Historical Geography
Volume 41 – 2013

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Historical Geography is an annual journal that publishes scholarly articles, book reviews, conference reports, and commentaries. The journal encourages an interdisciplinary and international dialogue among scholars, professionals, and students interested in geographic perspectives on the past. Concerned with maintaining historical geography’s ongoing intellectual contribution to social scientific and humanities-based disciplines, Historical Geography is especially committed to presenting the work of emerging scholars.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in EBSCO and Elsevier electronic databases, including HISTORICAL ABSTRACTS and AMERICA HISTORY AND LIFE.

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Cover illustration source: Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way, Frances F. Palmer, 1868
As some of you know, HG has undergone a major publishing change in the last year. Based on the success of last year’s trial run, we have now moved the journal to a new permanent home at the University of New Mexico, where we can take advantage of the Open Journals Systems platform hosted by UNM Libraries. In addition to publishing all of our content digitally, we are now also conducting all production activities online. The OJS platform streamlines everything from peer review and copyediting to subscription management, and we are extremely grateful to the UNM Libraries for providing this resource and the technical support we need to use it.

Now in our second year as a fully digital journal, we are pleased to bring you Historical Geography Vol. 41 (2013) in a format that is once again designed to reach a wide audience without the resource consumption or cost required for print publication. We hope you find content easily accessible, but we look forward to ongoing reader feedback as we continue to experiment with the technical and graphic aspects of our online presence.

Going forward, we at Historical Geography look forward to hearing from authors, subscribers, and potential guest editors through our OJS site at ejournals.unm.edu/index.php/historicalgeography. Authors can now use the online portal for article submission, and we encourage submissions that use diverse digital media forms for both analysis and presentation. Subscribers can begin or renew subscriptions through the subscription portal, in order to enjoy access to HG content in the first twelve months after publication. (Please note that all HG content is fully open-access after the first year.) As before, members of the AAG’s Historical Geography Specialty Group receive subscriptions to HG as a benefit of their HGSG membership. We also offer digital subscriptions to both individuals and libraries, and we are pleased to report that this subscription base has been growing steadily over the past year. Finally, those who are interested in editing a special issue on a particular theme should contact Maria Lane mdlane@unm.edu and Garth Myers garth.myers@trincoll.edu to discuss topical and scheduling considerations.

Last but not least, let us acknowledge those whose contributions have made this journal possible. As usual, Vol. 41 features a number of excellent articles and book reviews, with a formidable set of themed papers guest-edited by Gerry Kearns on “Irish Historical Geographies.” We are also very proud to publish Karen Morin’s Distinguished Historical Geography Lecture, which was first presented at the 2013 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Los Angeles. Much appreciation is due to both Karen and Gerry for their intellectual contributions to the journal, as well as to Soren Larsen, for his excellent stewardship of the book reviews. We would also like to thank the HGSG and its president Bob Wilson for supporting us in our digital transition and for providing financial assistance through member dues. Perhaps most importantly, we are heavily indebted to our UNM-based team, including Jon Wheeler for conscientious technical support and Imogen Ainsworth for outstanding editorial and production assistance. Thanks for reading and we hope you enjoy.

Maria Lane, Co-Editor
University of New Mexico
Carceral Space and the Usable Past

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Introduction

I am among a second generation of American feminist historical geographers. My advisor Jeanne Kay Guelke was a pioneer in the field, offering in the 1980s and 1990s some of the most incisive critiques of the masculinism of American historical geography.1 I was lucky to become her student while she also served as chair of the Geography Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the early 1990s; I think she was probably one of the first women to serve as such in the country.

There are not many of us who would—then or now—self-identify as “feminist historical geographers,” though of course our work overlaps with that of scholars in many closely aligned fields such as critical historical geography, postcolonial studies, and feminist history and historiography. Nonetheless, it is important to pause and consider what the early feminist historical geographers and historians accomplished for us and for geography. Thanks to predecessors such as Jeanne, we can now take for granted altered notions about what events, places, processes, and especially people count in and for historical geography. They demanded new ways of thinking about traditional areas of historical geography research (e.g. settlement patterns, staple export production, and types of survey systems), and offered whole new scales and categories of study such as the home, domestic space, and social reproduction to do so.

Of course what’s “in” and what’s “out” is always in flux. Thus one of the few areas where feminist historical geography aligned with critical race studies, for instance, was in colonial and postcolonial geographies.2 These, however, are now susceptible to drifting into the background, and places of colonial contact with them. We do not want to lose that foothold, though, and one way to keep race relations deeply in the mix is through historical carceral geographies, the subject of this paper.

I recently became interested in critical prison studies as an activist—as a volunteer and now decade-long executive board member of a local nonprofit prisoner rights group called the Lewisburg Prison Project or LPP. The project’s focus is on conditions of confinement; that is, helping to protect the civil and human rights of inmates incarcerated in the 50+ prisons located in the Pennsylvania Middle (judicial) District. Where I live in Pennsylvania unfortunately has one of the highest concentrations of correctional facilities anywhere in the United States. Prisons are the second largest industry in Pennsylvania overall, and the state’s incarceration rate continues to outpace all the other US states.3 Recently, inspired by my association with LLP, my work has become more scholarly-activist in nature. I am presently working on a number of projects related to historical geographies of mass incarceration in the US and the “spatial violence” of late modern...
American prisons and jails. This includes a study of USP-Lewisburg, a federal penitentiary located in my town, which has unfortunately become the focus of much of LPP’s current work and to which I will return below.

When I began research in this area I was surprised by the sheer volume of work available on American prisons and jails, across many disciplines—sociology, criminal justice, political science, psychology, history, law, and architecture—with relatively little contribution by geographers, though there are some key exceptions. There are many, many books about prisons in our university library, and yet what strikes me most about them is how relatively little impact all this academic work over the last forty years seems to have had on stemming the tide of hyper-incarceration levels. There is an explanation for this. As Wacquant has argued, prisons have grown increasingly closed and secretive and this has led to a reduction in direct observation types of studies in favor of those focusing more on “distant” analysis of incarceration rates, the dynamics of cost-effectiveness of penal management, and sentencing and litigation, among others. I think this also should alert us of the need to understand the connections between scholarly works and activist networks. We do not want carceral geography to become a sub-discipline stuck in the Ivory Tower. So with an aim to keep at least one foot planted in the real world of incarcerated individuals, my recent objective has been to help uncover—or rather to construct—what we might define as a usable historical geography of the American carceral past.

Here I focus only on historical geographies of American correctional institutions and their staggering growth, not on the much broader field of “the carceral” which would include concentration campus, immigration detention centers, Black Sites, and so on. Moreover my focus on the US is not meant to be chauvinistic about American historical geography, but is instead an admission that we have, in the US, a bigger problem than anywhere else in the world. We have all heard the numbers: the US has 5% of the world’s population but 25% of its prisoners, with an estimated 2.4 million men and women behind bars. This is the highest rate of incarceration of anywhere in the world, and the highest rate in US history. As many have argued, the US penal system is also a racialized strategy for regulating the urban poor; 70% of the prison population is African American or Latino. African Americans make up 13% of the US population, but 50% of the prison population; and two-thirds of African American men in their twenties are incarcerated or on parole or probation.

Philo has defined “carceral geography” as a subset of security geographies, with “carceral spaces” defined as those “set aside for ‘securing’ - detaining, locking up/away - problematic populations of one kind or another.” However, this definition does not really capture the complexity of how “the carceral” figures deeply in many social, economic, and political systems, both historically and today. This is evident in much of Philo’s own scholarship on spaces of confinement. Moran defines carceral geography as a field of geographical research that focuses on practices of incarceration, viewing “carceral space” broadly as a type of institution whose functionings have been understood primarily in dialogue with the works of Michael Foucault, Erving Goffman, and Giorgio Agamben. To this definition I would add that carceral geography studies share a distinctly activist component, an imperative to contribute to positive social change.

As Moran notes, whereas scholars from other disciplines have tended to focus on time as the basic structuring dimension of prison life (“doing time,” etc.), geographers are particularly well positioned to foreground the experience and study of prison space (or time-space) in three ways: (1) in study of the nature of the spaces of incarceration, individuals’ experiences within them, and their regulatory regimes and systems of punishment; (2) in study of the locational or distributional geographies of carceral systems, particularly with respect to their impact on
community economic development; and (3) in study of the relationship between the carceral and an increasingly punitive security state.\textsuperscript{11}

In this essay I suggest ways that historical geography can inform, and be informed by, these three areas of carceral geography. To date, those who self-identify as historical geographers have primarily contributed to the first; and these, to do with penal institutions but also the carceral more broadly conceived, to include workhouses, reformatories, and asylums. They have contributed to study of the interior design and architecture of prisons; the uses, nature, and experience of spaces of confinement; and the myriad social practices and tactics used to control people and their movements, especially through grand epic shifts. Most have, in one way or another, engaged with Foucault’s ideas from \textit{Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison} (1977), particularly his critique of Bentham’s panopticon design, surveillance power, and the production of docile bodies.\textsuperscript{12}

However, there are many other important studies that use historical geography logics. I will name just one: Gilmore’s foundational \textit{Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California} (2007), which examines the development of California’s carceral landscape from the nineteenth century to today. In \textit{Golden Gulag}, Gilmore describes how punishment became industrialized throughout California. What she terms the “prison fix” was a partially geographical solution to an unfolding political economic crisis in the state—the solution to surplus land, capital, labor, and state capacity “congealed” into the prison industrial complex. California prisons were built in areas that historically derived their power from agriculture and resource extraction, and the bodies that filled them were the former low-wage workers from urban centers such as Los Angeles.\textsuperscript{13}

Without becoming overly or unnecessarily schematic, I would like to offer some suggestions on how we can integrate the above themes into what we might call a “usable carceral past.” What is a useful or usable past that could help both understand current carceral trends, and ameliorate them? I would argue that we must have at our disposal a usable carceral past in order to be able to confront the unmitigated propaganda about people incarcerated in American prisons and jails that confronts us daily, and continue the project of progressive social transformation.

Segue: Prague’s carceral historical geography

I was fortunate to be able to attend the 2012 International Conference of Historical Geographers last summer in the beautiful city of Prague, Czech Republic. Inside the conference was a fabulous array of sessions, receptions, and activities; however, it was outside the conference, as I wandered the streets of Prague, where historical geography really made an impact on me. This city of charming castles and bridges, historic neighborhoods and squares, incredible museums, and cutting-edge art and architecture also offers one of the most usable examples of a carceral past I have encountered: from the smallest historical markers commemorating anti-Communist dissidents, to the Jewish ghetto and Nazi concentration camp at nearby Terezin. On one of my walks I stumbled upon the brilliant Franz Kafka Museum, memorial to one of the city’s famous writers. Beyond the biographical details of Kafka’s life—including the story of his sisters’ deaths at Auschwitz—the museum features exhibits that bring to life his various novels and works, each in separate rooms.

The room devoted to \textit{In the Penal Colony} features a model of the torture machine described in Kafka’s story, which slowly executed the condemned by inscribing the name of his crime onto his body. “Guilt is never to be doubted,” Kafka wrote.\textsuperscript{14} The engraved wall plaque accompanying the model informs the museum visitor of Foucault’s analysis of modern punishment described in \textit{Discipline and Punish} (1977). What happened with the executioners and their machine “was the start of modern justice” it reads, “when punishment became a merely administrative act,
versus the more spectacular public punishment that characterized the pre-modern form.” The
description continues:

What the Kafka narrative anticipates is the paradoxical extension and naturalization
of the process. Justice distances itself from the punishment it metes out by situating
the execution in an autonomous space but at the same time the prison form
expressed throughout the social body establishes mechanisms of surveillance and
control at the very heart of the modern city.

This display, to me, is an exceptionally usable reconstruction of an important moment in
carceral (as well as literary) history. It is strident, educational, and unapologetically dark—both
figuratively and literally; in fact the entire museum is dimly lit as if to capture a foreboding
sense of a past that had very little pleasant to illuminate. I wondered what might be some usable
parallels in the American carceral past? How might we distinguish a “usable past” here in the US
from which we can learn?

In search of a usable past

In my view there is no point in studying the past unless there is something we can learn
from it. The past must be made relevant, have purpose, and make a difference. Constructing
a “usable” past thus implies taking a pragmatic approach to history and historical geography,
what Tosh helpfully describes as “critical applied history.” But of course a usable past begs
the questions: usable by whom, and for what end or purpose?—both of which, I think, historical
geographers are well equipped to address head-on.

The library search term “usable past” is most often associated with the heyday of social
history in the 1970s and 1980s, as a response and challenge to top-down, master narratives and
foundational myths about the American experience. By turns scholars have argued that the “real”
American story is that of slavery, of Native American genocide, of various immigrant groups
struggling under labor subjugation, among others. The term was originally coined by the literary
critic Van Wyck Brooks, who in 1918 asked, “What, out of all the multifarious achievements
and impulses and desires of the American literary mind, ought we elect to remember?” Many
progressive era intellectuals like Brooks sought to “mobilize American memory as a resource for
a more democratic future,” to somehow construct a usable past from the many contradictions
inherent in the American experience. A usable past is thus “an invention or at least a retrospective
reconstruction [of historical referents] to serve the needs of the present.” It is, then, an
acknowledgment that behind every version of the past there must be a set of interests in the
present.

Vigorous debates have ensued in the last three decades among historians about the
instrumentalism, serviceability, and presentism inherent in attempts to create a usable past; and
these, from wildly divergent ideological and methodological positions. While it would seem that
research into the past could never be anything but presentist, many still hold to the idea that the
past is somehow uncritically knowable and accessible ‘on its own terms’; or alternatively, that
presentist accounts that are instrumentally constructed or invented can be put to deliberately
falsifying, distorting, or manipulative purposes. Obviously there are degrees of contextualization,
as well as unethical scholarly motives. But it also seems that scholars today should be better
aware of these dynamics, more prepared to be candid about the presentism of their accounts,
their ethics, and their value judgments. Clearly we have by now learned, if nothing else, that we
produce histories (and historical geographies) rather than reflect some pre-existing condition of
the past as a coherent, mutually agreed upon body of knowledge.
Questions of reflexivity, positionality, and accountability give us scope to acknowledge that there are different ways to explore the importance of past places, and the importance of the past in place, as Shein argues, and thus “free us to an extent from the dangers of presentism.” Again though, historical geographers have long discussed these issues—we have heard this before. And yet, the project of exposing these undercurrents remains profoundly unfinished.

Moreover, historical interpretations are always going to be contingent, since there are always many experiences and perspectives—“multiple pasts”—happening on the ground simultaneously. Questions regarding the availability of historical sources; archival reason; and archives as sites of power, privilege, and repression remain, along with the psychic or psychoanalytic costs of remembering and forgetting traumatic events (at the individual, familial, and social scales). These are all important and complicated questions and issues that we would do well to keep on the front burner.

Recently I came across a study that polled Americans about how they actually think and talk about their past—as individuals and as citizens. In this study, historians Rosenzweig and Thelen found that Americans in general “pursue the past actively and make it part of everyday life,” through a whole host of activities such as compiling photographic albums and visiting history museums. However, their real insight was in the distinct differences they found between (“white”) European American respondents and African American and Native American ones. White people chose to remember a personal history that was small scale and intimate. They largely ignored national narratives when talking about events and people that shaped their own lives—typically it was a family member from the past who most influenced and affected them. The authors argued that whites not only did not connect their family histories as part of a larger community or nation, but also were more ignorant of how their family histories connected with larger stories.

By contrast, the Native American and African American respondents in the study identified their histories as both personal and also more civic and public; they were far more ready than European Americans to place their personal pasts in a collective narrative explicitly tied to the American national story. The authors interviewed two hundred Oglala Sioux living on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, for instance. The chronology, key turning points, sites, and historical figures that the Oglala people identified as important went against the narrative structure and content of conventional American history. The details are probably obvious and do not need rehearsing here, but the salient point is how deeply embedded the past is in their present: “the past becomes their everyday life.” The respondents talked passionately about things that happened over a century ago. If we can slough over the complicated—and not very well addressed—identity politics inherent in the study just a bit, we might conclude that the past constructed by the respondents is not only “usable,” but essential to group and individual survival.

Again ignoring the largely unaddressed identity politics of the study, Rosenzweig and Thelen found as well that to African Americans they interviewed, family history is the same as the history of their race. Though the authors were reluctant to distinguish a unified African American narrative, their respondents all identified the same set of historical events, figures, commemorations, sites, and even sources as important to that history. These set them apart but also within the conventional American narrative of emancipation and progress, including in all its failures: slavery, sharecropping, Jim Crow, Civil Rights, and Martin Luther King’s assassination. The sites of pilgrimage commemorating these events constituted African American ‘history on the landscape.’ When asked to name someone in history who most affected him or her personally, about half of the respondents chose MLK (with Jesus Christ second). The authors conclude that African Americans have a stronger sense of the public past than do European Americans, and
that they readily engaged notions of democracy and progress that the European Americans eschewed.\textsuperscript{26} Thus, African Americans are the “primary keepers and interpreters of American civic memory,” a civic memory that as another critic describes it, “is the most usable past we have got.”\textsuperscript{27}

Despite its blank spots, I find this research instructive. What materially constituted the usable past to the respondents included, in each case, three elements: (1) the past in particular events; (2) the past as embodied in particular people; and (3) the past as memory materialized on the landscape. One method of constructing a usable carceral past then would be to put these same elements in play: what events, people, and material landscapes stand out in incarceration’s history?

My sense is that two of these three elements—the important events and people of the past—are already well integrated into critical prison research and scholarship; in fact these are well-trodden territory. Most critical research on American prisons attempts to understand them by first of all highlighting key historical events such as: trends in criminal justice structures, sentencing laws, and the courts; changes in penal philosophies; the decades-long War on Drugs; prison resistance movements; changes in American government legislation and economics which have driven it from a welfare state to a security state; prison labor practices; victims’ rights movements and the politics of a conservative ‘tough on crime’ stance; and the various demographic and other impacts of mass incarceration on prisoners’ families.\textsuperscript{28} Harsh sentencing laws such as California’s three strikes rule, which sentenced inmates to a life in prison regardless of the severity of three crimes; and the 1984 federal Sentencing Reform Act, which abolished parole for federal inmates and guaranteed their serving at least eighty-five percent of their sentence—such make up the panoply of events that are well known and shared among critical prison activists and scholars.

Similarly, many critical prison studies have focused on the people who have shaped the narratives of prisoner experiences, resistances, and rights movements. Bruce Franklin’s \textit{The Victim as Criminal and Artist}\textsuperscript{29} offered the first comprehensive history of prison literature and writers. To Franklin, the main lines of American literature can be traced from the plantation to the penitentiary. These are not peripheral cultural phenomena but something close to the center of the US historical experience as a nation state and thus offer the main key to its usable past.\textsuperscript{30} Joy James has more recently collected many poignant prisoner stories in her book \textit{The New Abolitionists},\textsuperscript{31} but there are hundreds of books, magazines, blogs, newsletters, organizations, and networks that document the stories and struggles of the famous, but also less well-known actors who have fought against abusive prison systems and conditions, from both the inside and the outside: George Jackson, Malcolm X, Angela Davis, L. D. Barkley … the list goes on.

The organization I work with receives hundreds of letters a month documenting the physical as well as psychological abuse, torture, and violence experienced by inmates throughout Pennsylvania’s Middle District prisons and jails. Letters from inmates at the Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary number in the thousands over the past couple of years, describing the civil and human rights abuses currently occurring at that institution (see below). These are essential documentary evidence from people who tell their stories despite the risks involved, exposing the dangerous realities of life behind the penitentiary’s walls. They document a living history in which injustice is a reality. As such these men are creating an alternative collective memory that competes with and challenges the mainstream public record.

\textbf{Historical geography and the usable carceral past}

So in constructing a usable carceral past we could say that identifying key events and people that comprise it has been a steady project of critical prison researchers and activists. But perhaps much of this work has also been to some extent space- and place-blind. The third element
important to people’s everyday usable pasts—sites of memory in the material landscape—offers a rich opportunity for historical geographers.

We tend to think of the carceral landscape as hidden from view, secreted away. Though much of it is indeed deliberately “invisible”—prisons are often isolated in out-of-the-way rural areas, as we know—once we start paying attention, “the carceral,” just in terms of the corrections industry alone, seems to be just about everywhere. A whole host of carceral sites and scenes rooted in place—physical structures and buildings as well as their representations—are common, ubiquitous components of everyday American life at various scales. From prison towns to individual correctional institutions, their spaces and architectures, museums and tourist sites, memorials, maps, and artistic installations (to name a few)—are material carceral artifacts but also “discourse materialized”: they tell stories about their contents, and in turn are experienced and understood in a wide range of ways. In this sense, the “more than representational” school of human geography has had much to offer the emerging body of carceral geographic work.

So I turn now to some examples and suggestions for how historical geographers might further engage in constructing a usable past of ‘mainstream’ corrections. My selections are, admittedly, highly idiosyncratic, based on my own personal experiences and activity spaces, and in that sense are suggestive rather than exhaustive.

“Dark” prison tourism

First, travel to and experience of places associated with death, disaster, and the macabre are increasingly pervasive features of the contemporary tourist landscape. Many sites of incarceration and punishment have become such “dark tourist” sites that commodify suffering, tragedy, and death for public consumption. Their purposes can range, however, across the scales of remembrance, education and study, local history and sightseeing, to pure entertainment. Many integrate contemporary tourist activities with historical exhibitions.

Louisiana State Prison at Angola provides a good example. Angola is the largest maximum-security prison in the country; a former (?) slave plantation, it covers eighteen thousand acres, almost the size of Manhattan. In addition to the sprawling housing units that contain over five thousand inmates, Angola features a popular public golf course on prison grounds and a rodeo stadium where, five or six times a year, prisoners perform stunts for thousands of spectators. Such tourism capitalizes on the public’s fascination with criminality through the spectacle of live “animalistic”—and untrained—inmates competing in events. The Angola museum, gift shop, and Hall of Fame complete the tourist experience.

Many former sites of punishment and incarceration have been converted into museums or heritage sites. Among the most prominent are Alcatraz Island in California, which receives 1.5 million visitors a year (now a part of the US Park Service); Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, with 250,000 visitors a year; as well as a number of more regional sites (such as Missouri State Penitentiary in Jefferson and Mississippi’s Jackson State Prison). Particularly in the past three decades, states and cities with their many decaying former prisons began to turn these “fortress-like piles of stone … into moneymakers.” Estimates are that there are roughly three-dozen such prison heritage tourist sites throughout the US, with more planned.

Many historic prisons become tourist sites based on their architectural significance, with local preservation or historical societies supporting their protection. Many survive commercially by “myth-making”—emphasizing famous or celebrity prisoners (such as Al Capone, who was incarcerated at both Alcatraz and Eastern State); dangerous escape attempts; horrific conditions endured by inmates; and through “ghost sightings.” Many scholars agree that these sites can erase as much as they reveal, particularly when it comes to communicating the meaning of imprisonment and punishment to their audiences. Prison museums offer important opportunities to engage
audiences in a conversation about the problems of mass incarceration, but these opportunities are mostly lost.37 Because they are typically positioned as regimes of the past, their narratives tend to be organized around the idea of penal reform—they tend to argue that the carceral present is somehow an improvement over the past. Torture devices; tiny, dark cells; products made by forced inmate labor—these artifacts help narrate a barbarous past that ostensibly compares favorably to the enlightened and civilized present (even if there are actually many more continuities than differences). Such sites also rely on creating a social distance between the punished and the visitor, again producing the “penal spectator …. whose imagining of punishment is haunted by abstract potentialities of danger and insecurity.”38

Of course, even dark tourism risks turning the usable past into a comfortable past, if the experience is “fun” and surrounded by an entire infrastructure of restaurants, hotels, and other creature comforts intended to draw tourists. As Blake argues, “[a] past that hurts, that scars its victims, that haunts their memories and disrupts their sleep decades later is a past that cannot be easily mobilized in the service of tourism and impression management … a past that forces us to work through the pain it has inflicted may be a usable past, but it will not be a comfortable one.”39

Eastern State Penitentiary, built in 1829, offers a case in point. Eastern State is considered America’s most “historical” prison, primarily for the role it played in developing American penal philosophy. Philadelphia Quakers are attributed with creating the idea for this first penitentiary, a prison designed to inspire true regret, or penitence, in criminals’ hearts through complete isolation, silence, and individualized labor in cells. Eastern State was a source of debate from the beginning—Charles Dickens was one of its earliest detractors, in 1842—yet its ideals were not abandoned until 1913 when they collided with the reality of overcrowding. The prison did not close until 1971 though, and public tours began in the 1980s.

Figure 1. Corridor at Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia, America’s “most historic prison.” (Photograph by author)
Bruggeman describes Eastern State as preserved in a state of “perpetual ruin ... with raw and terrifying beauty.” It is a massive, crumbling structure that rises up like a medieval castle, complete with ivy covered walls, a tower, corner battlements, and dark and dusty corridors. I take tours of the facility with my American Studies students and can attest to the cold, damp, repellent atmosphere. Bruggeman covers all the details of the original siting of this prison—and of it later as a tourist site—offering a useful analysis of the relationship between incarceration and its impact on urban space. Its location identifies both historical and present-day “fault lines” across Philadelphia’s race and class topography. Eastern State’s is a story of historic preservationists saving it from the mall developers or other redevelopment plans. Perversely, as more and more African Americans of the neighborhood were sent behind bars, the preservationists benefited from their displacements, and, helped along by tax reforms, opened the neighborhood of row-houses to young white professionals attracted to its “funky charm” when real estate came at bargain prices.

Yet the preservationists’ interests were in the institution’s architecture and its Quaker roots, not the stories of its former prisoners and their social milieu. In this and other prison tourist attractions, we should question the purposes that their narratives serve. Are the voices of ordinary prisoners heard? This is particularly an issue since most prison museumgoers tend to be white, educated, and over the age of fifty; that is, not of the same demographic as those incarcerated or those living in the former neighborhoods of the prisons and jails.

Depictions of the social construction of crime itself must also become integrated into these museums if we hope to consider such sites as part of our usable past. In the case of Eastern State, most of those incarcerated in the early nineteenth century were for non-violent crimes such as horse theft and counterfeiting. However, one of the most important factors contributing to the dramatic increase in incarceration in the early twentieth century—as well as the corresponding prison building spree and ultimately the abandonment of the principles upon which Eastern State was established—owed largely to Prohibition, and the criminalization of producing, transporting, and selling of alcohol (although also the criminalization of prostitution, counterfeiting, motor vehicle theft, and tax evasion). Most of Al Capone’s vast sixty million per year franchise was from the selling of beer. Public citizens today need the means to connect the dots. Most are probably not well aware that the Prohibition movement itself lasted from the 1840s to the 1920s; the Eighteenth Amendment to the US Constitution ratified Prohibition in 1919, and then the Twenty-first Amendment repealed it in 1933. Certainly today’s undeniably failed War on Drugs is Prohibition’s parallel, with over 75 percent of federal inmates incarcerated today for non-violent, drug-related charges; and 80 percent of those in state prisons. (Moreover, as Alexander has documented, people of all colors use and sell illegal drugs at the same rates, which again forces us to come to terms with the wildly disproportionate numbers of incarcerated minorities.42)

Meanwhile as massive prison industrial growth continues pretty much unabated (with decreases in some US states compensated by increases in others), the building of new prisons and jails means the decommissioning of others. There are an estimated three hundred decommissioning sites in the US today. As historical geographers we have an opportunity to scrutinize bond issues that control what is being built, what is being torn down, and what is happening with these sites. Presently at issue in my local arena, for instance, is the opening of the new state prison SCI-Benner near State College, Pennsylvania, which will “mothball” two existing ones (SCI-Greensburg and SCI-Cresson). Most of the local news deals with prison employment issues and the private contracting of work in the new facility, but there is an opportunity here as well to pay close attention to this mothballing process. Oftentimes, prisons are closed in order to justify new building projects, but are later re-opened later due to overpopulation pressures. Some of those mothballed facilities will undoubtedly, though, come to serve other purposes within the carceral
state (as detention or mental health centers for example), or become tourist attractions, and we would do well to stay vigilant in questioning why and how the carceral state apparatus continues to impact the landscape in these ways.

Small-scale and local heritage sites

My second example also draws from the work of historical societies and heritage commissions—groups that play an important role in constructing and maintaining sites of the carceral past. There are many prisons and jails which might be considered historic: those that have been turned into commercially driven tourist sites but also other heritage sites that are perhaps empty and abandoned, and which have no particular capital-generating potential.

One such site is an abandoned jailhouse in the town of Steinauer, Nebraska. My maternal ancestors, natives of Switzerland, founded the town in 1856 on land that the Otoe-Missouri people of southeastern Nebraska were forced to sell to the government in various installments beginning in 1833, before their eventual removal to Oklahoma Territory in 1876. These Swiss settlers purchased hundreds of acres of Indian land from the federal government in what was then Nebraska Territory (until 1867), for 1.25 per acre. In the early twentieth century the population of the town reached 350, when the railroad still passed through it; today 75 people remain. Friends and family occasionally gather for reunions here, at a former Catholic convent now converted into a bed-and-breakfast. I have to admit that there is something very appealing to me about a remote place in the middle of “nowhere,” where virtually the only functioning businesses are a former convent and a tavern, and where our cell phones don’t work.

Figure 2. Historic Steinauer (Nebraska) Jail, originally located behind the town’s tavern. (Photograph by Lana Miller)
Nineteen of the still-standing structures in the town are now listed in the Nebraska Historical Society registry.\textsuperscript{44} Not listed among them, however, is the town jail. This jail appears to be made for a single individual, standing room only. Local sources say it was originally located behind the tavern, which likely made its most frequent function to detain drunk or disorderly locals until they sobered up.\textsuperscript{45}

This was a period in Nebraska Territory history when the crime of “chicken stealing” could land you a year in the state penitentiary (which opened in 1867), yet you could escape punishment for lynching southern sympathizers (the “Jay-Hawkers”) for stealing horses. As I have not yet had the opportunity to consult the Steinauer Village Board meeting minutes, which would likely offer a fuller account of the use, occupants, and jurisdiction of the jail, it is easy to consider the possibility that it was simply installed by the local people for their own purposes, outside of the “official” legal system, to the extent that that attribution meant much at the time.

Such jails are briefly mentioned in the \textit{Nebraska Territorial Statutes of 1866}, which notes that the county sheriff deputized people in the villages to handle the drunk and disorderly.\textsuperscript{46} The statutes required that the sheriff, or his deputized “jailer,” keep a jail register and examine the conditions of any prisoners at least once each month. If this jailer failed at any of his duties (being guilty of “negligence or misconduct”), he was to be fined not less than five dollars. It was the duty of the county commissioners to visit each jail four times per year (once during each of their sessions), and to provide the basic necessities for them, including “warming for the jail, sacks for beds, and a night bucket.” The statutes also required that the cells be cleaned at least three times per year.

By 1912, the State Board of Charities and Corrections reported that there were two hundred such (or similar) “lockups” throughout the state. They reported that

\begin{quote}
many of these resemble stalls or pens with very little, if any, accommodations for the prisoners. As a rule they are much more unsanitary than the county jails. About 20,000 prisoners are thrown into these places during the year, a large number of them being arrested for drunkenness or vagrancy, and are held only a few hours; many of whom are tramps … [their] conditions [are] even more appalling than those found in county jails.\textsuperscript{47}
\end{quote}

Anecdotally, there are many such town jails throughout the state of Nebraska still standing. They offer historical geographers important insights into how concepts of criminal behavior intersected with social marginalization and exclusion in early American settlement farming communities, particularly insights into how vagrancy and homelessness were understood and criminalized. We have an opportunity here to study further how such communities understood their own industriousness and ‘safety’ in relation to the more nomadic. These I think are particularly compelling questions if we consider that such carceral settings were, again, likely operating outside of official (albeit developing) western legal frameworks.

\textit{Prisons as living memory}

Many correctional facilities operating today have undergone tremendous structural and ideological shifts over their life cycle, and as such may contain “living memories” that are somehow incorporated into their present. I take as a third example then, Muncy State Women’s Prison, located twenty minutes up the road from my house, the only maximum-security facility for women in the state of Pennsylvania. I recently took a tour of this prison, and colleagues from my university regularly participate in the Inside/Outside college curriculum program there.
Muncy opened in 1920 as the state “Industrial Home for Women,” a reformatory and training school created under the auspices of the Department of Welfare, but which in 1953 was transferred to the Department of Corrections. The home was founded to help troubled, “fallen” young women restore their “moral virtue” through training and instruction in domestic duties such as sewing, housekeeping, and food preparation.48 The institution opened with nine housing units, referred to as “cottages,” with thirty women (“residents”) assigned to each under the care of a house “matron.” While both the purpose of the institution and its attendant philosophies of reform have undergone structural and programmatic shifts in its nearly one hundred year history, today we see more social and spatial continuities with the past than breaks from it.
The early reformatory movement (1920-1970) emphasized the moral dimensions of women’s “fallen” state. The subsequent “therapeutic regime” (1970-1999) held to the belief that women’s criminal problems stemmed primarily from mental illness and/or victimhood. Programing during this period emphasized helping clients through emotional control therapy, parenting classes, drug and alcohol abuse counseling, and treatment programs for sexual abuse and domestic violence. The War on Drugs and changes in sentencing laws ushered in a third “custodial period” that characterizes the institution today (1999-); the grounds were fenced and “SCI-Muncy” transitioned to conventional prison policies. It now consists of 18 units which house 1700 inmates, 5 of whom are on death row, and 150 of whom are serving life sentences without the possibility of parole. In the shift to this latest period, incarcerated women were discouraged from using terminology associated with the earlier periods: cottages were renamed as “units,” residents became “inmates,” and matrons became “correctional officers.” In 1997, uniforms for both residents and matrons replaced the regular day clothing that both had worn previously.

According to Silberman, because Pennsylvania has a decentralized prison administrative system, the distinctive local traditions of older prisons such as Muncy can continue. And indeed, the ethos of both the reformatory movement and that of the therapeutic community regime have been folded into the current institutional structure, despite the current custodial crackdown. Perhaps most notable is that early twentieth century gendered norms of women’s reform persist at the institution, for instance in job training that focuses on traditional women’s work such as sewing and gardening. A full-fledged correctional-industry sewing factory was opened on the premises in 1989 (and this, at time when most of the US garment trade had moved overseas). The notion also persists that women who commit crimes are essentially victims of men, needy and emotionally dependent individuals who are driven to crime by their dependent natures. Forty-one percent of the inmates today are classified as mentally ill and receive medication; and all the inmates’ days are structured around therapeutic activities and spaces. On the day I toured Muncy I chatted with the officer giving the tour as we watched inmates playing with therapy dogs on the lawn; he confided his belief that almost all of the criminality of the Muncy women was a result of their association with corrupt men.

Such gender stereotypes obviously require some deconstruction, particularly to the extent that they are embedded into the law (e.g. with the Muncy Act of 1913). Similar to the usable pasts of other institutions and sites, the Muncy prison, despite seeming to offer a more humanizing therapeutic rehabilitation model of incarceration, also denies agency to women inmates to an important extent. But those stereotypes aside, the notion that Muncy incorporates living history in both its structure and philosophies of punishment is an important one. How we understand regime shifts in the carceral landscape is one of the crucial questions scholars struggle with, and I think the Muncy prison offers a good example of how we might stay attuned to a living past, the past in place, as we study those shifts. And while some prison administrations offer ample opportunity to capture living memory, others work very hard to erase it, as my next example illustrates.

Violence, punishment, and space in US federal penitentiaries

As I noted above, the prisoner rights group I am affiliated with has lately shifted most of its attention to the Lewisburg federal penitentiary, located just outside the quaint little college town I live in. This prison was built as a regular penitentiary in 1932 during the “reform era” in US prisonization. But beginning in 2008 the Federal Bureau of Prisons began transforming it into the first Special Management Unit (SMU) prison of its kind in the country. This recent dramatic shift in the use of space at the facility has resulted in five deaths, hundreds of assaults requiring
hospitalization, and thousands of letters to our organization from inmates who describe the torturous conditions inside that have now become the norm and which I have written about elsewhere.52

When USP-Lewisburg was built in 1932 its architecture reflected an ideology of reform and rehabilitation of its 1,200 male inmates. It was considered the most “modern” prison of its day, and others throughout the US were later modeled after it. Its architecture was meant to appear as little like a conventional prison as possible, for instance in giving it a “monastic atmosphere”—offering spaces for contemplation, study, and enlightenment.

![Figure 4. View of the Lewisburg Penitentiary 9 October 1947. Robert Tebbs, photographer. (Courtesy of the National Archives)](image)

The spatial configuration of the prison reflected the philosophy that both work and play were necessary for rehabilitation. The architect chose the rural Pennsylvania site ostensibly for the sunshine and fresh air available there, as well as for the available land on which inmates could farm poultry, dairy cattle, hay, corn, and other crops. The prison interior also featured a number of spaces for reform within it: inmates participated in a variety of sports including basketball, baseball, long jump, boxing, and weight lifting; others were active in musical and theatrical groups that performed on the auditorium stage (where big acts such as Louis Armstrong also performed); inmates worked in the metal workshop; others produced a newspaper; and ten classrooms, a library, and reading room offered spaces for education, training, and religious services.

This almost pastoral picture of life at the Lewisburg prison likely never mapped onto any sort of reality, and in any case the Bureau’s ideology of reform and rehabilitation suffered a short life span. By the 1970s the discourse of reform completely lost traction within the federal
prison bureaucracy and in the courts, and stood in stark contrast to the norms and practices of everyday life inside penitentiary walls. Guard brutality, overcrowding, unsafe working conditions, infrastructural deterioration, and inmate civil rights challenges led to a breakdown in the Bureau’s ability to control its facilities, and uprisings occurred with increasing frequency. Ultimately, the Bureau addressed its problems through an increasing use of solitary confinement and permanent lockdown as a primary method of prison control.

As I noted above, more than 75 percent of federal inmates are incarcerated for non-violent drug crimes, typically for transporting drugs. This is important to keep in mind, since nearly all those incarcerated in maximum-security lockdown are isolated not for the crime that put them in prison in the first place, but for some infraction that happened during incarceration. Most of them have been labeled as gang leaders, and/or have assaulted correctional staff or other prisoners.

Lewisburg is the first and only maximum-security federal prison in the country today with an SMU program of its type. Community spaces such as exercise yards, sports courts, the communal dining room, the library, and theatre have been emptied. Today, inmates from around the country are sent to this facility for a two-year program of “readjustment.” The men are kept in twenty-four hour a day lockdown, two men to each tiny cell, for the two-year duration. Five hours per week they are transferred to eight-by-ten foot recreation cages to exercise with six to eight other men.

The Bureau makes clear that the double celling practice is not due to overcrowding or economics. Interviewed by The Wall Street Journal, a Bureau spokeswoman said that Lewisburg inmates are deliberately housed in pairs to teach them how to “coexist with others.” Without going into detail about the macho staff code or the inmate gang code that structures life there, it is easy to see how increased violence is a guaranteed outcome of this regime. Even if cellmates are compatible—and we must ask, who would be or could be under these conditions?—the system is designed to create tension and violence. Men co-exist in spaces so small that only one of them may walk in the cell at any given time. The aim of the Lewisburg SMU is not the stemming of violence and pathology within the American federal penal system, but rather to reproduce it, to provoke and perpetuate criminality—in short, to keep prisoners locked up and “the machine” going. This seems especially the case given the context of the SMU and supermax facilities more generally, where the criminality at issue is a product of incarceration itself, created within the prison walls rather than on the outside. The violence self-perpetuates the institution, and indeed signals the need for additional facilities. Such dehumanizing practices are part of the fabric of prison life and always have been, but today, that alienation is going even further.

The present situation at Lewisburg is a serious concern. My research about it is situated as an historical geography of the modern to the late modern penitentiary form, in terms of both spatial tactics and penal philosophies. Certainly, uncovering the ideas and intentionalities that were built into the prison in 1932 offers a rich usable past from we can understand just how far the institution has devolved today in terms of inmate civil and human rights. Moreover, although the use of prison space has been completely altered by the introduction of the SMU program, the physical structure and particularly the architecture of the prison stands as a constant reminder of former ideas and practices.

A number of local entities and practices are also involved in constructing a usable past for the institution. The Lewisburg Historical Society regularly publishes materials and hosts events about the beautiful historic architecture of the prison building, and its bell tower certainly serves as an inescapable historical-cultural icon in the region. That the prison is a site of memory for the townspeople cannot be overstated either, especially considering that work in corrections is one of the main local occupations (that, and university professor). The experiences and habits of guards and administrators of yesteryear are a constant source of conversation in ordinary settings—at
schools, supermarkets, hair salons, and in bars. I hear stories ranging from the truly vicious—how the warden known as “Ax-Handle Fenton” used to beat inmates with an ax handle in the 1970s; to the more sublime—the former practice of giving apples to inmates at Christmastime for the tacitly approved making of moonshine.

Where prisons are located now is a product of past spatial logics and priorities, which often emerged under different social, economic, and political circumstances. In the case of Lewisburg, the town fought hard for the prison as a panacea to growth during the Depression. The Bureau of Prisons was flooded with over one hundred applications for what was to become the Northeastern Federal Penitentiary, and Lewisburg was selected both for reasons already mentioned and also due to near unanimous support from the community (including from the administration of Bucknell University). Local authorities lobbying for prisons hope that they will bring economic development, and are supported by the misbegotten idea that location away from urban centers is useful in some way. And as is the case with the Lewisburg penitentiary and others like it, the spatial fixity and spatial legacy of the institution has created its own local geography with multiple and diverse spin-out effects for townspeople who now occupy a place specializing in prisons; as well as, of course, for prisoners and their families who typically are from long distances away. These locational issues of the past have so much present relevance, and are very hard to undo.

Despite the complaints and lawsuits piling up that contest current practices, however, the prison administration remains very proud of the institution and its history, and particularly of its famous inmates. When I toured the facility in 2009 (a practice no longer available to our organization due to the administration’s claims of “security precautions”), I marveled at the trophy case in the front hall, which features historic artifacts of notorious American crime figures who have served time there. These include Mafia bosses and labor and other leaders connected to them (Jimmy Hoffa, John Gotti); but also famous civil rights activists and political prisoners (such as Alger Hiss, and Philip and Daniel Berrigan); and suspected terrorists and drug kingpins. Perhaps such “trophies” are typical features of most prisons. More important though, are any usable pasts of the thousands and thousands of more anonymous inmates who have passed through the gates, and who certainly have no local connections and no other “voice” in the town.

Their histories pop up in a number of books and films though, including a 1991 Academy Award nominated documentary entitled, Doing Time: Life Inside the Big House. The film depicts the humiliations and rank conditions present in the Lewisburg facility, including some poignant scenes of guards referring to the place as a “zoo” and inmates responding by “woofing” like dogs or wolves for the cameras, and declaring, “we’re dying.” What experiences comprise their memory of the institution, having served time there – what interactions and relationships, what transformations, what traumas, what scars? At the time of this writing, a segment from their work, Rap About Lewisburg Federal Penitentiary, is available on YouTube, and I would encourage those interested to watch and listen.

Conclusion: interventions—transforming history into art

It may seem that “the carceral,” even limited to just correctional institutions, “is everywhere” to someone like me, who lives in a place (central Pennsylvania) known for a heavy prison industrial complex but which also has the reputation of having a ‘backward’ prison system. However, while specific carceral techniques might be expressed differently across the American landscape, no place in the country has been untouched by the current trends in mass incarceration. Just up the road from the Steinauer jail I discussed above is the new Nebraska State Penitentiary (in Tecumseh), which advertises through billboards all the job opportunities opening up for so many displaced by the more recent decline of the rural farm economy. This is
where we are and this is what, in turn, requires intervention and the exercise of civil liberties on behalf of inmates.

There are many options for doing so, particularly for educators. We should never underestimate the transformative power of art, for instance, as with the Kafka museum’s imaginative reconstruction of the modern torture machine. I would like to conclude then with some thoughts about using media or art in constructing a usable carceral past.

Here I want to return to Angola. This past January our prisoner rights group (LPP) sponsored, along with the Bucknell Geography Department and others, a film event at our local theatre, featuring a new documentary called *Herman’s House*, and a talk by the film’s director, Angad Bhalla. The film addresses the injustice of solitary confinement and the transformative power of art by highlighting a friendship and collaboration between a New York artist and one of America’s most famous inmates, Herman Wallace, who was confined in a solitary prison cell at Angola for forty years, the longest of any inmate in the country (and who was finally released days before dying of liver cancer last October). Wallace and Albert Woodfox were first subjected to solitary confinement in 1972, following the killing of a twenty-three year old prison guard. The men—the two remaining of the “Angola 3”—contend that they were targeted by prison authorities and convicted of the murder not based on the actual evidence but because of their association with the Black Panthers. This political affiliation also accounts for their seemingly permanent stay in solitary confinement.

![Figure 5.](image)

*Figure 5.* Bucknell University students begin building a life-size 6 x 9 solitary confinement cell to commemorate Herman Wallace’s 40+ years of confinement, the longest of any American prisoner. (Photograph by author)
Related to this film screening, LPP partnered with some Bucknell students to build a life-size, six-by-nine foot prison cell that was displayed in the student center for several days prior to the film showing, and then moved to the theatre the night of the event. The installation gave the students and broader community a chance to experience something of the environment of solitary confinement—a deliberate remembrance for Herman Wallace and others subjected to that particular torture. Meanwhile another group of students created a film about the building and installation of the cell, and interviewed students who had spent time in it. This turned into a film “short” that was shown the night of Herman’s House. The whole experience was an important intervention in town politics. It also helped students and others explore issues in our criminal justice system, the psychological effects of solitary confinement, and I think, ultimately, how the creative process of art can be used to initiate positive change and greater understanding of social justice issues.

We are all going to make a difference; the question is, what kind of difference do we want to make?

Acknowledgements

Sincerest thanks to the Historical Geography Specialty Group of the AAG, including Bob Wilson, Maria Lane, and Garth Myers, for giving me the opportunity to deliver the Distinguished Historical Geography Plenary at the Los Angeles AAG, and to all those who attended. I am also most grateful to Maria Lane (and Imogen Ainsworth) for graciously seeing this into production under a new system, and really for all Maria has done more generally on behalf of Historical Geography this past year. Also I would like to thank John Enyeart, Ann Tlusty, and Dominique Moran for their valuable suggestions on an early version of my talk. They won’t necessarily know it, but Ruth Gilmore, Rashad Shabazz, Dominique Moran, and Jenna Loyd all were such passionate influences on my thinking about carceral geographies and usable pasts. Finally, Karen Steinauer of the Nebraska State Historical Society—with whom I share a deep affinity for places in the sticks—thank you for the invaluable help in locating archival materials related to the Steinauer jail.

NOTES


3 The state’s prison population increased from eight thousand in 1980 to more than fifty-one thousand today; Seth C. Bruggeman, “Reforming the Carceral Past: Eastern State Penitentiary and the Challenge of the Twenty-First-Century Prison Museum,” Radical History Review 113 (2012): 171–186; see 174. In the lean 2011 budgetary year in Pennsylvania, lawmakers managed to find $200 million for two new prisons, while cutting the education budget by $1 billion.

4 See for instance, Karen M. Morin, “‘Security Here is Not Safe’: Violence, Punishment, and Space in the Contemporary US Penitentiary,” Environment and Planning D: Society and Space
Carceral Space and the Usable Past


15 Among many other writers I am influenced here by John Tosh, Why History Matters (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); see especially 22–23.


24 Ibid., 165–169.

25 Ibid., 167, 173.

26 Ibid., 150–161.

27 Ibid.; also see Blake, “Usable Past,” 434.


30 Ibid., 100.


37 Bruggeman, “Reforming the Carceral Past,” 171.
40 Bruggeman, “Reforming the Carceral Past,” 172–176; also see Thompson, “Why Mass Incarceration Matters.”
41 Bruggeman, “Reforming the Carceral Past,” 176–177.
45 This section was drawn substantially from personal correspondences with Karen Steinauer, Nebraska Highway Archeology Program, Nebraska State Historical Society, January 15–18 2013.
46 The Revised Statutes of the Territory of Nebraska, in Force July 1, 1866, with Marginal Notes Showing the Contents of Each Section and a Full and Complete Index to Which is Added an Appendix … Revised by E. Estabrook (Omaha: E.B. Taylor, Public Printer, 1866), 245–246. Also available online at http://books.google.com/books (accessed April 11 2013).
49 Ibid., 274–278.
50 Ibid., 278–282.
51 Ibid., 283 and Silberman in personal correspondence with author on February 13 2013.
52 Material for this section is drawn substantially from Morin, “‘Security Here is Not Safe.’”
53 Ibid.
54 For instance see Heritage: The History of the Federal Penitentiary at Lewisburg (Union County Historical Society, Lewisburg, Union County, Pennsylvania, 2006).
INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL ISSUE

Historical Geographies of Ireland: Colonial Contexts and Postcolonial Legacies

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Anniversaries and colonial traumas

An independent Irish state will soon attain its centenary and its birth pangs of rebellion, war, and civil strife are being commemorated as a decade of anniversaries.1 Themes of memory and commemoration have been a particular interest of cultural and historical geographers working on Ireland.2 Brian Graham and his colleagues, for example, have produced a rich set of studies on the multiple and contested politics of memory, particularly in Northern Ireland.3 Given such geographical scholarship on the contestability of memory and history in Ireland, we can anticipate that geographers will engage as public intellectuals during this current period of taking our bearings from our past. At such times of reflection upon identity and legacy, there will always be a tension between exceptionalism and generalization. Each vibrates with political resonance, each risks false explanation, and yet each is necessary for critical and effective historical geographies.4 In introducing this set of historical-geographical essays on Ireland, let me begin at the comparative pole.5

The Irish Free State of 1921 was haunted by plantation and famine, the two defining moments of its colonial history. The separation of six counties, as the Province of Northern Ireland, from the remaining twenty-six, the Irish Free State, was a legacy of the last and most systematic of the plantations, that of Ulster. With eighteen thousand men, the English army sent to re-conquer Ulster from the Irish was the largest deployed anywhere in the world at that time (larger even than the Spanish army sent to take colonies in South America).6 As commander of the English forces (1600-1603), Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, determined upon a scorched-earth policy reducing much of the province to starvation, which together with disease and battle, may have killed eighty thousand Irish, halving the population of Ulster. Into this vacated space was poured a new people, one that from the 1603 union of the English and Scots crowns under James I/VI of England/Scotland, was increasingly described as British, such that “the colonization of Ulster” became “the first cooperative British enterprise of James’s newly proclaimed Kingdom of Great Britain.”7 With people from Wales, England, and, in particular, Presbyterian Scotland, a distinctive society was made within the half-emptied nest of Gaelic Ireland. From plantation came a religious division integral to the control of Ireland, a divide-and-rule policy that became typical of British colonial rule elsewhere and that encouraged partition as its postcolonial legacy.8

The Great Famine of 1845-52 was the last in a traumatic series but it was managed by the British in a novel fashion, both modern and cruel. The blight upon the potatoes in Ireland deprived the majority of the population of their daily food. Only exceptional measures could have kept them alive, and at times these were tried. In July of 1847 perhaps three million people were being fed at public or charitable expense, about one-third of the population of the island.9 Thereafter, policies became more savage. The Irish were not to be encouraged in idleness with

Historical Geography Volume 41 (2013): 22-34. © 2013, Historical Geography Specialty Group, Association of American Geographers
free food but should be willing to give up their plots, enter the workhouse, dissolve their family ties, or emigrate if they wished to survive. The mounting mortality was to be endured by British consciences as the price for bringing Irish population into line with Irish resources. The Irish survivors would not only have learned a lesson about improvident fertility but after their period in the workhouse they might have been imbued with that thriftiness upon which the British so prided themselves. The use of mass starvation for social engineering was, like plantation and partition, to become part of the arsenal of British colonial technologies. The consequences for Ireland were profound. Perhaps a million people died in the five years of the famine, perhaps another one-and-a-half million emigrated and the population level of 1845, probably about nine million, has never been regained. Indeed, emigration exceeded immigration in every decade from the 1840s until the 1990s. The Irish Free State inherited and did not reverse an expectation among many Irish people that prosperity was only to be found in Britain, the United States, or Australia.

Continuity and discontinuity

These issues have directly and indirectly affected the tone and substance of work on the historical geography of Ireland. For example, the question of continuity and discontinuity becomes one way that the significance of these traumas is indirectly debated. If, with Estyn Evans, one finds profound continuities in rural genres de vie, then, the distinctiveness of Ulster may be understood as long prepared and given only its latest and perhaps incomplete expression as Northern Ireland, with even the plantation merely repeating shapes of distinction long evident upon and from the land. In contrast, Tom Jones Hughes emphasized the discontinuity imposed by the replacement of tribal with landlord-based rural society and classed the disruption a species of colonialism. Through analysis of a systematic land survey of Ireland, Griffith’s Valuation of the mid-nineteenth century, Jones Hughes documented the tremendous diversity of property arrangements between landlords, large farmers and tenants. The colonial character of the property settlement in Ireland was challenged by other historical geographers, notably by Brian Graham and Lindsay Proudfoot.

The arguments of Graham and Proudfoot come from the revisionist pole of the Irish historical imagination and they are shaped profoundly by the partition of Ireland and the violent Republicanism and Unionism that made sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland during the 1970s and 1980s. In itself this style of historical argument was a marked postcolonial legacy. A central aspect of the revisionist arguments was that Ireland was characterized by a plurality of identities and that it was a nationalist myth to insist only upon a Gaelic origin and a Catholic basis for Irish society and culture. Their arguments, however, were in turn shaped by the very politics from which they wished to distance themselves. All too often, appealing to “revisionist” perspectives in Irish history was to enter a hall of mirrors where to prevent historical research being used to bolster nationalist politics, and the violence of nationalist insurrection, the conclusions of historical research were framed so as to inoculate them against nationalist use. Yet, it is one thing to argue that the history of colonialism does not justify an armed struggle in the present, but it is quite another to claim that this is because colonialism either never occurred or has left no discernable legacy; the very terms of the revisionist argument are one such legacy.

In this manner, revisionism is an acute form of postcolonial anxiety, the spectre of nationalism haunts historical methodology and arguments are constructed against a foil that is rarely fully documented. For example, a common feature of revisionist arguments has been an emphasis on complexity and the implicit foil is that there is a simplistic account that would otherwise be dominant. There are good reasons to insist upon complexity in preparing a context for advocating pluralism as a political virtue. However, complexity can also serve to obscure colonial contexts for fear that more plain speaking might give comfort to nationalists, that
spectral dominant narrative. Consider, for example, Proudfoot, noting “the welter of hyphenated identities in Irish history,” before going on to suggest that this meant that place-making could only be “ambiguous in . . . intent and outcome,” and that thus a place’s “[i]nitial meaning might be transient and multi-layered, and lost altogether in subsequent renditions.” One might imagine that the original stain of colonialism is somehow washed out in the multiplicity of pluralism. Or, again, consider Proudfoot insisting that “the plantations also involved processes which were socially and spatially adaptive rather than obliterative,” and that “new patterns of administration and landownership . . . were not . . . necessarily completely divergent from what had gone before.” Note the foil implicated by “also involved” and “completely divergent,” and how even the extremity of plantation can be diminished by insisting upon the necessity of a nuanced reference to continuity. This foil is not directly referenced but haunts the text in the making of the revisionist point; a point that is almost taken back in the following pages where we are told that “it is nevertheless still true that this process of dispossession created significant social divisions which had a lasting effect on Irish society,” and that, despite having been told that Ireland was not unlike some other parts of Europe in having large landed estates, “what was remarkable about the pattern of landownership in Ireland was . . . that [large estates] were owned in the main by families of relatively recent origin in the country, whose rights of possession were acquired at the expense of an earlier, largely displaced landed elite.” The case for the importance of colonial contexts and postcolonial legacies has rarely been put more clearly than that.

This interaction of colonial contexts and postcolonial legacies has been an important aspect of Irish historical geography more broadly. Paddy Duffy’s work on the territorial legacy of Gaelic Ireland not only highlights the ways that the spatial framework of rural life retained pre-colonial moorings even under the pressure of dispossession but suggests that where indigenous folk remained as tenants on lands they had once owned, they were yet able to ensure a continuity of some aspects of place-making, particularly in the “hybrid zone” at the medieval frontier. John Morrissey has documented ways that Gaelic lords might have chosen to engage with English law in order to prosecute or secure claims of their own against rivals. In Map-Making, Landscapes and Memory, Willie Smyth has taken up the historical geographical themes of Don Meinig’s work on European imperialism in North America and combining original scholarship with a synthesis of works by other historians and geographers, Smyth’s monograph establishes very clearly the colonial contexts and is more than suggestive of the postcolonial legacies of the project of plantation. Map-making has been a fruitful object and method for exploring postcolonial legacies.

Making maps

In a festschrift for Evans, John Andrews wrote about mapping in the service of the Elizabethan occupation and plantation of parts of Ireland. Andrews’ own work on the history of the Ordnance Survey in Ireland, A Paper Landscape, was celebrated by Jones Hughes in a review that, in noting Andrews’ account of the English transliterations of Irish place-names, remarked that: “In this way it is doubtful whether any other nation or language has suffered so great a humiliation at the hands of its official surveyors.” Not only this re-naming, but also reflecting upon the continuing cultural significance of such re-naming is a postcolonial legacy, and in this case the work of the scholar was taken up with enthusiasm by a playwright, Brian Friel, and informed the very successful Translations. Born in 1929, Friel grew up a nationalist within Northern Ireland and, feeling abandoned by the Irish Free State and marginalized within the Protestant province, has described a sense of being “at home but in exile.” In a play set during the Irish Civil War of 1922-3, Juno and the Paycock, Sean O’Casey had presented the ineffectual patriarch, Jack Boyle, as exclaiming that “the whole worl’s in a state o’chassis!” suggesting a
combination of chaos, crisis and stasis that is similar to the way Friel felt about contemporary violence in Northern Ireland. In *Translations*, set in Donegal in 1833, the double exile of the Irish from language and place is produced by the multiple erasures of place-lore, language and cultural continuity effected by compulsory education in English and by the remaking of the landscape as an English text. It is significant that in commenting upon the ways Friel drew upon *A Paper Landscape*, Andrews noted that Friel had presented the Ordnance Survey in Ireland as staffed by the British military, whereas it had, at the time, been a largely Irish bureaucracy led by people with profound scholarship in Irish. In folding the consequences of the Survey back into a characterization of its personnel, Friel gets a poetic truth he can produce on stage but at the risk of conflating the Survey with the British Army more generally and thus misapprehending Irish involvement with both, past and present. After the intolerable violence of the Famine, very many Irish people prepared their children for exile, pushing them away from hearth and kin towards a world of English. There is a postcolonial legacy of shame, difficult even to name.

The act of map-making has been at the heart of several collaborations between historical geographers, archaeologists, and historians in Ireland and each of these in their different ways can speak to the relations between colonial contexts and postcolonial legacies. Over the past three decades, under the direction of Anngret Simms, Howard Clarke, Jacinta Prunty and Raymond Gillespie, the multi-volume *Irish Historic Towns Atlas* has published mapped histories for two-dozen towns. The magnificent documentation of urban historical geography in these volumes manifests the extensive swathes of towns that were given over to defense and to military occupation. The descriptions of how buildings have been used, re-used and abandoned show not only the regular commandeering of space by the English and later British army in response to periodic rebellion, but also the current legacy of vacated military barracks that overlook so many Irish towns. The second collaboration focuses on counties rather than towns. Since 1985 with a work on Tipperary, Willie Nolan’s Geography Publications has been producing collections of essays on the history and geography of individual Irish counties. The diversity of material and approach within and between volumes is evident but the issues of plantation and famine are treated in many. There is work of summary and comparison needed before the regional geography of these matters will emerge from these volumes but as they stand they are suggestive of the local impact of these broader forces. Among many examples: Paul Kerrigan gave an overview of defensive structures in Offaly; for Kildare, Nolan looked at what he calls the documents of Conquest; Catherine Ketch examined land confiscations in Waterford; James Lyttleton considered one element of what he called the archaeology of plantation in Longford; Sheila Molloy traced dispossession in Galway; and Monica Brennan looked at changes in the structure of landownership in Kilkenny.

The third of the collaborations that highlights the importance of map-making is the new *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*. Walter Freeman’s early work on the geography of pre-Famine Ireland was to some extent complemented by the work of Stuart Cousens on the regional dimensions of famine mortality but for decades thereafter there was very little advance upon these early works of historical and population geography, that is until the last few years. This work of regional demography has been taken up in recent work by Stewart Fotheringham, Mary Kelly, and Martin Charlton. The colonial context and resonances of the British administration of famine relief have been explicated by David Nally. I have described some of the geopolitical forms of British colonial rule in this period drawing in part upon Giorgio Agamben’s theory of the exception and I have also described some geographical aspects of the anti-colonial politics that developed in reaction to this trauma. But with *The Atlas of the Great Irish Famine, 1845–52*, we not only now have a tremendous accession to the geographical scholarship on the Famine but we also have one that in its public impact becomes part of a new debate about postcolonial legacies. The core of the Atlas is a series of essays by Willie Smyth on the historical geography of the famine, for
Ireland and then for each its four historic provinces—Connacht, Leinster, Munster, and Ulster. These essays are illustrated by a wealth of maps on the depth, administration, and consequences of the Famine. There are also essays by other historians and historical geographers providing case-studies by topic and locality. Colonial contexts are well examined by Smyth and Nally, and postcolonial legacies are treated by Crowley in a piece on the fate of Victoria’s statue, Murphy writing about the manor walls built with the stones of demolished peasant cottages, Miller and colleagues on the elision of Presbyterian poverty from the Protestant memory of Famine, Neville on Irish gratitude to French republicans as expressed during the days of the Paris Commune, Reid on the famine Irish and the creation of Glasgow Celtic football club, Lee on the Famine memorial in New York City, Nolan on the shaping of later land reform by experience of the Famine, Póirtéir on the Irish-language folk memory, Dooley on museum culture, Marshall on Irish art, Morash on literature, and Dodds on the aestheticisation of famine imagery.

The Atlas was published in August 2012 and one of its editors soon introduced its core mapping project to the readers of the Irish Times. The fairest of winds was set for the public reception of the Atlas when Kevin Whelan wrote a long review for the Irish Times in which he asserted that, in nearly two decades, it was first work of Irish Studies that “everyone should read.” He praised the Atlas as “a powerful, unflinching account of the Famine as the defining event in Irish history” and remarked upon its “unparalleled assemblage of new maps, old images and extensive documentation.” The Irish Roots blog of the Irish Times of October 28 2012 reported that the Atlas was currently number seven on the list of bestselling books in one prominent Dublin bookstore and the blogger found this a welcome indicator of the public appetite for scholarship: “There’s hope for us all yet.” On November 29 2012, at his official residence, the president of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, accepted a copy of the Atlas and in his remarks he praised it as a “great vindication of the Irish university system,” describing it as a “book we have been waiting for,” a “great publishing event,” a “bringing home of the scholarship of the Famine to Ireland,” and a “final breaking of the all the silences that were there about the Famine.” In his three books of the year for the Irish Times, Diarmaid Ferriter included the Atlas, lauding it as a “stunning achievement, full of cutting-edge research and inter-disciplinary perspectives, lavishly illustrated and a worthy monument to the defining event in modern Irish history.” At the Cúirt International Festival of Literature in Galway in April 2013, the Atlas had its own session. The Atlas was shortlisted for non-Fiction Book of the Year and for the International Education Services Best Irish-Published Book of the Year under the Bord Gáis Energy Irish Book Awards for 2012, winning the latter. Given the academic and popular reluctance to accept the Famine as the defining feature of modern Irish history, the sales and public recognition of the Atlas mean that of itself it is prompting a renegotiation of postcolonial legacies.

From colonial contexts to postcolonial legacies

The preceding sketch provides some of the context for current work on the historical geography of Ireland that will be published in this and the next issue of Historical Geography. The first paper in this issue, by Keith Lilley and Catherine Porter, takes up the topic of the plantation of Ulster and the work of mapping that was part of it. Building upon the work of Andrews and Smyth on the cartography of plantation, Lilley and Porter return to the case of Ulster. They use the remarkably full record of correspondence concerning the surveying of Ulster 1609-10 to describe the organization of the collective effort needed to produce the maps that the British would use for re-allocating land and attracting investors. The novelty of their paper is that they also subject the maps themselves to something more than the textual analysis they have normally received and develop further the pioneering attempt of Andrews to subject them to spatial analysis. Using
GIS techniques, they use the pattern of inconsistencies between the maps of the seventeenth century and those of today to identify a pattern of deviations that throw light upon the process of surveying itself and this permits them to venture further towards a description of the interaction between imperial map-makers and local informants than has hitherto been possible.

The colonial enterprise in Ireland included a radical dissolution of Irish legal systems, including around the holding and inheriting of land. In the first place, a proclamation of 1605, sought to make illegal the Irish practice of gavelkind, or the idea that all sons had a right to a share in the estate of their father upon his decease. Gavelkind had effectively established the family group as the collective owner of land and this communalism was at the heart of Irish rural society. These kin-based systems were the basis of the sept system that were integral to Irish tribal society and rundale, a strongly egalitarian practice of the periodic reallocation to individual farming families, reinforced this communalism. The communal system of land reallocation was still found in existence in various parts of the west of Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century, and in some places even later. In his paper for this issue, Eoin Flaherty notes that Friedrich Engels saw this as evidence of Celtic resilience in the face of the colonial attempt to destroy the bases of their communal culture. Evans also saw rundale evidence of long continuity in Irish rural society whereas Whelan argued that the system had returned as a response to population pressure and food insecurity during the nineteenth century. Flaherty takes up the question of resilience through an examination of the ecological instability produced by colonialism. The issues raised by Flaherty are those focused by ecological readings of Marxism, which see political economy as a way of re-ordering the internal relations of society and nature. This approach promises a new understanding of the colonial ecology of the Famine.

Kevin Keegan’s paper returns us to the issues raised by interactions between Andrews and Friel. The contact zone between the colonized and the colonizer has often had the character of a liminal world where, despite inequalities of power, there are shared as well as divided spaces. Keegan takes up the question of the fate of the Irish language in such spaces. Examining works by Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), John Keegan (1816-49), and William Carleton (1794-1869), Keegan examines the cross-cutting relations between orality, literacy, Irish, and English. He shows the ways that contemporaries understood what was at peril with the loss of the Irish language, what might be attained through acquiring the English, and how the forms of literature took up the characteristic features of a story-telling tradition. The writings of folk such as Keegan and Carleton who had a familiarity with both language traditions can reveal much about the cultural dynamics of the contact zone and in their quotidian character can give nuance to the picture thrown into sharpest relief at times of crisis.

Land, law, and language were important battlegrounds for the colonial enterprise in Ireland and securing English and later British monopoly in each was integral to attempts to establish colonial rule as legitimate and Ireland as truly conquered. However, the field in which the British attempt to remake Ireland failed most spectacularly was that of religion, and this failure set the scene for the sectarianism and division that has followed. The confiscation of lands that was the preliminary to the plantations dispossessed Catholics and brought in new Protestant landowners. In 1600 Protestants held one-fifth of the land of Ireland, by 1700 they held six-sevenths. Alongside the dispossession of Catholics that was part of the seizure of lands from people judged to be in rebellion against the Crown, Catholics were subject to further economic and social disabilities as part of the successive Penal Laws passed at various times from 1607 through until late-eighteenth century. This limited the rights of Catholics to practice in the professions, to bear arms, to buy land, to be educated, to practice their religion, and in various other ways, some petty, some not, to feel the shame of second-class status. The social and geographical dimensions of the recovery of the Catholic Church after the intense oppression of
the seventeenth century has been analyzed by Kevin Whelan and these issues are re-examined in the paper by Martin Millerick. Millerick looks at the recovery of institutional Catholicism in the diocese of Cloyne, county Cork. Whereas Whelan had emphasized the significance of a Catholic culture as repository of opposition to dispossession, Millerick notes that in Cork at least the institutional recovery of the Catholic Church was perhaps assisted by its work as an agent of social control, defending rather than challenging property rights.

Kevin Whelan’s work on the radical culture that animated the rebellion of 1798 also provides some of the context for David Featherstone’s paper. Featherstone follows scholars such as Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker in placing Ireland within an Atlantic society agitated by colonialism, racism, slavery, and labor struggles. This Atlantic perspective has informed some recent work on Irish identities, for example in Adrian Mulligan’s studies of Irish nationalism in North America. The focus of Featherstone’s paper is the use of racial politics by Irish seamen and it raises important questions about postcolonial legacies where divisions of race cut across lines of colonial subjection. In documenting the radical politics of these black and Irish seamen, Featherstone’s research also highlights anti-racist and anti-colonial solidarities as occasional dimensions of Irish transnational politics. These progressive possibilities might also be part of Ireland’s postcolonial legacy.

Postcolonial legacies are the focus of Mary Kelly’s paper. Postcolonial perspectives have perhaps been most thoroughly developed in the field of literary studies and within Geography among historical and cultural, and to a lesser extent, development geographers. With respect to Ireland, Catherine Nash has written about the geographical techniques and metaphors of mapping and place-naming from postcolonial and feminist perspectives. Geographical studies of Irish literature have also shown a sensitivity to the postcolonial legacies of writers such as James Joyce. Kelly takes up the works of Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1973) and finds there not only an evident obsession with the postcolonial legacy of inheriting a big house that was a legacy of her ancestors’ occupation of confiscated Irish lands, but also an obsession which is explored through the evocation of geographies, both material and imaginary. Kelly finds Bowen reflecting upon the colonial contexts and postcolonial legacies of Irish life through the history of the engagement and dis-engagement of her own family with their neighbors. The Big House was a common synecdoche for the Anglo-Irish class that at certain periods styled itself the Ascendancy. William Butler Yeats reflected on the Big House as “the inherited glory of the rich,” and noting the threat posed during the Irish Civil War (1922-3) to both house and the class that occupied them, he offered a defense of both house and class, although he implied that the ultimate honor of such a house would come from it being the place where a modern Homer might as a guest produce great literature. Bowen ultimately lost her house since, as a writer, she did not command the income required to maintain it. Her family had preserved the house through rebellion and civil war, but the house was demolished in 1961, two years after Bowen has sold it. Haunted by a history that her characters find it difficult to enunciate, the Big House serves as a rich metaphor for what Bowen herself called her “fiction with the texture of history.” Ultimately, perhaps, Bowen made an apology similar to Yeats’s for in Bowen’s Court, her family history, she contrasted the militant planter class from which she was drawn with the later generations that supplemented martial values with a humanism evident in the library described at Bowen’s Court, and finally of course in the literary achievement of her own re-telling of the story of this ennoblement of being. In excavating the imaginary geographies in Bowen’s work, Kelly follows Nash’s injunction to attend to the tension “between the critical engagement with a grand narrative of colonialism, and the political implications of complex, untidy, differentiated and ambiguous local stories.” Attending to this tension can help explicate the relations between colonial contexts and postcolonial legacies.
NOTES

1 Nuala Johnson, Ireland, the Great War and the Geography of Remembrance (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Catherine Switzer, Unionists and Great War Commemoration in the North of Ireland, 1914-1939 (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007); Mark McCarthy, Ireland’s 1916 Rising: Explorations of History-Making, Commemoration and Heritage in Modern Times (Farnham, United Kingdom: Ashgate, 2012).


8 Joe Cleary, Literature, Partition and the Nation State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).


20 Proudfoot, “Property, Society and Improvement, c. 1700 to c. 1900,” in *An Historical Geography of Ireland*, 219–257, 223.

21 Ibid., 224, 225.


36 Crowley, Smyth, and Murphy, eds., Atlas of the Great Irish Famine.
39 Nally, Human Encumbrances.


66 Nash, “Cultural Geography,” 228.
Mapping Worlds?
Excavating Cartographic Encounters in Plantation Ireland through GIS

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ABSTRACT: This paper uses the analytical potential of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) to explore processes of map production and circulation in early-seventeenth-century Ireland. The paper focuses on a group of historic maps attributed to Josias Bodley, which were commissioned in 1609 by the English Crown to assist in the Plantation of Ulster. Through GIS and digitizing map-features, and in particular by quantifying map-distortion, it is possible to examine how these maps were made, and by whom. Statistical analyses of spatial data derived from the GIS are shown to provide a methodological basis for “excavating” historical geographies of Plantation map-making. These techniques, when combined with contemporary written sources, reveal further insight on the “cartographic encounters” taking place between surveyors and map-makers working in Ireland in the early 1600s, opening up the “mapping worlds” which linked Ireland and Britain through the networks and embodied practices of Bodley and his map-makers.

From his lodging on the Strand in London in March 1610, Sir Thomas Ridgeway, the first earl of Londonderry, wrote a letter to the earl of Salisbury, Robert Cecil, then the lord treasurer for England and the English Crown. Referring to maps “newly bound in six several books,” Ridgeway’s letter marked the end of a long enterprise, begun some eighteen months earlier, of surveying and mapping the Irish lands newly taken for plantation; the escheated counties of Ulster. Ridgeway wrote that not only would Salisbury receive the finished maps in a few days’ time, but that he would also send him “six like books of his own which he extracted at the camp and at his own house.” The maps were not entirely of Ridgeway’s making however, but were the work of a small group of men employed by the Crown in both Ulster and England to map the escheated counties, that is those lands confiscated by the English following the “flight of the earls” in 1607. To assist with the Plantation of Ulster, a commission was authorized by King James I in June 1609, and a key part of its remit was to survey and map escheated lands in counties Armagh, Tyrone, Londonderry, Fermanagh, and Cavan. Contemporary correspondence concerning the commission illuminates the working practices of surveyors and cartographers in the early seventeenth century, as well as highlighting their particular roles and agency within the broader context of British colonial statecraft in Ireland.

Some thirty years ago, Brian Harley observed that understanding historic maps required “a social history of cartography,” thinking, that is, about the cultural contexts and networks of map production and consumption. Doing so involves bringing maps and texts into dialogue with each other, something that is not always achievable in the history of cartography before ca.1700. Yet with the “newly bound” maps to which Ridgeway refers in 1610, not only does correspondence survive between those involved in their making, in the form of further letters, so too do the maps themselves. The group of maps, long known by modern scholars as the “Bodley maps of the escheated counties of Ulster”, formed part of the State Papers of Ireland, but in 1927...
were separated and placed in the “maps and plans” class at The National Archive (TNA) at Kew. Numbered MPF 1/38-64, this group of twenty-eight maps of western parts of Ulster have been the subject of detailed scholarly scrutiny since the nineteenth century. Most recently the maps have received particular attention from two of Ireland’s leading historical geographers, John Andrews and Willie Smyth. Both have dedicated substantive research papers on the assemblage that comprises the TNA’s “Bodley maps”, evaluating not only the broader political contexts for the maps but also examining closely the contents of the maps themselves. This paper extends their work, in part drawing upon the contemporary historical accounts of the cartographers involved in making the Bodley maps, but in addition, and more specifically, through using map-digitization, Geographical Information Systems (GIS), and quantitative techniques to examine in detail one particular map within the Bodley group, the map of Loughinsholin (MPF 1/47). The results of these new analyses are presented here, and their significance evaluated for understanding the processes and practices of colonial cartographic production in early seventeenth century Ireland.

Cartographic encounters

The letter Ridgeway wrote to Cecil in March 1610 is an indication of the intersecting worlds of mapping and map-making that drew together Ireland and Britain in the reign of James I. Those whose lives shaped these “mapping worlds” have been traced out by Smyth. Connections and links between various state agents, and cartographers and cosmographers, of Tudor and Stuart Britain and Ireland, reveal intertwined networks across Europe and the Atlantic in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. With lines depicting “key actor networks”, and links between a host of related individuals, the complexity and intricacy of Smyth’s map of map-makers is also a map of “cartographic encounters.” These encounters occurred in various locales of course, both urban and rural, inside and outside, and through various media, written, oral, visual, all of which molded the map-making process in subtle and often hidden ways.

Tracing these networks and encounters for the early seventeenth century is no easy task, despite the volume of surviving letters and reports from the period, as well as many of the maps referred to in them. In their work on the Bodley maps, both Smyth and Andrews combine detailed examination of the written sources and the map with a contextual approach to the history of cartography. Yet still, what has so far emerged is far from conclusive, for cartographers of this period usually reveal relatively little directly about the technical production of their maps. At the time the Bodley maps were made, map-making was by no means a standardized process. While contemporary treatises existed on matters such as surveying and “plotting”, including one written by John Norden, The Surveyors Dialogue of 1607, not all maps of this period were produced through surveying and measurement on the ground, in situ. Some were, instead, produced by copying from the maps of others, sometimes at a distance away from the place depicted by the map. For example, this would appear to be the case for Norden’s own map of Ireland, of around 1610, which Andrews suggests was largely derived by Norden from earlier maps, including one of the whole island produced in London by Giovanni Boazio in 1599, as well as for maps by Richard Bartlett during the early years of the seventeenth century. While Boazio’s map was, by his own admission, “partly surveyed,” Bartlett’s were a product of first-hand experience in Ireland, a task that cost him his life in 1607. The processes of production for the Bodley maps, and the cartographic methods that were used to create them, is a similar conundrum.

The MPF 1/38-64 group of maps, named after Josias Bodley, were actually the product of many minds and hands. Some of those involved were based in London, and thus physically remote from the western parts of Ulster that the maps portrayed, while others involved were familiar with Ireland first-hand, through their personal and professional experience. Through treasury accounts of the period, something is known of those individuals involved, for payments
were made to a group of men and not just to Bodley himself. Others named were higher ranking government officials, including William Parsons, surveyor general in Ireland, and George Sexten, clerk of the Crown in Ulster. Then there were also four other men who, like Bodley, were paid for their work “surveying and plotting” and also “framing and drawing up the plots and descriptions,” one of whom was Thomas Raven, who later mapped parts of Ulster in detail. A John Rawson was also specifically paid to color the maps of the escheated counties. The map-making process was undertaken in Ulster as well as in Dublin and London, from summer 1609 through to spring 1610. As such, rather than being the product of one hand, the maps bound in books submitted for Earl Salisbury’s perusal in March 1610 were multi-authored and the result of a protracted, interconnected process. The images of the escheated counties that the maps contained had political value and strategic purpose to the Crown of course, but as important to the English government were the bonds they forged between Britain and Ireland through the embodied practices of surveying and map-making in—and not just of—Ireland. The maps attributed to Josias Bodley thus suggest wider influences and networks—cartographic encounters—that stretched across and between Ulster and England during the early years of James I’s reign.

Unfolding the Bodley maps, metaphorically, reveals a complex web of social relations that wove England and Ulster more closely together at the time, yet recovering these past connections between the maps, as well as between the maps’ makers and the mapped, is not easy. Just looking at the Bodley maps themselves as a group, reveals certain idiosyncrasies that can be used to try to deduce the likely individuals who had an input into making them. For example, two adjoining maps, showing the Barony of Knockninny (MPF 1/38-39) at the western end of Lough Erne (county Fermanagh) use a plain blue for the water of the lough, whereas in the “the map of the Barony of Maghery Boy” (MPF 1/43), which shows an area nearby, the lake is shown by a distinctive zig-zag motif. This same zig-zag pattern appears again for bodies of water on a group of later maps, of London company lands in Ulster of 1622, including Londonderry and other new-founded towns, all drawn by one Thomas Raven, making it most likely that the Magheraboy map (MPF 1/43) of 1610 was also of his particular making.

Further comparative inspection of the Bodley maps grouped as MPF 1/38-64 reveal certain similarities to a group of earlier Ulster maps (MPF 1/35-37), known to have been made by Richard Bartlett some eight years prior to those worked on by Bodley and Parsons. Andrews points out that the compiler of the published catalog of maps and plans in the TNA had indicated that the Bodley maps were associated with the earlier Bartlett maps by being enclosed in the letter of March 15 1610 from Ridgeway to Salisbury, and that this might suggest “that the two sets of maps were brought together . . . perhaps by Salisbury himself.” Robert Cecil’s interest in maps is known from other sources and perhaps owed something to his own father’s cartographic work under Elizabeth I, in his capacity then as her lord treasurer. The three Bartlett maps, each of 1602-3, comprise a “campaign map” of south east Ulster (MPF 1/36), a “generalle description” of Ulster (MPF 1/35), and a map of Donegal and Sligo Bay (MPF 1/37). The first two maps were signed by Bartlett, but all three are of his making, and while each is drawn at a smaller scale than the later maps of the escheated counties, the second in particular covers the area that was surveyed and mapped under Bodley and Parsons in 1609–10. It seems likely, then, that the Bartlett maps had an influence on the maps of the escheated counties. One of the most striking similarities between the two sets of Ulster maps is the use of “blank” rectangular-shaped cartouches at the maps’ borders, as well as the shared color palette of whites, greens and mauves, for differentiating blocks of land, some of the boundaries of which were accentuated by the use of a broader colored band. This is the case with “the map of the barony of Loughinsholin” (TNA MPF 1/47), for example, where the mapped lands are distinguished and grouped using differing colors, a symbology that can be seen to geographically divide the barony into two constituent parts (Figure 1).
In TNA MPF 1/35-64, two sets of maps (Bartlett’s and Bodley’s) seem to share a common visual language, as if commissioned and presented to form a unifying vision. While there are some subtle variations between the maps within the Bodley group (MPF 1/38-64), for example in terms of their orientation and typography, the overall impression gained by viewing Bartlett’s and Bodley’s finished maps side-by-side, collectively, is one of consistency and coherence. This consistency between the two sets would surely also have helped to add further weight to their perceived authenticity and veracity (at court in London) as maps of far-off lands, perhaps also reflecting Bartlett’s continuing posthumous standing as a cartographer of repute whom Salisbury and the Crown held in particular regard? Examining such cartographic traits are important for it is through them that the Bodley maps may be traced to the processes and practices of their production and consumption, and their circulation within wider circuits of knowledge and colonial statecraft.

One further area of uncertainty about the making of the Bodley maps concerns how far the mapped lands and landholdings were derived from surveying work carried out in the landscapes of western Ulster. Rather than employing “rules of survey” as such, Andrews argues that surveyors on the ground engaged instead with “knowledgeable informants,” whose role was to affirm what had been said at the inquisitions, so guiding surveyors locally and helping them in their task of identifying topographical features in the landscape, such as rivers, mountains,
bogs and woods. Contemporary written accounts help reveal a process of information gathering at first-hand. Indeed, Josias Bodley himself reported in February 1610, in a letter written to Earl Salisbury, that “to have gone to work by the strict rules of survey would have asked long time, and drawn on deep charge,” so instead what they did was to “call unto us out of every barony such persons, as by their experience in the country, could give us the name and quality of every ballibo, quarter, tate, or other common measure in any precincts of the same, [particularly] how they butted, or mered interchangeably the one on the other.” Bodley reported that with these “and other necessary helps, we contrived those maps.” From these accounts (as well as from the maps themselves and associated written sources), Andrews deduced that the maps derived from inquisitions held at certain locales, where local inhabitants were summoned to describe the pattern of lands in the escheated counties. Thus, while their cartographic “framework” was perhaps “stiffened by compass bearings” taken in the field, Andrews concluded that theirs was not “a true survey.” Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the 1609 survey was intended to correct earlier less accurate calculations made in 1608, and by Bodley’s own admission his own work in Ulster had “found many thousands of acres more for his majesty, than by any survey heretofore.” By this time, theodolites and plane tables, as well as chains for measuring and triangulation for calculating angles and bearings, were all part of the surveyors’ and cartographers’ modus operandi. How far Bodley’s “contrived maps” were based upon surveying work undertaken locally in the landscape remains worthy of further consideration, for it remains to be seen to what extent ground-surveying formed a part of the process of map-making for Bodley and his team.

**Landscape mappings**

All the completed Bodley maps of the escheated counties of Ulster show a nested hierarchy of territorial divisions, the smallest units of land (townlands) being depicted as bounded areas, creating a mosaic of individually named and differently shaped parcels for all the baronies that were surveyed (see Figure 1). Within these townland units are symbols, the most common of which by far is a red dot. Townlands were not shown on Bartlett’s 1602-3 maps, though the larger units of land were distinguished. In fact, Bodley’s demarked townlands of 1610 is a feature seemingly unique to this group of maps, with parallels not easy to find, either in England or Ireland, at this period. The mapping of the townlands, Andrews suggested, occurred through a process that relied largely on the oral testimony of those summoned to the commission’s inquisitions during late summer 1609, which began first in Armagh, on August 12, then proceeded in turn to Dungannon, Limavady, Derry, Lifford, Enniskillen, ending on September 25 in Cavan. This peripatetic process thus circumnavigated the escheated lands, placing the surveyors, the informants and the commissioners within those mapped landscapes and territories that were committed to paper and ink early in 1610. At the same time, for those parties consulted and encountered by the surveyors in their journeys in and around western Ulster, this process also visibly defined the marked-out territories on the ground.

However the maps of the escheated counties were “contrived,” then, Bodley and the surveyors trod the ground in Ulster. The surveying process itself was an embodiment of the British colonial enterprise in Ulster, as government officials and surveyors alike traced out their maps, of the local landscape and its tenurial geographies, through physically being there. Bodley’s maps had an agency that was immediate and tangible to those brought within the scopic regime of the English cartographers. This was a much more visceral experience, of being seen to be mapped, than that say of Boazio and Norden whose map-making was at a (safe) distance. The social relations that unfolded through this process of surveying for Bodley’s maps have been discussed by Smyth, who remarks on the ways in which the surveyors translated an (Irish) oral landscape into a (colonial) written one, a process with close parallels to overseas cartographic
encounters that featured in other episodes of the British imperial expansion during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As far as the recorded townland names are concerned, both Andrews and Smyth point particularly to the apparent precision in the nomenclature and toponyms used in landscape mapping by Bodley and his group. Irish (Gaelic) placenames were recorded townland by townland across the mapped landscape; hence the Bodley maps provide one of the earliest extant written accounts of local toponyms of western Ulster and are an invaluable source for later cartographers and historians. However, the townland maps of 1609–1610 somewhat paradoxically perpetuated what otherwise might easily have become a lost landscape and history, something overwritten by the newcomers. Instead the pre-Plantation landscape of Ulster was immortalized by Bodley and the surveyors, as Smyth pointed out: “the stubborn townland unit endured in plantation ledgers, on the maps, in the rent-rolls and in the lives and minds of the people,” and so “the past was never fully eroded by conquest and plantations.”

The presence of named and mapped townlands on the Bodley maps offers scope for relating the historic landscape of Ulster just before the Plantation to the later landscape of the mapped counties. Using historic maps to explore landscape histories is a well-practiced approach of the kind stimulated by the work of English landscape historians such as W. G. Hoskins and M. W. Beresford. Identifying various landscape layers that constitute the modern landscape as a palimpsest, the Bodley maps might form one particular source of evidence for landscape change, providing a potential snapshot of a past landscape. With their cartographic eccentricities and overt political purpose, early maps such as those of Bodley might be viewed suspiciously by those seeking to somehow map objectively a landscape’s historical evolution, yet the maps themselves were clearly intended to be accurate, establishing what was where and how much land there was, as Bodley himself made clear in his letter to Salisbury. This was no trivial exercise, therefore, but rather a serious undertaking with important consequence, and Bodley’s maps should surely not be underestimated as cartographic endeavors. Nevertheless, some recent commentators on the maps have questioned their spatial and geographic accuracy—their “planimetric shortcomings” as Andrews put it—through identifying misplacement of certain mapped features such as rivers or names. The latest evaluation of the Bodley maps by Annaleigh Margey restates this view that, “if the baronial boundaries are examined, it becomes apparent that the neatness and exactness of their layout, betrays the fault of their survey, as it was unlikely that such consistent boundaries [of townlands] were in existence on the ground in the presence of rough terrain in Ulster.” These interpretations largely rely on looking for cases where the maps are wrong, but as Harley and others have stressed, all maps are cultural constructs. So rather than making judgments on the maps as examples of either good or bad cartography it seems more productive to begin to use the disposition of the maps’ features to help understand how the maps were made.

In looking further at the cartographic methods used by Bodley and his team, two questions are fundamental: first, how far did the Bodley surveyors work from contemporary principles and practices of ground-survey in creating their maps, and, secondly, to what extent was the placement of the bounded and named townlands shown on the maps reliant on the words and gestures of local informants or measurement and computation in the field? To begin to disentangle the map-making process requires some assessment of how the maps represent the local landscapes they depict, particularly how they position (spatially) the places that are shown, such as named townlands and topographic features. There is an analytical process that enables this to be done, through comparing the geographical positioning of mapped features statistically, and using GIS as a means of quantifying the relationship between mapped landscapes. It is an approach that can yields new insights into the practices of early seventeenth century surveyors and cartographers working in Plantation Ireland.
Cartographic analyses

The idea that a measure of relative map distortion can be derived and quantified is not new. Waldo Tobler established in the 1960s a statistical method of analyzing historic maps to determine how far geographic information corresponds between maps of different provenance. The same method can be used to explore cartographic variations within a map, allowing calculations to be made of differential map-distortion across a mapped area. With the application of GIS, and the availability of new computer software packages such as MapAnalyst, Tobler’s techniques of statistical regression can be relatively quickly implemented and explored as a research tool. In recent years a range of historic English maps have been analyzed quantitatively, exploring internal patterns of cartographic distortion (as has been done with the mid-fourteenth-century map of Britain known as the Gough Map), as well as comparing maps over time (as carried out for a group of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century maps of Essex in England). It is an approach tried out elsewhere too, not least in Ireland. For example, John Andrews, Matthew Stout, and Helen MacMahon used ‘the TRANSFORM function’ of Arc/Info to calculate the root mean square (RMS) error for a series of maps of Ireland, including Speed’s map of 1610 and Boazio’s of 1599. However, while the potential of Tobler’s cartographic analysis for quantifying cartographic distortion is relatively easily implemented through using GIS and MapAnalyst, it needs some careful handling, both statistically as well as interpretatively.

All maps, of course, distort space, simply by rendering the spherical Earth into a flat surface, the map. With historic maps, such as those of Bodley and his surveyors of 1609-1610, quantifying relative distortion provides a way of looking “behind” the map, excavating it, as it were, to help establish whether ground survey was part of the map-making process. Put simply, if Bodley had used survey methods such as triangulation, or taken field measurements with instruments; for certain areas of the lands covered, the expectation might be that these same surveyed areas would be evident through analyzing the map’s geographical positioning of topographic features. If certain rivers or mountains were surveyed on the ground, for example, their distances ought to equate in some way with distances on the map. Andrews points out that the Bodley maps have no scale-bars drawn on them but that the maps were drawn to an approximate equivalent scale (he estimated) of around one and a quarter inches to one statute mile, or inch and half inches to one Irish mile. Keeping the maps of the escheated counties at a comparable scale was something that seems to have been important for the map-makers, for instead of shrinking a larger barony to fit onto a single sheet of paper (a more cost-effective approach), two sheets of paper were used, enabling all the baronies both large and small to be more effectively compared. Quantifying cartographic accuracy is something to be explored further therefore, not to diminish the quality or importance of the Bodley, but rather as a means of better understanding the principles and practices underlying their production.

What can be gleaned, then, from analyzing cartographic distortion in the Bodley maps? As part of Andrews’ thorough evaluation of the maps of the escheated counties, he employed—with particular novelty for the time—the analytical ideas set out by Tobler to assess the “agreement between escheated counties maps and one-inch Ordnance Survey maps.” Reproducing the results of these analyses as a table in his paper of 1974, Andrews said rather little about how this technique was deployed, apart from that “Professor Tobler has kindly explained his method and applied it to a number of maps” that Andrews had supplied. Even so, the values derived from Andrews’ article provide a useful starting point for further analytical investigation. Of the twenty-eight examined, a small group of the maps show high degrees of agreement between themselves and the Ordnance Survey (OS) maps, pointing to a close correlation in the mapped information, and indicating therefore that some of the Bodley maps correspond cartographically.
closely to the OS-mapped landscape. The maps in this “elite” group include those with a value of
ninety percent and over (100 percent being complete agreement), namely maps numbered IX (90.2
percent), XI (90.2 percent), XVII (91.6 percent), XVIII (90.0 percent) and XXIII (91.0 percent), to
which map III perhaps also ought to be added (89.9 percent).\textsuperscript{51} The shared higher values for certain
nearby and adjoining maps (IX “Part of Dungannon” (MPF 1/45) and XI “Part of Loughinsholin”
(MPF 1/47), and XVII “Tullygarvey” and XVIII “Clankee”, respectively), is perhaps significant,
suggestive that these particular maps were where surveyors were able to get a closer spatial fix for
local landmarks and their coordinates, and so produce maps with a higher degree of cartographic
accuracy compared with others? After all, some of the results from Andrews’ analyses were much
lower, down to 8 percent in the case of Part of Oneilland (MPF 1/61), while the majority of the
maps score between 60 and 90 percent (seventeen out of the twenty-eight). This suggests that
there is potentially something rather special, or at least significant, about the five maps at the top
of Andrews’ table, though curiously he made little of this observation himself.

Such different figures might point to variations in working practices between those
involved, with more expert surveyors working in certain baronies and less-skilled ones in others?
Of course, the possibility has to be that particular kinds of ground may also have presented greater
difficulties for surveying, and that while some baronies were relatively easy to survey, others
were not. To consider this further one of the higher-scored barony maps—number XI “Part of
Loughinsholin” (MPF 1/47)—is used here to look more in more detail at patterns of internal map
distortion, to explore how far these techniques of cartographic analysis might yield some insights
into the surveying practices involved in creating the map. This particular map, in common with
many of the Bodley maps, has no particular stylistic characteristics to mark it out as especially
different to the others. It has similar typography and symbology and shows an area west of
Lough Neagh, in County Londonderry, around Maghera, encompassing the valley of the Moyola
River as well as the eastern flanks of the Sperrin Mountains (Figure 2). To begin to explore the
patterns of cartographic distortion shown by MPF 1/47 requires a number of stages, set out here,
of digitization in a GIS, of data linkage, and of statistical analysis. The analyses themselves provide
a basis for “excavating” how this particular map was made, in particular through relationships
with the local landscape, and the possible ways Bodley’s surveyors engaged with it and those
who provided information about the disposition of the adjoining townlands that appear on Map
XI.

**Excavating ‘Map XI: Part of Loughinsholin’ (MPF 1/47)**

The core of Tobler’s method of cartographic analysis is the quantification of the correlation
between mapped features. The Bodley maps, as already noted, largely consist of bounded areas,
the named townlands. So, for the purpose of the analysis of Map XI, townlands provide the
firmest basis for comparing geographic information between the 1610 map and the same area
mapped later. For this more detailed cartographic analysis, rather than the one-inch scale OS
maps used by Andrews and Tobler, the later maps chosen to compare Map XI with are the OS
first edition six-inch scale sheets of the 1830s.\textsuperscript{52} Excavating Map XI itself requires starting with a
high resolution digital image, in this case acquired from the TNA.\textsuperscript{53} Once imported into ArcGIS,
the raster image is georeferenced (note not georectified) so that the scanned map is the digital
equivalent, in its dimensions, to the original manuscript map.\textsuperscript{54} In addition; in the GIS, the entire
content of Map XI is digitized as vectors, allowing coordinates to be derived from the scanned
map to provide data needed for analyzing and comparing variations in map-distortion across the
source maps.

Excavating Map XI in a GIS highlights the various map layers that together comprise it:
its rivers, loughs, settlements, forests, and, of course, townlands (Figure 3).\textsuperscript{55} For the statistical
Figure 2. Top: the study area (named) within modern Northern Ireland. Bottom: the boundaries of townlands shown by MPF 1/47 but digitized from 1830s Ordnance Survey First Edition six-inch to one mile sheets (overlaid onto a relief model).
analysis, “point data” are preferred (rather than lines or polygons), as these provide discrete coordinate data which are more readily compared. The Bodley maps do contain “points” (a red dot) within each of the mapped townlands, but it is likely that these were not intended to indicate actual locations of settlements; not least because this area of west Ulster is characterized by a mix of dispersed and nucleated settlements. For this reason, then, point coordinate data for Map XI were derived from the map’s townland boundaries, which were digitized to create a polygon shapefile, first and then, from these polygons, a center point was calculated using the centroid tool within ArcGIS. This process yields map coordinates of centroids for each of the mapped townlands, a total of 173 in all. As well as creating the point layer in the GIS, each point shapefile is attributed with the townland name, as derived from the Bodley map. It is this identification that allows Bodley map townlands to then be matched with its Ordnance Survey Northern Ireland (OSNI) historic townland names (as shown on the six-inch OS), a process facilitated greatly by the results of the Northern Ireland Place-Name Project. The match with the modern townland boundaries provides the structure that is necessary to create an attribute join within the GIS, completed first by deriving a coordinate centroid from each OS six-inch townland, and second, joining the OS townland table to the Bodley townland table with its centroid coordinates (Figure 4). Of the 173 townlands, 150 were name-matched and successfully joined, but 23 townlands cannot be matched, mainly where a townland named on the Bodley map no longer exists. Also, in some cases townland names and boundaries were divided into two or more new townlands, while others were amalgamated with adjacent townlands so losing their original identities.

It is the joining of these two sets of coordinate data into one shapefile that enables analysis of positional variations of mapped points and comparisons between the Bodley and OS townlands. The statistical method used for this is based upon correlating coordinate data from the two maps, using the relative distancing and spacing of common points to determine how closely the two historic maps “fit”, spatially, or “correlate”, statistically. To do this, different forms of regression analysis are used, each providing statistical outputs as well as (using Map Analyst) visual outputs of variations in cartographic distortion, or veracity.
Figure 4. The shapefile attribute table for the Bodley townlands. This table records the Bodley townland name (‘BodleyName’), the equivalent Ordnance Survey townland name (‘ModernName’), the ‘Bodley Map Space’ townland centre point coordinates in centimetres (X_CM and Y_CM) and the equivalent Ordnance Survey townland centre point coordinates (X_M, Y_M).

First, linear or standard regression can be used to assess, on an individual basis, the fit of eastings and northings data between the points derived from the two maps. These two sets of coordinate data are shown here as two scatter graphs, one for eastings and one for northings, the OS six-inch derived centroid coordinates being on the x axis and the equivalent Bodley-derived map coordinates on the Y axis (see Figure 5). From this, the eastings and northings graphs can both be seen to have a positive regression trend. However, the coefficient of determination ($r^2$) indicates that the eastings data on the Bodley map have a higher $r^2$ value than the northings (i.e., a value closer to unity), with values of 0.8056 and 0.6923, respectively. This illustrates, then, that the eastings for the Bodley map centroids fit better with the OS-derived coordinate data, revealing that the mapped positions of the townland centroids are placed with a greater degree of cartographic accuracy in longitude than they are in latitude. There are, however, some variations within the data set; both linear regression graphs show a number of outliers, above and below the trend line. Those points that lie furthest from the trendline are the townlands (on the Bodley map) that correlate least closely with the equivalent OS centroid coordinates. To further investigate these outliers, a programming code (written in “R”) was applied to identify which of the townlands had highest impact on the overall $r^2$. What this reveals are two main groups of townlands, in the southern and the western part of the barony map, each effectively increasing map-distortion. For example, when the townland named Tullybrick is removed from the overall $r^2$ calculation, the $r^2$ value for northings rises from 0.6923 to 0.7170.

The results of the linear regression analyses help to begin to reveal internal differences in the mapping of the barony of Loughinsholin; spatial variations in cartographic distortion. To analyze these same point data further, a method of bidimensional regression is used, allowing simultaneous comparison of two sets of mapped points across two planes or spaces. As noted earlier, Andrews ran a similar calculation in the early 1970s resulting in a value of 90.2 percent (i.e., $r^2$ of 0.902) agreement for map XI. However, with the subsequent development of computational
Figure 5. The Linear regression graphs derived from townland centroids digitized from MPF 1/47 (“Bodley Map Space”), plotted against townland centroids derived from First Edition Ordnance Survey six-inch sheets (“Modern Map Space”).
techniques and GIS technologies, it is possible to extend the analyses by comparing the positions of townland centroids derived from digitizing the Bodley and OS maps.\textsuperscript{62} With an $r^2$ value of 0.9213 (using a Euclidean calculation), the results of the bidimensional regression in fact indicate a stronger overall relationship between the Map XI and OS townland centroids than Andrews’ figure. This result signifies a reasonable fit between the positioning of townlands on the Bodley map and the OS surveyors’ townlands of the 1830s, and illustrates a stronger correlation than the linear regression results noted above.

Spatial variations in bidimensional regression values can provide deeper insights into the relative distortion across Map XI, for which purpose MapAnalyst software is particularly useful.\textsuperscript{63} MapAnalyst uses an algorithm to calculate closeness of fit between two sets of spatial data, just as with the bidimensional regression technique, here based upon the centroid-derived coordinates for the Bodley and OS mapped townlands. One particular advantage of MapAnalyst is that it produces graphical, visual outputs of patterns of map distortion in the form of a “distortion grid”. If the Bodley centroids and the OS centroid data were to agree completely, the resulting grid would be perfectly uniform. However, instead the grid is warped to varying degrees across Map XI, which indicates patterns of local disagreement between the two sets of coordinate data (Figure 6). A particularly noticeable distortion is evident around the map’s edges, in particular along the western and the southern sections of the barony. It is these same two areas that were revealed in the outlier analysis, where (in relation to the OS maps) townland locations on the Bodley are positioned some distance from each other making the whole southern tip of Map XI stretched and distorted further southwards. The least distortion (conversely) lies in the north and east parts of the barony, and here the grid is most uniform in shape. A further exploration of these patterns is possible using directional displacement vectors, a related visual output in MapAnalyst, whereby the software draws a line from each of the Bodley townland centroids to their equivalent position on the OS six-inch maps (Figure 6). Here, the longer the vector, the more relative displacement exists between the two sets of map coordinates. In the southern part of the mapped barony, longer vectors reveal a pattern of displacement where again Bodley’s townlands are located too far to the south and the west. Those parts of the map with the shortest vectors (that is least displacement) are to the north and east, around Maghera. Even so, within these broad patterns of greater and lesser displacement and distortion, there are some points that do not fit the trend. The townland of Drumlamph, in the east, for example, appears to be mapped further north than it ought to be, and likewise Dunmurry at the western tip. Neither of these townlands appears to follow the distortion trends evident in the patterns surrounding them.

The distortion grid and displacement vector outputs thus begin to reveal how Map XI has within it different degrees of distortion, where some parts of the map compress relative distances between centroids, and some parts exaggerate distances. These spatial variations might reflect the effect of local conditions, particularly topography, on map-making and surveying work, or potentially arise from the application of differing cartographic practices to survey and create the map. Here MapAnalyst has another advantage, for it allows further spatial analysis of the disposition of the mapped townlands through calculating differences in map scale as well as degrees of map rotation. Using this function of MapAnalyst shows, for example, that the overall scale of Map XI is 1:76,900 and that the map is rotated twenty-eight degrees clockwise (from True North) (Table 1).\textsuperscript{64} This aggregated calculated scale is not absolute of course, but is derived from measuring between all the centroids of the townlands on Map XI. The same calculations can be performed for selected areas of the map too. This yields some interesting relative internal differences across the map in its scale and rotation. For example, Map XI splits the barony into two distinct bounded areas (indicated by a broad red-colored band), and if this same dividing line is used to compare townlands’ centroids between the eastern portion and the west a clear
Figure 6. MapAnalyst generated ‘distortion grid’ (top) and directional displacement vectors (below) projected onto Loughinsholin townland boundaries as digitized from MPF 1/47.
Table 1. The bidimensional regression outputs derived from the comparison between MPF 1/47 townland centroids and OS six-inch townland centroids. ‘All Townlands’ represents the figures derived for all the townlands in the barony of Loughinsholin as shown by MPF 1/47. The other outputs given here derive from selections of townlands as described in column one. Rotation is in degrees (cw = clockwise).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Portion of Map (MPF) 1/47</th>
<th>$r^2$ value (affine)</th>
<th>$r^2$ value (Euclidean)</th>
<th>Scale Helmert (4 Parameters)</th>
<th>Degrees of map rotation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Townlands in barony</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1:76,900</td>
<td>28° cw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townlands in northern half of map</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1:87,000</td>
<td>22° cw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townlands in southern half of map</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1:75,000</td>
<td>40° cw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townlands mapped as Churchlands</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1:75,800</td>
<td>32° cw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townlands on peripheral boundaries</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1:76,400</td>
<td>31° cw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townlands adjacent to rivers</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>1:83,300</td>
<td>26° cw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townlands as ‘Greater Proportions’</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>1:82,800</td>
<td>28° cw</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Townlands as ‘Smaller Proportions’</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1:73,300</td>
<td>32° cw</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A difference in positional accuracy emerges, with an $r^2$ value of 0.94 overall for the northern part and 0.82 in the southern half. The scale in the northern portion is 1:87,000 while in the south it is 1:75,000, and between the two halves there is also a difference in map rotation of eighteen degrees. What this means is that not only do the two halves of Loughinsholin barony map appear cartographically (visually) distinct, but that they are also, in effect, each differently devised (planimetrically), raising the possibility that either they were surveyed and mapped separately, or that local conditions in each affected the map-making process differently.

Other variations in map scale and rotation for Map XI can be explored using alternative parameters, such as separating churchland townlands (a group colored green on the map) from the temporal, or else looking at specific types of townlands, such as those situated along rivers, or situated on the periphery of the map. All reveal some subtle differences in scale and rotation (see Table 1). One further clear distinction made on the map itself is between townlands identified either as “greater” or “smaller proportions”. If these are compared in both scale, rotation and $r^2$ value, it is those in the former group that have the higher $r^2$ values, suggesting a closer fit between the mapped townland centroids in the “greater proportions”, perhaps because they were more important at the time and required closer attention to surveying detail? Andrews had observed that townlands on the edges of the Bodley maps were “inaccurate both in shape and position of the boundary junctions along their periphery.” While this may well be the case with some of the maps, for Map XI, the statistical results suggest little difference between townlands at the edges of the barony and those on rivers, for example. Instead, one more significant factor affecting the positioning of townlands is altitude. This again can be quantified using the MapAnalyst outputs. Selecting those townlands located on ground above around 500 feet (150 meters), some of which are along the periphery of the mapped barony, reveals the lowest of the $r^2$ values of 0.88, a map-scale of 1:81,000, and map-rotation of thirty-nine degrees clockwise, close to the forty degrees noted for the townlands in the southern half of the barony as a whole. It seems then, that the elevation of a townland was an important factor affecting positional accuracy of Map XI.

“Excavating” Map XI using GIS and spatial analysis techniques begins to suggest certain localized patterns of variation in cartographic distortion across mapped townlands. It is possible to use regression techniques to dig a bit more deeply into these localized patterns, to provide a more subtle picture of geographic variations in the positional accuracy of the Bodley townland centroids across the map. This requires use of Moving Window Regression (MWR) to quantify the
local relationships between a mapped location and its neighboring points. Here, the townland centroids derived from the Bodley and OS maps are analyzed simultaneously by means of a “moving window” across the study area. The MWR program, written as part of a previous collaboration, executes the calculations and provides a measured intercept, slope and coefficient of determination ($r^2$) defined by the nearest neighbor analysis. From Map XI’s 150 locations digitized and matched with modern townland data, ten nearest neighbors were chosen for analysis. No immediate spatial pattern is distinguishable using the coefficient of determination ($r^2$) output calculated from MWR. However, when those centroids with $r^2$ values greater than or equal to 0.8 are selected, clusters of townlands emerge. One such spatial clustering of higher MWR $r^2$ values is evident to the north and east of Maghera, an area of lower lying ground within the barony. The clustering of higher MWR $r^2$ values here reflect a consistency in the map’s placing of townlands. Taking into account the results of the MapAnalyst outputs (above) for this same area, this clustering probably reflects a relatively higher degree of spatial accuracy across these particular mapped townlands. A second such cluster lies in the map’s southern part (Figure 7). The MWR $r^2$ values here again indicate a consistent pattern of townland centroids in this portion of the barony, but this time, similarly taking into account the previous bidimensional outputs, these particular townlands are consistently displaced. Evidently, by placing the (geographically) southwestern portion of the barony in a midwest (cartographic) location, Map XI in effect twists space along the western edge of the barony. The higher elevation of land in this area might again explain this; map-distortion being a symptom of problems encountered locally with surveying field-work (rather than map-drawing) through difficulties posed by fixing townlands in upland areas.

Using these different but complementary regression methods is helpful in revealing spatial clusters of townland centroids with similar $r^2$ values. Such patterns appear to relate to processes involved in the making of Map XI, particularly surveying the ground to establish the pattern of townlands, ascertaining how “they butted, or mered interchangeably the one on the other,” to quote Bodley himself. One further statistical procedure sheds further light on how far terrain affected the work that lay behind the making of Map XI. Ordinary Least Squares Regression (OLS) were used to test for possible relationships that exist between the length of directional displacement vectors (derived from the MapAnalyst calculations), the positional coefficients calculated between townland centroids (derived from the Bodley and OS maps), and local elevation (Figure 8). The OLS model does reveal a relationship between vector “length” and local “elevation”, as elevation increases so the positional accuracy of the placement of Bodley’s townlands (relative to modern coordinate data) decreases. Even so, these data were found to have non-stationary relationships. This means that while elevation is a strong predictor of length in some areas, it is not in others. At first these analytical results individually might appear to be somewhat inconclusive. However, taken together, what all these analyses show is that variations in map distortion have distinct spatial and statistical patterns that are meaningful; and that although these differences across Map XI may in part be due to differences in terrain, such as physical obstacles to survey, other factors were also playing a part, including local factors, perhaps cultural resistance to the surveyors and the commissioners on the ground. To explore this further requires relating our cartographic analyses to the cartographers themselves.

Connecting cartographers

As Bodley and the 1609 Commission’s surveyors were working in western Ulster, Thomas Phillips reported to the Corporation of the City of London on the prospects for Plantation. Among the articles of his report Phillips referred to one particular area troublesome to the English: “The Barony of Loghanshelan.” This area was, he wrote, “Tyrone’s chiefest fastness and the very
Figure 7. The coefficient of determination ($r^2$) values derived from the Moving Window Regression. The higher $r^2$ values (rsq in key) are shown in darker red.

Figure 8. The Standard Residuals output derived from Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression on the variables Length, Modern X, Modern Y and Elevation. The model presented a 45% $r^2$ value and an AIC value of 453, lower than the AIC figures derived from the testing on other variations of variable relationships in this study. Elevation was found to have a positive correlation with directional displacement vector length indicating a relationship between the two variables. However, this relationship was deemed non-stationary indicating that the positive correlation was not true throughout the whole map as recognised by the strong (Red) and low (Blue) predictors in this figure.
Nursery of all rebellions in those parts and was therefore chiefly intended by his late Majesty to have been wholly planted with British which, if Londoners had done accordingly, they might have made of it as rich and strong a Country as any (of like in his Majesty’s Dominions) whereas it is now in worse case and far more dangerous to the State than when they first undertook it.”71

As a proposition for survey, then, Loughinsholin must have been a challenge for Bodley and his team, for not only did it present them with potential hostile assaults from local inhabitants; it was, it seems, an area of particular interest to the Crown. It was also an area through which the commissioners and surveyors had traversed as part of their circumnavigation of the escheated counties, for the party left Dungannon for Limavady on August 24 1609, having there completed the survey of Tyrone the day before.72 The journey to Limavady took the group three days having been slowed by the weather in the forest of Glenconkeyne, and on their arrival at Limavady they met with Phillips and with representatives from the City of London who had landed at Carrickfergus on August 22.73

As the commissioners discussed Plantation matters with Phillips in Limavady, their recent experiences in Loughinsholin must have been foremost in their minds, not just because they had just traversed this “nursery of all rebellions” without incident, but because it had been there, in the forest of Glenconkeyne, that they had endured the most difficult local conditions. In fact, a letter of August 28, sent from Limavady by Sir John Davies, Irish Attorney General, to Earl Salisbury in London, reported that: “Their geography has had the speedier dispatch, inasmuch as here the county is but little, consisting only of three baronies, and as they had sent two surveyors before to perambulate the country and to prepare the business by gathering notes of the names, sites, and extents of the townlands. This they performed well and readily, being accompanied with but a slender guard.”74 The two surveyors are not named, though William Parsons was present at the inquisition in Limavady.75 The surveyors’ work as an advance party between Dungannon and Limavady would have taken them through the Barony of Loughinsholin, and the large forest of Glenconkeyne that at that time comprised much of this area.

With the weather and forest to contend with, the surveying work in Loughinsholin must have been particularly difficult, for example in determining bearings and distances, and even in terms of staying orientated. It is in this context that the results of the cartographic analyses of Map XI townlands must be judged. It may well explain the displacements of townlands noted in the western and southern parts of the barony, for example, and the way the map twists space along the higher western edges of Loughinsholin, an area that was also situated furthest from the route taken by Commission itself from Dungannon to Limavady (see Figure 2). In poor weather, such higher ground would not lend itself to calculating distances through triangulation, at a distance. Similarly, considering the speed of the survey, measurement on the ground is unlikely to have appealed in this upland part of the barony. Instead, however, there are indications that tighter surveying or mensuration methods were employed in the area around Maghera and the lower-lying parts of the barony where the party did cover the ground, literally, on its way to Limavady. Here it might be supposed that relatively easier conditions, along with a stronger local military presence (through forts), helped the surveyors to complete a ground survey. This then may explain why relatively less distorted patterns of townlands can be observed here on the Bodley map, both from the MapAnalyst outputs and the MWR $r^2$ values. While there is no certainty in all this, the historical evidence and the analytical results taken together would seem to suggest some degree of agreement here. Based on the analyses presented above, our conclusion differs from Andrews’ view that “the escheated counties maps are no more correct than the kind of outline that can be produced from purely verbal data.”76 The closeness of fit observed between the Bodley and OS townlands would suggest otherwise, certainly for the northern and eastern parts of Loughinsholin.
From the analyses of Map XI’s townlands, then, there are strong indications that inputs into the map’s making came from those who had expertise in the task of land-surveying and map-making. Whether in this particular case it was the work of Josias Bodley himself, perhaps with William Parsons alongside, is not possible to confirm, though the likelihood is strong. Bodley had military experience, was familiar with Ulster, and was known to be a sound surveyor—he was commissioned again later, by James I, to complete a further survey of Ulster in 1614.77 In his earlier years, Bodley had served previously in the Netherlands and had helped his elder brother, Thomas Bodley, provide William Cecil, Lord Burghley, with drawings of the siege of Nijmegen (in July 1591), Thomas writing then that “my brother hath bin with me... and can give yow the platform drawing by himself.”78 Bearing in mind the apparent importance to the Crown of the area of Glenconkeyne and Loughinsholin, Josias Bodley would seem a most suitable tried and tested choice for the survey work here in August 1609. It is conceivable too that his continental experience equipped Josias with particular knowledge of, and expertise in, contemporary surveying practices.

Taking on board Andrews’ analytical results as well as the confirmation of a high overall $r^2$ value for Map XI as described above, Bodley’s presence may be reflected in the relatively precise execution of the survey of Loughinsholin, which would eventually yield a map that compares, in terms of cartographic accuracy of mapped features, so favorably across the escheated counties group of maps as a whole. It could be, though, that the internal differences in Map XI’s positioning of townlands, between its northern and southern parts, owes something to differing surveying practices in these areas, possibly attributable to the activities of different surveyors in each. To take this further would require similar systematic cartographic analyses of other “Bodley maps”; comparing them as a group, and linking the results of these analyses with a stylistic study of the maps and individual surveyors and cartographers known through contemporary correspondence. As well as comparative analyses across the Bodley group of maps, and indeed with other contemporary maps and surveys of Ulster, there is scope to explore the temporal relationships between the OS mapped townlands of the 1830s, and those Bodley mapped two hundred years earlier. For example, the longevity of townland boundaries might well be a factor in generating higher $r^2$ values in some parts of the barony than others, particularly in lower lying areas where continuity of boundaries might be more likely.79 Assessing this further, requires a local landscape study, of the kind currently being carried out in the area of Maghera.80 In the meantime, detailed study of Map XI’s “distortion” exemplifies the potential of quantitative techniques for excavating cartographic encounters,” especially when combined with the qualitative approaches more often deployed in the history of cartography and historical geography.81

While there is no doubt that survey work, of both the cartographic and administrative kinds, was being undertaken in the escheated counties, in situ, by the commission of 1609; the process of map-making was by no means finalized there. After working in Ulster, the surveyors and commissioners had returned to Dublin by early October, and there, according to John Davies, they saw to “the making up of [the] inquisition in form of law, the drawing of the titles into cases, the engrossing, enrolling, and exemplification thereof, the absolute finishing of the maps, [together with] the limiting and setting forth of the parishes, precincts, and proportions, which must be done upon the maps.”82 How much of the drawing of the maps, fair copies and drafts, would have altered those initial surveys and field-sketches (no longer surviving), is difficult to estimate. However, taking a quantitative approach might, again, help here; for comparing versions of Plantation maps over time might reveal what kinds of cartographic changes were made in this period, as well as where and perhaps also by whom.83 What is clear is that Map XI underwent a long process of production, spanning survey-work in Ulster and map-making in
Dublin as well as in London, from where Ridgeway had written to Salisbury in March 1610 to say that the Commissions’ cartographic work was nearly done.

Lately, Plantation surveys and maps have received renewed interest among historical geographers and historians of cartography, but much of this continues to rake over contemporary correspondence and rely on largely descriptive interpretations of surviving examples of maps. In this, the Bodley maps of the escheated counties have tended to be viewed in evolutionary terms—fitted to a history of early-seventeenth-century cartographic development and landscape representation.\(^8^4\) The aim of this paper has been to dig a little more deeply into the material map itself, to see what it may yield about the processes of its making and the worlds it constructed in Stuart Britain and Ireland. Rather than placing the Bodley maps within a particular stage in Plantation colonization therefore, and differentiating Plantation maps according to their primary function or context, such as military campaigns, or lot-allocation; the maps themselves, individually, form a useful focus for debate and discussion as a group of interconnected landscape-mappings with shared histories. Relating the maps to the landscapes they show is at the same time searching for their “silences and secrecy” and in this, GIS helps to excavate the Bodley maps through “deconstructing the map” both quantitatively as well as qualitatively.\(^8^5\) Since “maps are transitory and fleeting, being contingent, relational and context-dependent,” and are “always remade every time they are engaged with,” the Bodley maps too are perpetually unfolding, forever mobile.\(^8^6\) Excavating the Bodley maps through GIS produces yet further maps and mappings, and numerous interconnected “mapping worlds” emerge. Moving virtually backwards and forwards in time, as well as across spaces, we stage a series of cartographic encounters between the cartographers of early-seventeenth-century Britain and Ireland, and their counterparts today.

Acknowledgements

In preparing and researching this article, the authors wish to thank Professor Jerry Brotton and Dr Annaleigh Margey for early conversations about the Bodley maps. The research presented here was part-funded by a Department for Employment and Learning (NI) doctoral award held at Queen’s University Belfast.

NOTES


11 Smyth, Map-Making, 60; fig. 3.2.


22 Andrews, Queen’s Last Map-Maker, 33–6.


25 Andrews, Queen’s Last Map-Maker, 91–7; see also Margey, “Representing Plantation Landscapes: The Mapping of Ulster, c.1560-1640,” in Plantation Ireland: Settlement and...

27 Ibid., 146–7; 158.
29 Letter from Ridgeway to Salisbury, March 15 1610, SP 63/228/54, CSPI, 1608–1610, 393.
34 Counties but not parishes were more commonly shown by English seventeenth-century maps, for example see: Roger J. P. Kain and Catherine Delano Smith, English Maps: A History (London: British Library, 2000).
35 Harris, “The Commission of 1609,” 40.
36 For example in India, see Matthew H. Edney, Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843 (Chicago, Illinois: Chicago University Press, 1997), 309–16.
38 Smyth, Map-Making, 86.
39 See, for example: F. H. A. Aalen, Kevin Whelan and Matthew Stout, Atlas of Irish Rural Landscape (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011).
40 Letter from Bodely to Salisbury, February 24 1610, CPSI 1608–1610, 393.
42 Margey, “Representing Plantation Landscapes,” 152.
48 Our use of “excavation” and archaeological metaphors in this paper owes much to the ideas and work of Brian Harley, especially Harley, “Deconstructing the Map,” in Writing Worlds.


50 Ibid., 149.

51 Ibid., 149.


54 The historic map raster is “georeferenced” in the GIS by assigning its overall dimensions (usually measured in mm or cm), which is then used as the basis for deriving coordinates from the map. The map raster, however, is not “geo-rectified”, a process that in effect digitally stretches, or warps, the map to fit it to modern geospatial coordinate systems (e.g. latitude or longitude, or Irish National Grid).


60 The program routine used is available at http://irelandmapped.org/.


64 1:80,000 equates to one and a quarter miles to one inch. 1:76,900 is, therefore, very close to the map scale that John Andrews had estimated for the Bodley maps as a whole: see Andrews, “Maps of the Escheated Counties,” 153.

65 In his letter to Salisbury of February 24 1610, Bodley held “that those escheated countries should be so plotted that the known bounds of every country might be discerned by the eye, the church land distinguished from the temporal, and land already granted from that which is yet to be disposed of; the shares for the undertakers to be laid out with their apparent limits according to certain conceived proportions of different quantities, the goodness or badness of the soil; and the woods, rivers, or mountains, bogs and lochs, to be specified in their several places”; CPSI 1608–1609, 392–3.

66 The map differentiated between “proportions” of different size, that is land-holdings assigned for Plantation.


68 On MWR see Christopher D. Lloyd, Local Models for Spatial Analysis (Boca Raton, Florida: CRC Press, 2006).

69 Lilley and Lloyd, “Mapping the Realm.”
70 Harris, “The Commission of 1609,” 34.
71 HMSO, Londonderry and the London Companies.
73 Ibid., 47.
74 Letter from Davies to Salisbury, August 28 1609, SP 63/227/122, CSPI 1608–1610; Letter from Ridgeway to Salisbury, March 15 1610, SP 63/228/54, CSPI 1608-1610, 280.
75 Harris, “The Commission of 1609,” 50.
77 Margey, “Representing Plantation Landscapes,” 156.
78 Adams, “Sixteenth-Century Intelligencers,” 207; Letter from Thomas Bodley to Lord Burghley, October 11 1591, citing, SP/43/92, fol. 92r-93v, TNA.
79 A factor considered but not developed by Andrews, “Maps of the Escheated Counties,” 148. Historically, marginal areas of land in Britain and Ireland typically had more mobile administrative geographies, or else did not have fixed boundaries due to communal sharing of resources, for example in uplands: see, Maurice W. Beresford, History on the Ground: Six Studies in Maps and Landscapes (London: Lutterworth Press, 1957), 25–62.
82 Harris, “The Commission of 1609,” 42.
83 For example, comparing mapped features of the 1602-3 Bartlett maps (TNA 1/35-37) with those of the smaller-scale maps of the escheated counties, of 1610: namely, Hatfield House Library and Archives Cecil Maps 4/1, and British Library Cotton MS Augustus I.i.ii.44.
84 Margey, “Representing Plantation Landscapes,” 140; 164.
ABSTRACT: Drawing upon recent reworkings of world systems theory and Marx’s concept of metabolic rift, this paper attempts to ground early nineteenth-century Ireland more clearly within these metanarratives, which take the historical-ecological dynamics of the development of capitalism as their point of departure. In order to unravel the socio-spatial complexities of Irish agricultural production throughout this time, attention must be given to the prevalence of customary legal tenure, institutions of communal governance, and their interaction with the colonial apparatus, as an essential feature of Ireland’s historical geography often neglected by famine scholars. This spatially differentiated legacy of communality, embedded within a country-wide system of colonial rent, and burgeoning capitalist system of global trade, gave rise to profound regional differentiations and ecological contradictions, which became central to the distribution of distress during the Great Famine (1845-1852). Contrary to accounts which depict it as a case of discrete transition from feudalism to capitalism, Ireland’s pre-famine ecology must be understood through an analysis which emphasises these socio-spatial complexities. Consequently, this structure must be conceptualised as one in which communality, colonialism, and capitalism interact dynamically, and in varying stages of development and devolution, according to space and time.

Ireland is no stranger to reductionist characterizations of its economy, social structure, or geography. From the classical ethnographic study of Arensberg and Kimball, to the works of Estyn Evans, and modern accounts from comparative political economists, Ireland has long stood as a paradoxical case within the European Atlantic periphery. Nineteenth-century Ireland also occupies a contentious position within a series of narratives which, to date, have seen limited integration into mainstream historical-geographical discourse. Marxist historical materialism has recently experienced a resurgence of interest in Ireland amongst other countries, both empirically and theoretically, as an example of a pre-capitalist mode of production. In addition, others have begun to pay specific attention to Ireland’s complex ecologies of production, resulting from its embeddedness within broader systems of colonial rent, and global trade. Although these works serve to complicate simplistic accounts of nineteenth century Ireland as either a subsistence economy dependent solely on the potato, or a burgeoning capitalist society, less attention has been paid to the manner in which the complexities of Irish social structure, production, and ecology generated profound spatial inequalities and regional heterogeneities during the pre-famine era. Less attention still has been paid to the centrality of communality, in the form of the rundale system of agrarian communism, ubiquitous across the Western seaboard throughout this time, and the importance of its inclusion in any such characterization of the socio-spatial structure of nineteenth-century Ireland.

This paper attempts to remedy these deficiencies, by grounding Irish communality more clearly within a number of key metanarratives which have gained prominence in recent years.
amongst historical geographers, human ecologists, and Marxist historians, in particular those of the **metabolic rift**, as articulated by John Bellamy Foster, and of **ecology and the world system**, as developed by Jason Moore. Although these narratives offer much explanatory power and insight into the mechanisms which generate regional diversities and spatial patterns of ecological distress, they have seldom been brought to bear on specific historical case studies. Consequently, despite their theoretical sophistication in accounting for macro-level ecological despoliation under capitalism in the modern era; little is known about the position of non-capitalistic modes of production within the burgeoning pre-twentieth century world system. Pre-famine Ireland offers one such avenue for empirical enrichment; by elaborating more clearly the complexities of Irish socio-spatial structure throughout this time, we stand to learn much about the ways in which the structures of colonialism and communality interacted with the world system in a non-deterministic manner. These interactions in turn gave rise to a variety of socio-spatial regimes within Ireland, which were to prove critical for the distribution of distress throughout the later famine period.

The emphasis of this paper is therefore on clarifying the socio-spatial structure of pre-famine Ireland. To this end, it begins with a brief outline of the development of world-systems theory and Marxist human ecology since the turn of the century. This section also considers a number of restrictive accounts of Ireland’s development throughout the nineteenth century, which have attempted to characterize it in terms of prime movers such as population growth or a subsistence economy, and others which have erroneously characterized it as solely capitalist. I argue instead that nineteenth-century Ireland must be conceived in terms of complexity, rather than essentialism. Having established the conceptual utility of these metanarratives, I next describe the centrality of communality to the geography of pre-famine Irish agriculture. As a key component of the “hidden Ireland,” an historical re-visitation of Irish land law and contemporary statistical accounts suggests that agrarian communism, in the form of the rundale system, was a substantial component of the pre-famine landscape with its own unique productive dynamics and worthy of greater attention than it has received to date. Finally, drawing on existing works in historical political economy, I outline an alternative model of Irish socio-spatial structure, which depicts Irish communality within a broader matrix of feudal rent and global capitalism. I conclude by suggesting that to conceptualize Ireland in terms of such complexity means avoiding essentialist accounts which seek to reduce the dynamics of pre-famine Ireland to a single entity or cause. This alternative conceptual model might later form the basis of a revised assessment of the distribution of distress throughout the Great Famine, and of the unique nature of Ireland’s metabolic rift.

**The global ecology of capitalism and feudalism: tensions and transitions over space and time**

*Metabolic rift and the world-system*

The concept of metabolic rift has fast outgrown its origins in the critical environmental social science which emerged during the 1980s and 1990s. It has since been incorporated into a variety of substantive domains such as climate change, marine ecology, urban agriculture, and food sovereignty. The concept of metabolism has emerged, from its abstract origins in early ecological anthropology, to a formidable theory of the middle range, which has seen some application within social geography (by Carl Sauer, amongst others), and which now features in a number of empirical studies in comparative human ecology. It owes this rise to prominence, within the social sciences at least, to a number of key publications by John Bellamy Foster, which have since been incorporated within the apparatus of world systems theory by Jason Moore. Given that both strands have developed in dialogue with each other, it is worth briefly outlining their development, in order to establish their utility for understanding the case of Ireland.
The concept of metabolism constitutes the essential basis of Marx’s macro-theoretical model of *modes of production*, which play a central role in Marxian historical materialism. Accordingly, various modes of production may be viewed as differing modes of relating to nature, engendering differing historical forms of resource exploitation and, consequently, differing forms of social-ecological metabolism. Although certain definitions depict metabolism as strictly a biological concept, or a structural assemblage of matter-energy exchange pathways irrespective of historical form, the question of historical variability rests at the heart of Marx’s use of the concept. Consequently, the concept of *metabolism* permits characterization of the sum total of a society’s reproductive activity, and allows distinction between various empirical-historical forms of human organization in terms of their fundamental relations to nature, the form of which depends on how they are embedded within a particular mode of production. Accordingly, a capitalistic or feudal mode of production may present many empirical instances of social-ecological metabolism, depending on the manner in which production is organized at local levels.

Drawing upon the works of soil chemist Justus Von Liebig, Marx sought to refute notions of “natural fertility” which had long dominated the classical political economy of Malthus and Ricardo, a contention which held that land rents were determined primarily by natural rates of fertility, whose spatial distribution was mere historical accident. Conversely, James Anderson claimed in his 1777 *Enquiry into the Nature of the Corn Laws*, that the property of fertility was in fact a historically varying function of human interventions and investments, such as drainage, irrigation, and other remedial works.10 Shifting the emphasis from abstract notions of “natural endowment” thus mandated a close analysis of the human-generated conditions and inequalities which gave rise to the distribution of fertility and productivity over space. Marx advanced the concept of metabolic rift in order to capture what he saw as the core spatial-ecological dynamic of capitalism; the imbalance of nutrients engendered by the removal of produce from rural sites of local production, to urban centers of consumption during industrialization, where nutrients embodied in agricultural produce were not repatriated into their place of origins, but rather lost in the urban waste system. The underlying mode of production of capitalism was thus central to understanding the dynamics of local production, fertility, and productivity throughout the industrial revolution: “[F]ertility is not so natural a quality as might be thought; it is closely bound up with the social relations of our time.”11

Clearly, capitalism and feudalism are not mere passive historical archetypes in the schema of historical materialism; they generate vastly differing dynamics of production from the macro-, to meso- and micro-spatial levels. The ecology of production under putative capitalism, for example, may be differentiated by the centrality of the market as mediator between producers and appropriators; and the acceleration of land-labor separation engendered by the enclosure movement, as a hallmark of primitive accumulation in industrializing Britain.12 In volume three of *Capital*, Marx characterized such market-oriented capitalist relations as ones which “produce conditions that provoke an irreparable rift in the interdependent process of social metabolism, a metabolism prescribed by the natural laws of life itself.”13 This dynamic, according to Marx, extended readily to the case of colonial Ireland: “For a century and a half, England has indirectly exported the soil of Ireland, without as much as allowing its cultivators the means for making up the constituents of the soil that had been exhausted.”14 Throughout the early-mid nineteenth century, Britain was a net importer of corn with Ireland as one of its main suppliers, a condition facilitated both by the protectionist corn laws, and the ability of direct producers to subsist on the prolific potato crop. So extensive was this export trade, driven by the imperatives of commodity production engendered by rental obligations under colonialism, that Ireland was often characterized as a “granary for the remainder of the United Kingdom.”15
The question remains however, as to how the concept of metabolic rift facilitates the task of illuminating the complex and multilayered socio-spatial structure of Ireland in the pre-famine period, characterized as it was by the coexistence of capitalism, feudalism, and crucially, agrarian communism as will be qualified below. Historical geographer Jason Moore has recently incorporated the concept of metabolic rift into an ambitious theoretical model of the *longue durée* of capitalism. This model builds substantially on Wallersteiner world-systems theory, which conceptualizes the macro-historical emergence of the conditions of metabolic rift in terms of the rise of global markets. Moore’s early work advances the concept of *systemic cycles of agro-ecological transformation* punctuating the long-term development of capitalism. He stresses the relevance of this concept for understanding the emergence of ecological crises in the twenty-first century; which Moore claims owe their origins to the transition from feudalism to capitalism in sixteenth century Europe (1450-1640). This perspective claims to move beyond accounts which seek to assign causation for long-term ecological change to individual, local phenomena such as imperialism, technology, or industry, focusing instead on the reorganization of global ecology in terms of the logic of capital.

Within this broad historical perspective, Moore asserts that primitive accumulation, or the dispossession of property under colonialism, be conceptualized as essentially *multi-scalar* insofar as the twin colonial imperatives of land consolidation, and the separation of producers from their means of production, underpin the emergence of capitalism at multiple organizational levels (i.e. at the level of individual farms, settlements, estates, and national balances of trade and debt). These processes, resulting in the profound town/country antagonism which features centrally in Foster’s accounts of metabolic rift, are therefore afforded broader historical attention as products of antecedent “series of successive historical breaks in nutrient cycling.” Moore’s approach therefore extends the periodization of metabolic rift across the “longue durée” of capitalism, by illustrating how agriculture had, in certain locations, become subordinated to the imperatives of capital long before the nineteenth century. The crucial contribution of Moore’s model however, is to orient us toward the immanent need for a sufficiently abstract theoretical apparatus, as well as specific empirical-historical enrichment in order to assess inequalities of resource distribution within countries at specific historical points, given that different modes of production are capable of structuring resource dynamics in a variety of inequitable ways. Moore’s abstraction does however, identify an important general ecological dynamic of capitalisms’ historical development—that of its need for intensification through land-grabbing (conceptualized by David Harvey as a “spatial fix”), whereby capitalist accumulation comes to depend on additional land inputs in order to upscale agrarian productivity.

Adopting a world-systems perspective thus augments our understanding of long-term socio-spatial change, by examining how the growth of capitalism was predicated centuries earlier on a crisis of feudalism, or “socio-physical conjuncture.” This crisis, whereby feudal systems which were based upon the political extraction of tribute in the form of absolute surplus encountered limits to expansion, thus necessitated the outward expansion of global trade in order to sustain levels of accumulation. Imperialist colonial expansion, driven by systemic limitations to accumulation under feudalism, thus gave rise to a condition of core-periphery dependency. Coercive extraction in peripheral countries and colonies (including those of Atlantic slavery, European second serfdom, and Ireland from the seventeenth century), provided grain and raw materials to core regions, facilitating the conversion of agricultural lands and the freeing of an urban labor supply to fuel emerging industrialization. Driven by a need for food and fuel, global expansion gave rise to a system of enduring ecological inequality under a new extractive global division of labor, conditioning the unequal movement and distribution of natural resources both within and between implicated core and peripheral nations. The effect of this global incorporation
upon local ecology and production in Ireland was to introduce not only an international dimension to resource circulation, but to further subordinate local ecology and production to market and imperialist imperatives, giving rise to a condition of “metabolic rift” in the form of diminished productive capacity as detailed above. Colonial Ireland was therefore central to this emerging international division of labor.

**The uneven transition to capitalism**

Ireland was not merely a passive agent caught amid the churn of history and the globalization of trade; in this sense, world-systems theory falls somewhat short in its depiction of the external, unidirectional influence of the world system on production in non-capitalist societies. As a result, it produces too sharp a distinction between capitalist and pre-capitalist forms of production, and implies that the process of capitalization consists merely of the external imposition of market relations upon local producers. Ellen Hazelkorn is typically credited with forwarding a perspective emphasizing Marx’s reading of Ireland’s capitalistic nature throughout this period. According to Hazelkorn, Marx’s most prominent commentaries on Ireland (those in volume 1 of *Capital*), centered on the question of Ireland’s transition from a feudal to a capitalist mode of production, a process exacerbated in the post-famine years by demographic collapse, clearance and consolidation. Hazelkorn’s interpretation of Marx’s reading of Ireland as a “capitalist economy in the making” centers on a number of key structural developments throughout the mid-nineteenth century:

(i) the dramatic shift in population which removed an otherwise latent surplus population from rural areas as a first step towards the formation of a rural and urban proletariat; (ii) the transference of agricultural priorities from tillage to pasture further reducing the necessity and livelihood of tenant-farmers; and (iii) the introduction of free trade in land [which] encouraged the concentration of land under an emergent rural bourgeoisie.

According to Desmond Greaves, this apparent contradiction of the law of accumulation, by which surplus production continued apace against the backdrop of a declining economy in Ireland, is accountable for Ireland’s unique colonial relationship with Britain. Hazelkorn rightly points out that when considered as a unit, capitalist accumulation continued beyond the borders of Ireland, owing to the appropriation of Irish surplus by Britain. Mathur and Dix have also suggested, in agreement with Hazelkorn, that Marx’s inclusion of Ireland under a discussion of the “General Law of Capitalist Accumulation” in *Capital* served to downplay simplistic interpretations of Ireland’s colonial relationship with Britain which emphasized the Act of Union as a formal determinant of Ireland’s capitalist status. His interpretation focused instead on how “the transference of capital, foodstuffs, and labor from Ireland to England formed an integral and necessary part of their respective economic growth.”

Although Hazelkorn’s is largely an unproblematic account of prevailing structural conditions, such a reading engenders a number of conceptual difficulties, owing to the predominance of the manner in which this surplus labor and agricultural produce were appropriated from the Irish tenantry; in Ireland, the universal role of the rent relation as mediator between landowner and laborer continued unabated long into the nineteenth century. In short, Hazelkorn’s three factors of structural change cited above are but one means of assessing the relative penetration of capitalism into Irish society, and but one set of levels according to which one may reckon the extent of capitalism. Others have argued that such a reading was precisely forthcoming in Marx, and that the issue is perhaps not with his specific rendering of the agrarian question in Ireland, but the manner in which others have interpreted it.
On this point, Slater and McDonough forward an alternative reading of Marx which emphasizes the feudal nature of Irish social relations under landlordism. Accordingly, they point to the gross annual rental of landlords in 1867 of ten million pounds, a valuation which incorporated almost two-thirds of the surface of Ireland. The political and economic subjugation of Ireland thus rendered a feudal rent relation upon direct producers beyond the parameters of capitalist free contract, under which rent became not a surplus above wages and profit as per capitalist rent, but rather a surplus above minimum subsistence requirements without profit. This extraction was in turn predicated upon the conquest of Ireland under colonization, which resulted in the eradication of the Gaelic order, confiscation of lands under the estate system, and the erosion of tenurial security under the penal code. William Petty estimated the net value of Irish rentals in 1670 to be £800,000 out of a total national income of £4,000,000, rising to £1,200,000 in 1687, and by 1779, Arthur Young had estimated a total yield of £5,293,000 for Irish rent. Under such a system, English grantees and their agents engaged in extensive leasing and sub-leasing in order to extract maximum rent returns, resulting in a “rapid growth in Ireland of leasehold tenure to an extent never experienced in England.”

In Ireland, rent was thus determined not by the vicissitudes of supply and demand (a moot mechanism given the extent of land monopolization), but by the amount of intermediary sub-tenancies which, in practice, doubled rent returns according to each successive division and stage of mediation between direct producer and landlord. Following the legalization of long leases for Catholic tenants in 1778, many lengthy leases were granted, with the lessees enjoying significant profits owing to an upsurge in tillage prices throughout the Napoleonic wars. Such was the profitability of tillage at this time that the estate of Lord Leitrim, let originally for £8000, was subsequently re-let by middlemen for £64,000, under leases of thirty years. With rent being set, not by the relative scarcity of land, but by a relation of force between direct producer and the person to whom rent-collecting was farmed, this exploitative relation has been described as extrac- economic, and as feudal. This feudal rent relation featured prominently as a hallmark of the Irish class structure, and as a primary mechanism of surplus appropriation.

At regional levels, the mere presence of such a developed cash nexus has unfortunately lured others to a deceptive acceptance of the presence of capitalist relations, and the work of Meiksins Wood epitomizes this strain of thought. Initially, Wood establishes the specific mechanism by which capitalism penetrates rural relations, by suggesting the transition from feudalism to capitalism be reckoned in terms of a transformation of property relations through dispossession, and the institution of the market as prime mediator, which assumes “an unprecedented role in capitalist societies, as not only a simple mechanism of exchange or distribution but the principal determinant and regulator of social reproduction.” With regard to Ireland, Wood draws a clear distinction between the attempts of the early sixteenth century plantations to institute a system of feudal subjugation upon the Gaelic order by military means, and later attempts of the Tudor monarchy to impose an alternative model of economic, political, and legal order based on revolutionizing existing social relations. Consequently, Wood characterizes these later efforts as successful in instituting a new imperial project, which sought to “subdue the Irish by transforming their social property relations and introducing agrarian capitalism.”

Given that it glosses over substantial internal complexities and ignores the feudal character of the rent relationship in much of Ireland, there is, then, little validity to the contention that: “The Irish model […] represented a pattern of imperial settlement different from other European empires, a form of colonial domination that replaced existing property relations with new ones driven by market imperatives.” Furthermore, the extensive presence of agrarian communism (to be established below), further challenges such characterizations as depend solely on the presence of markets, ignoring continuities in non-capitalistic forms of production. Yet, it is also
abundantly clear that historically, Ireland was integrated substantially into global markets. The introduction of the potato into the tillage of the Irish peasant, and its subsequent dominance in the diet of the agricultural laborer, was predicated upon its introduction from Britain’s American colonies. Consequently, although the assertion of market primacy in world systems theory appears overdrawn, its role as a key influence on the organization of production at various spatial levels should neither be neglected, nor elevated to the status of prime determinant.

In order to resolve this conceptual dilemma, the remainder of this paper establishes the extent of non-capitalistic communal forms of production within Ireland at this time, before detailing their integration into broader systems of feudal tenure, and capitalist exchange. As we will see, there is no inherent contradiction in such an approach—the socio-spatial structure of Ireland at this time requires an approach which emphasizes these complexities, in order to make sense of the manner in which production and productivity were both spatially distributed, and critically compromised, throughout the pre-famine era.

The extent of agrarian communism in post-medieval Ireland

The practice of farming in common or as joint leaseholders, was widely distributed across pre-famine Ireland; the historical ubiquity of this practice however, has remained a highly contested topic in Irish historical geography throughout much of the twentieth century. Building on the seminal works of Seebohm and Meitzen, Estyn Evans was amongst the first to suggest that, contrary to the former’s emphasis on dispersed or Einzelhof patterns of settlement as a long-standing feature of Celtic society associated with pastoralism, both nucleated and dispersed forms of settlement could be traced to the iron age, with evident continuities into the recent past. These nucleated village clusters consisted of a “joint-farm which was leased in common by the joint-tenants, or partners, who co-operated in the work of the farm, each contributing his share of the joint-rent.” Each tenant’s holding consisted not of a fixed quantity, but of a notional entitlement to a share in the lands of the commune: “The land of the joint-farm was held in rundale by which individual holdings, to assure equal quality as well as quantity, consisted of open plots and strips scattered through the arable land.” The extent of common holding in pre-famine Ireland is well substantiated by statistical sources of the time as indicted in figure 1 below, which maps the extent of common- or joint-holding within counties based on data from the 1845 Devon Commission. Shadings of common holding are overlaid with an indication of the extent of poverty within each county, measured as the total poor law valuation of county holdings divided by the county population. As may be seen, those areas of higher common holding were also of lower valuation. When decomposed further to poor-law union, of which there were 130 in Ireland in 1845, greater within-county variance may be found. Therefore, although 58% of the lands of county Mayo were held in common, for the Mayo unions of Westport and Ballina in the year 1845, 83% and 68% of lands respectively were held in common or joint tenancy. Physical identification takes us only so far however, and it is important to approach rundale not simply as a morphological oddity (i.e., as settlement nucleation), but also by the prevalence of institutions of communal governance. The works of McCourt in particular emphasized the tendency of rundale to wax and wane over time, with individual holdings devolving into communes over generations of subdivision, along with possible consolidation of former joint units. James Anderson also introduced a distinction between the institutional and the physical forms of rundale, suggesting that earlier forms of kinship grouping (perhaps more readily identifiable as potential survivals of kin-based communal governance), and more recent forms of collective leaseholding, both gave rise to the characteristically nucleated villages recognizable as rundale. Identification of the prevalence of rundale in terms of institutional criteria is far more difficult a task, relying as it does on corroboration not readily amenable to historical and statistical
Figure 1. Lands held in common or joint tenancy, and poor law valuation per capita, 1845.
record. However, there are a number of ways in which this verification may be accomplished. As argued above, the presence of communality was central to the socio-spatial identity of pre-famine Ireland, in tandem with a country-wide system of feudal rent, and the gradual encroachment of global trade networks—in the case of Ireland, vis-a-vis its trade in agricultural produce with Britain. The extent to which those nucleated settlements themselves consisted of institutions of communal governance—such as the allocation of land shares by communal council, or the deputation of village headmen—may instead be corroborated by briefly examining the coevolution of customary legal codes with those of various waves of colonization in the post-medieval period. This is an essential step, given that systems of farming based upon communal administration conferred a drastically different ecological dynamic than that of individually farmed units, owing to the collective exploitation of their resources, and the unique balance of tillage and arable engendered by communal share rotation, and grazing entitlement allocation.

**Communality, communal property, and institutional co-evolution**

According to Wylie, modern Irish land law owes its composition to a range of predecessors, including principles of English common law grounded in Norman feudalism, and English statute law enacted both by devolved Irish parliament, and by Westminster subsequent to the implementation of the Act of Union in 1801. Land tenure in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland must therefore be interpreted in context, as a cumulative product of successive waves of colonial influence, the inconsistent eradication of indigenous legal codes governing landholding, transmission and succession, political conflict, and changing local administrative structures. Legal practice, particularly throughout the early nineteenth century, was compounded by the administration of law both by institutions of the crown—such as justices of the peace, magistrates, and assizes—and by those of the manor courts. The latter of these did not administer English common law, and quite often sought restitution within the provisions of local customary code.

Despite this complexity, a number of key features of landholding may be extracted through a broad examination of the development of Irish tenure under the dual influences of indigenous Brehon law and the colonial apparatus, which permits some corroboration of the prevalence of institutions of agrarian communism under the rundale system.

Following the ascendance of James I to the throne of Britain in 1604, a proclamation was issued in 1605 by lord deputy Arthur Chichester declaring all persons of Ireland subjects not of their lord or chief, but of their British king. Crucially, this proclamation outlawed the indigenous Irish system of partible inheritance, known as gavelkind under Gaelic law, through a declaration by judges of the King’s Bench in Dublin that neither should be recognized or enforced in the king’s court. According to Irish law texts of the seventh and eighth centuries, indigenous landholding centered on kin-groups known as derbfine (true kin) which exerted legal power over their members, according to which each legally competent male of the kin-group was entitled to some degree of responsibility in the kin-land, or finitu. Indicative of the subservience of individual to collective, members were not permitted to sell shares of land against the wishes of their kin group, and in certain instances of transgression, the kin-group could be held liable for the offences of individual members. Sir John Davies, in his *Of the Lawes of Ireland* (c.1610) detailed how Irish lands were distributed amongst septs headed by local chiefs, under which lands were distributed periodically between sept members, according to the provisions of gavelkind.

Similar forms of collectivity in a pan-European context were noted by Coghlan, who remarked on the Romanian body of customary law, or *jus valachorum*, which bound tracts of land to individual villages as the collective property of their residents. Coghlan and Davies’ comments suggest that not only was such a system of collective holding and partible inheritance characteristic of many pan-European forms of kin-based social organization (of common Celtic origin in the
cases of Ireland and Wales), but that it also involved periodic division and cyclical reallocation of lands. Land share allocation under gavelkind thus exhibits notable similarities with the later practice of periodically rotating shares under the rundale system. In parts of Antrim and Cork at the end of the eighteenth century, Arthur Young remarked on the existence within these regions of “change-dale,” a practice which involved annual rotation of arable plots amongst community stakeholders. Contemporary accounts suggest that similar practices of rotation operated across certain regions of the Western seaboard, and in parts of Kilkenny and Fermanagh. Although a tenuous proposition owing to source prestige bias, Young’s observations at least suggest that the practice of gavelkind appears to have survived with some prevalence amongst the lower classes in customary form, following the eventual submission of the Irish nobility to primogeniture under British colonization. Consequently, the practice of periodic rotation in certain districts, as observed by Young in the late eighteenth century, is suggestive not of an institutionalized system of private holding, but rather of a co-existing mode of collective holding and share entitlement or usufruct, which Friedrich Engels argued was a feature of Celtic survival.

Other accounts corroborate the institutional extent of agrarian communism across Ireland, from the seventeenth- to nineteenth-centuries. Writing in 1682, Henry Piers remarked on such a system of division undertaken by the inhabitants of a Westmeath townland, who allocated shares in both their arable and pasture by lottery. Over a century later, Peter Knight remarked on a similar process of collective division observed in the townland of Killmore (Mayo), by which the inhabitants cast lots for the arable land of the commune, “every third year for the number of ridges each person is entitled to after the usual rotation is over.” These lots were typically of varying quality and scattered, “in different parts of the farm, so as to equalize the quality among the whole,—a ridge in a good field, one in an inferior, and one in a worse one.” Allocation of grazing entitlement on the village outfield was similarly decided by the qualitative measures of collops, “which originally meant the number of heads of cattle the farm could rear by pasture.” Therefore, in order to avoid overgrazing, each commune member was permitted to graze no more stock than his tillage area could support, thereby maintaining a delicate balance between grazing and fertilization.

On this basis, it may be concluded that although the object of Chichester’s 1605 declaration, and subsequent crown plantations, was to supplant the existing Gaelic order by undermining its indigenous legal code, it is clear from the preceding examples that there remained within the later rundale system, a remarkable degree of similarity—if not continuity—in local modes of land administration, tenure, and transmission which bear striking resemblances to gavelkind such as it operated under Gaelic law. Amidst the administrative structures of colonialism, there remained notable indigenous elements of some resilience, in various stages of development and devolution. Although Brehon law had begun to yield to the influence of ius commune (European common law) by the late medieval period, according to Kenneth Nicholls, its longevity was previously asserted by Frederick Gibbs. He suggested an historical link between the provisions of Brehon law, and the rundale system of the nineteenth century.

What traces did Brehon Law, though abolished by the Judges and the Lord Deputy, Sir Arthur Chichester, leave in the habits and sentiments of the people, and can any of those traces be observed at the present day? Of the custom of Tanistry we hear no more; but the custom of gavelkind long survived, reappearing, under English law, in the form of tenancy common down to the early part of this century; and it may still be traced in the love of holding property in families, in the tendency to subdivide the land, and in an unfavourable shape, in Rundale, where the tenement is made up of a number of scattered patches of each particular quality of the land.
In terms of Moore’s depiction of the centrality of the world system, the continued presence of gavelkind and subdivision is not difficult to comprehend in light of the surplus-maximisation imperative under which many landlords, estate administrators and agents operated. In order to maximize rent returns, long leases were initially granted to Irish tenants, some up to hundreds of years, or leases renewable for three lives, under which subdivision subsequently held free rein. Under such conditions, customary modes of partible property transmission could continue, uninhibited, amongst the tenantry. Into the nineteenth century, as the wars of empire raged between England and France, such lengthy leases were readily granted, owing to an upsurge in tillage prices throughout the Napoleonic wars. This practice of maximizing returns through increasing the absolute density of direct producers continued until the contraction of the domestic British grain economy at the conclusion of the Napoleonic wars, signaling the end of wartime price inflation. Eamonn Slater has argued the conceptual significance of the intermingling of possession and usufruct in typifying property relations under rundale. Accordingly, Slater suggests that “the rundale system of farming is not merely a system of commonage but a specific system of land tenure, which is determined by the inheritance patterns of gavelkind.”

On the basis of the foregoing discussion, it is clear that existing accounts have drastically overdrawn a dichotomous transition between capitalism and feudalism. Continuity and co-evolution, rather than discrete rupture, is the hallmark of the Irish experience. Furthermore, unravelling the socio-spatial distribution of Irish tenure in this manner has demonstrated the multilevel nature of the impact of the world-system. The Irish tillage system was inherently responsive to market signification throughout this time, as may be observed in the early eighteenth-century shift from tillage to pasture in Irish agricultural production. As the post-war grain economy contracted into the nineteenth century, a new imperative took hold in response to the shifting structure of economic incentives, giving rise to a post-war regime of consolidation. On the Nixon estates in county Donegal, tracts of upland commonage were enclosed for grazing, whilst on his estates, Lord Leitrim retained for his personal use 1130 acres of mountain commonage for sheep grazing, subsequently raising rents on his tenants’ arable plots. As market conditions shifted in favor of production regimes dependent upon large-scale grazing, rather than intensive, small-scale tillage; enclosure and consolidation sought to deprive rundale communes of their grazing grounds, and to realign the imperatives of landlordism away from a rental regime of maximum population density, toward one of consolidation.

In terms of local ecologies of production, the system of trade in produce between Ireland and Britain was underpinned, within certain regions, by a mode of production based not on individual holdings but on agrarian communism. In this way, producers retained a degree of autonomy over the organization of their means of production. How might we characterize the precarious ecology of this system of production, by which agrarian communism continued to exist under the rubric of feudal rent, whilst its surplus produce entered into markets determined by political-economic trends playing out far beyond its boundaries? In order to understand how the interaction of agrarian communism, feudalism, and capitalism resulted in a state of heightened ecological risk exposure, a condition characterized above as one of *metabolic rift*, I conclude by examining more closely the structure of Irish trade throughout this time. In doing so, I advance a conceptual model of the structure of Irish tenure during the early-mid nineteenth century.

A complex mode of production: the ecology and socio-spatial structure of pre-famine Ireland

As discussed above, the progressive devolution of the institutions of Gaelic society suggests that the rundale system constituted not only a mode of landholding conforming to the parameters of agrarian communism, but that it was capable of coexisting comfortably under the rubric of Irish feudalism. In this manner, a commune could exist under conditions of joint or
Figure 2. Socio-spatial structures of communality, colonialism, and capitalism in nineteenth-century Ireland.

collective lease, as a primary stage of mediation between landlord and tenant-as-collective, whilst controlling access to the means of production on the basis of devolved, indigenous legal code. Organization of access to the means of production here resides within the *community*, and such an understanding is critical for grasping the ecological dynamics of Irish agrarian communism. Figure 2 offers a provisional outline of this systemic relation, according to which, the socio-spatial nature of the model of landholding distribution proposed in this paper becomes clear. Rather than proceeding by detailing the spatial distribution of forms of formal-legal tenure, when attempting to reckon the ecological dynamics of pre-famine Irish agriculture, it instead makes sense to consider in abstraction, the intermixing of the various components depicted in figure 2. Consequently, we may conceive of local agricultural practice as contingent upon a potential combination of influences, in varying states of devolution or development, according to place and time.

The effects of the Irish feudal rent system and of the institutions of agrarian communism upon the character of local production are readily grasped; but what of the extent, and influence of the world system at this time? As noted above, the exacerbation of the town-country antagonism was central to Marx’s understanding of the macro-ecology of production under capitalism during the industrial revolution. The spatial extent of this relation had arguably transcended the narrow confines of English farming villages and industrial towns by the nineteenth century however, extending its reach through a growing demand for foodstuffs and raw materials sourced from colonies far afield. In his “energetic” analysis of industrialization, Alf Hornborg has attempted to quantify the world-systems’ growing demand for resource appropriation. Hornborg’s estimates demonstrate the extent of this ecological displacement in the North American British colonies, which facilitated the supplanting of domestic British agricultural labor to manufacturing, through the externalization of raw material production under imperialism. According to Hornborg, the appropriation of “1.1 million hectares of cotton fields in North America . . . meant the liberation of the over 6 million hectares in Britain that would have been require to generate the equivalent amount of revenue from woollen manufactures.”66
Figure 3. Lands held in common or joint tenancy (1845), and corn production (1847).
In the South American colonies, demands for precious metals in Europe fuelled a drastic reorganization of labor and village structure, as in Bolivia. The colonial administration accomplished this by instituting a system of draft labor (*mita*), which involved conscripting one in seven adult males for work in mining and textiles. A supply of labor was established by the colonists’ relocation of 1.5 million indigenous people, and the imposition of collective agro-pastoral systems based on commonage, community regulation and herding. In the case of Ireland, as with the Bolivian *mita* system, the spur of global market demand and the apparatuses of colony and market exerted their pressure on the organization of Irish production at settlement level. Figure 3 illustrates the continuing importance of marketized cash-crop production across all regions of Ireland, contrary to the subsistence model that others have fallen victim to. To varying extents, corn formed an integral part of peasant production, across areas with both high and low extents of common holding. However, both market and landlordism conspired to disrupt consumption patterns at settlement level; as a result, in certain areas, such as Clare Island in County Mayo, oats became eliminated from local diets and consigned entirely to the market in order to meet rent obligations.

Regarding the extent of Ireland’s trade in produce with Britain, Figure 4 reveals something of the volume of Irish agricultural output consumed beyond its borders. Total weights of Irish grain imported into Great Britain from 1805–1840 are tabulated in this figure at five-year intervals. Beginning from a base of 2,411 quarters (30.6 metric tons) of oat and oatmeal imports in the year 1800, oats display almost consistent growth across the tabulated time period, peaking at 2,037,885 quarters (25,881 metric tons) in the year 1840. Such was the relationship between British industrialization and the transfer of foodstuffs from its colonies that the proportion of British population engaged in agriculture fell from 90% in 1698, to 10% by 1881. Whilst figure 4 illustrates real growth in the volume of trade throughout this period, with significant consistency across all categories buoyed in part by the presence of the protectionist Corn Laws which exempted Ireland from import trade tariffs, figure 5 tabulates Irish grain as a proportion of total foreign imports, allowing estimation of the relative contribution of Irish produce to British imports. Figure 5 excludes English and Scottish grain processed through the Port of London over the period 1820–1840, permitting a cursory comparative assessment of the position of Ireland amongst other colonies.

Although in Figure 5 it is somewhat more difficult to discern trends, given likely year-on-year inconsistencies in import volume from colonies further afield, it may be observed that Irish oats comprised a peak proportion of 98% of foreign oat imports into Britain in the year 1832, with Irish barley peaking at 50% in 1824, recovering to 39% in 1836. Crotty’s analysis of Irish export data between 1698 and 1818 also notes a burgeoning export market throughout this period in both tillage produce and livestock, to the extent that by the early nineteenth century, Ireland enjoyed a profitable trade in pigs and pig meat with locations as far afield as Denmark. In the period immediately following Ireland’s formal colonization, marketization began to take hold as evidenced in the growth of the port towns of Belfast, Derry and Cork, and an increase in granted authorizations to hold town markets and fairs, with over five hundred taking place between 1600 and 1649. Between 1616 and 1625, the amount of wool leaving Youghal rose from 4,378 stones to 15,716. In short, Ireland’s integration into global markets vis-à-vis its close trading relationship with Britain, far from being a phenomenon of the late nineteenth century, was a consistent hallmark of its political and economic union.

**Conclusion: Ireland’s precarious pre-famine ecology**

The specific form of the Irish metabolic rift within the rundale system was the disruption of the agricultural cycle through the removal of agricultural produce from local sites of production.
Figure 4. Grain of Irish growth imported into Britain, 1805-1840 (metric tons).

Figure 5. Irish grain as a proportion of total British foreign grain imports, 1820 -1840.
As Ireland’s population continued to grow prior to the demographic watershed of the Great Famine, and as markets increasingly dictated that enclosure, rather than subdivision, was to prove for landlords the more productive use of landed estates, a paradoxical state was reached. The rundale commune’s lands, which were in many cases subject to continuous cropping without fallow, were forced to yield both subsistence and cash crops under conditions of increasing ecological stress. Given that the sale of agricultural produce was integral to the reproduction of the rundale through the realization of rent; a classic, albeit multi-scalar mechanism of metabolic rift came into play, whereby movements of produce off-site deprived the commune permanently of these repatriated nutrients, which were instead consumed in locations far from their site of production. The long-term effect of this process was a decline in productivity and output, particularly in the inter-famine period, during which “the great export of live stock and of various other kinds of agricultural products raised in this country . . . has tended for many generations, to cause a depletion of fertility which can only be made good by importing feeding stuffs and fertilizers, and bestowing constant attention on the land.”76

Few regions, even those of the classically isolated Atlantic “peasant fringe,” escaped the imperative of cash generation. Regarding the remotest parts of the rundale-dense barony of Erris, county Mayo, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Arthur Young remarked on how livestock trade and cash-crop sale formed an integral component of the local economy, thus bringing the occupants of this classical subsistence fringe into contact with the vicissitudes of the market:

[H]e was told “there is not a post-house, market town, or justice of the peace in the whole Barony.” Yet . . . Cattle were driven into the market at Ballinasloe. In 1802 MacParlan wrote that “in years when they escape a blast” the people of Erris “plentifully supply the markets of Newport and Westport with potatoes and barley.”77

Furthermore, in the context of earlier regimes of subdivision—engendered by the desire of agent and landlord for increasing rent returns according to the number of intermediary lessors, and the inherent tendencies of rundale toward subdivision and parcellization under partible transmission, the presence of the potato as a key subsistence crop facilitated an ever-increasing density of direct producers. Due to its prolific nature, its ability both to thrive on poor-quality soils and act as a primer for corn production, the potato yielded a sufficient stock of food to permit the tenant to produce his rental surplus in the form of cash-crops such as oats, on increasingly smaller plots.78 Gibbon notes that:

This attribute of the potato allowed the peasant’s subsistence to be produced with a minimal expenditure of labour in the same way as the abundance of its yield allowed it to be grown on a minimal area of land. But the point of thus economizing in labour and land was to free these factors for the greater production of the grain or butter or beef which made up the rent.79

Such was the extent of this intensification of productive activity and market orientation that Peter Gibbon refers to the presence of a “dual economy” of export-oriented cash crop and subsistence zones.80 Although this distinction may be somewhat overdrawn, it is clear that the net effect of the accumulation imperative was to push rundale to ever-marginal locations as consolidation took hold in response to livestock price fluctuation in the early nineteenth century.84 Despite this “Malthusian drift,” and its tendency to lead to the cultivation of an increasingly narrow range of crop varieties, the
preceding evidence demonstrates quite clearly that the hierarchical integration of rundale remained largely intact, albeit with a concrete labor process not readily explicable solely in terms of market imperatives.

The dynamics of these interactions between production, tenure, and trade, as detailed in figure 3, thus conspired to critically interrupt the agricultural cycle. Despite the attempts of the commune to counter declining returns with techniques such as the selective application of fertilizer, ridge cultivation, and the maintenance of an infield-outfield rotation, such measures were “inadequate to overcome the loss of nutrients from the tilled soil and thereby unable to repair the damage done to the nutrient recycling process by the metabolic rift. More nutrients apparently leaked from the ecological system than were replaced by the rundale members and this was manifested in the continuing decline in the fertility of the soil.”82 These conditions accelerated to a drastic tipping point in the pre-famine era, resulting in a loss of species diversity, and a state of increased connectivity and biomass density brought about by subdivision and land-use intensification83. Together, they define the specific socio-spatial character of the metabolic rift, such as it operated under Irish agrarian communism.

Contrary to a number of accounts cited above, the encroachment of capitalism did not necessitate an eradication of either the feudal or communal orders. Adopting a multilevel socio-spatial perspective thus avoids the pitfalls of characterizing production strictly in terms of single dominant relations and instead emphasizes the structural complexities which fed into the spatial distribution of regional production profiles, here characterized by an intermixing of elements of agrarian communism, feudalism, and capitalism. This paper has offered a theoretical template with which to think through the spaces of ecological risk which became rapidly entrenched in pre-famine Ireland. The empirical task of probing the specific structural, productive, and demographic characteristics that differentiated these regions within Ireland is already underway, and it appears that these regional differences played a key role in determining the spatial distribution of distress as the famine took hold in 1845.84 Furthermore, incorporating the dual informants of world system and metabolic rift has enabled us to look beyond the specifics of Irish locality, and to understand how the general characteristics of capitalization and marketization gave rise, across the globe, to similar patterns of coercive resource appropriation, and unique local modes of agricultural production. Ireland therefore remains a critical case for understanding the long-term historical dynamics of capitalism, the uneven incorporation of non-capitalistic societies within its boundaries, and the ecology of local production within these global structures and processes.

NOTES


9 See note 5 above.

10 James Anderson, An Enquiry into the Nature of the Corn-Laws with a view to the new Corn Bill proposed for Scotland (Edinburgh: Mrs. Mundell, 1777); Foster, Marx’s Ecology, 145.

11 Foster, “Marx’s Theory of the Metabolic Rift,” 375.

12 Ellen Meiksins Wood, “The Agrarian Origins of Capitalism” in Hungry for Profit: The


14 Foster, “Marx’s Theory of the Metabolic Rift,” 384.

15 Christine Kinealy, This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine 1845-52 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2006), 4.

16 Moore, “Environmental Crises and the Metabolic Rift.”

17 Ibid., 127


22 Ibid.

23 The Act of Union (Ireland), 1800, 40 Geo. 3, c. 3; Chandana Mathur and Dermot Dix, “The Irish Question in Karl Marx’s and Friedrich Engels’s Writings on Capitalism and Empire” in Social Thought on Ireland in the Nineteenth Century, ed. Seamas O’ Siocháin (Dublin: UCD Press, 2009), 97–101.


25 Slater and McDonough, “Colonialism, feudalism and the mode of production,” 29.

26 Ibid., 30.


30 Crotty, Irish Agricultural Production, 43-4.


32 Ibid., 97.

33 Ibid., 154.

34 Ibid., 155.


38 Ibid.

39 Devon Commission. Appendix to minutes of evidence taken before Her Majesty’s Commissioners of Inquiry into the state of law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland. Part IV. 1845 [672] [673] xxii, Appendix 94, 280–282.

40 Desmond McCabe, “Law, Conflict and Social Order in County Mayo 1820-1845” (PhD
thesis, University College Dublin, 1991); Flaherty, “Modes of Production, Metabolism, and Resilience.”

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62 Ibid., 293.


65 Slater and McDonough, “Colonialism, feudalism and the mode of production.”


68 Data on cash-cropping from Devon Commission, note 39 above. Figures for corn cultivation
are taken from: *Returns of Agricultural Produce in Ireland, in the Year 1847. 1847-48* [923], viii-ix
69 Kevin Whelan, *New Survey of Clare Island* (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1999).
70 *Further Returns relating to the Importation and Exportation of Corn, Foreign and Colonial; Of the Quantities of Grain of each Kind, distinguishing British, Scotch, Irish and Foreign, Imported into the Port of London, in Each Year, from 1820 to 1841. 1842 [18-1] xl, 59. Original quarter-weight units converted to metric tons for interpretation (2 stone = 1 quarter; 1 quarter = 12.7kg; 1000kg = 1 metric ton).
72 *Further returns relating to the importation and exportation of corn, foreign and colonial; Of the Quantities of Grain of each Kind, distinguishing British, Scotch, Irish and Foreign, Imported into the Port of London, in each year, from 1820 to 1841. 1842 [18-1] xl, 60.
75 Ibid., 138.
ABSTRACT: Language and linguistic expression are integral to formulating senses of identity and belonging for the individual. Transmission of language influences the character of such phenomena in terms of behaviour and relatedness. The circumstances of colonial Ireland and the concept of the colonial more generally, produced social, cultural, economic and political tensions. Contained within and throughout all these aspects was language use and in Ireland, an essential contrast between what Yeats believed was the oral language of the Irish and the lettered language of the English. Rather than a simple replacement of Irish with English, there was a contact zone in which orality and literacy complemented one another. Necessitated largely by the conditions of livelihood in the new scheme of things, this resulted in hybridity through features such as the performance of the increasingly popularised written language. Illustrated by literary examples of the time, its integration into traditional modes of behaviour tells more of quotidian adaptation than rigid opposition.

Language is an important aspect of identity, and the geography of linguistic affiliation has been used as a means of defining the limits of nations, as, for example, in Jones and Fowler’s interrogation, “Where is Wales?” Linguistic affiliation expresses what Lewis has described as geographies of human relatedness. But the use of language also reinforces a sense of belonging and can have an important influence on behavior, as Kaplan shows for Canada’s pluralistic society. The mutual development of the Irish and English languages in Ireland was inflected by class and colonialism and the study of this language geography illuminates the patterns of human relatedness and identity that were elaborated through that history of conflict, accommodation, and mixing. Colonialism produced what Pratt has referred to as a “contact zone,” characterized by hybridity and complex cultural negotiations. White has even written of a Middle Ground where, for a time, the balance of forces is such that interaction creates some features of a shared social order, including pidgin dialects spoken on both sides of the encounter. A particular focus of this paper is the relations between oral and literary language affiliations. In colonial contexts, and through the eyes of the colonizer, oral cultures have often been seen as somehow less civilized, and the patterns of human relatedness they sustain, dismissed as merely traditional.

These issues have a particular sharpness in Ireland where the Irish language and culture was, in its popular form, largely oral; written texts were the preserve of an elite of scholars, poets, story tellers, clerics, and clan chiefs. If English is the language of print and literacy, how then did such a language gain a hold in an Ireland defined by oral culture and an Irish language that had established itself along such channels? This is especially challenging if we imagine English literacy and Irish orality in opposition, as, famously, did William Butler Yeats. Learning to read and write through a system of formal education would initiate discourse and ideology but would require the complement of informality and the everyday beyond the schoolhouse to be
truly effective. In this paper, by examining aspects of the literary use of English, I show that the interaction was more complex than a simple replacement of Irish orality by English literacy.

While English was the language of literacy, in Ireland it developed along established oral lines to the detriment of the Irish language. For instance, the mid-eighteenth century Drapier’s Letters of Dean Swift addressing an elite literate class saw a populist message of independence reach beyond those classes that were directly addressed. Ironically enough, the language of independence was not Irish but English. Ideas and ways of thinking that ran contrary to colonial ideas could nonetheless find their voice in colonial language. A century later, with literacy becoming ever more firmly established, examples from John Keegan’s autobiographical The Boccaugh Ruadh and William Carleton’s autobiography illustrate how the circumstances of everyday life do not necessarily change, but the language of such circumstances do. Comparatively, typical storytelling and the idea of a gathering, recounted in Keegan’s case around a fireside and Carleton’s performing a play in a field, continue while the language of these events changes. Relating their respective stories, the book becomes a record and even a performance of such common, everyday events; its language and topics the source of conversation. English becomes the language with which to make a living and the language with which to express quotidian circumstance; but it does so by having first taken up central features of the oral forms of cultural expression and transmission.

Material and linguistic geographies

The English language, itself incorporated into the everyday, becomes necessary for making a living in colonial Ireland. Standardized words enable and guide the movement of currency. Language—by means of a subtle complementarity between old ways and new forms—is integral to the development of an imperial economy, directing the strands of everyday experience in terms of work, culture, and society towards the centralized state by means of education in literacy and the English language. This moves language use beyond merely commercial matters. For instance in a report of 1835, the commissioners on national education concluded that a teacher should show “obedience to the law, and loyalty to his sovereign; he should not only possess the art of communicating knowledge, but be capable of moulding the mind of the youth, and of giving the power which education confers a useful direction.”

Incorporation, resistance and adaptability

Despite this idealized rendering there was historical opposition and some measure of dissatisfaction. This is well shown in the case of Swift’s Drapier’s Letters, a collection of pamphlets written in the 1720’s as a reaction to the introduction of copper halfpence into Ireland. It lucidly illustrates the relationship between money and the printed word. Written on the questionable constitutionality of the coin’s introduction to Ireland, the efforts to standardize perhaps might well have served to unite an Irish rebellion rather than an imperial sovereignty. Nevertheless, though well received among the Irish citizenry, the pamphlets being written and published in English betray an irony. English was the means of mass communication; any idea of rebellion was more against ideas than the manner of their expression. In Swift’s case the problem was with colonial discourse and enlightenment ideas, bereft of an independent Irish quality, being foisted upon the Irish populace. For cohesion or acceptance of some degree of sovereign conditions, both inducement to a livelihood and room for idiosyncratic expression in adapting to the conditions of the same livelihood would be required. Vitally though, Swift realized that language, politics, economics, and culture were interlinked and with the increasing proliferation of books and printed material—such things were bound up with the ideals of the imperial state. Formal education, such as that illustrated in the commissioners report above, a century after Swift had
communicated his guidance in literary terms, demonstrated an Irish society increasingly growing accustomed to literacy by the functional necessity of adaptability.\textsuperscript{12}

The old man who becomes a focus for a good part of Keegan’s story published a few short years later, finds himself out of touch, without formal education in discourse and language. His adaptability is derived from the mechanics of orality together with a predisposition towards seeking functionality within society. The reconfiguration of existing modes of organization is achieved through standardization and commonality.\textsuperscript{13} Vitally though, while the language becomes common, the means of its development depends upon pre-existing systems illustrating a complex interaction of power. While the colonial state can exercise power, its reception is dependent upon the power of tradition among the colonized to exercise malleability. Language informs the geography in the way land is understood while geography informs the language in the process of an idiosyncratic malleability.

In about 1920, Leonard Woolf, fairly anti-imperial in his outlook, published an analysis of economic imperialism entitled \textit{Empire and Commerce in Africa}. He reasoned that, quite apart from issues of morality, “the power and organisation of the individual State should be directed against the world outside the State for the economic purposes of the world within the state.”\textsuperscript{14}

\textbf{Standardization and states}

Continuing briefly in the vein of reason and mechanics, it may be asserted that power requires a tangible outward movement. That is, power, for it to function at all, must be exerted over something beyond a thing itself. If it is not exerted over something, if it is not felt or wielded by force or subtler—even subconscious—means, then it ceases to be; it is in its essence dialectic. Whatever the manner of its manifestation, it requires a multiple to function. Its functionality depends upon some change or alteration, some effect on a constituent. Through the interaction of people and land, such effects manifest themselves territorially, socially, culturally, politically or economically. Distilling these effects independently from the complexity of a singular collective is difficult indeed.\textsuperscript{15}

The idea of the nation-state is a good illustration of a singular entity formed in the interactive space of people and land. The character of the space is in the idiosyncrasy of power combinations.\textsuperscript{16} Such idiosyncrasy emerges in dialect through the blurred lines of the broader effects mentioned above. Standardization need not mean exactness; the effect is one of complementarity through continuity and change in the complex interactions of humans and land. Discourses on land management and organization—especially where integral to livelihood— Influence the way in which people interact with the land they inhabit and the way a necessary discursive response blurs the lines of culture and identity. In other words, the interaction between people speaking English and people speaking Irish was mediated by, among other things, their shared activities in transforming land. If land and ideas regarding the use of land are reorganized through the influence of a colonial power, as they were in Ireland, then to function in the reorganized territory and to understand its discourses purely from the point of functionality, it is necessary to communicate. A close engagement with the texts of Keegan and Carleton shows that, though there was a change in language use, both in verbal form and literate manner (from Irish to English); there were elements of meaningful continuity in oral modes of learning and dialect (what has been called Hiberno-English).

\textbf{Land and language}

In a colonial vein, power most conspicuously takes the shape of organization and rearrangement of purpose through land and people.\textsuperscript{17} In the evolution from feudalism to capitalism for instance, the purpose of the colonized is directed from the subsistence of itself to the world of the colonizer and a world of markets, commerce, and profit. This merchant capitalist
experience encompassed a novel way of managing resources, economy, and space; separating producers from means of production, transforming labor and natural resources into marketable commodities. Consequently, the territorial emphasis of the state was of vital importance, creating profits with which a world—that is the people, societies and institutions within the territory—could be ostensibly improved and civilized. Such ostensible ideas took the form of new literate language that imperially combined with oral practice to further enable a pervasive information technology.

The theme of combination is integral to the capitalist system as understood by Wallerstein: “Free labour is the form of labour control used for skilled work in the core countries whereas coerced labour is used for less skilled work in peripheral areas. The combination thereof is the essence of capitalism.” In much the same way as Gaelic Irish oral traditions would be subsumed into a literate world, Ireland’s subsistence plot holders would find themselves unwieldy components of a modern commercial system, continuing in the manner of subsistence but changing for the terms of the market.

In large part due to literate information technology, merchant capitalism established connections—global links which facilitated agrarian capitalism. The produce separated from producers enters an enlarged trade network rather than staying with a local or subsistence producer. The challenge is to apply this mode of thought, generated in a new language within the world of the imperial state, to the world beyond. It is applied not only to the world beyond but in the world beyond—in among the local places, creating absorption through relevance and use. Initiated through print and dissipated through orality, this linguistic absorption illustrated the efficiencies of imperialism, in principle very much like colonial territorial systems built upon indigenous and ecclesiastical ones. The circumstance was less abolishment and enforcement than continuity and change with practicality and incentive bringing about a shift in priority from tradition to modernity.

Money and maps

Much of the success of the colonial enterprise and the capitalist mode of production it champions depends upon order and fixity, upon an area of land that contains people rather than a people that contains an area of land. Papering a quantifiable territory with information through formal education and informal learning sees a linguistic and discursive standard emerge. Standardization necessitated by the range of the market economy and effected through the rise of a monetary economy enabled an expanding interregional and foreign trade. This would ultimately see the usurpation of common rights and pressure placed upon a peasant class. This in turn resulted in a modern structure of landlords (owners) tenant farmers (renters) and landless wage laborers all dependent upon this standardized system. The gathering of valuable land and territory beyond the state by legal and political means and configuring it to the purposes of the world within the state requires standardization of money, measurement, and—most importantly of all in terms of effecting a standard—thought and language. There was a growing discourse around best practice in the use of land and the arrangement of people and resources. For this discourse to grow at all, communication is required beyond a basic legal claim to ownership of a quantitative space to a place sanctifying the qualities of a market economy.

In the case of Ireland and its relationship with the English state, this had a number of implications. Firstly, English was the language of the new capitalist world—a world of towns, markets, and trade. Due to a separation of produce from producer, money was required to live and a commonality of language was therefore required, a standardization of words that expressed functionality in the new market economy. One of the efficiencies of the capitalist mode of production was creating value out of materiality such that the printed word in the
form of a material book or pamphlet for instance, was a product that could be practically and efficiently traded in a capital market. This was in contrast to spoken words that (save perhaps in the case of a professional storyteller) could not. Words, in printed form saw the creation of a print industry which supplied a growing necessity for literacy.\textsuperscript{23} This had implications for a culture whose means of communication was primarily oral; it involved a separation of discursive produce and producer. If the land and territory is functionally keyed into a literate discourse, the initiative of oral tradition is lost in a widening chasm between those steeped in folk traditions and a land that is increasingly unreceptive to them. Functionality in the relationship between people and land saw a sensory expansion to include sight rather than a shift from sound to sight. The words sighted were not Irish words, but English words, making the functionality of sight dominant. Consequently, the written word caused the traditionally spoken Irish word to retreat, fundamentally altering the geographical relationship between Irish territory and Irish people.

\textbf{The pragmatism of print}

Printed words, having the power of economic functionality, exceeded the insular and indigenous cultural power of the native tongue. If we talk of an Irish state for instance and the growth of trade, of foreign markets within which Ireland had a vital strategic purpose, the terms of commonality had expanded wildly. Irish was no longer a common language, befitting a nation or a “world” as Woolf might have called it. The particular characteristics of an Irish nation in terms of myth, memory and public culture are challenged. If the idea of a nation-state is an idea that fuses ideas of community and territory, then the value of the territory supersedes the value of the community. With a thriving economy in the second half of the eighteenth century and a premium placed on Irish goods beyond the boundaries of the island, a similarly high premium was placed upon literacy as a means of conducting trade in the towns and markets, the nucleus of territorial value and discourse.

Commonality in language provides access to information and the incentive towards commonality is livelihood. In this respect the power of words and the cultural, social, and ideological cache they carry is altered and so the dissemination of discourses of civilization; improvement and aspiration follow on. As Fabian explained: “A language never spreads like a liquid, nor even like a disease or a rumour.”\textsuperscript{24} The momentum is rather more the other way and people spread towards a language, so that there must be acceptance and will. This will enables complementarity since the means of learning beyond the formality of the schoolhouse rely on pre-existing ways. It is not so much that the language spreads, but that the people spread into the world of the language for livelihood and the sight of improvement. As Ó Ciosáin noted: “[A]n ability to read was essential to the success of even small-scale farmers or weavers.”\textsuperscript{25} The question was how to generate success and livelihood out of existing ways and means.

That information could be mined in reading material made print a valuable resource among a growing population of literate consumers, formally educated in the culture of the Modern English State. This in its way led to an attempt at reformation of popular culture and an inculcation of standardized bookish order and orthodoxy rather than the intangible, diffuse orality of myth, magic and superstition.\textsuperscript{26} Such things obstructed the channels of statecraft and efficiency of production. Tradition and folk memory though, would see reformations reaching only the heights of an attempt since ritual, habit and systems of belief long held were often difficult to obscure with modernity. Though the incentive was now to make a living—to earn and accumulate—the pull of the past and the traditions held within its speech were, and are, continual. In many ways the oral traditions feed into a literate one, lending meaning to use.
Literature and the oral tradition

About the time of Leonard Woolf’s comment on how the power of the state should be wielded for the use of the world within the state, W. B. Yeats, with an interest in the meaning of folk tradition and myth, presented the situation of the Irish poet by contrasting the spoken knowledge of Irish stories with the written knowledge of English literature. For Yeats, the relationship was an antagonistic one where old geographies of meaning gave muffled rattles within new geographies of use. The incentive to functionality challenged old imaginings:

Irish poetry and Irish stories were made to be spoken or sung, while English literature, alone of great literatures, because the newest of them all, has all but completely shaped itself in the printing press. In Ireland today the old world that sang and listened is, it may be for the last time in Europe, face to face with the world that reads and writes, and their antagonism is always present under some name or other in Irish imagination and intellect.27

The challenge to Irish imagination and intellect was a challenge to place names, memories, stories, and songs. The loss and sense of separation between people and place would inspire Yeats to describe the people of Galway as living “upon these great level plains . . . a community bound together by imaginative possessions, by stories and poems which have grown out of its own life.”28 If one can talk of character, then the storied character of a place like the Galway plains of which Yeats wrote is elided through a standardization effected in no small part by formal education. This education would center on books and the essential skills of reading and writing. To be learned and scholarly is to be literate. The language crafted in the printing press, to shape the character of occupation and habitation in new ways, symbolizes civilization, and improvement. Lore and the past became the preserve of old folks, wondrous in their way but lacking the practical virtues of modern use. This in turn encouraged a pragmatic neglect of the language among institutional bodies of the time, marginalizing the Irish culture of older people as mere myth and legend.

The imaginative possessions of which Yeats spoke were, and are, increasingly characterized by dependence upon preservation as opposed to the free perpetuation of old ways. The oral past seeks preservation in increasingly literate minds. This serves to create an oral present. Yeats’ lament is more for matter than form. The work of the artist in language is not simply to show things already revealed, but to explore the possibilities of the language in a broader framework, be that framework in the shape of poetry or other narrative styles. In Yeats’ time, a great many possibilities were lost with a dominant language of print. A very particular set of ways to express a particularly Gaelic Irish generative pattern of culture, identity, and imagination were lost. Places and the words used to render such places beyond earth and stone were steadily decaying.

Stories and lore around traditional issues such as places and names were no longer things in a proper time and place. Removed from such propriety, they become fossilized. In state management, one should strive to be logical and rational, with a place for everything and everything in its place. Things learned and ways of learning continually veer away from what Yeats acknowledged as the vibrancy of stories and folk memory. Literacy and reading feed into social convention, crafting something like an oral literature. Such complementarity results in the accretion of new meaning upon a modern sense of use. Geography, in the sense that it is something crafted in the relationship between human and land, was changed utterly with the influence of imperial discourse. The terms of validity in such a relationship were written anew. The way places were written about, and the very fact they were written, created a new imaginative space in the gaps of an increasingly established sense of belief.
Increasingly, the burden of proof of validity fell upon the bearer of folk tales, particularly where the teller was from the oral culture. Laoisman John Keegan’s recollection of his youth in *The Boccough Ruadh, A Tradition of Poorman’s Bridge* was written in 1841, a good many years before Yeats felt compelled to comment on the situation of orality and print and presents just such a scenario. It illustrates a sense of complementarity, but orality seems to occupy a place of lesser status. Reading from a statistical survey, Keegan finds the meaning behind a place-name has gone unrecorded. At this point an old man claims knowledge of the story behind the name. The richness of the storied old world has the power to beguile and astonish beyond modern expectation, illustrating a shift in the expectations of normality in a relationship between people and land. Lore and folk memory are astonishing in their detail because of their superfluity and imaginative luxury in an age where they find themselves treated more as cultural enhancement than as cultural establishment. When the old man raises laughs with his indignation at the failure of a book to recount such details, it illustrates a disparity between past and present senses of value.

The fireside gathering had arrived at and necessitated the introduction of the statistical survey when the “old crone who had astonished us with the richness and extent of her fairy lore” ran out of material: “[T]he quantity of earthly spirits she had put in, entirely put out all memory of un-earthly spirits, and sent her disordered fancy, all confused as it was, wool-gathering to the classic regions of *Their-na-noge*.” When she finishes her storytelling, the author picks up a book, a copy of Sir Charles Coote’s *Statistical Survey of the Queen’s County*. Commenting on the questionable ability of such a work to entertain, the author declares he is “well aware that the dry details of a work professedly and almost exclusively statistical were little calculated to amuse or interest such an audience.” Quite apart from issues of class, such a comment indicates a distinction of purpose. The book establishes knowledge of a kind that might require the complementarity of Yeatsian Romantic lore.

The author nonetheless ploughs on and reads a passage concerning a bridge local to the house: “Poor-man’s Bridge over the Nore was lately widened, and is very safe, but I cannot learn the tradition why it was so called.” The old man sitting nearby listening to the reading, comments indignantly on this point. For the cataloguer or the statistician, the bridge is interpreted in terms of improvements and safety, an established way of knowing in much the same way as we can talk of an established church. The name and how it came to have such a name as The Poor Man’s Bridge are but embellishments, entertaining but of no real value. For the old man, the exact opposite is the case. His way of knowing the bridge is through its history and beyond that a community of knowing, such as Yeats later described for the plains of Galway, accessed through its moniker: the improvements rendered are rather more secondary and speak increasingly to a new generation.

“*He cannot learn the tradition of Poor Man’s Bridge-inagh!*” said the old man with a sneer; “faith, I believe it not; I’d take his word for more than that. But had he come to me when he was travelling the country making up his statisticks, I could open his eyes on that subject, and many others too.”

Some of those present laughed outright at the old man’s gravity of manner as he made this confident boast.

“You need not laugh—you may shut your potato traps,” said the old man indignantly “Grand as he was, with his gold and silver, and his coach and horses and servants with gold and scarlet livery, I could enlighten him more on the ancient history and traditions of our country than all the *boddaghs* of squireens whom he visited on his tour through the Queen’s county.”
There are a number of significant points in this passage. Firstly there is the distinction between the elite statistical writer with the trappings of capitalism as imagined by the old man, and the popular culture of the peasant class from which he might easily have learned the story of the bridge. Secondly, there is a distinction between the old man and the younger people, who laugh at the old man’s seriousness. The confidence of the old man in his qualitative knowledge is incongruent with the certainty of statistics. While Keegan presents the scene almost facetiously and the old man appears almost a caricature, the exaggeration, if we assume that there is one, is telling. For the old man there is a disparity between the manner in which he professes his knowledge and the manner in which it is received. Yeats’ idea of a collective imaginative possession appears more the deluded ramblings of an old man out of touch. Finally, though the tone of the old man’s utterance of ‘Queen’s County’ goes unknown for the reader, the old man uses the language of the state, the Queen’s English. Its use by such a character illustrates a popularization of the language at the time, at least in terms of speech if not quite literacy. Readings such as that presented in Keegan’s account encourage a dissemination of the language through a removed literacy. Literacy provides a source for broadcasting the language. If one can read, there is the potential to read to someone. A figure such as the old man presented by Keegan picks up the language of the new system in a familiar manner of storytelling. In the writing and reported speech there is a very real sense of the Irish and English contact zone. Although expressing a facility with the language, Keegan’s peppering of the text with Irishisms shows an engagement on the fringes of commonality in the shape of dialect and a level of contact between the languages that stops short of bilingualism. This is perhaps even to the extent of excluding a literary elite, well-read and formally educated in the Queen’s English. With echoes of Swift, there is a subtle advantage given to Irish readers familiar with colloquialisms and turns of phrase showing perhaps a broader, more enhanced understanding than a purely formal perception might allow. An enhanced functionality with the language of standardization and quantification in the everyday requires adaptation rather than obliteration; opposition or recalcitrance are ultimately self-inhibiting since one is depriving oneself of the means to be functional: the shared end of systems old and new.

In the passage quoted above, Leonard Woolf continued after his assertion of state action to comment upon its opponents who show that they unconsciously support the system they attack, illustrating more a difference in means than in end. The support is perceived to be unconscious because the ultimate goal of functionality within society is the same. The scene in Keegan’s *The Boccaugh Ruadh* illustrates that English is the language of the majority while Irish is in the minority, a reversal from the previous century. The necessity to survive, thrive and make a living was and is, continual. The means of achieving that end were at this point beyond transition from traditional to modern, not quite perhaps paradigmatically marked but significant enough to bring about a scene such as Keegan presents us with. The old man requests at one point for the account of the Poor Man’s Bridge to be read again, indicating that though he might not be literate, he is nonetheless proficient in English albeit a form peppered with idiosyncrasies like “inagh”, illustrating more a change in source than of flow. The words of the book seep into the language of speech, changing subtly what one speaks about but not necessarily how or why one speaks, making for a confluence of orality and literacy.

The old man, for all his sneer and indignation at Coote’s lack of folk knowledge, still speaks the language, rendering the landscape, superficially at least, in the terms of the colonist. All those in the house are effectively English surrogates by virtue of the “new tongue.” The invocation to “shut your potato traps” illustrates that ancient history is indeed that, something no longer interesting or relevant. The potato, at the time something common and typically Irish in the colonial context, in turn perhaps amplifies a perceived view of the Irish as insignificant and simple. The old man leaps to the English language and its received contemporary codifications,
distancing himself with the self-importance of one who might dish out such a scolding and warning those who would laugh at his tales not to get ideas above their station. In doing this, he accepts the new scheme of things almost despite himself, ironically belittling the qualities of his own local knowledge in the process and the authority he might claim with it.

If the contrast between Ireland and England is, as Yeats might put it, one between speech and print, then storied speech is no longer relevant, while the things read in black and white are. In addition, there is the question of authority. The printed word holds sway over the rambling tale and perhaps most pointedly of all, such sway is held in the most intimate of homely communicative spaces, at the hearth. The channels of communication are straitened in print and the technologies of organization and quantification see an efficiency that is not removed but increasingly intimate in its administration, percolating throughout public and private spheres. The old man’s address shows an acquiescence of sorts in his acceptance of the new scheme of things, proclaiming his authoritative local knowledge yet dealing his words and more particularly his barbs, in the currency of the colonial world.

While Keegan’s rendering of the story may have a touch of reassurance about it, witness Ó Ciosáin’s valid observation that such accounts of a peasant class were designed to convince middle and upper class readers of the feasibility of popular reform. The class system befitting a colonial world might well be progressing and the swipe to “shut your potato traps” records this awareness of societal structure within the popular classes. The oral tradition of folklore, myth and stories is perhaps seen as primitive and simplistic in light of progressive reason and rationality and this is a view shared among elites and lower classes. Print facilitated the communication of the colonial order and its success both in popular terms and among the elites. The possibility of a more typically English social and economic structure to replace the archaic chiefdoms may appear enlivened.

Given the forum for publication in the short-lived *Irish Penny Journal*, the account may well be illustrating a more subtle cause, a lament for the decline of storied tradition and forms of knowledge ostensibly laughed off in company but perhaps quietly valued for the enhanced functionality a blended Hiberno-English language might afford. The English written word could become a quiet product of resistance where Irishisms are a means to befuddle and confuse. Eleanor Ruggles’ account of young people fooling Gerard Manley Hopkins with Irishisms is in this vein. Such a display of subterfuge would illustrate that it was not beyond a colonial official to fall into a native trap. The conditions of dialect and hybridity enable a linguistic challenge to authority, be it in the perceived self-importance of an old man trying to assert himself in a new system or a state official trying to assert himself in an old one. In its way this can function as something of a leveler, demonstrating different, but perhaps equal values in terms of storied quality and statistical quantity.

This sensitivity to language and its workings in the colonial system may be likely given the journal’s founder George Petrie’s active interest in Irish antiquity. The work of Petrie and O’Donovan, among others, with the Topographical Department of the Ordnance Survey would certainly support a valued approach to storied antiquity but it reinforces a developing literary nature and written record, one materially recovering the living breath of oral tradition but espousing philosophies of quantification, classification, fixity, and order. For the purposes of a market it separates product from producer but also records the inter-play of words for posterity where orality may struggle.

Although there were other similar journals, the brief run of the *Irish Penny Journal* through 1841 might hint at a limited demand for topographical description and the luxuries of lore. However, that is not to say there was not a sensibility regarding preservation and distribution of oral knowledges in literary forms. Indeed much as in the spirit of Swift’s *Draper’s Letters*, Keegan
too was of a nationalist inclination and would be of the same company as the nationalist poet, James Clarence Mangan. In Keegan’s obituary printed in *The Irishman*, the passing of “his friend and fellow poet James Clarence Mangan” some weeks before was immediately noted.³⁹ Gaelic oral tradition is not without its worth but the language of improvement and the discourses that follow it are hewn from English.

Discourses of landholding, production, and profit are more relevant and practical than myth and memory. Stories and scenery do not provide a means of survival. This passage illustrates a societal transition in terms of practice, focus, and the means of expression. When speech and talk burn themselves out around the hearth, the book inveigles its way in. While there may be some resistance to the skills and arts of quantification and “statisticks,” especially demonstrated when the author doubts that Coote’s account would be amenable to “such” an audience, there is a grudging acceptance. The old man, for instance does not actively resist the reading, he does not demand it be stopped but, in fact, asks for it to be read again. The resistance is a passive one. Quite apart from anything else, a book such as this has a presence in the house. Though the books may be few, there are nonetheless books, and books of a type such as Coote’s. The purpose of the old man’s knowledge needs defending in a new world of books, letters, and improvement that is not without practical benefit. The benefits of knowing in the English way and expressing that knowledge in the English way outweigh the benefits of knowing in the Gaelic way and so also the way in which that way of knowing is transmitted. To know and to be open to knowing requires a cause. Here, the cause is functionality. Seeking this functionality creates knowledge and enlightenment. Finding the knowledge requires literacy which in turn feeds speech with new words and new language, crafting new experiences of the local and beyond that, in the capitalist world, a demand and a trade.

In support of such a market, much of the success of Coote’s account and the lack of an energetic, articulate defense against it is precisely because it shares a vital element with the old man’s account; the common element is one of locality. The old man does not criticize what is written but rather what is left unwritten and unrecorded. While statistics reflect a national discourse, they are locally specific and therefore relevant. The two ways of knowing the local area and the specific feature of the bridge, are simply two different ways of knowing the same thing. So, there is the creation of new knowledge, a new localized, elite knowledge that trumps old knowledge in its relevance. New roots are taking hold, perhaps lacking in the subtleties of meaning but resplendent in use. The oral tradition through which the old knowledge was related suffers as the new knowledge is transmitted in a different way. Vitally though, there is an intermediary in reading aloud that retains the practice of old knowledge, therefore retaining the habit or the ritual but changing the material. In the case of Keegan’s story, a literary form presents itself as a written account of the old, oral, way of instruction. Literate minds can access orality but oral minds cannot access the literate, therefore creating a demand for literacy as a skill. Facilitating this demand in the eighteenth century, Ó Ciosáin asserted that “schools were the principal response to a demand for literacy.”⁴⁰ In addition to formal education there was the more informal and independent approach which supplied this demand, arguably more successfully than the formality of the school house.⁴¹

The whole exchange of *The Boccaugh Ruadh* illustrates another aspect of a distinction between Irish orality and English literacy. There was not an immediate paradigm shift from orality to literacy; rather there was a co-existence of sorts. The dissemination of printed material very often created the subjects of orality or, an oral literature as it were. Reading aloud too, created the conditions for informal education. From about the same time as Keegan’s *The Boccaugh Ruadh*, William Carleton’s story “The Hedge School” includes a disapproving listing of chapbooks studied in the schools of the author’s youth, material considered of quite an inferior
sort to Coote’s *Survey of the Queen’s County*. Among these was a play called *The Battle of Aughrim*. Though studied in the hedge school, the effects ripple outward from child to child by the virtue of knowing ‘by heart’. Therefore orality interweaves with literature where new material feeds traditional ways. Carleton (who, like Keegan, had written for the *Irish Penny Journal*) recalls the experience. There is desire to learn and its cause is simply a child’s sense of fun. Literature forms part of that experience and throughout, Carleton finds himself with a purpose directing children in their roles, part of which direction involved learning through reading. The core skill of the oral tradition—memory—is of vital importance here. The free perpetuation of English as a language of meaning, beyond mere use, comes less in literacy than it does in the imagination the words conjure. Literacy may have initiative but orality ensures continuance.

The English language becomes part of the imaginative mental life. The language of letters grows to a position of dominance through pragmatism and societal use but it also grows in a more subtle way, utilizing the spirit of an olden Gaelic oral culture. For Carleton in the following passage there is a mix of orality and literacy. He reads *The Battle of Aughrim* to the point where he can recite in the tradition of old, if not in the language of old.

I had *The Battle of Aughrim* off by heart from beginning to ending. This came to be known, and the consequence was that, though not more than ten years of age, I became stage director and prompter both to Catholics and Protestant amateurs. In the mornings and in the evenings such of them—and there were not a few on both sides—as could not read spent hours with me attempting to make themselves perfect in their parts. It is astonishing, however, what force and impetus such an enthusiastic desire to learn and recollect bestows upon the memory. I had here an opportunity of witnessing this, for the quickness and accuracy with which they prepared themselves was astonishing.

This piece from Carleton’s autobiography is revelatory in a number of ways, especially in terms of religion and education. It also tells us something about the elusive forms of ritual. If the generative pattern of culture in a pre-literate world is orality and the formation and promulgation of an Irish culture was disseminated along those lines of ritualistic speech and performance, conditional on an inherited framework, then for any language to succeed culturally, it must possess a ritualistic or habitual malleability. That is to say, the generative pattern of culture shifts from an oral one to a literate one but the transmission of the language of literacy is conditional on patterns of orality. The question of “what” may have changed: in Carleton’s instance a printed copy of *The Battle of Aughrim*. But the question of “how” possesses continuity in a persistent ritual of orality, leading to a sense of complementarity between orality and literacy. Orality and literacy encourage one another in terms of habit and ritual: a habit and ritual which find regeneration in education. Children are taught to read in the schoolhouse and then beyond the schoolhouse, they speak and perform what they have read, thereby encouraging the skill of reading to culminate in a microcosmic manifestation of Woolf’s assertion of the logical mechanics of statecraft discussed earlier.

Irrespective of moral and ethical concerns, if, as Woolf suggests, the power of the state should be directed at the world beyond for the benefits of the world within, then there must be some possibility of benefit. In the case of the Irish in colonial Ireland, there was less prospect of benefit than the pressing necessity of mere maintenance. In order to maintain and continue a standard of living, there was an obligation to be proficient in the new language of print. If the world beyond was guided towards the world within more in terms of produce than mode of production, then the guidance of that produce was channeled through markets. It was therefore
necessary for the small farmer and the cottier to understand the language of the market in order to ensure continued subsistence. In the case of Keegan’s autobiography discussed in the course of the paper: the discourses of education, the idea that one might be learned, the idea of practical value, had established themselves in aspirational terms at least. The old language and the stories that comprised the folktales of old now served as archaic enhancement within literate culture, rather than as continuity within the oral culture. The loss of such material would cause Yeats to lament the character of Irish identity in the form of its imagination and storied communities.

Though there was undoubtedly loss and perhaps a lack of cultural incentive to continue these traditions among lower classes, such that their preservation would ironically enough depend on the literate world of antiquarianism, there was a survival of the forms of the oral tradition. With the example of William Carleton’s autobiography we see an established literary tradition but we also see that language of literacy echoing out along the old storied lines of orality. While the material spoken of may have changed, the way in which it was spoken of was preserved. In such ways there is a complementarity at work between orality and literacy.

The relationship between orality and literacy, as a component of the colonial world more generally, provides an insight into colonial dynamics. If there is complementarity then it is a complementarity typically defined by tensions between tradition and modernity. Put more specifically, these tensions involve orality and literacy, aspiration and subsistence, and proximity and distance. The attempt is to overcome distance in these things and find a way to function in a world order sufficiently distant to sound different, but not so distant as to be out of sight. Language that contains the subtly powerful, double-edged variability of local distinction such as is illustrated in examples throughout the paper, enables colonial functionality while courting independence. This independence would be realized by 1922, its functionality shaped by the language and letters of colonial experience and its character shaped by Irish cultural characteristics.

NOTES

5 Mary Louise Pratt, Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation (London: Routledge, 2007).


11 Quoted in Michael C. Coleman, American Indians, the Irish and Government Schooling: A Comparative Study (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 164.


15 John Allen, Lost Geographies of Power (London: Wiley, 2003). Though power is something that moves and therefore allows the use of terms such as “wielded” and “received”, the nature of that movement is somewhat elusive. Power is not something centred and transmitted clearly, it something more diffuse and diverse. Though power may be generated in a collective, its communication and the uptake of values that enable the action of its wielding and reception run the gamut of human experience and nature, far beyond linear networks of enforcement or establishment.

16 The idea of a nation-state is useful in positing the idea of territory and people as distinct elements forming a collective; Mary Gilmartin, “Nation-State” in Key Concepts in Political Geography, eds. Carolyn Gallaher and others, (London: Sage, 2009), 18–27. This helps pose questions around the ways a nation (people) relates to a state (territory) to create a composite entity where communication between parts to form a whole is integral to its creation. In this instance of colonialism there is communication between peoples, influencing communication with a territory. Language is vital in this influence, creating discourse shaped by and shaping people and territory.


19 Raymond Gillespie, Reading Ireland: Print, Reading and Social Change in Early Modern Ireland (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 39.


25 Niall Ó Ciosáin, Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750-1850 (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1997), 32.

26 Boylan and Foley, “‘Next to Godliness.’”
28 Yeats, Ideas of Good and Evil (Dublin: Maunsel, 1905), 337.
30 Charles Coote, Statistical Survey of the Queen’s County (Dublin: Royal Dublin Society, 1801). The seventeenth volume of a series of county surveys produced by the Royal Dublin Society. The name of this county (now Laois) recalls its having been shired by Elizabeth I in 1556 and planted with English settlers at that time.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid., 182–3.
34 Woolf, Empire and Commerce, 15.
35 Louis M. Cullen, “Patrons, Teachers, and Literacy in Irish” in The Origins of Popular Literacy in Ireland: Language Change and Educational Development 1700-1920, eds. Mary Daly and David Dickson (Dublin: Department of Modern History University College Dublin/Department of Modern History Trinity College Dublin, 1984), 15–44.
36 Pryce, Literacy in Medieval Celtic Societies.
40 Ó Ciosáin, Print and Popular Culture, 30.
41 Ibid.
Revising Whelan’s Model of Tridentine Catholicism in Ireland: The Experience of Cloyne Diocese, County Cork, c.1700 to 1830

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ABSTRACT: In his pioneering research into the geographical development of Tridentine Catholicism in Ireland, Whelan (1988) identifies two contrasting regions. From a core region located mainly in the south and east of Ireland, innovations in Catholic thought and practice are presented as having diffused outwards geographically and downwards socially. The north and west of Ireland, however, is presented as having been slower in adapting to these changes. This paper finds that Cloyne Diocese may be broadly, yet not totally, located within the core region given that the west of the diocese looks more like Whelan’s periphery. Further analysis of this diocese suggests that contrasting one region as dynamic and active vis-à-vis another as lagging or passive is misleading since both regions are demonstrated to have been dynamic, albeit in different ways. These different paths were also influenced by the colonial and class relations within and through which Tridentine Catholicism interacted.

In his pioneering research into the geographical development of Tridentine Catholicism in Ireland, Kevin Whelan (1988) identifies two contrasting regions. One, a core region located mainly in the south and east of Ireland, is presented as materially wealthier and more urbanized; with deeply rooted Catholic and crypto-Catholic landed families, a large, commercialized Catholic tenant farming class, merchants and other professionals providing patronage and leadership for their church. Its enduring social, cultural, and economic ties with continental Europe were also significant. From such an advantageous position, innovations in Catholic thought and practice—the practices ratified by the Council of Trent (1545-63)—are presented as having diffused outwards geographically and downwards socially with little resistance to their movement. The north and west of Ireland, however, are presented as having been slower in adapting to these changes. This article finds that Cloyne Diocese, county Cork may be broadly, yet not totally, located within the core region given that the west of the diocese looks more like Whelan’s periphery. Further analysis suggests that contrasting one region as dynamic and active vis-à-vis another as somehow lagging or passive is misleading, since both regions are demonstrated to have been dynamic, albeit in different ways. These different regions were also clearly influenced by the colonial and class relations within and through which the Tridentine reforms were negotiated.

Given its early adoption of Tridentine Catholic practices, much of Cloyne diocese may be located within Whelan’s core region. From the 1750’s it was among the first Irish dioceses where parish missions were conducted by its priests. In 1771 sung vespers on Sundays and feast days in its towns were becoming the norm. By 1775 five of the towns in the diocese of Cloyne and Ross had Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament. In 1786 Bishop Matthew McKenna observed that “christenings are generally performed at the chapel or the priest[‘]s house.” This custom only became the norm for the rest of Ireland following the Synod of Thurles in 1850 which required that the administration of sacraments normally take place in a church. Geographically, the nearby
Catholic archdiocese of Cashel and Emly was described by Coombes as “the best organised rural diocese” in eighteenth-century Ireland. Although publicly apprehensive and retiring, by mid-century, the Catholic archdiocese of Dublin was also becoming a “quietly dynamic and increasingly assured institution,” albeit one that retained a “culture of caution” until the close of the eighteenth century.

In the north and west of Ireland, however, Tridentine Catholicism entered an environment that was materially poorer and more upland, with comparatively fewer patrons, lower numbers of continentally-trained priests and home to a more robust Gaelic culture. In Enniskillen, county Fermanagh, an Austrian Redemptorist priest observed that, as late as 1852, its people had “never even witnessed Benediction.” Whelan also pointed to a more organic, less institutionalized dimension to the religious cultures of the north and west. Its cultures, he suggested, placed greater emphasis upon communal, rather than individual values and facilitated their expression through exuberant religious rituals, characterized, on various occasions, by spontaneity, intimacy and gaiety.

This picture may be over-drawn, however. Identifying leading and lagging regions may obscure the dynamic context in and through which Tridentine reforms were negotiated. Tridentine Catholicism was just one stream among many that entered into a great river of spiritualties that had been flowing in Ireland long before the Council of Trent. By taking Catholic orthodoxy as defined by the Council as the sole benchmark, Hynes has warned that researchers may treat older beliefs and practices as somehow deficient. Yet the latter were often remodeled to meet the new demands of the Council. Far from being the passive recipients of orthodox teaching, Catholic communities may have been selective in what they accepted or rejected. Bishops and priests may also have been equally selective regarding which reforms they chose to accept or reject. Instead of assuming uniformity in belief and practice, therefore, Hynes cautioned:

[W]e must be alert for multiplicity in devotional forms . . . We must disaggregate the seemingly homogeneous and homogenising macro-processes of religious change into a variety of disparate processes, moving at different speeds across time and space with their effects perhaps appearing intermittently as often as linearly. We must allow for a variety of origins and antecedents of what might later appear to be uniformity . . . and recognise diverse trajectories from the pasts to the time and place we are investigating.

The Core: the eastern and northern parts of the diocese of Cloyne

Of nineteenth-century county Cork, J. S. Donnelly Jr. observed that “neither the quality of land, nor manner of life of the people was uniform.” In a similar fashion, covering much of the east, north, and middle parts of the county, eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Cloyne diocese held a variety of physical, socio-economic, and cultural environments; each with their associated communities and spiritualties (Figure 1). In 1741, Cloyne’s Church of Ireland Bishop and idealist philosopher, George Berkeley (1685-1753) concluded that, although having been “shaken to pieces” because of its size and the poor condition of its roads, Cloyne was nevertheless akin to Tivoli where “ver ubi longum, tepidasque praebit Jupiter brumas.” In 1750, Cork’s first published English-language historian, Charles Smith, regarded Imokilly barony in east Cork as “properly the granary of the city of Cork.” In 1800 the average cash income for Cloyne’s Catholic parish priests was estimated at between £100 and £120 per annum. In Raphoe diocese, Co. Donegal, it was £55. By 1825 the estimated average yearly benefice for Cloyne’s Catholic parishes was £220-£250 per annum. In the same year, Daniel O’Connell thought £150 per annum
a high average for a Catholic priest. It must also be pointed out that these figures relate to cash incomes only. When other customary entitlements such as agricultural produce and labor are taken into account, the living standards of Cloyne’s priests may have been impressive.

Along with its wealth and favorable climate, the proximity of the diocese to continental European Catholicism was also significant. The early arrival of Jesuits at Youghal in the late 1500s introduced continentally inspired religious practices through this seaport town. Devotional practices associated with the cult of Our Lady of Graces at Youghal (Figure 2) also demonstrate closer links with European traditions of pilgrimage than with local Irish ones. The focus of this devotion was Marian rather than a local Irish saint. The cult’s formation was more recent than most Irish pilgrimages, which tended to be older. Legends associated with the arrival of the carved ivory image of Our Lady of Graces were also typically continental. A silver shrine made for the image in 1617 by Lady Honora Fitzgerald of Cloyne further demonstrates closer parallels with continental European patterns than with local Irish ones.

The presence of the sympathetic Earls of Barrymore at Castlelyons, and that of what Whelan has described as a Catholic “underground gentry,” such as the Imokilly Fitzgeralds and the Cotters of Carrigtwohill in the southeast of the diocese helped to provide a sufficiently stable environment for the Catholic church to re-emerge after the repression of the late-seventeenth-century penal laws. On the Barrymore estates, the operation of penal provisions against Catholics, such as the activities of priest-catchers, was prohibited. Catholic families such as the O’Briens of Peelick and Kilcor also retained their lands under Barrymore protection. Coombes maintains that although having conformed to the Church of Ireland, the Barrymore Earls retained “a soft spot for the old faith and turned a blind eye to the fact that junior branches of the Barry family
still adhered to it.” Upon the death of James, the Fourth Earl of Barrymore, it was reported that there was Protestant “satisfaction” at his passing. “They call him the second Lord Lovat”, it was stated, because “he had . . . a most surprising influence on the Popish party in the country.” His indulgence towards priests and other Catholic “underground gentry” such as the Nagles and Coppingers of county Cork very likely earned him this title.

At the Reformation the formerly Catholic cathedrals of Ireland became vested in the Protestant Church of Ireland. Cloyne Cathedral officially became a place of Protestant worship from 1536. As late as 1607, however, the singularly Catholic feature of an altar to the Blessed Virgin was retained at the cathedral, very likely due to the protection of the Imokilly Fitzgeralid. In 1642, Edmund Fitzgerald removed the Anglican bishop and returned the cathedral to a Catholic priest who held it until 1650. In 1704, Andrew Fitzgerald was parish priest of the extensive parish of Cloyne, Aghada, Ballintemple, Corkbeg, and Inch, receiving two sureties of £50 each from two other Fitzgeralids of the same parish. Piaras MacGearailt/
Pierce Fitzgerald, the eighteenth-century head of the Ballymacoda branch of the Imokilly Fitzgeralds also wrote of his conformity to the Church of Ireland in the following resentful terms:

'Tis sad for me to cleave to Calvin or perverse Luther,
But the weeping of my children,
the spoiling them of flocks and lands brought streaming floods from my eyes and
descent of tears.
There is a part of the Saxon-Lutheran religion, which . . . I do not like,
that never a petition is addressed to Mary, the mother of Christ,
nor honour, nor privilege, nor prayers.
And yet it is my opinion that it is Mary
who is the tree of lights and crystal of Christianity,
the glow and precious lantern of the sky,
the sunny chamber in the house of glory,
flood of graces and Cliona’s wave of mercy.  

Perhaps not surprisingly, MacGearailt’s attendance at a Church of Ireland service was the bare legal minimum of only once a year.  

Such was the Cotter influence in east Cork that conferences and general councils of the early eighteenth-century Irish Catholic Church were held at Sir James Cotter’s residence at Ballinsperrig, Carrigtwohill. This family also provided the “future natural leader” of early eighteenth-century county Cork’s Catholics, Séamus Óg MacCoitir/James Cotter Jr. Two centuries later, local folklore re-iterated that Cotter Jr.’s contempt for the Protestant establishment was at least partly responsible for his death in 1720. One account held that “Mr. Cotter used to hunt a fox with an orange lily fastened to it.” Another maintained that “Cotter was hated by the faction of the day in Cork. He was a Catholic. Could not drive horses under his carriage. Used to ride into Cork, his carriage drawn by four bullocks. Around their fetlocks orange ribbons to trample.” Such accounts align with popular eighteenth-century county Cork Catholic opinion that “the Protestants of Cork were so much against him and hated him so much for his independent spirit and conduct towards themselves that he was executed.” Dickson, however, questions this assumption, noting that prominent Cork Protestants had campaigned for clemency on his behalf. 

In spite of such events, a young Catholic priest wrote from his nearby parish in 1769: “I am promoted to the care of souls in the pleasant district of Midleton . . . among a peaceable, good, people . . . [T]he walk is cool, and the country so agreeable, that I do not find myself much hardshiped.” Of the same parish in 1828, Catholic Bishop Michael Collins linked the “zeal and activity” of its Catholics with the fact that they were “more wealthy than generally are found in other parishes.” In 1802 the Catholic parish priest of Cloyne, Rev. John Scanlon commissioned a map of his parish. This map outlines the civil parishes that comprised the Catholic parish of Cloyne and may be a unique example of a priest’s commissioning of the mapping of his parish (Figure 3). By 1828, the parish chapel of Cloyne was referred to by Bishop Collins as: “One of the most respectable and commodious in the diocese . . . The altar is handsome and richly decorated . . . The parish is one of the finest districts in the county.” At Youghal, Bishop Collins believed that its Catholic Free Schools “excel any schools in Cork, and excel any in the diocese of Cloyne or Ross.”
Divisions within the Core

Unresolved sectarian and social class tensions lay beneath such seemingly favorable circumstances. By the early nineteenth century, east Cork was undergoing such a profound and rapid transition that Miller suggests it could be described as almost schizophrenic. Intense religious devotion, both modern and customary, co-existed alongside popular anti-clerical traditions and more modern expressions of popular alienation. However dysfunctional this part of the diocese may have become, it is possible that, similar to other parts of the Catholic core region it retained a capacity to "graft innovations onto a traditional stock." As seen earlier in the

Figure 3. Map of Cloyne Parish by T. Parker. Commissioned by Rev. John Scanlon, 1802. (Reproduced by kind permission of Cloyne Diocesan Archives, Cobh, county Cork)
case of Píaras MacGearailt’s blending of the attributes of a pre-Christian goddess (Clíona) onto Mary, such adaptation in the face of change was nothing new.

Following the death of Séamus Óg MacCoitir/James Cotter Jr. in 1720, the center of Catholic political society in the diocese moved northwards from east Cork to the Nagles of the Blackwater Valley. This area was dominated by large Protestant-owned estates such as the Aldworths at Newmarket, Percivals at Kanturk, St. Ledgers at Doneraile, Kings at Mitchelstown, and Hydes at Fermoy. Here, the construction of large estate houses, parklands, tree-planted landscapes, new field systems, and the introduction of new agricultural practices created what Smyth terms a “colonial” landscape. O’Flanagan refers to north Cork as Munster’s most conspicuously landlord-embellished zone. Old settlements at Rathcormac, Castlelyons and Fermoy were revitalized and new planned towns and estate villages built at Mitchelstown, Doneraile, Newmarket and Kanturk. Increased commercialization was also promoted by landlords through the establishment of markets and fairs.

For at least some of its eighteenth-century Catholics, however, this part of the diocese was “particularly repressive.” Such was the hostility of the rural hinterland of Cork city that it led wealthy Catholics to prefer to live in Cork city or elsewhere. That branches of Catholic families from Cloyne thrived in county Tipperary rather than in County Cork is suggested by Cullen as indicative of the challenges they faced. While visiting her daughter in Galway in 1766, the mother of Edmund Burke (1729–97), a Nagle from the Blackwater Valley, noted the more affluent lifestyle of Catholics in this part of the west of Ireland. Burke, too, cautioned his Nagle relatives to keep a low profile by staying out of parliamentary politics. Writing to his cousin Garret Nagle in 1768 he expressed his desire that “all my friends will have the good sense to keep themselves from taking part in struggles, in the event of which they have no share and no concern.”

In spite of their repressive hinterland, Cullen outlines the resilience of a Nagle/Hennessy enclave of propertied Catholic and crypto-Catholic landowners in the Blackwater Valley. Ó Buachalla memorably refers to it as “an island of Catholic hegemony in a sea of Protestant Ascendancy.” This enclave provided favorable conditions for the emergence of a number of exceptional individuals such as Edmund Burke, his first cousin Nano Nagle, Cllr. Joseph Nagle, Catholic lobbyist Garret Nagle and Richard Hennessy, founder of the French cognac family. The Annakissy Nagles also provided a home and employment for Irish-language poet Eoghan Rua Ó Súilleabháin. Success came at a price, however, as this enclave also drew the unwelcome attentions of local politicized Protestants during periods of heightened tension. It may have been for this reason that Nano Nagle wisely chose to challenge the restrictions of the penal laws not in her native Kilavullen but in the relative safety of Cork city. After twelve years of “frustration and failure” in Cork, Richard Hennessy also left for Cognac in 1765. David Nagle, the wealthiest Catholic landowner in County Cork, also moved permanently to Bath during the 1760’s.

Although the presence of a Catholic “underground gentry” such as the Nagles and Hennessys may have helped to provide a secure platform for the diffusion of Tridentine Catholicism, their influence could equally have hindered as much as helped. In 1731 the Catholics of Doneraile stated that their parish priest, John Hennessy, was on such good terms with local Protestants that he preferred their company instead of attending to his pastoral duties. “His chief study dayly,” they protested, “is, when he can get any pence, which [he’ll] seldom earn, then to hasten to the Protestants of Doneraile and drink that in brandy and punch.” The following year, he had turned informer on Bishop Thaddeus MacCarthy of Cork and Cloyne. Table 1 illustrates the degree of Nagle influence among the priesthood of the Catholic Church in north Cork. Fear of the socially well-connected parish priest of Glanworth, Dr. Patrick Nagle, however, prevented parishioners from reporting that he had “developed a sexual obsession to a degree that in modern
times would suggest the need for psychiatric treatment.”

This may have also intimidated Bishop John O’Brien from taking effective action. On his visitation of Mitchelstown in 1785, Bishop Matthew MacKenna noted that its parish priest, Charles Nagle, was “forbid to say publick Mass being unfit for it”. Unlike the rest of the diocese, his chapels were described as being “in no great order.”

In 1814, Rev. Michael Collins, a future Catholic bishop of Cloyne also left his parish at Castletownroche due to pressure from a Protestant branch of the Nagles with whom he had entered into a dispute.

Interdenominational relations in the Core

Good interdenominational relations were clearly vital to the progress of Tridentine Catholicism. While most of the Catholic priests of County Cork refused the Oath of Abjuration (1709) that rejected the Stuart claim to the throne, a cluster of four priests, located in the northeast of the diocese swore it. It is likely that these priests were influenced by local Protestant gentry to do so. By 1745, the Catholic parish priest of Castlelyons/Rathcormac, Dr. Thady O’Brien, in his *Truth Triumphant*, argued that Catholics were obliged to be loyal subjects of the Protestant administration. In a letter attributed to a Catholic gentleman from the same parish in 1750, the author regrets that following a dispute between Bishop John O’Brien and a local Protestant magistrate, a number of Catholic chapels had been closed. This, he lamented “[made] us mourn the loss of that dignity in which we are indulged by the legislative power (God bless them) to exercise and practice all the tenets of our religion.”

Bishop John O’Brien’s *Pastoral Letter to the Whiteboys* (1762) also called for Catholics:

> [T]o be more attentive than ever to . . . giving our most excellent and noble minded Lieutenant and all our great and good governors, the best and most solid proofs in our power, of the just and grateful feelings we have and always should have of their lenity and indulgence towards us in our unhappy circumstances, subjected as we are . . . to penal laws whose weight and severity, we already find to be alleviated in great measure through the goodness and clemency of our most gracious rulers.

While McVeigh detected a servile response in this document, earlier research by Coombes pointed to a different strategy. He argued that it was aimed more at Dublin Castle than at local Whiteboys, in the hope that it would lead to an improvement in the circumstances of Cloyne’s Catholics.

By the mid eighteenth century, Dickson identifies the emergence of “pragmatic toleration” between the Catholics and Protestants of County Cork. This was, he argues, based not upon the diffusion of more enlightened views, but rather benefited both sides to act more prudently towards each other. Amongst some Catholics, in the hope of greater toleration; deference, or at

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Parish</th>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. James Nagle</td>
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<td>Dr. Patrick Nagle</td>
<td>Glanworth, 1785</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr. Richard Nagle</td>
<td>Kilavullen, 1785</td>
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<td>Rev. Charles Nagle</td>
<td>Mitchelstown, 1785</td>
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<td>Rev. Nagle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rev. M. Nagle</td>
<td>Kanturk, 1824-32</td>
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*Table 1. Nagle Parish Priests of Cloyne diocese, 1720-1832.*
least the appearance of it, may have been chosen. Rising land prices and the capacity of the British State to project its power globally from the 1750s had also strengthened a desire among propertied Catholics for accommodation with the Hanoverian regime. Increasingly “yearning for security of property and quiet times,” the wealth, number, and power of Catholic and crypto-Catholic stakeholders had risen in the county through their taking out of long leases during periods of rising land prices.

Amongst other Catholics, while “popery with attitude” may have been toned down, deference remained optional. In 1766 at Youghal, some of its Catholics taunted their Protestant neighbors that they now had “more correspondents in foreign countries” and, if successful, would not suffer their enemies to “get a morsel of bread” in the town. Following the death of Bishop Matthew MacKenna in 1791, the Governor of County Cork—Richard Longfield—offered the position to the parish priest of Midleton. The priest responded that it was “the gift of the Pope.” According to the Earl of Shannon, a dialogue followed whereby “Longfield said damn the Pope, he shall not meddle in Co. Cork while I am governor and as you are my tenant I’ll make you bishop, the other said with much contempt he did not look so high.”

Instead of being viewed with suspicion, Cloyne’s Catholic priests were increasingly seen by Protestant landlords and magistrates as “vital instruments of social control, calming and admonishing their congregations, mediating oaths and contracts, perhaps on occasion passing on warnings to Protestant confidants.” The cautious introduction of Bishop John O’Brien’s 1765–6 parish missions were welcomed by Protestants who thanked him afterwards for the payment of debts. By 1775, Bishop Matthew MacKenna linked the progress of Tridentine Catholicism with good political relations. While five towns had Benediction, “others will soon have it,” he believed, “since the government is now more favourably disposed towards us.” Ten years later he found a Protestant schoolteacher who was teaching the Catholic catechism of the diocese at Mourne Abbey. Parallels may be made here with the situation in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic. In both the Irish and Dutch cases, formal Catholic education had been prohibited in the interests of state security. In the Dutch case, Protestant schoolteachers working in areas with high Catholic populations diluted the confessional content of their teaching so as not to alienate Catholic parents and thereby lose fees, something which was essential to supplement their meagre State salaries. By 1817, the observations of the Church of Ireland minister of Blarney demonstrate the extent of change that had taken place. He concluded that: “If I cannot make Protestants of the Catholics by whom I am surrounded, I will at least give my support in every measure, which will tend to make them good Catholics.”

Class relations in the Core

Although steady improvements in interdenominational relations may have improved the situation for the diffusion of Tridentine Catholicism, the same cannot be said for social class relations. According to her biographer, Bishop Coppinger, on returning from France in the 1740’s, an encounter between Honora “Nano” Nagle (1718–84) and a family of “poor tenants” on her father’s estate at Kilavullen led her to conclude that:

Under a misconception of their obligations, they substituted error in the place of truth: while they kept up an attachment to certain exterior observances, they were totally devoid of the spirit of Religion; their fervour was superstitious, their faith was erroneous, their hope was presumptuous and they had no charity. Licentiousness, while it could bless itself and tell the beads, could live without remorse, and die without repentance: sacraments and sacrileges went hand in hand, and conscience was to rest upon its own stings.
In parts of Cloyne where socio-economic extremes had not been peacefully resolved, however, recurring cycles of social unrest ensued. Such unstable environments were far from ideal for the diffusion of Tridentine Catholicism. In 1775 at Mallow, its Church of Ireland minister, James Mockler, concluded that the laboring poor of north Cork were “the most miserable and most distressed on the face of the earth.” He added that they continued to be marginalized by rising prices because: “The country around Mallow, and all over Munster is of late years, much thinned and stripped of its inhabitants to make room for bullocks, sheep and dairy cows. Rich folks were never half so fond as they have been within these 10 or 12 years past of taking farms and increasing their stocks of cattle.”

Ostracized by their own church, the Whiteboys in the 1750s and ’60s, the Rightboys in the 1780s, the United Irish in the 1790s, and the Rockites in the 1820s violently vented their anger against the people and processes whom they perceived had played a role in marginalizing and impoverishing them. Protestant ministers and Catholic priests were included. One Kildorrery Rightboy believed that “The luxurious parson drowned in the riot of his table the bitter groans of those poor wretches that his proctor fleeced, and the poor remnant of the proctor’s rapine was sure to be gleaned by the rapacious priest”. Such was his anger that he stated “we had reason to wish for our simple druids again”. Bishop Matthew MacKenna initially assumed Rightboy
activities to have been motivated by spiritual rather than socio-economic forces. “The enemy of mankind,” he held, “has sown the seeds of riot and disorder among the lower classes.” He dismissed Rightboy demands as a “pretended cause of complaint . . . which to our knowledge scarcely existed anywhere.” Adopting the same response as that of his predecessor towards the Whiteboys, he initially demanded that priests excommunicate known Rightboys. A more insightful Kerry-based priest, however, thought that the roots of the problem lay more with the behavior of some Catholic priests. He stated:

The clamor against the clergy for exhortations, oppression and tyrannical treatment of the poor has been so violent, and the defection of the people so general, and so long continued, particularly in the Barony of Muskerry that Dr. MacKenna seemed at length to awake from a state of lethargy . . . By the terror of firearms, they strove to intimidate their own parishioners . . . they declared war . . . against their own flocks.

He concluded: “The abhorrence of the Protestant Church and their respect for their own clergy has vanished. All confidence in their parish priests is lost.”

On one occasion, only the intervention of Sir John Conway Colthurst, one of the leading “Gentleman White Boy” activists of the Lee valley, protected Bishop MacKenna “from the fury of the populace, together with many other gentlemen of that religion.” Colthurst, it was rumored, had boasted that the “removal of tithes would have led to a 50% increase in the rental income on his estates.” By September 1786, as the movement was becoming increasingly violent and with Colthurst losing control of its direction, it was reported by the Church of Ireland Bishop of Cloyne, that “Sir John Colthurst himself begins to think his pupils have gone too far.” This may account for his alignment with Bishop MacKenna and his priests.

The behavior of priests, rising prices and a Catholic Church undergoing increased professionalism may have weakened or reversed previous gains made by Tridentine Catholicism. At Aghinagh in 1785, its Catholics refused to attend confession or to pay their annual dues. At Aghabullogue, Catholics refused to pay their Christmas and Easter dues. Others “in several parishes, and especially at Inniscarra and Blarney forsook their own worship, chapels and clergy, and came in great numbers to attend divine service in the Protestant churches.” At Inniscarra, a group of Rightboys gathered outside the house of a Protestant gentleman, having information that the parish priest lay there that night . . . upon which the clergyman opened the window to know their business, which was to warn him, on pain of death, that not to take at any marriage more than 5s 5d, 1s 7d at christenings.” At Donoughmore, Rightboys threatened to destroy the cattle of a priest and to give him a “warm reception” if he refused to “forgive the curse” that he had placed upon them. The priest refused.

The events of 1798–9 further aligned the Catholic Church with the Protestant establishment. In 1799 at Mallow, only the last-minute intervention of its Catholic parish priest prevented a massacre equivalent to that of Scullabogue (Wexford, 1798) where United Irishmen murdered some thirty or forty of their prisoners. After denouncing a planned United Irish attack on the town’s Protestants, the parish priest of Mallow was reported to have been “reduced to absolute want” by his parishioners. Despite being marginalized themselves, at least some of Cloyne’s Catholics were clearly capable of marginalizing their own priests. Writing from east Cork, an alarmed county Governor, Richard Longfield, feared: “[W]e are in a most dismal way here—murder everywhere committed and every smith in the country forging pikes, & the mob cutting all the trees for handles, & the French and a massacre expected every night.” Three months later he believed that:
Vigor and vigilance are all we have to secure our lives and properties, the disposition of the people is hostile to every protestant. The non-residence and inattention of our clergy have made those families all papists, who were sound Protestants in our father’s times. We never see the face of a parson, nor would it be safe for him now to show it here.\textsuperscript{100}

As at Mallow, the position taken by Catholic priests and their bishop may have offered at least some comfort. The parish priest of Midleton stated that he had: “endeavoured to bring back my deluded flock to legal subordination and spared no pains in laying before their eyes, the evil consequences of their persisting in outrages, and atrocities subversive of all law and tranquility.”\textsuperscript{101} Catholic Bishop Coppinger called for Catholics to surrender their arms for their own good.\textsuperscript{102} Yet he ridiculed what he perceived to have been the ideals of the United Irish movement. “How can there be cultivation” he asked “when there are no tillers? And where shall you find tillers, if all become gentlemen? Rank and property must go hand in hand, and the inequality of both in every civilised country must be as various as the talents of men.”\textsuperscript{103} In 1803 he re-iterated his opinion that “The United Irish Association, organised upon the Gallic model, I well knew it tended, not alone to induce temporal misery, but the total overthrow of religion, which I deem a far greater misfortune.”\textsuperscript{104} France, he thought, had become a “colossal monster and enemy of all religion.”\textsuperscript{105}

In the wake of the events of the 1780s and ‘90s, Protestant gentry support for Catholic chapel building underwent a significant improvement. If the French had landed on the Cork coast, it was likely that landlords such as the Earls of Shannon would have needed to rely upon the Catholic majority to protect their properties.\textsuperscript{106} In 1799, when requested to do so, Richard Boyle, the Second Earl wrote: “[T]ho’ I have no great passion for subscribing towards chapels, yet in consequence of it I desire to be put down for a sum not exceeding 30 guineas.”\textsuperscript{107} At Youghal, Bishop Coppinger reported receiving £50 as a small token of the Second Earl’s “perfect approbation of the undertaking.”\textsuperscript{108} In 1814 the parish priest of Ballymacoda thanked the Earl for “his most generous gift of a site for a chapel together with his liberal donation towards building it.”\textsuperscript{109} Lord Midleton remained cautious, however. “I am very desirous that they should have decent edifices,” he wrote:

[B]ut for my part I object strongly to bringing them forward to occupy the most auspicious situation in the prospect as I am convinced is the cause with them of engaging into rivalry with the established church.\textsuperscript{110}

In 1811, Bishop Coppinger stated that the Earl of Kingston had not only provided “400 guineas towards the building of Mitchelstown chapel” but had “interested himself in the progress of the work” to such an extent that “he frequently inspected it” and “conducted his guests to the spot, as if to animate them by his own example.”\textsuperscript{111} In 1826, Lord Doneraile gave £146 and laid the foundation stone for a Catholic chapel at Doneraile.\textsuperscript{112} Two years later, Bishop Collins noted that “Sir N. Colthurst contributed £50” towards the building of a new chapel at Ballyvourney.\textsuperscript{113} At Banteer, Lord Lismore provided £100 towards the construction costs of its chapel.\textsuperscript{114}

In spite of landlord support, the diffusion of Tridentine Catholicism may have remained limited, especially among the socially marginalized. Tridentine ideals regarding marriage were rejected by the women of Churchtown-Liscarroll whose husbands had been transported, but in the words of Bishop Collins had then chosen to marry “[in the Protestant Church with other men, notwithstanding their lawful husbands still living.”\textsuperscript{115} In 1828 at Shandrum, Bishop Collins observed:
The farmers are few in number but comfortable. The labourers numerous and very poor, many being unable to procure work. The consequences of this is that a spirit of popular insurrection, of nightly attacks on the persons and property of the wealthier farmers who charge enormous rents for potato ground (from 7 to 10 pounds the acre) and who are in general unwilling to let any ground for that purpose to poor people except to their domestic labourers, is of older standing here and more obstinate here than in other parishes . . .The result has been as may be expected that the spirit of religion declined among the people and a spirit of disorder and turbulence gained ground.116

In the nearby parish of Charleville, Bishop Collins noted “a disposition to riot among the lower order inhabitants in the town and a reluctance among grown persons who never learned the catechism[,] and this class is represented by the P. P. as numerous[,] to prepare themselves by attending it for their first Communion.”117

In only five of Cloyne’s forty-three parishes was Bishop Collins satisfied with the standards of learning imparted through the Catholic catechism of the diocese. His repeated remark that learners “have the words but not the meaning,”118 or similar, would indicate a relatively superficial penetration of Tridentine Catholicism across much of the diocese. Even where the Catholic doctrine of purgatory had penetrated the popular imagination, Cork antiquarian Thomas Crofton Croker believed that:

[T]he tenet of purgatory or qualification for heaven, held by the Romish church; and on this particular, the general belief of the Irish peasantry is somewhat at variance with the representations of their pastors: the priest describes it as a place of fire, but the people imagine it to be a vast and dreary extent, strewed with sharp stones and abounding in thorns and brambles.119

He continued that although shoes were expensive, they were thought to be “almost indispensable after death” because “much walking has to be performed through rough roads and inclement weather."120 It is possible, of course, that his respondents may have been misleading him. In common with much of the rest of Europe, however, orthodox religious belief was probably more the exception than the rule. Such was certainly the case in much of Ancien Regime Catholic Europe.121 In the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, teachers in public schools were required to ensure that the psalms and excerpts from scripture were known, but teaching in the sense of explanation and elucidation was rarely part of their timetable.122 The practice of rote-learning may also account for high attendance at Sunday service among nineteenth-century rural Lutherans in Saxony, but belief in life after death was uncommon.123

The Periphery: The western parts of the diocese of Cloyne

Alongside the experiences of the parishes that formed the Catholic core region of the diocese, the nature and development of Tridentine Catholicism in Cloyne’s western parishes presents further opportunities to test Whelan’s model. Richard Hedges, an early-eighteenth-century English settler at Macroom, described the area west of the town as “forty miles of a barbarous country” containing “not an English gentleman of note.”124 Its landscape was “all mountains, boggs and rocks,” and “entirely inhabited by Irish.”125 Charles Smith identified a similar division when he wrote that Macroom was located “on the frontier of a very wild country, being all rocky and barren to the north.”126 Just as these writers failed to appreciate the cultural vitality of this part of the diocese, so too, some of its Anglican and Catholic Bishops misunderstood its spiritual vitality. In 1720, Cloyne’s Church of Ireland bishop attempted to suppress devotion
to St. Gobnet of Ballyvourney on the grounds of idolatry. In 1785, at Ballyvourney, Bishop McKenna’s remark that “this region would want the best and most virtuous missioner” indicates how far he thought it to have been from the high standards of Tridentine Catholicism.

A further distinguishing feature of this part of Cloyne was its reputation as a place where the reach of the civil law was limited. Richard Hedges maintained that this was because of the absence of a resident Protestant elite. Writing from Killarney in 1714 he observed:

[S]ome heads of Irish clans...not only carry arms and harbour unregistered . . . priests in defiance of ye laws . . . but have gained ye ascent over ye civil power by their insolence and principles, so that the ordinary course of ye law cannot be put in force against them, without hazard to ye lives of such as go about it, there being very few protestants and they overawed by ye multitude of papists.

The civil law would certainly appear to have been more effectively enforced in the east of the diocese. In 1758, for instance, when Catholic Bishops John O’Brien of Cloyne and Pierce Creagh of Waterford excommunicated the inhabitants of Mitchelstown for rejecting Bishop O’Brien’s choice of clerical appointment, some Catholics turned violent and, not willing to cede control of public order over to Catholic bishops, Baron Kingston, the local landlord, placed a bounty on the bishops. Their excommunication sentence, which was reported to have had “the desired effect of putting an entire stop to all commerce” in the town, was short-lived.

Such exercises of episcopal and/or landlord discipline may not have been as easy to implement in the west. Ó Murchadha’s study of Inchigeela identified this part of county Cork as a place fostering the development of “what might be termed anti-establishment personages and events.” It was from this part of the diocese that the Caoineadh Art Úí Laoghaire (Lament for Art O’Leary) was composed. Traditionally attributed to O’Leary’s wife, Eiblín Dubh Ní Chonaill, the lament bitterly indicted Abraham Morris, a former county high sheriff, as the murderer of Art O’Leary, a flamboyant Catholic ex-Austrian cavalry officer in 1773. Failing to conduct himself “with the deference expected of the conquered Irish,” O’Leary refused to sell his horse to Morris, when requested to do so under the terms of the 1695 “Act for the Better Securing the Government by Disarming Papists.” Originally drafted for the purposes of state security, in this instance, such legislation was used by Morris “to keep the likes of O’Leary in his place.” By implication, the power structures that allowed Morris to murder O’Leary with impunity were also held up to contempt. For Heaney, this lament spoke powerfully:

In behalf of the oppressed native Catholic population of Ireland, a Gaelic majority placed legally beyond the pale of official Anglo-Irish life by the operation of the penal laws. It was an outburst both heartbroken and formal, a howl of sorrow and a triumph of rhetoric . . . [N]o wonder, either, that it was from the family of such an impassioned silence breaker that the great political silence breaker of early nineteenth century Ireland emerged.

Eiblín Dubh was an aunt of Daniel O’Connell’s, the “great political silence breaker” who successfully helped to secure Catholic Emancipation in 1829.

It is likely that this part of Cloyne may also have offered greater freedom of expression for “Popery with attitude” given the number of its Catholics. Whilst early eighteenth-century Protestant magistrates could obstruct the construction of Catholic chapels with relative ease in the east and north of the diocese such was not the case in parts of the west. As early as 1750 Macroom was reported to have had “a splendid mass house” built “on an eminence at the entrance into the town, with a handsome altar, a pulpit and confessional chair.” At Kanturk,
its Catholics simply ignored their landlord’s agent and built their chapel on the town’s common without his permission.139

Spontaneity, intimacy and gaiety were also three of the characteristics identified by Whelan in the “enduring outliers of a robust Gaelic world” such as the west of Cloyne.140 All were certainly evident during the great “pattern-days” or festivals associated with saints such as Gobnet at Ballyvourney. Observance of her feast day was initially encouraged by the Catholic Church.141 John Richardson’s The Great Folly, Superstition and Idolatory of Pilgrimages in Ireland (1727), however, castigated these practices:

An image of wood, about two feet high, carved and painted like a woman, is kept in the parish of Ballyvo[u]rn[ey] . . . [I]t is called Gubinet. The pilgrims resort to it twice a year . . . [I]t is set up for their adoration . . . They go round the image thrice on their knees, saying a certain number of Paters, Aves and Credos . . . and they
Figure 6. Effigy of St. Gobnet of Ballyvourney, county Cork.
conclude with kissing the idol, and making an offering to it, every one according to their ability . . . This image is kept by one of the family of the O’Herlehy’s, and when anyone is sick of the smallpox, they send for it, sacrifice a sheep to it, wrap the skin around the sick person and the family eat the sheep.142

William Shaw Mason observed: “A vast concourse of people . . . from neighbouring parishes and from very distant parts of the country, assemble to perform their religious, or rather their superstitious rounds . . . Indeed, such meetings ought to be discountenanced by everyreligious and moral person, as they generally terminate in drunkenness and bloodshed.”143 By 1828, Bishop Collins had suppressed St. Gobnet’s pattern day on the grounds of “abuses . . . which I felt necessary to forbid the people to attend in future under pain of excommunication.”144

A further reason for opposition may have been the presence of professional, although perhaps occasionally bogus beggars known as “bacachs” who assembled annually at Ballyvourney on St. Gobnet’s feast day. Under the title of “Clair Ghobnatan” (Gobnet’s clergy), they circulated their own effigy of the saint and established a school where lessons were given in their chant or “cronawn”. In 1825, the Halls observed: “Notwithstanding their outward pretensions to devotion and their constant attendance at places of prayer, they are always conspicuous outside the chapel gates, but who ever saw a bacach at Mass? They never receive or attend the sacraments of any church, that of marriage they totally disregard.”145

Given their relative inaccessibility, the uplands of west Duhallow and west Muskerry also provided a safe refuge for a number of Rockite encampments in the west of the diocese during the 1820s.146 In the winter of 1822, encampments were reported in the uplands outside Macroom.147 This movement was sustained by the prophecies of Pastorini, an interpretation of the Book of Revelation that envisaged the coming of a new era for the poor.148 Such prophecies failed to stop the use of violence. In 1823, the parish priest of Doneraile reported that the question asked every morning by his parishioners was “how many fires last night?”149 Two years later, he was taken to Buttevant barracks to hear the testimony of a man considered the “Captain Rock” of north Cork. Parties of police were subsequently dispatched to surrounding parishes to arrest seventy-five men who had been named to the priest.150 In 1823, an officer of the First Rifle Brigade stationed at Macroom wrote to Bishop Collins requesting information on the Rockite movement because his horse was lame. The following week, he received what he described as “the most comprehensive and satisfactory information that ever reached me,” intelligence which he promised to pass on confidentially to the government.151 The gradual extension of trials, transportations, a new county police force, a program of road construction and rent reduction in the west of Cloyne eventually managed to quell the activities of the movement.152

The resilience of socially marginalized groups plus the fact that the civil parishes of the west were largely dedicated to local Irish saints rather than to saints and/or other devotions from continental Europe, would indicate an east-west division in the diocese that long pre-dated the Council of Trent (Figure 7). The remoteness of the west from the standardizing authority of a bishop may also account, at least in part, for the behavior of some of its priests. Following a dispute between Bishop Coppinger and the parish priest of Macroom over the location of a site for a new chapel in 1804, it was reported by Bishop Coppinger that the priest: “[W]ent to his country parishioners and then publicly gave his curse to all who should subscribe or concur to the building of a chapel on the site of my preference . . . Such cursing or ringing bells in this district, without express permission . . . values suspension ipso facto, for at my entrance here it was too common.”153
Conclusion

Whelan acknowledges that it would be incorrect to dichotomize too rigidly between the two regions identified nationally. The situation of the Catholic communities of east Galway and Galway city, for instance, could certainly be favorably compared with that of east and north Cloyne. To dichotomize too rigidly for eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century Cloyne, however, would be to oversimplify a much more complex process of continuity, change, and adaptation taking place. The diocese clearly contained a multitude of different historical, cultural, geographical, and social worlds within which Tridentine Catholicism co-existed. No uniform Catholic experiences can be assumed, therefore, just as no equivalent Protestant ones can. To define one part of the diocese as “introspective, static, self-contained” vis-à-vis another as “outward-looking, dynamic and well-connected” would be too simplistic. While some parts of the diocese may certainly have displayed such characteristics more than others, many may well have displayed both, either simultaneously or at different times. Furthermore, the reinforcing of hierarchical control, a central part of Tridentine Catholicism, enabled the Catholic Church to serve as a supporter of law and order in a context where class-based and colonial relations...
fomented civil unrest. In the Cloyne case, the diffusion of Tridentine Catholicism was just as
dependent upon Protestant elite support and not just upon Catholic plebian acquiescence. Its
progress, therefore, may have been as much, if not gradually more reliant upon the alignment of
the Catholic Church with the status quo as it was upon the factors outlined in Whelan’s model.

The assumption that certain aspects of Tridentine Catholicism were archaic is also
questionable. Cullen, for instance, describes the excommunication of Mitchelstown in 1768 as
“an archaic and in the eighteenth century outlandish measure.” However, other censures such as
interdict remained an effective disciplinary measure used by the Catholic bishops of Cloyne
well into the early nineteenth century. In 1785 Bishop McKenna noted of Burnfort: “One chapel
interdicted on account of a quarrel.” In 1800, Bishop Coppinger placed the chapel of Ballintotis,
Midleton under interdict. In 1828, Bishop Collins noted: “The interdict taken off the chapel”
at Donoughmore. Dickson, too, found the work of priests such as Friar O’Sullivan in the
neighboring diocese of Kerry in 1750 to have been “curiously old-fashioned.” Yet how different
individuals or communities formulated their responses within varying sets of circumstances, real
or imagined, difficult or otherwise, was a complex process drawing upon an array of physical and
spiritual resources. For some, such resources may have been abundant. For others, more limited.

Given that it was not uncommon for priests to have been ordained in Ireland and sent
abroad afterwards for further study, it is likely that the number of priests with exposure to
continental European Catholicism was higher than Whelan’s map of 1704 registered priests
suggests. On their return, Bishop John O’Brien warned of the possibility of envy from fellow
Catholics. In his own case, he believed that “no man of my low rank in the world could have
suffered more from their envious disposition. It was enough that I kept my distance with most
of them.” Optimistic portraits of resilient eighteenth-century Irish Catholics, therefore, “not
merely adapting to their situation, but displaying creativity and confidence in the face of varying
degrees of opposition” are proving to be more complex. While most historians since the 1960’s
may have rejected the “penal” paradigm, with its subtext of an heroic, unified and silenced
Catholic nation “smarting under unrelenting persecution,” to dismiss the suffering, silences and/
or enmities involved would be to impoverish our understanding.

Nicholls’ observation that eighteenth-century anti-Catholic sentiment in county Cork
was high but characterized “more by occasional outbreaks of petty harassment than by steady
repression, let alone persecution”, fails to appreciate either the suffering involved or its long-
terms effects. Even if only occasional or seemingly petty, the killing of high-profile Catholics
such as Séamus Óg MacCoitir/James Cotter Jr. in 1720 and of Art O’Leary in 1773 generated
strong feelings at the time and had no parallels elsewhere in eighteenth-century Ireland. Dicksons’
reference to “servile” communities on the fringes of farms or estates would also benefit from
further research. To what extent might such responses have been the outcome of situations
whereby communities were marginalized, their needs neglected and their dignity not upheld?
The use of dehumanizing language in referring to the “untamed” Irish or to a “cull” of United
Irishmen in the aftermath of 1798 is also regrettable.

Nor can the eighteenth- or early-nineteenth-century Irish Catholic Church be viewed as
showing “little sentiment and little sense of its distinguished ancestry” in reconstructing its parish
network. In the Cloyne case, at least, some of its Catholics drew upon their rich cultural and
spiritual heritages. To what extent Catholics in other parts of Ireland drew upon theirs—when,
why and to what effects—invites further research. Cloyne’s Catholic bishops may also have
been just as selective as their congregations when it came to choosing which Tridentine reform
accept or reject. The XXIV session of the Council of Trent, for instance, recommended that
what needed to be uppermost on the minds of bishops while on visitation were to be all things
pertaining to the worship of God, the salvation of souls and the support of the poor. Yet the
visitation books of successive late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century bishops contain little, if any evidence of the latter insight. Indeed, Bishop Coppinger’s 1824 Visitation Book indicates a greater concern to record the names of the landed proprietors of the parishes that he visited.169

Clearly then, Cloyne was a place of multi-layered contradictions. While its formal Catholic religious leaders may have suffered “more than their fair share” during the early eighteenth-century, the diocese continued to produce a vibrant Catholic literati throughout the period.170 In the barony of Muskerry alone, at least fifty documented Irish-language poets were active.171 Nor were conditions entirely unbearable. Not all Protestant gentry or magistrates were “hell-bent” on destroying their political enemies, or determined to make a mockery of the law.172 When trouble might have been expected during the 1740s, Cloyne’s Catholics remained “apparently quiescent,” influenced, at least to some extent, by the enlightened presence of Church of Ireland Bishop George Berkley.173

The emergence of O’Connell’s Catholic Association in the 1820s may have offered further hope, at least for some. Unlike earlier movements, this Association was non-violent and hence gained the support of Bishop Coppinger. Rural protest movements were also quieted through its influence, rather than through the forces of law and order.174 It proved to be a tide that was not for turning.175 Emancipation opened up the possibility of access to government and, critically, the prospect of Catholics becoming first-class citizens in a society that had been constructed to keep them second. The old sensibility that “there was no law for . . . [the common people] but the will of the magistrates” could fade.176 Catholic Emancipation “at its dawn, proved to be “a sky of many colours.”177 Perhaps it was fitting that out of a diocese as repressive as Cloyne, its previous darkness, at least for some, may have been in proportion to the light to follow.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Mgr. James O’Brien, Prof. Gerry Kearns, Prof. James Kelly and Prof. Kerby Miller for their assistance and feedback during the writing of this article. Thanks also to Dr. Ronan Foley and to Mike Murphy for their help in the preparation of maps.

NOTES

3 Ibid., 88. The Catholic diocese of Cloyne was managed as a distinct diocese from 1148-1429. It was united with the diocese of Cork from 1429-1747. It was united instead with the diocese of Ross from 1747-1850. From 1850 it has been a separate diocese.
4 John Brady, Catholics and Catholicism in the Eighteenth Century Press (Maynooth: Catholic Record Society of Ireland, St. Patrick’s College, 1965), 245.
6 Coombes, A Bishop for Penal Times, 23.
7 James Kelly and Dáire Keogh, History of the Catholic Diocese of Dublin (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 161; 172.
8 Sean J. Connolly, Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1780-1845 (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1982), 93.
11 Eugene Hynes, *Knock: The Virgin’s Apparition in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2009), 101
15 Arthur A. Luce, *The Life of George Berkeley, Bishop of Cloyne* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1949), 169. This quotation is taken from Horace, *Odes* 2.6, 17–18; referring to Horace’s villa at Tivoli, a “where spring is long and Jupiter provides mild winters.” I am indebted to Prof. David Scourfield, National University of Ireland Maynooth for this translation. In Ireland at this time the same diocesan boundaries were shared by the Catholic Church as well as by the Protestant Church of Ireland.
17 Connolly, *Priests and People*.
18 Ibid., 50.
19 In 1575, Cork’s Catholic Bishop remarked that Youghal’s Jesuits “train their scholars and townspeople in the knowledge of the Christian doctrine, in the frequentation of the Sacraments and in the practice of solid virtue”; Seán Ó Coindealbhain, “Úi Macaille: its Anglo-Irish and English Schools,” *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society* 50 (1945): 129.
22 I am grateful to Mgr. James O’Brien, Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Rome, for this information.
24 David Dickson, *Old World Colony: Cork and South Munster 1630-1830*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), 235. Simon Fraser, 11th Lord Lovat, was a Scots Jacobite who had first sworn loyalty to the Hanoverian crown but later joined the forces seeking the installation of a Catholic king James II. After the defeat of the Jacobite forces at the Battle of Culloden he was executed.
26 Ibid.
28 I am grateful to a direct descendant of MacGearailts, Mr. Luke Beausang, Ballymacoda, for this information.
Cornelius G. Buttimer (Cork: Geography Publications, 1993), 475.
30 Dickson, Old World Colony, 268.
32 Ibid.
33 Ibid.
34 David Dickson, Old World Colony, 270.
35 Ibid.
36 Coombes, A Bishop for Penal Times, 49.
37 Bishop Michael Collins Visitation Book, July 11 1830, Cloyne Diocesan Archives, Cobh (CDA).
38 Bishop Michael Collins Visitation Book, July 9 1828, CDA.
39 Bishop Michael Collins Visitation Book, July 6 1828, CDA.
40 Kerby Miller, Ellen Skerrit and Bridget Kelly, “Stumbling towards Heaven? Edmond Roynane’s Responses to the Great Famine and Gilded Age America” (unpublished paper delivered at Radboud University, 2013), 5.
41 Ibid., 6.
42 Whelan, “Regional Impact,” 217.
49 Ibid., 558.
50 Ibid., 537.
51 Dickson, Old World Colony, 105.
52 Cullen, “Blackwater Catholics.”
54 Cullen, “Blackwater Catholics,” 538.
56 Dickson, Old World Colony, 279. Cloyne’s Catholic Bishop John O’Brien left for similar reasons in 1767. He died at Lyon two years later, declaring himself “an exile from his native land for defending his religion”; Coombes, A Bishop for Penal Times, 76.
57 Cullen, “Blackwater Catholics,” 563.
58 Ibid., 562.
60 Coombes, A Bishop for Penal Times, 90.
61 Bishop Matthew MacKenna Visitation Book, Mitchelstown, 1785, CDA.
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Rev. G. Teahan to Archbishop James Butler II, April 24 1786, Papers of Dr. James Butler II, Archbishop of Cashel and Emly, NLI Microfilm P5998.

Ibid.


Ibid.


Bishop Matthew MacKenna Visitation Book, Aghinagh and Aghabullogue parishes, 1785, CDA.


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Over three decades later, Bishop Collins observed of the same parish: “It is to be feared that there exists in this and one or two other of the parishes yet visited a greater anxiety to collect
money than to augment the faith and piety of the people”; Bishop M. Collins Visitation Book, June 11 1830, CDA.


98 Ibid.

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‘We will have equality and liberty in Ireland’: The Contested Geographies of Irish Democratic Political Cultures in the 1790s

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores the contested geographies of Irish democratic political cultures in the 1790s. It positions Irish democratic political cultures in relation to Atlantic flows and circulations of radical ideas and political experience. It argues that this can foreground forms of subaltern agency and identity that have frequently been marginalized in different traditions of Irish historiography. The paper develops these arguments through a discussion of the relations of the United Irishmen to debates on slavery and anti-slavery. Through exploring the influence of the ex-slave and abolitionist Olaudah Equiano on these debates it foregrounds the relations between the United Irishmen and the Black Atlantic. The paper examines the limits of some of the United Irishmen’s democratic politics. It argues that the articulations of liberty and equality by Irish sailors in mutinies in the late 1790s dislocated some of the narrow notions of democratic community and politics associated with the United Irishmen.

Unheeding the clamour that maddens the skies
As ye trample the rights of your dark fellow men
When the incense that glows before liberty’s shrine
Is unmixed with the blood of the galled and oppressed,

Oh then and then only, the boast may be thine
That the star spangled banner is stainless and blest.¹

These trenchant lines were written by the Antrim weaver and United Irishman (UI) James Hope in his poem, “Jefferson’s Daughter.” His autobiography noted the impact of the American Revolution on Ireland, arguing that “the American struggle taught people, that industry had rights as well as aristocracy, that one required a guarantee, as well as the other; which gave extension to the forward view of the Irish leaders.”² His poem, however, affirms the extent to which his identification with the American Revolution was critical. The poem’s vehement assault on the exclusionary forms of liberty produced during the early years of the United States emphasizes the role of activist-intellectuals like Hope in debating the character of liberty and in contributing to anti-slavery politics.

Hope’s poem emphasizes how radical Irish political thought and activism in the late eighteenth century were both influenced by Atlantic currents of political ideas and contributed to them in original ways. This paper seeks to contribute to an emerging body of work which foregrounds the relations of Ireland to the dynamic geographies of connection and flows that traversed the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Recent work in history and geography has contributed to a developing literature on the dynamic and contested relationships of Ireland and Irish subaltern politics to Atlantic connections.³ This work has important resonances with

¹ Historical Geography Volume 41 (2013): 120-136. © 2013, Historical Geography Specialty Group, Association of American Geographers
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recent work in geography that has stressed the relational constitution of politics and challenged state-centered and bounded accounts of the political. The central argument of this paper is that situating Irish subaltern politics in relation to these circulations, exchanges and flows of political ideas can be a productive move. It can foreground forms of subaltern agency and identity which have often been marginalized in dominant ways of narrating Irish histories.

To develop these concerns, the paper explores forms of democratic cultures produced by Irish radicals, especially those associated with the United Irishmen, in the 1790s. The 1790s were a formative decade in the constitution of democratic political cultures and identities in Ireland. The French Revolution had a major impact on Irish politics in the 1790s and Tom Paine’s *Rights of Man* became a bestseller. The limited democratic demands and forms of democratic culture associated with the Volunteer movement of the 1780s were transformed and politicized through the formation of the United Irishmen. The political context in which the United Irishmen mobilized can be viewed as a colonial situation, marked by particular exclusions from the political. Situating Ireland in relation to the Atlantic flows and circulations which constituted the British colonial project can foreground diverse colonial political geographies. This also permits a focus on the important counter-flows formed through resistance to colonialism and slavery.

This paper seeks to contribute to critical geographies of colonial Ireland through interrogating the diverse forms of subaltern political agency and identity constituted through mobilizing democratic identities and forms of organization. The first part of the paper argues that foregrounding forms of subaltern presence, agency and identity involves challenging key ways in which the geographies of the political have been theorized in dominant traditions of Irish historiography. The paper then explores aspects of the contested geographies of Irish democratic political identities. Firstly, it explores the relation of Irish democratic cultures to debates on slavery and anti-slavery. It argues that black activists like Olaudah Equiano (1734–97) had important effects on the ways these debates were framed and on the geographies of connection formed by the United Irishmen. It also notes the contested notions of political community formed through these debates. It develops this focus on some of the exclusions of Irish democratic cultures through exploring the mobilization of democratic imaginaries by Irish and other sailors in the naval mutinies of the late 1790s. It argues that in applying these democratic ideas to the organization of their workplace—the ship—and through the motley forms of association on the lower deck, they challenged some of the limits associated with United Irish forms of democracy. The conclusion draws out some of the broader implications of these arguments for critical geographies of colonial Ireland.

**Space, subaltern agency and Irish democratic political cultures**

In an intervention on the relationship between Irish histories and the Subaltern Studies project, David Lloyd makes an important set of claims about the relations between these two bodies of work. He notes the significance of the challenge made by the Subaltern Studies historians to dominant nationalist historiography in India. The influential agenda outlined by historians such as Ranajit Guha and Partha Chatterjee has foregrounded the agency of diverse subaltern movements and groups. They drew on Gramsci’s use of the term subaltern to signal diverse forms of marginalized groups and or marginalization including, but not exclusive to class, gender, ethnicity and race. Integral to this project has been a critique of depictions of “nationalism” as an “integrated will,” which had “overcome the divisive effects of caste, class, gender, and regional interests in its drive to forge the unity of the nation.” The concerns of the Subaltern Studies group have strongly influenced geographical work on resistance. It has been particularly influential on attempts to transcend the tendency of some critical geographies to see subaltern agency as always secondary to capital.
For Lloyd, what is instructive is the way that in Ireland the contestation of “nationalist histories” has come “not from anything akin to Subaltern Studies” but rather from the “large and impressive body of historical work that has become known as ‘revisionist history.’” 12 The focus of this work has been less on the epic of national struggle and more on the emergence under British administration of modern state institutions in Ireland. Revisionist thematics have been important influences on Irish historical geographies. Thus, in their introduction to An Historical Geography of Ireland, Brian Graham and Lindsay Proudfoot outlined an explicitly revisionist agenda for Irish historical geography. Graham and Proudfoot critiqued the insularity, lack of theoretical rigor, unproblematized “nationalist” assumptions about a homogeneous, traditional Ireland, as well as the anti-urbanism that dominated the work of central figures in the discipline such as E. Estyn Evans and T. Jones Hughes. 13 By contrast Graham and Proudfoot articulated an agenda for Irish historical geographies directly influenced by some of the dominant themes of revisionist historiography. This foregrounded the “plurality of Irish identity, landscape and history,” concerned itself with the dynamic character of social transformation, and situated the urban as central to Ireland’s historical geographies.14

John Morrissey has usefully argued for the importance of problematizing the “often simplified and unhelpful depiction of particular readings of Ireland’s past as ostensibly either ‘nationalist’ or ‘revisionist.’” 15 He suggested that “situating the debate in a broader discussion of theory, selectivity and subjectivity in historical inquiry” can transcend these polarized positions. 16 This is an important project for attempts to foreground forms of subaltern agency and presence in Irish histories and geographies as the terrain fashioned by both dominant traditions is rather unhelpful in this respect. As Maley has argued, like many seemingly opposed traditions, they share far more than initial appearances suggest. 17 Here I want to draw attention to their national- and Anglo-focus, their top-down approach to history, and their limited appreciation of the diversity of political forms; three features that must be displaced in accounts foregrounding diverse forms of Irish subaltern agency.

Firstly, then, revisionists and nationalists share some important affinities in terms of their imaginative geographies. As Lloyd indicated, both revisionist and nationalist traditions of historiography have been framed in restrictively nation-centered and Anglo-centered ways. He argued that “the focus of both nationalist history and revisionism has been on nation-state formation, with a shift of focus from heroes to bureaus.” 18 Thus O’Neill argued that rather than deliver its stated aim of disrupting an “Anglo-centric” Irish historiography Foster’s Modern Ireland offers an “alternative Anglo-centric view of Irish history,” which is “preoccupied with redefining the nature of the relationship between the two islands, and the effects which these relationships had upon the various groups into which Irish people were divided by history or historians.” 19 O’Neill also noted the dismissive and stereotypical tones in which Foster describes Irish emigrant communities abroad. An important consequence of the rather bounded framing of Irish historiographies is that it is only relatively recently, due in large part to the pioneering scholarship of Nini Rodgers, that Ireland’s relation to slavery and anti-slavery has been given serious attention.20

Secondly, both traditions of historiography have been structured by top-down approaches to historical writing and research. Guha and Chatterjee developed a thorough-going critique of Indian liberal nationalist historiography to foreground various forms of subaltern agency. Significant aspects of subaltern presence and agency have been marginalized by revisionist and nationalist historiographies alike. 21 A significant example here would be the marginal role accorded to the powerful labor combinations in accounts of eighteenth-century Irish politics. 22 A 1780 Report of the Grand Committee for Trade noted the power of combinations in various trades in Dublin. 23 They were significant in smaller towns such as Carrick-on-Suir, where there was a
weavers’ strike in 1764, and the site of exchanges of subaltern political activity. Thomas Preston, a London shoemaker and radical, found friendship and work among the cobbler of Dublin and Cork in the early nineteenth century and recounts leading a strike among Cork shoemakers. 24

Despite revisionism’s explicit project of attending to plurality, then, this approach has taken a rather limited approach to what and who is to be included. As Catherine Nash’s discussion of the constitutive role of gender and sexuality in Irish histories and geographies usefully emphasized, foregrounding diverse, plural accounts necessarily involves engaging with multiple forms of agency. She contended that Irish feminists’ focus on “cultural, geographical and historical senses of embodied Irishness challenges the meaning of historical significance, politics and the imagined geographies of nation, gender and sexuality. To confuse simple, traditional, binary understandings of cultural, gender and sexual identity is to change what Irishness can mean.” 25 This permits a focus on the different forms of agency active in constituting notions of Irishness, both in Ireland and elsewhere. 26

Nash’s stress on challenging binary understandings resonates with what Lloyd has described as “the multiple foci” of new histories “on the sites and narratives that state formation constitutively occludes.” 27 Lloyd pointed to significant work on agrarian secret societies, for example, which sits awkwardly with the theoretical and ideological project of “official Irish nationalism.” 28 Such societies have often been dealt with rather dismissively and labelled as pre-political, partly because they generate spaces of politics that disrupt the dominant nation-centered geographies that have framed Irish historiographies. 29 Movements like the Whiteboys, for example, are disruptive of nation-state-centered histories in various ways, both through the importance of the local to their forms of political activity, but also through the ways in which their forms of political activity travelled. 30 Their forms of organization and unruly subaltern cultures also moved beyond Ireland. Letters of missionaries in Newfoundland in the mid-1760s suggest the importance of the Whiteboy activity as a context for the emergence and intensification of rough subaltern cultures in Newfoundland. 31 They were influential on strikes among dockside workers in London in 1768. 32

Thirdly, these different approaches have occluded the multiple forms through which the political is constituted. Thus Francis Mulhearn has written about the foreclosure of the political in relation to nationalism in Ireland. He argued that the “peoples of Ireland face a political agenda as long and difficult as any. But nationality need not be its decisive term and—arguably—cannot be.” 33 He insisted upon the importance of recognizing the “heterogeneous scripts, none of them internally coherent, in which a diverse society torn by class, gender and other conflicts reads its situations and prospects.” 34 Mulhearn’s stress upon the multiplicity of the political in Ireland’s past and present is significant, because foregrounding the multiple antagonisms through which the political is constituted is a condition of possibility for interrogating the diverse forms of subaltern agency that shaped such pasts and presents.

Doreen Massey’s arguments about the co-existence of different political identities and the ongoing construction of spatial relations are significant here. 35 In this vein Adrian Mulligan has argued for the importance of transcending dominant state-centered histories of Irish nationalism to recover the plural identities constituted in relation to nationalism. He suggested that Fenianism was formed “on a transatlantic terrain” where nationalism functioned as “a highly mobile construct which could be reactivated in a multitude of contexts overseas, so as to make a sense of place, the world and one’s own predicament.” 36 Mulligan used this interrogation of the interconnections through which Fenianism was constituted to recover the multiple narratives and identities constituted through nationalism. He concluded that these connections affirm that “there can never be only one narrative of nationalism, territorially contained and following an orderly historical progression.” 37
Such work intersects with what has been described as a “transnational turn” in the study of anti-colonial politics. Maia Ramnath’s work on the transnational forms of Indian agitation shaped through the Ghadar movement, for example, has interrogated the relations between Indian, Egyptian and Irish anti-colonial radicals shaped in cities such as Berlin and New York. She noted how connections between Indian and Irish radicals represented a “triumph of principle over ascribed identity as the root of solidarity.” Such exchanges shaped identification, and in terms of repertoires of political activity as well as in terms of political rhetoric. Thus, Kevin Grant has noted the transcolonial circulation between Irish and Indian nationalists of the tactic of hunger-striking in prison in the early twentieth century.

This demonstrates the significance of thinking in relational terms about the formation of Irish political trajectories. By this I mean seeing political practices as formed through negotiating different connections and networks, rather than emerging from bounded sealed places. Mulligan’s account of Fenianism demonstrates that interrogating the connections and networks that have constituted Irish nationalisms doesn’t just add such connections on to existing understandings of nationalism. Rather, it foregrounds the different forms of identity and agency constituted in relation to nationalism. This paper develops these concerns through thinking about the formation of Irish democratic political cultures in the 1790s. As noted above, radicals like James Hope configured their political identities in relation to various Atlantic trajectories and flows of political activity, albeit in critical ways.

In what follows I use a focus on some of these Atlantic flows and connections, and how they were negotiated, to engage with the multiple political identities fashioned through Irish democratic cultures. The next section uses this focus to explore the relations of Irish democratic political cultures to debates on slavery. Drawing on the concerns of Atlantic histories and geographies, I position Irish democratic politics in relation to the differentiated geographies of power that shaped Atlantic networks. This permits a focus on the way that notions of political community generated through the activity of the United Irishmen were formed. Through exploring the black presence in eighteenth-century Ireland, and foregrounding the role of anti-slavery activists such as Olaudah Equiano in contributing to the terms of debate of Irish democratic politics, I argue that such an approach can illuminate forms of political agency that have often been marginalized or completely ignored by both revisionist and nationalist accounts of Irish democratic political cultures. I highlight, however, some of the exclusionary geographies of democracy constituted through these debates, through noting the limited forms of liberty and political community advocated by many United Irish activists both in Ireland and in the United States.

Slavery, anti-slavery and Irish democratic identities

In May of 1791 Olaudah Equiano, an ex-slave, free black, and abolitionist, sailed from Liverpool to Dublin. He wrote in the fifth and subsequent editions of his autobiography that he “was very kindly received” in Dublin: “[A]nd from thence to Cork and then travelled over many counties in Ireland. I was everywhere exceedingly well treated, by persons of all ranks. I found the people extremely hospitable, particularly in Belfast, where I took my passage on board of a vessel for Clyde, on the 29th of January, and arrived at Greenock on the 30th.” Equiano’s travels in Ireland were part of his tours to promote both his memoirs and the abolitionist cause. His autobiography, *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, or Gustavus Vassa, the African. Written by Himself*, was a key abolitionist text and records a truly Atlantic life lived between Africa, the Americas, and Britain and Ireland. By the time Equiano travelled to Ireland he was already a significant figure in debates on the slave trade. He had also developed an impressive array of contacts and friends. These included the abolitionist Granville Sharp and Thomas Hardy,
the Scottish shoemaker who was to be the first secretary of the London Corresponding Society (LCS), the “most controversial and most famous” of the various reform movements that emerged in Britain in the 1790s.42

Equiano was part of a small but significant black presence in late-eighteenth-century Ireland. He had formed friendships with Irish sailors before travelling in Ireland. Equiano served as a sailor during the Seven Years’ War while still enslaved to his master Captain Pascal. Aboard the Aetna, a “messmate, the Irishman Daniel Quin, taught him to read the Bible and to think of nothing ‘but being free.’”43 Another black seafarer, John Jea, who was born in Old Calabar on the Niger Delta in 1773, spent time in Munster between 1803 and 1805. He was enslaved and taken to New York. There he won his freedom and as a sailor and an itinerant preacher travelled to “Boston, New Orleans, the ‘East Indies’, South America, Holland, France, Germany, Ireland and England.”44 His autobiography noted that the “fame” of his preaching “spread through the country, even from Limerick to Cork. I preached in Limerick and the country villages round, and by the Spirit of God, many people were convinced and converted.” His preaching won him the condemnation of Catholic priests, one of whom informed him that “he was going to hell,” but also the support of the mayor of Limerick.45 During the eighteenth century there was a small black community in Dublin.46 Black soldiers were also present in regiments stationed in Ireland.47 This section uses an engagement with the black presence in eighteenth-century Ireland as a starting point to think about the relations between democratic political identities in Ireland and debates about slavery and the slave trade.

Equiano’s brief account of his stay in Ireland emphasized his appreciation of the hospitality accorded to him in Belfast. There he kept company among dissenters such as Samuel Neilson, “possibly the most radical member of Belfast’s secret committee and then the United Irishmen.”48 Neilson acted as Equiano’s patron, “so that the well dressed, middle aged African appeared with his Interesting Narrative not only at the local booksellers but at Neilson’s drapery business at the commercial heart of the town.”49 These connections and exchanges had effects. Key United Irish radicals, including Neilson and Napper Tandy, were subscribers to the Dublin edition of the Interesting Narrative.50 Neilson gave anti-slavery issues a prominent place in the Northern Star, the United Irishmen’s newspaper.51 William Drennan proposed the circulation of addresses on the boycott of sugar.52

These concerns around slavery intersected with politics around gender. Mary Ann McCracken, for example, was involved in anti-slavery campaigns and linked opposition to slavery with the oppression of women. She argued that there “can be no argument produced in favour of the slavery of women that has not been used in favour of general slavery.”53 McCracken contested the limits both of republicanism and of those exclusionary forms of masculinity, associated with violence and drinking, through which republicanism was constituted.54 These relations between gender, race and the forms of democratic political cultures and identities generated by the United Irishmen are significant. Foregrounding them also allows different stories to emerge about the shaping of their political imaginaries. In particular, they demand that Equiano’s agency in shaping the political identities of the United Irishmen, and some of the geographies of connection they produced, is taken seriously. Contemporaries certainly wrote important assessments of Equiano in this regard. The Belfast abolitionist Thomas Digges acclaimed his role “as a principal instrument in bringing about the motion for a repeal of the Slave-act.”55

Equiano’s important political connections, however, have been profoundly marginalized in Vincent Carretta’s recent biography of Equiano. Carretta wrote of Equiano’s time in Ireland that “Equiano was associating with people who were increasingly becoming politically controversial.” Carretta argued that although he may have not known it “one of the shadiest characters he befriended in Ireland was Thomas Atwood Digges, who wrote him a letter of
introduction on Christmas Day, 1791, to take with him to the town of Carrickfergus.” Carretta used Equiano’s association with Digges, together with a reductive framing of Equiano as a self-made man, to foreclose a serious engagement with Equiano’s connections with radical figures in Ireland, Scotland, and England. This is a significant omission as Equiano knew and was friendly with a number of leading radical figures even making new connections between them.

As I have noted Equiano was a friend of Thomas Hardy, the first secretary of the LCS. He brokered connections between Hardy and radical movements in Sheffield, drawing on abolitionist connections and networks. Equiano was thus connected with both key United Irish radicals and the LCS. He may have been important in envisioning and generating the connections that developed between them. This would be in keeping with his role in forging, or attempting to forge, connections between the LCS and other radical political groups. On his tours to promote his book in the early 1790s Equiano sought out contacts for the newly formed LCS. From Edinburgh in 1792 he sent Hardy: “My best respect to my fellow members of your society. I hope they do yet increase- I do not hear in this place that there is any such society- I think Mr […] Matthews in Glasgow told me that there was (or is) some there.” Given the direct concern of this letter with soliciting contacts for the LCS, it would seem almost inconceivable that Equiano would not at the very least have mentioned to Hardy and other fellow members of the LCS his knowledge of similar societies in Dublin and Belfast.

The London Corresponding Society was influenced by connections with Irish democratic cultures. Thomas Hardy derived the idea for a Corresponding Society from a pamphlet associated with the eighteenth-century Irish militia, the Volunteers: A Letter from His Grace the Duke of Richmond to Lieutenant Colonel Sharman. This pamphlet was republished by the LCS. LCS rhetoric included appeals for “healing the bleeding wounds of Ireland” and against the “savage system of coercion now pursuing in Ireland.” Important Irish radicals such as John Binns were involved in both the UI and LCS. LCS appeals and declarations were also circulated to the United Irishmen. These cross-cutting friendships, associations and exchanges challenge accounts of the politics of the United Irishmen that have erased or ignored Equiano. Further they raise questions about what role Equiano may have played in constructing, facilitating, or envisioning connections between the UI and LCS. Likewise, his connections with radicals associated with the United Irishmen arguably contributed to the prominence of anti-slavery themes in United Irish writing and thought.

Certain United Irish radicals made anti-slavery themes central to their writings. An important case here is Thomas Russell. Russell was one of the most significant of the radical-populist leaders of the United Irishmen and an associate of Digges and the UI founder, Theobald Wolfe Tone. Russell’s poem the Negro’s Complaint was printed in the United Irish songbook Paddy’s Resource. The relations between anti-slavery concerns and the political strategies of the United Irishmen were developed in Russell’s pamphlet A Letter to the People of Ireland on the Present Situation of the Country published in 1796:

Are the Irish of the nation aware that this contest involves the question of the slave trade, the one now of the greatest consequence on the face of the earth? Are they willing to employ their treasure and their blood in support of that system because and England has 70 or 7000 millions engaged in it, the only argument that can be adduced in its favour monstrous as it may appear? Do they know that that horrid traffic spreads its influence over the globe; that it creates and perpetuates barbarism and misery, and prevents the spreading of civilisation and thousands of these miserable Africans are dragged from their innocent families like the miserable defenders, transported to various places, and there treated with
such a system of cruelty, torment, wickedness and infamy, that it is impossible
for language adequately to express its horror and guilt, and which would appear
rather to be the work of wicked demons than of men. If this trade is wrong, is it
right for the Irish nation to endeavour to continue it? And does not every man who
contributes to the war contribute to its support.63

This extract from Russell’s pamphlet has been rightly noted for the equivalence it draws
between the treatment of the defenders and African slaves. Thus Kevin Whelan celebrated its
vivid “imaginative identification between the poor Irish and the African-American slave.”64 Luke
Gibbons argued in similar vein that “the cause of the Defenders is on a continuum with that of
African slaves; and the standards of civility against which English tyranny is found wanting
derive not from nature but from other cultures on the receiving end of colonialism, including that
of the [N]ative Americans.”65

Equally significant perhaps are the relations that Russell makes here between the struggles
for Irish independence and anti-slavery politics. His argument is about more than making a
simple equivalence between the conditions of slaves and Defenders, important and powerful
as that analogy is. He mobilizes slavery as a reason for opposing the English in the war against
France. Note Russell’s injunction that “this contest involves the question of the slave trade.” The
equivalence with slavery then is not made merely in order to emphasize the plight of the Irish
poor. Rather, it is used as part of a broader argument that England should be opposed, because
of England’s wealth from and support for the slave trade. Through the logic of this argument
Russell opens up an important set of questions about what could be termed the “geopolitics of
slavery.” The democratic cultures and identities of the UI in Russell’s pamphlet are produced,
then, through particular interventions in the geopolitics of slavery. This produces a way of
articulating emergent nationalist politics through geographies of connection and solidarity. At
the time Russell was writing this pamphlet the French had abolished slavery in certain colonies
in the wake of the slave insurrection in Saint-Domingue, later to become Haiti.66

The political identities and democratic cultures of the United Irishmen, however, were
produced in relation to Atlantic geographies that were marked by differentiated geographies of
power. There was no homogeneous linkage between United Irishmen and anti-slavery politics.
Russell had various arguments with the editors of the Northern Star in relation to slavery.67
Merchants like William Sinclair, a leading industrialist and linen producer and founder member
of the UI, were benefiting directly from the provisioning of the West Indian plantations.68 Most
strikingly, many of the United Irishmen who were exiled to the US in the wake of the 1798
rebellion became either proponents of slavery or active participants in it.69 As David Wilson has
argued, accounts of the UI’s anti-slavery stance are seriously undermined by the unpalatable
reality that “virtually every prominent United Irish exile who settled south of the Mason-Dixon
line became a slaveholder—men such as Harman Blennerhasset, who owned a cotton plantation
in the Mississippi Territory and constantly fretted over the price of slaves.”70 The links of Belfast
merchants to Atlantic trade noted by Rodgers suggest there were continuities in the different
relations of UI figures to slavery and the slave trade.

These multiple and contested links between the UI, slavery, and anti-slavery warrant
serious engagement with the different political opinions/identities within the UI. It would
be attractive to mobilize Russell’s analysis of the geopolitics of slavery and the links between
Equiano and the United Irishmen to support Kevin Whelan’s assessment that the United Irishmen
offered an “exemplary form of cultural pluralism.”71 However, this would be to ignore important
evidence that problematizes straightforward support by UI for anti-slavery politics. It would
also marginalize the role of figures such as Equiano, McCracken, and Russell in intervening in
the construction of the democratic political cultures of the UI. For these figures made significant interventions in linking anti-slavery positions to United Irish democratic cultures which are missed if an unproblematic anti-slavery position is assumed.

The debates over the relations between the UI and the politics of slavery emphasize some of the limited and contested notions of liberty and equality adopted by the UI. As David Wilson has argued of the United Irish exiles in America, not only “did their egalitarianism stop at the boundaries of white male society,” they also “refused to countenance class conflict within those boundaries,” being hostile to labor combinations. The next section explores some of the contested relations between labor struggles, democracy and nationalisms through an engagement with Irish involvement in the naval mutinies of the late 1790s.

Shipboard spaces, Irish nationalisms and democratic political cultures

In 1796 Wolf Tone addressed Irish sailors in the British Navy, asking them to mutiny and to steer their ships into the ports of Ireland. He noted that they would otherwise “probably be called upon immediately to turn your arms against your native land, and the part which you may take on this great occasion is of the very last importance. I hope and rely that you will act as becomes brave seamen and honest Irishmen. Remember that Ireland is now an independent nation.” Tone further asked: “What is there to hinder you from immediately seizing on every vessel wherein you sail, man of war, Indiaman or merchantman, hoisting the Irish flag and steering into the ports of Ireland? You have the power, if not the inclination.”

Irish sailors were to be central actors in the mutinies at the Spithead and Nore in 1797 and in mutinies and “disorders” off Cape Nicola Mole (in present day Haiti), off Havana in the Caribbean, at Plymouth, among the Mediterranean fleet and at the Cape of Good Hope. Tone’s address, however, views Irish tars primarily as a means to the end of the formation of an independent Irish republic. The historiography of the United Irishmen has reproduced Tone’s construction of Irish sailors as passive figures who needed to be led. The struggles of Irish tars are constructed as playing out the already formed designs and demands of the United Irish movement and leadership. This section argues, in contrast, that the sailor’s actions dislocated some of the limits of the UI’s notions of equality and liberty.

Tone’s address hails sailors as significant because they fitted into the geopolitical strategies of the United Irishmen to develop an alliance with the French, as the prospects for a rebellion in Ireland were seen as dependent on support from the French. Tone’s address, however, displays little interest or feel for the ongoing grievances of sailors, their distinctive organizing traditions or the social relations aboard ship. Irish sailors involved in these mutinies mobilized democratic claims and language. In 1798, for example, there was a conspiracy led by Irish sailors aboard the Defiance. The conspirators were heard to take oaths pledging allegiance to the United Irishmen and to claim that they ‘should have equality and freedom in Ireland’. There is evidence, however, that this was not just a passive mimicking of the ideas of groups like the United Irishmen, but an application of these ideas to the context of their harsh lives aboard ship.

The articulations between notions of equality and liberty and shipboard grievances can be demonstrated by a prosecution brief drawn up in the case of an Irish sailor, John Pollard. Pollard was arrested in a dockside tavern in 1800 for making the following toasts “success to the rebels,” “success to the French,” and “damn the dog that opposes them.” Pollard also boasted of his role in the Spithead mutiny, where he was among the leaders of the mutineers on La Nympe. The prosecution brief recounts that after the Spithead mutiny he had “ran away from her to avoid punishment for his behaviour in the mutiny” and had joined the Montague. It was alleged that on the Montague he had “at various times been guilty of mutinous seditions and disorderly conduct.” Pollard was later recognized by his former Captain Frazer on the Montague. Within
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an hour of being back on La Nymphe the brief alleges that “Pollard was endeavouring to excite the crew to mutiny,” boasting that “he had in the Montague been instrumental in sending Lord Vincent on shore at Gibraltar—and that if they [the crew of La Nymphe] had a dislike to any of their officers he would assist them ashore also.”

Pollard’s democratic imaginary, then, didn’t bear just on notions of independence in Ireland, they were also applied directly to the conditions of his work-place: the ship. As Moore has argued, the Spithead and Nore mutinies were characterized by important attempts to democratize these work places, structured as they were by hierarchical power relations and by both the threat and practice of ritualized forms of official violence. The existence and precise nature of contacts between political organizations like the United Irishmen and the London Corresponding Society and the mutinies has long been a source of contention. Both Wells and Elliott have argued that there were particular individuals with links to either or both the LCS and the UI.

The central significance of the LCS and the UI, however, would not appear to have been direct infiltration. Rather their influence seems strongest in the democratic cultures that characterized the mutinies. The mutineers’ attempts to democratize the space of the ship bear important similarities with the democratic spatial practices of the LCS. The mutineers at the Spithead and Nore elected delegates to a general committee. The sailors’ use of democratic systems of representation at Spithead was applauded by the Moral and Political Magazine of the LCS. The mutineers, however, did not passively mimic the forms of democratic political culture associated with the London Corresponding Society and the United Irishmen. Through using democratic principles, they attempted to regulate and transform life aboard ship, turning bow to stern as Moore argues. These were inventive uses of democratic practices extending them to regulating workplaces that were usually defined by strict and violent hierarchies. These mutinies, conspiracies, and revolts can’t be seen as just as a simple extension of the activity of the United Irishmen aboard ship. These intersections with sailors’ grievances and combinations reworked the United Irishmen’s political practices. They unsettle the power-relations which structure Tone’s address, wherein sailors are hailed as becoming part of an Irish navy, but where social and labor relations are still posed in hierarchical terms. Elite radicals could still be dismissive of such subaltern appropriations of democratic politics. John Thelwall of the LCS, for example, described the mutinies as “mere temporary politics.”

The forms of association produced through these mutinies established different forms of collectivity, suggesting that specific democratic and nascent nationalist identities negotiated the heterogeneity of the lower deck in different ways. Various historians have noted the social heterogeneity of Jack Tars in the eighteenth century. Thus Jeffrey Bolster has talked of the “rough egalitarianism” of the lower deck and Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker have described the ship as an “extraordinary forcing house of internationalism.” Evidence from these mutinies and conspiracies suggests, however, that Irish sailors negotiated this heterogeneity in distinct ways.

Thus a conspiracy aboard the Renommée locates sailor’s invocations of notions of liberty as part of the “ordinary multiculture” that shaped the lower deck. The ship was sailing off Havana when a conspiracy was detected, reputedly bearing the influence of the mutiny on the Hermione. Gabriel Johnson, an African American from New York, Thomas Hennigan from Dublin, and J. McDonald and Patrick Hynes, whom the Renommée pay book merely records as coming from “Ireland,” were court-martialed and sentenced to death for their part in the conspiracy. Evidence given to the court martial by William Allen, a sailor on the Renommée, turns on the way oaths were administered:

Patrick Hynes and me were drinking our grog together (he being a messmate of mine) [he] told me, he wanted to speak something sincerely to me. I asked him
what is meant. He told me they were going to take the ship into the Havannah and whether I would take an Oath upon it. I told him I would take no oath on that subject then he said whoever did not, that the word was . . . Death or Liberty. I told him it was foolish to think of that, and that surely every man would be hung then he said, whoever did not make Oath upon it, it would be death for them in any part of the ship they found them in. Upon that discourse he left me, and Gabriel Johnson came to me that evening, just after six O clock and asked me if Pat Hynes had asked me anything. I just told him he had not; he said, if he had You may as well tell me as not.91

His evidence suggests the use of the oath was part of strategies of ongoing intimidation and mobilization. It situates the administering of oaths as part of rough cultures of the lower deck and as part of particular sites of association. Allen’s testimony situates the administering of oaths as being used as a form of ongoing intimidation. His evidence notes that he was subjected to ritualistic and repeated intimidation by various fellow tars. The court-martial evidence for the conspiracy is suggestive of how the use of oaths was located at the intersection of different sailors. The oath is not seen as restricted to one group of sailors, it is not just “Irish” sailors who are sworn. These attempts to administer oaths suggest how they could be used to generate multi-ethnic practices of rebellion. The revolutionary edge of the watch-word “death or liberty” is also notable. In their court-martial testimony even fellow sailors who gave hostile witness do not mark out Johnson as black suggesting that his status as a fellow sailor transcended this difference.92

As Paul Gilroy has argued in a different context, “[r]acial difference is not feared. Exposure to it is not ethnic jeopardy but rather . . . unremarkable.”93 The use of the oath, however, suggests how particular masculinities cemented these ordinary forms of multiculture.94 The court-martial records of the conspiracy on the Renommée, then, suggest a conspiracy that drew together Irish and other sailors in multi-ethnic cultures of resistance and that oaths were a formative part of this multiculture. Such multiethnic cultures were shaped in diverse contexts. Nicole Ulrich has explored the role of two Irish “vagabonds” who were alleged to have been instigators of the 1808 Revolt in the Cape Colony along with two Khoisan farm servants and forty-seven slaves. One, James Hooper, it would appear had left Ireland in 1799 in the wake of the United Irish rising.95

Shipboard Conspiracies related to the United Irish rising in 1798, mobilized similar use of oaths to generate different forms of collective identity and antagonism. There is evidence that suggests the use of oaths as part of the formation of exclusionary collective identities associated with aggressive forms of territorialization. The court martial of those accused of being part of a conspiracy on the Defiance accuses Irish sailors of being part of a “mutinous assembly or meeting on the starboard side of the galley.”96 On the Captain, fifteen or twenty conspirators were said to meet “under the forecastle on the larboard side of the galley.”97 The administering of oaths was central to cementing these exclusionary identities and collectives.98 This suggests how the conspiracies of Irish sailors were conducted through aggressive forms of territorialization of particular sites of the lower deck.

The testimonies also suggest how these forms of association of Irish sailors were defined in very hostile ways against English tars. William Howell of the Defiance recalled that he had “heard David Reed say the English buggers we’ll kill them all and make Orange boys of them.”99 On the Caesar it was reported that “Englishmen hardly dare go thro’ the Galley by day time without being insulted and his heels tripp’d . . . from under him” and that Irishmen “threw bottles at Englishmen from the Galley.”100 These exclusionary identities were also produced through particular small acts of violence aboard ship, such as the intimidation of English sailors, and of Irish sailors who didn’t support the UI. In his testimony Lawrence Carroll of the Defiance
noted the response of the messmates in his berth after reading a letter he had written to his
brother in Dublin which concluded that “I hope the country is quiet and the rebels defeated. .
. . Cornelius Callaghan told me I ought to be knocked down for I was no Irishman for writing
such a letter.”101 This suggests how notions of Irishness became the site of contestation through
these mutinous events and conspiracies. It also suggests that sailors constituted different, and
potentially antagonistic, notions of Irishness in relation to events such as the 1798 rebellion.

Conclusions

David Dickson has argued that whereas in Britain “rights, universal or otherwise, became
the central concern of the most radical writing,” in Ireland, by the end of the 1790s, the rights
of man “were being transmuted into the rights of Irishmen.”102 This paper has demonstrated
the contested and multiple character of Irish democratic cultures and the struggles over notions
of who and what belonged to Irish democratic cultures in the context of this move towards the
elision between notions of democratic community and of the rights of Irishmen. Positioning
Irish democratic political activity in relation to Atlantic geographies of connection can help to
foreground the diverse forms of agency and identity which constituted, and were constituted in
relation to, Irish democratic cultures.

Interrogating the spatial relations through which these democratic cultures were formed
highlight different demarcations of inclusion and exclusion in forms of political community and
imaginary. Exploring the forms of inclusion and exclusion through which such democratic cultures
were formed has important implications for the character of the emergent forms of nationalism
in 1790s Ireland.103 The contacts between Equiano and the United Irishmen in Belfast, the motley
forms of politics that characterized the conspiracy on the Renommée, the arguments of Thomas
Russell against the geopolitics of slavery, all suggest there were different ways of generating
Irish nationalisms than the association of Irishness and exclusionary notions of whiteness which
emerged in the US in the nineteenth century.104 These different nationalist practices suggest that
what it was to be either, or both a democrat and a nationalist could be formed through positive
relations with others and forms of connection, rather than through an inevitable hardening of
identities.

By exploring the contested geographies through which Irish democratic cultures were
fashioned, I have sought to foreground forms of subaltern agency. Such a project is disruptive of
the terms of debate that have structured different traditions of Irish historiography. This directly
challenges the routine location of Irish politics and social movements within nation-centered
framings. Thinking Irish subaltern politics in relational terms, then, has important implications for
attempts to think about the diverse antagonisms, solidarities, and political networks constructed
by subaltern actors in colonial Ireland. Engaging with the contested spatial relations through
which political identities were made and remade is a key way of recovering these forms of agency.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Gerry Kearns and Maria Lane for their editorial support and engagement. Thanks
are also due to Colm Breathnach, Mo Hume, and Nicole Ulrich.

NOTES

1 Jemmy [James] Hope, “Jefferson’s Daughter” (1846) in Literary Remains of the United Irishmen
2001), 47.


14 Ibid., 11–14.


16 Ibid.

17 Willy Maley, “Nationalism and Revisionism: Ambivalences and Dissensus” in Ireland in Proximity: History, Gender and Space, eds. Scott Brewster, Virginia Crossman, Fiona Becket,
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20 Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery, and Anti-Slavery.
32 Featherstone, Resistance, Space and Identities; Linebaugh, London Hanged.
34 Ibid.
35 Massey, For Space.


39 Ibid., 96.


48 Rodgers, “Equiano in Belfast.”

49 Rodgers, “Equiano in Belfast,” 75; see also *Belfast Newsletter*, 20 December 1791.


54 Ibid., 139.


57 The National Archives UK (TNA): Public Record Office (PRO) TS 24/12/2.


59 Ibid., 252.

60 A curious example here would be Luke Gibbons’s discussion of UI attitudes to slavery which ignores Equiano’s connections with the UI; Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, Politics and the Colonial Sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003),
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208–30.

61 Quinn, Soul on Fire.


63 Thomas Russell, A Letter to the People of Ireland on the Present Situation of the Country (Belfast: Northern Star Office, 1796), 22.


65 Gibbons, Edmund Burke, 226.


67 Quinn, Soul on Fire, 61–3.

68 Rodgers, Ireland, Slavery, and Anti-Slavery, 84.


70 Whelan, “Green Atlantic,” 58.

72 Wilson, United Irishmen, 134.


74 Maurice Boucher and Nigel Penn, Britain at the Cape, 1795-1803 (Johannesburg, South Africa: Brenthurst Press, 1992), 187; Gill, Naval Mutinies, 252–3; Roger Wells, Insurrection: The British Experience 1795-1803 (Gloucester, United Kingdom: Alan Sutton, 1983), 145–51.

75 Marianne Elliott, Partners in Revolution: The United Irishmen and France (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1990), 140–2; Wells, Insurrection, 145; Whelan, Tree of Liberty, 123.

76 Elliott, Partners in Revolution.

77 Record of Court Martial Assembled on board HM’s Ship Gladiator in Portsmouth Harbor held 8th September to 14th day of September, 1978, TNA: PRO Adm 1/5346 (1978)

78 The King Against John Pollard For Sedition, TNA: PRO TS 11/914/3164.


81 Elliott, Partners in Revolution, 140–1; Wells, Insurrection, 95–9. The relationships between the LCS, the United Irishmen and the mutinies still, however, seem to be a matter of scorn for
some naval historians. Nicholas Rodger argues that the Quota Acts, which have been seen as a key source of dissent, were not a provocation to “educated trouble-makers,” but rather to “respectable working men in need of employment”; Rodger, “Mutiny and Subversion.” It was precisely “respectable working men,” however, who were members of societies like the LCS and who would have brought their experiences of these organizations to negotiate the harsh life aboard ship.

82 Moore, “Greatest Enormity.”
84 Moore, “Greatest Enormity.”
87 Bolster, Black Jacks, 91; Linebaugh and Rediker, Many-Headed Hydra, 151.
89 Wells, Insurrection, 149.
90 Renommée Fay Book, TNA: PRO Adm 35/1550.
91 Renommée Court Martial, TNA: PRO Adm 1/5343.
92 Ibid.
93 Gilroy, After Empire, 105.
94 Bolster, Black Jacks.
96 TNA: PRO Adm 1/5346.
97 TNA: PRO Adm 1/5347.
98 See TNA: PRO Adm 1/5346; Adm 1/5347.
99 TNA: PRO Adm 1/5346.
100 Wells, Insurrection, 148.
101 TNA: PRO Adm 1/5346.
102 Dickson, “Paine and Ireland,” 148.
104 Ignatiev, How the Irish became White.
Writing the Colonial Past in Postcolonial Ireland: an Anglo-Irish Response

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ABSTRACT: Whilst colonialism has left very visible impacts on Ireland’s landscapes, people, culture and identity, it has also left a significant imprint on Irish historical imaginations and on scholarship. One of the legacies of colonialism in Ireland and elsewhere is its effect on how we understand and approach the past. In the Irish context one dominant narrative has been that which has painted the colonial community (the Anglo-Irish) as a class of alien Others who lived parasitically off Irish land and labour and were out-of-place in the Irish landscape both during colonialism and after it. In this paper I explore one mid-twentieth Anglo-Irish response to this narrative, Elizabeth Bowen’s *Bowen’s Court* (1942). In doing so, I trace the evolving relationships that members of a colonial family had with Ireland as documented within the spaces of the text to reveal a more spatially nuanced view of the position of the Anglo-Irish in the Irish landscape.

Whilst colonialism has left very visible impacts on Ireland’s landscapes, people, culture and identity, it has also left a significant imprint on Irish historical imaginations and on scholarship. One of the legacies of colonialism in Ireland and elsewhere is its effect on how we understand and approach the past. In many instances post-independence histories have been as pointed and positioned in their anti-colonial agendas as those produced under colonialism. Attempting to move beyond the kind of oppositional either/or stalemate that such histories produce, postcolonial approaches seek to bring the messiness of the colonial encounter and its legacy to the surface by delving into subjective and localized experiences so as to highlight nuances and contradictions that disrupt dominant historical narratives. In the Irish context, one dominant narrative has been that which has painted the colonial community (the Anglo-Irish)—as a class of exploitative alien Others who lived parasitically off Irish land and labor and remained out of place in the Irish landscape from their arrival in the seventeenth century until their decline in the early-twentieth century. This image has circulated in history books as well as in art, literature, and the popular press; and while this view has been challenged by revisionist historians, debates between revisionists, anti-revisionists and post-revisionists in which scholars attempt to definitively explain the position of the colonial community in the national past have continued and stereotypes still circulate.

Whilst there may be many ways in which such stereotypes can be challenged, one way, this paper argues, is through the examination of the imaginative geographies embedded in Anglo-Irish family history writing. Imaginative geographies, as representations of people and place through which authors document their relationships with place and with Others, are a useful lens for exploring the positions of communities who don’t easily fit in or whose positions have been contested for a number of reasons. Firstly, imaginative geographies provide perspective on the various and often overlapping contexts in which people live (be they personal, local, regional, national, or international) and in which they experience different senses of identity. It
is well recognized that identities are not fixed but vary across space and time and that senses of identity are negotiated as people move through the spaces, places, and contexts in which lives are lived. The Anglo-Irish were not a homogenous spatial group. Families, with varied amounts of land and wealth, were scattered across the island and had complex entanglements with Ireland through a medley of social spaces from houses and parks to stable-yards and estate offices, from village fairs, local hunts and race-meetings, to courtrooms, political organizations and social clubs, some of which were exclusive but many of which were hybrid. Their money and status made them mobile and their connections with England and with empire meant that they had broad social networks and that many were in the habit of travelling. Moreover, given the long history of such families in Ireland, during which fortunes were lost and won, estates expanded and contracted, and people moved and married; the geographies of different generations varied with time, wealth, and fashion. Imaginative geographies, and in particular those embedded in family history and autobiography, capture these varied and shifting spaces.

Secondly, seen as expressions of identity through which groups articulate relationships with selves and Others, affiliating with some groups and spaces and distancing themselves from other groups and other spaces, imaginative geographies provide perspectives on the complicated and often contradictory kinds of relationships that people have with the places they occupy and the people they live among. The structuring impulse that underpins imaginative geographies, therefore, can enable us to trace the connections that the Anglo-Irish had with Ireland through the varied spaces that constituted their world. This is important because while historical scholarship has positioned the Anglo-Irish as a distinct class of Others who were either out-of-place in the Irish landscape or else “shallowly grounded in the soil,” an analysis of their imaginative geographies can reveal more complex kinds of embeddedness and the different spaces in which embeddedness took place.

Finally, as expressions of identity produced by communities themselves, imaginative geographies provide perspective on the ways in which groups see their own position in particular contexts and the relationships they think they have with those around them as opposed to the ways in which historians, sociologists, or anthropologists have written about them. Much of the writing on the position of the Anglo-Irish in Ireland has come from scholarship that has looked at that position from the perspective of Irish historical research and interpretation. Exploring Anglo-Ireland from an imaginative geographies perspective allows us to examine that positionality from within.

However, as a perspective on the past written from within and written from the present, the historical geographer must also interrogate the seeming objectivity of such descriptions. As Derek Gregory has written, imaginative geographies “articulate the desires, fantasies, and fears of their authors and the grids of power between them and their ‘Others’” that emanate from and reflect those feelings. Reading Anglo-Irish autobiography and family texts as imaginative geographies, therefore, enables us to consider them not only as accounts of the past within which relationships are articulated, but as accounts which also tell us something of the contexts in which they were produced. This sense of an imaginative geography is recognized by the author of the Anglo-Irish family history that is the subject of this paper, Elizabeth Bowen (1899-1975), who acknowledged that “[i]n making the past their subject, writers respond instinctively to a general wish – they react to, voice, what is in the air around them.” Reading historical texts as imaginative geographies, therefore, enables us to consider how articulations of territorial identity reflect the contemporary concerns of their authors.

Attempts to identify and reveal such positionality have been at the heart of most imaginative geographies research. Early work in the field noted that texts about colonial societies had always been produced from particular vantage points, served specific agendas, and were imbued with...
the ideologies of those that produced them. Such texts tended to represent colonial societies as Other, inferior, and often as wild, uncivilized, and in need of taming. Later postcolonial writers, also recognizing the positionality of any text, examined more complicated colonial relationships that were documented in subjective forms of writing such as diaries and journals as well as imaginative literature. Such sources elucidated the local nuances in colonial experiences. Autobiographical and family history writing is another form of subjective and located story telling that documents the intersection of life-worlds and broader social processes. Historical scholarship has traditionally been somewhat suspicious of the autobiographical account as an objective record. However, more recent work by historians, as well as geographers, recognizes the importance of autobiographical texts as sources that follow the connections between biography, locality, and history and articulate relationships with place. Less work has been done on family history writing as either imaginative geographies or records of evolving territorial identities.

In this paper I examine one family history, Elizabeth Bowen’s Bowen’s Court (1942), as an expression of territorial identity. Written by Anglo-Irish novelist and commentator on Irish affairs, Elizabeth Bowen, this text documents the history of successive generations of the Bowen family in Ireland from the time of their first arrival as part of the seventeenth-century Cromwellian conquest to the author’s own time in the early-twentieth century. As a writer of critical acclaim, Bowen has received significant attention from scholars. Whilst much work focuses on her fiction, her factual work on Anglo-Ireland, including Bowen’s Court, has also been explored by those interested in her craft and in her relationship to and treatment of the Anglo-Irish past. Thus, while the nature of her Irishness has been much debated by those who have studied her work, most critics regard her as an authoritative voice on and from Anglo-Ireland. Centered on the family’s ancestral home from which the text takes its title, Bowen’s Court is a history of a house and a place as well as that of a family set within a wider history of a region, a country, and a colonial project that expanded across the Irish landscape, shaped it, but was resisted by it. As a set of local stories narrated as part of a wider story about colonization, anti-colonial resistance and decolonization, it is a useful text for exploring the local spaces in which those processes happened and the particular parts played by members of the Anglo-Irish community in that unfolding history. Written between 1939 and 1941, at a time when the Anglo-Irish had been “relegated within the national cultural imaginary to remnants of an historically disliked order, linked to dominant national constructions of rack-renting landlords and subjugated tenants,” most contemporary analyses see the text as a response to the on-going animosity that existed in Ireland towards the Big House (a term used in Ireland to refer to the country houses of the gentry) and all that it represented. Certainly Bowen was concerned about the position of Anglo-Ireland in post-independence Ireland, particularly in terms of how it fitted in with contemporary Irish culture as well as how it was perceived in Irish historical imaginations. She was also deeply aware of how these two issues were related. This is documented most explicitly in her essay “The Big House” published in The New Statesman (1940). Here she argued that while the old myths of the Anglo-Irish as “the heartless rich” had been broken down “from the point of view of the outside Irish world” the house, its occupants and its history were still seen in hostile terms. Bowen’s response was to explore her own family’s position in the Irish past, and to document their unfolding relationships with the landscape, history, and people of the new place in which they had settled. In doing so, Bowen has left us with a family history, consciously told as part of a wider colonial history of Ireland, and imbued with its own interpretations, embellishments, and absences, but through which evolving relationships with people and place are recorded. Bowen’s Court is therefore not just a story within a story or a story about the past, but a conscious expression of territorial identity told to counteract the suspicion that surrounded the Irishness of the Anglo-Irish and their place in Ireland that prevailed in the post-independence period.
In this analysis of Bowen’s Court as a record of evolving territorial identities I examine the spaces depicted within the text and the kinds of relationships with Ireland that are articulated therein. As a narrative that recounts ten generations of family experiences and the three hundred years of colonial history in which their lives were enmeshed, the analysis traces the expanding and contracting spaces of family members and their intersections with the wider historical landscape that the text depicts through an examination of five narrative themes: colonial origins, settler integration, the impacts of colonial policy, Irish resistance to colonialism, and Anglo-Irish alienation. Using these themes, I examine the particular territoriality of this Anglo-Irish family and the way in which the text comments on the shifting position of the Anglo-Irish community in Ireland throughout the colonial period and after it.

The geography of colonial origins

The text opens with an almost cartographic survey of the northeast corner of County Cork in which Bowen’s Court is set and through which she describes its natural and built landscape of hills, valleys and rivers, towns, villages and roads, castles, demesnes, churches, and graveyards before settling in on her own house, eight miles from Shanballymore, thirteen miles from Mallow, twelve miles from Fermoy, eight miles from Mitchelstown and seven from Doneraile. In doing so Elizabeth presents a view of a peaceful and picturesque landscape best seen, she suggested, from the air. However, her references to a number of ruined castles, demesnes, abbeys, and barracks destroyed during Ireland’s numerous wars illustrate that this was a country much fought over and while the survival of Bowen’s Court—coupled with its distance from these other places—separates it from them and their history, her text acknowledges the relationship between her family and the colonial project by which they first came to Ireland. Their house, she tells the reader, was “imposed on seized” land and “built in the rulers’ ruling tradition,” as were other colonial houses in the vicinity. This opening chapter sets the scene for a family story that begins as part of the history of seventeen-century conquest and colonization but which, once established, went its own way. The first of the Bowens to arrive in Ireland (Henry I) came in 1652 to serve with the Cromwellian occupying army and for this service he received eight hundred acres in Farahy, north Cork. This grant was produced by the dispossession of a previous occupant and the establishment of the Bowens in the Irish landscape. Elizabeth acknowledged the particularly aggressive nature of the Cromwellian settlement and its impact on the Irish people and landscape, both in this text and in her other writings on Ireland. Here she argued that they were “hired toughs” who had come “fresh, and eager for Irish blood” and that theirs was a story that had “no moral.”

However, while Bowen presented an account of her family’s history as part of the Cromwellian conquest, confiscation, displacement, and plantation; part of a history that she presented as turbulent, violent and unjust; her telling of the more particular history and geography of her own family within that project complicates the narrative. Unlike his fellow Cromwellians who were Englishmen, Henry Bowen came from the Gower Peninsula in Wales and as a Celt he was ethnically different from them and closer to the Irish. Wales, she argued, was much like Ireland. However, Gower had grown overpopulated and as a result Henry moved to England where he joined the King’s forces. Being “careless and sensual”, with an “unruly and desperate spirit,” and having loyalties that were deemed questionable, Henry was sent to Ireland, where, it was thought, that his temperament would be better suited. In Ireland, however, Henry did not integrate with his fellow Cromwellians. Not only was he ethnically different from those around him who were soon “showing the Irish what was what,” but he also distanced himself from them physically, living isolated and aloof and “in a beggarly way” on his estate. Moreover, unlike them he did not bring his wife and family to Ireland and when they followed him there
he shunned them, after which they returned to Gower. He did, however, have a propensity for hawking and he brought his own birds over from Wales. This caused further conflict between him and his Cromwellian neighbors who considered hawking to be “ungodly and frivolous” and discouraged it due to the fact that it might result in fraternizing with the local population.27

Henry’s geography, explained in terms of his origins as a Welshman, his out-of-placeness in England, his precarious loyalties to the crown, his eventual self-imposed isolation in Ireland, and his possible interaction with local people, distances him from the phase of colonial history that brought him to, and provided him with property in, Ireland. However, Henry was followed to Ireland by his son John (John I), who came with a second wave of Cromwellian soldiers. This Bowen did not receive lands for his services but he did inherit his father’s property, which he expanded by marrying into a neighboring Cromwellian family. In doing so, John extended the Bowen territorial foothold in Ireland and consolidated the Cromwellian connection. However, this was not a happy marriage of families and it may have been one that was forced upon John by his father who stipulated in his will that his son would be disinherited if he married Elizabeth Cushin, the daughter of the dispossessed Catholic on whose lands the Bowens had settled. Thus, in spite of his disregard for Cromwellian society and supposed own interaction with the Irish, Henry I knew how and where to draw the line. John’s Cromwellian wife, however, died unexpectedly. This freed John from his entanglements and allowed him to move to Limerick where he took up residence with a woman of unspecified origin and with whom he had a daughter. To do so he had to relinquish his hold over the estate, which became the responsibility of his first wife’s family until his sons were of inheritable age.

In telling the story of two generations of Bowens in Ireland, Elizabeth presented her family as very much a part of the colonial project, through which they received and extended their land and their lines in Ireland. Her account of their Welsh origins, however, and of the particular kinds of engagements they had in Ireland, are shown as distancing them from the broader Cromwellian and English colonial program. These Welsh origins and their general difference from their wider society with whom they arrived is a repeated theme throughout the text. As Elizabeth explained, it was from “a certain independence and cynicism brought with them from Wales” that her family had always remained somewhat apart from colonial society.28 Unlike others, they did not receive peerages as rewards for supporting the Union of 1800. They were, she argued, too isolated from society, politically inactive and not showy enough.29 Moreover, their loyalty to the colonial authority was different to that of the wider Anglo-Irish community because while they had received their land “through England” they did not have other ties of loyalty there.30 Therefore, whilst a portrait of Olivier Cromwell was to hang on the walls of Bowen’s Court for generations to come, a reminder of the manner of their arrival, and an acknowledged sense of Cromwellian origin and entitlement in Ireland would continue to characterize the family spirit, symbols of their other origins could be seen on family artefacts. The household silver was embellished with hawks, a reminder that Henry’s birds came from Wales, or stags, an emblem that was on the original Bowen family crest before they came to Ireland, while the house itself took its name from Court House, the family’s Gower Residence.

The geography of settler integration

Parallel to the narrative of Bowen hybridity and deviation from the colonial norm is a story of the family’s increasing Irishness. Bowen developed this theme by showing the ways members of her family gradually began to engage with and feel part of the landscape in which they had settled. As roots deepened, family lines extended and as the geographies of the protagonists in this story expanded, so too did their sense of belonging in Ireland. John II was the first Bowen born in Ireland and he and his siblings “felt indigenous.”31 This generation married
into neighboring families thereby extending the family network and possessions. It is the Henry of the next generation, Henry III, however, who becomes the most deeply Irish. This child was born “delicate” and, following the Irish custom in such crises, the local people sent out for the skin of a newly slaughtered sheep in whose “life-heat” they could wrap the “half-living child.” Having saved him, they proceeded to call him “Cooleen” and Elizabeth informs her reader that “in spite of his ancestry” they had for him a respect that they generally reserved only for their own “natural lords.” Moreover, having lost both his parents in infancy, he spent significant time in the houses of his extended family that had settled in neighboring counties. By adulthood he “felt as Irish as Lord Muskerry,” and as such was regarded as the “first Irish Bowen to come to full bloom.” Thus within four generations, the Bowens both felt Irish and appeared Irish and when Henry IV went to England to be educated in 1799 Elizabeth suggests that he was probably by then easily identifiable as Other by his Irish brogue.

Settler integration can also be traced through their relationship with the landscape. Early in the text Elizabeth imagines the relationship between Henry I and his newly acquired land. “[U]nlike some of the settlers around him” Henry, she argued, was “not new to the possession of land” and may even have had “a physical love of it.” This love he invested into his estate as he traversed it on horseback and beat out his boundaries himself. John I, in spite of extending the property, was less preoccupied with his land. By contrast, his children, however, under the direction of their grandfather, had horses and hounds, and through them came to know their own land and the neighboring places they were to marry into. Such was Cooleen’s involvement with his Cork estate that he choose not to flee the country in the late-eighteenth-century, despite the provincialism of the society in which he lived and the increasing political instability of the period. With many Anglo-Irish families abandoning their estates to live as absentees in England, he was too closely connected with his region to leave: “[H]e was Henry Cole Bowen of Kilbolane, Ballymackey and Farahy. . . . He was too proud to spend his rents being just less showy than the gentlemen of Dublin, London or Bath. . . . He posed himself here in Mallow, in the rich positiveness of a provincial society.”

The most significant achievement of this “full bloom” Irish Bowen was his building of Bowen’s Court. The construction of the house, as told by Elizabeth, marks an important moment in the Bowen history in Ireland. In spite of having been “[i]mposed on seized land [and] built in the rulers ruling tradition,” it was not only built by the first Irish Bowen but it was also constructed of local rock by local laborers. Moreover, the foundation stone of the house, she tells the reader, was laid in 1775, the same year that settler Henry Grattan entered the Patriot Party to lobby for the establishment of an Irish parliament in Ireland. Her history of the house, therefore, positions both it and her family in a very particular way as part of the Irish landscape and as part of the settler story in Ireland. For Bowen, this story was as much architectural, intellectual and aesthetic as it was political. While the Anglo-Irish began “rather roughly” once settled they began to ornament:

[T]hese new settlers who had been imposed on Ireland began to wish to add something to life. The security that they had, by the eighteenth century, however ignobly gained, they did not use quite ignobly.

In doing so they built fine houses, in which they stocked libraries, hung paintings, ornamented ceilings and mantelpieces, and around which they planned and planted parks and demesnes and as they did their earlier “harsh, individual enterprise” gave way to a more refined protestant nationalism.
The Bowen house was, as described by Elizabeth, particularly Irish. When built, the house absorbed and reflected the atmosphere of the surrounding landscape. The rooms, she said, took their character “chiefly from the views from their windows,” whilst outside the sheds had “the same grey gleam” one sees over the wider countryside.\(^40\) Those who came to occupy the house were infused with its character. As a result, the house that “made all the succeeding Bowens.”\(^41\) Thus while Bowen integration had begun in the seventeenth century, the building of the house marked a point of much more profound integration where people and place become one. Moreover, laying the foundation at the moment when patriot politics was taking root, Bowen could present the history of her house as part of the wider history of growing Anglo-Irish political commitment and aesthetic contribution to Ireland.

Evidence of this commitment shines through her account of those subsequent Bowen patriarchs and matriarchs who displayed staying power comparable to that of Henry III. Henry V remained in Mallow to become a Justice of the Peace and a road builder despite the fact that, as Elizabeth imagined it, he may have been more suited to Paris than to Cork. Similarly, an Aunt Sarah was described as one who was deeply attached to her locality: “[A] person born to se faire valoir, and though, like Henry III, she lived and died in the provinces, she could raise to a high level her own world.”\(^42\) Even those who chose to leave Bowen’s Court retained an attachment to its surrounding landscape. Henry VI, Elizabeth’s father, was one such character. He was not interested in many of the practices that characterized the life of a late-nineteenth-century country gentleman such as farming, horses, servants, showiness, or social discrimination. Yet his attachment to the Bowen landscape could not be questioned: “His love of the country, his Ballyhoura country, was too deeply innate to be emotional – he had no contact with it through farming or sport, but all the same this was an informed love, for Henry knew about rocks and trees.”\(^43\) When trouble erupted in Ireland in 1916, this Henry, distressed over being out of “his own country,” returned to join the Four Courts division of the Veteran Corps to help put down the republican revolt.\(^44\)

Involvement, resilience, and durability in Ireland were presented as Bowen characteristics and were used to illustrate the extent to which this family had become rooted in the Irish landscape. Thus while they may have originated from the interweaving strands of Welsh and English colonial histories in Ireland, as the text progresses their increasing integration into the country and landscape becomes apparent. However, according to Elizabeth, it was not just the Bowens who had come to affiliate with Ireland, but rather that, post-1770 settler loyalties in general were now with their new country:

This new wish in the new Irish to see Ireland autonomous was in more than the head and the conscious will. Ireland had worked on them, through their senses, their nerves, their loves. They had come to share with the people round them sentiments, memories, interests, affinities. The grafting-on had been, at least where they were concerned, complete.\(^45\)

The local geographies traced in Bowen’s story then are ones which illustrate the ways in which her family members extended their personal orbits across the Irish landscape, came to know and love their territory, and began to make their mark on the countryside. As such it is a particular account of settler integration and of the spaces in which that happened. However, told as a story within a story it is one which suggests a wider narrative of settler integration and while she suggested that her family had more staying power than other Anglo-Irish families, the text did not suggest that settler commitment was unique to them.
The impacts of English colonial policy

A third narrative threading through Bowen’s history recounts the impacts of English colonial policy on Ireland. Her story began with the seventeenth century and was told largely at the abstract national scale because, and with a few exceptions, she made little comment upon the ways that the Bowens experienced, interpreted, negotiated, or resisted English colonial policy of that period of “greed, roughness and panic.” The reasons for this stem from the fact that in spite of receiving their lands through colonization, Bowen difference meant that, in the novelist’s view, they were always to some extent outsiders in that system. Her overview of the colonial period began with the death of Elizabeth I (1603) and the flight of the earls (1607) which she argues brought to an end what had been “a gallant era” in “both countries.” As the century progressed, the situation in Ireland, which, according to Bowen, was already “painful and dangerous” became “more complicated” as “[n]ew elements came in” and as they did “in Ireland as well as in England the new English middle class policy began to make itself felt.” This policy, designed to serve the interests of the burgess class, was based on “solicitude for investment” and was, wrote Bowen, predicated on the “complete subjugation and exploitation of Ireland.” As a result, Ireland, which was “already dense with her own sorrows” came to reflect “English changes as a cloud reflects distant changing light.” In such an account, Ireland is presented as a place embroiled within a wave of wider social forces that had enveloped England and were now spilling over onto the sister isle. This theme is maintained through her account of the later-seventeenth century when again she saw Ireland as a territory on which English political struggles were fought out. Her account of the 1641 rebellion represented that war as a conflict between English royalist and English confederate forces entangled with local factions that displayed various and often shifting objectives rather than as a war of anti-colonial resistance. The aftermath was that the country was left “prostrate” and ready for confiscation, division, and redistribution in a manner amenable to commercial interests. However, while Henry was a participant in that conquest and a receiver of its spoils, very little is said of his involvements other than that he was an idiosyncratic character and liked to live in isolation. Similarly, nothing of John I’s role in the Cromwellian conquest, confiscation, or redistribution is disclosed other than the fact that he did not receive land for his services.

While the seventeenth-century colonial landscape was characterized by successive waves of conquest and confiscation, the eighteenth-century terrain was presented as a place controlled from across the channel through a system of legislation that was “restrictive and disabling” for the majority population. Catholics could not hold office in either state or army, were not allowed to act as grand jurors or to vote, and were not entitled to purchase land or to obtain leases for more than thirty-one years. Such restrictions made it impossible for the indigenous gentry to recover territorial power while a law which stipulated that Catholic estates be divided among all male heirs unless the eldest “conformed,” had the effect of “shredding up” Irish estates and reducing families to the “small-holder way of life.” Bowen suggested that the impacts of this kind of legislation were felt across the Irish social spectrum: “The same system [of restrictions] that denied the Catholic gentry their status pushed the poor right under - they suffered atrociously.” Repeated reference to the poverty and the suppressed position of the broader Irish population reinforced Bowen’s depiction of an island crippled by colonial rule. However, while sympathetic to the position of the mass of population and critical of colonialism, it was a criticism directed at the English government rather than at the Anglo-Irish community in Ireland, who she also identified as victims of this system and themselves powerless to effect change. Feeling “the brunt of restrictive English laws,” eighteenth-century landlords, she argued, were forced to bear down
on tenants already burdened by the government’s Hearth Tax and, to whatever extent social discrimination was recognized, “under England’s aegis, everything was being done to keep the Anglo-Irish tied to the status quo.” This was primarily maintained through bribery. Peerages were issued in response to successive crises which, as Bowen reported, led some to argue that there were more peers in Ireland than sense. As outlined above, the Bowens did not participate in the peerage system, they being too “remote” and too “inactive in public life” to be “worth buying.”

This situation worsened in the nineteenth century. In response to the downturn in the economy that followed England’s war with revolutionary France, Irish landlords were, according to Bowen, encouraged to break up small holdings, evict tenants and consolidate estates for grazing. The results were poverty, landless distress and rural chaos. However, while Bowen recognized that Protestant prosperity was achieved at “native Catholic expense” and that the “untouchability of ruling interests in Ireland” was an obstacle to reform, colonialism was presented largely as an externally imposed system rather than the outcome of the activities of individuals living in Ireland. Repeatedly it is England that is blamed for the worsening situation in Ireland. For example, in the eighteenth century: “Ireland was knit to England, and checked by England, inside a system that, because it impeded growth, had become not only corrupt but damaging.” Bowen concluded that the English government failed to recognize the need for reform, in part because it was unable to see the Irish as anything other than “aliens” or as “subhuman – potato eaters, worshippers of the Pope’s toe.” Gladstone was particularly singled out as a symbol of English mismanagement, for despite his reforming intentions, she argued that he had an “incomplete grasp of Irish realities,” that he was “loath to consult Irish opinion,” and that consequently he carried out his reforms in the “in the dark.” These problems, she saw, as the “ills of too-distant government.” In Bowen’s view, further problems arose from the fact that Irish revenues were not spent in Ireland but were used to meet imperial expenditure abroad.

Thus it can be seen that Bowen documented the largely negative impacts of three centuries of English colonial policy in Ireland as a broad and sweeping history that almost blows in from across the channel. In doing so, her account distanced herself, her family, and her community from a project with which they were in fact deeply implicated. Charting initial seventeenth-century conquest and confiscation, the restrictive and disabling legislation of the eighteenth century, and nineteenth-century exploitation and mismanagement, she condemned English colonial policy and managed to separate herself from it ideologically. Moreover, presenting colonial policy as a product of distant governance, which had a negative impact on Anglo-Irish families and as such undermined their loyalty to a government that increasingly made their position in Ireland vulnerable, she also distanced her community from it. Finally while there was very little detail on the interactions of the Bowens with the system, what there was suggests that the Bowen propensity for independent lifestyles, their ambiguous loyalty to England that came with their Welsh origins, their detachment from public life, and the fact that they were not well-off, meant that they were always outsiders to that system. Recounting the views of nineteenth-century Robert Bowen and his wife Eliza she stated that:

Though they were from now on to call themselves Unionists, to be England’s dependents appealed to them no more than it ever had. Robert and Eliza, for their parts, had no time in which to be devoutly grateful to England for keeping Bowens Court where it stood—they were too busy keeping it there themselves.
Landscapes of resistance

A fourth theme in the Bowen story is one of ongoing Irish anti-colonial resistance. Resistance against the colonial settler community had been present from the time of Henry I for although Cromwell had left the countryside “prostrate” in 1652, by the time of the restoration of Charles II in 1665, “all over Ireland the drums and tramplings were to begin again,” as the “[u]nrestored Catholics kept their eyes on lost land.” Bowen reported that at this time settler families lived in fear of the dispossessed Irish. Henry I had stipulated in his will that his son John should not marry Elizabeth Cushin and in his later years he suffered from hallucinations that the native Irish were coming to retake their land. While the eighteenth century was primarily a period of peace and prosperity for settler families, towards the end of the century there was increasing agitation against Munster landlords. These however, she argued, were primarily a response to problems that were caused by England and not always the landlord’s fault. Bowen’s Court itself was a target of attack in 1798 and this she blamed on the fact that the “Englishified airs” of Henry IV (the one Bowen who had rejected his Irish identity for what he saw as a more sophisticated Englishness) caused antagonism among the local community. This is not to deny that violence against landlords was not always justified: “Disaffection was in the air of those poisoned days; there were a dozen reasons to strike at the Big House.”

Despite the failures of 1798 and 1803, violence against the landed community continued and by 1820 it was felt that “the entire country was in arms and plotting to slay its betters.” However, while there were significant threats made against Anglo-Irish houses and families, Bowen’s history also showed that more complex relations between landed and non-landed communities existed. It was, she reported, the servant of a local clergyman who had acted in the family’s interests and saved Bowen’s Court from attack in 1798; and the account of the Doneraile Conspiracy of 1821, where a Cork landlord was accused of harboring Whiteboy criminals, suggests that relations between the landed gentry and resistance movements were not always oppositional. As the century progressed, the situation in the countryside worsened. By the 1870s, as Bowen noted, resistance against landlords was so great that the Bowen family, along with other landed families in the area, had to barricade themselves into their house and by 1918, the north Cork settler landscape was again under attack: “North of the Galtees, south of the Galtees, familiar military movement was to announce itself; and that landscape, known to so many generals, was soon mapped for other campaigns. Once more the old positions were fought for: once more, bridges were blown up.”

This was the period in which violence against the Big House was most intensive and many in the Bowen’s Court neighborhood were burnt. Bowen’s Court however, while targeted, was not attacked. This Elizabeth attributed to the fact that her father had maintained positive relations with the community despite the fact that their politics differed. Consequently, as in 1798, a member of the local community acted in support of the family. But, as the civil war followed the Anglo-Irish war, the Big Houses that did survive were commandeered by republican forces. Mitchelstown Castle and neighboring Anne’s Grove were taken, as was Bowen’s Court. However, while Mitchelstown Castle was burnt to the ground and while those who occupied Bowen’s Court made preparations to destroy the house, no real damage was caused. All the valuables had been moved to safety in a neighboring cottage before the republicans had arrived and all that was found missing after their departure was a pair of leather gaiters. Moreover, from Aunt Sarah’s account of the manner in which they had left the house, it appears that the republicans had spent much of their time reading volumes of Kipling.

Bowen’s history of resistance therefore can be seen to illustrate that while the landscape was largely settled and peaceful, the threat of violence against landlords was always present
during the colonial period. When speaking of Ireland, she argues, one does not say “that war began again, but that war resumed.” Moreover, while violence always threatened the position of the landed class, Bowen made it clear that landlord-community relations were more complex than traditional oppositional narratives might suggest. Bowen’s Court was saved on two occasions by members of the local community and the fact that valuables were hidden in a local cottage during the civil war suggests that there was significant loyalty between the Bowens and some of the Irish families that surrounded them. Moreover, Bowen’s narrative showed sympathy for all sides who suffered during the troubled decades of early-twentieth century, including the neighboring Sinn Fein families, “some of whom had had been our family’s friends.”

Anglo-Irish alienation

A final theme that permeates Bowen’s text is that of Anglo-Irish alienation. Despite her attempts to locate her community in Ireland, to connect their histories with that of the wider island and to document their attachment to its landscape, her repeated references to the isolation of the house, the self-contained nature of family life, their physical and psychological distance from people, and their unawareness of the realities of Irish life capture the extent to which they always were to some extent out-of-place in the Irish landscape. The opening chapter provides a picturesque survey of the landscape that captures her love of the region but also her distance from it. While “lights burn late in cottages” and “music gives the darkness a pulse,” for Bowen “the country conceals its pattern of life.” However, while she felt that the landscape had “an inherent emptiness of its own,” her depictions of gentry homes set “deep in trees at the end of long avenues,” accessed through gate lodges and surrounded by high walls illustrate that her community was intentionally detached from the wider community. From these spaces, she argued, one could feel “the beat and air of light . . . see the plastic emptiness of the fields . . . and hear nothing but the humming telegraph wires.” From her own house, “tucked rather deeply into a crease of trees,” all one could see were “lawns up to the skyline.” As a result, on wet days, she said “the steady sough of rain in demesne tress induces by day a timeless and rather soothing melancholy,” whilst the “penetrating surrounding silence” made it a good house to sleep and wake up in. The cut-off timelessness and purposelessness that one experienced at Bowen’s Court is also captured in her fiction and used to exemplify Anglo-Irish experience. Characters in The Last September, for example, repeatedly express their frustration at not having anything to do and Bowen depicts the family as flowers preserved in a glass paperweight. Thus, while settler society had come to “ornament” the country in the eighteenth century, by the end of the nineteenth century such families had become primarily ornamental.

Furthering the cut-off-ness of life in the Big House as explained by Bowen is the fact that depictions or accounts of local people rarely feature in her chronicle and when they do, their appearance is vague and nondescript. Bowen’s failure to make the local inhabitants visible has been recognized as a feature of both her biographical and fictional work on Ireland, reflecting her own alienation from the wider population amongst whom she lived intermittently. Having left Ireland at the age of seven, Bowen’s experience of being Anglo-Irish in Ireland was unique. Unlike others of her class who lived permanently in Ireland, she shuttled back and forth across the Irish Sea and much of her time in Ireland was spent in Dublin. However, the kind of isolation that Bowen depicts in her work, she argued, was both typically Bowen, and therefore part familial, and also typically Anglo-Irish and as such part cultural inheritance. The idiosyncratic colonel (Henry I) had shut himself up in his castle and he had forbid John I to marry into the indigenous community. This might suggest that there were initial lines of interaction but that they were quickly cut off, for to “have married a papist, at that time, would have spelled ruin.” Thus, despite the extent to which Henry I or subsequent Bowens deviated from the Cromwellian or
colonial norm, they nonetheless had a religious belief in their own right to possess. “They were” she says, “conquering Protestants, whether they knew it or not”. The “Cromwellian justification” was in the family fiber and “innate conviction was at the root of their zest.”

Subsequent Bowens mixed and married within their own class as did their neighbors. Elizabeth’s mother was also Anglo-Irish. Her family settled with the Elizabethan conquest. That seventh generation settler families should continue to marry into other protestant families of colonial origin provides a sense of the strength of a connectedness maintained by tradition despite the three hundred years that intervened.

However, while long avenues maintained the physical distance between settler and indigenous communities, attitudes of superiority and territorial right also served to reinforce it ideologically. This kind of self-sustaining isolation was passed from generation to generation as children were socialized into these isolated and centripetal worlds. The extracts from the children’s diaries from 1867 that she includes with the text provide clear indication that visiting and being visited by neighboring Big Houses was a ritual of Anglo-Irish existence. However, life for the children she argued was “congested and isolated.” As a child Bowen experienced this isolation herself, albeit unknowingly and uncaringly. In her childhood memoir, *Seven Winters: Memories of a Dublin Childhood* (1942), she recollects that she did not realize until she was seven that she was part of a minority religion and that, while she knew that Catholics existed, she met few of them. They, she says, were “‘the others,’ whose world lay alongside ours but never touched.” Scarcely mixing with children or adults from the majority population she knew nothing of Irish fairy stories and her young geographical imagination was occupied with England, South-Africa, and the Russo-Japanese war.

The Bowens also maintained their distance from the Ireland outside their gates by not engaging in wider contemporary politics. Henry Bowen III had been a member of the Protestant Yeomanry in Mallow in the late-eighteenth century. However, Henry was shy and in general the Bowens were inactive in public life. This inactivity, she explains, was in part due to their remoteness in north Cork, the often precariousness of their finances, and on that familial “independence and cynicism” that they had brought from Wales. When trouble erupted in the region in 1829, the family further withdrew from local activities after which “Ireland, beyond their property’s bounds, offered them no opening or function.” As outlined above, Robert and Eliza focused all their energies on the running of their own house with little time for outside concerns. In the spring of 1844, during a period of intense political unrest, they took a trip to the capital. As Bowen records it they “treaded their way unnoticed through the tensed-up city: they made no impact on it, it made no impact on them.” Similarly, the Parnell scandal of the 1890s and the Irish Celtic Revival were events to which the family were largely indifferent.

However, whatever the particularity of Bowen isolation, the more general Anglo-Irish isolation that her work documents was also “an affair of origin” and the Bowens too were subject to this. As an “imposed” class they had to maintain their apartness from the wider community and this, she argues, was facilitated by focusing inwards on their own worlds as opposed to outwards on the Irish landscape. As she explained it:

> The upkeep of the place takes its tax not only of physical energy but of psychic energies people hardly know that they give. Each of these houses, with its intense, centripetal life, is isolated by something very much more lasting than the physical fact of space: the isolation is innate; it is an affair of origin.

This isolation was an inevitable outcome of being colonial. New settlers had to subdue any personal emotions they may have had on the project that gave them their positions and their
authority in Ireland or on the people who had been dispossessed in the processes. As Bowen explains it:

I have said of the Ascendancy of the seventeen-fifties that feeling might have been fatal to it. The structure of the great Anglo-Irish society was raised over a country in martyrdom. To enjoy prosperity one had to exclude feeling, or keep it within the prescribed bounds.85

Bowen’s text therefore chronicles Anglo-Irish isolation, explains it as an inevitable outcome of colonialism and argued that once established it was self-sustaining. Like the characters in The Last September outlined above, the Anglo-Irish of Bowen’s Court were also trapped in a paperweight. Many saw their predicament as inevitable. Commenting on the exploitative nature of landlord behavior in Ireland in the 1880s, George Moore argued that while he recognized it as unjust, it was “impossible” for him, as it was for the rest of his class “to do otherwise.”86

However, to whatever extent this isolation was an inevitable outcome of colonialism, a definite and enduring outcome of their coloniality was their social and cultural isolation from the Irish population. While neither commented on nor lamented directly in Bowen’s Court, their distance from the life-worlds of the Irish people is evident. Bowen knew that in the eighteenth century an underground Gaelic culture lay hidden in the “untouched country the settlers did not know”. There, through the “ceaseless poetry of lament” the Irish grieved over lost land.87 Embedded in this ballad history of Ireland was an alternative imaginative geography which told the story of the Irish landscape as one of occupation and displacement in which the landed class were depicted as exploitative foreign Others regardless of their own sense of integration, their contribution to Irish politics, or their ornamentation of the landscape. Anglo-Irish writers Somerville and Ross, who had more direct interaction with Irish culture than did Bowen, but who were also very much aware of the inability of the Anglo-Irish to comprehend it, capture the frustration that many felt towards this other antagonistic Ireland. Judith Talbot-Lowry, whilst attending a Catholic concert in Mount Music (1919), discerned “a sort of lyrical geography” through which Ireland was imagined and grievances remembered. She observed and remarked:

[T]he map of Ireland set to music! Bantry Bay, Killarney, the Mountains of Somewhere, the Waters of Somewhere else, all Irish, of course! I get so sick of Ireland and her endearing young charms—and all the entreaties to Erin to remember! As if she ever forgot!88

“Dispossessed people,” Bowen argued, knew their land in the dark recesses of their own imaginations. Recording lost territory and the history of dispossession through poetry and song was a strategy for remembering that lost land. However, it was also one that perpetuated historical animosity between the two communities right through the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries. Some chose to be oblivious to this animosity. With regard to her eighteenth-century ancestors, Bowen argued: “If Ireland did not accept them, they did not know it” and this she saw as one of the major weakness of her class:

[I]t is in that unawareness of final rejection, unawareness of being looked out at from some secretive, opposed life, that the Anglo-Irish naive dignity and, even, tragedy seems to me to stand.89

If writing was a medium though which animosity, however justified or however fantastic, was to be maintained it might also be a medium through which that animosity might be broken down. The retelling of the story of a house, along with the stories of its many inhabitants, their adventures,
idiosyncrasies, fears, phobias, avoidances and regrets, and their varied entanglements with those with whom they had arrived as well as with those among whom they lived was Bowen’s attempt to record the history of this particular Anglo-Irish family in the Irish landscape so as to facilitate a better understanding of that class for posterity. In her essay on the Big House Bowen had called for a more inclusive and integrated Ireland in which the doors of the house might be opened, where the past “with its bitterness and barriers” might be rejected and where Irish and Anglo-Irish could “all meet.”

Conclusion

A legacy of colonialism has been the way in which we write Irish history. Post-independence historiography has represented the colonial classes as alien Others and not properly part of the Irish landscape. Recent work on the Anglo-Irish has shown how members of this community who live in the Bowen region today remember the manner in which colonial heritage was largely ignored in scholarship throughout the twentieth century, as it was in heritage policy, and that they still feel the dominant view is one in which those of Anglo-Irish origin are seen as not quite Irish. Revisionist historians have taken a more inclusive approach to the colonial past, although this has been criticized for downplaying the exploitative nature of settlement, established and maintained by colonial conquest and policy. In an attempt to interrogate the position of the Anglo-Irish in the Irish past and to examine its relationship with Ireland, this paper has examined the imaginative geography embedded in one Anglo-Irish family history. In doing so, this analysis has traced an evolving territorial identity of a colonial family as woven through the spaces of the text. As such it presents a more spatially nuanced view of the position of the Anglo-Irish in the Irish landscape and the kinds of relationships they had with Ireland. In doing so, Bowen’s geography may be seen as a form of ideological self-justification that employs a set of spatial strategies to write her community into the Irish landscape: depicting growing distance from the colonial project, claiming the friendship of local people, presenting themselves as inert when it came to acting upon their lives and livelihoods and placing agency with a colonial government from whom they had always been somewhat removed and with whose policies they did not agree. As such her text can be read as an expression of territorial identity in which the spatial nuances of Anglo-Irish experience and their impacts on Anglo-Irish identity are recorded. Analysis of other Anglo-Irish family history writing, of which there is much, reveal similar local nuances. Anglo-Irish cousins Somerville and Ross, for example, provide perspectives on the varied ways in which family members engaged with historical events and processes. In their account of the Fenian rebellion of the 1860s, they tell how Somerville’s father provided lunch in the house for crown soldiers as well as a space on the lawn on which to carry out maneuvers, whilst at the same time a Somerville uncle, who was on amicable terms with Skibbereen Fenian O’Donovan Rossa, tended to the rebel forces in the outer fields of the estate. Excavating this body of work as spatially nuanced accounts of the past through which territorial identities are articulated might therefore contribute to the problem of placing the Anglo-Irish in the Irish historical landscape.

Nash has argued that postcolonial geographers need to attend to colonialism “as general and global, and particular and local” and to critically engage with the grand narratives of colonialism as well as the “political implications of complex, untidy, differentiated and ambiguous local stories.” Those stories, in turn, can alert us to the spatial strategies of identity formation which legitimate the position of a community in a place, be they genuine, fantastical or politically motivated. In the case of Bowen’s Court, we find an emphasis placed by Elizabeth Bowen on the distinctiveness of her family’s trajectory which allows her to present them as atypical colonists, as curiously detached settlers, as almost subject to the very same colonial policies that maintained their privilege, as curiously unmoved by anticolonial ideology while also claiming a set of
personal ties to the local people and a deep sense of belonging in the Irish landscape. At the same time however, in reflecting upon her continuing status as an outsider, Bowen was conscious of the kind of anti-Anglo-Irish sentiment that persisted in post-independence Ireland and the manner in which it was rooted in the Irish historical imagination. Bowen’s Court captures that wider sentiment that saw the Anglo-Irish as Other but at the same time challenges it.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the support of the Irish Research Council for Humanities and Social Sciences for funding the research on which this paper is based. I would also like to thank Gerry Kearns for his comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

NOTES


3 A recent example of the stereotype can be seen in the 2007 film The Wind the Shakes the Barley which is set in early 1920s Ireland. In this movie the local landlord is depicted as the oppressive foreign Other in accent, and outlook as well as in his harsh treatment of his tenants. His execution by Irish rebels eventually removes him from the Irish landscape. Another example can be seen on the cover of the Atlas of the Great Irish Famine (2012) which displays the nineteenth-century painting “The Eviction” by Daniel MacDonald. In this painting the commanding and smartly dressed landlord is juxtaposed against his impoverished and pleading tenants as he takes the keys to the house of those being ejected. See John Crowley, William J Smith, and Mike Murphy, eds., Atlas of the Great Irish Famine (Cork: Cork University Press, 2012). Both these images illustrate the prevalence of the historical stereotype of the landed class’s cruel and exploitative Others who are out-of-place in the Irish landscape and the way in which they continue to circulate in popular as well as academic representations.


5 Lindsey Proudfoot, “Hybrid space; ” Patrick J Duffy, “Colonial Spaces.”
6 Toby Barnard, Irish Protestant Ascents and Descents, 1641-1770 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), 35
8 Anglo-Irish specific histories have been written by historians of Anglo-Irish heritage. These include Peter Somerville-Large, The Irish Country House: a Social History (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995); Mark Bence-Jones, Twilight of the Ascendancy (London: Constable, 1995); Mark Bence-Jones, Life in an Irish Country House (London: Constable, 1996). Whilst writing from their own vantage points and presenting the Anglo-Irish in a different light to the border histories of Ireland, they are written as histories rather than as autobiography or family history writing.
11 This resonates with Joe Lee’s argument that each generation of historians produces the kind of history that that generation needs. See Joe Lee, “The Famine as History” in Famine 150: Commemorative Lectures, ed. Cormac O’Gráda (Dublin: Teagasc/University College Dublin, 1997), 159 – 175.
13 Derek Gregory, Geographical Imaginations (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993); Alison Blunt and Gillian Rose, eds., Writing Women and Space: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies (London: Guilford,
Writing the Colonial Past in Post-Colonial Ireland


16 Elizabeth Bowen, Bowen’s Court (London: Longmans Green and Co, 1942).


19 For discussion see Roy Foster, Paddy and Mr Punch.

20 Karen Lysaght, “Living in a nation, a state or a place?”, 61; Contemporary interpretations recognize that it is a text within which family biography and colonial history are interwoven. However views on what the text says about the Anglo-Irish past vary. Eatough has called it “one of the most sophisticated midcentury defences of Anglo-Ireland” in that while it presents the Anglo-Irish as a decaying class welded to tradition, it also documents their developing sense of individualism, professionalism, and enterprise. See Matt Eatough, “Bowen’s Court and the Anglo-Irish World-System,” Modern Language Quarterly, 73, no. 1 (2012): 69–94. By contrast, Ellmann sees it as a “funerary monument” to a house and a class that had by 1940 lost its significance in the landscape and their cultural capital in independent Ireland, Ellmann, Elizabeth Bowen: The Shadow across the Page, 42.


22 Elizabeth Bowen, Bowen’s Court, 22.

23 Elizabeth Bowen, “The Big House”, 27.

24 Elizabeth Bowen, Bowen’s Court, 44; 64; 49.

25 Ibid., 31; 40.

26 Ibid., 54.
27 Ibid., 50.
28 Ibid., 203.
29 As Bowen explains it “they were very remote gentry, inactive in public life, not in a big way, not, in short, worth buying. But offices, sinecures, pensions and, above all, peerages did shower on those who were more important, more active or nearer the capital” Ibid., 153.
30 Ibid., 203.
31 Ibid., 66.
32 Ibid., 88.
33 Ibid., 88; 92.
34 Ibid., 92; 106.
35 Ibid., 55.
36 Ibid., 106.
37 Ibid., 22.
38 Ibid., 12; Elizabeth Bowen, “The Big House,” 27.
40 Elizabeth Bowen, Bowen’s Court, 20; 22.
41 Ibid., 23.
42 Ibid., 280.
43 Ibid., 271.
44 Ibid., 325.
45 Ibid., 117.
46 Elizabeth Bowen, “The Big House,” 27.
47 Elizabeth Bowen, Bowen’s Court, 35–6.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid., 95.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
55 Ibid., 117; 153.
56 Ibid., 153.
57 Ibid., 95; 229.
58 Ibid., 116.
59 Ibid., 194.
60 Ibid., 266; 263.
61 Ibid., 229.
62 Ibid., 205.
63 Ibid., 66; 67.
64 Ibid., 158.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 197.
67 Ibid., 324.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid., 326.
70 Ibid., 12.
71 Ibid., 12-13.
72 Ibid., 9, 13.
73 Ibid., 13, 20.
76 Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen’s Court*, 57
77 Ibid., 182; 95.
78 Ibid., 240.
80 Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen’s Court*, 203.
81 Ibid., 204.
82 Ibid., 227.
83 Ibid., 22.
84 Ibid., 13–14.
85 Ibid., 182.
86 George Moore, *Parnell and his Island* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, Lowry and Co., 1887), 17
87 Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen’s Court*, 97.
88 Edith Somerville and Martin Ross, *Mount Music* (London: Longmans, Green and Co. 1919), 146
89 Elizabeth Bowen, *Bowen’s Court*, 117
90 Elizabeth Bowen, “The Big House,” 29.
91 Karen Lysaght, “Living in a nation, a state or a place?”
Machines in Desolation:
Images of Technology in the Great Basin
of the American West

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ABSTRACT: Mythic thinking about technology as an engine of progress has shaped the ways Americans have come to perceive the boundaries of vacant space. In the Great Basin of the Rocky Mountains, where the West still appears to the East as empty and formless, photography and art tell richly symbolic stories about wastelands transformed into wealth. Often those stories aggrandize machines and engineering. The essay presents a visual sampling of machines remaking the desert from three historical eras. First, from the postbellum era of the transcontinental railroad, are pictures of barrens redeemed by science and industrialization. Second, from pioneer Utah, are desert landscapes suspended between farming and industry. Third, from postmodern Nevada, are forebodings of apocalyptic demise.

On May 10, 1869, when Union Pacific met Central Pacific at Promontory in the territory of Utah, the driving of a golden spike became America’s first live coast-to-coast multimedia extravaganza. Western Union broadcasted the final thud of the ceremonial hammer via a wire attached to the spike. Cannons simultaneously boomed in Boston and San Francisco. Fire engines with screeching whistles circled Philadelphia’s State House for the ringing of the Liberty Bell.

A. J. Russell of the Union Pacific preserved the euphoric moment in a wet-plate photograph called East Meets West at the Laying of the Last Rail (See Figure 1). Composed as a tribute to the unifying spirit of E Pluribus Unum, with tycoons grasping hands below workmen on locomotives, the photo confirmed the technological magic of wasteland transformed into wealth. No matter that the photo was staged. No matter that the final spike was actually iron; that the railroad was far from finished; that the Union Pacific’s man with the silver hammer had been kidnapped while his workers demanded their wages; or that the slaving Chinese—earning about a dollar a day—were excluded outside the frame. And no matter if the champagne bottles, toasted in celebration, mysteriously disappeared from later reproductions as if to mollify temperance crusaders. Russell’s image was allegory. Neither fact nor entirely fiction, it strived for cultural truths. “Nature and Man shall be disjoin’d and diffused no more,” wrote Walt Whitman, who saw the photo as a wood engraving in Frank Leslie’s Illustrated.1 Engineering was cited by the poet as proof that the pious would inevitably triumph. The driving of the golden spike in Russell’s heroic framing was God’s mighty purpose revealed.2

The pale blankness of Utah-Nevada made the metaphor visually stark. Stretched from nowhere to nowhere, from the Wasatch Front to the Sierra Nevadas across 210,000 square miles of rivers draining inward, through sundrenched shadeless mountains and pools that mysteriously disappeared through sinks of alkaline sand; the Great Basin of Utah-Nevada was the highest and driest of North America’s deserts, the largest and least populated, the most disparaged and misunderstood (See Map in Figure 2). It was the Big Empty. The Void. The Great Unknown. Its
Figure 1. Chinese laborers stand outside the frame in A. J. Russell’s *East Meets West at the Laying of the Last Rail*, May 10, 1860. (Beinecke Library/Yale)

Figure 2. The Great Basin of the American West, hydrologically, spans 4,000 square miles of watersheds draining inward with no outlet to the sea. (Karl Musser)
character was “dreary and savage,” said US Topographical Engineer John Charles Frémont from the Bear Lake corner of Utah in 1843. It was “worthless, valueless, damned God forsaken country,” said a peddler on the overland trail. Mark Twain imagined “a vast, waveless ocean stricken dead and turned to ashes.” For cowboy novelist Owen Wister, writing in 1897, the high desert of Utah-Nevada was an “abomination of desolation . . . a mean ash-dump landscape . . . lacquered with paltry, unimportant ugliness . . . not a drop of water to a mile of sand.”

The strangeness repelled the first generation of landscape painters. Even as giants like Frederick Remington, Maynard Dixon, and Georgia O’Keeffe began to incorporate mesas and canyons, painters avoided the sagebrush. Printmakers and photographers compensated. Prints and photos of big machines and big engineering promoted tourism as they advertised land that financed the railroads. Hell-in-harness scenes of smelters and trestles, of shovels devouring hillsides, of dams, and the laying of track were images of American prowess, a chronicle of popular thought. Some of the images cheered, and others denounced, industrial progress. Some pined for the landscapes lost to smokestack industrialization. Some viewed irrigation as a scientific sensation. Some imagined a mechanized Eden reclaimed by the faithful for God.

Images of machines advanced the discovery process through which Americans learned to perceive the enigma beyond the Rockies as something more than a hideous void. Mixing the real and the ideal, the imagery left a culturally-coded appraisal of the highest and best use of land. Our sampling, herein, features landscapes from three historical eras. First, from the era of the golden spike, are pictures of barrens redeemed by steel and big engineering. Second, from paintings of agrarian Utah, are landscapes of farming’s surrender to industrialization. Third, from postmodern Nevada, are forebodings of the toxic Sahara the Great Basin might one day become.

Deserts and determinism

The frontier itself was a kind of machine that sputtered in arid places and had to be overhauled. So said Texas historian Walter Prescott Webb, writing in 1930. The machine with its axes and saws had moved west through swampy woodlands, clearing the timber, turning the sod. But the engine had stalled at base of the Rockies, and there the process gave way to a motive capitalist force that Webb called the cattle kingdom. “It was a machine, too,” said Webb, “but entirely different from the agricultural one undergoing repairs on the timber line.” Corporate and industrial, it crossed into Utah on rails. Its vital parts were windmills, barbed wire, steam engines, the McCormick Reaper, and the Colt revolver. Its triumph was to sustain the garden myth of the West as a Land of Plenty on a frontier that was factory-made.

Webb sang for a chorus of western writers in the chasm between the promise of technology’s progress and the peril of what progress had wrought. From the chasm’s hopeful side came utopians such as Nebraska’s William E. Smythe who predicted, in 1905, that irrigation and big hydraulics would make the rising state of Nevada “politically untrammeled” and “economically freed.” From the chasm’s brooding side came a literature protesting the loss of agrarian landscapes. Novelist Frank Norris, writing in 1901, recoiled at the “soulless Force” of trains crossing the prairie, their “tentacles of steel clutching into the soil.” Divergent though they were, the writings of Norris and Smythe anticipated a deterministic Webbian view of factory-made innovation. If machines dictated culture, if factories and their tools were agents independent of hope, fear, politics, and scientific conjecture, then technology had motive power.

Technological determinism is the term scholars have used to describe this view of machines as the force behind civilization. Determinists claim that the six-shooter conquered the prairie, that The Pill (or hardtop automobile) caused the sexual revolution, that cars created the suburbs, that Guttenberg’s movable type brought the Protestant Reformation, that drones and nuclear weapons have divested the US Congress of its authority to make declarations of
war. In each case the implication is that the social consequences of invention are far-reaching, uncontrollable, and irreversible. In each, a tool or device is the cause or precondition of some inevitable transformation. Things, not nature or culture, are the decisive agents of change (Figure 3).¹¹

![Figure 3. Poster artist Emmett Watson links patriotism to industrial progress in Troop Train on the Great Salt Lake, June 1944. (Springville Museum of Fine Art)](image)

It’s a comforting belief. Born in the European Enlightenment and reborn in the wishful thinking of Alexander Hamilton and image-makers like Currier and Ives, the gospel of progress through innovation squared nicely with the American myth of a clever, inventive people predestined to uproot the sagebrush and plow. Critics respond by evoking the peril of devastation. Thus the philosopher Lewis Mumford compared twentieth century Man to a drunken conductor of a runaway train. The train’s conductor was “plunging through the darkness at a hundred miles an hour, going past the danger signals without realizing that our speed, which springs from mechanical facility, only increases our danger and will make more fatal the crash.”¹²

Determinism pervaded the imagery of yeomen drawn west by the pull of empty places. In the era of Manifest Destiny, when the “destiny” of Protestant civilization seemed “manifest” in the prowess of wondrous machines, the railroad was an obvious symbol of national triumph. Painters Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, George Inness, and others were no longer content with puffs of steam in the distant horizon. Railroads took center stage. In 1860, in a landscape commissioned by a railroad mogul, Philadelphian Thomas Otter featured a west-bound Baldwin locomotive
crossing a bridge as it overtook an emigrant’s covered wagon. Satirist Thomas Nast depicted an Indian fleeing before a charging locomotive in his frontispiece to a popular guidebook called *Beyond the Mississippi* (1867). Another Nast illustration had an Indian warrior prone and helpless, his feathered head on the steel rail (Figure 4). Black smoke engulfed two cartoonish natives in a celebrated engraving called *Across the Continent: Westward the Course of Empire Takes its Way* (1868; Figure 5). Engraved after a sketch by Francis “Fanny” Palmer and colorized “for the masses” by the New York publishing giant Currier & Ives, *Across the Continent* showed the route of the Union Pacific as line of demarcation between savage and civilized worlds. Parallel lines of steel slanted west toward a treeless horizon. Unchallenged and pulling its mighty train of Anglo-Saxon values, the railroad moved from the past (as represented by cabins and toiling yeomen) into the nation’s industrial future along the base of snowy mountains across a waterless plain.\(^\text{13}\)

![Figure 4. Thomas Nast sketched the Indian’s view of the Union Pacific for *Harper’s Weekly*, July 10, 1869. (Library of Congress)](image)

The most famously garish of the genre’s colorized prints was John Gast’s *American Progress* (1872). First painted as oil-on-canvas, it reappeared as the frontispiece for *Crofutt’s Trans-Continental Tourist Guide* (1874). The print, said its publisher, depicted the Goddess of Civilization. Blond and scantily clad in flowing classical robes, she floated through a grassy landscape. Her right hand held a school book; her left, strung telegraph wire. Indians and buffalo escaped through
a dark corner at the edge of the canvas. Golden rays of heavenly light blessed the icons of national
greatness: the river steamboat, the wagon train, the prospector with his pick, the trapper with his
rifle, the yeoman with his plow. Three locomotives pushed west.14

Iron machines crossed canvas prairies with a heavy cargo of visual misinformation about
the desert’s flattest terrain. Seldom did the heroic school of metaphorical painters incorporate
scrub vegetation. Romantics like Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran preferred the alpine and
the operatic. Indifferent to grey-green sagebrush, they reached instead for the jewels on the rim
of the Basin: Lake Tahoe, Zion, the Green River, the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, the Shoshone
Falls of the Snake. “Culture work[ed] as a lens providing focus,” wrote historian Anne F. Hyde in
an essay about western landscapes; and thus, the history of artistic perception was also the story
of willful misperception.15 It remained for the photo savants of topographical science to reframe
Utah-Nevada as a distinct geophysical place.

Among the first to mule-pack a camera in the service of science was a Sephardic Jew of
Spanish-Portuguese decent. In 1853-54, Solomon Carvalho scaled the Rockies with a privately-
funded scientific survey under Colonel Frémont’s command. Frostbitten and surviving on
horsemeat above Utah’s Cathedral Valley, the surveyors were forced to abandon their scientific
equipment. Daguerreotype cameras were left in the snow. The misadventure spread skepticism
about photographic documentation. US geographers John Wesley Powell and Ferdinand
Vandeveer Hayden both came to prefer the imaginative grandeur of woodcut engravings.
Photography, many believed, was too literal. Book publishers such as William Cullen Bryant of
the New York Evening Post dismissed the camera because “mere topographical accuracy” would
likely obscure “animation and beauty.” Photography, Bryant maintained, “lack[ed] the spirit and personal quality which the accomplished painter or draughtsman infuses into his work.”

Not until photographer Timothy O’Sullivan met geographer Clarence King did the camera come into its own as a medium of scientific documentation. Irish-born O’Sullivan of Staten Island had campaigned with Union generals McClellan and Grant in the Army of the Potomac’s photographic corps. O’Sullivan’s silver prints of the Confederate dead, their corpses shoeless and posed, remain unsurpassed as testimony to the horror of war. Letters from the War Department brought O’Sullivan to the attention of King in the wake of Lee’s surrender. In July 1867, via steamer and Isthmus railroad from New York to Panama, San Francisco, and Sacramento, O’Sullivan followed King and his party of ten surveyors into Nevada across Donner Pass.

O’Sullivan did more than produce a stunning visual record. Shunning romantic convention, he extended the vision of science. Precise and meticulous but hardly objective, he supplemented the charts, graphs, fossil sketches, stratigraphic diagrams, contour topographical maps, and cross-sectional schematics that gave geology its visual power. In 1867, however, the camera was an afterthought for explorers whose primary task was the search for mineral wealth. Clarence King of Yale, age twenty-five, had orders to survey in advance of the railroad from Lake Tahoe to Colorado. King’s United States Geological and Geographical Exploration of the Fortieth Parallel, 1867-1873, became the first to establish that Nevada’s Humboldt River drainage was a watershed distinct from the Great Salt Lake. The Great Basin discovered by Frémont was, according to King, many dozens of smaller basins where primordial lakes had drained into the ocean, leaving alkali playas of sand. Science aside, it was the booming importance of mining that kept the survey funded by Congress. In Utah’s Green River Basin, the expedition found rich deposits of “practically inexhaustible” coal. In Wyoming, where swindlers had salted a mesa with chips from South African diamonds, King won international fame for exposing a mining hoax.

The Fortieth Parallel Survey was also theoretical science. Basalt flows in impossible canyons with toothed and twisted formations were offered as proof of the crumbling and crushing that had sculpted and resurfaced the globe. King’s Systematic Geology (1878), in part a challenge to Charles Darwin, advanced the theory that “moments of great catastrophe” had accelerated the life-altering process of natural selection. Volcanism drove evolution. Fractures, faults, fissures, and floods had forced the biota to cope or die.

The violence of geologic events also focused the photographer’s lens. Where King reported catastrophe, O’Sullivan accentuated the cataclysmic bizarre. In the Humboldt Sink of Nevada, where King used the word “picturesque” to describe volcanic fissures, O’Sullivan supplied what the scientists called “picturesque evidence.” At Witches Rocks, Utah, where, according to King, the crashing of tectonic plates had upthrust spires of sandstone, O’Sullivan exaggerated the height of the weird formation in a skewed low-angle shot. Another photograph of the fingerlike Witches formation used a paper masking to isolate a single teetering spire. Returning to the Comstock Lode at the western edge of Nevada, O’Sullivan framed lunar landscapes. An 1867 O’Sullivan print called Sand Dunes, Carson Desert showed mules pulling a wagon (Figure 6). Boot prints were tracked in the sand to emphasize isolation. Dark wedges of rock were engulfed by the whiteness of sky. Hailed for its minimalism, Sand Dunes was, according to historian William Goetzmann, “one of the great matter-of-fact photos of all time.” Yet the photo was, nevertheless, a staged misrepresentation. The dunes of the Carson Desert had long been an emigrant landmark in a farming region near a Pony Express station. O’Sullivan had composed the photograph to exclude a well-travelled emigrant road.

Changing photography as he changed the perception of Utah-Nevada, O’Sullivan pioneered an aesthetic of distance and space. His panoramas, bleak and edgeless, showed men in
improbable places that looked nothing like El Dorado. And when the focus of the survey turned
to the silver bonanza in western Nevada, the documentation defied the romantic sublime (Figure
7). Squalid mills trailing factory smoke seemed “hideous”, even “satanic.”24 One dark print from
Virginia City showed six despondent miners as they waited to be lowered in cages through a shaft of
the Savage Mine (Figure 8). A print of a mine disaster showed a miner’s severed leg. Below the surface,
danger was ever-present. In February 1868, in a dark gaseous tunnel below the Gould & Curry Mill
in Virginia City, the photographer risked explosion by igniting magnesium flares. Historians have
hailed the flare-lit mining study as the world’s first exposures of men working deep underground.25

O’Sullivan exposed the counter-intuitive fact that the Basin, like much of the West, was
urban before it was rural, its settlement clustered in towns. From Carson City to Reno through
ore and lumber centers; from Galena to Washoe City, Virginia City, Franktown, Devils Gate, and
Ophir, the Comstock’s scarred industrial landscape spread through the urban core. In Utah it
was Brigham Young and the overland trails that made Salt Lake City the point of debarkation.
Walled cities had effectively colonized the Ute and Shoshone homelands before the coming of the
Union Pacific. Waterpower drove foundries and gristmills. A church-owned public utility called
the Deseret Telegraph linked the five hundred mile Mormon urban network from Logan to St.
George.26
Figure 7. Timothy O’Sullivan’s showed Nevada as urban before it was rural. Pictured: Gold Hill, Nevada, 1867. (US Geological Survey)

Figure 8. Elevators transport miners in Timothy O’Sullivan’s Shaft of Gould & Savage Mine, Virginia City, 1868. (US Geological Survey)
Railroad photographers did the most to document the transformation. Alfred A. Hart of Sacramento, formerly a portrait painter, sold stereo cards of the Central Pacific as it crossed northern Nevada. Determinism pervaded Hart’s 1869 prints of Paiutes posed next to trains or in the path of railroad construction (Figure 9). Another master photographer of the Utes and Paiutes was the English-born Charles R. Savage of Salt Lake City (Figure 10). Savage rode circuit through the Mormon country, taking portraits and selling stereographic pictures of men with their heavy sledges breaking stone for the Mormon shrines. In 1867, at soon-to-be-famous Promontory Summit in Utah, Savage joined photographers Hart and A. J. Russell for the recording of the joining of rails. Mythology still shrouds the event. One persistent fable is that the Chinese workmen were excluded from the famous photos because they were camera shy. Legend has it that the Chinese dropped the rail and scattered when a bystander yelled at Savage: “Now’s the time, Charlie! Take a shot!”

Figure 9. Primitive man contemplates doom in Alfred A. Hart’s *Indian Viewing R. R from Top of Palisades*, albumen stereograph print, 1869. (Neil Goldblatt/Flickr)

The lesson within the legend is that historians and photographers faced a common interpretive challenge when framing symbolic events. With images, with words, they sought balance between reproduction and construction, between the passive mining of data and the sequencing of that information into narratives with emotional power. The photographer’s viewfinder became, as Yale’s Alan Trachtenberg phrased it, “a political instrument” for validating the expansionist need to fence and subdivide land. When icons of obsolescence were juxtaposed with the mechanical emblems of progress—when the covered wagon was overtaken, when Chinese fled before the hooded camera, when the Paiute alone on his cliff saw doom in the form of a freight train—territorial conquest, being inevitable, seemed pridefully justified.

Of the three photographers at Promontory, it was A. J. Russell more than Savage or Hart who milked the most metaphorical meaning from the power of the western landscape. Soldier, correspondent, salesman, and diorama artist; Russell, like O’ Sullivan, had photographed machinery for the union army during the Civil War. In 1868, from his base camp in Echo City, Wyoming, he had documented the last six hundred miles of the advance of the Union Pacific en route to the joining of rails. Fifty of Russell’s most sensational prints graced a silvery album formally titled *The Great West Illustrated in a Series of Photographic Views across the Continent* (Figure 11).
Figure 10. Charles Savage of Salt Lake showcased the rise of industrious Utah. Pictured: *Electric Light Works, Ogden Canyon, Utah*, about 1880. (Utah Historical Society)

Figure 11. Workers pose with Engine No. 119 in A. J. Russell’s *Promontory Trestle Work*, from *Great West Illustrated*, 1869. (Library of Congress)
Lavishly published with leather binding in 1869, the album sold in Manhattan bookstores for more than a rail worker’s monthly wage. The Far West with its trestles, tunnels, and trains appeared an astonishing and even “luxuriant” region of “colossal grandeur.” The desert, no longer wretched, appeared subdued and commoditized. Geographer Hayden cited Great West as proof that Utah was potentially fertile. Journalist Samuel Bowels, who travelled with Russell and witnessed the joining of rails, saw the photography as documentation of commercial and political virtues. The transcontinental, Bowles insisted, was more than a remarkable feat of American engineering: it was the single greatest engineering achievement of all time.

There were no buffalo storming the prairie in A. J. Russell’s grand presentation. No coolie-hatted Chinese. No Paiutes dwarfed by trains. In the futuristic Utah that photography framed in its moment of industrial triumph, the primitive was anachronistic and too distant to be perceived as a threat.

**Machines in the Garden of Zion**

A desert and elsewhere a garden, a Silverado, a cattle frontier, a passage, a pariah, a bleak and shifting mirage, the strangeness at the foot of the Rockies fed towering expectations for the West’s most perplexing terrain. Its discovery—a process, not an event—was visceral and subjective, an act of the mind as well of the eyes. Where tycoons saw industrial conquest, geographers saw cataclysm. Where engineers found canyons for dams and flatness for irrigation, the artist George Catlin, a painter of Utes and Shoshone, confirmed the defeat of a vanishing race. Always a West of the imagination, a projection of heartbreak and dreams, the Great Basin was also a biblical Zion for the chosen but persecuted who found, in that chaste isolation, God’s plan for restoring the Earth. Latter-day Saints, in flight and seeking salvation, escaped from the factory cities to preordained sanctuary. “Their spirit was inward, practical, and agricultural,” wrote historian Ronald W. Walker. Even now, according to geographer Richard Francaviglia, “life in the Intermountain West is somehow buffered or sequestered from the terrors of the outside world.”

Aridity and farming in the kingdom of the Latter-day Saints gave rise to a variant telling of the industrial fable about the inevitability of megamachines. As developed in the western writings of American masters like Emerson, Whitman, and Hawthorne, the story featured pioneers who fretted about modernization without losing faith in modern machines. Compelled, even predestined, to dominate wild places, they yearned for sylvan landscapes and pined for a lost way of life. Farmers mostly, they recoiled at uncut nature. They turned to nature for inspiration without wanting to return there on a permanent basis. Historian Leo Marx, in an important book about cultural symbols, linked the narrative to a pastoral longing for order in chaotic places. “Pastoralism”, as Marx defined it, held out the hope that the conquest of empty places would reconcile conflicting ideals. One ideal was progress through mass production—the machine. Another was tranquil living—the garden. The machine in the garden became a metaphor for balance between nature and industrialization. Blurring old into new, simplicity into sophistication, the machine would work in tandem with agrarian virtue to recover the garden lost to the industrial age.

God had given that redemptive garden to Mormons because, said Brigham Young, it suited no other people on Earth. Treeless and semiarid, it was topography starkly foreign to yeomen from a woodland culture. Even the native population was sparse. Yet the sloping valley at the foot of the Wasatch Mountains showed agricultural promise. Black soil supported a cover of vegetation so thick that the first pioneers, in July 1847, waded a considerable distance before finding a camping ground. Bunchgrass towered over the oxen. Feeders to the Jordan River seemed well suited for gristmills. Sagebrush could be burned. The air seemed
“good and pure, sweetened by healthy breezes.” Geothermal springs bubbled up from the Earth with medicinal powers enough to “heal all who bath no matter what their complaint.”

Most miraculous of all in the marvel that was Utah was the wondrous Great Salt Lake. An American Galilee, the lake was “an ocean,” said a rail tourist, “of majestic mystery clad in beauty divine.” Parisian tourist Albert Tissandier found it “impossible to dream of anything more poetic.” Currier & Ives published an 1870 lithograph that imagined surreal snowy mountains rising from the luminous lake. Painters Albert Bierstadt and Englishman Alfred Lambourne depicted the lake with shorebirds as it appeared in the Utah legend about crickets vanquished by seagulls. By 1883, with the arrival of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, the “strange beauty” of the Great Salt Lake was being promoted in Harper’s as “one of the points in the United States that all tourists think should not be missed.”

Storytellers of later times downplayed the wealth of the valley to heighten the drama of conquest. “There was little to invite and much to repel,” wrote Orson Whitney in his 1892 History of Utah. “A seemingly interminable waste of sagebrush,” the future site of the Mormon city was “baked and burning . . . the paradise of the lizard, the cricket, and the rattlesnake.” But Mormon artists told another story. Most of the best from the pioneer generation were converts from distant places like Denmark, Norway, and England. Carl C. A. Christensen of Copenhagen, a painter of portraits and panoramas, had trekked one thousand miles from Iowa City to Utah while pulling an emigrant’s handcart flying the Danish flag. Danquart Anthon Weggeland, missionary and educator, was a Norwegian trained in Denmark and perhaps the only pioneer painter in Utah busy enough to make a most of his income from art. George Ottinger, American-born, had wandered the globe as a whaler and forty-niner before his conversion to Mormonism. Reaching Utah with his mother by covered wagon, Ottinger tinted photographs for Charles Savage and established himself as an all-purpose painter of mountains and genre scenes. “Romantic realists”, they have been called: romantic because they painted the Salt Lake Valley as a biblical Canaan; realists because their paintings documented folkways and customs of Mormon pioneer life.

The first generation painted Utah cartoonishly but with reverence for the communitarian work of subduing the wild. Few of the paintings were overtly religious, but many showed pious devotion to Mormon teachings about beautification, self-reliance, and the virtue of pooling labor. Weggeland emphasized work toward common objectives in Old Fisher Folks (1870s), Rosebank Cottage (1881), Manti Temple (1884), and pioneer epics like Mormon Emigrants Crossing the Plains (1912). Christensen and Ottinger likewise glorified Utah in formulaic landscapes of praise for the holy work of reclaiming the Garden lost to the Fall. Christensen’s Wheat Harvest in Ephraim (undated) pictured three of his well-fed children smiling with armfuls of grain. In the distant village of Ephraim was a tabernacle peaked above a horizon of gable-roofed and chimneyed houses that Mormons called Nauvoo Style. Waterworks and modern equipment were excluded from the original painting. In 1904, however, when Christensen repainted the harvest, he added a hatless young man on his knees with a cup of water at the wooden gate of the homestead’s canal.

Paintings of the Utah harvest told parables of regeneration that were hardly unique to the Latter-day Saints. Strong in the Puritan heritage of Brigham Young’s native New England, where the metaphor for earthly Zion had been “the city upon a hill,” the iconography of regeneration had migrated west in the Mormon gospel of order vanquishing chaos, of wildness defeated and Eden restored. “Make beautiful everything around you,” Young had directed his people. “Build cites, adorn your habitations, make gardens, orchards and vineyards, and render the earth so pleasant that when you look upon your labors you may do so with pleasure and that angels may delight.”
Town planning echoed that piety of regenerative beautification. Villages right with the compass were said to be right with God. Rectangular townships “that lieth four-square” soon checkered the desert wherever the Saints methodically platted: in Salt Lake City with its ten-acre blocks symmetrically subdivided; in Spring City where LDS converts from Denmark built a cemetery in the rectangular shape of Utah; in Snowflake, Arizona, where the standardized streets were wide enough for a team of oxen to circle a wagon; in Franklin on the Idaho line where the Gothic limestone houses followed the rectangular patterns that latter-day prophets proscribed.43

Gridded towns with gridded fields framed the orderly sameness of hay derricks and hay stacks, of regimented orchards and sheep grazing with cattle, of cedar-post fences and cavernous barns. Scholars of Great Basin settlement patterns have called it the “Mormon landscape.” For geographer Richard Francaviglia, who coined the term in a dissertation, the pattern was symmetry, parallel lines, wide streets, central plazas, and geometrical repetition.44 For novelist Wallace Stegner, it was red-dusted fields of alfalfa, onions, and beets with row after parallel row of Lombardy poplars planted as fence lines. These fast-growing trees, Stegner explained, “were practically never planted singly, but always in groups [that] took the form of straight lines and ranks.”45 Gardens were also important. “A Mormon who creates something green,” wrote Mark Leone of Princeton, “has shown his inner state.”46

That the state of a man’s religion was the state of his village and farm became the diving premise of Utah’s agrarian art. Weggeland’s Bishop Sam Bennion Farm, Taylorsville, painted in 1879, praised the virtue of Mormon farming in a compact symbolic composite of the emerging settlement pattern (Figure 12). A painting in three parts, it honored the trinity of mountain, field, and home: the mountain, reddish brown, that the saints called Mt. Olympus; the orderly field with domes of haystacks; the home of salt-white stucco with double chimneys and multiple doors. Fruit trees shaded the homestead. Children played. A farmer hoed. Cottonwood Creek fed a canal as it branched toward the Jordan River. A train bound for Provo trailed smoke at the base of the mountains as if crossing between the yearning for tranquil nature and the questing for material wealth.47

Figure 12. Orderly places were blessed in Danquart Anthon Weggeland’s paintings of the Salt Lake Valley. Pictured: Bishop Sam Bennion Farm, Taylorsville, 1879. (Springville Museum of Fine Art)
The motif of the train puffing smoke was a visual concession to the Walter Prescott Webbian realization that utopians looking backward still needed forward motion, that farmers needed the railroads, and that even Canaans with biblical place names—Ephraim, Lehi, Manti, Nephi, Moroni—were inevitably forced to rely on factory-made tools and machines. Regimented orchards and windbreaks, because they depended on ditch irrigation, measured growing reliance on sophisticated dams and canals. Reclamation in Mormon doctrine became divinely providential. For apostle John A. Widtsoe, a biologist and educator, the “science” of reclamation was more than an economic necessity. It was Christian duty, a religious rite. “There can be no full conquest of the earth, and no real satisfaction to humanity,” Widtsoe explained, “if large portions of the earth remain beyond his highest control.” That God dwelled in dams and canals was also apparent to the journalist William Smythe who, in 1905, defended the science of big hydraulics as “religious” and “divine.”

Publicists rushed in to prove the promise of a mechanized Eden where minimal physical labor produced a perpetual abundance of crops. Color advertisements for the Oregon Short Line posed modern-day Adams and Eves near machines and irrigation equipment. Lombardy poplars framed the perfect square of a Utah orchard on the cover of 1915 brochure for the Denver & Rio Grande (Figure 13). Idaho photographer Clarence Bisbee, meanwhile, aggressively courted the US Reclamation Service with postcards of water rushing through geometric canyons that seemed ideal for hydro dams. Steam tractors redeemed the Idaho barrens in Bisbee’s 1910 promotion of the doomed Salm Falls Creek colony west of Twin Falls (Figure 14). Factory and garden elsewhere converged in photography of symmetrical orchards dissected by highways and flanked by telegraph wires.

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**Figure 13.** Trees, crops, and ditch irrigation are stylized emblems of the Mormon Landscape in a 1915 brochure for the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad. (Washington State Historical Society)
But machines in the garden of Zion still presented a modernist challenge to the tranquil aesthetic of Mormon art. In the 1890s, when five LDS painters were “called” to study in Paris at the Académie Julian, the art of Utah began to absorb a pastoral naturalism of muted colors and peasant themes. Art missionary John Hafen found in opulent Paris a model for the grander things that God had divined for Utah. Hafen’s *Harvest Time near Sugar House* (1897), *Girl among the Hollyhocks* (1902), and *Corn Stocks* (1905) were tributes to Zion’s glory, peaceful and devoid of machines. Fellow missionary Lorus Pratt, who sailed to Paris with Hafen, returned a devotee of the “toilers of the soil” tradition with its emphasis on sturdy peasant with primitive tools. Pratt, nevertheless, belatedly came to acknowledge Utah’s changing folkways. In *Harvest Time in Cache Valley*, painted in 1913, Pratt posed yeomen under the log boom of a primitive derrick near a gas-chugging threshing machine (Figure 15). Impressionism, post-impressionism, expressionism, and modernism were all adapted to Mormon landscapes. Expressionist Mabel Frazer mixed Mormon symbols into her praise of self-reliance in a vibrant painting called *The Furrow* (1929; Figure 16). Utah’s Philip Barkdull imported the fauvism of Henri Matisse in the saturated hues of the thick impasto he squeezed directly onto the canvas. Barkdull’s *Symphony in Colour* (1930) isolated a Mormon homestead on the banks of what appears to be Bear River irrigation. Canal water reflects the uniform massive trunks of three Lombardy poplars, their crowns reaching skyward as if searching the heavens for God (Figure 17).51
Figure 15. Lorus Pratt hints at the transition to mechanized farming in *Harvest Time in Cache Valley*, 1913. (Springville Museum of Fine Art)

Figure 16. LDS master Mabel Pearl Frazer sought distance from Europe with scenes of agrarian self-reliance. Her 1929 masterwork *The Furrow* has been called Modern Expressionist. (J. Willard Marriott Library. University of Utah)
Shockwaves of the Great Depression dislodged the French tradition and hit Utah especially hard. The Beehive State, in 1933, had the nation’s fourth highest rate of unemployment. Annual per capita income dropped nearly fifty percent. Police manned highway checkpoints to turn back migrant labor. Shacktowns of tar-paper shanties—Hoovervilles, they were called—sprouted wherever the lines of shivering homeless quietly waited for bread. For the arts, nationwide, the trauma forced introspection. In the prose of John Dos Passos, in the protest of Woody Guthrie, in the murals of John Steuart Curry and Thomas Hart Benton, and the bleak photography of Dorothea Lange, the despair stirred realism and a prideful rebuke of European ideals (Figure 18). “If we are to have anything that can be called a vital American art,” wrote Maynard Dixon, a powerful presence in Utah, “it must come this way; not by the obedient repetition of European formulas, but through the ability and courage of our artists to take the life and the material of their own country and of these express their aspirations.”52 Regionalist Edward Hopper concurred. “We are not French,” said Hopper, “and any attempt to be so is to deny our inheritance and to try to impose upon ourselves a character that can be nothing but a veneer.”53

A stoic man in a soft hat and suspenders—his trademark, a shirt-pocketed sprig of sagebrush—probably did much as any Great Depression painter to document the dislocation
in a mix of vernacular styles. LeConte Stewart of Davis County, Utah, in career spanning seven decades, rarely strayed far from his cottage in Kaysville where a narrow strip of farmland hugged the eastern shore of the Great Salt Lake. Stewart’s grayish purples and blues savored the serenity of the scrub vegetation; its pageantry, but also, said a critic, “the sorrow of men who have trekked across it to die.”54 Sagebrush, his sprig of solace, was also his “eau de cologne.” “As a youngster in Richfield and Glenwood, where I was born,” Stewart explained, “I stubbed bare toes over sage and prickly pear chasing cows over the sunbaked hillsides. The smell of the soil and pungent odor of sage got into my blood.”55

In 1903, when the artist was twelve, heart failure claimed his mother. One-by-one, soon after, three of his four siblings had died. In 1913 his father had been visibly grieved when the young man spent six hundred dollars in savings to respond to a magazine ad for the Art Student League in New York. “I’d rather [paint] than eat,” Stewart insisted. A year later he was back in Kaysville, suffering from chronic bronchitis. He taught school. He lettered signs. He married. In 1917, when called overseas for his Mormon mission, he painted Edenic murals in a temple near Honolulu. More mural projects for the church in Canada and Arizona led to one-man-shows in Ogden. In the 1920s he painted orchards and barns in a bold vibrating style of muted colors called tonal impressionism. But the subject matter darkened with the anguish of the Great Depression. Stark paintings of stricken Utah—of clutter and abandonment, of gas stations, hotels, frozen mills, and derelict homesteads—were praised and elsewhere denounced as “negative” and “ugly” but “down-to-earth” and “true.”56 Stewart’s House by the Rail Tracks (1935; Figure 19) featured an autumn field with a yellow house, its paint blackened by soot. Ogden, Becker’s Brewing (1933; Figure 20) and Cannery (1937) showed factories without factory workers. The Smiths’, the Joneses’, and the Browns’ (1936; Figure 21) depicted a row of shabby housing in field of telephone poles.

In the 1930s, like no other American time, the art world was drawn to these homely places and consumed by the plight of the poor. Stewart paralleled the journey of other American masters—Grant Wood of Iowa was one, Hopper of New York was another—who gravitated toward the
Figure 19. Steel and telephone poles frame a blackened farmhouse in LeConte Stewart’s *House by the Railroad Tracks*, 1935. (Church History Museum)

Figure 20. Empty factories and storefronts were hallmarks of LeConte Stewart’s American Scene Realism. Pictured: Ogden, Becker’s Brewing, 1933. (Private Collection)
commonplace and aggressively realistic in a movement that came to be called American scene regionalism. Stewart painted so many thousands of Utah landscapes that his work has been hard to label. Some saw introspection where others found defiance. Either way, the best of his art made sobering comment on Babylon’s encounter with Zion. In Private Car (1937; Figure 22), for example, he depicted hobos on moving boxcars. One stood in cocky pose as if train were his private car. In Death Curve at Roy, Utah (about 1936; Figure 23) the glare of garish neon broke the vastness of a menacing night. Neither painting was a polemic yet they signaled a cultural change. In the kingdom of agrarian virtue, where technology was divinely ordained, progress had ceased to be progress. Machines ran amok in the garden. Beautification had derailed in blight.57

It has been said that no one ever really recovered from the despair of the Great Depression. Stewart, in 1938, turned inward like the vanishing streams. That summer he accepted a teaching post at the University of Utah, and there for the next eighteen years his studies of the Mormon landscape retreated to autumn colors and snow-blanketed silos and barns. In 1985, Stewart, age ninety-four and still tracking backwards, winced at the sheetrock and plywood advancing towards Davis County. “This town used to be full of old barns,” Stewart lamented. “Everything that I find that’s good to [paint] they tear down.”58

**Framing Armageddon**

Now chaos, now garden, the desert emerged in the Christian view of Creation as emptiness transformed. Deserts ever since have begged the obvious question: empty of what? Certainly, in the gap between Colorado and California, the emptiness has seldom been empty of food. Native peoples found more than they could harvest in the basin’s nutritional balance of beans, roots,
Figure 22. Faceless men ride boxcars near Layton, Utah, in LeConte Stewart’s *Private Car*, 1937. (Church History Museum)

Figure 23. Paintings of the ordinary were dismissed as “bleak” and “raw”. Pictured: LeConte Stewart’s *Death Curve*, 1936. (Private Collection)
bulbs, fish, bison, game birds, grasshoppers, and other sources of protein. Empty, then, of what? “Of everything and nothing,” wrote the literary critic John Beck in an essay on cultural landscapes. Seemingly vast, the desert bred hope and fear and uninhibited experimentation. Chaotic, it must be ordered. Empty, it must be filled.

From the imperative to fill and confine what appeared to be empty and endless came the West as a tabula rasa where history could be written anew. Literary critic Catrin Gersdorf, a scholar from the Baltic Sea who writes about vacant places, found four basic storylines. First was the Jeffersonian narrative of the West as a garden of boundless abundance; second, a wilderness story of the desert as spiritual refuge; third, a West-meets-East parable of Orientalism in which aridity was contrasted against wet Victorian landscapes; and fourth, a story of otherness (or “heterotopia” as the French theorist Michael Foucault defined it) where Americans have constructed a sandbox for cultural experimentation, where sightings of flying saucer manifest alienation and atomic scientists contemplate the doom. Often the stories are deterministic. In railroad and mining promotions, in parables of self-reliance and landscapes of dreams turned to dust during the trauma of the Great Depression, the stories aggrandize machines. Historians of technology, stressing complexity, have mostly come to reject stories that purport to compact human encounters with deserts or trace them like a chain reaction to a single powder-keg spark. Metaphors, nevertheless, thrive where legend and folklore diverge from the empirical structure of history books.

And so it has always been in North America’s largest desert where heat and flatness conspire with stereotypes and idealizations to aggrandize and distort. Only artist or true believer stands far enough back to contain the hallucination. Only at a mythic distance from specific events in unique locations is it possible to see the machine—or capitalism, or aridity, or God, or any single factor—as history’s overpowering force. Closer inspection reveals the confusion of social and cultural factors that set machines in motion, shaping historical change.

Whether or not the things humans make drive their civilizations, there is no denying that machines, as metaphors and metaphysics, filter the ways Americans have come to perceive the boundaries of vacant space. In Nevada, especially, where the West still appears to the East as formless and empty, iconography provokes fatalism. Photographer Edward Weston was one of the first to double back on the tradition of Ansell Adams where humanity’s trespass was screened from Sierra Club calendar art. Weston, in 1937, posed a steam shovel’s hungry claw above Reno’s Truckee Basin as if to devour the romantic sublime. Postmodernists, ever since, have reconstructed the idea of the West with landscapes of exploitation, with billboards, graffiti, and strip malls, with bomb craters and shrapnel, with open-pit cyanide mining at places like Battle Mountain and an ancient homeland contaminated at Yucca Mountain’s nuclear dump. Manifest destiny is here rescripted to mean an attack—literally, in the case of weapons testing—on negative space that confounds.

Often in Nevada’s era of the A-bomb, the iconography of the pulverized desert was an apocalypse rained down from above. Aerial assaults on wild mustangs spurred anti-cruelty legislation when photos of a Nevada roundup went public in 1958 (Figure 24). Augustus “Gus” Bundy of Washoe County, a sculptor and portrait artist, had taken the photos seven years before in the Smoke Creek Desert near Pyramid Lake. Legend has it that the photos were shot with a hidden camera under his coat. Historians insist there was no need for stealth in an era when roping horses from pickups was standard practice. Surreptitious or not, the images captured the carnage—the herding of horses with planes, the stampeding with shotguns, the lassoing from speeding pick-ups. Photos showed horses tethered to tires and staggered by heat exhaustion. Slaughtered for soap and horsemeat, they were hauled off the playa in trucks. True: The Man’s Magazine purchased eight of the roundup photos for a story sensationally titled “Mustang
Figure 24. Gus Bundy’s action photos of horsemeat hunters shocked Congress and prompted a ban on mechanical roundups. Pictured: Bundy’s *Horse and Truck*, 1951. (Special Collections, University of Nevada, Reno)

Murder: About the Killing of the Wild Mustang Horse Out West.” The photography, said *True*, had exposed “the ruthlessness with which our mustangs have been pursued and captured to the point of near-extinction.” On September 8, 1959, with Dwight Eisenhower’s signature, a ban on mechanical roundups became federal law.

Black trucks in the glaring whiteness. Mustangs maimed from the air. Bundy’s photos were cited as proof that humanity, armed with machines, was the desert’s most lethal species. Lethal and also absurd said a Columbia English professor on sabbatical leave in Tucson. Joseph Wood Krutch of New York, writing in 1952, took a thousand-mile circular tour from Arizona through the Mojave arm of the Basin in search of spiritual meaning. His memoir, *The Desert Year*, contrasted Manhattan’s abundance of consumer goods with another kind of plenty—a plenty of salt and sagebrush, a plenty of space and light. It was not Technological Man, said Krutch, but the roadrunner and the coyote who best exploited desolation: the bird because he was cocky, the canine because he was stealthy. Both were stars already under contract for Looney Tunes at Warner Brothers. Roadrunner, the absurdist, darted through a yellow celluloid desert where gizmos and gadgets fell from top-heavy rock formations. Wile E. Coyote played the Krutchian hero too smart for his own survival. A beta-tester for ACME Corporation, Coyote crashed weather balloons, rockets, and bombs. Invariably, in the cartoons as in Krutch’s musings, materialism imploded in improbable ways.

Surprises everywhere fell from the sky in the heyday of Wile E. Coyote. On February 2, 1951, at Frenchman Flat about seventy miles north of Las Vegas, the searing three-second flash could be seen as far as Boise. It was followed by a roaring boom that mushroomed into a cloud
then fluffed into the shape of a bowtie. Baker-2, the blast was code named. Remote-controlled cameras showed pigs writhing with radiation. Dollar-sized greyish burns spotted the backs of Nevada cattle. Sheep and horses wandered with bleeding sockets for eyes.

“Now, for the first time in human history,” warned Lewis Mumford, “there is no spot on earth where the innocent may find refuge.”68 Certainly no spot of refuge near Frenchman Flat in the bombing range that came to be called the Nevada Test Site. From 1951 to 1963, above ground zero in the desolate test site, at least one hundred so-called “devices” mushroomed radiation. Downwind in St. George, Utah, lymphoma spiked and leukemia went epidemic among children under fourteen. Vegas played it for laughs with hair-sprayed mushroomed hairdos. There were Miss A-bomb competitions (Figure 25) and, at the New Frontier’s Venus Room, long, tall Elvis from Memphis was “atomic powered.”69 Nearby to the west, a Jesus reincarnated in concrete rose from a sculpture garden with hands outstretched to heaven as if preparing for Rapture’s fire. Facing doom from the East was an art complex that grew to become the world’s largest outdoor sculpture. Michael Heizer’s City, begun in 1972 and still under construction, resembled a mile-long temple-like bunker with a coating of chocolate cement. Minimalist and monumental, the bunker seemed massive enough to survive nuclear Armageddon. There were UFO watchers who thought City was an alien airstrip. Others saw a message sent deep into the cosmic future that art had predated The Fall.70

![Figure 25. Miss Atomic Bomb promotes Las Vegas, 1957. (Las Vegas News Bureau)](image-url)
From photo documentation to minimalism and brutalization, the landscape continued to mutate. Landscape photographer Peter Goin of Reno, one of the first to interpret the test site, framed radioactive debris in toxic panoramas devoid of greenery and people. Goin’s *Nuclear Landscapes* (1992) shunned romantic convention with edgeless horizons and bleached colors in bright-white Kodachrome light. Goin called them landscapes of fear. Classically composed but equally fearsome were bombing range studies by photographer Richard Misrach in his *Desert Cantos* (ongoing) series. Misrach’s *Bravo 20* (1993) documented the covert bombing and shelling of a pockmarked Nevada barren that was still being used for ranching (Figures 26 and 27). Taunting Congress, the photographer appended a serious-sounding proposal for a bombing range national park. Architectural drawings showed a Devastation Drive for tour buses, boardwalks with subterranean walk-in bomb craters, and a café with a viewing tower. In a Las Vegas suburb, meanwhile, painter Robert Beckmann isolated in oil on canvas the apocalyptic moment of impact of a sixteen-kiloton bomb. Beckmann’s *The Body of a House* (1993; Figure 28) colorized and enlarged eight chilling frames from 2.3 seconds of 1953 Pentagon footage. The sequence showed what The Bomb might do a two-story suburban home. Another Beckmann series pictured a fireball of radiation above the lucky 7-7-7 of a Vegas slot machine.71

![Figure 26. Richard Misrach, Bomb Crater and Destroyed Convoy, Bravo 20 Bombing Range, Nevada, 1986. (Fraenkel Gallery)](image)

The obvious metaphor for Beckmann and his traumatized generation was nuclear war as the ultimate gamble. More subtle was the postmodern critique of blank Nevada as a tranquilizing abstraction for the numbing of horrific events. “What, after all,” asked Rebecca Solnit in *Savage Dreams* (1994), “is the American idea of a Nuclear Armageddon but that of preservation and reinvention of the frontier?”72 The idea of the American West, Solnit explained, had always been about new beginnings. Bomb shelters and survivalist gear were—like the Mormon concept of Zion and A. J. Russell’s framing of the Pacific railroad—variations on the prophesy that order
would arise from chaos. The promise had always been that the Chosen would return to the fated places to create and elsewhere destroy.

**Burning women and men**

Bare-chested men were the movers of progress in sculptures pressed into concrete in the towers above Hoover Dam. Iconic, heroic, the men resembled machines. “Forms such as these,” wrote an art critic in *Fortune*, “are more deeply human than the muscles of a torso because they trace the firm pattern of the human mind.”73 Hoover Dam, like the driving of the golden spike at another great dedication, conflated machines with muscles and men in an aesthetic of limitless power.

Seventy seven years almost to the day since Hoover Dam’s 1935 dedication, about four hundred miles north in another Nevada barren, artists again were obsessed with machines. But now the energy was solar powered and the bare-chested were of every gender. Headless metal torsos guarded the carnival promenade where an artist mechanically danced as naked as desolation. A catapult shot men and pianos. A Viking shot flames from his helmet. A robot had torches for arms. “It’s the Louvre of underground art,” said King from California, our guide. His golf cart was a twenty-foot Japanese monkey with clapping cymbals. “It was the most annoying thing I could think of,” said King.74 In the chalky alkali whiteness the monkey fell in with the mutant procession—a mechanical fossilized mammoth, a Wile E. coyote art car, a giant walking spider machine. Night fell and the moon rose to the techno beat of a band named Robot Heart. The dehydrated, the overdosed, the hallucinogenic, the perpetually groovy and questing, the digiterati from Silicon Valley...more than fifty-two thousand people in all emerged from the desert darkness to circle a forty-foot effigy man on a fifty-foot wooden platform. Chanting “burn the Man, burn the Man”
and waving neon glow sticks, they sought purification by fire. It was not Woodstock or circus night in Las Vegas or a city in open rebellion. It was Burning Man in the Black Rock Desert, 2012.

Incubated in San Francisco and released into Nevada, the festival called Burning Man was an art epidemic gone wild (Figure 29). To describe the dynamic in words would be, said the festival’s website, like explaining a shade of color to someone born blind. Burning Man, in this respect and others, twisted the trail of past generations who struggled to make sense of the void. This image essay, herein, has marked that artistic trail in three mechanical phases. First, from the era of the golden spike, came images of the machine as a passage to industrial triumph; second, mostly from Utah, the machine as agrarian beautification; third, from postmodern Nevada, the machine as apocalyptic demise. All three phases layered the Great Basin with myths of western conquest, the most fundamental being that there ever existed a West as a definable geophysical region, not just a slogan or a compass direction. Mythologies, providential and enigmatic, still frame the pioneer genius for technological innovation in the aesthetics of a restless nation pridefully obsessed with its fate.

Fated technology, the fatalists continue to tell us, will surely outpace human reason in ways we can barely image. If true, then Burning Man may be a haven, for there, in the flattest of places, the fetish for fire and mechanization has been imaged and reimagined in most every conceivable way. “What Burning Man calls for, above all, is openness to transformation and wonder,” says Daniel Pinchbeck of New York, a student of shamanism. The same could be said _writ large_ of the steppe at the foot of the Rockies where machines drive the story of progress and emptiness beguiles.
Figure 29. Effigy ritually torched at the Burning Man art festival in Nevada’s Black Rock Desert, by Cristina Garcia Rodero, 2005. (Magnum Photos/ARTstor)

NOTES


9 Smythe, Conquest of Arid America, 220.


11 William Shaw, “‘The Handmill Gives You the Feudal Lord’: Marx’s Technological Determinism,” History and Theory, 18, no.2 (May 1979): 155–176; for the argument that Marxist determinism was economic more that technological see, Bruce Bimber, “Three Faces of Technological Determinism” in Does Technology Drive History? The Dilemma of Technological Determinism, eds. Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 89–99.


13 Albert Deane Richardson, Beyond the Mississippi: from the great river to the great ocean, life and adventure on the prairies, mountains, and Pacific coast (Hartford, CN: American Publishing Company, 1867), 567.


24 Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs*, 144, 146.

32 Francaviglia, Believing in Place, xiv. For Mormon culture as inward looking see Ken Verdonia’s interview with church historian Leonard Arrington, 1995, in the online companion to the University of Utah’s Promontory, a historical documentary concerning the joining of rails, at www.kued.org/productions/promontory.


35 Farmer, On Zion’s Mount, 108.


39 The artist’s full name was Carl Christian Anton Christensen; see, Richard L. Jensen and Richard O. Oman, C.C.A. Christensen, 1831-1912: Mormon Immigrant Artist (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-day Saints, 1984), 47 passim; see also, Vern G. Swanson, Robert S. Olpin, Donna L. Poulton, and Janie L. Rogers, Utah Art, Utah Artist (Layton, UT: Gibbs Smith, 2001), 8–9.


43 Wallace Stegner, Mormon Country (New York: Duel, Sloan, and Pearce, 1942), 27; see also, Terryle L. Givens, People of Paradox: A History of Mormon Culture (New York: Oxford
45 Stegner, Mormon Country, 24.
55 Poulsen, Painters of Utah’s Canyons and Deserts, 92; see also, Glen M. Leonard, A History of Davis County (Salt Lake: The Utah State Historical Society, 1999), 96.
Emptiness has emerged in the cultural geography of Nevada as the desert’s epistemological theme; see, for example, Peter Goin and Paul F. Starrs, *Black Rock* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2005), 114–116 passim.; William Fox, *The Void, the Grid, and the Sign: Traversing the Great Basin* (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 2000).


Since the 1963 publication of Eliot Porter’s requiem to Glen Canyon in *The Place No One Knew*, hundreds of large-format photography books have documented the desert in environmental distress; see, for example, William Jenkins, *New Topographics: Photographs of a Man-Altered Landscape* (Rochester, NY: International Museum of Photography, 1975); see also, Mike Davis, “Dead West: Ecocide in Marlboro Country,” in Over the Edge: Remapping the American West, eds. Valerie J. Matsumoto and Blake Allmendinger, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 341–345.


Francaeviglia, *Believing in Place*, 185.


A. H. Clark’s Framing of Geographical Change

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ABSTRACT: This paper considers the importance of Andrew Clark’s time in New Zealand to the ways in which he wrote about geographical change. It suggests that some of the features of Clark’s writings, for instance his reticence about generalisation emerged very early in his career. Likewise, that in a context where the landscape had been rapidly and to a great degree transformed, ‘geographical change’ assumed a central place in Clark’s thinking. Other considerations and approaches became more important to Clark by the mid-1950s but his New Zealand sojourn cannot be overlooked in any assessment of his over all career.

Introduction

Andrew Hill Clark died in 1976, at the comparatively young age of sixty-four, but left a considerable legacy in Anglophone historical geography, having played a formative role in its development in the USA during the middle years of the twentieth century. He produced some important sub-disciplinary statements and delivered the honorary presidential address to the Association of American Geographers conference in 1962, in addition to co-founding the Journal of Historical Geography in 1975.1 During his career he was the recipient of many honors.

Clark’s approach to historical geography was anchored on geographical change in the context of regional historical geography, where he brought to bear a mastery of the archive and other documentary sources in combination with fieldwork. He made use of comparisons between regions he was familiar with, but more typically eschewed what he regarded as premature generalizations until he had completed exhaustive investigations. Although Clark’s first book Invasion of New Zealand by People Plants and Animals is closely associated with a diachronic or vertical themes approach to the study of geographical change, he later drew on Darby style synchronic cross sections, as well as making use of a numerical indices and innovative cartography, in his study of Prince Edward Island. In his three major books Clark studied in depth two islands and one peninsula, paying attention to, amongst other things, isolation and insularity.2

Clark’s career and his contributions to North American historical geography have been acknowledged in a festschrift.3 To this, Donald Meinig—who arguably inherited Clark’s mantle within US historical geography — contributed an insightful prologue.4 In addition, Ward and Solot have crafted a revealing and substantial essay on Clark for Geographers, Biobibliographical Studies.5 Clark’s skills as a supervisor produced a generation of US and Canadian historical geographers some of whom have, in turn, been at the forefront of North American historical geography. For all that, Clark is now a somewhat forgotten figure.

While aspects of Clark’s career in Canada and New Zealand have already been explored, the treatment is far from exhaustive.6 Clark’s work may be organized into four clusters comprising: (1) the initial New Zealand inspired research (1945 to 1956) overtly concerned with geographical change pursued mainly through vertical themes, (2) geographical change in regional historical
geography and the reconciliation of this with Harshorne’s ideas about geography as areal differentiation, taking the form of mapping of rates of change in small areas (1959 to 1962), (3) geographical change understood through ‘thick’ cross sections and sequences of successive occupation (1962 to 1968), and (4) subjective elements of landscapes (1970 to 1976). The entirety of Clark’s career cannot be covered in a single paper. This paper focusses on New Zealand, where he took up his first fully fledged faculty appointment and where some of the ideas and attitudes that were to become hallmarks of his career took form. This is not to suggest that Clark’s ideas did not continue to change—clearly they did—but these changes can be usefully read against his New Zealand experiences and the publications that emerged from them. This part of his career has not previously been explored in detail and from an intellectual division of labor point of view, it is the portion that can be most effectively undertaken from New Zealand. After recounting some North American influences, the emergent features of Clark’s New Zealand historico-geographical research program are considered. Clark’s long term commitment to geographical change and some of his foundational thinking about historico-geographical research methodology, it is argued, can be identified in his writing from and about New Zealand. These highlight the early appearance of one part of what Ward and Solot identify as a tension in Clark’s mature writing whereby he tended towards what they describe as “hyperempirism,” as a means of avoiding unjustified generalizations, but which correspondingly tended to negate his “desire for a respectful and nostalgic evocation of landscapes.” The acknowledgement of “the profound satisfaction that comes from the deepest possible familiarity with individual areas and places,” present in his conversation, thus tended to be filtered out of his writing. It was not until very late in his career that Clark found a satisfactory way of writing with feeling about landscapes that were important to him.

A New Zealand sojourn 1941–1942

Born on an Indian reservation in Manitoba in 1911 and with strong familial ties to Prince Edward Island, Clark took his BA in mathematics and physics at McMaster University in 1930, supporting his studies through summer work surveying for the Canadian Geological Survey. He was employed for several years as an actuary before beginning post graduate study at the University of Toronto under Harold Innis in 1935. On completion of his MA in economic history, geology, and geography in 1938, Clark’s first academic post was as Demonstrator in Geography at Toronto under Australian Griffith Taylor, the noted environmental determinist. He accompanied Taylor on a Saharan expedition in 1938 and while environment was always to be part of his analysis, Clark was never an environmental (or economic) deterministic in his thinking. Late in 1938, he shifted to Berkeley and studied under Carl Sauer for his PhD, submitted in 1944. This was no library based exercise however, for in 1940 Clark accepted an appointment as Lecturer in Geography at Canterbury University College, joining New Zealander George Jobberns and Yorkshireman Ken Cumberland at the only university geography department in New Zealand, itself founded only in 1937. Thus, Clark has an authentic place as a pioneer figure in New Zealand university geography. Jobberns had visited the US on a Carnegie Fellowship in 1939, where he met many of the leading American geographers, including Sauer and, as a fellow recruit from geology, he was much impressed by the latter’s cultural landscapes approach to geography. Clark replaced Robert Bowman, another Berkeley student and an earlier appointment to Canterbury.

When Clark and his wife Louise arrived in New Zealand, he had reached another of the White Settler Dominions, but one of recent settlement; by Polynesians as late as the thirteenth century, while the European settler population had arrived only in numbers in the mid nineteenth century. The South Island, where Clark was bound, had an alpine backbone with mountains up
to four thousand meters, a heavily forested west coast and much of the country’s grassland plains on the east coast. Geologically young, with a dynamic environment, its landscapes had been further modified by human activity all within a relatively short space of time. The country was an “open book” for young and energetic geographers and in this respect Clark found the presence of new colleague Ken Cumberland, a sharp minded British-trained geographer recruited in 1938, a stimulus.13 Cumberland’s original training was in agricultural geography, but in New Zealand he developed a strong interest in historical geography and produced work influenced by both Sauer and Darby.14 Jobberns was a shrewd avuncular figure; he took Clark into the field and passed on his rich understanding of the regional landscapes of the South Island. Lance McCaskill, a friend of Jobberns’, then a Teachers Training College lecturer and an indefatigable campaigner against soil erosion, whose efforts contributed to the enactment of the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Act, 1941, also helped Clark make sense of the history of land use in New Zealand.15

On arrival, Clark had intended to investigate soil erosion for his thesis but subsequently adopted a broader topic dealing with the diffusion of various exotic species of plants and animals to New Zealand.16 Cumberland by then had interests in soil erosion and perhaps this pushed Clark to consider other possibilities.17 Clark described the pivotal moment as listening to “a bitter informal debate between two well-informed New Zealand scholars, one an Anglophile and the other an Anglophobe, as to the net effect of British influence on New Zealand.”18 Both parties accepted without question that New Zealand was “a second Britain” and only “differed as to the desirability of this fact.”19 Lance’s son Murray McCaskill, a Canterbury student in 1944, later an historical geography graduate and thereafter a faculty member, considered that Clark’s labelling of the debate as “bitter” was merely “lively” and speculated that the potential candidates could be George Wilson, a left wing Junior Lecturer in History as the “Anglophobe” and Alice Candy, his senior in the department and a traditional “Anglophile.” Jobberns, he positioned as a mild critic of Britain.20 In this context it now seems significant that Wilson was acknowledged in the preface of Clark’s Invasion of New Zealand by People Plants and Animals.21

Clark mined his thesis and time in New Zealand to good effect, producing three journal articles from 1945 to 1947, chapters in 1947 and 1956, as well as a book in 1949. Prior to coming to New Zealand Clark had commenced research on Prince Edward Island. He now shifted his attention to what must have, at the time, been an equally small, distant, and insular New Zealand. Yet in what might seem to be unpromising surroundings Clark found considerable inspiration. The lack of a university tradition in geography provided opportunity. Amongst time consuming obligations, in 1941 for instance, he delivered an address to school teachers in which he outlined “A Philosophy of Geography for New Zealand Schools” which forced him to articulate his own position on the nature of the discipline.22 Delivered early in his time in New Zealand, it doubtless summarized ideas from his Canadian and US experiences. Clark observed that school textbooks were frequently dogmatic about the nature of geography and he challenged the rump of deterministic thinking then present in the New Zealand school syllabus.23 He expressed concern about “unjustified generalisation,” which became a career long concern and complaint. He urged teachers to acknowledge that some explanations were complex and partial and that this ought not to be disguised from students even at an early stage. Finally, he rejected geography as “people and environment” because he was concerned that it implied a narrow deterministic control of people by environment. Much later, in a volume published in memory of Griffith Taylor, he expounded on his position more fully: people, he observed sometimes “made substantial changes in the face of the earth; sometimes they appeared to make little impression on the milieu but were themselves profoundly affected in culture . . . to assure the viability of their occupancy.”24 The working definition of geography that he put forward for teachers in 1941 was, “studying the
character form and arrangement of the things which make up the surface of the earth as he sees it – the very landscape in parts of which man lives.”

Clark later described himself as a reluctant participant in philosophical and methodological debates: “I almost inescapably have been drawn from time to time into the methodological lists. I don’t think my efforts have been particularly successful because, among other handicaps, my heart never really was in them.”

There are other philosophical and methodological points made in Clark’s New Zealand work, though they tend to be embedded in his prose, made very much in context rather than as standalone statements. For instance, in his observation, laced with Berkeley undertones, that:

It is impossible to discuss the natural endowment so abstractly as to ignore the presence of man. Hence the present-day New Zealand landscape cannot be analysed and interpreted adequately unless it is seen as result of the interaction of the occupying society and the natural habitat.

In “The Historical Explanation of Land Use in New Zealand,” Clark challenged the accepted explanation that a mix of British settlers and a climatic regime somewhat milder than Britain produced a pastoral economy in New Zealand. Instead, he made a case for the importance of the “relative location” of Australia and, with shades of Sauer, the diffusion of a pastoral economy from New South Wales to New Zealand. However, Clark remained alert to “the delicate chain of coincidence” which had led to this outcome. This paper thus contained another feature of Clark’s later work; his reluctance to unquestioningly accept the status quo interpretation.

Clark was always wary of the dangers of over generalization, a tendency that intensified in his work as time progressed. Writing in the Professional Geographer and drawing on his research efforts in New Zealand in 1946, he was clear and firm in his statement against generalization; “the facts with regard to location, arrangements, and characteristics of the phenomena must be gathered before we proceed to generalize, suggest causal connections and interrelationships, or characterize regions.” Clark accordingly adopted a more inductive approach to research; at least for the first cluster of New Zealand inspired writing. His reservations about generalization also ran counter to wider trajectories in geography as the discipline moved towards nomothetic approaches from the late 1950s.

His suspicion of generalizations resurfaced in a 1947 comparative piece of two islands with which he was familiar—Prince Edward Island and the South Island:

Generalisations which are not almost self-evident truths would seem to be highly speculative. To a large extent the ‘insularity’ which might be stressed is rather to be read as ‘maritime locations’ or ‘relative location’. The use of the word ‘insular’ in cultural connections has well-established precedents, but the connection with insularity in a physical sense is, at best an obscure and complicated one.

A good example of Clark’s hyperempiricism is also provided by the manner in which he addressed the question of who had emigrated to the New Zealand Company settlements in the 1840s. He dismissed the assertion that they were carefully selected, quality migrants particularly of the yeoman farming type, as lacking any supporting evidence. Instead he then embarked on an in depth survey of New Zealand Company Papers, shipping lists in the New Zealand archives, official publications, and newspapers which enabled him to identify, to his own satisfaction, the low proportion of those with “agricultural or pastoral skills.” Indeed, he considered that, comparatively, North America was a more attractive destination; being closer and with land more
readily available so that the inducement to select New Zealand would have been low. Instead he noted “the existing evidence points as strongly toward a generally urban background as toward their poverty.”

Clark spent only two years in New Zealand, where he had a full teaching load but still managed to undertake detailed archival work and a considerable amount of field work for his thesis. This was all the more impressive given the rudimentary state of archival collections at the time and the real difficulties posed by travel restrictions under war time conditions. After his return to the US in 1942, he lectured on meteorology to Army Air force and on Italy to Army personnel before joining the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) where he was one amongst a number of geographers and visited China. Declining a State Department position in 1946, he instead became the foundation geography appointment at Rutgers University.

Clark converted his thesis into a book published, after some delays, by Rutgers University Press in 1949, as *The Invasion of New Zealand by People Plants and Animals*. He commenced by laying out what he termed the “primitive habitat” of climate, soils, and vegetation before treating people, animals, and plants in separate, parallel descriptive and interpretative accounts, concluding with a recounting of the “geographical present” of the South Island in 1940, augmented by dot distribution maps. The strength of the approach is in its attention to origins and change over time, while it weakness lies in the disconnection that can occur between the vertical themes. Clark’s handling of the rabbit pest shows some deftness in ensuring that it is also understood as part of and not entirely separate from the sheep narrative. In point of fact the volume focused only on the South Island and indeed, it would be difficult to apply his approach so convincingly to the North Island if only because of the significance and resistance of the Maori population which disrupts a straightforward narrative of successive waves of invasions. The title *Invasion* also aligns itself easily enough with Sauer’s “Theme of Plant and Animal Destruction in Economic History” dating from 1938. As early as 1939, Jobberns had also prefigured some of these ideas in terms of British settlers bringing a new flora and fauna and exterminating some of the old. Cumberland was also working on a major paper, Sauer inspired, entitled “A Century’s Change: Natural to Cultural Vegetation in New Zealand” published in 1941, which argued that in terms of the rate and scale of change, New Zealand had been made over in a century; while similar North American transformations had taken four centuries and those of Europe, two thousand years. Their collective influence can be seen in Clark’s approach to understanding the geography of New Zealand. In the preface to *Invasion*, Clark however, took a step away from the Berkeley school of geography in announcing that the book was “a report on the revolutionary change in the character of a region, which occurred in the period of less than two centuries.” It became a little less statement about landscapes and rather more a work in historical geography.

Australasian historical geographers, Heathcote and McCaskill later applauded Clark’s *Invasion*, but were critical of his including distribution maps only for 1940 when (while acknowledging the difficulties of their construction) those for 1860 and 1890 “would have provided more valuable illustration of his themes.” *Invasion* was singular in some respects; Clark never again produced such a “pure” study of vertical themes to interpret geographical change. *Invasion* can be seen as an outgrowth of Sauer’s concern with cultural landscapes and implicitly contained the element of change over time. As Clark (without antagonism) moved further away from the Berkeley school of cultural geography and “landscape,” to historical geography per se and a closer engagement with Hartshorne’s ideas about geography; diachronic work was set to one side in favor of the challenging task of depicting change over time in a way that was compatible with a view of geography as a chorological science. Through mapping rates of change in *Three Centuries* and separately in other work on Prince Edward Island, he offered a methodology for studying regional geographical change; one that had some of the trappings of a
deductivist approach. In his 1962 AAG address, Clark in effect repudiated the method taken in *Invasion* when he claimed, “there is no end to the search for ultimate origins except in the happy hunting grounds of physical or metaphysical theory.”

In 1956 Clark was a participant in the famous symposium on *Man’s Role in Changing the Face of the Earth*, speaking on “The Impact of Exotic Invasion on the Remaining New World Mid-latitude Grasslands” where he narrowed the discussion to the un-ploughed grasslands of the US Great Plains, California, and the South Island of New Zealand. He distinguished historical from “processual” investigations; “the former is concerned with the fact of circumstance and change; the latter aims to assign relationships between the characteristics and changes and the processes observed is hypothesized.” While he recognized that much grasslands research took the latter approach, he considered their “wells of historical material [to be] running dry.” Some of the theory about land use and environmental change was, he suggested, based on very limited evidence. He later illustrated this with respect to the South Island, noting that much research had not been able to separate the effects of rabbits, sheep, and fire; though in combination they had clearly transformed the grassland environment. One of his concluding points was a warning to be “wary of the generalization ‘grassland’ for similar histories of exotic invasion had not led to similar changes”.

**Clark on landscapes and geographical change**

Although he opened *Invasion* with the comment that it was a study of revolutionary geographical change, unsurprisingly he did not collect his ideas together in anything like a “theory of geographical change” or even an “hypothesis of geographical change” or of “landscape change” — such a statement would have been antithetical to the way in which he worked and in any case, he wrote elsewhere of the “semantic mire” of landschaft and its translation as “landscape.” *Invasion* — all 465 pages of it — was his statement of geographical change in New Zealand and he did not derive any standalone abstractions from it. For all that, elsewhere in his New Zealand writing, Clark presented an implicit methodology for studying geographical change. This began with a comprehensive reading of the secondary literature in order to understand the wider topic and identify some potential research questions. His approach had four elements: field work and field observation; mastery of textual, photographic, and statistical sources; interviews; and the creation of maps depicting change. He discussed the role of fieldwork in historical geography, drawing explicitly on his New Zealand work at the American Society of Professional Geographers meeting in Washington. Fieldwork was to be “purposeful” and not an “omnibus compilation;” but neither was it merely an exercise in hypothesis testing buttressed by poor observation. One of Clark’s more illustrious students did suggest to me that over time he actually made greater use of regional economic statistics and spent rather less time on fieldwork that his 1946 paper put forward.

Clark regarded the camera as an adjunct tool for observation and extended this potentially to include, the then still comparatively new techniques of aerial photograph interpretation. *Invasion* was copiously illustrated, featuring 46 photographs with several oblique views, including 30 of his own selected from a larger set that he took as part of his fieldwork. In this respect, it contrasts with the 155 maps and absence of plates in *Three Centuries* and 5 plates in *Acadia*, none of which were taken by Clark. All the key official statistical sources were used in the New Zealand work as well, as some obscure early inventories included in early newspaper accounts (e.g. the list for free immigrants and their occupations included in the *Nelson Examiner* in March 1842). Clark made use of conventional dot distribution and choropleth mapping — particularly for livestock — but did also produce a more innovative piece of cartography to show the early settlement of the Nelson region, by placing west rather than north at the top of the map. Clark used maps in his
comparative study of Prince Edward Island and South Island and mimicking a technique used by Griffith Taylor, he mapped both Islands in overlay with reference to latitude and longitude as if they were in the same hemisphere. Clark also readily incorporated interviews into his research strategy noting that “one conclusion became more and more apparent; the most valuable information must come from the land itself, and from interviews with the people who lived on it, worked it, and remembered what their fathers and grandfathers have done with and to it.” Discussions with farmers were instrumental in shaping his views about water races on the Canterbury plains. He was alert to the need to establish a rapport with the interviewee and realized the importance of having a prior working knowledge of the subjects to be discussed, along with the merits of what would today be termed semi-structured interviews. At the same time he was well aware that oral testimony could not be used uncritically, wryly noting “the old maxim of the historians and rural sociologists that the word of the oldest inhabitant is the most unreliable bit of evidence that can be garnered on a field trip,” but characteristically he continued to say this was not always the case.

For Invasion Clark undertook successive periods of secondary reading, archival, and field work and put this forward as a preferable approach rather than envisaging these as a succession of discrete linear tasks. Fieldwork and mastery of documents were also, in Clark’s view, connected rather than separate exercises; early on he stated “field and archival work undertaken together are each improved by a cross fertilization of ideas,” while in Acadia he echoed this sentiment: “But to a geographer, the documents, however critical, can only be a part of the evidence. The historical human geography of any territory or people is the closely interwoven story of man and land.”

Clark used “geographical change” to signal that historical geographers need not be entirely concerned with the reconstruction of a specific past time. Meinig observes that Clark eventually used “geographical change,” “geography of change,” and “changing geographies” interchangeably but not entirely synonymously. In Invasion, Clark wrote about the introduction and diffusion of people, plants and animals but never sought to map the phenomenon which, in Meinig’s view, limited “geographical change” to “a study of certain periodic results of change.” In his later work and particularly in Three Centuries and the Island, he made use of an extensive suite of maps to try and depict how, singly and in combination, different phenomena varied between fixed points in time and how much change there had been them. A later criticism was that Clark’s view of history, influenced by Sauer’s thinking, tended to be a “natural history conception,” where history embraced the natural and human world; and that Invasion in particular exemplified this approach in which humans are “an integral part of Nature.” Extending his line of argument, Guelke further suggested that Clark’s notion of history was restricted to that of past time, proposing instead the case for more attention to internal relationships in order to better understand human societies.

Rereading Clark

Rereading Clark today, some of the elements of his work that were out of step with quantification, model building, and generalization in the 1960s now make for easier consumption, even though he is an unlikely candidate for rehabilitation as some sort of exemplar for historical geography in the twenty-first century. Clark’s detailed work was, though, quite sensitive to difference and diversity, as instanced in his comment: “It is the fate of small bands of people, in small areas to be overlooked and even forgotten as, in our passion for historical and geographical generalisation, we attach them for convenience to larger groups or regions.” His view that researchers ought to return something to the communities which they studied resonates strongly with present day viewpoints. Clark expressed concern that this opportunity was missed with his
study of Prince Edward Island. *Invasion* has also been rediscovered, though not always regarded in a favorable light, by a newly emergent cadre of environmental historians and others.\(^{63}\) *Invasion* as a title has a decidedly postcolonial tone, but this is a chimera; the Maori tend to be relegated to the past rather than being on-going presence in the text, and there is no real discussion of “power.”

Clark’s three books focused on two islands and a peninsula; this scale enabled him to work at a level of considerable empirical detail and still keep the results to a (barely) manageable length. Working alone on remote localities to study the interplay of environment, culture, and economy in regional settings meant that Clark addressed issues of isolation and insularity in his work. However, this was not a metaphor for his relationship to other parts of the discipline during a time when it was undergoing considerable change. In his 1962 AAG address he spoke of looking backwards “without distress and forwards without dismay.”\(^{64}\) Later work did, however, betray some irritation with what he regarded as the misuse of statistical techniques in geography. *Three Centuries and the Island* was laden with maps, including those showing the distribution of various arithmetic indexes, most notably the swine ratio and many attempts to map geographical change so that he cannot be dismissed as unwilling to engage in computational inquiry. Rather, he considered that some of the emerging enthusiasm for statistical techniques would produce “pyrotechnics” but little “scholarly illumination” when they were applied without reference to regional or systematic knowledge.\(^{65}\) As he remarked elsewhere, he had trained in mathematics and ‘labored long years in the statistical vineyard” so his criticisms of the emerging quantitative geography ought not to be dismissed as simply those of a reactionary and innumerate regional geographer.\(^{66}\)

*Invasion* and the strong influence of his time in New Zealand might be considered to mark the first phase of Clark’s approach to the study of geographical change. In contrast, *Three Centuries and the Island*, with its many synchronic maps and other maps which endeavored to measure changes between fixed points in time, represented a distinct second phase. In *Invasion* Clark carefully sieved through the limited colonial statistics in order to uncover the changing population and occupations of the Europeans settlers and incorporated these with a diachronic analysis. He presented *Three Centuries and the Island* as “experimental,” a pilot study for projected research on Nova Scotia, Australia and South Africa in terms of method. In doing so he now rather diminished *Invasion* as “an earlier attempt in the broader field of study [which] had the same basic purpose, although its particular problems suggested a different approach.”\(^{67}\) *Three Centuries and the Island* was also a product of a different set of influences, ranging from H. C. Darby to Richard Hartshorne. On leave in Darby’s department at University College London, Clark had delivered preliminary material from the book in 1954.\(^{68}\) That same year Clark published a major statement about the nature and state of North American historical geography.\(^{69}\) Richard Hartshorne—a staunch disciplinary boundary rider—had, in *The Nature of Geography*, offered only a limited space for “historical geography.” Clark and Cumberland had debated Hartshorne’s ideas in New Zealand and *Three Centuries* attempted to reconcile Clark’s earlier interest in geographical change with Hartshorne’s narrow admission to the discipline of historical geography only as synchronic cross sections.\(^{70}\) Somewhat ironically, as Clark shifted his ground so did Hartshorne in *Perspective on the Nature of Geography*, to provide a more expansive place for geographical change in historical geography.\(^{71}\) Clark at the time was editor of this AAG monograph series and this, together with the fact that Hartshorne was a geography colleague at Wisconsin doubtless played a part in the latter’s change of view in *Perspective*. Arguably both were moving in opposite directions; Hartshorne sanctioning a wider range of historical geographies while Clark moved away from the diachronic approach of *Invasion*. But he did not accept the limited ahistorical synchronic approach and sought instead, as he later put it to “move beyond cross-sectional geographies of the past” in
favor of “greater engagement with geographical change.” Former colleague Cumberland was one who now contested Clark’s views about historical geography as the study of geographical change through time by reiterating a very traditional Hartshornian view that changes over time were the province of history.

*Three Centuries* ultimately overshadowed *Invasion* in statements about the nature of historical geography. In the preface to *Invasion*, which Clark labelled a “pioneering venture,” he had referred to his grand project; a series of studies dealing with similar problems of the development of patterns and practices of land use in mid latitude areas overseas settled by people from the shores of the North Sea. This he reiterated in a slightly different manner in *Three Centuries*, but given his mode of working it is unsurprising that it could not be brought to anything like completion. Even if he had succeeded, such a “grand narrative,” too wordy and empirical for 1960s and 1970s historical geographers would be subject to close scrutiny and probably destructive criticism from the 1990s by any number of postcolonial vantage points.

**Discussion**

Analyzing Clark in his own terms means considering environment, economy, and region. He utilized in New Zealand an intellectual endowment from Sauer and Taylor, the latter inversely so in his rejection of determinism, and to a lesser extent Innis, whose thinking he drew on to reinterpret the land use history of the South Island. The South Island of New Zealand as a recently and much modified island landscape provided inspiration for Clark. He considered and rejected local explanations of the Island’s modification, which ultimately produced *Invasion*, with its then novel focus on geographical change, particularly in terms of the way in which he structured it with parallel accounts of different invading species.

Clark temperamentally was able to thrive in an environment when he was amongst a very small group of pioneering university geographers. What was it about New Zealand? Murray McCaskill expressed the view that, “to the extent that our thinking is fashioned by those we interact with and the places we visit, especially in our early careers, Clark was probably strongly influenced by his NZ experience.” The real significance of New Zealand, long term, in Clark’s thinking, related to geographical change: by commencing sustained research in New Zealand, he was situated in an environment where geographical change was rapid and extensive. New Zealand represented “one extreme” in “the varied continuum of experience.” Acadia, in contrast, represented the other; being little altered by European occupation to 1760. If Clark had completed his doctoral thesis on a region where environmental change was less significant, it would have taken a very different shape and geographical change might never have figured so centrally in his later work. In addition, it is arguable that the sort of intellectual and methodological ruminations that took Clark from *Invasion* to *Three Centuries* would never have arisen. The regional emphasis would likely have remained and—if speculation is permitted—he might, perhaps, have produced work like *Acadia* earlier in his career. He might also never have conceived his “grand project.”

In *Acadia*, Clark also ruminated on the value of Turner’s frontier thesis to that region of Canada before rejecting it. Yet as a metaphor, “frontier” is a useful term for dissecting Clark’s New Zealand sojourn. New Zealand was for Clark in several senses, a frontier. As a land of recent settlement, New Zealand had been transformed in a short period of time and to a large extent, particularly by European settlers. This transformation involved accelerated erosion, land degradation and species extinction as well as the introduction of European and other flora and fauna. Clark made what he must have considered to be a justifiable generalization, that “the New Zealander, whether farmer or townsman, is essentially a practical man rather than a dreamer, and practical men too often lack vision for the long future.” New Zealand though was to prove to be an ideal geographical laboratory for Clark to develop his interest in geographical change.
Clark was one of three staff in a newly established university department. He brought a trained eye to New Zealand and was part of a “frontier geography.” It was a frontier in the sense that it was the real beginning of Clark’s career as an academic. But this frontier was also one of opportunity. Jobberns was writing about geography and national development, Cumberland on land use and agricultural policy. They were a small team that mutually reinforced each other’s endeavors and debated the merits of Sauer and Hartshorne’s approaches to geography. Clark seized the opportunity to work in virgin intellectual terrain and was to do so in a novel and insightful manner as manifest in *Invasion.* At this point, Clark might be thought of as engaging with another type of “frontier” as margin, that of “geography at the frontier.” Left to his own devices in this setting, Clark moved away from Berkeley cultural geography.

Clark referred to the “delicacy of the chain of coincidence” in his paper on land use in New Zealand. This phrase can also be used to scrutinize his time in New Zealand. He brought a range of experiences and intellectual influences from Canada and the US to New Zealand. This breadth of experience included advanced study in mathematics and work as an actuary, survey work for the geological survey, and fieldwork in the Sahara. At a personal level he was adventurous enough to take the opportunity to interrupt his doctoral study in order to move to New Zealand and begin his thesis work on a local topic. Added to this Clark was both exact and questioning of orthodox viewpoints. This was amply demonstrated in the genesis of his choice of topic for *Invasion* but also in his reinterpretation of historical land use patterns.

The opportunity for Clark to come to New Zealand was itself highly contingent. The outbreak of World War II had prevented Jobberns from travelling on from the US to the UK. His extended stay in the US instead enabled him to establish connections with many leading figures in US geography, including Sauer. Bowman was initially hired from Berkeley and his resignation provided an unexpected opening for Clark. Cumberland, three year’s Clark’s junior provided an intellectual foil; the men spent time together in the field, sometimes with Jobberns and developed some parallel research interests and a set of mutually reinforcing publications. Jobberns was a skilled field observer, who Clark put on the same level as Griffith Taylor, Carl Sauer, Joseph Spenser, and Clifford Darby.

Clark brought some clearly defined ideas and capabilities to New Zealand and his university position, as evidenced by his 1941 address, but New Zealand also provided him with a convivial working environment and a field of study that enabled him to develop his skills of argument, his ideas about fieldwork in historical geography, and to conceive of and complete a major study about geographical change. Some of these ideas would potentially have appeared in modified form wherever he had been based. But, with Jobberns as an interpreter of landscape change and Cumberland who regularly challenged orthodoxies of land use and agricultural policy while drawing on Sauer and Hartshorne, Clark was particularly fortunate in terms of his own intellectual development. New Zealand gave Clark both stimulation and space to develop his thinking; he was not crowded out by having to respond to too many competing ideas and individuals. At one level New Zealand was unimportant to Clark’s ideas about field work, for these would have developed out of whatever region he was working on; but at another, the South Island provided an ideal “laboratory” in which he became sensitized to studying geographical change because it had been so recent and so extensive. *Invasion* was “revolutionary” in the sense that Clark alluded to in the preface, in that the extent and speed of environmental transformation was profound, but it was also “revolutionary” in a methodological sense with its explicit focus on geographical change, explored through a series of diachronic narratives. New Zealand was a subject of the first phase of his writing and the substantive focus though his interest in taking a purely diachronic approach to understanding geographical change had waned by the mid-1950s to be replaced by variations on synchronic approaches. But by striking upon New Zealand
first it gave impetus to his lifelong, though unfulfilled, project on Europe settlement overseas. It would have been much harder to conceive of such a project if he had not begun in a setting where geographical change was so pronounced. This is arguably the real bequest from New Zealand to Clark.

Clark’s efforts as a PhD supervisor have been acknowledged though it ought to be noted that his Wisconsin doctoral supervisions date from 1959 to 1975; that is most of them were undertaken as a mature scholar when, in retrospect, his two most important books, *Invasion* and *Three Centuries* were long completed. Ten of Clark’s fifteen doctoral students published book length versions of their theses and his involvement in their writing is acknowledged.84 The bibliographies of Merrens’, Harris’ and Ray’s studies show the close engagement with archival sources that Clark expected. The use of cartography and the type of tables in Merrens, Lemon, Harris, and Ray are evocative of those used in Clark’s own publications.85 Jim Lemon’s notable study on German settlers in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania comes the closest to adopting a Clark like stance where in his preface he wrote, after a lead-in discussion about environmental and cultural determinism that: “this study does not deny the power of tradition and environment; but it considers more centrally the decision of the people and their more immediate social conditions. The many decisions that shaped life on the land in the early Pennsylvania were the result of how people perceived their situation.”86 Harris’ study of the seigneurial system in Canada challenged long accepted interpretations in a fashion characteristic of Clark’s own work.87

To the extent that Clark’s students concerned themselves with the bigger question of geographical change in regional settings, they were extending a line of inquiry that Clark had settled on in New Zealand. The attention to archival sources and the use of specifically created cartography, rather than just the redrawing of period maps also rests on approaches developed from his New Zealand experience, although much of their more detailed mapping and use of tabulations draws on techniques and questions posed for *Three Centuries*. Overall New Zealand has a more muted presence in the techniques that Clark bequeathed to his doctoral students but still underpinned the focus on geographical change, although after *Three Centuries* and through his research for *Acadia* he was able to draw on North American examples. However, as Clark had moved away from the Berkeley tradition in which he was supervised by Sauer himself, so, it is unsurprising that his own group of PhD students found their own intellectual trajectories which took them far away from their mentor’s own interests and concerns.

Conclusion

Clark’s time in New Zealand, his fieldwork and engagement with colleagues in the small department of geography sharpened his interest in geographical change. The geographical insights he brought from Berkeley gave him some valuable intellectual tools to work with but Clark’s own efforts to rethink what he observed in the New Zealand landscape and how it might be understood should not be underestimated. Chance played its part in Clark coming to New Zealand, but once engaged in his research where landscape change was both rapid and extensive he was in the ideal place to conceive of a comparatively large scale study of European overseas settlement.

New Zealand lingered longer in other still important ways; Clark served as a sounding board for Jobberns with regards to other US geographers recruited to a visiting faculty position at Canterbury and he remained as a conduit of information about American geography more generally into the 1960s. Eventually, he returned to Christchurch on sabbatical in 1967, though by this time his interest was focused on Acadia. While he made no effort to return to any New Zealand research, he did consider that sufficient basic research had now been completed for the writing of the first historical geography of New Zealand.88
NOTES


7 This research is part of a larger study of the early years of university geography in New Zealand including the activities of Professor George Jobberns who hired Clark and Dr. (later Professor Ken Cumberland another contemporary of Clark’s, see Eric Pawson, “Creating public spaces for geography in New Zealand: Towards an assessment of the contributions of Kenneth Cumberland,” New Zealand Geographer 67 (2011): 102–115; and Michael Roche, ed., A Geographer by Declaration, Selected Writing by George Jobberns (Christchurch: Canterbury University Press, 2010). The larger project has included a significant amount of archival work which has provide much important contextual information though this has not been the major source drawn on in this present paper.


12 Michael Roche, ed., *A Geographer by Declaration, Selected Writing by George Jobberns.*
15 Emeritus Professor W. Barry Johnston, Personal communication, 2012.
19 Ibid.
20 Murray McCaskill to Michael Roche, Correspondence 1996, Author’s Collection.
21 Wilson is also acknowledged in the footnote 25 of Clark’s paper “The Historical Explanation of Land Use in New Zealand,” *Journal of Economic History* 5 (1945): 229, as “a keen and industrious” student of the “economic and social history of Canterbury” and lends some support to McCaskill’s conjecture.
26 Clark in Donald W. Meinig, “Prologue: Andrew Hill Clark, historical geographer,” 24.
30 Andrew H. Clark, “South Island, New Zealand and Prince Edward Island Canada: A Study of Insularity,” *New Zealand Geographer* 3 (1947): 150. When Jobberns declined expatriate New Zealand economist Horace Belshaw’s invitation to write the chapter he suggested instead that Clark be approached. Jobberns was not entirely fulsome in his comments about Clark’s efforts. (Jobberns to Belshaw September 25 1945, Jobberns Papers 93/86 Canterbury Museum, Christchurch).
31 Migrants of a later generation perhaps better fitted the view that Clark was rejecting, see Rollo Arnold, *The Farthest Promised Land: English Villagers, New Zealand Immigrants of the 1870s* (Wellington: Victoria University Press and Price Milburn, 1981).
33 Ibid.
37 Michael Roche, “George Jobberns and the writing of New Zealand Geography,” 98.
39 Andrew H. Clark, *The Invasion of New Zealand by people, plants and animals: the South Island*, v.
40 In *Three Centuries and the Island* he posed different questions and employed numerous temporal cross section maps. Andrew H. Clark, “Field Research in Historical Geography,” 21, noted that “field mapping” had limited application to his research problem in *Invasion*.
44 Ibid.
47 His views on the centrality of making and using maps remained unshaken—see Andrew H. Clark, “Praemia Geographiae: The Incidental Rewards of a Professional Career,” 236.
48 Fieldwork he regarded as both meaningful and enjoyable, though he conceded by the 1960s that it was methodologically out of fashion. See Andrew H. Clark, “Praemia Geographiae: The Incidental Rewards of a Professional Career,” 237.
50 Jim Lemon, Personal communication.
51 Andrew H. Clark, “Field Research in Historical Geography,” 17.
52 Andrew H. Clark, *The Invasion of New Zealand by people, plants and animals: the South Island*, 150–151.
53 Andrew H. Clark, *The Invasion of New Zealand by people, plants and animals: the South Island*, 56.
55 Andrew H. Clark, “Field Research in Historical Geography,” 18.
57 Andrew H. Clark, “Field Research in Historical Geography,” 22.
58 Andrew H. Clark, “Field Research in Historical Geography,” 22. This is not quite the same as Sauer’s famous statement about taking the documents to the field “to see the land with the eyes of its former occupants from the standpoint of their needs and capabilities” – see Carl Sauer, “Foreword to historical Geography,” *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 31 (1941): 10.
60 Donald W. Meinig, “Prologue: Andrew Hill Clark, historical geographer,” 21.
68 The influences were not all one way by any means; Darby had earlier referred to Invasion, while recognizing some criticisms of the approach in his famous paper on the relations between geography and history. See H. Clifford Darby, “On the Relations between History and Geography,” Transactions and Papers of the Institute of British Geographers 19 (1953): 1–11.
69 Andrew H. Clark, “Historical Geography,” 70–105. “Island” and “insularity” as threads in Clark’s work do not refer to any sort of self-imposed exile, even as his work moved apart from other geographical scholarship as the 1960s unfolded. Rather it was the quantifiers and model builders who with the benefit of hindsight can be said to have actively disengaged with the regional historical geography espoused by Clark and isolated themselves in “spatial science.” I am grateful to Prof Gordon Winder for discussion around this point.
74 A convenient way to assess this is to refer to the many entries to A. H. Clark in Green’s (1980) compendium volume which gathers together some classic statements dating from 1923 to 1980. It is also in keeping that Clark is much referred to but does not have an authored paper in the volume. See D. Brooks Green, Historical Geography, A Methodological Portrayal (Savage: Rowman & Littlefield, 1980).
75 Murray McCaskill to Michael Roche 1995 correspondence, Author’s Collection.
77 Andrew H. Clark, “Physical and Cultural Geography,” 20–47.
78 Ibid.
80 Ibid., 224.
81 Ibid., 215-230.


Democratizing Nature Through State Park Development

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ABSTRACT: During the Depression, the National Park Service forged a plan to create a healthier and happier citizenry by developing a nationwide system of state parks. The goal was to “cure the ills of society” by constructing a park within fifty to one hundred miles of every man, woman and child. Between 1933 and 1942, workers for the Civilian Conservation Corps built 800 state parks within the United States. The Park Service oversaw this process and produced master plans for park design that were replicated across the country. These plans typically required damming streams to construct a lake or swimming pond as the central element, and packaging nature for mass consumption. The construction of lakes and other scenery on such a large scale where none existed before was a first for the Park Service.

State parks have become a familiar part of the American landscape. Systems of such parks provide recreational opportunities and often protect unique natural landscapes or sites of historical significance. More than seven hundred million people have typically visited these facilities across the country each year—roughly twice the number who went to national parks. 1 Although state parks have in some ways existed under the shadow of national parks, most Americans have spent more time at these “lesser” recreational areas. In some cases, generations have grown up making pilgrimages to their favorite lake on summer weekends, which in all likelihood was developed as a state park. This paper focuses on the years of the Great Depression, when a fortunate merger of President Roosevelt’s New Deal economic programs and the dreams of a few promoters gave birth to a system of state parks nationwide. Between 1933 and 1942, workers for the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built eight hundred state parks within the United States, and the National Park Service encouraged park-system planning in all forty-eight states.2

Beyond the unprecedented volume of park development, the CCC program was significant in several ways. First, the large-scale construction of lakes and other scenery where none had existed before marked the entry of federal park planners into the process of significant landscape modification. Before this, the Park Service had concentrated almost solely on the preservation of scenic grandeur in about two dozen parks, almost all located in eleven western states.3 Second, one of the primary principles of the plan was to place recreational parks within the reach of every citizen, or in other words, to democratize nature. Although not intended to be elitist, the early western national parks were out of reach. Unless citizens were fortunate enough to live nearby, most Americans in the 1930s could not afford to visit them. In contrast, state parks were designed to be accessible to the masses.4 Third, the planners who controlled not only what shape the parks would take, but also which types of activities (hiking, riding, swimming) were appropriate there, were very few in number.5 Therefore, a small group of people had tremendous power to mold many of the feelings and beliefs about nature that we think of as typically American. This “ideal” model of nature they designed and constructed is one we need to understand better.
The Park Service planners that oversaw this process produced master plans for design that could be replicated across the country. These plans, or templates, utilized a lake or swimming pond as their central element, and thereby “packaged” nature in a specific way for mass consumption. Such scenery usually had to be literally constructed because most of the early state parks were established on inexpensive or donated land that had marginal scenic value. While the construction of lakes was relatively straightforward in humid Virginia, applying this concept in the arid West was a whole different matter. This and similar differences pose the central focus of this article. How did federal planners apply their basic design model across the diverse cultural and physical landscape of the United States?

Five states arguably saw the greatest impact from the work of the CCC, and this fact helped me to logically narrow the scope of this research. Those states were Virginia, South Carolina, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. Each of these places, which were without any state parks in 1932, developed an entire system of parks by participating in the CCC program. I chose three of the five for case studies. I began with Virginia, where state planners constructed some of the first CCC parks in the nation. The second choice was Oklahoma, where parks were constructed in both humid, wooded areas in the east and in arid areas in the northwest. Finally, New Mexico offered a physical and cultural landscape very different from the other possibilities.

Geographers certainly have looked at the development of parks before, although not in great numbers and most focused on national parks. The research value of parks received special attention in 2007 when *Historical Geography* devoted an issue to American parks and protected areas, edited by geographers Lary Dilsaver and Terence Young. Traditionally, research on parks has been dominated by historians. Most recently, Neil Maher explored the role of CCC conservation work in developing broad-based support for the developing post-World War II environmentalism. Ney Landrum devoted a chapter to the role of the CCC in his study of the state-park movement. Conrad Wirth, the planner responsible for all of the CCC state-park development, covered this topic while outlining his career as a landscape architect and later director of the Park Service, and John Paige looked specifically at the impact of the CCC on the Park Service in an administrative history.

The federal plan for democratizing nature

Park Service planners had been encouraging states to develop parks since the agency’s beginning in 1916, and in 1921 they organized the National Conference on State Parks in Des Moines, Iowa. The establishment of the CCC on March 31, 1933, provided a rare opportunity for funding and labor to develop a network of state parks across the United States and federal officials moved quickly to take advantage of the program. By July 1 of that year 270,000 men occupied 1,331 work camps across the country. Despite the rush, the Park Service plan evolved into a well-choreographed program that was responsible for unprecedented gains in recreational development. By constructing eight hundred state parks, hundreds of city and county parks, and establishing state planning agencies to encourage continued development in the following decades, the program modified a significant portion of the landscape and shaped how many Americans interacted with nature. Some park scholars suggest that the CCC program pushed state-park development ahead by as much as fifty years.

The design of the new state parks was based on the agency’s experiences with early national parks, as well as on existing state-park programs, such as those in New York, California and Indiana. However, in a major shift in national policy, one of the most important guidelines of the federal model was the placement of the new parks within reach of ordinary citizens, including low-income families. Federal planners reported that forty-two percent of the U. S. population...
could spend little, if anything, for recreation travel. The consensus of these existing programs was that parks should be located within fifty to one hundred miles of every state resident if possible.\textsuperscript{12}

This policy of accessibility was important for two reasons. First, it represented a shift from conservation of very selective scenery and natural areas toward the democratization of nature. This idea is related to what Park Service landscape architect Ethan Carr has called “human resource conservation.”\textsuperscript{13} Second, this criterion, by mandating parks in areas that were not considered scenic, required the intensive construction of lakes and other scenery, such as forest groves. Federal planners made this point clearly. The existence of lakes, trees, and wildlife at a proposed site was ideal, “however, be topography interesting or monotonous, water abundant or scarce, vegetation abundant or sparse, or climate salubrious or enervating, day-by-day recreational requirements are going to have to be met with the best that can be obtained near at hand.”\textsuperscript{14}

The essence of the Park Service’s ideal state park was captured in a drawing published in \textit{A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem of the United States} in 1941 by the Interior Department. An aerial perspective, it is labeled “Sketch of a Park,” and is described as a general development plan (Figure 1). The centerpiece is a large artificial lake surrounded by a wide valley with forested slopes. The park has only one entryway and a limited amount of roads to take visitors to points of interest. Cabins and camping areas are spread along the shorelines, and a bathhouse is centered on a wide beach. Other park structures, such as a museum, administration office and fire-control area, are clustered, which leaves the bulk of the park available as a “natural area” accessible by trails.

The idea of constructing artificial lakes as the centerpiece of a new park arguably had more impact on the landscape than any other criterion in the master plan. Between 1933 and 1943 the CCC built 195 dams in state parks and other recreation areas.\textsuperscript{15} Even if other scenic qualities were

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\caption{The federal government's model of an ideal park, published in \textit{A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem in the United States}. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior. 1941.}
\end{figure}
available, water for recreation was thought to be critical. Swimming, after all, was the perfect activity for making nature available to everyone, and fit nicely with the goal of democratizing nature. As Yi-Fu Tuan has noted, because the sport minimizes the physical and social differences among humans and requires no expensive equipment it is a good “litmus for the strength of a country’s democratic sentiment.” Recreation surveys completed by the Interior Department also illustrated the growing enthusiasm for additional water recreation.

Yet not all planners were comfortable with the idea of dams in parks. Perhaps still reeling from the public outcry after the damming of Hetch Hetchy Valley in Yosemite National Park, federal planners were notably cautious. They demanded that dams be “rigidly avoided” within national parks and monuments, but grudgingly agreed that “modifying natural conditions” was justified in “lesser parks,” where there was a shortage of “facilities for water recreation.”

Noted landscape architect Frank Waugh expressed similar sentiments:

So strong is the delight of human beings in water that the landscape architect is under strong temptation to supply artificial ponds where nature has failed to make them. But this temptation should be examined with great caution before one gives way to it . . . the artificial pond is likely to look unpleasantly artificial when it is done, and in that result all the contiguous landscape loses the illusion of naturalness.

Landscape architects had earlier fought outright the damming of streams in Yosemite and Yellowstone National Parks. But by the late 1920s and 1930s, possibly giving in to the rising tide of recreational park development, they shifted their stance from steadfast opposition to improving the design of dams being proposed. “The new lake should be made as nearly like the natural prototype as is humanly possible,” argued Waugh. Park Service publications soon offered advice and examples on how to naturalize the look of impoundments.

The same efforts were made to naturalize other human structures within parks. In many CCC parks, every structure from expansive lodges to lowly generator houses and bathrooms were designed in a naturalistic style borrowed from early Park Service landscape architects, which came to be known as “government rustic”:

Successfully handled, it is a style which, through the use of native materials in proper scale, and through the avoidance of severely straight lines and oversophistication, gives the feeling of having been executed by pioneer craftsmen with limited hand tools. It thus achieves sympathy with natural surroundings and with the past.

The size and shape of the logs, timbers and rocks had to be scaled properly to match the surrounding terrain. In mountainous and forested areas, for example, the native materials had to be overscaled to match the imposing terrain.

The challenge of Park Service planners was to coordinate all the work being done in the state parks so they met the above goals for park development. Thomas Vint, director of the Park Service Branch of Plans and Designs, pushed the agency’s vision of proper design by publishing and distributing a variety of documents. He used examples of outstanding park designs to create a pattern book of rustic designs. Works commended included the park museum buildings Herbert Maier had designed for Bear Mountain, Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and Yosemite, and also suitable examples of trailside shelters, footbridges, culverts, and amphitheaters. The pattern book was distributed widely and helped standardize the government rustic style among Park Service architects and planners.
The role of Park Service planners regularly went beyond architecture narrowly defined. It included all aspects of park development, including roads, the selection of natural areas, and the zoning of different types of land use. By 1934 a composite of these ideas was being referred to as a “master plan,” and was implemented to a considerable degree at nearly every state and national park. By the later CCC days, Park Service master planning became formalized enough to offer a program called “Plans on a Shelf.” The idea here was to provide complete project plans for a state park to be used as soon as funds might become available.

**Virginia park development**

With its early and rapid development of an entire system of state parks, Virginia became the first success story of the CCC program and helped to better define Park Service master planning. The nation’s very first work crew of the program was assigned to Virginia, and in 1936 officials there opened six state parks to the public—all on the same day. Because of Virginia’s location close to Washington, DC, the new parks were visited by Roosevelt and other high-ranking government officials. Media newsreels of these events also helped to place Virginia and the parks program in the national spotlight.

There were three key reasons for the success of Virginia’s state-park program. First, state officials already had experience working with the federal government through the establishment of Shenandoah National Park. This involvement required the state to acquire all the private land needed for the new park. It was an easy transition to then continue acquiring land for a system of state parks. Second, its close distance to Washington, DC, gave this state a political advantage over distant places in competing for CCC projects. And finally, the development of parks had broad statewide support. The Virginia press was guardedly optimistic about the CCC program in general, but throughout its history, newspapers gave the program’s efforts to develop parks favorable publicity.

Because Virginia’s parks were built so early within the years of the CCC program, they played a significant role in shaping park development across the country. The generic park design published in *A Study of the Park and Recreation Problem of the United States*, for example, is very similar to that of Douthat State Park in Virginia. In 1934 the regional offices of the Park Service’s Branch of Planning and State Cooperation moved from Washington, DC, to Richmond. The federal planners within this Richmond office often worked closely with Virginia planners, sometimes even at the same drafting board.

The six Virginia CCC parks were designed as a group and shared the same overall guidelines. These parks were Douthat, Fairy Stone, Hungry Mother, Seashore (now called First Landing), Staunton River, and Westmoreland. In each park a central water feature was the primary organizing element in the overall design. Three of Virginia’s first parks were located on the ocean or a river, and the remaining three were centered on an artificial lake. The lakes constructed at Virginia CCC parks were viewed positively at the time as a way of improving nature. Wilbur Hall, the chairman of Virginia’s parks commission, saw no distinction between the constructed dams and the existing woodland scenery. Hall said the parks were for people to “get back to Nature untouched by modern civilization.” Clearly, landscapes with artificial bodies of water that emulated nature, were still considered “untouched.”

Rather than viewed as necessary but unsightly aspects of the parks, the dams were often promoted much like natural scenic features. When the dam was built at Douthat State Park, engineers created a series of rock-faced spillways that came to symbolize the park itself. One promotional writer declared that Douthat was famous for its “waterfalls.” Another writer described the transformation that had taken place at Douthat in the following language:
In thirty-four months impassable thickets have given way to roads and bridges. A mountain stream has been converted into a silver lake. Here hillsides have become a riot of blossoms. Mother Nature has been aided in her beautification methods by landscape architects and the thought and brawn of skilled men . . . the sweat of their bodies mingled with the rushing waters of Wilson Creek to form the picturesque cascades.31

Promotional photographs published in 1936 captured happy park visitors at picnic tables with the spillways filling the frame as a backdrop, much the way we might photograph a natural waterfall or other “natural” scene (Figure 2). Charcoal drawings of the spillway by a local artist are still available at the Douthat gift shop.

Figure 2. Although an obvious human construction, the spillway at Douthat State Park in Virginia was promoted as if it were a “natural” scenic feature. (Photograph from the files of the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation)
Virginia officials fully embraced the idea of democratizing nature. After the six CCC parks were developed, these in combination with Shenandoah National Park and another federal area placed virtually the entire population of the state within fifty miles of a public recreation site. W. E. Carson, chairman of the Virginia State Commission on Conservation and Development, stressed the importance of understanding the “spirit and purpose” behind the establishment of Virginia’s state park system:

But most of all, they will provide recreation, pleasure and vacation delights for the person of moderate means who is unable to afford a vacation for himself and family in the more expensive resorts. The state parks were established for his benefit, his pleasure and his welfare.32

“The working man is entitled to more than a bare existence,” Governor George Peery declared during the opening ceremonies of the park system in 1936. “And so it is the duty of government, either state or national, to help bring to him some of the pleasures the world has to offer.”33

Unfortunately, the liberation of the lower classes did not include African Americans. The park system was closed to African Americans in Virginia at the time it was developed. A segregated area at Fairy Stone was initially considered for use by African Americans, however, the entire system remained white-only until 1950 when the state established Prince Edward Lake State Park for Negroes.34 Segregation in parks was common practice throughout the South at the time. In South Carolina, which had sixteen parks developed by the CCC, state officials closed all parks for three years rather than allow equal access.35

**Oklahoma park development**

Oklahoma was six years behind Virginia in planning for parks, and so was not prepared when the CCC first began in 1933. Once a parks commission was created in 1935, however, and the necessary lands were acquired, statewide support grew quickly and federal planners went to work. By the time the program ended in 1942, work crews had constructed seven parks. In semiarid western Oklahoma, the state developed Boiling Springs, Roman Nose, Quartz Mountain, and Lake Murray state parks, and in the humid east, planners established Osage Hills, Robbers Cave and Beavers Bend.36

The Oklahoma experience stands out in three significant ways. First, the two-year delay in joining the CCC program allowed park designers there to avoid mistakes made elsewhere. As a result, Oklahoma parks clearly represent the fully formed Park Service model, including its emphasis on the democratization of nature and artificial lakes. Second, Oklahoma’s parks include some of the finest examples of the government rustic style of architecture in the country. Finally, the variety of landscapes within the state, ranging from humid, forested areas in the east to semiarid regions in the west, challenged planners who tried to shoehorn the model across the entire state. Oklahoma park sites, because of this, were more heavily modified than in the forests of Virginia.

Unlike Virginia, which hired a landscape architect to begin planning its system of parks, Oklahoma relied totally on the expertise of federal planners. However, Oklahoma officials did assert some independence by defining their own goals for parks, which were not mere carbon copies from other states or federal design books. One such goal was the need to conserve wildlife habitat, which was unlike anything found in Virginia or New Mexico. Wildlife was protected in all of the original CCC state parks and large areas were identified as sanctuaries in the master plans of all but Quartz Mountain State Park.37
The democratization of nature was also a key component of the Oklahoma system. Federal planners concluded that most state residents could not afford to travel to resorts in Colorado, New Mexico, Missouri, or the Gulf states. Because of this, they carefully selected sites that would blanket the state and put almost every area within seventy-five to one hundred miles of a park. Although Oklahomans had a higher standard of living than many southern states, they still trailed residents of the north. Approximately one-third of Oklahoma farmers made as little as $300 a year. To compensate for low-income levels, user fees at parks were determined by the ability of the poorest inhabitants to pay.\textsuperscript{38}

Similar to Virginia, the parks in Oklahoma were not intended for all residents equally. Racial segregation was a common practice in the state in the 1930s, and most city parks were limited to whites only. This particular issue was a sore point for Roscoe Dunjee, editor of \textit{The Black Dispatch} newspaper. Dunjee repeatedly berated the Oklahoma City Council and State Park Commission about the lack of recreational opportunities for African Americans. He noted that nearly half a million dollars had been spent by the city and federal government on recreation facilities in 1935, yet no areas were available to the state’s twenty thousand African American residents.\textsuperscript{39} State officials eventually were pressured to open state parks to African Americans, but only in certain areas at Roman Nose and Lake Murray. Since these two parks were in counties with little African American population, however, this policy had little practical impact.\textsuperscript{40}

A body of water, the central tenet of federal-park planning, was well represented in Oklahoma. Each of the state’s parks was constructed in parallel with an artificial lake (or in one case an improved river section) ranging in size from seven-acre Shaul Lake at Boiling Springs, to 5,728-acre Lake Murray. Visitor surveys in 1938 validated this emphasis on water recreation. The average Oklahoma park visitor lived within twenty-five miles of his or her park, and went there for one-day outings to do water sports.\textsuperscript{41}

Although virtually all of the nation’s CCC parks were constructed of native materials in the government rustic style where possible, they cannot compare in style or quality to the extraordinary cabins, bathhouses, and other structures in Oklahoma (Figure 3). The most characteristic feature of these structures is the use of large stones that angle up from the ground, giving a building the appearance of having literally sprouted. Building sites were also chosen near existing rock outcrops, which further enhanced the natural look. The main reason for this exceptional quality is the influence of Maier, the Park Service designer who earlier had helped to shape the evolving rustic designs characteristic of national parks. Timing also played a role in the quality of these structures. The first two years of the rapidly thrown-together CCC program had produced many parks, but not all were of exceptional quality. By 1935 some hard lessons had been learned.\textsuperscript{42}

Oklahoma straddles the 100th meridian, that notable line of aridity through the Great Plains where annual precipitation generally drops below twenty inches, and forest gives way to prairie. This dry climate posed a serious challenge to federal planners. Could, for example, the ideal model of a blue lake tucked into a wooded valley be created without becoming a brown mud hole on the plains? Part of the solution, it turned out, was to select park sites at existing springs where a steady water supply was assured and where at least some trees already grew. With water taken care of, the next step was to transform the prairie into a forest by planting thousands of trees.

The only park not heavily reforested was Robbers Cave, which was developed in an area where the existing forest remained. The other parks, especially those in the west, saw significant reforestation work.\textsuperscript{43} Lake Murray State Park, developed near the town of Ardmore and the Texas border, is a good example of such efforts. Local residents described the proposed park site as
“extremely worthless land unfit for agricultural purposes.” Yet this did not stop park development. A tree nursery was established soon after work began to develop the park, and in 1938 alone more than seventeen thousand trees were transplanted.44

As was the case in Virginia, despite all the hands-on “beautification” of scenery, heavy tree plantings, and construction of lakes, these new landscapes remained “natural.” This was especially true when it involved the creation of a lake. At Robbers Cave State Park, Lake Carlton (Figure 4) opened to the public in 1938 after five years of construction and filling.45 The Latimer County News-Democrat gave the following description of Robbers Cave, which illustrates the essence of the federal model:

Perhaps the biggest attraction of the park is the lake itself which is nestled so conveniently between imposing, scenic hills and huge masses of towering rocks, their simple grandeur mirrored in the waters below. Despite its easy accessibility, the park still retains its atmosphere of untamed nature, with picturesque paths twisting their way through the foliage. For the accommodation of the bathers, a miniature beach was spaced out and covered with sand, where the swimmers may bask or bury themselves.46
Figure 4. Although Carlton Lake had to be constructed as the centerpiece of Robbers Cave State Park in Oklahoma, the park was still described as “untamed nature.” The lake remains a popular destination spot. (Photograph by the author, July 2001)

New Mexico park development

If Virginia was the success story of CCC park development, where the federal model worked smoothly, and Oklahoma was where aridity began imposing limits on the concept, then New Mexico was where the plan skidded to a halt. With only about 423,000 people in 1930 (one-fifth the population of Oklahoma), more than nine million acres of federal lands, and an arid landscape offering few scenic qualities not already included in federal possession, planners there faced several challenges not encountered in states to the east. These challenges included westerners with a distrust of planning and the federal government, racial tensions between Anglos, Hispanics and Native Americans, and a state legislature that was unsupportive of parks. Through this process planners discovered their existing template for park development had to be greatly modified.47

The imprint of federal land ownership was already firmly established in New Mexico when the CCC began. The state was home to Carlsbad Caverns National Park, which encompassed more than forty-nine thousand acres, eight national monuments, and much national forest land. With thirty-three percent of the state already under government control through such means, the idea that more parks were needed must have been a tough sell to some New Mexicans. Generally, with the exception of the places with large populations and growing urban areas such as California, Oregon, Texas, and Colorado, the western states built few CCC parks.48
The difficulties of developing parks in arid New Mexico became apparent almost immediately. To begin, New Mexico was unable to fill all of its CCC camps from its own sparse population. Then, when young men were imported from other states, they were often inexperienced in working in such heat. Because of such conditions, New Mexico camps had unusually high desertion rates. The racial makeup of the state, a mix of Native Americans, Hispanics and Anglos, also created unique conflicts and challenges. According to historian Maria Montoya, New Mexico’s CCC enrollees of Spanish or Mexican descent were considered mentally and physically inferior to the Anglo enrollees from Texas and Oklahoma. Because of these perceptions, Anglos were typically brought in for the more skilled jobs and leadership positions. Much of the problem with Hispanic enrollees was due to language barriers. All of the recruiting literature was printed in English, and only one of thirty county officials responsible for recruiting CCC workers in 1939 spoke Spanish.49

Besides the complex racial dynamics of the camps, another and arguably greater force in limiting CCC-park work in New Mexico was a lack of legislative support. The state legislature there had a history of not supporting recreational activities even before the program began, and several park proposals submitted to the legislature were rebuffed.51 Even after the federal government began supplying the labor and materials for the parks, this pattern continued. The state legislature repeatedly balked at using state money to purchase land or to fund park operations adequately.52

With all of the above hurdles, New Mexico was able to develop only three parks during the 1930s—half the number of Virginia or Oklahoma. CCC crews developed Bottomless Lakes State Park surrounding a chain of seven natural lakes twelve miles east of Roswell, and Hyde Memorial State Park, centered around a ski lodge in the Sangre de Cristo Mountains about eight miles northeast of Santa Fe. Both parks remain very popular today. However, it was the third park that demonstrates how the federal model stumbled in arid New Mexico. This was a park that few people in the state today know ever existed.

Eastern New Mexico State Park was to be an oasis for recreation in the Dust Bowl country between Portales and Clovis along the state’s border with Texas. State Parks commissioner Glenn Macy embraced the goal of democratizing nature when he proposed the park. “If we are going to have a system of state parks we must have several of them on the east side of the state where recreational facilities are few,” he told one federal official.53 Governor A. W. Hockenhull made a similar argument to Robert Fechner, director of the CCC. He requested a camp “out on the plains where the people have no parks or recreational grounds.”54

The problem, of course, was that the ideal park landscape envisioned by Park Service planners, a shady grove of trees surrounding a lake, had little resemblance to the windswept prairie of eastern New Mexico. Yet planners seemed confident that technology could master nature and even change the climate of the plains to meet their needs. And initially it appeared that they had indeed mastered the arid landscape with the construction of the new state park. A ten-acre lake materialized, along with a large bathhouse constructed of adobe in the Southwestern architectural style. The lake bottom sloped gently to a sandy beach next to the bathhouse. Once filled, the lake was stocked with game fish and within two years Roosevelt County boasted of a “good supply of 18-inch fighting bass,” and several thousand crappie.55 Water for the lake came from a well with a gasoline pump that produced a flow of 1,700 gallons per minute. By the summer of 1935 the pump had been working well and the lake was already being used by hundreds of swimmers.56

To create the required forest cover, CCC workers planted twelve hundred trees during the winter of 1934-35. Almost all were reported thriving during the following summer. All were native to New Mexico, but many were new to Roosevelt County. They included American elm,
cottonwood, native locust, cedar, pine, juniper, pinon and blue spruce. The young trees were irrigated by a system of canals, which were reinforced by flagstone, and designed to take on a “natural appearance” within a few years. During the summer of 1935 attendance grew each weekend to a peak of one thousand visitors on one day in August. Lifeguards from the CCC camp watched over swimmers, who were charged fifteen cents a day.

The park ultimately failed, however, because of a combination of bureaucratic and climatic problems and today is abandoned. The exact cause of this park’s death is difficult to determine with certainty, partly because there are no records of its existence at the New Mexico Division of State Parks. A search of local histories in the Portales library turned up only one passing mention in Works Progress Administration papers. In the brief mentions of the park in other publications, its failure has been blamed on a porous lake bottom. Whereas a porous bottom may well have added to the problems at the swimming lake, as well as the inevitable loss to evaporation, newspaper accounts and other sources suggest a more likely human cause. The park failed because of a lack of support by the state legislature.

Compared to artificial lakes constructed elsewhere by damming streams, the Eastern New Mexico lake required regular additions of water from wells. Long-term maintenance and fuel for the pump were expensive and not provided by state government. So long as the CCC camp remained, the park was successful. Workers kept the pump going and made sure the irrigation system was supplying water to the new trees. Once the camp disbanded, however, the responsibility of maintaining the park was left to the communities of Portales and Clovis, which could not afford the additional expenses. The park limped along without adequate support until 1941, when ironically, too much water doomed the project. A forty-one-inch rain, almost three times the annual average, caved in the roof of the adobe bathhouse and severely eroded the walls (Figure 5). This structure was never repaired.

The New Mexico experience offers important insight into the limits of the Park Service plan to democratize nature. With high-plains landscapes devoid of trees and scenic vistas, and mountain sites more suited to skiing than swimming, the seemingly reliable CCC model had practically no chance of working in New Mexico. Add to this the lack of statewide support for recreational development and it is a wonder that any parks were constructed at all. Despite the early failures and lack of support for parks, the federal model still helped to shape the New Mexico landscape in the decades that followed. State officials continued to slowly build a system of parks and followed the model of using a water feature as the central element, especially taking advantage of existing large reservoirs.

**Effectiveness of the program**

The nationwide development of state parks during the New Deal clearly changed a significant portion of the American landscape. These recreational systems continue to provide enjoyment for millions of people annually. For many families, who live a great distance from national parks or other public lands, their entire relationship with nature may have formed during weekend trips to a nearby state park. Going to the lake has become a part of American tradition.

The birth of parks dedicated to recreation also represented an important shift in the role of the federal government. Before the New Deal, the mission of the Park Service was to preserve only the most majestic scenery, which more often than not, was in the western states. In contrast, the CCC program brought nature to the people, and by doing so, democratized this process. Federal planners were faithful to the goal of putting entire states within reach of a park, even when this required heavily modifying the landscape—another major departure for the Park Service.

The decision to construct dams within parks met with early resistance from federal planners who still chafed at the negative public opinion caused by the dam in Yosemite. However,
this opposition faded as the model of a state recreation park was better defined. Gradually it was seen as appropriate to modify the landscape in these lesser parks if natural lakes were not at hand, and landscape architects turned their attention toward designing dams that looked more natural.

As the park development model moved into the western states, aridity and cultural changes required it to become even more flexible. Oklahoma parks are the best example of this. Park structures all followed the rustic style, but were not blindly projected onto the landscape. The designs mirrored regional cultures. In the four western parks, buildings were constructed mostly of rock and emulated Southwestern culture. In the wooded eastern region, the buildings were mostly log, reflecting the cabins built by early settlers in the area.

The adaptability of the model was tested most severely in New Mexico. There, planners were unable to construct “ideal” nature consisting of a wooded lake. It was technically possible to do so, of course, as was demonstrated for a few years at the park in the eastern plains, but the federal model ultimately failed because it was a bad fit culturally in the arid West. New Mexico lawmakers probably felt there was already too much public land, or at the very least, did not see the need for additional lands being set aside for recreation.

Quite simply, the model that worked so well in Virginia, which had very little public lands, was not needed in the rural, dry, and public-lands-rich West. Western states with low populations, such as New Mexico, Nevada, Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana, used the CCC crews
effectively to do forest work and complete projects in existing national parks. But the concept of additional organized recreation areas went against the grain of western individualism, and was sometimes even considered a bit of a joke.

Each of the case-study states continued to build impressive systems of parks after the 1930s, often taking advantage of reservoirs constructed for irrigation, flood control or power generation. Future parks were not as elegant as CCC parks, of course, because states no longer had the large labor forces needed to construct the intricate rockwork. Yet the idea of a park centered on an artificial lake with cabins and camping areas remained the dominant model.

NOTES
3 Ethan Carr, Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 257.
Democratizing Nature Through State Park Development


10 Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*.


13 Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service*.


15 Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*.


23 Ibid., 7.

24 Carr, *Wilderness by Design: Landscape Architecture and the National Park Service*.

25 Wirth, *Parks, Politics, and the People*.


33 “Hungry Mother Park Dedication Marks Opening of State System,” *Smyth County News*, June 18, 1936.


42 Herbert Maier, “Recreational Opportunities in the Southwest” (paper presented at the First Annual Oklahoma Planning Conference, Oklahoma City, 1938).


49 Richardson, “The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Origins of the New Mexico State Park System.”


52 Richardson, “The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Origins of the New Mexico State Park System.”


54 A.W. Hockenhull, “Governor A. W. Hockenhull to Robert Fechner,” in *Governor A. W. Hockenhull Papers* (Santa Fe: New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, 1934).


56 “Roosevelt Park Looks Like Oasis As 12,000 Trees Start Growth And Lake is Opened to Swimmers,” *Portales Valley News*, June 20, 1935.

57 Ibid.; Young, *The State Parks of New Mexico*.


59 David Kammer, *The Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico* (Santa Fe: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 1994); Young, *The State Parks of New Mexico*.

60 “Dept. of Interior Holds Up New Wells at Roosevelt Park,” *Portales Valley News*, June 20,
1935.
62 Young, *The State Parks of New Mexico*.

The World at Their Fingertips provides a detailed and thorough study of the peculiar flourishing of two-sheet double-hemisphere maps in British society during the eighteenth century. Bringing his vast expertise as curator of maps at the British Library to bear, Armitage explores the production and consumption of this unique cartographic style. Accompanying his extensive research are 150 color plates and maps, which serve to both support the historical analysis and dazzle the reader independent of the argument.

During the long eighteenth century, bracketed in this work by the years 1680 and 1807, a number of British publishers financed and printed double-hemisphere world maps set on conjoined sheets. Although maps of this size—more commonly identified as elephant folio—had antecedents in France, Germany, and The Netherlands, Armitage argues that two-sheet double-hemisphere maps evolved into a uniquely British style of map production peculiar to its period and place. These publishers, it is argued, identified a burgeoning market for the conspicuous consumption of such elaborate maps and produced their maps specifically for an affluent, socially rising class of consumers who sought to engage Enlightenment ideals but were ultimately indiscriminate of scientific accuracy.

The authors note that elephant folio map prints originated on the Continent with the Atlas Nouveau and the work of Alexis-Hubert Jaillot, but were later introduced to England by William Berry. It was Herman Moll, John Senex, and Charles Price, among others, who popularized the style in England. Especially notable is the importance of émigré engravers and printers who moved to Britain following religious upheaval on the Continent. While early examples of this style of map were scientifically accurate, plates were copied for so long that these maps lost their scientific credentials and transformed into purely decorative prints, status symbols for a curious public unable to discern the inaccuracies of these early plates some fifty years on. This is a story, as Armitage quips, of map production at a time when “money became more important than scientific and geographic accuracy” (p. 235). Curiously, Armitage also finds that while the style flourished in Britain for over a century, no long-term counterpart may be identified in Europe.

Despite Armitage’s conclusive argument, this work represents the first attempt to consider examples of this style of map as a cohesive group. Their cohesion appears somewhat naturally, however, as many of the examples are from the British Library’s collection. Armitage explains the novelty of his grouping as owing to examples being previously obscured by their inclusion within general atlases, by the diversity of examples between different publishers, and by the rarity of extant examples of the style. By tracing the evolution of the cartographic style alongside the rise of the consumer class that would create the market for these maps, Armitage effectively shows how the decorative nature of two-sheet double-hemisphere maps is a key aspect of their unique history and explains their contemporary scarcity. The cohesion is also supported through the inclusion of a fully illustrated cartobibliography of twenty-four maps.
A notable strength of the work is its treatment of the map trade in eighteenth-century Britain. This aspect of the work most clearly shows the impact of Armitage’s collaborator, Ashley Baynton-Williams, and echoes findings from the previously published *British Map Engravers* (Rare Book Society, 2011). By exploring map production as a reaction to market influences, this work rightly provokes the reader to consider the commercial relationships a newly affluent class fostered with publishers. The demographic and economic growth that surrounded the port of London following the monarchy’s restoration fed a market for world maps that illustrated Britain’s expanding commercial and imperial reach. No less, it was this class’s high demand for decorative evidence of their enlightened status, but low appreciation for scientific accuracy, which drove the trade in two-sheet double-hemisphere maps. The authors imply it was this unique relationship that developed between British map dealers and the consumer class that allowed this unique map style to find a niche home in Britain, but not in Europe. The contributions here to ongoing discussions of materiality and Enlightenment should be self-evident.

Armitage’s study raises a number of provocative questions about map production and consumption in eighteenth-century Britain. He has identified a fascinating collection, thereby opening avenues of inquiry that are much deserving of further study. This work likely exhausts much of the interest in British two-sheet double-hemisphere maps, but the questions it raises about materiality and scientific knowledge in the Enlightenment, about the commercialization and popularization of cartography during this period, and about nationalized styles of map production may yet bear more fruit. For those interested in eighteenth-century British mapping, the lavish images alone are worth closer investigation.

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★★★★


Over a century ago the French entomologist Jean-Henri Fabre could lament that history “celebrates the battlefields whereon we meet our death, [but] it scorns to speak of the ploughed fields whereby we thrive; it knows the names of the kings’ bastards, [but] it cannot tell us the origin of wheat” (*The Life of the Caterpillar*; Doss, Mead and Company, Inc., 1916). Nowadays, however, humanistic food scholarship is so pervasive that one may legitimately worry about an imminent dearth of alternative food movements, pastoralist countercultures, terroir traditions and heirloom varieties left to investigate.

One remaining opportunity for meaningful research, Durham University geographer Peter Atkins notes in the preface to *Animal Cities: Beastly Urban Histories*, is the past significance and eventual disappearance of urban livestock and especially the “extraordinary animal-intense districts” of large nineteenth century European and North American cities (p. 105). Building on a session convened at the 2006 European Urban History Association meeting, this collection of essays points the way forward by discussing topics such as urban animals numbers and types, the various nuisances and health problems they caused, the wide range of industries they sustained, and the reasons underlying their gradual removal from locations such as Paris, Edinburgh, Perth and Melbourne. (The book also contains two chapters on the London zoo and dog walking in Victorian and Edwardian England that tread on more familiar intellectual grounds.)

Over forty percent of the book was penned by Atkins whose nearly four decades of scholarship on the topic can be traced back to his doctoral dissertation on the historical geography
of the London milk trade. Using once again the British metropolis as his primary case study, he discusses problems ranging from the safety issues caused by large cattle, sheep and poultry drives in urban streets to zoonotic diseases. Apart from food, clothing and transportation, he reminds us, urban livestock provided a wide range of non-edible inputs to a cluster of dirty and smelly industries that included soap, glue, candle, fertilizer, comb, saddle, glove, and industrial belt makers. Urban (mostly horse) manure was also once the primary fertilizer used in peri-urban market gardens, fields, and pastures, which in turn provided much of the sustenance of nearby humans and livestock. While Atkins has previously written on some of these issues, his contribution incorporates much recent scholarship and additional thoughts and insights.

One of the most commendable aspects of Animal Cities is its minimal use of academic jargon. Unfortunately, its hefty price will keep it out of the hands of the increasingly large lay audience with a growing appetite for food history. Among academics, it will appeal primarily to urban and environmental historians, historical geographers, and the more down-to-earth “animal geographies” theorists. Proponents of urban agriculture as a community development strategy would especially benefit from familiarizing themselves with the book’s content, for although the authors are supportive of this approach, their evidence is not. For instance, they remind us that once ubiquitous chicken coops eventually disappeared from urban backyard not only because of public health (from salmonella to zoonotic diseases) and nuisance (from smell to their propensity to attract rats) concerns, but also because the advent of more productive agribusiness and new work and leisure opportunities for urban dwellers meant that most people were no longer willing to spend a portion of their time producing food at a loss. Indeed, several North American cities already struggle with hundreds of abandoned urban chickens because their previous hipster owners were both overwhelmed by the amount of care they required and disappointed by the fact that they only lay eggs for two years (Sarah Boesveld, “Hipster farmers abandoning urban chickens because they’re too much work,” National Post, 9 July 2013).

Also relevant for SPIN (Small Plot Intensive) enthusiasts is that the once greater productivity of peri-urban food production systems over their rural counterparts owed much not only to more intensive production practices (greenhouses, cloches, wind-breaking walls, large and specialized labor pool), but paradoxically to the much larger volumes of manure available in cities than in the countryside—a fact explained by the large volumes of animal feed imported from distant locations. Yet even before the end of the nineteenth century, the advent of superior fertilizers such as Peruvian guano and Chilean nitrates, more desirable employment opportunities for urban agricultural laborers, and new transportation (steamship and railroad) and preservation (refrigeration) technologies had essentially eradicated the economic foundations of urban SPIN. In the end, proximity to consumers and ever more abundant and cheaper horse manure (which in time became an unmitigated nuisance) simply could not overcome natural advantages and economies of scale in more distant locations. If anything, things are now probably worse in this respect than they have ever been.

Unfortunately, the contributors to Animal Cities only begrudgingly draw what would seem unavoidable conclusions as to the importance of economic forces (as distinct from public health considerations) in removing livestock from urban environments. For instance, after observing that in many parts of the world today “fresh animal food production in urban settings is not only tolerated but actively encouraged,” Atkins goes out of his way to point out that he “is not trying here to claim that there are strong parallels between British Victorian cities and the Third World today. But the mismatch of ‘urban’ and ‘agriculture’ in modernity came to be thought of as so strong that it is important to remind ourselves that alternative urbanisms are possible, where animal keeping is not outlawed” (p. 37).
And yet, urban livestock disappeared in every urban agglomeration where significant economic development took place. There was in the end nothing fundamentally peculiar or unique about the cases discussed in this book and similar chapters could have been written about other large western cities in the nineteenth century and more recent developments in East Asia. True, a new generation of enthusiastic animal keepers and some wealthy consumers are currently doing their best to reverse the tide of urban development, but the evidence provided in this book suggests rather unequivocally that the current urban agriculture craze will in the end be as socially significant as the hippie communes of a few decades ago. That the authors do not dare derive some politically incorrect conclusions from their evidence, however, does not in the end undermine the quality of their contributions.

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The environmental history of modern Mexico is one of long continuities punctuated by moments of deep structural change, writes Christopher Boyer, assistant professor of history at the University of Illinois at Chicago. For many years, it has been the colonial period which dominated environmental history of Mexico, emphasizing themes of degradation and decline associated with conquest. According to Boyer, far less attention has been paid to the “more recent and ambiguous political ecology of modernity,” a periodization which complicates traditional declension narratives (p. 3). In this edited volume, Boyer offers a critical, cyclical framework for understanding environmental change in modern Mexico which moves away from such traditional teleologies.

Human activity in the natural world is closely linked the vagaries of political organization. In modern Mexico, the centralization of power has clearly correlated to regimes of intensive, capital-driven and often state-sanctioned expropriation and exploitation which strain the productive capacities of the natural environment. On the other hand, when sources of social, political, and economic power are more widely dispersed, environmental change has been more extensive, decentralized, and responsive to local pressures. Boyer identifies the colonial Bourbon Reforms, the late nineteenth-century technocratic regime of Porfirio Díaz, and the twentieth-century Mexican Miracle with modes of intensive-centralized political ecology, while the interstitial periods of early independence, the 1910 Mexican Revolution, and our contemporary moment of “savage” neoliberalism represent periods of extensive-decentralized activity. Boyer’s introduction seeks to establish this cyclical pattern of expanding and contracting central authority as an effective model for environmental understanding change in modern Mexico.

Following this introduction and a pair of surveys devoted to the history of soils and water management systems in Mexico, A Land Between Waters is organized as a roughly chronological series of case studies between the late eighteenth century and the 1990s. The powerful link between the international market and primary product extraction, a problem tied intimately to postcolonial concerns, is a recurring theme. These chapters range widely in methodological and conceptual approach, from such mainstay topics as land tenure and sugar cultivation to the epistemological foundations of botanical gardens. Some shed light on such less-studied supply chains as turpentine and railroad tie extraction from the forests of Tlaxcala, commercial pearl
cultivation in the Gulf of California, or the short reign of “King Henequen” in the Yucatan as the now-surpassed binding material sine qua non of the growing US agro-industrial complex. Others bring new archival research into conversation with longstanding assumptions, such as Alejandro Tortolero Villaseñor’s study of sugar growth in Morelos. Challenging the consensus that growers were limited by the availability of land, Tortolero shows that it was only the scarcity of water which limited sugar production. He then places this scarcity of water, exacerbated by the sugar industry, within the wider agrarian struggles leading to the 1910 Mexican Revolution.

Two authors in particular offer thoroughly original understandings of the human relationship with the natural world which deserve special merit: Emily Wakild, a history professor at Wake Forest University, and Myrna I. Santiago, a professor of history at St. Mary’s College of California. Wakild’s analysis of the function and creation of national parks bring into high relief the tension between human activity and the North American notion of preservation, which precludes such activity. By reminding us that “[c]onservation and development are cut from the same cloth,” the author encourages a rethinking of the practice of setting aside land, and the terms upon which we describe such activity (p. 195). Anglo-American approaches have struggled to understand the urban hilltop complex of Chapultepec as a preserve, as it promiscuously mixes preservation of native flora and fauna with a highly curated botanical garden, food and crafts vendors, cultural and municipal buildings, cemeteries, and a theme park, among other uses. In this sense, Wakild sees in Chapultepec an ongoing conversation about the multiple, overlapping meanings and uses of space.

Myrna I. Santiago reintroduces the concept of class to the question of the human relationship to the environment, bringing a fresh approach to the topic of oil production in Veracruz. In her analysis, class reveals that “nature” is far more relational than many scholars have understood. While oil magnates experienced the clear-cut coastal jungle as a picturesque and tamed site of recreation—featuring plumbing, ice, running water, and ventilation—Mexican workers experienced a landscape of heat, disease and catastrophic danger. In between these two groups, North American engineers and managers occupied a safe but modestly-appointed space within tropical Mexico, and preferred to spend their leisure time in shaded brothels and bars. What is interesting, notes Santiago, is that Mexican workers rarely voiced environmental concerns, but instead complained of health and safety dangers. According to the author, the discourse of the Mexican Revolution and later oil nationalization in 1934 centered on labor issues because Mexican workers, North American engineers, and cosmopolitan magnates experienced the natural environment differently in their daily lives. That is, complaints about work conditions were complaints about both the danger to the self as well as the dangerous state of the environment.

Anáhuac, the pre-Columbian toponym for the central valley of Mexico, means “land between the waters,” a name applied to the Aztec imperial capital built among the lakes. And as Boyer notes, water has loomed large as a framing device in the historiography of Mexico, and there exists a longstanding tradition of careful water management across Mexico. In the various canals, ditches, dikes, dams, and reservoirs that cover the Mexican landscape, the human relationship with water has left a wealth of traces both in the earth and within the voluminous Mexican archives. The Archivo Historico del Agua (AHA) in particular has served since 1994 as the source of a torrent of water-related scholarship in Mexico, most notably the dozens of volumes which comprise the Biblioteca del Agua (Water Library) series edited by Colegio de Mexico history professor Luis Aboites Aguilar. The inclusion in this volume of Aboites, rarely published in English, represents a welcome and perhaps overdue step in broadening the conversation over the human relationship with the environment across national academies.

Indeed, A Land Between Waters is most compelling in its explicit attempt to cross divides. Two chapters feature the works of authors never before published in English, while nearly half
of the authors live and work in Mexico. This is indicative of a wider concern, especially prevalent in environmental history, that old national frameworks cannot effectively assess the global scales across which change occurs. A Land Between Waters represents the best of this impulse, offering a model for working across barriers of region, language, methodology, and conceptual focus rather than within them.

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Richard Hakluyt should hold a special place in the imaginations of North American historical geographers as the original visionary of everything we have come to study. Hakluyt (1552-1616) was the essential Elizabethan collector and publisher of travel narratives promoting English settlement in the New World and English imperialist ambitions worldwide. His major publications, including Divers Voyages Touching the Discovery of America, and the Ilands Adjacent unto the Same (1582) and The Principal Navigations, Voyages, Traffiques and Discoveries of the English Nation . . . (1589 and 1598-1600) stand as testaments to a life devoted to a single monumental theme, the aggrandizement of the English nation through discovery, expansion, and trade. An inveterate and careful researcher who believed that knowledge would be the key to the geopolitical rivalries to come, Hakluyt learned languages, pursued manuscripts, and presented to his readership several thousand first-hand accounts of travel and adventure chosen to provide clues to the challenges of expansion.

It is one of his smaller, unpublished narratives, however, that might qualify as the founding document of our discipline. Hakluyt’s Discourse on Western Planting (1584), written for a readership of one (his queen), provided a complete rationale for the English settlement of North America and described a future that seems eerily prescient when matched with the historical geographies that soon began to unfold. The Discourse might be seen as resting against the far left bookend of an endless shelf of scholarship that holds in chronological order the rich literature interpreting the historical geographies that indeed unfolded.

The role of Richard Hakluyt in the shaping of English territorial and commercial expansions has long engaged a tradition of scholarship from a wide range of disciplines. Current trends in this scholarship are amply covered in Richard Hakluyt and Travel Writing in Early Modern Europe, a collection of 24 essays chosen by the editors “to place Hakluyt’s work in context, to trace the humanist culture out of which his project emerged, to advance the study of his literary and historical resources, and to assess his wide and lasting impact” (p. 2). The essays are organized into five sections: Hakluyt in Context; Early Modern Travel Collections; Editorial Practices; Allegiances and Ideologies: Politics, Religion, Nation; and Hakluyt: Rhetoric and Writing. The volume also includes a Coda essay on the history of the Hakluyt Society, founded in 1846.

Fourteen of the essays were written by English or literature scholars, five by historians, and none by geographers, so it is doubtful that the volume will interest geographers beyond those with a special interest in Hakluyt scholarship. Nevertheless, the essays taken together provide deep insight into the political, economic, and intellectual contexts in which Hakluyt worked. As the European engagement with the larger world grew more global and more intense, Hakluyt was one of many individuals engaged in illuminating and manipulating that engagement. The essays
place him firmly in an early modern humanist tradition of writers and publishers who presented travelers’ narratives (supported by maps and illustrations) as essential sources of geographical information and made travel writing an integral part of the late Renaissance. In particular, this tradition included Venetian Giovanni Ramusio, Frenchman Pierre Bergeron, the de Bry family of Frankfurt, and Hakluyt’s literary heir, Samuel Purchas.

The essays also link Hakluyt with the political and economic interests in England during his lifetime. He was closely associated with powerful political patrons like Philip Sidney, Admiral Charles Howard, and secretaries of state Francis Walsingham and Robert Cecil. He wrote the Discourse on Western Planting at Walters Ralegh’s request to support his ambitions in Virginia. Hakluyt was a stockholder in the Virginia Company. His publications were often politically sensitive, and he made a number of editorial choices to support the London mercantile community, especially those concerns interested long-distance trade to new markets.

Geographers might find several of the essays to be of particular interest, including Anthony Payne’s insight into the geographical milieu in which Hakluyt worked in “Hakluyt’s London: Discovery and Overseas Trade”; Joan-Pau Rubies’ discussion of the growing importance of travel writing in early modern Europe in “From the ‘History of Travayle’ to the History of Travel Collections: The Rise of an Early Modern Genre”; Peter C. Mancall’s commentary on the use of geographical imagery to support travel narratives and to inform in “Richard Hakluyt and the Visual World of Early Modern Travel Narratives”; and Diego Pirillo’s discussion of the early modern debate over geopolitically contested rights to ocean territories in “Balance of Power and Freedom of the Seas: Richard Hakluyt and Alberico Gentili.”

Scott W. Anderson
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Giancarlo Casale’s The Ottoman Age of Exploration is an attempt to rewrite the history of the classical age of the Ottoman Empire beyond its borders. The main argument of the book is that the Ottoman Empire was directly involved in the struggle of the European Age of Exploration in the sixteenth century. Throughout the seven chapters, Casale emphasizes the agency of the Ottoman Empire in the early modern world in the context of “global politics” by illustrating the economic, religious, and diplomatic activities of the Ottomans in the Indian Ocean. Casale argues that in the classical age of the Empire, the Ottomans were not only in a struggle to conquer new lands but also were attempting to control the spice trade between the East and the West. Casale sees the trading world of the Indian Ocean as a battleground for the clash between Ottoman and Portuguese imperial ideologies claiming universal sovereignty.

Casale states that “the Ottoman Age of Exploration” started with the conquest of the territories of the Mamluk Empire in 1516. The conquest of Egypt provided a strategic advantage to the Ottomans against the Portuguese, and also gave Ottoman merchants the opportunity to establish their commercial ties with the region. Casale emphasizes how Ottoman geographical works such as Piri Reis’s world map of 1513 and naval commanders’ reports such as Selman Reis’s report (which claimed “whoever controlled Yemen would be master of the lands of India”) helped Selim I, or “Selim the Navigator” as Casale calls him, his successors, grand viziers such as Ibrahim Pasha, and governors such as Hadim Suleiman Pasha to expand their horizons (p. 45).

During Ibrahim Pasha’s vizierate, the Ottomans succeeded in establishing diplomatic
ties with Muslim powers across the Indian Ocean. Hadim Suleiman Pasha, successor of Ibrahim Pasha, continued to gather intelligence about the political, economic, and military atmosphere of the Indian Ocean. Moreover, Casale draws attention to Hadim Suleiman Pasha’s expedition to India in 1538 that “allowed the Ottomans to build naval bases and custom houses in Aden and Mocha, giving them a permanent foothold in the Arabian Sea” (p. 64). Casale points out that the expedition of 1538 marked the beginning of open warfare between the Ottomans and Portuguese, and fostered diplomacy between the two empires. Hadim Suleiman Pasha strengthened the Ottoman gains with his appointees from Egypt to Hijaz. Moreover, Casale focuses on the activities of the Ottoman frontiersmen such as Sefer Reis and Ozdemir Pasha, which shaped the Ottoman naval strategy and deepened the political and economic ties between the Ottoman Empire and the Indian Ocean.

Casale notes that Sokullu Mehmed Pasha, the mastermind of the Ottoman Empire’s push into the Indian Ocean, took Seydi Ali Reis’s *Mir’at’ül-Menalik* (Mirror of Countries) as a reference to build his grand strategy linked to “the concept of a universal Ottoman sultanate as a collective pan-Islamic ideology” (p. 129). According to Casale, as a result of these activities in the region, Ottoman political ideology shifted from a land-based empire to a “sovereign of the seas,” and also that Ottoman statesmen began to formulate policies to protect not only their political and economic interests but also Muslims throughout the Indian Ocean. For instance, besides being a partner in the spice trade with the empire, Aceh had Muslim clerics trained in Ottoman religious institutions. These clerics played a significant role not only in the expansion of *ummah*, the imagined community of Muslims, but also Ebu’s Suud’s caliphal doctrine in the Ottoman classical age. Casale calls the Ottoman imperial dominion in the Indian Ocean a “soft empire” since the main Ottoman interest in the region was not related to territorial expansion but instead to trade, communication, and religious ideology (p. 150).

Casale’s book is an important contribution to early modern Ottoman history in answering the question, “Did the Ottomans participate in the Age of Exploration?” Casale makes extensive use of Ottoman primary sources, mostly *Mühimme Defterleri* (Registers of Important Affairs), and also sixteenth-century Ottoman cosmographies, maps, and travel narratives. Casale notes that until the sixteenth century, the Ottomans’ knowledge of the world was based mostly on European sources that included portolan charts, world maps, and Ptolemaic geographies. As Casale states, Piri Reis’s famous world map of 1513, which was presented to Sultan Selim in Cairo in 1517, was a great contribution to the Ottoman intellectual world and had a significant impact on Ottoman naval strategies. The selection of portolan charts, maps, engravings, and miniatures from various archives makes this book valuable and illustrates the dissemination of ideas and intellectual works in the sixteenth century. Furthermore, Casale uses printed Portuguese sources including travel accounts and chronicles to break the silence of contemporary Ottoman chronicles about the Indian Ocean.

Casale’s book sheds light on the history of the Ottoman Empire from an international perspective and illustrates that the Ottomans were one of the major actors of European overseas expansion in the sixteenth century. From Ibrahim Pasha’s ambitious goal of establishing Ottoman presence in the Indian Ocean to Hadim Suleiman Pasha’s efforts to gather intelligence about the region and Sokullu Mehmed Pasha’s project to join the Mediterranean and Red seas, in each chapter Casale focuses on the key figures of the sixteenth-century “Ottoman Age of Exploration” through comparative perspective.

Ufuk Adak
University of Cincinnati

★★★★

Urban Rivers is one of the latest additions to the History of Urban Environment series, which examines the historical impact of urbanization. The work is composed of a collection of selected essays from a 2009 conference in (appropriately enough) Trois-Rivières, Quebec by environmental historians and historical geographers. The scope is rather broad, examining “both the role of rivers in the process of urbanization and the impact of urbanization on rivers” in Europe and North America from the eighteenth century to the present (p. 3). This expansive focus is both a strength and weakness of the work, allowing for a broad discussion of theory and historiography while simultaneously making it difficult for the reader to grasp the intricacies associated with individual locations. Nonetheless, this approach also means that the work offers something to specialists and general audiences alike.

Twelve chapters comprise the work, which is divided unevenly into three topical sections. The first topic, entitled “Industrialization and Riverine Transformation,” analyzes how city population growth created conflicts over urban river usage. This is followed by the largest section, “Urbanization and the Function of Rivers,” where five chapters are directed toward analyzing how urbanization affected the reordering of the role and place of rivers within cities. “Territorialities of Water Management,” the final topic, broadens the focus and “illustrates political problems resulting from the imposition of a social order on the nature of rivers” (p. 11). The essential unifying theme is that “the industrial and urban revolutions of the Western world changed how urban societies used rivers,” with the contributors addressing this idea with various approaches (p. 237). Related to this argument is the idea that these changes engendered social conflict, which often spread beyond urban centers into their hinterlands.

Like most compilations, however, this work suffers from a lack of focus at times. While the broad attention of rivers in an urban setting in North America and Europe provides a general theme, the contributions in the book vary considerably. This difficulty is often exacerbated by the fact that the scholars often need to offer minute geographic details in order to make their arguments. The end result is that as soon as the reader becomes familiar with the geography of a specific locale, they have to reacclimatize to a new location with the next chapter. This feature is most apparent in the two chapters which focus on Montreal by Michèle Dagenais and Jean-Claude Robert. Dagenais examines the city’s relationship with the Rivière des Prairies while Robert looks at the St. Lawrence River. At times, however, it appears as though the two scholars are discussing two entirely different cities, yet they both reach similar conclusions. Dageneis remarks, “In this way, even harnessed and imprisoned by infrastructure, the river [Rivière des Prairies] helped reconfigure Montreal’s territory” while Robert argues that “For Montreal, the St. Lawrence very quickly determined the city’s functions and oriented its layout” (pp. 92, 158). To be fair, their analysis is not strictly coterminous, as Dageneis concentrates primarily on the early twentieth century while Robert’s analysis stretches back considerably farther.

The intricacies surrounding these scholars’ arguments will undoubtedly make the work more beneficial to specialists treating a specific river or city. Nevertheless, Urban Rivers has a lot to offer a broad academic audience as well. The theoretical and historiographic topics are unquestionably the highlight of the book. The opening chapter by Chloé Deligne sets the trend, demonstrating how “water defined a sort of silent territory with no administrative status” (p. 25). Uwe Lübken advances another interesting argument when he contends that in terms of concept and practice, modern societies have separated rivers from their floodplains, resulting in disastrous floods. Another work which stands out is Craig E. Colten’s contribution on urban
river basins in the United States. In his introduction, he touches on several important works and approaches such as Richard White’s “organic machine,” Joel Tarr’s notion of the “ultimate sink,” and engineer Abel Wolman’s idea of “urban metabolism” (p. 202). The final chapter by Shannon Stunden Bower further emphasizes the theoretical strength of the work, demonstrating how in Manitoba “human activity and the laws of nature remain in discord” as different governmental and administrative levels have failed to harmonize social and environmental situations (p. 236). The strong theoretical underpinning of these chapters should make it easy for other scholars to apply these ideas to their research.

In short, Urban Rivers is an important contribution to the History of the Urban Environment series, demonstrating the multiple ways in which rivers, river basins, and flood plains have affected, and been affected by, urbanization and urban sprawl.

Robert Tiegs

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As its title promises, Troubled Commemoration examines the problems faced by the Civil War Centennial Commission (CWCC) to promote a better understanding of this nation’s bloodiest war. In his well-researched, written, and argued book, Cook shows how the CWCC was overshadowed—and in many cases upstaged—by the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Most important of all, the Commission never successfully addressed the centrality of slavery to the Civil War or the contributions of African Americans to the Union cause. The CWCC’s problems with the race issue were glaring amid the tumultuous events of what C. Vann Woodward has called the country’s “Second Reconstruction.”

The Commission began as an effort by conservative members—some of them avowed segregationists—to promote the centennial as a celebratory, patriotic, and commercial venture. Cook’s book adds an important dimension to the work of David Blight and others who have argued that sectional conciliation between North and South was made possible by erasing slavery from the larger Civil War narrative. Among CWCC members, even the northerner Ulysses S. Grant, III, whose grandfather helped defeat the South and free the slaves, was uninterested in highlighting the legacy of emancipation. The CWCC also faced challenges overcoming its decentralized administrative structure. Although the Commission was sanctioned by Dwight D. Eisenhower and given federal money, most of its funding came from the states, which set up their own commissions. And though the centennial was a national event, the focus of the CWCC’s efforts would fall on the troubled South, where most of the battles of the Civil War—not to mention the civil rights movement—were fought.

The turning point for the CWCC came in April 1961 when a hotel in Charleston, South Carolina refused to accommodate a black female commissioner from New Jersey, who was planning to attend the centennial of the firing on Ft. Sumter. An uneasy compromise was reached when the CWCC decided to meet at a nearby military base, which was not subject to South Carolina’s Jim Crow laws. The compromise, brokered by historian, CWCC member, and southern liberal Bell Wiley and the Kennedy administration, made clear the need for more progressive leaders within the Commission.
The new leadership of the CWCC included academics such as James I. “Bud” Robertson and Allan Nevins. With Robertson and Nevins at the helm, the CWCC took on a more serious and scholarly albeit subdued tone. Robertson shunned such things as battle reenactments. And Nevins would assume an important role in commissioning the superior scholarship that came out of the centennial, such as the Jefferson Davis and Ulysses S. Grant papers projects. Nevins also oversaw a series of scholarly monographs on the war.

The new CWCC leadership, however, was only moderately successful in maintaining the public’s interest in the centennial. As the civil rights issue heated up, Americans’ concern with the centennial cooled. For example, few people remember George Wallace’s visit to the commemoration at Gettysburg in July 1963, but far more Americans recall Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, which he gave later in August.

Cook does an excellent job of placing the activities of the CWCC in the larger context of the civil rights movement. The author rarely steps wrong until the last chapter, which examines historical literature and film from the commemoration period. This chapter on pop culture is insightful but feels like it belongs in a different book. Rather than have read about Civil War pop culture, I would have preferred to have learned more about how the various states involved in the centennial, especially Virginia, benefited, or did not benefit, from state tourism and other Civil War-based commercialization. Indeed, historians could do more work on examining the centennial at the state level. On the whole, however, as an overview of the history of the Civil War centennial, Cook’s book will be difficult to surpass.

Colin Woodward

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The historical relationship between European geographers and the politics of the Third Reich is a messy business. Sarah K. Danielsson’s study of the Swedish geographer Sven Hedin recognizes this, and the sometimes confrontational tone of her book reflects (accurately, in my view) a brand of historiography plagued by academic whitewashing, claims of professional self-preservation, and (too often) willful ignorance. While long-dead ethnocentric proponents of geopolitical determinism and Lebensraum (think: Friedrich Ratzel, Rudolf Kjellén, and Karl Haushofer) took the initial brunt of history’s judgment regarding the aggressive territorial expansion of Nazi foreign policy, only in the past thirty years or so has a small group of geographers and historians (led, in Germany, by Mechtild Rössler and Ute Wardenga, among others) begun to critically engage with the legacy of geographers who outlived the Second World War and whose professional careers survived Allied denazification efforts. Danielsson attempts to include Sven Hedin in this discussion, not simply as one more racist geographer but as an ideologue so radically avant-garde in his obsession with preserving the space of the Nordic “race” that he played a prominent role in helping establish the geographical imagination of the Nazis.

Danielsson splits the bulk of her text into two parts, with each part evenly divided into four chapters. The first four chapters outline Hedin’s rise to prominence and international recognition, his transformation from Swedish nationalist to pan-Germanist, his support of Germany in the First World War, and his support for genocidal solutions to perceived spatial problems—all of which, argues Danielsson, led him to embrace National-Socialism. It is within this section that
the reader learns of Hedin’s incredible efforts to mythologize his expeditions throughout the “Far East.” According to Danielsson, “Hedin’s popularity came through his ability to portray himself as the hero of the tale, placing his own work in the central role as purveyor of uncivilized knowledge made civilized . . .” (p. 36). After establishing himself as one of the world’s greatest explorers, the reader learns how Hedin used his reputation to begin intervening in foreign affairs and gain political influence. Danielsson lays out this shift well, showing her reader the ideological continuity between the self-centered geographer who robbed graves on his expeditions throughout Asia in the name of science and progress (pp. 16-17), the self-proclaimed “independent observer” who published letters he had stolen from the bodies of dead Russian soldiers in an effort to show their cultural and racial inferiority (pp. 94-95), and the witness of genocide against the Armenians—a project Hedin justified as well within the interests of the Ottoman state (pp. 99-100). Danielsson ends her first section by making clear Hedin’s early sympathy for Nordic racism, his friendship with members of the Nazi party leadership (particularly Hermann Göring), and his final expeditions to Asia.

The second part of Danielsson’s book begins with Hedin’s visit to what he called the “miracle” of Germany in 1935 (p. 130) and ends with his death in 1952. She clearly demonstrates the support Hedin received from the National-Socialist government, his criticism of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on racial/cultural grounds, his tacit acceptance of German expansion into Denmark and Norway in the spring of 1940, his knowledge of the Holocaust, and his unwavering allegiance to Hitler and National-Socialism even at the end of World War II. Danielsson’s final chapter grapples with Hedin’s insistence on remaining unapologetic for his support of Nazi Germany while simultaneously working to “tone down, and mask, his view on the Jews” (p. 247). She concludes this section of her book with a discussion of the flawed methods, lack of evidence, and political biases of Hedin’s earlier (much too sympathetic) biographers.

Perhaps the most famous example of Hedin’s postwar whitewashing was his involvement in the survival of Alfred Philippson, a German-Jewish geographer who had been banned from teaching in 1933 and eventually, in 1942, was imprisoned at the Theresienstadt concentration camp. The case of Philippson is often used to portray Hedin’s sympathy for the Jewish people and his refusal to simply lock-step with the atrocities of the Holocaust. Philippson himself claimed that he had been saved by Hedin’s intervention. But Danielsson points out that this was not at all the case, and that Hedin’s involvement in Philippson’s internment was limited and only a brief distraction from his otherwise complete compliance to Nazi policies toward the Jews (pp. 223-225).

Despite being a useful and persuasive new look at Hedin’s role in the spatial ideas of the Third Reich, Danielsson’s critique of the man does, in some cases, run into problems. The links between Hedin’s early expeditions and later enthusiasm for National-Socialism is often overemphasized. While Danielsson admits, for example, that his early trips exploring Asia “did not point toward his Nazism” (p. 20), everything else in her book certainly does. The research done, the evidence compiled, and the story presented to the reader all reflect what Danielsson makes explicitly clear: her story is interested in moving “relentlessly toward Hedin’s embrace of National-Socialism.” While her story is an important (and welcome) addition to the study of historical geography, one worries that she may be overcorrecting the Hedin narrative a bit. The author sometimes also fails to include specific information in her citations, offering at times only the unhelpful label “correspondence” after a cited archive (see p. 100, for example). German historians will take issue with some of Danielsson’s contextual oversights, most glaringly her assertion that “The Nuremberg Laws . . . restricted Jews from renting apartments, buying groceries, owning cats, and so on” (p. 142). While local and regional restrictions did often ban Jews from owning pets and houses by 1935, the Nuremberg Laws did no such thing. Moreover, Jews were
certainly allowed to buy groceries (although only during certain hours) and were forced to move into and pay rent for *Judenhaus* apartments. Finally, although it is most likely not the author’s fault, it would have been nice for the publisher to have included maps in the text, especially when discussing Hedin’s early expeditions in Asia. One cannot adequately characterize the developing spatial ideas of a geographer without presenting his or her cartographic work.

The breadth and importance of Danielsson’s project, however, should not be overlooked or quickly dismissed. She presents a forceful case against Hedin’s apologists and his portrayal as “a national hero in Sweden” (p. 259). Any scholar interested in the intersections of history, geography, Nazi Germany, and the Holocaust should read this book, engage with its material, and (as Danielsson begs in her conclusion) investigate the seemingly untarnished pasts of academics and intellectuals potentially connected to violent regimes and the inexcusable ideologies of racism and ultranationalism they are so often built upon.

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With a focus on the late eighteenth to early twentieth century, Lake Douglas examines the origins, people involved, and uses of the historical designed landscapes of New Orleans. Using a variety of archival sources such as lithographs, photographs, almanacs, advertisements, secondary observational writings as well as synthesizing existing scholarship, he attempts to explicate new understandings with major sections on public open spaces, commercial open spaces (pleasure gardens), domestic garden design, horticultural content, horticultural commerce, workforce characteristics (of those involved in horticulture), horticulture literature, and plant lists in and pertaining to New Orleans. Douglas includes black and white photographs, lithographs, advertisements as well as twenty color images of garden designs. His careful choice of visuals enriches his section discussions.

In the preface, Douglas states that he will, drawing from cultural geographers, show “landscape as process,” providing an analysis that moves beyond customary means of investigation and understandings of the city. He asserts that he places “New Orleans’s landscape history within a broader urban narrative and thereby provides a new perspective on the evolution of open spaces in America” as well as “a more complex, nuanced picture of people and developments involved in the evolution of American landscape design, a history defined less by singular ‘heroes’ or iconic examples and characterized more by contributions from anonymous actors and heretofore unnoticed cultural, economic, and social forces” (p. 2). Douglas also states that “...until now, an investigation of its landscape history has not appeared” (p. 2). Whereas an investigation concerning these topics in one work has not emerged, his assertion is an overstatement in that a variety of social scientists have provided in-depth critical examinations that involve “its geographic location, environmental characteristics, and cultural diversity” (p. 3) concerning a variety of designed landscapes in New Orleans. Surprisingly, many of these critical works are not cited. Nevertheless, based on these promises, the reader expects an analysis in which these topical areas are woven together in a cogent discussion that in fact reveals an innovative critical contribution to understanding the history of New Orleans’s designed landscapes.
Douglas’s greatest contribution is how he illuminates access, activities, and goods offered, and the spatial organization common to the until-now-unexamined pleasure gardens in New Orleans. In addition, he shows how domestic gardens evolved from encompassing more utilitarian to ornamental purposes as well as they varied in scale and spatial organization. The color plans and elevations from the New Orleans Notarial Archives complement Douglas’s analysis so that these gardens come alive for the reader. To be sure, these plans usually represent specific populations and locations—those more affluent, European and Anglo. Douglas also excavates information concerning the “who, how, when, and where” of horticulture resources to (some of) the city and through meticulous analysis provides comparative fruits, vegetable, and herbs plant lists (Table 1) and a compiled ornamental plant inventory (Table 2-B). Together, these sections, largely drawing from primary data, will prove an excellent point in which to begin researching additional facets of pleasure gardens as well as reconstructing or recreating domestic gardens in New Orleans.

However, though the author succeeds in these ways, the work fails to provide the necessary depth, analysis, and connections from one topic to another to have met the aims he set forth. Instead, he offers general impressions of each topic, more in isolation than integration. More importantly, Douglas does not provide equal attention between these topics. For example, though he argues early on that he will provide a nuanced picture of the people in these landscapes of process, most of his primary data comes from or is based upon literate, middle-class, or elite whites. The discussion he provides regarding Native American and enslaved populations’ agriculture and horticulture is in the service of the colonial city, and non-European or non-American open spaces and gardens are given little attention and detail. Furthermore, the section, “Workforce Characteristics of Gardeners, Seedsmen, and ‘Flourist’ Planters” is only thirteen pages. Though he includes more detail on the practices of European diversity, Douglas makes little mention of people of color beyond providing census of enslaved people arriving and mentioning, for instance, that “the agricultural economy of the rural antebellum South was built on the back of…enslaved people” (p. 173). Even as he provides some discussion of complex intersections among the vagaries of color, social standing, and freedom of people, he relies too heavily on synthesizing existing scholarship with popular accounts, often relying on those popular accounts, whether in pictorial or written form, as innocent and straightforward.

The book will be of interest to those who want a brief overview of specific, usually European and Anglo dominated public open spaces and the general state of horticulture. Those individuals concerned with detailed examination of European and Anglo commercial open spaces, domestic garden design, and plant lists will find much useful information. The reader will be left wanting concerning the complexity of “larger” and “smaller” processes that inform these landscapes and their associated practices, importantly including contributions from enslaved or free people of color as well as those Europeans and Anglos of lesser socioeconomic standing. Hence, new understandings of actors and the cultural, economic, and social forces that shape the public spaces and private gardens of New Orleans (landscape as process) are far more partial, in both senses of the word, than the author promises.

Rebecca Sheehan
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While most scholars of Revolutionary America are familiar with Tom Paine’s proclamation regarding the geographical absurdity of an island governing a continent and Montesquieu’s assertions about the spatial limitations of republican governance, the connections between geography and history in this tumultuous era are often overlooked. In The Nation’s Nature, James Drake illuminates the how geographical ideas contributed to the emergence of a national identity, the success of the War, and the eventual ratification of the Constitution. Through a combination of synthesis and original research Drake constructs an intellectual history that “traces some of the more important ways in which spatial identity changed over time and altered many North Americans’ political consciousness” (p. 9). By examining the intellectual currents and political events through a geographical lens, Drake not only demonstrates the centrality of “continental presumptions” to the course of events, he also reveals the importance of places otherwise erased from the master narrative of the American Revolution—Canada, the West Indies, Mexico, and even India. At its heart, however, The Nation’s Nature is a book about the power of geography and imagination.

The book, divided into two parts, begins by erecting the theoretical framework that supports the bulk of Drake’s analysis. Drake begins this critical task by connecting his work to Benedict Anderson’s Imagined Communities. While Drake pokes holes in Anderson’s contention that nationalism in the thirteen colonies depended on print capitalism, he readily subscribes to the integral role imagination plays in the creation of national identity. More importantly, perhaps, Drake builds on the work of Martin Lewis and Karen Wigen and their definition of “metageography.” For Drake, the concept of metageography—or a set of culturally constructed spatial structures used to frame how people think about the world—helps to explain how people living in North America began to think of themselves as part of a nation well before declaring independence. More importantly, by unpacking the metageographical understandings of eighteenth century actors, Drake reveals the importance of a “continental consciousness” to the history of Revolutionary America. As Drake demonstrates, the power contained within these metageographical understandings hinged on their ability to connect nature and politics.

In Part One, which is divided into three chapters, Drake examines the political and intellectual trends that shaped North America before colonists declared their independence. Focused on the abstractions of intellectuals, Drake introduces the prevailing notions about the connections between people and their natural environment. More importantly, perhaps, Drake outlines the debates between Europe and British North America that emerged from these geographical imaginings. For example, Drake details the debate between those who championed a “rigid relationship between latitude and climate” and those who connected climate to continent (p. 54). As the first sections progresses, however, Drake begins to delve more deeply into historical specificity.

Drake’s analysis of the Seven Years’ War and its aftermath, which constitutes the majority of the next two chapters, demonstrates how British North Americans applied their continental imaginings to political situations. According to Drake, anxieties about who would rule North America, which because of its geographical unity could only house one imperial power, helped jumpstart the Seven Years’ War. Furthermore, once Britain defeated France, it became easier for colonists to imagine themselves as part of a larger, continental community. Ironically, memory of this victory, according to Drake, “repeatedly raised the questions of whether the war was indeed for the continent and whether mainland colonists constituted a distinct continental society”
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(p. 132). Even as colonists’ memories of the Seven Years’ War helped to solidify an imagined continental community, growing political rifts with the crown regarding taxation, representation, and the Quebec Act built upon Americans’ continental consciousness.

The final four chapters that comprise Part Two examine how leading colonists turned previously constructed metageographical conceptions about the continent away from empire and toward independence and expansion. For Drake, this turn appears most clearly in two “continental” labels: the Continental Congress and the Continental Army. According to Drake, the Continental Congress “offered the comfort of a unity rooted in nature that helped allow a legislative body to assume executive powers and replace the discredited king” (p. 175). The “Continental” label helped diffuse some of the anxiety about the centralization of political power, and its later application to the newly formed regular army did much the same for American fears about standing armies.

In addition to wicking anxiety from a newly independent populace, metageographical understandings played a key role in the intellectual underpinnings of independence and expansion. Chiefly through a comparison of Jefferson’s Notes on the State of Virginia and Mexican Jesuit Francisco Clavigero’s Historia Antigua de Mexico, Drake demonstrates the peculiarity of the American geographical imagination. The same metageographical understandings that separated America from the West Indies, Canada, Mexico, and India also played an integral role in the eventual ratification of the Constitution. Although Anti-Federalists called on the warnings of Montesquieu, Federalists called on widespread ideas about the America’s “continental” destiny to alleviate the fears of their political opponents. Again, chiefly through intellectual history, Drake lays the connection between geography and politics bare.

While Drake uses intellectual history to effectively demonstrate the integral role played by metageographical understandings, his reliance on this methodology renders his central argument less effective. Far too often, Drake neglects to provide broad historical context for his analysis of eighteenth century geographical imaginings. As a result, Drake’s presentation of the development of Americans’ metageographical understandings seems far too linear. In other words, Drake’s study does little to illuminate any resistance to the growing continental consciousness of leading Americans. Perhaps a more through examination of non-elites would help unearth that resistance. That said, Drake’s contributions to the story of America’s independence far outweigh these shortfalls.

In the end, The Nation’s Nature provides readers interested in Revolutionary America, political history, and the intellectual foundations of nationhood new answers to old questions through an intriguing blend of historical and geographical analysis. Not only does Drake complicate America’s master narrative, he demonstrates that much like other cultural constructions, geography gives historians another lens through which to view the power dynamics that shape history. Most significantly, The Nation’s Nature adds to an important historiographical discussion about the value of interdisciplinary history.

Nathaniel F. Holly
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Since the late 1980s, researchers and academics with an interest in history have renewed their interest in analyzing across vast temporalities, such as the beginning of life on Earth.
From physicist Stephen Hawking’s seminal *A Brief History of Time* (1988) to historian David Christian’s influential article “The Case for ‘Big History’” (1991), grand scales of relationality and engagements that venture far beyond specific events, a few centuries, or even across the arc of a particular nation-state’s history have appeared with greater frequency. Embracing different urges than the “grand narratives” of civilization that captured the attention of historians in the past, these approaches consider the *longue durée* of human and/or planetary evolution. Although each one goes by different names and focuses on slightly different types of evidence, they share certain characteristics. The one that most applies to the book under review here is the intellectual endeavor that refers to itself as “big history.”

From the start, big history has had its advocates and critics. In *Maps of Time: An Introduction to Big History* (2011), David Christian notes that opponents of big history accuse its adherents of flattening important distinctions in the world in order to make exaggerated claims that sound like just another type of grand narrative. Christian does not back away from these challenges. Instead, he believes that critics can deal with these issues by addressing some concerns head-on and being clear about the limitations of the theoretical approach. While a challenging type of analysis, the end results are historical accounts that position human history within a wider, complex story of life that includes other species and even other worlds.

Although a challenge to many branches of history, big history looks quite tame when seen from the perspective of disciplines such as geology, geography, physics, and other fields in which studies of vast time and scale—such as evolution or the “big bang”—demand large data points across epochs (both historical and geographical). This fact may account for why historical geographers, such as Barry Rodrigue, participate at the forefront of big history along with other pioneers such as Christian, geologist Walter Alvarez, historian and educator Cynthia Stokes Brown, cultural and social anthropologist Fred Spier, and newly converted big history student-philanthropist Bill Gates. With an international organization, multiple books in circulation dealing with the topic, a wide range of courses for students of all ages, and an assortment of large-scale projects underway, big history has evolved into something formidable and much more far-reaching than merely a scholarly trend.

Although Steven Roger Fischer does not explicitly tie his book *Islands: From Atlantis to Zanzibar* to the big history community, it nevertheless does share several notable similarities with that field’s research agenda. First, although a prolific author more known for linguistics and language study, Fischer has created an interdisciplinary book on islands that seeks to tell a much longer history of the evolution of island systems. What emerges from this orientation is a book that carefully focuses on what Fischer describes as a “recognition that islands take on form through geology, take on life through biology, and take on meaning through culture” (p. 7). Fischer may have come to this conclusion while working on another book on islands of the Pacific. Regardless of where the motivation to write this text first appeared, the resultant book is one that, in keeping with the agenda of big history, focuses on aspects of island history that do not begin with human habitation of island systems.

From the start, Fischer makes this agenda clear, arguing in his preface that “islands are Earth’s crucibles and cradles, bridges and bonds” (p. 6). As such, examining islands on our planet is a study of life on Earth. The resulting text provides a diverse assortment of statistics, histories, and narratives that attempts to give islands a big history makeover. What follows, though, is a book that only partially succeeds in its aims. Although Fischer wants to chart the ways that island systems “have co-enabled, geologically and biologically, the very Earth that we know” (p. 6), what emerges is a readable but uneven text. Some chapters benefit from the big history approach while others become bogged down by too much information. Even with these issues, *Islands*, on the whole, proves a welcome contribution to big history and the field of island studies.
As noted above, the book grapples explicitly with the geological formation of islands and the flora and fauna that inhabit their worlds. In fact, the first two chapters deal specifically with these issues. Sweeping and almost overburdened with details, these chapters are, unfortunately, the least effective within the book. It is as if in order to tell a tale of big history, Fischer thinks that he needs to rigidly control the narrative by resorting to lists and definitions. In so doing, he struggles to find a tone within them that is neither overly technical, nor overly didactic (such as what one might expect in an undergraduate text). The end result is a story that contains far more lists intermixed with prose than argument. Although both chapters provide important and fascinating information, they lack the narrative punch of the later chapters. In these later sections, Fischer grabs the reader and sets up a rich conversation about islands, their myths and realities, and their afterlives.

One of the best examples from these chapters is one called “First Footprints.” It charts the evolution of humans and their “prints” on island systems over time. At nearly sixty pages, this is a mammoth chapter that swings from the first hominids and their island journeys to twenty-first century islanders exiled from their homelands due to climate change. Even though the information is presently chronologically, the chapter offers a compelling argument that human-island interaction over time contains cycles of connection, discovery, exploitation, and destruction. It is heady and engaging material.

The chapters that follow walk through a range of topics from trade through and among islands, nation-building on islands and archipelagoes, the island in the imagination of humans, and the future of island systems on our planet. It is this last point that draws the book to a close. And Fischer uses it to great effect by arguing that even with humanity’s current level of ecological destruction on the planet, islands have a future. It’s ours that is in doubt. “We shall all go,” he warns, “but islands will endure” (p. 306). A compelling read suitable for general audiences, students, and specialists.

Karen N. Salt
University of Aberdeen


The grandeur of the great Napa Valley oaks captured the imagination of many nineteenth-century travelers to the Napa Valley. Elocuently described in literature by Robert Louis Stevenson, and sensitively photographed by Carleton Watkins and Eadweard Muybridge, the Napa oaks were mainstays in a complex savanna landscape likened to an English park, valued for not only its aesthetics, but also for the practical benefits of providing shade during the hot valley summers. Over the course of a few decades, early farmers did away with most of the oak savannas, transforming the Napa Valley floor to favor the higher-value and sun-seeking vineyard and fruit orchard agricultural landscapes, dissipating an early geography no one has seen for over one hundred years (pp. 26-27). The Napa Valley Historical Ecology Atlas by Robin Grossinger examines the oak savanna landscapes and other historic ecosystems of the Napa Valley, documenting their rapid transformations and rediscovering forgotten habitats and functions that are vital for understanding present-day environmental challenges and practical land management options for the future. The San Francisco Estuary Institute, Friends of the Napa River, and other local partners collaborated with Grossinger’s investigation.
The *Napa Valley Atlas* presents a fresh perspective on an iconic landscape using methods pioneered by the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) in historical ecology that synthesize natural science with history to document the physical transformation of the Napa Valley over the past two centuries. *Napa Valley Atlas* cartographer, Ruth Askevold, has created a series of detailed maps that unite regional historical maps, photographs, paintings, and graphics to provide the reader with an elegant visualization of a forgotten heritage. These images are vital in chronicling each historic layer of landscape, unfolding a picture of the Napa Valley through time and space. Grossinger identifies five major components that compose Napa’s biogeography—the grand oak savannas, the downslope creeks, the valley wetlands, the Napa River, and downstream tidal marshes—relating distinct stories to explain the valley’s conversion to the present-day agricultural landscape. A selection of these stories is presented in a series of Napa Valley driving field tours designed to revisit the living landscape, identifying natural heritage remnants and patterns that correlate historical geography with present-day population and residential pressures.

The *Napa Valley Atlas* overall emphasizes historical ecology as an important tool for increasing the fundamental understanding of the Napa Valley ecosystem, investigating how people have interacted with and shaped the landscape during the past two-hundred years. Many contemporary researchers are recognizing that some conservation strategies are misguided and many ecological restorations fail due to a lack of knowledge about the local historical conditions. Understanding historical perspectives can expose the dynamic nature of a specific landscape, piecing together a picture of the long-term influence of humans as components in functioning ecosystems and providing a basis for conservation and restoration decisions. “There is a lot of mythology out there how things used to be,” writes Grossinger, but he contends that dispelling preconceived notions of the past can improve the conservationist’s goal to restore native habitat. The author recognizes that revisiting local geography with a new level of scientific thought and historical reconstruction will allow land managers to apply more integrated and functional landscape management practices. Historical ecology helps define and connect choices—those from the past with ones that will remain in the future. Landscape-level perspectives likewise can aid in an accurate identification of missing elements in present-day landscapes, marking hidden landscape elements that might be recovered within the context of current and projected future environmental conditions. The Napa Valley is a stunningly beautiful landscape, yet its characteristics are in constant flux. Local Napa Valley residents still desire roads and electricity, safety from floods, and a thriving agriculture and economy, but residents also want a resilient and healthy local river with fish and wildlife, a reliable water resource, and a landscape that is resistant to climate change for future generations (pp. 144-151).

“Part of the Napa mystique is in fact the rawness and vibrancy of the land, wildness mixed with refinement—rugged hills and remnant valley oaks framing vineyards in wine labels” (p. 145). Grossinger introduces the idea of *terroir*—the unique influences of the local land and climate on the nature of wine—to celebrate the Napa Valley for its unique present-day sense of place, yet interestingly, he scarcely mentions viticulture in the atlas. Within the local agrarian community, there is a remarkable knowledge of regional topography, soils, and microclimates of the valley (p. 144). The author attributes Napa’s agricultural success to a present-day culture that appreciates and preserves the countryside, thus suggesting that future environmental strategies may subdue urban and suburban development and create a resilient valley agricultural landscape that will guide the expansion of ecological functions and processes (pp. 144-151). *Terroir* is a promising theme Grossinger needs to expound. Napa’s natural bounty of salmon, oaks, songbirds, and other elements play unique roles and contribute to the valley’s aura, building a depth into the layers of the living Napa landscape.

Any examination of a historical landscape helps recognize the persistence and resilience of
its living landscape today. Grossinger argues that the historic Napa landscape was well adapted to a variable climate regime, exhibiting diverse ecological functions to buffer environmental extremes, but today’s modern landscape transformations have simplified native valley habitats, thus suggesting that many intrinsic features of resilience have been eliminated. Complexity and diversity did allow multiple life history options for Napa Valley native species now vulnerable to change. Overall, the author insists that there is still potential to increase local ecosystem health and resiliency by reestablishing selected characteristics of the valley’s historic natural heritage (p. 151). While the future is inherently unpredictable, Grossinger believes the Napa Valley residents still have the ability to choose and reshape the valley’s environmental elements to insure a sustainable, economically viable, and pleasant place to live. The Napa Valley Atlas is visually pleasing, initiating new thought on a dynamic northern California landscape that will be of general interest to public and scientific communities alike.

Katherine J. Heslop
University of Nevada, Reno

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Over the last three decades, Richard Harris has, in installments, sought out highly original ways to revise the history of suburbanization in North America. In Unplanned Suburbs (1996), Creeping Conformity (2004), and a suite of articles, he has joined Robert Lewis and others in rendering developments on the edge of the metropolis more morphologically complex, agentially diverse, and downright disorderly than received wisdom—in which composed residential enclaves of the middle class perforce lead the way—has let on. Here he continues this line of inquiry, but obliquely, refracting it through the specific sets of materials and now-ordinary economic practices that have made mass home improvement possible, popular, and convenient.

To do so, Building a Market adheres to a traditional sort of plot: setup, crisis, resolution. In the first part we see certain conditions of possibility settle into place: the middle classes learn in the 1920s to desire homeownership—neither a foreordained instinct nor, as Harris has argued for years, an originally middle-class contraption—and the lumber industry learns, fitfully, a bit awkwardly, how to accommodate amateurs. Indeed, the brunt of Harris’s empirical labors—and, one suspects, the book’s most enduring value—resides with this intricate story of lumber’s great domestication. In part it is the chronicle of an oddly chaotic, trust-besotted sector submitting to standardization. In larger measure the shifts we follow are cultural: lumbermen’s self-conception, public image, and professional competency all morph as companies diversify, establish showrooms, produce model homes, initiate whole “lines” and “packages” of their goods, and, crucially, retrain employees (or find new ones) to be genteel enough so as not to repulse their new, higher-class, increasingly female clientele. We watch reluctant manufacturers, in short, learning to become retailers, and to like it. Harris’s thick-descriptive contrast between the old-style “line yard,” that “Eveless purgatory” (p. 86) on the wrong side of the tracks, and the retouched, friendlier “home center” closer to downtown is evocative and instructive. And he revisits questions of gender in surprising ways throughout: home improvement, Harris argues, became by the early 1950s a key arena in which new forms of male–female cooperation were forged, men assumed a new interest in things domestic, and women took on new roles in public.

Harris also skillfully expands our understanding of the New Deal’s interventions in
housing finance. The emergence of the FHA has been documented and critiqued many times over, but usually with reference to the mortgages it facilitated for new housing starts (under the 1934 National Housing Act’s Title II). Harris points out that, particularly between 1934 and 1936, the state insured significant sums in order to promote the “modernization” of existing homes—an appealing option precisely because the climate for new housing was so dire. (Federal programs were, in turn, modeled on the installment plans innovated by the manufacturer Johns-Manville in the 1920s, and on the work of smaller credit agencies.) It was this expansion of financial instruments, for Harris, that “unwittingly, and unwillingly” (p. 224) laid the foundation for the post–World War II consolidation, complete by 1954, of a full-on “Do-It-Yourself” movement and the landscape of one-stop shops recognizably linked to today’s Home Depot gargantuas. The book’s third part deals with this postwar period in some depth, but Harris’s method is so measured and causal that the book’s resolution feels like an eventuality, telegraphed from the outset. His cultural-historical explorations of how “DIY” was parsed in the national media are astute, as are his comments on home improvement’s period-appropriate gloss as a form of “therapy,” but few appreciable surprises can be said to emerge.

Harris’s is not primarily a theoretical project. He is conversant with recent work in economic sociology that treats “markets” as learned collective performances, “field[s] of action” guided by state policy and sustained by trust, habit, and a host of forces that exceed naked calculative rationality. This brand of thinking, advanced largely under the sign of Pierre Bourdieu, can lapse into truism—“If markets are political, they are also fundamentally social” (p. 11)—but Harris wisely sequesters these formulations on the edges of his story, letting them adumbrate but not invade the text. He is at root a storyteller, not an interpreter: “We can parse rhetoric. Better, we can observe what people did” (p. 43).

Still, Building a Market harbors the residues of too many conceptual roads not taken, exciting leads that the author confines to the epigraph, the aside, the anachronistic cartoon. Harris seems uninterested in theorizing built space—its inhabitation, its modification, its inertial sway over hearts and minds—with the same kind of thoroughness he devotes to “the market.” Nor, despite the extended forays into lumber and its substitutes, does he reflect on materiality, on the house (or its components) as material culture, in any sustained way. Yet the perpetually “improved” home, all his evidence suggests, is, precisely in its constitutive incompleteness, a most perplexing artifact, thinkable only in process—and in terms of the ongoing activity to which it compels its stewards. Houses continually form their accompanying subjects: they are objects, but hardly inanimate. But what precise kind of animacy should we take this to be? Paul Robbins, in Lawn People (2007), has used another totemic unit of suburban space to open this conversation. Houses present a different sort of challenge. That buildings “learn,” that they “don’t stand still” (Building a Market, p. 1), we know colloquially but struggle to elaborate in a philosophical way. It would have been fascinating to see these propositions thought through with some of the speculative license assumed by another Harris, Neil, in Building Lives (1999), on the durable relationships of care and obligation—well beyond mere consumption—we enact with respect to the object world. The conspicuous reliance over the years on medical metaphors in making sense of home improvement—“the ailing house” (Building a Market, p. 153), “house doctors” (p. 330)—suggests a dense associative web suffusing everyday bromides about enhancing a building’s “livability.” Perhaps these conceptual flights beckon to a different, less narrative historian than the present author, but their seeds are manifestly there in his storehouse of evidence. Their pursuit might, too, have afforded relief from the mundane internecine blow-by-blow that Harris lets structure too many subheadings on end: “The Manufacturers Finally Pull Together,” “Dealers Go Their Own Way,” “Opportunity Knocks,” and so on.

But these are stylistic points, ultimately issues of emphasis and temperament. Harris’s
omnivorous archival work points us in a number of productive directions. The result ought to be read with attention by historians and theorists of the built environment, and by all those concerned with how ordinary Americans and Canadians have experienced, valued, reimagined, and intervened on their most familiar spaces.

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The progress of Western civilization has increasingly valued a removal from the natural world, a move from the material to the abstract. This trend manifests itself in a number of ways, from the fact that prized jobs now consist of sitting in front of a computer screen in air-conditioned buildings rather than laboring in the fields, to the reality that many people these days simply do not know where food comes from. Another manifestation of this trend, one largely unremarked outside of perhaps the survivalist subculture, is the growing loss of those traditional forms of navigation which relied upon reading the signs of the environment. After all, we live in an era in which increasingly affordable GPS devices offer a paint-by-numbers form of finding one’s way in the world, so what knowledge need we of how to find the northern star or take note of the direction of the wind?

As someone who enjoys hiking and who lives in a rural state with still many gaps in cellular coverage as well as large swaths of sparsely settled national forest land and several major trail systems, this reviewer appreciates Harvard University physicist John Huth’s assertion that “humans can absorb exceedingly subtle environmental clues to find their way,” and that “[e]ach of us is a navigator” (p. 2). The Lost Art of Finding Our Way explores what Huth calls “cultures of navigation,” those peoples such as the Vikings or Pacific Islanders who, as a matter of course, traversed great distances without the aid of modern technology, employing primarily their trained observations of the natural world. In surveying the techniques employed by such cultures, Huth produces a book that can be approached as both a study of the challenges faced and skills exercised by voyagers throughout human history and as a practical manual, “an opportunity to test your own observational skills, increase your appreciation of your environment, and perhaps develop a lifetime of practice” (p. 10).

Huth opens with a chapter describing the sorts of mental maps navigators must keep in their heads, pairing the practices of, for example, Inuit nomads with current research conducted by neuroscientists and psychologists into how our senses of motion and direction become integrated to produce an internal blueprint of the environment. Of course, sometimes mental maps and reality do not correspond, producing the experience of being lost, and Huth devotes a chapter to the behavior of lost people, with examples including individual hikers and major historic expeditions into the unknown. After laying this groundwork, the book proceeds to cover practical means of determining one’s position and course, beginning with dead reckoning, or the assessment of one’s position by reference to one’s starting point and travels thus far. Along the way, the practicalities of navigation are enriched with insights into the evolution of human understanding of the world, and how that understanding has been communicated. For example, the chapter on using maps and compasses includes a brief history of both items, from the earliest known maps appearing on cave walls dated to 12,000 BCE through the portolan charts that
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appeared in the thirteenth century down to the nineteenth-century Great Trigonometric Survey of India. Far from being mere asides, such sections actually enhance the narrative by revealing the underlying sophistication of maps and tools that might, to modern eyes, appear rather crude. Likewise does his foray into the physics of light polarization help to illuminate the likely use of calcite (a.k.a. Iceland spar) by Viking navigators to determine the position of the sun in a fogbank.

Lest it be thought that *The Lost Art of Finding Our Way* leaves the modern world behind, there is a chapter covering “urban myths of navigation” which tackles whether or not older churches are always aligned on an east-west axis and whether satellite dishes always point toward the southwest. In addition, Huth also draws attention to how even simply sighting a ship at sea or an airplane can aid in determining one’s course and position.

Occasionally, Huth turns MacGyver in order to illustrate the relative ease of employing classical navigation techniques, as when he sets out to determine his latitude and longitude armed only with his wristwatch and a homemade quadrant fashioned from “a wooden board, a metal tube, fishing line, a rock (for the plumb bob), and a graded angle scale I made from scratch,” with the result that he found his position “to a precision of thirty nautical miles along a north-south axis and fifteen nautical miles along an east-west axis” (pp. 247, 249). The whole latter half of the book focuses upon Huth’s clear favorite theme of ocean navigation, with chapters on reading the weather, waves, currents, and the flight of seabirds, differentiating between the use of migratory, shore-sighting, and homing birds. Unfortunately, the author, a kayaking enthusiast, does go off on watercraft-related tangents, covering in depth the stability of hulls as well as techniques for sailing against the wind. That said, though, the author addresses ocean-going travel with enough clarity as to be readily comprehensible by even his landlocked readers, and the closing chapter, which recalls the story of legendary woman navigator Baintabu of the Gilbert Islands, allows Huth to bring together all the lessons of his book in a moving narrative.

One of the challenges of doing historical geography is establishing that subjective experience of relating to the environment as those in the past would have done. One can research, say, older practices of agriculture, but unless endowed with the requisite land and materials, it is hard to establish a real sense of what it was like to engage in cultivation year in and year out. However, many of the navigational techniques detailed in *The Lost Art of Finding Our Way* can be practiced anywhere one can see the sun and stars above. With the practice of observing our surroundings, we not only begin to understand the lives of our ancestors, but we also begin to feel truly at home in this world, which is the true gift of this book.

Guy Lancaster

*Encyclopedia of Arkansas History & Culture*

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In *Mastering Iron*, Anne Kelly Knowles has written not a broad-ranging study of the role of iron in the growth and development of America’s economy, but rather a tightly focused exploration of nineteenth-century ironmaking as a process that takes place in, well, places. The result is a masterful exemplar of “doing historical geography” that stands to become an exceptional teaching resource for the way it highlights the fundamental nature of geographic considerations in contrast to the broader brushstrokes of history and economy. Historical GIS peeks through the text from behind the scenes in its role as invaluable research tool without
becoming a major topical focus in itself, making the book also an excellent embodiment of the trend toward historical geography scholarship quietly incorporating GIS technology.

Of the several essential geographic elements that form the foundations of this book, scale weaves itself through the text, here appearing in one guise and there in another. The overarching research question that Knowles seeks to answer concerns why American ironmakers did not fully adopt the British techniques and technologies that made the ironmaking complexes in South Wales and other key locations so efficient. This question appears, at first glance, as one to be worked out at continental scales. Knowles, by contrast, uses data at very different scales—that of individual sites and even buildings, and down to the bodies of workers—to produce much of her answer, even though global-scale factors such as transatlantic migration of artisans and diffusion of technologies are never far from the story and often do play important roles at the microscale. Conditions at regional and subregional scales within the eastern United States complete Knowles’ story.

Case studies of both successful and unsuccessful ironworks illuminate the critical role of site and situation in answering Knowles’ question. Relevant site conditions include terrain and water but even more critically, the proximity and chemical composition of iron ore, limestone, and carbon energy sources. In particular, some of the British technology designs were dependent on specific chemical compositions found there but not in the eastern US, making a simple transfer of technology insufficient for replicating British efficiencies. Situation conditions involving natural and built accessibility resources were also vital for outcomes at individual works. In this era of widespread internal improvements projects, sometimes an expected canal or railroad line connecting a works to sources and markets failed to materialize, leaving the location too isolated for viability. In other cases, wise initial locational choices were augmented by owners’ investment in further accessibility resources, creating a reinforcing feedback loop. Accessibility resources were of particular importance in American ironmaking in part because of the long distances involved. Thus another key geographic element in Knowles’ overall argument is that distance between places made conditions for American ironmakers fundamentally different from those in Britain and in continental Europe.

Feedback loops involving the making and use of iron were, as beautifully illustrated in Knowles’ chapter on the Civil War, instrumental in deepening the divide between North and South in terms of economic resilience and infrastructure as well as in the ability to fight the war itself. Although Knowles does not frame the unfolding changes in terms of systems thinking, it is clear that nearly every change in the North contributed to its growing strength in a series of reinforcing or amplifying feedbacks, while nearly every change in the South contributed to that region’s further diminishment in a series of balancing or negative feedback loops. In this chapter, more than in any others, Knowles’ examination of ironmaking contributes to a broader understanding of the structure and functioning of the United States and two of its major regions.

The longest chapter in the book is the one in which Knowles introduces the reader to her main data sources, discusses their origins and weaknesses in depth, and maps out the broad patterns they reveal. While this chapter might bog down some readers, notably undergraduates, it constitutes an outstanding example of the data assessment necessary for both researcher and readers to evaluate the validity of statements made based on these data. Without resorting to a dry framing of these considerations as such, Knowles presents a narrative about her data that shows us where we need to think about incompleteness, unevenness, uncertainty, and bias. For example, the people whose fieldwork built the guidebook on which Knowles relies were prone to make different assumptions about Southern ironworks than about Northern ones, and to give up more easily on acquiring information in Southern locations. Knowles also argues for the use of visual materials, not as mere illustration but as sources of information (a point I am also
frequently making to my students), and the book is richly “illustrated” with many of these visual
data sources, adding both to its visual appeal and its information content.

As part of the chapter on data, Knowles presents maps derived from a GIS database based
on the ironworks guide mentioned above. These maps are important because they demonstrate
that while there were clear spatial patterns in some aspects of the whole, patterns one might
expect to see in relation to the technologies adopted were not evident. That is, there was no clear
pattern of diffusion in which backwoods ironworks were primitive (though some were) while
their eastern counterparts were more advanced (though, again, some were). One interesting
data visualization technique used with some of these maps involves combining a map with a
graph constructed around lines extended vertically from major cities as the $x$ value, and year of
construction as the $y$ value. The outcome is quite interesting in terms of east-to-west patterns—
yet the graph would reflect different patterns if the map were put in a different projection. I
also wondered about what a north-south graph would show—or some other axis such as one
representing the mid-Atlantic coast.

I stated above that *Mastering Iron* will be an exceptional teaching resource. I base this
on my experiences teaching historical geography to undergraduates who are not geography
majors. All of them grasp the study of the past, but virtually none grasps how to do that from a
geographical perspective until, if I am lucky, the end of the semester. Knowles’ book, even more
than what it contributes to our understanding of iron in the antebellum United States or its role
in the Civil War, will give students a concrete and eloquent example through which to trace the
thoughts and concepts, the differences in focus, and the processes of investigation that make
historical geography different from history.

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History and GIS: Epistemologies, Considerations and Reflections. ALEXANDER VON LÜNEN and
CHARLES TRAVIS, editors. Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer Science+Business Media,

Advances in geographic information systems (GIS) have had beneficial effects for scholars
across a variety of disciplines. The ability to digitally store, manipulate, and analyze geographic
data has forever transformed research of spatial problems. Modern GIS applications operate with
remarkable speed and efficiency, and these applications increasingly serve as valuable tools for
investigators across academia. However, even with the publicity of the recent “spatial turn” in
history, few academic historians actively use GIS. Given the large datasets and geographic-based
information that often enhance historic research, any union of historians and GIS that has seemed
likely for the past few decades has not yet occurred. GIS offers a near-limitless potential of uses
and applications for research, so why is GIS not more prevalent in academic history?

Alexander von Lünen and Charles Travis present a response to the problem of distance
between academic history and GIS. Their edited volume, *History and GIS: Epistemologies,
Considerations and Reflections*, gathers a variety of discussions on the importance of GIS in academic
history. The editors argue that yes, GIS requires some technical training, but the real problem of
GIS and history’s continued separation is the lack of recognized methodological worth of GIS by
historians. Given this divide, the editors note that mainstream historians would be somewhat
justified in thinking that “GIS and its proponents have so little to offer in terms of intellectual merit,
but are asking for so much in terms of learning curve” (p. vi). This book is not a technical volume
Reviews

of computational terms, nor is it a tome that merely recounts dozens of interesting historical GIS projects. Rather, it is a collection of multi-disciplinary voices about GIS and GIS methods tailored to address the reservations of any skeptical historian. As the editors noted, the volume’s purpose is that each author will emphasize “why historians should use GIS and not how” (p. vii).

History and GIS is an edited volume, arranged into 14 short chapters. The text is quite accessible and the editors and authors are to be commended for this stylistically engaging book. The chapters include interviews, articles with a thematic focus, theoretical discussions, and writings about GIS method. Some chapters include a focus on a particular historical era (early medieval hagiography) while others expand upon a particular geographic topic (historical atlases). This diversity is not a weakness: each of the chapters presents a compelling case for increased usage of geospatial technologies in academic history.

David Bodenhamer begins with an outline of the basics of GIS in history while looking to a future “beyond GIS.” Alexander von Lünen follows with an interview of the French historian Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie about computational geography and academic history. Onno Boonstra’s appealing chapter covers the rise of thematic cartography of The Netherlands in the nineteenth century and identifies lessons for a possible golden age of historical GIS. Mark Palmer explains the utility of employing postcolonial discourses in historical GIS with a focus on the geospatial histories of North American Indians. Von Lünen interviews Gunnar Olsson on the geographical inference problem: What evidence or information may be gleaned from maps? Historian Alexi Baker provides an examination of the benefits of vernacular GIS in histories of the early modern period, where local concepts of space can suffice for historical data that lack “a modern degree of geographical precision” (p. 89). Faye Taylor discusses the potential benefits of GIS in medieval religious studies, including spatial approaches extant in recent medieval histories. Monica Wachowicz and J.B. Owens address potential revisions to historical GIS approaches using new kinds of knowledge spaces as a framework. Charles Travis interviews the historian David J. Staley about GIS, technology, and visualization. Sam Griffiths addresses the “epistemological barriers” between mainstream historians and GIS. Travis places GIS in a longer academic tradition of geographic practices, and suggests a more accessible use of GIS by historians, including a “rebooting” of GIS, and further argues that “GIS scholarship will proliferate only by developing its own unique language” (p. 191). Edward Ayers, Robert Nelson, and C. Scott Nesbit trace the American Historical Atlas from 1932, and relate the Atlas’s pre-GIS spatial history to current GIS debates. Von Lünen concludes by tackling methodological issues relating to historians and GIS.

Von Lünen and Travis’s edited volume is part of a wider set of scholars that argue for increased use of GIS in history. Anne Kelly Knowles’ Past Time, Past Place: GIS for History (2002), Ian Gregory and Paul Ell’s Historical GIS (2008), and the edited volume by Amy Hillier and Anne Kelly Knowles, Placing History: How Maps, Spatial Data, and GIS Are Changing Historical Scholarship (2008), have showcased the rise in book-length scholarship focused on GIS and history. A recent surge in titles includes The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship (2010) edited by David Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, and Trevor Harris; Michael Dear’s edited volume GeoHumanities: Art, History, Text at the Edge of Place (2011); and Toni Weller’s History in the Digital Age (2012). However, many of these works have focused far greater detail on the technical possibilities of GIS for history, in contrast to History and GIS.

The multi-disciplinary approach is valuable, and historians from many fields were represented, including a fair number of academic geographers. While the inclusion of more geographers might strengthen some chapters, the overall representation of the cross-disciplinary nature of historical GIS is effective throughout this work. In addition, while the volume is admittedly not a map gallery of research projects, a few more examples of the end products of various historical GIS approaches could have been included to give even greater support to the
unconvinced historian. Any critiques with this volume, however, are minor—the underuse of GIS in academic history is a broad problem, so there are no easy solutions in convincing a discipline to change methodological direction.

Alexander Von Lünen and Charles Travis have gathered a strong set of arguments, and this book adds important perspectives to scholarship of the geospatial humanities. Understanding and expanding on GIS in history is no simple task, yet the combined authors of this work present compelling geospatial invitations to academic historians. The overall approach and content of this work makes a successful argument for the active utilization of GIS in history. The editors noted that “GIS should be the killer app for digital history” (p. vi). Given the chapters that follow, historians who approach this work will surely agree.

Patrick D. Hagge
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Andrew Menard’s *Sight Unseen: How Frémont’s First Expedition Changed the American Landscape* offers a new approach to understanding critical environmental perceptions of the west in nineteenth century America. By placing John C. Frémont at the center of text, Menard claims it was Frémont’s 1842 expedition of the west that changed perceptions Americans held towards a broader western landscape. Menard argues that Frémont read manifest destiny into Great Plans and Rocky Mountain landscapes. As a result, the West evolved from a feared landscape to an environment filled with the potential of American expansion.

The text is divided into two sections. The first section places the West, more specifically the Great Plains and Oregon, within a larger American conversation of western spaces. Menard argues that politicians constantly debated the value of an American settlement too far removed from the political and economic centers of the east. For example, in the early nineteenth century it was often debated whether Oregon was an entity of the United States or its own autonomous political body. There was a concern among American politicians that its distance would promote lawlessness and hinder proper practice of patriotic democracy. Menard argues that naturalists and their reports reiterated the political arguments of the day. The American prairie was seen as the American Desert, a salty flatland that would never accommodate the agricultural demands dreamed of in Jeffersonian America. However, as Menard points out, this mentality would soon shift with the assistance of Frémont’s *Report*. The *Report* broke the standard western script for early nineteenth century naturalists. Frémont certainly saw the west as a violent wilderness; it was not, however, an environment to be feared.

The second portion of the text focuses on Frémont’s role in changing the definition of western space. As Menard points out, for Frémont western space was not defined by eastern standards, but rather appreciated for its own natural qualities. In this thinking, Frémont’s observation of Courthouse Rock embodies a piece of America rather than a distant and foreign landscape. Courthouse Rock came to represent a piece of American geography, as indicated by its name. Through name association, Menard links Frémont’s observations of the western landscape to the early beginnings of manifest destiny. The author places Frémont’s *Report* at the birth of manifest destiny and the text that helped change the discourse of the western United States from barren wilderness to celebrated extension of American landscape.
The author uses Frémont’s experience with a bee to create a convincing portrayal of the explorer’s view of manifest destiny. While resting during a hike in the Rocky Mountains, Frémont was accompanied by a traveling bee. Presumably tired from the increase in elevation, the insect rested upon his knee. After a few moments of inspection, Frémont crushed the bee with a nearby journal. Menard argues that the choice to include this narrative into the report speaks to Frémont’s view of conquering the western landscape. Instead of fearing the bee, Frémont kills it in a symbolic act that represents the American conquest of the western landscape. Menard argues that this event is placed in the Report specifically to embody a transition from the old sentiment of a barren West to a new and uniquely American West.

Frémont’s Report is one among other reports coming from an expanding American West. Menard believes that more than other naturalists, Frémont expressed optimism toward western expansion, which transformed and conquering formerly wild spaces. This argument can be hard to place among nineteenth-century naturalists. Eric Olmanson uses the reports of Henry R. Schoolcraft to shape the history of imaginative landscapes of the northern Great Lakes (The Future City on the Inland Sea: A History of Imaginative Geographies of Lake Superior, Ohio University Press, 2007). Both Frémont and Schoolcraft explored distant landscapes once perceived as wild and barren but came back reporting redemptive qualities of wild spaces. Both naturalists were equipped with the same cultural baggage during their expeditions. Schoolcraft and Frémont brought back narratives that embraced wild spaces and embodied a movement to understand foreign places on their own terms rather than as a digression from eastern landscapes. Although similarities may exist between Schoolcraft and Frémont, Menard effectively distinguishes Frémont’s role in changing American discourse on the West. Frémont’s findings and observations shifted the western landscape from an alien world to American landmark.

Menard’s work offers a fresh approach to understanding Frémont within American discourse on the West. The author’s references to political publications that appeared during Frémont’s expedition not only place the Report in a historical timeframe but also emphasize the distinct shift this expedition created in developing the theme of manifest destiny. As politicians debated the management of the West, Frémont saw a cohesive continent driven by one American system. Frémont did not perceive the continental divide as an obstacle to an American progress. Rather, the range acted as a unifying force, the spine of America that held the western and eastern United States together. Through the imaginative eyes of Frémont, Menard makes significant strides in linking the words of the explorer and naturalist to the cultural concept that would shape the future land use and settlement of the American West.

Camden Burd
Central Michigan University


As the fields of Atlantic and Transatlantic history have grown over the past two decades, so has the importance of the Caribbean as an area of study. Nowhere is this more clearly reflected than in the proliferation of generalist texts on the region which have emerged to provide a foundation for the more specialized works that typically characterize Caribbean studies. One of the more welcome recent entries into this growing body of work is the collection The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its Peoples. Edited by anthropologist Stephan Palmié, a specialist in Afro-
Cuban culture, and historian Francisco Scarano, a student of the Spanish-speaking Caribbean, the volume features essays from leading scholars of the Caribbean in various disciplines including history, geography, archeology, sociology, and anthropology. Spanning over four centuries from pre-Columbian society through the challenges of the twenty-first century global environment, the collection offers a view of the Caribbean that emphasizes the continuity of the region’s history even amidst frequent and often cataclysmic social, political, and economic change.

The key to understanding the Caribbean from the points of view of the editors and contributors to the volume is laid out in the first three chapters, comprising Part One of the collection. From its inception as a site of human habitation, the region was marked by both diversity and unity. The diversity of indigenous cultures and societies that occupied the islands in the centuries prior to European arrival, as L. Antonio Curet argues in chapter two, analogous to the diversity that characterizes the contemporary social landscape of the Caribbean. At the same time that diversity serves as a unifying element: the region was and is diverse in its human geography. This same “diversity as unity” theme is found in a shared physical geography, which, especially in the Greater Antilles, encompasses several local climates and terrain types that are remarkably consistent throughout the region. Hurricanes, oceanographic and weather patterns, and flora and fauna vary according to the several types of local environments, but provide a common geographical experience throughout the islands.

This theme of a unifying diversity forms the core of the remaining sections as the history progresses from the “Columbian moment” in 1492 to the nation-states of the twenty-first century. Part Two, “The Making of the Colonial Sphere,” explores the introduction of sugar planting and the attendant emergence of plantation slavery to the Caribbean islands. Essays highlighting the European conquest of the islands and the destruction of native peoples, the cultures of resistance to the creation of plantation complexes whether Taino or African, and the emergence of fringe communities, such as those of maroons and pirates, outside the growing imperial order in the region with sugar as the unifying concept around which these diverse histories are constructed. Parts Three and Four are likewise centered on the theme of plantation agriculture and slavery, with outstanding contributions from Alison Games, Selwyn Carrington and Ronald Noel that locate the region in the larger context of the Atlantic world both demographically and economically. Essays by Laurent Dubois and Phillip Morgan highlight resistance to the sugar plantocracy in the context of creole culture and revolution, while abolition figures prominently as the subject of contributions from Diana Paton and Jean Besson. Other essays explore the course of emancipation and abolition, the decline of the Spanish Caribbean, and imperial warfare.

Parts Five through Seven take the history of the post-emancipation Caribbean forward from the eighteenth century to the present. The diversity as unity trope of the collection is seen here in the variety of post-slavery experiences which differed from island to island depending on which European regime held political sovereignty, from the creation of a veritable peasant class out of former slaves in British and French territories, to the importation of Chinese and Indian laborers, as detailed by Gad Heuman, to Christopher Schmidt-Nowara’s explorations of the “second slavery” period in the Spanish islands of Cuba and Puerto Rico. The common factor remains the sugar industry, and even where cash crop diversity became prominent, such as cacao in the Spanish colonies or on British Trinidad, the plantation complex as established in the sixteenth century survived. Whereas the twentieth century witnessed the collapse of the colonial empires in the Caribbean, Part Six takes on the emergence of a new colonialism in the form of US economic hegemony in the Caribbean. Essays on the Cold War in the region, Caribbean nationalism, US business investment, and labor struggles all highlight the divergent experiences of various Caribbean islands within the common framework of establishing independent and viable national and cultural identities. Part Seven, which confronts the modern Caribbean, looks
at ways in which Caribbean peoples continue to grapple with colonial legacies and establish economic self-determination. One of the interesting features of the late twentieth and early twenty-first century experience is the diaspora of mostly Afro-Caribbean people to Europe and North America, who, as Kristine Du Bois notes, make valuable contributions to their host societies while retaining strong links with, and even contributing important cultural identifiers to their home region.

While the range of topics is remarkably broad, and the essays often complex, nothing less would do justice to a region that figures so prominently in the development of the Atlantic world and the cultures and societies of both New World and Old. Because of its survey type of format, The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its People would be appropriate for upper-division history course on the Caribbean or Transatlantic History, while the specialized nature of many of the contributions give the collection value to graduate courses in more narrow fields. Additionally, the diversity of contributions, much like the region itself, makes it both useful and accessible to a variety of disciplines and sub-fields. While the volume lacks the brevity of more general histories of the Caribbean such as Jan Rogonziski’s A Brief History of the Caribbean From the Arawak and Carib to the Present (2000) or Tony Martin’s textbook treatment Caribbean History From Pre-colonial Origins to the Present (2012) and does not contain the sharp topical focus of Frank Moya Pons’ History of the Caribbean: Plantations, Trade, and War in the Atlantic World (2007), which considers the region from an economic perspective, the combination of breadth and scope from a variety of viewpoints make The Caribbean: A History of the Region and Its People a valuable and useful addition to the field.

Jefferson Dillman
Temple College


One of the quandaries of entering the field of Native American historical geography is coming to grips with the meanings of historical maps. Take, for instance, C.C. Royce’s 1884 “Cherokee Nation of Indians” map, a cartographic record of Cherokee land cessions including roads, rivers, and settlements. These maps prompt us to establish a mental baseline of space in the form of political regions delimited by colorful boundaries, and this can lead us to assume that the actors in the map’s events perceived space and region just as we do today.

Rethinking spatial relationships, geographical scale, the meaning of place, and how these affected identities and social relations within the context of the deerskin trade in the upcountry of colonial Georgia, and ultimately the entire South, are some fo Robert Paulett’s objectives in his geographical history of the southern deerskin trade, An Empire of Small Places. Paulett’s use of “empire” is a nod to Eric Hinderaker’s 1997 book, Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in the Ohio Valley, 1673-1800 in which an “empire of commerce” proved too slippery for centralized administrative control. Paulett asserts that actors working within local spaces and seeking their own competitive interests created a flexible regional trade system that confounded external imperial control. Although the subtitle reference to “mapping” implies surveying or cartography, it is the first of many of the author’s applications of metaphor; here mapping refers both to the historical actors’ agency in creating a regional system out of shaping conditions locally, as well as the author’s historical interpretations of what it became. Paulett’s contributions are methodological
as well as substantive, and this book will be of use to students of colonial southern history, the
ethnohistory of the southeastern Indians, and the historical geography of peripheral regions
during the rise of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world.

The time period is much of the British long eighteenth century, beginning with the 1715
Yamassee War and lasting to Indian Removal in the early 1930s. The first chapter combines
an overview of the deerskin trade with a history of eighteenth-century British mapping of the
Southeast. The author demonstrates that deficient geographic information was no obstacle to
producing imperial maps, which served to justify commerce with interior Indian nations in order
to win them over from the French and Spanish. Paulett lays out his thesis early and, admirably,
tries to substantiate it by surveying the spatial settings of the trade rather than presenting
a linear progression of events. The primary spaces of the trade make up four of the six chapters
and include the Savannah River basin, the town of Augusta, the interior network of Indian
trading paths, and traders’ houses. Each of these spaces had their own constituent parts and each
embodies varied scales of interaction.

The Savannah River was the arterial up which the trade was initiated from the coast and
the primary space in which African-Americans, as boatmen and laborers, played a role in the
hide trade. The merchant settlement of Augusta, situated on the Fall Line, served as the entrepôt
of the trade. Augusta’s reach extended as far west as the lower Mississippi via a vast network of
Indian paths over which travel was perilous and demanded cultural negotiation. Beaded along
this network of paths were the numerous trading houses or posts in or near Indian settlements,
acting as central places within Augusta’s hinterland.

The author seeks to present the perspectives of those involved in the hide trade, from
colonial administrators seeking territorial expansion and stability, to town merchants competing
for network supremacy, to backcountry traders and their families with feet in two cultural
worlds, and to African-American slaves. An important theme of the narrative is how these actors
had not only different physical and social positions within the system, but also that they had
very different parameters of movement and scales of interaction. Administrators competed with
merchants, merchants competed with each other, and traders and tribes interacted across a huge
region where geographic information was scarce, cross-cultural communication was crucial, and
identities flexible. Not surprisingly, those on either end of the trade tended to be least effective.
Slaves remained slaves and administrators never controlled the hide trade. Instead, the geography
of the trade was orchestrated by the merchants of Augusta and the traders who resided among
the tribes across the interior South.

Paulett argues that before the American Revolution, the backcountry Southeast developed
as a complex, expansive functional region where commercial interests had worked to stabilized
relations among British traders and Native peoples. While it has long been recognized that
backcountry Scottish and English traders adapted to Native cultures as they built their own
power and influence, Paulett sheds light on the generational cultural changes that produced the
mixed-blood elite class that produced tribal factionalism in the 1790s. The system was flexible
enough to quickly reorient to British and Spanish outlets on the Gulf Coast following increased
white settlement and eventual rebellion in the Atlantic colonies.

Some readers may find Paulett’s work occasionally slowed by his tendency to give
extensive discussion to seemingly minor details that do not appear to advance his argument and
some will become weary of his passion for using direct quotations to construct the narrative;
both are marks of an enthusiastic young writer close to the research whose work will appeal
more to specialists than general readers. Other readers will enjoy his imaginative interpretations
and comparisons. Most readers will wonder why the publisher attempted, unsuccessfully, to
reproduce the large historic maps examined in the first chapter. But readers of this journal will
appreciate Paulett’s negotiation of the works of historical geographers, his grasp of material culture, and his obvious veneration of the spatial perspective.

Finally, Paulett’s story of the British among the Southeastern Indians during the eighteenth century begs for a comparison with the earlier French *coureur des bois* experience in New France, since both fathered generations of influential biracial descendants. Although he does not explore the topic, Paulett’s analysis shows that the southern hide trade, like the northern fur trade, is an example of how Europeans and Native Americans cooperated in a mutually-advantageous, *articulated* relationship. If so, then our dichotomous metanarrative of British-Indian and Franco-Indian relations should be revisited.

Brad Alan Bays
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In *Secret Science*, María Portuondo of the History of Science and Technology Department at Johns Hopkins University analyzes the operations, output, and milieu of Spanish cosmographers from the mid-fifteenth century to the early seventeenth century, when the country was exploring and settling the New World. Portuondo has thoroughly mined archival and secondary sources for her work, and provides the most thorough biographies (in English) of the prominent Spanish cosmographers of the day. She throws new light on the reasons for Spanish scientific and cartographic secrecy and how the sheer newness and immensity of the Americas altered cosmographic practices and imperial bureaucracy. Over this period, Portuondo contends, the humanistic discipline of cosmography served more and more as the adjunct to empire building, becoming increasingly specialized, mathematized, and bureaucratized.

In the first chapter Portuondo describes the discipline of Renaissance cosmography, a cartographic and narrative description of the peoples and places of the world. In Spain, as elsewhere in Europe, humanistic, cosmographic texts rested on classical and medieval foundations: Ptolemy, Sacrobosco, and Regiomontanus for geography and cartography, and Pliny the Elder, Strabo, and Pomponius Mela for descriptive natural history. Soon after the discovery of the New World, however, a flood of discoveries led to a dearth of knowledge about the new conquests, settlements, and subjects. The government tasked cosmographers with learning about and explaining the Americas so that king and court could understand the new lands. Cosmographers were also charged with refining navigational methods and training new pilots for the Indies route (*carrera de Indias*). By the accession of Philip II to the throne in 1556, cosmographers had already begun a shift from an emphasis on qualitative description to a more modern quantitative measurement and “scientific” explanation, a shift Portuondo says continued for the rest of the century.

The second chapter discusses the administrative and official uses of cosmography at the *Casa de Contratación* (the “Board of Trade” in Seville), the *Consejo de Indias* (the royal council that administered the Indies), and the *corte* (the royal court, where patronage was dispensed). Portuondo describes how information was collected and collated from the *relaciones* and reports submitted by explorers, conquistadors, and settlers in the New World, and used by the scholarly cosmographers to write books and suggest new regulations. Cosmographers such as Alonso de Santa Cruz, Juan de Herrera, and Rodrigo Zamarano attempted to tackle such problems as
locating the Treaty of Tordesillas line, creating instruments and equations to determine longitude, and assembling information for the use of the king and his ministers. Chapter three examines the increasing control of state bureaucracy on cosmographical practices and output. Official secrecy reduced the public output of Spain’s scholarly class while simultaneously regulating and bureaucratizing its methodology. This had the effect of de-emphasizing narrative description and history and accentuating qualitatively precise “science.” Cosmographer Alonso de Santa Cruz, with the approval of the information-hungry Philip II and his court, systematized the collection and processing of cosmographical information in the empire with two books, one of ordinances and another of instructions, meant to streamline the process of defining the empire. Portuondo claims that the plethora of information thus gathered was so profuse it prevented the production of any true Renaissance-style cosmography of the Spanish New World.

In chapters four through six, the focus is mostly on the work of Juan López de Velasco as cosmographer-chronicler of the Council of the Indies from 1571 to 1590, who inherited the procedures instituted by Santa Cruz. Velasco sent out the questionnaires that resulted in the oft-studied collection of documents called the relaciones geográficas de Indias, though scholars often fault him for not using such a trove to write a comprehensive cosmography of the Indies in the old style. Portuondo posits instead that the bureaucratic machinery in place and the deluge of constantly updated information prevented the writing of any such all-encompassing work. Velasco was content, Portuondo contends, to create a sort of encyclopedic database of information for the use of officialdom. In addition to the increasing scientific nature of the discipline, bureaucracy and secrecy prevented the writing of a narrative and comprehensive cosmography. Velasco rolled with the flow: the government altered cosmographic practices; he altered his cosmographic production. The last chapter discusses the changes wrought by the regulation and scientific specialization of cosmography over the sixteenth century. Portuondo concludes that the narrative-based cosmography of the Renaissance had been replaced by “mathematized cosmography” and the compilation of “atomized facts” because, Portuondo writes, “atomization—then as now—was the most efficient way to process a vast amount of information” (p. 255). The succession of Philip III to the throne in 1598 led to a loosening of some state secrets. Facts and books about the New World were seen less as secrets to be protected and more as a way to prove Spanish knowledge and possession of faraway places.

Portuondo’s analysis of Spanish cosmography in the century or so after the discovery of the New World succeeds in placing the work of such scholars in their proper governmental and bureaucratic setting. Her contention that the vast immensity of knowledge overwhelmed Renaissance methods of description is interesting and compelling, forcing an emphasis on useful, utilitarian knowledge—facts that would aid in the maintenance of empire. In this scenario, for instance, Velasco’s failure to write about the relaciones geográficas was not due to his disappointment about their oftentimes Amerindian-style content, but because government strictures and the inadequacy of Renaissance methodologies to process the information precluded any such writings. Velasco was instead compiling a database of useful knowledge for the ruling of the empire. (The tendency of bureaucracy to hamper output with tedious rules and regulations is made apparent but it is never explicitly cited as a cause for the lack of narrative output by Spain’s cosmographers.) Portuondo’s contention that the information gathered and sifted by Spanish state scholars tended to become more systematized and scientific over time makes sense as well: the history of conquest and the tiresome recounting of native mythologies did not aid lawmakers in Spain, but precise and accurate maps, rutters, and tables did. She concludes that by focusing on utilitarian solutions to the problems of imperial governance “little room was left for scientific speculation” (p. 302). Thus, Portundo concludes, Spanish cosmographic science has suffered when compared to the work of others in Europe. This last contention would have been
strengthened by comparing the methods and output of Spanish cosmographers to their peers outside the Iberian Peninsula. Despite this minor drawback, Secret Science is an excellent addition to the literature for historians of science and the cartography of the age of discovery and conquest, highlighting Spanish cosmography’s role in governing an empire.

Gene Rhea Tucker
Temple College


Historians Jack P. Green, Philip Morgan, and David Armitage have each championed advancements in the study of British American colonies and/or the wider early modern British Atlantic world in the last forty years. With prize-winning titles published singly (and jointly), they have pushed forward a surprising range of approaches that have informed how most scholars study the British Americas. From empire, to Atlantic studies, to transtemporal history, each of these scholars has demanded that critics interested in Britain’s imperial territories (and its seas) take seriously the transnational and transmigratory peoples who have moved through these territories—either by choice, coercion, or force.

Critics, especially those interested in British North America’s Caribbean connections, have responded to these challenges by producing texts such as literary and postcolonial critic Sean X. Goudie’s award-winning Creole America: The West Indies and the Formation of Literature and Culture in the New Republic (2006), historian Ashli White’s award-winning Encountering Revolution: Haiti and the Making of the Early Republic (2010), and what will be reviewed below, historian Paul M. Pressly’s On the Rim of the Caribbean: Colonial Georgia and the British Atlantic World (2013). Although Pressly’s book shares a Caribbean focus with White’s and Goudie’s monographs, his work does not align with their interests in black Atlantic studies, hemispheric American studies, or the “orature” at the heart of Joseph Roach’s Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance (1996). Instead of linking On the Rim of the Caribbean with issues of race, politics, the entangled history of the new US republic with the Caribbean, or the wider region’s cultural syncretism, Pressly is more focused on colonial Georgia as a site of cultural and economic contact and exchange in the British Atlantic world.

From the start, the text focuses on economics and identity-formation, providing significant statistics on consumption patterns, wealth and trade networks, accumulation along the imperial periphery, the exchange of raw goods and products, and the exploitation of laborers (especially enforced slaves) within and beyond colonial Georgia. In working through these issues, Pressly describes how “an economic backwater” such as colonial Georgia would become a part of “Caribbean and Atlantic economies where trade spilled over national boundaries, merchants reacted to rapidly shifting conditions in multiple markets, and the transport of enslaved Africans bound together four continents and three races” (p. 1).

The book begins with an intriguing first chapter that outlines what Pressly calls the three Georgias. In it, he argues that the colony—initially founded as a philanthropic attempt to provide farming and small-scale trade as a form of redemption—struggled to find its position in the Americas and to entice white indentured laborers from Britain. Originally committed to an anti-slavery, pro-white labor ideal, the colony eventually splintered into different cultural zones in which imperial wars and threats from (and to) indigenous groups ebbed and flowed.
among multiple colonial communities that included Highlander regiments, lowland Scots, various indigenous peoples, Germans, and a frontier mix of hardened traders, adventurers, and opportunists. With little infrastructure, very low trade levels, and an undeveloped port, colonial Georgia sat for many years in its own inconspicuousness. All of that changed around 1750 when officials allowed slavery to exist within the colony. This decision forever changed the course of the colony’s future.

Rather than herald the arrival of a stampede of opportunists, the allowance of slavery saw the beginning of a slow transformation that Pressly suggests brought specific innovators to Georgia’s shores, some of whom used their Scottish networks and familial connections to move goods from Georgia to custom houses in the Caribbean or directly to British markets. These traders became the first merchants of the colony and used their links with deer traders, indigenous traders, and others (including merchants from the Caribbean and the Carolinas) to create a rich, varied, and powerful ruling elite. Chapters three, four, and five detail the ways that Georgia, in its emergence as something akin to but apart from the plantation economies of the wider British Atlantic, would engage with these other trade zones. At first, the colony traded its pine. Before long, it began trading in indigo and rice utilizing cultivation practices from a variety of laborers to manage Georgia’s coastal floodwaters and inner floodplains, including knowledge from enslaved persons of African descent. This community’s contributions to colonial Georgia are the subject of chapter six.

Chapters seven to ten bring the book back to its earlier theme of Georgia’s British North American identity crisis. As elite merchants and politicians attempted to maintain the new populations and shifting economics within the colony, they began to strengthen their ties to the homeland and to the Caribbean. Goods moved in both directions and Lowcountry plantations in Georgia were created at a staggering pace in order to feed this demand. Although the colony never out-produced the Carolinas, it sped in that direction during a staggering twenty-five years of growth. Pressly’s book displays the successes and the costs of that rise for Georgia as its later political leaders initially refused to participate in the burgeoning resistance to British trade at the beginning of the American Revolutionary era. They did not want to risk alienating their main trade partner. But refusing to align itself with other British North American colonies against the empire proved costly—both internally and externally. Pressly notes how “the colony [...] stamped itself a pariah” (p. 218). The last nine pages of the book briefly describe the tumultuous political changes that saw colonial Georgia’s complete reversal from pro-British site to Patriot haven. During that time, Patriots took over the political center and shifted Georgia in support of the American Revolution. The former elites, who had so carefully steered Georgia’s growth, fell from power and a new consortium rose up—one that embraced a strong US focus. This is perhaps the most urgent part of the book and the one that is the least detailed. However much I may have wanted more information for this part of Pressly’s narrative, it is an appropriate endpoint to his tale of colonial Georgia rather than a beginning.

On the Rim of the Caribbean is an examination into the political and economic beginnings, morphings, and alterations of colonial Georgia, but it is also the story of how a frontier site with grand dreams and schemes would become a US state—even as it balanced on the rim of the Caribbean. General readers and specialists with detailed knowledge about colonial British North America and the Caribbean will find a compelling and welcome addition to the field.

Karen N. Salt
University of Aberdeen

★ ★ ★

Kentucky’s Frontier Highway is an extensively illustrated and annotated text, part history book, part active project of historical and cultural geography and mapping. It contains no less than twenty-four maps and dozens of images of lost, forgotten or “orphaned” places encountered along the Maysville Road between Lexington and Kentucky. This hybrid text catalogues many aspects of the “development” of the road (both the Maysville Road and the road as a form proliferated across the United States in particular), from the physical changes in road surfaces brought about through the increasing pace of road traffic and technological developments, to the less tangible changes of culture and landscape over more than 200 years and across more than seventy miles.

Authors Karl Raitz and Nancy O’Malley detail a culture of roads and vehicles—not only the Maysville Road and its influence throughout Kentucky, but also the culture of people who have lived and worked along American highways, and the role of the road in relation to broad social changes. Kentucky’s Frontier Highway combines approaches from physical geography, history, and anthropology, and is situated within a rich field of historical texts about the culture and landscape of Kentucky. It takes its place among other offerings on the region from one of the co-authors, Karl Raitz (for example, Rock Fences of the Bluegrass).

In chapters one and two, the book introduces the concept of “reading” the road as a text, as compared to travelling the road. This is followed by a detailed “landscape biography”—an account of field research undertaken block-by-block along the Maysville Road, with each section headed by the distance travelled (mile 0.2, mile 1.3 and so on) and accompanied by pictures (taken by Raitz between 2005 and 2007), maps, plans, and other documents painstakingly accumulated from local archives.

The influence of both Geography and Anthropology brought to bear on this topic results in a staggering quantity of detailed material which is then used to ground the meandering descriptions provided of different localities across a broad time period (for example, the town of Paris from the present to World War II, the nineteenth century, and back to the origins of the town’s farms, fence constructions, and tavern). From “Indian Paths and Buffalo Traces” (p. 51) to “1990s gated exurban development of large single-family residences” (p. 136) and beyond, every major point in the history of this strip of road—social, cultural, and architectural—is recorded in a plethora of written and visual material, constantly grounded against the contemporary experience of the site in question.

Raitz and O’Malley put forward the argument that “the road” is a ubiquitous phenomenon and the roadside a “corridor of complexity” (p. 93), simultaneously a national network and a “road landscape” (p. 93). As the title suggests, this road landscape is read as both a contemporary space visited by the traveller and frequented by the local, as well as a historical space that continues to have a relationship to earlier cultural practices and uses. The Maysville Road is studied as a model for an approach that sees a “tableau of historical geographies” (p. 15)—many geographies and histories which are revealed to the “curious traveller” as “layers and bundles of human agency.” This literal and metaphorical “reading” of the landscape is then enacted throughout the book, which concludes with a brief discussion on the road and American culture.

This dynamism of structure and intent is simultaneously the book’s strength and weakness—it is sometimes unclear whether this is a scholarly or more general publication, and the ideas are therefore at times ungrounded—lofty in its aims but never fully executed. The
reference in the frontispiece to George R. Stewart is perhaps the best indication that this is mostly a historical text. However, by including oral histories and hearsay along with speculation and personal experience, Raitz and O’Malley do not give excessive weight to any one source, and as a result have compiled a text that is just as much folklore as it is a historical account, one that values both the everyday and the official history of the area.

The process of “reading” the road transforms an ordinary or banal experience of travelling into an experience that is beyond the everyday. “Reading” extends to forks in the road and intersections built around things that no longer exist—absences and unseen elements as much as the visible landscape and architecture. This flexible reading of the landscape moves this text away from a strict historical account yet does not sufficiently ground the text in an academic sphere to make it a definitively scholarly undertaking. While it contains a number of key ideas (particularly the useful notion of a landscape biography), it is not a theoretically dense text. There is no mention of Edward Soja, David Harvey (two of the mostly highly-cited contemporary geographers), or any of the successors to Carl Sauer’s work on the cultural landscapes of America (Andrew Sluyter, for example). Students of human or cultural geography, anthropology, sociology, or cultural studies would find little here to interest them critically despite the enticing use of mobility, historical landscape, and references to American road culture. However, the unique structure in which the landscape biography presents a historical cross-section of locales, each one prefaced by a description of the landscape and roads in question, presents a useful tool for cataloguing a changing landscape across time and space.

Although the introduction touches on notions of landscape, technological change, mapping, car culture, and other useful modes of “reading” the road, much of the academic literature is eclipsed by the wealth of historical and visual information to the detriment of the conceptual framework that underpins this book.

For those interested specifically in the notion of a landscape biography, this is particularly useful reading. For the theory-oriented academic or researcher, there is less to engage the reader than would be expected of a tome of some 411 pages. The absence of Kathleen Stewart, for example, is telling. (Her 1996 book Space on the Side of the Road shares many of the same themes, not least of which is reading the roadside landscapes of America as a historical text.) These absences make this otherwise impressive offering less appropriate for a scholarly audience.

However, the detailed place-by-place account would be invaluable for practical purposes: local geography, historical research, or travel through the (albeit small) region. The value of this text is in the way it captures a particular space during a specific period, and how it renders the landscape, history, and people with an engaging complexity underlined both by an intimate knowledge of Kentucky (and the towns along the Maysville Road) and a clear passion for the subject. This complexity is expanded via the thematic preoccupation with symbolic and literal transformations taking place on roads that have built and linked communities throughout Kentucky and the United States more broadly, particularly in terms of the relationship between American culture and the concept of reading “the road.”

Despite the academic background of the authors, this book is intended to accommodate the widest possible audience while still doing justice to its subject—in which case the execution is very successful, as this book would sit just as comfortably in a public library as in a private scholarly collection.

Emma Fraser

University of Manchester

★ ★ ★

This book is about the Hudson River valley as a landscape, an observable swath of river and land that has special meaning and associations to beholders. The years 1820-1909 mark the rise and fall of the Hudson River valley as a revered landscape.

In 1820 the United States was overwhelmingly rural and cities like New York, at the Hudson's mouth, were quite small by today's standards. The bucolic nature of the Hudson and its valley, however, was threatened as the Erie Canal construction commenced in 1817. Schuyler focuses on six artists and writers—Thomas Cole, Washington Irving, Nathaniel P. Willis, Andrew J. Downing, Jervis McEntee, and John Burroughs—who shaped their fellow countrymen's encounters, direct or vicarious, with the Hudson. The six men interacted with a large number of other figures, both contemporary and historical, in the course of their artwork or writing, and thus the reader also learns about the indirect roles that individuals such as George Washington and Theodore Roosevelt played in the preservation of the Hudson region.

The book has several themes. First, Schuyler portrays the six personages as so emotionally attached to the Hudson and its preservation that they devote much of their lives to raising people's awareness and appreciation of the Hudson River valley as the most scenic natural world in the United States. Second, Schuyler, a distinguished historian, wants to record how Americans have fought to preserve local history and historical memory, and he argues that this movement began in the Hudson valley. Third, Schuyler shows the connections that the valley had to distant places such as Europe and not-so-distant New York City, which was critical to selling the art on the Hudson and also to publishing the books and magazines dealing with the river.

Thomas Cole was the first professional painter to put the Hudson River to canvas and is credited with starting the Hudson River School (of art) in 1825. The scenic beauty that attracted tourists up the river from New York City to Albany starting in the early 1820s also enticed Cole to sail north on a sketch trip from the City in 1825. Schuyler critiques not only Cole's paintings, especially his Course of Empire allegorical series (reproduced in colored plates), but also his essays and poetry. The reader comes to appreciate Cole as a man who summoned all his creative energy to idealize and sanctify the Hudson valley and highlands.

Washington Irving and Nathaniel P. Willis are the two writers most closely associated with the Hudson River valley. Schuyler holds Irving as a human embodiment of the valley because he invented its folklore, praised its landscape in print, built Sunnyside in Tarrytown, and then fashioned a fanciful history of the estate in Wolfert's Roost (1855). The younger Willis knew and admired Irving, who even visited his house in Cornwall, also immortalized in 1855 in Willis' Out-Doors at Idlewild. Although wildly popular in his early career, Willis fell out of favor before 1850. Schuyler accepts the critics' judgment of the man as light and breezy, which strikes this reviewer as a little glib itself as Willis worked long hours to perfect phrasing pleasing to readers.

The most unlikely writer discussed is Andrew J. Downing. His primary occupation was running a nursery business in Newburgh. Somehow he found the time and energy to write articles and books on landscape gardening, edit a monthly magazine, The Horticulturist, and next to the nursery, build his own house and landscaped grounds. Downing educated many Americans on how to modify and landscape country residences. Accordingly, Schuyler credits Downing with expanding the Hudson River aesthetic to a national scale.

Chapter five is a narrative interlude, a consideration of the industrialization and urbanization of some of the villages along the Hudson by the mid-nineteenth century and the rise of the historic preservation movement. There is an account of the successful efforts to conserve
Washington’s Headquarters, a humble building in Newburgh from where the general led the American Revolution during its last year.

The most poignant figure in this volume is Jervis McEntee, who split his time during most of his long career between his native Rondout, a Hudson River port, and a New York City studio. He excelled at painting close-at-hand nature scenes of late fall and winter in the Catskills. His canvasses are skillfully wrought in muted tones and bold brush strokes, yet they fell out of favor in the 1870s as Americans became enamored with European Impressionism. Schuyler details McEntee’s financial distress toward the end of his career. Many figures for the sales of McEntee’s out-of-favor paintings are listed; their 2012-dollar equivalents should have been provided.

Schuyler addresses John Burroughs, a literary naturalist, last. Born in Roxbury in the Catskills, Burroughs, a federal employee, arranged a transfer to the Hudson Valley as a federal bank examiner. He built the house called Riverby in West Park, overlooking the Hudson. But his time at Slabsides, a rustic cottage a mile to the west and out of earshot of his nagging wife, is what enabled Burroughs to blossom as a detailed and accurate observer of nature. Schuyler defends Burroughs as a true environmentalist, despite a lack of public activism, because he was a teacher of the natural world who inspired activists like John Muir and Theodore Roosevelt. The book closes with a discussion of several historic preservation efforts along the Hudson and a summary of the Hudson-Fulton Celebration of 1909, a lavish jubilee that had little lasting impact on the public. Schuyler concludes by acknowledging that the six men featured never painted or wrote about the Hudson and its region holistically, nor did they forestall the fouling of the river that accompanied “progress.” He does, however, see them as laying the foundation for the modern environmental ethic.

In the introduction on facing pages there are two maps, one of the entire Hudson region and the other of larger scale on “the geographical center of Sanctified Landscape.” Neither is sufficiently detailed to show many locales, houses, railways, and canals discussed in the text. This handsome volume is well documented, although some of the footnotes include too many references. It would serve well, nevertheless, as a reference work on the Hudson River valley and as a supplementary reader for a historical geography course on the United States or for a conservation geography course.

Steven L. Driever
University of Missouri-Kansas City


In this edition of Buildings of Pennsylvania, which covers the eastern half of the Commonwealth including the city of Philadelphia, author George Thomas along with contributors Patricia Ricci, Richard Webster, Lawrence Newman, Robert Janosov, and Bruce Thomas, takes readers on an architectural journey through one of the most culturally diverse landscapes on the eastern seaboard. As part of the Buildings of the United States series, the book travels through varied architecture, starting in Philadelphia and moving systematically toward the New York border. Buildings of Pennsylvania is designed to be a field guide for architectural explorers. Entries are organized in a sensible geographic order and safety tips are provided for architectural tourists.

The strengths of the volume are the ambitious goals that the author sets for himself. Within the course of 600 pages, the author and his contributors aim to provide a cursory but
comprehensive picture of eastern Pennsylvania. While by no means complete, the author tries to select a wide variety of structures that accurately portray the variety of architecture present in eastern Pennsylvania. Rather than just focus on plentiful high architecture of the region, the author strives for a mixture of high and vernacular designs. Entries range from iconic structures, like Independence Hall, to the everyday homes of typical Pennsylvanians, sometimes so commonplace that the entries are simply titled "house." The selections include buildings designed by famous architects such as Frank Lloyd Wright and I.M. Pei, but also include structures designed by local carpenters and stone masons whose work has been hidden for so long. The dates of the buildings range from earliest European contact to modern twentieth-century buildings.

The sheer variety of structures that the author chose makes the volume potentially very informative. Rather than just focus on churches, houses, government buildings, and commercial structures, which often are the subject of architectural studies, entries include nuclear power plants, parks and recreational areas, industrial landscapes, stadiums, bridges, and airports in addition to the expected entries on courthouses, mansions, and religious structures. Each entry provides information about the architect/engineer/craftsman who designed and built the structure (and redesigned or added to it, if applicable), a brief history of the structure, a description of important architectural details, and its importance in the context of its local community. The book is divided into sub-regions, which consist of a number of counties. Each county section begins with a brief history of the county to serve as a context for the cultural and architectural landscape that is about to be discussed. Each county is further divided into significant sub-regions with additional history and context provided as necessary.

Perhaps what the author and his contributors do best is to demonstrate the layers of cultural history present in eastern Pennsylvania. The book begins with a lengthy discussion of William Penn and how the policy of religious freedom created a varied landscape where German architectural elements sit shoulder-to-shoulder with those of the Welsh, Scots-Irish, and Ukrainians, among others. The impacts of Native Americans are also highlighted. The theme continues throughout the book, reinforcing the notion that eastern Pennsylvania has some of the most varied architecture in the US.

That cultural variation is part of what causes this volume to fall short of its own goals. It struggles under its own weight, attempting to capture a myriad of cultures' impact on the architectural landscape of the region. Sacrifices had to be made to maintain page restrictions and reduce costs. Photographs are limited and the further one gets from Philadelphia, the less photographic evidence is provided. In some cases, the author describes beautiful colors and designs that would be best served with a few color plates, but the already exorbitant cost of the book prevents this. This is a book that cannot be fully appreciated unless one is in the field, looking at the building while reading the entry.

In addition to the lack of photographs, the selection of buildings leaves the reader wanting more. Again sacrifices had to be made; the author admits this. Only existing structures were included in the volume, which is a sensible choice for a field guide. The author admits, given the limited space, that public and accessible buildings were more likely to be selected than private and inaccessible, again a seemingly sensible choice. County numbers range from a whopping 200-plus entries for Philadelphia County to a paltry four entries for Sullivan County. Perhaps given the diversity and importance of Pennsylvania architecture to other culture regions of the US, the Commonwealth should have been divided into more than two segments in the series to provide adequate coverage.

The author's own biases come out in the choice of entries. In regional and county introductions there are repeated discussions celebrating the rural nature of many of eastern Pennsylvania's counties. But the selections seem to favor urban architecture over many of the
Commonwealth’s beautiful rural buildings. Also, Philadelphia and its surrounding counties have much longer and more complete selections, whose entries contain far more detail than the entries for the Northern Tier of Pennsylvania. The further one gets from Philadelphia, the shorter the entries, the fewer the buildings selected for a county, and the more significant the oversights of major buildings. What is a volume of significant architecture, which claims to capture the diversity of the sub-regions, without things entries on the Crayola factory in Easton or the Eagles Mere toboggan slide? Is there something that makes Citizens’ Bank Ballpark and Lincoln Financial Field more significant than the home of the Little League World Series in Williamsport, other than the former two are in Philadelphia?

The greatest downfall of this book is the fact that the further one gets from Philadelphia, the vaguer the information becomes. It is almost as if the entries for northeastern Pennsylvania were completed without any ground truthing, like they were simply taken from other written records. While useful for those on an architectural excursion, to say this volume should be taken with a grain of salt is an understatement. What is meant to be a field guide of eastern Pennsylvania’s unique architecture must be taken with multiple grains of salt the further one gets from Philadelphia. What starts out as a very thorough examination of the architecture of Philadelphia steadily declines in significance to the point that there are outright falsehoods in entries by the time the reader arrives in the counties along the New York border. While the book has its uses, if you are seeking to understand the history and architecture of counties north of the Lehigh Valley, look elsewhere.

Dawn M. Drake
Missouri Western State University


In popular imagination the English landscape is commonly envisioned as a patchwork quilt of small irregularly-sized fields enclosed by verdant hedgerows. As a source of cultural identity, this enclosed landscape is often thought to encapsulate a timeless appeal to conservative rural tradition and Englishness. However, like many other cultural artifacts of modernity, the “tradition” surrounding the enclosing of open fields in England since 1700 is largely invented. As a process of landscape change, enclosure was dramatic, disruptive, and disturbing. While the geometries of enclosure have long been reconstructed by historical geographers and economic historians alike, the artistic responses to this transformation are much less well known. Examining these proves fertile ground for Waites’s pioneering study. The book is considerably wider in scope than the title alone implies. While landscape painting provides the core lens through which to conceptualise and critique the erasure of the common field systems of England, the interpretation of this process takes the author full-square into debates over the relationship between land, society, and identity. Concern with the loss of centuries-old tradition of communal solidarity in the countryside is as central to the argument as the detailed discussion of a range of landscape artists and their work. In many ways, the strength of this book lies in reinterpretation. While many of the themes or artists discussed will be familiar to historical geographers of landscape, the insistent focus on common land opens up fresh, insightful, and innovative findings.

The organization of the book is notable. The author successfully eschews a strictly chronological narrative and deftly weaves together changing ideas about landscape and its interpretation in a manner that consistently illuminates his key themes. It begins with a useful,
if brief, outline of the nature of open field systems and their subsequent enclosure. For those not well versed in English agricultural history, this will be very welcome. Coupled with this, the author also sets out a framework for interpreting landscape paintings within the historiography of English landscape art. Here, as elsewhere in the volume, theory is worn lightly. The response to this choice probably will depend largely on the reader’s own predilection for engaging in discourses on “ways of seeing.” Following this, groups of artists are considered in relation to a series of specific genres of English landscape painting: prospects; the creation of idylls; English naturalism; and nostalgia. The penultimate chapter shifts somewhat from this distinctively thematic approach to consider towns and the growing pressure of urbanism on commons adjacent to, or indeed within, urban boundaries. Interpretively, this thematic approach works very well, while the author manages to keep a sufficiently clear narrative thread to tie the story together over the whole period.

What is so interesting about this book is how familiar artists and their work are seen afresh when the common field is the organizing principle guiding an investigation of their work. The paintings of Turner, Constable, Gainsborough, and a host of lesser-known names are carefully considered to see what light can be shed on the nature, timing, and reaction to the loss of common land. The range of paintings and drawings considered is impressive. Some give quite direct evidence on extant common land or its enclosure, but many are ostensibly about quite distinct themes such as hunting, farming, or prospects for the landowning class. In these instances, the author demonstrates considerable skill reading against the grain to piece together how change in the countryside was represented. Furthermore, despite the title, Waites considers a much wider range of evidence than paintings alone. The poetry of John Clare is perhaps an obvious source, writing about the loss of common fields around his native Helpston, Northamptonshire. Here the author intriguingly triangulates Clare’s prose with Peter Tillemans’s drawings of the same landscape. In this and other examples, Waites demonstrates the analytical power of focusing a range of sources on particular places to ground broader interpretive themes. In other contexts, the work of writers as diverse as Cobbett, Wordsworth, Blake, and Arthur Young are interpolated with the sketches, drawings, and paintings of George Lambert, George Stubbs, William Turner, and John Sell Cotman.

Inevitably in a work of this scope there are absences, some of which the author is well aware of. Certain counties dominate, particularly those in lowland England such as Norfolk, Northamptonshire, and Oxfordshire. Little sense is gained of the transformation of Cumbria, Yorkshire, or Cornwall in this period. Discussion of towns too appears focused on places where the ground is well prepared, such as London, Norwich, or Leicester. By contrast, little is said on the impact of the explosive growth of the great industrial cities of the north. For urban heaths and commons in particular, the role of such spaces as subversive and a threat to the wider moral order could also have been developed further.

Sadly, in one or two places the attractive format and production of the book are marred by the occasional typographical error. For a book concerned so centrally with visual images, the relatively small size inevitably compresses the reproduction of a number of paintings. For the black and white images in particular, it is occasionally difficult to make out the detail that the author so ably describes. These minor quibbles aside, this is an impressive work that deserves to be read by all those with an interest in the remaking of the English landscape. For historical geographers in particular, it demonstrates, beyond the broad themes discussed above, the great value of getting close to places in the landscape via archives, texts, and images to shed further light on one of the most enduring and fascinating historical records we possess.

Iain S. Black
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