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**The Book Trade and Print Culture:**  
**A Comparative Analysis of Belfast and Baltimore 1760-1825**

Sarah Crider Arndt

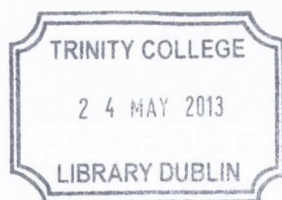
Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy  
Department of History,  
School of Histories and Humanities,  
Trinity College Dublin

March 2012

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## Summary

This project offers a wide-ranging analysis and comparison of the cultures of print in Belfast and Baltimore between 1760 and 1825. Each city and its hinterland have been examined individually and comparatively in order to offer insights into the production, distribution and consumption of printed works in provincial centres across the Atlantic world. The study starts in 1760, when both communities were small provincial towns of relatively little importance. Spanning the next sixty-five years, this study uses the examples of Baltimore and Belfast to examine what factors influenced the changing patterns of print production and consumption as the communities grew in population and national importance. The study's time span allows for consideration of questions regarding the role of print in national identity formation, as it covers both the American Revolution and early republican period and the Irish rebellion of 1798 and the 1801 union with Great Britain. As both communities are set within their wider Atlantic context, the impact of local, national and international events can all be viewed through the lens of print.

This project examines both production and consumption within provincial areas, using a thematic approach to compare and contextualize each town. The work uses Robert Darnton's communication circuit, which is a model that describes the process by which texts are created, distributed and consumed by readers, to approach the study of print culture from a holistic perspective. The small scale of Belfast and Baltimore during this period, allow both these fields to be considered in a meaningful way. The study approaches each community thematically, using a mix of source materials and methods. Literacy is explored through both qualitative and quantitative data, as well as the educational institutions and movements within each town. The study then explores other types of community organizations, such as libraries and literary societies, which used British models to promote the use of books within the provincial cities. Business records and newspapers are used to explore the local print trades, production and importation of

texts into the various communities through national and international networks. The texts produced in each community have been used as both material artifacts, and textual sources. Finally the study examines some of the ways that individuals in both communities used reading in their everyday lives through anecdotal evidence.

This study highlights the ways in which members of provincial communities participated within larger transnational movements and modified them to meet their communities' needs. Reception of these ideas, and of texts, was never passive but mediated through local concerns and needs. This is not a simple story of the interaction between the provinces and the metropolis, where products from the metropolis made their way to provincial consumers. At times, these provincial communities not only by-passed the major metropolitan hubs, like London, to interact with other provincial communities directly, but they also fed back ideas, in the form of texts, to the broader Atlantic community. Though this study uses the medium of print to trace these interactions, contributing meaningfully to the study of book history in the process, it speaks to much wider issues of how individuals and communities participated in the transnational eighteenth-century British Atlantic world.

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## Abbreviations

A.A.S.	American Antiquarian Society
<i>A.C.D.A.</i>	<i>American Commercial Daily Advertiser</i>
A.P.S.	American Philosophical Society
B.C.C.	<i>Belfast Commercial Chronicle</i>
<i>B.E.P.</i>	<i>Baltimore Evening Post</i>
<i>B.M.M.</i>	<i>Belfast Monthly Magazine</i>
<i>B.N.L.</i>	<i>Belfast News-Letter</i>
<i>B.P.</i>	<i>Baltimore Patriot</i>
<i>B.R.</i>	<i>Baltimore Repertory</i>
<i>D.I.B.</i>	<i>Dictionary of Irish Biography</i>
<i>M.G.</i>	<i>Dunlap's Maryland Gazette, Maryland Gazette and Baltimore Advertiser</i>
<i>D.P.</i>	<i>Democratic Press</i>
E.C.C.O.	Eighteenth-Century Collections Online
E.P.F.L.	Enoch Pratt Free Library
E.S.T.C.	English Short Title Catalogue
<i>F.G.</i>	<i>Federal Gazette and Baltimore Daily Advertiser</i>
<i>F.R.</i>	<i>Federal Republican and Commercial Gazette</i>
H.S.P.	Historical Society of Pennsylvania
L.C.P.	Library Company Philadelphia
L.H.L.	Linen Hall Library
M.d.H.S.	Maryland Historical Society
<i>M.J.B.A.</i>	<i>Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser</i>
N.A.	National Archives, United States
N.A. Kew	National Archives, United Kingdom at Kew
N.A.I.	National Archives, Ireland
N.D.U.	Notre Dame University
N.L.I.	National Library Ireland
N.L.S.	National Library Scotland
<i>N.S.</i>	<i>Northern Star</i>
N.S.T.C.	Nineteenth-Century Short Title Catalogue
<i>N.W.R.</i>	<i>Niles' Weekly Register</i>
P.R.O.N.I.	Public Records Office Northern Ireland
T.C.D.	Trinity College Dublin
U.A.	University of Aberdeen

## Chapter 1 Introduction

The following study will explore how print was used by individuals and provincial communities across the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. This study serves two purposes. First, it reveals how print shaped the lives of individuals and provincial communities in Ireland and America. Recent scholarship has begun to acknowledge what individuals have instinctually known for hundreds of years. Print is powerful. It shapes the ways that individuals view the world and their place within it, it shapes the ways that people interact with their government and it broadens the potential audience of once restricted ideas. The effect of print is felt not only by the consumers of texts, but also in the ways that print production and distribution shaped communities. The second aim of the project is to use this examination of the multifaceted world of print as a medium for examining how provincial communities participated in wider transnational and transatlantic cultural developments. Using print as a medium allows us to explore how ideas, like texts, are changed as they travel, to see how major events, like the American Revolution, impacted provincial life and to see how fashions circulated on the ocean currents. In order to do so, this project offers a wide-ranging analysis and comparison of the book trades and cultures of print in Belfast and Baltimore between 1760 and 1825. Each city and its hinterland have been examined individually and comparatively in order to offer insights into the production, distribution and consumption of printed works in provincial centers across the Atlantic world.

One of the inspirations for this study has been Robert Darnton's concept of a communication circuit.<sup>1</sup> This model was designed to assist in viewing the discipline of

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<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of the model see Robert Darnton's essay 'What is the history of books?' in David Finkelstein & Alistair McCleery (eds), *The Book History Reader* (London, 2002), pp 9-26; and Robert Darnton, *The kiss of Lamourette: reflections in cultural history* (London, 1990), and for an updated explanation of this model see Robert Darnton, "'What is the history of books?'" revisited' in *Modern Intellectual History*, iv, no. 3 (2007), pp 495-508.

book history as a whole, rather than as partitioned sub-fields under the interdisciplinary heading of book history. This foundational model traces the life-cycle of a printed book from the author, to publisher, printer, shipper, bookseller and finally to the reader. Its strength is that it acknowledges the role each of those individuals had in the creation and reception of a book. Here the book is not a static artifact created by an author and received as intended by an ideal set of readers, but an ever changing one. Other models, such as the one by Thomas R. Adams and Nicholas Baker, focus more specifically on the text, rather than the human element.<sup>2</sup> What these models share is an emphasis on the complexity of the interactive process that surrounds the creation and use of texts. Though this study does not specifically follow Darnton's circuit, an attempt has been made to capture the spirit of the model by examining how texts moved through the community and how they were changed in the process. Darnton's model informs the definition of print culture used in this study, as a complete picture of production, distribution and consumption within a specific delimited community. Though many cultures of print can and do exist within a single community, they each involve aspects of this process.

Throughout all of this study, the Atlantic Ocean stands as a silent witness. The Atlantic is both the physical body which links Baltimore and Belfast, and the larger frame which has shaped this approach. This framework is what allows this analysis to be more than a simply local or even national study. In Jack P. Greene and Philip Morgan's recent critical appraisal of Atlantic history, they stated that one of the failings of Atlantic history has been its tendency to emphasize similarities between locations without contributing to the overall knowledge of local areas.<sup>3</sup> This project addresses these concerns by advancing

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas R. Adams & Nicholas Baker, 'New model for the study of the book' in David Finkelstein & Alistair McCleery (eds), *The Book History Reader* (London, 2002), pp 47-65.

<sup>3</sup> Jack P. Greene & Philip D. Morgan (eds), *Atlantic history: a critical appraisal* (Oxford, 2009), p. 7; Nicholas Canny & Philip Morgan (eds), *The Oxford handbook of the Atlantic world c. 1450- c. 1850* (Oxford, 2011); David Armitage & Michael J. Braddick (eds), *The British Atlantic world, 1500-1800* (New York, 2002); Bernard Bailyn & Patricia L. Denault (eds), *Soundings in Atlantic history: latent structures and intellectual currents, 1550-1830* (Cambridge, MA, 2009); Patrick Griffin, 'A plea for a new Atlantic history' in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, lxxvii, no. 2 (April, 2011), pp 236-239.

the study of print culture in both Ireland and America. While at the same time, Greene and Morgan assert that ‘the great virtue of thinking in Atlantic terms is that it encourages broad perspectives, transnational orientations, and expanded horizons at the same time that it offers a chance for overcoming national and other parochialisms.’<sup>4</sup>

These ‘parochialisms’ have limited much of the previous work done by historians of the book, who often approach the study of print culture, or book history, from either a local history perspective, or under the over-arching framework of national projects in the history of the book. Local history and bibliographical studies, often dating from the early twentieth century, were frequently concerned with tracing the earliest imprints or printers in any given area, and have been a huge source of information for scholars of print culture. In Ireland much of the information known on early imprints stems from the work of E.R. McClintock Dix and John Anderson.<sup>5</sup> In America authors like Rollo G. Silver and Lawrence Wroth have served similar functions.<sup>6</sup> However these works rarely provide a substantive context for understanding the developments they trace.

In many ways, the various projects working on the history of the book within different national contexts have been a response to this earlier local work. National projects like *A history of the book in America*, and *The Oxford history of the Irish book*, have been attempts to create a coherent national story of the development of printing and publishing.<sup>7</sup> These projects have proved to be important developments in the study of print

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<sup>4</sup> Greene & Morgan (eds), *Atlantic history*, p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> A selection of work by E.R. McClintock Dix was used in this study including the following, ‘Earliest print of Shakespeare’s plays in Ireland’ in *The Bibliographical Society of Ireland*, ii, no. 1 (1921-1925), pp 18-20; ‘The works of Oliver Goldsmith hand list of Dublin editions before 1801’ in *The Bibliographical Society of Ireland*, iii, no. 9 (1928), pp 93-10; ‘Irish pirated editions’ in *An leabharlann*, ii, no. 1 (April, 1906), pp 67-77; ‘Books and tracts printed in Belfast in the seventeenth century’ in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, xxxiii, Section C, no. 4 (1916), pp 73-80.

<sup>6</sup> Works by Rollo G. Silver include *The American printer 1787-1825* (Charlottesville, VA, 1967); ‘The Baltimore book trade, 1800-1825’ in *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* (March, 1953), pp 114-125. Lawrence C. Wroth is the author of *The colonial printer* (New York, 1965); and *A history of printing in colonial Maryland 1686-1776* (Baltimore, 1922).

<sup>7</sup> Hugh Amory & David D. Hall (eds), *A history of the book in America: volume I: the colonial book in the Atlantic world* (Cambridge, 2000); Raymond Gillespie & Andrew Hadfield (eds), *The Oxford History of the Irish book: volume III: The Irish book in English 1550-1800* (Oxford, 2005); James H. Murphy (ed), *The Oxford history of the Irish book: volume IV: the Irish book in English 1800-1891* (Oxford, 2011).

culture. They have provided momentum and a rallying cry to scholars of the book, gathering together those who work on diverse aspects of book history. These volumes have attempted to address not only production but the consumption and distribution of texts within each nation, an important undertaking given the extent of specialization within the broader field of book history. In order to do so these national volumes often had to commission work from scholars on new areas of research. The result has been that these volumes address a very wide variety of topics within the study of book history. *A history of the book in America: volume II* is a particularly good example of the attempts to address not only production but issues of consumption, and the sociological place of texts within American life.<sup>8</sup> The texts that these national projects have generated have now become standardized references for scholars interested in the history of printing, publishing or reading. However, the success of these attempts has been restricted by the geographical and temporal scope that each volume covers. By limiting the scope of this study to the analysis of two particular provincial cities within a limited time frame, this study hopes to profitably combine many of the approaches described in these national volumes to create a more holistic picture of the development and use of print within these specific communities.

More recently, several scholars have attempted to step outside these national frameworks by engaging in studies which deliberately challenge national preoccupations. The limitations of national projects on book history have long been acknowledged by scholars promoting a more transnational approach to the study of book history. Isabel Hofmeyr, in her 2004 work *The portable Bunyan: a transnational history of the Pilgrim's Progress* talks about studying the 'international text' rather than the simple story of Bunyan as British author for British audiences. Sydney J. Shep in her article 'Books without borders: the transnational turn in book history' argued that texts ignore boundaries

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<sup>8</sup> Robert A. Gross & Mary Kelly (eds), *A history of the book in America: volume II: an extensive republic: print, culture, and society in the new nation, 1790-1840* (Chapel Hill, 2010).

of time, area and nationality, and that scholars should begin to recognize and study this. Current work by James Raven has also begun to move beyond the national framework. His most recent publication, edited in conjunction with Leslie Howsam, examines the movement of texts between Europe and the Americas.<sup>9</sup> As they state in their introduction, ‘a transnational history can transcend the artificial boundaries of the nation-state by indentifying networks and other patterns of relationship.’<sup>10</sup> Studies of this nature have the potential to make huge contributions not only to the study of book history, but also to scholars’ understanding of how ideas move into and between communities. This project is located firmly within this growing body of work, as it hopes to use transnational models for understanding how Belfast and Baltimore were each ‘amphibious, at once part of and distinct from the metropolitan trade.’<sup>11</sup> In other words, Belfast and Baltimore were both part of their national cultures of print and part of the larger transnational and transatlantic cultures of print production and consumption. Here the Atlantic framework provides an excellent opportunity for exploring the trans-nationality of texts in these communities.

While national studies help establish the framework for this project, other authors have laid the foundation for this work with their investigations of specific aspects of print culture within these two communities. Very few authors have written specifically on the print culture or book trades of either Belfast or Baltimore, though the cities have been covered by regional studies. Within the Irish context, J.R.R. Adams’ work lays the

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<sup>9</sup> Isabel Hofmeyr, *The portable Bunyan: a transnational history of the Pilgrim’s Progress* (Princeton, 2004); Sydney J. Shep, ‘Books without borders: the transnational turn in book history’ in Robert Fraser & Mary Hammond (eds), *Books without borders volume 1: the cross-national dimensions in print culture* (New York, 2008), pp 13-37; At the 2010 Perils of Print Culture Conference in Dublin, Ireland James Raven gave a talk entitled ‘The Perils of Nationalism in Book History’ in which he challenged scholars to move beyond the national framework inherent in those studies.

<sup>10</sup> James Raven & Leslie Howsam (eds), *Books between Europe and the Americas: connections and communities, 1620-1860* (London, 2011), p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> This phrase comes from the introduction to Amory & Hall (eds), *A history of the book in America: volume I*, p. 54. Within the book the authors use it to describe the way in which the North American colonies were both inside of and beyond the British provincial print culture. The same sentiments can be used to describe how each provincial community sits within their own ‘national’ print culture and yet simultaneously a part of the larger transnational networks of print circulation.

foundations for studies on publishing, distribution and popular reading within Ulster.<sup>12</sup> Adams' examinations of Belfast imprints, edition sizes, and distribution routes have formed the model for examining the movement of popular print in Ireland. Niall Ó Ciosáin's study on *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750-1850*, builds on Adams' foundations to offer a broader and more quantitative approach.<sup>13</sup> Adams' pioneering work on Ulster reading societies has also inspired a recent essay by Johanna Archbold on book clubs and reading societies in Ireland.<sup>14</sup> The latest work specifically dealing with the print trades in Belfast is a study of the printer James Magee by Michael O'Connor.<sup>15</sup>

While Adams' work focused on Ulster, pioneering studies of Irish print culture by Richard Cargill Cole, Mary Pollard, Charles Benson and Máire Kennedy among others have begun to paint the picture of the Irish print trades in more general strokes. Pollard's work on the Dublin book trades offers the most comprehensive analysis of eighteenth-century Irish publishing. This, along with works on the print trades produced by Benson, Robert Munter and James Phillips provide an excellent resource for understanding the structures and figures of the print and publishing industry in Dublin.<sup>16</sup> Máire Kennedy's work begins to sketch out the networks that connected the Dublin print trades to both continental and provincial publishers, while Cole's work on English writers and Irish publishers begins to highlight the connections between the book-trades of Ireland, England

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<sup>12</sup> J. R. R. Adams, *The printed word and the common man: popular culture in Ulster 1700-1900* (Belfast, 1987); J. R. R. Adams, 'Reading Societies in Ulster' in *Ulster Folklife*, xxvi (1980), pp 55-64.

<sup>13</sup> Niall Ó Ciosáin, *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750-1850* (London, 1997).

<sup>14</sup> Johanna Archbold, 'Book clubs and reading societies in the late eighteenth century' in James Kelly & Martyn J. Powell (eds), *Clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2010), pp 138-162.

<sup>15</sup> O'Connor's dissertation on Magee was completed at Queen's University, Belfast in 2008 but will not be released until July 2012. Part of his research is available in Michael O'Connor, "'A Small Cargoe for Tryal": Connections between the Belfast and Philadelphia book trades in the later eighteenth century' in James Raven & Leslie Howsam (eds), *Books between Europe and the Americas: connections and communities, 1620-1860* (London, 2011), pp 187-211.

<sup>16</sup> M. Pollard, *Dublin's trade in books 1550-1800* (Oxford, 1989); M. Pollard, *A dictionary of the members of the Dublin book trade 1550-1800: based on the records of the Guild of St. Luke the Evangelist Dublin* (London, 2000); Charles Benson's thesis provides an extension of Pollard's work into the nineteenth century: Charles Benson, 'The Dublin book trade 1801-1850,' (4 vols, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Dublin, 2000); Robert Munter, *A dictionary of the print trade in Ireland 1550-1775* (New York, 1988); James W. Phillips, *Printing and bookselling in Dublin, 1670-1800: a bibliographical enquiry* (Dublin, 1998); Vincent Kinane is another scholar who has contributed to the knowledge of printing and publishing in Ireland. See Vincent Kinane, *A brief history of printing and publishing in Ireland* (Dublin, 2002).

and America.<sup>17</sup> Together these authors have significantly advanced the study of Irish print culture.

In the American context, Baltimore has also been neglected by recent book historians, despite the generally more developed literature on print culture in early America. In the first half of the twentieth century, work by Joseph Towne Wheeler and A. Rachel Minick began to explore printing in Maryland.<sup>18</sup> Thanks to the new digital editions of work by American bibliographers like Charles Evans and Ralph Shaw and Richard Shoemaker, more is known about Baltimore's imprints than Belfast's, but very little new scholarship has been done with this knowledge with regards to Baltimore.<sup>19</sup> More recent scholarship has examined aspects of reading within Baltimore. Work by Larry Sullivan and Carl Garrigus explored the reading habits of particular portions of Maryland society.<sup>20</sup> However, most of the work which has been done on Baltimore's print culture has been a part of larger studies focused on America more generally. For example work on Baltimore's newspapers can be found in Jeffrey Pasley's recent work on newspaper politics in the early republic.<sup>21</sup> Likewise because of the close ties between the print communities in Baltimore and Philadelphia, many studies on Philadelphia contain important references to

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<sup>17</sup> See Máire Kennedy, *French books in eighteenth-century Ireland* (Oxford, 2001); 'The distribution of a locally-produced French periodical in provincial Ireland: the *Magazin a la Mode*, 1777-1778' in *Eighteenth Century Ireland*, ix (1994), pp 83-98; 'Book trade networks in the south of Ireland' in M.T. Richards (ed), *Branches of literature and music proceedings of the thirteenth seminar on the history of the provincial book trade held in Bristol, 11-13 July 1995* (Bristol, 2000), pp 25-46; 'The domestic and international trade of an eighteenth-century Dublin bookseller: John Archer (1782-1810)' in *Dublin Historical Record*, xlix, no. 2 (Autumn, 1996), pp 94-105; 'Spreading the word in the Irish midlands: bookselling and printing in the later 18th century' in *Long Room*, no. 43 (1998), pp 29-37; "'Politics, Coffee and News": the Dublin book trade in the eighteenth century' in *Dublin Historical Record*, liix, no. 1 (Spring 2005), pp 76-85; Richard Cargill Cole, *Irish booksellers and English writers 1740-1800* (London, 1986).

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Towne Wheeler, *The Maryland press 1777-1790* (Baltimore, 1938); Joseph Towne Wheeler, 'Reading and other recreations of Marylanders 1700-1776' in *The Maryland Historical Magazine*, xxxviii (1943), pp 36-55; A. Rachel Minick, *A history of printing in Maryland 1791-1800, with a bibliography of works printed in the state during the period* (Baltimore, 1949).

<sup>19</sup> The work of these bibliographers has been supplemented and made available digitally by Newsbank as their early American imprints collection.

<sup>20</sup> Carl E. Garrigus Jr., 'The reading habits of Maryland's planter gentry, 1718-1747' in *The Maryland Historical Magazine*, xcii, no. 1 (1997), pp 37-54; Larry E. Sullivan, 'The reading habits of the nineteenth-century Baltimore Bourgeoisie: a cross-cultural analysis' in *The Journal of Library History* (1974-1987), xvi, no. 2 (Spring, 1981), pp 227-240.

<sup>21</sup> Jeffrey L. Pasley, *'The tyranny of printers' newspaper politics in the early American republic* (Charlottesville, 2001).

print culture in Baltimore.<sup>22</sup> This work is heavily indebted to the scholarship of James N. Green, whose careful analysis of the Philadelphia print trades, including the firms of Benjamin Franklin and Mathew Carey, have hugely added to scholar's knowledge of how the American print trades operated.<sup>23</sup>

In recent years, several important studies have connected the study of print culture to republican ideology and the process of nation-building in the United States.<sup>24</sup> These studies build from Jurgen Habermas' theories of the 'public sphere' and Benedict Anderson's theories of 'imagined community.' Meredith McGill, building on the theories of Michael Warner, reminds us that issues of reprinting are linked to a republican understanding of print as public property.<sup>25</sup> Trish Loughran meanwhile has challenged some of these assumptions by stressing how print's localness, not its unified national nature, made nation building possible. These studies highlight the complex relationship between national identity formation and print culture, an area of intense interest among many historians. Meaningful comparisons can be made between this literature and Irish scholarship surrounding issues of nationalism at the end of the eighteenth century.<sup>26</sup> By examining Baltimore and Belfast in light of these theories, new perspectives on the 'unique' historiographies of both Ireland and America may challenge some of these

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<sup>22</sup> Some examples include Rosalind Remer, *Printers and men of capital: Philadelphia book publishers in the new republic* (Philadelphia, 1996); David Kaser, *Messrs. Carey & Lea of Philadelphia: a study in the history of the booktrade* (Philadelphia, 1957); Edwin Wolf, *The book culture of a colonial American city: Philadelphia books, bookmen, and booksellers* (Oxford, 1988).

<sup>23</sup> See James N. Green, *Mathew Carey publisher and patriot* (Philadelphia, 1985); *Benjamin Franklin: writer and printer* (New Castle, DE, 2006); 'The rise and fall of Isaiah Thomas's bookselling network' presented at the American Antiquarian Society, 24 October 1996; and the extensive contributions of James N Green to Amory & Hall(eds), *A history of the book in America: volume I*; and Gross & Kelly (eds), *A history of the book in America: volume II*.

<sup>24</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Revised edition, London, 2006); for related theories see Jurgen Habermas, *The structural transformation of the public sphere: an inquiry into a category of bourgeois society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Berlin, 1989).

<sup>25</sup> Meredith McGill, *American literature and the culture of reprinting, 1834-1853* (Philadelphia, 2003); Trish Loughran, *The republic in print: print culture in the age of U.S. nation building, 1770-1870* (New York, 2007); Michael Warner, *The letters of the republic: publication and the public sphere in eighteenth-century America* (Cambridge, MA, 1990).

<sup>26</sup> Padhraig Higgins, *A nation of politicians: gender, patriotism, and political culture in late eighteenth-century Ireland* (Madison, WI, 2010) emphasizes the role of print in politicizing the middle classes in the 1780s. For similar work on the 1790s see Nancy Curtin, *The United Irishmen: popular politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (Oxford, 1998); or David Dickson, Dáire Keogh & Kevin Whelan (eds), *The United Irishmen: republicanism, radicalism and rebellion* (Dublin, 1993).

assumptions. One of the benefits of the comparative framework is that it easily allows for the synthesis and critique of theories developed in diverse geographical and temporal spaces.

While Darnton's communications circuit provides the inspiration for this approach to the study of print culture, a rationale also needs to be established for the comparative aspect of this project. Though there were many links between these communities, some of which will be highlighted, this study will be primarily comparative in nature. Comparative studies have much to offer scholars interested in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world.<sup>27</sup> By comparing two locations, each of which is within the larger British 'cultural empire,' it becomes easier to identify the types of relationships that provincial cities in the Atlantic world maintained with each other and with the metropole. In terms of the development of printing and publishing, many communities shared a general trajectory of growth, or a life-cycle, which describes how printers and booksellers operated at different stages of community growth. These patterns become more evident through comparison, but the danger of this approach is that these patterns then appear axiomatic and predictable. Here, in-depth studies of the local which highlight the differences between the development of Baltimore and Belfast allow for real advancement in the studies of both local communities, and provide a way of exploring the factors which influenced these growth patterns. The impact of local values, geographical conditions and national law can be evaluated within the comparative context to determine their impact on these wider patterns.

One of the very striking things, at the beginning of this study was the scarcity of scholarship on the print culture of provincial Irish or American communities. Though some authors made assumptions about what they thought was happening in provincial Ireland and America by extrapolating from their research conducted on England or Great

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<sup>27</sup> Chris Lorenz, 'Comparative historiography: problems and perspectives' in *History and Theory*, xxxviii, no. 1 (February, 1999), pp 25-39; Lara Putnam, 'To study the fragments/whole: microhistory and the Atlantic world' in *Journal of Social History*, xxxix, no. 3 (Spring, 2006), pp 615-630.

Britain, very few specifically examined provincial cities. An example is William St. Clair's *The reading nation in the romantic period*.<sup>28</sup> This is an excellent study of the legal and economic realities that governed book production in England. However, St. Clair uses these same models to predict access to reading material in both Ireland and America. While his statements cannot be dismissed, they do deserve to be evaluated. A more typical example is Richard Sher's monograph *The enlightenment and the book*.<sup>29</sup> This is an exceptional macrohistory of Scottish Enlightenment publishing which includes in-depth investigation into publishing in Dublin and Philadelphia. While Sher's work provides an excellent model for how texts can be traced across the Atlantic world, he like many others tends to ignore cities which did not have a first-rank publishing industry. In these instances the microhistory of the print culture of Belfast and Baltimore can serve as a telling example and a check on macrohistorical studies of printing, publishing, and reading in the Atlantic world.<sup>30</sup>

Baltimore and Belfast were chosen as the locations for this study for several reasons. Primarily they are each unique, interesting and under-examined case studies in their own right. Both cities occupy exceptional positions with regards to their own regional and national print cultures. Belfast, by means of its close connections to Scotland, is distinctive from other provincial printing centres in Ireland. Though the town still sourced much of its print from Dublin and London, the importance of printed material from these places is not as central as it would have been had there been no Scottish dimension.

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<sup>28</sup> St. Clair makes several arguments about the availability of texts in Ireland and the United States which use his models developed for England, including that rural print culture in North America was frozen because of British copyright (p. 380) and that reading in provincial Ireland was 'little different' than Manchester (p. 339). William St. Clair, *The reading nation in the romantic period* (Cambridge, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> Richard B. Sher, *The enlightenment and the book: Scottish authors and their publishers in eighteenth-century Britain, Ireland, and America* (Chicago, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> An exception to this general statement is work by Hannah Barker which explores issues of print and politics in relation to provincial towns in England. These include Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, politics, and public opinion in late eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1998); Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, politics and English society, 1695-1855* (Harlow, Essex, 2000). Another English exception is John Feather, *The provincial book trade in eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1985). One of the earliest works dealing solely with provincial Irish print culture was W. G. Wheeler, 'The spread of provincial printing in Ireland up to 1850' in *Irish Booklore*, iv, no.1 (1978), pp 7-19; followed by Gerard Long (ed), *Books beyond the pale: aspects of the provincial book trade in Ireland before 1850* (Dublin, 1996).

Meanwhile, Baltimore's location as the northernmost city of the south or the southernmost city of the north puts it in a special position relative to most other American cities.<sup>31</sup> Though very much still within the orbit of Philadelphia's book-trade, the city was also open to print from a variety of other sources. But while each of these two towns displays some unique traits, they are not so distinct as to be outside the spectrum of normal experience. In addition, Baltimore and Belfast possessed several characteristics, outlined below, which ensure that comparisons between these towns serve to bring to light both the distinctive characteristics of each, and the wider patterns at play.

In 1760, the starting point for this study, both Baltimore and Belfast were small port towns operating on the fringes of the Atlantic basin. At the time, Belfast was a rather small provincial town of about nine thousand inhabitants, with a long history dating back to pre-Norman settlement. In the seventeenth century, Ulster had been one of the primary areas of plantation settlement for Scottish immigrants. By the mid-eighteenth century the majority of Belfast's inhabitants were Scots-Irish Presbyterians, though the members of the Church of Ireland generally dominated the local gentry and the positions of authority within the town's corporation. A few Baptists, Catholics and Quakers could also be found among the town's population. This religious mix made Belfast unique among larger Irish towns, which were more often dominated by the relationship between Catholic and Anglican populations.<sup>32</sup> As this study reveals, it was the town's Presbyterians, largely members of the middle classes, who proved to be the driving force behind many of the developments in the community. These merchants and artisans, prevented from participation in local government by the Irish legislation of 1704, developed many alternative sites of community participation, which are of direct interest to this study. By

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<sup>31</sup> This description of Baltimore can be found in the introduction to Seth Rockman, *Scraping by: wage labor, slavery, and survival in early Baltimore* (Baltimore, 2009).

<sup>32</sup> This is a very much a simplification of Irish demographics. For an early history of the town see George Benn, *A history of the town of Belfast from the earliest times to the close of the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols (London, 1877, 1880); W.A. Maguire, *Belfast a history* (Lancaster, 2009); Jonathan Bardon, *A history of Ulster* (Belfast, 1992); J.C. Beckett et al, *Belfast: the making of the city 1800-1914* (Belfast, 1983).

supporting printers, promoting literacy and fueling the cultural development of the town, Presbyterians in Belfast drove much of the early growth of print culture.

Baltimore, by contrast, was a new city. First laid out in 1744, the town's early growth was assisted by hostilities on the western frontier during the French and Indian War, which confined the growing population to coastal areas. By 1760 there were still only a few thousand individuals who called Baltimore home.<sup>33</sup> Like Belfast, Baltimore supported an unusual balance of religious communities during the colonial period. Though Maryland was officially an Anglican colony, it was also home to large Catholic communities, in addition to Quakers, Lutherans, Presbyterians and others.<sup>34</sup> Though official restrictions on dissenting religions were lifted during the American Revolution, the dynamics between these religious communities provide some interesting points of comparison for our two towns. In what ways did the disenfranchised Catholic community use print to create alternative modes of public participation, and did they, like the Presbyterians in Belfast, contribute disproportionately to the cultural development of the town?

Commercially the two towns shared many of the same experiences through their participation in coastal and transatlantic trade. As port cities they shared an immediate concern with the affairs of the wider Atlantic world, which offset their engagement with strictly national or even local developments. The merchants of Belfast developed regular trade connections with North America, where much of the flax seed which supplied Irish flax growers, was grown. While raw materials from North America were brought into Belfast, emigrants were a major export from Ulster; consisting of two-thirds of the total

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<sup>33</sup> For an early history of the area see Thomas W. Griffith, *Sketches of the early history of Maryland* (Baltimore, 1821); Sherry H. Olson, *Baltimore the building of an American city* (Baltimore, 1980); John T. Sharf, *The Chronicles of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1874).

<sup>34</sup> For a detailed analysis of religious diversity in Maryland see Rodney Stark & Roger Finke, 'American religion in 1776: a statistical portrait' in *Sociological Analysis*, xlix, no. 1 (1988), pp 39-51.

immigrant population leaving Ireland in the eighteenth century.<sup>35</sup> Other Belfast merchant networks extended into the British West Indies in search of products like sugar, which was imported into Belfast and then refined at local refineries for sale in the Irish market. There were even attempts by Belfast merchants to participate directly in the slave trade.<sup>36</sup> To a more limited extent, Belfast merchants traded with continental cities in France, Spain and the Netherlands. These transatlantic voyages supplemented a very active coastal trade with cities and towns in Britain and Ireland, keeping Belfast linked to commerce within the British Isles as well as the broader Atlantic trade. In 1792 Belfast could claim fifty-eight ships belonging to the town, twenty-five of which traded to the West Indies, eight to London, eight to Liverpool, and four to America, in addition to several vessels which served miscellaneous destinations like Dublin and Glasgow.<sup>37</sup> Though ship-ownership declined in relative importance to Belfast's overall economy over the years of this study, long distance trade remained essential to the economy of the town, and experienced resurgence in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Belfast's textile industry, which came to dominate the town's economy in the early nineteenth century, was fed through these trade connections. Flax seed and barilla ash from North America supplied the large linen industry that had developed across eighteenth-century Ulster but was centered in the Lagan valley. Linen was woven by small farmers and tenants and then funneled through the town by bleachers and drapers, who sold into wholesale markets in England and America.<sup>38</sup> Starting in the late 1770s, the cotton weaving industry also began to take hold in Belfast. Initially established as a trade to

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<sup>35</sup> Kerby A. Miller, *Ireland and Irish America: culture, class, and transatlantic migration* (Dublin, 2008), p. 44. For further details on the Irish linen industry see chapter 9 of Thomas M. Truxes, *Irish-American trade, 1660-1783* (Cambridge, 1988).

<sup>36</sup> For details see the short article by Bill Rolston, "'A lying old scoundrel': Waddell Cunningham & Belfast's role in the slave trade' in *History Ireland*, xi, no. 1 (Spring, 2003), pp. 24-27; and Nini Rodgers, *Ireland, slavery and anti-slavery, 1612-1865* (Basingstoke, 2009).

<sup>37</sup> This data comes from a retrospective look at the town contained in Thomas Bradshaw, *Belfast general and commercial directory for 1819: containing and alphabetical list of the merchants, manufacturers, and inhabitants in general...with a directory and history of Lisburn* (Belfast, 1819), p. iv. This directory also contains shipping information for 1819 which shows by that time that shipping tonnage exceeded 10,000 tons and included multiple packets per week to Glasgow, Liverpool and Dublin.

<sup>38</sup> Truxes, *Irish-American trade*, pp 193-211.

occupy individuals in Belfast's poor house, the cotton industry grew in the city until around 1808, when the United States trade embargos cut off supplies of cotton to the town's mills. From this point, linen regained its manufacturing dominance. During these early decades of the nineteenth century, thousands of individuals were employed in the textile industry in and around Belfast. This provided the foundation for Belfast's later growth as a major industrial centre by the mid-nineteenth century and for a time Belfast became the fastest growing urban centre in the United Kingdom.<sup>39</sup>

In Baltimore, shipping was the most important part of the town's economy. The carrying trades were responsible not only for moving goods along the Atlantic seaboard but also for sending supplies like flour and tobacco to the West Indies, Britain and the European continent. On exchange, these ships brought finished goods from England, rum and sugar from the islands and slaves from Africa into Baltimore. Baltimore was one of the few ports that was not blockaded during the American Revolution, allowing merchants there to capitalize on their relative advantage. Throughout the period of this study, Baltimore's port continued to grow and expand, successfully competing against Philadelphia in the export of flour which was produced in parts of western Pennsylvania and Maryland, and ground at the numerous mills surrounding Baltimore. The town led the way in the flour export trade from 1815 to 1833, as their product was particularly well-suited for long-distance transport.<sup>40</sup> Over this period, Baltimore's merchants began expanding into new markets in South America and Asia. As shipping increased in

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<sup>39</sup> Miller claims that by 1800 27,000 people were employed in the cotton industry within a ten mile radius of Belfast. Kerby A. Miller, 'Forging the "Protestant way of life": class conflict and the origins of unionist hegemony in early nineteenth-century Ulster' in David A. Wilson & Mark G. Spencer (eds), *Ulster Presbyterians in the Atlantic world: religion, politics and identity* (Dublin, 2006), pp 137-8.

<sup>40</sup> G. Terry Sharrer, 'The Merchant-Millers: Baltimore's flour milling industry, 1783-1860' in *Agricultural History*, lvi, no. 1 (January, 1982), pp 138-150; Paul Clemens, *The Atlantic economy and colonial Maryland's eastern shore: from tobacco to grain* (Ithaca, NY, 1980).

Baltimore, so too did ship-building; the construction and supply of ships became a major sector within the town's economy.<sup>41</sup>

Unlike Belfast, nineteenth-century Baltimore was still a primarily mercantile city. Though several small industries had been long established in the city, international trade was still the focus of most economic activity. Improvements in transportation, including canal development and the Baltimore & Ohio railroad, chartered in 1827, linked the city more firmly with its western hinterlands, and contributed to the dominance of wholesale trade. Many of the industries which did develop in the city were linked to this trade. Iron works and grist mills located on the outskirts of the city kept the port supplied with flour and metal goods, and a few textile mills supplied cloth primarily for the local market. The major advances in Baltimore's industrial infrastructure did not take place until the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>42</sup>

These economic factors not only contributed to the general growth of these communities, but directly shaped the ways in which Baltimore and Belfast interacted with the wider Atlantic community. The facility with which merchants in these towns moved throughout the Atlantic, and the absolute necessity of these wider connections to the local economy, illustrates how important the Atlantic world was to members of both communities. The movement of goods and people also hints at the facility by which texts and ideas could move into and out of these communities, both as trade goods in and of themselves and as by-products of commercial activity. What is also evident is the diversity of connections sustained in each community, which helps to put their relationships with metropolitan centres such as London, Dublin and Philadelphia into perspective.

By 1825, the end of this study, Belfast and Baltimore were very different communities. The time frame of this study allows us to see how some of the largest events

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<sup>41</sup> Belfast also developed a ship-building industry, but its major period of development came in the mid-nineteenth century with iron-sided, steam powered vessels.

<sup>42</sup> Edward K. Muller & Paul A. Groves, 'The emergence of industrial districts in mid-nineteenth century Baltimore' in *Geographical Review*, lxi, no. 2 (April, 1979), pp 159-178.

of the age impacted on these communities. In the sixty-five year span both communities underwent a change of status. In Baltimore the American Revolution transformed colonial structures into provincial and national ones. Though the town was still very much a part of the wider British cultural empire in the Atlantic, the process of nation-building altered their relationship to London in ways that were both profound and subtle. In Belfast, the American Revolution touched off a period of patriotic fervor, culminating in Irish legislative independence.<sup>43</sup> However this period of semi-independence was short lived, and the 1800 Act of Union officially merged Ireland's legislature with that in Westminster, forming the United Kingdom. This act relocated the site of many of Ireland's grievances from Dublin to London and changed the parameters of the debate on Irish national identity. In the period between the American Revolution and the Act of Union, the French Revolution spread currents of radicalism throughout the Atlantic world, manifest in party politics in the United States and in political polarization and ultimately radical rebellion in Ireland.<sup>44</sup> Throughout the period of study, war was an almost constant factor across the Atlantic, impacting trade and national policy. While these events are not the focus of this work, they are a critical part of the background.

Though chronology is therefore important, this study adopts a thematic approach in tracing the production, distribution and consumption of printed texts in these communities, in order to examine the comparative aspects of this project and to emphasize more clearly points of convergence and departure. The thematic approach uses issues of production and reception to break down the larger cultures of print in both communities, contributing to our understanding of the holistic nature of print culture. Though this approach de-emphasizes the chronological narrative of each community's history, it does help to uncouple the examination of print from the historiographical narratives developed around

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<sup>43</sup> Maurice R. O'Connell, *Irish Politics and Social Conflict in the Age of the American Revolution* (Philadelphia, 1965); and Stephen Small, *Political thought in Ireland 1776-1798, republicanism, patriotism, and radicalism* (Oxford, 2002).

<sup>44</sup> Ian McBride, *Eighteenth-century Ireland: the isle of slaves* (Dublin, 2009).

these political changes. Though developments in printing and political changes are linked, this uncoupling opens opportunities for examining other causal factors.

The study begins by examining literacy and educational opportunities in these communities. Chapter two highlights the existence of a reading public in both Baltimore and Belfast through the examination of quantitative data in order to establish literacy rates. An exploration of the educational opportunities available in the communities shows that they developed similar educational institutions and used many of the same educational theories. The absence of public education systems in both locations allowed religious organizations to establish institutions of higher education as well as more egalitarian Sunday Schools. While the texts and methods used in these schools often reflected transatlantic fashions; national concerns and local flavors ensured that there was considerable difference in their implementation and reception.

Chapter three explores the various public institutions and organizations, such as subscription and circulating libraries, literary clubs and mechanics' institutes, which promoted book ownership and created sites of reading within these eighteenth-century communities. This section continues to examine how these communities adapted ideas and organizational structures from across the Atlantic to create institutions that would supply texts and foster public education and civil discourse for the members of their local communities. This chapter describes a few of these organizations with an eye to determining if they served the same function and demographic element in each community. It demonstrates how these types of associations not only consumed texts, but in some instances produced them as well as shaped the social and cultural spheres of the towns themselves.

Chapters four and five begin a closer exploration of the production of print in these communities. Chapter four looks at the members of the local print trades, and at the development of newspapers in each community. This section argues that newspapers

played a key role in the development of the print trades. The legal and economic restrictions which stunted the growth of newspapers in Belfast severely limited the growth of other types of printing, while in Baltimore market forces were allowed to hold sway, leading to fierce competition, growth and specialization within the print trades. Chapter five provides an overview of the types and quantities of texts produced in each community and the impact of changing copyright legislation on that production. Here the imprints themselves are examined as material artifacts from the communities in which they were produced. Together, these chapters reveal the important role of such factors as copyright, taxes and government policy, by demonstrating how the very different circumstances in Baltimore and Belfast led to dramatic shifts in the production of print within the local communities.

Chapter six shifts to look at imported print: to see where books were being imported from and at some of the strategies used to move them into these communities. It traces the national and international networks within the book trades that facilitated the movement of print into these communities, and the role of national sentiment in the consumption of texts. Finally this chapter traces some of the transatlantic links between Baltimore and Belfast and other Atlantic cities through the movement of print.

Chapter seven returns to the theme of textual consumption by examining the uses of reading within these communities. Through anecdotal evidence found in diaries and personal letters, this chapter explores some of the evidence left behind by actual readers in Baltimore and Belfast, to see what they were reading and, where possible, what purpose that reading served in their lives. What is particularly evident in these case studies is the mixed approach that most individuals took to reading for entertainment and reading for self-improvement. These case studies are then balanced by an examination of the attitudes and beliefs about reading expressed by community groups, such as tract societies and

Sunday Schools. Though this does not illuminate actual reading practices, it can reveal what contemporaries believed to be common reading practices.

Finally the work concludes by reflecting on the implications of these findings for the broader role of print in these provincial communities. Together this work embraces the fields of print production, the methods and means of distribution and the sites of reception within each community. It places these communities in a new context, demonstrating connections to national centres and broad adherence to international trends.

## Chapter 2 Literacy and Education

At the beginning of any study of print culture, or of the book trades within a community, it is helpful to have at least a basic understanding of both literacy levels and the cultures of reading that shaped the market for publications. Determining the levels of literacy not only provides a base-line for the demand for texts within a community, but it also helps identify the audiences for locally produced texts. By studying the ways that community members used reading in their everyday lives, whether for pleasure, salvation or utility, we can begin to see the impact of print on a particular community. Attitudes to reading, expressed by contemporaries interested in educational reform, also reveal their hopes and fears concerning the power of reading. This chapter begins to explore these issues, by using a variety of types of evidence to attempt to triangulate local reading attainment and practice. It will begin by exploring how individuals in Baltimore and Belfast learnt to read, what types of institutions and groups promoted literacy through education, and some of the texts created and used in the process.

### Literacy

The calculation of literacy rates in the eighteenth century is a subject of much heated debate among scholars because the scarcity of evidence requires a more indirect approach. For some, the evidence of signatures can be used to estimate a rough degree of literacy. However, the ability to write one's name, and the ability to read were separate skills taught to individuals at different times for much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>1</sup> As a result, scholars need to be careful not to conflate these skills too closely when examining literacy. It is not always clear that those who could sign their name could also read, or that those who could not sign were illiterate. However, studies using

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<sup>1</sup> For a description of early educational practices see E. Jennifer Monaghan, *Learning to read and write in colonial America* (Amherst, 2005).

signature data for literacy suggest that, overall, the under- and over-reporting of literacy from signatures generally balances out to provide a rough estimate of literacy rates for a given population. Another approach used by scholars has been the back-projection of age-specific census data from the nineteenth century to reconstruct trends in literacy rates from the late eighteenth century. This system presents statistical difficulties stemming from the methods used to report literacy and the distance between the date of the census and the presumed acquisition of literacy.<sup>2</sup> Within this contentious field, disputes have even arisen over the very definition of literacy itself. Should 'literacy' include all those who have been taught to read, even if they are functionally illiterate, only those who have obtained a certain level of reading proficiency, or those who could unambiguously both read and write? This study will adopt the definition of literacy used by Carl Kaestle, which defines it 'as the ability to decode and comprehend written language at a rudimentary level.'<sup>3</sup> This definition of literacy is well-suited to use by historians, since it encompasses a wide spectrum of individuals who have at least some ability to read, and is not tied to the ability to write.

Previous studies of literacy rates that utilized nineteenth-century census data have been conducted in both Ireland and the United States. While this methodology has its problems, the similarities between the two data sets allows for some comparisons to be made. In Ireland, the earliest national census data that included questions on literacy was the 1841 census. This census used the categories of those 'who can read and write,' those who 'can read only' and those 'who can neither read nor write.' This data was further

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<sup>2</sup> Issues relating to the study of literacy are most often discussed within studies of the history of reading such as Guglielmo Cavallo & Roger Chartier (eds), *A history of reading in the west* (Oxford, 1999); Mary Daly & David Dickson (eds), *The origins of popular literacy in Ireland: language, change and educational development 1700-1920* (Dublin, 1990); Bernadette Cunningham & Máire Kennedy (eds), *The experience of reading: Irish historical perspectives* (Dublin, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> Carl F. Kaestle, Helen Damon-Moore, Lawrence C. Stedman, Katherine Tinsley & William Vance Trollinger, Jr., *Literacy in the United States: readers and reading since 1880* (New Haven, 1991), p.3; see also Carl F. Kaestle, 'Literacy and diversity: themes from a social history of the American reading public' in *History of Education Quarterly*, xxvii, no. 4 (Winter, 1988), pp 523-549.

divided up by gender, ten year age cohorts and by geographical area.<sup>4</sup> Niall Ó Ciosáin, among others has used this census data to back-project literacy rates for the second half of the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup>

Overall, the 1841 census stated that of individuals over the age of five, forty-seven per cent of the population could read. While these figures seem quite low and are indeed much lower than commensurate American figures, Ó Ciosáin puts Ireland in the middle third in relation to European literacy in the nineteenth century. These figures must also be qualified based on language, since they represent literacy in English which was the first language of only about half of the Irish population at the time. Breaking these figures down by location and gender reveals a much more detailed picture of literacy in Ireland. Urban dwellers were almost twenty per cent more likely to be able to read than rural dwellers, and males were almost ten per cent more likely than females. However the biggest extremes came from regional differences. Ulster, our area of study, marks the high end of the scale, with some locations reporting that eighty-five to ninety per cent of the population could read. Ulster also shows higher female literacy rates than the rest of Ireland, which has been attributed to the impact of the Presbyterian community.<sup>6</sup>

In fact this impact is even clearer when seen at the county level. In 1841 the counties of Antrim, Down and Londonderry had the highest levels of literacy in Ireland. Antrim ranged from roughly seventy-nine percent for males and seventy-four per cent for females. In Belfast, the average literacy for both sexes was approximately eighty-three per cent, which was nearly ten per cent higher than Dublin.<sup>7</sup> No other region of the country

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<sup>4</sup> See the tables on education in *Report of the commissioners appointed to take the census of Ireland, for the year 1841* (Dublin, 1843), p. xxxii, 438. This included statistics on illiteracy and school attendance for the age group five to fifteen years in Belfast. These show that 21% of individuals in this group could neither read nor write while 28% attended school, leaving approximately 50% of the population in 1841 aged five to fifteen which possessed some literacy but did not attend school. It also provided a ratio of the number of educators in the town to the total population age five to fifteen, which was a rate of 1 to every 74 children.

<sup>5</sup> Ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture in Ireland*.

<sup>6</sup> For more information see Andrew R. Holmes, *The shaping of Ulster Presbyterian belief and practice, 1770-1840* (Oxford, 2006); John A. McIvor, *Popular education in the Irish Presbyterian church* (Dublin, 1969).

<sup>7</sup> See plate number three regarding education in Ireland in *Report of the commissioners appointed to take the census of Ireland, for the year 1841* (Dublin, 1843), p. 59, 438.

could boast of an urban centre along with its extensive hinterlands with such high levels of general literacy. This means that though Ireland as a whole had only average levels of literacy, in European terms, Belfast and its surrounding hinterland had relatively high levels of literacy more consistent with American rates. Even English cities of the time could not always match these Irish figures. Work done on Lancashire in the 1830s indicates that parishes in Lancaster had literacy rates of only fifty-five per cent, while parts of Manchester had rates of only thirty-six per cent.<sup>8</sup> While these figures are not representative of England as a whole, they do provide some perspective for both our Irish and American communities.

Using back-projection, Ó Ciosáin utilized the 1841 census figures to estimate literacy rates in the second half of the eighteenth century. He estimated that of individuals born across Ireland between 1766 and 1775 between thirty-two and sixty-seven per cent of males could read and between twelve and fifty-one per cent of females could read with the variance again due to very marked regional differences.<sup>9</sup> Looking only at the figures for Ulster, sixty-seven per cent of men and fifty-one per cent of women born between 1766 and 1775 could read in 1841. These figures rose steadily over the next fifty years so that seventy per cent of men and fifty-two per cent of women born between 1786 and 1795 could read, and seventy-seven per cent of men and sixty-eight per cent of women born between 1816 and 1825 could read at the time of the 1841 census.

While this data is the most comprehensive available for Ireland some cautions need to be made in its interpretation. It is based on self-reporting of surviving individuals in 1841, when some of the age cohorts were quite old. Poorer individuals who were less

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<sup>8</sup> Though quite dated, Michael Sanderson presents an excellent statistical analysis of literacy levels in Lancashire from the mid-eighteenth century through to the early nineteenth century. He posits that increased industrialization in this area actually led to a decrease in literacy and social mobility for a period from 1790 to roughly 1820, which is in contrast to the general increase in literacy throughout England as a whole. Michael Sanderson, 'Literacy and social mobility in the Industrial Revolution in England' in *Past & Present*, no. 56 (August, 1972), p. 85. See also David W. Galenson, 'Literacy and age in preindustrial England: quantitative evidence and implications' in *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, xxix, no. 4 (July, 1981), pp 813-829.

<sup>9</sup> For Ó Ciosáin's full analysis of the census data see pp 37-45.

likely to be literate also had a somewhat shorter life span, which may have artificially inflated the literacy rate of the older cohorts. It is also not clear if this data represents those who at some point in their life learnt to read, or only those who retained that skill in 1841. Despite these unknowns, what the figures do show is that over the period 1766 to 1825 Ulster, and specifically Belfast and its surrounds, did have a very significant reading population, and that over this period literacy rates continued to rise. Men were more likely than women to be able to read, but female literacy had grown at a faster rate than male literacy, gradually closing the gap over the period. Finally literacy rates in Belfast were consistently higher than the Irish national average over the whole of the period.

A study conducted by Soltow and Stevens for the United States using both census data from the 1840 and the 1850 census and signature records provides comparisons.<sup>10</sup> In this study Soltow and Stevens acknowledged the methodological problems of measuring historical literacy from both signature and census data, and therefore used both types of data sets to try and identify deeper trends in American literacy prior to 1870. Several snapshots of data are provided for Maryland, which along with their general conclusions, can be used to provide a sense of eighteenth-century literacy in and around Baltimore.

The first estimates they provide for Maryland came from a 1768 petition to move the county seat from Joppa to Baltimore, which had 2,030 signers. Of the signers, 407 were markers, which if signatures are used as a demonstration of literacy, show a rate of approximately twenty per cent illiteracy in Baltimore County. However, different parts of the petition signed in various locations in the county reveal extreme variation with illiteracy rates ranging from one to fifty per cent. Soltow and Stevens proposed that 'given such variation and the overall figure of 20 percent, it is likely that the level of illiteracy for the entire colony of Maryland was somewhat higher, but still within the range of our other

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<sup>10</sup> Lee Soltow & Edwards Stevens, *The rise of literacy and the common school in the United States: a socioeconomic Analysis to 1870* (Chicago, 1981).

eighteenth-century samples.’<sup>11</sup> The variation of literacy rates throughout Baltimore county supports their hypothesis that before 1800, literacy rates were directly related to population density. Therefore locations such as Baltimore town, which grew steadily throughout the eighteenth century, experienced a steady increase in literacy.

This theory seems to be confirmed by using military enlistment records from 1799 to 1829, which provide aggregate data for enlistees based on region of birth, whether they were native citizens and on occupation. It is important to note that their data only covers white men: women, children and blacks were excluded. They show that of those born in the South fifty per cent were illiterate, while those born in Northern states other than New England had a rate of forty per cent illiteracy. Foreign-born enlistees had higher illiteracy rates than native citizens, and those with a stated occupation had lower illiteracy rates than either farmers or labourers, the latter having the highest rates of illiteracy at fifty-four per cent.<sup>12</sup>

Finally the authors used the 1840 and 1850 census data to break down literacy rates by state. The 1840 census asked the question, ‘how many white persons in your family twenty years of age cannot read or write?’ This question is problematic in several ways. First it aggregates the family, so that specific data on gender and age cohorts is hidden. The question also fails to distinguish between reading and writing skills, possibly leading to higher rates of misreporting, and it does not specify language. In the 1850 census the question was broken down by individuals. According to the 1840 census, literacy rates in Maryland were approximately ninety-two per cent for white persons over the age of twenty. This is compared to ninety-five per cent for Pennsylvania and eighty-one per cent in Virginia.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Soltow & Stevens, p. 38; See also Robert E. Gallman, ‘Changes in the level of literacy in a new community of early America’ in *The Journal of Economic History*, xlviii, no. 3 (September, 1988), pp 567-582.

<sup>12</sup> Soltow & Stevens, pp 52 -54.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 159.

Together, what these three data sets can tell us is that literacy rates in Maryland rose significantly over the period, and that factors of population density, place of birth, nativity and occupation all related in some way to literacy levels. It is also clear from this data that Maryland occupied a middle ground in both geography and literacy between the higher literacy levels in northern states and the lower literacy levels in states farther south. Higher population density in Baltimore probably translated into higher literacy levels than the state average.

Together the data from both countries indicates that a significant and growing portion of the population was literate. On the whole, while Maryland's literacy rate exceeded Ulster's by around ten percent in the 1840s, the main point is that both these communities had relatively high rates of literacy for the eighteenth century.

It is important to keep in mind, that this data can tell us very little about the literacy rates of several excluded groups, the largest of which were African Americans. All the data pools used by Soltow and Stevens excluded African Americans, whether free or slave. Though we know that Baltimore's free black community was at least partially literate and that they supported schools to increase literacy, we have very little idea of what literacy rates in this community might have been. Literacy among enslaved African Americans is even more difficult to estimate.<sup>14</sup> The literacy data, both in the US and Ireland, is also very patchy in terms of non-English speakers. Irish speakers around Belfast and German speaking communities in the United States present challenges to the study of print culture in both communities, which needs to be kept in mind when considering a full picture of the cultures of print in these areas.

While it can be difficult to estimate the exact proportion of the population that was literate in the eighteenth century using nineteenth-century data, several factors suggest that

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<sup>14</sup> Black literacy was not recorded in the census until 1850. Reading among enslaved communities in Maryland was frowned upon, but not illegal, contrary to the classic assertion made by Hugh Auld against the education of Frederick Douglass. Maryland never legislated against teaching either free or enslaved African Americans to read, unlike most other slave holding states. See Hilary J. Moss, *Schooling citizens: the struggle for African American education in antebellum America* (Chicago, 2009), p. 98.

literacy was of growing importance in both communities, and basic reading skills may have been possessed by a significant proportion of the population. In Baltimore, the Baltimore County Orphans Court was charged with contracting apprenticeships for orphaned or indigent children in the city. In the 1790s this amounted to an average of eighty-five contracts per year, but by the mid-1810s over four hundred orphans were being apprenticed by the court each year. These contracts included specifications of the responsibilities of each party. While apprentices were required to stay away from ale houses, taverns, playhouses, horse races, cards and fornication among other things, masters were required to train their apprentices in their respective trades and provide them with a basic education which included both reading and writing.<sup>15</sup> Even free black apprentices, were to be supplied with an education, or after 1817, a cash substitute of \$20 for girls and \$30 for boys, an amount which perhaps approximated the cost of a basic education at the time.<sup>16</sup> Though work by James Watkinson on apprenticeship contracts in Petersburg, Virginia shows that these clauses were not always heeded, the fact that this was a standard part of apprenticeship contracts, even for the poorest children performing the most unskilled jobs, suggests that basic literacy was seen an essential attribute and likely to have been quite general throughout the community.<sup>17</sup>

In Ulster higher literacy rates have frequently been attributed to Presbyterian culture.<sup>18</sup> While evidence shows that there were correlations between higher literacy levels and religious denomination, it is difficult to prove causality. Since, for example, religion

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<sup>15</sup> For a detailed analysis of the various trades to which Baltimore's orphans were apprenticed see Charles G. Steffen, 'Changes in the organization of artisan production in Baltimore, 1790 to 1820' in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, third series, xxxvi, no. 1 (January, 1979), p. 108.

<sup>16</sup> Moss, *Schooling citizens*, p. 74.

<sup>17</sup> For details on apprenticeship literacy see James D. Watkinson, 'Reluctant scholars: apprentices and the Petersburg (Virginia) Benevolent Mechanics' Association School' in *History of Education Quarterly*, xxxvi, no. 4 (Winter, 1996), pp 429-448; John E. Murray, 'Family, literacy, and skill training in the antebellum South: historical-longitudinal study evidence from Charleston' in *The Journal of Economic History*, lxiv, no. 3 (September, 2004), pp 773-799.

<sup>18</sup> Ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture*, p. 36. See also McBride, *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, p. 57; and Graeme Kirkham, 'Literacy in north-west Ulster, 1680-1860' in Daly & Dickson (eds), *The origins of popular literacy in Ireland*, pp 73-96.

intersected with factors of class and occupation.<sup>19</sup> However, it is clear that Presbyterian culture valued literacy. The ability of individuals to read the scriptures for themselves was at the heart of Presbyterian values and beliefs, and members of the clergy were supposed to test their congregations on their knowledge of the bible and catechism.<sup>20</sup> Though Presbyterian clergy may not have always been active in fulfilling their duties to ensure that all members of their congregation were literate, this does not diminish the place of literacy as a broad value within the community. Just as apprenticeship contracts point to a fundamental belief in the benefits of literacy in Baltimore, so too do Presbyterian values in Belfast. Simply valuing literacy does not explain how individuals within these communities learned to read, for that we will have to turn towards an examination of the educational opportunities available.

### **Educational Institutions**

While both then as now, an education was not the only way that individuals acquired literacy, it does represent a primary and traceable means by which individuals in Baltimore and Belfast obtained basic literacy. Wide-spread and systematic educational efforts correlate strongly with increased literacy and with a growth in print culture, yet these efforts themselves were dependent on a pre-existing culture of print. Educational institutions were both dependent on and huge contributors to print culture throughout the Atlantic world. They not only helped build a critical mass of readers but produced their own literature and significantly contributed to the demand for texts within local communities. Educational efforts by communities were extensions of the values of their organizers, and represented one means by which community leaders attempted to shape the

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<sup>19</sup> It is difficult to isolate the contributing factors to literacy. While religion may play a significant role, it is closely linked with social class and increased commercialization in Ulster which has also been shown to drive up literacy rates. However it is clear that predominantly Presbyterian areas did have significantly higher literacy rates during the early nineteenth century than districts predominantly settled with either Catholic or Church of Ireland communities.

<sup>20</sup> For more information see Holmes, *The shaping of Ulster Presbyterian belief and practice*; McIvor, *Popular education in the Irish Presbyterian church*.

nature of their society. Here local ‘cultures of print’ are embodied in the institutions where people acquired literacy and interacted with texts in a formal way. These institutions represent a community’s idealized vision of interactions between texts and young people. If print culture is a complex and interactive process, surrounding the use of texts, educational institutions and textbooks represent some of the most foundational and influential sites of interaction.

In both communities, popular ideas concerning education, such as the Lancastrian and Sunday School movements, made their rounds at similar points, demonstrating how each community borrowed from the pool of ideas circulating throughout the British Atlantic world. However, local concerns and personalities also impacted on the development of educational institutions over the period in question. This section will explore some of the ways in which people in Baltimore and Belfast learned to read, the texts that they used to do so, and the institutions and organizations that facilitated this process.

One of the problems of studying eighteenth- and nineteenth-century education is the bewildering array of educational institutions co-existing in most urban areas. Here problems of definition and classification have made it difficult to get a firm understanding of actual access to educational opportunities by students from different portions of the population. To this end, this study will utilize the classification scheme laid out by Kim Tolley in her 2002 essay ‘Mapping the landscape of higher schooling, 1727-1850’ to categorize various educational institutions for the purpose of comparison.<sup>21</sup> Tolley used the terms of venture schools, church schools and town schools to classify institutions based on the form of financial support they received. Venture schools were institutions supported entirely by student tuition and include dame schools, hedge schools and private pay

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<sup>21</sup> Kim Tolley, ‘Mapping the landscape of higher schooling, 1727-1850’ in Nancy Beadie & Kim Tolley (eds), *Chartered schools: two hundred years of independent academies in the United States, 1727-1925* (New York, 2002), pp 19-43.

academies. Church schools, as the name may imply, were sponsored by religious groups, and included Sunday Schools and various charity schools run by religious communities. Finally, town schools were institutions that were governed by an elected group and which received at least some funding from government bodies— local, regional or national. By looking at the financial basis of the institution rather than student demographics, educational models or other factors, these terms allow for some standardization across the period of study, and provide a basis for comparison between Baltimore and Belfast.

In many eighteenth century communities religious institutions led the way in providing basic education to the community. In both Maryland and Ulster, church schools had an interesting and complicated history as a result of penal laws which, at various points, restricted Catholic and dissenting churches from forming schools. In Ireland, the penal laws were established in the seventeenth century. While these were primarily aimed at restricting Catholics, protestant dissenters were also inhibited by some of the laws. These restricted Catholics from forming their own schools and ensured that state funding went only to schools run by the Church of Ireland. The Church of Ireland was officially tasked and funded to provide schools in each parish of Ireland. However this system was largely dysfunctional and never covered all of Ireland. While the penal laws were not consistently enforced, they did prevent Catholics and Presbyterians from establishing a comprehensive system of officially recognized schools. Parts of the laws were repealed in 1782, in response to popular agitation generated by the Volunteer movement during the American War of Independence. More relief measures were passed in 1793, in response to looming war with France. These together removed the restrictions on schooling, and allowed other churches to establish schools, and have them officially endowed. In Maryland the War for Independence had altered the status of Catholic and dissenting communities, which had previously operated under formal disadvantages in the Anglican colony. In the eighteenth century, Maryland had similar legal restrictions to those in

Ireland. Catholics and dissenting communities were restricted from forming schools and participating in government. These restrictions were generally abolished during the War of Independence when Maryland drafted a new constitution. As a result of these restrictions in both Baltimore and Belfast, church schools, which generally played a large role in eighteenth-century education, were not widely established, with the exception of a few Anglican schools, in either community until the 1780s and 1790s. This provides a strong contrast to places like Scotland where religious institutions had led the way from the early eighteenth century in providing general education throughout the community.

In both our communities, venture schools were the earliest, and most diverse, schooling option available. These schools ranged very widely; catering to various social and economic groups, with various kinds of curriculum from the most basic literacy to a classical education in preparation for university enrollment. While gifted and deserving students were sometimes admitted on scholarships, these schools were practically limited to those children whose parents could afford at least a small amount of money, and the loss of the child's labour for their education.

Since these venture schools were not directly supported by government or religious institutions, they had to compete for the patronage of students. Newspaper advertisements then provide a window into the types and varieties of schools operating in each community, along with some of the perceived benefits touted by the masters, and the target audience. While these advertisements are useful in painting a general picture of the variety of private schooling available, they are biased towards the more well-off institutions. The smaller and cheaper a school was, the less likely that it would advertise for students in the newspaper. Dame schools run by women from their homes, which taught only the basics of literacy, and other marginal institutions have left little or no records behind for scholars

to find, and yet they should not be underestimated as a vehicle for literacy, especially among the lower and middling classes.<sup>22</sup>

Hugh Porter, a weaver and poet from County Down, described his education in the preface to his *Poetical attempts* in 1813.

First then, I naething write by rule,  
For o' the knowledge taught at school  
Mine was a very scanty share,  
I only learn'd the letters there:  
Yet, by degrees, wi'tentie head,  
At leisure hours I came to read;  
And thus, by bit an' bit I grew  
That I could write a little too,<sup>23</sup>  
A willin' mind a deal can do.<sup>23</sup>

Porter's explanation of his education was part of an apology to his readers for the rough nature of his verse, which he wrote 'to please my sel' and 'never for the public meant them.' Porter's poems were published by subscription after he lost his eyesight and could no longer support his family as a weaver. While it is unclear exactly where he received his scanty schooling—a dame school, hedge school or at home, Porter's story shows how an individual could build upon even the smallest amount of education to enrich his or her life and provide financial security. Porter also provides an example of self-education, a condition which may have been very common, but is often only known through exceptional anecdotal evidence.

In Belfast, private academies and hedge schools, terms which describe venture schools operated in the town from at least the early eighteenth century and continued to operate well into the nineteenth century. Advertisements for schools in 1760, the first year of this study, in the *Belfast News-Letter* show the variety of options available to the town's parents. William Eccles, in addition to offering private tuition, opened a school in his home on Broad Street.<sup>24</sup> James Morphett taught practical mathematics from his home in

<sup>22</sup> For more on hedge schooling in Ireland see Antonia McManus, *The Irish hedge school and its books, 1695-1831* (Dublin, 2004); and P. J. Dowling, *The hedge schools of Ireland* (Cork, 1968).

<sup>23</sup> Hugh Porter, *Poetical attempts, by Hugh Porter a County Down weaver* (Belfast, 1813), p. xi.

<sup>24</sup> *B.N.L.*, 25 January 1760.

Warren Street with both day and night classes.<sup>25</sup> John Bankhead opened a more advanced school in the Session House of Ballymena where he taught French, Latin, Greek and English grammar.<sup>26</sup> William Dowglass taught writing and arithmetic at his home in Anne Street.<sup>27</sup> For most of the schools advertised in the newspaper, teaching was just one source of income that was often combined with other activities. Both William Dowglass and James Morphett were surveyors. David Manson supported his school as a brewer and also sold rides on his ‘Flying Chariot’ machine outside of school hours. Many women may have operated small schools from their homes to supplement their family incomes, such as the one operated briefly by Martha McTier in the 1790s. While there is little mention of these female-run schools in the newspaper, we can assume that at least a few were quietly operating on the margins of Belfast’s educational scene, providing some children with their only access to schooling.

David Manson operated perhaps the most influential venture school in eighteenth-century Belfast. His innovative teaching methods and textbooks and the later prominence of his students allowed his influence to spread well beyond Belfast. Manson operated what he called a ‘play school’ in Belfast from the mid-1750s. In 1760 he expanded his operations to a boarding school. Manson’s educational philosophy revolved around play and amusement as a means of educating children. Manson anticipated many later educational movements by rewarding students with gifts and toys and by having students monitor each other’s progress in the classroom, perhaps laying the foundation for the later adoption of the Lancastrian monitorial system by many Belfast institutions.<sup>28</sup> William Drennan recalled his education under Manson while listening to a lecture by Joseph Lancaster, saying that ‘I was also much pleased with Lancaster’s lecture on the facility of abridging the common methods of school education by proper order and well adapted

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<sup>25</sup> *B.N.L.*, 29 February 1760.

<sup>26</sup> *B.N.L.*, 2 May 1760.

<sup>27</sup> *B.N.L.*, 10 October 1760.

<sup>28</sup> Manson’s methods have been compared with those of Joseph Lancaster and with Johann Pestalozzi. See W.A.C. Stewart & W.P. McCann, *The educational innovators 1750-1880* (London, 1967), p. 15.

rewards of merit. David Manson would have found himself out done by this Quaker.<sup>29</sup> Manson rejected contemporary ideas of corporal punishment, instead relying on positive motivation through his rewards system and peer pressure through public shaming of those who did not learn their lessons.

Unlike many other well-known educators, Manson chose to focus his attention on the youngest students, teaching them the rudiments of reading. He had large copies of the alphabet and monosyllables printed for use in his classroom. These were hung on the walls and pasted on the sides of a box to teach the youngest of children. Once children had learnt these they moved on to use a series of schoolbooks he designed himself, and eventually incorporating the *Lilliputian Magazine* and ‘some other easy and diverting books’ into their reading curriculum.<sup>30</sup> More advanced students were accommodated at the school by other instructors who taught writing, mathematics and French using Manson’s methods.

Manson’s reputation and influence spread far beyond his small school. He kept his school open to other schoolmasters who wished to observe his teaching. Manson was happy to instruct young teachers in his ‘play school’ methods, and this practice was credited with spreading Manson’s methods and philosophy throughout many hedge schools in Ulster.<sup>31</sup> Manson’s reputation was also spread by his students. For more than thirty years he taught the youth of many of Belfast’s most prominent families, so that by the 1790s there was a generation of individuals who had absorbed his love of learning. It may be argued that Manson’s influence on the print culture of Belfast exceeded that of any other individual in the eighteenth century. One of Manson’s first students was Helen Joy, daughter of Henry Joy the printer of the *Belfast News-Letter*. Manson taught Helen to read, a skill which she employed in her father’s print shop correcting type and comparing manuscripts. Manson also educated John, Francis and Henry Joy, who later ran the *News-*

<sup>29</sup> William Drennan to Martha McTier, 26 February 1810, in Jean Agnew & Maria Luddy (eds), *The Drennan-McTier letters 1802-1819*, iii (Dublin, 1999), p.658.

<sup>30</sup> ‘The Life of David Manson’ in *B.M.M.*, vi, no. 31 (February, 1811), p. 129.

<sup>31</sup> John J. Marshall, ‘David Manson, schoolmaster in Belfast’ in *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, second series, xiv, no. 2/3 (May-August, 1908), p. 63.

*Letter*, along with Mary Ann McCracken and her brothers, William Drennan, Martha McTier, John Templeton and John Henry Upton, Viscount Templetown to name just a few.<sup>32</sup> These individuals maintained a love of learning throughout their lives, founding and participating in many of the cultural institutions that promoted print culture in Belfast as well as publishing various texts of their own. Elizabeth Hamilton, author of the popular *Cottagers of Glenburnie*, offered a tribute to Manson in her book. In the text Mr. Gourlay offered to show

a book written by one Mr David Manson, a schoolmaster in the north of Ireland, which contains an account of what he calls his play school; the regulations of which are so excellent, that every scholar must have been made insensibly to teach himself, while he all the time considered himself as assisting the master in teaching others. All were thus at the same time actively engaged; but so regulated, as to produce not the least confusion or disturbance.<sup>33</sup>

Though Hamilton was born in Belfast, she was not educated by Manson herself, having moved to Scotland as an infant, but her older sister Katherine was, and it was undoubtedly through her that Elizabeth became acquainted with Manson's methods. In a footnote to this reference Hamilton went on to describe David Manson as a man of 'extraordinary talents' who lived in relative obscurity, for whom 'a small volume, containing an account of the school, rules of English grammar, and a spelling dictionary' was the only memorial left. For Elizabeth Hamilton, as for many others, it was through David Manson's schoolbooks that they encountered his influence.

During his career as a schoolmaster Manson published several texts to assist his students becoming literate. These texts spread beyond the area where Manson himself was known, and were reproduced in countless editions over several decades. An 1811 account of his life recalled that Manson's experience in the classroom 'soon pointed out to him the necessity of school-books, upon a plan different from any before in use. As children spend

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<sup>32</sup> John Killen, *A history of the Linen Hall Library 1788-1988* (Belfast, 1990), p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth Hamilton, *The cottagers of Glenburnie; a tale for the farmer's ingle-nook* (Edinburgh, 1808), pp 372-374.

much time learning to spell monosyllables he imagined that a primer printed upon good paper would save larger books, and would be otherwise useful, and that such little ornaments might be added to the covers by the binder, as would make them more pleasing to the children of the low class.<sup>34</sup> This account of Manson's life was published in the *Belfast Monthly Magazine*, edited by John Templeton, John Hancock and William Drennan, two of whom were Manson's former students, and can thus be considered a fairly accurate source, despite its anonymity.

Though Manson was known to have published a primer, a spelling book and a dictionary in multiple updated editions both in Belfast and elsewhere, few of these items are known to have survived. Only *A new pocket dictionary; or, English expositor* published in 1762, *A new primer. Or, Child's best guide* from approximately 1770, and his *An accurate pronouncing and spelling dictionary* of 1774 have extant copies reported in E.S.T.C. The account of Manson's life claims that the author himself did not make any money from his texts (but the publishers certainly must have). Though publishing textbooks was a popular way to supplement a teacher's meager income. From our list of venture schools advertised in the *Belfast News-Letter* in 1760, both Morphett and Manson published texts books. To put a teacher's pay in perspective, in 1760 the parish of Bright wanted a clerk and schoolmaster for a salary of seven pounds per annum, and by 1810 parish schoolmasters were being offered thirty-five pounds per annum, or about two shillings per day.<sup>35</sup> Farm labourers around Belfast could make one shilling per day in 1800.<sup>36</sup>

In addition to Manson's schoolbooks, the instructions to play his literary cards have also survived.<sup>37</sup> The literary cards were designed as a series of games that used the

<sup>34</sup> 'The Life of David Manson' in *B.M.M.*, vi, no. 31 (February, 1811), p. 128.

<sup>35</sup> *B.N.L.*, 25 November 1760; *B.N.L.*, 16 May 1810. For another discussion on the salary of school masters in eighteenth-century Ireland see Dowling, *The hedge schools of Ireland*, p. 82.

<sup>36</sup> Material collected for Henry Joy's *Annals of Ulster* (L.H.L., Joy Manuscripts, vol. 5), p. 201.

<sup>37</sup> David Manson, *A new primer. Or, child's best guide* (Philadelphia, approx. 1770), E.S.T.C. W22995; David Manson, *A new pocket dictionary; or, English expositor* (Belfast, 1762), E.S.T.C. T229722; David

popularity of playing cards to keep children entertained while they learned to read and spell. The instructions for playing the various games have survived, though the cards themselves have not. The 1770 edition of *A new primer* also represents a unique instance of the survival of Manson's work. This text was published in Philadelphia by John Dunlap, an Irish immigrant born in Strabane, who was apprenticed to his uncle in Philadelphia as a printer. The text was also later published in Baltimore. This text is evidence not just of the transatlantic exchange of ideas, but of how print culture in provincial cities could contribute to the wider pool of knowledge. Immigrants like Dunlap took Manson's ideas and texts with them as they travelled, ensuring that Manson's impact and influence far exceeded his small school. (Later chapters will discuss how school books served not only to supplement a teacher's income, but were also important underpinnings for provincial booksellers' and printers' business.)

In Baltimore, venture schools grew with the expansion of the town. Since these schools were driven by market forces, they could respond quickly to changing circumstances in the town. In 1775, as political turmoil began to increase in Maryland, a Mr. Alcock proposed an academy for the study of military arts, fortification and gunnery. However, in case there were not enough interested subscribers, he also offered to teach a night school providing all of the usual subjects.<sup>38</sup> In 1785 William Dick thanked the parents of Baltimore for the continued support of his grammar school after thirteen years.<sup>39</sup> He must have felt the reminder necessary, due to the increasing number of competing schools being advertised in the paper that year. Over the course of the year nine other men sought students for their schools, and three sought employment as private tutors or

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Manson, *Directions to play the literary cards* (Belfast, 1764), E.S.T.C. T225005; David Manson, *An accurate pronouncing and spelling dictionary, and complete English expositor. Particularly calculated for the use of schools* (Belfast, 1774), E.S.T.C. T229149.

<sup>38</sup> *M.G.*, 5 September 1775.

<sup>39</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 1 April 1785.

instructors.<sup>40</sup> Even the competition for the patronage of the young ladies of Baltimore increased, with three new female academies teaching subjects like needlework as well as reading. Two other schools specifically advertised co-educational learning. One of these, opened by Jonathan Hudson on Market Street, promised a very extensive curriculum for both young men and women. He offered instruction in ‘all the learned languages, the several branches of the mathematics, geography, with an explanation of the globes, English grammar, oratory, composition, writing and reading with propriety’ all for the low cost of one guinea per quarter.<sup>41</sup>

Perhaps William Dick did have reason to worry about the continued success of his grammar school, for it appears that the people of Baltimore were in general becoming more concerned about the educational opportunities available in their town. In March of 1786 an outline for a plan to establish an academy in Baltimore was published in the paper. Two weeks later a meeting was held at Mr. Grant’s tavern to discuss the proposal.<sup>42</sup> At this meeting nine men were appointed to a committee, with Father John Carroll as the chair. The purpose of this academy was to form a school modeled on the education of St. John’s College in Annapolis. The education provided was to allow young men to either progress to a liberal arts degree or a career in business. The academy was to be established immediately, paid for by an initial subscription and then funded through student fees.<sup>43</sup>

The Baltimore Academy represented a feather in the cap of the citizens of Baltimore. The education available at the school was not that different from that offered by several of the other venture schools operating in the town, but it served as a measure of civic advancement in the community. St. John’s College had been chartered by the state in Annapolis in 1784. Though Baltimore’s academy was not envisioned as a college initially,

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<sup>40</sup> Advertisements for new schools appear in the *M.J.B.A.* for 1785 on the following dates 4 January, 18 January, 28 January, 1 April, 3 May, 6 May, 17 June, 12 July, 5 August, 26 August, 20 September, 22 November and 23 December.

<sup>41</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 22 November 1785; Lawrence A. Cremin, *American education: the colonial experience 1607-1783* (New York, 1970).

<sup>42</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 7 March 1785; *M.J.B.A.*, 21 March 1785.

<sup>43</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 21 April 1785

there was hope that the school would expand over time, eventually allowing Baltimore to support its own college as a rival to that in Annapolis. In order to sell the school to the local community, emphasis was placed on the practical nature of the education on offer and the benefits to the community at large. Along with the announcement of the school's opening came a statement that 'the sole intention of this seminary of learning is to qualify youth for the ordinary business of manhood, the course of their studies, and the objects of their attention shall invariably be such, as will tend to prepare them for their destined employment in active life.'<sup>44</sup> After the school's first public examinations the community was again reminded that 'this town must feel great satisfaction in the fair prospect now opened, of enjoying a flourishing seminary of learning; as the want of such an institution has been heretofore a just reproach to the spirit of improvement, which in every other respect, characterized the citizens of Baltimore.'<sup>45</sup>

The Baltimore Academy was unfortunately not destined for greatness. Without strong backing from the city, church bodies or any other large organization, the school had little to differentiate itself from other venture academies operating at the time. Even John Carroll, who presided over the committee to establish the school, was simultaneously working on his own plans to form a school in Georgetown. A second attempt to form a rival to St. John's was made by the citizens of Baltimore in 1804. Joseph Priestly had also operated a successful academy on Paul's lane, for several years. In 1804, the academy was granted a charter from the state government, which along with a lottery to raise funds transformed the institution into Baltimore College. The college was not very successful at competing with other well-established institutions, and was merged with the University of Maryland in 1832.<sup>46</sup> However these schools, as well as representing an episode in civic

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<sup>44</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 4 July 1786.

<sup>45</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 6 March 1787.

<sup>46</sup> There are no records of any students ever graduating from Baltimore College, though regular lectures were advertised in the newspaper. The University of Maryland, within which it was subsumed, developed out of the College of Medicine of Maryland, which was an extremely successful medical school founded in

rivalry, demonstrated Baltimoreans' concerns over the education available in their community as well as the high and low points of using venture schools to provide schooling.

While most scholarship has focused on the impact of the penal laws on Catholic education in Ireland, protestant dissenting communities were also affected by the legal restrictions on education.<sup>47</sup> In Belfast, where the Presbyterian majority dominated local life, the ability to read was very important to their religious identity and faith. One of the primary responsibilities of the Presbyterian clergy was to visit members of the congregation to test knowledge of the catechism. This pre-supposed some reading ability. In Scotland, Presbyterians, with the financial help of the state, established schools in every parish to provide for these literary needs. Since in Ireland that was the preserve of the Anglican Church, alternative arrangements took the place of formal parish schools. Many Presbyterian children were educated through local venture schools, which may have been run by Presbyterian licentiates who used the Westminster catechism, but were not structured educational institutions run or funded by the church body.<sup>48</sup>

In Belfast, after restrictions on religious education were lifted in the 1780s, efforts were made by the General Synod of Ulster to establish a school that would remove the necessity of sending students to Scotland to be educated for the Presbyterian clergy. In 1784 they called for proposals for practical schemes to found educational institutions in Ulster. As a result, in 1785 Rev. Dr. James Crombie, the minister of the Rosemary Street Congregation publicly proposed the founding of an academy in Belfast.<sup>49</sup>

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Baltimore in 1808. Bernard Steiner, *The history of university education in Maryland* (Baltimore, 1891), pp 15-21.

<sup>47</sup> For the Catholic perspective see McManus, *The Irish hedge school and its books*; and Deirdre Raftery 'Colonizing the Mind: the use of English writers in the Education of the Irish poor, c.1750-1850' in Mary Hilton & Jill Shefrin (eds), *Education the child in enlightenment Britain: beliefs, cultures, practices* (Burlington, VT, 2009), pp 147-161.

<sup>48</sup> Holmes, *The shaping of Ulster Presbyterian belief and practice*, p. 266.

<sup>49</sup> For a fuller history of the Belfast Academy see A.T.Q. Stewart, *Belfast Royal Academy, the first century 1785-1885* (Antrim, 1985).

The Belfast Academy was funded through a public subscription, in which various civic leaders contributed nearly £1,000 to found the school.<sup>50</sup> However, the Academy was founded with the hope and intention of securing support from the General Synod, as a collegiate institution for educating young men for the ministry. Early funding from the Presbytery of Killyleagh and the estate of Arthur Maxwell, which had been specified for the education of Presbyterian clergy, attests to links between the Academy and the Presbyterian community in Belfast. However, the Academy failed to win support from either the General Synod or the Irish Parliament and by 1796 they had abandoned the higher aspirations of the school.

The result was that the Belfast Academy operated as a venture school, initially founded through public subscription and church donations but supported by student tuition. Though it did not offer collegiate training to rival the universities in Scotland, the Academy provided a strong classical education to both day students and boarders from the growing commercial classes in and around Belfast. Initially four schools were founded, each with their own master. These included classics, run by Dr. Crombie and later his successor Dr. William Bruce, mathematics, English and writing. Additional schools such as French and Italian along with evening classes for young ladies were later added. All of the Academy's income came from tuition and a small amount of rent from some adjacent buildings.<sup>51</sup> Each master collected his own fees, and managed his own school with minimal oversight by the Academy's principal.

Though the Academy was founded with an intention to serve the Presbyterian community, the school itself was non-denominational. Students were required to attend church each Sunday, but it was their individual church of preference. However the links between the Academy and the Presbyterian community were still strong. Dr. Crombie and

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<sup>50</sup> For a full list of subscribers see Minute book of the Royal Belfast Academy (P.R.O.N.I., T3101/1), p. 1.

<sup>51</sup> Tuition for boarders was £40 per annum, later raised to £50 with a £5 entry fee, and then reduced back to £40 as competition from the Inst began to draw students away.

Dr. Bruce both served as principals of the Academy while acting as ministers of the Rosemary Street Congregation in Belfast, and most of the initial subscribers, who went on to become the governing patrons of the Academy were locally prominent men and Presbyterian. Though the school was not strictly speaking a church school, it does represent an early attempt by the Presbyterian community to establish an advanced educational institution for their own use in Ulster, and demonstrates the desires of that community to support liberal education in Belfast.

Under Dr. Bruce, the school's second principal, the school enhanced its reputation as a centre of learning throughout Ulster and integrated itself more fully into the local community. Dr. Bruce deliberately set out to increase the Academy's status within the town, possibly with the hope of securing recognition from the Presbyterian Synod or the Irish parliament. In 1790 the patrons announced that 'we remark with particular satisfaction that he [Dr. Bruce] has with this view opened a public library in the Academy, which promises to be of extensive utility to the students and to the town and neighbourhood.'<sup>52</sup>

Bruce also used his own reputation as a writer to support the Academy by publishing sermons, pamphlets and newspaper articles defending the Academy and its education and attacking all rivals. And Bruce was not the only instructor at the Academy to use published texts to support the school. Robert Telfair, the writing master at the Academy, issued at least four Belfast editions of his book *Practical arithmetic*, which was primarily extracts from an earlier mathematics text by John Gough.<sup>53</sup> School-book publication served multiple functions. In addition to income, which was not likely to be

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<sup>52</sup> Minute book of the Royal Belfast Academy, 31 July 1790 (P.R.O.N.I., T3101/1), p. 22.

<sup>53</sup> Robert Telfair, *Practical arithmetic in four books extracted from the larger entire treatise, carried on by subscription, and adapted to the commerce of Ireland...for the use of schools by J. G. carefully revised by Robert Telfair, writing-master & arithmetician, Belfast...* (Belfast, 1788), not in E.S.T.C.; copy to be found at T.C.D. Though this is the earliest known copy of this work, the preface claims that this is the second edition. Several surviving copies exist of a 1794 edition of the book, some with the place of publication in Belfast, and others Dublin, though it is likely that these are all from the same printing. Two copies of the work printed in Wilmington, DE are also available in E.S.T.C. dating 1794 and 1800, though the title attributes the work to Thomas Telfair. Finally a copy from an 1805 edition published in Belfast has also been found.

large for the authors of most school books, instructors also used publication to increase their reputation as scholars or educators, and as an advertisement of their schools.<sup>54</sup> An appendix to the 1788 edition of Telfair's book, written by William Atkinson, another mathematics instructor at the Academy, states that his position in 'relation to the town of Belfast, as a public teacher of the mathematicks' induced him to add to what was already 'an excellent school-book.'<sup>55</sup> Works by John Hamilton Moore, a popular author of instruction manuals and textbooks, were reprinted in Belfast with subtitles stating their use at the Belfast Academy.<sup>56</sup> The large number of school books which developed out of the activities of the Belfast Academy reflected as much the need to advertise the scholarly credentials of the institution and its instructors, as to generate income or to provide appropriate texts for its various courses.

Ultimately, despite the reputation of the Belfast Academy as a site of excellent education, it did not meet the aim of becoming a collegiate institution. Once it became clear that the Academy would never be recognized by the synod or state, community members began constructing new proposals for an advanced academic establishment. In 1806 a public meeting was held to discuss the issue, at which the new proposal for a school and college was drawn-up. This was the first beginnings of what would later become the Belfast Academical Institution, or Inst as it is still known. Very much like the Belfast Academy, Inst was to serve as both a school and a native college, which would prepare young men for either business or other learned professions. From the beginning it was understood that one of the primary aims of Inst was to provide training for the Presbyterian ministry equivalent to that given by the Scottish universities. Inst hoped to secure backing

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<sup>54</sup> Schoolmasters regularly used almanacs to advertise both their schools and their scholarly credentials. See Niall Ó Ciosáin, 'Almanacs' in Murphy (ed), *The Oxford history of the Irish book: volume IV*, p. 201.

<sup>55</sup> William Atkinson's appendix to Telfair, *Practical arithmetic* (Belfast, 1788), p. 339.

<sup>56</sup> Hamilton Moore, *The young gentleman and ladies monitor, being a collection of select pieces from our best modern writers: particularly calculated to form the mind and manners of the youth of both sexes, and adapted to the use of schools and academies, used in the Belfast Academy* (Belfast, 1796), E.S.T.C. T229193, copy from T.C.D. library. A written inscription inside the book states that this copy was given as an examination prize at the Inch Academy in 1800.

from the various Presbyterian synods which would send their young men for training, but as Joseph Stevenson, the secretary, wrote to Lord Stanhope, 'the Institution is not connected with any religious persuasion. Nor will it be a question with the Managers and Visitors of what religion the Professors may be. The subscribers to the Institution are composed of all religious persuasions.'<sup>57</sup> This supposed neutrality was achieved by allowing any religious body to appoint and endow their own chair of divinity within the collegiate department of the Institution. It was hoped that this arrangement would allow Inst to pursue recognition and grants from the Irish government without the taint of religious discrimination.

In 1810 a royal charter was granted by parliament, despite opposition from the Marquis Wellesley, who was suspicious of the political reliability of Belfast's Presbyterian residents and of the type of education to be offered. Construction of Inst's buildings began at this time, with £15,000 raised through a local subscription. In February 1814 Inst opened its doors to students. No collegiate department had yet been established, but chairs in classics, English, chemistry and natural philosophy, writing, French and mathematics had all been filled. Boarders were charged £40 per annum and day students paid £4 a year in each school that they attended. Most of the 250 students were sons of local businessmen, although subscribers did suggest worthy students to attend on charity.<sup>58</sup>

While this was a successful beginning, without the collegiate department the school's aims were incomplete. The school's board of directors knew that without government support, developing a college would not be possible. All the initial subscription had been spent on setting-up the school, and the fees paid by students went directly to the various masters for their support. From 1809 to 1813 the institution applied unsuccessfully to parliament for a grant. Inst met strong opposition from individuals

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<sup>57</sup> Letter from Joseph Stevenson to Lord Stanhope as quoted in John Jamieson, *The history of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution 1810-1960* (Belfast, 1959), p.11.

<sup>58</sup> Marquis of Hillsborough to Joseph Stevenson, 7 March 1823 (P.R.O.N.I, SCH 542/7B/17/5).

within government, but grants had already been given to colleges in Cork and Maynooth, and the government had few concrete reasons to deny Belfast. In 1814 Inst was given a grant of £1,500, and a year later the collegiate department was opened.<sup>59</sup> In June of 1815 the Presbyterian Synod of Ulster placed official approval of Inst as a degree-granting institution on their records. They agreed to accept an MA degree from the school as equivalent to that of the University of Glasgow. The General Synod of Ulster and the Associate Synod each appointed a chair of divinity, and other professors were hired to staff the college. The institution's managers had gained support from both government and the Presbyterian synods, and the town had then finally achieved their aim of having 'an honourable and reputable rival of those foreign universities whither its young men have been wont to resort for professional instruction.'<sup>60</sup>

A reading diary kept by Robert James Tennent, a student at Inst from 1816 to 1819, helps illuminate the course of study undertaken at the school. A typical day's entry reads as follows:

In the morning before Breakfast, I said in Homer's Iliad, 7th book from the 171st line to the 243d of the same book. Also Xenophon, from the 15th section of the second chapter of the Cyropaedia to the middle of the first section of the third chapter.

After Breakfast, from 10 O'Clock till a quarter after 11, I said Horace, first epistle of the book, from the 45th line to the 79th. Again, from a quarter past 11 till half past 12, I said in the third satire of the second book from the 250th line, to the end. I said also, from half past 12 till a quarter of two, a part of the fifth book of Voltaire's Charles the twelfth, from the 213th to the 219th page. From that time till four I was doing problems in Fluxions.<sup>61</sup>

Once a week all students attended the Common Hall; a weekly public recitation in front of the various masters and visitors. In addition examinations were held in each subject at the end of every term.

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<sup>59</sup> This grant was a one-time grant, forcing the Inst to re-apply each year, and giving the government new opportunities to set conditions on the grant or discontinue it.

<sup>60</sup> William Carr to the Managers and Visitors of the Belfast Academical Institution, 21 June 1823 (P.R.O.N.I., SCH 542/7B/17/13).

<sup>61</sup> Diary of Robert James Tennent 1816-1819, 9 September 1816 (P.R.O.N.I., Tennent Papers, D 1748/G/750/1), p. 1.

While Tennent's diary reveals some of the texts used in the various courses, records from the library provide other evidence for the type of books used at Inst. In 1823 John Young, the chair of Moral Philosophy, was authorized to purchase books for the school in Scotland. From July to September Young purchased nearly 250 volumes from various booksellers in Glasgow and Edinburgh.<sup>62</sup> The school did not use a bookseller or agent to contract this purchase but sent Young with list of titles to find, and presumably a budget. Young purchased books from nearly a dozen booksellers, two or three volumes at a time over the period of months. For many titles, Young purchased only one copy, but for some he purchased two or three copies, and in a rare instance ten copies— of *Helveticas*.<sup>63</sup> His final account included a list of titles with the prices he paid. Unsurprisingly this list is heavily weighted with books on moral philosophy and religion, with a healthy selection of classics. On 28 July 1823, in a relatively large order from William Kerr, Young purchased Usher's *Body of Divinity*, two copies of Brown on the *Existence of God*, two copies of Nichols' *Confirrance* [sic], Watt's *Essays*, Dunlop on *Confessions*, three copies of Lock's *Controversy*, Bruce's *Free Thoughts*, Bruce's *Lectures*, Wise's *Cudworth*, two copies of the *Fable of the Bees*, *Fendon de Dieu*, *Reflections on Scripture*, two copies of Balquy's *Sermons*, and Doddridge's *Lectures*.<sup>64</sup>

Inst did not remain long in the good graces of government. In 1816, a St. Patrick's Day celebration provided the political pretext that members of the government needed to discontinue the grant.<sup>65</sup> Several individuals associated with the Inst attended a dinner at which radical toasts were drunk, though the dinner itself was not a political one. Inst quickly disavowed any association with the dinner, the toasts drunk and the politics they

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<sup>62</sup> Various individual receipts as well as a final account of the purchases made on this trip are included in (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Belfast Academical Institution, SCH 542/7B/17/1-56).

<sup>63</sup> Books bought from James Duncan Glasgow by Dr. Young, 29 August 1823 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Belfast Academical Institution, SCH 542/7B/17/26).

<sup>64</sup> Books bought from William Kerr by Dr. Young, 28 July 1823 (P.R.O.N.I., Records of the Belfast Academical Institution, SCH 542/7B/17/16).

<sup>65</sup> For a full account of the St. Patrick's Day dinner and the resulting trouble with the government grant see Jamieson, *The history of the Royal Belfast Academical Institution*, pp 26-33.

expressed. But this was not enough for the government, which had presented the school with a list of demands to be met for the continuance of their grant. The school's managers believed that these demands compromised the independence of the school which was run on a semi-democratic basis, and refused to submit. Negotiations ensued, but Inst's grant was not restored until 1829. Amazingly, the school managed to keep the collegiate department going during this period, appealing to the local public and members of the Ulster diaspora for help. A. J. Macan, a partner of the Calcutta firm of Alexander and Company, raised over £5,000 from Ulstermen in India.<sup>66</sup> These networks and strong links to the local Presbyterian community helped to sustain the school until the government grant was restored.

In Maryland, the Catholic community undertook similar endeavours to form schools after the Revolution.<sup>67</sup> Before the Revolution, wealthy Catholics in Maryland often sent their children to either England or the Continent for their education, despite the fact that this was illegal under the laws of the colony. Both John Carroll, the first American Catholic bishop, and his cousin Charles Carroll of Carrollton, were educated by the English Jesuits in France at St. Omer.<sup>68</sup> After the Revolution, education was a major concern in the early republic and a wave of college formations from 1782 to 1800 resulted in twenty-three new American colleges, mostly established by various religious denominations.<sup>69</sup> Maryland's Catholic community was part of this movement. John Carroll, writing to a friend in England in 1783 stated that 'the object nearest my heart is to establish a college on this continent for the education of youth, which might at the same

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p.32.

<sup>67</sup> It should be noted that probably the earliest church school founded in Baltimore was established by the Quaker community. See Dean R. Esslinger, *Friends for two hundred years: a history of Baltimore's oldest school* (Baltimore, 1983).

<sup>68</sup> Ruth LaMonte, 'Early Maryland education: the colonials, the Catholics, and the Carrolls,' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Ohio State University, 1976), pp 100-111.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Emmett Curran, 'John Carroll, Georgetown Academy, and the origins of Catholic Higher education' in *U.S. Catholic Historian*, vii, no. 4 (Fall, 1988), p. 362; Jay P. Dolan, 'Catholic education in the early republic' in *History of Education Quarterly*, xxi, no. 2 (Summer, 1981), pp 205-211.

time be a seminary for future clergymen.’<sup>70</sup> Carroll felt that the lack of well-trained native priests was the largest problem facing the Catholic community in America. To combat this problem Carroll used his position and influence to found and support several Catholic schools in and around Baltimore.<sup>71</sup>

Carroll began serious plans to form an academy in 1786, when he announced his intentions to Rome. In 1787 a printed copy of the *Proposal for the establishment of an academy at George-town* was circulated.<sup>72</sup> The proposal did not mention any connection to the Catholic Church or the founder’s intention to eventually add a seminary. Like the Belfast Academy and Inst, Georgetown Academy was open to students of every religious background. In addition to the classical education that Belfast’s schools provided, the Georgetown Academy aimed to provide practical subjects like geography, in keeping with republican beliefs about the utility of education.

Georgetown, approximately thirty-five miles from Baltimore, was chosen as the location for the school for several reasons. Rural locations were considered more wholesome for students, both for reasons of health and so they would not have the attractions of city life to distract them from their studies. While Baltimore was the center of the Catholic hierarchy in the United States, the town’s Catholic population was mostly working-class and could not be counted on to support the Academy, whereas the area around Georgetown was the social centre for many of Maryland’s wealthy Catholic planters. While the Presbyterian community in Belfast was strongly of the middling classes, Baltimore’s Catholics were more likely members of the working classes, so Catholic initiatives such as the academy were often organized among wealthier Catholic communities like that of Georgetown. Finally, Georgetown was chosen because at the time

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<sup>70</sup> Letter from John Carroll to Charles Plowden quoted in Curran, ‘John Carroll,’ p. 359.

<sup>71</sup> Philip Gleason, ‘Boundlessness, consolidation, and discontinuity between generations: Catholic seminary studies in antebellum America’ in *Church History*, lxxiii, no. 3 (September, 2004), pp 583-612.

<sup>72</sup> *Proposal for the establishment of an academy at George-town* (Baltimore, 1787) not in E.S.T.C.; located at Georgetown University Library.

its rural location meant that it would be significantly cheaper to maintain than one in urban Baltimore.<sup>73</sup>

The money for the Academy came through subscriptions raised via Catholic networks in the United States, student fees and income from plantations in Maryland, which had formerly belonged to the Jesuits and were now controlled by Carroll. Carroll was reluctant to seek government support for the Academy, given the uncertain nature of public tolerance of the Catholic community, and he anticipated that the school would have to operate on a tight budget for many years.<sup>74</sup> Like the Belfast Academy and Inst, the Georgetown Academy was connected with the church, but did not receive financial support directly from it. Instead it operated much as a venture school during its early years until the opening of the seminary solidified relationships with the Catholic Church.

The Georgetown Academy, which was eventually to become Georgetown University, was Carroll's preferred educational institution, but he did lend support to other Catholic institutions in Baltimore.<sup>75</sup> One of the earliest was St. Mary's seminary in Baltimore, founded in 1791 by Sulpician priests from France.<sup>76</sup> Members of the order of St. Sulpice were among the many Catholics who fled France and its colonies to escape persecution during the French Revolution. Baltimore had a history of receiving Franco-Catholic refugees that dated back to the French and Indian War, and the Sulpicans were simply one in a long line of Catholic orders that wished to re-establish themselves near Baltimore. Carroll for his part worked to ensure that these clerics had something to do, and he supported their suggestion of opening a school.

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<sup>73</sup> While the site for the Academy was chosen before the location of the capital at Washington D.C., Carroll had a good idea that his Academy would be located near to the new capital. For a full analysis see Curran, 'John Carroll,' pp 359-374.

<sup>74</sup> The Georgetown Academy did eventually seek a charter from the state government later in the nineteenth century.

<sup>75</sup> The college charter was granted in 1818.

<sup>76</sup> See Joseph M. White, 'Perspectives on the nineteenth-century diocesan seminary in the United States' in *U.S. Catholic Historian*, xix, no. 1 (Winter, 2001), pp 21-35.

St. Mary's followed the opposite course to that of the Georgetown Academy. Here the seminary was established immediately, with a general college to follow. Each bishop was entitled to keep a seminary in the diocese of his cathedral, and St. Mary's was the first diocesan seminary in the United States. Carroll had only been established as the first American bishop in 1789, so this was the first opportunity that any American city had to establish a seminary. Carroll supported the school, though he continued to advocate the formation of a seminary at Georgetown. He felt that ultimately the Sulpicians were simply too French—and their education could not adequately prepare priests for their role in the new republic.<sup>77</sup>

In 1805, after over a decade of operation, St. Mary's opened a general college to complement their seminary. Student enrolment in the seminary had never been high, and the cost of operating the school exceeded their limited income. The college was designed to generate income to support the seminary, and a government charter was granted in support of their civil education. St. Mary's, unlike the other institutions examined, looked first to fulfilling their role in ecclesiastical education. However, like Inst and the academies in Belfast and Georgetown, they soon realized the financial necessity of providing a general education. These schools were all part of a wider educational trend in which the formation of ministers served as the primary motivation for the establishment of colleges in colonial environments.<sup>78</sup> Another example of this trend was the foundation of Cokesbury College in Harford County Maryland by the Methodists in 1784.<sup>79</sup> This can be contrasted to movements in places like Edinburgh where educational efforts in the 1820s were aimed at providing local youths with an education that would allow them to take their

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<sup>77</sup> Carroll had originally asked the St. Mary's only accept Spanish and French students, but the school eventually opened its doors to young men of any nationality. Steiner, *The history of university education in Maryland*, p. 32; Christopher J. Kauffman, 'The Americanization of St. Sulpice: context and charism' in *U.S. Catholic Historian*, xi, no. 1 (Winter, 1993), pp 21-34.

<sup>78</sup> Natalie A. Naylor, 'The theological seminary in the configuration of the American higher education: the ante-bellum years' in *History of Education Quarterly*, xvii, no. 1 (Spring, 1977), pp 17-30.

<sup>79</sup> Steiner, *The history of university education in Maryland*, pp 23-28.

place in the expanding ranks of the British imperial administration.<sup>80</sup> Though Belfast was not strictly colonial, they experienced many of the same difficulties in regards to finding and training clergy, as both the Catholic and dissenting communities were excluded from the dominant educational institutions that were associated with the established church.

While these schools represented the educational aspirations and served the needs of the middle and upper classes with a classical education at more advanced levels, it was the schools which served the poorer parts of our communities which had the greatest impact on literacy levels. Eighteenth-century individuals would have had no problem acknowledging the power of reading, though they might disagree about whether it was a good or bad thing. The 1811 editor of the *Baltimore Repository* expressed his clear belief in the positive benefits of reading by stating that ‘the influence of literature upon the habits and passions, is confessed by all. It polishes the manners, enlightens the understanding, and expands the nobler affections of the heart.’<sup>81</sup> But his was by no means the only opinion about reading.<sup>82</sup> *Billy Bluff and Squire Firebrand*, a satirical political pamphlet from 1790s Belfast, ridiculed the fears about the results of reading among the populace. As the squire said:

D—n thinking, Billy, ‘tis putting the world mad: O! what a happy country we had before men turned their thoughts to thinking: Catholics thought of nothing but just getting leave to live, and working for their meat: Presbyterians thought of nothing but wrangling about religion, and grumbling about tythes: and Protestants thought of nothing but doing and saying what their betters bid them: and the Gentlemen thought of nothing but drinking, hunting, and the game laws. O! how times are changed, and all for the worse. Your Catholic College— your Catholic Schools— your Catholic Emancipation— your Sunday Schools—your Charter Schools— your Book Societies— your Pamphlets, and your Books; and your one h-ll

<sup>80</sup> The Edinburgh Academy was founded in 1824 to provide a classical education to allow students to compete with the graduates of the large English prep schools. The founders had a clear goal of being able to send their graduates on to Oxford or Cambridge, as an entrepôt for positions within the British administration. For an institutional history of the school see Magnus Magnusson, *The clacken and the slate: the story of the Edinburgh Academy 1824-1974* (London, 1974).

<sup>81</sup> *The Baltimore Repertory of papers on literary and other topics*, i, no. 1(1811), p 1.

<sup>82</sup> This statements uses two internalized metaphors about reading, one that reading is like a ladder, and that all books can be ranked on a scale from good to bad, and the second is that reading is like eating, where the content of texts can be consumed and has predictable effects on the reader. For a more detailed description see Catherine Sheldrick Ross, ‘Metaphors of Reading’ in *The Journal of Library History (1974-1987)*, xxii, no. 2 (Spring, 1987), p. 147.

or another, are all turning the people's heads and setting them a thinking about this, that, and t'other.<sup>83</sup>

As Americans began constructing their new national identity, literacy became part of debates over the rights and responsibility of citizens and the extension of the electorate. In 1818, Baltimore removed property restrictions for white male voters, and the belief was that education was urgently needed to allow laborers to select proper candidates.<sup>84</sup> Voters needed to be able to read the newspaper, to keep abreast of current events and political debates. Samuel Knox, a Presbyterian minister born in Ireland, wrote to the Maryland Assembly in a plan for establishing a system of public education, that 'ignorance, more especially literary ignorance, has ever been the parent, and stupid nurse of civil slavery—and in proportion as this ignorance prevails, or is dissipated, so are men, in every situation, more or less disposed to support the interest of civil liberty, or political happiness.' He argued that the public 'interest, their character, their freedom and their happiness depend on the state of the education of their youth.'<sup>85</sup> For Knox the future of the United States depended upon providing education to the young, and he set out a system of universal education, in which literacy was the basic tool used to shape future generations of citizens. Though his plan was not adopted by the legislature, Knox practiced his beliefs as principal of Baltimore College from 1808 to 1820.<sup>86</sup>

In Ireland these concerns were more complex, but still present. Liberal Whig thought had always supported educational endeavours to a certain degree. Thinkers such as

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<sup>83</sup> James Porter, *Billy Bluff and 'squire Firebrand: or, a sample of the times* (Belfast, 1797), p. 5, E.S.T.C. T190776.

<sup>84</sup> For more on this argument see Julie A. Reuben, 'Patriotic purposes: public schools and the education of citizens' in Susan Fuhrman & Marvin Lazerson (eds), *The public schools* (Oxford, 2005), p. 4.; also for a discussion of the relationship between education and citizenship in the new republic see Carolyn Eastman, *A nation of speechifiers: making an American public after the revolution* (Chicago, 2009).

<sup>85</sup> Samuel Knox, *An essay on the best system of liberal education, adapted to the genius of the government of the United States* (Baltimore, 1799), p. 26, 28, E.S.T.C. 006458003.

<sup>86</sup> Knox provides a link between Baltimore and Belfast. Born, in County Armagh, Knox moved to America as a young man, but returned to Scotland for his education at University of Glasgow, and was licensed by the Presbytery of Belfast. He then returned to Maryland where he operated several schools over the course of his career. See 'Knox, Samuel (1756-1832),' *Encyclopedia.com*, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G2-2536600765.html>, accessed 29 February 2011; Wilson Smith (ed), *Theories of Education in Early America 1655-1819* (Indianapolis, 1973), p. 291.

Locke emphasized the individual benefits to be had from liberal education.<sup>87</sup> Radicals, inspired by both the American and French revolutions, supported universal education, and used literacy as a radicalizing force in the 1790s.<sup>88</sup> This resulted in a conservative backlash, as exemplified by the quote from Squire Firebrand.<sup>89</sup> In the decades after 1798 distrust and concern often surrounded new educational initiatives, though there was a general moderation of extremes on both sides. The controversy over the government grant to Inst can be seen as one episode in this on-going debate.

Growing urban landscapes heightened many of these concerns over the power of reading. Population concentration, while revealing some of the worst excesses of poverty, also created opportunities for access to schooling. Wage labour, while separating men from the moral benefits of agricultural society, meant that for the first time, many individuals had the cash needed to purchase the variety of books available from a city's bookshops. The cityscape itself created spaces outside the home where young men and women could spend their free hours. These spaces could be beneficial ones, such as the church, school or library, or dangerous ones like the tavern, the pool hall or brothel. These ambiguous by-products of urbanization meant that it was more important than ever to cultivate and control the reading habits of the seething masses of city-dwellers.

These debates actively raged throughout the Atlantic world. And while many feared the effects of improper or destructive reading, it was the power of biblical reading as a source of salvation which motivated most of the literacy efforts in both Baltimore and

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<sup>87</sup> John Locke's 1693 essay *Some thoughts concerning education*, posits the idea that children are a blank slate, shaped by their environment and education. This theory, while generally aimed toward genteel audiences, allows for the possibility that the most humble men and women could achieve the same intelligence and moral character as their social superiors. Because of this it was highly favoured by liberal educational theorists.

<sup>88</sup> See Jim Smyth, *The men of no property: Irish radicals and popular politics in the late eighteenth century* (London, 1992); and David Miller, 'Radicalism and ritual in east Ulster' in Bartlett, Thomas, David Dickson, Daire Keogh & Kevin Whelan (eds), *1798: a Bicentenary Perspective* (Dublin, 2003), pp 195-211.

<sup>89</sup> For a discussion of the dangers of reading see Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain: A dangerous recreation 1750-1835* (Cambridge, 1999); and Ana-Isabel Aliaga-Buchenau, *The 'Dangerous' potential of reading: readers and the negotiation of power in nineteenth-century narratives* (New York, 2004).

Belfast. In Ireland the earliest Sunday Schools date from the 1770s, and by the mid 1780s these schools had adopted the methods supported by the Sunday School movement in England. Little is known about Sunday Schools in Belfast at this time, though they were in operation. A 1792 article in the *Belfast News-Letter*, which discussed a charity school in Portaferry referenced Belfast's Sunday Schools. The author noted that Belfast's Sunday Schools were the model for their school which provided a free education to poor children seven days a week.<sup>90</sup> Belfast's 1808 directory listed the 'Belfast Weekly or Sunday-school, off Waring-street, for the education of such persons as are not likely to have the means or opportunity of otherwise obtaining any.'<sup>91</sup> This school was founded in 1802 and in 1810 expanded to the Belfast Daily Lancastrian School.<sup>92</sup>

At this time Sunday Schools in Ireland each operated independently and it was not until 1809 that a national organization was founded to provide oversight and coordination. In 1809 the Hibernian Sunday School Society was founded, which later became the Sunday School Society of Ireland. This organization aimed to further spread Sunday Schools throughout Ireland, and support those already in place. According to their rules,

The society proposes to accomplish the object of their institution, by procuring and disseminating the most approved plans of conducting Sunday Schools, by supplying them with spelling books and copies of the sacred Scriptures, at reduced prices, and by contributing to defray the expenses of such schools where necessary, without however interfering with their internal regulations, and as to religious instruction, confining themselves solely to the sacred Scriptures or extracts therefrom.<sup>93</sup>

Among those who were listed as accepting subscriptions for the society were 'Messrs. Tennent, Callwell and Co. Belfast.' These men probably connected Belfast's existing Sunday Schools to this new national society, taking subscriptions, maintaining correspondence, and distributing assistance on behalf of the Hibernian Sunday School

<sup>90</sup> *B.N.L.*, 31 January to 3 February 1792.

<sup>91</sup> J.R.R. Adams (ed), *Merchants in plenty Joseph Smyth's Belfast Directories of 1807 and 1808* (Belfast, 1991), p. 80.

<sup>92</sup> Bradshaw, *Belfast general and commercial directory for 1819*, p. xxxiii.

<sup>93</sup> Hibernian Sunday School Society, *Prospectus* (Dublin, 1810); For a full description of the various organizations similar to the Sunday School Society see Helen Clayton, 'Societies formed to educate the poor in Ireland in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries,' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Dublin, 1980).

Society in Belfast. Evidence from the society's reports suggests that they were very successful. The society's annual 1822 report estimated 14,048 people in Ulster attended Sunday Schools. The society itself was non-denominational, though primarily run by members of the established church. This permitted them to support schools which taught Catholic and dissenting catechisms, as long as they used the bible as their primary teaching text, and made it easy for members of the Presbyterian assembly to support the Sunday School movement. By 1825, when the government published the *First report of the commissioners of education inquiry*, Ulster led the country in Sunday School attendance. The counties of Antrim, Down and Tyrone had one out of every thirteen individuals attending Sunday Schools, while Leinster generally only had one out of every eighty-six.<sup>94</sup> The commission also reported that 'it appears that in the north of Ireland instances occur, where servants make it a condition of their engagement, that they shall be allowed a certain portion of time on Sunday for their attendance at the school.'<sup>95</sup> This evidence suggests that Sunday Schools were wide-spread, and well-liked in Ulster.<sup>96</sup>

Sunday School education was often free, but if a child's parents could afford it, they were asked to make a small contribution to the school's funds. In times of severe distress all students were asked to contribute a penny a week to the schools. The author of the article on the Portaferry schools claimed that his school was so well-considered in their community that better off individuals wished to send their children.<sup>97</sup> The Hibernian Sunday School Society encouraged its teachers to be paid each week, and that they be

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<sup>94</sup> *First report of the commissioners of education inquiry*, 1825 (400), xii, I, p. 62

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 63.

<sup>96</sup> It should be noted that the rise of Sunday Schools in Ulster closely matches the rise of industrialization in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. Industrialization in Belfast made Sunday Schools more useful and necessary as it allowed working individuals to still attend school. See Kerby A. Miller 'Forging the "Protestant way of life": class conflict and the origins of unionist hegemony in early nineteenth-century Ulster' in David A. Wilson & Mark G. Spencer (eds), *Ulster Presbyterians in the Atlantic world: religion, politics and identity* (Dublin, 2006), pp 128-165.

<sup>97</sup> *B.N.L.*, 31 January to 3 February 1792. The popularity of the Sunday Schools among middle class parents may have been due to a lack of options as much as their superior education.

selected from the middle classes of the community.<sup>98</sup> These factors contributed to diversity within Irish Sunday Schools, since they catered to a wider variety of students and promoted interaction between members of various classes. In this way, the Irish Sunday Schools more closely resembled those in the United States than those of England which were more strongly concentrated in working-class communities.<sup>99</sup>

In Baltimore, rising evangelical fervor associated with the Second Great Awakening saw the formation of new associations whose aims were to provide basic literacy and moral instruction among the poor and the youth of the city. In the 1790s, refugees from Santo Domingo sparked the creation of six charity schools run by various denominations in Baltimore.<sup>100</sup> However, it was not until 1816, when the first Sunday School was founded by the Methodists that serious efforts were made to educate large numbers of poor children. In 1817 a Union board of Delegates for the Male Sabbath Schools was organized to expand their efforts and bring greater efficiency. This group, which included several prominent ministers and wealthy merchants, oversaw nine schools with 1,100 students. In the schools themselves, young men of 'respectable standing and pious dispositions' engaged in 'the arduous service of teaching' poor and indigent boys the rudiments of literacy.<sup>101</sup> The Sabbath School Union was eventually expanded to include females, and incorporated as part of the American Sunday School Union founded in 1824.

By 1821 reports about Baltimore's Sunday Schools were glowing. One report in the *American Missionary Register* stated that 'in Baltimore the utmost harmony seems to exist among the various denominations of Christians who are united in the management of

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<sup>98</sup> Male teachers were paid 2s.6d. per Sunday and female teachers were paid 2s. For more details see Clayton, 'Societies formed to educate the poor in Ireland,' pp 77-80.

<sup>99</sup> Anne E. Boylan, *Sunday School: the formation of an American institution 1790-1880* (New Haven, 1988), pp 16-22.

<sup>100</sup> The first churches to open schools in Baltimore were the Quakers and the German Lutherans, though these efforts were aimed at providing education to members of their own congregations. In 1825 legislation was passed which provided for the first public schools in Baltimore. For more information on the religious community in Baltimore see Terry D. Bilhartz, *Urban religion and the second Great Awakening: church and society in early national Baltimore* (London, 1986).

<sup>101</sup> John E. Caldwell, *The Christian Herald*, iv (New York, 1817), p. 367.

Sunday Schools.’<sup>102</sup> Another report claimed that ‘in Baltimore, (as we have been recently informed) a system of Sunday School operations have been adopted, which embraces the whole city, and is of so efficient a nature, that no one can avoid its vigilance, or escape its researches.’<sup>103</sup>

Both white and free black children and adults were ‘found’ by the Sunday School visitors that were ‘anxious to learn.’<sup>104</sup> The Sunday Schools provided a rare opportunity for working individuals to receive a basic education. Apprentices, servants and labourers could attend classes in their free time at free or subsidized rates, without interfering with their employment. Free blacks were taught in separate schools, often supported by black church communities, which complemented the range of fee-paying schools and charity schools offering day and night classes to that community.<sup>105</sup>

Despite these glowing reports, the Sunday Schools were by no means uncontested spaces. Attendance was a consistent problem. John Duncan, in his account of his travels through parts of the United States and Canada commented that

Sabbath schools have been in operation in Baltimore for some time, but the inhabitants have not yet fully learned to appreciate their value. The teachers tell me that they find considerable difficulty in persuading the children to attend regularly, and too frequently the parents, when spoken to on the subject, show by their answers that they almost consider it a favour to the teachers to allow their children to be taught by them!<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Z. Lewis, *American missionary register: embracing the principal transactions of the various institutions for the promulgation of Christian knowledge with the proceedings at large of the United Foreign Missionary Society, i* (New York, 1821), p. 84.

<sup>103</sup> *The religious intelligencer for the year ending May, 1822*, vi (New Haven, 1821), p. 521.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> For more information on the education of free blacks in Baltimore see Moss, *Schooling citizens*. Some of the earliest education for enslaved African American in Maryland was also undertaken for religious reasons, see Beatriz Betancourt Hardy, ‘“The Papists ... have shewn a laudable Care and Concern”: Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Slave Religion in Colonial Maryland’ in *The Maryland Historical Magazine*, xcvi, no.1 (2003), pp 4-34.

<sup>106</sup> John M. Duncan, *Travels through parts of the United States and Canada in 1818 and 1819*, 2 vols (New York, 1823), p. 246.

Duncan's observations were used by Baltimore's elites in debates over the creation of publicly funded town schools.<sup>107</sup> A tract published by the Religious Tract Society in Baltimore specifically addressed the parents of prospective students. The tract urged parents to let their children attend the free school to learn to read, imploring them that 'if you love your children, you will be very glad to use such means to do them good.'<sup>108</sup> However, low attendance figures were used in arguments against the formation of town schools, since for some they were evidence that poor and working-class families were simply not interested in obtaining literacy.

In both Baltimore and Belfast Sunday Schools served a function that was typically supplanted by publicly funded town schools. Organizations in both locations used monitorial systems based on Joseph Lancaster's methods to help keep costs low and provide education to the largest number of students. However in both communities, public education was slow in coming, and Sunday Schools helped meet the need for basic literacy among poor and working class communities that would have otherwise gone unmet. Neither Baltimore nor Belfast established a public school system until after our period of study. Though many communities in New England operated town schools in the colonial period, Maryland was much slower in developing an education system. Baltimore as a city petitioned the state legislature for the ability to establish public schools in 1825. However, as hinted above, these measures were controversial, and the first town school did not open until 1826. In Ireland, government grants had been supporting charter schools since 1733, but this system was strongly divided along confessional lines and completely defunct in most parts of the country. Part of the mission of the 1825 education inquiry was to establish whether or not a system of nondenominational public education could be

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<sup>107</sup> For information on debates over the formation of public schools in Baltimore see Tina H. Sheller, 'The origins of public education in Baltimore, 1825-1829' in *History of Education Quarterly*, xxii, no. 1 (Spring, 1982), pp 23-44.

<sup>108</sup> Religious Tract Society of Baltimore, *Address to Parents from Persons who support Sunday-Schools*, no. 18 (Baltimore, 1819), p. 2.

established in Ireland. In 1831 an executive initiative for the promotion of schools in Ireland eventually created a system of primary schools which were organized along denominational lines, but did provide much wider educational opportunities throughout Ireland.

By examining the educational institutions in these communities we can see myriad ways in which individuals could have obtained literacy. We see some of the conditions under which children encountered texts, whether it was under eye of a kindly and concerned schoolmaster or in the semi-industrial environment of a monitorial Sunday School. Student's encounters with texts varied considerably depending on the type of education their parents could afford. Middle- and upper-class children in both communities could avail themselves of a classical education of the highest standard—engaging with the likes of Cicero and Demosthenes. Working-class children often received their education through whatever books were at hand, whether it was a locally produced spelling book, or a medieval chapbook romance. Mixed in with these texts were a range of chapbooks, testaments, and catechisms handed out by organizations designed to improve the morals of their readers.

School books over this period varied widely. While some schools might require a specific text be used, such as in the case of the teacher as author or for a classical curriculum, other schools simply relied on children to bring whatever text they had available to use during class. The 1825 Irish Commission on Education drew up a list of books commonly found in use in schools. Their sample reveals an astonishing assortment of books ranging from Manson's *Speller*, to Hume's *History of England* to *Arabian Nights*.<sup>109</sup> In the same report, Henry Cooke a leading Presbyterian minister, stated that in the schools he was familiar with in Ulster 'the reading books in the schools were exceedingly promiscuous, with the sole exception of the Scriptures, there was no

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<sup>109</sup> *First report of the commissioners of education inquiry*, 1825 (400), xii, I, Appendix 221, p. 553.

classification in the school, except reading the Scriptures and spelling; they were necessarily in classes; the other books were exceedingly promiscuous, and in general very bad.’<sup>110</sup> Cooke’s opinions, while fairly negative, do highlight the diversity of texts used in Ulster.

Sales catalogues from booksellers show that a wide variety of educational texts were available locally. Pasted on to the verso of the title page for a 1796 edition of *The young gentleman and ladies monitor* was a list of books for sale by William Magee in Belfast.<sup>111</sup> [see Table 1] These texts were identified as ‘principally for the use of schools,’ and their place in a text book linked to local schools further highlights the specific audience this list was intended to cater to. The list contains a wide selection of schoolbooks. Students at all levels could find appropriate texts, which covered not only basic reading and writing, but more advanced and specialized subjects like navigation and Greek grammar. The list also contains texts which, while not strictly speaking textbooks, would have been widely used in schools— such as collections of eastern tales, Enfield’s *Speaker* and Milton’s *Paradise lost*. Though the prices are not listed, the variation in volumes suggests that multiple price points were available. Goldsmith’s *History of England* was offered in both one volume and four volume formats.

**Table 1 List of books sold by William Magee**

A Catalogue of English Books, &c. Principally for the use of Schools, sold by William Magee, at No. Nine Bridge Street, Belfast
Manson's, Fenning's, Dilworth's Entick's, Dyche's, and Clark's Spelling Books, Manson's Primer Manson's Spelling and Pronouncing Dictionary, a new edition, according to Mr. Sheridan's Pronunciation. Entick's, Dyche's, Fenning's, Sheridan's, Seally's, Scott's, and Johnson's Dictionary. The Lilliputian Magazine: or the young gentleman's golden library. The History of Sandford and Merton- A work intended for the use of children 13 vols. The Preceptor; or lessons for reading, speaking, and writing letters. A collection of eastern Stories and other moral Tales.

<sup>110</sup> *First report of the commissioners of education inquiry*, 1825 (400), xii, I, p. 820.

<sup>111</sup> A Catalogue of English Books sold by William Magee, in Hamilton Moore, *The young gentleman and ladies monitor...* (Belfast, 1796), E.S.T.C. T229193.

Louth's English Grammar.  
 Ashe's Introduction to English Grammar.  
 The youth's Instructor; in Prose and Verse.  
 The Arcana of polite Literature; or a compendious Dictionary of fabulous history.  
 Paradise Lost. In twelve books by Milton.  
 The Governess; or the history of Mrs. Teachum and her nine girls.  
 The Speaker; or Miscellaneous pieces in Prose and Verse, selected from the best English writers by W. Enfield, in two vols.  
 Lessons on Elocution, in Prose and Verse by William Scott  
 Elegant extracts or useful and entertaining passages in prose, selected for the improvement of scholars, at classical and other schools.  
 Elegant extracts or useful and entertaining pieces of poetry, selected for the improvement of Youth.  
 Goldsmith's Roman History, 2 vols.  
 Goldsmith's Grecian History, 2 vols.  
 Goldsmith's History of England, 4 vols.  
 Goldsmith's History of England in 1 vol.  
 Fenning on the Globes.  
 Guthrie's Geography, best Edition, and complete set of Maps.  
 Guthrie's Gazetteer.  
 Salmon's and Mair's Geography.  
 Ferguson's young Gentleman and Lady's Astronomy.  
 Emerson's and Keil's Astronomy.  
 Emerson's Mathematicks.  
 Emerson's Mechanicks.  
 Hawney's Mensuration.  
 Simpson's and Whiston's Euclid  
 M'Claurin's, Simpson's, and Sanderson's and Emerson's Algebra.  
 Leadbeatter on Dialing.  
 Ward's Mathematicks.  
 Simpson's and Wright's Trigonometry.  
 Gibson's Surveying.  
 Ballard's Gauging.  
 Gough's, Fisher's, Hill's, Cocker's, Dowling, Dilworth's, Emerson's, Voster's, and Fenning's Arithmetick.  
 Muller and Vauban's Fortification.  
 Mair's, Jackson's, Dowling's, and Stevenson's Book-keeping.  
 Greek Lexicons, Latin and French Dictionaries and Grammars, with all the Latin, Greek and French Authors, &c., used in Schools.  
 Gunter's Scales and Dividers.  
 Sea Charts and Maps, &c.

A Catalogue of English Books sold by William Magee, in Hamilton Moore, *The young gentleman and ladies monitor* (Belfast, 1796), E.S.T.C. T229193.

In Baltimore, Mathew Carey's extensive exchange network allowed him to stock his Baltimore store with the leading school texts from across the Atlantic. Sales of school books, often only identified as 'spellers' or 'grammars' but including entries such as 'Dilworth's' and 'Pink's Arithmetic,' account for a significant portion of the daily

transactions. Inventories and shipments delivered to the Baltimore store invariably included a large selection of educational books similar to those advertised by Magee. One 1808 account included thirty-six copies of Webster's *Grammatical Institutes*, as well as various dictionaries, instruction manuals and histories.<sup>112</sup> The only type of books sent in larger quantities than schoolbooks were bibles and catechisms.

While Carey's store provides evidence for the strong sales of schoolbooks and the variety available, his accounts also highlight one of the growing differences between Irish and American schoolbooks. Increasingly Carey's store sold larger numbers of fewer books. While there was always a large selection of schoolbooks on the market, including reprints of texts imported from London, several American authors began to gain widespread circulation. From the 1790s, schoolbooks began reflecting the increasing national sentiment in the US, and authors who incorporated American themes and reading selections became increasingly popular. The most well-known of these authors was Noah Webster. An advertisement for Webster's text in Baltimore in 1785 claimed that this work was rapidly taking the place of all other school books in the northern states.<sup>113</sup> Copyright law and new print technologies also contributed to the growth of market share by individual texts. Lindley Murray's texts were widely reprinted in the US. His popular books were not protected by any copyright, and no royalties had to be paid. These texts were quickly stereotyped, making their production even cheaper. Noah Webster, in contrast, was one of the leading proponents of copyright protection in the US. He personally worked to ensure that his texts were both protected and distributed in each of the states. His lecture tours served as promotions for the sale of his texts, which he had specifically created for an American audience. One advertisement expressly suggests

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<sup>112</sup> Mathew Carey's stock to Baltimore store, 16 June 1808 (A.A.S, Carey Papers, box 14, folder 8). Mathew Carey also supplied school books to the Georgetown Academy. See John Carroll to Mathew Carey, 3 August 1793 (H.S.P., Lea and Febiger Collection 227B, Mathew Carey Correspondence 1785- 1796 (C-Ch), box 4, folder 18).

<sup>113</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 20 May 1785.

Webster's work in preference to 'any *foreign* School Book.'<sup>114</sup> By 1840 Lindley Murray and Noah Webster together sold more than twenty-two million copies of their textbooks in the US.<sup>115</sup> These impressive numbers were then dwarfed by those of McGuffey's *Reader* which became the premier American schoolbook from the 1840s onward.<sup>116</sup>

In contrast, circumstances in Ireland worked against the dominance of the schoolbook market by any particular text. Integration between the Irish and British book trades after 1801 ensured that London publications dominated the market. An 1831 catalogue of schoolbooks sold by Simms and McIntyre in Belfast reveals a combination of best-selling London textbooks, and locally produced works such as Manson's *Speller*, with no national 'Irish' texts.<sup>117</sup> Religious differences may have also played a role, since different denominations often choose different texts to use in their schools. Here copyright laws and the size of London publishing combined with the religious divisions in the educational system to ensure that few Irish textbooks had a chance to become the premier school book in Ireland in the first decades of the nineteenth century.<sup>118</sup> This situation only changed after the establishment of the Nation School System in 1831, the board of which produced an extremely popular series of textbooks, which by mid-century, dominated not only Irish education but also education across the British Empire.<sup>119</sup>

What this examination has begun to highlight are the values and attitudes which shaped local educational initiatives. While this has not been an exhaustive depiction of the schools available in either Baltimore or Belfast, it has traced some of the major educational

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<sup>114</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 5 August 1785.

<sup>115</sup> Eastman, *A nation of speechifiers*, p. 22, 41.

<sup>116</sup> Eastman proposes that because of edition sizes before the 1840s and the large number of British reprints on the market that we cannot assume that any particular nationalistic text, no matter how popular, circulated widely enough to reach most of the reading public, *A nation of speechifiers*, p. 2.

<sup>117</sup> *A catalogue of new and improved editions of school books, printed and published by Simms and McIntyre, Belfast; and sold by all the respectable booksellers in the kingdom* (Belfast, circa 1831).

<sup>118</sup> Later in the nineteenth century Dublin publisher Alexander Thoms, who won the contract to supply the new national schools with books, was a very successful exporter of school books back into England.

<sup>119</sup> For a full description of the National School System and its text books see D.H. Akenson, 'Pre-university education, 1782-1870' in W. E. Vaughan (ed), *A new history of Ireland: V, Ireland under the Union, I 1801-70* (Oxford, 1989), pp 523-537.

innovations and institutions. It is clear that both communities valued education and literacy. Often this attitude stemmed from religious considerations—the need to read the scriptures or the desire for children to be catechized, and the need for a trained and educated clergy. In both communities, political realities impacted on the way that various religious communities worked to establish schools to provide for these needs. For both Presbyterians in Belfast and Catholics in Maryland, the penal laws delayed efforts to provide denominationally specific basic education. Instead broad educational movements, like the Sunday Schools, were generally organized within an interdenominational context. These groups did, however, support more elite institutions both directly and indirectly, which could provide new clergy. Nevertheless religion was not the only motivator for literacy. Political ideologies and economic realities also impacted on the foundation of educational institutions. This can be seen particularly clearly in rhetoric surrounding citizenship in the early republic, which emphasized the need for a well-informed and literate citizenry. In contrast, a much more heated debate surrounding these republican principals along with religious divisions may have resulted in a more cautious approach to popular education in Ireland from the 1790s. Economic factors provided personal motivation for individuals who sought literacy. Social pressure over mounting urban poverty also motivated philanthropic organizations to promote schooling. Finally the time constraints of working students, particularly acute as the pace of industrialization increased, helped shape the Sunday School movement, which was the largest purveyor of literacy in both communities until the formation of publicly funded town schools.

Having assembled a sketch of the educational landscape of the town, of how people obtained literacy, the question now stands what did they do with it? This chapter has highlighted the existence of a reading public in both Baltimore and Belfast through the examination of literacy rates. An exploration of the educational opportunities available in the communities has shown that they had similar developments in terms of institutions and

educational theories. In the absence of public education systems, religious organizations provided the motivations for establishing institutions of higher education as well as more egalitarian Sunday Schools. The texts used by students in these schools reflect transatlantic fashions, national concerns and local flavours. And while the ways that reading was used in these communities by the majority of individuals is still largely hidden, further explorations of the mechanisms of the print trades in these town will hopefully reveal further pieces to this puzzle.

## Chapter 3 Reading and Institutions

Reading and the use of books, in the eighteenth century, just as today, took place in a variety of settings ranging from informal use at home to a more structured public setting. Public ownership, consumption and interaction with texts created shared public spaces for the exchange of ideas as well as providing the environment for different modes of polite sociability. This chapter will explore the various public institutions and organizations, such as subscription and circulating libraries, literary clubs and mechanics' institutes, which promoted book ownership and created sites of reading within these eighteenth-century communities. In both Belfast and Baltimore a remarkably similar array of associations for the promotion of reading existed. This chapter seeks to describe a few of these organizations with a particular eye to determining if they served the same function and constituency in each community. These types of associations not only consumed texts, but in some instances produced them, as well as shaped the social and cultural spheres of the towns themselves.

This chapter will also undertake a more in-depth comparison between the subscription libraries in each town. The records of the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge founded in 1788 and the Baltimore Library Company founded in 1795 offer a unique opportunity to compare similar institutions established on the same general principles. Their collections, membership and structure are similar, but important differences can be found in each. Despite these similar beginnings the fate of the two institutions differed greatly.

### Circulating Libraries

Within each of these communities there were a wide variety of organizations that promoted a culture of reading. The organizations can primarily be classified on the basis of

which segment of the population that they catered to, or by the seriousness of the texts that they used. Populations could be divided using religious affiliation, gender, age, socio-economics, class or any one of a number of factors. Circulating libraries offered the widest range of popular literature to the widest range of individuals, and are distinguished from the other institutions that promoted reading because they were run for profit. These businesses rented books and pamphlets to the public for a modest sum. Anyone with a moderate amount of money could have access to the latest publications, one volume at a time. Though William St. Clair suggests that this did not open up reading to new socio-economic groups as much as it widened the amount of texts read by upper- and middle-class readers,<sup>1</sup> David Allen provides evidence from circulating libraries in Britain that shows that in some cases, they catered to a wide variety of individuals, not all of whom could be considered bourgeoisie. He also points out that though rental prices have at times been viewed as exclusionary, in an era when so many other factors restricted individuals' reading, a straightforward monetary transaction could be very freeing.<sup>2</sup> This suggests that circulating libraries had the potential to reach large segments of the reading population.

In Baltimore there were several successful circulating libraries in operation dating from the 1780s. In many instances it is difficult to determine the longevity of these establishments, or their overall success. Evidence for these establishments is usually sparse, most often surviving as advertisements in newspapers, on book covers, or in directories. Many circulating libraries were organized by booksellers or by others involved in the book trades, and run in conjunction with other business activities. These institutions did not usually attempt to build up a permanent collection, but instead assumed that items would be read to pieces, or sold outright to customers and then replaced with the newest offerings, making it very difficult to identify their holdings over time.

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<sup>1</sup> St. Clair, *The reading nation in the romantic period*, p. 274.

<sup>2</sup> David Allan, *A nation of readers: the lending library in Georgian England* (London, 2008), p 151, 225.

Since these institutions were run for profit, they depended on carrying items that catered to the popular demand. They developed a reputation as purveyors of popular novels sought after by women. Surviving evidence from an Annapolis circulating library shows that by 1783 forty-two per cent of their collection was fiction.<sup>3</sup> Work by Paul Kaufman and David Allen in Britain reveals varying amounts of narrative fiction in circulating library collections, with an average of approximately twenty per cent.<sup>4</sup> However Mark Towsey's work on Scottish institutions suggests that circulating libraries tailored their holdings to their particular community, so that in some locations fiction dominated, while others carried mainly religious works or histories.<sup>5</sup> This makes sense when considering that these institutions were based on the profit motive and that any prudent bookseller would stock the items most likely to appeal to the local populace. Contemporary evidence from Belfast demonstrates how circulating libraries could be used as a source for a variety of publications. In a letter to his sister in 1806 William Drennan wrote:

If you can get a play called Nathan the Wise, excellently translated from the German of Lessing, read it, but it is so dear here, seven shillings that I hesitate to buy it and wait for a cheaper edition. Villar's prize essay on the reformation of Luther is another excellent book which I believe Miss Y[oung] would like to hear read to her and is probably at your circulating library.<sup>6</sup>

Though undoubtedly certain circulating libraries did cater to those already seeking a good supply of narrative fiction, this was not the case with every institution. Contemporary descriptions may reveal as much about prevailing cultural fears as the actual state of reading institutions at the time.

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<sup>3</sup>Ross W. Beales & James N. Green 'Libraries and their users' in Amory & Hall (eds), *A history of the book in America: volume I*, p. 402.

<sup>4</sup> Allen, *A nation of readers*, p. 135; see also Paul Kaufman, *Libraries and their users: collected papers in library history* (London, 1969).

<sup>5</sup> Mark R. M. Towsey, 'Reading the Scottish enlightenment: libraries, readers and intellectual culture in provincial Scotland c. 1750-1820,' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of St. Andrews, 2007), pp 120-123.

<sup>6</sup> William Drennan to Martha McTier, 14 August 1806, in *The Drennan-McTier letters*, iii p. 517.

The Baltimore area supported a wide-variety of small libraries, which catered to a particular niche in the reading market. In 1801 Jacob D. Dietrick of Hagerstown supplied reading matter to the German community, while in 1804 Pierre Roche kept a circulating library stocking mainly French language works. Other circulating libraries catered to religious groups. In 1810 Bernard Dornin operated the Roman Catholic Circulating Library, and in 1812 St. Peter's Theological Library was run by John Creery.<sup>7</sup> The expansion of the reading public in early nineteenth-century Baltimore allowed for this specialization among booksellers and circulating-library operators, and the presence of these for-profit libraries made available a wider selection of texts of interest to specific groups of local readers.

The circulating library, as a business model, offered several benefits to their owners. Though books themselves were expensive, and the capital for the initial stock may have been quite substantial, monthly subscriptions from members would have provided a steady, if small income. In addition to this recurring income, titles were often sold, especially the more ephemeral works of fiction, to generate capital for new stock purchases. Other indirect benefits can be identified. Circulating libraries, which promoted and expanded reading in new segments of society, also helped drive the general market for books. This was of particular benefit to proprietors who combined their library with actual book and stationery sales. The cycle of renting books also helped to draw customers into a shop on a regular basis as they came to return books and choose new ones. This would have benefited sales of other goods, perhaps explaining why so many circulating libraries were combined with shops selling consumer goods, such as hats or patent medicines.

The earliest known circulating library in North America was owned by William Rind, the first native-born printer in Maryland and apprentice to Jonas Greene, printer of

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<sup>7</sup> For a complete list of all circulating libraries in the Baltimore area see David Kaser, *A book for a sixpence: the circulating library in America* (Pittsburgh, 1980), pp 127-163.

the *Maryland Gazette*.<sup>8</sup> He established a circulating library in his home in Annapolis before moving to Virginia in 1766.<sup>9</sup> The first circulating libraries came to Baltimore in 1773. William Aikman proposed to open a Baltimore branch of his Annapolis circulating library at the same time as Joseph Rathell, a Baltimore school-master, printed a broadside proposing to establish his circulating library. Rathell's business only lasted a month; however Aikman maintained his circulating library until 1775, when his loyalist beliefs forced him to leave the state.<sup>10</sup> After the Revolution, the first circulating library to be re-established in Baltimore was opened by William Murphy, another printer, around 1784.<sup>11</sup> This was located in his shop on Market Street, and was soon sold to Hugh Barkley. Henry Keatinge operated a circulating library in 1796 on the premises of his bookshop and print house on Baltimore Street. He advertised the most modern European publications as well as school books and stationery.<sup>12</sup>

Some circulating libraries were long-running establishments, attesting to their adaptability and popularity as well as the strength of the reading community in the town. In 1793 the Baltimore Circulating Library was established. In 1819, on the death of William Mundy its owner, Lucy Hunter took over the establishment and was still issuing catalogues as late as 1882. However, undoubtedly the most successful circulating library in Baltimore in this period was Joseph Robinson's business started in 1809. Initially Robinson charged a subscription fee of \$6.00 a year; however, wishing to appeal to a wider public he created a graduated price plan that ranged from \$4.00 to \$16.00 per year, depending on the types of access desired.<sup>13</sup> His establishment catered to several segments of Baltimore's reading population. He had separate rooms for reading newspapers and books, designed to emulate the private gentlemen's clubs of more affluent segments of

<sup>8</sup> Kaser, *A book for a sixpence*, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> Lawrence C. Wroth, *A history of printing in colonial Maryland 1686-1776* (Baltimore, 1922), p. 85.

<sup>10</sup> Kaser, *A book for a sixpence*, p. 36.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas W. Griffith, *Sketches of the early history of Maryland* (Baltimore, 1821), p. 108.

<sup>12</sup> William Thompson & James L. Walker, *Baltimore City Directory* (Baltimore, 1796), p. 99, E.S.T.C. W9538.

<sup>13</sup> *General Catalogue to Robinson's Circulating Library* (Baltimore, 1823).

society. These rooms were known to cater to such literary figures as Edgar Allen Poe.<sup>14</sup> For women, he had a separate entrance which led to female only rooms that contained a pianoforte and writing materials. These separate gendered spaces allowed male and female customers to enjoy Robinson's books independently. Female readers could feel comfortable coming to the reading rooms on their own, and male readers could relax within a privileged male space. By creating these gendered spaces, Robinson was recognizing the importance of courting both groups of patrons.

However, Robinson's success was also a result of the collections available to his patrons. His institution offered popular literature, first and foremost, with ninety per cent of his collection in novels and romances. Not only was his collection almost exclusively popular in content, but it was also extremely large, amounting to 7,000 volumes by 1816 and 15,000 by 1823.<sup>15</sup> Within Baltimore, Robinson's circulating library was by far the largest collection of texts open to the public in our period. Though there are no surviving circulation records, the success of his enterprise over thirty years indicates the appetite among readers for such works of popular fiction.

Within Belfast, circulating libraries have left even less evidence behind. Directory entries and newspaper advertisements show that from the mid 1770s circulating libraries existed in the town. Hugh Warrin ran a successful circulating library in Belfast from 1772 to 1805. John Hay, a local printer and bookseller, opened the Belfast Circulating Library around 1775, but his establishment lasted only until 1778. Again many of these ventures seem to have been sidelines for local printers and booksellers, such as Henry Greer's Circulating Library circa 1820. Greer's establishment offers an opportunity for examining the way these businesses may have operated. A circulating library founded in Newry by a

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<sup>14</sup> Kevin J. Hayes, *Poe and the Printed Word* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 32.

<sup>15</sup> Joseph Lawrence Yeatman, 'Literary culture and the role of libraries in democratic America: Baltimore 1815-1840' in *The Journal of Library History*, xx, no. 4 (1985), pp 350-353.

Robert Greer in 1822, a relative, has left accounts dating from 1826.<sup>16</sup> These accounts provide a list of customers for both his circulating library and his retail store. Subscribers to the library were mostly from Newry; however individuals from as far as Dublin and Belfast are listed. Several organizations were also listed as subscribers, including the Newry Reading Society, the Newry News Room and the nearby Rathfriland Reading Society. However most of Greer's retail customers were not subscribers and the circulating library accounted for only a small portion of his overall business income. Most sales list a mixture of goods: books, patent medicines, small amounts of jobbing print work and stationery. The texts most often purchased from Greer in Newry were Waverley novels, school books like Rudiman's *Rudiments*, and periodicals such as the *Monthly Review*.<sup>17</sup> These accounts demonstrate how circulating libraries co-existed with other facets of the book trade. They also indicate a wide variety of subscribers from young ladies, to well-established ministers and sailors operating between Newry and Liverpool. The Greer family must have found the circulating library to have been a successful business enterprise, providing many potential benefits to its owners, for we find that William Henry Greer continued the family business, establishing the Celtic Circulating library in Paris in 1892.<sup>18</sup>

John Hodgson's Circulating Library in Belfast, established in 1808, provides one of the few surviving catalogues from the period. Hodgson sold a variety of merchandise, advertising bookselling, stationery, wall-paper, lottery tickets and patent medicines as well as his circulating library. His 1818 catalogue advertised up to 6,000 volumes, which were broken down into novels and romances, which made up well over fifty per cent of the collection, and miscellaneous which included histories, travel accounts, political works, some French language titles and a large selection of periodicals. The price for a yearly

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<sup>16</sup> While there is some family relationship between Henry and Robert Greer, it is not entirely clear what that may be. Some accounts for Henry Greer's business do survive for the years 1847 to 1858 in the private hands of Rolf Loeber.

<sup>17</sup> Greer Account Book, circa 1829 (P.R.O.N.I., Mic40).

<sup>18</sup> W.H. Greer, to the Marquis of Dufferin, 22 March 1892 (P.R.O.N.I., D/107/H/B/G/388).

subscription was £1.10s. for two books at a time, or ten pence weekly. A slightly higher price scheme existed for those who wanted new publications only, and it was set at 12s.6d. quarterly or 1s.8d. weekly. The catalogue does not provide any evidence for the number of library subscribers, but it can provide hints as to the subscribers' concerns. Hodgson claimed that his connections 'with the first houses in London and Edinburgh, in the bookselling line, enables them to assure subscribers that every new publication of merit shall be regularly added to their collections when published,' and that multiple copies of new popular works would be obtained to allow for the greatest number of readers to get access to them.<sup>19</sup> The catalogue paints a picture of an establishment catering to the public taste, where new publications, particularly narrative fiction, were the most highly sought after commodity.

There is also limited evidence of circulating libraries run by women.<sup>20</sup> Though recent scholarship has begun to dispel the contemporary idea that circulating libraries catered solely for women, women were important customers and account for a growing market of readers.<sup>21</sup> From the eighteenth century, circulating libraries were acceptable venues of female participation, and were often located in public areas where females would have felt comfortable visiting unattended. Some, like Robinson's establishment in Baltimore, provided separate entrances and facilities for women, while others were located in shops selling feminine attire.<sup>22</sup> These feminine public spaces may also have provided opportunities for women to earn a living. The 1807 Belfast directory listed a circulating library run by Isabella Drummond from her home at 10 Castle Street; in 1808 it was listed

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<sup>19</sup> *Catalogue of Hodgson's new Circulating Library 9 High-Street, Belfast; containing a careful selection of upwards of six thousand volumes* (Belfast, 1821), copy at T.C.D.

<sup>20</sup> For a list of circulating libraries in Ireland see the Alston database of book clubs, libraries, reading societies, circulating libraries in British Isles, <http://www.r-alston.co.uk/library.htm>, accessed 4 December 2009. For examples of this in England see Hannah Barker, *The business of women: female enterprise and urban development in Northern England 1760-1830* (Oxford, 2006).

<sup>21</sup> Jacqueline Pearson provides an in-depth coverage of women's reading in, *Women's Reading in Britain: A dangerous recreation 1750-1835* (Cambridge, 1999). Pearson describes how women formed a rapidly growing market for print works and the effects this consumption had on publications and perceptions of reading.

<sup>22</sup> Charles G. Steffen, 'Newspapers for free: the economies of newspaper circulation in the early republic' in *Journal of the Early Republic*, xxiii, no. 3 (Autumn, 2003), p. 418.

under Rose Drummond at 12 Castle Street.<sup>23</sup> While little is known about this library, advertisements in the *Belfast News-Letter* suggest that it probably catered specifically for a female clientele. In addition to the ‘between three and four hundred volumes (the great part published in the last and present year) consisting of biography, travels, poetry, novels, etc.’ recently received from London, Isabella Drummond also advertised ‘perfumery, including Warren's Genuine Milk of Roses, [and] a further supply of Dickinson's Gowland's Lotion daily expected.’<sup>24</sup> Though not as elaborate as Robinson's establishment, this circulating library also points to the importance of creating spaces for female patronage and participation. It also suggests that without these measures, women readers may have found it difficult to access these collections.

In both communities circulating libraries operated from at least the mid 1770s. These were important venues for procuring reading material, and they became more prolific as the period continued despite the growing number of other associations and societies that provided access to books. Circulating libraries also allowed new segments of society to have access to books; the financial nature of this transaction may have in many ways facilitated this access. Working-class individuals, women and youths could procure books of their own right and of their own choosing. Though relatively cheap rates meant that nearly anyone could afford to hire at least a volume of a popular new publication, middle-class and professional individuals benefited greatly from circulating libraries. Books were expensive and even Dr. William Drennan, who made on average £200 per annum in his Dublin medical practice, lamented that he could not afford to purchase books and was confined to the library and newsroom.<sup>25</sup> For Belfast citizens the circulating library was one of the few places that novels could be acquired at all, since popular literature was excluded from many of the town's other reading associations, as these were not seen by

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<sup>23</sup> Adams (ed), *Merchants in plenty Joseph Smyth's Belfast Directories of 1807 and 1808*, p. 19, 54.

<sup>24</sup> *B.N.L.*, 15 February 1805.

<sup>25</sup> Letter William Drennan to Martha McTier, 29 June 1807 in *The Drennan-McTier letters*, iii, p. 610.

everyone as appropriate texts for women and children. In Baltimore, the plush surrounds of Robinson's circulating library provided a cheaper imitation of a gentleman's private club, opening the world of reading to anyone with a few dollars.

### **Mechanics' Institutes**

The risks inherent in extending access to unregulated texts were a preoccupation of many members of the middle and upper classes at the beginning of the nineteenth century. They did not feel that either circulating libraries or the chapbooks and ballads sold by peddlers offered the proper moral and religious education appropriate for working-class individuals. Therefore it was a moral duty for middle- and upper-class community members to try and rectify this situation. As mentioned in the previous chapter this spurred the creation of schools for needy children, teaching them to read using appropriate moral and religious texts. However another manifestation of this spirit prompted the formation of mechanics' institutes and libraries.

The model for the mechanics' institutes came from John Anderson in Glasgow. He applied scientific learning to industry and agriculture, providing lectures to workers. In the words of one contemporary, these institutions could take 'men who before the establishment of such societies, went to the alehouse for want of a better way of spending their time' and allowed them to now be 'better employed either at the Scientific School, or in reading at their fireside the books of their own library.'<sup>26</sup> Increased industrialization in England offered opportunities for a more highly educated and skilled work force, while strong working-class political movements empowered individuals within the working-class community to push for the creation of mechanics' institutes. However in both Ireland and Maryland, industrialization lagged behind England, and different degrees and forms of politicization among workers meant that the mechanics' institutes established there were

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<sup>26</sup> Extracts from a 'Report of toasts, speeches, etc. delivered by a few mechanics at the anniversary of the Belfast Franklin Forum on the evening of January 9, 1827' (L.H.L., BPB1827/5) in [W.H. Crawford], *Problems of a growing city: Belfast 1780-1870* (P.R.O.N.I., 1973), p. 87.

generally founded upon middle-class sentiment and patronage, as much as working-class initiative.<sup>27</sup> These male only spaces offered a version of bourgeoisie gentlemen's associations to a working-class audience.

The Belfast Mechanics' Institute was founded in 1825 by a coalition of local artisans and leading Belfast intellectuals. At the first meeting of the inhabitants of Belfast to consider the formation of a mechanics' institute it was resolved 'that the establishment of institutions for the instruction of mechanics in the scientific principles of the arts which they practice, as also in other branches of useful knowledge has been productive of incalculable benefit in other parts of the empire, a Society for this purpose be established in this town.' Here Belfast's middle classes were drawing upon the experience of their fellow British subjects, in an effort to benefit their own community. The leadership was highly Presbyterian in nature and included Joseph Stephenson, William Tennent, and the Rev. T.D. Hincks. The organization proposed to do four things: found a library, establish lectures, collect models and philosophical apparatus, and to establish a scientific school. A group of directors, two-thirds of whom had to be operative tradesmen, were established to run the institute on a daily basis. The library was to contain works concerned with the arts and sciences, specifically excluding controversial works on politics and religion, or works of an immoral character.<sup>28</sup>

Initially this organization was extremely popular, enrolling 400 members at the rate of twelve British shillings per annum, in the first three months. Two years after the institution was founded, speeches were given on its anniversary by members of the Belfast Franklin Forum, a debating society founded among the members of the institute. These speeches highlight some of the ways that these men viewed themselves: the first toast was

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<sup>27</sup> Seamus Duffy, "'Treasures open to the wise' the Mechanics' Institutes of north-east Ulster' in Norman McMillan (ed), *Prometheus' Fire: a history of scientific and technological education in Ireland* (Kilkenny, 2000), pp 322-336.

<sup>28</sup> Constitution and Laws of Belfast Mechanics' Institute 1825 (P.R.O.N.I., D1769/24/2) in [W.H. Crawford], *Problems of a growing city: Belfast 1780-1870* (P.R.O.N.I., 1973), pp 80-83.

drunk to the memory of Dr. Franklin, and celebrated the way the men of the institute ‘prefer wandering in the mazy but flowery field of literature, or of rambling among the ambiguous passages of science, to being lost in the labyrinths of polemical divinity, or drawn into the whirlpool of British politics.’ The speaker also felt called to justify the use of Franklin’s name in the name of their group, situating their activities firmly within a British context, but freely appropriating ideas of the self-made man from across the Atlantic.<sup>29</sup>

However after this initial growth the society experienced a gradual decline in membership until it finally merged with the People’s Reading Room in 1865. The decline can be attributed to several factors, one of which may have been the technical nature of the library’s collections. The scientific journals and technical papers stocked by many mechanics associations, such as the *Transactions of the Philadelphia Philosophical Society*, often required a high degree of literacy and technical knowledge well beyond the basic education of many artisans. Several mechanics’ associations in North America reported similar problems with their own library collections.<sup>30</sup> Other factors may have included an opposition to the objects of the society by some members of the ‘respectable’ classes who believed that educating the working classes would lead to social disruption and the degeneration of the institute’s lectures into political and religious controversies among the various instructors.<sup>31</sup>

In Baltimore similar beneficent motives prompted the creation of a succession of organizations designed to serve the working-class community. The earliest were the

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<sup>29</sup> Extracts from a ‘Report of toasts, speeches, etc. delivered by a few mechanics at the anniversary of the Belfast Franklin Forum on the evening of January 9, 1827’ (L.H.L., BPB1827/5) in [W.H. Crawford], *Problems of a growing city: Belfast 1780-1870* (P.R.O.N.I., 1973), pp 84-87.

<sup>30</sup> Watkinson, ‘Reluctant scholars’, pp 429-448.

<sup>31</sup> Extracts from a ‘Report of toasts, speeches, etc. delivered by a few mechanics at the anniversary of the Belfast Franklin Forum on the evening of January 8, 1827’ (L.H.L., BPB1827/5) in [W.H. Crawford], *Problems of a growing city*, pp 84-87; Duffy, ‘The Mechanics’ Institutes of north-east Ulster,’ pp. 322-336. For a fuller discussion of middle-class attitudes toward Belfast’s working-class community see Kerby A. Miller, ‘Forging the “Protestant way of life”: class conflict and the origins of unionist hegemony in early nineteenth-century Ulster’ in David A. Wilson & Mark G. Spencer (eds), *Ulster Presbyterians in the Atlantic world: religion, politics and identity* (Dublin, 2006), pp 128-165.

Mechanics' Library which lasted from 1820 to 1822, and the Apprentices' Library Association of Baltimore, from 1822 to 1824. These institutions, founded by conservative professionals, served a dual function. They made 'useful' books available, while excluding any books of immoral tendencies, and provided an alternative space for leisure hours. The charter of Baltimore's Mechanical Company stated its aims as 'collecting a library of literary and scientific books, and of holding stated meetings for the hearing of lectures and essays, with a view of exciting and fostering among its members a desire for mental cultivation and improvement.'<sup>32</sup> These efforts to educate and control the reading of Baltimore's masses were all founded following a period of political unrest in the city. Riots and mob violence rent the city frequently in the early decades of the nineteenth century; earning Baltimore its nick-name 'Mob Town.'<sup>33</sup> Apprentices were a large part of this problem. In 1812 the Mayor had to issue a proclamation instructing all masters to keep their apprentices indoors. It is not too far a leap to suggest that efforts to improve Baltimore's working classes were spurred on by these incidents.

Though these organizations were short-lived, due to under-funding and an inadequate supply of books, their failure did nothing to deter those wishing to provide for the moral and social needs of Baltimore's growing industrial population. In 1825 leading Baltimoreans such as Fielding Lucas Jr. and John H. B. Latrobe founded the Maryland Institute for the promotion of the Mechanical Arts. This organization was primarily focused on education, providing lectures, drawing courses and exhibits of industrial manufactures; however it also maintained a small library of books on the mechanical arts

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<sup>32</sup> Quoted in John Calvin Colson, 'The fire company library associations of Baltimore, 1838-1858' in *The Journal of Library History* (1974-1987), xxi, no. 1 (Winter, 1986), p. 166.

<sup>33</sup> Baltimore was frequently rent by rioting in the early decades of the nineteenth century, with particularly bad riots in 1812 caused by the editor of the *Federal Republican* newspaper and 1835 by the failure of the Bank of Maryland.

and sciences. The institute survived in Baltimore until a fire in 1838 shut its doors for nearly a decade before it was eventually reopened.<sup>34</sup>

These mechanics' institutes, and the libraries that they created, were aimed at the improvement of both working-class men, and the general improvement of the technical and mechanical arts. In both Belfast and Baltimore, growing industrial sectors in the nineteenth century contributed to the growth of the urban working-class population. Mechanics' institutes and apprentices' libraries were institutions designed to serve this growing population, and both Baltimore and Belfast's implementation of these institutions took place at the height of their popularity across the Atlantic world. While, as we have seen, these institutions had varied success at serving the reading and educational needs of apprentices and mechanics because of limited or inappropriate book selection, they did provide access to publications, particularly technical and scientific works, to those who otherwise probably would not have been able to acquire this type of reading material on their own.

### **Literary Societies**

Not all public institutions that supported a culture of reading provided texts to their readers. Some, like the literary societies, merely offered a forum for literate community members to exchange ideas and engage in their own forms of cultural production. In both Baltimore and Belfast these societies were composed of very small groups, averaging less than a dozen members per meeting, and consisted of a core group of local literati. Just as the circulating library and the mechanics' institute provided access to texts and knowledge for specific constituencies within each community, so too did the literary society, which provided an outlet for those who wished to delve deeper into the world of the written word.

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<sup>34</sup> Yeatman, 'Literary culture,' pp 362-3. Libraries established by Fire companies in Baltimore represent another attempt to regulate leisure hours through the formation of alternative public spaces. See Colson, 'The fire company library,' pp 158-176.

Within Belfast, the Literary Society was founded in the year 1801.<sup>35</sup> The ‘objects of the original members were, mutual communications on literary subjects, and the investigation of the antiquities, political economy, and history, natural and civil of the county of Antrim.’<sup>36</sup> They met on the first Monday of the month for an evening of discussion. Both men and women discussed items of interest in the literary world and read papers aloud to the group. William Knight, an instructor at the Belfast Academical Institution, described the society in his diary as ‘a Literary Society, which has seldom contained more than twelve members, was commenced in 1801, and meet monthly during eight months of the year, from October to May. Each member reads, in rotation, a paper on polite literature, science, antiquities, or the history and present state of the County of Antrim.’<sup>37</sup> The first president of the society was Dr. James McDonnell and meetings were held in his home. Eventually he was replaced as president by Samuel Stephenson who was also vice-president of the Society for Promoting Knowledge from 1802, and the meetings were moved into the library’s facilities.<sup>38</sup>

The society was supposed to prohibit the discussion of any controversial political and religious issues, for the sake of both peace at the meetings and to avoid bringing down unwelcome attention from the government authorities. Despite these restrictions, the members maintained a liberal stance on most social and political issues of the day. Members such as Mary Ann McCracken, who would have been considered a radical throughout the 1790s, in the period after 1801 supported a position of general social liberalism prominent among the ‘new men’ of Belfast in the early nineteenth century.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> [W.H. Crawford], *Problems of a growing city*, p. xii.

<sup>36</sup> *B.M.M.*, i, no. 2 (October, 1808), p. 145.

<sup>37</sup> Diary of William Knight, Ireland First Volume (U.A., MS M 404/6/1), p. 45.

<sup>38</sup> John Magee, *The Linen Hall Library and the cultural life of Georgian Belfast* (Newcastle, 1981), pp 7-13; see also Gerald R. Hall, *Ulster liberalism, 1778-1876 the middle path* (Dublin, 2011), pp 65-68.

<sup>39</sup> See Jonathan Jeffrey Wright, ‘“The natural leaders”: the Tennent family and the political and intellectual life of Presbyterian Belfast c. 1801-1832,’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Queen’s University, Belfast, 2009).

The society did publish some of its material, generally in the field of belles lettres. In 1808, the *Belfast Monthly Magazine* included a favourable review of the *Select Papers of the Belfast Literary Society*. This was printed in Belfast by Smith and Lyons, the same company that published the magazine, priced at 2s.2d. sewed in paper. This forty-five page quarto volume contained an essay on 'Fiorin Grass' by William Richardson and an essay on an aerostatic voyage transmitted to the society from Paris by D. B. Warren. The same edition of the magazine contained an advertisement for subscriptions for the full set of the Society's papers. The publisher would furnish a title page, preface and table of contents at the end of the first volume.<sup>40</sup> The links between the *Belfast Monthly Magazine* and the Literary Society went beyond sharing a publisher. While the society provided a forum for sociable literary discussion the *Belfast Monthly Magazine* provided a more public printed equivalent. Many members of the Literary Society were also members of the Society for Promoting Knowledge, the group that supplied the *Belfast Monthly Magazine* with its editorial staff. These organizations served complementary functions within the genteel and well-educated circles in Belfast. The library supplied books and access to the latest academic research, while the literary society, which did not have any of its own collections, provided an outlet for informed conversation and literary aspirations and the magazine a public outlet for their products.<sup>41</sup>

Within Baltimore a similar interconnectedness existed between their literary society, the Delphian Club, and the Library Company of Baltimore. This society operated from about 1816 to 1825 with approximately nine members at any one time. Of the seven founding members, William Sinclair, the club's first president, and James McCulloh were also members of the Library Company of Baltimore. Over the lifetime of the club several other members also held joint membership, including William Gwynn, the last president of

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<sup>40</sup> *B.M.M.*, i, no. 2 (October, 1808).

<sup>41</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the interlocking relationships in eighteenth-century literary culture see David S. Shields, 'Eighteenth Century Literary Culture' in Amory & Hall (eds), *A history of the book in America: volume I*, p. 476.

the club, William Winder and Fielding Lucas.<sup>42</sup> They met weekly, on Saturday nights and read to each other pieces of their own work on science and literature. The aims of the society were twofold, first to foster the literary love and talent of its members, and secondly to provide entertainment to fill their leisure hours. The Delphians were a more sociable club, and unlike the Belfast Literary Society, they had no female members. The men of the club met in a private residence, and in addition to reading each other's work, they also drank, laughed and sang.

The society was actively engaged in the town's publishing industry, and its publications provided the opportunity for some aspiring writers to appear in print. Paul Allen, a member, was editor for *The Journal of the Times* and contributor to a literary magazine called *Portico*, and he regularly solicited contributions to these publications from the club's members. The publication *Red Book* also featured contributions by members of the Delphian Club, such as work from John Neal, a local novelist and playwright, and Francis Scott Key, the author of the original 'Star Spangled Banner.'<sup>43</sup> Mostly the club allowed its members to hone their literary skills, and John Uhler claimed that members of the club produced upwards of forty-eight works of fiction.<sup>44</sup> The Delphian Club was itself the subject of literary attention in Edgar Allen Poe's work *Tales of the Folio Club*, which lampooned the society calling them a 'Junto of Dunderheadism.'<sup>45</sup>

In both communities the literary societies were very small organizations, containing a close-knit group of well-educated individuals. The membership heavily coincided with membership lists for other cultural institutions and consisted of what might be considered the literary elite among the local populations. These societies however had an impact that

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<sup>42</sup> For a list of the club's members see John Earle Uhler, 'The Delphian Club' in *The Maryland Historical Magazine*, xx, no. 4 (December, 1925), p. 306.

<sup>43</sup> Rollo G. Silver, 'The Baltimore book trade, 1800-1825' in *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* (March, 1953), p. 115.

<sup>44</sup> Uhler, 'The Delphian Club', p. 308.

<sup>45</sup> Edgar Allen Poe, *Tales of the Folio Club* (manuscript, 1833), p. 1 available online through the Edgar Allen Poe Society of Baltimore, <http://www.eapoe.org/works/misc/foliop.htm> accessed 8 December 2009.

went far beyond their small numbers in that they created the first stage of a vibrant local literary culture—bridging the gap between metropolitan and provincial society.

### **Subscription Libraries**

The most prominent type of organization promoting a culture of reading in each town however was the subscription library. In Belfast this was the Belfast Library and Society for Promoting Knowledge, and in Baltimore the Library Company of Baltimore. Each of these institutions, though limited in membership, represented one of the fundamental cultural building blocks of the community. The balance of this chapter will be devoted to a detailed case study of these institutions, examining their membership, print collections and organizational structure. It will also discuss the political differences between these organizations and the possible reasons for the long-term success or failure of each.

In 1788 the citizens of Belfast formed a reading society. Overall we know very little about this early group. We know from a letter written by Martha McTier, sister to Dr. William Drennan, that ‘there was not among them one of higher rank than McCormick the gunsmith, or Osborne the baker.’<sup>46</sup> Dr Alexander Haliday described the society as a product of the ‘sanculottes’ [sic] of Belfast, stating that ‘it originated many years ago among some sensible and reading mechanics who, by paying a crown at first, and a shilling monthly, had got up a tolerable collection of good books before the society was known out of their own walls.’<sup>47</sup> We also know that this was not merely a reading society or a subscription library, but that the members had higher aspirations. They wished to model their society on Benjamin Franklin’s Library Company of Philadelphia, founded in 1731, which was one of the primary models for associational libraries throughout the Atlantic world and one which both the Belfast and Baltimore libraries used. They may have been

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<sup>46</sup> Mather McTier to William Drennan, 28 October 1792, in *The Drennan-McTier letters*, i, pp 418-19.

<sup>47</sup> As quoted in Killen, *A History of the Linen Hall Library*, p. 11.

inspired by Franklin's Library, and by Franklin himself who travelled through Ulster in 1771.<sup>48</sup> Whatever the inspiration, true to their enlightenment spirit, these men of Belfast sought self-improvement and the improvement of their community.

In 1792 the 'worthy plebeians' of the Belfast Reading Society, as described by McTier, were joined by a large influx of new members. The reason for the society's sudden popularity is unknown, but McTier suggested that professional men wished to take advantage of the valuable collection of books that had already been assembled by the original members.<sup>49</sup> These new members consisted of many leading merchants and professionals, including some of the town's most prominent citizens. A prime example was Dr. Alexander Haliday, who was elected as president in 1792, and was typical of the new members being drawn to the society. He was the wealthy son of a Presbyterian minister, who had studied medicine at Glasgow and now supported Catholic emancipation in Ireland.<sup>50</sup>

These new men brought increased professionalization to the Belfast Reading Society. The meetings, originally held at the Donegall Arms, were moved to a private residence, where they began to record the minutes. In 1792 the society voted to change its name to the Belfast Library and Society for Promoting Knowledge, again taking a cue from Philadelphia, and with this name change came an articulation of the objectives of the organization. As printed in their first catalogue, 'the great and first object of this society being to form a library' the society was to undertake 'the collection of an extensive library, philosophical apparatus, and such productions of nature and art as tend to improve the

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<sup>48</sup> Edwin Wolf, *At the Instance of Benjamin Franklin: A Brief History of the Library Company* (Philadelphia, 1976), p. 1; for details on Benjamin Franklin's trip through Ireland see J. Bennett Nolan, *Benjamin Franklin in Scotland and Ireland 1759 and 1771* (Philadelphia, 1938). There is no surviving evidence of Franklin's daily activities as he travelled through Ulster towards Scotland, but it is certain that he passed through Belfast to Donaghadee for the crossing.

<sup>49</sup> Mather McTier to William Drennan, 28 October 1792, in *The Drennan-McTier letters*, i, p. 419.

<sup>50</sup> Killen, *A history of the Linen Hall Library*, p. 194.

mind, and excite a spirit of general enquiry.’<sup>51</sup> This was an echo of similar language in the articles of association of the Library Company of Philadelphia, which called for ‘purchasing a collection of valuable books’ for ‘the advancement of knowledge and literature in the city of Philadelphia.’<sup>52</sup> This statement maintained the original purpose of collective self-improvement that the founders intended. However it also expanded the horizons of the society from one focused solely on the reading of books to one that sought knowledge through experiment, observation and participation in the international learned community. Evidence for this expanded view of their objectives can be inferred from some of the early purchases of 1792. In March the society resolved to purchase the *Proceedings* of the Royal Society of London, the Royal Irish Academy and the Bath and Manchester Societies as far back as could be acquired.<sup>53</sup> This demonstrated a desire on the part of the members to see themselves as participants in a geographically dispersed scholarly network, emphasizing their connections to a larger community and to the metropolitan centre.

In March of 1793 James Bryson and John Templeton were ordered to make a catalogue of books owned by the society.<sup>54</sup> This is the first record of the library’s collections. The catalogue was printed in April and distributed to members shortly afterwards, along with a copy of the rules. The original catalogue contained 135 titles, and a list of the books ordered but not yet received.<sup>55</sup> This early catalogue serves as a base line for the society’s library, since most of the titles listed would have been part of the pre-1792 collection. The 1793 catalogue reveals the types of materials that were purchased by the original reading society. Most titles in the collection fall into four main categories: histories, travel literature, belles lettres and scientific and philosophical discourses. The

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<sup>51</sup> *A Catalogue of the Books belonging to the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge* (Belfast, 1793), p. 1, not in E.S.T.C.; copy found at L.H.L.

<sup>52</sup> *The original Articles of association of the Library Company of Philadelphia: together with the charter, etc., etc.* (Philadelphia, 1894), p.3; Wolf, *At the Instance of Benjamin Franklin*.

<sup>53</sup> Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 3 March 1792 (L.H.L., Minutes 1 November 1791 to 28 October 1793).

<sup>54</sup> Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 28 March 1792 (L.H.L., Minutes 1 November 1791 to 28 October 1793).

<sup>55</sup> The Belfast Society’s catalogues were arranged by title and do not record, place of publication, date, or the exact number of volumes in the collection.

catalogue also contains a number of biographies, reference works such as the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and a few periodicals.<sup>56</sup> The catalogue represents a basic canon of ‘essential reading,’ including works by many prominent Enlightenment writers such as Smith, Hume, Smollett, Blair and Montesquieu. This is consistent with similar institutions in Scotland, where acquiring an Enlightenment canon was one of the first actions undertaken by subscription libraries.<sup>57</sup>

However, it is perhaps more interesting to see what was not included in the early Belfast catalogue. There were very few items of a religious nature. The society deliberately refrained from collecting religious works because of the possibly controversial nature of such items. This is one area where the Belfast Society was different from many contemporary comparable libraries, and this is perhaps a reflection of the increasing tension between religious factions in Ireland. There were also no foreign language items, though there were a few works in translation. This makes sense if one considers that the original membership, which contained many individuals such as Osborne the baker who may not have been classically educated and therefore would not have been able to read works in Latin or French. This was one area that changed quickly under the new leadership. In September 1792 the society resolved that up to one-fifth of their budget could be used to purchase foreign language or ancient works.<sup>58</sup> However another category of material that was missing was entertaining literature or novels. Although poetry and the dramatic works of Shakespeare were allowed entrance to the library, no novels whatsoever, including those of Sir Walter Scott, were admitted until the second half of the nineteenth century. This was an issue on which the society developed a very strong view, believing

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<sup>56</sup> *A Catalogue of the Books belonging to the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge* (Belfast, 1793). No records were kept of newspapers subscribed to by the library members. However by 1819 Bradshaw’s Belfast Directory mentions a newsroom in the White Linen Hall that stocked a wide variety of Irish, Scottish, and London newspapers. See Bradshaw, *Belfast general and commercial directory for 1819*, p. xxiv.

<sup>57</sup> For more information on Scottish subscription libraries and enlightenment texts see Towsey, ‘Reading the Scottish Enlightenment,’ p. 94.

<sup>58</sup> Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 7 September 1792 (L.H.L, Minutes 1 November 1791 to 28 October 1793).

with others of their time that reading novels was harmful to the mind and destructive to the aim of improving themselves through reading. This was a consistent view on the part of the society and its members throughout our period of study. Editors of the *Belfast Monthly Magazine*, a periodical run by members of the society, expressed the same view in 1808, saying that ‘pleasure is rendered subsidiary to improvement.’<sup>59</sup> In a later edition they went even farther stating that, ‘for of all the creatures that ever nature gave birth to, a novel writer... is the most disgusting.’<sup>60</sup> The society maintained its stance on entertaining literature well into the nineteenth century, even as novels and other entertaining literature became more acceptable reading genres.<sup>61</sup>

A second catalogue was published in 1795 and by that point the number of titles in the library had more than doubled— from 135 to 296.<sup>62</sup> This second catalogue allows researchers to track changes in the library’s acquisitions and to determine what types of materials the post-1792 members thought were important, given the Library’s newly articulated objectives and more highly educated membership.

When looking at the works present in the 1795 catalogue the general categories are nearly identical to what had gone before. Scientific and philosophical works, travel, histories and belles lettres make up about seventy-five per cent of the collection. The only new category of work was foreign language titles, of which there were five. This represents a strong continuation of the collection policies of the members.

Later catalogues confirm the early collection patterns continued into the nineteenth century. Once the society had purchased its collection of canonical and reference works they focused primarily on the acquisition of newly printed material. This allowed them to keep up-to-date on scientific and literary developments. It is also clear that they used periodical reviews and other institutions’ catalogues to ensure that their collection was in

<sup>59</sup> *B.M.M.*, i, no. 1 (September, 1808), p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> *B.M.M.*, ii, no. 7 (February, 1809), p. 141.

<sup>61</sup> Killen, *A history of the Linen Hall Library*, p. 5, 60.

<sup>62</sup> *Catalogue of the Books, belonging to the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge; with their rules, and a list of the Members* (Belfast, 1795), not in E.S.T.C.; copy found at L.H.L.

line with the standards of the polite world. While some of the books in the collection were printed in Dublin or Belfast, the majority of the titles, especially after 1801, were London publications.<sup>63</sup> The cultural cues that the Belfast Society members used to create their library, as well as many of the editions themselves, were exactly the same as those used by subscription libraries from Bristol to Baltimore. The realities of the Atlantic book trade, which was dominated by London booksellers and publications, suggests that subscription libraries, wherever their location, must have encountered many similar experiences while building up their collections. However, the added complications of shipping books to Ireland, and the independence of the Irish book trades before 1800, may mean that American institutions provide a better comparison than their British counterparts when it comes to examining the collections of eighteenth-century subscription libraries.

However a closer look at the 1795 acquisitions reveals some trends that can be identified. As mentioned earlier, the Society had invested in the *Proceedings* of several learned societies. In 1793 they owned the Bath Society papers on agriculture, a history of the Académie royale at Paris, the *Transactions* of the Royal Society of London and of the Royal Irish Academy. By 1795 they had expanded on the original set of papers and added essays from a society in Edinburgh and from the Society of Physicians in London, *Transactions* from the Antiquarian Society of Scotland, the Philadelphia Philosophical Society, and the Academy of Arts. They had also added catalogues of other institutions' collections, such as the Liverpool Society Library. Taken together this is confirmation that the members wanted to feel a part of the broader learned community. Not only were these texts excellent sources for the latest academic discoveries and a major attraction for members, but they allowed provincial readers a kind of vicarious participation in learned circles across the Atlantic and offered a shared sense of identity. Furthermore, the acquisition of these items was an act of trade where purchase of these texts endowed their

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<sup>63</sup> *Laws, of the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge, with a catalogue of its books, May 1, 1819* (Belfast, 1819).

readers with a sort of cultural and political status. These were not provincial reproductions, but authentic artifacts from the centres of knowledge and power. There is also a sense that these texts allowed the library to keep their collections in line with what other institutions had purchased. This brings us back to the idea of creating a canon of ‘essential reading.’ In October of 1792 John Templeton, in his diary, compared the literary pursuits of the Library Company of Philadelphia to that of the Belfast Society, suggesting the conscious effort of the Society to emulate other organizations.<sup>64</sup>

Not only did the society maintain an illusion of participation in a geographically dispersed scholarly network through their reading, but they also developed a web of relationships that stretched across the Atlantic world fostered by correspondence with individuals and other organizations. The society’s secretary managed the correspondence and the development of scientific intelligence on behalf of the organization.<sup>65</sup> While the details of this correspondence have not survived, small hints over the years paint a picture of an organization that was actively reaching out and one that was remembered fondly by members of the Ulster diaspora. Evidence for this correspondence exists in the form of donations recorded in the society’s minutes. Most recorded donations of either books or specimens were from individuals in the British Isles. In 1793 Alderman John Boydell of London, who donated a copy of his engraved prints, was rewarded with the society’s thanks and honorary membership. In 1794 Dr. James Corry of Northampton donated a copy of his work on observations concerning death by drowning. And in 1795 the Royal Irish Academy donated a copy of their proceedings to the society.<sup>66</sup> These acts helped to

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<sup>64</sup> John Killen, ‘The Reading Habits of a Georgian Gentleman, John Templeton, and the Book Collections of the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge,’ in Bernadette Cunningham & Máire Kennedy (eds), *The Experience of Reading: Irish Historical Perspectives* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 99-108.

<sup>65</sup> Rule number twenty-two as written in the Society’s minutes on 1 January 1795 states ‘The result of experiments made by enquirers conducted for the Society as well as all Philosophical intelligence or correspondence shall be communicated to the Secretary, and by him to the committee and reported by them when necessary to the Society at large. All letters from the Society are to be signed by the Secretary.’ See Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 1 January 1795 (L.H.L., Minutes 7 November 1793 to 3 September 1812).

<sup>66</sup> Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 2 January 1793, 17 April 1794, 5 February 1795 (L.H.L., Minutes 7 November 1793 to 3 September 1812).

establish the society within the larger British networks of learned communities and show their participation in various patronage relationships.

Other connections were the result of Ulster individuals who, having left Ireland, sought to reaffirm their connection to Belfast by sending back donations of rare specimens to the society. As part of its new objectives, the society wished to build up collections of natural specimens and scientific apparatus (just as Franklin's society in Philadelphia had done) to facilitate learning and discovery among its members. These donations can help trace the networks of family and business that linked Belfast's merchant community to North America and the Caribbean. In 1801 John Caldwell of New York sent the society sundry skins as a gift.<sup>67</sup> In many cases these donations were facilitated by service in the British military. Two indicative examples, where this relationship stretched far beyond the Atlantic world, include Lieutenant Colonel Chambers of Letterkenny who donated a python skin taken during his military career, and Charles Telfair a naval surgeon and colonial administrator, who helped to found the *Société d'Histoire Naturelle de l'Île Maurice* and sent back several botanical specimens which eventually became part of the Belfast Museum.<sup>68</sup>

While books donated to the library can account for some of the more idiosyncratic items in the collection, such as the manuscript copy of the Gaelic Bible donated by Charles Lynd, titles were usually added to the library of the Belfast Society through purchase.<sup>69</sup> The only firm principle determining the purchase of books was that they must be of an improving nature. The society employed a full-time librarian, whose job was to keep the books in good order and manage lending; he did not have the power to set collection

<sup>67</sup> It is not clear exactly which John Caldwell this is, although it may be John Caldwell, son of Sir James Caldwell of County Fermanagh who served in the American Revolution and who was well-known for his relationship with the Native American tribes. See the *D.I.B.* entry for Sir James Caldwell by Linde Lunney. It may also be a relation of Robert Caldwell of Belfast, who was the brother-in-law of William Magee, Belfast printer and member of the Society who had both personal and business connections to New York.

<sup>68</sup> Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 2 October 1801, 6 December 1810 (L.H.L., Minutes 7 November 1793 to 3 September 1812); Marc Serge Rivière, 'From Belfast to Mauritius: Charles Telfair (1778-1833), naturalist and product of the Irish enlightenment' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, xxi (2006), pp 125-144.

<sup>69</sup> John Anderson, *History of the Belfast Library and the Society for Promoting Knowledge* (Belfast, 1888), p. 22.

policies or to purchase items. Thus the decision as to which books to purchase was made by individual members. In March 1793, the Society resolved to purchase a blank book where any member, in good standing, could write the title of a book he wished the library to purchase. These items were then approved or rejected by a general committee, and ordered as funds allowed.<sup>70</sup>

Orders for books were generally placed through one of the local Belfast booksellers, who used their existing networks to import books from both Dublin and London. According to Máire Kennedy's work on book-trade networks in the south of Ireland, it appears that local printers served as one of the primary means by which both new and second-hand books were distributed throughout provincial Ireland.<sup>71</sup> Early on, the society expressed a preference for books available in Belfast. This was probably due to the fact that nearly all of the local booksellers were members of the society. William Magee was the primary supplier for the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge, meeting their orders by acquiring and binding specific publications from both London and Dublin. The Society's primary concern was cost, and they were willing to receive used books as well as new, so long as they were in excellent condition. The Society wished to allow its members the greatest access to reading material possible on its limited budget. Because of this, the Society also provided a place in the library rooms which facilitated members lending their personal books, if they were not included in the Society's library. Dr. William Bruce also allowed members of the Society to borrow books from the library of the Belfast Academy while he was principal.<sup>72</sup> This may help account for the lack of religious material in the Society's catalogue, since Bruce's Academy already contained a larger selection of these titles.

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<sup>70</sup> Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 2 March 1793 (L.H.L., Minutes 1 November 1791 to 28 October 1793).

<sup>71</sup> Máire Kennedy, 'Book Trade Networks in the South of Ireland,' in M. T. Richards (ed), *Branches of Literature and Music: Proceedings of the Thirteenth Seminar on the History of the Provincial Book Trade held in Bristol, 11-13 July 1995* (Bristol, 2000), pp. 25-46.

<sup>72</sup> Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 2 April 1795 (L.H.L., Minutes 7 November 1793 to 3 September 1812).

If items were not available locally, they were imported from Dublin or London. The Society had an agent in London from 1793— Robert Jameson. He was not it seems a member of the London book trade, and his role was restricted to purchasing and shipping pre-selected items on behalf of the Society. Title selection was tightly controlled, and there is no evidence that he ever sent items that were not expressly requested. Around the time of the 1800 Act of Union, the Society expressed a desire to support Irish production, for in the wake of the Union came the extension of the British copyright act to Ireland, ending the lucrative reprinting of London editions in Dublin. It was at this time that the Society, as a policy, began specifically to look for Irish editions, perhaps as a political act of protest, and their association with Jameson seems to end: however, as the later catalogues demonstrate, the Society did purchase most of their books from London within a few years of the Act of Union.<sup>73</sup> This subtle shift highlights some of the cultural and political undercurrents of the changing political environment for a liberal Irish institution. Though the Society seemed to desire the connection with London, it was a troubled one, both for pragmatic reasons of trade and because of the political sensitivities of eighteenth-century Ireland. London represented the centre of this international scholarly community, but the members of the Society felt compelled by their own political beliefs to attenuate that relationship. Perhaps this is why they chose to emulate the Library Company of Philadelphia rather than a similar institution in the British Isles. In this way the Society could establish a connection with London without fully acknowledging it as the dominant influence.

A membership list printed in 1795 provides evidence for the social profile of the Belfast Society. Of the 163 members, representing the newly expanded membership, approximately forty per cent can be positively identified using the earliest surviving Belfast directory published in 1807.<sup>74</sup> The largest groups of identifiable members were merchants

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<sup>73</sup> Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 20 February 1793 (L.H.L., Minutes 1 November 1791 to 28 October 1793); Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 20 February 1800 (L.H.L., Minutes 7 November 1793 to 3 September 1812).

<sup>74</sup> Adams (ed), *Merchants in plenty Joseph Smyth's Belfast Directories of 1807 and 1808*, pp 11-42.

(10 per cent), and doctors and surgeons (5 per cent). Attorneys, clergy, storekeepers and wealthy members of the linen trade made up a further 10 per cent of those identified. In addition to Osborne the baker and his fellow artisans, at least 30 per cent of total membership came from the professional classes of Belfast. Though women were originally excluded from the Society, a vote was taken which allowed them to have a membership in their own name, though they could not participate in the Society's governance. The membership costs, which were two guineas to join and one British shilling monthly, and the process of nominating members, maintained some exclusivity within the Society. Interestingly, the landed classes were poorly represented within the Society's membership. The Marquis of Donegall, the largest local landholder and virtual owner of Belfast, was not proposed as a member until October 1808, six years after he came to reside permanently in the area.<sup>75</sup> It can be assumed that in religious affiliation the Society was overwhelmingly Presbyterian, reflecting the trading and artisanal make-up of Belfast.<sup>76</sup> And as Eoin Magennis has argued in his study of clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Belfast 'associationalism provided Presbyterians excluded from town government with an alternative platform.'<sup>77</sup> This is consistent with what Peter Clark identified as the broad membership of British societies, especially among dissenting communities, and with similar institutions in the United States, such as the Library Company of Baltimore.<sup>78</sup>

The Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge also contained a strain of radicalism. The United Irishmen were founded in Belfast in late 1791, and within a few months many of the founding men became involved in the Belfast Society. Samuel Neilson, Thomas Russell, Henry Joy McCracken, and Samuel McTier were all participants in both societies.

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<sup>75</sup> Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 6 October 1808 (L.H.L., Minutes 7 November 1793 to 3 September 1812); W. A. Maguire 'Lords and landlords- the Donegall family' in J. C. Beckett *et al*, *Belfast: the making of the city 1800-1914* (Belfast, 1983), pp 27-39.

<sup>76</sup> Magee, *The Linen Hall Library*, pp 5-6.

<sup>77</sup> Eoin Magennis, 'Clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Belfast' in Kelly & Powell (eds), *Clubs and societies in eighteenth-century Ireland*, p 467.

<sup>78</sup> Peter Clark, *British clubs and societies 1580-1800: the origins of an associational world* (Oxford, 2000), p. 443.

The *Northern Star*, a radical newspaper, was run and owned by members of the Belfast Society.<sup>79</sup> It was not just a few individual members, but a sizable cohort of the Society seemed to sympathize with these radical beliefs. In 1792 the Society issued a statement in support of Catholic Emancipation, particularly supporting their rights to education.<sup>80</sup> And when Thomas Russell lost his position as a magistrate due to his political views, the Society hired him as their librarian, despite the fact that he was dyslexic. Russell was working at his post as librarian in 1796 when he was arrested for treason.<sup>81</sup>

This is not however to suggest that all of the Society's members supported radical politics. Within the institution there was a moderate faction which fought back against any expression of radical sympathies. These individuals tried to steer the Society away from controversial politics. In 1793 they printed a notice in the *Belfast News-Letter* which stated the Society's intentions to avoid controversial political and religious issues as an institution, whatever the beliefs of individual members.<sup>82</sup> Dr. Haliday and Dr. William Bruce, an influential and moderate Presbyterian minister, attempted to protect the Society by providing assurances to the government that though some members had tried to involve the Society in politics their efforts had been 'baffled.' The Belfast Society's wide connections to literary and intellectual circles in Ireland and Britain were later used to disassociate them from the rebellion. Haliday in particular exploited his connections with the earl of Charlemont, who was a founder of the Royal Irish Academy and president of the Dublin Library Society. For Charlemont 'intellectual engagement trumped political affiliation.'<sup>83</sup> As the government cracked down on subversive activity in the years leading up to the 1798 rebellion the Society went into decline, and temporarily ceased all activity in

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<sup>79</sup> Killen, *A history of the Linen Hall Library*, p. 21.

<sup>80</sup> Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 26 January 1792 (L.H.L., Minutes 1 November 1791 to 28 October 1793).

<sup>81</sup> Anderson, *History of the Belfast Library and Society for Promoting Knowledge*, p. 13; See also C. J. Woods (ed), *Journals and memoirs of Thomas Russell 1791-5* (Dublin, 1991).

<sup>82</sup> *B.N.L.* of April 1793 as quoted in Killen, *A history of the Linen Hall Library*, p. 15.

<sup>83</sup> Dr. Alexander Haliday to the first earl of Charlemont as quoted in Killen, *A history of the Linen Hall Library*, p. 16; Michael Brown 'Configuring the Irish Enlightenment: reading the Transactions of the Royal Irish Academy' in Kelly & Powell (eds), *Clubs and Societies in eighteenth-century Ireland*, p. 167.

1798. However they escaped the destruction handed out to the Doagh Book Club, the Newry Literary Society and the offices of the *Northern Star*. Increasingly this radicalism, prevalent in the 1790s, was transformed in the early decades of the nineteenth century to a general liberalism, which operated within the parameters of the Act of Union.<sup>84</sup>

Work on the Cork Library Society shows in some ways the uniqueness of Belfast politics.<sup>85</sup> The Cork Library Society was founded in 1792 as part of the same trend which had led to the formation of the society in Belfast. In Cork, the Library Society served as a focus for the cultural life of a city which was heavily involved in the Atlantic trade and which had a significant Catholic population. Their membership was comprised of professionals and leading members of the town, several of whom were from very prominent Catholic families. Yet they were at heart a conservative Protestant institution. Sixteen of their members were officers in the yeomanry and the Society, as well as many of the town's merchants, fully supported the Act of Union as a way of advancing trade. Though both communities contained strong non-establishment religious communities, in Cork this did not lead to radical or even liberal political involvement by the middle-class and professional institutions of the town. However Belfast's radicalism was not that unique when seen within the broader Atlantic context, and was in fact a variation on a larger pattern of dissenting radicalism in the 1790s as identified in Britain by David Allen, and which had been heavily influenced by earlier American activities.<sup>86</sup> Though somewhat unusual in Ireland, when seen in the Atlantic context the Belfast Society was simply reflecting wider debates over democratic and Enlightenment practices.

The influence of prominent and liberally-minded men in Belfast was wide-ranging. Their presence can be felt in many of the cultural activities and organizations of the town. Cross-referencing the membership of the Belfast Society with the leadership of other

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<sup>84</sup> Killen, *A history of the Linen Hall Library*, p. 42.

<sup>85</sup> For complete information on the Cork Library Society see Máire Kennedy, 'The Cork Library Society of 1801' in the *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, xciv, no. 253 (1989), pp 56-73.

<sup>86</sup> Allen, *A nation of readers*, p 67.

cultural institutions reveals an unsurprisingly short list of individuals engaged in multiple types of public enterprise. Some examples include Samuel Stephenson and Dr. James McDonnell who were both early members of the Society as well as actively involved in the Literary Society. Stephenson was on the board for the Belfast Academical Institution and McDonnell helped found the Belfast General Hospital.<sup>87</sup> James Raven's work on the Charleston Library Society emphasizes the role of the Library Society there as a pivot point for the larger networks of fellowship and sociability within the town.<sup>88</sup> The same could be said of the Belfast Society, since the concentration of influential individuals within the organization secured for it a central place in town life, despite the fact that its actual size was quite small.

In Baltimore, the Library Company was founded in 1795 by 'some gentlemen in Baltimore town, impressed with a sense of the benefits resulting from a Public Library.'<sup>89</sup> This was also an organization based on the Library Company of Philadelphia, and correspondence was opened between these institutions in order to allow for Baltimore's founders to learn from their model institution. Prices were set at \$20 a share, with a \$4 annual contribution. The founding members were high-status citizens of the town. Rev. John Carroll attended the first meeting and was chosen as the president; he served in this capacity for twenty years until his death in 1815.<sup>90</sup> Carroll, though a member of the Catholic minority, was well-connected in both learned and political circles in Maryland. Carroll had travelled to Canada with Benjamin Franklin, Charles Carroll and Samuel Chase to seek their neutrality in 1776, and had petitioned Congress on the need for constitutional protection for religious liberty.<sup>91</sup> He was active in many civic organizations in Baltimore

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<sup>87</sup> Magee, *The Linen Hall Library*, pp 7-8; Killen, *A history of the Linen Hall Library*, p. 231.

<sup>88</sup> James Raven, *London booksellers and American customers: transatlantic literary community and the Charleston Library Society, 1748-1811* (Columbia, SC, 2002), p. 77.

<sup>89</sup> The constitution and by-laws of the Library Company of Baltimore (M.d.H.S., MS 80, box 1).

<sup>90</sup> Stuart C. Sherman, 'The Library Company of Baltimore, 1795-1854' in *The Maryland Historical Magazine*, xxxix (1944), p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> Charles George Herberman (ed), *The Catholic encyclopedia: an international work of reference on the constitution, doctrine, discipline, and history of the Catholic Church*, iii (New York, 1913), p. 382.

and throughout Maryland and represented a leading member of local society. It is inconceivable that a Catholic bishop could have played such a role in a secular cultural organization in the Old World at that time.

By January 1796 the library had 112 members and by 1799 there were 349.<sup>92</sup> Membership peaked at about 400 in 1809, and after the War of 1812 it fell to around 250 members and remained there for the life of the library.<sup>93</sup> An analysis of membership in 1809 reveals that it was primarily populated by members of the business and professional classes. Using the 1807 *Baltimore Directory*, 54 per cent of the 415 members could be identified, of these 26 per cent were classified as merchants, 4 per cent as attorneys and 4 per cent as medical men. Women were allowed to own shares from the beginning, and many were very active borrowers, but like in Belfast they were not active in the Company's leadership. One category not prevalent in the Belfast Society but which made up a significant proportion of the Baltimore membership was 'gentlemen,' who accounted for 5.5 per cent of total membership. These men were designated either by the title gentleman or esquire, indicating that they were of independent means and probably made their living through property ownership.<sup>94</sup>

This suggests that while the membership of the Baltimore and Belfast institutions was broadly similar and consistent with other eighteenth-century subscription libraries, the Baltimore library had a cohort of land-owners among its early members. This element may have been responsible for the generally more conservative tone of the Library Company of Baltimore. It may also indicate that members joined these subscription libraries not only to have access to reading materials, which presumably they could have afforded on their own, but also to engage in a prescribed type of sociability. These wealthier members generally

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<sup>92</sup> An account of the Library, 13 January 1796 (M.d.H.S., MS 80, box 1).

<sup>93</sup> Yeatman, 'Literary culture,' p. 357.

<sup>94</sup> These figures were reached using the membership list in the 1809 catalogue and comparing that to the 1807 Baltimore directory, see *Catalogue of the books, etc. belonging to the Library Company of Baltimore; to which are prefixed, the act for incorporation of the company, their constitution, their by-laws and an alphabetical list of the members* (Baltimore, 1809); James M'Henry, *Baltimore directory, and citizens' register for 1807* (Baltimore, 1807).

did not play a very active role in running the society, instead acting as patrons, while leaving the day to day management up to the professional classes.<sup>95</sup> This holds true in the case of Charles Carroll of Carrollton, who as a member made limited use of the library's books and was not actively involved.<sup>96</sup> Like the Charleston Library Society, the Library Company of Baltimore, 'operated at several levels, as a repository of learning and instruction, but also as a social passport and a conduit for polite society.'<sup>97</sup>

Baltimore's library could be used in multiple ways by members and non-members alike. The Library Company paid a full-time librarian to be present at the library from ten a.m. to two p.m. Monday through Saturday and to attend the daily running of the organization. When members wished to peruse a particular book they could either read it in the library or they could borrow the book and take it home. Books could be collected from the library by members in person, or by sending written instructions signed by the member with a slave or servant. All borrowing was recorded by the librarian in the lending records, and all written instructions were kept until titles were safely returned. The amount of time that members were allowed to borrow books depended on the size of the volume and their distance from town. Town members could keep a quarto volume, two duodecimos, or four pamphlets for two weeks, while members who resided on the eastern shore of Maryland could take twice the number of books and keep them from December to March. Many members, especially those living in town, sent servants to collect their books using written instructions, thereby avoiding the necessity of visiting the library themselves. Non-members could hire books by leaving a deposit for twice the value of the title or series with the librarian, plus four cents a day.<sup>98</sup> Records of these transactions were only kept

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<sup>95</sup> Towsey, 'Reading the Scottish Enlightenment,' p. 71.

<sup>96</sup> Lending records of the Library Company, 1797 (M.d.H.S., MS 80, box 4). John Carroll was an exception to this general statement, as he was active as the Company's first president, helping to organize the original subscribers and making the Company's first catalogue.

<sup>97</sup> Raven, *London booksellers and American customers*, p. 227.

<sup>98</sup> Taken from the constitution and by-laws of the Library Company of Baltimore found in *Catalogue of the books, etc. belonging to the Library Company of Baltimore...*, pp vii-xx.

until the titles were returned in good condition and the fees were paid, so it is impossible to know the extent to which non-members used the library in this way.

Rare and valuable titles had to be read in the library and could not be borrowed, even by members. The Library Company's collections were housed in various locations throughout the town until a semi-permanent location was chosen in 1798 on the first floor of the Dancing Assembly on Holiday Street. This location was not ideal, as is evidenced by successive attempts by the Library Company to fund a purpose-built library of their own. Some spaces were provided for members in the building to read or consult the various scientific apparatus. However, the number of notes used to borrow books suggests that while the library had reading rooms open to its members, borrowers may have preferred to read at home if possible. Non-members could also consult texts within the library simply by paying a fee of four dollars a year, or for one dollar a month they could read any of the Library Company's books on the premises. This fee was consistent with those charged by subscription libraries in Baltimore, and suggests that the Library Company served in some way as an alternative to those institutions. The Library Company offered access to a large selection of both imaginative literature and expensive scholarly texts for a relatively small fee, but the four dollar yearly fee did not allow for borrowing, thus restricting practical access to the collections. No records were kept of titles consulted in the library, making it difficult to paint a picture of the daily experience in the library facilities.

The Library Company of Baltimore purchased most of its volumes in London. They took a very different approach to procuring items from that of the Belfast Society. The Library Company organized a Committee of the Catalogue to make a list of desired titles and then to correspond with their agent in London. The agent was given strict instructions in regards to the appearance of books, but greater freedom when it came to the

titles that were to be sent.<sup>99</sup> The Company minutes of April 1796 provided instructions to the committee:

Resolved that the Reverent Mr. Bend and Mr. J. Carroll be requested to complete the catalogue with the addition of some novels, and to write to William Murdock Esquire London requesting his assistance in purchase of the books and that in their letter they desire the books to be well bound, ordering the Octavo size except for novels and other books of inferior moment, preferring the last edition of every work, except in cases where it would suppose the octavo size or give a work of inferior moment in a larger size than 12mo. And directing the folio or quarto size for all works materially valuable on account of their plates.<sup>100</sup>

William Murdock, a general merchant, initially acted as the agent for the Library Company in London, but eventually John and Arthur Arch, booksellers and stationers, took over the assignment.<sup>101</sup> The Library Company imported books and periodicals from the Arch brothers into the 1820s.<sup>102</sup> However not all the Library Company's titles were imported. It had resolved early on to collect works concerning the newly founded United States; these were mostly American productions and were supplied through local booksellers and via auctions, which were particularly prevalent in early nineteenth-century Baltimore. After the outbreak of the War of 1812, the option of purchasing books in London was temporarily suspended, and there was a movement toward collecting only those works that were produced in America. Purchasing records from around 1813 indicate that the local booksellers Fielding Lucas Jr, and Edward J. Coale supplied a significant number of the Library Company's book orders, approximately fifty per cent of which were domestically produced titles.<sup>103</sup> However this did not last long, as the Library Company determined that

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<sup>99</sup> Often the Library Company was sent duplicate titles or items that had not been requested, similar practices are evidenced in importation of items from Dublin and London see Vincent Kinane "Literary Food" for the American market: Patrick Byrne's exports to Mathew Carey' in *The American Antiquarian Society*, civ, part 2 (1994), pp. 315-332.

<sup>100</sup> Minutes of the Library Company, 6 April 1796 (M.d.H.S., MS 80, box 2).

<sup>101</sup> Ian Maxted, *The London book trades, 1775-1800* (Kent, 1977), p. 5.

<sup>102</sup> The timely arrival of periodicals from London was of particular importance to the Company members. These reviews were then used to inform later purchasing decisions.

<sup>103</sup> Bound volume 1 which includes a list of books recommended to the library with purchases with a start date of 1813 (M.d.H.S. MS 80, box 1, vol. 1).

there were few items of interest that they did not already own, and that their prices exceeded what they were accustomed to pay in America.<sup>104</sup>

While both the libraries in Baltimore and Belfast purchased items directly from London, the relative importance of this differed greatly. Both communities had an outward focus, created by strong trade relationships with Britain. London publications were seen as high-status items, not just texts but as a form of cultural currency. Possession of such goods provided a tangible outlet for social ambition and a connection to the heart of many intellectual communities.<sup>105</sup> The Library Company of Baltimore deliberately chose to purchase items directly through a London bookseller, for while this had been quite common among American collectors during the first three quarters of the eighteenth century, by the end of the century members of the local book trade would have been well able to supply the library, either through local publishers or through their own importation networks. This supports the idea that the library's habit of direct London purchases was not strictly necessary, but rather an act of conspicuous consumption. It was only when the War of 1812 closed the London trade that the Library Company seriously began looking at local supply.

In Belfast the desire for London editions, while present, was mitigated by two factors. The first was money. During the first decade of the Belfast Society's existence, the town was suffering economic difficulty. This, combined with their small membership, limited their resources to acquire expensive London editions. The Society was anxious to build a solid collection, and so they purchased texts wherever they could find them at the best price. This often meant purchasing lightly used second-hand items and having them rebound, or Irish re-prints of new London publications. The second factor was an ideological concern to support Irish manufacture. Supporting Irish manufactures was an

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<sup>104</sup> Minutes of the Library Company, 24 April 1809 (M.d.H.S., MS 80, box 2).

<sup>105</sup> Raven, *London booksellers and American customers*, p. 223; James Raven, 'The representation of philanthropy and reading in the eighteenth-century library' in *Libraries & Culture*, xxxi, no. 2 (Spring, 1996), pp 492-510.

act of public solidarity for Irish patriots, though never a very effective system in Ireland, and purchasing Irish goods was still a political gesture supported by many segments of Irish society.<sup>106</sup> This is consistent with the Society's political leanings— and the presence of members of the Belfast book trade in the organization. Yet despite both of these concerns, the Society still acquired a large variety of London publications and felt the need to secure an agent in the city, revealing more ambivalent views regarding London among members of the Society. Meanwhile the Library Company of Baltimore was founded at a time when British goods had become fashionable marks of a consumer's wealth and taste.<sup>107</sup>

The Library Company of Baltimore's collections were quite extensive, amounting to approximately 4,000 volumes at the time of their 1809 catalogue. The holdings were dominated by theology, religious tracts and sermons. Stuart Sherman, in his work on the Library Company, has provided an analysis of the catalogue by genre, which is helpful in understanding the collection as a whole (See Appendix I).<sup>108</sup> The Baltimore collection had several categories not present in the Belfast Library; these included narrative fiction, political controversy and religion. The Library Company of Baltimore had a smaller proportion of scientific titles, and relatively more works on fine arts and belles lettres. Besides these differences, the collections were quite similar, representing an assortment that can be classified as generally canonical. Both these institutions were run by members of the professional classes, and they acquired a selection of acceptable reading for the entire family and useful works of 'improvement' for the professional man of business.

<sup>106</sup> For more detail on Irish consumer nationalism see Sarah Foster, 'Buy Irish: consumer nationalism in eighteenth-century Dublin' in *History Today*, xlvii (June, 1997), pp. 44-51; Martyn J. Powell, *The politics of consumption in eighteenth-century Ireland* (London, 2005); Higgins, *A nation of politicians*, p. 92.

<sup>107</sup> Though imported texts were at times condemned as corrupting luxuries in the early republic, they continued to retain cultural currency as indicators of taste and standing. Linzy A. Brekke, 'The "Scourge of Fashion": political economy and the politics of consumption in the early republic' in *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, iii, no. 1 (Spring, 2005), pp 111-139; see also Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: how revolutionary America became a postcolonial nation* (Oxford, 2011), p 77.

<sup>108</sup> Sherman, 'The Library Company of Baltimore,' p. 15.

However the collection alone does not tell the entire story at Baltimore. Fragmentary lending records indicate that the Library Company's collection policies were not quite in line with the reading habits of its members, suggesting some dislocation between the Library Company's ideological mission and the practical tastes of its members. The Library Company was founded on the principle that 'public libraries, under judicious regulations, cannot fail to promote the diffusion of useful knowledge, and the interests of virtue, and to grow greatly beneficial to society.' According to the regulations, the collections were supposed to be comprised 'chiefly of books in general demand and of such as are likely to be of general utility.'<sup>109</sup> Yet a study by Stuart Sherman of these records indicated that one out of every four titles checked out from the library in 1800 was a work of fiction. The most popular titles were *Don Quixote*, *Castle of the Rock* and *Gil Blas*. Theology, the largest genre in the collection, accounted for only about six per cent of titles lent out in 1800. Most members checked out a variety of material ranging from popular novels to travel accounts and histories. The three most popular non-fiction titles borrowed in 1800 were Pope's *Works*, Gibbon's *Rome* and Plutarch's *Lives*.<sup>110</sup> However Sherman's study may not give the whole story, since it is only indicative of borrowing habits and does not include texts consulted within the Library Company's facilities. Since many of the expensive and rare academic texts and instruments could not be taken out of the library facilities, the bias toward fiction evident in the lending records may hide a higher propensity to consult non-fiction texts within the library.

These lending records, while extremely insightful into the popularity of texts in Baltimore, can be misleading as well. The lending records were all recorded under the name of the owner of the share, and yet there is a large amount of evidence to indicate that multiple individuals regularly checked out material using one account. From 1818 to 1826

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<sup>109</sup> See *Catalogue of the books, etc. belonging to the Library Company of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1809), p. v; Minutes 1796 to 1809 of the Library Company of Baltimore, 29 February 1796 (M.H.S., MS 80, box 2).

<sup>110</sup> Sherman, 'The Library Company of Baltimore,' p. 14; Lending records of the Library Company of Baltimore 1800 (M.d.H.S., MS 80, box 5).

the society librarian, Mr. Owen, kept a record of all permissions granted for use of the library. These total 278 separate permission slips, ranging from the use of a single text to the full use of an individual's share for up to a year.<sup>111</sup> Other slips, within the lending records, confirm that shares regularly served to supply reading material to the entire household. Highlighting another, often hidden means by which women could access the collections of male-dominated subscription libraries. A note from Charles Hughes in 1809 asked Mr. Owen to send the novel *Belinda*; however he added 'if *Belinda* is not in Mr. Owen will oblige Miss Hughes by sending her word when he expects it will be in the Library.'<sup>112</sup> These records confirm the high demand and popularity of novels among the patrons of the library. Yet this indicates that the lending records, while an extremely valuable source, cannot be taken as a record of any one individual's reading habits.

After the War of 1812, and the economic downturn after 1815, Baltimore suffered a general recession and the Library Company of Baltimore experienced some financial difficulty. Membership fell and the library entered a long struggle for financial viability. In 1816 it attempted to raise a subscription to purchase a vacant lot and build a library building. However, not enough money was subscribed and the library was forced to offer a partial refund to subscribers amounting to \$15 out of every \$25 share.<sup>113</sup> This proved the beginning of a long decline for the Library Company, and though it continued in existence until 1854 it consistently struggled for members and money. In 1848 it was joined with the Maryland Historical Society in the creation of the Baltimore Athenaeum, a building designed to house both organizations as well as provide rooms for an art gallery and the Mercantile Library Association. In 1854 the Library Company announced its official amalgamation with the Maryland Historical Society founded in 1844.<sup>114</sup> All of its books

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<sup>111</sup> Record of Permissions granted to use Library 1818 to 1826 (M.d.H.S., MS 80, box 8).

<sup>112</sup> Librarian's Ledger January 1809 (M.d.H.S., MS 80, box 16), p. 352.

<sup>113</sup> Library Company Correspondence 1816-1819 (M.d.H.S., MS 80, box 18), pp 7-31.

<sup>114</sup> Sherman, 'The Library Company of Baltimore,' pp 23-25.

and collections were handed over and have remained with the Maryland Historical Society ever since.

Historically the failure of the Library Company in the nineteenth century has been attributed to their inability to appeal to the poorer sections of society. However more recent scholarship by Larry Sullivan suggests that their failure was more a result of fiscal mismanagement than a conservative collection policy.<sup>115</sup> The failure of the 1816 subscription drive and the insistence on purchasing the latest London edition of titles supports this view. Sullivan's theory is supported by Raven's work on the Charleston Library Society. Membership of the latter was even more exclusive than that of Baltimore, yet it has survived until the present. However, the Charleston library was financially much more secure. It also purchased items primarily through London booksellers, but generated the needed income through high membership dues and by lending out money at interest.<sup>116</sup> The Belfast Society also survived this period, despite its lack of mass appeal, and this survival has been attributed to its strong fiscal controls and a tight budget. This would suggest that the Library Company of Baltimore might have been able to overcome its limited membership with tighter financial management. However the timing of the Library Company's failure, which coincides closely with the beginning of the public library movement in the United States, suggests another possible contributing factor to its demise in the 1850s.

Structurally, the Baltimore and Belfast Societies were polite subscription libraries, with a large middle-class membership and a stock of socially acceptable reading. They are consistent with the patterns observed in British subscription libraries.<sup>117</sup> These institutions allowed members to access a wide variety of books on many acceptable topics, and to engage in prescribed sociability with others of similar interests. They did not simply

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<sup>115</sup> Yeatman, 'Literary Culture', p. 358.

<sup>116</sup> Raven, *London booksellers and American customers*, p. 72, 116.

<sup>117</sup> St. Clair, *The reading nation in the romantic period*, p. 258; Allan, *A nation of readers*, p. 107.

supply books to the citizens of their respected towns, but acted as a hub for a certain class of highly active men and as a starting point for many of the towns' other cultural institutions. Members of Baltimore's Library Company participated in the Delphian Club and helped to found the mechanics' libraries and associations. In Belfast, the Society for Promoting Knowledge supplied members to the literary society, the editorial staff to the *Belfast Monthly Magazine*, and had members who helped found most other public institutions. Hence the subscription library's significance within the town's reading cultures was disproportionate to the access that they provided to texts or their importance as a site of reading in themselves.

We can therefore see subscription libraries operating within the models and parameters of polite associational culture in the English-speaking Atlantic world. Their membership, rules and collections were all within the expected norms for subscription libraries in Ireland, Great Britain and the United States. When individuals tried to pull a society off this accepted path, such as in the case of the Belfast Society and its involvement with radical politics in the 1790s, other members stepped in to prevent drastic deviation. This polite culture was not something that simply evolved, but was carefully imitated and cultivated through correspondence between individuals and organizations across the Atlantic world and by the consumption of literary reviews, and other standard-setting publications. The members of these groups were not simply trying to institute a local organization to serve particular needs in their town, but were attempting to participate in a cultural phenomenon which stretched across the British Atlantic. These organizations engaged with American models and British texts, and used the transatlantic connections of their members to create institutions to supply texts and foster public education and civil discourse for the members of their local communities.

This chapter has offered a limited glimpse into a few of the public organizations that promoted reading within these provincial towns. The list is not exhaustive, but has

highlighted key institutions which provided texts and access to the world of reading to various constituents within the two communities. These organizations' role in providing access to texts was particularly important to lower-status groups in the community, where circulating libraries and mechanics' institutes represent one of the few options for working-class individuals to access the latest works of fiction or scientific learning. Here, gender was also a factor in determining access. While women were formally excluded from certain private male associations, they may have still benefited from a father, husband or brother's ability to access texts. In other situations, like the circulating libraries, women were courted as patrons in their own right by enterprising library owners. However the largest impact of these public institutions was among the middle and genteel classes in the towns, where they provided access to more expensive texts, and a social framework for community involvement. The high costs of books in the eighteenth century meant that even relatively well-off individuals could not afford to purchase all the books they desired to read, and so the impact of these middle-class institutions on reader access to texts should not be downplayed. The subscription libraries acted as central associations from which a web of interconnected institutions and relationships emerged. Their presence in the town spurred on the creation of other cultural institutions that provided both education and reading materials. As a result of these organizations, the demand for texts within these communities rose exponentially over time. The next chapters will discuss the ways in which production and importation attempted to meet these growing demands.

## Chapter 4 The Print Community

The previous chapter examined the various ways in which reading was encouraged in each town, and the organizations that provided sites for reading to take place. By illuminating the circumstances under which many individuals encountered texts, these represent one facet of the larger picture of the cultures of print in evidence in our towns. However, in order to understand the significance of the ways individuals within these societies encountered texts, we must also understand what texts were available for them to read. In these provincial communities texts became available by two general means. The first, and most extensive, route was through importation of texts from larger metropolitan centres such as London, Dublin or Philadelphia. The second route, and the focus of the next two chapters, was through local production by printers and publishers within the respective communities.

While local production may not account for the majority of texts available in most provincial towns, it did represent an important element of the culture of print within any given location. Texts produced within a specific area are windows into that community. As physical objects they tell us about the resources available for production and the intended market for the products. As intellectual productions they highlight the contribution of the hinterlands to the flow of cultural knowledge circulating through the Atlantic world. Whether these texts were written by local authors, or translations or reprints of popular works from abroad, they represent unique contributions to the world of letters and are worth exploring in some detail.

This chapter and the one that follows will examine three main questions relating to the production of texts within Baltimore and Belfast. The first question, examined in this chapter, is the identity of those involved in the book trades in these towns: what were the numbers involved and how were these communities structured? Here we will explore the

structure and evolution of the print trades in both communities, along with newspaper production. The second major question, tackled in the next chapter, concerns the types and quantity of texts produced locally. What types of works were being produced and how did this change over the period in question? Finally, which of these texts were original productions to the communities, such as local newspapers and pamphlets, and which were reproductions of texts first published elsewhere? The purpose of this investigation is to get a sense of what texts would have been readily available through the local market and who produced them, to see which texts were important enough or popular enough to merit local production and to begin to outline the local communities of writers that supplied many of these texts for consumption.

### **The Printing Community**

Printing in Belfast dates from the year 1700 when Patrick Neill established his press in the town. By 1707 he was gone and James Blow, a printer who operated steadily until 1758, was for a while the town's sole printer. The output from the town's presses in these early years was primarily religious and devotional material for the Presbyterian community.

The first major development among the town's printers took place as a direct result of conflicts within Ulster's strong Presbyterian community. Around 1720, a long simmering dispute over subscription to the Westminster Creed split the Presbyterian congregations in Belfast.<sup>1</sup> The Belfast Society, an organization founded by several Presbyterian ministers, supported non-subscription, an extension of the Moderatism movement in England and Scotland, and began publishing several sermons on this topic in 1720.<sup>2</sup> These non-subscribers earned the name 'New Lights,' and a full-scale pamphlet war broke out among Presbyterians in and around Belfast. James Blow printed these 'New

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<sup>1</sup> See Ian McBride, *Scripture politics: Ulster Presbyterians and Irish radicalism in the late eighteenth century* (Oxford, 1998); Benn, *A History of the Town of Belfast, I*, p. 406.

<sup>2</sup> James Barkey Woodburn, *The Ulster Scot: his history and religion* (London, 1915), p. 188.

Light' sermons, but a new printer, Robert Gardner, was recruited to print sermons for the other side of the ecclesiastical debate.

It seems likely that this division of labour was due to personal conviction as well as simply business, and the conflict had widespread results for Belfast's print culture. During the 1720s the total number of imprints produced in the town increased from 30 in the previous decade to 52, of which over 90 per cent were religious in nature. These texts also represented a larger than average number of original local works, and it is from this point onwards that Belfast maintained several printers— despite a population of less than 8,000 inhabitants.

By 1760, the beginning of this study, James Magee, Robert and Henry Joy, John Hay and Daniel Blow all operated presses within Belfast. These pioneers acted as both printers and publishers; for the first forty years of the study they represent the primary members of the local book trade. Though others came and went during this period, these men and their families provided a strong continuity within Belfast's trade until roughly 1800. The cultural and political changes that came in the late 1790s, combined with the natural developments within Belfast's print trade, created new structures within the town's print community in the years around 1800. The periods before and after this date can be distinguished by differing sets of dominant individuals, by the degree of division between printing and publishing, and to a lesser extent by the types of material that was produced.

To a large degree the continuity evident before 1800 was a consequence of familial succession and kin connections. In 1790, when he retired at age 83, James Magee was succeeded by his son William. William's brother John Magee ran the *Dublin Evening Post* and provided a strong connection with the Dublin print community. John and William collaborated together in operating an Irish lottery, which was a core part of the Magee business. The Magees were also strongly linked to other members of the Belfast merchant community through William's wife Jane Callwell, whose brother Robert went into business

with William as wine importers. The family had also established early connections with the American colonies through James' brother Thomas, who sold books briefly in Philadelphia, and James' former apprentices Andrew Steuart of Philadelphia and Hugh Gaine of New York.<sup>3</sup>

James and later William Magee were the largest booksellers in Belfast throughout the second half of the eighteenth century. Magee's bookshop at the sign of the Bible and Crown on Bridge Street was a hive of activity. They printed and published many of their own titles, as well as importing texts from Dublin, Scotland, London and North America. J.R.R. Adams in his work on print and popular culture in Ulster identified Magee as the leading supplier of cheap publications across Ulster.<sup>4</sup> Magee supplied a network of travelling chapmen who distributed his publications throughout Belfast's hinterland. Many of these titles were published by Magee but others were purchased from London, Dublin and Glasgow. Surviving lists of Magee's chapbooks between 1750 and 1780 show that he offered diverse material ranging from medieval classics such as the *Seven champions of Christendom*, to contemporary school books such as David Manson's *Spelling Book*, practical texts such as Nicholas Culpeper's *A directory for midwives*, and religious classics such as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>5</sup> He offered the chapmen discounts and allowed them to use his shop as a town address. In addition to a wide variety of chapbooks and schoolbooks the Magees also printed and published a variety of controversial political and religious works, and imported books to supply the upper end of the market. With well over 200 imprints to their name appearing between 1760 and 1800 the Magees produced nearly half of the surviving Belfast titles.<sup>6</sup> Besides printing and bookselling, the Magees also invested in a paper mill in Ballymena and a bookbindery; this vertical integration

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<sup>3</sup> Francis Joseph Bigger, *The Magees of Belfast and Dublin printers with some notes on the Willson, Callwell, and other Belfast families* (Belfast, 1916), pp 1-7; Michael O'Connor "'A Small Cargoe for Tryal'" in Raven & Howsam (eds), *Books between Europe and the Americas*, p. 193.

<sup>4</sup> Adams, *The printed word and the common man*, pp 23-24.

<sup>5</sup> All titles are taken from Magee's catalogue in John Flavel, *A token for mourners* (Belfast, 1780), E.S.T.C. N47131, p. 180.

<sup>6</sup> Based on the E.S.T.C. searched 20 May 2010.

allowed them a large amount of control over both the production and distribution of texts within Belfast. Perhaps the only area of the book trade in Belfast that they never successfully engaged in was newspaper publication; despite attempts in 1745, 1786 and 1792. Since the Magees' business model was based on supplying cheap popular works, the introduction of copyright legislation in 1801 was a serious blow for the business. William Magee could no longer reprint the latest political tracts, British text books or London plays to keep his audience supplied with fresh publications, but he now had to rely upon out-of-copyright material or local productions, or else pay premium prices for the newest works. In 1809 William sold his stock to Samuel Archer, who in partnership with Magee's former assistant, continued to supply the Ulster market with cheap publications. William spent the last years of his life serving the community on the board for the Belfast Academical Institution and died a highly respected member of the community in 1827.

A second major printing family in eighteenth century Belfast was the Joys. Beginning with Francis Joy in 1737 the family worked as printers and publishers in Belfast until 1795. Though their major contribution was production of the *Belfast News-Letter*, they also ran a shop where Henry Joy acted as a notary public, and they sold various items of hardware and books. The Joy family printed and published their own texts in Belfast as well as importing texts for sale. There are at least fifty surviving imprints from the Joys between 1760 and 1795, when they sold their press.<sup>7</sup> The Joys were the primary paper manufacturers locally and used their business expertise and capital to move into cotton manufacturing with their cousins the McCrackens— an industry which Robert Joy helped introduce to Ulster after a trip to Scotland in 1777.<sup>8</sup> The Joys were active and respected members of the local community as well as successful members of the business

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<sup>7</sup> Based on the E.S.T.C. searched 20 May 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Norman G. Gamble, 'The business community and trade of Belfast: 1767-1800,' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Dublin, 1978), p. 32.

community; even after leaving the newspaper business they played prominent roles in the civic life of the town.

The Blows were one of the earliest printing families in Belfast, and James Blow left his press and paper mill to his son Daniel at his death in 1759. Blow has been somewhat dubiously credited with printing the first bible in Ireland in 1702, of which no copies have been discovered. However the Blows undoubtedly produced a very ambitious edition of 8,000 bibles in Belfast in 1751 and had previously published portions of the scriptures.<sup>9</sup> The majority of Blow's imprints were religious, primarily for the Presbyterian community, though titles of entertaining literature and local politics were also produced. The family published texts, sold books and produced paper in and around Belfast. However from 1759 Daniel Blow focused primarily on the growth and development of the family's papermaking enterprise, even becoming involved in the linen industry to improve his production.

Finally, there were John Hay and his sons David and John Jr., who were primarily booksellers, producing only a handful of original publications. Their shop was at the sign of the Two Bibles where they operated a short-lived circulating library from 1775 to 1778. They, more than any of the other families mentioned, worked through partnerships with other printers and publishers. Most of the surviving imprints bearing their name state that they were printed for or sold by John Hay. Several publications are in conjunction with the Joy brothers, one of which was *A short introduction the English grammar* by Robert Lowth, which John Hay and the Joys published editions of in 1765 and 1778. Many advertisements for publications from as far away as London list the Hays as the Belfast location where the works were available or where subscriptions were taken. In January 1760 the Hays took subscriptions for both the *Family Expositor* from Dublin, and the

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<sup>9</sup> Linde Lunney entry on James Blow in the *D.I.B.*

*British Magazine or Monthly Repository for Gentlemen and Ladies* published in London.<sup>10</sup>

John Hay Jr. died in 1810, though he had ceased business somewhat before that date.

As these families illustrate, the Belfast print community, prior to 1800, was very much a coterie of familial groups, with a strong sense of continuity for the greater part of the eighteenth century. Most major players published at least a few titles and sold a variety of books, all the while maintaining other revenue streams through paper manufacturing or un-related business ventures. These printers and booksellers were respected members of the community and were mostly members of one of the Presbyterian congregations in the town. They were free to publish whatever titles they thought fitting for their market, which contributed to the lively and competitive print trade of the town.

Evidence from this same period for Dublin indicates the same sort of mix between publishing, bookselling and jobbing that these men may have had. The Graisbury accounts at Trinity College are the only surviving records for any printers in Ireland in the eighteenth century and offer a rare glimpse into the world of the Irish printer. Most of the orders listed in the day book from 1777 to 1785 were jobbing orders, though many of the big-ticket items came from printing books either whole or in part. Hand bills, lottery tickets and blank forms kept the press busy between publishing jobs, and selling old and new books, stationery and patent medicines further supplemented income.<sup>11</sup> If this is true for a print shop in Dublin, which benefited from the close-knit community and joint publishing established there, it undoubtedly also holds true for the provincial presses of Belfast.

From around 1800, the character of the Belfast trade was somewhat different. The cessation of business for all these print firms in the decade around 1800 opened the field to a new group of printers, publishers and booksellers. Many of these new men had been apprentices or journeymen working in the town in the 1790s. The extension of copyright

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<sup>10</sup> *B.N.L.*, 1 January 1760.

<sup>11</sup> Printers day book 1797-1806 (T.C.D., Graisbury Accounts, MS 10315).

in 1801 made it more difficult for provincial printers to act as their own publishers on a large scale, and this quickened the division of labour between printers and publishers in Belfast, already so much a part of the London trade. The gradual expansion of the printing trade in Belfast and the division of labour between the various roles in the trade can be traced to some degree through the Belfast directories. In the earliest surviving Belfast directory published in 1807, there are seventeen entries for individuals in the book trade.<sup>12</sup> These include bookbinders, paper makers, booksellers, printers and circulating library operators among others. Most entries, such as the one for John Doherty printer and bookseller, list multiple titles for each individual. Twelve years later the 1819 directory broke down each of the various professions in the book trade into its own category. Ten bookbinders were listed; sixteen booksellers, four engravers, four paper warehouses, and six printing firms were mentioned separately.<sup>13</sup> This indicates both overall growth in the printing community within Belfast and a greater division of labour among its members, though the directory cannot be considered comprehensive.

The nineteenth-century Belfast book trade was dominated by several firms which continued to control the production and distribution of popular literature in the town well after the period in question. The largest of these firms were those of Joseph Smyth and Simms and M'Intyre. Joseph Smyth began work in Belfast in 1799. He concentrated primarily on printing popular material, though he was also the printer for most of the local productions in the early decades of the nineteenth century. From 1803 to 1810 Smyth partnered with S. Lyons, and this firm was responsible for printing the first Belfast directory, the *Belfast Monthly Magazine* and the proceedings of the Belfast Literary Society.

Smyth went on to produce an extensive list of popular works including schoolbooks, catechisms and entertaining titles. By around 1820 he had begun publishing

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<sup>12</sup> Adams (ed), *Merchants in plenty Joseph Smyth's Belfast Directories of 1807 and 1808*, pp 13-42.

<sup>13</sup> Bradshaw, *Belfast general and commercial directory for 1819*, pp 93-128.

these titles in small paper-covered volumes, which became the standard for cheap popular literature. Some overlap between items produced by Christopher Warren of Dublin, and by Smyth is evident as little effort seemed to have been made to distinguish their imprints. One later example was *The Indian cottage, or, a search after truth* of 1845 which listed J. Smyth of Belfast on the title page, but C.M. Warren of Dublin as publisher on the paper cover.<sup>14</sup> These publishers may have had some sort of joint publishing relationship, or more likely they simply purchased large wholesale orders from each other for which they then produced their own title pages for the texts which was then marketed as their own. This makes it somewhat difficult to determine the exact origin of many of these titles, and the exact number of titles actually published in Belfast. Not only did Smyth produce his own titles and purchase extensively from booksellers such as Warren in Dublin, but his catalogue also included titles from the Society for the Education of the Poor in Ireland or the Kildare Place Society, which was an organization that worked on the same lines as those supported by Hannah More and used many of her tracts.<sup>15</sup> In Smyth's 1843, catalogue *Elizabeth or the Exiles of Siberia* represents one of the most popular of the improving tracts. Research on the impact of the Kildare Place Society's tracts, and their ability to displace the traditional 'pernicious' chapbook literature, suggests that publishers such as Smyth simply bought and sold these titles along with their own without distinction.<sup>16</sup> The improving tracts did not so much displace the older literature as supplement it. Adams has investigated the relationship between the Kildare Place Society books and other popular titles on Smyth's list of publications, and determined that Smyth and other Belfast publishers incorporated some Kildare Place titles into their own lists as

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<sup>14</sup> Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, *The Indian cottage, or, a search after truth...* (Belfast, 1845), copy in the Dublin City Library contains a paper cover which also has the imprint of Christopher M. Warren of Dublin. For details on Warren's career see Charles Benson, 'The Dublin book trade 1801-1850,' iiiii (4 vols, unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Dublin, 2000), p. 1144

<sup>15</sup> These tracts were generally published in Dublin in editions of 5,000, so it was likely that Smyth simply bought them wholesale and added a new title page instead of printing his own edition.

<sup>16</sup> Joseph Smyth's catalogues of books for 1843 found in *The adventures of Sir Francis Drake* (Belfast, 1843); Adams, *The printed word and the common man*, pp 139-140.

long as they were good sellers, but when they were no longer available he was happy to produce alternative titles to replace them.<sup>17</sup>

An even more important firm was that of Simms & M'Intyre. David Simms and John Doherty began working together in the 1790s: they were both composers who lost their positions when the *Northern Star* office was wrecked. These men acquired a press and began printing. By 1807 David Simms had replaced Doherty with M'Intyre. The firm printed and published a range of titles, including a large selection of educational works and Catholic literature; however their greatest contribution was the publication of several series of small uniform titles. Their first series started in 1820 and included five titles priced between 6 ½ d. and 2s.6d. This series was the direct competitor to Smyth's publications, and there is good evidence of strong local competition between these firms.

Simms & M'Intyre considered themselves to be primarily publishers instead of printers, for although they developed their own presses through the early adaptation of stereotyping the firm had titles regularly printed by other printers in Belfast. The firm's greatest achievements came after the period of study, when John Simms and James M'Intyre, sons of the founders ran the company. In 1847 the firm launched the Parlour Library, a series of uniform titles, new and reprinted, priced from 1s. to 1s.6d. each. The popularity of this series went far beyond Belfast, and the firm opened an office in London to handle its interests there. In 1853, the series was sold to their London agent and the firm ceased to operate in Belfast.<sup>18</sup>

These two firms were the largest producers of texts in Belfast in the first half of the nineteenth century. However surviving texts from this period reveal an array of imprints from the town. Individuals such as Drummond Anderson, Thomas Mairs, Francis Finlay and the firm of Alexander Mackay and son were all printers who at one time or other

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<sup>17</sup> Adams, *The printed word and the common man*, pp 138-149; Joseph Stubenrauch, 'Silent preachers in the age of ingenuity: faith, commerce, and religious tracts in early nineteenth-century Britain' in *Church History*, lxxx, no. 3 (September, 2011), pp 547-574.

<sup>18</sup> Adams, *The printed word and the common man*, pp 149-155; Roger Dixon, 'Belfast Publishing' in Murphy (ed), *The Oxford history of the Irish book: volume IV*, pp 73-80.

published a newspaper and/or produced some books during this period. George Berwick, and Archbold and Dugan also have surviving imprints and are listed as booksellers by John Anderson in his catalogue of early Belfast imprints.<sup>19</sup> Due to the lack of surviving evidence on the Belfast book trade and the lack of a comprehensive list of post-1800 imprints from Belfast it is extremely difficult to determine the extent of these publishing operations— whether they represent a few odd titles or were a major operator in the town.<sup>20</sup> This picture of the Belfast book trades must therefore only hint at what was most likely a complex and multi-dimensional sector.

Unlike Belfast, the earliest printing in Maryland was closely connected to political rather than religious organizations. William Nuthead's press was briefly established in Maryland in 1686, making it one of the earliest colonies to have a printer.<sup>21</sup> In the eighteenth century, the Anglican Church was the official established church in Maryland, and because of their ties to the establishment in London they had little need for local printers to produce any of their devotional or denominational literature. This environment did not support the establishment of rival religious presses as in Belfast or in other American colonies, and it was only when the Maryland Assembly saw a need for a printer that printing began to take hold in Maryland. A series of printers briefly operated presses in Annapolis, mostly working as the public printer responsible for printing the laws and other government proclamations. However it was not until William Parks set up his press in Annapolis in 1727 that a permanent and professional press was in operation in Maryland.<sup>22</sup>

Printing in Baltimore came somewhat late in the colonial period, and only began to grow towards the beginning of the early republican period. However from the 1790s

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<sup>19</sup> John Anderson, *Catalogue of early Belfast printed books, 1694 to 1830 with supplements* (Belfast, 1890), pp v-vii.

<sup>20</sup> See chapter 5 for a complete discussion of surviving imprints and sources for information on imprints from both towns for this period.

<sup>21</sup> In the United States, colonial presses were often dependent on printing contracts either through the local colonial government or established religion for their survival.

<sup>22</sup> For a full history of early Maryland printers see Wroth, *A history of printing in colonial Maryland*.

similar changes can be detected in the Baltimore book trade, as can be seen in Belfast around the turn of the century. Several established printers left or retired, new members joined the community and a greater division of labour began to differentiate the separate functions of the book trades. Changes also took place in the types and quantity of material that was generated by Baltimore presses. Within American publishing history the period from the 1790s to the 1830s is generally considered a transitional one before the huge boom in publishing in the 1840s, and Baltimore follows many of these development patterns.<sup>23</sup>

The first known printer in Baltimore was Nicholas Hasselbach, a German immigrant who published in both German and English. His shop opened in 1764 and appeared to be still successful when in 1770, on a trip to the continent to purchase additional equipment, he was lost at sea.<sup>24</sup> In the early 1770s there were at least two presses in operation in Baltimore. One was run by Enoch Story the younger, son of Enoch Story of Philadelphia. The other is only known through one surviving imprint, George Cockings' *The conquest of Canada, or, the siege of Quebec*, attributed to Hodge and Shober in 1772.<sup>25</sup> In 1773 Hasselbach's presses and equipment were sold to William Goddard, soon one of the most energetic, and controversial printers in early Baltimore, forever changing the print culture of the city.

Goddard was born in Connecticut where he learned the print trade. After a rocky early career in Providence and Philadelphia, he came to Baltimore in 1772 where he lived and ran his various businesses for the next twenty years.<sup>26</sup> In 1773 he established the third newspaper in Maryland, the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser*. However, ever the man on the move, he soon saw new opportunities, and in 1774 left his business in the

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<sup>23</sup> See James N. Green, 'The rise of book publishing' in Gross & Kelly (eds), *A history of the book in America: volume 2*, pp 75-127.

<sup>24</sup> Wroth, *A history of printing in colonial Maryland*, p. 111.

<sup>25</sup> George Cockings, *The conquest of Canada, or, the siege of Quebec. An historical tragedy of five acts* (Baltimore, 1772), E.S.T.C. W479256.

<sup>26</sup> For more on Goddard's career in Philadelphia see Leona M. Hudak, *Early American women printers and publisher 1639-1820* (Metuchen, NJ, 1978), pp 231-320.

hands of his sister Mary Katherine Goddard while he worked toward the establishment of a national post office and participated in the Revolutionary War effort. In 1779 he returned to Baltimore and again assumed control over his business interests.

Goddard, like the Joys and the Magees of Belfast, controlled many aspects of the production circuit. Around 1776 he assumed control of a paper mill near Elkridge, which was probably established by James Dorsett, who received money from the state convention for that purpose, but quickly became associated with Goddard and the *Maryland Journal*.<sup>27</sup> In addition to newspaper production, paper making, and general printing, Goddard also sold books and did some bookbinding. Though he was never a large publisher, his schemes for expanding his printing enterprise were never-ending, though usually unsuccessful. In 1781 he proposed, along with Eleazer Oswald one of his many partners, to reprint the classics of Great Britain including works by Goldsmith, Addison and Steele, but this scheme never found the necessary support. Another attempt to enhance the literary character of Baltimore four years later had Goddard, this time with Edward Langworthy, proposing to print a new magazine called the *American Spectator*. This too did not receive enough support. Goddard's final attempt at a large publishing venture came only a few months after his proposal for the *American Spectator*. This time Goddard and Langworthy issued a prospectus for a three-volume edition of General Charles Lee's letters, which they planned to edit themselves. This too failed, and Goddard seemed to have been finally discouraged from further attempts at large-scale publishing ventures.<sup>28</sup> In 1792 Goddard published his farewell address to the citizens of Baltimore and moved to Rhode Island.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 10 April 1781; Joseph Towne Wheeler, *The Maryland press 1777-1790* (Baltimore, 1938), pp 5-7.

<sup>28</sup> Langworthy who was supposed to be preparing the manuscripts for press, secretly sold them to a publisher in London which resulted in the publication of the *Memoirs of the life of the late Charles Lee* (London, 1792), E.S.T.C. T146543, cited in Isaiah Thomas, *The history of printing in America: with a biography of printers & an account of newspapers*, Marcus A. McCorison (ed), (New York, 1970), p. 545; Wheeler, *The Maryland press*, pp 6-8.

<sup>29</sup> Goddard had inherited some land in Connecticut through his wife's family, which prompted his relocation.

Though Goddard was heavily involved in many aspects of the print trades in Baltimore his most important contributions were not imprints from his press. In 1774 Goddard began working to establish a postal system for the colonies completely independent of the British authorities. His system was taken over by the Continental Congress on 26 July 1775, and it was this initial structure that later became the United States Postal Service. In spite of his expectations Goddard was never appointed postmaster general, but the position was given to Benjamin Franklin and later to his son-in-law Richard Bache. Goddard was instead given the post of surveyor, which he resigned in 1777, after quarrelling with Bache.<sup>30</sup>

This quarrelsome nature was perhaps one of Goddard's most well-known characteristics; he could not stay any place long without involvement in some sort of dispute. Beginning in 1776, the *Maryland Journal* published an article entitled 'Tom Tell Truth' which was a satirical piece which discussed the reasons why the Americans should consider the terms of peace then being offered by the British. As Charles Carroll described it, 'the piece signed Tom tell truth was written by [Samuel] Chase & was intended as a s[arcas]m on the credulous disposition of the people with respect to terms of accomadation[sic]; what was meant by him as irony was seriously taken by the Whig Club.'<sup>31</sup> The local Whig Club demanded the name of the article's author first from Mary Katherine and then William Goddard. Unwilling to submit the information, William was forcibly brought before the club and sentenced to banishment. Goddard immediately left town for Annapolis to seek assistance from the council of safety. There he presented a memorial and his case was given full consideration, and ultimately it was decided in his favour that the club had been in violation of individual rights and the freedom of the press.

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<sup>30</sup>Hudak, *Early American women printers*, pp 320-325.

<sup>31</sup> Charles Carroll of Carrollton to Charles Carroll of Annapolis, 9 March 1777, in Ronald Hoffman, Sally D. Mason & Eleanor S. Darcy (eds), *Dear Papa, dear Charley: the peregrinations of a revolutionary aristocrat, as told by Charles Carroll of Carrollton and his father, Charles Carroll of Annapolis, with sundry observations on bastardy, child-rearing, romance, matrimony, commerce, tobacco, slavery, and the politics of revolutionary America*, ii (Chapel Hill, 2001), p. 972.

This incident has been cited as an early test of the freedom of the press within an American context, with a successful outcome for newspapermen across the country. Goddard, however saw it more as a personal slight that the Whig Club was not more strenuously punished.<sup>32</sup>

Though William Goddard's career was exciting, it was his sister Mary Katherine who was probably most responsible for the steady output of their press in Baltimore. Mary Katherine Goddard had made a career out of assisting her brother as both an experienced presswoman and business manager. She and her mother Sarah had taken over William's business concerns in Providence and then Philadelphia while he left town for extended periods, and issued imprints under their own names. When William Goddard established his newspaper in Baltimore, it was really Mary Katherine who ensured things ran smoothly. As a result of William's long absences and his financial difficulties, his name was removed from the colophon of the *Maryland Journal* in 1775, and it ran in Mary Katherine's name alone until January 1784.

Mary Katherine ran all of Goddard's business concerns while he was engaged setting up the postal service. When he returned to Baltimore in 1779 he assumed control of everything except her store which sold books, stationery and dry goods and the *Maryland Journal*. In addition to these duties, she also served as the Baltimore postmistress from 1775 to 1789. Mary Katherine continued to run the newspaper, and print blank forms, broadsheets and almanacs until 1784 when William's name was again added to the paper. At this point, a falling out between the siblings took place, and though the exact nature of the quarrel is unclear, evidence for the dispute can be seen in the five lawsuits filed by Mary Katherine, and the issuance of two identical and competing almanacs from William and Mary Katherine for the year 1785. From this point onwards Mary Katherine's role in the Baltimore book trade was limited to that of postmistress until 1789 and bookseller and

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<sup>32</sup> The earliest account of this story in the secondary literature is recounted by Isaiah Thomas in *History of printing in America* originally published in 1810.

stationer until her death in 1816. She was not just her brother's manager, but an important force within the Baltimore printing community. She published the first authorized version of the Declaration of Independence in 1777. And again it was Mary Katherine who was the only newspaper editor in Baltimore able to continue publishing from July 1779 to May 1783 due to the paper shortages caused by the war. Here her control of Elkridge paper mill was the deciding factor.<sup>33</sup> Though her career was often shaped and over-shadowed by her brother William, Mary Katherine Goddard was every bit as important to the Baltimore print community before the 1790s.

Prior to the 1790s, besides the Goddards, other local printers included Enoch Story Jr. son of Enoch Story of Philadelphia who operated a press in Baltimore but seems to have returned to Philadelphia around 1794 selling Goddard his types. The next competitor for Goddard was John Dunlap. Dunlap was born in Ulster but had finished his training in Philadelphia under his uncle William Dunlap. Dunlap set up his press in Baltimore around 1775 and immediately started *Dunlap's Maryland Gazette or the Baltimore Advertiser*.<sup>34</sup> Dunlap printed the official journals and publications of the Continental Congress, and so imprints bearing his name appear in several locations as he followed this body. In 1778 Dunlap sold his paper and presses to James Hayes Jr., who claimed to have run the business for the previous three years. Dunlap and James Hayes eventually found their way to Virginia, to set up shop there at the behest of the governor.

However, the Goddards' biggest competitor in this period was John Hayes. The first imprints bearing John Hayes name appeared in 1783, John was probably related to James, but the relationship and the exact date of John's arrival in Baltimore are unclear. John Hayes was associated with the *Maryland Gazette* after its reappearance in 1783, and it was through this organ that his rivalry with Goddard was most clearly expressed. Hayes

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<sup>33</sup> See the entry on Mary Katherine Goddard in Hudak, *Early American women printers*, pp 319-339; Mary Katherine Goddard Papers 1779-1790 (M.d.H.S., MS 1517).

<sup>34</sup> Wheeler, *The Maryland press*, pp 49-50; See *D.I.B.* entry on John Dunlap by Linde Lunney. Dunlap was the printer who printed Mary Katherine Goddard's competing almanacs after her dispute with her brother.

not only printed a newspaper but was involved in a range of other printing activities. In 1787 he managed to break William Goddard's monopoly on almanacs and began producing his own almanac *Ellicott's Maryland and Virginia almanac, and ephemeris*, to compete with Goddard's *Ellicott's Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia almanack and ephemeris*.<sup>35</sup> Hayes was primarily a printer, producing mostly practical works and broadsides with a few odd works of poetry and religion. He retired in Baltimore sometime between 1801 and 1804 as competition among the book trades increased.<sup>36</sup>

From the 1790s the number of individuals involved in the book trade in Baltimore began to increase dramatically, preparing the way for its later prominence in the publishing world. Old standards like the Goddards and Hayes gave way to a host of new printers, publishers and booksellers. Unlike in Belfast, most of Baltimore's new men were primarily from outside the town— journeymen from places like Philadelphia or New York. During this period of change a greater degree of specialization within the trade is visible, and firms from other cities began to establish branches in Baltimore, contributing to the increase in the diversity of the printed texts available to the populace. A 1796 Baltimore directory begins to paint a picture of broad change within the town. In the 1770s Baltimore had a few members of the print trade engaged in many aspects of production and distribution of printed texts, by 1796 the directory listed seven printers and nine booksellers, but no individuals were listed as both though some booksellers were also stationers or bookbinders.<sup>37</sup> This represents a remarkable growth in both the size and the complexity of the industry. Imprints from this period onward show the increased separation of printers and publishers or booksellers. Even the 1796 Baltimore directory was printed by William Pechin, an active press, for publishers William Thompson and

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<sup>35</sup> Andrew Ellicott, *Ellicott's Maryland and Virginia almanac, and ephemeris, for the year of our Lord 1787* (Baltimore, 1786), E.S.T.C. W24127; Andrew Ellicott, *Ellicott's Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia almanack and ephemeris, for the year of our Lord, 1786* (Baltimore, 1785), E.S.T.C. W10650.

<sup>36</sup> Rollo G. Silver, 'The Baltimore book trade, 1800-1825 Part II' in *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* (April, 1953), p. 199.

<sup>37</sup> William Thompson, *1796 Baltimore Town and Fells Point Directory* (Baltimore, 1796), E.S.T.C. W9538, (E.P.F.L., microfiche no. 64).

James Walker. In 1800 Maryland passed a law requiring a printed form for any legal transaction. The law aimed to provide a way for any citizen to perform a basic legal transaction without the aid of a trained lawyer. A side benefit was that it increased the demand for printed forms within the state and provided jobbing work for a larger community of printers who relied on this type of job printing.<sup>38</sup>

Besides an increase in the number of printers, Baltimore also hosted several large bookstores from the 1790s. Some, such as the prominent one run by George and Henry Keatinge, published a number of titles, all of which were printed for them by various Baltimore printers. Edward J. Coale and various partners ran bookstores in the town from 1808 onwards, continuously purchasing the stock of other booksellers to expand the business, as well as publishing their own works for sale. Other shops were branch locations of larger firms from other American cities. Thomas, Andrews and Butler operated a bookstore which principally sold items printed and published by Isaiah Thomas and Ebenezer Andrews of Boston. James Rice and Co. was associated with the firm of Henry and Patrick Rice of Philadelphia. Henry Carey, son of Philadelphia publisher Mathew Carey, spent the summer of 1805 running their branch office in Baltimore. These firms were a vital link in the establishment of distribution networks by larger American publishers, and ensured the availability of a much wider selection of printed texts in Baltimore than the city itself produced. They also allowed for specialty bookshops, such as that run by Joseph Carr which specialized in music, or the law book store of Patrick Byrne Jr.<sup>39</sup>

One of the few men who did continue to operate at all levels of the book trade was Samuel Saur [sometimes Sower]. He appeared in Baltimore around 1795 and worked there until his death in 1820. Saur specialized in German-language printing, catering for the

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<sup>38</sup> Warner, *The letters of the republic*, p. 18.

<sup>39</sup> Joseph Carr was partnered to Benjamin Carr of Philadelphia and James Hewitt of New York who cooperated to publish and sell music sheets and song collections; Silver, 'The Baltimore book trade, 1800-1825 Part II,' p. 185. Byrne was also associated with his father's bookstore in Philadelphia.

large number of German and Dutch immigrants in Maryland and Pennsylvania. In addition to printing and publishing German and English texts, he imported large numbers of books from Germany and ran several periodicals. After 1800, along with partner Samuel Cole, he founded an auction company that sold books, prints, maps and charts. Saur also advertised in 1808 for apprentices needed at his type foundry operating near St. Mary's College, where he produced all sorts of type, including music type.<sup>40</sup> Saur's diverse business interests, at a time when others were specializing, may have been a result of his dominant position in the local German-language market. Instead of consolidating his business into one branch of the print trade, he integrated many production stages together under his control, allowing him to control prices and stay competitive in the small German-language print marketplace.

The general diversification of the Baltimore book trades allowed for the rise of large-scale publishing, beginning around 1810 and coming into its own in the following decades. Among the town's publishers, Fielding Lucas Jr. was perhaps the most important during this period. In 1807, hoping to establish himself in Baltimore, he entered a partnership with Conrad and Co., a firm based in Philadelphia as booksellers and publishers. After his marriage to Eliza Carrell of Philadelphia in 1810, he bought out the Conrads and established himself as a Baltimore bookseller and publisher.<sup>41</sup> He worked with Mathew Carey of Philadelphia, exchanging stock, stereotype plates and selling lottery tickets, until he began publishing atlases that Carey felt competed too closely with his own. As a Commissioner of public schools and a prominent Catholic, Lucas was one of the

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<sup>40</sup> Rollo G. Silver, 'The Baltimore book trade, 1800-1825 Part IV' in *Bulletin of the New York Public Library* (July, 1953), pp 351-352.

<sup>41</sup> See Lucas' correspondence with Eliza Carrell in the Lucas Papers (M.d.H.S., MS 2275-2277, box 1). It is possible that Lucas was assisted in this business by Carey who held a very large bond of his during this period. The bankruptcy of the Conrad firm in which both men suffered financially, solidified the personal relationship between them.

primary suppliers for school books and of Catholic devotional material well beyond Baltimore.<sup>42</sup>

Both Baltimore and Belfast demonstrate a similar life-cycle in their book trade communities. They each evolved from having a small number of individuals who engaged in multiple aspects of the book trade, to a much larger trade community where specialization was the norm. Printing and publishing became separate trades, and the production of large numbers of cheap publications served as a mainstay of production. However in Baltimore this evolution took place much more quickly and this trajectory took the print trade much farther than Belfast, where both the stifling of the newspaper industry and the expansion of copyright helped to ensure that it remained a strictly secondary print centre within Ireland.

## Newspapers

Within provincial communities newspapers served an extremely important function. They were a vital building block in the growth of the printing industry and in the spread of the written word. Newspaper production was both an indicator of the health of the printing community in a provincial town, and a vital component for further growth. As Rosalind Remer has suggested, newspapers and other periodicals were popular choices for publishers since they gave them a measure of control over their production, and if successful they provided some economic stability and public recognition. James Green has gone further, arguing that competition among newspaper publishers was a prerequisite for other entrepreneurial publishing activity.<sup>43</sup> These theories are borne out by the evidence from both Baltimore and Belfast. Examining newspaper production in these towns reveals

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<sup>42</sup> James W. Foster, 'Fielding Lucas Jr., early 19<sup>th</sup> century publisher of fine books and maps,' reprint from the *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society for October 1955* (Worcester, MA, 1956), pp. 161-212.

<sup>43</sup> Remer has argued that newspapers provided steady work for printers, unlike book work which was more sporadic, and that successful newspapers provided their printers with public recognition and some degree of financial stability. This is in contrast to theories that state the primary use of provincial papers to printers was as a vehicle for advertising their other wares. For more on this argument, including that of James N. Green see Remer, *Printers and men of capital*, pp 19-24.

both patterns of development for provincial Atlantic print centres—the vital role of newspapers in publishing activity, and the ways in which governmental structures and policies could affect this development.

In order to establish a successful newspaper in a new market, several things were necessary. The first was a reliable source for production materials. Printers needed to secure a steady supply of paper to ensure the success of their venture. Many newspapers floundered as war or other external events eliminated their regular paper supply or made it prohibitively expensive. Secondly, a successful newspaper needed a market. Proprietors needed to ensure that they had a sufficient number of literate individuals with enough disposable income to sustain circulation and attract paying advertisers. Finally, newspaper proprietors needed to develop networks for distribution. These networks supplied the editor with fresh news and correspondence to fill the pages of the paper, and were a crucial means of distributing their newspaper and collecting subscription fees.

While many other factors contributed to the success or failure of provincial papers, these criteria represent both minimal requirements for a thriving newspaper and important foundations for the development of further publishing activity. Local newspapers promoted the development of other local publishing in two ways. First they provided a steady income to the printers and proprietors, allowing them to invest capital in other ventures. Secondly, the development of a newspaper paved the way for the publication of other works by identifying in advance potential markets and routes for advertisement and distribution as well as name recognition for the publisher.<sup>44</sup> This was very important, especially in communities where many items were published by subscription.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> For a further development of the newspaper networks for the circulation of books see Máire Kennedy, 'Book trade networks in the south of Ireland' in M.T. Richards (ed), *Branches of literature and music proceedings of the thirteenth seminar on the history of the provincial book trade held in Bristol, 11-13 July 1995* (Bristol, 2000), pp 25-46 and Kennedy, 'Eighteenth-century newspaper publishing in Munster and South Leinster' in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, ciii (1998), pp 67-88. Johanna Archbold also made this point with regards to periodical publications which acted in a similar fashion. See Johanna Archbold, 'Irish periodicals in their Atlantic context, 1770-1830: The monthly and quarterly

In Belfast the *Belfast News-Letter* (*B.N.L.*) was founded by Francis Joy in 1737. This was the first and the most successful paper in Belfast throughout the period 1760 to 1825. There is some evidence that James Magee ran a short-lived paper called the *Belfast Courant* in 1745, but no copies survive, and apart from this the *News-Letter* was the only paper in the town until the 1780s.<sup>46</sup> The *News-Letter* has had a unique continuity in Ireland to the present day, and large runs of the paper survive as copies of all the paper's back issues were deposited in the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge in the early nineteenth century by the publisher; the paper serves as a key primary source for eighteenth-century Belfast history.

Francis Joy, the paper's founder, has also been credited with manufacturing the first press in Ireland and founding the first paper mill in the area.<sup>47</sup> This paper mill was established in 1740 in partnership with James Magee and Samuel Wilson, both printers in Belfast. Paper supplies from France had been cut-off due to the threat of war, and local linen scraps were used to produce a low-quality paper.<sup>48</sup> These men wished to ensure a steady supply of production materials for their presses. Regular advertisements in the paper offered money to anyone who could supply rags for paper production. In 1745 Francis retired to an even larger paper mill he established near Randallstown, and the *Belfast News-Letter* was passed down to his sons Robert and Henry, and later to Robert's

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magazines of Dublin, with comparison to those of Edinburgh and Philadelphia' (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Dublin, 2008).

<sup>45</sup> Hannah Barker's work on provincial newspapers in England reminds us that a newspaper could benefit an owner's other business interests even if they were not print related, and that provincial papers were attractive business opportunities for those with entrepreneurial flair. See Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, politics, and public opinion in late eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1998).

<sup>46</sup> Reference is made to this paper in the Town Book of the Corporation of Belfast for 1745 and mentioned in Robert Munter, *A hand-list of the Irish newspapers 1685-1750* (London, 1960), p. 29. For a complete list of surviving copies of Irish newspapers see the Newsplan list available through the N.L.I.

<sup>47</sup> The story of Francis Joy's production of the first Irish press was taken from Joy's petition to parliament seeking support for his paper mill and is included in Robert Munter, *The history of the Irish newspaper 1685-1760* (Cambridge, 1967), p. 42.

<sup>48</sup> Bigger, *The Magees of Belfast*, p.1.

son Henry Jr. in 1789.<sup>49</sup> Throughout the Joy's tenure at the *News-Letter*, all of the paper was supplied by their mill at a discounted price of 13s. per ream.<sup>50</sup>

The *Belfast News-Letter* was then one of the largest and most successful provincial papers in Ireland. It was published twice weekly on Tuesdays and Fridays throughout most of the eighteenth century. The paper consisted of four pages, with the first two pages generally filled with news taken from the London and Dublin papers and the last two consisting mainly of advertisements. As a port city, Belfast received regular packets of newspapers from London and a good stream of continental and American news. In times of war reports from the battlefield usually dominated the paper, while during times of peace news concerning London society and parliament took its place. Advertisements covered a wide range of items, including shipping announcements, imported goods for sale, local fairs and races and a large number of properties for lease or purchase. The paper also served as the primary means of advertising new publications, both those sold by the Joys and by other Belfast publishers, and books published in Dublin and London, likely to interest the Ulster market. In 1760 the cost of an advertisement 'of moderate length' was 2s.2d. for the first insertion and 6 ½ d. for each continuance.<sup>51</sup> Over time these costs increased as the Irish government raised taxes on newspaper advertisements (in an effort to control the opposition press in Dublin).<sup>52</sup> The government increased the cost of newspapers in other ways as well. In 1774 the first stamp duty on newspapers became payable in Ireland, and by 1798 it had more than doubled to 2d. per issue. These costs were in turn passed along to customers. In 1750 the subscription price of the *News-Letter* for someone living in Belfast was 4s.4d. yearly, but by 1795 the cost had risen to 2 ½ d. per

<sup>49</sup> Mary McNeill, *The life and times of Mary Ann McCracken: 1770-1866 a Belfast panorama* (Dublin, 1960), pp 15-16.

<sup>50</sup> The Joys valued this paper at 14s. per ream but only charged themselves 13s. for the *News-Letters'* supplies. This discount contributed to the profitability of the paper. Henry Joy to Robert Allan, 23 January 1795 (N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/29/122).

<sup>51</sup> *B.N.L.*, 1 January, 1760.

<sup>52</sup> Brian Inglis, *The freedom of the press in Ireland 1784-1841* (London, 1954), p. 128.

issue.<sup>53</sup> As a result, and despite strong circulation figures for the *News-Letter*, which in 1788 were 1,975 and which peaked after the outbreak of war at 2,904 in 1794, advertising revenue, a crucial part of any newspaper's business, declined from £1,168 per annum in 1789 to £850 per annum in 1794.<sup>54</sup> This was one of the contributing factors to the sale of the paper by Henry Joy in 1795. Despite this decline, the *News-Letter* was still making a handsome profit of nearly £1,200 per annum in the 1790s.<sup>55</sup>

Politically, the *News-letter* was a moderate paper for most of the eighteenth century. The paper generally avoided taking strong political stances, adopting the eighteenth-century position of the printer as a neutral provider of public service. The Joys were careful to steer clear of isolating any potential subscribers, while staying on the right side of government. In the early 1780s the *News-Letter* initially supported the Volunteer movement, but by 1782 the paper began to express a more conservative line towards their activities.<sup>56</sup> This prompted the formation of the *Belfast Mercury* in 1783 as an opposition paper. The *Mercury* was published twice weekly by John Tisdall and Co., in support of the reformist policies of many Volunteer corps. During this period Dublin Castle was relatively lenient towards the opposition press, but the climate changed in 1784 because of events in Dublin. And in that year the Irish House of Commons denounced the *Mercury* for publishing certain Volunteer resolutions. Tisdall sold the paper in May of 1786 to William Magee, who changed its name to the *Belfast Evening Post*, and started issuing the paper at 6 pm on Mondays and Thursdays. Magee was attempting to take advantage of the mail times, which arrived at 8 am on Mondays and Thursdays, to supply the citizens of

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<sup>53</sup> *B.N.L.*, 22 May 1750.

<sup>54</sup> A. Aspinall, *Politics and the press c. 1780-1850* (London, 1949), pp 110-112; John Robertson and Robert Allen to Edward Cooke, 23 March 1797 (N.A. I., Rebellion Papers, 620/29/122). For a description of the importance of advertising revenue to newspaper proprietors see Steffen, 'Newspapers for Free,' pp 381-419.

<sup>55</sup> Summary of accounts relative to the sale of the *Belfast News-Letter* in a letter from Henry Joy to Robert Allan, 23 January 1795 (N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/29/122).

<sup>56</sup> Inglis, *The freedom of the press*, p 22.

Belfast with the latest news the day before the *News-Letter* was published. The *Evening Post* ran for thirty weeks before eventually closing down.<sup>57</sup>

Over the next ten years the *News-Letter* editors found it increasingly difficult to maintain a moderate line. As Martha McTier said 'these are not times a man can sit between two stools.'<sup>58</sup> The Irish government was cracking down on the opposition press through stricter press laws and increased litigation. Yet, portions of the Belfast public were seeking a progressively more liberal press. This is similar to developments traced in the United States by Jeffrey Pasley who noted that 'printers first became political professionals more or less against their will during the 1790s, as the printing trade's traditionally neutral approach became increasingly unsustainable in the overheated and polarized political atmosphere.'<sup>59</sup> In January 1792, the *Northern Star* was founded, and its immediate success testified to the untapped demand for a more vibrant oppositional press in Belfast.<sup>60</sup> Discomfited by the *Star's* success and facing greater competition for subscribers and increased political pressure, the Joys began looking to sell the *News-Letter* in 1795. Two publishers from Edinburgh, Robert Allen and John Robertson, purchased the paper for £3,000. They set up George Gordon, another Scotsman, as editor with a salary of £200 per annum and a share of the profits.<sup>61</sup>

In the face of competition from the *Northern Star*, Gordon was unable to check the decline in revenue and subscriptions for the *News-Letter*. In 1796, he sought out Edward Cooke, the Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle, to offer the paper's services to government,

<sup>57</sup> A. Albert Campbell, *Belfast Newspapers, Past and Present* (Belfast, 1921), pp 2-3.

<sup>58</sup> Martha McTier to William Drennan, 17 March 1794 in *The Drennan-McTier letters*, i, p. 493.

<sup>59</sup> Pasley, 'The tyranny of printers,' p. 22.

<sup>60</sup> John Gray provides an excellent comparison of the political slant of the coverage of public debates in 1792 between the *News-Letter* and the *Northern Star*. See John Gray, 'Reporting the great Belfast debates of 1792' in *The Linen Hall Review*, ix, no. 1 (Spring, 1992), pp 4-8.

<sup>61</sup> There is some confusion over the price the Joy's received for ownership of the *News-Letter*. In a letter to Allan and Robertson Joy asked for £4,000, but Allan and Robertson only reported to the government paying £3,000 for the paper. Henry Joy added further confusion by later recording that he received £5,000 for the paper in his manuscript notes on the Annals of Ulster, which are in the L.H.L. Inglis, *The freedom of the press*, p. 69; Aspinall, *Politics and the press*, pp 110-112; Henry Joy to Robert Allan, 23 January 1795 (N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/29/122).

something which chimed with his personal politics.<sup>62</sup> Gordon used the *News-Letter* to support the government line in exchange for monetary assistance and the placement of government proclamations in the paper, which ran as tax-free advertisements and served as a way for the government to support friendly newspapers. The *News-Letter* received a payment of £200 yearly until at least 1803, and some evidence suggests that further payments were made in 1819, 1823, 1824, and 1825.<sup>63</sup> These payments ensured that the *News-Letter* supported government policies and politics, which theoretically protected the editors from harassment by government authorities. Gordon, however, managed to simultaneously estrange the populace of Belfast and irritate the government. In 1796, under pressure from the military commander-in-chief in Ulster, he published what amounted to a general condemnation of the behavior of the citizens of Belfast. According to Gordon, this resulted in ‘not only the greater part of the inhabitants withdrawing their subscriptions, but by an almost general resolution of withholding their advertisements, upon which last the very existence of the paper depends.’<sup>64</sup> Gordon published an apology where he laid the blame for the publication on the local commander, Colonel Barber. This appeared to the government like breach of contract with the commander, though Gordon insisted the commander had given his permission to print his name. In the polarized atmosphere of the time Gordon was forced to flee Belfast, and eventually Ireland altogether.<sup>65</sup> After 1797, when the *Northern Star* office was destroyed, the *News-Letter* became once again the sole paper in Belfast, which ensured its survival, despite its more conservative politics and murky financing. The paper remained a conservative publication throughout the nineteenth century, though it did eventually regain some of its independence from Government.

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<sup>62</sup> George Gordon to Edward Cooke, 16 September 1796 (N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/25/70).

<sup>63</sup> Correspondence between George Gordon and Edward Cooke can be found in (N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/28/39, 620/25/70, 620/26/78); Aspinall, *Politics and the press*, p. 121.

<sup>64</sup> George Gordon to Edward Cooke, 25 November 1796 (N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/26/78).

<sup>65</sup> Inglis, *The freedom of the press*, pp 69-71; John Robertson and Robert Allan to Edward Cooke, 23 March 1797 (N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/29/122).

The *Northern Star* represents a unique example of newspaper publishing in Belfast. The paper was established with a view to support liberal political principles and to act as an alternative voice in Belfast's politics. The paper also acted to support the beliefs of the Society of United Irishmen, which was founded in Belfast in 1791.<sup>66</sup> The first edition stated the aims of the paper. First, they wished to support the freedom of the press through competition, by offering Ulster readers an alternative to the *News-Letter*. Secondly, the paper was to support several political aims, firstly parliamentary reform in Ireland, the uniting of all Irishmen irrespective of religion, and the provision of 'faithful intelligence' respecting both domestic political news and international affairs.<sup>67</sup> Throughout the life of the publication, coverage of the French Revolution was a major feature in nearly every issue. Because of the radical political nature of this paper, a great amount of modern research has been done on it, both as a literary and a political organ, so the aim here is only to provide a brief discussion as to how the paper operated and how it changed the print world of Belfast.<sup>68</sup>

The *Northern Star* was founded corporately by the creation of shares at £50, sold to raise the initial capital of £2,000. Twelve men purchased at least one share, but Samuel Neilson who purchased a total of thirteen shares was the largest shareholder and first editor of the paper.<sup>69</sup> Other shareholders included William Magee, printer, William Tennent, a merchant, John Rabb, a clerk, Robert Caldwell, a banker, Gilbert M'Ilveen, a linen draper, William M'Cleery, a tanner, John Hazlitt, a woollen draper, and John Boyle, William and Robert Simms, and Henry Hazlitt, merchants. This corporate ownership structure, which

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<sup>66</sup> Though most scholars on the *Northern Star* have followed the lead of R.R. Madden, Brian Inglis and others who have assumed that its only purpose was to act as the propaganda arm of the Belfast radicals, a closer examination of the paper as a business reveals a much more nuanced picture, one in which at least initially, politics and profit were carefully balanced.

<sup>67</sup> *N.S.*, 4 January 1792.

<sup>68</sup> For further work on the *N.S.* see Curtin, *The United Irishmen*; John Gray, 'A tale of two newspapers: the contest between the *Belfast News-Letter* and the *Northern Star* in the 1790s' in John Gray & Wesley McCann (eds), *An uncommon bookman: essays in memory of J.R.R. Adams* (Belfast, 1996), pp 175-192; Brian MacDonald, 'South Ulster in the age of the United Irishmen' in Bartlett, Dickson, Keogh & Whelan (eds), 1798, pp 226-242.

<sup>69</sup> Campbell, *Belfast Newspapers*, p. 4.

was used by subsequent radical papers like *The Press* in Dublin, allowed the paper to continue publication even as consecutive editors were imprisoned by government authorities, but it also provided a less risky way for individuals to invest in the business and generated the initial capital needed to finance the establishment.<sup>70</sup>

The paper very quickly fulfilled its initial aim of developing competition among the presses in Belfast. Distribution of the *Star* quickly reached that of the *News-Letter* and then surpassed it. Prior to publishing the first issue, the owners sent proposals throughout the countryside to gauge demand and begin establishing distribution networks. The owners asked for the names of gentlemen in the neighborhood interested in subscribing to a second paper, along with assistance in receiving subscriptions and generally acting as an agent for the paper.<sup>71</sup> They also secured a document with 134 signatures from local Belfast businessmen, who agreed to give equal advertising to their paper.<sup>72</sup> At the height of the paper, circulation was estimated at 4,000 copies per issue distributed throughout Ireland.<sup>73</sup>

As the slow decline of the *News-Letter* attested, the *Star* provided competition within the local markets for both readers and advertising revenue. While the *News-Letter* continued to carry several pages of advertisements per issue, they lost a number of major advertisers to the *Star*. One of the largest was William Magee. As one of the *Star*'s proprietors, Magee immediately transferred his publishing advertisements to the *Star*, only maintaining advertisements for his lottery and occasionally giving notice of a publication in the *News-Letter*. In January 1792 Magee advertised his publication of William Todd Jones' *A Letter to the Societies of United Irishmen of the town by Belfast*, selling for 1s.1d., in the *Star*.<sup>74</sup> This was an important local work, published serially in the *Star*, and generating multiple published rebuttals. This item was never advertised in the *News-*

<sup>70</sup> For English examples of this type of funding structure see Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, politics, and public opinion in late eighteenth-century England* (Oxford, 1998), pp 107-125.

<sup>71</sup> Letters received in response to this circular (N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/19/42/1-53).

<sup>72</sup> *B.N.L.*, 30 December 1791 to 3 January 1792.

<sup>73</sup> Inglis, *The freedom of the press*, p. 93.

<sup>74</sup> *N.S.*, 8 to 11 January 1792; David Miller, 'Radicalism and ritual in east Ulster' in Bartlett, Dickson, Keogh & Whelan (eds), 1798, pp 195-211.

*Letter*, though it was mentioned as local intelligence. Not only did Magee transfer his lucrative advertisements to the *Star*, but as one of the principal booksellers in Belfast, he led the way for other publishers to follow his lead. In the issue after Magee's advertisement for Jones' *Letter*, William Mitchell advertised his edition of the same for 2s.2d. In the following issue Magee again inserted his advertisement this time raising his price to 2s.2d. The majority of advertisements for publications sold by local booksellers appeared in the *Star*, while the *News-Letter* did have occasional local advertisements for items such as almanacs and school books; most of the publications they advertised were Dublin publications that did not name specific Belfast booksellers. This may also have been due in part to the political nature of many of the ephemeral publications of the time, which would not have been consistent with the more conservative tone of the *News-Letter*. An example was Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man, part II*, which was advertised extensively in the *Star* in keeping with their support of Jacobin principles but not at all in the *News-Letter*.

Despite the paper's popularity among readers, the 'liberal and tolerant' principles supported by its editors were increasingly offensive to government.<sup>75</sup> The Irish authorities employed various methods in an attempt to shut down the paper. The first was through the Stamp Office. Stamped paper for publication was a necessity and newspaper proprietors needed to register with the office. Stamped paper could only be collected by a registered proprietor of the paper. This was a condition used by government to ensure that papers could not continue publication if their proprietors were imprisoned. However the *Star*'s structure of corporate ownership allowed the paper to continue publication even as sequential editors were imprisoned by government authorities. Samuel Neilson was arrested in 1796 while in Dublin, and the Simms brothers took over his duties as editor

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<sup>75</sup> *N.S.*, 11 to 14 January 1792.

until they too were arrested in 1797 and replaced by Thomas Corbett.<sup>76</sup> The Stamp Office also tried to withhold or delay deliveries of stamped paper. The *Star* simply produced editions on unstamped paper, running an advertisement such as the following:

The paper upon which this day's publication is printed, is such as we purpose always to print upon; and none being stamped, for sale here of an equal size or quality- and our own stamps not having yet arrived from the head office in Dublin- we are obliged to use unstamped Paper; which shall be duly accounted for upon oath.<sup>77</sup>

However since the government's efforts at both litigation and interference failed to discontinue the publication of the *Northern Star*, pro-government supporters used force as a means of silencing the paper. A total of three governmental raids took place on the *Star's* office. The second raid, by Colonel Barber in February 1797, led to the arrest of the Simms brothers and the seizure of the paper's type in an effort to halt publication permanently. However within a few months Thomas Corbett, without stamped paper and using inferior press and type, began issuing further editions of the *Star*. On 19 May 1797 the Monaghan Yeomanry forces entered the paper's office for the third time. This time, instead of merely creating havoc, they sought to end the *Northern Star*. General Gerard Lake, commander of the forces in Ulster, described the incident in a letter to Brigadier-General John Knox.

I have extreme satisfaction in telling you that upon my return in the town after an absence of four hours, I found that the Monaghan Regt. in consequence of the printer of the Northern Star having refused to insert their resolution in that paper they had attacked the office, destroyed its types, press etc. but unluckily before they had completed their business, Col. Leslie arrived and took them to the barracks- but as luck would have it the moment they were gone the recruits of the Artillery with some of the old hands rushed into the place and did lay about them most lustily and almost wholly demolished the whole of the Machine.<sup>78</sup>

The tone of the letter clearly conveyed the commander's feelings regarding the unauthorized actions of the troops. Brian Inglis described this event as an unplanned act of

<sup>76</sup> Inglis, *Freedom of the press*, p.96; William and Robert Simms to Edward Cooke, 7 February 1797 (N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/28/233).

<sup>77</sup> *N.S.*, 4 January 1792.

<sup>78</sup> General Lake to Brigadier-General Knox, 21 May 1797 (N.L.I., MS 56, Letter 79).

self-preservation on the part of government and its allies. None of the troops were ever punished for the incident, despite admittance by the Irish Chief Secretary that the raid was an outrage. This incident with the *Northern Star* shows how the Irish government condoned the use of force to shut down opposition papers after legal sanctions had failed.<sup>79</sup>

1797 marked the end for the *Northern Star* and also the beginning of a long period of stagnation for Belfast's newspapers. The *News-Letter* was again the only operational paper until 1805 when the *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* was founded. Unlike the situation in Baltimore, political turmoil and official harassment severely contracted the growth of the press in Belfast during a period when both population and industry were growing. The large circulation figures of the *Star* and the *News-Letter* attest to the potential market within the hinterland for newspapers and the successful regional distribution networks already established by the various publishers. It was not bad business or market saturation that stunted the growth of the Belfast newspaper activity, but government systems of suppression and control. Several unsuccessful attempts were made to form new papers in Belfast after 1798. Both John Dogherty and one of the Simms brothers attempted to establish new opposition papers in Belfast in the few years after the *Star* had been shut down. However government officials, warned of incoming applications to the Stamp Office by John Robertson an owner of the *News-Letter*, refused all such applications.<sup>80</sup> This check on newspaper development helps explain the differences in the number of papers in operation in the nineteenth century between Baltimore and Belfast and may also help explain why Baltimore developed a more vibrant publishing industry, since competition in periodical publications was a building block for other publishing activities.

It took more than twenty years from the suppression of the *Northern Star* for Belfast to secure another political newspaper. In the first few decades of the nineteenth

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<sup>79</sup> Inglis, *Freedom of the press*, p. 92.

<sup>80</sup> John Robertson to John Lees, 5 April 1803 (N.A.I., Rebellion Papers, 620/66/232); also Aspinall, *Politics and the press*, p. 61.

century all of the new periodicals were strictly commercial publications, appealing to mercantile audiences. In 1805 the *Belfast Commercial Chronicle* was founded by Tom Whinnery the postmaster and James Blow a bookseller; who supplied the paper from his mill. The paper was politically neutral and dealt mainly with commercial news, and ran successfully until 1850. Drummond Anderson was the original printer, and eventually came to be both the paper's editor and proprietor. The *Commercial Chronicle*, took advantage of Whinnery's position as postmaster, to secure privileged access to incoming news and distribution routes, giving it an edge over its competitors.<sup>81</sup> Another commercial paper, *Taggart's Mercantile Journal*, was founded in 1816 by Francis Taggart, a notary public, and Hugh Gordon, a printer. This paper again dealt mostly in commercial news and was published three times weekly until 1821. Finally the *Belfast Mercantile Register* was founded in 1822 to fill the gap left by Taggart's paper. The *Register* was only published once a week, but it became the recognized organ for the Irish linen and grain trades. It continued successfully into the 1890s.<sup>82</sup>

It is only towards the end of the period in question that political journals once again began appearing in Belfast. In 1819 John Lawless founded the *Irishman*, with the support and backing of several 'advanced reformers' in Belfast.<sup>83</sup> Both Lawless and the paper engaged in almost constant controversy, for it openly supported Catholic emancipation. The paper was short lived and Lawless left Belfast for Dublin where he helped to organize the Catholic Association and continued his political career. However the *Irishman* was quickly followed by *The Northern Whig* in 1824, printed by Francis Dalzell Finlay, another radical who supported Catholic emancipation, and edited by a man named Peterkin.<sup>84</sup> This

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<sup>81</sup> For a discussion of the Irish mail routes and their development see Mairead Reynolds, *A history of the Irish Post Office* (Dublin, 1983).

<sup>82</sup> Campbell, *Belfast newspapers*, pp 5-7.

<sup>83</sup> Wright has suggested that William Drennan and the Tennents provided money to support Lawless, who in turn vocally supported the reform agenda. Wright, 'The natural leaders,' p. 102.

<sup>84</sup> John Barkley, 'Belfast Newspapers' in *PACE*, vi, no. 1 (Spring 1974), pp 3-6.

paper was better funded and well edited, a small eight pages long and sold for 6 ½ d.<sup>85</sup> *The Northern Whig*, was a popular reform-minded journal, and it lasted until the 1960s.

By the early 1820s, Belfast politics had undergone a change: radicals from the 1790s were either gone or mellowed with age, and a new generation of liberal Whigs, which Jonathan Wright has labelled ‘advanced reformers,’ had replaced them. These middle-class groups existed side-by-side with a growing population dependent on wage-labour within the town’s industries and with stalwart conservatives. Throughout all this the *Belfast News-Letter* operated as the primary newspaper for the town, which after its period of government support, continued to operate from a conservative but independent standpoint.

In Baltimore, newspaper production started much later, but without many of the imposed restraints and government controls found in Belfast it grew quickly and flourished. As in Belfast, newspaper production in America served as a building block for the print community. Experience in the newspaper business allowed printers and publishers to build-up capital, experience and markets. In Baltimore, the same efforts to secure paper supplies, markets and distribution networks can be seen amid the fierce competition between publications.

In August 1773, using the Hasselbach press, William Goddard published the first issue of the *Maryland Journal and Baltimore Advertiser* (*M.J.B.A.*), the first newspaper in Baltimore.<sup>86</sup> In his opening letter to the public, Goddard apologized for the delay in publication (the prospectus had been issued in October 1772), and laid out his plan for publication. He planned to establish a special post from Philadelphia on Monday mornings, enabling him to print all the latest news from the Philadelphia, New York and Connecticut papers, as well as foreign news from the British and Irish papers. He hoped to have his paper published and distributed to Baltimore, Annapolis and the lower counties of

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<sup>85</sup> Campbell, *Belfast newspapers*, p. 7.

<sup>86</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 20 August 1772.

Maryland before the King's post arrived on Thursday. He attempted to corner the market through the establishment of reliable distribution networks for both incoming news and outgoing papers. In 1773 this was not hard to do, given that his was the only newspaper outside of Annapolis, but that situation did not last for long. In 1774 Goddard left the paper in the very capable hands of his sister Mary Katherine in order to work towards the establishment of what would become the United States post office, which came out of his attempts to develop these post routes from Philadelphia for the *Maryland Journal*.<sup>87</sup>

Mary Katherine steered the paper through the difficult period of the American Revolution. As with all successful papers of the period, the *Maryland Journal* was a republican paper and an important hub for the distribution of news throughout the Baltimore hinterland.<sup>88</sup> It was published weekly, and eventually twice a week at the price of 10s. per annum.<sup>89</sup> The paper was generally four pages long, but varied throughout the revolutionary period as breaking news and paper shortages forced its extension or contraction. The first issue of the paper announced that the editor would publish any contribution that was in favour of liberty and the rights of mankind, provided that the language was decent.<sup>90</sup> Mary Katherine's role as postmistress of Baltimore allowed her to receive the latest news first, since any newspapers could be sent free through the mails as part of an exchange network. This provided a ready-made distribution network to other major towns and cities, and allowed her privileged access to private networks of communication. As with most of the Baltimore papers, distribution was focused within the western counties of Maryland and central Pennsylvania in wheat-producing communities, which maintained close ties to Baltimore where their products were shipped to for processing and distribution.<sup>91</sup> The *Maryland Journal* ran until 1797, when stiff local

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<sup>87</sup> Wheeler, *The Maryland press*, p.2.

<sup>88</sup> Pasley, *The tyranny of the printers*, p.36.

<sup>89</sup> Hudak, *Early American women printers*, p. 324.

<sup>90</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 20 August 1772.

<sup>91</sup> Wheeler, *The Maryland press*, p. 57; James Weston Livingood, *The Philadelphia-Baltimore trade rivalry 1780-1860* (New York, 1970), p.15.

competition and fire damage forced the paper to close. The Goddard siblings were the primary owners and operators until 1793 when William sold the paper to James Angell. However Goddard had taken on several successive partners over the years, a feature of many of the Baltimore papers; these included Eleazer Oswald, Edward Langworthy, and finally James Angell.

In 1775, John Dunlap had started the second paper in Baltimore, *Dunlap's Maryland Gazette*, which became the *Maryland Gazette and Baltimore Advertiser* in 1778, when it was sold to James Hayes Jr. The paper cost 10s. per annum and was published weekly. It operated for four years, until the paper shortage caused by the war forced it to suspend publication. Dunlap received his paper from a mill near Philadelphia, where he had previously operated the *Pennsylvania Packet*, but Hayes lacked this dedicated paper supply and could not maintain a steady stream during the difficult war years; the paper was discontinued. Mary Katherine, thanks to the Elkridge paper mill, was the only editor able to maintain a steady publication schedule and the *Maryland Journal* was the only paper in Baltimore until 1783 when the *Maryland Gazette* was revived by John Hayes, who offered Goddard steady competition until 1792. Since Baltimore was never occupied by either army during the war, newspaper publication was relatively free from disruptions, and patriot papers were able to operate throughout.<sup>92</sup> For Baltimore the revolutionary period was one of continuation and not of radical change for the print producers in the community. The only other newspaper in Baltimore prior to the 1790s was a German language paper printed by Henry Dulheuer in 1786, of which no copies survive.<sup>93</sup>

The 1790s saw an explosion of newspapers across America with an increase of 180 per cent over the previous decade, and Baltimore was no exception.<sup>94</sup> Republican rhetoric valued the dissemination of knowledge through the press and federal legislation, instead of

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<sup>92</sup> For Baltimore's printers paper supply was the most persistent hurdle to production throughout the war.

<sup>93</sup> Clarence S. Brigham, *History and bibliography of American newspapers 1690-1820*, 2 vols (Worcester, MA, 1947), pp 218-251.

<sup>94</sup> Pasley, *The tyranny of printers*, p. 405.

hindering the growth of the press as in Belfast, enabled it. All newspapers were entitled to send copies through the post free of charge to other newspaper offices, and no copyright applied to periodical publications which were considered too ephemeral. This ensured that newspaper editors always had a ready supply of material from other American papers freely and regularly delivered, and this could be copied without any difficulty. Threats of the imposition of a tax on the carriage of newspapers in the mail in 1792 led to cries of tyranny and to comparisons with the hated British stamp tax by editors across the country. One anonymous writer in the *Maryland Journal* stated that ‘the liberty of the press is the grand palladium of our political freedom’ and this tax was a block to that freedom, demonstrating how closely the concept of the free circulation of information through newspapers was linked to wider republican ideals.<sup>95</sup> The absence of stamp or advertisement duties or bonds of registration in Maryland also encouraged printers and publishers to start new papers as they were guaranteed any profits and did not need large amounts of start-up capital. Finally, most state constitutions guaranteed the freedom of press, even before it was added to the federal constitution.<sup>96</sup>

These newspapers went a long way towards creating a sense of regional and national space within the minds of their readers. The newspaper exchange system allowed for news to be passed well beyond the bounds of a particular paper’s distribution network, and for provincial readers to place themselves within a larger transatlantic geography. An advertisement for positions at St. John’s College in Annapolis printed in the *Maryland Journal* asked editors of other papers to reprint the advertisement in their own papers.<sup>97</sup> Here Charles Carroll, by seeking applicants from further afield, was giving voice to what may have been a very common assumption regarding the ability of newspapers to reach regional and even national audiences, even if only through select reprinting.

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<sup>95</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 31 January 1792.

<sup>96</sup> Warner, *Letters of the republic*, pp 124-127; see also Frank Luther Mott, *American journalism a history: 1690-1960*, 3rd edition (New York, 1962), pp 71-161.

<sup>97</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 24 February 1792.

Advertisements for publications in the Baltimore paper from at least the 1790s suggest that strong ties linked Baltimore with Philadelphia, and occasionally with New York or Boston, supporting the idea of a regional if not national sense of identity. Finally, David Waldsteicher reminds us that American slave owners regularly used newspapers to cover large portions of the country when looking to retrieve runaway slaves.<sup>98</sup> Since even the smallest provincial paper regularly contained news from the major Atlantic cities, as well as various other European ports, it is not unrealistic to think that the mental geography of eighteenth-century newspaper readers in Baltimore and Belfast spread itself well beyond their regional centres, fostering an Atlantic perspective.

Within Baltimore the surge of newspaper production in the 1790s amounted to sixteen new papers established within the decade. Most of these were short lived, and many represent multiple attempts by the same printers or publisher. The *Daily Repository* founded in 1791 by David Graham is a typical example. In 1793 Graham took on partners Leonard Yundt, printer, and William Patton, bookseller. Sometime in the same year Graham's name was dropped from the paper and Yundt and Patton renamed the paper the *Daily Intelligencer*. In October 1794, the paper was given new numbering and continued by Yundt and Matthew Brown printer as the *Federal Intelligencer* until 1796 when it was again changed to the *Federal Gazette* still under Yundt and Brown. The *Federal Gazette* continued until after the end of our period, but changed hands at least twice before 1820. From 1807 it was printed and published by John Hewes, and after 1813 it was edited and owned by William Gwynn, an attorney.<sup>99</sup> Though this was a long lived example it is fairly typical of the Baltimore newspapers of the period, which tended to go through several hands and multiple manifestations in a relatively short period of time.

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<sup>98</sup> David Waldsteicher, 'Reading the runaways: self-fashioning, print culture, and confidence in slavery in the eighteenth-century mid-Atlantic' in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, third series, lvi, no. 2 (April, 1999), pp 243-272.

<sup>99</sup> Brigham, *History and bibliography of American newspapers*, pp 218-251.

By the early decades of the nineteenth century Baltimore maintained a wide selection of newspapers, ranging from commercial daily papers to weekly political and literary journals. Political controversies could see the development of competing papers within a very short period of time, such as the *People's Friend*, a federalist paper printed by the owners of the *Federal Republican*, and the *People's Advocate*, a democratic paper, both of which were only published for a short period surrounding the presidential election in 1816. Other characteristics of the early nineteenth-century Baltimore papers include separate country editions of a paper, and a general separation of the roles of editor and printer. Many of the daily newspapers published country editions which were issued either weekly or twice-weekly for the customers outside of town. These editions, comprising compilations of the week's issues, could be sold cheaply and generated a respectable profit for the owners. Before the 1830s editing was considered a somewhat gentlemanly pursuit rather than a professional career.<sup>100</sup> As newspapers became more closely divided along party lines, the role of the editor became increasingly important in projecting a paper's message. By 1800 editing was also already becoming separated from the role of print production. Paul Allen, poet and member of the Delphian Club was, along with Alexander Hanson and Benjamin Edes, owner of the *Federal Republican* and the *Baltimore Telegraph*, which Allen edited from 1816. Allen also edited the *Journal of the Times*, a magazine published from 1818 to 1819, and printed and owned by Thomas Maund and Frederick G. Schaeffer. This later became the *Morning Chronicle* which was produced by the same printers and edited by Allen.<sup>101</sup> Another development evidenced within this newspaper surge of the 1790s was a gradual specialization among the newspaper industry. Printers who produced newspapers gradually distinguished themselves from ones who printed books, as expanded production and greater competition in the early republican period made specialization possible. Once the American book trades had developed to a

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<sup>100</sup> Hayes, *Poe and the printed word*, p. 38.

<sup>101</sup> Silver, 'The Baltimore book trade, 1800-1825 Part II,' p. 123.

certain point, publishing a newspaper was no longer necessary to advance a successful career, and book publishing and job printing each evolved in separate ways.

Despite the proliferation of newspapers in Baltimore, several papers were able to establish long-term success within the market after the demise of the *Maryland Journal* in 1797. One of these was the *Federal Gazette* mentioned above, which in its various manifestations operated from 1793 to beyond 1825. Another was the *American*, first established by Alexander Martin in 1799, which continued throughout the period and was the leading commercial paper in Baltimore. The *American* was published daily except for a period in 1814 when British forces occupied Baltimore, when the paper was only published intermittently. These papers found a steady demand among Baltimore's reading public even in the face of abundant competition.

The development of distribution networks, paper supplies and markets for newspapers in these communities benefited not only their proprietors, but opened new possibilities for additional publication which was further spurred on by competition between newspaper printers. Despite the fact that newspaper and book publication separated in this period, newspapers expanded the market for printed goods and opened new markets of readers through distribution and advertising.

Baltimore serves to highlight the huge impact that government policies had on the book trades. In 1790 the populations of the two towns were very close, around 18,000. Yet the abundance of newspapers within Baltimore and the complete devastation of Belfast's newspaper trades offer startling contrasts. What impact then did the stagnation of the newspaper trade have on Belfast's print culture? The revenue from newspaper publication supported a large number of printers in Baltimore, in the same way that jobbing work also supplemented the income from printing more substantial texts. The newspaper industry also facilitated the separation of the roles of printer and publisher within Baltimore, which began in the 1790s. Though the *Northern Star* was an early Belfast

example of the separation between printer, editor, and proprietors, it was an unusual one. Within Baltimore, market forces were allowed to hold sway, and this competition led to a diverse selection of periodicals within the town. This was aided by a sense of republican entitlement to the news wide-spread among Americans. In Belfast, government intervention stunted the growth of the periodical industry within the town, slowing development and allowing publications from London and Dublin, or other provincial papers to fill the market that Belfast publications had developed. Without the essential building blocks of local newspapers, the book trades were handicapped in trying to stimulate other publishing enterprises. This can be put forward as a partial explanation as to why Baltimore's publishing industry developed to a much greater degree than that of Belfast in the first few decades of the nineteenth century. A second explanation, for the differing patterns of development can be found in the evolution of copyright legislation in each jurisdiction.

## Chapter 5 Copyright and Local Production

The production of texts within a particular community is a function of several factors. What is produced depends not only on the personalities of the individuals involved in the trade and the resources available, but also on demands made by local readers and on structural factors such as copyright laws and taxes. While the previous chapter has addressed the question of who was involved in the local print trades and examined some issues of resources, this chapter will focus on the texts produced within these communities and how issues of taste and demand affected production. What types of texts were produced, how many and why? It will also explore the issue of copyright, and how the legal ownership of texts changed in each location over the period of study.

### Copyright

Copyright legislation is one of several regulatory factors that affected publishing in these towns. In both locations copyright changed drastically over the period of study, and each country had significant watershed moments where the status of copyright was transformed. In order to get a sense of how this impacted on the local publishing environment it is helpful to trace the state of copyright over time. Copyright law in Great Britain provided a background to the developments in both Ireland and America; as a result understanding the English system of copyright is key to establishing how these provincial towns may have deviated or conformed to that prevailing regime.

Throughout the period of study printers across Great Britain operated under the copyright act of 1710 entitled an ‘Act for the Encouragement of Learning.’<sup>1</sup> This act rectified the lapse of the previous copyright act (in 1695) and attempted to bring English and Scottish copyright under the same regulatory system. Legally copyright was valid for a period of fourteen years, renewable for an additional fourteen years. In practice the law

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<sup>1</sup>1710 8 Anne c.19, G.B.; in force 10 April 1710.

was a continuation of the status quo, which supported the maintenance of a system of perpetual copyright predominantly held in the hands of London printers and publishers. Through both official copyright registration and the restrictive trade practices enforced by certain portions of the London publishing trade the rights to many texts were strictly controlled well-beyond the period granted by the letter of the law. In Scotland, where a tradition of more limited copyright had existed prior to 1710, publishers more closely followed the letter of the law, especially when it enabled them to take advantage of demand for publications to which the London publishers still claimed copyright.<sup>2</sup>

In 1739 the Importation Act was passed in Great Britain, which prevented the importation of any title into Great Britain that had been printed or reprinted there in the previous twenty years. While this act only restricted the importation of texts still under copyright, its implementation practically restricted all Irish imports. The 1710 act was never extended to cover Ireland, nor was there any parallel Irish act, and Irish printers were free to publish items even if it was still under copyright in Great Britain. Some courtesies of the trade were practiced in Dublin, but for all intents and purposes there was no copyright law in Ireland until 1801. However, the 1739 Importation Act stopped the increasing traffic of books from Ireland into Great Britain and limited the market for Irish prints to domestic sales, and eventually exports to North America. While there is some evidence for the continued smuggling of Irish texts into Great Britain, it is difficult to know the extent of this trade.<sup>3</sup>

After a long series of legal cases, over the issue of copyright in Britain, in 1774 a legal case brought by Scottish publishers culminated in a ruling which declared that

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<sup>2</sup> For more details on the development of copyright in the Great Britain see John Feather, *Publishing, piracy and politics: an historical study of copyright in Britain* (London, 1994); Adrian Johns, *Piracy the intellectual property wars from Gutenberg to Gates* (Chicago, 2009); Hugh Amory, "'De Facto Copyright'? Fielding's *Works in Partnership, 1769-1821*" in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, xvii, no. 4 (Summer, 1984), pp 449-476.

<sup>3</sup> Pollard asserts that the extent of book smuggling into Britain must have been small due to the relatively low numbers of seizures by British customs. However this point is disputed by Richard Sher who uses evidence of Irish reprints of Scottish Enlightenment texts, found in Britain as evidence that Pollard 'may have erred.' Sher does however reaffirm the statement that most Irish publications were probably aimed at an Irish market, and not solely produced for export, *The Enlightenment and the book*, pp 466-467; Pollard, *Dublin's trade in books*, p. 81.

perpetual copyright did not exist and that the 1710 act should be enforced as it was written. Though the case originated in Scotland, and Scotland and England maintained separate legal systems, a vote in the united House of Lords ensured that this ruling was reinforced in England. Effectively, this resulted in the enforcement of the 1710 act, which generally meant that most new publications were granted a period of copyright protection from fourteen to twenty-eight years throughout Britain. Many older publications, whose de facto copyright the London book industry had claimed, became freely available on the open market, resulting in a flood of cheaper versions of classic texts and a general lowering of book prices. London publishers quickly issued new versions of older texts featuring some revisions or additions, which enabled them to claim a new copyright, thereby reasserting their monopoly over textual production. This represents what was otherwise a fairly closed system with a tradition of perpetual copyright.<sup>4</sup>

In 1814 a further copyright act officially extended copyright in the United Kingdom to twenty-eight years on new publications or the lifetime of the author.<sup>5</sup> This act lasted until the 1840s, when a period of post-mortem copyright for authors was introduced. For the major part of the period under study, copyright in Great Britain was effectively a period of twenty-eight years on new publications. The London printers and publishers continued to own most legal copyright in Great Britain, and they were successful in finding ways to extend their control beyond the strict limits of the law.

As mentioned above, with the expiration of the copyright act in 1695, no copyright existed in Ireland until after the Act of Union between Ireland and Great Britain in 1801, when the new united parliament passed a specific copyright law for Ireland, which brought it into line with the situation in Great Britain. However this is not to say that no restrictions existed on publications before then. Publication of texts in Ireland was restricted in several ways. First, production was restricted through courtesies of the trade which were practiced

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<sup>4</sup> St. Clair, *The reading nation in the romantic period*, pp 115-121.

<sup>5</sup> 1814 54 George III c. 156, U.K.

among Dublin publishers. Within Dublin, the first publisher to advertise a publication by announcing it through the press or hanging a title page for display, claimed a sort of copyright within Dublin. To do this, Irish printers had to secure a copy of either the finished text or proofs from the London printers and then advertise his or her intent to publish the work in Dublin. Text copies were obtained through a wide range of methods. George Faulkner, Jonathan Swift's publisher in Ireland, had a cordial relationship with several British authors and publishers who provided him with copies of their texts in order to produce an Irish edition.<sup>6</sup> However not all Irish printers were as fastidious as Faulkner and, as London publishers were quick to point out, very often advance copies of books were obtained illegally by bribes or through outright theft, all in an effort to secure the first copy of a new publication thereby securing the Irish 'copyright' and cornering the market in Dublin for a particular publication.

However, in Dublin the courtesies of the trade were based on professional respect and on the enforcement of rules through the trade guild, so while generally they functioned well they could break down. Faulkner again provides evidence of this situation. In July 1767 he wrote to Charles O'Connor about a piracy that had been committed against him. Another printer had issued an edition of his *Universal History* to which Faulkner had secured the Irish 'copyright' in accordance with the traditions of the trade.<sup>7</sup> Faulkner had already invested considerable sums in securing a text copy and had started production of a folio edition of the work. O'Connor suggested that Faulkner urge his many friends in parliament to take up the issue of copyright, for without a law prohibiting this type of publishing activity there was nothing that could be done to protect Faulkner's investment in his edition. This incident revealed, in the breakdown of regular trade practices, both how

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<sup>6</sup> This type of relationship provided some advantages to both sides. Faulkner had access to early copies of new publications and could claim the right to publish within the Irish market, and in exchange he provided monetary compensation to British authors and publishers in addition to giving them a measure of control over the potential Dublin editions. Further details of Faulkner's relationship with various authors are available in Robert E. Ward (ed), *Prince of Dublin printers: the letters of George Faulkner* (Lexington, KY, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> Faulkner discussed this piracy in his paper the *Dublin Journal*, 17-20 June 1767; Charles O'Connor to George Faulkner, 10 July 1767 in Ward (ed), *Prince of Dublin printers*, p. 93.

the Irish system should have worked and what happened when it did not. This also clearly demonstrates that British copyright meant little or nothing to Irish publishers who wished to produce a specific work. Some like Faulkner secured the text copy through purchase agreements with the British publishers or authors. However this did nothing to guarantee them the sole production rights in Ireland, and it was just as likely that another Irish publisher would obtain their copy by other means and produce a competing edition.<sup>8</sup>

Other checks on publication in Ireland were stamp duties and the threat of litigation for publishing inappropriate material. Stamp duties increased the production price for particular types of publications. This acted as a form of government control, particularly over periodical production, reducing the profitability of items such as political pamphlets and newspapers which might be opposed to government aims. The first stamp act was instituted in Ireland in 1774, prior to this there was no tax on newspaper advertisements or on the production of pamphlets, and even after this date Irish stamp duties remained less than those in England, though still prohibitive for many Irish readers.<sup>9</sup> In addition to these taxes, the threat of litigation helped deter publishers from producing lewd or libelous material. No formal censorship of material took place prior to publication such as existed in France during this period. However fear of prosecution by the state and other individuals served to enforce a system of self-censorship by authors and publishers, and this was generally successful in limiting the political and moral discourse 'within the parameters of what the ruling Protestant elite deemed normative.'<sup>10</sup> These controls were only partially effective in preventing the publication of subversive or politically contentious material. The publication of the *Northern Star* serves as an example where

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<sup>8</sup> For a further discussion of 'copyright' and trade practices in Ireland see Sher, *The enlightenment and the book*, chapter 7 and Johns, *Piracy*, chapter 7.

<sup>9</sup> Pollard, *Dublin's trade in books*, pp 22-24; In 1774 the stamp duty was set at ½ d. for a ½ sheet pamphlet or newspaper or 1s. per sheet of octavo pamphlets of seven sheets or less, and 2d. per advertisement in newspapers.

<sup>10</sup> For ways litigation was used to control Irish print see James Kelly, 'Regulating print: the state and control of print in eighteenth-century Ireland' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, xxiii, (2008), pp 142-174.

both high stamp duties and the threat of litigation failed to prevent the publication of material that the government considered subversive.

What practical impact did these controls have over provincial printing in Belfast? Publishers in Belfast were not generally competing with their Dublin colleagues for the publication of the first edition of a new work from London. Throughout the eighteenth century they generally did not have the capital or the market to reproduce large format editions of new titles. For those types of works they could easily secure copies from Dublin to sell in their shops. For smaller works, such as plays or political pamphlets where the initial capital investment for printers was quite small, the courtesies of the trade were not maintained to the same degree. Belfast printers greatly benefited from the lack of copyright when it came to these materials. A large number of the regular publications of individuals such as Magee consisted of new plays from Dublin and London, and short tracts and pamphlets generally sold for a few shillings or less. In 1792 James Magee published Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man Part II* in Belfast selling for 2s.8 ½ d. one week after its initial publication in London.<sup>11</sup> Because of the popularity of this text, John Hughes also published an edition in Belfast. Within a few weeks, the price for the work was reduced to 6d. putting it within reach of the lowest levels of the market. The text was also serialized and featured in the *Northern Star* over several issues. Paine's work was quickly and cheaply made available to all levels of the Belfast market, while the London edition was still being sold as an octavo. None of this could have happened if these publishers had been required to uphold the British copyright. The lack of copyright allowed them the opportunity to supply new and up to date material locally in inexpensive formats—providing a greater range of reading material to all classes of readers.

This advantage becomes more evident when we examine the impact of copyright extension in 1801. The introduction of copyright in Ireland froze the development of

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<sup>11</sup>Notice of the London publication of Thomas Paine's *Rights of Man Part II*, in the *N.S.*, 22 to 25 February 1792; James Magee's announcement of his edition of the same, *N.S.*, 25 to 29 February 1792.

provincial publishing since most of the copyrights for both new literature and steady sellers were already owned by London publishers. After 1801, citizens of Belfast were still able to purchase the newest texts locally if they could afford to pay to purchase imports from London or Dublin. Magee and other booksellers, had well-established connections to London publishers which allowed them speedy access to these texts, which kept the town's readers supplied with books, but these items could no longer be re-printed and sold in cheaper formats. The lower end of the market was radically restricted to include only older or local publications. For publishers like Magee, who specialized in supplying the cheaper end of the market, this was very bad for business. St. Clair describes this phenomenon in Great Britain throughout the eighteenth century, calling it a division of the reading nation where the lower end of the market was confined to out-dated materials while only the wealthiest segments of society could purchase the newest titles.<sup>12</sup>

In America the story of copyright took a different route. There is some debate among book history scholars over the state of copyright within the North American colonies prior to the American Revolution. St. Clair has argued that copyright in colonial America was the same as in Great Britain, since colonial laws could not be in conflict with English statute, and states that 'in book publishing, as in other matters, the towns of colonial North America were more like English provincial and university towns which happened to be located thousands of miles away, and were accorded a measure of local autonomy, than metropolitan centres of different jurisdiction.'<sup>13</sup> His evidence to support this theory is based on the small number of copyrighted publications that were reproduced in colonial cities, and statements claiming that certain texts were published 'by authority' which he believes represents copyright authority.<sup>14</sup> If St. Clair's theory is true, it means that Baltimore printers were restricted to publishing only items that were locally authored,

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<sup>12</sup> St. Clair, *The reading nation in the romantic period*, pp 66-79.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p. 378.

<sup>14</sup> For the full argument see St. Clair, *The reading nation in the romantic period*, pp 375-380.

where no British copyright had been established, and to items whose copyright had expired. Prior to the 1774 act which effectively abolished perpetual copyright this would have been very few items indeed. There is no evidence of any material that was copyrighted in Great Britain and illegally reprinted in Baltimore prior to 1780; however due to the very small nature of Baltimore's print industry this is not compelling evidence. However in Philadelphia several examples exist of items that were reprinted locally while still under copyright in Great Britain. One example is John Lovell's *Memoirs of the life of Thom Tryon*, which claimed to have been printed from the London edition and was reprinted by William Dunlap of Philadelphia in 1761.<sup>15</sup> Many other scholars have argued that while some local restrictions on copyright existed within specific colonies, the 1710 copyright act was never fully incorporated by colonial legislatures, or that if so it was not enforced. John Feather in his study of copyright and politics proposed economic reasons for the large importation of British books. He argued that demand within colonial cities was not high enough to justify the increased cost of printing new colonial editions of texts that could more easily be imported from Great Britain. He suggested that it was only in the 1820s that demand became large enough to justify large-scale reprinting of British books in America.<sup>16</sup> James Raven has also attributed the large number of imported books to 'the limited and unbalanced growth of colonial printing.'<sup>17</sup> These theories carry weight in light of the large-scale continued importation of British books after the American Revolution, which suggests an economic rather than legal impediment to American book production. Because American production could not compete with imported texts, the legal status of British copyright in colonial America is somewhat moot; however I am unaware of any

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<sup>15</sup> However it should be noted that William Dunlap was Irish and so his reprint practices may have been influenced by Irish practices of the time. John Lovell, *Some memoirs of the life of Mr. Thom Tryon, late of London, merchant: written by himself: together with some rules and orders, proper to be observed by all such as would train up and govern, either families, or societies, in cleanness, temperance, and innocency. And now re-printed for John Lovell, in West-Jersey, for the good of mankind* (Philadelphia, 1761), E.S.T.C. W42227.

<sup>16</sup> Feather, *Publishing, piracy and politics*, p. 150.

<sup>17</sup> James Raven, 'The importation of books in the eighteenth century' in Amory & Hall (eds), *A history of the book in America: volume 1*, p. 187.

instances where British publishers were able to effectively enforce their copyright in colonial America.

This view of colonial copyright does not suggest that American publishers faced no legal restrictions on publications during the colonial period, as was the case in Ireland, rather that because of the unique nature of their position in the empire they were relatively free from the British copyright system before independence. Within specific colonies, colonial legislatures and royal governors regularly appointed and dismissed official or public printers who held the sole rights to publish the statutes and proceedings of the state. Within Maryland this was the position that William Parks occupied from the mid-1720s.<sup>18</sup> These positions granted the printers certain rights and privileges, but could easily be taken away with a change in government or where they failed to fulfill their duties. In other colonies, religious or political sects supported printers to whom they gave the sole right to publish certain material. These same groups could also act as constraints on printers, since they could prohibit the publication of material contrary to their values. An example is the firm control the Quakers exerted over Pennsylvania printers during the colonial period.<sup>19</sup>

After the American Revolution the newly independent states were free of any restraints from British copyright. However within individual states, legislatures began instituting various laws for the protection of intellectual material. Maryland enacted its copyright law in March 1783, giving a fourteen-year term of protection and issuing a two cent fine on each illegally produced sheet.<sup>20</sup> The American constitution, which contained support for copyright similar to the British idea of intellectual property, stated that Congress shall have the power to ‘promote the progress of science and useful arts, by securing for limited times to authors and inventors the exclusive right to their respective writings and discoveries,’ thereby claiming sole power to grant copyright to the federal

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<sup>18</sup> Wroth, *A history of printing in colonial Maryland*, p. 70.

<sup>19</sup> David D. Hall, *Cultures of print: essays in the history of the book* (Amherst, 1996), p. 147.

<sup>20</sup> James Gilreath (ed), *Federal copyright records 1790-1800* (Washington, 1987), p. xix.

government.<sup>21</sup> In 1790 Congress passed the first American copyright legislation, which superseded state and local regulations.<sup>22</sup> This law, like the British 1710 act, gave authors a transferable copyright period of fourteen years, renewable for an additional fourteen. These protections were restricted to the productions of American citizens and residents, and offered no protection for imported material. Within American copyright law, the recognition of the author as the original owner of the rights to the work was drawn from French legal tradition. However Michael Warner in his study on publication and the public sphere in eighteenth-century America argued that since the spread and availability of the printed word was central to American republican ideology, the early American legislation was more concerned with supporting local republican literature and the diffusion of texts than defining the text as a commodity.<sup>23</sup>

Within the American publishing industry, copyright did not develop in the same way that it did in Great Britain or Ireland. Copyright was slow to be adopted and it took decades for American publishers to reach the same levels of control that were instituted in Ireland within a matter of years after the act of union. Several factors contributed to the delay in the solidification of copyright within America. The first was that the American legislation offered no protection for works imported from abroad or written by non-American residents. Since British titles still represented a large proportion of the available texts on the market, this naturally limited the usefulness of copyright legislation during this period. The US government was very slow to join any international agreements regarding copyright, such as the one instituted among European nations in 1886, and it was not until 1896 that America joined the international copyright union. This left the regulation of imported titles up to informal trade arrangements, similar to those in Ireland prior to 1801.

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<sup>21</sup> The United States Constitution, Section I, Article 8, Clause 8 in Carol Berkin, *A brilliant solution: inventing the American Constitution* (New York, 2002), p.283.

<sup>22</sup> See Gilreath, *Federal copyright records*, p. xxi for details on the 1790 federal Act for Encouraging Learning.

<sup>23</sup> Warner, *The letters of the republic*, p. 127; see also McGill, *American literature and the culture of reprinting*.

Respectable American publishers did not reprint an imported work once another American publisher had released their edition.<sup>24</sup> Publishing strategies, such as the use of stereotyping, first used in the United States in 1814 for bibles, could also offer American publishers a *de facto* copyright for imported or expensive texts. However this system, like that in Ireland, could easily break down. The tremendous popularity of Walter Scott's Waverley novels contributed to the end of this system. In the early years of the novels the trade courtesies were respected— Mathew Carey stopped his edition of *Guy Mannering* in 1815 to maintain this arrangement. However as the novels grew in popularity, publishers were unwilling to allow the huge potential profits to pass them by, and if the original American publisher could not supply the demand fast enough another publisher happily printed their own edition.<sup>25</sup>

Another factor which slowed the solidification of copyright in America was the lack of organization within the printing trades. When Ireland was incorporated into the British copyright system, a pre-existing infrastructure based in London was in place for organizing and enforcing copyright among the British publishing community. In the American context, the vast distances between communities and the regional and state differences did not allow for the same level of centralization. Though Philadelphia and New York were leading printing centres, distribution of texts was a significant problem and few publishers could directly claim more than a regional distribution capacity. In many cases it was more economically feasible to manufacture a text close to the intended market, as opposed to shipping it overland from Philadelphia or New York. For this reason, it was sometimes detrimental to textual diffusion for copyright to be claimed on certain types of texts. James Gilreath's study of American copyrighted texts between 1790 and 1800 demonstrates that it was primarily useful works of enduring commercial value that were copyrighted.

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<sup>24</sup> Feather, *Publishing, piracy and politics*, p. 160.

<sup>25</sup> Emily B. Todd, 'Established routes for fiction in the United States: Walter Scott's novels and the early nineteenth-century American publishing industry' in *Book History*, xii (2009), pp 109-111.

Literary work was rarely copyrighted since it limited the distribution of the work, and did not justify the additional expense.<sup>26</sup> Many American authors and publishers may have chosen not to register a text for copyright in order to secure wider distribution. For these reasons among others, copyright within America during the early republican period was much more varied. Some texts had a copyright period of twenty-eight years with the full support of the law, but the majority of texts in circulation were offered no protection under law with only limited protection through tradition or a *de facto* copyright status.

### **Local Production**

Though copyright legislation was important for determining the limits of what could be published in a particular locale, it cannot offer a complete explanation for the body of work produced there. Within this frame of possibilities, factors such as individual choice, restrictions on capital, local taste and literary talent also played a role in determining production in provincial towns. The following section attempts to sketch an outline of the types and quantities of texts produced in each town; what types of texts the local printers and publishers felt merited reprinting, and how much local authors contributed to the overall body of texts produced. Particularly looking to see how these texts were produced, where the capital for publications came from and how they were distributed.

This analysis provides more of a general picture rather than a precise study. As in all historical research the source material shapes the types of questions that can be answered. Two major factors affect the way that production in these towns can be studied. The first is that the production records for these towns are all based on surviving imprints. Common sense tells us that the imprints that have survived cannot correspond to the whole body of work that was produced. Nor are they necessarily representative; only one imprint

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<sup>26</sup> See the discussion of James Gilreath's study in McGill, *American literature and the culture of reprinting*, p. 49.

survives from the Hodge and Shober press in Baltimore from the 1770s, and it is in fact the only evidence to prove that the press existed.<sup>27</sup> However the work in question is unlikely to have been their only imprint and may not be in any way typical of their other work. Using surviving imprints is also problematic because oftentimes the most popular works were the ones least likely to survive. School books, chapbooks, and other ephemeral material may simply have been read to destruction, or deemed unworthy to be kept by librarians or collectors. This is a problem that book historians are well-aware of and yet it is difficult if not impossible to re-create lost imprints. In 1792 William Magee of Belfast is represented by only one surviving imprint that can definitely be attributed to him in the E.S.T.C., Allen Ramsay's *The gentle shepherd*. Yet advertisements in the *Northern Star* for the same year claim at least twenty titles printed by Magee, not counting those which he imported and sold for other publishers.<sup>28</sup> However it would be both tedious and unreliable to include all advertised but non-surviving publications in the list of imprints for a particular printer, as there is no evidence to prove that they were ever actually published. George Faulkner, of Dublin, in a letter to Charles O'Connor warned that individuals were reluctant to pay in advance of receiving a particular text because of 'being often disappointed by the works never being printed.'<sup>29</sup> Advertisements for a text cannot always be taken as proof of its publication, and so their value for compiling a record of imprints is questionable, leaving historians with the list of surviving imprints as the most reliable, yet incomplete, source for studying local imprints outside of the surviving records of specific firms.

The second factor that affects the way imprints from these towns can be studied is the form that these lists take. Due to the diffuse nature of surviving imprints, and the way that books have always tended to migrate across oceans and borders it may be impossible

<sup>27</sup> George Cockings, *The conquest of Canada, or, the siege of Quebec. An historical tragedy of five acts* (Baltimore, 1772), E.S.T.C. W479256, produced by Hodge and Shober of Baltimore.

<sup>28</sup> Allen Ramsay, *The gentle shepherd: a Scots pastoral comedy* (Belfast, 1792), E.S.T.C. N64872; Advertisements for Magee's publications taken from issues of the *N.S.* for the year 1792.

<sup>29</sup> George Faulkner to Charles O'Connor, 18 July 1774 in Ward (ed), *Prince of Dublin printers*, p. 120.

to locate and view every imprint from Belfast or Baltimore. It is only with the advent of the large international databases such as the English Short Title Catalogue (E.S.T.C.) and Eighteenth-Century Collections Online (E.C.C.O.) that imprints can be collected and analyzed in any sort of systematic way. Despite their tremendous value these tools have their own limitations. E.C.C.O. was compiled using the resources of a limited number of institutions and does not include many smaller repositories or personal collections. Though more comprehensive, the E.S.T.C. is only as good as its contributing libraries, and this study has identified many items in E.S.T.C. participating libraries which have not yet been added to the online database. Both the E.S.T.C. and E.C.C.O. are also projects that are limited to the eighteenth century and so for this study, they finish twenty-five years early. Though some databases, such as the Nineteenth Century Short Title Catalogue (N.S.T.C.) are available for the nineteenth century, the information on each entry is not standardized and varied levels of detail are offered in the different data sets.<sup>30</sup> While this is not a major problem in Baltimore, where comprehensive lists of imprints are available for the nineteenth century in the Shaw and Shoemaker collection, Belfast presents a very different scenario. There, John Anderson's catalogue of early Belfast printed books identified only 112 imprints from 1800 to 1825.<sup>31</sup> This work was based on decades' worth of searching through local catalogues and private collections, but does not include any Belfast imprints that resided outside of the United Kingdom. Though this work has been able to build on all of these existing sources to create a database of imprints for both locations, which includes many newly discovered imprints; any systematic analysis would still be unbalanced. So this study therefore seeks only to paint a general picture of the imprints from each location, using anecdotal evidence and sampling to provide detail.

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<sup>30</sup> Some attempt has been made to use the N.S.T.C. database in this study. But since the available information on each imprint is somewhat uneven, imprints cited in this study do not provide the N.S.T.C. citation.

<sup>31</sup> Anderson, *Catalogue of early Belfast printed books*.

It is also important to note that the list of imprints produced in these towns does not represent the majority of texts available for purchase within the town. Most texts in both communities would have been printed elsewhere and imported through various channels, and this is the subject of the next chapter. This section focuses on the texts that were produced within the towns. These were items that local members of the print community felt were important or profitable enough to print, and they fall into two main categories: reprints of works which were first produced elsewhere, and local originals. Both communities published a mix of old and new, original and reprinted works. However Baltimore seems to have produced more original local works as a percentage of total production than Belfast, especially in the period before 1800. Most of these productions were ephemeral items. During the American Revolution, Mary Katherine Goddard in particular, published a large number of broadsides and pamphlets on the latest news, both military and political. These account for more than ninety per cent of the imprints from Baltimore in the E.S.T.C. from 1776.<sup>32</sup> After the war, a large number of the imprints from the Goddard press were announcements for the local theatre. In 1781 two-thirds of the imprints were theatre announcements and all but one of the imprints was an original production, although not of any great literary significance. This represents both a much larger proportion of original publications compared with Belfast, and a fairly high survival rate for ephemera in Baltimore.

Original productions were not limited to theatre announcements and news. Both communities produced original religious and literary contributions. In Baltimore the influence of local reading institutions on the print output of the town is clearly evident. The members of the Delphian Club, the town's literary society, produced a large amount of material. John Uhler claimed that there were 'extant at least forty-eight books of fiction,

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<sup>32</sup> All calculations based on the E.S.T.C. records for Baltimore 1760 to 1800, accessed March 2010. Total of eleven imprints for the year 1776, one of which was a selection of hymns by Elhanan Winchester and the rest were news related.

history, travel, letters, or biography; nine volumes of poetry; one drama; nineteen speeches; and there were twelve newspapers or magazines of which the editors were members of the Delphian Club.’<sup>33</sup> Though little of this writing was the formal product of the club, it encouraged and honed the talents of its members, inspiring them to continue their literary pursuits. An example was Joseph D. Learned’s *View of the policy of permitting slaves in the states west of the Mississippi*, published in Baltimore in 1820.<sup>34</sup>

Within Belfast, poetry more than novels or plays was the most popular genre for local literati. Samuel Thomson, printed three volumes of poetry by subscription in Belfast in 1793, 1799 and 1806.<sup>35</sup> Thomson was also a regular contributor of verse to the Belfast newspapers, and a local Burns aficionado. His surviving correspondence is quite illuminating as regards the relationships between printers, booksellers and literary men.<sup>36</sup> Other local poets include Thomas Romney Robinson, a young boy who published a volume entitled *Juvenile poems* by subscription in Belfast in 1806.<sup>37</sup> Robinson was a child prodigy who was sponsored by the Bishop of Dromore in his literary endeavours. Contemporary reception of his poetry was mixed, and it seemed that his work was less than popular among the mothers of Belfast who, according to Martha McTier, could not help but compare ‘their seven year old ones.’<sup>38</sup> However Robinson’s work was generally well-received outside Belfast, and in 1807 his work was reprinted in London with a new subscription list, and in 1808 an American edition was produced in Brooklyn from the original Belfast edition. Several other local figures published books of verse by subscription in Belfast, including William Drennan and William Hamilton Drummond.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>33</sup> John Earle Uhler, ‘The Delphian Club’ in *The Maryland Historical Magazine*, xx, no. 4 (December, 1925), p. 308.

<sup>34</sup> Joseph D. Learned, *A view of the policy of permitting slaves in the states west of the Mississippi* (Baltimore, 1820).

<sup>35</sup> See *D.I.B.* entry on Samuel Thomson by Linde Lunney.

<sup>36</sup> Samuel Thomson Correspondence 1792-1810 (T.C.D., MS 7257).

<sup>37</sup> Thomas Romney Robinson, *Juvenile poems, with portrait and 29 pages subscriber’s names* (Belfast, 1806).

<sup>38</sup> Martha McTier to William Drennan, 25 October 1806 in *The Drennan-McTier letters*, iii, p. 533.

<sup>39</sup> William Drennan, *Fugitive pieces in verse and prose* (Belfast, 1815); W. Hamilton Drummond, *The giant’s causeway; a poem with plates* (Belfast, 1811).

One possible reason for the larger number of original works published in Baltimore over Belfast, not including the ephemeral items, was that it was fairly common for Irish authors to have their work published in London even when it would have been possible to publish locally. The prestige and possible remuneration attached to a London publication sometimes outweighed the convenience of utilizing the Belfast printers. Edward Bunting's collection of ancient Irish music, a publication sponsored by the Belfast Society for Promoting Knowledge was published in London in 1796, despite soliciting bids from both Belfast and Dublin printers. London publications before 1801 had the added benefit of offering copyright protection, which may have been of particular importance for expensive and difficult publications such as Bunting's Irish music. Thomson originally wished to publish his works in London, where he would have suffered less personal embarrassment in soliciting subscriptions. However he settled for publishing in his local market, using friends and acquaintances to manage his subscriptions. There are fewer examples of Maryland authors taking their work away from being published in Baltimore, though it did still happen. One example was *Memoirs of the life of the late Charles Lee*, which was surreptitiously published in London for monetary reasons but which had originally been proposed in Baltimore. Other examples can be found among the works of the members of Delphian Club: John Neal's novels *Randolph* and *Seventy-Six* were both written in Baltimore but published in Philadelphia.<sup>40</sup> These examples reveal ways in which various authors pursued what they thought would be the most profitable means of publication, often leaving their own doorstep in search of better distribution, copyright protection, cultural status or monetary gain.

By far the largest category of original publications from Belfast was religious material. Religious material in general represented one of the most significant categories of works produced in the town. These items ranged from bibles, psalms, and catechisms to

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<sup>40</sup> Uhler, 'The Delphian Club,' p. 322.

sermons and works concerning the operation of Presbyterian meetings. Most of these items were in a small format, and ranged from sixteen to twenty-four pages in length. A twenty-four page sermon sold in Belfast in 1774 for 3d., putting these items among the least expensive on the market.<sup>41</sup> Most of the original works produced in Belfast were either sermons preached to local groups and published by request, or titles on the denominational concerns of the Ulster Presbyterian community. Here local production is revealing of the community from which it sprang. The connection between this religious community and the town's printers had always been solid. The strongly Presbyterian nature of the town was reinforced through their dominance of the printed word and, particularly prior to 1800, the dominance of Presbyterian members of the print trade.

Many of these religious titles conveyed political messages in religious formats, a standard practice through much of the eighteenth century where political and religious discourses were still intertwined. In Belfast in the 1770s there was a particular spike in the political-religious production, surrounding issues of Volunteerism in Ireland and the American Revolution. Here Rev. James Crombie's sermon to the Volunteer Company of Belfast serves as a prime example.<sup>42</sup> Crombie's sermon offered direct religious support for taking up arms in defense of the nation. Greater separation between these genres can be seen from the 1790s onward. In Belfast this resulted in the growth of political publication as a genre in itself. Within Baltimore political prints dominated the press for much of the period. The pressing political realities of the revolutionary period ensured that American presses were always closely engaged with the political struggles of the day. Early on in Baltimore this took the form of news updates or announcements from Congress; later publications began to develop more of a party affiliation, especially as the nation's capital took up its new residence nearby in Washington D.C.

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<sup>41</sup> Theophilus Lindsey, *A sermon preached at the opening of the chapel in Essex-House, Essex-Street, in the Strand, on Sunday, April 17, 1774* (Belfast, 1774), E.S.T.C. T105976.

<sup>42</sup> James Crombie, *A sermon on the love of country. Preached before the first company of Belfast Volunteers, on Sunday, the 19<sup>th</sup> of July, 1778* (Belfast, 1778), E.S.T.C. T129333.

Overall, most items printed in Belfast were not original publications, but reprints of texts first published elsewhere. These reprints represent texts from a wide variety of places and genres. Some were printed directly from the original publications. In 1760 John and David Hay published *The folly, infamy, and misery of unlawful pleasure*, a sermon given by James Fordyce in May 1760 in Edinburgh.<sup>43</sup> Similarities in the text and title pages suggest that this work was taken from the first Edinburgh edition published by G. Hamilton and J. Balfour, and not the London edition for T. Field, T. Beckett, and C. Henderson, despite their close timing. A Dublin edition was not issued for a further eight years, despite the success of the title which went through multiple editions in London and Edinburgh in the first few months. Strong ties between the Presbyterian community in Belfast and Scotland makes it likely that this edition was imported directly. The Hays took advantage of an opportunity to reprint a new and popular text, which had local appeal and was not protected by copyright. Other examples of texts reprinted from Scotland include Robert Burns' poetry. In 1787 William Magee printed the first edition of his *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect*, outside of Scotland, preceding the London edition by about a month.<sup>44</sup> Many more examples exist of new works making their way directly from London to Belfast, without moving through subsequent editions elsewhere. Examples include Thomas Paine's *Rights of man*, discussed earlier. This type of production supplanted potentially imported texts from other metropolitan centres and reveals some life and vigour among the print culture of the town.

Other texts reprinted in Belfast were simply local editions of perennial best sellers, items that the local printers felt were popular enough to merit a new local edition, despite a variety of editions elsewhere. The production of these types of text depended on them being free from copyright protection— either through age or law. Some examples of these

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<sup>43</sup> James Fordyce, *The folly, infamy, and misery of unlawful pleasure a sermon preached before the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, May 25, 1760* (Belfast, 1760), E.S.T.C. T87397.

<sup>44</sup> Robert Burns, *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish dialect* (Belfast, 1787), E.S.T.C. T92737.

types of text were James Magee's editions of Shakespeare. Shakespeare is not commonly found on the list of provincial printing and is probably evidence of Magee's personal taste. In England the copyright for his works was extremely valuable and closely guarded by the London booksellers. However because Magee was not bound by British copyright he freely reproduced several of Shakespeare's plays for the Belfast market. Magee's editions of Shakespeare, as with most of his plays, came from performances given at one of the major theatres in London. His 1776 edition of *Hamlet* stated that it was printed 'as performed at the Theatre-Royal, Covent-Garden. Regulated from the prompt-book ... by Mr. Younger, prompter.'<sup>45</sup> These publications coincided with productions of the plays in Belfast, suggesting that Magee was in some way using the local theatre to promote his publications.<sup>46</sup>

In Baltimore local editions of popular works were much less frequent prior to the nineteenth century. The period in question represents a transitional era in American book history. During the colonial period, it was cheaper to simply import titles than produce them in America. Only as local demand increased and production costs were reduced in the early republican period was it financially attractive for American provincial printers to print their own editions. An edition of Blair's *Sermons* produced in 1792-1793 in Baltimore is an early example of a popular title reprinted in the town.<sup>47</sup> This edition was published at the request of Mason Locke Weems, a colorful character in the American book trade, who was very much in tune with the demands of the local population for reading material. Weems financed his publications primarily through subscription or by

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<sup>45</sup> William Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark. A tragedy, by Shakespeare. As performed at the Theatre-Royal, Covent-Garden. Regulated from the prompt-book ... by Mr. Younger, prompter* (Belfast, 1776), E.S.T.C. T164347.

<sup>46</sup> It is not clear if the publications took place before, after or during the plays' performances in the Belfast theatres, only that productions and publications took place within the same year. See John C. Greene, *Theatre in Belfast, 1736-1800* (London, 2000).

<sup>47</sup> Hugh Blair, *Sermons, by Hugh Blair, D.D. one of the Ministers of the High Church, and professor of rhetoric and belles lettres in the University of Edinburgh. To which is prefixed, that admired tract on the internal evidence of the Christian religion. By Soame Jenyns, of the British Parliament. Volume the first. Edition The sixteenth edition* (Baltimore, 1792), E.S.T.C. W2965.

using his own money, so he would have had to have been very confident in the success of a title to have it published.

School books were another category of works frequently reproduced in both communities. Though some textbooks, such as David Manson's *A new pocket dictionary*, were written and published locally, many others were publications from elsewhere adapted to the local market. George Fisher's *Arithmetick in the plainest and most concise methods hitherto extant*, went through at least four Belfast editions in this period.<sup>48</sup> *The young clerk's vade mecum: or, compleat English law-tutor* was another textbook that went through several Belfast editions in the eighteenth century.<sup>49</sup> Though this title was originally printed in London, Belfast produced the largest number of editions, and it was from these editions that the text was reprinted in both New York and Dublin. In addition to school texts, other practical guides can be found on the list of imprints for each locale. These guides were produced to suit the needs of the local community. Thus Belfast has titles such as *The dealer's companion, and trader's assistant improved*, while Baltimore produced titles such as *The weaver's draft book and clothier's assistant*.<sup>50</sup>

After 1801 school books continued to be a staple production for Belfast publishers. Large editions of these texts could be produced relatively cheaply, and were in steady demand. As Belfast developed more educational institutions, demand for a greater number and variety of school books developed. Local printers met these demands as best they could, and it was as a result of this market that stereotyping came into use in Belfast in order to publish larger print runs at cheaper prices. Many school books, such as the texts of Daniel Fenning, were old enough to be free from copyright. These texts continued to be reprinted in Belfast after 1801, while the growing number of teachers and lecturers in the

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<sup>48</sup> Editions of this title, which was first produced in London around 1700, were printed in Belfast in 1754 by Henry and Robert Joy, and 1762, 1767 and 1775 by James Magee.

<sup>49</sup> Editions produced in 1742, 1754, 1763, 1771 and 1792 by various members of the Joy family.

<sup>50</sup> *The dealer's companion, and trader's assistant improved.... The seventh edition, much enlarged and carefully corrected* (Belfast, 1794), E.S.T.C. T472856; John Hargrove, *The weaver's draft book and clothier's assistant* (Baltimore, 1792), E.S.T.C. W20868.

town provided a source for new local textbooks. These textbooks were produced to meet the specific needs of students engaged in a course of study within Belfast, and can give an idea of the demand for school books locally. Dr. William Bruce, a teacher at the Belfast Academical Institution and son of Dr. Bruce from the Belfast Academy, taught classics and wrote an *Introduction to scanning Greek metres* and later *The state of society in the age of Homer* for the use of his students.<sup>51</sup>

Within Baltimore, school books were rarely produced locally until the early nineteenth century. Again, production costs and scale ensured that it was cheaper to import these from publishers such as Mathew Carey of Philadelphia or Thomas and Andrews of Boston, who had advantages of scale and copyright. Evidence from Carey's branch store in Baltimore suggests that school books made up a large portion of his sales both to individuals and to other retailers.<sup>52</sup> As local demand grew and pedagogical reform changed the nature of school books, men such as Fielding Lucas made their publishing fortune by producing school books in association with local and state school boards. As a commissioner for public education in Baltimore, Lucas was well-placed to supply the school system with books and stationery. He also published texts for St. Mary's seminary written by their staff, many of which were in Latin and Greek.<sup>53</sup>

Though the majority of texts in both communities were produced in English, other languages can be found among the imprints. In Baltimore, German-language printing accounts for a significant number of imprints. Strong immigrant communities in the towns surrounding Baltimore supported German language papers and publications, and German publishers operated within extensive print networks, linked to but separate from the English print community. These publications ranged from religious and practical texts to entertaining literature, the most popular of which were the German almanacs. Karl Post, a

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<sup>51</sup> William Bruce, *An Introduction to the Scanning of the Greek Metres, with copious examples* (Belfast, 1823); William Bruce, *The state of society in the age of Homer* (Belfast, 1827).

<sup>52</sup> Baltimore store accounts 1805 (A.A.S., Mss. Carey Papers, box 11 folder 6).

<sup>53</sup> Foster, 'Fielding Lucas Jr.,' pp 177-184.

German traveller in the United States noted that for German farmers in backcountry Pennsylvania their library consisted mainly of the bible and the Baltimore German almanac.<sup>54</sup>

French refugees, primarily members of the Catholic clergy, fleeing the Revolution and earlier Acadian immigrants from Canada also helped create a market for Latin- and French-language works in Baltimore. William Pechin produced *La Journée du Chretien, sanctifiée par la prière et la meditation* for this audience in 1796.<sup>55</sup> As the Catholic centre of the United States, Baltimore publishers produced liturgical works in Latin which circulated widely throughout the country. Bernard Dornin, an Irish immigrant, was the first publisher in Baltimore to attempt to produce only Catholic works. However, competition from Fielding Lucas, who established himself as the primary printer for Catholic works in Baltimore including those in liturgical Latin, drove him out of business.<sup>56</sup> Several publishers attempted to capitalize on the Catholic market in Baltimore, but the primarily working-class population may not have been able to support a dedicated Catholic publisher. In 1789 John Carroll noted of Maryland's Catholics that 'in many parts of Maryland, they have been so long used to receive, as a present from their Clergy, the religious books, they wanted, that they have no idea of purchasing any.'<sup>57</sup> Despite this claim, both William Patton and William Christie noted a demand in Baltimore for cheap Catholic works.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> For more on German print communities in early America see Robert E Cazden, *A social history of the German book trade in America to the Civil War* (Columbia, 1984) and Felix Reichmann, *German printing in Maryland: a check list, 1768-1950* (Princeton, 1948).

<sup>55</sup> *La Journée du Chretien, sanctifiée par la prière et la meditation. Edition Nouvelle* (Baltimore, 1796), E.S.T.C. W11342.

<sup>56</sup> Dornin attempted to sell only Catholic works in several places but was not able to sustain his business. Lucas was more successful since he had a diverse catalogue of works.

<sup>57</sup> John Carroll to Mathew Carey, 8 April 1789 (H.S.P., Lea and Febiger Collection 227B, Mathew Carey Correspondence 1785- 1796 (C-CH), box 4, folder, 18); Michael S. Carter, "'Under the Benign Sun of Toleration'" Mathew Carey, the Douai Bible, and Catholic Print Culture, 1789-1791' in *Journal of the Early Republic*, xxvii, no. 3 (Fall, 2007), pp 437-469.

<sup>58</sup> William Patton to Mathew Carey, 20 January 1804 (H.S.P., Lea and Febiger Collection 227B, Mathew Carey Correspondence 1804 (Pat-S), box 49, folder 1); William Christie to Mathew Carey, 13 June 1807 (H.S.P., Lea and Febiger Collection 227B, Mathew Carey Correspondence 1807 (A-C), box 58, folder 9).

Around Belfast, no large non-English speaking communities demanded their own publications from the local print community. Though Irish speakers represented a large percentage of the population in eighteenth-century Ireland, the Ulster region surrounding Belfast had relatively low numbers of Irish speakers. Foreign-language titles were generally rare. A general exception to this was *Bolg an tsolair*, a very short-lived Irish-language magazine produced by the proprietors of the *Northern Star* in 1795.<sup>59</sup> In the late 1790s William Magee attempted to develop the market for foreign-language publications in Belfast by issuing *Les aventures de Gil Blas de Santillane* and *Justini historiarum ex Trogo Pompeio libri XLIV* in which he styled himself Guillaume and Gulielmi Magee respectively.<sup>60</sup> However these were singular publications, unlike the highly organized and central trade in German works in Baltimore.

Total production in both communities grew steadily throughout the eighteenth century so by the last decade of the century we have approximately 150 surviving imprints from Belfast and 250 from Baltimore. It is difficult to estimate long-term publication output from Belfast due to the dearth of confirmed post-1801 imprints. In Belfast after 1800 imprints certainly declined. It is difficult to determine if this was the result of a greater number of lost imprints, or a result of a true decline in publication within Belfast due to the extension of copyright in 1801. Since the printing community did not decline but grew along with the town's population over this period, it would be safe to assume it was primarily the former reason. Within Baltimore, a different trend is apparent. Though output did gradually grow between 1760 and 1800, the years after 1800 show a dramatic rise in the number of imprints from the town— with over 1,500 known imprints in the first twenty-five years of the nineteenth century. This is indicative of a more complete

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<sup>59</sup> Irish language speakers made up a very small percentage of the county Antrim population at this time, the magazine attempted to create demand for Irish language publications rather than meet it, see Ó Ciosáin, *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland*.

<sup>60</sup> *Les aventures de Gil Blas de Santillane. Par M. Le Sage* (Belfast, 1798), E.S.T.C. T118661; Marcus Junianus Justinus, *Justini historiarum ex Trogo Pompeio libri XLIV* (Belfast, 1799), E.S.T.C. T205390.

bibliography for the town as well as the dramatic rise of Baltimore as a publishing centre in the early years of the century.

Given the wide range of publications produced in each community in spite of strong competition from larger print centres nearby, it is important to examine how these publications were funded and produced. Where did the inspiration and money come from that allowed Belfast to produce its own editions of Shakespeare or Baltimore to produce their own editions of Blair's *Sermons*? Print runs and formats on most texts were quite small in both towns, reducing the overall production costs. Few titles exceed octavo in size, and in fact most were in duodecimo or an even smaller format with less than 100 pages. Print runs can be difficult to determine because of a lack of records from the provincial printers. Evidence from the Graisberry accounts from Dublin suggested that even there, most print runs averaged 250 or 500 copies for a longer work and 1,000 for handbills, broadsides or very popular titles. 250 copies of Robertson's *America* were printed, while 1,000 title pages were produced for Enfield's *Sermons*.<sup>61</sup> Within provincial communities, we can assume that the smaller runs were more frequent, though larger runs were possible. Estimates on American publications of the period suggest that most pamphlets were published in runs of 500 to 1000 copies because this represents one half or one ream of paper respectively.<sup>62</sup> In the early nineteenth century print runs grew with the expansion of publishing and the adoption of stereotyping from 1814. In 1802 Mathew Carey contracted the Baltimore firm of Bonsal and Niles to print an edition of the bible of between three and four thousand copies.<sup>63</sup> Fielding Lucas, who specialized in school books and practical publications, produced print runs of 3,000 to 5,000 for his Catholic catechisms by the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> James Williams 1777, Printers day book 1777-1785 (T.C.D., Graisberry Accounts).

<sup>62</sup> Loughran, *The republic in print*, p. 49.

<sup>63</sup> Mathew Carey to Bonsal and Niles, 2 December 1802 (H.S.P., Lea and Febiger Collection 227B, Mathew Carey Letterbook 1802, vol. 15, no. 2184). They were paid for their work in bibles from the edition.

<sup>64</sup> Foster, 'Fielding Lucas Jr.,' p. 207.

In terms of price, most surviving imprints from these towns were generally quite cheap. Pamphlets produced in Belfast in the 1790s sold for between 1s.1d. and 2s.2d. though prices went as low as 4d. for a one sheet almanac. However publications were not only gauged to the lower end of the market. Though the most expensive items advertised in the *Belfast News-Letter* had been published elsewhere, it is clear that the local printers offered a range of goods competitively priced. Belfast consumers could purchase David Manson's spelling book bound in red leather for 9s. or his pocket dictionary for 2s.2d. In Baltimore 10s. could purchase a yearly subscription to the *Maryland Journal* in 1773. Since many of the early imprints were single-sheet broadsides, they were relatively inexpensive. However later publishers such as Fielding Lucas produced items for all levels of the market. His atlases and maps were luxury items, large in format and containing multiple high-quality engravings. These publications served to establish his reputation as a quality publisher, while the majority of his productions, and likely most of his income, were from cheap editions, such as his Newbery children's books which sold for \$2.70 per dozen.<sup>65</sup>

The prices of texts frequently correspond to the method of financing used for the publication. In provincial towns, printers and publishers often worked with very small profit margins, and may not have been willing or able to risk large amounts of capital on publications that were not guaranteed to sell. For this reason, subscription and subsidized publication was more common in provincial areas than elsewhere. Many of the sermons published in Belfast state that they were published by request of the audience. In these cases, publication costs were paid by the group requesting the publication, and in consequence print runs were probably extremely small. Sometimes profits were split between the author and publisher after the cost of printing was deducted. This method encouraged authors to speed sales, while ensuring the publisher's costs were recovered

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<sup>65</sup> Foster, 'Fielding Lucas Jr.,' p. 202.

first. This type of publishing was generally not very profitable for the author: William Drennan, who published several pamphlets in this way, commented that 'what with printing expenses, advertising and his [the printer's] division of the profit, I suppose little present profit will fall to my share.'<sup>66</sup> Subscription publishing was another means for reducing the risk to the printer for larger and more expensive works. Subscriptions were used either when the publisher was unsure of the salability of the title, such as with new authors, or to pay the higher production costs of a large work or luxury edition. Many of the original productions in both communities were published through subscriptions. In some cases, the author, or their friends would be charged with soliciting subscriptions, freeing the printer from the responsibility. Samuel Thomson used a man named David Boyd to assist with the embarrassing task of gathering subscriptions for his poetry in 1806. Boyd solicited subscriptions, gathered the money and paid the printer. William Drennan solicited subscriptions for both the Belfast and London editions of Thomas Romney Robinson's poems among his circles in Dublin.<sup>67</sup>

In Baltimore, some members of the book trade developed subscription gathering into a highly organized process. In the early nineteenth century, Fielding Lucas used subscriptions as a well-established means to generate the production capital for some of his atlases which were large and expensive publications. In 1813 Henry Keatinge, writing to Mathew Carey, offered his services in gathering subscriptions in Baltimore for one of Carey's atlases. Keatinge wrote,

I never undertake a business of this nature less than 3 dollars per day, which had been always paid with promptitude and pleasure, as I interest myself in the same manner I should for myself. If these terms suit you may send me the proposal and instructions which I will follow as close as circumstances will admit. As it will be necessary to advertize here Mr. Ebenezer French editor of the Baltimore Patriot a paper of very great and increasing circulation will subscribe for the maps on condition of your taking it out in advertising. Mr. French, Mr. Niles and a number of other have always paid

<sup>66</sup> William and Sarah Drennan to Martha McTier, 10 April 1806 in *The Drennan-McTier letters*, iii, p. 463.

<sup>67</sup> David Boyd to Samuel Thomson, 4 August 1806 (T.C.D., Samuel Thomson Correspondence 1792-1810, MS 7257); William Drennan to Martha McTier, 24 March 1806 in *The Drennan-McTier letters*, iii, pp 450-451.

me when engaged by the day 3 dollars. Mr. Robinson gives me 1 dollar for every subscriber to his Library. It takes from 10 to 15 or 20 days to go through the city according to the nature of the work, but from my knowledge of the city I never go on longer except otherwise desired and that will pay expenses.<sup>68</sup>

Keating's highly developed marketing strategy, which provided testimonials and a guarantee of his work, was successful, as Carey at first protested his high rates, but eventually hired him to gather subscriptions. This evidence shows the benefits of subscription publishing, and the huge potential profits to be made. It also demonstrates the need for local knowledge, in successfully marketing publications, a need which Keatinge was quick to exploit.

Subscription lists reveal both the social networks of the authors and some of the distribution networks available to local printers. Advertisements listed locations where subscriptions were taken, illuminating connections among the members of the book trades. In Belfast, overlap between printers and publishers in different networks suggest that these were not 'cast-iron long-term contracts' but rather fluid commercial relationships.<sup>69</sup> In 1760 books available from John and David Hay were often also available through George Stevenson of Newry. However Stevenson was also listed as a source for publications in connection to the Joys and the Blows.<sup>70</sup> In Baltimore Fielding Lucas and Mathew Carey took subscriptions for each other's atlases, until competition ended the relationship.<sup>71</sup>

Mason Locke Weems was a travelling preacher and chapman. He was primarily employed to sell and collect subscriptions throughout the Maryland and Virginia hinterlands for publications produced by Mathew Carey of Philadelphia. Weems however, began publishing his own works because he felt that certain demands within the market were not being met. Some of these publications he wrote himself, and financed through his

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<sup>68</sup> Henry Keatinge to Mathew Carey, 5 February 1813 (Lea and Febiger Collection 227B, Mathew Carey Correspondence 1813 (Gr-McA), box 85, folder 5).

<sup>69</sup> Adams, *The printed word and the common man*, p. 28.

<sup>70</sup> See publication advertisements in the *B.N.L.*, 1760.

<sup>71</sup> Lucas took over management of Carey's subscriptions in Baltimore after Carey's unsuccessful use of the services of Henry Keatinge.

own money. This is how his famous work *The life and memorable actions of George Washington* was first published by George Keatinge of Baltimore. For larger works, Weems relied on subscriptions which he gathered from the well-off farmers in the countryside. Weem's two volume edition of Blair was financed in this way.<sup>72</sup>

For small and cheap works these printers financed their own publications. Provincial printers had to be very aware of the market within their community when making decisions on which items to publish. This made them cautious about new titles, and more likely to reprint a title that they knew would sell well. This is one area where secondary print centres were disadvantaged since they often lacked the available capital to take publication risks. This may be a partial explanation as to why certain titles remained so long within these provincial markets. *Valentine and Orson* was a medieval tale first published in Lyon in 1489; Magee produced a Belfast edition as late as 1782.<sup>73</sup> *The history of the seven wise masters of Rome* was another title dating from the middle ages that was advertised by Magee in 1777, and reprinted in Baltimore in 1795.<sup>74</sup>

Oftentimes the capital investment needed to produce large works was too great for one publisher to tie up in an edition that would likely take years to sellout. One way of getting around this difficulty was for a publisher to purchase a share of an edition in production. The publisher would supply some of the needed capital and in return would receive a certain percentage of the copies with their name appearing on the title page of the imprint. This method had the added benefit of built-in distribution, where copies of the edition were automatically distributed to publishers in other markets, keeping sales up and providing wider name recognition. This joint publishing through share purchase was

<sup>72</sup> Mason Locke Weems, *The life and memorable actions of George Washington general and commander of the armies of America* (Baltimore, 1800), E.S.T.C. W13604; For more details on Mason Locke Weems see Lewis Leary, *The book-peddling parson: An account of the life and works of Mason Locke Weems patriot, pitchman, author and purveyor of morality to the citizenry of the early United States of America* (Chapel Hill, 1984).

<sup>73</sup> *The history of Valentine and Orson : two sons of the emperor of Greece. Newly corrected and amended; with new pictures, lively expressing the history* (Belfast, 1782), E.S.T.C. T126282 .

<sup>74</sup> Advertisement for 'Seven Wise Masters' found in *Ars amandi: or, Ovid's art of love* (Belfast, 1777), not in E.S.T.C, printed by James Magee; *The History of the seven wise masters of Rome* (Philadelphia and Baltimore, 1795), E.S.T.C. W11105.

extremely common in early nineteenth-century Baltimore. Family and business connections often provided the link in these publishing ventures. An example is C. F. Volney's *A view of the soil and climate of the United States of America*, published by J. Conrad & Co. in Philadelphia, M. & J. Conrad & Co. in Baltimore, Rapin, Conrad, & Co. in Washington City, Somervell & Conrad, in Petersburg; and Bonsal, Conrad, & Co. in Norfolk in 1804. Other examples include dozens of toy books, or very small children's books, published jointly between Samuel Wood and Sons of New York and Samuel S. Wood of Baltimore from 1817 onwards. Though joint publication with publishers in other cities was not commonly found among Belfast imprints, similar arrangements existed. Joseph Smyth's publications in conjunction with Christopher Warren of Dublin were one example. These arrangements could also take the form of subscription publication. In Ireland, provincial booksellers often subscribed for numerous copies of a publication to sell in their shops, providing the publisher some initial capital and a guaranteed distribution for the work. In these cases the provincial booksellers' names often appeared in a list of subscribers rather than as joint publishers, but both publication strategies address the same issues of capitalization and distribution.<sup>75</sup>

Local production within these towns was therefore quite diverse over the period. Both communities produced a selection of new and re-printed titles ranging from announcements, to sermons, to literary productions of prose and verse. These productions not only made the local print culture more diverse and distinct, but they contributed to the wider circulation of texts within the Atlantic world. Examples can be found in both communities of titles that were first produced for the local market but were later reprinted elsewhere in places such as London, Dublin or Philadelphia. These examples demonstrate the ways in which knowledge flowed not only from the metropolis outward to provincial

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<sup>75</sup> While subscriptions by publishers can be viewed as support for a publication, it also served as a means of finance and distribution. Booksellers who subscribed for multiple copies could get a discount, and would then be able to retail the books a higher non-subscription rate.

communities, but from the provincial back to the metropolis and from one provincial community to another, independent of mediation by the larger metropolis. Though these communities were not political or population centres their print culture was by no means stagnant, or simply recreations of London models. In Emma Hart's words 'rather than simply emulating the centre, the provincial town[s] entered into a cultural dialogue with it.'<sup>76</sup> Even the reprinted texts were not simply transcriptions but translations, unique offerings produced to meet the reading needs of the local communities which in turn informed the cultural currents flowing around the Atlantic

These local cultures of print were shaped by forces both far and near. Legal restrictions, taxes and copyright served as external checks on local production. Local newspapers and periodicals primed the market for reading material, as well as providing the basic structures needed for other types of publication. They functioned as sites where community identity and public consciousness developed. The blocked development of Belfast newspapers, discussed in the previous chapter, provides an illustration of the ways in which these outside controls profoundly influenced the print culture of a local community. Changing copyright legislation can also serve as narrative framework for the development of printing and publishing within these communities, and is further illustration of the effect of structural factors on local production. Internally the social and religious make-up of the communities and their preoccupations were reflected in the titles they produced. In Belfast the dominance of the Presbyterian community was reflected in the large body of religious publications produced in the town. In Baltimore, politics ruled and this is again clearly conveyed in the imprints. The provincial members of the book trade were just as astute as their London counterparts, often working in more competitive conditions, with smaller margins for loss. Small beginnings in the eighteenth century paved the way for nineteenth-century firms of national significance in both towns. Both

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<sup>76</sup> Emma Hart, *Building Charleston town and society in the eighteenth-century British Atlantic world* (Charlottesville, 2010), p. 133.

Simms and M'Intyre of Belfast and Feilding Lucas of Baltimore used their specialized catalogues, developed within the local setting, to branch out to national sales. Beyond these forces, James Magee's choice to publish Shakespeare and William Goddard's impact on the freedom of the press were both the result of personality, individual choice and clever use of opportunities. As a result of the interplay of these forces, printing and publishing in Belfast and Baltimore followed a similar life-cycle, yet each produced a unique list of imprints. Local production is one way of looking at the differences between these provincial print centres. What truly united them was shared participation in the larger transatlantic world of print. This is most clearly identified in the importation and consumption of print from other communities, and will be the focus of the following chapter.

## Chapter 6 Importation of Texts

In Baltimore and Belfast the majority of texts available for consumption in both communities were produced elsewhere, either in other national print centres or internationally. Texts were produced in Dublin, Philadelphia, London or further afield and then brought into these communities through personal connections, book trade networks or a myriad of other ways. These texts were both physical and symbolic links stretching across the Atlantic, tying together not only the major book-producing hubs but also smaller provincial cities in a web of interlocking relationships and shared cultural experiences. This chapter will examine print material in these two towns that was not locally produced to see where these books were coming from, and some of the strategies used to import them into these communities. It will explore the role of national sentiment in the consumption of texts, by examining which texts were imported and why. And finally this chapter will try to trace some of the transatlantic links, both between Baltimore and Belfast themselves and between these communities and other Atlantic cities.

In eighteenth-century England most texts available to provincial readers were produced outside their local community. These texts would have predominately been selected, designed and produced by booksellers in London, and then shipped either directly to individual purchasers throughout the country or to provincial bookshops for sale. Provincial book production in England was quite limited, especially before 1774, and was not able to supply the selection of printed material demanded by local readers. James Raven has estimated that London accounted for approximately seventy-five per cent of the total English-language book production in the eighteenth century.<sup>1</sup> Though both of the communities involved in this study offer modifications to this English model, they like their English counterparts still relied on texts produced elsewhere to provide the selection

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<sup>1</sup> James Raven, *The business of books: booksellers and the English book trade* (New Haven, 2007), p.140.

of reading materials needed to satisfy their customers. Though many of those texts came from London, both the Irish and American book trades offered competitive national book-production centres to counter the gravitational pull of London production. As geo-political relationships changed over the course of this study, so too did many of the cultural motivators and trade relationships that circulated texts around the Atlantic world.

The demand for a selection of texts by readers created and sustained a variety of networks and relationships that were used to move texts into and between various provincial cities in the Atlantic world. In addition to moving stocks of printed books, these networks facilitated the circulation of knowledge and ideas which can be traced through the appearance of local editions of texts which originated elsewhere. While local factors may explain the decision of provincial printers to reproduce a particular texts within their local markets, as noted in the previous chapter, these networks can explain how those texts first became available to them. Usually multiple and overlapping channels were active in importing texts into these communities, ranging from informal personal correspondence to highly organized national and international book-trade networks.

Sometimes provincial consumers were primarily concerned with particular titles, or fields of inquiry, where the text's origin and place of production mattered little. This was the case with the *Waverley* novels in the United States. There consumers were more concerned with getting the latest novel first than with where it was published. However, for other purchasers of books, the place of production was just as important as the title of the book or the content it contained. London publications always maintained a certain appeal among various groups of consumers, while on the other side patriotic movements in Ireland and America promoted the consumption of texts produced within their national borders. These distinctions, while somewhat exaggerated and artificial, will serve as our guidelines in tracing the patterns of importation of texts into both Belfast and Baltimore during our period of study.

## National Book Trade Networks

Both Baltimore and Belfast were communities with strong ties to their national book trades. In Ireland, Dublin served as the central hub from which texts circulated throughout the country. Belfast in turn served as a regional hub from at least the 1780s, serving the reading needs of its Ulster hinterland. In America the trade, though organized along more regional boundaries, still supported hubs from which texts circulated. Philadelphia was the closest and most important of these for Baltimore, though Boston and New York were also prominent centres of print activity. Baltimore then supplied a network of customers and booksellers stretching westward into Maryland, Virginia, and western Pennsylvania.

These national supply networks were vital in linking various members of the book trades as well as providing distribution networks for publishing ventures and bringing order to the book trades. However the question remains, exactly how did they function? Research on the Philadelphia or Dublin book trades highlights some of the operating procedures of these various trades, but often fails to connect those practices to those of smaller cities and towns. Using the available evidence to reconstruct these business relationships may reveal vital information about the supply of books to provincial cities, as well as to highlight some of the underlying factors that drove book production in the major hubs.

Much more evidence of these business relationships has survived for the American trade than for that of Ireland. However because of similarities in law, practice and cash-flow as well as the large number of Irish bookmen which made up the American trade, tentative conclusions can be drawn concerning the Irish trade. No records survive for Baltimore booksellers; however archives of larger American publishers such as Mathew Carey and Isaiah Thomas provide evidence for intersection and interaction with Baltimore

firms, as well as standards of practice evident in other transactions.<sup>2</sup> By combing these records for references to printers and booksellers in and around Baltimore a general picture emerges, which highlights three distinct ways that books produced in other American cities and towns made their way into the hands of Baltimore's readers.

The first, and probably the most common way, for texts to circulate through these national networks, was through an exchange of stock, or an exchange account as booksellers of the time described them. The development of national or even regional trading networks happened slowly in the early republican period of the United States. From the 1790s American publishers began to reproduce texts first produced in other markets, and produce new works or editions that were aimed at a wider regional audience.<sup>3</sup> In order to facilitate these developments high levels of cooperation were needed between booksellers and publishers across the country to reduce competition and to find effective means of distribution for newly produced books.

In Baltimore evidence suggests that many booksellers and publishers participated in this system in multiple ways. The most straightforward exchange accounts were maintained by the larger publishers. Fielding Lucas Jr. kept large exchange accounts with Mathew Carey of Philadelphia. Lucas began exchanging titles with Carey while part of the firm Conrad, Lucas and Co. One account, probably closing down the business between the two firms in 1810, brings to light some details about the process. Carey received a dozen copies of Homer's *Iliad* and twenty-three copies of Murray's *Reader*, as well as other unnamed spelling books and a copy of Thomson's *Seasons* plus other titles, which he paid for by the exchange of \$109.50 worth of stock books and \$143.67 worth of bibles. This account also included separate items shipped specifically to Lucas.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The records concerning Mathew Carey are located in two separate collections, one is the Carey papers at the A.A.S. which contain his account books and the other is the Lea and Febiger collection at the H.S.P. which contains personal and business correspondence. The Thomas papers are located at the A.A.S.

<sup>3</sup>For the growth of publishing in Philadelphia see Remer, *Printers and men of capital*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup>Account of Mathew Carey with Conrad Lucas and Co., 1810 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 16, folder 4). This account was one of their earliest transactions.

Later accounts show that Lucas had a very large and active exchange account with Carey after he began operating on his own. An account from 1812 to 1813 between Carey and Lucas records a balance of \$1,213.30 ½ in which Lucas made payments for freight specifically in cash, but which was mostly paid for in unspecified merchandise.<sup>5</sup> A later account from 1817 to 1818 itemized the books exchanged between Carey and Lucas. This account represents approximately \$1,400 worth of stock being sent by each of the two men, and is one of the best indicators of what sorts of titles regularly entered Baltimore through these exchanges. The largest numbers of books sent by Carey include fifty copies of a work titled *Washington*, fifty works by Robert Dodsley, fifty of Franklin's spelling book, forty unidentified school books, thirty copies of a book identified as *Vade Mecum* in sheets, and a hundred copies of a work only described as *Maria*.<sup>6</sup> These titles probably represented the steady sellers of the time— school books and other practical and popular texts which could be counted on to sell well in Baltimore. Smaller quantities of more specialized works included one copy each of Erasmus and Gibbon's *Rome*, a dozen copies of Carey's pamphlet entitled *An Olive Branch* and four copies of *Scientific Dialogues*. In exchange for these titles Lucas sent Carey a wide selection of texts, the largest quantities of which were Lucas' own publications, such as the 150 copies of Ruddiman's *Rudiments*, a spelling book and dozens of prayer books in various formats which probably came from Lucas' Catholic publications.<sup>7</sup>

The system of stock exchange functioned in a fairly straight-forward way. Titles were exchanged at their retail price, based on the current market value of the text. Books were exchanged like for like when it came to binding. Accounts kept a running total of

<sup>5</sup> Account of Mathew Carey with Fielding Lucas Jr., 1812-1813 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 18, folder 5).

<sup>6</sup> These descriptions possibly refer to *The life of Washington* by Mason Locke Weems; Robert Dodsley, *Economy of human life*, which had two Philadelphia editions in 1815 and 1817; *The Franklin primer*, which was a popular spelling book which went through multiple editions in the early nineteenth century; *The Devout Christian's vade mecum* (Philadelphia, 1817) published by Mathew Carey; Louis Bonaparte, *Maria or the Hollanders* (Philadelphia, 1815) printed for M. Cary, A. Small, E. Earle, J. Bioren, and D. Hogan.

<sup>7</sup> Exchange account of Mathew Carey with Fielding Lucas Jr., 1817-1818 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 22, folder 14); Thomas Ruddiman, *The rudiments of the Latin tongue* (Baltimore, 1817).

stock sent and received, the cash value of which should balance. Exchanges were often supplemented by small cash payments, or even the exchange of other goods which were used to settle the accounts. Participation in these exchanges required that both parties had stock of value to exchange. However these publications did not have to be a particular publisher's own productions, but could be stock received in previous exchanges. This system facilitated the flow of texts outward from publishing hubs into provincial cities and towns across the United States. It was a built-in distribution system that allowed booksellers to stock a wide variety of texts without laying out precious cash. The exchange system also gave relatively small booksellers the opportunity to secure major publications by exchanging a selection of their own publications— facilitating the flow of texts from the hinterlands back into metropolitan centres.

The exchange system helped American booksellers and publishers, in a limited way, to overcome the regional nature of book distribution during this period. There is no surviving evidence to suggest that Thomas and Andrews of Boston ever took up direct exchange with any booksellers in Baltimore. Instead their publications reached Baltimore readers either through sale at their branch office (Thomas, Andrews & Butler), which operated from 1793 to 1803 in Baltimore, or through vicarious exchange. Thomas and Andrews had extensive business dealings with Carey of Philadelphia. Though this relationship was not always smooth, Carey served as another conduit for Thomas and Andrews' publications to reach Baltimore. Copies of their publications, such as Jedediah Morse's *American Geography* were exchanged with Carey, who in turn sold and exchanged them with various booksellers further south. An exchange account between the firms in 1789 and a 1798 copy of Carey's exchange catalogue addressed to Isaiah Thomas helps establish this as a long-term relationship.<sup>8</sup> In this way, the regional nature of the

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<sup>8</sup> *Mathew Carey's exchange catalogue* (Philadelphia, 1798), E.S.T.C. W10215, signed copy located at A.A.S.; see also Mathew Carey's exchange account with Isaiah Thomas, 15 August 1789 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 2,

book trades in early national America was more fluid than some have suggested, and texts had the ability to move far beyond the direct influence of their publishers.

Throughout this period, the United States frequently suffered cash shortages. There is evidence that Carey sometimes paid his accounts to Baltimore booksellers through his credits with other booksellers, and that book exchanges often functioned as a means of paying debts. In 1814 Lucas received thirty copies of Carey's publication John Russell's *Instructions for the Drill* from a Mr. Grant in Philadelphia to be credited to Carey's account.<sup>9</sup> A second note in the Carey accounts, this time from 1820, desired a Rev. Mr. Andrews to receive as many copies of the *Journal of Daniel Coker* as he wished on the account of the publisher Edward J. Coale of Baltimore.<sup>10</sup> These small examples provide some evidence for the ways that books flowed through trade networks, both for their own sake and in lieu of cash payments.

Not all of the books which were exchanged with Baltimore booksellers came from the largest publishers of the day. The Leibert Papers in the American Antiquarian Society contain the accounts of Peter Leibert, a German-language printer and publisher from Germantown, Pennsylvania. Leibert was a Baptist Dunker minister who published on a relatively small scale and primarily in German, including a German-language newspaper the *Germantauer Zeitung* between 1785 and 1787.<sup>11</sup> His accounts record sales and transactions with a wide variety of individuals from Virginia to New York, ranging from larger publishers to small shop owners. Leibert carried on some extensive contacts with individuals in and around Baltimore. In 1793 he had an account with John Fisher a brushmaker in Baltimore and in 1795 an account with Valentine Schwartz of

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folder 7). This exchange catalogue is an early example of a separately printed catalogue specifically for stock exchange. This item is a broadside specifically addressed to 'the booksellers.'

<sup>9</sup> Note from Fielding Lucas Jr. to Mathew Carey on receipt of books to be credited to Carey's account from a Mr. Grant of Philadelphia, 12 October 1814 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 18, folder 11); John Russell, *Instructions for the drill and the methods of performing eighteen manoeuvres* (Philadelphia, 1814).

<sup>10</sup> Note from M. Carey and Sons to Rev. Andrews, 26 July 1820 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 23, folder 10); Daniel Coker, *The journal of Daniel Coker a descendant of Africa* (Baltimore, 1820).

<sup>11</sup> For a list of his publications and biographical information see the entry on Peter Leibert in the Printer's File at the A.A.S.

Fredericktown, Maryland. One of his larger exchanges was with Samuel Saur of Baltimore. Leibert sent copies of his German publications such as *Der Kleine Kempis* from 1795 and his book *Blumen-Gartlein* from 1791. In exchange Saur kept Leibert supplied with yearly shipments of his German-language almanac, which Leibert sold and further distributed to other retailers. In exchange for sending his own publications and shipments of other items such as fennel seed and castor oil Leibert received English and German school books, grammars, hymn books and bibles, in addition to the ever-popular almanac.<sup>12</sup> This successful exchange can be contrasted to Saur's attempts to exchange stock with Mathew Carey. Since Carey did not have a large demand for German-language texts, he declined taking any of Saur's work.<sup>13</sup> Here we can see how smaller booksellers and publishers entered into these exchange networks, how their smaller local publications made their way into larger urban bookshops, and how German-language printers and publishers operated a separate but overlapping exchange network.

However this system did have its drawbacks. Extensive use of these exchange networks caused systemic problems in the early American book trades, as well as personal quarrels. This system of exchanges did not actually generate any cash flow for booksellers or publishers, since no money was made until the books were actually sold to consumers. This led to accounting problems, and may have contributed to some of the bankruptcies among American booksellers in the early national period. The exchange system also sustained large amounts of older stock, which was simply discounted and passed on when they could not be sold, generally devaluing all titles being exchanged.<sup>14</sup> Samuel Butler summed it up nicely in a printed circular letter he distributed to various booksellers in 1807.

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<sup>12</sup> Account with Samuel Saur, 1799 (A.A.S., Mss. Leibert, p. 138).

<sup>13</sup> Mathew Carey to Samuel Saur, 18 September 1801 (H.S.P., Lea and Febiger Collection 227B, Mathew Carey Letterbooks (K-Y) August 1800 to December 1801, vol. 13, no. 1651). Carey refused the exchange because he felt it was an uneven one.

<sup>14</sup> For more details on the problems with the exchange system see James N. Green, 'The rise and fall of Isaiah Thomas's bookselling network' presented at the A.A.S., 24 October 1996.

The rage for exchanging books, which has pervaded the United States for several years back, having been complained of by the most respectable of the profession, as having a tendency to prevent actual sales, and to keep back all those books that the proprietors thought either too new or valuable, to throw into the market, against such articles as the book-fairs have generally been supplied with; has given me an idea that it would have a good tendency, if one book seller in each large town, was to receive such works for sale, on account of the owners; but then it would be requisite to give a liberal allowance, so as to enable him to sell to booksellers and country merchants with the customary discounts.<sup>15</sup>

It was these factors which motivated Mathew Carey to offer his bibles as cash-only sales, so they retained their market value. Isaiah Thomas was notorious for only exchanging his publications at their original retail price, despite their age or the actual market value of the text. This contributed to the bankruptcy of Thomas, Andrews & Butler in Baltimore. Samuel Butler, the local partner, ended up with a large debt to Thomas for stock which was mostly out-of-date publications that could not be sold or exchanged in Baltimore for anywhere near the amount Thomas demanded.<sup>16</sup> Though the exchange system often led to difficulties, as the circulation and accumulation of large stocks of outdated books masked cash flow problems and devalued texts, by exchanging stock, booksellers were able to work together to distribute their publications and avoid using scarce cash resources that were needed for other purchases, such as paper, international shipments of books and certain categories of books, such as bibles. It was one of the primary means by which texts from around the United States entered the bookshops of Baltimore.

Exchange was by no means the only way that booksellers acquired texts to sell. Sales by commission and wholesale cash sales also facilitated the flow of texts into Baltimore during this period. Commission sales were a fairly low risk way for small booksellers to secure new stock, since it required no initial capital investment by the receiving booksellers. Many individuals who were just getting involved in the book trades, and who lacked the cash, credit or connections to purchase texts outright would agree to

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<sup>15</sup> Samuel Butler, *The rage for exchanging books...* (Baltimore, 1807), copy at the L.C.P.

<sup>16</sup> In 1803 the Baltimore store had debts worth \$30,000 dollars but assets of only \$11,000, Green, 'The rise and fall of Isaiah Thomas's bookselling network,' p. 15.

sell a publisher's work on commission. Under this arrangement a publisher would send a small number of their books to a bookseller, or shopkeeper at a discounted rate of between ten to twenty per cent. The shopkeeper would then sell the books at retail price, and keep a percentage of the sale. Samuel Saur gave Peter Liebhert a commission of ten per cent on the almanacs which Liebert sold and distributed to other retailers.<sup>17</sup> Mathew Carey gave Philip Edwards of Baltimore commissions of sixteen and two-thirds per cent for items sold on his behalf.<sup>18</sup>

The benefit of this distribution method was that it allowed publishers to penetrate quite small markets with specific publications. Mathew Carey used the services of Mason Locke Weems, to identify potential agents for commission sales of his publications. Weems was based in Maryland, not far outside Baltimore, and much of his early work selling books took place within Baltimore's hinterland. The benefit to the small shopkeepers and booksellers was that there was little investment or risk for them. They accepted the books, without any initial capital outlay, with which they could stock their shelves, and if the books did not sell they were generally returnable within a certain period of time. Though commission sales did not guarantee large profits to either the booksellers or publishers it was one way that newer or more expensive publications could be distributed outside the major towns and cities, and it also allowed new entrants to the book trade to secure a stock of books to sell before they had generated the capital or credit to purchase items outright.

Within Baltimore, Philip Edwards was a good example of the type of individual who acquired and sold books on commission. Edwards was a newspaper proprietor and editor who worked on various publications in Baltimore including the *Maryland Journal*, the *Baltimore Evening Post*, and the *Sunday Monitor* before his death at age twenty-eight

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<sup>17</sup> Account with Samuel Saur, 1799 (A.A.S., Mss Liebert, p. 138).

<sup>18</sup> Account between Philip Edwards and Mathew Carey, 11 September 1794 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 1, folder 8).

in 1800.<sup>19</sup> Imprints bearing his name generally state that they were printed by Philip Edwards out of the newspaper office, and were generally broadsides or small ephemeral items such as the *Minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church* published in 1796.<sup>20</sup> In 1794 Edwards sold the following books on commission for Mathew Carey from his printing office in Baltimore: a total of fifty-one copies of Carey's *A desultory account of the yellow fever, prevalent in Philadelphia, and of the present state of the city*, with and without accompanying maps; seven maps of Tennessee; thirty-seven United States Registers; thirty-five *A short accounts of Algiers*; and two copies of *Love in a village*, as well as other texts, all of which appear to be Carey's own publications.<sup>21</sup> In all Philips sold £57.7s.3½d. worth of books of which he was able to keep £9.14s.6½d., the rest of which was remitted to Carey.<sup>22</sup> Though Carey and Edwards' relationship deteriorated quickly, with Edwards returning many books unsold, this is indicative of how these sales functioned.<sup>23</sup>

For traders with more cash or credit, the wholesale purchase of books was an increasingly important method of acquiring texts. Problems resulting from the exchange system and the increasingly long and complex credit chains which contributed to various bankruptcies in the book trades during the early national period encouraged many publishers to move towards a more cash-based business model. Evidence from the Carey accounts suggest that wholesale purchases were generally given a discount of between one

<sup>19</sup> For information on Edward's publishing career see Brigham, *History and bibliography of American newspapers*, pp 229-240; see also Rollo G. Silver, 'The Baltimore book trade, 1800-1825 Part II,' p. 194.

<sup>20</sup> *Minutes of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, begun at Baltimore, on the 20th of October, 1796* (Baltimore, 1796), E.S.T.C. W14530.

<sup>21</sup> The list of works sold on commission by Philip Edwards for Mathew Carey is in the Carey papers but has been damaged so a complete reconstruction of the list is impossible, account between Philip Edwards and Mathew Carey, 11 September 1794 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 1, folder 8).

<sup>22</sup> These transactions are likely conducted using a Sterling exchange rate to normalize between different currencies in circulation in the United States during the period of transition to the national dollar standard in the 1790s. See Peter L. Rousseau, 'A common currency: early US monetary policy and the transition to the dollar' in *Financial History Review*, xiii, no.1 (April, 2006), pp 97-122.

<sup>23</sup> Mathew Carey was very unsatisfied with Philip Edwards' sales and with slow communication, and demanded that all books sent to him be returned. Mathew Carey to Philip Edwards, 9 January 1795 (H.S.P., Lea and Febiger Collection 227B, Mathew Carey Letterbook 28 October 1794 to 29 December 1795, vol. 5), p. 83.

quarter and one third off of the retail price. Carey was given a discount of twenty-five per cent off the purchase of two dozen sets of Hezekiah Niles' *Weekly Register* with supplements.<sup>24</sup> Carey offered Patrick Byrne Jr., who was a bookseller specializing in legal texts in Baltimore, (and son of Patrick Byrne bookseller of Dublin and later Philadelphia), a discount of thirty-three and one-third per cent on his purchase of over \$1,000 worth of books.<sup>25</sup>

Large publishers such as Carey were also able to offer attractive credit terms to help attract purchases. A printed letter from Carey to his customers in 1814 offers revealing insights into what was considered good terms of credit at the time. The circular states:

Various considerations, unnecessary to detail, impel me, till the restoration of peace, to contract my business in some degree, and make a slight modification of my credits. The alteration to each of my customers will be unimportant. To me it is of considerable consequence.

On purchases between fifty and one hundred dollars, the credit will be three months; on those above one hundred, six months.

But to remove, as far as practicable, the objections to this measure, I shall make the same discount for cash, as I have hitherto done, previous to this alteration: that is to say, prompt payment for a purchase now limited to six months credit, will entitle the purchaser to the same discount as he would have had, if the credit had remained nine months.

Relying upon your liberality to put a favourable construction upon the contents of this letter, I remain, Your obedient humble servant, Mathew Carey

P.S. during the continuance of the war, I should prefer moderate orders to large ones. As soon as peace is restored, it is my intention to renew the former arrangements with respect to credit.<sup>26</sup>

In addition to detailing his current credit practices, this letter also reveals Carey's prewar arrangements of nine months credit. We can assume that these terms would have been among the best on offer, with smaller publishers and booksellers unable to match Carey's terms. The letter is also indicative of the impact of war on credit arrangements in the United States.

<sup>24</sup> Account of Mathew Carey with Hezekiah Niles (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 19, folder 13).

<sup>25</sup> Account of Mathew Carey with Patrick Byrne, Jr. (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 16, folder 4).

<sup>26</sup> Mathew Carey, *Sir accept my sincere and grateful acknowledgements for the repeated orders I have received from you...* (Philadelphia, 1814).

Purchases did not necessarily have to be large orders, but could consist of only a few books amounting to a couple of dollars. From around 1803 when Carey's Baltimore branch store was in operation, many of Carey's Baltimore contacts began to purchase their books through the store as an alternative to large wholesale orders from Philadelphia. While these purchases did not replace larger orders, they may have served as a way to acquire items in a hurry, or as a way to save on freight costs for very small orders. The day books from the store reveal a steady stream of business from booksellers, printers, and stationers in Baltimore who regularly purchased small amounts of goods at a varying discount depending on the item. On 11 March 1808 eighteen purchases were made on the day, two of which were by other Baltimore booksellers. The average purchase amounted to around fifty cents worth of goods, which might include two chapbooks and some paper, or some ink and a spelling book, or simply paper and quills. Amidst these small purchases which form the majority of the store's business, Warner and Hanna printers and stationers, purchased six copies of Goldsmith's *Rome* and six copies of Murray's *Key* totaling \$6.87 ½. Conrad Lucas and Co. also purchased one copy of Goldsmith's *Rome* for \$.73, the retail price of which was \$.87 ½, a discount of around sixteen per cent.<sup>27</sup> A third large purchase of a dozen historical grammars was made by Mrs. Lcomb, who ran a young ladies' academy on South Calvert Street.<sup>28</sup> These individuals were the only named customers in the day's records, and represent the customers who, while they may have paid cash, were eligible for store credit or discounts. From September to December 1805 discounts were given to just over a dozen individuals including the Conrads, Saur and Cole, William Christie, Samuel Butler, Samuel Knox and John Munday.<sup>29</sup> These discounts generally were smaller than those offered for larger orders direct from Philadelphia, ranging from ten to twenty per cent, depending on the number of items ordered and

<sup>27</sup> Day books for Mathew Carey's Baltimore store, 11 March 1808 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 14, folder 7).

<sup>28</sup> James M'Henry, *Baltimore directory, and citizens' register for 1807* (Baltimore, 1807), p. 74.

<sup>29</sup> Baltimore Store bill of sales September to December 1805 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 12, folder 2).

whether or not cash was paid, but did not require the purchasers to pay for shipping, perhaps offsetting the higher cost on small orders.

Records of the store's debtors paint an intriguing picture of the geographical spread and type of customers that were eligible for credit at the store. An end-of-year account from 1810 lists those customers who still had a balance due. This Baltimore bookstore counted customers from Washington D.C., Maryland's eastern shore, western Virginia and Pennsylvania, as well as individuals from Baltimore and its immediate surrounds. While some of these customers were clearly members of the book trades like George Keating, Samuel Saur, and James Callendis, a bookbinder, others were individuals like John Hart, a walking stationer, and Bernard Connelly, a peddler, who probably sold books as a small part of their business. Others such as Samuel Moale the attorney, Patrick Edwards, a teacher, and Thomas Connelly, a carpenter, had a more ambiguous relationship with the store. While some of these accounts had later been marked paid, some had clearly been written off as bad debts, including those of Clement Brook, J. Duffie and James Callendis all marked insolvent, and a Mr. Lowry next to whose name was the note 'left the city.'<sup>30</sup> Carey only offered credit at his store to members of the book trade and those living inside the city, having learned from his experiences with the *American Museum* that country debts were more hassle than they were worth.

The records of Carey's Baltimore store provide intriguing but anonymous glimpses into the retail sales of books in Baltimore which need to be explored more fully. However the more detailed information of wholesale and discounted purchases by local members of the book trades further reveal some of the mechanisms of distribution and circulation at work at all levels of the trade. Books entered the Baltimore marketplace through multiple channels all of which were overlapping and interdependent. Flexible networks allowed booksellers and publishers to adapt their methods depending on the resources available.

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<sup>30</sup> List of balances due to Baltimore store, 13 December 1810 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 22, folder 9).

The best discounts were available for purchasers who could pay for large orders in cash, but lack of cash did not necessarily exclude someone from the national networks of exchange. Large stocks of books could be acquired through exchanges which facilitated the distribution of books regionally and to some extent nationally, allowing publications from even the smallest country printers to migrate to various urban centres. And even the smallest shopkeeper or peddler could take books for sales on commission. Baltimore's readers were probably unaware and uncaring about the complex relationships which provided them with a supply of new and useful books to read, but only by understanding these relationships can we hope to better appreciate why certain books and not others made their way successfully into different communities. One caution needs to be made due to the nature of the surviving evidence which privileges Philadelphia and Mathew Carey as sources for publications coming into the Baltimore market. Because the full extent of the relationships between Baltimore booksellers and other publishers is obscured, it is difficult to judge the centrality of Carey's contribution to the market, and so this evidence should be taken as examples of the possible trade relationships rather than a typical picture of Baltimore's trade.

Within Ireland very little evidence survives to detail the exchange networks and book sales that existed there, and almost none of it relates directly to Belfast. However we do know that books from Dublin and elsewhere were regularly advertised for sale by Belfast booksellers. We also know some of the relationships between Belfast and Dublin booksellers and printers. Finally we know that many of the American booksellers, Mathew Carey included, learned their trade in Ireland before emigrating, and it is possible to surmise that they may have adapted Irish trade practices to fit their new national environment. Working back from this evidence it may be possible to describe some of the mechanisms used by the Irish book trades, and to sketch the barest outline of Belfast's activity.

As in the United States, books were imported into Belfast in many different ways that depended on established book-trade routes and personal relationships. Anecdotal evidence provided by Pollard suggests that Irish booksellers used stock exchange, rather than cash, as a very common method to purchase books.<sup>31</sup> In 1760 Thomas Stewart of Newry, taking over his mother's bookselling and ink-making business, advertised that 'booksellers may be supply'd [sic] with the above by the exchange of their copies.'<sup>32</sup> Given that Belfast's printers generally produced a good number of local editions, and regularly advertised Dublin publications for sale in their shop, it seems likely that they may have participated in stock exchanges with Dublin, and even London, printers. John Hay of Belfast participated in what was described as an 'exchange' with John Murray of London.<sup>33</sup> Though no stock exchange accounts have yet come to light, to provide details of these transactions, we can assume that stock exchanges in Ireland functioned in a similar way to those in the United States. However, the limited number of Belfast imprints found among Dublin book collections suggests that some caution should be taken when evaluating this limited evidence.

Newspaper advertisements in the *Belfast News-Letter* for books 'just published' in Dublin can provide some clues to how these books might have ended up in Belfast. As well as the details contained in the advertisements themselves, the newspapers provide evidence of potential distribution routes and the possible geographical spread of customers. Máire Kennedy's work suggests that in many Irish provincial towns, the newspaper printer was often also the primary bookseller. Access to newspapers allowed booksellers both to advertise their wares, and to use the paper's distribution networks to send customers catalogues.<sup>34</sup> While this was not the case in Belfast, where the Joys ran the paper and the

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<sup>31</sup> M. Pollard, *Dublin's trade in books*, p. 193.

<sup>32</sup> *B.N.L.*, 6 June 1760.

<sup>33</sup> John Murray to John Hay, 18 January 1774 (N.L.S., John Murray Archive, Ms 41899).

<sup>34</sup> For more information on book distribution in eighteenth century Ireland see Máire Kennedy, 'Book trade networks in the south of Ireland' in Richards (ed), *Branches of literature and music proceedings*, pp 25-46; and Kennedy, 'Spreading the word in the Irish midlands,' pp 29-37.

Magees were the primary booksellers, all the bookselling families in eighteenth-century Belfast had access to the *News-Letter* for advertising. Roads, waterways and, after 1789, mail coach routes were all other potential distribution channels for Irish publications coming into Belfast. Since Belfast was well-connected to both Dublin and other provincial towns, as a result of its importance as a linen market, we can assume that its potential access to texts from Dublin was quite good.

Many of the advertisements in the *News-Letter* list the Dublin printers or publishers of a new text but just mention that they were available from the booksellers in Belfast. These advertisements were probably placed by the Dublin publishers themselves to advertise their books since local booksellers would have included their own names. The phrase 'booksellers of Belfast' was a generic term that implied that the text was widely available and in general circulation through the book exchange networks, and that there were probably no exclusive or specific arrangements between the Dublin publishers and any individual members of the Belfast book trades.

Some of these advertisements, which include no hint of where Dublin publications could be purchased locally, imply that Belfast's readers were able to order books directly from Dublin booksellers. Wealthy or well-connected readers could easily order items directly from Dublin, while more modest print consumers would have been limited to texts available locally. John Archer was just one bookseller in Dublin who processed orders for country readers, extending them credit and keeping track of their purchasing preferences for future orders. Archer sent catalogues of his wares to Belfast, and Belfast readers and booksellers appear on subscription lists for his publications.<sup>35</sup>

Both booksellers and individuals living in Belfast would also have had access to books through auctions. Robert Bell, 'having brought from Great Britain and Dublin a choice collection of modern books on various subjects,' held a book auction in Belfast in

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<sup>35</sup> Kennedy, 'The domestic and international trade of an eighteenth-century Dublin bookseller,' p. 98.

April 1760. The auction was held at 8pm in Bridge Street at the former shop of Hugh McIlrath, and printed catalogues were available at the time of the auction. Country customers were encouraged to come and purchase books on divinity which would be offered from 11 am till 5 pm on the same day.<sup>36</sup> While auctions were not as regular a feature of Belfast's print culture as they were in Dublin, this was still one means by which large amounts of texts were made available for the reading public as well as retail booksellers. Robert Bell's travelling auctions were also a feature of book importation in Baltimore. Bell, after wearing out his welcome among the Dublin booksellers, relocated to Philadelphia in the 1770s. It was there that he continued his practice of travelling auctions, moving through Baltimore on his routes south. After Bell's death while auctioning books through the American south, much of his stock was purchased by Mathew Carey.<sup>37</sup>

Other advertisements for books in the *News-Letter* list specific Belfast booksellers where Dublin printed items were available for purchase. These advertisements were probably placed by the local Belfast bookseller, though possibly paid for by the Dublin publishers. John Murray of London paid for the cost of advertising his publications and patent medicines in Belfast after John Magee placed advertisements in the *Belfast News-Letter*, suggesting that this was a possibility for Dublin booksellers as well.<sup>38</sup> One example where a specific Belfast bookseller was named was in an advertisement for a new edition of Pope's works and the *Gardener's complete kalendar* both published by James Williams of Dublin and sold by John Hay of Belfast.<sup>39</sup> These advertisements may suggest a closer relationship between individual Dublin publishers and local booksellers, although this cannot be confirmed using newspaper advertisements alone. Work on the distribution of popular titles within Ulster indicates that financial arrangements, including partnerships

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<sup>36</sup> *B.N.L.*, 8 April 1760.

<sup>37</sup> James Gilreath, 'Mason Locke Weems, Mathew Carey and the southern booktrade' in *Publishing History*, x (1981), pp. 27-50.

<sup>38</sup> Letters to John Hay and John Magee of Belfast from John Murray London, 20 January 1776 (N.L.S., John Murray Archive, Ms 4190, pp 20-21).

<sup>39</sup> *B.N.L.*, 29 December 1764; Henry Stevenson, *The new and complete gardener's kalendar* (Dublin, 1765), E.S.T.C. T174476 .

and distribution arrangements, between provincial members of the book trade were both common and generally short-lived, perhaps suggesting similar possibilities between Dublin and Belfast booksellers.<sup>40</sup>

Family, business or religious ties can hint at relationships and networks which Irish booksellers and publishers may have used to distribute their publications and secure stock. The best example of an individual using this type of networking in Belfast was James Magee. Throughout his career, Magee used family and business contacts to expand his business in Ulster. His son John Magee went to Dublin where he printed the *Dublin Evening Post*, and published various materials in conjunction with the Company of Dublin booksellers.<sup>41</sup> This served as an excellent connection for James Magee of Belfast to exploit to secure a steady stream of Dublin publications as well as a market for his own Belfast productions, and may have helped Magee secure his position as the premier bookseller in Ulster. No records exist to provide details of how this relationship functioned, but evidence from their lottery business and the John Murray archives confirms that the Dublin and Belfast Magees did engage in various business ventures together.<sup>42</sup>

Finally, many advertisements in the *News-Letter* were bids for subscriptions to Dublin printed books that listed specific local booksellers or individuals as subscription agents. In 1765 a proposal for an edition of Thomas Stackhouse's *New History of the Holy Bible*, to be published in Dublin was advertised in the *News-Letter*. Six specific booksellers in Belfast and one in Newry were listed as subscription agents, who would then presumably have additional copies of the title for sale when and if it was published.<sup>43</sup> While the exact nature of the relationships between these Belfast booksellers and their

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<sup>40</sup> Adams, *The printed word and the common man*, pp 24-25.

<sup>41</sup> John Magee son of James Magee of Belfast and brother to William Magee passed the paper to his sons John Jr. and then James Magee.

<sup>42</sup> For more information on the Magee family see Bigger, *The Magees of Belfast and Dublin* and also John C. Greene 'The trials of Richard Daly and John Magee, involving the Sham Squire, the Lottery Swindle of 1788, the Billiard Marker's Ghost, and the Grand Olympic Pig Hunt' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, xxiv (2009), pp 135-158.

<sup>43</sup> *B.N.L.*, 28 June 1765.

Dublin suppliers is unclear, the frequency of subscription advertisements suggests that this was a fairly common type of interaction. Subscription publication was not only a popular way of financing publications in the eighteenth century but was also used as a distribution method in Ireland. Irish subscription lists often include the names of booksellers in other towns who had subscribed for multiple copies, generally at some sort of discounted rate, who then offered these books for sale. Discounts often took the form of a free copy after so many were ordered. In 1762, George Faulkner of Dublin advertised in Belfast for subscriptions to an eleven-volume set of the complete works of Jonathan Swift.<sup>44</sup> He offered one free copy for each six that were subscribed for; this translates into a discount of sixteen per cent and is consistent with trade discounts elsewhere. Subscription publication shared the up-front costs of the publication and secured a guaranteed distribution of the work. John Archer's 1791 edition of Thomas Pennant's *Some account of London*, included the names of booksellers from Belfast like William Magee, who took six copies, and private individuals like Andrew Thompson, esquire.<sup>45</sup> The same method was used to distribute Belfast publications outside Ulster. The 1806 Belfast edition of Thomas Romney Robinson's *Juvenile Poems* included an extensive subscription list which listed booksellers from a large geographical area. Among these were John Kelso, a stationer in Derry, and J. Odell, a bookseller in Cork, with two copies each, John Barlow of Dublin, who took twenty copies, four separate booksellers in Edinburgh, taking a total of forty-nine copies, and John Murray of London, taking just one.<sup>46</sup>

Though this evidence is limited, it does hint at some of the ways that Belfast booksellers acquired publications from Dublin and elsewhere to sell in their shops. It is likely that an established stock exchange system was in place in the Irish book trade, in which the Belfast booksellers participated. There is also evidence that personal

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<sup>44</sup> *B.N.L.*, 11 May 1762.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Pennant, *Some account of London* (Dublin, 1791), E.S.T.C. T59910, published by John Archer of Dublin, with subscription list.

<sup>46</sup> Subscription list in Thomas Romney Robinson, *Juvenile Poems, to which is prefixed a short account of the author* (Belfast, 1806), pp ix-xxvii.

relationships facilitated the sale and exchange of books between booksellers in Belfast and Dublin. Booksellers and individual customers could purchase items directly from Dublin publishers, or through books auctions, such as the one run by Robert Bell. Subscription publishing was used to distribute books at a discounted rate to publishers in other cities and towns, and Belfast booksellers used this system to both buy and sell books. Additionally, other less formal means were used to import new Irish works into Belfast. Dr. William Drennan personally sent copies of one of his pamphlets published in Dublin to John Hay and William Magee in Belfast. Magee sold two batches of these pamphlets, sending part of the profits back to Drennan, who had undertaken much of the organization for the publication on himself.<sup>47</sup>

What this evidence together suggests is that when Dublin printers and publishers produced new works, they did so with a national audience in mind, as evidenced by their advertisements in provincial papers. Established practices for sales and exchange allowed for the regular, if limited, circulation of Dublin printed works into the provincial cities of Ireland, from which they could be further distributed into the country. Belfast booksellers had no trouble securing a steady stream of incoming books for their customers. Though the details of this trade are obscure, hints of the networks and trade relationships can be found in advertisements and in the books themselves. Personal connections seem to have been highly important to the circulation of texts, especially in the case of subscription publishing, where financing and distribution depended on securing enough subscriptions. However these national trade networks, both in the United States and in Ireland, did not just serve as a means of distributing books from other national centres, but they were also vital components in the circulation of books from abroad.

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<sup>47</sup> Letter William Drennan to Martha McTier, January 1799 in *The Drennan-McTier letters*, ii, pp 459-462.

## International Book Trade Networks

Modern concerns about tracing the unique history of various nation-states has led to a misleading preoccupation with tracing the production and consumption of books within national boundaries. Recently it has been well-acknowledged that while national projects tracing the history of the book contain much valuable scholarship, they can focus too closely on the production and consumption of books within national boundaries.<sup>48</sup> This can lead to a distorted understanding of the actual patterns of consumption of historical readers in any given place. By focusing on the means by which books produced outside local communities made their way to readers, we can restore some of the perspective of eighteenth-century consumers, for whom books were rarely if ever limited to those produced within the local or even national boundaries.

Generally speaking books produced outside Ireland or America during the period of study made their way into Belfast and Baltimore through two primary channels. The first was through importation by booksellers, who then circulated these texts through the pre-existing national book trade networks. Much work has already been done by scholars tracing the importation of books from abroad by major bookselling enterprises. For Ireland, Máire Kennedy has worked on John Archer, a Dublin bookseller, and his continental imports. Other work has been done on major Dublin booksellers such as George Faulkner and Thomas Ewing and their contacts with the London book trades. Dublin has also been the centre of investigations looking into Irish book exports, particularly those sent to the United States.<sup>49</sup> However all of these studies use Dublin as their focal point, and spend little if any time dealing with Belfast or other provincial cities.

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<sup>48</sup> For further details see Introduction, p. 3.

<sup>49</sup> Kennedy, 'The domestic and international trade of an eighteenth-century Dublin bookseller,' pp 94-105; Hugh Gough, 'Book imports from continental Europe in late eighteenth-century Ireland: Luke White and the Société Typographique de Neuchâtel' in *Long Room*, no. 38 (1993), pp 35-48. For work on the relationships between major Dublin booksellers and the London book trades see William Zachs, *The first John Murray and the late eighteenth-century London book trade* (Oxford, 1998); Ward (ed), *Prince of Dublin printers*; and Kinane, *A brief history of printing and publishing in Ireland*. For work on Irish exports to America see Kinane, "'Literary Food' for the American market: Patrick Byrne's exports to Mathew Carey' in *The American Antiquarian Society*, civ, part 2 (1994), pp. 315-332; and Pollard, *Dublin's trade in books*.

A recent exception is an essay which deals with Magee's American connections by Michael O'Connor.<sup>50</sup> In America, because of the great dependence upon imported texts for much of the eighteenth century, more is known about the process of importing texts from across the Atlantic. This is particularly true in the case of individuals such as David Hall, Isaiah Thomas and Mathew Carey for whom large archives survive. More evidence is available on books exported to America within the archives of London bookselling firms, making this a study that has been pursued from both sides of the Atlantic.<sup>51</sup> However, there are few studies that deal directly with Baltimore, nor very much material on how imported books circulated once they reach American shores. This section will attempt to use knowledge of the national book networks to try and trace imported books from major centres such as Dublin and Philadelphia into our provincial cities.

The second general channel for imported books to reach the readers in Baltimore and Belfast was by direct importation by local booksellers or merchants with the intention of retailing them to readers within their communities. We know that provincial readers did not always choose to rely on booksellers from elsewhere, and often imported books from abroad themselves. Though we do not have any accounts from booksellers in Baltimore or Belfast to judge the scale of these imports, correspondence, newspaper evidence and port records reveal that direct importation into these provincial communities took place throughout our period of study. Here we will try to piece together this evidence to try to determine how active our provincial readers were in the transatlantic trade in books.

In addition to questions concerning how imported books made their way into these provincial communities we must also investigate why books were imported from some locations and not others, and why some types of books were imported over others. How

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<sup>50</sup> Michael O'Connor, "A Small Cargoe for Tryal," pp 187-211.

<sup>51</sup> See Robin Myers & Michael Harris (eds), *Spreading the world the distribution networks of print 1550-1850* (Winchester, 1990); Remer, *Printers and men of capital*; Amory & Hall (eds), *A history of the book in America : volume 1*. For work done on American imports from a British perspective see Raven, *London booksellers and American customers*; and Sher, *The enlightenment and the book*.

did factors such as fashion, utility, price and national feeling determine the value of texts outside their place of production, and how did these factors change over time and distance?

Early American imports of texts from Great Britain and Ireland were transactions that were driven, to a large degree, by the lack of choice. From the early colonial period until at least the mid 1790s book production in America was generally not a cost-effective proposition. Labour and materials were scarce and more expensive than in Great Britain or Ireland. In addition, the vast majority of new texts in English were first published in London.<sup>52</sup> For these reasons, until the production methods and markets were sufficiently developed to support national production, it was simply cheaper and less risky to import many texts to cities like Baltimore than to reproduce them.

During the first half of our study, the evidence suggests a mixed approach to book importation into Baltimore. Newspaper advertisements regularly listed ships returning from Great Britain with a variety of goods, including publications, for sale. These publications were often listed and sold alongside goods, such as London porter and garden seeds, by general merchants. Other shipments of imported books were advertised by local booksellers, such as William Murphy, who in 1784 declared that he had just imported a collection of books ‘worthy of attention, being some of the latest and most valuable publications, in elegant bindings.’ Murphy provided a long list of titles to tempt his customers, which were mostly multi-volume sets of serious and practical works. These included five volumes of Blackstone’s *Commentaries*, three volumes of Leland’s *History of Ireland*, sixteen volumes of Hook’s *Roman History*, and two volumes of Robertson’s *History of America*.<sup>53</sup>

A consistent feature of book advertisements in the Baltimore papers prior to the mid-1790s was that the location from which the books were imported featured as a prominent part of the advertisement. In 1792 Rice and Co. advertised that they ‘have just

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<sup>52</sup> Raven, *The business of books*, pp 134-140.

<sup>53</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 6 January 1784.

received from London and Dublin a general assortment of books among the latest and most approved publications.<sup>54</sup> This same shipment probably also supplied Rice and Co. with copies of pamphlets, such as Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, which they then reproduced in a local edition.<sup>55</sup> London and then Dublin were the most frequently mentioned suppliers of books, though other locations were sometimes mentioned.

Many American booksellers imported large amounts of books from their connections in Dublin before 1801.<sup>56</sup> Because of the lack of copyright protection for British publications in Ireland, Irish publishers could produce smaller and cheaper editions and undercut the London prices on books exported to America.<sup>57</sup> This trade increased after 1780, when the direct trade between Ireland and North America was legalized. Irish exports of books to America amounted to at least £10,000 between 1780 and 1800.<sup>58</sup> These transactions took place in similar ways to transatlantic book sales in London. In 1793 John Rice of Dublin sent Isaiah Thomas two boxes of books which he could either accept on commission sales or on six months credit.<sup>59</sup>

Like the British trade, Irish imports also had their draw-backs. In 1788 Carey, writing to Patrick Byrne in Dublin, advised him that, 'we are deluged with books from England and Ireland, and money is very scarce. Therefore even the best books sell slowly, and at low rates.' He further advised that future shipments of books should 'be of the most solid and substantial kind; history, voyages, philosophy, science, and well-chosen books,' and that 'novels will by no means answer.'<sup>60</sup> Carey was only able to sell a quarter of books

<sup>54</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 24 April 1792.

<sup>55</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 4 May 1792; James Rice and Co. advertised a Baltimore edition of Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* alongside their imported books from London and Dublin.

<sup>56</sup> Kinane, "'Literary Food' for the American market," pp. 315-332.

<sup>57</sup> Scottish publishers were also heavily engaged in exporting texts to America using their mercantile and family connections, though copyright legislation prevented them from reprinting everything available in Dublin.

<sup>58</sup> Kinane, "'Literary Food' for the American market," pp. 315-332.

<sup>59</sup> Letter Ebenezer Andrews to Isaiah Thomas, 28 April 1793 (A.A.S., Mss Thomas, box 2 folder 10).

<sup>60</sup> Letter from Mathew Carey to Patrick Byrne of Dublin, 22 October 1788 (H.S.P., Lea and Febiger papers 227B, Mathew Carey Letterbooks, vol. 1), pp 74-76.

sent on speculation by Byrne and had to return the rest to Ireland. For shipments like this, sent on speculation, all of the risks and costs of transport, including the return cost for unsold stock, were assumed by the exporting bookseller. An early attempt in 1753 by James Magee of Belfast to engage in this type of speculative shipment resulted in a profit of £3.3s.9d., when he sent a bundle of pamphlets on the persecution of the Protestants in France to New York to sell. However it took three years for these profits to be realized and even then not all the publications had sold, suggesting the risky nature of this type of sales.<sup>61</sup> On shipments of books on order, booksellers like Carey received a twenty-five per cent discount and six months credit. In these transactions the importer generally paid for shipping and insurance costs— assuming the risks associated with the venture. Often shipments, such as the ones between Mathew Carey and Patrick Bryne, contained a mixture of ordered books, and books sent on speculation where the risks were shared by the two men. Byrne often used Carey to forward shipments of books which were landed in Philadelphia on to other American cities, and in 1795 Carey forwarded on books from Byrne to Clarke and Kiddie in Baltimore.

Though cities such as Amsterdam and Leipzig were mentioned occasionally, ‘Europe’ was often listed as the generic source for German-language publications imported into Baltimore, reflecting the range of publication centres and ports which supplied German publications. Advertisements for non-English book imports generally maintained the features of the early English advertisements, stressing the act of importation from abroad, well into the nineteenth century. In 1815 F.G. Schaeffer announced the receipt of a shipment on 11 September of German bibles from Europe.<sup>62</sup> Despite the large German communities around Baltimore, these types of imports were fairly rare. Before American independence, all books designated for resale had to be routed through England, paying

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<sup>61</sup> Details of this transaction to be found in a letter from Waddell Cunningham of New York to Thomas Greg of Belfast, 20 September 1756, in Thomas M. Truxes (ed), *Letterbook of Greg & Cunningham 1756-57: merchants of New York and Belfast* (Oxford, 2001), p. 208.

<sup>62</sup> *B.P.*, 14 September 1815.

import duties there, before being shipped to the colonies. This made the process of obtaining texts from the Continent quite long and expensive, and smuggling books on Dutch ships was often risky. Continentally produced works in French or German could be just as easily and cheaply purchased from specialist booksellers in London, and imported with other London publications. After American independence, the Napoleonic wars and declining numbers of German immigrants made large-scale Continental book imports generally unprofitable.<sup>63</sup>

Disruption of transatlantic trade, particularly from war, had a strong impact on book importation into Baltimore. An advertisement by William Goddard in 1781 highlights the value of imported texts in Baltimore as well as the problems associated with dependence upon Great Britain for supplies of texts. Goddard stated that

Nothing is more unfavourable to the promotion of literature than a state of war;...it is presumed that the lovers of learning and the sciences will give their patronage and encouragement to any attempt, tho' feeble, to spread the rays of knowledge thro' the American states. Much we have suffered this way, since the commencement of this unhappy contest; numberless new *European* publications have not reached these shores, besides the want of the importation of such books as were usually circulated among us, both for the use of schools, and for those of mature years.<sup>64</sup>

He went on to propose printing local editions, at the lowest prices, of books of interest to Americans. Goddard valued these imported texts for their knowledge and the practical information they provided. He appealed to the lovers of learning and science, not great literature, and proposed his scheme for the practical benefit of American citizens. Imported texts, in this instance, served a utilitarian purpose; they were important for the information they contained, not as status symbols or as 'European' cultural artifacts. Price was a major factor, and Goddard suggested that it did not matter where these texts came from as long as they could be had 'at as low a price as possible.'<sup>65</sup> This attitude, though by no means the only one, helps to explain the popularity of Dublin publications, which were

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<sup>63</sup> For information on German-language importation arrangements see Cazden, *A social history of the German book trade*.

<sup>64</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 10 April 1781.

<sup>65</sup> *M.J.B.A.*, 10 April 1781.

cheaper than London editions, and the preponderance of serious and practical works on early lists of imported texts. Goddard also represented an early national perspective which called for Americans to rid themselves of dependence on imports, which were easily disrupted by conflict, through increased American book production.

As the period progressed two major changes in the importation of texts into Baltimore are evident. The first was an increasing reliance on the established national book trade networks for sourcing imported texts. Over time there was less and less direct importation of texts into Baltimore. The second occurred as American printing capabilities increased, causing the value of imported texts to become more contested. As American production grew and was gradually better able to supply basic textual requirements like school books and bibles, imports were no longer necessities for many. Increasingly they took on the tone of luxury, becoming more fashionable than useful as new genres such as novels supplanted imports of 'useful' works. Both of these general changes were visible from the mid-1790s.

In a letter to his partner Isaiah Thomas in 1793, Ebenezer Andrews discussed the arrangements being made for a shipment of books from Scotland. Andrews was planning on including orders from other booksellers in his shipment of books, and wanted to make sure that the rates charged were acceptable to Thomas. According to Andrews they charged others in the book trade a rate of eighteen per cent below retail price for imported books. This gave them a variable return, depending on the source of the books as Irish and Scottish books offered better returns than English ones.<sup>66</sup> Andrews viewed their profit on these transactions to be quite small, considering all the effort and expense of the shipment. However his motivation for offering his services to other booksellers was by no means altruistic. In addition to a small profit, Andrews felt that by placing their orders for them he could keep his competitors from gaining any additional insight into the import trade.

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<sup>66</sup> Letter Ebenezer Andrews to Isaiah Thomas, 12 March 1793 (A.A.S., Mss Thomas, box 2, folder 9).

The books added also allowed him greater clout when negotiating discounts with British and Irish publishers. Andrews' letter is quite revealing. Not only does he state some of the profits that booksellers could expect from imported texts, but his attempts to consolidate the import trade coincided with a general movement in the American book trade to integrate imported books into the trade arrangements being constructed nationally.

Importing books from Great Britain, Ireland or the Continent was a difficult process that required booksellers to have both connections and the credit necessary to complete the transaction. Shipping difficulties, import duties and insurance rates added costs to the process. London publishers were often reluctant to fill transatlantic orders because of the long credit American customers demanded, the low rates of return and the difficulty of satisfactorily filling their orders.<sup>67</sup> Over time this led many American customers to use the services of a general merchant to fill orders for books, rather than dealing directly with the London book trades.<sup>68</sup> For both American customers and British and Irish publishers, consolidating orders through larger publishing firms simplified this process. While there had always been individuals, such as David Hall of Philadelphia, who acted as specialist importers, from the mid-1790s imported texts in provincial markets were increasingly supplied from larger publishing firms through the purchase and exchange networks discussed in the previous section.

Baltimore was no exception. In 1812 William Munday, bookseller and operator of the Baltimore Circulating Library, wrote to Mathew Carey to settle accounts and 'to request the favour of your list of new novels from London as soon as possible.' Munday continued, 'I shall also consider it a particular favour if you will send me from time to time

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<sup>67</sup> London publisher John Murray, writing to Thomas Gates of Charleston, asked Gates to accept the shipment of books sent, 'being very sensible of the difficulty of hitting another's [sic] taste in books.' Letter John Murray London to Thomas Gates Charleston, 4 July 1791 (N.L.S., John Murray Archive, MS 41906), p. 5.

<sup>68</sup> The Library Company of Baltimore is an example of a group that chose to use the services of a general merchant to import books from Great Britain after their contacts with London booksellers proved to be frustrating.

London novels that are new and of great celebrity.’<sup>69</sup> Consistent accounts between Carey and Longman and Co. suggest that they were Carey’s primary contact in London from at least 1812. A shipment to Carey from Longman in 1818 totaling about £350 worth of books consisted mainly of periodicals, such as the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, imaginative literature, like the works of Byron, and a few copies of *Rob Roy*, and specific scholarly works on various subjects like Gillie’s *Aristotle* and Burnett’s *Specimens*.<sup>70</sup> Accounts with Longmans also included commissions on globes and other items, which they arranged to be sent to Carey from other London firms.<sup>71</sup>

Carey also imported books directly from Continental sources. In 1818 Carey published a catalogue of German-language books for sale, which were mostly imports. An account from 1812 documents Carey’s imports of books from France. In this account some of the books were to be shipped to Philadelphia, some to New York and others to Baltimore.<sup>72</sup> The account does not make it entirely clear whether these books were for Carey to sell directly in Baltimore, or if that part of the order was placed on behalf of another bookseller in Baltimore, such as Fielding Lucas Jr. whose 1832 catalogue included fifty-five French-language titles.<sup>73</sup>

Newspaper advertisements for books from this later period were much less likely to use the phrase ‘just imported,’ or to mention a place of publication for the texts. Trade arrangements for imported texts no longer required direct advertisement to readers, since other trade members were the primary purchasers of book shipments. Advertisements from this period tend to mention either ‘books received,’ such as an advertisement from 1810 promoting law and medical books, or they generally stated that booksellers had a ‘large

<sup>69</sup> Letter William Munday to Mathew Carey, 27 November 1812 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 18, folder 5).

<sup>70</sup> Mathew Carey’s account with Longman and Co. London, 22 June 1818 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 22, folder 14).

<sup>71</sup> Messrs. Longman and Co. London to Mathew Carey, 12 February 1821 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 25, folder 2).

<sup>72</sup> Cazden, *A social history of the German book trade*, p. 49; Mathew Carey account of French imports, 5 September 1812 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 17, folder 6).

<sup>73</sup> *Catalogue of the Standard Catholic book published by F. Lucas, Jr.* (Baltimore, 1832).

assortment of books,' or 'all the newest books.'<sup>74</sup> The latest publications were no longer strictly associated with the process of importation, and the language used in these advertisements suggests that the public was less concerned with the origin of the text and more interested in its 'newness.'

These trade developments coincided with changes in the attitudes surrounding imported British books. As the American experiment struggled to find its feet during the early national period, individuals and groups from across the country began to demand and promote American manufacture of a variety of goods, including books. As American manufacture advanced, the types of books imported from Great Britain changed. American publishers could now profitably produce the quantity of school books, religious works and bibles needed to supply the American public. These steady sellers, which made up a large portion of imported works in the previous decades, were gradually surpassed by the importation of works of fiction and specialist texts of all sorts. The importation of British books was no longer a necessity to keep the American people supplied with basic reading material, but became a luxury, one contested by nationalistic ideals.

For some groups in the early nineteenth century, it was enough that the text was physically produced in the United States. For them, Carey's editions of the Waverley novels, or Joseph Robinson's Baltimore publications of English dramas were American productions, despite the fact that the authors were British.<sup>75</sup> However, this type of reprinting still depended on a certain amount of importation, and reveals the confused and at times contradictory relationship between American readers and foreign texts. Perhaps this relationship contributed to the promotion of the idea of 'newness' over overt claims of textual origin in advertisements for books.

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<sup>74</sup> *F.R.*, 13 December 1810. Other examples include an advertisement for Warner and Hanna which mentions having 'just received' a list of new titles from both England and elsewhere in the Union in *B.E.P.*, 19 December 1807. Also in the *B.E.P.*, 31 December 1808 Conrad Lucas and Co. have 'just received' a list of new titles.

<sup>75</sup> Joseph Robinson printed and published a series of English dramas in the *Baltimore Repertory*, which was a short-lived literary periodical published in Baltimore by a Society of Gentlemen in 1811.

For others, it was not enough that the text was printed in the United States; it also needed to be an original American production. In 1816 in Baltimore, Dr. Tobias Watkins and Stephen Simpson founded a literary periodical, *The Portico*, to support original American compositions.<sup>76</sup> The back cover of the work stated that it did ‘on that account deserve the patronage of every American, who desires to see his country freed from spiritual, as well as political bondage.’<sup>77</sup> However not even this publication could maintain its uncomplicated position. In addition to the original compositions published in the magazine, literary intelligence also kept its readers abreast of the latest publications, including new British works such as Bryon’s latest poems, implying that the periodical’s readers expected content of this kind. The literary intelligence section also offered support for new American editions of imported titles, such as Anthony Finley’s edition of John Bell’s *Engravings of the bones muscles and joints* and his proposal for an American edition of Adam Smith’s *The theory of moral sentiments*.<sup>78</sup> However an essay on the state of polite learning in America in the July edition helped to reconcile these contradictions. In it, the author used the analogy of Athens and her colonies to describe the American relationship to England. ‘Athens like England, propagated her literature and science, in her own language, at the same time, and in the same direction, that she extended her manners, morals, habits, economy, and politicks, to distant regions, by the emigration of her citizens, and the formation of new republicks.’ The author went on to state that none of Athens’ colonies ever grew to eminence in science or letters, since all of their best thinkers went to Athens itself to live. He then asked, ‘does the great importation of foreign literature, obstruct the advancement of native genius?’ His answer was no, but that in the current situation reprinted imported texts afforded greater profit to publishers than original native

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<sup>76</sup> Frank Luther Mott, *A history of American magazines 1721-1850* (Cambridge, MA, 1938), p. 293. Watkins was a member of the Delphian Club, and several members authored pieces in the magazine. The magazine lasted from January 1816 to June 1818 and appeared at various intervals first, monthly and then quarterly.

<sup>77</sup> Quote taken from the back cover of the paper wrapper of *The Portico* (April, 1816) copy held at the A.A.S.

<sup>78</sup> These notices to be found in the literary intelligence section of *The Portico*, i, no. 1 (January, 1816), pp 346-348.

compositions because of copyright, and therefore American authors were not being supported. However his solution was that

We must be resigned to the continuance of the evil, till it gradually corrects itself; or till the habit of reading becomes incorporated with the wants of the people, and every man deems a book as necessary to his happiness and comfort, as a dinner, or an estate. To this condition of universal reading, had England gradually arrived; after having once been as low as ourselves, in point of literary taste and patronage.<sup>79</sup>

This article helps explain how the continued importation of texts could be reconciled, at least for a time, to a patriotic and national desire to support American manufacturers and authors. It also demonstrates the complex relationship many Americans had with British texts, which while necessary and worthwhile were also somehow seen as a destructive force.

In Ireland, similar debates about the value of imported British publications were taking place from the early nineteenth century as sentiment against the Union simmered. Belfast had always imported texts from abroad, in addition to purchasing books from Dublin and printing their own publications. The cultural and religious links between Ulster and Scotland had facilitated the flow of texts across the Irish Sea. London publications also played an important role in the Belfast market. In some ways this trade was similar to that between Great Britain and America, but factors of distance and political circumstance affected the balance of the relationship over our period of study.

Direct importation of British books into Belfast, was quite common, though the quantities of texts in question are unknown. In 1769, London publisher John Murray inherited part of an estate twenty miles south of Belfast. In the process of settling the inheritance Murray, a Scotsman, was required to make several trips to Ireland and Belfast.<sup>80</sup> While on these trips he became acquainted with various prominent members of the town, including members of the bookselling families the Hays and Magees. Upon his

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<sup>79</sup> 'Essay on the State of polite learning in America' in *The Portico*, ii, no. 1 (July, 1816), pp 112-115.

<sup>80</sup> For details on the first John Murray's Irish inheritance and trips to Ireland see Zachs, *The first John Murray*, pp 133-135.

return to London John Hay and John Magee both began a correspondence with Murray which lasted from around 1774 to the end of 1776.<sup>81</sup>

Each bookseller used this connection for a slightly different purpose. Hay requested a selection of voyages as well as various numbers of ‘medical commentaries,’ which he had the opportunity of returning if unsold.<sup>82</sup> Murray also sent Hay twenty-five copies of ‘Enquiry into the power of Ecclesiasticks’ in 1776, which was written by a friend of James Crombie of Belfast and which the author expected to sell well there.<sup>83</sup> Hay’s account only amounted to around £4 sterling, and Murray very wisely acknowledged that as soon as cheaper Dublin numbers of the medical commentaries were available he would have no more occasion to send Hay further shipments from London. Murray’s relationship with Magee was somewhat more extensive. Magee acted as an agent for the sale of Murray’s Edinburgh powder, selling packets for 3s., and he acted as a go-between for Murray and a Mr. Kinlay, an apothecary in Belfast. Murray shipped Magee Lindsey’s *Apology*, and the *Edinburgh Pharmacopia*, which he claimed had been sent to no one else in Belfast, in addition to other works whose titles were not mentioned.<sup>84</sup> Magee’s account in January 1776 totalled just over £25 of books.<sup>85</sup>

John Murray was very aware of the Irish book market through his extensive connections to Dublin publisher Thomas Ewing. Many of his shipments to Belfast were either shipped to Dublin, and delivered by Ewing or another Dublin bookseller, or else shipped through Murray’s extensive contacts in Scotland, indicating some of the ways national book networks were used to spread imported publications and the ways that

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<sup>81</sup> This correspondence takes place between John Murray and John Hay senior and John Magee, son of James Magee, brother to William Magee who later becomes a newspaper editor in Dublin.

<sup>82</sup> This is probably a reference to *Medical and philosophical commentaries. By a society in Edinburgh* (London, 1774), E.S.T.C. P6674 printed for J. Murray, No. 32, Fleet-Street; Kincaid and Creech, and W. Drummond, Edinburgh; and T. Ewing, Capel-Street, Dublin.

<sup>83</sup> John Murray London to John Hay Belfast, 1 October 1776 (N.L.S., John Murray Archive, Ms 41901), p. 194.

<sup>84</sup> Probably Theophilus Lindsey, *The apology of Theophilus Lindsey, M.A. on resigning the vicarage of Catterick, Yorkshire* (London, 1774), E.S.T.C. T26773 and the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, *Pharmacopoeia Collegii Regii Medicorum Edinburgensis* (Edinburgh, 1774), E.S.T.C. N61618; John Murray London to John Magee Belfast, 28 April 1774 (N.L.S., John Murray Archive, Ms 41899).

<sup>85</sup> John Murray London to John Magee Belfast, 20 January 1776 (N.L.S., John Murray Archive, Ms 41899).

personal connections facilitated these transactions. When discussing prices and arrangements Murray often referenced ‘the country trade,’ implying that he saw his Belfast sales in the same light as his sales to British provincial cities, and different from his transatlantic shipments to British colonies. Despite the fact that Ireland and Great Britain at the time operated different sets of laws and used slightly different currencies, the distances involved and the relative ease of water travel meant that it took only slightly longer for London publications to reach Belfast by boat than it did for them to reach distant parts of Britain by road. One of Murray’s transactions with Hay referred to the sale as an ‘exchange,’ and evidence suggests that Hay may have paid for part of his order by sending publications to Murray in London.<sup>86</sup> Kinlay the apothecary sent a list of publications as a proposed exchange for the Edinburgh powder, to which Murray replied, ‘the books of which you gave me a list would be no means answer for sale here,’ and instead asked for cash.<sup>87</sup> This is further evidence that the booksellers involved were treating the transaction in a way similar to those conducted within their own national networks, but it is unlikely that exchange was a regular feature of book importation to Belfast.

The nature of the business between Murray and the Belfast booksellers was in many ways quite personal. In addition to orders for books, they used the correspondence to settle other business. Hay and Magee distributed packets to various residents of Belfast for Murray and assisted him with the sale of linen produced on his property. In exchange, Murray served as contact and host in London, paying various firms with notes on behalf of John Magee. The letters also frequently made enquiries into the health of family members and mentioned personal meetings between these men. While it appears that they originally met in Belfast, Murray hosted Magee in London and met him in Dublin on one of several trips to settle his inheritance. The correspondence between Murray and both of these

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<sup>86</sup> Summary of a letter from John Murray London to John Hay Belfast, 18 January 1774 (N.L.S., John Murray Archive, Ms 41899).

<sup>87</sup> John Murray to Mr. Kinlay Belfast, 28 April 1774 (N.L.S., John Murray Archive, Ms 41899)

Belfast bookmen appears to have ended in 1776. According to Magee, he had had ‘little encouragement’ to import ‘English’ books into Belfast and could not make orders as frequently as Murray expected.<sup>88</sup> Publications produced in Dublin were simply cheaper for Belfast readers, implying that at least among Magee’s customers price was more of a concern than the status of London books. By 1776, Murray had finalized the sale of his Ulster property, and no longer had need for extensive contacts near Belfast. He had also heard some alarming rumours concerning John Magee’s mental state, and was wary of continuing his business arrangements.<sup>89</sup> Though the connection between Murray and Belfast seemed to come to an end, this was undoubtedly not the only connection Belfast’s book community had with London publishers, and can be taken as an example of how those transactions may have been conducted.

Customs records from the early years of the nineteenth century show that books were regularly imported directly into Belfast. In these records, imports were broken down into bound and unbound books. Bound books were estimated in monetary value and unbound books were simply listed by hundred weight (cwt). Between 1802 and 1815, years when imports from England and Scotland were differentiated in the records, Belfast imported a total of around £2,000 worth of bound books and a further 1000 cwt. of unbound books from England. We can presume that most of these books were in fact London publications. What is more interesting is that an almost equal amount of books were imported from Scotland over this period. Here too, approximately £2,000 worth of bound books and 1000 cwt. of unbound books were recorded as entering Belfast’s port from Scottish ports. Here it is possible to detect a general increase in all categories of imports over the dozen years available, which may be the result of either a growing

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<sup>88</sup> John Murray London to John Magee Belfast, 31 March 1775 (N.L.S., John Murray Archive, Ms 41900), p. 168.

<sup>89</sup> On a trip to Dublin, Murray heard that John Magee had a condition that made his mental state uncertain, and viewed all subsequent interaction with him in a suspicious light. These same rumours reappeared regarding John Magee in the 1790s during his turbulent career as the editor of the *Dublin Evening Post*. John Murray’s Memorandum books 1775-1776, Dublin 3 May 1775 (N.L.S., John Murray Archive, Ms 43018 A), p. 32; Greene, ‘The trials of Richard Daly and John Magee,’ pp 135-158.

demand for imported publications in Belfast or a general increase in demand for texts of all sorts caused by an increase in the overall reading public.<sup>90</sup> In light of the enactment of copyright in Ireland in 1801 and the curtailment of Dublin's reprint trade, these figures take on greater significance. Prior to 1780 book imports into Ireland were grouped together, so that while imports as a whole rose steadily throughout the eighteenth century, peaking at a value of around £8,000, it is not always possible to determine from which port they were shipped, and hence where they might have been published.<sup>91</sup> However, James Raven estimated that between 1700 and 1780 Ireland took 47 per cent of books shipped as part of London's eastern export market, which suggests that this trade was well-established.<sup>92</sup> Provincial ports like Belfast shared in this import trade, mirroring that of Dublin. While this trade grew steadily in the eighteenth century, after 1801, Irish imports of British books increased by nearly four times that of the 1790s, demonstrating the gap left in the Irish book supply by the declining Irish reprint trade.<sup>93</sup>

Close cultural ties between Ulster and Scotland, encouraged the importation of books from this quarter through multiple overlapping channels. Glasgow University was the preferred educational institution for many Belfast Presbyterians, including Dr. William Drennan, who then returned to Ireland after his schooling. This connection kept ties between these communities fresh and generated a demand within Belfast for Scottish publications. Because of the Presbyterian connection between these communities, religious books often featured as part of shipments of books into Belfast from Scotland. In the 1760s the Edinburgh publishers Kincaid and Bell, who published many original Scottish works including works by Adam Smith, Lord Kames and Adam Ferguson, used their contacts in Belfast, John and David Hay to fill an order for bibles that was to be shipped to

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<sup>90</sup> Ledgers of imports and exports, Ireland 1802-1815 (N.A. Kew, CUST 15/ 107-118). Special thanks to Dr. Charles Benson for his transcripts of these records.

<sup>91</sup> Imports into Ireland from Great Britain were calculated at a rate of £10 per cwt, and it is believed that the customs records underestimate the total amount of imports. For a more complete discussion of Irish imports and exports see Pollard, *Dublin's trade in books*, pp 110-164.

<sup>92</sup> Raven, *The business of books*, p. 144.

<sup>93</sup> Pollard, *Dublin's trade in books*, p. 161.

David Hall of Philadelphia.<sup>94</sup> While the other business between these firms is unknown, it is clear that they had a standing relationship close enough for Kincaid and Bell to call upon them for an illegal shipment of bibles. This fragmentary evidence supports the anecdotal material that describes the strong flow of texts between Belfast and Scotland.

Despite Murray's willingness to accept items on exchange and Kincaid and Bell's attempts to export Irish bibles, both practices of questionable legality during the period, it seems likely that most purchases of British books by Irish booksellers were made by cash or credit. Given the consistent and large imports of books throughout the period, where and how did Belfast's booksellers generate the needed revenue to pay for British publications? Credit shortages, while not as extreme as in the United States, were still a frequent problem in eighteenth-century Ireland. It is not likely that publishing, or book sales produced large amounts of cash for our Belfast booksellers, at least until the larger-scale operations in the early nineteenth century. For men such as Magee and Hay, other lines of business probably generated the revenue to purchase expensive London editions. Stationery, patent medicines and lottery tickets were all common parts of a bookselling enterprise. The Magees sold all of these, particularly lottery tickets. Lottery tickets did not require the same kind of capital investment as publishing, and could act as steady cash infusers into the business.<sup>95</sup> While vertical integration of the printing process kept production costs down, and exchange networks removed the need for cash transactions among Irish booksellers, neither of these measures generated the necessary revenue to purchase imported texts. Though we do not have any records from Belfast to confirm this, research on the larger publishing houses in London and Philadelphia demonstrates the importance of revenues earned in cognate commercial activities for even the largest

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<sup>94</sup> Warren McDougall 'Scottish books for America In the mid-18th Century' in Myers & Harris (eds), *Spreading the word*, p. 31.

<sup>95</sup> Fielding Lucas experimented with lottery ticket sales in the early nineteenth century in partnership with Mathew Carey. Fielding Lucas to Mathew Carey, 2 April 1812 (H.S.P., Lea and Febiger Collection 227B, Mathew Carey Correspondence 1812 (L-M), box 80, folder 5).

printers and publishers.<sup>96</sup> Murray's Ulster inheritance is just one example of how alternative sources could provide needed cash to booksellers and publishers.

In addition to generating revenue, Belfast's booksellers also needed access to larger credit networks to facilitate the importation process. This could be done by drawing on connections both in and outside the trade. As well as selling lottery tickets, the Magees also partnered in a wine exporting business, which they may have used to assist with their importation and exportation of books. The Magees paid both Murray and Longman in London with a bill of exchange drawn from John Avery in Liverpool.<sup>97</sup> They also used merchant networks to help with their exportation of books to America. In 1756, the merchant firm of Greg & Cunningham paid Magee for the sale of a bundle of pamphlets in New York.<sup>98</sup> The Magees merchant connections gave them access to credit networks which spanned the English-speaking Atlantic world. For purchases of British books by provincial booksellers, this access to credit was as important as their sources of revenue for making these transactions possible.

The sheer number of advertisements for London publications in the *Belfast Newsletter* throughout the period suggests that Belfast's readers had relatively easy access to imported works, and that Belfast's booksellers had consistent means of purchasing these texts. Though Murray's correspondence with Magee only lasted a few years, the firm's Dublin connections were sustained and cultivated well into the nineteenth century. This suggests the potential for Dublin booksellers to offer steady and relatively quick access to

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<sup>96</sup> Remer, *Printers and men of capital*, pp 12-16; Raven, *The business of books*, pp 143-147. When Carey's Baltimore store failed William Christie suggested that it was because he did not have any other sources of cash, and pointed out that most other bookstores in Baltimore had something such as hardware to off-set the sales of books. William Christie to Mathew Carey, 6 October 1810 (H.S.P., Lea and Febiger Collection 227B, Mathew Carey Correspondence 1808 (A-E), box 70, folder 6).

<sup>97</sup> John Murray to John Magee, 30 January 1775 (N.L.S., John Murray Archive, Ms 41900).

<sup>98</sup> Waddell Cunningham to Thomas Greg, 20 September 1756 in Truxes (ed), *Letterbook of Greg & Cunningham*, p. 208. For a description of how these credit networks functioned see Jacob M. Price, 'What did merchants do? Reflections on British overseas trade, 1660-1790' in *The Journal of Economic History*, xlix, no.2 (June, 1989), pp 278-281.

London publications for their provincial contacts. Dublin booksellers may also have had easier access to the credit and cash needed to make these transactions.<sup>99</sup>

Irish attitudes towards these imported texts varied. On one hand, many readers were primarily concerned with the cost of books. Unlike in the American case, it was possible for Irish publishers to produce slightly cheaper editions of many books in comparisons to British imports. While the Irish reprint trade was still active prior to 1801, there was little incentive for provincial readers to purchase the London edition of a text if one had been reprinted in Dublin, other than its material status. Importing texts was then reserved for specialty items, for which local editions were impractical, and as status symbols for those who could afford to purchase the larger, more elaborate and more costly London editions. As a result of the consequences of the Act of Union, the financial benefit of Dublin editions was greatly reduced as reprints were restricted, but in time the social and political reasons for 'buying Irish' may have increased. The Belfast Society is one example of a group that attempted to purchase Irish publications and later adopted a 'buy Irish' policy in response to the proposed Act of Union.<sup>100</sup> Though their later catalogues suggest this was short-lived, various resolutions within the minutes indicate a desire to support Irish authors and publications. In a review of Thomas Burnside's poem *The Twelve*, published in the *Belfast Monthly Magazine*, the editors stated that,

We regret the present state of the printing art in Dublin; it is low indeed. They labour under some disadvantages, but they too readily sink under discouragements, and find an excuse for their want of exertion, in a complaint of the evils of the Union.

This whining complaint is heard everywhere in Dublin. Like the countryman whose cart stuck fast in the mud, and who complained of the badness of the roads, and vainly called on Hercules for help, they content themselves with declaiming against the Union, and neglect those habits of individual exertion, by which only their situation can be bettered. Let them

<sup>99</sup> Luke White of Dublin used sales of lottery tickets to fund his large imports from the continent. Gough, 'Book imports from continental Europe,' pp 35-48.

<sup>100</sup> The Belfast Society resolved to purchase local editions if possible in 1793, and in 1800 again specifically requested the Dublin editions of a particular work, Minutes of the Linen Hall Library, 20 February 1800 (L.H.L., Minutes 7 November 1793 to 3 September 1812).

print better- let them make the printing trade respectable- and energy, will always, to a certain degree, produce success.<sup>101</sup>

Though the *Belfast Magazine's* editors promised to provide a full review of works published by Irishmen, the section on Irish publications was gradually shortened in favour of reviews of new British publications. What these examples reveal is that while some Irish readers may have felt a national duty to promote the literary arts within Ireland, they were often unwilling to limit themselves to purchasing only those items produced there.

Imported texts, primarily from Great Britain, made up a considerable part of the book market in Belfast. British books took on even greater significance in the nineteenth century, once the Union parliament at Westminster had eliminated the Irish reprint trade centered in Dublin. From 1801 onwards, the lines blurred as Belfast was more fully incorporated into the larger book trade networks of the United Kingdom. In many ways Belfast re-aligned its relationships with London during this period, becoming more like British provincial cities such as Liverpool or Manchester. British books, while still imported using the communication and trade networks established in the eighteenth century, could no longer strictly be considered in the same light. In the first three decades of the nineteenth century, London publications account for three-fourths of all titles published in Great Britain and Ireland, making them the main source of publications for everyone in the British Isles, and altering the dynamics of text importation in Ireland.<sup>102</sup>

In both Ireland and America, members of the book trades developed networks for the effective importation and distribution of texts from outside their national boundaries. Though individuals in both Baltimore and Belfast imported texts on their own to tempt local readers, the contacts and credit required of these transactions helped to gradually consolidate the trade with larger firms that could then distribute the books to provincial cities. In both communities, the values placed on these texts changed over time, as national

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<sup>101</sup> 'Review of New Publications' in *B.M.M.*, i, no. 1 (September, 1808), pp 61-62.

<sup>102</sup> Information is cited from a study of Victorian printing done by Alexis Weedon and cited by Raven, *The business of books*, p. 140.

production capacity and political realities shifted. Though books from London, Edinburgh and elsewhere made up an important part of the reading material available throughout the Atlantic world, provincial readers entered this world on their own terms, taking those texts which best suited their needs and quickly changing their consumption strategies in the light of new opportunities. While imported books should not be underestimated as a portion of the reading material circulating in both Baltimore and Belfast, it is important to see the ways in which local and national concerns mediated the contexts in which these books were purchased and consumed.

### **Transatlantic Links and Personal Connections**

What we have been looking at so far concerns the organized networks of trade that allowed books to circulate in and between cities in the English-speaking Atlantic world. One thing that is important to keep in mind is how much many of these systems depended on personal connections. Even many of the transactions within the respective national book trade networks were facilitated by personal connections. This section will examine some of the roles individuals played in connecting communities across the Atlantic world and facilitating the flow of print through these communities.

At the most basic level of personal influence, were those individuals who used their personal connections to secure books for their own use. While these men and women did not directly contribute to the print culture of the larger community, by expanding their personal libraries and by allowing others to access their collections, they made small ripples in the sea of local reading. One such individual was Charles Carroll of Carrollton. While living abroad for his education in England and France, Carroll regularly corresponded with his father Charles Carroll of Annapolis concerning which books to purchase before his return to America. His father sent him lists of books already owned by the family, and advised him that ‘books you must buy as you want, let them be good & of

the best editions.<sup>103</sup> Once back in Maryland, Carroll used the friends and contacts he had developed while in London to keep him supplied with the latest books, pamphlets and news. One particular correspondent was William Graves, a Master in Chancery and Member of Parliament from 1768 to 1782 and 1796 to 1798.<sup>104</sup> Carroll and Graves discussed their favourite authors, and the latest works of history and politics in their letters. Graves then purchased books for Carroll from a Mr. Lewis, Carroll's bookseller, and sent them to Carroll's agent Perkins to be shipped to Maryland. Upon receipt of some books from Graves Carroll wrote, 'it seems you are inclined to think that the quantity & cost of the books sent may make me rejoice that your packets arrive only once in 3 years—This I am sure was only said in Joke— money can not be laid out better, in my opinion, than in the purchase of valuable books— you think like me in this respect, or why should you lay out yearly £30 in that article?'<sup>105</sup> Graves was just one of many individuals in both England and France who regularly supplied books to Carroll. His books were open for members of his circle to borrow; Mr. Ireland, an overseer for one of Carroll's plantations, was regularly recorded as borrowing particular books. While Carroll did not allow the general public access to his collection, his love of reading inspired him to support the Baltimore Library Company as a public institution. As a tobacco grower, Carroll was an active participant in Atlantic trade and he used these connections to get personal recommendations of books and to ensure that he was kept up-to-date on political matters in England through printed pamphlets. While his bookseller and agent could have shipped him requested titles, his relationship with Graves gave him a sense of participation in public debates and ensured that his particular interests and taste were always considered.

Extremely wealthy individuals and merchants with transatlantic trade connections were not the only ones who used friends and family members to obtain books. Just outside

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<sup>103</sup> Charles Carroll of Annapolis to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, 6 October 1759, in *Dear Papa, dear Charley*, i, p. 130.

<sup>104</sup> Hoffman, Mason & Darcy (eds), *Dear Papa, dear Charley*, i, p. 315n.

<sup>105</sup> Charles Carroll of Carrollton to William Graves, 14 August 1772, in *Dear Papa, dear Charley*, iii, p. 630.

Belfast the local schoolmaster and poet Samuel Thomson used his connections to secure books for his library. He was interested in poetry in the Scots dialect, particularly the work of Robert Burns, whom he met in 1794.<sup>106</sup> Thomson cultivated a selection of correspondents in Ireland and Scotland with similar literary interests, with whom he exchanged verse, books and anecdotes of figures such as Burns. In 1806 William Finlay, then a student at Glasgow College, assisted Thomson by purchasing books for him, and taking subscriptions for his latest volume of poetry. Finlay wrote, 'in conformity to your direction I paraded through the booksellers shops, about an hour every day for a week looking for 'Bowles' Sonnets' and after making the circuit of them all, I at length discovered what I sought the bookseller demanded 12s for them in boards, which is so extravagant a price that I have delayed purchasing the book till further orders.'<sup>107</sup> Thomson provides an excellent example of the types of fraternal networks developed by individuals in the eighteenth century, who were neither particularly wealthy nor well-connected. By carefully developing personal friendships which centered on the written word, where books and poems acted as a currency, Thomson obtained imported books for his own use.

Other individuals used their personal connections not only to secure books for themselves, but as a way of facilitating often difficult transatlantic transactions. For those who emigrated to America, family connections at both ends were important in helping individuals start businesses and integrate themselves into their new communities. These individuals became points of connection for an interconnected and inter-continental web of relationships. One example is Mathew Carey, whose early career in Dublin established connections which would last for the rest of his life. Once established as a printer and publisher in Philadelphia, Carey corresponded with Patrick Byrne, a Dublin bookseller. Byrne was a political ally and friend who also served as one of Carey's contacts for exporting Irish publications to America. Carey helped Byrne's son William establish

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<sup>106</sup> *D.I.B.*, entry on Samuel Thomson by Linde Lunney.

<sup>107</sup> William Finlay to Samuel Thomson, 10 January 1806 (T.C.D., Ms 7257).

himself in New York, and then after the 1798 rebellion, when government pressure and a fire forced Byrne to leave Ireland and relocate his business to Philadelphia, Carey aided the father. In the early years of the nineteenth century, William Byrne relocated to Baltimore and opened a bookshop. After his death in 1805 the store was briefly run by his father, and then continued by his brother Patrick Byrne Jr. as a bookshop specializing in legal texts. The Byrnes used Carey as a major source for their stocks—both American editions and British ones that had been imported by Carey through Longman's of London.<sup>108</sup>

The Rice family provide another example of how emigration could be used to further the business of selling books. Henry, Patrick, James and John Rice were booksellers and publishers whose careers stretched from Dublin to Philadelphia to Baltimore. In the 1780s John Rice was a bookseller in Philadelphia, while Henry and Patrick Rice operated in Dublin. By the early 1790s the men reversed their locations, and John travelled back to Dublin while Henry and Patrick moved to Philadelphia. At the same time James Rice operated in Baltimore. Over this period the men served as contacts and partners in shipping books across the Atlantic, to each other and to other American printers and booksellers. Around 1803 James was forced to move to Philadelphia to care for his brother. And in 1803 John Rice had moved back to America, this time to Baltimore where he sold books and published items until his death in 1805.<sup>109</sup>

The Magee family of Belfast also maintained an extensive network of connections throughout the north Atlantic world. In addition to direct family connections, such as John Magee of Dublin, the Magees of Belfast used former apprentices to extend their personal

<sup>108</sup> See Kinane, "Literary Food" for the American market,' pp. 315-332; and for the Byrne's Baltimore career see the Printer's File at the A.A.S. and Rollo G. Silver, 'The Baltimore book trade, 1800-1825 Part II,' p. 185.

<sup>109</sup> Information on the Rice family can be found in the Printer's File at the A.A.S.; Rollo G. Silver, 'The Baltimore book trade, 1800-1825 Part III,' p. 305; M. Pollard, *A dictionary of the members of the Dublin book trade 1550-1800: based on the records of the Guild of St. Luke the Evangelist Dublin* (London, 2000), p. 493. Imprints bearing the names of J. Rice of Baltimore and H. and P. Rice of Philadelphia can be found from 1803 to 1805. While Henry, Patrick, and James Rice were brothers, their relationship with John is unknown. John Rice of Dublin, regularly relocated back and forth across the Atlantic, and claimed in 1793 to operate shops in Dublin, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Charleston. There may have been two individuals in the family with the names of John, which may explain the transatlantic relocation. In addition to books John also sold music and was a harpsichord maker in Dublin.

connections across the Atlantic.<sup>110</sup> In the 1760s, James Magee began corresponding with David Hall of Philadelphia. Hall wished to purchase some items from Magee for sales in America. Hall wrote to Magee that ‘I have at different times bought some books of yours from your brother here, of which [I bought] a parcel lately, and shall pay him for them next month.’<sup>111</sup> Thomas Magee worked as a bookseller in Philadelphia from 1765 to 1769, and stocked works produced by his brother in Belfast. Thomas was not the only American with access to Magee’s publications. Some evidence suggests that both Andrew Steuart and Hugh Gainne, sold publications from Magee. These men were both former apprentices of Magee, who had opened printing offices in America. Gainne worked in New York, while Steuart was in Philadelphia. Their business model, closely resembled Magee’s, and they specialized in chapbooks and other forms of cheap literature. Not only did they sell work imported from Magee, but they both also re-printed titles from Magee’s catalogue.<sup>112</sup> These connections, not only moved Belfast imprints into America, but also helped keep Magee supplied with news and pamphlets which he re-printed in Belfast.

While these are just a few isolated examples of the ways in which personal connections facilitated the flow of print across the Atlantic, they do show some of the ways that trade networks were created, supplemented and by-passed by individuals within the English-speaking Atlantic world. Ties of friendship and kinship acted as grease to keep the complex infrastructure of transatlantic communications going— facilitating the flow of information and texts from all points. For many of these individuals, personal service from known and trusted sources was preferred to utilizing the services of unknown persons, or purely business connections. Whether it was for books for personal use, as in the case of Charles Carroll, or for the importation of books for profit in the case of Magee, personal

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<sup>110</sup> See O’Connor, “‘A Small Cargoe for Tryal,’” pp 187-211.

<sup>111</sup> David Hall to James Magee, 4 February 1766 (A.P.S., David Hall Papers, David Hall Letterbook vol.4, 3 May 1764-16 November 1767).

<sup>112</sup> For more details on this see Victor Neuburg, ‘Chapbooks in America: reconstructing the popular reading of early America’ in Cathy N. Davidson (ed), *Reading in America: literature and social history* (Baltimore, 1989), pp 81-113.

trusted connections allowed them to negotiate the daunting process of acquiring books from abroad.

This investigation into the importation of texts into our provincial communities shows that while the majority of texts flowed from metropolitan hubs such as London, these were by no means the only transactions taking place. Texts from London were often imported through connections with other cities, such as Philadelphia or Dublin which complicated the transfer of ideas and text. Direct connections between cities across the Atlantic world, such as Belfast, New York, Glasgow, Baltimore and Amsterdam, completely by-passed metropolitan hubs, allowing provincial readers to access a wide variety of texts and demonstrating the complex nature of sources for printed material in these communities.

Nor was the reception of texts in these communities a passive one. Not only did both Baltimore and Belfast feed texts back into national and international print circulation through their local productions and reproductions, but they also resisted the dominant cultural influences from London. On-going debates, in both locations, about the value to the cultural and intellectual life of their communities of texts from abroad, spurred by nationalistic movements and economic pressures, fostered a concern about where their books were being produced. While these debates did not necessarily stop or even slow the importation of books from outside their respective communities, it did help create a sensitivity towards Irish and American authors and productions that had not previously been expressed.

## Chapter 7 The Uses of Reading

Some of the most interesting and difficult questions to answer about the history of the book revolve around reading. How did individuals in the past use texts, what did they think about what they read and how did their reading affect their behaviour? For most of these questions only hints are available, and these often come from exceptional individuals rather than the ‘average’ reader. Despite such difficulties, these questions are worth pursuing. This chapter will explore some of the evidence left behind by readers in Baltimore and Belfast, to see what they were reading and if possible what purpose that reading served in their lives. Because of the scarcity of sources, this will necessarily be anecdotal, but will also serve to highlight some of the ways in which individuals in Baltimore and Belfast interacted with the print culture around them.

We can begin in Baltimore with the earliest and most elite case study. Charles Carroll of Carrollton was sent abroad for his education to both France and England. Beginning with this separation and continuing throughout his life, Carroll maintained a steady correspondence with his father. It is here in these letters that Carroll described both the books he read, and the various ways that reading featured in his life.

Much of Carroll’s early discussions of reading were purely educational. His father expected regular reports on his education, and frequently recommended books to further his studies. In 1752 Carroll’s father commented that since he has ‘now read Cicero’s Epistles and are reading his Orations, & therefore I ho[pe to] find you improve in the stile [sic] of your letters.’<sup>1</sup> For the Carrolls reading was to be undertaken in a systematic manner since it was the key not only to acquiring a good education, but also to fashioning oneself as a gentleman. Carroll was encouraged to keep a commonplace book to record his reading progress. As his father said, ‘all beginnings are dificult, [sic] yr understanding will

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Carroll of Annapolis to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, 9 October 1752 in *Dear Papa, dear Charley*, i, p. 19.

open in proportion to the progress you make in reading.’<sup>2</sup> In 1758 Carroll wrote to his father that

My chief nay my allmost only amusement is reading; I find no conversation more agreeable than that of a Horace’s a Virgil’s a Racine’s &c. their company is instructive and at the same time agreeable, monent et mulcent. Sometimes I forsake the poets & prefer to the melodious harmony of the muses the profitable and faithfull lessons of history; here I learn to be wise at the expence of other’s and to attain to true glory by the example of the great, good, & just.<sup>3</sup>

While Carroll’s early reading served to shape him morally and intellectually, his later reading back in Maryland was of a much more practical nature. Once back in Maryland, Carroll began to get involved in running his father’s business interests. Carroll used practical treatises such as Bartlett’s *The Gentleman’s Farriery* to assist with his plantations. His law books came in handy when dealing with the many legal cases that the family was involved in, and Carroll regularly consulted them on points of law. As he travelled between properties Carroll transported books with him for his use in a special box reserved for that purpose.<sup>4</sup>

Carroll gradually became more involved in the great political disputes between Great Britain and her colonies. He relied on his reading to keep him informed about opinions back in England. He used ‘the newspapers & the London Magazin[es]’ for news, and pamphlets sent from his London correspondents for political debates. Like many of his contemporaries, Carroll’s writing was filled with allusions to political theorists, classical authors and imaginative writers. This served both to highlight his gentlemanly credentials and education, and to give his arguments the weight of established thinkers. In 1773, while Carroll was writing his ‘First Citizens Letters’ he drew on his personal collection of

<sup>2</sup> Charles Carroll of Annapolis to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, 13 January 1758 in *Dear Papa, dear Charley*, i, p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Charles Carroll of Carrollton to Charles Carroll of Annapolis and Elizabeth Carroll, 14 June 1758 in *Dear Papa, dear Charley*, i, p. 69.

<sup>4</sup> Carroll owned two copies of Bartlett’s *The Gentleman’s Farriery*, one of which was always in the place where he kept his most valuable horses, Charles Carroll of Carrollton to William Graves, 14 August 1772 in *Dear Papa, dear Charley*, ii, p. 632. For a reference to the transport of books see Charles Carroll of Annapolis to Charles Carroll of Carrollton 5 December 1770, in *Dear Papa, dear Charley*, ii, p. 545; Michael T. Parker, “‘The fittest season for reading’ the library of Charles Carroll of Carrollton,” (unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Maryland, 1990).

books to help formulate his arguments concerning British imperial policies.<sup>5</sup> Just one of his First Citizen letters, a series of open letters published in the newspaper dealing with the Maryland fees controversy, contains references to Lord Bolingbroke, Coke, Hawkins, Blackstone, Hume, Swift, Horace, Juvenal, Pope, Milton, early Daniel Dulany, and John Dickinson.<sup>6</sup> Carroll wrote these letters with the help of his books, which he gathered in for this purpose. At the time, his father sent him ‘2 Volumes Evangile du jour. 2 do: Demosthenes His Orations & Paradise lost.’<sup>7</sup> Here Carroll’s intellectual pedigree was laid bare before his audience. Carroll’s writing abounds with references to both classical authors and modern Enlightenment thinkers, and it is clear that he used his reading to supply him with the justifications and authority he needed to make his claims.

A second interesting case from Baltimore allows us to see a continuity of reading over the course of an individual’s life. Fielding Lucas Jr. became one of the premier publishers in nineteenth-century Baltimore, specializing in Catholic literature and school books. However the first record of his reading dates from around 1800 when he was still an apprentice in a bookshop in Philadelphia.<sup>8</sup> In an undated copybook Lucas recorded extracts from works he read. Most of the titles were imaginative fiction or belles lettres, though *Euripides* and the *History of Modern Europe* also appear. Unlike Carroll, Lucas’ reading seemed to be used for pleasure, and possibly also to draw quotes for use in later conversation, but it did not seem to represent any systemic attempt at self-improvement. The extracts in the copybook do not have a particular theme. Some are pithy quotes such as ‘reading makes a full man, conversation a ready man, and writing an exact man,’ from

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<sup>5</sup> Charles Carroll of Carrollton to Charles Carroll of Annapolis, 28 March 1761 in *Dear Papa, dear Charley*, ii, p. 200. The ‘First Citizen Letters’ were a series of anonymous letters written by Carroll and published in the *Maryland Journal*. They countered arguments put forward by Daniel Dulany, who supported the Governor’s position regarding a controversy over fees in the colonial administration. These letters gained Carroll a place as the spokesman for those who opposed the established government in Maryland.

<sup>6</sup> Bradley J. Birzer, *American Cicero: the life of Charles Carroll* (Wilmington, 2010), p. 71.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Carroll of Annapolis to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, 17 March 1773 in *Dear Papa, dear Charley*, ii, p. 664.

<sup>8</sup> Fielding Lucas Jr. Copybook (M.d.H.S., Lucas Papers, Ms 2083), pp 1-105.

Lord Bacon.<sup>9</sup> Others may simply represent scenes that caught Lucas' fancy. However the texts themselves were nearly all relatively recent publications. *The Royal Captives*, a novel that Lucas frequently returned to, was only published in Philadelphia in 1795.<sup>10</sup> As an apprentice in a bookshop Lucas had ready access to the newest publications, without having to purchase them. Lucas' return to certain texts again and again may represent his fascination with them, but it is probably also a result of surreptitiously reading books from the shelves at work.

What we can see is that later in life Lucas maintained similar reading habits. As a rising member of the community in Baltimore in the early nineteenth century, Lucas joined the Library Company of Baltimore. Again his position as a bookseller and publisher probably meant that he had easy access to many types of publications, but his lending records indicate that he continued to borrow a selection of publications from the library. Lucas' lending records for August 1816 were fairly indicative of the types of books he chose to select from the library. Over the course of the month Lucas borrowed: 'Coleb in search of a Wife 2<sup>nd</sup> volume, Johnson's tour to the Hebrides 1<sup>st</sup> volume, Analectic Magazine 1815 & 1816 1<sup>st</sup> volume, Miller's Retrospect of the 18th Century, Cordenir's Antiques of Scotland 1<sup>st</sup> volume, American Register 2<sup>nd</sup> volume.'<sup>11</sup> Lending records from the 1830s and 1840s also contained this same mix of fiction, periodicals and more serious works— Lucas borrowed *Mansfield Park*, *Blackwood's Magazine*, and several volumes on the history of France.<sup>12</sup> Though we cannot say how these items were read, what we can say is that for more than forty years reading was a part of Fielding Lucas' life. As a young man he primarily chose works of fiction, and periodicals. As he aged he read a larger

<sup>9</sup> Fielding Lucas Jr. Copybook (M.d.H.S., Lucas Papers, Ms 2083), p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Ann Yearsley, *The Royal Captives* (Philadelphia, 1795), E.S.T.C. W41535 quotes from this book appear thirteen times in Lucas' copybook.

<sup>11</sup> Fielding Lucas' lending records, Baltimore Library Company Records 1816 to 1833 (M.d.H.S., MS 80, Oversize vol 1), p. 480.

<sup>12</sup> Fielding Lucas's lending records, Baltimore Library Company Records 1833-1843 (M.d.H.S., MS 80, Oversize vol 2), pp 469-470.

proportion of works of history, travel and science, but narrative fiction and novels never lost their appeal.

It is possible that Lucas' reading served not only to entertain, but also as inspiration for his publishing business. In 1800 Lucas copied a quote from Hervey into his copybook. In 1808, the *Beauties of Hervey* was listed among the publications of Conrad, Lucas and Company.<sup>13</sup> Other titles from this catalogue also appear later in Lucas' lending records.<sup>14</sup> Whatever else these tantalizing links suggest, they support the proposition that Lucas enjoyed reading items that he published. Lucas may have used his earlier entertaining reading to serve his business interests later in life. Though he did not publish novels as a general rule, he did stock them in his book store, and he may have used his reading in making determinations about his stock.<sup>15</sup> Though Carroll and Lucas came from somewhat different periods in Baltimore's history, (and operated in very different social scenes), they both used texts for enjoyment, although these were texts of a very different nature.

Turning now to Belfast we can see similar motivations for reading. Over nearly four decades, from the 1780s to 1819, William Drennan exchanged letters with his sister Martha McTier. Though Drennan was raised in Belfast and eventually returned there, for much of this period he lived in Dublin. This correspondence covered every imaginable topic from fashion to love to politics, and scattered amongst these letters are references to reading. Both William and Martha commented on books they had read, made reading recommendations and described the situations in which they read. These letters provide evidence of the ways in which reading served both individual and communal purposes.

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<sup>13</sup> *Catalogue of Books published by C. and A. Conrad & Co. (Late John Conrad & co.), No. 50 Chesnut-Street, Philadelphia; Conrad, Lucas, & Co., No. 138 Market-Street Baltimore; Somervell & Conrad, Petersburg; and Bonsal, Conrad, & Co. Norfolk (Philadelphia, 1808), p. 4.*

<sup>14</sup> In August 1816 Lucas borrowed *The American Register* and Miller's *Retrospect of the Eighteenth Century* both of which appear in the 1808 catalogue.

<sup>15</sup> In 1812 Lucas resolved not to publish novels, but instead concentrate on works of 'standard reputation' since he could always get novels from other publishers. Fielding Lucas to Mathew Carey, October 1812 (H.S.P., Lea and Febiger Collection 227B, Mathew Carey Correspondence 1812 (L-M), box 80, folder 5).

Much of the discussion of reading in the letters centered around politics. Both William Drennan and Martha's husband Samuel McTier were actively involved in the Society of United Irishmen, a radical organization founded in Belfast.<sup>16</sup> They were closely connected with many of the revolutionary political figures of the time, and Drennan himself was arrested and put on trial for supposedly subversive political writing. It was important for Drennan to keep abreast of political developments in Ireland, England and abroad. To do this he read a variety of newspapers from Dublin and London, and important material in the Belfast papers was regularly brought to his attention by Martha McTier. Drennan also read many political pamphlets, exchanging them with members of his family in Belfast. The McTiers acted both as a source for reading material, and as a filter, regularly commenting on the items they sent. In August 1794 when Drennan requested a copy of the satirical pamphlet *Hurdy Gurdy*, both Samuel and Martha McTier included positive reviews of the work and recommended it over the pamphlet *Thoughts on the British Constitution* which was also in circulation at the time.<sup>17</sup>

Drennan regularly recorded his thoughts on longer works of political theory, history and philosophy in letters to his sister. The tenor of these remarks is illustrated in the following statement; after making a reference to Paine, Drennan commented that 'I think Paine has only popularized Hume, and translated Voltaire, who in his dictionary and other works, with all the appearance of slight sketches and morning pastimes of the pen, has examined and compared the Gospel history with great sagacity and great knowledge in ancient history. Gibbon himself only paraphrases and illustrates his remarks.'<sup>18</sup> Though a physician, and therefore relatively comfortable, Drennan was dependent on his membership to the Royal Irish Academy for access to many of these longer and more expensive printed

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<sup>16</sup> For more information see Curtin, *The United Irishmen*.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel and Martha McTier to William Drennan, 11 August 1794 in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, ii, pp 88-90.

<sup>18</sup> William Drennan to Martha McTier, undated 1794 in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, ii, p. 101.

texts. He enjoyed this reading, and it allowed him move in the higher political and intellectual circles of his day.

While these letters created a virtual reading community between Drennan and the McTiers, they also described incidents of communal reading in Belfast. Many references in the letters mention reading aloud in the family home, which was a major source of entertainment for all involved.<sup>19</sup> However, letters from 1794 indicate that Martha McTier was also in the regular habit of hosting female reading parties at her home. These events generally centered on the reading of a play, in this instance Sheridan's *The Rivals*, and sometimes she included additional material written specifically for the occasion. McTier's description of the event provided both the details of the occasion and the atmosphere. 'Sheridan's excellent comedy of "The Rivals" afforded an innocent, rational, and animated entertainment to some ladies who, on Saturday night last, read it in parts...My room was well lit, adorned with flowers, an orchestra which faced the readers, who sat at one end round a table nearly half circle, and covered with green cloth- good music and sweet singing, and fruit, cakes, wine etc., afterwards, charmed all the young ones.'<sup>20</sup> Drennan in turn contrasted a similar event in Dublin.

Here, they [reading parties] were merely for intrigue and very stupid...They were generally made to set off one good reader who thought herself too good for the stage. They sat round a table in the centre of the room, and of a large company; and without action, figure, or face generally seen, you heard upon the whole very uninteresting inanimate reading, and long before it was done there was an eager looking out and longing for supper.<sup>21</sup>

In Belfast, McTier's entertainments provided a venue for young women to read aloud that was both sociable and exciting. Public performance was a large part of these parties, which often featured singing as well as poetry reading and acting out scenes from plays. McTier's events also highlighted the learnedness of her guests, as she often asked local

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<sup>19</sup> Martha discusses hiring a maid who can also act as a reader in the house and in 1805 she complained that Miss Bigger 'cannot now read aloud for we have lost more teeth in this house, than gained [-] in yours, so that all reading devolves on me.' Martha McTier to William Drennan, 23 February 1805 in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, iii, p. 323.

<sup>20</sup> Martha McTier to William Drennan, undated 1794 in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, ii, pp 98-99.

<sup>21</sup> William Drennan to Martha McTier, 3 September 1794 in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, ii, p. 96.

individuals to compose pieces on a particular theme. For one party William Sampson was asked to write a parody of 'Rule Britannia,' using Mary Wollstonecraft, and Joseph Crombie was asked for a prologue for the evening's play.<sup>22</sup> McTier was participating in the fashionable trend of reading parties popular in the late eighteenth century, while also demonstrating her love and appreciation for literary entertainment.

The letters between Drennan and McTier also record reading for educational purposes. Martha McTier ran a school for girls from her home in 1795, and there she claimed, 'my little girls do not gabble over the testament only, nor read with that difficulty which prevents pleasure in it. I take care to give them books and treatment which makes my absence, or being sent from school, a punishment they are not able to bear, and with tears and on their knees pray to be remitted.'<sup>23</sup> McTier, was given another opportunity to educate the young when Drennan's sons Thomas and William were sent to live with her. She assumed responsibility for teaching the boys to read and directing their education. She sent regular updates to their parents on their progress but firmly stated to Drennan and his wife Sarah that 'to say the truth neither of you appears to me so knowing in the reading education as I am myself.'<sup>24</sup>

McTier recommended that children be given books with 'language a child can understand—the words he can spell and the story which will amuse and thus instruct. In reading to children and servants we ought to put ourselves out, and them in their natural situation.'<sup>25</sup> She recommended the works of Mrs Barbauld and the *History of Sandford and Merton*, a children's book of which a Belfast edition was published in 1787 and 1797. For Martha McTier and her brother William Drennan reading was used as entertainment

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<sup>22</sup> Martha McTier to William Drennan, 24 October 1794 in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, ii, p. 105; Naomi Tadmor, "'In the even my wife read to me": women, reading and household life in the eighteenth century' in James Raven, Helen Small & Naomi Tadmor (eds), *The practice and representation of reading in England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 162-174; Alan Richardson, *Literature, education, and romanticism reading as social practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>23</sup> Martha McTier to William Drennan, 17 January 1795 in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, ii, p. 121.

<sup>24</sup> Martha McTier to Sarah Drennan, 4 November 1803 in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, iii, p. 167.

<sup>25</sup> Here Martha's own education at the hands of David Manson is evident. Martha McTier to Sarah Drennan, 4 November 1803 in *Drennan-McTier Letters*, iii, pp 167-168

within the family and the wider community, it kept them abreast of current political events and, carefully regulated, it resulted in a proper education for the young.

Like the others before him, Robert James Tennent used reading for a myriad of purposes. His reading diaries, the dates of which together cover 1816 to 1819 and 1822 to 1824, provide a window into his life as a respectable young man in early nineteenth-century Belfast.<sup>26</sup> He was the son of Robert Tennent and the nephew of William Tennent, both former radicals from the 1790s who came to represent the ‘new men’ of Belfast—leading liberal reformers active in many aspects of town life from the early years of the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> The Tennents were a fairly wealthy and well-educated family. Robert James’ father was a physician and his uncle was a very prominent merchant and banker, who invested heavily in local manufacturing such as sugar production and distillation.<sup>28</sup> Robert James then grew up in an environment of middle-class privilege where education was highly valued, and where books were plentiful.

He first started recording his reading in 1816, as a student at Inst. These entries meticulously followed his daily reading for school. As a student studying classics, French and mathematics, Tennent spent a significant part of each day ‘saying’ passages designed to further his knowledge of these subjects. Presumably this reading was done aloud as a preparation for the school’s weekly oral examinations and can be distinguished from his entries where he described himself as simply ‘reading.’ This was reading for utilitarian purposes to further his education and knowledge on various subjects; however it was not the only type of reading recorded in his diaries.

Tennent seemed to have a genuine love of reading. Despite his rigorous academic schedule, Tennent spent many of his holidays and weekends reading works of a less serious nature. On Saturday 21 December 1816 Tennent recorded ‘this day I also spend at my

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<sup>26</sup> Robert James Tennent’s reading diaries are part of the Tennent papers (P.R.O.N.I., Tennent Papers, D/1748/G/750/1 and D/1748/G/755/1).

<sup>27</sup> For details on the ‘new men’ of Belfast, their activities and politics see Wright, ‘The natural leaders,’ pp 44-55.

<sup>28</sup> W.A. Maguire, entries on William Tennent and Robert Tennent, *D.I.B.*

Uncle's; where I read a good deal in Bingley's Animal Biography, Swift's works...'<sup>29</sup> This type of reading was often connected with visits to his uncle William's home. William Tennent's extensive library was filled with a large variety of books purchased from booksellers across the British Isles. William Tennent purchased books of serious and scientific nature, such as John Galpine's *British Botany*, books of radical politics like Thomas Paine's *Letter to Abbe Raynal*, and books of imaginative literature like *Don Quixote* and Burn's poetry.<sup>30</sup> William Tennent frequently lent books from his library to his circle of friends and acquaintances, so it is no surprise that his nephew had free access to his books.<sup>31</sup>

Tennent's later reading diary was of a very different style. This diary, kept after he left school in the 1820s, served as a record of his personal critiques of his reading—specifically recording his thoughts on books, copies of his favorite passages, and a list of books and authors to read in the future. From this diary Tennent's tastes, and concerns become more apparent. Tennent particularly enjoyed reading novels and poetry, and he specifically sought to read new works by his favorite authors. Byron was one of Tennent's favorite authors, and the diary described him as a 'genius.' Works by Thomas Moore and James Fenimore Cooper were also critiqued in the diary. Tennent generally evaluated these authors in light of their other works which he had read. *Lalla Rookh* was favorably compared to *Love of the Angels*, and *The Spy*, a novel 'from the pen of the author of the Pioneer, and the Pilot' was considered 'far superior to either.'<sup>32</sup> Tennent not only used his reading for entertainment, but his critiques often focused on the political position of the author in relation to his own views on nationalism.<sup>33</sup> In response to Lord Chesterfield's

<sup>29</sup> Diary of Robert James Tennent 1816 to 1819, 21 December 1816 (P.R.O.N.I., Tennent Papers, D1748/G/750/1), p. 26.

<sup>30</sup> These titles come from bills of sale for books purchased by William Tennent 1811 and 1812 (P.R.O.N.I., Tennent papers, D1748/B/3/4/4, D 1748/B/3/4/5, D1748/A/3/4/3).

<sup>31</sup> Account of books lent by William Tennent, 1792 to 1812 (P.R.O.N.I., Tennent Papers, D1748/B/3/4/1).

<sup>32</sup> Robert James Tennent reading diary 1822-1824 (P.R.O.N.I., Tennent Papers, D/1748/G/755/1), p. 2, 29.

<sup>33</sup> Robert James Tennent was at this time an ardent nationalist, who became involved in the Greek independence movement. See Wright for a detailed account of his politics.

*Letters to his Son*, Tennent wrote that ‘these precepts may make a shining and successful courtier, but will never form a mind to virtue, to glory, to immortality. Lord C's perfect man, would be a false friend, a perfidious enemy, a sensual and soulless lover, & a bad citizen, seeking a deceitful and temporary advantage at the price of his country's welfare & his own honor.’<sup>34</sup> Tennent's critiques were not generally recorded at the time of reading, and so should not be taken as a spontaneous reaction to a particular reading event, but as a constructed response which helped him shape and refine his opinions and served as a self-construction of himself as a man of taste.<sup>35</sup>

One type of reading, which was conspicuous for its absence in Tennent's diaries, was religious reading. Though his father was an ardent evangelical, and his grandfather had been a Presbyterian minister, Tennent only mentioned biblical reading once. On Friday 26 June 1818, after what we could only assume was some sort of spiritual awakening Tennent recorded that ‘I rose today at 5 O'C & spent the time before breakfast in my own room, where after beginning the day as I intend to begin every day in future— (by reading the Bible & praying to God—) I read some more in Theocritus & Xenophon till near 9 O'C.’<sup>36</sup> This was a short-lived conviction, as three days later Tennent returned to his usual routine. But the episode does demonstrate Tennent's general belief that biblical reading was consistent with a strong Christian faith. This raises questions about the role of religious reading in Tennent's life. Was he simply uninterested, was his religious experience primarily non-textual, or did he see his religious reading as somehow different, and therefore not necessitating recording? Tennent, as a member of the Church of Ireland, provides a necessary contrast to the description of Ulster Presbyterians given by John Gamble in 1811 in which he stated that ‘in general they are great readers of the Bible. It is

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<sup>34</sup> Robert James Tennent reading diary 1822-1824 (P.R.O.N.I., Tennent Papers, D/1748/G/755/1), p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> Several entries in this diary record that the texts were read up to a year in the past, and at one point after neglecting his entries, Tennent filled in several months worth of reading in a single entry.

<sup>36</sup> Diary of Robert James Tennent 1816 to 1819, 26 June 1818 (P.R.O.N.I., Tennent Papers, D1748/G/750/1), p. 96.

the first book that is put into their hands, and all their ideas take a tinge from it and often their phrases.<sup>37</sup>

Certain sets of readers, which continue to remain elusive, include both African Americans and native Irish-speakers. While Irish-speakers represent a very small proportion of the population of Belfast and its hinterland during this period, by 1820, nearly twenty per cent of Baltimore's population was black, some of whom were free and others of which were still enslaved. These individuals represent some of the most elusive readers in Baltimore. We know that some of this population was able to read. Though schools for black children were much rarer than schools for whites, during the colonial period the Catholic church worked to spread literacy among Maryland's slaves, and in 1833 the *Complete View of Baltimore* listed four public schools for African Americans.<sup>38</sup> The 1850 census also recorded literacy rates for black heads of household within Baltimore. In Baltimore's ward 17, the most concentrated area of African American housing, roughly fifty per cent of heads of households were literate.<sup>39</sup> There were also literate African Americans in Baltimore, such as William Levington, who wrote and published books and pamphlets for use within their community.<sup>40</sup> Black men and boys were employed in the cities print shops as press men, sold newspapers on the streets and delivered books from the cities bookstores. While these facts affirm that Baltimore's African Americans were engaged with the city's print culture, their absence from so many

<sup>37</sup> Quote from John Gamble's 1811 *Tour of Ireland* as printed in John A. McIvor, *Popular education in the Irish Presbyterian church* (Dublin, 1969), p. 79. For a description of Gamble and his positions on various issues see the introduction to the new edition of his collected travel writings by Breandán Mac Suibhne (ed), *Society and manners in early nineteenth-century Ireland by John Gamble* (Dublin, 2011), pp xiii-lxxviii.

<sup>38</sup> Beatrix Betancourt Hardy, "'The Papists ... have shewn a laudable Care and Concern': Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Slave Religion in Colonial Maryland" in the *Maryland Historical Magazine*, xcvi, no.1 (2003), pp 4-34; Charles Varle, *Complete view of Baltimore* (Baltimore, 1833), p. 11, 33.

<sup>39</sup> Census data quoted in Moss, *Schooling citizens*, p.91.

<sup>40</sup> William Levington was the minister for St. James African Protestant Episcopal Church, which ran one of the public African American schools. He published *Origination, constitution, and by-laws of St. James First African Protestant Episcopal Church in the City of Baltimore, adopted April 23, 1829* (Baltimore, 1829). This text not only laid down the governing principles of the church, but defended their voting policy which allowed only free black men to vote in the church government. For more details on this controversy see Bilhartz, *Urban religion*, p. 33; Joanna Brooks, 'The early American public sphere and the emergence of a black print counterpublic,' in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Third Series, cxii, no. 1 (January, 2005), pp 67-92.

records makes it difficult to know in what ways they engaged. Were they regular purchasers of texts, members of circulating libraries or contributors to newspapers? What roles did printed texts play in their lives? As this study has progressed, the near complete absence of African Americans from the available sources has made these questions even more intriguing.

However, perhaps the most iconic example of early nineteenth-century African American reading took place in Baltimore. Frederick Douglass, in his autobiographical narrative, recorded many of his early encounters with reading, and the deep meaning he found therein. Around 1825, Douglass, then a slave of only seven or eight, first came to Baltimore. There his mistress taught him the alphabet and some simple spelling, until forbidden by her husband Hugh Auld. Douglass realized, through Auld's objections that reading was 'the pathway from slavery to freedom.'<sup>41</sup>

In the narrative Douglass recounts some of the ways he used to further his reading and writing. He bribed local school boys with bread to teach him, challenged others to writing contests to learn to new letters and filled in blank spaces in his young master's copy book.<sup>42</sup> Douglass also provided some tantalizing hints of what he read. He probably first learned to read from a simple spelling book owned by his young master Thomas, in a sequence that was fairly typical of the time. Later Douglass mentioned that he would get into trouble if seen with a newspaper, and that if he was alone in a room for too long his mistress assumed he had been reading. Though Douglass does not give us specific titles, these anecdotes paint a picture of an urban environment where texts were present and fairly easy to obtain, even for a penniless slave.

Two titles which Douglass specifically mentioned were *The Columbian Orator*, and Webster's spelling book. The spelling book, which he used to learn italics, may again have

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<sup>41</sup> These examples come from the Signet Classics Series edition of Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the life of Frederick Douglass: an American slave written by himself* (New York, 1997), with an introduction by Peter J. Gomes, p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, pp 51-56.

been the property of master Thomas, or another one of the local boys. *The Columbian Orator* was an extremely significant text for Douglass, and one which he claimed as his own. Douglass carried this book with him wherever he went, reading at every opportunity. His two favorite pieces were a dialogue between a slave and a master, where the slave convinces the master to free him, and Sheridan's speech on Catholic emancipation. Douglass said that, 'I read them over and over again with unabated interest....The moral which I gained from the dialogue was the power of truth over the conscience of even a slaveholder. What I got from Sheridan was a bold denunciation of slavery, and a powerful vindication of human rights. The reading of these documents enabled me to utter my thoughts and to meet the arguments brought forward to sustain slavery.'<sup>43</sup> Douglass also mentioned reading the New Testament, though the extent of his biblical reading is uncertain.

Though scanty these examples possibly illustrate the majority of Douglass' reading before his escape to freedom. They show his determined and practical attempts at self-education through the use of readily available school books. However Douglass, unlike our other case studies, was deeply aware of the inherent power of reading, and believed it to be the secret behind the white man's dominance over the black man. His reading was not for entertainment. Reading was equated to freedom, freedom of the mind and freedom of the soul. Reading was also the practical route to escape from enslavement. In one failed escape attempt, Douglass used his skills to forge passes for himself and some fellow slaves.<sup>44</sup> More broadly, while Douglass may have been an exceptional individual, his experience brings to light both the access to and impact of texts on the hidden community of African American readers in Baltimore.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, pp 52-53.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 92; David Waldsteicher, 'Reading the runaways: self-fashioning, print culture, and confidence in slavery in the eighteenth-century mid-Atlantic' in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, third series, lvi, no. 2 (April, 1999), pp 243-272.

These cases represent snapshots into the reading habits of both individuals and their local communities. Though they cannot be considered representative they do point to some common uses of reading. Reading served a central place in the education for these individuals; while Carroll and Tennent shared a systematic approach to learning, Martha McTier's more casual educational style reflected both her own education by David Manson, and the theories of writers such as Maria Edgeworth and Rousseau. Even Douglass' surreptitious education used standard texts and methodologies. Reading also served as a bridge between individuals both near and far. Reading aloud in the home and at parties provided sociability, and recommending and discussing reading through letters provided shared experiences to those, like the Carrolls who were separated by distance. The reading diaries kept by Lucas and Tennent reveal some ways that young men engaged with entertaining reading. Lucas preserved quotes and passages to be read and admired later, while Tennent honed his skills as a critic. These are concrete examples of how texts were used by individuals in Baltimore and Belfast. The examination of our reading case studies has shown some of the ways that transnational fashions, national concerns and local flavours were reflected in the reading practices of individuals.

Though it is often difficult to pinpoint exactly how individuals used texts in their lives, it is much easier to discover how they wished to change and shape the reading habits of others. Many groups in both communities were concerned over what was read and its effect. By looking at these organizations, their aims and methods, we can see how they perceived reading in their communities, and how they felt about this. Although this method does not illuminate actual reading practices it is useful because of what it can tell us about what people believed to be common reading practices. We can assume that these views, while not completely accurate or representative, did contain at least a grain of truth and can help fill in some of the gaps concerning the uses of reading in these communities.

Over the course of this study thousands of poor and working-class children and adults learned the basics of reading through the efforts of philanthropic organizations in Baltimore and Belfast. Because of this increasing literacy, and the generally understood potential power of reading— both positive and negative, some groups were not only concerned about giving the labouring classes and the young the ability to read, but also about controlling what was being read, and how. Reading had to be monitored. ‘Pernicious novels’ and superstitious chapbooks ‘the offspring of degeneracy and corruption and the idols of dissipation and lassitude’ could not be permitted to pervert the natural inclinations of young minds.<sup>45</sup> Time spent reading these books, particularly time spent in privacy, was thought to be particularly damaging to the young and to apprentices, for which this served as just another vice, like visiting taverns and attending the theatre, which was to be strictly avoided.<sup>46</sup>

Religious tract societies and Bible societies worked hand-in-hand with Sunday School movements to provide impressionable readers with uplifting and ‘improving’ literature. Most of these efforts in both communities were local expressions of larger international movements, which used the models, and often the publications, of the parent organizations to improve the reading habits of local citizens. These links were deliberate and open, and seen as Christianity joining together across the globe.<sup>47</sup> One example was the Religious Tract Society of Baltimore which was founded in 1816 and corresponded and exchanged tracts with the London Tract Society. The Baltimore Bible Society, which was founded in 1810, also had many affiliates before 1825. By 1821 the Bible Society claimed

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<sup>45</sup> *The Baltimore Repertory of papers on literary and other topics*, i, no. 1(1811), p. 72.

<sup>46</sup> Inmates at the Baltimore almshouse were forbidden from reading immoral books along with swearing, drinking and gambling. Rockman, *Scraping by: wage labor, slavery, and survival in early Baltimore* (Baltimore, 2009), Kindle edition, 4249-56.

<sup>47</sup> As one sermon put it, these bible associations ‘are established, with Christianity, in the wilds of Hindostan, amidst the snows of Siberia, on the burning sands of Africa.’ From William Wyatt, *An address delivered in St. Paul’s Church, at the request of the Union board of Delegates from the Sunday Schools of Baltimore, on the second anniversary of their institution. January 1st, 1820* (Baltimore, 1820), p. 23. For a fuller discussion of these organizations see Leslie Howsam, *Cheap Bibles: nineteenth-century publishing and the British and Foreign Bible Society* (Cambridge, 1991); Susan Pedersen, ‘Hannah More meets Simple Simon: tracts, chapbooks, and popular culture in late eighteenth-century England’ in *The Journal of British Studies*, xxv, no. 1 (January, 1986), pp 84-113.

to have distributed forty-nine bibles, eighty-one testaments, and 652 tracts among the poor in Baltimore.<sup>48</sup> In Belfast a branch of the Society for Discontenting Vice was established in August 1815.<sup>49</sup> Prior to this the Society for Promoting the Education of the Poor in Ireland, or the Kildare Place Society, founded in 1811 and the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge founded in 1788 both distributed their publications in Belfast. In 1807 the Synod of Ulster established a Bible committee which collected money and received a grant from the British and Foreign Bible Society. This funded the distribution of 3,354 bibles, 2,674 testaments, and 100 psalters to thirty-eight local congregations.<sup>50</sup>

These organizations sought to spread the Christian religion and to drive out ‘pernicious’ literature through subsidized sale or gratuitous distribution of purposefully produced tracts and bibles. This required that they enter the commercial market-place for books. These groups needed the services of printers, and booksellers to produce and distribute their works effectively. In 1820 the Baltimore Religious Tract Society paid printer Joseph Robinson between \$35 and \$70 per tract for editions of 5,000. The Society claimed that they had produced 60,250 tracts in this manner, but only about 20,000 had either been sold to members or gratuitously distributed.<sup>51</sup> While the society had already given away tracts at the prison, the almshouse, the hospital and at several missions in the city, what they really wanted was that the reading public would purchase them from local booksellers in place of less worthy reading matter. To this end they made arrangements for the booksellers Cushing and Jewett to stock their tracts. As members of the Bible Society,

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<sup>48</sup> *The religious intelligencer for the year ending May, 1822. Containing the principal transactions of the various Bible and missionary societies with particular accounts of revivals of religion*, vi (New Haven, 1821), p. 521.

<sup>49</sup> Bradshaw, *Belfast general and commercial directory for 1819*, p. xxxv.

<sup>50</sup> Holmes, *The shaping of Ulster Presbyterian belief and practice*, p. 275.

<sup>51</sup> \$15.50 was also paid to an engraver for five wood cuts to adorn the works. Other evidence suggests that tracts were sold for one penny each to members of the society, but it is unclear if this rate was varied for different purchasers. *The fourth annual Report of the Religious Tract Society of Baltimore with the constitution, and appendix extracts of correspondence and a list of subscribers* (Baltimore, 1820), pp 6-8. See David Paul Nord, ‘Free grace, free books, free riders: the economics of religious publishing in early nineteenth-century America’ in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, cvi (1996), pp 241-272; Joseph Stubenrauch, ‘Silent preachers in the age of ingenuity: faith, commerce, and religious tracts in early nineteenth-century Britain’ in *Church History*, lxxx, no. 3 (September, 2011), pp 547-574.

Joseph Cushing and Joseph Jewett combined their philanthropic and commercial interests, and in 1820 they reportedly sold \$62.95 worth of tracts.

In Ireland, most of the printing for these societies was carried out in Dublin. Like their American counterparts, these tracts were generally published in editions of 5,000. However, they often used local booksellers in Belfast to help distribute their publications, either as a specified dealer or by incorporating them into the general marketplace for books. Robert Hull acted as the Belfast bookseller for the Association for Discouraging Vice, and Joseph Smyth regularly advertised works from the Kildare Place Society's lists.

While this commercial relationship was beneficial to both parties, it was an uneasy one. Evidence from Carey's Baltimore bookstore suggests that small purchases of stationary and cheap books like primers, catechisms and chapbooks along with bible sales made up a major proportion of their retail sales.<sup>52</sup> Baltimore's unskilled laborers could earn up to \$1 per day from 1790 to 1820. This was more than twice as much as the average agricultural worker in Maryland, and suggests that interested workers could have been able to afford the occasional publication.<sup>53</sup> Spelling books could cost between 12 and 25 cents, chapbooks and toy books between 12 and 31 cents. Catechisms were among the cheapest items advertised at 6 cents each, and a single newspaper could cost as little as 2 cents in 1792. Not only could working-class individuals afford to purchase the occasional publication, but the names of working-class people like Thomas Connelly, carpenter, appear in the Baltimore accounts.<sup>54</sup>

So while these tract societies may have promoted reading and used the services of local printers and booksellers, providing income and advertisements in their publications, they were also cutting directly into one of the most profitable areas of sales for provincial

<sup>52</sup> Account of Baltimore sales, January to August 1807 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 13, folder 5-6).

<sup>53</sup> For urban wages in Baltimore see Rockman, *Scraping by*, 1536-43; and for rural wages see Donald R. Adams, Jr., 'Prices and wages in Maryland 1750-1850' in *The Journal of Economic History*, xlvii, no. 3 (September, 1986), p. 632.

<sup>54</sup> List of balances due to Baltimore store, 13 December 1810 (A.A.S., Mss Carey, box 22, folder 9).

booksellers. These booksellers relied on the steady income of cheap publications. Research into the relationship between booksellers and philanthropic tract societies in Belfast by Adams demonstrates that booksellers were willing to sell the most popular tracts in their stores, but that when supplies ran low these items were quickly replaced by non-didactic alternatives.<sup>55</sup> Members of the booktrade were happy to make a profit from ‘improving’ work but not ready to forgo other sales. However if these societies’ distribution figures are correct, they possibly represent the largest element of reading material available to the poorest groups, for whom even a few pennies was too much to waste on non-essential items. In Ireland, perhaps the most universally distributed texts nationally were those produced and sold by the various philanthropic societies, such as the Kildare Place Society.

The tracts distributed were either specifically written for the Society, or else reprinted from tracts issued by their corresponding societies. They were a literature created for popular audiences, but not by them. Those who were given these tracts may never have read them: the Religious Tract Society of Baltimore was unable to provide any examples of the benefits of their tracts to publish in their 1820 report, and had instead to borrow anecdotes from London.<sup>56</sup> It is likely that tracts produced by the Society, such as *The Narrative of Francis Newport, shewing the horrors of infidelity, as manifested on the death-bed of this modern free thinker*, may have had an audience, but whether they were read in the way the Society intended is uncertain.<sup>57</sup> While there would certainly have been readers who benefited from and appreciated the religious and moral messages, it is just as likely that many readers read these tracts against the grain, ignoring the pleas for repentance and simply enjoyed the narrative itself.

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<sup>55</sup> See Adams, *The printed word and the common man*.

<sup>56</sup> *The fourth annual Report of the Religious Tract Society of Baltimore with the constitution, and appendix extracts of correspondence and a list of subscribers* (Baltimore, 1820), pp 6-8.

<sup>57</sup> The Religious Tract Society of Baltimore published *The Narrative of Francis Newport, shewing the horrors of infidelity, as manifested on the death-bed of this modern free thinker* (Baltimore, 1819).

Though these bible and tract societies represent the production and distribution side of print culture, they can tell us something about reading in these communities. First of all, these organizations believed that the current reading practices and material available within their community was dangerous to the moral and religious health of individuals. They believed that uplifting and didactic texts if freely distributed or sold in the place of cheap alternatives could combat this problem. They appealed to the market for cheap publications already in existence, proving that reading was taking place among poor and working-class members of their communities, whether or not it was the type of reading that they envisioned. Finally, the structures of these societies were neither local nor national, but transatlantic. By sharing intelligence and texts with sister organizations across the English-speaking Atlantic they were relating larger theories about reading to their particular provincial communities, while engaging with local individuals and cultures of print.

## Conclusion

This study has used the towns of Belfast and Baltimore as comparative case studies for exploring cultures of print within provincial cities in the Atlantic world. Within these towns we have explored issues of print production, distribution and consumption in an attempt to gain a more comprehensive picture of the ways in which print not only shaped local communities but also facilitated participation in larger Atlantic trends. By examining the print cultures and the book trades within these communities comparatively this study has added significantly to the knowledge of provincial print culture within both Ireland and America.

The comparative approach has benefited this study in several ways. By looking at the print cultures of these two communities side-by-side scholars can begin to see patterns of development for provincial cities and towns in the Atlantic world. Areas of convergence become clearer, and speak to shared cultural experiences which were truly international. The popularity of London novels in both Baltimore and Belfast demonstrates one way in which the reading habits of two communities, separated by an ocean, were each shaped by the same imaginative literature. Areas of convergence also help to contextualize developments traditionally studied through national perspectives. The radicalization of Belfast's printers during the 1790s looks much different when compared to similar American developments than when seen only in an Irish or even British context. The absence of African American readers from the records, when seen side-by-side with the absence of Irish-speaking readers in Ireland, also brings up fundamental issues, not only of race, but also of the what is print culture and who gets to participate and how?

The comparative approach has also provided methodological benefits. Gaps in the source material of one city have been filled in using existing material in another. Mathew Cary's business records and his interactions with Baltimore's print community, not only

expand our understanding of the American print trades, but help us understand what business practices Belfast's printers may have been using. Without this parallel American data to help frame the discussion, the study of provincial print culture in Ireland would be limited to small pools of data whose context is often unknown. The comparative approach has deepened our knowledge of both local communities, while offering broader perspectives.

This study has also offered challenges to several assumptions regarding the availability of print within provincial cities. Investigation into the importation networks used by the print trades in both Belfast and Baltimore demonstrates that provincial booksellers were adroit at securing a variety of publications from print centres across the Atlantic world, often on their own terms. This study has shown the value in examining provincial cities and towns alongside their larger counterparts by demonstrating ways in which provincial communities contributed to the larger body of knowledge available and were active agents in the transfer of ideas around the Atlantic. We now have a more nuanced understanding of the strategies of consumption and production used in provincial cities, what types of interaction they had with major centres and how these changed with fashion, economics and geo-political realities. These communities were neither isolated and insular, nor slavish dependents of print from London, Dublin or Philadelphia, but rather dynamic participants in both national and transnational print networks.

More broadly, this study has placed these communities within a wider Atlantic context demonstrating the centrality of their participation in this world to local textual consumption. At every level of this study textual production, distribution and consumption has been linked to participation in the wider transatlantic world. From the content of newspapers and best-selling novels, to the organizational structures of circulating libraries and bible societies, to the networks of communication which moved texts, these communities were dependent on transatlantic and transnational connections. The mental

geography of provincial readers stretched well-beyond their local or national borders to encompass not only metropolitan hubs like London, but also smaller cities and towns across the Atlantic.

In order to achieve these aims, this study has emphasized several themes. It began by tracing an ever expanding pool of potential readers in both communities through literacy statistics and educational opportunities. The role of religious communities and their relationships to the state had a significant impact on local literacy. At the higher end of the educational scale, Irish Presbyterians and American Catholics each sought to establish academies, colleges and seminaries as locations from which their local clergy could be trained. In both instances, their exclusions from established schools and government sources of funding encouraged them to initiate independent institutions. At the lower end of the educational scale, religious groups, through Sunday School organizations, served as a primary educator within these communities in the absence of publicly funded town schools, which were slow to develop in both locations. The importance of religious groups as drivers of literacy and providers of education, as well as producers of texts, highlights their centrality to the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century cultures of print across the Atlantic world. It also nuances our understanding of the rise of the mass reading public in the nineteenth century, often touted as a factor of industrialization, democratization and state educational movements.

This tension between religious and political factors was further explored through the development of print production within these communities. The comparative nature of the study brought out very clearly the dependence of early printing within these communities upon a sponsoring body whether religious in the case of Belfast, or political in the case of Baltimore. The narrative of the development of the book trades within each community also points towards a general life-cycle of the provincial book trades, and several systematic factors which may have influenced this development. Both Baltimore

and Belfast evolved from towns with a few long-term printers engaged in multiple aspects of production and distribution to cities with many individuals specializing in a particular aspect of the production or distribution of print. Within this life-cycle, newspaper production was identified as a key factor in the further development of print production, as it encouraged competition, secured steady supplies of raw materials, pioneered distribution routes and provided small but steady streams of capital. The attenuation of Belfast's newspapers in the 1790s demonstrates the impact of government policies on newspaper production, and illustrates the importance of newspapers to the development of further print production.

The development of the local book trades was also vital in defining the terms of interaction between these communities and the major centres of print production, both nationally and internationally. As local production grew, both in terms of production ability and output of original texts, these communities were increasingly able to negotiate the terms by which they consumed print produced elsewhere. Instead of being forced to choose the London edition of a work, provincial consumers could more easily produce their own edition or surrogate, or source a cheaper edition closer to home through integration into national book trade networks. Local production also allowed for texts to be exchanged in lieu of cash payments. This both increased the 'buying power' of provincial booksellers, who were often strapped for cash, and provided a channel for local texts to enter the wider Atlantic circulation of knowledge. Members of the local book trades in both communities had strong ties to their national book trade networks and to wider transatlantic networks stretching between Britain, Ireland and the United States. These networks were often based on ties of family, religion or nationality and were above all facilitated by personal relationships. While networks of this type have been well-documented with regards to cities like London, relocating the focus of this inquiry to a provincial city like Belfast reveals that individuals there had no less extensive networks than their more cosmopolitan

counterparts. Recall that James Magee sent books to his son in Dublin, his brother in Philadelphia, his apprentice in New York, while trading with publishers in London and Edinburgh known through their local connections.

In both Baltimore and Belfast we can see ways in which individuals and organizations participated in transatlantic trends. The similarities between those organizations in each community which promoted a culture of reading attest to the knowledge of transatlantic models by local founders. This was generally not an unconscious borrowing, but a deliberate attempt to participate in a certain movement or to emulate a particular group while meeting the individualized needs of local members. The subscription libraries offer the best example of how these organizations could impact on local communities by providing access to texts, encouraging local literary talent, and serving as meeting places for socially active members of the community. Evidence concerning individual consumption of texts also emphasizes the transnationality of the reading experience for citizens of Baltimore and Belfast. While most people used reading to serve a variety of needs, educational, entertaining and enlightening, they did so with an awareness of their participation in a shared community of readers. Even if this shared community was at times imagined, this membership allowed provincial readers to envision themselves as citizens of the world, as consumers of transatlantic fashions and as active members of their changing nations.

At the end of the chronological period of our study, we leave both Baltimore and Belfast as cities much changed from the small provincial towns they were in 1760. Their populations, trade and industry had all greatly expanded, and they sat on the cusp of mid-nineteenth century booms. The sixty-five years of this study also saw deep social problems, whose fundamental questions still plague us today, take root in these cities. In Maryland, the system of chattel slavery solidified in the early republican period, becoming an accepted, if not acceptable way of life for the citizens of antebellum Baltimore. In

Belfast, the 1790s saw the violent end of a brief period of religious tolerance, and after the 1798 Rebellion, religious sectarianism became deeply entrenched. This study began with the intention of exploring how print was used by individuals and communities in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. We set out to explore the ways that print production and consumption shaped not only the lives of individuals but also the wider communities. However, this study has also revealed the evolution of very modern and lively cultures of print evident in both Baltimore and Belfast, cultures that contributed to the economic, social and political developments of the town.

## Appendix I

Analysis of the 1809 Catalogue of the Library Company of Baltimore by Stuart Sherman

Subject	Number of Volumes	Percentage
Miscellaneous	466	12.9
Theology	401	11.09
History	350	9.68
Fiction	339	9.37
Law and Politics	318	8.79
Poetry and Plays	308	8.51
Voyages and Travel	275	7.6
Science and Mathematics	263	7.3
Surgery and Medicine	263	7.27
Biography	211	5.83
Belles Lettres	138	3.81
Classics and Antiquities	135	3.73
Agriculture and Domestic Economy	85	2.35
Art and Music	64	1.77
<b>Total</b>	<b>3616</b>	<b>100</b>

Stuart C. Sherman, 'The Library Company of Baltimore, 1795-1854' in *The Maryland Historical Magazine*, xxxix (1944), p. 15. Sherman's methodology for compiling this analysis unknown and does not correspond to the original subject headings in the 1809 Library Company catalogue, and therefore should be considered only as a general guideline.

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