"Where are the originals?" Britishness and problems of authenticity in post-Union literature from Addison to Macpherson.

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

University of Leeds, School of English

September 2001

The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the generous help, encouragement and support of many people. My research has benefited beyond reckoning from the supervision of Professor David Fairer, whose inspired scholarship has never interfered with his commitment to my research. It is difficult to know whether to thank or to curse Professor Andrew Wawn for introducing me to James Macpherson's Ossianic poetry during my MA at Leeds, but at any rate I am now doubly indebted to him for his insightful reading of a chapter of this thesis. I am also grateful to Professor Paul Hammond for his enormously helpful comments and suggestions on another chapter. And despite the necessary professional distance which an internal examiner must maintain, I have still enjoyed the benevolent proximity effect of Professor Edward Larrissy. I am grateful to Sue Baker and the administrative staff of the School of English for providing me with employment and moral support during this thesis, especially Pamela Rhodes.

Special thanks to the inestimable help, friendship and rigorous mind of Dr. Michael Brown, and to Professor Terence and Sue Brown for their repeated generous hospitality in Dublin. Many thanks also to Dr. Colin Winborn for finding me a room with a view in Armley. I am deeply grateful to my beloved son Harry for indulging his Dad during the past three turbulent years. Finally, this thesis could not have happened without the loving support, patience and gifted mind of Ingrid Gunby, who has had the unlucky chore of keeping me on the straight and narrow for the past two years: thank you for bringing our beautiful Oscar into the world, and I dedicate whatever shines in this thesis to you.

Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between the formation of British national identity and textual authenticity in the eighteenth century, focusing on literary practices of myth-making and nation-building by a range of authors from Joseph Addison to James Macpherson. Exploring a variety of 'authentic' as well as 'fabricated' sources, the thesis traces the origins of Britishness to authors as diverse as King Alfred, Tacitus and Julius Caesar. The question 'Where are the originals?', which Samuel Johnson levelled at the problematic Ossianic poetry of James Macpherson, serves as an organising principle throughout the thesis.

Chapter One outlines an illustrative set of perspectives on the sources of post-Union identity in Great Britain, addressing the tensions between mythical originals and the premise of authenticity by authors including Geoffrey of Monmouth, Samuel Johnson, Joseph Addison, Martin Martin and Daniel Defoe. Chapter Two examines Addison's association of the ballad *Chevy-Chase* with the epic tradition, forming a critical context for reading the problematic ballad *Hardyknute* as a product of British nation-building. Chapter Three concentrates on Thomas Warton's miscellany entitled *The Union*, mapping the intermixture of poetry, oratory and the political tension between old and new British identities during the 1750s. In Chapter Four, William Blackstone's *The Great Charter and Charter of the Forest* provides a post-Union context for revisiting both the originals of the Magna Carta and Gilbert Burnet's 'authentication' of the ancient constitution. In Chapter Five, the effects of the Penal Laws and the subsequent demise of professional bards in Ireland set the stage for a transformation of Irish bardic tradition in Micheál Coimín's *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth*. Finally, Chapter Six brings these various problems of authentic originals, fabrication and identity to bear on the work of James Macpherson. Concentrating primarily on his pre-Ossianic poetry, this final chapter examines the development of Macpherson's literary and political affiliations, aiming to shed some light on the 'originals' which preceded his Ossianic poetry.

Tracing the language of British nationhood from the fragmentary to the epic, my argument concludes with Macpherson, situating him within an Addisonian tradition of myth-making and a Bolingbrokean tradition of nation-building. Whether in his *Dictionary of the English Language* or in the Ossian controversy, Johnson's insistence upon pure originals signifies his English resistance to the mixed identity of Britishness. But it remains to be seen whether Johnson's own work, or indeed culture itself, can sustain the weight of his question, 'Where are the originals?'

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Introduction

In his 1907 'Preface for Politicians' to *John Bull's Other Island,* George Bernard Shaw writes that 'Macaulay, seeing that the Irish had in Swift an author worth stealing, tried to annex him by contending that he must be classed as an Englishman because he was not an aboriginal Celt. He might as well have refused the name of Briton to Addison because he did not stain himself blue and attach scythes to the poles of his sedan chair'.[1] The fraught relationship between Ireland and Britain observed here by Shaw resonates with the wider historiographical disputes and cultural tensions between England, Scotland, Ireland and Wales, both before and after the 1707 Act of Union. His incisive comment on the identity of Addison and Swift, Britons and Celts, therefore serves as an appropriate beginning to this thesis, which is concerned with problems of literary authenticity and their relationship to questions of identity in the post-Union nation-state of Great Britain.

The enduring popularity of that seminal text, *The Invention of Tradition* (1983), attests to the topicality of this relationship between authenticity and identity. In that collection of essays, Hugh Trevor-Roper attempts to distinguish between some of the conventional symbols of Scottishness, mixing the kilt, 'traditional' clan costume, and the literary heritage of Ossian into an indictment of Highland cultural identity.[2] In a separate essay, Prys Morgan similarly tries to

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[1] George Bernard Shaw, *Preface for Politicians (John Bull's Other Island)* (1907), in *Bernard Shaw: The Complete Prefaces*, ed. by Dan H. Laurence and Daniel J. Leary, 3 vols (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane/ The Penguin Press, 1993), I, pp. 193-243 (p. 197).

[2] Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition in Scotland', in *The Invention of Tradition*, ed. by Terence Ranger and Eric Hobsbawm (Cambridge: Canto, 1997), pp. 15-42. Cited hereafter as *Invention of Tradition*.

expose as nostalgic fiction a range of narratives which depict life in ancient Wales.[3] However, readers of *The Invention of Tradition* will look in vain for a similar investigation of the immemorial 'traditions' of England, or the 'invention' of Englishness by Anglocentric historians. Focusing on parades and pageantry, David Cannadine does examine the public rituals of the British monarchy, c.1820-1977; however, compared with Trevor-Roper and Morgan's enthusiastic dismantling of Scottish and Welsh cultural identities, Cannadine's essay offers only a perfunctory explication of Britishness.[4] As it is neither accurate nor acceptable to conflate the terms 'England' and 'Britain', or 'English' and 'British', it is curious that *The Invention of Tradition* revels in the myth-making associated with Britishness, while implicitly privileging the authenticity of England's 'pure' origins.

Historiography itself is no stranger to 'invention', and in this thesis historians provide some of the most politicised and unbridled examples of literary imposture. As Bernard Shaw censures Macaulay for attempting to characterise Swift as an 'Englishman', so he might also berate Linda Colley, who, having explicitly denied the relevance of Ireland to the 'evolution of Britishness', annexes Edmund Burke into her narrative of British history.[5] However, as the ongoing bloody 'troubles' between Unionist and Republican factions show, Colley's historiographical wish-fulfilment is refuted by the constitutional realities of Northern Ireland. As in *The Invention of Tradition*, a

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[3] Prys Morgan, 'From a Death to a View: The Hunt for the Welsh Past in the Romantic Period', in *Invention of Tradition*, pp. 43-100.
[4] David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the 'Invention of Tradition', c. 1820-1977', in *Invention of Tradition,* pp. 101-64.
[5] Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 8. Cited hereafter as *Britons*.

text whose presence is felt throughout *Britons* (1992), Colley's omission of Ireland from post-Union Britain calls the legitimacy of her wider argument into question. Both of these texts have helped shape this thesis, particularly in relation to questions of 'authentic' cultural and national identities.

In his landmark study *Nations Before Nationalism*, John A. Armstrong makes the following observation about the connection between identity and language:

> Anthropological historians have been increasingly obliged to confront the fact, implicit in [Frederik] Barth's approach, that groups tend to define themselves not by reference to their own characteristics but by exclusion, that is, by comparison to "strangers". Primitive man, according to this interpretation, was disturbed by the uncanny experience of confronting others who, perforce, remained mute in response to his attempts at communication, whether oral or through symbolic gestures.[6]

Armstrong's association of linguistic boundaries with the formation of communities compares interestingly with state-oriented concepts of identity. In his book, the 'focus is on group identities rather than upon institutional structures such as the state'.[7] Armstrong's concentration on the connection between language, myth and identity is part of the conceptual framework of this thesis. He notes that Tacitus's *Agricola* represents a key point of origin for a variety of 'imperial myths'.[8] As will be discussed in this thesis, many writers from Addison to Macpherson demonstrate a formative post-Union concern with Tacitus, 'imperial myths', and the creation of a shared *lingua franca* of the British body politic. Such a dynamic range of voices would have to undergo diverse processes of cultural compression before this British *lingua franca* would find its audience.

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[6] John A. Armstrong, *Nations before Nationalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1982), p. 5.
[7] *Nations before Nationalism*, p. 3.
[8] *Nations before Nationalism*, p. 130.

The formation of a distinctively British literary language involves generations of writers actively imagining the nation into existence, elementally conforming over the course of several centuries to Benedict Anderson's definition of the nation as an 'imagined community'.[9] Whether explicitly or implicitly, the disparity between post-Union and pre-Union cultures was a central concern of many writers in Great Britain. The identity of Great Britain, or any other nation, extends far beyond the machinations of its political institutions. Through texts as varied as the Magna Carta, *The Spectator*, the problematic ballad *Hardyknute*, and William Blackstone's groundbreaking edition of *The Great Charter* (1759), this thesis examines the role of constitutional history, myths and ballads in the making of British nationhood. One of the arguments put forward is that Britishness has no central design, only competing narratives of origin. As Alexander Murdoch notes, 'the "four nations" idea of British history' was first advanced by John Pocock.[10] While as a general principle this thesis embraces Pocock's 'four nations' approach, in practice it covers only Ireland, Scotland and England. My omission of Wales is not intentional, but a product of the necessary restrictions of length and time imposed upon doctoral theses. Ideally, I would like to have been able to include a chapter on Ambrose Philips's play, *The Briton. A Tragedy* (1722), a Whig appropriation of Welsh antiquity, and an important commentary on anxieties about British identity in the wake of the South Sea Bubble (1720). However, this topic may form a significant part of a future research project.

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[9] See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (London and New York: Verso, 1991), pp. 5-7.

My assumptions regarding the ways that historiography, myths and myth-making are used to legitimate various identities in post-Union Britain are indebted in many ways to Armstrong, Anderson and Pocock, whose influences are fundamental and implicit throughout this thesis. Yet the issue of textual authenticity itself, particularly the concept of 'forgery', has often been represented in eighteenth-century studies as a separate discipline from these 'imagined communities'. Christine Gerrard's synthesis of poetry, politics and national myth addresses this gap between political ideology and identity myths, and her work has been influential in my reading of eighteenth-century literature.[11] Norman Davies's wide-ranging history of the British Isles has also provided fresh insights into the interpretation of the past.[12] However, much research remains to be done concerning the eighteenth-century arbiters of authenticity, where there is an inevitable conflict of interest between the historicity of 'pure' origins and social needs for the validation of self-identity. Only through acknowledging this dilemma regarding the issues of 'authentic history' and the ubiquitous fictions of nation-building can we begin to distinguish 'forgery' from fiction, and to evaluate the semantic distinctions between the positive 'construction' and pejorative 'fabrication' of history.

In the eighteenth century, fiction masqueraded as genuine history at least as often as allegations of fabrication were levelled at poets. Ian Haywood has increased our knowledge of the relationships between forgery and identity, as

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[10] Alexander Murdoch, *British History 1660-1832* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 74. The work to which Murdoch refers is J.G.A. Pocock, 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject', in *Journal of Modern History*, 47 (1975), 601-28.
[11] Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth 1725-1742* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Cited hereafter as *The Patriot Opposition*.
[12] Norman Davies, *The Isles: A History* (London: Macmillan, 2000).

well as fiction and history, in eighteenth-century British literature; many of the issues which he has raised are developed in this thesis.[13] Yet there is more scope for the exploration of the ideological politics of the 'pure' or 'authentic' literary source. Paul Baines has recently published an extensive survey dedicated to forgery in the eighteenth century.[14] Yet the term 'forgery' implicitly relies upon the existence of genuine 'originals'. An issue of the journal *Angelaki*, with a special focus on a revaluation of Thomas Chatterton, was recently devoted to 'narratives of forgery'.[15] Its editor, Nick Groom, has subsequently produced another important collection of essays on Chatterton, whose work he describes as 'perpetually challenging the genres of writing, mixing national histories, national fictions, and national myths in a great post-Enlightenment reinvention of the past'.[16] Groom's influence on this thesis extends from the problematic definition of 'forgery' to the nature of the literary source itself, including the bardic tradition claimed by James Macpherson and the counter-appropriation of English minstrelsy and the ballad form by the antiquarian Thomas Percy.[17] My research on the literary sources of British nation-building from Addison to Macpherson augments Groom's published research on the ballad form.

My awareness of myth-making, cultural identity and the premise of authenticity began with the Ossianic poetry of James Macpherson, but the scope

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[13] See Ian Haywood, 'The Making of History: Historiography and Literary Forgery in the Eighteenth Century', *Literature and History*, 9 (1983), 139-51.
[14] Paul Baines, *The House of Forgery in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Aldershot, Hants. and Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1999).
[15] *Angelaki*, vol. 1, no. 2 (Winter, 1993-94).
[16] *Thomas Chatterton and Romantic Culture*, ed. by Nick Groom (Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan/ St. Martin's, 1999), p. 5.
[17] See Nick Groom, 'Celts, Goths and the Nature of the Literary Source', in *Tradition in Transition: Women Writers, Marginal Texts, and the Eighteenth-Century Canon*, ed. by Alvaro Ribeiro and James Basker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), pp. 275-96, and *The Making of Percy's* Reliques (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999).

of this interest in the politics of literary imposture has widened to include a range of authors and texts. Although these issues run throughout the thesis, it is the final chapter which exposes the flaws of Johnson's seminal question, levelled at Macpherson's Ossianic poetry: 'Where are the originals?'. As recent surveys by Jerome McGann and Howard Weinbrot indicate, in the past ten years there has been a rush to reassess the importance of Macpherson.[18] Yet both of these authors struggle to bring something new to his work, labouring at times to place him in a suitable context. More focused and sustained examinations of his work have appeared in studies by Colin Kidd, Nicholas Hudson and in a recent collection of essays edited by Terence Brown, all of which have shaped my own response to Macpherson's work.[19]

Katie Trumpener's recent study on 'bardic nationalism' and the 'Romantic novel' makes a nominal claim to the field which I have outlined.[20] Yet for a study of this nature, her 'bard' is a curiously modern and generalised construct, reliant almost exclusively upon Romantic representations themselves, rather than an evolution from pre-eighteenth-century originals. And like Gerald Newman, Trumpener often has an unfortunate tendency to conflate the terms 'English' and 'British', as though they were conceptually interchangeable.[21] Howard Gaskill's recent critical edition, combined with a separate collection of

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[18] Jerome McGann, *The Poetics of Sensibility: A Revolution in Literary Style* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) and Howard Weinbrot, *Britannia's Issue: The Rise of British Literature from Dryden to Ossian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[19] Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish whig historians and the creation of an Anglo-British identity, 1689–c.1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), cited hereafter as Kidd; Nicholas Hudson, '"Oral Tradition": The Evolution of an Eighteenth-Century Concept', in *Tradition in Transition: Women Writers, Marginal Texts, and the Eighteenth-Century Canon*, pp. 161-76; *Celticism*, ed. by Terence Brown (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996).

[20] Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997).

fine essays that he has also edited, has made Macpherson's Ossianic poetry accessible to a far wider audience.[22] Paul de Gategno's monograph on Macpherson represents a welcome addition to this turning tide of scholarship.[23] But the most compelling analysis and research behind the present revitalisation of Macpherson studies has been produced by Fiona Stafford, among whose other important works the essay on Wordsworth's problematic debts to Macpherson provided the crucial spark for the inception of this thesis.[24] There has been a curious resistance to admitting the highly influential works of Macpherson into the canon of poetry in the English language. Perhaps this is due to their controversial status as putative 'forgeries', or perhaps it has more to do with a perennial unwillingness to challenge our own implicit faith in the premise of textual authenticity itself. As will be argued in this thesis, fabrication is synonymous with culture, and the vexed problem in British literature regarding authentic originals is as relevant to Chatterton or Macpherson as it is to such iconic texts as the 'ancient constitution', Johnson's *Dictionary,* or Pope's translation of the *Iliad.*

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[21] Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830*, 2nd edn (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).
[22] *Ossian Revisited,* ed. by Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991).
[23] Paul J. deGategno, *James Macpherson* (Boston: Twayne, 1989).
[24] Fiona Stafford, '"Dangerous Success": Ossian, Wordsworth, and English Romantic Literature', in *Ossian Revisited*, pp. 49-72. See also *The Sublime Savage: James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988) and *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations*, ed. by Fiona Stafford and Howard Gaskill (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998) and 'Primitivism and the "Primitive" Poet: A Cultural Context for Macpherson's Poetry', in *Celticism*, pp. 79-96.

'Where are the originals?': the origins of Britishness

Near the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Act of Union (1707) had provided the constitutional definition of the state of Great Britain, but it lacked the power to legislate the ways in which the newly-created British public perceived of themselves. Reading a range of literature from the 1690s to the reign of George III, it becomes evident that those whom the Union had legally bound together struggled to conceive of themselves as a single body politic. In effect, the Act of Union had created a disjunction between pre- and post-Union identities, and Great Britain found itself in conflict about its ancient 'origins', and without a shared sense of nationhood. In ways that legislation could not address, the perceived legitimacy of this new Britishness was contingent upon an immemorial past. However, this sense of an original 'Britain' did provide political figures with raw materials for national myth-making. Upon reading a draft of his 1760 coronation speech, which had been composed by Lord Hardwicke, George III requested that a single line be inserted: 'Born and educated in this country, I glory in the name of Britain'. After some private and politically loaded remarks about a spelling error, Lord Hardwicke did add the line to the speech, but he changed the spelling of the final word from 'Britain' to 'Briton'.[1] This nice point between the King and the Lord Chancellor might be seen to address uncertainties about George III's perceived status as an authentic embodiment of British identity. This chapter will argue that this problem of

[1] See Philip C. Yorke, *The Life and Correspondence of Philip Yorke, Earle of Hardwicke, Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain*, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), III, p. 262. Hardwicke seems to have been unaware that authors from Camden, to Defoe, to Dr. Johnson had used the word 'Britain' to signify both the land and its people.

authenticity was not just connected to the House of Hanover, but to the conceptual enigma of British originals.

Establishing the authenticity of British origins, or 'originals', had occupied political and historical writers for centuries. The antiquarian Edmund Gibson (1669-1748), Bishop of London, was no exception to this idea. In Gibson's 1722 edition of William Camden's *Britannia* (1586), Camden addresses the elusive issue of British originals in a candid manner:

> But concerning the most antient or the very first Inhabitants of this Island, as also the original of the name of *Britain*, divers opinions have been stated; [. . .] Nor ought we *Britains* to expect more certain evidences in this case, than other nations. For, except those in particular, whose originals the holy Scriptures have delivered; all the rest, as well as we, remain under a dark cloud of error and ignorance, concerning their first rise. [. . .] The first Inhabitants of countries had other cares and thoughts, than the transmitting their several originals to posterity. [. . .] But in the following ages, there arose in many nations a sort of men, who were studious to supply these defects out of their own invention.[2]

Contesting the 'invention' of fabulous myths of origin by this 'sort of men', Camden then expounds his own theory that 'the *Original* of the Britains' could be traced through the Gauls to Armenia, and back to Noah's Ark itself.[3] Presumably he thought a more direct link between Britannia and the Garden of Eden would have seemed improbable. Camden's genealogy represents an extraordinary British original. Yet as will be seen throughout this thesis, such literal connections to antediluvian origins are far from unusual in British literature. In the Dedication (to George I) of his edition of Camden, however, Gibson proposes an alternative theory of British national origins: 'Not only our Histories, but our Language, our Laws, our Customs, our Names of Persons and

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[2] William Camden, *Britannia: or a Chorographical Description of Great Britain and Ireland, Together with the Adjacent Islands*, ed. by Edmund Gibson, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: James and John Knapton, John Darby, Arthur Bettesworth, Francis Fayam, John Osborn and Tho. Longman, John Pemberton, Charles Rivington, Francis Clay, Jeremiah Batley, and Aaron Ward, 1722), I, p. v. Cited hereafter as *Britannia*.

Names of Places, do all abundantly testify, that the greatest part of your Majesty's Subjects here, are of Saxon Original'.[4]

Something crucial had occurred during the interval between the reigns of George I and his grandson, George III. Bishop Gibson had flattered the German-speaking George I by identifying him as a 'Saxon', but George III would explicitly claim the authority of an original 'Britain'. The disparate histories with which these two kings identify themselves returns us to the apparent contingency of modern Britishness upon an imagined and immemorial past. This immemorial past was not readily reducible to an integrated iconography of nationhood, because if such a thing as the totality of British myth-making could be conceived, it would be composed of competing narratives of Welshness, Scottishness, Irishness and Englishness. From George I to George III, this shift in the origins which they claim demonstrates the changing tides of British identity. This chapter will explore some of the conceptual origins of national identity in eighteenth-century Great Britain, examining how certain representations of British 'originals' are fraught with problems of authenticity. The troubled relationship between authenticity and identity is central to this thesis. Moving towards that end, the chapter will outline some of the ways that historians have constructed the image of Britain and Britishness. Looking at specific works by Geoffrey of Monmouth, Samuel Johnson, Thomas Blackwell, Joseph Addison, Martin Martin and Daniel Defoe, this chapter will highlight how these writers conceptualise and sustain their own ideal British identities. Particular attention will be paid to the

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[3] *Britannia,* I, p. xxx.

[4] *Britannia*, I, p. B recto.

literary formation of a distinctly British culture and the shifting boundaries of Britishness.

A British citizen of Irish origins, Richard Steele inaugurated his influential periodical *The Tatler* in 1709. Periodicals subsequently influenced by Steele's *Tatler* would provide an important national forum for airing, shaping and defining what it meant to be a Briton. But identity is always contingent to some degree upon memory and a sense of the past. The new nation of Great Britain lacked a sense of common origins, and this could not be supplied solely by a flourishing periodical press.[5] This is not to denigrate the depth and scope of periodical literature of the day, but to acknowledge that periodicals as a genre were too ephemeral to serve as the origin of nationhood. A tenable British national identity would require affirmations of its own historical continuity, whether real or imagined. Venerable myths of Britishness were needed at this time. Interestingly, in 1718, eleven years after the Act of Union, the first English translation of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* (c.1138-39) appeared.[6] In the *Historia*, Geoffrey of Monmouth does not trace the lineage of the Britons to primordial natives of the British Isles, but to Brutus, the great-

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[5] Nicholas Phillipson has constructed an Anglocentric history of Scotland's role in eighteenth-century Great Britain, one which stresses the indispensability of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. Phillipson's views on the cultural significance of the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* in eighteenth-century Scotland will be the subject of a detailed discussed later in this chapter.

[6] See *The British History, translated into English from the Latin of Jeffrey of Monmouth, with a large Preface concerning the Authority of the History*, trans. by Aaron Thompson (London, 1718). All citations refer to *The History of the Kings of Britain*, trans. by Lewis Thorpe (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 33. Cited hereafter as *History of the Kings of Britain*.

grandson of Aeneas.[7] Geoffrey claims that the *Historia* is a translation of a remarkable ancient text in the 'British language':

> Walter, Archdeacon of Oxford, a man skilled in the art of public speaking and well-informed about the history of foreign countries, presented me with a certain very ancient book written in the British language. This book, attractively composed to form a consecutive and orderly narrative, set out all the deeds of these men, from Brutus, the first King of all the Britons, down to Cadwallader, the son of Cadwallo, all told in exceeding beauty. At his request, therefore, albeit that never have I gathered gay flowers of speech in other men's little gardens, and am content with mine own rustic manner of speech and mine own writing-reeds, have I been at the pains to translate this volume into the Latin tongue.[8]

The existence of this 'very ancient book' has never been proven, but Geoffrey's claim that it was 'written in the British language' suggests a remarkable continuity of culture and learning in Britain. Here was a venerable if elusive source of British identity. Even in Geoffrey's day, however, critics scoffed at the authenticity of his text, and at the very idea that Walter's 'ancient book' had ever existed.[9] Much of Geoffrey of Monmouth's narrative can be found in a variety of written and oral material which predates the *Historia*, but it illustrates a formative impulse towards an epic narrative of nationhood, compiled by an editor who was not afraid to take liberties with his texts.

By the end of the Elizabethan period, Geoffrey of Monmouth's myth-making had become an elemental source of cultural identity in English literature; Malory, Holinshed, Sidney, Spenser and Shakespeare had found an 'original' in the *Historia Regum Britanniae*. Its questionable authenticity had not hindered the *Historia* from being appropriated as a source of British cultural origins, and hopes still remained that Geoffrey's source-text would be recovered. In 1773, the

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[7] See Roger A. Mason, 'Scotching the Brut: Politics, History and National Myth in Sixteenth-Century Britain', in *Scotland and England: 1286-1815*, ed. by Roger A. Mason (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), pp. 60-84. Cited hereafter as 'Scotching the Brut'.

[8] *History of the Kings of Britain*, p. 53.

first historian of English poetry, Thomas Warton, wrote the following in a letter to Bodleian Librarian John Price with hopes of locating Geoffrey's 'original':

> In your Library at Jesus you have a Copy of Geoffrey of Monmouth's *British Original*. I wish you would look whether it appears to be of great antiquity; for it is pretended that it is the very Copy from which Geoffrey made his Latin translation. I think you & I examined it formerly, & I believe the edges of the Leaves are cutt too close. Pray enquire and find out (take notice I am not sending you on a Search into that vile country *South*-wales) whether or no there is not a Squire Davies at Llanerk in Denbighshire, who has a very curious Library of Manuscripts; in which, as I am informed, there is a Copy of Geoffrey's original in the hand-writing of Guttyn Owen a welsh bard of 1470.[10]

It is interesting that Warton bases this judgement about the '*British Original*' held at Jesus College on its physical attributes. In his opinion, 'the edges of the Leaves are cutt too close', signifying that the craftsmanship involved in making this manuscript was too refined for it to be of 'great antiquity'. When he undertook the first history of 'English' poetry, Warton had chosen to define his subject in terms of language rather than nationality, because his study deals with Scottish poetry at length. But the practical effect of mixing English and Scottish poetry in this way was to create a genuinely British miscellany.

By the eighteenth century, the 'British language' from which the *Historia* had ostensibly been 'translated' was being pushed into relative obscurity by the ascendancy of English. In A *Dictionary of the English Language* (1755), Dr. Johnson makes the following distinction between the British and English languages:

> Though the *Britains* or *Welsh* were the first possessors of this island, whose names are recorded, and are therefore in civil history always considered as the predecessors of the present inhabitants; yet the deduction of the *English* language, from the earliest times of which we have any knowledge to its present state, requires no mention of them: for we

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[9] For Geoffrey of Monmouth's sources, see *History of the Kings of Britain*, pp. 14-19.

[10] See letter 301, *The Correspondence of Thomas Warton*, ed. by David Fairer (Athens, GA and London: University of Georgia Press, 1995), pp. 328-29 (p. 328).

> have so few words, which can, with any probability, be referred to *British* roots, that we justly regard the *Saxons* and *Welsh*, as nations totally distinct.[11]

Johnson assumes here that language is a nation's defining characteristic. It might be noted that such a position puts him into immediate difficulties regarding his own multilingual nation of Great Britain. His distinction between the 'English' and 'British' languages explicitly equates the term 'British' with 'Welsh', emphasising England's purer 'Saxon' genealogy. In fact, this idealisation of England's Saxon heritage may be read as a declamation against what he saw as the corruption of an expanding British empire; readers would be hard pressed to find any mention in the *Dictionary* of Great Britain. By this omission, he attempts to obfuscate his own Britishness, identifying instead with an imaginary England which he has conjured out of literature itself. As will be seen in his *Dictionary*, there is a formative gap between Johnson and this idealised identity.

While this distinction between English and British languages has a sound linguistic basis, Johnson's identification of the word 'British' exclusively with Wales disguises another motive which shapes his *Dictionary*. This motive is bound up in the troubled relationship between 'Britain' and 'Britons' which George III had addressed in his coronation speech. To understand Johnson's conceptualisation of the English language is to understand his idea of England itself; consequently, it is necessary to outline his fundamental assumptions about its origins. In fact, Johnson relies so heavily in the *Dictionary* upon his conception of the term 'original' that it requires some preliminary explanation. One important anecdote from Boswell's *Life of Johnson* (1791)—albeit later than

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[11] *A Dictionary of the English Language: in which the words are deduced from their originals, and illustrated in their different significations by examples from the best writers. To which are*

the first edition of the *Dictionary*—sheds important light on this point. James Boswell records a dinner party at the London home of booksellers Charles (1739-1807) and Edward (1732-1779) Dilly, during which the following conversation takes place:

> JOHNSON. 'O! Mr. Dilly—you must know that an English Benedictine Monk at Paris has translated *The Duke of Berwick's Memoirs*, from the original French, and has sent them to me to sell.' [. . .] DILLY. 'Are they well translated, Sir?' JOHNSON. 'Why, Sir, very well—in a style very current and very clear. I have written to the Benedictine to give me an answer upon two points—What evidence is there that the letters are authentick? (for if they are not authentick they are nothing;)—And how long will it be before the original French is published? For if the French edition is not to appear for a considerable time, the translation will be almost as valuable as an original book.'[12]

The word 'original' carries interesting connotations in this exchange. Johnson's fundamental assumption about the nature of language itself emerges here in his categorical statement that if Berwick's letters 'are not authentick they are nothing'. He repeatedly stresses the relationship between the terms 'original' and 'authentick', equating authenticity with incontrovertible origins.[13] Noticeably, he treats the idea of translation with generic suspicion.

In Johnson's mind, translation introduces corruption into a text's original state of purity; therefore, translated texts somehow tend toward a fictive, corrupt order of language and literature. But Johnson contradicts his own distaste for translation in his later assertion that Pope's English translation of the *Iliad* 'is certainly the noblest version of poetry which the world has ever seen, and its publication must therefore be considered as one of the great events in the annals

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prefixed, A History of the Language, and An English Grammar; by Samuel Johnson, 2 vols (1755; repr. London: Longman, 1990), p. D. Cited hereafter as *Dictionary*.

[12] *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. by George Birkbeck Hill and L. F. Powell, 6 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934-50), III, p. 286. Cited hereafter as *Life of Johnson*.

[13] Johnson defines the word 'authentick' in his *Dictionary* as 'That which has everything to give it authority, as an authentick register. It is used in opposition to any thing by which authority is destroyed, as authentick, not counterfeit. It is never used of persons.'

of learning'.[14] Given his generic suspicion of translation, it seems highly unlikely that Johnson could countenance the idea that Pope's translation could exceed Homer's original. In the following exchange between Johnson and the Nonconformist minister, Dr. Henry Mayo (1733-1793), the discussion at the Dillys' dinner party suitably comes to rest on the authority of originals:

> DR MAYO. 'Pray, Sir, are Ganganelli's letters authentick?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir. Voltaire put the same question to the editor of them, that I did to Macpherson—Where are the originals?'[15]

'Where are the originals?' For Johnson, this is an incontrovertible question which strips away the disguises of literary imposture, fabrication and corruption. At a stroke, it delineates between truth and fiction, between mystification and solid reality. In certain aspects of the *Dictionary*, however, Johnson himself proves unequal to his own question.

The first edition of Johnson's *Dictionary* gives the following definitions of the term 'original':

Original *n.*	1. Beginning; first existence. 2. Fountain; source; that which gives beginning or existence. 3. First copy; archetype; that from which anything is transcribed. 4. Derivation; descent.
Original *adj.*	Primitive; pristine; first.[16]

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[14] *Johnson's Lives of the Poets*, III, p. 119.

[15] Mayo refers here to Giovanni Vincenzo Ganganelli (1705-74) – Pope Clement XIV—and Johnson refers to the Scottish author and protagonist of the Ossian controversy, James Macpherson (1736-96). Macpherson will be the subject of extensive consideration in the sixth chapter of this thesis. For Voltaire's investigation of the fabricated *Lettres interessantes du Pape Clement XIV, traduites de l'Italien et du Latin* (1775), 'edited' by (or more accurately, written by) Louis Antoine Caraccioli (1721-1803), see the anonymous 'Translation of a Letter from Monsieur de Voltaire, concerning the Collection of Letters', in *The Annual Register, or a View of the History, Politics, and Literature, for the Year 1776* (London: J. Dodsley, 1777), pp. 185-88.

[16] *Dictionary*, II, p. 1185.

This definition does not concede that the individual or the creative imagination itself is a valid point of origination. It precludes the idea that something could be both authentic and invented, which is problematic for a man of letters like Johnson. In this sense, it is strangely consistent with his view that Pope would be best remembered as the translator of Homer, rather than an ingenious 'maker' in his own right. All the while that Johnson expresses his contempt for innovation, he is actually engaged in that very practice: an innovative construction of cultural identity, ostensibly founded upon the authenticity of the original English people. The *Dictionary* carefully constructs an argument which validates Johnson's own sense of identity within a politically factious and culturally divergent society. In a sense, he seems to create a master narrative of Englishness that will impose order on the perceived chaos of modern Britain. But defining the word 'original' proves problematic for Johnson in the *Dictionary*, although not in ways that he would have been likely to concede. These problems lie in the *Dictionary*'s Preface and the prefatory essay entitled 'History of the English Language', where his use of unacknowledged sources and the historicity of his argument fail to meet the standards of authenticity which Johnson himself demanded of other authors. As Allen Reddick has noted, 'large portions of the "History" and the "Grammar" are distillations of or outright borrowings from works by others' and that 'Johnson's prefatory essays (unlike the Preface itself) are not particularly original pieces'.[17] More significantly, Johnson's representation of the history of the English language is plagued by problems of authenticity, undermining the authority of his *Dictionary*.

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[17] Allen Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary, 1746-1773* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 74. Johnson writes: 'Swift, in his petty treatise on the *English*

The purpose of this line of enquiry is not to characterise Johnson in some degree as a plagiarist or a poor historian; rather, the object is to point out some of the ways in which his use of the term 'original' is contingent upon his own identification with a fictional England. In the Preface to the *Dictionary*, Johnson creates an extraordinary image of England that is underwritten by anxieties about the status of the English language. The origins to which he wishes to return become manifest in a romantic vision of England which represents a state of sociolinguistic purity, a mythical state of cultural integration. From this fortress England, Johnson declaims against what he perceives as modern degeneration and corruption:

> So far have I been from any care to grace my pages with modern decorations, that I have studiously endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the restoration, whose works I regard as *the wells of English undefiled*, as the pure sources of genuine diction. Our language, for almost a century, has, by the concurrence of many causes, been gradually departing from its original *Teutonick* character, and deviating towards a *Gallick* structure and phraseology, from which it ought to be our endeavour to recal [sic] it, by making our ancient volumes the ground-work of stile, admitting among the additions of later times, only such as may supply real deficiencies, such as are readily adopted by the genius of our tongue, and incorporate easily with our native idioms.[18]

The phrase 'the wells of English undefiled' is a fanciful image, an allusion to Spenser's tribute to Chaucer in *The Faerie Queene* (IV.ii.32.8), locating Johnson's England in an idealised past. Temporally and spatially remote from contemporary life, these 'pure sources' of the English literature are protected by Johnson's imagined fortress whose 'ground-work' of 'ancient volumes' comprise metaphorical earthworks and defensive boundaries, 'admitting' only the words which 'supply real deficiencies' in the language.

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language, allows that new words must sometimes be introduced' (*Dictionary*, I, p. C, 2).

[18] Johnson, *Dictionary*, I, p. C.

When Johnson argues that to admit foreign words into the nation's vocabulary is to corrupt the identity of the nation itself, contending that the English language is inherently self-sufficient, he appears to be backing himself into a corner of his own design. He also echoes some of the ideas of Swift. From the corrupting influence of refinement and affectation to the admission of 'Cant' words into the language, key concepts from Swift inform Johnson's Preface.[19] It is difficult to imagine the future of a nation which resists innovation, creativity or anything new. His association of robust linguistic borders with the survival of the English nation shapes the Preface:

> I have been cautious lest my zeal for antiquity might drive me into times too remote, and croud [sic] my book with words now no longer understood. I have fixed *Sidney*'s work for the boundary, beyond which I make few excursions. From the authors which rose in the time of *Elizabeth*, a speech might be formed adequate to all the purposes of use and elegance. If the language of theology were extracted from *Hooker* and the translation of the Bible; the terms of natural knowledge from *Bacon*; the phrases of policy, war, and navigation from *Raleigh*; the dialect of poetry and fiction from *Spenser* and *Sidney*; and the diction of common life from *Shakespeare*, few ideas would be lost to mankind, for want of *English* words, in which they might be expressed.[20]

Once again we find Johnson firmly emphasising the importance of defensive linguistic 'boundaries', although in this instance they are temporal rather than spatial. Yet we find no acknowledgement from Johnson that Spenser, Sidney and Shakespeare had in part derived their literary authority from the fictional histories of that great fabricator, Geoffrey of Monmouth.

The likelihood that the *Dictionary* could have been so influenced by the ideas of Swift, a Briton of Irish origin, suggests that Johnson's fortress England

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[19] 'The period wherein the *English* tongue received most Improvement, I take to commence with the Beginning of Queen *Elizabeth*'s Reign, and to conclude with the great Rebellion of Forty-two. [. . .] From that great Rebellion to this present Time, I am apt to doubt whether the Corruptions in our Language have not, at least, equalled the refinements of it' 'A Proposal for Correcting, Improving and Ascertaining the English Tongue: In a Letter to the Most Honourable Robert Earl of Oxford and Mortimer, Lord High-Treasurer of Great-Britain' (1712), in *The Prose Works of Jonathan Swift*, ed. by H. Davis, 16 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1939-59), IX, pp. 11-13.

was less impervious to Britishness than he wished to concede. As noted above, Johnson explicitly locates 'the wells of English undefiled' in 'examples and authorities from the writers before the restoration', in an England uncomplicated by the Revolution of 1688 and the Revolution Settlement, the Act of Union and the Hanoverian succession. His anxieties about the corruption of the English language by such 'foreign' influences become manifest in his opinions concerning cultural exchange and textual translation. The process of translation exposes the 'pure' text to the hazards of corruption, interpolation and fiction. Johnson's rhetorical position is that commerce poses the greatest single threat to the integrity of the English language. But Great Britain's incontrovertible status as a trading empire drives a wedge between Johnson and the England with which he identifies.

His anxiety about the corrupting influence of commerce becomes clear in the following passage:

> Commerce, however necessary, however lucrative, as it depraves the manners, corrupts the language; they that have frequent intercourse with strangers, to whom they endeavour to accommodate themselves, must in time learn a mingled dialect, like the jargon which serves the traffickers on the *Mediterranean* and *Indian* coasts. This ['mingled dialect'] will not always be confined to the exchange, the warehouse, or the port, but will be communicated by degrees to other ranks of the people, and be at last incorporated with the current speech.[21]

Apparently, a 'mingled dialect' does not qualify as a genuine language. Although he does not concede the reference here, Johnson's notion of 'the jargon which serves the traffickers on the Mediterranean and Indian coasts' alludes to Dryden's

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[20] Johnson, *Dictionary*, I, p. C.

[21] Johnson, *Dictionary*, I, p. C, 2.

usage of the term *lingua franca*.[22] Under the influence of trade, this supposed degeneration of language is analogous in Johnson's mind to the dissolution of social virtues and national decline following the Revolution of 1688.

An empire built upon trade and commerce necessarily has a large zone of cultural contact with foreign societies. In Johnsonian terms, immemorial Englishness was under siege by Great Britain's wealthy trading economy, corrupting the language into a 'mingled dialect'. What he essentially rejects here is the inevitable *lingua franca* of Britishness, identifying instead with an imagined England, unsullied by the social, economic and political realities of eighteenth-century Britain. Therefore, Johnson is not simply a conservative lexicographer setting up external boundaries against linguistic and cultural change. Constructing a Romantic epic of nationhood from a distinctly fragmented sociolinguistic history, his *Dictionary* represents a literary justification of English resistance to Britishness.

Determined to trace the English language to its sociolinguistic ancestors, Johnson wishes to attribute its birth to a figurative Adam and Eve, whom he admits he is unable to discover. Certainly Camden had provided Johnson with something of a precedent when he argued above that the parents of the English people had been aboard Noah's Ark. But intercourse between languages and cultures has always been too promiscuous to regulate in such metaphorical terms. Although avowedly unable to prove the linguistic 'parent', Johnson salvages what he can of 'pure' Gothic and Saxon orthographies, with which he invokes the

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[22] Dryden uses the term 'lingua franca' in his play as follows: '*English*! Away you Fop! 'tis a kind of *Lingua Franca*, as I have heard the Merchants call it; a certain compound Language, made up of all Tongues that passes [sic] through the *Levant*' (*The Kind Keeper; or Mr. Limberham* [1680], I.1. 477-479).

cultural authority of that 'original' royal patron of the English language, King Alfred. Alfred was regarded at this date as the founder of Oxford, Johnson's own university, and for Johnson, Alfred acts as a kind of surrogate parent of the English language by having sponsored during his reign the Anglo-Saxon translation of Boethius's *The Consolation of Philosophy*. But crucially, Johnson overlooks the enormous liberties which Alfred's translation takes with its original. His treatment of Alfred's text appears to be a strategic obfuscation. As Johnson knew, and as W. F. Bolton has shown, 'Alfred's Old English *Consolatio* will serve as no pony to its Latin source. It departs from Boethius in large ways and small. Though Alfred's late ninth-century version omits substantial portions of the Roman philosopher's early sixth-century original, especially from Book V, it is nonetheless all but twice as long'.[23] Still, Johnson does not pursue the issue that the Old English translation may be something of an illegitimate brainchild, because despite its infidelities to the original text, the Alfredian 'translation' has a quality which Johnson needs to authenticate his argument about the English language: venerable, respectable antiquity.

In his tacit patriotic reverence for King Alfred, Johnson covets this specimen of the 'Saxon' language for its antiquity but cannot broach its gross infidelities to the original Latin text. Crucially, Johnson refers to Alfred's *Boethius* as 'an imitation or paraphrase' rather than a translation, thus side-stepping the problem of its textual authenticity.[24] It is quite possible that the

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[23] W.F. Bolton, 'How Boethian is Alfred's Boethius?', in *Studies in Earlier Old English Prose*, ed. by Paul E. Szarmach (Albany: State University of New York, 1986), pp. 153-68 (p. 153).

[24] The *Dictionary's* prefatory 'History of the English Language' begins by citing 'king Alfred's paraphrase or imitation of *Boethius*, and his short preface, which I have selected as the first specimen of ancient English', after which he provides the text. Johnson then states that 'This may perhaps be considered as a specimen of the Saxon in its highest state of purity, for here are scarcely any words borrowed from the Roman dialects' (*Dictionary*, I, p. D).

Anglo-Saxon *Consolations of Philosophy* was produced by multiple translators under the king's general editorship, so that it represents a kind of miscellany of translations that was authenticated under the pseudonym of Alfred. Such so-called 'authentick' origins are formative in Johnson's *Dictionary*, and though his philological argument is generally viable within the limits of his day, Johnson imagines England not just as a nation bound by a common language, but also as a mythical unity, a Gothicized community which had coalesced from a northern European, pan-Gothic pre-history.

Johnson's next task is to authenticate the Gothic language itself:

> Of the *Gothick*, the only monument remaining is a copy of the gospels somewhat mutilated, which, from the silver with which the characters are adorned, is called the *silver book*.[25] It is now preserved at *Upsal*, and has been twice published. Whether the diction of this venerable manuscript be purely *Gothick* has been doubted; it seems however to exhibit the most ancient dialect now to be found of the *Teutonick* race, and the *Saxon*, which is the original of the present *English*, was either derived from it, or both descended from some common parent.[26]

The *Codex Argenteus*, or 'Silver Book', contains fragments of the four Gospels which were translated from the Greek into Gothic by Ulphilas, a fourth-century Bishop of the Moeso-Goths. According to Joseph Bosworth, the manuscript as an artefact is supposed to be 'the work of Italians in their own country at the close of the fifth century, or beginning of the sixth'.[27] Johnson's 'silver book' itself manifestly demonstrates the degree of Teutonic commerce with other cultures in the fifth century; furthermore, the translator Ulphilas was a Bishop of the Vatican, a cosmopolitan Goth who knew multiple languages. So the purity of

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[25] Johnson's 'silver book', so called for its silver lettering upon vellum, is more formally known as the *Codex Argenteus* held in Uppsala, Sweden, a fourth-century Gothic translation of the Greek Gospels. See *The Gothic and Anglo-Saxon Gospels in Parallel Columns with the Versions of Wycliffe and Tyndale*, ed. by Rev. Joseph Bosworth and George Waring, 3rd edn (London: Reeves and Turner, 1888). Cited hereafter as *The Gothic and Anglo-Saxon Gospels*.

[26] Johnson, *Dictionary*, I, p. D.

Johnson's '*Gothick*' original must be read as a myth. The genealogy of English sociolinguistic identity which he constructs in the *Dictionary* is a desired rather than an actual past.

Johnson is apparently unaware how the constitution of Gothic societies would have precluded the very idea of ethnolinguistic purity. As Herwig Wolfram writes in his *History of the Goths*, Gothic society was a distinctly polyethnic mixture of peoples:

> The polyethnic structure of the Gothic peoples remained intact even within the Roman Empire. The Gothic army that settled in southern Gaul in 418 had the following composition: Tervingian-Vesian and Greutungian-Ostrogothic tribal elements; non-Gothic groups that had been Gothicized to varying degrees, among them Alans, Bessi from Thrace, Galindi from the Baltic Sea, Varni, probably also Heruli, and maybe even Saxons from the Loire and Garonne rivers. [. . .] The kingdom of Theodoric the Great was no less polyethnic. As a Roman high magistrate and king of his Goths, he was actually in the best position to turn his army into a Gothic people, but the ethnogenesis itself involved non-Gothic elements. [. . .] Apart from the Romans who served in Theodoric's army and who were "Goths at heart," there were also former Roman subjects, like the wild Breoni in the Tirol, who became federates of the Gothic federates.[28]

It appears that in the fifth century, a Roman, Saxon or Gael might become a Goth simply by choosing to do so – by becoming a 'Goth at heart'. The Gothic lineage which Johnson claims through England's Saxon forefathers is neither linguistically 'pure' nor historically 'authentick'. This is not to ridicule Dr. Johnson for lacking twentieth-century knowledge of the subject, but to foreground how the *Dictionary* is informed by imagined as well as authentic sources.

With an eye on Roman history and an ear to the great voices of Roman oratory, Johnson makes a final charge at the corruption of the English language in

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[27] *The Gothic and Anglo-Saxon Gospels*, p. vii.

[28] Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, trans. by Thomas J. Dunlop (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 8.

the following remark: 'tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration; we have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language'.[29] In rhetorical terms, Johnson reduces the survival of the nation to the preservation of 'our language' and 'our constitution'. By expurgating foreign corruption from the English language, England itself could begin to become pure again. In effect, it could rediscover its own lost 'originals'. Half a century earlier, however, Daniel Defoe had thoroughly satirised this view of pure Englishness in his poem, *The True Born Englishman* (1701). He castigated 'the Vanity of those who talk of [. . .] being *True Born*; whereas 'tis impossible that we shou'd be *True Born*. [. . .] I confess I find my self mov'd by it to remind our Nation of their own Original, thereby to let them see what a Banter is put upon our selves in it; since speaking of *Englishmen ab Origine*, we are really all Foreigners our selves'.[30]

If the authenticity of Johnson's *Dictionary* labours under his fanciful belief in the existence of pure origins, then it is pertinent to ask how he could justify his forthright assumption that such pure originals had ever existed? One answer to this question can be found in the writings of the Roman historian, Tacitus. As Tacitus states in the *Germania*, 'I accept the view that the peoples of Germany have never contaminated themselves by intermarriage with foreigners but remain of pure blood, unlike any other nation'.[31] Johnson, who mentions Tacitus in his Preface to the *Dictionary*, bases his nationalistic arguments about

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[29] Johnson, *Dictionary*, I, p. C, 3.

[30] 'An Explanatory Preface' to *The True-Born Englishman, A Satyr*, 9th edn, partially reprinted in *Selected Writings of Daniel Defoe*, ed. by James T. Boulton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), pp. 52-53 (p. 52). Cited hereafter as *The True-Born Englishman.*

[31] *The Agricola and The Germania*, trans. by H. Mattingly, rev. by S. A. Handford (London: Penguin, 1970), p. 104. Cited hereafter as *The Agricola and the Germania.*

the purity of the 'Gothick', 'Teutonick' and 'Saxon' originals of the English language on this kind of classical authority. Pondering 'the first inhabitants of Britain' in the *Agricola*, Tacitus admits that the origins of the Britons 'is open to question: one must remember that we are dealing with barbarians'.[32] The notion of barbarous peoples rises from the kind of linguistically-defined concept of identity outlined by Armstrong; barbarians are the 'foreigners' who stare uncomprehendingly at those who have recorded the encounter. But even Tacitus subdivided the generic identity of 'Briton' into tribal communities and linguistic groups. We learn from Tacitus that the Britons were a spirited people who 'have not yet been enervated by protracted peace. History tells us that the Gauls too had their hour of military glory; but since that time a life of ease has made them unwarlike: their valour perished with their freedom. The same has happened to those Britons who were conquered early; the rest are still what the Gauls once were'.[33] Tacitus argues that with 'its very powerful nations', a unified Britain would make a terrible adversary, but that 'now they are distracted between the warring factions of rival chiefs', and consequently that 'It is seldom that two or three states unite to repel a common danger; thus, fighting in separate groups, all are conquered'.[34]

In the *Agricola*, Tacitus reports the Roman circumnavigation of Britain which had recently been completed, confirming for the first time its geographical status as an island. Therefore if Britain had internally failed to conceive of itself as a community united against a common Roman enemy, it could be mapped by the Roman empire as a country that was unified by its natural boundaries. Despite

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[32] *The Agricola and the Germania*, p. 61.
[33] *The Agricola and the Germania*, p. 62.

its importance as a polite account of barbarous Britain, the *Agricola* contains internal inconsistencies, inaccuracies and contradictions which call its historicity into question. Some elements are clearly fictional, created by Tacitus to make his narrative more interesting. An example of Tacitus's fictional history occurs in his representation of a decisive battle between Agricola's army and a 30,000-strong host comprised of 'Caledonians' and various 'Britons'. 'Calgacus', an enigmatic Caledonian orator, rallies this army with a new myth of British unification:

> When I consider the motives we have for fighting and the critical position we are in, I have a strong feeling that the united front you are showing today will mean the dawn of liberty for the whole of Britain. You have mustered to a man, and all of you are free. [. . .] Out of sight of subject shores, we kept even our eyes free from the defilement of tyranny. We, the most distant dwellers upon earth, the last of the free, have been shielded until today by our very remoteness and by the obscurity in which it has shrouded our name. [. . .] The Brigantes, with only a woman to lead them, burned a Roman colony and stormed a camp; and if success had not tempted them to relax their efforts, they might have cast off the yoke. We, who have never been forced to feel that yoke, shall be fighting to preserve our freedom, and not, like them, merely to avenge past injuries. Let us then show, at the very first clash of arms, what manner of men Caledonia has kept in reserve.
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> Do you imagine that the Romans' bravery in war matches their dissoluteness in time of peace? No! It is our quarrels and disunion that have given them fame.[35]

The 'barbarian' Calgacus is a remarkable orator. Although only an excerpt from a much longer speech, this passage immediately brings several issues to mind. The rhetorical polish of Calgacus is seemingly at odds with his barbarian status, and his assertion that the peoples of Britain are 'the most distant dwellers upon earth' is also strange. Given their ostensible 'remoteness' and lack of commerce with other nations, it is odd that Calgacus should conceive of Britain as being at the edge of someone else's empire, rather than at the centre of its own world. There is also another crucial problem: in what language did Calgacus address this 'disunion' of over 30,000 men from different language communities? Calgacus's

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[34] *The Agricola and the Germania*, p. 62.

speech begs the question of a lost original British language, yet his wonderful oration betrays its true author: Tacitus. 'It is a proper Roman declamation', writes Ronald Mellor, 'and Tacitus projects Roman rhetoric into the mouth of a remote barbarian tribal leader and thereby elevates him into an opponent worthy of Agricola'.[36]

As represented by Tacitus, Calgacus is not only a fictional character who declaims against the corruption of Roman imperialism, but also a striking forerunner of what critics centuries later would classify as a 'noble savage'. Calgacus represents an 'identity myth', which John Armstrong sees as necessary for the formation of group identities, and one through which Tacitus attempts to unmask the corruption behind the veil of Roman imperial myths.[37] Tacitus responds to this by planting new seeds of imperial myth in British soil. He writes that prior to the Caledonian battle described above, the remaining free people of Britain 'had realized at last that the common danger must be warded off by united action, and had sent round embassies and drawn up treaties to rally the full force of all their states'.[38] If we take Tacitus's account seriously, then a formal and written prototype for British unification existed almost seventeen centuries before the Act of Union. But we can only wonder in what language these 'treaties' between different language communities were written. Indeed, 'Where are the originals?', we might ask. If ever they actually did exist, they have been lost for

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[35] *The Agricola and the Germania,* pp. 80-82.

[36] Ronald Mellor, *Tacitus* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), p. 12. Cited hereafter as *Tacitus*.

[37] On identity myths see *Nations before Nationalism,* pp. 130, 131, 135. Ronald Mellor writes that 'in the *Agricola* Tacitus also provides cogent critiques of Roman imperialism' through 'the speech he writes for an anonymous Briton' on the eve of Boudicca's revolt in 60 A.D., and also that Tacitus's 'emotions and his art here joined [in Calgacus] to create in the mouth of an enemy a diatribe against imperialism' (*Tacitus*, p. 107).

[38] *The Agricola and the Germania*, p. 79.

almost 2000 years. The fact that Tacitus had taken such liberties with history did not damage his reputation.

Through Calgacus, the *Agricola* would in the future provide British authors with an 'authentic' Caledonian voice from the past, and the *Germania* would implicitly authenticate Johnson's arguments in the *Dictionary* about the purity of England's Germanic origins. Tacitus emphasises the putative purity of Germanic genealogy, as well as the absence of avarice, greed, and luxury in this people of noble simplicity. According to Tacitus, the only Germanic peoples who had any real appreciation of money, or indeed precious metals, were those who lived in the cultural contact zone with the Roman empire.[39] Tacitus may be seen here as an unacknowledged underwriter of Johnson's arguments on the causal relationship between trade and the corruption of manners. Questions concerning commercial contact between ancient civilisations appear to have preoccupied British writers in the eighteenth century. One such writer is Thomas Blackwell.

Blackwell's ideas on trade and cultural exchange between peoples are markedly different from Johnson's. In *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735), Blackwell conjectures that 'it was either a *Trading* People, or Persons under a Necessity of travelling abroad for some bold Actions at home, who were the first Instructors of the ancient Greeks'.[40] In his view, the ancient Greeks had greatly benefited from intermixture with other peoples. Yet despite the fact that he attributes the origin of Greek civilisation to trade, Blackwell

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[39] 'Silver and gold have been denied them – whether as a sign of divine favour or of divine wrath, I cannot say. [. . .] Those who live on the frontiers nearest us, however, do value gold and silver for their use in commerce, being quick to recognize and pick out certain of our coin types', but 'the tribes of the interior stick to the simpler and more ancient practice of barter' (*The Agricola and the Germania,* pp. 104-05).

[40] Thomas Blackwell, *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (London: [n. pub.], 1735), p. 45. Cited hereafter as *Writings of Homer.*

depicts the life of Homer in an age before property and luxury had corrupted the manners and enervated the spirit of the people. The noble simplicity of Homer's genius is transmitted through his poetry. Blackwell argues that 'the greatest Objections against our Poet, arise from the *too great Truth* of his Descriptions; and from his representing his Heroes in those *natural Lights* which we think below the Politeness of our Manners'.[41] Here, Blackwell foregrounds a conflict between the unaffected language of Homer and the artificial cultural refinements of modern polite literature. Written during his tenure as Professor of Greek at the University of Aberdeen (1725-1757), the *Enquiry* notes the following:

> There is, *My Lord*, a thing, which, tho' it has happened in all Ages and Nations, is yet very hard to describe. [. . .] It may be called a *Progression of Manners*; and depends for the most part upon our Fortunes: As they flourish or decline, so we live and are affected; and the greatest Revolutions in them produce the most Alterations in the other: For the Manners of a People seldom stand still, but are either polishing or spoiling.[42]

Blackwell's history charts social change on a graph in which the two variables are 'Manners' and 'Fortunes'. This cyclical social history depicts a direct cause-and-effect relationship between economic change and the state of language.

The influence of Blackwell's sociolinguistic assessment of identity has not yet been fully assessed, but his 'Progression of Manners' speaks to the intermixed languages of Britishness. The idea that the fabric of society is always 'either polishing or spoiling' might be used to explain the manifestly discontinuous history of seventeenth-century Britain. Whether in response to the upheavals of the Civil Wars, the Revolution of 1688, the Union of 1707 or the 1714 Hanoverian Succession, post-Union writers like Blackwell and Johnson

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[41] *Writings of Homer*, p. 317.

[42] *Writings of Homer*, pp. 13-14. On Blackwell's professional life at Aberdeen, see Lois Whitney, 'Thomas Blackwell, a Disciple of Shaftesbury', in *Philological Quarterly* 5 (1926), 196-211.

freely adapted and appropriated myths of national origins to create a sense of historical continuity. Thinking of ancient Greece and eighteenth-century Britain, Blackwell foregrounds the growing reciprocity between landscape and national identity:

> For so unaffected and simple were the Manners of those Times, that the Folds and Windings of the human Breast lay open to the Eye; [. . .] This was *Homer's* Happiness, with respect to Mankind, and the living part of his Poetry; as for the other Parts, and what a Painter wou'd call *Still-life*, he cou'd have little Advantage: For we are not to imagine, that he cou'd discover the entertaining Prospects, or rare Productions of a Country better than we can. *That* is a Subject still remaining to us, if we will quit our Towns, and look upon it [. . .] [43]

For Blackwell, 'the entertaining Prospects' of a country offered poets an opportunity for the self-determination of national identity. The problem for him lay in writing such self-descriptions with 'unaffected' manners and, perhaps as importantly, creating literature that was truthful to the 'Subject'. Blackwell then suggests that James Thomson's recently published *The Seasons* (1730) represented a noble effort in this direction.

Although Thomson (1700-48) was born in pre-Union Scotland, he lived most of his adult life in the vicinity of London. Yet in his poetry, Thomson is much more concerned with 'Britons' than Scotsmen or Englishmen. He privileges a post-Union identity of Britishness over his native Scottishness, a trait which we also find in Blackwell's work. Like Blackwell, Thomson's work deals with the relationship between place and identity, painting a integrated national landscape and an unifying narrative of nationhood. The implicit motivations behind Thomson's imperial myth-making are encompassed within John

[43] *Writings of Homer*, pp. 34-35.

Armstrong's observation regarding 'the intangible boundaries of an empire as defined by its myth-symbol complex':

> Because these boundaries include groups possessing distinct identity myths, the imperial polity—if it is to be stable—must either erase or transcend them. Even where identity myths based on characteristics like language are latent, the presence within an empire of such alternative myths associated with memories of earlier polities poses serious problems for the imperial elite. Erasing the memories except through substituting a more powerful, transcendent myth is virtually impossible.[44]

When applied to the eighteenth century, Armstrong's statement effectively describes the tensions between pre- and post-Union identities. His argument has direct relevance to the 'transcendent myth' of empire that informs the poetry of James Thomson. As Christine Gerrard has demonstrated, this rhetorical construction of a unified British nation is also indicative of Thomson's role in the Patriot opposition to Walpole.[45] Yet Armstrong's argument regarding the 'boundaries' of empire, 'as defined by its myth-symbol complex', emerges explicitly in Thomson's appropriation of Britannia, a transcendent icon of Britishness.

Before moving directly to Thomson's personification of Britannia, it might prove useful to provide a brief outline of this figure's origins. The earliest popular images of the Britannia figure appear on the back of Roman bronze coins issued during the reigns of Hadrian (117-138 A.D.) and Antoninus Pius (138-161 A.D.). However, both emperors had used this representation of Britannia to impose the illusion of Roman order.[46] So by the second century A.D., Britannia

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[44] *Nations before Nationalism*, p. 131.

[45] For an excellent assessment of Thomson's political affiliations and how they shape his literary identity, see Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition.*

[46] See Joe Cribb, Barrie Cook and Ian Carradice, *The Coin Atlas: The World of Coinage from its Origins to the Present Day* (London and Sydney: Macdonald, 1990), pp. 10, 11, 15. Cited hereafter as *Coin Atlas.*

was already freighted with problems of political myth-making. Britannia then experienced a long period of relative obscurity from the end of Roman occupation until the Restoration of Charles II on 14 May 1660, when the image of Britannia came to be associated with British coinage.

If Charles II's Declaration of Breda (4 April 1660) paved the way to his own restoration, the commemorative 'Breda medal' restored the image of Britannia to a degree of her former status. In February of 1667, Samuel Pepys records in his diary a visit to his goldsmith's where he 'did observe the King's new Medall, where in little there is Mrs. Steward's face, as well done as ever I saw anything in my whole life I think – and a pretty thing it is that he should choose her face to represent Britannia by'.[47] Clearly Charles II approved of emphasising a link between the legitimate return of the Stuart monarchy and the continuity suggested by the Roman icon of Britannia. It has been observed of seventeenth-century British coins that 'The most long-lasting design feature introduced under Charles [II] was the modern image of Britannia', which appeared in 1672 on the reverse side of a distinctly Roman representation of Charles II.[48] Following the Civil Wars and the 1749 execution of his father Charles I, it appears that Charles II wished to identify with Roman rather than British originals. By directly associating himself in this way with the

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[47] *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. by Robert Latham and William Matthews, 11 vols (London: G. Bell and Sons Ltd/Bell and Hyman, 1970-1983), VIII, p. 83. The editors note that the 'medal is usually known as the Breda medal. Engraved by Jan Roettier, it was issued in copper, silver and gold, but not dated. The portrait of Frances Stewart as Britannia is on the reverse and is closely connected with Roettier's portrait medal of her' (VIII, p. 83, *n.* 1).

[48] *Coin Atlas*, p. 15. Referring to the Restoration, R.A.G. Carson notes that 'a new feature of this coinage was the introduction in 1672 of a regal halfpenny and farthing in copper. The king's portrait on the obverse is laureate and cuirassed in the Roman fashion and the inscription reads Carolus a Carolo – Charles, the son of Charles. The figure of Britannia which now appeared for the first time on British coinage was probably inspired by the Britannia on coins of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius in the second century but it is a very free adaptation of the Roman model'; see R. A. G. Carson, *Coins: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (London: Hutchinson, 1962), p. 244.

rehabilitation of Britannia, Charles II demonstrates a conscious decision to identify himself with a seemingly timeless Roman classicism, instead of a patently ephemeral Britishness. Ironically, he authenticated the national currency by stamping it with this counterfeit political continuity. Interestingly, this means of restoring the public perception of normality in Britain was not contingent upon literacy, but upon a society which in its daily handling of hard currency began to invest the figure of Britannia with intrinsic value.

For James Thomson, Britannia functions as a transcendent identity, one which assimilates memories of pre-Union identities and seeks to replace them. The primary application of this unifying iconography is to reinforce the pursuit of British imperialism. In *Britannia. A Poem* (1729), the weeping figure of Britannia, 'the *Queen/ Of Nations*' (ll. 13-14), berates 'her degenerate Sons' (l. 2) for making an ignoble peace with Spain.[49] Then, she equates British imperialism with the integrity of the Union:

> And what, my thoughtless Sons, should fire you more,
> Than when your well-earn'd Empire of the Deep
> The least beginning Injury receives?
> What better Cause, than when your Country sees
> The sly Destruction at her Vitals aim'd?
> For Oh it much imports you, 'tis your All,
> To keep your Trade intire, intire the force. (ll. 166-72)

Projecting a vision of the 'well-earn'd Empire' whose lifeblood is 'Trade', Thomson seeks to legitimate his own contemporary point of view through the venerable antiquity of Britannia. The association between place and identity, so

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[49] James Thomson, *Britannia. A Poem* (London: T. Warner, 1729). This poem begins and ends with references to Frederick, Prince of Wales, the royal patron and figurehead of the Patriot movement. Thomson uses the image of Britannia as a mouthpiece for the Patriot opposition to Walpole. Voicing a broader 'discontent with Walpole's conciliatory policy towards Spanish depredations' on British trade, Thomson responds to 'the unpopular Peace Treaty of Seville' which Walpole had signed that same year (*The Patriot Opposition,* p. 155).

crucial to Thomson's poetics of Britishness, becomes explicit as Britannia argues that the origins of the British empire are nothing less than a logical extension of the British landscape itself:

> This is your Glory; this your Wisdom; this
> The native Power for which you were design'd
> By Fate, when Fate design'd the firmest State,
> That e'er was seated on the subject Sea; (ll. 191-94)

Speaking to a nation which was in actuality factious and disunited, Britannia attempts to restore national unity by recalling Britons to their reason for being: trade. The landscape itself appears to be read as a text, an organically-manifest prophecy of empire:

> For this, these rocks around your Coast were thrown;
> For this, your Oaks, peculiar harden'd, shoot
> Strong into sturdy Growth; for this, your Hearts
> Swell with a sullen Courage, growing still
> As Danger grows; and Strength, and Toil for this
> Are liberal pour'd o'er all the fervent Land.
> Then cherish this, this unexpensive Power,
> Undangerous to the Publick, ever prompt,
> By lavish Nature thrust into your Hand:
> And, unencumber'd with the Bulk immense
> Of Conquest, whence huge Empires rose, and fell,
> Self-crush'd, extend your Reign from Shore to Shore,
> Where-e'er the Wind your high Behests can blow,
> And fix it deep on this eternal Base. (ll. 199-212)

In this national landscape, native natural phenomena are read as a narrative in which 'rocks', 'Oaks' and 'Coast' are interpreted as divine affirmations of empire. Landscape and nation melt into one unified body politic. Similarly, Thomson's eighteenth-century Britain speaks with a unified voice, the voice of imperial Britannia.

Thematically, *Britannia. A Poem* appears to have served as the original for *Alfred. A Masque* (1740), a more lengthy and ambitious project co-written by

Thomson and his friend and fellow Briton of Scottish origins, David Mallet (1705-65). Mallet 'translated' his own name from 'Malloch' upon moving to London, expressing dismay that no one there could pronounce it correctly. In Thomson and Mallet's representation of history, the figure of Britannia does not vie with Alfred for centre stage; she is more the muse or visionary inspiration who urges him to greatness. Interestingly, Francis Wise of Oxford University had edited a facsimile of Asser's *Life of King Alfred* (893) in 1722, which would have provided Thomson and Mallet with biographical source material; but like scholars of the present day, Francis Wise found the originals of Asser's text to be problematic.[50]

The disparity between representation and reality is as evident in the provenance of Asser's *Life of King Alfred* as it is in Thomson and Mallet's *Alfred. A Masque.* The enduring appeal of Thomson and Mallet's representation of King Alfred has been facilitated by its very departure from historical authenticity. The presence of Britannia herself may be less explicit here than in *Britannia. A Poem,* but she is important none the less as an emblem of the lost liberty which Britons had originally enjoyed. *Alfred* shares the themes of unity through imperialism and a national identity contingent upon divine and mythical origins. The feature of *Alfred* remembered most frequently is probably the ode

[50] Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge write that the 'first attempt at a scholarly edition was Francis Wise, *Annales Rerum Gestarum Ælfredi Magni, auctore Asserio Menevensi* (Oxford, 1722)', but in attempting 'to distinguish between the genuine text and the later additions by Parker and Camden', 'it is apparent that the information he received was often incorrect and incomplete'; see *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and other Contemporary Sources*, trans. by Simon Keynes and Michael Lapidge (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 223-27 (p. 226). Keynes and Lapidge note that the provenance of Asser's *Life* is complicated by the absence of any original manuscripts, and by the editorial interpolations and inventions of previous editors such as William Camden. According to Keynes and Lapidge, Camden notoriously invented the passage which stated that King Alfred was the founding father of Oxford University (p. 226).

'Rule Britannia', set to music composed by Thomas Arne. In Thomson and Mallet's *Alfred*, Britannia is the patron of a unifying myth of Britishness:

> An ODE.
>
> 1.
> When Britain first, at heaven's command,
> Arose from out the azure main;
> This was the charter of the land,
> And guardian Angels sung this strain:
> 'Rule Britannia, rule the waves;
> *Britons* never will be slaves.'
>
> 2.
> The nations, not so blest as thee,
> Must, in their turns, to tyrants fall:
> While thou shalt flourish great and free,
> The dread and envy of them all.
> 'Rule, &c.[51]

This ode on future British liberty, sung by an 'Aged and blind' bard (II. V. 72), is a strangely refined performance for such a primal figure. This association of bardic life with primal simplicity, ascetic contemplation and refined expression reverberates throughout this thesis. As will be seen in Chapters Five and Six of this thesis, the received eighteenth-century image of 'the bard' has a problematic relationship with its originals. Yet this representation of the bard in *Alfred: A Masque* might be seen as an original for future representations of bards by Thomas Gray, Thomas Warton and James Macpherson. There are problems with Thomson and Mallet's imaginative reconstruction of history: in Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, there is no sense of an all-encompassing sense of British nationhood, but it *can* be found in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum*

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[51] [James Thomson and David Mallet] *Alfred: A Masque. Represented before Their Royal Highnesses The Prince and Princess of Wales, at Cliffden, on the First of August, 1740* (London: A. Millar, 1740), II. 5. 75-85. Cited hereafter as *Alfred: A Masque.*

Britannia.[52] Although Alfred was able to consolidate a sense of English cultural identity in the ninth century, Thomson and Mallet fail to distinguish effectively between 'England' and 'Britain', tending at times to conflate the terms for their own ideological purposes. Perhaps most interestingly, the Norman Conquest is omitted entirely from the Bard's song; it is a historical event which even Geoffrey of Monmouth includes, but one which dispels Thomson and Mallet's mythical 'charter' that 'Britons never will be slaves'.

In *Alfred: A Masque.*, the figure of the Hermit is noticeably a bard-like figure, leading a life of reflective solitude in nature, removed from worldly clamour, yet urging Alfred on with visions of Britain's favoured origins and with prophesies of its future glory. The masque ends with the Hermit's final exhortation to Alfred and his British subjects, which immediately follows the Bard's ode:

> Alfred, go forth! Lead on the radiant years,
> To thee reveal'd in vision.—Lo! they rise!
> Lo! Patriots, heroes, sages, croud to birth:
> And bards to sing them in immortal verse!
> I see thy commerce, Britain, grasp the world:
> All nations serve thee; every foreign flood,
> Subjected, pays its tribute to the Thames.[53]

The rhetorical ideal of liberty which both the Bard and the Hermit have described is not English; rather, it privileges the fortune of Britons. Relating his vision of Britain's destiny as a trading nation and as a unified people, the Hermit is represented as prophet of empire. This figure may be a hermit by name, but he is a bard by nature; yet the context of this entire scene, including the prophetic

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[52] 'Britain is inhabited by five races of people, the Norman-French, the Britons, the Saxons, the Picts and the Scots. Of these the Britons once occupied the land from sea to sea, before the others came' (p. 54).

voice itself, suggests that Thomson and Mallet had found an unacknowledged original in the Pope's *Windsor-Forest* (1713), particularly the prophetic voice of 'Old Father *Thames*'.[54] Significantly, the figures of Bard and Hermit have visions of nationhood which Thomson had formerly ascribed to the figure of Britannia herself. The effect of this strategy seems to be this: Britannia becomes the British muse of a new representation of the British bard, and the peoples of Britain become a polity united in their identification with this bardic voice of liberty. In *Alfred*, Thomson and Mallet construct an idealised British polity through a bardic language of prophetic vision, one which is designed to supplant the memory of past, present and future problems of nationhood.

In his study of Homer, Blackwell looks to Thomson as an exemplar of *polite* literature, 'doing Honour to the British poetry'.[55] This is an opportune point to stress the relationship between the terms 'polity' and 'politeness', and how the language of politeness provided the means for the literary expression of Britishness. The term 'polity' is not strictly contingent upon formal institutional structures or governments. Polities can be consensus-based communities of many varieties, including those based on language and manners. Although the meaning of 'politeness' remains somewhat promiscuous and subjective, it was an

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[53] *Alfred: A Masque.* II. 5. 186-92.

[54] I see, I see where two fair Cities bend
Their ample Bow, a new White-hall ascend!
There mighty Nations shall inquire their Doom,
The World's great Oracle in Times to Come;
There Kings shall sue, and suppliant States be seen
Once more to bend before a *British* QUEEN.
Thy Trees, fair *Windsor*! Now shall leave their woods,
And half thy Forests rush into my Floods,
Bear *Britain*'s Thunder, and her cross display,
To the bright Regions of the shining Day; (*Windsor-Forest. To the Right Honourable George Lord Landsdown* [1713], ll. 375-86), in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. by David Fairer and Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 102-13.

[55] *Writings of Homer*, p. 35.

important basis of creating the polity of Britishness in the eighteenth century.[56] In this sense, polite speech is a denominator of identity, or, membership in a given community. In the beginning of his book entitled *Subverting Scotland's Past,* Colin Kidd puts forward the puzzling argument that language has not played a key role in the evolution of Scottish national identity.[57] Kidd hazards to argue that as a language, 'Scots was largely an irrelevance in the socioeconomic sphere, though it remained important as a badge of cultural identity', and then he dismisses the Gaelic language with equal confidence.[58] It is curious to observe a modern historian sweeping such a crucial aspect of the Scottish Enlightenment under the rug. If Scots was a 'socioeconomic irrelevance' in the eighteenth century, then in what social 'sphere' was Anglicisation operative in Scotland?

Kidd's argument appears to be contradicted by the cultural tensions between the languages of the provinces and the perceived 'centre' of British society.[59] Recalling a conversation with Lord Mansfield, Alexander Carlyle remembers Mansfield's observation that although he greatly enjoyed the histories of Hume and Robertson, 'Yet when he was Reading their Books, he Did not think he was Reading English'. Carlyle continues: 'To every Man Bred in Scotland, The English Language was in some respects a Foreign Tongue, the precise Value and Force of whose Words and Phrases he Did not Understand'.[60] Hume, whose name had been Anglicised from 'Home', spent a great deal of

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[56] This point will be developed in greater detail in Chapter Two of this thesis.

[57] Kidd, pp. 2-4.

[58] Kidd, p. 3.

[59] For an informative assessment of this point, see the third chapter of Kenneth Simpson's *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth-Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), pp. 70-96. Cited hereafter as *The Protean Scot.*

[60] Alexander Carlyle, *Anecdotes and Characters of the Times,* ed. by James Kinsley (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), pp. 264-65. Cited by Kenneth Simpson in *The Protean Scot*, p. 75.

energy removing 'Scotticisms' from his writing, enlisting the help of David Mallet.[61] For Hume, and indeed for many Scots of his day, polite language and letters were the key to socioeconomic improvement. The tension between 'provincial' Scots and the 'polite' English spoken in Westminster was in itself a political process and now provides a fascinating model of the social politics of Anglocentrism within eighteenth-century Britain. Kidd is apparently prepared to exclude language and the wealth of culture it affords from the 'socioeconomic sphere' of Scotland; such a methodology would impoverish the history of any nation. By side-stepping the significance of language, Kidd overlooks a formative aspect of the Scottish Enlightenment.

A historical interpretation that divorces language from culture, or from historiography itself, deserves to be regarded with some scepticism. Because nationhood is not simply a constitutional issue, it is difficult to imagine how language itself could be extricated from the assimilation of Scotland into the polity of Great Britain. Kenneth Simpson observes that

> [t]he self-consciousness of the Scots as regards their provincial speech grew [. . .] after the first sending of Scottish representatives to Westminster. Increasing contact with the English at every level exacerbated the Scots' feeling of inadequacy in the use of standard English. [. . .] It is understandable that educated Scottish Society should have been concerned to resolve as soon as possible the problems of cultural identity which it was experiencing, and which it had helped to create, by becoming acceptable to the English eyes in terms of polite literature.[62]

The idea of 'standard English' plays a central role in the process recounted here. Language is the primary means of self-identification, but there is a third way in this argument between the presumed dichotomy between standard English and

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[61] James Basker gives a useful account of Scotticisms and their social significance in 'Scotticisms and the Problem of Cultural Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain', in *Sociability and Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland*, ed. by John Dwyer and Richard B. Sher (Edinburgh: The Mercat Press, 1993), pp. 81-95.

the 'provincial speech' of the Scots. Simpson rightly points out the cultural tensions between Englishness and Scottishness, but fails to take Britishness into account. For as Samuel Johnson makes clear in the Preface to his *Dictionary*, the very idea of standard English was under great pressure from the influx of new words, phrases and idioms. This cultural compression is implicit in the idea of a 'polite' language which encompasses and mediates between the complexities of Irishness, Welshness, Scottishness and Englishness.

From Tacitus to Geoffrey of Monmouth, and from Camden to Johnson, the textual sources of national origins in the eighteenth century comprise a wide field. In a controversial account of the relationship between language and polity, Nicholas Phillipson has attributed the cultural and intellectual achievements of eighteenth-century Scotland to the language of politeness developed by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison in the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. Phillipson believes that the Scottish Enlightenment 'has always made Scottish intellectuals uneasy', the sum of whose achievements can be accounted for by 'the intense interest Scots showed in importing whole systems of foreign knowledge'.[63] In a separate essay, he argues that the proliferation of 'Addisonian vocabulary' and the implementation of 'principles of Addisonian propriety' among Edinburgh's coffee-houses and clubs was no less than 'the principal achievement of the Scottish Enlightenment'.[64] According to Phillipson's view, the Scottish Enlightenment was a kind of scripted public performance, staged according to a

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[62] Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, pp. 75-77.

[63] Nicholas Phillipson, 'Politics, Politeness and the Anglicisation of early Eighteenth-Century Scottish Culture', in *Scotland and England, 1286-1815*, ed. by R. A. Mason (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1987), pp. 226-46 (pp. 226, 228). Cited hereafter as 'Politeness and Anglicisation'.

[64] Nicholas Phillipson, 'The Scottish Enlightenment', in The Enlightenment in National Context, ed. by Roy Porter and Mikulas Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 19-40 (pp. 27-28). Cited hereafter as 'Scottish Enlightenment'.

uniform interpretation of what he calls 'Addisonian politeness'.[65] But this idea is distorted by its own Anglocentric resistance to Britishness.

As Phillipson argues, an Addisonian vocabulary did circulate widely throughout the coffee-houses and clubs of eighteenth-century Scottish society. It was exchanged like a kind of currency in Britain's emerging social economy. But Mr. Spectator and the culture of politeness he represents are literary constructions of British identity—shaped, refined and polished by Addison and Steele—to which readers might aspire. For those Britons who could read, the public's reception and discussion of the *Spectator* enacted a daily performance of identity. The *Tatler* and *Spectator* had effectively helped not only to facilitate a culture of politeness, but to mediate between the fractious regional, cultural, political and religious communities of Great Britain through this *lingua franca* of Britishness, aiming to disseminate this culture to the many Britons who had difficulties reconciling pre- and post-Union identities.[66] Although Phillipson is quick to attribute the origin of the Scottish Enlightenment to the *Spectator*, he is slow to discover the sources of Addisonian politeness.

This oversight seems more puzzling given that Addison appears to have drawn some important ideas about the formulation of a distinctly British progression of manners from pre-Union Scottish sources. In *Spectator* 50, Addison refers to the celebrated visit of 'the four *Indian* Kings' to London in

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[65] Phillipson, 'Politeness and Anglicisation', p. 228.

[66] All citations refer to *The Spectator*, ed. by Donald F. Bond, 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965). The Spectator's British nation-building is explicit: 'There cannot a greater Judgment befall a Country than such a dreadful Spirit of Division as rends a Government into two distinct People, and makes them greater Strangers and more averse to one another, than if they were actually two different Nations. [. . .] Knowledge and Learning suffer in a particular manner from this strange Prejudice, which at present prevails amongst all Ranks and Degrees in the *British* Nation' (*The Spectator*, I, pp. 509-11).

April 1710.[67]. Through a literary sleight of hand, he invents a text 'written by King *Sa Ga Yean Qua Rash Tow*', one of the four visiting Iroquois chieftains, containing his purported impressions of London.[68] Most remarkable in this apocryphal memoir of 'Sa Ga Yean Qua Rash Tow' is the description of St. Paul's Cathedral. The Iroquois chieftain's response to St. Paul's is 'translated' as follows:

> I am apt to think that this prodigious Pile was fashioned into the Shape it now bears by several Tools and Instruments, of which they have a wonderful Variety in this Country. It was probably at first an huge mis-shapen Rock that grew upon the Top of the Hill, which the Natives of the Country (after having cut it into a kind of regular Figure) bored and hollowed with incredible Pains and Industry, till they had wrought in it all those beautiful Vaults and Caverns into which it is divided at this Day. As soon as this Rock was thus curiously scooped to their Liking, a prodigious Number of Hands must have been employed in chipping the Outside of it, which is now as smooth as the surface of a Pebble [. . .].[69]

The dignified yet simple language of this exposition signifies an individual from a culture that is too primal to comprehend one so smoothly polished. Unable to account for the means by which St. Paul's was constructed, Sa Ga Yean Qua Rash Tow conceives of the cathedral as an organic unity that has been laboriously refined from primordial crudeness into a highly polished artefact. Ostensibly, his language has evolved among the natural phenomena of his native North American home, rather than being constructed among the polished surfaces of London.

But there appears to be a disjunction between the original Iroquois king and Addison's representation of him. Curiously, Sa Ga Yean Qua Rash Tow displays the same concise elegance of diction as Mr. Spectator himself,

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[67] *The Spectator*, I, p. 211. See also *The History and Progress of the four Indian Kings, to the kingdom of England giving a particular description of the country they came from, their government, customs, religion and manners* (London, 1710).

[68] Phillipson, 'Scottish Enlightenment', p. 29.

suggesting that Addisonian politeness is a decidedly more universal ethnolinguistic construct than Phillipson's 'provincial language of civic morality'.[70] As Steele notes in *Spectator* 38, 'politeness' is a promiscuous signifier: 'Men are oppress'd with regard to their Way of speaking and acting', and 'The wild Havock Affectation makes in that Part of the World which shou'd be most polite, is visible wherever we turn our Eyes'.[71] As a native of Ireland, Steele's perspective on the self-conscious conduct of provincial Britons who aspired to a place in polite society was informed by personal experience. But Addison juxtaposes the self-conscious behavior of 'Affectation' against the primal simplicity of his Indian King in order to suggest that social refinement should not be understood as superficial ornamentation.[72]

Evidence suggests, however, that Addison derived the persona of Sa Ga Yean Qua Rash Tow from the pre-Union writings of Martin Martin, a native of the Isle of Skye, a fact which casts some doubt on Phillipson's argument while broadening the parameters of Britishness. In *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (1703), Martin had brought the wild landscapes, hardy souls and

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[69] *The Spectator*, I, pp. 212-13.

[70] Phillipson, 'Scottish Enlightenment', p. 29.

[71] *The Spectator*, I, pp. 161-62. A relevant literary precedent for Steele's notion of 'Affectation' occurs in Martin Martin's *A Late Voyage to St. Kilda, the Remotest of all the Hebrides, or the Western Isles of Scotland* (London: D. Brown and T. Goodwin, 1698). Cited hereafter as *A Late Voyage to St. Kilda*. As Martin writes in the Preface, 'I presume that this following Relation will not prove unprofitable or displeasing, unless the great Advantages of Truth and unaffected plainness may do it a prejudice', going on to state that the 'Author of this Treatise is a Person whose Candor and Integrity guard him against all Affectation and Vanity' (pp. iii-iv). Martin claims a more elevated form of 'unaffected plainness' for the natives of St. Kilda. The 'Inhabitants', he writes, 'are a sort of People so Plain, and so little inclined to Impose upon Mankind, that perhaps no place in the World at this day, knows such Instances of true primitive Honour and Simplicity; a People who abhor lying Tricks and Artifices, as they do the most poisonous Plants, or devouring Animals'(pp. iv-v).

[72] The similarities between this Addisonian character and Martin's St. Kildan are further confirmed by their respective observations on the churchgoers, but Addison inserts a topical deviation from Martin's text, using the opportunity to censure the irreligious vanity and affectation of the congregation (*The Spectator*, I, p. 213).

windswept sublimity of the Hebrides into the coffee-houses and conversations of polite society. Martin had dedicated his earlier *A Late Voyage to St. Kilda* to 'the Right Honourable *Charles Montague*, Esq; Chancellor of His Majesty's Exchequer, President to the *Royal Society*, &c.'.[73] Martin clearly aimed to reach a polite Anglocentric audience:

> The Author, perhaps, might have put these Papers into the Hands of some who were capable of giving them the politest turns of Phrase, and of making some pretty Excursions upon several passages in them; but he thought the Intelligent and Philosophick part of Mankind would value the Truth more in such Accounts, than any thing that can be borrowed from Art, or the advantages of more refined language; [. . .] and therefore it may be reasonably hoped, that the meanness of its dress will not be made use of as any considerable Objection against this preliminary Essay.[74]

There is a striking similarity between Martin and Blackwell's thoughts on the conflicting interests of 'the politest turns of Phrase' and 'Truth'. Somewhat problematically, Martin expresses distaste for the 'pretty Excursions' and 'Art' of 'refined language', while at the same time addressing his work to the 'Chancellor of the Exchequer, President to the Royal Society' and the privileged social elite whom Montague represented. In this instance, the politics of literary patronage dictated that provincial writers like Martin had to assimilate the language of politeness.[75] The provincial Martin had adopted a proto-British persona in order to gain access to an Anglocentric audience. Consequently, he expresses himself in a British *lingua franca* of politeness which mediates between his provincial Scottish origins and his cosmopolitan London audience.

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[73] Martin, *A Late Voyage to St. Kilda*, p. v.

[74] Martin, *A Late Voyage to St. Kilda*, pp. v-vi.

[75] Blackwell observes of 'Politeness of Stile' that 'what we call *Polishing* diminishes a Language; it makes many Words obsolete; it coops a Man up in a Corner, allows him but one Set of Phrases, and deprives him of many significant Terms, and strong beautiful Expressions' (*Writings of Homer*, pp. 58-59). Martin's comment above addresses his anxiety about the confines of his own sociolinguistic identity in pre-Union Britain.

In his Preface to *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (1703), Martin gently apologises for 'what defects may be found in my Stile and Way of Writing: For there's a Wantonness in Language as well as in other things, to which my Countrymen of the Isles are as much strangers, as to other Excesses which are too frequent in many parts of *Europe*'.[76] Martin implies that authentic 'Language' is characterised by unaffected simplicity rather than polished sophistication. This kind of authenticity is therefore alien to the affected language of so-called polite society. In this same text, Martin recounts a visit to Glasgow by a native of St. Kilda, the remotest of the Hebrides, who had never before travelled to the mainland of Scotland. This episode bears a remarkable resemblance to Addison's caricature of King Sa Ga Yean Qua Rash Tow:[77]

> Upon his Arrival at *Glascow*, he was like one that had dropt from the Clouds into a new World, whose Language, Habit, *&c.* were in all respects new to him: [. . .] When he went through the Streets, he desired to have one to lead him by the hand. *Thomas Ross* a Merchant, and others, that took the diversion to carry him through the Town, ask'd his Opinion of the high Church? He answer'd, that it was a large Rock, yet there were some in *St. Kilda* much higher, but that these were the best Caves he ever saw; for that is the Idea which he conceiv'd of the Pillars and Arches upon which the Church stands.[78]

Like the Indian King, Martin's St. Kildan conceives of the 'high Church' in terms of an organic unity, basing his metaphors on the originals of nature. For him,

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[76] Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, 2nd edn (London: Andrew Bell, 1716), pp. vii-viii. Cited hereafter as *Description of the Western Islands*.

[77] See *The Spectator*, I, p. 212, *n.* 4. Bond refers to the Hill and Powell edition of Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, ed. by George Birkbeck Hill and L.F. Powell, 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934) in which Boswell recalls Dr. Johnson's particular enjoyment of Martin's account of a visit to Glasgow by a St. Kilda native, a man who had never before ventured to the British mainland. Johnson's father had acquainted him with Martin's *Description of the Western Islands*. Boswell's inscription on the title-page of their travel copy (London: Andrew Bell, 1703) states that 'This very copy accompanied Dr. Samuel Johnson and me in our Tour to the Hebrides in Autumn 1773' (*Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, ed. by R.W. Chapman [London: Oxford University Press, 1924], page not numbered). According to Boswell, Johnson 'was particularly struck with the St. Kilda man's notion that the high church of Glasgow had been hollowed out of a rock' (Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, I, p. 450). Hill and Powell note that in his earlier edition of the same text, John Wilson Croker had compared Martin's account of the St. Kildan's description of the Glasgow church to the Indian King's description of St. Paul's as recorded in *Spectator* 50.

language is not the kind of self-conscious, deferential performance we find in Martin's Anglocentric dedication to the *Description*.[79] It appears that the St. Kildan does not assimilate, affect, or identify with the manners of cosmopolitan society.[80] The language attributed to him seems to be governed more by the requirements of nature than by the strictures of culture.

But it is easy to lose sight of the strong possibility that this representation of the St. Kildan has been crafted by Martin; it seems possible that the original event was subject to multiple interpolations before it came to Martin's (and subsequently Addison's) attention. In a way that is consistent with Tacitus' figure of Calgacus, both Martin and Addison project a polite language of noble simplicity onto their respective creations. And in each of these cases, Blackwell's thoughts on the incompatibility of politeness and authenticity remain salient. In *Spectator* 50, Addison signals his interest in this problem with the epigram 'Nunquam aliud Natura, aliud Sapienta dicit', or, 'Never does nature say one thing and wisdom another'.[81] Here, wisdom (and implicitly truth) is always in accordance with 'nature', and therefore what is represented as natural must also be authentic.

For Martin, the landscape is a kind of text which in its present state is deficient, and which must be submitted to the rigours of refinement and improvement before it is a suitable subject for polite society. But this conflicts

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[78] Martin, *Description of the Western Islands*, pp. 296-97.

[79] 'To His Royal Highness Prince *George* of *Denmark*, Lord High Admiral of *England* and *Ireland*, and of all Her Majesty's Plantations, and Generalissimo of all Her Majesty's Forces, *&c.*' (*Description of the Western Islands*, p. iii).

[80] 'The Inhabitants of these Islands do for the most part labour under the want of Knowledg of Letters, and other useful Arts and Sciences; notwithstanding which Defect, they seem to be better vers'd in the Book of Nature, than many that have greater Opportunities of Improvement' (*Description of the Western Islands*, p. x).

[81] *The Spectator*, I, p. 211.

with his claim that owing to his 'natural' and unaffected language, his descriptions of the Hebrides are self-evidently authentic. A landscape overwritten with a narrative of nationhood has been 'naturalised' in a quasi-political sense, working its way into the psyche of the body politic. It raises the teleological problem of whether it is possible for language to be both polite *and* authentic. In this sense, Martin's descriptions represent problematic originals which mediate between anticipating the expectations of his audience, most of whom are in London, and his own patriotic nostalgia for his beloved Hebridean landscape. But such contradictions can be seen to be part of the British landscape's emergence as an economic resource and an untapped reservoir of the Romantic imagination.

Whether we speak of England, Scotland, Ireland or Great Britain, a culture that pretends to be founded essentially on authentic or pure origins has succumbed to yet another variety of myth. Cultural and national identities are largely defined and sustained by creativity, innovation and myth-making. Defoe elaborates on this point in a variety of ways in *The True-Born Englishman*:

> The *Scot, Pict, Britain, Roman, Dane* submit
> And with the *English-Saxon* all unite:
> And these the Mixture have so close pursu'd
> The very Name and Memory subdu'd;
> No *Roman* now, no *Britain* does remain;
> *Wales* strove to separate but strove in vain;
> The silent Nations undistinguish'd fall,
> And *Englishman's* the common Name for all.
> Fate jumbl'd them together, *God knows how*;
> Whate're they were, they're *True- Born English* now. (ll. 358-67)

Defoe's satirical poem is aimed at breaking down the barriers of English chauvinism, proposing the idea that personal merit is more important as a determiner of identity than mythical national origins. But here, he does not appear to recognise the legitimacy of '*Britain*' as a post-Union identity. Defoe

demonstrates a general tendency to conflate England and Britain; this may be in part due to his rhetorical tendency to denounce what he perceives as Britain's perennial internal divisiveness. On the other hand, it might be seen as a manifestation of his own Anglocentrism which persisted despite his arguments in *The True-Born Englishman.* At times in *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1724-27), Defoe even refers to his Englishness as a form of authority. He had recorded his observations of Scotland with the firm pledge 'to let the Readers know what Reason they will have to be satisfy'd with the Authority of the Relation'.[82] The purpose of Defoe's journey was to produce a 'reliable' survey that would authenticate the commercial potential of Scotland. The prevailing English opinion was that the Scots were incapable of accurately describing their nation: as Defoe argues, 'Hitherto all the Descriptions of Scotland, [. . .] have been written by Natives of that Country, and that with such an Air of the most scandalous Partiality'.[83] Unfortunately, one of the primary 'authorities' whom Defoe regularly cites is William Camden, the very man who had traced the original Britons to Noah's Ark and who had fabricated the myth that King Alfred was the founder of Oxford University. This point reiterates the cultural relativity of authenticity and authentic literary sources, and how they subsequently shaped the works of authors like Defoe.

In the *Tour*, Defoe seems to struggle with the distinction between Britain and England. He shows a tendency to think of Great Britain as a single body of land, and England as its governing head. Britain is a figurative warehouse of raw

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[82] *A Tour Thro' the Whole of Great Britain, Divided into Circuits or Journies. Giving A Particular Account of Whatever is Curious and Worth Observation*, with an introduction by G.D.H. Cole (1724-27; repr. London: Peter Davies, 1927), 2 vols, I, p. 3. Cited hereafter as Defoe.

materials behind the shop-fronts of English industry. Defoe shows little interest in placing England at the geographical centre of Great Britain; in his map, the nation has multiple Anglocentric 'centres' of commerce. As in Defoe's *A Plan Of the English Commerce* (1728), 'English' trade is the controlling idea behind his *Tour*. His employment of the term 'desart' in describing areas of the Highlands reveals a specific motivation and methodology. By his own admission, his survey of Scotland aims at 'employing Hands to cut down their Northern Woods, and make Navigations to bring the Firr Timber, and Deal to England, of which Scotland is able to furnish an exceeding Quantity'.[84] The greatest potential beneficiary of this vast supply of timber is the British fleet, and by extension British trade and commerce. This would explain his focus on areas such as 'the Shire of Ross', where 'they have vast Woods' of fir trees 'large enough to make Masts for the biggest Ships in the Royal Navy'.[85] Thomson's caricature of Britannia could whole-heartedly endorse such an imperialist interpretation of landscape.

Although taken from his later work, *A Plan Of the English Commerce*, the following passage reveals a rhapsodic interest in shipbuilding:

> The Captains, Masters, Owners, and Navigators of Ships, they move in another Orb, but still act in the same Round of Business; the Ship is built, and fitted out for a Voyage; the Timber, the Plank, the Iron-Work, the Masts, the Rigging, the Tar and Hemp, the Flax and Oyl, all pass thro' different and numberless Hands, till they center in the Builder's Yard; there the Frame of a Vessel is set on the Stocks. What Hands are then employ'd to creat the beautiful useful Form of a Ship! and what Art to perfect and launch her into the Water![86]

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[83] Defoe, II, p. 689.
[84] Defoe, II, p. 691.
[85] Defoe, II, p. 826.

If Defoe lacks a poetic appreciation for Highland heaths, he seems in his element when describing ships and the world of trade. In fact, the ship seems to embody everything that Defoe values; it is a symbol of utility, employment, improvement and profitable commerce. In such a scenario Scotland can only figure as a storehouse of natural resources within the Union, a wilderness to be cultivated for the coinciding interests of the Royal Navy and '*English Commerce*'. Accordingly, he appears to have no use for wild Highland heaths because of their lack of commerce with the world of ships. Defoe represents an English coloniser in search of fabled Scottish forests, to supply the Royal Navy with ever more ships to facilitate ever more 'English', rather than British, trade. In economic terms, he appears to think of Great Britain merely as the island from which the English conduct their business. But his specific views on the English people will be further discussed later in this chapter.

Remarkably, when Defoe set out to produce this authoritative economic survey in his *Tour*, he actively authenticated the mythic status of Scotland's wildest landscapes: the domain of Ossianic literature. In the following aestheticised description of a Western Highland scene, landscape and native identity are difficult to separate:

> From this River or Water of *Abre*, all that mountainous barren and frightful Country, which lies South of the Water of *Abre* is call'd *Loquabre*, or Country bordering on *Loch Abre*. It is indeed a frightful Country full of hidious desart Mountains and unpassable, except to the Highlanders who possess the Precipices. Here in spight of the most vigorous Pursuit, the Highland Robbers, such as Rob Roy in the late Disturbances, find such Retreats as none can pretend to follow them into, nor could ever be taken.[87]

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[86] Daniel Defoe, *A Plan of the English Commerce, Being a Compleat Prospect of the Trade of this Nation, as well the Home Trade as the Foreign* (1728; repr. Oxford: Basil Blackwell for the Shakespeare Head Press, 1927), p. viii.

[87] Defoe, II, pp. 831-32.

Ironically, Defoe promotes the mythic status of this remote and 'frightful' landscape: first, by associating it with Rob Roy and the Jacobite 'Disturbances' of 1715, and then by suggesting that it is too dangerous for a polite English traveller like himself. Such vast barbarous spaces lacked the intrinsic worth to be surveyed with any great precision, and could not be mastered on the printed page. Instead, Defoe indulges in the sort of imaginative licence which he supposedly had sought to dispel.

Here Defoe confronts the disparity between mythic landscape and the printed word, and falls short of his self-appointed descriptive duty. His sketchy description ascribes a kind of mythic power to an inscrutable topography which resisted his taxonomic, colonial inventory; he could not adequately represent it on a map or in the written word. Whether intentionally or not, Defoe's repetitive references to 'this frightful Country'[88] and its 'hideous' mountains authenticate the sublimity of Highland scenery through the words of an avowedly pragmatic Englishman. Standing on the coast at 'Dingsby-Head' in the month of June, Defoe completely surrenders his narrative to the power of myth:

> No wonder the antient Mariners, be they *Phœnician* or *Carthaginian*, or what else you please, who in those Days knew nothing of the Motion of the heavenly Bodies, when they were driven thus far, were surpris'd at finding they had lost the steady Rotation of Day and Night, which they thought had spread over the whole Globe.
>
> No wonder they talked so much of their *Ultima Thule*, and that the Elysian Fields must lye this Way; when they found that they were come to everlasting Day, they could no longer doubt but Heaven lay that Way, or at least that this was the high Way to it; and accordingly, when they came Home, and were to give an Account of these Things among their Neighbors, they fill'd them with Astonishment; and 'twas wonderful they did not really fit out Ships for the Discovery; for who would ever have gone so near Heaven, and not ventur'd a little farther to see whether they could find it or no?[89]

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[88] Defoe, II, p. 819.

[89] Defoe, II, p. 824.

Defoe provides an answer to his own final question by deciding not to visit any of the Islands. Despite his obvious 'wonder' at this remote landscape, as he takes pleasure in mythologising it further here, Defoe does not sail on in search of 'Ultima Thule'.

Late in his tour Defoe announces his intention to divide Scotland into 'four Districts' of 'South Land', 'Midland', 'North Land' and the 'Islands'.[90] By his own admission Defoe failed to survey the fourth district on the presumption that these islands did not merit the time, effort or expense of surveying them. But such negligence or even omission reveals much about the motivations of the topographer:

> I may if I have room give as just a Description as I can from authentick Relations; for being on Horse-back and no Convenience of Shipping presenting itself here, I am to own that we did not go over to those Islands personally, neither was it likely any Person whose business was meer Curiosity and Diversion, should either be at the Expence, or run the Risque of such a hazardous Passage where there was so little worth Observation to be found.[91]

We may wonder upon what information Defoe declares that 'there was so little worth Observation' in the Northern and Western Islands. There is no mention of Martin Martin here, who arguably was the definitive 'authority' on this subject, yet in keeping with his own character, Defoe justifies his decision on an economic basis, while relying upon such 'authentick Relations' as Camden's *Britannia.*

Without trees for shipbuilding or ports for trading, there was little room in Defoe's map for such topography. Although he admits in his own 'Curiosity and Diversion', his failure to map the Islands only heightened their imaginative

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[90] Defoe, II, p. 819.
[91] Defoe, II, pp. 827-28.

appeal. Despite his objective to produce an 'authentick' survey of the land, he merely reinforces the insurmountable remoteness, obscurity and sublime potential of these islands. Martin's works were well known by the time Defoe made his Tour. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Martin created a stir in the realm of polite literature with his stories of St. Kilda and its natives, emphasising the strong sense of community and absence of corruption among them. He offered these unknown landscapes, sublime landscapes and 'Heroick Souls' to eighteenth-century British society as a polite literary commodity. Somewhat ironically, however, he commodified the St. Kildans by introducing them to the very commercial marketplace of print culture which could bring about their fall from grace.

As outlined in this chapter, the comparison between Johnson and Defoe's nation-building reveals markedly different ideas about nationhood and national identity in post-Union Great Britain. Johnson employs a linguistic definition of identity, while Defoe's model is economic. By omitting Scotland's wildest regions from his *Tour*, Defoe transforms them into a sublime terrain of the imagination, the same landscapes in which much of James Macpherson's Ossianic poetry is set. Upon deciding not to hazard a journey to the Northern and Western Isles, Defoe seems to have taken a leaf out of Camden's *Britannia*; when Camden 'could not tell what to deliver for Truth', he appears to have determined that he 'might at least delight and please' his readers with the recollection of regional myths.[92] When Defoe writes that 'I am now to enter the true and real *Caledonia*, for the Country on the North on the *Firth* is alone call'd by that Name, and was antiently known by no other', he refers to a boundary

originally drawn by Tacitus.[93] Providing Defoe with the threshold to the 'true and real' Caledonia, Tacitus writes the following:

> The Clyde and the Forth, carried inland to a great depth on the tides of opposite seas, are separated only by a narrow neck of land. This isthmus was now firmly held by garrisons, and the whole expanse of country to the south was safely in our hands. The enemy had been pushed into what was virtually another island.[94]

Tacitus goes on to speak of 'tribes beyond the Forth', north of the line where in 79-80 A.D. Agricola 'established a chain of forts in the valley between the Forth and the Clyde, which was already recognised as a potential frontier line'.[95]

Defoe's perception of the authentic 'Caledonia' is clearly contingent upon the problematic accounts of Tacitus and Camden, complete with their mythical images of Calgacus and Phœnician mariners in search of Ultima Thule. This is not to ridicule Defoe for being credulous, but to acknowledge that myth is often inseparable from history, and that the premise of authenticity is often unreliable. The history which Johnson creates in order to authenticate his *Dictionary* represents a similar case in point. Unlike Johnson, Defoe gives no quarter to the idea of an unmixed nation in *The True-born Englishman.* As the following lines demonstrate, he was as sceptical as anyone about the concept of pure originals:

> A *True-Born Englishman*'s a Contradiction,
> In speech an Irony, in Fact a Fiction.
> A banter made to be a Test of Fools,
> Which those that use it justly ridicules.
> A Metaphor invented to express
> A man *a-kin* to all the Universe. (ll. 372-77)

Given this healthy scepticism about myths of national origins and the conceptual authenticity of the English pedigree, it seems that Defoe would have been an

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[92] Camden, *Britannia*, p. vi.
[93] Defoe, II, p. 772.
[94] *The Agricola and Germania,* p. 74.

outspoken advocate of Britishness as a recognised national identity. He revels in the distinction between English exclusivity and British inclusiveness, sharing out his satirical abuse among all the peoples of Britain:

> Thus from a Mixture of all Kinds began,
> That Het'rogeneous Thing, *An Englishman*:
> In eager Rapes, and furious Lust begot,
> Betwixt a Painted *Britton* and a *Scot*:
> Whose gend'ring Offspring quickly learnt to bow,
> And yoke their Heifers to the *Roman* Plough:
> From whence a Mongrel half-bred Race there came,
> With neither Name nor Nation, Speech or Fame. (ll. 334-41)

Tired of the perennial rancour over English resistance to all things foreign, Defoe sets his sights on attacking English resistance to Britishness. He envisages a Great Britain in which the races, cultures and languages of the British Isles merge into one 'Het'rogeneous Thing'. Defoe values a Union that combines personal industry, merit and mutual tolerance, as well as the occasional myth. So it is fitting that the voice of reason in *The True-Born Englishman* that pleads with the nation to reconcile itself to Britishness belongs to none other than Britannia.[96]

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[95] Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p. 8.

[96] For Britannia's speech, see ll. 893-956. Britannia speaks on behalf of King William III, who is widely ridiculed throughout the nation for being a Dutch foreigner on the British throne.

Britons, Ballads and *Hardyknute*

Although Britishness might reasonably be thought to have originated from the 1707 Act of Union, there is evidence that it was already a tangible identity before this date. 'When James VI succeeded to the English throne in 1603', writes R. A. G. Carson, 'the union of the crowns was followed by a union of the coinage as far as the types and denominations were concerned'.[1] This throne of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland was no longer 'English', but definitively British. At the very least, James had conceptualised the nation of 'Magnae Britanniae' as an economic entity long before it achieved constitutional status. 'Under James I (1603-35) the title of KING OF GREAT BRITAIN appeared for the first time and the union of England and Scotland is commemorated on the coins, particularly the 1 pound coin, now called a unite'.[2] In effect, the legitimacy of the 'unite' was underwritten by an imagined rather than an actual nation; during the reign of James I, 'Magnae Britanniae' quite literally was a state of mind.

With this newly-commissioned currency to legitimate his vision of Great Britain, James I aimed to unite Scotland and England, yet he also made a commensurate bid for constitutional union: having taken his coronation oath, he 'thank'd the Parliament for this so ready and chearful Recognition of his Right', and then proposed an Act of Parliament to draw up plans for constitutional union between the two kingdoms, so '*that, as they were made one in the Head, so*

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[1] R. A. G. Carson, *Coins: Ancient, Medieval and Modern* (London: Hutchinson, 1962), p. 261.
[2] *Coin Atlas*, p.15. As Gerald Hoberman shows in his illustrated treatise, the inscription 'IACOBVS • D.[EI] • G.[RATIA] • MAG.[NAE] • BRIT.[ANNIAE] • FRAN.[CIAE] • ET • HIB.[ERNIAE] • REX' was stamped on the unified British coinage newly commissioned by James I; see *The Art of Coins and their Photography: An Illustrated Photographic Treatise with an Introduction to Numismatics* (London: Spink /Lund Humphries, 1981), p. 142.

among themselves they might be inseparably conjoined, and all memory of by-past Divisions extinguished'.[3] But this Union was not to be created until 1707. Consequently, the coinage commissioned by James I demonstrates his engagement in various processes of myth-making and nation-building, imagining a Union commensurate with his crown, yet one that was manifestly absent. But the departure of the Stuart Court from Edinburgh to London created its own problems of absence, calling the validity of post-Union Scottishness into question.

Focusing on ballads as a kind of cultural currency that 'conjoins' the British community, this chapter will examine texts which respond to the Union of the Crowns (1603) as well as the Act of Union (1707). It will explore the idea that the departure of the Scottish Court, and of the cultural identity which it had promoted through the polite arts, would eventually invite some Scots writers and their patrons to fill this crucial vacuum with their own literary acts of myth-making. Opening with Addison's influential appraisal of the traditional ballad *Chevy Chase,* his analysis of *Chevy Chase* will set the stage for the appearance of the eighteenth-century ballad *Hardyknute*, an anonymous work that subsequently took on a robust life of its own in post-Union British literature. Unlike conventional treatments of *Hardyknute,* my discussion of its problematic provenance will not trace a putative point of origin, but explore the relationship between textual authenticity and national identity. This chapter will follow *Hardyknute* through a succession of editors and impostures, attempting in the

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[3] See '*Articles of Union*, Jac. I', in Camden, *Britannia,* ed. by Edmund Gibson, 2nd edn , 2 vols (London, 1722), II, pp. 1113-38.

process to demonstrate the necessary relationship between invention, imagination and nationhood in eighteenth-century Britain.

'The revival of Scottish literature, which began after the Union of the Kingdoms in 1707, was complex in character'; so begins the essay by John Butt entitled 'The Revival of Vernacular poetry in Eighteenth-Century Scotland'.[4] For Butt, the Act of Union represented a moment of reawakening for Scotland and Scottish literature. While his assertion is sustainable to a degree, it raises the problem of arguing that this 'revival' of Scottish literature is defined by factors outside, rather than within, Scotland. It suggests a culture whose existence depends on external events. In general, Butt makes a convincing case regarding the post-Union pressures of cultural assimilation, attesting to the re-appropriation of traditional songs, ballads and vernacular literature by Scottish writers. However, he appears to cling to an 'Anglo-Scottish' construction of Great Britain, an oversimplified dichotomy that fails to challenge or complicate its own assumptions with the existence of a separate and distinct British identity, or identities, in vernacular literature.[5] Butt's virtual omission of the culture of Britishness seems more curious given his opening reference to the following idea of William Robertson:

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[4] *From Sensibility to Romanticism: Essays Presented to Frederick A. Pottle*, ed. by Frederick W. Hilles and Harold Bloom (Oxford University Press: London, Oxford and New York, 1965), pp. 219-37 (p. 219). Cited hereafter as *Sensibility to Romanticism*.
[5] *Sensibility to Romanticism*, p. 221.

> At length, the union having incorporated the two nations, and rendered them one people, the distinctions which had subsisted for many ages gradually wear away; peculiarities disappear; the same manners prevail in both parts of the island; the same authors are read and admired; the same entertainments are frequented by the elegant and polite; and the same standard of taste, and of purity in language, is established.[6]

It would be an oversimplification to read the process described here by Robertson as the Scots 'becoming English'. From an etymological point of view, 'politeness' stems from 'politus', or polished, a state which necessarily requires friction. In this cultural friction between Scotland and England, Robertson explicitly describes the cultural machinations of smoothing and polishing. Cultural differences 'wear away' on both sides, becoming compressed into a complex language of post-Union politeness which can no longer in good conscience be represented as simply Scots, English or Anglo-Scots. This kind of friction can be found in the discrepancies between poetry written in Lowland Scots dialect and that of 'polite' English literature.

Robertson seems to embrace the idea of Union in the above passage. Whether we speak of the conceptualisation of a unified British polity, or the sense of nationhood fostered by the eighteenth-century production and consumption of polite literature, Joseph Addison looms large as a literary presence. As was suggested in the previous chapter, *The Spectator* might be seen in general terms as a kind of script for the performance of Britishness. *The Spectator* dedicates itself to shaping and defining the taste and manners of polite Britons, and by extension the qualities and attributes of Britishness. Addison is fluent in the language of myth-making and nation building, especially the ways in which he represents a sense of native literature as the bedrock of cultural

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[6] William Robertson, *The History of Scotland* (1759), cited by John Butt in *Sensibility to*

consensus in post-Union Britain. This implicit political agenda seems to pit the refinements of polite society against the noble simplicity he ascribes to the colloquial ballads of the common people, yet in practice it facilitated a much wider range of possibilities than such a dichotomy admits. Today, ideas such as polite society, noble simplicity and the common people are justifiably regarded as loaded social constructs, but this very subjectivity reveals Addison to be a linguistic innovator working at a key historical point, attempting to erase Britain's internal boundaries through his own rhetoric of Union.

In *Spectator* 70 and 74, Addison fixes his eye upon the genre of the popular ballad as raw material for building what is referred to in the previous chapter as an 'imperial polity', reconstituting the *disjecta membra* of the Union's divided past into a transcendent myth of empire. In a complex rhetorical manoeuvre which he makes appear deceptively simple, Addison constructs an argument designed to reinvent the public perception and cultural significance of the popular ballad, concentrating his efforts upon *Chevy Chase.* Citing Ben Jonson and Sir Philip Sidney's praise of this ballad, he not only renders it acceptable for the attention of polite society, but raises it to the level of heroic poetry, using it to illustrate parallels between the strife of pre-Homeric Greece and pre-Union Britain:

> As *Greece* was a Collection of many Governments, who suffered very much among themselves, and gave the *Persian* Emperour, who was their common Enemy, many Advantages over them by their mutual Jealousies and Animosities, *Homer*, in order to establish among them a Union, which was so necessary for their Safety, grounds his Poem upon the Discords of the several *Grecian* Princes who were engaged in a Confederacy against an *Asiatick* Prince, and the several Advantages which the Enemy gained by such their Discords.[7]

Romanticism, p. 219.

Addison depicts the *Iliad* as a unifying narrative of nationhood, reinventing Homer as the father of the Greek body politic. Interestingly, Homer becomes a literary nation-builder who draws together the contentious 'Governments' of Greece 'to establish among them a Union', which by analogy suggests the creation of an epic from a collection of miscellaneous fragments. Then, projecting this Homeric paradigm of national unification upon the 'Author' of *Chevy Chase*, Addison devises the following association between Greece and feudal Britain:

> At the Time the Poem we are now treating of was written, the Dissentions of the Barons, who were then so many petty *Princes*, ran very high, whether they quarrell'd among themselves or with their Neighbours, and produced unspeakable Calamities to the Country: The *Poet*, to deter men from such unnatural Contentions, describes a bloody Battle and dreadful Scene of Death, occasioned by the mutual Feuds which reigned in the Families of an *English* and *Scotch* Nobleman. [8]

Addison's decision to analyse the ballad *Chevy Chase* is far from random, and his agenda for creating a British identity which transcends pre-Union borders is illustrated in what he describes as the 'unnatural Contentions' between the English and the Scots. Focusing as it does on the militarised border between feudal England and Scotland, Addison's analysis of *Chevy Chase* reveals an acute Unionist agenda operating behind the thin disguise of his claim that it 'is the favourite Ballad of the common People of England'.[9] And crucial to Addison's purpose is the idea that *Chevy Chase,* and the greater body of popular ballads and songs it represents, are native to Britain, a common and legitimate currency used to underwrite the perception of a transcendent British polity.

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[7] Bond, *The Spectator*, I, p. 299.
[8] Bond, *The Spectator*, I, p. 299.
[9] Bond, *The Spectator*, I, p. 298.

In *Spectator* 74, *Chevy Chase* continues to be a source of 'the majestick Simplicity which we admire in the greatest of the ancient Poets', explicitly relating the nobility of selected passages to others by Homer and Virgil.[10] Readers of *The Spectator* would have come into contact here with the idea that ballads were directly related not only to polite literature, but to epic poetry. This exploration of *Chevy Chase* colonised a kind of headland on the forgotten shore of vernacular literature, a cultural *terra incognita* in a world of increasing politeness. By the year 1723, however, Addison's argument about ballads serving as the building blocks of the epic appears to have underwritten at least one writer's enterprise to map this unknown land in the name of polite British literature. The anonymous editor of *A Collection of Old Ballads* (1723-25), a miscellany which includes *Chevy Chase*, prefaces his enterprise with the statement that 'I may, I hope, without either Vanity or Offence enter upon the Praises of *Ballads*, and shew their Antiquity'.[11] He then proceeds to embroider the fabric of Addison's earlier argument:

> [. . .] the very Prince of Poets, old *Homer*, if we may trust ancient records, was nothing more than a blind *Ballad-singer*, who writ Songs of the Siege of Troy, and the Adventures of *Ulysses*; and playing the Tunes upon his Harp, sung from Door to Door, till at his Death somebody thought fit to collect all his Ballads, and by a little connecting 'em, gave us the *Iliad* and *Odysses* [sic], which since that Time have been so much admired.[12]

Here, Homer is represented as a '*Ballad-singer*', not an epic poet. Ostensibly, the act of unifying the *disjecta membra* of his ballads into an epic unity occurred

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[10] Bond, *The Spectator*, I, p. 316.
[11] *A Collection of Old Ballads. Corrected from the best and most Ancient Copies Extant. With Introductions Historical, Critical, or Humorous, Illustrated with Copper Plates*, 3 vols (London: James Roberts, 1723-25). Cited hereafter as *A Collection of Old Ballads*. The editorship of this miscellany is conventionally ascribed to Ambrose Philips, a friend of Addison and Steele, but definitive proof of this ascription remains to be demonstrated.
[12] *A Collection of Old Ballads*, pp. iii-iv.

after his death by an anonymous compositor; this claim no doubt is intended to reflect favourably upon the labours of the editor of this miscellany. The gathering and compiling of these 'fragments' into more formalised collections, complete with introductions and notes, is represented here as a noble act of cultural recovery, preservation and transmission. And the nobility of this exercise had been advocated and authorised by Addison's association of *Chevy Chase* with the epic poetry of ancient Greece.

Aaron Hill was clearly familiar with Addison's association of the popular ballad with Homer and the epic tradition. In *The Plain Dealer* 36 (1724), Hill appears not only to appropriate Addison's argument, but also to paraphrase the anonymous editor of *A Collection of Old Ballads,* combining both into an image of Homeric Greece. In the following passage, Addison's Unionist rhetoric of the popular ballad is infused with the above idea that the *Iliad* was constructed of ballads which had been sung in the streets of Greece:

> *Such Ballads* were the reverend Fragments of disjointed *Homer*, when they were sung about the Streets of the *Grecian* Cities, before *Lycurgus* caused the Limbs to be assembled into Union; and so piec'd, redeem'd, and consecrated them to the End of Time, as we now see 'em in his *Iliad*.[13]

By the 1720s, the concept of constructing an epic out of 'Fragments' had plainly become a metaphor for the making of the 'Union' in the consciousness of polite society. Based on the similarities of the arguments and his stated reverence for the ballad genre, it cannot be ruled out that Hill himself was the anonymous editor the *Collection of Old Ballads*. Interestingly, however, this particular edition of *The Plain Dealer* focuses on the ballad 'William and Margaret', an

eighteenth-century imposture composed by David Mallet. In 'William and Margaret', Mallet develops a much older fragment found in Beaumont and Fletcher's play, *Knight of the Burning Pestle* (1607), into a lengthier narrative which Percy would praise forty years later as 'one of the most beautiful ballads in our own or in any other language'.[14] Hill gives the impression in his essay that the identity of the author is unknown, ostensibly believing the ballad to be ancient. It is significant that Mallet's literary debut involves the question of textual authenticity in the broader context of the popular ballad. 'William and Margaret' rides in the wake of a more prominent imposture, *Hardyknute*, yet a kind of continuum begins to emerge in post-Union vernacular literature which involves re-imagining the past, rewriting older texts to suit present cultural needs, and reshaping the literary relationship between the terms 'original' and 'authentic'.

This post-Union revaluation of Homer as a 'ballad-singer' speaks to our perception of the present, and the extent to which the present is contingent upon received notions about the past. Whether specifically addressing the ballad or other narrative forms, storytelling can serve as a means of reconstructing or revising the past and our relationship to it. Stories provide a self-validating means of identifying with a greater sense of community or cultural continuity, a means of building a consensus about the past and negotiating a shared perception of the present. The 'authenticity' of a story may have little to do with historical objectivity; as in the prefatory essays of Johnson's *Dictionary*, an 'authentic'

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[13] *The Plain Dealer* 36 (Friday, July 24, 1724), in *The Plain Dealer*, 2nd. edn., 2 vols (London: J. Osborn, 1734), pp. 295-306.

[14] See William Chappell, '"Rule Britannia" and David Mallet's Forgeries', in *Notes and Queries*, 7th series, 2, 410-11. Also see Percy, *Reliques*, II, pp. 261-2, 393-95 (p. 262).

story is one with which we most closely identify, or which provides self-validation. Addison's critical reassessment of *Chevy Chase*, including its Unionist subtext, had set the stage in Britain for a general resurgence of the popular ballad as a literary form which manifested itself in the *Hardyknute* imposture.

Hardyknute has often been loosely characterised as a 'fake' or a 'forgery', as though the proposition of an 'authentic ballad' is clearly defined. On the contrary, the idea of what constitutes an authentic ballad is far from established, relying almost entirely upon unqualified generalisations about the notion of textual authenticity itself. Throughout the eighteenth century, textual authenticity may be understood as being contingent upon influential 'interpretive communities'.[15] These communities had been politicised by doctrines such as Whig and Tory theories of history, Protestant narratives of nationhood, the Revolution of 1688, or 'moral' justifications of British imperialism. Hence, the problematic connection between textual authenticity and national identity is less abstract than it might at first appear.

The vision of the past constructed in *Hardyknute* is inextricable from problems of textual authenticity, interpretive communities, and British identity. The critical history of *Hardyknute* is shaped by as many unspoken anxieties about the literary culture of Britishness than the ballad itself, as though repudiating it as a 'forgery' somehow attests to the existence elsewhere of a purer body of 'authentic' literature. As discussed in the previous chapter, Thomson and Mallet's masque of *Alfred* is in many ways an authentic source of 'Britishness'.

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[15] Stanley Fish, 'Interpreting the *Variorum*', *Critical Inquiry: A Voice for Reasoned Inquiry into Significant Creations of the Human Spirit*, 2 (1976), 465-85.

Naming these two authors as examples, John Butt has emphasised that 'there is an Anglo-Scottish tradition in eighteenth-century verse as well as in eighteenth-century prose', but as will be seen, British literature is something which explicitly seeks to transcend such pre-Union cultural traditions.[16] As discussed in the preceding chapter, England was no more immune than Scotland to anxieties about the implications of this new British identity, and Johnson was concerned about the unstable boundaries of Englishness and the English language. Both Thomson and Mallet were born and raised in Scotland, yet under the aegis of Britannia, they created a new mythology with which all Britons—not simply the English—could identify.

The 'original' author, or authors, of *Hardyknute* appear to have adapted Addison's association of the popular ballad with epic poetry to a Unionist fable of their own creation. The *Hardyknute* controversy provides a strong example of how post-Union myth-makers negotiated their own concept of Britishness, and how the imagination could appropriate the past to recreate the present. It is therefore unfortunate that the latest study devoted exclusively to the *Hardyknute* imposture makes so many unreliable claims, while it neglects to consider the wider historical and cultural contexts of the ballad's origins. Although G. Ross Roy correctly questions whether Lady Elizabeth Wardlaw (1677-1727), nee Elizabeth Halket, is the actual author of *Hardyknute*, he provides no justification for his imprecise assertion that it was first published 'in an anonymous chapbook

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[16] *Sensibility to Romanticism*, p. 221.

c. 1710', which only serves to confuse even further what is already a complicated provenance.[17]

The authorship of *Hardyknute* has always been, and perhaps may always remain, problematic; its obscure origins, which bear some signs of a well-engineered subterfuge, account for much of its appeal. Thomas Percy wrote the following in a 1761 letter to Thomas Warton:

> You will be concerned, when I inform you that *Hardyknute* is neither more nor less, than a Modern piece. [. . .] Mr. Guthrie (Author of the English History) [. . .] assured me upon his own knowledge that it was a modern piece, wrote by a Mrs. Hackitt, Aunt to Sir Peter Hackitt, who was kill'd along with Bradock in 1755: and that the late Lord President Forbes was in the secret, and used to laugh at the deception of the World. It was written between 40 and 50 years agoe and never extended farther than we have it at present.[18]

As will be discussed in the next chapter, Warton had included a version of *Hardyknute* in his miscellany entitled *The Union* (1753), believing the ballad to be ancient. However, *Hardyknute* is neither a fragment nor ancient, as Warton thought, but an eighteenth-century imposture. Warton offered the following critical observation in 1754:

> I cannot omit this opportunity of lamenting, with equal regret, the loss of [a] great part of a noble old Scottish poem, entitled, HARDYKNUTE; which exhibits a striking representation of our ancient martial manners, that prevail'd before the conveniency and civilities of refin'd life had yet render'd all men fashionably uniform; and lull'd them into that tranquill security, which naturally excludes all those hazardous incidents, and glorious dangers, so suitable to the character and genius of the heroic muse.[19]

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[17] See G. Ross Roy, 'Hardyknute—Lady Wardlaw's Ballad?', in *Romanticism and Culture: A Tribute to Morse Peckham and a Bibliography of His Work*, ed. by H. W. Matalene (Columbia, S.C.: Camden House, 1984), pp. 133-46 (p. 133). In a footnote, Roy claims to have listed this 'in *New CBEL* in 1971', yet fails to provide any justification for this date. These versions printed in undated chapbooks could easily be part of a wider imposture in the *Hardyknute* controversy.

[18] See *Correspondence of Thomas Warton*, pp. 93-98 (p. 95). Percy refers here to the testimony of William Guthrie (1708-1770).

[19] Thomas Warton, *Observations on the Faerie Queene* (1754), p. 114. In the second edition of his *Observations* (1762), Warton acknowledges in a footnote that *Hardyknute* is a modern composition, yet he maintains that the first stanza is ancient.

It is interesting that Warton associates Hardyknute with the 'heroic muse'. As Percy correctly writes, there is no evidence that the poem was ever part of an original whole; its lost continuity is an essential element of its original design, enforcing its appeal among readers as a cultural remnant which had survived the ravages of many centuries. *Hardyknute* seemed to fill a gap in literary and social history. Until receiving Percy's letter, Warton was unaware of its modern composition, yet since its first appearance the ballad had increasingly taken on a life of it own, growing within the imagination of British literature into the nineteenth century. Literary historians have conventionally attributed part or all of *Hardyknute* to Lady Elizabeth Wardlaw. However, Wardlaw's authorship of the ballad has long been contested.[20]

The earliest edition which can be dated with any degree of certainty is entitled *Hardyknute, A Fragment* (1719), a twelve-page anonymous folio edition containing 29 stanzas and totalling 232 lines, published in Edinburgh by James Watson (d. 1722), printer to George I. At least two anonymous and undated versions could potentially predate this edition, but at present the place and date of their publication remains the subject of conjecture.[21] According to Percy, Lady Wardlaw had reputedly discovered this relique 'on shreds of paper, employed for what is called the bottoms of [tailor's] clues.[22] But this claim is contradicted by

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[20] See Robert Chambers, *Romantic Scottish Ballads: Their Epoch and Authorship* (London and Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, 1859) and Norval Clyne, *The Romantic Scottish Ballads and the Lady Wardlaw Heresy* (Aberdeen: A. Brown, 1859).

[21] Although there may be other chapbook or garland versions that I have not been able to find, the two editions in question are *Hardiknute. A Fragment of an old heroick ballad* (*ESTC* T166588, *Foxon* W214) and *Hardyknute, a fragment.* Given the extent of the *Hardyknute* imposture, it cannot be ruled out that these undated versions, which vary from the Watson edition, were actually printed later than 1719 as part of an elaborate hoax to cloud the waters about the age and origins of this composition.

[22] See Thomas Percy, *Reliques of Ancient Poetry*, 4th edn, The Everyman's Library, 2 vols (1794; repr., London: J.M. Dent, 1926), I, p.347. Cited hereafter as *Reliques*.

the story that 'she had taken them down in writing from an old woman, who sung them while she was spinning at her distaff'; however, as it would later be said, 'this spectre of an old Woman had never appeared to anyone but herself'.[23] James Watson had himself published his own three-part *Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Scots Poems* (1706,1709,1711), and would have had some experience collecting ballads. On this basis, Watson would have had more than a pecuniary interest in *Hardyknute*, but it appears unlikely that he would have had political sympathies with the ballad as a Unionist narrative.[24] However, as it will be discussed in this and the following chapter, it is an oversimplification to think of Jacobitism and Britishness as being incompatible.

Immediately after the title page of Watson's 1719 edition, an illustration on the unnumbered second page presents evidence of *Hardyknute*'s status as a Unionist narrative, telling its own pictorial story about Scotland's place within the Union. At the centre of the image is a crest: a single crown above the lion rampant of England, framed on both the left and right by a unicorn. Each of the two unicorns rests its upraised front hooves upon the crest, supporting a flag between its front legs. The flag on the left shows a lion rampant, while the flag on the right shows Scotland's cross of St. Andrew. Two more unicorns augment the illustration, one further to the left and one further to the right, both emerging through garlands of foliage (at that time, 'garland' was used somewhat interchangeably with 'chapbook'). The image is visibly punctuated with thistles.

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[23] See the anonymous letter attached to an anonymous manuscript of 'The Life of Allan Ramsay', held in the Laing Manuscripts in Edinburgh University Library and reprinted in *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, ed. by Burns Martin, John W. Oliver, Alexander M. Kinghorn and Alexander Law, The Scottish Text Society, 6 vols (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood & Sons, 1951-1974), IV, p.71. Cited hereafter as *Works of Allan Ramsay*.

The central crest with its single crown represents the Union, and the surrounding iconography of lions and unicorns allude to the rhyme 'The Lion and the Unicorn', which first appears in William King's *Useful Transactions in Philosophy* (1708-9).[25] Beneath this illustration is the epigraph, 'NEMO ME IMPUNE LACESSET', or, 'No one will sunder me with impunity'. This phrase, which is imprinted along the edge of those modern pound coins which bear the image of a crown and thistle, is in fact the motto of the Order of the Thistle. Although the actual date of its origins is the subject of conjecture, the Order of the Thistle was officially founded in 1687 by James II; it was revitalised by Queen Anne in 1702 after falling under the shadow of James's abdication/expulsion.[26] This phrase most logically refers to a Britain unified under the power of the Stuart monarchy. The balance of the iconography suggests that the figurative 'me' in the epigraph is the Union itself.

A historical image of Scottish autonomy and military might is personified in the imaginary figure of Hardyknute himself, a noble yet fearsome knight who emerges from the context established by the above illustration. Perhaps he implicitly serves as a mythical founder of the Order of the Thistle. It is hardly likely that 'Hardyknute' is a play upon 'Hardy knight', because the term 'knight'

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[24] 'It is clear that Watson opposed the Union', Harriet Harvey Wood explains in her Introduction to *James Watson's Choice Collection of Comic and Serious Poems*, ed. by Harriet Harvey Wood, The Scottish Text Society, 2 vols, (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1991), II, p. xvii.

[25] 'The antagonism, reflected in this rhyme, between the lion and the unicorn has been legendary in many countries through many ages. [. . .] The popular tradition about the rhyme is that it tells the story of the amalgamation of the Royal Arms of Scotland with those of England when James VI of Scotland was crowned James I of England. Two unicorns were supporters of the old Scottish Royal Arms and, with a lion on the other side, one of them became a supporter of the English shield and had a crown placed on its head. After the Hanoverian succession, however, the crown was removed. Strife between England and Scotland resumed, and this period may well have been productive of the rhyme, for its earliest recording is found not long afterwards (1709)'; see *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*, ed. by Iona and Peter Opie (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1951), pp. 269-70.

[26] Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History* (London: Pimlico, 1992), p. 261.

occurs several times within the poem itself, which would make the spelling of 'knute' an absurd anachronism in that usage. The name depicts a fictional character, and it appears to be derived from Harthacnut, King of Denmark (1035-1042) and England (1040-42). Thomas Gray appears to have determined this for himself when, in the context of the Ossian controversy, he writes to Horace Walpole that 'I have been often told that the poem called "Hardicanute" (which I always admired and still admire) was the work of somebody that lived a few years ago. This I do not at all believe, though it has evidently been retouched by some modern hand'.[27] Despite Gray's admiration for the poem, the events in *Hardyknute* seem to bear no relationship to history, at least not to the figure of Harthacnut portrayed in *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*.[28] In developing his personal character, the first stanza of the poem attempts to shape a consensus about the nature of Scotland's martial past. England and the English are decidedly absent from the poem, avoiding the topic of Anglo-Scottish conflict featured in *Chevy Chase*. But *Hardyknute* does emphasise an unambiguous distinction between Scots and 'Britons':

> Stately stept he East the Wa,
> And stately stept he West,
> Full Seventy Years he now had seen
> Wi' scarce Seven Years of Rest.
> He liv'd when **Britons** Breach of Faith
> Wrought **Scotland** mickle Wae:
> And ay his Sword tauld to their Cost
> He was their deadly Fae. (ll. 1-8)
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> [Bold font indicates words printed in black-letter]

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[27] *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, ed. by Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), II, p. 665.
[28] See *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles*, trans. and ed. by Michael Swanton (London: Phoenix Press, 2000).

In the figure of Hardyknute we find a 'Stately', powerful warrior whose life has been spent in the service of his country, fighting the enemies of Scotland. Remarkably, he remains in the prime of his knighthood at the age of 'Seventy', which underlines his mythical status. Apparently in the tradition of Tacitus or Geoffrey of Monmouth, the anonymous author represents the 'Britons' as one people, or a mythical unity; but we are left to speculate over the nature of their 'Breach of Faith'. On the other hand, there were communities of Britons within the geographical boundaries of modern Scotland until at least the tenth century, and this could be a reference to their Dumbarton-based kingdom of Strathclyde.[29]

Although past conflict with the Britons is apparent in the first stanza, the narrative does not focus in the manner of *Chevy Chase* upon the pathos of a bloody Anglo-Scottish conflict. Instead, *Hardyknute* develops a decidedly Lowland vision of medieval Scotland whose imagery is not complicated by the Highlands, but focuses on the polite literary conventions of knights, chivalry and loyalty to the Crown.[30] The second stanza further establishes the chivalric and sub-Arthurian setting:

> High on a Hill his Castle stood
> With Ha's and Tow'rs a height,
> And goodly Chambers fair to see,
> Where he lodged mony a Knight. (ll. 9-12)

His unnamed 'Dame' (l. 13) is then praised for her peerless beauty and virtue. We learn little about her other than that she has given birth to fourteen children, most of whom have died in battle:

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[29] See Michael Lynch, *Scotland: A New History*, pp. 13, 16, 29.
[30] This point is topical in terms of the political debate surrounding the Oath of Allegiance (1689) to William and Mary.

Full Thirteen Sons to him she bare
All men of Valour stout;
In bloody Fight with Sword in Hand
Nine lost their Lives but doubt:
Four yet remain, long may they live
To stand by Liege and Land,
High was their Fame, high was their Might
And high was their Command. (ll. 17-24)

Given that nine out of their thirteen sons have died in battle, it may be guessed that the anonymous author has something to say about the human cost of 'Valour' in the history of Scotland. The pathos of their deaths is associated with their unswerving will 'To stand by Liege and Land', enforcing what seems to be the author's desire to emphasise the strength, loyalty and moral integrity which Scotland brings to the Union. The description of Hardyknute's family is completed in the fourth stanza with a foreboding description of his only daughter, '*Fairly* fair' (l. 25), whose terrible beauty in the end proves 'Waefou to young and auld' (l. 30).

The main story of the ballad revolves around an invasion of Scotland by the 'King of *Norse*' (l. 33) and his army of 'Twenty Thousand glittering Spears' (l. 43); this scenario does have several possible historical precedents, but the specific events in *Hardyknute* have only a tendentious relationship with literal historiography. The invasion provides this particularised vision of Scotland with a justification to pit its heroes against a worthy, non-British enemy. Upon hearing of the invasion, the King of Scotland sends a messenger bidding Hardyknute to meet him 'on the Strand' (l. 38) with his army; the parallels with the epic conventions of the *Iliad* are quietly developed. The image of two great armies engaged in an epic struggle upon the coast is followed by the assembly and

arming of the heroes. Upon hearing the news, Hardyknute sounds the alarm on his 'Horn as green as glass' (l. 61), calling his sons to the battle:

> His Sons in manly Sport and Glee,
> Had past that Summer's Morn,
> When lo, down in a grassy Dale,
> They heard their Father's Horn.
> *That Horn*, quo' they, *ne'er sounds in Peace,*
> *We've other Sport to bide*;
> And soon they hy'd them up the Hill,
> And soon were at his Side. (ll. 65-72)

The Lowland scene is further confirmed by the nobility sporting leisurely in a 'Dale', rather than a glen. It appears to be the 'Sport' of polite nobility instead of the kind of hunting that is motivated by sheer necessity.

Following the arming of Hardyknute and his sons, the youngest of whom is left behind in the castle to guard Hardyknute's wife and their daughter Fairly, the knights and their host of three thousand soldiers set off to join their King in battle against the Norse invaders. On their way to battle, they meet a 'wounded Knight' (l. 355) who forms the basis of the secondary story. Like a figure from Keats's 'La Belle Dame Sans Merci', the knight has been wounded by love, it becomes apparent, rather than violence. In an act of *noblesse oblige*, Hardyknute tells the knight that he would be well looked after in his household, particularly by his daughter, the beautiful Fairly. This gesture suggests that Hardyknute is a man of sensibility and emotional depth, as well as a mighty warrior. His encounter with the wounded knight seems to form part of a secondary story line which is interrupted by a lacuna, one of several which break the narrative, but this thread appears to be picked up in the final stanza of this 'fragmentary' ballad, after the primary story concludes.

In the ballad's primary narrative, the Scots and Norse armies clash in epic fashion. At the outset of the battle, the air is so thick with missiles that 'Darts clove Arrows as they met' (l. 139). Impatient to fight with his royal counterpart, the King of Scotland races ahead of his men upon his charger, but almost instantly he is hit in the forehead with a 'sharp and fatal Shaft' (l. 156); reaching for the fatal wound, another arrow pins his hand between his eyes. This graphic depiction of the King of Scotland's death clears the way for a heroic clash between Hardyknute and Norse:

> Proud Norse with Giant body tall,
> Braid Shoulders and Arms strong,
> Cry'd, *Where is* **Hardyknute** *sae fam'd*
> *And fear'd at* **Britain's** *Throne*:
> *Tho'* **Britons** *tremble at his Name,*
> *I soon shall make him wail,*
> *That e'er my Sword was made sae sharp,*
> *Sae saft his Coat of Mail.* (ll. 185-92)

Several interesting clues about the anonymous author emerge from this passage. The image of Norse's 'Giant body tall' suggests that the author has studied the poetry of Milton, imitating his technique of positioning a noun between two adjectives. This helps to localise the date of the poem's composition. Here Britons are associated with 'Britain's Throne', seemingly an anachronistic and romantic ideal unless it refers to Wales; but even then there is little historical basis for armed conflict between the Scots and the Welsh. The knights portrayed in *Hardyknute* would be incongruous and anachronistic among Tacitus's Britons. This idea of a unified British throne seems fanciful, but it actually did become manifest in the Union of the Crowns in 1603, when a Scot assumed what from that moment onwards may legitimately be referred to as 'Britain's throne'. But the author seems to show little concern for the historical authenticity of

Hardyknute; as highlighted in the previous chapter, writers such as Tacitus, Geoffrey of Monmouth and William Camden had previously created similar apocryphal narratives of British character and manners. The author of *Hardyknute* keeps a political rather than geographical idea of 'Britain' in the foreground of this imaginary past, implicitly using it to assert the worthiness of Scots as modern Britons.

Norse's vaunt is a classical literary device, like that directed by Ajax at Hector in Book VII of the *Iliad*, yet another instance of epic conventions being imposed upon the ballad form. The two warriors engage in single combat, with Hardyknute drawing first blood. Stunned and ashamed that his 'far fam'd Arm' (l. 203) had left Hardyknute with the 'Power to strike' (l. 204), Norse lands a sword-stroke on Hardyknute's helmet which 'made him down to stoop' (l. 206), as though he were making a courtly bow. At this moment, however, the narrative is broken yet again with a gap in the text, and the reader is left to imagine the chaos and violence of the battle. But as it is suggested here in the penultimate stanza, the combat between Norse and Hardyknute appears to be resolved, like that between Ajax and Hector, with a heroic act of generosity:

> There on a Lee where stands a Cross
> Set up for Monument,
> Thousands fow fierce that Summer's Day
> Kill'd, keen War's Black Intent.
> Let **Scots**, whilst **Scots**, praise **Hardyknute**,
> Let **Norse** the name ay dread,
> Ay how he fought, aft how he spar'd,
> Shall latest Ages read. (ll. 217-24)

We can infer from this stanza that in the 'missing' text, Hardyknute overpowers Norse; his life is 'spar'd', leaving him to 'dread' the name of his conqueror. Hardyknute's stature increases with this act of largesse, the noble warrior who

spares the life of his enemy. This is what we 'in latest Ages' read of the battle, as the primary narrative concludes here.

The secondary plot can be described as follows: Hardyknute returns victorious from the epic battle with the Norse, apparently alone, and sees from a distance that his castle appears dark, cold and lifeless. Due to 'gaps' in the ballad, which no doubt are part of its design, readers are left to piece together their own narrative in response to the following final scene:

> Loud and chill blew westlin Wind,
> Sair beat the heavy Shower,
> Mirk grew the Night ere **Hardyknute**
> Wan near his stately Tower,
> His Tow'r that us'd wi' Torches Light
> To shine sae far at Night,
> Seem'd now as black as mourning Weed,
> Nae marvel sair he sigh'd. (ll. 225-32)

We can only guess what terrible things may have happened at 'his stately Tower' during Hardyknute's absence. One of the few justifications for including the scene with the 'wounded Knight' is that he is associated with whatever has transpired at Hardyknute's castle. This interpretation would justify the depiction of his daughter 'Fairly fair', to whom the line 'What waefou Wae her Beauty bred!' (l. 29) refers. But one of this poem's beauties is that all readings of its ending ultimately rely upon conjecture. The poetic medium of the fragment is masterfully manipulated here as the text disintegrates into this atmosphere of unrelieved foreboding, melancholy and Ossianic indeterminacy. Arriving within sight of his home only to experience this atmosphere of absence and privation—

bereft of light, warmth and apparently of family—Hardyknute cuts a strikingly Ossianic figure, one whose lonely sighs are carried away on the 'westlin Wind'.[31]

The 1719 edition—the earliest one whose date is certain—concludes in this way, leaving us with nothing more than uncertainty about the origins of *Hardyknute*, including the identity of its author, or authors, as well as its date of composition. If this is the 'original', then it was almost certainly composed later than Milton, given the above-mentioned imitation of his style contained therein. And as my discussion has shown, the political iconography of the lion and unicorn imprinted at the beginning of this edition is traceable in Britain to 1709, two years after the Act of Union. It was not even necessarily written by a Scot, but it has been constructed as such by literary critics who perhaps had their own reasons for needing to believe so. It was, however, composed by one who was explicitly concerned with the language and culture of Lowland Scots, the literary conventions of medieval romance, and the idea of a single British throne. Focusing almost exclusively on Lowland Scotland, the author leaves Highland iconography of kilts and clans, pipes, tartan and claymores out of the picture. Instead of being taken from a long possible list of Scots patriots, the name 'Hardyknute' itself is a fabrication, derived from Danish and English history, and therefore its creation speaks to the absence of a specific kind of Scottish hero: a Unionist.

Hardyknute's defeat of Norse may be read as the re-imagining of a figurative cultural conflict, one which W. P. Ker has described as 'the victory of

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[31] The relationship between *Hardyknute* and James Macpherson's Ossianic poetry will be explored in chapter six of this thesis.

the new literature of chivalry over the older forms of heroic narrative'. Ker continues:

> The history of these two orders of literature, of the earlier Epic kinds, followed by the various types of medieval Romance, is parallel to the general political history of the earlier and the later Middle Ages, and may do something to illustrate the general progress of nations. The passage from the earlier "heroic" civilisation to the age of chivalry was not made without some contemporary record of the "form and pressure" of the times in the changing fashions of literature, and in successive experiments of the imagination.[32]

Hardyknute does contain an uneasy mixture of the heroic and the chivalric, facilitated by Addison's association of the heroic ballad with epic poetry. But it is an important 'experiment of the imagination', one in which the author attempts to identify with contemporary culture through appropriating an immemorial past. In this sense, the authenticity of individual experience, as expressed by the author, should not be confused with literary authenticity; for by definition, an immemorial past must be recreated as an imaginary construct. It is remarkable that a text from 1719 should combine the 'Gothic' sensibilities of the later eighteenth century—anxiety, indeterminacy and prolonged foreboding—with the conventions of medieval romance. Yet it should not be forgotten that French romances had been popular at the Court of Norway since the days of the thirteenth-century king Hakon Hakonsson, and many of these works were translated into his own language during his reign.[33] This is the same Norse king who was offered the kingship of Ireland in exchange for expelling the English, but he declined.[34] So in thinking of the representation of Norse in *Hardyknute*, he

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[32] W. P. Ker, *Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1922), p. 4. Cited hereafter as *Epic and Romance*.
[33] Ker, *Epic and Romance*, p. 278.
[34] See James Lydon, *The Making of Ireland: From Ancient Times to the Present* (London and New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 78.

should not necessarily be perceived by modern readers as coming from an isolated country in the frozen North with a limited zone of cultural contact. From that time, Norway participated in a literary economy of lays, ballads and sagas, one from which Scottish, Irish, English and French ballads and storytelling cannot be excluded. The task of disentangling an 'authentic' or 'pure' literary form within such a cultural contact zone begins to seem highly improbable.

If Lady Wardlaw was in fact the author of the 1719 edition, it seems remarkable that she was silent when *Hardyknute* reappeared, substantially-altered and enlarged, in a two-volume miscellany entitled *The Ever Green: Being a Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious before 1600* (1724).[35] The compositor of *The Ever Green* was Allan Ramsay (c.1685-1758), an Edinburgh wig-maker, poet and man of letters.[36] Interestingly, it appears that Wardlaw neither acknowledged nor denied this *Ever Green* version of *Hardyknute*. At the very least, her silence indicates a degree of complicity in the *Hardyknute* controversy, which begins to intensify under the editorship of Ramsay. In terms of its Dedication, Preface and editorial decisions, *The Ever Green* is constructed according to a specific set of editorial aims. The subtitle, *A Collection of Scots Poems Wrote by the Ingenious before 1600*, contains an important clue to Ramsay's motivation behind the compilation of this miscellany: it implicitly states the case that the national and cultural independence of Scotland was vibrant and well established before the Union of the Crowns, suggesting that *The Ever Green* constitutes a particular response to anxieties about Britishness.

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[35] Allan Ramsay, *The Ever Green: Being a Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious before1600*, 2 vols (1724; repr. Glasgow : R. Forrester, 1876). Cited hereafter as *The Ever Green*.
[36] It appears that the exact date of Ramsay's birth, conventionally given as 15 October 1685, may now be in doubt; see *Works of Allan Ramsay*, IV, pp. 4, 59.

Ramsay, whose father was a Scot and whose mother was English, explores some of the voices of Britishness in his work, seeking in the process to reconcile the stories of Scotland's past with the realities of the present. As an author whose literary fortune was made upon his awareness of the cultural proliferation of Britishness, Ramsay's identity accommodates the views of a sentimental Jacobite and a Unionist.[37] *The Ever Green*, whose Dedication and Preface might easily be misconstrued as the work of a strident Scottish nationalist, is dedicated to the Royal Company of Archers, 'a socially exclusive association which claimed James I of Scotland as its traditional founder but which was officially established as late as 1676'.[38] The Royal Company of Archers has been characterised as a Jacobite organisation;[39] but whatever the vicissitudes of Ramsay's Jacobite sympathies may have been, Jacobitism clearly existed in various degrees, and Jacobites should by no means be construed as anti-Unionist. In this Dedication, Ramsay explicitly draws the attention of the Royal Company of Archers to the great native works of their ancestral bards, who had 'tuned their Souls' to 'Immortal Fame' (iv-v). As in *Hardyknute, The Ever Green* insists upon a kind of cultural continuity in Scotland, and it marshals literary evidence of Scotland's historical independence and freedom. In his

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[37] 'Smeaton, Gibson and Martin and other historians of the post-Union literary revival such as Geddie have depicted the Easy Club as Jacobite in character and Ramsay, Hamilton, of Gilbertfield, and Ruddiman as the products of a political movement. Ramsay was brought up to look favourably upon some of the characteristic attitudes of the Jacobites, nationalism, backward-looking "historical" patriotism and an unchannelled longing for action in some great cause—but his own close friends, [Sir John] Clerk and Cunyngham, were the staunchest of Whigs, and admired public figures like Duncan Forbes, while supporting the Union, rejected the Stuarts. From his earliest days in the Easy Club Ramsay seems to have eschewed self-dramatisation in the face of contrary majority opinion and his vehement dislike of Papists, Episcopalians and London control of Scottish affairs should not be construed as "Jacobite" except in a loose sense' (*Works of Allan Ramsay*, IV, pp. 16-17).

[38] *Works of Allan Ramsay*, IV, p. 25.

Preface, Ramsay's distinctive construction of Scotland's past connects literature and identity:

> When these good old *Bards* wrote, we had not yet made Use of imported Trimming upon our Cloaths, nor of Foreign Embroidery in our Writings. Their *Poetry* is the Product of their own Country, not pilfered and spoiled in the Transportation from abroad: Their *Images* are native, and their *Landskips* domestick; copied from those Fields and Meadows we every Day behold.[40]

This contempt for the 'Foreign' in favour of the 'domestick' might be characterised as chauvinistic. In fact, Ramsay enforced this mythical state of native purity with an inventive editorial hand, fabricating and shaping antiquity where it did not meet his modern needs and expectations. There are many inventions and problems of textual authenticity in *The Ever Green* in which Ramsay takes great liberties with his originals, but this problem of authenticity does not diminish its importance. In fact, one of *The Ever Green*'s most valuable attributes is to demonstrate how anxieties about identity and continuity manifest themselves in processes of literary invention, myth-making, and in a broader sense, nation-building. We find some evidence of this in Ramsay's 'editorial' treatment of *Hardyknute*.

Interestingly, Ramsay's version of *Hardyknute* was not the same as that which had been published in 1719; the 'old' text had been mixed with new stanzas of previously unpublished material.[41] Not only had the 29 stanzas of the 1719 edition been expanded to 42 stanzas, but the spelling and orthography had

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[39] Murray G.H. Pittock writes that 'in the cities, middle-class activities like publishing and gentry-dominated institutions like the Royal Company of Archers were alike heavily infiltrated by Jacobitism'; *Jacobitism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), p. 60.

[40] Ramsay, *The Ever Green*, I, pp. vii-viii.

[41] In their edition of *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, Kinghorn and Law seem to be uncertain about Ramsay's contribution to *Hardyknute*. At first they state that Ramsay himself had added sixteen stanzas to the 1719 anonymous text (see IV, p. 282), but later they retract this statement without explanation, reducing Ramsay's contribution to thirteen stanzas (see VI, p. 193).

been substantially altered to give it a more ancient appearance. The following stanzas, two of thirteen apparently written by Ramsay, give some indication of how he augments the somewhat mysterious episode involving the wounded knight. The first speaker is Hardyknute:

XVII.

ARYSE, zoung Knicht, and mount zour Steid,
Full lowns the schynand Day,
Cheis frae my Menzie quhom ze pleis
To leid ze on the Way.
With smyless Luke and Visage wan,
The wounded Knicht replyd,
Kynd Chiftain, zour Intent pursue,
For heir I maun abyde.

XVIII.

TO me nae after day nor Nicht
Can eir be sweit or fair,
But soon beneath some draping Trie,
Cauld Deith sall end my Care.
With him nae Pleiding micht prevail,
Braif *Hardyknute* to gain,
With fairest Words and Reason strang,
Straif courteously in vain.

As seen here, Ramsay is cognisant of Scots dialect, as well as archaisms. He is plainly interested in representing a 'native' language, but also in imposing the illusion of greater antiquity on the Watson text of 1719. With or without the help of the anonymous author of the 1719 version, Ramsay's 1724 edition is nearly double the length of its 'original'. Yet the narrative of the new version does not seem to be significantly more ambitious; rather, he appears to fill in some of the gaps in the poem, but does not attempt to suggest the lost totality of this 'fragment'. Rather than making the claim that *Hardyknute* is in fact part of a lost epic, Ramsay seems content in *The Ever Green* to create the illusion of its great

antiquity, associating it with the patriotic spirit and pleasurable nostalgia of old bards and poets who had 'tuned their Souls' to ancestral Scotland.

When viewed in the context of his other works, the nationalistic attitude adopted by Ramsay in *The Ever Green* appears to be the affectation of an accomplished, highly self-aware man of letters. Taken at face value, the Dedication and Preface of *The Ever Green* alone might seem to provide ample evidence that he was an ardent Scottish nationalist who resented the assimilation of Scotland into Great Britain. But it would be a mistake to interpret Ramsay's work at face value, for he was an eighteenth-century makar who could speak with irony or sincerity to the subject of nationhood and its multiple voices—both real and imaginary. Ramsay 'argued that he could not be confined to the one pen-name offered to members' of Edinburgh's Easy Club.[42] His adopted pseudonym in the records of the Easy Club is alternately Isaac Bickerstaff, a fictional character created by Steele in *The Tatler*, and Gavin Douglas (1476-1522), Bishop of Dunkeld and notably the earliest known translator in Britain of the *Aeneid*.[43]

Unlike *The Ever Green*, the emphasis in *The Tea-Table Miscellany* is on songs. It appears that Ramsay, an avid reader of *The Tatler* and *The Spectator*, derived the title and concept of *The Tea-Table Miscellany* from an essay by that great advocate of Britishness, Addison.[44] In it, Addison writes that 'there are none to whom this Paper will be more useful, than to the female World', going

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[42] See *The Mercat Anthology of Early Scottish Literature*, ed. by R.D.S. Jack and P.A.T. Rozendaal (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1997), p. xxx.
[43] See *The Mercat Anthology of Early Scottish Literature*, p. 166.
[44] 'It was said of Socrates, that he brought Philosophy down from Heaven, to inhabit among Men; and I shall be ambitious to have it said of me, that I have brought Philosophy out of Closets and

on to propose that the *Spectator* could provide women with a source of entertainment and polite education.[45] Ramsay clearly intended it to reach a broad audience, conceiving of placing a collection of popular songs and ballads upon tea tables throughout Great Britain. He suggests in his 1730 Preface that it is 'for the Use of the Persons of the highest Quality in Britain'.[46] Clearly conceiving of himself as reaching a British audience via the tea table—especially women—Ramsay continues, indulging in his characteristic sense of humour and an oblique reference to Alexander Pope:

> Now little Books, go your ways; be assured of favourable Reception wherever the Sun shines on the free-born chearful *Briton*; steal your selves into the Ladies Bosoms. Happy Volumes! You are to live as long as the Song of *Homer* in *Greek* and *English*, and mix your ashes only with the Odes of *Horace*. Were it but my Fate, when old and ruffled, like you to be again reprinted, what a curious Figure would I appear on the outmost Limits of Time, after a thousand Editions? Happy Volumes! You are secure, but I must yield; please the Ladies, and take care of my Fame.[47]

This passage indicates the kind of pleasure Ramsay derived from mock-heroic language and in drawing parallels with epic works. We can find a topical connection between these interests and his appreciation of *Hardyknute*.

Just a year after its appearance in *The Ever Green, Hardyknute* was included in the second volume of *The Tea-Table Miscellany* (1725). The narrative of the two versions is virtually identical. Curiously, however, the Scots archaisms of the former miscellany give way to polite English style of 'Britons' in the latter. The tensions between regional and national identity are evident in the differences between these two texts: they might be seen to reflect Ramsay's

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Libraries, Schools and Colleges, to dwell in Clubs and Assemblies, at Tea-Tables, and in Coffee-Houses'; Addison, *Spectator*, I, pp.44-47 (p. 44).

[45] Bond, *The Spectator*, I, p. 46

[46] *Works of Allan Ramsay*, IV, p. 239.

[47] *Works of Allan Ramsay*, IV, p. 239-40.

Easy Club alter-egos, with the nostalgic archaisms of *The Ever Green* as the 'Gavin Douglas' text, and the Anglocentric polish of *The Tea-Table Miscellany* as the 'Isaac Bickerstaff' text. As seen in the following stanzas, two of Ramsay's own which supplement the 'missing' text of the 1719 edition, the stylistic differences emerge between this and the language of the *Ever Green* versions:

XX.

Now with this fierce and stalwart train,
He reach'd a rysing height,
Whair braid encampit on the dale,
Norse army lay in sight;
Yonder, my valiant sons and seirs,
Our raging revers wait
On the unconquer'd Scottish *swaird,*
To try with us our fate.

XXI.

Mak orisons to him that sav'd
Our sauls upon the rude,
Syne bravely shaw your veins are fill'd
With Caledonian *blude.*
Then furth he drew his trusty glaive,
While thousands all around,
Drawn frae their sheaths glanst in the sun,
And loud the bougills sound.

It seems that Ramsay's imagination was drawn into the missing text of the battle scene itself, a vacuum he felt compelled to fill. Hardyknute's oration appears to find its original in another fictional Scottish warrior, devised by Tacitus: Calgacus. As noted in the previous chapter, Calgacus exhorts his army to expel the Roman invaders with the line, 'Let us then show, at the very first clash of arms, what manner of men Caledonia has kept in reserve'. The illusive originals of *Hardyknute* can be traced to the same source as other apocryphal narratives of nationhood throughout history: the poetic imagination.

The editorial differences between Ramsay's miscellanies give the impression that Ramsay intends to address two distinctly different kinds of audience. The friction between regional and national identities emerges in his shift from artificially antiquated Scots to refined and more standardised English. *The Ever Green* addresses the kind of patriotic and nostalgic image of Scotland invoked by organisations such as the Order of the Thistle, whose creation in turn redressed the absence of the Stuart Court in Edinburgh. *The Tea-Table Miscellany* is explicitly aimed at the polite female reader. The coarse edges of regionalism dissolve into the literature of Britishness. Whether we speak of creating new chivalric orders or new ballads, absence provides the necessity in this instance for what the ancient Greeks called *poesis,* or 'making'. Critics of such as John Butt, mentioned above, seem reluctant to acknowledge that the broader 'making' of a new British literature the involved in revival of vernacular literature signifies fabrication and invention, not fidelity to received notions of legitimate 'English' and 'Scottish' literature. However, the idea of Ramsay being caught between Scottish and English literature is more of a critical myth than a literary reality. In *The Ever Green*, the antiquarian appeal of Ramsay's more turgid Scots orthography, as found in *Hardyknute,* made some of the poetry less accessible to the general British public than it otherwise would have been: *The Ever Green* went through only two editions in the eighteenth century. The first of four volumes of *The Tea-Table Miscellany* had appeared in 1724; by 1730 the collection had gone through *five* editions; it 'was reprinted twenty-four times during the eighteenth century, twelve times during Ramsay's lifetime'.[48] It was

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[48] *Works of Allan Ramsay*, IV, p. 141.

not simply Scottish or English readers who registered their approval in these sales figures, but the wider British public from Dublin to Cardiff to Aberdeen. The friction between Ramsay's polite English and his dialectal Scots might be gauged in the differing popularity of these works.

Referring to *Hardyknute* and Ramsay's attitude towards its original, an anonymous writer (possibly Allan Ramsay's son, the painter Allan Ramsay) makes the following statement:

> To those who look upon Poetry as an affair of labour and difficulty, it must appear very strange that any man should compose so much of it, with so little view either to fame or profit. But the fact is, that writing verse cost Ramsay no trouble at all, and as it *lightly came*, it *lightly went*. In the Ever Green already mentioned, there is what is called a *Fragment* of *Hardiknute*, of which almost one-half made its first appearance in that publication. But this was a forgery which could not be supposed to ly very heavy upon his Conscience, as he knew that the original *fragment* so justly admired, was not above 10 or 15 years greater antiquity than his own additions to it. For it had been ushered into the World by a Lady Wardlaw, who produced it by two or three stanzas at a time, saying that she had taken them down in writing from an old woman, who sung them while she was spinning at her distaff. But as Lady Wardlaw had given sufficient proofs to her poetical genius, by several smaller Compositions, and as this spectre of an old Woman had never appeared to anyone but herself, none of her acquaintance ever doubted of her being the true author. What parts of this pretended fragment, as printed in the Evergreen, were Lady Wardlaw's and what were Ramsay's, his son, from whom I had likewise this anecdote, could not precisely remember, and said that they were all too much of the same texture for his critical skill alone to make the distinction; but that it was a point which might be easily ascertained, by comparing what is in the *Evergreen* with the copies of Hardiknute, printed before the year 1725. In the Evergreen, the whole of this Poem is printed in the spelling of the 15th Century, which, though the flimsiest of all disguises, has a wonderful effect in imposing upon the bulk of readers.[49]

This passage attributes the authorship of *Hardyknute* as it appears in *The Ever Green* solely to Lady Wardlaw and Allan Ramsay. It also suggests that Ramsay had knowledge of the textual fabrication before he added his own stanzas to the imposture. If scholars were later concerned about the authenticity of Ramsay's originals, it did not adversely affect his immediate success in targeting the polite British reader. Between them, *The Tea-Table Miscellany* and *The Ever Green*

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[49] See *Works of Allan Ramsay*, IV, pp. 75-76.

cover a dynamic range of literature, yet they also represent important steps toward blurring the boundaries between English and Scots traditions, between polite and popular literature, thus realising Addison's projected social economy of Britishness founded upon the native currency of vernacular literature.

Between 1719 and 1725, the text of *Hardyknute* had appeared in three different incarnations; its totality was always absent or implied. In its own, relatively small way, *Hardyknute* shows how the very idea of an authentic text, forged somewhere between the arbiters of cultural authority and bibliographical accuracy, is a problematic assumption. Individual ballads are often particularly fluid, since they can often lead a double-life of popular and polite forms. This fluidity of ballads and the ballad genre holds true in the subsequent publication history of *Hardyknute*, where the 'authentic' text becomes appropriated by other writers. Interestingly, it was in London—not Edinburgh, Glasgow or Aberdeen—that it was explicitly named an epic poem: *Hardyknute: A Fragment. Being the first Canto of an Epick Poem; with General Remarks and Notes* (London: R. Dodsley, 1740), containing some 'General Remarks upon *Hardyknute* in a Letter to a Friend' by an anonymous editor. 'I shall not trouble you with any whimsical Conjectures about [the Author]', the unknown editor writes. As he observes, 'Far be it for me to compare *Hardyknute* with the matchless *Iliad*', yet 'our Author was undoubtedly blest with a large Portion of the fiery Spirit of *Homer*' (p. 4).

The proliferation of the *Hardyknute* controversy becomes difficult to trace in a linear way beyond this point, and any reconstruction is necessarily based upon the unreliable testimonies of potential co-conspirators. According to David Dalrymple, Lord Hailes (1726-92), publication of the 1719 edition of *Hardyknute* was financed in part by Duncan Forbes (1685-1747), the Scottish judge and

President of the Court of Session, and by Sir Gilbert Elliot (1693-1766), Lord Justice Clerk for Scotland.[50] Both Forbes and Eliot were Unionists.[51] If the testimony of David Dalrymple can be trusted, then Lady Elizabeth Wardlaw's brother-in-law, Sir John Hope-Bruce of Kinross, was the author of *Hardyknute*.[52] In this particular account, Hope-Bruce claims to have found the manuscript in a Dunfermline vault. Although no autograph manuscript of this letter has yet been discovered (if it ever existed), Dalrymple informed John Pinkerton (1758-1856) that 'Sir John Bruce of Kinross' had sent the following message in a letter to Lord Binning, circa 1719:

> To perform my promise, I send you a true copy of the manuscript I found, some weeks ago, in a vault at Dumferline [sic]. It is written on vellum in a fair Gothic character; but so much defaced by time, as you'll find that the tenth part is not legible.[53]

Referring to this and other testimonial evidence, Thomas Percy asserts that 'it appears that Sir John was the author of Hardyknute, but afterwards used Mrs.

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[50] See Percy's headnote to *Hardyknute, A Scottish Fragment* (*Reliques*, I, pp. 347-48). The Scottish antiquarian David Dalrymple is a central figure in the *Hardyknute* controversy, but he may not necessarily be a reliable narrator, which will be discussed below.

[51] Forbes was made sheriff of Midlothian by the favour of the second Duke of Argyll, was friends with the Duke's brother Lord Islay, and was loyal to the Crown in the 1715; with the help of the Earl of Loudon, Forbes raised 2000 Scots to combat the Jacobite army in 1745, but was forced into retreat upon their northward return to Scotland (*DNB*). Sir Gilbert Elliot, the first Lord Minto (1651-1718), was active on behalf of William of Orange prior to the Revolution of 1688, and went to Holland to prepare for the Earl of Argyll's rising. Sir Gilbert Elliot succeeded his father as second Lord Minto in 1718, was a supporter of the Hanoverian succession, and escaped to nearby crags when Jacobite forces stopped at his Roxburghshire estate on their way southward (*DNB*).

[52] Originally known in the annals of the Hope family as John Bruce Hope, his name was changed to John Hope-Bruce when he became heir to the Bruce estate upon the death of his elder brother. Hope-Bruce married Lady Wardlaw's sister, Charlotte Halket.

[53] Dalrymple's account of Sir John Bruce's discovery of the *Hardyknute* manuscript first appears in John Pinkerton's *Select Scotish Ballads*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (London: J. Nichols, 1783), I, p. 136. Pinkerton wryly remarks upon Bruce's letter that the 'reader is left to judge whether this story of the manuscript on vellum, &c. has most the appearance of a true narrative, or of a *jeu d'esprit* addressed to a familiar friend. Lord Hales [sic] has a copy of the original edition of Hardyknute, with MS alterations in the handwriting of Dr. John Clerk, Physician in Edinburgh'(I, p. 137). The fact that Dalrymple's testimony appears in the same edition as Pinkerton's own substantial *Hardyknute* imposture undermines the credibility of both men.

Wardlaw to be the midwife of his poetry, and suppressed the story of the vault'.[54] It seems strange that Percy is so quick to disqualify Lady Wardlaw from authorship, particularly given the dubious source of his information. Percy had been informed on this matter by Pinkerton, the fabricator of a 432-line sequel to *Hardyknute*, which Pinkerton published as ancient in the second edition of his *Select Scotish Ballads* (1783). Crucially, Dalrymple's account of the Dunfermline manuscript was first published in this edition, suggesting the possibility of collusion between himself and Pinkerton. 'I am indebted for most of the stanzas, now recovered, to the memory of a lady in Lanarkshire', writes Pinkerton, ascribing the authenticity of his newly-discovered text to an anonymous, deceased and untraceable custodian of the oral tradition.[55] But in chronological terms, Pinkerton's work lies beyond the scope of this thesis.

It seems that to look for *Hardyknute*'s 'authentic' origins is to misread the cultural role which literary imposture is capable of playing. As a self-perpetuating fabrication, *Hardyknute* met the shared need of a community by producing a Unionist vision of Scotland with which English, Welsh, Irish and Scottish people could identify. Although the 1719 edition appeared in the year that he died, we can assume that Addison would have approved of its success. Addison had facilitated this success with his own essays on *Chevy Chase* and the epic tradition. This point is supported by the publication in 1754 of *Chevy Chase* and *Hardyknute* together in the same critical edition.[56] Interestingly, this edition

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[54] Percy, *Reliques*, I, p. 357. See also Percy's variant notes on *Hardyknute* in the second edition of *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, 3vols. (London: J. Dodsley, 1767), II, pp. 94-110 (pp. 109-10).

[55] Pinkerton, *Select Scotish Ballads*, I, p. xli.

[56] CHEVY-CHASE, With a PREFACE: Endeavouring to prove that the AUTHOR intended the Earl of Douglass for his HERO; and NOTES on some Passages of the POEM. To which is subjoined,

retains the assignation of 'Epic' ascribed to *Hardyknute* in 1740, and it apparently following the text of the anonymous edition published by Dodsley throughout. And though the anonymous 1754 editor is reluctant to relate *Chevy Chase* to specific events in Scottish history, he then proceeds to do so with *Hardyknute*.[57] With this edition, the greater Addisonian narrative of British ballads and nation-building appears to come full circle, acknowledging its own point of origin. As W. P. Ker observes, the 'growth of Epic out of the older and commoner forms of poetry, hymns, dirges, or panegyrics, is a progress towards intellectual and imaginative freedom'.[58] For eighteenth-century Britons, *Hardyknute* was not a fragment but a continuity, a robust myth of nationhood which apparently was reluctant to die.[59] It had become the common property of the public imagination, a British palimpsest which had been fabricated, published and overwritten to suit the needs of a nation at odds with its past and coming to terms with the present.

Forbes and Elliot would hardly have advanced this literary imposture if it challenged the legitimacy of their own Whig politics. If they were active behind

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HARDYKNUTE: A FRAGMENT. Being the first CANTO of an EPIC POEM, with NOTES. (Aberdeen: F. Douglass and W. Murray, 1754).

[57] The editor places the story in the tenth century, which accords with the Strathclyde Britons referred to above: 'History relates, that soon after the middle of the 10th century, Hago Prince of Norway and Helrick Prince of Denmark invaded Scotland with a mighty fleet; and, landing in the North, ravaged the country in a furious manner. Indulfus King of Scotland, raising an army with great expedition, and coming upon them almost before they were apprized of his march, gave them an entire overthrow, but was himself kill'd in the pursuit. Several circumstances make me think that our author has an eye to this story' (p. 16).

[58] Ker, *Epic and Romance*, p. 13.

[59] George Steevens would later dupe Richard Gough and members the eighteenth-century Society of Antiquaries, who were apparently eager to believe the story, with his 'discovery' of Hardyknute's gravestone, replete with an invented account of his death. On Steevens' 'Hardyknute Stone' imposture, see I. D'Israeli, *A Second Series of Curiosities of Literature; Consisting of Researches in Literary , Biographical, and Political History; of Critical and Philosophical Inquiries; and of Secret Histories*, 3 vols (London: John Murray, 1823), III, pp. 49-51. See also *Minor Lives: A Collection of Biographies by John Nichols, Annotated and with an Introduction on John Nichols and the Antiquarian and Anecdotal Movements of the late*

the scenes of the 1719 publication of *Hardyknute*, then it must have proffered a vision of Scotland's past which they sought to project: not one of bardic melancholy and mythic Highland sublimity which William Collins, John Home and James Macpherson would later explore, but one of mail-clad knights, feudal oaths of allegiance to the Crown, and the literary conventions of medieval romance. Although eighteenth-century Scots were constitutionally 'British', the process of becoming English, particularly a Johnsonian conception of Englishness as outlined in the previous chapter, was beyond reach. The creators of *Hardyknute* collectively constructed a vision of Scotland's past with which Unionists and Whigs could feel comfortable, one in which the common enemy of the Scots was not the English, but the Norse. There are no tartan-clad, crypto-Jacobite Highlanders in this post-Union ballad; the Scotland which Hardyknute and his sons defend is a sovereign nation unified by its martial spirit and oath of obedience to the Crown. Written with a Lockean sense of citizenship, civic responsibility and the body politic, *Hardyknute* serves as a fable wherein Unionists on both sides of the Tweed could proudly identify with their pre-Union cultural identities, while still observing the 'ancient' British constitution.

Eighteenth Century, ed. by Edward L. Hart (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 55-56.

Thomas Warton and *The Union*

Defoe's particular interest in Scotland as outlined in Chapter One of this thesis appears to be mapped according to the priorities of 'internal colonialism', which Michael Hechter has applied to the economic development of Great Britain.[1] By describing only those areas of the nation he believes to be relevant to trade and commerce, Defoe's map of the nation is defined by centres of economic exchange connected by commercial thoroughfares. But in eighteenth-century Scotland these zones of economic development were often bordered, or even surrounded, by hinterlands filled with barbarous strangers, legends and spirits. Therefore, his map was also defined by the 'frightful country' at the nation's margins. Defoe's sheer enthusiasm for economic exchange powered his imagination and shaped his idea of Britain. 'The truth is that Defoe possessed a wild inventive streak, a demonic imaginative power all his own', writes Pat Rogers; '[h]e was not just a reporter – he was the Great Fabricator.'[2]

That is not to suggest that there was or is a 'correct' way of imagining Great Britain, or that an objective representation is possible, but to acknowledge that the illusive agency of British cultural authority was collectively fabricated in, and derived from, such so-called 'authentick' narratives. This chapter will progress from that idea, focusing primarily on Thomas Warton's miscellany entitled *The Union* (1753) in order to highlight how contemporary politics

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[1] This term is used in Michael Hechter, *Internal Colonialism: The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975).

[2] Preface to Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain,* ed. by Pat Rogers (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 9.

authorised the ways that British authors imagined Great Britain into existence on the printed page.

Representations of eighteenth-century Britain as a Protestant, Anglocentric hegemony rely in part upon erasing its ties to the Scottish, Catholic heritage of the Stuart dynasty. In this sense, the 'invention of Britishness' has implicitly relied upon the denial of its own internal, historical differences; not to mention control over its own textual, literary identities.[3] The century between the Union of the Crowns (1603) and the Act of Union (1707) had seen the Civil Wars, the zealous reign of Cromwell and the Revolution of 1688. Curiously, John Locke recasts this chaotic history as a well-ordered and continuous narrative in *Two Treatises of Government* (1689/1690). Given the extent to which Locke's *Two Treatises* has served to legitimate the Revolution of 1688, it is extraordinary that the greater part of the manuscript is 'lost':

> Reader,
> *Thou hast here the Beginning and End of a Discourse concerning Government; what Fate has otherwise disposed of the Papers that should have filled up the middle, and were more than all the rest, 'tis not worth while to tell thee. These, which remain, I hope are sufficient to establish the Throne of our Great Restorer, Our present King* William; *to make good his Title, in the Consent of the People, which being the only one of all lawful Governments, he has more fully and clearly than any other Prince in* Christendom: *And to justifie to the World , the people of* England, *whose love of their just and Natural Rights, with their Resolution to preserve them, saved the Nation when it was on the very brink of Slavery and Ruine. If these Papers have that evidence, I flatter my self is to be found in them, there will be no great miss of those which are lost, and my Reader may be satisfied without them.*[4]

It is true that William had secured a Protestant crown for England and Scotland, but whatever this 'Great Restorer' actually did restore to the nation, it was certainly not continuity. And it cannot be the same emphatic notion of 'REDEAT'

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[3] The phrase 'the invention of Britishness' is taken from Linda Colley, *Britons*, p. 1.
[4] Preface (1698), *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. by Peter Laslett, Student edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 155. Cited hereafter as *Two Treatises*.

exemplified in the Jacobite oratory of William King, which this chapter will explore.

Modern Locke scholars have been unable to prove that the so-called 'middle' of Locke's *Two Treatises* ever existed, yet he implicitly draws authority from this problematic original. If Locke can be taken at his word about this missing text, then the nation which emerged from the Revolution of 1688 was shaped as much by this absent text, '*more than all the rest*', as it was by the published text. At present, however, this missing manuscript exists only as the subject of conjecture involving a pseudonymous *De Morbo Gallico* treatise and a mysterious chest full of Locke's manuscripts.[5] Locke's purpose in the *Two Treatises* is to create the illusion of political continuity in the history of the British throne. At a time when the Anglican church was casting itself as the only Christian orthodoxy to have descended directly from Christ, few would question the validity of framing the argument of the *Two Treatises* on the mythical figures of Adam and Eve.[6] As mentioned earlier, Camden had set a precedent for this kind of antediluvian genealogy in *Britannia*. Locke's success in transforming civil war and revolution into a plausible narrative of political continuity represents a masterful stroke of Whig myth-making and nation-building.[7]

Locke's revisionist historiography speaks to the wider cultural practice of rewriting the past to suit present-day needs. The primary focus of this chapter is Thomas Warton's problematic miscellany entitled *The Union: or, Select Scots*

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[5] Laslett, *Two Treatises*, pp. 45-66.

[6] On the purity of the Anglican Church and its Protestant myth-making, see chapters four and five of this thesis.

[7] Locke has been referred to as 'the evangelist of whig doctrine', and the 'whigs found in Locke's two great works on civil government and toleration an effective antidote to the tory thesis' of

and English Poems (1753), a text whose title indicates a concern with British nationhood and the integration of English and Scots poetry into a truly national literature. But with this new nation comes the potential for a break with the past. Through Warton's concern with historical disruption and lost continuity, he expands the literary map of the nation in *The Union* by self-consciously synthesising a British literary canon from the old and the new, from pre- and post-Union traditions. This mixture of traditions, ideologies and poetic sources of nationhood forms a central concern of this chapter, serving as an organisational principle of the Union as well as *The Union*.

The Act of Union itself builds upon the constitutional precedents established in the Revolution and in Locke's *Two Treatises*. Article I of the Act of Union declares

> That the two kingdoms of England and Scotland shall upon the First Day of May which shall be in the Year One thousand seven hundred and seven, and for ever after, be united into One Kingdom by the Name of Great Britain and that the Ensigns Armorial of the said united kingdom be such as Her Majesty shall appoint and the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew be conjoyned in such Manner as her Majesty shall think fit and used in all Flags Banners Standards and Ensigns both at Sea and Land.[8]

The Union Jack was decreed to symbolise these two 'conjoyned' kingdoms under the constitution of one nation state; but the lineaments of older national identities

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Divine Right and the Stuart cause. See Basil Williams, *The Whig Supremacy: 1714-1760*, 2nd edn, rev. by C. H. Stuart (Oxford: Clarendon Press: 1962), pp. 3, 4.

[8] See 'Act for the Union with Scotland, 1706', in *The Law and the Working of the Constitution: Documents 1660-1914*, ed. by W. C. Costin and J. Steven Watson, 2 vols (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1952), I, pp. 98-110 (p. 99). Cited hereafter as *The Law and the Working of the Constitution*.

can be traced beneath the surface of this new flag, a fitting emblem of the British determination to overwrite old national identities with a new one. So, the Union Jack may be read not only as a British text authorised by Article I, but also as a symbolic affirmation of Britishness as a kind of palimpsest. More than any other, Article II would prove to be the source of the new nation's first political crisis of conscience:

> That the Succession to the Monarchy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and of the Dominions thereto belonging after Her most Sacred Majesty and in Default of Issue of her Majesty be remain and continue to the most Excellent Princess Sophia Electress and Duchess Dowager of Hanover and the Heirs of her body being Protestants upon whom the Crown of England is settled [. . .].[9]

This sentence contains the constitutional precedent for the Protestant Hanoverian succession of 1714 and was engineered to ensure the perpetuity of a Protestant Britain. But British political continuity was severely disrupted yet again following the 1714 death of Queen Anne. Pursuant to Article II of the Act of Union, George Lewis of Hanover was the nearest Protestant successor to the throne. Upon his coronation as King George I, the Whig party seized control of Parliament from the Tories. As they competed for the favour and patronage of their respective arbiters of political influence, Whig and Tory writers alike took up the task of representing the new national identity, usually along recognisable party lines. Fabricating the illusion of a continuous British polity marked a struggle for editorial control over the palimpsest of Britishness.

This chapter deals with literary texts of problematic authenticity: whether wholly invented or, like the Union Jack itself, combining old and new elements. It will explore the relationship of these problematic texts to British cultural

authority, placing emphasis on the theme of lost continuity. Before moving directly to *The Union*, however, some preliminary background material on Thomas Warton (the Younger) should prove to be useful.[10] An earlier text in which Warton had been involved was Thomas Warton the Elder's posthumous *Poems on Several Occasions. By the Reverend Thomas Warton* (1748), edited by Warton's elder son Joseph. Readers have observed that this volume represents a puzzling mixture of past and contemporary eighteenth-century styles, some going so far as to suggest that Warton the Elder was a progenitor of Romanticism. His *Poems on Several Occasions* gave the impression that he had anticipated the taste and style of succeeding generations of British poets. Remarkably, recent research in the Warton Papers at Oxford has demonstrated 'not only that Joseph Warton sometimes heavily edited and improved his father's verses, but that he and his brother [Thomas] wrote at least ten of these poems themselves'.[11] So not only is Warton the Elder's *Poems on Several Occasions* a textual imposture; his identity itself, at least as he exists for posterity through this text, is the progeny of Joseph and Thomas Warton.

The handling of identity in *The Union* suggests that Thomas Warton had learned much from his part as a secret contributor to his father's *Poems on*

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[9] Costin and Watson, *The Law and the Working of the Constitution*, I, p. 99.

[10] Born in 1728 to Thomas Warton the Elder, Oxford Professor of Poetry from 1718 until 1728, Thomas the Younger had demonstrated poetic abilities from an early age. At seventeen he composed *The Pleasures of Melancholy,* a blank verse poem of 315 lines reflecting upon antiquities and ruins; it was published when he was only nineteen by Robert Dodsley in 1747. At sixteen he went up to Trinity College, Oxford, became a fellow in 1752, and like his father before him was elected Oxford Professor of Poetry, serving from 1756 to 1766.

[11] David Fairer, 'The Poems of Thomas Warton the Elder?', *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 26, (1975), 287-300 (289). Cited hereafter as 'The Poems of Thomas Warton the Elder?'. Upon his death in 1745, Warton the Elder left his family of four with pressing debts. Availing themselves of his unpublished work, the Warton brothers augmented their father's poetry with their own to produce a more copious edition, one whose proceeds from subscription sales would be used

Several Occasions. *The Union* is a miscellany of complicated origins and overt textual impostures, representing a shadowy assembly of pseudonymous voices, fabricated identities, and problems of provenance. In fact, the title page imprint of the first edition falsifies the names of both its publisher and its place of origin.[12] Interestingly, works by many of the literary figures who would be directly or indirectly involved in the Ossian controversy were assembled in *The Union* by Warton, including Allan Ramsay, Thomas Gray, William Mason, William Collins, Tobias Smollett and David Mallet. Most remarkably in this particular respect, *The Union* includes a poem attributed to 'Mr. Hammond' which was actually written by Samuel Johnson, an indefatigable Ossian sceptic.[13] As will be shown, Warton himself disguises his own identity as compositor, editor and poet within its pages. D. Nichol Smith provided the only sustained examination of *The Union* in the twentieth century; his bibliographical research on the individual selections and their often-disguised authors is indispensable.[14] The stated purpose of Smith's bibliographical analysis is to provide a detailed account of the often mysterious provenance of its contents, but my present line of enquiry will capitalise upon his research in a different way. This chapter seeks to

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against family debts. See also Christina le Prevost, 'More Unacknowledged Verse by Joseph Warton', *Review of English Studies,* 37 (1986), 317-47.

[12] See D. Nichol Smith, 'Thomas Warton's Miscellany: *The Union*', *Review of English Studies*, 19 (1943), 263-75. Cited hereafter as D. Nichol Smith. Of *The Union*'s imprint, 'Edinburgh: Printed for Archibald Monro & David Murray. M.DCC.LIII', Smith writes that no such booksellers or publishers are to be found in records for that time in Scotland, adding that it was a clever name 'for an Oxford wit to devise for an Edinburgh firm' and that the actual publisher was R. Baldwin of Paternoster Row (D. Nichol Smith, 263).

[13] Dr. Johnson was perhaps an unwitting, but apparently not an unwilling, contributor to *The Union*; his poem entitled 'On a Lady's Presenting a Sprig of Myrtle to a Gentleman' was incorrectly attributed to 'Mr. Hammond' in five successive editions from 1753 through 1796. Given that Thomas Warton and Samuel Johnson knew each other and corresponded, it seems curious that the misattribution carried on unnoticed through such a long series of editions. See D. Nichol Smith, 267.

[14] D. Nichol Smith, 271.

uncover constructions of identity in *The Union*, looking at politics, patriotism and literary imposture as unifying and necessary themes in the fabrication of British cultural identity.

The title of *The Union* attends to the political as well as cultural connotations of the term, which may be understood as Warton's poetic attempt to do what Westminster politicians of the day could not: produce a unifying and culturally inclusive vision of Britishness. In the Preface, Warton reflects upon his selection procedure with the following remark:

> It is hoped that the ancient Scottish poems (amongst which THE THISTLE AND THE ROSE, and HARDYKNUTE are more particularly distinguished) will make no disagreeable figure amongst those of modern date; and that they will produce the same effect here, as Mr. Pope observes a moderate use of old words may have in a poem; which, adds he, is like working old abbey-stones into a modern building, and which I have sometimes seen practised with good success.[15]

As seen in chapter two of this thesis, *Hardyknute* was not so 'ancient' a composition as Warton had believed, and 'The Thistle and the Rose' had also been transformed by the hand of its eighteenth-century editor, Allan Ramsay. 'Indeed,' writes Nick Groom, 'the archaic pastiche *Hardyknute* was believed genuine until [Thomas] Percy, suspicious of its authenticity, established the identity of its eighteenth-century author', and he sent his discovery to Thomas Warton in a letter (June 1761).[16] Even after learning from Percy that *Hardyknute* was in fact a modern narrative, Warton maintained that the first stanza was

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[15] Thomas Warton, *The Union: or, Select Scots and English Poems*, 3rd edn (London: R. Baldwin, 1766), pp. iii-iv. Cited hereafter as *The Union*.

[16] Groom, *The Making of Percy's Reliques*, p. 63. As discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, the identity of the 'author' of *Hardyknute* has not been 'established'. But it can be confirmed that Warton used Ramsay's *Ever Green* edition of *Hardyknute* in *The Union*. On Warton's correspondence with Percy, see Fairer, *The Correspondence of Thomas Warton*, pp. 93-98.

ancient and the rest were derived from that original fragment, demonstrating yet again his characteristic fascination in synthesising the old and the new.

At a later date, Warton would print an observation, similar to the one above, that '[w]hen I read Pope's elegant translation of [Chaucer's *Temple of Fame*], I think I am walking among the modern monuments unsuitably placed in Westminster-abbey'.[17] These two comments appear to contradict one another on the intermixture of the ancient and the modern, yet they indicate the growth of Warton's critical abilities between compiling *The Union* and writing *A History of English Poetry* (1774). It may be wondered why he grants Pope 'good success' in the first instance, censures him in the second, and then otherwise excludes Pope from *The Union*. In the first, the supposedly ancient poetry from Scotland that should 'make no disagreeable figure amongst those of modern date' suggests that Warton imagines a venerable, polite figure joining a unified British polity; in the second, he outlines the means by which Britain's English 'centre' resists this imagined state of integration.

The Union's table of contents shows that Warton sought a mixture of Scottish and English voices in order to achieve a more inclusive paradigm of British poetry. But its genuineness is complicated by the discovery that Warton himself ventriloquized six of his own poems in *The Union* through fabricated or concealed identities. Warton attributed his own 'Ode on the Approach of Summer' and 'A Pastoral in the manner of Spenser, from Theocritus, Idyll. 20.'

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[17] Thomas Warton, *A History of English Poetry, from the close of the eleventh to the commencement of the eighteenth century. To which are prefixed two dissertations. I. On the origin of romantic fiction in Europe. II. On the introduction of learning into England. (A third dissertation on the Gesta Romanorum.)*, 3 vols (London: J. Dodsley, J. Walter, J. Robson et al., 1774-81), I, p. 396. Cited in *Pope: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by John Barnard (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), pp. 465-66.

to 'a Gentleman formerly of the University of Aberdeen'. He attributed his 'A Panegyric on Oxford Ale' to 'a Gentleman of Trinity College'; 'The Progress of Discontent' was said to be by 'a Gentleman of Trinity College, Oxford', 'Job, Chapter XXXIX' by 'a Gentleman of Oxford' and finally his anonymous verses 'Inscribed on a beautiful Grotto near the Water'.[18] It seems curious that Warton, who had never even been to Scotland, would attempt to adopt an Aberdonian persona. It appears that for him, British poetry itself could not be adequately represented without these fabricated identities.[19]

By juxtaposing 'Scotch and English' identities from the past and present, Warton's miscellany may be said to represent his own integrated vision of pre- and post-Union identities. The first poem in *The Union,* Dunbar's 'The Thistle and the Rose', recounts the 1503 Edinburgh marriage of Margaret, daughter of Henry VII, and James IV, King of Scots. This union between the Tudor and Stuart monarchies serves as an appropriate introduction to Warton's own tropology of British unity. Originally known by its first line, 'Quhen Merche wes with variand windis past', Dunbar's sixteenth-century poem was modernised by Allan Ramsay in *The Ever Green* (1724) under the title 'The Thistle and the Rose'.[20] Ramsay's edited version of Dunbar's poem suggests the tensions

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[18] See Richard Mant, *The Poetical Works of the Late Thomas Warton, B.D.*, 5th edn, 2 vols (1802; repr. Farnborough, Hants.: Gregg International, 1969). Cited hereafter as *Late Thomas Warton.* 'The pieces in this little publication [*The Union*, 1753] were selected by Mr. [Thomas] Warton: and he contributed to it several pieces of his own, as "The Triumph of Isis," the "Ode on the Approach of Summer," the "Pastoral in the manner of Spenser," and the "Inscription on a beautiful Grotto near the Water" (*Late Thomas Warton,* I, p. xxiv).

[19] 'Warton was never in Scotland; it may be doubted if he was ever north of Oxfordshire. The gentleman from Aberdeen served to keep the two Edinburgh booksellers in countenance' (D. Nichol Smith, 273). David Fairer has pinpointed Lincoln as the northern extremity of Warton's travels in Great Britain.

[20] *William Dunbar: Poems*, ed. James Kinsley, Clarendon Medieval and Tudor Series (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), p. 109. All citations from *The Ever Green* refer to *The Ever Green: A Collection of Scots Poems, Wrote by the Ingenious before 1600,* 2 vols (1724; repr. Glasgow:

between old and new ways of remembering Scotland's past. Ramsay ascribes a new, emblematic title to Dunbar's work, one that Warton felt was a suitable opening to his own miscellany.

These old and new ways of identifying with the past resonate in the 'Old Interest' of Jacobitism and the 'New Interest' of the Hanoverian accession. The Jacobite Rising of 1745 and the events leading to the final military defeat of the Stuart cause at the 1746 Battle of Culloden remained fresh in the minds of many Britons in the 1750s. In the first edition of *The Union* (1753), Warton included a poem entitled *The Tears of Scotland*, anonymously published in 1746 without a title page or an imprint; he did not attribute this seven-stanza ballad to its author, Tobias Smollett, until the third edition (1766).[21] Researchers have been unable to discover how the *Union* text of *The Tears of Scotland* came into Warton's hands, because it varies noticeably from all previous known versions, yet no manuscript has yet been found. If Smollett ever provided Warton with an autograph manuscript of the *Union* text, it remains lost.

Following the Rising of 1745 and Culloden, *The Tears of Scotland* might readily be interpreted by government officials at face value as a Jacobite ballad,

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Robert Forrester, 1876). With the exception of 'Part of the Prologue to Sir David Lyndesay's Dream. Written in the Reign of King James V.', Warton selected all of his 'ancient Scottish poems', including *Hardyknute, a Fragment* and 'The Eagle and the Robin Red-Breast, a Fable, by Archibald Scott, written before the Year 1600' from *The Ever Green*, each of which had been heavily edited or written entirely by Ramsay. On Warton's debt to Ramsay see D. Nichol Smith, 270-71. On Ramsay's editorial practice in *The Ever Green*, see *Scottish Poetry: A Critical Survey*, ed. James Kinsley (London: Cassell and Company, 1955), p. 166.

[21] D. Nichol Smith, 269-70. Smith states that Smollett's 'Love Elegy' printed in *The Union* was originally published in *Roderick Random* (1748) but is unable to determine the origin of *The Tears of Scotland*. See also William Scott, who pursues the matter more thoroughly in 'Smollett's *The Tears of Scotland*: A Hitherto Unnoticed Printing and Some Comments on the Text', in *Review of English Studies*, n.s. 8 (1957), 38-42. More recent Smollett scholarship remains undecided on this specific point, but notes that the text of *The Union* (1753) varies from earlier versions, but that it has served as the standard text of *The Tears of Scotland* ever since. See *Poems, Plays, and* The Briton: *Tobias Smollett*, ed. by Byron Gassman and O. M. Brack, Jr., (Athens, GA. and London: University of Georgia Press, 1993), pp. 554-60.

so that 'even as late as 1753 Smollett may not have wished his name to be associated with the poem'.[22] D. Nichol Smith has noted that Alexander Carlyle declares in his *Autobiography* that although Smollett was a Tory, he 'was not a Jacobite, but he had the feelings of a Scotch gentleman on the reported cruelties that were said to be exercised after the battle of Culloden' (269). Carlyle denies Jacobitism on the part of Smollett; it may well be that the Jacobitism of this cosmopolitan Briton was limited to sentimental nostalgia. The publication of *The Tears of Scotland* in the *Craftsman* (June 1750), begun in 1727 by the disenfranchised Tory Lord Bolingbroke and the opposition Whig William Pulteney, could suggest Smollett's affiliation with their 'Patriot' platform.[23]

Under Smollett's editorship, the journal *The Briton* (May 1762 to February 1763) appears during its brief life to have derived much from the political platform of the *Craftsman*. But his concessions to the consolations of Union are muted in *The Tears of Scotland*:

> Mourn, hapless CALEDONIA, mourn
> Thy banish'd peace, thy laurels torn!
> Thy sons, for valour long renown'd,
> Lie slaughter'd on their native ground; (ll. 1-4)

Smollett's grief over the aftermath of Culloden emerges at once, yet it fails to manifest itself in a partisan Scottish excoriation of English tyranny. Even though its seven stanzas assume the form of a traditional Scottish ballad, Smollett's tone is overtly elegiac; this is not a Jacobite call to arms, but a poem that makes poetic capital out of the pathos of a massacre, dissolving into passive grief. This

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[22] Tobias Smollett, *Poems, Plays, and* The Briton*: Tobias Smollett*, p. 558.
[23] On the politics of *The Craftsman*, Patriot ideologies and ideologues, see Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition*.

resignation to tears suggests that he was to identify himself with Britain as much as Scotland. He focuses his moral outrage on the way that internal faction and political dissent had brought down an apocalyptic blow on the head of Scotland:

> Thy tow'ring spirit now is broke,
> Thy neck is bended to the yoke.
> What foreign arms could never quell,
> By civil rage, and rancour fell. (ll. 21-24)

The nature of 'yoke' is a less obvious than a first reading might suggest. It seems to be directly linked to the historical consequences of factionalism. Despite the atrocities that Smollett catalogues in the ensuing verses, he fails to shift his position from that of a sympathetic but passive observer. This moderation suggests that Smollett would sooner view himself as Briton than a Scot. Scotland had paid in blood for its own factionalism and inner turmoil. After Culloden, many had been yoked long enough to the political strife and 'civil rage' of Jacobitism.

Thomas Warton did not live beyond the shadow of these events in Trinity College, Oxford.[24] His own father, Thomas Warton the Elder, had developed an unshakeable Jacobite reputation at the University. Perhaps it began with his notorious Restoration Day sermon of 29 May 1719, reputedly so seditious that the Vice-Chancellor was reluctantly compelled to demand that Warton surrender his sermon notes; under duress, however, Warton claimed to have misplaced the manuscript altogether.[25] His oratory was powerful enough to produce an enduring impression of his political convictions, yet ephemeral enough to evade the legal

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[24] Thomas Warton the Elder was 'the Jacobite poetry professor who satirized George I' and was known as ' "Tom of Maudlin", warm favourite of all the Oxford beauties and toast of the tory university' (Fairer, 'The Poems of Thomas Warton the Elder?', *Review of English Studies*, 287).

authority of a society that was based upon the material evidence of the written word. From one Warton generation through to the next, Oxfordshire was a virtual republic of English Jacobitism, a community galvanised by its opposition to the Hanoverian succession and 'the Whig supremacy'. But one theme that this chapter will explore is that the medium of Oxford Jacobitism was often oral, ranging from drunken oaths to formal performances, rather than the written word.

In 1748, for example, undergraduates gathered outside Oxford's lonely Whig outpost, Exeter College, shouting seditious oaths and throwing debris at its windows. 'God Damn King George and all his assistants. God Bless King James the Third of England, Prince Charles and Prince Henry, Duke of York', cried John Whitmore of Balliol College.[26] Richard Blacow emerged from Exeter, forthrightly if not comically, at this provocation. When he did so, 'he was greeted by the memorable words, "I am the man that dare say God bless King James the 3d and tell you my name is Dawes of St. Mary Hall. I am a man of independent fortune and therefore am afraid of *no one* or *no man*"'.[27] The Vice-Chancellor John Purnell, who was reluctant to act upon the accusations made by the Whig Blacow (later canon of Windsor) against the drunken Jacobite rioters, was tried before King's bench in London as were the undergraduates Whitmore, Dawes and Charles Luxmoore.[28] They were released on bail, the integrity of the University was impugned, but the event was far from the end of the Old Interest at Oxford. It has been argued that 'The O[xfordshire] Election [of 1754] was the

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[25] W. R. Ward, *Georgian Oxford: University Politics in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958), pp. 90-91. Cited hereafter as *Georgian Oxford.*
[26] W. R. Ward, *Georgian Oxford*, pp.170-71.
[27] Paul Kleber Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People, 1688-1788* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 276-77. Cited hereafter as Monod.
[28] W. R. Ward, *Georgian Oxford,* p. 200.

greatest struggle between the Friends of the Pretender, and those of the Hanover Succession that hath ever been known, except the two rebellions of '15 and '45'.[29]

In his examination of the 1754 Tory victory in Oxfordshire—an election result controversially overruled by Parliament on 23 April 1755—R. J. Robson has demonstrated how the 'Old Interest' of English Jacobitism represented a threat to British political hegemony. This Oxford radicalism forms an interesting context for *The Union*, and may suggest that Warton's prefatory reference to 'old abbey-stones' among the new is a high-spirited political pun on the 'Old Interest'. These were dangerous times for supporters of the Old Interest, with the ever-present danger of trial for sedition. Warton's awareness of this danger emerges in the elisions seen in the autograph manuscript of a letter to his brother Joseph on 9 May 1755:

> How the El—n was carried will ever be a secret; unless an *account* of the *Justness* of the Disqualification was laid before the World; which *won't* be done; at present they say, "we disqualifyd so Many of their Votes" — "ay—but how, or why?" — "A.) they were JUDGED to be justly disqualified by the H—se, & that's enough." — Lord Eg—nt, & Co. persevered to the last in favour of the O— Int—st.[30]

This 'Disqualification' raises interesting questions about the authenticity of British democracy in the 1750s, and how Jacobitism was minimised and suppressed by Parliament, creating the illusion of political harmony in the heartland of England. If the Warton brothers shared their father's enthusiasm for the Old Interest, they did so in a far less public and conspicuous manner than he

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[29] R.J. Robson, *The Oxfordshire Election of 1754: A Study in the Interplay of City, County and University Politics* (London: Oxford University Press, 1949), i, *n.* 2. See also *Georgian Oxford*, pp. 192-206.
[30] Fairer, *Correspondence of Thomas Warton*, p. 47.

had done. The danger of Jacobite sympathisers being tried for sedition was clearly great enough at the time that, by using dashes and strategic lacunae, Warton took precautions to disguise his feelings about the outcome of the controversial 1754 election.

This vitality of the 'Old Interest' suggests how the argument that Jacobitism died at Culloden is a historiographical fiction. Almost a decade after Culloden, Jacobitism was alive, well and being actively suppressed in the heart of Old England. The strength of the 'Old Interest' community in Oxford brings us to a central feature of *The Union*, something that might be called 'the contest of Isis'. It seems ironic that at the core of Warton's miscellany, amidst a maze of concealed identities, we find two texts which are correctly attributed and whose origins are well-established: William Mason's *Isis: An Elegy* and Thomas Warton's *The Triumph of Isis*. In *Isis. An Elegy* (1748), the Cambridge poet William Mason (1724-1797) had addressed the 1748 London trial of the Oxford Jacobites, including Vice-Chancellor Purnell (see above), to which Warton responded with *The Triumph of Isis* (1750). These two poems, which take their titular image from Oxford's River Isis, are printed back to back by Warton, working together as a central political feature of *The Union.* Mason, later canon of York, invokes the historical patriotism of Oxford with epic intonation, listing some of its former 'heroes' such as Sidney, Raleigh, Addison and Locke. The writings of Locke and Addison, of course, were formative in the success of the Whig party, but this list of exemplars also serves to establish grounds for denouncing Oxford's infamous Jacobitism:

> Ilissus! Roll thy fam'd Athenian tide;
> Tho' Plato's steps oft mark'd thy neighb'ring glade,

> Tho' fair Lycaeum lent it's awful shade,
> Tho' ev'ry Academic green imprest
> It's image full on thy reflecting breast,
> Yet my pure stream shall boast as proud a name,
> And Britain's ISIS flow with Attic fame.
> Alas! How changed! Where now that Attic boast?
> See! Gothic Licence rage o'er all my coast;
> See! Hydra Faction spread it's impious reign,
> Poison each breast, and madden ev'ry brain: (ll. 80-90)

Mason represents the Old Interest harboured by Oxford as a self-centred and profligate aberration from its former virtue and greatness. He argues that liberty is a kind of agency that prospers only through voluntary social integration, while it degenerates through 'Faction', independence of mind and political dissent. Mason appears to depict the consequences of faction similar to the way that Smollett does above.

Mason might be referring here to the second of Locke's *Two Treatises of Government*:

> when any number of Men have, by the consent of every individual, made a *Community*, they have thereby made that *Community* one Body, with a Power to Act as one Body, which is only by the will and determination of the *majority*. [. . .] And thus every Man, by consenting with others to make one Body Politick under one Government, puts himself under an Obligation to every one of that Society, to submit to the determination of the majority.[31]

Mason uses this injunction by Locke as a rhetorical tool for separating the Old Interest dross of Jacobitism from the newly-forged British identity of the Hanoverian Whigs. However, New Interest ideology had to compete not only with those of the Old Interest and moderate Tories, but also those of the dissident 'Patriot Whigs'.[32] Mason's invocation of Locke, who, 'With Majestic Wisdom thron'd upon his brow' (l. 68), proclaims that '"NATURE'S FIRST BEST GIFT WAS

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[31] Laslett, *Two Treatises of Government*, pp. 349-50.
[32] Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition*, p. 3.

LIBERTY"' (l. 76), appears to refer to the model of 'Society' cited above.[33] The opposition between liberty and faction which Mason appears to be so fond of here was in fact first asserted by Bolingbroke himself in his *Remarks on the History of England* (1730), the first important 'Whig history'.[34]

Although Mason's *Isis. An Elegy* does not fall within the historical scope of Christine Gerrard's *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, it appears to adhere to her characterisation of Patriot attitudes. Repeatedly employing the term 'patriot', Mason invokes the selfless civic virtue idealised by Addison in his play *Cato* (1713). Mason imagines the spirit of Cato appearing on the tree-lined banks of the Isis, saying the following to Addison:

> My son, he cry'd, observe this mein [sic] with awe,
> In solemn lines the strong resemblance draw;
> The piercing notes shall strike each British ear;
> Each British eye shall drop the patriot tear!
> And rous'd to glory by the nervous strain,
> Each Youth shall spurn at slav'ry's abject reign,
> Shall guard with CATO's zeal Britannia's laws,
> And speak, and act, and bleed, in freedom's cause. (ll. 51-58)

Mason appropriates the voice of Cato in order to idealise patriotism as a voluntary subordination of the self to the good of 'Britannia'. This Anglicised

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[33] 'To understand Political Power right, and derive it from its Original, we must consider what State all Men are naturally in, and that is, *a State of perfect Freedom* to order their Actions, and dispose of their Possessions, and Persons as they think fit, within the bounds of the Law of Nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the Will of any other Man. [. . .] A *State* also *of Equality*, wherein all the Power and Jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another' (John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government* , in *Two Treatises of Government*, p. 287). Mason consciously misrepresents the political scene by attributing 'Hydra Faction' solely to the Tories, for the Whig party itself was a factious 'Community' and a divided 'Body Politick'. British politics in the 1720's were so divisive that the disenfranchised Lord Bolingbroke, a leader of the Patriot Opposition, prioritised 'the subordination of Whig-Tory party identity' to the welfare of the nation; see *The Patriot Opposition*, p. 4.

[34] In *Bolingbroke and his Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Harvard University Press, 1968), Isaac Kramnick writes that in 'Bolingbroke's history, according to Herbert Butterfield the first important "Whig" history, the dynamics were provided by the interplay of two "spirits," one of liberty and one of faction' (p.

Cato enacts a performance of British civic virtue based on a mythical Lockean 'Body Politick' of the British 'patriot line' (l. 35). In a letter to Warton, Mason would later declare himself to have always been an 'Old Whig', a Whig faction unto itself.

The Triumph of Isis is a direct response to Mason's *Isis. An Elegy*, and it is the only one out of the seven poems by himself in *The Union* to which Warton attaches his own name. The two poems are printed side by side in *The Union*, further signifying the identity politics highlighted between them. Mason represents Oxford as a law unto itself, an anachronistic relic of England's feudal, Gothic past. But rather than being ashamed of Oxford's heritage, Warton celebrates its Gothic architecture as symbolic of a national identity which Mason would erase from the nation's memory. Warton questions this Whig definition of liberty which will not countenance the intellectual freedom and political independence of Oxford. In response to Mason's rhetoric of freedom, Cambridge is represented as the home of hypocrites who extol the virtues of Whiggish liberty while they prostitute themselves to the whims of the Court.

But *The Triumph of Isis* also represents a distinctive assertion about the nature of Britishness. Warton receives the following exhortation from the apparition of Isis, the 'guardian queen' (l. 11) and muse of 'the shadowy stream' (l. 10):

> When Freedom calls, and OXFORD bids thee sing,
> Why stays thy hand to strike the sounding string?
> While thus, in Freedom's and in Phoebus' spite,
> The venal sons of slavish CAM, unite;
> To shake yon tow'rs, when Malice rears her crest,

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25). Kramnick alludes here to Herbert Butterfield, *The Englishman and His History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1944).

> Shall all my sons in silence idly rest?
> Still sing, O CAM, your fav'rite Freedom's cause;
> Still boast of Freedom, while you break her laws:
> To pow'r your songs of Gratulation pay,
> To courts address soft flattery's soothing lay. (ll. 25-34)

An ideological struggle between pre- and post-Union identities – even pre- and post- Revolution identities – is at work in this contest between Warton and Mason, despite their acquaintance with each other.[35] As will be seen in greater detail in Chapter Four of this thesis, the divisions between Tories and Whigs over the ideological basis of nationhood was formed by the Revolution of 1688 and its aftermath.

Unlike Mason's hegemonic vision of British patriotism and his disparagement of Oxford's Old Interest, Warton represents his own formulation of Britishness as a heterodoxy of patriotic spirits. Jacobitism represents only one of these spirits, but it materialises in ghostly fashion in *The Triumph of Isis* in the form of Dr. William King, Principal of Saint Mary Hall and Vice-Chancellor of the University. Dr. King had delivered an oration in Latin with the stirring refrain of "'REDEAT ILLE MAGNUS GENIUS BRITANNIAE' (restore that great *genius* of Britain)" at the April 1749 opening ceremony of Oxford's Radcliffe Library; his Jacobite politics earned him an audience with Prince Charles Edward Stuart , who made a clandestine London appearance in September 1750.[36] Dr. King was less than impressed with the Young Pretender's intellect, lack of learning and

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[35] Warton and Mason became acquainted through their mutual friend William Hurd, but their friendship did not warm much beyond professional courtesy. See Fairer, *The Correspondence of Thomas Warton*.

[36] See Monod, pp. 36, 81. See also David Greenwood, *William King: Tory and Jacobite* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969), especially pp. 234-38; cited hereafter as Greenwood. J.C.D. Clark provides a brief analysis of William King's 1749 Radcliffe Camera oration in his book, *Samuel Johnson: Literature, Religion, and English Cultural Politics from the Restoration to Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 38-40.

charisma, but even before this disappointment he had shown interest in alternative expressions of political opposition. King's Latin poem *Templum Libertatis* (1742) seems to have been inspired by the 'Temple of Liberty' published in the foremost Patriot journal, the *Craftsman* (28 April 1733). It would be a mistake therefore to oversimplify King as an intractable Jacobite. Warton's Isis enthusiastically recalls the opening ceremony for the Radcliffe Library in the following lines:

> E'en late when RADCLIFFE's delegated train
> Auspicious shone in ISIS' happy plain;
> When yon proud dome, fair Learning's amplest shrine,
> Beneath its Attic roofs receiv'd the Nine;
> Mute was the voice of joy and loud applause
> To RADCLIFFE due , and ISIS' honour'd cause?
> What free-born crouds adorned the festive day,
> Nor blush'd to wear my tributary bay!
> How each brave breast with ardors heav'd,
> When SHELDON's fane the patriot band receiv'd; (ll. 87-96)

This image recalls a public ceremony commemorating the opening of the Radcliffe Library and the beneficence of John Radcliffe (1652-1714) to the University, conveying an air of patriotic pride in Oxford's past as well as celebrating this contemporary addition to its ongoing heritage. However, this nostalgia soon becomes overshadowed among the 'free-born crouds' and 'the patriot band' by a more immediate event:

> But lo! at once the swelling concerts cease,
> And crouded theatres are hush'd in peace.
> See, on yon sage how all attentive stand,
> To catch his darting eye, and waving hand.
> Hark! he begins, with all a TULLY's art
> To pour the dictates of a CATO's heart.
> Skill'd to pronounce what noblest thoughts inspire,
> He blends the speaker's with the patriot's fire; (ll. 115-22)

Warton retrieves Cato (and implicitly Addison) from Mason here, employing him in the defence of Oxford and in his promotion of the Patriot platform.

Demonstrating his penchant for synthesising the ancient and the modern, Warton 'blends' his anonymous eighteenth-century 'sage' (Dr. William King) with the Roman virtues of Cato and Tully. The 'art' is notably oracular.

What follows is Warton's representation of King's speech.[37] These flattering lines were composed to paint Dr. King in the most favourable light; they could have served as a suitable epitaph for King, a 'bold' minister of English Jacobitism:

> Bold to conceive, nor tim'rous to conceal:
> What Britons dare to think, he dares to tell.
> 'Tis his alike the ear and eye to charm,
> To win with action, and with sense to warm;
> Untaught in flow'ry diction to dispense
> The lulling sounds of sweet impertinence;
> In frowns or smiles he gains an equal prize,
> Nor meanly fears to fall, nor creeps to rise.
> Bids happier days to ALBION be restor'd
> Bids ancient Justice rear her ancient sword;
> From me, as from my country, wins applause,
> And makes an OXFORD's a BRITANNIA's cause. (ll. 123-34)

What Warton appears to value most in William King is the strength of his political convictions and his willingness to risk arrest by stating his Jacobite beliefs publicly; publicly in that it represents a performance solely for Oxford's anointed patriots – those who could follow King's Latin oratory – rather than the illiterate and the unwashed. This English hymn to Jacobitism builds a vision of national union out of Dr. King's dissenting patriotism, rising in the last line to encompass the political aspirations of the entire nation. Warton argues that Jacobite sentiments are secretly harboured by many British citizens, a text

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[37] Despite William King's explicit request that no Latin transcription or English translation of his 1749 Radcliffe Camera oration should be circulated in manuscript or in print, literal and satirical versions of this speech continued to be published for years afterwards; see Greenwood, pp. 193-233.

concealed in the hearts of thousands: 'What Britons dare to think, he dares to tell'.

Relations of Jacobite oratory such as this one in *The Triumph of Isis* are often implicit and encrypted. Even the 'patriot' performer's name is withheld. A close association may be found between Jacobitism and oratory. Under pain of sedition or treason, it appears imminently pragmatic that oratory would displace the printed page as the Jacobites' preferred medium of transmission, thus dispensing with the legal hazards of material evidence. In this sense, a genuine Jacobite text would rarely be manifestly explicit on the printed page: an authentic Jacobite manuscript is almost by definition a lost one. Secretive, illusive and dangerous, 'it' lives only in its authors and its first-hand auditors.

King's speech seems reminiscent of Thomas Warton the Elder's Restoration Day speech discussed above, whose sermon notes had mysteriously disappeared. Warton the Younger appears to find a father figure in both of these patrons of English Jacobitism. Richard Mant writes of *The Triumph of Isis* that Dr. King went in to the Oxford shop of bookseller Mr. Prince 'soon after its anonymous publication, and having enquired whether five guineas would be of any service to the young man, who was the author of the poem, desired Prince to give him that sum'.[38] There is more at stake here between Mason and Warton than what D. Nichol Smith describes as a 'friendly rivalry'.[39] At the time when these poems were published, the nation-state of Great Britain was less than a half-century old; its various political, religious, linguistic and cultural

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[38] Mant, *Late Thomas Warton*, I, p. xv.

communities were far from integrated. Not only were Oxford Tories and Cambridge Whigs fighting over the creation of a tenable, inclusive British identity: they were struggling just to imagine it.

Warton appears to have appreciated the relationship between faction and freedom in a way that Mason did not. The British monarchy itself was divided by faction. Perhaps with this in mind, Warton included two poems in *The Union* commemorating the untimely death of Frederick, Prince of Wales, who holds a central position in the miscellany. The Prince of Wales was a notoriously rebellious member of the House of Hanover, removing his wife Augusta from Hampton Court to St. James's while she was 'in the agonies labour' so that she would not give birth 'under his parents' roof'.[40] It constituted a formative break from the family whereby Frederick was banished from the Court. He subsequently established his residence at Leicester Square; by 1735 Frederick and his personal secretary George Lyttelton had established the *de facto* headquarters for 'the Opposition'.[41] According to Linda Colley, Frederick had 'recognised what was wrong with the Hanoverian's practice of monarchy' since the 1730's, seeking to make positive changes by 'choosing his friends and allies from all political groupings' and wanting 'to extirpate traditional party divisions'.[42] Taking this into consideration, *The Union* begins to look more and more like a

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[39] 'Mason's and Warton's twin poems—an elegant instance of the friendly rivalry which now finds blunter expression in other fields—were both well known, Warton's having already gone into three editions' (D. Nichol Smith, 266).
[40] Williams, *The Whig Supremacy*, p. 339.
[41] Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and his Circle*, pp. 32-33.
[42] Colley, *Britons*, pp. 220-21. In his anti-court, Frederick enjoyed the company of former and present Tory leaders such as Lord Bolingbroke and William Wyndham, as well as entertaining opposition Whigs such as Lord Cobham, William Pulteney, Lord Carteret and William Pitt the Elder.

confederacy of dissenters united by the spirit of Frederick, Prince of Wales, 'the Patriot's political figurehead'.[43]

The thread of this Patriot argument is maintained in *The Union* with 'A Fragment' by David Mallet. Mallet had changed his family name from Malloch after moving to London, complaining that English people could not pronounce his surname. Similarly, David Hume changed the spelling (but not the pronunciation) of his name from the original 'Home', as in the Scottish playwright John Home (1722-1808). Mallet's change of name is an interesting signifier of British cultural assimilation, illustrating the pressures of Anglicisation and its consequential identity politics among provincial Britons in London.[44] With his long-time friend and fellow Scot James Thomson, Mallet co-authored *Alfred. A Masque*, expressly composed for Prince Frederick and his Patriot opposition platform. 'A Fragment' was published in *Poems on Several Occasions* (1743), the year after Prince Frederick had appointed Mallet as under-secretary.[45] Written in octosyllabic couplets, 'A Fragment' wanders through ninety-two lines of descriptive imagery taken from external and internal nature, with visionary scenes such as the following:

> From thought to thought in vision led,
> He holds high converse with the Dead;
> Sages or Poets. See they rise!
> And shadowy skim before his eyes.
> Hark; Orpheus strikes the lyre again,
> That softened savages to men:

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[43] Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition*, p. 1. See 'On the Death of Prince Frederick. Written at Paris, by David Lord Viscount Stormont' and 'On the Same. By Mr. James Clitherow of All Souls Coll.', in *The Union*.

[44] In his cursory and hostile treatment of Mallet, Johnson writes that '[Mallet] was by his original one of the Macgregors, a clan that became, about sixty years ago, under the conduct of Robin Roy, so formidable and so infamous for violence and robbery, that the name was annulled by a legal abolition; and when they were all to denominate themselves anew the father, I suppose, of this author called himself Malloch' (Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, III, p. 400.

[45] On Mallet's appointment, see Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition*, p. 63.

> Lo! Socrates, the Sent of Heaven,
> To whom its moral will was given.
> Fathers and Friends of human kind!
> They form'd the nations, or refin'd,
> With all that mends the head and heart,
> Enlightening truth, adorning art. (ll. 65-76)

Although the poetry distinctly lacks physical action, it produces a landscape of intense imaginative power. The narrative appears to observe the unities of time, place and – to a certain degree – action, primarily encompassing the inner experiences catalysed by a day spent walking alone in nature, culminating in a politicised, though presumably incomplete, conclusion: Mallet's 'A Fragment' ends just as the spirit of 'Fair Freedom's GENIUS' (l. 84) materialises in the forest twilight:

> Freedom! Sov'reign boon of Heav'n;
> Great Charter, with our being given;
> For which the patriot and the sage,
> Have plan'd, have bled thro' ev'ry age!
> High privilege of human race,
> Beyond a mortal monarch's grace:
> Who could not give, who cannot claim,
> What but from God immediate came! (ll. 85-92)

Structurally, the narrative achieves a chronological progression from morning to night, a temporal framework within which spatial and psychological dimensions are poetically established and explored by Mallet. The conclusion is the least complete conceptual aspect of the fragment, but it remains complete enough to convey Mallet's political relationship to Frederick and the Patriot opposition. Replete with this explicit reference to the 'Great Charter's, Mallet's poem imagines a transcendent continuity of British patriotism in which Thomas Warton appears to have shared an interest.

Although it was not featured in *The Union*, Warton's collected *Poems* (1777) opens with his six-stanza 'Elegy on the Death of the Late Frederic Prince

of Wales' (1751), which had first appeared in *Epicedia Oxoniensia in Obitum celsissimi et desideratissimi Frederici Principis Walliae* (1751) 'under the name of John Whetham, Fellow Commoner of Trinity College'.[46] Richard Mant notes in his study of Warton that this kind of misattribution was then a common practice among many people, therefore brushing aside Warton's persistent employment of pseudonyms as inconsequential. Warton selected two other poems from *Epicedia Oxoniensia* on the death of the Prince of Wales which appeared under false identities: 'On the Death of Frederic Prince of Wales. Written at Paris, by David Lord Viscount Stormont, of Ch. Ch. Oxon', 115 lines in blank verse and 'On the Same. By Mr. James Clitherow of All Souls Coll.', composed of 25 quatrains. D. Nichol Smith has determined that the first piece was probably written by Dr. William Markham (1719-1807), future Archbishop of York; the second was by the judge Sir William Blackstone (1723-1780), who was notably the brother-in-law of James Clitherow.

As a secret contributor to the *Epicedia Oxoniensia*, Smith asserts, Warton himself would have known that Markham and Blackstone were the true authors of these two pieces, but chose to perpetuate the deception in *The Union* (267-68). With its sepulchral gloom, its phantoms and his dire, premonitory visions of 'Britannia's falling state' (l.18), the piece by Blackstone overshadows the one by Markham. The 'mitred sage' (l. 13) who reads Frederick's funeral rites betrays a sense of Blackstone's oppositional politics:

VII.

Who now shall tend, with fond paternal care,
The guardians of our faith and laws;
Who teach their breasts with patriot worth to dare,

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[46]Mant, *Late Thomas Warton*, p. 24.

And die with ardour, in Britannia's cause?

The word 'patriot' provides the key clue here. Blackstone contrives a patriotic courtier by the name of Lorenzo, ostensibly too overcome with grief to leave the evening funeral scene, who observes a supernatural ceremony in which Frederick's spirit takes its place alongside three other deceased Princes of Wales: Arthur (elder brother of Henry VIII), Edward (the Black Prince) and Henry (son of James I). Even in death, Frederick is represented as a patron of this eighteenth-century cult of British patriotism, and his image is inducted here into Blackstone's patriot mythology.

Frederick serves as a martyr to the sins of a nation that periodically falls from a mythical state of grace. Lorenzo hears the following words spoken by Edward, referring to the recent death of Frederick:

XX.

But oh! I tremble for Britannia's state,
May guardian pow'rs avert the dire presage!
For well she knows, at our untimely fate
How heav'ns dread vengeance smote each sinful age.

With this Old Testament-style vehemence, Blackstone portrays the age of Frederick as being steeped in corruption, a corruption that might only be reversed by idealised, disinterested patriotism. After the Revolution of 1688, of course, the monarchy became divorced from the doctrine of divine right that had been in force 'When pious Charles in right fraternal reign'd' (l. 89), but Blackstone appears to have numbered himself among those who anticipated a reversal of Britain's social degeneration in the future reign of Frederick, a Bolingbrokean 'Patriot King'. With the Prince of Wales's death, 'Enough to vengeance is

already given; Her Frederic's dead;—there needs no other blow'(ll. 95-96). Drawing upon his professional knowledge of legal history, Blackstone represents the early deaths of these four Princes of Wales as a cycle of divine justice. Their martyrdom stays the punitive action of an angry god against a romanticised Britain mired in corruption and iconoclastic identity politics.

Warton attributes two poems in *The Union* to 'Mr. Hammond'. Contrary to D. Nichol Smith's mistaken assertion, the poet in question is actually James Hammond (1710-1742), rather than his father Anthony Hammond (1668-1738).[47] The first of these poems, 'A Love Elegy', was indeed written by James Hammond; however, 'On a Lady's Presenting a Sprig of Myrtle to a Gentleman', was actually composed by Samuel Johnson. That Warton sought with these two poems to include James Hammond in his miscellany accords with the emerging 'imagined community' of *The Union*.[48] He was a graduate of Westminster School, a stronghold of Jacobite sympathy.[49] As Walpole writes to Sir Horace Mann 10 June 1742, 'there is just dead one Hammond, a disciple of Lord

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[47] See D. Nichol Smith, 269. Anthony Hammond, MP for Shoreham and later Huntingdon, poet, and father of James Hammond, was made Commissioner of the Navy in 1702 under the Godolphin administration. He was the editor of *A New Miscellany of Original Poems, Translations and Imitations. By the most Eminent Hands, VIZ. Mr. Prior, Mr. Pope, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Harcourt, Lady M. W. M—, Mrs. Manley, &c. Now first Published from their Respective Manuscripts. With some Familiar Letters by the late Earl of Rochester, never before Printed.* (London: Printed for T. Jauncy at the Angel without Temple Bar. 1720).

[48] This term refers to Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* rev. edn (London: Verso, 1991): 'In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. It is *imagined* because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion' (p. 15).

[49] 'Of the great national schools, Winchester and Westminster were the Jacobite favourites' (Monod, p. 274).

Chesterfield, and equerry [1733-42] to his Royal Highness' the Prince of Wales.[50]

James Hammond, writes Samuel Johnson, 'was equerry to the Prince of Wales, and seems to have come very early into publick notice, and to have been distinguished by those whose friendship prejudiced mankind at that time in favour of the man on whom it was bestowed; for he was the companion of Cobham, Lyttelton, and Chesterfield'.[51] In 'A Love Elegy', Hammond explicitly names his patron: Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield,:

XI.

STANHOPE, in wisdom, as in wit, divine,
May rise, and plead Britannia's glorious cause,
With steady reign his eager wit confine,
While manly sense the deep attention draws:

XII.

Let STANHOPE speak his list'ning country's wrong,
My humble voice shall please one partial maid,
For her alone, I pen my tender song,
Securely sitting in his friendly shade.s

XIII.

STANHOPE shall come and grace his rural friend,
DELIA shall wonder at her noble guest,
With blushing awe the riper fruit commend,
And for her husband's Patron cull the best.[52]

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[50] *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, ed. by W. S. Lewis and others, 48 vols (London and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1937-1983), XVII, p. 451. This edition cited hereafter as *Walpole's Correspondence.*

[51] Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, II, p. 313.

[52] In the first edition of Hammond's text, edited by Lord Chesterfield, each of the fifteen elegies bears a number rather than a title, and the stanzas are unnumbered; for example, this poem in question is referred to as 'ELEGY XIII' in the first edition. If this is actually Warton's source, then many subtle changes have been made: the *Union* text carries the title 'A Love Elegy' and dispenses with the original capitalisation, modernises some verb endings, adds or changes some punctuation, changes some spelling and subtly changes a few words. Unlike the first edition text prepared by Lord Chesterfield, the *Union* text denotes each stanza with Roman numerals.

Hammond expounds the pleasures of simple rural life, eschews the vanities of material wealth, yet prioritises sociability with Delia and with Stanhope. He appears to delineate a position consistent with these poetic imitations of Tibullus, a life that is happily governed by enlightened simplicity. The character Delia refers to the captivating Catharine (Kitty) Dashwood, the 'toast of the Oxfordshire Jacobites'. Kitty Dashwood reportedly inspired Hammond's posthumous *Love Elegies. Written in the Year 1732*, an anonymous publication which bears the imprint of 1743 but which actually seems to have appeared in 1742. It was published by the editor, Lord Chesterfield himself, who added a panegyrical Preface to the volume.[53] Observing Hammond's reverence for 'the Ancients' in this Preface, Chesterfield seizes the opportunity to expound the Patriot manifesto while editorialising for posterity his friend's identity as a Patriot:

> he revered that Love of their Country, the Contempt of Riches, the Sacredness of Friendship, and all those heroick and social Virtues, which marked them out as the Objects of the Veneration, though not the Imitation of succeeding Ages; and he looked back with a kind of religious Awe and Delight, upon those glorious and happy times of Greece and Rome, when Wisdom, Virtue and Liberty formed the only Triumvirates, e're Luxury invited Corruption to taint, or Corruption introduced Slavery to destroy, all Publick and Private Virtues.[54]

Lord Chesterfield's romantic view of Greek and Roman 'Liberty' fails to acknowledge that those two societies embraced 'Slavery' in every sense of the word; his view of Hammond as a fallen champion of liberty could be equally

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[53] 'It is comical to Kitty Dashwood, the famous old beauty of the Oxfordshire Jacobites, living in the palace as duenna to the Queen' (*Walpole's Correspondence*, XXI, p. 531). See the *D.N.B.* entry for James Hammond. See also *Miscellaneous Works of the Late Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield: Consisting of letters to his Friends, never before printed, and Various Other Articles. To which are prefixed, Memoirs of his Life, tending to illustrate the Civil, Literary, and Political, History of his Time,* ed. by M. Maty, M.D., 2 vols (London: Printed for Edward and Charles Dilly, 1777), I, pp. 133, 282-8.

self-indulgent. Looking at their political relationship in this light, Horace Walpole's description of Hammond as a 'disciple' of Chesterfield carries slightly less sarcasm. But Walpole had already fixed his scathing eye on Chesterfield's contemporary 'triumvirate'.[55]

Hammond had enjoyed the friendship and support of James Thomson, the literary epitome of the Patriot campaign. Thomson was unsparing in his praise of Hammond.[56] In *The Union*, Thomson makes his spiritual presence known in more ways than one, but most explicitly perhaps in William Collins's *Ode on the Death of Mr. Thomson*.[57] Thomson added this tribute to Hammond in the 1744 edition of *The Seasons*:

> Where art thou, Hammond? Thou darling pride,
> The friend and lover of the tuneful throng!
> Ah! Why, dear youth, in all the blooming prime
> Of vernal genius, where, closing fast,
> Each active worth, each manly virtue lay,
> Why wert thou ravished from our hope so soon?
> What now avails that noble thirst of fame,
> Which stung thy fervent breast? That treasured store
> Of knowledge, early gained? That eager zeal
> To serve thy country, glowing in the band
> Of youthful patriots who sustain her name? (*Winter*, ll. 555-565)

As a poet-patriarch of the Patriot campaign, Thomson places the Hammond at the heart of the 'band/ Of youthful patriots'. He is represented as a stranger from vice and corruption, but it may be added that Lord Lyttelton refers to him in 1736 as

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[54] Preface to James Hammond, *Love Elegies. Written in the Year 1732* (London: Printed for G. Hawkins, 1743).

[55] 'Lord Hervey lives shut up with Lord Chesterfield and Mr. Pultney—a triumvirate, who hate one another more than anybody they could proscribe, had they the power' (Walpole to Sir Horace Mann, 7 January 1742, *Walpole's Correspondence*, XVII, p. 275).

[56] On Thomson's political life, see Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition*, pp. 16-18.

[57] Collins's *Ode* was originally published as an *Ode occasion'd by the Death of Mr. Thomson* (1749).

'the joy and dread of Bath'.[58] Hammond died on 7 June 1742, while visiting his fellow Patriot Lord Cobham at Stowe.

As mentioned above, Warton mistakenly attributed Samuel Johnson's anonymous poem, 'On a Lady's Presenting a Sprig of Myrtle to a Gentleman', to 'Mr. Hammond'. Dr. Johnson, an iconic figure of British literary authority, was a friend and correspondent of both Thomas and Joseph Warton in the 1750s; but it was a friendship that could not sustain their increasingly divergent points of view. However, it is a strange but appropriate coincidence that Johnson's work should accidentally be included in the political community of *The Union*, because Johnson's own identity politics, as well as his personal and professional relationships, closely associate him with opposition politicians. Thomas Warton, along with Francis Wise, was instrumental in securing the conferment of Johnson's Master of Arts diploma from Oxford on 20 February 1755. Johnson had received his degree in person, from none other than Dr. William King, before Warton's letter could convey the good news to him. As Johnson writes to Warton, 'Dr. King was with me a few Minutes before your Letter, this however is the first instance in which your kind intentions to me have ever been frustrated.'[59] Because King was at that time the *de facto* spokesman of the Oxford Jacobite movement, Boswell's comment on Dr. King's personal delivery of Johnson's degree seems remarkable: 'We may conceive what a high gratification it must have been to Johnson to receive his diploma from the hands of the great Dr. KING, whose principles were so congenial with his own'.[60]

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[58] Cited in the *D.N.B.* entry for James Hammond.
[59] Fairer, *The Correspondence of Thomas Warton*, p. 38.
[60] Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, I, p. 282.

Johnson was avowedly a great admirer of William King. 'I have clapped my hands till they are sore, at Dr. King's speech', Johnson writes to Boswell, after attending the 1759 induction ceremony of the new Chancellor of Oxford University: John Fane, Earl of Westmorland. The manuscript of William King's speech is lost, if in fact it ever existed.[61] But its very absence – as with so many other Oxford Jacobite orations – suggests the possibility of its Jacobite nature. Johnson would have been aware that the new Chancellor, the Earl of Westmorland, 'had moved into opposition in the 1730s when deprived by Walpole of his regiment'.[62] Both the Earl of Westmorland and Dr. King were among the Jacobite elect who had met the Young Pretender during his secret London visit of 1750.[63] After meeting him in person, however, Dr. King felt disappointed by the Young Pretender's lack of intellectual and social refinement; he seems to have concluded that Charles Edward Stuart could not be that 'Great Genius of Britain' whom he had mythologised in his rousing oration at the Radcliffe Camera. Given his personal disillusionment with the Jacobite claimant to the throne, and his own advancing age, Dr. King appears by 1759 to have espoused the more moderate Patriot principles, principles which Johnson vigorously applauded. Johnson's calculated silence on the text of Dr. King's moving speech – a message that he applauds with aching hands, yet is unable to publicly acknowledge or own himself – highlights Johnson's repression of his own opposition politics. The amount of energy Boswell spends in his *Life of*

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[61] Informed by the intense controversy which had followed his 1749 Radcliffe Camera oration, King may have taken more serious measures to prevent any actual or fictional transcripts being circulated.

[62] John Cannon, *Samuel Johnson and the Politics of Hanoverian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p. 41.

Johnson erasing and suppressing the subtext of Johnson's Jacobite sympathies is directly correlative to their significance in Johnson's identity politics.

Johnson had delayed for as long as possible the printing of his *Dictionary* so that he might add the authority signified by the letters 'A.M.' to his name on the imprint. As Allen Reddick observes,

> Johnson's concern over the awarding of the degree, as one would imagine, is not attributable simply to his hope that it would help the book sell. Because he felt somewhat ill at ease in his role as arbiter of the language, the degree would have helped to assure, if not all of his critics, then perhaps himself, that he had some claim to formal authority.[64]

It is interesting that Johnson, who had left Pembroke College, Oxford without distinction or degree, should invest an honorary title with such authority, one that was freighted with Oxford's notorious Jacobite tradition and personally delivered in London by Dr. King himself. The actual text of Johnson's diploma may in fact have been written by King.[65]

Johnson stayed in Oxford for five weeks in the summer of 1754 during the controversial Oxfordshire election under the pretence of using the university libraries. He lodged next to Trinity College with the promise of contacting Thomas Warton upon his arrival.[66] But the reasons for his visit were just as likely political as academic, because Thomas Warton notes that Johnson apparently left Oxford without having done any such work at all.[67] Johnson's personal interest in a Tory victory in the Oxfordshire election cannot be ruled out as a motivation for

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[63] See Monod, p.209.
[64] Allen Reddick, *The Making of Johnson's Dictionary*, p. 78.
[65] See Greenwood, p. 280.
[66] Fairer, *The Correspondence of Thomas Warton*, pp. 21-22, 27-8, *n.*5. Correspondence from Johnson to Warton is particularly frequent between 1754 and 1758.

his otherwise unproductive stay in Oxford. His interest in opposition politics is further evidenced in the *Dictionary* project. Johnson had addressed his thirty-four page *Plan of a Dictionary* (1747) to Lord Chesterfield, and was clearly solicitous of his patronage.[68] A person of Johnson's intellect would have known about Chesterfield's role in the Patriot opposition, which further delineates the party with which Johnson identified at that time. Disappointedly, however, Johnson received no encouragement from Chesterfield, nothing approaching the patronage which James Hammond had enjoyed from the same 'STANHOPE'.

At the final hour before its publication, Lord Chesterfield vainly tried to insinuate his way into the Dedication of Johnson's *A Dictionary of the English Language* (1755). 'Lord Chesterfield,' writes James Boswell, 'to whom Johnson had paid the high compliment of addressing to his Lordship the *Plan* of his *Dictionary*, had behaved to him in such a manner as to excite his contempt and indignation'.[69] The letter of repudiation which Johnson sent to Chesterfield is a rhetorical masterpiece.[70] Johnson's Preface to the *Dictionary* is a masterful work of a different nature. His invocation of 'the spirit of English liberty', derived from 'Gothick' and 'Saxon' ancestry, seems tailor-made for the rhetorical purposes of the Patriot opposition. But 'the *English Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great', he writes in the Preface to the first edition, thus formally and publicly divorcing himself

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[67] '[Johnson] stayed about five weeks. He lodged at a house called Kettel-hall, near Trinity College. But during his visit at Oxford, he collected nothing in the libraries for his Dictionary' (Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, I, p. 270, *n.* 5.

[68] *The Plan of a Dictionary of the English Language; Addressed to the Right Honourable Philip Dormer, Earl of Chesterfield; One of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State* (Printed for J. and P. Knapton, T. Longman and T. Shewell, C. Hitch, A. Millar, and R. Dodsley, 1747).

[69] Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, I, p. 256.

[70] Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, I, pp. 261-63.

from Lord Chesterfield, who privately must have realised what a fine opportunity of patronage he had squandered in his neglect of Johnson.

It is not a question of *whether* Tories and Whigs (or the students of Bolingbroke) took liberties with the 'authentic' history of Britishness, but *how* they went about it. The Tory Johnson was a formidable linguistic nation-builder, complete with ties to his conjectural Gothic past. The Whig Locke had attempted to shore up the discontinuous history of the British Crown with his *Two Treatises*, a narrative whose authenticity is vexed with problems. Miscellanies such as *The Union* brought a sense of continuity to a patently disjunctive and fragmented national past, helping Britons to conceptualise themselves as part of a broader, integrated British community. Another 'union' trope in Warton's miscellany is the marriage he arranges between the Old Interest and the Patriot Opposition. One traceable concern in Warton's work is the way that he questions the selective memory and exclusionary history upon which the identity of post-Union Britain had been (and was being) fabricated, as though the Act of Union had severed all ties with pre-Union and pre-Revolution identities. Warton met this contradictory position with his own contradiction: he sought to preserve the integrity of the past in his idealised Union, yet he simultaneously approved of the integration of 'old abbey-stones' into the 'modern building' of the British state. Warton's identification with English history and its Gothic heritage was not only integral to his Romantic fascination with Chaucer and Spenser, it was fundamental to his own sense of national identity, one that, like Johnson's, antedates the Revolution of 1688.

Making History: Blackstone, Bishop Burnet and the original Magna Carta

In his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Edmund Burke remarks that the Revolution of 1688 'was made to preserve our *antient* indisputable laws and liberties, and that *antient* constitution of government which is our only security for law and liberty'.[1] With the term '*antient* constitution', Burke describes a kind of sacred text whose originals exist in the national consciousness, rather than in the written word.[2] Indeed, his argument seems to emphasise 'the spirit of our constitution' more than its corresponding physical documents, deferring the authority and authenticity of these 'indisputable' rights and liberties to unwritten, immemorial origins. If the rights and liberties of such a transcendent constitution had been observed and enforceable, then we must wonder why the barons brought King John to the bargaining table at Runnymede in 1215, troubled themselves with inscribing the Magna Carta, and then fought the civil war which their text-based form of constitutionalism had precipitated.

The authenticity of this Burkean 'antient constitution' is problematic. Whether we speak of a constitution, a sacred scripture, or a myth, the act of committing such words to paper entails subjective interpretation, analysis and perhaps even iconoclasm. The 'antient constitution' which Burke describes has the appearance of a secular religion, one whose scriptures are irreducible to a form which might suffer exegetical rigour. He does express reverence for the

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[1] *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke,* ed. by Paul Langford and others, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981-97), VIII, p. 81. Cited hereafter as *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke.*

[2] See J.G.A Pocock, *The Ancient Constitution and the Feudal Law* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957).

Magna Carta, but he sees it as a 'reformation' of these inherited and immemorial liberties, rather than as an original source of constitutional authority. He writes:

> Our oldest reformation is the Magna Charta. You will see that Sir Edward Coke, that great oracle of our law, and indeed all who follow him, to Blackstone, are industrious to prove the pedigree of our liberties. They endeavour to prove, that the antient charter, the Magna Charta of King John, was connected with another positive charter from Henry I, and that both the one and the other were nothing more than a re-affirmance of the still more antient standing law of the kingdom.[3]

It is interesting that Sir Edward Coke (1552-1634) is described in pseudo-religious terms as an 'oracle of our law'. With his monumental *Institutes of the Laws of England* (1628), Coke 'moulded the ideology which viewed the historic growth of law since Anglo-Saxon times as the heart of the English tradition', becoming a founder of 'the cult of Magna Carta'.[4] Therefore, we may wonder if there is an ecclesiastical connotation in Burke's use of the term 'reformation'. Perhaps he is suggesting that eighteenth-century Britain enjoys a kind of 'Protestant' constitutionalism, while nations such as France labour under a figurative 'Catholic', absolute and centrally-controlled authority. This notion would supply Great Britain with its own Trinitarian iconography: the 'King', the 'ancient standing law of the kingdom' and the 'Magna Charta'. Burke's insistence upon an unwritten, immemorial 'law of the kingdom' raises an interesting point in connection with British national identity: do the legitimate rights and liberties of the people reside in unwritten originals? If so, how can such a constitution be authenticated?

William Blackstone, to whom Burke refers in the above passage, addresses the constitutional crux between immemorial rights and written

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[3] *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, pp. 81-2.

documents in his scholarly edition of *The Great Charter and Charter of the Forest* (1759). It represents a significant step in transforming the constitution from an arcane, pseudo-religious document into an authoritative historical record. Blackstone's edition fills a gap in eighteenth-century scholarship, exploring the relationship between textual authenticity and the 'ancient constitution' of Britishness. We find a precedent for Burke's term 'antient constitution' in the Introduction of Blackstone's *The Great Charter*. Blackstone's research helps to create a distinction between the mythical and the real 'Great Charter', shedding light on a fundamental textual problem that had persisted since it was committed to writing. As it will be seen, Blackstone was anxious to demonstrate that for over five hundred years, the government of England (and subsequently Great Britain) had operated under a questionable version of the Magna Carta, and desired to provide the nation with the authentic text. Focusing on Blackstone's edition of *The Great Charter*, this chapter will explore the connection between 'authentic' and mythical texts of the Magna Carta.

Burke's insistence upon the 'spirit of our constitution', as well as the 'ancient constitution' suggests a kind of metaphysics of Britishness, which at times appears not only to privilege nostalgia over the more desirable security of written constitutional laws, but to supersede the significance of the Magna Carta itself. For many post-Union Britons, the Magna Carta, or Great Charter,

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[4] Norman Davies, *The Isles: A History* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 486. Cited hereafter as *The Isles*.

represented a sort of sacred text which had secured the inviolable rights of the people. Before the Great Charter, it seems, English constitutional law was an illiterate and arbitrary agency, one that was not above the occasional flirtation with transubstantiation. In his book entitled *Magna Carta*, J. C. Holt notes the following lesson in twelfth-century lawmaking:

> One of the stories which Gerald of Wales picked up on one of his journeys to Lincolnshire concerned a penurious local knight, one Roger of Asterby, who encountered visions of St Peter and the Archangel Gabriel while walking through his fields. Roger was a cautious man: he established the *bona fides* of his visitors by requiring them to recover his coat of mail which he had pledged to Aaron the Jew of Lincoln in return for a loan. When they had completed this task and performed other miracles, Roger agreed to do their bidding, which was to lay seven divine commands before King Henry II. These commands were that the king should maintain his coronation oath and the just laws of the realm; that nobody should suffer the death penalty without judgement, even though guilty; that inheritances should be restored to their rightful owners and that right should be done; that justice should be given freely and without charge; that the *servitia* of his ministers should be restored; and, finally, that the Jews should be expelled without their bonds and pledges which should be returned to the debtors who had surrendered them.[5]

Here is worrying evidence concerning the potential 'sacred' origins of the ancient constitution. But the sheer social diversity, not to mention irony, involved in the composition of this image invites commentary. A Welsh cleric depicts the prejudice of an Anglo-Norman knight and the arbitrary authority of his newly-imported liege, Henri Plantagenet—neither of whom would necessarily have conversed in the English language of the day—looking for a 'plausible' legal justification to expel a community of 'outsiders', one which clearly performed an integral economic and social role in twelfth-century England: Jewish money-lenders. This episode suggests how societies may create fictions to redress their own perceived impurities; the way that historians have rewritten King 'Henri' as Henry, or 'Jean' as John, gives a small indication of how we elect to deceive

ourselves that anything 'purely' English could have survived over four hundred years of Norman and Plantagenet rule. As Norman Davies notes, at this time the 'English undercurrent was waning. The French supremacy in England was set to last. The idea that English history can be separated from French history in this period is an illusion'.[6]

When Blackstone published his scholarly edition of *The Great Charter and Charter of the Forest* (1759), English constitutional history was in a state of chaos.[7] If anything, Blackstone's meticulous edition had indirectly shed light on the profound disarray of English legal historiography, including the charters of liberties. If one were to ask at this time, 'Where are the originals?', quite often they could not be produced; even manuscripts of the Magna Carta itself were lost for centuries, only to reappear. Under such arbitrary conditions, it is no wonder that Burke preferred the 'spirit of the constitution' over the charters of liberties themselves. Rather surprisingly, this chaotic state of affairs persisted until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

There was no accessible, comprehensive and authoritative inventory of these charters of liberties and constitutional documents until the publication of *The Statutes of the Realm* (1810), commissioned by the order of King George III. '[T]he Public Records of the Kingdom are in many Offices unarranged, undescribed, and unascertained', writes George III, adding that 'many of them are exposed to erasure, alteration and embezzlement, and are lodged in Buildings

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[5] J.C. Holt, *Magna Carta* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 60-1. Cited hereafter as *Magna Carta*.
[6] Norman Davies, *The Isles*, pp. 279-83 (p. 282).
[7] William Blackstone, *The Great Charter and Charter of the Forest: with other authentic instruments: to which is prefixed an introductory discourse, containing the history of the*

incommodious and insecure'.[8] His statement expresses anxiety about the 'erasure, alteration, and embezzlement' of original documents, as though responding to a real threat of forgery and illegal traffic in constitutional documents. As the full title of *The Statutes of the Realm* reveals, the attention of Parliament had been focused by order of the king upon the long-term security of Britain's 'Original Records and Authentic Manuscripts'. The appointed Commissioners took ten years to perform this royal commission, and this was actually only the first of many volumes; it suggests the scale of the task of locating, identifying, interpreting and cataloguing many centuries' worth of English constitutional manuscripts.

The first volume of *The Statutes of the Realm* marks an important juncture in the evolution of Britishness, for it is here that we find Parliament taking responsibility for a lax constitutional history. Without something approaching a comprehensive codification of these laws—acquired from reliable source material—the implementation of the laws of the land might be construed as arbitrary and subjective. The immense effort behind the organisation and publication of the volume was motivated by King George's desire to create the first authoritative historical record of British constitutional law, as well as a comprehensive inventory of 'originals' which were now seen as valuable government property. But much more was at stake than the preservation of the original documents: George III recognised that the act of publishing these texts

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charters; by William Blackstone (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1759). Cited hereafter as *The Great Charter.*

[8] 'Commission for Executing the Measures Recommended by the House of Commons. 19 July 1800.'; in *The Statutes of the Realm. Printed by Command of His Majesty George the Third. In Pursuance of an Address of the House of Commons of Great Britain. From Original Records and Authentic Manuscripts. Volume the First.* ([n.p.], [n. pub.] 1810), p. ix.

amounted to the British constitution coming of age, evolving from its Englishness and self-confidently asserting its own legitimacy. This recognition represents a formative act of self-authentication on behalf of the nation. It was the same man who had said at his 1760 coronation ceremony, 'I glory in the name of Briton.'

The origins of British constitutional law may be traced with some certainty to the reign of King John (or Jean) and the creation of the Great Charter at Runnymede in 1215. But the authority of this text is not as unshakeable as conventional wisdom admits. As J.C. Holt observes, it is a story which begins in a state of chaos:

> In 1215 Magna Carta was a failure. It was intended as a peace and it provoked war. It pretended to state customary law and it promoted disagreement and contention. It was legally valid for no more than three months, and even within that period its terms were never properly executed. Yet it was revived in the re-issues of 1216, 1217 and 1225. The last version became law, to be confirmed and interpreted in Parliament and enforced in the courts of law.[9]

The written foundation of English constitutional law is far less stable than conventional historiography concedes; in fact, the Great Charter is less 'English' than its iconic status allows. The provenance of this illusive text is complicated by its violent and chaotic beginning, with the added problem that there are multiple and non-identical originals. As will be shown, it is arguable whether a single, definitive 'original' actually exists. Most eighteenth-century Britons were unaware of this constitutional dilemma; like their twentieth-century counterparts, they appear to have been content with 'the "myth" of Magna Carta', rather than

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[9] J.C. Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 1.

its problematic originals.[10] Throughout the eighteenth century, representations of the liberties underwritten by an immemorial Englishness provide evidence that illusion is an essential element of the British constitution. If no authoritative record of these immemorial liberties existed, then they must surely have been difficult to preserve, not to mention enforce.

Anxious to establish the authority of the Great Charter of liberties on firmer ground, William Blackstone focuses his attention on the written originals of English law. As the first Vinerian Professor of Law at Oxford, Blackstone was a leading intellectual in his field, and his edition of *The Great Charter* represents a milestone in legal scholarship. Therefore, his following introductory remarks on the provenance and implementation of the Magna Carta must have surprised his readers:

> 'There is no transaction in the ancient part of our english [sic] history more interesting and important, than the rise and progress, the gradual mutation, and the final establishment of the charters of liberties, emphatically stiled THE GREAT CHARTER and CHARTER OF THE FOREST; and yet there is none that has been transmitted down to us with less accuracy and historical precision.[11]

Given its importance as an original text, Blackstone rightly finds it alarming that for five hundred years, historians, scholars and the government itself had adhered to a received, rather than an authentic, text of the Magna Carta. In fact, his Introduction reveals an even more alarming textual problem. He continues as follows:

> There is not hitherto extant any full and correct copy of the charter granted by king John, M. Pine's engraving excepted, which, on account of it's character, is not fitted for

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[10] J.C. Holt, *Magna Carta*, pp. 8-9. See also John C. Fox, 'The Originals of the Great Charter', *The English Historical Review*, XXXIX (1924), 321-36. Cited hereafter as 'The Originals of the Great Charter'.

[11] Blackstone, *The Great Charter*, p. i.

> general perusal: and the charters of king Henry the third have always been printed, even in our statute-books, not from the originals themselves, but from an *Inspeximus* of king Edward the first. This want of authentic materials, or neglect of recurring to such as might be easily had, (of which the foregoing are two very glaring instances) has often betrayed our very best historians and most painful antiquarians into gross and palpable errors, as will in some measure appear from the following deduction; to adjust and remedy which, as well as our remaining evidences and the distance of five centuries will allow, is the principal end of the present publication.[12]

Blackstone explicitly states that with the exception of an engraving by 'M. Pine', no 'full and correct copy' of the Great Charter existed in 1759. Furthermore, the subsequent constitutional laws contained in the Charters of 1216, 1217 and 1225, which superseded the Magna Carta, were copied from an inferior '*Inspeximus*', rather than from the originals, resulting in the perpetuation of 'gross and palpable errors'. This 'want of authentic materials' is also surprising. Blackstone's scholarship reveals dangerous faults in the written foundation of English constitutional law itself. He writes that 'the principal end of the present publication' is to supply the absence of an authoritative version of the Magna Carta. If Blackstone is correct, then what was the source of English and British constitutional authority between 1215 and 1759?

A slightly farcical streak of sartorial humour runs through the history of the Magna Carta. Given their importance, the original charters of liberties appear to have been treated with careless disregard over the centuries. There are many stories about the Magna Carta disappearing, being forgotten, lost or miraculously recovered. An anecdote recorded by several authors states that the antiquarian Sir Robert Cotton 'discovered the "palladium of English liberties" in the hands of his tailor at the critical moment when the scissors were about to transform it into

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[12] Blackstone, *The Great Charter*, p. i.

shapes for a suit of clothes'.[13] Interestingly, the 'original' of *Hardyknute* was supposedly saved from the very same fate.[14] Central to the idea of the authentic Magna Carta is the great seal of King John. The great seal ostensibly distinguishes the authentic text from inferior or inaccurate versions. It is reasonable to suppose that a copy sealed by King John would have been sent to each county. The exact number of copies sealed by King John on 15 June 1215 is not known, but the consensus among historians is that 'many' were needed so that they could be 'distributed throughout the land, and [. . .] preserved in important strongholds and among the archives of cathedral churches'.[15] If this happened, then it is a source of wonder that multiple originals of the Magna Carta have been lost without notice.

At the present time, scholars acknowledge the existence of only four originals: two are held in the British Museum (known as Ci and Cii, formerly of the Cottonian Library), one in Lincoln Castle (L) and one at Salisbury Cathedral (S).[16] Each one of these four manuscripts has a complicated provenance. Sir Edward Dering discovered version Ci at Dover Castle in 1630, and arranged for it to be delivered to Sir Robert Cotton. It was nearly destroyed by a fire in the Cottonian Library in 1731, from which it was rescued in a partially illegible state, but the great seal of King John had been melted beyond recognition. The history of version Cii is unknown, other than that it came into the hands of Sir Robert Cotton from 'Humphredus Wyems', or 'Mr. Humphrey Wyems' on the first of

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[13] William Sharp McKechnie, *Magna Carta: A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John; with an Historical Introduction* (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1905), pp. 194-205; pp. 196-97. Cited hereafter as *A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John*.
[14] See Chapter Two of this thesis.
[15] McKechnie, *A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John*, p. 194.

January, 1628; it is not known who Mr. Wyems was or why he was trafficking in original constitutional antiquities.[17] Strangely, 'there is no trace left of any seal' on Cii.[18] Perhaps Wyems was the sort of unscrupulous person to whom George III alludes in his speech above, commissioning *The Statutes of the Realm*. As will be seen, a great seal circulating at large among antiquarians represents a potential problem of authenticity.

The history of version L, held at Lincoln Cathedral, is also the subject of conjecture, and it was unknown to Blackstone in 1759. No record of it appears until *The Statutes of the Realm* (1810), when version L was suddenly proclaimed to be 'of superior authority to any of the others'; but it has no great seal.[19] Finally, Blackstone knew of the copy held at Salisbury Cathedral (version S), 'but, upon diligent inquiry made at that cathedral in *A.D. 1759*, nothing of this sort could be found'.[20] Some were suspicious that S had been 'borrowed' by Gilbert Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury from 1689-1715 and a known antiquarian, until it reappeared c.1814. John C. Fox argues that the 'texts of Ci, Cii and L are more correct than that of S', noting some errors, omissions and variations in that version. We can only wonder who would have cut the great seal from version S, and if there was a market among antiquarians for such items. This general suspicion suggests a plausible explanation for the widespread disappearance of the charters of liberties from England's many other counties and dioceses.

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[16] The designations of Ci, Cii, L and S are used by John C. Fox in 'The Originals of the Great Charter'.

[17] Fox, 'The Originals of the Great Charter', 327; *A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John*, p. 196.

[18] McKechnie, *A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John*, p. 196. Of version Cii, John C. Fox writes that 'There is no seal, but there are three slits at the foot, the largest of which, in the centre of the vellum, was apparently intended for a seal' ('The Originals of the Great Charter', 327).

[19] McKechnie, *A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John*, p. 197.

If we accept the Burkean argument about an immemorial constitution, then perhaps it follows that laws are most effective when they remain part of an arcane body of knowledge, one whose esoteric power would be diminished by translating it into a more accessible form. Subjecting this secular scripture to exegesis—and thereby producing an accessible and authoritative text—would amount to iconoclasm. On the other hand, if we adopt a Lockean view toward these constitutional *disjecta membra*, then scholars such as Blackstone had an obligation to inventory, assess and preserve these texts as the property of the nation. This textual relationship between the secular and the religious obligations, which in turn supports various idealised constructs of 'Liberty', is a rich theme in British history. As Blackstone acknowledges in his Introduction, the Great Charter of liberties was actually preceded by other significant constitutional documents. These manuscripts sometimes emerged from their obscurity only to be a thorn in the side of the government. More than once, these *disjecta membra* had proven to be a threat in the hands of a church official.[21] On the topic of laws as a national property, Blackstone discusses an unreliable historical account of 'the accidental discovery of that granted by king Henry the first' by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury.[22] Langton reputedly used this recovered charter of liberties to rally the barons against the tyranny of King John.[23] It is an effective piece of constitutional myth-making.

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[20] Blackstone, *The Great Charter*, p. xvii.

[21] In the first chapter, I have suggested Bishop Edmund Gibson's interest in the history of constitutional law, as seen in his edition of Camden's *Britannia* (1722).

[22] Blackstone, *The Great Charter*, p. iii-vii.

[23] On the veracity of this story, see J.C. Holt, *Magna Carta*, pp. 135-38. Given that Langton was in direct conflict with King John, it is perhaps unsurprising that he allegedly played an important role in establishing the Great Charter in 1215. It is interesting that Langton mitigated this conflict by producing a 'lost' charter of liberties, which among other things protected the rights of the Church from royal tyranny. As Norman Davies notes, King 'Jean's conflict with the Church

Langton's supposed recovery of Henry I's charter, as reported in the thirteenth century by Roger Wendover, speaks of the following centuries in which English constitutional history was a stranger to itself, ignorant of what Burke describes as its own 'inheritance'. By the eighteenth century, this secular religion of immemorial 'Liberty' was being variously fabricated by politicians, churchmen and authors alike, thus stamping this discontinuous and disorganised legal history with their 'authority'. The rhetorical construct of British liberty as a marriage between secular and sacred interests had been pushed to the limit by the Revolution of 1688. As Blackstone notes, the infamous pamphlet entitled *A Pastoral Letter* (1689), written by Dr. Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715), Bishop of Salisbury, 'was burnt by the order of both houses of parliament, having vouched a particular clause in them the existence of which was doubted by some of his antagonists'.[24]

Before examining the controversy surrounding the *Pastoral Letter*, it would be useful to outline the shape of the debate between Burnet and 'his antagonists'. Forged in the tempestuous debate between secular and sacred interests, the late seventeenth-century discourse of British liberty included arguments between Protestants and Catholics over the basis of church and state authority, a genuinely national debate which culminated in the Revolution of 1688 and the Revolution Settlement. Leading up to the Revolution, this debate

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started with a disputed election to the late Archbishop Walter's see at Canterbury. When the Pope imposed Cardinal Stephen Langton, and personally invested him in Rome without the King's knowledge, the King forcibly expelled the clergy of Canterbury and seized their property. In consequence, England in 1208 was placed under interedict. In theory, all places of worship were closed, all the sacraments were suspended, and all people who died were denied salvation. [. . .] Jean did not submit until 1213, when a French invasion fleet gathered at Damme, near Bruges, then Archbishop Langton was welcomed to England; and all expelled clergy were promised restitution' (*The Isles*, p. 302).

[24] Blackstone, *The Great Charter*, p. xv.

between Catholics and Protestants had grown into a sizeable body of literature, formed by texts such as Burnet's *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (1679-81). Born in Scotland in 1643, Burnet was an Anglican ideologue whose political skills earned him the distrust of James II and the confidence of William of Orange. Rising to power in support of William and Mary, he played a crucial ideological role in the Revolution of 1688 and its aftermath. An ardent Whig, Burnet was rewarded for his loyal services to William and Mary by being ordained Bishop of Salisbury (1688-1715). However, his propensity to attain his own political ends by pitting church and state interests against each other did not pass unnoticed among his contemporaries.

In Part III of his beast fable *The Hind and the Panther* (1687), Dryden casts Burnet as 'the Buzzard'.[25] With this less than flattering caricature, he situates Burnet in the broad conflict between Catholics (the Hind) and Protestants (the Panther) over unwritten tradition as the source of church authority, and its relationship to the legitimacy of the state. Dryden's concern about the textual basis of church authority is the subject of *Religio Laici* (1682), published prior to his own conversion to Catholicism. As he notes in the Preface to *Religio Laici*, Christianity itself has a particularly fraught relationship with its reputed originals:

> Reformation of Church and State has always been the ground of our Divisions in *England*. While we were Papists, our Holy Father rid us, by pretending authority out of the Scriptures to depose Princes, when we shook off his Authority, the Sectaries furnish'd themselves with the same Weapons, and out of the same Magazine, the Bible. So that the scriptures, which are in themselves the greatest security of Governours, as commanding express obedience to them, are now turn'd to their destruction; and never

[25] In this case, buzzard connotes the most base kind of hawk: physically and mentally slow, unsuitable for sport. For excellent commentary on *The Hind and the Panther*, see *The Poems of Dryden*, ed. by Paul Hammond and David Hopkins, The Longman Annotated English Poets, 4 vols (Harlow: Longman, 2000), III, pp. 32-180. Paul Hammond also notes the plausibility of reading the Buzzard as a representation of William III.

> since the Reformation has there wanted a Text of their interpreting to authorize a Rebel.[26]

Varying translations and interpretations of the Old and New Testament had made the Bible an uncertain text; and—as Dryden outlines the great religious controversy of his day—where the written text is uncertain, the traditions of the Roman Catholic Church might provide the only reliable guide to Christianity.[27] Yet for most Protestants, the Catholic Church itself was to blame for corrupting the intentions of 'the Scriptures'. In the following lines, Dryden confronts the potential dangers raised in this struggle between written originals and unwritten tradition:

> Oh but says one, *Tradition* set aside,
> Where can we hope for an *unerring Guid* [sic] ?
> For since th' *original* Scripture has been lost,
> *All* Copies *disagreeing*, *maim'd* the *most*,
> Our *Christian Faith* can have no *certain* ground,
> Or *Truth* in *Church Tradition* must be found. (ll. 276-81)

This debate between Protestants and Catholics over their respective original sources of authority inevitably raised problems of authenticity whose implications rocked the legitimacy of the British government. At a time when religious and political narratives became inextricably intertwined, the Revolution itself took place upon the shaky ground between unwritten '*Church Tradition*' and the lost '*original* Scripture'. In Dryden's view, it was an exegetical contest in

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[26] *The Poems and Fables of John Dryden*, ed. by James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), p. 281

[27] For contextual analysis of *Religio Laici*, see *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. by Paul Hammond and David Hopkins, II, pp. 81-134.

which individual 'conscience' would shape the fate of Britishness, one over which 'the Buzzard' hovered opportunistically.[28]

Burnet's *Pastoral Letter* addresses the departure of James II and the accession of William and Mary to the British throne, expounding the clergy's religious and political obligations to take the Oaths of Allegiance to the new King and Queen. In it, the Anglican Church is portrayed as the chosen faith whose survival was secured by the Revolution. In this way, the *Pastoral Letter* was conceived to provide a constitutional prop to William and Mary's reign. In a semantic sleight of hand, Liberty, rather than the Stuart monarchy, becomes the nation's most important political continuity. Yet in Burnet's view, the individual political consciences of the clergy provide no proof against their Anglican duties to God. He writes:

> If our Saviour has denounced a terrible Woe against those, who lay a stumbling Block before one of his Little Ones, under how much greater damnation do they fall, who lay such a stumbling Block, as the refusing of Oaths will be, before a whole Nation, and a Nation in whose Strength and Union, the security both of Religion and Liberty consists? A man that adventures to do so dangerous a thing, had need be very sure that he is in all this matter in the right, otherwise he runs a risque of fighting against God, if he should happen to be in the wrong.[29]

With a clear purpose of preserving the 'Union'—a revealing expression of Burnet's Britishness—his rhetoric conflates religious and secular obligations

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[28] 'The nation is in too high a ferment for me to expect either fair war, or even so much as fair quarter, from a reader of the opposite party. All men are engaged either on this side or that, and though conscience is the common word which is given by both, yet if a writer fall among enemies, and cannot give the marks of their conscience, he is knocked down before the reasons of his own are heard'; To the Reader, prefacing *The Hind and the Panther*. As Paul Hammond notes, King James II issued *His Majesty's Gracious Declaration to all his Loving Subjects for Liberty of Conscience*, 'which applied equally to Catholics and to Protestant dissenters', alienating many in the Church of England by suspending 'the penal laws which excluded all but Anglicans from public office and punished non-attendance at Anglican service, and instead permitted freedom of religious assembly' (*The Poems of John Dryden*, IV, p. 33).

[29] Gilbert Burnet, A PASTORAL LETTER Writ By The Right Reverend Father In God GILBERT, Lord Bishop of SARUM, To the Clergy of his Diocess [sic], Concerning *The Oaths of Allegiance*

here. He occupies the seemingly preposterous position of affirming the authority of this mythical 'ancient constitution' at a point when the nation is patently breaking with it. Unable to concede the formative collapse of this mythical concept, Burnet constructs the Revolution of 1688 as an integral part of a historical continuum; in his words, it 'gives us all the security, that, humanely speaking, we can look for, both for the Protestant Religion, and for Civil Liberty'.[30] Once again he celebrates the idealised marriage of church and state which supports the secular religion of immemorial liberty.

His aim is not only to convince the clergy that William and Mary are instruments of divine intervention (saving Protestant Britain from the arbitrary rule of Catholic King James II), but also that the new King and Queen, in his words, have the authority of 'the Ancient Constitution of *England*' on their side. Interestingly, Burnet's divine justification of the Revolution Settlement relies on a profoundly secular argument. He argues that upon throwing his great seal into the Thames and fleeing to France, James II had clearly broken his 'Original Contract' with 'the Peers and People of *England*'; according to 'Feudal Law', the people of Britain owed him no more 'Allegiance'.[31] Burnet then pulls out all the rhetorical stops:

> I will only add one thing in this Paper; That the Original Articles of the *Magna Charta* granted by King *John*, is now in my Hands, with his Great Seal to it; which has been ever since that Time esteemed the Measure of the English Government; and by it, it is expressly provided:
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> > *That in case the King should violate any part of it, and should refuse to rectify what he had done amiss, it should be lawful for the Barons and the whole People of* England, *to distress him by all the Ways they could think on; such as, the seizing on his Castles, Lands, and Possessions, provision being only made for the Safety of the Persons of the King and Queen, and of their Children.* [italics indicate text printed in black-letter]

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and Supremacy To K. WILLIAM and Q. MARY (London: Printed for J. Starkey and Ric. Chiswell, 1689), p. 4. Cited hereafter as *Pastoral Letter*.

[30] Burnet, *Pastoral Letter*, p. 3.

[31] Burnet, *Pastoral Letter*, pp. 24-5.

> And the Subjects are not only warranted, but required to enter into Associations and Oaths for that Effect.[32]

This revelation understandably caused a furore in Parliament, for Burnet had apparently laid his hands on *the* constitutional authority, complete with the 'Great Seal' of King John, to require every 'Subject' in England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland to take the 'Oaths'. Burnet's employment of the term 'Original' is formative here; the verb 'is' refers to it, rather than the plural 'Articles'. The poor state of constitutional scholarship at this time gave Bishop Burnet enough leeway to impose the authority of his original upon Parliament and the nation. He used this problematic 'original', containing a clause which was absent from what had been received as the 'authentic' Magna Carta, to justify the Oaths to William and Mary. Parliament was rightly anxious about the legitimacy of Burnet's unknown 'Original Articles', which motivated both Houses to vote for a public and symbolic burning of the *Pastoral Letter*. It was a futile and impotent gesture, for those flames could not destroy Burnet's original. Whether deliberate or not, however, Burnet's reading of the clause above, not to mention the document itself, is a misprision of the ancient constitution; as will be seen, his 'authority' was derived from a self-serving interpretation, rather than the document itself.

Blackstone confirms Burnet's possession of the Articles of the Barons, affirming their authenticity, but he offers no legal commentary on Burnet's representation of the text itself. How did he come to possess the Articles of the Barons, and what constitutional authority do they contain? Burnet himself describes the provenance of the Articles as follows:

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[32] *Pastoral Letter*, pp. 27-8.

> The mentioning this makes me add one particular concerning Archbishop *Laud*. When his impeachment was brought to the Lord's bar, he apprehending how it would end, sent over *Warner*, Bishop of *Rochester*, with the keys of his closet and cabinet, that he might destroy or put out of the way all papers that might either hurt himself or any body else. He was at that work for three hours, till upon Laud's being committed to the black rod, a messenger went over to seal up his closet, who came after all was withdrawn. Among the writings he took away, it is believed the original *Magna Charta* passed by King *John* in the mead near *Stains* was one. This was found among *Warner's* papers by his executor, Colonel *Lee*, who gave it to me. So it is now in my hands; and it came very fairly to me. For this conveyance of it we have nothing but conjecture.[33]

This elaborate tale seems legitimate enough until Burnet says that it is constructed out of 'nothing but conjecture'; the sole fact averred here is that he received the Articles of the Barons from Bishop Warner's son and executor, 'Colonel Lee'. From Blackstone to *The Statutes of the Realm*, this provenance has been accepted ever since as factual.[34]

J.C. Holt offers the following commentary on the legal function of this subversive original acquired by Burnet:

> These Articles are a remarkable chance survival from the negotiations of 1215, for they had no permanent importance. They have survived because Stephen Langton, the chief intermediary, apparently pocketed them in 1215, whence they found their way into the archiepiscopal archives where they remained until they passed into the hands of Gilbert Burnet in the seventeenth century.[35]

The idea that the Articles of the Barons 'had no permanent importance' complicates Burnet's usage of them. What he actually had was a preliminary schedule of proceedings, mutually agreed between King John and the barons, arranged prior to the meeting of both parties at Runnymede. Without such a provisional agreement of the subjects to be addressed, 'the results would have

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[33] Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's History of his own Time*, 6 vols (London: printed for the Company of Booksellers, 1725), I, pp. 47-48.
[34] See McKechnie, *A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John*, pp. 200-02.
[35] Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 156. The Articles of the Barons is an undated document, but it is plainly a preliminary stage in the drawing up of the Magna Carta. It is listed as item VI in *The Statutes of the Realm* (1810) as 'Articuli Magna Carte Libertatum, A.D. MCCXV': 'This appears to be the

been chaotic'.[36] Had these Articles been legally enforceable, they would still have been superseded by the Great Charter of 1215, as it was in turn superseded by the Charters of 1216, 1217 and 1225. Holt's observation changes entirely the meaning of the clause which Burnet misappropriates in his *Pastoral Letter*. King John's failure to keep his appointed meeting at Runnymede and to observe these agreed articles in the forthcoming negotiations would result in the punitive actions described in Burnet's clause above. It did not constitute, as Burnet wished to believe, an 'Immemorial Practice'.[37] The 'Original Contract' and 'Ancient Constitution of England' desired by Burnet had no 'authentic' textual basis.[38]

It is not clear that Burnet understood the exact nature of this original which he possessed, but his approach to the ancient constitution suggests that the greater the antiquity of the law, the greater its authority. He claimed that it was 'the original of King *John's Magna Charta,*', which is true in textual—but not legal—terms.[39] Burnet is speaking on a slippery semantic slope. Towards this end, the great emphasis which he places on the authority of the 'Great Seal' invites closer scrutiny. Given that the legitimacy of his argument in *A Pastoral Letter* was underwritten by the Articles of the Barons, Burnet might have gone to great lengths in order to establish the authenticity of his original. In his edition of *The Great Charter*, Blackstone does not remark on the curiosity of the great seal being attached to Burnet's Articles of the Barons. But J.C. Holt finds it both remarkable and curious:

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identical Instrument, formerly in the Possession of Archbishop Laud, and afterwards of Dr. Burnet, Bishop of Salisbury, from which the copy in Blackstone's Charters was printed'.

[36] Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 157.

[37] Burnet, *Pastoral Letter*, p. 10.

[38] Burnet, *Pastoral Letter*, pp. 18, 24, 28. Burnet's construction of these concepts derives from the premise of unwritten and immemorial English laws, transmitted by oral tradition.

> They carried the king's great seal. This indeed is their most striking feature, for the Articles had little of the characteristic form of a charter or letter patent. Legally, they did not convey or grant anything. There was nothing in them to be strengthened or made valid by the appending of the seal. The sealing of such a document was quite abnormal if not unique.[40]

As Holt's observation indicates, we can only speculate on why the Articles of the Barons carries the great seal. In his imaginative reconstruction of the event, John C. Fox unquestioningly accepts this aberration.[41] William Sharp McKechnie accepts Burnet's provenance of the Articles wholesale, and the presence of the great seal is a source of reverence, rather than surprise.[42] But Holt's assessment invites further consideration.

The fact of the great seal's presence on the Articles of the Barons may be approached through the character of Burnet himself, who 'constructed the historical ideology of the Whig Revolution, in which a common thread was found in the Protestant struggle for "Liberty"'.[43] His career as a Bishop was ensured by helping to secure the success of William and Mary in the Revolution of 1688. His *Pastoral Letter* represents an ecclesiastical justification of the Revolution Settlement and the Protestant succession, reconstructing James II's departure as a voluntary abdication rather than a *coup d'état.* With so much riding on this vital text, Burnet needed to ensure that his argument was unshakeable, using every

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[39] Burnet, *History of his own Time*, III, p. 1394.
[40] Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 157. Holt proceeds to speculate on why this document might have received the great seal, but does not produce reliable evidence to this effect.
[41] 'In picturing the course of procedure in the preparation and execution of the charter at Runnymede, the urgency of the matter must be borne in mind. The barons would admit of no delay; they would give John no time to change his mind. It is estimated that the writing of the charter would occupy not less than a day, and the barons would not consent to delay. They had already required the Great Seal to be affixed to their 'Articles'. [. . .] The sealing of the 'Articles' signified a general acceptance of terms which were afterwards elaborated and conclusively fixed by the sealing of the charter' ('The Originals of the Great Charter of 1215', 333).
[42] McKechnie, *A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John*, pp. 200-02.
[43] Davies, *The Isles*, p. 427.

effective means at his disposal. An original of the Magna Carta was held in Burnet's own see at Salisbury Cathedral; as Bishop of Salisbury, he would have had unrestricted access to it. Remarking on the physical condition of this document, John C. Fox notes that a 'seal seems to have been attached formerly', but 'it has been removed by two incisions reaching from the foot of the vellum to the holes, so that the seal with its cord could be detached entire'.[44]

The questions raised by Holt and Fox about the great seal of King John can be answered with the following hypothesis: the incisions in the Salisbury Magna Carta were made by Gilbert Burnet. It is possible that Burnet secretly removed the great seal from the Salisbury Magna Carta and attached it to the Articles of the Barons; by doing so, he appropriated a stamp of authority which none of the originals of King John's Charter bore. This stamp of authority on the Articles of the Barons underwrote the legitimacy of his *Pastoral Letter* and the Whig ideology therein. The father of the 'historical ideology of the Whig Revolution' could have justified this action in the name of Liberty, Church and State, without defacing or altering the text of the originals themselves.

Scholars acknowledge that the history of the Salisbury original is not known.[45] However, textual commentary on this document is contained in James Tyrrell's *The General History of England* (1696-1704).[46] Tyrrell's collation of this text was published in 1700, during Gilbert Burnet's office as Bishop of Salisbury (1688-1715). Blackstone notes that the Salisbury original 'was collated

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[44] Fox, 'The Originals of the Great Charter', 329.
[45] See McKechnie, *A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John*, pp. 197-98, and Fox, 'The Originals of the Great Charter', 328-29.
[46] James Tyrrell, *The general history of England, both ecclesiastical and civil: from the earliest accounts of time, to the reign of His present Majesty, King William III. Taken from the most ancient records, manuscripts, and printed historians. With memorials of the most eminent*

by M. Tyrrel with Matthew Paris's copy about sixty years ago, being then in the archives of the dean and chapter of Salisbury; but, upon diligent enquiry made at that cathedral in April *A.D. 1759,* nothing of this sort could be found'.[47] At some time between 1700 and 1759, therefore, the Salisbury Magna Carta had disappeared. The shadow of Bishop Burnet hangs over its disappearance.

Blackstone faced the disappointment of being unable to find the Salisbury original with stoic faith. Its disappearance 'was owing in part to the repairs then making in the library', he writes, 'which had thrown the books and MSS into some disorder: but it is also said that thirty years ago this charter was missing'.[48] Tyrrell had been more fortunate. Crucially, Tyrrell must have had some co-operation from Bishop Burnet, for his *General History of England* contains a passing comparison of the Salisbury Magna Carta and the Articles of the Barons. His commentary on this subject is regrettably brief, but revealing none the less. Tyrrell writes:

> I shall now only warn the Reader, that the original Charter of King *John*, which is now in the Custody of the Right Reverend and most Learned the Lord Bishop of *Salisbury*, is not *Magna Charta* properly so call'd, but only the first Draught, or Heads thereof, under his Great Seal, it not being so large and particular as that; as any one may see who has the opportunity to compare them'.[49]

Tyrrell clearly impugns the authority of Burnet's original, referring to it as 'only the first Draught'. It is unlikely that Burnet could have read this 'warning' with pleasure. But the other item of paramount importance in Tyrrell's groundbreaking comparison is that he does not mention any seal on the Salisbury

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persons in Church and State. As also the most noted monasteries, and both universities, 3 vols in 5 parts (London: W. Rogers [and others], 1696-1704). Cited hereafter as Tyrell.

[47] Blackstone, *The Great Charter*, p. xvii.

[48] Blackstone, *The Great Charter*, p. xvii.

[49] Tyrrell, II, pt. 2, p. 822.

Magna Carta. Therefore, Tyrrell's commentary does not preclude the possibility that Burnet had already reassigned the great seal for his own political purposes. There would be little 'opportunity to compare them' again in Burnet's lifetime. Following the publication of Tyrrell's *General History of England,* the Salisbury Magna Carta disappeared for over a century.[50]

Blackstone may not have been able to locate the Salisbury Magna Carta, and he did not know about the Lincoln Magna Carta, but he did know of the two Cottonian originals in the British Museum. He declares that what 'the reader may expect in the following sheets is an authentic and correct edition of THE GREAT CHARTER', stating that the 'following edition is carefully printed from M. [John] Pine's engraving of the Cottonian original' of Ci.[51] John Pine's engraving was made in 1733, about eighteen months *after* Ci had been rendered partially illegible by 'the unfortunate fire of 1731'.[52] It is understandable that a permanent and authentic copy was desired of Ci, before it deteriorated any further. Blackstone's meticulous edition is therefore made from a copy, rather than an original, but this does not detract from its authority. He was aware that Pine's engraving combines elements of Ci and Cii. Two holes had been burned in the text of Ci itself, which Pine supplied with text from Cii.[53] Thus Pine's 'authoritative' text is a conflation of two originals. From a practical point of view, it would have been easier for Pine to have created an engraving of the

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[50]The Commissioners of The Statutes of the Realm (1810) failed to uncover the Salisbury Magna Carta. According to Fox, its recovery is noted in Dodsworth's *Historical Account of Salisbury Cathedral*, 'about the year 1814' ('The Originals of the Great Charter', 329, *n.* 3).

[51] Blackstone, *The Great Charter*, p. ii; p. xviii.

[52] Blackstone, *The Great Charter*, p. xviii.

[53] 'The engraving bears a certificate dated 9th May, 1733, narrating that the copy is founded on the original, which had been shrivelled up by the heat; but that where two holes had been burned, the obliterated words had been replaced from the other version' (McKechnie, *A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John,* p. 196).

relatively unblemished Cii, raising a crucial question: why did Blackstone prefer to use Pine's engraved copy of Ci rather than the original of Cii?

This question broaches the issue of whether one of the four extant Magna Carta originals is more authoritative than the others. It is a divisive and contested subject among twentieth-century scholars. Blackstone was aware of only three originals, but only the two Cottonian version were available to him. Ci and Cii are not identical: both contain amendments at the bottom of the document, suggesting that they were added after the main body of the document had been agreed and transcribed. Despite these amendments, Fox argues that 'the texts of Ci, Cii, and L are more correct than that of S, which contains some obvious clerical errors, adding that a notable 'peculiarity of the scribe of S is that he prefers to use the future indicative when the other three manuscripts have the present injunctive'.[54] There are other patently obvious differences between these originals. McKechnie writes that 'Three of the five addenda inserted at the foot' of Ci are 'found in a similar position' in Cii, but 'the substance of the two others is included in the body of the deed'.[55]

George III's Commissioners had the following to say about their happy discovery of another original of the Magna Carta:

> In Lincoln Cathedral, an Original of the Great Charter of Liberties, granted by King John in the Seventeenth Year of his Reign, is preserved in a perfect State. This Charter appears to be of superior Authority to either of the Two Charters of the same Date, preserved in the British Museum. From the contemporary Indorsements of the Word *Lincolnia* on Two Folds of the Charter, this may be presumed to be the Charter transmitted by the Hands of Hugh the then Bishops of Lincoln, who is one of the Bishops named in the Introductory Clause; and it is observable that several Words and Sentences are inserted in the Body of this Charter, which in both the Charters preserved in the British Museum, are added, by way of Notes for Amendment, at the Bottom of the Instrument'.[56]

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[54] Fox, 'The Originals of the Great Charter', 330.
[55] McKechnie, *A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John,* p. 196.
[56] *Statutes of the Realm* (1810), p. xxix.

The criterion upon which the Commissioners based their decision seems to be the correctness of the copy, rather than its textual variations from the other originals. Despite its 'superior Authority', they omit the point that the Lincoln Magna Carta does not have the great seal attached. Its 'superiority' has been disputed by twentieth-century scholars to the point that faith in any 'original' requires the willing suspension of disbelief.[57] The assumption that one original was transcribed and sealed first, and perhaps then held triumphantly aloft in front of the cheering Barons, is the source of this dissent. On the one hand, there is scholarly pressure to demonstrate that one of the originals is of superior authority; on the other hand, there is a sense that textual variations have little or no relevance in this matter, as though there is a metaphysical Magna Carta which transcends the sins of the transcribers. This line of enquiry brings us only negligibly closer to the authentic text.

If we adopt a Johnsonian approach to the necessity of an 'original' Magna Carta, then we find ourselves in a difficult position. Even the expert Blackstone is elusive on this subject; like his predecessor Burnet, he diverts the origins of the 'antient constitution' into a conjectural history of common laws, one promiscuously founded on oral tradition and an immemorial past. Referring to

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[57] Fox vacillates on the matter between declaring that 'they are all of equal authority' to arguing that the 'first of the three [considered in *Statutes of the Realm*] to receive the Great Seal was of authority before the others came into existence' ('The Originals of the Great Charter', 333). Unfortunately, Ci is the only one of these 'three' which was definitely sealed; the vellum of Cii and L is perforated, but a hole is not proof of a great seal. McKechnie argues that the immunity of L from clerical errors and amendments 'proves that it was of later and less hurried execution than the others, and therefore of less authority, if any distinction is permissible' (McKechnie, *A Commentary on the Great Charter of King John*, p. 200). Holt feels that the controversy has run its course, stating that the 'debate is not of great moment', concluding that all the originals are 'of equal weight and value' (*Magna Carta*, p. 313).

himself in the third person here, Blackstone addresses the question of tracing the origins of the Magna Carta as follows:

> But it is not in his present intentions, nor (he fears) within the reach of his abilities, to give a full and explanatory comment on the matters contained in these charters. That, properly executed, must include little less than a complete history of the feodal tenures, so far as they were received in this kingdom; together with an exact and extensive view of our antient constitution in ecclesiastical matters as well as in civil government; a work, which he hopes, and has reason to believe, has long been meditated, and is in part already executed, by a gentleman whose learning, experience, and abilities are every way suited to the performance.[58]

It is interesting that this scholarly edition of the Great Charter begins with the caveat that its authentic origins lie beyond the scope of the present work, indicating that Blackstone shares Burnet's enthusiasm for an irreducible 'antient constitution'. The 'gentleman' referred to here is Blackstone himself, and the 'work' which he proposes is his own *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765-69).

It is remarkable that according to Blackstone, the authenticity of the Magna Carta is derived from an immemorial oral tradition. In *Commentaries on the Laws of England*, he writes the following passage:

> That antient collection of unwritten maxims and customs, which is called the common law, however compounded or from whatever fountains derived, had subsisted immemorially in this kingdom; and, though somewhat altered and impaired by the violence of the times, had in great measure weathered the rude shock of the Norman conquest. [. . .] But the common law of England, being not committed to writing, but only handed down by tradition, use and experience, was not so heartily relished by the foreign clergy; who came over in shoals during the reign of the conqueror and his two sons, and were utter strangers to our constitution as well as our language. (p. 17)

Blackstone presents us with the unlikely image that what authenticates English law is the oral tradition of the 'common law', rather than the royal seal on a manuscript. Can it be that the Magna Carta represents a polite corruption of a

barbarous, oral 'constitution'? This is an alarming argument to come from Blackstone, Oxford's Vinerian Professor of Law, who promised his readers 'an authentic and correct edition' of the Magna Carta. It is categorically not the England which Johnson constructs in his *Dictionary of the English Language.*

Bishop Burnet's *Pastoral Letter* attempts to persuade the nation's clergy to place their faith in the authority of two specific fragments from an ancient oral constitution: the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy. But he does not acknowledge that the Magna Carta is more Norman than English, nor does he divulge that these 'ancient' Oaths of England are subservient to Protestant ideology, facilitating the accession of a Dutch monarch to the British throne. Similarly, Blackstone does not acknowledge that the national boundaries of post-Union England have dissolved into the broader political and cultural map of the nation which James I had named *Magna Britannia.* But Blackstone has no intention of demystifying the 'fountains' from which his illusory Saxon nationhood flows:

> These originals should be traced to their fountains, as well as our distance will permit; to the customs of the Britons and Germans, as recorded by Caesar and Tacitus; to the codes of the northern nations on the continent, and more especially to those of our own Saxon princes; to the rules of the Roman law, either left here in the days of Papinian, or imported by Vacarius and his followers; but above all, to that inexhaustible reservoir of legal antiquities and learning, the feodal or, as Spelman has entitled it, the law of nations in our western orb. (pp. 35-36)

As suggested in the first chapter of this thesis, Tacitus is a problematic authority on 'the customs of the Britons and Germans'; this is true for Johnson as well as Blackstone. As soon as Blackstone suggests that these 'originals should be traced to their fountains', he ascribes the sources to locations so remote that he can

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[58] Blackstone, *The Great Charter*, p. ii.

never be held accountable for tracing them all. In this context, it is interesting that the term 'fountain' occurs in Dr. Johnson's 1755 definition of 'Original'.[59] But as recent scholarship has shown, Johnson's contempt for Whig ideology went beyond mere conversation. Acting as mentor and possibly as ghost-writer (which, as Curley has argued in a separate essay, Johnson would also do in William Shaw's prejudicial *An Enquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems ascribed to Ossian* [1782]), Johnson secretly collaborated with Robert Chambers—Blackstone's successor as the second Vinerian Professor of Law—to produce *A Course of Lectures on the English Law*, a systematic Tory antithesis to Blackstone's 'Whig reading of the national constitution'.[60] A copy made for George III of these Vinerian lectures still exists, but the location of the originals is unknown.[61]

The 'fountain' of Burke's sentiments on the ancient constitution appears to be the tradition of Burnet and Blackstone. In the following passage, his resistance to modern demands that constitutional liberties to be explicitly defined in writing becomes clear:

> But the age of chivalry is gone.—That of sophisters, œconomists, and calculators, has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is extinguished for ever. [. . .] All the pleasing illusions, which made power gentle, and obedience liberal, which harmonized the different shades of life, and which, by a bland assimilation, incorporated into politics the sentiments which beautify and soften private society, are to be dissolved by this new conquering empire of light and reason. All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off.[62]

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[59] See Chapter One of this thesis.
[60] On Johnson's secret collaboration with Chambers, see Thomas M. Curley, 'Johnson's Secret Collaboration', in *The Unknown Samuel Johnson*, ed. by John J. Burke. and Donald Kay (Madison, WI and London: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), pp. 99-112 (p. 101); E. L. McAdam, Jr., *Dr. Johnson and the English Law* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1951). For Johnson's secret collaboration with William Shaw against the authenticity of Macpherson's Ossianic poetry, see Thomas M.Curley, 'Johnson's Last Word on Ossian: Ghostwriting for William Shaw', in *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*, ed. by Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), pp. 375-94.
[61] See Thomas M. Curley, 'Johnson's Secret Collaboration', p. 94.
[62] *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, VIII, p. 81

Burke's concept of the ancient constitution represents a national epic, a kind of sacred and unwritten tradition from the 'age of chivalry', fabricated from the *disjecta membra* of an imagined past. His fear is that this 'pleasing illusion' is at risk of demystification; the unmasking of this unwritten ancient constitution, whereby all 'the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off', equates to iconoclasm.[63] However, the iconography of patriotism has often been elevated to this status of a secular religion. The Whig tradition of myth-making which Burke had inherited from Burnet and Blackstone responds to a formative absence: the ancient constitution did not survive the seventeenth century, not to mention three hundred years of Norman rule, as anything other than a romanticised ideal. Similar to Johnson's Tory fable of 'the wells of English undefiled', the fountain of the Whig ancient constitution is the 'inexhaustible reservoir' of the British literary imagination.

Blackstone concedes that the Great Charter of 1215 had both written and unwritten originals: the Charter of Henry I and the common law, respectively. The 'Original Contract' idealised by Burnet is an oral tradition of law based on the oath, yet he produces the written Articles of the Barons to authenticate his argument. It is an interesting contradiction between written and unwritten traditions. Ironically, his aim in his *Pastoral Letter* is to persuade his fellow churchmen that they should return to this 'Original Contract' with the monarchy by taking the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy. So, is the authenticity of the

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[63] My association of the term 'demystification' with the sacred, and the unmasking of 'false' consciousness and illusion, is directly derived from Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. by Denis Savage (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), especially pp. 26-7, 32-36.

original charter of English liberties founded upon a Johnsonian or a Burkean tradition? As J. C. Holt observes,

> King John did not sign Magna Carta; there is no evidence that he could write. He did not even seal it; sealing charters was the task of the spigurnel, a member of the Chancery staff. Furthermore, there is no evidence at all that the Charter figured in the ceremonies at Runnymede either on 19 June or on any other day. There is no evidence that there was some kind of solemn and ceremonial sealing of an 'original' Magna Carta. There is not even any evidence that such a sealed 'original' ever existed; [. . .] Magna Carta was not a treaty: we need not imagine that the barons carried off a sealed charter in triumph. The settlement of the 19th was made *viva voce*; it comprised verbal and formal acts—the renewal of homage and the oath to observe the terms of the settlement.[64]

This representation of the meeting between King John and the barons at Runnymede on 19 June 1215, authenticated by an oral performance, does not succumb to the 'pleasing illusions' of antiquarian nostalgia. This litany of 'no evidence' is not an image of which Burke would be likely to approve, except perhaps that Holt describes the machinery of authentication as an oral tradition, rather than an affixing of the king's great seal. A politician of Burke's stature could surely make use of this contradiction between text and '*viva voce*'.

The Magna Carta cannot be brought to a comfortable reconciliation of unwritten constitutions and authentic texts. A certain 'unknown charter' in France's Archives Nationales represents a case in point: it is a document of uncertain date, authorship and deliberate archaism, apparently a forgery of Henry I's charter of liberties, 'to which certain concessions to John have been added'.[65] Literature repeatedly responds to the provisionality or absence of 'originals'. Written or unwritten, Tory or Whig, the real continuity in the history of nationhood is the act of fabrication itself. If the 'centre' implied by the word 'Anglocentric' refers to the cultural authority of English constitutionalism, then it

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[64] Holt, *Magna Carta*, pp. 165-6.

lacks an authentic textual basis. Faith in the idea of an immemorial England which transcends the Union of 1707, thus providing Great Britain with an immutable centre, requires the willing suspension of disbelief. As will be seen in the next two chapters, the mutability of written and unwritten cultural identities is a defining characteristic of Britishness in post-Union literature.

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[65] Holt, *Magna Carta*, Appendix II, pp. 296-303 (p. 296).

As has been mentioned in the second chapter, James I had envisaged 'Magna Britannia' as early as his coronation in 1603, and had taken steps to make that concept a reality. In this sense, it would be prudish to argue that Britishness is the legitimate and planned child of the Act of Union, instead of a more promiscuous kind of cultural intercourse. Is it possible to distinguish this mixed Britishness from the 'purer' identities which reputedly preceded the Union? In her book entitled *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, Linda Colley addresses 'the invention of Britishness' in the following passage:

> Great Britain in 1707 was much less a trinity of three self-contained and self-conscious nations than a patchwork in which uncertain areas of Welshness, Scottishness and Englishness were cut across by strong regional attachments, and scored over again by loyalties to village, town, family and landscape. In other words, like virtually every other part of Europe in this period, Great Britain was infinitely diverse in terms of the customs and cultures of its inhabitants.[1]

In this preliminary conceptualisation of Britishness, Colley acknowledges some formative cultural differences, but she omits Ireland from her map of Great Britain. Although only briefly, she does acknowledge the later Act of Union (1800) between Ireland and Great Britain, but then she attempts to minimise 'this new political arrangement' by blaming it on France.[2] 'I have deliberately chosen not to write about Ireland itself', she writes, because 'the invention of Britishness was so closely bound up with Protestantism, with war with France and with the acquisition of empire, that Ireland was rarely able or willing to play a satisfactory

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[1] Colley, *Britons*, p. 17.

[2] Strangely, we are led to believe that this proposition is cut and dried: 'Ireland was annexed to prevent Napoleon from using it as a springboard for an invasion of the British mainland' (*Britons*, p. 340).

part in it'.[3] Britain's ties to Ireland cannot be so easily cut, overwritten or wished away. This definition may facilitate a more convenient narrative of British identity, but it unwittingly adds an ironic connotation to the subtitle, 'forging the nation'.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the complex religious debate between Anglicans and Catholics over British nationhood addressed by Dryden in *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther* demonstrates the potential for dissent and disintegration in scripture-based narratives of nationhood.[4] If Ireland had a conflicted historical relationship to Protestantism, so too did England, home of the visceral Gunpowder Plot (1605) and the Popish Plot (1678-79), a groundless fabrication.[5] 'In reality', writes Norman Davies, 'the only principle on which all the Protestants of the Isles were agreed was "anti-Popery"'.[6] If *Britons* cannot countenance Ireland's role in Great Britain, then perhaps the problem rests with Colley's definition of Britishness, rather than with Ireland itself. The crux is not Ireland's unwillingness to participate in 'the invention of Britishness'—

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[3] Colley, *Britons*, p. 8. The image of eighteenth-century Ireland as a Catholic monolith indicates Colley's failure to engage with English and British colonial history in Ireland.

[4] 'The comparatively recent origin of the Church of England was insisted upon by Catholic writers, who argued that since it could not be traced back further than the Reformation, it lacked any claim to the church founded by Christ. Anglican writers insisted that the Reformation simply purged the church of abuses and accretions in doctrine and practice which had no warrant in scripture, and that the Church of England preserved the apostolic succession (whereby bishops, as they are consecrated by other bishops and succeed to ancient sees, theoretically form an unbroken chain back to the first apostles)' (*The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. by Paul Hammond and David Hopkins, III, p. 72). This concept of the Anglican Church as the restoration of Christianity to its original purity after centuries of Romanist corruption is a Protestant fabrication perpetuated by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*. 'Una is that church, and also its head, Elizabeth I, who replaced the papacy which had usurped the royal chief priests, her ancestors, for so long'; see *The Literature of Renaissance England*, ed. by John Hollander and Frank Kermode (New York, London & Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 170.

[5] On the Gunpowder Plot and the Popish Plot, see Davies, *The Isles*, pp. 465-66, p. 510.

[6] Davies, *The Isles*, p. 428.

because it actively and manifestly did so—but with the ideology of 'superimposing' an Anglocentric narrative on a diverse British history.[7]

For centuries it has been contested whether Protestantism can serve as a reliable national narrative; as discussed in the previous chapter of this thesis, the same might also be said of constitutionalism. In actuality, Britishness cannot be satisfactorily defined in ecclesiastical or constitutional terms alone. Furthermore, it was not comprehensively imposed upon the public, and with the possible exception of Oliver Cromwell, it has never been sufficiently within anyone's power to do so.[8] The post-Union culture of Britishness sponsored by *The Tatler* and *The Spectator* was largely shaped by Richard Steele, Jonathan Swift and Thomas Parnell, all of whom were Irish and also definitively British.[9] Their places in the literature and cultural identity of Great Britain cannot be appreciated without some understanding of England's historical relations with Ireland. In considering Irish history since the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Britishness has emerged as a direct result of—not in spite of—religious, linguistic and socioeconomic differences. Interestingly, Ireland has been divided along religious lines by proselytisers since the days of Saint Patrick in the fifth-century.[10] The

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[7] Colley contends that 'Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and above all in response to conflict with the Other' (*Britons*, p. 6). There should be room for Ireland in this putative internalisation of the 'Other'. As Christopher Harvie observes of *Britons*, 'Ireland is crucial, and crucially absent. Colley rules it out through a self-denying ordinance; [. . .] Colley's Protestant-military elite had annexed 4½ million Catholics, plus half a million of the most militant Britons of the lot. A problem, she admits, but leaves it at that' ('Uncool Britannia: Linda Colley's *Britons* Reconsidered', *TLS* [Supplement], 4997 [1999], 12).

[8] Oliver Cromwell's policies in Ireland will be discussed later in this chapter.

[9] The formative role which *The Spectator* played in shaping a distinctively British polity based on shared taste, manners and politeness has already been discussed in the Chapter One of this thesis.

[10] See James Lydon, *The Making of Ireland: From Ancient Times to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1998). Cited hereafter as *The Making of Ireland.* 'Leinster and Munster preserve some traditions of pre-Patrician saints. This rough division of Ireland into two separate areas of missionary activity not only mirrored the old division of Ireland into two halves, *Leth Chuinn*

Protestant Reformation in the reign of King Henry VIII changed this state of religious division into a permanent feature of the national landscape.

This division of Ireland was not limited to religion. Beginning with Viking raids in the 790s, Ireland was variously invaded or colonised, pillaged or settled by a succession of Anglo-Normans, Cambro-Normans, English and Scots. Dublin was wrenched from 'the Irish Norseman, Askulf MacTurkill, who had relatives in the Orkneys and Hebrides', by the Cambro-Norman Richard 'Strongbow' de Clare in 1170.[11] King Jean consolidated this victory in 1199 by incorporating the Lordship of Ireland with the throne of England, and as mentioned in the Magna Carta (1215), the Archbishop of Dublin was to receive a letter patent explaining the rights and conditions of the charter itself.[12] Accordingly, many histories acknowledge a diversity of communities in Ireland, such as the Old Norse, Anglo-Normans, Old English, the Old Irish, the New English, French Huguenots, Ulster Scots and Anglo-Irish, as well as an Irish 'race'.

The issue of an Irish race was addressed in a controversial fashion by William Molyneux (1656-1698), who marshalled the incendiary argument that the 'great Body of the present People of Ireland are the Progeny of the English and Britains [sic], that from time to time have come over into this kingdom; and there remains but a mere handful of the Ancient Irish at this day, I may say, not one in a thousand'.[13] As a Protestant arguing for an independent Irish parliament,

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("Conn's half") and *Leth Mugha* ("Mug's half"), north and south, but was also reflected in later ecclesiastical controversy between Armagh and Kildare' (Lydon, *The Making of Ireland*, p. 4).

[11] Davies, *The Isles*, pp. 291-93.

[12] Holt, *Magna Carta*, p. 337

[13] *The Case of Ireland's being Bound by Parliament in England Stated* (1698; repr. Dublin, 1725), p. 16. Cited by Foster in *Modern Ireland*, p. 161. Molyneux was born in Dublin and

Molyneux's nationalism alienated him from the Westminster parliament and Irish Catholics, suggesting some of the complex fault-lines underlying Irishness and Britishness. Despite Molyneux's own political biases, he does raise a crucial point. After nine hundred years of invasion, immigration and colonisation, the notion that a pure Irish race had survived intact—if its existence could ever be demonstrated at all—is an ideological myth rather than a biological reality; this applies with equal impact to England, Wales and Scotland. Such a rhetorical position in itself neither denies nor diminishes the existence in Ireland of a Gaelic sociolinguistic community, or *The Hidden Ireland*, with its own histories, traditions, beliefs and cultural identities; it simply distinguishes between sociolinguistic identity and 'race'.[14]

In Ireland as in the rest of Great Britain, anxieties about a 'pure' cultural identity and the inherent intermixture of Britishness have been redressed through literary acts of myth-making. As will be shown in this chapter, the dialogues between St. Patrick and Oisín signify the meeting of Gael and *Gall* (foreigner), the inevitable mixing of monastic and bardic traditions, and the confluence of scriptural and non-scriptural Irelands. These dialogues signify a zone of cultural

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educated at Trinity College, Dublin. A Protestant and a constitutional nationalist, Molyneux designed his pamphlet to secure more political autonomy for the Irish Parliament, and it was ordered by the Westminster Parliament to be burned by the common hangman (*Modern Ireland*, p. 118). Quoting an unspecified and contemporaneous parliamentary statement on this controversy, Lydon says that the House of Commons condemned Molyneux's pamphlet as 'of dangerous consequence to the crown and people of England by denying the authority of the king and parliament of England to bind the kingdom and people of Ireland, and the subordination and dependence that Ireland hath and ought to have upon England as united and annexed to the imperial crown of the realm' (*The Making of Ireland*, p. 229).

[14] Daniel Corkery's *The Hidden Ireland: A Study of Gaelic Munster in the Eighteenth Century* (Dublin: M. H. Gill, 1924) is a groundbreaking literary study of Irish poetry. His premise that a history of Ireland compiled only from 'official' records would create a false representation is compelling; but his own conviction that the Irish should seek their historical identity in an exclusively Gaelic past is an equally untenable and circular argument. See Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972* (Harmondsworth: Allen Lane/ Penguin, 1988), pp. 167-68, 195, 205.

contact which remains in a state of agitation over fifteen centuries later.[15] Beginning with Spenser's *A View of the State of Ireland*, this chapter will provide a selective historical outline of the years between Spenser and Samuel Johnson to help establish the atmosphere of Irish literary life in the eighteenth century. The fragmentation of Ireland will be of particular concern, looking in particular at Cromwell's closure of the bardic schools in 1649, and the wider historical record of Britain's attempted erasure of Irishness through the Penal Laws. It will then focus on Micheál Coimín's *Laoidh Oisín ar Tír na n-Óg*, or *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth*.[16]

Today, Coimín's poem is perhaps most often recollected as the unacknowledged original of W. B. Yeats's 'The Wanderings of Oisin' (1889).[17] It deserves to be considered in this thesis not only because it is a remarkable Ossianic composition, but because it was composed approximately a decade before the publication of James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760). As will be seen in the following chapter, the transformative power of Ossian would catalyse not only Gaelic scholarship, but the imaginative literature

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[15] The contest between the Protestant Ascendancy and Catholic Ireland allows a way into the manifold interpretations of Irish history. 'In the 1890s W. E. H. Lecky devoted a major section of his great work on eighteenth-century history to a discussion of Georgian Ireland that was ambivalent but inspirational; it remains one of the best sources. The foundation of the first Irish Georgian Society in 1909, and its publication of J. P. Mahaffy's deliberately reactionary celebration of Georgian style, brought reassessment into disrepute; by the 1930s there was a dual tradition of interpretation, represented on the one hand by Daniel Corkery's condemnatory *The Hidden Ireland* [1924] and on the other by the commitment of W. B. Yeats and Elizabeth Bowen to the imagined world of their ancestors. [. . .] Belief in the dream required a personal commitment to the history of the Ascendancy class. To the Catholic or Dissenting traditions, those values seemed at once oppressive and frivolous' (R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, pp. 167-68).

[16] *Tír na n-Óg* is correctly spelled with a diacritical mark above the 'T', indicating an aspirated pronunciation; but because such signs are not recognised by English language databases, computerised indexing and search facilities, I will use this as the more functional, though incorrect, spelling.

of the Western world. This chapter, however, will attempt to consider Coimín's *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth* in the Irish cultural context which existed before 1760. The *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth* is a neglected Ossianic composition, a freely-interpretive work of the imagination which bridges a gap between bardic and balladic traditions, and between the poet and his idealised cultural identity. In tracing the complex relationship between Coimín's ballad and the Ossianic 'canon', it will suggest the wider literary relationships between the Romantic imagination and the proliferation of Britishness.

In *The Bard. A Pindaric Ode* (1757), Thomas Gray makes poetic capital out of Edward I's thirteenth-century subjugation of Wales, focusing in particular on his supposed persecution of the bards. Gray's poem breaks fresh ground in politicising the bard, challenging the ideology of empire in a way that Thomson and Mallet had scrupulously sought to avoid in *Alfred. A Mask.*[18] Gray writes in his prefatory Advertisement to the 1757 edition that 'The following Ode is founded on a Tradition current in Wales, that EDWARD THE FIRST, completed the conquest of that country, ordered all the Bards, that fell into his hands, to be put to death'.[19] The operative assumption in this 'Tradition' is that bards are the living repositories of cultural memory and identity; a 'ruthless King' (*The Bard,*

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[17] Published in W. B. Yeats, *The Wanderings of Oisin and Other Poems* (London: Kegan Paul, 1889). On Yeats's unacknowledged appropriation of Coimín's poem, see Russell K. Alspach, 'Some Sources of Yeats's *The Wanderings of Oisin*', *PMLA*, 58 (1943), 849-66.

[18] On the representation of the figure of the bard in *Alfred*, see chapter one of this thesis.

l. 1) or a 'Tyrant' (l. 6) who could silence the bards would gain the ability to impose an English myth of empire on Wales without fear of being contradicted by native history. Gray's bard challenges the legitimacy of an Anglocentric narrative of history which silences the voices and historical experiences of Wales.

Gray's assumptions about Edward I's atrocities against the bards were derived at least in part from Thomas Carte's *General History of England* (1750), but as Lonsdale argues he did not necessarily believe in the authenticity of his source.[20] As Lonsdale notes, Gray later concluded that Carte had severely overstated this reputed death-penalty for Welsh bards; Edward I 'proceeded no further against them in general', writes the poet, 'than to order that they should not travel (as usual) about Wales, nor ask any rewards from the Inhabitants'. In Welsh and Irish history, the bard is a politically-loaded figure. If the laws in Wales were less tyrannical than he had originally thought, there was plenty of historical evidence in Ireland regarding the persecution of the bards.

Gray's poem outlines a process of military and political conquest, followed by cultural assimilation, one which is also manifest in the British subjugation of Ireland. The following passage gives some indication about the iconic status of the bard in seventeenth-century Ireland:

> On January 28th, 1603, a proclamation was issued by the Lord President of Munster, by the terms of which the Marshal of the Province was strictly charged "to exterminate by marshal [sic] law all manner of Bards, Harpers," etc. Within ten days after said proclamation, Queen Elizabeth herself ordered Lord Barrymore "to hang the harpers wherever found, and destroy their instruments". [. . .] During the year 1604, eleven bards and five harpers were pardoned. All the bards were of one clan, namely, MacConmidhe

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[19] *Gray, Collins and Goldsmith: The Complete Poems*, ed. by Roger Lonsdale (London and New York: Longman, 1976), p. 180. Cited hereafter as Lonsdale. As Lonsdale notes, there is a long-standing incorrect notion that Edward I ordered all the bards to be put to death (pp.180-81).
[20] Lonsdale, pp. 180-81.

> (MacNamee or Conmee). However, before the close of that year, Sir John Harrington [translator of Ariosto], Seneschal of County Wicklow, was ordered "to banish bards and rhymers out of his limits, and whip them if they did not quit after proclamation duly made." (2 James I) Any bard who failed to leave the country of the O'Byrnes within twenty days was to be tried by court-martial and executed.[21]

The arbitrariness of such atrocities against the bards, reported here by William Henry Grattan Flood (1859-1928), points out the questionable legitimacy of Elizabethan law in Ireland, underscored by the irony that the Queen herself retained an 'Irish harper, Donal *buidhe*' in 1602 to 'soothe her nerves'.[22] But this resurgent pattern of military and political conquest, followed by enforced cultural assimilation, emerges in relation to the bards in seventeenth-century Irish history. In effect, this pattern involves a contest between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. It will be seen how the doctrines of Protestantism were used to justify the decimation of the Catholic aristocracy, and how the literary culture of the bardic schools subsequently collapsed without its traditional patrons. Whether enacted by legislative, religious or historiographical means, the silencing of the Irish bards is a powerful gesture of conquest, one designed to smash the epic totality of national identity into fragments of its former self. This idea is analogous to Gray's bard hurling himself off a cliff, shattering himself rather than waiting to be silenced by the state.

Edmund Spenser was among Elizabeth's retinue of 'bards', and accordingly he mythologised her in his Protestant epic, *The Faerie Queene*

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[21] William Henry Grattan Flood, *A History of Irish Music*, 2nd edn (Dublin, Belfast and Cork: Browne and Nolan, 1906), pp. 185-86. Cited hereafter as *A History of Irish Music.* Although his Irish nationalist sentiments are often thinly veiled, Flood's history covers a neglected field of study concerning the effect of the Penal Laws; yet it lacks the scholarly rigour of complete references and footnotes. Nevertheless, it represents a key text in the under-researched conditions which shaped the history of Irish culture, as cited in *A New History of Ireland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), IV, pp. 542, 549, 550.

[22] *A History of Irish Music,* p. 185.

(1590-96).[23] In this literary act of nation-building, he drew upon Geoffrey of Monmouth's Arthurian tales in *The History of the Kings of Britain*, thus self-consciously perpetuating an ongoing ideological process of 'forging' the nation. But Spenser's interest in constructing a fictional past was not confined to poetry. His treatise entitled *A View of the State of Ireland* (1596), regarded by many in eighteenth-century England as an authoritative text on the subject, takes the form of a Socratic dialogue between two fictional characters, Eudoxus and Irenæus. Spenser's *View* was first published in 1633, an annotated edition by the Dublin antiquarian and historian Sir James Ware (1594-1666).[24] In this account of Elizabethan Ireland, Eudoxus questions Irenæus, who has recently moved to Ireland, about the validity of Irish historiography as recorded in Irish manuscripts, chronicles and oral tradition. In the following passage, Eudoxus devalues the means by which Irish history has been communicated:

> *Eudox.* You doe very boldly Iren. adventure upon the histories of auncient times, and leane too confidently on those Irish Chronicles which are most fabulous and forged, in that out of them you dare take in hand to lay open the originall of such a nation so antique, as no monument remaines of her beginning and first inhabiting: especially having been in those times without letters, but only bare traditions of times and remembrances of Bardes, which use [sic] to forge and falsifie every thing as they list, to please or displease any man.[25]

Eudoxus seeks to discredit the authority of 'Irish Chronicles', the 'remembrances of Bardes' and the reputedly barbarous culture which they support. Convinced

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[23] 'The new (or, as propaganda said, very old) church was in poor condition. It was rescued by a brilliant intellectual enterprise: Archbishop Jewel's apology for the church, Archbishop Parker's history of it, and [John] Hooker's justification of its middle way in broad historical and theological terms [. . .] created a myth which Spenser and others accepted. [. . .] Spenser found himself in a position to write an Anglican epic' (Hollander and Kermode, *The Literature of Renaissance England*, pp. 162-63).

[24] Among many other original scholarly works, Sir James Ware also produced in 1633 an edition of Edmund Campion's *A Historie of Ireland, Written in the Year 1571*. Ware's editions of Spenser and Campion were reprinted in Dublin at the Hibernia Press in 1809 by John Morrisson.

that Irish historiography is necessarily 'fabulous and forged', Eudoxus implicitly raises the issue that some histories are more subjective than others. Effectively claiming that the only authoritative account of Ireland can come from an English pen—a point of view which Defoe later expressed about Scotland in his *Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*—Spenser nevertheless feels no pressure to conceal his Anglocentric bias. Ostensibly there was no potent threat of contradiction from contemporaneous Irish bards and chroniclers.

The putative inferiority of Ireland's traditional learning and scholarship to that of England may be understood as a cultural anxiety on behalf of English writers such as Spenser: being illiterate in the Gaelic language, most Englishmen were in no position to interpret or manipulate native Irish histories, and therefore they attempted to dismiss them in a wholesale manner. In effect, English was championed as the language of Protestantism—and hence truth itself—and consequently England was the sole producer of authentic histories. Accordingly, Eudoxus affects surprise when Irenæus contradicts this notion:

> *Iren.* Those Bardes indeed, Caesar writeth, delivered no certaine truth of any thing, neither is there any certaine hold to be taken of any antiquity which is received by tradition, since all men be lyars, and many lye when they wil; yet for the antiquities of the written Chronicles of Ireland, give me leave to say something, not to justify them, but to shew that some of them might say truth. For where you say the Irish have alwayes been without letters, you are therein much deceived; for it is certaine, that Ireland hath had the use of letters very anciently, and long before England.[26]

It would be startling for many English readers to find that Ireland was literate, learned and scholarly 'long before England'. A disjunction is emphasised here between 'antiquity which is received by tradition' and 'written Chronicles', as

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[25] *The Works of Spencer, Campion, Hanmer and Marlebvrrovgh. In Two Volumes.* (1809; repr. Port Washington, NY/London: Kennikat Press, 1970), pp. 61-2. Cited hereafter as *View of the State of Ireland.*

though the oral culture often associated with the bards is somehow more subject to fabrication than the written word. But even though he uses Caesar's literary authority to discredit the bardic tradition, Spenser is guilty here of conflating 'Bardes' with druids.

This confusion could arise from the distinction between the terms *bard* and *fili*, two separate classes of poets. In his edition of *A View of the State of Ireland*, James Ware points out that there is no mention of bards in 'Caesar's Commentaryes', but there are repeated references to 'Druides'.[27] Later scholars note that in early Irish literature, 'we find at times that *fili* and *drui* (druid) are interchangeable terms'.[28] According to Knott and Murphy, in 'the early metrical tracts the *bard* was simply a poet and versifier; the *fili* a poet, but also a scholar and guardian of traditional knowledge; he is especially a prophet and a seer and can wield supernatural powers'.[29] Conventional Irish bardic poems 'are addressed exclusively to members of the upper and educated classes. They sometimes lack inspiration, but they are always dignified in style and carefully finished'.[30] This chapter will for the most part deal with bards, rather than the *fili*, but there are inherent problems of authentic originals in this premise. For as seen above in Gray's famous poem, popular images of Gaelic bards throughout the past two hundred and fifty years have blurred the distinctions between these two categories of poets, synthesising the visionary and prophetic qualities of the *fili* with those of the less inspired and professional *bard*. Not only is the term 'bard'

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[26] Spenser, *View of the State of Ireland,* pp. 64-5.
[27] Spenser, *View of the State of Ireland*, p. 64
[28] Eleanor Knott and Gerard Murphy, *Early Irish Literature* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 21.
[29] Knott and Murphy, *Early Irish Literature,* p. 21.

rare in Irish poetry, but the evolution of its iconic status since the time of Spenser provides evidence of the proliferation of Britishness. As Osborn Bergin notes in his landmark study of bardic poetry, 'the "rise of the bard" is explained by the fact that the word 'bard' came to be used in English, not in Irish, to denote an official Celtic poet'.[31] Through the bard, the Gaelic margins of the British empire supplied the polite 'centre' with what it desired: a romanticised ideal of a sublime 'original', rather than authenticity itself.

Although this notion that 'the Saxons of England are said to have their letters, and learning, and learned men from the Irish' is one of Spenser's few kind remarks about Ireland, the implications of his observation clearly exercised the imagination of writers for many years. In Spring 1757, Samuel Johnson wrote the following lines in a letter to Charles O'Connor (1710-1790), a moderate Catholic, a landed gentleman and scholar of Irish language and history, to whom James Boswell refers as 'the venerable authour of *Dissertations on the Ancient History of Ireland*' (1753):

> Sir William Temple complains that Ireland is less known than any other country, as to its ancient state. The natives have had little leisure, and little encouragement for enquiry; and strangers, not knowing the language, have had no ability.
>
> I have long wished that Irish literature were cultivated. Ireland is known by tradition to have been once the seat of piety and learning; and surely it would be very acceptable to all those who are curious either in the original of nations, or the affinities of languages, to be further informed of the revolutions of a people so ancient, and once so illustrious.
>
> [. . .] I hope you will continue to cultivate this kind of learning, which has lain too long neglected, and which, if it be suffered to remain in oblivion for another century, may, perhaps, never be retrieved.[32]

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[30] Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*: *Texts and translations, together with an introductory lecture*, ed. by David Greene and Fergus Kelly (Dublin: The Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 1970), p. 22. Cited hereafter as *Irish Bardic Poetry*.

[31] Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, p. 4, *n.* 1.

[32] Hill and Powell, *Life of Johnson*, I, pp. 321-22.

In asserting that Ireland 'is known to have been once the seat of piety and learning', Johnson acknowledges O'Connor as an exemplar of an Irish scholarly tradition, one which is strangely represented by a dearth of books. It is a problem that Johnson revisits, although some twenty-four years later, in his second letter to O'Connor (May 1777):

> If ever I have disappointed you, give me leave to tell you, that you have likewise disappointed me. I expected great discoveries in Irish antiquity, and large publications in the Irish language; but the world still remains as it was, doubtful and ignorant. [. . .] the ages which deserve an exact enquiry are those times (for such there were) when Ireland was the school of the west, the quiet habitation of sanctity and literature.[33]

It is strange for one who professes to be 'ignorant' about Ireland to have such clear assumptions about its past as 'the school of the west'. However they were formed, Johnson appears unable to reconcile these assumptions about Ireland's scholarly traditions with the contemporary absence of books in the Irish language. The textual contradiction expressed by Spenser in his *View of the State of Ireland* overshadows Johnson's letters to O'Connor.

It is noteworthy that Johnson does not mention the Catholic historian Geoffrey Keating (c.1570-1644), whose monumental *Foras Feasa ar Éirenn* (1634), known in English as *The History of Ireland*, is the first narrative history of Ireland in the Irish language.[34] It also preserves a quantity of Irish mythology and bardic poetry taken from manuscript sources which have long since perished. Identifying himself as an Irish Anglo-Norman of old stock—an 'Old *Gall*', or Old Foreigner—Keating was educated for the priesthood in Bordeaux, returning to his native parish in County Tipperary. Reputedly he often wove Gaelic myths and stories into the content of his sermons. But one day during mass, he offended

the Catholic mistress of Sir George Carew (d. 1629), the Protestant president of Munster, with a sermon that supposedly dealt harshly with carnal sin; to the amusement of the congregation, Keating is said to have punctuated this service by fixing his eye on the woman in question. After this incident, Carew invoked the Penal Laws against Keating, who was forced into hiding in the 'Glen of Aherlow, where he remained for some years' as a fugitive from Protestant justice, undertaking the composition of his *History of Ireland* there.[35]

In this ambitious account of Ireland from the pre-Christian age until the Anglo-Norman invasion, Keating denounces accounts of Irish history which had been fabricated by foreigners such as Gerald of Wales, William Camden, Edmund Campion, Richard Stanihurst and Spenser.[36] Gerald of Wales, or Giraldus Cambrensis, is the *nom de plume* of Gerald de Barry (1146-1243), a member of the influential 'Pembroke circle' at the heart of the Conquest of Ireland which began in 1169.[37] After a personal visit to Ireland, Gerald of Wales wrote *De Expugnatione Hibernica* (1189), a text which motivated Keating's *History of Ireland.* Not only had this text served for generations as a justification of Anglocentric imperialism in Ireland, William Camden had published his own edition of it in 1602. The timing of Camden's edition of *De Expugnatione Hibernica* was politically astute, as it immediately followed the final defeat of the Great Rebellion led by Hugh O'Neill, the second Earl of Tyrone (1540-1616), at

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[33] Hill and Powell, *Life of Johnson*, III, pp. 111-12 (p. 112).
[34] See Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, p. 38, *n.* v.
[35] Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland*, p. 556.
[36] Edmund Campion (d. 1581), Oxford scholar and author of *A Historie of Ireland, Written in the Year 1571*; his pupil Richard Stanihurst (d. 1618), member of a Old English family of Dublin and author of *De rebus in Hibernia gestis* (1584). Both of these authors are reviled along with Spenser, Camden and others by Keating.
[37] On the 'Pembroke circle' and the Conquest of Ireland, see Davies, *The Isles*, pp. 291-96.

the Battle of Kinsale (1601).[38] In *Britannia*, a work whose descriptions of Ireland are informed by the work of Gerald of Wales, Camden's blatant demonization of 'the wild and native Irish' would provide a historiographical justification for Elizabethan policy in Ireland, including the eighth Baron Mountjoy's campaign of 'harrying the Irish countryside without mercy, burning crops, hanging rebels, razing villages, and praising God for his protection' in 1602 and 1603.[39]

Camden's damning caricatures of 'the wild Irish' approved the same imperialist historiography which Keating felt it was his duty to refute.[40] Supposedly disguising himself, he would travel out of the Glen of Aherlow to consult manuscripts and antiquities. Collating the contents of ancient vellums throughout Ireland, Keating shaped his Irish antidote to Anglocentric historiography while he was a fugitive. By engaging with the apologists of imperialism, his *History of Ireland* constitutes a necessary national argument about the nature of British identity. He attacks the myth of 'the wild Irish'—barbarians who, as Camden would have us believe, were still extant in 1607—and the imperialist agenda which it supports as the propaganda of mercenary Anglocentric historians. The productive tensions of Keating's argument emerge

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[38] On O'Neill's Rebellion, the battle at Kinsale and the Flight of the Earls, see Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, pp. 3-45. See also Davies, *The Isles*, pp. 409-411.

[39] Davies, *The Isles*, p. 411.

[40] 'But now take the observations of Mr. Good; in whose behalf I observe once and for all, that there is nothing in them malicious or partial, but all exactly true; and that they are only to be understood of the *wild and native Irish [*n.** And as these were, ann. 1607], who are as yet unciviliz'd, as living in the remoter parts of the Kingdom. [. . .] As for the rest, who inhabit the English Pale (as they call it,) they are not defective in any point of civility or good breeding; which they owe to the English Conquest: and much happier would it have been for the whole Island, had they not been blinded with a stubborn conceit of their own Customs, in opposition to much better. But the Irish are so wedded to those, that they not only retain 'em themselves, but corrupt the English among them; and it is scarce credible how soon these will degenerate: Such a proneness there is in human nature, to grow worse' (Camden, *Britannia*, II, pp. 1422-23).

in the way that he emphasises Ireland's freedom from Roman occupation, celebrating its independence from Britain until the time of the Anglo-Norman invasion.[41] It is indicative of the odds against Irish historiography itself that the original Irish text of Keating's *History of Ireland* was only available in manuscript copies until the twentieth century.[42]

When Dermot O'Connor published his English translation of Keating, *The General History of Ireland* (London: B. Creake, 1723), it was greeted by controversy. In fairness to his critics, it is at times a very free translation, making imaginative departures from Keating's original. An anonymous critic levelled the following condemnation at O'Connor:

> [T]he Accounts given, not only of the *Irish* Transactions then, but before and after, are very imperfect, and deserve to be corrected and supply'd; especially now, when fresh Endeavours are on foot to impose upon the World in a grosser manner, by an *English* Version of Doctor *Keating*'s pretended History, which is getting ready for the Press. Concerning which, I shall, for the sake of Truth, and in Vindication of the real Antiquities of that Nation, (without any other View or Design whatsoever) venture to say that it will not at all answer the Character, given it in late Advertisements; as being, for the most part, an heap of insipid, ill-digested Fables, and the rest but very indifferently handled. The Owner of the Copy (for the Original belongs to the Lord Baron of *Cabir* in *Ireland*) assumes the Name of an *Irish* Antiquary, which (for I ought to know) he could make some Claim or Title to: tho' I verily believ'd there was none of that sort remaining in the Country. [. . .] But if reading and writing alone be sufficient to make an Antiquary, modestly speaking, there are three Parts of four, of the People in Great Britain, Antiquaries too; and so in the same Proportion in other Kingdoms.[43]

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[41] 'The ideology of the Counter-Reformation, absorbed through the channels set up to Catholic Europe, would help to change this; by mid-century a fusion of Catholicism and patriotism was evident in the work of intellectuals like Keating. Whether this can be called 'nationalism' remains debatable. The work of Keating and others was a response to the need to make sense of what had happened in Ireland; [. . .] His *Foras Feasa* takes its place with the outpouring of contemporary Irish hagiographies and annals as "a monument to a doomed civilization", as a contradiction of the anti-Irish works of Spenser, Moryson and Davies, and as a political tract. In Irish life, historiography and poetry did the duty of political manifestos and would continue to do so' (Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, p. 43).

[42] *Foras Feasa ar Éirenn* was translated into English by Dermot O'Conor, published as *The General History of Ireland* (London: B. Creake, 1723), followed by a second edition (Westminster: B. Creake, 1726) which was later reprinted without a named publisher (London, 1732). According to James Lydon, O'Connor's translation was published in Dublin in 1717, but he gives no reference or details (*The Making of Modern Ireland*, p. 251). An Irish edition of Dermot O'Connor's translation of Keating was published (Dublin, 1723) without a publisher's name on the imprint.

[43] This quotation is taken from the anonymous 'Dissertation' which prefaces *Memoirs of the Right Honourable the Marquis of Clanricarde* (London, 1722), pp. cxviii-cxix. It will be discussed in

The distinction made here between 'the Original' and 'the Copy', not to mention the qualification regarding 'Doctor *Keating's* pretended History', are intended to undermine the authority of Dermot O'Connor's translation as well as the authenticity of Gaelic mythology itself. This anonymous critic is not only censorious about Dermot O'Connor's credentials as an antiquary, he is also dismissive of the nature of the Irish past represented in the work of Keating, which is redolent of the Irish language and the traditions of Catholicism. The objectivity of this anonymous critic is compromised by his repeated appeals to the authority of the Protestant historian and Archbishop James Ussher, a prodigious myth-maker who had calculated the date of Creation at 4004 BC and claimed that the Protestant Church of Ireland had survived in an unbroken chain of succession from the 'pure' Church of St. Patrick.[44] Ussher's fabrications were widely accepted as historical facts by British Protestants. In this sense, myth and fable were less peripheral to Britain's cultural assimilation of Ireland than Ussher's followers might care to admit. Keating's alternative narrative of Irish history was an anti-narrative to the Protestant myth-making of Britishness.

Keating's story illustrates the wider circumstances which led to the scarcity of printed texts in the Irish language. Apparently putting this dearth of Irish scholarship down to Irish laziness or truculence, Johnson's correspondence with O'Connor seems ill-informed about the practical effects in Ireland of British discrimination against Catholicism. The scarcity of texts in the Irish language can

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greater detail later in this chapter. In the *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Library*, Robin Flower attributes the Dissertation from which the above quotation is taken to 'Thomas Sullevane, *Esq.*'; see below.

[44] Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, p. 49.

be traced in part to Cromwell's Irish campaign of 1649. 'Despite centuries of English efforts to extend the use of the English language in Ireland', writes Brian Ó Cuív, 'the end of the sixteenth century had seen Irish in common use everywhere, even in Dublin'.[45] By the beginning of the eighteenth century, however, this situation had dramatically changed. No one tried harder to extirpate Catholicism and the Irish language than Oliver Cromwell. In the fabled manner of Saint Patrick's banishing of the snakes, Cromwell considered it his duty to drive Catholicism out of Ireland. 'When Cromwell departed in 1649', writes Norman Davies, 'Ireland lay bleeding, prostrate, and paralysed. He left his deputies with the task of confiscating all Catholic land, converting the Irish to the Protestant faith and deporting all rebels to the colonies'.[46]

It was clear in 1641 that Ireland could no longer be referred to in monolithic terms as a Catholic nation. In November of that year, rebellion erupted in the Ulster Plantation, fuelled not only by tensions between Protestant and Catholic communities, but also between Royalists and Parliamentarians, the Old and New English, Scots settlers and Irish Catholic gentry, all of whom had their own ideas about the definition of nationhood. The expansion of the Rebellion of 1641 precipitated a cycle of violence which would culminate in Cromwell's Irish campaign in 1649. Between the effects of famine, Civil War and systematic dispossession of Catholics, the statistics of this decade are staggering. 'Forty percent of Ireland's population had died since 1641. Eighty per cent of the land found its way into Protestant ownership compared to half that

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[45] 'Irish language and literature, 1691-1845', in *A New History of Ireland*, 10 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), IV, pp. 374-423 (p. 374).
[46] Davies, *The Isles*, p. 497.

proportion ten years earlier. Hundreds were executed.'[47] Throughout the violent upheaval of colonisation, processes of cultural assimilation and resistance were irrevocably set in motion which relegated a 'pure' Ireland or England to mythical status. In terms of conquest, assimilation and 'a union of manners', the proliferation of Britishness had been well underway in Ireland since the days of Spenser.[48]

'Cromwell to this day is a dominant figure in the popular mythology of Ireland', writes James Lydon, adding that he 'left an imprint on the Irish imagination which has never been exorcized'.[49] Upon his arrival in Dublin, he proclaimed that he would restore the 'barbarous and bloodthirsty Irish' to their 'former happiness and tranquillity'.[50] He slaughtered all who crossed his path in a matter of nine months; it was a 'peace and tranquillity' such as Ireland had never experienced. In their wholesale destruction of church organs, Cromwell's men set about destroying all harps which they could lay their hands on. They 'broke all the harps they could find', notes Grattan Flood, who observes that the historian Archdeacon Lynch (c.1599-c. 1673) 'was of the opinion that within a short time scarce a single instrument would be left in Ireland'.[51] The harp, traditional

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[47] Davies, *The Isles*, p. 501. James Lydon notes the following: 'According to Sir William Petty, the famous cartographer who was responsible for the Down Survey, 616,000 had been lost out of a population of 1, 466,000 and these for the most part were Irish Catholics. Of the 850,000 remaining in 1652, something like 160,000 were Protestant. [. . .] Altogether nearly half of Ireland was confiscated by the English parliament and all of this was transferred from Catholic into Protestant ownership. Thus, at one swoop, Protestant control of most of the land of Ireland would be established' (*The Making of Ireland*, pp. 193-94).

[48] 'And therefore now, since Ireland is full of her owne nation, that ought not to be rooted out, and somewhat stored with English already, and more to be, I thinke it best by a union of manners, and conformity of mindes, to bring them to be one people, and put away the dislikefull conceipt both of the one, and the other, which will be by no meanes better then by this intermingling of them' (Spenser, *View of the State of Ireland*, p. 239).

[49] Lydon, *The Making of Ireland*, p. 191.

[50] Quoted by Lydon in *The Making of Ireland*, pp. 191-92.

[51] Flood, *A History of Irish Music*, p. 200.

instrument of the bards, had become a reviled symbol of Irish resistance to the Protestant mythology of Britishness.

The legislative means by which this resistance was broken down may be identified as the 'Penal Laws', a term that Dryden uses disapprovingly in his Preface to *Religio Laici* (1682) – a few years prior to his own conversion to Catholicism.[52] These laws have a particular significance in Britain's cultural assimilation of Ireland. Ideologically, Penal Laws are defined by their imperative to eradicate Catholicism, freeing the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland from the supposed evils of Popery. It is difficult to determine when the Penal Laws first came into to effect in Ireland, yet it would be naïve to argue that such systematic discrimination against Irish Catholics had to be formalised in writing before it was practised. There is a marked continuum in this type of discriminatory legislation since the age of Spenser. As Patrick J. Corish notes:

> [W]ith the suspension of the activities of the high court of justice in 1654 it became more or less settled policy that the catholic priests should be exiled. The priests do not appear to have gone as readily as the soldiers, although on 6 January 1653 the commissioners of parliament ordered that any priest who had agreed to go but had delayed his departure for more than twenty days, or who had gone but had returned from exile, was to be subject to the penalties of the English statute of 1585 (27 Eliz. I, c. 2), which had made a catholic priest guilty of treason by the very fact of his presence in the country, and made it a felony to harbour and assist him.[53]

Although they were not always comprehensively enforced, the introduction of Penal Laws in Ireland can be traced at least as far back as the reign of Elizabeth.[54]

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[52] See the discussion of Dryden's *Religio Laici* and *The Hind and the Panther* in Chapter Four of this thesis.

[53] 'The Cromwellian regime, 1650-60', in *A New History of Ireland*, III, pp. 353-86 (pp. 382-83).

[54] 'Everyone knows very well the many and rigorous laws, which, from the time of Queen Elizabeth to the present, have always been passed by the Parliaments of this Kingdom against the Roman Catholics, and that all of them are in force; and thus it only remains to discover if the Government carries them out'; see 'Account of the State in which the Roman Catholics Exist at Present in Regard to the Exercise of their Religion in these three Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland' (1710), in Williams, *The Eighteenth-Century Constitution*, pp. 340-41 (p. 340).

The specific effects of this body of legislation on printing, publishing and literary culture represents an under-researched field in Irish history; the present enumeration in this chapter is illustrative rather than comprehensive.

'It is generally assumed that the Penal laws did not begin to operate to the intellectual ruin of the Irish until the eighteenth century', writes Douglas Hyde (1860-1947), Professor of Modern Irish at the National University of Ireland and President of Ireland.[55] He continues:

> But, in truth, the paths of learning and progress were largely barred by them after the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Already, as early as 1615, King James had issued a commission to inquire into the state of education in Ireland, and the celebrated Ussher, then Chancellor of St. Patrick's, was placed at the head of it. [. . .] Ussher appears to have shut up remorselessly the native schools wherever he found them, on the ground that the teachers did not conform to the established religion [. . .].[56]

There were already many laws on the statute books which 'the celebrated Ussher' could use to enforce the closure of 'the native schools', the same body of laws which had been used to silence Keating and drive him into hiding. It was in the interest of James Ussher (d. 1656) to do so, because he is credited with 'laying the foundations for an anglican view of Irish history'.[57] After defeating the army of James II in Ireland's Battle of the Boyne (1 July 1690), a battle not only between the possessor of the British throne and the dispossessed, but also between the forces of Reformation and Counter-Reformation, William III needed to consolidate his political support among Irish Protestants by taking steps to prevent future Jacobite risings.[58] Therefore, the beginning of the Penal Age is

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[55] See Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, p. 448-49.
[56] Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland*, p. 554.
[57] James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh (1625-56), antiquarian and historian; T. W. Moody, 'Introduction: Early Modern Ireland', in *A New History of Ireland*, III, pp. xxxix-lxiii (p. lvi).
[58] '[William III] saw that the co-operation of the Irish protestants was not to be had without some concession to their fears and prejudices, and he decided that the price must be paid. When a new

often attributed to the reign of William and Mary. 'The basis of [the Irish] ascendancy was established during the reigns of William and Anne by a series of penal laws designed to keep catholics in a state of powerless subordination'.[59]

The 'popery act' of 1704 abolished land ownership among Irish Catholics, devastating not only the remainder of the old aristocracy, but also the Gaelic language, literature and bardic culture which it supported.[60] While other Penal Laws effected a general erosion of the Old English and Old Irish aristocracy through property divestiture, the 'Schism Act' of 1714 abolished public or private teaching without a government licence. This licence was conditional upon taking the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy. Having received it, religious instruction was then limited to 'the catechism set forth in the book of common prayer', and perhaps most devastating to the Gaelic language, the Act stated explicitly that 'reading, writing, arithmetic or mathematical learning shall be taught in the *English* language only'.[61]

By its association with Catholicism, Gaelic Ireland was brought to the verge of extinction by the Penal Laws.[62] Few institutions were more thoroughly

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parliament met in 1695 it was presented with two measures calculated to please protestant opinion: a bill prohibiting the sending of children abroad to be educated, and a bill for the disarming of papists, both of which were readily passed. The same parliament, in its session of 1697, passed an act banishing all Roman Catholic bishops and regular clergy. [. . .] Thus within a decade of the Boyne, the character of the new protestant ascendancy had declared itself. The era of the penal laws had begun'; see J.C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland 1603-1923* (London: Faber and Faber, 1966), pp. 151-52.

[59] Simms, *A New History of Ireland*, IV, p. 1.

[60] 'The "popery act" of 1704 [2 Anne, c.6] was a formidable blow to catholic property-owners. It prohibited a catholic from buying land or from leasing it for more than thirty-one years; a lease had to be at a rent of at least two-thirds the yearly value. At his death his estate had to be gavelled, that is, divided among all his sons, unless the eldest turned protestant, in which case he got the whole estate' (Simms, *A New History of Ireland*, IV, p. 19).

[61] See E. Neville Williams, 'The Church', in *The Eighteenth-Century Constitution 1688-1815: Documents and Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), pp. 325-82 (pp. 337-40).

[62] 'Though there were some protestant landlords and protestant scholars who interested themselves in Irish antiquities and the Irish language, it was among the Roman Catholic masses

extirpated by the effects of this legislation than the bardic schools, which depended not only on the patronage of the Catholic aristocracy but teaching in the Gaelic language. As noted above, Spenser argues that the bards were mere composers of fictional histories; but as is evident from Geoffrey of Monmouth to Gerald of Wales to Spenser himself, it is debatable whether authentic originals are required, or efficacious, in the fabrication of national histories and identities. And historicity itself provided no protection in 1649 against Cromwell's authority. Interestingly, Cromwell enforced the closure of the bardic schools. They are generically referred to throughout bardic literature itself as 'the schools'.[63]

The bardic schools were not formally constituted institutions, nor were they modelled after universities in England or the Continent; they existed primarily in the figure of the *ollamh*, or chief bard, rather than in lecture halls and libraries. A hereditary profession, bards composed their poetry for the pleasure and edification of the Gaelic aristocracy; essentially, it was produced by aristocrats, for aristocrats. 'It is not probable that we shall ever discover the origins of the bardic schools', writes Daniel Corkery, but he contends that there are endless 'references to the schools' in Gaelic literature.[64] Consequently, almost all of the evidence for the existence of bardic schools is internal to the

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that the tradition of Gaelic culture survived. But though it survived, it underwent a transformation, for it lost the aristocratic patronage on which it had formerly flourished. The older nobility and gentry, Gaelic and Anglo-Norman, had been almost extinguished by the Revolution settlement. Of those that remained, some sank under the pressure of penal laws' (J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland*, p. 186).

[63] See Douglas Hyde, *A Literary History of Ireland*, ed. by Brian Ó Cuív, 2nd edn (London and New York: Ernest Benn and Barnes & Noble, 1967), pp. 514-38 (p. 524).

[64] See 'The Bardic Schools' in Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland*, 2nd edn (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1925), pp. 59-89; p. 62, p. 65.

bardic tradition itself, placing issues of their authenticity at a potentially irresolvable cultural crux between Irish and British historiography.

In his landmark study, Osborn Bergin points out two important accounts of bardic schools in the English language, one of which is Martin's *Description of the Western Isles of Scotland* (1703), a text which Samuel Johnson had loved since his father presented him with it as a boy, and which he later carried on his journey to Scotland with Boswell.[65] The 'best description of a Bardic School or College', writes Bergin, 'is in the *Memoirs of the Marquis of Clanricarde*, published in 1722', but the authorship and authenticity of this account are problematic.[66] Robin Flower contends that the editor of the *Memoirs of the Marquis of Clanricarde,* as well as the author of its remarkable one hundred and eighty-four page 'Dissertation', is one Thomas Sullevane, an Irish antiquarian about whom few facts are known.[67] Although this description of life within a bardic school, which Flower attributes to Sullevane, does contain fascinating detail, it is definitely an eighteenth-century composition which, no matter how well informed by antiquarian knowledge, must be regarded as an imaginative

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[65] Osborn Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry,* p. 5. Johnson's enjoyment of Martin is recounted by Boswell as follows: 'The mention of this gentleman [Sir James Macdonald] led us to talk of the Western Islands of Scotland, to visit which he expressed a wish that then appeared to me a very romantick fancy, which I little thought would be afterwards realized. [Johnson] told me, that his father had put Martin's account of those islands into his hands when he was very young, and that he was highly pleased with it' (*Life of Johnson*, I, p. 450).

[66] Osborn Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry,* p. 5. The text to which Bergin refers is the introductory essay to the anonymous MEMOIRS *of the Right Honourable the Marquis of* Clanricarde, *Lord Deputy General of* Ireland. *Containing Several Original Papers and Letters of King* Charles *II, Queen Mother, the Duke of* York, *the Duke of* Lorrain, *the Marquis of* Ormond, *Archbishop of* Tuam, *Lord Viscount* Taaffe, *&c. relating to the Treaty between the Duke of* Lorrain *and the* Irish *Commissioners, from* February *1650, to* August *1653. Published from his Lordship's original MSS. To which is prefix'd a* DISSERTATION *wherein some passages of these* Memoirs *are illustrated. With a digression concerning the antiquities of* Ireland. (London: James Woodman, 1722).

[67] See Flower's comments on Sullevane in the *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Library*, ed. by Standish Hayes O'Grady and Robin Flower, 3 vols (London: Trustees of the

reconstruction of an idealised bardic past.[68] The extensive scope of this scholarly 'Dissertation' is too wide to be accommodated by this chapter, but the *Memoirs of the Marquis of Clanricarde* does deserve consideration in its entirety as an introduction for learned eighteenth-century Britons to some of the complexities of Irish history, including the British politics of the bard.

The poetry produced by 'the schools' is characterised by metrical complexity, highly compressed language and 'one standard literary dialect, which remained almost unchanged for five hundred years'.[69] The *ollamh*, or *ollave*, was the chief bard and master of each school, and his students were born into their profession, the hereditary office of the bard. 'The ollaves were the subtlest of grammarians; they were not excelled in the passion for exactitude and for erudition by the scholars of the Classical revival of learning', but the middle of the seventeenth century saw the end of this traditional education.[70] Mastery of Latin was an essential element of the curriculum. In his comments on the poignant seventeenth-century poem 'The Empty School', Bergin remarks that in Ireland the 'last of the bardic schools are said to have closed about 1641. By that time the old profession of poet and man of letters in the traditional style had come to an end'.[71] There are many poetic examples of the break-up of the bardic order, such as the following seventeenth-century verses from 'The Passing of the Order' (c. 1630):

British Museum, 1926-53), III, pp. 15-17. Interestingly, the name 'Thomas Sullevane, *Esq.*' occurs on the subscription list at the beginning of the *Memoirs*.

[68] This description of the bardic schools is counterbalanced with a robust scholarly debate about the authenticity of Dermot O'Conor's forthcoming translation of Keating.

[69] Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, p. 13.

[70] de Blácam, *Gaelic Literature Surveyed,* p. 89.

[71] Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, p. 159.

> Alas for him who has followed his family profession: it has befallen Banbha of the fresh soft surface that in Ireland's cool green field one's father's natural calling is not the best.
>
> It has come to them, north and south, that the poetic order cannot speak of their father's produce: let us set about a change of work.
>
> One must not spin the threads of lore; one must not follow up the branches of kinship; one must not weave the artistry of lyrics; poetry should not be spoken of.
>
> The first man that professed poetry – alas that he did not find a substitute: the dignity he loved was transient; your arts are a reproach to the scholar.
>
> Alas that the fosterer in lore did not teach the breaking of steeds, or the steering of ships, or the yoking of ploughs behind oxen, to the man who composed lays.
>
> Woe to the scholar who knows not some craft that would be no cause of censure, that he might join timbers, or shape a vat, ere he attained the service of learning.[72]

Some idea of bardic poetry can be had from this excerpt. Even in translation, the economy and cadence of its understatement is powerful, adding nobility to the end of a civilisation which is compressed into the simple phrase, 'let us set about a change of work'. The bards have fallen into neglect and even 'censure', their ancient craft is now perceived as 'transient'. The fate of 'the schools' and the bardic tradition was apparently sealed.

The effects of military and legislative conquest on Irish historiography and cultural identity may be seen in the original suppression of Keating's iconic text, *Foras Feasa ar Éirenn.* Interestingly, many scholars believe that prior to his studies in France for the priesthood, Keating himself had been educated in the bardic schools.[73] Under such conditions, Johnson's complaints to O'Connor

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[72] Verses 1-6; for a complete transcription of the original Gaelic text, with translation and notes, see Bergin, *Irish Bardic Poetry*, pp. 120-21, pp. 266-68.

[73] This point about Keating's bardic education in 'a Seminary or School for *Irish* Poetry' is made in the 'Dissertation' (1722), (pp. cxxv-cxxvi). Daniel Corkery writes that the 'bardic schools, with their deep-rooted feeling for Latin, if not also for Greek, then found themselves, shattered and changed though they were, gradually called on to fulfil a new purpose: in the penal days they became the unofficial seminaries of the Church [. . .] It was a good thing, in the end, for the Church that its future priests, while they sat learning their Greek and Latin, should become at the same time saturated with the Gaelic learning which still, as always, held first place in the affections of the schools. [. . .] The number of priests who were themselves poets is very striking:

about access to books written in the Irish language comes into clearer focus. 'The Penal Laws should be related to the anti-Jacobite paranoia of the early eighteenth century, which helps to explain their relaxation after the failure of 1745', writes R. F. Foster, yet the members of the Irish Parliament, who remained 'fiercely conscious of the forfeitures on which their property was based', were far more resolute about keeping them on the statute books than were the British government.[74] These laws had always helped to galvanise certain Irish communities into a mindset of cultural resistance.

The effects of the Penal Laws had blighted Irish literature, creating a formative break with its past traditions. Micheál Coimín (1688-1760) was born and raised in this cultural landscape.[75] As a relatively wealthy Protestant family, the Coimíns enjoyed more immunity to the privations of life than most of their Catholic neighbours. It is curious that the Coimíns, said by some to have 'descended from the famous Scottish house of Comyn', had their lands confiscated during the Civil Wars.[76] The poet's father, Patrick Coimín, was dispossessed of his estate by the Commonwealth, but following the Restoration he was granted a substantial landed property in County Clare.[77] It was at this new family home in Kilcorcoran in the parish of Kilfarboy that Micheál Coimín was

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Keating, that great soul, is now remembered as a poet and historian rather than as a priest' (*The Hidden Ireland*, pp. 92-3).

[74] Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*, pp. 205-06.

[75] Flower gives 1676-1760 as Coimín's lifespan; see *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Library*, II, p. 192.

[76] de Blácam, *Gaelic Literature Surveyed*, p. 324. On the relationship between the names Coimín and Comyn, see Edward MacLysaght, *Irish Families: Their Names, Arms and Origins*, 4th edn. (Dublin: Academic Press, 1985). Cited hereafter as *Irish Families*.

[77] For brief lives of Comyn, see Daniel Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland: A Study of Gaelic Munster in the Eighteenth Century*, 2nd edn (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1925), pp. 290-98; Aodh de Blácam, *Gaelic Literature Surveyed*, 2nd edn (Dublin: The Talbot Press, 1973), pp. 323-27; Brian Cleeve, *Dictionary of Irish Writers: Volume Three* (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1971); Henry Boylan, *A Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1979).

born. A wealthy member of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy, Micheál Coimín represents an intriguing set of contradictions: he was a Protestant, yet he composed his poetry in Irish. Adding further complexity to his personality, he sympathised with the Jacobite cause.

Even wealthy Anglo-Irish Protestants like Coimín felt the encroachments of the British polity. His Jacobite sympathies, love of the Irish language and affection for Gaelic ballads may be seen as a response to Ireland's wider negotiations with Britishness. Coimín's friend Aindrias Mac Cruitín (d. 1738), a professional poet, scribe and teacher in County Clare, had prophesied an 'invasion' of Ireland which would reputedly take place in 1755.[78] Mac Cruitín may have been thinking wistfully of King James II landing with high expectations at Kinsale in March 1689. Although Mac Cruitín's *aisling*, or vision, might be interpreted as a projection of similar hopes upon the Young Pretender for a more successful expedition, he did not live, as Coimín did, to witness the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 or the Battle of Culloden (1746).

Building upon his friend's vision, Coimín composed the unnamed Jacobite song which has been catalogued in the British Museum by Robin Flower (see note 77). The evidence for his Jacobite sympathies extends beyond the composition of this Gaelic song. 'His son Michael Comyn (b. 1704), emigrated to France where he was accepted as one of the nobility of France', writes Edward Mac Lysaght, 'and his grandson, John Francis Comyn (1742-93), was guillotined

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[78] On Mac Cruitín's prophesy and the Jacobite song which Coimín based upon it, see Robin Flower's commentary in *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum*, II, pp. 192-93. Unfortunately, the *Catalogue* does not supply the text of either Mac Cruitín's or Coimín's poem. I have not been able to read them separately or together.

as an aristocrat during the French Revolution'.[79] These connections to France are suggestive of something more than sentimental Jacobitism. In the 1750s, Jacobitism was still alive in the halls and streets of Oxford, as it was in the homes and lanes of County Clare.[80] Daniel Corkery writes that Coimín died fifteen years after the '45, 'in a period when everything Gaelic was decried as savouring of rebellion'. He continues:

> Protestants, naturally, were more conscious of the anti-Gaelic atmosphere than Catholics; Coimín's son, Edward, who seems to have been of the wreckless type of Anglo-Irishman, breathed in this after-war bitterness, and, ashamed of being the son of a Gaelic poet, went and burned all the manuscripts he could find in his father's house! In this way is explained why so small a bulk of poetry remains after Micheál Coimín.[81]

Coimín's Jacobitism was sufficient to make his son nervous about his Gaelic papers and manuscripts. Whether or not Edward was literate in the Irish language, he would have had some awareness of his own father's Jacobite sympathies. But his reported action says something important about the changing status of Irish originals.

Somewhat like the harp or the bard in the age of Cromwell, the Irish manuscript itself had been ideologically transformed into a reviled source of spurious national origins. As Ireland and Britain become intermixed and entwined, cultural compression occurs when inscrutable Irish originals and British imperialism dispute each other's version of history. A mythical 'centre', London, attempts to define itself through inventing polities of manners, taste and politeness, then asserts its superiority in these matters over the provincial margins

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[79] MacLysaght, *Irish Families*, p. 66.
[80] On Jacobitism in Oxford during the 1750s, see Chapter Three of this thesis.
[81] Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland*, p. 292. 'After his death his son Edward, entirely a squireen [sic] and with none of his father's love of Irish culture, burned his father's manuscripts, considering

of the national map, such as Ireland; consequently, a Gaelic community becomes defined by its resistance to this external oppression. This kind of conflict is central to the idea of Britishness, which overall is not a finely-crafted discourse, but a chaotic haggling session over the cultural terms of empire. Without this contested ground between England and Ireland, fought not least by churchmen and politicians as well as historians and poets, Keating's *History of Ireland* would probably not exist.

By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the culture which sustained conventional bardic literature had already been decimated. Without patronage or schools, Gaelic literature was set adrift from its past; the erudite profession of bardic poetry gave way to more popularly accessible forms such as the *laoidh,* or 'lay'. 'Both ballad and speech-poem are in Irish known as *laid* (Modern Irish *laoidh*)', Knott and Murphy write, and they illustrate the crucial part which it plays in the development of 'the Romantic cycle' of Ossianic lore.[82] In this Gaelic mythology, Oisín is a heroic warrior-bard, one of the sons of Fionn Mac Cumhaill (literally 'Fair One, son of Cumhall'), leader of the mighty band of professional warriors, or *fiana*. Recounting their lives and adventures, the Fionn cycle developed over many centuries. 'We may take the cycle as having reached maturity when Keating wrote his history, three hundred years ago', writes Aodh de Blácam.[83]

In *Foras Feasa ar Éirenn*, Keating was self-consciously mixing myth with history; compiling the *disjecta membra* which he recovered in his

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them evidence of treasonable thinking, or at least weak-mindedness, and therefore only a handful of Micheál Coimín's work survives' (Cleeve, *Dictionary of Irish Writers: Volume Three*, p. 29).

[82] Knott and Murphy, *Early Irish Literature*, p. 158; p. 178.

[83] de Blácam ,*Gaelic Literature Surveyed*, p. 58.

archaeological researches through unknown quantities of Gaelic manuscripts, he felt no need to apologise for recovering what he understood as the totality of Irish cultural memory. As he understood it, this totality included both mythical and actual pasts: 'Know, O reader, that it is not as genuine history I set down this occupation, nor any occupation which I have treated up to this; but because I have found them written in old books'.[84] While it is true that the cycle may have 'reached maturity' by the time that it was recapitulated by Keating, it was not yet finished. Ossianic lore has been shaped into a cohesive unity by literary historians, an appearance of continuity achieved through processes of revision which continued into the eighteenth century and beyond.[85] It is in this context that we may approach the *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth.*

The *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth* represents a bridge between the faltering sense of Gaeldom after Culloden and the mythological past represented in the Fionn cycle. It has been proposed that Coimín's ballad reached the Western Islands and the Highlands, which suggests a sense of Gaelic community in Great Britain; but such claims are a product of the renaissance in Gaelic scholarship caused by Macpherson's Ossianic poetry, and they should therefore be regarded with some scepticism as part of a wider contest between Ireland and Scotland

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[84] Geoffrey Keating, *Foras Feasa ar Éirenn: The history of Ireland; by Geoffrey Keating, D. D.*, ed. with translation and notes by David Comyn and Patrick S. Dinneen, 4 vols (London: Published for the Irish Texts Society by D. Nutt, 1902-14), I, p. 147.

[85] 'Down to the middle of the last century the Ossianic cycle retained its sway over the native literary class; the tales were continually being re-worked over and remodelled, and a certain amount of fresh invention, on the lines and in accord with the spirit of the older legend, took place. Thus the well-known poem of Ossian in Tir na n-Og (the Land of Youth) is undoubtedly the composition of the eighteenth-century poet Michael Comyn'; see Alfred Nutt, *Popular Studies in Mythology Romance & Folklore: No. 3, Ossian and the Ossianic Literature,* 2nd edn (London: David Nutt, 1910), p. 38.

over oral tradition and the ownership of the authentic originals.[86] Although the *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth* 'appears to be an old tale, we possess it only in a modern poem'; some critics, such as Eleanor Hull quoted here, appear anxious to concede that the 'original' of this romantic Ossianic ballad is none other than Coimín's imagination, as though to do so would be to diminish it or to forsake a 'purer' source.[87] The exact date of its composition is difficult to determine because Irish texts could not be printed domestically, owing to continuing Penal Laws against teaching and learning the Irish language, but 1750 is conventionally accepted as the approximate date.[88] It then circulated in manuscript and by oral tradition alone for the next hundred years.

The first printed English translation of *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth* did not appear until 1859, 'so difficult was it to get anything published in the Irish language'.[89] The poem is framed as a dialogue in which Oisín relates his adventures in Tír na n-Óg to Saint Patrick, placing it in a semi-historical, fifth-century context. It is important to note that the dialogue between Oisín and Saint Patrick is not Coimín's own invention, but a ubiquitous trope in Irish literature. Flannery's edition of the poem is comprised of 600 lines, written in the form of

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[86] The relationship of Coimín's poem to Macpherson's poetry will be addressed in the following chapter of this thesis.

[87] Eleanor Hull, *A Text Book of Irish Literature*, 2 vols (Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son and London: David Nutt, 1910), I, p. 125.

[88] For example, see the Schism Act (1714) discussed above, especially the emphasis of the final article, XIII: '[. . .] Be it therefore enacted [. . .] That all [. . .] the remedies, provisions, and clauses, in and by this act [. . .] shall attend to *Ireland*, in as full and effectual manner, as if Ireland had been expressly named and mentioned in all and every the clauses [sic] in this act' (Williams, *The Eighteenth-Century Constitution*, pp. 337-40; p. 340).

[89] The *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth*, trans. by Tomás Ó Flannghaile [Thomas Flannery] (London: City of London Book Depot and Dublin: M.H. Gill & Son, 1896), p. x. All citations refer to this edition of the poem, cited hereafter as Thomas Flannery. The original English version to be published appeared in *Transactions of the Ossianic Society*, IV (Dublin: John O'Daly, 1859), pp. 227-80, translated by Brian O'Looney. Notably O'Looney chose to render his translation in prose, rather than the Ossianic stanza of the Gaelic original. The disparity between

the Ossianic stanza.[90] He states in his critical introduction that 'to translate a poem merely word for word, is I hold nothing less than a *desecration*—it is treating it as a mere heap of words, or as a column of a dictionary—ignoring its chief value, namely, as *a piece of literature*'.[91] Yet the tensions between his literal and versified translations shows what a difficult task it is to convey Gaelic poetry in English. Oddly, Flannery's verse translation is full of hale and hearty chivalric imagery and pseudo-Arthurian idiom. In Britain and Ireland, literary conventions such as knights are decidedly post-Norman, and therefore have little place in the fifth-century Ireland of Saint Patrick. Although the poet's own version may not be entirely free of anachronisms, its cohesive vision is diminished somewhat by Flannery's pseudo-medieval verse translation, which suggests that he had a greater affinity for the likes of *Hardyknute* than for Coimín's original. Nevertheless, Coimín deliberately chose the Ossianic stanza as the form for the *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth*, so both Flannery's literal and verse translations of the text will be provided here.

In the opening scene of the ballad, the Fenians are hunting deer on the shores of Loch Lein, when they see a horse and rider coming towards them at great speed. This is the arrival of Niamh of the Head of Gold, the daughter of the King of Tír na n-Óg, or, the Land of Youth. She has crossed the Western ocean upon her magical horse in search of Oisín, the warrior-bard whose fame has

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Flannery's verse translation and the literal text suggests that O'Looney might have chosen the best route.

[90] The Ossianic stanza 'consist of four lines each generally of eight syllables, though occasionally one finds a line with an extra syllable, and sometimes on the other hand a six or seven-syllabled line. The second and fourth lines must rhyme or "assonate", the first and third need not, and rarely do. This however is but a small part of the scheme. The first line will also be found to assonate with some accented syllable in the second line(generally the fourth, sometimes the sixth syllable) and similarly the third line must assonate with an accented word or syllable in the middle of the fourth' (Thomas Flannery, pp. xiv-xv).

spread all the way to Tír na n-Óg. Niamh expresses her love for Oisín, asking him to return with her to the Land of Youth, where he will become her husband. But his father—the great hero Finn—is reluctant to lose his son to the enchanted world:

XXXIX.

Then up rose that steed with a mighty bound
Gave forth three sounding startling neighs,
His mane he shook, then with a fiery look
His riders he took to the sea's known ways.

[Then arose that steed with strength and when we reached the edge of the strand, he shook himself then for the journey and let forth three neighs aloud.]

XL.

Now when from Finn and the Fenian host
The steed to the coast was coursing so,
There burst forth from the chief a cry of grief
A wail of grief not brief nor low.

[When Finn and the Fenians saw the steed swiftly (going) in his course and turning his face to the strong sea, they uttered three cries of grief.]

XLI.

'Oh Oisín' cried Finn with faltering voice—
'My son most choice must I then lose,
With never a hope to see thee again?
—My heart in twain 'twill break and bruise!'

['Oh Oisin' said Finn weak and faint, 'my grief is that thou art going away, (leaving) me without a hope to see thee come back again to me all triumphant!']

XLII.

His noble features now clouded o'er
And tears did pour in showers free
Till breast and beard in tears were drowned—
'My grief! He e'er found this maid from the Sea!'

[His features and beauty changed and he let fall showers of tears, which drowned his bright face and bosom, and he said, 'My woe, O Oisín, thy going away from me!']

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[91] Thomas Flannery, p. xi.

The differences between the prose and verse translations are marked, as in the representation of Finn's grief. His tears in stanza XLII speak of emotional complexity as well as dignified restraint, and the literary influences of sensibility are in full view here in Coimín's composition. But the verse image of Finn's beard 'drowned' in tears distorts his eighteenth-century poetry of sensibility into a bathetic nineteenth-century parody of the genre. Watching his son climb onto the enchanted beast with Niamh, Finn cannot contain his feelings, because his son is now on a journey to immortality, yet when Oisín turns his back on this world, his father will lose him forever. In the literal translation of stanza XL, Finn cries out three times, echoing Niamh's horse; this tripling motif is a recurrent prosodic feature of this ballad. As expressed through these mythical figures, this scene strikes a balance between the joy of eternal paradise and the despair of life in Gaelic Ireland. It is a poignant example of a phrase James Macpherson would later coin: 'the joy of grief'.

This situation in which Ireland's brightest son leaves his family for the promise of happiness in a foreign land has a deep allegorical resonance. The English victory at Kinsale (1601), a formative end to Hugh O'Neill's great rebellion and a crushing blow to hopes for Irish independence, resulted in the exodus of nobility known as the Flight of the Earls.[92] Thereafter, this exodus of the children of the Gaelic aristocracy continued, known as 'the Flight of the Wild

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[92] 'This 'flight of the earls' marked the end of an era. [. . .] Their tragedy was personal. But Gaelic Ulster, abandoned by most of the traditional leaders, suffered more [. . .] It was a cultural disaster and the beginning of a process which was to drive the Gaelic tradition from its traditional, aristocratic fastness to a more popular level and end the endowments which had kept it alive from time immemorial' (James Lydon, *The Making of Ireland*, p. 161). Although this idea of 'time

Geese', in which they left for the Continent to be educated and to seek their future abroad, free from the segregated society created by the Penal Laws. This tradition survived until the days of Micheál Coimín himself. For as mentioned above, his own son left their home in County Clare to live among the French nobility.[93]

For the Fenians, Ireland itself is no longer a paradise; the ideal life exists elsewhere. The Land of Youth serves as a mythical reservoir of all the vitality which had begun to drain out Ireland since the defeat of O'Neill's rebellion at Kinsale. This disappearance of nobility, aristocracy and the disintegration of community parallels the vacuum left in Scotland when the Court of King James vacated Edinburgh for London.[94] As in Coimín's allegorical ballad, the Gaelic aristocracy of Ireland had vanished into an imagined world beyond the sea. Such absence is nowhere to be seen in the Land of Youth, a vibrant Gaelic community which has a king, court, feasting and a bardic culture at its eternal heart. Oisín rejoices with Niamh in the everlasting spring of Tír na n-Óg for a period which he later discovers to have been three hundred years. Although he greatly enjoys life in this land without age or disease, hunger or toil, Oisín cannot help but remember Finn and his home in Ireland. Against Niamh's wishes, he begs to ride home on the magic horse for a brief visit; she finally agrees, but gives him the following warning:

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immemorial' is deeply problematic, Lydon does draw attention to the transformation of Gaelic tradition from bardic into balladic poetry.

[93] Edward MacLysaght notes that 'descendants of the Wild Geese of the name [Comyn] were also enrolled among the nobility of Spain' (*Irish Families*, p. 66).

[94] For my discussion of this point, see chapter two of this thesis. The surrogate patronage of newly-revived Order of the Garter and myth-making such as *Hardyknute* were conceived to redress the void left by the permanent removal of the Scottish Court.

CXV.

'A third time now I thee implore
And beg thee sore thy seat to hold
Or else at once thy strength shall go,
And thou shalt grow both blind and old!'

['For the third time I say to thee, shouldst thou come off thy horse, that thou wilt be a blind, withered old man, without strength or spirit, unable to run or bound!']

CXVI.

''Tis woe for me, Oisín, to see
How thou canst be so anxious-soul'd
About green Erin, changed for aye—
For past's the day of the Fenians bold.'

['I think it woeful, dear Oisín, that thou shouldst ever go to green Erin again, she is not now as she was (of old) and thou never shalt see Finn of the hosts!']

CXII.

'In Erin green there's now nought seen
But priests full lean and troops of saints—
Then Oisín, here my kiss to thee,
Our last, may be—my heart—now faints!'

['Thou wilt not find now in Erin eastward (any) but fathers of orders and troops of saints—then beloved Oisín, here is my kiss to thee—to the Land of Youth, woe, woe! I fear thou never wilt return.']

Here, Coimín recognises the tensions between the idealised Erin preserved in Oisín's memory and the actual Erin encountered upon his return. Oisín rides home on Niamh's supernatural horse, only to find that all has changed, and that Finn is only a faded memory among a people no longer literate in bardic lore. He is told that: 'Many a book is there to be found amongst the sweet, melodious bards of the Gael, of which we could not easily tell thee—that speaks of the deeds of Finn and the Fenians'.[95]

[95] Thomas Flannery, literal translation of stanza CXXXII, p. 67.

In Coimín's day, to identify with Ireland's Gaelic past was to be at odds with the present; As Coimín well knew, bardic literature was not in a state of decline in the day of St. Patrick—the era in which he posits the return of Oisín from Tír na n-Óg. He is therefore clearly making an eighteenth-century comment on the popular decline of Gaelic language and bardic literature. Yet everywhere there are images of decline and of a people oppressed. One image of oppression in particular is directly linked to the undoing of Oisín. As he passes Glenasmole, he sees a large group of men straining beneath the weight of 'a great flag of marble', and some of the men 'who were down under the flag were being miserably crushed'.[96] The allegorical imagery of a nation being crushed under the weight of a giant load, perhaps a gravestone, speaks of the state of Irish Gaeldom in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Oisín's heroic stature is only too obvious to the dispirited labourers who are sinking to their graves, and one begs him to save them from being crushed. The mythical Oisín, long since departed to another land, returns to save the Irish in their time of need.

Taking pity on their desperate situation, he rides over and grasps the huge flag with one hand, hurling it many yards and rescuing the men who were being crushed to death beneath it. But with this mighty heave, the girth of his saddle breaks, and Oisín falls to the ground. He is instantly transformed into blind and helpless old man, capable only of lamenting his former glories in the Land of Youth, and with the Fenians, to Saint Patrick. The decline of the bardic order is emphasised several times in the poem, as is the case here when Oisín becomes reliant upon Saint Patrick for his daily bread: the church has become the sole

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[96] Thomas Flannery, literal translation of stanzas CXLI and CXLII, p. 72.

viable patron of Gaelic tradition.[97] This dissolution of patronage had not occurred in the fifth century, and did not become a reality until Geoffrey Keating's day, so that Coimín's narrative adopts an allegorical and trans-historical commentary on the dissolution of Gaelic heritage.

Whether we speak of individuals or communities, identity is always contingent in some degree upon memory. Seen in this way, the *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth* may be read as the apotheosis of bardic literature and the Gaelic vision of nationhood which it underwrites. It is signally a work of eighteenth-century Romanticism, shaped by anxieties about the disintegration of 'self'. The poem is formed by a prescient bardic vision of Gaelic Ireland's future subjugation, trapped under the 'flag' of empire; this premonition, projected onto the fifth century by Coimín, may be read as a sign of the cultural compression implicit in the spread of Britishness. In eighteenth-century Ireland, this compression can be seen in the rise of the popular ballad and the collapse of 'the schools', along with the elaborate traditions of the *fili* and the bard, which followed the systematic eradication of the Gaelic aristocracy. In their scholarly edition entitled *Early Irish Literature*, Eleanor Knott and Gerard Murphy acknowledge the importance of Coimín's work in this rise of the ballad and the overall scheme of Ossianic lore, yet they decline to pursue its significance in the wider scheme of Irish literature. They write that the 'further development of the

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[97] See Thomas Flannery, pp. 63-65: [CXXIV.] *Oisín*: If I could get abundance of bread, as I used to get at all times from Finn, I would pray to the King of Graces that thou mightst be saved for ever on account of it. [CXXV.] *Patrick*: Thou shalt have food and drink all unstinted from me—sweet to me the words of thy lips—continue thy story still for me.

Romantic cycle at the hands of eighteenth-century scholars such as Tadhg Ó Neachtain and Micheál Coimín lies outside the scope of this work'.[98]

Curiously, this claim about Coimín's 'development of the Romantic cycle' of Ossianic poetry has not been applied to a sustained analysis of the *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth.* Yet their comment illustrates how some have attempted to situate this remarkable ballad within a unified vision of Irish literary history. Coimín did not originate the idea that Oisín survived to relate the heroic deeds of the Fenians to Saint Patrick, but he may well have found inspiration in the writing of Keating, who in a critical discussion of Ireland before the Flood writes the following:

> I think there is nothing but a poetical romance in the history which would relate Fionntain to have lived before the deluge and after it. However, I do not say that there was not a very aged and wise man before the coming of Patrick to Ireland, and that he lived many hundred years, and that he related to Patrick everything which he remembered, and moreover every tradition which he had got from the ancestors concerning the times which had elapsed before him [. . .].[99]

This disclaimer is aimed at Gerald of Wales, whose prejudices and distortions had in Keating's view reduced Anglocentric perceptions of Irish historiography to infantilism and fable. Yet he clearly desires, as Coimín does, to illustrate a chain of succession between Fenian mythology and the Christian tradition of his own day. In *The Hidden Ireland,* Daniel Corkery has presented a sustained account of the *cúirt,* or Court of Poetry, which flourished throughout Munster in the wake of the 'immemorial' bardic schools.[100] As Corkery writes, the Gaelic poets of these Courts in Munster 'had no publishers, it must be recollected, no laws of copyright, no press, no printers: it was, therefore, in those Courts that

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[98] Knott and Murphy, *Early Irish Literature,* p. 178.
[99] Keating, *The History of Ireland,* I, p. 151; see pp. 147-55.

many a famous poem was heard for the first time. They thus had their "First nights," some of which must surely have been memorable', among which he lists Micheál Coimín's recitation of the *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth.*[101] Thus Corkery retrieves Gaelic continuity from the end of the bardic tradition by locating its survival in more accessible forms of poetry.

There is a sense of unrest among historians of Irish literature concerning epic poetry. Some describe Ireland's native epic tradition, while others wonder why it never came into existence. Much of this scholarly commentary involves 'the native epic, *Táin Bó Cuailgne* (The Cattle Raid of Cooley)', which at one point had been lost, and the 'original' reconstructed in the twelfth-century *Book of Leinster* then assimilated into the wider Red Branch Cycle. Notably, this was a period in which Irish historians were attempting to create continuity in a disordered literary canon.[102] This question of mastering the extant materials suggests potential problems of authenticity, for as a curious note appended to the *Book of Leinster* states, 'he is no *filí* who does not harmonize and synchronize all the stories'.[103] For Douglas Hyde, the *Táin Bó Cuailgne* does not qualify as an epic, representing instead a cycle of a more fragmented and mixed nature; however, he expresses concern that in Ireland the epic form did not develop out of the Ossianic lays:

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[100] See Corkery, 'The Court of Poetry', in *The Hidden Ireland*, pp. 90-125.
[101] Corkery, *The Hidden Ireland*, pp. 100-01.
[102] Knott and Murphy, *Early Irish Literature*, pp. 29, 155. Douglas Hyde notes an interesting account called the "Proceedings of the Great Bardic Institution", according to which the *Táin Bó Cualnge* 'was at one time lost, and the Great Bardic Institution was commanded to hunt for and recover it' (*Literary History of Ireland*, pp. 260, 399).
[103] *Duanaire Finn: The Book of the Lays of Fionn*, ed. by Eoin MacNeill and Gerard Murphy, 3 vols (London and Dublin: The Irish Texts Society, 1908-1953), I, pp. xxxviii-xxxix. Cited hereafter as *Duanaire Finn*. 'The *fili*, or man of letters, took rank according to the number of traditional stories at his command', MacNeill states (*Duanaire Finn*, pp. xxxviii-xxxix).

> It is very strange and very unfortunate that notwithstanding the literary activity of Gaelic Ireland before and during the penal times, no Keating, or Comyn [Coimín], or Curtin ever attempted to redact the Ossianic poems and throw them into that epic form into which they would so easily have fitted. These pieces appear to me of even greater value than the Red Branch sagas, as elucidating the natural growth and genesis of an epic, for the Irish progressed just up to the point of possessing a large quantity of stray material, minor episodes versified by anonymous long-forgotten folk-poets; but they never produced a mind critical enough to reduce this mass to order, coherence, and stability, and at the same time creative enough to supply the necessary lacunae.[104]

Hyde expresses regret that despite an ample supply of 'pieces', no one had yet resolved to 'throw them into that epic form'. But there is an uncanny similarity between this suggestion by Hyde and Addison's association of ballads with the epic tradition. As will be seen in the following chapter, these principles outlined by Addison and Hyde shaped Macpherson's popularisation of Ossianic poetry in the 1760s. But they also apply to the historiographical impetus behind *Duannaire Finn, or The Book of the Lays of Fionn.*[105] In a footnote, Hyde alludes to an unpublished 'seventeenth-century collection of Ossianic poems' of some ten thousand lines, held at the Franciscan Convent in Dublin, the same which would later be named *Duannaire Finn.*[106] This miscellany of Irish Ossianic poetry responds to the very absence of which Hyde complains, but the putative journey of this collection to Dublin is as entertaining as its provenance is problematic. The originals of the *Duannaire Finn* have been lost.

The *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth* holds a pivotal place in the history of Gaelic literature. Although an apparently modest and accessible poem, its Romantic vision bridges the gap between the Gaelic past and the Ireland of post-Union Great Britain. And if the poem itself has no epic pretensions, it serves as a

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[104] Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, p. 510.
[105] *Duanaire Finn: The Book of the Lays of Fionn*, ed. by Eoin MacNeill and Gerard Murphy, 3 vols (London and Dublin: The Irish Texts Society, 1908-1953).
[106] Hyde, *Literary History of Ireland*, p. 513, *n.* 1.

linchpin which holds together the chronology of what some historians of Irish literature described as the 'Fenian Epic Cycle'.[107] Aodh de Blácam states that the *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth* is the final Fenian composition, and includes it as one of his 'eight chief divisions' of what he characterises as an epic cycle.[108] Oisín's three-hundred-year stay in Tír na n-Óg creates a connection between the lost originals of pre-Christian Ireland and the scribes associated with the arrival of Saint Patrick. As is evident in the following account given to the Royal Society of London by the Welsh philologist and Oxford scholar Edward Lhuyd (1660-1709)—one which might have been of interest to Samuel Johnson—the survival of Gaelic culture was anything but secure:

> Near Larne in Antrim we met with one *Eoin Agniw*, whose Ancestors had been Hereditary Poets, for many Generations, to the Family of the *O Neals*; but the Lands they held thereby being taken away from his Father, he had forsaken the Muses and betaken himself to the Plow: So we made an easy Purchase of about a dozen Ancient Manuscripts on Parchment.
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> I have in divers Parts of the Kingdom pick'd up about 20 or 30 Irish Manuscripts on Parchment: But the ignorance of their Criticks is such, that tho' I consulted the chiefest of them, as *O Flaherty* (Author of the *Ogygia*) and several others, they could scarce interpret one Page of all my Manuscripts; and it is occasioned by the want of a Dictionary, which it seems none of their Nation ever took the trouble to compose. I was informed (but how truly I know not) they have lately printed one at the *Irish* College in *Lovain* [sic]; which if I could procure, I should not despair of being in a short time able to understand these Manuscripts; tho' many of them being but insignificant Romances, it would scarce quit the pains. [109]

Lhuyd's image of the 'Hereditary Poets' turning to the 'Plow' echoes the same kind of upheaval recorded in the bardic poem cited earlier in this chapter: 'let us set about a change of work'. Two of the 'insignificant Romances' which Lhuyd acquired during his travels in Ireland were 'the sole original manuscripts both of

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[107] See Eoin MacNeill's commentary in *Duanaire Finn*, I, xxiv.
[108] Aodh de Blácam, *A First Book of Irish Literature: Hiberno-Latin, Gaelic, Anglo-Irish, From the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (1934; repr. Port Washinton, N.Y. and London: Kennikat Press, 1970), pp. 61-65.
[109] Edward Lhuyd, in *The Philosophical Transactions, From the Year 1700 to the Year 1720*, ed. by Benjamin Motte, 5 vols (London, 1721), II, p. 146.

the *Book of Leinster* and the *Yellow Book of Lecan*, now in the library of Trinity College, Dublin.[110] Upon his death in 1709, these priceless manuscripts were sold by Oxford University to cover the scholar's modest debts. Whether written down or preserved by oral tradition, the process of preserving the Gaelic past was under serious and continual threat.

As seen in Lhuyd's statement that Irish 'Romances' would 'scarce quit the pains' of translation, Johnson's comments to O'Connor about the absence of Irish books and scholarly analysis of Gaelic literature holds true to a certain extent, but he fails to appreciate this dearth as a cost of cultural assimilation into the British empire. The literary history and culture of the Irish bard, the *ollamh* and the *fili* had been silenced and dismantled by the Penal Laws. The significance of the *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth* is that it internalises a particular interpretation of the Gaelic past, reconstructing the bardic voice not as an arcane and complex language of 'the schools', but in the popular medium of the ballad, so that it could be enjoyed and preserved among a much wider Gaelic community. Internalising this decaying tradition, Coímin's ballad synthesises traditional Gaelic myths and his own Anglo-Irish imagination. Like the eighteenth-century creation of *Hardyknute* or Edmund Burke's version of 'the antient constitution', it represents a Romantic negotiation with British identity. By breaking with literary tradition, Coímin helped to create a cycle of Romantic poetry which fostered a meaningful sense of community and connection among 'the wild Irish'. Within a decade, Ossianic poetry itself would transform the connotation of 'the wild Irish' from a hostile caricature into a Romantic ideal.

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[110] Davies, *The Isles*, p. 77.

For men like Keating, the disappearance of Irish originals was a personal as well as a national tragedy, yet the assimilation of Ireland into the culture of Britishness meant that memories carried forward by the poetry of the bardic tradition were no longer valued as highly as they once had been, and manuscripts were sold to passing strangers such as Lhuyd. Stories such as this make Sir Robert Cotton's anecdote about rescuing the 'original' Magna Carta from the scissors of his tailor seem slightly less improbable. Like the conventional dialogue between Oisín and Saint Patrick, Keating's life was divided between mythological and ecclesiastical histories, both of which are contingent upon memory, written and oral traditions. It is interesting to note that Uilliam Buinneán wrote a poetic tribute to Coimín and his literary achievements, 'among which it records that he wrote verse like Dryden and translated Keating's *Foras Feasa* into English'.[111] Unfortunately, the manuscript of this translation has not yet been recovered.

[111] Robin Flower, *Catalogue of Irish Manuscripts in the British Museum*, II, p. 193.

'A fragment falls': James Macpherson and the language of British epic

In his unmistakable voice, Dr. Johnson once again raises the issue which has shaped this thesis: 'Whence he drew the original design has been variously conjectured by men who cannot bear to think themselves ignorant of that which, at last, neither diligence nor sagacity can discover'.[1] The person to whom Johnson refers here, however, is not James Macpherson (1736-96), the author of *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, *Fingal* and *Temora*, but John Milton. In his life of Milton, Johnson writes of *Paradise Lost* that because 'highest praise of genius is original invention', Milton 'cannot be said to have contrived the structure of an epic poem', and he therefore 'owes reverence' to Homer.[2] Yet in Johnson's opinion, *Paradise Lost* had been surpassed by an eighteenth-century rival:

> It cannot be unwelcome to literary curiosity that I deduce thus minutely the history of the English *Iliad*. It is certainly the noblest version of poetry which the world has ever seen, and its publication must therefore be considered as one of the great events in the annals of learning.[3]

Johnson's praise of 'the English *Iliad*' is unequivocal: England had found its national epic and its literary champion in Pope. However, this critical pronouncement places Johnson in a self-contradictory position on the relationship between epic poetry and 'original invention'. If *Paradise Lost* is inferior to the *Iliad* on the basis that Milton had not created the epic genre itself, then how can Pope's translation of Homer surpass its original, to become 'the noblest version of poetry which the world has ever seen'? Johnson's

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[1] Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, I, p. 133.
[2] Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, I, p. 194.
[3] Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, III, p. 119.

inconsistency on the issue of originality and translation should be borne in mind when considering his critical assessment of James Macpherson's work.

In this thesis, Johnson's question, 'Where are the originals?', has served as the organising principle in tracing some of the origins of Britishness, showing how various individuals and communities within British society have sought to gain control over the present by rewriting the past. The thesis has examined a range of post-Union British literature in order to illustrate some of the ways that the relationship between authorship and identity is fraught with problems of textual authenticity. And through a series of iconic texts from the Magna Carta to Johnson's *Dictionary*, it has highlighted some of the ways that fabrication and nationhood are inseparable concepts. This final chapter aims to bring Johnson's question full circle by re-examining the early career of Macpherson, placing him within the wider context of Britishness outlined in the preceding chapters.

Macpherson owes much of his wide knowledge of intellectual history to his education at the University of Aberdeen. He entered the university at a time when it was one of the most exciting intellectual centres of the Enlightenment. Thomas Blackwell, James Beattie, Thomas Reid and Alexander Gerard were among the more famous scholars at work there in the late 1750s, the period when Macpherson studied there. Reid himself was Macpherson's Regent in the second year of his education.[4] Coming of age amidst that commercially thriving and intellectually vibrant city would prove to be immensely important in Macpherson's success as a writer, but this cultural exposure would create internal tensions between himself and his own ancestry in the pre- and post-Culloden

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[4] See Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage*, p. 27.

landscape of the Highlands. In the young Macpherson, we find an aspiring poet who, like many other Britons, was seeking a literary tradition in which to work and looking for exemplars to emulate who could somehow help to reconcile these pre-and post-Union identities. As was the case with other writers before him, Macpherson struggled to come to terms with the national landscape, seeking his own voice in the literary language of Britishness. Macpherson was a native Gaelic speaker, and the ballads of the Highland oral tradition were part of his heritage. Taking his raw materials from those same landscapes which Defoe had written off as a 'frightful country full of hideous desart mountains and unpassable', he would refine Gaelic ballads and fragments into a literary commodity designed to appeal to a polite British audience.[5]

The Ossian controversy signals a profound change in the British literary world, not one that Macpherson started but one in which he was a key figure. His work marks a wider shift from literary traditions based on classical models of scholarship, translation, intellectual history and Johnsonian models of virtue to the transmission and reception of imaginative power. As Edward Young writes in his *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759), 'Let us build our Compositions with the Spirit, and in the Taste, of the Ancients; but not with their Materials'.[6] In this change, imaginative literature contests the pedagogical authority of the canon, marking a paradigmatic shift in literature from canonicity towards originality. In the words of Young, 'Rome was a powerful Ally to many States; antient Authors are our powerful Allies; but we must take heed that they do not succour, till they enslave, after the manner of Rome' (p. 25). To Johnson,

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[5] *A Journey Through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, II, p. 831.

the concept of 'originals' is rooted in those authors whom he regarded as canonical 'authorities', many of whom he cites in his *Dictionary*. Formidable critic though he was, however, Johnson found himself out of his element in the world of Gaelic literature, and, as can be seen in his letters to Charles O'Conor, he knew almost nothing of a Gaelic canon. Yet ironically it was through his dispute with Macpherson over the authenticity of his originals that the Gaelic 'canon' would come to define itself. Macpherson had a problematic relationship with his own Gaelic originals—he lied about them. But as will be argued in this chapter, the deception does not negate the cultural complexity, or importance, of his achievement; in fact, it affiliates his potent synthesis of history and Romantic imagination with the British canon of myth-making and nation-building which this thesis has selectively outlined.

A comprehensive overview of the Ossian controversy is beyond the scope of this chapter. Because Macpherson's earliest material has received less critical attention, the chapter will mainly focus on his pre-Ossianic poetry, beginning with close readings of *The Hunter* and *Death*, uncovering some of the writers whom the young poet was emulating. The marked disparities in the poetics of these two early pieces will be discussed, linking these changes to the intellectual influence of Joseph and Thomas Warton. Further consideration will be given to Macpherson's first epic poem, *The Highlander*, as his own negotiation with personal and national history. The chapter will then trace the rapid trajectory of Macpherson's progress from these draft fragments, descriptive lyrics and published pre-Ossianic work to his highly stylised and polished *Fragments of*

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[6] Edward Young, *Conjectures on Original Composition. In a Letter to the Author of Sir Charles Grandison* (London: A. Millar, R. and J. Dodsley, 1759), p. 22

Ancient Poetry. Intellectual differences about the definition of poetry that began to emerge between the Wartons and Johnson form a critical context for the chapter, tracing Macpherson's movement from a fragmentary to an epic vision of nationhood. With apposite readings from Johnson and Boswell's tour of Scotland, it will conclude with a reconsideration of the conceptual framework for Macpherson's epics *Fingal* and *Temora*, revisiting the problem of locating 'pure' originals. Macpherson's contest with Johnson over the stability of written and oral traditions will be used to illustrate how the bardic voice of Ossian is inextricably entwined with problems of British identity, and how language has the power to master the present by reinventing the national past.

After studying at Aberdeen, Macpherson went to the University of Edinburgh for a brief period in divinity school, but he did not complete his degree there.[7] Upon returning to his home in the Highlands, Macpherson found employment as a teacher in Ruthven Grammar School. But he was unhappy with his situation, and his mental state became obvious to those like Donald Macpherson who knew him well:

> I met Mr. Macpherson off the road near the Church, walking alone. Upon joining, I found him more morose, silent and pensive than usual. With a serious feeling, I asked the reason. He said, in the same humour, that he was quite wearied of teaching a school, was at a loss how to acquire genteel bread. I told him that he was blessed with several talents, singular good memory, particularly

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[7] See Paul deGategno, *James Macpherson*, who argues that Macpherson left Aberdeen without a degree due to financial hardship: 'In 1755 he was forced to leave [King's College] without a degree since he could not afford the increase that year in tuition. He transferred for a time to Marischal College, Aberdeen, and then to the University of Edinburgh, where he was a student in divinity. Unable to secure a degree, he returned to Ruthven in 1756 and began teaching in the charity school there' (p. 3). deGategno does not qualify his characterisation of Ruthven Grammar School as a 'charity school'.

> poetry. Did he hit right, he had no reason to perish (?) so soon. He said there was little room there for him.[8]

Macpherson's friend Donald recollects a young man oppressed by necessity, struggling to reconcile his poetic idealism with the practical demands of daily life. It was not the coarse oatcakes of the Highlands, but the 'genteel bread' of the Lowlands and the land beyond, that James Macpherson desired. Yet without financial independence or a patron to support him, he could not imagine successfully staking his claim in society as a poet. Educated though he was in logic, Latin, Greek and his own independent study of English literature—not to mention a working familiarity with Gaelic—Macpherson felt excluded from that world he had observed in Aberdeen and Edinburgh: 'there was little room there for him'. Reading his early drafts such as *The Hunter* and *Death*, a picture emerges of Macpherson trying to find 'room' to express himself, yet feeling unsure about the cultural space in which he should take root. By examining his early poetry, we may derive a clearer sense of the history with which he identifies, some of the voices he emulates, and the kind of national landscape he envisages in this psychological state of confinement.

It has taken almost two centuries to wrestle the Ossian controversy from the national prejudices of its adjudicators. Lord Dacre's chauvinistic burlesque of Macpherson and Scottish culture at large is an unfortunate exception to this rule, but subsequent Macpherson scholarship has avoided the ruts of his example.[9] The literary influences which shaped Macpherson's pre-Ossianic poetry have not

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[8] This letter from Donald Macpherson to Reverend John Anderson of Laggan, dated October 1797, is cited by Stafford in *The Sublime Savage*, p. 41.

yet received adequate critical attention. An examination of this early material may help to locate and bring into focus the kind of national landscape that he idealised and the sense of history that informs it. Thanks to one of his severest critics, the historian and Member of Parliament Malcolm Laing (1762-1818), examples of Macpherson's unpublished poetry have been preserved in *The Poems of Ossian* (1805).[10] This edition by Laing appeared nine years after Macpherson's death, in the same year as the *Report of the Committee of the Highland Society of Scotland, Appointed to Inquire into the Nature and Authenticity of the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh, 1805), edited by the author Henry Mackenzie.

Laing's own cultural nationalism is sufficiently politicised to warrant closer scrutiny. His motivation for the eight years that he spent compiling his edition of Macpherson has not received the attention it deserves. As Colin Kidd notes, that 'Celtic patriot' the Reverend Andrew Gallie (1730-1803), a friend and literary collaborator of Macpherson's, 'had claimed that it was little wonder an Orcadian scholar such as Malcolm Laing, descended of Gothic Picts, was attempting to discredit the authenticity of a Celtic epic'.[11] The term 'Gothic Picts' implies the fascination with racial origins espoused by John Pinkerton (discussed in chapter two of this thesis), James Sibbald (1745-1803) and the Reverend John Jamieson (1759-1838), whom Kidd characterises as 'Picto-Gothicists', who contended that the Picts were a Gothic rather than a Celtic

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[9] Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Invention of Tradition: The Highland Tradition of Scotland', in *The Invention of Tradition*, pp. 15-41.

[10] *The Poems of Ossian, &c. Containing the Poetical Works of James Macpherson, Esq. In Prose and Rhyme: with Notes and Illustrations*, ed. by Malcolm Laing, 2 vols (1805; repr. Edinburgh: James Thin, 1971). Cited hereafter as Laing.

people.[12] Pinkerton—the same man whose literary imposture had swelled Ramsay's version of *Hardyknute* into an epic—had the audacity to argue that 'Celtic influences, including the propensity to lies and fantasy, had retarded Scottish historiography relative to technical developments in other European historical traditions'.[13] Orkney was not ceded to Scotland until the fifteenth century, and the name of the Laing ancestral estate, 'Strynzia', speaks of the family's pride in its Norse heritage.[14]

Laing's affiliation with 'Picto-Gothicism' and his nostalgia for Norse antiquities indicate that his edition of *The Poems of Ossian* should be approached warily. In preparing his edition, Laing had acquired an autograph manuscript from the Reverend John Anderson containing two of Macpherson's unfinished drafts.[15] *The Hunter* (c.1756), a name attributed by Laing, has often been treated rather dismissively by critics. 'Banal, and sometimes utterly incongruous', writes Kenneth Simpson of this poem, stating that its 'excursions into poetic diction

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[11] Kidd, p. 257. As Fiona Stafford notes, Gallie helped Macpherson with his translation of Gaelic materials that he had discovered (*Sublime Savage*, p. 123).

[12] Kidd, pp. 251-53.

[13] Kidd, p. 253.

[14] His brother Samuel Laing (1780-1868), was even more fascinated by Orkney's Norse affiliations. He travelled extensively in Norway and Sweden, and wrote *Journal of a Residence in Norway during the Years 1834, 1835, and 1836, made with a view to inquire into the Moral and Political Economy of that Country and the Condition of its Inhabitants* (London, 1836), which has been described as 'little less than an unqualified panegyric upon Norway, whose free, industrious, and enterprising peasant proprietors' are depicted as models of 'native virtue' (*DNB*). In *A Tour in Sweden in 1838: comprising Observations on the Moral, Political, and Economical State of the Swedish Nation* (London, 1839), Samuel Laing 'denounced the Unon of Sweden and Norway' and represented 'the privileged nobility and priesthood of Sweden as destitute alike of public spirit and private virtue, and denounced the entire nation as the most immoral in Europe' (*DNB*).

[15] 'The two first poems, entitled DEATH, and the HUNTER, are printed from a manuscript in Macpherson's hand-writing, discovered in the Highlands many years ago, and most liberally communicated to me by the Rev. Mr Anderson, minister of Kingussie. They are published, not on account of their poetical merit, but as Macpherson's first rude essays in English poetry, and as historical evidence that he was a heroic poet from his earliest years. The manuscript is evidently the first rough draft of his compositions; and contains memorandums concerning his school and house-keeping at Ruthven, in Badenoch, with a few dates, from which the Hunter appears to have been written towards the end of the year 1756. The poem upon Death is an earlier and worse

(often sub-Miltonic) are far from happy'.[16] '*The Hunter* is juvenile throughout', writes John MacQueen, 'most of all perhaps in the disorder of its narrative and the confused presentation of the natural and supernatural orders'.[17] Paul DeGategno states the 'weaknesses of the poem are inescapable'.[18] Despite these ringing endorsements, it should be borne in mind that while *The Hunter* does leave much to be desired, Macpherson had not intended these unfinished and untitled pieces to be read or published, and therefore it constitutes an unguarded opportunity to detect some of his formative influences.

The Hunter, a poem of 1680 lines in heroic couplets, was written by the same young man who had been known at the University of Aberdeen to ridicule his classmates in Hudibrastics and who 'appears to have spent much of his time at university amusing himself with comic verse'.[19] Macpherson's childhood friend Donald Macpherson recollects that '[w]hen he taught the Grammar School of Ruthven, near his father's and my father's Dwellings, I know he composed several ludicrous poems and catches upon Countrie emergencies, even one upon myself'.[20] Indeed, this might be a reference to 'Donald' in *The Hunter*. Bearing in mind this tendency towards sarcastic wit, it becomes easier to see that his poem is less sub-Miltonic than an emulation of Pope; although an inconsistent production, it is at least in part an imitation of *The Rape of the Lock*—complete with supernatural beings—transferred from London to the Highlands. This transplantation is not so unlikely as it may at first appear. In his

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composition; but they are both marked with the same extravagance of sentiment and diction that prevails in Ossian' (Laing, I, p. 455).

[16] Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, pp. 48-9.

[17] Introduction, Laing, p. x.

[18] deGategno, *James Macpherson*, p. 13.

[19] Stafford, *The Sublime Savage*, p. 25.

Preface to *The Ever Green*, Ramsay had made the following statement about the dignity of portraying native landscapes:

> *The* Morning *rises (in the Poets Description) as she does in the* Scottish *Horizon. We are not carried to* Greece *or* Italy *for a Shade, a Stream or a Breeze. The* Groves *rise in our own Valleys; the* Rivers *flow from our own Fountains, and the* Winds *blow upon our own Hills. I find not Fault with those Things, as they are in* Greece *or* Italy: *But with a* Northern Poet *for fetching his Materials from these Places, in a Poem, of which his own Country is the Scene* [. . .].[21]

Both landscape and language have a reciprocal relationship to the identity of the poet. This passage suggests that appropriating Pope to the Highlands would not have been groundless. Thomas Blackwell had been attracted to Ramsay's views on 'Northern Poets' and the evocation of a strong sense of place as expressed in *The Ever Green*, and a case will be made in this chapter that Macpherson was familiar with that text.

It has been suggested by more than one critic that *The Hunter* constitutes a trial run at Macpherson's published poem, *The Highlander* (1758), a text to be discussed later in this chapter whose narrative is derived from George Buchanan's *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (1582).[22] They share a similar storyline of a Highlander of unknown birth rising to fame through heroic deeds and patriotic virtue; in both cases, the discovery of their noble Scottish birth clears the final impediments to a royal marriage, wealth and power. The opening lines of *The Hunter* depict a landscape which is consistent to a large degree with Ramsay's argument:

> Once on a time, when Liberty was seen

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[20] Letter from Donald Macpherson to Reverend J. Anderson of Laggan, October 1797; cited by Stafford in *The Sublime Savage*, pp. 40-41.
[21] *The Ever Green*, I, p. viii.
[22] See John MacQueen's Introduction to Laing, p. x.

To sport and revel on the northern plain,
Immortal fair! and was supremely kind
On Scotia's hills to snuff the northern wind;
There lived a youth, and Donald was his name.
To chace the flying stag his highest aim;
A gun, a plaid, a dog, his humble store;
In these thrice happy, as he wants no more. (I, ll. 1-8)

The power of primal 'Liberty' to 'snuff', or diminish the harshness of, the 'northern wind' immediately suggests the humour behind this idealised Highland landscape. This sportive image of 'Liberty' is more suggestive of polite recreation than necessity, yet its presence favours the simple life of the 'thrice happy' Donald, the central figure of this disjointed piece. Donald has the misfortune to kill a fawn which belongs to the daughter of the King of the Fairies, who has two names, 'Flavia' and 'Xanthe'; this suggests the thoroughly unfinished quality of the piece:

It chanced the Fairie's king a daughter had,
A beauteous, blooming, and a sportive maid.
She took delight, upon the flowery lawn
To frisk, transported, round a female fawn.
The hunter aims the tube: the powder flies;
The fawn falls, roars, and shakes her limbs, and dies. (I, ll. 21-26)

In a serious work, the poorest of writers would not say that a fawn 'roars' when shot; if this were not a mock heroic piece, a word like 'cries' would have been a more obvious choice. With this fateful mistake, Donald sets off a chain of events, bringing the wrath of the Fairies down on his head. Flavia, or Xanthe, resolves to have vengeance, and this simple premise drives the narrative of *The Hunter*.

The Fairy Princess flies to Edinburgh, were she finds a debauched courtier:

The hours through half his journey drove the day.
While slumbering yet the hiant [sic] Meno lay,
Fair Xanthe entered; round his pillow shed

> Sleep-deep'ning air, and fum'd his dizzy head.
> He snored aloud; the palace thundered round,
> And repercussive walls repel the sound.
> She took a knife, a deep incision made,
> Then healed the wound, and with the humour fled. (I, ll. 148-55)

In this portrait of drunken 'Meno', snoring so loud in the middle of the day that 'the palace thundered round', Macpherson's satirical tone is more assured. The passage is reminiscent of the spirit Umbriel's journey in *The Rape of the Lock* to 'the cave of *Spleen*' (IV, l. 16), where he acquires a 'vial' (IV, l. 85) of splenetic humours with which to torment Belinda (IV, ll. 89-176). In a similar way, Xanthe extracts the 'humour' of 'vile ambition' from Meno and implants it in Donald. As a young man who had previously been 'thrice happy' with only his 'humble store' of gun, plaid, and dog, Donald now finds himself discontented, melancholic and racked with ambition to leave his home for a better and more social life. This is an inversion of Pope's portrayal of Belinda, who recants her vain 'love of Courts' (IV, l. 152) and desires to escape to 'some lone isle, or distant Northern land' (IV, 154). The two protagonists wish to change places.

Another example of the satirical tone of Canto I may be found in this caricature of Edinburgh:

> On rocks a city stands, high-tower'd, unwall'd,
> And from its scite the hill of Edin call'd,
> Once the proud seat of royalty and state,
> Of kings, of heroes, and of all that's great;
> But these are flown, and Edin's only stores
> Are fops, and scriveners, and English'd whores. (I, ll. 138-43)

The idea that 'kings', 'heroes' and virtue have left Edinburgh for good alludes to the exodus of James I for London in 1603, a crucial historical context that I have discussed in Chapter Two. The power of luxury to emasculate and corrupt a nation represents a central concern of *The Hunter*, as seen in this distinction

between virtuous Highlanders and the 'English'd' Lowlanders. David Daiches has said that it is 'a reflection of the impoverishment of Scottish Culture that the issue should have been between a native simplicity and an imported sophistication'.[23] Yet here we also find another echo of *The Rape of the Lock*, specifically Pope's playful parody of Hampton Court (III, ll. 1-18), and the pitfalls of luxury have seldom been portrayed with more mock-heroic success than in Belinda's 'Toilet' scene (I, ll. 121-148). It is through imitating Pope's Tory-inflected rhetoric that we find an original of Macpherson's early attitudes toward Unionism and the inescapable intermixture of cultures implicit in Trade and Commerce.

One salient feature of *The Hunter* is the chase itself, an activity to which Macpherson gives a kind of sacral status. Hunting signifies a different kind of pastoral life from ploughing the soil or herding sheep, both of which produce commodities for exchange; the ritualisation of the hunt represents an anti-narrative to commerce, a tradition which predates the feudal landscape itself. Combining vigorous physicality and weaponry skills with long intermittent periods of watchful waiting amidst the native scenery of the Highlands, hunting offers the opportunity for reflection as well as action, the ideal combination of human traits espoused by Blackwell, Professor of Greek at the University of Aberdeen. Macpherson's experimentation with the epic form follows naturally from his formal education in Latin and Greek, and may be seen in the following epic simile:

> Thus in the lowly hut, the faithful hound,

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[23] David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture: The Eighteenth-Century Experience* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1964), p. 34.

> With tender twigs of yielding osier bound,
> When, far without, he hears the blasting horns,
> Leaps here and there, and in his bondage burns;
> But once let loose, he snuffs the gelid wind,
> And leaves the winged blast to puff behind. (III, ll. 74-80)

Even the dog's leash, woven out of 'osier', suggests a highly primitive atmosphere. But in depicting the chase, Macpherson cannot refrain from projecting his own vivid experiences of hunting onto the character of Donald. Unfortunately, the kind of weapons which an eighteenth-century Highlander was accustomed to using—' The blue-tubed gun' (II, l. 72)— fit awkwardly into the feudal world of the 'Fergusian' line (I, l. 59).

These somewhat mock-heroic anachronisms show Macpherson's uncertainty about where in history to locate the ideal Scotland. Buchanan was only one of several different literary sources which he was considering.[24] Macpherson chooses to address the issue of commerce in *The Hunter* through a reference to the 'Prophecies of Merlin', an episode in Geoffrey of Monmouth's *History of the King's of Britain*:[25]

> (Prophetic Merlin thus in rapture said),
> Long Saxons shall for Scottish liberty,
> Enwrapt in death, far from your country lie.
> The hill-descended shall retain the prize,
> Until a race, deep-versed in policies,
> Shall sprout from Saxon trunk, and schemes unfold,
> To change their steely points to fusil gold;
> Then shackled on his heath, the hill-born swain
> Shall crawl along, and move his hard-bound limbs with pain.
> Fair Liberty to them shall lose her charms,
> And Scots shall tremble at the sight of arms. (IV, ll. 178-88)

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[24] On Buchanan, myth-making and the politics of the Scottish ancient constitution, see Kidd, pp. 12-29, 89-96. See also Roger A. Mason's excellent essay, 'Scotching the Brut: Politics, History and National Myth in Sixteenth-Century Britain', in *Scotland and England: 1286-1815*, pp. 60-84.

[25] See *History of the Kings of Britain*, pp. 171-85.

In this prophecy, Scottish 'Liberty' is exchanged for 'fusil gold', subjugated by commerce with the English. Although there are no such lines in Geoffrey of Monmouth's 'Prophecies of Merlin', Macpherson appears to be appropriating the voice of Merlin to denounce the House of Hanover and the ill effects of the Act of Union upon Scotland. But this is an isolated instance of Arthurian myth in *The Hunter*. Here we find further evidence of the young Macpherson casting about unsuccessfully for a native British tradition in which to work – an uncertainty that is reflected in the structure and tone of the poem.

By planting the seed of ambition in Donald, the Fairies destroy his peace of mind and his connection with his home, convincing him that the only life worth having was to be found elsewhere. The unsettled anxieties in this disjointed piece have many autobiographical parallels. Having been away to university in Aberdeen and Edinburgh, Macpherson was beginning to feel the pull away from the Highlands in ways that his censorious treatment of 'fops, and scriveners, and English'd whores' could not disguise. The fantasy that Donald is not a rustic Highlander without any prospects, but a lost heir to nobility, would appeal to a young man whose family fortunes had been radically altered by the Rising of 1745 and its aftermath.[26] *The Hunter* shows how Macpherson was attempting to adapt his knowledge of Latin and Greek, plus authors including Buchanan, Geoffrey of Monmouth and Pope to his own personalised landscape, yet finding himself unable to 'synchronise and harmonise' this Romantic vision of history within existing historical frameworks. His ritualisation of the hunt

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[26] On Clan Macpherson and Jacobitism, see John Prebble, *Culloden* (London: Penguin, 1996).

offers the best link in this poem to the wide open spaces of prehistory, and 'the chase' would eventually feature prominently in his Ossianic poetry.

The second experiment in the manuscript recovered by Laing is entitled *Death*, a markedly different composition from *The Hunter*. Laing claims that *Death* was written before *The Hunter*, but his chronology based on Macpherson's marginalia is inconclusive.[27] Laing's opinion on this matter is not sufficient in itself, yet it is all we have to work with, given that the manuscript has since disappeared.[28] *Death* is a disjointed and fragmentary sketchbook, a blank-verse contemplation of 512 lines containing related images and lyric experiments. However, the chief interest of these fragments is to shed light on Macpherson's literary influences. It shows the Romantic gaze turning inwards to the pastoral spaces of his youthful imagination, yet guided by the examples of writers as diverse as Virgil, Milton, Dryden, Thomson and the Wartons.

There are echoes of 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso' in Macpherson's introductory invocation to *Death*, and Kenneth Simpson has also noted its similarity to Thomas Warton's *The Pleasures of Melancholy. A Poem* (1747).[29] This parallel is well observed by Simpson but he fails to develop it. Warton had composed *The Pleasures of Melancholy* when he was only seventeen; he was successful in finding a publisher for it by the age of nineteen. The youthful enthusiasm of its author comes through in the poem's vigorous imagination and

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[27] See footnote number fifteen above regarding 'house-keeping' marginalia. The manuscript which he describes is at best a palimpsest, layered with incomplete poetic experiments, promiscuous marginalia and overwritten with Laing's determination to unmask Macpherson.

[28] See *Index of English Literary Manuscripts*, III: pt. 2, ed. by Margaret M. Smith (London and New York: Mansell, 1989), pp. 179-83 (p. 181).

[29] All citations of Thomas Warton's *The Pleasures of Melancholy* refer to the text printed in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry: An Annotated Anthology*, ed. by David Fairer and Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999). See Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, p. 42. However, Simpson

lack of emotional restraint. In Milton's more mature 'Il Penseroso' we find the invocation of 'Hail, divinest Melancholy'(l. 12): 'Come, pensive nun, devout and pure' (l. 31) in a 'sable stole' (l. 35) and 'musing gait' (l. 38). Thomas Warton develops this cluster of images into 'Mother of musings, Contemplation sage,/ Whose grotto stands upon the topmost rock/ Of Teneriffe' (ll. 1-3), asking to be led 'To ruin'd seats, to twilight cells and bow'rs,/ Her fav'rite midnight haunts'. He lends a contemporary flourish to Milton, modifying the introspective original with a Romantic, eighteenth-century enthusiasm for 'yon ruin'd abbey's moss-grown piles' (l. 28).

The Pleasures of Melancholy also hints at the epic form to which Macpherson already shows signs of aspiring. In *Death*, Macpherson synthesises these voices and influences:

> Come melancholy, soul-o'erwhelming power!
> Woe's sable child! Sweet meditation come;
> Come, pensive gaited, from thy hermit cell,
> Brood wide o'er life, and all its transient joys,
> The noisy follies, and corroding strifes:
> Shut the pleas'd ear from harmony and song;
> And from the heart ensnaring voice of fame.
> They come, they come! I seem through fields to rove
> Sacred to woe, where Sorrow, sable shade!
> Looks pensive to the uncomfortable ground. (*Death*, 1-10)

Here, Macpherson projects his own sense of inner-turmoil upon the external world, personifying his anxieties through poetic characters and casting about for a poetical style to emulate. In these lines, sound represents the key to the visionary mind. Yet the 'pleas'd ear' must be attenuated by 'meditation', and then focused on a more serious purpose. 'These are delights unknown to minds profane', writes Thomas Warton, 'And which alone the pensive soul can taste'

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treats the poem in a cursory manner, citing only the first seven of its five hundred and twelve

(ll. 194-95). Macpherson's phrase 'noon/ Of night' (*Death*, ll. 412-13) occurs—with the identical enjambment—in *The Pleasures of Melancholy* (ll. 50-51), suggesting that he was familiar with Warton's phraseology; however, both of these poets may have found the original of this image in Dryden.[30]

Malcolm Laing describes *Death* as 'a juvenile imitation of Blair's Grave'.[31] But that does not account for Macpherson's appropriation of the following scene from Joseph Warton's ode 'To Fancy':

> Let us with silent footsteps go
> To charnels and the house of Woe,
> To Gothic churches, vaults, and tombs,
> Where each night some virgin comes,
> With throbbing breast and faded cheek,
> Her promis'd bridegroom's urn to seek;
> Or to some Abby's mould'ring tow'rs,
> Where, to avoid cold wint'ry show'rs,
> The naked beggar shivering lies,
> While whistling tempests round her rise,
> And trembles, lest the tottering wall
> Should on her sleeping infants fall. ('To Fancy', ll. 65-76)[32]

Warton patiently develops the identity of the 'naked beggar'; the image of a homeless woman struggling to shelter her 'sleeping infants' is a more powerful source of *pathos* than that of a homeless man. In his inexperienced manner, Macpherson constructs a gruesome imitation of Warton designed to transmit a similar sense of the pathetic:

> He starts, he views, he flies; no dangers fright
> But those of Daphne: her he shivering found,

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lines. Fiona Stafford's treatment of 'Death' (*The Sublime Savage*, pp. 48-51) is more detailed.

[30] Both Warton and Macpherson could have appropriated the phrase 'noon of night' from here: 'With brazen Sickles reap'd at Noon of Night' (*Æneis*, IV, l. 744), in Dryden's *The Works of Virgil: containing his Pastorals, Georgics, and Aeneis. Translated into English Verse; by Mr. Dryden* (London, 1697). Cited hereafter as *The Works of Virgil.*

[31] Laing, II, p. 446.

[32] From the second edition of *Odes on Various Subjects* (London: Dodsley, 1747), cited in Joseph Warton, *Odes on Various Subjects* (1746), with an introduction by Joan Pittock (Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1977), p. vi. Cited hereafter as *Odes on Various Subjects*.

> Rock'd the tottering hall; her azure eyes,
> Like two fair fountains, watered the plain
> Of roses on her cheek. He clasp'd her round,
> And bore, through death, the lovely prize away.
> Death, death might pity, could but death relent:
> The field appears, and joy begins to dawn;
> When from a tottering roof a fragment falls,
> And crush'd the lovely Daphne in his arms!
> How did Doricles stand aghast! How beat,
> With broken sighs, his sorrow-wounded breast! (*Death*, ll. 63-74)

The 'tottering hall', 'tottering roof' and 'shivering' woman echo the scene of the disintegrating 'Abby' established in Joseph Warton's ode, yet Macpherson renders explicit what Warton merely suggests. The gruesome scene that ensues when 'a fragment falls' hardly bears contemplation. However, the phrase 'a fragment falls' can be found in three of Macpherson's later poems, 'The Cave' (a previously unpublished poem printed by Laing), *The Highlander* and as seen here in 'On the Death of Marshal Keith' (*Scots Magazine*, October 1758):

> See! The proud halls they once possessed, decayed,
> The spiral tow'rs depend the lofty head;
> Wild ivy creeps along the mould'ring walls,
> And with each gust of wind a fragment falls;
> While birds obscene at noon of night deplore,
> Where mighty heroes kept the watch before.[33]

This mixture of evocative imagery and imaginative power can be traced to at least a few originals. Here, the Wartons vie with Dryden for the greatest influence on Macpherson, producing a complex synthesis of literary allusion and original invention. In Thomas Warton's *Pleasures of Melancholy* we find 'mould'ring caverns' (l. 34), 'mould'ring obelisc' (l. 263) and the 'mould'ring mass' of uprooted columns give way here to Macpherson's 'mould'ring walls'. Yet the

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[33] Laing, II, 'On the Death of Marshal Keith', ll. 53-58.

phrase 'birds obscene' and 'noon of night' can both be found in Dryden's translation of *The Aeneid*.[34]

Some of the proper names provide further evidence of some of the literary influences which Macpherson was attempting to synthesise in *Death*: Palaemon, Andraemon, Acasto and Philanthes. The original 'Palaemon' can be found in Virgil's *Eclogue III*, which Macpherson would have known in the original Latin but could have admired in translations by Dryden and Joseph Warton.[35] The name 'Andraemon' can be found in Books Two and Thirteen of *The Iliad*, which Macpherson had the ability to read in Greek or in Pope's translation. However, the name 'Acasto' occurs in a much more contemporary work, Thomson's *Autumn*, as do 'Palemon' and 'Lavinia', each of whom put in an appearance in *Death*. In Thomson, Macpherson found the voice of a Scot, a Briton and a Patriot Whig. Here was a voice, and a sense of Scotland's place in the world, to be studied and emulated.

While Thomson's repudiation of the chase (*Autumn*, ll. 360-469) would have displeased the author of *The Hunter*, his description of Wallace (l. 900) and 'Caledonia in romantic view' (l. 880), where 'the Atlantic surge/ Pours in among the stormy Hebrides' (ll. 865-66), would have drawn Macpherson's attention to the poetic possibilities of Ossian's 'streamy Morven'. Macpherson felt the attraction of Thomson's 'Britannia' (*Death*, l. 301) as a seductive symbol of nationhood, combining English and Scottish history into a unified national landscape. Another name in this representative list from *Death* offers further

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[34] 'And on th' offended Harpies humbly call: /And whether Gods, or Birds obscene they were (*Æneis* III, ll. 340-41) and 'With brazen Sickles reap'd at Noon of Night' (*Aeneis* IV, l. 744), in Dryden's *The Works of Virgil*.

insights into the young poet's mind: the source of 'Philanthes' appears to be Thomas Warton's 'Eclogue the Fourth' from his *Five Pastoral Eclogues* (1745). The character of Philanthes is illustrated here by Macpherson in a funeral train, mourning the death of his only son:

> Behind, with trembling steps, the hoary age
> Of old Philanthes mourns; a staff supports
> His tottering feet: he droops his silvered head;
> And tears run trickling down his pallid cheeks. (*Death*, ll. 424-27)

Ossian himself is foreshadowed in Philanthes, and the narrative itself contains a syntactical inversion characteristic of Ossian: 'the hoary age/ Of old Philanthes mourns'.[36] In that same fragment, Philanthes effectively appears (with only slight modifications) as the father of Morar:

> Who on his staff is this? who is this, whose head is white with age, whose eyes are red with tears, who quakes at every step?—It is thy father, O Morar! The father of none but thee.

Thematically, the death of Philanthes' only son bears a strong resemblance to the 'last of all the line' motif developed through the persona of Ossian. The problem that Macpherson seems to be negotiating through Philanthes is the reconciliation of solitary contemplation with a communal ritual of grief:

> Ah me! My son, ah, comfort of my age!
> My only son, supporter of our house!
> Ah! Why, Philaetes, have you left your sire,
> Struggling with age, and soul-corroding woe!
> Why sunk in death the sun that brightly shone
> On th' evening of my days! (*Death*, ll. 431-436)

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[35] Joseph Warton, *The Eclogues and Georgics of Virgil* (1753) and John Dryden, *The Works of Virgil*.

[36] On the subject of Macpherson's syntactical inversions, see Peter T. Murphy, 'Fool's Gold: The Highland Treasures of MacPherson's Ossian', *ELH*, 53 (1986), 567-591 (576).

This attitude comes to a finer point in the following: 'Why name Philaetes, now my greatest woe,/ Though once the comfort of my drooping mind!' (ll. 477-78), echoed in Ossian's more skilfully condensed expression, 'Why openest thou afresh the spring of my grief, O son of Alpin, inquiring how Oscur fell?'[37] In this sense, *Death* can be viewed as an unfinished exercise in the poetics of 'the Pathetic', a fragmentary narrative in which the poetic mind meditates upon its own evanescence, a crumbling structure loosely supported by memories, images and allusions.

Ruins and fragments have the power to draw the observer into the mysteries of their incompleteness and their past. The evanescence of these falling and fallen structures indicates the thrust of Macpherson's developing poetics, contemplating relics and ruins of the past as a source of imaginative power and emotional immediacy. At the beginning of *Odes on Various Subjects*, a volume which had secretly included two poems by Thomas Warton, Joseph Warton makes the following statement:

> The Public has been so much accustom'd of late to didactic Poetry alone, and Essays on Moral Subjects, that any work where the imagination is much indulged, will perhaps not be relished or regarded. The author therefore of these pieces is in some pain least certain austere critics should think them too fanciful or descriptive. But as he is convinced that the fashion of moralizing in verse has been carried too far, and as he looks upon Invention and Imagination to be the chief faculties of a Poet, so he will be happy if the following Odes may be look'd upon as an attempt to bring Poetry into its right channel.[38]

Here is a manifesto which begins to make sense of the great stylistic differences between *The Hunter* and *Death*. On the one hand, we find *The Hunter*'s amateurish adherence to the heroic couplet of Dryden and Pope, and on the other

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[37] Fragment VII, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, in *The Poems of Ossian*, ed. by Howard Gaskill, with an Introduction by Fiona Stafford (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1996), pp. 1-31 (p. 16). This edition cited hereafter as Gaskill.

hand the sense in *Death* that conventional literary structures are falling down around Macpherson's head. The Wartonian echoes which can be heard in *Death* and 'Ode on the Death of Marshal Keith' also reverberate in Macpherson's later poetry:

> I have seen the walls of Balclutha, but they were desolate. The fire had resounded in the halls: and the voice of the people is heard no more. The stream of Clutha was removed from its place, by the fall of the walls.—[. . .] Why dost thou build the hall, son of the winged days? Thou lookest from thy towers to-day; yet a few years, and the blast of the desart comes; it howls in thy empty court, and whistles round thy half-worn shield. [39]

Wasted by the ravages of time, these 'desolate' structures are transformed into enigmatic icons of the pathetic. In these images Macpherson confronts his own impermanence, attempting to sustain continuity with the past. Homes and churches, abbeys and ancestral halls are not simply physical structures, but also vessels of culture, values and beliefs; to identify with their decay is to follow Macpherson's exploration of a new sense of British community.

'While "The Hunter" appears to have sprung straight from Macpherson's imagination, *The Highlander* owes something to historical and literary sources', writes Fiona Stafford.[40] Kenneth Simpson has judged *The Highlander*, published in Edinburgh by Walter Ruddiman in 1758, to be rather 'more successful than *The Hunter*', but he complains about its 'stock poetic diction' and its 'obvious

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[38] 'Advertisement' to *Odes on Various Subjects* (1746).
[39] 'Carthon: A Poem', first published in *The Works of Ossian, the Son of Fingal. In Two Volumes* (London, 1765); reprinted in Gaskill, pp. 127-34 (pp. 128-29).
[40] *The Sublime Savage*, p. 68. Paul deGategno writes that the 'similarities between The Hunter and The Highlander leave little doubt that the former was an early draft of the latter: the unknown warrior of mysterious lineage emerges through acts of valor and bravery as champion of the Scots in a war against the invader; he conquers not only the enemy, but the hearts of the nobles, including that of the king's daughter, and his noble ancestry is revealed' (*James Macpherson*, p. 16).

glance in the direction of the Young Pretender'.[41] When reading *The Highlander* 'through' Macpherson's Ossianic poetry, rather than as a pre-Ossianic text in its own right, it is easy to misinterpret or minimise the significance of his first epic, which is set in the tenth century. Written while Macpherson was living in Edinburgh, this six-canto poem composed in heroic couplets is steeped in the intellectual history and culture of that vibrant cosmopolitan environment. Although it might be convenient to project Jacobite qualities onto *The Highlander*, thus accounting for it as a kind of wish-fulfilment for the post-Culloden Highlands, the text itself proves resistant to this sort of interpretation.

Rather than being a reiteration of the existing iconography of Jacobitism, *The Highlander* communicates a philosophy of history which attempts to disengage the Highlands from its Jacobite legacy. This can be seen in the exchange between the titular hero Albin—later revealed as Duffus, 'lost son of the 76th [Scottish] king, Milcolumbus, and eventual successor of the 77th, Indulfus, brother of Milcolumbus'—and the second-sighted hermit whom he visits in the following passage.[42] The hermit addresses Alpin here:

> Thy blood, which rolling down from Fergus came,
> Passes through time, a pure untainted stream.
> Albion shall in her pristine glory shine,
> And, blessed herself, bless the Fergusian line. (V, ll. 145-48)

Linking Alpin to the mythical Fergus who reigned over a thousand years earlier, the hermit then looks into the future not of Scotland, but of 'Albion':

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[41] Simpson, *The Protean Scot*, p. 49. Given the breadth of Macpherson's learning, we are left to wonder exactly what 'stock poetic diction' Simpson has in mind. For some possible Jacobite contexts of Macpherson's poetry, see Murray Pittock, *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 178-86, and 'James Macpherson and the Jacobite Code', in *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations*, pp. 49-58.

> But, ah! I see grim treason rear its head,
> Pale Albion trembling, and her monarch dead;
> The tyrant wield his sceptre smeared with blood -
> O base return! but still great Heaven is good:
> He falls, he falls; see how the tyrant lies!
> And Scotland brightens up her weeping eyes:
> The banished race again resume their own,
> Nor Syria boasts her royal saint alone.
> Its gloomy front the lowering season clears,
> And gently rolls a happy round of years. (V, ll. 149-58)

In these lines, the hermit describes the 'treason' of the Civil Wars and the regicide of Charles I, 'her monarch dead'. The 'tyrant' Cromwell's sceptre is 'smeared with blood', but 'he falls' and Scotland 'brightens'. With the Restoration of Charles II, the Stuarts 'resume their own' throne, followed by a reference to St. Andrew, disciple of Jesus and brother of Simon-Peter, the 'royal saint' of Scotland whose remains—says the myth—were carried to the present-day site of St. Andrews in the fourth century.

With the exception of the Union of the Crowns itself, the hermit's vision picks up the narrative of mythical history where Buchanan's *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* (1582) had left off. Next he foretells the coming of the Revolution of 1688:

> Again I see contending chiefs come on,
> And, as they strive to mount, they tear the throne;
> To civil arms the horrid trumpet calls,
> And Caledonia by her children falls.
> The storm subsides to the calm flood of peace;
> The throne returns to Fergus' ancient race.
> Glad Caledonia owns their lawful sway;
> Happy in them, in her unhappy they!
> See each inwrapped untimely in his shroud,
> For ever sleeping in his generous blood!
> Who on thy mournful tomb refrains the tear?
> O regal charms, unfortunately fair! (V, ll. 159-70)

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[42] John MacQueen, Introduction to Laing, I, p. x.

The Revolutionary factions 'tear the throne', fragmenting the continuity of the ancient constitution. With a tacit reference to the Battle of Killiecrankie (1689), Caledonia 'falls' by the divided Jacobite and Williamite loyalties of 'her children'. As in the speech which Tacitus attributes to the enigmatic Calgacus, disunity leads to defeat. The reference to Queen Anne, 'unfortunately fair!', is particularly poignant; it reflects upon the tragedy of the seventeen babies she gave birth to, none of whom survived beyond childhood. Each of them sleeps 'For ever' in the 'generous blood' of Fergus.

The hermit's vision concludes with a fascinating image. Queen Anne is oppressed by the forces of 'Faction' (V, ll. 171-80), particularly the vigorous Union debate which was initiated by Anne upon her accession to the throne in 1702, and also regarding the Hanoverian succession which had been secured by the Act of Settlement (1701). But the most revealing aspect of this narrative is the way Macpherson refers to the exiled Stuart dynasty:

> Why mention him in whom th' eternal fates
> Shall bind in peace the long-discording states?
> See Scot and Saxon, coalesced in one,
> Support the glory of the common crown.
> Britain no more shall shake with native storms,
> But o'er the trembling nations lift her arms. (V, ll. 175-80)

Regardless of which member of the exiled Stuart family these lines refer to, the message is clear that the 'native storms' related to the Jacobite cause have no future in the hermit's vision of 'Britain'. Here we see the kind of coded reference to the Pretender which became a commonplace in the eighteenth century, but there is a clear antipathy for 'Faction' in this scene. 'Why mention him' in a nation in which 'Scot and Saxon' are happily mixed, or 'coalesced in one'?

Through the vision of the hermit, Macpherson publicly denounces the Jacobite cause in favour of the Whig ancient constitution.

Only the most sentimental of Jacobites would have dreamed that reversing the Union of the Crowns, or exchanging the British throne for the crown of Scotland, was an advantageous trade; Macpherson was not among them. Jacobitism does not preclude Britishness—it is a product of Britishness. As outlined in Chapters Three and Five of this thesis, Jacobite communities continued to flourish from Oxford to County Clare and beyond in the late 1750s. Like many Britons at this time, Macpherson could have harboured private feelings of sentimental Jacobitism. But *The Highlander* provides evidence that by 1758 Macpherson had chosen to work within the tradition of history founded by Bishop Gilbert Burnet. In *Subverting Scotland's Past*, Colin Kidd has provided an intriguing account of Macpherson's ideological relationship with 'Scottish whig historiography'.[43] Kidd acknowledges that for most readers, it seems unlikely 'to characterise James Macpherson as a whig', mainly because 'he has traditionally been described as a tory or as a "sentimental Jacobite"'(p. 223). He affiliates Macpherson with the sophisticated latitudinarianism of Scottish Whigs such as Sir John Dalrymple (1726-1810) and David Hume. *The Highlander* appears to confirm Macpherson's attraction to Whig ideology, but it remains to be seen whether his 'Celtic whiggism' was a formal engagement or a promiscuous relationship.

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[43] In my reading of Kidd and his interpretation of Macpherson's politics, I am indebted to Dafydd Moore. It has been a privilege to read his unpublished essay, 'James Macpherson and Celtic Whiggism', which I hope to publish in a collection of essays, *Culture, Community and 'the invention of Britishness'*, ed. by Michael Brown and Mel Kersey (currently under consideration by Ashgate Publishing).

In a rigorous argument, Kidd links Macpherson to what he describes as a 'tradition of Celtic neo-whiggism'.[44] The intellectual genealogy of this Celtic neo-whiggism includes Edward Lhuyd, the Reverend David Malcolme, Paul Pezron (1639-1706) and Jerome Stone (1727-56), a Dunkeld schoolmaster, collector of Gaelic poetry and the translator of 'Albin and the Daughter of Mey', which appeared in the *Scots Magazine* in 1756.[45] Malcolme, argues Kidd, 'was able to deploy a language-based theory of migration', a revision of the Fergusian regnal mythology which had been exploded by the Jacobite antiquarian Father Thomas Innes (1662-1744), in which the myth of the election of Fergus I was reinvented 'with Scotland as the mother country and Ireland as colony'.[46] Malcolme based this linguistic argument on Lhuyd's contention that 'the "Guydhels" were the original inhabitants of Britain, crossing from Gaul to Britain, and then from Scotland to Ulster'.[47]

But as outlined by Kidd, Macpherson's involvement in this model of Celtic whiggism hangs upon the contingency that he was familiar with Jerome Stone's published work in the *Scots Magazine* and, crucially, that 'he may have also known Stone's historical views' and subscribed to his thesis of 'whig sociolinguistics'.[48] It is not unrealistic to claim that as a contributor to the *Scots Magazine*, Macpherson might have been aware of Stone's translation of Albin and the Daughter of Mey', but this has not been conclusively demonstrated.[49] Yet

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[44] Kidd, p. 227.
[45] See *The Sublime Savage*, pp. 63-5, and Thomson, *The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's Ossian*, pp. 6, 21-5.
[46] Kidd, p. 224.
[47] Kidd, p. 224.
[48] Kidd, p. 227.
[49] Paul deGategno argues rather incautiously that 'Macpherson had undoubtedly read' Stone's translation in the *Scots Magazine*, but fails to offer proof (*James Macpherson*, p. 24). Mícheál Mac Craith rushes to the same conclusion that 'Macpherson could hardly have missed Stone's

had he read it, his knowledge of Stone's 'historical views' would still remain hypothetical. And if Macpherson had read Stone's piece immediately in January 1756 and taken it to heart, it is strange that he exclusively employs the Anglocentric term 'minstrel' (VI, ll.1, 11, 73) instead of a Gaelic equivalent in *The Hunter*, a poem which reputedly was written later in that same year. Two years after Stone's translation appeared, Macpherson's usage in *The Highlander* had shifted to the term 'bard' (V, ll. 289, 310), without a minstrel anywhere to be seen.

Kidd's characterisation of Macpherson as a latitudinarian Whig is fascinating, opening up many new ways of reading his poetry as well as his prose. But the more specific label of Celtic neo-whiggism has yet to be demonstrated. The crux of Kidd's argument, at least in terms of the specific intellectual genealogy which he outlines, is unnecessarily tenuous. There are less convoluted channels through which Macpherson could have come into contact with the sociolinguistic theory that Ireland was originally colonised from Britain by the Scots. After all, Edward Lhuyd was not the originator of this hypothesis. In *Britannia*, Camden gives the following account of the original colonisation of Ireland:

> Some few ages after ['the Israelites departed out of Egypt'], Hiberus and Hermion (call'd Ever and Erimon by the Irish writers) the sons of Milesius King of Spain, planted Colonies in this Country (unpeopled by a Pestilence at that time,) with the permission of Gerguntius, King of the Britains; as the British History informs us. I shall not meddle either with the Truth or Falsity of these relations: Antiquity must be allow'd some liberty in this way.

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translation', but gives no positive evidence; 'The Forging of Ossian', in *Celticism*, pp. 125-41; p. 128. Fiona Stafford argues more judiciously that 'no solid evidence exists to prove that Macpherson had read Stone's translation', no matter how likely it appears (*The Sublime Savage*, p. 65).

> However, as I doubt not but this Island was inhabited, as soon as mankind began to multiply and disperse in the world; so it is very plain, that its first Inhabitants came from Britain.[50]

Here, Camden uses 'the British History' of Geoffrey of Monmouth to authorise his wider argument that the 'first Inhabitants' of Ireland 'came from Britain'. And his idea that 'Antiquity must be allow'd some liberty' is noteworthy, as though the idea of authoritative origins ultimately dissolves into subjectivity and myth. Sir James Ware (1594-1666) found in Camden the idea that Ireland had originally been populated from Britain and developed it further in *The Antiquities and Histories of Ireland*, an Anglocentric survey whose Protestant historiography attempts to erase the Gaelic language and Catholic religion from the text of Irish history. The list of authorities which Ware cites includes many figures already discussed in this thesis, including 'Giraldus Barry', 'the most Learned Camden', 'Geofry Monmouth' and 'Tacitus'. Based upon his readings of their works, Ware writes the following of Ireland:

> But as to the first Inhabitants ; their Opinion seems to me most satisfactory, who deduce them from Britain, both by reason of the Vicinity of Britain, and the easiness of the passage, as also for the Conformity of the Language and Customs with those of the Ancient Britains [. . .].[51]

Ware's concentration on 'Language' here is explicit, and in the pages which follow he develops his thesis more extensively. By his own admission, Macpherson deferred to Ware's authority on this subject. 'That Ireland was first

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[50] Camden, *Britannia*, II, p. 1314.

[51] *The Antiquities and History of Ireland; by the Right Honourable Sir James Ware, Knt.* (London: Printed for R. Robinson, at the Gold Lyon, 1714). Cited hereafter as Ware. The editor of this edition remains anonymous, but in his 1722 edition of Camden's *Britannia*, the Whig Archbishop Edmund Gibson adds a footnote citing Ware on this very point of the British colonisation of Ireland (II, p. 1314). Combining this with a shared ideological approach to history, it is therefore possible that the anonymous editor of Ware's *Antiquities and History of Ireland* is Gibson himself.

peopled from Britain is certain', writes Macpherson.[52] 'Sir James Ware', he states forthrightly, 'was indefatigable in his researches'.[53] So in terms of a linguistic argument for the original colonisation of Ireland from Britain, there is a direct ideological descent from Camden to Ware to Macpherson.

Temora (1763) plays an important part in illustrating Macpherson's argument that Ireland was first inhabited from Scotland, an idea that may be traced in his work at least as far back as *The Highlander*. In *The Highlander*, he refers twice to Scotland's conquest of Ireland under 'Gregorius' awful name,/ Hibernia's conqu'ror for a gen'rous fame' (I, ll. 49-50), a point that essentially upholds Kidd's argument about Macpherson's Whiggism, differing only on its ideological and philological sources.[54] John MacQueen has said that Macpherson's name 'Temora corresponds to the Irish *Temair*, "Tara".[55] Crucially, in Ware's study we find a regnal list containing many of the mythical kings of Ireland under the heading 'Of the Succession of their Kings' (pp. 11-13).[56] In that list he mentions a kingdom of 'Temoria', the source from which Macpherson has almost certainly derived 'Temora'. By this time Macpherson had concluded for himself that the Fergusian mythologies of John Fordun (c. 1320-c. 1384), Hector Boece (c. 1465-1536), and George Buchanan were no longer defensible, and he had distanced himself from them in his prefatory

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[52] 'A Dissertation', in *The Works of Ossian, the Son of Fingal. In Two Volumes. Translated from the Galic Language By James Macpherson*, 3rd edn. (London, 1765). Reprinted in Gaskill, pp. 205-24 (pp. 208-09).
[53] See the 'Advertisement' to *The Works of Ossian*, reprinted in Gaskill, pp. 201-02 (p. 201).
[54] See also *The Highlander*, V, ll. 302.
[55] John MacQueen, '*Temora* and Legendary History', in *From Gaelic to Romantic*, pp. 69-78 (p. 71).
[56] Ware, pp. 11-13.

'Dissertation' to *The Works of Ossian* (1765).[57] In *The Highlander* he had discovered a potent means of transmitting cultural history through the 'vocal quire' (V, l. 294) of the bards:

> While thus the king and noble chiefs rejoice,
> Harmonious bards exalt the tuneful voice:
> A select band by Indulph's bounty fed,
> To keep in song the mem'ry of the dead!
> They handed down the ancient rounds of time,
> In oral story and recorded rhyme. (V, ll. 293-96)

Liberated from the confines of recorded history, we find Macpherson spreading his sails and moving into the imaginative world of 'the ancient rounds of time', unfettered by the printed words of all who had come before him. The ideological crux of Macpherson's *Temora* (1763) is to re-appropriate this situation—complete with the Scottish conquest of Ireland—into a mythical Ossianic framework, abandoning the debunked annals of Fordun and the Fergusian regnal lists to explore the wide open spaces of bardic pre-history.[58] In this twilight world, Macpherson is subtly disengaging from the idea of a canon, erasing the signs of his literary sources to arrive in the trackless history and timeless landscapes portrayed in his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760).

Before moving to a discussion of *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, a further discussion of Macpherson's political affiliations might prove useful. Evidence

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[57] 'Fordun, possessed of all the national prejudice of the age, was unwilling that his country should yield, in point of antiquity, to a people, then its rivals and enemies. Destitute of annals in Scotland, he had recourse to Ireland, which, according to the vulgar errors of the times, was reckoned the first habitation of the Scots. [. . .] It was from [the Irish bards] he took those improbable fictions, which form the first part of his history. [. . .] Even Buchanan himself, except the blind elegance and vigour of his style, has very little to recommend him. Blinded with political prejudices, he seemed more anxious to turn the fictions of his predecessors to his own purposes, than to detect their misrepresentations, or investigate truth amidst the darkness which they had thrown around it' ('A Dissertation', in Gaskill, pp. 206-07).

[58] See John MacQueen, '*Temora* and Legendary History', in *From Gaelic to Romantic*, pp. 69-78. See also Thomson, *Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's Ossian*, pp. 59-68.

has already been discussed in the context of Kidd's researches that Macpherson had adopted a Whig ideological position. It as a sound assumption that by 1758 Macpherson identified with a Whig sense of nationhood, but 'Whig' is a label of mixed meanings. *The Highlander* and the prefatory essays to his Ossianic poetry undermine Kidd's theory that Macpherson had been indoctrinated in the Malcolme, Pezron and Stone 'tradition of Celtic neo-whiggism'.[59] It has frequently been noted that from the time he published the epic *Fingal* (December 1761), Macpherson had sought the patronage of Lord Bute. Lord Bute's place in history has suffered through the historiographical ill effects of English resistance to Britishness, rather than by any genuine professional deficiency on his own part.[60] It played to the propaganda of extremists such as John Wilkes that Macpherson had dedicated *Fingal* and *Temora* to Lord Bute, a member of the Stuart family. But the relationship between Macpherson and Bute has often been misrepresented as that of two predatory Scots at large in London, rather than as two Britons who shared a common political ideology.

As Christopher Hibbert has noted, Bolingbroke's *Idea of a Patriot King* (1738) was to have a profound effect on the intellectual development of the youthful Prince George, later King George III, who from the earliest days of his education had been indoctrinated with the ideology of his father Frederick's

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[59] Kidd, p. 227.

[60] 'Bute's extraordinary unpopularity was a result of a mix of factors ranging from aristocratic envy to popular xenophobia, but the major charges can be summarized under three heads. First, Bute was a Scot and was thought to be using his influence over the king to prefer Scotsmen to lucrative and powerful places throughout the government. Second, Bute was a Stuart, and was assumed to be encouraging the king's supposed absolutist tendencies. Third, Bute and the king were pushing for an immediate end to the Seven Years' War with France - a war which William Pitt had conducted with brilliant success. In the popular mind, Bute's ascendancy threatened not only the jobs and status of Englishmen, but political stability and national prestige'; see Lance Bertlesen, *The Nonsense Club: Literature and Popular Culture, 1749-1764* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp.170-71.

party, the Patriot Whigs.[61] 'George III became something which his grandfather had not been and which Frederick might have become had he not died in 1751—a "Patriot King" in the national, British, rather than political sense of the term', notes Christine Gerrard.[62] Bute's intellectual influence on George III has long been acknowledged. With its 'broad-bottom' platform of subordinating Tory and Whig partisanship to the ideal of selfless civic virtue, George III's education in the Bolingbrokean language of nationhood had begun as a child under the instruction of the Patriot Whig Dr. Francis Ayscough (1700-1763), and this education was reinforced by his mentor Lord Bute.

Lord Bute's role as Macpherson's patron should be considered in this context, as a political meeting of two complex intellectuals, rather than the chauvinistic caricature of two predatory Scots on the make. Approached from this point of view, it is easier to see Macpherson's argument that Ireland was originally populated from Scotland as a kind Bolingbrokean paradigm in which the 'factions' of pre-Union Scotland, Ireland, England and Wales are all subjugated to a transcendent myth of Britishness. In 'Literary Anecdotes of James Macpherson, Esq.', included by Laing in his edition of *The Works of Ossian*, we find the following discourse ascribed to Macpherson:

> To execute [*The History of Great Britain from the Restoration to the Accession of the House of Hanover* (1775)], he was furnished with the best and most authentic materials, the original papers of the families of Stuart and Hanover, together with those of King William; of which he made the most liberal and accurate use, without being either tinctured with the prejudices, or biassed by the parties and factions, which convulsed these kingdoms during the times of which he treats.[63]

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[61] Christopher Hibbert, *George III: A Personal History* (London: Viking, 1998), pp. 11-12.
[62] Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition*, pp. 14-15.
[63] See Laing, I, pp. xlvix-liii. Laing speculates that this piece, originally published in *Ruddiman's Weekly Magazine* (1776), was written by Macpherson himself.

The emphasis on 'authentic materials' and 'original papers' almost overshadows this rhetorical construct of Macpherson as a selfless servant of civic virtue who can reconcile 'the families of Stuart and Hanover' in a politically neutral narrative of British history. In this pseudo-panegyric, Macpherson is portrayed as not being 'biassed' by 'parties and factions'. The Bolingbrokean rhetoric of Patriotism, and King George III's rhetoric of a 'Briton', are plainly ascribed to Macpherson. Strangely, Lord Bute's patronage is then implicitly denied:

> Mr Macpherson has been too independant [sic] and perhaps *too high* in his mind to court the great; he has therefore received no favour from their munificence, no advantage from their patronage. We cannot, in all our inquiries, discover that he ever had what the world distinguish by the name of patron.[64]

For the unknown author of this biographical sketch, Macpherson plainly represents a complex mixture of concepts, principles and identities in which his debts, obligations and sources are obscured or erased. Notably, the patronage of the man who had in part facilitated his literary and political success—Lord Bute—is not acknowledged. These 'anecdotes' recognise neither the patronage of Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* by an influential Edinburgh circle of 'sociological whigs', nor the same group's indispensable facilitation of his epic 'translations' after his initial rise to fame.[65]

So far, this chapter has examined some of Macpherson's pre-Ossianic poetry in order to establish a clearer sense of the identity of the central figure in the Ossian controversy. The differences between the *aisling*, or vision, depicted in each poem suggest an abrupt change in Macpherson's political ideology; in *The Hunter*, Union is prophesied as the nemesis of Scottish 'Liberty' and

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[64] Laing, I, p. lii.

Highland cultural identity, while in *The Highlander* there is no room in the British future for the Stuart dynasty. The fragmentation and elegiac tone of *Death* enacts the disintegration of personal history as Macpherson breaks with the Jacobite heritage of his clan and embraces the Whig ideology of 'Liberty'.

However, most of Macpherson's readers had little interest in the veiled polemical aspects of his poetry, or its authenticity; they bought edition after edition for the sheer pleasure of reading it. In early April 1760, Thomas Gray received 'two specimens of Erse poetry' from Horace Walpole, who in turn had received them from Sir David Dalrymple.[66] Upon reading them, Gray declared that he 'was so struck, so *exstasié* with their infinite beauty' that 'I am resolved to believe them genuine, spite of the Devil & the Kirk. [. . .] in short this Man is the very Demon of Poetry, or he has lighted on a treasure hid for ages'.[67] It was through these arbiters of taste that Macpherson's first experiments reached the public eye, but they had not acted alone.

Macpherson met the playwright John Home (1722-1808) at Moffat in the Autumn of 1759. Fiona Stafford argues that this meeting was not accidental, but had been arranged by Adam Ferguson (1723-1816).[68] There, the Lowlander Home pressed the Highlander James Macpherson—who by this time had published two poems in the Scots magazine, plus *The Highlander*—for his knowledge of Gaelic poetry. Home, a man whose play *Douglas* (1757) had brought him fame and prosperity, persuaded Macpherson to translate some Gaelic poetry for him, a task which Macpherson was reluctant to perform. But

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[65] On the 'sociological whigs', see Kidd, pp. 117-22.
[66] *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, ed. by Paget Toynbee and Leonard Whibley, 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1935), II, pp. 664-65, *nn.* 1-2.
[67] Gray to Wharton [c. June 20, 1760], *Correspondence of Thomas Gray*, II, p. 680.

when he relented and gave Home the piece which would later be published as Fragment VII, 'The Death of Oscur'.[69] Home and Ferguson were joined in Moffat on Tuesday, 2 October, by Alexander Carlyle (1722-1805), who was as impressed as his friends were by the vigour, style and striking imaginative force communicated by Macpherson's 'translation'.[70] This circle of admirers and patrons would expand to include Hugh Blair (1718-1800), David Hume and Lord Kames (1696-1782). Macpherson rose to power through the direct influence of this circle of sociological Whigs.

Gray's immediate response was to prove a perceptive gauge of the public response to *Fragments of Ancient Poetry, Collected in the Highlands of Scotland, and Translated from the Galic or Erse Language* (Edinburgh, 1760), which rapidly went to a second edition in August of that year. As has been discussed in chapter two, Addison's association of *Chevy Chase* with the epic tradition had transformed the ballad into a polite literary form, and miscellanies such as Ramsay's *The Ever Green* and Thomas Warton's *The Union* attest the popularity of ballads such as *Hardyknute*. In the Dedication to *The Ever Green*, Ramsay refers to 'the following Old Bards' who 'now make a Demand for that Immortal Fame that *tuned their Souls* [my italics] some Hundred Years ago'.[71] The fact that Macpherson appreciated these antiquarian sentiments as expressed in *The Ever Green* is evident from his lines, 'In vain the poet glides in melting strains,/ In vain *attunes his soul* to tuneful woe' (*Death*, ll. 386-87; my italics).

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[68] *The Sublime Savage*, p. 77.
[69] On the 'Death of Oscar', see Donald Meek, The Gaelic Ballads of Scotland', in *Ossian Revisited*, pp. 19-48 (pp. 37-40).
[70] See Alexander Carlyle, *Anecdotes and Characters of the Times*, ed. by James Kinsley (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), p. 203.
[71] *The Ever Green*, I, pp. iv-v.

But the influence of that miscellany on Macpherson extends beyond this particular borrowing, into *Hardyknute* itself. In that poem, the king of Scotland sends a messenger to alert Hardyknute that a Norse invasion has begun. A well-structured 'summoning scene' ensues when, as his sons are enjoying the chase, Hardyknute sounds the call to arms: he blows his 'Horn as grene as Glass', the 'Treis in grene Wod schuke thereat/ Sae loud rang ilka Hill' (VIII). As the text continues,

> His Sons in manly Sport and Glie,
> Had past that Summers Morn,
> Quehen lo down in a grassy Dale,
> They heard their Fatheris Horn
> That horn, quod they, neir sounds in Peace,[72]
> We haif other Sport to byde;[73] (*Hardyknute*, IX)

The significance of this scene in *Hardyknute* resonates in Fragment XIV of *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760). In Macpherson's version, when the Irish hero Cuchullin learns that Swaran has landed on the coast with his invasion force, a pattern remarkably similar to *Hardyknute* ensues. Cuchullin, or 'Cuchulaid', as Macpherson calls him, gives the following order: 'Go, Moran, take my spear; strike the shield of Caithbat which hangs before the gate. It never rings in peace'. This passage indicates just how explicit the connection is between Macpherson's Fragment XIV and *Hardyknute*.

However, his interest in *Hardyknute* extends beyond this unacknowledged debt. As Derick Thomson has noted, Fragment XIV serves as the opening scene

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[72] cf. 'It never rings in peace'; Fragment XIV, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760).
[73] cf. 'Another sport is drawing near', *Fingal*, Book I.

of the epic *Fingal.*[74] In moving from the fragmentary into the epic, Macpherson carries the ideas of Ramsay along with him:

> Go, Fithil's son, and take my spear: strike the sounding shield of Cabait. It hangs at Tura's rustling gate; *the sound of peace is not its voice.* My heroes shall hear on the hill.
> He went and struck the bossy shield. *The hills and their rocks replied.* [. . .] Hail, said Cuchullin, sons of the narrow vales, hail ye hunters of the deer. *Another sport is drawing near:*[75] [my italics]

Given the Whig tendencies Macpherson has demonstrated thus far, it is not surprising that he should admire the imaginary history and noble sentiments expressed in *Hardyknute*, a Unionist fable of Britishness. These two separate narratives were both created by Unionist nation-builders, fabricating their own romanticised histories of British identity and scripting them in the Scottish landscape. As outlined in the preceding chapters, the sources of this eighteenth-century Romanticism can be traced to the Union of the Crowns, the Revolution of 1688 and the Act of Union.

Both pieces express latent anxieties about Scotland's ultimate survival within the Union, while interpreting the ancient British constitution as the only viable option of nationhood. Yet they embrace this contradiction by writing histories which make sense out of the present. The turbulence of the Revolution of 1688, and more specifically the Battle of Killiekrankie (1689), register themselves as possible contexts for the language used in Fragment VIII, where elegy and memory form a temporary bridge to a past which can only be recovered through the poetic imagination. Macpherson had already employed the phrase

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[74] Thomson, *The Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's Ossian*, p. 17
[75] *Fingal*, Book I, in Gaskill, pp. 55-6; my italics.

'relics of a dying race' (l. 47) in 'On the Death of Marshal Keith'. This poignant description finds an echo in his portrayal of Ossian in Fragment VIII:

> By the side of a rock on the hill, beneath the aged trees, Old Oscian sat on the moss; the last of the race of Fingal. Sightless are his aged eyes; his beard is waving in the wind. Dull through the leafless trees he heard the voice of the north. Sorrow revived in his soul: he began and lamented the dead.
>
> How hast thou fallen like an oak, with all thy branches round thee! Where is Fingal the King? Where is Oscur my son? Where are all my race? Alas! in the earth they lie. I feel their tombs with my hands. I hear the river below murmuring hoarsely over the stones. What dost thou, O river, to me? Thou bringest back the memory of the past.[76]

At this stage, Macpherson had not yet settled the spelling of his famous bard's name, which appears here as 'Oscian'. However, the landscape he paints would continue to be characteristic of his Ossianic poetry, with the 'voice of the north' moaning in the 'leafless trees' and the 'murmering' river which speaks only of 'the dead'. It is difficult to do justice to the uniqueness of Macpherson's imagination as expressed in *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*. 'The Fragments are what modern readers should concentrate on if they wish to feel Macpherson's power', writes Robert Crawford, arguing that the 'Ossianic tone' of this poetry 'is at the root of Romanticism'.[77] The anxieties which drive Macpherson's Romanticism may be read in 'the last of the race of Fingal': the end of the Fordunian regnal lists, the demystification of the Stuart cause and, perhaps foremost, the end of Scottish independence at Killiecrankie.

This battle has been mythologised as a formative moment in national history, but 'Bonnie Dundee's' fatal wound took away the finest field commander that the Jacobite cause had. In his Latin elegy for John Graham of Claverhouse (created Viscount Dundee by James II in 1688), Dr. Archibald

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[76] Gaskill, p. 18.

Pitcairne (1652-1713) turns the death of Dundee into an apotheosis of Scotland's martial independence, saying farewell to the 'Ultime Scotorum', the last of the Grahams and the last of the Scots.[78] Dryden, whom Macpherson greatly admired, liked the poem enough to 'English' it in his own liberal manner. For Macpherson, Culloden was a traumatic affirmation that Scottish martial independence had already been relegated to myth. He appears to have appropriated the sentiment of Pitcairne's 'last of the line' image to the bardic voice of Ossian, signifying a formative break with conventional representations of the Highlands and the beginning of a new way of remembering and identifying with its past.

Pitcairne's 'Ultime Scotorum' has topical as well as tonal echoes in Macpherson's apotheosis of 'the last of the line of Fingal'. The success of his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* would send him into the Highlands in search of originals for a 'work of considerable length, and which deserves to be styled an heroic poem', one which had already been briefly described in the Preface to the second edition: 'the last three poems in the collection are fragments which the translator obtained of this Epic poem'.[79] In the summer of 1760 Macpherson left Edinburgh for the Highlands and Islands in search the 'original' bardic tradition of Ossian.[80] In their enthusiasm for narratives of immemorial British nationhood, the influential Edinburgh Whig circle that had adopted Macpherson also

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[77] See Robert Crawford, 'Post-Cullodenism', in *The London Review of Books* (3 October 1996), 18.

[78] 'Epitaphium in Vice-Comitem Dundee', or 'Upon the Death of Viscount Dundee', in *The Poems of John Dryden*, ed. by Paul Hammond and David Hopkins (Harlow: Longman, 2000), III, pp. 218-19.

[79] See the Preface to *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, 2nd edn, in Gaskill, pp. 5-6.

[80] On Macpherson's journeys in search of Gaelic source material, see Stafford, *The Sublime Savage*, pp. 117-18. See also deGategno, *James Macpherson*, pp. 20-21.

commissioned his search for more Gaelic *disjecta membra* from which to construct this promised epic, *Fingal*.[81]

In the summer of 1773, Samuel Johnson and James Boswell set out to the Highlands and Islands on their own search for originals. However, the genuine motivation for their tour is a matter of uncertainty. Each would later write his own account of that journey, yet with conflicting accounts of its origins. In the first sentence of Johnson's *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775), he denies, or effaces, any particular original impulse: 'I had desired to visit the Hebrides, or the Western Isles of Scotland, so long, that I scarcely remember how the wish was excited'.[82] It seems like a simple evolution of a wish rather than a specific beginning. A more complex and specific narrative emerges, however, when we compare these words with those written by Boswell in his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (1785):

> Dr. Johnson had for many years given me hopes that we should go together and visit the Hebrides. Martin's Account of those islands had impressed us with a notion that we might there contemplate a system of life almost totally different from what we had been accustomed to see; and to find simplicity and wildness, and all the circumstances of remote time and place, so near our native great island, was an object within the reach of reasonable curiosity. Dr. Johnson has said in his Journey that he scarcely remembered how the wish to visit the Hebrides was excited; but he told me, in summer 1763, that his father put Martin's Account into his hands when he was very young, and that he was much pleased with it.[83]

Martin does portray 'a system of life almost totally different from what we had been accustomed to see', full of sublime landscapes, 'simplicity and wildness', and people reputedly untouched by the vices associated with trade and

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[81] Paul deGetegno, *James Macpherson*, p. 31

[82] Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, ed. by J. D. Fleeman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 1.

[83] James Boswell, *Boswell's Journal of* A Tour to the Hebrides *with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*, ed. by Frederick A. Pottle and Charles H. Bennett (London: William Heinemann, 1936), p. 3. Boswell's private papers were recovered at Malahide Castle in 1927.

commerce. And as described (with questionable authenticity) by him, St. Kilda represents a living example of prelapsarian civic virtue; crucially, this ideal community exists on native British soil. The work of Martin seems to cast a shadow of contradiction over their tour: Johnson declares that he can 'scarcely remember how the wish was excited', yet Boswell unequivocally states that their tour to Scotland was inspired by 'Martin's Account'.

Interestingly, this journey took place in the same year in which a new edition of *The Works of Ossian* had appeared, and there are sufficient reasons to believe that the popularity of Macpherson's poetry was a central motivation for their Tour. But the contest between Johnson and Macpherson has more to do with defining the dominant narrative of nationhood than with locating authentic sources. Eighteenth-century anxieties on all sides of the Ossian controversy implicitly stemmed from questions regarding the literary language of Britishness and the 'pure' origins of national identity. As the self-appointed representative of eighteenth-century London's literary establishment, Johnson either had to repudiate the Gaelic oral tradition upon which Macpherson's work was reputedly founded, or concede that 'Celtic' culture was more ancient and learned than the Gothic 'well of English undefiled'. For both Johnson and Macpherson, then, the bardic tradition of Scotland's Highlands and Islands assumed monumental importance in their competing myths of British nation-building.

Johnson appears to have been ill-disposed towards enlightening himself about the history of Highland bardic culture, particularly if he relied upon the testimony of Martin. As noted in Chapter Five, there are two extant English language accounts of life and educational practice within a bardic school: one occurs in the anonymous *Memoirs of Clanricarde* (1722), and the other is

recorded in Martin's *Description of the Western Isles of Scotland*, the very text which Johnson carried with him on his tour. Here is Martin's description of a bardic school:

> I must not omit to relate their way of study, which is very singular: They shut their Doors and Windows for a day's time, and lie on their backs, with a Stone upon their Belly, and Plads about their Heads, and their Eyes being cover'd, they pump their Brains for Rhetorical Encomium or Panegyrick; and indeed they furnish such a Stile from this dark Cell, as is understood by very few: and if they purchase a couple of Horses as the Reward of their Meditation, they think they have done a great matter. The Poet, or Bard, had a Title to the bridegroom's upper Garb, that is, the Plad and Bonnet; but now he is satisfy'd with what the Bridegroom pleases to give him on such occasions (p. 116).

Given that this is one of only two known descriptions of bardic schools, we may wish that Martin had allowed this 'singular' description a touch more dignity. Johnson, as well as the rest of Martin's readers, might be forgiven for failing to read this unlikely scene of men lying on their backs in darkened houses, 'with a Stone upon their Belly' and their 'Plads about their Heads', as an ancient and highly sophisticated tradition. Osborne Bergin has argued that it was conventional bardic practice to compose and memorise verses in a darkened room; furthermore, the unintelligible 'Stile' which emerged from 'this dark Cell' was not the gibberish of illiterate fools, but a five-hundred-year-old dialect of great metrical precision and linguistic complexity practised exclusively by this professional class of Gaelic poets.

Martin hardly hints at the vestiges of the learned tradition which this scene represents, leaving his readers with this almost parodic picture of the bards, a highly problematic original which had fostered a trenchant prejudice in Johnson.[84] Yet Sir James Ware, Macpherson's 'indefatigable' authority on Irish

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[84] In his excoriation of Highland cultural identity, Johnson incautiously writes that 'We heard of manuscripts that were, or that had been in the hands of somebody's father, or grandfather; but at

antiquities, provides an equally problematic representation of '*the most Famous Schools of* Ireland', retailing as historical fact Bishop James Ussher's Protestant myth-making that these schools were exclusively Christian in nature and had proliferated through the influence of Saint Patrick at Armagh, 'the most Antient, and most Eminent' of the 'Schools'.[85] In fact, Ware himself removes the bards from his apocryphal Protestant account of Ireland's 'Academies'. This historiographical erasure of the bards and their scholarly traditions works to Macpherson's advantage, creating 'room' for him to synthesise into the bardic voice of Ossian his own mixture of Gaelic ballads, the Aberdeen Enlightenment, the Bolingbrokean language of nationhood, and the *lingua franca* of polite British literature.

As discussed in the previous chapter, Johnson had made clear in his letters to Charles O'Conor that the world was 'doubtful and ignorant' of Irish antiquities and of bardic scholarship, yet he was diplomatic enough to make a linguistic distinction between Irish and Erse. Although willing to concede that the existence of ancient Irish manuscripts and scholarship was not contingent upon his knowledge of it, he was not so circumspect about 'Highland Bards', the 'Earse' language, and ultimately Macpherson's sources:

> That the Bards could not read more than the rest of their countrymen, it is reasonable to suppose; because, if they had read, they could probably have written; and how high their compositions may reasonably be rated, an enquirer may best judge by considering what store of imagery, what principles of ratiocination, what comprehension of knowledge, and what delicacy of elocution he has known any man may attain who cannot read. The state of the bards was yet more hopeless. He that cannot read, may now converse with

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last we had no reason to believe they were other than Irish. Martin mentions Irish, but never any Earse manuscripts, to be found in the Islands in his time' (*A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, pp. 97-98).

[85] Ware, *The Antiquities and History of Ireland*, p. 35.

> those that can; but the Bard was a barbarian among barbarians, who, knowing nothing himself, lived with others that knew no more.[86]

Intransigently dismissive of bardic culture and tradition, Johnson resolves to invent his own prejudicial and fictional history of the bards. However, the graduates of the bardic schools were far from illiterate 'barbarians'. Johnson assumes that imitation, such as Pope's *Iliad*, rather than invention, such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, supplies a poet's 'store of imagery', a point which he had made clear in the context of St. Kilda. Boswell recollects the following conversation:

> We had in the course of our tour heard of St. Kilda poetry. Mr. Johnson said, "It must be very poor, because they have very few images." "But," said I, "there may be a poetical genius to combine these, and in short to make poetry of them." "But, sir," said he, "a man cannot make fire but in proportion as he has wood. He cannot coin guineas but in proportion as he has gold". (*Tour to the Hebrides*, p. 189)

It is clear here that Johnson associates the creation of poetry with the imitation of a literary canon, rather than individual creativity or 'poetical genius'; a poet can only 'make fire' if he has access to external raw materials. Paradoxically, Johnson is willing to defend publicly his own belief in Martin's account of the 'second sight', but feels compelled to deny the inner fountain of the individual imagination, the source of Romanticism.[87] Martin himself argues of the people of the Hebrides, 'those who understand our Native Language must own' that it is sufficient to 'work upon the Affections in as Pathetick a manner as any other

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[86] Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, p. 96.

[87] Boswell writes, 'I omitted to mention that Mr. Johnson told Mr. Macqueen that he had found the belief of the second sight universal in Skye' (*Tour to the Hebrides*, pp. 188-89). For Johnson's extensive interest in the second sight, see *Journey to the Western Islands*, pp. 89-91. See also Edward Larrissy, 'The Celtic Bard of Romanticism: Blindness and Second Sight', in *Romanticism*, 5.1 (1999), 43-57.

Languages whatever'.[88] And Joseph Warton had argued in 1756 that 'The Sublime and the Pathetic are the two chief nerves of all genuine poesy. What is there transcendentally Sublime or Pathetic in Pope?'.[89] Johnson concedes no ground to the possibility that one could acquire 'comprehension of knowledge' and 'delicacy of elocution' through an alternative tradition to his own. It is in this repression of invention that we find Johnson's anxieties about the epic status of *Paradise Lost*, or the imaginative power of Macpherson's poetry to rewrite the immemorial origins of Britain.

There are in fact noticeable similarities between the arguments of Johnson and Macpherson about the linguistic origins of national identity in Britain, from the time of the Roman empire onwards. Given the learning and wide reading of both men, it is not a surprise that they ultimately might have come to rely upon the same original as the basis of their disparate opinions, and that both should address issues of mixture and purity as the basis of authentication. Macpherson was no mean classical scholar, and was keen to substantiate the linguistic argument in *The Works of Ossian* concerning the 'establishment of the Celtic states, in the north of Europe' from the most respected authorities.[90] Like Johnson in his *Dictionary*, Macpherson produces an unmixed pedigree of his native language stretching back into ancient times, linking the integrity of Scotland's national identity to this supposed purity:

> If tradition could be depended upon, it is only among a people, from all time, free of intermixture with foreigners. We are to look for these among the mountains and inaccessible parts of a country: places, on account of their barrenness, uninviting to an enemy, or whose natural strength enabled the natives to repel invasions. Such are the people of the mountains of Scotland. We, accordingly, find, that they differ materially

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[88] Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands*, pp. vi-vii.
[89] *An Essay on the Genius and Writings of Pope*, 4th edn, 2 vols (London: Dodsley, 1782), I, p. x.
[90] 'A Dissertation.', in Gaskill, p. 205-224 (p. 205).

> from those who possess the low and more fertile part of the kingdom. Their language is pure and original, and their manners are those of an ancient and unmixed race of men. Conscious of their own antiquity, they long despised others, as a new and mixed people. [. . .] It is no wonder, therefore, that there are more remains of antiquity among them, than among any other people in Europe.[91]

The convergence of the terms 'pure and original' with 'ancient and unmixed' shows how the rhetorical intensity and concentration of Macpherson's linguistic nation-building rivals Johnson's. There are enough similarities between this analysis and Johnson's comments upon the survival of the 'British' language in the mountains of Wales to conclude that Macpherson had modelled his argument upon the prefatory essays in the *Dictionary*. In this particular instance, Johnson might have felt eaten away inside by the irony that imitation is the highest form of flattery. But another more ancient origin would also account for this similarity: both men may have built their arguments upon this key observation by Julius Caesar:

> The interior of Britain is inhabited by people who claim, on the strength of an oral tradition, to be aboriginal; the coast, by Belgic immigrants who came to plunder and make war – nearly all of them retaining the names of the tribes from which they originated – and later settled down to till the soil. The population is exceedingly large, the ground thickly studded with homesteads, closely resembling those of the Gauls, and the cattle very numerous.[92]

The idea that Britain resembled 'Gaul', though one that Johnson may have found distasteful, fitted into the linguistic argument which Macpherson derived from Camden and Ware: that the Gauls had originally populated Britain and that Ireland was subsequently colonised from there. It was this argument regarding 'the strength of an oral tradition' which Macpherson implicitly used to validate the authenticity of the bard Ossian. This was sufficient not only to gain Johnson's

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[91] 'A Dissertation.', in Gaskill, pp. 205-06.

full attention, but to induce him into arduous countermeasures via the unforgiving tracks and tides of the Highlands and Islands.

'Of the Earse language, as I understand nothing, I cannot say more than I have been told. It is the rude speech of a barbarous people, who had few thoughts to express, and were content, as they conceived grossly, to be grossly understood', writes Johnson.[93] Johnson's rhetorical association of language and nationhood is evident when a few pages later he writes of 'the whole *Earse* nation' (p. 99). In this way Johnson attempts to compartmentalise the island of Britain, implicitly defending the purity of his own language-based myths of English identity from the mixed *lingua franca* of Britishness. Having thus dispensed with the 'Earse language' and the bards, he attacks Macpherson with equal confidence:

> I suppose my opinion of the poems of Ossian is already known. I believe they never existed in any other form than that which we have seen. The editor, or author, never could shew the original; nor can it be shewn by any other; to revenge reasonable incredulity, by refusing evidence, is a degree of insolence, with which the world is not yet acquainted; and stubborn audacity is the last refuge of guilt. It would be easy to shew it if he had it; but whence could it be had? [. . .] He has doubtless inserted names that circulate in popular stories, and may have translated some wandering ballads, if any can be found; (*Tour of the Western Islands*, p. 98)

Johnson is correct to assume that 'wandering ballads' partially formed the basis of Macpherson's epic poetry, a Whig tradition of nation-building which had continued at least since the time of Addison's *Spectator* essays on the ballad *Chevy Chase*.[94] However, Johnson was ill qualified to judge the authenticity of

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[92] Caesar, *The Conquest of Gaul*, trans. by S. A. Handford, rev. by Jane F. Gardner (London: Penguin, 1982), V.12 , pp. 110-11.
[93] Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, p. 95.
[94] See Thomson, *Gaelic Sources of Macpherson's Ossian*, and Donald Meek, 'The Gaelic Ballads of Scotland: Creativity and Adaptation', in *Ossian Revisited*, pp. 19-48.

any 'ballads' in the 'Earse language'; he could say 'no more than I have been told'.

Having convinced himself that he could silence the bards with his canonical authority, Johnson incautiously hazarded the following categorical statement: 'I believe there cannot be recovered, in the whole *Earse* language, five hundred lines of which there is any evidence to prove them a hundred years old'.[95] But Johnson had already been proven wrong on this exact point.[96] During his Highland travels, Macpherson himself had in fact recovered a precious manuscript original: The Book of the Dean of Lismore (1512-c.1542), an original manuscript whose unprecedented phonetic transcription of sixteenth-century Highland Gaelic contains nearly twenty-five hundred lines of heroic poetry ascribed to the bard Ossian.[97] However, it does not explicitly contain epic poetry. Neil Ross writes that The Book of the Dean of Lismore 'called after Sir James MacGregor, Dean of Lismore in Argyll, contains three sections of Gaelic poetry. The first is Scottish verse by native poets. [. . .] The second part includes five or six thousand lines of poetry of Irish origin. [. . .] The third section is devoted to heroic poetry', the subject of his volume entitled *Heroic Poetry from The Book of the Dean of Lismore*. As Derick Thomson and subsequently Donald Meek have shown, the poems *Fingal* and *Temora* are derived in part from these and other authentic ballad sources, as well as from Macpherson's imagination. It

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[95] Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, p. 97.
[96] See Henry A. Beers, *A History of English Romanticism in the Eighteenth Century* (1899; repr. New York: Dover, 1968), pp. 306-38 (pp. 313-14).
[97] See *The Dean of Lismore's Book: A Selection of Ancient Gaelic Poetry*, ed. by William F. Skene (Edinburgh: Edmonston and Douglas, 1862) and *Heroic Poetry from the Book of the Dean of Lismore*, ed. by Neil Ross, The Scottish Texts Society (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1939). See also Meek, 'The Gaelic Ballads of Scotland: Creativity and Adaptation', in *Ossian Revisited*.

is therefore appropriate that the mixed origins of Macpherson's Ossianic epics should arise from a heterogeneous sixteenth-century miscellany.

In many ways, the year 1760 marks the culmination of many of the themes which this thesis has traced. On a literary level, it was a significant year in the history of Ossianic poetry, one in which Micheál Coimín died and Macpherson rose to fame through his *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*. On a national level, it may be remembered for the death of George II and the accession of George III with his famous Bolingbrokean declaration that 'Born and educated in this country, I glory in the name of Briton'. The new father of the nation was determined to rise above the party faction of his children. From this moment, history came to be seen as less of a contentious threat to civic virtue and constitutional liberty:

> One of the features which first strikes the modern reader about Bolingbroke's account of Saxon liberty is his extremely flexible application of ethnic labels. All those who had invaded Britain, he asserts, 'were originally of Celtic, or Gothic extraction, call it what you please, as well as the people they subdued. They came out of the same northern hive; and therefore they naturally resumed the spirit of their ancestors when they came to a country where it prevailed.' In a footnote he adds that 'we have thought fit to explain the expression in this place, though we know the word Celtic, as well as the term Scythian, hath been used in the same large and general sense'. Celts, Goths, Saxons, and their accompanying mythologies could all find shelter under the same Gothic roof.[98]

Under this 'roof', there was room for Ossian. Both Johnson and Macpherson explicitly construct national origins whose purity is ultimately a myth. Like George III and Lord Bute, Macpherson was a student of Bolingbroke's works. Despite his rhetorical claim to the unmixed and pure 'tradition', however, what Macpherson presented to the world as authentic Highland poetry is actually a complex synthesis of imitation and invention, of Gaelic and English, a

Bolingbroke-inspired literature of Britishness. Since the obscure publication of *The Highlander*, he had been ready to supply a British epic by mixing existing myths derived from Buchanan with his own imagination.

Crucially, the Clan Macpherson itself was not 'pure', but part of the mixed Clan Chattan ('cat'), 'an ancient confederation of many tribes holding land to the east of Loch Ness'.[99] Macpherson must have felt a flush of pride when he read an explicit reference to 'Lord *Chattans* Land' (XIX) in Ramsay's edition of *Hardyknute*: in the anonymous 'Literary Anecdotes of James Macpherson, Esq.', included by Laing in his edition, it is written that the Macphersons 'deduce their origin from the ancient Catti of Germany' (Laing, I, xlix). Laing attributes the authorship of these 'Anecdotes' to Macpherson himself. Whether or not this is the case, the improbable link between Macpherson, Clan Chattan and Tacitus's description of the 'Chatti' in the *Germania*, is a mock-heroic flirtation with the ideology of Bolingbroke.[100]

On the other hand, Johnson demonstrates how the Tory pretence of an independent, pure and immemorial England subsists upon resistance to change and the endless denial of the British threat to its fictional homogeneity. As he repudiates the literacy of the bards, he obfuscates the explicitly mixed linguistic and cultural histories in England's 'Anglo-Saxon' past, identifying with the canonicity of Pope and repudiating Macpherson's new language of British epic. As an Anglocentric nation-builder, Johnson was determined to deny the

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[98] Bolingbroke, *The Works of Lord Bolingbroke*, 4 vols (1844), I, p. 318; cited by Gerrard in *The Patriot Opposition*, p. 112.
[99] Prebble, *Culloden*, p. 68.
[100] In a lengthy description, Tacitus describes the Chatti as a 'nation' that 'is distinguished by hardy bodies, well-knit limbs, fierce countenances, and unusual mental vigour', who excel in the strategy and execution of warfare' (*The Agricola and the Germania*, pp. 125-28).

authenticity of the Highland bardic tradition at any cost, as seen in this reference to The Book of the Dean of Lismore: 'The editor has been heard to say, that part of the poem was received by him, in the Saxon character. He has then found, by some peculiar fortune, an unwritten language, written in a character which the natives never beheld'.[101] By 'Saxon character', Macpherson had referred in the prevailing philological terminology of his day to the English language itself, whose Roman orthography was used in the unique phonetic transcription of Gaelic ballads in *The Book of the Dean of Lismore*. In this way, Johnson's eyes were plainly closed to any original that would legitimate the bard Ossian.

Macpherson did attempt to deceive his readers about the authenticity of his sources, but that does not make him a forger. From the Bible to the Magna Carta, from Geoffrey of Monmouth's *Historia Regum Britanniae* to Johnson's *Dictionary*, iconic texts and the culture they sustain are plagued by problems of authenticity. To categorise Macpherson's Ossianic poetry as 'forgery' is to identify with the illusory premise that somewhere there is an 'authentic' canon of literature, one produced by a culture which is not sustained by its own fictions. Whatever recriminations were made from Ireland regarding the 'genuine' home of Ossian, Oisín, or any of a number of variant spellings of this promiscuous name, the Irish had no privileged claim over the Scots in this matter to textual authenticity. As languages have regional dialects, so too oral traditions have regional variations. Macpherson had not stolen the bard from Ireland, but grew up with the Ossianic ballads that were in his native Highlands, polishing this Gaelic poetry to suit the literary tastes of eighteenth-century Britain; but in

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[101] Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, p. 98.

finding this 'room' for himself in ancient Caledonia, he had raised the dilemma of what is actually meant by an 'authentic' British myth. It was only through this controversy that Ossian ceased to be a common Gaelic currency, and became a contentious literary commodity whose ownership has been since that time the subject of an Irish-Scottish cultural dispute.[102]

Thomas Warton had remained more receptive to the voice of Ossian than his old acquaintance Samuel Johnson. He remarks in his dissertation, 'Of the Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe' (1774), that 'We must be careful to distinguish between the poetry of the Scandinavians, the Teutonics, and the Celts. As most of the Celtic and Teutonic nations were early converted to christianity [sic], it is hard to find any of the native songs. But I must except the poems of Ossian, which are noble and genuine remains of the Celtic poetry'.[103] It is evident in William Lisle Bowles' 'Monody' that Joseph Warton had also enjoyed casting the Romantic spell of Ossian over his own students.[104] The Wartons found great pleasure in the imaginative power of Macpherson's poetry, while Johnson was deeply threatened by it. His litany of denials and refutations in the Ossian controversy was itself a kind of fabrication, a repression of the tangible changes in the national landscape: he did not brave an objective inquiry into authentic

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[102] See Claire O'Halloran, 'Irish re-Creations of the Gaelic Past: the Challenge of Macpherson's Ossian, *Past and Present*, 124 (August 1989), 69-95. See also Kathryn Temple, 'Johnson and Macpherson: Cultural Authority and the Construction of Literary Property', in *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities*, 5 (1993), 355-387.

[103] Thomas Warton, 'Of the Origin of Romantic Fiction in Europe', in *The History of English Poetry, from the close of the eleventh to the commencement of the eighteenth century. To which are prefixed two dissertations. I. On the origin of romantic fiction in Europe. II. On the introduction of learning into England. (A third dissertation on the Gesta Romanorum.)*, 3 vols (London: J. Dodsley, J. Walter, J. Robson et al., 1774-81), I, sig. g4 r.

[104] William Lisle Bowles, 'Monody on the Death of Dr. Warton', in *The Poetical Works of William Lisle Bowles*, ed. by George Gilfillan, 2 vols (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1860), I, pp. 135-41.

Gaelic originals, but sheltered behind his Tory resistance to the literary and cultural identities of Britishness.

If Macpherson's poetry was after all simply poetry, then we may wonder why Johnson expended so much of his energy repudiating it. With regard to his zealous criticism of Macpherson, Johnson may be censured with his own aphoristic comment on Milton and *Paradise Lost*: 'Whence he drew the original design has been variously conjectured by men who cannot bear to think themselves ignorant of that, which, at last, neither diligence nor sagacity can discover'. Johnson's anxieties about the potency of Macpherson's myth-making and his tireless efforts to discredit him—as evidenced in his *Journey to the Western Islands* and his secret collaboration in William Shaw's *An Enquiry into the Authenticity of the Poems Ascribed to Ossian* (1781)—suggests that the 'centre' of Anglocentrism was not quite so well defined.[105] It is remarkable that Johnson has been remembered in the Ossian controversy as he would have wished: as the dominant voice of objective reason and sober intellectual inquiry, and not as a harried tactician, fighting off the encroachments of British cultural identity upon 'the wells of English undefiled'. If Johnson's efforts against Macpherson were correlative to these anxieties, then neither the arbiter nor the 'centre' of Anglocentrism was as robust as he would have us believe.

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[105] See Thomas M. Curley, 'Johnson's Last Word on Ossian: Ghostwriting for William Shaw', with Appendix, in *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*, ed. by Jennifer J. Carter and Joan J. Pittock (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), pp. 375-480.

CONCLUSION

In British literature, the post-Union premise of textual 'authenticity' originates in the rhetorical struggle to define the dominant narrative of nationhood, rather than in a transcendent world of ideas. The literary origins of British identity can be traced at least as far back as the writings of Julius Caesar and Tacitus; and myth-making by 'authorities' such as Geoffrey of Monmouth and Gerald of Wales would serve the imperialist interests of Anglocentric nation-builders for generation after generation. The culture which these successive generations of writers collectively fabricated, or 'constructed', has less to do with purity and authenticity than the intermixture and synthesis of multiple languages, histories, beliefs and competing mythologies. The very absence of an authentic or pure body of literature acted as an imaginative catalyst for post-Union literature in texts such as *Hardyknute*, Coimín's *Lay of Oisín in the Land of Youth* and Macpherson's Ossianic poetry; a more extensive list than this thesis has allowed might include works by Thomas Percy, Thomas Chatterton and William Blake.[1]

At times in his *Journey to the Western Islands*, it is difficult to determine whether Johnson is conjuring the world mythologised by Martin, or whether he is exorcising the voice of Ossian. Writing almost a century after Macpherson's death, Matthew Arnold demonstrated how these contentious issues of language and nationhood raised in the Ossian controversy had remained salient. As Arnold notes in the Introduction to *On The Study of Celtic Literature* (1867), his own

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[1] On the problems of textual authenticity in Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*, see Groom, *The Making of Percy's* Reliques. On Chatterton and literary fabrication, see *Thomas Chatterton and Romantic Culture*, ed. by Nick Groom (Basingstoke and New York: Macmillan/ St. Martin's Press, 1999).

circumspect public remarks dignifying 'Celticism' and the cultural importance of the Welsh Eisteddfod had elicited this editorial response from *The Times*:

> The Welsh language is the curse of Wales. Its prevalence, and the ignorance of English have excluded, and even now exclude, the Welsh people from the civilisation of their English neighbours. An Eisteddfod is one of the most mischievous and selfish pieces of sentimentalism which could possibly be perpetrated. It is simply a foolish interference with the natural progress of civilisation and prosperity. If it is desirable that the Welsh should talk English, it is monstrous folly to encourage them in a loving fondness for their old language. Not only the energy and power, but the intelligence and music of Europe have come from Teutonic sources, and this glorification of everything Celtic, if it were not pedantry, would be sheer ignorance. The sooner all Welsh specialities disappear from the face of the earth the better.[2]

In this statement, intellectual curiosity about 'everything Celtic' represents 'sheer ignorance' and nostalgic infantilism, while English imperialism—'the natural progress of civilisation'—traces its immemorial origins to 'Teutonic sources', free from intermixture. The echoes and images of Johnson and his mythical England are unmistakable. Written at a time when the Irish Republican Brotherhood, or 'the Fenians', were increasingly asserting Ireland's right to constitutional independence, this voice of *The Times* betrays the strains and stresses felt at the 'centre' of a Union on the verge of fragmentation.

Arnold specifies this hostile response to his more inclusive vision of Britishness as 'Philistinism', a term which might be applied to Johnson's perspective on the Ossian controversy. *The Study of Celtic Literature* features an examination of Macpherson's 'translations', providing an interesting assessment of their cultural legacy:

> The Celts, with their vehement reaction against the despotism of fact, with their sensuous nature, their manifold striving, their adverse destiny, their immense calamities, the Celts are the prime authors of this vein of piercing regret and passion, —of this Titanism in poetry. A famous book, Macpherson's *Ossian*, carried in the last century this vein like a flood of lava through Europe. I am not going to criticise Macpherson's *Ossian* here.

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[2] Cited by Arnold in *The Study of Celtic Literature* (London: Smith, Elder, 1891), p. xii.

> Make the part of what is forged, tawdry, spurious, in the book, as large as you please; strip Scotland, if you like, of every feather of borrowed plumes which on the strength of Macpherson's *Ossian* she may have stolen from [. . .] the true home of the Ossianic poetry, Ireland; I make no objection. But there will still be left in the book a residue with the very soul of the Celtic genius in it, and which has the proud distinction of having brought this soul of the Celtic genius into contact with the genius of modern Europe, and enriched all our poetry by it.[3]

Arnold is clearly not threatened by the issue of whether or not 'Macpherson's *Ossian*' is authentic. For him, the 'Titanism' of Macpherson's Ossianic poetry transcends criticism concerning the putative existence of 'genuine' myths. Whatever criticisms may be levelled at Arnold for his own mythologisation of 'the Celt', his cogent observations on the wide influence of Ossian returns us to the dilemma of what we actually mean by a 'genuine' ballad or myth.[4] Often it appears that antiquity, rather than authenticity, is the crux of the matter.

No evidence has been found to prove that Homer was any more literate than a native of St. Kilda. It is more likely that the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were synthesised from extant 'wandering ballads' and mixed oral traditions, than that they sprang pure and fully formed from his head. As Bernard Knox writes of the *Iliad*, the Homeric text is far from stable, because it originates from variant oral traditions accumulated over an unknown span of time. When he performs, Homer 'is improvising. And every time he sings the poem, he does it differently', which would explain why 'Aeolic and Ionic forms appear in the same line', producing the 'unhistorical amalgam of customs, objects and linguistic forms that we find in our Homeric text'.[5] But as Knox observes, the way that the language of epic was

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[3] *The Study of Celtic Literature*, pp. 127-28.

[4] On Arnold and 'the Celt' as a nineteenth-century cultural construct, see Joep Leerssen, 'Celticism', in *Celticism*, ed. by Terence Brown (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 1-20.

[5] *The Iliad*, trans. by Robert Fagles, with Introduction and notes by Bernard Knox (New York: Viking, 1990), p. 17. Cited hereafter as Fagles. There are important parallels between Macpherson's technique and the method ascribed by Knox to the bards of ancient Greece: 'As

supposedly transmitted from generation to generation contains an improbable parallel between the bardic traditions of Ossian and Homer:

> The language of Homer is of course a problem in itself. One thing is certain: it is not a language that anyone ever spoke. It is an artificial, poetic language [. . .]. For the Greeks of the great age, that fifth century we inevitably think of when we say "the Greeks", the idiom of Homer was far from limpid (they had to learn the meaning of long lists of obscure words at school), and it was brimful of archaisms—of vocabulary, syntax and grammar—and of incongruities: words and forms drawn from different dialects and different stages of growth of the language. In fact, the language of Homer was one nobody, except epic bards, oracular priests or literary parodists would dream of using.[6]

Reading about the 'obscure' language of Homer, exclusive to professional bards, the image springs to mind of the arcane dialect of 'the schools' in the Gaelic bardic tradition. If our Johnsonian anxieties about the ways that literary texts are used to legitimate national identity could be temporarily set aside, then it might be concluded that the legitimate distinction between Greek and British epic is not authenticity, but antiquity. Because to identify with Johnson's insistence on written 'originals' is to deny not only the origins of the epic tradition, but also that which, after all, was Pope's source for 'the noblest version of poetry that the world has ever seen'.

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each new generation of singers recreates the song, new formulas may be created, new themes and scenes introduced; reflections of contemporary reality creep into descriptions of the fighting, especially into the similes. But the dedication of epic poetry to the past and the continuing usefulness of so much traditional phraseology will slow the process of modernization and produce the unhistorical amalgam of customs, objects and linguistic forms that we find in our Homeric text' (Fagles, p. 17).

[6] Fagles, p. 11.

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