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Warren R. Hofstra. *Ulster to America: The Scots-Irish Migration Experience, 1680-1830.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2011. 263 pp. $45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57233-754-1.

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An "Anti-Ethnic Ethnic Identity": Perspectives on Defining the Experience of the Scots-Irish in the United States

This is a volume about trying to place an old idea in a new context.[1] The idea of the Scots-Irish as a foundation people in the United States gained great currency in the second half of the nineteenth century, and was influential into the twentieth century. Woodrow Wilson's declaration that "every line of our history is one drawn in Scots-Irish blood," declaimed to the New England Society of the City of New York in the early twentieth century, has recently been misquoted in Scotland as "drawn in Scottish blood."[2] This is a concept that suggests the idea of a distinctive cultural and historical tradition associated with Protestant migration into Ireland, undoubtedly with a significant Scottish component, and the survival of that tradition in what has become Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. It is worth noting that every scholar contributing to this book is based in the United States, although the editor notes in his acknowledgements that its genesis lay in consultation work carried out by most of the contributors in affiliation with work at the Ulster American Folk Park in Ormagh, Northern Ireland, which concerned its portrayal of Scots-Irish settlement on the American frontier. In that sense this book marks a welcome collaboration between a transatlantic team of academic and curatorial scholars. The result is an eclectic mixture of the specific and the general that illustrates the difficulty of pinpointing a transatlantic diaspora in the context of the shifting parameters of the American frontier. For this reviewer, it illustrates the challenges of tracking ethnicity over multiple generations, and the fluidity of diasporic identities.

Two outstanding essays provide a stimulating conclusion to this collection. Peter Gilmore and Kerby Miller discuss the Scots-Irish experience at a particular time as well as in a particular place, in an essay entitled "Searching for 'Irish' Freedom–Settling for 'Scotch-Irish' Respectability: Southwestern Pennsylvania, 1780-1810," and Patrick Griffin contributes an essay under the title "Searching for Independence: Revolutionary Kentucky, Irish American Experience, and Scotch-Irish Myth, 1770s-1790s." Both move on from origin myths to discuss Irish migrant experience of key arenas of the postindependence American frontier in which Irish associations were being absorbed into the early national project of creating a US national identity that would invent a modern republic. In this process Americans would reimagine classical and Renaissance republicanism and create a civic republicanism that would accommodate both an expanding creole population and continuing European immigration.

In the continuum of the period of history chosen to mark the parameters of this book, Gilmore, Miller, and Griffin demonstrate how Protestant Irishmen in a revolutionary era played a key role in inventing a United States that was not centered on New England in its culture and ideology. In 1784, Gilmore and Miller note, a member of the prominent Lee family of Virginia (Arthur, who was educated at Eton and the University of Edinburgh) described Pittsburgh in western Pennsylvania as "'inhabited almost entirely by Scots and Irish, who live in paltry log houses, and are as dirty as in the north of Ireland, or even Scotland"' (p. 176). Widespread opposition in western Pennsylvania to the ratification of the US Constitution and subsequently to the policies of the early Federalist US governments were associated with "Irish" influences. Hugh Henry Brackenridge, a Pennsylvania Federalist of Scottish birth joked about opponents who were "'Irish or only Scotch-Irish"' (pp. 177, 184). Federalists, such as Brackenridge, blamed Irish influences on those who supported the so-called Whiskey Rebellion of 1794. Griffin argues that in Kentucky, "migrants from Ireland and their descendants had helped win the [American Revolutionary] war by defining Indians as racial inferiors but had lost the Revolution at the hands of the wealthy" (p. 222). The key point made by Griffin is

that it was the American descendants of Protestant Irish migrants who created "Scotch-Irish mythic conceptions that downplay class antagonism" (p. 225). Diasporic identities are about myth and memory over time. They exist because those who are part of them believe in them. The salient characteristic about both Irish and Scottish identity is that neither is English. In America, migrants from Ireland and Scotland determined that whatever the United States would become, it would not be a new England.

This volume makes an interesting and distinctive contribution to a historiography in which Griffin's and Gilmore and Miller's work remain the most profound contributions. Its great virtue is that it tries to build bridges between abiding public interests in the United States, in particular in the idea of an Ulster-Irish transatlantic community, and the need to situate this concept more convincingly in sustained examination of the way in which this ethnic discourse became so influential during the nineteenth century. Although all the contributors to this book are based in the United States, it originated in a conference that brought US-based scholars together with museum curators in Northern Ireland. Yet not all migration from Ireland to North America during the eighteenth century originated in Ulster, and future efforts to encourage a more transatlantic approach to this subject would be all the better for taking that fact into account.

Notes

[1]. The "anti-ethnic ethnic identity" in the title of the review comes from Patrick Griffin's essay, "Searching for Independence: Revolutionary Kentucky, Irish American Experience, and Scotch-Irish Myth, 1770s-1790s," in the book under review (p. 223).

[2]. Arthur S. Link et al., eds., *Papers of Woodrow Wilson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1972), 12:53; and Alexander Murdoch, *Scotland and America c.1600-c.1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2009), 1-2.

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