

Introduction

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Interest in migration and diaspora studies shows little sign of abating. In recent years, indeed, the field has not merely grown, but expanded beyond its principal original focus on immigrant studies, to embrace a broader and more complex appreciation of the topic.¹ The increasing use of the term 'diaspora' to suggest a wide-ranging examination of parent as well as host countries and cultures indicates that the field will continue to expand, allowing for an interdisciplinary and multi-cultural world view. Diaspora furthermore suggests a more complex perspective on the process of migration, with its implication of classification by racial or religious, as well as national, allegiance.²

As far as Ireland is concerned, this shift in emphasis is evident in a number of ways. From a position where much of the focus was upon the Irish experience in the United States, and to a lesser extent, the Antipodes, work is now being undertaken on South America, South Africa, India, and Asia, as well as what was actually the principal destination for the Irish, Britain.³ What this new work has revealed is the manner in which Irish migrants responded to the opportunities as well as pressures offered by host countries, and how ethnicity and religion were frequently utilised to advantage. The loosening of theoretical frameworks with regard to migration has allowed for the imaginative reading of groups such as missionaries,⁴ soldiers,⁵ or civil servants, many of whom would not have considered themselves

1 Migrants from Europe who settled in the New World in the nineteenth century have long been a topic of interest, and the experiences of the Jewish and African diasporas explored in various ways, but the nineteenth and twentieth century movements of Asians, for example, are only now beginning to be undertaken. See for example C. Bates (ed.), *Community, Empire and Migration: South Asians in Diaspora* (Basingstoke, 2001); D. Dabydeen & B. Samaroo (eds), *India in the Caribbean* (London, 1987); C. Clarke, C. Peach, & S. Vertovec (eds), *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity* (Cambridge, 1990), M.S. Wokeck, *Trade in Strangers: the Beginnings of Mass migration to North America* (Pennsylvania, 1999). **2** For an Irish combination of both of these elements, see for example D. Keogh, *Jews in 20th Century Ireland* (Cork, 1998). **3** For an indication of the sheer scale of Irish migration, see P. O'Sullivan's six-volume work on *The Irish World Wide* (Leicester, 1992). See also P. McKenna, 'Irish Emigration to Argentina: a different model' in A. Bielenberg (ed.), *The Irish Diaspora* (Harlow, 2000), pp. 195–212; D.H. Akenson, *Occasional Papers on the Irish in South Africa* (Grahamstown, 1991); D.M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain* (Basingstoke, 1999). **4** E.M. Hogan, *The Irish Missionary Movement: A Historical Survey, 1830–1980* (Dublin, 1990); M. Holmes & D. Holmes (eds), *Ireland and India: Connections, Comparisons, Contrasts* (Dublin, 1997). **5** K. Jeffery (ed.), *'An Irish Empire?': Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester, 1996); T. Bartlett & K. Jeffery (eds), *A Military History of Ireland* (Cambridge, 1996).

to be 'immigrants', but who certainly fit comfortably within the Irish diaspora. Moreover, with the reconfiguration of the image of the migrant has also come a wider appreciation of Irish roles in social, political, and military movements throughout the globe. Active as pro- and anti-slavers, as radical and conservative politicians, as governmental administrators and anti-government agitators, and fighting on both sides of campaigns from the American Revolution through to the Boer War, Irish influence in all these fields proves wide-ranging and contradictory. As essays within this volume also show, the concept of 'diaspora' as a 'de-centred approach in which migration, migrants and their multi-generational societies and cultures are seen as phenomena in themselves'⁶ allows for the examination of migrant representation and construction through literature and memoir, as well as more traditional forms of migrant record. As scholars continue to explore the diversity of Irish influences abroad, another dimension is emerging closer to home: the impact on Ireland itself of returning migrants. And the recent media preoccupation with the issue of refugees and asylum seekers throughout Europe suggests that there are yet more chapters to be added to the history of migration.

This is a collection of essays that reflect on the state of being 'abroad', rather than engage with the minutiae of cohort depletion, passenger lists, or patterns of settlement. That is not to say that the essays fail to wrestle with the fundamental issues associated with migration, such as displacement, opportunity, and disappointment. These inescapable elements of the migrant experience are reflected in the careers of individuals and groups under study, and in the literature that survived them. Some contributions emphasise the role of the individual as participant in the migratory process, or as an agent in cultural and political transmission. Others look at groups or organisations who whole-heartedly embrace the host culture, seeking to re-make themselves through a process of assimilation. Still more focus on the liberation to be found through imagining an Ireland that is projected 'abroad'.

A striking thread through the essays is the sense of opportunity associated with 'abroad'. The majority of the subjects, either as individuals, or groups of professionals, were relatively privileged; they were for the most part literate, several were very well educated, and some were wealthy, and do not for the most part conform to the stereotypical image of the impoverished Irish migrant. Thus arguably many left Ireland in an attempt to improve their professional or political prospects, rather than as a last desperate act of survival. This appears to have had a considerable impact upon their perceptions of the host country. With the exception of those whose residency abroad was by nature of their occupation temporary, many sought to assimilate with the new society, while still retaining a distinct sense of ethnicity. They were, however, traditional migrants in the sense that most did not return to Ireland once they had established themselves elsewhere.

The volume is divided into three sections: 'Imaginings', 'Professions', and 'Transmissions'. The first includes those essays that engage with the means through

6 P. MacÉinrí, 'Introduction' in A. Bielenberg (ed.), *The Irish Diaspora*, p. 1.

which Ireland has been both represented, and self-created, by individuals who left it to travel abroad, or, in one case, never visited the country at all. This section, and the book, begins with Declan Kiberd's reading of Wolfe Tone's journal, kept when Tone cut a youthful swathe through Irish, American and French society. Tone begins the long nineteenth century, his actions signalling a world of political and philosophical possibility for Ireland. Although it is he who travels abroad, it is his journal that brings abroad to Ireland, placing Belfast and Irishtown at the heart of European thought, and drawing comparisons between the French Revolution, and what he hoped might be achieved in Ireland. As the originary moment for this volume, Tone's memoir is, as Kiberd remarks, remarkable for its poignancy. The reader carries the uncomfortable burden of knowledge that Tone lacked: that his optimistic journeys will end in military failure and suicide. Clíona Ó Gallchoir's essay on Madame de Genlis' responses to a country she had never visited, continues this theme of an imagined Ireland. Freed from the burden of personal experience, Ireland becomes for Genlis 'an idealised eighteenth-century state of mind', a tabula rasa on which her characters progress may be charted, without the inconvenience of historical or political realities. Ireland is an Eden, an uncorrupted backdrop against which heroic figures fulfilled their romantic destinies, and in which religious, economic, and political differences could be elided for the sake of a good story. Genlis' stories constructed a version of Ireland that drew upon, but did not accurately reflect, historical reality, while insisting upon their validity as 'national tales'. The issue of literary constructions of Ireland is also charted by Liam Harte, although from the perspective of Irish immigrants to Britain. Ostensibly accounts of individual successes and failures, these autobiographies actually constitute national as well as personal acts of 'self-fashioning'. The memoirs under discussion assume several guises – moral tales, testimonials, political biographies, and narratives of self-improvement – yet all share an implicit concern to 'challeng[e] negative stereotypes of the immigrant Irish'. Immigrant success was an automatic rebuttal to those who viewed the Irish as inherently shiftless and untrustworthy, and the biographers recount with pride the occasions on which their achievements were recognised by the British establishment. The narratives reveal a basic tension with regard to self-construction, however; British acceptance of the Irish immigrant was predicated on assimilation. For some, this was an unproblematic position; for others, it provoked a sense of personal and cultural anxiety, quieted only through emphatic declarations of allegiance with Ireland.

Peter Denman further explores the ambiguities at the heart of the creative immigrant experience, but raises the liberating potential to be found through the location of Irish narratives abroad. Being abroad is an 'enabling resource', freeing writers from the necessity of engaging with domestic politics, yet drawing upon (as Ó Gallchoir also suggests), an established conception of Ireland as a site of drama and romance. The novel *Vandeleur* draws upon these presumptions, but reflects the potentially liberating effect of migration: Irish characters did not simply change location, they could also reinvent themselves culturally. However, it is

Charles Wolfe's poem, 'The Burial of Sir John Moore', that indicates the extent to which 'abroad' was a crucial element in Irish historical literature. An 'Irish poem of expatriation which is universalist and inclusive, if not unionist, in effect', the work emphasised the potential for integration represented by military service, but steered away from any emphatic statement of political or national assimilation. The final essay in this section also examines themes of ethnic 'disguise'. While other authors in this volume have raised the potentially liberating elements in residence 'abroad', Kate Costello-Sullivan engages with the awkward position of the Irish in the Empire. Kim, the titular hero of Rudyard Kipling's tale, occupies an ambiguous middle ground between 'English' and 'Indian'. In this case, 'abroad' becomes the place in which anxieties regarding Ireland's own position in the Empire are played out. Kim is variously described as 'Indian', 'Asiatic', 'Oriental', 'British', 'English' and 'Irish' by critics and by Kipling alike, reflecting not merely the character's indeterminate status, but the broader position of Irish immigrants throughout the British empire. The question asked repeatedly by Kim – 'Who is Kim?' – finds echoes in the experiences of several of the groups and individuals presented in this volume: the state of being 'abroad' bringing the troubled issues of ethnicity, race, and culture very much to the fore.

The second section of this volume focuses upon some of the professions followed by Irish immigrants, and the reasons for the congregation of individuals in certain fields. Louise Miskell opens with an examination of an immigrant group doubly neglected by diaspora scholars: medical practitioners. As she points out, little work has been done on the Irish professional experience abroad, and even less on the experiences of Irish medical practitioners, a considerable body of men by the 1880s. In an interesting reversal of the traditional image of the disadvantaged unskilled migrant, Miskell traces the careers of several newly qualified Irishmen in Wales, finding that increasing industrialisation offered opportunities to ambitious individuals who faced unemployment at home. Opportunity is also a central theme in the succeeding essay, on the Irish presence in police forces abroad. Elizabeth Malcolm points to the enormous numbers of Irishmen serving in police forces in Britain, and especially Australia, where in the 1860s almost 70 per cent of recruits were Irish born, and 45 per cent had previously served in a police force, in the majority of cases the Royal Irish Constabulary. It is a striking instance of how the Irish transmitted not merely culture, but professional organisation and expertise abroad, and shaped fundamental societal structures. Ironically, political developments at home, in the shape of land agitation and boycott, significantly influenced the movement of Irish policemen overseas, as large numbers resigned from the RIC. As with Miskell's examination of Irish doctors, the importance of informal networks of communication is clear in the testimony of Irish police, as information regarding territories with the best opportunities was rapidly transmitted to the discontented forces at home.

Diane M. Hotten-Somers moves the focus back to somewhat more familiar territory with her examination of the relationship between Irish domestic servants

and their middle-class employers in the United States. Like their male counterparts in the Australian police force, Irishwomen dominated domestic service, forming over 50 per cent of the service in cities such as Massachusetts in the late nineteenth century. The domestic servant, argues Hotten-Somers, was increasingly viewed as a commodity, purchasable (and expendable) in a manner similar to the mass-produced consumer goods that flooded the American market in this period. Indeed, the 'commodification' of the domestic servant encouraged greater regulation of the public and private lives of domestic servants, as employers sought to standardise the profession. The ideal end-product was an identically trained servant, endlessly replicated in training institutes across the country, and instantly replaceable. The next essay in this section, by Nini Rodgers, follows the career of an individual who saw 'abroad' as a place of varied opportunity. Richard Robert Madden travelled extensively, adapting his talents to the opportunities that presented themselves wherever he landed. Madden was no mere adventurer, though. He is best remembered for his courageous role in combating slavery in the Americas, and as an historian of the United Irishmen. In this sense, Madden was a man who literally saw Ireland abroad – his anti-slavery work informed his writing of Irish history, and his natural sense of justice. Oonagh Walsh ends this section with an examination of aspects of the life of Robert Alexander Crawford, a Presbyterian missionary to Manchuria in the late nineteenth century. Crawford was a multi-faceted individual, revelling not merely in his role of Christian missionary, but in the opportunities that missionary work gave him to travel extensively in remote regions. A skilled cartographer, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society for his detailed and accurate maps of Manchuria. His papers reveal a depth of insight into the complexities of Chinese life, but also the struggle he had in accommodating the European impact on Chinese life, and his own role in that process.

The third segment of this volume is entitled 'transmissions', a term designed to suggest the manner through which cultures are constructed as a result of migrant contact. It also refers to the construction of an Irish migrant identity, one in which certain kinds of migrants, such as the elite, may have been simply elided. Irish emigration demonstrates both elements of this process in an obvious manner. The essays in this section demonstrate how British domestic politics, the Roman Catholic church in Scotland, and the development of an alternative Irish ethnicity in Australia, all reflect the manner in which Irish emigration helped to re-construct host cultures. The authors engage with the literal transmission of culture by immigrants to their hosts, and the absorption of alien cultures at home.

The first essay in this unit, by Martin J. Mitchell, raises the issue of politically contaminating visitors, in its concentration upon the Catholic church in Scotland's anxieties regarding the suitability of Irish born and trained priests. Despite a huge increase in the numbers of Roman Catholics in the western lowlands of Scotland, boosted for the most part by Irish migrants between 1790 and 1830, and a chronic lack of priests to minister to them, the Scottish Catholic hierarchy were loath to recruit Irish priests. Driven at times by desperation to employ such men in their

dioceses, the hierarchy frequently found that ethnic and national tensions made the situation impossible. The Irish claimed bitterly that they were passed over for senior posts because of their nationality, while the hierarchy feared the control they exercised over their congregations, especially the Irish-born. As the century advanced, tensions also increased over the politically inflammatory role Irish priests were seen to play in Scotland, encouraging the spread of organisations such as the Repeal Association. National identity took precedence over religious obligation, as the priests continued to actively participate in politics, in the face of opposition from their superiors.

Máirtín Ó'Catháin's essay on the activities of republican activists in Scotland continues this theme of a host society desperately seeking to contain its dissenting Irish elements. Unlike the Irish-born priests of Mitchell's study, many of these activists were Scottish born, but their political allegiance was to Irish militancy. They represented therefore not merely non-assimilated migrants, but a group who sought the literal destruction of the Union. Ó'Catháin examines two phases of the 'dynamite war' in Scotland in the 1880s and 1890s, and demonstrates the importance of cross-national political links. The dominant influence as far as Scottish activism was concerned was Irish-America, not necessarily Ireland, a fact that may have influenced the Scottish trend towards the dynamiting campaign. But the consequences of emigration go beyond this factor. The author argues that the dynamiters and their supporters were doubly alienated from influences that might have moderated their activities. They had rejected what they regarded as the cautious approach of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and their 'heightened sense of exile', exacerbated by the appalling conditions under which they laboured in Glasgow, encouraged a hopeless faith in violent action as a means of political, and presumably economic, advance.

Irish migration has had a world-wide impact, with certain destinations such as the United States and Australia receiving large numbers of Irish settlers, and consequently a good deal of scholarly attention. Given the numbers involved, a surprising element has been the presumption that all Irish migrants shared a common religious and cultural heritage. Lindsay Proudfoot's contribution to this volume proposes a revision to the predominant image of Irish migrants as Catholic and Gaelic, examining instead the Anglo-Irish and Scots-Irish migrants who also travelled to Australia. Drawing attention to the large numbers of both – Protestants accounted for almost 45 per cent of Irish-born migrants in New South Wales in 1844–5 – Proudfoot draws attention to the means through which alternative Irish identities were constructed in Australia, and how these were expressed geographically. The disruption of a homogenous Australian-Irish culture allows for a more sophisticated appreciation of colonial Australia's relationship with Britain.

Ian McClelland further develops this theme of alternative identities in Australia, through his examination of Anglo-Irish gentry migrants to that country. He argues that this particular group exerted an influence on Australian society out of all proportion to their numbers. Ironically, these particular migrants have been

ignored by historians, principally because of their relative wealth. While impoverished migrants travelled in large numbers on assisted passages, and so are recorded in governmental and other records, the gentry are noted by name only at points of departure and arrival. They have therefore been less examined than other migrant groups, yet assumed the same influential positions in Australia – landowners, clerics, doctors, bureaucrats, and pillars of society – as they had enjoyed in Ireland. Their position of relative privilege, McClelland argues, caused gentry migrants to view the Australian landscape in a significantly different manner from many of their fellow-Irish, and caused the landscape to be differently, and demonstrably, inscribed by their preoccupations and interests. In this, their shaping of new settlements ‘reflected similar activities undertaken by other Anglo-Irish gentry members back in Ireland’, suggesting that for this class at least, ‘Ireland Abroad’ was a literal fact, a theme that links many of the pieces in this collection. The final essay in this section, and in the book, raises some far-reaching questions regarding the associations between Irish Famine migrants of the nineteenth century, and those refugees, economic and political, currently seeking asylum in Ireland. Individuals seeking residence in Ireland today, argues Jason King, are interpreted both as the modern equivalent of the Irish displaced in mid-century, and as ‘bogus’ refugees, unworthy of humanitarian consideration. King examines the contradictory attitudes towards migrants, when a sense of guilty obligation towards new migrants – because of the Irish historical experience – clashes with anxieties regarding the protection of contemporary prosperity. What emerges from the rhetorical thicket of ‘obligation’ and ‘continuity’ is a shared desire on the part of Victorian authorities, and European Union legislators, to ensure that migrants remain in perpetual motion, moving constantly towards an imaginary refuge in another country.

For many Irish, ‘abroad’ is in fact ‘home’. Long association with migration, and the creation of hyphenated communities in the United States, Britain and mainland Europe, means that a sense of membership in other countries exists for a considerable proportion of the population. Yet, as the essays in this collection indicate, migrant response is enormously varied. ‘Abroad’ may be imagined, constructed, a place of new beginnings or a shadow of ‘home’, and yet still trigger an emotional, uneasy response. It is to this interface between one place and another, but also between our myriad and evolving sense of ‘self’, that these essays are directed.