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**AMERICAN LITERATURE AND THE TRANSNATIONAL  
MARKETPLACE**

# An Enemy Abroad: The Transnational Politics of Francis Jeffrey and the War of 1812

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In 1813 the celebrated founding editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, Francis Jeffrey, travelled to New York and Washington while Britain was at war with the United States and there is a surviving journal of that journey. The trip was for a romantic purpose (Jeffrey was to marry and bring back to Britain his second wife) but the timing meant that he was an enemy abroad while on US soil. As such, the journal unsettles our expectations about national identifications and this article examines Jeffrey's interactions in the White House, his reactions to encounters with African Americans and his Romantic responses to the American landscape in order to investigate his transnational politics.

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This article contributes to the growing field of Atlantic literary studies by examining the experiences of the founder of the *Edinburgh Review*, Francis Jeffrey, when he made a remarkable transatlantic journey to New York and Washington during the War of 1812. Jeffrey recorded the episode in a detailed private journal (Elliott & Hook, 2010). The fact that Jeffrey – who famously feared water – was willing to make a transatlantic crossing while the country was at war is surprising to say the least. In spite of the risk of being detained, he travelled to the United States in order to marry Charlotte Wilkes, having lost his first wife at a young age. His journal, which omits much personal information, nonetheless provides insights into his feelings toward his American hosts, and toward the landscape, people and culture he encountered during his time abroad. Approaching the journal as a transatlantic text, my aim is to consider Jeffrey's interactions and exchanges with prominent American figures while an 'enemy' abroad, and to argue that his writing provides evidence of his ability to transcend national boundaries at a key point in US/British history, just as those borders were being further entrenched. Jeffrey's crossing to New York and his warm welcome in the US sheds light on the transatlantic reach and influence of his famous *Edinburgh Review* while highlighting the fact that his political allegiances crossed national boundaries. As I will show, Jeffrey responds to his experiences in the US in ways that can be examined under three interlocking headings: politics, race and landscape. To understand Jeffrey's unusual position in the US at this historical moment we might ask what it means to be a transnational figure. And that question can itself be framed by the critical discourse now known as transnationalism.

In recent years, influential critics such as Paul Giles and Susan Manning have argued for classic American literature to be read within a transnational framework, since literary, philosophical and political ideas travelled beyond the boundaries of the nineteenth-century nation-state, and new productive readings of texts might be made that take a fuller account of this intellectual commerce (Giles, 2003; Manning & Tavor Bannet, 2014). Their point about the limitations of nation-bound literary histories chimes with other cultural theorists writing from the perspective of our present era of globalisation. As the postcolonial scholar Arjun Appadurai has argued, the economics of multinational corporations and the decentred power of digital media help to ensure that 'the nation-state, as a complex modern political form,

is on its last legs' and the world is moving instead towards 'post-national social forms' (Appadurai, 1996: 19, 158). Paul Giles proposes, in a sympathetic spirit, that transnationalist readings of nineteenth-century literature should help free texts and ideas from the limits imposed by narrowly national definitions of tradition, inheritance and influence. My contention here is that Jeffrey's journal – which is literally a transatlantic work – should be treated as part of a wider phenomenon of nineteenth-century literary transnationalism. By approaching it in this way, this article claims that Jeffrey's journal (written amidst national conflict) tests the dominant logic of the nation-state through its affiliation to ideas and perspectives drawn from either side of the Anglo-American divide. Such a method provides a new way of understanding the contradictions that sustain Jeffrey's writing in the journal.

Giles's theory of literary transnationalism offers one way to evaluate the significance of this peculiar case study of spatial and political crossing, not least because it lays stress on the experience of conflict:

A critical transnationalism can probe the significance of cultural jagged edges, structural paradoxes, or other forms of apparent incoherence... transnationalism seeks various points of intersection, whether actual border territories or other kinds of disputed domain, where cultural conflict is lived out experientially. (Giles, 2003: 65)

Jeffrey's account of his travels can be illuminated by Giles's theory, while also prompting some further critical probing of the terms of transnationalism. Jeffrey embarks upon a problematic voyage and is detained upon his arrival in New York, deemed an enemy alien by officials and subject to internment. Indeed, the narrative is conveyed in a prose marked by repeated 'jagged edges' and 'incoherence'. In particular, it presents an account of Jeffrey forging political allegiances across national boundaries when those borders were at their most impassable. Secondly, Jeffrey's own sense of national identity seems confused, particularly when he presents himself as an 'Englishman' in the White House yet elsewhere as loyally Scottish. Thirdly, just as Jeffrey begins to explore the possibilities of intercultural dialogue and accord, he visibly acquiesces to the conservative racial politics of the New World. My overarching purpose in looking at these aspects of the primary text

is to appraise Jeffrey's status as a transnational figure, focussing on his reception in the US and his transnational politics, his approaches to race, and his descriptions of the American environment.

His journal originally consisted of two parts, the first relaying his passage from Liverpool to New York and the second his subsequent journey from New York to Washington. The only known reader of the entire journal was Henry Cockburn, Jeffrey's biographer, who read the manuscript in full but judged that it 'records nothing... that would now interest others' (Cockburn, 1852: 226). The only mention of the journal after Cockburn was in 1941 when the American literary scholar William Charvat published an article on 'Francis Jeffrey in America'. Charvat observes in a footnote that 'Professor Derby has searched for the manuscript of his journal in Great Britain, as I have in the United States. It seems not to exist' (Charvat, 1941: 321). Charvat was wrong, however: the first section was indeed lost but the second section survived and that journal is in print (Elliott & Hook, 2010). In 2009 Pam Perkins blew the dust off of two other Jeffrey journals, one being an account of his Highland tour of 1800 and the other a record of his Continental tour of 1823. Both shed light on Jeffrey's appreciation of the Scottish Highlands, a subject to which this article will return (Perkins, 2009). The published journal offers readers an extraordinary insight into Jeffrey's experiences in 1813 and a fascinating, indeed unique, perspective on the new American republic while it was under construction, on the infrastructure of the New World and its attendant symbolism. As well as being a first-hand account of the formation of the United States, the journal is significant for helping to reveal the transatlantic influence of the *Edinburgh Review* and Jeffrey's own transnational politics, which the *Edinburgh* reflected. Against the background of the War of 1812, Jeffrey's emerging American sympathies confront and even unsettle the ideological narrative of two nations at war that framed political understanding at the time.

### **Transnational Politics**

The War of 1812 is often considered a forgotten conflict – 'probably our most obscure war', as the US historian Donald Hickey has observed. 'Although a great deal has been written about the conflict', Hickey goes on, 'the average American is only vaguely

aware of why we fought or who the enemy was' (Hickey, 2012: 1). Not only has it faded from memory in a way that the War of Independence never will, it was a war that neither side appeared eager to contest. In the years leading up to the outbreak of war, Britain introduced a series of trade restrictions to impinge on American trade with France, with whom she was also at war. Britain also sowed the seeds for war with an impressment policy where seamen on American ships were forced into the Royal Navy. The underlying objectives, Hickey suggests, were hard to identify, and so 'the decision for war... has been attributed to a wide variety of motives', with no clear explanation emerging as to why the two nations were fighting (Hickey, 2012: 2). Any warmongering is hard to attribute to either the British or the American side. In Britain, reverberations from the War of Independence still shook the Old World, and British subjects were as bewildered by this second conflict as the Americans themselves. But there was also a demographic who desperately celebrated the American cause, on the grounds that it held revolutionary promise for their own radical politics at home. Scottish Whigs like Jeffrey belonged to this group.

In 1813, when Jeffrey made his journey, America remained a democratic experiment whose success or otherwise mattered crucially to the cause of radicalism in Britain. And, despite the personal motive for setting sail, Jeffrey recognised the political statement he was making. As one of the founders and presiding editor of the Whig-supporting *Edinburgh Review*, and with supporters in the United States as well as at home who shared his political outlook and believed wholeheartedly in the experiment of the American republic, Jeffrey cut an important transnational figure. Indeed, the transatlantic influence of the *Edinburgh Review* in the early nineteenth century should not be underestimated. The *Edinburgh* was not only the symbolic home of Scottish philosophical Whigs but was picked up for circulation in the United States, too. As Andrew Hook comments:

Within a few years the *Edinburgh Review* was being reprinted entire in New York and Boston [...] Ezra Sargeant of New York probably began publication in 1810 [...] the *Edinburgh Review* was available to, and was probably read by, the majority of those who composed America's intellectual and literary

world. One consequence of its American circulation was deep and lasting American respect for the *Edinburgh Review*. (Hook, 2008: 94)

As a result of Jeffrey's celebrity in America's intellectual circles word soon spread that he was preparing to visit and Washington Irving – who was in the States at the time – wrote a piece for the *Analectic* of Philadelphia calling American readers to welcome him (Irving, 1813: 350). Jeffrey's insistence on the fundamental importance of human reason, combined with a rejection of all authority that could not be justified by reason, sat him squarely in the intellectual traditions of the Scottish Enlightenment. Indeed, Francis Hutcheson, a key Scottish Enlightenment thinker, was part of the group of friends who established the *Edinburgh Review*. Jeffrey's Enlightenment views, alongside his Whig insistence on the supremacy of Parliament over any monarch, aligned him with the early Federalists of the United States. This connection between nineteenth-century Scottish and American politics gave Jeffrey a transnational posture during his time in the States. Pam Perkins reasons that while Jeffrey's journal records sympathies for the American cause, this fact should not lead us to underestimate the danger of his crossing there during wartime or his resulting pronounced feelings of alienation when in the US (Perkins, 2012: 53). Perkins interprets Jeffrey's engagement with American politics as just another way for him to comment on the Tory administration at home. But by 1813 the *Edinburgh Review* was officially sympathetic to the American cause and even took a pro-American stance in the war. Jeffrey and his Whig friends knew that it was crucial to support the American experiment even when their own country was fighting them. These points help demonstrate how the primacy of national identity could be tested, if not supplanted, by the higher bond of ideological compatibility.

The most remarkable section of the journal details Jeffrey's evening as an invited guest of President Madison and Secretary of State James Munroe at the White House. He finds himself in this unlikely setting due to the political influence of the *Edinburgh* and its American sympathies. In a long passage he recalls having drinks with the President and Munroe, recounting their conversation concerning the war. Munroe, Jeffrey recalls, 'proceeded to make some just and general remarks on the

unfortunate war by which the two countries were divided' (Jeffrey qtd in Elliott & Hook, 2010: 57). After a great deal of civil talk on the subject, the conversation was sufficiently friendly for Jeffrey to remind Munroe gently that he was, after all, an Englishman. To this, Munroe replied that:

He could expect from no English gentleman any other feeling or profession than a wish for the success of his country, and that those who valued themselves for patriotic feelings would be the first to approve of them in others. He then entered into a considerable discourse with a view to convince me that his government was most sincerely and earnestly desirous of peace with England. (Jeffrey qtd in Elliott & Hook, 2010: 59)

In fact, Munroe exclaimed they had to 'make ourselves enemies in order to have a basis on which to negotiate' (Jeffrey qtd in Elliott & Hook, 2010: 57). One should pause here to consider the significance of Jeffrey's nationality, given these exchanges in the White House. When he claimed to be an Englishman (for the sake of the ease of the conversation, one may presume), Jeffrey actually concealed further connections between himself and his American hosts. Arguably, Jeffrey's Scottish nationality would have helped him to sympathise with Munroe's claim that they had to make themselves enemies in order to negotiate, and he would have understood the necessary disruption that Munroe describes particularly because of his Scottish heritage. Susan Manning, who has written widely on 'Scottish-American versions of fragmentation and union', retraces Scottish-US affinities to dominant models of nationhood in both Scotland and America, as defined by the parliamentary Union and the confederation of the United States. If Manning is right here, her thinking would suggest that the Scottish roots of Jeffrey's political thought can account for a further sympathy between him and Munroe:

For historical and political reasons, the analogy between self and nation remained alive, and resonant, in Scottish and American writing throughout the Enlightenment and Romantic periods [...] Political and personal, psychological and grammatical versions of union and fragmentation resonate mutually in the texture of [Scottish and American writing] that is hard to

match in English literature [...] The integrity and structure of selfhood (or its disintegration) mirror those of the nation: both are unions of potentially disjunctive parts. Disintegration of nation, or disunion, threatens integrity of personal identity. (Manning, 2002: 12)

The idea that Scottish and American literature of the Enlightenment reflected (and enacted) a close correlation between self and nation, and that this relationship between personal and national identity was untypical of English writing of the period, sheds light on the importance of Jeffrey's Scottishness in the White House. The rapport he enjoyed with his hosts has to be attributable in part to their shared political frame of reference, for Jeffrey's long conversation with Munroe and President Madison on the subject of their warring nations is culturally and politically extraordinary. They wrestled out complicated feelings about political alliance and national borders and (dis)union, and the very idea that the War of 1812 was initiated to begin political negotiations – that is, to make connections rather than break them – again testifies to the primacy of political affiliation between the men themselves over the national boundaries which the war had aggravated. Their talk of nations and patriotism paid mere lip service to a war that neither nation particularly cared to wage. The *Edinburgh Review* (and its Scottish Enlightenment origins) connected these men much more powerfully than war could separate them.

### **The 'filthy negroes': Jeffrey and Race**

For all the affinities uniting Scottish Whigs and American Federalists, Jeffrey's treatment of race in his US journal cannot help but undermine the writer's avowed political radicalism. This feels somewhat surprising as the *Edinburgh Review* had supported the cause of anti-slavery from its conception. This was mainly 'over its departure from principles of social and economic organization [rather than a humanitarian concern, but its] attitude hardened during the thirty years between its foundation and the Emancipation Act' (Rice qtd in Perry & Fellman, 1981: 42). Moreover, Jeffrey's anti-slavery views at home were well known; in the 1790s, when he had graduated from Glasgow University in law, he composed mock speeches against the slave trade (Flynn, 1978: 32). In fact, in 1830, years after his American trip, Jeffrey

would become instrumental in calling for the abolition of slavery at home as the *Anti-Slavery Reporter* records:

On the 8th of October [1830], a numerous and highly respectable meeting of the friends of Abolition was held at Edinburgh, in the Great Assembly Room, George Street. The Lord Provost, W. Allan, Esq. having taken the chair, and opened the meeting with a short address, the celebrated Mr. Francis Jeffrey (now Lord Advocate of Scotland), moved certain resolutions which had been prepared by the Edinburgh Anti-Slavery Society, expressive of their sense of the evils and miseries necessarily attendant on the system of Negro Slavery, and their conviction that there ought to be no further delay in taking measures for its final and total abolition; and that, in the meantime, such means ought to be adopted for mitigating its evils, and for such instruction and improvement in the condition of the Slaves, as might be best calculated ultimately to fit them for the blessings of freedom. Mr. Jeffrey entered into a long and luminous review of the various efforts that had been made in this country for the abolition of the Slave Trade and Slavery, from the earliest agitation of these great questions to the present period. (Macauley, 1832: 25–6)

Even though Jeffrey would go on to become a key figure in abolition at home, in 1813 he noticeably sharpened his appreciation of racial difference – years after first espousing anti-slavery views and precisely when he was becoming a transnational figure. An ease with racial hierarchies emerges only too clearly in the journal, underscoring just how deeply his thought was implicated in white supremacist structures. These conventional ideological hierarchies were the product of what Dana Nelson calls the ‘forces driving the racial categorization and racist institutions that emerged [in the Anglo-colonial eighteenth century] and that we live in versions of today’. As Nelson claims:

Europeans did *not* [...] identify themselves *collectively* as a superior racial group [...] Rather, Europeans then identified themselves in a variety of aristocratic, trade, religious, ethnic, military, and protonationalist ways, not

as “European”, and not necessarily or primarily as “white”, if white at all. Nor did their various experiences of colonial life in America, or their experiences of the Revolution, work to draw them into a seamless, common sense of identity. (Nelson, 1998: 5, italics in original)

Jeffrey fits neatly into this picture. His protonationalism linked his politics to the Federalists' outlook and he achieved bonds with the men in the White House in just this way. But he was separated from those men in dramatic ways, especially as an enemy during wartime. He was also snobbish when it came to American customs and etiquette. In the journal, even his reception in the White House strikes him as failing to observe familiar British manners. Perkins has noticed that ‘elements of the American tour are easily and casually assimilated to and judged against British standards (the girls are more forward, the drink is more strong, the houses more flimsy)’ (Perkins, 2012: 64). In bringing all of his British cultural expectations and prejudices with him, Jeffrey was well aware of his own alien status. Nelson asks an important question about these kinds of meetings: ‘how and why [did] these various – and often mutually antagonistic – groups of people [come] to identify themselves together?’ For Nelson, the answer has more to do with the way ‘whiteness’ shaped the intercultural dynamics behind Jeffrey’s positioning:

Adapting “white manhood” as the marker for civic unity worked as an apparently democratizing extension of civic entitlement. It worked symbolically and legally to bring men together in an abstract but increasingly functional community that diverted their attention from differences between them – differences which had come alarmingly into focus in the post-Revolutionary era. (Nelson, 1998: 5)

Jeffrey’s journal records a different side to his political outlook on the matter of race. It is his sense of an abstract but functional community that helps to aggravate his racism when in the US, as Jeffrey adapts to suit the racial politics of the New World. Despite Jeffrey’s warm experience at the White House, his writing indicates some signs of insecurity during his entire time in the US. America, as he sees it, teeters on

the edge of respectability: women are forward, people drunk, houses weak, manners in the White House lacking, and so on. His response to feelings of insecurity when confronted with this alien New World is to affirm the virtues of inscribing and reinforcing racial difference, and to render invisible those who are racially Other, as a way to reinforce the familiar and bring the recognisable firmly back into view. Perkins rightly observes that 'Jeffrey's "oppressive" sense of being entirely out of place suggests an unsettling gap between the foreign and the familiar', and, in attempting to close that gap, Jeffrey's racism is aggravated as he tries to expel the racial Other from view (Perkins, 2012: 64).

When in the journal Jeffrey finds himself in the company of 'negroes', which happens on several occasions, the experience alarms him. He describes a particularly fraught carriage ride in which two African American men take public transport alongside other 'plebeians', Jeffrey himself and his new wife Charlotte. Jeffrey recalls the scene vividly:

It was a new but disgusting and really horrible spectacle to look into the depths of our filthy cavern, as it was transiently illuminated by this operation; and to see the hideous faces of the two filthy negroes who sate at the end of the long recess, with their glaring teeth and eyes, and the nasty plebeians who filled the body of it contrasted with the innocent and delicate looks of one very pretty and modest young woman who was jammed in the dark in the midst of them – to say nothing of C. (Elliott & Hook, 2010: 25)

A fervent abolitionist at home, Jeffrey rekindles racist disgust quite readily here, in a way that helps illustrate how little the architects of the European and Scottish Enlightenments often had to say to the African American experience. Paul Gilroy has written at length about this dimension of the political thought of men like Jeffrey. As Gilroy says, 'different nationalist paradigms for thinking about cultural history fail when confronted by the intercultural and transnational formation that I call the black Atlantic' (Gilroy, 1993: ix). Gilroy's point also reminds us to think in a multidimensional way when considering transnationalism. In other words, in the example of Jeffrey, when it comes to attitudes toward race, the assumptions of

orthodox nationalist European thought appear to unseat any kind of intercultural or transnational commitment. In *The Black Atlantic*, Gilroy comments on the 'absence of a concern with "race" or ethnicity' from most writings about modernity (Gilroy, 1993: ix). Jeffrey's journal documents modernity in a profound way, from the position of an observer with a shifting insider/outsider position relative to the sight of the new republic under construction. As Perkins has noticed, his welcome in the US did not mute his feelings of alienation. Yet, it is also utterly silent on the inequities of racial politics and expresses no concern with problems of ethnicity; rather it is littered with all-too familiar racist anecdotes. This is especially noteworthy given Jeffrey's anti-slavery views at home and the *Edinburgh Review's* abolitionist ethos: astonishingly, the main reported impression is Jeffrey's revulsion at the sight of the 'negroes', and nothing more. In the carriage, the only real concern expressed (and the concern of the rest of the party, it would seem) is a conventional general wish to render these men absent, literally to vanish them from sight:

As this was evidently by no means a very eligible situation for a lady, the person who supervised the whole equipment of himself suggested that some of the gentlemen in the back part of the vehicle should allow her to take his place there; the answer was, however, that the back seat was occupied by two *negroes* who were not disposed to stir for any white woman in the land. This manly resolution was received with so much approbation by the rest of the company, that it was no sooner announced than they unanimously declared that they entirely concurred in it, that they were settled comfortably in their places and really could not conveniently move.  
(Jeffrey qtd in Elliott & Hook, 2010: 24–5)

Under the ruse that there is a damsel in distress in need of a seat, it is only the 'negroes' who are expected to vacate their seats for her. The party's insistence on this suggests that they wish the men to move out of sight and ride up front with the driver for reasons other than the woman's comfort. Jeffrey goes on at length to remember his horror at the 'negroes' who not only refuse to vacate their seats for the lady but

who remain visible and in the company of the rest of the carriage – refusing to ride in the front with the driver – for the duration of the journey. As Gilroy reminds us, the ‘literary and philosophical modernisms of the black Atlantic have their origins in a well-developed sense of the complicity of racialised reason and white supremacist terror’ (Gilroy, 1993: x). Ironically, it is in his efforts to move between two cultures, British and American, in a transnational gesture, that Jeffrey becomes overtly xenophobic when encountering African American culture. Even black children unsettle him greatly. Later, in one of the American boarding houses, he is confronted with one such playful child:

My British habits do not readily conform to the familiarity and turmoil of an American boarding-house. The hostess chattered the whole day beside us; various friends and visitors of hers were constantly sitting down by our fireside; and even a little black imp of a slave boy – not five years old – insisted upon showing us how he could make a bow, and offered to stand on his head for our amusement, before we had been an hour in the mansion.  
(Jeffrey qtd in Elliott & Hook, 2010: 33)

Here, as before, Jeffrey relapses into ‘nationalist paradigms for thinking’ (Gilroy, 1993: ix) and blames his ‘British habits’ for his inability to sit at ease with the turmoil of the boarding house – the talkative hostess – ‘and even a little black imp of a slave boy’. This episode and others like it serve as a reminder that Jeffrey’s negotiation of an intercultural and transnational political identity were dependent on, if not shaped by, an accentuated discourse of racial inequality. Crucial, once more, is Jeffrey’s ascription of personal revulsion to ‘British habits’. Given that he had written against slavery at Glasgow University in the 1790s it is surprising, to say the least, to find Jeffrey include the ‘slave boy’ in his account of the general ‘turmoil’ of the American boarding-house that grates against his British sensibility. The objectified ‘slave’ boy (the ‘little black imp’) offers more than an innocent performance or spectacle and is very clearly a source of racially inflected disgust. Here, Britishness becomes a kind of mask of national identity which serves to hide more uncomfortable, unpalatable or

contradictory feelings, not unlike his 'English' self-presentation at the White House. When confronted by the racial politics of the New World, Jeffrey hides behind a persona of British manners to justify his disgust at the non-white 'Other' and his apolitical approach to the problem of race in the new republic.

### **The Poetics and Politics of Landscape**

Jeffrey's sense of the US as alien territory comes across when he discusses race but it also surfaces in his notes on the natural environment. Jeffrey's notes on landscape carried a decidedly political significance. His account of his American surroundings raises issues about nationality and identity that are worth exploring in particular; passages describing the journey between New York and Washington reveal veiled Romantic sensibilities, evident in his descriptions of the unfamiliar landscape. Andrew Hook points out in *Scotland and America* that the 'intellectual and artistic life of eighteenth century Scotland is marked by two apparently contradictory impulses or emphases; one is exclusively national, the other more English or European or international' (Hook, 2008: 2). Significantly, Jeffrey reacts to the US environment by turning markedly towards the latter, especially as he begins to intuit similarities between the 'virgin' land of the US and the sublime English landscape of the Lake poets. His narrative captures a transformation, as the noted critic of English Romanticism grows increasingly attuned to the Romantic allure of the American landscape. Jeffrey had earned a reputation for his searing intolerance of the Lake poets, yet many of his passages of scenic observation make sense of the American landscape using a comparable poetic idiom. A reputation for picking fights with British Romantic poets preceded Jeffrey. His anti-Wordsworthian aesthetic had been exclaimed in his notorious opening outburst in the review of Wordsworth's 1814 poem *The Excursion*. His shout of 'This will never do!' (Jeffrey, 1814: 1) still echoes in literary criticism's hall of infamy. However, despite his annoyance at the Lake Poets and their insistence on intuiting the sublime in nature, Jeffrey did possess a sophisticated appreciation of natural landscape. This appreciation can be found not only in his American journal but also in his journal recording his time spent in the Scottish Highlands. Pam Perkins has pointed out in her edition of his Highland tour journal of 1811 that 'Jeffrey was capable of responding to the natural world with passionate enthusiasm, although

that was not a quality that most of his contemporaries would have associated with him' (Perkins, 2009: 11). Indeed, as the poet Anne Grant reported on his Highland tour: 'I expected that, from the mere habit of carping, he would have criticised the mountains unmercifully' (Grant qtd in Perkins, 2009: 11). Grant confuses Jeffrey's criticism of nature poetry with a habit of condemning nature itself. He did not criticise the mountains or anything else about the Scottish Highlands and it is not really surprising that Jeffrey looked favourably on them since he was emotionally attached to the Scottish landscape. We know of this from his letters. The young Jeffrey, after a miserable year studying at Oxford, wrote to his sister that all that was keeping him alive was the thought of 'Scotland – Scotland!' (Jeffrey qtd in Cockburn, 1852: 37). He goes on to make clear that the Scotland he longs for is not the cities of Edinburgh or Glasgow but the Highland scenery. Later, in 1831, he wrote to Jane Carlyle that he must retreat from Parliament into nature: 'I cannot tell you how often that feeling comes to me – during my present life of exile and bondage – If it were not for my love of nature, I think I should die' (Jeffrey qtd in Perkins, 2009: 13). In its strength of feeling this statement is especially memorable, contradicting as it does Jeffrey's cultivated anti-Romantic image. Despite claiming in the White House that he was an 'Englishman', his identification with the Scottish nation and landscape was highly developed. Having famously dismissed the Lake Poets for what he saw as their indulgent appropriation of nature, he was capable of deep feeling catalysed by landscape. Jeffrey could not read English landscape poetry without becoming outraged, but a sensitivity for the Scottish landscape emerges indubitably in his letters and journals. Likewise, his American journal is brimming with descriptions of the American landscape, mostly positive and sometimes evoking the Romantic sublime. This may be an issue of the aesthetic duty of poetry more than anything, but nevertheless his journal reaches moments of poetic elevation at pronounced points on his journey through the States. Stopping off at Baltimore, for instance, he conveys the beauty of a natural prospect by figuring it in a recognisably Romantic mode:

The scene was decidedly wintry... the air, though chilly, was calm, and the sky bright... many streaks of pale yellow crossed the leaden colour of the heavens, and the edge of the horizon all round shone with a mild and silvery

radiance. There was a Sabbath stillness over all the prospect which accorded well with the loneliness of the scene. (Jeffrey qtd in Elliott & Hook, 2009: 30)

The 'loneliness' of this scene may point to Jeffrey's own feelings of seclusion and alienation, in a travelogue form of the pathetic fallacy. Elsewhere, Perkins has commented on Jeffrey's discussion of the American environment in similar ways. She claims that, during an account of an evening walk, Jeffrey's sudden awareness of the utter foreignness of his surroundings leads to an inability to "read" them according to his usual standards of aesthetic judgment' (Perkins, 2012: 64). Likewise, when he 'reads' the landscape here, he looks often to home to make sense of what he's watching. For example, the concerted religious tone of these lines (the 'silvery radiance' and 'Sabbath stillness') almost elevates the writing into a prose-poem. Against the great colourful vastness, it is as though the isolated observer (the consciously artful figure of Jeffrey) confronts the purely natural composition of sky and land, which radiates an enigmatic, impersonal calm at the edges of understanding, as though withholding some promise of meaning. Most strikingly of all, perhaps, the wintry American scene is reminiscent of the 'secret ministry' of the frost in Coleridge's 'Frost at Midnight' (Coleridge qtd in Holmes, 2003: 46).

Throughout his journal Jeffrey writes freely and poetically about the striking, and often untouched, landscape around him. Consider the following passage, which recounts his discovery of the Delaware River:

The Delaware here, which is more than half a mile over, was the first of the great American rivers I had seen, and certainly struck me with an air of magnificence. It runs with a deep rapid stream over a stony and rocky bottom. The water is tolerably clear and has a bluish tinge that is by no means disagreeable. The banks are low on both sides, but the curves of its course and the roar of its current soothe the imagination and give it an interest that flat shores but rarely possess. (Jeffrey qtd in Elliott & Hook, 2010: 10–11)

The majesty of the river is captured here in a language of intensified subjective appreciation. The bold association of imagination and landscape seems especially

surprising, given its ties to Romanticism's spiritualised understanding of nature. Yet there are other long passages that could be lifted straight from Thoreau's *Walden*, where Jeffrey personifies the woods full of 'mingling shades of poplar, oak and hickory brooding in dreary silence... the ground, free from underwood... deeply matted with the fallen leaves... some sluggish rivulets stole feebly along by the naked roots and fallen trunks' (Jeffrey qtd in Elliott & Hook, 2010: 10–11). The personification of the poplar, oak and hickory, 'brooding in dreary silence', recalls Thoreau's animation of Walden pond which, for example, at sunrise threw off 'its nightly clothing of mist' (Thoreau qtd in Fender, 2010: 79). This remarkable shift in taste when Jeffrey finds himself in the Highlands of Scotland or recording his feelings about the American landscape suggests a political alliance with the land itself. His American sympathies allow him to make unconscious connections between the landscape and his own feelings of solemnity, beauty and insight, just as the Scottish Highlands express elsewhere some serious connection to emotional truth; but he also attempts to translate the American landscape from something alien into something familiar and recognisable and in doing this he draws on his memory of the English Lake poets.

Indeed, it is in Jeffrey's descriptions of landscape that English, Scottish and American identities meet, even fuse, interculturally. Whereas the War of 1812 exacerbates anxieties over national difference in the White House section of the journal, here Jeffrey's narrative style finds an aesthetic frame for the American environment that borrows from, and tentatively blends, his earlier writing on Scottish landscape and his absorption of English Romantic poetry (notably Coleridge) and the pioneering nature writing of Thoreau. If Jeffrey achieves a transnational and intercultural dialogue and consensus at all in his journal, it is at the level of language, in his own narrative voice and hybridised literary mode. Yet the achievement only highlights shortcomings elsewhere, in his thoughts around national politics and race. Jeffrey's confused slippage from a Scottish identity into an English identity in the White House underscores his insecurities about having a British identity on enemy territory. More worryingly, his failure to extend intercultural dialogue to race relations in the New World illustrates Gilroy's contention that 'different nationalist paradigms for thinking about cultural history fail when confronted by the intercultural and

transnational formation that I call the black Atlantic' (Gilroy, 1993: ix). Indeed, Jeffrey's journal allows 'insight into different nationalist paradigms for thinking about cultural history', but Gilroy's point plays out in the journal as the racial politics of the New World undermine Jeffrey's other forms of transnational commitment.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

What then of Jeffrey as a transnational figure? His American journal is a reminder of complex transatlantic connections, political, literary and natural, which transcended or mapped across the fixed boundaries of nations and the official discourse of sovereign enmity. It complicates the historical narrative of international hostility between Britain and America, but shows that any promise for intercultural dialogue ends at race. His use of the *Edinburgh Review* as a bargaining tool to help him to escape internment testifies to the resilience of literary ideas in the face of political division and aggression. And the figure of the 'Scotch Reviewer' who nevertheless Romanticises the American landscape has a political resonance of its own, illustrating his imaginative commitment to both places (Byron, 1810: 1). Jeffrey's commitment to Scottish philosophical Whig views connects his experience to the Federalists of the New World in significant ways. When in the White House he claims to be an 'Englishman' in that still-practised slippage where Englishness becomes synonymous with Britishness; Jeffrey draws attention to his Britishness – the elephant in the room – presumably as a way of getting beyond it, to more interesting connections. Jeffrey's Scottish identity and its associated Whig politics and Enlightenment views houses a commitment to the success of the new republic; his response to the American landscape which draws on his feelings about the Scottish landscape show strongly intuitive or imaginative Scottish–American bonds, even at a time of war. This exemplifies Jeffrey seeming able to transcend, or surpass, his own British identity while abroad, projected by his writing via multiple traditions of literary landscape. Yet, for all this, Jeffrey's journal's transnationalism is compromised and contradicted by his responses to racial politics in the US, which depart from the views expressed in his much earlier anti-slavery writings – composed on the other side of the Atlantic. Race, then, marks the limit-point of Jeffrey's intercultural instincts: in the US he absorbs

the conservative racial politics of those he meets and complies with the racist conventions of his time and place.

Jeffrey's imaginative commitment to Scotland and the US can be summarised by considering the following letter to Charles Wilkes – his new father-in-law, following marriage to Charlotte – written from Glasgow on 7 August 1818, in which Jeffrey reflects:

I do not think I could bear to live and die anywhere but in Scotland. But on public grounds I am as much concerned for America as for Scotland, and would rather live there than in any foreign or enslaved portion of the old world, however elegant and refined. (Jeffrey qtd in Cockburn, 1852: 185)

When speaking of public grounds, Jeffrey really means political grounds, and here he is clearly not restricted by national boundaries. Instead, his political interests bind Scotland and America in some deeply-held form of imaginative and transnational union. This transnational union between Scotland and America seems to be catalysed by the natural landscape found in both places, in a way that reinscribes a Romantic valorisation of natural scenery. This vision cuts across sovereignties old and new, across the contours of national experience, and what distinguishes Jeffrey's poetic engagement with the landscapes of Scotland and America is that each is firmly driven instead by political affiliation and outlook.

## Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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