

to intervene, and yet whose public interventions reveal a deep disdain for the popular voice and an ingrained hostility to listening to what it had to say. The tragedy of Charles I, as Cressy shows us, is that while some of his subjects denounced him as a purblind fool there remained many others, like Lucy Martin, who sought an audience to save not only the kingdom but also the king.

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MATTHEW P. DZIENNIK. *The Fatal Land: War, Empire, and the Highland Soldier in British America*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. Pp. 320. \$65 (cloth).
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In 1976 Birlinn published James Hunter's *The Making of the Crofting Community*. An obvious homage to E. P. Thompson's 1963 work *The Making of the English Working Class*, Hunter's monograph represented his own attempt to rescue the people of the Highlands and Islands from what Thompson had described as "the enormous condescension of posterity." In particular, Hunter aimed to show that Highlanders had exercised considerable agency in the shaping of their own history, rather than simply being victims of either impersonal historical forces or of cruel and rapacious landlords.

While *The Making of the Crofting Community* was not the first work that dealt with the themes of agency and victimhood in the Highland context, it remains, some forty years on, one of the most important. Over the years it has been followed by a number of books and articles, each seeking to understand the relationship between the people of northern Scotland and the British state and empire. Works informed by postcolonial and imperial history have particularly proliferated in recent years, driven by a newfound interest in Scotland's relationship with empire. Yet if the work of John MacKenzie has effectively quashed the idea that Lowland Scots were the victims of English empire building, then the place of Gaelic-speaking Highlanders within this picture has remained more ambiguous. Certainly, the specter of the Highland Clearances—coupled with the (at times) outright hostility exhibited by the British state towards the Gaelic language—has continued to cast a long and controversial shadow.

Matthew Dziennik's *The Fatal Land: War, Empire, and the Highland Soldier in British America* is the latest in this long line of works exploring the themes of victimhood and agency in the context of the Scottish Highlands. By examining how the region received and reacted to British colonialism in the eighteenth century, Dziennik aims to investigate the broader patterns of colonialism and assimilation operating in the Atlantic world (3). To do so he focuses on the life cycle of a Highland soldier: from recruitment in Scotland to the battlefields of North America; the soldier's subsequent contact with colonial peoples; then demobilization and its effects back home in Scotland. What such an investigation tells us, according to Dziennik, is that Highlanders of all backgrounds took advantage of the access to empire provided by British military recruiting to empower themselves and their local communities (3). Whether through the ability of Highland men to dictate the cost of their enlistment (47–48), or the impact of the North American experience on the Gaelic imagination (183), Highlanders were not simply victims of British colonialism but active instruments in its effective operation.

This is all good stuff, and Dziennik makes effective use of both Gaelic and English sources to evidence his points. But, as noted, the themes of victimhood and agency are hardly new ones in this context. Beyond its specific—and undoubtedly able—treatment of the Highland soldier's experience in North America, therefore, one must ask to what extent *The Fatal Land* fulfils its

aims of significantly advancing our understanding of the relationship between the people of the Scottish Highlands and the British Empire. Here, unfortunately, is where the work becomes unstuck.

The biggest problem Dziennik faces with *The Fatal Land* is that military recruiting in the eighteenth-century Highlands and Islands has already formed the basis of one excellent monograph: Andrew MacKillop's *More Fruitful than the Soil* (2000). Exploring the century between 1715 and 1815, MacKillop laid out in great detail how army recruiting affected the people of the Highland region in the crucial years before and after 1745. This included not just the introduction of additional financial opportunities to a population experiencing rapid economic and social change but also the effects of wide scale recruitment on public perceptions of the region, and their intendant—largely negative—consequences for the manner of northern Scotland's historical development.

How, then, does *The Fatal Land* move beyond the position already laid out by MacKillop? Dziennik argues that MacKillop failed to examine the actual experiences of Highland soldiers fighting abroad and thus ignored the enormous cultural impact of military service in both Scotland and America (14). There is certainly merit in this criticism, yet *The Fatal Land* fails to demonstrate that paying greater attention to such cultural factors significantly alters any of MacKillop's original findings. Indeed, while Dziennik's chapter on the soldier and Highland culture is a solid one, Wilson MacLeod has already argued similar things in a general survey of Gaelic poetry's relationship with the British military. The chapter on indigenous encounters similarly covers ground already broken elsewhere, while Dziennik's biggest-hitting ideas on the economic and social history of the Highland region are simply underscoring ideas originally raised by MacKillop. Lacking a long durée approach to the issue of recruiting, Dziennik is also unable to ask—as MacKillop did—whether and how the circumstances he identifies changed over time.

Key works on Highland history also go uncited, and this hampers *The Fatal Land*'s ability to offer fresh insight into its proposed area of impact. Reference to *The Making of the Crofting Community* is an unfortunate absence given Dziennik's thematic argument, while Malcolm Gray's *Highland Economy* is also notable by its omission. Dziennik also relies heavily on evidence drawn from the southern and eastern Highlands for many of his arguments about the region as a whole. In this respect reference to Iain Mowat's work on Easter Ross as a "double frontier" between Highland and Lowland Scotland would have allowed *The Fatal Land* to reflect more critically on how the existence and form of distinct subregions within the larger Highland unit affected an individual's experience of empire.

In all, therefore, *The Fatal Land* is a perfectly competent work on the Highland soldier's experience in North America, but one that largely fails to fulfil its own claim to significantly challenge the wider field.

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MICHAEL EVERETT. *The Rise of Thomas Cromwell: Power and Politics in the Reign of Henry VIII, 1485–1534*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. Pp. 362. \$40.00 (cloth).
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Michael Everett's detailed and enjoyable book, *The Rise of Thomas Cromwell*, traces Cromwell's journey from a relatively ordinary London lawyer and merchant in the 1510s and 1520s to royal secretary in 1534. Everett presents Cromwell as a highly organized and efficient administrator whose competence and capacity for hard work ensured that his responsibilities (and