Volume 2
PART TWO: THE SIGN ON DISPLAY

Introduction

In *Evening Amusements*, the silver fork novel with the tartan wedding masque I quoted in the last chapter, the Highland landowner whose wedding it is later pays a visit to his estate. His English wife passes his observations on to her correspondent:

He says they are the happiest set of folks I ever saw, in a state most people would think themselves very miserable; fond of their native rocks. The chieftain of their name sprung from the same root: The fond attachment seems to increase with every danger; but, alas! they feel no such paternal kindness as their fathers and grandfathers used to find in their chiefs.... Much blame to those, who, forgetful of their country, cramp the natural freedom of their brave Highlanders, by airs of superiority and extortion, treatment their forefathers were unacquainted with; nor can the present generation relish it: their warm grateful hearts are always ready to own a favour, but are equally alive to affronts, and ready to revenge the injury.²

Here, in 1797, we can see the ideas of the 1770s attain the security of cliché. The writer clearly doesn't understand some of the things she's saying: the second sentence ought to say that the chief and the people share a common name and ancestry, but doesn't quite manage it; the view that unkind landlords are unpatriotic as well as degenerate needs to be backed up by the 'nursery of soldiers' idea if it's to make sense. The passage is not so much an exposition as a blind groping from one fixed idea about the Highlands to the next. Contented poverty - native

rocks - patriarchy - mercenary heritors - natural freedom -
fidelity and vindictiveness: the received characteristics of the
Highlanders can be unerringly rehearsed without the need to think
about them. Every word of the recital is thoroughly familiar:
what is new, at around this date, is the oblivious confidence
with which the goods are displayed. The Highlands are now known,
in a form which can be recognised, summarised, copied, gestured
towards, weightlessly circulated - in short, they have hardened
into a sign.

If we need a date for the completion of this process, it
should perhaps be 1805. In that year the terms of the emigration
debate and the Ossian debate were definitively set by the Earl of
Selkirk and the Highland Society respectively; in that year, too,
Scott announced his decisive arrival on the scene by the dedication
of his muse to the land of the mountain and the flood,\textsuperscript{2} and also,
in a slightly different sense, by the rather waspishly knowing tone
of his \textit{Edinburgh Review} articles on Ossian and Thornton.\textsuperscript{3} The
work of constructing the Highland image was finished. The years
of its most prominent exposure were to come, but the components
were more or less fixed. In the second part of this study, then,
I shall be concerned not so much with the anatomy of the sign as
with its operation within certain signifying systems. We know
now what the myth consisted of: what meanings could it serve?

\textsuperscript{2} In \textit{The Lay of the Last Minstrel}, Canto VI, stanza 2.

\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Edinburgh Review}, 5 (1804–05), 398–405, and 6 (1805),
429–62.
Before proceeding to that question, we must pause over the fact that if the image was fixed, the life of the region itself was not: on the contrary, it was in crisis. The year of Waverley was also the year of the Strathnaver burnings: the sweet myth adumbrated in the great romance was twin to the bitter myth of the Clearances, which would hardly begin to be developed in print for another forty years, but would survive the more intensely in popular memory.⁴

The essence of the crisis was that the Highland landlords' attempts to commercialise their estates, which we saw being ineffectually resisted in Chapter 4, were proving only selectively successful. The selection was determined by the interests of British capitalism as a whole: when Highland developments fed the expanding requirements of the metropolitan economy, they were likely to thrive, but when they were in competition with that expansion, they failed.⁵ The outcome was a colonial economy. The Regency Highlands, with their sweated kelping communities and vast sheep ranches side by side with an explosively increasing under-class of pauperised subsistence farmers, present a startlingly recognisable pattern of what we now call underdevelopment. Within it, the old Highland ruling class had the role of a historical Janus: on the one hand, it appeared as a buyer and seller of

⁴ See, for example, Donald Ross, The Clearing of the Glens (Glasgow, 1854), and Donald Macleod, Gloomv Memories in the Highlands of Scotland (Canada, 1857).

⁵ Hunter, The Making of the Crofting Community, Chapter 1.
commodities in a dynamic capitalist economy, while on the other, it presided over a system of primitive surplus extraction in which the primary producers scarcely used money at all except to pay the rent. The landlords' integration into capitalist society did not have the effect of turning them into agrarian capitalists, as had happened elsewhere. Rather, it produced a phase of super-exploitation. As Malcolm Gray says,

On the whole it seems clear that by 1815 landlords were taking a much larger proportion of the money income derived from husbandry than they had half a century before; indeed it had become the accepted policy to set rent as to remove the whole cash income (of husbandry) in return for the tenants' right to use arable plots for subsistence production. The point about this response is that it was socially reactionary. The proprietors' insatiable claim on the land's surplus was not likely to erode their pre-capitalist authority, or enhance the independence of the cultivators, who were of course frequently in arrears. Highland social relations were not liberalised by the advent of market forces: on the contrary, there is evidence that they became archaic, tending towards a baronial caricature. Thus Eric Richards detects a 'feudal' recrudescence in the islands in the 1790s, and shows that during the Napoleonic war several Highland landlords raised recruits by offering a family a plot of land in return for a son - a revival of military tenure in all but name. Macdonnell of Glengarry, with his medieval pomp and ruthless evictions, was only the tip

7. Richards, History of the Highland Clearances, pp. 64, 152-54.
of an iceberg.

The great exceptions to the rule of this bastard feudalism were of course the commercial sheep farmers. They were entrepreneurs whose tenancies were based on a calculation of profits and costs and a normal commercial parity of status with the landowner. But they were almost always incomers from southern Scotland, and, as is very well known, their activities were not compatible with the existing native husbandry. Often, they needed the old tenants to be moved, and in delivering this requirement, the chiefs were using their traditional, extra-economic powers. The land was reset, but the sclerosis of the indigenous society was confirmed.

This deeply contradictory situation turned out to be tenable for a long time. The Highland aristocracy was protected from its own obsolescence by a bizarre series of friendly circumstances—beginning with the potato, which, introduced into the Hebrides from Ireland in 1743, soon formed the indispensable subsistence base of the whole structure of exploitation. The most important of these friendly circumstances was the favourable movement of prices. The region's basic export was and continued to be cattle on the hoof, the price of which rose by five times between 1740 and 1810; kelp rose over the same period from under £3 to over £20 a ton; the revolutionary textile industry which undercut native manufactures nevertheless ensured a buoyant market for


raw wool. The Napoleonic wars increased the demand for all these commodities and brought other benefits too: the raising of regiments offered the sons of the aristocracy respectable and lucrative careers, and the poor enlisted in such numbers that it made a significant contribution to the region's cash income (through pay and prize money sent home), as well as relieving the demographic pressure. So the Highland proprietors had a good war: their barbaric mansions at Inveraray, Taymouth, Achnacarrie and Armadale led the Gothic revival; the mountains became the scene of newly fashionable amusements while France and Italy were closed; and even the Sutherland evictions, which gathered pace in the closing years of the war, were not desperate remedies, but part of an expensive plan based on extremely optimistic assessments of the estate's potential.

Even under these freakishly favourable conditions the tensions were acute. Kelping, while producing large short-term profits out of a system approximating to slave labour, also produced anomalous concentrations of tenants on barren coasts, vulnerable to the slightest hiccup in distant markets.

scale capitalist sheep farming, affording rents which eventually proved irresistible everywhere — the Cheviot crossed the Great Glen in 1792 and spread rapidly in Caithness and Sutherland after 1800 — entailed at every stage, though not in every case, the displacement of people. The old Jacobite families were no more immune to the logic than anyone else: hereditary tenants were outbid by ranchers on the estates of Cameron of Locheil in 1801-04, and Fraser of Lovat was evicting in 1807-10. In 1813, a serious disturbance when shepherds appeared in Kildonan marked one of the few attempts at vigorous resistance by the Highland poor, and in 1814 the clearance of Strathnaver was accompanied by a brutality which, publicised at the trial of Patrick Sellar the following year, brought the Sutherland Estate close to scandal.

Selkirk's 1805 pamphlet encouraged landlords to take an optimistic view of emigration, and it continued, certainly in response to high rents, unfettered landlord power, and sheep. The wartime influx of cash produced little new working capital, because many of the big estates were already trapped in mortgages which devoured any increase in rent income. These pressures combined were bringing the landlords by degrees to the stark

17. Logue, Popular Disturbances in Scotland, pp.64-72.
choice between eviction and bankruptcy. Behind its anachronistic prosperity, or even because of it, Highland society was breaking up. 21

And the end of the war meant disaster. The troops returned and called the bluff of military tenure: there was not enough land for all these men. Kelp prices fell back somewhat after about 1810, and continued to tail off until 1825, when a change in excise duty destroyed the industry completely. Cattle prices fell sharply after 1815, wool from 1818. 22 The extortionate rents immediately became unpayable. Seaforth's estates in the Outer Hebrides, for example, with an official rental of £11,500, had arrears of £900 in 1815 and £10,000 in 1817. Landlord and tenant plunged into debt together, revealing in retrospect how thin the ice had been. After that the collapse of the landed class was long-drawn-out but certain: around 1830 the population began to fall absolutely, and during the following fifty years two-thirds of the Highlands were sold. 23

Seen in context, therefore, the first quarter of the nineteenth century has the character of a stay of execution; a subsidised, delusive period when a doomed local social order enjoyed a sort of Indian summer of feudalism. It was partly a


23. Gray, Highland Economy, pp.148, 188.
reflection of the long simultaneous 'twilight of the ancien régime' in Scotland as a whole, and it also coincides, not altogether fortuitously, with the productive years of Sir Walter Scott. For that time, the mortgaged supremacy of the chiefs constituted a forcing-house of conservative romance, colourful rather than substantial, traditional rather than historical, and shot through, even at its most festive, with snobbery and nostalgia. The rise of an imperial market had brought the separate history of Highland society to an end; it was in the histrionic terms of its particular submission that its image was reproduced in the ideology of the empire at large.

24. The phrase is from Bruce Lenman, Integration, Enlightenment, Industrialisation: Scotland, 1746–1832 (1981), title of Chapter 8. Night fell, of course, in 1832 — the year of Parliamentary Reform, and also of the death of Scott.
CHAPTER SIX
MEMORIALS OF A TOUR

In the evening of a wet Sunday in August 1803, William and Dorothy Wordsworth and Coleridge were walking on the road by Loch Lomond:

While we were walking forward, the road leading us over the top of a brow, we stopped suddenly at the sound of a half-articulate Gaelic hooting from the field close to us. It came from a little boy, whom we could see on the hill between us and the lake, wrapped up in a grey plaid. He was probably calling home the cattle for the night. His appearance was in the highest degree moving to the imagination: mists were on the hillside, darkness shutting in upon the huge avenue of mountains, torrents roaring, no house in sight to which the child might belong; his dress, cry, and appearance all different from anything we had been accustomed to. It was a text, as William has since observed to me, containing in itself the whole history of the Highlander's life — his melancholy, his simplicity, his poverty, his superstition, and above all, that visionariness which results from a communion with the unworldliness of nature. 1

Wordsworth's 'text' is not the boy, who may or may not be melancholy, simple, poor, and so on, but the whole, composed scene — the hooting, the twilight, the clouded mountains, the solitude — not excluding the accidents of the tourists' viewpoint: the mysterious effect of their hearing the sound before they identify its source, the estranging stillness of their suddenly stopping on the road, and the strangeness for them of the child's language and clothes. The unity which Wordsworth's

remark confers on this bundle of circumstances is that of a mythic signifier: the elements combine to denote 'the Highlander's life'. From this construction, we in turn can recover many of the themes of the 'poetical' Highlands. There is 'Lovat's salmon'—the literal realisation of a literary image: this is a tableau vivant of Wordsworth's own Boy of Winander. There is the converse valuation, familiar from Mrs Grant's poem of the same year, which discovers in primitive husbandry a spiritual wealth proportioned to its material penury. There is the myth of Gaelic as the language of nature: the 'hooting', which is half-articulate because it might be language or might be only a cry, is a fragile middle speech between the articulacy of the diarist and the roaring of the torrents. And in the association of Highland landscape, melancholy, visions and unworldliness, there is an unconscious reconstruction of Beattie's remarks about Highland music and the Second Sight; another 'whole history'—that of the value-laden polarity of Highland and Lowland, imagination and life—is thus inscribed upon the passing glimpse.

That particular moment didn't give rise to a poem. It is perhaps too felicitous: the live salmon flops into the cooking-pot with disenchanting neatness. It is nevertheless a paradigm for virtually all the poems that came out of the 1803 tour. The occasion of each is a lonely place marked by a human message; the message, like the hooting, detaches itself from its setting.
arrestingly but imperfectly, always in terms which intimate more than they reveal. This intensely apprehended but unknown dimension of the place, an overheard sound or a charged silence, constitutes the chance for the poem to exist. It's a meeting, a rupture in the complementary continuities of the visible scene and the travelling, a space to write.

The encounter by Loch Lomond offered so much (Coleridge, too, records it with enthusiasm)² because of its pregnant obscurity: the unintelligible cries, the dimness, and the boy's apparent homelessness must all have opened up great indeterminate spaces into which the travellers' minds could expand. Written down, however, it loses just that quality of indeterminacy: Wordsworth's interpretation of his text resolves it into a series of sociological descriptions which seem open and shut — either they are based on knowledge from elsewhere, or else they are unfounded. (We can see that they are a bit of each.) The poems of the tour,³ on the other hand, although they're governed by exactly the same situation, contrive to postpone its pseudo-factual closure, and to sustain the local play of perception and thought. Thus they suggest the myth's quality, not simply as an inert deviation from


reality, but as a living experience.

It lives most in 'The Solitary Reaper'. Here again the traveller pauses on the road and listens to the Gaelic voice of a figure 'single in the field'. The poem, however, has a form in which the singer and the act of hearing her appear simultaneously; the Highland text and its interpretation, instead of blankly confronting one another, are interplayed. Of the four stanzas, only the last narrates the incident: the first fixes the point of apprehension with dramatic imperatives, and the middle two, removing into negative comparisons and questions, avoid descriptive statement altogether, while yet holding the reaper and the song at the centre of attention. So that when the poet eventually declares his own presence, six lines from the end - 'I saw her singing' - the effect is that only now does his discourse detach itself from hers: until that disenchanting drop into the past tense, we now see, the poem was in the 'Vale profound' which is filled with the singing, the exotic similitudes and guessed—at themes participating in its lyricism as well as describing it. It's this realisation of a fusion enacted not mentioned which validates the level tone of the summarising hyperbole: 'The music in my heart I bore'.

The condition of this profound intimacy, however, is distance. The first stanza conveys the impression of a figure in a vast landscape; this is the unspoken implication of the fourfold insistence that she is alone (the beholder must be able
to see that she is alone, so there must be a wide setting, and she must be quite far away); this subtle intimation surrounds her literally with silence. The ultimate remoteness of the scenes of the second stanza carries the strained feeling of distance into the characterisation of the singing itself. Then the questions - 'Will no one tell me what she sings?' - add a different kind of distantness, reminding us that the 'Highland Lass' is singing in a language the poet doesn't understand, while at the same time carrying the poem into its deepest interfusion with the song: communion and separation are obverse sides of the same pattern.

That interdependence is articulated in the closing couplet, where the distance between the singer and the poet opens up to infinity, but yet the song survives in silence. It's a complete, even a pat, conclusion, but which lingers with an excess of implication that comes originally from its being the poem's real source. The traveller who encountered the solitary reaper was Thomas Wilkinson, whose account of the moment reads:

Passed a female who was reaping alone: she sung in Erse as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard: her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more.4

Wilkinson has produced the beautiful phrase almost by accident: the subject of the sentence - 'her strains' - lands him with an

impersonal construction unsuited to what he wants to say, which is simply that he felt the delight of the music long after he had passed out of earshot. By setting it in a place of such prominent finality, at the end, moreover, of a sentence governed by 'I', Wordsworth isolates its specific ambiguity: it makes it sound as if the girl had died. That note of elegy - which, once sounded, sets off echoes back through the poem, such as the sepulchral injunction, 'Stop here, or gently pass!', and the Hebridean cuckoo, a remote portent of death from Martin Martin⁵ - furnishes the key to the unity of communion and separation. Both are of the grave: the separateness is that of the dead, the community that of common mortality. Death, as it were the invisible meaning of the visible scene with its lively activities of working and walking, is carried upon its surface in the form of the melancholy of the tune.

'The Solitary Reaper' is the typical, as well as the most refined, lyric of the Highland tour. Wordsworth's characteristic activity as a poet is the decipherment of such wayside memorials. Often the occasion is literally a visit to a grave: the journey is punctuated by epitaphs for Burns, Rob Roy, Claverhouse and Ossian. In this, he is inserting a major form of his own - that of 'Michael' or 'The Ruined Cottage' - into a very general tour-istic sense of the Highlands as a gallery of monuments. That the

⁵. Martin, Description of the Western Islands, p.104.
woman should be singing

For old, unhappy, far-off things,
   And battles long ago

is a supposition which the whole developed cultural definition renders natural. Gilpin, acknowledging that in Scotland "you can hardly ascend any elevated ground without throwing your eye over the scene of some memorable action", made his evocations of Stirling or Killiecrankie romantic as well as picturesque; and the Wordsworths' own tourist guide, Stoddart, looked with emotion "on the spot "Where glad Dundee in faint huzzas expir'd"", adding that the sublime accompaniments of overhanging rock and wood are thoroughly in unison with this feeling, though indeed "the rude stone, erected to commemorate his death, must have given importance to the simplest landscape". Even Johnson, in a famous passage, had identified the power of the ruins of Iona with "whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses; whatever makes the past, the distant or the future predominate over the present." Thus in the Highlands the consciousness of mortality is mediated through the relics of a particular history.

The most programmatic identification of that shock of intimacy in distance which is the pivot of 'The Solitary Reaper'

7. John Stoddart, Remarks on Local Scenery and Manners in Scotland during the Years 1799 and 1800, 2 vols (1801), II, 185.
comes in the 'Address to Kilchurn Castle':

Oh! there is life that breathes not; Powers there are
That touch each other to the quick in modes
Which the gross world no sense hath to perceive,
No soul to dream of.

The context of this conviction is the excited contemplation of the contradiction between the warlike past the castle represents and its present quietude. The passage of centuries becomes actual through that tension as the poet pays grandiose homage to the memorial majesty of Time Impersonated in thy calm decay.

The ruin becomes a sensor of the invisible processes of history; a function symbolised by the Aeolian sounds 'caught' from it on the wind. Filled with this power, it is venerable, ruling over the greater but timeless sovereignty of the vast mountain behind it. However, this supremacy is itself subject to time: it is a 'vicegerency', existing

Now, while a farewell gleam of evening light
Is fondly lingering on thy shattered front;

emerging, like the plenitude of the reaper's song, out of separation and decay. An expansive closing simile views the castle's turbulent origins as a mountain torrent, apparently motionless because seen from so far away; once again, the human trace verges on transcendence by virtue of its imperfect legibility.

As that last formulation hints, though, there falls over all these scenes the murky gleam of Ossian. The tourist-pilgrim, pausing to expatiate at graves, is the dreamy hunter; the spiritualising lapse of time between past battles and their
remembrance is what separates the blind bard's epics from their heroes; above all, the mystique of translation, the fanciful reconstruction of an irrecoverable Gaelic text, is at the heart of Macpherson's glamour. Wordsworth was firmly among the sceptics in the Ossianic controversy; he described the bard, with uncharacteristic ribaldry, as a Phantom 'begotten by the snug embrace of an impudent Highlander upon a cloud of tradition'. Nothing therefore illustrates Macpherson's constitutive significance in the making of the Highland image more forcefully than his presence in these poems. It was a buried presence, with which Wordsworth could be said to have settled accounts in the adroitly decorous elegy, 'Glen Almain'.

'Glen Almain' begins, even more purely than the other memorial pieces, in the manner of an epitaph -

In this still place, remote from men,
Sleeps Ossian, in the NARROW GLEN -

and proceeds to develop the contrast, parallel with that of 'Kilchurn Castle', between the 'stormy war' Ossian sang and the 'entire tranquillity' of the place. In this case the difference is expressed as an anomaly: surely such a bard should have been buried

Where sights were rough, and sounds were wild,
And everything unreconciled?

This perplexity, whose preciosity is acknowledged in the undermining reconciled neatness of the diction, issues in the question

Does then the Bard sleep here indeed?
Or is it but a boundless creed?

which is then immediately dissolved —

What matters it? — I blame them not
Whose Fancy in this lonely Spot
Was moved; and in this way expressed
Their notion of its perfect rest.

This turn of the argument sketches a sophisticated reading of the naive legend of Ossian's burial-place, and, by extension, of the Ossianic myth as a whole: it is conceived, psychologically and realistically, as having a propriety of the 'Fancy', an expressive validity which is not so much true or false as permissible ("I blame them not"). The poem goes on to recreate the imaginative movement which the idea of Ossian's grave expresses, in particular refining the notation of the atmosphere which the earlier description had called, externally, 'tranquillity':

It is not quiet, is not ease;
But something deeper far than these;
The separation that is here
Is of the grave....

The syntactic speeding up, as the non-committal pronouns ('It ... something ...') give way to the crucial specifying 'separation', announces the poem's arrival at its point. The verse is literally quickened by coming to touch, in the midst of the inhuman scene, the text of mortality; it is at that crux, as in 'The Solitary Reaper', that the obscure human message discloses itself. The contact made, the restless questions are resolved;
And, therefore, was it rightly said
That Ossian, last of all his race!
Lies buried in this lonely place.

Thus finally, although the admission of uncertainty is not withdrawn, the bald assertion of the opening is reaffirmed, on the level of metaphor. The lachrymose image of the last survivor, no less than the "stormy" image of the poet of battles, is derived from Macpherson's confections. But the conclusion is undisturbed by that fraudulent inheritance because its adoption has been raised to consciousness, claiming the illusion as a fiction instead of a deception. Still, of course, the condition of the recovered authenticity is silence. Irrevocably past, Ossian is 'buried in' the place, not articulate but pervasive. The inadequacy of Macpherson's restorations is not fortuitous — it is only as lost speech that the ancient song is eloquent.

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Running through these poems is a quality no less pervasive than the elegiac, of which the metaphorical, almost metaphysical wit of 'Glen Almain' is one instance: a sort of truancy, a wilful extravagance. In the somewhat diffuse and rhetorical 'Rob Roy's Grave', it appears as a cheerful irresponsibility:

Yet was Rob Roy as wise as brave;
Forgive me if the phrase be strong; —
A Poet worthy of Rob Roy
Must scorn a timid song.
Say, then, that he was wise as brave....

On this basis, Wordsworth goes on to make Rob Roy a Jacobin
philosopher with a zest actually heightened by the implausibility.
The flattery and easy tears of 'To A Highland Girl' are comparable;
and the same trace is detectable in the more restrained pieces,
in the exoticism of 'The Solitary Reaper' or the naturalised
tartanry of the 'Sonnet in the Pass of Killiecrankie'. It's a
note which suggests the voluntary indulgence of a position not
really tenable; an awareness that the traveller stopping by
Loch Awe or at Inversnaid is not compelled either by these
encounters or by the onward thrust of the road, but is at leisure.
A very slight touch in 'Kilchurn Castle' signals it: the evening
light is 'fondly lingering on thy shattered front' - 'fondly',
with its double sense of 'tenderly' and 'unrealistically',
makes the light, 'lingering' on something long ago 'shattered',
express a vain reluctance to depart felt by the setting sun.
(The extravagance of the pathetic fallacy itself extends the
feeling of a 'fancy'.) The apotheosis which follows is thus
very marginally frivolous; a conscious flight from time and
necessity; a holiday.

In the ferryman's hut by Loch Katrine, to return to Dorothy
Wordsworth's Recollections,

We caroused our cups of coffee, laughing like children
at the strange atmosphere in which we were; the smoke
came in gusts, and spread along the walls and above
our heads in the chimney, where the hens were roosting
like light clouds in the sky. We laughed and laughed
again, in spite of the smarting of our eyes.

It's not altogether clear what they were laughing at, until
later on, when Dorothy describes herself going to sleep thinking
of the Fairyland of Spenser, and what I had read in romance at other times, and then, what a feast would it be for a London pantomime-maker, could he but translate it to Drury Lane, with all its beautiful colours.

This is, with the intensity of a discovery, the delight of being on holiday. To be really here, in a sort of pantomime wood-cutter's cottage, with smoke, and crisscross beams, and hens - the laughter is not amusement, but merriment; a suspension of adult prudence. The party owe this, not only to the look of the house, but also to their coming to be there. Wanting to see the Trossachs - a desire still just eccentric enough to cause some local puzzlement - they had left their horse and car at Tarbet, crossed Loch Lomond, and walked east to Glengyle with no idea of where they would stay. This night in the hut of the ferryman who had taken them down Loch Katrine and back thus represented the success of a mildly adventurous departure from the ordinary tourist route from Dumbarton to Inveraray: it was, so to speak, an excursion from their excursion, a double truancy. It's a good example of the Wordsworths' inventiveness as tourists, their taste and talent for situations which cunningly compromise between the designed and the unexpected.

This particular adventure lies interestingly in the background of another tour poem, 'Stepping Westward'. The poem's

incident is, once again, an evening encounter, on the road, with a woman in a lonely place, and with a text that carries the mind beyond itself and beyond the material world. But instead of being Gaelic, the text is in an idiosyncratic English: the woman says, by way of greeting, 'What, you are stepping westward?' The odd phrase, and the afterglow of the sunset ahead, reverberate in a relaxed sort of way:

And stepping westward seemed to be
A kind of heavenly destiny;
I liked the greeting; 'twas a sound
Of something without place or bound;
And seemed to give me spiritual right
To travel through that region bright.

Although, clearly, the elegiac overtones are still heard (there is a submerged allegory, which surfaces at the end of the poem, of the road as the course of life), there isn't the intense feeling of separation shared by the other pieces I've examined. The reason is simple: the poet feels this time welcomed into the dimension 'without place or bound' intimated by the meeting, and so the transcendence is easy-paced, imaginary, without the tragic disjunction of the others. This is to make a much less serious gesture altogether, as the anecdotal looseness - 'seemed', 'liked', 'something' - suggests. The pleasure of the poem, in fact, includes the knowledge that the expansive construction placed on the woman's words is a personal, wayward one - that the imagination is playing. Behind that is the circumstance that the Wordsworths were walking to the same hut, where they had caroused and giggled, having resolved to deviate westward...
from Callander to revisit it just as they had deviated eastward
from Tarbet to find it. 11 By their returning there, the pantomime
hut is made into an imaginary home, and it's this further refine-
ment of fancy which generates the poem's geniality. Wordsworth
and his sister have as it were been given the freedom of the
place.

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If Wordsworth's poems are viewed, somewhat reductively, as
simply one of the records of the 1803 tour, they seem by contrast
with the other two versions to present a curiously insubstantial
Highlands. Coleridge's notebooks, on the one hand, aspire with
passionate pedantry to a faithful notation of scenery; words
and associations are subordinated to the grinding, frustrated
effort to write the land down; the myth which fascinates the
writing is not a myth of the Highlands. 12 And Dorothy, though
no such heroic slave to the visible (she prefers her landscape
half-shrouded in mist, a picturesque form of Wordsworth's care-
ful cultivation of the imperfectly legible), is able to produce
a realistic image of local society. For example, she notices
the complicated journeys the people make from their scattered
hamlets to preachings; little groups in their good clothes
setting out, meeting up at prearranged trysts, exchanging news:


12. Coleridge, Notebooks, I, 1489: 'Silly words I am vexed
with you'.
If it were not for these Sabbath-day meetings one summer month would be like another summer month, one winter month like another—detached from the goings-on of the world, and solitary throughout; from the time of earliest childhood they will be like landing-places in the memory of a person who has passed his life in these thinly-peopled regions; they must generally leave distinct impressions, differing from each other so much as they do in circumstances, in time and place, etc.—some in the open fields, upon hills, in houses, under large rocks, in storms, and in fine weather. 13

Here—by coincidence on the same Sunday—is a 'history of the Highlander's life' sharply alternative to the other-worldly hooting with whose interpretation we began: an idea, recognisably 'Wordsworthian', of nature and society interfolded in layers of cumulative association. So that between them, Wordsworth's travelling-companions throw into relief his suppression of the positive presence of both Highland land and Highland people for the sake of an absence, a vision mediated by solitude and obscurity, or by a whimsical refusal of contingency—his choice, in other words, of the 'poetical' Highlands.

The 'Memorials' of the tour end with 'The Blind Highland Boy', a children's tale 'told by the fire-side, after returning to the Vale of Grasmere'. Distinguished in this way from all the other Highland poems as regards its pretext, it is equally distinct in form; for while the poems of the road are elegiac lyrics, this is a comic narrative, placing just their negativity, wittily, in

a more broadly representational context.

The story takes its departure from a beautiful topographical equivalent for that 'visionariness which results from a communion with the unworldliness of nature' which Wordsworth makes the decisive strain in his Highland character. The blind boy lives by a sea-loch, a lake

Not small like ours, a peaceful flood;
But one of mighty size, and strange;
That, rough or smooth, is full of change
And stirring in its bed.

This restlessness is another touch of 'something without place or bound': it's because

to this lake, by night and day
The great Sea-water finds its way
Through long, long windings of the hills....

Between this incursion, eternal, enlivening and alarming, and the boy, whose lightless mind is consoled by 'joy Of which we nothing know', there is an affinity. He has 'many a restless dream'; he is also a musician; and his delight is to listen to the sounds of the sailors and the sea:

Thus lived he by Loch Leven's side
Still sounding with the sounding tide,
And heard the billows leap and dance,
Without a shadow of mischance.

The child's blindness is a form of intimacy with unseen powers: in this, he is a rejuvenated version of the blind bard and a mythologised version of the darkling Lochlomondside cow-herd; but also, in his half-comprehending listening and his gaiety, a type of the wandering poet himself.

The story is then another tale of truancy: how the playful
visionary defies his mother's prohibition, takes a turtle-shell (itself a trophy from the exotic ships which come up the loch) and launches himself on the water, giving himself over to its asocial, abstracting power:

Still better pleased as more and more
The tide retreated from the shore,
And sucked, and sucked him in.

The emotional climax turns on the sharpening contrast between the panic and anxiety of the 'crowd' on the shore and the pure contentment of the child as he is swept down towards the sea. The account of his rescue is in terms of the cruel capture of a prey, and sets his despair -

So all his dreams - that inward light
With which his soul had shone so bright -
All vanished; - 'twas a heartfelt cross
To him, a heavy, bitter loss -

against the rejoicing of his friends. Obedient to its bedtime-story convention, the poem ends by assuring its audience that having 'fondly braved The perilous Deep', the boy was now 'pleased and reconciled To live in peace on shore'. But the dramatic weight of the telling can't be shifted so easily, and still falls on the extreme incompatibility between the ecstatic inner life of the boy and the social life that keeps him from harm. By manipulating his faux-naïf tone, Wordsworth manages to adopt both points of view: the bitterness and pain are raw and unmistakable, yet at the same time we're aware that the boy is absurdly bobbing about on a large shell, and that there's no serious question of leaving him to drift blissfully down to a
watery grave. Thus the story, at once terrible and farcical, furnishes a formula for the 'poetical Highlands' in general: the visionary life elicited by their opacity is vouched for quite unevasively, but the whole avowal is made in a whimsically extravagant manner which admits the visionariness to be the sport of a holidaying mind.

At the crisis of his rescue, or capture, the boy shouts, 'Lei-gha - Lei-gha': once again, a visionary state is communicated by a half-articulate Gaelic cry. The comic narrator, unlike the elegiac traveller, interprets with unhesitating confidence:

> And what he meant was "Keep away,  
> And leave me to myself!"

Coming after so many ambiguously deciphered messages, this brisk gloss is both poignant and funny. At last the death-haunted Highland solitary speaks (it is the boy's only utterance in the poem), and at last we are offered an authoritative translation. But the message is nothing but a demand to be left alone and uncomprehended. It's because he never does close in on the substance of the text — because he is always in the end at play — that Wordsworth can at once deal in the tawdry fixings of the Highland myth and register, in the form of irony, an unfixed and unreached local reality.

14. Wordsworth wrote to Scott for a suitable Gaelic phrase: he wanted a real idiom here, not just hooting. (See note in *Poetical Works*, III, 449.)
CHAPTER SEVEN

ROMANCES

The texts discussed in this chapter are


*Llewellyn: A Tale*, 3 vols (1799)

Mary Anne Hanway, *Andrew Stuart, or the Northern Wanderer. A Novel*, 4 vols (1800)

T.J. Horsley Curties, *The Scottish Legend; or, the Isle of Saint Clothair, A Romance*, 4 vols (1802)

Elizabeth Helme, *St. Clair of the Isles; or, the Outlaws of Barra. A Scottish Tradition*, first published 1803, third edition, 4 vols (1824)

Mrs Rice, *Monteith, A Novel. Founded on Scottish History*, 2 vols (Gainsborough, 1805)

*Glencore Tower; or, The Feuds of Scotland. A Legend of the Thirteenth Century*, 2 vols (1806)

Francis Lathom, *The Romance of the Hebrides; or, Wonders Never Ceaset*, 3 vols (1809)

Peter Middleton Darling, *The Romance of the Highlands*, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1810)


As the Highlands hardened into a mythical object, one of the showcases in which it could be viewed was the medievalising novel, loosely called Gothic, which rapidly came to dominate the growing middle-class fiction market in the closing years of the eighteenth century. That the region should enter this genre wasn't surprising. The idea of the Highlands as literally poetic, though we have seen it being developed largely by poets and their readers, was even more grateful from the point of view of the romance-writer. As John Berryman, for instance, has pointed out, the Gothic had inscribed on it from the first the project of combining the Strange and the Natural in a single discourse: anti-realistic in its emotional extremism, tortuous plotting and constant flirtation with the supernatural, it nevertheless clung to realistic form in the psychological intimacy of its narratives and the redundant particularity of its topographical descriptions. Its most extravagant fantasies were meant to seem actual - that was the point. Hence the resort to epochs and locales where fantasy and actuality seemed to merge, from the towers of Samara to the dungeons of the Spanish Inquisition. The Scottish Highlands, firmly identified as Fancy's Land, met the specifications.

The guarantee of actuality was primarily visual: as J.M.S. Tompkins remarked, the Gothic past was nominally historic and really picturesque. In The Romance of the Hebrides, for example, the Thane of Dunvegan is presented at length on his wedding morning in tartan kilt, speckled deerskin leggings, embroidered linen, a crimson and ermine cloak, a gold breast-plate, and a plaid bonnet adorned with pearls, emeralds and snow-white plumes. "He appeared", the narrator comments understandably, "more than mortal". The same minute transcendence characterises landscapes in The Romance of the Highlands - the viscount gazed with enthusiasm on the sun, sinking slowly beneath the blue horizon, tinging the edges of the adjacent clouds and summits of the distant mountains with a deep glow of purple, illuminating, with a ruddy hue, the bold terrific rocks, which appeared rising in gloomy majesty, till they were lost in distance, discovering to the eye gleams of light grey, yellow, and black crags of stone.

Neither of these fairly typical descriptions has any narrative function, and both are marked by a distinctive excess of colour and detail: the shortcake-tin chief is overdressed even by the contemporary standards of Raeburn, and even the most excitable picturesque travellers don't quite match the spectacular bruise-coloured sunset. In short, they are formally and representationally gratuitous: something other than description is going on.

The key to this subtext is the presence in the foreground of the viscount, gazing with enthusiasm. This figure is an

almost invariable complement to the scenery: the Highlands are not merely delineated, but narrated through the refined sensibilities of high-born characters. In Ann Radcliffe's first book, for instance - The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne - the noble heir to one of the castles is an enthusiast in the mould of Beattie's Minstrel:

His warm imagination directed him to poetry, and he followed where she led. He loved to wander among the romantic scenes of the Highlands, where the wild variety of nature inspired him with all the enthusiasm of his favourite art.5

From this cue, characterisation moves seamlessly into narrative, as the hero, straying among sublime solitudes, finds he has lost himself.

He remained for some time in a silent dread not wholly unpleasing, but which was soon heightened to a degree of terror not to be endured....His memory gave him back no image of the past; and having wandered some time, he came to a narrow pass ....

Through the pass the youth comes upon a lushly wooded valley where, in a romantically situated cottage, he encounters the young peasant of inexplicably noble mien who.... The readers of 1799 were perhaps as well able to predict the upshot as we are. What emerges clearly from this transition is that Radcliffe is really interested, not in the terrain, which is only particularised to the extent needed to distinguish the romantic, the terrible, and the beautiful, and not in the plot, which is a

cliché, but in sensibility itself. The hero's responses to scenery are traced with a subtlety that stands out from the crudity of the rest. In particular, the prose responds to the point at which appreciation of the scenic sublime borders on fear, and it's typical — in fact it's a recurring formula in the novel — that the hero's picturesque reverie is what carries him into the adventure story.

Radcliffe has the relationship under control, even in this early sketch, but in other hands the insistence of sensibility is unmanageable. When heroines about to be ravished, and generals marching into battle, continue to admire the cataracts and woods around them, it's tempting to say that the story's characters are identifying with the reader rather than the other way round.  

The Romance of the Highlands affords a striking example of this when its hero, Kenneth, is so impressed by the hollow sounding of the wind among the rocks that

He looked around, expecting to see the majestic form of some ancient bard, seated upon a high rock, musing upon the scene, and now and then striking the strings of his harp.  

It's an expectable fancy in an Ossianised tourist. But Kenneth is supposed to be a native: he plays the harp himself, and a few chapters earlier, in another rugged setting, he really did meet with an ancient and majestic form — actually a hermit rather than a bard — who told him the secret of his birth. The author

has forgotten that his hero is part of the romance, and cannot
well be part of the romanticism too.

But whether they're handled skilfully or not, the cliffs
and glens which are constantly kept before our eyes attain to no
geographical solidity, because they are needed, as constantly,
to function as allegories of sensibility. Insofar as they are
sublime, the Highlands are not a part of the world so much as
the theatre of a tremulously susceptible consciousness which is,
in the end, that of the notional reader. Wandering, frowning,
soothing, towering, opening — the typical scenic gestures are
symbolic but emptily so, lending themselves indifferently to
the pious (craggs that lift the melancholy beholder 'from Nature
up to Nature's God') and to the sexual (lovers' meetings adorned
by mossy caves, subterranean torrents and flashes of lightning).

The two clouds of association merge, via Burnet, at a critical
moment in The Scottish Legend, when the heroine is abducted
through

an almost impassable and trackless chain of desert
wolds, whose rude uncivilised rocky steeps admitted
through their opening fissures the rushing torrents,
pouring, with tremendous velocity, their foaming
waters down immeasurable heights, and burying
themselves amid the frightful untrdden chasms
of the deep, the bottom of which could never be
found, and seemed to exclude the light of the sun
whose cheering rays had never pierced so deep since
that chaotic deluge sent by an offended Creator, had
overwhelmed the guilty lands, and left these
stupendous ruins as memorials of its awful effects.

   of the Hebrides, I, 142.

In this rather overheated sentence, the sublime of landscape fuses with the heroine's physical and metaphysical fear of being raped. At this point it becomes quite easy to say what burnishes the colours and exaggerates the declivities of the circulating-library Highlands: masochism. At the higher pitches of sensibility, the scenery is charged with dreams of violation.

This isn’t to say that the fiction of the wild Highlands is libertine: on the contrary, the stories police the innocence of their heroes and heroines as vigilantly as Macpherson before them and Scott after. I suspect that Gothic libertinism selects Southern settings, and that a pure moral atmosphere is effectively what is signified by choosing the Grampians rather than the Apennines. The Highlands themselves enforce this puritanism through the extremely powerful theme of the secluded upbringing. In *Llewellin*, for instance, a pan-British fantasy of the fourteenth century, the protagonist and his sister are kidnapped as children and grow up on Skye:

Emma, though transplanted from the most accomplished court in Europe to these remote and dreary isles, bloomed and flourished; with all the delicacy, she escaped the indolence and affectation of court-bred ladies.... At a proper age our benefactor placed her at a nunnery in Icolmkill, and me at a neighbouring monastery, where I became hardy and vigorous, was early inured to every labour....

Moral and physical health are, in a familiar way, inseparable here, and together sketch how the region's 'rudeness', its rustic lack of rules and resources, can signify innocence as well as

chaos. The rough and lonely rocks are at once the trials of virtue and its nurse.

There's more to be said about this moralism in another context: the point here is that between these two complementary symbolisations, the landscape becomes *overmotivated*. This is really the decisive feature of the descriptive style: the phrases, which formally offer themselves as a record of places and events, are really and invariably enforcing ideological closures. Reading is a relentless process of decoding:

The danger seeming now over, Duncan placed Marion on a broken fragment, which had rolled from the rocks above; he cheered her with the fond hope of again beholding her adored parent. With confidence on her returning strength, she then arose, to climb the rugged mountains of Dunrae, which was soon to bring them to many a well-known spot of youthful pleasures.11

(Physical intimacy occasioned by emergency has its own dangers, symbolised by perilous scenery. Filial sentiment guarantees purity of lonely tête-à-tête. Strength is the link between resilience of character ('hope') and challenging environment ('rugged'). Security of childhood regained as reward for effort.)

Here, bits of the Highland scenic and sentimental ensemble are woven together to produce a constant undemanding alternation of alarm and reassurance, transgression and authority. Naively presented, the fictional world is in reality saturated by authorial intention: the savage rocks and manners are weightless because they are *totally* mythical. Every glimpse of the setting is valuable — and when it happens that no values can be attached to the scenery, as is the case for quite long passages in all

11. *Glencore Tower*, I, 64.
these stories, it simply disappears.

An incidental advantage of the Highland setting, for such purposes, is the ready access to the supernatural which it affords. Superstition was the best-known attribute of the inhabitants, as we've seen; and though the romance-writers show no great concern to be locally idiomatic, ghosts, portents and prophecies certainly abound. In St. Clair of the Isles, the events of the novel are delphically and frantically foretold by two separate white-haired visionaries. One talks like Ossian, the other like Ezekiel; but the utterances of both, marked by transport and terror, are picturesque and accurate anticipations of the plot. The impression they give is that behind the apparent spontaneity of the characters' subsequent behaviour there lies an iron destiny, hidden and suppressed, but irresistible. Thus the pressure of overmotivation finds an alibi in the Second Sight: the narrative seems driven by external compulsions, and so, in fact, it is.

* 

What myth is it? At the level of plot, it's almost always the foundling legend. An heir, thought dead, is living in obscurity, not knowing who he really is. The reason is usurpation, tempest, illegitimacy, misunderstanding — explanations are various, often inadequate, and evidently ad hoc.

What counts is the predicament: the myth of occluded origins.

The formula is not peculiar to the Highlands, of course, and not peculiar to the Gothic either. But it does have a special place in a form which, as David Punter points out, projected an aristocratic past in the terms and for the enjoyment of a bourgeois public. It's a story which assumes an aristocratic model of identity, posing the question 'who am I?' in the form 'whose son am I?'. But when, within that frame, the youth rises to distinction by his own spirit and courage, still believing himself to be the son of the humble foster-parents, the aristocratic model is complemented by a bourgeois one. The heroes are self-made men, whose making however, culminates in the repossession of rights they have a hereditary claim to anyway. The ingenious withholding of birth certificates is the mechanics of a magical reconciliation of 'birth' and 'merit', hierarchy and enterprise. The low-born champion takes over the ancient castle, but the hereditary order, instead of being convulsed by this revolution, is restored to its full legitimacy. It's a sort of class fantasy, confusedly triumphalist and humble at the same time — in other words, it is a fictional form of snobbery. The fierce social conflicts of the decades when the Gothic novel flourished are smoothed away by ritual observance.

The Highlands seem to be a natural setting for this rite.

It was the plot, not only of Home's Douglas, but also of The

Highlander (1758), the pre-Ossianic dwarf epic by Macpherson, himself a real-life example of a youth of humble origin discovering that he is a king's son. And the region's understood character suits the story well. On the conservative side of the deal, aristocracy is grandly validated by the imagery of patriarchal chieftainship, with its aura of venerable antiquity and kindly power. In The Scottish Legend, for example, the ancestral castle, a moss-grown Ossianic ruin at the beginning, is progressively restored by the straightening out of the dynastic tangles: first the return of the plebeian heritor —

again the antique halls of Hollodale smiled with the cheerful welcome of its ancient hospitality —

and later the marriage —

The ancient domestics shared in the general favour of their adored mistress; and the harpers and minstrels... sung in exalted strains the praise of heroic deeds and goodness.14

The antiquity signifies the naturalness of the family's rule (whatever medieval century the romancers choose they never describe a new castle); while its continuing vitality, despite its age, is seen in the affection of its retainers. This popular attachment is often expressed in a fantastic economics of hospitality, in which the poor all live on what the aristocrats give them: in this absurdity, as we have seen elsewhere, the

incomprehensibility, for modern political economy, of Highland social traditions, inspires a complete flight from economic rationality into an idyll where self-interest doesn't exist. 15 Besides the unusual glamour of its nobility, the region also facilitates the foundling plot through its freedom (to Lowland eyes at least) from conspicuous markers of class difference. The eclipsed heir is degraded neither by his speech (which observes a woodenly literary convention the more happily for being supposed to be in Gaelic), nor by his clothes:

The person of Lord Donald was disguised as much as it could be by wearing the simple clothing of a native highlander; but neither the coarse plaid, nor the philibeg, could conceal his noble mien; it perhaps received additional interest from that garb.16

That was written in 1805, when, as we saw, tartan was a well-established patriotic fashion among the upper classes: it's not surprising, therefore, that Lord Donald looks none the worse for his. The kilt suggests a magical social harmony, in which, although the superior status of the ruling family is unquestionable, no one is common.

If the Highland setting, then, idealises aristocratic order, it presents an equally glowing image of the supposedly low-born hero. The key to this resolution is, once again, the educational value of Highland, and especially Hebridean, rusticity:

16. Rice, Monteith, I, 123.
"Thy son, bred in a court, had been a moth, a butterfly; ... fostered in the rude winds of the Western Isles, he hath learned to be a man."

Here, in St. Clair of the Isles, the island has a neat double function: it keeps the dispossessed hero out of the way of harm or discovery while he and the plot mature, and it also instils in him the 'rude' manliness and strength to deserve his inheritance in the end. The Isles — it's the central motif of the book — are the scene of a topographical felix culpa.

St. Clair is the man who brings up the mislaid heir (though, with a redundancy characteristic of the genre, a flashback reveals that he was one himself, in youth). He is an aristocrat, but has been outlawed through some machinations at court, and taken refuge with his trusty comrades and his beautiful wife on Barra. He is thus a sort of Robin Hood; but in fact the book avoids having him rob anyone, so the outlawry becomes a form of unworldliness. Barra is immune to evil (the foster-son, venturing to the mainland for the first time, finds 'the country was mountainous, dreary and unpeopled; but, unaccustomed to villainy, he knew no fear'), and even immune to time:

"Eighteen years, did you say, your companion in banishment? In truth, lady, your face and form might give the lie to the world, who would never credit your being a wife at that period."

"A good husband, my liege, is a preservative against wrinkles; while women love, they wish to please; and, in the solitude of Barra, no contentions

17. Helme, St. Clair, IV, 173.
arose to disturb our tranquillity. But if this is tir nan og, the coy tone of that, at once flirtatious and sententious, makes it a very impure version. To be exact, it is Eden domesticated: St. Clair's lady is preserved by a perfectly genteel home life —

In fine weather, our morning entertainment on the water; our afternoon walks; and our evening's music, when thy voice mixed with mine — I had not a wish unsatisfied —

and by a demurely expressed sexual contentment —

The proud dames of the fertile south, stretched on silken beds by their listless lords, would envy the wife of Monteith, amidst the barren rocks of Barra, defended by the arms of a hero. 19

The picture is hardly plebeian: despite the rude winds and barren rocks, the outlaws seem to live rather like the rentiers in Jane Austen. But the real point of it, as the nursery of the mislaid heir, is not any particular level of privilege, but its closed quality: the outlawry, the fortress, and the rocky islet amount to an idealised image of private life.

It's in this sense that the happy confluence of aristocratic and bourgeois values adumbrated in the plot actually reproduces itself in the portrayal of the Highlands. The scattered castles and islands reflect, pictorially, an idealised aristocratic system of life. But at an unseen, formal level of the fiction, they refer to a bourgeois ideal of individual sovereignty,

19. Helme, St. Clair, IV, 111; I, 123.
whereby every family is its own extra-social world.

The Romance of the Hebrides, for example, is a family drama. Somerled, the Thane of Dunvegan, struggles to defend his inheritance (which he describes as 'the savings of his industry') against the villain, Ronaldbride, who claims, erroneously as it turns out, to be his elder brother by the incestuous union of his father and his aunt. A sub-plot deals with the fortunes of Somerled's bride Alexandra, the heiress of Barra who has been exiled on unjust suspicion of being a witch. The action takes place on Skye, Mull, the Uists, Barra and St Kilda; the mutual isolation of all these places is essential to the prolonged denials of information, forcible detentions and arbitrary tyrannies on which the story depends. Moreover, all the inhabitants of the islands are dependent on the heritors who make up the cast of the drama: anyone who is not either a monarch or a domestic servant is a criminal. Alexandra's deposition is the work of her uncle; the allies of her escape are two household servants of her mother's. Later she is marooned on St Kilda, which is apparently uninhabited, as is another quite large island where the real impregnator of Somerled's aunt drags out his remorseful days. In other words, the islands are really family houses, the privacy of their conjugal joys or their skeletons in the closet being naturalised by the estranging sea, which also aggrandises and simplifies the domestic melodrama by giving all its participants the status of
little kings and queens.

The covert modernity of the antique characters is clearly readable in the recurring figure of the villain. Dark, morose and dictatorial, strong and brave but unaccustomed to controlling his passions, he is in type, and often in detail, the ancient feudal chieftain, whose arrogance and caprice are supposed to reflect the arbitrary and irregular nature of his social power.

However, this historical basis for the character is purely nominal: what actually happens is that the narrative, holding fast to a post-feudal legality which is unquestionable because it's assumed to be universal, turns the ostensible Highland chief into an individual criminal, a more or less Byronic brigand whose followers are compelled 'to retire with the spoil they had gained, and seek an immediate refuge and security amid the trackless forests, and deep excavated caverns of the mountainous districts they infested.' When these saturnine characters justify their arbitrary behaviour, it's in the terms, not of any clan ethos, but of unrestrained individualism: thus Ridolpho in The Scottish Legend resolves to 'defy the shallow forms of base and abject laws to which the free souls of men should never stoop!'; while Ronaldbride defends his decision to turn Hebridean pirate by asking, 'Was I, with the towering spirit which animated my veins, and which was derived to me from my ancestry, ere I knew my lineage, to bend in crouching submission to the unfeeling hand

of wealth, for a crust? Both these declarations could roughly be called aristocratic, but it's a personal and rebellious aristocracy, not a coherent social order. The point of the brigand-chief is not his history, but the pure individualism of his anti-social and acquisitive passions:

Rash and impetuous in his resolves, he no sooner conceived a desire of obtaining any object, than it was pursued with the most unjustifiable ardour.

This shift of stereotype from Highland chief to individualistic bandit tends, indeed, to be induced by the foundling plot. Several of the Highland romances begin by offering what seems to be a feud story (the title of The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne alludes to this idea). But with the discovery that the heir to one of the feuding establishments was spirited away some eighteen years ago, and consequently that its present incumbent is an unscrupulous usurper, the feud simply dissolves, and what promised to be a story about destructive traditionalism turns into one about an individual who is prepared to violate any tradition whatever. The realisation that in the medieval Highlands the modern novel is confronting a society fundamentally different from its own penetrates, in the end, only in the sense that the novelist uses it to dream a life conditioned by no society at all.

22. Rice, Monteith, II, 42.
The Gothic Highlands, in this last sense of the term, have the capacity to slip their medieval alibi and intervene in contemporary stories. There's an interesting tendency for silver fork novels, mostly tied in to a trivial and etiquette-ridden convention of society, to resort to the 'wild' code of the Gothic for an enhanced power of motive or climax. In *The Assassin of St. Glenroy*, for instance, the tragic heroine becomes a dissipated society belle with an aching heart because of her failure to marry the good man she loved; the reason she refused him was that she believed him, wrongly, to be the assassin of the title. Thus the routine beau monde sorrows are traced back to a mysterious and barbaric crime committed in the gloomy woods of a Highland glen. Again, in the picaresque *Andrew Stuart*, one of the heroes is persecuted by a worthless aristocrat who, when challenged to a duel, decamps in the direction of his massive Highland castle. A carriage chase follows, and the fight eventually takes place in a glen surrounded by cloud-capped mountains. In these cases the Highlands function as a sort of accessible past, prior to civilisation, where the normal muting and masking of fashion and propriety and bluff don't apply, and the underlying relations of power and desire simply appear. That's to say, the mountains frame an illusory positive, projected out of the blocks and contradictions of the silver fork world itself.

*The Castle of Strathmay* opens with the hero, shipwrecked on the coast of Caithness, seeking shelter for the night in the
castle of the title. It's a decayed cliff-top pile, such as 'superstition would have marked as the habitation of a supernatural being, delighting in the wildest scenes of nature', inhabited by a misanthropic old man and a beautiful artless girl of mysterious antecedents. These two turn out later to be the hero's wicked uncle and his illegitimate daughter. So far, all is recognisably Gothic — the accidental precipitation into the story-world, the self-discovery in the midst of strangeness, the non-committal supernaturalism, the half-buried transgression. But in fact, as the story is pieced together on a rather complex time-scheme, it's revealed that the setting is contemporary, and young Douglas's stormy landing is really the prelude to a highly conventional silver fork career: he will travel to Edinburgh, learn there the emptiness of fashionable amusements, and, after some hesitation over the image of the girl at the castle, marry the pleasant and wholly un-Gothic Lowland heroine, 'the Flower of Esk'. At the same time, however, the story of the previous generation is progressively unveiled — the romantic meeting between Douglas's high-born English father and low-born Highland mother, the implacable opposition of the families, the villainy which produced the illegitimate daughter, the true lovers' perilous escape from the Castle of Strathmay, and so on.

By the end of the novel, all the characters from this earlier

plot have died, and the newly married juvenile leads resolve to visit the castle for one month in the year in memory of their tragic forebears.

Thus the fairy-tale encounter at the castle gate turns out to have been the hinge between two quite distinct fictional codes: from it, the story extends backwards into a Gothic Highland convention of lawless passion, violence, and extremes of suffering; and forwards into the society novel, based on the Edinburgh season and accepting a narrow regime of propriety and a bland ethic of benevolence. That this split is deliberate is clear, not only from a wittily self-conscious epilogue, but also from the ruthless purge of fairy-tale progenitors: the modern city of prudence and judgment is strictly incompatible with the Gothic hinterland, which is laid waste on the way to the happy ending.

Although there's no doubt about the triumph of civilised values, it isn't carried through without compunction. Morna, the illegitimate daughter, has an absolute innocence in prurient contrast with her origins; she is naturally modest and unsuspicuous, like Miranda, and sits in the sun spinning and singing melancholy Gaelic songs. In similar vein, when the hero and heroine visit the castle at the end, they reconstruct the parents' escape, and from the rock whence the imprisoned maid must have leapt to the boat, a sea-bird ascends on white pinions into the sky. Nothing in the Edinburgh half of the book matches this imagery of other-worldly purity. The calculated rejection
of Gothic is a loss of authenticity as well as an emancipation from passion.

That uneasy balance shapes the Highland centrepiece of a more serious novel of contesting fictional codes: **Adam Blair**. And although Lockhart's strange, feverish performance is not really from the same period as the novels I've been examining, it's worth hopping forward in time to see the logic of their themes at an intensity which is beyond them.

The real setting of the novel is Cross-Meikle, the picturesque and devout Lowland village where Adam is the minister. Within this historically precocious kailyard, two narrative voices run unstably side by side, a mawkish delineator of tender sentiment who enters sympathetically into the bereaved minister's spiritual revival through his intimacy with the ill-used Charlotte Campbell, and a coldly perceptive commentator pointing, reductively, to the adulterous implications of the couple's indulgence of sensibility. Under the influence of this unresolved tension of viewpoint, the scenes and relationships of Cross-Meikle become fetishised, fraught with suppressed sexuality, until, in a manner more reminiscent of Sterne than Mackenzie, the category of pure religious feeling itself is being placed at risk. What Lockhart does in this crisis, with great deliberation, is to remove the sexual object, Charlotte, to a castle on the shore of Loch Fyne.

Here she is persecuted by her husband's unpleasant lawyer, and Adam sets off down the Clyde to come, in a rather undefined
way, to her assistance. But at this point, very adroitly, the imagery of the Gothic Highlands starts to take over his intention. The hypnotic motion of the waves, and the Gaelic singing of the boatmen, induce a trance-like susceptibility to the lavishly described grandeur of birchwood and mountain as Adam is carried deeper into the Highlands. He lands at the tower among grey boulders 'shattered from the brow of the impending rock by some primeval convulsion of nature': he has been removed from his culture into an elemental world, an effect furthered in more specifically medievalising terms by the mysterious horseman who laughs as Adam approaches the place, and the sword which falls, enigmatically a sign of danger or surrender, from Charlotte's hand as Adam waits in the moonlight for admission to the ancient pile. 24

Thus when Adam and Charlotte are re-united they have both acquired roles in a type of narrative quite different from the one they were in before. Adam is a knight-errant, and Charlotte is something between a damsel in distress and a fairy-tale temptress. So that having edged them deviously into intimacy at the manse, the story now precipitates them into bed with melodramatic but convincing speed, accompanied by a startlingly direct imagery of fire, wine and tempest. It's as if things which were subtextual in the more densely realised milieu of the

Lowland village are here, in a desocialised, fragmented setting, allowed to become surface events: amid the eternal rock and water, the tale of the unconscious is made actual.

But if it is briefly a tale of pleasure, what is more signally released, the following morning, is paranoia. Adam is lost — to grace and to the psychologically complex narration of the first thirteen chapters — and the presentation is instantly lurid: the landscape turns sympathetically to a wilderness of black rocks and lightless tarns, and the dialogue cracks into shrill Ossianic-biblical declamation. The lovers' intimacy, consummated at such a pitch, is all spent: they call each other 'Adam Blair' and 'woman' as if they were literary symbols even for themselves. The nemesis, in this newly crude narrative convention, is as naively physical as the offence — Charlotte dies and is borne to her island burial place with ancient Gaelic lamentation, and Adam returns to the Lowlands white-haired.

In the end, then, the supervention of the Highland setting on the ethical and psychological narrative is a false friend. It enables the narrator to escape from his dilemma between sentimentality and cynicism, and bring his domestic tensions to a crisis which is actualised and dramatic. But the price of that escape from euphemism is ruinous, because it is an escape from history — both the general history embodied in the religious culture of Cross-Meikle and the specific history of Adam and Charlotte's relationship. In other words, the novel gets itself
off the hook by covertly switching the minister's identity
before he actually goes to bed with the woman, and switching
it back again afterwards. The alternative — to accept the
continuity between the pious tenderness and the sex, and have
them sleep together at the manse — would have generated too
much consternation in the book's precarious system of values.
This is the explanation of the peculiar tone of the Highland
sequence — its sensuality and pseudo-apocalyptic violence. It
is the reflex of a taboo.

* *

If we now use Lockhart's more highly articulated structure
as a means of reading the primitive fictions it makes use of,
we can name the signification of the Gothic Highland myth quite
simply: it is liberty. All over the trackless and fragmented
scene, institutional barriers are down. The restraints of
class dissolve: the aristocracy lead bourgeois lives, and the
bourgeois heroes were secretly aristocrats all the time. The
only ties are those of blood — desire, murder and heredity —
and in the unfenced landscape spectacles of freedom, from the
uncorrupted island child to the unbridled robber chief, complement
the unconditioned and enthralling presence of Nature. However,
it's a liberty wholly devoid of the promise of liberation,
because it is back-derived from the inhibitions of the novels'
own society to the fastness of an exotic time and place, where
it leads a dehistoricised life, betraying the negativity of
its origins by the obsessive involutions of disguise, secrecy and perversity which surround and sustain it.
CHAPTER EIGHT

THE ANNUS MIRABILIS OF ROMANCE

By the beginning of 1810, Scott had sold his half-finished new poem, 'my Highland Epic', for 2,000 guineas. In January he was publicising and all but producing the premiere of The Family Legend, Joanna Baillie's tartan tragedy. In May there appeared The Scottish Chiefs, Jane Porter's equally be-plaided fictional life of Wallace. In June, 'Criticus' wrote to the Scots Magazine deploiring such 'cant and whining nonsense' and announcing that 'the age of Romance is now happily over', but the very fact that he had a name for it acknowledged the pull of the tide he was swimming against. It was also that June that The Lady of the Lake appeared in the shops. It was Scott's commercial zenith as a poet, selling nearly 25,000 copies by the end of the year, and reputedly making the fortune also of a Perthshire peasant named (like the poem's protagonist) James Stewart, who guided the crowds of votaries over the instant classic ground. Anne Grant went there in the autumn and wrote from Callander: 'Five hundred chaises have been here this summer: it has been the annum mirabilis of romance.'

5. Memoir and Correspondence of Mrs Grant of Laggan, edited by J.P. Grant, 3 vols (1844), I, 269.
Forest Minstrel, with its Jacobite revivalism, followed in August; and the following year Grant herself brought out her Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland, an extended and quite influential attempt to ground the romance in fact, which inspired Jeffrey, not only to a surprisingly warm review, but also to a personal trip to Speyside. 6

During the 1810–11 season, meanwhile, the Lady itself engendered dramatisations, musical arrangements, re-tellings, imitations and characters for bals masqués. 7 These were the best years of what I've called the wartime Indian Summer of the Highland ruling class, and their prosperity seems to have found its ideological reflection in a general celtophilia which even


the charm of the poem and the time together.

1 The Chase

The first Canto of [The Lady of the Lake] touches on a reverberant romantic image – that of the 'headmost huntsman' who, like Sir Walter in 'Hart-Leap Well' (1800), is separated from his companions by the momentum of the chase and led by the quarry into an alien world. Scott was certainly aware of the supernatural dimension of his story – he had translated Bürger's [Wilde Jäger] long before 8 – but here he chooses to evoke the fairy story without actually telling it. Fairies and spells abound in the text, but it's either in hyperbolic description, or in the playful exchanges between Fitz-James and Ellen – in both contexts the magic is explicitly the creation of literary fancy. The stag does lure the hunter into an enchanted land, but the enchantment is not supernatural: it's scenic.

The vigour and bustle of the opening ride are brought to

an abrupt end by the death of the huntsman's horse; in the evening stillness he sets off to 'join some comrades of the day'. The very exact topography of the sequence makes it clear that he should now follow his own hoofmarks back eastwards in the direction of Brig o' Turk. But in fact the landscape takes over at this point, in four stanzas of virtuoso description which take to themselves all the built-up energy of the chase, so that it's the path that finds it way, the rocks that shoot up, nature that scatters the flowers and trees which themselves mingle, find their bowers, group, weep, cast anchor, and fling their boughs across the sky. The huntsman, now 'the wanderer', loses the initiative: first his eyes and then his steps are passively drawn upward and westward by the brilliant and balletic scenery. The main action of the sequence, which is the discovery, beyond the Trossachs, of Loch Katrine, is similarly displaced:

Onward, amid the copse 'gan peep
A narrow inlet, still and deep ....
Lost for a space, through thickets veering,
But broader when again appearing,
Tall rocks and tufted knolls their face
Could on the dark-blue mirror trace.

The movement denoted by 'onward' and 'veering' must literally be that of Fitz-James, but the syntax avoids having him as subject, and misrelates its participles confusingly in order to keep the objects of his gaze in motion. In the next stanza, still more estrangingly, roots of trees make his ladder to the

point from which he views the whole loch. The effect is like
that of subjective camera: the person vanishes and all we read
is the retinal images swaying and scintillating. So one hardly
notices that the hunter is walking in exactly the wrong direction.
He is unresisting; the picturesque leads him to its queen like
a fairy herald.

Here are two separable reasons why the poem instantly
established itself as the glass through which the Trossachs were
to be viewed.\textsuperscript{10} One is the particular quality of the descriptive
writing that comes out of such rigorous visual subjectivity.
Ruskin calls Scott the great modern landscape poet, greater than
Wordsworth because Scott's natural world doesn't alter under the
pressure of human feeling, but genuinely registers the seen.
Using the dawn sequence from the opening of Canto III of the
Lady as one of his illustrations, Ruskin goes on to point out
that what is almost entirely missing from Scott's rendering of
landscape is form: he composes his imagery *either of colour,
or of that delicate half-believed life which we have seen to be
so important an element of modern landscape*.\textsuperscript{11} All these
qualities - the formlessness, the 'colour' (really light:
Ruskin's eye remains pre-Raphaelite, though very sharp), and

\textsuperscript{10.} For example by Elizabeth I. Spence, on 16 August, 1810:
see her Sketches of the Present Manners, Customs and
Scenery of Scotland, second edition, 2 vols (1811),
I, 203-16.

\textsuperscript{11.} John Ruskin, 'Modern Landscape', in Works, 39 vols
(1903-12), V (1904), 317-53 (p.349).
the suggestion of life - reflect the vivid and sympathetic subjectivism. Scott was giving his readers, not the Trossachs in any whole or integral realisation, but a linear sequence of views, approximating to a visit. But then beyond that, the second power of the description is that its place in the story constitutes a formula for the affectivity of the scene. The sublimity of the pass is directly part of the plot: as we saw in Ann Radcliffe, but with incomparably clearer definition, the scenery is what half-steals the hero from himself and conducts him to the delightful and perilous encounter which will unlock the romance. The conceptual link between mountain aesthetics and the 'passions belonging to self-preservation',12 which underpins the whole experience of the sublime, is quite literally fulfilled by the tale of adventure. The tourist who has read the poem thus sees the Trossachs, not only picked out by a minute delineation, but also bathed in the glow of a narrative aura.

A hundred and fifty years after Scott's death, the maps continue to mark 'Ellen's Isle': his imprint on the place is nearly indelible.

All the same, he didn't invent it. The impression that Loch Katrine was an unknown wilderness until it was transmuted by a touch of the wizard's pen is, I suspect, a tribute to Lockhart's mythographic talents. Already celebrated by the Minister of Callander in the Statistical Account in 1790, and

12. See p.162, above.
by Mrs Murray's *Companion to Scotland* in 1799, the loch was
visited, as we have seen, by the Wordsworths in 1803, when it
was also the setting for a saccharine idyll by John Cririe.¹³
By 1810 the visitor could also consult the entry in a national
gazeteer, Forsyth's * Beauties of Scotland* (1805-08), which
reprinted the O.S.A. report in its entirety, or the local guide
produced by Patrick Graham, the Minister of Aberfoyle, in 1806.¹⁴
The latter is generously quoted (and acknowledged) in Scott's
notes to his poem. The significance of this background is that
*The Lady of the Lake* is not, like, say, the accident of Shake-
peare's having been born in Stratford, the inadvertent source of
a subsequent tourist industry: on the contrary, the poem's
structural affinities with tourism are a part of its making.

When the noble stag pauses on the slopes of Uamh Mhor to
decide whether to make for Loch Ard or Loch Achray, it is
surveying the alternative approaches to the Trossachs which make
up the two sections of Patrick Graham's booklet - the west road
from Callander and the south road by Aberfoyle from Gartmore.
The animal chooses the more popular Callander route, and so
leads the hunt up the valley of the Teith. The pursuit is
another invitation to fancy: the incantation of place names
and thumbnail descriptions - Cambusmore, Ben Ledi, Loch
Vennachar, Loch Achray, Ben Venue - exactly rehearses the notable

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¹³ Rev. J. Robertson, entry on Callander, O.S.A., XII (1977),
137-42; Murray, *Companion and Useful Guide*, I, 146-52;
Cririe, 'Loch-Ketterine', in *Scottish Scenery*, pp.175-228.

¹⁴ Robert Forsyth, *The Beauties of Scotland*, 5 vols (Edinburgh,
1805-08), IV (1808), 194-96; Patrick Graham, *Sketches
Descriptive of Picturesque Scenery on the Southern Confinces
of Perthshire* (Edinburgh, 1806).
features of the road as they would appear to a user of the
guide book. 15 When such a traveller, in the 1790s or 1800s,
actually arrived at the shores of Loch Katrine, he would find
two wicker-work booths, erected by the landowner, in which to
shelter while admiring the view; in Scott's hands these
blossom delightfully into the 'rustic bower', at once luxuriant
and uncouth, where Fitz-James is entertained by the mysterious
lady of the lake. 16 So the whole of Canto I is, among other
things, a day-trip to the Trossachs, all viewed through wonderful,
Quixotic glasses.

In tracing affinities of this kind, it's almost impossible
to avoid a note of irony; at worst, a sneer. Even while
praising the fanciful verve of Scott's descriptions, I imply
by a word like 'tourism' that their appeal was vulgar or banal.
There's nothing anachronistic about such doubts. Scott himself
was capable, a few weeks after the poem's appearance, of lamenting
with rather sour humour 'an age when every London citizen makes
Loch Lomond his washpot, and throws his shoe over Ben-Nevis', 17
and the Katrine mania of the next couple of seasons was the
object of some ill-tempered satire in which pained good taste
mingled with snobbery. 18 The tension that lies behind this

16. Lady, I, xxv-vi; compare O.S.A., XII, 142.
17. Scott, Letters, II, 357.
18. Mary Brunton, Self-Control: A Novel, 2 vols (Edinburgh,
1811), I, 100-03 and 206-09.
uneasy response isn't far to seek. Fitz-James is an ideal picturesque tourist in the precise sense that the ideas suggested by the scenery — solitude, danger, and wonder — are for him not arranged or imagined, but real aspects of his situation. The pathos of tourism is that it is always imitating such moments on terms — organisation, safety, predictability — which leave no possibility of experiencing them in reality. Indeed, the more glamorous an image, the more imitators there are, and the quicker, consequently, the glamour is destroyed. (The only way to anticipate the deterioration, so far as the Highlands were concerned, was to be, or be friends with, the owners of the land: that's the content of the snobbery in the case.) It would be a matter of some ingenuity to reproduce the pristine raptness of Fitz-James's initiation; a deeper penetration into the 'darksome glen' was needed than was offered by a chaise and a sketch-book. It's an index of the seminal (and vulgar) force of Scott's invention that his first canto points out this alternative too.

If Fitz-James is a 'wilde Jäger', his punishment is not perdition, but the loss of his horse. His farewell to it, flamboyantly staged in the dramatisations, is his first speech:

I little thought, when first thy rein
I slack'd upon the banks of Seine,
That Highland eagle e'er should feed
On thy fleet limbs, my matchless steed! 19

19. Lady, I, ix.
From Norman chivalry to Gaelic wildness: Scott characteristically turns the metaphysical frontier which is crossed in the underlying legend into a cultural one. Fitz-James has inadvertently moved between the two Scotlands which are the matter of the poem. And the stag, by escaping across the Highland Fault, has defeated the mounted hunt.

As its enthusiastic historian Duff Hart-Davis points out, the sporting essence of the nineteenth-century cult of Highland deer was stalking, a solitary and exacting pursuit in marked contrast with the other methods of hunting, such as the big traditional deer drive or the wild chase with staghounds, which had hitherto been better known in the south. Scott's poem is situated right at the beginning of this beguiling upper-class craze. Stalking had been a task, or amusement, of young Highland men for generations; and Scott knew about it, for he alludes to it as a national specialism in a review of 1805 - this must be one of the earliest occurrences of the term in its modern sense.

But only around 1810 did landowners begin deliberately to manage their estates for deer, and to let the shooting rights to outsiders - to Lowland Scots initially, but soon to adventurous Englishmen such as the Duke of Bedford, who tried it in 1818, and William Scrope, who started stalking at Bruar Lodge in 1822,


having been recommended to the Duke of Atholl by Scott. It remained an eccentric pastime until popularised by Scrope's book about his days in the Forest of Atholl, *The Art of Deerstalking* (1838). Scott was the founder of the Victorian Highlands in more ways than one.

For landscape, as James Holloway and Lindsay Errington pointed out in a very sharp piece on Highland paintings, the point about stalking is that you can't plan your route; it's dictated as you go along by the direction of the wind and the wanderings of the quarry. You are thus led irresistibly into new scenes, vast solitudes, exhausting and possibly dangerous contact with the land. In short, you remake for yourself — disdaining to imitate — the image of the royal huntsman standing alone, dismounted, nameless and entranced, amid the 'scenery of a fairy dream'. Scott's stag escapes, but it would be killed thousands of times before the dream lost its power.

2 The Island

Fitz-James is a model, then, for the sketchers and sportsmen of the nineteenth-century Highlands. But what's his own alibi? His behaviour in the poem is hardly straightforward.


The political context of the romantic story is a matter for rumour and counter-rumour. Early in Canto V, for example, Roderick Dhu (who is pretending not to be himself) asks Fitz-James (who is pretending not to be the King) whether he’s heard the rumours about a Lowland army raised by Mar against Clan-Alpine. Fitz-James replies:

‘No, by my word; — of bands prepared
To guard King James’s sports I heard;
Nor doubt I aught, but, when they hear
This muster of the mountaineer,
Their pennons will abroad be flung,
Which else in Doune had peaceful hung.’

This is certainly disingenuous. Mar’s forces will be in action in the Trossachs a few hours later: they must certainly have left Doune and be advancing on Clan-Alpine’s heartland as Fitz-James speaks these words. The point of his remarks is to throw the blame for the war on Roderick, without telling him that it’s about to start. The argument that the government mobilisation is just a reaction to the muster of the clans is equally suspect. Clan-Alpine was called out two days before this conversation; but royal troops under Moray and Mar have been at Doune since the day before that — a suspiciously imposing force merely to ‘guard King James’s sports’, and predictably provocative. It’s hard to avoid the conclusion, in retrospect, that when the royal huntsman galloped into the mountains at the beginning of the poem, he was doing so on the

eve of a crisis deliberately brought about by his own government.

That ride is in fact the first of two visits in the course of the story. It later becomes clear that before leaving the area (on the morning of the second day), he made arrangements to return with the means to take Ellen back to Stirling with him. This he duly does, leaving the horses and attendants at Bochastle and appearing at Ellen's refuge, Coir-nan-Uriskin, during the morning of the fourth day. She refuses him, and it's at this point that he runs into danger: as he travels away from the cave, he is betrayed by his guide Murdock, who is acting on the reasonable assumption that the Southron huntsman is a spy. In the resulting fight, the luckless Blanche of Devan is killed, and Fitz-James vows to avenge her, which he successfully does in the combat the following morning before riding furiously back to Stirling, arriving about noon.

In all these wanderings Fitz-James has very much the air of a solitary romantic, taking risks out of chivalrous love for one girl, chivalrous pity for another, and accidentally getting caught up, like Waverley after him, in a Highland stramash which doesn't concern him. He protests to Roderick Dhu that his only interests in the area are game, women, and danger, and although he is of course lying, the figure of the young king who, tired of his national identity, plays at being a free,

25. Lady, V, iv.
'errant' individual knight, is an attractive and convincing one. At the height of his difficulties he says to himself:

Of all my rash adventures past,
This frantic feat must prove the last. 

But against this image of careless youth, we can set the king, who, if my deductions are correct, has actually precipitated the stramash himself; who realises that the inmate of the lonely isle is almost certainly the outlawed Douglas, living under the protection of the outlawed Roderick Dhu; and whose 'rash adventures' - this is the crucial point - are crowned with signal political success. By defeating Roderick, he neatly decapitates the insurrection. By letting it develop as far as it does he gives Douglas the chance to demonstrate his loyalty by not joining it. And by entering into Ellen's romantic concerns, he becomes a kind of patron to her marriage with his erring Highland ward Graeme, thus securing the loyalty of almost everyone. The royal irresponsibility turns out to be profounder policy than policy itself.

In other words, Scott is using the elliptical and uninformative style he has adapted from the ballads to cover the fact that he has given his royal protagonist two incompatible characters - the wise hero of a 'will-of-the-Czar' story, and the reckless hero of a 'Prince Hal' story. It's not merely that the King is in disguise, but that the disguise has two meanings: it's

the camouflage under which he goes about doing good — that is, a mask for others; and it's the fancy dress in which he enjoys the luxury of a change of personality — that is, a mask for himself.

And if Fitz-James borrows the ambiguities of Henry IV, Douglas and his daughter borrow those of As You Like It. They are in the Highlands because they have been banished, and the starting tear at the memory of past glories contributes to the melancholy which is a necessary part of any Highland mise-en-scène. But the decisive tone is

this old man's silent tear,
And this poor maid's affection dear,
A welcome give more kind and true,
Than aught my better fortunes knew. 27

The social defeat is a victory of feeling: one loses the world and finds true love. The island refuge, with its ready music, its lavish adornment of trees and flowers, and its weightless 'shallop', the delightfully fragile link with the shore, is a retreat, not just from the King's displeasure, but from 'life's uncertain main' in general. The self-absorbed sadness of the lyrics — 'Soldier, rest!', 'The lonely isle', 'Ave Maria' 28 — undercuts the rather philistine comedy of the main narrative with regret at the transitory perfection of such withdrawal. Real life is a scene of brutality and self-interest, but one can't stay on the island for ever.

27. Lady, II, xxiii.
28. Lady, I, xxxi-ii; II, ii-iii; III, xxix.
Thus four of the main characters of the story - Fitz-James, Ellen, Douglas, and Allan the minstrel - are Lowland visitors to Loch Katrine, which is not their home, but their Forest of Arden. The Edinburgh Review regretted this, feeling that in turning from the Borders to the Highlands Scott should have made a 'true Celtic story', rather than the chivalric tale as before with Gaelic trimmings. This is to ask for a radically different poem. Picturesque, archaising, light-moving and playful, The Lady of the Lake essentially offers its readers a holiday. Its sentiment and swagger are those of a narrator who isn't being wholly serious, and the plot-lines of espionage and exile are in a sense pretexts, improvised occasions for releasing the characters, too, from their working-day roles and responsibilities.

This goes beyond the accidents of Scott's own relationship with Highland Scotland. The Family Legend, the play he helped with while he was finishing the Lady, and which was hailed as the first notable native tragedy since Douglas, deploys its Highland imagery in strikingly similar fashion, despite being a wholly 'Celtic story'.

It concerns the unhappy marriage of Helen, daughter of the Earl of Argyll, to the chief of the Macleans. The marriage is an attempt to patch up the ancient feud between the two clans,


but fanatical Macleans sabotage the deal by forcing their weak-willed chief to agree to have Helen marooned on a Hebridean rock. In Act I, with this trouble brewing, Helen receives a clandestine visit from her mettlesome brother Lorne, and his friend Sir Hubert, whom Helen is really in love with but has heroically foregone for the sake of clan peace; and in Act III she is saved from her watery grave by the sailors with whom Lorne and Sir Hubert are still wandering about the Hebrides. Thus for the first half of the play the two young heroes are behaving in exactly the same way as Scott's Fitz-James - travelling disguised through picturesque scenery during a political crisis and combining knight-errantry, holiday-making and spying in a single glamorous style. The incoherent motivation - the failure, that is, to say whether the disguise and the journey are matters of business or pleasure - is necessary to the entertainment: it ties the knot between the characters' attitude to events and places and that of the spectator-tourist.

This holiday imagery is unaltered by the absence of Lowland characters. What constitutes the Highlands, for these purposes, is not any positive qualities so much as their difference from wherever the wanderers come from; and the play's opposition of Mull and mainland Argyll is exactly the same system as the poem's opposition of Highland and Lowland. Inveraray represents the civilised, without which the Macleans couldn't register as wild.
There's no place, in the annus mirabilis of romance, for stories which proceed indigenously, without reference to that charged polarity; for the polarity is the condition of the romance. No-one just lives in fairyland.

3 The Gathering

However, Loch Katrine is not just fairyland, nor the Lady altogether a romance. The Highland-Lowland dichotomy, on which the whole poem depends, is produced not only as a holiday, but also as a conflict. The lonely isle is not only the maiden's bower, but also the ancestral headquarters of Clan-Alpine, whose emblem, in conscious contrast with the deciduous vegetation that surrounds the incomers, is the pine —

Moor'd in: the rifted rock,
Proof to the tempest's shock,
Firmer he roots him the ruder it blow. 31

Here after all are the region's permanent inhabitants, with a familiar dactylic aggression which Roderick Dhu himself is occasionally able to translate into a definable ideology: warning his allies of the fate of the Highlands by reference to that of the Borders, he says,

The dales, where martial clans did ride,
Are now one sheep-walk, waste and wide. 32

31. Lady, II, xix.
32. Lady, II, xxviii.
In 1910 the emphasis is a barbed anachronism: the sheep farmers were just gaining their ascendancy in the councils of the Sutherland Estate, so the Cheviot would soon be through to the north coast; and in another few years Highland landlords generally would be giving up the struggle to keep their people and beginning to push them out. Sir Roderick places himself in opposition to the maxim, which the Scots Magazine in November expected would soon be generally admitted, that

> the true value of land is to be found, not in the number of ignorant and idle people, who can contrive to live upon it, but in the number of cattle and sheep, and in the quantity of corn it can produce.

The romantic history with which the poem counters that dehumanising logic later seemed to some its most valuable aspect. Donald Ross's anti-landlord pamphlet Real Scottish Grievances (1954), for instance, uses as epigraph the chief's spirited defence of his lawlessness:

> These fertile plains, that soften'd vale,
> Were once the birthright of the Gael;
> The stranger came with iron hand,
> And from our fathers reft the land....

Similarly, J.C. Shairp's protest poem of 1876-77, 'The Clearing of the Glens', copies Scott's metre and half-ballad style in


35. Donald Ross, Real Scottish Grievances (Glasgow, 1854), title page, quoting Lady, V, viii.

an effort to deliver the appropriate narrative and rhetorical punch. In a general way, it's easy to see Scott's clan-chief, with his vitality and his proud honour, as a sort of mythical resistance fighter. The Fiery Cross sequence, for instance, skilfully uses a well-documented tradition to dramatise at once the extent of Roderick's mountainous domain, the sacredness of his authority, and the courage and vigour of his followers: the image thus develops a Highlands of space and spontaneity, in contrast with the new order whose management for sheep and game was progressively fencing off the hills — and the ruling families — from the people. But the poem as a whole places Roderick in a set of relationships which defeats him, and with him all his oppositional force.

The poem's title is correct as well as commercial: Ellen is its passive centre. Caught between her father and her three mutually antagonistic suitors, she can have a reflective consciousness denied to the characters who are capable of action. Separated from the Highlands by her birth, and from the Lowlands by her situation, she escapes the poem's controlling dichotomy and is as it were pre-cultural — an unmediated source of human values. And as far as Roderick is concerned, these values turn out to be those of the eighteenth-century British establishment:

37. Patrick Sellar, to take a famous example, was actively enforcing such closures in 1810: see Papers on Sutherland Estate Management, edited by R.J. Adam, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1972), II, 114, 133.
just like Pennant or Johnson, she finds the Highland Chief brave but wild, generous but cruel, true in friendship but a vindictive enemy, and so on. Moreover, when she feels a momentary impulse to give herself to him in order to secure him as an ally for her father, the moment is described, in an extended simile, as the subconscious urge to throw oneself off an exposed height.

This decorously landscaped image places Roderick even more decidedly than the discursive character - he is powerful, natural, even fascinating, but his appeal is to the anarchic and destructive elements in personality and society. Formally, he is the villain of the story in the sense that the eventual happy marriage of the heroine depends on his removal. The organisation, not only of the realm, but of the poem itself, is against him.

Once again, The Family Legend suggests the generality of this pattern. Helen, like Ellen, is carried into a temporary alliance with the dark, lawless Highlands by an inter-clan marriage of convenience; the error leads to oneiric extremes of danger (the sea-girt rock has the same Gothic perilousness as the vertigo), before she is saved by the enlightened metropolitansing forces (Argyll for Helen, royalty for Ellen) and united with the fair and modest figure she really loves. It's a pattern with a definite political dimension, as that summary indicates. The conflict between centralising and autonomist powers in the story is fixed by the circumstance that it's the

39. Lady, II, xxxi.
centralists who have it in their gift to make the heroine heart-whole. Thus the periphery can be as dynamic and enchanting as possible (it's a great deal more so in Scott than in Baillie, not only because he's more talented, but also because he's more of a romancer), but its moral defeat in the poem's eventual harmony is no less certain, since disharmony and conflict are constitutive of its imaginative formation in the first place.

Scott marginally complicates this structure by making the man the heroine really loves, Malcolm Graeme, a Highlander himself. For the myth to work, Malcolm then has to be kept clearly distinct from the 'dark' Highlands, otherwise the marriage itself would be a kind of subversion. His extreme youth, his flaxen hair, and the half-Lowland associations of his name all contribute to this-precaution, but its real guarantee is the golden chain, punningly a symbol of his marriage and his imprisonment by the State, which the King whimsically throws over him at the end. The terms of the marriage itself sanitise the bride-groom's Highland origins. Despite this ingenuity, Graeme's character remains seriously under-formed, as Scott observed:

my lover spite of my best exertions is like to turn out what the players call a walking gentleman. It is incredible the pains it has cost me to give him a little dignity.40

The reason it's so difficult is that Scott has nowhere to go

40. Scott, Letters, II, 236.
with the character. If he develops him in the direction of good-
nature, tolerance, gentlemanly ease, he'll detach him from the
Highlands altogether. If, on the other hand, he strengthens
gloom, solitude, rugged independence of mind, he'll compromise
his availability for the closing harmony. The negativity of the
Highland wooer is structural: he can't be properly 'done' without
it.

Why in that case does Scott try to run his lover between
this Scylla and Charybdis? I think it's because a complete and
neat separation of Highland and Lowland would effectively exclude
the former from the happy-ending-of-state, and so maim the affective
capacity of the national resolution. Baillie avoids such an
ideological breakdown in rather breathless fashion: the weakly
treachery Maclean, dying after a single combat with Lorne,
repents, and then when it's all over Argyll has an authoritative
speech condemning clan feuding and looking forward to the day
when all this fighting spirit will be directed against the French.41
That kind of topical pulling together, depending on the immediate
play of audience sentiment, really only works on the stage: at
least one of the dramatisations of the Lady itself (Dibdin's)
ends on the same patriotic upbeat. Scott needs a more refined
means of rescuing the Highlands from ideological exclusion, and
the hybrid lover generates it: not only is the eventual union
a nominally Gael-Saxon one, but also it's the centralist ratific-

ation of a 'wild' Highland tenderness, nursed unofficially by scenery and secrecy.

Now, however, it's reasonable to ask in turn: why is it necessary that the happy ending of the romance should feature an inclusive reconciliation of Highland and Lowland? To discuss this, it's helpful to look at a notable contemporary of the Lady which is much more explicitly and schematically a national romance - Jane Porter's The Scottish Chiefs.

This novel, designed "to paint the portrait of one of the most complete heroes that ever filled the page of history", was certainly the most successful Scottish historical fiction to appear before Waverley, running to seven editions in the author's lifetime as well as conversion for the stage and the penny magazines. It traces the career of Wallace from peaceful retirement at Elderslie to posthumous victory at Bannockburn, interpolating picturesque and amatory episodes with scant regard for historical accuracy. Its directly patriotic content seems to have given it a nationalist readership: it was popular in Germany and Russia as well as Scotland, and in one of its editions claims to have been banned by Napoleon. Its national imagery makes sparing but strategic


44. Postscript to the third edition (1916).
use of the Highlands.

The dark Highlands aren't altogether absent. The 'gloomy Athol', who turns against Wallace, retires to 'the stupendous strongholds of nature' to plot the latter's downfall: he is the book's closest approach to a villain, and his scenery decorates the role. And the Countess of Mar, who harbours an adulterous desire for Wallace, reveals it in a storm-tossed open boat on the way to Bute: in a familiar Gothic manner, Highland wildness mediates illicit passion. But on the whole, the romance of darkness is overriden by a political imagery. The first gathering of the patriots is among the crags and torrents of Glenfinlas:

The awful entrance to this sublime valley, struck the whole party with a feeling that made them pause. It seemed as if to these sacred solitudes, hidden in the very bosom of Scotland, no hostile foot dared intrude. Murray looked at Ker: "We go, my friend, to arouse the genius of these wilds. Here are the native fastnesses of Scotland, and from this pass the spirit will issue that is to bid her groaning sons and daughters be free!"

Here, programmatically, the Highlands are the essence of Scotland - her bosom, genius, native fastnesses, spirit. It's a simple idea which cuts ironically across the national unity sought in the Lady: the wilds which Fitz-James is seeking to subdue to a national imperative are now declared to be that same imperative's sacred source.

45. Porter, **Scottish Chiefs**, III, 302.

46. Porter, II, 212-17.

47. Porter, II, 7.
The genius discovered in Glenfinlas is felt in several ways elsewhere in the book. At some points, the 'awful' aspect of the mountains allegorises the travails of Scotland, as when Wallace and Bruce survey the black ravines of Ben Vorlich and see, 'where its blue head mingled with the clouds, a stream of brightness that seemed to promise the dispersion of its vapours' — this gleam turns out to be the armour of a patriot band coming to join them. The same inhospitable scenes have value as cradles of national morale: when Bruce regrets that such brave hearts have so bleak a home, Wallace warns him against changing the simple habits of these virtuous mountaineers. Introduce the luxurious cultivation of France into these tracts, you will infect them with artificial wants; and with every want you put a link to a chain which will fasten them in bondage whenever a tyrant chooses to grasp it.45

And, more elaborately, but just as evidently from the common stock of Highland imagery, there's a sequence where Bruce is a semi-prisoner in England and Wallace visits him disguised as a minstrel à la Blondel.49 The situation is medievalist, but the songs are Ossianic: it's the Highland muse, like the Highland mountains, that is best calculated to wake the Bruce to a sense of his national destiny.

We've already seen how Highland insignia, especially kilts and pipes, were taken over for national and even imperial meanings during the Napoleonic War. This is certainly important context

for the *romance* of 1810: Porter's hagiography finds its counterpart in the dedication of the Wallace monument that August, attended by 'a great concourse of people, carrying Scots thistles in their hands, and accompanied by a drum, and a pair of Highland bagpipes'.

50 The success of *The Family Legend* - its Inveraray scene swelled by the loan of Scott's brother's tartaned recruiting party - must, as Scott suggested, have owed something to the same kind of feeling in 'a national audience'.

51 In such an atmosphere, clearly, Scott, having turned to the Highlands with the national prestige of the *Lay* and *Marmion* about him, and having accepted that unofficial laureateship in the *Lady* by solemnly taking down the 'Harp of the North' at the beginning, was obliged to include the Highland world he had imagined in the national consensus of his ending. To do otherwise would have been to exclude the nation's very spirit.

Yet it's a curious nationalism which centres itself on an enclave of the nation which it also defines as anarchic, unserious, uncivilised, and due for domination by an anglicising centre. Of what Scotland did the Highlands contain the spirit?

Scott's national role was very politically described by the young Lockhart in 1819. Scott's significance, he said, lay not so much in his literary gifts as in 'the extent and importance of the class of ideas to which he has drawn the public attention',


that's to say that in

re-awakening the sympathies of his countrymen for the more energetic characters and passions of their forefathers ... he employed, indeed, with the skill and power of a true master, and a true philosopher, what constitutes the only means of neutralising that barren spirit of lethargy into which the progress of civilization is in all countries so apt to lull the feelings and imaginations of mankind. 52

This encomium starts out by sounding nationalistic, but by the end the 'important ideas' seem to have less to do with nationality than with Ferguson's problematic of the decay of communal vigour in the face of social progress. The nationalism Lockhart finds in Scott is then one of memory, dealing in past energies rather than future struggles, counteracting social organisation as such rather than envisaging new ways of organising society, and seeking to produce a change, not of government, but of feeling and imagination.

This slightly odd emphasis is confirmed by a look at Scott's prologue for The Family Legend, in which he addresses his 'national audience' directly. He recommends the play, of course, as the vernacular offering of a daughter of 'Caledon'. But the main thrust of the rhetoric is, unmistakably, Heimweh:

Chief, thy wild tales, romantic Caledon,
Wake keen remembrance in each hardy son,
Whether on India's burning coasts he toil,
Or till Acadia's winter-fetter'd soil,
He hears with throbbing heart ... etc. 53

52. Lockhart, Peter's Letters, II, 342.

It's true that Baillie herself was living in London, but even so, it's a strange way for a Scottish poet to talk to a Scottish audience in Scotland. Again, it isn't Scott's peculiarity: in 1809 James Grahame's *British Georgics*, a poem of the Lowland Scots agricultural year, included an image of Highland migrant harvesters turning for home, tears springing to their eyes as the setting sun picks out the mountain torrents. This leads directly into an enthusiastic apostrophe to the *Tweed*; as the Edinburgh Review commented, 'the analogy of their Celtic partialities draws a fine and very natural burst of nationality from the author.' In both these cases, the Highland inflection of 'nationality' is insistently elegiac, as if 'romantic Caledon' is a country from which all Scots are exiled, whether they live in India or Edinburgh. Linking this displacement back to Lockhart's nationality of 'forefathers', or to Porter's nationalism of sublime hardships and old songs, we can see how a whole structure of feeling is in love with obsolescence. It's precisely as an archaic, defeated force that Clan-Alpine is valuable. The dark passions of Roderick Dhu are the poem's charm against the dispiriting rationality of its own triumphant synthesis.

54. *Edinburgh Review*, 16 (1810), 222.
4  The Prophecy

Dark passions are something of a Highland specialism in James Hogg's most concerted attempt at a national poem, *The Queen's Wake*, published in 1913. In this cycle of verse tales, supposed to be recited before Mary Queen of Scots by bards from different parts of the country, the Highlands are represented by such figures as Allan Bawn, who sings of an abbot of Iona sucked down to a watery death off Staffa by a whorish mermaid in retribution for his secret fornications, and the Bard of Lomond, who tells how the last of the Macgregors disappeared, groaning horribly, in the boat of an unearthly lady as darkness gathered on Loch Katrine. The occasion of the whole cycle is a dispute about the relative merits of Highland and Lowland poetry, and in the end the palm is won for the Highlands by Gardyn, whose tale, 'Young Kennedy', is particularly steeped in Gothic darkness. It concerns an ultra-natural mountain creature, born in a rocky den where his mother freezes to death and he grows up ferocious and misanthropic, learning from his storm-battered surroundings.

His hunger, his thirst, and his passions to feed.

His only social feeling is a desire for revenge on Macdougall, the worthy chief who is indirectly responsible for his privations.


Macdougal's daughter Matilda returns from the Lowlands as young Kennedy reaches manhood, and is unfortunate enough to arouse his lust; he debauches her, and they get married. Before the wedding Kennedy murders Macdougal, but Matilda, "in a painful delectable dream", hardly reacts to her father's death. On the wedding night, however, the father's ghost comes for his assassin, who flees, pursued by the ghost, "away, and away, by the light of the moon". Matilda is driven mad by the experience, and Kennedy is later found dead at the foot of a precipice.

In the elements of this grisly story there is a discernible family likeness to The Lady of the Lake. The "cleft in the correi, which thunders had riven" is the same locale as the "dell upon the mountain's crest", surrounded by boulders and haunted by goblins, where Ellen takes refuge when the war starts. The crazed Matilda, victim of savage Highland passions, is cousin to the mad Blanche of Devan abducted by Roderick. And Kennedy himself is from the same midnight Highlands as Brian, the wild seer of Clan-Alpine begotten by the bones of the dead, his birth unhallowed and his upbringing estranged and morose. Here are the figures of a Highland romance neither picturesque nor national, but pathological, its unrestrained supernaturalism mediating neurotic fantasies of sexuality and murder - Matilda's wedding night, exploding into a guilt-ridden struggle between ghost-father and demon-lover, is a particularly legible example.

57. Lady, III, xxvi; IV, xxii-iii; III, v-vii.
The Highlands, it's hardly too schematic to say, signify the unconscious mind, its desires made monstrous by repression.

But despite the iconographic parallels, the reader of *The Lady of the Lake* doesn't in fact experience the desperate, deviant quality of Hogg's Gothic-Gaelic concoctions. Scott's poem maintains through all its local hag-ridden excesses that undemanding sensibleness shrewdly identified in Jeffrey's review of it:

> Writing for the world at large, he has wisely abstained from attempting to raise any passion to a height to which worldly people could not be transported. 58

The mechanism of this emotional prudence is a constant symmetrical placing of the disturbing elements. The dark retreat in the corrie is paired with the idyllic retreat on the island; Blanche, the Lowland maid who is Roderick's victim, is part of the pattern which also includes Ellen, the Lowland maid who ends by magnanimously pleading for his pardon; if there is the visionary Brian, there is also the visionary Allan-Bane, who is equally romantic, but benign, Christian and domesticated. Roderick himself, as we've seen, is 'answered' by the sunlit alternative of Malcolm Graeme. Thus whereas the national unity of *The Queen's Wake* is serial and arbitrary, paralysed by an artificiality which is itself somewhat Gothic and leaves the regional bardic voices anarchically diverse, Scott's structure is a meaningful order which moderates the 'dark Highlands'.

58. *Edinburgh Review*, 16 (1810), 270.
within a controlling ethical syntax, checking and balancing out their violence and anxiety. This conservative resourcefulness is one key to Scott's success as a purveyor of the Highland myth: he produced an evocation of its inspiriting negativity and irrationality which was, at the same time, an act of containment. The royalty of Fitz-James is nowhere more apparent than in his robust attitude to the subconscious: shaken by half-grasped visions during his night on the island, he declares:

I'll dream no more; by manly mind
Not even in sleep is will resign'd. 59

Psychologically as well as politically, the rebel clans are allowed their moments of ascendancy only under the greater hegemony of the waking state.

5 The Combat

Lockhart provides us with one of the most arresting images in the repertoire of reception studies: Sir Adam Ferguson in the lines at Torres Vedras in October 1810, kneeling in a trench, ducking enemy fire from time to time, and reading to his prone troops the 'Battle of Beal an Duine' from the sixth Canto of The Lady of the Lake. 60

We can imagine that it passed the time. Torres Vedras was an engagement of a quite modern kind: not a battle, but

59. Lady, I, xxxv.

60. Lockhart, Life of Sir Walter Scott, III, 286.
the month-long struggle to hold long, fortified lines which had been constructed by engineers as the forward defences of Lisbon. The British had garrisoned them at the beginning of the month, and were then required simply to stay there. There's a piquant contrast between this dour, positional, incipiently technological warfare and the fluid charge and counter-charge of the skirmish the soldiers were hearing about. It might be pleasing - it was perhaps Lockhart's intention - to see Scott as the verbal piper of Fergusson's regiment, urging them on to heroic deeds by the exuberance of his descriptions. But it fits the case better to say that the poem was a distraction. They weren't called upon to be heroic, but to be disciplined; and something new and colourful like this would take their minds off the constant morale-sapping chance of being shot.

This marks a difference, more profound than the technical ones, between the actual and the fictitious fighting. It is impossible to imagine the combatants in Scott's battle needing distraction. The rapid action is punctuated by wild cries and spirited exhortations; the formations of men are forests and waves, cornfields, gusts of wind and darkening clouds. A sympathetic thunderstorm breaks over the loch, and real and metaphorical torrents and whirlwinds collide. Everything is reduced to natural shocks and recoils; everyone is splendidly and barbarically immersed in what is happening. It's war romanticised, not in the sense that it takes out the pain and
dying — for the 'fell havoc' is quite insisted on — but in the sense that it takes out the alienation. There is cruelty, but no boredom or absurdity.

It goes with this somehow that the battle in the poem is almost completely pointless. It can be argued from the text that it only happens because the King forgets to cancel it; certainly such reasons as there are don't make themselves felt during the fighting sequence itself. Thus the purity of personal involvement, the sense of warfare as an authentic and natural expression of life, is undisturbed by any political considerations which might degrade it into a mere instrument for an ulterior purpose. Here again there's a sharp contrast with the war that was really in progress. By 1810, the struggle between Britain and France was primarily an economic one: each of the two empires was trying to strangle the other's trade. The reason for the defence of Lisbon was that Portugal was a traditional British trading partner which continued to be accessible through the Royal Navy's control of the Atlantic. To break the French stranglehold on Europe by a decisive battle was out of the question at this stage: the point of the Portuguese campaign was to apply military pressure which Britain could realistically hope to sustain (in contrast with the failure on the Scheldt), and so waste French resources. The entrenched auditors of

61. _Lady_, V, xxxii.

Scott's verses, serving such global abstractions, might well warm to the spontaneous violence of the savage mountaineers.

Yet the connection between the two wars is not altogether arbitrary. The Peninsular campaign had a peculiar fascination for Scott, not least because 'Gazettes dated from Oviedo, and gorges fortified in the Sierra Morena, sounds like history in the land of romance.' It invaded his imagination in more serious ways than that, too: the disaster at Corunna early in 1809 gave him restless dreams of 'broken ranks, bleeding soldiers, dying horses - "and all the currents of a heady fight"'; and he even contemplated a visit to the theatre of war, not to write about Spain itself, but 'to collect from what I might witness there so just an idea of the feelings and sentiments of a people in a state of patriotic enthusiasm, as might hereafter be useful in any poetical work I might undertake.' Besides - perhaps because of - the compulsion of its imagery, the war held as Scott saw it crucial political significance. It was a patriot war, needing 'a Wallace, Dundee, or Montrose' to lead a hardy and enthusiastic but disorganised peasantry in the name of the rightful royal family; the parallel with the Highlands, as

64. Scott, Letters, II, 159 (31 January, 1809).
65. Scott, Letters, II, 95 (14 October, 1808).
another scene of causes at once legitimist and popular, is striking. The analogy led him to see commitment to the Peninsula as a test of British national will, and his decision in 1808-09 to help launch the Quarterly as an antidote to the Edinburgh Review directly reflected his passionate belief that the Edinburgh's line on Spain was not only wrong, but an evil influence, tending to corrupt patriotic feeling. The military and ministerial confusions of the autumn of 1809 — Walcheren, Ocana, Castlereagh's duel with Canning — undoubtedly seemed to him symptoms of that corruption. It was in these months that Scott was writing the Lady.

Thus the emotional holiday offered by the picturesque violence of the Highland tale turns out to have an unstated ideological coherence: it's the matrix of British sympathy with Spanish and Portuguese guerrillas fighting Napoleon. And from a propagandist point of view, the anachronistic naivety and spontaneity of the poem's image of war is exactly its value. From the dream world of clan fights and claymores, modern warfare borrows the barbaric emotions — vengeance, personal valour, triumph over the enemy — which it needs, but is too much a matter of calculation to generate itself. The connection is made very explicitly indeed in the opening section of The Vision of Don Roderick (published in June, 1811), when the spirit of the Scottish mountains sends their minstrel out to Spain to find in

the present heroic themes of the kind that they have afforded him from the past. Don Roderick is self-confessed hack work, turned out at speed to raise money for a Portuguese relief fund, but Scott is able to make that grandiose gesture through the reputation of his earlier poems. As the bard of Beal an Duine he is, if not quite the regimental piper, then something approaching the official war poet.

The place which Spain thus acquired in the structure of the Highland myth is rather systematically presented in C.I. Johnstone's novel Clan-Albin, published in 1845. In an ingenious modernisation of the foundling plot, the hero, Norman, son of a woman who takes shelter in a Highland glen and dies in labour without being identified, is adopted by the old lady who is the last survivor of the glen's ruling family, Macalbin.

Norman grows up and joins the army, and later finds himself at large in occupied Spain after Corunna. Delighted with the country's scenic and cultural similarities to his native hills, he joins a wandering band of mountaineers who are harassing the French, and after various adventures meets the chief of the Catalan guerillas. This melancholy and aristocratic person turns out to be Norman's father, and also the long-lost son of the lady in Glen-Albin. Thus the broken moral and literal lineage of the clan is restored by recourse to a parallel Highland world – one,

69. C.I. Johnstone, Clan-Albin: A National Tale, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1845).
moreover, whose circumstances carry the patriarchal social relations and vivid small-scale wars of the pre-145 Highlands forward into the present day. Johnstone's romance is a mythic history of Highland revivalism: in the 1790s, while Norman is growing up and the rightful chief is absent, the glen is invaded by sheep and mercenary values; but then the soul-stirring events of 1809 lead to the chief's rediscovery as a paternal and warlike figure. The father then dying in action, Norman formally claims his heritage on Christmas Eve, 1809, and 1810 sees him using the moral authority he has acquired through his Peninsular adventures to rebuild the Highland community. With uncanny cultural precision, the novel displays, as narrative, both the Highland romance of the 'annus mirabilis' and its roots in the ideologically fertile soil of Saragossa and Fuentes d'Onoro.

The most spectacular military image in the poem is not, as it happens, from the battle, but from a moment shortly before the single combat between Roderick and Fitz-James. Fitz-James has declared that he is eager to meet with Clan-Alpine, and Roderick retorts, 'Have, then, thy wish!' and whistles, causing five hundred armed clansmen to rise up out of the heather of the apparently deserted hillside. They stand a moment and then, at a wave of the Chief's hand, vanish —

It seem'd as if their mother Earth
Had swallow'd up her warlike birth.

70. _Lady_, V, ix-x.
This coup de théâtre (it's centrally featured as such by all the dramatisations) recalls the opening of the poem in making adroit affective use of the supernatural: the apparition is not literally magical, but it suggests some ominous encounter with the fairy host. However, the natural image which is thus enhanced is itself ambivalent. On the one hand, the point of the uncanny camouflage is that Clan-Alpine are children of nature (as opposed to civilisation): they are 'Benledi's living side', as though the mountain itself has stirred to fight the Saxon. It's not a bad emblem of the guerrilla, whose great irreplaceable advantage is his being indigenous. But on the other hand, what the incident is meant to show is the absolute authority of the Chief. The moment when the warriors appear is also the moment when Roderick reveals who he is; they illustrate his name, as it were; he is demonstrating his power to tell his people when they are to exist, and when to remain latent. Thus if they are a facet of their mountain, they are also a facet of their commander: it's a simultaneous apotheosis of naturalness and of drill.

We saw earlier on how this 'Asiatic' conception of Highland chieftainship, a myth whose anecdotes were growing steadily more exotic, was a retrospective regimental deformation. Now it works to cross the Spanish-Gaelic iconography of patriot liberty with a compensatory hyperbole of discipline. Napoleon, after all, wasn't alone in having problems of public order. During the
writing of the Lady, the Old Price riots in the London theatres, and the disturbances surrounding the arrest of Burdett, will have reminded the Tory partisans of Iberian insurrection that subordination at home was by no means secure. The ideal, both in Spain and in general, was a fighting force at once formidably wild and perfectly controllable. Clan-Alpine embodied the ideal.

6  The Notes

In his essay on 'Myth Today' (1957), Roland Barthes reflects on the difference between a Basque house in the Basque and a similar one in a Paris suburb. The first has, it's true, certain architectural features which can be referred to, or generalised as, an ethnic style. But these are not insistent: they exist without considering the beholder and they don't address him. In Paris, on the other hand, the same features buttonhole the beholder, imperiously demanding that he name them as Basque. The ethnic architecture is no longer silent, but a kind of speech; it holds forth, as it were, to the passer-by; it is full of intention. To put it more crudely than Barthes does: in the first case, the house is a house, but in the second case, it is a house and also a sign.

However, it is an impure sign, precisely because it is also

a house. A pure sign is one in which the signifier exists only by virtue of its signifying function, and can therefore be separated from the concept it signifies only in theory: this is the case with ordinary language. The Basque house, on the contrary, could exist perfectly well without signifying anything at all. It was there first, and then it got taken up, appropriated by the concept. It is therefore characterised by a crucial doubleness: it has one meaning, and it is the form of another meaning.

When Jeffrey's review of *The Lady of the Lake* remarked - in a phrase later echoed by Scott himself - that the Highlanders were a people uniquely 'well adapted for the purposes of poetry', it was identifying them as something like the Basque house. The accidental distinctions of their way of life are suitable, that is, for conversion into speech. Their songs, their social system, their methods of fighting, their religious and magical beliefs - details of this kind, which needn't in themselves be anything but lived and observed patterns of behaviour, can now be used as mythic signifiers, denoting, beyond themselves, an essence: what Barthes teaches us to call *Gaelicity*.

The virtue of such a sign consists just in its impurity. For the historical depth and actuality which are appropriated by the concept don't for that reason wither away. In the respect

72. *Edinburgh Review*, 16 (1810), 240; compare Scott's 1930 Introduction to the *Lady*, *Poetical Works*, p. 274.
that the history now constitutes a signifier it is, admittedly, empty, ready to be filled with the meaning whose form it is.

But a signifier is not all it is: it is also, still, the history, the things which have literally happened. Thus the concept, vague and homeless in itself, has at its disposal the materiality — the indisputability, charm, definition — of the historical contingency. A political value (such as nationality, or subordination) contrives to acquire the spontaneous presence of a natural object which the poet may innocently describe.

A text dedicated to the display of a myth is obliged to reproduce the doubleness of its object. It is to present the signifier in all its literalness: it therefore adopts the naive circumstantiality of a representation, as if aiming to make itself transparent. But it is also to transmit the intention, to draw from the signifier all the values with which it is charged: it therefore seeks to make itself the temporary voice of the myth, not now showing what the object is but saying what it says. Altogether, the text needs to be both silent and garrulous; a photograph and a ventriloquist.

The Lady of the Lake is the poem of the Highland myth par excellence. Its great success was not its own — for fault was quite widely found with its design and technique — so much as that of the sign it displayed, the scenery and manners of the Highlands. (1810 was the annum mirabilis, not of Scott, but of Romance.) And the doubleness of the sign is deep in the poem's conception:
a real picture of what that enthusiastic race actually were73 — the reality and actuality refer to the silent history, the enthusiasm to the vociferous signification. Accordingly, the poem’s form is riven and compromised by the bad faith which is inseparable from the project. It is an exemplary case of the ethics of the concept’s appropriation.

The most striking fissure in the text is that between the verses and the nearly equal bulk of the notes.74 This isn’t, of course, a simple print-out of the duality of the sign: it’s a specifically literary deformation, producing the structure in discursive form. The notes are above all judicious — they quote literary authorities and apologise for the occasional use of oral ones; they make effusive acknowledgment of the scholarly labours of others; they discuss dubious traditions with a donnish blend of rigour, romanticism and irony; they point out where the poet has adopted an existing legend and where he has employed his own invention to augment or amend. In short, they base themselves on the order of History; they take responsibility; they vouch massively for the materiality of the sign. Hedged by these guarantees, the poem can address itself ‘enthusiastically’ to the sign’s spontaneity and, assured of its credit’s foundations in the past, carelessly expend its accumulated ideological value.

73. Scott, Letters, I, 324 (? September, 1906).

in the present.

But that makes it sound as if the verse is a playground, joyful and irresponsible, set within the formidable but protective stockade of antiquarian erudition. In a sense this is true: the holiday which the poem offers its readers, as well as half its characters, is also taken by its author in the form of a truancy from legality, whether the latter is posed by the rules of evidence (the poet embraces with credulity traditions which the scholar reviews with scepticism) or by the authority of the state (the poet warms to exhibitions of chiefly prowess which the commentator defines as the 'disorder' of a 'rude people').

However, the trouble with this way of putting it is that the experience of reading makes the notes, rather than the verses, appear to be in a zone of freedom. The commentator is good-humoured, digressive, humorous and sentimental by turns, at his ease — if anyone is playing, it's him: the bard, by contrast, goes through his antique paces grimly, intimidated by the prestige of his borrowed Harp, syntactically awkward in his short-breathed couplets, and seeming, in his bluff and banal comments on the action, to have left his capacity for enjoyment behind in the nineteenth century. If the poem's fanciful gestures of wildness and chivalry are indeed those of a game protected from the grown-up world by a hedge of scholarship, it's a strange playground, in which the park-keeper is relaxed and playful, the children stiff and constrained.

The reason for the constraint is that whereas the notes are
merely exhibiting the myth, and have no anxiety about their own status, the verses are set up to be part of the myth, really characterised by the naivety and fire of the Highland world. (This expectation is ratified by the notes themselves: their metalinguistic presence constitutes the poem as a language object and compels it to assume the innocence of one.) It's therefore impossible for the poem to explain itself properly: if it is claiming to be part of the territory, it can only surreptitiously and marginally function as the map. The result is that the signifying functions of the Highlands are squashed into the profile of the characters and events themselves, rather as the whole of 'Basquity' is squashed into the asymmetry of a roof; and the figures, distorted by the denotative urgencies inside them, become excitable and self-conscious. Thus the white-haired bard, who is to be understood as a romantic circumstance of Highland life, consequently becomes a romantic poet, whose songs express the sentiments his existence is to inspire. And the chief, whose office is supposed to have given him great and irregular personal power, is obliged, in the impossibility of any sociological code's emerging to taint the spontaneity of the narrative, to reflect his history by being a haughty and volatile person. Or again, the Fiery Cross has as its point the wild devotion of the chief's followers: this notification, too, has to be concealed in the data, and so everyone who carries the Cross or responds to its summons does so in a wild and devoted manner, with many exclamations about the barbarity of their
feelings and the ineluctability of the call of duty. In such cases, the characters represent the 'Highland way of life' not inadvertently, through the generalisations of an observer, but insistently, through conformity to an order; they are, so to speak, its official representatives. But although they are therefore unremittingly Highlanders (they do as little as possible which is not culturally distinctive), the representative function they execute is still not admitted. The intention which is using them is dressed up as a piece of information.

As Barthes puts it, the sign buttonholes you, demands that you name it as Highland; but then, when you turn to it, it stiffens, resuming the impassivity of its literalness:

On the surface of language something has stopped moving: the use of the signification is here, hiding behind the fact, and conferring on it a notifying look; but at the same time, the fact paralyses the intention, gives it something like a malaise producing immobility: in order to make it innocent, it freezes it. This is because myth is speech stolen and restored. Only, speech which is restored is no longer quite that which was stolen: when it was brought back, it was not put exactly in its place. It is this brief act of larceny, this moment taken for a surreptitious faking, which gives mythical speech its benumbed look.75

This touches the pallor of Scott's verse, its mortuary gleam like that of the perfect repro mouldings at Abbotsford, with remarkable accidental accuracy. The imagery of the Lady, for instance, with its studiously casual allusions to deer and

75. Barthes, Mythologies, p. 125.
heather, is exactly an intention made innocent by freezing it in a fact.

And what about the theft? Its very success makes it difficult to put a name to the article which was stolen. One can talk about the falsification of the 'Highland way of life'; but then that phrase, with its connotation of settled habits going on, far from the turmoil of cross-cultural conflict or internal change, is already pressing into the imposing forms of the myth the freedom it seeks to name. It is itself an idiom of the restored speech which 'was not put exactly in its place'. Yet the reality the phrase fails to describe is undeniable: if it were not, the mythic structure would have nowhere to stand. So the theft consists in this: that the living, in the places and in history, gives up its articulations to the signifying order of its colonists, and is left without a word to speak of itself. Its presence survives as a latency, an openness, which is in turn the finest point of the myth's degraded enchantment.
CHAPTER NINE

MORALISTS

Scott, like the Gothic novelists, projects a Highland scene belonging to the past; and we've seen repeatedly how this pattern of consigning the Highlands to antiquity is determined rather than accidental. However, there were also novels of the contemporary Highlands — one, published in 1816, is subtitled 'Highlanders of the Nineteenth Century', as though in conscious reaction against the dominance of the past — and these have a correspondingly distinct imagery and angle. As in Chapter 7, it's convenient to give a list of the titles I have in mind.

Elizabeth Helme, _Duncan and Peggy: a Scottish Tale_, 2 vols (1794)

Elizabeth Helme, _Albert; or, the Wilds of Strathnavern_, first published 1799, new edition, 4 vols (1821)

J. West, _A Tale of the Times. By the Author of A Gossip's Story_, 3 vols (1799)

Robert, Bisset, _Douglas; or, the Highlander. A Novel_, 4 vols (1800)

Elizabeth Hamilton, _The Cottagers of Glenburnie; a Tale for the Farmer's Ingle-Nook_ (Edinburgh, 1808)

Mary Brunton, _Self-Control: A Novel_, 2 vols (Edinburgh, 1811)

Mary Brunton, _Discipline: A Novel_, 3 vols (Edinburgh, 1814)

Christian Isobel Johnstone, _The Saxon and the Gael; or, The Northern Metropolis: including a View of the Lowland and Highland Character_, 4 vols (1814)

Christian Isobel Johnstone, _Clan-Albin: A National Tale_, 4 vols (Edinburgh, 1815)

Mary Johnston, _The Lairds of Glenfern; or, Highlanders of the Nineteenth Century. A Tale_, 2 vols (1810)


The immediately striking thing about this list is that with one minor exception everything on it is by a woman. That reminds us, in turn, that the makers of the romance of 1810, Scott himself aside, were Joanna Baillie, Anne Grant, Jane Porter. There's a strong sense, despite Scott's pre-eminence, of the Highlands being progressively defined as a woman's topic during the years of his career; an impression which is strengthened by the fact that many of these writers developed their literary personalities hand in hand with specifically feminine roles, becoming specialist authors on child care, or cooking, or a certain sentimental and uncontentious strain of Christian piety.

This bias is no doubt a sociological trace of the repressive structure identified at a theoretical level by Malcolm Chapman: the equivalence of the Saxon-Celt opposition and the masculine-feminine one.¹ This ideological reflex, read by Chapman out of Renan and Matthew Arnold, moulds both Celt and Woman into a stereotype (non-rational, innocent, natural, incompetent, inward, etc) which naturalises the political sub-

ordination of each. The sexual and racial mysticism of that is, I think, a mid-century development: Scott and his contemporaries continued to situate the Highlands in an Enlightenment polarity of civilised and primitive, or of art and nature, far more decisively than an ethnic one of Saxon and Celt. (This is true even of C.I. Johnstone's The Saxon and the Gael, whose title is a fairly frivolous allusion to the sign of the Salutation Inn in Perth. 2) But even without the fully articulated racism, the naming of the Highlands as feminine is quite a strong theme. It works expressively in the Waverley Novels, for instance, where, regularly, the purest representative of Highland culture is a woman, so that Flora MacIvor reproves the Lowland compromises of her brother, Helen MacGregor those of her husband, and Elspat, the Highland Widow, those of her son. 3 It works repressively in the Monthly Review's notice of Anne Grant's Essays, which quotes a passage about the Highland attitude to marriage and remarks that 'our fair essayist' expatiates on the purity and felicity of the wedded state with such romantic pathos as almost to tempt us, if we could but prove our Celtic extraction, to renounce our wigs and quills, and seek for happiness in the paradise of Badenoch. 4

In this brief and apparently casual extract, male institutions — gallantry, the first-person plural of the review, and the masculine

3. In Waverley, (1814), Rob Roy, (1819) and Chronicles of the Canongate, first series (1827), respectively.
profession of letters ('wigs and quills') - are lined up almost massively to patronise Grant's picture of the Highlands as feminine (romantic, pathetic, tempting). We saw when examining Grant's counter-improving idyll how it implicitly admitted the superior rationality of what it was explicitly resisting: here we see the proffered advantage heartily seized, via the existing mechanisms for the repressive idealisation of women.

Thus the terms on which the women were writers (or vice versa) matched the terms in which the region was represented, and invited a negative identification: there seemed to be a natural fit between the characteristically limited concerns of the novels on the one hand, and the circumscribed life of the Highlands on the other. In the stories, the main meeting-ground is one we have already noticed in a different context: the nursery. Practically all these novels trace their protagonists' upbringings in some detail, assuming that adult character is largely determined by the quality of parental care, which makes for a didactic narrative structure with later events passing judgment on the parents' principles and habits. This didactic, not to say doctrinal, insistence is common to all the books, and reflects a component of the nineteenth-century female stereotype (Christian mother) which is not quite the same thing as the Celtic mystique of femininity (instinct, moonlight, etc). The training of character, in a broad sense not restricted to the very young, is the shaping pre-occupation of all the novels, and on the whole they aim not only to depict the process, but to
further it in their readers.

Within such a structure, the Highlands figure firstly, and most crudely, as a producer of heroes and heroines. In *Albert*, for instance, 'the wilds of Strathnavern' confer virtue on their offspring, Albert and his sister, so schematically that when Frederic St Austyn wants to marry the latter, he is made to rusticate there for three years while his character and credit recover from a profligacy which is, in turn, the result of a misconceived upbringing in London.\(^5\) Comparably, the heroines of *Duncan and Peggy*, *Self-Control* and *Marriage*, more or less beleaguered in the egotistical and deceitful society of Town, all owe their successful negotiation of its moral dangers to their keeping faith with their Highland childhoods. 'As I hope soon to return to the Highlands,' Peggy retorts when offered a diamond necklace by a libidinous peer, 'so elegant an ornament would be useless, for a wreath of roses there would be more estimated.'\(^6\)

As that sentiment fairly suggests, the essence of the region's educative value is negative: children grow up there unaffected, unavaricious, unsuspicious and serious-minded because of the absence, respectively, of etiquette, wealth, malice and trivial amusements — the absence in short of *The World*, the tyranny of whose ill-founded opinions is an explicit and intense

theme of *The Inheritance*. Because of this reflexive structure, the Highland nursery tends to exhibit its most uncomplicated perfection in rhetorical opposition to the civil society it negates: so that in *Marriage*, for example, a Highland setting with very definite geographical and social drawbacks starts turning into a paradise as soon as the heroine is on the coach for Edinburgh; and in *Self-Control* the heroine can be said to grow up grave and innocent, 'far from the scenes of dissipation and frivolity', only a few pages after a description of her dissipated and frivolous mother. The idealising force of the peripheral–metropolitan contrast is strong enough to override the positive complexities of the peripheral setting. (This principle, incidentally, casts a side-light on the anomalously insistent Heimweh noted in the last chapter. If what constitutes the Highlands is that they're not-the-world, then only by leaving them and going into the world can one, in every sense, realise their value.)

However, the moralists are also seeking to be realists. Their scenario of moral formation rivets the link between character and environment which is the basis of realistic fiction; and the anti-sumptuary tendency of their suspicion of 'Society' often includes a hostility to extravagance and invention in literature.

So the nursery has, increasingly as time goes by, to be positively depicted, and it's in this attempt that the texts run to conflicting patterns.

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The primary character-forming power of the Highlands is 'nature'. This denotes a range of interlinked qualities: in heroines, for example, it points importantly to a simplicity of life that embraces forthright manners, unsophisticated clothes and hairstyles, sensible bedtimes and practical ability around the house. (Town-bred ladies, by the contrast which is never far away, are coquettish, take hours to dress, rise and retire late, and would expire without constant attention from their servants.) This somewhat militant rusticity is in line with J.M.S. Tompkins' impression that the overwhelming passivity of English heroines of sensibility, their social and physical helplessness, is mitigated as the novel moves out to the Scottish, Irish or colonial peripheries. This relaxation of the most destructive kind of sexual stereotyping is a tangible gain, though, expectably, the motifs of natural vigour and competence are still much more pronounced among Highland heroes, who regularly announce their quality by saving lesser characters from cliffs, floods or ruffians.

However, it's moral rather than physical education which is


always central, and here the inflection of 'nature' is aesthetic. In almost all these stories, the appreciation of sublime and beautiful mountain scenery has hardened into a directly ethical value: trivial and deficient characters expose themselves by failing to respond to 'the rude uncultivated beauties of nature'; and the prospective Lowland spouses of Highland natives demonstrate their eligibility by sharing in the scenic affections of the latter. The content of this moral landscaping is a sort of natural piety: so long as this is made clear, even the business-like Mrs Mason in The Cottagers of Glenburnie can indulge in its pleasures:

Seating herself upon a projecting rock, she contemplated the effulgent glory of the heavens ... and the living waters, pouring their crystal flood over the craggy precipice .... The good woman's heart glowed with rapture: but it did not vainly glow, as does the heart, or the imagination of many a pretender to superior taste; for the rapture of her heart was fraught with gratitude.

At this point, though, certain difficulties arise. As the tart reproval of the 'pretender to taste' suggests, it isn't enough just to admire the scenery: there are right and wrong kinds of admiration. Nature's messages are too indeterminate: responses have to be controlled. Lochmarlie, for example, the idyllic


Highland locale in *Marriage*, is introduced in a classic graduated set-piece, rising from fishing-boats on the loch up through a lovely irregularity of cottages and woods to the lonely summits - 'How delicious to the feeling heart to behold so fair a scene of unsophisticated nature...' \(^{14}\) But the force of the reference to 'the feeling heart' is felt when the responses of the three beholders in the story are crisply found wanting in turn. The fine lady pines for villas and conservatories: her taste is over-refined. Her husband is only interested in the value of the fisheries: although the narrator has carefully insisted on the productivity of the ensemble, this reaction is not refined enough. And the Highland-bred girl who is with them laments the want of a level place to run races: in her education, physical vigour (good in itself) has improperly excluded refinement altogether. 'Nature' turns out to be an exacting affiliation.

Deciphering Lochmarlie is further complicated by the fact that it is only half of the Highland scene in the novel: the other half, Glenfern, is genuinely bleak and 'unsophisticated', and has a double satiric function - to expose the fine lady's overcultivated squeamishness, but also to reprove the rustic apathy of its owner, who has failed to initiate the improvements which are conspicuous at Lochmarlie. This morally weighted pairing of a smiling and a frowning Highlands is a recurrent

device — it’s paralleled in The Lairds of Glenfern, in which the young hero’s admirable parents are exiled to the cheerless estate of Clathen. Under their prudent and tasteful management, it acquires a ‘natural’ charm capable of inspiring the morally elevating affection of their children. Despite the rhetoric of ‘rudeness’, the scenic romanticism is really very limited. Good nature is thoroughly humanised.

The reservation implied by this evasiveness comes out very clearly in Self-Control. The characterisation of the heroine, Laura, suggests an exemplary product of Highland naturalness. But in a prefatory note obviously inspired by anxiety on just this point, Brunton says, ‘I do not ascribe any of the virtues of Laura to nature, and, least of all, the one whose office is to regulate and control nature.’ This is relevant comment: the whole point of the title, and of the story, is Laura’s hard-won control over her own ‘natural’ impulse to yield to the attractive but unprincipled Colonel Hargrave. At one point, when he surprises her expressing her feelings for him in the ‘wild extempore measures’ of her ‘native mountains’, she is so aroused by her own singing that all is almost lost: her natural education here aids the besieger rather than the garrison. Consistently with this militantly protestant morality of the will, Hargrave’s pursuit of her culminates in an attempted rape

15. Brunton, Self-Control, I, ix.
16. Brunton, Self-Control, I, 312.
amid the utterly natural - and evil - wilds of America. She escapes, obtains a passage back to Scotland, and arrives on a Sunday, gazing from the deck at fields, woods and mountains sanctified by the tolling bell and the clean Sabbath plaids and kerchiefs. In other words, the native landscape is orchestrated to obscure what the whole shape of the story enforces: the agonising puritan incompatibility of impulse and principle, nature and morality. The imperatives of the crags and streams are not after all natural to them, but hopefully naturalised in them.

Ferrier's Lochmarlie is recognisably Gilpin's Inveraray, and in the novels as in Gilpin, nature contains and conceals a principle of Improvement. And again as in Gilpin, the terms of the co-operation are a matter for the nicest negotiation. The case of politeness is a good example. In the 'artificial' society of the metropolis it is depicted with deep suspicion: polite people are falsifying their feelings, either for a reason (in which case they are designing) or for no reason (in which case it's affectation). But an equally prominent hostile type, in most of these novels, is the rich tradesman whose insensitivity to social tone is registered, with pain, as vulgarity. Rather as with the problem of the proper response to scenery, the

17. Brunton, Self-Control, II, 449.

18. Gilpin, Observations, I, 181-84. Ferrier knew Inveraray: Marriage was originally conceived as a collaboration with a friend who was niece to the Duke of Argyll.
novel's system of values seems to have its characters in a double-bind: they're condemned for being polite, or else for being impolite. From this bind Brunton and Johnstone, in particular, escape to the differently structured courtesy of common Highland manners. On an empirical basis derived partly from Anne Grant, they depict, with amusement but with more admiration, a society in which innkeepers and footmen are gentlemen, and intricate considerations of protocol govern visits to huts as well as to drawing-rooms. 19

The minutiae of this etiquette are spelled out with a rather attractive psychological subtlety. In Discipline, for instance, there's a humble tenant who is too ill to attend the laird's shearing, his health having been broken by a spell in the army as servant to the laird's officer son. He regrets the discourtesy of simply not coming, but decides not to send his excuses, since reminding the family of his illness might look like 'reflecting'. 20 Or again, at the opening of Clan-Albin, there's a question of whether to apply to 'the Lady' in the middle of the night for wine for a sick stranger, or whether to go a good deal further to the inn. The decision is to go to the inn, because although the real argument for going to the Lady is that the stranger would get the wine sooner, it would look as if one was disturbing her merely in order to save

19. Brunton, Discipline, III, 203-08; Johnstone, Clan-Albin, I, 69-73. Grant discusses the subject in Essays, I, 197-213; both Brunton and Johnstone were familiar with her writings.

oneself a journey. Another old lady, on the other hand, who is informally nurse to the village, will have to be woken up, as she would be offended if her function were to be slighted.\textsuperscript{21}

The first volume of \textit{Clan-Albin}, especially, is full of such nice instances of good breeding. The point of them is that the refined tact in the humble context intimates a society in which nobody is vulgar; this then redeems the principle of politeness from the exclusivity and hypocrisy which vitiates it in a more divided and alienated social setting.

There's more to this than the fortuitous solution to a problem of social style. The reason why the hopeless choice between affectation and vulgarity matters - the reason why Ferrier, for instance, raises the pressure of her exposures of coarseness to a point where reading them is positively uncomfortable - is that it suggests a society in which goodness is speechless. If the characters who articulate the authorial values can't be allowed to do so in either polite or non-polite language, they are left with no convincing means of intervening in the society; the values thus become frustrated, inward, potentially misanthropic, and the social realism languid and dismissive. It's this Calvinistic divide which fuels the ferocious ethics of \textit{Discipline}: the training the London-bred heroine receives at the hands of Providence involves learning to conquer her own character, her impressions of other people, her pleasure in their society, her sense of herself as one of them -

\textsuperscript{21} Johnstone, \textit{Clan-Albin}, I, 12-17.
in short, her eventual moral victory is achieved by destroying the whole texture of life as the novel depicts it. She ends up delirious, confronting her 'bosom sin' (pride) amid the lurid terror and darkness of a lunatic asylum in which she has been wrongly confined. The dissonance between the languages of morality and society is ultimately a violent one.

The girl, and also, I should think, the fictive discourse itself, are both saved from this violence by their translation to the Highlands. The inhabitants of the paradisal Glen Eredine square the social circle by their 'instinctive politeness' - that is, their picturesque setting, their poverty and their lack of education enable Brunton to present the conventions governing their relationships as natural ones, not a code imposed on behaviour, but a mode of behaviour growing from the 'feeling heart'. Thus their propriety is free of the stresses which distorted metropolitan attempts to act rightly: the impulses of the heart have directly prompted, and are in turn prompted by, the arrangements of society. Without this saving consonance, the heroine's heart may be disciplined but not capable of that generous and self-devoting sentiment which, in retirement, springs amid mutual pursuits; links itself with every interest of this life; and twines itself even with the hopes of immortality. My affections and my imagination were yet to receive their culture in the native land of strong

22. Brunton, Discipline, III, 77.
23. Brunton, Discipline, III, 153.
attachment, ere I could be capable of such a sentiment. 24

"Culture": the rich and historically precocious metaphor points us to the inspiration of the idyll, which is the controlling idea of British conservatism - an organic society.

The Highlands are "the native land of strong attachment" because they are imagined as a historical society whose universal principle of cohesion is kinship. Glen Eredine and Glen-Albin are inhabited almost exclusively by Grahams and Macalbins respectively, and the harmony between gentry and peasantry is underwritten by their common ancestry. Chieftainship is moralised: it's a lushly sentimental procedure, but at least it has the merit of projecting the clan as something other than an instrument of war, and also making possible a measure of narrative respect for its working people. Others, such as Mary Johnston and Susan Ferrier, less well-informed or less optimistic, lay out much less idiomatic retreats, and their glens tends to be little more than the conditions for the necessary isolation of the perfectly loving and well-adjusted private home. Either way, though, the decisive context of Highland manners is their social and associative grounding in the family. This is the sign which resolves the contradiction between nature and principle, since the image of the parent is at once biological and religious; and also reconciles the

instinctive and the polite, since the family denotes a hierarchical order which works without artificial rules.

Here, then, is the 'women's' content of the contemporary Highland myth at its most referential - it provides documentary authentication and splendid decor for making a whole community in the image of the middle-class family, with its desocialised domesticity, its gentility, and its consciously cultivated artlessness. The Highlanders in their glen, and the matron in her suburban villa, are drawn together in a system that charges both with cherishing, as it were in reserve, the deepest sociality of a society which deforms and marginalises them.

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The operating difficulty with this domestic version of the Highlands is that it's intensely conservative. This isn't an accident, of course: the whole point of the paternalist and organicist models of society it celebrates is their ideological suppression of social conflict in general and political egalitarianism in particular. But that programme is then at odds with the novels' bourgeois didacticism. Their scene of action is the individual conscience, their conception of the moral life a constant self-correcting review of backslidings and failures. None of this sits happily among the benign 'instinctive' continuities of the extended and secluded Highland family. Seen in this harder light, the attachment can quickly look like
prejudice, the seclusion like ignorance, and the gentility like an exasperating softness in the head. A mundane but revealing indicator is that none of the narrators, across a wide range of degrees of sympathy, is so pro-Highland as to resist commenting on the time it takes the natives to sweep a room or post a letter.\(^{25}\) In a formula which again recalls the stereotype of femininity, the obverse of instinctive harmony is practical incompetence. The quick, habitual ridicule betrays the presence of a critical awareness, at odds with the perceived values of the Highlands.

The most conspicuous critical purchase is family pride. The books are full of very broadly satirised 'feudal' types - Helme's Mrs Campbell ('money is but dross compared to the blood that fills my veins'),\(^{26}\) Johnstone's Scots peer ('The Earl nodded and smiled - the dignified smile of Glenlara'),\(^{27}\) or Ferrier's absurd and paralytic Sir Sampson Maclaughlan.\(^{28}\) Even Robert Bisset, whose Douglas, an Anti-Jacobin Press publication, programmatically favours hereditary pride as a spur to good conduct though inconsistent with reason, nonetheless derides the hyper-genealogical pretensions of 'Sir Duncan Dismal of That Ilk'.\(^{29}\) Although the attitudes of these people follow

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26. Helme, Duncan and Peggy, I, 74.
quite naturally from the principle of family attachment which the novels idealise, they're overridden by the value of individual merit, which has greater weight because it's structural. If family attachment becomes strong enough to blind its devotees to the virtues the juvenile leads have learned from the plot, it is condemned after all. Heritors of this type are denounced in particular as unworthy guardians of the nursery: the choleric old lairds in Marriage and The Lairds of Glenfern oversee their families with a complacent narrow-mindedness which produces dull, hoydenish daughters and drunken, ignorant sons.

Ferrier's handling of this dilemma is notably tight. She shows sons who abandon their ancestral rights and responsibilities and thoughtlessly spend hard-won rents on metropolitan amusements whose frigid elegance contrasts with the clumsy warmth of home; but at the same time she insists unsentimentally on the stupidity of the home, its irritating and futureless routine. So that while the young men appear both callow and callous in leaving, it's hard to see what else they could sanely do. This predicament, anticipating the English Victorian novel's problematic of a personal emancipation which thrives at the crippling cost of violating a deep and kindly but claustrophobic customary culture, seems at times to bear the impress of a historical crisis. So it was read, interestingly, by a contributor to the Noctes Ambrosianae - probably Lockhart - in 1831. In her novels,

30. Henry in Marriage, Delmour in The Inheritance, Reginald in Destiny.
the ultimate breaking down and debasement of the Highland character has been depicted. Sir Walter Scott had fixed the enamel of genius over the last fitful gleams of their half savage chivalry; but a humbler and sadder scene — the age of lucre—banished clans — of chieftains dwindled into imitation—squires — and of chiefs content to barter the recollections of a thousand years for a few gaudy seasons of Almack's and Crockford's — the euthanasia of kilted aldermen and steam—boat pibrochs was reserved for Miss Ferrier. 31

The high—coloured nostalgia is the critic rather than the novelist: Blackwood's in the middle of the Reform agitation was in a frenzy of reactionary sentiment, whereas Ferrier shows no interest in half savage chivalry real or travestied. But that's a difference of positions within the felt conflict: the moment and movement itself does gain access to the texts.

Surrounding and shaping the ethical debate, and exceeding its expressive requirements, there is the slow and testy death—bed of a social order. Glenroy's decline, in Destiny, from quasi—feudal power to maundering fantasy, is perhaps the most reverberant image.

After all, the heirs who turn their backs on the long euthanasia have more to recommend them than their skin—deep charm. They are fulfilling their role in the civilising scenario drafted by the State and theorised by Adam Smith: through their vanity and frivolity, unhandy concentrations of

landed wealth and power are broken up, and the Highlands are prepared to receive the benefits of commerce and the rule of law. 32 As we saw earlier, the available terminology makes it hard to question the desirability of this development; and from the standpoint of the moralistic novel it is particularly hard. Sociologically, the blessings of the market are supposed to be its stimulus to innovation (old and unprofitable customs are superseded) and its encouragement of independence (the tenant is now the landlord's equal in status, neither corrupted by his subsidies nor oppressed by his exactions). Now old habits and dependence are both targets of the didactic novelist's too: the habits because they obstruct the programme of moral education, and the dependence because it undermines the construction of character. The genre is committed to Improvement by the very terms of its existence.

The most interesting and insecure handling of the conflict of ideologies is C.I. Johnstone's The Saxon and the Gael. The Gael are the family of the Earl of Glenlara, whose unreasoning attachment to 'feudal habits' has led him to keep all his tenants and rents unchanged, so that his people lead lives of 'contented wretchedness' and 'hereditary idleness'. 33 At one level, their habits are dismissed in just the tone of impatient sarcasm which characterises The Cottagers of Glenburnie,

32. Smith, Wealth of Nations, pp. 18-19, and see above, p.5.
Elizabeth Hamilton's influential manifesto of domesticated Improvement. They react to new ideas by saying 'it was not worth their while to change'; they spend most of their time in the 'profitable employment' of lounging around the castle gate keeping a look out for strangers; they shake their heads over farms leased to provident tenants outside the family, or water-pipes in Edinburgh putting poor Highland barrelmen out of work, or money thrown away on building a bridge 'though there is perhaps another not six miles off, over the same river'.

The common sense which fumes at their myopia is understood. But the brisk satirical flow is constantly being broken by pockets of unexpected depth, mostly having to do with the comic hereditary piper, Donald. For instance, he discovers very early on in the story that the ancestral banner, having survived Flodden and Culloden, has just been torn up to stuff the chronically unmended window in someone's bedroom: distressed by this indignity, he plays Glenlara's 'cronach' with unusual pathos, until the Earl, moved by the tune's associations, gazes round the table at the 'lovely well-born beggars' who are his daughters and leaves the room in uncontrollable anxiety. It's as if the episode doesn't quite go according to plan: the knowing bathos of the banner and the lament is cut by the sudden pathos of the Earl's real situation, beggared by an ancient grandeur he is

34. The Saxon and the Gael, I, 25, III, 5-6, I, 90, IV, 47.
unable for that very reason to relinquish. The narrative sidesteps into a complexity of judgment incompatible with the certainties either of Improvement or of romance. A comparable effect is achieved in comic terms when the family is in Edinburgh and Donald writes one of his letters home to the housekeeper, Morag. It's a confused and racy account of how Donald met with a Highland laird he knows who had just taken up the price of a ton of kelp unbeknownst to his wife. Donald, the laird, a rather fly cawdie called Finlay McSorn, and one or two other somewhat shadowy figures decide to make a night of it, and a piping contest ensues, combined with a gargantuan pub-crawl that eventually takes in two days and most of the dives in Leith. Johnstone doesn't forget that the kelping laird's family are thus being deprived of a significant part of their shrinking income; but the vitality of the narrative, and the confused truculence, furtiveness and gaiety of the chance allies' collective style, carries the story past disapproval into an anarchic if short-lived protest against the tense and temperate version of happiness which is accepted by the novel as a whole.\textsuperscript{36} Or, in a different key again, there's a subtly angled quarrel between Donald and the charming and self-centred heir of Glenlara, Lord Macallan. Macallan, desperate for money, is trying to cultivate the rich and vulgar 'Saxon', Winpenny, and wants Donald to play the pipes

\textsuperscript{36} The Saxon and the Gael, II, 71-77.
(which it's incidentally clear he does very well) to impress him. With great embarrassment, Donald refuses:

"I and my forbears before me, have walked in the hall of Dunlara 300 years, and may he take me to himself, long and long before the sound of Donald Macallan's pipe is heard below a stranger's smoke, except in the way of friendship or sociality." ... "You are an old fool, Donald," says he, "O Morag! Morag! think yourself, if a dirk driven to my heart, would it be anything to such from him: but I deserved it all, for who had the best right to know what was best for me to do, he or I?"

"Fool I may be, and fool I am no doubt, since you say so; but I was neither ould nor foolish the day I dragged yourse from the linn of Lanna." 37

Macallan is genuinely contrite at this recollection, for a few minutes, and so Donald is further grieved by his young darling's self-reproach before the incident is closed. What lights up the exchange is that, for once, Donald is right: Macallan's ploy is not 'friendship or sociality' but exploitation, and his request is an insult. Donald's refusal then shows that his attachment to the family is not the servility it often appears to be, but part of a system which confers rights on him too. At the same time, he really is an old fool, in his perverse determination to take all Macallan's shortcomings on himself; however, Macallan is the last person to have a 'right' to make that judgment, given the affable cynicism with which he takes Donald's sacrifices for granted. So that Donald, without ceasing to be a satirically conceived anachronism, briefly speaks for inherited values still powerful enough to condemn the

shabby compromises of their latest representative.

In such rare cases, one starts to see what a realistic novel of the modern Highlands would have been like—not in the sense that myth is cast aside and reality appears in its innocence, but in the sense that the contradictions contained by the myths are allowed to tease and bewilder one another. Custom and education, family attachment and individual self-realisation, backward-looking celebration and forward-looking prudence, sweet seclusion and practical knowledge of the world—the demands on the image so stretch it that the ideological recitation falters and moralism threatens to stumble into historical realism. Unfortunately for us, though, there is usually a means of escape from that.

* * *

We can now see a recurring pattern in the moralistic use of Highland settings. The regional landscape and culture are a source of unaffected manners, but these can run to coarseness; of exalted scenic sentiment, but this has to be moderated by an exact taste; of instinctive politeness, but this can deteriorate into 'feudal' impracticality; of family attachment, but this must be enlightened if it is not to take the form of prejudice. It is at every level a question of control, because what is happening—it's the formal essence of the mythmaking—is that cultural differences discovered on the periphery are being co-opted to substantiate the moral ideals of the centre; and if this is
to work in a realistic genre, the meaning of the difference has to be ordered and determined within the structure of the fiction. The Highland imagery is as it were an object language, distinctive, energetic, full of idiomatic charm, but constitutively incapable of organising signification authoritatively. Its resources need to be administered by a metalanguage, empowered to say what the Highlands only are.

As it happens, the analogy of language is literally fulfilled in several cases. Peggy, in Duncan and Peggy, has an exemplary upbringing owing to the accident of her being noticed and adopted by an anglicised landowner at the age of ten. Before that, she is in the care of an old peasant woman who imparts traditional ballads and 'unassuming virtue'; from then on, she receives an education based on books and ideas.38 A just (English) understanding is thus erected on the basis of a feeling (Highland) heart. Exactly similarly, Norman in Clan-Albin learns Gaelic as his first language and imbibes folklore from the oldest woman in the glen, but then goes on to a classically based curriculum with a presbyterian clergyman who, though his pedantry and sectarianism are mildly satirised by the standard of the easy-going oral culture around him, can apparently be trusted with the development of the young hero's mind.39 Both these pedagogic idylls carry out Anne Grant's image of grafting: Gaelic is the wild stock, charged with

38. Helme, Duncan and Peggy, I, 51.
simplicity and emotional richness, English the gentler scion which mends it with elegance and judgment. It's in the context of this decisive asymmetry that we must read hyperbole such as the closing sentence of Discipline, in which the heroine looks back over the selfish pleasures of her past life and the enlarged affections of her present and exclaims, 'I might compare them — but the Lowland tongue wants energy for the contrast.' Gaelic may be more energetic, more genuine, superior in every way; but none of its merits can possibly challenge the hegemony of English, because the comparison is being made inside a system of values which marks English as the language of consciousness itself. It's not a matter of preference: English just is the metalanguage — ultimately, of course, because it is the language of economic and political power.

It follows from this relationship that the Highlands, as they are deployed in the novels, cannot produce the language to organise their own meaning. Highland virtues are all of the order of naivety: the last thing they could possess is authority. But on the other hand, since it is no less constitutive of the imagery that it unconsciously criticises the affectations or

40. See above, p. 237. The same opposition marked the linguistic policy of the Kirk, with Evangelical missionaries tending to favour Gaelic religious teaching and emotive preaching, Moderates inclining to Anglicisation and erastian rationalism. See Durkacz, The Decline of the Celtic Language, pp. 96-108.

41. Brunton, Discipline, III, 276.
resolves the contradictions of British society at large, the metalinguistic authority can't legitimately be situated outwith the Highlands either. What's required is a source of authoritative values which is rooted in the Highlands but not limited by them, a voice which is somehow idiomatic and universal at the same time.

All the novels have this problem, and nearly all of them have recourse to the same solution: the army. Peggy's liberal mentor is Colonel Campbell, Laura's father in *Self-Control* is Captain Montreville, the enlightened tenant of Lochmarlie in *Marriage* is Major Douglas, the model upbringing of the hero and heroine of *The Lairds of Glenfern* is supervised by Captain Grant — all over the moralised Highlands these articulate and good-humoured half-pay officers are at work, directing their children's affectionate dispositions by conscious maxims, adorning their little estates so as to refine, without violating, the character of the land, and reforming agricultural practice with a vigorous good sense which is tempered by their respect for their native traditions. Robert Bisset speaks for all at the opening of *Douglas* when he explains that

> The time he had spent in the army had improved the understanding of the proprietor of Tay Bank; had liberalized his sentiments, and invigorated his character, and thus rendered him a more agreeable and respectable neighbour.42

42. Bisset, *Douglas*, I, 3. Bisset goes on to say that 'sensible and observing writers' have noted the improving successes of retired officers, which is true (e.g., Knox, *Tour*, pp.140–42).
The new generation travels towards a corresponding maturity by
the same route; thus Mary's suspension between rural idiocy and
urban vacuity in *Marriage* is ended by her union with Colonel
Lennox on his return from character-seasoning war; and the
appealing freshness which Norman Macalbin derives from his
enthusiastic seed-time among his native mountains ripens into
manhood amid the rigours of the Peninsula. Thus in the lives
of the domestic kingdoms of the glens, the army serves the
function of ensuring a worthy succession.

Its fitness for the role is conditioned by the whole
complex militarisation of the Highland image which was the subject
of Chapter Five. On the one hand, there are the affinities between
the region and the regiments - the warrior past of the Highlands,
the partly actual clan basis of the levies, the adventurousness,
traditionalism and economic innocence of military life. On the
other hand, the service entails theoretical study of military
science, cartography and so on, social contact with men from all
parts and classes of Britain, and, above all, iron conformity to
a discipline whose ultimate and explicit reference is to the
King - in short, it is a brief but compendious initiation in the
life and learning of the empire.

So far as the moralistic novel is concerned, the other
distinction of the army as a seminary of enlightened native
potentates is of course that it is a male institution - not
only in the sense that no women join it, but also in the sense
that its professional demands - neatness, efficiency, cool-
headedness, courage, command - are constituents of 'masculinity' according to much the same opposition which classified the Highlands as feminine. By an arrangement written boldly across their plots, the 'women's' Highlands exist under the protection of a British and patriarchal authority which firmly prevents their contradictions from getting out of hand. The component of the Highland sign which determines all the others is the military.
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A. Primary sources
   1. Printed books
   2. Periodicals
   3. MSS

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