BRITONS
Forging the Nation 1707–1837

LINDA COLLEY

1992
Yale University Press
New Haven and London
For David
Acknowledgements

Illuminated my understanding of Britain's empire, Bruce Smith has proved an indefatigable research assistant. And my agent, Mike Shaw, has been - as ever - a splendid source of encouragement and good advice.

But my best thanks go to my husband and comrade-in-arms, David Cannadine. Without him, it is not too much to say that I would scarcely have survived to complete this book. And I would certainly not have relished life so much in the process. It is a daunting thought that he has lived with this book almost as long as he has lived with me. Let us hope that the heavier of his burdens has now been lifted.

L.J.C.
December 1991

The appearance of this book in paperback has enabled me to correct some factual and typographical errors. I am very grateful to those reviewers, colleagues and students who helped me to identify them.

Introduction

This book is about the forging of the British nation between the Act of Union joining Scotland to England and Wales in 1707 and the formal beginning of the Victorian age in 1837. I have written it with two linked intentions in mind. The first is to uncover the identity, actions and ideas of those men and women who were willing to support the existing order against the major threats their nation faced from without, to establish exactly what it was these Britons thought they were being loyal to, and what they expected to gain from their commitment. The second is to show that it was during this period that a sense of British national identity was forged, and that the manner in which it was forged has shaped the quality of this particular sense of nationhood and belonging ever since, both in terms of its remarkable strengths and resilience, and in terms of its considerable and increasingly evident weaknesses.

What made these themes, mass allegiance on the one hand and the invention of Britishness on the other, so central during this 130-year long period was a succession of wars between Britain and France. Prime powers on sea and on land respectively, the whale and the elephant as Paul Kennedy styles them, they were at war between 1689 and 1697, and on a larger scale and for higher stakes between 1702 and 1713, 1743 and 1748, 1756 and 1763, 1778 and 1783, 1793 and 1802, and, finally, between 1803 and the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. And these were only the most violent expressions of a much longer and many-layered rivalry. Even in the interludes of token peace, the two powers repeatedly plotted against and spied on each other. Their settlers and armed forces jostled for space and dominance in North America, the West Indies, Africa, Asia and Europe. French clerics, intellectuals and tourists scrutinised Britain's political system, moral fibre and cultural achievements, and their British counterparts did the same with regard to France, in both cases with a manic obsessiveness that betrayed their mutual antagonism and anxiety. Like another famously unhappy couple, the British and the French had their teeth so sunk into each other in these years (and long after) that
they could neither live together peacefully, nor ignore each other and live neutrally apart. The result was less a series of separate and conventional wars, than one peculiarly pervasive and long-drawn out conflict which rarely had time to become a cold war in the twentieth-century sense.

It is a commonplace that this prolonged struggle tested and transformed state power on both sides of the Channel. In Great Britain, it led directly to the founding of the Bank of England and to the creation of the City, to the evolution of a more efficient and nationwide fiscal system, and to the emergence of a massive military machine which has only begun to be seriously dismantled since the Second World War. Yet to read most history books is to gain the impression that these organisational changes took place within a human vacuum. We know extraordinarily little about how the majority of British civilians responded to this succession of wars, and to the innovations, conquests and dangers that accompanied them. In part, but only in part, this is because—unlike almost every other European nation in this period—Great Britain never experienced a major invasion from without. As a result, it never had to resort (though it came close to it) to implementing mass conscription. Consequently, the impression has persisted that what has been mis-called Britain’s second hundred years war with France took place largely outside the thought-world of its civilian population: that in these conflicts—in contrast to the Civil War of the mid-seventeenth century or the World Wars of the twentieth—the politicians, bureaucrats and professional soldiers remained an active minority surrounded by an indifferent multitude.

Yet this is quite wrong. The fact that Britain escaped a substantial invasion did not make the prolonged conflict with France seem irrelevant to the mass of its inhabitants. It merely made responses to the wars more unabashedly chauvinistic. Unlike most of their European neighbours, Britons at this time—like Americans in the twentieth century—were able to savour military glory without ever having to pay the price in terms of civilian casualties and large-scale domestic destruction. Singularly free from these more brutal imperatives, they were able to focus, many of them, on the broader, less material characteristics of the struggle with France, a struggle that played a crucial part in defining Great Britain through the very process of exposing it to persistent danger from without.

At one level, these were religious wars, and perceived as such by both sides. One of France’s primary objectives in the Nine Years War (1689-97), in the War of Spanish Succession (1702-13) and in the War of Austrian Succession (1739-48) was an invasion of
Britain in support of the Stuart claimants to the throne, first the exiled James II, then his son, James Edward Stuart, and finally his grandson, Charles Edward Stuart, alias Bonnie Prince Charlie. Since these princes were Roman Catholics, all of these wars were bound to raise the issue of the security of the Protestant settlement within Great Britain itself, as well as the spectre of another civil war on its shores. Even in the Seven Years War (1756–63), there was a slight, vestigial threat of a French-sponsored Jacobite invasion.

By then, though, Jacobitism throughout Britain was plainly dust and ashes. The main ideological threat posed by the next two wars with France was not religious but overwhelmingly political. By allying with the Americans after 1776, France succeeded in stripping Britain of the most valuable sector of its first empire, and the part with which the bulk of its population felt the closest emotional ties. A territory once governed from London was converted into a republic which rauously proclaimed itself not just independent, but freer, better and more genuinely Protestant than the mother country. In other words, this war, too, forced the British to look anxiously and inquiringly inwards, even though the bulk of the action took place three thousand miles away on the other side of the Atlantic. The French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars (1793–1802 and 1803–15) would prove still more corrosive to British constitutional complacency, as well as lasting longer, extending over a larger geographical area and posing a much greater threat of invasion.

All of these major wars, then, challenged the political and/or religious foundations upon which Great Britain was based, and threatened its internal security and its commercial and colonial power. Consequently, its rulers were obliged, over and over again, to mobilise not just the consent, but increasingly the active cooperation of large numbers of Britons in order to repel this recurrent danger from without. Of course, not everyone responded positively. In recent years, we have learned a great deal about those men and women who defied the authorities and persisted in supporting a Jacobite invasion of Britain in the first half of the eighteenth century, or who opposed Britain's war with America after 1775, or who supported peace with Republican and Napoleonic France after 1793.  

There were always dissenting voices: and it is right and proper that they should emerge loud and clear from the historical record and that we acknowledge them. But we should not let them drown out the other, apparently more conventional voices of those far greater numbers of Britons who, for many different reasons, supported these successive war efforts. What follows is partly an attempt to rescue these people, the seemingly conformists, from the condescension of posterity (I had more appropriately said from the ignorance of historians). Their behaviour badly needs reconstructing because it usually represented much more than visceral chauvinism, or simple-minded deference, or blinkered conservatism. For all classes and for both sexes, patriotism was more often than not a highly rational response and a creative one as well. Patriotism in the sense of identification with Britain as something to be cherished and fought for, as a bond with which different groups and interests could identify so as to steer it in a direction that would benefit them. Being a patriot was a way of claiming the right to participate in British political life, and ultimately a means of demanding a much broader access to citizenship.

Looking critically and comprehensively at patriotism in this period is also vital if we are to understand the evolution of what must be called British nationalism. I am aware that in referring to Great Britain as a nation, I may bewilder, and even offend those who are accustomed to thinking of nations only as historic phenomena characterised by cultural and ethnic homogeneity. My reply would be that, if we confine our use of the term 'nation' to such pure, organic growths, we shall find precious few of them available in the world either to study or to live in. By contrast, if we accept Benedict Anderson's admittedly loose, but for that reason invaluable definition of a nation as 'an imagined political community', and if we accept also that, historically speaking, most nations have always been culturally and ethnically diverse, problematic, protean and artificial constructs that take shape very quickly and come apart just as fast, then we can plausibly regard Great Britain as an invented nation superimposed, if only for a while, onto much older alignments and loyalties.

It was an invention forged above all by war. Time and time again, war with France brought Britons, whether they hailed from Wales or Scotland or England, into confrontation with an obviously hostile Other and encouraged them to define themselves collectively against it. They defined themselves as Protestants struggling for survival against the world's foremost Catholic power. They defined themselves against the French as they imagined them to be, superstitious, militarist, decadent and unfree. And, increasingly as the wars went on, they defined themselves in contrast to the colonial peoples they conquered, peoples who were manifestly alien in terms of culture, religion and colour. National identity, Peter Sahlin has written, 'like ethnic or communal identity, is contingent and relational: it is defined by the social or
Introduction

territorial boundaries drawn to distinguish the collective self and its implicit negation, the other. In other words, men and women decide who they are by reference to who and what they are not. Once confronted with an obviously alien ‘Them’, an otherwise diverse community can become a reassuring or merely desperate ‘Us’. This was how it was with the British after 1707. They came to define themselves as a single people not because of any political or cultural consensus at home, but rather in reaction to the Other beyond their shores.

I am not suggesting for one moment that the growing sense of Britishness in this period supplanted and obliterated other loyalties. It did not. Identities are not like hats. Human beings can and do put on several at a time. Great Britain did not emerge by way of a ‘blending’ of the different regional or older national cultures contained within its boundaries as is sometimes maintained, nor is its genesis to be explained primarily in terms of an English ‘core’ imposing its cultural and political hegemony on a helpless and defrauded Celtic periphery. As even the briefest acquaintance with Great Britain will confirm, the Welsh, the Scottish and the English remain in many ways distinct peoples in cultural terms, just as all three countries continue to be conspicuously sub-divided into different regions. The sense of a common identity here did not come into being, then, because of an integration and homogenisation of disparate cultures. Instead, Britishness was superimposed over an array of internal differences in response to contact with the Other, and above all in response to conflict with the Other.

Recognising this helps to explain some of Britain’s current difficulties. As an invented nation heavily dependent for its raison d’être on a broadly Protestant culture, on the threat and tone of recurrent war, particularly war with France, and on the triumphs, profits and Otherness represented by a massive overseas empire, Britain is bound now to be under immense pressure. It is not just that it has had to adjust to the loss of its empire, though that is obviously part of the problem. It is also that Protestantism is now only a residual part of its culture, so it can no longer define itself against a predominantly Catholic Europe. Indeed, now that it is part of the European Economic Community, Great Britain can no longer comfortably define itself against the European powers at all. Whether it likes it or not, it is fast becoming part of an increasingly federal Europe, though the agonies that British politicians and voters of all partisan persuasions so plainly experience in coming to terms with Brussels and its dictates show just how rooted the perception of Continental Europe as the Other still is. In these circumstances, the re-emergence of Welsh, Scottish and indeed

English nationalism which has been so marked in recent decades can be seen not just as the natural outcome of cultural diversity, but as a response to a broader loss of national, in the sense of British, identity. The Other in the shape of militant Catholicism, or a hostile Continental European power, or an exotic overseas empire is no longer available to make Britons feel that—by contrast—they have an identity in common. The predictable result has been a revival of internal divisions among them. The manner in which Great Britain was made out of that remarkable succession of wars with France in the past is a root cause of its uncertain identity in the present, and may well be the means of its unmaking in the future.

This book, then, deals both with a specific problem—why did Britons in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries become patriots and with what results?—and with a process that continues to have broad-ranging repercussions to this day: the invention of a nation. I have cast the book chronologically, focussing on different themes and groups according to the time when they became most prominent. The first three chapters explore the main cements in Great Britain from its creation as a nominally united kingdom in 1707 to the outbreak of the American Revolution some seventy years later: the overwhelming influence of Protestantism, the contribution made by trade, and the growing connexions between Scotland and the rest of the island and its empire. Chapters four to seven focus on the half-century after the Declaration of Independence in 1776, one of the most formative periods in the making of the modern world and—not accidentally—in the forging of British identity. These were the years in which the monarchy and the governing class became authentically and very effectively British, and both ordinary working men and unprecedented numbers of women were drawn into national affairs and especially national defence as never before. The final chapter takes the story from Waterloo to the accession of Queen Victoria in 1837, years when the shock of peace after so many major wars forced a re-examination of the connexions between Britishness and active citizenship.

In adopting this structure, I am aware that much has had to be glossed over and some things have had to be left out altogether. I have concentrated on civilian responses, rather than on attitudes in the armed forces, which desperately need separate and detailed attention. I have tried to bring together in one book the experiences and mental furniture of Britons from different social backgrounds and from different parts of the island, and in particular to bring out the myriad voices of those who have often and wrongly been
deemed too conventional to be listened to; but I have not attempted a history of high culture. There is nothing here on political theory. And although I have drawn heavily on visual evidence as well as on written sources in reconstructing what Britishness involved, I have not discussed in detail what fine art, or the theatre, or literature, or music can tell us about this subject. I hope that in the future others will. Finally, I have chosen to look at Wales, Scotland and England, and at how their inhabitants defined themselves in relation to the rest of Europe and to the British empire. But although I occasionally refer to those Irishmen and women who lived on the British mainland, I have deliberately not written about Ireland itself. The invention of Britishness was so closely bound up with Protestantism, with war with France and with the acquisition of empire, that Ireland was never able or willing to play a satisfactory part in it. Its population was more Catholic than Protestant. It was the ideal jumping-off spot for a French invasion of Britain, and both its Catholic and its Protestant dissidents traditionally looked to France for aid. And although Irishmen were (and still are) an important component of Britain’s armed forces, and individual Irishmen played leading imperial roles as generals, diplomats and pro-consuls, Ireland’s relationship with the empire was always a deeply ambiguous one. How could it not be, when London treated it as a colony, and when Irishmen of all kinds partook, as Roy Foster has written, ‘psychologically and pragmatically... of attitudes best called colonial’? Ireland was cut off from Great Britain by the sea; but it was cut off still more effectively by the prejudices of the English, Welsh and Scots, and by the self-image of the bulk of the Irish themselves, both Protestants and Catholics.

One last point: this book is about patriotism and nationalism, but I have tried to ensure that neither its content nor its approach is insular. The evolution of Britishness as I understand it cannot, in fact, be understood without reference to both European and world history, and one of my wider aims in tackling this subject was to get away from the highly introverted and specialised mode of historical writing to which post-war British historians have been so prone. I wanted to integrate the domains of military and imperial history with the broad political and social history of Great Britain as a whole. Doing this seems to me to be the only appropriate way to make sense of this nation’s past and of its present. For, contrary to received wisdom, the British are not an insular people in the conventional sense—far from it. For most of their early modern and modern history, they have had more contact with more parts of the world than almost any other nation—it is just that this contact has regularly taken the form of aggressive military and commercial enterprise. As I have said and as I shall continue to argue, this is a culture that is used to fighting and has largely defined itself through fighting. Indeed, if a recent trans-European survey is correct, over two-thirds of Britons remain only too willing to fight for their country. By contrast, less than a half of their European neighbours indicate a similar willingness to express their patriotism in this fashion. Perhaps someone who is part Welsh, part English, Transatlantic in lifestyle and European by choice—as well as British—may be allowed to express the hope that, if Britishness survives (and it may not), it will in the future find a more pragmatic and more generous form.
When Britain first at heaven’s command,
Arose from out the azure main,
This was the charter of the land.
And guardian angels sung this strain:

‘Rule Britannia, rule the waves,
Britons never will be slaves’.1

James Thomson’s words have become so familiar since they were composed in 1740, have been roared out so often in concert halls, at football matches or church services, in a mood of jingoistic pride or, more recently, self-indulgent nostalgia, that we hardly bother anymore to think about what they mean or what they fail to say. We barely notice that opening all-important reference to Britain’s divine origins, even though for Thomson—a minister’s son from the Scottish Lowlands—it would have meant a great deal. And the chorus is so rousing that it scarcely seems to matter that it is Britain’s supremacy offshore that is being celebrated, not its internal unity. Or that the British are defined less by what they have in common, than negatively—whatever these people are, we are told, they are not slaves. Yet Thomson’s emphases, like his silences, are suggestive. It is almost as if God is being invoked and bombast is being deployed to deter more searching questions. For just who were the British? Did they even exist?

A LESS THAN UNITED KINGDOM

As a would-be nation, rather than a name, Great Britain was invented in 1707 when the Parliament of Westminster passed the Act of Union linking Scotland to England and Wales. From now on, this document proclaimed, there would be ‘one united kingdom by the name of Great Britain’, with one Protestant ruler, one legislature and one system of free trade. Like the earlier Act of Union between England and Wales in 1536, this was very much a
union of policy, as the novelist and journalist Daniel Defoe called it, not a union of affection. The politicians in London had feared that unless a formal, political union with Scotland was cemented, as distinct from the existing dynastic union, the country might opt on the death of poor childless Queen Anne (1702–14) for James Edward Stuart, her exiled Roman Catholic half-brother, instead of agreeing, as the English and Welsh had already done, to import a new Protestant dynasty from Hanover. A full, legislative union was the only solution London was prepared to consider. But few pretended at the time or later that a union on paper would automatically forge a united people.

Of course, Scotland and England had been drawing increasingly together since the Reformation in the sixteenth century. Since 1603, the two countries had been ruled by the same Stuart dynasty. They shared the same King James version of the Bible. And long before the Act of Union, a cognate language with English called Scots had spread throughout the Scottish Lowlands and beyond, so that men and women on one side of the border could usually communicate with their neighbours on the other side. In commercial terms, too, Scotland and England had a long history of interdependence, the latter taking easily a half of Scottish exports by 1700. None the less, a thoroughgoing political union between Scotland and the rest of Britain had by no means been a foregone conclusion, and even the Act of Union only partially achieved it. Scots were now represented in the same Parliament as the English and the Welsh; they paid the same taxes and customs duties, and competed for the same government and administrative appointments. But they still retained their distinctive religious organisation and social structure, as well as their own legal and educational systems. And in the first half of the eighteenth century, especially, poor transport, inadequate maps and the sheer distance separating Scotland from London enabled them to remain largely self-governing in practice.

For the majority of Scots at this early stage, the Union was of only marginal relevance to their lives. As for the wealthy or ambitious minority, they were torn between anger at the loss of Scotland’s ancient independence and a natural desire for a wider stage than their own homeland could afford them. At one and the same time, they resented the South and craved its bounty and opportunities, kicking against the Union when it proved uncomfortable, yet demanding full parity with the English inside it. On the other side of the border, ambiguity and reluctance were just as marked. It is sometimes supposed that the Act of Union was a piece of cultural and political imperialism foisted on the hapless Scots by their stronger southern neighbour. But this was not how many eighteenth-century Englishmen regarded it. To some of them, union with Scotland seemed a blunt affront to older identities. They bitterly disapproved of ‘English’ and ‘England’ giving way to ‘British’ and ‘Great Britain’, as they were in both official and everyday vocabulary by the 1750s. And many regarded the Scots as poor and pushy relations, unwilling to pay their full share of taxation, yet constantly demanding access to English resources in terms of trade and jobs. There was also an element of fear. The fact that in 1715 and 1745, hostile Jacobite armies marched into England from Scotland ensured that older memories of cross-border hostilities remained alive. ‘Scotland... is certainly the sink of the earth’, a Whig grandee would write to the Duke of Newcastle after the Battle of Culloden in 1746. ‘As to Scotland,’ replied Newcastle, who was then Secretary of State as well as the Prime Minister’s brother, ‘I am as little partial to it as any man alive.’ ‘However,’ he added, in a rare fit of generosity, ‘we must consider that they are within our island.’

English nationalists were much less repelled by their union with Wales, partly because this connexion was so much older, but primarily because the Welsh seemed so much less threatening than the more numerous and militarily minded Scots. Yet in some respects, Wales was a more aloof and distinctive country even than Scotland. True, its separate identity was not rooted in institutions. It had lost its own legal system, its religious organisation was modelled on England’s own, and it had no universities or capital city like Edinburgh to serve as a focus for its cultural life. What distinguished the Welsh was their language, a language that three out of four of them still spoke out of choice as late as the 1880s. In the eighteenth century, English was largely confined to Radnor, Monmouthshire, Glamorgan and parts of Pembroke, to the few well-established towns like Conwy in North Wales, and to emerging urban centres like Neath and Cowbridge in South Wales. Some Welsh-speakers were bilingual. Even in the mountains and remote villages of central Wales, travellers and traders from England could usually find a few individuals to understand them. But amongst themselves, most Welshmen and women below gentry level spoke only their own language. And for much of the time, though not for all of the time, they seem to have regarded the English as a different people. In 1751, a Welshman living in London would claim that his poorer countrymen back home knew ‘no other name for Englishmen at this day, than Saxons, or Saxons’.

At one level, then, Great Britain at the beginning of the eighteenth century was like the Christian doctrine of the Trinity, both three and one, and altogether something of a mystery. The inhabitants of
Wales, of Scotland and of England were separated from each other by history and in some cases by language. And until the end of the century, when better transport, together with a greater supply of mass-produced goods and English-language books and newspapers, began to reduce local peculiarities somewhat, they were also separated from each other and among themselves by different folklores, different sports, different costumes, different building styles, different agricultural practices, different weights and measures, and different cuisines. Yet acknowledging that England, Wales and Scotland in 1707 differed sharply from each other is not the same as saying that ordinary men and women in each of these three countries were invariably possessed by a single and overwhelming sense of their own distinctive identity as Englishmen, or Welshmen, or Scots. Most of them were not.

The Welsh and the Scots, for example, rarely defined themselves against the English by reference to the kind of rich Celtic nationalism that certain Irish patriots would make so much of after the 1840s. Nor did they usually see themselves as fellow Celts, and for good reason. Wales and Scotland had no frontier in common, and precious little culture in common either. The Gaelic spoken by Scottish Highlanders was very different from the Celtic language spoken by many of the Welsh, far more different in fact than English was from French or German. And the majority of Lowland Scots and a substantial minority of Welshmen were not even Celtic in ethnic origin, but Anglo-Saxon or Norse. So while it is highly convenient to use the term ‘Celtic fringe’ as a piece of shorthand for Wales and Scotland as well as for Ireland—and the phrase is sometimes used in that fashion in this book—doing so tells us very little about how the inhabitants of these countries actually saw themselves.10

Moreover, attachment to Wales, to Scotland and even to England was always complicated by the fact that these three countries were neither united in themselves nor distinct from each other. ‘Different as English-speaking Scotland was from its southern neighbour’, as Tom Nairn writes, ‘it actually contained a much greater internal differentiation within its own historical frontiers’.11 In terms of language, religion, levels of literacy, social organisation and ethnicity, Scottish Lowlanders had far more in common with the inhabitants of northern England than they did with their own Highland countrymen. This was reflected in the vocabulary of the time. Sassenach (in the original Gaelic, sasanach) means a Saxon, and the word is now used as one of the kinder Scottish epithets for someone who is English born and bred. But in the eighteenth century, it was used overwhelmingly by Scottish

Highlanders as a blanket term to cover English-speaking Scottish Lowlanders as well as the English themselves. In Highland eyes, these two peoples were virtually indistinguishable, and both were equally alien. In turn, Lowland Scots traditionally regarded their Highland countrymen as members of a different and inferior race, violent, treacherous, poverty-stricken and backward. They called them savages or aborigines, labels that some Lowlanders continued to use well into the 1830s, despite Sir Walter Scott’s literary efforts to romanticise and sanitise the glens, clans and tartans of the far north.12

The degree to which the Welsh were able to see themselves as one people was also limited by an acute north–south divide, the country’s central range of mountains making trade, communications and ordinary human contact between counties in South Wales, like Glamorgan, Carmarthen and Pembrok, and northern counties, such as Flint, Merioneth and Caernarfon, very difficult indeed. No Glamorgan landed family, for example, intermarried with a family from North Wales during the eighteenth century—because people from these two regions simply did not encounter each other, unless, that is, they happened to meet up in England.13

And what of that ‘heterogeneous thing, an Englishman’, as Defoe called him?

In eager rapes, and furious lust begot,
Betwixt a painted Briton and a Scot:
Whose gend ring offspring quickly learnt to bow,
And yoke their heifers to the Roman plough:
From whence a mongrel half-bred race there came,
With neither name nor nation, speech or fame
In whose hot veins now mixtures quickly ran,
Infus’d betwixt a Saxon and a Dane.
While their rank daughters, to their parents just,
Receiv’d all nations with promiscuous lust.
This nauseous brood directly did contain
The well-extracted blood of Englishmen...14

Defoe’s uncompromising insistence on the ethnic diversity of England, its early exposure to successive invasions from Continental Europe, and the constant intermingling of its people with the Welsh and the Scots, was fully justified in historical terms. Yet the sheer mocking savagery of *The True-Born Englishman* is less straightforward than it seems. Defoe was deflating English conceit to be sure, but the fact that he—an Englishman—was prepared to do so in such remorselessly satirical language was in itself a powerful demonstration of English confidence. Far more than the
Welsh and Scots felt able to do, the English could—occasionally—ridicule themselves because they had a strong sense of who they were and of their own importance. England’s population was four times that of Wales and Scotland put together, and its economy much richer. Unlike its two neighbours, it had long possessed a strong and highly centralised state, it contained only one major language, and its internal communications were more advanced and much less disrupted by geography.

Yet in England, too—as Defoe was concerned to point out—there was only limited uniformity in terms of culture, custom or outlook. Northumberland, for instance, in the way that its people looked and lived and thought, was much closer to being a Scottish than an English county. Here, as in the Scottish Lowlands, the poor consumed oatmeal as a matter of course, a cereal that—as Samuel Johnson remarked in his famous dictionary—more affluent southerners dismissed as animal fodder. Here, too, over a third of all adults may have been able to read by the early 1700s. This was virtually the same level of literacy as existed in Lowland Scotland, but a much higher level than, say, in the English Midlands where Johnson himself hailed from. Books and newspapers from Scottish printing presses were far more common in Northumberland than London-produced reading matter, and Scots and their accents were infinitely more familiar than visitors from the south. Northumbrians and Lowland Scots even tended to look alike, with the same raw, high-boned faces and the same thin, angular physiques. ‘To pass from the borders of Scotland into Northumberland’, a Scottish clergyman would write at the end of the eighteenth century, ‘was rather like going into another parish than into another kingdom.’

Much the same could be said of Shropshire and Herefordshire with relation to Wales. Here, as in Northumberland, centuries of cross-border trade, migration and marriage had forged a distinctive but mongrel regional culture. ‘The manners of the people’, noted one early nineteenth-century antiquarian of this region, ‘are half English, half Welsh’. My own surname, ‘Colley’, is a common one in this part of the world. It means black, and is probably a testament to all those dark-haired Celts who, like my own ancestors, crossed over from Wales and settled on the English side of the border. But even in those parts of England that were not directly exposed to Welsh or Scottish influences in this way, there was still massive diversity. How could there not be, when scenery and soil types varied enormously even over short distances, when the bulk of roads and people were too poor for long-distance travel to be common, and when no one—however rich—could journey faster on land than a horse, that is at ten miles an hour at the most? ‘I had never been above eight miles from home in my life’, the labouring poet John Clare would write of his youth in Northamptonshire, ‘and I could not fancy England much larger than the part I know.’

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

Some of these internal disparities would be smoothed out as this period progressed, by the advance in road and postal communications, by the proliferation of print, and by the operation of free trade throughout the island. But it was not primarily this limited process of cultural integration that made possible an emerging sense of Britishness. Instead, men and women came to define themselves as Britons—in addition to defining themselves in many other ways—because circumstances impressed them with the belief that they were different from those beyond their shores, and in particular different from their prime enemy, the French. Not so much consensus or homogeneity or centralisation at home, as a strong sense of dissimilarity from those without proved to be the essential cement.

It was partly geography that underlay this marked sense of difference, the simple fact that Great Britain was an island. The encompassing sea was a vital defence and a highly effective frontier, keeping Britons enclosed and together, as well as keeping enemies out. But the sea could also be imagined as a telling symbol of identity. In France, as in most Continental European states, national boundaries would fluctuate throughout the 1700s and long after:

Not only did the idea of territorial sovereignty remain undeveloped, in theory as in practice, but the political boundary in the north and east was largely undelimited. France’s frontiers were riddled with enclaves, exclaves, overlapping and contested jurisdictions, and other administrative nightmares. By contrast, British boundaries after 1707 seemed settled once and for all, marked out by the sea, clear, incontrovertible, apparently pre-ordained. As one clergyman put it in a sermon delivered in celebration of the Act of Union: ‘We are fenced in with a wall which knows no master but God only.’
This conviction that Britain’s physical identity, its very shape and place on the map, had been laid down by God points to the much more profound sense in which its inhabitants saw themselves, particularly in times of emergency, as a people apart. At odds in so much of their culture and secular history, the English, the Welsh and the Scots could be drawn together—and made to feel separate from much of the rest of Europe—by their common commitment to Protestantism. To a very limited extent, this had been the case since the Reformation. But throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and even after, external pressures and imperatives made the fact that this was an overwhelmingly Protestant culture relevant and compelling in a quite unprecedented way.

From the Act of Union to the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, Great Britain was involved in successive, very dangerous wars with Catholic France. At the same time and long after, it was increasingly concerned to carve out a massive empire in foreign lands that were not even Christian. In these circumstances of regular and violent contact with peoples who could so easily be seen as representing the Other, Protestantism was able to become a unifying and distinguishing bond as never before. More than anything else, it was this shared religious allegiance combined with recurrent wars that permitted a sense of British national identity to emerge alongside of, and not necessarily in competition with, older, more organic attachments to England, Wales or Scotland, or to county or village. Protestantism was the dominant component of British religious life. Protestantism coloured the way that Britons approached and interpreted their material life. Protestantism determined how most Britons viewed their politics. And an uncompromising Protestantism was the foundation on which their state was explicitly and unapologetically based.

THE STRUGGLES OF GOD’S ELECT

The absolute centrality of Protestantism to British religious experience in the 1700s and long after is so obvious that it has proved easy to pass over. Always reluctant to be seen to be addressing the obvious, historians have preferred to concentrate on the divisions that existed within the Protestant community itself, on the tensions between Anglicans and Protestant non-conformists in England and Wales, and between Presbyterians and Episcopalians in Scotland, and between the older forms of dissent that emerged in the seventeenth century, Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers and the like, and newer versions such as Methodism. These internal rivalries were abundant and serious. But they should not obscure what was still the most striking feature in the religious landscape, the gulf between Protestant and Catholic.

At its most formal, the division was enshrined in the law. From the late seventeenth century until 1829, British Catholics were not allowed to vote and were excluded from all state offices and from both houses of Parliament. For much of the eighteenth century they were subject to punitive taxation, forbidden to possess weapons and discriminated against in terms of access to education, property rights and freedom of worship. In other words, in law—if not always in fact—they were treated as potential traitors, as un-British. The legal position of Protestant non-conformists, however, was utterly different. As ‘an effectual means to unite their Majesties’ Protestant subjects’, the Toleration Act of 1689 had permitted dissenters who accepted the doctrine of the Holy Trinity the right to worship freely. They could vote providing they met the relevant property qualifications, they could build their own churches, they could set up their own academies to educate their children, and they could carry arms. By law they still had to conform at least occasionally to Anglican worship in order to be eligible for state or local office, and some Tory politicians would have liked to exclude them from official life altogether. But in practice, English and Welsh Protestant dissenters were able to penetrate almost all levels of the political system up to and including Parliament itself, and so too were Scottish Presbyterians.

Great Britain, then, was not a confessional state in any narrow sense. Instead, its laws proclaimed it to be a pluralist yet aggressively Protestant polity. It was not primarily the law that made Protestantism and anti-Catholicism such powerful and pervasive emotions, however. Official intolerance, like mass intolerance, was rooted in something far more intangible, in fear most of all, and in the way that Britons chose to remember and interpret their own past. For large numbers of them, as David Cressy has shown, time past was a soap opera written by God, a succession of warning disasters and providential escapes which they acted out afresh every year as a way of reminding themselves who they were. Every 30 January until 1859, Protestant worshippers throughout England and Wales fasted and prayed in memory of Charles I’s execution in 1649. By contrast, 29 May, the anniversary of the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, was a jubilee day marked out by bonfires and bells, a time for celebrating the end of political instability and martial rule. The first day of August marked the accession in 1714 of the first Hanoverian king, the securing of the Protestant Succession. And 5 November was doubly sacred, not just the anniversary of the landing in England in 1688 of
The mechanisms of trade helped to bring together the different regions of Great Britain. The business of trade helped to stock the Exchequer. The merchant marine was the Royal Navy’s training ground. And men and women of trade played a signal part in preserving the Hanoverian dynasty.

For all these reasons, there is little point in debating whether eighteenth-century Britain (or indeed nineteenth-century Britain) was essentially a landed society or a commercial society. It was neither of these things alone, because it was both of these things together. It is the relationship between land and trade that is the important issue; and before 1775, that relationship was widely and correctly believed to be a mutually beneficial one. If it subsequently became more adversarial, this was due in part to the quickening pace of economic and social change, but also to the changing experience of war. Both the war with the American colonies and the protracted struggle with Revolutionary and Napoleonic France damaged British commerce as conflicts earlier in the century had not done. Once this was noticed, commercial tolerance of the landed classes’ predominance in central government was likely to become rather more frayed.

Yet even before 1775, it was possible to detect ambiguities and tensions. There were clear signs that some British traders were becoming impatient with their existing, indirect influence in the state. The rise of voluntary associations like the Anti-Gallicans, the Society of Arts and the Marine Society had a double significance. They supplied additional proof of the willingness of men (and women) of commerce to invest in Great Britain, to preach and practice patriotism, in part because it brought them profit. But at a deeper level, these private organisations also bore witness to dissatisfaction with the more formal institutions of the state, to a growing belief that they were too hidebound and too exclusive to carry out all the changes that traders wanted. In the 1760s, many of these societies would swing over to support John Wilkes and parliamentary reform. And logically so. All that was happening was the working out in public politics of the private pretensions that Hogarth had observed in Thomas Coram long before. Since trade shone on Great Britain, then surely those who promoted it had a right to a more prominent place in the sun?

3 Peripheries

The Seven Years War was the most dramatically successful war the British ever fought. They conquered Canada. They drove the French out of most of their Indian, West African and West Indian possessions. They tore Manila and Havana from the Spanish. Their navy devastated its European rivals. And they assumed for themselves the reputation of being the most aggressive, the most affluent and the most swiftly expanding power in the world. ‘Look around’, declared the young and still conventionally chauvinistic Charles James Fox to his fellow MPs: ‘...Observe the magnificence of our metropolis—the extent of our empire—the immensity of our commerce and the opulence of our people.’

Yet the euphoria soon soured. In part, this was because of the hangover that always follows excessive indulgence in major war. There was the predictable social strain of absorbing more than 200,000 demobilised men, most of them poor, some of them mutilated, all of them trained to violence. There was the hard, unpleasant fact of a massively inflated National Debt which led inexorably to a rise in taxation. And there were the unpalatable diplomacies of the Treaty of Paris in 1763, in which Britain restored some of its winnings to France and Spain in the vain hope that they would refrain from going to war in the future to regain the rest. Yet significant though these irritants were, the root cause of post-war uncertainty and division was more profound and long-lasting. More than anything else, it was the quality and extent of the victory itself that subsequently inflamed the peace. The success had been too great, the territory won was at once too vast and too alien. The British had enormously inflated their national prestige and imperial power. But, rather like the frog in the Aesop fable which exploded in trying to compete with the ox, at the end of the day they were left wondering if they had overstretched themselves, made nervous and insecure by their colossal new dimensions.
brought with them not only Asiatic luxury, but I fear Asiatic principles of government. 14

The spoils of unprecedented victory unsettled, then, in part because they challenged longstanding British mythologies: Britain as a pre-eminent Protestant nation; Britain as a polity built on commerce; Britain as the land of liberty because founded on Protestantism and commerce. All of these premises seemed to be put in question by the scope and nature of the post-war British empire. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, Britons have been understandably obsessed with the problem of having too little power in the world. In the third quarter of the eighteenth century, by contrast, their forbears were perplexed by the problem of having acquired too much power too quickly over too many people. They had been plunged dramatically and very profitably into the midst of the Great Game, but most of them had still to learn and accept its rules. The adjustment was made only harder by simultaneous changes in the rules of the power game at home.

Support for the Seven Years War had been remarkably and deceptively unanimous. In contrast with every previous war with France since 1689, there had been no French-sponsored invasion of the British mainland on behalf of the Stuart claimants to the throne, and no even halfway serious plot for an internal rising on their behalf. 5 By 1763, it had become clear to even the most paranoid Whig politician that—in England and Wales at least—Jacobitism was now too marginal to influence the course of events. Tories, both within and outside Parliament, had been as satisfyingly belligerent during the war as their Whig counterparts. The Hanoverian dynasty was once and for all securely entrenched. So, apparently, was Scotland’s union with the rest of Great Britain. For the first time ever, the British army had been able to recruit men on a massive scale from the Scottish Highlands. Those clans that had taken up arms against the Union in 1715 and in 1745 had been wooed to the British cause by way of favours and promotions for their former chieftains, and transformed into the cannon-fodder of imperial war. ‘I sought for merit wherever it was to be found’, as William Pitt the Elder boasted: ‘I found it in the mountains of the North... a hardy and intrepid race of men... They served with fidelity as they fought with valour, and conquered for you in every part of the world.’ 10

But to whom would these spoils of victory belong? Now that Tory loyalty had been proved beyond a shadow of a doubt, now that Jacobitism was ashes and now that Scotland as a whole, and not just the Lowlands, had invested in British patriotism, what justification could there possibly be for any longer confining high
office and opportunities to Whigs and Englishmen? As far as Tories, Scotsmen and, most importantly, the new king, George III, were concerned, the answer was no justification at all.

To those used to being at the centre of things, then, but also to those below them, the prospects in 1763 were exhilarating but also frighteningly wide open. Indeed, it is not too much to say that from this point on until the American Revolution and beyond, the British were in the grip of collective agoraphobia, captivated by, but also adrift and at odds in a vast empire abroad and a new political world at home which few of them properly understood. It was a time of raised expectations, disorientation and anxiety in which demands for change on the one hand, and denunciations of change on the other, came from the peripheries of the political nation, from the peripheries of Great Britain itself and from the peripheries of the empire as well. At home, John Wilkes and his supporters launched a turbulent campaign for old English liberties and new English rights, while English patriots more generally felt themselves under threat from Scottish ambition and Scottish constructions of Great Britain. Abroad, those American colonists whom many Englishmen and women had been accustomed to viewing as mirror images of themselves, rejected both the authority of the British Parliament and in the end their own residual British identity. Reacting to these pressures would force a major reassessment of the meanings of Britishness and of the implications of empire.

**JOHN WILKES AND ENGLISHNESS**

On 15 August 1763, a Scotsman challenged an Englishman to a duel in the streets of Paris. The Englishman was John Wilkes, holidaying in France so as to escape his creditors back home, and to recover his poise after his brush with the government over a matter of seditious libel. His would-be assailant was a brash young man called John Forbes, son of an Aberdeenshire Jacobite who had fled to France in the wake of the 'Forty-Five. He had recognised Wilkes from Hogarth's portrait of him, that brilliant cartoon in which the patriot's slim elegance and journalistic pretensions are utterly offset by his cynical leer, obvious squint and a bogus cap of liberty suspended over his fashionably bewigged head like an inverted chamber-pot. But Forbes was not in pursuit of the real or even the false prophet of liberty: he wanted to kill the hammer of the Scots. Back in Wilkes's lodgings, he told him that his life was forfeit for his scandalous attacks on North Britain and its inhabitants. Wilkes extricated himself with his customary blend of wit, pomposity,
impudence and intelligence. He pleaded a previous duel with an English Secretary of State. He declared himself too useful a subject of the crown to risk his life. He called Forbes a rebel not worth fighting. Then, once the young man had stormed off in a rage, he put himself swiftly under the protection of the French magistrates.

This was not the only Scottish attempt on Wilkes’s life. Later that same year, an insane Scottish marine was caught creeping into his London apartments, armed with a penknife. He told the authorities that he and twelve other Scots had sworn an oath to assassinate their national enemy. Other irate Scots excoriated Wilkes in private letters, in public pamphlets and even in Gaelic songs. In Edinburgh, and other Scottish towns, apprentice boys burnt effigies of him on the sovereign’s birthday, a practice that would continue into Queen Victoria’s reign. These expressions of Scottish anger are usually omitted from English history books, just as Wilkes’s forthright hostility to Scotland is often marginalised as a regrettable vulgarity of no real relevance to the movement that gathered around him. Yet in viewing Wilkes as the personification of arrogant English chauvinism, the Scots had, in fact, identified the essence of what his movement was about—a celebration of a certain kind of Englishness and an assertion of English rights.

If this swaggering and intolerantly Little English patriotism has subsequently been downplayed, it is because Wilkes can so easily seem a purely dissident figure. A born Londoner with a background in trade, a dissenter who was educated in Holland and dabbled in freethinking, a lecher who cheerfully abandoned his wife, joined a Hell Fire club and attempted a sexual autobiography in the manner of Rousseau, a man who stood out against the smoke-filled rooms of Westminster and Whitehall and became a folk hero in the process, a household name throughout the length and breadth of England: Wilkes was undeniably the joker in the pack, an unabashed outsider in terms of origins, temperament, and behaviour. As such, he still brings out the prig in British historians to an excessive degree. They linger on his cynicism, his opportunism and his delight in women, as though politicians in general are invariably possessed of sincerity, principled consistency and tight-lipped moral probity, and as though self-indulgence is necessarily incompatible with the possession of significant ideas. Yet John Wilkes and the arguments associated with him deserve to be taken seriously. The man himself was indisputably a rake on the make. He told outrageous lies, relished mischief and was often frivolous. But he was also a popularist who made his fortune by knowing how to tap mainstream opinions and prejudices, and in one vital respect at least his actions were remarkably consistent.
Even before he entered Parliament in 1757, Wilkes had attached himself to precisely those ginger groups that other middle-class Londoners of a patriotic disposition liked to patronise—the Anti-Gallican Association and the Society of Arts. Once elected MP for Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire, he became an enthusiastic colonel in the county militia and displayed a proper anxiety for maintaining the plebeian birth-rate by serving as Treasurer to the local branch of the Foundling Hospital. (Honesty compels the admission that he also embezzled its funds.) The two furors that made his name, his arrest in 1763 for libelling the king and his minister in the forty-fifth number of the *North Briton*, the newspaper he edited with the poet and playwright Charles Churchill, and his election—while still an outlaw—for the county of Middlesex in 1768, were each converted by his supporters and his own public statements into contests over what was owing to Englishmen. When finally allowed to take his seat in Parliament in 1774, his less-than-distinguished speeches included pleas for a national art gallery and for a more splendid capital city, as well as his much-better-known proposal for universal manhood suffrage. Ten years later, he was campaigning on behalf of William Pitt the Younger and ‘his patriotic plans to . . . recover the faded glory of our country’. And almost his last public action before his death in 1797 was to award the Freedom of London to a successful naval commander called Horatio Nelson.

Looked at this way, the shift from the younger, more populist Wilkes of the 1760s and early ’70s to the City bigwig of his later years, becomes rather less stark. Although its political significance certainly changed over time, an ostentatious patriotism characterised his career throughout. So did a cult of *England*, which emerges from his private correspondence just as much as from his public writings and speeches. On trial before Lord Chief Justice Pratt in 1763, he told the court that its verdict would determine ‘whether ENGLISH LIBERTY be a reality or a shadow’. Once acquitted, he told the jury that thanks were due to them ‘from the whole English nation, and from all the subjects of the English crown’. In exile the following year, he committed himself to writing a three-volume history of England since the Glorious Revolution, and actually went on to complete one volume of it. Immured in King’s Bench in 1768, he assured his supporters that ‘In this prison, in any other, in every place, my ruling passion will be the love of England.’ And much later, in a strange and strictly private argument with the law reformer Samuel Romilly in the 1780s, he would defend frequent death sentences and public executions on the grounds that they accustomed Englishmen to a contempt for death. Out of an English gallows came forth English courage.
Why did Wilkes, so supremely conscious of his audience, choose to present himself in this fashion? One obvious answer, of course, is that cloaking attacks on the government of the day in patriotic slogans and gestures was a well-established way of making them acceptable. Or as Samuel Johnson famously pronounced in the 1775 edition of his dictionary (with Wilkes very much in mind): patriotism was the last refuge of the scoundrel. Like many previous opposition groups in England, Wilkes and his supporters argued that it was not they who were deviating from right, constitutional behaviour, but rather the court and its minions. They, the Wilkites, were the authentic Englishmen: it was their enemies in high office who were alien by birth and by conduct. If the Wilkites employed this style of polemic more extensively and more successfully than earlier dissenters, it was partly because the circumstances allowed them to do so. It was a sheer gift to them that the Prime Minister in 1763 was a Scot, the hapless John Stuart, 3rd Earl of Bute, not an Englishman like all his predecessors. It was a further bonus that one of the judges Wilkes had to grapple with in 1768 was yet another Scot, William Murray, 1st Earl of Mansfield. Here, the Wilkites claimed, was concrete proof that Englishness was being eroded from above.

And those who governed Britain after 1760 could be portrayed as alien in another and more substantial respect. Ever since the establishment of the Hanoverian dynasty in 1714, high political office had been confined to men calling themselves Whigs. Tories, the traditional supporters of Anglican supremacy, had been proscribed. As a result, Protestant dissenters had felt secure in their religious rights and had been almost excessively loyalist. Then came George III. By admitting a very few Tories back to government office and by expressing a more overt enthusiasm for the Established Church, the new king broke with the conventions of forty-six years of Hanoverian rule. However good his intentions, however sound the precedents for his actions were in fact, he still felt a need to reassure the church and the nation. Protestant dissenters—maintained that English history had gone into reverse. Wilkes's own collisions with the authorities, like the widening rift with the American colonists, merely confirmed that the country's 'glorious inheritance', the achievements of the Protestant Succession, the Revolution of 1688, the Civil War, even the Saxon struggle against the Norman Yoke, had been laid open to attack.

In response, and as a way of vindicating their own pretensions to patriotism, the Wilkites championed an aggressively Whig interpretation of English history. In the case of Wilkes himself, this meant literally composing a history book, *The History of England from the Revolution to the Accession of the Brunswick Line* (1768), a highly conventional if rather well-written celebration of 1688. More importantly, much of the public symbolism of his movement was in fact a celebration of Whig constitutionalism. The pressures of debt and economic strain meant to pay his debts and educate the public about the need for reform called itself the Society of the Supporters of the Bill of Rights (the S.S.B.R. for short), deliberately invoking the anodyne charter of English liberties passed by Parliament in 1689 to buttress its own more radical intentions. The hundreds of prints published championing Wilkes linked him time and time again with those earlier martyrs in the Whig pantheon who had suffered in the struggle against arbitrary power: John Hampden, John Pym, John Lilburne and Algernon Sydney. And it was in the context of this same heroic and quasi-mythical past that his grass-roots supporters were encouraged to see him. In Middlesex in 1768, for example, a typical procession of Wilkite voters assembled at a tavern named after William of Orange, before setting out to vote for the hero, under banners of Magna Carta and the Bill of Rights. Similar demonstrations occurred throughout England and in some parts of Wales.

Seizing control of an important and emotive part of the English national memory in this way was one of Wilkes's greatest strengths. He and his supporters were able to portray his personal dilemmas, his trial for seditious libel, his expulsion from Parliament after being elected for Middlesex by a large majority, and his subsequent imprisonment as but a continuation of the Englishman's centuries-old struggle for liberty, another vital stage in his distinctive pilgrimage towards habeas corpus, trial by jury, freedom of election and the liberty of the press. Wilkes became the personification of liberty, and liberty was the hallmark of Englishness. One great advantage of this position was that Wilkes in his guts probably believed it. Cynical, mannered and lax though he so obviously was, it should always be remembered that he was bred a Protestant dissenter. The idea that England was an elect nation, marked out by God with the possession of a peculiar degree of freedom, would almost certainly have been familiar to him from an early age. How could it not have been, when both his father and his brother were called Israel? But this approach to Englishness had a much wider advantage. It could be understood and appreciated at two very different levels, and utilised for two very different purposes: as an argument for change, and as an affirmation of existing identity.
For hard-line supporters of Wilkes, those lawyers, professionals, retail tradesmen and would-be gentlemen who joined the S.S.B.R., or organised his power base in London and Middlesex, or manned its outposts in the great provincial cities, this version of the English past and the English present was chiefly valuable as a means of validating their radical aspirations for the future. To them, Wilkes himself was little more than an attractive symbol for a campaign aimed at transforming the social distribution of political power and the theory on which it rested. In the words of William Beckford, the London MP whose fortune rested on West Indian trade, Wilkite activists rejected the belief that a man’s patriotism was to be measured “by the number of his acres”. Instead, by stressing their supreme solicitude for liberty and by arguing that liberty was synonymous with Englishness, they advanced their own superior claims as patriots. Individuals like themselves, men of movable property, whether dissenting or Anglican, not only had an equal right with the landed classes to active citizenship. They had a better right, for they were better Englishmen.

For these activists, the affair of John Wilkes was just part of their political education, only a step on the way to a more protracted commitment to parliamentary reform and policy change, annual parliaments, an extension of the franchise, a crack-down on bribery and a repeal of the measures that were alienating the Americans. For the mass of Wilkes’s supporters, though, those who were too poor, too conventional, too uninformed or too ground down with the business of keeping alive to read radical newspapers and pamphlets or to concern themselves with the S.S.B.R.’s political programme, the issues at stake were at once less specific and more short-term. For them, the movement turned on Wilkes himself, not on his real personality or even on his proclaimed ideas, so much as on his totem-like value as the personification of a certain version of English freedom and identity. This was why so many Wilkite songs were sung to the tunes of ‘Rule Britannia’ or ‘God Save the King’, why toasts in Wilkes’s honour at prosperous dinners, or slogans in his support roared out in the street so often linked his name with that of the king, why the predominant tone of the movement was, as John Brewer has commented, ‘remarkably loyalist’.

In the confused aftermath of the Seven Years War, as men and women struggled to come to terms with unprecedented and expensive victory and new imperial responsibilities, Wilkes affirmed the traditional canons of Englishness. Through his own words and exploits, he offered boisterous reassurance that the English were a uniquely free and distinctive people who could keep alien and arbitrary rule at bay, a reassurance that was all the more potent because he himself—and this is sometimes forgotten—was able to win so many of his battles. Arrested in 1763, he outpaced his judges and was triumphantly discharged. Elected MP for the most important county in England, with minimal personal wealth and the penalty for outlawry hanging over him, he was none the less able in the end to take his seat in Parliament. True, he suffered imprisonment in 1768. But when he left the King’s Bench in April 1770, it was as a celebrity snowed under with presents and applause. Four years later, he even emulated that earlier folk hero, Dick Whittington, by becoming Lord Mayor of London, achieving like him a place in the sun against formidable odds. In spite of debt, profound ugliness, religious non-conformity and the opposition of the law, the king and his ministers, Wilkes had clambered up the greasy pole and made himself the first citizen of the capital of the British empire.

By achieving so much, so outrageously, he made his opponents in the upper echelons of British society and government appear both helpless and ridiculous, and this gave enormous vicarious satisfaction to his supporters. But precisely because Wilkes succeeded, the message he communicated was as likely to foster complacency as alienation. ‘Wilkes and Liberty’ became a slogan expressive of triumph, celebration and relief, rather than a war-cry stimulating further protest. This, I suspect, was one reason why neither the man nor the slogan was much referred to by subsequent generations of radicals. Wilkes—so deceptively disruptive as a personality—was in practice just too easy to incorporate into a conventional, approving English patriotism. That was one reason why his movement attracted such wide support south of the Scottish border. But the extent to which he appealed to and incited complacency also made him too ambiguous a figure to be comfortably accommodated in a later, more uncompromising and more British radical canon:

Triumphant they bore him along throughout the crowd,
From true English voices joy echo’d aloud,
A fig then for Sawney, his malice is vain,
We have Wilkes—aye and Wilkes has his freedom again.
O sweet liberty! Wilkes and Liberty!
Old English Liberty, O!

If we see Wilkes in this light—as a man offering reassurance that plucky Englishmen could win through and maintain their identity amidst the confusions and challenges of the post-war world—his noisy Scotophobia becomes far more comprehensible. Scots, so the Wilkite argument went, were inherently, unchangeably alien, never
ever to be confused or integrated with the English. In Wilkite prints they were invariably (and inauthentically) portrayed as wearing tartan kilts, garments banned by Parliament after the 'Forty-Five. Highlanders and Lowlanders, cultivated patriots, like the Earl of Bute, and the poorest, most illiterate clansmen were all conflated


**EXPLANATION.**

**ARMS.**

1. Weighty and convincing Argument for the obdurate and refractory.
2. Wooden Shoes and Petits, blessings sincerely designed for the Protestant Subjects of Great Britain, by the worthy Company in the lower Department, consisting of
   - A white Scotch Lawyer. 
   - A black English Duke.
   - A Scotch Earl.
   - A public Defaulter, and
   - An insignificant, peace-making Duke.

**CREST.**

8. The A, Gallow and Halter, the fate fate of inferior Culprits; one or other of which, is unfriendly recommended to each of the worthy Company just mentioned, according to the Motto:

"Erga residuum in parte jacta reddamur" tur immancabile solutus.

**SUPPORTERS.**

10. An Irish, Middlesex Freeholder.

in a common sartorial foreign-ness. By the same token, Wilkes used the pages of his newspaper, the North Briton, to remind his readers of the linguistic divisions between the two countries ('I will endeavour to write plain English, and to avoid ... Scotticism'), and to protest against the growing popularity of the term 'Great Britain'. His preference for using 'England' as a word to describe the entire island, and for 'Englishman' over 'Briton', was taken up by many of his more committed supporters. John Horne Tooke, for instance, a leading figure in the S.S.B.R., used his Petition of an Englishman (1765) to warn the likes of Bute and Mansfield—and indeed George III himself—against melting 'the English name ... down to Briton'.

But the prime difference that the Wilkites claimed to detect between the English and the Scots was one of political temperament. By this they did not mean the split that some commentators argue for today: between the 'natural' conservatism of the English and the ingrained radicalism of their northern neighbours. Quite the reverse. For Wilkes himself, and for many other more conventional Whigs on both sides of the Atlantic, the fact that the Stuart dynasty came from Scotland was proof positive that the country harboured a taste for arbitrary power on the one hand, and a willingness to cringe before it on the other. 'The principal part of the Scottish nobility are tyrants and the whole of the common people are slaves', declared Wilkes dismissively in 1763. It was the misfortune of the Scots, one of his supporters agreed six years later, 'that those of the highest rank have been born and nurtured in arbitrary principles, and those of the lowest orders in the most abject slavery, and passive obedience'. This line of attack reached its logical conclusion in Wilkite accusations that it was the Scots who finally precipitated war with America after 1775: 'The ruin of the British empire is merely a Scotch quarrel with English liberty, a Scotch scramble for English property.' Alien men and alien attitudes from North Britain had finally succeeded in infecting the seat of power in London, forcing those other Englishmen across the Atlantic into righteous rebellion.

That many of these accusations were arrant prejudice of the most unpleasant kind is obvious enough. When a Welshman called Thomas Pennant, a highly civilised gentleman tourist, journeyed around Scotland in the late 1760s, he was appalled to discover just how bitter more informed Scots felt about being so constantly and cruelly misrepresented in the south. His best-selling Tour in Scotland (1771) was in large part an attempt—as he admitted—'to conciliate the affections of the two nations, so wickedly and studiously set at variance by evil-designing people'. Such well-meaning moder-

ation remains heartwarming. Yet to adopt Pennant's line and dismiss the Wilkites' Scottophobia as nothing more than the irresponsible indulgence of a group of small-minded chauvinist thugs would be utterly wrong. The accusations they levelled against the Scots need to be taken seriously in two senses at least. First of all, they show once again how John Wilkes functioned as an English nationalist administering comfort to a people in flux. By dwelling on how irreversibly alien the Scots were, he offered a reassurance to his more intolerant and worried countrymen that they would not be absorbed into an all-embracing and non-Anglocentric Great Britain. Scottish difference, he implied, was a guarantee that traditional Englishness and English primacy within the Union would remain intact. This was exactly what large numbers of English men and women wanted to hear. Yet, in practice, it was a deeply misleading reassurance. For—and this is the second point—the real significance of Wilkite complaints that Scots were invading the British polity to an unprecedented extent is, quite simply, that they were true.

A SCOTTISH EMPIRE?

Runaway Scottophobia in England after 1760 was not the product of a traditional antipathy between two peoples, but a response to something much more recent. There was, of course, a very long history of mutual hatred, mistrust and armed conflict. Englishmen had been regularly swarming into Scotland, and Scots had been just as regularly invading northern England since the eleventh century at least. Memories of rape, slaughter and pillage ran deep on both sides of the border and were kept alive in folklore and children's games. Well into the nineteenth century, boys in the Scottish Lowlands played at 'English and Scotch', a tug-of-war in which one team tried to drag the other across a line, the victors snatching up the losers' coats and hats in the process. But for men and women living in the 1760s, there were much grimmer legacies of recurrent invasion and plunder. To remind themselves of Scottish depredations, Englishmen had only to think back to the Highlanders' march on Derby in 1745, or glance at the beacon towers still strung along the hills of Cumberland and Westmorland, erected over the centuries so as to give warning of impending Scottish raiders. As for Scotsmen, the genocide that had reputedly followed the Battle of Culloden was reminder enough of the English capacity for racialism and hate.

Joined together by a common Protestantism, by trade and by the Act of Union, Scots and Englishmen could still succumb to fear,
contempt or even open violence when they encountered each other. Peter Kerr and Helen Halliday, poor Lowlanders who together manned the toll-bar at Ravenshaugh on the border between East Lothian and Mid-Lothian, discovered this one evening in October 1766. It may have been that Lieutenant-Colonel John Hale and his party of fellow English dragoon officers tried to get round the toll-bar without paying, or it may have been—as the officers subsequently claimed—that the Scottish couple insulted them (perhaps on their Englishness). Whatever the reason, the Englishmen reacted ferociously. They beat up the toll-keeper, and when his wife rushed to aid him, they flung her to the ground and pistol-whooped her as well. She was pregnant at the time. The couple's relations and neighbours met with similar treatment when they tried to intervene, and Kerr and Halliday were left unconscious and near to death. Hale and his fellow heroes were drunk, but this was not the root cause of their behaviour. Hale had been stationed in Scotland in the immediate aftermath of the Forty-Five, and one of his men apparently yelled out at the toll-keeper, 'God damn him for a Scotch rebel bugger!' With their discipline slackened by alcohol, and their nerves on edge perhaps from riding at dusk through an alien landscape, these men had simply and instinctively reverted to seeing Scotland as enemy territory, and its people—particularly its plebeian people—as fair game.

English aggression, however, was not the most illuminating aspect of this episode, but what came after. The local gentry clubbed together to fund a public prosecution against Hale and his men, and they were put on trial in Edinburgh. Sober now, and horribly aware of what they had done, their apologies and offers of private compensation were brushed aside. Nor did London intervene to save their honour and their faces. Instead, George III himself insisted they should submit to the Scottish courts, ordering them to be severely reprimanded as well: 'to regain the good opinion and confidence of their fellow citizens'. It was this reaction on the part of the authorities in the south that was the most remarkable part of the Ravenshaugh toll affair. It showed that in official eyes, Scotland was no longer the old enemy, and no longer either an alien province to be left gingerly alone or viewed with unrelenting suspicion, the standard ministerial responses to it in the first half of the eighteenth century. Instead, Scotland was coming to be seen by those in power as useful, loyal and British, just as entitled as any other part of the island to have its civilian law upheld against arbitrary attack by members of the regular army.

This shift in official attitude had only come about since the Forty-Five. Having suppressed the rising, Parliament did what it had largely failed to do after the Act of Union, or after 1715. It devised legislation to undermine the cultural, political and economic distinctiveness of the Scottish Highlands. The wearing of tartan was banned on pain of imprisonment, except, indicatively, for Highland regiments serving with the British army. Episcopalian clergymen, often proponents of Jacobitism in the past, were required to take new oaths of allegiance and to pray from now on publicly and explicitly for the Hanoverian royal family. Most notably, the Heritable Jurisdictions Act of 1747 substituted royal jurisdiction for the private jurisdictions previously exercised by clan chieftains. The intention being, as one MP succinctly put it, to 'carry off the King into every part of the United Kingdom'. These were the sticks designed to beat down Highland autonomy. But an attempt was made to create some meagre carrots as well.

As far as the Highlands were concerned, this meant ploughing money from confiscated Jacobite estates back into the economy. Basic industries like tanning, whaling and paper-making were subsidised. Schools were established to instruct adults in the mechanics of linen production and to teach Gaelic-speaking children English.

Yet again, the rulers of the British state betrayed their absolute conviction that trade and patriotism were inseparably linked. If more Scottish Highlanders could be hooked into the commercial system, the argument went, their loyalty would be bound to blossom. And once that happened, they could be safely absorbed into the imperial war machine. For ministers had no wish to destroy all of the Highlanders' ancestral values. Their obedience and bravery when their chieftains summoned them to war were entirely admirable characteristics in Whitehall's view, so long as from now on they were channelled exclusively into British military service. As the Secretary at War, Lord Barrington, told Parliament in 1751:

*I am for having always in our army as many Scottish soldiers as possible; not that I think them more brave than those of any other country we can recruit from, but because they are generally more hardy and less mutinous: and of all Scottish soldiers I should choose to have and keep in our army as many Highlanders as possible.*

Here was a *volute face* of striking proportions. Scotland—including its Highlands—was no longer an expensive nuisance. It had become the arsenal of the empire.

As shrewder English politicians recognised, however, substantial changes in the running of the state and in the thinking behind it were needed if this asset was to be exploited to the full. Scotland's loyalty to the Union and Scotland's manpower would have to be paid for by giving its titled and talented males increased access to London and its plums. Just one year after the slaughter of Culloden, the then Prime Minister, Henry Pelham, conceded that 'Every Scotch man who had zeal and abilities to serve the King should have the same admission with the administration as the subject of England had.' This was to be the other side of forcible integration: allowing Scots to compete for advancement in the state on a wider scale and on more favourable terms than ever before. And it was the recognition that this was what was happening, in fact, that made English outsiders like John Wilkes and his followers so furious. In their prejudiced but not perceptive eyes, more opportunities for Scots meant fewer perks for Englishmen:

> Into our places, states, and beds they creep;  
> They've sense to get what we want sense to keep...  

Wilkes himself, it needs to be remembered, went into opposition journalism in the first place only because his frantic lobbying to be the first governor of newly conquered Quebec failed. Instead, the job was given to Brigadier James Murray, who was, of course, a Scot.

Wilkite virulence against the Scots, then, was deeply felt but also profoundly ironic. So often interpreted at the time and since as evidence of the deep divisions between south and north Britain, in reality its extremism was testimony to the fact that the barriers between England and Scotland were coming down, savage proof that Scots were acquiring power and influence within Great Britain to a degree previously unknown.

English insecurity in the face of this new Scottish leverage helps to explain the obsession in so much written and visual polemic at this time with Scottish sexual potency. The most extreme expression of this was the claim that Lord Bute was bedding George III's mother, the Princess Dowager. In one ribald print after another, the elegant and almost certainly entirely innocent Scottish minister was shown flaunting his long legs (of which he was intensely proud) before the swooning princess, or mounted provocatively on a broomstick, or with a set of rampant bagpipes placed as suggestively close to his body as the artist could conceivably devise. Crowds rioting in support of Wilkes regularly made the same none-too-subtle point by brandishing a woman's...
perricoat to represent the princess, together with a boot (in other words, Bute). This was not an attack on immorality in high places. The accusation that one Scottish minister was penetrating the mother of the King of England was symbolic shorthand for the real anxiety; namely, that large numbers of Scots were penetrating England itself, compromising its identity, winning access to its riches and cutting out English men. As the princess was made to say in one splendidly filthy cartoon, her hand located firmly under Lord Bute’s kilt: ‘A man of great parts is sure greatly to rise.’ And just how far were Scotsmen going to rise?

The question was canvassed in newspapers and novels but particularly in plays. Before the 1750s, Scottish characters had only featured in English drama in a very miscellaneous fashion. No stereotypical Scotsman had emerged, and few English dramatists had known how to mimic Scots language. In the second half of the century, all this changed. Two stock Scottish characters appeared. And, indicatively, they were challenging, not contemptible types—the intellectual and the careerist. Laughing at their antics and aspirations as exhibited on stage, English audiences tried to exercise their apprehension at Scottish ambition. ‘I ha’ acquired a noble fortune, a princely fortune’, boasts Sir Pertinax Mamsycophant in Charles Macklin’s True-born Scotsman (1764):

...I raised it by bowing; by bowing, sir; I never in my life could stand straight i’ th’ presence of a great man; but aways bowed, and bowed, as it were by instinct...Sir, I bowed, and watched, and attended, and dangled up’ the then great man, till I got intill the very bowels of his confidence.

Macklin was an Irishman. But he knew full well that many Londoners were now sufficiently familiar with Scottish accents to enjoy hearing them caricatured on stage, and sufficiently envious of Scottish achievement to attribute it all to obsequiousness. (And how telling it was that sycophancy to those in power, not Jacobite treason, was now seen by Englishmen as the essential Scottish vice.) What Macklin failed to realise, perhaps, was that Scots were now just too powerfully entrenched for this kind of satire to be acceptable. Government censors kept his play out of the London theatres until 1781. Even then, they insisted on a change of title: The True-born Scotsman had to become the more neutral Man of the World.

Petticoat though this episode was, it supplied further proof that the shrill English complaints about the Scots taking over did have some basis in fact. As Christopher Smout puts it, the Scottish periphery was beginning to exert ‘a pull on the core, the tail beginning ever so slightly to wag the dog’. Part of the reason for this was Scotland’s own greatly increased prosperity. Its economy expanded after the 1750s at a faster rate than ever before, in some respects at a faster rate than the English economy. Between 1750 and 1800, its overseas commerce grew by 300 per cent, England’s by 200 per cent. In the same period, the proportion of Scots living in towns doubled, whereas England’s more substantial urban population increased by only some 25 per cent. And Scottish towns were now far more affluent places, secure in post-Jacobite stability, made fat on imperial trade and graced with new, broad streets, elegant private houses and imposing public buildings. The show-piece was Edinburgh New Town, its centre designed by James Craig in 1767 as a celebration of British patriotism, and as an assertion of Scotland’s and the city’s importance in the Union. Prince’s Street, George Street and Queen Street intersected with Hanover and Frederick streets, thereby paying tribute to George III, his immediate family, his father and his dynasty. And while St Andrew’s Square commemorated Scotland’s own patron saint, it was balanced—in Craig’s initial plan at least—by another square named after St George. The very heart of Scotland’s capital was now a monument to its parity with England in loyal attachment to the House of Hanover.

Yet, as both sides of the border came to recognise, there were senses in which Scotland was not England’s peer but its superior. The fact that large numbers of people today have heard of the Scottish Enlightenment, whereas comparatively few know or care that an English Enlightenment even took place, shows both the stellar quality of the best Scottish intellectuals at this time—David Hume in philosophy, William Robertson in history, Joseph Black in science, John Millar in social theory and Adam Smith in economics—and their distinctive chiciness. Coming from a small country, and under persistent pressure from English prejudice, Scots in the world of letters, and in other realms of activity, tended to stick together and advance each other. ‘No Scot ever exerted himself but for a Scot’, wrote Wilkes darkly, and this sense of collective identity enormously increased the impact they were able to make. Ambitious Scots also benefited from having more and better universities as training grounds. In the century after 1750, for example, Oxford and Cambridge produced only 500 medical doctors. Scotland, by contrast, educated 10,000. Many of these men naturally looked south of the border for employment. So did large numbers of Scottish engineers, like James Watt, who left Glasgow for Birmingham and collaboration with Matthew Boulton in 1774, and somewhat later the great road-builder Thomas Telford. And so did Scottish architects like Robert Adam.
and Sir William Chambers, both comfortably ensconced at the top of their profession as joint architects to George III and his queen.

Scots had been going south in search of greater opportunities for centuries, but not in such numbers, and rarely with the advantage—now—as of having fellow countrymen sufficiently highly placed in politics to act as influential patrons. To this extent, Wilkite laments that the Scots were getting above themselves were fundamentally wrong. Because Jacobitism was dead, because London was desperately eager to secure Scottish collaboration in warfare and empire-building, and because Scotland itself was developing into a more prosperous country, equipped with impressive reserves of talent, men from the north were able to seize upon jobs and opportunities in the south to an unprecedented degree. And the results were considerable and complex. Whatever some Scottish

nationalists choose to maintain today, it was not simply a case of Scottish ability being creamed off away from its proper home all for the benefit of an English empire. English resentment of this Scottish exodus is surely proof of that.

Scots who went south reacted—as people who uproot themselves from their homeland always do—in very different ways. Some returned home as soon as they could, deeply alienated and disillusioned. Others stayed on as foreign mercenaries, taking what advantage they could from their new surroundings while remaining fundamentally aloof. Still others, like James Boswell, were turned into perpetual exiles by the experience, feeling themselves too Scottish to settle comfortably in England, yet becoming too English ever to return to their native land. But some, particularly the most successful, were able to reconcile their Scottish past with their English present by the expedient of regarding themselves as British. James Watt, for example, remained throughout his career a Scottish patriot. Every invention he patented, every steam engine he pioneered, filled him with the glowing thought that in the future his own countrymen would be able to say: 'This was made by a Scot.' Yet when Catherine the Great tried to persuade him to come to Russia, Watt told her he could never leave his own nation which was Great Britain. Winning access to a wider stage of endeavour had also broadened his patriotism.45

Scots like Watt do not seem to have regarded themselves as stooges of English cultural hegemony. Far from succumbing helplessly to an alien identity imposed by others, in moving south they helped construct what being British was all about. In part, this was because many of the most successful of them were concentrated in certain well-defined areas of British life. A breakdown of the career patterns of Scotland's Members of Parliament illustrates this point very clearly:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scottish MPs holding state office, 1747–1780</th>
<th>1747–53</th>
<th>1754–60</th>
<th>1761–67</th>
<th>1768–74</th>
<th>1780</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Civilian posts in Scotland</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civilian posts in England</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army and Navy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As this table demonstrates, in the immediate aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745, hardly any of Scotland's forty-five MPs
were in state employment of any kind. Yet in less than forty years, this situation was triumphantly reversed. By 1780, more than half of all Scotland’s representatives were in receipt of state salaries, and this table actually underestimates the degree to which elite Scots were coming to profit from being British. It omits, for example, men like Sir James Cockburn, the MP for Linlithgow, who held no official post for most of his career, but who did pick up a state pension, as well as a valuable contract to supply 100,000 gallons of rum to the troops in America during the War of Independence. 47

The table also omits the growing number of Scotsmen who sat for English or Welsh rather than Scottish constituencies. Few Scots had been able to take this path to political life and its profits before the 1750s. But between 1754 and 1790, sixty did so, including Alexander Wedderburn. He came to London from the Scottish bar, invested some of his savings in elocution lessons so as to smooth down his natural brogue, and was duly returned to Parliament for a Yorkshire seat in 1768. Three years later, he had clawed his way to being Solicitor-General and was a Privy Councillor. By 1780, he was Attorney-General and Lord Loughborough. Still ahead for this son of a Dundee town clerk lay the Woolpack and, in the end, splendid incarceration in St Paul’s cathedral. 48

Yet, as the experience of Scotland’s own MPs bears out, this kind of burrowing into the very heart of the civilian establishment in London was rarely possible for Scots before 1780. Some of those who tried succumbed to English discrimination, like James Oswald who made it to the Board of Trade, but missed being appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1763 because he was a Scot. 49 Those few who did get to the very top were hale, like Lord Bute, to encounter vicious resentment. So it was easier and usually far more rewarding to explore rather different routes to advancement. Accepting an administrative post back in Scotland was one possibility. But far more attractive to Scots from a wide variety of social backgrounds were two areas in which life was still sufficiently hard or uncertain to repel the more pampered and overbearing English patricians, and opportunities were consequently much more open—the less fashionable regiments of Britain’s army, and the coal-face of its empire.

Ever since the Union, the British army had been one of the few departments of the state wide open to Scottish ambition. Perhaps one in four regimental officers in the mid-eighteenth century was a Scot. 50 Like their English, Welsh and Irish counterparts, these men needed money and contacts to get to the very top of their profession. But if they possessed these attributes, as well as proven loyalty, there were no barriers to what they might achieve. An extreme example of what was possible would be John Campbell, 4th Earl of Loudoun, a man of only mediocre ability who was none the less valued enormously by London because of his title, his territorial power in Ayrshire and his unflinching Whiggism. Loudoun advanced incompetently but inexorably in the army’s hierarchy, ending up as Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in North America during the Seven Years War, a position from which he was soon fortunately recalled. 51 The majority of Scottish army officers were better but also poorer than this, more often than not the sons of impoverished gentry families. For them, the rapid succession of imperial wars in the second half of the century was a godsend. Of course, their chances of dying in battle soared, but so too did their prospects of rapid advancement through the ranks and their opportunities for booty. ‘I was born a Scotsman and a bare one’, Sir Walter Scott would write, ‘Therefore I was born to fight my way in the world’, and this gets the connexion between economics and aggression exactly right. 52 For Scottish younger sons, prevented by convention from going into trade like some of their English equivalents, the path to glory was also one of the few available pathways to fortune. Securing British victories could be the means of ensuring their own.

And for many, it was. Hector Munro came from a family in Cromartyshire which had mattered in the fifteenth century but had dwindled into poverty thereafter. A family friend bought him a commission in one of Loudoun’s Highland regiments, but it was only when he sailed to India with his men in 1760 that his career took off. Munro literally fought his way to notice, in 1764 winning the Battle of Behar which effectively ensured that Britain would annex Bengal. He promptly went home and used his share of the loot to build up a Scottish estate and make himself a Member of Parliament. For some Scots, though, empire became a profession in itself, an opportunity for power, responsibilities and excitement on a scale they could never have enjoyed back home. James Murray had gone into the army in 1740 weighed down with two disadvantages. He was the fifth son of a poor Scottish peer and his brothers were Jacobites. It took him twenty years’ active service to establish himself as a brigadier, and his big break came only when General James Wolfe chose him for his campaign against Quebec. Victory, together with Wolfe’s death, gave him his chance. He stayed on in the province restoring order, and in 1760 was duly rewarded by being made Britain’s first Governor of Canada. 53

Such men were the stars of the imperial firmament, rich, resplendent and only rarely emulated. But there were a multitude of lesser lights as well, and in some parts of the empire a quite
disproportionate number of these were Scottish. During the time he was Secretary of State, for example, Lord Bute seems to have ensured that his countrymen got the lion’s share of crown appointments in East and West Florida, colonies only acquired in the Seven Years War and therefore singularly free of any prior English stranglehold. It was India, though, that the Scots made their own, long before the reign of ‘Harry the Ninth’, Henry Dundas. More than a quarter of the East India Company’s army officers were Scotsmen; so, by mid-century, were a good proportion of its civilian officers in Madras and Bengal—the Scottish bankers and stockholders who had a strong grip on the Company made sure of that. Yet, paradoxically, it seems to have been an Englishman, Warren Hastings, Governor of Bengal and subsequently Governor-General of India, who converted this stream of Caledonians into positions of influence in the East into a torrent.

Hastings’ career raises in an acute form questions that need to be posed more generally: What, if anything, was distinctive about the Scots’ contribution to the British empire? And why did they invest in it in such large numbers and so enthusiastically? That Hastings advanced a disproportionate number of them is clear enough. In the decade after 1775, some 47 per cent of the 249 men appointed to serve as writers in Bengal were Scots; and so were 60 per cent of the 371 men allowed to reside in Bengal as free merchants. Most impressively of all, Hastings’ inner circle of confidants, the men he personally selected to go on intricate diplomatic missions to courts in India and elsewhere, was dominated overwhelmingly by Scots. By men like George Bogle, sent by Hastings to negotiate trade relations with the Teshu Lama of Tibet in 1774, or Major Alexander Hannay, dispatched on an equally dangerous mission to the Mogul court the following year. These were the men whom Hastings called his ‘Scotch guardians’. But just what was it about them that made him value them so much?

One reason for their prominence may have been that the quality and the quantity of Scottish talent available in the colonies at this time, like the quality and quantity of Irish talent, were more abundant than that of the English variety. Well-born and/or well-educated Englishmen usually had the pick of jobs back home. With some conspicuous exceptions, like Hastings himself, those of them who abandoned these opportunities on their doorstep for the discomforts and dangers of colonial life tended to be outsiders in some way: the less affluent, the less fortunate, the less reputable and the less able. By contrast, even the rawest frontiers of the empire attracted men of first-rate ability from the Celtic fringe because they were usually poorer than their English counterparts with fewer prospects on the British mainland.

Having more to win and less to lose, Celtic adventurers were more willing to venture themselves in primitive conditions. Some of them were also more willing to spend time learning exotic new languages, as George Bogle did when he became the first European (apart from stray Jesuit priests) ever to make an intensive study of Tibetan culture, establishing a close friendship with the Teshu Lama and writing to him regularly after their meeting until his own savagely early death back in Calcutta. There was an important sense in which this kind of venturesome behaviour was in keeping with Scottish tradition. Back in the seventeenth century, thousands of Scottish officers had served as mercenaries in Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands and even Poland and Russia. So, for Scots, journeying to a foreign culture to work and fight was a familiar and un frightening prospect. And the rewards could be considerable. As would be true until the twentieth century, Britain’s empire, especially its Indian empire, gave the talented, the lucky and the high-ranking a chance to experience luxury as well as squalor, and the opportunity to build up a substantial personal fortune. Living expenses were few, house servants were abundant and, in this earlier period especially, the pickings in terms of presents, ransoms and booty could be enormous. Even the ultra-professional Bogle, who was only in his thirties when he died, was able to accumulate £2,500 from his time in India, and so pay off the debts on his family’s estate at Daldowie near the River Clyde. Once again, it was a case of comparative Scottish poverty spurring on aggressive Scottish interest in British imperial expansion.

And what was true for this tiny minority of active imperialists applied far more broadly. Investing in empire supplied Scots with a means of redressing some of the imbalance in wealth, power and enterprise between them and the English. For Scottish merchants and tradesmen, access to the newer colonial markets proved doubly advantageous because, unlike older settlements and the customary European markets, they were not dominated by English merchantmen. For Scots who had trained in medicine, the level of disease in the colonies ensured that there were always lucrative if dangerous openings available there. For skilled artisans, blacksmiths, wrights, coppersmiths, joiners and the like, leaving Scotland for the West Indies or other possessions could be a means of making enough money to buy their own slaves and set up a business. Other Scots found niches in the colonies as clerks, or as book-keepers, or as legal assistants. ‘It is impossible to be precise about the numbers
who left the country', one Scottish historian has written, 'but the surviving documentation suggests it was enormous.' In many cases, those who emigrated must have found only failure, disillusionment and a speedy death waiting for them. But for all that, dynamic imperial growth still offered Scots chances that the Old World did not.

For some Scots, though, it was less the job and trading opportunities that empire provided, than the idea of empire that proved most compelling. If Britain's primary identity was to be an imperial one, then the English were put firmly and forever in their place, reduced to a component part of a much greater whole, exactly like the Scots, and no longer the people who ran virtually the whole show. A British empire, in other words, enabled Scots to feel themselves peers of the English in a way still denied them in an island kingdom. The language bears this out very clearly. The English and the foreign are still all too inclined today to refer to the island of Great Britain as 'England'. But at no time have they ever customarily referred to an 'English empire. When it existed, as in retrospect, the empire has always been emphatically British. In terms of self-respect, then, as well as for the profits it could bestow, imperialism served as Scotland's opportunity.

And this was exactly what some Britons who were not Scottish feared. In 1785, Edmund Burke would cite Warren Hastings' grants of 'contracts, allowances, and agencies' to Scots as proof of his attempt to create 'a prodigal and corrupt system of government in India.' Those Scots who had been so active in Britain's Indian possessions were, he suggested, hard, unscrupulous men, with an eye turned unerringly to the main chance, all too prone to sacrifice native interests to ruthless centralisation and self-aggrandisement. Like those earlier Whigs in opposition, John Wilkes and his supporters, Burke took it for granted that Scotsmen were irremediably 'tinctured with notions of despotism'. By employing them so enthusiastically, he argued, Hastings had revealed his own arbitrary politics and consequently merited impeachment. And impeached he duly was, in a long trial that dragged on from 1788 to his final, belated acquittal in 1795. In the eyes of his parliamentary critics he had committed two blatant wrongs. He had given preferential treatment to Scottish military and civilian officers in India, and he had governed in a high-handed and unscrupulous fashion, and the two offences were intimately connected.

Were these accusations against Hastings anything more than just another expression of English (or in Burke's case, Irish) envy and resentment at the increased scope for Scottish ambition? Was it really the case that Scots found empire congenial because it gave expression to an inherent taste for strong, even ruthless government? For some Scots, I suspect it was. Once again, the opposition critique contains an element of truth, something that simply cannot be explained away as prejudice and pique. Many of the Scotsmen who made successful military or civilian careers in the colonies at this time came from Jacobite families or had at one time been Jacobites themselves. James Murray, for example, the first Governor of Canada, had a Jacobite father and Jacobite brothers. John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore (no relation), served as Governor of New York in 1770 and was appointed Governor of Virginia one year later. Yet his father had fought for Charles Edward Stuart, the Young Pretender, in 1745, and he himself had acted as his page during his brief stay at Holyrood.

Or take the case of Lord Adam Gordon, who fought for Britain in the West Indies and acquired 10,000 acres of land for himself in New York. His father had been a Roman Catholic and had taken up arms for the Pretender in 1715. He himself was entirely loyal but utterly hard-line, advising London in the 1760s that it should appoint centrally paid full-time royal governors in the American colonies, and that it should seize control of all religious property in Canada. And then there was Simon Fraser, a leading general in the Seven Years War and fervent opponent of American independence. His father, Lord Lovat, had been executed in 1747 for Jacobitism, while he himself had fought for that cause at the Battle of Falkirk. As for Warren Hastings' Scotsmen in India, almost all of them had Jacobite relations 'lurking in some cupboard'.

The absorption of so many previously Jacobite families and individuals into imperial service represented an extreme example of that much wider and more important trend: namely, the increased integration of Scots into the British community in the aftermath of the Forty-Five and in response to war and its conquests. Yet Jacobite infiltration of the empire also stands as a powerful reminder of the ambiguities of integration. As I have argued, Scots were not just passively assimilated. They did not invariably become honorary or, according to one's point of view, dishonourable Englishmen. They brought their own ideas and prejudices to bear on the business of being British. And in the case of Scottish empire-builders who had once been closely linked with Jacobitism, this could mean applying certain attitudes to authority to virgin territory in North America, India and the West Indies.

Because of their political beliefs, these men were likely to adopt a sympathetic attitude towards royal authority, even if their king was now George III. Perhaps, too, they were more prone to take a strong line in suppressing colonial disorder, and more unapologetic
in devising new and efficient forms of centralised control. Used back home in Scotland to an electorate that was tiny by English and Welsh standards, possessed of a strong military tradition and accustomed to exercising far more power over their tenants than most landowners in the south could expect to enjoy, it is possible that some Scottish imperialists, at least, found the business of presiding over thousands of unrepresented subjects in the colonies neither very congenial nor particularly unfamiliar. The same would be true of the later generation of Anglo-Irish proconsuls, classically Richard Colley Wellesley and his brother, Arthur Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington.

None of this lets the English off the hook, of course. As the careers of Wolfe, Hastings and Robert Clive demonstrate, many of them, too, relished the empire and the opportunities for unbounded power it brought with it. But if we are to understand the profound unease expressed by Edmund Burke, John Wilkes and so many other disgruntled Whigs, we must recognise that Scottish enthusiasm not only sought expression in a splendid and cosmopolitan Enlightenment, but had an aggressive and sometimes unscrupulous side as well. In the uncertain aftermath of the Seven Years War, Scots played a leading part in making British imperialism what it was, accelerating that drift towards greater authority in political style which became so marked after the American war.

Their disproportionate contribution to the Great Game persisted throughout the nineteenth century and on until the end of the empire. And in a strange, vestigial way, it still continues. Today, Scots are unusually well represented in Britain’s foreign office, in its diplomatic service and, it would seem, in the upper echelons of its secret service. ‘Why’, John Le Carré’s hero wonders in Smiley’s People (‘not for the first time in his career’), ‘. . . are Scots so attracted to the secret world? . . . Ships’ engineers, colonial administrators, spies’. Nor is this just a belated example of English suspicion of intriguing, domineering Scots operating in a cold-blooded, out-of-bounds manner, though it is certainly that. Can it be entirely accidental that the most famous fictional spy of them all, James Bond, Number 007, deadly marksman, intriguer, the ultimate man behind the curtain, sexual athlete and ruthless patriot, is also a Scot, as was the author, whose wish-fulfilment he was?

AMERICA AND THE REVOLUTION IN BRITISH SENSIBILITIES

War and empire, then, were the means by which the union between Scotland and the rest of Great Britain was made real. But military and imperial strife would also define what Britishness was about in another, far less congenial manner. In March 1774, a striking mezzotint was published in London. Entitled The Oracle, it showed Father Time giving a magic-lantern show to an audience consisting of Britannia (used in this case as a symbol for England alone), together with allegorical maidens representing Scotland, Ireland and America. Time’s images are of the future, a brilliant future in which British freedom and British union triumph over the discord that is threatening to tear the empire apart. Wreathed in smiles, Britannia leans back from these happy prospects in relief, while a devoted Hibernia gestures to the globe, to the worldwide dominion that is now secure. Thus did John Dixon, a Dubliner by birth, imagine times to come. One year and one month later, shots rang out at Lexington, and Britain and the thirteen American colonies went to war.
Britons at this time were not unaware that imperial dominion might in the future shift from their own small island to the massive continent inhabited by their American colonists. Dixon's Indian princess carries a bow and arrows. Far more than her sisters in empire, even Britannia, whose spear rests casually beside her, she is a warrior, a possible threat.

Americans as colonists subordinate to the mother country, Americans as Englishmen abroad and consequently the brethren of those at home. Americans as uncorrupted children of a promised land, Americans as potential competitors in empire: behind these conflicting images lay profound uncertainty about the workings of the imperial relationship itself. There have been many different explanations volunteered as to why the American Revolution broke out when it did and in the way that it did. But if one were rash enough to plump for only one underlying cause, it would have to be London's failure to establish the kind of strong institutions of imperial control in North America that the Spanish had been able to construct in their Latin American colonies. This failure was due to domestic circumstances, more than to any lack of interest or lack of will. From the first substantial migrations of East Anglian puritans to Massachusetts in the 1630s, Englishmen had settled in America by order of the king alone. None of the colonies founded after this were authorised by an Act of Parliament, and none of them sent representatives to the House of Commons. Consequently, it was to successive English monarchs, not to the Legislature, that the colonists looked as the source of ultimate authority. But for much of the seventeenth century, the Stuart kings faced too many troubles at home to devote concentrated attention to their settlements overseas. And although Charles II and James II made serious attempts to clamp down on the American colonists' growing autonomy, the Revolution of 1688 quickly undid almost all of their efforts.

Successive wars and the distractions of dynastic change prevented British administrations from again devoting sustained attention to American affairs until the 1740s. These belated attempts to reassert metropolitan control over the colonists were made more urgent, and at the same time far more difficult, by the impact of the Seven Years War. The conquest of Canada substantially removed the colonists' fears of a French invasion from that quarter. And this made for an obvious conflict of interests with the mother country. As far as the British were concerned, the massive increase in the geographical size and cultural diversity of their North American empire made a much larger and more permanent military presence there indispensable. Since the post-war National Debt was so
corrupt that it sucked in almost five-eighths of the government’s annual budget in interest payments, it was crystal clear to almost every member of both Houses of Parliament that the Thirteen Colonies must be made to contribute more to the cost of their own defence. But since the American colonists now felt much more secure than before, this line of argument fell on stony ground. Why, they asked, now that the French were no longer a threat, should they be taxed to pay for a standing army that was bound to increase centralised authority over them?

And what right had Parliament to tax them anyway? Their allegiance was owing to the King of England alone and, as far as taxation was concerned, only their own elected colonial assemblies had the right to demand it of them. ‘Acts of Parliament have been passed to annex Wales . . . to the realm’, the leading American patriot and future President, John Adams, reasoned in 1775, ‘but none ever passed to annex America . . . . The two realms of England and Scotland were, by the Act of Union, incorporated into one kingdom by the name of Great Britain; but there is not one word about America in that Act.’ Since the colonies owed neither their existence nor their connexion with Great Britain to acts passed by Parliament, but only to the king, the former could have no powers of taxation or legislation over them.

Perfectly logical in its own terms, this argument made no sense to the British governing classes and no sense in terms of recent British constitutional history. By the 1760s and 1770s, British monarchs had long ceased to be able to function without the consent of Parliament. Consequently, the distinction Americans wanted to draw between royal authority on the one hand and parliamentary authority on the other seemed, on the British side of the Atlantic, grotesquely inappropriate.

This constitutional and fiscal quandary was not the only or, as far as the Americans were concerned, even the prime motor behind the outbreak of war. But for the British it was the central issue at stake. In the past, they had signalily failed to do what the Spanish had done: namely, build an effective structure of royal authority and administration in their American colonies. As a result, no possibility existed of soothing and winning over influential and talented Americans, in the way that influential and talented Scotsmen were increasingly being won over, by giving them increased access to state employment. The existing state apparatus in North America was simply too small for that to be an option. Given these already glaring inadequacies in Britain’s control over the Thirteen Colonies, on what basis could the imperial relationship be conceivably

sustained in the future, if the Americans were to be allowed to reject Parliament’s supremacy as well?

It was in these terms that the government put its case for going to war with the Americans in 1775. In George III’s words, they were fighting ‘the battle of the Legislature’. As such, they could hope to appeal to those patriots who looked to Parliament as a crucial component of British identity and British superiority. But in other respects, as ministers acknowledged, the traditional rudiments of popular patriotism could not be drawn on with remotely as much confidence as in previous eighteenth-century wars. This time the enemy was not Roman Catholic. And while High Church clergies might find it easy to condemn the American colonists as latter-day puritans and vile republicans, large numbers of ordinary English, Welsh and Scottish Protestants, and not just dissenters, seem to have felt consistently uncomfortable about going to war with their co-religionists across the Atlantic. Then, of course, there was the matter of trade. By the early 1770s, the Thirteen Colonies took some 20 per cent by value of British exports and supplied 30 per cent of its imports. Only by bringing the Americans to heel, the government argued, could these jewels in Britain’s commercial crown be kept intact. But while some merchants and traders agreed with this wholeheartedly, others bitterly resented the war’s disruption of transatlantic trade in the meantime and feared that a defeated and ravaged America would make only a poor market for British goods in the future.

But what chiefly compromised enthusiasm for the war at its start was quite simply that it was a civil war, not just in the sense that both sides had so much in common, but also in that each side was split within itself. One exasperated American estimated that one third of his countrymen were in favour of winning independence, another third were ardent loyalists, while the remainder had still to make up their mind—a wild guess that does at least have the virtue of conveying the confusion prevalent in the Thirteen Colonies in 1775. Opinion within Great Britain was just as seriously fractured. And this needs stressing, because so many historians have chosen to concentrate either on radical opposition to the war or on conservative support for it, whereas what mattered most at the time was that responses were neither overwhelmingly pro-war nor uncompromisingly anti-war, but instead profoundly mixed. ‘Interested as we are in this context’, wrote the editor of the Annual Register carefully, ‘. . . . It indeed little becomes us to be dogmatical and decided in our opinions in this matter, when the public, even on this side of the water, is so much divided.’
Just how divided was suggested by the government’s encouragement of what was in effect a rigged plebiscite on the war. Early in September 1775, the gentlemen, clergy, manufacturers and inhabitants of Manchester submitted an address to the king pleading support for the war. This was a spontaneous local initiative. But a delighted government promptly encouraged other bodies to follow suit. In all, some 150 corporations, town councils, militia regiments and groups of inhabitants sent in loyal addresses in favour of pursuing war with the Americans. Together with the names of the signatories, these were duly reprinted in virtually every English and Scottish newspaper. No publicity campaign of this kind had been thought necessary in earlier wars, though indicatively one had been implemented after the Jacobite invasion in 1745. The intention, now as in that earlier emergency, was clearly to outface any domestic opposition. On this occasion, however, the tactic misfired. Twenty-five towns and counties retaliated against the loyal addresses by submitting rival peace petitions. These documents were also signed, in some cases embarrassingly so. Hampshire’s petition against the war with America, for example, collected 2,500 signatures, ten times more than the county’s pro-war address. More than 1,200 Newcastle freemen, many of them small tradesmen and artisans, also petitioned for peace. Yet only 124 of their fellow citizens had signed up for war.

And looked at carefully, even the loyal addresses themselves bore testament to the extent of domestic division over the war, and particularly to the unevenness of response between different parts of the island. The counties of northern England – Cumberland, Northumberland, Westmorland, Durham, Cheshire, Yorkshire and Lancashire – had tended to be royalist enclaves during the Civil War, and many of them retained a strong Tory as well as a Roman Catholic presence in the eighteenth century. In accordance with this partisan tradition, many people here seem to have viewed what was happening across the Atlantic as yet another rebellion of seditionists dissenters against a king, a second civil war in fact. Almost 6,000 men signed Lancashire’s address in support of the war, while 1,200 signed Bolton’s address – the largest number of pro-war signatories from a single town obtained in this campaign. Yet even this obviously conservative region was split asunder over America. Predominantly Anglican though it was, it also had a large population of Quakers who retained strong links with their brethren in Pennsylvania. Individual Friends seem to have played a conspicuous part in organising Lancashire’s peace petition, which attracted some 4,000 signatories.

In fact, there were only three parts of Great Britain where public responses to the outbreak of the war were more or less monolithic: East Anglia, Wales and Scotland. The first of these, and particularly the counties of Suffolk, Essex and Norfolk, had supplied the bulk of those men, women and children who had journeyed across the Atlantic between 1620 and 1641 to become the first white settlers in New England. These early links with America, kept alive in local memory by way of folk histories, by records in family bibles and by transatlantic correspondence, seem to have made many East Anglians deeply antipathetic to the war, not least because it was in the New England colonies that the first blood was spilt. Only one small borough in Suffolk and one town in Essex dispatched loyal addresses to the king. Otherwise these two very well-populated counties remained silent. So did Norfolk, reserving its fire until 1778, when 5,400 of its inhabitants dispatched a petition to London demanding peace. In this region, opposition to the war was never confined to just Protestant dissenters or radicals, but was a much wider phenomenon. Perhaps the most powerful evidence of this is the behaviour of Cambridge University’s dons, all of whom at this time were required to be Anglicans. Whereas Oxford University (which had Lord North as its Chancellor) dispatched a loyal address supporting the war in October 1775, Cambridge remained stubbornly mute until the end of November. Even then, a motion to address the crown passed the University’s senate by only eighty-four votes to forty-six.

The Welsh were even more taciturn, the whole country submitting only two pro-war addresses. This may simply have been because mobilising opinion in this way was still very much of a novelty in Wales. But its poor showing as far as the government was concerned may also have owed something to widespread unhappiness about the war. Protestant identity was very strong here, and the country had produced a good many emigrants to America, most of them concentrated in Virginia and Pennsylvania. Richard Price, a leading opponent of the war, was Welsh, and surprisingly large numbers of his countrymen had supported John Wilkes in his campaign to get elected for Middlesex. ‘The Welsh and the Scotch, who inhabit the remote ends of this kingdom’, a Wilkite journalist had argued in 1769, ‘are very opposite in their principles. The former are hot, generous, and great lovers of liberty. The latter violent and tyrannical.’ The first part of this typical piece of Wilkite ethnic stereotyping does seem to have had some basis in fact, in the sense that many pro-Wilkite Welshmen also went on to be pro-Americans. As for the second part, Wilkite suspicions of Scottish authoritarianism were only corroborated by the campaign of addresses in support of the war.
September 1775 and February 1776, over seventy addresses in support of armed coercion of the American colonists were submitted by Scottish counties and town councils, almost as many as issued from the whole of England, which had five times as large a population. Neither at this stage of the conflict nor later did a single Scottish petition for peace ever reach London.

As a guide to opinion in Scotland, this was actually less cut and dried than it appeared. All but three of the Scottish pro-war addresses had no signatures attached or only very few. Almost all of them were written and submitted solely by provosts, town councils and magistrates, and so reveal very little about reactions lower down the social scale. And, despite the lack of peace petitions, anti-war activism did exist in Scotland, among the Presbyterian clergy, among the legal fraternity, among Edinburgh’s intellectual elite, and in Glasgow, where there was an abortive attempt to petition for conciliation. Support for the war, then, was no more unanimous here than in any other part of Great Britain. None the less, as far as formal expressions of opinion were concerned—addresses, propaganda, subscription lists, sermons and recruiting drives—the Scots Magazine was right to claim that “in this part of the kingdom, the exertions in support of government have even exceeded the exertions in the southern part.” And Scottish support for the war was just as marked on the other side of the Atlantic. According to Bernard Bailyn, some 40,000 Scots emigrated to North America between 1760 and 1775, many of them desperately poor Highlanders in search of a better and more prosperous life. Yet, in marked contrast with the 50,000-odd Irishmen who emigrated to the Thirteen Colonies in the self-same period, these Scottish settlers seem to have opted overwhelmingly for the loyalist side in the War of American Independence. Here, perhaps, is further evidence that Scots, even the very poor, had become much more reconciled to the British polity since the rising in ’45, and deeply attached as well to a British empire that afforded them so many opportunities.

Many influential Scots, in fact, seized on the American war as a means to underline their political reliability to London, deliberately contrasting their own ostentatious loyalty with American disobedience, and with the anti-war activity of English radicals. The loyalty address submitted by the magistrates and council of Forres in Inverness-shire, for example, waxed scathing on that “set of men... who, under the mask of patriotism, sow sedition”, a clear reference to John Wilkes and his allies who were now spearheading opposition to the war in London. The gentlemen of Nairnshire reminded the king how “this county in the late war sent out many of its sons to defend your Majesty’s ungrateful colonies”, and assured him that they would fight just as hard now against “the traitorous and the disaffected”. “Untainted by the vices that too often accompany affluence”, declared the nobility of Caithness-shire, “our people have been injured to industry, sobriety—And, when engaged in Your Majesty’s service, have been distinguished for an exact obedience to discipline and a faithful discharge of duty.” The gentlemen and freeholders of Renfrewshire sent similar reassurances, but they at least were honest enough to spell out the mixed motives behind this epidemic of Scottish obsequiousness. In supporting the war effort, they admitted, they were acting out of “loyalty, love of our country, [and] regard for our own interests.”

As this candid admission suggests, it was not just concern for the maintenance of royal authority and a zest for empire that prompted so many politically active Scots to come out in favour of war with America, important though those motives were. The war also presented a splendid opportunity for impressing the authorities with their country’s loyalty, thereby ensuring that its interests and inhabitants would receive even more positive attention from London in the future. Such a reminder of Scotland’s value was judged all the more essential in the light of the recent Wilkite attempts to play on traditional Anglo-Scottish divisions. Wilkes’s xenophobic Englishness and popular success had been viewed north of the border as seriously prejudicial to those attempts, in progress since 1746, to construct a more united Great Britain and a more imperial Great Britain, in which Scots might see themselves, and be seen by others, as peers of the English. But now, as Alexander Murdoch has written, ‘the American War renewed their opportunity to prove their loyalty and enthusiasm for the concept of Britain’.

In other ways, too, the American war compelled different groups of Britons to re-examine the nature and boundaries of their patriotism. As far as the radicals and other opponents of the war were concerned, the passage of time made their position increasingly difficult. Most of them had been anxious to keep their brethren on the other side of the Atlantic within the empire and had favoured conciliation as the best means of achieving this. The American Declaration of Independence in July 1776 cut the ground from under their feet, as well as leaving many Englishmen with the sense that part of their past history and collective identity had been brutally amputated. Openly supporting the Americans’ right to establish themselves as a separate and independent nation, as distinct from advocating their appeasement, was very hard for those radicals who prided themselves on being patriots. It was harder still when the Americans allied themselves with the old
in the nature of radicalism in Britain. Before the war, critics of the constitution had experienced little difficulty in reconciling demands for change at home with the most blatant chauvinism, imperialism and bellicosity. The enemy then had always been France or Spain, Roman Catholic regimes that could easily be seen by prejudiced Protestant eyes as enemies to liberty. Wilkes, for example, had seen no contradiction between his advocacy of parliamentary reform and concessions to the American colonists on the one hand, and lambasting the administration for failing to go to war with Spain over the Falkland Islands in 1770 on the other. In both cases, in his view, he was fighting liberty’s battles. But war with America destroyed this kind of complacency. The innovation, as far as British experience in the eighteenth century was concerned, of fighting Protestants on a large scale undermined this facile union of constitutional zeal and uninhibited jingoism. From now on, domestic critics of a British imperial state were more likely to face a hard choice between winning easy popularity by supporting successive war efforts, or risking unpopularity by concentrating on the need for political and social change at home.\(^3\)

For those who governed the British state, too, the war proved in the short term peculiarly costly and brutal. It lasted much longer and was far more expensive than ministers had ever anticipated. It had to be pursued against a background of domestic division and debate and in dangerous isolation. France joined the Americans openly in 1778, followed by Spain one year later and Holland in 1780. Britain, by contrast, had no European allies at all, barring those few German states who lent it manpower. Encircled by enemies, it lacked the strength and the will to prevent one of its own peripheries, Ireland, from acquiring parliamentary independence in 1782. Worst of all, of course, and uniquely in this period, it lost. And the humiliation of defeat at the hands of a former colony was profound for a ruling elite possessed of strict notions of hierarchy and massive pride: ‘Your armies are captured’, London’s Livery told George III after his forces’ definitive defeat at the Battle of Yorktown, ‘the wonted superiority of your navies is annihilated; your dominions are lost’.\(^4\)

Yet, paradoxically, this defeat proved more constructive in the long term than the glossy victories achieved in the Seven Years War. At the level of ordinary opinion, the experience of an unsuccessful and unhappy war, fought in isolation from or opposition to the rest of Europe, seems actually to have resolved some of the uncertainties and divisions of the 1760s and early 1770s. Alienation from the administration that had gone to war there certainly was. But once the Prime Minister, Lord North, accepted the position

28. The Partizan: A Sketch of Modern Patriotism. Radicals (including a cross-eyed John Wilkes) as friends to America and therefore traitors to Britain: anonymous print, 1776.

Catholic enemy France in 1778. And it was lethal in the context of major battles involving large numbers of British casualties. ‘I am sorry’, John Wilkes told the House of Commons after Saratoga, ‘that 800 valiant English and Germans were killed in a bad cause, in fighting against the best constitution on earth.’\(^\) This was brave, but it could hardly be popular. Indeed, individuals who were less prestigious and protected than Wilkes could have a very rough ride if they expressed their support for the Americans too openly. There are scattered references in the newspaper press to American sympathisers being beaten up, or on occasions tarred and feathered by their neighbours, a deliberate borrowing of the punishment notorious Americans had inflicted on royal officials before the Revolution.\(^1\)

Critics of the government were thus put on the defensive, and their claims to patriotism contradicted in a very brutal way:

How despicably mustposterity consider those men, who amidst their boasted professions of loyalty and zealous attachment to the constitution, give their assistance to enemies who are openly aiming at dismemberment of the empire.\(^2\)

In this sense, the American Revolution contributed to a revolution
of scapegoat and resigned in 1782, a sense of embattled identity, of Britain against Europe and, now, of Britain against America became more prominent than anything else. An entirely obscure Staffordshire clergyman summed up the mood well when he scribbled in his parish register that:

To future ages it will appear to be an incredible thing . . . that these kingdoms should maintain (as they have done) a glorious, but unequal conflict for several years with the most formidable and unprovoked confederacy that should be formed against them.87

Instead of being sated with conquests, alarmed at their own presumptuous grandeur as they been after 1763, the British could now unite in feeling hard done by. Their backs were once more well and truly to the wall, filling many of them with grim relish and renewed strength.

The war refurbished their unity in another important respect. True, one important periphery, the American colonies, had been lost. But another, Scotland, had become linked to the centre to a greater degree than ever before, fastened tight by cords of mutual self-interest. This did not mean that antipathy towards the English in Scotland, or antipathy towards the Scots in England promptly evaporated in the warmth of a new tolerance and understanding. Obviously not. But never again was there an outcry against Scottish influence in the state on the scale initiated by John Wilkes and his supporters.86 And this was not because that influence declined, but rather because southerners became accustomed to its increasing. The English had been able to regard the heartland of their first empire, the American colonies, as peculiarly their own, pioneered by their own ancestors long before the Act of Union with Scotland. By contrast, in terms of those who won it, those who governed it and those who settled it, the Second British Empire would indeed be emphatically British. And a major share in the work (and the profits) of constructing Greater Britain would for a long time be sufficient for Scottish ambition.

I have suggested that Scottish penetration of the new British empire was one element in the shift towards a much firmer governing style at the end of the eighteenth century. But there were many other elements, and defeat in America was one of the most important. It has sometimes been argued that the War of American Independence was for Great Britain what Vietnam would be for the United States some two hundred years later, a David and Goliath conflict which divided and demoralised the great power in question even before it went down to unexpected defeat. If this seems a valid analogy, then we can push it further. In the case of both of these world powers, loss of face was followed by a sharp move to the Right, a new impatience with opposition and a hard determination to shore up the fabric of the state. The lesson drawn by London from the American war, wrote Frederick Madden and David Fieldhouse, was ‘not that the first British empire had been too strictly governed or that policy had been too selfish or inflexible, but rather that it had been too permissive, conciliatory and ineffective.’88 In the wake of the Seven Years War, some leading Britons had been embarrassed by the weight of empire, even going so far as to question its morality. By 1783, however, many of these scruples and uncertainties had gone. The result was a series of imperial reforms designed to clarify and strengthen London’s control: the India Act of 1784, the Canada Act of 1791 and the Act of Union with Ireland in 1800 being only the more important.

But the governing elite would also work to strengthen its position at home, reconstructing its authority, image and ideas, and—as we shall see—devoting far more attention than before to questions of Britishness. In the half-century after the American war, there would emerge in Great Britain a far more consciously and officially constructed patriotism which stressed attachment to the monarchy, the importance of empire, the value of military and naval achievement, and the desirability of strong, stable government by a virtuous, able and authentically British elite. Everyone knows that the War of American Independence created a new nation in the United States of America and undermined an old nation, ancien régime France. But it did even more than this. It helped to forge a very different Great Britain in which both men and women would have to work out their ideas of patriotism as never before.
Notes

Since the references to each chapter make up what is in effect a running bibliography, I have dispensed with a separate list of further reading. Throughout, references are given in full at the first citation in each chapter and are abbreviated thereafter. The place of publication of the edition used in the text is London unless otherwise stated. When quoting from manuscript sources, I have modernised the spelling whenever it seemed necessary.

The following abbreviations are used in the notes:

Add. MS       Additional Manuscript
B.L.          British Library, British Museum
Hansard       Hansard’s Parliamentary Debates
H.M.C.        Reports of the Royal Commission on
               Historical Manuscripts
H.O.          Home Office
Political and Personal Saites
               Frederick George Stephens and Mary
               Dorothy George, Catalogue of Prints and
               Drawings in the British Museum: Political
               of England from the Earliest Period to 1803
               (36 vols., 1816).
P.R.O.         Public Record Office, London
S.P.          State Papers

INTRODUCTION

2 See, for example, John Lough’s, France Observed in the Seventeenth Century by
   British Travellers (Stockfield, 1985), and his France on the Eve of Revolution, British
4 For example, only two books to my knowledge have been published in the last few decades
   surveying domestic responses to Britain’s epic wars with Revolutionary and Napoleonic
   France, even though, as Ana Briggs wrote, ‘...the way into the nineteenth century led
   across the battlefield as well as through the cotton mill and the iron foundry,’ The Age of
   Improvement 1781–1867 (1979 edn), p. 129. Contrast this poor showing with the unceasing
   torrent of books and articles on the impact of industrialisation on Britain.
5 See, for example, Paul Kleber Monod,
1. **Protestants**

   1. The Complete Prose Works of James Thomson, ed. J. Lodge Robertson (Oxford, 1986), p. 426. The figure of Britannia dates from the time when much of Britain was a Roman province. She seems first to have appeared on English coins in 1665, though she acquired her familiar trident only in 1777 in the wake of a succession of naval victories against the French. In 1821, Britannia became an even more martial icon and appeared on British coins equipped with a helmet; see C. William Park, English Copper, Tin and Bronze Coins of the Early and Middle Roman Periods (2nd edn, 1964), pp. 110, 288, 295. For how she was used to represent Great Britain as a whole in eighteenth-century prints, see Herbert M. Atherton, Political Prints in the Age of Hogarth (Oxford, 1974), pp. 89–97.


5. For a particularly paranoid complaint on this score, see John Freeman, 'Reasonable Reflections upon the Importance of the Name of England' (1795).


10. See Richard Rose, Understanding the United Kingdom: The Territorial Dimension of Government (1983), pp. 15 et seq. As Rose cautions, the implication that there is a monolithic Celtic identity is one of the problems in Michael Hechter's otherwise interesting Internal Colonisation: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity (1959, 1986), p. 112. See also the excellent survey which fails, however, to come to grips with the extent of anti-Catholicism on Welsh anti-Catholicism, see Geraint H. Jenkins, Literature, Religion and Society in Wales, 1660–1730 (Cardiff, 1982). As yet, little work has been done on the very similar prejudices existing in Scotland, see Robert Kent Dunmore, No Popery and Resistance: Opposition to Roman Catholic Relief in Scotland, 1778–1782 (New York, 1987).


23. See David Crossley, Borderers and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England (1989). Despite its title, this book also contains references to Wales. My research student, James Cade, is currently writing his thesis on the importance of the Protestant calendar of commemorations throughout Great Britain as a whole in the eighteenth century.


27. ibid., p. 245.

28. Literature, Religion and Society in Wales, p. 47.


30. See, for example, Defoe's comments on the easy-going relationship between Protestants and Catholics in Holy-

Quoted in Black, Challenge of Autocracy, p. 107.


E.g., Clark, English Society, passim. Using the term 'aristocratic regime' to describe the Continent Europe before 1790 is anachronistic, since it was applied in this sense only retrospectively by Alexis de Tocqueville and others. Since, as Simon Schama comments - it carries a 'heavily freighted sense' of obscurantism - and is therefore increasingly being discarded by historians of pre-Revolutionary France, it is not clear why British historians should want to adopt it.


I am indebted for this point to an unpublished paper by E.A. Wrigley, 'Society and the economy in the eighteenth century'.


John Chamberlayne, Magnae Britanniae Notitia: or, the present state of Great Britain (1710), p. 362.

I am grateful to A.D. Stenberg of the Eighteenth Century Short Title Catalogue for this information.

G.A. Cranfield, The Development of the Provincial Newspaper (Oxford, 1962); M.E. Craig, The Scottish Periodical Press, 1750–89 (Edinburgh, 1931). Much more work needs to be done on the Scottish newspaper, periodical and religious press which has been neglected in favour of the largely widely distributed works of the luminaries of the Scottish Enlightenment.

E.g., Scots Magazine 1 (1729), pp. 76–8, 485, 609.

Colley, In Defence of oligarchy, p. 325n. 80.

LITERATURE, RELIGION AND SOCIETY IN WALES, p. 54.


See infra, p. 289.

Paulson, Hogarth, ii, p. 90.


Paul C. Gibs, 'English attitudes towards Hanover and the Hanoverian Succession in the first half of the eighteenth century', in Adolf M. Birke and Kurt Khiran (eds.), England and Hanover (Munich, 1986), pp. 37; see Ragnhild Hattori, George F. Leckie and...
it worth while to disturb a government so long settled and established, and to plunge a kingdom into the miseries of civil war?" (my italics). The first part of this quotation reflects Scott's own politics, but the last sentence captures a much more widespread response in Scotland, especially by 1745. I owe this reference to Cyrus Vahli of Yale University.

52. For this, see Monod, Jacobitism and the English Protests and William Donaldson, The Jacobite Secession: Political Myths and National Identity (Aberdeen, 1988).

53. A Collection of State Songs, Poems etc. that have been published since the Rebell (1716), p. 137.


55. When a Stockport man did fire at and kill a Jacobite soldier, the Highlanders burned his cowhouse and barn, killed his cattle and seized his father in retaliation. F.J. McLynn, The Jacobite Army in England, 1745 (Edinburgh, 1983), p. 147.

56. Ibid., p. 145.

57. McLynn, France and the Jacobite Rising of 1745.


62. Ibid., p. 62, P.R.O., S.P. 36/7/3/3.


65. See Appendix 1.

66. Speck, The Butcher, pp. 72 and 211.


72. Lummis, Jacobite Risings in Britain, p. 257.

73. Ibid., Garnett, 'Correspondence of Archbishop Harrington,' p. 729.


75. Monod, Jacobite Risings in Britain, pp. 101–12, 216–18. I am also indebted here to information from Paul Monod.

76. All historians agree that by the 1740s, the Union was playing a decisive role in the economic development of the Union. On the Union's economic policies and its role in the development of the Union, see, for example, Paul Monod, The Union and the Economy (1975), pp. 231–42; and spa. Wilson, Urban culture and political activism in Hanoverian England: the emergence of voluntary hospitals, in Eндей Hillman (ed.), The Transformation of Political Culture: England and Germany in the Eighteenth Century (Oxford, 1993), pp. 165–84.

77. See Robert Hunt, Some account of the laudable institution of the society of Antigallicans, in Sermons on Public Occasions (1781).

78. John Foxe, A sermon preached at St John's, in Southwark before the laudable and loyal associations of Antigallicans (1756), pp. 18 et seq., and his An Essay Towards an History of the English Tongue (1749), and The Danger Attending an Enlightened Free People (1753), where he makes similar claims for a common Saxon ethnicity.


3 PERIPHERIES


5. Though there were schemes for a French invasion which proved abortive, see Eveline Cruickshanks (ed.), Ideology and Conspiracy: Aspects of Jacobinism, 1689-1793 (Edinburgh, 1982).


7. See Scott Magazine 25 (1760), pp. 473-86.

8. See Political and Personal Satires, iv, print no. 407.


10. A new biography of Wilkes is badly needed, Raymond Proctor's That Devil Wilkes (1930) is the best of the old accounts, while George Rude, Wilkes and Liberty (Oxford, 1962) and John Brewer, Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III (Cambridge, 1976) provide splendid analyses of his supporters and tactics.


13. Election remittances 1776, 1777, 1784, B.L. Add. MS. 30806, fol. 54.

14. Rude, Wilkes and Liberty, p. 44.


18. Political and Personal Satires, iv, print no. 408.


22. I am indebted for this information to Gareth Stedman Jones.

23. Political and Personal Satires, iv, print no. 402.

24. Ibid., print no. 402, 403.


30. This and the next paragraph are based on Alexander Murdoch, ""Beating the legs": The military riot at Ravenshaugh toll on 5 October 1760, Transactions of the East Lothian Antiquarian and Field Naturalists Society 17 (1982).


32. See Annette M. Smith, Jacobite Estates of the Forty-Five (Edinburgh, 1982).

33. The belief that Scottish Highlanders were unusually well endowed sexually was an old one in the Lowlands and in England, reflecting the fact that the Englishmen were seen as both threatening and primitive.

34. See, for example, Political and Personal Satires, iv, print nos 3425, 3468, 3562, and 3399.

35. Ibid., print no. 3649.


37. ’Scotland in the 17th and 18th centuries—a satellite economy’, in State Dyre, Knut Mykleland and Jan Oldervoll (eds), The Satellite State in the 17th and 18th Centuries (Bergen, Norway, 1979), p. 18.


40. Manuscript comment by John Wilkes in the margin of his copy of The History of the Late Minority (1764), B.L. C. 13853.


42. See Janet Adam Smith’s Some eighteenth-century ideas of Scotland’, in N.T. Philp and B. Mitchell (eds), Scotland in our Time (Edinburgh, 1970), Gerald Newman, The Rise of English Nationalism: A


41. Ibid., ii, pp. 229–30.

42. Ibid., iii, pp. 618–21.

43. Ibid., iii, pp. 237–40.


45. Our gentry are both poor and proud and...we can neither submit to having our sons to trade, nor afford to place them in the genteel walk of commerce, nor buy them commissions, so we send them to fight for their bread', Scottish Modern Displayed (1778), p. 19. Scott is quoted in Janet Adam Smith, John Buchan: A Biography (Oxford, 1985), p. 13.


47. I owe this information to Alexander Murdoch.


50. See Clements R Markham, Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet (1876).

51. Ibid.

52. C. Duncan Rice, 'Archibald Dalziel, the Scottish intelligencer and the problem of slavery', Scottish Historical Review 62 (1983), p. 124 and passim.

53. See Murdoch, 'Lord Bute, James Stuart Mackenzie, and the government of Scotland', in Schweizer, Lord Bute, for an illuminating discussion of this point.


56. Lenman, The Jacobite Class, p. 204.

57. Nameer and Brooke, House of Commons, ii, p. 511; Carnall and Nicholson, Impression of Hastings, p. 54.


61. I am indebted for this information to my colleague at Yale, Jules Prown.


65. I have benefited here from an unpublished paper by John Elliott, 'The role of the state in British and Spanish colonial America'.


69. See, for example, Peter Marshall, Bristol and the American War of Independence (Bristol, 1977); John Sambrook, Disaffected Patriots: London Supporters of Revolutionary England 1769–1782 (Gloucester, 1987).

70. These are printed in the London Gazette from 12/16 September 1775 to 9/12 March 1776.

71. The anti-war petitions are discussed most fully in James E. Bradley, Popular Politics and the American Revolution in England (Macron, Georgia, 1986); and see Sambrook, Disaffected Patriots.

72. Fischer, Albion's Seed, pp. 13–205.

73. Ibid., pp. 76, 204.

74. Fischer, Albion's Seed, pp. 219, 436–8.

75. Middlesex Journal, 29 April 1769.


79. Ibid., 14/18 November 1775.

80. Ibid., 16/20 January 1776, 14/18 November 1775.


82. Speeches of John Wilkes, ii, p. 41.


84. The Analysis of Patriotism: or, an enquiry whether opposition to government, in the present state of affaires is consistent with the principles of a Patriot (1778), pp. 36–7.


86. Common Hall, Book 8, entry for 6 December 1782, Corporation of London Record Office.

87. Notes by Viscount Hanbury, 1 January 1779, Staffordshire Record Office.

88. Ibid., pp. 239–62.

89. Though low-key criticism of Scottish ambition and success did continue, see Political and Personal Satires, vi, prints nos 7126, 7130, 7132 and 7296.


4 DOMINANCE

1. Annual Register (1778), pp. 264–70.


8. Ibid., ii, p. 404.

9. Ibid., i, pp. 331–2.


13. See, for example, Thorne, House of Commons, i, pp. 394, 398–25.


18. Quoted in Frank O'Gorman, Edmund Burke: His Political Philosophy (1973), p. 121.


95 Alan Muriel, "Criminal Guilt in the Irish Rebellion" (1890), pp. 171-201.
101 Majesty.
102 Lewis Namier, 'George III speaks out' in the House of Commons, 1939, p. 137, has an interesting and Richard H. Nettleship, George III and the Middle-Bourgeoisie (1969), that the king's real aim was not to suppress the Irish, but to end the bloodshed.
104 Macaulay and Hunter, George II, p. 54.
105 Accounts of royal power in eighteenth-century Britain are thin on the ground, and those that exist sometimes supply too much material, based on legal records and official propaganda which describes how the monarchy was sup-
106 It is not surprising that all British politicians in office during the 17th century paid little attention to the need to avoid civil war.
108 From the minutes of the Pitt Club, which are in the Oxfam collection of manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, Yale University, New Haven.
115 Majesty.
116 Lewis Namier, "George III speaks out" in the House of Commons, 1939, p. 137, has an interesting and Richard H. Nettleship, George III and the Middle-Bourgeoisie (1969), that the king's real aim was not to suppress the Irish, but to end the bloodshed.
118 Macaulay and Hunter, George II, p. 54.
119 Accounts of royal power in eighteenth-century Britain are thin on the ground, and those that exist sometimes supply too much material, based on legal records and official propaganda which describes how the monarchy was sup-
120 It is not surprising that all British politicians in office during the 17th century paid little attention to the need to avoid civil war.
122 From the minutes of the Pitt Club, which are in the Oxfam collection of manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, Yale University, New Haven.
MANIPOLVER

1.楠 of the many brilliant graphic artists, who, at this time, Isaacs, Cunliffe, Thomas Bowland, George Woodward, Charles Williams, or Galloway himself, was able to forge a convincing and unassailable narrative about the plebeian patriot. The reasons for this were aesthetic as well as political: see John Barrett, The Dark Side of the Landscape, The Rural Poor in English Painting 1750–1840 (Cambridge, 1980); and G. C. M. Paul, Lulham Realism and Politics in Victorian Art of the Crimean War (Epping, 1984), pp. 1–39.


7. See, for example, The Conscientious Objectors in the Rising 1792, 1793 (Oxford, 1985).

8. In March 1805, Lord Hawkesbury told his fellow peers that 80,000 men were serving within the United Kingdom alone. That was not the least one in number of the whole male population of this country capable of bearing arms... greater in any other country on the globe has none. Hawkesbury, 1st ser., 3 (1807), p. 608.


10. See Appendix 2.

11. The Defence of the Realm return for Crickadarn parish, National Library of Wales, Merthyr MSS 6941–64.

12. Sussex Militia List, Perseverance Rate 1803 Northern Division (Eastbourne, 1889), under East Grinstead.


23. Return of volunteers in Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire, Record Office, HA 15/1–4, Litchfield parish register, Nottingham Record Office, Nottinghamshire MS 5 86.


25. Nicholas Mansfield, 'The Men of the Regiment', in C. G.知晓 (ed.), Norfolk and Suffolk in the War (Norwich, 1990), p. 39. Coastal, as distinct from inland East Anglia—and especially Norfolk—did have a strong naval tradition: but I suspect that in many cases the pristine objects of desire were the sea and its opportunities, rather than the land and its buildings.


27. In December 1803, the House of Commons was told that 200,000 firearms had been distributed among volunteer corps. Hanover, 1st ser., 1 (1803–4), pp. 381–2.

28. For the kind of pressure, Scottish grandees were able to exert in recruitment, see E. Cragge, Argyll Estate Inventories, Mull, Moremen, Tire 1771–1805 (Edinburgh, 1964), p. 195.


30. See Appendix 2.


34. See the arguments of William Withering to Henry Dundas, 26 April 1796, Scottish Record Office, GD 51/13/31.


37. M.Y. Ascroft, To Escape the Minister's Clutches: notes and documents illustrating the preparations in North Yorkshire to repel the invasion threatened by the French from 1793, North Yorkshire County Record.
Notes to pages 351–369

Despite its title, this book does not in fact concentrate itself to England.
79. Ibid., p. 29, 26–30.
82. Ibid., pp. 35–9, Drescher, Capitalism and Antislavery, p. 101.
84. Drescher, Capitalism and Antislavery, pp. 70–3.
91. The Bow to the Cloud, Or, the Negro's Moon (1834), p. 465. A collection of amateur verses by different Britons on the emancipation of the West Indian slaves is an invaluable text for the more compliant brand of patriots at this time.
94. Econocide, p. 16. Drescher is returning here to my mind successfully, as the argument of Eric Williams's classic, Capitalism and Slavery (1944).
97. Drescher, Econocide, para. 3. In economic, as in moral terms, Britain's record on slavery was mixed. After 1838, its sugar was produced by free

Notes to pages 369–375

...Swedish Age of Greatness (1973).
12. Ibid., p. 112.
15. This is beginning to happen. See, for instance, the essays in Raphael Samuel, ed., Patriarchs: The Making and Unmaking of British National Identity (3 vols., 1989).
17. Peter Scott, Knowledge and Nation (Edinburgh, 1990), p. 168.
22. Tom Nairn's Scottish Nationalist classic The Break-Up of Britain: Crisis and New-Nationalism (2nd edn., 1981) has been followed by a succession of similar studies. But anyone who wants a sense of just how urgent and widespread this debate has now become need only glance at the daily newspaper press in Britain.