Region, Nation, Frontiers
Region, Nation, Frontiers:
Proceedings from the 11th International Region
and Nation Literature Association Conference

Edited by

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Cambridge Scholars Publishing
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“Region, Nation, Frontiers” represents the work of sixteen scholars in a variety of literary specializations who gathered in July of 2006 for a meeting of the Region and Nation Literature Association (RNLA). The association meets every two years in a different country to discuss literature in terms of the influence of regional and/or national identity on authors and texts. The theme is determined by our hosts for that year, although participants are welcome to interpret the theme more broadly to comply with their own research interests and/or with the association’s ongoing interest in regional/national identities. At my first RNLA conference in Bratislava, Slovakia in 1994, I was introduced to a wide range of regional and national literatures, as well as to issues relevant to the literature of the host country: panel discussions and poetry readings by Slovaks addressed the effect on language and national identity of the recently re-established boundary between Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

In July 2006, RNLA held its eleventh conference, meeting for the first time in the United States, and because the conference was held in Kansas, it seemed particularly appropriate to designate this year’s theme as “Region, Nation, Frontiers.” Because of our conference locale and theme, we had a preponderance of papers devoted to the American Frontier, some of which are included in Part I—including Richard McLamore’s examination of how “an essentially Romantic understanding of the beneficial interactions of man and nature” was challenged by American writers’ (especially Washington Irving, in *A Tour on the Prairies*) personal confrontations with the devastating effects of westward expansion on the native population. J. Derrick McClure considers the repercussions of the interactions between immigrant Scottish Highlanders and the Native American population on the language and culture of both groups.

As creative nonfiction has gained increasing attention in the academy, creative nonfiction of place has become integral to any consideration of regional and national identity. Part II, “Creative Nonfiction of Place,” with special emphasis on the American Frontier, begins with Robert Root’s “Locating a Nonfiction of Place,” which provides a useful definition of the genre, tracing its evolution in American writing from Henry David Thoreau. In Elizabeth Dodd’s essay, “Cañonicity,” a sojourn to Palo Duro
Canyon, the region which had once inspired Georgia O’Keeffe’s fascination with the west and provided the first images of the southwest for many Americans, becomes an occasion for reflecting on the writer’s own efforts to develop a sense of place and an “aesthetics of the horizontal” in the Kansas Flint Hills. Finally, Tracey Seeley’s “Ghosts” describes the writer’s return to the small prairie town of Ruleton, Kansas, at the center of the High Plains, where she had grown up.

A number of participants chose to interpret "frontier" or "boundary" more broadly, inviting us to consider how shifts in geographic boundaries have repercussions on language. Hence, in Part III, "Linguistic Boundaries," Amy Unsworth and Jack Ayres examine how the language issue has shaped the national identity of writers in Ireland, where, as a result of colonization, the indigenous language of Irish Gaelic was outlawed and virtually eclipsed by the English language, leading to postcolonial efforts either to restore the Irish Language to its precolonial status or to create a hybrid language that more accurately reflects the mixed heritage of its speakers. Unsworth’s essay, “Seamus Heaney & the Political: Subtleties in Silence & Speech,” considers how linguistic binaries in Heaney’s poetry are the means by which a series of inter-related conflicts are explored: Protestant versus Catholic, Northern vs. Southern, working the land vs. the life of the mind, among others. Ayres’ “The Functions of Language in Brian Friel’s Translations” contends that the functions, limitations, and control of language are central to an understanding of the play as well as an adequate assessment of the hybrid language of Ireland.

Part IV, “Postcolonial Boundaries,” considers the way in which the colonial enterprise established racial, linguistic, geographic, and class-based boundaries in order to justify control of the native population—boundaries which continue to influence the lives of postcolonial subjects. Johan Jacobs, professor at the University of Kwa Zulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa, in “Embracing chaos: Diasporic identities in Contemporary South African Fiction,” chronicles the evolution of these boundaries in South African fiction since the end of Apartheid. Jacobs relies on certain aspects of diaspora theory to provide insight into the depiction of cultural identities in contemporary South African fiction, and in particular, to understand the conflictual cultural dynamics presented by Ndebele in The Cry of Winnie Mandela. Johan Geertsema, a South African professor now at the National University of Singapore, in “Drawing the Boundaries: Arendt, Race, and the Boers,” examines the role of racialization in the colonization of South Africa, which Hannah Arendt implicates as a factor in the rise of antisemitism in Europe in the twentieth century. Finally, in
“Tanami Desert Embodiment: Kim Mahood and the Conflictual Politics of Land, Culture and Identity,” Frances Devlin-Glass, from Deakin University, Melbourne, addresses Mahood’s interrogation of “Bush Nationalism”—Australia’s version of the frontier myth.

Part V, “Erotic Boundaries,” examines how notions of the erotic are related to and informed by national identity and hence, products of geographic boundaries. In “Self-Sacrificing Love: Local or Universal” Reiko Aiura-Vigers and Piers Vigers, both at universities in Japan, consider the interplay in Japanese literature and culture of Japanese concepts of love and the erotic with those of western culture. Emily Mattingly, U.C.-Riverside, in “(C)Overt Erotics of Irishness: Montague and O’Faolain’s ‘Sinful’ Carnivalesque” analyzes how Irish national identity, shaped by Catholicism and colonization, is inevitably implicated in Irish authors’ depiction of the erotic. In both stories, a French protagonist romantically involved with an Irish protagonist helps to underscore the distinctive aspects of Irish erotic and national identity. In “Mary Lavin’s ‘Sarah’: Punishment for a Temptress orVictimization of an Unconventional Woman?” Melissa Kleindl, University of Nebraska at Lincoln, challenges critical readings of Mary Lavin’s “Sarah” that rely on gender binaries that create sexual double standards.

Part VI, “Crossing Boundaries,” considers the many ways in which national boundaries are productively transgressed, particularly in response to globalization. Marie-Ann Hansen’s “What Frontiers? Beyond the Borders of Small Countries” considers the influence of American writers on her native country of Luxembourg, which has by its very history and geography resisted the kind of hegemonic national identity that America has been compelled to embrace. Literary techniques such as intertextuality and pastiche allow writers to express the transgressions of boundaries that inevitably occur with new technologies, as Susan Savage Lee explains in “An Indistinct Identity: The Role of Pastiche in Manuel Puig’s Novels, Boquitas pintadas and El beso de la mujer araña.”

We wish to thank the American Conference for Irish Studies; the Kansas Humanities Council; the Kansas State University Office of Diversity and Dual Career Development, Office of the Dean, and the English Department for their generous support of the conference. In particular, Linda Brigham, Elizabeth Dodd, Lisa Killer, Dave Rintoul, Larry Rodgers, Susan Rodgers, Mary Siegle, Steve White, and a number of KSU faculty members helped to make the conference possible. We are also grateful to our family members—Helen, Chuck, Scott, Richard, Stef, Josh, Cecilia, Ethan, and Isabella—for their support during the conference and/or throughout the editing process.
PART I:

THE AMERICAN FRONTIER
SCOTS AMONG THE INDIANS

J. DERRICK MCCLURE

The Gaelic tongue is now almost extinct in North America: even in its final stronghold, Cape Breton Island, the present generation of ancestral Gaelic-speakers seems likely to be the last. Yet the presence of an enormous number of Gaelic-speaking Highlanders among the immigrants who settled the New World is a well-known historical fact. The vicious repression of the Highlands after the Battle of Culloden and the collapse of the Jacobite Uprising in 1746, and the infamous Clearances of the nineteenth century, sent literally hundreds of thousands of Highlanders across the Atlantic; and even in the relatively peaceful period between these two disasters, the combination of heavy taxation, a new and iniquitous land-holding system, and the sheer impossibility of maintaining a tolerable living standard as a rising population struggled with the chronically unproductive land, led thousands more to leave the glens for what they hoped would be a better life overseas. Though popular history and folk-memories of the period often focus on the brutality of the mass evictions, it is necessary to remember that many people left voluntarily: one of Robert Burns’s most venomous satires, Address of Beelzebub, is directed at the Earl of Breadalbane for his attempt to prevent five hundred of his tenants from emigrating to Canada “in search of that fantastic thing—Liberty”:

They! an’ be damned! what right hae they
To Meat or Sleep or light o’ day,
Far less to riches, pow’r, or freedom,
But what your lordships PLEASE TO GIE THEM?2

But on the other hand, an anonymous poem in English, the “Canadian Boat Song”, first published in 1823 but probably written some years

1 My attendance at this conference was facilitated by a grant from the British Academy, for which I record my thanks.

previously, memorably evokes the feelings of those who had not gone willingly:

From the lone sheiling of the misty island
Mountains divide us, and the waste of seas—
Yet still the blood is strong, the heart is Highland,
And we in dreams behold the Hebrides. […]

When the bold kindred, in the time long-vanished,
Conquered the soil and fortified the keep,
No seer foretold the children would be banished,
That a degenerate lord might boast his sheep.³

This poem has been conjecturally attributed to John Galt,⁴ who as well as being one of Scotland’s greatest novelists worked for several years as an active and highly successful land developer in Ontario, and in a letter to a friend described the experience of being rowed down the St Lawrence by a crew of sturdy Gaelic-speaking oarsmen, all born in Canada. Galt, from Ayrshire, had no Gaelic and little first-hand knowledge of the Highlands; but was keenly and proudly aware of the part being played by his countrymen in the development of the North American wilderness: his novel Bogle Corbet, based partly on his own experiences, relates (with characteristically shrewd observation and ironic humour) the struggles of a group of colonists—not fiery Highland adventurers but unromantic burghers from the industrial Lowland towns of Glasgow and Paisley—to establish a township in Upper Canada.

Substantial Scottish colonies, including many consisting of Gaelic-speakers, settled in various parts of what are now the United States and Canada, and their language and culture survived for generations. Their contribution to American history is of fundamental importance; and the fact that their descendants have now mostly forgotten their ancestral language should not be allowed to obscure the enormous contribution made by those for whom it was the mother tongue. And a whole field in which much research remains to be undertaken is that of the contacts between the Highlanders (and other Scots) and the native peoples of the continent. For those contacts were frequent, extensive and long-lasting.

⁴ The attribution is far from certain; and it must be noted that though Canada is the setting for one of Galt’s novels, Canadian themes scarcely ever appear in his poetry.
It is by no means fanciful to point out resemblances between the two cultures. A life based on subsistence farming, supported by hunting, in a harsh environment, had led to the development of closely-knit, intensely kin-based societies, in which leadership was based on personal ability rather than hereditary right. An intimate association and identification with the natural world, and a total absence of any notion of “ownership” of land or territory, characterised both peoples: as is well known, the Indians from the first found the whites’ concept of buying and selling land simply incomprehensible; and the fundamental reason why the Clearances—brutal indeed, but far from the most violent or bloody events in Scotland’s troubled history—still arouse such a uniquely bitter response in folk memory is the betrayal of ancient principles committed by chiefs now bent on using the land as a source of personal gain. Both cultures were essentially oral: many records testify that white observers were impressed by the oratorical skills of Indian leaders; and though Gaelic as a written language has a longer history than any in Europe save Greek and Latin, the magnificent corpus of Gaelic song and poetry has always been, and indeed to a surprising extent still is, based on oral tradition. And a further and a growing bond of sympathy was the dispossessed condition of both peoples: one of the oldest and best-known of Gaelic poems from North America, attributed to John MacRae (Iain mac Mhurchaidh) from Kintail but probably based by him on an earlier version, contains the lines

Tha sinne ’n ar n’Innseanaich, cinnteach gu leòir;
Fo dubhar nan craobh, cha bhi h-aon againn beò.[

“We’ve become Indians surely enough. Skulking under trees, not one of us will be left alive”—a sentiment which vividly evokes a shared identity as hunted fugitives; and on a more positive note, the Cherokees, shortly after the Trail of Tears, set up a fund for the relief of Highlanders suffering the effects of the potato famine.6

The elements of cultural sympathy between the immigrant Highlanders and the Indians may well have contributed to the social as well as

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5 These points could be said to be magnificently epitomised in the great eighteenth-century Gaelic poet Duncan Bàn MacIntyre (Mac an t-Saoir). His *Moladh Beinn Dòbhrain* “Praise of Ben Dorain” [a mountain], one of the greatest poems in the Gaelic language, beautifully evokes his intimate closeness to the hill, the deer which graze on it and which he hunts, and the water and plants which give life to him and them: and MacIntyre was literally illiterate.

6 Which affected Scotland as well as Ireland, though not to the same catastrophic extent.
commercial relationships that developed. Many Scots took native women as wives: to this day in the Isle of Lewis, it is said that the descendants of a group of traders who returned with their wives, ordering them to cover their faces as they disembarked so that they would not arouse curiosity, can be recognised by their straight black hair and athletic ability. Alexander MacGillivray of the Creeks and John Ross of the Cherokees, two great Indian leaders whose stories are landmarks in American history, were of part-Scottish blood; and they are far from the only individuals whose mixed cultural inheritance enabled them to contribute to the history of inter-racial relations in both Canada and the United States. And the contacts between the two races are not represented solely by a few individuals: Scottish and Indian communities in geographical proximity not only formed trading relationships but often interacted culturally in mutually productive ways, an attractive and well-documented example being the adoption of tartan and plumed bonnets by the Cherokees, Creeks and Seminoles of the South-East.

Two of the most detailed first-hand accounts of the Indians of Canada were written by Scottish observers. Of these, the earlier is by far the more widely known, being a landmark work relating one of the greatest stories of exploration in the history of the North American continent, by a Gaelic-speaking Islesman from Stornoway in Lewis. This is Alexander MacKenzie’s Voyages from Montreal, on the River St Laurence, through the Continent of North America, to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans, written during his expeditions of 1789 and 1793 and published in 1801. In his words, “I explored those waters which had never before borne any other vessel than the canoe of the savage; and traversed those deserts where an European had never before presented himself to the eye of its swarthy natives.” MacKenzie’s journal is in three parts: an account of the fur trade between the colonised parts of Canada and the North-West, and diaries of two expeditions, the first lasting from 3rd June to 12th September 1789 and the second from 10th October 1792 to 24 August 1793. All sections contain, as well as careful notes on distances and directions of travel, flora

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8 Quotations from the first-edition copy in Aberdeen University Library Special Collections.

9 vii.
and fauna, weather conditions and the like, detailed descriptions of the various Indian peoples whom he encountered.

His *General History of the Fur Trade* includes regretful observations on the interaction of the *coureurs des bois* and the Indians. “Experience proves that it requires much less time for a civilized people to deviate into the manners and customs of savage life, than for savages to rise into a state of civilization”, and the discreditable behaviour of the traders, he notes, hindered the efforts of European missionaries by giving the Indians a bad impression of white Christian civilisation and its representatives. Yet the missionaries too were, he suggests, guilty of poor strategy: “If they had been as well acquainted with human nature, as they were with the articles of their faith, they would have known, that the uncultivated mind of an Indian must be disposed by much preparatory method and instruction to receive the revealed truths of Christianity [...]”. Instead of attempting to “go native” and preach to the Indians from within their own setting (here one recalls the Irish-Canadian writer Brian Moore’s novel *Black Robe*), they should have first brought them to civilised ways by instructing them in agriculture—the method which was, MacKenzie claims, successfully employed in Paraguay.

At other points in his narrative he remarks on the baleful effects that interaction with European traders and missionaries have had on the Indians: as one example, he mentions a mission village of Iroquois and Algonquins who have been brought to literacy in their own languages and indeed are better educated than the local whites of the lower ranks, but since they have in other respects been left to pursue their traditional ways of life, “are becoming every day more depraved, indigent and insignificant” as another, he expresses his “perfect conviction” that the presence of British military posts is harmful to both the fur trade and the native peoples, since the game which they kill using ammunition obtained from the soldiers is bartered for rum instead of being used to feed their families, so that “their numbers are in a very perceptible state of diminution.”

MacKenzie then proceeds to an admirably detailed account of the geography, topography and natural life of the huge area covered by the fur trade, making careful distinctions among the various Indian peoples; and then to “Some account of the Knisteneaux [that is, Cree] Indians.”

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10 i-ii.
11 iv.
12 xxx.
13 xxxviii.
14 xc i ff.
J. Derrick McClure

remarks on the similarity of their language to that of “the people who inhabit the coast of British America on the Atlantic”—the Algonquins—and later demonstrates this by a list of over 300 corresponding words in the two languages. (It is extremely interesting to compare MacKenzie’s lists to those compiled by modern linguists: what such a comparison shows is that his attempts to render the alien pronunciations through the vagaries of English and French orthographic conventions in fact resulted in renderings probably as accurate as could be obtained with those very blunt instruments). With obvious interest, he describes their dress, habits of decoration and disposition: “they are naturally mild and affable, as well as just in their dealings, not only among themselves, but with strangers. They are also generous and hospitable, and good-natured in the extreme, except when their nature is perverted by the inflammatory indulgence of spirituous liquors.”15 The Chepewyans, whom he then goes on to describe, he obviously found less attractive: they are “sober, timorous and vagrant, with a selfish disposition which has sometimes created suspicions of their integrity;”16 but they fare much better than the Slave and Dog-ribs, whom he finds to be “a meagre, ugly, ill-made people ... Many of them appeared to be in a very unhealthy state, which is owing, as I imagine, to their habitual filthiness.”17

All those tribes, however, and the others described in later sections of his book, are commemorated in detailed descriptions of their social customs, artefacts, methods of hunting and living conditions: indeed, MacKenzie’s accounts of the Canadian Indians while their cultures had still not been changed beyond recognition by European contact must rank among the most valuable anthropological studies in North American literature. As his narratives of his explorations progress, with full accounts of the parts played by the Indians who accompanied him and those whom he encountered on the way, MacKenzie’s remarkable capacity for insight and sympathy with the native peoples become increasingly clear; and his determination to maintain good relations with the people he encounters (e.g. by preventing one of his guides from stealing a paddle from a member of a small group with whom he was engaged in bartering), assures him of an honourable place in the history of White-Indian contact.

The second study is also a notably careful and sympathetic account of the Indians; and is not like MacKenzie’s, a description of a pioneering journey but a practical handbook written much later when Canada had already been extensively settled. This is The Emigrant’s Guide to North

15 xciv-vi.
16 cxix.
17 35.
America (*Cean-IUIL an Fhir Imrich*), written in Gaelic by Robert MacDougall in 1841. As the title suggests, MacDougall’s purpose is to provide practical advice, and this he does by means of a lively and picturesque narrative, including a compendium of information on the landscape, climate, people, and agriculture of the area. MacDougall spent three years in and near the township of Goderich (planned by Galt, incidentally) in what was then called the Huron Tract (now, approximately, Huron County, on the coast of Lake Huron in the quasi-peninsula bounded by it and the two lower Great Lakes); and his altogether fascinating book devotes an entire chapter to the Indians: Ojibways, though he does not specify their tribal origin. He speaks in terms of warm admiration of the Indians as people, describing their imposing appearance, their courage in battle and their disposition: they are “commanding, valiant men, but I do not expect ever to see men who are more respectful towards others.”

MacDougall’s Highland background is evident in much of what he says about his Ojibway neighbours. Their colour, he says, is neither black, yellow, nor copper; but “When one of my kinswomen in the Highlands is dyeing cloth, let her take hold of a hank of yarn; let her immerse it in the tub of lichen; let her wring it tightly, and firmly, when she lifts it out; then let her immerse it twice more in the pot of dyer’s woad, wringing it carefully each time she lifts it out; and I would almost bet my share of the cloth that there is not an artist in the city of the King of France who could produce anything closer to the hue of their complexion.” Indian women “have a heavy, undulating gait like the Highland women who are used to carrying the creel” —because the women carry both the children and nearly all their families’ possessions when they move camp. Describing the Indian cradle boards and their efficacy, he says “Although the Gaels do not use this method today, or a method as good as it, for rearing children, I do not know whether they have not used it in the past; if they have not, why would it be said [quoting a song] ‘She tied the infant to a board, on top of a withered branch close to her’?” And “The Indians have neither king nor governor, but a chief, just like the clan chiefs who were once among the Gaels” : this observation leads into a dramatic account of the death of the great Shawnee leader Tecumseh, who taking death

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19 39.
20 30-1.
21 31
22 35.
23 36.
“good aim”, a Gaelic phrase which MacDougall evidently believes is the origin of Tecumseh’s name—wrought havoc on his American enemies before receiving his death wound.

Not only in items of their culture does MacDougall see resemblances between the Indians and his own countrymen, but also in their language (he shows no awareness that the native peoples varied in both language and culture). His remarks on this, however, while they clearly demonstrate his friendly feelings for the people, show that his actual knowledge of the matter was non-existent: “They have a slow, soft, pleasant speech, merely a branch of the Gaelic language; and if those who first wrote it down had been well acquainted with Gaelic, the two languages would look remarkably similar.”

This is on any showing a puzzling statement: I of course know no Ojibway, but I happen to have heard the well-known writer Jim Northrup reading his own poems and stories in the language, and can give a categorical assurance that it does not sound in the slightest degree like Gaelic. MacDougall endeavours to demonstrate the imagined resemblance between the Indian language and Gaelic by citing perceived similarities between words: besides Tecumseh to *deagh-chuimse*, he relates *moccasin* to *mu chasan* “about the feet”, *tomahawk* to *tuagh-bheag* “little axe”, *papoose* to *patha bus* “thirsty mouth” (!) and *saganash* “white man” to *Sasunnach* “Englishman”. This, of course, is mere fancy; and indeed it is unlikely that MacDougall heard the first three words from his Indian acquaintances at all. *Moccasin, tomahawk* and *papoose* are from languages of the Atlantic coast; and though languages such as Wampanoag and Narraganset are ultimately related to Ojibway, all belonging to the enormous Algonquian family, they represent different branches of it (the Eastern and the Central) and are certainly not so similar that a word from a language in one group would be recognisable as its cognate in one from the other. All three words, too, had long been in familiar use as English loan words. *Saganash*, which is attested in place names and personal names, is much more likely to have

24 39.
25 For whatever an impressionistic recollection may be worth, the language I heard had a strongly-marked syllable-timed rhythm as contrasted with the flowing stress-timed pulse of Gaelic; its vowels were predominantly the least marked among the world’s languages (such as [i], [a], [u]) as contrasted with Gaelic’s exceptionally complex vowel system abounding in central and back-unrounded vowels; and plosive, including voiced plosive, consonants were notably frequent as contrasted with the predominance of fricatives and approximants in Gaelic.
26 For confirmation of this see the table of cognate words in the Algonquian languages at this web site: http://www.native-languages.org/famalg_words.htm
been heard by MacDougall in its native context, and is probably a faulty transcription of the Ojibway word for “Englishman,” *zaagnaash*. Alas, though it at first seems entirely possible that its resemblance to the Gaelic *Sasunnach* might be due to direct borrowing, it is much more likely to be from *les anglais*: with the French liaison, the position of the word break could easily have been mistaken, *l* regularly becomes *n* in loan-words from European languages in Ojibway, and historically French-speakers were to be found in numbers in the Great Lakes area long before Gaelic-speakers.27

Later, MacDougall relates the name Ottawa to *ath-a-tuath* “north ford”, Niagara to [abhainn] na gàirich “roaring river”, Montreal to *monadh thri allt* “mountain of the three burns” and Rideau, the name of a tributary of the Ottawa River, to *ruith dubh* “black river”—though as it is scarcely credible that he did not know that the last two names are French in origin, his Gaelic phrases in those cases were surely intended as mere comparisons. Had MacDougall encountered the Chipewyan tribe of Northern Canada, he would no doubt have seized on the words for “man” and “hand” which MacKenzie gives in his word list as *dinnie* and *law*, because of their striking similarity to *duine* and *lamh*! But these are common Athabascan words—the former is related to *Dine*, the familiar word used by the Navaho, speakers of a geographically displaced Athabascan language, for themselves—and their similarity to the Gaelic words is pure chance. Nonetheless, it is worth stressing that tens of thousands of Gaelic-speakers, most of them knowing no other language, lived in close proximity to the native peoples for generations, making it entirely possible that Gaelic could have supplied loan-words to their languages as readily as did English, French, and Spanish; and the fascinating question of whether Gaelic loan-words actually exist in measurable numbers in any of the native American languages has, as far as I know, never been explored.

MacDougall’s chapter also contains vivid accounts of the Indians’ methods of hunting, fishing, and erecting their lodges; but the ending has an elegiac tone: “their language has been spoiled by the foreigners,” he says, and notes that many of them, under the influence of the whites, have abandoned hunting “and every old custom that was unprofitable” and begun to adopt the life of settled farmers. He notes approvingly the advance of Christianity among them: “these foreigners served as a means

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27 I owe this suggestion, the accompanying information, and nearly all the material on Indian languages in this paper, to Dr Laura Redish, one of the webmasters of the above-mentioned site.
of bringing them from darkness into light;” but the muted tone of this concluding section contrasts, perhaps more strongly than he intended, with the enthusiasm with which he describes their traditional way of life.

Finally, it is worthy of note that in our own time Gaelic poets in Scotland have looked to the Native Americans for inspiration. I select as illustrations a couple of poems by Derick Thomson and Myles Campbell, two of our finest living Gaelic poets. In Thomson’s Aodannan “Faces”, the semantic force of the adjectives applied to the faces of the Indians and the white Americans are in marked contrast: leathann is simply “broad” or in other contexts “spacious”, whereas plaomach (ultimately derived from a word meaning curdled milk) has decidedly unpleasant overtones, suggesting a face that is pale, fat and flabby. That the faces of the Indians are dullich am mòchadh “difficult to smother” (the last word suggests suffocating something or someone by pressing down), the implication appears to be, is shown by the fact that they keep on appearing, even in unimpressive environments, and reveal their own inherent breadth—of human feeling and spirit—by contrast with the dull obesity of the whites. Blonaig, the ingredient which is lacking in American faces, means “fat”, but in the sense in which the word might be applied to a healthy animal or its meat. This is associated with the love of the harsh land; and the sense of the poem’s conclusion is that it may sometime be restored to the poet’s own land and people.

The background to Campbell’s James Bay, Quebec is, of course, the long-running dispute between the Crees and the Quebec and federal governments over the hydro-electric development in the area. Hydro-electric power dams are conspicuous in Northern Scotland as well, though there they have not resulted in environmental damage or socio-cultural disruption. A key phrase in the poem is an duine gheal “the white man”: a phrase which has a pointed relevance in that the English immigrants to the Highlands, who in some places are so abundant that in any restaurant, café, souvenir shop or tourist-oriented exhibit you visit the person who serves you is almost certain to have an English accent, are ironically referred to as “white settlers”. The message that all the power is with the whites, statements of which frame the poem, thus overtly links the Gaelic-

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28 For a full discussion of this see the following web page: http://arcticcircle.uconn.edu/HistoryCulture/Cree/Feit1/index.html
30 Rather the reverse, in fact. Some of the dams, such as the one at Pitlochry, have proved to be popular tourist attractions; and the Scottish Hydro-Electricity Board (now superseded by Scottish Hydro-Electric PLC) had a Gaelic motto, Neart nan Gleann “The Strength of the Glens”.

speaking Highlanders with the Crees as being excluded from power: throughout *an duine geal* is spoken of in the third person, whereas the “you”\(^{31}\) in line 11 and the “we” later in the poem are presumably the Crees and the Highlanders. The precariousness of Cree culture is suggested in a number of ways: *Waringi* is seen as the real name of the place and “Painthills” only the white man’s name for it; but Cree cultural traditions now have to be taught in school there, and by a woman with a non-Indian name. Cree children who leave for further schooling do return, but with *sgilean eile* … *sgillinn eile*: the near-homophony of the Gaelic words is dexterously used to link the concepts of training and money. Gaels and Indians are allies in a war against the *duine geal* whose dams will dam up the native cultures; but the outcome is uncertain. Certain, however, is that the cultures of the Gaels in Scotland and the Indians in North America continue to endure, despite unrelenting hostility, or at best ignorance and indifference, from the dominant society. And it is heartening to note that this endurance now serves to perpetuate the ancient cultural sympathy and productive mutual interaction.

**Bibliography**


Campbell, Myles. *James Bay, Quebec, A’Gabhail Ris.* Glasgow (Gairm) 1994, pp. 30-1.


\(^{31}\)Necessarily, the grammar is changed in the translation. *Bhur* is a second-person possessive.
APPENDIX


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* Remember that *oi* in eighteenth-century French was pronounced *way*.

**MacDougall’s Gaelic “etymologies”**.

Tecumseh — *deadh chuimse* “good aim”
moccasin — *mu chasan* “about the feet”
tomahawk — *tuagh-bheag* “little axe”
papoose — *patha bus* “thirsty mouth”
saganash “white man” — *Sasunnach* “Englishman”
Ottawa — *ath-a-tuath* “north ford”
Niagara — *abhainn na gàirich* “roaring river”
Montreal — *monadh thri allt* “mountain of the three burns”
Rideau — *ruith dubh* “black river”
(From MacKenzie’s Chipewyan list:
*dinnie* “man” — *duine*
*law* “hand” — *lamh*)

### AODANNAN

**le Ruaraidh Mac Thòmais**

Tha aodannan leathainn
nam Micmac’s nan Eskimo
duilich am múchadh:
chi mi ban-Innseanach
air chiel nan grìogagan
am bòth a Halifax;
chuala mi mu bhan-Eskimo
am Montreal —
cha bu dúrig dhi
an cuireadh a dhìùltadh
a dhol a laighe
le fear nach b’hiù leath’ —;
’s ged a tha aodannan
nan Ameireaganach plaomach
chan ionnan an gaol
ris an dùthaich dhiùir seo;
chan eil a blonaig air an gruaidh.
Uime sin
cuiridh mi m’aghaidh
air mo dùthaich fhìn,
air a bheil an aghaidh-choilmheach,
gun fhios nach gabh i
uair no uair-èiginn
suathadh dhan a’ bhlonais.

### FACES

**by Derick Thomson (tr. JDMcC).**

The braid faces
o the Micmacs an Eskimos
is ill tae smuir.
I see an Indian wife
ahint the beads
in a shop in Halifax;
I hard tell o an Eskimo lassie
in Montreal —
she hedna the wull
tae gie a na-say tae the invite
tae bed wi a cheil
that wes nane tae her myn —
an houbeit the Americans tae
hes faces that’s pluffy
there isna the luve in thaem
for this dour kintra:
their chouks isna stent wi its creesh.
An sae
I’ll turn my face
tae my ain kintra,
wi the false fremmit face that’s
ower’t,
that sometime micht — I dinna ken —
tak a dichtin o creesh.
Scots Among the Indians

James Bay, Quebec

by Myles Campbell (tr. JDMcC)

It aa belangs the white man: darg, pouer, technology, the warld.

The auncient hame o the Crees
James Bay, Quebec:

a waxty scarp as braid as Breitain
whaur they wad hunt
for hides an fish
ablow the ice, amang the snae,
afore there wess word o the white man.

The white man’s biggin dams.
It’s you he wants tae dam.

Margery Mark in Waringi —
Painthills, the white man caas it —
in the primary scuil
teachin the Crees’ traditieions.

At eicht year auld they gang tae the south,
an syne win hame wi ither ploys
an ither placks.

But wha’s tae hunt the beaver?

Here, whaur the Cree cud finn their fouth,
the white man cann finn but drough.

We hae the saw:
“‘The bluid o the fowk wull gainstaun the
scours.’”

It wull, or aiblins no.
We’re in the war forbye,
whaur the white man’s biggin dams
muckler nor beaver dams.
But this I’ll hae ye ken:
It aa belangs the white man: darg,
pouer, technology, the warld.

JAMES BAY, QUEBEC

le Maolios Caimbeul

‘S ann leis an duine gheal an t-saothair,
an cumbachd, an teicneolais ’s an saoghal.

Seann duthchaich nan Cree
James Bay, Quebec —
fasach cho mór ri Breatainn
far an robh iad a’ sealg
a’ bhéin ’s an eisg,
ton deigh, anns an t-sneachda
mus robh guth air an duine gheal.

Tha an duine geal a’ togail dhàman.
Tha iad ag iarraidh bhur dàmadh.

Margery Mark ann a Waringi —
’s e Painthills a th’ aig an duine gheal air –
anns a’ bhun-sgoil,
a’ teagast dhoighchean nan Cree.
Aig aois a h-ochd tha iad a’ dol mu dheas,
a’ tilleadh le sgilean eile,
le sgìllinn eile.

Ach có a shealgas an dobhar-chú?

An tir a tha dhan Chree ’na ghàrradh,
tha i dhan duine gheal ’na fásach.

Canaidh sinne:
“Theid an dualchas an aghaidh nan creag.”

Thèid, no’s dòcha nach tèid.
Tha sinne cuideachd sa’ chogadh
far a bhèil an duine gheal a’ togail dhàman
nas motha na dàm an dobor-choin.

Ach biodh fios agaibh:
‘S ann leis an duine gheal an t-saothair,
an cumbachd, an teicneolais, ’s an saoghal.
BUFFALOS, BEES, AND PRAIRIE DOGS:
HOW OKLAHOMA KILLED ROMANTICISM

RICHARD V. MCLAMORE

Washington Irving had many reasons for accepting Henry L. Ellsworth's invitation to act as Secretary on his journey as one of the three commissioners appointed by Secretary of War Lewis Cass to "superintend the settlement of emigrant Indian tribes to the west of the Mississippi". Already traveling through "the magnificent woodland scenery of Ohio" in search of subjects for a book which he knew, as his "first appearance before the American public since my return," had to be "of a decidedly national character." Irving immediately recognized that Ellsworth's "offer was too tempting to be resisted."

I should have an opportunity of seeing the remnants of those great Indian tribes, which are now about to disappear as independent nations, or to be amalgamated under some new form of government. I should see those fine countries of the "far west," while still in a state of pristine wilderness, and behold herds of buffaloes, scouring their native prairies, before they are driven beyond the reach of a civilized tourist.3

For a writer who found his "literary persona and reputation . . . considered largely as evidence in debates of national resources and affiliations," therefore, "[i]t seemed the ideal journey with which to reacquaint himself with the American landscape, and the ideal location in which to gather the native American materials for his literary reintroduction to his American readers."

Dangling over and around this ideal prospect like cottonmouths from the

3 Irving, Letters II, 733-734.
trees of the Arkansas River, however, were a variety of threats to Irving's ability to realize an uncomplicated representation of American expansionism in a "country . . . destined for the settlement of some of the migrating tribes." The chief of these threats was Jackson's Indian Removal Act of 1830, which proposed "to acquire the countries occupied by the red men of the South and West by a fair exchange, and, at the expense of the United States, to send them to a land where their existence may be prolonged and perhaps made perpetual." The removal of the Civilized Tribes from their ancestral lands in Tennessee, Georgia, Florida, and Mississippi was criticized by political leaders such as Henry Clay, Justice Joseph Story, and Attorney General William Wirt, religious leaders and abolitionists such as William Lloyd Garrison and Arthur Tappan, and, of course, most, but by no means all, Native leaders. Nevertheless, historian Ronald Satz writes that, "especially when presented in humanitarian terms, [it] seemed a logical and even enlightened policy to many Americans during the Jacksonian era."

However enlightened the policy might have seemed to many Americans, the War Department's bungling of the removal of the Choctaws in 1831 aroused "waves of sympathy for the beleaguered southern Indians" which troubled a Jackson administration already scarred by Nullification, the Bank crisis, and the Eaton affair. On July 14, 1832, therefore, the House of Congress passed Secretary of War Lewis Cass's act establishing "a commission to visit and examine the country set apart for the emigrating Indians west of the Mississippi" so as to locate "for them permanent districts sufficiently fertile, salubrious, and extensive, and with boundaries, either natural or artificial, so clearly defined, as to preclude the possibility of dispute." Initially frustrated in his search for sufficiently humanitarian and public-spirited men who were willing to lend their names to this project and thereby counter "its critics who were bemoaning the inhumanity of the removal policy." Secretary Cass then turned to prominent figures, including Henry L. Ellsworth, a one-time president of the Aetna Insurance Company and prominent real-estate developer in Hartford, CT, who, as the first administrator of the United States Patent Office, would later become known as the "father of the Department of Agriculture" (DAB). In such circumstances, Irving's de facto participation in the work of the commission,

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7 Satz, 56.
8 Satz, 79.
9 Satz, 79.
10 Satz, 135.
and the adroitness with which he managed to transform newspaper notices of the journey into descriptions of the progress of “The Irving Party" also constituted something of a public-relations windfall for the Jackson administration.11 The voyage which Irving immediately recognized as offering "ideal" prospects "for his literary reintroduction to his American readers," therefore, also necessarily involved him with the Jacksonians in the politically and emotionally charged debate about Indian Removal and Expansion.12

An essentially Romantic understanding of the beneficial interactions of man and nature underwrites much of the antebellum approach to its engagement with nature: In 1809, Irving’s brother John foresaw development in these glowing terms:

The seas of Huron, Erie, and Ontario shall be whitened by the sail of internal commerce. Our trackless wilds shall soften under the hand of cultivation; the desert and the silent place shall rejoice, and the "wilderness shall blossom the rose." Where the smoke of the solitary wigwam now curls lightly in the breeze, there shall roll the dark volume of the populous and spacious city. The glad ray of knowledge shall burst upon those dark recesses where the wandering savage holds dominion, the mighty mammoth thunders thro’ the forest, and the rattling serpent wreathes his folds among the herbage.13

Described by one scholar as a structure of feeling used "[to] naturalize conventions of seeing the landscape and the social life related to it", romantic perceptual strategies figure prominently in assessments of the relationships between human and land in the developing United States.14 In an 1844 article in The United States and Democratic Review Charles W. Webber penned a fulsome paean to fostering nature and those who can be influenced by it:

From the swelling hills and softly rounded landscapes, through the beautiful proportions and graceful curves of the human form, and its mystic harmonious tones, that “softly blend the finite with the infinite,” is the one universal being speaking to our souls. Happy is he who sees the One and Infinite, through all and every portion of this wondrous variety —whom every hill’s aspiring summit lifts to heaven!—to whom every joyful stream murmurs, and every passing breeze whispers, “God is love!” Oh! to him how calm and serene with the harmony of peace are the moonbeams and the starry

11 Antelyes, 74.
12 Antelyes, 49.
heavens—how warm with love, and bright with the wisdom of benevolence, the sunshine! To his sense every bird hymns praise,—the pine trees chant Te Deums,—the waves raise an anthem chorus—all nature is devout.¹⁵

But Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher,” published in 1839, dourly undercuts this Romantic premise that a discriminating perception of objects could add value to and regulate nature. Unnerved by his first sight of “the House of Usher,” Poe’s narrator reasons that re-arranging “the details of the picture, would be sufficient to modify, or perhaps to annihilate its capacity for sorrowful impression.”¹⁶ So, he moves. The view gets worse, foreshadowing the failure of his therapeutic visit.

Poe’s Gothicism works, therefore, to refute the Wordsworthian discovery of “how exquisitely . . . The external World is fitted to the Mind.”(66-68).¹⁷ From William Cullen Bryant’s divinely-guided duck through to Thoreau’s praise of the poet who can harvest the true ‘yield’ of the landscape, American writers used this Romantic belief to suggest the power of a properly perceived power of landscape to redeem and sustain against a more aggressively exploitive stance. But what if there are no settled communities or farms to mediate between people and land?

Washington Irving refers to the areas of western Arkansas and central Oklahoma that he toured in the Fall of 1833 as “a debateable ground between the Osage, the Creek, the Delaware, and other tribes, that have linked themselves with civilisation, and . . . the Pawnees, the Comanches, and other fierce and as yet independent tribes, the nomads of the prairies.”¹⁸ A Tour on the Prairies includes several encounters with various members of “tribes that have linked themselves with civilization,” but Irving never so much as sees a Pawnee or Comanche and experiences precious little ‘debating.’ As William Bedford Clark observes, A Tour on the Prairies takes on the form of a “mock-heroic quest that quietly subverts the perennial American myth of westering.”¹⁹ This mock-heroic turn expresses Irving’s doubts that the

¹⁸ Irving, Tour 1-2.