

by Oliver the Spy, is nicely dealt with, there is clearly more to say there, too. Potentially, the subject of this book is massive.

Mackenzie does not explore this issue, but the growth of the newspaper press put pretenders of all sorts on a much larger stage than hitherto, dressing them in colors to attract attention. Newspapermen's refinement of spin and a new degree of sensationalism drove this process. The suddenly increasing power of mass public opinion, as with today, was morally ambivalent. It effected, say, the abolition of the slave trade and other humanitarian reform, but it also created a much more slippery kind of truth.

This is the world that Kirsten McKenzie has made her own, and the best thing about it is that in her hands her showmen remain real and sometimes tragic human beings. In her previous two books, *Scandal in the Colonies: Sydney and Cape Town, 1820–1850* (2004) and *A Swindler's Progress: Nobles and Convicts in the Age of Liberty* (2009), she told various stories of shape-shifting. Prominent among her characters was the convict John Dow, who toured New South Wales in the 1830s pretending to be the son and heir of the Earl of Harewood. But then the Harewoods themselves had lately been colonials, and had changed their character very quickly from slave-owners to noblemen.

The individuals concerned had a more or less distinct understanding of themselves situated within the network of empire. Invited to share it, readers are given a means of escape from the narrower mindset that has been integral to the writing of their own national histories. Britain, rather than being the great antagonist, becomes instead a single point, though the most important, in an intricate pattern. In this book, the work of John Thomas Bigge, who was a judge in one colony and a commissioner of inquiry in two, looks entirely different from hitherto, and McKenzie makes some striking comments about the way he has been variously represented in the South African and Australian stories. He too, though posthumously and unwittingly, has changed his character according to his circumstances. The third earl Bathurst, secretary of state for the colonies, is a fairly well-known figure. But he takes on new subtlety and depth when seen dealing with the unruly complexities of law, personality, and politics from colony to colony, as happens here. For those of us who have spent decades laboring within a single national tradition and within the old imperial framework, McKenzie's way of setting national traditions side by side is refreshing indeed.

This book, and McKenzie's work as a whole, opens so many new doors that it is tantalizing to imagine how it might all be worked through in a more comprehensive volume. The single best thing about her approach is the way in which she poses and partly answers such large new questions and at the same time recreates individual lives in such a vivid and touching way.

*Alan Atkinson*, University of Sydney

CIAN T. MCMAHON. *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840–1860*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. Pp. 238. \$34.95 (paper). doi: 10.1017/jbr.2017.48

Historians of the Irish diaspora have long traced the migratory networks of Irish emigrants around the nineteenth-century Anglo world. Particular attention has been paid to the journeys and careers of Ireland's political exiles from the abortive 1848 "rebellion." Even Thomas Kenneally (and his publishers) saw the subject as one with mass appeal when he wrote and they published *The Great Shame* in 1998. What Cian McMahon has done with *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840–1860* is to measure the effect of these Irish exiles, and their Irish allies back in Ireland, on the creation of an Irish national identity in the mid-nineteenth century. He traces their influence through what he aptly calls the

“global transmission” (5) of their thoughts and ideas on Ireland and its place in the community of nations.

Focusing on the United States and Australia, McMahon clearly indicates early how concepts of Irish identity developed in the *Nation*, the newspaper founded by Thomas Davis in 1842, and the voice of what became known as Young Ireland, circulated around the Anglo-World through to the Irish diaspora through their ethnic press. McMahon chooses a number of issues and crises, such as the settlement of Australia, American slavery, and the American Civil War, to examine how Irishness was expressed in each. In the process, he discovers a strong sense of racial identity which placed the Irish, in their own minds anyway, firmly among the “white” races of Europe. Thus, they did not have to “become white” when they landed in America or Australia. They already were so. Indeed, many Irish believed that as “Celts” they were as “noble” a race as any, and even superior to the conceited “Anglo-Saxons.”

The Irish use of racial identity by Irish nationalists, however, could be contradictory. It was very useful in supporting and justifying a “national campaign for political independence from England,” but it also highlighted “the sectarian differences within the Irish nation” (41). The greatest advocates of a strong racial Irish nation, Young Irelanders Thomas Davis and John Mitchel, acknowledged their own English blood. Davis therefore rejected a pure Irish race for a cultural one, but Mitchel buried his qualms about his own origins to embrace the theory of Celtic superiority over the Anglo-Saxon. In his most notorious phase, as a pro-slavery Confederate during the American Civil War, Mitchel pushed the Celtic thesis hard, arguing that white southerners were Celtic, too, and their invading “Yankee” enemies akin to their Anglo-Saxon cousins in Britain.

McMahon specifies how these ideas of race were covered extensively and circulated in the Irish and Irish diasporic press. And, even if much of the most elaborate Celticist theories were not endorsed fully, those who left did have a sense of “Celtic identity” that was reinforced by their “transnational” experiences (163). There were differences depending on location. The Irish press in Australia, for example, was not as critical of the “Anglo Saxons” as the Irish American press and also displayed some sympathy for the indigenous Aboriginal population. The Irish in the northern American states, also, did not subscribe to Mitchel’s conflating of Irish ethnology with American conflicts. Despite an often deserved reputation for anti-black sentiment, with Mitchel being the most virulent example, the Irish abroad then did not always fit the stereotype of the knee-jerk racists. Patrick Ford, for example, who began his American career as a printer for William Lloyd Garrison’s *Liberator* and would edit himself an abolitionist newspaper in Boston, could still speak of the Irish race and “Our enemy the Saxon” (171). His paper, *The Irish World*, first published in 1870, circulated by the tens of thousands in the United States in the late nineteenth century and reached 125,000 by the early twentieth. It was widely available in Ireland, too. Thus, a “popular press perpetuated a transnational sense of community among the world scattered Irish” (143).

McMahon has done a masterful job in tracing Irish national ideology across the diaspora. His work leaves no doubt as to the “whiteness” of the Irish when they left Ireland. Despite all the stereotyping of them being uncouth, uncivilized, and brutal in the nativist press, they retained a firm sense of their own worth among the “best races” of the world. Indeed, they gave as good as they got in the racial pride stakes, asserting Celtic superiority, especially over the hated Anglo-Saxons. Rather than being just innocent, naïve, bystanders in the “scientific” racism rhetorical wars of the nineteenth century, they were active participants in it. Simultaneously, while embracing set notions of Irishness, many in the Irish diaspora, like Patrick Ford, also displayed a lot of nuance in these matters. McMahon’s other major achievement here is to show us clearly the influence of Irish leaders and the Irish press in influencing the wider Irish population. Ultimately, he highlights that, when it came to national identity, Irish leaders and the dissemination of their ideas through the popular press really mattered.

David T. Gleeson, Northumbria University