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SCOTTISH IDENTITY IN STONE:
STATUES OF ROBERT BURNS AND WILLIAM WALLACE IN
19TH CENTURY BALLARAT

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Abstract
The statues of both Robert Burns and William Wallace, erected in the provincial Victorian gold mining town of Ballarat in the late-nineteenth century, are a unique entry point into the world of diasporic Scottish culture. They were physical icons of identity—designed, executed, and interpreted to reflect hybrid Scottish, British and Australian ethnic identities. The intellectual and ideological re-imagining of both Burns' and Wallace's positions in Scottish tradition and history enabled Scots to present their lives and works in ways that accommodated both Scottish and British loyalty in an Australian colonial setting.

Introduction
EXPRESSIONS OF CULTURAL IDENTITY in the Scottish diaspora have been marked by dynamism and diversity. Historians have explored a variety of manifestations of Scottish culture in Australia, including religion, literature, sport, dancing, food and drink, and ethnic associations and celebrations. An emerging field of interest in Australia is the way in which Scottish culture has been 'written' on the built environment. The statues of both Robert Burns and William Wallace, erected in the provincial Victorian gold mining town of Ballarat in the late-nineteenth century, are a unique entry point into the world of diasporic
Scottish culture. Importantly, the Burns statue in Ballarat was one of the first in Australia, while the Wallace statue was the first to be built outside Scotland—the second was a monument in Baltimore’s Druid Hill Park.²

There are over 160 statues of Robert Burns around the world and eight were erected in Australia between 1883 and 1935: in Camperdown (1883), Ballarat (1887), Adelaide (1894), Melbourne (1904), Sydney (1905), Brisbane (1929), and Canberra (1935), while Bendigo has a bust (1911). In other areas of Scottish settlement, the United States has sixteen Burns statues, Canada has nine, and New Zealand, four.³ The Ballarat case provides a useful example because it is home to two statues of Scottish heroes. Both were erected in the same decade at the height of Burns memorialisation, and the same Scot—John Nimmo—unveiled both and spoke at the opening ceremonies. On the statues and in the speeches accompanying their unveiling in Ballarat, we find the manifestation of hybrid Scottish, British and Australian identities. What makes this case interesting is the intellectual and ideological positioning of both Burns’ and Wallace’s positions in Scottish tradition and history, and how the cultural identities manifested in these statues compared to other similar memorials in Australia and around the world. Such monuments are physical icons of identity, designed, executed and interpreted in a way that reflects national and regional identities. In Ballarat, the perceived universality of Burns and Wallace enabled some Scots to interpret their lives and works in ways that accommodated both Scottish and British loyalty in an Australian colonial setting.

Scottishness, Britishness and Symbols of Ethnicity

Statues such as those examined in this article are, in Pierre Nora’s words, *lieux de mémoire*, sites of memory where “memory crystallises and secretes itself”, because there are no longer *milieu de mémoire*, or real environments of memory.⁴ In a sense, these particular statues are static symbols of a faraway homeland. Public monuments and statues commemorating figures from Scotland’s past are representative of the process by which migrants create or recreate symbolic traditions of ethnicity in their adopted countries, often disconnected from the historical realities of their homeland and set apart from their everyday lives.⁵ Sometimes, however, symbolic traditions do intersect with a migrant’s social and political environment. As suggested in Max Weber’s concept of ‘social closure’, ethnicity can be instrumental in itself for a migrant group. The invocation of ethnicity—and
the establishment of rules, practices and boundaries—in the process of self-identification can be a strategic choice made by migrants for social, economic, or political security.6

As lasting and highly visible statements of culture and identity, statues and monuments are particularly pertinent examples of social closure. As Kirk Savage has observed, monuments are integral to understanding the creation and negotiation of cultural identity, because they ‘impose a permanent memory on the very landscape within which we order our lives’. Monuments provide public and enduring credibility and legitimacy to particular groups, although they must necessarily marginalise others in the process.7 Monuments are especially useful entry points into the nature of group identity, because the process of their creation is far more democratic, representative, and collective compared to other arts such as painting and literature; we can recognise monuments as both products of, and stimulus for, the public imagination.8

In the monuments erected across the world to commemorate figures from Scotland’s past, historians have found very specific constructions of Scottish identity.9 Scottish history has been embodied in a variety of emotional and sectarian heroes—figures such as Robert the Bruce, Mary, Queen of Scots, William Wallace, Bonnie Prince Charlie, Walter Scott and Robert Burns.10 In North America and Britain, Burns statues and memorials were selective, romantic visions of Scotland’s past. Historian Christopher Whatley notes a tendency to present Burns as a poet or a ploughman, ‘but never as a man of liberty or a democrat’.11 While monuments in Australia reflected the romanticising tendency in the global diaspora, interpretations of both Burns and Wallace in Ballarat displayed, in contrast to the transatlantic tendency, a promotion of universalism and individualism present in Australian colonial politics at the time.12 Thus, although externalised and largely symbolic ethnic traditions could easily exist apart from everyday life, in this case, they also reflected the adoption of colonial social and political outlooks by Scots—an important observation given that it is often the case that symbolic identities do not overlap with a migrant’s everyday life.13

The particular political outlook reflected in the events surrounding the Ballarat statues, and the statues themselves, represented the worldwide re-imagining of Scottish identity within the framework of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. As numerous historians have observed, Scottish and British identities became increasingly convergent as Scots
and Scotland drew benefits from their inclusion in, and administration of, the British Empire. Linda Colley, for instance, notes that, in the nineteenth century, Scots learned to wear more than one ‘hat of national identity’ concurrently—a Scottish one and a British one. The hybridisation of Scottish and British identities in Australia has also been the subject of much discussion and has been a common theme in histories of the Scots for many years.

The British element of Scottish identity and culture in Australia extended at least back to the late 1840s, when annual Scottish festivals were held in Melbourne to celebrate both Robert Burns and William Wallace. The occasions were at first explicitly political and assertive, and anti-English sentiment was especially rife (in 1847, the organisers even refused to invite Melbourne’s mayor because he was English). These festivals were exemplars of the broader evolution of Scottish culture and identity in Australia during the nineteenth century.

Gradually, the exclusivity of the events was replaced by the promotion of ‘unionist nationalism’—a hybrid form of British loyalty and Scottish nationalism. By 1850, non-Scots were allowed to attend, representing a growing confidence among Scots of their (real or imagined) proliferation in the social élite and a growing sense that Scots were the key factor in the success of the Empire and its colonies. As the 1850s drew out, the celebrations, though becoming more ostentatious in their ‘Balmorality’ and romanticisation of Scotland’s past, began to exhibit an unabashed sense of British patriotism and made assertions that the Scots were the supreme component of the British Empire. Throughout that decade, numerous Caledonian societies and St Andrew’s associations were founded where there had been none before—a development assisted in part by the immigration of thousands of Scots to the colonies in the 1850s. Their activities, too, were tinged with a unique combination of romanticised Scottish culture and British loyalty. In the middle of the nineteenth century, therefore, an imperial culture emerged among Scots in Victoria and Australia that harmonised with the numerous connections they had forged throughout the Empire. This article complements the body of literature by addressing these themes as they developed towards the end of the nineteenth century in another colonial city, Ballarat, but also adds a new dimension to these discussions by examining their relevance to public monuments of Burns and Wallace.
The reinvention of Scottish identity for a British world extended specifically into celebrations of Robert Burns, which became less combative and increasingly marked more by universalism and pro-imperialism. Burns’ Scottish nationalism was ‘cancelled out’ by increasing emphasis on his British patriotism, and the reinvention of Burns for colonial society provided a resilient symbolic focus for Scottish identity. In addition to this British patriotism, individualism pervaded understandings of Scottish identity, and such notions also extended to the re-imagining of Robert Burns. In Scotland, by the middle of the nineteenth century, the concepts of freedom and liberty were more associated with middle class individualism and anti-aristocratic sentiment than Jacobinism. The values of self-help, thrift, diligence, independence and respectability became central to Scottish identity at this time. Such values were projected onto Burns. Ralph Waldo Emerson himself said in Boston in 1859: ‘Robert Burns, the poet of the middle class, represents in the mind of men today that great uprising of the middle class against the armed and privileged minorities.’

This study confirms findings that indicate a reinvention of Burns for the British colonial world in the nineteenth century, but extends this process to encapsulate William Wallace, a figure in Scotland’s history whose mythological tradition arguably required far more negotiation to accommodate British imperial patriotism. While the Wallace statue in Ballarat has been noted in the broader context of Scottish nationalism in Scotland and abroad, this article places it in a comparative framework alongside Burns and the development of Britishness in Scottish culture abroad. In Ballarat, we find an exemplary statement of the dominant concept of culture and identity in the Australian Scottish diaspora at this time, one that promoted individualism and British loyalty while retaining a distinctly Scottish character.

**Robert Burns in Ballarat, 1887**

The statues of Robert Burns and William Wallace, and their prominence in the landscape, hint at the achievements of the Scots and their relative comfort in Ballarat society. Indeed, since the early days of settlement in the Port Phillip District, Scots had been successful settlers, and this was especially so in the Western District. Ballarat was no exception. In 1857, there were 5,735 Scottish-born residents in Ballarat, and around 3,800 were men—Melbourne was the only place in the colony with more Scottish residents, although parts of the Western District were still, proportionally,
overwhelmingly Scottish.\textsuperscript{25} Over the second half of the nineteenth century, the number of those born in Scotland dwindled, and their settlement patterns showed a shift from Ballarat East to Ballarat West, towards the more prosperous and stable part of the growing city. In 1871, there were 4,296 Scots living in Ballarat and the ratio of men to women had become more even—3,123 of these Scots lived in the west, while 1,173 lived in the east. In 1881, the east-west division is clear again, with 1,339 in Ballarat West and 654 in Ballarat East. Similarly, in 1,891, the numbers had dropped, but there were around 1,300 in the west and 426 in the east.\textsuperscript{26}

Weston Bate has argued that the overall division of Ballarat between east and west was also evident in the demographics of each area. The low-lying flats of the east were prone to floods and fire, and thus affluent residents moved towards the more physically stable west; the east’s geography was unsuited to the needs of a growing metropolis, while the west offered more appropriate sites for the buildings and institutions of Ballarat. Moreover, the
west was closer to rich, gold-bearing quartz deposits deep in the earth, and was also oriented towards the fertile pastoral lands of the Western District. Bate notes that the West’s residents were often affluent merchants, bankers, retailers, investors, and architects.\textsuperscript{27} Jan Croggon has argued that the Scots’ trend towards residing in the west over the second half of the nineteenth century, a more pronounced shift than for other migrant groups, reflected their ‘pattern of quiet achievement’.\textsuperscript{28} She observes that the Scots were ‘builders—men who left their mark’.\textsuperscript{29} Indeed, their mark was indelible and undeniably ‘Scottish’.

On 30 September 1884, the Melbourne newspaper \textit{The Argus}, reported briefly that in Ballarat: ‘A movement is on foot for the erection of a marble statue of Burns in the Botanical Gardens by a number of admirers of the poet.’\textsuperscript{30} Subsequent reports indicate that Scots and other residents of the Ballarat district warmly took to the cause. The Burns Memorial Committee was established (with one Thomas Stoddart as its president). They opened a subscription list, and funding arrived from private contributions and proceeds from various charitable events—including a large St Andrew’s Day concert. Contemporaries suggested that the largest donation was made by the Ballarat City Council—perhaps because of its ongoing commitment, funded largely by Scottish money, to the ‘beautification’ of Ballarat.\textsuperscript{31} In 1935, one historian indicated that the total cost of the statue was approximately £1,000.\textsuperscript{32} In any case, by August 1885, the committee had raised enough money to commission John Udny, in Italy, to sculpt the statue.\textsuperscript{33}

The Burns Memorial Committee of Ballarat decided on the final design for the statue in mid-January 1886. One of seventeen submissions in a competition organised by the committee, the design was prepared by Thomas Thompson, a local woodcarver and architectural designer.\textsuperscript{34} The nine-feet-high statue, sculptured from Italian Carrara marble, stands on a pedestal of Harcourt granite, with a substructure of bluestone and concrete. One observer described ‘the poet, standing erect, holding a book in the left hand and a pencil in the right. The head is uncovered, but the dress and plaid mark the poet’s nationality. The figure of a shepherd’s collie, sits at the feet’.\textsuperscript{35} Well into the twentieth century, many people believed the statue to be the first of Robert Burns in Australia. However, the \textit{Camperdown Chronicle} asked readers in 1937: ‘But what of Camperdown’s statue of the poet with his dog?’, a statue originally sculpted in Scotland in the 1830s and purchased for Camperdown in the early 1880s. The \textit{Chronicle
went on to observe that residents of Camperdown ‘could not help but feel indignant’ about claims that Ballarat’s statue was the first in Australia.\(^{36}\)

Initial proposals from the Committee suggested that the Ballarat statue was to be located in Ballarat’s Botanical Gardens.\(^{37}\) The location was later changed to the site of an existing monument of Burke and Wills, although this met with opposition from the public, perhaps revealing the extent to which notions of Australian identity had already permeated colonial society by the early 1880s. Newspapers reported: ‘The dissenters consider that as the present erection [of Burke and Wills] is so essentially Australian, it is more appropriate than the statue of a man who has never seen Australia.’\(^{38}\)

The Ballarat Burns statue was unveiled on 21 April 1887 at its present site on the corner of Sturt and Lydiard Streets. Burns was the first statue to be erected on the small strip of gardens running along Sturt Street and occupied a significant position. Contemporaries described the site at which Burns is located thus:

> These narrow gardens crest the hill on which the Post office stands, an eminence known now as Post office-hill, but in primitive days as Camp-hill. The brow of this eminence immediately in front of the Post office has been appropriated to the statue, and a finer site could not be found.\(^{39}\)

The unveiling of Burns coincided with a trades procession on Sturt Street in commemoration of the Eight Hour Day. Of this date, one writer said: ‘no day could have been more appropriately chosen than those of the Eight Hours Day [sic], because Burns was essentially the Bard of Labor’.\(^{40}\) At its unveiling, observers noted that the statue faced westward, and right into a willow tree, which stood a few feet away. The Argus reported that the City Council had been asked to allow the removal of the willow, ‘but a sentimental desire to retain it as it was planted by one of the city fathers now deceased, has so far prevented their complying with the request. The tree is, however, so manifestly in the way of the statue that it will have to be cut down if the statue is to be visible at its best’.\(^{41}\) Another observer wrote: ‘Many years ago, Mr Thomas Lang ... brought out some slips of Kilmarnock willow, which he planted in Ballarat ... The tree beside which the statue of Burns is erected is thus a lineal descendant of one of the willows under which Burns often reclined.’\(^{42}\)

Newspaper reports at the time suggested a crowd of between 15,000 and 20,000 people in attendance. John Nimmo, the state Minister of Public Works, gave the main speech. Nimmo was a surveyor by trade,
a businessman and a parliamentarian. He was born in 1819 at Catrine, Ayrshire, the son of a mason, and trained in Glasgow. He arrived in Australia in 1853. In business, he was a produce merchant specialising in coffee and spices. As a politician, Nimmo was at various times a local government councillor, a mayor, a Member of the Lower House from 1877, and later a staunch protectionist.43

‘As the veiling was drawn away from the figure,’ reported The Argus, ‘the assemblage cheered enthusiastically’ and the Phoenix Foundry Band played Burns’ egalitarian song, ‘A man’s a man for a’ that’. The speech given by John Nimmo after the unveiling of the Burns statue was reproduced in full in The Argus. The speech indicates Nimmo was a man well versed in the life and works of Burns, as well as those of other poets and writers. Indeed, Lord Aberdeen, in apologising for his absence at the unveiling, wrote: ‘I doubt if any man in the colonies or in our own native land could more accurately and effectively interpret and convey the true spirit and force of Burns’ poetry than Mr Nimmo.44 Throughout the speech, Nimmo compared and contrasted the life and writings of Burns with those of other literary greats. He said of Burns:

but for his span of life having been cut short by a premature death, he would have developed results equal to the greatest poets on earth; and that the little that he did produce proved conclusively that he possessed a keen, penetrating intellect, a lively and fertile imagination, a poetic faculty, with inventive genius and descriptive powers that placed him on a qualitative level with Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton.45

Noting the affective power of Burns’ poetry, Nimmo paid particular attention to the universality of Burns. He said that, in addition to admiration and pride, Scots ‘love Burns, whose songs are the sympathetic links that bind [them] not only to Scotland, but to the world. Those songs crystallise almost every emotion of the human heart, and that is the secret of their power’. Additionally, revealing his interpretation of the poet as an exemplar for individualism, Nimmo epitomised Burns as the Ayrshire ploughman—the hardworking, humble worker, focussed on self-improvement and the attainment of prosperity and success in this life and the next. He told the crowd:

The life and writings of Robert Burns furnish cheering and conclusive evidence to the sons of toil in every land that humble birth, association with poverty, and hard manual labour, do not form insuperable obstacles in the way
of a man who is bent upon self-improvement and attaining to a distinguished position in the world.\textsuperscript{46}

The universalism and individualism attributed to Burns by Nimmo was reflective of deeper understandings of Scottish identity in the nineteenth century. The ideals of freedom and liberty were at the heart of the middle class, while independence, frugality and diligence were espoused as the core elements of the Scottish 'national character'.\textsuperscript{47} There was a strong sense in which Burns was interpreted in Ballarat as rising above Scottishness to embody values, ideals, and a morality common to the public of a colonial community in the nineteenth century. Although acting as a reference point for Scottish identity, rather than intensifying a migrant's sense of Scottish ethnicity, Burns represents the transcendence of Scottishness in ways that accommodated converging Scottish, British and Australian identities in a colonial setting. While appealing to the public at large, by retaining a semblance of Scottishness, such an interpretation of Burns also demonstrated the place of Scots as members of the community. Indeed, the pomp and ceremony surrounding the unveiling, and the prominence of the site itself, may indicate the permeation of Scots into the social elite, echoing the cultural confidence exhibited in Melbourne in the 1850s.\textsuperscript{48} Explaining the importance of Burns to Scots, Australian poet Henry Lawson wrote of the Ballarat statue:

One of Caledonia's sons,
Coming lonely to the land.
Well might think he'd met a friend
Who would take him by the hand,
And the tears spring to his eyes,
While his heart for friendship yearns;
And from out that heart he cries,
'Heaven bless ye, Bobbie Burns.'

Robert Burns was, therefore, represented at the unveiling ceremony as being at once universally relevant and recognisably Scottish. As a public icon of identity, the statue and the events surrounding it reflected internal constructions of Scottishness as well as externalised and public symbols of ethnicity. The monument itself further reflected the way in which those who had a hand in its design and construction understood Burns, and how they chose to represent him, their cultural ambassador, to the public. Lawson described the statue in a way that evokes a mischievous Burns:
Round the corners of the lips
Lines of laughter seem to run;
From the merry eye there slips
Just a twinkle as of fun.

This characterisation of Burns extended to other features of the monument. The statue has passages from four of his poems inscribed on its plinth. The north-facing side features passages from the 1786 poem ‘Address to the Unco Guid, or the Rigidly Righteous’. On the eastern face is ‘To a Mouse, on Turning Her up in Her Nest with the Plough’ from 1785. Facing south is ‘To a Louse, on Seeing One on a Lady’s Bonnet at Church’ from 1786. Finally, facing west are passages from 1787’s ‘There was a lad’ or ‘Rantin’, Rovin’ Robin’.

The northern inscription—or, at least, the poem from which it was drawn—indicates a tacit acknowledgement of Burns’ irreverence towards the self-righteous. ‘Address to the Unco Guid’ condemns the ‘uncommonly good’ among us, and was written in response to his suffering at the hands of those who smugly held him to account for his love affairs and illegitimate children. ‘O you, who are so good yourself,’ writes Burns, ‘So pious and so holy, You have nothing to do but mark and tell, Your neighbours’ faults and folly.’ Later, Burns writes: ‘gently scan your brother man, Still gentler sister woman; Though they may go a little wrong, To step aside is human.’ Similarly, in the poem, ‘To a Louse’, from which the southern inscription is taken, Burns focuses on class, humanity, and equality. In a satire of social pretence and a warning against vanity and pride, Burns feigns outrage as he chastises a louse for not recognising how important its host is. Ultimately, he writes, ‘O wad some Pow’r the giftie gie us, To see ourseuls as ithers see us!’ (And would some Power the small gift give us, To see ourselves as others see us!). The monument in Ballarat, therefore, embodied criticism of social pretence and moral self-righteousness.

Yet acceptance of the poet was not necessarily unanimous. In 1885, while the Burns Memorial Committee was collecting funds for the statue, a letter of protest appeared in The Horsham Times. The author complained of Burns’ alleged disreputable character, and wrote:

I enter my protest, as, in my opinion, Burns left a sufficient monument of his fame, or rather of his notoriety. ... I would recommend a perusal of Principal Sharp’s [sic] ‘Life of Burns’ or the still better ‘Life and Writings of Burns’ by R. Chambers. They will learn from those high authorities the number of his illegitimate children was not known with certainty, but eight were well
known; that he was a drunken lewd, and licentious libertine, and that he lampooned those ladies and gentlemen at whose table he dined.49

This criticism of Burns did not feature in the speech given at the unveiling ceremony. As a temperance advocate, Nimmo was vice-president of institutions such as the Victorian Alliance for the Suppression of the Liquor Traffic, the Victorian Band of Hope Union and the International Temperance Conventions of 1880 and 1888. In his capacity as Member for Emerald Hill (Albert Park after 1889), he was vital to the success of legislation to curtail retail trading in alcohol in the 1880s.50 If the poet’s disrepute was widespread, or his misdemeanours interpreted as being unredeemed, it seems unlikely Nimmo would have approved of the statue and its inscriptions. Indeed, it seems instead that the statue’s inscriptions approve of Burns’ lampooning of ‘those ladies and gentlemen at whose table he dined’.

While the western inscription features lines of ‘Rant in ‘Rovin’ Robin’, a simple ode to the poet’s home and origins, anti-aristocratic sentiment is expanded upon in the poem featured in the eastern inscription, ‘To a Mouse’. This poem is dedicated to a ‘Wee, sleekit, cow’rin, tim’rous beastie’, whose home has been upturned. In it, Burns bewails the plight of the mouse and condemns the disruption of nature caused by the dominion of men. He sympathises with lowly creatures and imagines their loss, destruction, insecurity and personal anxiety. The poem features Burns’ most often and ill-quoted line, ‘The best-laid schemes o’ mice an’ men, Gang aft agley,’ or ‘The best laid schemes of mice and men, Go often awry’, which is a final lament over the tyranny of both man and nature over the weak and the poor.

‘To a Mouse’ is one of the poet’s most poignant defences of individual freedom, and was, therefore, popular among Scots, who saw equality of opportunity as a core principle of a Scottish nation. Taken as a whole, the selection of poems for inscriptions on the Ballarat statue leaves an impression of Burns as the champion of liberty and democracy, and someone who believed social pretence should be eliminated in favour of the meritocratic recognition of real excellence. The statue and the unveiling were part of a rebirth of Scottishness throughout the Empire that reflected the reinvention of Scottish identity at home. While these notions were highly popular in Scotland in the nineteenth century, as Finlay and others have noted, they were certainly not out of place in Australian colonial society, which was itself an amalgamation of Anglo-Celtic cultural
and political identities.\textsuperscript{51} Thus, the Robert Burns monument in Ballarat publicly embodied and expressed a cultural identity that accommodated the growing convergence of Scottish, British and Australian identities in a colonial setting.

Yet the accommodation of different identities does not mean that the Scots were, or became, ‘invisible ethnics’ in this part of Australia, as scholars such as David Armitage have argued, describing Scots in North America as ‘stalwart supporters of Empire, predominantly Protestant and eager to assimilate’.\textsuperscript{52} Eric Richards adopts this position for Australia and argues Scots quickly disregarded their ethnic origins after settlement as the forces of integration and assimilation intensified.\textsuperscript{53} On the other hand, historians such as John Mackenzie and Tom Devine have rejected these views.\textsuperscript{54} Devine notes that one striking feature of the Scots in the diaspora is that they were often identified by others as a specific ethnic group and were not merely described as members of a generalised British diaspora, ‘moulded into uniformity … by the experience of settlement in distant lands’. He argues that the maintenance of Scottish identity was, in fact, complementary to British loyalty: ‘the British empire did not so much dilute the sense of Scottishness but strengthened it’.\textsuperscript{55} Indeed, John Nimmo hinted at such hybridisation of cultural and political allegiances (the phenomena that Morton has termed ‘unionist nationalism’) at the unveiling of the Burns statue. In his only reference to the British Empire, Nimmo said that the ‘noble, heroic, and soul stirring song of ‘Scots wha’ hae wi’ Wallace bled’, has nerved the arm of the British soldier to turn the tide of battle in many a hard fought field, when the fate of our glorious empire was trembling in the balance’.\textsuperscript{56}

Unionist nationalism, however, was more salient in the case of Ballarat’s unique statue of William Wallace. The case of Robert Burns in Ballarat tapped into broader sentiments about core Scottish values and the values of the society in which the statue was erected. Focusing more on unionist nationalism, the following example provides an exemplar of the dynamic between British and Scottish political identities and loyalties in the diaspora, the kind that required a comprehensive revision of Wallace’s place in Scottish culture and tradition.

\textbf{William Wallace in Ballarat, 1889}

The cult of Wallace in the nineteenth century had little resemblance to the Wallace legend of the late-twentieth century as represented in popular films
such as Mel Gibson’s *Braveheart*. Devine notes that Wallace was ‘one of the supreme Victorian icons’, and that the Wallace cult in the nineteenth century was ‘not designed to threaten the union or inspire political nationalism’. Instead, the story of Wallace was seized upon to remind Scots of how the Union of 1707 had been achieved precisely because of his struggles for freedom and liberty: since Scotland remained unconquered, it could form a beneficial and equal union with England in the eighteenth century. Devine observes that the devotion in Scotland to Wallace was evidence that ‘pride in Scottish nationhood and loyalty to union and empire could be reconciled’.

This munificent cultural nationalism was reflected in Australia in the late-nineteenth century. Additionally, the Australian context complicates what
we know about Scottish identity, because unionist nationalism survived longer in the diaspora than in Scotland itself, where, Whatley notes, ‘service to unionist-nationalism was less obvious by the 1860s, and coincides with the demise of unionist-nationalism itself’.\(^5\)

The statue of William Wallace in the Ballarat Botanical Gardens was bequeathed to the city by James Russell Thompson.\(^5\) Thompson was a successful businessman from Airdrie in Scotland. He had arrived in Ballarat in 1853 after finding gold on the Ovens goldfields. Deafness caused by an early career in mining prevented Thompson from becoming involved in public life in Ballarat but, dying a wealthy man in May 1886, he was able to leave significant bequests to relatives and also request that his remaining estate be put towards the purchase of statues for the Ballarat Botanical Gardens. Fellow Scot, Thomas Stoddart—president of the Ballarat Burns Committee—was executor of Thompson’s estate, and was able to procure for the gardens numerous monuments and statues made of Italian Carrara marble.\(^6\) The most notable of Stoddart’s procurements, however, was the statue of Scottish hero William Wallace. The Ballarat Star noted that ‘the statue of Wallace was decided on as a compliment to Mr. Thompson’s love for the country he came from—an effigy of the greatest character treated in Scottish history or legend’.\(^6\)

Sculpted by Melbourne artist Percival Ball, the statue is made of marble and rests on a granite base. It was unveiled on 24 May 1889, the day of both Queen Victoria’s and Thompson’s birthdays. The monument represents Wallace standing on Abbey Craig, waiting to give the signal to his army to descend upon the English forces crossing Stirling Bridge. The Ballarat Star describes Wallace as being:

> [of] heroic size, standing, as the great patriot is said by legend to have stood, over eight feet in height. His powerful figure is clad in a close-fitting suit of chain armor, which well displays the muscular development of the stalwart frame. The arms are bare to just above the elbow, and the large muscles stand out in cords through the armor. Both hands are grasping a representation of the immense sword that in Wallace’s hands wrought such havoc amongst his foes. Over the figure is a light surcoat, with [the] lion of Scotland emblazoned on the breast, and on the head is a simple marion, so that the features are not hidden by a vizor. These are most expressive, representing a stern resolve to do or die, not unmixed with anxiety, and full of vigilance and observation. The pose is natural and effective, and the tout ensemble is pleasing to the eye.\(^6\)
Much like the Burns ceremony, the unveiling of the Wallace statue was a festive occasion. Approximately one hundred members of the Caledonian Society of Melbourne came to Ballarat by rail. It was reported that at least twenty of them were in full Highland regalia, and the party was led by four pipers. They were joined by members of the local St Andrew’s Society, also in Highland dress, and various other Ballarat dignitaries. Overall, newspapers estimated that around three thousand people were in attendance at the event. John Nimmo was again called upon to present the monument to the public, and as he unveiled the statue, ‘in all its beauty’, the militia band played ‘Scots wha hae wi’ Wallace bled’. As at the unveiling of Burns, the occasion, support and prominent location of the statue suggested the cultural confidence and the permeation of Scots in the social elite.

Nimmo gave a brief history of Wallace, and noted that in Ballarat he could observe thousands of “public-spirited and high-minded citizens met to do honour to the memory of that brave man who struggled, fought, suffered, and died as a patriot martyr in the cause of national liberty’. Implicitly acknowledging the difficulties involved in reconciling Wallace with British loyalty in a mixed Anglo-Celtic community, Nimmo attempted to remove any sense of national enmity that the monument may have embodied:

I am proud to see amongst the audience Englishmen and Irishmen mingling with Scotchmen ... I thank God that England and Scotland have shaken hands, and for many years have united in fighting for that tight little island side by side. I pray that this state of things may long continue, and that the noble and glorious Queen who now reigns over us may long continue to do so ... The Irish, too, I am pleased to see here. They are a brave and noble race—a little impulsive, perhaps, but amongst them I have found as much genuine manliness and real good feeling as I have amongst the Scotch.

What was most striking about Nimmo’s speech on this occasion was the extent to which he defused the national and political antagonisms that exist within the Wallace tradition. William Wallace had become not only a patriot of Scotland, but also a Unionist hero. The narrative, of course, required some adjustment. Of Edward Longshanks, or the ‘Hammer of the Scots’, who features so prominently as the antagonist in the modern Wallace tradition, Nimmo pronounced:

I have long been of the opinion that Edward I was not a true Englishman, and I am sure he did not represent the English character truly. I have always found in my dealings with the English that they are, as a body, high-souled and honourable men. I am sure they were misled by Edward ... I have found
the English one of the first nations in the world as regards fair and honourable dealings between man and man, and for bravery and generosity. 66

Indeed, while Burns and his poetry held affective power and was perceived as universally appropriate to all men and women, Wallace's narrative was easily read as one of unambiguous political nationalism. For Nimmo, the tradition required contortion in order for it to become palatable to the public audience in Ballarat, and, indeed, appropriate to the unionist nationalism that began to define Scottish identity in the nineteenth century. Yet this was not the only way in which Wallace was interpreted at the time, though the Victorian cult of Wallace was arguably the dominant understanding. At the time of the statue’s unveiling, the socialist writer and polemicist Francis Lauderdale Adams wrote a poem dedicated to Wallace and had it published alongside a series of anti-English, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist poems in the volume ‘Songs of the Army of the Night’. 67 The poem (dedicated specifically to the statue in Ballarat) represents a more familiar, post-Braveheart reading of Wallace’s position in Scottish history:

This is Scotch William Wallace. It was He
Who in dark hours first raised his face to see:
Who watched the English tyrant Nobles spurn,
Steel-clad, with iron hoofs the Scottish Free:

Who armed and drilled the simple footman Kern,
Yea, bade in blood and rout the proud Knight learn
His Feudalism was dead, and Scotland stand
Dauntless to wait the day of Bannockburn!

O Wallace, peerless lover of thy land,
We need thee still, thy moulding brain and hand!
For us, thy poor, again proud tyrants spurn,
The robber Rich, a yet more hateful band!

In 1969, British historian H.J. Hanham associated the Wallace statue with the poem written by Adams, suggesting Adams’ interpretation was the most representative. 68 Echoing Hanham’s understanding of the statue’s significance for Ballarat, historian Edward Cowan has linked the Wallace statue with the Eureka Stockade at Ballarat in 1854. Although the linkage of the poem and the statue rests on the incorrect placing of the Adams’ poem on the statue itself, it is easy to see how Adams’ interpretation of Wallace could resonate in a city so strongly linked with the rise of democratic
institutions in Australia. The actual inscription is from Robert Burns’ ‘The Cotter’s Saturday Night’. Adams’ sentiments were not echoed in Nimmo’s speech, although it is important to recognise that interpretations of both Burns and Wallace were not homogenous.

While Nimmo retained some assertiveness in his imagining of Scottishness, he nevertheless adopted a kind of pragmatism suitable to an environment in which Scots had to live alongside the English, Welsh and Irish. Furthermore, Nimmo’s and Adams’ contesting interpretations of Wallace were reflective of similar trends elsewhere. For example, the National Wallace Monument on the Abbey Craig near Stirling in Scotland was subject to similarly competing interpretations at the end of the nineteenth century—unionist nationalism on the one hand, and a more radically political and nationalistic reading on the other. Ultimately, the monument at Stirling was intended to stress a peaceful union with England and was broadly accepted as such at the time—historian James Coleman describes the Wallace monument at Stirling as ‘unionist-nationalism in stone’.

While the Wallace tradition was made relevant to British, Scottish and colonial contexts, such negotiations were unnecessary in other parts of the world. In the nineteenth century North American context, speechmakers did not have to negotiate their way around British loyalty at opening ceremonies. Set high on the stone plinth of the Wallace statue in Druid Hill Park in Baltimore are the unambiguous words: ‘Wallace, patriot and martyr for Scottish liberty, 1305’. The core values of liberty and individualism were retained without the need to explicitly realign Wallace with the British Empire, which was a sometimes awkward task, as Nimmo’s speech showed.

At the unveiling of the Wallace statue in Baltimore in 1893, the principal benefactor, William Wallace Spence, said:

> It was this man who, by his precept and example, implanted in Scotland that indomitable and inextinguishable love of freedom which has been a distinguishing characteristic of Scotchmen in every quarter of the globe. This was abundantly manifested by them in this, their adopted country, for which they so freely shed their blood in the trying days of the American Revolution.

Although the emphasis on freedom and liberty is recognisable, Spence’s interpretation is in contrast to those offered in the colonies and Britain, which purposefully avoided placing stress on Wallace’s political Scottish nationalism. The cultural identity reflected in Nimmo’s interpretation of Wallace suggests the popularity of unionist nationalism and the
compatibility of Scottish identity with British loyalty and reflects the broader Wallace cult in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, it should be clear that, as competing interpretations from the likes of poet Francis Adams attest, the realigning of Wallace with British patriotism was not as simple a task as it had been with Burns.

After the unveiling of Ballarat’s Wallace statue, tributes were paid to the sculptor, Percival Ball, and the artistic merits of the monument. Three cheers were called for the mayor, the trustees and the artist. The militia band played ‘God Save The Queen’, and the gathering followed this with a verse of Burns’ ‘Auld Lang Syne’. After the unveiling ceremony, visitors were invited to a banquet at the City Hall, at which more speeches were given. One speaker James Lambie spoke of his pride in Ballarat being linked with his native country. The Ballarat Star reported Lambie as saying:

Some people wondered why they should bother about heroes of the past, but even if the tales of the heroes were not true they were of extreme value if they gave inspiration to the young. They should cherish the heroes of the past, and all people who enjoyed English liberty should honor the Scottish hero and join in his praise. He was just as ready to bow down before a hero of Southern England as a Scottish hero. It was Wallace who first discovered the value of the masses of the people, and the best blood of the Scottish people came from the lonely farmers in the distant moors and the small villages outside the towns.\footnote{72}

Here, we see a clear exposition of symbolic ethnicity and the nostalgic connections made by diasporic Scots to the traditions and myths of Scotland. We also see the ways in which identity is transformed in response to the immediate social environment. Much like Nimmo had attempted to defuse national antagonisms inherent in the narrative, Lambie is pragmatically re-imagining Wallace as a universal hero, appropriate to a group of migrants living in a British colonial world. In essence, it is a call for sectarian Scottish and English heroes to be incorporated (but not assimilated) into a broader middle-class British cultural and political identity that claimed individualism and liberty as its core values. Finally, as if to extend the inclusiveness of the event to all, the final song sung at the banquet was ‘Steer my bark to Erin’s Isle’, a popular folk song that fittingly ended with the lines:

If England was my place of birth, I’d love her tranquil shore;
If bonny Scotland was my home, her mountains I’d adore.
But pleasant days in both I've passed, I'd dreams of days to come; 
Oh! steer my bark to Erin's Isle, for Erin is my home.

Conclusion

As an emerging field of interest in Australia, further investigations of the way in which Scottish culture has been 'written' on the built environment will add new dimensions to our understanding of migrant identities. Monuments such as the Ballarat Burns and Wallace statues reflect cultural and political identities. The rituals attached to the unveiling of public monuments, and the dynamics of their reception, can assist us to identify their specific role and place in the public consciousness. Taken as a whole, the statues themselves, the ceremonies surrounding them, and their public reception help us to investigate, as Nuala Johnson notes, the 'symbolic, ritualistic, and performative dimensions of identity formulation'. The statues of Robert Burns and William Wallace, erected in Ballarat in the late-nineteenth century were physical icons of identity—designed, executed and interpreted in a way that reflected hybrid Scottish, British and Australian ethnic identities. The intellectual and ideological re-imagining of both Burns' and Wallace's positions in Scottish tradition and history enabled their lives and works to be presented in ways that accommodated both Scottish and British loyalties. They reflected and stimulated a Scottish cultural identity that was at once nationalistic and munificent, and thus appropriate to an Australian colonial setting in which populations were ethnically and culturally diverse.

Monuments provide public and enduring credibility and legitimacy to particular groups, and so necessarily marginalise others in the process. Francis Adams' interpretation of Wallace was representative of a strand of Scottish political nationalism that was less pervasive in Australia in the late nineteenth century than the culturally centred unionist nationalism expressed at the unveiling of William Wallace in 1889. This dominant, 'imperial' notion of Scottish identity was reflected succinctly in statues of both Burns and Wallace in nineteenth century Ballarat.

NOTES

1 In addition to this paper, see also Malcolm Prentis and Ben Wilkie, "Coming lonely to the land", or "crawlers round the bardie's name": Memorials to Robert Burns in Australia', conference paper, Australian Historical Association Conference, University


3 Prentis and Wilkie, p. 1.


10 Rodgers.


12 Prentis and Wilkie, p. 9.


Alex Tyrrell, ‘‘No common corrobory’’, pp. 172–175.


*Census of Victoria*, 1857.

*Census of Victoria*, 1857, 1871, 1881, 1891.


Jan Croggon, p. 257.
29 Croggon, p. 274.
30 The Argus, Melbourne, 30 September 1884, p. 6.
33 The Argus, Melbourne, 5 August 1885, p. 6.
34 The Argus, Melbourne, 16 January 1886, p. 12.
35 The Argus, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.
36 Camperdown Chronicle, 3 August 1937.
37 The Argus, Melbourne, 5 August 1885, p. 6.
38 Traralgon Record, 1 November 1886, p. 2.
39 The Argus, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.
41 The Argus, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.
44 The Argus, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.
45 The Argus, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.
46 The Argus, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.
47 Finlay, pp. 4–5.
49 Horsham Times, Horsham, 26 October 1885, p. 3.
50 Mitchell.
55 Devine.

56 The Argus, Melbourne, 22 April 1887, p. 7.


59 Ballarat Star, 25 May 1889.


61 The Ballarat Star (BS), 25 May 1889.

62 BS, 25 May 1889.

63 BS, 25 May 1889.

64 BS, 25 May 1889.

65 BS, 25 May 1889.

66 BS, 25 May 1889.


68 Hanham, p. 79.


72 Ballarat Courier, 25 May 1889.

73 Nuala Johnson, p. 478.