'The most ancient Boundary between *England* and *Scotland*': Genealogies of the Roman Wall(s)

Richard Hingley, Durham University (29/5/2009)
Department of Archaeology, Durham University, South Road, Durham, DH1 3LE (email: Richard.Hingley@durham.ac.uk)

Richard Hingley is a Professor of Archaeology at Durham University (UK). His research focuses on Roman imperialism and historiography and he is the author of a number of books, including *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen* (Routledge, 2000), *Globalizing Roman Culture* (Routledge, 2005) and *The Recovery of Roman Britain* (Oxford University Press, 2008). He is on the editorial committee of the Archaeological Journal and the Classical Receptions Journal. He is currently Principal Investigator for the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded, *Tales of the Frontier* project, the initiative from which this paper arises.

'The most ancient Boundary between *England* and *Scotland*': Genealogies of Hadrian's Wall

> 'English, I mean British'—this familiar locution alerts us immediately to one of the enduring perplexities of English national identity. How to separate the 'English' from the 'British'.
>
> Kumar (2003: 1).

Abstract

This paper explores the writings of English, Scottish and Irish authors to address how these draw upon the geographical and conceptual spaces created through the medium of the two Roman Walls of Britain. It draws upon texts, written during the eighteenth to early twentieth centuries, in order to explore how the location of Hadrian's Wall leads to its use as a motif for what might be and what is not English. Significantly, the meanings attributed to this Wall are rather more complex than any simple idea of inclusion in or exclusion from English national space. Interpretations are often bound up with a broader geographical focus that draws upon the remains of a second and less substantial Roman frontier, the Antonine Wall. The location of this monument in Lowland Scotland complicated any simple territorial identification of England with the former geographical extent of Roman civilization. It is argued that authors' ideas of identity were deeply influenced by where they were born, but they were also challenged by their physical or conceptual movement across the lines of the Walls. Mobility turns Hadrian's Wall into a spatial referent for a transformative and ill-defined concept of Englishness which, in the writings of some authors, draws upon a nuanced conception of identities *within*, *between*, and/or *beyond*.

Introduction

The Englishman Edmund Bohun wrote in 1693 that '*The Picts Wall* [...] was the most ancient Boundary between *England* and *Scotland*; begun by *Hadrian* the Emperour to separate the *Picts* (or Barbarous Northern Nations) from the Civilized *Roman-Britains*, in 123' (Bohun 1693: 316). One of the major peoples of prehistoric northern Britain, the Picts, became closely associated with this Roman structure during medieval times when it was often called the Picts' Wall (Shannon 2007). Bohun's comments made a direct link between, on the one hand, Hadrian and the English and, on the other, the Picts and the Scots. He drew on one of the few classical texts that referred to the building and use of the Wall, a late Roman source that states that '[Hadrian] was the first to construct a wall, eighty miles in length, which was to separate the barbarians from

2

the Romans' (*SHA* II: 2). The view that Hadrian's Wall formed the border of Roman/English civilization with Pictish/Caledonian/Scottish barbarism drew upon classical roots and has remained influential; it is a spatial measure that, whether it is used literally or ironically, establishes a hierarchy of relative civilization, placing the English in a dominant location (Hingley 2008: 91).

In brief, Hadrian's Wall was built in the AD 120s and remained in use until the early fifth century (Fig. 1). It is a substantial and complex monument, including an impressive stone rampart and V-shaped ditch that runs 60 miles across the isthmus between the River Tyne and the Solway Firth (Breeze 2006a). It helped to define the boundary of the Roman province of *Britannia* for much of the period of Roman rule. The continuing visibility of the physical remains of the central section in medieval and modern times suggested that a frontier in this region of the English–Scottish border was 'natural' (Robbins 1998: 25). The Antonine Wall was built in a broadly comparable form, but well to the north between the Clyde and Forth, in the AD 140s and was probably used for around 20 years before Hadrian's Wall was re-commissioned (Breeze 2006b). The Antonine Wall presents an alternative spatial referent for Lowland Scots, but one that rarely impressed English writers due to the greater physical and literary visibility of *the* Roman Wall (Hingley 2008: 86-7).

The significance of Hadrian's Wall from medieval times to the twentieth century has been addressed (Birley 1961, Shannon 2007, Griffiths 2003 and Hingley 2008: 87-110), although less has been written about the Antonine Wall (for a review, see Hingley 2008). This paper takes a different thematic perspective to these studies, by adopting a genealogical approach that assess the roles played by the Walls in the creation and contestation of ideas of the identity of the peoples who constitute Great Britain. The material presence of these physical works formed the focus around which arguments about distinctions between peoples living to their south, north and west could be articulated, providing an anchor for relatively fluid national and regional identities. This paper seeks to show the complexity of the Roman Walls as referents in space and time, by addressing a limited number of literary and antiquarian writings (see Appendix). By drawing on sense of a marginality and place, some writers seek to create a solid historical foundation for national identities through reference to the Walls, where others aim to contradict the security of such understandings. The readings here are selected to indicate that the meanings of the Walls have not been set in stone—rather that interpretations have been transformed, contradicted, abandoned and re-cycled (Foucault 1989).

The texts date from a formative period in the construction of ideas about the identity of the peoples of the British Isles (Colley 1994; Colls 2002; Kumar 2003: 29-30; Young 2007). The

relevance of any form of concrete concept of nationhood prior to the nineteenth century is contentious (for discussions, see Kidd 1999, 1-6; Kumar 2003: 28-30), but it is evident from the sources quoted here that Hadrian's Wall had a particular relevance to the bounding of English space from medieval times, deriving from its location on the northern boundary of England and also from its ancient origin. Works by English, Scottish and Irish authors are addressed, some written by well-known literary figures. All but one of these texts were written by men, a bias reflecting the focus of research on Roman Britain prior to the twentieth century (Hingley 2008: 15).

Spatial positioning

The particular relevance of Hadrian's Wall to these English, Scottish and Irish writers arose from its material nature—the security of knowledge of its ancient history, its origin as an imperial monument, its impressive monumentality, together with its physical location close to the border. The spatial positioning of authors in relationship to the Walls is key—how did the location and physicality of these monuments lead, in certain writings, to their use as referents for personal and national identities? People re-locate their conceptual co-ordinates through the physicality of places (Colls 2002: 260) and the Walls represents powerful topographic barriers, lines to defend or to cross, to be emphasized or played-down. The frontier location of Hadrian's Wall, a long distance from London and Edinburgh, together with its monumentality and ruination, makes it a highly effective 'theatre of memory' (Samuel 1998; Dietler 1998)—a physically and deeply-historical liminal zone used to articulate important issues of identity. The historical depth of knowledge about both Walls created landscapes with dimensions in time as well as space (Calder 2006: 122).

The spatial positioning of each writer, including place of birth or family origins, and the travels that they had undertaken in Great Britain and overseas are deeply relevant (c.f. Hulme and Youngs 2002). Some writers experienced Hadrian's Wall directly by travelling to, or through, it (Nesbitt and Tolia-Kelly in press), others drew upon it without having visited. The Antonine Wall was also often a target for visitors and its location, some way to the north of Hadrian's Wall, helped in some writings to create an ambiguous territory between Walls, neither within nor without the inherited territory of imperial Rome. Wall identities are, therefore, often not simply inclusive or exclusive. The conceptual location of the author—*within*, *between*, or *beyond* the Walls—informed the identities defined through the medium of the monuments' materiality. The writers reviewed here relocated the co-ordinates of the Walls to suit their relative inclusion within, or exclusion from, the territory contained, but this spatial relationship to nationhood was

not self-evident or predictable. By moving across the line of the Wall(s) in either direction and by moving overseas or into Britain from abroad, individuals relocated their Wall-identities, drawing upon the monument as a conceptual referent for nationhood. The English were no longer spatially contained within, or the Scots necessarily physically excluded by, Hadrian's Wall.

A contested frontier

The character of Hadrian's Wall in many writings appears to derive from its status as a contested landscape of great historical depth (c.f. Bender 1993). In a study of sacred sites, Blain and Wallis (2004: 1) remark that boundaries and frontiers have significance as 'spaces, both physical and intellectual, which are never neutrally positioned, but are assertive, contested and dialogic' (c.f. Juffer 2006; Russell 2001). The significance of Hadrian's Wall as a contested frontier derives from its materiality, its physical form, its geographical location and its history. Roman texts addressing conflicts between barbarians and Romans emphasized the contested nature of the Wall and, in the eleventh century, the frontier zone between the kingdoms of England and Scotland was settled in this area (Ellis 1988; Ferguson 1977: 10). As a result, the English have long viewed the Wall as the boundary between themselves and the Scots. The dramatic remains of the monument lay on the English side of the frontier and the substantial ditch to the north of the stone rampart clearly excluded those beyond. From medieval times until the late sixteenth century, the land to either side of the Roman Wall was subject to invasion and disruption (Ellis 1999; Ridpath 1776), perhaps replicating the unsettled nature of this landscape in late Roman times.

The Wall's monumentality was supplemented by its readability. From the sixteenth century, Latin inscriptions regularly found among its remains, helped to project the image of a classical Roman identity onto the literate elite in England living within the Wall's protection (Hepple 2004). Hadrian's Wall projected an idea which the English have drawn upon intermittently since the Renaissance, that their culture was a direct result of the assimilation of Lowland Britain into the Roman empire (Hingley 2008). Textual sources and ancient finds suggested that the Roman influence on Scotland was much less significant, while Ireland appeared to have seen little Roman influence at all (Robbins 1998: 25). Despite this, from the sixteenth century, the Antonine Wall provided an additional source for Scottish intellectuals to draw upon ideas of classical origins (Hingley 2008, 87-8: 101-2).

This zone either side of Hadrian's Wall was gradually pacified from the early seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, as England and Scotland became united into the single kingdom of Great Britain (Bosanquet 1956: 168), but Hadrian's Wall continued as a physical reminder of this contested landscape. This English Wall myth of the boundary to national territory was not,

however, an uncontested interpretation. Irish, English and Scottish authors imagined the Wall in a variety of ways, from the idea that the scale of the Roman works reflected the degree of native (Scottish) valour to the exploration of colonial assimilation though a reflection on barbarian Scottish ancestors beyond civilization's frontier.

'Stinking breath … and … smells': agonies of Union

A political tract written in the immediate aftermath of the Act of Union of Scotland and England in 1707 reflects on the new political alignment (Swift 1778; McMinn 1991). Jonathan Swift (1667-1745), the Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, was an Anglo-Irish Protestant, born in Dublin but who spent some time in England (Kumar 2003: 143; Probyn 2004). Swift's tract, *The Story of an Injured Lady*, explores the relationship between England, Scotland and Ireland. One of a number of political pamphlets that he wrote on Irish affairs, this particular work, probably written in 1710, was not published until 1746 (Probyn 2004). Swift draws upon a long tradition by personalizing the various countries that made up Great Britain. He compares the relationship between England, Ireland and Scotland with the personal relationship of a man and two women, written from one woman's (Ireland's) perspective.

'Being ruined by the inconstancy and unkindness of a lover, I hope a true and plain relation of my misfortune may be of use and warning to credulous maids, never to put too much trust in deceitful men.' (Swift 1778: 375). Ireland continues:

'A gentleman [England] in the neighbourhood had two mistresses, another and myself [Scotland and Ireland]; and he pretended honourable love to us both. Out three houses stood pretty near one another. His was parted from mine by a river [the Irish Sea], and from my rival's by an old broken wall [The Picts wall]'. (*ibid*).

Swift then presents an 'impartial' account of the character of Ireland's rival, Scotland:

she hath stinking breath, and twenty ill smells about her besides […] As to her other qualities, she hath no reputation either for virtue, honesty, or manners: And it is no wonder, considering what her education hath been.' (*ibid*: 375-6).

This emphasis on the violation of cleanliness is in keeping with Swift's other poems about women (Barnett 2007: 4; but see Doody 1999), while his personification of England as male reflects a gender hierarchy within the countries of Great Britain. Swift's view of Ireland is far

more positive: 'I was reckoned to be as handsome as any in our neighbourhood, until I became pale and thin with grief and ill usage (Swift 1778: 377).

In this account, the author draws a contrast between the Church of Ireland (Swift's own church), with its close connection to the Church of England and its structures, and the Presbyterian Church of Scotland (I am very grateful to John Richardson for clarification of this point). Joseph McMinn (1991: 22) argues that Swift's bitter rejection of Ireland's dependant status was central to his understanding of Anglo-Irish relations. The Irish Sea is interpreted as a river, playing down its scale to emphasize England's close connection with the Protestant population of Ireland. The ruined nature of the Wall echoes some writings that had reflected on the closer unity of England and Scotland during the reign of James I (Griffiths 2003; Hingley 2008: 93-101). Swift image of ruination drew, ironically, on what was to become a common eighteenth- and nineteenth-century motif, attacking the English and the Scots in the process.

Antiquarian arguments north and south of the Wall
The early eighteenth century was a period of considerable interest in the Roman Wall (Hingley 2008: 101-2) and a dispute arose between two antiquaries—Scotsman Alexander Gordon and Englishman Robert Gale—over the meaning of Roman monuments. Gordon (c.1692-1745?), who probably originated from Aberdeen, well north of the Antonine Wall, had travelled to Italy and lived in London (Brown 2004). Also an opera singer, he produced one of the most original antiquarian works of eighteenth century Britain, *Itinerarium Septentrionale* (Gordon 1727). This was a thorough and original account, but its reputation suffered from criticism from both his contemporaries and modern authors (Hingley 2008: 123).

Gordon records and maps the Roman stations and Walls across central Britain, using their substantial surviving remains to conclude:

> If *Scotland* boasts of being numbered among the Nations which never bowed their Necks
> to the Yoak of the *Roman* Bondage, I think, from the foregoing sheets, it appears plain,
> that their Pretence is not built upon a wrong Foundation: For, from the Tenor of the
> whole *Roman* History in *Britain*, it cannot be shewn, that the *Scots* and *Picts* ever
> suffered the least Part of their Country to lie under Subjection, any considerable Time,
> without re-possessing themselves thereof, and taking a just Revenge upon their Enemies
> and Invaders. (Gordon 1727: 135).

He discusses the evidence from the writings of classical authors for the resistance of the ancient populations of northern Britain arguing:

> we plainly perceive, that the united forces of the *Romans* and the Provincial *Britons*, were never able to put a stop to the invasions of the *Caledonians*, who were always acting on the offensive Part; but there can be no greater Proof of the *Scots* never having been conquered, than the very *Roman* Walls themselves, built as Fences against their Hostilities: Which, while there is a stone of them remaining, will be undeniable Monuments of the Valour and Prowess of that Nation. (*ibid*: 136).

For Gordon, the remains of Roman military operations in Lowland Scotland and northern England, have a living significance. Their scale and permanence provides an effective reflection on Scottish valour and nobility, ideas which, in turn, draw upon classical writings. The Caledonians were a second people who lived to the north of the Wall in Roman times, possibly prior to the Picts. Gordon was writing twenty years after the Union and his work exhibits anxiety over English cultural domination (Hingley 2008: 122-33).

Robert Gale (1672-1744) disagreed directly. A well-respected English antiquary, born in Cambridgeshire and a resident of Scruton in Yorkshire (Clapinson 2004), Gale had a particular interest in the Roman occupation of Britain and had visited Hadrian's Wall in 1725 with the antiquary William Stukeley (Stukeley 1776: 17). In a letter to Sir John Clerk in 1726, Gale reflects upon Gordon's claims for the valour of the ancient Scots:

> I cannot think it not a scandall for any nation to have been conquered by the Romans, but a great misfortune not to have submitted to their arms, since their conquests were so far from enslaving those they vanquisht, that they tended onely to the civilizing and improving their manners, reducing them under Roman laws and government from their wild and savage way of life, instructing them in arts and sciences, and looking upon them as fellow-citizens and freemen of Rome, the common mother of all that had the happynesse to fall under her subjection …(R. Gale 1726: 87-8; Ayres 1997: 100).

These contrasting views on the Roman conquest articulate what can be interpreted as opposed Scottish and English views of the Roman inheritance, ideas that appear to be combined in the views of another Scottish antiquary, Sir John Clerk. According to Clerk (1676-1755), the monumentality of the Wall excluded the Scots from the benefits of classical civilization. A

wealthy Scottish aristocrat, mentor of Gordon and friend to Gale, Clerk was born in Edinburgh, lived in Lowland Scotland, built a villa, visited Hadrian's Wall, collected Roman stones and attempted to imitate the life of a Roman aristocrat; he was also one of the main parliamentary proponents of the 1707 Act of Union (Mitchison 2004). In a letter to Gale in 1739, Clerk states ''Tis true the Romans walled out humanity from us, but 'tis as certain they thought the Caledonians a very formidable people, when they, at so much labour and cost, built this wall' (Clerk 1739: 96; Brown 1987: 45). Clerk's observations effectively provided a synthesis of Gordon and Gale's claims, indicating that Hadrian's Wall's significance can not be defined simply in terms of a dichotomy between English and Scottish interpretations. The comments of Gordon, Gale and Clerk show that the Roman Walls had a living significance, one that required them to be visited, surveyed and written about.

Modern scholars have followed Gale in criticizing Gordon's political motivation. Iain Brown has called Gordon an important complier of records of Roman antiquity who also pursued 'a game of cultural nationalism or political antiquarianism' where the Roman remains of Scotland were concerned (Brown 2004), while Eric Birley suggested that his approach had more in common with '"popular" journalism' than with 'methodological study' (1961: 15). Gordon drew a direct parallel between, on the one hand, the ancient Caledonians and Scots of his own day and, on the other, between the Romans and contemporary Englishmen. What is excluded by this perspective, however, is that the musings of Gale and other contemporary English writers were based on equally political considerations (Hingley 2008: 131-2). Gale's comments on the value of a Roman cultural inheritance for the English reflects the context of early eighteenth-century, Augustan, England, a society that claimed to be building upon and improving upon the example of classical Rome (Ayres 1997: 96-7). The idea that the English to the south of the Wall had been made civil, while the Scots and the native Irish were excluded through their barbarity, originated during the later sixteenth century and has had considerable power since (Hingley 2000; 2008). Although this myth of English civilization has been a far more commonly expression since the eighteenth century than Gordon's claim, it is no less political.

Rebuilding the Pict's Wall to exclude the barbarians
Over a century later, in *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle* on Sunday 21st October 1838, Rory O'More wrote in reply to the 'bra Scot, Sir Peter Laurie', who, O'More informs the reader, 'now and then administers justice indifferently at the Guildhall, in London.' 'Rory O'More' was a pseudonym, derived from the well-known Catholic Irish rebel leader who campaigned against the English in Ireland in the early seventeenth century (c.f. Leniham 2004).

Sir Peter Laurie (1778-1861), who was born in Haddington, east of Edinburgh, had moved to London around the turn of the century, where he sat as a magistrate in Westminster and held the office of Lord Mayor in 1832 (McConnell 2004). He was regularly satirized in *Bell's Life* and other London papers and magazines.

'Rory O'More' notes:

> "I wish", said his worship last week to a poor fellow who had failed in his hopes of obtaining a place in that hard servitude the London police, "I wish an impassable Wall could be raised all round Ireland." […] But, gentle Sir Peter [...] let me just apply your own rule to your own case. Doubtless the lank and voracious locusts from the north are quite as great a nuisance in London upon their first arrival here as the low Irish themselves; and suppose somebody had proposed to repair the *Roman Wall*, some forty years ago, and treat Scotland as you now propose to treat Ireland, who, think you, would be at this present writing, the Alderman of Aldergate-ward? (O'More 1838).

Laurie's mention of the Wall around Ireland is presumably a reference to the Pale, the boundary between English and Irish territory from the fifteenth century onward (see Ellis 1988). The particular relevance of O'More's account, however, is the idea that the Roman Wall might have been rebuilt to keep the Scots out of London at the end of the previous century; Laurie had been one of the Scots who emigrated across the line of the Wall at that time.

O'More's comment may also draw upon earlier writings that had remarked on the problems resulting from the ruination of Hadrian's Wall. In 1807, in a discussion of Scottish emigration into England in *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, William Cobbett had stated that 'The Pict's wall is surely not standing! No: that cannot be, because the Scottish emigrate in great numbers to England' (Cobbett 1807: 490). In Catherine Gore's novel *Pin Money*, the same attitude to the ruination of the Pict's Wall is satirized when the disdainful Duchess of Trimbletown discusses those who buy and sell in London and concludes: "There ought to be a Picts-wall built up to defend us against the incursions of such hordes of barbarians" (Gore 1831: 303; Copeland 2001: 125). The educated middle classes of London at this time often appear to have felt that an influx of the Irish was a threat to society (Davis 2000, 24: Young 2007: 28), although Gore's satirical comments indicate that this idea was by no means universal.

Beyond the Walls with Robert Louis Stevenson
This Scottish author was deeply inspired by the writings of classical authors, viewing himself as

having grown up on the margin of Roman influence. Born in Edinburgh (Mehew 2004), Stevenson (1850-1890) traveled in and wrote about the Scottish Highlands (Calder 2006). He also wrote about the Roman Walls in accounts of his visits overseas, since travelling to North America and the South Seas appears to have made him reflect upon the significance of his own origins (Ambrosini 2006).

Stevenson traveled to America in 1879-80 and again in 1887-8. In his novel *The Wrecker* (1892) he wrote that San Francisco was 'not only the most interesting city of the Union, and the hugest smelting-pot of races and the precious metals. She keeps, besides, the doors of the Pacific, and is the port of entry to another world and an earlier epoch of man's history.' (Stevenson 1892a: 117). Writing of the variety of ships in the harbour, Stevenson's narrator, the American Loudon Dodd, observes that:

> I stood there on the extreme shore of the West and of to-day. Seventeen hundred years ago, and seven thousand miles to the east, a legionary stood, perhaps, upon the wall of Antoninus, and looked northward towards the mountains of the Picts. For all the interval of time and space, I, when I looked from the cliff-house on the broad Pacific, was that man's heir and analogue: each of us standing on the verge of the Roman Empire (or, as we now call it, Western civilisation), each of us gazing onward into zones un-romanised. (*ibid*: 118).

These comments draw a direct comparison between the Antonine Wall and a port on the west coast of America. In writing of San Francisco as the smelting-pot of races and the door to another world, Stevenson is, perhaps, applying a comparable interpretation to the role and significance of the Antonine Wall. Knowledge was increasing at this time and a number of inscriptions of the legions who built the frontier had been located (Bruce 1888), while excavation work was undertaken from 1890 to 1893 (Maxwell 1989: 13), of which Stevenson was presumably aware. By identifying himself with a Roman legionary standing on the Wall and looking north, Stevenson's narrator positioned himself as a Roman citizen on the margins of civilization gazing toward the uncivilized beyond.

In the 1880s, Stevenson traveled to the South Seas and Samoa in an attempt to improve his health (Jolly 1996: 113; Mehew 2004). In his book, *In the South Seas*, Stevenson amplifies the issues raised in his earlier work. He notes, during his sea travels, that:

> I was now escaped out of the shadow of the Roman empire, under whose toppling

monuments we were all cradled, whose laws and letters are on every hand of us, constraining and preventing. I was now to see what men might be whose fathers had never studied Virgil, had never been conquered by Caesar, and never ruled by the wisdom of Gaius or Papinian. (1896: 7; Jolly 1996: 113).

This work imagines a kinship between the Scottish Highlanders and the Polynesians (Jolly 1996: 114; Smith 1998: 109-10, 234), a comparison that reoccurs in his later writings.

Elsewhere, Stevenson writes specifically again about the Roman Wall in *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa*. There he writes of the Samoans as:

Christians, church-goers, singers of hymns at family worship, hardy cricketers; their books are printed in London by Spottiswoode, Trubner, or the Tracts Society; but in most other points they are the contemporaries of *our* tattooed ancestors who drove their chariots on the wrong side of the Roman wall. (Stevenson 1892b: 1; author's emphasis).

Stevenson appears to reposition himself, presumably as a result of his experience of the South Seas. He is no longer standing on top of the Antonine Wall, looking out, but has, metaphorically, crossed the Wall, taking on the genetic inheritance of ancestors in the territory beyond. It is not clear, in this context, whether Stevenson's Roman Wall is the Antonine Wall or Hadrian's Wall, although in nineteenth Britain the term usually referred to the latter. In any case, he positions himself with the Picts or Caledonians living north of one of the Walls. An association with colonized peoples in the South Seas draws directly upon Stevenson's perception of his own geographical origins as someone at, or even beyond, the margin of Roman civilization (Smith 1998: 234; Ambrosini and Dury 2006).

Reviewing Stevenson's works, Roslyn Jolly has suggested that the symbolic use of the Roman Wall at the beginning of *A Footnote to History* established a particular notion of the frontier in Samoa, which affects 'Stevenson's conception of his subject, the shape of his narrative, and the demands he makes of his readers' (Jolly 1996: 114). Clearly, in these writings Stevenson uses his personal geography to think through the colonized identity of people of Samoa (Jolly 2006: 558). Jolly suggests that Stevenson uses the Roman parallel to look at Britain north and south of the Wall, and to set this dichotomy in the context of contemporary Samoa. Stevenson, as a Scot who had a particular sympathy with Highland culture, was a member of a community that had itself been the subject of English colonization. In recognizing a similarity between South Sea islanders and the 'barbaric' Scottish Highlanders, Stevenson was positioning

himself both as a victim of colonialism and as an intrusive colonial (Colley 2004, 5).

Jolly suggests that Stevenson's spatial positioning posed a number of challenges to his readers and to the then currently dominant (mainly English) models of imperial history (Jolly 1996: 119). At this time, the dominant discourse incorporated the Roman past of Britain into a tale of contemporary British imperial greatness (Hingley 2000; Vance 1997), a form of history in which the colonized Picts or Samoans played a marginal role. Stevenson's search for analogies, was based on the questioning of the conventional Victorian anthropological opposition between primitive and civilized (Reid 2006: 8-9; Stocking 1987: 302-4), an anthropological approach to fiction (Ambrosini 2006: 24) and one that pre-figures issues concerning the contemporary world (Reid 2006: 5). Rather than imagining the imperial frontier in Samoa as at the end of all culture, Stevenson presented it as a boundary between alternative cultural fields (Jolly 1996: 119), an issue that also reflects on the meaning of the Roman Wall.

The exact position taken by Stevenson, according to Jolly, placed him with 'one foot on either side of the "Roman Wall"' (Jolly 2006: 558), but the subtlety here is to know which Wall is being referred to in *A Footnote to History*. Edinburgh is situated well to the north of Hadrian's Wall, but lies just within the territory defined by the Antonine Wall. Stevenson, like Sir John Clerk before him, was born in the area between the two Walls but very close to the edge of this ambiguous territory. Stevenson was born and educated in neo-classical Edinburgh attending the Edinburgh Academy, which had been founded by Sir Walter Scott and others in order to give Edinburgh boys the opportunity to get into Oxford and Cambridge by learning Latin and Greek (John Richardson pers. com.). He inhabited an ambivalent genealogical location, between Walls, but on the far side of the most monumental and famous. Jolly suggests that Stevenson asked his European readers to cross, in their imaginations, the frontier of their own civilization (*ibid*), but he did this by drawing upon his own classical origins, within, but close to the margin of, Roman territory.

The ruins of Englishness

Rudyard Kipiling (1865-1936) visited Hadrian's Wall (Mothersole 1924: 82-3) and wrote about it on several occasions. Kipling was born in India and travelled widely in Britain and overseas, writing numerous works of fiction that explored contemporary troubles (Pinney 2004). By the early twentieth century, Britain was facing a difficult imperial situation and writers looked to the Roman past for morals that would help to bring stability to Britain's empire (Hingley 2000; Kumar 2003: 198). In 1906, in his children's novel, *Puck of Pook's Hill*, Kipling makes Hadrian's Wall a metaphor for the British imperial frontiers and for concerns about the state of

the empire, particularly drawing upon recent events in South Africa and India (Kipling 1906; see Hingley 2000: 56-7; Ricketts 1999: 305-6). Kipling was one of a number of Edwardian Englishmen—including politicians, military men, educationalists and university academics—who drew on the Wall to explore imperial comparisons and contrasts at this problematic time.

A rather different view of the Roman Wall is evident in Kipling's speech, 'England and the English', presented to the Royal Society of St. George in April 1920, after the First World War, the death of Kipling's son and during a rather introspective period of Kipling's life (Pinney 2004). At the start of the speech, Kipling remarks:

> About sixteen hundred years ago, when Rome was mistress of the world and the Picts and Scots lived on the other side of the Wall that ran from Newcastle to Carlisle, the story goes that Rome allowed those peoples one night in the year in which they could say aloud exactly what they thought of Rome, without fear of consequences. So then, on that one night of the year, they would creep out of the heather in droves and light their little wandering fires and criticise their Libyan Generals and their Roman Pontiffs and Eastern camp followers, who looked down on them from the top of their great high unbreakable Roman Wall sixteen hundred years ago.
>
> To-day, Imperial Rome is dead. The Wall is down and the Picts and Scots are on this side of it, but thanks to the Royal Society of St. George, there still remains one night in the year when the English can creep out of their hiding-places and whisper to each other exactly what we think of each about ourselves. (Kipling 1928: 177-8).

Kipling's comment about the Picts and Scots having crossed Wall repeat an earlier motif. The Wall, as a ruin, can no longer serve to define the boundaries of English identity, but Kipling's account is ambiguous, since the whole speech is based on the premise that the English can still identify themselves and meet together to discuss common kinship (Young 2007: 203, 228-30).

Kipling draws explicitly on Daniel Defoe's 'The True-Born Englishman', thinking of the English as a mixed race (Ricketts 1999: 291). The English, according to Kipling, were 'taught' by the Phoenicians and the Romans, as well as by the Normans; he suggested that the complexity of English history would have 'driven an unmixed race to the edge of lunacy' (Kipling 1928: 178). The ruination of the Wall appears symbolic of cultural mixing, leading to what might today be termed a hybrid English identity. As Young has argued (2008: 230), in Kipling's later works, the real England had become the much larger civilization found across the British empire. A transformed idea of Englishness gained powerful support at this time, as the English aimed to

distinguish themselves from Germans by contesting their own racial purity as Teutons (Hingley 2000). The ambiguity in Kipling's account is, however, self-evident. He acknowledges only certain ancestors of the English—Romans, Danes, Normans, Papists, Cromwellians, Stuarts, Hollanders, Hanoverians, the Upper Class and Democracy (Kipling 1928: 180). This continues to exclude people from the empire who had settled in England, the Scots and, apparently, the Germanic (Anglo-Saxon), unless the latter are included in Hollanders or Hanoverians. The Roman Wall continues to serve as a referent for the exclusion of certain peoples from common kinship.

Conclusion: *within*, *between* and *beyond* the Walls

This paper has explored the contentious character of the Roman Wall by addressing how certain English, Scottish and Irish authors positioned themselves with regard to the metaphorical space that it creates. The accounts addressed suggest that the Wall had a specific value for authors throughout the British Isles at certain times, but the thoughts of these writers do not break down into neatly defined English, Scottish and Irish identities. Rather, the Walls are often drawn upon to think through nationhood in complex terms. These issues have been addressed by exploring the conceptual positioning of individual author *within*, *between*, or *beyond* the Wall(s).

From an English perspective, Hadrian's Wall's spatial relevance often appears to relate to its potential, or lack of potential, to define a barrier between the English and the Scots and/or Irish. In this way, the Wall includes the English *within* the civilized nation and excludes the uncivil. In the writings of Cobbett, Gore and Kipling, the Wall either fulfils this role, or has ceased to provide such a function due to its ruination and the movement of people across its line. Swift projects a comparable view from a Protestant Irish perspective, the ruin of the Wall casting a critical light on England's courting of Scotland through Union. Perhaps the relationship between the distinct countries of Great Britain might be improved if the Wall still stood to its full height with its garrison in place.

Scottish writers sometimes articulated a connected idea of being *beyond* the Wall(s). Gordon hailed from well to the north of both Walls and he saw the Roman military remains as evidence for the serious opposition of the Caledonians to Roman military activity. Sir John Clerk viewed the situation from an excluded perspective, despite his spatial positioning within the Antonine Wall, when he remarked that the Romans 'walled out humanity', a position that reflects his role in the Act of Union. Sir Peter Laurie, if Rory O'More's account is to be relied upon, transported the Picts' Wall to the Irish situation by proposing the rebuilding of the Irish Pale, defining himself at the same time from the beneficial position of being *within*. Evidently, Laurie's

own migration across the line of Hadrian's Wall caused him to redefine his co-ordinates. Stevenson, like Laurie, was born in the Scottish Lowlands, between the Roman Walls, and may well have been drawing upon both Roman Walls to consider the issues of colonial subjugation that affected the Scots in both Roman and modern times and which were now impacting on the people of the South Seas and Samoa. This reflects Stevenson's fascination with the Scottish Highlands and their people, but it is, perhaps, the spatial depth of the Roman frontier system from north to south that enabled him to see the limits of lands 'un-romanised' extending from the port of San Francisco to the South Seas. He appears to have one foot on either side of the Walls, deeply reflecting his classical education and also his travels within Britain and overseas.

In all these accounts, the Walls retains significance as living and animated entities. These writings, whether they stress ruination or survival, envisage the monuments as relevant to the determination of contemporary identity. It is the ambiguity of the Walls as ancestral but relevant, ruined but monumental and the area within the ambit of the Walls, English but also Lowland Scottish and (formerly) imperial Roman, that continue to make them so relevant to those who aim to think through issues of identity today.

Figures
Fig. 1. The location of the two Roman Wall showing the location of birth of authors mentioned in the article (by Christina Unwin).

Appendix: research materials
The research for this paper addressed formal published texts that relate to Hadrian's Wall, while references to the Antonine Wall have also been located as part of the methodology. These source include histories, political tracts, antiquarian studies, poems, diaries, letters, novels, depictions and newspapers articles. Many texts have been found through the searching of on-line databases, but only a few are addressed here, in order to draw out issues relevant to themes set out in the introduction.

Impey, Sophia Labadi, David Mattingly, David Matless, John Richardson, Chris Scarre, Michael Shanks, Sam Smiles, Pete Wilson and Christina Unwin for help and advice.

Bibliography

Ambrosini, R. (2006). 'The Four Boundary-Crossings of R. L. Stevenson, Novelist and Anthropologist', in R. Ambrosini and R. Dury (ed.): 23-35.

Ambrosini, R. and R. Dury (2006). 'Introduction', in R. Ambrosini and R. Dury (ed.): xiii- xxviii.

Ambrosini, R. and R. Dury (ed. 2006). *Robert Louis Stevenson: Writer of Boundaries*. London, University of Wisconsin Press.

Ayres, P. (1997). *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century England*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Barnett, L. (2007). *Jonathan Swift in the Company of Women*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Bender, B. (1993). 'Stonehenge - Contested Landscapes (Medieval to Present-Day)', in B. Bender (ed.) *Landscape: Politics and Perspectives*. Oxford, Berg: 245-80.

Birley, E. (1961). *Research on Hadrian's Wall*. Kendal, Titus Wilson.

Blain, J. and R. J. Wallis (2004). 'Sacred Sites, Contested Rites/Rights,' *Journal of Material Culture* 9: 237-61.

Bohun, E. (1693). *A geographical dictionary representing the present and ancient names of all the counties, provinces, remarkable cities, universities, ports, towns, mountains, seas, streights, fountains, and rivers of the whole world*. London, Charles Brome.

Bosanquet, R. C. (1956). 'Robert Smith and the "Observations upon the Picts Wall"', *Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society* New Series, 55: 156-71.

Breeze, D. (2006a). *J. Collingwood Bruce's Handbook to the Roman Wall, Fourteenth edition*. Newcastle upon Tyne, Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Breeze, D. (2006b). *The Antonine Wall*. Edinburgh, John Donald.

Brown, I. G. (1987). 'Modern Rome and Ancient Caledonia: the Union and the Politics of Scottish Culture', in A. Hook (ed.) *The History of Scottish Literature*. Aberdeen, Aberdeen University Press. 2, 1660-1800: 33-49.

Brown, I. G. (2004). 'Gordon, Alexander', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online edition* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11021. accessed October 2008>.

Bruce, J. C. (1888). 'The Wall of Antonine', *Journal of the British Archaeological Association* 45 (1889): 131-4.

Burriss, E. E. (1925). 'The Classical Culture of Robert Louis Stevenson', *The Classical Journal* 20: 271-9.

Calder, J. (2006). 'Figures in a Landscape: Scott, Stevenson, and Routes to the Past', in R. Ambrosini and R. Dury (ed.): 121-32.

Clapinson, M. (2004). 'Gale, Roger', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/10294. accessed October 2008>.

Clerk, S. J. (1739). 'Sir John Clerk to Roger Gale, relating to his journey to Whitehaven, the coal works there, antiquities at Boulnesse, and the Picts Wall', in W. C. Lukis (ed.) *The Family Memoirs of the Rev. William Stukeley, M.D. and the Antiquarian and other Correspondence of William Stukeley, Roger & Samuel Gale, etc*. Durham, Surtees Society. 76 (1883): 90-7.

Cobbett, W. (1807). 'Summary of Politics', *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register*, Saturday September 26, 1807, Issue 13: 481-95. <http://find.galegroup.com. accessed October 2008>.

Colley, A. C. (2004). *Robert Louis Stevenson and the Colonial Imagination*. Aldershot, Ashgate.

Colley, L. (1994). *Britons: Forging the nation, 1707-1837*. London, Pimilco.

Colls, R. (2002). *Identity of England*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Copeland, E. (2001). 'Crossing Oxford Street: Silverfork Geopolitics', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 25(2): 116-34.

Davis, G. (2000). 'The Irish in Britain, 1815-1939', in A. Bielenberg (ed.) *The Irish Diaspora*. Harlow, Pearson: 19-37.

Dietler, M. (1998). 'A tale of three sites: the monumetalization of Celtic oppida and the politics of collective memory and identity', *World Archaeology* 30: 72-89.

Doody, M. A. (1999). 'Swift among the Women', in N. Wood (ed.) *Jonathan Swift*. Harlow, Longman: 196-224.

Ellis, S. G. (1988). *The Pale and the Far North: Government and Society in two early Tudor borderlands. The O'Donnell Lecture, 1986*. Galway, National University of Ireland.

Ellis, S. G. (1999). 'The English State and its Frontiers in the British Isles, 1300-1600', in D. Power and N. Standen (eds.) *Frontiers in Question: Eurasian Borderlands, 700-1700*. Basingstoke, MacMillan: 153-81.

Foucault, M. (1989). *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Reprinted 2002. London, Routledge.

Gale, R. (1726). 'Roger Gale to Sir John Clerk, London, June 24th, 1726', in W. C. Lukis (ed.) *The Family Memoirs of the Rev. William Stukeley M.D. and the Antiquarian and other*

Correspondences of William Stukeley and Roger & Samuel Gale. London, Surtees Society: 86-91.

Gordon, A. (1727). *Itinerium Sepentrionale or a Journey thro' Most of the Counties of Scotland and Those in the North of England*. London, F. Gyles, D. Browne, Woodman and Lyons and C. Davies.

Gore, C. G. F. (1831). *Pin Money; a novel*. London, Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley.

Griffiths, H. (2003). 'Britain in Ruin: The Pict's Wall and the union of the two crowns', *Rethinking History* 7: 89-105.

Harvey, D. (2003). '"National identities" and the politics of the ancient heritage: continuity and change at ancient monuments in Britain and Ireland', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 28: 488-507.

Hepple, L. W. (2003). 'William Camden and early collections of Roman antiquities in Britain', *Journal of the History of Collections* 15: 159-74.

Hingley, R. (2000). *Roman Officers and English Gentlemen: the imperial origins of Roman archaeology*. London, Routledge.

Hingley, R. (2008). *The Recovery of Roman Britain 1586-1906: 'A Colony so Fertile'*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Hulme, P. and T. Youngs (2002). 'Introduction', in P. Hulme and T. Youngs (ed.) *Travel Writing*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1-13.

James, S. (2005). 'Limsefreunde in Philadelphia: a snapshot of the state of Roman Frontier Studies', *Britannia* 36: 499-502.

Jolly, R. (1996). 'Robert Louis Stevenson and Samoan History: Crossing the Roman Wall', in B. Bennett, J. E. Doyle and S. Nandan (eds.) *Crossing Cultures: Essays on Literature and Culture of the Asia-Pacific*. London, Skoob Books: 113-20.

Jolly, R. (2006). 'Robert Louis Stevenson, Henry Maine, and the Anthropology of Comparative Law', *Journal of British Studies* 45: 556-80.

Juffer, J. (2006). 'Introduction', in J. Juffer (ed.) *The Last Frontier: The Contemporary Configuration of the U.S.-Mexico Border*. Durham, Duke University Press: 663-80.

Kidd, C. (1999). *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Kipling, R. (1906). *Puck of Pook's Hill*. London, Macmillan & Co.

Kipling, R. (1928). 'England and the English, Royal Society of St. George, April 1920', in R. Kipling, *A Book of Words: Selections from speeches and addresses delivered between 1906 and 1927*. London, Macmillan.

Kumar, K. (2003). *The Making of English National Identity*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Lenihan, P. (2004). 'O'More, Rory [Roger Moore]', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online edition*. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/20762. accessed October 2008>.

Maxwell, G. (1989). *The Romans in Scotland*. Edinburgh, James Thin.

McConnell, A. (2004). 'Laurie, Sir Peter', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online edition*. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/16133. accessed October 2008>.

McMinn, J. (1991). *Swift's Irish pamphlets: An Introductory Selection*. Savage, Maryland, Barnes & Noble.

Mehew, E. (2004). 'Stevenson, Robert Louis', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online edition*. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26438. accessed October 2008>.

Mitchison, R. (2004b). 'Clerk, Sir John', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online edition* <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/5617. accessed October 2008>.

Mothersole, J. (1924). *Hadrian's Wall.* Third edition. London, Bodley Head.

Nesbitt, C. and D.P. Tolia-Kelly (in press). 'Hadrian's Wall: Embodied Archaeologies of the Linear Monument', *Journal of Social Archaeology*.

'O'More, Rory' (1838). 'Sir Peter Laurie and the Irishy', *Bell's Life in London and Sporting Chronicle, Sunday October 21st 1838*. London: 1. <http://find.galegroup.com. accessed October 2008>.

Pinney, T. (2004). 'Kipling, (Joseph) Rudyard', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online edition*. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/34334. accessed October 2008>.

Probyn, C. (2004). 'Swift, Jonathan', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, online edition*. <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26833. accessed October 2008>.

Reid, J. (2006). *Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the Fin de Siècle.* Basingstoke, Palgrave.

Ricketts, H. (1999). *The Unforgiving Minute: A life of Rudyard Kipling*. London, Chatto & Windus.

Ridpath, G. (1776). *The Border-History of England and Scotland, Deduced from the earliest times to the Union of the two Crowns. Revised and published by the Author's Brother, Mr. Philip Ridpath, Minister of Hutton*. London, T. Cadell, A. Donaldson, J. Balfour and R. Taylor.

Robbins, K. (1998). *Great Britain: Identities, Institutions and the Idea of Britishness*. London, Longman.

Russell, L. (2001). 'Introduction', in L. Russell (ed.) *Colonial Frontiers: Indigenous-European Encounters in Settler Societies*. Manchester, Manchester University Press: 1-15.

Samuel, R. (1998). *Island Stories, Unravelling Britain*. London, Verso.

SHA = *Scriptores historiae Augustae*, Volume 1, *Hadrian*. Translated by D. Magie. 1930, London.

Shannon, W. D. (2007). *Murus ille famosus (that famous wall): Depictions and Descriptions of Hadrian's Wall before Camden*. Kendal, Titus Wilson & Son.

Smith, V. (1998). *Literary Culture and the Pacific: Nineteenth-century textual encounters*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Stevenson, R. L. (1892a). *The Wrecker*. Reprinted, 1926. London, William Heinmann.

Stevenson, R. L. (1892b). *A Footnote to History: Eight Years of Trouble in Samoa*. London, Cassell.

Stevenson, R. L. (1896). *In the South Seas: Being an account of experiences and observations in the Marquesas, Paumotus and Guilbert Islands*. London, Chatto and Windus.

Stocking, G. W. (1987). Victorian Anthropology. New York, Free Press.

Stukeley, W. (1776). 'Iter Boreale', in *Itinerarium Curiosum. Or, an Account of the Antiquities and Remarkable Curiositys in Nature or Art, Observed in Travels through Great Britain,* Centuria II. London, Baker and Leigh: 17-77.

Swift, J. (1778). 'The Story of an Injured Lady. In a Letter to her Friend. With his Answer', in *The Works of Jonathan Swift*. Edinburgh, Churnside and Wilson: 375-87.

Vance, N. (1997). *The Victorians and Ancient Rome*. Oxford, Blackwell.

Young, R. J. C. (2008). *The Idea of English Ethnicity*. Oxford, Blackwell.