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A New Albion in New America: British Periodicals and Morris Birkbeck's English Prairie, 1818–1824

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The "English Prairie" settlements in Edwards County, Illinois attracted an inordinate amount of commentary in the post-Napoleonic War period, providing a window into British intellectual life of the period. Morris Birkbeck, the more famous of the English Prairie's two founders, came to personify America for British readers. Commentators ranged widely in their opinions of the English Prairie, speaking in broad terms of either superior aspects of western American society and polity or else making the new state of Illinois a foil to illustrate the ills of democracy and religious disestablishment. Three of the most prominent British reviews of the time – the Edinburgh Review, Quarterly Review, and Westminster Review – were vital participants in this debate that was really about the future of Great Britain. The periodicals created images of America suited to their understanding of the situation, as one small part of sparsely populated Illinois became a vicarious arena for competing concepts of politics and religion.

Keywords: Morris Birkleck; English Prairie; *Edinburgh Review*; *Quarterly Review*; *Westminster Review*; Anglo-American cultural relations

In Edwards County, Illinois, an "English Prairie" settlement was born in late 1817, months before Illinois became the westernmost state in the Union. Though historians have mostly forgotten this Anglo-American episode in the West, the English Prairie attracted the fervent attention of travelers and writers from its conception until the mid-1820s. A sizable number of British readers followed the travails of a small number of British emigrants in Illinois, on the very edge of the English-speaking world. More than fifty contemporary books, articles, and pamphlets dealt exclusively or in large part with the English Prairie.[1]

Given the insignificant number of actual settlers to Edwards County, the English Prairie was less a practical experiment in western American settlement than a cultural battleground in the contest for the future of Great Britain. I am primarily concerned with the self-referential nature of commentary on the English Prairie as was given in three of the most important British periodicals – the *Edinburgh Review* and *Quarterly Review* and *Westminster Review* – Whig, Tory, and Radical journals, respectively. These periodicals' comments regarding the English Prairie provide a window into post-Waterloo perceptions of culture, religion, and polity.

The English Prairie was first imagined as a solution to the economic and political problems facing English farmers in the immediate post-Napoleonic War period – recession, high taxes, and disenfranchisement for religious dissenters.[2] The Prairie's founders were Morris Birkbeck and George Flower, both dissenters. An articulate, talented man, Birkbeck became the symbol of Illinois to British readers. Born in 1764, the only child of a Quaker preacher, Birkbeck was a Surrey lease-holding farmer of wealth who leased 1,500 acres dubbed "Wanborough" from the Earl of Onslow. He took pride in employing advanced agrarian techniques and was first to raise

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Merino sheep in England. Birkbeck's wife died in 1804, his father in 1816. The lease on Wanborough was nearly up, and Birkbeck was discontent, eager to find a better place to live.[3] Flower, a wealthy farmer, twenty-four years Birkbeck's junior, became a partner in this search.

In 1814, Birkbeck and Flower toured France for three months. Napoleon had been exiled to Elba, the English economy was slowing, and land was cheap on the Continent. Birkbeck penned a popular book, *Notes on a Journey through France in 1814* (1815), in which he portrayed Britain's former adversary positively: "France, so peopled, so cultivated, moderately taxed, without paper money, without tithes, without poor-rates, almost without poor, with excellent roads in every direction, and overflowing with corn, wine and oil … is a rich country."[4]

However, France, tainted by Catholicism and traces of feudalism, offered no remedy. As Birkbeck explained, "The number and influence of the military and the clergy were, to persons of our republican tendencies, decisive against a residence in France."[5] Birkbeck and Flower quickly turned their focus to the United States, the end of hostilities in early 1815 having opened the gates for emigration. As Flower later recollected, "To persons of fastidious political tastes, the United States of North America seemed to be the only country left for emigration…. Men of reading read all that was written about the country."[6]

Birkbeck and Flower had formed a number of remarkable trans-Atlantic friendships before their emigration. General Lafayette and the English radical William Cobbett supplied letters of introduction to greet important Americans. Edward Coles, an American diplomat and soon to be Governor of Illinois Territory, offered advice. Birkbeck even corresponded with George Washington in the 1790s, politely declining the President's invitation to be the manager of Mount Vernon.[7]

A prosperous English farmer, Birkbeck's primary motivation for emigrating was political. He resented a government that taxed but refused dissenters the ballot or any modicum of civic life. In America, English farmers could own land, become full citizens with voting rights, and forgo tithing to a church to which they did not belong. The western United States was a place to escape the dead weight of European history, to overcome a corrupt system too slow to reform.

Throughout his *Notes on a Journey in America*, Birkbeck emphasized a dichotomy between "old America" and "new America." The Alleghenies were no obstacle but rather a gateway to new Atlantis unspoiled by European religious or political hierarchies. Across the Ohio River was "the land of promise."[8]

> Richard Flower, George's father, glorified the opportunity to begin life anew: Here are few public buildings worthy of notice. No kings going to open Parliament with gilded coaches and cream-coloured horses…. No old castles which beautify the rural scenes of the country…. No cathedrals or old churches to ornament the cities as well as the counties of England…. America has none of these costly ornaments or beautiful monuments of oppression. I thank God she has not; and hope she may be exempt from them.[9]

Birkbeck echoed these radical sentiments: "The world we have left at so remote a distance, and of which we hear so little, seems, to my imagination, like a past scene, and its transactions, as matter rather of history, than of present interest." Life in England had been "years wasted in the support of taxes and pauperism." Only in America, at his old age, was "a really useful career …just beginning." Birkbeck explained in plain terms, "ubi libertas ibi patria [where liberty dwells, there is my country]."[10]

A feud between Birkbeck and Flower resulted in the creation of two villages between the Big and Little Wabash – "Wanborough," Birkbeck's creation after his former estate and "Albion," Flower's creation. 1818 saw the arrival of a small wave of immigrants. Birkbeck sang the praises of the prairie in his *Letters from Illinois* (1818). Roasted wild turkey provided a main entree almost daily, berries grew to perfection, and, countering the charge of New World degeneration,

Old World vegetables were "improved by the change." Manure accumulated as a nuisance. Even winter was not as bad as warned.[11]

Critics would mock Birkbeck's choice of Illinois' empty space, far away from most vestiges of English civilization. The isolation was deliberate. To Birkbeck, English history was a catalog of crimes and corruption. He never spoke of regretting English institutions. Unfortunately for Birkbeck, his was not the only image given of Illinois. The English Prairie sparked vicious debates within the leading British periodicals.

Reviewers and the Prairie

The *Edinburgh Review* (founded 1802), the most important British periodical of the era, championed Birkbeck and the English Prairie. That the *Edinburgh Review*, an important cultural arbiter and vehicle for the popularization of Scottish political economy, would devote dozens of pages, at the height of its prestige, to frontier Illinois requires examination. The issue was not emigration. Though emigration would be tempting to "men of moderate fortunes and industrious habits," as the periodical noted, few of the *Edinburgh Review*'s readers would consider relocating to Illinois' virgin farmlands.[12] The journal mostly ignored practical matters of climate and farming techniques. Instead, the Scottish reviewers placed Birkbeck and the settlements within the context of the contemporary Whig calls for reform.

Henry Brougham's extremely favorable full-length review of Birkbeck's *Notes on a Journey in America* appeared in the June 1818 *Edinburgh Review*. Brougham, a future Lord Chancellor, began his review with a passionate claim: "We have no hesitation in pronouncing this one of the most interesting and instructive books that have appeared for many years."[13] Birkbeck's project aligned perfectly with the *Edinburgh Review*'s critique of British corruption, his emigration being glaring testimony of Britain's problems. Underlying Brougham's account was a conviction that government in the United States was relatively inexpensive. Corruption burdened the British people with such a debt that, "Whoever prefers his own to any other country as a place of residence, must be content to pay an enormous price for the gratification of his wish." Birkbeck's patriotism could not be faulted: "Such persons as Mr Birkbeck are inducd to emigrate by the defects which at present exist in our system of administration." Those who remained needed to "redouble their exertions in favour of a necessary reform."[14]

Brougham emphatically warned of America's rising power: "Where is this prodigious increase of numbers, this vast extension of dominion, to end? What bounds has Nature set to the progress of this mighty nation? Let our jealousy burn as it may; let our intolerance of America be as unreasonably violent as we please; still it is plain, that she is a power in spite of us, rapidly rising to supremacy."[15] An unreformed Britain would soon fall behind the young republic.

To the *Edinburgh Review*, however, America's potency never equaled perfection. Brougham maintained a moral superiority by being selectively disapproving of certain aspects of America. Birkbeck's entry into the United States at Norfolk and his brief, uncomfortable time in the American South, allowed for the condemnation of slavery.[16] The *Edinburgh Review*'s writers needed not endorse all parts of the American experiment but only those pertinent to their own situation. Whig visions of America varied considerably; region and topic under consideration mattered, as did the British situation at the time. Illinois in 1818 was useful to the *Edinburgh Review*, helpful to illuminating the need for reform at home.

Ironically, the *Edinburgh Review* had been somewhat critical of Birkbeck just a few years before. In a review of *Notes on a Journey through France* by "Moses" Birkbeck, his sanguine view of Britain's continental adversary was given a mixed review. Birkbeck was a "shrewd observer" and "experienced farmer" but exceedingly sympathetic to the French Revolution and its effects.[17] Since its founding, the *Edinburgh Review* had treated France's recent history

with ambiguity, mostly defending the Revolution's early moderates – Turgot, Quesnay, and Mirabeau – while decrying the chorus of Tory demagogues in Britain who unceasingly rallied against ubiquitous French atheism and Jacobinism.[18] However, as Biancameria Fontana has noted, when it came to describing the *actual* Revolution, the arch-Tory *Quarterly Review* and *Edinburgh Review* were not so distant.[19] The *Edinburgh* reviewers were *anti*-anti-Jacobin but would not endorse Birkbeck's positive portrait of France. If the reform debate needed be fought on foreign soil, America, not France, was a choice battlefield.

The Whig view of America would not go unchallenged. The London *Quarterly Review*, founded in 1809 as a rival to the *Edinburgh Review,* was a worthy challenger when it came to the subject of the English Prairie. William Gifford directed the assault on Birkbeck for Britain's most important Tory journal, ridiculing the "new Albion." Gifford, the *Quarterly Review*'s heavy-handed editor and self-anointed expert on the United States, was an outspoken critic of the fledgling republic, having co-authored, with John Barrow, a rather infamous review of Charles Jared Ingersoll's *Inchiquin's Letters* (1810) that appeared in the January 1814 issue of the *Quarterly*. Unlike the somewhat ambivalent *Edinburgh Review*, the *Quarterly*'s depictions of America were easy to characterize – as almost uniformly negative. The Tory reviewers found cultural anarchy, negligent government, and dearth of religion in America – proof against the desirability of reform.

From the 1790s on, Tories had worried that the United States would do France's biding and join in conflict against Britain. With the Emperor exiled to St. Helena, the United States could be seen without a Gallican lens, the "intervening distractions" (the Jacobins and Bonparte) having been eliminated.[20] Unfortunately for Anglo-American cultural relations, Waterloo and the Treaty of Ghent only began a new, more virulent campaign in the Paper War. Though the Franco-American threat had dissipated, a fresh look at America's growing potency combined with disorder of home and emigration fears to produce a more intensive wave of Americaphobic anxiety.

After reading Barrow's draft review of *Notes on a Journey in America*, Gifford welcomed his publisher's invitation to improve the article: "I am very glad that you have sent Birkbeck. He appears to me *the most dangerous man that ever yet wrote from America*, and is likely to do us much mischief. Our friend has missed his character; and I have nearly re-written the Article."[21] That a Surrey farmer's emigration to America would provoke such apprehension underscores the unease of the time.

Barrow and Gifford's combined efforts resulted in a particularly notorious review. An "imitator of a *gentleman* farmer," Birkbeck deserted farm, landlord, and country. The reviewers mocked Birkbeck's taste for trans-Appalachia, finding Birkbeck's disappointment at the primitive condition of Pittsburgh, a town that had been puffed up by the Americans, to be amusing and ironic. Birkbeck's promotion of Illinois was similarly fraudulent: "He is already familiar with 'the American figure of anticipation,' and, like his adopted countrymen, 'contemplates what *may be*, as though it were in actual existence.'"[22]

Barrow and Gifford warned that an absence of public religious life made the English Prairie's demise inevitable: "There is not one syllable mentioned of religious instruction, nor one set apart for any kind of public worship." "Friend Morris," like his adopted countrymen, was motivated only by greed: "He no longer deals in insinuations, but openly avows his total disregard and dislike to religion under whatever form it may appear.... Self-interest is the predominant motive and the end of every measure." Birkbeck became emblematic of the United States, where disestablishment left society degraded, and individual trumped community.[23]

The religious question was fundamental for the *Quarterly* reviewers, their obsession with preserving the Established Church resulting from Birkbeck's avowed radicalism. "This is Christmas day [1817]," Birkbeck noted in the *Letters from Illinois*, "and seems to be kept as a pure holiday – merely a day of relaxation and amusement: those that choose, observe it *religiously*." Nor were births and deaths commemorated by religious ceremony: "Children are not

baptized or subjected to any superstitious rite; the parents name them, and that is all: and the last act of the drama is as simple as the first. There is no consecrated burial place, or funeral service." Birkbeck flaunted his controversial opinions: "After this *deplorable* account, you will not wonder when you hear of earthquakes and tornados amongst us."[24]

In contrast, the *Edinburgh* reviewers, who favored political rights for dissenters, including Catholic emancipation, cherished the effects of American religious disestablishment:

> [The Americans] have fairly and completely …extinguished that spirit of religious persecution …not only that persecution which imprisons and scourges for religious opinions, but the tyranny of incapacitation, which, by disqualifying from civil offices, and cutting a man off from the lawful objects of ambition, endeavours to strangle religious freedom in silence, and to enjoy all the advantages, without the blood and noise and fire of persecution.[25]

The Americans were "devout without being unjust." What appeared to be religious apathy was actually the absence of religious animosity.[26] The *Edinburgh*'s writers were a skeptical/indifferent bunch when it came to organized religion, having even gone to some lengths to defend David Hume's piety.[27] It is, however, interesting to note that in the pages of their journal the reviewers defended a positive notion of American religiosity and *not* Birkbeck's rabid anti-clericalism. To endorse the later would have been impolitic. The *Edinburgh Review* also failed to mention Birkbeck's radical pronouncements about escaping from English traditions, hierarchy, etc. The Whig reviewers portrayed Birkbeck as a moderate, sensible man with real grievances against his government, a shining example of the need for reform.

As was readily apparent to critical readers, reviewers were clearly less focused on matters that concerned emigrant farmers than with the hypothetical implications of the disestablishment of religion and political reform. The possibilities for Old England, not New America, were at issue.[28] The *Quarterly*'s Gifford and Barrow emphatically denied any crisis. England was an "elastic country" that was now "basking in the broad sunshine of peace and prosperity." "Her soil," the Tory reviewers explained, "is covered with the richest blessings of heaven; the busy hum of industry is heard in all her streets; every port is crowded; and oceans groan under the fleets that are posting towards her with every wind that blows." Those who would "wage war with the bears and red Indians of the 'back-woods' of America" would not be missed. Englishmen of modest means should be content to "possess a little cottage, with a few roods of land, perched on the skirts of a smiling common, mantled with the golden furze and the purple heath, than as many thousand acres of the 'pine barrens' and 'savannahs' of either New or Old America."[29] In Tory eyes, the English Prairie was an exercise in deculturation.

Birkbeck's letters from America were just the spark that ignited several years of controversy. Travelers immediately found the English Prairie a worthy destination, resulting in waves of controversy in the reviews, the first resulting from Henry Bradshaw Fearon's *Sketches of America* (1818), an Americaphobic travel classic. Possibly the English Prairie's most vicious detractor, Fearon combined criticisms of democracy with displeasure at the low level of frontier civilization. A London physician and wine merchant, Fearon was sent by thirty-nine middling Essex farm families to judge the prospects for emigration to America. An Americaphile before his trip, Fearon soon came to detest much about American society, particularly in the West, separated from English civilization.[30]

Fearon's polemic against Birkbeck consumed his *Sketches*. Fearon damned Illinois' settlers, preferring the "genuine *uncontaminated* Indian" to the "half-civilized and half-savage" American frontiersmen. "Duels are frequent," he explained. "The dirk is an inseparable companion of all classes; and the laws are robbed of their terror, by not being firmly and equally administered." The West was devoid of culture: "I have not seen a book in the hands of any person since I left Philadelphia."[31] Illinois was territory for land-jobbers, not gentlemen. The West became America's future, and maybe Europe's – egalitarian, crude, and prone to violence.[32]

Fearon's "Introductory Remarks" revealed the depth of the crisis facing Britain and the symbolism of the hunt for a place for emigration, a venture bound to produce what James Chandler has described as "anxieties of exodus"[33]:

> Emigration had, at the time of my appointment, assumed a totally new character: it was no longer merely the poor, the idle, the profligate, or the wildly speculative, who were proposing to quit their native country; but men also of capital, of industry, of sober habits and regular pursuits; men of reflection, who apprehended approaching evils; men of upright and conscientious minds, to whose happiness civil and religious liberty were essential; and men of domestic feelings, who wished to provide for the future support and prosperity of their offspring.[34]

The prospect of a mass emigration of talented Englishmen combined with Birkbeck's outspoken politics to exacerbate fears of increasing American might.

Nineteenth-century Britain is often viewed through the lens of the relatively stable and prosperous Victorian era, making it easy to forget that the final years of the Regency (1811–1820) and first years of George IV's reign (1820–1830) were remarkably tumultuous. Britain had defeated Napoleon only to face the prospect of collapse at home, fears reflected in both the *Quarterly* and *Edinburgh* reviews. As Asa Briggs noted, "historians have chosen these tense years between Waterloo and Peterloo as the nearest point Britain ever reached to social revolution."[35] Many contemporaries thought so. Francis Jeffrey shared his fears in a tense *Edinburgh Review* article published in October 1819: "Every reflecting man in this country has of late been impressed with the very serious apprehensions respecting its future welfare."[36] The Tory *Quarterly*'s writings on America during the period are also ripe with fear but contain an additional concern – that the liberal obsession with America was adding fuel to the fire.

Fearon's letters warning against emigration were all for naught. He hurried back to England to plead his case without even visiting the English Prairie (as if he really needed to). It was too late. Samuel Thompson, Fearon's father-in-law and leader of the thirty-nine families, had already commissioned Flower to purchase 9000 acres in Edwards County.[37] Fearon may have failed, but subsequent travelers built on his portrayal of Illinois as a fertile country with degenerate people.

The *Quarterly Review* (January 1819) quickly responded to Fearon's book with a forty-two page review authored by Barrow. *Sketches of America* was the perfect gift for a Tory reviewer: Fearon went to the United States a committed Americaphile and returned to England an anti-democratic Americaphobe. Barrow mocked Fearon, who had arrived in the United States a "democrat fieffé" with a "sovereign contempt for the civil and religious institutions" of England and "blind and sottish admiration of those of America, of which he knew nothing at all."[38]

Barrow did acknowledge Britain's troubles, a testimony to the depth of crisis facing British in 1819, a year described by Briggs as "one of the most troubled …of the nineteenth century."[39] Barrow also, however, questioned the patriotism of English farmers who thrived during the war but were now "too selfish to endure any reduction of their extravagant profits" to help their country out of crisis. The thirty-nine families ignored ties of blood and society, trampling over their forefathers' graves "to deposit their wealth where it may be safe from the claims of their native land." Fearon was possessed with *patriophobia*. The English Prairie was an "unbounded flat of swamps and forests" whose inhabitants were a "medley group of Indian hunters, squatters, land jobbers, lawyers, doctors, and farmers occupying lands on speculation."[40] Barrow again showed his obsession with the religious question: "We fear, indeed, that there is very little religion of any kind in the greater portion of the United States." The link between disestablishment and poor morals, American democracy and American decline, was obvious: "The evil in North America has a deeper root, the total absence of early religious instruction."[41]

The *Edinburgh Review*'s Sydney Smith reviewed Fearon's *Sketches* together with three other travel narratives in the December 1818 issue. Smith began by reiterating the importance of the emigration discussion: "These four books …contain a great deal of information and amusement;

and will probably decide the fate, and direct the footsteps, of many human beings, seeking a better lot than the Old World can afford them." Though Fearon was "a little given to exaggeration in his views," overall, Smith was more moderate in his criticism of Fearon than Brougham had been in his praise of Birkbeck. The change in tone illustrated the fluidity of Whig image-making of America and their tendency to use specific aspects of the American example to criticize explicit British flaws rather than give a blanket endorsement of American superiority. British shortcomings were more than matched by a supreme American defect:

> The great curse of America is the institution of Slavery – of itself far more than the foulest blot upon their national character, and an evil which counterbalances all the excisemen, licensers, and tax-gatherers of England…. And these are the men who taunt the English with their corrupt Parliament, with their buying and selling votes. Let the world judge which is the most liable to censure – We who, in the midst of our rottenness, have torn off the manacles of slaves all over the world; – or they who, with their idle purity, and useless perfection, have remained mute and careless, while groans echoed and whips clank'd round the very walls of their spotless Congress.[42]

By arranging these parallel barbarities – British corruption with American slavery – the *Edinburgh Review* was able to retain the moral high ground. The *Edinburgh* reviewers' purpose was to reform British politics, never to mimic the United States.[43]

Birkbeck went without mention by name, though at the conclusion of his article, Smith addressed the emigration question: "A wise man should be quite sure he has so irresistible a plea, before he ventures on the Great or the Little Wabash. He should be quite sure that he does not go there from ill temper – or to be pitied – or to be regretted – or from ignorance of what is to happen to him – or because he is a poet – But because he has not enough to eat here, and is sure of abundance where he is going."[44] The American West was a sometimes useful locale for the Whig reviewers, not really a desirable one.

As the English Prairie settlements struggled to attract inhabitants, Illinois' extraordinary role in the battle of the reviews continued. In the April 1822 issue, the *Quarterly Review* again addressed the English Prairie. William Tell Harris' *Remarks made during a Tour* (1821), Adlard Welby's *Visit to North America and the English Settlements* (1821), Richard Flower's *Letters from the Illinois* (1822), and Frances Wright's *Views of Society and Manners* (1821) provided fuel for John Barrow's renewed criticism of the United States, as well as the reform movement at home.[45] Barrow condemned the authors under review for sharing the same traitorous motive – a desire to investigate the United States as a destination for emigrants.

The *Quarterly* savored the negative reports that Harris and Welby gave of the "western paradise" of the English Prairie. Birkbeck was a "hard-hearted, selfish, greedy, avaricious and unprincipled land-jobber…. There are thousands of our poor countrymen who have been seduced from their homes…. They cannot return, and the land of their birth will know them no more." Great Britain could do without "her Fearons, her Flowers, and her Birkbecks." Britain was the best poor man's country: "With all our drawbacks …there is no country in the world where the mass of the people are so well fed, clothed and lodged, as in England; where life and property are so well protected and secured, and where real and rational liberty, the Englishman's birthright, is so fully and so effectually enjoyed."[46]

A proxy battleground for British polemics, the controversy over the English Prairie tells us more about the debate's participants than it does about Illinois' early statehood. The periodicals' commentaries on the English Prairie, and America generally, were suited to their reading of the situation in Britain. As John Stuart Mill later remarked of the quarterlies' use of books about America in British political debate, "For many years, every book of travels in America had been a party pamphlet, or had at least fallen among partisans, and been pressed into the service of one party or of the other."[47] None of the reviewers had even been to Illinois. The diverse traits attributed to Illinois by the leading Whig and Tory periodicals might be compared to an episode given

by Dror Wahrman in his *Imagining the Middle Class* (1995). Wahrman analyzes the two very different conclusions presented in the *Edinburgh Review* and *Quarterly Review* in review articles of travel books on Sicily. The Whig *Edinburgh Review* praised the middling parts of Sicilian society; the Tory *Quarterly Review* deftly concentrated on the higher and lower orders. Such "divergence of social description" was common to the periodicals' depiction of social order on the English Prairie.[48]

The *Edinburgh Review*'s eager embrace of Birkbeck was noteworthy but no indication of an incurable love of America or Illinois. Brougham had explained that Birkbeck's emigration had honest motives, but later Whig writers were not as charitable to those who would leave, strongly discouraging emigration to Illinois in the early 1840s for fear that a Mormon exodus would deprive the English economy of skilled workers.[49] By that time, Whigs had been in and out of government leadership for more than a decade and had achieved substantive reform in 1832. Whigs could take credit for Britain's prosperity and strived to help in its continuation. The English Prairie had served as a tool for the *Edinburgh Review* to illuminate the problems facing Britain, in the post-Napoleonic War period.[50] America was a weapon that could be unsheathed when needed in the reform debate, but even a few years later, the American example no longer had a strong rationale. The journal's tributes to the English Prairie were never really about the future of Illinois, but rather that of Great Britain.[51]

Praise for Birkbeck and frontier Illinois must also be reconciled with the *Edinburgh Review*'s taste for advanced commercial society. The Scottish reviewers had done their part to bring Whig thought into the nineteenth century through an embrace of contemporary political economy, which makes the English Prairie a seemingly incongruent subject of focus. Edwards County was economically primeval, with hardly a hint of any division of labor or the arts of an advanced, commercial society. Birkbeck, a representative victim of the archaic English system, suited Whig political critique. That a wealthy, talented man would choose refuge in America was the best evidence of British shortcomings. As John Clive explained in his magnificent *Scotch Reviewers* (1957), the *Edinburgh* reviewers valued three traits together as a yardstick for admiration – "culture, virtue, and industry."[52] Birkbeck was strong in the last two, adequate in the first, yet denied a civic life. Something was amiss in Britain.

The Whigs promoted a vision of America that highlighted certain political aspects, particularly what they supposed to be the unobtrusive and unornamented nature of American government. The New Republic lacked the venality of Europe and provided useful symbolism. The absence of powdered wigs and robes in the American courtroom was especially attractive. As Sydney Smith explained, "The Americans …are the first persons who have discarded the taylor …and his auxiliary the barber…. [A judge] is obeyed, however: and life and property are not badly protected in the United States." More generally, Smith claimed that "the example of America will in many instances tend to open the eyes of Englishmen to their true interests."[53]

The *Edinburgh Review* was also doubtful that democratic aspects of the American experiment were relevant to Britain. Causes for American stability were rationalized. As explained in James Mackintosh's review of Jeremy Bentham's *Plan for Parliamentary Reform* (1817), broad suffrage in America worked only because of very special circumstances: "There is no part of their people in the situation where democracy is dangerous…. They had no populace; and the greater part of them are either landlords, or just about to be so."[54] Americans were fortunately too busy making money to be swayed by demagogues.[55] Praise for Birkbeck and Illinois in no way resembled panegyric for rule of the common people.[56]

The Whigs could either take it or leave it when it came to the United States. Their pragmatic approach to America allowed for outright condemnation of certain characteristics. Slavery was routinely criticized, as seen above. American cultural deficiency was also an obsession, as apparent in Smith's review of Fearon: "Literature the Americans have none – no native literature, we

mean…. Prairies, steam-boats, grist-mills, are their natural objects for centuries to come. Then, when they have got to the Pacific Ocean – epic poems, plays, pleasures of memory, and all the elegant gratifications of an antient [sic] people who have tamed the wild earth, and set down to amuse themselves. – This is the march of human affairs."[57] Smith's query in the January 1820 *Edinburgh Review* would trouble Americans for decades: "Who reads an American book?" Criticism of culture (or lack of it) appeared simultaneously with praise for the English Prairie, evidence of mixed Whig opinion regarding America. When Whigs spoke of advanced civil society and corresponding refinement of the arts, none of the United States, particularly the primitive westernmost, was a model.

William Faux's *Memorable Days in America: Being a Journal of a Tour to the United States, Principally Undertaken to Ascertain, by Positive Evidence, the Condition and Probable Prospects of British Emigrants; including Accounts of Mr. Birkbeck's Settlement in the Illinois* (1823) spawned another episode in the Paper War. As shown in the elongated title, Faux's book was a polemic against Birkbeck. Faux introduced himself as a "simple farmer." His self-proclaimed "sense of patriotic duty" prompted a visit to America. Faux left for America in January 1819 and visited Illinois in November of that year. He damned previous travelers' and emigrants' accounts: "All have over-rated America. Hope told her a flattering, lying tale, and they believed her to their own undoing. A visit to this country will increase an Englishman's love for his own." Liberty in America "means to do to each as he pleases; to care for nothing and nobody, and cheat everybody."[58] Though *Memorable Days* was not published until 1823, Faux's work reflected the bitter atmosphere of 1819 when fears of mass emigration, and even revolution, haunted Tory and Whig alike.

The *Quarterly Review*'s Barrow and Gifford again combined to write a lengthy article (July 1823), devoted solely to Faux's provocative book. Their review was more notorious than the actual book, a litany of their previous complaints against American democracy with an even stronger condemnation of British Americaphiles. Barrow and Gifford reveled in stories of Englishmen who had been "seduced" by Birkbeck's *Letters* into journeying into the wilderness. The "new" Albion was already in a state of decay. Farms around the settlement were only "partially cultivated." Birkbeck had failed: "He is, in fact, what we long ago said he was, a mere land-jobber; he has, however, deceived himself, as well as others, and made but a sorry job of it. Indeed Friend Morris appears to have less worldly wisdom than we were willing to give him credit for." The West was long-fated to remain without civilization: "Long ages must pass away before the population, now thinly spread over the immense vale of the Mississippi, will become sufficiently dense to render any part of it a desirable habitation for civilized beings."[59]

Barrow and Gifford's conclusion as to the cause of the English Prairie's impending failure (and the entire American Republic's eventual demise) again illustrated that essential Tory principle – the unity of church and state:

> We are very much inclined to ascribe the vicious and heartless conduct of the Americans …to the total disregard of religion on the part of the government. This fatal mistake, in framing their constitution, has been productive of the most injurious consequences to the morals of the people; for to expect that men will cultivate virtue and morality, and neglect religion, is to know very little of human nature. The want of an established national religion has made the bulk of the people either infidels or fanatics.[60]

Though extremely repetitive, the *Quarterly*'s continuing depiction of America as a country without religion reflected the exigencies that framed High Tory image making of America. Birkbeck's use of America to preach reform and disestablishment could not stand. The *Quarterly Review*'s biased ("anti-American", to use an anachronistic term) commentaries on the United States were not gratuitous but instead a precipitant of competing pro-American views. From a Tory perspective, Americaphilism was particularly dangerous during this time of post-war crisis and escalating emigration.

The *Edinburgh Review* failed to defend Birkbeck after the initial spate of articles in 1818. The Scottish reviewers ignored books that might have served Birkbeck's cause, including John Wood's sympathetic *Two Years' Residence in the Settlement on the English Prairie* (1822) and Birkbeck's pamphlet, "An Address to the Farmers of Great Britain" (1822). Nor was the English Prairie even mentioned in Sydney Smith's July 1824 treatment in the *Edinburgh Review* of William Blane's *Excursion through the United States and Canada* (1824) though Blane had given a balanced, first-hand description of the then five-year-old settlements. The English Prairie episode had played out its usefulness in Whig eyes. In 1818, Birkbeck personified the victimization of dissenters and the hope for American-inspired reforms. Unfortunately, his project had never really gotten off the ground, making Edwards County a somewhat dubious battleground.

More generally, as the British economy improved, and crisis atmosphere abated, the *Edinburgh Review* seemed to have lost its taste for American topics, at least until the revival of the reform debate in the late 1820s. David Paul Crook listed no articles on America in the *Edinburgh Review* for the nearly five-year period after Smith's July 1824 article and June 1829![61] American topics had been very familiar to the journal's longtime readers. Susan Oliver's bibliography of *Edinburgh Review* articles dealing with North America notes 42 articles between the first issue in October 1802 and August 1820, including fifteen articles during the *Edinburgh*'s first five years of existence and ten articles in the five-year period following Waterloo.[62]

Though John Quincy Adams-era America may have bored the Scots, I believe that the key factor in the decline of a previously favored topic was the changed situation in Britain, namely, a relaxation of the crisis and relative lull in the reform debate. Despite the *Edinburgh Review*'s personal and professional connections with the United States – Jeffery's wartime trip to the United States and marriage to an American, Brougham's encouragement of American political causes, and the periodical's strong ties with counterparts at American reviews – America was an instrument, not an enduring addiction, for the Scottish reviewers.[63]

In 1824, Radicals, not Whigs, took the lead in defending America. Peregrine Bingham's critique of Gifford and Barrow's review appeared in the very first issue of James and John Stuart Mill's new Benthamite periodical, the *Westminster Review*. As John Stuart Mill later explained in his *Autobiography* (1873), the *Westminster Review* was founded to provide a progressive alternative to the timid *Edinburgh Review*.[64] The *Westminster* reviewers were certainly more zealous than Whigs in embracing the United States and even attacked Washington Irving for not being American enough.[65]

Bingham's review of a review provided a remarkable forum to criticize Tory conceptions about American democracy: "A fitter opportunity could scarcely have presented itself for estimating the candour, knowledge, and integrity of that Review, – and for developing the process by which it fabricates a representation calculated to flatter the passions and prejudices of those who entertain an instinctive hatred of responsible and economical government."[66] It was a testimony to the importance of periodical literature of the era that Bingham, undoubtedly with the encouragement of the Mills, called out the *Quarterly*'s article but not Faux's book.

Bingham complained that the *Quarterly* article contained 32 pages of only the most unflattering particulars from Faux's book, namely the "details of individual instances of ferocity, violence, knavery, boasting and vulgarity, disappointment, failure, despondency, bad soils, bad climates, bad food, discomfort, dirt, and barbarism – all on the debtor side of the account, without hinting at the existence of a single item on the creditor side."[67] The myopic Tories also misjudged the causes of America deficiency:

> It would not have suited his [the *Quarterly* reviewer's] purpose; which, from his sneers at the "Land of Freedom," and irrepressible expressions of hatred towards republican government, we may fairly assume to be, an endeavour to persuade the reader that the evils, physical and moral, inseparable from every infant state of society, are altogether the result of American institutions, or rather the absence

of an established church, the Quarterly reviewer discovers the cause of every offence committed in the United States.[68]

Defense of American disestablishment was front and center for Bingham. In fact, the Americans were a more devout people than Anglicans, who, "without bestowing a single thought on religion …say their prayers, go to church, nod through half the service, and pay tithes without a murmur."[69] America's lack of refinement was a product of America's youthful circumstances and would abate as frontier conditions mitigated.[70]

In another article within the same first issue of the *Westminster Review*, Bingham provided a detailed analysis of the English Prairie. Though frontier circumstances would long trouble the American West, the Edwards County settlements were promising. Birkbeck had done what he could to build a pleasant existence. His family enjoyed "every comfort, and many of the elegancies of European life; books, music, & c." The biggest threat to the settlements was not religious disestablishment or republicanism but rather the feud between Flower and Birkbeck, two Englishmen.[71]

Radical travelers took Birkbeck's cause as their own, providing more spirited defenses of the English Prairie than that given by Bingham. Thomas Hulme's *Journal made during a Tour of the Western Counties of America* (1818) gave one of the earliest accounts of the English Prairie and was emblematic of how Radicals might use the West. Hulme, a Manchester bleacher, promised to answer "Whether the Atlantic, or the Western, Countries were the best for *English Farmer* to settle in."[72] Uninhibited praise of the United States amplified his criticism of Britain: "[In the United States] I saw an absence of human misery. I saw a government taking away a very small portion of men's earnings. I saw ease and happiness and a fearless utterance of thought every where prevail…. I heard of no mobs, no riots, no spies, no transportings, no hangings."[73]

Perhaps already convinced that he would find the region favorable to eastern America, Hulme set out for the West, visiting Illinois in late June of 1818. His depiction of the English Prairie was uncomplicatedly positive. The surroundings were picturesque: "These prairies, which are surrounded with lofty woods, put me in mind of immense noblemen's parks in England."[74] Birkbeck and his family were cheerful and healthy, and the settlements showed signs of impending prosperity. Few settlers had joined, but Birkbeck was well prepared. The English Prairie would thrive, especially due to the superior agricultural skills of Birkbeck and the other Englishmen. In Illinois, all could enjoy noble landscapes without living like the parasitical aristocracy of England.[75]

Fanny Wright, a young Scottish reformer with sanguine views of the United States, gave possibly the most favorable praise of Birkbeck's Illinois experiment in her *Views of Society in America* (1821). Wright advised Americans to "laugh in good humor" at the work of Fearon and others among the "ignorant and the prejudiced," who criticized the United States.[76] Relying on a friend's account, Wright employed picturesque language to describe the English Prairie: "The prairie in which it stands is described as exquisitely beautiful: lawns of unchanging verdure, spreading over hills and dales, scattered with islands of luxuriant trees, dropped by the hand of nature with a taste that art could not rival – all this spread beneath a sky of glowing and unspotted sapphires."[77] Wright provided a favorable physical description of a place that she had not seen, proof of the importance of Birkbeck to Radicals.

Unlike the *Edinburgh* reviewers, Wright, who would herself later attempt a settlement for freed slaves in Tennessee, accentuated the radical, anti-hierarchal qualities of Birkbeck's experiment. She did not wish for a *new* Albion in North America, but rather a new society, devoid of any remnants of English feudalism. Wright praised the "vigorous intellect and liberal sentiments" of Birkbeck and advised immigrants to clear their minds of lingering British prejudices. Wright also disparaged anglicized New *England*. The manly, self-assured western states, having never enjoyed formal connections with Great Britain, were humanity's brightest hope.[78]

Other leading Radical and Benthamite figures, including Thomas Love Peacock, an East India Company official and *Westminster* reviewer, took notice of the English Settlement in Illinois. Peacock deified Birkbeck: “Birkbeck’s *Notes on America* have fixed the public attention on that country in an unprecedented degree…. Multitudes are following his example…. He is a man of vigorous intellect, who thinks deeply and described admirably…. The picture he presents of the march of cultivation and of population beyond the Ohio is one of the most wonderful spectacles ever yet presented to the mind’s eye of philosophy.”[79] Whigs had used the United States as a weapon to bludgeon the Tory establishment; Radicals went further in promoting the United States as a model.

The Bostonian *North American Review* (founded 1814) provides an interesting comparison on the subject of the English Prairie. The *North American Review* has been described as the American “counterpart” to the *Edinburgh Review*.[80] Friendship, as well as circumstance, united American Federalists and British Whigs, both of whom had been out of power for some time and needed to accommodate to unfavorable political and cultural trends. The *North American Review* split with the *Edinburgh Review* over the English Prairie, however. Within the *North American Review*’s conservative mindset, Birkbeck’s criticisms of the British establishment were destructive: “If instead of filling his pages with sneers at religion, or with tiresome newspaper declamations about English politics …he had given us more full accounts of the country where he settled, – of its scenery, its natural productions, its soil and climate, – the book would have been more worthy of the attention of a general reader.”[81] It is telling that the *North American Review* disparaged Birkbeck and his critic Faux alike.[82] Birkbeck played a destabilizing role, his miniscule western settlement being a stalking horse in the British reform debate that threatened to drag American politics and religion further to the left.[83] Though Tory criticisms of Birkbeck were fundamentally harsher, the *North American Review* and *Quarterly Review* were bedfellows on the issue of the English prairie; neither could tolerate the symbolism of Birkbeck’s experiment in the West.[84]

The English Prairie Fades

After the *Westminster Review*’s January 1824 article, the English Prairie failed to attract much attention. The reviews had focused on the tiny settlements for six fruitful years, an indication of how seriously Birkbeck was taken. The United States receded into the background until the late 1820s/early 1830s when Basil Hall’s *Travels in North America* (1829) and Fanny Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832) inserted America into the reform debate, re-energizing the contest over the making of images of the United States in Britain.[85]

The English Prairie never grew to the expectations of its founders or the fears of its critics, an abject failure with lots of flash and not much substance. According to an informal census taken in 1822, Wanborough counted only 68 people whose surname was something other than Birkbeck! Albion contained a robust 170 inhabitants.[86] Though both observers and immigrants blamed Birkbeck for being a better promoter than community planner, his plans for a thriving agricultural community also suffered from unforeseen circumstances, including drought in 1818–19. The Panic of 1819 and disintegration of markets worldwide meant lower prices than Birkbeck had promised. Some recent arrivals spent the last of their savings on a return ticket home, hateful of Birkbeck.[87] Ironically, factors that had raised interest in the English Prairie contributed to its failure as economic contagion followed Birkbeck across the Atlantic. Travelers stopped visiting, and periodicals quit writing about the English Prairie, as more attention went to Robert Owen’s ambitious New Harmony, Indiana cooperative. The Erie Canal opened in October of 1825, shifting Illinois’ future prosperity to Chicago and the northern part of the state. The Great Lakes, and not the Ohio and Mississippi rivers, became the best outlet for Illinois farmers.[88] Charles Dickens traveled

through Illinois in the 1840s but failed to mention the English Prairie in his *American Notes* (1842), instead making Cairo and the "Looking-glass Prairie" near St. Louis the focal point for pejorative commentary on the American West.

Birkbeck did not live long enough to see much of the history of the state he had done so much to promote. He drowned on June 4, 1825 while crossing the Fox River after visiting Owen. Birkbeck's body was found the next day, his right hand still clutching a green umbrella, evidence of a lingering material Englishness.[89] Birkbeck's Wanborough soon disappeared, and the Birkbeck family's English Prairie experience ended rather suddenly. A daughter and two of his sons left for the new Mexican republic. Another daughter moved to Australia. George Flower, spirit broken and drained of his fortune by the failure of the English Prairie, remained in Albion until 1849 when financial dire straits (only $2.50 remaining of his previous fortune) forced him into taking a job as a hotel manager in Mt. Vernon, Indiana. Flower and his wife made their home in Mt. Vernon until they died on the same day in 1862.[90] Today, Albion has a population of slightly less than 2000 and an economy based on agriculture and light industry, according to United States Census figures.

The failure of the English Prairie has blinded us to its importance for Anglo-American cultural history of the period. As James Chandler has noted, "It is hard to come to terms with Birkbeck's importance in his own time when in ours he is so little known."[91] For at least a few years, the American experience became identified with Birkbeck's Illinois, as Britain and the United States struggled to define their identities, vis-à-vis one other, in the midst of political and economic crisis. Birkbeck attempted to make western America a workshop for the creation of solutions to Britain's crisis, to the elation of proponents of reform and the consternation of British conservatives. Both the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* reviews spent a remarkable number of pages on the English Prairie at the very height of their circulations.[92] Gifford's assertion about Birkbeck being the "most dangerous man" may, in retrospect, sound preposterous but illustrates the Illinois Prairie's centrality to the contest of molding images of the United States in Britain. Likewise, Brougham's claim that Birkbeck had written "of one of the most interesting and instructive books" rings hollow in light of Birkbeck's contemporaries (Bentham, Byron, Goethe, James Mill, Ricardo, and Scott, to name a few) but should be read with complete seriousness. That staid critics would make such claims speaks volumes. Faux, Birkbeck's unforgiving critic, also magnified the importance of his nemesis – "No man, since Columbus, has done so much towards peopling America as Mr. Birkbeck" – again an unsustainable claim, but, nonetheless, an indication of the intensity of the obsession with the English Prairie.[93]

Though all three journals created myopic perspectives of America, I believe that the *Edinburgh*'s had some attributes superior to the others. Tory and Radical commentaries on America were both invested in extremely dogmatic versions of America's future. The *Quarterly* depicted the United States to be without religion and predicted the Republic's catastrophic failure. Radicals empowered themselves to reform Britain by America's example, emphasizing a nearly prelapsarian view of America. Such a perspective required the United States' nearly complete success. Though capable of rallying party loyalists, neither the High Tory nor Radical stance provided room to maneuver.[94]

The Scottish reviewers' *via media*, incorporating praise for some political institutions and practices with a denigration of America's immature culture, avoided the nearly straightjacket approaches of the *Quarterly* and *Westminster* reviews.[95] Even within a brief measure of time, one can see a shifting, as the *Edinburgh Review* went from being a champion of Birkbeck and America to being completely silent about the United States. The periodicals' depictions of the United States, however self-referential, also needed to adapt to the changing realities, both good and bad, of the burgeoning American republic. In future decades, the United States would face both boom and bust, experience increasing creativity on the part of its citizenry, and also decisive sectionalism

and a civil war. The Whig's pragmatic view of America was not so tied to foreign events that were out of their control.

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Notes

1. Boewe, *Prairie Albion*, xi.
2. Flower, *History of the English Settlement*, 26–7.
3. Thistlethwaite, *Anglo-American Connection*, 48; Boewe, *Prairie Albion*, 6–7.
4. Mackintosh, "France," 520. Flower, *History of the English Settlement*, 26–7.
5. Boewe, *Prairie Albion*, 7; Flower, *Letters of an English Gentlewoman*, 3.
6. Flower, *History of the English Settlement*, 28.
7. Boewe, *Prairie Albion*, 8; Thistlethwaite, *Anglo-American*, 48. George Flower visited Monticello, where he spotted Birkbeck's *Notes on a Journey through France* on the bookshelf. Flower, *History of the English Settlement*, 24.
8. Birkbeck, *Notes on a Journey in America*, 48, 30, 45, 49.
9. Flower, *Letters from Lexington and the Illinois*, 92. In sharp contrast, John Ruskin later refused to visit the United States because it lacked castles! Barry Rubin and Judith Colp Rubin, *Hating America*, 54.
10. Birkbeck, *Notes on a Journey*, 9, 28.
11. Birkbeck, *Letters from Illinois*, 18, 40–41, 37, 39.
12. Brougham, "Notes on a Journey," 134–5.
13. Ibid., 120–21.
14. Ibid., 123, 124.
15. Ibid., 136, 137.
16. Ibid., 124–7.
17. Mackintosh, "France," 519. This previous review was *not* mentioned in the review of *Notes on a Journey*.
18. Clive, *Scotch Reviewers*, 95–9; Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics*, 15.
19. Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics*, 22.
20. Chandler, *1819*, 453.
21. Quoted in Crook, *American Democracy in English Politics,* 101. The emphasis is mine.
22. Gifford and Barrow, "Birkbeck's Notes," 55, 77, 62. See also Barrow, "Fearon's Sketches," 151; Barrow, "Views, Visits, Tours," 78; Birkbeck, *Notes on a Journey*, 38–9.
23. Gifford and Barrow, "Birkbeck's Notes," 72, 74.
24. Birkbeck, *Letters from Illinois*, 24, 25, 24. Albion was given a more openly religious character, mostly through the efforts of Richard Birkbeck. Boewe, *Prairie Albion*, 114–15.
25. Sydney Smith, "America," 429.
26. Smith, "America," 430; Smith, "Travellers in America," 144–5.
27. Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics*, 87, 90.
28. Reviewers of this era took extreme latitude within their articles, often showing an ignorance of the book under examination, a larger goal being to score debate points in broader polemics. As seen above, the *Edinburgh Review*'s gave Birkbeck the given name Moses in the review of his book on France. *The Quarterly Review*'s January 1814 review of Charles Jared Ingersoll's *Inchiquin's Letters* misspelled the title of the book being reviewed. Sydney Smith's flippant remark that, "I never read a book before reviewing it; it prejudices a man so" had a grain of truth for this generation of literary men. Quoted in Pearson, *The Smith of Smiths*, 54.
29. Gifford and Barrow, "Notes on a Journey," 77, 78.
30. The elongated title of Fearon's work told of the centrality of Birkbeck and the English Prairie to his mission: *Sketches of America: A Narrative of a Journey of Five Thousand Miles Through the Eastern and Western States of America; Contained in Eight Reports addressed to the Thirty-Nine English Families by whom the Author was deputed, in June 1817, to ascertain whether any, and what part of the United States would be suitable for their Residence, with Remarks on Mr. Birkbeck's "Notes" and "Letters"* (London, 1818). Some believed that Robert Southey, the Poet Laureate, had written *Sketches of America*. Boewe, *Prairie Albion*, 158.

31. Fearon, *Sketches*, 261, 262, 249.
32. Fearon's critique of the West built on previous accounts by Charles William Janson and Thomas Ashe, both of whom portrayed the American frontier as a violent, forbidding place, unworthy for emigrants. Janson, *Stranger in America* (1807); Ashe, *Travels in America* (1809).
33. Chandler, *England in 1819*, 459.
34. Fearon, *Narrative of a Journey*, vii–viii.
35. Asa Briggs, *Age of Improvement*, 208.
36. Jeffrey, "State of the Country," *Edinburgh Review* 32 (October 1819), 293; Chandler, *England in 1819*, 20–22, 84.
37. Fearon's letters, along with the growing chorus of criticism against the English Prairie, may have had some effect. Only a portion of the thirty-nine families made the trip to Illinois, excluding Mr. Thompson. Only years later did Thompson's two sons emigrate to Edwards County to live on the land they had inherited. Rodman, "English Settlement in Southern Illinois", 59; Flower, *History of the English Settlement*, 321.
38. Barrow, "Fearon's *Sketches*," 125.
39. Briggs, *Age of Improvement*, 208.
40. Barrow, "Fearon's *Sketches*," 156.
41. Barrow, "Sketches," 125, 166, 132, 148.
42. Sydney Smith, "Travellers in America," 133, 146, 148.
43. As Smith explained, attempts to copy American institutions neglected tradition, and might prove dangerous: "If we were to build the house afresh, we might perhaps avail ourselves of the improvements of a new plan; but we have no short of wish to pull down an excellent house, strong, warm and comfortable, because, upon second trial, we might be able to alter and amend it, – a principle which would perpetuate demolition and construction. Our plan, where circumstances are tolerable, is to sit down and enjoy ourselves…. America is so differently situated from the old governments of Europe, that the United States afford no political precedents that are exactly applicable to our old governments." "America," 433 (footnote *), 439.
44. Smith, "Travellers in America," 150.
45. Barrow, "Views, Visits, and Tours," 71–99.
46. Barrow, "Views, Visits, and Tours," 89, 91, 99.
47. Mill, "Democracy in America," 2.
48. Wahrman, *Imagining the Middle Class*, 164, 157–8.
49. Crook, *American Democracy*, 84, note 2.
50. It would be of interest to examine if and how the full-fledged "Condition of England" debate a few years later was refracted through periodical commentary on America.
51. As James Chandler explains in regards to William Cobbett, "Cobbett needed the leverage of an *opportunity* for emigration, and the *idea* of an America to which Britons might properly be attracted, but he needed them to carry on his struggle for reform at home" (*England in 1819*, 467). Though the *Edinburgh Review* and Cobbett, who had taken refuge on Long Island, came to different conclusions about the English Prairie (Cobbett finding virtue in the American East, not West), Chandler's perceptive comment about the latter's utilitarian view of America might be applied to the Scottish reviewers as well.
52. Clive, *Scotch Reviewers*, 145.
53. Smith, "Travellers in America," 133; Smith, "America," 427. Thomas Jefferson's 1817 letter to Birkbeck illuminated the capacity of the English Prairie to work as a moral force within British politics: "You have set your country a good example, by showing them a practicable mode of reducing their rulers to the necessity of becoming more wise, more moderate, and more honest, and I sincerely pray that the example may work for the benefit of those who can not follow it, as it will for your own." Jefferson to Birkbeck, 12 July 1817 quoted in Boewe, *Prairie Albion*, 62–3.
54. Mackintosh, "Universal Suffrage," 200–201.
55. "Notes on a Journey," 138–9.
56. Both Clive, *Scotch Reviewers* and Fontana, *Rethinking the Politics* note the careful moderation of the *Edinburgh Review*'s calls for reform, at least until the late 1820s.
57. "Travellers in America," 144. As Clive noted, "The *Review* took it as axiomatic that in the realm of culture and Intellect nothing better than the mediocre could, for the time being, emerge from America." *Scotch Reviewers*, 169.
58. Faux, *Memorable Days*, viii, vii, viii, 102, 194.
59. Gifford and Barrow, "Faux – Memorable Days in America," 359, 365, 368.
60. Gifford and Barrow, "Faux – Memorable Days in America," 365.

61. Crook, *American Democracy*, 209. Crook lists four articles in the *Quarterly Review* on America during that same time period. During the next five-year period, during the debate over reform and its supposed consequences, the *Edinburgh* published eight articles on America, the *Quarterly* nine.
62. Oliver, “Edinburgh Review articles.”
63. Charvat, “Francis Jeffrey in America” 309–34.
64. Mill, *Autobiography*, 66.
65. Cairns, *British Criticisms*, 15.
66. Bingham, “*The Quarterly Review*, no. LVIII,” 250.
67. Ibid., 251.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid.
70. Benthamites, unlike the Whigs, had no inclination, either political or cultural, against fully taking up the cause of America. As David Paul Crook explained, “Unembarrassed by qualifications or hesitations, they commended full-blooded democracy, having at that stage apparently no doubts that the Republic was such a system.” The low state of American culture was not shocking to hardheaded utilitarians, the new industrial cities of northern England, Radical strongholds, not ordinarily being strong in cultural refinements. Crook, *American Democracy*, 27.
71. Bingham, “Travels of Duncan, Flint, and Faux,” 109–10.
72. William Cobbett, “Preface,” 21.
73. Hulme, “Journal,” 26.
74. Ibid., 48.
75. Ibid., 80, 81. Barrow’s vicious condemnation of Hulme illustrates the dichotomous meaning of America to Radicals and Tories: “Of all the unnatural vipers who have sucked the nutriment of their country, and then turned to sting her to death, this is the most rank and poisonous. His language is that of an infuriate demon: the foam gathers round his mouth at the mention of a priest, and curses and execrations pour in full tides from his lips whenever the name of England occurs to him. We bless Providence for having put it into the heart of such a wretch to exhale his venom elsewhere.” “Fearon’s Sketches,” 159, note‡.
76. Wright, *Views of Society and Manners*, 71.
77. Ibid., 136.
78. Ibid., 205, 183, 137.
79. Peacock, *Letters to Edward Hookham & Percy B. Shelley*, 78, as quoted in Dondore, *Prairie and the Making of Middle America*, 169.
80. Foletta, *Coming to Terms with Democracy*, 228–31.
81. Spooner, “Birkbeck’s Letters,” 359. John Bristed, a naturalized citizen of a Federalist persuasion, likewise complained that Birkbeck’s otherwise “valuable and interesting” *Notes on a Journey* contained “some Jacobin slang against England.” Bristed, *America and Her Resources*, 10.
82. Everett, “Faux’s Memorable Days in America,” 92–125.
83. Fanny Wright was also skewered by the *North American Review*. Wright, like Birkbeck, an outspoken critic of mainstream British politics and sycophant of the extreme democratizing elements within American society, was potentially more dangerous than proclaimed enemies of republicanism to the conservative Bostonian. Everett, “Views of Society and Manners in America,” 15–26.
84. There was inevitably some geographical bias in American criticism of the English Prairie. Many thoughtful Americans, including James Fenimore Cooper, believed that the West had become disproportionately large in the making of images of America, a phenomenon readily apparent to readers of British periodical literature from the period. Unfortunately, as Cooper explained in his *Notions of the Americans* (1828), “Nearly all of the English travellers who have written of America pass lightly over this important section of the Union [New England].” Suspicious of what he presumed to be an “unworthy motive,” Cooper lamented that, “Volumes have been written concerning the half-tenanted districts of the West, while the manners and condition of the original States, where the true effects of the American system can alone be traced, are usually disposed of in a few hurried pages.” Cooper, himself no minor image-maker of the American West, believed that impressions of American character needed to be created around the eastern seaboard. Cooper, *Notions of the Americans*, 91–2.
85. The *Edinburgh Review* correctly accused Trollope of making her preface to the *Domestic Manners* into “an express advertisement against the Reform Bill.”
86. Boewe, *Prairie Albion*, 98, 116.
87. Hansen, *Atlantic Migration, 1607–1860*, 118; Shepperson, *Emigration and Disenchantment*, 47.
88. Walker and Burkhardt, Introduction to Flower, *Letters of an English Gentleman*, 21.
89. Boewe, *Prairie Albion*, 276–7.

90. Ibid., chapter 9; Flower, *History of the English Settlement*, 254–5, 358.
91. Chandler, *England in 1819*, 455–6.
92. Cairns, *British Criticisms*, 10.
93. Faux, *Memorable Days*, 298.
94. Radicals and Tories did come to a reassessment of the United States in the late 1830s. In both cases, a careful reading of Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840) pulled them closer to the center in their understandings of America. See Crook, *American Democracy*, chapter V "The Influence of Alexis de Tocqueville".
95. Clive cited the *Edinburgh Review*'s pragmatic streak, sometimes supporting innovation, at other times the status quo: "One tends to find an amalgam whose ingredients vary according to the general political situation at the time of writing." Calls for reform were sometimes balanced with conservative sounding "prim and old-maidish" political discussion though some tendency towards a more reformist view can be seen after 1807 (*Scotch Reviewers*, 114, 120, 73). Crook noted the Whig's relative impartiality: "The most objective impression of America often came from the Whigs; partly, it would seem, from temperament – the Whig tradition was a pragmatic one which rarely countenanced eulogy – but also for political reasons, for objectivity did no obvious harm to Whig interests" (8).

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