Wark, *The Beach Beneath the Street: The Everyday Life and Glorious Times of the Situationist International* (London and New York, 2011), 2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 2. ‘The Idea of Communism’ refers to a 2009 conference at Birkbeck’s Institute for the Humanities, and was subsequently a Verso book (London and New York, 2010) of the same title edited by Costas Douzinas and Slavko Žižek.

<sup>59</sup> Wark, *The Beach Beneath the Street*, 5.

after—fashionably *late*. As noted mordantly by John Gray, ‘in the life of the academic mind, the owl of Minerva seldom flies as early as dusk.’<sup>60</sup> This concept of lateness—late-Marxism, late-capitalism, late-nationalism—indicates the stubborn continuance of a political phenomenon whose life should have been, theoretically speaking, long since extinguished. ‘New cosmopolitanism’ exists in the historical era of late-nationalism, and flourishes in the bourgeois confines of the neoliberal university.

It was during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s that, according to David Harvey, ‘Neoliberalism became ... hegemonic as a universalistic mode of discourse’.<sup>61</sup> For Harvey, the term ‘globalisation’ ‘performs a masking function as to the power relations involved’ in neoliberalism, which is the contemporary form of capitalist imperialism.<sup>62</sup> In academia, especially in the humanities, the discourse of globalisation has been nowhere more conspicuous than in the centrality of critical and cultural theory to university curricula and scholarly interpretations.<sup>63</sup> The success of the theory industry has rested on its ability to universalise itself and claim a transnational status (and hence a largely anti-nationalist politics), in spite of the often local origin and application of particular theories (for instance, Mettray is for Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975) the origin of the modern French penal system, yet the ‘disciplinary society’ which he believes to have grown from such local beginnings now apparently encompasses the whole post-Enlightenment world). Although theory is ostensibly radically oppositional and anti-market, its anti-nationalism is not on the whole Marxist but is actually a warped mirror of the anti-nationalism of capitalist-imperialist globalisation. The theory industry, much in the manner of capitalist show business, even throws up its own oft-cited celebrity figures. This is ironic, perhaps, given theory’s objection to the supposed tyranny of the single author. All the more paradoxical is Foucault’s starry status since the author-as-genius has apparently been routed by Foucauldian discourse and Foucault’s question ‘What is an Author?’<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Gray, ‘Why the Owl Flies Late: The Inadequacies of Academic Liberalism’, *Times Literary Supplement*, 3 July 1992; reprinted as ‘Notes Toward a Definition of the Political Thought of Tlön’, *Enlightenment’s Wake*, 22.

<sup>61</sup> Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 57.

<sup>62</sup> Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom*, 58.

<sup>63</sup> I have deliberately not capitalised critical theory so as not to confuse my conception here, which is the generic humanities-based post-Marxist, postmodern modular subject, with that of the Critical Theory of the Frankfurt School.

<sup>64</sup> Michel Foucault, ‘What is an Author’ in Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (London, 1986), 101–20.

The transnationalism of theory, with its undermining of the idea of national traditions, is a reflection of the transnational academic job market in an era of globalisation. When job-seeking academics need to pack their bags and sell their intellectual labour practically anywhere in the world, knowledge of a specific local culture or national tradition is unlikely to be terribly marketable – unless of course that knowledge be of one of the imperial cultures. Under the terms of globalisation, cosmopolitan critical theory has necessarily replaced local knowledge in the transnational academic's toolkit. Just as the feel-good rhetoric of multiculturalism is expressive of the transnational ethics behind much theory, so cosmopolitanism is a 'structure of feeling' of the professional class that deploys such discourse. The hegemonic rise of the university 'new cosmopolitans', indicative of their class position as a professional academic caste, is connected to their lack of connection to the town or city that their employing university usually bears the name of and trades on. The University of Duncairn, to utilise the name of Lewis Grassie Gibbon's imagined city in *Grey Granite* (1934), may be situated in the city of Duncairn, but it is no more local in its current corporate, neoliberal guise than any other university.

Stefan Collini, in *What Are Universities For?* (2012), is one of a number of recent commentators to be concerned by the changes taking place in higher education, changes that signal 'a kind of mercantilism of the intellect'.<sup>65</sup> The university, Collini argues, has moved towards a much more market-driven model that sees 'higher education as an extension of globalization'.<sup>66</sup> According to Collini,

from the late nineteenth century onwards the existence of European empires naturally led to the transplanting of domestic models to other parts of the world. But what may have been relatively new in the last couple of decades of the twentieth century, and even more marked in the past ten years, is the simultaneous transformation of the scale of higher education in almost all 'developed' (and some 'developing') countries, along with the concomitant introduction of similar organizational and financial arrangements which cut across, and have sometimes signalled major departures from, existing national traditions.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Stefan Collini, *What Are Universities For?* (London, 2012), 17. For other examples, see Michael Bailey and Des Freeman (eds), *The Assault on Universities: A Manifesto for Resistance* (London, 2011), and Thomas Docherty, *For the University: Democracy and the Future of the Institution* (London and New York, 2011).

<sup>66</sup> Collini, *What Are Universities For?*, 15.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 13–14.

As Collini points out, because ‘scholarship and science are inherently supranational activities, there have always been instances of universities in one country learning from or imitating those in another’.<sup>68</sup> However, whilst scholarship may in some measure be ‘supranational’, the function of the university, first-and-foremost, should be to serve the good of the local and national communities. As John Macmurray states, ‘The business of a university is to be the cultural authority of the region that it serves.’<sup>69</sup>

The lack of representation of the local population in what Collini calls the ‘global multiversity’ is tellingly allied with the sparse attention paid to the national intellectual tradition.<sup>70</sup> As Cairns Craig writes: ‘The critic’s right to judgement is no longer based on values deriving from an argued philosophy or from a cultural tradition: it is based instead on the ability of the critic to stand beyond the boundary of culturally conditioned value systems.’<sup>71</sup> Andrew Lockhart Walker protests in *The Revival of the Democratic Intellect*, published in 1994, that ‘The only thing Scottish about half our universities is their geographical location’, and that ‘At least half our universities have in fact acquired colonial status’.<sup>72</sup> Clearly, Lockhart Walker is deeply influenced by the Anglicisation thesis argued by George Davie.<sup>73</sup> But the change towards a more specialised university system in Scotland in the nineteenth century away from a generalised philosophical tradition, examined by Davie in *The Democratic Intellect* (1961), and the crisis-point Davie believes was reached in this process in the twentieth century, which he elucidates in *The Crisis of the Democratic Intellect* (1986), may now be seen as part of a geographically wider process of cosmopolitanisation and corporatisation in higher education and society more generally.

Gerard Carruthers identifies what he calls the tradition of “‘generalist” Scottish literary criticism’, which says ‘attempts to describe the [cultural] continuity, or lack of this, in a way that is concerned with an over-determined or over-anxious sense of tradition’.<sup>74</sup> Nation and culture are symbiotically linked

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<sup>68</sup> Collini, *What Are Universities For?*, 13.

<sup>69</sup> John Macmurray, ‘The Idea of a University’, *TESS*, 4 December 1970; quoted in Andrew Lockhart Walker, *The Revival of the Democratic Intellect: Scotland’s University Traditions and the Crisis in Modern Thought* (Edinburgh, 1994), 285.

<sup>70</sup> Collini, *What Are Universities For?*, chapter 1, ‘The Global Multiversity?’, 3–19.

<sup>71</sup> Cairns Craig, *Intending Scotland: Explorations in Scottish Culture since the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 2009), 219.

<sup>72</sup> Lockhart Walker, *The Revival of the Democratic Intellect*, 241.

<sup>73</sup> For a critique of Davie’s thesis, see R.D. Anderson, *Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland: Schools and Universities* (Oxford, 1983), 25.

<sup>74</sup> Gerard Carruthers, *Scottish Literature* (Edinburgh, 2009), 10, 10–11.

in the generalist tradition, each illustrating and informing the perceived health (or sickness) or existence (or non-existence) of the other. For Carruthers, this generalist tradition is influenced by Matthew Arnold's essentialised conception of Celticism, and is demonstrated in the work of G. Gregory Smith, Edwin Muir, John Speirs, Kurt Wittig, David Craig and David Daiches. The generalist tradition has been characterised by pessimism as to Scotland's ability to achieve or sustain an organic culture, which is in turn caused by and illustrates Scotland's precarious national status. For Muir, if the Scottish writer 'wishes to add to an indigenous Scottish literature, he will find there ... neither an organic community to round off his conceptions, nor a major literary tradition to support him, nor even a faith that a Scottish literature is possible or desirable'.<sup>75</sup> According to David Craig, 'there did not emerge with modern Scotland a mature, "all-round" literature. Sheer social forces—centralisation, emigration, the widespread wasting away of the regional and the vernacular—were against the sustained output of anything like a *separate* literature for Scotland'.<sup>76</sup> Speirs, in his preface to the 1962 edition of *The Scots Literary Tradition*, first published in 1940, admits to 'the pessimism of the book's conclusion' that Scotland had 'lost consciousness' of itself in having lost the linguistic resources of the past, although that *The Scots Literary Tradition* first appeared as essays in the Leavisite *Scrutiny* somewhat accounts for Speirs' pessimism as to Scotland's apparent failure to uphold an organic literary culture.<sup>77</sup> Carruthers acknowledges that 'A number of critics and commentators in the last twenty years ... have begun to provide alternatives to the pessimism of the generalist' tradition.<sup>78</sup> He then contends: 'A true paradox resides in the fact that (largely well-meaning) critics seeking to explore Scottish literature further have, *due to their idea of a tightly-bound literature and nation*, found Scottish literature ultimately to be unsustainable.'<sup>79</sup> I would argue, rather, that it is those critics with a theoretical and cosmopolitan bias who have questioned the existence of Scottish literature and indeed Scotland itself. Just when some twentieth- and twenty-first-century critics have sought to overcome the negativities of what Carruthers terms the generalist tradition, and to do so within the context of a national tradition, the concept of a national tradition has been exploded from a different angle:

<sup>75</sup> Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland: The Predicament of the Scottish Writer* (1936; Edinburgh, 1982), 4.

<sup>76</sup> David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People 1680–1830* (1940; London, 1961), 14 (italics in original).

<sup>77</sup> John Speirs, *The Scots Literary Tradition: An Essay in Criticism* (London, 1962), 14, 161.

<sup>78</sup> Carruthers, *Scottish Literature*, 24.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 24 (The emphasis is mine).

as for the idea of the (independent) nation, so for the idea of the national culture—both are deemed irrelevant in the current neoliberal, cosmopolitan world order. The real paradox is that the ‘new cosmopolitans’ have inherited the national nihilism of the generalist tradition they would reject.

Berthold Schoene’s *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (2009) acknowledges some of the problems associated with cosmopolitanism, such as the class privileges—privileges that extend to the national haves and have-nots—behind ‘traditional cosmopolitanism’.<sup>80</sup> For Schoene, therefore, cosmopolitanism in an age of globalisation cannot justifiably be a mere ‘lifestyle option’ of rich Westerners, but instead ‘must be definitive of ethical responsibility and firm political commitment’—a difficult task, surely, when ‘what cosmopolitanism is, or might be, remains as yet to be clearly defined’.<sup>81</sup> However, Schoene dates the beginning of ‘new cosmopolitanism’ (a phrase he too deploys) to the attacks on the World Trade Center, the moment at which the United States of America was violently forced to confront the fact that the whole world was not in agreement with the New Right’s ‘End of History’-conception of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism.<sup>82</sup> Schoene also believes that, alongside 9–11 in America, the fall of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 and the devolution referendum in Scotland on 11 September 1997 ought to ‘be cited as determining Britain’s contemporaneity’.<sup>83</sup>

Schoene’s reference to the devolution referendum is crucial to his analysis of James Kelman’s *Translated Accounts* (2001) and *You Have to Be Careful in the Land of the Free* (2004). These are, at the time of writing, the only Kelman novels to be set wholly outside of Scotland: *Translated Accounts* in an unspecified zone of conflict with its ensuing migration of political refugees, and *You Have to Be Careful in the Land of the Free* in the USA. Their respective geographies and their post-devolution publication dates allow Schoene the liberty of arguing that these novels are a critique of Scotland’s international role and responsibilities. Schoene claims that the setting and subject-matter of *Translated Accounts* is

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<sup>80</sup> Berthold Schoene, *The Cosmopolitan Novel* (Edinburgh, 2009), 3.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 2. Similarly, Sheldon Pollock, Homi K. Bhabha, Carol A. Breckenridge and Dipesh Chakrabarty argue that as an emerging theoretical concept cosmopolitanism is currently indefinable, indeed that to seek to define cosmopolitanism would be ‘uncosmopolitan’: ‘As a historical category, the cosmopolitan should be considered entirely open, and not pre-given or foreclosed by the definition of any particular society or discourse’, ‘Cosmopolitanisms’ in Breckenridge et al (eds), *Cosmopolitanism* (Durham, 2002), 1.

<sup>82</sup> Schoene, *The Cosmopolitan Novel*, 8.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

Kelman's tangential way of beating post-devolution Scotland over the head for its continuing complicity with Anglo-American imperialism and Scottish literature for its continuing Scoto-centric parochialism: 'As far as Kelman is concerned, it is time post-devolution Scotland looked beyond its own legendary suffering, which is at risk of becoming inauthentic through so much reiteration. It is time the nation grasped its new ethical responsibility in the world.'<sup>84</sup> The 'new cosmopolitan' Schoene shows his political hand with his sardonic reiteration of the phrase 'It is time ...', used by the SNP in their 2006 party political propaganda-claim that 'It's time ...' for Scotland to vote for the SNP and achieve independence. Without independence, however, Scotland cannot grasp fully its new international ethical responsibilities, as the devolution settlement does not allow the Scottish state to control its own foreign policy. Yet, this political fact fails to deter Schoene, who goes on to attack Scottish culture: 'It is time Scotland ceased to provide Scottish literature's sole focus and subject matter. It is time the country acknowledged its relatively powerful and influential position and started paying attention to the fate of the rest of the world.'<sup>85</sup> Is this really Kelman's point with *Translated Accounts*, or is this actually what Schoene wants to reduce this complex, sophisticated novel to in order to make his own political speech? Even when a Scottish writer writes about something other than Scotland the anti-nationalist, 'new cosmopolitan' critic takes this as an excuse to belittle Scottish culture: a novel Schoene wants to classify as a cosmopolitan novel is still somehow implicitly aimed at and about Scotland. Ironically, Schoene fails to see that this is everything he claims Kelman is claiming Scotland should move beyond. He makes a similarly inverted value-judgement when calling Mark Renton's 'Ah hate the Scots'-rant in Irvine Welsh's *Trainspotting* (1993) an 'infamous anti-nationalist speech', when in fact Renton thinks that Scotland has been colonised by the English; by inference, one could argue justifiably, the Scots are a 'wretched, servile, miserable, pathetic' people precisely insofar as they *do not* rebel against their subordinate position.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid., 73; Irvine Welsh, *Trainspotting* (1993; London, 2004), 78. Renton's 'speech', as Schoene calls it, is actually internal monologue in the novel; it becomes a, somewhat awkward, set-piece speech in Danny Boyle's 1996 film, as the scene is displaced from pub to symbolically-touristy Scottish countryside. Renton's self-condemning attitude is reminiscent of Roddy Doyle's *The Commitments* (1987; London, 1998), where Jimmy Rabbitte says the Irish are 'the niggers of Europe', although in voicing the words of James Brown, 'I'm black an' I'm proud', there is a measure of opportunistic (multi)

Schoene concludes *The Cosmopolitan Novel* with the concern that literary art is in demise, and that the way the novel is currently marketed, sold and taught is fundamentally responsible for literature's continuing marginalisation in the face of market standardisation. Yet what if literary art is dying, as Schoene intimates, because of the very cosmopolitanism he valorises; because different—not discrete—national cultures and traditions are being worn away by globalisation? What if literature *is* national in origin and inspiration, as Neil M. Gunn suggests? 'The small nation has always been humanity's last bulwark against that machine [of political and commercial standardisation], for personal expression against impersonal tyranny, for the quick freedom of the spirit against the flattening steam-roller of mass. It is concerned for intangible things called its heritage, its belief and arts, its distinctive institutions, for everything, in fact, that expresses it. And expression finally implies spirit in an act of creation, which is to say, culture.'<sup>87</sup>

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cultural expressiveness lacking in Renton's national self-loathing. *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>87</sup> Neil M. Gunn, 'Nationalism and Internationalism', *Scots Magazine*, 15 (June 1931); reprinted in McCleery (ed.), *Landscape and Light*, 179.



## Notes on Contributors

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