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Editorial

This special edition of JIIS brings together articles that began as papers delivered at the conference ‘On the Edge: Transitions, Transgressions, and Transformations in Irish and Scottish Studies’ convened in Vancouver in June 2013. The conference, which included around seventy papers and several keynote speakers, was hosted by Simon Fraser University and co-sponsored by the Canadian Association for Irish Studies, the Research Institute for Irish and Scottish Studies, and the University of Aberdeen. The conference included a striking array of papers that were deliberately cross-disciplinary, and many were concerned with questions of space and place, with interactions of communities (especially in diaspora), and with questions of genre and periodization. There was an especially strong focus on the entangled histories and literary cultures of empire and on experiences of migration. The following articles represent some of the very best papers and keynotes delivered in Vancouver from both well-established and up-and-coming scholars.

Liam McIlvanney’s article on the New Zealand poet John Barr (1809-1890) is an expansion of his Conference keynote lecture. The article is an exemplar of the inter-disciplinary character of the conference and shows how much literary analysis has to offer historians concerned with the ‘New British History’ advanced by J. G. A. Pocock. Pocock’s call in the mid-1970s for an exploration of the interactions between peripheral cultures of the British Isles has been taken up by numerous scholars who have worked to destabilize the anglocentrism of much previous historical scholarship and to replace it with an archipelagic focus. Here McIlvanney picks up a neglected thread in Pocock’s critique – that a focus on identities and cultures forged in the interaction of peripheral peoples of the British Isles should also be extended to an ‘oceanic’ perspective and involve those entangled histories of immigrants from the British Isles relocated to colonies. McIlvanney uses the example of John Barr, a poet of Scottish descent working in a ‘Burnsian’ mode, to explore the relationship of Scottish poets to the creation of a New Zealand national literary canon. McIlvanney shows that Barr and other Scottish poets were

left out of national anthologies that privileged English connections, especially after the 1960s, and this exclusion worked to push Scottish poetry ‘to the edge of available maps of New Zealand verse.’ As McIlvanney points out, Barr’s depictions of New Zealand, Otago in particular, are far from a ‘transplanted Scotland’. On the contrary, his use of Scots ‘signals a rootedness in Otago’, a means of transitioning into the new country, far removed from ‘the colonist’s nostalgia for home.’ In foregrounding this example of Barr, McIlvanney then draws attention to the legacy of Lowland Scots and its role as a possible idiom for expression within contemporary New Zealand literature.

Mike McLaughlin explores tensions between Irish nationalism, Canadian nation-building, and settler colonialism in the second half of the nineteenth century through the life and writings of J.L.P. O’Hanly, an immigrant Irish nationalist steeped in Canadian politics and whose career as a government land surveyor in Canada involved him in the British-Canadian colonization of aboriginal lands. O’Hanly actively engaged in press debates about Irish nationalism and the relationship of Irish Catholics to a nascent Canadian nation, and much of his advocacy writing was shaped by the context of Fenianism in Canada. O’Hanly had to navigate troubled political waters as he argued in support of Irish nationalism yet sought to distance himself and the Irish Catholic community in Canada from Fenianism, especially in the years immediately after the Fenian raids across the U.S.-Canada border in 1866 when government repression of Fenianism threatened to spill over into blanket repression of all Irish Catholics. During the Irish Home Rule movement as well, O’Hanly supported the cause from Canada. In his private correspondence he acknowledged that Home Rule was not an end goal but only a step on the way to ‘annihilation of the cursed British empire.’ This strident anti-imperialism makes O’Hanly’s own work in service of settler colonialism particularly enigmatic, and McLaughlin argues that O’Hanly’s complicity with empire can be only partly explained as the result of a pragmatic personal interest in finding well-paying work. More important was the fact that O’Hanly, like many Irish immigrants abroad in the British Empire, largely accepted discourses of Western imperialism and its purported civilizing mission.

Marjory Harper’s contribution, also based on a keynote lecture at the Vancouver conference, explores experiences of mental illness for Irish and Scottish immigrants to Canada, especially British Columbia, from the 1860s through the 1910s. Using asylum admission registers that record biographical detail of patients’ lives and reading these alongside a wealth of individual case files (which include doctors’ case notes as well as intimate letters between

patients and their families), Harper is able to evaluate the perceived causes of mental illness among immigrants and to draw conclusions about the consequences of 'migrant insanity.' Here Harper is in conversation with postcolonial scholars who have shown how dependent were settler colonial regimes on maintaining discourses of racial superiority. The figure of mentally ill settlers, Harper explains, belied this discourse, and so mental illness was thought to be a particular threat to the colonial order and required either asylum confinement or expulsion for those labelled 'insane.' Canada deported more immigrants than any other country in the British Commonwealth, and Harper explores how definitions of insanity and doctors' diagnostic practices were central to how the state, under the influence of eugenic science, identified people to be deported. The asylum records show how medical professionals understood and diagnosed mental illness, revealing doctors' preoccupation with race, ethnicity and heredity as causal factors of mental illness as well as doctors' tendency to make moral judgments about their patients. To grasp the experience of immigrant mental illness, Harper probes beyond the question of diagnostic norms and reads across many case files to reveal meaningful patterns in the inner world of migrants' experiences of dislocation and the common 'triggers of mental breakdown.'

Gillian Tasker's article engages theories of space in literature to explore the work of Alexander Trocchi, Glasgow-born writer of the 1950s and 1960s. While Trocchi's work is often associated with French existentialism and the Beat Movement, in this article Tasker focuses on the representation of heterotopic and 'other' spaces in both *Young Adam* (1954) and *Cain's Book* (1960), in order to examine the forms of subversive spatiality in evidence within each text. Referring to the work of both Michel Foucault (on heterotopia) and Gaston Bachelard (on interior space), the article opens out the idea of heterotopia as existential space. As Tasker points out, for Foucault the model of the ship represents 'heterotopia *par excellence*' and this notion of nautical heterotopia fits directly with Trocchi's novels in which the images of the barge and scow feature strongly. In each text there are similarly heterotopic concerns with the mirror, that is, with the image of the reflected self as site of self-disassociation and estrangement. Linked to this, there are also heterotopic readings of the fairground in *Cain's Book*, where 'the heterotopia of the fairground is also the setting for an existential moment on the edge.' A key counter-cultural writer of his age, Trocchi proclaimed himself a 'cosmonaut of inner space'. It is therefore unsurprising that the protagonists of each novel are 'on the edge' in several evident ways. Through an examination of drug culture at the heart

of each novel, Tasker goes on to examine the representation of the heroin hit as site of spatial transformation. In tying these various strands together, Tasker points out that in Trocchi's work 'heterotopia is both the space of, and beyond, the edge.'

The article by Christopher Korten is the only one included here that was not originally presented in Vancouver. We thought it a welcome addition, though, since like many of the papers presented in Vancouver it explores peripheral spaces and events in order to illuminate an historical problem relevant to Ireland. Here Korten offers a fresh view of Irish Catholic education at the end of the eighteenth century by looking to the opposite edge of Europe and to local events and controversies in Rome. Korten's main concern is to explain the failure of a movement to establish an Irish-born Rector at the Irish College in Rome during the three decades following the suppression of the Jesuits in 1773 (a failure despite much lobbying by Irish clergy and bishops). Korten goes against the grain of recent scholarship that has characterized Rome's relationship to its Churches in the British Isles as primarily shaped by a struggle for control wherein Rome sought rapprochement with the British Crown in order to deal with their common enemy in the French Revolution and so advised its followers in Ireland to be obedient to the authority of the British Crown. On the thorny issue of establishing a native Rector at the Irish College, Korten shows that such questions of national control and obedience came, at best, second place to much more important local considerations to do with key individuals' interests (especially those of the long-standing Italian Rector, Luigi Cuccagni, and all of the three Italian Cardinal Protectors of the colleges) in maintaining their offices, privileges and authority over the colleges. Through a close reading of petitions from Irish clergy and correspondence between Cuccagni and other officials in Rome, Korten reveals important insights into the local politics of patronage in Rome as well as the theological debates and xenophobia that shaped the native Rector controversy.

The final section of this issue contains extracts from Kenneth White's 'waybook', *The Winds of Vancouver*, which was launched at the Vancouver conference: being 'on the edge' has been fundamental to White's writings throughout his career – both in geographical and in theoretical terms, and we are delighted to be able to include a piece directly relevant both to the theme of the conference and to its location.

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