

Four Nations Approaches to Modern 'British History'

A (Dis)United Kingdom?

Edited by

Naomi Lloyd-Jones

King's College London, UK

Margaret M. Scull

King's College London, UK

PART 1

METHODOLOGY

A New Plea for an Old Subject? Four Nations History for the Modern Period*

Naomi Lloyd-Jones and Margaret Scull

J.G.A. Pocock's famed clarion call for the recovery of the concept of 'British history' and the inauguration of a 'new subject' is now more than forty years old. Pocock lamented a lack of 'histories of Britain' and the dominance of what grievously amounted to 'histories of England', in which the Welsh, Scottish and Irish appeared 'when, and only when, their doings assume[d] power to disturb the tenor of English politics.' This unevenness was compounded by the parallel writing of 'histories of Wales, Scotland [and] Ireland' as 'separate enterprises' within 'separate historiographical traditions', encountered by 'limited and fragmented publics'.ⁱ He would later describe Anglocentric and Anglophobic historiographies as two sides of the same coin which, if fused, would afford but a synthetic imitation of a true British history.ⁱⁱ For Pocock, within its more immediate cartographical confines, 'British history' denoted 'the historiography of no single nation but of a problematic and uncompleted experiment in the creation and interaction of several nations.'ⁱⁱⁱ Pocock's challenge was most comprehensively taken up in the 1990s by early modernists who emphasised the need to place given points in history into their 'British' context, to tease out 'forgotten' dimensions and establish more complete narratives. The edited collections generated by a flurry of symposia led to the emergence of what David Cannadine has called a 'school of self-consciously "British" historians'.^{iv} The Pocockian inheritance was conspicuous in these historians' vocabulary: where Pocock's suggested prototype had been for a 'pluralist approach',^v proponents of the 'New British History' strove to achieve 'a multiperspectival history' and 'an *holistic* or *organic* account' of events in the isles.^{vi} This was, at last, the "'Britishing" of British history', as Keith Robbins deftly described it.^{vii}

The aim of this collection is not to reinvent the wheel that Pocock crafted and the New British historians spun. The ‘British’ ‘turn’ has already taken place. Crucially, it problematised a field of enquiry. It confronted our taxonomical presuppositions and encouraged us to think critically about the criteria with which we establish the geographical breadth and margins of our studies, prompting both the decentring of historical accounts and the refashioning of a ‘British’ metanarrative. ‘British history’ was to an extent a subject interposed between the discrete histories of England, Ireland, Scotland and (to a far lesser degree) Wales, designed primarily to interrogate the dynamics of their coming together. It was at the same time an endeavour to establish an overarching frame of reference with which to describe a shared existence. The New British History replaced neither the practises of ‘Scottish’, ‘Welsh’ and ‘Irish’ histories nor Anglocentric readings of critical episodes and phenomena in which the non-English parts of the United Kingdom are unhelpfully and often inaccurately partitioned into a ‘Celtic fringe’.^{viii} It has indeed been accused of discounting their dissimilarities and of sustaining focus on a suspiciously ‘English’-looking core. It took nearly twenty years for Pocock’s historiographical and semantic experiment to be embraced with any urgency or consistency, and a further two decades for a collection such as this, with an explicit emphasis on the modern period, to emerge. The stop-start nature of this field of historical enquiry can in part be attributed to fatigue: by the early twenty-first century, the debate over the New British History and its nomenclatures had in one sense come full circle, culminating as it had begun, in a dispute over how *not* to write history.

Does this collection therefore represent a new plea for an old subject? In a sense, yes: fundamentally, its intention is not to totalise the histories of these islands, but to explore how polycentric narratives can be achieved. However, it also embodies a desire for a new ‘new’ subject: a practicable, sustainable ‘four nations history’ for the modern period. The disjuncture between modern ‘British’ and ‘national’ narratives is alive and well, with too few

bodies of work concerned with both their multifaceted interplays and distinctive experiences. With the exception of an underutilised collection edited by Sean Connolly,^{ix} the application of Pocock's entreaty has been directed principally at understanding the mechanics of early modern state construction. If it is to be successful, 'British' history must be occupied by more than the making of Britain. Nor should four nations history by extension concentrate on how, once made, the state was maintained and administered. This collection is less a study of integration, and more one of interactions, across and within national boundaries. It does not discount the importance of state formation but rather proposes fresh angles from which this process can be considered. The shift in periodisation makes new themes available, necessitates the asking of different questions, and presents distinct problems for the conceptualisation and analysis of that period's history. This collection encompasses the cultural, social, economic, intellectual and (low) political history of the United Kingdom in the period between the late eighteenth and early twentieth centuries. Among other aims, we aspire to rebalance what Colin Kidd has called the 'lopsidedness' of the New British History,^x in which Wales occupied but a tangential position. That said, we do not seek to impose a symmetry upon the United Kingdom. Although it has its shortcomings, by its very terminology 'four nations' is less 'wholeistic'^{xi} and perceptibly more pluralistic than 'British history'.

If we are to construct genuinely polycentric narratives there is not, and cannot be, a one-size-fits-all model. It is for this reason that we encounter a semantic minefield when attempting to define our subject. It is ironic that the absence of a categorical label – and indeed category of study – is indicative of precisely why we need multidimensional histories. The Union project, as Robert Colls has put it, resulted in 'a set of British peoples with a sense of their own nationality but never quite sure of how to talk about themselves as a collective of nations,'^{xii} an awkwardness that somehow feels familiarly 'British'. As editors, we use the

umbrella term ‘four nations’ – popularised by Hugh Kearney – as a heuristic device, in recognition of the separate national histories and in acknowledgement of the complications arising from the fact of their forming a larger polity, represented in and governed by a united parliament, for the majority of the period covered by this collection. If Pocock envisaged ‘British history’ as archipelagic and diasporic in scope,^{xiii} ‘four nations’ more firmly situates the parameters of study within the United Kingdom.

We view ‘four nations history’ as a methodology – a perspective with which our contributors agree to varying extents. From Kearney’s point of view, ‘The label “Four Nations” history is a reminder that the United Kingdom is a union of peoples’.^{xiv} To this we may add: it is a prompt that we should recognise heterogeneities within the composite state, and that, while its history is more than the sum of its parts, they should be considered in conjunction. The term’s (un)satisfactory tidiness invites us to question how we ought to conceptualise the relationships between the nations and their peoples, which were in turns linear, binary, parallel. This is not to suggest that the study of one, two, or even three nations affords but an abridged history; it is instead an attempt to offer inclusive narratives of coexisting nationalities and ethnicities. Their histories shaped and informed one another’s – the extent to which they shared a ‘British’ history is interrogated, rather than assumed, throughout the pages of this collection. A ‘four nations’ history can be comparative, employed to study points of convergence, interaction and conflict, but should also be capable of acknowledging that developments in the one were not always present in the other(s), and of asking why. In Raphael Samuel’s words, such history ‘widens the scope of scholarly enquiry’, ‘puts in question some of our more cocksure generalisations’ and ‘encourages us to think more geographically’.^{xv}

Pocock used the term 'British history' to 'denote the plural history of a group of cultures situated along an Anglo-Celtic frontier and marked by an increasing English political and cultural domination', while emphasising that the 'fact of a hegemony does not alter the fact of a plurality.'^{xvi} If English history was the 'old subject', the new was sensibly presumed to consist of and be familiar with (but not to synthesise), 'three modes of historical consciousness' – English, Scottish and Irish.^{xvii} And yet, in acknowledging that such history was 'remarkably difficult to write in other than English terms',^{xviii} Pocock's examples of how a 'British history' might be realised certainly revolved around how the English polity infiltrated neighbouring societies and how the political and socio-cultural entities within its orbit responded to successive attempts at integration. It is perhaps unsurprising, therefore, that the New British History comprised two main thrusts: comparative and supra-narrative. For Joanna Innes, the benefits of comparison were threefold: it presented the opportunity to highlight 'broader patterns of similarity and difference in the governance societies of the four nations'; it could enhance 'our knowledge of the form and character of intellectual and cultural exchange'; and finally, it provided us 'with a richer context in which to assess and interpret the choices made in each.'^{xix} Moreover, as Rees Davies surmised, 'developments which are taken for granted in one country might appear much more surprising – and therefore demanding of an explanation – if we are forced to contrast them with what happened (or did not happen) elsewhere'.^{xx} This should in turn facilitate something of a 'supra-national perspective',^{xxi} wherein we are confronted almost with a fifth nation – 'Britain'. If successful, this history would serve as a superstructure for understanding how these collectivities operated as a whole; the process of contextualisation is inadequate if conceived of as centralistic with the introduction of peripheral 'add-ons'^{xxii} when convenient.

Perhaps the most powerful critique of the New British History is the allegation that it amounted to little more than an Anglocentric narrative redux. It could be suggested that the

field was ultimately tracing the origins of institutions, structures and concepts that would come to be understood as 'English', such as the state, parliament and constitution. Keith M. Brown, for instance, has warned that this 'risks taking us back to a more sophisticated version of old-fashioned anglocentric constitutional history.'^{xxiii} Nicholas Canny one of its foremost critics, has remarked that 'much of what appears as "new British history" is nothing but "old English history" in "Three-Kingdoms" clothing.'^{xxiv} Ironically, with state formation its 'unifying problematic',^{xxv} the New British History could thereby stand accused of perpetuating the very practice Pocock denounced. If Ian McBride's chapter in this collection is correct and Pocock's project comprised 'a more subversive agenda' that entailed 'provincialising England', then the New British History could be said to have done the opposite: recentralising England and further peripheralising her neighbours.

That said, the roots of this historiographical axis cannot be said to be uniquely English. As Kidd has observed, the '*de facto* continuity of the historic English parliament validated the ethnocentric notion that Britain's political heritage resided in the history of English institutions.'^{xxvi} However, in tracing the strange death of Scotland's whig historical ideology, Kidd has illustrated how intellectual and literary elites reconciled themselves to Union and its attendant identity by essentially de-historicising Scotland's own past.^{xxvii} This did not involve the wholesale eradication of a 'Scottish national consciousness' but rather the creation of 'a national historical consensus' along what Kidd elegantly describes as 'Anglo-British contours'.^{xxviii} In turn, it can be argued that the nineteenth-century phenomenon of 'Unionist-nationalism' involved less a repositioning of this consciousness along Scoto-British lines and more the logical maturation of 'the Anglo-British suggestion that post-1707 Scots participated in the freedoms won in the long course of English history.'^{xxix} Unionist-nationalism was thus a means of articulating Scotland's contribution to a partnership-based relationship, without recourse to the resistance-based, defensive nationalism practised by the

Irish.^{xxx} Claydon has claimed that 'the persistent failure of the English to think in "British" terms' could serve to demonstrate that "'British history" is non-existent'.^{xxxi} If the English were indeed myopic in this respect, the Scottish dimension is nonetheless evidence that 'British' history, however Anglo-oriented, need not begin with or be thought up by the English in isolation.

A related, but parallel, concern is that such approaches, in imposing a metahistory upon the isles, presuppose 'a denial of those separate histories and separate identities of England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales'.^{xxxii} According to Linda Colley, if 'pushed too hard or too exclusively', the methodology threatens to conceal 'the fact that the four parts of the United Kingdom have been connected in markedly different ways and with sharply varying degrees of success'.^{xxxiii} Canny in particular has warned against assuming a comparability that simply did not exist and of 'emphasis[ing] similarity at the expense of difference'.^{xxxiv} The implication here is that the teleological tendency of the New British History – however inadvertent – shores up rather than dismantles the edifice of homogeneity. The histories and historiographies of the four should not be subsumed under the monolith of the one whole. Glenn Burgess, who edited what was by far the most searching and self-critical of the New British collections, suggested how the discipline might correct itself. He asserted that if British history is to offer more than just explanations for 'the inexorable growth of English dominance', the individual histories of the four nations must 'constitute the necessary basis for constructing a British history that pays attention to difference and mutuality as much as to English preponderance'.^{xxxv} There is a compelling case to be made for viewing this kind of history as most fruitful when conducted as a bottom-up rather than a top-down enterprise. When understood in this vein, it should be perceived less as a palimpsest – it is not advantageous to superimpose 'British' history atop layers of English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh histories – and more as the fusing together of multiform narratives.

The consequences of England's historical political and territorial dominance are however evident in the scant treatment afforded to Wales by the New British school. Wales has been the least well incorporated into the field, essentially because it was the best incorporated into England. As Neil Evans has pointed out, the war of the three kingdoms narrative 'left little room for Wales'.^{xxxvi} Indeed, in editing *Three Nations - A Common History*, Ronald Asch justified Wales' omission on the grounds that 'Wales had no constitutional status of her own after the 1536 Act of Union'.^{xxxvii} If Ireland and Scotland are more readily comparable examples of the limits of integration, neither constitutional continuity nor the apparent quietude of Welsh patriotism can paper over the singularities of the Welsh experience, least of all for the period covered by this collection. Pocock rather indelicately admonished 'the authors of histories of Scotland and Ireland' for writing 'as if they were addressing themselves to different reading publics'.^{xxxviii} For him, it seems, recognition of plurality could not be permitted to descend into parochialism; these histories must be written and read together, not independently.

Yet if 'British' history precludes discussion of Wales on the proviso that it was constitutionally indistinguishable from England, it falls at the first hurdle. To invert Pocock, it appears that, in the case of Wales, the fact of a hegemony has to an extent denoted a homogeneity. We must turn to historians of Wales, writing for a Welsh audience, to fill in the gaps. For instance, if Colley is correct and 'it was their common investment in Protestantism that first allowed the English, the Welsh and the Scots to become fused together',^{xxxix} it was their antithetical brands of Protestantism that, particularly from the mid-nineteenth century, enabled expressions of national distinctiveness. Where Colley's 'Britons' regarded Catholics as the principal 'other', historians of Wales have illustrated that Welsh nonconformist identity became increasingly exclusionist, juxtaposed against an 'alien' Anglican aristocracy.^{xl} How far we view the use of the Welsh language as a diacritical feature in the

history of 'British' movements is also a subject ripe for exploration through four nations frameworks. Here, Martin Wright's chapter traces the formation of a 'Welsh-medium socialist discourse' by activists for whom, 'in a very real sense, their medium was their message'. It also raises questions as to the mapping of Welsh culture and as to the competing national (more so than regional) visions presented by north and south Walians.

On the other hand, we must acknowledge Robbins' very real concern that 'history's "English dimension" ... is sometimes marginalised.'^{xli} Here, it would seem, there is a fine line between Anglocentric history and the explicit study of England. The slipperiness of English national identity conceivably reinforces this trend – if English history is not British history, then what is it? Determining how far we can disentangle the 'national' contributions to 'Britishness' perhaps affords a window into what was English about being British. For example, Paul Ward's chapter examines the transmission of 'British' identity through the Beefeaters, located in and deeply connected with the imperial capital. He shows that while their 'origins were associated with English history' – thus affording the imposition of 'an English historical narrative on the rest of the United Kingdom' – they were in fact 'ciphers for the United Kingdom in the nineteenth century'. We may then ask whether England had any icons or traditions, 'invented' or otherwise, that were uniquely its own. Likewise, what was 'English' about the experiences of people in England?

In reasserting the 'ultimate autonomy of English history when it comes to explaining events in England', Tim Harris has argued that 'we need to recognise that even when political actors in England appear to have been reacting to developments in Scotland and Ireland, they reacted in ways that were structured by the context of their own historical experience and the distinctive character of English political culture'.^{xlii} And yet the same rationale must assuredly be extended to *dramatis personae* in Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and to their respective socio-economic circumstances. Indeed, it has traditionally been easier to pinpoint the

character of Irish, Scottish and Welsh political culture than it has the English.^{xliii} The need for what Harris has dubbed ‘internalist explanation[s]’^{xliv} is not exclusive to the history of England. For instance, Patrick Walsh investigates the extent to which the institutions of the fiscal-military state, transposed from an English model, took on characteristics in Ireland and Scotland coloured by their underlying economic, administrative and military infrastructures. On the other hand, Oliver Betts’ chapter highlights the juxtaposition between an increasingly ‘English’, ‘administrative’ understanding of poverty and the actuality of how poverty was experienced at a local level. Thus, both the ‘national’ and the ‘British’ contexts must be established.

Even where the full aspect of the ‘British’ dimension was not always present, the politics and cultures of the four nations did not develop or operate in a vacuum; events and ideas reverberated out from multiple centres and multiple peripheries. For instance, James Stafford’s chapter shows that English advocates of Union with Ireland were happy to borrow from the political economy of the Scottish Enlightenment to suit their ends. Melanie Bassett considers how working-class migrants, in seeking to legitimise their presence and ingratiate themselves in a corner of southern England, sought out those with whom they had a geographically-specific kinship. She demonstrates, in particular, the portability of their local, regional and national identities. This is a clear example of what Ward’s chapter terms ‘the fluidities of national cultural boundaries in the British Isles’. Four nations history thereby affords a nuanced framework with which to reveal multi-layered patterns of internal and intra-national hybridity.

--

The terminology used in this collection is intended neither to atomise nor to totalise the history of the United Kingdom. Apportioning the United Kingdom into suitable units for

historical enquiry has long been a task fraught with semantic complications; this collection does not pretend to tender a definitive solution to this difficulty. What it does offer, however, are analytical tools for interrogating the methodological perspectives from which we enter upon our chosen subject. A newish ‘new’ subject, ‘four nations history’ is not an adjunct to ‘British history’, nor is it intended to serve as its replacement. It instead affords a different kind of territorial, and thus narrative, stratification: ‘four nations’ is in one very crucial respect a statement of intent as to the structure of the enquiry.

That ‘four nations history’ emerged as a descriptive and a problematic is emblematic of perceived shortcomings in the parameters of ‘British’ history. If Britain technically refers to England, Scotland and Wales, as Kearney has pointed out, the history of the ‘larger island’ was not ‘self-contained.’^{xlv} And yet, the juxtaposition of ‘British history’ and ‘Irish history’ implies both a homogeneity to the experience of the former and its separateness from the latter. As Pocock has noted, “‘Irish history’ is not ‘British history’, for the very good reason that it is very largely the history of a largely successful resistance to being included in it; yet it is part of ‘British history’, for exactly the same reason.”^{xlvi} The two are entwined, with the points at which they interweave and detach dependent upon the nature of our inquiry, where we locate our ‘core’ and our ‘periphery’, and the ‘cause’ and ‘effect’ of our subject. Furthermore, as McBride elaborates, the undesirability of a Pocockian framework to certain Irish historians, who reject a reading which places Ireland too firmly in Britain’s historical trajectory, poses the question as to whether there are ‘*any* logical divisions of mankind’.^{xlvii} Ultimately, like the United Kingdom itself, ‘four nations’ is a construct, the label in many respects a convenience. No one talks of practising ‘United Kingdom history’ or ‘United Kingdomish history’.

As editors, we use the term ‘four nations history’ in full knowledge that it is not uncontroversial. Particularly when engaged as a ‘disaggregating’^{xlviii} technique, it raises

questions as to the divisibility of the United Kingdom, and as to the (in)appropriate lines of division. As Paul O’Leary explains in his chapter, the United Kingdom is, and has been, a state of multiple unions and multiple kingdoms. Its composition has shifted: the centralisation required at its inception in 1801, the partition of Ireland in 1922, the instability of successive Stormont administrations, and the asymmetry of late twentieth- and early twenty-first century Scottish and Welsh devolution settlements, have all resulted in imbalances of power. These transformations have implications for how one might arrive at a four nations approach. In 1989, Robbins observed that ‘the history of the whole of Britain is so difficult to write precisely because there is no ideal vantage point from which to survey it’.^{xlix} Indeed, our preferred observation deck arguably depends upon the type of history we intend to write and on what we hope to discover; for instance, are we searching for interactions or dissonance – and between or among whom? – or looking down upon a superstructure? The preoccupations of English historians are neither analogous to nor interchangeable with those of Irish, Scottish or Welsh historians (and vice versa) – their core and peripheral visions are undoubtedly shaped by where they write their history from.

A quarter of a century later, the ‘paradox’ identified by Robbins - that ‘the “centre” of Britain is located in the South of England’¹ – has been supplanted by the normality of multiple, alternative and often rival centres. This is evidenced not only in the establishment and enhancement of devolved administrations, but in the backlash against the perceived ineptitude of an out-of-touch Westminster elite that contributed to the June 2016 decision to leave the European Union. This surely throws into relief Brown’s objections to a ‘core-periphery’ model - that there existed more than one core, each with ‘very different peripheries’, ‘sliding in and out of one another’s vision depending on circumstances.’^{li} Ian B. Stewart’s chapter, on the dynamics of ‘Celticism’ in the long nineteenth century, contends that the notion of a ‘Celtic fringe’ is unsatisfactory and demonstrates that ‘Celts’ competed as

much among one another as against the ‘Saxon’ English. If we are to move away from anachronistic dichotomies we must not only rethink our own taxonomy but be aware of its etymology and past usages.

In dealing with boundaries of nationhood, we must ask what defines a nation or a national grouping. What are our categories for exploring and explaining space and place? Identities, ethnicities, cultures, relationships and ideas overlap, transcend, supersede and undermine borders. Nations are more than their governing bodies (or lack thereof); acts of parliament are amended and repealed. The three kingdoms united in 1801 were arguably not coterminous with the nations contained therein. ‘Three kingdoms history’ must of necessity operate within different constraints – and chronologies – than four nations history. In its historical and historiographical senses, ‘four nations’ implies, and is usually taken to mean, England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales. In this respect, it is at least more satisfactory than ‘British’ history, which has more universalising connotations. However, what room does this nomenclature leave for pre-1922 Ulster and modern Northern Ireland,^{lii} or for the claims of, say, Cornwall,^{liii} to nationhood? Although beyond the scope of this collection, more must be done to address where Northern Ireland fits into these complex and often territorialised understandings of national narratives. Should Northern Ireland be conceived of as a fifth nation? If so, from what date? Can a history come under the ‘four nations’ banner if it does not deal with each of the four or if each does not receive proportional treatment (and how ought we determine these proportions)? By this logic, there are contributions to this collection for which the moniker ‘four nations’ may not be strictly accurate. Patrick Walsh acknowledges a deficiency of data concerning the impact on and involvement of Wales in the fiscal-military state, and James Stafford notes the virtual absence of Wales from the late eighteenth-century debate on union with Ireland. They come under the aegis of this collection

because one of its core aims is to test the plasticity of four nations history as a conceptual framework.

--

With the ‘New British History’ no longer new, this collection admittedly prompts the question, why now? The conference from which these essays are drawn was announced prior to the Scottish independence referendum of September 2014 and long before the Conservative Party promised to hold a vote on the United Kingdom’s membership of the European Union. It was borne out of frustration at what we saw as stagnancy in the debate over how we research and write the history of these islands and out of a desire to bring together historians of England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. However, the collection has since developed against a backdrop of heightened intra-United Kingdom tensions, radically altered patterns of socio-political allegiance and a reorientation of the country’s international position. In the febrile atmosphere of 2017, the need for pluralistic histories seems more pressing than ever. It also reinforces the advantages of ‘four nations’ over ‘British’ history as a descriptive.

The historiographical interpretations of the New British History were unmistakably a product of its historical moment, the consequences of which Paul O’Leary teases out in greater detail in Chapter 3. The Victorian self-assuredness that had sustained whiggish visions of English progress and inevitability had dissipated in a post-war era defined by the loss of an empire, the decline of a once highly-prized world standing, and the arrival of migrants from former colonies and Europe. In 1995, Cannadine could juxtapose an ‘unprecedented break-up of nation-states’ against ‘the seemingly inexorable shift of power to the Strasbourg Parliament and the Brussels bureaucrats’.^{liv} For Pocock, a New Zealander disquieted by the impact upon colonial ‘neo-Britons’ of what he identified as the

‘Europeanization of Great Britain’, the ‘double defeat’ represented by the fading of imperial power and the ‘perceived failure of the social democratic [experiment] Britain attempted in and after 1945’, was key to understanding why the United Kingdom had from the 1960s decided ‘to become European’.^{lv} This realignment, in turn, was crucial to problematising *where* British history should be positioned, geopolitically.

At a pre-election rally in 1992 (the same year as Pocock’s article on Europeanisation was published), John Major, speaking ‘as a Briton’, denounced Scottish nationalism as a threat to the British constitution. He counselled against ‘The exchange of Great Britain for a little Scotland and a lesser union’ and maintained that were a Scottish parliament established, ‘We could be no longer a United, but a Disunited, Kingdom’. Major concurrently branded the ‘move towards a federal Europe, towards a United States of Europe’ as a menace. Major’s Britain, it seemed, would only be Europeanised in so far as it was possible to ‘build a Europe of nation states’.^{lvi} The message was unambiguous: sovereignty would neither be devolved from Westminster nor ceded to Brussels. At the same time, the 1993 Downing Street Declaration placed the search for a peaceful solution to the situation in Northern Ireland front and centre of the political agendas of both the United Kingdom and Ireland. It was the Troubles and the resurgence of ballot box nationalism in Scotland and Wales that, according to Cannadine, ‘helped to make us more aware of the “British” problem’.^{lvii}

Writing in 2017, it is abundantly clear that the United Kingdom continues to possess both a ‘British’ problem and a European problem. The United Kingdom may include four nations but in this it is becoming ever more exclusivist; we see the othering of Scottish nationalists, and of European migrants, bureaucrats and institutions. We are conceivably witnessing the reversal of the trend detected by Pocock, although the de-Europeanisation of the United Kingdom as a polity appears increasingly incompatible with Scotland’s attachment to and investment in its Europeanness, above and beyond its Britishness. Both the

Scottish and European Union referendums have given politicians recourse to a four nations rhetoric – the main variation being that in contemporary political parlance Northern Ireland has replaced Ireland as one of the four. In the immediate aftermath of the Scottish vote in September 2014, David Cameron simultaneously christened himself ‘Prime Minister of four nations in one United Kingdom’ and vowed to transfer additional powers to the devolved administrations as a means for securing ‘a united future’.^{lviii} When in January 2017, Cameron’s replacement, Theresa May, came to set out her Brexit objectives, she pledged her government to ‘put the preservation of our precious Union at the heart of everything we do.’ Her vision for an ostensibly archipelagic ‘Global Britain’ rested on the hypothesis that ‘A stronger Britain demands that we ... strengthen the precious union between the four nations of the United Kingdom.’^{lix} There are obvious similarities in these speeches – they recognise a diversity of opinion and attempt to portray the United Kingdom as both drawing strength from and greater than these differences, the seeming contradictions reflecting the complexities of numerous Union settlements and resettlements.

This discourse is of especial value in portraying the Conservatives as the ‘Party of Union’ at moments of profound national crisis. If the Conservative electoral heartland is English, the party’s identity has nevertheless been bound up with the preservation of the United Kingdom’s unions – first the Irish and later the Scottish. In 1978, against the backdrop of the devolutionary Scotland Bill, Margaret Thatcher told the Scottish Conservatives that ‘The four nations of these islands have long and glorious histories – but it was only when they came to form one United Kingdom that our full splendour came to fruition.’ The punchline followed: ‘None of this involved any sacrifice of distinctive national traditions. It was a Union, but absolutely without uniformity – a unity of the individual genius of the separate nations, into an even greater whole.’^{lx} This theme is precisely that identified in Colley’s seminal thesis: that the ‘the invention of a British national identity after 1700 did not

obliterate ... other, older loyalties', with 'Britishness' instead 'superimposed over an array of internal differences'.^{lxi}

A further consequence of the 2014 Scottish referendum has been the re-opening of the 'English question', with Cameron declaring that England had long been 'missing' from the 'national discussion'.^{lxii} This is an intriguing counterfoil to the accusations of earlier nationalists that England, through an in-built Commons majority, was capable of overriding the voices of the other nations. Placing England at the centre, portraying it as acted upon, the 'English problem' involves in one respect a recasting of the traditional core-periphery dichotomy, with England subject to an inverse form of 'internal colonialism'.^{lxiii} The late Tam Dalyell's now well-rehearsed 'West Lothian question', as to how long English constituencies and MPs would tolerate 'members from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland exercising an important ... effect on English politics while they themselves have no say in the same matters in Scotland, Wales and Ireland',^{lxiv} is the existential inheritance of successive attempts to solve the late nineteenth and early twentieth century 'Irish question'. When William Gladstone proposed the creation of an Irish Home Rule parliament in 1886, it was regarded by some as 'intolerable to England and Scotland to have Irish members in Westminster using their influence in directing English and Scotch legislation'.^{lxv} The roots of the modern Scottish National Party can likewise be traced to 1886 and the establishment of a Scottish Home Rule Association, which campaigned 'to have Scottish business transacted in Scotland by a Scottish Parliament and a Scottish Executive'.^{lxvi} If the lack of appetite for an English parliament can in part be attributed to the direction of travel of centralisation, it is also a reminder that in England, as Colls has put it, 'the state came first, and the rest, whatever we call them – "nation", "people", "land", "country", "territory", "identity" – came second'.^{lxvii} The English Votes for English Laws process introduced from 2015 maintains England's place at the heart of the constitution, but distinguishing the 'English' polity in this

manner has surely only been made possible by the neighbouring territorial and administrative distinctions afforded by Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish devolution.

The Brexistential crisis sparked by the referendum on membership of the European Union likewise forces us to view the United Kingdom as divisible and, feasibly, dividable. The ‘Leave’ votes in England and Wales (53.2 and 51.7 per cent, respectively) broadly corresponded with the UK average of 51.9 per cent, while in Northern Ireland 55.7 per cent and in Scotland a more resounding 62 per cent voted ‘Remain’. Scotland’s First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, has warned that Scotland faces ‘being dragged out’ of the European Union against its will. Questions as to who speaks for Scotland and as to whether it should be treated individually or as part of a larger whole have, at the time of writing, given rise to calls for a second independence referendum. Sturgeon has made clear her desired timetable for a fresh vote^{lxviii}, and asserted that the UK Government's handling of the situation has exposed ‘claims about Scotland being an equal partner’ – that Unionist-nationalist chestnut – as ‘nothing more than empty rhetoric’. She has alleged that ‘the very foundations of the devolution settlement that are supposed to protect our interests ... are being shown to be worthless.’^{lxix} If the January 2017 Supreme Court ruling on the triggering of Brexit negotiations situates sovereignty in parliament and not the executive, then its rejection of the argument that the devolved assemblies should have a ‘veto’ reinforces the idea that that sovereignty rests definitively in Westminster. The ‘Anglo-British’ configuration of ‘Britishness’ is, according to Kidd, ‘dependent on a historical allegiance to England’s evolving constitution of crown and parliament’.^{lxx} If the nationalists are successful in portraying Westminster as overriding and delegitimising Scotland’s ‘democratic voice’, that allegiance – and the British project with it – will unravel.

The referendum also has politically and culturally sensitive implications for Northern Ireland as the only part of the United Kingdom to share a land border with a European Union

member state. At the time of writing, the situation in Northern Ireland is unstable and unpredictable. Warnings abound that Brexit could unleash the ‘ghosts of Irish history’,^{lxxi} with concerns for the agreed freedom of movement with the Republic and the possible construction of a physical border, and questions around access to EU funds for peace and reconciliation efforts. As frustrations with the UK government have mounted, the rhetoric used by Irish politicians has shifted. Taoiseach Enda Kenny at first urged an ‘all-island’ approach to Brexit^{lxxii} but now openly talks of the need for a united Ireland clause in any negotiated UK-EU treaty. He has nevertheless been careful to couch the rationale for this argument in terms of safeguarding the integrity and ‘language’ of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.^{lxxiii} However those who live in the North or work on Northern Irish history acknowledge that the Agreement represented not an ‘end’ to the conflict but was rather one step on the path to peace.^{lxxiv} The March 2017 election placed Unionism in the minority in the Northern Ireland Assembly for the first time ever, creating still more uncertainty for the future of the power sharing agreement.^{lxxv} Northern Ireland is in flux – one of the four contemporary ‘nations’ of the United Kingdom and yet apparently subsumable within a wider island nation. It exists in a state of low but constant fear that any misstep may plunge communities back into violence.

How, then, will historians respond to these contemporary developments? Will we instinctively place greater emphasis upon the uniqueness of each nation? One possibility is that Samuel’s prediction as to the history of Scotland being ‘told in an anti-unionist sense’, in search of the ‘roots of Scottish separatism’,^{lxxvi} will be borne out. Yet, this enterprise risks imposing a new teleology; it should not emphasise Scotland’s singularity at the expense of grasping its connections with the wider isles or archipelago. Nor must it fall into the trap of only looking for interactions when they impacted upon Scotland, mirroring and reversing the trend that so exercised Pocock in the case of English historians. If Scotland is no longer part

of the United Kingdom, does ‘British history’ become an anachronism? No – British history will continue to be made and written; if the United Kingdom ceases to exist in its current shape, this does not alter the fact of its existing historically. On the other hand, if four nations history has been criticised as an inward-looking indulgence – if not Little Englandism, then Little Britainism – will leaving the European Union reinforce our historiographical introspection? Or will it encourage us to write histories that emphasise not only the place(s) of the four nations within the United Kingdom but also their engagement with Europe (however defined) over the centuries?^{lxxvii} This might, finally, push against the Pocock-inspired resistance to Britain’s inclusion into wider European narratives. Arguably, here too the historiographical trajectory will depend much upon *where* in the United Kingdom these histories are being written.

--

This collection comprises two sections: the first is concerned principally with the historiographical and methodological groundings of four nations history, and the second offers seven rigorous examples as to its practicability and versatility. With certain topics, a four nations approach is intuitive; with others, the fit is looser. In some chapters, the subject matter is located across the United Kingdom, while in others the authors take more of a deconstructive or four-nations-in-one-locality approach. What emerge are not only shared narratives but also distinct national and local experiences. The contributors discuss interactions between nations, regions and individuals, the reconfiguring of boundaries, identities and ideologies, and shifting patterns of intellectual and cultural transference. They pursue the fissures within and between the nations and national alignments as much as their commonalities. They bring together a variety of historiographical traditions, and are candid in their assessments as to four nations history’s ability to alternately expand and constrict our horizons.

The collection turns first to a biographical study of Pocock as the progenitor of 'British' history. Ian McBride's chapter is interested in the 'role of biography in shaping decisions about the spatial or territorial frame we adopt when we write about the past'. McBride places Pocock's call for the contextualisation of early modern cataclysms which paid no heed to geographical boundaries into its own broader context. He draws out the tensions between Pocock's writing, his New Zealand heritage, and his anxieties as to the gradual severing of the trans-oceanic imperial umbilical cord. McBride traces how Pocock's body of work has altered the shape of British (and English and Scottish) historiography, while underscoring the essential consistencies in Pocock's argument, the existential current running through his pursuit of a 'new subject', and his continued focus on macro-historical modes of enquiry. Just as Pocock's work has been predicated upon a situational awareness and interest in 'historical consciousness', its reception has been informed by the personal and intellectual circumstances of his readers. The extent to which cultural investment in 'Britishness' has been prioritised or has proved historiographically relevant can help explain the varying degrees of interest in the 'British problem.' Indeed, McBride suggests that the ebbing of the New British tide can be attributed to its having been borne out of 'the exhaustion of English political history, as traditionally conceived', as opposed to any genuine commitment to 'Britishness'. In underlining Pocock's preoccupation with historical subjectivity, McBride reveals the underlying problematic not only of how British history was to be conceived but as to *whom* it should be 'done'.

Paul O'Leary's chapter argues that four nations approaches to British and Irish history 'have been overdetermined by a metanarrative of national decline'. He reasons that the field emerged in an intricate 'structure of feeling', the desire to rethink 'narratives of a unitary past' incubated in periods of perceived crisis. However, he warns that, in reaching back for explanations as to how something that now appears to be unravelling first came into being,

we impose a polarity and a self-limiting narrative structure upon our historical enquiry; we should not be ‘constrained by an opposition between integration and dissolution’. O’Leary advocates accessing the history of these isles from the perspectives of multiple centres, conceived ‘in terms of a series of asymmetric developments rooted in uneven and shifting relationships and identities over time.’ The chapter outlines three broad themes that have shaped and, in the latter two cases, could continue to mould, the research agenda: the relationship between the professionalisation of History and the Anglocentric study of state formation; an interest in how far ‘Britishness’ existed as an overlaying and integrative identity; and the extent to which four nations history is compatible with or an adjunct to transnational historical approaches. O’Leary suggests that we might envisage the United Kingdom as a ‘union state’ – and scrutinise how applicable this idea is to each internal territory – interrogate the nation as a framework for analysis, and inspect ‘how borders have been both created and erased over time’. This is a formidable task, but one O’Leary believes will add texture as well as context to our narratives.

The chapters comprising Section Two offer nuanced examples of how such multifaceted histories might be achieved. In Chapter Four, Patrick Walsh examines how the fiscal-military state – curiously absent from the New British History – served as an apparatus for the uneven incorporation of the four nations into a ‘supranational’ Hanoverian state, while also confirming their differences in practice. He deals not only with the export of English fiscal and power structures to the administrative margins but examines the significance of the contributions of Ireland, Scotland and (to a lesser extent) Wales to the composite state. In particular, he emphasises the ‘processes of negotiation and cooperation between the centre and local ... interests’. Walsh explores how successfully the different national experiences of the fiscal-military state can be compared and weaved into one account; here, the history of a supranational state requires both a supra-narrative and a holistic analysis of its relationship to

and impact on its constituent parts. The territorialities of the fiscal-military state and its instruments, the varying speeds at which its institutions and structures became a reality, and the movement of people and money throughout the isles all speak to the need for a polycentric perspective. Furthermore, while arguing for an appreciation of separate national socio-economic environments, Walsh's chapter also has implications for how comprehensively local dynamics can be manifested in a four nations approach. The sub-national is uncovered through a discussion of the state's engagement with local residents, contractors and officials, affording a further tier to his multi-layered methodological framework.

James Stafford's chapter sheds fresh light on the intellectual interrelations involved in and necessitated by the process and experience of late eighteenth-century Union-making. Far from the mechanics of state formation involving linear absorption into an English core, Stafford illustrates that the 'Scottish enlightenment' afforded the critical framework by which Irish poverty and unrest, and thus Union, could be conceived and justified. Drawing on a wealth of pamphlet literature, Stafford examines the dissemination of and appropriation by supporters of Irish Union of what could be understood as recognisably 'Scottish' ideas. 1801 was more than 'the simple repetition of the constitutional device of parliamentary incorporation'; it entailed the repackaging of concepts developed by Scotland's philosophers to suit Ireland's circumstances. Less a comparative study of the intricacies of the two Unions, Stafford's chapter instead investigates the ideological character of the Irish Union by situating it in its wider 'Scottish' and 'British' intellectual contexts. Crucially, Stafford also argues that a four nations – or, more accurately in his case, three kingdoms – approach must in turn be contextualised by reference to events in Europe. In demonstrating that advocates of Union responded to events beyond the four nations, Stafford makes the case for a further decentring and reorientation of historical narratives.

Ian B. Stewart's chapter on Celticism throws into relief the plurality of both the United Kingdom and of the so-called 'Celtic fringe'. The particular alignment of Ireland, Scotland and Wales determines the axis upon which 'British' history turns, yet, as Stewart argues, 'Celticism was not simply reducible to non-Englishness', nor should Celts be crudely designated 'as a monolithic "other"'. He charts first the advance of competing national claims upon the genealogical and linguistic heritage of the 'Celt', before turning to the development of racialised constructs of 'Celt' and 'Saxon' and lastly to the increasing articulation of pan-Celticism. The chapter emphasises the malleability of the 'Celt' – concurrently and varyingly a self-classification and a totalising Saxonist imposition – contrasting the privileging of Celtic ideas by eighteenth-century English antiquarians to the adulteration represented by Irishness in the nineteenth century. If Celticism was not always a stick with which to beat the non-English, Celts 'othered' fellow Celts as much as they were, as a grouping, othered themselves. Notions of kinship, Stewart maintains, were obfuscated by bickering over which nation was the most authentically Celtic, pan-Celticism only taking root toward the end of his period. Even then, the nation was prioritised over any sense of transnational ethno-linguistic commonality. In de-marginalising the 'fringe', Stewart stresses that ideas of the Celt are 'less about separateness or similarity' and should instead be understood as pliable, contingent 'on the nation, era and intellectual backdrop'.

In Chapter Seven, Paul Ward contends that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, much depended upon the location in and perspective from which Britons viewed symbols of the nation. He shows how the curating of a cultural icon – the Beefeater – could serve as a mechanism for the expression of a range of identities. The image of the Beefeater could be packaged to represent the imperial metropole, or England, or the United Kingdom; it could be used to transform an 'English' into a 'British' identity. The Beefeaters became an attraction, a symbol of the pageantry of the modern monarchy. They became the cultural

property of the nation - but, as Ward asks, which nation? His chapter confronts the notion of 'for Englishness see Britishness', and, by exploring how an elite crafted a narrative for mass consumption, reveals the complexities of a manufactured popular culture. As a cultural construct and living monument, the Beefeaters represented the intersection between and entanglement of English and British identities. Acknowledging where these lines are blurred is as valuable an exercise as shifting away from Anglocentrism. It is curious that, as David Armitage has observed, 'England has rarely been considered as one of the objects of comparison' within the 'British' geographical schema.^{lxxviii} England is, as Paul O'Leary neatly remarks in his piece, the four nations elephant in the room; Ward's chapter brings England back into the fold.

Melanie Bassett's chapter focuses on regional variations in the conception, negotiation and expression of collective patriotisms and identities. Four nations history should be capable of more than comparing the nations as units – it should also facilitate the study of how they interacted on a micro, as well as on a macro level. Bassett charts the activities of self-promotional national and county societies in the English naval town of Portsmouth at the turn of the twentieth century. Sought out by workers drawn from across the four nations, this associational culture fulfilled a need for community and conviviality symptomatic of 'the alienating effects of increasing industrialisation, economic migration and urbanisation'. The societies enabled migrants not only to take succour from their common heritage but also to emphasise the contribution of their respective birthplaces to the wider British and imperial nation. The region was, perhaps unsurprisingly given the scale of internal migration, the preferred territorial unit for societies formed by workers from elsewhere in England, whereas the 'Caledonian' and 'Cambrian' associations were according to Bassett, 'a way of harking back to a pristine Scottish and Welsh identity'. The organisation of social relationships along geographically-familiar lines and the mediation of specific local

expectations upon the British ‘imperial citizen’, Bassett argues, show how ‘unique and shared characteristics ... were fluidly prioritised and hybridised to suit a myriad of circumstances’. This four-nations-in-microcosm approach to identity-making demonstrates the importance of the local, regional and national to these histories.

Oliver Betts’ chapter likewise investigates how far a four nations methodology can be both local and national. Betts examines the extent to which poverty was conceptualised and its relief organised within a common ‘national’ framework at the turn of the twentieth century. He reveals sharp contrasts between ‘a centralising and increasingly urban and English understanding of poverty’, with its broadly defined peripheries, and the lived experiences of the poor in these ‘margins’. This vision was not merely extrapolated out from a London-centric core, it was actively contributed and subscribed to by those in charge of administering relief in the four nations. Betts’ detailed attention to the utility of the ‘comparative element of four nations history’ is a reminder that it is not just historians who look for similarities; for contemporaries, understanding the local nature of poverty was the essential pre-requisite for establishing the generalisations necessary for ‘national’ solutions. However, this process and the predominance of the ‘outside expert’ tended to sideline the voices of the poor themselves. In seeking to access how the poor comprehended their predicament, Betts analyses the testimonies given as part of contemporary investigative studies, with particular reference to the Scottish islands. In reincorporating ‘the very fringes’ of the four nations into the ‘British’ narrative, Betts’ chapter has important implications for how we frame the geographical scope of our enquiry.

The final chapter, by Martin Wright, closes the collection on an experimental note. Using Wales – simultaneously at the ‘margins and core’ of British socialism – as a prism through which to view the movement’s early development, he deliberates on how we might arrive at a four nations history of socialism. Wright probes what was ‘Welsh’ about socialism

in Wales, and contends that in locating the points of convergence with ‘British’ interests, the ‘trans-national interplay’ between Wales and England was critical. Attention is drawn to frictions over whether to organise as ‘Welsh’ (however understood by north or south Walians) or British socialists, the linguistic peculiarities and practicalities of socialist discourse and communication in Wales, and the relationships between ‘indigenous’ socialists and those imported from England. Wright illustrates not only the particularisation of socialism within the Welsh national context, but, by paying close attention to Wales’ social and physical geography, uncovers irregular patterns of ideological engagement with, and the ‘linguistic and cultural pluralism’ of, British socialism. We see the uneven pace at which the socialism of the south Wales coalfields – itself maturing through complex interactions between local activists and English thinkers – spread north and was mediated through the Welsh language, taking on diverse characteristics. This prompts us to ask what constitutes ‘Welshness’ - by whom it is constructed and to whom it belongs – and also to inquire as to the cores and peripheries of major ‘national’ political and ideological movements.

--

This collection offers not a prescriptive definition of a four nations methodology, but rather provides a range of interpretations and templates for its practical application. The authors test the flexibility of these models – and, we anticipate, provoke debate as to how far their schemas are transferrable beyond the pages of this book and the extent to which alternative national, regional and local configurations could be proposed. Toby Barnard has surmised that one of the reasons why the ‘British’ approach has in the past two decades appeared to afford diminishing returns is that ‘problems with which historians of England have been wrestling ... are being taken up by analysts of Scotland and Ireland.’^{lxxix} One way to ‘renew’ (Barnard’s word) the old ‘new’ subject would be to foster greater collaboration between historians of the individual nations. This is less a case of going through one

another's historiographical laundry and more a suggestion that it is through dialogue between often disparate historiographical traditions that we can forge more complete narratives.

As editors, it is our aim for this collection to be read by undergraduate students as well as by academics. We believe that if four nations history for the modern period is to sustain its new-found momentum, more university courses must engage with the benefits and pitfalls of the methodology and embrace it as a teaching tool. It is a question of coverage – the token introduction of ‘weeks’ on each non-home nation will not suffice, nor will too narrow a focus on ‘Britishness’. Here it seems appropriate to return to John Morrill’s preferred word, ‘holistic’, to describe the framework we envisage. For instance, in treating the United Kingdom and its history as multi-compositional, consideration should be given to how seismic socio-cultural movements reverberated and took on specific characteristics in alternate settings. Discussions of ‘great’ pieces of legislation should draw attention to the fact that such apparent watersheds required the implementation, at varying speeds, of separate Acts for England and Wales, Ireland and Scotland. Greater advantage should be taken of the wealth of regional studies – in the case of England especially, where regional approaches have arguably been a means for compartmentalising English history, of making its sheer scale manageable. The generalisations applicable to one corner of one nation may not be replicable at its opposite end – indeed the phenomena they describe may be more readily comparable across territorial boundaries. Utilising an inclusive four nations approach to teaching affords the opportunity to enhance the breadth and depth of the material on offer, and to encompass historiographical traditions students might otherwise only encounter in isolation.

We hope this collection will inspire critical engagement with such frameworks, renew old and spark new historical conversations. This is in part a search for a methodological grounding for modern ‘British’ history; ‘four nations’ is but one means by which it might be secured. A four nations peg cannot be forced into a three kingdoms hole. The position of

Northern Ireland further complicates what neatness there is to ‘four nations’. Equally, ‘four nations history’ must not insulate the United Kingdom from the European, Atlantic and wider imperial dimensions of its past. That said, the current fashion for transnational history represents more of a threat to the old new British history, with its focus on the state, than it does to the four nations model. Our apparent teetering on the brink of a disunited kingdom will nevertheless feed the ‘structure of feeling’ for this generation of historians at the very least.

We cannot write fast enough to keep up with the hurriedly changing political, social and economic global environment. In these tumultuous times, historians are confronted by the breathless reconfiguring of geo-political allegiances and identities. Four nations history offers a conceptual framework which pushes against reductive generalisations and affords a viewpoint which is both inclusive and expansive. The challenge posed by this aggressive questioning must be met with a rich, multifaceted understanding of the past that enhances our understanding of the present.

March 2017

*The authors are grateful to Joel Barnes, Matthew Glencross, Andrew Harrison and Paul Readman for reading drafts of this chapter.

ⁱ J.G.A. Pocock (1975) ‘British History: A Plea for a New Subject’, *Journal of Modern History*, 47:4, 603-604. This article opened with a stinging critique of A.J.P. Taylor’s impatience with the word ‘Britain’. Pocock’s objection to the tokenistic inclusion of Ireland, Scotland and Wales in ‘English’ narratives should be understood in part as a direct rebuttal to Taylor’s blunt avowal that ‘Where the Welsh, the Scotch, the Irish, or the British overseas have the same history as the English, my book includes them also; where they have a

different history, it does not.' See A.J.P. Taylor (1965) *English History, 1914-1945* (Oxford, first edition), v. Taylor, for his part, dismissed Pocock's protest as a storm in a teacup, countering that 'Everyone knows what we mean whether we call our subject English history or British history. It is a fuss over names, not things.' A.J.P. Taylor (1975) 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject: Comments', *Journal of Modern History*, 47:4, 622.

ⁱⁱ J.G.A. Pocock (1982) 'The Limits and Divisions of British History: In Search of the Unknown Subject', *American Historical Review (AHR)*, 87:2, 314.

ⁱⁱⁱ Pocock, 'Limits and Divisions of British History', 318.

^{iv} D. Cannadine (1995), 'British History as a "new subject." Politics, perspectives and prospects', in A. Grant and K.J. Stringer (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdom? The Making of British History* (London), p. 13. See, for example, R.R. Davies (ed.) (1998) *The British Isles 1100-1500: Comparisons, Contrasts and Connections* (Edinburgh); S.G. Ellis and S. Barber (2013) *Conquest and Union. Fashioning a British State, 1485-1725* (Abingdon, second edition); L. Brockliss and D. Eastwood (eds.) (1997) *A Union of multiple identities. The British Isles, c.1750-c.1850* (Manchester); B. Bradshaw and P. Roberts (eds.) (1998) *British Consciousness and Identity. The Making of Britain, 1533-1707* (Cambridge); G. Burgess (ed.) (1999) *The New British History: Founding a Modern State, 1603-1715* (London); S.J. Connolly (ed.) (1999) *Kingdoms United? Great Britain and Ireland since 1500. Integration and Diversity* (Dublin).

^v Pocock, 'A Plea', 610.

^{vi} G. Burgess, 'Introduction - The New British History', in Burgess (ed.), *New British History*, p. 21; J. Morrill, 'The British Problem', in Bradshaw and Morrill (eds.), *The British Problem*, p. 18.

^{vii} K. Robbins (2004) 'British History and the Generation of Change', in H. Brocklehurst and R. Phillips (eds.), *History, Nationhood and the Question of Britain* (Basingstoke), p. 3.

^{viii} See for instance, Colin Kidd's commentary on the distortions created by this

historiographical partition, C. Kidd (2003) 'Race, Empire, and the Limits of Nineteenth-Century Scottish Nationhood.', *The Historical Journal*, 46:4, 874.

^{ix} *Kingdoms United*, published in 1999, identified 'cultural identity', 'law and administration' and 'economic development' as issues still in need of attention. See Connolly's 'Introduction', pp. 11-12.

^x C. Kidd (2010) 'Wales, the Enlightenment and the New British History,' *The Welsh History Review*, 25, 209.

^{xi} Morrill, 'The British Problem', p. 18. In advocating a 'holistic' history, Morrill stressed that 'Holistic does not mean wholeistic'.

^{xii} R. Colls (2004) *Identity of England* (Oxford), p. 377.

^{xiii} According to David Armitage, Pocock had 'attempted the revivification of British history as an imperial history, both within Britain and Ireland and across the oceans', a quasi-Seelyan enterprise. D. Armitage (1999) 'Greater Britain: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis?', *AHR*, 431.

^{xiv} H. Kearney (2004) 'Four Nations History in Perspective', in Brocklehurst and Phillips, *History*, p. 10.

^{xv} R. Samuel (1995) 'British Dimensions: "Four Nations History"', *History Workshop Journal*, 40, xviii.

^{xvi} Pocock, 'A Plea', 605.

^{xvii} According to Pocock, Welshmen - like Orangemen and Orkney men - had not 'developed complex historiographical traditions of their own.' See 'A Plea', 616.

^{xviii} Pocock, 'A Plea', 610.

^{xix} J. Innes, 'What would a "Four Nations" Approach to the Study of Eighteenth-Century British Social Policy Entail?', in Connolly (ed.) *Kingdoms United?*, p. 184.

-
- ^{xx} R.R. Davies, 'In Praise of British History,' in Davies (ed.), *The British Isles*, p. 19.
- ^{xxi} Davies, 'In Praise', p. 22.
- ^{xxii} K.M. Brown, 'Seducing the Scottish Clio: Has Scottish History Anything to Fear From The New British History?', in Burgess (ed.), *New British History*, p. 241.
- ^{xxiii} Brown, 'Seducing the Scottish Clio', p. 242.
- ^{xxiv} N. Canny, 'Irish, Scottish and Welsh responses to centralisation, c.1530-1640', in Grant and Stringer (eds.), *Uniting the Kingdoms?*, pp. 147-148.
- ^{xxv} Samuel, 'British Dimensions', xiv.
- ^{xxvi} C. Kidd (1993) *Subverting Scotland's past. Scottish whig historians and the creation of an Anglo-British identity, 1689-c.1830* (Cambridge), pp. 209-210.
- ^{xxvii} Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's past*, p. 205.
- ^{xxviii} Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's past*, pp. 272-3.
- ^{xxix} Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's past*, p. 207.
- ^{xxx} See, for example, G. Morton (1999) *Unionist-nationalism: Governing Urban Scotland, 1830-1860* (East Linton), L. Paterson (1994) *The Autonomy of Modern Scotland* (Edinburgh), R.J. Finlay (1997) *A Partnership for good? Scottish Politics and the Union since 1880* (Edinburgh).
- ^{xxxi} T. Claydon (1997) 'Problems with the British Problem,' *Parliamentary History*, 16:2, 222.
- ^{xxxii} Cannadine, 'British History', pp. 25-6.
- ^{xxxiii} L. Colley (1992) 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *Journal of British Studies* (*JBS*), 31:4, 314.
- ^{xxxiv} Canny, 'Responses to centralisation', p. 148.
- ^{xxxv} Burgess, 'Introduction', p. 8.

^{xxxvi} N. Evans, 'The Changing Context of Welsh Historiography, 1890-2000', in Brocklehurst and Phillips (eds.), *History*, p. 28. See also Kidd, 'Wales'. An alternative avenue of inquiry has been suggested by Paul O'Leary, who, in a comparative study straddling late nineteenth and early twentieth century Wales and Ireland, sought to 'reveal complexities not easily accounted for by historical interpretations which see the one country as moving inexorably towards independence while the other renounced all pretensions of a distinctive nationality.' P. O'Leary, 'Accommodation and Resistance: A Comparison of Cultural Identities in Ireland and Wales, c.1880-1914', in Connolly (ed.), *Kingdoms United?*, p. 134.

^{xxxvii} R.G. Asch (1993) "'Obscured in whiskey, mist and misery.'" The role of Scotland and Ireland in British History', in R.G. Asch (ed.), *Three Nations - A Common History? England, Scotland, Ireland and British History, c.1600-1920* (Bochum), p. 15.

^{xxxviii} Pocock, 'Limits and Divisions of British History', 312.

^{xxxix} L. Colley (2009) *Britons. Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (Yale, CT, revised third edition), pp. 367-368.

^{xl} See M. Cragoe (1998) 'Welsh Electioneering and the Purpose of Parliament: "From Radicalism to Nationalism" Reconsidered', *Parliamentary History*, 113-130; R.M. Jones (1992) 'Beyond identity? The reconstruction of the Welsh', *JBS*, xxxi, 330-357.

^{xli} Robbins, 'British History', p. 9.

^{xlii} T. Harris, 'Critical Perspectives: The Autonomy of English History?', in Burgess (ed.), *New British History*, pp. 267-268.

^{xliii} For more on tracking English political culture, see R. Colls (2014) 'Englishness and the political culture', in R. Colls and P. Dodd (eds.), *Englishness. Politics and Culture 1880-1920* (London, second edition), pp. 61-90.

^{xliv} Harris, 'Critical Perspectives', p. 268. Cf. Michael Hechter's claim that, in some cases, 'there is no reason for the periphery to assume a position near center stage', (1975) 'British History: A Plea for a New Subject: Comments', *Journal of Modern History*, 47:4, 626.

^{xlvi} Kearney, 'Four Nations History', p. 10.

^{xlvii} J.G.A. Pocock, 'Conclusion: Contingency, identity, sovereignty', in Grant and Stringer (ed.), *Uniting the Kingdom?*, p. 295.

^{xlviii} See, for instance, Jane Ohlmeyer's discussion of Irish objections to the New British History. Ohlmeyer has herself suggested that Irish historians should embrace more fully the New British and Atlantic histories, asking, 'After all, what should scholars know of Ireland who only Ireland know?'. J. Ohlmeyer (1999) 'Seventeenth-Century Ireland and the New British and Atlantic Histories', *AHR*, 104:2, 462.

^{xlvi} Samuel, 'British Dimensions', ix.

^{li} K. Robbins (1998) *Nineteenth-Century Britain. England, Scotland, and Wales: The Making of a Nation* (Oxford), p. 12.

^{li} Robbins, *Nineteenth-Century Britain*, p. 12.

^{lii} Brown, 'Seducing the Scottish Clio', p. 241.

^{liii} On the 'invention' of 'Ulster' and 'the attempt to establish a British identity for northern Ireland' in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, see J. Loughlin (1999) 'Imagining "Ulster": The North of Ireland and British National Identity, 1880-1921', in Connolly (ed.) *Kingdoms United?*, pp. 109-122. See also T. Hennessey (1993) 'Ulster unionist territorial and national identities 1886-1893: province, island, kingdom and empire', *Irish Political Studies*, 8, 21-36. For the earlier period, see P. Griffin (2000) 'Defining the Limits of Britishness: The "New" British History and the Meaning of the Revolution Settlement in Ireland for Ulster's Presbyterians,' *JBS*, 39, 264.

^{liii} For a discussion of the ‘ambivalent position of Cornwall in the English imagination, and of England in the Cornish imagination’, see J. Vernon (1998) ‘Border crossings: Cornwall and the English (imagi)nation’, in G. Cubitt (ed.) *Imagining Nations* (Manchester), pp. 153-172. Vernon argued that attempts from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century to ‘represent Cornwall and England as discrete, centred, stable and homogeneous nations’ should in fact be understood as ‘symptoms of their very insecurity and instability’. According to Vernon, this reading of identity-making and internal ‘othering’ ‘problematizes the four-nations model of British national identity, one that tellingly ignores Cornwall or conflates its alterity within Englishness’ (see pp. 168-9).

^{liv} Cannadine, ‘British History’, p. 18.

^{lv} J.G.A. Pocock (1992) ‘History and Sovereignty: The Historiographical Response to the Europeanization in Two British Cultures’, *JBS*, 31:4, 361-363.

^{lvi} Speech 5 April 1992, <http://www.johnmajor.co.uk/page2437.html>, accessed 26 January 2017.

^{lvii} Cannadine, ‘British History’, p. 26. See also Samuel, ‘British Dimensions’, iv.

^{lviii} <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/scottish-independence-referendum-statement-by-the-prime-minister>, accessed 3 February 2017.

^{lix} <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/the-governments-negotiating-objectives-for-exiting-the-eu-pm-speech>, accessed 3 February 2017.

^{lx} Speech 13 May 1978, <http://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/103684>, accessed 26 January 2017.

^{lxi} Colley, ‘Britishness’, 315; Colley, *Britons*, p. 25.

^{lxii} <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/scottish-independence-referendum-statement-by-the-prime-minister>, accessed 3 February 2017.

^{lxiii} Michael Hechter used the term ‘internal colonialism’ to describe ‘the essentially colonial process by which English institutions and markets expanded into the regions of the Celtic fringe.’ See M. Hechter (1999) *Internal Colonialism. The Celtic Fringe in British National Development* (New Brunswick, NJ, revised second edition), p. 342.

^{lxiv} Hansard, 5th series, volume 939, 14 November 1977,
<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1977/nov/14/scotland-bill>, columns 122-123,
accessed 27 January 2017.

^{lxv} *Leeds Mercury*, 14 April 1886, p. 2.

^{lxvi} For more on Scottish responses to Gladstonian Home Rule and the Scottish Home Rule Association, see N. Lloyd-Jones (2014) ‘Liberalism, Scottish Nationalism and the Home Rule Crisis, c.1886–93’, *English Historical Review*, 129:539, 862-887. On the parallels between the language employed by the SNP and the SHRA, see N. Lloyd-Jones (2014), ‘Separate Scotland?’, *History Today*, 64:8, 34-6.

^{lxvii} R. Colls, *Identity of England*, p. 4.

^{lxviii} Sturgeon speech 13 March 2017, <http://news.gov.scot/speeches-and-briefings/first-minister-speech-1>, accessed 13 March 2017.

^{lxix} Sturgeon’s response to the Supreme Court’s ruling on the triggering of Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, http://www.snp.org/nicola_sturgeon_uk_supreme_court_ruling, accessed 24 January 2017.

^{lxx} Kidd, *Subverting Scotland’s past*, p. 1.

^{lxxi} I. McBride, ‘After Brexit, Northern Irish politics will again be dominated by the border’, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/jul/19/brexit-northern-irish-politics-border-eu-good-friday-agreement>, accessed 19 February 2017.

^{lxxii} Kenny speech at the All Island Civic Dialogue launch,
<http://www.merriestreet.ie/Merriestreet/en/News->

[Room/Speeches/Speech by the Taoiseach Mr Enda Kenny T D at the First Meeting of the All-Island Civic Dialogue on Brexit.html](#), accessed 3 November 2016.

^{lxxiii} https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2017/feb/23/irish-leader-enda-kenny-calls-for-united-ireland-provision-in-brexit-deal?CMP=share_btn_fb, accessed 23 February 2017; <http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/republic-of-ireland/enda-kenny-insists-on-united-ireland-clause-in-brexit-deal-35477171.html>, accessed 23 February 2017.

^{lxxiv} See M. Power (2011) 'Introduction: Peacebuilding in Northern Ireland', in M. Power (ed.), *Building Peace in Northern Ireland* (Liverpool), pp. 1-17.

^{lxxv} <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/ni-assembly-imminent-prospect-of-brexit-causes-shift-in-attitudes-1.2998278>, accessed 7 March 2017.

^{lxxvi} Samuel, 'British Dimensions', xiii.

^{lxxvii} For the impact of incorporating 'British' history into a broader 'European' schematic on our understanding of what 'Europe' means, see Pocock, 'History and Sovereignty', 378. If 'Britain' is a product of multiple nations, then 'Europe', similarly, must 'consist of a number of distinct if interlocking communities with distinct if interacting histories'.

^{lxxviii} Armitage, 'Greater Britain', 432.

^{lxxix} T. Barnard (2013) 'Renewing the "New" British history', unpubl. Dacre lecture, Oxford University. Naomi Lloyd-Jones is grateful to Professor Barnard for providing her with a draft copy of the talk.