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Introduction

Much of what has been written about Scotland’s relations with America has been concerned with uncritical ethnic chauvinism. Like many other ethnic groups in America, Scottish-Americans claim a significant importance for themselves in helping to make America, and Scots naturally focus on this when thinking about their country’s exchanges with America, neglecting the very considerable impact of America in making modern Scotland. This book is a survey of what we know about this complex subject to date, excluding the entirely unexplored history of cultural exchange between Scotland and America in the twentieth century. Most work has been carried out on the eighteenth century, when Scotland redefined itself as part of the European Enlightenment and made an important contribution to the creation of modern Britain and its empire. My own research has been focused on that period, and the content of this book reflects that. By the end of that century the United States had emerged as a modern republic, in European eyes the first American nation, but this is not a book about Scotland and the United States. It seeks to consider both countries in the broader context of the Atlantic world that transformed modern history in the eighteenth century and began the process of globalization that is such an important part of modern world history.

Woodrow Wilson’s statement, in an after-dinner speech to the New England Society of the City of New York in 1900, that ‘every line of strength in the history of the world is a line colored by Scotch-Irish blood’ (often misquoted as ‘Scottish blood’), sometimes has been cited in support of the idea that Scotland made an exceptional contribution to the creation of the United States. Although Wilson was a significant American president who made a major impact on world history in leading the United States into the First World War and the elaborate
peace negotiations that followed its conclusion, his claim about the importance of ‘Scotch-Irish blood’ was meant as much of a joke as Voltaire’s observation in the eighteenth century that ‘today it is from Scotland that we get rules of taste in all the arts, from epic poetry to gardening.’\textsuperscript{2} Clearly Wilson’s Presbyterian background was an important part of his upbringing and personality as his education at Princeton and later experience as president of that university. In his ‘Scotch-Irish’ speech, he identified his Scottish predecessor as president of Princeton, James McCosh, as well as the great Scottish Presbyterian leader of the nineteenth century, Thomas Chalmers, as major figures in the tradition he claimed to represent. Later he would write to Andrew Carnegie (in seeking funding for Princeton) that ‘the Scots blood that is in me makes me wish to renew the traditions of John Witherspoon’s day in the old place.’\textsuperscript{3} It is important to remember, however, that Wilson was not a Scot like McCosh or Chalmers or Carnegie, let alone John Witherspoon.

Ironically, Wilson when at Princeton reformed and modernized it by leading it away from the Presbyterian seminarianism that had made it ‘Scottish’. Wilson appealed to the legacy of Witherspoon and McCosh for Carnegie’s cash, but he looked to the German universities of the nineteenth century as a model for the academic excellence to which he aspired for Princeton. It was they, and not Scottish universities, whose specialist curricula had provided the model for his own postgraduate education as a historian at Johns Hopkins University.\textsuperscript{4} In contrast, there clearly was a very material American influence on Scottish education by the end of the nineteenth century in the form of Andrew Carnegie’s decision to establish the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland in 1901. Although his own formative education took place in the United States rather than in Scotland, by establishing a Scottish trust, Carnegie supported the idea of the national importance of the Scottish educational system, although he was criticized at the time for forcing change on the Scottish universities. By 1904 the Carnegie Trust funded the studies of half of all students at Scottish universities, and had become ‘practically a ministry for Scottish universities’, and in the process doubled their income.\textsuperscript{5}

Carnegie’s intervention in the Scottish education system illustrates how relations between Scotland and America began to alter significantly after the end of the American Civil War. Although expansion of the British Empire would have a significant impact on Scotland in the second half of the nineteenth century, much of that empire was American, particularly Canada and the British Caribbean. Combined with
growing US influence on Scottish and British public life as issues of
democratic reform, republicanism and federalism became increasingly
important; the balance in the cultural exchange between Scotland and
America began to shift to the expanding and dynamic North American
continent, including Canada. As the Scottish population stagnated,
that of North America continued to grow exponentially, and given
Scotland’s long links with America it should be no surprise that the
effect on the country was as great as that in Ireland. This book repre-
sents an attempt to focus on the issue of the importance of adopting a
comparative approach to examination of Scottish exchange with
America that does not privilege claims of national or ethnic superiority,
but instead employs them to explore complex issues of national devel-
opment and ethnic diversity in a transatlantic context. Unlike the Irish
or other European (or Asian, Caribbean or South American) immigrants
to the United States in the nineteenth century, those who were ‘British’
(including Wilson’s ‘Scotch-Irish’) believed that they had a kind of prior
claim on America through ethnic connections with its traditional elite
and the first European settlers there. It is now obvious how simplistic
their views were, but it distinguished their experience of America, just
as it disguised the growing impact of America on Britain, Scotland and
Europe as a whole.6

Most of this book is about Scottish contact with America in the
seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, although it seeks to look forward
to significant cultural exchange between Scotland and America in the
nineteenth century that was built as much on the great moral issues of
slavery, Protestant evangelicalism and education as it was on trade and
the export of Scottish population to the western hemisphere. By exam-
in ing emigration and trade separately from cultural exchange, the aim
 is to try to place the Scottish experience of transatlantic exchange in a
broader European context. The conclusion is that if Scots, like many
other European ethnic groups, made an important contribution to the
formation of modern American (meaning Caribbean as well as North
American) society, by the nineteenth century it was becoming increas-
ingly obvious that American experience and examples were making a
significant impact on Scotland, perhaps more so than in most of Europe
other than Ireland. If this American influence did not consist only of
‘American’ influence from the United States, the US was not ‘British’ in
the sense that Canada and the Caribbean were, and this made it excep-
tional, certainly in its influence on Scotland. It abolished slavery later
than Britain, but unlike Britain fought a devastating Civil War that
became defined by the issue. It was a republic that created a national
identity for itself by its opposition to constitutional as well as absolute monarchy. It embarked on egalitarian democracy (for men) in public life early in the nineteenth century in a manner that would provide an influential alternative model for political reform in Britain. All of these issues mark the United States as worthy of the particular attention it receives in the last chapter of this book, and are worthy of exploration in much greater depth in future research.

Thus the book has been organized in two unequal parts. In Part I, the reader is provided with a survey of our current knowledge of Scottish trade and settlement in America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as both became focused on the western hemisphere rather than Europe in a manner that laid the basis for the great expansion of both in the nineteenth century. The two defining episodes in increasing Scottish contact with America were the contrasting failure of the Company of Scotland expeditions to Darien in Panama at the turn of the eighteenth century and success of the Scottish merchants trading out of Glasgow in achieving dominance in the tobacco trade with America in the third quarter of the eighteenth century. It is clear, however, that the failure to establish an independent colony at Darien was far from the end of Scottish trade in the Caribbean, which remained a significant destination for Scottish merchants and emigrants into the early nineteenth century. Equally the tobacco trade with the mainland American colonies of Virginia and Maryland on the Chesapeake Bay was far from the only point of contact for Scottish merchants and emigrants on the North American mainland in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This much broader contact between Scotland and America in the eighteenth century in particular provided the basis for the more complex issues of cultural exchange between Scotland and America that are considered in Part II.

The key subject that links emigration and trade with cultural exchange is slavery. It is only recently that this has become apparent to most scholars working on research that relates to Scottish contact with America. Of course, it has long been known that the major American commodity trades in sugar and tobacco (and, later, cotton) all involved plantation production that depended on slave labour imported from Africa and later on their descendants born into hereditary bondage in the Caribbean and the American South. Even at Darien in 1700, the colony’s leaders requested shipments of African slaves to carry out heavy manual labour. Yet from a Scottish perspective, until recently these were issues that were viewed as part of American and Caribbean history rather than Scottish history. It was the wealth generated by
colonial trade and its impact on Scottish modernization that was viewed as Scottish, and for a number of historians of Scotland, colonial trade was responsible for only an insignificant part of the wealth generated by the economic advances the country experienced in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.\(^8\) That view has come under considerable revision recently.\(^9\) This has not been the result of significant additional research on Scotland's trade with America in the eighteenth century but reflects new perspectives arising from the changing nature of Scottish society in the early twenty-first century as it has become more diverse ethnically, more confident and less insular.

There has been important new academic research that has increased awareness that however small Scotland's direct involvement in the slave trade and the use of slavery in the British Empire had been, it is important to acknowledge that there were links between Scotland and this painful legacy of imperialism. This is particularly important because over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, as Scotland became more integrated into Britain and the British Empire, Scottish national identity became mediated increasingly through culture rather than politics or, indeed, economics. This was the legacy of the successful adoption of European Enlightenment culture in Scotland by the end of the eighteenth century and formed the basis of the now largely forgotten self-styled 'democratic' public culture of nineteenth-century Scotland.\(^10\)

That is why in this study Chapter 3 on trade at the end of Part I concludes with discussion of Scottish involvement in the transatlantic slave trade and with the system of employing enslaved labour to work the colonial plantations that produced the commodities that became such a source of wealth for the Scottish mercantile community. Yet this aspect of Scottish involvement with the great tragedy of transatlantic slavery is only part of its history, as the Rev. Dr. Iain Whyte has demonstrated.\(^11\) Thus in this book the initial chapter in Part II on cultural exchange is focused on the impact of the fundamental issue of slavery and freedom that dominated transatlantic history in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. If Scotland became enmeshed in the development of transatlantic chattel slavery in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it also contributed to the movements to abolish first the transatlantic slave trade, and then slavery itself in the British Empire. Although many of those involved in these campaigns may have been disappointed in the manner in which slavery was ‘abolished’ in the British Caribbean, the focus on slavery in the Americas inevitably led to substantial Scottish interest in the subsequent campaign to abolish slavery in the United States which caused the US Civil War.\(^12\)
Recognition of the injustice of human slavery illustrated a relatively neglected aspect of the influence of Enlightenment culture on Scotland. It was also present in the history of Scottish awareness and concern with the native peoples of America. The changing nature of this contact (remotely as well as directly) was founded on a different kind of trade and a different moral issue than those involved in slavery, although of course in the seventeenth century, in particular, many ‘Indians’ were also enslaved. The trade was first in animal furs and skins in return for gunpowder and alcohol, and later was in the land occupied by native peoples who could no longer resist a growing settler population. European ideas about savagery and civilization changed over the course of the eighteenth century in a manner that increased willingness to acknowledge the virtues of ‘savage’ tribal societies previously dismissed as such in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Did the changing nature of cultural relations between Gaelic-speaking Highlanders and Lowland Scotland during the early modern period give Scots distinctive insights into the cultural encounters they experienced with native peoples in the Americas? It is clear that this was an aspect of Scottish contact with America that had an impact on the Highland Scottish experience of modernization and change that occurred over the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.13

In both the case of the issue of slavery in the British Empire and the place of native peoples within it, one of the distinctive aspects of Scottish experience of contact with America was its national religious culture and its identification with Presbyterianism. As Presbyterian congregations grew and multiplied in North America, so they came to exert an important influence in Scotland. The transatlantic Protestant evangelical movement of the eighteenth century had a profound impact on cultural and social change in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Scotland. Not all Scots were Presbyterians, but equally Presbyterians in Scotland had to acknowledge that many Presbyterians were not Scots. They also had to recognize that they had more in common with many fellow Protestants in America, even if they were not Presbyterians, than they did with the established Church of Scotland that developed as the British state church in Scotland during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. When Presbyterianism fragmented in the nineteenth century under the impact of economic and social change in Scotland, American influences on Scottish religious culture increased, drawing more and more Scots into international and transatlantic networks of Protestant evangelicals whose concerns came to have a significant impact on the great moral issues of the abolition of slavery and the promotion of
world missionary work that increased in importance in Scottish public culture over the course of the nineteenth century.\textsuperscript{14}

If British North America and the British Caribbean were important parts of Scottish cultural exchange with America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries after 1783, the influence of the United States grew ever more important as its population and economy expanded to the point that it attracted a substantial majority of Scottish emigrants. This book concludes with a chapter that considers the argument that Scotland exerted a disproportionately large influence on the formative years of the United States that made an enduring mark on its character. Similar suggestions have been made in regard to Canada. Both have some merit, but the conclusion of this study is that in both cases emphasizing the contribution of one particular national, ethnic or tribal group in the development of a country does not tell us as much as a more challenging but ultimately more rewarding comparative approach. The creation of the Atlantic world and the expansion of its networks played a crucial role in the creation of modern Scotland. Equally, to consider Scottish contact with America as too small in scale to be of significance is to underestimate its impact. Scotland benefited from a geographical position that was peripheral in European terms, but placed it at the centre of the Atlantic networks that created the modern world. This was something that would come to define the Scottish nation in modern times.
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