Imperial Footprints:
Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin in Ireland, Canada and India 1870-1914

Valerie McLeish
Department of History
University College London

A thesis submitted for the degree of PhD to
The University of London
2002
Abstract

This thesis focuses on Lady Ishbel Aberdeen (1857-1939) and Lady Harriot Dufferin (1843-1936) who accompanied their husbands, who were Colonial Governors, into the British Empire. I argue that their footprints were indelibly etched on the colonial landscape; that each woman left her mark on the places where she lived. Officially these women promoted the British Empire through their positions as ‘first ladies’. They willingly accepted this as a duty to their husbands and the Crown: an unwritten contract. However the unofficial cultural and discursive work of Empire that they undertook was perhaps less obvious but just as far reaching. It was undoubtedly political in nature yet it was not thought of in that way.

The twin themes of representation and identity are explored on each colonial site. I argue that Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin constructed representations that placed colonised others in an inferior position, whilst enabling the women to bolster their own identities as British imperialists. From their privileged positions they promoted Britain, the British Empire, and Christianity. They were both involved in Ireland, where they had different views on Home Rule, and Canada, where they each lived for several years. Between them they started organisations to benefit health in Canada, Ireland and India. These points in common allow comparisons to be made, although this is not the main focus of the thesis.

I use a combination of post-structural and traditional methodology, with much of the research based on the Dufferin and Aberdeen private papers. Secondary themes explored include the nature of Britain’s relationship to Ireland, Ulsterwomen’s efforts to prevent Home Rule, and attitudes to health and disease.
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Section</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Abstract.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Index of Illustrations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Acknowledgements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A Note about Names.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 1</strong> Introduction and Literature Review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Literature Review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Themes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Sources and Methods.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Some Definitions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Summary of Chapters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 2</strong> The Ends of the Earth: A Background to Late Nineteenth-century Imperialism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>The Metropolis: England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>The Jewel in the Crown: India.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>The New Dominion: Canada.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>The Metropolitan Colony: Ireland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77</td>
<td><strong>Chapter 3</strong> Privileged Lives?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>81</td>
<td>A Life in a Page.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>83</td>
<td>The Father.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>88</td>
<td>The Mother-in-law.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>The Husband.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>92</td>
<td>Racing the Empire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94</td>
<td>A Woman’s Place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98</td>
<td>Conclusion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Page

99  2. Ishbel Maria Marjoribanks.

100 A Life in a Page.

102 The Power of Knowledge.

104 Keeping Ourselves to Ourselves.

106 The ‘Heavenly Power which has carried me through.’

109 Politics and Liberalism.

111 Suffrage and Feminism.

116 Greater Britain.

119 Conclusion.

122 Chapter 4 Uniting the Canadian Nation.

126 Native Americans.

131 French Canada.

135 Lady Aberdeen and the Irish in Canada.

137 Immigration.

144 The Making of Canada: Organising Women.

151 The Victorian Era Ball.

159 Conclusion.

161 Chapter 5 Lady Aberdeen: Taking ‘Ireland’ to America.

161 Lady Aberdeen’s Views on Ireland and the Irish.

168 Irish Home Industries.

174 Lady Aberdeen and Mrs Hart.

177 The Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893.

196 Conclusion.

197 Chapter 6 Lady Dufferin: Keeping Ulster British.

199 ‘The Dark Eleventh Hour Draws On ...’

203 The Ulster Women’s Unionist Council.

207 Protestantism, Class and Britishness.

211 Ulster Identity.

221 Irish Identity.

223 British and Imperial Identity.

228 Conclusion.
Imperial Anxieties and Native Spaces.

India: The Uncolonised Space of the Zenana.

Canada: Anxieties in the Wilderness.

Ireland: The Contested Space of the Rural Homestead.

Comparisons and Conclusions.

Chapter 8  ‘Improving the Health of the Empire.’

1. Introduction.

2. The National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India (The Dufferin Fund).

Imperial Interests.

3. The Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada.

Imperial Connections.

4. The Women’s National Health Association of Ireland.

Microbes and the ‘Bad Housewife’.

Opposition.

5. Comparisons and Conclusions.

Chapter 9  Conclusion.

Appendix  The Birth and Death of Sidney Temple.

Abbreviations.

Bibliography.

Index of Illustrations

Figure 1: 1878 and 1898 Canadian Banknotes.

Figure 2: The Empire: North America Set, The Victorian Era Ball.

Figure 3: The Empire: India and Australasia Set, The Victorian Era Ball.
Acknowledgements

My greatest debt is to my supervisor, Catherine Hall, and I would like to thank her for her unflagging support and interest, for generously sharing her time, and for expertly and sensitively guiding my work. I am also grateful to Rebecca Spang, my second supervisor, for her perceptive comments on earlier drafts.

I made several visits to Haddo House, where Lord Haddo kindly allowed me access to the Aberdeen papers. Mark Andrew, Molly McPherson and other staff at the Estate Office provided me with every assistance and I thank them. Lady June Aberdeen gave me a guided out-of-season tour of Haddo House, and shared her memories and knowledge of Ishbel Aberdeen, for which I am grateful. I also want to thank Rose Cunnane and Ray Gallagher for their help at Peamount Hospital, Newcastle, Co Dublin; the staff of the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland in Belfast; and Cheryl Thompson at the Dawson City Museum.

I have been assisted in different ways by Bernice Archer, Julia Bush, Tricia Cusack, Leonore Davidoff, Andrew Gailey, Andrew Harrison, Greta Jones, Jamie McLeish, Victoria Smith and Pat Winans; I thank them. I am also grateful for the support and friendship of the other members of Catherine Hall’s PhD group. Finally, special thanks to Allister, who probably knows more about Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin than he ever wanted to, yet has been constantly supportive in every way.
A Note About Names

Confusion can exist over aristocratic titles. They can be hereditary, or created for special services to the Crown. When Ishbel Marjoribanks married John Gordon, Seventh Earl of Aberdeen, she became the Countess of Aberdeen. In 1915 he was elevated to the rank of Marquis of Aberdeen and Temair, and Ishbel became a Marchioness. When Hariot Rowan-Hamilton married Frederick Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood, Fifth Baron Dufferin, she became Lady Dufferin. In 1871 he was created an Earl and she became Countess; in 1888 he was made First Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, so her title became Marchioness. However to avoid confusion I shall refer to the women as Ishbel and Hariot, or Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin (which is how they were normally addressed after their marriages). I have made it clear in the context if I am referring to one of their mothers-in-law. In referring to other titled married women I distinguish them by their first name coupled with their husband's title, eg Theresa Londonderry.
Chapter 1

Introduction and Literature Review

If miles were metres a traveller today could drive over the Lady Aberdeen Bridge in Ottawa, borrow a book from the Lady Aberdeen Memorial Library in Waterloo, Ontario, stroll along the Dufferin Terrace in Quebec, and perhaps camp in the Countess of Dufferin range of mountains in western Canada. She could get medical treatment from one of twelve Countess of Dufferin hospitals in India and Pakistan, apply for a Lady Aberdeen scholarship in Randalstown, Co Antrim, and slake her thirst in the Aberdeen Arms (next to Haddo House) in Aberdeenshire, or the Dufferin Arms (next to Killyleagh Castle) in Co Down. And assuming it was legal tender, she could pay for her drink with a Canadian dollar bill engraved with the portrait of either woman. (See figure 1).

This naming also ran in the other direction. In 1888 Lord Dufferin was elevated to Marquis in the peerage, so that the Countess of Dufferin took the title of Marchioness of Dufferin and Ava: Ava was the ancient capital of Burma, a nation which had been annexed by Dufferin in 1886 while he was Viceroy of India. In 1915 the Aberdeens' stint in Ireland was also rewarded with a Marquisate. They then chose to add the name of Tara, the ancient capital of Ireland and place where kings were crowned, to their title. This was strenuously opposed in Ireland, so they compromised with the old Irish form of the name, and the Countess of Aberdeen became the Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair.¹

¹ See John and Ishbel Maria Aberdeen, We Twa (Collins, London, 1925), pp271-5. As discursive adjuncts to previous military invasions these expropriations can be interpreted as symbolic attempts to sequester ancient Burmese and Irish culture for the British Empire.
Figure 1: Canadian Banknotes

1878 Canadian Dollar Bill
The Countess of Dufferin

1898 Canadian Dollar Bill
The Earl and Countess of Aberdeen

1 Internet reference: <www.mts.net/~kmutch/dollar2.htm>.
These examples illustrate some of the ways that metropole and colony were interconnected; how what happened in one affected the other, and vice versa. It has now become well established that, in the words of Anne Stoler and Frederick Cooper, ‘metropole and colony, colonizer and colonized, need to be brought into one analytic field’. This is what I have aimed to do in this thesis. My central argument is that Ishbel Aberdeen and Hariot Dufferin were heavily involved in furthering British imperialism through their official and unofficial work as wives of colonial Governors. I chose the title Imperial Footprints with the notion of interdependency in mind. It suggests the tracking of these journeys - made by Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin - over the nine chapters of this thesis: from ‘centre’ to ‘periphery’, from metropole to colony, and back again.

The meaning of imperialism changed in different nineteenth-century contexts from the more formal economic imperialism - or colonial expansion - of the first half of the century which was often accompanied by military presence, to Disraeli’s new aggressive imperialism of the 1870s and then to incorporate a jingoistic and popular cultural imperialism by the end of the century. In this thesis I use the word

---


3 I discuss this in the next chapter. Some cultural aspects of imperialism are covered by John M MacKenzie, Propaganda and Empire: the Manipulation of British Public Opinion 1880-1960 (Manchester UP, Manchester, 1985); and ‘Empire and Metropolitan Cultures’, in Andrew Porter (ed.), The Oxford History of the British Empire: Vol 3, The Nineteenth Century (Oxford UP, Oxford/NY, 1999); Catherine Hall (ed.), Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Manchester UP, Manchester, 2000); Clare Midgley (ed.), Gender and Imperialism (Manchester UP, Manchester, 1998); Dagmar Engels and Shula Marks (eds), Contesting Colonial Hegemony: State and Society in Africa and
'imperialism' in the sense of 'making things British': importing British ideas, institutions and morals, whether by accident or design. But it is unlikely that there was a single 'imperial project', an overarching theme. Instead there were different territories with different inhabitants, and different colonisers with different agendas.4

The travels of these two women and their often self-defined involvement with imperialism and nation building provide me with a central focus and a connecting thread from start to finish. Each colony they visited had a different relationship to the metropolis. Canada was a dominion, a white settler colony. Ireland was a colonised nation yet also part of the metropolis, while the Indian Empire had a small white population that ruled autocratically. The context to the imperial visitations involved key moments in the history of each nation. In India independence organisations came together for the first time as the Indian National Congress in 1885, the year the Dufferins arrived. The years I discuss Ireland, 1893 and 1911-16, were years of crisis over Home Rule. And Canadian provinces were still joining the new dominion as the Dufferins disembarked in Québec in 1872.

Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen had ample opportunities to promote Britain and the British Empire as part of their official yet unwritten contract. This role was to lead society, take part in charity work, undertake national tours and help to weld people to nation and nation to Empire. They both took a particular interest in women, and set up or presided over women’s organisations in each place they visited. These included associations to improve health in each site of Empire: the Victorian Order of India (British Academic Press, London/NY, 1994); and David Cannadine, 'The Context, Performance and Meaning of Ritual: The British Monarchy and the “Invention of Tradition” c1820-1977', in Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), Invention of Tradition (Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1983).

4 See Catherine Hall’s ‘Introduction: Thinking the Postcolonial, Thinking the Empire’, in her edited Cultures of Empire; and Nicholas Thomas ‘Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy, and History in Early Twentieth-century Evangelical Propaganda’, also in Cultures of Empire.
Nurses for Canada, the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India (The Dufferin Fund), and in Ireland, the Women’s National Health Association.

Following their footprints through the Empire allows me to engage in a study of discourse and representation in each colonial territory. In this way I can develop my arguments that both women were deeply implicated in imperialism, and that the constructions they produced of the colonised other placed him/her in an inferior position, while allowing them to strengthen their own precarious identities as British imperialists.

I have chosen to focus on just these two women rather than several, and this gives my thesis the link that holds different historical moments together: the circuits of Empire they traced provide the structure. I chose these women because their trajectories followed similar paths: Lady Aberdeen was Canadian Vicereine twenty years after Lady Dufferin, and the women first met in India in 1887. Both had connections with Ireland. Lady Dufferin had a home in Ulster, where she was born and grew up, while Lady Aberdeen spent most of her adult life involved in Irish affairs. Both were involved in health associations. These moments when their lives crossed or followed each other allow comparisons to be made. These three sites of Empire - Ireland, Canada and India - were also different enough to offer points of comparison. Furthermore both women led long and full lives and helped by their ethnicity, status and wealth, made significant and lasting contributions to society.

I have not attempted to write a comprehensive biography of either woman,\(^5\) but have instead enlarged on moments where their lives intersected within the British

---

Empire. So Lady Dufferin’s years as Ambassador’s wife in Russia, Italy and France are not discussed, nor is Lady Aberdeen’s work as President of the International Council of Women, a position she held for nearly forty years.

**Literature Review**

I have drawn on several areas of recent research into imperialism in the writing of this thesis. Most of this work takes account of developments stemming from Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, and shares the notion that the metropolis and the colonies should not be viewed as separate entities and are interdependent. These ‘new imperial histories’ study the impact of categories of difference such as race, class and gender on both colonisers and colonised. Within this broad genre of historical writing, I have found that work standing at the intersection of gender and imperialism has been most relevant, including that on women and nationalism. Writing on the making of national identities has also been useful.

Imperial historiography shows the acquisition of the British Empire to be a masculine endeavour: accomplished by military conquest or economic expansion, and controlled by continuing British administration or military presence. There is a large body of literature dealing with imperial history, but most of this mainstream history has little to say about the role that women played in the building of the Empire. Since the feminist movement of the 1970s much work has been done to highlight women’s contribution to all areas of history. Women’s history adds on stories of women to

---

existing history, that is, it tends to be written within the parameters of (male-dominated) mainstream history. By contrast, gender historians attempt to unpick these categories and rewrite history from the inside. They agree that the very foundations upon which mainstream history is based (including gender) are culturally constructed categories.

Mainstream versions of imperial histories with their autonomous male actors do not normally attend to questions of race or gender. They are therefore regarded as inadequate by historians influenced by feminism and post-colonial theory. Some feminist work, for example, has testified to the male gendering of imperialism by using the metaphor of rape to draw an analogy between the rape of the land and of indigenous women by British colonisers. And because imperialism was masculine gendered the Empire was written about as a male preserve in which white women had no place. It was argued that as more women began to accompany their husbands to the colonies from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards they caused tensions, widened the social divide by their racist and hedonistic attitudes, and even caused the downfall of Empire. This myth of the superficial and frivolous western woman in the colonies has now been exposed. More recent work acknowledges the complex and


diverse roles that many white women (who were neither idle nor racist) played in different parts of the Empire. But some of this work went too far in the other direction, and it has been accused of either glorifying women, or failing to recognise their complicity in imperial projects.

The two biographies of Lady Aberdeen are guilty on both these counts. Marjorie Pentland, her daughter, wrote an intelligent and politically astute biography in 1952. My own familiarity with the source material indicates Pentland used it critically and carefully. However, perhaps unsurprisingly, Pentland continually subscribed to the notion that Mother knew best. Yet this is a far better biography than Ishbel and the Empire. Despite its title, Doris French's book mainly concerns Ishbel's life in Britain and Canada. It is not academically rigorous, and indulges in hypotheses about the father of Ishbel's last child. The one redeeming feature is her clear analysis of Lady Aberdeen's involvement in Canadian politics. But like Pentland, French's admiration leaves her blind to Lady Aberdeen's complicity with imperialism.


12 Doris French, Ishbel and the Empire (Dundurn, Toronto, 1988); Marjorie Pentland, A Bonnie Fechter (Batsford, London, 1952). Another hagiography is Maureen Keane, Lady Aberdeen in Ireland (Colourpoint, Newtonards, 1999). Julia Bush cautions the need for a careful reading of letters, memoirs and journals of aristocratic women who knew they were writing for an audience in her Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power (Leicester UP, London, 2000), pp4-5.
Claudia Knapman’s study of Fiji clearly illustrates the paradox of white women’s position as the ‘inferior’ half of the ‘superior’ race. They could dominate indigenous people but were themselves subject to white male power. However she believes that white women made a positive contribution to the future of colonial settlement in Fiji. In her work on the Indian Empire and parts of Africa Margaret Strobel argues that women played a crucial role in perpetuating the masculine ethos of colonial domination through the administrative structures, and through ideological domination. They supported their husbands in practical ways, and in accepting their helpmeet role they acknowledged their complicity in the patriarchal ideology of Empire. Helen Callaway contrasts the active involvement in education, health care and administration of many western women in Nigeria, with their negative representations in novels and their invisibility in male colonial memoirs. These writers all conclude that far from heralding the downfall of Empire, the women reproduced it in myriad ways in their daily lives.13

Work like this has been critiqued by black women for continuing to give white women centre stage. Furthermore non-metropolitan women argue that western feminists assume their agenda represents women everywhere; that they fail to take account of race and difference.14 Jane Haggis has cautioned along these lines that ‘any non-recuperative history of white women and colonialism must also engage with the

---


hierarchies of the present or risk producing a discourse which ... continues colonising the non-Western "other". This awareness has resulted in more complicated but much richer work. Feminist historians have begun to investigate the multiple intersections of gender, race, class and ethnicity that produced and constantly disrupted the discursive field of colony and metropole, while at the same time being sensitive to present day issues of race and power. Much of this scholarship based its methodology on the innovative work of Edward Said, whose *Orientalism* (1978) marked the beginnings of colonial discourse analysis.

Said was influenced by both Foucault and Gramsci. Foucault rethought the relationship between knowledge and power, arguing that the discursive field contained a whole web of power relations. Using this argument Said discussed a wide variety of European Orientalist texts (such as studies of language, art, religion, travel, history and politics) to show that the Orient was produced by the west in a way that essentialised the 'other' as inferior. He further argued that these power relations were reproduced through Gramsci's notions of consent and hegemony. There were various criticisms of Said's work. It was argued that his conceptions of 'the west' and 'the Orient' were monolithic and did not reflect the complexities of imperialism. The

---


17 Text in its widest sense can include not only historical artefacts but actions and meanings.

way he combined Gramscian hegemony - an ongoing process - with Foucauldian notions of power which existed only in the moment of discourse, was questioned by historians. Furthermore, it has been noted that he ignored gender. Nevertheless Orientalism has been hugely influential, suggesting as it does new ways to look at the axes of power that operated in the context of Empire. Said’s methodology was refined and taken further, in particular by those who included gender and sexuality as well as race as categories of analysis.

For example Anne McClintock attempted to demolish the binaries and keep gender, race and class in constant play in *Imperial Leather*, her investigation of the centrality of imperial power to ideas of consumption and domesticity, sexuality, and capitalist expansion. Using Foucault she discusses the wide range of cultural forms that make up the discursive field of colony and metropole, and shows how they have been harnessed as agents of power. This is impressive work despite its lack of historical context. Anthropologist Anne Stoler was inspired by Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, and inserted a racial dimension. She argued that Empire and race were fundamental constituents of bourgeois identities in both the Netherlands and the Dutch colonies. Other work which takes Orientalism further is Megan Vaughan’s investigation of medical discourse in Africa, and Mary Louise Pratt’s analysis of travel writing, *Imperial Eyes*.20

---


Recent work in this field has explored the impact of Empire on women in Britain. Antoinette Burton has argued that the Empire helped to shape British feminist discourse, and conversely, that British feminists helped to shape imperial discourse. Looking at an earlier period than Burton, Clare Midgley's pioneering work shows the centrality of women to the British anti-slavery campaigns. They not only organised their own work, but they also supported the men's campaigns.\(^{21}\)

Janaki Nair and Deirdre David both noted the pivotal role that women played in diffusing knowledge between the metropolis and different sites of Empire. They sometimes obtained a privileged view of indigenous life that male colonisers did not have. This inside knowledge of native culture was coloured by their own particular beliefs as colonisers; it was never ideologically neutral. The representations they provided of the colonised 'other' in their letters, travelogues, memoirs and novels contributed to popular imperialism by helping to shape an imperial world-view in Britain.\(^{22}\) All this work was helpful in thinking about questions of women and Empire.

There has been an ongoing debate as to how far nineteenth-century society was divided into separate spheres of male and female influence, and how useful this concept is for historians. The public/private divide which Davidoff and Hall argue 'could never fully be fixed, yet had to be dismantled', may be an imperfect concept but it has been influential and widely used.\(^{23}\) KD Reynolds has argued that it is not a useful


concept for the aristocracy. Using a wide variety of autobiographical and manuscript sources she showed the many different ways that mid-Victorian aristocratic women worked in partnership with their husbands to advance their political careers or protect the family dynasty. Her work has increased our knowledge of the aristocracy in Britain, and signals the renewal of interest in aristocratic women from the late eighteenth century through to the mid-Victorian decades.24

However upper-class women's role in politics and imperialism in the later nineteenth century has not had the same attention. The contributors to Amanda Vickery's recent edited collection neither deal with imperial issues, nor do they discuss aristocratic women in the late Victorian or Edwardian period.25 Most women involved in Clare Midgley's anti-slavery campaigns, those who went to India as the reformers that Burton and Nair discuss, or Deirdre David's colonial wives were from the middle classes or below. And although the 1920s and 1930s witnessed a flood of memoirs as elderly dowagers reminisced about their participation in Victorian public life, they are now largely forgotten.26 In some ways this is understandable, as these women could be hard to like, racist and conservative.27 Yet in other ways it is


26 For example several by Lady Aberdeen referenced elsewhere; and Edith Gordon, The Winds of Time (John Murray, London, 1934).

27 For one unlovely woman see Helen Callaway and Dorothy O Helly, 'Crusader for Empire: Flora Shaw/Lady Lugard', in Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (eds), Western Women and Imperialism. See also Dea Birkett and Julie Wheelwright,
surprising, not least because the aristocracy had the Empire to thank for much of their wealth and power. There is still much to do on the connections between aristocratic women and imperialism in later Victorian and Edwardian Britain and Ireland, although work is beginning. Julia Bush has researched private papers and association records to give a clear picture of upper-class Edwardian women’s involvement in organised female imperialism in the United Kingdom and the Empire.28

Empire is crucial to questions of nationalism and identity, for as Catherine Hall has noted 'nations cannot be understood outside of Empire'.29 National and imperial identities were in constant flux, never fixed, always in process. Benedict Anderson’s work on the cultural basis of nationalism has been influential: that national belongings were forged as people imagined themselves into communities through shared cultural similarities such as language or religion. The imagined community is a powerful concept and I found it a helpful way of thinking about the construction of the new Canadian nation, although like Said, Anderson has been criticised for neglecting gender.30

---


29 Catherine Hall, ‘Introduction: Thinking the Post-colonial, Thinking the Empire’ in her edited Cultures of Empire, p23.

The earlier work on the making of Canada and the construction of a Canadian identity does not include women, nevertheless it remains a vital source. A sparsely populated colony like Canada relied on immigration, which Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin both promoted. However the various ethnic groups who arrived from Europe had to learn how to coexist peaceably with each other, with the English and French, and with native Americans. The best recent work on settler colonies examines their construction in terms of gender, race, class and ethnicity. For example Adele Perry shows how gender and race were intertwined in the making of British Columbia, where white settlement and native American dispossession were opposite sides of the same coin, and where mixed marriages and male bonding disrupted the hoped for 'orderly white society'.

Another excellent book is the wide-ranging collection of Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis, whose volume investigates how settler colonisation in the British dominions and elsewhere was both gendered and racialised. The contributors look at the interdependency of indigenous people and settlers and/or immigrants, and discuss


how they have been constructed relative to each other. Stasiulis and Jhappan critique the masculinist ‘white settler society construct’ of Canada. This excluded the women and minority groups who had also played a part in forming Canadian society, an exclusion that has perpetuated friction and conflict to this day.

Irish historiography reflects the fact that Ireland had a double identity as a colony and as a part of the United Kingdom. Nationalist history may have served the purposes of a newly-independent Ireland, but since the 1960s and the Irish move towards Europe much Irish history writing has attempted to jettison the colonial legacy, and been revisionist in character. Little work has yet been done on the Irish as colonisers (there is more on the Scots). Recent work on Ulster explores the multifaceted nature of (male) Protestant identities, if not their gendered scripts.

---

34 Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis (eds), Unsettling Settler Societies (Sage, London, 1995); Gender and race are also written into Australian nation building in Patricia Grimshaw, Marilyn Lake, Ann McGrath and Marian Quarty, Creating a Nation (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1996). Shula Marks notes inherent tensions in the white settler colonies between ideas of Britishness and colonial identity. See her ‘History, the Nation and Empire’.


In 1982 Tom Dunne wrote ‘La Trahison des Clercs: British Intellectuals and the First Home Rule Crisis’, a piece of work that deserves more attention than it has had. He not only highlighted the importance of the Home Rule debate to the future of Britain, but he included an early discussion of the English nationalist basis of British imperialism: that England and Englishness had come to represent the whole of the British Isles.39

In India the construction of a national identity was not viewed with the same enthusiasm by the British as it was in the settler colonies. Indian identity was connected to the rising hopes for independence. An oppositional discourse became more prominent as Hindu nationalist groups amalgamated to the Indian National Congress in 1885.40 In the case of India it was important to strengthen imperial


authority, and Cohn shows how after the so-called Indian mutiny of 1857 this was done through the construction of ritual. He argues that the period from 1857 to 1877, when Victoria was made Empress of India, saw 'the completion of the symbolic-cultural constitution of British India'.

Themes

The above literature has proved to be of central importance in guiding my work. My wider concern in this thesis is to develop the argument that Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin promoted imperialism in the colonies in which they lived as Governors' wives between 1870-1914. I do this by focusing on the twin themes of representation and identity. Representation concerns how these ladies produced and disseminated knowledge about colonial subjects. Identity concerns their involvement in the formation of national identities and their promotion of British imperial identity in each site of Empire. A sub-theme is concerned with the health associations these women set up in each country. These themes are interconnected because discourse analysis puts the emphasis not on the colonial subject per se, but on the writer. Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin's constructions of the colonial subject tell us a lot about their own motivations and identities. This is because identity is formed in difference, as Parker notes:

identity is determined not on the basis of its own intrinsic properties but as a function of what it (presumably) is not ... The very fact that


such identities depend constitutively on difference means that nations are forever haunted by their various definitional others." 

The imperial footprints which are the central connecting thread of my thesis - the circuits of Empire that these women made - allow these themes to be developed in their different colonial contexts.

I explore how these women constructed the native other in each site of Empire through a variety of representations. These were produced and disseminated in their published books, journals and letters, through the spoken word in speeches and conversations, in the photographs, artworks, literature and plays they sponsored, and through the women's organisations they founded. For example Lady Aberdeen produced Ireland as spectacle when she took an Irish Village to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893, a portrayal of the Irish as happy compliant people that reinforced the strength of the metropolis. 

These representations showed how they compared the various communities of colonised people, and how they organised different ethnicities into a mobile hierarchy of 'races of Empire'. They also made comparisons of particular groups over a period of time - the 'before' and 'after' representations. These were quite common, and indicated the perceived change for the better in a group of people once they had benefited from British benevolence, British rule or Christian missionary activity.

---


I explore representations by both colonisers and colonised of the little known spaces of the zenana, the Irish homestead, and the Canadian wilderness. Each of these native spaces was understood to be a repository of the basic elements of national identity. These representations highlight the vulnerability felt by imperialists, colonisers and new settlers, and reveal some of their fears over what these native spaces might contain. Discourses produced by Lady Dufferin's and Lady Aberdeen's health associations linked health and purity to the colonising races as they connected disease and contamination with indigenous people. It was a contemporary belief that there were connections between moral and physical purity, and equally between moral and physical impurity, so much of this discourse was concerned with supposed moral failings. These representations all added to the existing knowledge about colonised people. I argue that they continually place native others in inferior positions.


46 For Victorian representations of the Irish see eg LP Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and*
The second main theme, that of identity, threads right through the thesis. The imperial search for a secure and superior identity was played out between men and women alike in diverse areas of colonial activity. These interactions ranged over various areas of contest - education, health, sexuality and the body for example - which assumed greater or lesser significance at different times. Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin therefore had many opportunities to influence the formation of national and imperial identities. This discursive work occurred within the context of a formative moment in each place - a key point in time when national identities were being reworked. This perhaps comes across most clearly in Ireland, which had a dual identity as both a colonising and colonised nation. The two women held opposing views on Home Rule, although both hoped to see a united Ireland under the British flag. Lady Dufferin and others involved in the Ulster Women’s Unionist Council suffered agonising conflicts of loyalties - to Ireland, to Ulster and to Britain - as the Home Rule crisis played out between 1911 and 1916. Lady Aberdeen hoped that after Home Rule Irish men and women would share an Irish identity - reflecting the glory of Celtic and Gaelic civilisation - with a British one within the United Kingdom and the British Empire.

At the end of the nineteenth century Canada was a new nation in the process of constructing a national identity. The work Lady Aberdeen did as President of the National Council of Women of Canada, the Victorian Order of Nurses, and the Lady Aberdeen Association for Distribution of Literature to Settlers in the West was

important here. Many Anglo-Saxon British Canadians of a leisured class were involved, which helped to make the dominant identity in Canada a British one. The Aberdeen Association became important in an imperial context when its work was extended by the Victoria League in Britain to South Africa and Australia in 1904.

The souvenir book of the Victorian Era Ball hosted by Lord and Lady Aberdeen in Toronto in 1897 consolidated some of the themes I discuss. The sketches of the various tableaux showed the inclusions and exclusions in the new Canadian nation and indicated what male and female roles might be. They also illustrated Anglo-Saxon hegemony in the wider British Empire: various parts of Africa, New Zealand, India and Australia. The ball itself was a grand celebration of British imperialism.

The formative moment in India pointed to the possibility of self-determination for the Indian people as the Indian National Congress met for the first time in 1885. Many British administrators, including Lord Dufferin, thought the Indians would be unable to cope with independence. Lady Dufferin stressed an imperial identity in India. She emphasised how Queen Victoria, the patron of the Dufferin Fund, cared personally about all her subjects. Lady Dufferin promoted British morals and habits through her health scheme, and emphasised the superiority she saw in British institutions and values. She was careful not to stir up anti-colonial sentiments by criticising Indian culture publicly, although she sometimes did so privately. Nothing that Lady Dufferin did in India united the people of the Indian sub-continent into a national identity, nor did she intend it to.
Sources and Methods

I have combined both post-structural and traditional historical methods in this thesis. It is traditional in the sense that it is based on archival research. Parts of it are explicitly comparative and uncover differences and similarities, for example the chapters on the health associations set up in Canada, India and Ireland. I would describe the methodology I have used as ‘pragmatic post-structuralism’. Post-structural methods are attractive to historians of women or of disadvantaged groups because they decentre the dominant and uncover alternative histories and minority voices. Yet in common with others I can see the disadvantage of a theoretically pure post-structuralist methodology. It becomes a cultural relativism in which there is no unified subject and hence no agency; no distinction between text and context, hence no commentary; no sense of causality or change over time, just a snapshot of the moment.

So I have therefore drawn from different methodologies in this thesis. I start from the premise that categories such as race and gender are culturally constructed. I combine feminist and post-colonial methods of discourse analysis with the traditional historian’s concept of change over time, a belief in the validity of human experience, and the idea that we can tell a story. I believe that this combination of method gives the advantages of conventional and post-structural history without the drawbacks.47

I used the Aberdeen and Dufferin private papers in Aberdeenshire and Belfast for my research. Several volumes of Lady Aberdeen’s memoirs and journals have been published, also journals and magazines that she edited. Her private papers at Haddo

47 This is based on the ideas expressed by Joyce Appleby, Lynn Hunt and Margaret Jacob in *Telling the Truth About History* (Norton, NY/London, 1994), in which they incorporate post-structural theories into conventional history. See also Clare Midgley’s comments in ‘Gender and Imperialism: Mapping the Connections’, in her edited *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester UP, Manchester, 1998), pp5-6.
House include journals, many books of press cuttings, letters received, copies of speeches and family memorabilia. There were some notable omissions. The newspaper cuttings were mostly favourable; to get a balanced picture required additional research. The original letters from her friend Henry Drummond (1885-95) have been destroyed and replaced by typewritten copies, possibly edited. Also missing are many of Lady Aberdeen's journals for the period after 1880. It is believed that Marjorie Pentland destroyed them after writing her mother's biography. Much Irish material from the second Viceroyalty, including journals, was destroyed by fire at Haddo several years ago, an unfortunate loss. It would have illuminated Lady Aberdeen's relationship to Ireland and the Irish, and dealings with the British cabinet. However this gap was partly filled by the (uncatalogued and unsorted) Irish material at Peamount Hospital, Dublin.

The Dufferin private papers are held in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). Lady Dufferin's papers from schoolgirl essays to funeral notices are here, including letters to and from her mother-in-law and children, and her journals. Lady Dufferin's Indian journals make telling comparisons with the published volumes, which edited out many unfavourable remarks. PRONI holds the records and correspondence of the Ulster Women's Unionist Association. Also here are the Dufferin Fund minute books for India and London, and correspondence and other documents relating to the fund. Surprisingly, I have come across no other Dufferin Fund researcher who has footnoted the PRONI records.

The Internet is a useful tool for historians. For example the Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions (CIHM) has scanned in its vast microfiche collection of nineteenth-century leaflets, pamphlets and books. Many of these relate to Canadian women and can be read or downloaded at Early Canadiana Online. The
text of scanned copies of these nineteenth-century books, pamphlets and runs of journals is fully searchable on this and other sites. I made good use of this facility.\footnote{Early Canadiana Online is at <canadiana.org/eco/english/abouteco.htm>. Nineteenth-century journals have mostly been made available online by American University Libraries. See eg the University of Texas Digital Library at <www.lib.utexas.edu>. A British site is The Internet Library of Early Journals at <www.bodley.ox.ac.uk/ilej>.}

**Some Definitions**

In the nineteenth century the culturally-constructed term ‘race’ was used more broadly than now, in a similar way to the present-day usage of ‘ethnicity’.\footnote{Catherine Hall, *White Male and Middle Class* (Polity, Oxford, 1992), pp25-6. I discuss race further in chapter two.} As well as dividing people according to their skin colour or other physical characteristics, or even sometimes by class, the term ‘race’ differentiated them according to their cultural roots. Thus Victorians referred to the Scotch race, or the Irish race, for example. Yet English people used ‘England’ or ‘the English’ in hegemonic fashion, as Rosebery noted: ‘Englishmen generally eschewed the terms of “British” and “Great Britain”. They tended to think that every part of the United Kingdom was English’.\footnote{Quoted in Thomas Hennessey, ‘Ulster Unionist ... Identities’, p27.} This clearly marginalised Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Sometimes even Irish people of standing - Lord Dufferin, for example - were referred to in this way, but not the masses, who were ‘othered’ as Irish.

I use ‘English’ and ‘England’ literally to show geographical locations, place of birth, or ethnicity, and refer collectively to ‘Britain and Ireland’, or ‘the United Kingdom’. I cannot avoid using the terms British and Britishness in two discrete ways. First, in the imperialist sense to denote those in the colonies who originate from
Britain or Ireland, identify with the British nation and culture and support the British Empire; and secondly to describe people in or from Britain as opposed to Ireland.

In speaking about Canadians, the nineteenth-century use of 'British' or 'English' showed considerable slippage, and did not always distinguish between those with ancestors from the UK and recent immigrants. Additionally Canadians were sometimes described (by themselves or others) as Scotch-, English-, British- or Irish-Canadians. In Ireland the expression 'Protestant Ascendancy' was originally used in a religious sense, but by the end of the eighteenth century it came to be used politically to describe the ruling group, thus effectively marginalising Catholics. The term 'Anglo-Irish', which also describes this group, became popular at the end of the nineteenth century to describe Protestants descended from English settlers of the Tudor and Stuart periods. People from the United Kingdom who lived in India and their children born in India were known as Anglo-Indian, while those of mixed European/Indian ancestry were described as East Indian or Eurasian.

It is difficult to define the upper classes. In looking at the aristocracy in Britain and Ireland, David Cannadine found it useful to define them in Weber's terms of status, wealth, and political power. Burke distinguished between three layers of the aristocracy: the peerage; the baronetage, or possessors of hereditary knighthoods; and the landed gentry, who had no legally conferred titles or privileges, but whose way of life, social pre-eminence and a right to arms separated them off from those below them in the social scale. Virtually all the families who fell into these categories owned from 1,000 to upwards of 30,000 acres. I shall refer to the whole group as the

---


upper classes, and if I want to differentiate further, call them major, middling or minor aristocracy or gentry according to their perceived wealth, power and status.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter two is a wide-ranging background chapter, which sets the contexts for the travels of the Dufferins and the Aberdeens. It opens with a brief summary of political, economic and social change in the metropolis over the period of this study. I discuss the way that contemporaries perceived their world, and the ever-changing concepts of imperialism, class, race and identity which helped them to find their own place in it. The focus then shifts to an overview of contemporary events in India, Canada and the metropolitan colony\textsuperscript{53} of Ireland.

Chapter three is a biographical chapter. I trace the family histories of Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin to show how deeply their families were implicated in imperial projects. Then I turn to the influences upon the child and the young woman, to see how and why they became the women they were. I suggest that the main influence on Lady Aberdeen was religion, whereas for Lady Dufferin it was her husband. A chronological summary of the life of each woman is included for reference purposes.

In chapter four I focus on two main themes concerning Canada. Both women spent several years there, Lady Dufferin during the 1870s and Lady Aberdeen during the 1890s. I look at the construction of the new nation and its identity: the inclusions, the marginalisations and the exclusions. I consider the ways that various ethnic groups - native Americans, French Canadians, Irish Canadians and others - were represented.

\textsuperscript{53} This is Roy Foster's phrase. \textit{Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History} (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1995), p86.
I discuss how both women's representations of Canada were designed to encourage immigration. Then I explore Lady Aberdeen's efforts to build loyalty to Britain and promote the British Empire in Canada through her work for the National Council of Women. Lastly I consider how the Victorian Era Ball of 1897 showed that imperial thinking was based on a hierarchy of nations. Those mostly populated by white Anglo-Saxons were at the top.

The next two chapters focus on Ireland. Chapter five explores Lady Aberdeen's representations of Ireland and the Irish and her intense desire for Ireland to have Home Rule. A discussion of the Irish Industries Association, with which she was involved for many years, is followed by an examination of representations of Ireland and Irish people in her Irish Village at the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. I argue that her discourse of an Ireland inhabited by a happy band of knitters, spinners and weavers depicted Ireland as less advanced than Britain. It also strengthened the power of the United Kingdom by implying that when Ireland was given Home Rule it would be loyal and subservient to Britain and the Empire.

Chapter six explores the intertwined threads of Ulsterwomen's identities through a discussion of Lady Dufferin's Vice-presidency of the Ulster Women's Unionist Association from 1911-16. This organisation rejected the idea of a Dublin parliament, and supported Unionist Ulstermen in the fight against Home Rule. My discussion shows how Lady Dufferin's competing Ulster, Irish, British and imperial identities each assumed greater or lesser importance as the Home Rule debate wore on. Ideas of class, ethnicity and religion are all deeply involved in this.

Chapters seven and eight are interconnected, and discuss how Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin set up health organisations that had as much to do with cultural imperialism as the improvement of health. In chapter seven I develop the idea that
sites existed in India, Ireland and Canada that were largely hidden from imperial eyes: the Indian zenana, the rural Irish homestead, and the Canadian wilderness. I explore the imperial fears that surrounded these ‘native spaces’, such as fear of pollution, of anarchy and of native nationalisms. I argue that these ‘native spaces’ became a critical terrain for the making and remaking of imperial identities. This theme is expanded further in chapter eight with a discussion of the health organisations set up by Ladies Aberdeen and Dufferin. These were the Victorian Order of Nurses (Canada), the Dufferin Fund (India), and the Women’s National Health Association (Ireland). Women involved with these groups could enter these native spaces and gain an intimate knowledge of their inhabitants, something male colonisers could not do. In this way they could introduce British culture. Health discourses had constructed native others who could be ‘improved’ by intervention from the health organisations. In each colony there were efforts to purify not only physical bodies, but moral conditions also. The similarities and differences between these sites of Empire are discussed, which highlights the hierarchical ordering that existed between them.

I conclude with chapter nine. Here I summarise my principal argument that Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin both had an impact on the sites of Empire they visited. This has not had full acknowledgement from historians. Lady Aberdeen in particular enlarged the role of the Vicereine in the places she visited. Both women took part in the political work of Empire, although it was not thought of in that way.
Chapter 2

The Ends of the Earth:
A Background to Late Nineteenth-century Imperialism

When Sandford Fleming, a surveyor and engineer on the Canadian railways, missed a train in Ireland because Cork time and Dublin time differed, he proposed that the world should be divided into time zones. Fleming, a settler and Empire builder was born in Kirkcaldy, home of that apogee of the enlightenment, Adam Smith. It was perhaps no accident that Fleming experienced the desire for control in Ireland, a colony that the British had found difficult both to repress and understand. This apparent need to dominate the physical world and the people within it was a common characteristic of the Victorians, and can be read as an illustration of the insecure nature of Victorian imperial identities.

In 1884 Fleming’s proposal was taken up, and representatives from twenty-eight nations attended the Prime Meridian Conference in Washington to discuss how best to standardise time. Suggestions that it might be measured from Rome or Jerusalem for religious reasons, or from the great pyramid at Giza which had survived through the ages, were turned down. It was decided to site the Prime Meridian at Greenwich because of Britain’s reputation as an ‘outstanding maritime and naval power’. The imposition of rational order on world time and the fact it was measured from London indicated Britain’s superiority to the world, confirmed the

---

importance of London as a metropolitan centre, and underlined the importance of the British Empire on the world stage.

The territories comprising the British Empire were not all ruled in the same way. There was a broad difference between the various kinds of dependencies - where the ratio of Europeans to indigenous people was small - and the white colonies of settlement. The original legal principle was that an overseas colony was a possession of the Crown, and those who lived there were British. ‘Colonial protectorates’ were technically not British possessions, but were treated as Crown Colonies for convenience and administration. Britain held informal control in protected states like the Indian princely states, Egypt and Cyprus. British India was ruled autocratically, with power shared between the Secretary of State for India in London and the Viceroy in Calcutta.²

By contrast Canada, Australia and other settler colonies - later known as dominions - were ‘given’ responsible government³ during the nineteenth century. The ancient nation of Ireland had previously been forcefully colonised by the British. Yet as a territory within the United Kingdom it was also part of the colonising power.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide some background to the travels of Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen in the British Empire, so that they can be placed in the context of their time. It is divided into four sections, but there is an inevitable overlap. As well as briefly setting out the British context, the first section considers the way that class, race and identity were viewed in the nineteenth century. The

² Frederick Madden and David Fieldhouse (eds), The Dependent Empire and Ireland, 1840-1900: Advance and Retreat in Representative Self-Government (Greenwood, NY, 1991).

³ Government in which the Governor acted only on the advice of the cabinet supported by a democratically elected majority in parliament.
remaining sections review contemporary events and attitudes in India, Canada and Ireland.

**The Metropolis: England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales**

*For the Lord our God Most High*
*He hath made the deep as dry*
*He hath smote for us a pathway*
*To the ends of all the earth!*

*A Song of the English*, Rudyard Kipling.  

The British Empire grew dramatically during the nineteenth century. Conventional early historiography placed the motivation for this as either economic, humanitarian, or power driven. Because the mid-Victorian era was an era of free trade, early historians had assumed that this was a period of indifference to Empire. But in the 1950s Robinson and Gallagher argued that mid-nineteenth-century trading conditions had allowed the growth of a large ‘informal’ Empire in which British influence was as important as direct control in the Empire proper; this has been extensively debated.

The growth of popular imperialism between the 1870s and the 1890s, the increased reverence and love for Queen Victoria as mother of the Empire, and the emotional fervour of patriotism coloured Lady Aberdeen’s feelings towards the

---


Empire in a way that had not yet affected Lady Dufferin in the 1870s. The 1890s was a period of high imperialism. Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897 was feted by pomp and ceremony throughout the British Empire on a scale never before seen, although Cannadine argued that this could just as well signify national doubt as confidence.7

From the 1870s onward there were several new trends and events at home and overseas which affected Britain and the Empire. Britain’s leading position in the international economy was being challenged by later industrialising nations like Germany and the United States. As a consequence of this there was a change in the way imperial affairs were conducted. Gladstone’s imperial policy had been relatively unassertive, and he expected the colonies to shoulder their own defence expenditure. However, in a keynote speech in 1872 Disraeli signalled that Britain should enter a new dynamic phase of imperialism, saying: ‘No minister of the country will do his duty who neglects an opportunity of reconstructing as much as possible our Colonial Empire … the source of incalculable strength and happiness to this land’.8 He became Prime Minister in 1874 and in 1877 Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India.9 There was an endeavour to expand British influence by military means, and the army was engaged in Afghanistan (1878), Egypt (1882-4) and South Africa (1879).

On the domestic front general economic performance started to decline in the 1870s.10 The 1884 Reform Act gave many working-class men the vote. In the

---

9 Bernard Cohn, ‘Representing Authority in Victorian India’.
10 Per capita GNP declined from £34.6 in 1875 to £31.1 in 1885 (current prices). Trade Union unemployment figures rose from 2.3% in 1882 to 10.6% in 1886. Open University, Themes in British and American History, A Comparative Approach
mid-1880s unskilled workers began to amalgamate into unions and organise strikes. Feminists, although not yet taken seriously, were a thorn in the side of politicians. The Liberal Party divided over the 1886 Irish Home Rule Bill, with Liberal Imperialists joining the Unionists. They thought that to allow Ireland Home Rule would not only weaken the centre of the British Empire, but would cause India and other colonised nations to seek independence. They believed the maintenance of the union transcended party considerations because of its importance to the future of the Empire: Ireland, like India, should be ruled by coercion not by consent, because giving in to Irish 'lawlessness' could set a precedent for India. Home Rule therefore raised the two main spectres of many sections of Victorian society: the threat of turmoil and anarchy at home, and the threat of challenges to Britain’s rule overseas.

Imperial affairs were managed from the Colonial Office in London, which was headed by the Colonial Secretary. Communication between the various Governors and the Colonial Office was by letter, and from 1866 (or later) by telegram also. By the late nineteenth century British Governors had little work to do in the white settler colonies. There was no Irish parliament, of course, but MPs were sent to Westminster. The monarch’s representative in Ireland was known as the Lord-Lieutenant, and as in Canada, his power had diminished. The power in Ireland was held by the Chief Secretary.

11 ‘Maintaining the Union … Preserves that unity of the State which is essential to the authority of England and to the maintenance of the Empire’, AV Dicey, England’s Case Against Home Rule (John Murray, London, 1887), p283. For India see Goldwin Smith, quoted by Dunne, ‘La Trahison des Clercs’, p162.
The Indian Empire was ruled from both London and Calcutta. In Britain the Secretary of State for India was advised by the Council of India, a consultative body of fifteen retired Indian administrators, described by Ripon in 1882 as 'the most Conservative body now existing in Europe'. The Government of India (in Calcutta) was headed by the Viceroy. Although in Britain both the Secretary of State for India and the Council of India had the power of veto, the Government of India was nevertheless a very powerful body.

The British Empire was colonised by people from each part of the United Kingdom: Ireland, Wales and Scotland as well as England. How these people came to be seen and see themselves as British has been debated. The constructed identity of a community - 'us' - defines all who are included, and always stands in relation to the excluded and essentialised other - 'them', as Said has argued about the West and the Orient. In relation to British identity there have been two broad approaches to this. Hugh Kearney has focused on the 'four nations' viewpoint, and stresses the interactions and perceived differences between England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Linda Colley sees limitations to this approach, arguing that the four nations became 'British' to different extents and under different circumstances. The Irish, seen as 'other' by the English, Scots and Welsh, did not accept the mantle of Britishness to the same degree as the other nations. However, the place of Ireland in both these approaches is problematic, as Irish nationhood was a contested issue not only against Britain but within Ireland itself. Colley's main point is that these nations were connected by Empire building and a common Protestantism, and through these uniting

---

13 Quoted in Anil Seal, *The Emergence of Indian Nationalism*, p151.

14 This is discussed further on p50. See also RJ Moore, 'Imperial India, 1858-1914', in Andrew Porter (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire: Vol 3, The Nineteenth Century* (Oxford UP, Oxford/NY, 1999).

15 Hugh Kearney, *The British Isles*. 
factors they could define themselves as 'British' against both the colonised Empire and foreign nations.\textsuperscript{16}

Colley does point out that the Irish were incorporated into the UK in a different way to Scotland and Wales, but I cannot agree that the many Catholics who supported Britain felt a common religious identity with the British. Nevertheless, both Protestant and Catholic Irishmen showed just how crucial they were to the imperialist venture. At certain periods in the nineteenth century they provided more soldiers than England for the British Army, despite their much smaller population. The same was true in India. From 1825-1850, 48\% of all recruits for the Bengal army were Irish.\textsuperscript{17} Irish emigration, especially during mid-century, swelled the population of the new white colonies, while Irish administrators, for example Lord Dufferin, Viceroy of India, occupied some of the highest positions in colonial administration worldwide.\textsuperscript{18}

When English, Scottish and Welsh (and some Irish) males travelled into the Empire on behalf of Britain they retained a pride in their country of origin, yet they also thought of themselves as British. These men built up a body of knowledge as they categorised and classified the native other. Outwardly the British middle- and upper-class Victorian male appeared to be an authoritative member of what he believed was the most civilised and enlightened nation. But his identity was defined in relation to others. To be superior he needed lesser beings to be superior to: women, children, native black, brown and yellow people, colonised races, workhouse inmates, working classes. At different times during the nineteenth century these various groups (or those who spoke for them) were to challenge their lack of legal, political, 

\textsuperscript{16} Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness'.

\textsuperscript{17} Economic factors were important here. Keith Jeffery, 'The Irish Military Tradition and the British Empire', in his edited 'An Irish Empire'? 

economic and civil rights. Each confrontation required this male individual to renegotiate his identity. Recent research reveals that his apparently stable persona masked a welter of insecurities as he attempted to deal with these multiple challenges to his position.¹⁹

The identity of British women was also insecure. It has been well argued that those who travelled to India and other colonies set themselves above indigenous women, spoke for them, and used them to measure their own society's seemingly superior progress.²⁰ These women perhaps accompanied their husbands on tours of duty from the United Kingdom, worked under the auspices of one of the churches as missionaries, or went alone as reformers. They shared many of the views of their male counterparts about the shortcomings of indigenous people, yet their gender placed them in a subordinate position within their own ethnic group.

Many of the inhabitants of the white settler colonies had emigrated from the United Kingdom, or descended from families that had done so years, or even centuries before. The length of time since the original settlers arrived seems to bear no correlation to the strength of loyalty felt towards Britain. For example some of the most stridently imperialist Canadians were those of British descent whose families had fled into Canada from America during the American revolution. In Ireland some of those who thought of themselves as British (such as the Dufferins) had families that had left Britain in the seventeenth century. Their different circumstances and backgrounds make it clear that there was not one, but a multiplicity of 'imperial identities', each constructed upon intersecting but unstable co-ordinates of class,

¹⁹ Catherine Hall, White, Male and Middle Class, especially pp207-8.
²⁰ For a discussion of India see Antoinette Burton, Burdens of History; for Canada see Mariana Valverde, The Age of Light, Soap and Water and Veronica Strong-Boag, The Parliament of Women.
gender, race and ethnicity, and all depending on the existence of inferior and colonised others.

British interactions with these ‘inferior and colonised others’ were governed by theories of racial difference that evolved over the century. Early nineteenth-century ideas of race can be divided into two main groups. The dominant theory, monogenesis, was the old Christian view that all races stemmed from the same source - Adam and Eve. The abolitionists used this theory to argue that some branches of the human family were not yet fully developed and needed help, compassion and education to raise themselves. Polygenesis was the theory that some races were widely different, and any racial mixing between them would normally either result in infertility or would produce barren offspring. This argument was used to justify the continuance of slavery.

Attitudes towards race began to change after mid-century. In London fears were brought about by the 1867 Hyde Park riots, the unknown spectre of working-class voters, and the threat posed by Irish Fenians. In the colonies there were rebellions in India and Jamaica. These events, coupled with theological uncertainty over the accuracy of biblical scholarship, hardened attitudes to race, and mono- and polygenesis fell out of favour. Both were undermined by Darwin’s theories and, furthermore, polygenesis had never adequately explained the existence of the clearly fertile mixed-race men and women who peopled the colonies. During the last thirty years of the century the dominant racial theory was of a biological racism that reinforced the British right to world supremacy. Taking account of Darwin’s work on

---

natural selection it posited that evolutionary differences had made the white Anglo-Saxon superior to others. By drawing up a hierarchy of races it could be shown that some were closer than others to the Anglo-Saxons in physical characteristics. Proximate races could intermix without any problems, but the mixing of distant races would cause degeneration in the superior race. This is one reason why the British frowned upon cross-racial sex.

During this period efforts to ensure racial purity, and the increasing numbers of white women accompanying their husbands on foreign postings led to a greater emphasis on the protection of white women in the colonies. It was believed that foreign races could and must be civilised by the English, but they could not become equal or superior, because they were not English.\(^{22}\)

Race was one way that the Victorians categorised people; class was another. And in categorising the ‘residuum’ - those scraping a subsistence level of existence underneath the ‘respectable’ working classes - the two were often intertwined, as comparisons were made between these people and the inhabitants of the black colonies. The relative fortunes of different social classes had changed during the nineteenth century. The middle classes had grown in number and become prosperous on the back of industrialisation. By the 1880s the working classes were beginning to wield enough influence to unsettle those further up the social ladder. Labour unrest and unemployment caused a demand for independent working-class representation in parliament. This was when unskilled labourers like the dockers began to amalgamate into unions. The 1867/8 and 1884 Reform Acts had increased the suffrage, and by 1884 many working-class men were enfranchised.\(^{23}\)


\(^{23}\) After 1867/8 one in three adult males in Britain (and one in six in Ireland) could
Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin were members of the upper class, which comprised the landed gentry and the aristocracy. Most of the positions of power in government, the civil service, army and judiciary went to this class. As other classes gained in affluence and influence so the upper class suffered. Cannadine thinks the aristocracy began to decline from the end of the 1870s.24

I have called this section ‘The Metropolis’, because (despite Dilke and Seeley) that is where those in Britain thought they were: the Empire was something ‘out there’ to which one travelled. However, if we look beyond the binary distinction it is clear that the Empire was both formative of and formed by the metropolis. The concepts of class and race which were produced and modified by the Victorians did not simply emanate from the metropolis and become superimposed on people at home and in the colonies; Britain and the Empire were interdependent in myriad ways, and this includes the distillation of ideas. One effect of this, as I have discussed, was the continual reworking of imperial identities. The rest of this chapter will look at contemporary events and attitudes towards them in the three sites of Empire under consideration: India, Canada and Ireland.

The Jewel in the Crown: India

The British primacy, attained in 1818, has secured to all India for a century perfect protection against foreign enemies, almost unbroken internal peace, and complete religious liberty.25


24 David Cannadine, The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy.

By the 1870s the Indian Empire had become the most important British 'possession', the pivotal point in an eastern area of British imperialism which stretched from the newly-built Suez Canal via Siam and Malaya to China. The Indian Empire was self-financing and the revenues it raised paid for its expenditure. Not only did India enhance British prestige abroad and imperial self-confidence at home, but it was economically important. In 1869 it took 20% of British cotton exports; by 1890 the proportion was 40%.\textsuperscript{26} British capital flowed into India to invest in cash crops such as raw cotton, jute, indigo and tea, and above all else, to invest in the railways. Meanwhile, the Indian surplus of trade with east Asia was used to finance the deficit of British trade in that area.\textsuperscript{27}

In 1881 the population including the native states was 187,937,450. Scholars had identified 179 languages and 544 dialects amongst these people. The main religious groups were Muslim 20%; Hindu 74%; Sikh 0.73%; Parsis 0.03%; and Christian 0.73%. Muslims mostly lived in Bengal and the Punjab. Each of the major Indian provinces had either a Hindu or a Muslim majority, but these main groups were split further. Muslims for example divided between Sunni and Shia, and there were dissident Hindu sects such as Jains and Lingayats. There were deep social divisions and rivalries between Hindus and Muslims, even though neither group had a particularly strong sense of solidarity.

The complex Hindu caste system regulated relations between different families. A Hindu could not change the caste s/he was born into. Although the main classical caste divisions were between Brahmans (priests and scholars), Kshattriyas...
(warriors), Vaisyas (traders) and Sudras (menials), in practice these groups subdivided into about two hundred sub-castes. Beneath all were the untouchables.  

When the British East India Company first traded in India in 1600 the Mogul Empire controlled much of Northern India. By the mid-eighteenth century its authority had disintegrated, and the East India Company was the dominant foreign power. ‘British rule’ dates from 1757, when Clive won control of Bengal. By 1805 the East India Company’s army was 155,000 strong. In 1784 Pitt’s India Act subordinated the company to the British Parliament, and the administrative structure which was to last until 1947 was laid down. The East India Company now consolidated its control of India. One by one the provinces were annexed: Bengal, 1793; Poona, 1802; Sind, 1843; the Punjab, 1849; Nagpur, 1853; Oudh, 1856, and others. The so-called ‘native states’ had some degree of autonomy, especially in cultural matters, although East India Company residents in each state worked to enhance authority and obtain loyalty. Native states were required to conduct interstate affairs through the British government and support Britain in the event of war. 

The period from 1820-1856 was characterised by a programme of liberal reform. The British tried to outlaw traditional social practices such as sati. In 1835 Macaulay argued that Indians should have western education, which would ensure 

---

30 Ibid, p76.
31 Ibid, p110-5.
they learned English ways of thinking, English morals and English tastes. It was hoped that knowledge of Western civilisation and liberal tenets would transform India.

What became known as the 1857 mutiny lasted a year or more. Historians agree that there were multiple causes. They pinpoint the recent annexation of Oudh; taxation, especially of land; British defeat in the Crimea and Afghanistan, which encouraged hope of the end of British rule in India; and a fear of modernisation and change. However there was some support for the British within all factions and all levels of the communities.

After the 'mutiny' there was a re-examination of British rule in India: the nature of Indian society, its relationship to British rulers, and British goals in India. The 1858 Government of India Act disbanded the East India Company and transferred its power to the Crown. The new position of Viceroy of India was created. The Viceroy had wide powers. Bills concerning finance, religion, the military or foreign affairs could not be introduced to the Government of India (in Calcutta) without his consent. He could veto any bill and in an emergency he could pass bills to last for six months without the approval of council. However his powers were circumscribed from London. Not only could the House of Commons instruct him to introduce bills, but the Secretary of State could veto any undesirable legislation.

The Viceroy, who perhaps had little knowledge of India, relied upon a powerful executive council of five members and had the power to nominate up to twelve more. There were local (unelected) legislatures in the various states and, in

---

35 Bernard Cohn investigates how these changes were consolidated through ritual in 'Representing Authority in Victorian India'.
addition, executive councils in Bombay, Calcutta and Madras. The Governor appointed Lieutenant-Governors to the various states and their councils were appointed locally. In contrast to earlier in the century the Government of India interfered more in the native states, most of which had no formal agreements with Britain. As Lady Dufferin put it: ‘Rajahs are kept to a certain extent in leading strings until they have proved their capacity for ruling’.36

British India was ruled autocratically, but not easily. One problem was practical: the way that power was divided between London and India. Despite this division of powers the Viceroy had enormous power, far greater than in Canada.37 Another problem was ideological. How could democratic governments at home and in the settler colonies be reconciled with an autocracy in India? As Canada and other white settler colonies became dominions India became more tightly controlled. Not until the Morley-Minto reforms of 1909 did India move towards responsible government.

The Viceroy’s wife was an unpaid helpmeet to the Viceroy. Lady Dufferin’s life in India involved putting on a show of more pomp and spectacle than perhaps anywhere else in the world.38 She travelled all over the country attending durbars and visiting Maharajas. After riding in a howdah on an elephant she wrote:

This is evidently the way to make a state progress in India. One feels so very grand and so very much better and higher than other people ... We had a procession of twelve elephants, but ours was the biggest and grandest of all ...39

36 PRONI D/1071/J/C1/8/2, 21 November 1885.
37 Sumit Sarkar, Modern India.
38 See David Cannadine, Ornamentalism: How the British saw their Empire (Penguin, London, 2001), for details of imperial pomp.
39 Hariot Dufferin, Our Viceregal Life in India 2 (John Murray, London, 1889), p163 (13 April 1887). The symbolic significance of the howdah should not be ignored. Stallybrass and White note the importance of the balcony in nineteenth-century
Other duties included entertaining visitors from Europe, giving and attending official balls and dinners, taking part in charitable work and leading local society. On a more mundane level she opened hospitals, presented prizes, received addresses, visited zenanas, learned Hindustani. In India, as in Canada and Ireland there were still the normal responsibilities of a Victorian wife: homemaking, children’s schooling, worries over elderly parents in the United Kingdom. These were made more onerous by living in an unfamiliar country with a difficult climate and being separated by distance from Britain.

On his arrival in India, Dufferin reported to Kimberley that ‘the whites and blacks [were] divided into two hostile and vociferating camps’. This was the result of the controversy over the 1883 Ilbert Bill, which had received stiff opposition from planters and other white civilian groups. The Ilbert Bill removed all racial disqualifications to judicial appointments, meaning in practical terms that a white defendant could be tried by an Indian judge. However there was far more at stake than this. The controversy over the bill crystallised the different arguments about race and liberalism. A basic argument used by supporters was that equality before the law must apply regardless of race, and to oppose the bill would destroy the moral superiority of the English. To counter this the opposition argued that once Indians were allowed equality the basis of rule would be lost. Protesters contended that Indian men who treated their wives and daughters badly should not adjudicate over white women.

writing. From the balcony white women, royalty and other important people could avoid contamination from the crowds below, could see without being touched. The howdah had the same effect for Lady Dufferin, separating her from the crowd yet making her visible to them. P Stallybrass and A White, Politics and Poetics of Transgression, p136.

40 PRONI D/1071/KH/1/2/1.
41 Anil Seal, Emergence of Indian Nationalism, p169.
They pictured a white female defendant - friendless and victimised - being tried by a Bengali magistrate.42

Mrinalina Sinha argues that the Ilbert Bill controversy shifted the debate from race to gender. Sinha’s thesis is that the British constructed the Bengali male as effeminate, in contrast to the ‘manly Englishman’. Thus issues of racial discrimination were bypassed, and the issue became the ‘abnormal’ femininity of the Bengali male and his unfitness to adjudicate over the manly English race. She believes that this resulted in a realignment of British policy away from one professing equality to one of difference.43

When Dufferin arrived in India in 1884 he wrote to Kimberley:

"The Bengali Baboo is a most irritating and troublesome gentleman, ... we must not show ourselves at all afraid of him. He has a great deal of Celtic perverseness, vivacity and cunning, and [is organising] a repeal agitation, something on the lines of O’Connell’s Patriotic Associations. The loathing felt for him by the middle-class Calcutta Englishman is almost ludicrous."44

Dufferin believed the ‘feminine’ qualities of the Bengali, like those of the Irish Celt, needed a firm hand. The ‘repeal agitation’ Dufferin mentions refers to the actions of various Indian reform groups that came together as the Indian National Congress (INC) in 1885 with modest demands, mainly for some level of representation. They were not necessarily anti-British. Some were western-educated Hindus who supported Gladstonian liberalism and were loyal to Britain. There were also anti-Muslim Hindus who were averse to western supremacy. Few Muslims joined, because they feared that the Congress would lead to bloodshed. Seal thinks the Congress was neither

---


44 PRONI DAP D/1071H/M1/4, 3 February 1884.
economically nor class driven. He believes it began among Western-educated elites, most of whom were high-caste town dwellers, although they often claimed to represent the hinterland. However, lesser groups organised their own associations. Jains and Lingayats allied on a nationwide basis, while Muslims had a pan-Indian Educational Congress.\footnote{Anil Seal, \textit{The Emergence of Indian Nationalism}.}

Gender practices were integral to the nationalist struggle. Nationalist discourse stressed a golden past and a superior culture, in comparison with the perceived superficial values of western materialism. Hindus traditionally saw a clear division between home and outside. A man could venture out but not his wife, who was required to preserve the sacred space of the home, where the Indian male could cultivate his private, spiritual identity. Any criticism of Indian gender relations by the British, especially British women, could be taken as a direct assault on the nationalist credo.\footnote{See Partha Chatterjee, ‘The Nationalist Resolution of the Women’s Question’, in Sangari and Vaid (eds), \textit{Recasting Women}; Kumari Jayawardena, \textit{The White Woman’s Other Burden}, p7; Dipesh Chakrabarty, ‘The Difference - Deferral of a Colonial Modernity’.} Practices such as purdah, child marriage, and the ban on widow remarriage were often criticised by the colonisers, but not solely by them: some Hindu reformers also wanted modernisation and westernisation.\footnote{For example see Manomohun Ghose, ‘Progress in Bengal During the Last Thirty Years’, \textit{The Indian Magazine and Review} 302 (February 1896), pp60-71.}

One result of the Ilbert Bill was the acknowledgement that educated Indians would grow in number and would not be held back. Dufferin came to fear the INC: ‘…we shall soon have something like a Home Rule organisation established in India, on Irish lines, under the patronage of Irish and Radical members of Parliament.’\footnote{Quoted in AT Harrison, ‘The First Marquess of Dufferin and Ava: Whig, Ulster Landlord and Imperial Statesman’ (PhD Thesis, New University of Ulster, 1983), p608.}
Calcutta newspapers supported the INC, which could not be ignored. Dufferin thought it was 'a mischievous organisation' which wanted to 'convince the uneducated classes that the Government of India is a pestilent, cruel and malevolent despotism....' Dufferin's policy was to give in to moderate demands in the hope of pre-empting further demands, yet by the time he left India the (British) Conservative government had not allowed any form of representation.

Demands for a Native Volunteer Movement of high-caste educated Indians were also rejected in both India and Britain. Sinha believes that this was a missed opportunity for the Raj to ensure the ongoing support of the native elite at a time of rising nationalist challenge. This demand signalled a recognition by the elite that it was in their interests to preserve the colonial social order. Dufferin refused it, because it would have allowed a body of native Indians, including Congress supporters, to bear arms and train themselves.

Sinha's investigation into the demand for a Native Volunteer Force shows how the politics of colonial masculinity were invoked because the movement challenged existing racial and class hierarchies. The demand came from both the old 'martial race' elites and the newly educated Hindus, perceived to threaten colonial rule. Arguments against the effeminacy and unsuitability of the educated classes were therefore brought forward to justify keeping the existing policy.

Another contemporary issue was that of land reform, unfinished business from the Ripon administration. The Bengali landlords (zemindars) opposed reforms to the

---

49 Ibid, p608.
50 Seal, Indian Nationalism, p171. In England members of the working classes were accepted as volunteers; in Ireland during the Home Rule crisis from 1912-14 loyalist and republican volunteer bodies massed and trained without undue restrictions by the British government.
land system. The Bengal Tenancy Bill, prepared by, in Dufferin’s words, ‘three or four violent Irishmen’,\(^{51}\) seemed to give too much to the tenants. Dufferin, an Irish landlord, had lost faith in Gladstone after his second Land Act in 1881 enshrined Irish tenant rights. Because of this he felt he had knowledge and experience to bring to the debates. Gopal remarks that Dufferin supported the landlords and gave them more concessions than were needed.\(^{52}\)

The Indian Empire was of crucial strategic and economic importance to Britain. ‘Possession’ of this Empire enhanced British prestige both in England and overseas. The Indian sub-continent was ruled autocratically by relatively few white men, and Britain wanted it to remain that way. Dufferin’s opinion was that “the Government of India … must be a benevolent bureaucratic despotism for many a long year to come.”\(^{53}\)

The New Dominion: Canada

In Canada can be seen today that most fascinating of all human phenomena, the making of a nation.

Ralph Connor, 1909\(^{54}\)

The British had gained control of Canada from the French in 1759. In 1839 after a series of rebellions in Upper and Lower Canada (Ontario and Québec) the Earl of Durham, Governor-General, known as a radical liberal reformer, made his recommendations. He was not unbiased. The Durham Report recommended the

\(^{51}\) BL Eur Mss F130/20, Dufferin to Queen Victoria, 16 February 1885.


introduction of responsible government - but not for Québec - and the anglicisation and assimilation of the French. In other words the ‘progressive’ Anglo-Saxons must absorb the ‘backward’ French-Canadians. Upper and Lower Canada should unite, making an English majority in the new province. Durham contrasted the ‘decided superiority of intelligence’ of the English with the ‘unreasoning ... uneducated and unprogressive’ French Canadians. The English had ‘the most improved agriculture in the world’, while the French farm was ‘worn out and slovenly’. He praised the ‘superior energy, skill and capital’ of the English in Québec. His conclusion was unequivocal: ‘I entertain no doubts as to the national character which must be given to Lower Canada; it must be that of the British Empire’. His recommendations were mostly implemented over the next few years. The importance of this was that Canada became the first self-governing colony, and provided a model for future democratisation in the white settler colonies. In 1901 Lady Aberdeen spoke of her ‘passionate desire’ that the Boers should be treated in a similar way. Durham’s policy decreased the powers of the Governor-General, who occupied a ‘secondary position in the conduct of Anglo-Canadian relations after 1867’. Dawson called him ‘a legal survivor who has contrived to remain a political necessity’. His role was further reduced by constitutional changes in 1878. Goldwin Smith thought that the Governor-General was unaware of much that was going on and ‘delegate[d] his impotence’ to a puppet Lieutenant-Governor in each province.

---

56 *Aberdeen Journal*, 22 November 1901.
In 1867 an act of the British parliament - the British North America Act - brought the Dominion of Canada into being. The founding provinces were New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Upper and Lower Canada. The consensus is that the British government welcomed, but did not force confederation. From the British point of view it was the natural outcome of responsible government and, furthermore, it would rid Britain of defence commitments in North America. (Britain removed her garrisons in 1871.) Secondly the new union would make invasion by the United States less likely. It would also benefit trade, result in better communications, and end the political deadlock in Upper and Lower Canada by dividing Canada into two provinces.

At the time of confederation each province had its own distinctive character. Upper Canada (Ontario) was wealthy and Protestant, settled by United Empire Loyalists whose vehement loyalism and anti-Catholicism were accentuated in the 1840s by the arrival of destitute Roman Catholics fleeing the Irish famine. Then during the 1860s American Fenian border raids into Canada ‘aroused a new wave of patriotic sentiment’. The Fenian raids were important because they helped to give Canada a strong (but divisive) Orange/British/Protestant identity. Upper Canada was the driving power behind confederation, and stood to gain the most. It would have a dominant role in the federal parliament, could implement its plans for expansion, and carry the pioneering spirit (and the Protestant religion) into the prairies.

---


61 Americans who supported Britain in the war of independence 1775-83. 50,000 fled north of the border, 12,000 to Ontario and the rest to Nova Scotia. See Walter Stewart, *True Blue* (Collins, Toronto, 1985).

Lower Canada (Québec) was mostly French, agrarian and conservative. Despite Durham's designs on assimilation Lower Canada had kept its own identity and language and a French bloc in parliament. But now this was threatened by Upper Canada's domination in the federal government.

The Maritime Provinces have been described as insular, parochial, fiercely independent, and loyal to Britain and the Empire. Nova Scotia had been settled by United Empire Loyalist refugees, and Yankee loyalists brought in to replace the Acadians (original French settlers expelled by the British) in the eighteenth century. During the nineteenth century immigrant Protestant Scots, Irish Catholics and returning Acadians gave it a more complicated ethnic mix. Over one third of the population of New Brunswick was of Irish origin, mostly Roman Catholic. These two provinces joined the confederation reluctantly, believing that it would benefit not them but Ontario and Québécois. Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland did not join until 1873 and 1949 respectively.

Further west the Red River Settlements (Manitoba) were peopled by Métis - mixed race French/native Americans, and fur traders. Manitoba joined the union in 1870. The colony of British Columbia was proclaimed in 1858 when Canadians, Californians and Asians stampeded to the Fraser goldfield. It joined the federation in 1871 on promise of a transcontinental railway, which provided work for more Chinese immigrants during the 1870s.

The franchise in the new dominion differed from province to province and different regulations existed for federal and provincial elections. There were various property qualifications, most of which were removed in 1920. The secret ballot was

---

introduced in 1874. Women generally gained the vote between 1916-1918, although in Québec provincial elections it was not until after the second world war. Native Americans could vote from 1867 in most provinces, but they did not always have the means or knowledge to do so. The isolated Inuit, for example, had no way of exercising their right. And if native Americans wanted to vote in federal elections they had to give up any rights they possessed as members of a tribe. British Columbia (and other provinces variously) excluded people of Chinese, Japanese, or ‘Hindu’ origin, as well as native Americans. These exclusions were not rescinded until 1960.64

The Canadian provinces each had a Lieutenant-Governor nominated by the Governor-General. The Governor-General was appointed for five to seven years by the British government. His powers were limited, with foreign and international business dealt with by Britain. He had three main functions. One was to discharge the legal obligations delegated to him by the Crown, although by this time they were mainly formalities. The Governor-General had to accept the advice of the cabinet, although he could act on his own initiative in certain exceptional situations. (Aberdeen did this in 1896 when he refused to take the advice of the defeated government over the making of appointments.)

A second function was to advise and mediate where required. He advised the cabinet and Prime Minister, and mediated between party leaders, or between the dominion and provincial governments when necessary, which was usually in an emergency. A third function was to offer moral and social leadership to the nation. This involved giving balls and formal state dinners, receiving foreign dignitaries and touring the country once or twice a year.

The Governor-General's wife had no official duties or remuneration but custom provided her with many jobs. The staff of seventy at Government House (in the Aberdeens' time) needed to be supervised. Other duties included entertaining house guests; overseeing preparations for official balls and dinners; attending functions; being 'at home' to local society; showing an active interest in social welfare, charitable and other 'womanly work' in Canada and making some of this her own. There were gifts to be organised, letters to be written, state visits and tours of the country to be made. This is quite a formidable list, but Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen both took on more than this as a way of helping their husbands, an issue which will be discussed in chapter four.

To nineteenth-century British imperialists Canada was an 'empty' land waiting to be filled: a land the size of Europe with a population less than that of London. The first census in 1871 listed 3,700,000 inhabitants, 80% of them living in rural areas. Of these one million were English and Scottish Protestants, one million were French Roman Catholics and 850,000 were Roman Catholic or Protestant Irish. The remainder comprised aborigines, African-Americans, other Europeans and Chinese.

Confederation had been a sensible necessity born of pragmatism. The historical consensus is that after 1867 a unified Canadian identity was slow to emerge. Clearly, one of the difficulties faced by the new nation was that of creating an overarching sense of Canadian identity for the inhabitants of the various provinces. Lord Dufferin landed at Québec in 1872 with a remit to do just that, and to make Canadians aware of the reciprocal ties of Empire and loyalty which bound them to Britain. This was happening, he said, describing Canada in the starkly gendered language of imperialism as

a land so replete with contentment in the present, so pregnant of promise in the future. From the northern forest borderlands, whose
primeval recesses are being pierced and indented ... Everywhere have I learnt that the people are satisfied ... satisfied to be the subjects of the Queen, to be members of the British Empire.

This official discourse hid the dissenting voices. In the 1870s ethnic tensions simmered for a variety of reasons, often involving discrimination against the French or the Catholics. Native North Americans were having to adapt from their traditional way of life as they were uprooted onto reservations. Every 17 March and 12 July the tension between Irish Protestants and Catholics overspilled into rioting. These clashes of culture all involved groups with reason to be dissatisfied with the status quo of British rule.

Various artificial attempts in the 1870s to create a basis for nationhood around Anglo-Saxon Protestantism failed because they excluded the Catholics and the French. The Orange Order, an offshoot of the Irish Lodges, had 200,000 members at one time. Adherents of Canada First, founded in 1871, were keen loyalists. They believed Canadians were descended from the European Aryans. But by the end of the 1870s the group had disintegrated.

In 1869 Louis Riel led 12,000 mixed-race French/Indian Catholics in Manitoba to resist the transfer of the Red River lands to the Canadian government. The resistance was short-lived, Riel escaped and a settlement was negotiated. He

---


66 Lady Dufferin tells how 3,000 police were drafted into Montreal to crush any disturbance caused by 'roughs' coming from Buffalo to break up the Orange Day Parade: *My Canadian Journal*, p432 (11-12 July 1878). William Osler wrote of his boyhood in 1870s Ontario that 'there were two red-letter days - March 17th and July 12th. We were sure of a holiday & a good row between Orange & Green'. Harvey Cushing, *The Life of Sir William Osler* (Oxford UP, London 1940), p1285.

resurfaced in 1884 to lead the Saskatchewan Métis and the Cree nation to another momentary rebellion. He was executed in 1885 with an outburst of racial and ethnic feeling. Dufferin revealed his Anglo-Saxon bias: 'Hanging was too good for him' he wrote from India, 'nor do I think, will it be a bad lesson to our French friends'. Then in 1871 public funding was withdrawn from Catholic Irish and Acadian schools in New Brunswick. Events like these kept the question of French nationalism alive during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

By 1880 white hunters had virtually destroyed the buffalo, essential to the traditional native American way of life. Lacking in the food, clothing and shelter that the buffalo provided, many were forced onto reservations. The dominant image became one of a people living in squalor and doomed to extinction. A reporter travelling to British Columbia with the Dufferins in 1876 wrote of them:

Those that we see about Victoria are not favourable specimens, but Indians resident in the midst of a white population have but one certain fate before them. Their demoralization is always speedy and complete.

By this time two distinct viewpoints on native Americans had developed. Humanitarians spoke sentimentally of the 'noble savage' and argued that they were victims of greed and oppression. But to imperialists they were an inferior race, which justified both the relentless westward advance of the frontier and the attempts to

---


69 BL Eur Mss F130/20, Dufferin to Lansdowne, 17 December 1885. And Dufferin once indicated that the French-Canadians needed a dose of the Royal Irish Constabulary to keep them in order. CW de Kiewiet and FH Underhill (eds), *The Dufferin-Carnarvon Correspondence* (Champlain Society, Toronto, 1955), pxxxii.

70 It has been estimated that of 3,700,000 buffalo killed between 1872-74, only 150,000 were killed by native Americans. Dee Brown, *Bury my Heart at Wounded Knee* (Bantam, NY, 1973), p254.

civilise them. To survive they had to adopt the customs and habits of the white man.  

These difficulties that Dufferin faced all had a common source: the diverse ethnic makeup of Canadian society. But there was a further problem during these years which had its genesis outside Canada. It permeated everything during this time and affected the attitudes and the confidence both of politicians and the general public. It was the world depression, which settled on Canada in 1873 and had still not lifted by 1878.

Aberdeen became Governor-General in 1893. During the 1880s Protestant immigration from Ontario had changed the nature of Manitoba. And from 1896 the character of the western states changed further under the new immigration policy of Laurier's Liberal administration. Clifford Sifton, the minister of the interior, actively promoted immigration from central and eastern Europe, believing that rural peasants would be more successful in western Canada than those from industrialised countries. These immigrants were seen as outsiders until they spoke English and adopted English ways.

In the 1890s religion in the schools was debated again, this time in Manitoba, where the Liberals wanted to abolish separate schools for Protestants and Catholics. This topic dominated Canadian politics between 1891 and 1896. Saywell believes that it crystallised opinions on many crucial issues, such as racial and religious conflict, or whether Canada was to be English or French. Historians have pointed out that although divisions in society were ostensibly caused by religious bigotry, this was not so. The main concern was to preserve the English-Canadian character of the west by

---

73 David de Brou and Aileen Moffatt, ‘*Other* Voices: Historical Essays on Saskatchewan Women* (Canadian Plains Research Centre, Regina, 1995).
imposing Protestantism. English speaking Catholics, theoretically able to bridge the gap between French and English began to identify more closely with English settlers than French Roman Catholics. By the twentieth century the Irish Catholics in Toronto were keen to shake off their Irish past and take up a Canadian identity.

International issues affecting Canada were dealt with by the imperial government in England. Relations between Britain and America were cool at the end of the 1860s, but the 1871 Washington conference saw a marked improvement and enabled Britain to turn its attention to Europe. During the 1870s and 1880s there was much talk of annexation of Canada by the US, with some Canadians in favour. In 1874 Dufferin made it clear that he would support the British Government in Disraeli’s more aggressive imperialism, and use his influence to keep Canada British:

You may depend upon my doing my very best both to weld this Dominion into an Imperium solid enough to defy all attraction from its powerful neighbour across the Line, and to perpetuate its innate loyalty to the Mother Country.

In the 1870s less than 10% of Canadian foreign trade was outside British and American markets. The Canadian Pacific railway which was under construction would open up trading routes and help both domestic and foreign trade. The Liberals lowered tariffs to encourage American imports but the Conservatives were re-elected in 1878 on a protectionist platform. Again in the 1880s the Liberals, supported by

---


77 WL Morton, The Critical Years.

78 de Kiewiet and Underhill (eds), The Dufferin-Carnarvon Correspondence, p24, (25 April 1874).

79 Morton, The Critical Years.
anti-imperialist Goldwin Smith, advocated free trade. Macdonald seized upon this in his 1891 election campaign, and branded the Liberals an anti-imperialist party. This was when he uttered his famous lines 'a British subject I was born - a British subject I will die.' He was against annexation: 'This [is] my last effort for the unity of the Empire and the preservation of our commercial and political freedom'. He won, and talk of annexation faded away.⁸⁰

A further point concerned Canada’s relationship to the British Empire. In the 1890s most of Canada was opposed or indifferent to Joseph Chamberlain's Imperial Federation League with its proposed central parliament, which seemed tantamount to handing power back to Britain. The most common feeling in Canada before the first world war was that it should remain British, reject annexation, reject independence and reject the imperial federation, while maintaining an equal say in imperial affairs.⁸¹ Towards the end of the 1890s Canadians participated more in events which affected the British Empire. Laurier sent 8,000 troops to the South African war. Morton thinks this is when a true Canadian nationality began to emerge⁸². However Underhill believes that this war merely underlined the differences between British and French Canadians.⁸³

Historians agree that when the North American provinces first considered confederation the British government cared little whether Canada remained in or outside the British Empire. But later on in the century it became important for Britain to have (and hold) its overseas 'possessions'. Canada was strategically important to

---


⁸² WL Morton, *The Canadian Identity*.

the Empire because it was a foothold in continental North America. It was of economic importance because of its rich natural resources. And it was of social and cultural importance because of its dominant Anglo-Saxon ethos and its constant stream of immigrants to swell the population. There was a strong likelihood that they would be assimilated into a Canadian-British way of life. All these points made Canada a desirable member of the British Empire.

**The Metropolitan Colony: Ireland**

History, religion and politics grow on one stem in Ireland, an eternal trefoil.

Lady Gregory

In the sixteenth century British settlers took over forfeited church land in Ireland under the Tudor policy of colonisation. In the seventeenth century they were 'given' land confiscated by Cromwell. In the eighteenth century Ireland had an independent (Anglo-Irish Protestant) parliament which sat in Dublin. But after the rising of 1798 during which nationalists tried to seize power the British doubted the loyalty of the Irish and feared a French invasion. This led to the Act of Union (1800) which abolished the Irish parliament. Thereafter Ireland was represented at Westminster.

By the late nineteenth century the Lord-Lieutenant's political role was severely reduced, and only a social role remained. The Vicereine's role was to do little but lead society. However Lady Aberdeen organised charities, and raised money through

---

84 Quoted by Harold Plunkett, *Ireland in the New Century* (Murray, London, 1904), pxix. Lady Gregory was mentor of WB Yeats and together they founded the Abbey Theatre.

aristocratic connections in England for poverty and distress in the west of Ireland. She also tried to unite the country under the Union Jack. One of her advisers told her that

Lord Aberdeen's wise project of making the Viceroy something of what the Crown is and should be in England may be of vast service. You may afford a rallying point and common meeting ground for the people in Ireland who at present are kept apart by imaginary barriers.86

The demand for Home Rule grew out of events in the first half of the nineteenth century: demands in the early 1800s for repeal of the Union, O'Connell's campaign for Catholic rights, radical land agitation, and the pluralist/romantic/nationalist Young Ireland movement of mid-century led by Thomas Davis. Davis, a Protestant and great popular hero, believed that when Ireland was 'a nation once again' Irish nationality would unite different classes and creeds. Irish affairs came to concern the wider British public in the late 1860s, when the Fenians, who wanted a separate Irish Republic, became active with 'outrages' in Britain.87 Demands for disestablishment of the (Anglican) Church of Ireland were met in 1869. Catholic education and a continuing popular revolt by the peasantry over land conditions were other issues. English liberals had expressed disquiet ever since the famine over conditions in Ireland, where tenants clearly did not have their rights protected by law. As Said and others have pointed out the first objective of a colonised nation is to reclaim the land, first in imagination and then in reality.88 Gladstone brought in two Irish Land Acts (1870 and 1881), which improved conditions, but the land question

86 HH 1/5, Stephen Gwynn to Lady Aberdeen, 24 March [probably 1906].
88 Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism, pp269-280; Catherine Nash, "Embodying the Nation"; the West of Ireland Landscape and Irish Identity," in Barbara O'Connor and Michael Cronin (eds), Tourism in Ireland (Cork UP, Cork, 1993).
dominated until 1903, when Wyndham’s Land Act returned 60% of the land to (mostly Catholic) peasant proprietors.\(^\text{89}\)

Three Home Rule bills came before Parliament, in 1886, 1893, and 1912. The first Home Rule Bill was debated and rejected by the House of Commons in 1886. A second bill in 1893 was passed by the Commons but rejected by the House of Lords. After the Parliament Act was passed in 1911 the Lords had to assent to a bill on its third presentation. The third Home Rule Bill, introduced in 1912, reduced the number of Irish MPs sitting at Westminster and gave Dublin limited control of internal affairs. Defence, foreign policy and finance were controlled from London. This bill passed the Lords in July 1914, but after the outbreak of war in August it was suspended.

The native Irish were Celts, and almost all of them were Catholics. English settlers had brought the Anglican and Quaker religions to Ireland, and the Scots who came to north-east Ulster brought Presbyterianism. Stiff eighteenth-century penal laws against Catholicism were relaxed in the nineteenth century, culminating in the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829 when Catholics were able to hold public office and sit in parliament. However from mid-century the gap between Catholics and Protestants widened as attitudes hardened. By 1900 to be a Catholic generally, but not always, meant to have nationalist leanings, while in the north Anglicans and Nonconformists were likely to oppose separatism.

Long before industrialisation the British had considered the Irish primitive barbarians, and Celtic society savage.\(^\text{90}\) A wealth of English comment such as by Edmund Spenser in the sixteenth century or William Petty in the seventeenth century

\(^{89}\) In comparison to 1776 when Protestants owned 95% of Irish land. Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p211.

had reinforced Irish otherness. In 1665 the Act of Explanation recommended for Ireland 'new and proper names more suitable to the English tongue [than] the barbarous and uncouth names by which most places were called'.

In 1832 James Phillips Kay used a cholera epidemic as a metaphor for the evil influence of the Irish in Britain. Disraeli indicated quite clearly that he saw the Irish as other:

[The Irish] hate our order, our civilisation, our enterprising industry, our sustained courage, our decorous liberty, our pure religion. This wild reckless, indolent, uncertain and superstitious race have no sympathy with the English character. Their fair idea of human felicity is an alternation of clannish broils and coarse idolatry. Their history describes an unbroken circle of bigotry and blood.

Catholics predominated in nineteenth-century Ireland, but most of the wealth and power fell to Anglican families. (Although most Protestants were poor.) In 1861 out of 84 titled men in Ireland 73 were Protestant; 70% of a further 1802 who considered themselves 'gentlemen' were Protestant. Members of this class, known as the Anglo-Irish or Protestant Ascendancy - the class to which Lady Dufferin belonged - were to lose both their power and their wealth as the century wore on. It has been pointed out that they had never gained hegemony over the Irish, partly because they defined themselves in religious terms, and partly because they left it too late. It would have been possible earlier, but by the nineteenth century events overtook them: Catholic emancipation in 1829; the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland in 1869; changes in primogeniture practice after the famine, enabling small farmers to build up

---


93 Quoted by LP Curtis, Anglo-Saxons and Celts, pp50-51.


their holdings; the agitation which led to Gladstone’s land laws in the 1880s; the emergence of a confident professional Catholic (and nationalist) middle class; and the increasing influence of a reformed and ultramontane Catholic church under Cardinal Cullen. By the end of the century most of the aristocracy could see the writing on the wall.

JC Beckett has noted the ‘arrogance and ambivalence’ of this class.\textsuperscript{96} Professor Lyons believed ‘their tragedy was that, hesitating as they did between two worlds, they could never be fully accepted by either’.\textsuperscript{97} They were regarded with suspicion by their Catholic tenantry. Their wealth and their moral imperatives were formed by the colonial power and built upon conquest not only in Ireland but in the wider British Empire. These families sent their sons to English schools, lived in England part of the year, and intermarried with the English upper classes, yet their British counterparts did not always accept them as equals.\textsuperscript{98}

By 1912 Ulster was adamantly resisting demands for Home Rule, and a harsh new style of Conservative-Unionist leadership emerged that year under Bonar Law. He warned that ‘including force’, he could ‘imagine no lengths of resistance to which Ulster can go in which I should not be prepared to support them’.\textsuperscript{99} In 1913 the Ulster Volunteers were formed to defend the Ulster Protestant way of life, closely followed in the south by James Connolly’s Citizens’ Army and the National Volunteers to support Home Rule. Both groups armed in preparation for a conflict.


\textsuperscript{97} FSL Lyons, \textit{Culture and Anarchy in Ireland}, p22.

\textsuperscript{98} The Irish aristocracy at Oxbridge was looked down upon by the English: they ‘despise us’ Charles Parnell noted during his time at Cambridge. FSL Lyons, \textit{Ireland Since the Famine}, p157.

\textsuperscript{99} Widely quoted, including FSL Lyons, \textit{Ireland Since the Famine}, p303. Law was born in Canada of Scottish parents.
In March 1914, in what is known as the Curragh mutiny, fifty-eight cavalry officers tendered their resignations rather than coerce the Orange faction. Then in April 1914 when 800 rebels offloaded guns at Larne harbour, Lord Aberdeen was refused permission to arrest the local activists. Roy Jenkins thinks this is because their leaders - Bonar Law and Edward Carson - were sitting at Westminster.\textsuperscript{100}

Some historians stress the seriousness of these events - members of the Cabinet inciting British troops to armed rebellion against the British parliament - and some ignore them.\textsuperscript{101} A consensus on the Ulster question seems to be that 1912 was the point of 'no turning back', and up until then a solution was possible. Historians agree that the British government's handling of Irish affairs between 1910-1914 is a story of missed opportunities and gross ineptitude.\textsuperscript{102}

Towards the end of the nineteenth century Irish identity became an important issue. Irish nationalism had never been the sole preserve of the Catholics. Protestant nationalist opinion covered a wide spectrum, from those like Constance Markievicz who advocated physical force separatism, through to the Irish Protestant Home Rule Association. This was largely Nonconformist, and wanted absolute religious pluralism, a constitutional settlement to the Home Rule question, and to remain within the United Kingdom.\textsuperscript{103} At the opposite end of Protestant opinion and against Home Rule

\textsuperscript{100} Roy Jenkins, \textit{Asquith} (Collins, London, 1964).


\textsuperscript{103} James Loughlin, 'The Irish Protestant Home Rule Association', \textit{Irish Historical
were the Ulster Unionists, who fiercely clung to their British nationality, yet took pride in being Irish and defended their Irish heritage. The complex layering of identities in Ulster will be discussed in connection with the 1912-14 Home Rule crisis in chapter six.

There was a similar spectrum of opinion within Catholicism. At one end were those who supported violent separatism and had a narrow definition of Irishness which excluded all non-Catholics; they derided those they called 'castle lackeys': Catholics content with the status quo. In the middle ground were the Catholic Home Rulers, who thought that only those who actively supported the nationalist cause could claim Irish nationality.\textsuperscript{104} It is clear there were many different concepts of Irishness. The Protestants had to accept a religious pluralism, of course, but apart from that, neither they nor the Catholics shared any common opinions over the extent to which Ireland should accept British cultural influences. It was from these conflicting identities that an Irish parliament would arise after Home Rule, so they were as important to the British as they were to the Irish.

It has been argued that after Parnell’s downfall\textsuperscript{105} in 1890 the nationalist struggle shifted from politics and into culture. Boyce thinks the populist cultural movement was the most influential of all. At school and church, through newspapers, at fairs and markets, in the taverns and around the fireside the average Irish Catholic


\textsuperscript{104} Foster, \textit{Modern Ireland}, p456. He argues that most Catholics would have been content with a constitutional settlement.

\textsuperscript{105} He was cited as correspondent in a divorce action. Much Irish historiography concerns Parnell, the dominant figure in later nineteenth-century Ireland. It is agreed that his main talent was to bring both the constitutionalists and the Fenians under one umbrella. Conor Cruise O'Brien, \textit{Parnell and His Party 1880-90} (Clarendon, Oxford, 1957) is still important; others include FSL Lyons, \textit{Charles Stuart Parnell} (Collins, London, 1977); and Roy Foster, \textit{Charles Stuart Parnell: the Man and His Family} (Harvester, Brighton, 1976).
was regaled with popular nationalism from the cradle to the grave. It was anti-British but not necessarily anti-Anglo-Irish. It was seemingly respectable, yet it was not pluralist; although it thought Irish identity should include Protestants and Catholics alike, it was within a Catholic state and on Catholic terms.\footnote{DG Boyce, \textit{Nationalism in Ireland} (Routledge, London, 1991), pp254,385; Graham Walker, ‘Irish Nationalism and the Uses of History’, \textit{Past and Present} 126 (February 1990), pp203-14.}

The (populist) Gaelic and the (elite) Celtic cultural revivals centred around the relative importance of the Irish language, Catholicism, Gaelic games and traditions, Irish goods and industries, a rejection of all things English and/or a rejection of modern civilisation (not easily distinguished). Various historical debates cover the years from 1890 to 1914: was Catholicism a determining factor of Irishness? How widespread was the desire for a constitutional settlement to Home Rule? Could Irishness happily exist with a wider identity within the British Empire? Did the Celtic revival serve the political purpose of the Anglo-Irish? Did the Gaelic revival work in the interest of the Catholic landlords and obscure the class nature of rural society by intimating England as ‘the enemy’? Or conversely, was Catholic Ireland free of internal class antagonisms but united against Anglo-Irish landlords? What about the industrialised area around Belfast, where sectarian and cross-class unity was more likely over Home Rule than over labour questions? How widespread was the physical force tradition?\footnote{These debates and more are discussed in Lyons, \textit{Culture and Anarchy in Ireland}; Foster, \textit{Modern Ireland}, pp432-56; JR Archer, ‘Necessary Ambiguity: Nationalism and Myth in Ireland’, \textit{Eire-Ireland} 19:2 (Summer 1984), pp23-37; Joseph Lee, \textit{The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918} (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1973), Chapter 6. For a Gramscian reading see Cairns and Richards, \textit{Writing Ireland}.}

Lady Aberdeen began her anti-tuberculosis crusade in 1907, the year noted by Lyons as a watershed in both politics and wider culture. There is a consensus that
1907-1914 saw a quickening of pace in Irish events. Parliamentary politics, Sinn Fein, the separatist and militant IRB, a fledgeling socialism, in addition to various cultural movements combined in different ways to produce a hardening of attitudes right across the political spectrum. Last but not least, a papal decree commanded that the children of mixed marriages should be raised as Catholics. These events, which anticipated the failed rebellion of 1916, added to a heightening of tensions in Ireland at this time.108

In 1886 it was possible for both Irish Protestants and Catholics to have their own sense of Irish identity, and, as many appeared to, feel comfortable within a wider Britishness at the same time. There was far less likelihood of this by 1910-1914. The cultural revival had strengthened the Southern Irish sense of identity. The congruence of interests to keep ‘Rome Rule’ out of Ulster had thrown the northern Presbyterians and Anglicans together in 1886, and over the next twenty years their attitudes, based mainly around a view of religious superiority, hardened. By 1910 Ulster Unionists also had a stronger and more clearly defined sense that their Britishness was different to the Britishness of England.

* * * * *

This chapter has presented a background to the social, political and economic events occurring in Ireland, Canada and India at the time that the Aberdeens and the Dufferins were living in those countries. In addition I have focused on the various categories by which the Victorians ordered and found their place in the world. As I have noted, there was a two-way interaction between these ideas and the context in

which they were produced. This in turn affected the construction of imperial identities, which could never be secure. The next chapter will comprise biographical studies of Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin and show how the various influences throughout their lives combined to produce the people they were.
Chapter 3

Privileged Lives?

We live our days to the tune of God save the Queen, from the moment the train stops till it departs, & one sometimes wonders inwardly whether the moment will not arrive when instead of keeping up an inane smile, we will not seize someone & turn them round & shake them or do something desperate ....

Lady Aberdeen on tour in Ontario.¹

We don’t choose our guests; we don’t always invite them; we can’t say for how long they shall stay; and our experience is the less we like them the longer they do remain. ... I appear to be only a sort of hotel-keeper, I must meekly obey [their wishes]. To ‘speed the parting guest’ comes home to me now with quite a new and heart-stirring meaning. I don’t believe anyone has ever been so full of joyful relief as I sometimes am when I see globe-trotting visitors safe out of Calcutta.

Lady Dufferin in Calcutta.²

These two quotations illustrate some of the negative aspects of being a high-level imperial wife. Of course Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin had privileges only dreamed of by the majority of women, yet there were definitely drawbacks. Lady Aberdeen’s quote is unusual because she generally took herself - and everyone else - very seriously, and rarely let her public persona slip to this extent. On the other hand Lady Dufferin’s quote is typical of her style of writing and shows a refreshing vitality and lively sense of humour. The two women met for the first time in 1887. Lady Dufferin wrote:

¹ Saywell, Canadian Journal, p365 (26 September 1896).
² PRONI D/1071/J/C1/8/9, Journal, 24 January 1888 (this quote and the following one were unsurprisingly omitted from the published version).
I was very curious to see the Aberdeens and am a little disappointed with her. I think her rather a difficult person to get on with. She makes me feel as if I ought always to be talking about a Question, beginning with a capital letter, Home Rule, or the Rights of the People, Education, or Political Economy.\(^3\)

In this chapter I look in detail at these women, born Hariot Georgina Rowan Hamilton and Ishbel Maria Marjoribanks: how they lived their lives; where they went and when; who they married; what they thought; why they did what they did. There were basic differences between them. Ishbel Aberdeen was overwhelmed with a lifelong and almost fanatical desire to improve things and people. She spent her life (and a lot of her family money) in public service. I can say far more about Lady Aberdeen’s views on politics or social concerns because she wrote them down or made them clear. By contrast Hariot Dufferin’s letters and journals are neither those of an intellectual nor a political commentator, and they mainly cover day to day expatriate life, recording who and when rather than how and why. She was devoted to her family, and spent a lot of time and effort in making the barren colonial palaces homely. When her children were small she was funloving, participated in sports, and enjoyed putting on family theatricals. Her writing shows a warmth and affection that is not apparent in that of Lady Aberdeen. It could be said that Lady Aberdeen was influenced more by concepts, and Lady Dufferin by people.

Each biography will follow the same format: a section on family history will be followed by a short chronological biography. Then most of the chapter will be taken up with looking at formative influences during childhood and young adult life, and discussing how and why various topics became important to each woman. I will start with Lady Dufferin.

\(^3\) PRONI D/1071J/C1/8/5, Journal, 12 February 1887.
1. Hariot Georgina Rowan Hamilton

Hariot’s family background clearly illustrates not only how the Anglo-Irish and English were intermixed, but the extent to which her wealth and position in society were made possible by British colonial adventures. The Hamiltons had settled in Ireland from Scotland in the seventeenth century on land appropriated from the O’Neills (from whom, incidentally, Ishbel Aberdeen was descended through her Hogg grandfather). Hariot’s nephew Harold Nicolson was under no illusions as to his family’s past:

My mother’s forebears had behaved in no way better than Edmund Spenser. They had behaved even worse, since they had been more successful. ... Not only had the Hamiltons been as greedy as any of the undertakers, as any of the Ulster planters, but they had profited by their loot.  

Hariot’s grandfather, Gawen Rowan Hamilton, had been a commodore in the British Navy during the Greek war of independence from the Ottoman Empire in the 1820s. Greece was strategically important to Britain, and Finlay reports that Hamilton’s mediating skills helped to calm local unrest and safeguard British interest until Greece became jointly protected by Britain, Russia and France in 1830. An Athens street is named after him, and his portrait hangs in the Greek National Museum, perhaps evidence for Finlay’s 1861 statement that he was ‘the first public advocate of the Greek cause among influential Englishmen’ [sic]. In 1817 he married Catherine, the only child of Whig politician, General Sir George Cockburn, of

---

4 She called herself ‘Hariot’ after her marriage and I use this spelling throughout, although her father called her ‘Harriot’ and her family spelt her name variously.


Shanganah Castle, Co Wicklow. Sir George was a keen collector of ‘antiquities’, and his son-in-law sent him four ancient carved marble altars and a Corinthian capital from Greece. In July 1832 Sir George erected these on a base of Irish granite in front of the main castle entrance, with a marble tablet commemorating the passing of the Reform Act. Greek booty and the sweat of Irish stonemasons upheld his commitment to British democracy.

Gawen Rowan Hamilton’s father was Archibald Hamilton Rowan, (Mr Rowan) born in England of an Irish father and English mother; one of the leaders of the United Irishmen. To assert his difference from his family he had reversed his name. He fought for Irish independence in 1798, was condemned to death, escaped to America and was later pardoned and allowed to return to Ireland. On his return he supported Catholic emancipation. Such an anti-British ancestor was an embarrassment to his family, who reinstated the Hamilton surname in the next generation. ‘He was a rebel’, Hariot’s sister told her son Harold. ‘We do not talk about him much. I think that we are rather ashamed of him in a way.’

Hariot’s mother was Catherine Caldwell from Cheltenham, the daughter of George Caldwell, an Anglican clergyman. Catherine had moved in elite circles even as a child: she was educated at the same school in Paris as the Empress Eugénie, wife of Napoleon III. Catherine’s mother was descended from the Marquis of Wellesley, while her father George’s family had originated from New Grange in Ireland, and from Liverpool. George’s brother William had gone to Jamaica during the first years of the nineteenth century, where he prospered as a merchant. His will provided for his three daughters’ education and support but fobbed off his ‘reputed son William Caldwell by

---

8 Nicolson, *Desire to Please*, p200.
Betsey Baron of Montego Bay' with £20 pa until the age of 21, then a lump sum of £500. The residue of the estate in England was to go to Hariot’s grandfather George, who provided his daughter Catherine with a generous marriage settlement.\(^\text{10}\)

In 1842 Catherine married Captain Archibald Rowan Hamilton, a member of the middling Irish gentry. It was perhaps ironic that a year later ‘the reveille trumpet sounding from the Barrack’\(^\text{11}\) celebrated Hariot’s birth as the first of seven children of a British army officer. Hamilton, of course, was not British, but Anglo-Irish, the inheritor of Killyleagh castle and estate in County Down.

**A Life in a Page**

1843 5 February: Hariot was born at Killyleagh, Co Down.

1855 Hariot was sent to school in Boulogne, and afterwards in Liverpool.

1860 2 May: Hariot’s father died aged 41. Her schooling was terminated and she returned to Ireland.

1861 Dufferin threw a ball for Hariot’s ‘coming out’, to fulfill a promise to his friend Hamilton. Dufferin’s mother Helen groomed her and chaperoned her in her debut into London society. She did this again in 1862.

1862 25 October: Hariot married Frederick Blackwood, Lord Dufferin, 37, a step up the social ladder for her. He held both Irish and English titles - his family had received a ‘loyalty’ peerage with the Act of Union in 1800 - and owned 26,000 acres of Co Down. He had been Lord in Waiting to Queen

---

\(^\text{10}\) PRONI D/3403/8; D/3403/11.

\(^\text{11}\) PRONI D/1071/J/A/1, Archibald Rowan Hamilton to Hariot Rowan Hamilton, 5 February 1856.
Victoria, and had just refused the Governorship of Bombay. Dufferin's politics were towards the Whig end of liberalism.

1864-1872 Dufferin held various government posts: Under-secretary at the India Office, the War Office, Chancellorship of the Duchy of Lancaster, Spokesman on Irish affairs in the House of Lords. During this time the family moved between London and Killyleagh. Seven children were born to Lady Dufferin during these years, but two died shortly after birth.

1872-1878 Lord Dufferin was Governor-General of Canada. Two more children were born in Canada.

1879-1881 The Dufferin family were sent to St Petersburg where Dufferin was Ambassador.

1881-1884 The Dufferin family moved to Constantinople where Lord Dufferin was Ambassador. This includes four months they spent in Cairo.

1884-1888 Lord Dufferin was Viceroy of India. Lady Dufferin started the National Association for Female Medical Aid to the Women of India.

1888-1891 The Dufferins were sent to Italy where he was Ambassador.

1891-1896 The Dufferins were sent to Paris where he was Ambassador.

1900 Son Archibald died at Ladysmith.

1902 12 February: Lord Dufferin died. Lady Dufferin stayed at Clandeboye under straitened circumstances.

1911-1936 Lady Dufferin was Vice-president of the Ulster Women’s Unionist Council, and was extremely active in it until 1921.

1917 Son Ian Basil died in action.

1918 Son Terence died.

1921 Lady Dufferin moved to England.
1930 Son Frederick died in an airplane accident.
1936 25 October: Lady Dufferin died aged 93.

Hariot had decided at a young age that as an Anglo-Saxon she belonged to a ‘superior race’. When she was twelve she wrote an essay for her governess at Killyleagh on the Acadians: ‘Whatever the crimes of the Acadians were the English had no right to punish them so severely’, she wrote, showing that she felt instinctively that the English had a right to judge the colonised Acadians’ actions as ‘crimes’.¹²

Hariot’s family background and her upbringing had helped to inform her views on religion, gender, class and race. And three of her close relatives - her father, husband and mother-in-law - groomed her for a life spent overseas in the service of the Crown.

**The Father**

Hariot’s father, Archibald Rowan Hamilton, who died unexpectedly in May 1860 aged 41 had a huge influence on her. His death profoundly affected Hariot, then 17, who had last seen him the previous Christmas. She reread his letters, which were warm and deeply affectionate and made a scrapbook of them for further study, discarding the parts written by her mother. Hamilton influenced Hariot’s life in many ways. Firstly he had enhanced her status and marriage chances by giving her an expensive foreign education which he could ill afford. ‘Very few of the Co Down young ladies will have the same advantages’, he told her.¹³ So when Hariot was

---

¹² PRONI D1071J/C2/1/1. Acadians were French-Canadians.

¹³ PRONI D/1071/J/A/1, A Rowan Hamilton to H Rowan Hamilton, nd.
twelve she was sent away to Boulogne to school, uncommon for daughters of the gentry before the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{14}

Secondly although he was Anglo-Irish Hamilton often identified himself with the English and wanted his daughter to do likewise. So when she was fifteen she was transferred to a school in Liverpool. 'It is the last touch that completes every work', he told her, 'and as we have spent so much on your education we must not hurry the operation that is to crown the intellectual edifice'.\textsuperscript{15} In Liverpool she would 'live amongst and be instructed by those who take those deeper views of the duties and the responsibilities and the philosophy of life which belong to the English character'.\textsuperscript{16} This is an interesting statement considering that Hamilton was Irish. The 'philosophy of life' he referred to was one built upon enlightenment ideas of progress which saw the human race on a scale which ascended from barbarism to civilisation.

Thirdly Hamilton educated his daughter into the firm belief that she was superior not only in terms of ethnicity but in terms of class. In 1859 Hamilton decided she was old enough to travel alone from England by rail and steamer. It was most unusual for a sixteen-year-old girl of her class to travel unescorted; they were normally closely chaperoned by older family members, governesses or maidservants.\textsuperscript{17} Despite Hamilton's shortage of money it seems a strange choice. He gave her detailed instructions: how to wrap up well in her bunk, how to avoid unwanted attentions on the train, and told her to ask for 'a private sitting room' at the Crown Hotel between

\textsuperscript{14} Davidoff, \textit{The Best Circles}; PRONI Mic 22/6, A Rowan Hamilton to Dufferin, December 1855.

\textsuperscript{15} PRONI D/1071/J/A/1, A Rowan Hamilton to H Rowan Hamilton, nd.

\textsuperscript{16} PRONI D/1071/J/A/1, A Rowan Hamilton to H Rowan Hamilton, 28 August 1858.

\textsuperscript{17} Jalland, \textit{Women, Marriage and Politics}. 
trains. With the customary assurance of one of his class he said that at Liverpool she should ‘find a porter named Eagan who was in my Regiment and give him a shilling [and] he would be civil to you’. Remarks such as this would certainly have allowed Hariot to believe that the ‘lower orders’ were loyal and would give her their respect by virtue of who she was. On another occasion he instructed her to help the poor with whom she came into contact: ‘[T]ry and understand and enter into their feelings and to give them your sympathy’, he advised. This was an accepted way for upper-class women to involve themselves outside the home. Hariot had done a little visiting, and she and her mother had been asked to take a class at Sunday school, but unlike Ishbel Marjoribanks, neither of them had been overly enthusiastic about it.

The responsibility Hamilton saw falling on Hariot’s shoulders was thus a gendered one, reflecting the ideals of the upper stratum of mid-Victorian society. Furthermore, Hamilton told Hariot that her most important responsibility was to provide a haven of comfort for her family: ‘You were born for nobler purposes [than pure amusement] and to fulfil greater and higher duties - to be the comfort and delight of a home, a blessing to your fellow creatures - to fulfil on earth duties worthy of the destinies of an immortal being’. Whether Hariot married or not, the future Hamilton saw for her was within the home:

... perhaps you may become the wife of a rich man ... a poor man’s wife ... or perhaps as is now with so many the case you may never marry ... At any rate it will never be your necessity to look to marriage for a maintenance, and I trust it may never be your folly to rush into a condition which when rashly undertaken yields the inevitable result of

---

18 PRONI D/1071/J/A/1, A Rowan Hamilton to H Rowan Hamilton, December 1859.
19 PRONI D/1071/J/A/1, Catherine Rowan Hamilton to H Rowan Hamilton, [1859?].
20 PRONI D/1071/J/A/1, A Rowan Hamilton to H Rowan Hamilton, nd.
an unhappy life. ... The end must ... be always kept in view and that end is to fit yourself for an uncertain lot.\textsuperscript{21}

At mid-century the ‘problem’ of ‘surplus’ unmarried women was debated in England. Greg thought they should be sent to the colonies.\textsuperscript{22} Young women could no longer assume there would be a queue of suitors at the door, but in Hariot’s case her father had done his best to ensure that she made a good marriage. She was educated as Hamilton deemed necessary, tempered of course by her gender, into the duties, responsibilities and philosophy of the English.

Perhaps Hamilton’s desire for his (Irish) daughter to succeed on English terms was a reflection of his own Anglo-Irish insecurity. By the 1850s his self-image was being threatened from several quarters. He had not excelled in a career as his ancestors had done. He had not spent his life in the corridors of power in London, but in an Irish village, where he was apparently well liked, but lived quietly and held only local positions of importance. (He was a JP and had been High Sheriff of Co Down.)

In the 1850s Hamilton found it difficult to keep up the trappings of gentry life upon which his status depended. He had retired from the army to manage his estate after Hariot’s birth, and his livelihood depended on his rental income; with his tenants destitute there was little he could do. Co Down had been relatively unscathed during the famine years, but still there was much hardship: Hamilton took out two mortgages during the 1850s.\textsuperscript{23} ‘Poverty ties us to this place’, he wrote to Lord Dufferin in London in 1858. ‘The children have become so expensive and the distress of the

\textsuperscript{21} PRONI D/1071/J/A/1, A Rowan Hamilton to H Rowan Hamilton, 12 April 1860.

\textsuperscript{22} W Greg, ‘Why are Women Redundant?’ \textit{Literary and Social Judgements} (Bungay, London, 1869).

\textsuperscript{23} PRONI Mic 22/9, A Rowan Hamilton to Dufferin, 10 February 1860.
county must be felt to be appreciated'. Hamilton’s ideas about poverty were
class-related not absolute, as his planned trip to Switzerland that year indicates.) But
he had seen other landlords who were not so lucky become insolvent. The sales of
these landlords’ forfeited lands were simplified by the Encumbered Estates Act in
1849, and as much as a quarter of Irish land changed hands between 1849-1854, much
of it bought by profiteers and the younger sons of the upper classes.

Hariot learned from her upbringing that her father had placed his boot firmly in
the English camp. Yet in another way, incorporating both tradition and modernity,
Hamilton was equivocal. During the late 1850s, in a curious blend of old and new,
Hamilton made some improvements to Killyleagh castle. He laid gas pipes, the latest
modern convenience for the wealthy, into the castle, and in a gesture that
re-emphasised tradition, he painted the castle walls with ‘some wash that should give
them the air of antiquity’. This would combine the best of both worlds - the
comforting but dead world of a glorious family past and the future Anglocentric world
of material progress through science.

The religious influence that Hamilton passed on to Hariot was not great. He
had views on Protestantism (‘the true faith’) and Catholicism (‘foolish stories of saints
that never happened’), yet he was not particularly religious. He allowed his family to
play cards, and he did not object to Hariot writing him letters from school on
Sundays. When he provided her with a list of ‘daily aims’ for her adult life the first
one was to read imaginative standard works of fiction and poetry. The

24 PRONI Mic 22/8, A Rowan Hamilton to Dufferin, 14 July 1858.
25 Lyons, _Ireland Since the Famine_, p47.
26 PRONI Mic 22/6, H Rowan Hamilton to Dufferin, February 1856.
27 PRONI D/1071/J/A/1, A Rowan Hamilton to H Rowan Hamilton, 1852.
recommendation to 'set aside a portion of every day to religious duties' came eighth and last. Nevertheless he told her to 'endeavour to carry into the world the spirit of Christianity, ... not troubling yourself with controversy and questions about man's ability to decide but resting content with this simple precept ... love God with all the heart [and] love your neighbour as yourself'. In other words, as a woman she should not tax her brain with concepts, but accept Christian teaching in its most general form.

Hariot's parents belonged to the established Episcopal church, while previous generations of Hamiltons had divided between Presbyterianism and Unitarianism. The tenantry on the Killyleagh estate was 85% Presbyterian and 15% Catholic. The (Anglican) Church of Ireland the Hamiltons supported was a low church with simple furnishings and no musical instruments, tending towards evangelicalism and evidential theology. However Hamilton deplored its 'wretched barn-like interior and its thoroughly unEnglish character', and in the 1850s he helped to raise money for redecorating and installing an organ or harmonium. Hamilton was more concerned with the badge which religion placed upon him and his family than with any devotional matters. Hariot echoed this in her adult life, when she appeared to fulfill religious commitments out of social necessity rather than piety.

The Mother-in-law

The second major influence on Hariot was Dufferin's mother, Helen, Lady Dufferin, later Lady Gifford. She was a granddaughter of Sheridan, and a well-known London society hostess. She had published cartoons and verses, some of her plays had been performed in London theatres, and her letters show an acute sense of humour.

28 PRONI D/1071/J/A/1, A Rowan Hamilton to H Rowan Hamilton, 12 April 1860.
29 PRONI Mic 22/5, A Rowan Hamilton to Dufferin, 1855.
Dufferin idolised his mother all his life. He could remember her twenty-first birthday party, and as widow and only child they had a very close relationship. He built a shrine to her - Helen's Tower - on the Clandeboy estate in 1861. When he published a volume of her verses in 1894 he introduced her as 'one of the sweetest, most beautiful, most accomplished, wittiest, most loving and lovable human beings that ever walked upon the earth'.

One would not think that Hariot could break into this intense mother-child relationship, but she seems to have succeeded. It was Helen who taught Hariot the rituals of London society, both before and after her marriage. Because Helen had the highest ambitions for Dufferin, and was the force behind him, she trained Hariot accordingly. She delighted in teaching her daughter-in-law to cope in any social situation, so that she would be a good helpmeet to the important man she wanted Dufferin to become. She followed her son's career closely, and would not be satisfied with second best for him, as is evident from her letters. When she thought someone else might get the credit for Dufferin's actions in Constantinople she wrote:

It makes me mad to think of nearly a year of the most precious and active period of your life gone in the management of a business which might establish your reputation and fix your position for ever; but which this man's selfish and inordinate vanity may make a mere episodical 'shunting place' on the main line of your career.

When the wedding was announced Helen wrote to her family and her friends praising Hariot highly. She apparently took Hariot to her bosom and loved her as she would a daughter. She continued to train Hariot in social niceties after the marriage. She suggested that Hariot took over the role of hostess every second week at their

30 Nicolson, Helen's Tower, p143.

31 PRONI D/1071/F/A/1/6, Helen Dufferin to Dufferin, nd.
Sunday dinners. Hariot, who was not afraid to stand up to Helen when she wanted to, refused, maybe from fear:

I ... write to petition you not to cast me out from the shadow of your wing, even occasionally. I would much rather see you do the honors, [sic] and make acquaintances while under your protection. I will not therefore consent ... and I am sure when I tell you that I really and sincerely prefer the present arrangement you will not ask me to take upon myself the duties of Hostess, at any rate this year. I am more grateful to you than I can say, for thinking of this plan for my 'aggrandisement' but I will thank you still more if you will let me remain second in command at the Sunday dinners.³²

Despite this refusal Helen’s letters show that she was pleased that Hariot was a willing pupil and was so eager to be a good wife.

Hariot liked Helen enough to let her know immediately - after less than a month of marriage - the symptoms that made her suspect she was pregnant. And she trusted her enough to leave her children in Helen’s care while she travelled with Dufferin. When Helen died in 1867 Hariot wrote in her private diary:

To me she was so true a friend, so loving a mother - never during the four and a half years I had been her daughter saying one single cross or even hasty word to me - always helping me - never grudging me Ghigo’s love - but on the contrary doing all she could to keep it for me to make me seem more worthy of it.³³

The Husband

Dufferin was eighteen years Hariot’s senior, and had known her most of her life. He had promised Hariot’s dying father to oversee her ‘coming out’. He kept his promise. He had a big ball for her, and bought her and Catherine expensive dresses and accessories to wear. He arranged for his mother to chaperone her in London during the season. He had told Hariot to look upon him as an ‘elder brother’, and she

³² PRONI D/1071/J/B/9, Hariot Dufferin to Helen Dufferin [wrongly indexed as Mrs RH], nd.

³³ PRONI D/1071/J/C2/4/1, Hariot’s Diary, 1867.
used this as an excuse to remind him that ‘brotherhood is no sinecure’. Dufferin became the father figure in Hariot’s adolescent life. Harold Nicolson noted Dufferin’s unconscious identification with the age gap of eighteen years, that between his mother and himself, and between him and Hariot. In a curious way they could each fulfill a need in the other: he Hariot’s lost father/authority figure and she Dufferin’s lost girl-mother, moulded into her likeness.

The Hamiltons were of lesser status, power and wealth than Dufferin. Catherine Hamilton was aware that there were other Co Down families who felt their superior social position to the Hamiltons made their daughters more eligible for his attentions:

... the Co Down world (which is also my world) are very ill natured to you and to us, being so envious of your friendship to us, ... everything will be done and said to try and interrupt it.

Hariot was acutely aware of her subordinate position as a woman in her married relationship, and throughout her life would stop speaking when Dufferin entered the room. However, her sense of humour enabled her to cope with the inferior position in which society placed women. She found a way to assert herself by gently mocking Dufferin’s masculine excesses:

How will you feel when I tell you that from the very top of the pinnacle of masculine infallibility and superiority upon which self considered ‘lords of creation’ perch themselves, you came to a wrong conclusion ... you made a mistake which many people do, but then you are a man and one expects the man-mind to be far above all mistakes.

---

34 PRONI Mic 22/10, H Rowan Hamilton to Dufferin, Monday 2nd [February 1862].

35 Nicolson, Helen’s Tower, p143.

36 PRONI Mic 22/11, C Rowan Hamilton to Dufferin, 1 April 1862.

37 PRONI Mic 22/10, H Rowan Hamilton to Dufferin, Thurs 2nd [January 1862].
Although Hariot had more power and influence than most women her status depended upon her husband. Like other imperial wives this put her in an ambivalent position. She upheld colonial domination, but at the same time - and unlike Lady Aberdeen - she was completely dominated by her husband. If she ever questioned his commands or judgement it was in private and went unrecorded. Dufferin was the most important person in Hariot’s life, and everything she did reflected that.

Racing the Empire

Before Lady Dufferin reached India she did not appreciate the complexity of race, and the way it was intertwined with class. During her stay in Canada she had met people of many different nationalities and had formed a ‘hierarchy of races’ in her mind. But after her arrival in India in 1883 she began to differentiate non-white people by class as well as race. She respected the high-caste Indians for their wealth and culture, detecting a bond of class and level of refinement between them and herself, despite the other differences. She wrote that the Maharajah of Jaipur had manners ‘quite as beautiful as my own, and he made his exit most gracefully’. However on one occasion she admitted to being quite startled by the perfect colloquial turn of phrase of one Indian gent, who spoke ‘as if he had just come from Eton or Harrow’. For the Indians to imitate the British too closely in dress and manners could lead to that sense of unease described by Homi Bhabha in Of Mimicry and Man. Mimicry, Bhabha argues, instead of being the sincerest form of flattery, becomes menacing because it undermines the singular authority of the original.

38 Dufferin, Our Viceregal Life 1, p53 (2 February 1885).
39 Dufferin, Our Viceregal Life 2, p38 (9 June 1886).
40 Bhabha, ‘Of Mimicry and Man’.
Perhaps this explains why Lady Dufferin had strong views about styles of dress, which she thought should be preserved against British influence. She complained about the British fashions worn by girls who won prizes at a zenana mission, including 'a horrid calico frock of a purely English pattern'. She contrasted the 'superior dignity' of five elderly Sikhs wearing 'artistic Oriental garb ... all that is beautiful and comfortable and fine', with a younger man in 'ugly and undistinguished' European dress. Clearly she would have liked to impose her own ideas of what 'native dress' should be, rather than respect their choices, which indicated that she believed her judgement to be culturally superior.

There was a world of difference between Lady Dufferin's descriptions of high-caste or royal Indians and her views of the lower castes and the native tribespeople. Describing the entertainments at a durbar in Rawal Pindi, she wrote:

... we had a quantity of wild men to dance their own peculiar savage war dance ... a hundred most cut-throat looking creatures, indifferently clothed and with long hair hanging down, went shrieking and jumping and dancing and brandishing their swords to the sound of a horrible tom-tom and some worse pipes. ... Implicit in Hariot's journal is the view that the British were the most civilised nation on earth, and the standard they set was one to be aspired to by others. She appeared not to see any inconsistency between that view and her report of General Graham's 'decisive victory' at Sikkim in 1888, where '400 of those foolish people who would not make peace, were killed, while on our side we have only two severely, and eight slightly, wounded'.

---

41 Dufferin, Our Viceregal Life 1, p58 (11 February 1885); p122, (16 April 1885).
42 Ibid, p109 (6 April 1885).
43 Dufferin, Our Viceregal Life 2, p303 (25 September 1888).
Hariot thought that British white upper-class civilisation represented the pinnacle, and so she judged other cultures by how close they came to that perfection. Her journal entries show that regardless of their social status in their own societies, native Americans were low down in her ‘hierarchy of races’ (see chapter four). However, contact with missionaries in either Canada or India immediately raised a group several notches on the scale, as this ‘delightful’ village near Barrackpore:

I was not prepared for such clean and picturesque little houses. ... Miss Angelina Hoare is the ruling spirit of all this work. She lives amongst the natives in the paddy fields. ... After the Lord’s Prayer had been said in Bengali I began to hand out the prizes. ... All the children looked nice and clean and tidy.\(^{44}\)

Aristocratic Hindus and Muslims were still further up in her colonial pecking order, although definitely below Anglo-Saxons. Once she had become acquainted with Indian society Lady Dufferin began to think about ‘the other’ in ways which depended on class and status as well as race and ethnicity.

**A Woman’s Place**

Whether Lady Dufferin supported female suffrage is not clear. She had no connections with the formal suffrage movement, and was opposed to it reflecting the fight against Home Rule in Ireland. But she attended a women’s demonstration at the Albert Hall with her daughter Victoria, and at other times she seemed to be in favour.\(^{45}\) She certainly wanted women to live up to their potential and use their brains. She wrote a message on the first page of a new periodical, *The Ulsterwoman*, in July.

\(^{44}\) Ibid, p127 (24 February 1887).

\(^{45}\) PRONI D/1071/J/C1/10, Hariot Dufferin to C Rowan Hamilton, 21 February 1908; D/1071/KH/1/2/1/307, Hariot Dufferin to Hermione Blackwood, 18 March 1917. See chapter six below.
1919, stressing how important it was that women learn all they could about parliamentary issues, and use their votes 'intelligently and conscientiously'.

One charity which she headed when a young woman was the Belfast Ladies Institute, which Alison Jordan notes had a prevailing feminist spirit about it. Its aim was to widen the opportunities for advanced education to higher-class women. Hariot thought that education was important for women, but she was quite happy for it to be gender specific. The suggestion that girls should have classes in domestic economy and household accounts as a substitute for mathematics in middle schools in India seemed to please rather than alarm her. Like Lady Aberdeen, she thought women were equal but different. She fronted several associations that were run by and for women, so she obviously thought that they had a role to play in public life.

Lady Dufferin demanded high moral integrity of others and unlike Lady Aberdeen, was often deeply concerned with status, etiquette and manners. She showed intense disapproval of Harold Nicolson's moral standards and bisexuality; Nicolson thought she was far stricter than his mother. But her moral rectitude was within the bounds of normality for a woman of her class and time, and part and parcel of protecting the aristocratic lineage. She recognised her intolerance, and was even able to laugh at herself in the description she gave of a corridor at the Rangoon Ball:

> Where it shone was in its really scientific arrangements for flirtation. ...

46 *The Ulsterwoman*, 12 July 1919.

47 Alison Jordan, 'Opening the Gates of Learning: the Belfast Ladies' Institute, 1867-97', in Holmes and Urquhart, *Coming into the Light*.

48 Hariot Dufferin, *The National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India* (1886), p40.

curtains, and each little niche just big enough for two. Need I say that 
the light was of that quality usually known as ‘dim religious’? I made a 
sort of state promenade down these alleys, giving a shock to each 
couple as I passed, and discovering the Military Secretary in the last 
one.50

The rituals of etiquette imposed by upper-class women were one of the ways 
that they protected their position at the top of the social ladder. (This will be further 
discussed in the section on Lady Aberdeen.) Shortly after her arrival in Egypt Hariot 
wrote to her mother that

Lady Alison has not come yet, a fearful social anxiety - I begin to fear 
she expects me to go to her first as I should do in England, but I wish 
she would ask somebody and find out ... it is quite contrary to 
‘Etiquette’.51

Lady Dufferin clearly had a sharp awareness of her position, yet despite this 
her shyness prevented her from really settling into being a Very Important Person. 
Katherine Tynan, a younger friend of Catherine Rowan Hamilton’s, related an 
occasion - probably 1911 - when she travelled by train into Dublin in the same 
carriage as Lady Dufferin. They knew each other but they did not speak: ‘I, as became 
me, waiting to be asked. The old lady said afterwards: “My daughter would have liked 
to talk to you on the way up to town, but she did not like to offer herself. She is very 
shy.”’52

Only women could be physical reproducers of Empire,53 but this extra work of 
being a woman sometimes had a very high cost: infant mortality and maternal deaths 
were not uncommon. Lady Dufferin gave birth to six boys and three girls - future

50 Dufferin, Our Viceregal Life 1, p333 (24 February 1886).
51 PRONI D/1071/J/C1/6, 18 November 1882.
imperial subjects - over twelve years. Two of these babies died soon after birth. But children can also cause grief when they are grown, and Lady Dufferin knew the pain women can suffer in war. In 1899 she gave her ‘first blood-sacrifice to the cause of Empire,’ her eldest son at Ladysmith.

Lady Dufferin handed her seven children a cultural legacy by bringing up her four boys to be imperial rulers of the future, and her girls to be daughters of Empire. They did not fail her. Helen had an imperial career as the wife of the Governor of New Zealand, Ronald Munro-Ferguson. Hermione and Victoria became Jubilee nurses in Britain and Ireland; Hermione served with the ambulance service in France during the war, and Victoria was involved with the South Africa Colonisation Society and on the executive of the Victoria League. Archibald was the son killed at Ladysmith. Another son, Basil, helped administer the Orange River Colony and later became Governor of Barbados. He was killed in action in 1917. Terence went into the foreign office. The youngest, Frederick, was wounded in the Boer war and later served in India and Australia. Harriot’s six sons all predeceased her.

---

54 For every thousand live births there averaged 150 infant and 5 maternal deaths throughout the nineteenth century; death during miscarriage also occurred. (The statistics are under-representative). See Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford UP, Oxford, 1996), pp119-42, statistics p120. Lady Dufferin’s account of the birth and death of one of her babies is in the Appendix.


Conclusion

During their married life the Dufferins had many official overseas postings: Turkey, Egypt, Canada, Russia, India, Italy and France. In these places Lady Dufferin was a high-level representative of the British Crown. Her nephew was mystified as to how ‘a shy country girl from a restricted social background’, had ‘metamorphosed into a woman who could mix with the elite the world over’. But it is not surprising. Three people helped to bring about this change, her father, husband and mother-in-law. Her father had had high ambitions for her; the Dufferins groomed her and made them real. As a young woman Hariot played the ingenue, the delighted child, but she never forgot who was in charge. And after her marriage she appeared not to need or want control over her own destiny. Her sense of self derived from Lord Dufferin and his position.

Lady Dufferin revered her husband, and no doubt fulfilled many of her imperial responsibilities to please him. Without her sense of duty and devotion, many of the tasks which she undertook in the service of Empire would have remained undone. Unlike Lady Aberdeen, her social conscience was little developed. Marian Fowler points out that her Indian journal did not mention her thoughts on beggars or slums, and her Canadian journal ignored the severe poverty and unemployment of 1870s Canada. She liked to support charities which helped the upper classes, especially those who had fallen on hard times. The Dufferin Fund, for example, was mainly

57 Nicolson, Helen's Tower, p146.
58 Marian Fowler, The Embroidered Tent (Anansi, Toronto, 1982).
59 Such as the Ulster Ladies' Work Society to help reduced gentlewomen: see Belfast Newsletter, 23 July 1914.
intended for high-caste women. She clearly had little interest in improving the lot of the masses.

Reading Lady Dufferin’s private letters and journals I was struck by her lack of confidence in official situations, whether welcoming dignitaries, hosting a reception or helping a charity. She was also extremely shy. She hid these difficulties beneath a strict veneer of propriety and duty (thereby terrifying some of the younger generation of Blackwoods). It is a cliché to say it, but she was a product of her time.

2. Ishbel Maria Marjoribanks

Doris French’s biography is called *Ishbel and the Empire*. This title is apt, for much of her family’s wealth flowed from the outposts of Empire, while her Scottish, Irish and English ancestors bore witness to her birth as a child of the metropolis. Ishbel was born in 1857, the third of five surviving children of Isabel Hogg and Dudley Coutts Marjoribanks, who married in 1848. Isabel’s father was a ‘brilliant but penniless’ lawyer from Co Down, James Weir Hogg. 60 He sought his fortune in India, and before long was earning £15,000 a year at the Calcutta bar. There in 1822 he married Mary Swinton, whose family owned estates in Berwickshire and Durham. On their return to England he became a Tory MP, and in later life sat on the Indian Council.

The Marjoribanks family originated in Berwick-on-Tweed, where they had produced a long line of Members of Parliament and Lords Provost. Dudley’s father Edward, a Liberal MP, was a barrister and a director of the East India Company. For seventy years he was a partner in Coutts Bank, which had prospered on the spoils of Empire; his cousin Thomas Coutts was a founder. Edward married Georgina Latour,

who was part French, in 1808. Dudley, Ishbel’s father, was Liberal MP for Berwick-on-Tweed before being raised to the peerage in 1881 when Ishbel’s brother Edward was elected to his seat. For some reason Dudley had displeased the Coutts family, and was not offered a job in the bank, but he accepted a partnership in Meux Brewery. This was a prosperous period for Dudley - and Britain. Between 1850 and 1870 the gross national product increased by 75%. Dudley amassed considerable wealth in his own right, including a large shareholding in the Hudson Bay Company, before he inherited his father’s estate in 1868. With his fortune he acquired the good things in life for himself and his family. In 1856 he bought an estate in the Scottish highlands, Guisachan, and completely rebuilt the house. He bought Wedgwood china, old masters, eighteenth-century furniture and fine carpets to adorn Brook House, the home overlooking Hyde Park where Ishbel was born.

A Life in a Page

1857 14 March: Ishbel Maria Marjoribanks was born in London. Childhood years were spent in Scotland and London.

1877 Ishbel married John Campbell Gordon, 30, (November 7). He had become the seventh Earl of Aberdeen on the deaths of his two older brothers.

1877-1878 November - June: Honeymoon in Egypt.

1878-1886 The Aberdeens divided their time between London and the Haddo estate in Aberdeenshire, coming south for parliamentary sessions. Lady Aberdeen gave birth to five children, one of whom died in infancy. She started the Onward and Upward Association to educate servants.

---

Aberdeen was made Lord-Lieutenant of Aberdeenshire.

Aberdeen was made Lord High Commissioner to the Church of Scotland.

February - August: During Gladstone’s brief administration Aberdeen was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. Lady Aberdeen started the Irish Home Industries Association.

1886-1887 December - July: The Aberdeens embarked on a world tour visiting India, Australia, New Zealand and the United States.

The Aberdeens lived between Scotland and England as before. Lady Aberdeen founded and edited *Onward and Upward*, a monthly magazine which was still running in 1927. She took on political work, making speeches on behalf of the Liberals. She took the chair of the Women’s Liberal Federation, and other organisations.

August - November: The Aberdeens went to Canada to look at prospects for immigrants from Britain. Lady Aberdeen persuaded some Winnipeg women to set up the Lady Aberdeen Association for the Distribution of Literature to Settlers in the West.

Further visit to Canada.

Lady Aberdeen took her Irish Village to the Chicago World’s Fair. She accepted the presidency of the International Council of Women (held 35 years).

Aberdeen was Governor-General of Canada. Lady Aberdeen personally inaugurated nineteen local branches of the National Council of Women.

Lady Aberdeen started the Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada.

Life in Scotland and London as before.

The Aberdeens went back to Dublin for a second term.
1907 Lady Aberdeen founded the Women's National Health Association.

1909 Youngest son Ian Archibald Gordon was killed in a car crash.

1916-1918 The Aberdeens toured America on speaking engagements to raise money for the WNHA and Scottish charities.

1934 7 March: Lord Aberdeen died.

1938 Lady Aberdeen planned the Peace Pavilion for the Empire Exhibition in Glasgow.

1939 18 April: Lady Aberdeen died.

The Power of Knowledge

When Ishbel was thirteen (1870) she started a journal. She recounted how when in London she was tutored in dancing, piano, painting and singing, while for recreation she joined the group of young people who rode in Hyde Park each morning. Her governess Mlle Baux chaperoned her to M. Roche's twice-weekly lessons for young ladies. These were conducted in French, as fluency in that language was still absolutely necessary for members of the aristocracy. Later she was tutored by Professor Meiklejohn. There were no lessons in mathematics or science, a lack she felt all her life. This was all normal for the girls of this class; their brothers, of course, were sent away to school.

It was believed that too much education could harm young girls, and even destroy their future ability to reproduce, although by the 1870s doctors began to challenge this idea. Girton College, founded by Emily Davies in 1869, was the first

place to provide university-level education for women. When Meiklejohn had suggested Ishbel should apply, her father refused to allow it.\(^6^3\) Perhaps because of this she later presided over societies in Edinburgh and Glasgow which sought university education for women. She told critics of female education that they should perhaps compare 'the percentage of women who broke down in the pursuit of education' with 'the percentage who broke down in the pursuit of pleasure'.\(^6^4\)

Believing that education was the key to self-dignity, she formed the Onward and Upward Association to educate servants, writing the courses herself: religion, history, geography, arithmetic. After a year she had 800 subscribers in 24 branches in Aberdeenshire, with classes for both men and women.\(^6^5\) In 1890 she produced (and edited) a monthly magazine, *Onward and Upward*, for the Association. It contained articles on people and places in the Empire, many of them written by herself. There were suggestions for Bible reading and other books. There were quizzes which involved some research for the participant. Prizes were offered for essays on topics which were clearly designed to encourage critical thought. All this was interspersed with predictable fiction, household hints, cookery and needlework and heavily overlaid with religion.\(^6^6\) Later on in Ireland she started a magazine, *Slainte*, for the purpose of educating on health matters.


\(^{6^4}\) NLI MS 24522, Amy Manders Papers, cutting from Pall Mall Budget, 25 April 1889: *Address by Lady Aberdeen as Retiring President of the Edinburgh Association for the University Education of Women*.

\(^{6^5}\) Ishbel Aberdeen, *Mistresses and Maid servants* (Brown, Aberdeen, 1884). By 1899 there were over 100 branches in Scotland, three in Canada and others in South Africa. A Jamaican branch was started in 1909. Membership peaked at over 8,000; in 1899 it stood at 6341. National Council of Women of Canada, *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, for distribution at the Paris International Exhibition, 1900 (The Queen's Printer, Ottawa, 1900), p406.

\(^{6^6}\) James Drummond (ed.), *Onward and Upward* (Aberdeen UP, Aberdeen, 1983),
Keeping Ourselves to Ourselves

Class boundaries in Victorian Britain were carefully policed. The newly wealthy members of the middle class, perhaps with pretensions to grandeur, had to be kept in their place underneath the upper classes on the social ladder. This was done, according to Leonore Davidoff, by the 'structured access rituals of nineteenth-century Society'.\(^6^7\) So Ishbel was carefully trained in etiquette, style and manners. She hated it: 'I was pulled about all morning by Isodore [hairstylist] and trying on dresses etc'.\(^6^8\) In her journal in February 1875 she wrote: 'Very tired and stiff after Presentation lesson'.\(^6^9\) She was no lover of London society or fashions, maybe because she was large-boned, tall and heavy, tipping the scales at 154lbs when she was only fourteen.\(^7^0\) She did not enjoy her presentation to Queen Victoria, tripping over her train in her haste to make a quick exit.\(^7^1\) Nevertheless looking back years later she bemoaned the relaxation of protocol because she thought it did young people good. Submitting to the rules of society was perfect training for their adult lives.\(^7^2\)

After 'coming out' young upper-class women attended parties to meet prospective marriage partners. But Ishbel's first adult party in 1875 did not impress

\(^6^7\) Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p15.
\(^6^8\) HH10/1/5, *Journal*, 15 December 1874.
\(^6^9\) John and Ishbel Maria Aberdeen, *More Cracks with We Twa* (Methuen, London, 1929).
\(^7^0\) HH10/1/2, *Journal*, 25 November 1871.
\(^7^1\) HH 10/1/6, *Journal*, 19 March 1875.
\(^7^2\) J and I Aberdeen, *More Cracks with We Twa*.
her. 'I was introduced to ever so many people whom I am sure I will not remember', she wrote, 'I am very glad to be home again and very tired of hearing the same things repeated over and over again'.\(^3\) She thought that her English class was 'much more enjoyable' than her first dance, which she thought was 'so very stupid'.\(^4\) A few weeks later at Guisachan she wrote with relief: 'It is so delightful being away from all that London whirl - it is a breathing-time for which I am truly thankful'.\(^5\)

Formally arranged marriages no longer took place, but aristocratic mothers were extensively involved in matchmaking for the younger generation.\(^6\) Ishbel's mother had heard Matthew Ridley's speech as head boy at Harrow, and determined then to have him as a son-in-law. He later married Ishbel's older sister Polly.\(^7\) Isabel once held a dance to further Annie Churchill's prospects. '[I] went off very successfully', Ishbel wrote cynically in her journal, 'and gained its object, as Lord Beaumont finally proposed to Annie Churchill'.\(^8\) Ishbel's own 57 year marriage to John Campbell Gordon was aided and abetted by her mother.\(^9\)

\(^{73}\) HH10/1/6, *Journal*, 3 February 1875.

\(^{74}\) HH10/1/6, *Journal*, 8 February 1875.

\(^{75}\) HH10/1/6, *Journal*, 17 May 1875.

\(^{76}\) Davidoff, *The Best Circles*, p49.

\(^{77}\) Aberdeen, *We Twa* 1, p142.

\(^{78}\) HH10/1/5, *Journal*, 31 March 1874.

\(^{79}\) HH10/1/6, *Journal*, February-April 1876; July 1877. Ishbel did the same thing years later by engineering a marriage for her epileptic oldest son with a woman past childbearing age.
The 'Heavenly Power which has carried me through ...

Although Ishbel’s parents were austere orthodox Presbyterians, like other families who moved between England and Scotland they attended both Church of Scotland (Presbyterian) and Church of England services. Ishbel was confirmed in both churches when she was fourteen. Her mother Isabel’s family were evangelical Christians; Isabel’s brother Quintin Hogg helped organise the Moody and Sankey tours of 1875 and 1884. Dudley, Ishbel’s father, had been brought up in the severe Calvinist tradition, which believed in predestination and original sin, although after the secession of the Free Church from the Church of Scotland at the Disruption of 1843, he remained within the established church. Both parents impressed upon Ishbel her duty to obey God. As a teenager she sometimes visited church two or three times a day, listening attentively to the sermon so that she could give it pride of place in her journal and think about what it meant. This strong religious conviction remained with her throughout life, and accounts for the passionate way she tried to improve the world.

It was common for young girls of Ishbel’s background to teach at Sunday school before ‘coming out’, and when Ishbel was seventeen she was asked to conduct a class at Quebec Chapel near Marble Arch. She was overjoyed at this wonderful opportunity ‘to be made the channel through which the water of life may flow to some of these souls.’ Next she started to prepare young girls for their confirmation. She took all this work extremely seriously, and visited the homes of her Sunday school boys to check on their welfare. She even invited them all to tea at her

81 Davidoff, The Best Circles.
82 HH10/1/5, Journal, 26 April 1874.
home. Then she begged her father for permission to organise similar classes for the tenant children at Guisachan.

After her marriage she continued to rescue souls. Gladstone introduced her to some of his protégées at the Strand Rescue Mission when he felt he was too old to continue his work there. She evidently went alone into nearby streets every Friday evening to tempt prostitutes into the mission and show them the error of their ways. Her parents were horrified and asked Gladstone to stop her, but he refused. Shortly after taking up residence at Haddo House she decided to improve the morals of young women workers in Aberdeenshire, and started the Onward and Upward Society described on page 103. This was deliberately open to all women, including unmarried non-virgins who were debarred from other societies like the Girls Friendly Society.

At the age of 27 Lady Aberdeen moved away from fundamental Presbyterianism. It had been a fierce religion for her, with its emphasis on original sin, and in which earthly endeavours seemed to count for nothing. The reason for the change was that in 1884 she met Henry Drummond, who ‘changed us so completely that on looking back to the first seven years of our married life we scarcely recognise ourselves in the prim goody young couple we were then’. Although Drummond was the son of a Presbyterian Free Church minister, he had gone into the progressive New Church which jettisoned traditional belief in predestination, or the idea that only the elect would reach heaven, in favour of personal conversion and salvation. More importantly, in his book *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*, he had shown how it was

---


84 *Onward and Upward* 1:1 (1890), p18.

possible to combine these ideas with evolutionary Darwinism. The natural fixed laws of science, he argued, also governed the spiritual world of religion. Late nineteenth-century society was unsettled by a period of religious uncertainty and doubt in which scientific theories like those of Darwin were challenging received religion, and so Drummond’s book was immensely successful. But the argument that religion could coexist with science was much criticised among theologians, who demonstrated to their own satisfaction that it was founded on fallacy.\(^8^6\)

Lady Aberdeen, however, saw it as a perfect synthesis. Science could further, not hinder, religion, and religion could give purpose to a present life as well as a future one. In practice this meant that individual action was valuable, and society could progress through a combination of modern science and individual moral earnestness. She was so taken with these ideas that she borrowed the ballroom at Grosvenor House, and persuaded Drummond to give a series of lectures there for London’s social elite.

In the last years of her life she described how after studying with Drummond she had received the call, something which she had never before acknowledged:

And then came the feeling that this call had nothing whatsoever to do with myself, but that a mighty Power was taking possession of me if I could only have faith to let myself go ... I was only too conscious all the time that I was being carried along on a sort of great wave of divine love which sometimes seemed to make one’s physical body quiver all over. ... In the strength of the Almighty ... difficulties simply vanished ... paths for compromise and understanding simply manifested themselves, and forces for evil were dispersed and defeated.\(^8^7\)

---


\(^8^7\) HH 10/4/8, *Notes by Lady Aberdeen for Matthew Urie Baird*. 
Lady Aberdeen’s personal philosophy had been (naively) of a social harmony in which everyone worked together for the common good. Now her renewed faith in religion and in the difference she could make revived her sense of purpose and made social action not only worthwhile but imperative. Her first opportunity to put Drummond’s teaching into practice was in Ireland in 1886. Lady Pentland writes that Ireland was a troublesome country for which [Lady Aberdeen] felt a strong dislike; where she would have to observe just the sort of ‘flummery’ and social convention against which she had rebelled from her youth.  

Lady Aberdeen told Gladstone they felt ‘overwhelmed by the prospect’. But she accepted it as a mission from God, and entered a love affair with Ireland which lasted all her life. Her time in Ireland is discussed in chapters five and eight.

**Politics and Liberalism**

‘Liberalism is, so far as we can judge, Christianity applied to politics’, Lady Aberdeen told the Glasgow Women’s Liberal Federation. She thought that being a Liberal meant having a voice, and most importantly, having an opinion, unlike Primrose League women whom she said were ‘not allowed to talk politics’. From childhood Ishbel had mixed in high Liberal circles and been interested in politics. Her grandfather, father and brother had all been Liberal MPs, her brother Edward had married into the Churchill family, and the Gladstones were friends of her parents. In 1874, when the Liberals lost power to the Conservatives under Disraeli, she noted

---


89 BL Add Mss 44090/145, Ishbel Aberdeen to WE Gladstone, 11 February 1886.


91 *Aylesbury Reporter*, 2 July 1892.
that although her father was re-elected her brother had failed to win a seat. She commented in her journal that 'everywhere the Liberals have been beaten by great majorities even at places where the same members have sat for 30 years.'

Her mother (Lady Tweedmouth) taught her that women had power through their influence, and could use it to attain their wishes. One way a well-connected woman could do that was as a political hostess, and Lady Tweedmouth was one of the most successful of her day. Although she was a Liberal she had kept up her family's Conservative connections. When her daughter Polly married Matthew Ridley she gave dinner parties for them to help Matthew's career in the Conservative party; Disraeli attended one of these. Shortly after the 1874 election Ishbel was allowed to join a dinner party held by her parents. The guests included some key political figures: Gladstone, the Speaker of the House of Commons (Brand), Lord Halifax (Secretary of State for India 1859-66) and Randolph Churchill. Ishbel listened attentively to their conversations, which would have helped to form her own opinions.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century many factors combined towards what George Dangerfield later called 'The Strange Death of Liberal England,' and after World War 1 the Liberal party had little influence on national politics. Nevertheless, Lady Aberdeen remained a staunch supporter of mainstream Liberalism all her life. In 1878 when Disraeli declared war on Afghanistan she had persuaded her husband to move from the Conservative to the Liberal benches in the House of Lords. She stayed with the party in 1886, when the Liberal Unionists - including her father - deserted over Irish Home Rule. She stayed with the mainstream in 1902 when the Liberals split further over the war in South Africa. In 1937 aged 80 she addressed

---

92 HH10/1/5, Journal, 4 and 14 February 1974.
93 HH10/1/4, Journal, 6 March 1874.
Buxton Liberals, proudly recalling her final meeting with Gladstone. Gladstone had frequently spent his weekends with the Aberdeens at Dollis Hill in the 1880s and 1890s, and he and Lady Aberdeen constantly exchanged letters on anything and everything: politics, rescuing prostitutes, books she had read, books he should read. In 1892 he asked her to speak for the Liberal party at an election meeting in Aylesbury. Given the strengths of her convictions and similar views to Gladstone it is probable that there was a two-way flow of influence and ideas between them.

Suffrage and Feminism

In the later nineteenth century women of all classes in Britain may have lacked the vote but they were active in party politics. Upper-class women had always wielded political influence, publicly as political hostesses and privately as confidantes. From the 1870s onward women could stand for election to local councils, school boards and boards of guardians. In 1883 the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Act made it illegal to pay political campaigners, and so voluntary groups such as the Women’s Liberal Federation, and the Primrose League, which had a million male and female members by the early 1890s, became established. In 1887 Lady Aberdeen took the chair of the new WLF executive, which according to Linda Walker had a reputation for ‘strong feminism’. In 1892 the movement split over female suffrage, and those groups that

94 Pentland, Bonnie Fechter, p223.
95 Many letters from Lady Aberdeen to Gladstone are in BL Add Mss, 44090/.
96 Aylesbury Reporter, 2 July 1892.
thought other liberal objectives were more important left the Federation. Lady Aberdeen was uncompromising in her view:

We demand the suffrage, we make no pretence about this nor about our intention of educating the country generally to demand it - it is an absurdity to expect women to do political work [and] not to demand the elementary political privilege.  

But despite this conviction she did not support gender-selective suffrage. This was not because of the common belief that women would vote Conservative. She credited women with more intelligence and independence of thought than that. It was because of her liberal principles. She wanted the vote as much as anyone, but not as a special favour to women because all men and women should be enfranchised, and working-class people needed the vote more than those with leisure, means and influence.  

Lady Aberdeen hated unpleasantness between the sexes, and disapproved of militant feminism in any form. In 1905, after political speeches in the Albert Hall had been interrupted with cries of 'Votes for Women', she told Campbell- Bannerman that the WLF 'wish emphatically to distance ourselves from such method'. She believed that the object of the women's suffrage movement was largely misunderstood. It was not for 'the glorification of women' but 'that we may be in a position of doing our duty, for the sake of the home, city and country'. Women were separate but equal, she believed: '..is it not enough that we should realize that as women we have a great and wonderful mission to perform? and it is just because we are women that we want to be able to fulfil that mission in its fulness, [sic] side by side with men'.


99 HH Bookcase A2, Speeches, Addresses and Articles by and on Lord and Lady Aberdeen 1, ‘Speech to the WLF, London, May 1892’.

100 HH1/5, Ishbel Aberdeen to John Morley, 20 May 1889.

101 Pentland, Bonnie Fechter, p151.

102 Ishbel Aberdeen (ed.), Report of the International Council of Women (Toronto,
Olive Banks has contrasted evangelical feminists like Lady Aberdeen with equal-rights feminists who believed the sexes were equal and the difference between them shaped by environment. Evangelical feminists thought there were inherent differences between the sexes, and they wanted access to the public sphere so that society could benefit from their special virtues and abilities. In 1889 Lady Aberdeen formed the Society for the Return of Women as County Councillors so that they could play a part in public life, although she believed that their duties as wives and mothers must always come first.

Jane Lewis points out that some women seized on the civilising mission as a way to justify activities outside the home. Perhaps, but Lady Aberdeen’s vision went further than that. She believed that the world of politics was less than perfect because ‘the women of the community have not taken their part in it’. Once enfranchised they would become active agents of change, and were urgently needed to raise the moral tenor of local, municipal and political government. Her message of social maternalism was clear: this was ‘not a matter of choice, but of duty ... the women of each country must mother it by helping its city fathers to administer ...’

Even when speaking of women’s moral influence within the home Lady Aberdeen had far-reaching ideas. Her thoughts reached beyond the confines of family, community, and country, and stretched out to the Empire:

1910, p219 (emphasis in original).


104 Pentland, *Bonnie Fechter*, p75; see also *South London Press*, 27 February 1892.


107 Ibid, p185 (emphasis in original).
Are we using our influence as sisters, wives, and above all, as mothers, to inspire our children, and those amongst whom we live, not only with an intense patriotic pride and love for their own country and desire to serve her, but also with that greater ambition which comes with the sense of belonging to a race to whom the great Father of all has entrusted in these later days, in large measure, the destinies of the world*108

Some years later Ishbel complained how women’s social duties were mainly seen to be leaving cards and returning visits, dining out and going to evening parties, and doing that which really is woman’s duty in political life - making yourself agreeable to all who would advance your husband or his party, never mind who and what they are.

As we will see, Ishbel herself never restricted her activities to social duties. She wanted to contribute, especially if it would lead to the betterment of society.109

However she gently modified her ideas on social reform as the years passed. She came to realise that education and self-help were not always sufficient to raise some families out of near destitution; state and voluntary aid together were required. ‘Wherever there is the best undertaking and co-operation between official and voluntary workers, there will be the best work and the most fruitful results’, she told the International Congress of Women in 1909.110 This suggests that by then she was following New Liberal ideas, after TH Green, common enough amongst intellectuals, although perhaps unusual amongst the aristocracy.

Whenever the opportunity arose Lady Aberdeen emphasised women’s unacknowledged and quiet heroism in private life and their importance in public life. For thirty-five years she was the active president of the International Council of Women. The ICW stated it was neutral in religion and politics, and aimed to bring

---

108 Queen, 8 February 1892.


together all women involved in social welfare work.\textsuperscript{111} It was an umbrella organisation for the National Councils of Women in different countries. She was instrumental in starting some of these national councils herself.

In 1919 when the Covenant of the League of Nations was being framed, Lady Aberdeen requested an audience with the convening body chaired by President Wilson. Her ICW delegation achieved the insertion of certain clauses into the Covenant. One stated that appointments to the League Secretariat should be open equally to both sexes. Another specified equal consultation of women and men in any referendum regarding change of nationality.\textsuperscript{112} This well illustrates Ishbel’s ability to identify a problem, find a solution, and go to the very top to get it implemented. But it should be noted that few women had the status or social connections to do this.

Lady Aberdeen was also skilled at making useful links, or pinpointing ways that new groups could be founded to further her ambition of uniting (middle- and upper-class) women for peaceful progress the world over, preferably under her supervision. In 1894 she persuaded Lady Glasgow, wife of the Governor of New Zealand, to write an article about her Mother’s Union for \textit{Onward and Upward}, and commented that she could possibly ‘cement new happy relations between the New Zealand and Scottish groups’.\textsuperscript{113} Before Herbert Gladstone and his wife were sent to South Africa in 1909 she wrote and asked to discuss the possibilities of establishing a National Council of Women there. After their meeting she sent them the Canadian Council’s handbook, with these instructions:


\textsuperscript{112} Ibid, p45.

\textsuperscript{113} HH10/2/4, \textit{Additional Journal}, 1894.
I fancy Canada would be the best model for South Africa and perhaps some of the workers from Canada could come to South Africa later on to help the South African women to organise.\textsuperscript{114}

**Greater Britain**

In 1886 Rosebery urged the Aberdeens to take a world trip and see the Empire at first hand.\textsuperscript{115} Lady Aberdeen had already gleaned ideas of Empire from her family and their acquaintances.\textsuperscript{116} When she was 18 she wrote an essay on India on the occasion of the Prince of Wales’ visit. It revealed the view she had assimilated, providing a pretty standard picture of ‘the Indian’ through colonial eyes. The Bengali was ‘weak and puny’, ‘treacherous’, ‘a fawning slave’, and ‘a thorough coward’. The Sikh was ‘manly and active’, and ‘not so cunning and untruthful’ as the Bengali.

However the essay also indicates that she was working out how to win Indian people over. She believed that ‘want of sympathy and confidence’ was ‘the main evil’, and that the British needed to kindle ‘enthusiasm and loyalty’ in Indian hearts, so that their ‘deep-rooted prejudices’ would give way. Her view was idealistic, as it remained all her life, but she appreciated how pomp and spectacle were useful weapons of power: ‘Extreme magnificence alone produces the full impression of power upon Eastern minds’, she wrote. Each gift, each ritual or tradition must be reciprocated on a larger scale, so that the Prince could ‘worthily’ represent ‘the great Empire’. Ishbel also thought conversion to Christianity should accompany British rule. This could be

\textsuperscript{114} BL Add Mss 45995/258, Ishbel Aberdeen to Mrs Herbert Gladstone, 23 January 1910; also 45995/262, Ishbel Aberdeen to Herbert Gladstone, 29 April 1910.

\textsuperscript{115} Pentland, *Bonnie Fechter*, p65.

\textsuperscript{116} For example a guest at the dinner party mentioned on page 110 had been Secretary of State for India.
accomplished, she thought, by working through the 'educated and independent' 'Bengali Babus', who 'had learnt to disbelieve in Hindoosm'.

On honeymoon in Egypt the Aberdeens bought Arabic Bibles and tracts to give away. Travelling down the Nile, they 'adopted' four boys out of slavery, calling them Abdeen, Haddo, Campbell and Gordon. Lord Aberdeen told the crew that the boys were on an English boat, and so were 'NOT SLAVES'. Later in his journal he noted with some satisfaction that 'this statement was received with loud cries of approval'. The Aberdeens expected to be rewarded with gratitude for their efforts. Once while Lady Aberdeen was amusing some Egyptian boys, they disappointed her by asking for a big Bible each. This 'startled us and gave us a feeling of disappointment', she wrote, well aware that the motivating factor was not Christianity.

In Egypt Lady Aberdeen had wanted to spread the Christian and liberal principles that she believed in. This of course was the cultural impact of the British Empire, although she did not think about it in those terms. But during her six-month long world tour ten years later, she pondered on just how her own principles were intertwined with Empire. She read the new edition of Dilke's Greater Britain, was very impressed, and gave it to Henry Drummond to read.

Like Dilke, her idea of Empire had come to mean a federation of English-speaking people. But she believed that the United Kingdom must be strengthened to

---

117 HH10/1/7, Ishbel's essays for Meiklejohn.

118 HH10/1/8, Journal, 19 December 1877.

119 HH10/1/8, Journal, 26 February 1878. The Aberdeens paid for the boys' education and kept in touch. Three died in childhood but the fourth became a college lecturer.

120 HH10/1/8, Journal, 15 January 1878.

121 HH1/7, Henry Drummond to Ishbel Aberdeen, 29 April 1890.
provide the necessary pivot around which the Empire revolved. She argued that Home
Rule would strengthen the United Kingdom by making the Irish peaceful and
compliant members of it. It would remove ‘friction and irritation’ between Britain and
America, so that Irish-Americans would cease to be a pressure group. Home Rule
could then ‘lay the foundation of a solid alliance between the two great branches of
the English speaking race’. In 1891 she told American women that ‘we scarcely yet
have a glimmering of the grandeur of the vocation to which God has called us ...’.122
She envisaged a strong and vibrant British Empire with America clamouring for
membership and Britain in command. If America were to join ‘God’s chosen people
above all others in the service of humanity ... What may not the English-speaking race
accomplish?’123

With a strong centre to the British Empire, and America satisfied, the next
important thing, Ishbel thought, was to strengthen the individual white settler
colonies. They needed a sense of their own identity as nations within the British
Empire. Writing from British Columbia during a ‘successful’ tour in 1894 she told
Gladstone the tour would ‘help in cementing the links between the various Provinces
as well as between Canada and the Empire’.124 Canada was important, because once
Canada had a strong sense of nationhood Canadians would not be drawn into political
union with America. She set up three unifying organisations there: the Aberdeen
Association, the National Council of Women, and the Victorian Order of Nurses.
These will be discussed in chapters four and eight.

122 Queen, 6 February 1892.
123 HH Bookcase A2, Speeches, Addresses and Articles by and on Lord and Lady
Aberdeen 1, ‘Speech to the WLF, London, May 1892’.
124 BL Add Mss 44090/256, Ishbel Aberdeen to Gladstone, 6 November 1894.
When the South African war came Lady Aberdeen and other mainstream Liberals fought hard against the policies of the Conservative government. She said that Conservatives had chosen to spend money on the ‘gold-diggers’ in the Transvaal rather than provide domestic reforms or help persecuted Armenian Christians. ‘Is this the process of upholding the honour of the Empire? Is this the new imperialism in very deed?’ she asked her Scottish audience. ‘The time has come when we as patriots are called upon to save our country by changing its policy.’ The Boers could not have independence or self-government immediately, but it would come when they were ready. In the meantime kindly friends would govern them, using, she suggested, the Canadian policy of Lord Durham. This speech illustrates Ishbel’s convictions as a Christian and a humanist, and her firmly-held belief in an innate British superiority and destiny.

**Conclusion**

Lady Aberdeen’s life clearly shows the ways in which her gender, race and class positions intersected - sometimes to constrain her and at other times to liberate her. Her typical upper-class upbringing may not have allowed her the freedom to go out unchaperoned, but it liberated her in other ways. Women in her position had influence. She used the power of status and class (and sometimes her Englishness) to get her own way. Despite the demands of motherhood, and unlike many less privileged women, she could pursue her interests because her retinue of servants and nannies released her from the drudgery of housework and childcare. She cared little for convention and etiquette, and did not worry what people thought of her. She had a

---

125 *Aberdeen Journal*, 22 November 1901.
'gentle generous husband' who was apparently happy to support her in whatever she did.  

Like other 'women of Empire' born in mid-Victorian Britain, Lady Aberdeen was influenced by Christianity and liberal principles. She had an intense belief that she could make worthwhile changes to the world, and a fervent desire that all people should reach what she believed to be their potential. Lady Aberdeen did not support a good cause because she had to, but because she passionately felt she was doing good. Even in her sixties she often worked through the night, and demanded the same kind of commitment from others – which they could rarely give. Leaving Haddo at five in the morning to catch the Irish ferry was not unusual; she travelled to meetings in Ireland most months for many years. The day before she died she was involved in discussions about workmen's cottages being built at Peamount Sanatorium, Dublin. Lady Aberdeen did not change greatly with age. Her commitment to a cause was almost always absolute, so that her interests lasted for life.

* * * * *

There were minor differences between these two women. Lady Aberdeen was proactive and Lady Dufferin was not. Lady Dufferin tended not to notice the people who did things for her, while Lady Aberdeen was always aware of the services provided by those beneath her on the social scale. Lady Dufferin stressed the importance of position and protocol, something Lady Aberdeen cared little about, (although no doubt it would have been important if she had lacked it).

However their shared class and ethnic origin ensured that they had much in common, some of it learned at mother's knee. They were both intelligent, liberal-

---

126 Pentland, Bonnie Fechter, p23.
minded and Presbyterian, although Lady Dufferin was not overly religious and Lady Aberdeen was more politically radical. Both played an unpaid role in the Empire as representatives of the Crown. Both believed that they belonged to the 'superior race'. Yet they both admitted to private insecurities. This indicates a level of ambivalence in each woman, perhaps some liminal realisation that her relationship to other classes and other races was not fixed, but was based on power and exploitation. And while they had privileged lives and possessed power and authority over colonised people, they were both aware of their inferior status as women, and had to negotiate the patriarchal society in which they lived.

Part of Lady Aberdeen’s insecurity stemmed from her lack of formal education, especially when dealing with better educated women in later life. Lady Dufferin felt she was constantly being judged, and was shy and self-conscious for most of her life. The following chapters will show that they dealt with these constraints in different ways, one by challenging and one by conforming to social norms.
Chapter 4

Uniting the Canadian Nation

Lady Dufferin was Vicereine between 1872 and 1878, and Lady Aberdeen was Vicereine twenty years later (1893-1898). This chapter opens with a brief overview of general aspects of their lives there. I will not discuss Lady Aberdeen’s influence (and interference) in Canadian politics, which has already been well studied. I compare the way Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen wrote about and interacted with native North Americans, French Canadians, and recent immigrants, including a short section on Lady Aberdeen and Irish-Canadians. Looking at how these women perceived others is a way into understanding how they saw themselves and their role in imperialism. Next will be a discussion of Lady Aberdeen’s attempt to unite Canadians under the British flag as President of the Aberdeen Association and the National Council of Women of Canada. She thought they should develop a strong sense of national identity so that Canada would not be drawn into political union with America. Finally a cameo of the Victorian Era Ball in 1897 suggests that it conveyed a triumphalist picture of the world-wide supremacy of the British nation and Anglo-Saxon people.

1 When Conservative Premier John Thompson died in 1894 Aberdeen sent for the mediocre and unsuitable Bowell to form a ministry, rather than Charles Tupper (then in England) who could have won the Conservatives an election. Bowell lasted for 18 months before Sir Charles took over too late and Laurier’s Liberals won the 1896 election. Before handing over power Tupper attempted to fill Senate and judiciary vacancies with his supporters, but Aberdeen (unconstitutionally) refused him. Tupper resigned and won the publicity war. These crises were tied up with the Manitoba school question. Lady Aberdeen’s deep involvement in these and other political wranglings is clear from her journal, and from the long hours she spent in the House. Saywell (ed.), Canadian Journal pp.xxiii-lxxxiv; French, Ishbel and the Empire, pp160-221. Ishbel confided in Gladstone that she hoped the Liberals would gain power: BL Add Mss 44090/262, 1 Aberdeen to WE Gladstone, 28 March 1895.
Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen in Canada

Most of this chapter is about Lady Aberdeen, because Lady Dufferin contributed to the Empire in a less obvious way. This is partly because Lady Aberdeen had such extraordinary energy, tenacity and driving ambition that she did more than most people and still found time to write about it. It was also because of the changing nature of British imperialism from the late 1870s onwards, discussed in chapter two.

Lady Dufferin kept a daily journal during her overseas postings and sent it to her mother in Ireland in weekly instalments. Because of her public persona as Dufferin's wife it is unlikely that her Canadian journal was written without an eye to future publication.\(^2\) Besides providing news to her family and friends at home it fulfilled other, wider functions, one being to encourage immigration from Britain. Furthermore, the travel writings, memoirs, novels and letters home of women such as Hariot Dufferin disseminated a particular view of colonised people which was forged by their preconceptions and self-image as members of the 'master race'. 'One is always pen in hand here,' Lady Dufferin wrote shortly after her arrival in Canada. 'We look upon our epistles as seed sown, and are always egging each other on to write to new people...'.\(^3\)

In 1890 the Aberdeens bought a ranch in British Columbia, and Lady Aberdeen wrote a series of articles on Canada for her *Onward and Upward* magazine. These were published as *Through Canada with a Kodak* in 1893. She also kept a journal while living in Canada. In editing it in 1960, Saywell commented that the 'Governess-General' was 'a power that could not be overlooked'. He ranked her

---

\(^2\) It was published in 1891.

\(^3\) Hariot Dufferin, *Canadian Journal*, p22 (16 August 1872).
journal with 'the major manuscript collections', and called it 'the most important published document for the period'.

The English-speaking Canadians with whom Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin came into social contact came mostly from the highest ranks of society. Some came from families that had lived over a hundred years in Canada, others were those of more recent arrival who had made good. Lady Aberdeen was pleased to note a high proportion of Scots among these successful people, and concluded that the Scots had 'largely to do with the making of Canada'. They were 'a race who seemed bound to rise to high position and influence wherever they may go the world over'. Likewise Lady Dufferin noted how the Irish had contributed to the building of Canada, especially those from County Down, saying that 'we are constantly meeting successful people from that renowned county'. That they took pride in the part their fellow countrypeople had played in the growth of Canada shows that their Irish and Scottish identities were important to them. However this complicity with British imperialism is an involvement that Scots and Irish today might prefer to forget.

Both women apparently respected English-speaking Canadians and preferred them to Americans, but privately they thought they lacked the refinement of those in Britain. Sometimes they indicated that the British could do things better. When Lord Dufferin took possession of his new yacht Lady Dufferin wrote: 'His sailors are not very smart, but he is looking forward to the arrival of Hammond, an English sailor,

4 Saywell (ed.), Canadian Journal, pxxiv, pxxxii.
5 Ishbel Aberdeen, Through Canada, p138.
6 Hariot Dufferin, Canadian Journal, p184 (8 August 1874).
who will soon give it the air of an English yacht. On a short holiday in Scotland from Canada in 1894 Lady Aberdeen wrote privately how ‘perfect’ everything was:

... the civilisation and the gentlemanliness of everything - and the eating off nice plates, ... And the people. ... I have to bite my lips not to make disagreeable remarks about Canada and to extol the country and its future.

Lady Dufferin remained resolutely ‘English’ throughout her stay in Canada. Her personal friends during that time were her sister Gwen who lived for a while in Montreal, and the British wives of two of her husband’s ADCs. She served Empire by supporting her husband at every opportunity, including spending hours in Parliament House so she could report the debates to Dufferin, who was forbidden to be present. She decoded confidential telegrams for him, and occasionally deputised for him on official engagements. But as well as fulfilling most of the functions of the ‘incorporated wife’, she was also an angel in the house. Her journal is full of the ways she tried to make the official residencies welcoming and homely, and remove the ‘hopelessly company look’ of the state rooms. While Lady Aberdeen hung a picture of Gladstone in every room at Rideau Hall, Lady Dufferin put up pictures of her two Irish homes, Killyleagh and Clandeboye.

Lady Dufferin used ritual to keep people in their place. She insisted that protocol be followed absolutely, especially that to do with precedent. She introduced British court customs, such as that of the drawing-room into Canadian life. The

---


9 HH Box 2, 10/2/4, Additional Journal of Lady Aberdeen (22 June 1894).


12 This was a two-hour period when Canadians could come and pay homage. Sometimes as many as 1,500 people filed past, and she evidently returned each curtsey. Hariot Dufferin, *Canadian Journal*, p41 (8 October 1872).
fancy dress ball she held in February 1876 was said to have cost $100,000. This emphasised the importance of the Governor-General as the Queen’s official representative and her own importance as his wife.

While Lady Dufferin was one of the most popular Vicereines the same cannot be said of Lady Aberdeen, who was perhaps respected but often disliked.\(^{13}\) She knew this. There was no love lost between Lady Aberdeen and the conservative Toronto elite, with their often intense anti-Catholicism, and Orange-style loyalism. These people had impeccable social credentials; some were descendants of the United Empire loyalists who settled there during the American revolution. They disapproved of her liberalism, her support for Irish Home Rule, and the constantly circulating stories (which she denied) about how she fraternised with her servants. When the Aberdeens left Canada in 1898 the Toronto magazine *Saturday Night* described Lord Aberdeen as ‘sensible and inoffensive’ but called Lady Aberdeen ‘the most aggressive busybody who ever presided over Rideau Hall’, and gleefully announced their ‘feeling of relief that school is out and that the schoolmaster and schoolmistress have gone away’.\(^{14}\)

Native Americans

Ever since Columbus set foot in America travellers and adventurers have provided changing representations of native Americans for Europeans.\(^{15}\) Eighteenth-century romanticism produced descriptions of innocent children of the forest living in

\(^{13}\) HV Ross, ‘Vicereines of Canada’, *Canadian Magazine* 29 (1907).


\(^{15}\) See Billington, *Land of Savagery, Land of Promise*; and Trigger and Washburn, ‘Native Peoples in Euro-American Historiography’.
happy freedom amid the bounties of nature. The glorification of the native American as a ‘noble savage’ had its roots in this period, as did ‘captivity narratives’ which showed indigenous Americans as sadistic barbarians.\textsuperscript{16} These ‘good’ and ‘bad’ representations lasted into the nineteenth century. By the 1880s in England a body of boys’ literature had evolved along similar lines, with the ‘good Indian’ usually one that was Europeanised.\textsuperscript{17}

Lady Aberdeen scornfully dismissed these portrayals, thus giving her own eye-witness representations more authenticity. She described the previous freedom, wealth and culture of native Americans to her \textit{Onward and Upward} readers, and then made an appeal to their emotions:

It is a pathetic sight to see what appear to be the ghosts of a people of other days, stealing gaunt, and mournful, and silent, to the towns and railway stations, ... Small wonder that the red man looks sad, and listless, and hopeless, as he looks out on the altered conditions of life for his race, and as he meditates on the future of his country, which seems to have so little place for him unless he alters all his habits and tastes! ... Can we thus lightly dismiss the fate and fortunes of a nation whom we have disinherited?\textsuperscript{18}

She was clearly concerned about their future, but under no misapprehension as to what that future should be. Crowfoot, she said, the ‘far-seeing’ chief of the Blackfeet, had chosen the right path for his people:

\begin{quote}
[He] understood that ... the only hope for the Indian was to accommodate himself to the new order of things, and to co-operate with the Englishmen in spreading education, and civilisation, and the art of agriculture.\textsuperscript{19}
\end{quote}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[16] James Fennimore Cooper successfully incorporated both in his novels, sometimes in the same character, for example \textit{The Prairie} (Signet, NY, 1964).
\item[17] For example the novels of George Henty.
\item[18] Ishbel Aberdeen, \textit{Through Canada}, pp202-3.
\item[19] Ibid, p212. Note that she credits \textit{Englishmen} with spreading civilisation.
\end{footnotes}
The chapters Lady Aberdeen wrote on native Americans in *Through Canada with a Kodak* explain cultural practices, and are full of illustrations of artefacts such as totem poles, papoose boards, and head-dresses. Clearly they were written as a form of educative anthropology; she quoted Smithsonian Institution texts as her authority. This gave credibility to her value-laden statements about the relative merits of the native American and the English in Canadian society. The professionalisation of anthropology in the late nineteenth century gave a scientific status to knowledge about the so-called primitive races, thus sanctioning the low position of native Americans in the racial hierarchies in museum and exhibition culture.

The ethnology department of the Smithsonian was then under the direction of John Powell. Powell and his team believed all races were at different points along the same trajectory of progress, and native American culture was important only insofar as it led to a knowledge of earlier European cultures. During the 1870s he had recommended moving native Americans to reservations, and giving them cloth, not clothes; agricultural implements, not food. They should adapt or die out. This social Darwinism concurred very well with Lady Aberdeen’s thinking. She indicated that their way of life must disappear:

> They cannot stand before the forces of civilisation, and they are doomed to give way to those who have entered on their predestined work of cultivating the land and building cities, thus multiplying the population and replenishing the earth.

Lady Dufferin, writing twenty years earlier, was not particularly interested in native American culture, nor did she have the authority of the Smithsonian Institution.

---


behind her, but she produced graphic descriptions of her visits to native American settlements. As first-hand accounts, the representations she chose to provide would have helped to shape the body of public 'knowledge' about such people. Her accounts show her belief that they could be civilised and educated. But unlike Lady Aberdeen, and perhaps lacking her social conscience, she neither pitied nor made excuses for them. She made no attempt to hide her disgust and fear of those who had not benefited from missionary activity. She told the story of a missionary who came to live with some 'savage and debased' native Americans in Metlacatlah, British Columbia:

When [Mr Duncan] first came the Indians were some of them cannibals, and all exercised the most horrible heathen rites and ceremonies, dressed in blankets, wore painted masks, had several wives, and knew no Law.  

In a single sentence Lady Dufferin both expresses and confirms all the worst fears of the British about the native Americans: they had no laws, no Christianity, no proper clothes, their culture was 'horrible', they were sexually profligate, and worst of all, they ate each other. But they were not beyond redemption, and under Mr Duncan’s influence this village had been transformed:

... he has Christianised and civilised them; he has not only taught them their religion [sic] and the three R’s, but has himself shown them how to build, taught them how to trade, to make soap, to sing; is their chief magistrate, and, as I said before, their father and friend.  

He had also taught them to read English, sing 'God Save the Queen,' and had written a song about their village which they sang to the tune of 'Home Sweet Home'! All this was heartily approved of by Lady Dufferin, and when she visited them she noted that they were

remarkably well dressed, the men in cloth clothes, the women in neatly made prints, with bright coloured handkerchiefs on their heads and

---


24 Ibid, p284.
shaws over their shoulders. They and everything we saw here were quite Dutch in their cleanliness.\textsuperscript{25}

By contrast, wrote Lady Dufferin, at nearby Alert Bay where there was no missionary, the chief appeared to be ‘stupid’ and the rest were

having one of their most savage orgies, and had been singing, dancing and feasting for six days. This very morning their medicine man had been out on the rampage, and in his tantrums had bitten six people. On these occasions he rushes out of the house naked, and all the people are bound to run away; but if caught, they stand still to be bitten, as they consider it a great honour. ... Drink is at the bottom of much of the misery.\textsuperscript{26}

These before and after descriptions of native Americans show that Lady Dufferin believed the civilising mission was justified and necessary for the upholding of British rule in Canada. Without it they would remain outside the new Canadian nation and be a constant threat to it.

In the 1870s the frontier, that imaginary and real borderland between belonging and not belonging, was inhabited by native Americans, and represented the outer limits of British rule. It was in areas of virgin hinterland like this that imperial anxieties were most keenly felt according to Anne McClintock.\textsuperscript{27} Lady Dufferin’s fear of native Americans was an expression of this anxiety. They were the race furthest from British control, a dangerously unquantifiable element in an otherwise charted imperial future. They were the tangible and unwelcome confirmation of the \textit{myth} of the ‘empty lands’.

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid, p285 (30 August 1876).

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid, p291 (2 September 1876). Lord Dufferin drew a stark contrast between these two settlements in his farewell speech in BC. One contained ‘scenes of primitive peace and innocence, of idyllic beauty and material comfort ... under the wise administration of a judicious and devoted Christian missionary’; the other gave him ‘a sinister opportunity of descending upon a tribe of our Pagan savages in the very midst of their drunken orgies and barbarous rites’: Molyneux St John, \textit{Sea of Mountains} 2, pp162-3.

\textsuperscript{27} See Anne McClintock, \textit{Imperial Leather}, pp28-31.
During their tour in British Columbia the Dufferins studied the as yet unnamed mountain ranges, islands and inlets on the navigator’s charts, and chose names for them - one was called the Countess of Dufferin range. This naming and claiming, the assertion of sovereignty from the comfort of a ship’s cabin, was as important to the Dufferins as a physical act of conquest because it pushed back the imagined frontier of the mind.

By the 1890s the diminishing frontier was no longer charged with unspoken menace, and its significance had dissipated along with the native Americans who were forced onto reservations. Lady Aberdeen thought they posed no threat to white supremacy, and did not fear them as Lady Dufferin had done. She spoke of the need to gain their confidence as one might a child or a timid animal. She normally only spoke of gaining the confidence of those that she considered inferior, such as wayward young working-class women, Boers, Irish peasants, and the Irish in general (in Ireland), but never in connection with the European settlers in Canada.

In different ways Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen clearly conveyed the inescapably raced message that native Americans, whether ‘civilised’ or not, were inferior to white Canadians. This contrasted with the way that (white) European settlers of all nationalities were welcomed to Canada as Canadians. The imagined community was white.

**French Canada**

In 1871 more than a quarter of the population of Canada was French and Catholic, mostly concentrated in Québec Province. Québec City was the seat of

---

29 Ishbel Aberdeen, *Through Canada*, p204.
French Canada. The official residence of the Governor-General while in Québec City was the Citadel, which looked down over the old town. Topographically the Citadel emphasised the power and superiority of British rule over the French, as Lady Aberdeen knew when she described it as the ‘rugged fortress’ which ‘crowns the heights’. Lady Dufferin also had the same instinctive feeling as she sat on the terrace surrounded and reinforced by the accoutrements of British imperialism:

There I sit and look down hundreds of feet upon the town lying below me ... There are great black cannon also looking out from the Citadel, and the Union Jack and the Dominion Flag [are] flying beside me. I assure you it is very romantic!

The fortifications of Québec had begun to decay and no longer served a practical purpose, but in 1874 Dufferin started a campaign to rebuild them and preserve the whole fortification as a historical monument. The British built Citadel dated from the early nineteenth century, but the ramparts were older and French. It is significant that instead of restoring them in the style designed by Chaussegros de Léry in 1745, they were rebuilt in nineteenth-century Gothic. This was a slight rewriting of history which removed some of the French influence and accentuated the British.

Dufferin’s last public act as Governor-General was to lay the foundation stone of the newly-designed and imperially-named Dufferin Terrace which ran underneath. All this helped to compensate for the loss of visible British power since the withdrawal of British troops in 1871. A Montreal reporter was reminded how he missed the British troops when he heard a seventeen-gun salute to Dufferin in 1875:

---


[Artillery fire] tells of national power and inculcates the grand lesson of loyalty. [The salute] was like an echo of the old land, and a pathetic reminder of the fact that we are fast drifting from its secular tutelage. ... The presence of soldiers in the thoroughfares or on their sentry beats were familiar sights and sounds ... this was indeed a thorough British Colony. Now all is changed ... The military were a tangible link of union with the Mother Country. They associated us with the historic glories of Britain, and kept perpetually alive the memory of the manner in which England became possessed of Canada.  

Almost twenty years after Lady Dufferin, Lady Aberdeen also described the view she commanded from the Citadel. She too mentioned the town below and then visualised the arrival of Jacques Cartier in 1535. However she was not one to waste the chance of a didactic exercise in British superiority for her Onward and Upward readers. She told them to get out their history books to trace out how Québec was founded a half-century later by Champlain, how it became half a mission, half a trading station, how it was defended against the many attacks of the Indians and became the centre of the Colony of New France; and then how it was neglected and misgoverned by corrupt officials from France, and finally how it was conquered by the splendid daring of General Wolfe in 1759. ... When the British conquered Québec they wisely allowed the people to retain their own laws and customs, and the result is that nowhere can be found more loyal subjects of the British crown.  

Lady Aberdeen had gained much of her knowledge of Canada's past from the American historian Francis Parkman, whose seven-volume romantic Whig history (written 1865-92) was an accepted standard work until the 1960s. In vivid style it focused on the courage of the French in their struggle to set up a civilisation in

---

34 Canadian Illustrated News, 30 October 1875.
35 Ishbel Aberdeen, Through Canada pp17-19. See also Frank Abbott, ‘Cold Cash and Ice Palaces: the Québec Winter Carnival of 1894’, Canadian Historical Review 69:2 (March 1988), pp167-202. He argues that the purpose of the carnival, in which the Aberdeens participated, was to produce a ‘myth of social cohesion’.
Canada, and how they were freed from the despotism of their own corrupt
administration by General Wolfe and British rule. However Parkman’s work was
contemptuous of American Indians, and has since been discredited by French
Canadians, who resented being portrayed as ‘backward’.  

On the surface both women treated French Canadians as equals, and one
cannot easily find examples of prejudice against them or their Roman Catholic
religion. Lady Aberdeen was so careful about religion that it is almost impossible to
discover her real opinion on Catholicism, either in connection with the Irish or the
French. The best example is a letter from her close friend Henry Drummond in 1886.
She had asked his advice over a delicate decision her husband had to make in Ireland.
I think Drummond’s reply indicates a complicity of understanding between them
about Catholicism:

Of course one foresaw this sort of thing would arise - would arise
always where a Christian [Aberdeen] is in office with a semi-Christian
(pardon) Government over a (very) semi-Christian people.  

Both women were diplomatic enough to conduct their conversations in fluent
French when appropriate, and occasionally gave speeches in French. Lady Dufferin
does not discuss the French in her journal. This is because she was used to them; she
had stayed with Napoleon and Eugénie in France as a young woman, and both she and
her mother had been educated in France.

However Lady Aberdeen occasionally let slip that she thought the French were
inferior. Speaking in Victoria BC, which she liked because of its ‘Britishness’, she
singled out French Canadians as being particularly suited to domestic service. The

37 Moyles and Owram, *Imperial Dreams* p94; Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers*;

38 HH 1/7 Henry Drummond to Lady Aberdeen, 4 March 1886.
best domestic training school that she had ever seen was in Sligo (Ireland), she said. ‘I hope that [soon] there will be a training school in Québec especially for French Canadian girls, who seem likely to make admirable servants when well trained’.\(^3\) In her memoirs she praised more than forty Canadian National Council of Women activists, but only four of these were French Canadians.\(^4\) She believed that French Canadians offered no challenge to British superiority:

> French Canadians are a thrifty, contented, law-abiding, religious people. ... they are still the same simple Norman and Briton [sic] peasants who came out some hundreds of years ago.\(^4\)

Perhaps the biggest giveaway was her opinion of Durham’s policy towards French Canada in 1837, which she thought was successful, fair and equitable.\(^4\) However Durham’s report, discussed in chapter two, clearly shows his racist and supremacist views.

### Lady Aberdeen and the Irish in Canada

Lady Aberdeen was astounded at the level of bigotry she met in Canada. Confronted with an overt display of Orange loyalism by a youth in New Brunswick, she later admitted to a strong desire to tear his Union Jack into shreds.\(^4\) Since 1886 she had taken a special interest in Ireland, and had really hoped they would be sent back there in 1893; Canada was a poor consolation. Before they left England Aberdeen received a warning from Ripon, the Colonial Secretary:

\(^3\) *Victoria Western Times*, 9 November 1895, my emphasis. Later on training schools for Protestant women were opened in other provinces.

\(^4\) But there were far fewer French Canadians in the movement.


\(^4\) *Aberdeen Journal*, 22 November 1901.

... on Home Rule on which you and I feel so deeply you must be silent in Canada for there is a strong section of Orangemen in the Colony scarcely less violent than their brothers in Ulster. ... Such restrictions are irksome and you, and I fear Lady Aberdeen also will feel them so.\textsuperscript{44}

Lady Aberdeen was well aware of the need to choose her words carefully in Canada, especially over religion or Home Rule. But that did not stop her encouraging Irish Canadians to think along the same lines as she did. The talk on Irish literature which she gave to the Catholic Young Ladies' Literary Association in Toronto shows how she hoped to influence Irish Canadians. She recommended the \textit{New Irish Library} series, edited by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, to direct their appreciation of their cultural heritage into a harmless channel which would not encourage support for violent separatism. Some of these books were reprints of the romantic nationalist writings of Duffy and his associates in the mid-century Young Ireland movement, now safely consigned to the historical graveyard.\textsuperscript{45} Others were written by Anglo-Irish writers such as Standish O'Grady: 'a Tory with an Irish name' according to the American journal \textit{Catholic World}. They condemned him as a 'very anti-Irish Irishman', and said his \textit{The Bog of Stars} which dealt with the Elizabethan wars in Ireland was an 'utterly unfair and defamatory parody of Irish history'.\textsuperscript{46} WB Yeats, originally a partner in the \textit{Library}, backed out because he thought the enterprise was unrepresentative of modern Irish nationalism and ignored new creative talent.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{44} Ripon to Aberdeen, May 9 1893. Quoted in Saywell (ed.), \textit{Canadian Journal} pxxxviii.

\textsuperscript{45} After the Young Ireland movement broke up Duffy emigrated to Australia, worked as a barrister, entered politics, became Prime Minister of Victoria in 1871 and returned to Europe in 1880. Goldwin Smith noted that like almost all upper-class Catholics he had turned his back on revolutionary ideas. 'Great Britain, America and Ireland', \textit{Princeton Review} 2 (July-December 1882), pp283-305. From the \textit{Making of America} website. Internet address: <http://moa.umdl.umich.edu>.

\textsuperscript{46} \textit{Catholic World} (US) 58:347 (February 1894), p748 (from \textit{Making of America}).

\textsuperscript{47} WB Yeats, \textit{Autobiographies} (Fontana, London, 1985), pp224-8.
But the series, especially *A Parish Providence* by Mrs EM Lynch, came in for high praise from Lady Aberdeen. *A Parish Providence* was set in an Ireland thinly disguised as rural France, and told the strongly moral tale of an ignorant and shiftless community transformed by one man’s enterprise. In his introduction Dufify commented that every Irish gentleman who read the book should help his own people ‘in a country where discipline and guidance are so painfully needed’. Catholic World thought the book was a plea for ‘a better order of philanthropists than the Irish landed classes have hitherto shown themselves to be’.

Lady Aberdeen, who saw herself as a ‘better philanthropist’, approved of the moral regeneration shown in the book. (Perhaps she also thought it carried a relevance to the French-speaking areas of Canada.) Her detailed discussion of *A Parish Providence* led naturally on to the work that she, a benevolent British woman, was doing for Irish industries. In this way she impressed upon young Canadian minds the importance - and the necessity - of continued British influence in a Home Rule Ireland.

**Immigration**

Hariot Dufferin learned just how ‘new’ Canada was on her two-week trip across the Atlantic on the *SS Prussian*. She discovered that many of her fellow passengers were emigrants, including 107 children rescued from destitution on British city streets by Annie Macpherson, a child emigrationist, who had arranged for their

---


50 Catholic World (US) 59:534 (September 1894), pp856-7.
adoption into Canadian homes. Lady Dufferin thought this was an ‘excellent charity’.\textsuperscript{51} She called these children ‘street Arabs’, unaware of how far-flung encounters between British colonial and native other were deeply implicated in the use of this expression, which denoted difference and inscribed racial otherness upon metropolitan working-class children. During the journey she met other emigrants. One young woman, worried that she and her husband had too many children, was reassured by Lord Dufferin that the more children they had the better. Canada needed people.\textsuperscript{52}

Hariot Dufferin’s letters and journal showed would-be immigrants the kind of life awaiting them in Canada, and the sort of citizens the country most needed. Her views about immigrants were additionally disseminated through the colonial grapevine: the constant stream of British visitors to Government House, and through them to the servant network in Britain. Hariot spoke of the opportunities in Canada in very positive terms, and this itself could create an impetus towards emigration among her reading public. Billington has discussed the importance of ‘letters home’ in creating a desire to emigrate among those left behind,\textsuperscript{53} but Hariot’s letters, and later her published journal had a special impact because of her unique social position and influential contacts. Canada was a growing nation, and her journal bound together everybody who appeared in its pages as a community of\textit{Canadians} under the British flag. Canadians were presented positively as independent and resourceful people, but on each page was the reminder that they were also part of the wider community of Greater Britain.

\textsuperscript{51} Several child emigration schemes like this existed during the later nineteenth century, often run by church-based charities like the Salvation Army. There was seen to be a double benefit: less overcrowding and poverty in British cities, and an increase in the white stock of settler countries.

\textsuperscript{52} Hariot Dufferin,\textit{Canadian Journal}, p2 (19 June 1872).

\textsuperscript{53} Billington,\textit{Land of Savagery}, p70.
What sort of people would be successful emigrants to Canada? What would their lives be like? How would they be treated? What about their native customs and traditions? Hariot’s journal answered all these questions. One message was that Canada wanted to attract hardworking and industrious nation builders, and in return had a lot to give. Emigrants from Iceland had settled successfully, she wrote. Her husband’s speech to them so impressed her that she copied it down. He told them that

[this] is a country in which you will find yourselves freemen, serving no overlord, and being no man’s men but your own. … from generation to generation your little ones will continue to learn in your ancient Sagas that industry, energy, fortitude, perseverance, and stubborn endurance which have ever been the characteristics of the noble Icelandic race.⁵⁴

Another welcome group had been the ‘most desirable’ Mennonites from Germany and Russia, who were ‘hard-working, honest, sober, simple, hardy people’. Most were young, and ‘everybody has at least six children. Think what a gain they are to this country’.⁵⁵

There were many Irish in Canada. One man from Cavan had cleared thirty acres of land, and increased the population of Gaspé by fifteen. His house was ‘very comfortable’ and everything was ‘very neat and clean’.⁵⁶ The ‘finest’ were an old soldier and his wife from Meath, with nine ‘beautifully dressed’ children and a wall covered with books. He was ‘loud in his praises of the country and would advise everybody to come here’.⁵⁷

One Englishwoman told Lady Dufferin how she and her husband, who had both been in service, had decided to come to Canada five years previously. They knew

---

⁵⁴ Hariot Dufferin, Canadian Journal, p387 (15 September 1877). Dufferin uses the rhetoric of the ‘freeborn Englishman’ derived from Locke.

⁵⁵ Ibid, pp360-61 (21 August 1877).

⁵⁶ Ibid, p157 (14 June 1874).

⁵⁷ Ibid, p177 (28 July 1874).
nothing at all about farming, but were given 200 acres of uncleared land, and now had
two fine boys:

She was so merry, and so happy and courageous. They do everything
for themselves and are getting on well. Their land is good, and if only
the railway comes to it, Bracebridge will become an important town.
... the houses are remarkably neat and finished looking, and the
population is almost entirely English.58

These journal entries are quite explicit, not only about the sort of qualities that
nation builders needed to have, but about the sort of country that Canada was to
become. The message Lady Dufferin got across was that fertility, the ability to work
hard, optimism and perseverance were preferable qualities for emigrants to possess.
With these, no special knowledge or ability was needed, and wealth or social position
was immaterial. Immigration was best thought of as a contract. Immigrant families
exchanged their labour for the rewards of a plot of land and the freedom to be their
own boss. Canada contained many different ethnic groups, but the impression Lady
Dufferin gives is that they were becoming a tolerant and peacable nation living
together under British rule.

Lady Dufferin’s journal entries all speak about the success of the settlers, the
opportunity for advancement, their freedom, and especially the free land which was
given to each family. Although Canada wallowed in a long period of depression
during the 1870s there is no mention of misfortunes such as crop failures, disease,
poverty, or unemployment; prospective immigrants would not be encouraged by
failures. Her journal supported British rule in Canada, and the part the British could
play in the country as future immigrants. By writing and publishing it she played a
small part in creating the sort of imagined community which best suited Britain. It was
a community which was resourceful, independent, and united under the British flag.

58 Ibid, p176 (27 July 1874).
Lady Dufferin looked at immigration primarily in terms of the advantages to Canada rather than the individuals concerned. Greg had recently suggested that unmarried ‘surplus’ women should leave Britain and find husbands in the settler colonies, but she did not invite single women to emigrate to Canada.\footnote{Greg, ‘Why are Women Redundant?’} This indicates her conservative ideas on class and gender. Canada did not need women used to a leisured life, it needed women who were prepared to work hard. But adventurous unattached working-class women represented a threat to the sexual morality of Canada, whereas working-class couples did not.

What Canada needed was married women who would be helpmeets to their husbands and who would go forth and multiply. The need to swell the population was uppermost in her mind; she constantly stressed the importance of children. The families in her journal were those in which husbands and wives worked in happy and harmonious partnership to build their homesteads and Canada's future. This was unrealistic because of the unequal nature of most partnerships. Although women shouldered their fair share of work, and couples may have discussed where to live, or how to spend any spare income, in most cases it was the man who made important decisions.\footnote{Rasmussen, \textit{A Harvest yet to Reap}. Husbands freely purchased modern farm implements, yet women lacked basic labour-saving devices such as modern stoves.}

Lady Dufferin apparently believed that the immigrants she encountered were malleable enough to embrace British culture, demonstrate loyalty to Britain and take their places as citizens in a British Canada. She wrote about many different nationalities, perhaps with the idea of giving an example of each in her journal. However at the time she was writing most Canadian immigrants came from the United Kingdom, or (in the west) were English-Canadians from Ontario.
During the 1890s when Lady Aberdeen was in Canada, immigration from Britain slowed down and that from Europe increased. This was especially so after the Liberals came to power in 1896, when interior minister Clifford Sifton introduced the new official immigration policy. Sifton was more interested in how useful immigrants were than where they came from, and believed that Eastern and Southern Europeans were fitter than the ‘weakly’ British. Immigration officials and Canadian farmers also disliked British immigrants who were thought to prefer easier work in cities.® Lady Aberdeen did not appear to discriminate against non-British European settlers, but neither did she encourage them to come. Her work to encourage immigration was solely among the Scots and English.

Lady Aberdeen’s interest in immigration was not motivated solely by concerns of Empire. She also thought it could help to solve social problems in Britain: The Bitter Cry of Outcast London (1888), and Booth’s Life and Labour of the London Poor (17 volumes 1891-1902), had recently chronicled desperate levels of poverty in the metropolis. As ever she promoted the interests of women. Her particular interest was assisted emigration for working-class women. She gave her Onward and Upward readers detailed information about the Québec reception centre, and recommended the United British Women’s Emigration Society, run by Ellen Joyce.® The Aberdeen Ladies’ Union which Lady Aberdeen had inaugurated in Scotland in November 1883 had female emigration, mainly to Canada, as one of its integral aims. It sent 296 women to Canada between 1884 and 1913.® They mostly found work as servants,

62 Ishbel Aberdeen, Through Canada p13. Mrs Joyce later organised emigration through the English branch of the GFS, of which Lady Dufferin was a lifetime Vice-president.
63 Marjory Harper, Emigration from North East Scotland. Female emigration to
thus freeing their middle-class employers from household drudgery. The ALU stressed the importance of choosing suitable women. Lady Aberdeen visited some of them while in Canada, and took pride in the way they were chosen, unlike other societies:

> It is utterly wrong and cruel for the G.F.S. or Mrs Joyce, or any Emigration Society, to encourage [female servants trained in upper-class homes] to come out. ... Good strong general servants, ready to fall in with the ways of the country, and who have not been told that they are sure to marry comfortably so soon as they set foot in Canada are what are wanted.\(^4\)

In other words, women who would stay in the same position for some time and cheerfully accept whatever was thrown at them.

Lady Aberdeen was as realistic in her assessment of the prospects for settler families as she was for single women. Although her *Journal* and *Through Canada with a Kodak* speak of successes, she stressed the need for settlers to be adaptable and prepared to learn new ways. She recognised the difficulties of newly-settled families on the prairies. Instead of glossing over the hardships like Lady Dufferin, Lady Aberdeen encouraged the settlers to triumph over adversity, which she hoped would produce the strong characters that Canada needed:

> that life which looks so full of freedom and attraction and of golden hope on the outside, and which, when you come to it, means not only so much grim toil, privation of all comforts, but often the lack of all that makes life worth living to men and women of education and culture. [Canada’s] development must be the price of isolation and much hard work, and they are not true friends of the country who would conceal this from intending emigrants. The land is full of hope and the reward is sure to come, but it has to be striven for.\(^5\)

\(^{4}\) Saywell (ed.), *Canadian Journal*, p262 (3 August 1895).

\(^{5}\) Ishbel Aberdeen, *Address at a Public Meeting* (Ottawa, 1898).
At the end of the nineteenth century the dominant identity that was emerging for the new nation was white and English-speaking. It replicated British institutions and culture, and thus increased Anglo-Saxon influence.66

The Making of Canada: Organising Women

The late nineteenth century saw increased opportunities for women in British Canada. In 1884 the first Canadian women graduates left Queen’s University, Kingstown. These educated women wanted a wider life than their mothers’ generation. They began to enter the professions as doctors and solicitors, while middle-class women enrolled in the burgeoning nursing and secretarial schools. Philanthropic work was another area in which women were becoming involved. In English-speaking urban areas church-based organisations began to appear in the 1870s, as did women’s rights organisations. Missionary societies had the most influence, but by the 1880s the Women’s Christian Temperance Union was well supported. Most of these societies were still only locally based in the early 1890s, with no nationwide mechanism to co-ordinate their efforts. Women in French Canada were less well educated and less likely to join women’s associations, which were frowned on by the Catholic hierarchy. Philanthropic work in French Canada was generally carried out in convents.

Lady Aberdeen never tired of reiterating her belief in the power of Canadian womanhood. She believed women had a special obligation to guard public morals and social purity, and that they could ‘turn out citizens who will make Canada all that we desire it to be amongst the nations of the earth. … [and] bring up our children with

the aspiration to serve their country'. She noted the 'new possibilities and opportunities' for women of the British Empire. But most opportunities were still only open to a small group of well-heeled, mainly Protestant women, who generally had someone at home to look after the household:

For many of [these opportunities] we are indebted to the direct influence of our Sovereign herself, who in her own person also has been able to prove to the world that a woman can pursue higher studies and have an intimate knowledge and grasp of the affairs of state, whilst at the same time being a model of all womanly, wifely and motherly virtues and charm.

Lady Aberdeen was reminding the women of Canada how Queen Victoria personified the family, the nation, and the family of nations of which Canada was a part. In a study of representations of Victoria in different parts of the Empire, Victoria Smith has discussed how maternal images of the Queen produced a mythic vision of the British Empire as a unified family. In addition the imagined bond between Queen and subject was made personal and intimate by the title 'mother', thus seemingly lessening class and racial divisions.

Queen Victoria was a complex figure for feminists as she was believed to wield immense public influence which she successfully combined with the ideal of domestic womanhood. Yet she had conservative views on women, was anti-suffrage, and had refused to support a deputation of women who asked her to acknowledge their progress in public life. But Queen Victoria marked the intersection of gender and Empire, and to Lady Aberdeen she was a useful figurehead. Lady Aberdeen set up three major women's groups in Canada. These were the Lady Aberdeen Association

---

67 *Brandon Sun*, 6 December 1895. In her ‘Women in Canada’ Lady Aberdeen honours famous and unknown Canadian heroines over a 500 year time span.


for the Distribution of Literature to Settlers, known as the Aberdeen Association, in 1890 (AA); the National Council of Women of Canada in 1893 (NCWC); and the Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada (VON), in 1897. She also started the Ottawa May Court Club (which recently celebrated its 100th anniversary). Members were the elite daughters of Ottawa society, who gave up their spare time to socialise with factory girls and teach them all about thrift, sexual purity and other useful habits.

While visiting Winnipeg in 1890 Lady Aberdeen recruited a group of women to send magazines to isolated settlers. The Aberdeen Association expanded into all the major Canadian cities, negotiated free postage, shipping and rail carriage and was active for 25 years. In 1899 sixteen Canadian branches distributed over 20,000 parcels of pictures, flower seeds and reading material ‘of a suitable nature’ to 8,000 people.

With an emphasis on what was described as good literature, each parcel also included some appropriate religious material, and settlers were expected to write to their benefactors twice a year. As well as the immediate benefit to the settlers, Lady Aberdeen thought Canada itself would be strengthened by the friendships thus formed. It would bring ‘links between east and west, between dwellers on the prairies and in the forests with those in the cities … a very real source of strength to the country’.

Lady Dufferin, who was living in the UK, started a British and Irish branch which arranged for the collection and bulk despatch of books from British cities. In 1901 the Victoria League was formed in Britain, and using the AA as a model, started similar schemes in South Africa and Australia. In this way the influence of the AA

---

70 The NCWC were involved in founding the VON, discussed in chapter eight.
71 Regina Leader, 5 December 1895.
72 Ishbel Aberdeen, Address at a Public Meeting, [Aberdeen Association] (Ottawa, 1898).
spread beyond Canada and into the wider British Empire. The women who ran the Victoria League in Britain were imperially minded enough to ensure that the ‘right’ sort of literature was sent out. As well as supervising the Aberdeen Association’s work in the UK, Hariot Dufferin was on the executive committee of the Victoria League. In 1904, in an effort to avoid duplication of work, the Victoria League took over the British work of the Aberdeen Association. The Aberdeen Association continued its work of collection and distribution in Canada until 1915.\textsuperscript{74}

At the Chicago World’s Fair in May 1893 Lady Aberdeen was elected President of the International Council of Women and was asked to enlarge its influence. Canadian women had decided to have their own National Council, and 1500 of them attended a public meeting in Toronto on 27 October 1893 to inaugurate the NCWC. Lady Aberdeen addressed them and accepted their invitation to be President.

The Council co-ordinated local philanthropic work, and tried to secure appropriate legislation to better the position of women, children, the poor, and the sick. It immediately achieved successes in many predictable areas.\textsuperscript{75} It was written into the constitution and well publicised that members would put their homes and families first.\textsuperscript{76} This allowed conservative women to join, and ensured male support. Some members were disappointed that the suffrage issue was not taken up by the movement, but Lady Aberdeen had two reasons for this: she could not have presided

\textsuperscript{74} Elizabeth Riedi, ‘Imperialist Women’, p101-5.

\textsuperscript{75} Strong-Boag, \textit{Parliament of Women}. See also Saywell (ed.), \textit{Canadian Journal}, p24 (27 October 1893) for details of the launch of the NCWC. Initial successes were getting domestic science taught in Ontario schools; female factory inspectors; women on school boards; reports on impure literature; reports on unemployment; provision of hospitals in some smaller districts. These activities are fully discussed in Rosa Shaw, \textit{Proud Heritage: A History of the National Council of Women of Canada} (Ryerson, Toronto, 1957).

\textsuperscript{76} Strong-Boag, \textit{Parliament of Women}, p81.
over such a controversial issue while Vicereine, and the council would have lost the support of influential conservative women.

During the next two years twenty-two local councils were inaugurated, nineteen of them by Lady Aberdeen while accompanying her husband on official tours (planned to include the appropriate towns). She always attended NCWC meetings on these tours to keep in touch with the activities of different groups, and so she and Aberdeen could ‘get our hand on the pulse of the country’.\(^77\) She believed the ‘very essence’ of the council was its ‘purely patriotic work’ of bonding the country by bringing women of different religions and ethnic groups in touch with each other.\(^78\)

Lady Aberdeen provided strong top-down leadership. Veronica Strong-Boag argues that this was detrimental to the NCWC because it set a precedent which ‘inhibited flexibility and creativity over the long term’.\(^79\) Maybe so, but it suited her purpose in the short term. Although the NCWC purported to be democratic Pentland wrote that:

> Ishbel had taken immense pains by much consultation and correspondence to invite only those who would make the best leaders of this venture in each place, large or small, and in their wise hands the Council link had proved just what suited the great Dominion …\(^80\)

Lady Aberdeen wanted nominated officials who would represent the ethnic and religious make-up of local society (which is not the same thing as the local community), be tolerant, and work for unity without rocking the boat. At one inaugural meeting she was dismayed when an unnominated woman was elected Vice-president:

---

\(^77\) Saywell (ed.), *Canadian Journal*, p89 (14 April 1894).


\(^79\) Strong-Boag, *Parliament of Women*.

\(^80\) Pentland, *Bonnie Fechter*, p119, my emphasis.
... we had finally to let Mrs B be V. President instead of Treasurer who is tiresome as it brought about the election of Mrs Edwards as Treasurer who ... is rather aggressively Evangelical for a post which will bring her much in contact with the RCs. However there it is. The election of officers at these public meetings without nomination previously is a mistake and does not work well.\(^\text{81}\)

Lady Aberdeen directed the NCWC’s activities far more perhaps than the members realised. She had often extolled the virtues of reading and she encouraged the NCWC to campaign for new laws to regulate the importation of ‘evil and pernicious literature’ from the United States. She disapproved of the American influence, thinking it would destroy the moral fabric of Canadian youth. She wanted parents to encourage the reading of ‘good penny novels and penny poets’ published in the UK since they were more likely to perpetuate British culture and traditions and inculcate a sense of pride in belonging to the worldwide family of Empire.\(^\text{82}\)

Lady Aberdeen was much taken with Ruskin’s ideas on the dignity of manual labour. She told the Victoria, BC group how Ontario Councils had succeeded in getting domestic science and woodwork on the syllabus of their schools. ‘I cannot help regretting, ladies, that you did not include in your programme a resolution on this subject today’, she reprimanded them. ‘I trust that you will bear it in mind. ... [P]ress the manual education and don’t rest until you have got the rest of the councils in British Columbia to do the same. (Applause)’\(^\text{83}\)

This autocratic leadership was only partly about keeping a brand-new organisation afloat. Lady Aberdeen wanted to strengthen Anglo-Saxon world

\(^{81}\) Saywell (ed.), Canadian Journal, p59 (16 January 1894), my emphasis.

\(^{82}\) Québec Gazette, 25 March 1896; Montreal Star, 13 May 1896. Lady Aberdeen started the National Home Reading Union in England in 1888, and opened a Canadian branch in 1894 which had 500 members in 1900. Members followed courses of ‘required’ and ‘recommended’ reading but unfortunately no details have survived. See NCWC, Women of Canada, p269.

\(^{83}\) Victoria Daily Times, 9 November 1895.
influence by making Canada a strong dominion in the British Empire, and so she exercised careful control of the NCWC. In this instance she thought skilled workers with a pride in their abilities would be fulfilled and contented, more productive, and so unlikely to cause class conflict.

The NCWC faced initial opposition from some Catholic bishops, and problems with over-zealous Protestants in Ontario, but these were overcome when silent prayers were introduced at the beginning of each meeting. This also resulted in a prominent inflow of Jewish women to the Montreal and Toronto branches.

Lady Aberdeen wrote that

[It means] a great deal towards the consolidation of Canada, that her women from one end to the other, from Halifax to Victoria, shall be discussing one another’s circumstances, and needs, and work, and are thus brought together to realize that they are one great sisterhood, with a mission to forward the welfare of this great Dominion.84

But the NCWC united a particular class of Canadian womanhood. In theory no-one was denied membership on account of race, class, religion or ethnicity, but in practice it was those women with a leisured lifestyle - mainly white middle- and upper-class Protestant women - who had the time to participate. There were few working-class members, which Strong-Boag believes was due to NCWC snobbishness and lack of support for labour. French-Canadian women were often reluctant to join, and in 1907 they started their own equivalent association, the Fédération Nationale St-Jean Baptiste, which ‘allows us to be friendly but not to be assimilated - this will be our own Canadian association - French and Catholic’. Strong-Boag noted the self-interest which prompted the NCWC to put more energy into improving the inward flow of domestic servants to Canada than any other class of labour.85 When Lady

---

84 Regina Leader, 5 December 1895.
85 Strong-Boag, Parliament of Women, quote p121; pp194-5.
Aberdeen spoke about the new possibilities and opportunities for women of the Empire, she was clearly not referring to this group, who were simply exchanging drudgery in Britain for equal or worse drudgery in Canada. The NCWC women, of course, owed their freedom and independence in no small measure to women such as these.

The NCWC still thrives today, and had three quarters of a million members in 1993, the centennial year. In the 1890s it was important as much for the way it united Canada as for the work its members did, something that Mrs Archibald knew when she wrote an article for the 1896 Annual Report entitled ‘The importance of the National Council in fostering and developing the patriotism of Canadian women’. And by stressing the importance of home and family and the morally rigorous upbringing of children it was safeguarding the next generation of Canadians. Lady Aberdeen was well aware, long before the scandal of the Boer War soldiers, that informed and diligent mothers produce healthy babies who grow up to be healthy citizens. But the NCWC failed to attract French-Canadian women or those from ethnic minorities, and very few Catholics held local or national office. The women it united were those that Lady Aberdeen thought could best support British interests in Canada: those of Anglo-Saxon origin, loyal to the throne and the British Empire, and patriotic towards the dominion.

The Victorian Era Ball

Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897 was feted by pomp and ceremony throughout the British Empire on a scale never before seen. David Cannadine

---


attributes this to the waning of monarchical power which allowed Victoria to stand above politics as a symbol of consensus and continuity for the nation. Chamberlain brought colonial troops to Britain for the first time, including 200 from Canada, to make the occasion a truly imperial one. Victoria Smith argues that at this time when Canadians were searching for a national identity, English-speaking Canadians could celebrate the jubilee as an expression of their cultural and racial identity as white Anglo-Saxons within the British Empire.

The Aberdeens hosted a Victorian Era Ball in Toronto to celebrate this 'landmark in the history of the mighty Empire'. Mrs Archibald, the patriotic NCWC member mentioned above (page 151) suggested the theme. Lady Aberdeen seized upon the idea, and appointed Major Denison from a well-known loyalist family as Master of Ceremonies. They invited 2,500 great and good Canadians, some of them in prearranged costumes, to represent different aspects of Empire. The colonies, art, literature, music and scientific inventions were all depicted in a series of tableaux, in which those who dressed up as dark-skinned colonials often found themselves relegated to the background. Scenes from Kipling or Gilbert and Sullivan provided an imperial backdrop to the 'Literature and Music' set, while the printed programme contained judiciously chosen quotations from Tennyson and Kipling. These invoked suitable images of Empire, describing India ('Those three hundred million under one Imperial sceptre now'); British Possessions in Europe ('Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay'); and Africa ('The map that is half unrolled').

---

88 David Cannadine, ‘The British Monarchy and the “Invention of Tradition”’.  
89 Victoria Smith, Constructing Victoria.  
90 Saywell (ed.), Canadian Journal, p447 (8 December 1897). Major Septimus Denison was the brother of Col Denison, founder of 'Canada First' (see chapter two).  
91 James Mavor, Book of the Victorian Era Ball given at Toronto on the Twenty-eighth of December MDCCCXCIV (Rowsell and Hutchison, Toronto, 1898),
This ‘brilliant spectacle truly symbolised the Empire’, wrote Lady Aberdeen in her introduction to the souvenir book of drawings of the ball. The whole enterprise was an exercise in British imperial self-congratulation, yet at the same time it was more than this. It was as if the very rituals of performance and representation were themselves a part of Empire building, and through performance the Empire could be made real. It was through events like this that Lady Aberdeen and other Empire supporters could reaffirm and renegotiate their imperial identities.

The opening Empire Group consisted of several sets, each one representing a different continent. The ‘North America’ tableau came first, underlining the importance of Canada to the Empire - and the participants. In the extreme left and right foreground stand a standard bearer in modern army uniform and an anachronistic herald in opulent court dress. Their greater size indicates British superiority. They enclose the group both spatially and chronologically, and situate it firmly within British cultural tradition.

The spotlight falls on Lady Aberdeen’s 18-year-old daughter Marjorie, Lady Gordon, who shares front centre stage with the Dairy Maid, and who represents the Forests of Canada. Both appear to be dressed in white. Dutiful and well-protected daughter that she was, Marjorie highlighted the subordinate status of the 30-year-old dominion under the mother country, just as Kipling did when he proclaimed that Canada was ‘a daughter in her mother’s house, a mistress in her own’. Lady Aberdeen sometimes spoke of Queen Victoria’s ‘Canadian Daughters’, but Lady Gordon was not Canadian but a member of the British aristocracy, which only served

\[\text{p52. The book was sold in aid of the VON.}\]

\[92\] Ibid, Foreword.

\[93\] Ibid, p1.

\[94\] In ‘Our Lady of the Snows’. This quote was also used by Laurier: see Ishbel Aberdeen, ‘Women in Canada’, p288.
Figure 2
The Empire: North America Set,
The Victorian Era Ball.
to emphasise Britain's dominance and Canada's secondary status. It also emphasised the subordinate position of women, as allegorically both virgin forests and unblemished womanhood were awaiting masterful British conquest.

The Dairy Maid was both representational and symbolic. On a practical level she provided Canada with that most elemental of nutrients, milk. The milk in her pail symbolised fertility and hope for the new generation in many cultural traditions, including the Old Testament. This symbolism was particularly appropriate for a new nation like Canada. NCWC literature quoted M l'Abbé Dugas, who once described Manitoba as 'a fertile land', where 'the intelligent and industrious farmer can literally make rivers of milk to flow'. This description, they thought 'may justly be applied to all the colonization districts of Canada'. The presence of the Dairy Maid at the front of the tableau thus reaffirms the importance of white immigration into Canada.

Everyone else in the tableau is ranged behind these four key figures. There is only one 'non-white' in the group (the Cree chief in the second row, impersonated by Mr Morris). Surrounded by whites, he will eventually become assimilated. While the men in this group represented lumbermen, fur trappers, ranch hands and miners, most of the women were allegorical or symbolic figures: Our Lady of the Snows, Wheat, Cod, and the Forests of Canada. The allegorical use of the female form to personify a nation was a commonplace in the nineteenth century. Historically it originated in three distinct concepts. It was a continuance of the tradition from Ancient Greece, through the Renaissance to the nineteenth century in which woman was used to personify ideal concepts such as love or justice. It was associated with the colonial appropriation and

95 NCWC, *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, p419.
penetration of land. It also came from the idea of a woman as a perfect lady, the angel in the house.  

Seventeen people comprise the India Set, which for some reason included Australia and New Zealand, maybe to have a ‘white’ presence. Fifteen of them are dressed and made up to represent various Indian people, and another represents a Maori chief. However the eye is immediately drawn towards the figure of ‘Australia’, who is blonde, dressed in white and stands larger than life in the centre foreground, while the others are arranged around and behind her, and look admiringly towards her. Her white skin contrasts with the rest of the group, emphasising her Anglo-Saxon purity, cleanliness and virtue. These were qualities the settlers should possess. Her larger size indicates the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon race. Most of the other figures have shadows on their faces but there are no shadows on her. The impression given is that she will lead them out of the shadows and into a sunlit future. White women may have had inferior status to white men but this illustration shows that they were considered superior to dark-skinned colonised people of both sexes.

Although the Africa set depicted ‘the Dutchman and Englishman of the Cape’ and ‘Egyptian ladies of the upper classes’, the Egyptians had pale skins and there were no black Africans represented at all. In studying the book it is evident that non-whites from colonies supposedly having a long cultural tradition, such as India and

---


97 Mavor, p5.

Figure 3
The Empire: India and Australasia Set,
The Victorian Era Ball.
Egypt were represented more fully, with many members of Government House and the Toronto elite happy to portray them. By contrast nobody wanted to be a Zulu, although there were several white Boers.

The settler colonies were shown populated either by white men with useful occupations or allegorically by white women, with only token representations of aboriginal inhabitants. As with the Cree Chief in the Canada set, this indicated the preferred course of Empire in the settler colonies. The non-white races would become assimilated by a white race in which the males were gainfully occupied in taming the land while the females upheld British moral ideals. This gendering and racing of the settler colonies symbolically stripped the aboriginal inhabitants of power, agency and authority within what had been their nation, and transferred it to the white man. And although the white female was chosen as a metaphorical representation of the nation, her physical embodiment often possessed little authority and less legal or economic power.

After the ball Lady Aberdeen congratulated herself in her journal by listing those moments which the onlookers ‘seem to agree’ were ‘the most striking and effective’ of the evening. Needless to say, these were the moments which celebrated British imperialism: the Viceregal procession up to the dais to the tune of God Save the Queen; the Empire March, when those costumed as colonials were presented; and ‘above all’, the moment when Aberdeen announced Queen Victoria’s good wishes for the event, which led to the impromptu singing of God Save the Queen. ‘It was an impressive moment, as all present felt it to be’, Lady Aberdeen wrote, ‘and one of those moments which do much to seal a nation’s loyalty’. Sealing the nation’s loyalty was what the ball was all about, but the elite of Canadian society was not the nation.

---

99 Saywell (ed.), *Canadian Journal*, pp446-9 (8 December 1897).
Conclusion

Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin both had firm ideas about who should belong to the Canadian nation and what identity it should have. Hariot’s community, imagined on the pages of her journal, became ‘the truth’ for those who read it, but it had its hierarchies and exclusions. Native Americans were excluded until they became ‘civilised’, at which point they occupied the margins. Working-class urban dwellers were little mentioned, not even in their capacity to keep the wheels of society turning: it is quite amazing how often Lady Dufferin arrived somewhere to ‘find’ a fire laid, a tent pitched or a meal ready!

Lady Aberdeen used her influence to gather women together in an optimistic attempt to build the kind of Canada that middle- and upper-class women might have preferred. It had to be earned, but those who were prepared to work hard and accept British cultural influences could belong. This Canada was all inclusive, as Ishbel protested, but her strict hierarchy gave pride of place to white Anglo-Saxons, followed by other white ethnic groups. Coming last were the native Americans, who needed education and constant supervision. But working-class women were essential because their labour was needed to free middle-class women from household chores so they could minister to the community.

The work that Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen did in Canada promoted a Protestant Anglo-Saxon culture, and so helped in the construction of a Canadian identity which marginalised or excluded other ethnicities. Furthermore, Lady Aberdeen hoped that the strong sense of national identity she promoted would prevent any union with the United States on American terms. This chapter has shown that imperialism was not just a masculine endeavour. These women both fulfilled an
imperial role in Canada which has yet to be fully acknowledged by historians. In doing so they not only had many opportunities to reconstruct their own imperial identities, but they revealed how they were influenced by assumptions of their racial and cultural superiority as white Anglo-Saxon Protestants.
Chapter 5
Lady Aberdeen: Taking ‘Ireland’ to America

Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen held totally opposing views on the Irish Home Rule question which came before parliament in 1886, 1893 and 1912-14. Lady Dufferin is the subject of chapter six. Here I shall discuss how Lady Aberdeen supported Irish Home Rule, what she thought of Ireland and the Irish people, and her work for the Irish Industries Association from 1886 to 1894. This includes the Irish Village she organised at the Chicago World’s Fair in 1893, which can be seen as a microcosm of her imagined Ireland. I shall argue that much of this work can be interpreted as a vehicle not only for Home Rule but for a particular version of British liberal imperialism.

Lady Aberdeen’s Views on Ireland and the Irish

Aberdeen was Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland in 1886 and again between 1906 and 1915, and Lady Aberdeen was heavily involved with Irish affairs for the whole period. While she was Vicereine she could not campaign for Home Rule, but this did not prevent her indirectly supporting it in other ways. Her views on Ireland developed in 1886 when she became enamoured with the Irish people, and wrote in her journal: ‘Ireland is laid on us to do all in our power for her forever’.1

---

1 It is not always clear who was included in Lady Aberdeen’s concept of ‘the Irish’. On occasions it appears to be the Catholics or Celts alone, sometimes the rural poor. Sometimes she means the whole nation including the Anglo-Irish.

2 Pentland, Bonnie Fechter, p64.
During the world tour which she and her husband took from December 1886 to July 1887 Lady Aberdeen came to appreciate the importance of Ireland and Home Rule to the Empire. In Australia, New Zealand and America they met expatriate Irish people who believed that Home Rule would be ‘for the benefit of all concerned’, English and Irish alike. In the Antipodes they were apparently feted by Irish immigrants in each town they visited. Travelling through America they learned that the majority of Irish Americans wanted non-violence and a constitutional settlement.

Judge Wilson, a member of Congress, told the Aberdeens that ‘the predominating view of Irish in America was not in favour of violence or of reparation,’ and Judge Moran, Judge Prendergast and Mr McHugh ‘asserted in their speeches that they accepted Mr Gladstone’s settlement as final’.

Lady Aberdeen’s views on Ireland were influenced by two different nineteenth-century racial theories (see chapter two), but both put the Irish in an inferior position. Her pronouncements about the Irish can in part be allied to the theory of monogenesis, which was a belief that all races stemmed from Adam and Eve, and their potential could be realised through compassion and education. Like many Liberals of her generation she had a sentimental concept of Ireland as a nation wronged by Britain, a trusting childlike race of people desperately trying to forge a decent life for themselves against all odds. In 1894 she described how in rural Ireland she ‘received a most genuine greeting from some dear toil-worn faces full of gladness and gratitude’.

---

3 Aberdeen, More Cracks With We Twa, p56.
4 HH Bookcase A/2, Ishbel Aberdeen, Speeches, Articles and Addresses, ‘Speech to the WLF’, nd [1888].
5 HH10/2, Journal, 8 June 1887; 11 July 1887.
6 HH10/2, Additional Journal, 16 June 1894.
was becoming a reality with her help. She begged people to show a tolerance towards Irish shortcomings, which she emphasised were the result of years of mistreatment and misunderstanding by the British:

The faults most apparent in Ireland are those which are bred in a people who are alternately tyrannized over then cajoled; and if they seek by secret means to obtain their desires, who can blame them? she once wrote. This argument treated Irish ‘shortcomings’ as cultural, to be obliterated by a more understanding approach. She implied that the Irish were victims: to be handled, dealt with, controlled, and persuaded ad nauseum. The titles she chose for two of her articles, *The Sorrows of Ireland* and *Helping Ireland to Help Herself*, reinforced this image.

Lady Aberdeen also indicated Irish ‘shortcomings’ were inherent, and used arguments of ‘scientific’ racism to justify this. She was much influenced by Matthew Arnold. ‘I must surely be without the bias which has so often rendered Welsh and Irish students extravagant’, Arnold professed in all true modesty, and maybe he believed it. However his ‘scientific’ racism and his belief in the innate superiority of the Anglo-Saxon over the Celt belied this statement, as Robert Young and others have discussed. Arnold based his argument on what he saw as scientific philological and physiological evidence of a common racial heritage, a long-ago mixing of Celt, Saxon, Teuton and Norman, who were all ‘brothers in the great Indo-European family’.

---

9 Arnold’s discussion of the Celts includes those from Wales, Ireland, Scotland, and France. Sometimes he mentions specific nationalities and sometimes he talks of them in general terms. When he uses the term ‘Celt’ I have taken this to include the Irish.
11 Young, *Colonial Desire*, Chapter 3; Cairns and Richards, *Writing Ireland*.
Lady Aberdeen, proud of her own Celtic ancestry, agreed with Arnold, saying that every successful Anglo-Saxon had ‘a dash of the Celt’ in his make-up.\textsuperscript{13}

However despite this racial mixing which had spawned the nineteenth-century Anglo-Saxon English, there were still wide differences of temperament and ability to be seen between them and the (inferior) Celts, who had apparently retained their distinguishing features. In \textit{On the Study of Celtic Literature} (1867), Arnold argued that the Celts and Anglo-Saxons each possessed distinctive qualities which could complement the other, but that the tendency of modern civilisation would inexorably and rightly lead to the ‘fusion of all the inhabitants of these islands into one homogenous \textsuperscript{sic} English-speaking whole...’.\textsuperscript{14} This was to be no marriage of equals. The Welsh and Irish languages would become fossilised in Arnold’s proposed Chair of Celtic Languages at Oxford, not part of the living world. Arnold envisaged the assimilation of the Celts under English influence: ‘Of the shrunken remains of this great primitive race all, with one significant exception, \textit{belongs to the English empire}; only Brittany is not ours; we have Ireland, the Scotch Highlands, Wales, the Isle of Man, Cornwall. \textit{They are part of ourselves}...’.\textsuperscript{15}

Lady Aberdeen wrote her Irish speeches with a copy of \textit{Celtic Literature} close to hand; she was certainly familiar with Arnold’s words. ‘Remember the ever intense loyalty of the Celtic race to a leader; remember the strong capacity for love in the Irish people,’\textsuperscript{16} she once said, echoing Arnold’s similar description of the Celt: ‘out of affection and admiration giving himself body and soul to some leader’. She was urging

\textsuperscript{13} Ishbel Aberdeen, ‘The Sorrows of Ireland’, p64.

\textsuperscript{14} Arnold, \textit{Celtic Literature}, p20.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid p133 (my emphasis).

\textsuperscript{16} Ishbel Aberdeen, \textit{Address Delivered to the Members of the Edinburgh Women's Liberal Association, 5 December 1890} (Darien, Edinburgh, 1890).
support for Home Rule, so she wisely ignored the rest of Arnold’s paragraph in her speech: he said the Celts were

undisciplinable, anarchical, and turbulent by nature ... [T]hat is not a promising political temperament, it is just the opposite of the Anglo-Saxon temperament, disciplinable and steadily obedient within certain limits, but retaining an inalienable part of freedom and self-dependence.17

Lady Aberdeen made the binary distinction between an emotional, feminine Ireland and a strong and capable Britain, saying that the perceived ‘cussedness’ of the Irish needed ‘the steadying touch of the solid Anglo-Saxon to make him more fully effective in practical life.’18 But she definitely wanted the individual cultures to retain their separate identity, not become some amorphous mass: ‘Celts and Saxons, Normans and Teutons, are brothers in very truth as well as in name, and it is in union and blending with one another that they can become great, each supplying the other’s need’.19 What she meant here was co-operation, not intermixing: Ireland needed self-government and Britain needed Irish acquiescence. Lady Aberdeen did not agree with Arnold’s views on fusion and homogeneity. As I will discuss later, it was in her and British interests for Irish culture to be visible, not submerged. In this way Ireland would be a foil to Britain, a yardstick by which to measure British strength and progress.

Like Gladstone, Lady Aberdeen used a clear argument for Home Rule: righting Ireland’s wrongs in the name of liberalism, justice and equality. She saw the Irish as childlike victims of British misrule who with guidance and support could be helped to become useful citizens. But they definitely needed her help and Britain’s.

17 Arnold, *Celtic Literature*, p86.
18 Ishbel Aberdeen, ‘The Sorrows of Ireland,’ p64.
19 *Ottawa Citizen*, 18 March 1898.
'Organise! - Organise!' she wrote in her journal in frustration at one point. In what was one of the first political speeches to a large mixed audience by a woman, she told 5,000 Liberal supporters in Birmingham that because the Protestant gentry in Ireland largely opposed Home Rule, they were distrusted by the Irish masses, who otherwise would 'gladly' have taken them as their 'natural leaders'. She argued that British misrule had resulted in 'a cramped, soured, distrustful blighted character and disposition' on the part of the Irish peasantry, and 'a contemptuous scorn' of them by the Protestant gentry class in Ireland, who looked upon them as 'another race'.

In 1886 the Liberal party split over the issue, and the Liberal Imperialists left the party. They believed that Irish Home Rule would endanger the solidity of the United Kingdom and therefore the British Empire. However Lady Aberdeen turned this argument on its head, saying that by leaving the party the Liberal Imperialists themselves had 'imperilled' the 'whole future of the Empire'. She agreed that the United Kingdom should remain whole, but that this could only be done with the co-operation of Ireland. She argued that Home Rule would benefit the Empire because it would remove Irish grievances, thus allowing them to be 'full' partners in the imperial enterprise. She hoped that once Ireland had self-government the Irish nation would become a useful complement to the British, and both nations would stand together at the centre of Empire. The United States would see the power of a fully united Empire and would want to join: a union with Britain at the helm.


21 Women's Gazette, 17 November 1888.

22 Aberdeen Journal, 22 November 1901.

23 The idea of an Anglo-Saxon alliance of Britain, Canada and America in Greater Britain was also taken up by Chamberlain while visiting America in 1888: Richard Jay, Joseph Chamberlain: A Political Study (Clarendon, Oxford, 1981), p187.
However Lady Aberdeen's attitude towards the Irish indicates that she did not consider Ireland to be an equal partner in the United Kingdom, but a nation of dependent, and probably inferior people. This was not a view she admitted to publicly, and she may not have realised it herself. It was in marked contrast to the picture of the new Canadian nation she painted in *Through Canada With a Kodak*, and the way she described the white settlers in Canada. She never, for example, said they were 'picturesque', a favourite word for the Irish. The only 'picturesque' people she wrote about in Canada were the native Americans and the Chinese - not to her mind the nation builders, the 'true Canadians', but those that needed to be educated into British culture. Travelling from the west of Ireland to Dublin in 1894 Lady Aberdeen waxed lyrical about the scenes she saw:

The people who are working looking most picturesque, sometimes an old woman with her wheel on her shoulder returning from market, sometimes a lad with a creel and a scythe, or a pony, or a cow - or simply the people digging away at their potato patches in bright shawls and handkerchiefs over head and shoulders, generally with bare feet - or again a group of picturesque looking urchins.24

On the same trip she had 'photographed some picturesque old women carrying creels of turf'. The poverty of people having to dig barefoot was not commented upon, neither was the considerable physical strain suffered by the old women.25 A week later in Scotland she wrote that she was 'ashamed' of poor children in Ottawa just as she was ashamed of those on her Scottish estate, and would not want her mother to see them.26 However, she apparently never felt ashamed of the Irish. What she was happy to see as 'picturesque' in Ireland, or amongst non-white Canadians, she

25 A full creel of turf weighed over 70lbs.
clearly thought would have been a disgrace - for which she felt personally responsible - amongst the white working class in Scotland and Canada.

The 'othering' of Ireland and the Irish by politicians, commentators and cartoonists was a familiar theme in the nineteenth century, and much has been written about this. But Lady Aberdeen could impart very similar ideas more subtly and she gained much publicity for her efforts. Her comments show that the Irish in Ireland occupied a subordinate position in the hierarchy of races in her mind: below the English, Scots and settler Canadians, but above the native Americans.

**Irish Home Industries**

Lady Aberdeen and Lady Rosebery were joint convenors of the Women's Home Industries Section of the Edinburgh International Exhibition held in 1886. They had asked Lady Carnarvon, the Irish Vicereine, to set up a general committee for the Irish exhibits. (It comprised 115 women, 104 of whom were titled.) A Dublin-based executive committee of eight women started its work shortly after Ishbel arrived in Ireland, and she assumed the presidency. This committee was socially wider in its membership. It decided that support for women's industries in Ireland should continue after the exhibition closed, so the Home Arts and Industries Association was founded to complement those already in existence in England and Scotland. It was renamed the Irish Home Industries Association (IHIA), and was launched in July 1886.

---


This association illustrates how, perhaps unconsciously, Ishbel tried to provide the 'steadying touch of the solid Anglo-Saxon' in what she officially promoted as a neutral body supported by all creeds, classes and political parties. Just after the inauguration the Aberdeens were recalled to London, but Lady Aberdeen decided to continue the work from there. Henry Drummond supported the 'very strong' reasons she had given for continuing: 'The ship seems all ready for launching and it would mean everything for the country that it should fly the Vice-Regal flag at its mast-head rather than that of the Nationalists'. From the outset the Irish Home Industries Association was clearly not the neutral body it was purported to be.

The IHIA organised rural home industries: lace making, sprigging, embroidery, knitting, spinning, weaving and woodcarving, and to a lesser extent egg and butter production. A band of philanthropic middle-class women and some paid staff educated the workers into the standards required and provided outlets for their work. Shops were set up in Dublin and London. Producing goods within the home allowed a woman to earn a few pence and still attend to the needs of her husband and children. The fact that the women often earned very little did not seem to bother Lady Aberdeen. On the contrary she thought that this encouraged moral rigour, and related that although prices paid for knitted garments appeared 'terribly low, ... the people eagerly seek for the work, walking miles and miles to obtain it'. She spoke highly of one woman who required her employees to save part of their earnings as a condition of their employment.

---

29 Ishbel Aberdeen, ‘The Sorrows of Ireland,’ p64.
30 HH 1/7, Henry Drummond to Ishbel Aberdeen, 12 July 1886.
Frank Prochaska has discussed how many of the nineteenth-century philanthropic organisations in England allowed the middle classes to dispense their own brands of social control to the working classes. As was true of English organisations, the IHIA was more than just an organising body, as Lady Aberdeen herself noted approvingly: 'There is still a place for the manufactures of the hand which machinery can never displace ... the proper organisation and development of these is full of moral as well as material good to the country that possesses them'.

But in Ireland the situation was more complicated than the simple imposition of middle-class mores upon working-class recipients. Most of those producing the goods were poor Irish Catholics. Of the thirty Vice-presidents of the IHIA, twenty eight were titled, and either Anglo-Irish or English. The several hundred strong committee contained many aristocratic English members, alongside Irish Catholics and Protestants. When a motion was brought before the committee which might have led to the exclusion of English members Lady Aberdeen was aghast, and wrote personally to each committee member urging their support. The Irish manager TW Rolleston, maybe with an eye on his budget, agreed with her: 'English aid will not make the crochet and homespun of the west of Ireland less Irish than they are', he told her. However, it is clear that the nationalist dimension, like that of gender, provided an added dynamic which cut across and complicated class relationships.

---


35 HH 1/5, TW Rolleston to Lady Aberdeen, 23 July 1899.
Joanna Bourke has pointed out that between 1891 and 1911 home industries declined in Ireland - they were of variable quality, often inferior to foreign goods, and difficult to market.\(^6\) This was brought home to Lady Aberdeen when the senior partner of a Liverpool firm to which she had hoped to sell Irish goods told her that ‘in Liverpool imitation lace is mostly bought, as it is now so well made, and of course must be cheaper than the original.’\(^7\) Yet during this time Ishbel actively strove to keep the industries going. Although industry in England (and in Belfast) had steadily moved away from home-produced goods and towards organised factory production, Ireland should apparently follow the reverse path. The newly renamed Irish Industries Association (IIA), advised its members to actively seek out and resurrect old crafts, \textit{not necessarily Irish ones}. They suggested that the committee members could help by ‘collecting information regarding any Home Industries and the successful way of conducting them and how they might be introduced in Ireland’.\(^8\)

This prescription may well have encouraged Sophia Sturge, from a prominent Birmingham Quaker family, to set up a basket-making enterprise in Letterfrack, Co Galway in 1888. Many nineteenth-century Quakers had achieved great wealth as merchants, industrialists or financiers, and the tradition of Quaker philanthropy was far stronger than their limited numbers would suggest. They had also been important in peace and anti-slavery movements.\(^9\) Sophia Sturge felt strongly that Ireland had suffered from English misrule, and was trying to redress the balance.

---


\(^7\) Saywell (ed.), \textit{Canadian Journal}, p1 (16 September 1893).

\(^8\) HH Bookcase A/2, Box of Pamphlets, \textit{Irish Industries Association} [c1892], my emphasis.

Baskets made from dried grasses were produced everywhere there were peasants, of course, but the superior type of basket making Miss Sturge had in mind was not indigenous to Ireland but to France and Germany. She decided that this would be a suitable craft for peasants in the west of Ireland to learn. Basket making was dying out in a rapidly industrialising world and tutors were hard to find, but she eventually discovered that Origny in France was a basket-making centre. There she learned the basic skills, and with financial help from English Friends she established a class in Letterfrack to pass her knowledge on to local young people. Later she arranged for a basket maker from Origny to assist her enterprise for a year. The sale of the baskets produced a modest profit for a few years, and would have helped to ease local poverty.40

The aim of the Irish Industries Association was to foster crafts such as this among the Irish peasants. Lady Aberdeen was most impressed with Sophia Sturge, used some of her products for display in the Chicago Fair, and described her as ‘a brave and devoted lady’.41 That Lady Aberdeen applauded Miss Sturge’s enterprise confirms her philosophy for Ireland. Like Miss Sturge, she thought that basket making, requiring a minimum outlay on materials and equipment, could provide Irish peasants with an income. But basket making was already becoming obsolete in the 1880s, as indicated by the difficulties Miss Sturge encountered in getting instruction for herself. My point here is that Sophia Sturge was not resurrecting an extinct local craft, which at least could have been seen as preserving a genuine Irish cultural heritage, but importing an alien one. (Lady Aberdeen did a similar thing in 1912 when she brought over an American woman to instruct Dublin children in country dancing.)

40 William Hughes, Sophia Sturge, a Memoir (George Allen and Unwin, London, 1940).
41 Ishbel Aberdeen, Why Should we Encourage Irish Industries?
These were small steps towards the construction of an Ireland that would never threaten England’s industrial dominance, because promoting home industries against the tide of modernisation helped Ireland to remain an atavistic backwater.

A clear intersection between imperialism, gender and class can be identified in the various consequences of the home industries movement. As is often pointed out, the colonial appropriation of land and of woman has long been associated. The feminisation of Ireland by the British solidified this identification. The rural Irish cottage served as a marker in the nationalist imagination after 1922, and woman and Ireland became as one within it as an emblem of resurgent nationality. But as I argue in chapter seven, in the late nineteenth century the Irish cottage was contested space. The Anglo-Irish Celtic revivalists such as Yeats and O’Grady, as part of claiming their own Irish heritage, thought they had found a traditional and spiritual authenticity in rural Ireland. Unionist Horace Plunkett supported Lady Aberdeen wholeheartedly, and donated £1,000 to the IIA’s exhibit at the Chicago World’s Fair. He started the Irish Agricultural Organisation Society to develop co-operative farming in rural Ireland, and not without reason called the IAOS weekly paper *The Irish Homestead*. In the colonial landscape land and woman merged in the Irish cottage.

The primitivisation of land and people were fused in the image of the female colonial subject in the appropriated landscape: sitting by the hearth with one hand on the cradle and the other on her spinning wheel. The home industries movement perpetuated this image. It kept working-class women at home (unlike Lady Aberdeen herself) and available to furnish domestic comforts for their families, but did not put the same strictures on middle- or upper-class women. In fact they were, like Sophia

---

Sturge, positively encouraged to leave the home and take up outside work. Lady Aberdeen was a strong believer in the separate spheres argument, but with reservations. For women like herself she envisaged a wider context: the world rather than the cottage. And as will become obvious when I discuss her fight with Mrs Hart over the Chicago Irish Village, she was not averse to assuming the masculine role when it suited her.

The work Lady Aberdeen did for the IIA well illustrates her imperialist motivations and her desire for Britain to retain cultural hegemony in Ireland. But working solely within Ireland could never give her vision of a happy and supportive British Ireland the exposure she wanted. She hoped to convince the American people that after Home Rule the United Kingdom would be a more powerful centre for British imperialism. Her chance came when she heard about the World’s Fair in Chicago, scheduled to take place during the summer of 1893. Here was the opportunity she had been waiting for, and she was quick to take advantage of it.

**Lady Aberdeen and Mrs Hart**

Alice Hart was English but she supported Irish separatism. After she and her husband had toured the west of Ireland together she started the Donegal Industrial Fund which provided technical education for Donegal cottage industries. It was her idea to construct an ‘Irish Village’ at the Chicago Fair. In 1892 Lady Aberdeen discovered that Mrs Hart had applied for a concession at the fair. Her initial attempts to control the project by effecting a merger were refused, so she resorted to bullying tactics to force Mrs Hart to surrender control. She threatened to use her influence to

---

get Mrs Hart’s concession withdrawn. Then, possibly aware of Mrs Hart’s support for separatism, she spoke to the American Consul in London. He informed Mrs Hart that he ‘feared the village might be utilised by lawless Irish political organisations unless worked in connection with Lady Aberdeen and her committee.’ Mrs Hart was visited by ‘a gentleman of considerable political influence’. He told her that if Lady Aberdeen was associated with the project it would bring ‘untold benefits’, and warned her that ‘unless you agree to the plans suggested by Lady Aberdeen’s committee there will be friction and discontent arising, which may induce the Commissioners to withdraw the concession’.

Despite this clear intimidation Mrs Hart was unwilling to give up her village, but eventually she agreed to hand over the title, the rights to the concession, and her plans. In return the IIA would provide £2,000 towards the erection and maintenance of the village, and the Donegal Industrial Fund would receive half the proceeds. After the concession was signed over the IIA apparently reneged on the deal, so Mrs Hart applied for and received a separate concession. Thus there were two Irish Villages at the Chicago Fair, but Lady Aberdeen’s got most of the attention, and this is the one I shall focus on.

This incident illustrates the complexity of the power bases within and between gender and class, and shows that they cannot easily be reduced to simple binary forms. Lady Aberdeen employed a combination of different strategies - class position, official status, threats, influential friends - to get her own way when negotiations failed. She used the connections and advantages which her class conferred upon her, while Mrs

---

44 All this is reported in minute detail in a statement issued by Mrs Hart’s London agents, printed in *United Ireland*, 5th August 1893, p3. The Aberdeens blamed Mrs Hart and her team for lack of co-operation, but neither side wanted adverse publicity to harm Irish interests. See also HH Newspaper Cuttings - Chicago 1891-93: *Sala’s Journal*, 24 February 1893.
Hart was not a titled woman and could not compete on the same terms. Neither could she compete on gender terms: the reason she finally bowed to Lady Aberdeen's demands was because she was too 'nice'. She refused to use male-centred methods of domination, and was concerned that her fund should not suffer. By contrast although Lady Aberdeen preached democracy, her management style was masculine and authoritarian in the extreme. She believed in the idea of separate spheres yet had uncompromisingly crossed her own boundaries, as she frequently did.

Mrs Hart's village included cottage industries, but she also had displays of Irish fine art: sculpture, paintings, and copies of ancient illuminated manuscripts. She held special days to celebrate the Irish heroes and martyrs whose portraits hung in her castle. Her village projected an overtly nationalist representation of Ireland which Lady Aberdeen would have been uncomfortable with, from the Irish flags flying overhead to the Gaelic Athletic Association's escort for opening day.

Lady Aberdeen's village, by contrast, was an unparalleled opportunity for her to construct a particular representation of Irishness under a British flag for an American audience. It portrayed cottage industries, music and dancing, and was designed to reflect Ireland's difference from Britain in non-threatening terms, as will be discussed in detail later. It was not an official British exhibit, but she wanted it to be seen as such. It was of critical importance that she had overall control of the enterprise herself, so she could be assured that it would benefit Great Britain.

---

45 This audience included 400,000 Irish immigrants and their descendants who lived in the Chicago area, many of whom had arrived between 1836-1851 to build the canal and railway from the Mississippi River to Lake Michigan. In the 1860s Irish-American Fenians were several hundred strong, and made (ineffectual) border raids into Canada but had disintegrated by 1870. They later regrouped as Clan-na-Gael. See Charles Fanning (ed.), *Mr Dooley and the Chicago-Irish: The Autobiography of a Nineteenth-Century Ethnic Group* (Finley Peter Dunne) (Catholic University of America, Washington, 1987); Hereward Senior, *The Fenians and Canada* (Macmillan, Toronto, 1978); Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America.*
The Chicago Columbian Exposition of 1893

The Chicago Columbian Exposition, popularly known as the Chicago World's Fair, commemorated the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in the Americas, and ran from May to October. By including 'exhibits' from lesser developed nations - and native Americans, visitors were given a yardstick by which to measure the extent of American progress. The fair was planned to surpass the Paris Exposition of 1889, and it has been argued that it fulfilled America's need to gain European recognition as a culturally unified and mature nation. The neo-classical design of the buildings helped to reinforce this message, as did the World Congress held in the fair, a series of symposia on current matters of debate and concern in every field. The fair could provide proof that America was now a fit nation to enter onto the world stage and embrace imperial adventure. But it could also justify European expansion at a time when European nations were competing for their place in the sun. What better justification could there be than the juxtaposition of modern progress with native lack of it?

The fair was built over 686 acres in three main sections: the state and foreign pavilions where each participating nation had commissioned its own building, supposedly representative of some part of its history; the White City; and the concessions in the Midway Plaisance. The classically styled White City was the main section of the fair, and comprised twelve buildings where the official exhibits were displayed. The buildings were huge; the Manufactures Building was said to be the largest in the world at the time. James Buel wrote in 1894 that the White City and its exhibits

---

46 Wim de Wit, 'Building an Illusion,' in Harris et al, Grand Illusions.
bring us to a realisation of the amazing performances, and a comprehension of the almost boundless capacity of human genius. To this display of artistic handiwork all the civilized nations of the earth contributed ... to the highest advantage, every marvel of the age.\textsuperscript{47}

The third section was the Midway Plaisance, where the Irish villages were. This was a street leading to the White City which held the forty private concessions: sideshows, amusements and ‘native’ villages. These attractions had names such as ‘The Moorish Palace’, ‘Hagenback’s Zoological Area’, ‘South Sea Islanders’. The \textit{Chicago Tribune} explained to its readers that it was ‘a sort of side show for the accommodation of certain classes of exhibits which would conflict with the artistic construction of the work in Jackson Park’. These exhibits were ‘of a curious and unusual order. ... As the more advanced nations are represented in the main Exposition buildings, it has remained for exhibitors in the Plaisance to show in miniature the life of many parts of the world about which little is practically known’.\textsuperscript{48}

As in other exhibitions of the period the ‘educational’ aspect of the concessions was stressed. The native villages, given the stamp of authority by their very presence, became the ‘scientific evidence’ illustrating the contrast between white and other races. Buel noted in similar vein:

Object lessons in intellectual advancement were afforded by the gathering here of representatives of many semi- and totally uncivilized races ... forming curious and most interesting parts of an ethnographic exhibition such as was never before seen, affording instruction to visitors beyond their capability to otherwise acquire.\textsuperscript{49}

The cultural implications of the difference between the Midway and the White City were ignored by early twentieth-century historians, who concentrated on the

\textsuperscript{47} James Buel, \textit{The Magic City} (Historical Publishing, St Louis, 1894), (pages unnumbered).

\textsuperscript{48} \textit{Chicago Tribune}, 30 April 1893.

\textsuperscript{49} Buel, \textit{Magic City}. 
contrast between the idealistic White City and Chicago itself.\textsuperscript{50} By the 1960s interest
turned to the impetus the fair had given to urban planning, while during the 1970s
historians saw it as a symbol of solidarity for a fragmented nation.\textsuperscript{51} It was not until
the 1980s that the value system that produced the fair was investigated, often in stark
black and white terms. Historians focused on the meanings of the contrast between
the White City and the Midway Plaisance. This has been interpreted as a still ongoing
contest between high and low culture,\textsuperscript{52} or alternatively the triumph of elite over
popular culture with a future led by 'a corporate alliance of business, culture and the
state.'\textsuperscript{53} Other recent writers have discussed the exclusion of minority groups in the
planning stage, and the complicity of national prejudices and discrimination this
indicated.\textsuperscript{54}

Robert Rydell argues that the anthropology building lent scientific credence to
continued racial discrimination, and the fair sanctioned the white American view of a
‘barbaric and childlike’ non-white world. In this way it could justify future American
imperialism. The Midway Plaisance (the projected and repressed desires of white
Americans) was degraded, so that the White City (white purity) could be maintained.\textsuperscript{55}
More recently Rydell has investigated the way the fair reinforced gender and racial
difference and considered some of the strategies employed by disadvantaged groups
to overcome this.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{50} Lady Aberdeen also noted this aspect of the fair: BL Add Mss 44090/232, Ishbel
Aberdeen to WE Gladstone, 31 October 1893.

\textsuperscript{51} Neil Harris, 'Memory and the White City', in Harris et al, \textit{Grand Illusions}.

\textsuperscript{52} James Gilbert, \textit{Perfect Cities: Chicago's Utopias of 1893} (University of Chicago

\textsuperscript{53} Trachtenberg, \textit{Incorporation of America}, p217.

\textsuperscript{54} Russel Lewis, 'Preface' in Harris et al, \textit{Grand Illusions}.

\textsuperscript{55} Rydell, \textit{All the World's a Fair}, p40.

\textsuperscript{56} Rydell, 'A Cultural Frankenstein?'
Not surprisingly the aim of these American writers is to understand the competing motivations which propelled the internal development and foreign image of their own nation. Little if any attention has focused on Britain and Ireland at the fair. Yet there was a marked contrast between the projected images of the two countries. And since Lady Aberdeen was largely responsible for the Irish Village I shall discuss this in detail by focusing on several interconnected questions. How was Ireland represented at the World’s Fair in relation to Britain, and in relation to other nations? In what ways did her Irish Village promote British imperialism, and how far was this due to her efforts? What was the effect of this for Ireland and for the British Empire?

When the fair was announced the UK government voted a total of £75,000 as their contribution, and appointed the entire council of the Society of Fine Arts to be the Royal Commission for the fair. This is indicative of the sort of representation Britain was looking for. This body of imposing and titled gentlemen contained only one Irishman, the Anglo-Irish Duke of Abercorn (born in Brighton; educated at Harrow and Oxford; owner of 76,500 acres of land in Ireland, and 2,162 acres in Scotland).

The Royal Commission decided that the British pavilion at the fair would be a permanent structure, unlike almost all the other buildings, and indicating the expected longevity of the British Empire. With about forty rooms, and a replica of Shakespeare’s cottage in the grounds, it supposedly represented ‘a typical English residence’. A reporter from the Chicago Tribune described it as follows:

Victoria House … more than anything else in the park represents Great Britain, the British Government and the English character. The way that the location and surroundings of this building have been made to simulate England is astonishing and somewhat amusing. Victoria House stands on a little peninsula, formed by the lake shore and the inlet, with nothing between it and the roaring surf of old Michigan but a little courtyard. So near by as to appear a part of it is the battleship Illinois with its long guns run out menacingly in every direction, as if to
protect Victoria House and announce to all that “Britannia Rules the Wave” [sic]. The building has no neighbor, for between it and Canada’s building, the club house of its greatest colony even, rolls the ‘Atlantic’ of a broad graveled roadway. It is the only foreign building in the park with a high iron railing and closed gates around it. It all looks as if the very genius of insulation, dignity, red tape and reserve had presided over the conception. One almost expects to find carved over the entrance “Noli me tangere”.57

There is little one can add to this insight, except to point out that although Britain comprised England, Scotland and Wales, the building made a statement about English, not British identity. Furthermore although the World Fair commissioners had refused to recognise Ireland as a separate nation they were prepared to recognise Britain as such. From 1801 to 1922 the official designation of the nation which included England was ‘The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland’. Apparently no-one had noticed this. In the fair literature, newspaper reports and maps Victoria House was labelled ‘Great Britain’, or ‘The British Building’. There was nothing here to indicate Ireland had any connection with it.

The siting of Victoria House was not accidental, as ‘the British Commissioners had their choice of site, and instinctively selected this one’.58 The reporter noted how the aloofness of Victoria House contrasted with the welcoming friendliness of the buildings erected by the British colonies. This merely served to emphasise that Victoria House was designed to illustrate English strength and reinforce English superiority. In contrast to Lady Aberdeen’s desire for the articulation of a separate Irish identity within the United Kingdom there was no mixing of cultures here. The building illustrated the shift since 1886 from the Gladstonian blueprint of (English led) different national cultures within the United Kingdom, and reinforced the Liberal Imperialist concept of a homogeneous nationalism under the name of Englishness.

57 ‘Don’t touch me’. Chicago Tribune, 22 October 1893.
58 Chicago Tribune, 24 May 1893.
The twelve main exhibition halls in the White City were reserved for national displays, and Ireland was not considered a separate nation. Irish commercial concerns wanting to exhibit in the White City had to do so under the auspices of Britain. At least twenty-six Irish firms representing industries which included shipbuilding, linen, breweries, distilleries and cloth-making, sent exhibits. However these were scattered among the various English, Scottish and Welsh ones to comprise the ‘British’ display.  

Irish MPs wanted distinctive Irish displays at the fair, and while it was still in the planning stages they voiced their disapproval in Parliament. They also complained that their requests for Irish representation on the Royal Commission or its various subcommittees had fallen upon deaf ears. They had asked for an ‘Irish gentleman ... a man of business capacity, acquainted with the woolen [sic] and linen trades’ to sit on the Royal Commission. Instead they had only the Duke of Abercorn. Not surprisingly they considered him unsuitable because of his ignorance of trade. There was only a nominal Irish presence on the eleven subcommittees: ten of the 387 members were Irish, later increasing to 14. There were no Irish subcommittee members to represent their biggest industry, agriculture. Sir Thomas Edmonde complained bitterly that ‘this commission ... has displayed a gross neglect of its duties in regard to Ireland’.

The Irish MPs at Westminster always carefully referred to ‘the British and Irish exhibition’ in Chicago. They were concerned that their position in the United Kingdom was ignored. Was Ireland to be hidden away and swallowed up in British interests? ‘Irish individuality will be entirely lost if the word British is maintained and

---

59 Hansard, Parliamentary Proceedings, House of Commons, 26 February, 17 March 1892. Irish exhibitors rented space from the Royal Commission for £23.10s per 100 sq ft.
no attention paid to Ireland in the matter', Mr Flynn told the House of Commons. His voice went unheard, and during the exhibition little notice was taken of the Irish exhibits, except for that of John Power and Sons, distillers of Dublin: a nine foot high Irish round tower built from bottles of whisky.

One Dublin newspaper thought Ireland should have insisted on separate representation in the White City, and had missed a crucial opportunity for Irish trade:

Here was an opportunity to open a market for Irish goods ... What did we do? We did nothing. ... The Nationalist [and] Unionist merchants ... let it pass; and finally, with our fine philosophies of Nationality and the rest of it, we were forced to follow - humbly and silently - in the wake of the "British section".

Irish exhibitors had received no publicity, the article continued, because all the publicity went to Lady Aberdeen's Irish Village, which came to be seen as "the representative exhibition of this country at the greatest exhibition the world has ever seen, in a country containing millions of Irish men and women."  

Lady Aberdeen had taken forty young Irishwomen to Chicago to illustrate Irish Home Industries in a 'typical' Irish Village, complete with castle, Blarney Stone, and real Irish turf. Some staff were employed locally, and altogether over a hundred of them demonstrated crafts such as weaving, spinning, lace making and carving. Irish-made goods were sold, and a concert hall provided displays of music and dancing.

Both Irish villages were concessions on the Midway Plaisance. It has been suggested that the layout of the Midway was designed to lead from more 'backward' civilisations like the Dahomey Village at the far end to those closer to contemporary

---

60 For this and preceding paragraph: *Hansard, Parliamentary Proceedings, House of Commons*, 26 February 1892; quotes 15 March 1892. See also debates on 17/28 March, 5/7 April, 26 May.

61 *United Ireland*, 4 November 1893.
America. Some European villages were mixed in with the native ones, but these showed an earlier stage in their evolution. Both of the Irish villages were closer to the White City end. Lady Aberdeen’s village, perhaps illustrating her quasi-official status, was right on the corner of the Plaisance opposite the Woman’s Building in the White City and next to the Philadelphia Workingman’s House. (Incidentally the Woman’s Building was on the perimeter of the White City, next to the Midway, showing how women were marginalised.)

With the exception of Ireland, and the Philadelphia Workingman’s House, exhibits on the Midway from the ‘developed’ world were set in the past. For example the German Medieval Village was ‘a curious reminder of feudal times’; the Street in Old Vienna was set in 1492; the New England Cabin reproduced ‘the manners, styles and characteristics of the colonial fathers and mothers’. So although these exhibits were placed among those from the 'underdeveloped' nations, unlike the Irish villages they were temporally distanced from the rest of the Midway; by inference they were allied to the White City. Visitors could believe that they were witnessing an anachronistic stage in the successful evolution of the German, Austrian and American members of the white race. This was seemingly confirmed by their exhibits in the main halls of the White City.

No such distancing occurred with the Irish Village, which was set in the present and so more akin to the ‘native’ villages. Yet the siting of the two present-day exhibits on the corner of the Midway and opposite the Woman’s Building in the White City suggests that the Irish and the Philadelphia working man, although ‘foreign’, were somehow more acceptable than the brown-skinned people who had their villages

---

62 Rydell, All the World’s a Fair, p65, quotes nineteenth-century reports of this.

63 Buel, Magic City.
further away. If the arrangement of the concessions represented a sliding scale of acceptance, then Ireland occupied a place on the inner margins. As a homogeneous part of the United Kingdom (within the British section) it was acceptable, but as a separate race it ranked lower. As representative of one of the four nations making up the United Kingdom, the Irish Village could illustrate the diversity of cultures there, but would not represent any form of challenge to British industrial superiority.

Lady Aberdeen’s Irish Village was an anomaly. It was set in the present but it was curiously static by comparison to the native villages, where births, marriages and deaths occurred. Contemporary reports indicate that sexuality was expected to be a normal part of life in the native villages at the fair, just as it was in Hagenback’s animal show. For example there were belly dancers who performed ‘a suggestively lascivious contorting of the abdominal muscles, which is extremely ungraceful and almost shockingly disgusting’.64 This was thought to be too immoral for Chicago audiences and they were asked to tone down their acts.65 By contrast the Irish Village showed no such evidence of sexual activity. Although Lady Aberdeen admitted that the Irishwomen were chosen for their good looks, it was for their rosy cheeks and not their sexy bodies. At the close of the exhibition she was pleased to report that the Irishwomen would return ‘the pure, true, sunny, maidens that came’.66

There are two main points here. The first is that the Irish Village was incomplete, showing only a sanitised part of life - gentle work and relaxation. The native villages presented life in the raw. Many of them had young children and babies. An Eskimo woman showed off her four-day-old baby to ‘curious onlookers’, and a Javanese couple (‘aged fourteen and twelve’) celebrated their marriage in ‘an

64 Ibid.
65 World’s Columbian Exposition Illustrated 3:7 (September 1893).
66 Chicago Tribune, 21 October 1893.
imposing manner’. Some villagers died: smallpox occurred and waterborne diseases were rife. Work (and play in the form of traditional dancing and music) went on in the Irish Village, but there were none of the normal events that make up day-to-day living. The Irish Village, like the New England Colonial Farmhouse, was a sealed time capsule. But it was sealed in the present. The native villages held the promise of evolution and advancement in the future, but the Irish Village did not. The message Lady Aberdeen wanted Americans to pick up was that Ireland was not going to progress or change, but would remain comfortingly the same.

The second point concerns the way the Irishwomen were presented as chaste or asexual, in comparison with the women in the native villages. This, of course, was because although Ireland was colonised the Irish were white, and Ireland was a part of the United Kingdom. Irishwomen were to be respected, whereas the all-pervasive representations of exotic, mysterious and sexual Eastern/Javanese women indicates they were not given the same respect. It has been suggested that during the nineteenth century black and brown women in the colonies (and working-class women in the metropolis) were thought to be closer to nature and thus more likely to display their sexuality than middle class white women. Irishwomen received little publicity in reports of the fair; when they did it was never as sexual objects. They were seen in the same way that middle-class British women in the colonies were: as women whose chastity must be protected and preserved. Irish historians have been notably reticent in writing about sexuality, and the received version is that the nineteenth-century Irish were the most chaste nation in Europe. This view has been contested: Donald

---

67 Buel, Magic City.

68 Davidoff, ‘Class and Gender in Victorian England’, Worlds Between, p107. The construction of Irish female sexuality contrasts markedly with that of India, where brown-skinned women were defined by their reproductive systems.

69 Lee, Modernisation of Irish Society, pp5-8.
Akenson argues that possibly as many as 20% of women in Ireland were pregnant on marriage at this time. Whatever the case, this was all swept under the carpet by the Irish and the British in preference for a belief in Irish sexual purity.

Annie Coombes points out that at Lady Aberdeen's 1908 Irish Village at the Franco-British Exhibition in London, the 'colleens' were seen as the very essence of Ireland, and this identification of woman with nation reinforced the feminisation of Ireland. The identification of Ireland with the feminine was marked in a different way in the 1893 village because the women were not singled out for comment. It was the products produced, and above all the overall culture the village represented, that were remarked upon on by the press and the visitors. This perhaps reflected a certain nostalgia amongst Irish Americans. Nevertheless the (feminised) culture - songs, dancing, village crafts, Irish language, - all took place within homely whitewashed cottages under the protective shadow of 'Blarney Castle', and briefly, the Union Jack. And as I mentioned earlier, the Irish cottage was marked as a repository of the feminine by the British colonials. The village was like a womb which incorporated all that was feminine. It was an artificial construction of Irishness which completely neglected the 'masculine' industries of shipbuilding, engineering and distilling. These took place outside the village, and were all appropriated and displayed within the British section.

The strong element of protection which enveloped Ishbel's village invoked more than a feminisation, however. The received message was that the Irish were sexually and intellectually undeveloped, ie children. In Mrs Hart's village there was evidence of an intellectual maturity - fine paintings, early Irish historical manuscripts,

70 Donald Akenson, Small Differences (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1988), p35.
portraits of patriots. Lady Aberdeen’s village had none of these. The activities of her villagers were not dissimilar to those of children amusing themselves: making music, dancing, enjoying hobbies and receiving pocket money. There is a clear comparison here with Lady Aberdeen’s own children, who organised concerts, gave their handicrafts as Christmas presents, built their own playhouse and earned pocket money growing vegetables in Ottawa.72

However the ‘childlike’ had to be prepared to take on responsibilities. During the summer of the fair the Chicago Irish avidly followed the progress of the second Home Rule Bill through Parliament in their newspapers.73 With the possibility of Home Rule so close, it was important for Lady Aberdeen that the Ireland which she invented in her village not only showed its difference from Britain, but also that it was very much the ‘lesser partner’ in the United Kingdom. Speaking to a large assembly of Chicago Irish in April, she said:

We are not here to talk politics but we … already discern a golden future for the dear old country … Our business, who believe in this, is to prepare the people for it in other ways besides the purely political, and we can see how this can be done when we visit some district where an established home industry has become an accomplished fact…74

Home industries then, were deemed a suitable preparation for life after Home Rule, and helped to perpetuate the myth of an unchanging Irish rural lifestyle, in contrast to the thrusting modernity of Britain. The 1893 Irish Village demonstrated that Ireland had its own heritage of music, dancing, village crafts and traditions, and so served as an important reminder of the cultural diversity of the United Kingdom. It

73 The bill was passed by the Commons on 9 September 1893 and rejected by the Lords on 12 September.
74 Chicago Tribune, 17 May 1893.
clearly did not illustrate Irish industrial ability, nor did Lady Aberdeen intend that it should. The subliminal message was that Ireland, with its passive, compliant and childlike population was no threat to English supremacy, with or without self-government. If the clean, happy, productive and self-contained village represented Ireland as it was intended to, the message was that this would continue unchanged after Home Rule. A peaceful Ireland would make the United Kingdom a more powerful nation and a dynamic centre for the British Empire.

It is not surprising that the Aberdeens were shaken and offended when the British flag, which was hoisted over the village, was torn down. For most of the duration of the fair Lady Aberdeen’s village had flown a green flag with the words ‘Irish Village’ printed on it, whereas Mrs Hart, with her more nationalist inclinations had a proper Irish flag. The Aberdeens had not put up the Irish flag, they explained, because Unionists had donated money for the project. However when the Aberdeens revisited the village after Aberdeen became Governor-General of Canada, they ensured that all the paraphernalia of British imperialism was well to the fore. Lady Aberdeen informed Gladstone that ‘there was of course no doubt about the flag going up and the Union Jack was hoisted on Blarney Castle and the Royal Standard [normally only used when the Queen was in residence!] on my cottage and our Irish band received us with “God save the Queen”’.

Over the next few days the British flag was torn down at least twice. Lady Aberdeen told Gladstone, as she made a point of telling reporters, that the Chicago papers had exaggerated the event completely: ‘Any reports that may appear about thousands of Irishmen assembling and supporting the assailants are mere inventions’, she wrote. ‘This action was of course attributable to the small but violent Clan na Gael party who have been against our Village all along, who have supported Mrs
Hart's village'. She was afraid that the Orange element in Canada would try to make political capital out of the event, which could be seen to demonstrate the inability of Aberdeen (and the British) to control nationalist aggression, and destroy her preferred image of a submissive Ireland. It needed to be quite clear that Britain had the upper hand.

Lady Aberdeen's promotion of the Irish Village merely diverted public attention away from Irish manufacturing industries which needed international recognition to be able to compete in world markets. While Britain received credit for the modern marvels it exhibited in the White City, the Irish Village in stark contrast presented a small insignificant section of rural Ireland as if it were the whole.

Lady Aberdeen took immense pride in the way her village had the 'personal support of every class, creed and politics in Ireland from the leaders downward'. It did, but only partly. As the flag incident shows, there were those who were offended by it. After visiting the village Lord Mayor Shanks of Dublin commented:

Don't deem the Irish Villages as representative of Ireland. ... We believe in the British Commission but we do not believe that the Irish trade has been properly presented at the Fair. We are not proud of our exhibit here and we have not got an exhibit which is a mirror of Ireland.

Before Shanks had seen the village he had supported it. Arthur O'Connor MP, speaking to 8,000 Irish-Americans at the Irish Day celebrations in the Chicago Festival Hall, contrasted the results of 'free American industry' with 'the small and pitiful exhibition of our country as exhibited in the Irish Village'. Another visitor

---

75 BL Add Mss 44090/232, Ishbel Aberdeen to WE Gladstone, 31 October 1893.
76 Chicago Tribune, 21 October 1893.
77 Ibid.
78 Chicago Tribune, 1 October 1893.
wrote to *United Ireland* to comment on the misrepresentation of Ireland the village provided:

We are on the stage with the world for an audience, and I think that every true Irishman should demand representation on or elimination from the map of Jackson Park. Lady Aberdeen is our friend ... but she is, I think, misguided in her zeal for our betterment. ... [We] should proclaim our unwillingness to be caricatured.\(^79\)

Ishbel's Irish Village was one of only three concessions which made a profit.\(^80\) It received generous publicity both in America and Ireland, and over half-a-million visitors took away the impression that they had seen a slice of Ireland. As the Irish Members of Parliament had predicted, it came to be seen as THE Irish representation at the World's Fair. The products of forward-thinking Irish industrialists in the British section were little noticed. *United Ireland*, a Dublin paper which had heaped praise on the village, changed its tune when the editor realised how Ireland had been misrepresented:

Both [Mrs Hart and Lady Aberdeen] are no doubt estimable and philanthropic persons, [but] ... they were the innocent means of leaving the impression on the minds of the American people that Irishmen have no business capacity and that in fact they are a mere nation of histrionic paupers and fiddlers. The point is, the Irish ... and American people have been led to believe that these Irish Villages were truly representative of the arts and industries of Ireland. Now at the finish the truth leaks out that, not alone have they not been this, but that they have been Ireland's deepest humiliation.\(^81\)

Not all Irish men and women felt this way. The multiple intersections and contrary forces operating within and between class, gender, ethnic and racial divisions militate against drawing any hard and fast lines between these. The same argument holds with the imperial periphery and the metropolis, and any consideration of Ireland

---

\(^79\) *United Ireland*, 10 June 1893.

\(^80\) Aberdeen, *More Cracks with We Twa*, p231. The others were the Cairo Street and the Ferris Wheel. From the profit of £25,000, £20,000 went to the workers in Ireland and £5,000 was used to set up a permanent Irish goods depot in Chicago.

\(^81\) *United Ireland*, 4 November 1893.
is further complicated by the unique duality it held with respect to imperialism. The representation of Ireland in the Irish Village at Chicago well illustrates the complexity involved, and so it is worth trying to unpick the strands.

Strangely, the Ireland which Lady Aberdeen wanted to create had parallels with the vision of nationalists such as Yeats, de Valera and Patrick Pearse. These all advocated a return to a traditional Irish lifestyle untainted by the effects of British industrialisation. But despite these similarities radical nationalists despised Lady Aberdeen and resented her well-meaning attempts to organise the nation. The difference was, of course, that her vision was English-led. She was appropriating nationalist discourse, and using it not for the separatist cause, but for different reasons.

The Irish Village was not simply imposed upon the Irish by the British: it required a measure of approval. Lady Aberdeen’s particular representation of Ireland was constructed with the tacit acceptance of many Irish men and women, and the acknowledged support of others. The following statement was signed by the mayors of Dublin and other Irish nationalist cities:

... the Irish Industrial Village [in Chicago] has been established by the Irish Industries Association under the presidency of Lady Aberdeen in pursuance of a widespread movement supported by representatives of all sections of the community, irrespective of creed, party or class, ... in our opinion the Irish Industrial Village is a thoroughly representative undertaking.\(^2\)

It further depended on the explicit co-operation of others, from the titled English and Anglo-Irish members on the committee to the rural Catholic workers in the village. Peter White, and later his widow, who went beforehand to prepare the ground, were also Irish Catholics. The £10,000 to cover initial costs was lent or donated by Unionists and Nationalists, Catholics and Protestants, Irish, English and American.

\(^2\) _United Ireland_, 10 June 1893.
Lady Aberdeen’s village, a particular construction of Irishness which she believed would benefit Britain and the Empire, had the support of many Irish men and women. She disapproved of Mrs Hart, and thought that her village was too nationalistic and supported political separatism. Yet Mrs Hart was no radical Irish nationalist, she was an Englishwoman.

The lines here become blurred between colonisers and colonised, as they do when we look at gender. I have argued that the (British) feminisation of Ireland and the ideal representation of Irish womanhood were fused in the whitewashed cottages of the village. This was a British construction of Irishness, but the representation of Irish womanhood demonstrated by the village well concurred with the view of the Catholic church, which supported the village. Furthermore, this ideal of Irish womanhood was not uncontested. It had been repudiated by women in the Land League twelve years earlier, as it would be by nationalist women in the early twentieth century.83

There were non-religious reasons why the Catholic Church wanted to perpetuate the cults of woman as virgin, woman as mother. The priesthood mostly came from the rural tenant-farmer class, and so had a vested interest in the continued rise of this class, who were to triumph in 1922. Gladstone’s Land Laws of 1881 made it worthwhile for tenant farmers to consolidate their holdings rather than subdivide as previously. One son inherited the farm, a dowry was provided for one daughter, while the others took their chances elsewhere. A large sexually-active single population could destabilise society, and with it the continued prosperity of tenant farmers. On

the other hand, motherhood within marriage and celibacy without would further their economic security. This explains why some rural Catholic nationalists supported the village when other strands of Irish society were expressing their disquiet.

Coombes noted the close connection between gender and national identity at Lady Aberdeen’s 1908 Irish Village. Like many feminist historians who write about Ireland she discussed the nationalist feminist viewpoint, commenting on their rejection of ‘woman as colleen’ representations. But she did not consider the imperial feminist viewpoint: the part played by influential British women like Lady Aberdeen in helping to create the myth of an all-inclusive ‘British’ identity as a strong centre for British imperialism. Her case study of the portrayal of the Irish at the Exhibition is brilliant in its conclusions but it completely neglects Lady Aberdeen’s instrumental role in this. Coombes argues that the 1908 village met the need of both national parties at that time to strengthen national identity by developing an inclusive and ancient national culture. Primitivising ‘contested’ ethnic groups such as the Irish was a necessary step towards this. Lady Aberdeen, who both represented Anglo-Irish society and was in touch with nationalist opinion, was merely a ‘useful figurehead’ for British interests and a ‘safe liberal spokesperson for Ireland’.

This discounts the vital contribution Lady Aberdeen made to British interests. She intensified the effect of the Irish Village in Chicago by ensuring that it received large doses of publicity. She was well aware of the benefit of publicity, and actively sought out people who could give it to her, helped in this of course by her status. She also tried to manipulate public opinion by making sure that she got the kind of publicity she wanted, often by asking for it. In 1893 she befriended Sullivan, the editor

---

84 Cairns and Richards, Writing Ireland.
of the *Chicago Tribune*, and persuaded him to promote a meeting and concert at the Central Music Hall so she could make the purpose of the Irish Village clear to all. In the Orange heartland of East London, Ontario, she sought out journalists to ensure that her version of the flag incident would be broadcast. William Stead, who edited the *Review of Reviews* was a personal friend. She mentioned in her journal that ‘he is very anxious to make his American edition serve our ends [in respect of Canada]’.\(^8^6\)

But she was not always successful. John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, did not reply to her telegram from Chicago which asked: ‘May I say you offer good wishes Irish Industries Association?’\(^8^7\) Lady Aberdeen assiduously wrote down the names of useful people wherever she went, such as Lucy Arnott, whom she noted had ‘real influence’ in Cork.\(^8^8\) Her mother, Lady Arnott was president of the Women’s Unionist Association in Dublin; she and her husband were already friends of the Aberdeens. Sir John Arnott, proprietor of the *Irish Times*, gave her loyal support, and she persuaded him to contribute £1,000 for the Irish Village. She promoted the Irish Industries Association as a neutral body, and gave the impression that Catholic and Protestant, Unionist and Nationalist, worked together within it towards an idyllic and harmonious Ireland under British patronage. Coombes points out that the IIA was the ‘acceptable face of the Gaelic revival’, but it was Lady Aberdeen who made it so.

Lady Aberdeen had the ear of middle- and upper-class women, whom she addressed regularly in the Women’s Liberal Federation and the National Council of Women, and working-class women through the Onward and Upward Society. Her various Irish projects were all accompanied by massive personal fund-raising drives in


\(^8^7\) NLI Mss 15164/1, (Redmond papers.) Telegram Ishbel Aberdeen to John Redmond, 16 May 1893.

\(^8^8\) HH 10/2, *Additional Journal*, 2 June 1894.
Britain and America. She earned money by speaking. She wrote articles for magazines such as the *National Review*. She wrote letters to newspapers. She wheedled money from the British government, Irish-Americans and others. She raised awareness throughout the world of her view of the importance of Ireland to the United Kingdom.

**Conclusion**

While the genuinely devoted and humanitarian aspects of Lady Aberdeen's work were very real and should not be overlooked, she fashioned her own particular brand of imperialism over Ireland. She projected the image of a backward, subservient nation through an emotional appeal to a perverse logic that kept poor women in the home yet sanctioned middle- and upper-class women to work towards British interests outside it. Perhaps without her realising it, the work she did for the IIA was directed towards securing the background for imperialism that she thought would best maintain the status quo after Home Rule. The maintenance of British cultural hegemony within Ireland was critically important to the continued strength of the United Kingdom. Britain would lead, representing all that was forward thinking and modern, Ireland would remain the lesser partner in the United Kingdom, and peasant Irishwomen would stay at home to supervise the upbringing of future imperial citizens. In constructing this image she was also reconstructing and reconfirming her own 'superior' identity as an Anglo-Saxon. In addition, by taking her Irish Village to the Chicago World's Fair, Lady Aberdeen could demonstrate to the wider world, especially America, that a self-governing Ireland would be compliant and supportive of British imperialism. The fair was an opportunity for her to put her constructed Ireland on the world's stage, and illustrates the way that ideas of gender, imperialism and class intersected in her mind. Lady Dufferin saw Ireland in a very different light, as will become evident in the next chapter.
Chapter 6
Lady Dufferin: Keeping Ulster British.

What answer from the North?
One law, one land, one throne!
If England drive us forth
We shall not fall alone!

_Ulster 1912_, Rudyard Kipling.¹

Lady Dufferin, like Lady Aberdeen, was a keen imperialist, and both women used the connections of England, Empire and the wider English-speaking world to promote their different views about Ireland. In the last chapter I discussed how Lady Aberdeen believed her vision of a self-governing Ireland within an ethnically diverse United Kingdom would strengthen the British Empire. She stressed Ireland's difference from Britain as a way to highlight British superiority and fitness to rule. Like many Ulsterwomen, Lady Dufferin did not see things this way. What was important to her and what she wanted to preserve was not Ireland's - or more specifically Ulster's - difference, but its _Britishness_. She worked towards this by fighting against the imposition of Home Rule with the Ulster Women's Unionist Council. My aim in this chapter is to study her resistance to Home Rule, in which her complex allegiances - to Ulster, Ireland, Britain and the Empire, - are evident.

Hariot Dufferin became a Vice-president of the UWUC in September 1912 and remained an active member of the executive until she moved to England in 1921, and a Vice-president until her death in 1936.² In 1912 she was 69 years old. By this time

¹ Rudyard Kipling, _Rudyard Kipling's Verse_ (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1940), p233.
² PRONI D/2846/1/8, E Wheeler to T Londonderry, 10 September 1912. The commencement of Lady Dufferin's Vice-presidency is incorrectly stated in the two histories of the UWUC.
the world had moved on to an age of cars and telephones, Europe was in a state of
tension and the arms race had begun. A pessimistic attitude existed over the future of
both Britain and the Empire which had not been apparent ten years previously. These
points should be borne in mind, because the Lady Dufferin of thirty or forty years
before had faced a different world, and was a different person in many respects to the
elderly widow I discuss in this chapter.

The first President of the UWUC (1911-13) was Mary, the second Duchess of
Abercorn. She does not appear to have been very involved in the UWUC, and was
apparently little more than a figurehead. Lady Londonderry, President between 1913
and 1919, spent most of the year in London. Lady Dufferin therefore shouldered the
bulk of the responsibility for ultimate decision making, chairing several of the
committees on a regular basis. Mrs Wheeler noted this: 'We regret that our President
lives so far away. ... The burden of all advice and anxiety has fallen upon our
Vice-President, Lady Dufferin, who, now as always has been ready to help us in our
difficulties and troubles'. The available minutes of the UWUC are not complete, nor
are they always detailed enough to ascertain Hariot's immediate input. But since she
took on this responsibility, it is reasonable to assume that she guided the UWUC
according to her own convictions, and this is borne out by the private letters she
wrote at the time. The fact that she remained a Vice-president until her death in 1936
also showed that she fully endorsed their actions and objectives.

---

3 Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Imperial Century 1815-1914* (Batsford, London, 1976),
pp95-97.

4 PRONI D/2688/1/7, Advisory Committee Minutes, 18 June 1918.
The 1886 Home Rule Bill was rejected by the Commons, and that of 1893 by the Lords. A Liberal government came to power in 1906, and once the 1911 Parliament Act had removed the veto of the House of Lords, Home Rule appeared to be a virtual certainty. This caused loyalist Ulster to mobilise and the Ulster Unionist clubs, defunct since 1893, were re-established. These clubs provided a focus for loyalists who were not part of the largely working-class Orange Order. The Ulster Unionist Council was formed to co-ordinate the activities of these clubs.

Female Ulster Unionists had campaigned against the first and second Home Rule Bills under the auspices of the Irish Unionist Alliance and the Belfast branch of the Women’s Liberal Unionist Association. In 1893 they sent a women’s petition against Home Rule to Westminster; it had over 20,000 signatures. In January 1911 the Ulster Women’s Unionist Council was formed to co-ordinate women’s groups throughout Ulster in support of the Ulster Unionist Council and their fight against Home Rule. At the same time volunteer groups of Orangemen throughout Ulster had begun to organise and drill. The following year 218,206 men signed Carson’s Solemn League and Covenant (28 September 1912). It stated that Ulstermen, as loyal subjects of the King, would use ‘all means which may be found necessary’ to defeat the imposition of Home Rule. Implicitly of course this included violence. They also

---

6 *Belfast Newsletter*, 16 January 1911.
pledged that if a Dublin parliament was imposed ‘to refuse to recognise its authority’. In January 1913 the Ulster Unionist Council co-ordinated the volunteers under one umbrella as the Ulster Volunteer Force. The Home Rule crisis had forced Anglicans and Presbyterians into an alliance against Catholicism which straddled class divides, as UWUC Executive Committee member Mrs McGregor Greer noted when she said that ‘these times of stress and trouble had ... brought about a remarkable union of Protestants of all classes and sects ...’. By September that year there were 30,000 volunteers, rising later to over 100,000.

These were serious steps, but the received historical consensus is that Ulster’s resistance to Home Rule should not be interpreted as political nationalism. Although Ulster was distinct from the rest of Ireland in religious, cultural and political terms, and despite the sense of impending doom involved in all these preparations, the Unionists were only united in fighting Home Rule, not demanding it for themselves. David Miller stressed the contractual nature of Ulster’s relationship to Britain: Ulster Unionists would farm the land and work the economy in return for the protection of their rights to live in Ulster and remain British. Loughlin identifies a strong emotional and ideological commitment to Britain, British values and traditions, and pride in the Empire. He believes Ulster identity was a local variant of British nationality and was allied to racial ideas: the perceived shared Anglo-Saxon blood.

---


11 David Miller, *Queen’s Rebels: Ulster Loyalism in Historical Perspective*, (Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 1978); James Loughlin, *Ulster Unionism and British National Identity Since 1885* (Pinter, London/NY, 1985); and Gladstone, *Home Rule and the
More recent historians have followed Linda Colley’s argument that an imagined British identity became superimposed upon older local loyalties. They have started to unpick the different allegiances involved - to Ulster, Ireland, England, Britain, and the British Empire. Rather than discussing the narrow question of political nationalism, they have come to take a much wider view. The picture that emerges is one of complex, and multi-layered identities, in which different loyalties assume priority in various social, cultural and political contexts.

Thomas Hennessey, for example, identifies three major coexistent identities within Unionism between 1886-93. These are a territorially-based Ulster regional identity; an ‘Irish national consciousness’, which differentiated itself from Irish nationalism by identifying with British imperialism; and an Anglo-Saxon racial identity with the British Isles and the British Empire. Ian McBride also notes three distinct and superimposed identities over the whole of the Home Rule period: the Ulster-Scot identity, through which Ulster was distinguished from the ‘degenerate’ south of Ireland; a pure Irish identity which also took care to differentiate itself from Catholic nationalism; and a British identity which aligned Ulster culturally, racially and through a common religion, with Great Britain. At the same time Ulstermen clearly professed their attachment to the Empire as a civilising and moral force.


Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness’.

Hennessey, ‘Ulster Unionist Territorial and National Identities’.

McBride, ‘Ulster and the British Problem’.
The extent of imperialist allegiance within Ulster is still being debated, and there is no consensus about this. McBride, Loughlin and Hennessey, as we have seen, think there was an identification with Britain and Empire which was based on Anglo-Saxon blood ties. On the other hand Donal Lowry believes that Ulstermen possessed an imperial rather than a metropolitan British identity: pride in Empire was always a fundamental basis of Ulster Unionism. In 1912 Lord Carnforth wrote to Lady Londonderry from Lismore, saying

I doubt if people understand that the Orangemen are imperialists. My host here, who commands 1,400 drilled men, tells me that they refused to wear the Orange cockade, and insisted on red white and blue ... which seems to back up Lowry’s argument. However Alvin Jackson disagrees, and thinks that Ulstermen were not particularly interested in imperial matters, except for personal reasons, or possibly during the first world war. Their main concern was the pragmatic opposition of Home Rule.

Not surprisingly the identities that these historians discuss are male; women are hardly mentioned in their work. The involvement of Unionist women in politics has been researched by Diane Urquhart (see below page 206-7), but she does not discuss questions of identity. Yet it cannot simply be assumed that Unionist men and women felt the same way over this. Gender specific issues like the suffrage question meant that women may have had different responses. In fact the suffrage issue had forged alliances between loyalist and nationalist women, although these alliances had broken down by 1913 as we will see. In addition some UWUC members had husbands, fathers or brothers who sat in both houses of the Imperial Parliament which the UWUC so strongly opposed. Where did these women’s loyalty lie? Clearly more

---

15 Lowry, ‘Ulster Resistance and Loyalist Rebellion’.

16 PRONI D2846/1/7/20, Lord Carnforth to Lady Londonderry, 4 June 1912.

17 Jackson, ‘Irish Unionists and the Empire’.
research is needed to ascertain the limits of female middle- and upper-class Protestant identities in Ulster. It is known that male loyalism and nationalism correlated fairly consistently (but not overwhelmingly) with religious affiliation, but this information is not available for women.¹⁸

UWUC records indicate that there are no easy answers to how these complicated class, gender, national and imperial motivations intersected and how they helped to shape the actions and identities of their members. What they do show is the delicate compromises Lady Dufferin faced as a leader of the UWUC. The organisation tried to steer a course between the cultural demands of gender and class roles and the varying interpretations of these roles on the one hand, and their position within the United Kingdom and the British Empire as British women, Irishwomen and Ulster Protestants on the other. These are some of the points I shall try to unravel, but first I shall describe the organisation and activities of the UWUC.

The Ulster Women’s Unionist Council (UWUC)

The Ulster Women’s Unionist Council, formed in 1911, was a voluntary political support group like the Women’s Liberal Federation and the Primrose League. In fact many UWUC members were Primrose Leaguers, with future UWUC president Theresa Londonderry on the League’s Executive Committee. Upper-class women had always been involved in politics in a variety of ways, but for the middle-class women who formed the rank and file of the organisation, political work was a new departure.¹⁹ However the UWUC members took their new-found responsibilities very

---


¹⁹ Jalland, Women Marriage and Politics.
seriously, and did not attempt to use their debut on the political scene to campaign for gender-related interests such as female suffrage. Neither their constitution nor their leaders allowed this, and when the topic came up in 1913 it was firmly set aside.

The first President of the UWUC was Mary, second Duchess of Abercorn, who presided over the Irish branch of the Woman's National Anti-suffrage League. Mary Abercorn's successor in 1913, Theresa Londonderry, was also a well-known opponent of women's suffrage, no doubt because she had enough influence in other ways. Hariat Dufferin appeared to support the demand for the vote in general terms, although she had never campaigned for it. These women were politically sensitive, well versed in the debates over Home Rule, and fully aware of the complexity of the Ulster situation. For example in July 1916 Lady Dufferin advised Lady Londonderry not to publicise their views on the latest partition proposals: 'We are sitting on gunpowder', she wrote, 'and even the most careful pronouncement may set us Alight'.

The UWUC constitution was framed by Presbyterian Thomas Sinclair and his wife in consultation with Unionist MP James Craig, later the first Prime Minister of Northern Ireland. The sole object of the Council was to resist the severance of the Union. Dealing with any other topic was specifically disallowed. This proviso was

20 For examples of Theresa Londonderry's anti-suffrage stance see Belfast Newsletter, 22 September 1913; PRONI D2688/1/5, Advisory Committee Minutes, 17 March 1914.


22 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Hariat Dufferin to Theresa Londonderry, 22 July 1916.

23 Sinclair, 73, had a long involvement in politics, first as a Liberal, and since 1886 as a Liberal Unionist. Much of the credit for the rapid growth of the UWUC was due to Mrs Sinclair for her work on the Affiliation Committee during the important first two years.
inserted to prevent the organisation becoming a pressure group for female suffrage or temperance reform, both controversial issues. The wives of Ulster Unionist MPs and peers were automatically made members of Council, because the constitution decreed that these women were, ‘in the opinion of the Executive Committee, Unionists’. The idea that they might be of a different political persuasion to their husbands was unthinkable to the framers of the constitution, and the uncritical acceptance of this clause demonstrates the innate conservatism of the UWUC over feminist issues.

The UWUC grew fast and boasted between 40,000 and 50,000 members by its first anniversary. By 1913 there were 32 affiliated associations with a total membership of 200,000.\(^{(24)}\) Initially the UWUC confined its activities to those normally associated with a women’s political support group, such as fund-raising, canvassing, voter registration, public speaking, and distributing propaganda.

From the outset the UWUC recognised the importance of educating British voters, and immediately dispatched speakers to England. They preferred to get their message across in public meetings rather than canvassing, as they could reach more people that way.\(^{(25)}\) They were confident in their abilities to sway public opinion in Britain. During 1913, 93 workers addressed 100,000 electors at 230 public meetings in England and Scotland, in addition to numerous drawing room meetings.\(^{(26)}\) Julia Bush thinks this was a very high level of activity compared to the Edwardian women she has researched, and points out part of its importance was that the women

---


\(^{(25)}\) PRONI D/2688/1/3, *Active Workers Minutes*, 3 June 1913.

\(^{(26)}\) PRONI D/2688/1/9, *UWUC Annual Report 1913*. 
addressed (male) electors rather than women’s gatherings, or suffrage meetings, a major advance in itself.\textsuperscript{27}

The UWUC liaised with British groups such as the Union Defence League, the Primrose League, Women’s Unionist Associations and the Dublin based Irish Unionist Alliance.\textsuperscript{28} They distributed Unionist propaganda, sending more than a quarter of a million leaflets, newspapers and pamphlets to Britain in 1913.\textsuperscript{29} From late 1913 onwards the UWUC set up medical stations all over Ulster, and organised nursing training for volunteers in preparation for civil war. The UWUC had an important role in co-ordinating support for the Ulster Unionist Council among women’s groups throughout Ulster, and providing volunteers whenever they were required by the men’s group.

Diane Urquhart has most ably analysed the activities of the UWUC, and concludes that they made a significant contribution to the work of the Ulster Unionist Council. She argues that these women defined their struggle against Home Rule in terms of gender. They fought to remain within the union to protect their gender-specific interests of home and family, interests that they thought would be damaged by rule under a Dublin parliament. By doing this, she concludes, they had to concede the larger gender issue of political citizenship for women.\textsuperscript{30} This was the case, but I think that in reducing the Home Rule question to one of ‘gender versus Ulster’ Urquhart neglects the importance of other factors. Did UWUC members demonstrate the same multi-layered identities and allegiances that Hennessey and McBride discuss? Did they

\textsuperscript{27} In a letter addressed to me.

\textsuperscript{28} PRONI D/2688/1/3, Active Workers Minutes, 7 June 1911; 1 July 1913; D/1098/1/1, Excom Minutes, 15 October 1912.

\textsuperscript{29} PRONI D/2688/1/9, \textit{UWUC Annual Report}, 1913.

\textsuperscript{30} Urquhart, “The Female of the Species is More Deadlier than the Male”? and \textit{Women in Ulster Politics}. 
have the pride in the British Empire that Lowry identifies among male Unionists, or were they little concerned with imperial matters? What did being Irish mean to them?

Neither does she discuss how class affected forms of national belonging. Although all classes were represented in the UWUC, the members were mostly upper or middle class, especially those who sat on the committees. Twenty-three of the fifty-nine members of the first executive committee were titled. They were from the Anglo-Irish gentry and aristocracy, a narrowly defined social group who intermarried among themselves and with the English upper classes. (Lady Dufferin was distantly related to her husband; her Irish father and English mother were also distantly related.) Many of these women feared they would lose social power and prestige under a Dublin parliament in which positions of influence were more likely to go to the Catholic middle classes. How far this fuelled their resistance to Home Rule is implicit, but worth discussing. Their main concern may well have been to safeguard their homes and families, as Urquhart suggests, but that does not eliminate these other considerations.

Protestantism, Class and Britishness

It was of paramount importance to UWUC members that Ulster retained its legislative ties with Britain, and so they stressed their loyalty by emphasising their Britishness and the common bonds that Ulster Unionists shared with Britain. One bond was Protestantism. When Lady Dufferin addressed what she believed was the largest gathering ever of women in Belfast, she implicitly used this argument to differentiate between 'them' and 'us':

31 Urquhart, Women in Ulster Politics, p57.
We [Protestants] have no ill feelings toward any of our [Roman Catholic] countrymen. We wish them to enjoy the same liberties, civil and religious, that we demand for ourselves here and it is because we believe that home rule will perpetuate strife, will endanger our [Protestant] religious liberties, and will bring financial disaster upon the country that we [Protestants] oppose it with all our strength.\(^{32}\)

The UWUC particularly feared rule by a Dublin parliament strongly influenced by Catholicism. They believed the Catholic Church could inflict damage on the sanctity of family life, and obtained 104,301 signatures on their January 1912 petition against the *Ne Temere* papal decree of 1908. This stated that mixed marriages would not be recognised unless conducted by a Catholic priest, and the children of such marriages must be raised in the Catholic faith.\(^{33}\) They felt the religious argument was so important that when the West of Scotland WUA asked them to omit the ‘question of religion in Ireland’ in their canvassing in Scotland, the UWUC thought it ‘could not possibly be avoided’.\(^{34}\) Regardless of the extent of their piety, Protestantism was an expression of their Britishness, so the religious motive for opposing Home Rule was of primary importance to them.

The loss of privilege which upper-class Ulsterwomen feared under Home Rule was naturally not mentioned by the UWUC in their campaigning, but it was a topic which wove together ideas of class, religion and national identity. In Ireland the upper classes were far more likely to be Anglo-Saxon than Celt, and far more likely to be Protestant than Catholic.\(^{35}\) The loyalist Anglo-Irish aristocracy differentiated

---

\(^{32}\) *Belfast Newsletter*, 1 October 1912.

\(^{33}\) Kinghan, *United We Stood*, p20.

\(^{34}\) PRONI D/2688/1/3, Active Workers Minutes, 6 December 1912.

\(^{35}\) In 1861 less than 10% of titled men, and less than 30% of self-styled ‘gentlemen’ were Catholics, despite a Catholic/Protestant population ratio of 78:22: Akenson, *Small Differences*, p161, p179. The 1911 census figures were collated differently, and are not directly comparable, but out of 52 Irish peers 8 (15%) were Catholic and 78% were Protestant, while the Catholic/Protestant/Others ratio was 74:23:3. Parliamentary Papers, *Accounts and Papers 1912/13, Vol 70*, p9.
themselves from nationalist Ireland by accentuating their loyalty through their fiercely British culture and Protestant religion. Harold Nicolson’s description of the Dufferins’ home at the end of the nineteenth century shows how their way of life was indicative of their British identity as well as their class:

At Clandeboye the Protestant ascendancy was established, unmitigated, unperturbed. The gravel upon the garden-paths stretched weedless between mown grass; the men who raked it would touch their hats as the carriages crackled by. ... The flag flew from Helen’s Tower, the bell rang for church, the curate propped his bicycle against one of the stone cannon-balls at the entrance to the house; and at 11.15 each morning the butler would enter the library bringing cake and Marsala, the London newspapers and the English mail.36

However this way of life was a desperate assertion of Britishness in the face of a crumbling existence: by the 1890s the Clandeboye estate had already been whittled away by Dufferin’s need to raise capital. It became more and more difficult to keep up the trappings of aristocratic existence. In 1901 Lady Dufferin decided to reduce her staff to six and make other economies: ‘give up the laundry - and get things washed by woman at Helen’s Bay. Give up stable - set apart £50 a year for hire’.37 The British aristocracy also suffered a decline in income during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; the Aberdeens’ bank manager wrote them several polite letters at this time.38 In Ireland the changes were felt more acutely. Unionist and Protestant Margaret Dockrell explained in 1891 that Ireland was in a state of transition:

The governing power in local affairs has passed from the unionist to the nationalists, from Protestants to Catholics, from the educated, cultured leisured classes to the traders, small farmers, and in many cases even to the labourers.39

36 Nicolson, The Desire to Please, pp5-6.
37 PRONI D/1071/KH/1/2/1 283, H Dufferin to Hermione Blackwood, 26 January 1901.
38 HH Bundle 1/5: eg Bank of Ireland to Ishbel Aberdeen, 23 June 1915, withdrawing threat of legal proceedings.
39 Mrs Dockrell was one of the first elected female local government officials. Luddy,
She could have added ‘from the Anglo-Irish to the Irish’. In the years before the first world war the Anglo-Irish still tried to cling precariously to their privileged position, and feared that Home Rule would accelerate these changes. But after the first world war most of the Ascendancy ‘pulled up stumps and headed for the Home Counties’. Lady Dufferin moved to the south coast of England. Those who remained saw their worst fears of impoverishment realised, even in British Ulster. Lady Dufferin’s great-granddaughter wrote Great Granny Webster, a black comedy set in Brighton.

The fictional great-granddaughter describes her family’s Ulster estate thus:

> The house had both the melancholy and the magic of something inherently doomed by the height of its own colonial aspirations. It was like a grey and decaying palace fortress beleaguered by invasions of hostile native forces. Fierce armies of stinging nettles were seizing its once imposing elm-arched driveway. ... [Indoors] pieces of dangling string ... helped to direct the massive flow of unaccountable leaks to the various pots and pans and jam jars in which it suited my family that they should land.

This extract depicts straitened circumstances, but it also conveys the siege mentality which had been a part of Ulster Protestant identity since 1689, when 30,000 Protestants were confined inside the Derry city walls for 101 days. This ingrained attitude distinguished them from both nationalist Ireland and their English cousins. Hamilton, Hariot’s father, had defensively put up both the Royal Arms and his own over Killyleagh Castle doorway. His own arms asserted his right of abode as an Irishman: ‘The arms of a family being on a building are considered the most

---

*Women in Ireland*, p296.


* C Blackwood, *Great Granny Webster* (Duckworth, London, 1977), pp.83-5. Andrew Harrison suggested to me that the main character was based on Hariot Dufferin.

* Boyce, ‘The Marginal Britons: The Irish’.
convincing proof of the connection of a family with a locality...’ he told Dufferin. But at the same time the Royal Arms were an emblem of British authority that proclaimed his difference, announced his Britishness and clearly staked out the boundaries of his own enclave. Something of this siege mentality and fear of dispossession also extended to Harold Nicolson, who reveals his feelings of displacement in the extract below.

Beyond the woods and lakes of Clandeboye, outside the walls and fencing which enclosed the demesne, Ireland asserted her eternal shambling sway. ... There were strange people in those parts, I heard it whispered, ... ‘Catholics’ ... dangerous people, difficult people, people who were in the hands of the [F]enians and the priests; alien, intractable, sly. Even as a child I had felt vaguely that here was the ‘foreign’ element which had disturbed me so much in Turkey, Bulgaria or Morocco. ... It was a shock to me to discover that here also my people were but settlers in a foreign land. ... Yet slowly and painfully it was borne in upon me that they and their fellow immigrants were also living among foreigners ..."44

**Ulster Identity**

UWUC members had multi-layered identities and complex loyalties. In 1912 as the Ulster situation began to deteriorate, the very real threat of Home Rule brought their Ulster identities to the fore. Like Harold Nicolson they felt a sense of siege, which became more pronounced as their distrust of Catholic Ireland was added to by their sense of abandonment by the British government. For example the UWUC executive said in 1912 that the main reason they opposed Home Rule was ‘government tactics’: that the Parliament Act ‘with all its fatal consequences’ had been achieved with the co-operation of Irish nationalists.45 The UWUC became more

---

43 PRONI Mic 22/6/29, AR Hamilton to Dufferin, February 1856.
45 PRONI D/2688/1/11, *Belfast Newsletter*, 19 Jan 1912. They believed there had been collusion: that the Liberals had agreed to introduce a Home Rule Bill if the Irish Parliamentary Party would support the Parliament Act through the Commons. But
hard-line in their attitudes towards Britain in general and the decisions of the Cabinet over Ulster in particular. The one member of the cabinet that Lady Dufferin trusted was Sir Edward Carson, whom she thought represented the beleaguered voice of Ulster. ‘He is the only strong leader we have’, she told the Council, ‘and any expression of opinion that weakened his authority would be bad for Ulster!’ After the outbreak of war with Germany in August 1914 their patriotism and loyalty towards Britain soared, but if anything their feeling of betrayal by the British government became more acute. In this section I shall explore the coexistence of these conflicting emotions.

Firstly the UWUC’s quarrel was not with Ulstermen or Ulsterwomen who happened to be Catholics, it was with the British government. From 1912-14 while the Home Rule Bill was going through parliament the largely upper-class members of the executive of the UWUC were wholly against any violence towards Catholics within their communities. They showed a sensitivity to the way that small incidents could escalate into violence, and took upon themselves a peacekeeping role in this regard. In 1912 Mrs King-Kerr reported that her group saw the importance of keeping in touch with the working classes, and were planning ‘an evening meeting and speakers, and to impress upon them to exercise “self control”’. Her group also wanted ‘to walk to show their strength’. But, she added, ‘[t]hey think it well out too. They say keep out of the Catholic districts’. The same year Lady Dufferin emphasised that ‘we women must do all we can to allay bitterness, to avoid strife, to keep peace in our own city of...”

Jalland notes that after the December 1910 election the Liberals did not need Irish support. Jalland, *The Liberals and Ireland*, pp27-8.

46 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Hariot Dufferin to Theresa Londonderry, 16 July 1916.

47 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Charlotte King-Kerr to Theresa Londonderry, 21 February 1912.
In February 1914 she wrote a letter on behalf of the UWUC executive to Unionist newspapers, hoping to reduce the name calling which took place outside factory gates by ‘factory girls, mill workers etc’:

... much may occur to provoke Ulster Unionists, and incite them to an outbreak of disturbance. We ... beg our Unionist sisters to be patient under all provocations, ... and to strive earnestly to preserve peace and order ... by imposing the greatest possible self-restraint both upon themselves and upon all around them.49

Their worries may have been unnecessary. Remarkably few provocations escalated into violence. Monthly police records during the Home Rule crisis show time and time again that the Ulster nationalists were quietly keeping their heads down.50

Hariat Dufferin and her colleagues in the UWUC also showed the intensity of their loyalty towards Ulster by refusing to be sidetracked by feminist demands for the vote. The fight over Home Rule had undermined the suffrage movement north and south, and split suffrage supporters and opposers equally, as Margaret Ward has discussed.51 In 1913 the Ulster Unionist Council indicated that women would have the vote if the Provisional Government came into operation, and UWUC members would be co-opted onto its various committees.52 Hariat Dufferin chaired the UWUC meeting when the subject was discussed, and reported to Theresa Londonderry that she had managed to avoid ‘unpleasantness’ at the meeting:

[There was] a great deal of feeling ... the suffragettes are triumphant, others write to suggest that we ‘veto’ the resolution. ... I [gave] a word of warning to the meeting - namely, that our Association stands for one political question only - that on Home Rule we are united, on

---

48 Belfast Newsletter, 1 October 1912.
49 PRONI D2688/1/5, Advisory Committee Minutes, 3 and 10 February 1914.
50 PRO CO/904/83-89.
52 PRO CO/904/27/3/546.
every other question we are probably divided, and therefore that it is all important that we should refrain from any expression of opinion on other policies ... 53

Clearly the conflicting views of the members were strong enough to cause argument, but Lady Dufferin was firm in her efforts to keep the fight against Home Rule foremost in their objectives. Although the UWUC were divided over the suffrage question neither Hariot Dufferin nor Theresa Londonderry allowed these divisions to interfere with their main objective of safeguarding the legislative union between Britain and Ireland.

Six months later the saviour of Ulster, Carson, who had been prepared to allow women limited voting rights to a provisional government, now vehemently opposed it for the Westminster parliament. This was a problem for Ulster Unionists who were also suffragists. The English Women’s Social and Political Union, frustrated at Carson’s opposition, held an inflammatory public meeting in Belfast in March 1914 when they declared ‘War on Ulster’. Despite their different views on Home Rule the Irish suffrage societies had up till then attempted to keep lines of communication open amongst themselves. Margaret Ward believes that the insensitivity of English suffragists to the delicate Irish political situation only succeeded in driving the various suffrage groups apart. 54 One UWUC member succinctly expressed her opinions about the WSPU to the Belfast Newsletter:

I have been working hard for the past two years for my country and for my leader Sir Edward Carson ... and I am proud to do it. ... We Ulsterwomen are quite capable of expressing our own views without the help of English Suffragettes or their organisations. ... Who authorised the statement that Ulsterwomen now declare war on

53 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Hariot Dufferin to Theresa Londonderry, 16 September 1913; PRONI D/1098/1/1, UWUC Minutes, 16 September 1913.
54 Ward, ‘Conflicting Interests’.
Edward Carson? ... We Unionist women of Ulster have thanked God from our hearts that such a leader has been raised up for us ...  

An 'Ulster Unionist' and 'non-militant suffragist' complained to the Newsletter of the 'gross ignorance' and 'impertinence' of the WSPU in 'attacking our devoted leader'. She continued: 'I am a Unionist before a suffragist and I know that in England immense harm is done to our cause by these ladies ... [The vote] will not be obtained by harassing our leaders at this most critical time ...'. Like the UWUC executive, these two correspondents put the salvation of Ulster above their desire for the vote.

A strong sense of Ulster identity is further apparent in the correspondence between the UWUC and Scottish women. It was once inelegantly suggested that Ulster was 'like a piece hacked out of Britain between the Tweed and the Tyne,' and Ian McBride argues that (male) Ulster Unionists expressed their identity by stressing their Scottish origins during the Home Rule period. This does not seem to be the case for the women’s council, whose relationship with the West of Scotland Women’s Unionist Association had often been strained. Despite several complaints by the UWUC their members working in Scotland in 1914 were dismayed to find they were still being allocated clerical and messenger jobs unconnected with Ulster, instead of the canvassing work they expected. And when Ulsterwomen in Paisley wanted to start a local UWUC group the West of Scotland Women’s Unionist Association wrote them a ‘very strong letter’ of protest, and so they dropped the idea. During the

---

55 Belfast Newsletter, 24 March 1914.  
56 Belfast Newsletter, 18 March 1914.  
57 FF Moore, 1914, quoted by Loughlin, Ulster Unionism, p26; McBride, ‘Ulster and the British Problem’.  
58 PRONI D/2688/1/3, Active Workers Minutes, 22 April, 18 May 1914; D/2688/1/1 Finance Committee Minutes, 7 July 1914.  
59 PRONI D/1098/1/1, Advisory Committee Minutes, 19 November 1912.
world war the UWUC made the astonishing decision not to help the Scottish Red Cross by meeting convalescent soldiers at the Belfast docks. They decided that as the soldiers would not be members of the Ulster Division, the matter was 'scarcely one for the UWUC'.

In October 1913 the possibility of civil war loomed large, and so the UWUC broadened its sphere of activities. Lady Dufferin wrote to the Medical Board of the UVF suggesting that a central authority be established to supervise the recruitment and training of nurses and first aiders, and run ambulance classes. This was agreed, and the Women's Council drew up a scheme to organise and train a network of volunteers throughout Ulster. By May 1914 they had instructed 4,881 women in first aid and 1,916 in home nursing, and set up and equipped medical stations ready to support the volunteers.

Other preparations for civil war continued. In February that year Lady Dufferin began to collect money and supplies and equipped Clandeboye as a hospital. She also loaned the grounds of her estate to the Ulster Volunteer Force for manoeuvres. For a week over Easter 1914 an estimated thousand men of the first and second battalion of the UVF North Down Regiment pitched their tents at Clandeboye. Equipped with real rifles they paraded before Carson. The other leaders of the UWUC were like-minded. The Abercorns' residence, Baronscourt, and the

---

60 PRONI D/2688/1/6, Advisory Committee Minutes, 2 March 1915.
61 PRONI D/1098/1/1, Hariot Dufferin to UUC Medical Board, 16 October 1913, and reply.
62 Kinghan, *United we Stood*, p29. The local constabularies informed the British administration in Dublin Castle of all these preparations amongst the women. See for example PRO CO/904/86,89,91; PRO CO/904/273/587.
63 PRONI D/2846/1/9/25, Charlotte King-Kerr to Theresa Londonderry, 4 February 1914.
64 *Belfast Newsletter*, 10 April 1914 and ff.
Londonderrys' Irish home, Mountstewart, were also used as UVF training camps, and Mountstewart was kitted out as a hospital.

After the Curragh incident in 1914 the UWUC discussed sending a resolution of thanks to General Gough and to the army officers who had tendered their resignation rather than support Britain against Ulster. Although they unanimously decided that such a resolution would be ‘inadvisable’, the very fact of the proposal indicates that some of them at least were prepared to support British army officers in rebellion against the state.\(^{65}\)

The UWUC executive disagreed over how best to ‘save Ulster both from Home Rule and from Civil War...’. Some UWUC members thought it was vital to campaign in England. However others thought the canvassers were being ‘made the fool of the English Conservative party ... who have no regard for Ulster except as a lever for securing their own return to power’. These members wanted to equip hospitals or fund the purchase of ammunition for the UVF.\(^{66}\) Both groups of women held the same objective - to save Ulster - but thought that different methods could attain it. It is clear that the priorities of the Ulster Women’s Unionist Council were set firmly with Ulster rather than political Unionism. This shows the overwhelming importance of their identity as Ulsterwomen at that point.

The UWUC knew that their opposition to Home Rule could lead to civil war with Britain. Lady Londonderry well expressed their feelings over this when she said: ‘To us women the very thought of strife, accompanied by bloodshed, is an unspeakable horror. In such times it is the women who suffer most.’ But principles were important. She promised that the UWUC would do all they could to support the

\(^{65}\) PRONI D2688/1/5, Advisory Committee Minutes, 31 March 1914; 14 April 1914.

\(^{66}\) PRONI D2688/1/5, Advisory Committee Minutes, 9 and 15 June 1914.
men ‘who are prepared to risk everything for that cause’. Lady Dufferin had lost her eldest son in the Boer War and so knew the suffering war could bring. A fellow committee member described her as ‘like many of us, moderate and in favour of peace and unanimity’. Yet despite these comments Lady Dufferin and Lady Londonderry had raised money for guns and ammunition, and had allowed UVF soldiers to trample over their flower beds. This indicates just how much they thought was at stake. In spite of their horror of violence they were fully prepared to lead the UWUC to support Ulstermen in armed conflict against Britain if it became necessary. Their Ulster identities were very important to them.

In August 1914 Britain declared war on Germany. Over the next two years the conflicting loyalties of Lady Dufferin and the other UWUC members became clear. The UWUC offered their wholehearted support to Britain in the war, while at the same time they continued to register their dismay over the way the British government was handling Ulster and the Home Rule question. Lady Dufferin became more and more despondent over the fate of Ulster as the European war progressed. In September 1914 she wrote:

How shocking is the behaviour of the Government over Home Rule - we Unionists, have been so good to them that really they should have responded and shown some sense of justice to Ulster - What a nasty spirit runs through their whole party - It is despairing.

She not only thought they were neglecting Ulster’s wishes over partition, but that they were not aggressive enough towards the nationalists. In May 1916 fifteen of the rebel leaders of the Dublin Easter rebellion were put to death. These ‘grisly executions’,

---

67 Northern Whig, 15 July 1914.
68 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Edith Mercier-Clements to Theresa Londonderry, 19 February 1912.
69 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Hariot Dufferin to Theresa Londonderry, 1 September 1914.
were described by Roy Foster as a ‘draconian reaction’ by the British authorities.\textsuperscript{70}

They clearly did not go far enough for Lady Dufferin; perhaps her age had made her more reactionary. In July 1916 she complained to Theresa Londonderry that

The whole state of Ireland is terrible and hopeless because the Government will not allow strong measures to be taken. After that ‘rebellion’ they had a splendid chance of showing a mailed fist and they lost it. ...

Lady Dufferin also criticised Lloyd George’s proposals for immediate Home Rule with the temporary exclusion of six counties:

Our women are naturally much upset by the turn things have taken, ... we all feel heartbroken over the proposed partition of Ulster and are still hoping some better solution of our difficulties may come out of the melting pot. ... I feel strongly with our women in all this.\textsuperscript{71}

Sentiments such as these were an expression of Ulster identity, yet these same women also showed loyalty towards Britain, which had become clear when war broke out. Council members immediately threw their energies into supporting the war effort. Lady Dufferin turned her hospital over to the government, and her grounds to the British army: ‘We are being fortified’, she told Lady Londonderry, ‘Clandeboye is to be a sort of Aldershot - very hideous, but patriotic’.\textsuperscript{72} The UWUC offered their network of resources, medical stations and volunteers (which had all been built up to prepare for war with Britain), to help the families and dependants of Ulstermen who had signed up to fight for the United Kingdom, saying that

No part of the community has more clearly demonstrated its loyalty to the Throne and to the Empire than the people of Ulster. Today our men are responding to the call of the King and rallying round the flag; and we feel it is our duty to see that their families and dependants are cared for...\textsuperscript{73}

\textsuperscript{70} Foster, \textit{Modern Ireland}, pp484-5.

\textsuperscript{71} PRONI D/2846/1/8, Hariot Dufferin to Theresa Londonderry, 16? July 1916.

\textsuperscript{72} PRONI D/2846/1/8, Hariot Dufferin to Theresa Londonderry, 8 September 1914.

\textsuperscript{73} PRONI D/1098/1/3, Theresa Londonderry, Hariot Dufferin and Rosalind Abercorn
When this letter is compared with the anti-British sentiments concurrently being expressed by the UWUC two points emerge. First, the ideological contradictions of their Ulster identity are apparent. The letter stresses their loyalty to the ‘Throne and to the Empire’, yet they had contemplated supporting war against Britain, and had shown their willingness to assist the UUC in setting up a separate Ulster state if necessary. DG Boyce points out that Ulster Unionists got round this contradiction, as the UWUC does here, by making the Crown the focus of their allegiance. In this way they could justify their opposition to the actions of the British government without compromising their loyalty to the British Crown.  

The second point is the way this letter supports Colley’s argument that in the face of external challenge a common British identity came to the fore. Disagreements over Ulster were still acute, as we have seen, but the greater crisis of the war had revealed the Britishness of the Ulsterwomen. Immediately upon the declaration of war in August some UWUC members displayed a fierce patriotism and eagerness to help the war effort, ‘an “ultra-imperial section” among the “all-imperial”,’ Edith Wheeler called them, ‘anxious to give all we had, friends, goods etc and at once’. Others, including Lady Dufferin, were more cautious about immediately relinquishing their resources. They might still need them: at that point the Home Rule Bill had been passed in parliament, and although discussions were taking place to suspend it for the duration of the war, this was not agreed until 15th September.

The shifting and conflicting nature of the women’s Ulster identities is clear. This confirms that Ulster Unionist women (like the male Unionists discussed by

to the Lord Mayor of Belfast, 12 August 1914.


75 Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness.’

76 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Edith Wheeler to Theresa Londonderry, 19 August 1914.
Hennessey and McBride), had multi-layered loyalties. Their intense support for Ulster was because they wanted to protect and preserve their *Britishness*: the way of life, Protestant religion, and position at the centre of the British Empire. Their Ulster identities were created and recreated by and through the articulation of cultural, historical, and social phenomena as much as by the boundaries on a map.

**Irish Identity**

Boyce and McBride both pinpoint a long-standing allegiance to Ireland by the Ulster Unionists throughout this period, with the loyalist Irish careful in differentiating their Irishness from the nationalists.77 The argument that there were two Irelands, one loyal and one disloyal to Britain, had been put forward in 1884 by Colonel Saunderson, previous leader of the Ulster Unionists, although his all-Ireland point of view was falling into disfavour. His argument sprang from Matthew Arnold’s notion that there were two distinct races in Ireland, - the Celtic and the British - and led the Unionists to stress their Anglo-Saxon blood and their racial connections with Britain.78

Mrs Wheeler used this argument at many large meetings in England in 1913. For example she often related how a nationalist Irish council had refused to put up a monument to the glorious dead of the Boer War, preferring to honour the Irish soldiers who had fought with the Boers. She emphasised the unfitness of the nationalists to govern them because of their disloyalty to Britain and the Empire.79

---


79 eg *Windsor, Eton and Slough Express*, 15 March 1913, p3.
The UWUC also differentiated between loyalist and nationalist Ireland in their economic arguments against Home Rule. They believed that Anglo-Saxon characteristics had helped Ulster to build a prosperous economy which would suffer under nationalist rule. When some members of the Women’s Amalgamated Unionist and Tariff Reform Association visited Ulster from Britain the UWUC decided to take them on an eye-opening tour to ‘some of the nationalist parts of the north west and afterwards to bring them to the prosperous loyalist districts of the north east by way of contrast’.  

Before 1914 Lady Dufferin referred to the whole population of Ireland as the ‘Irish’ and called the nationalists ‘nationalists’. In October 1912 she could state as an Irishwoman: ‘[w]e love Ireland. Our greatest desire is that peace and happiness and prosperity should reign here throughout the length and breadth of the land’. The following March she still thought in an all-Ireland way, hoping that ‘[i]f we could win seats in the South and West it would be an enormous help, and we might split the nationalist party’.  

From then on Lady Dufferin’s loyalty to Ireland waned as her support for the Ulster cause intensified. By 1914 she had resigned herself to partition between north and south. But she was firmly against the proposed division of the province of Ulster, in which three Ulster counties would be ‘handed over to the rebels’ as she put it. She chaired a discussion on the matter and arranged for a letter to inform Carson of the ‘very strong feeling’ generated ‘against the elimination of the Counties Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal in any settlement which may be come to’.

---

80 PRONI D/2688/1/3, Active Workers Minutes, 17 July 1911.
81 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Harriot Dufferin to Theresa Londonderry, 19 March 1913.
82 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Harriot Dufferin to Theresa Londonderry, 22 July 1916.
83 PRONI D/2688/1/5, Advisory Committee Minutes 12 May 1914. Carson told the
mentioned 'the Irish' she meant only the nationalists. She told her daughter - who was as Irish as she was - that she hoped 'the Irish' would be 'beaten on every vote'. In 1921 she moved to England.

Lady Dufferin had always been proud to be Irish in a colonial situation, but she seemed to forsake her Irish identity during the Home Rule crisis and distance herself from 'Ireland'. It is impossible to know whether or not she celebrated her Irishness in private, but she does not appear to have done so publicly. Being British was more important to her.

**British and Imperial Identity**

It has been well demonstrated that imperial consciousness was an intrinsic part of British (English) identities in the nineteenth century. This was constantly reinforced by repeated encounters with colonial others. The civilising mission, the perceived cultural and racial superiority, and the apparent assurance of being God's chosen people (not to mention the financial reward) led to a rapid growth in the size of the Empire during the nineteenth century. The intense identification with Britain which the Dufferins displayed in their way of life was strengthened by an awareness of their contribution to this success. In the Clandeboye muniments room were the many trophies which they had collected in foreign parts, and which helped to define their existence as members of the colonising race: native artefacts; antiquities; tiger skins. An illuminated address to Lady Dufferin from the women of Bengal reposed on the sideboard in its 'pretty bamboo and silver box', reminding her of their 'heartfelt UWUC to 'keep quiet', saying that 'no settlement will be arrived at unless Ulster is consulted'.

---

84 PRONI D/1071/KH/1/2/1, 9 March [1917].

85 eg Hall, *White, Male and Middle Class*; McClintock, *Imperial Leather*. 
expression of gratitude'. She could also take pride in her 'sympathy with suffering', ‘devotion to the weak and helpless’ and ‘wisdom and enthusiasm’. And when Lady Dufferin first visited Burma after it had been annexed in 1886 she ‘found some carved wooden ladies who were … carried off with a view to their taking up a position some day in the Hall at Clandeboye’.87

Lady Dufferin's British and imperial identity was bolstered by mementoes such as these. Lady Londonderry also felt a pride in the Empire, and once remarked that ‘there is no nobler work for women than endeavouring to influence all those around to preserve the empire as our forefathers handed it down to us’. However their imperial identity was not always as fixed and clear-cut as this, especially when they thought the British government was ignoring their interests. On occasion they gloomily concluded that far from being part of the Mother Country, Ulster had been relegated to an inferior position below the white dominions. Lady Londonderry sent a letter to Lady Dufferin to be read out at a council meeting: ‘Public opinion in this country [England] would be outraged’, she wrote, ‘if any white community of the Empire of our numbers, our prosperity and our energy were fighting for their liberties as we are today’. Theresa Londonderry conveniently ignored the fact that Catholic Ireland was also fighting for its liberty. Furthermore she implied, as was the case, that dominant British public opinion only extended as far as supporting freedom for white colonies. At this point she identified more with settler communities in Canada and Australia than with the metropolis. Lady Dufferin decided not to read out this sentence; perhaps she thought it would be bad publicity for the Ulster cause.

---

88 Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People*, p58.
89 PRONI D/1098/1/3, Theresa Londonderry to Harriot Dufferin, 13 January 1913.
The dominions had certainly felt a kinship with Ulster, and the UUC had received many donations from Australia and New Zealand, including two of £25,000. When Carson inspected the UVF troops in the grounds of Clandeboye, he told them of the many messages of support he had received from Australia, Canada, India and South Africa. The UWUC invited Archbishop Walsh to speak at a public meeting celebrating their first anniversary, and cheered his sentiments on the status of Ulster identity:

Splendid as it may be to be a colony or self-governing dominion of the British Empire, it is still more splendid still [sic] to be part of the Mother Country herself. (Applause) [We have] borne a glorious part in the upbuilding of the British Empire. [We have] in the past performed a most illustrious part in the Government and maintenance of that empire. ... [We are] not willing to be thrust out into the outer court and to take [our] place as a dependency or colony, no matter how splendid its dependencies might be. ... Home Rulers and radicals in England spoke about Home Rule as a concession of freedom, [but we] regarded it as a degradation of status.

The UWUC feared the political consequences of Home Rule. Mrs Mercier-Clements told the Mid-Antrim Branch of the Women's Unionist Association that 'from the Imperial standpoint' the Home Rule Bill 'could only mean the disintegration of the great Empire of which [we are] all so proud'. Indeed the UWUC stated that their second most important argument against Home Rule was that it would 'imperil the unity not only of Great Britain but of the Empire itself'. However this argument was normally little used in their campaigning. This was partly because they interpreted

---

90 Belfast Telegraph, 17 April 1914. For further instances of dominion support and the way that Ulster set a precedent for other white rebellions see Lowry, 'Ulster Resistance and Loyalist Rebellion'.

91 PRONI D/2688/1/11, from Belfast Newsletter, 19 January 1912.

92 Belfast Newsletter, 2 March 1914.

93 Ibid, 19 January 1912.
their constitution narrowly, and felt that it did not allow it. They advised their
delegates in Britain to begin their speeches with the words:

I want to make it clear that I am here as an Irishwoman to explain the
dangers that will arise to your country and mine by the adoption of the
Government policy of Home Rule ... I do not concern myself with the
other questions in which English Unionists may be interested.94

Another reason this argument was little used was the immediacy of the
situation in Ulster. While the leadership and executive of the council felt a pride in the
British Empire, to which Ulster people had made a significant contribution, the
pressing requirement for them was to preserve their links with Britain and resist rule
from Dublin. All other concerns faded into insignificance next to this.

In 1916 the Council began to think anew about publicising the Ulster cause in
the Empire. British and colonial troops were fighting in Europe in a spirit of
co-operation. The UWUC was also spurred by Ulster war losses. Over 5,500 men of
the 36th Ulster division (one sixth of the total number of Ulster volunteers) had been
killed or wounded in the first two days of the battle of the Somme.95 On 8 July Edith
Wheeler wrote: ‘I feel absolutely fierce when I read name after name today, all gone.
... The only thing left to us is to support the principles for which they have died and
to stand by those who are left, especially those belonging to the men of the deserted
counties’.96

However they realised that a different approach was necessary to secure the
attention of English voters. Lady Dufferin wrote to Theresa Londonderry, suggesting
that they had perhaps limited their scope by interpreting the constitution ‘in too literal
a way’. She said that speakers in England ‘will not be listened to if they only talk

94 PRONI D/1098/1/1, Council Minutes, 7 June 1911.
95 Jackson, ‘Ulster Unionists’, p156.
96 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Edith Wheeler to Theresa Londonderry, 8 July 1916.
“Ulster” - The whole situation is changed and the outlook will be less local’. She made the same point to the members of the UWUC. As a result the UWUC, in consultation with the UUC, made changes to their constitution. They inserted a clause by which they would promote ‘the consolidation of the Empire and a closer union of the United Kingdom with the overseas Dominions’. Another new clause permitted actions ‘in the interest of the Imperial Province of Ulster’ relating to post-war trade, resettlement of Ulster veterans, and anything else ‘which may tend to the benefit of Ulster and the Empire’.

Edith Wheeler suggested that more workers be trained, and new instructions provided on post-war ‘Imperial problems’. She proposed a series of private lectures which commenced in October 1916, saying that ‘it will be work on new lines that will be necessary if the Irish question comes up at all - the relation of Ireland to the Empire’. The UWUC had appreciated (as had the nationalists) that the white settler colonies could give them continued support for their cause. Mrs Wheeler thought they should send out newspapers to ‘Colonial Friends’, and persuade them to get articles on Ulster printed in their own newspapers, and Lady Dufferin was ‘much taken’ with Wheeler’s idea of running a reading room in Belfast for visiting Anzacs. It is clear that the position of Ulster was the immediate reason for this sudden interest in imperial questions in 1916.

---

97 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Harriot Dufferin to Theresa Londonderry, 4 October 1916.
98 PRONI D/2846/1/8/60, Harriot Dufferin and Rosalind Abercorn to UWUC members, 16 November 1916.
100 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Edith Wheeler to Theresa Londonderry, 16 August 1916; 5 October 1916.
101 PRONI D/2846/1/8, Edith Wheeler to Theresa Londonderry, 4 October 1916.
The UWUC prepared for the resumption of the Home Rule debate after the war by publishing a newspaper, *The Ulsterwoman*. The first issue discussed how they saw the question of the Union in a different light to the men. They explained that men focused on the wider political consequences of the break-up of the Union or the Empire, while women saw things from the *personal* point of view of the war volunteers and their families, a view which ‘none but women can fully understand’. But their statement that ‘husbands, sons, brothers and lovers’, who had given ‘service to King and Country’ must not suffer ‘exclusion from the commonwealth of the UK and the great Empire of which it is the head’ shows that they also focused on the wider political consequences; that the British Empire was very important to them.¹⁰² They did not want to lose the superior position of being ‘part of the Mother Country’, nor suffer any of the ‘degradation of status’ Archbishop Walsh had mentioned. Although their concern was for Ulster and their resistance to Home Rule, this was deeply bound up with their imperial identity and their membership of the Union at the head of the British Empire.

**Conclusion**

I have argued that upper-class Ulsterwomen like Lady Dufferin and many of those she represented in the UWUC were single-minded in their efforts for Ulster to remain an integral part of the United Kingdom governed from London. But paradoxically, as Fitzpatrick has pointed out, the greatest threat to the Union during these years came not from nationalist Ireland or Home Rule, but from Ulster loyalists themselves.¹⁰³ This apparent contradiction illustrates how competing loyalties can exist.

---

¹⁰² PRONI D/2688/1/10, *The Ulsterwoman*, 12 July 1919. The paper was discontinued in August 1920 due to lack of support.

alongside each other in a state of mutual dependency. Lady Dufferin’s response to Home Rule demonstrates that seemingly secure identities can be uncertain and precarious, and illustrates the shifting patterns of loyalties which she held as an Irishwoman.

Whereas Lady Aberdeen was apparently secure in her belief that her British identity gave her the unwavering right to pontificate to the Irish, she was not threatened by the loss of her legal British status. Lady Dufferin was in a different position. Her Ulster identity assumed primary importance to her because of her fear that she would lose everything that she held dear under nationalist rule. If she were to believe her association’s own propaganda, she would suffer religious persecution, see north-east Ulster’s well-ordered tidy affluence reduced to lazy poverty, and lose her British nationality and social status.

The way she expressed her gender identity was perhaps a reflection of her conservatism, but it also betrayed these fears. Like Lady Aberdeen, Lady Dufferin conformed to cultural gender expectations by stressing women’s desire for peace and harmony, and their traditional nurturing and caring abilities. But whereas Lady Aberdeen often stepped outside the confines of gender, Lady Dufferin did not. She practised what she preached, and kept her activities impeccably within the limits of the socially acceptable for upper-class ladies. She tended to defer to male Unionists over political matters, and did not allow any gender disharmony to affect the fight against Home Rule. The issue of Ulster was too important.

Lady Dufferin’s desire for Ulster to remain British also indicates how the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy’s notions of Britishness were closely bound up with their social position. She stressed Protestant Ulster’s cultural links with Britain through her religion, sense of identity and way of life. But her way of life was also a product of her
class-based identification with British landed society. She thought nothing of braving the gales in the Irish Sea to pay visits to friends and family in Britain, and struggled to keep up an aristocratic lifestyle. Class differentiated her from English shopkeepers and factory owners, or the Protestant farm workers on her County Down estate, just as her Britishness and loyalty to Empire separated her from sections of nationalist Ireland.

By 1914 Lady Dufferin had come to accept that Britain would relinquish the south of Ireland, and perhaps for Ulster Unionists this was no more than a painful expedient. But she never wholly accepted the division of Ulster, and relocated to Britain in 1921. Her determined fight for Ulster to remain part of the ‘Mother Country’ which ruled over the British Empire was more than just a desire to safeguard British imperialism. It indicates that on a much more personal level her very identity was based on remaining a legal member of the colonising nation.
Chapter 7

Imperial Anxieties and Native Spaces

This chapter and the next are interconnected, and compare various aspects of three sites of Empire - Ireland, Canada and India, - in which Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin set up organisations to benefit native health. Separated by thousands of miles, with dissimilar climates, different administrative systems, and varying levels of independence, these countries may all have had the British flag waving over them, but they occupied vastly different positions in the British imagination. Metaphorically Canada and India could not have been more unlike. Measured temporally and spatially from late nineteenth-century Britain in the centre, India, to the east, represented the past, and Canada to the west, the future. As Seeley put it:

The same nation which reaches one hand towards the future of the globe and assumes the position of mediator between Europe and the New World, stretches the other hand towards the remotest past ...¹

India was imagined as an exotic eastern land with an ancient but ‘dead’ civilisation, inhabited by brown-skinned people, described by Dufferin as ‘yearly multiplying beyond the numbers which the soil is capable of sustaining’. He had come to this conclusion, he explained, by remembering the ‘widespread misery’ he had seen in Ireland resulting from ‘similar conditions’.² This was in his youth, when he toured the famine districts of the west of Ireland on a fact-finding expedition for a pamphlet, and was one of the many parallels Dufferin noted between Ireland and India.

² Dufferin, *Speeches Delivered in India*. His pamphlet was *Narrative of a Journey from Oxford to Skibbereen During the Year of the Irish Famine* (JH Parker, Oxford, 1847).
Canada by contrast was imagined as a western land of future promise, a land with tracts of untrodden snow, virgin forests and fertile prairies. (The metaphors are apposite.) It was waiting to be populated with, as Lady Aberdeen put it ‘the fairest and boldest children of the Old World’, a description which does not need elaboration.

Somewhere between these extremes of time and space was the metropolis/colony of Ireland, which was equidistant from both Canada and India. As an integral part of the United Kingdom it was at the very centre of the British Empire, which was - at least according to the English - the hub of the contemporary world. But at the same time it had been colonised years before the British set foot in either Canada or India, and as Keith Jeffery points out, it had been a nation for centuries.

Within each of these colonies were ‘native spaces’, by which I mean sites which the British colonisers knew little about and over which they had relatively little jurisdiction. The sites I identify are the Indian zenana, the Irish homestead and the wilderness of north-west Canada. These native spaces stood on the threshold of colonial authority and at the intersection of a host of imperial anxieties: pollution, native bodies, disease, anarchy. Because of this, I argue, they became contested sites within which imperial and national identities were negotiated. There was therefore an acute need for them to be known and demystified by imperialists.

The format of these two interconnected chapters is as follows. The rest of this chapter looks in more detail at the zenana, the Irish homestead and the Canadian wilderness, the sites on which some of this discursive and practical work of Empire took place. In chapter eight I continue the same theme by focusing on the health

---


4 Keith Jeffery, ‘Introduction’, in his edited ‘*An Irish Empire*’?

5 Segregated female living quarters.
associations set up by Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin. They allowed access to these spaces for women already supportive of Britain and the Empire. I will argue that the way that these associations were set up, received and operated says as much about 'English' attitudes to race, gender and ethnicity as it does about health issues.

**Native Spaces**

Rudyard Kipling knew that there were spatially and anachronistically distinct enclaves on the margins of colonial authority, which contained an aura of mystery and intrigue for the British:

If you go straight away from Levees and Government House Lists, past Trades' Balls - far beyond everything and everybody you ever knew in your respectable life - you cross, in time, the Border line where the last drop of White blood ends and the full tide of Black sets in ...  

The extract above suggests a journey to another time and another world, in which alien values prevailed. The unspoken fear of anarchy and rebellion in the contrast between 'respectable life' and a 'full tide of Black' setting in is clear. Borderland native spaces hidden from imperial eyes unsettled British colonisers, not only in India, but in Canada and Ireland as well. If the Indian zenana, the Irish cottage and the Canadian wilderness are considered as contested sites within which identities were renegotiated, their significance is far greater than their material embodiment would suggest. I shall argue that each of these native spaces, at the outer limits of British colonisation and relatively unknown, contained the nucleus of a newly-developing national identity. This represented a grid of (potentially anti-imperialist)

---

power strung across each site of Empire. However once these spaces became known, categorised, classified and assimilated, their power could be diminished.

Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin both assisted in this process by forming associations which gave imperial women access to these native spaces. These associations will be fully discussed in the next chapter and I shall just briefly summarise their objectives here. The Countess of Dufferin’s Fund: The National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India (DF), was founded by Lady Dufferin in 1885. It aimed to enlist and train women doctors and nurses, and provide medical care for Indian women in secluded conditions: zenana hospitals, dispensaries, cottage hospitals or their own homes. Lady Aberdeen inaugurated the Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada (VON) in 1897, which trained and supplied skilled visiting nurses to the inhabitants of remote areas in the west, including the Yukon, and to poor people in the cities. Then in 1907 when she was in Ireland she started the Women’s National Health Association (WNHA). Her main concern was to reduce the tuberculosis death rate, but wider objectives included education in all aspects of health and hygiene, particularly infant and child welfare.

The female employees and helpers of these organisations could enter the lives of ‘natives’ (upper-class Hindus and Muslims; working-class and peasant Irish; and working-class and immigrant Canadians) on a more intimate level than was normally accessible to colonial men. In India the Dufferin Fund gave them access to the innermost sanctum of the native home, stronghold of tradition and culture. The civilising influence of Victorian Order nurses was a way to reach and tame the western adventurers in Canada, and bring them under the wing of society in a way that the North West Mounted Police could not. In the prairie homesteads the nurses could supervise the care of future citizens, while in Irish cottages the middle-class
WNHA members and health visitors performed a similar function through their familiarity with British customs of childcare and domestic management.  

**India: the Uncolonised Space of the Zenana**

The practice of excluding women by ensuring their segregation in a zenana and the complete covering of the face and body outside it was originally a Muslim one. It had been adopted by Hindus as a method of protecting women during the period of Muslim rule. By the later nineteenth century some of the new western-educated middle classes had abandoned seclusion, which was practised mainly among traditional middle- and upper-class families in areas of north, north west, and east India. The rules of seclusion differed in the two cultures, but female purity was important to both. Maud Diver wrote that ‘an integral part of the Hindu religion’ was ‘the worship of the woman-ideal, as wife and mother’. Because of this Hindu women could influence national life; Chirol thought that ‘the Hindu woman behind the Purdah often exercises a greater influence upon her husband and her sons than the English woman who moves freely about the world’.

---

7 Just as upper- and middle-class women visitors sallied forth into the working-class districts of British cities. See Anne Summers, ‘A Home from Home’.

8 For Hindus purdah started on marriage and secluded a woman from her male relations, whereas Muslim purdah restrictions applied from puberty but only outside the household. See a full discussion in Hanna Papanek, ‘Purdah: Separate Worlds and Symbolic Shelter’, in Hanna Papanek, and Gail Minault (eds), *Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia* (Chanyaka, Delhi, 1982); also Dagmar Engels, *Beyond Purdah? Women in Bengal 1890-1939* (Oxford UP, Delhi, 1996); Nair, ‘Uncovering the Zenana’. Although the Dufferin Fund operated throughout India most of my discussion of native spaces is concerned with Bengal, which is where the bulk of feminist scholarship and research has taken place.


However the rules of purdah were not always strictly observed, and Indian women sometimes negotiated levels of freedom for themselves. For example Lord Dufferin was surprised (and so fascinated he stayed for over an hour) to watch pilgrims bathing in the river at Hurdwar:

We ... were very much interested in seeing the gentlemen, and especially the ladies, bathe. I was told they were all 'purdah' women, but their principle seems to be 'in for a penny, in for a pound'. They might just as well have been quite naked, their only garment being a thin muslin robe, which became invisible the moment it was wet.11

Indian husbands naturally varied in the amount of power they exercised over their wives. Some, typically the polygamous Kulin Brahmins, delighted in having educated wives whom they allowed a measure of freedom. This was never given as a right, but as a concession, and appeared to be unusual. Households with zenanas were often wealthy, and the men had power and status within their communities as well as at home. Some enhanced this by donating a hospital, a dispensary, or a hospital bed, to the Dufferin Fund. These gifts were always publicised, and often named after the donor.

The dominant representation of the zenana in the west was of a site of mystery and intrigue to which few had access. Female travellers first brought 'authentic' knowledge of the zenana to the west in the early nineteenth century. From mid-century western women were being sent to India by missionary societies. They described the zenana as a prison for helpless Indian women in countless missionary tracts and contemporary journals.12 By the 1880s this knowledge was so well

11 BL Eur Mss F130/26a, Dufferin to Lytton, 16 April 1887; see also Lady Dufferin's account of this voyeurism in Our Viceregal Life 2, pp161-2 (13 April 1887).
12 The Englishwoman, a feminist journal, is a good source for these. A book which contains particularly offensive and prejudiced statements on most pages is that by Dr Hewlett, who worked with her husband as a missionary in Amritsar. Lady Dufferin used Hewlett's criticisms of native midwives in some of her pamphlets. SS Hewlett, Daughters of the King (Church of England Missionary Society, London, 1886).
disseminated that it would have been difficult for any educated middle-class British woman to avoid. One example from many is the anonymous writer in *The Young Woman*, who implored the mothers of England never to rest 'until their sisters, who pine and sigh with stunted intellects and crushed hearts in the zenanas of India, are rejoicing in the liberty and peace of Christianity'.

Rudyard Kipling wrote two poems about zenana women. One was a plea to Indian husbands to '[d]raw back the purdah for their sakes and let our women in!' The other, supposed to be voices from the zenana speaking to the wind about Lady Dufferin, emphasised the Indian women's helplessness:

> ... Say that we be a feeble folk who greet her,  
> But old in grief and very wise in tears:  
> Say that we, being desolate, entreat her  
> That she forget us not in after years. ..." 

Similarly, a prize-winning essay on the Dufferin Fund by KA Knox in a competition open to Indian and European women was entitled 'Do you hear them weeping, oh my brothers?'

The continued existence of the zenana, and the dominant representations of the passive woman within it suited those western feminists who could not or would not believe that Indian women had any agency. They allowed British women, both in India and Britain, to continue to think that their own social arrangements were superior, and enabled them to imagine a bond of sisterhood - the stretching out of a helping hand - between themselves and purdah women. This relationship was of course unequal, as has been extensively discussed.

---

13 *The Young Woman* 1 (1892-3), pp278-80.
15 PRONI D/1071/J/G/4A/1.
16 For example Burton, *Burdens of History*; Vron Ware, *Beyond the Pale. White
There were reasons why British women might have wanted the zenana to be preserved. Lady Dufferin thought that losing the zenana would give secluded women such a huge culture shock that they would be unable to cope.\textsuperscript{17} Her attitude was criticised by progressive Bengalis, who accused her of paying lip service to outmoded traditions.\textsuperscript{18} Another reason was that the zenana was believed to offer useful employment opportunities for women doctors from Britain, who often found it difficult to find appointments in British hospitals.

Janaki Nair looks at the way privileged knowledge of the zenana was revealed to the west. She argues that British women’s representations served different ideological purposes at different historical moments, although her periodisations overlap considerably. It was portrayed as ‘a site of reform’ - which offered an opportunity to educate Indian women into conformist culture; as a ‘symbol of the collective past’ which showed all women had the same history but some were further along the road than others; as a ‘symbol of female power’ which recognised the dignity and difference of womanhood - the separate spheres argument; and as a ‘site of resistance’, the one place that was uncolonised. She argues that these representations of the zenana placed Indian women on the margins, and hid British women’s own subordination by British men.\textsuperscript{19}

Some Indian representations of zenana life in the nineteenth century, including several by secluded women themselves, presented a different picture to most of those discussed above. They showed zenana women as resourceful, keen to educate themselves, and holding power in some areas of life. One such positive representation


\textsuperscript{17} Hariot Dufferin, \textit{Our Viceregal Life} 1, p71 (27 February 1885).

\textsuperscript{18} Manomohun Ghose, ‘Progress in Bengal During the Last Thirty Years’.

\textsuperscript{19} Nair, ‘Uncovering the Zenana’.
is that of the zenana of a Bengali Kulin Brahmin, zemindar Sham Chandra Roy, as it was in the middle of the nineteenth century. It is unclear whether this account is fact or fiction, but this is immaterial. The point is that this representation is completely at odds with the dominant one of passive and illiterate womanhood. It portrays four intelligent and thinking women, the matriarch and her daughters-in-law. Their discussions roam over woman's role and rights, British and Indian ideas of beauty, non-secluded modern women, India under Muslim and British rule, and widow remarriage. A Byshnobee sister gave them lessons in various branches of Hinduism, and helped them to study the Bhagavad Geeta. Parts of this Geeta can be interpreted as a call to arms, and it is not difficult to see how zenanas such as this one could unsettle the British.

A Bengali custom was for strolling female musicians to be invited into the zenanas to provide some entertainment. One of their songs dating from the mid-nineteenth century, when translated ran in part as follows:

```
The British rule is humane, wise,
    Though sometimes Anglo-Indians' vice
Corrupts the rule and strains the laws,
Subserv'ent makes their little flaws
But to their love of lording o'er
The race committed to her care
By Providence for ends all-wise,
And England's mission thus belies.

To this, once great, now fallen race,
That yet may rise by Hari's grace
To power and greatness and renown,
Which they enjoyed in days long gone.
```

---


21 The reasons the doubter gives Sri Krishna for not attacking enemies are 'loss of kindred' leading to 'destructions of the traditions of our ancient lineage' and 'pollution of blood'. But Sri Krishna says the doubter must fight to save these things: '... gird up thy loins, and conquer. Subdue thy foes and enjoy the kingdom in prosperity. ... Fight and fear not. Thy foes shall be crushed'. Shri Purohit Swami (translator) *The Geeta* (Faber, London, 1990), p12, p52.
Ah! When that time will come to bless
The people, and their wrongs redress,
A share in their affairs secure
To them which justly they ask for ...²²

Folk songs such as this, probably unheard by colonial ears, were not only a way in which illiterate women could learn about the wider world outside, but they provided lessons in nationalism.

Although the 1891 census showed that only one in 200 women could read and write,²³ recent feminist research in India has uncovered and catalogued over 400 items written by Bengali women (some secluded) between 1857 and 1914, including journals, novels, poetry and autobiographies.²⁴ In addition historians have begun to interview elderly women about their role in the freedom movement.²⁵ Many zenana women recognised that education was the key to their future progress. Rassundari Devi (b c 1809) was a secluded Bengali woman who taught herself to read and eventually published her autobiography in 1876.²⁶ In 1878 Pandita Ramabai (Sarasvati) set up a club for secluded women in her own home in Calcutta. Her aim was to encourage them to develop an awareness of politics and national life. Ramabai Ranade, who married at the age of 11, was taught to read by her husband, a district judge. She started a similar club for women in Poona in 1881, with lectures on subjects such as astronomy. These last two women tried to help widows - often

²³ Kaur, Role of Women in the Freedom Movement, p34.
²⁵ Before 1920 'women played important indirect roles on the periphery of revolutionary organisations. ... They mainly did the work of sheltering absconders (especially) as housekeepers, concealing and distributing arms and ammunitions and passing coded secret messages'. Tirtha Mandal, Women Revolutionaries of Bengal 1905-1939 (Minerva, Calcutta, 1991), p42.
high-caste, and some of them less than ten years old - by setting up homes where they could receive education and become zenana teachers.\(^7\)

These Indian representations of the zenana and its occupants may have been in the minority, but they clearly present an alternative perspective. They show that especially from the 1870s onward, far from being the passive women they were portrayed as being, some Indian women were independent, educated, and helping to educate others.

In 1885 the Indian National Congress held its first annual meeting. Interest in Hindu nationalism was spreading. While Lady Dufferin was planning how to broach the zenana it was already becoming a cultural symbol of resistance to colonialism and British power for the Hindus.\(^8\) Chatterjee has discussed how the home space became an important repository of the essential spirit of Hinduism. He believes that a distinction grew between the reality of the outer, colonised world, and the inner world of the mind and the spirit which could never be colonised. In day-to-day life this dichotomy became one of outside world/home space, which became imbued with male/female gender characteristics. With the development of nationalist ideology from the 1880s women were held to have a special responsibility for strengthening the home and protecting it from colonisers.\(^9\)

---


\(^8\) Because of this some women from Hindu fundamentalist families felt unable to use the services of the Dufferin Fund. See Dagmar Engels, *Beyond Purdah?* pp58,139.

\(^9\) Chatterjee, 'The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question', in Sungari and Vaid (eds), *Recasting Women*. The same thing happened in Muslim households, but later.
A view of the zenana as a place of sedition came to be reflected in British establishment discourse. The ‘spirit of revolt’, noted Chirol in a series of articles for *The Times*, ‘seems to have obtained a firm hold of the Zenana …’ He described *sanyasis* (mendicant ascetics) as ‘missionaries of sedition’:

... their reputed sanctity gives them access to the zenana. In Bengal even small boys of so tender an age as still to have the run of zenanas have ... been taught the whole patter of sedition, and go about from house to house dressed up as little sanyasis in little yellow robes preaching hatred of the English.\(^\text{30}\)

The zenana had become a potent symbol of cultural heritage for Hindu traditionalists. Nair notes that from 1900 on Englishwomen described the zenana as a site of resistance: ‘the unreasonable, illogical space that resisted colonization’.\(^\text{31}\) As the British came to view it as a possible site of subversion its very secrecy made it a threat which had to be ‘penetrated’ and disarmed, but not necessarily dismantled.

**Canada: Anxieties in the Wilderness**

The unconquered space here was the wilderness of the north-west territories and northern British Columbia, and the homesteads in the newly-claimed land on the fringes of civilisation. The wilderness was of economic importance to imperialists because of the richness of its natural resources such as timber and minerals. It was important figuratively because it represented the last portion of unsettled land before the Pacific Ocean. Dominant representations of the Canadian wilderness stressed positive points such as its purity, closeness to nature, and mineral wealth. According to Morton, Canadians all had the boundary between civilisation and the wilderness

\(^{30}\) Chirol, *Indian Unrest*, p103-4. See also Kaur, *Role of Women*.

\(^{31}\) Nair, ‘Uncovering the Zenana’, p235.
etched through their psyche. They believed that grappling with the unforgiving terrain and the fierce climate had strengthened their national character. Lady Dufferin, Lady Aberdeen and other imperial promoters liked to stress how settlers were heroic men and plucky women building Canada for Britain and the Empire. For example Lady Aberdeen wrote that

\[t\]he men and women of Canada … have all silently, but surely been also pouring out their lives in building us an Empire in that Golden West as the result of the toil of their hands and brains … by their high character, their endurance, their sobriety, their determination …

But alongside this positive view of western Canada, representations of the wilderness were infused with palpable discourses of fear. These discourses would not encourage prospective immigrants from Britain, and so were little used by either Lady Aberdeen or Lady Dufferin in their public pronouncements.

In the 1870s imperial anxieties had been largely concerned with the native American inhabitants, who were placed by the British at the very bottom of the racial hierarchy. They were perceived to be at the extreme limits of British authority and thus appeared to threaten the westward progress of imperialism as has been discussed in chapter four. But from the 1890s onwards native Americans were no longer considered a threat to colonial security in the same way, because they had mostly been forced into reservations or were living in missionary settlements where they could be controlled.

By the 1890s settled colonists had other fears. The forbidding nature of an inhospitable terrain and a harsh climate certainly worried Lady Dufferin while her eldest son was on a ‘sporting expedition’ in the Canadian Rockies in 1898. She told

---


Lady Aberdeen that she and Dufferin could not rest until he was ‘safe out of there’.\textsuperscript{34} But mostly the fears of the new thriving communities concerned the men who traversed the wilderness and how they might disrupt and contaminate settled community living. Lawlessness, anarchy, rape, pollution, fear of the spread of tuberculosis and other diseases, fear of alien nationalisms: these were some of their concerns. To those who lived in settled communities this freewheeling culture seemed wild and threatening. In the 1870s a commentator described the ‘turbulent life’ in much of western Canada and America:

*The lawless white man, leaving behind all bonds and fetters, had a free hand in following the bent of his wild passions. Murder and massacre were constant occurrences, even in cold blood; but when the wildest of whiskey was running riot, then terrible orgies, both brutal and shameful, were enacted.*\textsuperscript{35}

John Macdonald, first Prime Minister of the Dominion, recognised at this time that lawlessness in the north west threatened peaceful law-abiding settlers. He decided to model the Canadian North West Mounted Police on the Royal Irish Constabulary. The RIC had a reputation for ruthlessness, and unlike the police in Britain, they carried arms and were under central government control. Macdonald thought a police force such as this would be particularly suited to the conditions because ‘they would have the advantage of military discipline, would be armed in a simple but efficient way, would use the hardy horse of the country, and by being police would be a civil force ...’\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34} HH 1/6, ‘Mixed Letters 1892-1906’, Harriet Dufferin to Ishbel Aberdeen, 11 October 1898.


\textsuperscript{36} Quoted in SW Horrall, ‘Sir John A Macdonald and the Mounted Police Force for the Northwest Territories’, *Canadian Historical Review*, 53:2 (June, 1972), pp179-200. Unsurprisingly the first commander of the NWMP was an Irishman with wide knowledge of the RIC. In 1907 it became British government policy for all colonial police forces to attend training at the RIC barracks in Dublin. See also
The first policeman in the Yukon was sent in 1895 to establish a presence. Gold was discovered along the banks of the Yukon and Klondike rivers in 1896, and the population of Dawson City rose from 500 to an estimated 25-35,000 in little more than a year; an estimated 7-10% of these were women. Dr Montana, who lived there with his family, said that in 1897

good and bad people of all nationalities poured into Dawson, over thirtyfive thousand were living at one time, in tents erected in the mud and along the waterfront. Log buildings sprang up rapidly. ... men made fortunes and lost them during the early days when Dawson was a wild country and before the Northwest Mounted Police arrived. I have seen people shot and killed; men and women drinking and fighting - Dawson was then a place of turmoil and confusion - humanity gone mad.

The police presence was increased so that by 1898 there were 285 mounted police there. When Commander Steele arrived to take charge he had 34 new cells built in the Dawson prison because the district contained ‘such a large number of “bad men”’. Four-fifths of the population of the Yukon Territory was American, and the Yukon Field Force, a detachment of the Canadian army, was formed in 1898 to protect Canadian sovereignty there and to assist the NWMP to maintain law and order. Commissioner Walsh told Clifford Sifton (Minister of the Interior) ‘how thoroughly this district is in the hands of a foreign element … it would be the easiest


37 The gold rush fell between the 1891 and 1901 censuses, and no reliable statistics are available. However in 1898 7% of steamer passengers on the Upper Klondike River were women. Frances Backhouse, Women of the Klondike (Whitecap, Vancouver/Toronto, 1995); Tappan Adney, The Klondike Stampede of 1897-1898 (Harper, New York, 1900), p355.


39 SB Steele, Forty Years in Canada (Jenkins, London, 1914), p320.
thing in the world for a few bold men to take possession'. Clifford Sifton did not think the US wanted to annex the Yukon, but he agreed that the Americans there could pose a threat. He told the House of Commons that

\[
\ldots \text{200 or 300 of our officers would be surrounded by starving thousands of armed men, of alien men, not citizens of Canada, but citizens of foreign countries, and these men would have possession of the Yukon district instead of the Govt of Canada...}^{40}
\]

Canadians commonly believed they were superior to Americans because they adhered to ideas of decency and fair play. Lady Aberdeen echoed the Canadian view when she hoped that

\[
\text{they will leave all USA ideas behind them and realize that they have returned to a country where freedom and liberty exists for all and not for some, where law and order are respected and where treaties with Indians are respected. ... there is a remnant who would like to introduce American ideas as to what conduct 'in the West' should be. These must be dealt with ruthlessly...}^{41}
\]

For women the fear of rape by white marauders was ever present. In the Klondike a man was not accepted as one of the boys 'until he had shot a bear and slept with a squaw'.\textsuperscript{42} Laura Berton, who accompanied her husband to Bonanza Creek, admitted she was 'terrified almost every moment of my stay in Sourdough Gulch', terrified of 'first, a strange Man who might do dreadful things to me, and second, The Woods, where dreadful things might happen. Now here I was, surrounded on all sides by vast quantities of both'.\textsuperscript{43} Emily Ferguson, feminist and reformer who worked with Lady Aberdeen on the NCWC and VON, wrote a travelogue of her life in the west under the name of Janey Canuck. She observed that

\[^{40}\text{Quoted in Brereton Greenhous (ed.), Guarding the Goldfields: the Story of the Yukon Field Force (Dundurn, Toronto, 1987), p20.}\]

\[^{41}\text{Saywell (ed.), Canadian Journal, p263 (5 August 1895).}\]

\[^{42}\text{Laura Beatrice Berton, I Married the Klondike (Hutchison, London, 1955), p79.}\]

\[^{43}\text{Berton, I Married the Klondike, p115-6.}\]
among the lumbermen in Saskatchewan 'there are desperadoes of the deadliest breed - men who are mere pulps of animalism ... Forest blood ever runs hotly'. Sarah Patchell admitted she was frightened when she arrived in Dawson City in 1904 and found that her husband had gone off to the goldfields. She was told that she was 'too young and attractive to be left alone in a lonely cabin in Dawson', where 'everything inside would be perfectly safe, except a beautiful woman left unprotected'. Lady Aberdeen also noted in her journal the 'hardships and difficulties' of 'a physical and moral character' that she thought Victorian Order nurses would face in the Yukon 'owing to the type of people who have gone in'.

In the late nineteenth century imperial fears were centred on ways in which pollution from native spaces by germs, dirt, disease or miscegenation, would lead to degeneration of the white race. The imperial impulse, as Anne McClintock has well demonstrated, was to scrub, sanitise, whiten and purify. Victorians held a strong belief that cleanliness of self and surroundings was somehow connected to godliness and moral virtue. Alison Bashford writes of Victorian England that '[s]anitary reform always involved some sort of moral reform, which rested upon theories of disease which conflated physical and moral cleanliness and health, and perhaps more pertinently, physical and moral dirtiness and ill-health'. Given the sudden increase in population Dawson City was - unsurprisingly - dirty. The commander of the Yukon Field Force, Lieut-Col Evans, wrote to Lady Aberdeen that in Dawson

---

44 Ferguson, Janey Canuck in the West, p119.
45 Patchell, My Extraordinary Years, p38.
46 Saywell (ed.), Canadian Journal, p446 (8 December 1897).
47 McClintock, Imperial Leather, discusses the relationship between physical cleanliness, moral purity and whiteness in a colonial and racial context.
48 Bashford, Purity and Pollution; Valverde, The Age of Light, Soap and Water; Davidoff, 'Class and Gender in Victorian England'.
the street behind the main street is nearly up to one’s knees in mud, and the mud and swamp becomes deeper until the foot of the mountain is reached... It seems to be nobody’s business to look after the sanitary arrangements ... the smells are awful.49

Whereas dirt was visible the organisms that caused disease went unseen. Victorians believed that contamination of the blood with tuberculosis could occur, either from direct airborne infection, or to future generations by intermarriage with someone predisposed to the disease. Tuberculosis was widely thought to cause ‘degeneration of the race’, and it was believed that a predisposition to it existed alongside ‘moral failings’ such as sexual licentiousness and alcoholism. Around the turn of the century the high death rate of native Americans from tuberculosis caught the attention of the white population in Canada.50 There were fears that white settlements near reservations could become infected. (Tuberculosis will be discussed in the next chapter in connection with the work of the WNHA in Ireland.)

As well as the wilderness the outlying areas of colonisation on the prairies were a particular cause for concern, because the scattered population contained many immigrant communities. Bessie Rehwinkel, a practising doctor and wife of a clergyman, set up home in 1912 beyond Edmonton, where ‘waves of immigrants’ were pouring in. Her husband’s congregation included pioneers from Germany, Austria, Russia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, and a few from Ontario and the United States. Of these she said:

Many of them had belonged to minority groups in their respective homelands, and minority groups are always extremely nationalistic. That is true everywhere and with all minorities. For centuries these

49 Ishbel Aberdeen, What is the Use of the Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada? p41.

50 The annual death rate in reservation schools was estimated at 8,000 per 100,000 - forty times the rate for the white population. Peter Wherrett, Miracle of the Empty Beds: History of Tuberculosis in Canada (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1977), pp105-110.
people had maintained their identity, their own culture, especially their German language, and they were determined to continue what they had and to hold on to the heritage they had received.\(^{51}\)

The fear here is that they would not be loyal British subjects until they had learned English, assimilated the culture, and changed many of their ideas.\(^{52}\) A VON worker in Winnipeg commented on the way some immigrant men treated women:

In one instance, when the nurses urged the husband to send for a doctor for his wife who was desperately ill he replied, ‘No, no, I get another wife for five dollars.’ Women married very young - thirteen to sixteen years, often dying from exhaustion, from hard work, child-bearing, poor food or brutality. Lives of women and girls were cheap. A widower of six weeks’ time was unknown.\(^{53}\)

Social practices like this presented a challenge to the VON. In the prairie provinces the men who held positions of power at the turn of the century mostly originated from Ontario and Britain. The kind of society they envisaged for themselves was modelled on British principles of law and government, and British middle-class cultural practices: the 1906 Edmonton Bulletin reported that ‘the ideal of the west is not only greatness, but greatness achieved under the British Flag and stamped and moulded by the genius of race’.\(^{54}\) Their wives campaigned for social change through organisations like the National Council of Women, the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and the local branches of the Victorian Order of Nurses. The inflow of Central and Eastern European immigrants to the prairie provinces which began in the 1890s would threaten their hopes for a progressive society unless they were helped to become acculturated.

\(^{51}\) Alfred M Rehwinkel, *Dr Bessie: as Told by Herself to her Husband* (Concordia, St Louis, 1963), p144.

\(^{52}\) See also Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*; and de Brou and Moffatt (eds), *Other Voices*.


\(^{54}\) Palmer, ‘Strangers and Stereotypes’, quotation p312.
The anxieties which the Canadian wilderness engendered were over how anarchy, rape, dirt, disease and subversion might affect settled communities, and concern over those who appeared not to know or understand what standards were expected of them. Anxieties over lawlessness and rape were particular fears felt by settled men and women over undesirable forms of male aggression and power which had not been directed into the 'proper' channels. The imperial need in Canada was therefore felt to be twofold: to wrest the wilderness from the adventurers whose trails criss-crossed it in search of gold, and where permanent settlement had taken place, to secure the loyalty of immigrants from the Old World. This involved knowing, containing and civilising the wilderness and its inhabitants.

Adele Perry, discussing an earlier period, has noted how white women were encouraged into northern British Columbia as civilising agents.\textsuperscript{55} The Victorian Order of Nurses which Lady Aberdeen founded in 1897 came to play a part in this process. Because the 'strong men of the west' were defined by their physical power, they became vulnerable when they were sick or injured, which opened up a space for the VON to operate. The nurses, who were carefully chosen, were mostly educated, middle-class, Protestant women of Anglo-Saxon origin. Lady Aberdeen hoped that the influence they brought to bear would rid western adventurers of their wayward habits, and teach non-British immigrants the virtues and benefits of British culture.

\textbf{Ireland: the Contested Space of the Rural Homestead}

Three social groups - the Celtic Irish, the British and the Anglo-Irish all laid claim to the Irish homestead, but in different ways and for different reasons. For nationalist Ireland it represented stability, tradition and cultural permanence against

\textsuperscript{55} Perry, \textit{The Edge of Empire}. 
the sweeping modernity of Britain. During the nineteenth century the Irish cottage was often pictured in Britain and Ireland as a site of contestation or subversion. By the early twentieth century it was more likely to be represented as a site of pollution. Or as we will see, used to illustrate how Ireland was a peaceful partner at the head of the British Empire. Finally the Anglo-Irish with their sense of dispossession saw a Celtic culture embedded in the homestead, making it a powerful symbol of identity that they could relate to and wanted to share.

The Irish homestead had been a site of nationalist resistance activity since the days of the Ribbonmen and other rural secret societies in the late eighteenth century. During and after the famine of 1845-6, and at the time of the land wars of the 1880s the ruthless eviction of tenants and their families by agents of British landlords was common, although evictions took place throughout the nineteenth century. It is noticeable how prominently women figure in these examples of rural strife. Margaret Ward has noted that in addition to her domestic duties, women’s traditional role in rural communities included the defence of the family home against repossession.

William Carleton graphically describes many evictions in his novels. George Pellew was an American lawyer who spent four months investigating attitudes to

---

56 In addition to the literary examples discussed below, lithographs on this theme appeared regularly in British magazines. For example see The Pictorial Times, January 1847; Illustrated London News, 16 December 1848; 7 May 1870; 7 February 1880; 10 April 1886.

57 Between 1849 and 1886 113,462 families (577,553 people) were evicted from their homes, although 20-25% were later readmitted as tenants or caretakers. Evictions lessened after 1903. Evictions Which Have Come to the Knowledge of the Constabulary in Each of the Years From 1849-1880 Inclusive, (and later figures) House of Commons Papers, 1881.


59 For example Valentine M‘Clutchey the Irish Agent and Solomon M‘Slime his Religious Attorney (Duffy, Dublin 1859); The Black Prophet: a Tale of Irish Famine
Home Rule in Ireland in 1887, speaking to Catholics and Protestants from all walks of life. In Herbartstown, Co Limerick, he visited Mrs Moroney, who told him that in her village ‘every house is barricaded’. At Gweedore in Ulster he was witness to an eviction:

Soon the long line of constables ... halted by the roadside, while the agent and the magistrate marched slowly up a sloping field to the door of a little cottage - a rude stone hut, with one window ... The agent stepped quickly to the door to demand possession. ... Four or five rough looking men seize long iron bars and begin striking at the door. In a few minutes it is torn down and discloses a rough barricade ... from behind it a shower of hot water issues in a cloud of steam. Several constables now join in the fray ... ducking to avoid the water that jets out in intermittent streams ... At last they leap over the [barricade] and reappear with the still struggling warriors - an old woman in a patchwork dress of rags, a boy and a girl, and a neighbor called in to assist in the defence of the homestead ... a sturdy young married woman with an unweaned baby at her breast. The contents of the hut are now removed, one by one - an old bench, a few pots and pans, and some soiled blankets.

In the early twentieth century the Irish cottage was still contested territory. Dan Breen recalls how many rural women sheltered him and his compatriots in their cottages while he was on the run during the civil war of 1921-22:

at Mrs Fitzgerald’s we had the first square meal since early morning ... Mrs Tobin’s house was ever open for the boys until it was burned to the ground as an official reprisal. ... the Moloney’s house was later raided by the Black and Tans ... he gave us the latchkey of Mrs Malone’s, where wanted men need never want for shelter. ... Mrs O’Byrne gave breakfast to twenty-five of the Cork boys who were on their way to Mallock.

These representations of the Irish cottage all depict the stark reality of a site of resistance and contestation. In other contexts it suited imperial supporters to focus on the miasma, laziness and dirt they believed existed within - especially during the early

---

(Clarke, London, 1862).


twenty-first century and the tuberculosis campaign (see the next chapter). The Irish cottage was thought of as a dangerous place.

In 1905 my great-grandfather became the sixth medical officer of health in Spiddal, Co Galway to die of typhus fever in ten years. Thomas Hickey's death - unlike those of his patients - caused a furore in the press. All the reports emphasised the source of his disease: that he caught typhus while visiting his poor patients in their miserable cabins. One journal called Spiddal 'a deathtrap for doctors' and concluded that 'medical service in Spiddal is worse than medical service on the West Coast of Africa', thereby linking Irish peasants to black Africans and demonising both. The slippage of emphasis from (lower) class to (dark-skinned) race is significant, for it illustrates not only that each was seen as a source of pollution and danger, but how closely the two were linked in the imperial mind.

The representations discussed so far are in marked contrast to the iconography of the Irish cottage as discursively colonised by the British. Writing to publicise the WNHA, Lady Aberdeen described the Irish homestead thus:

> It is the little farms, with the thatched whitewashed houses, that make such a delightfully characteristic picture of much Irish scenery, with the tiny fields surrounded by stone walls patiently erected to free the land for tillage, the turf clamps in the bog, the children leading the donkeys or driving the crated carts with the peat that is kept in slaths built alongside the little homes. ... To counterbalance the labours, and to bring a measure of joyousness there are the dances, songs and music and story-telling of the winter evenings, and the sparkle of wit that springs up with gay spontaneity when the neighbours have a 'ceilidhe'.

---


64 *Women's National Health Association of Ireland* (leaflet), (Dundalgan, Dundalk, nd).
In this example all the positive facets of Irish life were appropriated, and the unacceptable ones ignored. The result was that this imperial discourse constructed neat cottages inhabited by docile happy people, a similar representation to that which Lady Aberdeen achieved in her Irish villages in Chicago and London. At a time when some feared the break-up of the United Kingdom over Irish Home Rule, this and similar competing definitions of Irishness strengthened the United Kingdom's position at the centre of the British Empire by representing Ireland as an obliging partner in the imperial enterprise.

Similar representations of the Irish cottage can be seen in much of the Anglo-Irish writing of the Celtic Revival. WB Yeats’ 1897 story *The Twisting of the Rope* (later written as a play in Irish by another Anglo-Irishman, John Synge, and performed at the Abbey Theatre in 1902), contained all the elements of Irish culture that the Anglo-Irish needed to appropriate in a bid to construct their own identity and express their Irishness: the poet/mystic on the road hears a fiddle, follows the sound of music and dancing, enters a cottage and is handed a glass of whisky. Sitting by the roaring bog-peat fire he relates Celtic legends to the ‘very comely and smiling’ daughter of the house. Representations of the homestead such as these made it a facility for example John Synge, *In Wicklow and West Kerry*, (Maunsell and Roberts, Dublin/London), 1912.

65 WB Yeats, ‘The Twisting of the Rope’, (1897) in Ben Forkner (ed.), *Modern Irish Short Stories* (Futura, London, 1983), quote p76. Dublin-born Yeats, a middle-class Protestant with roots in Sligo and English forebears, lived between England and Ireland, and was drawn into separatism by Maud Gonne. He believed himself to be Irish, although others did not: the *United Irishman* and *The Leader* both chastised him for leading Catholic Ireland astray with his Celtic Revival. Because of his ambiguous background dispossession was a key theme. An elitist, he scorned Catholics and the middle classes, was set apart from his Gaelic peers by religion, and thought the Ascendancy should provide social and cultural leadership. See Roy Foster, *WB Yeats: A Life 1: The Apprentice Mage 1865-1914* (Oxford UP, Oxford, 1997); Lennox Robinson, *Ireland’s Abbey Theatre. A History 1899-1951* (Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1951); Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland*; Eagleton, *Heathcliffe and the Great Hunger*, chapter six.
potent symbol of Irishness with which the Anglo-Irish could identify. But the ambivalence of their relationship to England and the British Empire on the one hand, and to Irish Ireland on the other, meant that their search for a stable identity would always be compromised.

The Irish homestead may not have held material wealth but it contained a distinctive cultural heritage that British imperialists hoped to sterilise and appropriate under the Union Jack. The mystic Celtic culture within the Irish cabin afforded a perfect foil to the rational culture of scientific progress which existed in Britain. To British eyes it showed that the Celts were one of the lesser races that made up the ‘British’ nation, for Irish tradition could never stand up in comparison to British supremacy in a modern industrialised world. And as an example of the diversity of ‘Britishness’ it helped to solidify the tradition, standing and weight of the United Kingdom on the world scene. The unspoken desire was to win Ireland for Britain and the Crown, and away from the nationalists. Whether the Irish homestead would remain a centre of subversion or would become a sanitised and harmless folk-version of itself to suit British eyes was therefore important to British imperialists.

**Comparisons and Conclusions**

There are contrasts and similarities between these native spaces that are worth exploring further. The first is that the male coloniser defined all these spaces as feminine. In the Canadian west a Protestant missionary, riding through ‘ample and shapely valleys’ contemplated the material advantages of total possession of this landscape in explicitly gendered words:
... these magnificent foothill and mountain breasts, surcharged and bursting full with the rich and richer milk of uncomputable wealth for the generations yet unborn.67

Discourse such as this was common, and this extract paraphrases the thoughts of many nineteenth-century British and Irish upper- or middle-class males involved in colonisation on behalf of England.68 Woman and the land possessed a common ability to receive and incubate seeds, which linked them in the imperial imagination, where they were both seen as available to be penetrated and controlled. In this way they were conflated as objects for conquest, as McClintock and others have discussed.69 Furthermore the ubiquitous iconography of virgin:penetration:mother reinforced the gendered scripts that delimited woman in the domestic sphere (as reproducer and nurturer of ‘the race’) while the imperial male, undefined, remained unbounded.

Similar gendering occurred with the zenana and the Irish cottage. The Indian zenana was synonymous with women because it was their separate space, and men did not enter it. The Irish cottage in the landscape ‘became a surrogate for the depiction of the rural Irish woman and the values of motherhood, tradition and stability’,70 both for the British who had colonised Ireland and for the Irish nationalists who wanted it back. The net result was the same in both sites of Empire: woman was defined by and defined the domestic space she occupied.

The men who protected these sites from colonial incursion - I call them the ‘guardians’ - sometimes had questionable allegiances to British authority: patriarchal

67 McDougall, On Western Trails, p18.

68 One example is the extract from Dufferin’s speech (page 61-2), where he describes northern Canada as a land ‘replete with contentment ... pregnant of promise ... whose primeval recesses are being pierced and indented ...’

69 McClintock, Imperial Leather; Sharkey, Ireland and the Iconography of Rape; Nash, ‘Remapping and Renaming’; Spivak, ‘Women in Difference’.

70 Nash, ‘Remapping and Renaming’, pp44-5.
husbands in Ireland and India with possible nationalist leanings; European immigrants, speculators and other independent spirits in Canada. Therefore the imperial male, despite possessing the social authority of his nationality, class and race, as well as any legal powers he may have had as a member of the colonising administration, was uneasy without inside knowledge of these spaces.

The level of authority and the power these men held over their 'space' and its occupants was different in each case. As is clear from the examples in the Canadian section of this chapter, an aggressive masculinity was constructed in discourse for the adventurers, miners and backwoodsmen who controlled the wilderness in Western Canada. These 'guardians' were often feared, which gave them power over the wilderness and the men and women within it. My examples show that the middle-class or aristocratic male in India appeared to have more control over his 'native space' than the Irishman did. Male absences due to imprisonment, seasonal agricultural work or fishing trips meant that the Irish wife, unlike her Indian sister, was often left in complete charge. (Although Irish rural society was conservative and patriarchal, and when the husband was at home he had ultimate authority.)

Irish male power derived from the dominance of the Catholic church which idealised women yet supported their subordination. It was enhanced by laws which favoured men and gave them voting and property rights. Gaelic legends were reworked during the nineteenth century to show aggressive men and passive women. In 1884 the Gaelic Athletic Association was founded. It focused on 'manly' Irish sports. All this was in response to fears of loss of masculinity. DP Moran, journalist and member of the Gaelic League, wrote in 1899 that he belonged to 'a conquered
race' with 'nothing masculine in the character'. The same theme occurs constantly in the writings of Patrick Pearse:

... Ireland has not deserved to be free. Men who have ceased to be men cannot claim the rights of men. ... [M]odern Irishmen with eyes open have allowed themselves to be deprived of their manhood ... in suffering ourselves to be disarmed, ... we in effect abnegate our manhood.

Comparisons can be drawn here with the construction of masculinity in India. Ashis Nandy argues that colonialism produced feelings of emasculation which led, as in Ireland, to a resurrection of the ideology of the martial races.

Upper-class Indian men with purdanashin wives, both Hindu and Muslim, possessed something that almost none of the Irish homesteaders had: wealth. This and their community standing earned them, unlike the Irish, some respect from the British. The Canadian adventurers - the guardians who largely controlled the wilderness - also commanded some respect. They were seen to be performing a useful service for the British Empire, often in dangerous and hazardous conditions, by uncovering Canada's mineral wealth.

The native spaces were each recognised to contain a kernel of Irish, Indian and Canadian national identities. Indian nationalists believed that the zenana held and preserved the very essence of Hindu religion and culture. The wilderness was acknowledged by Canadians to be a cornerstone of Canadian identity. The Irish cabin, as became clear in de Valera's Free State, represented the spiritual heart of republican

---

71 Quoted in Cairns and Richards, Writing Ireland, p50.

72 Pearse was executed for his role in the 1916 rebellion. Padraig Pearse, Political Writings and Speeches (Talbot, Dublin, 1952), pp194-5. See also eg p9, p41, p97.

73 Ashis Nandy, The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self Under Colonialism (Oxford UP, Delhi, 1983). See also Sinha, Colonial Masculinity, for a historically grounded reading that argues that each masculinity was constitutive of the other.
Ireland. The connection of 'native spaces' with national identity was therefore a
good reason why imperial knowledge of these sites was so important.

It also helps to explain the different attitudes imperialist men - and women -
had towards the men who were 'guardians' of each site. They showed an ambivalence
towards the adventurers who roamed the Canadian wilderness, fearing them, yet
apparently condoning many of their activities. This is illustrated in the way that British
investors bought up miners' claims in British Columbia and the Yukon in the last
decades of the nineteenth century. This was of course in the hope of making a profit.

It also shows in the 'boys will be boys' attitude which seemed to prevail. Assault, a
violent crime, was punished lightly, while magistrates and police turned a blind eye to
other unlawful acts such as the use of prostitutes, gambling, and often to the rape of
native American women. In India and Ireland the 'guardians' were not viewed so
indulgently. Imperialists were uneasy about them, and the extent of their loyalty to
Britain. Furthermore because the spaces they guarded contained the essence of
national identity, imperial supporters were cautious of these 'guardians'; they did not
want them to have any opportunities of forging a national identity, which could cause
a weakening of British rule. But they were keen to promote a Canadian self-identity
because they believed its nature would be Anglo-Saxon and Protestant.

74 See, for example, Articles 40 and 41 of the 1937 Constitution. The New Irish
Constitution: the Citizens Manual (Duffy, Dublin, 1938), pp9-10; Tricia Cusack, 'A
“Countryside Bright with Cosy Homesteads”: Irish Nationalism and the Cottage

75 The London and Globe Finance Corporation headed by Lord Dufferin had mining
investments in British Columbia, was described as 'a highly speculative and aggressive
finance company', and collapsed in 1900 under accusations of opportunism. Moyles
and Owram, Imperial Dreams, p163.

76 RC MacLeod, 'Crime and Criminals in the North-West Territories, 1873-1905',
Baker (ed.), The Mounted Police and Prairie Society, 1873-1919 (Canadian Plains
Research Centre, Regina, 1998).
There were countless zenanas and homesteads. Each was a specific domestic space, enclosed and clearly demarcated by physical boundaries - walls, fences and curtains - and with definite entry points. The Canadian wilderness was the reverse. There was only one wilderness. Its boundaries were indeterminate and liminal, metaphorical as well as physical. The wilderness was everywhere that was not civilised, and was defined by civilisation, rather than the other way about. Yet despite their geographical diversity and seemingly different nature, the public space of the Canadian wilderness and the private spaces of the Irish homestead and the zenana held one overriding factor in common: they represented multiple microcentres of power that the colonial authorities wanted to know, and ultimately to control. The physical force option, always available to a colonising power, did not allow them to win hearts and minds. The next chapter will focus on the female health workers, well in tune with British moral standards, who were able to gain access to these ‘native spaces’ and, it was hoped, win the support of their inhabitants.
Chapter 8

‘Improving the Health of the Empire’

1. Introduction

Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin used their influence and their political and social connections to set up organisations for the improvement of health in Ireland, Canada and India. The associations they founded are the subject of this chapter. They were not ventures imposed from without upon unwilling people, but neither were they accepted with open arms. They were negotiated schemes which were met with varying degrees of support and opposition in each colony, with no clear dividing line between the views of coloniser and colonised, men and women, or different ethnic groups.

Although all three organisations were non-governmental and mostly privately funded, they achieved quasi-governmental status in the eyes of the public because of the personalities involved, and because their set up was modelled on the colonial hierarchy. Because of this, those who opposed political domination by Britain tended to show responses which varied from apathy to open hostility.¹ A few opponents supported the schemes, often for political expediency or humanitarian reasons.

In the previous chapter I discussed how imperial supporters were uneasy about the relatively unknown ‘native spaces’, one terrain upon which imperial identities were made and remade. This chapter will focus on how upper- and middle-class women - nurses, doctors, health workers or unpaid volunteers - breached these ‘native spaces’ in the name of the health associations. I will start with a detailed discussion of the

¹ Reception was particularly hostile in Ireland, which Lady Aberdeen later identified as being the one place where opposition to her plans was ‘v. bitter’. HH 10/4/8, Notes by Lady Aberdeen for Matthew Urie Baird, written 1937.
founding and running of these. It will become evident that the sponsors of all three associations produced discursive constructions of the colonial subject within his/her native space. This will be illuminated further in the last section by a comparison of various aspects of these representations. They can be read to reveal different facets of colonial power, including attitudes to gender, race, and ethnicity.

2. The National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India (The Dufferin Fund)

In India as in other tropical colonies the first consideration of health policy was to support the army, then the European residents. This was the role of the civil surgeons who worked for the Indian Medical Service. Next came public health efforts to protect natives from diseases they could transmit to the expatriate community such as venereal diseases, cholera or smallpox. But while Indian men used the services of male civil surgeons, this was not an option for women following strict purdah restrictions. Their only access to western medical aid before the 1880s was through female missionaries, but this entailed the double dose: medicine and Christianity.

In 1867 Dr Corbyn started the first medical school for women in Bareilly, NWP. It was unsuccessful, but the Madras Medical College was opened to Indian women in 1874. The first women graduates of this college were white: Mrs Scharlieb, who set up her own practice, and Dora White, who later ran a large dispensary in Hyderabad. In the 1880s other institutions in Bombay, Calcutta, Agra and Lahore began to admit women students, mostly of white or mixed race.

---

2 As in Britain, Contagious Diseases Acts were passed in the 1860s but only partially repealed in the 1880s amid controversy. Prostitutes were more strictly controlled in India, with lock hospitals in both civilian and military cantonments. See Kenneth Ballhatchet, *Race Sex and Class Under the Raj* (Weidenfield and Nicholson, London, 1980); Philippa Levine, 'Venereal Disease, Prostitution, and the Politics of Empire: The Case of British India', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4:4 (1994), pp579-602.
In 1881 missionary doctor Elizabeth Bielby gave Queen Victoria a message from the Maharani of Punna asking for medical help for secluded women. Victoria's response that 'something must be done for these poor creatures' was widely publicised, and led to debate in the Journal of the National Indian Association and other British journals as to how this could best be accomplished. As a result an American in Bombay, Mr Kittredge, built a women and children's hospital there and in Madras a women's Caste hospital was built. Before Lady Dufferin started her association, therefore, there had been some attempts to provide medical tuition and medical care for women, but there had been no national or state-run initiatives.

Lady Dufferin visited Queen Victoria before she left England in 1884. Queen Victoria expressed her desire that Hariot direct her beneficent activities in India towards women. Lady Dufferin recorded her visit to the Queen in her diary but not the request: clearly the welfare of Indian women was not uppermost in her mind. Nevertheless it was a duty which she took seriously. Soon after her arrival in India she wrote to the wives of the provincial Lieutenant-Governors for information and suggestions. Provisional plans were drawn up, and the National Association (generally known as the Dufferin Fund) was launched in August 1885.

The aims of the fund were to provide medical tuition and medical services to Indian women. Independent branches were established in Bombay, Madras and the

---

3 George Kittredge, *A Sketch of the Beginning and Working of the Medical Women for India Fund of Bombay* (Education Society, Bombay, 1889); PRONI D1071/J/G/3/1B, 'Medical Women for India Movement', *Correspondence Respecting a Proposal for the Training of Native Nurses and the Education of Native Female Doctors in India* (privately printed, no details, 1886), p34; Margaret Balfour and Ruth Young, *The Work of Medical Women in India*, (Oxford UP, London, 1929); Frances Elizabeth Hoggan MD, *Medical Women for India* (Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1882); Lal, 'The Countess of Dufferin's Fund'.

4 Hariot Dufferin, *Female Medical Aid to the Women of India* (1886), p8.
North West Provinces. The Central Committee in Simla/Calcutta co-ordinated activities and publicity, raised funds and liaised with Britain. Most of the money came from large private donations within India, but some was raised through fêtes and garden parties organised by the branches, and a small amount was raised in Britain. The National Association took some existing private institutions under its wing, worked in co-operation with others, and built its own hospitals as funds allowed. Scholarships to Indian medical schools were made available. These were primarily intended for ‘Native Students’, but could be taken up by women who, in Lady Dufferin’s words, ‘whether they be native, Eurasian, or of pure English parentage’, were born and brought up in India, and intended to stay there. At first native Indian women lacked the primary education necessary to attend a medical course. However education for girls expanded and substantially more native women enrolled at Agra each succeeding year. The qualifications they could study for ranged from Licentiate of Medicine and Surgery down to that of hospital assistant, equivalent to a nurse. By 1894 the 224 Dufferin students were defined as 21 Europeans, 50 of ‘Eurasian descent’ and 153 mostly of ‘purely native races’ from ‘the lower orders’; these last were training as hospital assistants.

The aims of providing Indian women with medical training in mixed-sex classes and medical care in purdah conditions raised an unavoidable contradiction.

---

5 PRONI D1071/J/G/1A/1, Central Committee Minutes, 30 December 1885.
6 PRONI D1071/J/G/1A/1, Central Committee Minutes, 13 January 1886; ‘Countess of Dufferin’s Fund: UK Branch Report 1894’, Indian Magazine and Review 290 (February 1895), pp55-9.
Lady Dufferin appeared not to realise this. She told a group of Purdanisha women in Lahore that because there would always be 'exceedingly few' British women doctors in India, the Punjab must provide its own medical students. However, traditional Punjabi - and other Indian - fathers were not prepared to allow their daughters to train as doctors. Yet in Agra and Bombay the applicants often came from non-traditional families and so were not bound by strict purdah arrangements. In these centres Lady Dufferin had wanted to provide segregated classes for her students, but was told that this was unnecessary.

Purdah arrangements varied for women of different classes. Lower-class women were often used to working outside the home, and were not generally bound by the rules of seclusion; the provision of medical treatment for them appeared not to be a problem. Lady Dufferin was told that those in Lahore 'can be attended to at any hospital'. By the 1880s some reformist middle-class families had given up purdah. Amongst the upper classes the degree of seclusion varied. Some of these women permitted Ayurvedic or Unani practitioners, or even western male doctors to attend them. On the other hand a Muslim nobleman told Lady Dufferin that 'in the harems

---

9 'Lady Dufferin’s Reply to the Representatives of the Women of the Punjab’, Dufferin, *Speeches in India*, p220; a similar speech is in PRONI D1071J/G/6/2.

10 The Agra Medical School admitted women from the early 1880s, and was not a Dufferin school, although the Fund supported some students each year. Of the 46 women students in 1887, 5 were described as Eurasians, 26 Native Christians, 13 Hindus (including 5 Brahmin), and 2 Muhammedans. PRONI D1071J/G/8/1, *Annual Report of the Agra Medical School, 1886-1887*.

11 Ibid; PRONI D1071J/G/1A/1-3, Central Committee Minutes, 20 January 1886 and 4 January 1889.

12 PRONI D/1071J/G/3/1/A, Commissioner, Lahore Division, to the Secretary to the Punjab Government, 23 May 1885.

13 Lal, ‘The Countess of Dufferin’s Fund’ p40. Unani was the traditional Muslim system of medicine, Ayurvedic was Hindu.
in Scinde not even a man’s picture is admitted, much less a live doctor, ... female medical aid is truly necessary there'.  

Despite being informed about these different purdah practices Lady Dufferin preferred to believe that no Indian woman would allow a man to examine her, saying that ‘I may safely say that they never do except in the last extremity’. She had accepted the stereotypes of Indian women produced by colonial discourse and seemed unwilling to believe that women often had different views on purdah.

The Dufferin Fund was well supported in India while Lady Dufferin ran it. By 1888 twelve female hospitals and fifteen dispensaries had opened. In 1890 they treated 411,000 women, and 204 pupils were supported by the Fund at medical colleges. Upon her return to England in 1889 she set up a London branch.

Imperial Interests

There were several different ways in which the Dufferin Fund helped to promote official British interests in India. As with other philanthropic schemes in the colonies, it was run by the wives of British administrators and their local helpers. Queen Victoria, ‘mother of the Empire’ was patron and the ideological figurehead. She was depicted in Britain as being deeply concerned about her Indian ‘colonial subjects’, especially the women. This implication that the British Empire was one

---

14 Hariot Dufferin, *Our Viceregal Life* 2, p206. He meant western aid, because folk medicine was commonly used within the zenanas. Ramabai Ranade remembers how in the 1870s her mother was well known locally for her home-prepared medicines. Ranade, *Himself*, p6.


16 *Oxford Times*, 6 June 1891. It is not clear whether patient figures relate to affiliates as well as Dufferin supported institutions.

17 Donations were pitiful - £218 in 1894. ‘Countess of Dufferin’s Fund: UK Branch Report, 1894’, p58.
happy family presided over by the Queen was accepted by some, as was the unlikely
notion that a special bond existed between Victoria and her subjects which
transcended differences of class and race.18

Secondly, a powerful discourse of rationality, progress and modernity was
employed by the National Association to underline the benefits of western medicine,
while the stereotype of the passive victim was used to describe Indian women. Indian
medicine, childbirth practices and aspects of culture which were thought to impinge
on health were represented as backward, irrational and vastly inferior to their western
equivalents. For example in a medical text Lankester wrote that seclusion and child
marriage were the reason why over twice as many women as men contracted
tuberculosis, known as the ‘zenana disease’.19 And an address to Lady Dufferin from
the women of Uttapara (almost certainly written by colonial officials), said that ‘the
reliance upon domestic resources in the treatment of our sex, has gradually given way
before the spread of European science’.20

Within India this discourse was widely dispersed, although not among the poor
or illiterate. It reached the wealthy traditional families who were expected to
contribute to the Dufferin Fund; all those who attended Dufferin Fund public
meetings; it was used by colonial administrators, fund supporters and the western
medical profession; it was read by the (mainly urban) subscribers to native and
English-language newspapers. Maneesha Lal writes that reports of the National
Association’s activities in Indian newspapers were generally favourable. They

18 Victoria Smith, ‘Constructing Victoria’. Some of those in England helped by the
1887 Jubilee Nurses wrote to tell Queen Victoria about their ailments and progress.
Report to Her Majesty the Queen from the Trustees of the Queen Victoria Jubilee
Institute for Nurses (Edinburgh, 1889).
approved of the way that the National Association would bring women the benefits of scientific western medicine but not interfere with the traditional practice of purdah.²¹

In a fund-raising pamphlet circulated in England Lady Dufferin wrote that indigenous obstetrics and other so-called inferior health practices must be obliterated and replaced by ‘the knowledge of medical science and of rational sanitary habits ... hitherto unknown...’.²² The native midwives, or dais, were constructed as vicious and ignorant. This, of course, was a partial view. Maneesha Lal writes that

[t]he local midwife would have been familiar, easily accessible and affordable; would probably have had fairly extensive experience in attending deliveries; and would also have shared similar traditions and notions of acceptable practice with the birthing mother.²³

None of these positive points was mentioned in Dufferin Fund literature. The dai was blamed for gynaecological and obstetric problems, as was the Indian tradition of child marriage, which ‘renders their health more delicate than that of European women’.²⁴ Lady Dufferin spoke of the dais’ treatments as ‘barbarous and revolting ... the consequent suffering and loss of life was enormous’. Missionary Dr Hewlett claimed they murdered infants ‘by twisting their necks or breaking their backs’; jumped on the mother to hasten the afterbirth, and caused chronic ill-health by various other practices.²⁵

²² PRONI D1071J/6/8/1, Hariot Dufferin, United Kingdom Branch of the Countess of Dufferin’s Fund, 1891.
²⁴ PRONI D1071J/6/8/1, Hariot Dufferin, United Kingdom Branch of the Countess of Dufferin’s Fund, 1891.
²⁵ Quote from Hariot Dufferin, A Record of Three Years Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India (Hatchards, London, 1889), p67-8. See also Geraldine Forbes, ‘Managing Midwifery in India’, in Engels and Marks (eds), Contesting Colonial Hegemony. She argues that the ‘vicious dai’ was an artificial construct. Balfour and Young report that infanticide, especially of girls, was common at this time. The Work of Medical Women in India, p7.
labour as ‘indescribably unclean’ and the ground underneath a ‘quagmire of filth’. Rudyard Kipling wrote a poem about childbirth for Lady Dufferin which clearly shows the association of blackness with filth and ignorance: an implicit racism which permeated much Victorian writing:26

Ye know the worn and rotten mat whereon your daughter lies,
Ye know the Sootak room unclean, the cell wherein she dies. …
These things you know, and more than these - soul secrets of the Dead,
Black horror done in ignorance, by Time or Folly bred …27

All this discourse placed western medicine and culture, assumed by the British to be the ideal, in a superior position and demonstrated just how far Indian medical practices fell short of that. The logical inference was that people in India needed British knowledge and expertise in medical matters.

Another way the Fund promoted imperial interests in India was by carefully ensuring visible public support from the various religious groups, knowing this would be well reported in the press. In 1886, for example, it was proposed that the vote of thanks to the chairman at the AGM ‘should be moved and seconded by native gentlemen’. Two of the three native committee members - one Hindu and one Muslim - were suggested, and agreed. The point is that this did not just happen - it was orchestrated.28 At the following annual meeting the same thing was done and Lady Dufferin reported

a most representative gathering. There were the Councillors and the RC Archbishops, and the high Priest of the temple of Baidyanath, and Hindu and Mahometan gentlemen of position and Judges … a Hindu

26 Davidoff, ‘Class and Gender in Victorian England’.
28 PRONI D1071J/G/1A/1-3, Central Committee Minutes, 13 January 1886.
gentleman, Maharajah Norendra Krishna, proposed, and Nawab Abdool Lateef seconded, a vote of thanks to me ...\textsuperscript{29}

This helped to register consent for the colonising administration, significant at a time when nationalism was gaining supporters amongst some western-educated Indians. However the National Association was far from representative. The Central Committee included only one Muslim and one, sometimes two, Hindu representatives. The other seven committee members were white, highly qualified and/or titled: five high ranking members of the ICS, the President of the Bank of Bengal, and Lady Dufferin, the President and the only woman.\textsuperscript{30} Dr Edith Pechey, matron of the Cama Hospital for women and children in Bombay, had advised Hariot Dufferin to keep the power in British hands:

Even with the best intentions [Indian] interference in the management of a medical institution would be undesirable as their ways are so slipshod and unbusiness-like.\textsuperscript{31}

Closely connected with the need for broad levels of support is the way that the Indian government wanted to stay on good terms with wealthy traditional Muslims and Hindus. Dufferin considered them to be the true aristocrats of India (in contrast to the western-educated Bengalis whom he feared and despised).\textsuperscript{32} This class supported and approved of the Dufferin Fund, as shown by their donations. These were acknowledged each month in the newspapers, and some were even rewarded with titles or decorations from Queen Victoria, although Lady Dufferin was horrified at obvious attempts to bribe her.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{29} PRONI D/1071J/C1/8/5, Journal, 26 January 1887.

\textsuperscript{30} PRONI D/1071J/G/8/1, Memorandum of Articles of Association; D1071J/G/1A/1, Central Committee Minutes, 21 December 1885 - 24 January 1887.

\textsuperscript{31} PRONI D/1071J/G/3/1/A, Dr Pechey to Hariot Dufferin, 17 May 1885.

\textsuperscript{32} BL Eur Mss/F/130/2, Dufferin to Randolph Churchill, 7 August 1885.

\textsuperscript{33} 'I had to write a scathing epistle to a lady who had dared - dared is the word - to dangle 1,50,000 rupees in the shape of a Lady Dufferin Hospital before my eyes on
The aristocracy had traditional values that the Dufferin Fund was required to respect and uphold, such as their commitment to their religion, and the tradition of purdah. An administration that used medicine as a front for Christian missionary activity would never be trusted. Committee member Maharajah Tagore emphasised that it was of the ‘utmost importance’ that the Dufferin Fund remained unsectarian.34

Two points highlight the tension between what Lady Dufferin did and what she thought. Once, while defending her scheme to medical missionaries, she stressed how she had had no choice but to follow the principle of unsectarianism.35 This perhaps indicates that her own personal choice might have been to allow missionary work. On another occasion she said the Dufferin Fund did not want to abolish purdah: ‘this is far from being the case ... we are making every endeavour scrupulously to respect your customs in this particular.’36 Perhaps so, but her comment that ‘the caste laws meet one at every turn, and the many different languages spoken are all so many stumbling blocks in our path’ is revealing in the way it smacks of cultural arrogance.37 It clearly irritated her that Indian culture did not fit in with her plans.

A final way that the Dufferin Fund helped to promote imperial interests in India was by giving white women the top positions in Dufferin hospitals and medical schools. This gave considerable opportunities of introducing British and western ways.38 Dr Vaughan noted the ‘civilizing influence’ these English-run hospitals had on condition that certain gentlemen should get a certain title which they coveted’. PRONI D/1071J/C1/8/3, 27 January 1886, see also 8 March 1886 (both edited out of the published journal).

34 PRONI D/1071J/G/1A/1, Central Committee Minutes, 30 January 1886.
36 PRONI D/1071J/D/32, Reply to Address from Benares Women [April 1886].
37 Hariot Dufferin, Female Medical Aid to the Women of India, p22.
38 PRONI D/1071J/G/1A/3, Note Showing Principal Operations of the Central Committee (October/November 1890); Hariot Dufferin, Three Years Work, p43. And
Henry Acland believed this influence spread somewhat further. He wrote: ‘every cultivated English lady who enters India as a physician or surgeon is part of a great system for bettering the human race’.

Dufferin students were probably either from Christian or reformist families, or rebels against tradition, and so likely to be receptive to the British ethos. Lady Dufferin was told how useful these women would be once they were qualified. They could enter where no Englishwoman could go, understand local languages and customs, and could better work with what Mrs Robertson called ‘the ignorance and prejudices of the Zenanas’.

From the 1980s onwards historians have been considering the extent to which cultural imperialism in medicine took place. David Arnold argues for a complex reading, believing that ‘medicine was too powerful ... to be left to the colonisers alone’. He identifies several different Indian responses to western medical initiatives: ‘resistance, accommodation, participation and appropriation’. Cunningham and Andrews, however, write that the ‘imperialist nature of Western medicine can be seen wherever it has been spread’.

see PRONI D/1071J/G/7A/6, Particulars Regarding Lady Doctors, Assistant Surgeons and Hospital Assistants in Charge of Zenana Hospitals or Wards Throughout India (Calcutta, 1897).


40 Oxford Times, 6 June 1891.


42 In 1887 Bhawani Baj became the first Hindu woman in Upper India to graduate. PRONI D/1071J/G/8/1, Extracts from the Annual Report of the Agra Medical School, April 1887.

43 PRONI D/1071J/G/3/1/A, Mrs GL Robertson to Lady Lyall, nd, [1885]; Mrs Grant Duff to Hariot Dufferin, 18 May 1885.

44 Cunningham and Andrews, ‘Introduction’ in their Western Medicine as Contested Knowledge, p1; Mark Harrison, Public Health in British India: Anglo-Indian Preventive Medicine 1859-1914 (Cambridge UP, Cambridge, 1994), p228; David
Harrison and Pati note that ‘the Dufferin Fund was ... intended as a bearer of Western cultural values, that would bind Indians more closely to their colonial masters’. And Dufferin Fund supporters clearly believed this, but their apparent confidence may have been misplaced. There is a difference between aspirations and results. Did the Dufferin Fund actually succeed in doing this? Historians have given a mixed response. However there is general agreement that the fund only affected a minority of women, and it was disadvantaged by its connections with the colonising administration. Dagmar Engels thinks it was a ‘relative failure’ which aimed to destroy native traditions, and politicised childbirth and women’s health. In contrast Arnold calls it ‘a turning point in the history of western medicine in India’ resulting in many advances in women’s medical education and health care. Mark Harrison is ambivalent, saying the fund was at best ‘an expression of genuine humanitarian concern’ and at worst it ‘reflected notions of racial superiority’. Maneesha Lal believes it perpetuated existing power relationships, and notes that disparate groups - Indian leaders and journalists, British women doctors, colonial administrators - used it to their own political advantage. Lady Dufferin was the driving force, and when she left India in 1888 the fund suffered.

Arnold (ed.), Imperial Medicine and Indigenous Societies, and Colonising the Body, quote p10; OP Jaggi, Western Medicine in India: Social Impact (Atma Ram, Delhi, 1980), p98-9; Roy McLeod, ‘Introduction’ in his and Lewis (eds), Disease, Medicine and Empire.


Mark Harrison, Public Health in British India, p230.

Several problems were hidden under the Dufferin Fund hyperbole. Male Hindu fundamentalists resisted the introduction of western medicine and so their wives did not use it. And although Lady Dufferin and her supporters wanted to provide work for British women doctors, the patients clearly preferred Indian women.\textsuperscript{50} In 1889, as the first female graduates began to emerge from Indian medical schools, the Central Committee in Calcutta warned Lady Dufferin that they had no jobs for British women. The London Committee thought this was ‘most discouraging and depressing’.\textsuperscript{51} By 1894, after ten years of operation, the Fund had only brought twelve British doctors to India, so it changed direction. Lady Dufferin announced that no more British women would travel to India, but qualified Indian women could apply for further training in Europe ‘to improve themselves and to enable them to study our European methods’\textsuperscript{.52} Four of the first six successful applicants had English surnames, suggesting they were either of mixed race or European origin. They were exposed to British culture and customs at medical schools in Britain for two years.

Most of the women who ran the Dufferin Fund thought they understood ‘the Indian woman’ and her needs, thought they were sensitive to Indian culture, and thought their aims were wholly humanitarian. But Indian women, particularly of the upper classes, proved extraordinarily resistant to being ‘helped’ in this way. Not all of them wanted British doctors, and many women did not require the purdah conditions that were provided. However the Fund did help to familiarise the women who used it with western medicine. And as it focused attention on the apparent shortcomings of

\textsuperscript{50} This seems to have been a common response in Africa and India, according to Shula Marks’ survey of the literature. See Divided Sisterhood: Race Class and Gender in the South African Nursing Profession (St Martin’s, New York, 1994), p11.

\textsuperscript{51} PRONI D/1071/J/G/1B/1, London Executive Committee Minutes, 1 July 1889; PRONI D/1071/J/G/1A/3, Central Committee Minutes, 29 July 1889.

\textsuperscript{52} Hariot Dufferin, ‘The United Kingdom Branch of the Countess of Dufferin’s Fund’, Indian Magazine and Review 288 (December 1894), pp611-14.
the native dais and so-called inferior cultural practices, it drew attention away from other problems such as general poverty and illiteracy that the colonial authorities were not keen to highlight.

In 1891 Lady Dufferin wrote of the steady progress of her fund in India despite 'ancient prejudice and the iron bands of custom'. But although she had hoped the introduction of modern western medical ideas into the zenanas would 'draw closer together the bonds which should unite all the subjects of our beloved Queen-Empress and her Imperial dominion', they were clearly not united equally. Because Indian women were constructed as passive victims, their restricted lives illuminated the 'superiority' of British cultural arrangements.

3. The Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada

Before the VON no national district nursing scheme existed in Canada. The Roman Catholic Grey Nuns and the Sisters of Providence had both organised visiting nurses in Montreal, and other religious or philanthropic organisations had done likewise in other cities. But professional medical provision on the prairies and in rural areas was generally poor. The lack of medical help for women and children in western Canada, especially during childbirth, was raised by the National Council of Women in 1896. It was important to Lady Aberdeen and the NCW because every baby was a future Canadian citizen:

53 PRONI D/1071 J/G/6/7, cutting of letter to The Times c1891.

54 Lady Dufferin's own gender, class and race position was enhanced in 1916 when she received the DBE for her work in India.

55 Gibbon and Mathewson, Three Centuries of Canadian Nursing is a comprehensive account. Kathryn McPherson, Bedside Matters: The Transformation of Canadian Nursing 1900-1990 (Oxford UP, Toronto, 1996), analyses the relationship of nurses to other health professionals along axes of race, class and gender. For philanthropic efforts towards home nursing in the early 1890s see Boutilier, 'Helpers or Heroines?'
It is the race that is involved in maternity work, not the individual. A pregnant woman is a national asset, a national glory, a national responsibility. It is the next generation to which we owe allegiance …

Miners in the North West Territories worked in high-risk occupations in remote areas, usually far from medical facilities. The gold rush in the Yukon and Klondike had greatly increased the population, but medical provision lagged behind. Most doctors were unlicensed. Dawson City had two one-room hospitals hastily built by the Catholic and Presbyterian Churches. Until the VON arrived in August 1898 all the nurses were men. They were believed to lack the civilising influence of women, and seen as little better than thugs who waited, like ghouls, for a man to expire … borrowed money from the dying, knowing they would not need to pay it back, or sent the invalids’ watches to be repaired, hoping to claim them … if the owners died.

In January 1897 Lady Aberdeen produced a plan for a countrywide visiting nursing service as a memorial for Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee. It would be permanent, national, and she believed it would unite east and west. It was based on the Jubilee Institute for Nurses in Britain, founded in 1887. The VON would not be state funded; local committees would raise funds to support their own nurse(s) and contribute to a central fund for districts that needed extra help. Initially Lady Aberdeen planned an organisation of home helpers with basic qualifications in first aid, nursing and midwifery. They would help sick mothers with domestic tasks,

56 Marion Cran, quoted in Susan Jackel (ed.), A Flannel Shirt and Liberty: British Emigrant Gentlewomen in the Canadian West, 1880-1914 (University of British Columbia Press, Vancouver/London, 1982), p146. The importance of the mother’s role to the imperialist cause was first brought to notice by Anna Davin in ‘Imperialism and Motherhood’.

57 Gibbon and Mathewson, Three Centuries, pp254,267.

provide emergency first aid to loggers, miners and farmers in the north west and assist at childbirth.

These plans were strenuously opposed. Nursing leaders complained bitterly that such an organisation would downgrade their profession and community standing.\textsuperscript{59} Since the 1870s nurse training schools had been created in most established city hospitals. As in England, nursing had gained a higher status as the professional graduate of a two or three year structured course came to replace the working-class hospital helper, whose only training was the practical experience she picked up on the ward.

The most vehement opposition to the VON came from doctors' groups, described by Lady Aberdeen as 'organised in virulent bitterness and complete ignorance'.\textsuperscript{60} In 1897 the Ontario Medical Association expressed 'its most unqualified disapproval of the scheme, on account of the dangers which must necessarily follow to the public should such an order be established'.\textsuperscript{61}

The doctors' groups had several reasons for opposing the VON. Their western colleagues could lose patients to nurses who would charge less; doctors wanted to keep obstetrics for themselves; and they feared that in remote districts or during childbirth emergencies nurses would work unsupervised, and so come to expect more power and autonomy.\textsuperscript{62} Dr Worcester, a supporter, was adamant that this must not happen:

\footnotesize

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{59} Boutilier, 'Helpers or Heroines?'
  \item \textsuperscript{60} Saywell (ed.), \textit{Canadian Journal}, p441 (24 November 1897).
  \item \textsuperscript{61} John Murray Gibbon, \textit{The Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada 50th Anniversary 1897-1947} (Southam, Montreal, 1947), p12.
  \item \textsuperscript{62} Lady Aberdeen suspected this might happen but turned a blind eye. Saywell (ed.), \textit{Canadian Journal}, p437 (7 November 1897). Also see Suzann Buckley, 'Ladies or Midwives? Efforts to Reduce Infant and Maternal Mortality', in Linda Kealey (ed.), \textit{A Not Unreasonable Claim: Women and Reform in Canada 1880s-1920s} (Women's
Victorian Nurses are ... trained to know their own proper sphere. ... unless there is the most hearty co-operation between this Order and the medical profession it cannot go on.63

Lady Aberdeen invited Dr Worcester to address a doctors' meeting in Toronto, hoping to convert them to her scheme. One doctor told Worcester that 'we in Toronto do not feed on royal pap, ... the idea of so commemorating the Queen's reign adds no weight with us to any proposed institution'.64 He was applauded, which I find surprising because Toronto was a very 'British' city. However Dr Worcester shamed this doctor and his colleagues into patriotism and by the close of the meeting they rose to cheer Queen Victoria. The doctors clearly felt threatened by the VON; Lady Aberdeen noted at the time that they 'made no secret of their want of respect for nurses'.65 At that historical moment their Britishness was less important to them than protecting their professional identity. But when the VON was up and running the doctors realised that some of their concerns were misconceived, and they were gradually won over.66 The VON had needed their support, and so had taken the various criticisms into account. The nurses would now undergo full professional training followed by a six-month course in district nursing.


63 Gibbon, Victorian Order, p25. Dr Worcester ran the Waltham Training School for district nurses in Massachusetts.

64 Ibid, p21.

65 Saywell (ed.), Canadian Journal, p444 (8 December 1897).

66 As Boutilier discusses in 'Helpers or Heroines'. However she places undue emphasis on the VON being forced to change its plans about home helpers. The plans were always provisional and contingent upon consultations with professional bodies. Lady Aberdeen continued to stress the importance of the domestic help that the VON provided. See for example Halifax Chronicle, 17 June 1897; Vancouver Semi-Weekly, 29 July 1898; Ishbel Aberdeen, What is the Use? p32 and especially p57.
So far I have said little about native Americans and French Canadians. This is because they were absent from the national picture, which perhaps tells its own story. The VON’s enthusiasm for nursing miners and prospectors contrasted with their noticeable indifference towards native Americans; they did little work amongst them until well into the twentieth century. The first VON nurse for native Americans started work at the Grand River Reservation, Brantford in 1910. In 1916 one reservation nurse wanted to ‘enforce the fumigation and lime-washing of all the log-houses’. This relates to the symbolic whitening of Canada. Native Americans were thought of as a source of contamination. They did not feature in the imagined community of Canadians, and their needs were consistently ignored over many years. In 1935 the Canadian TB Association (clearly only concerned about white Canadians) unsuccessfully petitioned the government to employ ‘active measures’ against ‘the menace of uncontrolled tuberculosis on Indian reserves to the surrounding white population’.

As discussed in chapter four, ‘British’ Canadians thought they were superior to French Canadians. The French showed a strong desire to keep their own separate identity. Because of this there was little interest from French Canada in supporting a nurse, because they had their own visiting nurses from the convents. Apart from Montreal, by the end of 1899 there was only one Victorian Order nurse working in Québec Province, and none in Manitoba which also had a large French-speaking population. It was not until the 1920s that the VON made a concerted effort to reach French Canada.

---

68 Gibbon, *Victorian Order*, p79.
70 For a discussion of the place of French Canada in the British-Canadian female
The main aim of the VON was humanitarian, but it had other aims as well. By the late 1890s more women wanted to work outside the home. One benefit, stressed by Lady Aberdeen, was that nursing would 'furnish a new field of labour' for many (single) women:

In nursing they would find an opportunity of helping themselves to happier lives, and of bringing brightness into the homes and lives of others. 71

During this period the idea of the devoted middle-class nurse working for higher glory was reworked to accommodate the new professional working for money. Yet Lady Aberdeen marvelled at trainees with their 'steadfast look of holy determination and devotion'. 72 A VON nurse was still expected to be an 'inspiration'.

**Imperial Connections**

The many connections which the VON had with Britain and the Empire were stressed through the publicity it generated. Its name shows its British roots. It was modelled on Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute and founded to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. Lady Aberdeen called it 'a Christian memorial of a Christian Queen'. 73 The VON revolved around the colonial aristocracy and the establishment. The Governor-General was patron, Lady Aberdeen was the President, and the vice-patrons included the provincial Lieutenant-Governors, church leaders and politicians. The

---

71 Ishbel Aberdeen, *Canadian Fund for the Commemoration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee* (Governor General's Office, Ottawa, 1897), p9.

72 John and Ishbel Aberdeen, *We Twa*, p123. Boutilier, 'Helpers or Heroines' discusses how the NCW and the VON were ultimately forced to reconcile sentimental imagery like this with the idea of a modern professional working for financial gain.

73 *Boston Herald*, 25 October 1897.
handpicked provisional committee naturally excluded those who might have disagreed with Lady Aberdeen’s idea of what the VON should be.

The provisional committee had no medical representatives, and so could consult professional opinion without having to agree with it. Lady Aberdeen discarded the constitution which twelve Montreal doctors had framed for the VON. She said that they were ‘a little hurt’, but she wanted to copy the British Jubilee scheme.\(^7^4\) The doctors wanted a central board totally elected by subscribers, not with five members nominated by the Governor-General as the Aberdeens wanted. Lady Aberdeen commented: ‘Knowing the jealousies, the evils of patronage, and the ignorance of the Local Boards we had to fight for this strongly.’\(^7^5\) The doctors lost on this and other points, although their suggestions would have made for a more democratic organisation. Lady Aberdeen wanted a board over which she, an aristocratic Englishwoman, had autocratic control.

In these ways the Britishness of the VON emphasised the links between Canada and Britain. Lady Aberdeen thought it could help to ‘civilise’ the wilderness, unite the Canadian nation, and strengthen a Canadian identity among its inhabitants. This identity, available to those who were prepared to conform to English-based middle-class culture and habits, had its own uniqueness because of the pioneering nature of settlement in Canada, and the hardships which new settlers had to endure before they could lead comfortable lives.\(^7^6\)

Nurses of the Victorian Order could support these endeavours because they generally came from a Canadian Anglo-Saxon Protestant background. The VON was

\(^7^4\) Saywell (ed.), *Canadian Journal*, p438 (7 November 1897).

\(^7^5\) Ibid, p439.

\(^7^6\) Ukranian immigrants spent about three years in temporary labouring jobs before they could afford to buy a homestead. Avery, *Dangerous Foreigners*, p22.
an elitist organisation with a strict employment policy. Applicants had to be graduates of recognised training schools. These invariably taught in English, and so (until the 1960s) the selection procedure operated against French Canadians and non-British immigrants. After selection the women had to do a further six months’ district training. Superintendent Charlotte MacLeod ‘took infinite trouble in the selection of the nurses … their personal qualifications, … their character, their personality … their vocation for district nursing’. The background of most of these nurses was Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, and middle class. So by accident or design they brought British ideas of culture and social behaviour into the native spaces of rural and backwoods Canada.

A VON/NCWC book aimed at introducing girls and young women to their responsibilities and opportunities in the adult world, described the mother’s special role as a nation builder:

The home … is the miniature state, and the mother with her little band of embryo citizens builds the foundation upon which the greater superstructure is to be reared. … Shall our sons and daughters be weak and nervous and puny of constitution, or shall they have strength of bone and muscle and sinew and vigor of brain? For answer we must look chiefly to the mothers.

The nurses had numerous informal opportunities to educate new Canadians. When they stepped over the threshold into the prairie homesteads they gained privileged knowledge of the intimate lives of their patients and families. This enabled family mores to be monitored and brought into line if necessary, and so facilitated the

---

79 John and Ishbel Aberdeen, *We Twa 2*, p129.
81 In 1898 21 nurses made 8,080 visits; in 1908 117 nurses made 79,670 visits; in 1918 333 nurses made 336,063 visits. Gibbon, *Victorian Order*, pp115,44.
‘Canadianization’ of recent immigrants. The education of immigrant families in culture and citizenship was successful, according to Dr MacEachern in his survey of district nursing in 1922:

Through intimate contact with the lives of thousands of new settlers [the VON] are perhaps doing more than any other agency to bind these people to their adopted country and make them Canadian in heart and outlook as well as in name. To them is given an unlimited opportunity to assist in the Canadianizing of the newcomer to our country, for in the home where these nurses do most of their work the personal contact or touch thus afforded is far more selective.\(^{82}\)

Adele Perry has shown that in British Columbia the presence of suitable white women among rough men was believed to have a civilising effect. Lady Aberdeen knew this, and told the women of Nelson, BC, that it was their responsibility to lead young men ‘in the highest way that goes to make a true man of good repute’.\(^{83}\) Tappan Adney, *Harper’s Weekly* Yukon correspondent commented that ‘[w]e who lived roughly were astonished to observe how the hand of woman could transform an interior, and what an air of comfort could be given’.\(^{84}\)

The VON became part of this. Chief Superintendent Charlotte MacLeod noted the ‘comforts and home-like condition’ provided for the homeless men and boys at VON cottage hospitals in Regina and Vernon.\(^{85}\) The four Yukon nurses decorated their own cabin with remnants of material, then Nurses Hanna and Payson brightened up a sick man’s tent by hanging up old beef tins filled with wild roses.\(^{86}\)

---

\(^{82}\) Gibbon, *Victorian Order*, p86.

\(^{83}\) *Nelson Miner*, 23 July 1898.


\(^{85}\) Ishbel Aberdeen, *What is the Use?*, p49.

\(^{86}\) Thora McIlroy Mills, ‘Rachel Hanna’s Diary’, *The Herald-Gazette* (Bracebridge, Ontario, 11 April 1974), pp13,20. Rachel’s parents were Quakers. She was born in Kilmarnock but grew up in Bracebridge, a town which Lady Dufferin described as ‘almost entirely English’, (see page 140).
While the nurses encouraged the pioneers to become Canadian citizens, and the adventurers to adopt civilised ways of living, Lady Aberdeen wrote to every school in Canada asking for donations. Children represented the future, she thought, and she invited them to imagine themselves as British Canadians within the British Empire and as building blocks for tomorrow’s Canada. She wrote:

... on the prairies, in the forests, in mining districts ... [the nurses] will go hither and thither amongst our brave pioneers and bring help to those heroic people who are building up the future of this beautiful country amidst many hardships and privations. ... Will you give a hand, children of Canada? Will you bring along your tribute to the queen and at the same time like true patriots help the country you love so well?

‘Brave pioneers’ and ‘heroic people’: this is the language of the west in the adventure stories that children would be familiar with. Whether they lived in cities or in isolated areas they too could imagine themselves as pioneers by donating their twenty-five cents. She told them they would be proud to see ‘the “Queen’s Nurses” going through the country on their mission of mercy ... a living memorial in the homes of Canada of the reign of our loved sovereign lady’.  

In other words the VON would be a lasting reminder to young people of their allegiance to Canada, the UK and the British Empire, both from the public space of their settlements or cities, and within the private space of their homes. Seeing the nurses in their uniforms as they went about their work would reinforce the message to communities at large, and individual families would have personal reasons to be thankful for being Canadian subjects within the British Empire.

The publicity generated by the VON reinforced the cultural scripts that credited men and women with particular characteristics according to their gender. It contrasted the nurses’ ideal feminine qualities with the hardy masculinity of their male

---

patients. This was particularly apparent in reports of the Klondike nurses. With an eye to the publicity potential Lady Aberdeen had appointed four nurses to the Klondike goldfields on three-year contracts. Faith Fenton, a journalist supporter of Lady Aberdeen, offered to accompany the nurses to the Yukon, and Lady Aberdeen helped her find sponsors. The party was escorted to the Yukon by Canadian soldiers en route to Fort Selkirk, 150 miles south of Dawson City. Lady Aberdeen arranged official engagements for the nurses during the four-month journey. These, including a reception given by the Lieutenant-Governor of British Columbia, generated much positive newspaper publicity.

On the journey Faith Fenton noted ‘the craving of strong men in their sickness for a woman’s care’, telling how one man had travelled fourteen miles in pain to be ‘within reach of their ministrations’. Meanwhile the women of Nelson BC, keen to start a local VON branch, told Lady Aberdeen that

[w]estward the star of Empire takes its way. ... The fevered brow of the hardy and adventurous prospector, many of whom succumb to mountain fever, will be soothed, and he will bless the hand that cools. The unfortunate miner racked with pain from broken limb or bruised body will bless the nurse ... 

Lady Aberdeen spoke of ‘fine young fellows’ seeking their fortune, ‘struck down by illness or accident and wasting away in lonely helplessness in their little shacks or lodgings untended’. The Canadian nurses became modern day incarnations of the lady with the lamp, as in The Ballad of the VON:

88 Faith Fenton’s reports were turned down by British papers but printed in the Toronto Globe. Jill Downie, A Passionate Pen: the Life and Times of Faith Fenton (Harper Collins, Toronto, 1996).
90 Quoted in Gibbon, Victorian Order, p34.
91 Nelson Miner, 23 July 1898.
92 Ottawa Free Press, 11 February 1897.
In lonely hour no hope I knew
Until there came within my ken
A gentle nurse in quiet blue,
An Angel from the VON.
... [Three more verses.]

These quotes are typical of a discourse in which the rough and rugged representations of Canadian manhood were offset by those of the tender and compassionate nurses. The so-called masculine characteristics of the nurses - physical strength, confidence, initiative and intelligence - were little commented on. Nurse Powell’s private correspondence shows the nurses possessed these qualities in abundance. She wrote to a friend describing the 150 mile march into Dawson:

From mountain to swamp to bog we went ... through deep forest ... where the trail was narrow and the branches of trees threatened our eyes ... over sharp and jagged rocks where slipping would be dangerous ... [U]p at two in the morning, breakfast at three, tents down and everything packed at four and all ready on the trail before five. Our lunch ... consisted of two hard biscuits and a cup of water from the nearest spring.

When they arrived in Dawson City in August/September 1898 Nurse Hanna had lost thirty pounds. Their summer outfits, expected to last three years, were completely worn out. Nurse Powell took charge of the Good Samaritan Hospital: two log cabins, one still half-built and unfloored. There were seven patients, rising with a typhoid epidemic to thirty-six two weeks later. Nurse Powell wrote:

Nor was the sickness all but the filth and the vermin and we had so little. ... few mattresses ... no disinfectants ... no sheets, nightdresses nor pillows. ... A few towels - no materials for dressing. ... [W]e prepared food for patients, made poultices, received supplies, cut out garments, held consultations, drew charts, wrote records, and often swallowed a hasty bite while watching a delirious patient ... The cooking stove was so small it could easily be carried under one arm,

93 Gibbon, *Victorian Order*, p120-1.
94 Ibid, p31-32.
95 Mills, ‘Rachel Hanna’s Diary’.
96 John and Ishbel Aberdeen, *We Twa 2*, p131.
and our only utensils were two baking pans and some butter cans and with these we had to prepare food for the patients and nurses.97

These quotes belie the common Victorian assumption that ‘feminine’ and ‘masculine’ characteristics were innate rather than culturally constructed. These women were clearly tough and practical, with high endurance levels, qualities that Victorians did not normally associate with women. Biological determinism has been much remarked upon in the context of nineteenth-century Britain. The Englishman’s presumed greater intellectual capacity and physical strength ensured his active participation in public and imperial life. Essential feminine qualities provided seemingly incontrovertible evidence for women’s special role as carers within the home - nursing was merely an extension of this.98 The similarities of normative gender roles in Canada to those in Britain were emphasised in the publicity generated by the work of the VON, and this tied Canada closely to Britain in the imperial imagination.

I have argued that the badge of the VON allowed nurses to access the ‘native spaces’ of the wilderness and the prairie homestead. Their education, background and support for the Empire99 ensured that any influence they had over the behaviour of adventurers and recent immigrants would suit the imperialist order. The VON helped to promote Britain and the Empire, and as a national institution it provided a unifying force around which a Canadian identity could be constructed. But because the VON was saturated with Anglo-Saxon Protestant ideals it came to acquire a particular cultural dynamic. Those cultures and social practices that fitted dominant and imperial

97 Gibbon, Victorian Order, p32.


99 Victorian Order nurses, including two from the Yukon, nursed in South Africa during the Boer War. Gibbon and Mathewson, Three Centuries, p289.
preconceptions of what Canadians should be like were favoured. Others were marginalised and excluded.

4. The Women's National Health Association of Ireland

Irish philanthropy had always been denominationally based, and both Protestant and Catholic groups worked separately among the poor in nineteenth-century Ireland.¹⁰⁰ The Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses, the visiting nurse scheme on which the VON in Canada was based, was set up in London and Edinburgh in 1889 without any problems. However in Dublin the organisers faced 'more difficulty' because 'obstacles not yet entirely surmounted have caused delay'.¹⁰¹ The Archbishop of Dublin told Lady Aberdeen that the scheme had been 'hopelessly shipwrecked' by the Dublin provisional committee. They resented having a plan made out in England, and were convinced it would not work, because the nurses were expected to visit regardless of creed. Walsh also noted that the committee entirely ignored the nationalist section of the community.¹⁰² The scheme was imposed from London and attempted to help Catholics and Protestants alike, but was dogged with problems. Riding roughshod over the views of Irish nationalists was typical of schemes which the British introduced to Ireland, and twenty years later Lady Aberdeen faced similar problems when she founded and ran the WNHA.


¹⁰¹ Report to Her Majesty the Queen from the Trustees of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses, (Edinburgh, 1889).

¹⁰² HH 1/6, 'Assorted Letters from Ireland', William Walsh to Lady Aberdeen, (i) 11 November 1888, quote; (ii) 18 March 1889, quote; (iii) no date but same period.
The WNHA was started in 1907 by Lady Aberdeen in an attempt to bring down the death rate from tuberculosis, which caused one in six deaths, mostly among young adults. Tuberculosis was on the wane over most of Europe but in Ireland the death rate was higher than in the 1860s.¹⁰³ This fuelled the arguments of eugenists that the Celts were racially disposed to the disease, and the knowledge that it was an airborne infection led to the belief that Irish standards of hygiene were lower than those in Britain. The WNHA planned to teach people that their health was their own responsibility, show them how to stay well, and how to bring up a ‘healthy and vigorous race’.¹⁰⁴ All members pledged to fight tuberculosis.

Lady Aberdeen had at least one avowed nationalist on her central committee, and she made sure that local committees were representative.¹⁰⁵ The WNHA commenced operations with an anti-tuberculosis exhibition and series of lectures in Dublin, and then two caravans took the show to rural Ireland. In the first year more than 700,000 people visited the exhibition, and more than 100 branches were formed.¹⁰⁶ Branch workers were usually middle- or upper-class Protestants, although some Catholic women took part. (Many Catholic women preferred to join the United Irishwomen, a rural self-help group.) On the branch committees were representative churchmen, the local MOH and perhaps a local council official. Those holding executive office tended to be local Anglo-Irish gentry or aristocracy. These people all paid a 2s6d (12½ pence) yearly subscription, and were expected to subscribe to Slainte, the WNHA magazine. By contrast ‘ordinary’ membership was free; women


¹⁰⁴ John and Ishbel Aberdeen, More Cracks with We Twa, p156.

¹⁰⁵ This was Dr MF Cox.

¹⁰⁶ Pentland, Bonnie Fechter, p161.
often joined after door-to-door canvassing. These women, the target population, could then be ‘instructed personally in health work in their own homes’.

WNHA workers and ordinary members were therefore divided along class lines.

Ishbel thought of the WNHA as a ‘mother’ and each new branch as a ‘child’, and as in Canada she stressed women’s civilising role. By 1911 there were over 150 branches, and 17,530 ordinary members. The branches provided free meals in 80-90 schools, supervised play areas in cities, mother and baby clubs, boys’ and girls’ guilds of health, and milk depots to ensure a pure milk supply. They organised lectures, cookery classes, ‘cleanest house’ and vegetable growing competitions. By 1912 local branches had raised funding for 36 tuberculosis nurses and six maternity and infant nurses. On a national level the WNHA built two sanatoria. A tuberculosis dispensary and holiday homes were paid for by American supporters. Lady Aberdeen started a monthly magazine, *Slainte*. The Slainte insurance scheme was started in co-operation with the British government. After independence in 1922 many of these functions were taken over by local authorities.

**Microbes and the ‘Bad Housewife’**

A military approach was adopted to the anti-tuberculosis campaign. It was publicised as a fight between good and evil. The WNHA had followed the lead of the medical profession in Ireland and identified two battles to be won. One was against unseen organisms such as the tubercle bacillus and other germs. The apocalyptic battle of ‘man against microbe’ was illustrated on the WNHA membership card. Lady

---

107 Ishbel Aberdeen, *Women’s National Health Association of Ireland - Organisation of Local Branches* (Dollard, Dublin, nd), p5.

108 Militarism in society became more common from the 1880s to the first world war. See MacKenzie, *Propaganda and Empire*. 
Aberdeen described it as representing 'an angel with stern determined countenance slaying a host of dragons and hobgoblins, and bearing on a shield the battle-cry of the old Crusaders “God wills it”'. By comparing her campaign with the Holy Wars for Christian supremacy six centuries before, she aimed to elevate the importance of her crusade to that of a religious war.

The other battle was against perceived unsatisfactory domestic practices. As today, doctors thought that inferior standards of household cleanliness allowed germs to multiply, and poor infant and child nutrition lowered resistance to disease. However much of the discourse surrounding the WNHA’s campaign which reached the general public was strident, some of it was only tenuously linked to TB, and most of it heaped abuse on Irish wives and mothers for their lack of domestic skills. This discourse constructed a new subject in early twentieth-century Ireland - the ‘bad housewife’. She was criticised for clinging to old traditions: to win the battle against tuberculosis it was ‘absolutely necessary ... to break down some of the most cherished beliefs of the women’. To stop the ‘plague of tuberculosis’ Professor Lindsay, Secretary of the Belfast Eugenics Society, wanted to ‘civilise and humanise the people ... educate them in just views of life, in right habits of living’. Irish housewives were thought to be so ignorant that their children were put at risk. One newspaper discussing tuberculosis said that many women were ‘utterly unfitted’ to rear children, and often, through ignorance, ‘practically murdered’ their offspring:

109 Ishbel Aberdeen, *WNHA of Ireland, Organisation of Local Branches.*

110 The 'uneducated housewife/mother' was also a construct in nineteenth-century Bengal. See Chakrabarty, 'The Difference - Deferral of a Colonial Modernity'.

111 Dr Leopold Hare, 'Some Popular Objections to Sanatoriums Answered', in Ishbel Aberdeen (ed.), *Ireland's Crusade* 2, p83.

112 JA Lindsay, 'The Economic Aspect of Tuberculosis', in Ishbel Aberdeen (ed.), *Ireland's Crusade* 1, p108.
[T]hey make sad mistakes, mistakes that often have a tragic ending, and that are accountable for our high death rate[.] How could it be otherwise? They have no idea of the value of cookery, cleanliness or fresh air ... in order to elevate and civilize the race [we must] train and educate women ...\(^{113}\)

A correspondent to *Irish Homestead* said that children were needlessly dying from a lack of milk and an inappropriate diet 'from earliest infancy ... potatoes, fat bacon, bits of sausages, white bread pap', and other unsuitable foods.\(^{114}\) This was weighty criticism of the poor housewives. Not everyone believed they caused the death of their own infants, but all seemed to agree that they should improve their domestic skills and that this would solve the problem of tuberculosis. As Dr Steede said, 'if all, or even the majority, of the women in our country were enlisted in this crusade ... the battle would be more than half won'.\(^{115}\)

The discursive creation of the 'bad housewife' provided at once a cause and a solution to the problem of tuberculosis. If she had caused it, with help she could solve it. The 'bad housewife' was capable of salvation, because education would enlighten her. And by focusing on this the campaign was diverted away from the intractable problems of poverty and expensive social reform. (However housing and poverty did become an important issue in 1912-13: see below page 304-5.) The 'bad housewife' also allowed the WNHA helpers to confirm what they already believed: their vastly superior knowledge and ability in domestic affairs.

---

\(^{113}\) *Belfast Evening Telegraph*, 11 February 1907.

\(^{114}\) 'Homestead Stockbreeder', *Irish Homestead*, 25 May 1907.

\(^{115}\) HB Steede, 'How to Reduce Mortality from Tuberculosis,' in Ishbel Aberdeen (ed.), *Ireland’s Crusade* 2, p138.
Opposition

As discussed in chapter seven, there was a fear that pollution emanating from unclean native bodies, from dirty indigenous dwellings, or from the polluted air within could contaminate the Anglo-Saxon race. Tubercular contamination was a double threat because it could either be caused directly by the bacillus or indirectly to future generations by intermarriage with someone predisposed to the disease. Because the WNHA were so enthusiastic in their mission to reduce this threat, their attempts to 'purify' Ireland were not always as tactful as they could have been. Suggestions that the Irish were 'contaminated' and their homes dirty were insulting. Edward Russell told Aberdeen he was not surprised at 'the alleged bad reception of the Countess's hygienic endeavours', as the Irish were 'particularly resentful at being improved out of bad habits'.

Jim Power, an old friend, gave Lady Aberdeen similar advice:

... not to force Tuberculosis any more on us. The Shop keepers, The Hotel people ... every Conservative in the country ... are all outspoken in their hostility towards Her Excellency's proceedings and very unpleasant things are being said. It will be desirable in the present tension of the public mind - that no further newspaper announcements be made ... re tuberculosis. 

It was rumoured that the WNHA campaign had adversely affected tourism, damaged Ireland's image overseas, and fears of contamination had reduced British demand for lace and other products. The South Dublin Union Board of Guardians asked Lady Aberdeen to stop her campaign because of the 'serious effect' it would have on Ireland and the tourist traffic 'on which a great number of the poor people in the country districts have to depend for a living'. On investigation the WNHA found these rumours were completely unfounded. However the damage was done, Irish

---

116 HH 1/5, Edward Russell (Liverpool Post editor) to Aberdeen, 3 September 1909.
117 HH 1/5, James Talbot Power to Aberdeen, 26 October 1909.
public opinion was mobilised against the WNHA, and the impact of their campaign was lessened.\footnote{The Times, 9 September 1909; Slainte 1:10 (October 1909), pp194-197, quote p195.}

The debate over compulsory notification of tuberculosis also divided public opinion. Notification was supported by the WNHA. The \textit{Prevention of Tuberculosis (Ireland) Bill} was debated at Westminster in 1908, and Lady Aberdeen visited London to brief Birrell, the Secretary of State for Ireland, on his statements and replies for the second reading debate.\footnote{Pentland, \textit{Bonnie Fechter}, p166.} There was hostility to the British government because of the discriminatory nature of the bill, which would make tuberculosis a notifiable disease, and so label victims, unlike in Britain.\footnote{Compulsory notification followed in Britain in 1912.}

Politicians divided along Nationalist and Unionist lines. Mr Farrell, MP for North Longford, wrote: ‘Apparently Mr Birrell and Lady Aberdeen are determined to force on Ireland ... a far more drastic Coercion Act than any before attempted, even by a Liberal Government’.\footnote{Irish Independent, 2 November 1908.} The \textit{Dublin Evening Telegraph} thought the bill was of ‘unmitigated and universal ferocity’, even when compared to other ‘oppressive measures’ foisted on Ireland:

\begin{quote}
[It imposes] a disability on a British subject, because he lives in Ireland, which does not apply to a British subject elsewhere ... he is deprived of full rights to liberty and work - registered like a known thief and watched ... [It] makes consumption a crime in Ireland but not in Britain.\footnote{Dublin Evening Telegraph, 18 July 1908.}
\end{quote}

The Dublin Mail carried the headline: ‘Tuberculosis Bill “Almost Universally Condemned” by Medical Bodies in Ireland’. In fact the doctors supported compulsory notification.
notification, but not in the present form, which gave doctors no back-up from the sanitary authority.  

Because of the delicacy of nationalist sensibilities Lady Aberdeen rarely promoted the Crown and the Empire in Ireland as she did in Canada. On the few occasions that she did she came away licking her wounds. For example in 1911 she asked WNHA members to collect signatures for an address to Queen Mary, and donations from women called Mary, so that a coronation gift could be bought. Nationalists complained that women who patronised the WNHA penny dinners in Kilkenny were 'strongly urged' to sign the address 'in complete ignorance of what the signatures were intended for and on finding out later, became enraged at the idea'. Irish Freedom retaliated with a poem entitled 'To the Marys of Ireland'. Here is one verse:

O Mary dear, you needn't fear your penny or your crown  
Will bear disease across the seas to healthy London town:  
'Twill be surely disinfected, pasteurised, and washed with care,  
To banish all the poison of the tainted Irish air!

The opposition above was from a vocal minority of physical-force nationalists, but Lady Aberdeen, or Lady Microbe, as she became known, was unpopular with other sections of Irish society. Her liberalism and hopes for Irish Home Rule made Unionists dislike her, although those in the WNHA professed not to let 'controversial emotions' affect their work. Instead they stressed the inclusive nature of the tuberculosis campaign and how it might help unify Ireland. Lady Dufferin, then the Belfast branch Chairperson, told Lady Aberdeen it was 'absolutely essential' to

---

123 Dublin Mail, 21 September 1908.  
124 Irish Times, 9 February 1911.  
125 Sinn Fein, 22 April 1911.  
126 Irish Freedom, March 1911.  
127 Lady Londonderry organised a Unionist boycott of official entertainments in 1909.
‘take advantage of every opportunity that occurs to repeat and insist upon the non-political and humanitarian character of the Association’.\textsuperscript{128} However her very vehemence perhaps leads one to suspect what it seeks to deny: that the non-political was political.

**Imperial Interests**

Lady Aberdeen did not shout the Empire from the rooftops in Ireland as she did in Canada, but the WNHA still promoted British culture as part of its project of Irish household reform. She knew that to win support ‘you must have the women with you or you will fail ... public opinion is formed in the homes of the People’.\textsuperscript{129} Believing that housewives lacked knowledge of basic domestic practices the WNHA organisers made it their mission to introduce British/middle-class methods of disease control, childcare, and domestic management, and stamp out the indigenous practices they thought were unsatisfactory.\textsuperscript{130} They wanted to transform the Irish cottage *from the inside* into their vision of what it should be.

The opening of cottage windows, insisted on by Lady Aberdeen, was the ritualistic first step: ‘With wonderful and admirable unanimity [the people] threw open their windows, so that today the most ignorant person in the most obscure cabin knows well the benefit and necessity of fresh air’.\textsuperscript{131} This ritual, seemingly of minor

\textsuperscript{128} HH 1/6, Harriot Dufferin to Ishbel Aberdeen, 3 February 1911.


\textsuperscript{130} However the imposition of middle-class values took on an extra dimension in Ireland, when English Protestant values were imposed upon Irish Catholic families. For example menu sheets were introduced with ingredients little used in Ireland, such as lard. Bourke, *Husbandry to Housewifery*, p255.

significance, was actually of deep symbolic importance. It can be compared with the WNHA worker, angel on shoulder, crossing the threshold of a doorway to the native space within. Like the doorway, the window was simultaneously within and without, the point of cultural transference. It allowed the outflow of all that was deemed unhealthy - air, germs, morals and habits, and the inflow of all that was pure.

The next step involved the purification of the whole building and its occupants. The removal of dirt and refuse, 'the allies of the microbes which cleanliness and sunshine destroy', was thought to be of crucial importance. WNHA members visited local families to check domestic standards, and awarded prizes to the cleanest homes. 'A cottage', wrote the Cabinteely branch president reprovingly, 'no matter how poor its occupants may be, can still be kept neat, clean, and tidy, where the mother or wife is willing to set an example'. The four members of the Cabinteely adjudicating committee visited the cottages each month 'at uncertain times and when least expected'. Marks were given in fourteen different categories, including cleanliness and neatness of occupants, food and water storage, ventilation, and state of floor.

It was recommended that cottages were lime-washed once a year: '[w]hat really pleased [Lady Aberdeen] was to find a whole village newly whitewashed to greet her; to hear how visitors noticed the open windows in Dublin streets at night'. Like the open windows, whitewashed cottages had a significance of their own. The

---

132 Stallybrass and White have noted how 'what is socially peripheral is so frequently symbolically central'. Politics and Poetics, p5.


135 Pentland, Bonnie Fechter, p163.
importance of this prescription was not simply that the WNHA’s teaching had been put into practice. It was in the racial overtones, the metaphorical ‘whitening’ of a house and its occupants, or in the above case a whole village. Symbolically the Irish people had to become whitewashed and purified to take their place alongside the British in the United Kingdom.

The last stage in the transformation was the introduction of British middle-class morals and habits. This was a by-product of the WNHA campaign against tuberculosis; Lady Aberdeen called it their ‘splendid reward’. ‘We have set ourselves to hunt one demon out of the world’, she said, and through doing this ‘new and richer opportunities for the development of mental, moral and spiritual life have been granted’. Many areas of life were thought to need guidance. Rev Clarke asked the Drogheda branch to organise a curfew to keep children inside after dark. Laziness and fondness for alcohol or sex were believed to be potential causes of tuberculosis and thus suitable areas for reform. The Wexford WNHA started a small lending library of ‘carefully chosen’ books. Lady Aberdeen thought the school meals scheme gave ‘opportunities … of making the meal times lessons in manners’. These issues and more were not strictly health issues, but provided work for local WNHA branches inside and outside Irish homes. As in Canada, Lady Aberdeen saw the advantages of getting her message across to children, the future citizens. She asked Mrs Eaton to write a story of this sort of ‘transformation’, and arranged for it to be

137 Slainte 2:13 (January 1910), p34.
140 Slainte 1:2 (February 1909), p21.
used by the Board of Education as a reader in the National Schools. The predictable tale involved a brother and sister, a dirty house, a dead father and sick mother. Along came the good fairies of Fresh Air, Cleanliness, Nourishing Food, Temperance, Cheerfulness and Perseverance to provide the happy ending.

By this three-tiered approach to transforming the Irish home the WNHA played a part in the imperial enterprise. Whereas nineteenth-century representations had shown dirty, poverty-stricken cabins with despairing or hostile inhabitants, these twentieth-century representations were different. The women inside these homes may have been uneducated, but they were shown to be eager to learn and to practise new skills. There was resentment and opposition to the campaigns, as we have seen, and also conflicting opinions on how far the WNHA could alter Irish habits. Lady Edith Gordon, who ran the Killorgan branch wrote that some branches succeeded beyond expectation and others, including her own, failed: ‘Nothing, ... I could say on the question of hygiene had any effect, for the reason that nobody in Kerry believes in anything but tradition in these matters’. Nevertheless ‘best kept homes’ competitions were popular - thirty women entered in Dundalk. Places at the girls’ guilds and the mothering classes were well taken up, and apparently it was often ‘standing room only’ at the travelling lectures.

The made-over Irish cottages came to reflect a constructed (yet primitivised) Irishness. Annie Coombes writes: ‘[o]ver the period 1902-1910, the constitution of a ‘national’ culture was a feature of the bid for political ascendancy by both Tory and

---

141 FE Eaton, The White Demon and How to Fight Him (Maunsel, Dublin, 1909). Mrs Eaton also wrote Ireland and its Industries for Lady Aberdeen.

142 Edith Gordon, The Winds of Time, p162.

143 Slainte 2:13 (January 1910), p35.

144 In Husbandry to Housewifery Joanna Bourke argues that as housekeeping became more skilled Irishwomen earned greater status within the household.
Liberal administrations in Britain. She argues that at colonial exhibitions, cultures with a long history like the Celtic Irish, were appropriated - but through ethnic and racial difference - to make up a diversity of national cultures, which paradoxically were able to strengthen the homogeneous nature of Britishness by producing varied beginnings for it.\footnote{Coombes, Reinventing Africa, p187.} It is clear that this work did not only take place in colonial exhibitions. The cover of the 1911 Slainte calendar, for example, showed a cosy farmhouse kitchen with the whole family happily involved in traditional domestic tasks.\footnote{Peamount Hospital Archive.} This echoed Lady Aberdeen’s belief that Irish people, once given a helping hand and trusted with Home Rule, would be gentle and happy members of the United Kingdom, and no threat to British supremacy.

The WNHA was founded to bring down the tuberculosis death rate, and this apparently succeeded.\footnote{Various reasons have been advanced for this. See Valerie McLeish, “Gender, Health and Medicine: the WNHA and the Anti-tuberculosis Campaign in Ireland 1907-1914” (MA, Essex, 1996).} As for gaining support for British imperialism, this was rarely pushed explicitly. Nevertheless WNHA workers were tireless in their efforts to teach working class and peasant Irish people modern (British) standards of domestic hygiene, child rearing, and middle-class habits. Often they succeeded, but equally often their advice fell on deaf ears.

The campaign pleased many people - perhaps primarily those whose families were helped by the WNHA. There are countless letters of appreciation on file at Haddo House from Irishmen and women of all denominations and political persuasions. These usually emphasise Lady Aberdeen’s benevolence and the writer’s own loyalty to Ireland, the Crown, and/or the Empire.\footnote{The letters are undoubtedly genuine but they are so cloying and sentimental I could.
like the WNHA would always command wide support because the people who benefited from the work came from disparate sections of society.

The WNHA campaign did not draw attention away from the other problems with British rule, as the Dufferin Fund did in India. In fact it highlighted them, especially the problems of poverty and poor housing; the disagreements between the Local Government Board in Dublin and the local councils; and the insensitivity of British officials to Irish religious differences.¹⁴⁹

5. Comparisons and Conclusions

Despite the differences between the health associations and the work in which their supporters were involved in these three sites of Empire, it is possible to pick out connections between them. The first is the way that whiteness, purity and moralising were connected in the imperial mind. A second connection concerns the construction of ‘native others’ in each site of Empire: it was hoped that the health associations and the women involved with them would help these ‘native others’ to improve. Lastly I consider the ways that these discourses created a hierarchical ordering between one imperial site and another, and what the results of this were.

The following quotations, which were written by supporters of each health association, are all concerned with ideas of whiteness and moralising:

...its ultimate aim is to roll away the stones from before the darkened doors; to flood the dim, cobwebbed corners of India's homes with the life-giving light of healing, truth and love.

The Dufferin Fund, India¹⁵⁰

---

¹⁴⁹ For more details on this see McLeish, ‘Gender, Health and Medicine’.

¹⁵⁰ Diver, The Englishwoman in India, p102.
In teaching useful information, in making homes and patients cleaner, whiter and purer, in letting God's clear light stream through dark places, and in sweeping out foul dust, these nurses will do good ...

The VON, Canada\textsuperscript{151}

Our enemies are bad air, bad food, bad drains and dirt. Our weapons are pure air, pure food, pure milk and cleanliness. Hope and courage win the day. Victory is certain if we unite and persevere.

The WNHA, Ireland\textsuperscript{152}

Each writer uses binary oppositions in a hierarchical way to fix meaning so that the native home (and its inhabitants) is portrayed in a bad light. And because contemporary wisdom did not differentiate between the physical and moral aspects of purity and pollution, purifying the domestic space and those within it meant not only cleansing, but middle-class moralising as well.\textsuperscript{153} 'Whitening' included the symbolic idea of scrubbing, cleansing and reinventing black skin as white, a necessary part of the civilising process. This is explicit in the Canadian quote. In the Irish quote racial connotations are implicit in the contrast between pure milk and bad drains, although the black was imagined: the Irish were not racially marked.\textsuperscript{154} Furthermore the Christian imagery of the first two quotes is missing in that from Ireland. Religion there was such an emotive subject that Lady Aberdeen hardly ever mentioned God to the Irish.

These quotes all construct the native home in a negative light to provide a suitable contrast to the expected changes which the female health worker and British

\textsuperscript{151} Gibbon, \textit{Victorian Order}, p25.

\textsuperscript{152} Peamount Hospital Archive: photograph of the health caravan with this legend on the side.

\textsuperscript{153} It was believed that an ill-ventilated house could lead to lax morals as well as physical illness. Equally the air within a house could be fouled by the presence of an unclean or immoral body. Bashford, \textit{Purity and Pollution}, pp2,17.

\textsuperscript{154} Although the English sometimes spoke as if they were. See for example RN Lebow, \textit{White Britain and Black Ireland: the Influence of Stereotypes on Colonial Policy} (Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Philadelphia, 1976).
benevolence would bring. However this consonance does not assume any overriding hegemonic vision on the part of the British in the colonies. Each site of Empire clearly played host to diverse colonial projects orchestrated by different groups of people. The complex dynamics of these projects are hidden by Manichean distinctions such as these.

In chapter seven I argued that the native space was a contested arena in which imperial and colonial identities were made and remade. The women who inhabited these domestic spaces - the 'bad housewife', the 'veiled and helpless woman', the 'vicious dai', and the 'resourceful pioneer' - were a series of imperial constructions, formed or perpetuated through the health discourses of the VON, the WNHA and the DF. British women poised to enter these native spaces depended upon representations of 'native others' such as these, because it was against them that their own identities were constituted. Yet the unstable nature of these constructions required constant redefinition.

To British eyes the 'vicious dai' symbolised all that was backward and undesirable about India conveniently embodied in one person. Her construction through difference highlighted the progress and perfection of western medicine in comparison to the unsanitary and unskilled techniques which she, the dai, was believed to use. The reformers' mission was to stamp out indigenous methods of obstetrics, and so inevitably the dai would be sacrificed to progress.

The 'veiled and helpless woman' contextualised within (implied) unsatisfactory Indian cultural traditions, was a perfect foil to the comparatively independent British woman. She seemed to illustrate the apparent superiority of British gender relations.

---

155 For example see Nicholas Thomas, 'Colonial Conversions'.
156 Burton, *Burdens of History*. 
It is noticeable that she was defined by her sexuality, and her ailments were expected to be connected to her reproductive system, as is clear from Dufferin Fund publicity. Tuberculosis, well known as a zenana disease, was a serious problem, with city death rates probably equalling those of Ireland. The publicity did not mention this.

The ‘bad housewife’ in Ireland was represented as ignorant, dirty, and lazy. (As a point of comparison, in working-class districts of Edinburgh the nurses had quite a different view of the housewives they encountered. They spoke of ‘the ready assistance they receive to keep up the high standard of cleanliness which they require in the sickroom’.) Like the dai the Irish housewife was criticised for clinging to outmoded customs. She was the antithesis of the Irish health worker who saw herself as a moderniser, hard working, possessing high standards of moral and physical purity, and who was often well educated.

From about 1912 a combination of events led to the demise of the ‘bad housewife’ in Ireland. Socialist James Larkin had made people aware of the desperate poverty of the labouring classes. The collapse of a tenement block with seven deaths in 1913 had caused an outcry and focused attention on Dublin Corporation and the eleven members who owned 89 tenement buildings. Lady Aberdeen organised a deputation to Dublin Castle, and in 1914 launched a Civic and Town Planning Exhibition. The WNHA threw a lot of their energies into town planning because

157 Indian figures are unreliable and incomplete. TB was little known in many rural areas. In Chitpur in 1913 the incidence was increasing and the death rate was 268. This compares with 175 in Montreal in 1910, and 255 in Ireland in 1907, (all per 100,000 living per annum). Lankester, Tuberculosis in India, p136; Wherrett, Miracle of the Empty Beds; Aberdeen, Ireland’s Crusade Against Tuberculosis, p21.

158 Report to Her Majesty the Queen from the Trustees of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses (Edinburgh, 1889).

159 For further details see Keane, Ishbel, Lady Aberdeen in Ireland, p200.

160 Sean P Walsh, ‘The Role of the Viceregency in the Development of Planning in Ireland: the Case of the Aberdeens’ (MA, UCD, 1985), discusses this fully. He believes
realisation had dawned that poor housing and poor health went in tandem. Severely impoverished women living in dilapidated cabins or slum tenements were often already doing the very best for their families that they could.

The representations of white Canadian women, especially prairie women, tended to be positive. One reason for this, of course, was to encourage immigration, either from eastern Canada to the west, or from Europe. In contrast to the dai and the bad housewife, the Canadian woman on the prairies (including the European immigrant) was constructed as a resourceful woman who took her future in both hands. To British-Canadian eyes she was, if not ‘one of us’, then capable of becoming so with very little help. In contrast native American women on the reservations, like Irish housewives, were blamed for the high rate of tuberculosis and other diseases because of their poor housekeeping.  

I suggest that the health discourses connected with these three associations aligned Canadian society with Britain, but primitivised Irish and Indian societies. This is surprising since Ireland was a part of the metropolis, although the Irish themselves have shown an affinity with India. In Ireland the health schemes clearly took on the primeval characteristics of a battle between the forces of good and evil, or purity and pollution. Here, as we have seen, military discourse was constantly appropriated to publicise the campaign (as in the quote on page 302). In India although the health scheme was not described in military terms, it was interpreted similarly: as a contest between colonisers and colonised, or between the forces of western progress and

---


162 See for example M Quinn, ‘History for the Hindu,’ The Catholic Bulletin (Dublin, November 1918), pp521-6; and TG Fraser, ‘Ireland and India’, in Jeffery (ed.), ‘An Irish Empire’?
eastern tradition. Speaking about Lady Dufferin’s work, Lord Dufferin juxtaposed ‘the unchanging East’, and ‘the gates of cast-iron tradition’ with ‘sound, well-considered and rational progress’. However, binary constructions like this can create the impression that all tradition was regarded as evil and all progress was thought to be good, which does not reflect the multifaceted character of colonial life. What appears to be a simple polarity hides complex depths of meaning which need to be explored.

The way that Canada appeared in health discourses contrasted sharply with Ireland and India. Canada was not depicted as a primeval battleground, but as a region that had much in common with Britain. The rising hysteria over dais in India and tuberculosis in Ireland was replaced by an air of quiet confidence when the nurses’ mission in Canada was discussed. Like British nurses (and unlike the WNHA and DF), the VON were depicted as ministering angels of mercy. It was the similarities - such as gender roles - between Canada and Britain that were focused on, not the differences.

In Ireland and India the sharp differences with Britain were emphasised. Difference in an imperial/colonial context is always expressed in a hierarchical way. It always indicates inferiority which is positioned with ‘the other’. What was noted time and again in Ireland and India was the shortcomings of the recipients. I am not implying that shortcomings went unnoticed in Britain or Canada, because of course they were remarked on, especially by do-gooders in working-class districts. My point is that the imperial gaze tended to be on the nurse rather than the recipient in Canada and Britain, and tended to be on the recipient rather than the nurse or health worker in Ireland and India.

---

As we have seen, social practices in Ireland and India were thought to have a restrictive influence which hindered medical and social progress. In India dais and cultural traditions like child marriage were blamed for illness and premature death. In Ireland housewives and their traditions were overwhelmingly blamed for the ill health of their families. Edith Gordon reports of ‘the hopelessness of attempting to interfere in the sacred traditions of birth-rites and customs ...’.\(^{164}\)

By contrast in VON publicity Canadian culture was not seen as alien, and not blamed for causing ill health or accidents.\(^{165}\) These were accepted as an unwelcome but inevitable corollary to the high-risk occupations of many men and the isolated nature of prairie settlement. In chapter seven I discussed how Lady Aberdeen stressed the heroism of Canadian pioneers. Even the bad ways of the adventurers were tolerated: Edith Tyrell noted their hard shells and soft insides. She said that a little child could tame ‘these wild, uncouth men, some of them desperadoes who had drunk, gambled and shot their way through life’. Emily Ferguson wrote that ‘there is nothing of the milksop about [Saskatchewan lumbermen] ... Brutality is a sign of strength and health. When people become soft they become a prey’.\(^{166}\) These examples suggest a certain endorsement of the Canadian male that was not evident in Ireland or India.

In Canada as in Britain medical discourse was not about cultural deficiencies, nor structured metaphorically around germ warfare or battles between good and evil, but was grounded in practical health issues. In both Ireland and India there was a preoccupation with culture which altered the terms of the debate. The WNHA and the National Association became arenas of confrontation between ‘good’ British cultural


\(^{165}\) It was believed that the culture of immigrants from the Ukraine and other south-west European states would die out as they embraced Canadian culture.

\(^{166}\) Ferguson, *Janey Canuck*, p119.
practices and ‘bad’ indigenous ones, rather than impartial agents for improving health. Irish and Indian culture was primitivised by representations which implied that indigenous social and medical practices were irrational, backward and should be abandoned.

* * * * *

As I argued in chapter seven, the Indian zenana, the Irish homestead and the Canadian wilderness each contained what was believed to be a prime constituent of national identity. The penetration of these sites by women in sympathy with British aims therefore had a symbolic importance relating to the imperial mission. Each native space entered was a metaphorical step towards more complete colonisation, each inferior representation enabled British women and imperial supporters in these countries to reinvent their own identity through difference.

Settlers in western Canada, whether immigrants from Europe or Canadians from Ontario, were mostly presented in a positive light, while the silences surrounding French Canadians and native Americans indicate just how dominant the Anglo-Saxon ethos was in Canada. In Ireland and in India representations of indigenous women were generally not positive. It was not the colonisers alone who were responsible for negative representations. Irish and Indian men also constructed inferior representations of women in their societies, thus enhancing their own dominant gender position.

In India half a million women were treated through the Dufferin Fund in 1890, either in hospitals, dispensaries or their own homes. In Ireland 700,000 people heard the message of the health caravans during the first year of the campaign. The main benefit of the Yukon nurses was to publicise the work of the VON throughout
Canada. Overall the VON improved life for settlers, encouraged immigration to western areas and contributed positively to the acculturation of recent immigrants. It expanded and in 1908 the nurses made 80,000 visits, rising to over 500,000 in 1922.\textsuperscript{167}

In their different ways these schemes familiarised colonised persons (whether they liked it or not) with British culture, middle class mores, 'progress' and 'civilisation'.

\textsuperscript{167} John and Ishbel Aberdeen, \textit{We Twa} 2, p133.
Chapter 9

Conclusion

This thesis has tracked Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin as they traversed the colonial landscape over forty years between England, Scotland, Ireland, Canada and India. My central aim in following their footprints was to assess the extent of their involvement with imperialism. How far did they promote Britain and the Empire? This led to several questions about the effect of their involvement. Did they inculcate loyalty towards the British Empire in these places? Did they help to promote internal unity? If so, how far was the construction of a distinctive national identity in these colonial sites based on British ideas? And how did Empire affect their own identities?

The work these women did was unpaid, like much women’s work, but I conclude that they played a significant role in furthering the cause of the British Empire, and in transmitting British culture to these different places.

Hariot’s and Ishbel’s family backgrounds, with their particular combination of upper class, white skin, and Anglo-Saxon ethnicity, ensured that they were born into lives of privilege. These factors shaped their existence from childhood onwards. However their upper-class lifestyles were not only enabled by birth, but by the wealth and land the Hamiltons and the Marjoribanks inherited. Much of this was a direct result of colonial expansion, from the appropriation of Irish land in the seventeenth century to the accumulation of wealth from the Calcutta Bar; from Jamaican sugar plantations and the Hudson Bay company in Canada to Coutts Bank, whose coffers grew fat on the profits of Empire. Much of this wealth, of course, depended on the work of native others for little or no reward.
The rituals of upper-class life were a part and parcel of both women’s lives and because they were so rigid they were constraining, especially before marriage. Furthermore the cultural construction of gender meant that neither woman had the freedom of action which her male relatives took for granted. While Lady Dufferin was happy to conform to these class and gender restrictions Lady Aberdeen was not, and we have seen how she pushed out the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for women in her position.

Yet their advantages outweighed their disadvantages, and gave them privileges on the world scene. When they came into contact with native others in the colonies (and the working classes in the UK) it was not difficult for the women to believe that they had reached the pinnacle of civilisation. However their positions required the constant renegotiation of their identities. They were reproduced through daily encounters - both real and imagined - with native others. Lady Aberdeen, for example, reinvented her identity against ‘lesser’ native others from all parts of the British Empire by staging the Victorian Era ball in Toronto in 1897. And the Irish Village she took to Chicago was another way she could strengthen her identity as a British woman. Hariot Dufferin’s response to the threat of Irish Home Rule illustrates how her security depended upon retaining her legal British identity. This could only be done if Ulster remained under Westminster rule. But her social position was tied up with notions of Britishness which could not be taken away. Her response not only illustrates the competing loyalties she held - to Ulster and Ireland as well as to Britain and the Empire - but shows how they assumed various levels of importance in her mind at different times.

We have seen that, like other members of the colonising race, Ishbel Aberdeen and Hariot Dufferin had private insecurities. This was perhaps because underneath all
their outward show they had some appreciation of the extent to which their positions in society were the result of unequal race and class relationships. Despite their advantages their identities could never be secure, because the expectations and traditions of native others and white settlers were constantly evolving. By the 1880s in India the INC and the pan-Indian Muslim Educational Congress nurtured a new sense of national belonging, and western-educated Bengalis wanted a degree of political representation. In Canada the character of the west was changing by the 1890s as non-English-speaking immigrants arrived from Europe and native Americans were driven on to reservations. In Ireland a growing Catholic middle class (and sometimes even sections of the working class) shared in local and national government. All these developments altered the nature of the relationship between coloniser and colonised, and underlined the shifting nature of imperial identities.

I have discussed how representations of the Irish were constantly reworked in different discourses, but always to the advantage of the English. We saw how Lady Dufferin’s representations of the Irish changed for the worse as her fears over Home Rule increased. Lady Aberdeen’s Irish Village at the Chicago Fair represented her view that Ireland would not threaten England’s industrial dominance or thwart England’s position as leader of the Empire. Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin had different views about Home Rule, but they both wanted Ireland to be a proud member of the United Kingdom and the British Empire. Lady Aberdeen thought that Britain must retain cultural hegemony in Ireland. If that happened, and basing her ideas on discussions with many people all over the world, she concluded that Home Rule would satisfy Irish hopes for independence, lead to a cessation of violence, end Irish resentment of Britain, and strengthen the UK as the centre of Empire. Her hopes in the
1890s that the United States would join the British Empire were never realised, but they do indicate the depth of her convictions and pride in Empire.

Lady Dufferin’s representations of Indians showed that she respected high caste Indians, and did not have a good word to say about the hill tribes. She did not comment on the educated Bengali middle classes, although Lord Dufferin feared them and compared their ‘cunning’ to the Irish. Although the woman in the zenana came to represent the kernel of national identity for Hindus, the dominant imperial discourse of the 1880s portrayed her as a pathetic suffering figure. While some women certainly fitted this description there were many who did not. But these representations predominated, especially in connection with the Dufferin Fund, and allowed British women to believe their society was superior.

In Canada the representations that Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen produced of native Americans, French Canadians and the various immigrant communities show that both women had firm ideas about who should be included, and who should not in the new nation. Their discursive and practical work of Empire building contributed towards the acculturation of immigrants and to the unification of Canada as a nation under the British flag. In addition the women’s organisations Lady Aberdeen founded became a focal point around which a sense of national belonging developed. Many of the members were from the middle and upper classes, and of Anglo-Saxon origin. The emerging dominant Canadian identity was based on English culture, with an added belief that civilising the wilderness and the severe northern climate had fortified the Canadian character. However this marginalised or excluded some people. Although almost all Canadians were welcomed into the imagined community for the various roles they could occupy, white Anglo-Saxons were welcomed more than others, and native Americans occupied a peripheral place, but
only after becoming 'civilised'. The souvenir book of the Victorian Era Ball, at which Canadians dressed up to represent people from different countries of the British Empire, indicates the preferred racial and gender hierarchy in other countries of the Empire as well as Canada.

While these women were happy to promote nationalism in Canada they did not do that in Ireland or India where it could stimulate demands for independence. But paradoxically while the inhabitants of these nations were not encouraged to have a modern political identity, they were encouraged to maintain elements of their 'heritage': folk culture such as costume, dances and rituals. At the same time Lady Dufferin and Lady Aberdeen promoted the English way of life and an imperial identity under the Crown rather than a national identity. But as discussed, this was difficult in Ireland.

I used the concept of native spaces as a way to look at and compare the health organisations set up by Lady Aberdeen and Lady Dufferin. The zenana, the wilderness and the Irish homestead were sites that were largely hidden from imperial eyes, yet important for colonisers to know, because they were believed to hold the essence of national identity. These were contested spaces, where national identities were made and remade. Each native space entered by health workers in tune with British ways of thinking was a symbolic colonisation, but also a practical way of transmitting British culture and morals, and British ideas of domestic management.

One effect of the discourses produced by Lady Aberdeen, Lady Dufferin and their supporters in the health associations was to connect native others with pollution and disease, and the colonisers with transforming this into purity and good health. In addition they reveal how Ireland, Canada and India were ordered into a hierarchy in the imperial mind. Traditional cultural practices in both Ireland and India were
believed to stand in the way of progress in health matters. I have argued that representations of these nations primitivised them, in contrast to Canada and England which were more likely to be shown as progressive nations. The health discourse on Ireland had more in common with that on India than with Britain or the white dominion of Canada.

Historians have shown limited interest in women like Hariot Dufferin and Ishbel Aberdeen. There has been a lot of work on nineteenth-century feminists, reformers, middle- and working-class women, but despite recent research there is still more work to be done on upper-class women who went into the Empire in positions of power. There are plenty of questions to be asked. How far, if at all, did they think they shared in an overarching imperialist project? How did the role of Vicereine change over the nineteenth century and through to decolonisation? Did this vary in different sites of Empire? What role, if any, did they play in the decolonisation process? Did their relationships with indigenous ruling groups - white or black - change in this period? It is important to ask questions like these if we are to reassess further the role and influence of aristocratic women in the UK and the colonies. The analytic field of colony and métropole was cross cut with axes of race, class, gender and ethnicity, and at each intersection different dynamics came into play. Investigation of how aristocratic women fitted into these will highlight their place in the wider development of society in Britain and Ireland and point the way to further research.

Ishbel Aberdeen and Hariot Dufferin both had power. This power should not be underestimated, because without it neither woman could have done the work for Empire that she did. Their class and social status gave them influence that women lower down the social scale did not have, and the confidence to know when and how to use it. It is clear that much of their work in the service of Empire was political.
Both women were deeply involved officially and unofficially, innocently and knowingly, in imperialist initiatives. The work they did was important in spreading British customs, British culture and British morals - for better or worse - in the countries they visited.
Appendix

Lady Dufferin's Diary

The Birth and Death of Sidney Temple

3rd July 1867. I was taken ill about four o'clock and sent for Mr Freeman then for Dr Gream and for a nurse - this was the 29th of May. At 8 o'clock a dear little Boy was born - but he never breathed properly and after crying for five hours he died. He was so lovely to look at - a little angel born for heaven - he lived so short a time, and yet he has left so great a blank behind. I saw him the instant he was born when he appeared to me strong and well - once again when they had little hope of his life - when he looked blue and unnatural - and once laid out in his little white coffin, covered with flowers which Ghigo had arranged. It was he who carried him up to my bedside, and let me kiss his little cold cheeks and touch the son who should never know me. They say he would always have been delicate, but for that very reason he seems almost a greater loss for me - Ghigo grieved so for him too. I cannot write about him he was so good to me. We called our baby Sidney Temple and I have a photograph of his darling little face.

---

1 See page 97. PRONI D/1071/J/C2/4/1, Diary 1867.
### Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AA</td>
<td>Aberdeen Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ADC</td>
<td>Aide-de-camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL</td>
<td>British Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DF</td>
<td>Dufferin Fund</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFS</td>
<td>Girls’ Friendly Society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH</td>
<td>Haddo House Archive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICS</td>
<td>Indian Civil Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICW</td>
<td>International Council of Women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IHIA</td>
<td>Irish Home Industries Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IIA</td>
<td>Irish Industries Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCW(C)</td>
<td>National Council of Women (of Canada)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nd</td>
<td>no date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLI</td>
<td>National Library of Ireland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWMP</td>
<td>North West Mounted Police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWP</td>
<td>North West Provinces (India)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRO</td>
<td>Public Record Office, London</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRONI</td>
<td>Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RIC</td>
<td>Royal Irish Constabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UUC</td>
<td>Ulster Unionist Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVF</td>
<td>Ulster Volunteer Force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UWUC</td>
<td>Ulster Women’s Unionist Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VON</td>
<td>Victorian Order of Nurses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WNHA</td>
<td>Women’s National Health Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WUA</td>
<td>Women’s Unionist Association</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Bibliography

Manuscript Collections

British Library: Manuscript Collection, Gladstone Papers.

British Library: Oriental and India Office, Dufferin Papers.

Haddo House, Tarves, Aberdeenshire: Aberdeen Papers.

National Library of Ireland, Dublin: Redmond Papers; Amy Manders Papers.

Peamount Hospital Archives (unsorted and uncatalogued), Newcastle, County Dublin.

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast: Dufferin Papers; Londonderry Papers; Ulster Women’s Unionist Association Papers.


Official Publications


Parliamentary Papers:

----- Accounts and Papers 1912/13, Vol 70.

----- House of Commons Papers: Evictions Which Have Come to the Knowledge of the Constabulary in Each of the Years From 1849-1880 Inclusive (and later figures) , 1881.

Newspapers and Magazines

Aberdeen Journal

Aylesbury Reporter

Belfast Evening Telegraph

Belfast Newsletter

Boston Herald
Chicago Citizen
Chicago Tribune
Dublin Evening Telegraph
Dublin Mail
Halifax Chronicle
Illustrated London News
Irish Freedom
Irish Homestead
Irish Independent
Irish Times
Nelson Miner
North Eastern Daily Gazette
Northern Whig
Onward and Upward
Ottawa Citizen
Ottawa Free Press
Oxford Times
Pictorial Times
Queen
Sala's Journal (Boston)
Sinn Fein
South London Press
Times (London)
Ulsterwoman
United Ireland
Books and Journal Articles Published up to 1960


Aberdeen, Ishbel Maria (ed.), Ireland’s Crusade Against Tuberculosis (3 vols), (Maunsell, Dublin, 1908/9).


----- ‘The Women’s National Health Association’ (25 year survey). Supplement to The Irish Times (25 July 1933).


----- Address at a Public Meeting - Aberdeen Association (Ottawa, 1898).

----- Address Delivered to the Members of the Edinburgh Women’s Liberal Association, 5 December 1890 (Darien, Edinburgh, 1890).

----- Canadian Fund for the Commemoration of the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee (Governor General’s Office, Ottawa, 1897).

Mistresses and Maidservants (Brown, Aberdeen, 1884).

The Irish Literary Revival: A Lecture Delivered at the Request of the Catholic Young Ladies' Literary Association at the Massey Hall, Toronto, May 31st 1895 (Toronto, 1895).


Through Canada with a Kodak (White, Edinburgh, 1893).

What is the Use of the Victorian Order of Nurses for Canada? (Mortimer, Ottawa, 1900).

Why Should we Encourage Irish Industries? (Irish Village Bookstore, Chicago, 1893).

Women's National Health Association of Ireland - Organisation of Local Branches (Dollard, Dublin, nd).

Women's National Health Association of Ireland (Dundalgan, Dundalk, nd).

Aberdeen, John Campbell and Ishbel Maria, More Cracks with We Twa (Methuen, London, 1929).

We Twa (Collins, London, 1925).

Thirty Months' Work in America and the Results (Cornwall, Aberdeen, 1918).

Adney, Tappan, The Klondike Stampede of 1897-1898 (Harper, NY, 1900).

Anon 'Women's Work in India', The Young Woman 1 (1892-3), pp278-80.

Arnold, Matthew, 'Irish Catholicism and British Liberalism', in Mixed Essays (Smith Elder, London, 1903).


Bahadur, 'The Englishwoman in India', The Englishwoman 10:29 (May 1911), pp181-185.


Black, Mrs George [Martha], *My Seventy Years* (Nelson, London, 1938).


de Kiewiet, CW, and Underhill, FH (eds), *The Dufferin-Carnarvon Correspondence* (Champlain Society, Toronto, 1955).

de St Dalmas, AE, *Canada and the Empire* (Briggs, Toronto, 1903).


Drummond, Henry, Natural Law in the Spiritual World (Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1883).


----- A Record of Three Years’ Work of the National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India (Hatchards, London, 1889).


----- Our Viceregal Life in India (2 Vols) (John Murray, London 1889).

----- The National Association for Supplying Female Medical Aid to the Women of India (1886), (pamphlet).

Dufferin and Ava, Frederick, Narrative of a Journey from Oxford to Skibbereen During the Year of the Irish Famine (JH Parker, Oxford, 1847).

----- Speeches in India (John Murray, London, 1890).


Ferguson, Emily, Janey Canuck in the West (Cassell, London, 1910).

Finlay, George, History of the Greek Revolution (Blackwood, Edinburgh/London, 1861).


Ghose, Manomohun, ‘Progress in Bengal During the Last Thirty Years’, *The Indian Magazine and Review* 302 (February 1896), pp60-71.


Hare, Dr Leopold, ‘Some Popular Objections to Sanatoriums Answered’, in Aberdeen, Ishbel Maria (ed.), *Ireland's Crusade Against Tuberculosis 2* (Maunsell, Dublin, 1909).

Heagarty, John, *Four Centuries of Medicine in Canada* (Wright, Bristol, 1928).


Hoggan, Frances Elizabeth, MD, *Medical Women for India* (Arrowsmith, Bristol, 1882), (reprinted from *Contemporary Review*).

Hopkins, JC, *Canada and the Empire: a Study of Imperial Federation* (Robinson, Toronto, 1890).


Kittredge, George, *A Sketch of the Beginning and Working of the Medical Women for India Fund of Bombay* (Education Society, Bombay, 1889).


Mavor, James, *Book of the Victorian Era Ball Given at Toronto on the Twenty-eighth of December MDCCCXCII* (Rowsell and Hutchison, Toronto, 1898).


----- *Women of Canada: Their Life and Work*, for distribution at the Paris International Exhibition, 1900 (The Queen’s Printer, Ottawa, 1900).


----- *The Desire to Please*, (Constable, London, 1943).

*Notes Submitted to the Queen by the Trustees of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institution* (October 1887, no publication details).


Pennell, Alice M (nee Sorabji), ‘Medical Problems in India’, *The Englishwoman* 21 (1914).


Ramabai, [Sarasvati], *The High-caste Hindu Woman* (George Bell, London, 1888).

Report of a Public Meeting Held in the Christian Institute Glasgow, 8 March 1889 (Glasgow, 1889).

Report to Her Majesty the Queen from the Trustees of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses (London, 1889).


----- The Office of Lieutenant Governor (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1957).


----- Canada and the Canadian Question (Macmillan, London, 1891).


St John, Molyneux, The Sea of Mountains: an Account of Lord Dufferin’s Tour through British Columbia (Hurst and Blackett, London, 1877).

Steede, Dr HB, ‘How to Reduce Mortality from Tuberculosis,’ in Aberdeen, Ishbel Maria (ed.), Ireland’s Crusade Against Tuberculosis 2 (Maunsell, Dublin, 1909).

Steele, SB, Forty Years in Canada (Jenkins, London, 1914).


**Books and Journals Published Since 1960**


Appleby, Joyce; Hunt, Lynn; and Jacob, Margaret, *Telling the Truth About History* (Norton, NY/London, 1994).


----- (ed.), *Warm Climates and Western Medicine: the Emergence of Tropical Medicine, 1500-1900*, Wellcome Series in the History of Medicine 35 (Rodopi, Atlanta, 1996).


------ *The Writing of Canadian History: Aspects of English-Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1986).


Blom, Ida; Hagemann, Karen; and Hall, Catherine, Gendered Nations: Nationalism and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century (Berg, Oxford, 2000).


Boutilier, Beverly, ‘ Helpers or Heroines? The National Council of Women, Nursing, and “Woman’s Work” in Late Victorian Canada’, in Dodd, Diane, and Gorham, Deborah (eds), Caring and Curing: Historical Perspectives on Women and Healing in Canada (University of Ottawa Press, Ottawa, 1994).


----- *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (Leicester UP, London/NY, 2000).


----- and Richards, Shaun, *Writing Ireland* (Manchester UP, Manchester, 1988).


----- and Strobel, Margaret (eds), *Western Women and Imperialism: Complicity and Resistance* (Indiana UP, Bloomington, 1992).


Day, Anna, Turn of the Tide: the Story of Peamount (Brophy, Dublin, 1987).

de Brou, David and Moffatt, Aileen, ‘Other’ Voices: Historical Essays on Saskatchewan Women (Canadian Plains Research Centre, Regina, 1995).


Dodd, Diane, and Gorham, Deborah (eds), Caring and Curing: Historical Perspectives on Women and Healing in Canada (University of Ottawa Press, Ottawa, 1994).


----- and Marks, Shula (eds), Contesting Colonial Hegemony: State and Society in Africa and India (British Academic Press, London, 1994).


Findling, John E, Chicago’s Great World’s Fairs (Manchester UP, Manchester, 1994).


Forbes, Geraldine, ‘From Purdah to Politics: The Social Feminism of the All-India Women’s Organisations’, in Papanek, Hanna, and Minault, Gail (eds), Separate Worlds: Studies of Purdah in South Asia (Chanyaka Publications, Delhi, 1982).

----- ‘Managing Midwifery in India’ in Engels, Dagmar, and Marks, Shula (eds), Contesting Colonial Hegemony: State and Society in Africa and India (British Academic Press, London/NY, 1994).


----- ‘We are all Revisionists Now’, *The Irish Review* 1 (1986), pp 1-5.


----- *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History* (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1995).


----- *The Embroidered Tent* (Anansi, Toronto, 1982).


*Gender and History*, 2:1 (Spring 1990), Special Issue on Auto/Biography.


Grimshaw, Patricia; Lake, Marilyn; McGrath, Ann; and Quartly, Marian, Creating a Nation (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1996).

Haggis, Jane, 'White Women and Colonialism: Towards a Non-recuperative History', in Midgley, Clare (ed.), Gender and Imperialism (Manchester UP, Manchester, 1998).

Hall, Catherine (ed.), Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Manchester UP, Manchester, 2000).

------ 'Introduction: Thinking the Postcolonial, Thinking the Empire', in Hall (ed.), Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Manchester UP, Manchester, 2000).


------ White, Male and Middle-class (Polity, Cambridge, 1992).


------ Emigration from North East Scotland, 2: Beyond the Broad Atlantic (Aberdeen UP, 1988).


Hughes, M, Ireland Divided: the Roots of the Modern Irish Problem (University of Wales Press, Cardiff, 1994).

Hurst, Michael, Parnell and Irish Nationalism (RKP, London, 1968).


Jaggi, OP, *Western Medicine in India: Medical Education and Research* (Atma Ram, Delhi, 1979).

----- *Western Medicine in India: Social Impact* (Atma Ram, Delhi, 1980).


----- *The Liberals and Ireland: the Ulster Question in British Politics to 1914* (Harvester, Brighton, 1980).


Jeffery, Keith (ed.), *'An Irish Empire'? Aspects of Ireland and the British Empire* (Manchester UP, Manchester, 1996).


Jones, Greta, 'Captain of all these Men of Death': The History of Tuberculosis in Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Ireland, Wellcome Series in the History of Medicine 62 (Rodopi, Amsterdam/NY, 2001).

Jordan, Alison, 'Opening the Gates of Learning: The Belfast Ladies' Institute, 1867-97', in Holmes, Janice, and Urquhart, Diane, Coming Into the Light (Institute of Irish Studies, Belfast, 1994).


Kasturi, Leela, and Mazumdar, Vina (eds), Women and Indian Nationalism (Vikas, New Delhi, 1994).


Keane, Maureen, Lady Aberdeen in Ireland (Colourpoint, Newtonards, 1999).


Kumar, Raj; Devi, Rameshwari; Purthi, Romila, Women and the Indian Freedom Struggle (Pointer, Jaipur, 1998).


---


---


---

*Ulster Unionism and British National Identity Since 1885* (Pinter, London/NY, 1995).


--- *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939* (OUP, Oxford, 1982).


Madden, Frederick, and Fieldhouse, David (eds), The Dependent Empire and Ireland, 1840-1900: Advance and Retreat in Representative Self-Government (Greenwood, NY, 1991).


Marks, Shula, ‘History, the Nation and Empire: Sniping at the Periphery’, History Workshop Journal 29 (Spring 1990), pp111-9.

----- Divided Sisterhood: Race, Class and Gender in the South African Nursing Profession (St Martin’s Press, NY, 1994).


McClintock, Anne, Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Conquest (Routledge, NY/London, 1995).


McInnis, Edgar, Canada: A Political and Social History (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Toronto, 1982).


Midgley, Clare (ed.), *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester UP, Manchester, 1988).


Nash, Catherine, “‘Embodying the Nation”: the West of Ireland Landscape and Irish Identity’, in O’Connor, Barbara and Cronin, Michael (eds), *Tourism in Ireland* (Cork UP, Cork, 1993).


Parker, Andrew; Russo, Mary; Sommer, Doris; and Yaeger, Patricia (eds), *Nationalisms and Sexualities* (Routledge, London, 1992).


Procida, Mary, Married to the Empire: Gender, Politics and Imperialism in India, 1883-1947 (Manchester UP, Manchester/NY, 2002).


----- Votes for Women in Britain (Historical Association, London, 1994).


Rehwinkel, Alfred M, Dr Bessie: as Told by Herself to her Husband (Concordia, St Louis, 1963).


----- *All the World's a Fair* (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1984).


‘Women in Difference: Mahasweta Devi’s “Douloti the Bountiful”’ in Parker, Andrew; Russo, Mary; Sommer, Doris; and Yaeger, Patricia (eds), Nationalisms and Sexualities (Routledge, London, 1992).


Stasiulis, Daiva and Yuval-Davis, Nira (eds), Unsettling Settler Societies (Sage, London, 1995).


Stewart, Walter, True Blue (Collins, Toronto, 1985).


Street, Margaret, Watch-fires on the Mountains: the Life and Writings of Ethel Johns (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1973).


Thomas, Nicholas, ‘Colonial Conversions: Difference, Hierarchy, and History in Early Twentieth-century Evangelical Propaganda’, in Hall, Catherine (ed.), *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester UP, Manchester, 2000).


Trachtenberg, Alan, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (Hill and Wang, NY, 1982).

Trigger, Bruce C, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada’s ‘Heroic Age’ Reconsidered* (Manchester UP, Manchester, 1985).


Urquhart, Diane, “‘The Female of the Species is More Deadlier than the Male’? The Ulster Women's Unionist Council 1911-1940”, in Holmes, Janice and Urquhart, Diane, *Coming Into the Light* (Institute of Irish Studies, Belfast, 1994).

Valverde, Mariana, "When the Mother of the Race is Free": Race, Reproduction and Sexuality in First-Wave Feminism," Iacovetta, Franca, and Valverde, Mariana (eds), *Gender Conflicts* (University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1992).


Vibert, Elizabeth, 'Real Men Hunt Buffalo: Masculinity, Race and Class in British Fur Traders' Narratives', in Hall, Catherine (ed.), *Cultures of Empire: Colonizers in Britain and the Empire in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Manchester UP, Manchester, 2000).


Walker, Graham, 'Irish Nationalism and the Uses of History', *Past and Present* 126 (February 1990), pp203-14.


**Unpublished Theses**

Harrison, AT, ‘The First Marquess of Dufferin and Ava: Whig, Ulster Landlord and Imperial Statesman’ (PhD, New University of Ulster, 1983).


Riedi, Elizabeth L, ‘Imperialist Women in Edwardian Britain: The Victoria League 1899-1914’ (PhD, St Andrews, 1997).

Smith, Victoria, ‘Constructing Victoria: The Representation of Queen Victoria in England, India and Canada 1897-1914’ (PhD, Rutgers, 1997).
