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**The Cultural History of the Bagpipe in Britain, 1680-1840**

**Vivien Estelle Williams**

**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of:  
Doctor of Philosophy**

**Subject area: English Literature  
School of Critical Studies  
College of Arts  
University of Glasgow**

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## **Abstract**

In this thesis I seek to trace the cultural history of one of the most representative icons of Scottishness – the bagpipe – within the wider context of Great Britain in the period spanning from the advent of Jacobitism to late Romanticism. In developing my analysis I take into consideration a variety of literary, artistic and musical sources. By investigating the role and symbolism of the bagpipe in the various contexts, I endeavour to illustrate how the construction of the icon changed through time, according to the political and social situation. I argue that during the course of the eighteenth century a radical change in perspective took place; a transformation which is closely linked to Jacobitism and its effect on British politics. In this sense, the bagpipe underwent the same fate as tartan. Their stereotyping in literature and art in strictly Scottish terms acquires greater force especially with the advent of Jacobitism. In the various contexts they are portrayed in they always represent more than themselves. Recent studies about Scotland's national fabric show how tartan, once the mark of disloyalty towards the British government, was gradually rehabilitated after the last Jacobite Rising into a garment of fashion, which we can see today worn by members of the Royal Family. Quite the same kind of study has not yet been undertaken about the bagpipe – and it is what I propose to do in the present thesis. The bagpipe in fact experienced a similar transition to tartan. What was once the instrument played by warring Jacobites and uncouth Scots in general progressively turned into a Romantic emblem, bearing the memory of a long-lost, virtuously martial past, rendering the bagpipe a more accessible and acceptable icon within a wider British frame.

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## Abbreviations

- BL        *British Library*
- BM        *British Museum*
- NGI       *National Gallery of Ireland*
- NGS       *National Galleries of Scotland*
- NLS       *National Museums of Scotland*
- O.E.D.    *Oxford English Dictionary*
- NPG       *National Portrait Gallery (of Scotland)*



### **Author's declaration**

I hereby declare that the present dissertation is the result of my own personal work and research, and that any reference to the work of others has been acknowledged and referenced. This thesis has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or indeed at any other institution.

Vivien Estelle Williams



# Introduction

## Theoretical framework

The present thesis is a study of the cultural history and representation of the bagpipe in Britain through its presence in literature, art, satire and performance. My focus is on Britain as a whole, as I will not favour the analysis of one type of bagpipe over another. Nevertheless, it will be noted throughout my dissertation that the majority of the works I will draw upon speak in one way or another to Scotland, and particularly Highland Scotland. This is itself indicative of the process of identification the bagpipe has undergone, and which results today in the common definition of the bagpipe as Scotland's national instrument.

By 'cultural history' I mean the broad field of enquiry which welcomes anthropologically-centred objects of study, rather than giving primacy to the study of "economic and demographic conjunctures and of social structures"<sup>1</sup>, an approach dominant until the 1960s. It is now acknowledged that aspects of national history, culture and tradition are made up of elements such as rituals, folksong, arts and crafts – more generally, of *Volkskultur*<sup>2</sup> – disciplines once consigned to the hands of anthropologists, antiquarians and folklorists. Overlapping fields – spanning from linguistics to sociology, from art criticism to popular culture – combine to create a whole narrative of the history of various social groups. In this sense, scholars over the past few decades have undertaken sociological and historical researches on tartan, acknowledging it to be a characterising element of Scottish identity. Through the 'perspective' of tartan, its changing status in time, its use in everyday life and the different readings of its use, a further understanding of Scottish history is made possible. Collecting and analysing tartan-related facts – from actual remnants of the first datable fabric to satire, collective memory and Vivienne Westwood – has over recent years been seen as a way to pinpoint and map out Scotland's socio-cultural history and evolution.

The bagpipe is, like tartan, one of the most colourful, striking features of Scottish culture; an emblem of nationality. Over time there has been an attempt to record all that is known about the bagpipe, although often what is *said* about the pipes acquires equal, if not greater importance than fact. Much of the bagpipe's history is composed of a collective, selective memory: an active process which constantly reconfigures the relationship of individuals and groups with a performative past, and repositions their

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<sup>1</sup> Roger Chartier, *Cultural History: between Practices and Representations* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1988), p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Volkskultur* originated in Germany in the late eighteenth-century. See Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2006), p. 17.

approach towards the present<sup>3</sup>. Until recent years, this outlook also pervaded bagpipe-related scholarship. Maurice Halbwachs argues that “we can understand each memory as it occurs in individual thought only if we locate each within the thought of the corresponding group”<sup>4</sup>: the courses taken by community thought and individual thought proceed in parallel. The ‘media’, in the broad sense of the term (including letters, spoken language, photographs, written documents, and books) constitute an important outline for the shaping of memory and personal perception. There are a number of bagpipe-related stereotypes in literature and spoken word: ‘stories’ and themes which are reiterated, and often over-embroidered, and which it is important to analyse in context in order to understand the cultural heritage of the bagpipe in Britain. Memory, perception and interpretation are in fact the keywords for much early bagpipe-related literature. This body of texts, although they present themselves as a means to preserve history, mostly reveal the authors’ approach towards the past from a certain perspective of the present. The result is a subjective, often emotional version of history: a sort of collective memory which reflects an opinion rather than a truth. This “cultural memorialisation”<sup>5</sup> is what has happened with the bagpipe: it is an instrument around which a whole apparatus of cultural signifiers has been built. Musical instruments, like many – if not all – artefacts, bear the traces of their homelands’ cultural development, environment and social necessities; when objects or people become cultural identifiers, they become so deeply embedded within their national culture that they are symbolically charged with social, and often political and religious significance.

According to Alessandro Portelli, “memory is not a passive depository of facts, but an active process of creation of meanings”<sup>6</sup>. Such is certainly the case with the bagpipe and the piper in Scotland. ‘Facts’ about the instrument’s history and culture have been, and to a certain extent still are, divulged on the basis of non-written sources and, more importantly, cultural memory, which has dictated the course of the studies and knowledge about the instrument, its past, its social status, and its legacies. Indeed, various aspects of the instrument’s history are consigned to anecdote, which through the centuries has constructed a mythical past – and a romanticised present. Fanciful notions, such as the instrument’s adoption in the Roman Army and its supposed proscription with the 1746 Disarming Act, are part of a ‘common knowledge’ which circulates widely to this day. The subjective approach to these ‘histories’ has helped shape the modern and

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<sup>3</sup> Astrid Erll and Ann Rigney, *Mediation, Remediation, and the Dynamics of Cultural Memory* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2009), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, ed. by Lewis Coser (London: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p. 53.

<sup>5</sup> Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> Alessandro Portelli, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), p. 52.

contemporary perception and experience of the bagpipe as an icon. There is a limited set of principles and utterances which are transmitted, and they are reproduced, replicated, and re-interpreted in time, producing a “*proliferation interne du sens*”<sup>7</sup>, as Michel Foucault terms them: an internal proliferation of meaning. The bagpipe has in fact acquired a whole set of values and characteristics through narratives which are mediated by a collective memory liable to stress certain traits such as valour, antiquity and nation. For almost two centuries (and, to a certain degree, to this day) the bagpipe was seen to be threatened by extinction, and piping tradition to be progressively fading. The supposedly fading history also made it possible to direct the anecdotal ‘relics’, endowed with greater credibility than they sometimes deserved, to create a veritable myth. The fear of the potential ‘absence’ of history has therefore legitimated the proliferation of such anecdotes, which have built an often insubstantial substratum of ‘micro-histories’ on which to actively build the cultural framing of the instrument. As Barbara Misztal argues, “collective identity precedes memory, therefore social identity determines the content of collective memory”<sup>8</sup>: hence these anecdotes, although at best unreliable, acquire importance as an integral part of Scotland’s cultural history.

### Literature review

The emotional, often fictitious notions and stories about the bagpipe have been encouraged by past literature, and by a willingness to cling on to anecdotes which would enhance the instrument’s mythical aura, its antiquity, and the history of persecution it is seen to share with the Scottish ‘race’. Works such as William Laird Manson’s *The Highland Bagpipe: Its History, Literature, And Music* (1901) for instance are precisely, as the sub-title suggests, accounts of *Traditions, Superstitions, and Anecdotes* about the instrument, its history, and its tunes. It is interesting that Manson should use the word “superstition”. Scotland has in fact for a long time been viewed as a cradle for the supernatural, in its various aspects. The Gothic, for example, is a prominent feature in Scottish and Scotland-related art and literature: haunted castles, graveyards, ruins and ghosts can be found in James Hogg’s novels as well as paintings by Louis Jacques Mand Daguerre; not to mention today’s tourist entertainment packages. The literary Gothic in the British Isles, as Murray Pittock argues, often acquires the political dimension of national debate, as

in its beginning it was an expression of national triumphalism, a return to the past made possible only by the total control of history and the assurance of the triumph of its stadial civility. [...] Yet this use of the Gothic was one which in itself could contain anxiety at the return of the repressed or the usurped<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Michel Foucault, *L’Archeologie du Savoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 1969), p. 157.

<sup>8</sup> Barbara Misztal, *Theories of Social Remembering* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2003), p. 52.

<sup>9</sup> Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 213.

For this reason, the Gothic feature in British literature was often involved in issues related to Jacobitism: as we shall see in Chapter 2 of the present thesis, the bagpipe is an element which acquires strong national symbolism precisely in the issues related to Jacobitism, as well as religion.

But of course superstition is not exhausted with the Gothic. To this day, the connection with the Celtic world casts on Scotland a hugely appealing aura which speaks of fairy-folk, water-horses and enchanted woods – cultural elements which it shares with Ireland, and all the more alluring as they spring from Pagan – hence very ancient – times. The close link between the supernatural and the ancestral, peasant world gives Scotland the possible double connotation of backward nation and repository of ancient traditions, which in any case has triggered the imagination of many artists and authors. It is easy to see how the bagpipe, with its connection with the peasant world and deep implications in the Scottish (and Irish) territory, can be absorbed in the supernatural world of folklore and legends. These are eloquently displayed in a *c.* 1880 painting by William Holmes Sullivan, ‘The Fairy Ring’<sup>10</sup>.



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<sup>10</sup> Item sold by the Leicester Galleries, an art and antiques gallery based in London specialising in nineteenth- and twentieth-century artworks.

The impressionistic brushes add indefiniteness to the visionary scene. The piper and his music make the delusion possible: the fairies and pixies of the woods do not fear the musician, and all come out to celebrate the music in a halo of colourful lights. The bagpipe is an instrument so in touch with nature and folklore that it draws the piper closer to the supernatural, to the visionary, and nature in its most inaccessible secrets.

Manson is not the only author to engage in the (re)collection of sporadic pieces of bagpipe information, ranging from chronologies of its history to the figure of the piper as a hero, and from humorous references to remarkable characters. ‘Inventories’ of bagpipe-related anecdotes similar to Manson’s are to be found in Alexander Duncan Fraser’s *Some Reminiscences and the Bagpipe* (1907) and William Henry Grattan Flood’s *The Story of the Bagpipe* (1911). These are works in which concepts of “purity”, “blood” and “honour” are liberally used to state the desired point; many details are not referenced, which makes it difficult to establish the reliability of their sources, and often the texts acquire the air of an *apologia* rather than a detailed, factual account. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that the cited titles mention “reminiscences” rather than “knowledge”, and “stories” rather than “histories”. These works are in fact often a jumble of embellished anecdotes: they are indicative of a desire to gather material to construct and – possibly more importantly – (re)interpret the instrument’s past.

In these works great prominence is given to the topic of military piping: it is in fact to this day perhaps the most widely discussed aspect of the instrument. Military piping was a major theme in pre-war scholarship and, besides substantial sections in ‘bagpipe history’ books, monographs were also written. Bruce Seton and John Grant in *The Pipes of War* (1920), Major Iain Mackay Scobie’s *Pipers and Pipe Music in a Highland Regiment* (1924) and Charles Alexander Malcolm’s *The piper in peace and war* (1927) all discuss the function of regimental pipers and piping. These works, much like Manson’s, Grattan-Flood’s and Fraser’s, are at times rather emotional: the piper acquires a mythical, almost proverbial status, and again unreferenced anecdotes (such as the bravery of pipers who honoured their regiment by reviving shattered soldiers with their piping in frightful circumstances) are often divulged as irrefutable facts. Nevertheless, interspersed in the texts are essential notions of the piper’s military life: again this appears like a wish to gather an – at times rather sciolistic – overall knowledge of the bagpipe world. The integration in British discourse of tartan and bagpipes received a great boost with their adoption in the British Army, and this certainly constituted a decisive factor in determining the course of bagpipe studies in this direction. This is not without reason, since military piping greatly enhanced the instrument’s status, as well as its romanticised aura of martial loyalty and, last but not least, its musical repertoire and technique.

Early bagpipe scholarship is characterised by an almost antiquarian gusto for tracing all possible elements relative to the instrument, from pipe tunes to literary references. Gilbert Askew, for example, attempted to collect all the sources concerning the bagpipe – from tutors to collections of tunes and histories, starting from 1511 and following up until his day – in his *A Bibliography of the Bag-Pipe* (1932). This desire to gather bagpipe-related material extended to literature and the figurative arts: a plethora of articles proliferated on the theme, seeking to understand (or often simply state) the presence of a reference<sup>11</sup>. Shakespearian and Chaucerian mentions attracted particular attention, as the authors seem to wonder at the presence of the bagpipe not only in non-Scottish works, but in the works of authors who have determined the canon for English literature<sup>12</sup>. These publications admittedly do not always constitute any great advancement in scholarship, yet they demonstrate an interest, an increase in the awareness of the subject of the bagpipe as an icon, which was in fact to develop during the following decades.

With the development of the study of the bagpipe world, more room is given to factual, less subjective works. Perhaps the growth of a national consciousness, also coinciding with the crumbling of the British Empire in the 1960s, gave Scotland the input to consider itself more strongly as a nation in its own right rather than a British appendage, and to find more credibility in its own resources and cultural capacity. To use a phrase of Murray Pittock's, "a weakened external empire was the catalyst for a reviving internal nationalism"<sup>13</sup>. Rather than gathering the fragments of a supposedly disappearing culture and history, Scotland could focus on the available material, and critically analyse its role and position, both historically and culturally, within a European and international framework.

Although general overviews of the bagpipe's history continued to be published, such as Anthony Baines' *Bagpipes* (1960) and Francis Collinson's *The Bagpipe: the History of a Musical Instrument* (1975), they differ from the previous 'histories' in that the authors tend to stick to fact and pursue their aims through a quasi-scientific study of the pipes' components, history and heritage, rather than charm the readers by indulging in reminiscences and anecdotes. Baines' analysis is probably the first monograph of this sort.

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<sup>11</sup> See George Moore's 'Συμφωνία not a Bagpipe', in *Journal of Biblical Literature*, vol. 24 (1905), pp. 166-175; p. 65; Kathleen, 'Sow-and-Bagpipe Imagery in the Miller's Portrait', in *The Review of English Studies*, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 71 (1967), pp. 287-290, George Fenwick Jones' 'Wittenwiler's "Becki" and the Medieval Bagpipe', in *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, vol. 48, no. 2 (1949), 209-228..

<sup>12</sup> Such is the case, for instance, of Edward Block's 'Chaucer's Millers and their Bagpipes', in *Speculum*, vol. 29, n. 2, part 1 (1954), pp. 239-243; Louis Marder's 'Shakespeare's 'Lincolnshire Bagpipe'', in *Notes and Queries*, vol. CXCIV (1950), pp. 383-385; Cletus Oakley's "Shylock's 'Woollen Bagpipe'', in *The Times Literary Supplement* (1960),

<sup>13</sup> Murray Pittock, *The Road to Independence? Scotland since the Sixties* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2008), p. 22.

It is rather more focused on the organological aspect, and deals with the development of the instrument from its origin to the present, setting aside any potentially misleading notions. Collinson, on the other hand, besides providing a meticulous historical and cultural evolution of the instrument from its origins, examines the history of the bagpipe from its predecessor – the reed-pipe – and follows it through to the present day. His work is accurate and pondered: he carefully analyses the ‘facts’ brought forward by previous authors, and traces them to their primary sources (when available). Compared with his antecedents’, Collinson’s evaluations are generally more cautious, and referenced in greater detail – a fact which in itself shows an awareness of the necessity of deconstructing the myths which revolve around the bagpipe. He himself employs the word ‘myth’ when analysing the mendacious notions which have accompanied the instrument in its ‘cultural development’; such is the case, for example, of the supposed employment of the bagpipe in the Roman Army in Britain. He also questions the approach to bagpipe knowledge of individual authors, such as William Laird Manson: he does not refrain from terming certain assumptions and statements “sheer nonsense”, and the accuracy of his research seldom proves him wrong.

Bagpipe-related scholarship has also developed in the direction of non-Scottish bagpipes<sup>14</sup>. Emanuel Winternitz is a great contributor to the understanding of the social status of the bagpipe in Europe through the medium of art. In his *Musical Instruments and their Symbolism in Western Art* (1967), a highly informative monograph on the artistic symbolism of musical instruments, he dedicates a whole chapter to the bagpipe, paralleled with the hurdy-gurdy as ‘eccentric’ members of distant families of instruments. His is one of the first systematic analyses of the semiotic value of the bagpipe in art. Winternitz takes various examples of artistic references to bagpipes from all over Europe, and examines the connotations the instrument has acquired through the centuries. He uncovers the issues of the bagpipe’s vulgar and satanic connotations, as well as its pastoral connections and its intimate relationship with the French *musette*. Although he only mentions the Highland bagpipe to mark a contrast with continental bagpipes and

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<sup>14</sup> See John Stokoe, ed., *Northumbrian Minstrelsy* (Hartboro: Folklore associates, 1965), Ronald Sutherland, ‘The Bagpipe in Old English Literature’, in *Piping Times*, xix/4 (1967), pp. 18-19. More recently Roderick Cannon, mentioned in greater detail below, has developed the topic of non-Scottish bagpipes in articles such as ‘English Bagpipe Music’, in *Folk Music Journal*, vol. 2, no. 3 (1972), pp. 176-219, “Bagpipes in English Works of Art’, in *The Galpin Society Journal*, vol. 42 (1989), pp. 10-31, ‘The Bagpipe in Northern England’, in *Folk Music Journal*, vol. II, no. 2 (1971), pp. 122-147. Also Alfred Cocks and Jim Bryan, *The Northumbrian Bagpipes* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Northumbrian Pipers’ Society, 1975), Harry Woodhouse’s *Cornish Bagpipes, Fact or Fiction?* (Trewirgie: Dyllansow Tryran, 1994), James Merryweather’s “Two-Chanter Bagpipes in England”, in *The Galpin Society Journal* Vol. 54, (2001), pp. 62-75, Pete Stewart’s *The Day it Daws: the Lowland Scots Bagpipe and its Music, 1400–1715* (Ashby: White House Tune Books, 2005): a collection of over a hundred tunes for the Lowland pipes, including details about the history of instrument and tunes.



their associations, many of the arguments he puts forward are nevertheless also applicable to Scottish pipes.

In more recent years, scholarship about bagpipes has made a considerable leap forward. It is in fact more difficult now to find the ‘overwhelmed’ words that past authors dedicated to the pipes. This is not to say that the old legends and feelings have altogether subsided: the web, for instance, in most cases is a cauldron of exalted views, where the same old myths and legends circulate and flourish. There remains a will to endow the figure of the piper with a mythical aura, as can be clearly seen in works such as Joanna Asala’s *The Piper Came to Our Town* (2009), in which fairy tales are mixed with wartime anecdotes and there is scarcely any distinction between the two spheres. On the other hand scholarly approaches today have developed in the direction already evident in works published during the 1960s and 1970s: a greater seriousness of approach leaves little room for subjectivity, and seeks to deconstruct myths and shed light on the ways in which piping traditions have evolved.

As I have mentioned above, a similar process is evident in the treatment of tartan. As an icon representative of a nation’s culture, tartan and the bagpipe have undergone the same mythicisation. Tartan and the ‘tartan monster’ have in recent years been analysed and discussed in a number of works: Jonathan Faiers, author of *Tartan* (2008) and Ian Brown, editor of *From Tartan to Tartanry* (2010) have contributed largely to this aspect of the field of Scottish cultural identity, deconstructing the myth, analysing its development, and separating fact from fiction. Hugh Cheape, a contributor in Brown’s work, also discusses the history of tartan and its roots in Highland society in *Tartan: the Highland Habit* (1995). Being among Scotland’s visually most striking symbols, tartan and the kilt have gone through times in which they were so charged with political meaning that their mere presence was enough to stir havoc and protest, as Ian Brown points out<sup>15</sup>. That a Disarming or ‘Disclothing Act’ should be passed by Parliament in 1746, for a “more effectual securing the Peace of the [...] Highlands, and for restraining the use of Highland dress” is particularly telling of how strongly tartan had become a mark of disloyalty to the House of Hanover<sup>16</sup>.

Although the bagpipe over the centuries has followed an analogous process of mythicisation and stereotyping in literature and art, the instrument has not yet received as much scholarly attention as the fabric. Besides his studies on tartan, Cheape is also, and perhaps more importantly, a prolific contributor to bagpipe scholarship. His *Book of the Bagpipe* (1999) is a short but informative and, above all, accurate account of the

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<sup>15</sup> Brown, *From Tartan to Tartanry*, pp. 4–5.

<sup>16</sup> Hugh Cheape, ‘Gheibhte Breacain Charnaid’, in *From Tartan to Tartanry*, ed. by Ian Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 13–31 (p. 17).

instrument's history. His main focus is on the Highland bagpipe: he contextualises it through history in Celtic culture, music, literature and art – a work which he has continued, focusing in greater detail on the collections present in the National Museums of Scotland, in his more recent *Bagpipes, a National Collection of a National Instrument* (2008). This work constitutes a highly knowledgeable and reliable source, covering the history of the bagpipe from its arrival in Scotland almost to present day. Cheape makes profuse use of literature (mainly Gaelic) and art to trace the pipe's history and establish its role in Gaelic society. In fact, Cheape's work spans across various aspects of bagpipe studies, from literature to art and material documentation<sup>17</sup> – indeed precious contributions, since thanks to his knowledge of the material present in the National Museums of Scotland we have an account of the museum's bagpipe-related collection. These are all excellent works, of great precision and thoroughness, which show a great awareness of the necessity to develop the field in a 'scientific' way, which moves away from much previous material which has often encouraged speculation rather than fact.

Scholarly interests have also developed in the direction of specific, localised Highland piping traditions, whether from particular areas of Scotland or abroad. The connection with North America, for example, is indeed a growing field of enquiry. As the effect of late eighteenth-century mass emigrations to the New World is seen to have had repercussions also in the piping tradition, John Gibson analyses and compares its changes between Scotland, America and Canada in *Old and New World Highland Bagpiping* (2002); this issue he also tackles in *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping 1745-1945* (2002). In this work the author also strives to deconstruct certain myths which have revolved around the bagpipe, such as its supposed proscription with the Disarming Act of 1746, by providing original material. The piping tradition was for a long time seen as a dying element of Gaelic culture: whether it was in any danger in the first place is still being debated, and John Gibson's contribution in this sense is vital as he provides documentation to demonstrate that it was not necessarily true. Scottish and Gaelic identity, in relation to piping both in Scotland and abroad, is also a much debated topic: Roderick Cannon, for example, makes a list of the 'Gaelic names of pibrochs', in *Scottish Studies* (2000). Cannon has contributed extensively to the study of *piobaireachd* and pipe music. He is also the author of *A Bibliography of Bagpipe Music*: as the title suggests, it is a comprehensive inventory of all known published pipe tunes (for Irish, Brian Boru and Northumbrian pipes, as well as Great Highland), chronologically listed, cross-referenced, and accurately commented with the whole philological tradition of the tune. His *The Highland Bagpipe*

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<sup>17</sup> See, for instance, "The Bagpiper' by Sir David Wilkie, 1812–1814: Caricature, Character Study, or Historical Document?", in *Common Stock*, vi (1991), pp. 10–15; 'The Piper to the Laird of Grant', in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, cxxv (1995), pp. 1163–73.

*and its Music* (2002) is an analysis of the uses and forms of *ceòl mòr* and *ceòl beag*, within their performative contexts and technical development<sup>18</sup>. He is also cautious when treading on the uncertain ground of the instrument's prehistory, and warns the reader about the often romanticised interpretations of much previous bagpipe knowledge, too often imbued with speculation. Alexander Haddow has also given substantial input to the study of *piobaireachd*: his *History and Structure of Ceòl Mòr* (1982; posthumous publication) is in fact an important study on the 'classical music' of the bagpipe, as the title explains, from both a historical point of view, and also from a formal, structural one. Joshua Dickson, on the other hand, focuses his attention on South Uist piping in his *When Piping was Strong: Tradition, Change and the Bagpipe in South Uist* (2006): the basis for his study is the performing Gaelic piping community, rather than the much-discussed mainstream performing world. He is also the editor of the book *The Highland Bagpipe: Music, History, Tradition* (2009): this collection of scholarly essays brings together topics which range from the technicalities of pitch to the origins of the 'piping dynasties'<sup>19</sup>. These publications show that the field is very much alive, with new research being carried out in all sorts of different aspects, from notation to reed-making to piping dynasties.

Research of more sociological rather than strictly musical consequence has also been undertaken. The impact of the presence of the piping tradition – from military activities to accompaniment during work, from Highland Games to *canntaireachd* – is analysed in great detail by William Donaldson, in his *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society 1750-1950* (2000). His analysis focuses on the bagpipe's role in the changing post-Culloden Scottish society, and the accuracy of documentation makes this work a milestone in bagpipe studies. Donaldson starts his work by introducing the groundbreaking Macphersonian 'paradigm' which, although it had nothing to do with piping, constituted one of the triggering factors for interest in Scotland and its culture. He configures the subsequent bagpipe-related events and literature within the frame of mind created by the renewed – or possibly newly-discovered – curiosity and interest in the nation. This interest not only brought Scotland international relevance, but it also encouraged internal awareness about topics of national culture – of which the bagpipe is a key element.

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<sup>18</sup> Cannon's work on *piobaireachd* is extensive, as is testified in articles such as 'What can we learn about piobaireachd?', in *British Journal of Ethnomusicology*, vol. 4 special issue (1995), pp. 1-15. Cannon has also contributed to editions and publications of *piobaireachd* manuscripts, such as *Joseph MacDonald's A Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe* (Glasgow: Piobaireachd Society, 1994), thus helping understand the piping styles of the time, and show variations of tunes which today are played differently.

<sup>19</sup> The topic of localised forms of Highland piping is also developed by authors such as Bridget Mackenzie in *Piping Traditions of the North of Scotland* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1998), and Mats Hermansson in his thesis *From Icon to Identity: Scottish Piping and Drumming in Scandinavia* (Göteborg: Göteborg University, 2003).

By analysing the focal publications, manuscripts, collections, as well as the leading figures of piping and the dynamics created by the patronage and influence of the Highland Societies, the Highland Games and the Piobaireachd Society, the author traces the changes in tradition to the 1950s. Like Gibson, he also tries to deconstruct the myth of the piping tradition being in danger of disappearing, as he argues that this opinion was influenced by people such as John Ramsay who wrote the preface to Patrick Macdonald's *Highland Vocal Airs* but had little direct contact with Highland society. Donaldson is also the author of *Pipers: A Guide to the Players and Music of the Highland Bagpipe* (2004): this work is an insight into the piping performing world, seen through the contribution of individual players, composers and *connoisseurs*. Donaldson contextualises their musical contribution in the wider perspective of Scottish culture, in which piping is inextricably embedded. Pipe music is in fact such a vital part of Scottish music that it has encouraged the creation of a particular genre which takes its origins from European (and particularly Italian) music and transforms it into something uniquely Scottish: I am referring to fiddle *piobaireachd*, or bagpipe music transported to and 'translated' for the fiddle. The 'ideological' contrast between imported and traditional music is very much present in eighteenth-century literature, although these instances are seldom analysed, and technical literature specifically on fiddle *piobaireachd* is scarce. John Purser refers to it in some detail in his titanic work *Scotland's Music* (2007), and so does David Johnson in *Scottish Fiddle Music in the 18th Century* (1997), but monographic works on the topic are otherwise difficult to find.

The presence of the bagpipe in works of art increasingly constitutes a matter of research. The focus is not just on the instrument's history: more attention is dedicated to an interdisciplinary approach in order to provide a global picture<sup>20</sup>. The context of the artworks is taken into account, with detailed literary, historical and cultural background. Previous scholarship was often interested in gathering an 'inventory' of material, almost to concretely secure the memory of the items and sources for posterity. As this anxiety to preserve is gradually pacified, more space is given to a constructive approach which seeks to unite the collected knowledge into an organic whole, of which history of art and literature form an integral part. Specialised journals now exist, such as *Chanter* and *Common Stock*. They keep the interest in the bagpipe world thriving, and show awareness about a field which is expanding. Nevertheless, a systematic analysis of the literary and artistic references to the bagpipe in British literature has not yet been attempted.

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<sup>20</sup> See, for instance, David Stephens' 'History at the Margins: Bagpipers in Medieval Manuscripts', in *History Today*, xxxix/Aug (1989), pp. 42-48, and Katherine Campbell's 'The Hog-Bagpiper Gargoyle at Melrose Abbey', in *Cosmos*, vol. 2, n. 2 (2005), pp. 137-146; Hugh Cheape's above-mentioned articles; John Planer, 'Damned Music: the Symbolism of the Bagpipes in the Art of Hieronymus Bosch and his Followers', in *Music from the Middle Ages through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, ed. by Carmelo Comberati and Matthew Steel (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1988), 335-353;

Although an antiquarian gusto for collecting bagpipe-related material is by no means absent<sup>21</sup>, the taste for gathering material is balanced by the process of contextualisation. Jordi Vallverdú, for example, analyses the bagpipe's alternatively positive and negative literary role in Europe in his brief but explicative 'Bagpipes in Literature', in *Utriculus* (2005).

### **The present thesis**

As we have seen, histories of the bagpipe – whether Scottish or non-Scottish – abound; its military connections in the Highlands are particularly highlighted, although it is not until recently that there has been an attempt to separate fact from fiction. To this day, a number of fictitious anecdotes are thought of as 'common knowledge', and it is a great step forward to be able to rely on ascertainable, authoritative sources. Technicalities of sound and musical organology are also being dealt with in greater depth. Artistic and literary analysis of bagpipe-related references, as has been stated, can also be found: although there is no reason to question their accuracy, they are generally confined to one particular aspect – whether a specific author, mention, or quality. What is lacking is an excursus of the bagpipe's cultural significance through the changing panorama of British history. While the bagpipe's role and function in the military and civil sphere are topics which have been amply discussed, together with topics such as its technical development, and legacy leading towards its elevation to national instrument, its role in literature and art has seldom been analysed. Although the bagpipe's role in individual works or authors has received occasional attention, there has been no in-depth scholarly analysis of an actual corpus of references within a given time. As the approach to cultural history as a subject develops, literary and artistic expressions are recognised more and more as being integral to the social understanding of a country. Moreover, they are seen to be a means of comprehending how a nation deals with its own historical, political and social concerns, and its external dynamics with the foreign 'other'.

The key question of my thesis will be to uncover the cultural, political, social, and religious issues which lie under the changing discourse regarding the bagpipe: an instrument which, for over six centuries, has been considered a symbol of Scotland. By focusing on the literary and artistic production throughout Britain I wish to show how the terms and imagery employed to describe the bagpipe reflect the attitude the authors and artists took towards Scotland as a whole. Through the analysis of references to the bagpipe in literature, prints and art, my work seeks to trace a cultural history of the instrument in the light of contemporaneous political, social, and even religious issues. In

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<sup>21</sup> See works such as Keith Proud and Richard Butler's *The Poetry of the Pipes* (Cramlington: Border Keep, 1983).

particular, I will focus on the internal dynamics of British history in accounting for changes in attitude towards the bagpipe. For the sake of contextualisation, the present work will start with a concise account of the instrument's history, from its origins to present day. This will be done by examining some of the key bagpipe-related artefacts, artworks and literary sources. My work will then focus on the period which spans from the Jacobite era to Romanticism. I have chosen to begin my research with the late seventeenth-century and Jacobitism because, as I will demonstrate in Chapter 2, the movement, seen as the expression of Highland disloyalty to the House of Hanover, contributed significantly to cast a particular – negative, in non-Scottish sources – light on the bagpipe. In Chapter 2 in fact I will explore the impact Jacobitism had on British literature, and how it affected the bagpipe and its being viewed as a cultural signifier. The repercussions of Jacobitism were felt through the whole of Britain, and this was pivotal to how Scotland was viewed – and to how it viewed itself. The rather grossly-sketched parallels which circulated at the time, and which Peter Womack describes as the “Tory-Jacobite-Scot-Highlandman associative web”<sup>22</sup>, ensured that elements of a broader Scottish culture were equated to Jacobitism, and thus used as a means for Scottish vilification by the British government and anti-Jacobite propaganda; as was the case for tartan and the kilt.

My research analyses the dynamics between Scotland and England. The bagpipe was seen as the voice of national resistance: in Scotland this often constituted a reason for national pride, as one may see from both Anglophone and Gaelic sources – examples of both of which I will provide. In England on the other hand, the not uncommon view of Scotland – at times seen as a synecdoche for ‘Jacobite’ – as an ‘enemy’ charged the bagpipe with the worst possible connotations. Satirical prints, as well as Grub-Street authors, provide an eloquent range of sources. Gradually, towards the end of the eighteenth century, after Jacobitism stopped being seen as a threat, authors and artists started viewing the bagpipe in a different light; so much so that pipers, a characterising presence in the Jacobite Army, were adopted by the British Army.

The introduction and subsequent integration of the piper in the British Army constituted an important watershed; this topic I will discuss in Chapter 3. The piper's involvement in the British Army was a decisive factor for the future of the bagpipe tradition, changing and crystallising its repertoire and strongly contributing to the creation of the instrument's status as we know it today. Particularly thanks to the integration of the Highland warrior within the British Army, the notion of savagery

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<sup>22</sup> Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance* (Houndmills and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989), p. 17.

attributed stereotypically to the Highlander (hence by synecdoche the Scot), could be used to the advantage of the English rule, and even coloured with nuances of nobility.

Highland soldiers were heavily employed in Empire warfare, and numbers increased considerably after the Seven Years' War of 1756-'63. The studies undertaken to date about tartan and its related literature and art show that the heavy employment of Highland soldiers constituted a decisive element for turning the icon of the kilted Highlander into an "image of the warrior hero in tartan"<sup>23</sup>. The very same symbol which, during the Jacobite risings, was the visual representation of the enemy to the English rule, gradually turned into what to this day is a colourful, positive icon, which even in fashion and haute-couture speaks of individuality and uniqueness. In Chapter 3 I will therefore demonstrate how the bagpipe, in many ways, shared the same fate as tartan. Slowly, an icon once so negative came to be endowed with associations of ancestral values and primitive simplicity. This constitutes therefore a 'transition period', in which the view of the Scot – and by synecdoche the bagpipe – is heavily romanticised.

Romantic Scotland inherited a nation shaken by Jacobite tensions and their explosion in the '45. The final two chapters on the present thesis will explore how the attitude towards the bagpipe changed with the end of the Jacobite rebellions, and with the advancing of Romanticism – of which Scotland became the protagonist. As James Boswell wrote in 1785

The very Highland names, or the sound of a bagpipe, will stir my blood, and fill me with a mixture of melancholy and respect for courage; with pity for an unfortunate and superstitious regard for antiquity, and thoughtless inclination to war; in short, with a crowd of sensations with which sober rationality has nothing to do.<sup>24</sup>

I extend my research to Romanticism as the words and artworks of some of the key figures of the period, both Scottish and English, contributed significantly in characterising the associations connected with the instrument, endowing it with a variety of connotations, many of which still influence our view of the bagpipe today. Chapter 4 will focus essentially on literary sources: I will analyse the works of various authors, with particular focus on Robert Burns, Sir Walter Scott, Lord Byron and William Wordsworth as they provide some of the most interesting references about the bagpipe.

The period which followed the Battle of Culloden coincided with the publication in 1760 of James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, which were followed in 1762 by *Fingal*, *Temora* in 1763, and collected in *The Works of Ossian* in 1765 became one of the key works of Romanticism, translated into all major European languages, and they were

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<sup>23</sup> Cheape, 'Gheibhte Breacain Charnaid', in *From Tartan to Tartanry*, ed. by Brown, 13-31 (pp. 20-21).

<sup>24</sup> Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, *Johnson's Journey*, ed. by Robert William Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 249.

to place Scotland at the very centre of European literary debates. Macpherson's Ossianic material brought Scotland to international visibility by 'rediscovering' its ancient Gaelic past often imbued in myth. Madame Germaine De Staël thought of Scotland as the nation from which literary Romanticism originated, and her preference for the literature of the North springs from her readings of Macpherson: Ossian is the "*premier type*" of the "*grandeur poétique*" of Northern literature<sup>25</sup>. I argue that one of the consequences of this is that the bagpipe was subsequently indicated by authors such as Sir Walter Scott as a *Northern*, and therefore quintessentially *Romantic* instrument.

Whereas Chapter 4 will focus essentially on literary sources, Chapter 5 is dedicated to the Romantic representation of Scotland and Scottishness in works of art, music, travel books and the performing world, through the 'perspective' of the bagpipe. The visual impact of the bagpipe in landscapes, pre-Victorian genre-painting and Highland life sketches contributed to configure variegated notions of Scottishness, appealing to a Romantic audience who in that period often set out on holidays to Scotland. Travel-books and journals are a precious source to understand how the bagpipe was perceived by the travellers, and how it was employed (or seen as being employed) by the locals. The *perception* of Scottishness – and particularly Highlandness – often acquired greater importance than real life: this is particularly noticeable in artworks, as I will argue extensively, but also in music. Scotland provided an interesting ground for composers and musicians, as Scotland's music was seen as authentic and uncorrupt by Continental influences. As Kirsteen McCue argues, "European composers of the period were fascinated by the opportunities provided them by Scotland's newly published poetic and musical traditions"<sup>26</sup>. I will dedicate a whole section to Mendelssohn, whose *Scottish Symphony* is one of the most significant musical depictions of Scotland, and endeavour to understand the role of the bagpipe in the composer's perception of Scottish music and identity. Mendelssohn's *Scottish Symphony*, as I will explain, was in fact based on and had more to do with musical pictorialism than accuracy in rendering Scottish music.

Scottish music was, in a way, seen to be 'kept alive' with the Highland Games and piping competitions: the Highland Societies played an important role in directing the course of the piping performing world. With this in view I will analyse the role of the Highland Societies and of piping competitions – the first of which took place in 1781 – in the shaping of Scottish musical identity, and bagpipe repertoire and performance. Perceptions of Scotland and Scottishness are expressed in a great number of travel books,

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<sup>25</sup> M.me Germaine de Staël, *Oeuvres Complètes de Madame la Baronne de Staël-Holstein*, s. n., in 2 volumes (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères et C<sup>ie</sup>, Libraires, 1837), vol. 1, p. 252.

<sup>26</sup> Kirsteen McCue, 'Scottish Song, Lyric Poetry and the Romantic Composer', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. by Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 39-48 (p. 40).



which were written and published by the many travellers who visited Scotland. Particularly from the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Continent was largely inaccessible due to the Napoleonic Wars. Travellers turned to Scotland in search for the picturesque, and the landscapes described in Macpherson and Scott's works. In Chapter 5 I will in fact follow up the issue of the Macphersonian reception, and how the bagpipe was affected by it. Macpherson's work does not even mention the bagpipe, as at the time when the episodes are set, in the third century, the bagpipe had not so much as made its appearance in Scotland; the fundamental instrument in the Ossianic fragments is in fact the *clàrsach*: the Celtic wire-strung harp to which the bards used to sing and perpetrate histories, legends and stories. Nevertheless, the bagpipe benefited from the new perception of Scotland. Notions of nation, Primitivism, blood, valour and loyalty mingled to make of Scotland the prototypical 'Romantic wonderland', which we can admire today in paintings and prints.

Research could be extended through Victorianism – which I briefly mention in those issues relating to Romanticism – and from there up to the present day: the topic is by no means exhausted with the long-eighteenth-century. I have directed my focus on the period between the rise of Jacobitism and late Romanticism since I intend to follow the rise and change in the way the instrument was stereotyped in Scottish terms – a process the force of which became evident with Jacobitism.

To make the steps of this process clear it is important to start from the beginning of the bagpipe's history. Although there is no other bagpipe which shares the same symbolic characteristics as the Great Highland pipes, many of the connotations the instrument has acquired in Scotland have their precursors and roots on the Continent. This is hardly surprising since the bagpipe's arrival in Scotland happened relatively late compared to its diffusion from India to Europe and the Mediterranean. Thus, although the Scottish pipes and their symbolism reflect many of the connections the instrument had gathered from the Continent, such as the devilish aspect, or the pastoral one, in Britain these values and associations acquire original traits which are inextricable from the nation's history. For this reason, for a deeper comprehension of the instrument's legacy and its cultural inheritance to date, it is important to follow its steps from antiquity to the present day, which is what I will attempt to do in Chapter 1 of the present thesis.

## Chapter 1

### The bagpipe: history, legends and legacy

#### Introduction

Many of the connotations attributed to the bagpipe during the period I am focusing on – from the advent of Jacobitism to late Romanticism – survive to this day. In order to realise how they came to be, and how they changed through the centuries, it is important to understand the instrument's history. It is indeed a very ancient instrument, and as such it has undergone a rich variety of structural changes and social significations, which differ greatly according to geographical location and cultural climate. Through the centuries, bagpipes can be seen cast in a variety of different contexts. They have been ridiculed, praised, romanticised, elevated to the status of national instrument and criticised in the vilest of terms, appreciated so much that they became a royal favourite, and reduced to objects of abuse. Poems have been dedicated to them, both derogatory and complimentary. Some depictions glorify them, stressing the splendour of the *pompa magna* attire of the professional piper. Others vilify them, representing them in dishonourable situations or played by beasts and roguish characters. There is a remarkable spectrum of paradigms of which the bagpipe has been the direct or indirect protagonist; its appearance in sources of every kind is hardly ever devoid of deeper meaning.

In spite of the bagpipe's widespread geographic distribution, it is undeniable that Scotland has achieved the status of 'bagpipe nation', elevating piping and its tradition to something more than a simple manifestation of folk culture, as it is seen to be in most other countries where bagpipes are played. In order to fully understand how the pipes ultimately become so strongly associated with Scotland it is essential to trace a history of this instrument, and follow its development. In this chapter I shall provide a global but, as far as is possible, concise history of the bagpipe's 'journey' through the centuries. By tracing and defining the steps the instrument has taken, and hence by contextualising its technical development and socio-cultural progress, I intend to delineate the role of the pipes within the historical period I wish to analyse.

I will therefore endeavour to pin down the instrument's *excursus* right from its Neolithic precursor (the hornpipe) passing through its presence in Classical Greek and Roman times. Sources of such antiquity are often unclear and references are dubious, but with the Middle Ages one treads on safer ground: records and documents become more copious, and leave less room for doubt. In Britain, the word 'bagpipe' appears probably for the first time in 1288 (*bagepipa*), in England, while the first unquestionable evidence in

Scotland does not appear until the 1400s, as is testified by the carvings in Rosslyn Chapel and Melrose Abbey.

The military aspect of the bagpipe appears in the sixteenth century, and it will become increasingly important. This period also coincides with a break in Gaelic society, one of the effects of which was that the role of the harpist (or *clàrsair*), which had been so prominent in the culture of the *Gàidhealtachd*, declined. At the same time, the role and status of the piper gradually rose, and he is in fact celebrated in much poetry, particularly Gaelic, of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The bagpipe was by then quite a popular instrument, appreciated even by characters such as Henry VIII<sup>27</sup>.

As I have explained, bagpipes figured heavily in the Jacobite risings, and their representational significance acquired a further dimension. Gaelic and Anglophone literature show that they were a reason for Scottish national pride. As a result, on the English government's side the reception of the instrument was anything but favourable, but this attitude changed for the better after the '46 disaster, which saw the defeat of the Jacobite threat and the annihilation of Scotland as a potential enemy State. As I have pointed out, the almost concurrent publication of the Ossianic fragments, which took Europe by storm, made Scotland one of the quintessential Romantic nations; the Scot/Highlander, and by synecdoche the bagpipe, greatly benefited from this aura, as is testified in many artistic compositions. Generally a greater 'seriousness' of approach was given to the bagpipe: it was acknowledged to be a mark of cultural identity, and as such it was seen as worthy of in-depth study. Military piping is probably the prominent aspect in the bagpipe's current cultural *status quo*: in modern times, the instrument in Britain and indeed worldwide is chiefly identified with the Great Highland pipe. Today, musical experimentation progresses in parallel with a widespread antiquarian desire for preservation of the traditional aspect of the piping world.

### Early history

A bagpipe is an instrument of the composite reedpipe class<sup>28</sup>. Its main constitutive elements include a bag (originally made of animal skin, but today it can be found in its synthetic variations like Gore-Tex and Windtex), a chanter (though double-chantered bagpipes are not infrequent, as can be found, for example, in many Italian *zampogne*<sup>29</sup>), a means for blowing air into the bag (namely a blow-stick/-pipe, or a bellows), and one or more drones (though droneless bagpipes do also exist, such as the Croatian and Bosnian

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<sup>27</sup> Sandra Sider, *Handbook of Life in Renaissance Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 169.

<sup>28</sup> George Grove, Eric Blom, and Denis Stevens, eds., *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), s.v. "bagpipe".

<sup>29</sup> Anthony Baines, *Bagpipes*, ed. by Thomas Kenneth Penniman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), pp. 93-102.

*mih*<sup>30</sup>). These elements present many variables, such as shape, size, way of functioning, material etc.; this ensures a remarkable variety of instruments within the same family. One geographical area alone may be home to more than one kind of bagpipe. Therefore, when talking about ‘bagpipes’, one is not referring to a particular instrument (as, for example, when mentioning the kazoo, the Jew’s harp, or the shamisen), but to a whole class of instruments.

The history and origin of the bagpipe is wrapped in mystery. This is partly because it is an instrument with a very ancient, and therefore difficult to trace, past (according to the *Oxford Dictionary of Music*, the bagpipe is over 3000 years old<sup>31</sup>), and also possibly because much of its fame worldwide is connected with Scotland and Scottish culture, which tends to somewhat obfuscate its truer Indian or Near Eastern origin<sup>32</sup>. The pipes in fact journeyed to Europe passing through the Middle East and Northern Africa – one must bear in mind that the ‘piping world’ stretches from India to Britain, and from Northern Africa to Scandinavia, covering most of the intermediate areas<sup>33</sup>. They reached Scotland relatively late compared to other European nations; it is therefore rather unusual that no other country, with perhaps a longer piping tradition, has given the instrument importance and cultural relevance to the extent that Scotland has.

Clearly it is difficult to follow the exact progress of very early instruments, since the materials used to produce them were natural, and therefore subject to decay. Nevertheless, the precursor of the bagpipe is thought to be the hornpipe, an instrument which probably dates back to the Neolithic era<sup>34</sup>. Though we are left with no original specimens of the instrument, there are terracotta figurines, vase decorations and similar material survivals confirming the existence of the instrument, and enlightening us about playing techniques, fingering etc. The hornpipe was made up of two pipes, either waxed or tied together, or diverging; the bag element was originally absent, and was added at a later stage<sup>35</sup>: according to Febo Guizzi, the use of a bag as a means for an instrument to produce simultaneous sounds through its various sonorous elements dates back to around the first century A.D.<sup>36</sup> The common traits which connect the hornpipe to the bagpipe are the continuous sound obtained by circular breathing (a practice which was subsequently

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<sup>30</sup> Andrea Lanza, ed., *Enciclopedia della Musica - Le Garzantine* (Milan: Garzanti libri, 2006), s.v. “mih”.

<sup>31</sup> Michael Kennedy, and Joyce Bourne, eds., *The Oxford Dictionary of Music* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997), s.v. “bagpipe family”.

<sup>32</sup> Emanuel Winternitz, *Musical Instruments and their Symbolism in Western Art* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1979), p. 69. Also Lanza, *Le Garzantine - Musica*, s.v. “zampogna”.

<sup>33</sup> Lanza, *Le Garzantine - Musica*, s.v. “zampogna”. Also Grove, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. “bagpipe”.

<sup>34</sup> Baines, *Bagpipes*, p. 57.

<sup>35</sup> Grove, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. “bagpipe”. Also Francis Collinson, *The Bagpipe: the History of a Musical Instrument* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1975), p. 27.

<sup>36</sup> Febo Guizzi, *Gli Strumenti della Musica Popolare in Italia* (Lucca: LIM Editrice, 2002), p. 224. The *O.D. of Music*, s.v. “bagpipe family”, even claims bagpipes to be over 3000 years old.

substituted by the bag), and the possibility of producing two simultaneous sounds thanks to the double pipes.

As has been stated, given the lack of early specimens it is impossible to establish when exactly the bagpipe originated. Their homeland is thought to be the Indian region, where the indigenous pipes were used in classical and professional music to provide a constant droning sound – in fact the Tamil name *sruti upanga*, which defines one particular type of Indian bagpipe, means precisely ‘instrumental drone’<sup>37</sup>. To further confirm that the origin of the bagpipes lies in this area of Asia is the fact that very early traces of the instrument can be found in African regions known to have undergone Persian and Arab domination<sup>38</sup>.

There are no iconographic records testifying that the Greeks were acquainted with the bagpipe, and literary documentation of the time is rather dubious. A couple of passages by the playwright Aristophanes suggest possible hints to bagpipe-playing: in the play *The Acharnians* we find an unflattering exhortation to “inflate a dog’s posterior with bone pipes”, and in *Lysistrata* a “bladder” is said to be used to make Spartan music<sup>39</sup>. As one can see, the true meaning of these references is rather obscure, and any explanation is a matter of conjecture. Unfortunately little else is worthy of note for bagpipe-study purposes in Greek times. Baines explains the almost complete absence of documentation, unusual for ancient Greek practices, hypothesising that it may have been an instrument associated with beggars and peasants, and therefore not worthy of mention<sup>40</sup>.

Nonetheless, there is an intriguing linguistic reference from the Hellenic world: that of the word *ascaules*, ‘bagpiper’, mentioned in Roman times by Martial in his *Epigrams*<sup>41</sup>, which date back to the first century A.D.. “*Ascaules*” is a Greek loan word: a compound noun, formed by the terms *ασκός*, ‘bag’<sup>42</sup>, and *αὔλος*<sup>43</sup>, the traditional Greek

<sup>37</sup> Guizzi, *Gli Strumenti della Musica Popolare in Italia*, p. 224.

<sup>38</sup> Winternitz, *Musical instruments*, p. 69.

<sup>39</sup> Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 30, and also Jordi Vallverdú, ‘Bagpipes in Literature’, in *Utriculus*, vol. IX, 33 (2005), 4–23 (p. 4), and Baines, *Bagpipes*, p. 63.

<sup>40</sup> Baines, *Bagpipes*, pp. 66–67.

<sup>41</sup> Marcus Valerius Martialis, *Epigrammaton*, Liber 10, 3, 8: “[...] *Vernaculorum dicta, sordidum dentem, / Et foeda linguae probra circulatricis, / Quae sulphurato nolit empta ramento / Vatiniurum proxeneta fractorum, / Poeta quidam clancularius spargit / Et volt videri nostra. Credis hoc, Prisce? / Voce ut loquatur psittacus coturnicis / Et concupiscat esse Canus ascaules? / Procul a libellis nigra sit meis fama, / Quos rumor alba gemmeus vehit pinna: / Cur ego latore notus esse tam prave, / Constare gratis cum silentium possit?*”. Ker interprets these lines as follows: “The scurrilities of home-born slaves, low railing, and the foul insults of a hawker’s tongue, which the broker of shattered Vatinian glasses would reject as the price of a sulphur match, a certain skulking poet scatters abroad, and would have them appear as mine. Do you believe this, Priscus? That a parrot speaks with the voice of a quail, and Canus longs to be a bag-pipe player? Far from poems of mine be bad repute, poems which lustrous fame uplifts on pinions white. Why should I toil to be known so evilly when stillness can cost me nothing?”. See Valerius Martialis, *Martial Epigrams, with an English Translation*, ed. and trans. by Walter Charles Alan Ker (LaVergne: Kessinger Publishing’s Photocopy Edition, 1920), p. 155.

<sup>42</sup> Galen, a Greek man of medicine, even uses this word to identify the whole instrument. Lorenzo Rocci, ed., *Vocabolario Greco-Italiano* (Rome: Società editrice Dante Alighieri, 1983), s.v. “*ασκός*”.

diverging double-pipes found documented in many iconographic and literary sources from the earliest Cycladic and Minoan times<sup>44</sup>. An etymology of the sort possibly sets the basis for the compound word indicating the instrument in various languages today (starting from the English “bag-pipe”). According to François-Joseph Fétis, “Canus, a celebrated player of the flute, would have thought himself dishonoured by changing his instrument for the *utricularia*”<sup>45</sup>. Orazio Maccari seems to share the same opinion: for Canus to set aside his flute to play the bagpipe would be an embarrassing choice<sup>46</sup>. The fact that Martial uses the Greek loan-word *ascaules* to identify a bagpipe-player probably shows that the term was already in use in Greece: therefore, in spite of the lack of documentation, it is possible that the instrument was in fact present in that particular area. For this reason, the author had the chance to pick it up and use it to identify his ‘piper’.

This episode is not the only one worthy of note in Roman times. There are a few literary mentions, such as the one found in the work *Copa Syrysca*<sup>47</sup>, attributed perhaps erroneously to Virgil:

Copa Surisca, caput Graeca redimita mitella,  
crispum sub crotalo docta movere latus,  
ebria fumosa saltat lasciva taberna,  
ad cubitum raucos excutiens calamos [...] <sup>48</sup>

According to translators such as Remo Giomini, “under her [the hostess] elbow shrilly the pipes vibrate”<sup>49</sup>. The meaning is admittedly rather ambiguous and can not necessarily be interpreted as a reference to bagpipes<sup>50</sup>. Similarly, there are cases of various Latin terms, such as *cadus* (meaning ‘wooden container’, ‘barrel’, ‘urn’) which have raised questions as to their possible association with bagpipes and bagpipe-playing. Philosopher and anatomist Bartholin Gaspard and later on philologist, historian and theologian Jules-César Boulenger have questioned whether *cadus*, used by Propertius (last half-century B.C.) in connection with a *tibia*, the Roman flute very similar to the Greek *aulos* but with a

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<sup>43</sup> Rocci, ed., *Vocabolario Greco-Italiano*, s.v. “αὐλός”.

<sup>44</sup> Grove, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. “aulos”.

<sup>45</sup> François-Joseph Fétis, ‘On the pneumatic organ of the ancients’, in *The Harmonicon* (1829), pp. 4–6 (p. 4).

<sup>46</sup> Orazio Maccari, ‘Dissertation on an antient marble statue representing a bagpipe player’, in *The Belfast Monthly magazine* (1808), pp. 7–12.

<sup>47</sup> Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, pp. 45–46.

<sup>48</sup> Virgil, *Appendix Vergiliana*, ed. by Remo Giomini (Florence: La Nuova Italia Editrice, 1962), p. 233: “The hostess Surisca, wearing a Greek coif on her head, shaking a rattle learned to sway her hips; in the smoke-filled tavern, inebriated and lascivious she skips, under her elbow shrilly the pipes vibrate”. My translation.

<sup>49</sup> “Stridule vibrano le canne agitate sotto il suo gomito”; Giomini, ed., *Appendix Vergiliana*, p. 233.

<sup>50</sup> Henry Rushton Fairclough, for instance, translates *calamos* as ‘tambourine’. See Virgil, *Virgil: Aeneid Books 7–12, Appendix Vergiliana*, ed. by Patrick Goold, trans. by Henry Rushton Fairclough (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 439.

different history and development altogether<sup>51</sup> (“*tibia Mygdoniis libet eburna cadis*”, found in his *Elegiae*, Lib. IV, 6) may have been intended as ‘leather bag’ – a meaning attributed to the term also by authors such as Virgil in the *Aeneid*, Lib. I, 195. Clearly the interpretation of this particular word, just like various others of the sort, is a matter of conjecture.

One famous piper was no less than Emperor Nero, whom Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus describes as an *utricularius*<sup>52</sup> in his *De Vita Caesarum*, which he wrote in A.D. 121. This particular reference, in which the author explains that “unless fortune changed for him, he [Nero] would participate in the games that were to be held to celebrate his victory” in the role of *utricularius*<sup>53</sup>, has been interpreted in different ways: Nero’s bagpipe-playing for the games has been read as a celebration for the changing of his fate<sup>54</sup>, or as an offering; a sort of self-inflicted sacrifice to thank the gods for an important change in fortune<sup>55</sup>. These two interpretations clearly shed very different light on the subject, but to this day it has not been established which is the correct one. Dio Chrysostom also confirms Nero’s piping skills by writing in his *Oratoria*, LXXI, 9, that the emperor could play the *aulos*:

<p>φασὶ δὲ καὶ γράφειν καὶ πλάττειν ἱκανὸν αὐτὸν εἶναι καὶ αὐλεῖν τῷ τε στόματι καὶ ταῖς μασχάλαις ἄσκον ὑποβάλλοντα, ὅπως διαπεφενγῶς ἢ τὸ αἰσχρὸν τὸ τῆς Ἀθηναῖς. οὐκ οὐκ ὑπῆρξε σοφός</p>	<p>Besides, they say that he could paint and fashion statues and <i>play the pipe, both by means of his lips and by tucking a skin beneath his armpits</i> with a view to avoiding the reproach of Athena! Was he not, then, a wise man?<sup>56</sup></p>
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Nero is therefore attributed the skill of playing the pipe by squeezing a bag under his armpit. Interestingly, Dio Chrysostom does not give the instrument a name, but uses a

<sup>51</sup> Grove, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. “tibia”.

<sup>52</sup> See Charles Du Cange, *Glossarium Ad Scriptores Mediae et Infimae Latinitatis* (Frankfurt: Ex Officina Zunneriana, apud Johannem Adamum Jungium, 1688), s.v. “utricularius”.

<sup>53</sup> Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *De vita Caesarum*, LIV: “Sub exitu quidem vitae palam voverat, si sibi incolumis status permansisset, proditum se partae victoriae ludis etiam hydraulam et choraulam et utricularium ac novissimo die histrionem saltaturumque Vergili Turnum”; see Brian Warmington, *Suetonius, Nero* (Bristol: Bristol Classics Press, 1977), p. 50. Alexander Thomson provides the following translation of this passage: “Towards the end of his life, he publicly vowed, that if his power in the state was securely re-established, he would, in the spectacles which he intended to exhibit in honour of his success, include a performance upon organs, as well as upon flutes and bagpipes, and, on the last day of the games, would act in the play, and take the part of Turnus, as we find it in Virgil”. See Thomson, Alexander, ed., *The Lives of the Caesars* (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1855), p. 380.

<sup>54</sup> Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, pp. 43–44.

<sup>55</sup> William Laird Manson, *The Highland Bagpipe* (London: Alexander Gardner, 1901), p. 33.

<sup>56</sup> Chrysostom, Dio, *Dio Chrysostom, Discourses*, ed. and trans. by James Wilfred Cohoon and Henry Lamar Crosby, in 5 volumes (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1979), vol. 5, p. 173. The section I have put in italics is explained as follows: “evidently a sort of bagpipe”.

The above-mentioned “reproach of Athena” has also been translated as the “disfigurement of Athene” The “disfigurement” would, according to this interpretation, refer to “the swollen cheeks [of the player] and bloodshot eyes that can result from continually blowing a reed instrument with nasal inhalation to avoid breaks in the sound”. See Baines, *Bagpipes*, p. 64.

paraphrase to identify it; in spite of Nero's piping abilities, this somehow confirms the marginality of the bagpipes in Roman times<sup>57</sup>. The author's attitude towards the subject of Nero's bagpipe playing appears to be neutral, so he does not help in shedding light on Suetonius' remark, or on the general public's thoughts about the emperor's skill.

There are various theories about how and when the pipes reached the British Isles: whether from the north, whether from the south, or even whether Britain and Ireland 'bred' their own indigenous pipes. Probably the most widely accepted opinion is the one according to which the bagpipe was brought into Britain by the Romans after their invasion in A.D. 43, and therefore the instrument continued its 'journey' northward through what is now England, and subsequently reached Scotland. The earliest documentation in Britain possibly representing a set of bagpipes is that of a small stone figurine depicting the Roman goddess Atys playing the pan-pipes while squeezing a bag under her arm, supposedly to produce a droning sound. This would lend weight to the theory according to which the pipes were brought into Britain by the Romans, and since it represents an isolated case one may with reason infer that it was not a terribly widespread instrument, or at any rate its presence was not well documented<sup>58</sup>. No other records of particular interest, or which might in any definite way be connected to bagpipes, can be found in Britain in that time. For more certain and proportionally more copious references to the pipes, one must wait for the Middle Ages.

### **Piping in the Middle Ages**

From a pan-European point of view, it is certainly with the Middle Ages, when wind instruments become the prevailing musical family in use<sup>59</sup>, that more substantial records and documentation about bagpipes can be found. Literary references become clearer and more frequent, and iconographic sources can help us understand the shapes and forms the pipes were taking. From the visual documentation available today it would appear that Medieval bagpipes had already developed into the shapes and types we are used to seeing in present times.

The first literary description of a set of bagpipes is found in an Epistle (*De diversis generibus musicorum*) addressed to Dardanus, dubiously attributed to St. Jerome. The epistle has been dated back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, and it is contained in around 60 different manuscripts, the earliest extant of which dates to the tenth century<sup>60</sup>. It is concerned with

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<sup>57</sup> Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 45.

<sup>58</sup> Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 48.

<sup>59</sup> Winternitz, *Musical Instruments*, p. 131.

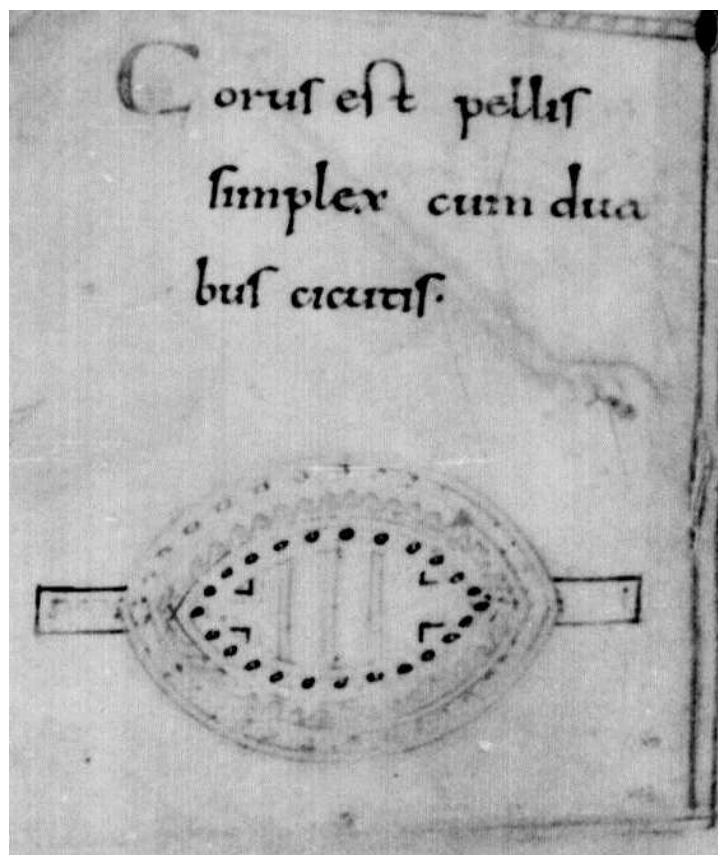
<sup>60</sup> Reinhold Hammerstein, 'Instrumenta Hieronymi', in *Archiv für Musikwissenschaft*, 16. Jahrg., H. 1./2 (1959), 117-134 (p. 117).



religious symbolism in musical instruments<sup>61</sup>, and the author describes a *chorus*<sup>62</sup>: an instrument made of a “skin” with two air-pipes:

Chorus quoque simplex pellis cum	The <i>chorus</i> also has a simple skin, with
duabus cicutis aereis et per primam	two air pipes, and through the first one
inspiratur, per secundam vocem emittit	the air is blown inside, and the second
	one emits the sound <sup>63</sup>

We are dealing with a description, in this case, of a droneless form of bagpipe. The term comes from the Latin and it would appear to be a translation from the Hebrew *machol*<sup>64</sup>. Among the many versions of the manuscript, some even show an image of the instrument to accompany the text. The following is a detail from the Cotton Tiberius Manuscript<sup>65</sup>.



As we can see, it is a very imperfect representation (to say the least!) which shows that the scribe had no notion whatsoever about what a *chorus* looked like. From this we can infer, therefore, that it probably was not a very popular instrument at that time.

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<sup>61</sup> Baines, *Bagpipes*, p. 67.

<sup>62</sup> Frederick Morgan Padelford, *Old English Musical Terms* (Bonn: P. Hanstein, 1899), p. 51.

<sup>63</sup> Hieronimus, 'Epistula Hieronimi ad Dardanum', MS Cotton Tiberius, C.VI, held at the BL. My translation.

<sup>64</sup> Grove, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "chorus".

<sup>65</sup> © The British Library, Cotton Tiberius MS C.VI. Author's own digital copy of the microfilm.

But the *chorus* was only one of the types of bagpipes found in Medieval Europe, and as the centuries went by the bagpipe scenario became more and more varied. To understand just how much the bagpipe developed during the Middle Ages, one needs only take a look, for example, at Alfonso X el Sabio's *Cantigas de Santa Maria* (c. 1260): throughout the text we find a number of miniatures of bagpipes of all shapes and forms<sup>66</sup>.



In the *Cantigas* it is possible to find pipes which are droneless (therefore chorus-like) multiple-droned; single- and double-chantered, bell- or conical-bored, most of them profusely decorated and elaborately carved. There is no doubt that through the Middle Ages the bagpipe received a considerable boost across Europe: its fruition became more widespread, and technical developments are noticeable as the various constitutive elements of the instrument take different shapes and dimensions. With this in mind, it would be useful at this stage to analyse the development of the bagpipes in Medieval Britain.

A remarkable episode in bagpipe-related literature of the time is that of number 31 of the *Codex Exoniensis* or *Exeter Riddles*<sup>67</sup>, a manuscript containing a vast anthology of Anglo-Saxon riddles, possibly collected by the bishop Leofric (ob. 1072). The solution to this particular riddle (which talks about a beautiful bird which rests on a man's shoulder with its beak – the chanter – facing downwards and its feet – the drones – up in the air, waiting for its moment of glory) is thought to be precisely “the bagpipe”.

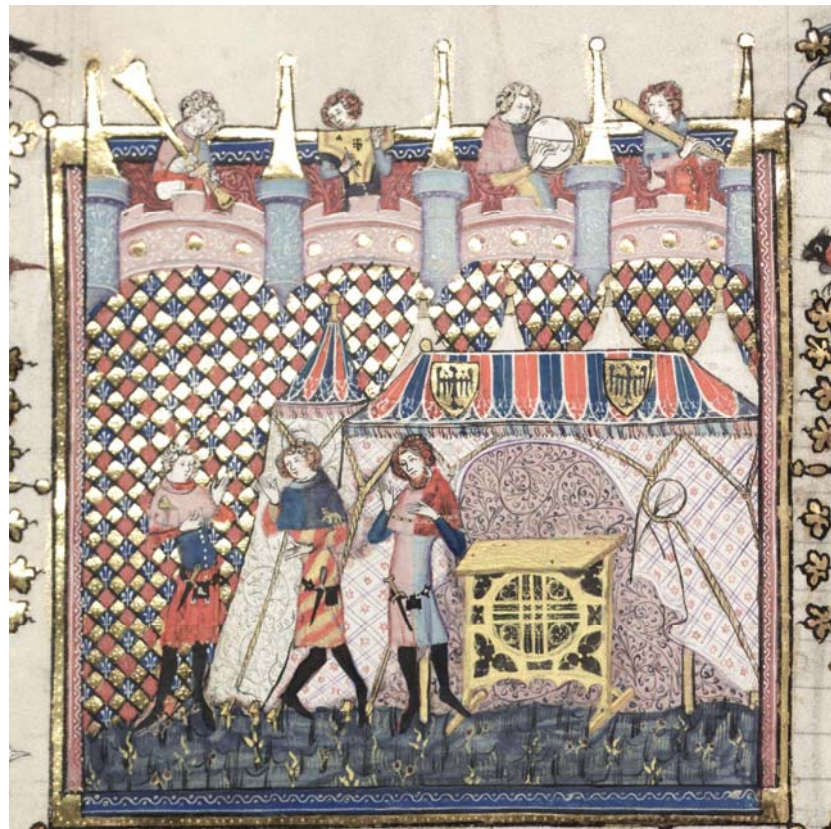
<sup>66</sup> Reproduced here are miniatures of Cantigas 260, 280 and 350 of the Escorial Codex E. Images are public domain: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cantiga\\_bagpipes\\_2.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cantiga_bagpipes_2.jpg)  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cantiga\\_bagpipes\\_1.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cantiga_bagpipes_1.jpg)

<sup>67</sup> See Alfred Wyatt, *Old English Riddles* (Boston and London: D. C. Heath & Co, 1912), p. 24.

Is þes middangeard      missenlicum  
 wisum gewlitegad,      wrættum gefrætwað  
 Ic seah sellic þing      singan on ræcede;  
 wiht wæs [nōwēr]      werum on gemonge  
 sio hæfde wæstum      wundorlicran.  
          Nīperweard      wæs neb hyre,  
          Fet ond folme      fugele gelice;  
 no hwæpre fleogan mæg,      ne fela gongan.  
 Hwæpre feþegeorn fremman      onginneð  
          gecoren cræftum,      cyrreð geneahhe  
          oft ond gelome      eorlum on gemonge,  
          siteð æt symble,      sæles bideþ,  
 hwonne ær heo cræft      hyre cyþan mote  
          werum on wonge.      Ne heo þær wiht þigeð  
 þæs þe him æt blisse      beornas habbað.  
 Deor, domes georn,      hīo dumb wunað;  
 hwæpre hyre is on fote      fæger hleoþor,  
          wynlicu woðgiefu.      Wrætlic me þinceð  
          hu seo with mæge      wordum lacan  
          þurh fot neoþan      frætweð hyrstum.  
 Hafað hyre on hales,      þonne hio hord warað  
          bær, beagum deall,      broþor sīne,  
 mæg mid mæg [um].      Micel is to hycgenne  
          wisum woðboran,      hwæt sio wiht sie.

Beautifully made      in many ways  
 is this our world,      cunningly adorned.  
 I saw a strange thing      singing in a house;  
 Its shape was more wonderful      than aught among men.  
 Its beak was underneath,      its feet and hands birdlike,  
          yet fly it cannot      nor walk at all.  
 Yet eager for movement      it starts to work  
          with various arts.      It often goes around  
          again and again      among noble men.  
 It sits at the banquet-boards,      awaits its turn  
          till comes its time      to display its skill  
 among those who are near.      It partakes of nothing  
          that the men there      have for their pleasure.  
 Brave, eager for glory      it remains dumb,  
          yet it has in its foot      beautiful sounds,  
 a glorious gift of song.      Wondrous it seems to me  
          how this very thing      can play with words  
 through its foot beneath      adorned with trappings.  
          It has on its neck      when it guards its treasure,  
 Bare, proud with rings,      its two companions,  
          brother and sister.      It's a great thing surely  
          for a wise singer      to think what this is.<sup>68</sup>

The described scene suggests a very dignified situation, which gives the instrument a status worthy of aristocracy; in fact a passage in the riddle explicitly says that “It [the ‘bird’] often goes around / again and again / among noble men”. This attitude which sees the pipes as a refined, aristocratic instrument is confirmed in later stages in certain depictions such as the one found in the *Romance of Alexander*<sup>69</sup>, a manuscript of c. 1344.



<sup>68</sup> Craig Williamson, *The Old English Riddles of the Exeter Book* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1977), pp. 86-87.

<sup>69</sup> *Romance of Alexander*, fol. 142 verso, MS 264, Bodleian Library. Reproduced with permission.

As one can see, the piper (on the top left-hand corner) is depicted with a set of golden pipes, and from the scene one cannot discern any debasing trait. Nevertheless, it must also be said that this decorous image is not consistent in literature and iconographic records. In fact, it is also possible to find pig-pipers (such as the famous one carved in Melrose Abbey<sup>70</sup>), jester-pipers (as in the Bodleian Manuscript no. 964 of c. 1344<sup>71</sup>) and the like. Grove's *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* tells us that the bagpipe was both a popular and courtly instrument in the British Isles from the early fourteenth century<sup>72</sup>, and in fact the two attitudes seem to simply co-exist, evidently implying the presence of two different traditions of the instrument. One aspect does not exclude the other (just like, for example, with the case of the violin *vs.* the fiddle: the same instrument is seen from two different perspectives and is given two different social connotations).

It is not until the twelfth century that the above-mentioned droneless *chorus* appears in the British Isles. Giraldus Cambrensis, Welsh monk and archdeacon of Brecon, gives us an account of the instruments played in the British Isles, and when talking about Scotland and its musical practices says that “Scotia tribus, cythara, tympano et choro” (Scotland uses three [instruments]: the harp, the tympanum and the *chorus*)<sup>73</sup>. It should nevertheless be said that the translation of the word *chorus* with ‘bagpipe’ is not accepted by everyone. John Purser, for instance, is of the opinion that Giraldus was probably referring to a cruit or Celtic lyre<sup>74</sup>. Giraldus certainly gives us an extremely interesting insight into the musical world of Medieval Britain, because it illustrates the gradual build-up of its musical identity. Should the correct interpretation of the term *chorus* in this context actually be ‘bagpipe’, the close association between the instrument and Scotland at such an early stage is particularly fascinating.

The first appearance of the term ‘bagpipe’ in the English language is generally thought to be found, in its Middle English form *baggepipe*<sup>75</sup>, in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (which I shall discuss shortly), though Latham's *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British Sources* reports an even earlier record, dating back to 1288, which would pre-date the better-known one from Chaucer's *Prologue* by almost a century. It is found in a manuscript included in the Exchequer Treasury of the Receipt Books (MS PRO, E. 36). This particular entry is in the Book of the Treasurer of King Edward I, in a section which

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<sup>70</sup> Cheape, *Bagpipes*, p. 30.

<sup>71</sup> See Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>72</sup> Grove, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. “bagpipe”.

<sup>73</sup> Giraldus, *Giraldi Cambrensis: Opera*, ed. by James Dimnock (London: Longmans, 1867), p. 154.

<sup>74</sup> John Purser, *Scotland's Music* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 2007), p. 86.

<sup>75</sup> John A. Simpson, and Edmund S. C. Weiner, eds., *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), s.v. “bagpipe”: “A musical instrument of great antiquity and wide diffusion, consisting of an airtight wind-bag and one or more reed-pipes into which the air is pressed by the performer”. Ref. 1: c1405 (c1387-95) Chaucer *Canterbury Tales Prol.* (Hengwrt) (2003) l. 567 A Baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne.



lists the gifts made to members of the royal household. The source cites as follows: “cuidam garcioni cum una bagepipa pipanti coram rege de dono ipsius regis, ij s.” (a certain servant with a bagpipe who piped before the king, was given two shillings)<sup>76</sup>. This was indeed quite a good sum, as it was more or less equivalent to a week’s income for an agricultural worker<sup>77</sup>.

### Chaucer’s Miller and his “baggepipe”

A lot has been said about Chaucer’s reference to the bagpipe. In the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales* is in fact the description of the Miller, whom Chaucer describes as playing a “baggepipe”<sup>78</sup>. The Ellesmere manuscript (considered to be virtually the most reliable of the remaining sources, since it was compiled only five years after Chaucer’s death in 1400) even shows a miniature of the Miller<sup>79</sup>, mounted on a horse with his bagpipes.

His appearance and character is clearly not the courtly one of the *Romance of Alexander*. Chaucer, when choosing the physical features of his Tale’s pilgrims, was influenced by the largely popular Physiognomies of his time, described especially in the works of Rhazes Rasis Rahzes, Persian medical man (*ob.* 930), and the astrologer Hali Abenragel (*ob.* 1037). The roguish physical and behavioural peculiarities the author offers of the Miller are descriptive and symbolic of the character’s rough, rural, lower-class status, and of his proportionally coarse, rustic personality. Chaucer describes the miller as a broad, stout fellow with short shoulders and a corpulent physique, who enjoyed wrestling; his strength was such that he could even break hinges with his head. His hair was red “as any sowe or fox”, and his beard was “brood as though it were a spade”. His nose had black, large nostrils, and a wart with red, bristly hairs. His wide mouth was a cauldron (“forneys”) of dirty stories and “goliardeys”, “sinne” and “harlotries”, of which he spoke in a deep, rumbling voice. According to the physiognomy and metoposcopy lore<sup>80</sup> which Chaucer was certainly acquainted with, such physical particularities were

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<sup>76</sup> Benjamin Byerly and Catherine Byerly, eds., *Records of the Wardrobe and Household, 1286-1289* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1986), p. 94. Also Ronald Edward Latham, ed., *Dictionary of Medieval Latin from British sources* (Oxford: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1975), s.v. “bagepipa”. My translation.

<sup>77</sup> This information I have gathered whtough private correspondence with Mr Barrie Cook, Curator of Medieval and Early Modern Coinage, BM.

<sup>78</sup> “A baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne, / And therwithal he broghte us out of towne”. Benson, ed., *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 32.

<sup>79</sup> MS EL 26 C 9, folio 34, verso, detail; Huntington Library, San Marino. Reproduced with permission.

<sup>80</sup> “[...]metoposcopy [...] in addition to treating of the significance of the lines corresponding to the celestial bodies on the forehead, deals with warts, moles, and other natural marks found on the face. It is based, as are the kindred sciences of geomancy and chiromancy, together with the science of dreams and medicine, on astrology”. See Curry, ‘Chaucer’s Reeve and Miller’, p. 205.

indicative of an irate disposition, greediness, astuteness, and a great appetite for food and lust; he is “a man easily angered, shameless, loquacious, and apt to stir up strife”<sup>81</sup>.



There is nothing refined about this character. After his description of the Miller's physical qualities, Chaucer informs us that “a baggepipe wel koude he blowe and sowne”<sup>82</sup>. The characterising presence of the bagpipe is a means for Chaucer to use ordinary, everyday materials of life to achieve artistic purpose and emphasise the character's rural, low-caste background<sup>83</sup>. It was quite a common practice for pilgrims to travel around with pipers, as it is possible to infer from documents of the time. Such is the case, for instance, of a trial of 1407, in which the Lollard William Thorpe complains to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Arundel, about the racket pilgrims make during their travels precisely because of their pipers<sup>84</sup>.

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<sup>81</sup> Curry, 'Chaucer's Reeve and Miller', p. 1998.

<sup>82</sup> Benson, *The Riverside Chaucer*, p. 32.

<sup>83</sup> Laura Lambdin and Robert Lambdin, eds., *Chaucer's Pilgrims* (Westport and London: Praeger, 1996), p. 276.

<sup>84</sup> Block, 'Chaucer's Millers and their Bagpipes', p. 240. Also Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 86

Certainly part of Chaucer's intention was to provide a realistic picture of the customs and habits of his time. Nevertheless, the strong characterisation he sets for his Miller suggests that the descriptive elements presented in the *Tales* imply a connotation of the character which goes beyond that of a mere description of the custom of pilgrims to travel with musical entertainers. Helen Cooper's interpretation of the Miller's personality sees him associated with the pipes because of their shrill, strident sound: the instrument's sonorous characteristic constitutes a descriptive parallel between the pipes and their player<sup>85</sup>. Though this is certainly an interesting perspective, I fear it may be somewhat limited. Dr George Fenwick Jones has analysed the highly symbolic value of the bagpipe in the Middle Ages<sup>86</sup>, and has come to the conclusion that the main qualities it identifies are gluttony and lechery – and a substantial part of the Miller's personality is represented by precisely these characteristics.

An interesting parallel in this sense can be traced between the *Canterbury Tales* and Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron*, which is said to have inspired Chaucer's masterpiece in the first place. Boccaccio mentions the bagpipe (*cornamusa*) three times in the *Decameron*: twice in reference to the old servant Tindaro, who is asked to play them to entertain the company. Tindaro is often the protagonist of malicious conversations and ends up getting involved in mischief of sexual nature. Considering the sexual symbolism that the bagpipe has acquired during its long history, the connection between the pipes and the Miller (or Boccaccio's Tindaro) is symbolic of the character's lecherousness.

### **Renaissance bagpipes**

In the Renaissance the bagpipe certainly constituted musical entertainment in rustic contexts, but it was also appreciated at court. The description of a 1454 banquet by the courtier and soldier Olivier de la Marche tells us of a shepherd who “played on the bagpipe in the most novel fashion”<sup>87</sup>. In spite of the setting, which is described as very refined, the rural element, as one can see, is still present. Also worthy of mention is the fact that Henry VIII is known to have possessed about seven sets of bagpipes, mounted with ivory pipes<sup>88</sup> - or rather “with pipes of Ivorie, the bagge covered with purple vellat”<sup>89</sup>. At the burial of Henry VIII a piper, Richard Edward, is mentioned in the Account of Liveries for the Household. On the occasion of the King Edward VI's coronation (on 20 February 1547) a “Bagge Piper”, Richard Woodward, was appointed, and indeed documents demonstrate that virtually on a yearly basis warrants were

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<sup>85</sup> Helen Cooper, *The Canterbury Tales* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 54.

<sup>86</sup> See Jones, ‘Wittenwiler's ‘Becki’ and the Medieval Bagpipe’, p. 220.

<sup>87</sup> See Gustave Reese, *Music in the Renaissance* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1954), p. 57.

<sup>88</sup> Sider, *Handbook of Life in Renaissance Europe*, p. 169.

<sup>89</sup> Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 96.

recorded for liveries for him. For many years (from 1555 to 1565) he is mentioned together with Richard Pike, “another of the musicians”; but while he disappears from the accounts after 1565, Woodward continues to be mentioned, under the category of “musicians”, until 1569<sup>90</sup>. After this date, for a long time the records cease to report specific references to pipers, which may mean that they were either eliminated from the musical *ensemble* of the court or that they ceased to deserve a separate mention, and were included in the general groups of “windy Instruments”, “musicians” or “minstrels”. About a century later, in 1663<sup>91</sup>, William Tollett was appointed “bag-piper in ordinary”, but this constitutes an isolated case.

The military use of the bagpipe is a central part of its cultural representation in Scotland, to this day. The first military occurrence is thought to be that of the battle of Pinkie (1547)<sup>92</sup>. Pipers are mentioned for their playing in Argyll’s forces by a French military officer, who in 1549 wrote an *Histoire de la guerre d’Ecosse*, stating that “*Les Ecossois sauvages se provocquoyent aux armes par les sons de leurs cornemeuses*” – “the savage Scots incited themselves into battle with the sound of their bagpipes”<sup>93</sup>. I feel the use of the possessive adjective “*leurs*” (“their”) is particularly telling: they are not described simply as “bagpipes”, but rather as an instrument which *belongs* to a country. Besides this consideration, the passage is indicative of the fact that certainly by the sixteenth century the pipes in Scotland had begun to acquire a distinctive martial connotation. By the mid-seventeenth century the Scottish bagpipe becomes generally identified as a martial instrument, or an instrument of war. Regimental pipers existed in various Scottish troops, as for example in Captain Balfour’s company in the Scots Brigade serving in Holland in 1586, where there were “two drummers and a piper”<sup>94</sup>. The first mention of pipers in the Forces of the Crown appears in 1627. As Seton and Grant explain:

[...] Alex. Macnaughton of Loch-Fyne-side was commissioned by King Charles I. to “levie and transport twa hundredthe bowmen” for service in the French war. Writing in January 1628 to the Earl of Morton, Macnaughton says: “As for newis from our selfis, our baggyperis and marlit plaidis serwitt us in guid wise in the pursuit of ane man of war that hetlie followed us.”

The records show that this company had a harper, “Harnie M’Gra frae Larg”, and a piper, “Allester Caddell”, who, in accordance with the custom of the time, had his gillie to carry his pipes for him.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Henry Cart De La Fontaine, ed., *The King’s Musick* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), pp. 5-22.

<sup>91</sup> La Fontaine, *The King’s Musick*, p. 166.

<sup>92</sup> Cheape, *Bagpipes*, p. 40.

<sup>93</sup> Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 140.

<sup>94</sup> Bruce Seton and John Grant, *The Pipes of War* (Glasgow: MacLehose, Jackson & Co. Publishers to the University, 1920), p. 14.

<sup>95</sup> Seton-Grant, *The Pipes Of War*, p. 14.



Pipers will ultimately be included in the British Army in the eighteenth century (though their officialisation will take place in the mid-nineteenth-century), but that I shall mention in greater depth in Chapter 3. The bagpipe constituted a good instrument to march to, because of its shrill, loud sound; it could also be played for a longer time than most other war-instruments<sup>96</sup>, such as the trumpet, because the playing technique did not put as much strain on the player. That the process of the instrument's acquisition of this particular connotation had certainly already started by 1547 is further confirmed by Scottish historian George Buchanan, who in 1582 wrote that

Instead of a trumpet, they [the Highlanders] use a bagpipe. They are exceedingly fond of music [...] Their songs are not inelegant, and, in general, celebrate the praises of brave men; their bards seldom choosing any other subject [...]<sup>97</sup>

This passage introduces us to the topic of bards and pipers. Performance was an important element in chieftains' and aristocratic households. For this purpose bards were employed to maintain the performing traditions, which would be handed down orally from generation to generation. Though lutenist- and fiddler-bards<sup>98</sup> could also be found, the majority were *clarsairs*<sup>99</sup>: players of the *clàrsach*, the Celtic harp<sup>100</sup>, which for centuries was considered the national instrument of Scotland and Ireland. Bardic harpers enjoyed high status within Irish and Scottish society. There are strong links between Gaelic Scotland and Ireland. Until the seventeenth century in many respects they constitute a unitary culture, though linguistically Scottish Gaelic began to separate from Irish at the end of the sixteenth-turn of the seventeenth century<sup>101</sup>. The tradition of the bards is part of this common cultural heritage<sup>102</sup>. Aristocratic families and clans would employ bards to perform for them. These bards were often *clarsairs*, and they either spent their lives travelling and playing for important families round the country, or they would be employed by one particular household on a stable basis. They would sing the praises of the family ancestors, commemorate the patron's activities, celebrate important events and accompany the clan in battle.

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<sup>96</sup> Purser, *Scotland's Music*, pp. 156-157.

<sup>97</sup> Buchanan, George, *The History of Scotland*, ed. by James Aikman, in 4 volumes (Glasgow: Published by Blackie, Fullarton & Co., 1827), vol. 1, p. 41. The original Latin goes as follows: "Loco tubae tibia utuntur utriculari. Musica maxime delectantur [...] Accinunt autem carmen non inconcinne factum, quod fere laudes fortium virorum contineat: nec aliud fere argumentum eomm Bardi tractant". See George Buchanan, *Rerum scoticarum historia* (Aberdeen: typis Jacobi Chalmers, 1762), p. 20.

<sup>98</sup> By 'fiddle' in this case is intended the Medieval fiddle, since the violin only appeared in Scotland in the late seventeenth century: in 1680 we have the first Scottish manuscript to specify the instrument. See David Johnson, *Scottish Fiddle Music in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>99</sup> Purser, *Scotland's Music*, p. 150.

<sup>100</sup> Grove, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "*clàrsach*".

<sup>101</sup> Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Cause* (Glasgow: Richard Drew Publishing Ltd., 1986), p. 17.

<sup>102</sup> Derick Thomson, 'Gaelic Learned Orders and Literati in Medieval Scotland', in *Scottish Studies*, 12 (1968), 57-78 (p. 75). Also Cheape, 'Traditional Origins of the Piping Dynasties', in *The Highland Bagpipe*, ed. by Dickson, 97-126 (pp. 102-104).

### The break in Gaelic society: the consequences on piping

The sixteenth century produced a break in popular Highland tradition: attempts to restore the Lordship of the Isles, religious conflicts, the breaking of the power of Irish chieftains, all contributed to the disruption of the established customs. A collateral effect of this vacillation is the decline of the tradition of the clan bards<sup>103</sup>. There is no doubt that by the end of the seventeenth century the number of dynasties of professional poets had shrunk drastically, but the *clàrsach* had hitherto kept its reputation of being the predominant instrument in Scotland and Ireland. Running parallel to the decline of the bardic tradition, in the *Gàidhealtachd* pipers achieved the social status which to that day had been afforded to the bards. They were held in very high esteem in society, and enjoyed great privileges such as the holding of hereditary lands. Though it is not possible to talk about *bardic* pipers as such (a piper could not accompany his playing with song and poetry), they enjoyed the same privileges as the bards. Iconographic documents of the time show pipers in splendid attire, such as the 1714 ‘Piper to the Laird of Grant’<sup>104</sup> by Richard Waitt.

This is first clear depiction of a Highland bagpipe more or less as we know it today<sup>105</sup>. I say “more or less” since, as Hugh Cheape points out, the pipes in the portrait constitute rather a puzzling case. To start with, they are portrayed on the wrong side of the player with the drones perched on the right rather than the left shoulder; their style of turning and decoration, and the size of the drones do not resemble any found in the material evidence hitherto gathered about instruments of the time; the chanter also is “more reminiscent of early forms of oboe and may have been a detail reconstructed in studio conditions”<sup>106</sup>.

In the distance is a representation of Castle Grant<sup>107</sup>; but the bare, almost desert setting gives prominence to the piper only. The rusty colours of the land and clouds seem to speak of blood and courage, and participate of the colours of the piper’s clothes, as if he were one with the landscape. From his garments it is clear that we are dealing with a character worthy of Scottish nobility. Richard Waitt painted a series of portraits of the Grant lairds and kinsmen, and the piper’s uniform appears more elaborate than the attire of any other.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 132.

<sup>104</sup> NMS 000-000-579-757-C. Reproduced with permission

<sup>105</sup> Cheape, ‘The Piper to the Laird of Grant’, p. 1163.

<sup>106</sup> Cheape, ‘The Piper to the Laird of Grant’, p. 1169.

<sup>107</sup> Cheape, ‘The Piper to the Laird of Grant’, p. 1168.

<sup>108</sup> Cheape, ‘The Piper to the Laird of Grant’, p. 1170.



The main reason for this change of status between bardic harpers and pipers is the increasing military involvement of the Highlanders in war: the bagpipe and its loud, shrill sound was more suitable in bellicose situations than the harp could ever be. The *clàrsach* remained, in the imagery of many authors such as James Hogg, one of the symbols of Scottish national identity: in *The Queen's Wake* the author describes a competition between Scottish bards. As Douglas Mack explains:

the prize for which the bards of Scotland compete is a magnificent harp, to be presented by the Queen. The harp [...] was a powerful symbol of poetic inspiration for the Romantics [...] the bard at this period came to symbolise the indigenous oral

culture of the Celtic parts of the British Isles [...]. Seen in this context, the bardic contest of *The Queen's Wake* emerges as an attempt to explore, to recover, and to reanimate a Scottish national identity that had been obscured and complicated, for Hogg's generation, by the 1707 Union with England. [...] Furthermore, it seems that the harp could be present in the background on occasions when people of Jacobin sympathies drew on Jacobite sources.<sup>109</sup>

Though this attitude may with every right persist in the mind of many an author, a growing interest in the role of the bagpipe can also be found. Collinson transcribes a passage from one of Hogg's contemporary authors, Mrs. Ann Grant of Laggan's *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland*, Edinburgh, 1811:

The Harp was [...] the national music of the highlands [...]. During the cruel wars between king's men and queen's men [i.e. supporters of king James VI and Mary Queen of Scots], in the minority of James VI, the unity of the clans was in great measure broken.

A sanguinary spirit was introduced, and the sweet sounds drawn by love and fancy, or by grief or tenderness, from the trembling strings of the *clàrsach*, gave way to the ruder strains of martial music, which the bagpipe was so much better suited to convey. [...] <sup>110</sup>

Though the author is writing long after the change actually took place, it nevertheless makes plain one of the possible attitudes (namely, in this case, Romantic) toward the subject-matter of the *clàrsach* vs. the bagpipe. As Cheape also explains:

When they [the bagpipes] merit mention [in Gaelic sources], the reference is immediately to an instrument of resounding, almost explosive power. Terms such as *sgal*, *gàirich*, *torman*, *nuallanach* and so on, all serve to emphasise the vigour and power of the bagpipe and contrast sharply with descriptions of the music of the harp<sup>111</sup>.

The sound of the bagpipe became so strongly mindful of battle and war, that it acquired strong masculine connotations. According to Manson, it would appear that "at the beginning of the eighteenth century, Alasdair MacMhaighstir Alasdair, the Clanranald bard, said he preferred the pipes to the harp, which he called *cèol nionag*, maidens' music"<sup>112</sup>. This attitude acquires a particular significance given the fact that the poet was also a military officer during the Jacobite risings.

Such a statement had deeper implications than that of a simple musical preference. By 'gendering' the *clàrsach*, MacMhaighstir was putting emphasis on a particular role of the bagpipe: its important task in battle and rebellion, of encouraging the troops. His

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<sup>109</sup> James Hogg, *The Queen's Wake*, ed. by Douglas Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. xxvi-xxxi.

<sup>110</sup> Anne Grant, *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland*, in 2 volumes (London: Printed for Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1811), vol. 2, p. 201.

<sup>111</sup> Cheape, *Bagpipes*, p. 42.

<sup>112</sup> Manson, *The Highland Bagpipe*, p. 24. This particular anecdote is confirmed by Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 131.

‘Tearlach Mac Sheaumais’ (‘Charles Son of James’) is also very interesting: “*Mì eadar an talamh ‘s an t’athar a’ seoladh, / Air iteig le h-aighear, misg-chath’, agus shòlais, / Us caismeachd phìob-mòra bras-shròiceadh am puirt*” (“Between earth and heaven in the air I am sailing, / On the wings of exultance, battle-drunken, enraptured, / While the notes of the great pipes shrilly sound out their tune”<sup>113</sup>). This last reference is particularly interesting, since it is an explicit connection between bagpipes and Jacobite activity; this topic will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter.

Much Jacobite propaganda was expressed in Highland terms. The Highlander was seen as a symbol of patriotic purity, of a society resistant to the Empire, which had therefore preserved its national integrity in the face of English colonial hegemony. The Highlander became iconic of Scottish cultural independence from England. This kind of discourse is actually pre-Jacobite, but after the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89, Highlanders became associated with Jacobite ideology, becoming the bearers of a whole iconology based on the identification in a national idea<sup>114</sup>. The socio-political causes of this rather shallow way of tackling what is in fact a complex reality are many. In Murray Pittock’s words:

The Enlightenment writers combined this concept [of ‘English liberty’] with Protestantism (held to be more characteristic of the Germanic peoples of the Northern Holy Roman Empire, Holland, Switzerland, England, Scandinavia and (by extension) Lowland Scotland). By this equation, Jacobites, friends of the Stuarts, who were Catholic monarchs (and popularly held to be absolutist tyrants) must be neither Germanic nor Protestant, since they were friends (so it was held) neither to political liberty nor liberty of conscience. Thus, virtually all Scots Jacobites were seen as Highlanders (Celts) and Catholics.<sup>115</sup>

These rather gross, simplistic connections flowed from notions of nationality to religion and politics: as I have briefly mentioned above, Peter Womack defines them as the “Tory-Jacobite-Scot-Highlandman associative web”<sup>116</sup>. These mental associations persevered even long after the Culloden defeat.

During the seventeenth century, the Highlands were involved in major national and international wars which involved a considerable number of soldiers also to be sent to the Continent (for example, the army set up by Donald the Lord of the Isles, grandson of Robert II, to bid for the kingship of Scotland during James I’s captivity in England, consisted of 10,000 soldiers<sup>117</sup>). By this time, the incitement or *brosnachadh*<sup>118</sup> of the men

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<sup>113</sup> John Lorne Campbell, ed., *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1984), pp. 52-53.

<sup>114</sup> Murray Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 27.

<sup>115</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, p. 10.

<sup>116</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 17.

<sup>117</sup> Cheape, *Bagpipes*, p. 42.

<sup>118</sup> Derick Thomson, ed., *A New English-Gaelic Dictionary* (Glasgow: Gairm, 1994), s.v. “brosnachadh”.

was left to instruments with a stronger exciting charisma than the *clàrsach*. This role was in fact fulfilled by the *Pìob Mhòr*, the Great Highland bagpipe, which had by that time developed more or less into the shape and sound we know today. The bagpipe's role in war became even more important during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. In this sense, the bagpipe's 'fate' proceeds in parallel with that of tartan, as Highland garb and iconology were adopted in many regiments of the British Army regardless of nationality. This Highland-based 'symbolism' created a means of compatibility between the emblems of Scottish tradition/ideology and the British Army, which in many ways suited both sides, as I will explain in the following chapter.

It is also in the seventeenth century *piobaireachd* emerged. It is an important part of the Highland bagpipe repertoire, often described as its 'classical repertoire'. The origin of this musical form is obscure, but it appears to have evolved as ceremonial music played at Highland courts, for clan gatherings and as battle music. Its main classes are the *fàilte* (welcome/salute), the *cumha* (lament), the *spaidsearachd* (march) and the *cruineachadh* (gathering)<sup>119</sup>. Hugh Cheape observes that the vernacular stressed metre composition of the seventeenth-century vernacular poets (heirs, in a limited sense, of the professional poets of yesterday) presents a congruency with the musical phrase sequence of the *ceòl mòr*, or 'great music' – the *piobaireachd*. The *ceòl mòr* lines appear to reflect the verbal phrase of the vernacular Gaelic poetical compositions, which is stressed, rhythmic, and well-suited to oral transmission. This vernacular poetry seems to emerge alongside the bagpipe's *ceòl mòr*, in the sixteenth/seventeenth centuries, and in the context of chiefly houses and patrons. Metrics and music would suggest that the Great Highland bagpipe and the *piobaireachd* were grafted onto earlier traditions, rather than evolving *sui generis*.

Musically speaking, in Britain and particularly in Scotland a rich repertoire specific to the bagpipe was further developed, during and after the seventeenth century, also thanks to the emergence of piping dynasties<sup>120</sup> such as the MacCrimmons, MacArthurs, Campbells and Mackays. The tradition of the piping dynasties is connected with the history of the clans and hereditary poets, bards and musicians. As has been mentioned above, pipers, just like bards, were employed by the families of clan chieftains (some of which were "true patrons of the arts", in Cheape's words<sup>121</sup>) and they served hereditarily, and enjoyed high social status. The pipers would play and transmit the art of piping, especially *piobaireachd*; they also set up piping schools, hence creating true piping *dynasties*. The schools or colleges are said to have been run, among others, by the Rankins, the MacCrimmons and the MacArthurs, all of which are well-known piping

<sup>119</sup> Grove, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "pibroch".

<sup>120</sup> Hugh Cheape, 'Traditional Origins of the Piping Dynasties', in *The Highland Bagpipe*, ed. by Dickson, p. 102.

<sup>121</sup> Cheape, *Bagpipes*, p. 60.

families. Possibly the size and prestige of these colleges has been exaggerated, as often happens with bagpipe-related ‘facts’<sup>122</sup>; though this may be true, it is undeniable that it is also thanks to this tradition that we find professional orders of pipers<sup>123</sup>.

Considering that the perspective adopted by many an English author about the bagpipe is often unflattering to say the least<sup>124</sup>, the attitude of Scottish authors writing in the same period is, on the other hand, quite different: the bagpipe acquires great dignity within its martial connotation, which becomes more and more concrete. To a Scot’s eye (and ear), it is not the idyllic pastoral instrument for peasant entertainment, or the producer of unpleasant, ridiculous clatter, but it bears a majestic, noble symbolism. Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh, for instance, in her Gaelic song ‘Pòsadh Mhic Leoid’ writes:

Ciodh i sud ach Long nan rìghrean,	What is yonder but the ship of kings
Air an seinnear Na trì pìoban [...]	Whereon are played the three pipes? [...]
Dhìreadh mo leanabh Mullach mhóirbheann,	My darling would ascend the summit of high peaks,
Pìob ‘ga spreigeadh Leat ‘san tòrachd	With thee the pipe briskly playing in the pursuit,
Claidheamhna geala Dhèanadh feòlach [...]	Bright sword-blades that would make carnage [...] <sup>125</sup>

The role of the sword is particularly significant. It is in fact a noble weapon of *fine*: in Gaelic society it is the weapon of the officers, just as it is in the British Army. It is therefore a weapon of status, and its value is highly symbolic, as I will explain in the following chapters. The connection which the author establishes between the bagpipe and swords by uniting them in the same noble context emphasises the high-class status of the bagpipe. Many engravings and portraits of pipers depict them with a sword, such as the above-mentioned ‘Piper to the Laird of Grant’, or the ‘Highland Piper in his Regimentals’, a popular engraving in the 1740s based on a genre piper portrait by the Dutch Mannerist

<sup>122</sup> Cannon, *The Highland Bagpipe and its Music*, p. 54.

<sup>123</sup> By the end of the eighteenth century, the tradition of the clan piper was nevertheless already dying out, as Samuel Johnson tells us in his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*: “The solace which the bagpipe can give, they [the islanders] have long enjoyed; but among other changes, which the last Revolution introduced, the use of the bagpipe begins to be forgotten. Some of the chief families still entertain a piper, whose office was anciently hereditary”. See Johnson, Samuel, and James Johnson, *Johnson’s Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and Boswell’s Journal of a Tour of the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson*, ed. by Robert William Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 93

<sup>124</sup> Such is the case, for instance, with Shakespeare who in *The Merchant of Venice* wrote that “others when the bagpipe sings i’ th’ nose, / Cannot contain their urine [...]” – though of course the passage does not necessarily refer to a Scottish bagpipe. See William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, ed. by John Russell Brown (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1971), p. 105.

<sup>125</sup> James Carmichael Watson, ed., *Gaelic Songs of Mary MacLeod* (Edinburgh: published by Oliver & Boyd for the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1965), pp. 4–7.

artist Abraham Bloemaert (1564-1651)<sup>126</sup> and which I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 3. This element is particularly interesting in view not only of its function in Gaelic poetry, but also in Government propaganda.

Sometime after Màiri Nighean Alasdair Ruaidh and her ‘Pòsadh Mhic Leoid’, Sileas Nighean Mhic Raghnaill (or Sileas na Ceapaich, also known as Sileas MacDonald) (c. 1660-1729) also writes about the *phìob*:

Thighearna Shrùthain o Ghiùthsach nam bean,  
Thug thu tamull a’ feitheamh ‘s an Fhraing;  
Tog do phìob is do bhratach-  
So ‘n t-àm dhuit bhith sgairteil-  
‘S cuir na Caimbeulaich dhachaidh ‘n an deann.

(Laird of Struan<sup>127</sup> from the mountainous Giùthsach<sup>128</sup>, you have spent some time waiting in France. Raise your pipe and your flag – now is the time to be active – and send the Campbells home in full flight.)<sup>129</sup>

As one can see, disenchanted (to say the least) and positive views about this instrument tend to co-exist within the same period, creating a peculiar dichotomy of perspectives.

### The eighteenth century

After the Glorious Revolution, itinerant pipers became more and more numerous, and in Ireland they became strongly associated with the circulation of the Jacobite cause. It was such a common practice for these pipers to travel, also to Scotland, spreading Jacobite sympathies that they had to obtain a letter of consent from local magistrates before they could set off for their journeys<sup>130</sup>. The bagpipe became so strongly connected with the Jacobite cause that synecdochal connections were inevitable: ‘piper’ is equivalent to ‘Jacobite’ in many prints and satires, as I shall explain and demonstrate in the following chapters. The second half of the eighteenth century was characterised by a wave of national pride – possibly as a reaction to the Culloden disaster, the fear of the fading of Gaelic tradition and the consequent loss of many distinctive national cultural landmarks.

This new tendency was probably also made possible by a general English post-Culloden feeling of acceptance and inclusion of Scotland as an integral part of Britain: a sentiment not altogether unusual for winning nations to feel towards the ‘enemy’ which ceases to be a threat. In Pittock’s words: “Once defeated, it [Jacobitism] could be safely

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<sup>126</sup> Cheape, *Bagpipes*, p. 53.

<sup>127</sup> Alexander Robertson of Struan was an officer in 1689 and 1715, and Major General in the ‘45. He was also present, though not active, at the Battle of Prestonpans.

<sup>128</sup> Kingussie.

<sup>129</sup> Colm Ó Baoill, ed., *Poems and Songs by Sileas MacDonald* (Edinburgh: published by The Scottish Academic Press for The Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1972), pp. 22-23.

<sup>130</sup> Murray Pittock, *Poetry and Jacobite Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 191.



romanticized, through an emotion which – as emotions so often do – conferred only the illusion of respect”<sup>131</sup>. Various sources of the time, including bagpipe-related literature, confirm this perspective: an example is that of Kane O’Hara’s *Midas*<sup>132</sup>, a play which aims at ridiculing Italian opera to make a statement about the quality of British music. The author does this by stating the triumph of the bagpipe, played by god Pan (not an uncommon binomial), over the guitar, played by Apollo. References to “lairds” and “thistles” throughout the text, not to mention “bagpipes”, undoubtedly connect god Pan – the piper – to Scotland; nevertheless the instrument in this particular context is symbolic of the whole of Britain: bagpipe music, the music of Scotland, is equalled and ‘elevated’ to national *British* music. An interest for Scottish music was indeed spreading at the time, as I will explain in greater detail below – Roger Fiske points out that already from Purcell’s time in England it was possible to note a *gusto* for popular song, which was usually Scottish though not always<sup>133</sup>; at the same time an attitude towards the bagpipe such as the one just described would probably have been inconceivable only twenty years earlier.

Scotland received significant consideration in late eighteenth/early nineteenth century Europe, and Scottish culture soon acquired an international visibility hitherto unknown. Until the aftermath of the 1746 Jacobite rising the Highlander, just like the Irish and the Welsh, was wrapped in negative connotations which connected the Celtic race with barbarism, irrationality, and in general with a ferocious appetite for fighting and battle; a sort of under-developed being with aggressive instincts. This attitude, created by old political and religious prejudice, has been strongly reinforced by Whig history, though modified in its basic perspectives. The parameters of Whig history condition the interpretation of the past, which is seen as a ‘prelude’ to the present.

As a consequence, it is a history which often tends to exalt the winner and marginalise the loser<sup>134</sup>. After the 1730s, patriot Whigs sought to create a different discourse of British patriotism, which projected the “patriot Gothic” in a Saxon paradigm. When the scar of the Culloden disaster had been sufficiently nursed and the Highlander/Jacobite/Celt had ceased to constitute a threat for Hanoverian Britain, this new frame of mind made it possible for the ever-loyal England to ‘make amends’ with the Celtic race. As Pittock puts it, it is “the tragic finale in receipt of a superficial flattery from a historiography which can only accommodate it once it had been destroyed”<sup>135</sup>:

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<sup>131</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, p. 12.

<sup>132</sup> Kane O’Hara, *Midas: an English Burletta* (Dublin: Printed for W. and W. Smith, 1764).

<sup>133</sup> Roger Fiske, *Scotland in Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. ix.

<sup>134</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>135</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, p. 14.

Celticism, in the mellowed light of nostalgia, could be embraced by the Gothic patriot approach<sup>136</sup>.

In this particular time in history the piping tradition was thought to be risking disappearance: the period of proscription (namely between 1747 and 1782) has in fact often been interpreted as a serious blow for piping and for Gaelic culture in general<sup>137</sup>. This is in fact a rather fanciful notion. A Disarming Act was enacted in 1746, on the basis of the previous 1716 Act which the Whigs and Hanoverians had stipulated as a reaction to the 1715 Jacobite rising. To this Act a new passage was added in 1748: “An Act to amend and enforce so much of an Act made in the nineteenth Year of his Majesty’s Reign, as relates to the more effectual disarming the Highlands in Scotland, and restraining the Use of the Highland Dress”; this included tartan, plaid, philibeg (or ‘little kilt’) and suchlike garments (the measures regarding clothing and de-weaponing were only policed in 1748)<sup>138</sup>. It is on the basis of these Acts and their clauses and amendments regarding Highland dress that the myth was created of the bagpipe being included in the proscription.

In truth, in no official document is the bagpipe and piping declared to be banned or prohibited. Even though it is often referred to as an “instrument of war”, no legal document declares piping or the possession of a bagpipe to be a criminal offence, or in any way punishable by law. Even the many poets which kept Gaelic literature flourishing at the time, such as Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, Iain Mac Codrum and Rob Donn MacKay (whom I mention more extensively in the following chapters), though they were writing openly against the Disarming Act and its effects on the *Gàidhealtachd*, never so much as hint at the possibility of the bagpipe ever being proscribed, or to its use declining at all<sup>139</sup>. Given the importance of the bagpipe in Scotland, it is hardly thinkable that an author writing in defence of his/her affected culture would forget to mention such a major theme, had the Disarming Act had any noticeable effect on it. The erroneous idea was probably strengthened, amongst other cases of which I shall illustrate the most salient below, by the episode of the hanging of a piper, James Reid, in York. This affair has led many to the conclusion that the pipes were actually proscribed, together with kilts and tartan. This is in fact not true, and the incident has been misinterpreted.

James Reid was hanged three months and a half after the 1746 Disarming Act; he had been captured in 1745 in Carlisle as a Jacobite garrison. He was accused of treason, since he had taken part in the Jacobite rebellions. The “treason” consisted in having

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<sup>136</sup> Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 34.

<sup>137</sup> Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, pp. 166-167.

<sup>138</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, pp. 27-29.

<sup>139</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, pp. 52-53.

contributed to levying war against the King – a crime punishable by hanging (and, in earlier days, drawing and quartering) according to the 1351 Treason Act. His sentence had therefore nothing to do with disobeying the Disarming Act, even though the court of York pronounced the words which would mislead pipers for years:

no regiment ever marched without musical instruments such as drums, trumpets and the like; and that a highland regiment never marched without a piper; and therefore his bagpipe, in the eye of the law, was an instrument of war.<sup>140</sup>

Gibson also reports the case of Donald MacDonald, who indirectly caused the idea of the banning of the bagpipe to set its roots deeper into popular conviction:

[...] Donald MacDonald, born in 1749, a piper and pipemaker in Edinburgh in the early nineteenth century. With *ceòl mór* in mind, MacDonald wrote in his preface that “after the Battle of Culloden the Bag-Pipe was almost completely laid aside. In this interval much of the Music was neglected or lost.” Without being explicit, MacDonald implied that the Disarming Act was to blame. Although he talked of the bagpipe’s having been laid aside, he was discussing *ceòl mór* and not the entire range of pipe music [...]

As one can see, it is an issue of a few episodes having been misread. The idea of the banning of bagpipes and piping is now very much rooted into a supposed ‘common-knowledge’ about the instrument, and to this day it is a concept which is difficult to eradicate.

Old-style, traditional piping and dance after Culloden did not suffer the great crisis that many tend to attribute them (e.g. Collinson, Kilberry). In fact, in many areas these traditions remained almost untouched, particularly in the West Highlands and Islands: indeed Gibson tells us that “Between 1750 and 1760 pipes were played in the *Gàidhealtachd* as usual”<sup>141</sup>. If anything, part of the Gaelic and Scottish cultural heritage was lost due to the mass emigrations to America and Canada, which occurred about three decades later<sup>142</sup>. Though emigration had started already by 1707, the more substantial flux of mass departure, particularly to Nova Scotia, happened after the 1770s. Interestingly, though hardly surprisingly, it was the high and middle classes (and therefore the sponsors and supporters of the Gaelic community) who had the means to leave; while the poorer strata of the population could, at the most, move to the Lowlands, but generally stayed behind<sup>143</sup>.

The main reason for this exodus was the rents: in twenty years they had quadrupled, and the population was unable to pay. Reverend Thomas Hepburn of Birsay

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<sup>140</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 33.

<sup>141</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>142</sup> Cheape, *Bagpipes*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>143</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 6.

blamed the poverty of the Orkney Islands on the lairds and heritors, whom he described as “oppressive” and “luxurious”. Captain John MacDonald of Glenaladale in 1772-73 was sailing to Isle St Jean, and in a letter to his cousin Alexander MacDonald he wrote that “emigrations are like to demolish the Highland Lairds, and very deservedly”<sup>144</sup>. Throughout Scotland, the Crown chamberlains and the factors of the landlords added new exactions wherever it was possible, and even the fishing industry underwent severe taxation in order to pay the ministers’ stipends. “High Rents & Better Encouragement” was the most common reason the emigrants offered to the customs officers who registered the departing ships<sup>145</sup>. As a result, Gaelic-speaking Scots and Highlanders often unwillingly left their homeland to settle in North America and Canada. English settlers looked down on this community<sup>146</sup>, and soon started to denigrate Gaelic and discourage its use in public places, especially in educational institutions. In some settings, especially rural, the Gaelic language and culture survived for many generations, including fiddle playing, step-dance, and piping. Particularly as regards the latter, traditional music forms have remained more intact in the New World than back in Scotland, where new musical varieties seem to have overwhelmed the older ones, and interest has been diverted to more modern piping forms. A certain fact is, in Gibson’s words, that “New World piping forms have become unique anachronisms in terms of function, style and speed (particularly of reels and strathspey playing)”<sup>147</sup>.

Another factor which must be taken into account to understand the development of Scotland’s culture in this period is James Macpherson’s Ossianic material. It was the right work at the right time, as I will explain in greater detail in Chapters 4 and 5; his *Fragments* were published in 1760, and were hugely successful. Macpherson’s collected material was both a literary and political ‘statement’: the Celts possessed a foundation epic poem, enshrined in the oral memory of the *Gàidhealtachd* – an important part of culture, which England lacked. Also, Macpherson presented the importance of Celtic culture in such a way that it was devoid of any negative connotation<sup>148</sup>: as I will explain, his work in fact contributed to trigger a certain change in attitude towards the Celt. The bagpipe benefited largely from the Ossianic aura. Although it is not even mentioned in the *Fragments*, as indeed it would have been an anachronism, it often received the status of quintessentially Romantic instrument in the eyes of many authors and artists.

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<sup>144</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 7.

<sup>145</sup> Iain Charles Cargill Graham, *Colonists from Scotland: Emigration to North America, 1707-1783* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co. Inc., 2006), pp. 66-67.

<sup>146</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 3.

<sup>147</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 4.

<sup>148</sup> Pittock, *Celtic Identity*, p. 36.

About a decade after the 1745 rising not only did Scotland start re-evaluating its literary heritage with Macpherson's Ossianic material<sup>149</sup>, but James MacDonald also began to write his manual on piping: the *Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe*<sup>150</sup>. The author had intended this work to be a comprehensive account of the technique and musical repertoire of the Great Highland bagpipe. Several collections of Scots tunes had already been published in Joseph MacDonald's time, so he had a range of publications he could draw the inspiration from when writing a compendium for Highland songs; I am referring to works such as Robert Bremner's *Scots Reels or Country Dances*<sup>151</sup>, William McGibbon's *Collection of Scots Tunes* and Neil Stewart's *Collection of the best Reels and Country Dances*<sup>152</sup>, to quote but a few. John Geoghegan even wrote a *Compleat Tutor for the Pastoral or New Bagpipe*<sup>153</sup>; but no works had been dedicated to the tradition of Highland piping.

Unfortunately the young author never completed his *Compleat Theory* since he caught a "malignant fever" whilst serving in India, and died in 1763, aged twenty-four. His elder brother Patrick MacDonald saw to the posthumous publishing of his work, and also of *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs*<sup>154</sup>, a collection of song and dance which Joseph had collected and compiled in the 1750s. The only downside to this last publication was its second introductory article, written by the diarist John Ramsay of Ochtertyre, whose knowledge of Highland culture derived from little more than his readings of *Ossian*. Consequently his essay 'On the Influence of Poetry and Music upon the Highlanders' was in many aspects ill-informed, and gave a general gloomy overview of a supposedly moribund, artless Highland culture and song. This essay was unfortunately to be more influential than it ought to have been, and weighed on the opinions of many a reader<sup>155</sup>, and the influence of this attitude is still discernible to this day. In any case, what is most important is that the MacDonald brothers were the first to put the Highland piping tradition in print.

From a pan-European point of view, the bagpipes have been the inspiration for various compositions also in art music. Composers such as Bach, Corelli, Torelli, Handel and various others took to evoking bagpipes and their sound in their works; the main source for fascination came from the Italian *zampogna*, with its traditional Christmas

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<sup>149</sup> William Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society 1750-1950* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), pp. 5-19.

<sup>150</sup> Joseph MacDonald, *A Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe* (Wakefield: S.R. Publishers, 1971), original published in 1803 from Joseph's original manuscript, c.1760.

<sup>151</sup> Robert Bremner, ed., *Scots Reels or Country Dances* (London: Printed and sold by Robert Bremner, c. 1754)

<sup>152</sup> Williamson, *The Highland Pipe*, p. 24.

<sup>153</sup> John Geoghegan, *Compleat Tutor for the Pastoral or New Bagpipe* (London: Printed for & sold by John Simpson, 1746).

<sup>154</sup> Patrick MacDonald, *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs* (Edinburgh: Corri and Sutherland, 1784).

<sup>155</sup> Williamson, *The Highland Pipe*, pp. 46-54.

repertoire. Other composers, such as Lully, even introduced the bagpipe (in its *musette* form, which I shall describe shortly) in the orchestra and stage works such as *Isis* and *Thésée*<sup>156</sup>. Later it was used by Montéclair, Leclair, Rameau, Campra and other composers in various operas and ballets<sup>157</sup>.

It is between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that ‘courtly’, ‘aristocratic’ versions of the pipes are created: in Baroque France the above-mentioned *musette de cour* becomes one of the most fashionable instruments to be played by a new class of ‘make-believe Arcadia’-loving aristocracy. Precious materials, gems and intricate ornaments decorated these little masterpieces, and a smaller version of the organ bellows was the perfect solution for an aesthetically elegant means of bag inflation<sup>158</sup>. The *musette* constituted the inspiration for various other types of bagpipes: between the end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth: instruments such as the Northumbrian and Highland small-pipes, and the Irish *uilleann* or Union pipes flourished and developed into masterful displays of technical masterpieces.

### **The nineteenth-century: military piping and Highland Societies**

In the mid-nineteenth century the role of the piper was made official in the British Army. In clan warfare, pipers played on the battlefield; in the Army also the piper supported the soldiers in actual fighting. Cannon tells us that it was not until well into the First World War that the authorities decided not to place the pipers in the front line, given the great value of their supporting role. The military sphere of piping will be discussed in greater depth in Chapter 3 of the present thesis; in this context may it suffice to say that the military use of bagpipes strongly influenced piping tradition throughout the British Empire, and ensured the predominance of the Great Highland bagpipe over the Scottish musical scene, and its great international visibility. Also, given the ennobling character of the military career, the Regiment piper was (and still is) held in very high esteem. The pipes acquired an iconic status in Empire battles; an eloquent example is that of India, where to this day there are operative piping Regiments. The military involvement of the bagpipe forms one of the key phases in the history of piping in Scotland – and in Britain. For centuries England had considered the Highlanders as barbarians. A great change for Gaelic Scotland began with the Seven Years’ war, in which Britain and France fought on opposite sides. Several Gaelic regiments formed voluntarily, and many Catholic ex-Jacobites were involved. To appreciate the importance of this, it should be noted that between 1727 and 1736 English regiments were not even allowed to enrol

<sup>156</sup> Giovanni Treccani, ed., *Dizionario Enciclopedico Italiano* (Rome: Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 1970), s.v. “zampogna”.

<sup>157</sup> Grove, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. “musette”.

<sup>158</sup> Winternitz, *Musical Instruments*, pp. 81 and ff..

Highlanders<sup>159</sup>. The perception of Highland Scotland became less threatening for the Hanoverians as the '45 rising was 'allowed' to turn into a distant memory, emptied of all its political value.

Not less important for the change in perception towards the Scot is the emergence of a Primitivist frame of mind. This attitude was in clear opposition to the drastic modernisation the Enlightenment had brought, and looked upon the Celt from a somewhat de-historicised perspective. This led Celticism to become part of a fashionable attitude towards tradition and newly-found ancestral roots. In a cultural climate which made all things primordial commensurate with a finer level of feeling, the Celt was no longer the uncivilised creature so far apart from the world-famous refined British society, but a noble savage; a charming representation of elevated sentiments and purer instincts. The Highlander was now devoid of his Jacobite – therefore disloyal – connotations.

The piping tradition thrived also thanks to the Highland Societies. The example for these 'academies' was set by the Edinburgh Society, which was founded in 1755 and encouraged the flourishing of arts, manufactures, sciences and agriculture. Even more than its Scottish counterpart, the Highland Society of London (founded in 1778) soon showed a keen interest in "the preservation of ancient Highland music", not to mention the "keeping of the martial spirit"<sup>160</sup> to which the bagpipe, as we have seen, was so strongly connected. For this reason piping competitions were set up, and soon became the official way to establish a piper's skills. A standardisation of the tunes was considered a necessary step: the piping competitions could not be judged fairly unless the competing pipers could base their performances on a given standard which was the same for everyone.

The first piping competition took place in 1781, and a Gaelic poetry contest was annexed to it, on the theme "Poems in Praise of Gaelic and the Great Pipe" – for six years the winner was Dhonnchaidh Bhain Mac an t-Saoir. But already by the following year, 1782, major nationalistic and patriotic fervour became evident on the occasion of the event<sup>161</sup>, which soon turned into something resembling more, in Donaldson's words, a "national display" than a mere piping contest<sup>162</sup>. The change of climate is noticeable also in Dhonnchaidh Bhain's poetry on the "Gaelic and the Great Pipe", which I will also discuss in Chapter 2. The tone and topic of his verses gradually changes through the years, initially being a praise especially to the Gaelic language, and becoming more and more a showy eulogy to the event, the prize-pipes, and the Society's merit for keeping the

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<sup>159</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, pp. 57-58.

<sup>160</sup> Iain MacInnes, *The Highland Bagpipe: the Impact of the Highland Societies of London and Scotland*, M.Litt. Thesis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1989), p.18.

<sup>161</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, pp. 61-80.

<sup>162</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, p. 81.

piping tradition alive (as we have seen, as a consequence to the introductory article to Patrick MacDonald's *Highland Vocal Airs* it was generally though erroneously assumed at the time that it had risked disappearance).

With the advancement of the Romantic climate, and Scotland being viewed as a quintessentially Romantic country, all things with a Gaelic 'flavour' had become particularly fashionable. Dhonnchaidh Bhain explains this in his winning poem of the 1782 – therefore the second – edition of the piping competition. The poem is indeed lengthy, and I will transcribe the part of the text which deals specifically with these themes:

[...] Tha gach fasan Gàidhealach  
An dràs d' a' tighinn gu feum:  
Na deiseachan a b' abhaist dhaibh,  
'S a b'fheàrr leo aca féin;  
Coinneamh anns gach àite  
Aig na h-àrmainn as fheàrr beus;  
Gach duine labhairt Gàidhlig dhiubh;  
'S a' phìob a ghnàth an gleus.

'S i pìob-mhór na h-Eaglais' Brice  
A' phìob as mó mios an Albainn;  
Fàinneachan chnàmh air a dosaibh,  
'S i gu làidir socair calma;  
Séidear 'na màla an toiseach  
Na lìonas a corp le aintheas;  
'S sunndach an ionnsramaid phort i,  
Is àrd a chluinnteach gloc a sealbhain.

Tha i eireachdail r'a faicinn,  
Chan 'eil ball de 'n acainn cearbach,  
Le ribheid nam binnguth blasda,  
'S an stoc dreachmhor air a charbhadh;  
Gaothair' deas dìreach, gasda,  
Anns na fasanan as fhearr dhiubh;  
Sionnsair choimh-lionadh gach facail  
A nì chaismeachd a dhearbhadh.

Tha i measail air gach banais  
A bhitheas am fearann nan Garbhchrioch;  
'S feàirrd' an camp i 'n am dhaibh tarraing,  
Gu seinn coimh-theanal na h-armailt:  
'S math i g' an dùsgadh 'sa' mhadainn,  
'S g' an cur a chadal mu anmoch;  
Tha i còrr an am an eadraidh,  
'S e 'm feasgar a' chuid as fhearr dhi.

'S lìonmhor suirghich aig an ainnir  
Tha tighinn ceanaalta 'na tairgse,  
Ge b'è aca leis an téid i,  
Bithdh eudach ris agus farmad;  
Am fear dh' a bheil an dàn a cosnadh,  
'S ann air a ta 'm fortan margaidh-  
Iùbhrach nam pongannan glana  
'S éibhinn dh' a leannan bhith falbh leath'.

[...] Each fashion of the Gaels  
is now coming into vogue-  
the suits they were accustomed to  
and favoured for themselves:  
meetings are held everywhere  
by the most courteous heroes,  
each of them speaking Gaelic;  
and the pipe is always tuned.

The great bagpipe of Falkirk  
is the most prized pipe in Scotland:  
it has bone rings on its drones,  
and 'tis strong, well-balanced, sturdy:  
there is blown into its bag, to start with,  
that which fills its frame with passion:  
'tis a lively instrument to dance tunes,  
loudly was heard the guggle of its throat.

It is comely to look at,  
no item of the fittings is amiss:  
it has a reed of delicious, dulcet notes,  
and a handsome stock, all carved;  
also a trim, straight, shapely mouthpiece-  
each best of their several designs:  
with chanter that would comply with every  
[rule  
that will test the marching tune.  
'Tis esteemed at every wedding  
that takes place in the Roughbounds region:  
'tis helpful in camp at their parade time,  
to sound the assembly of the troops:  
'tis good for rousing them in the morning,  
and for sending them to sleep at night:  
'tis pre-eminent at mid-day,  
while evening suits it best of all.

The damsel has numerous suitors  
who approach her politely with proposal:  
whichever of them she goes off with,  
will incur jealousy and envy:  
the man that is destined to win her  
will have all the luck of the fair-  
her ladyship of the clear notes,  
'tis bliss for her lover to escort her.



Tha i measail ann an Lunnainn,  
 Fhuair i urram anns an tìr seo;  
 'S fèarr i na torman na clàrsaich,  
 'S thug i bàrr air cluiche na fìdhle;  
 'S mór an onoir th' aig a' phàirtidh,  
 Nach leig iad gu bràth a dhìth oirnn  
 Ceòl gun a leithid r' a àireamh,  
 'S càinain urramach na firinn.

It is highly prized in London,  
 and in this country it has won esteem;  
 'tis better than the murmur of the harp,  
 and it surpasses fiddle-playing;  
 'tis greatly to the Society's credit  
 that they will never let us lack  
 music to which no equal can be cited,  
 and the revered language of the truth.

Rogha gach cainnt Gàidhlig ra-mhath,  
 Tagha gach ciùil sgàil na pìoba,  
 'S ann a nis tha 'n t-am gu tarraing  
 Aig ard luchd-ealaidh na rioghachd,  
 Le ceòl siubhlach luthmhor ealamh,  
 Sùnnach caithriseach luath dìonach;  
 Tha 'n seo breitheanas air talamh,  
 'S gheibh gach fear a réir na nì e.

Best of all speech, unequalled Gaelic;  
 choice of all music, skirl of the pipe.  
 Now is the time for the chief musicians  
 of the realm to take their places,  
 with fluent music, nervous, nimble,  
 lively, vivacious, swift, unbroken;  
 here is judgement in the earth  
 and each will get according to his  
 [performance].<sup>163</sup>

These words give an idea of the cultural climate and of the status of the bagpipe at the time, and the importance the competitions were acquiring in the piping world. The essential feature for the “courteous heroes” is that they speak Gaelic, and that the bagpipe is “always tuned”. Almost like the Anglo-Saxon Exeter Riddle mentioned above, the bagpipe is described as a mark of nobility. It is used for weddings and in camp; the military sphere is particularly prominent. It is an indispensable presence at parades, assembly of the troops, morning wakes, midday and night. The author celebrates the qualities of the prize-pipes in homage to the Highland Society: he compares them to a damsel with many admirers for whom it would be blissful to clasp her in their arms – a metaphor which also recurs in his 1784 poem, also written for the poetry contest. The sound of the bagpipe is explicitly compared with that of the harp. The intimate past connection between Scotland and the *clàrsach* is almost denied, rejected: the sound of the bagpipe is better. The harp is in the past: the bagpipe is the future, and the “language of the truth”. Just like Gaelic, it is the voice of the nation: Scotland speaks through the Gaelic language, and through the bagpipe.

The Societies certainly had the merit of having shown an interest in the piping world, as they themselves proudly claimed:

Had it not been for the encouragement granted by the Highland Society of London, and attention given by the Highland Society of Scotland, to the practice of the Highland Pipe [...] there would not perhaps have been a single piper now living [...].<sup>164</sup>

<sup>163</sup> Duncan Ban Macintyre, *The Songs of Duncan Ban Macintyre*, ed. by Angus MacLeod (Edinburgh: Published by Oliver & Boyd for the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1952), pp. 276–281.

<sup>164</sup> *Highland Society of London Papers*, NLS, Dep. 268, Minutes, 1814–1816, 26/8/1815.

Nevertheless, their interest was not so much in supporting and encouraging the keeping of tradition. Eloquently enough, most of the judges at the competitions had no notions whatsoever about piping. Not until around the 1820s were rules set to select qualified arbitrators – though Manson complains about judges’ ignorance in piping music, and he was writing in 1901<sup>165</sup>! Again in Donaldson’s words, “the Societies’ approach was entirely utilitarian: they considered that the pipe had a single purpose – to keep the military spirit of the Gael and, by so doing, to sustain the gallantry of Highland regiments” – though the army was in fact not an attractive option for a piper, since personal pipers could perform their job without having to undergo military training<sup>166</sup>. The Highland Society of London made an ultimately abortive attempt to set up a military School of Piping; but the fact that the Society sought the Government’s financial support without ever even hinting at the possibility of funding the activity itself is probably quite eloquent in itself<sup>167</sup>. In this context, it is important to remember the role of piping in the Highland Games. These yearly events, which flourished under George IV and Queen Victoria, are a product of the ‘Celtic twilight’ of the time: they were the image (though rather flawed) of Gaelic pastimes. Piping events were an integral part of these celebrations, which are still held to this day.

The tunes originally handed down orally from generation to generation were put in print, and this had a considerable impact on the piping tradition: though on the one hand this meant an ‘officialisation’ of the tunes and all in all the achievement of a musical status, it obviously ended up ‘crystalising’ the melodies and suppressing a considerable part of tradition, since often the quality of a certain tune resided precisely in the player’s personal interpretation of it. Joseph MacDonald in his *Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe* even explicitly states the importance of the performer’s artistic freedom in playing *piobaireachd*<sup>168</sup>. In 1903 the Piobaireachd Society was formed, its objectives being “the Preservation of Old Highland Piobaireachd, and the diffusion of knowledge concerning them”<sup>169</sup>. It was originally born as the Piobaireachd Society *of Scotland*, but its connections with British high-class society and establishment soon became so strong that by 1905 the headquarters moved to London, and the “sobriquet”, in Donaldson’s words, was removed<sup>170</sup>. The Society is still operative today.

Queen Victoria’s interest in all things Scottish has become proverbial – and through to the present day, as the instrument’s legacy lives on and musical and cultural

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<sup>165</sup> Manson, *The Highland Bagpipe*, pp. 292-293.

<sup>166</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, p. 90.

<sup>167</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, pp. 90-96.

<sup>168</sup> Joseph MacDonald, *Joseph MacDonald’s A Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe*, ed. by Roderick David Cannon (Glasgow: Piobaireachd Society, 1994), p. 36.

<sup>169</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, p. 282.

<sup>170</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, p. 282.

cross-fertilisations are part of everyday life. But beyond Romanticism, one is left rather with the *legacy* of what has occurred in the period I analyse in the present work. I intend to study the *origins* of the phenomenon, which I have identified as starting with the rise of Jacobitism, and developing to its climax with the Romantic era. My aim is to focus on this transition period, which gave rise to the apparatus of iconology the bagpipe is endowed with today.

### **The bagpipe today**

Much in the way of tartan in fashion, during the twentieth century the bagpipe has become part of an eclectic music repertoire: more or less fructiferous ‘contaminations’ have come from pop music, jazz, Celtic revivalism, and even heavy metal, from artists all over the world. From Paul McCartney’s folksy sing-along tune ‘Mull of Kintyre’ (with its evocative video-clip featuring a pipe band wandering on a wind-swept Scottish beach, aiming at inducing a sense of Celtic nostalgia in the viewer), to Korn’s intro to the rather heavier ‘nu metal’ track ‘Shoots and Ladders’ which seems to simply be a mark of originality; from Asturian Hevia’s well-known ‘Busindre Reel’ played on the electric bagpipes, even to electronic music such as Martyn Bennett’s ‘Chanter’, and the Red Hot Chili Pipers’ wholly original ‘bagrock’ genre and their versions of pop/rock classics, not to mention spiced-up revisited versions of traditional tunes.

The pipes and their music are undergoing a process of hybridisation – as I have said – much like tartan. These two particular constitutive elements of Scottish identity saw the height of their popularisation after their adoption in the Highland regiments and the Army, and both are today the object of creative re-invention. Tartan is being employed widely (and wildly) not only to satisfy the marketing demands of tourist-oriented Scottish paraphernalia, but also in haute-couture. It represents a statement of rebellion and non-conformism, as can be seen in many collections by, for example, the English designer Vivienne Westwood, or as a youthful re-styling of the Scottish habit *par excellence*, which empties it of the clan symbolism which so strongly characterises it. In this way, it makes tartan ‘accessible’ and appealing to tourists and Scots alike; a clothing label like Ness, with its unconventional colour schemes, is an example of this reformulation created especially for the female customer base; and also particular models of Dr. Marten’s shoes and boots<sup>171</sup>. In much the same way, bagpipe music is undergoing the same process: its music today is no longer necessarily associated with the *pìobaireachd* and Scottish tradition, but it can enter the wide span of different fields which modernity offers. Electrification, fusion with musical genres probably unthinkable up to only a few

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<sup>171</sup> An extensive account of the employment of tartan in this more modern, hybridising way can be found in Ian Brown, ed., *From Tartan to Tartanry*. Also Jonathan Faiers, *Tartan* (New York: Berg, 2008).

decades ago, not to mention smaller details such as the creativity in the choice of the bag cover (a faux-fur maculated *animalier* cover with a dangling tail would probably make Dòmhnall Ruadh of the MacCrimmon piping family cringe) all constitute a visible process of hybridisation of the instrument's role and resources. There is certainly a growing awareness in the field of bagpiping, and a will to preserve, as well as experiment with the instrument's potential.

Not only have the pipes inspired much creativity in the musical field of the twentieth century, but also in the figurative arts: Salvador Dalí, for example, must have felt a peculiar fascination for the instrument, as one may gather from the rather disquieting scene depicted in 1973 'Bossu a la cornemuse' from the *Pantagruel* series; a work in his most typical surrealist style. Fantasy perspectives can be found in illustrator Pascal Moguerou's works, in which clumsy elves and mischievous-looking pixies dance and swirl around the sheet with their bagpipes. Literature also abounds with references to bagpipes; Hugh MacDiarmid, for instance, often refers to the national instrument in beautifully evocative terms ("They are like a human voice – no! For the human voice lies / They are like human life that flows under the words"<sup>172</sup>). The interest, as we can see, is high; it is even possible to find collections of bagpipe-related poetry and prose, such as Keith Proud and Richard Butler's *The Poetry of the Pipes: a Collection of Poems about Bagpipes*<sup>173</sup> or Stuart McHardy's *The Silver Chanter and other Pipe Tales*<sup>174</sup>. Many mentions appear in children's books such as Gerry and George Armstrong's novel *The Magic Bagpipe*<sup>175</sup>, or Carolyn Keene's *The Clue of the Whistling Bagpipe*<sup>176</sup> and various others. Kirsty Gunn's latest novel *The Big Music*<sup>177</sup> even goes as far as picking up on the concept of *ceòl mòr* – the bagpipe's 'big music' – to structure the chapters of the story according to the variations of *piobaireachd*.

Over the past few years, in Britain and particularly in Scotland other kinds of pipes apart from the Great Highland ones have been receiving particular attention. This is the case, for example, of the small-pipes, which are currently going through a positive phase of growing interest from the general public, and also the Lowland and Border pipes. The widening of the pipe spectrum encourages the healthy flourishing of the piping world.

In spite of unavoidable phases of highs and lows, today bagpipes are seen as an important element in Scotland's musical tradition. Particularly from the mid-eighteenth

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<sup>172</sup> Michael Grieve and William Russell Aitken, eds., *The Complete Poems of Hugh MacDiarmid*, in 2 volumes (Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1994), vol. 1, p. 665.

<sup>173</sup> Keith Proud and Richard Butler, eds., *The Poetry of the Pipes: a Collection of Poems about Bagpipes* (Cramlington: Border Keep, 1983).

<sup>174</sup> Stuart McHardy, *The Silver Chanter and other Piper Tales* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2004).

<sup>175</sup> Gerry and George Armstrong, *The Magic Bagpipe* (Edinburgh: International Piper Ltd., 1978).

<sup>176</sup> Carolyn Keene, *The Clue of the Whistling Bagpipe* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964).

<sup>177</sup> Kirsty Gunn, *The Big Music* (London: Faber&Faber, 2012).

century onwards they have acquired a strong national symbolism, with distinctive martial connotations which set their roots in sentiments of tradition, Highland pride and ancestral values. Though these values are possibly natural to the social and cultural history of Scotland, the boost they received from the inclusion, after much prior vilification, of Highland regiments in the British army, and from a final English acceptance of their nature as part of a British culture and identity as a whole, is enormous. To this day the predominance of the Great Highland pipes in Scotland's musical world has given this particular instrument an international visibility which even ends up merging – for better or for worse – with stereotypical representations of the culture. Scotland is famous worldwide for its pipes, as they have become an icon, a symbol, the cultural emblem of a nation.

In my next chapter, I will proceed to discuss the icon of the Jacobite, and the bagpipe's role in relation to it. Vilifying descriptions and depictions of bagpipes are already present in pre-eighteenth century sources across Europe, but, as I have explained, most of the negative aura which surrounded the bagpipe in eighteenth-century British literature and art originated from the close relation of the instrument with the phenomenon of the Jacobite risings. Much Gaelic and Anglophone literature celebrates and praises the bagpipe; it was a motive of pride. Particularly through Gaelic song, Scottish authors were to attribute to the bagpipe values of blood, honour and virility. It was also the instrument which accompanied the Jacobites in war, inciting them into battle and constituting a mark of unity and distinctiveness. Furthermore, pipers were known to play Jacobite songs to traditional tunes – a crafty yet safe way of 'spreading the word' while at the same time avoiding sedition.

As a counterpart, as the already precarious relationship between England and Scotland was further shaken by Jacobitism, the bagpipe offered non-Scottish authors and artists a pretext for derogatoriness. The literature and art analysed in the following chapter will show how much eighteenth-century literature was to charge the bagpipe with social, religious and political implications. The connections attached to it follow the steps of Scotland's dynamics and position towards England and the United Kingdom and the House of Hanover. The effects of these contrasting attitudes will be made clear in the following chapter.

## Chapter 2

### Bagpipes in the Jacobite world

In the previous chapter I have given an account of the history of the bagpipe through the centuries and all across the bagpipe world. It is understandable that, being an ancient instrument, it has come to symbolise a great many concepts, both positive and negative – it has been portrayed played by pigs and devils, courtly musicians and bawdy monks, debauched millers and valiant soldiers, drunken peasants and fashionable gentlemen.

In Britain, the bagpipe picked up its own distinctive connotations. In this chapter I will focus on bagpipe representations in British literature and figurative arts occurring over the period of the Jacobite risings, and their long trailing aftermath. By analysing the references to the instrument during this time it will be immediately apparent just how much it had come to incarnate Scotland, in the eyes of both Scottish and non-Scottish authors. Most, if not all of the references to the bagpipe which I have encountered throughout my research, have dealt with Scotland or Scotland-related issues. This bond between nation and instrument, which as I have pointed out in the previous chapter was already present by the 1500s at least, is further reinforced in this period, as the bagpipe featured prominently in the Jacobite risings. It was the instrument which identified the allies of the Stuart dynasty, widely employed by the Jacobites in battle and celebrated in much contemporaneous Scottish literature.

The issue of Jacobitism cannot be reduced to a mere ‘England vs. Scotland’ conflict. There were English Jacobites just as much as there were Scottish Hanoverians, and there were English fighting for the Jacobite army just as there were Scots fighting in the Hanoverian army. Nevertheless, a more simplistic view was taken up by many at the time – and, in truth, to this day<sup>178</sup>, whereby Jacobite was tantamount to Scottish, and Hanoverian to English. Symptomatically, the bagpipe was employed to stress the differences between the two nations. From the non-Scottish perspective, the bagpipe was a means to highlight any reason for vilification and dispraise towards Scotland; the terms of this discourse often had religious and political implications. Particularly in the eyes of English authors and satirists, ‘Scottish’ was tantamount to Highland, Gael, and Jacobite. These terms were virtually interchangeable, and were imbued with notions of faithfulness to the Stuart dynasty, and corrupt Catholicism. The bagpipe partook in imagery of national stereotype, and it stood for Jacobite Scotland, and its threat to the English rule. This is especially apparent in satirical prints, where the artists appealed to a kind of imagery which is full of devilish, sexual, and religious implications. In this chapter I will

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<sup>178</sup> Ian and Kathleen Whyte, *On the Trail of the Jacobites* (London and New York: Routledge, 1990), p. xviii.

provide an outline of the terms employed in the stereotyping of the Scot, thus showing how bagpipe descriptions are consistent with this kind of discourse.

The terms employed by Scottish authors took up very different tones. Jacobitism was a popular theme in bagpipe-related literature of the time; the issue was strongly felt, and the bagpipe was very much the mark of a common identity and a common goal. It can often be found in connection with standards and tartan, especially on the battlefield. This is indicative of how much iconic value it enshrined: to see a bagpipe, or tartan, or a military standard, was to convey a feeling of unity, cohesion, against subdual and suppression. The terms employed by authors both Anglophone and Gaelic are full of national pride, and the bagpipe is virtually an ever-present element in this kind of discourse.

The last Jacobite Rising, the Battle of Culloden of 1746, somewhat ‘settled’ the heavy political situation by providing a winner and defeated. Once the de-stabilising element for the House of Hanover had been ruled out, it was possible to re-consider the dynamics between England and Scotland. With the hatchet buried, even the most stereotypical traits of the Scot could be re-interpreted – the once proverbial savagery became tinted with the nuances of nobility. I will describe this process of “rehabilitation”, as it is termed, amongst others, by Hugh Cheape and Steve Newman<sup>179</sup>, and the way in which the bagpipe followed this development, taking up different connotations and characteristics as the status of the Scot changed.

### **The Scot and stereotype**

Through the centuries, Scottish identity has expressed itself (or, in some cases, has been seen to express itself) through a wide range of identity markers: from the well-known showy displays of stereotyped merchandise of Scottish ‘folklore’ such as tartan, the thistle, haggis and whisky, to deeper, historically rooted convictions of ethnic peculiarities, social behaviourism, and political and religious tendencies. These expressions of national identity have been the object of different interpretations, and at that not always very accurate. Unravelling the confusions and mythicisations which to this day occur about Scotland’s culture and identity is often a complex task. Studies of this kind have been (and in some cases still are) at times rather tendentious. Fanciful or wishful notions about landmarks of Scottish – particularly Highland – identity abound,

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<sup>179</sup> Hugh Cheape, ‘Gheibhte Breacain charnaid’, in *From Tartan to Tartanry*, ed. by Ian Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 13–31 (p. 20); Steve Newman, ‘Ballads and Chapbooks’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. by Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 13–26 (p. 23).

from the abuse and misuse of the word ‘Kailyard’ in literature<sup>180</sup> to James Scarlett’s speculation about the Pictish derivation of tartan<sup>181</sup>.

Even within the bagpipe world itself, authors such as Alexander Duncan Fraser, William Laird Manson or even the much more historically aware Francis Collinson, though certainly moved by the best of intentions, have provided inaccurate (if not completely erroneous) notions about the instrument’s history and heritage. Statements such as “Scotland got the bagpipes from Ireland”<sup>182</sup> and how it is “useful to-day as when it led the Roman legions of old”<sup>183</sup>, and talk about how a “true Highlander” never forgets that “his ancestors followed Prince Charlie [...] preferring a lost cause with honour to success without it”<sup>184</sup> have rather distorted the picture of the instrument and the nation, often favouring an emotional account of events to historically-based fact. Over-simplification is often to blame, as the history and culture of Scotland is at times superficially dismissed by scholars such as David Fraser Harris, who maintains that during the Jacobite rebellions Scotland was debilitated to the extent of being unable to produce any art<sup>185</sup>; or Hugh Trevor-Roper, who when talking about Highland society states that it “had almost no history, till it was invented by Hector Boece”, and “almost no literature till it was invented by Macpherson in the eighteenth [century]”<sup>186</sup>.

Anti-Highland discourse can be found in literature and satire from the Middle Ages. Animal-related and bestial imagery particularly, in connection to Highlanders and the Irish, has a long lineage. From the Middle Ages onwards, many authors all over Europe were in fact influenced in their opinions by the works of illustrious predecessors, such as Ptolemy and Tacitus. The latter, as I will explain in greater detail below, with his views of the Germanic and Celtic tribes in his *Germania*, became very influential in the construction of Whig history, according to which the past is subordinated to the present in seeking its contribution to present civilisation. On the other hand, Tacitus also juxtaposed the virtues of the *Germani* with the corruption of Imperial Rome. His *Agricola* was in fact seen as a critique of the Empire, while it praised the values of Republican Rome. These values lie at the very heart of Scottish patriot history, as promoted by characters such as John of Fordoun and Hector Boece in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and picked up, for instance, by the Jacobites and Scots who were unsupportive of the Union. Indeed the anti-Imperial words Tacitus puts in the mouth of the

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<sup>180</sup> Andrew Nash, *Kailyard and Scottish Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 14–15.

<sup>181</sup> James Scarlett, *Tartan: The Highland Textile* (London: Shephard-Walwyn, 1990), p. ix.

<sup>182</sup> William Henry Grattan Flood, *The Story of the Bagpipe* (London: Walter Scott, 1911), p. 17.

<sup>183</sup> Alexander Duncan Fraser, *Some Reminiscences and the Bagpipe* (Edinburgh: Wm. J. Hay, 1907), pp. 6–7.

<sup>184</sup> Fraser, *Some Reminiscences and the Bagpipe*, p. 7.

<sup>185</sup> David Fraser Harris, *St. Cecilia's Hall in the Niddry Wynd* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant, Anderson, and Ferrier, 1899), p. 256.

<sup>186</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, *The Invention of Scotland* (London: Yale University Press, 2008), p. 192.



distinguished Caledonian chieftain Calgacus in his speech to his followers<sup>187</sup>, have largely been employed by Scots patriots to mark a distancing from the moral decadence of the Empire. Pre-Enlightenment approaches especially saw Scotland as a nation whose history had been shaped by its struggle for liberty. The Wars of Independence, and the Declaration of Arbroath of 1320, are but a couple of the historical episodes to which Jacobitism appealed to stress Scotland's desire for liberty<sup>188</sup>.

But the Celt was stereotypically characterised as childish and immature; and these traits, during colonial times, he was seen to share with the Indian and the colonised. As Murray Pittock points out, "Sawney" is frequently, if not always, presented in the dress of a Jacobite Highlander, or at least as an aggressive and contumacious external threat to British order"<sup>189</sup>. All it takes is to have a look at contemporary caricature to realise that hilarity and irony are driven today by the same kind of stereotypes, in some cases cultivated through today's media<sup>190</sup>.



SCOTLAND

(google street view)

<sup>187</sup> The most famous passage of Calgacus' speech is possibly the section which recites as follows: "*auferre trucidare rapere falsis nominibus imperium, atque ubi solitudinem faciunt, pacem appellant*" ("Plundering, butchering, stealing they call 'empire' with false names, and where they make a wasteland they call it peace"). See Holly Haynes, *The History of Make-Believe: Tacitus on Imperial Rome* (London: University of California Press, 2003), p. 17.

<sup>188</sup> Murray Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 18.

<sup>189</sup> Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 25-27.

<sup>190</sup> randomoverload.net/a-bit-more-colorful-than-you%E2%80%99d-imagine Reproduced with permission.

Especially after the Union of 1707 Scotland, and particularly Highland Scotland, was put under the strain of conforming to ideals of Britishness, which translated, more simply, into ideals of Englishness. The consideration of England as the political ‘role-model’, an example of stability, virtuosity and balance to be followed – a sort of “English pedigree for British identity”, as Murray Pittock puts it<sup>191</sup> – subsequently implied on the long-run a form of *othering* of the Scot (and the Irish).

Englishmen often did not even distinguish clearly between England and Britain. Roger Mason explains that

[t]he problem [in the eighteenth century] was by no means new. Medieval Englishmen were equally prone to equate England with Britain and Britain with England. [...] The confusion originates with Roman usage of the term *Britannia* to denote both the British mainland as a whole and that part of it over which the empire had effective control. It was compounded, however, by Anglo-Saxon rulers. [...] As a result, by the time of the Norman Conquest, the idea of English hegemony over Britain was well-established [...] ambitions were further encouraged by the appearance in the 1130s of Geoffrey of Monmouth’s extraordinarily influential *History of the Kings of Britain*. For Geoffrey’s work served to ensure that the idea of Britain as a single geopolitical entity with a single royal overlord became not just a commonplace, but a commonplace founded on massive historical precedent. Just as Brutus the Trojan had ruled over the whole island of Britain, so too had the illustrious Arthur, and so too did the Norman kings who had fallen heir to the ancient British throne. As far as the Anglo-Norman élite was concerned, it was not simply reasonable to believe that England was Britain and Britain England, it was a matter of proven historical record.<sup>192</sup>

As emerges from Mason’s words, the original linguistic confusion about the Roman word *Britannia* was applied to a much wider context, and endowed with deeper ideological meanings. As John Koch explains, the Venerable Bede in the early Middle Ages mentioned the *Imperium*-wielders of Britain in his *Historia Ecclesiastica Gentis Anglorum*; this was glossed as *bretwalda* in Anglo-Saxon – ‘powerful ruler’. *Bretwalda* was used to indicate the rule over the provinces of Britannia; it was therefore *Imperium* by association. Starting from this concept, modern historians have “inferred a formal institution overlordship in early medieval Britain, possibly influenced by the Celtic ideas of high-king or overking”<sup>193</sup>. From the perspective of the righteousness of England’s supremacy, already expressed by Bede and encouraged in Monmouth’s work (as mentioned by Mason), the idea of the emergence of the Kingdom of Scotland which would threaten the lawful English hegemony was wholly unreasonable; a “monstrous historical affront”<sup>194</sup>.

<sup>191</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, p. 9.

<sup>192</sup> Roger Mason, *Kingship and the Commonwealth* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1998), pp. 81-82.

<sup>193</sup> John Koch, ed., *Celtic Culture: a Historical Encyclopedia*, in 5 volumes (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2006), vol. I, s.v. “Beda/Bede”.

<sup>194</sup> Mason, *Kingship and Commonwealth*, p. 82.

On its part, Scotland had its own *mythomoteur*, to use the word employed by Mason: a sort of national epos, explained by early Medieval chroniclers such as John of Fordoun and Walter Bower. Their explanatory chronicles describe the tale, of Irish origin, of the Scots' descent from Scota, daughter of Pharaoh, and the founding of the Scottish kingdom by Fergus in the fourth century BC<sup>195</sup>. This gave Scotland the possibility to claim its own ancestral descent, and its individuality: in the early sixteenth century, John Asloan wrote that

we may say this day, be verray suthfastness, thar was never land, nor is no land nor nacioun, so fre bygane of all the world nor has standing so lang tyme in fredome as we Scottis in Scotland. Ffor we have bene xvij hundredth yeire in conquest nor never was dantit be no nacioun of strange countre or king to this daye, bot evir undere our kingis of richt lyne discendand fra Gathele and Scota, first inhabitaris of this land, and fra Fergus forsaid til our soverane lord that ryngis now present.<sup>196</sup>

This origin-myth, described with great pride by Asloan, gave Scotland the dimension of a distinct, individual nation, with its own claim to an ancient, high-ranked mythical past in its own right, which did not need to rely on another nation's culture.

In spite of this 'high-ranked' past for Scotland, vilifying descriptions of Scots, and especially Highlanders as barbarous beast-like savages abound, and became particularly bitter by the end of the seventeenth century. William Cleland, for instance, was a young Scottish poet and soldier for the Covenanters, who flourished during the second half of the century and died in 1689 in the Battle of Dunkeld as he was fighting with the Cameronian regiment against the Jacobites. His 'Mock Poem upon the Expedition of the Highland Host who came to destroy the Western Shires in Winter 1678' provides various humorous references to the Highlanders. Cleland explains that the reason they can endure the weather and "hop" about – a verb with a clear animal association – under a storm is because "they're smear'd with tar / which doth defend them heel and neck / just as it doth their sheep protect"; and should the reader not believe his words, he assures that "They're just the colour of Tar'd Wool". He describes them as clean "of moral honestie" and of being accounted "sharp" in nothing "except in Bag-pipe and in Harpe" – the subtext of these words makes the instruments appear as somehow worthy of underdeveloped beings. Beside the animal-like descriptions of their appearance, posture and habit, part of their bestiality is conveyed by their seemingly irrepressible susceptibility, which could lead to murderous effects: indeed "For a misobliging word" they would "durk their neighbour ov'r the board"<sup>197</sup>.

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<sup>195</sup> Mason, *Kingship and Commonweal*, p. 84.

<sup>196</sup> John Asloan, *The Asloan Manuscript, a Miscellany in Prose and Verse*, ed. by William Craigie (Edinburgh and London: Printed for the Society by William Blackwood and Sons, 1925), p. 193.

<sup>197</sup> William Cleland, *A Collection of Several Poems and Verses* (s.l.: s.n., 1697), p. 13.

Similar approaches could still be found in the following centuries. At best, the words of many key Enlightenment philosophers and intellectuals tend to underline the emotional disposition of the Highlander, and consider Scotland's maturity to be accomplished thanks to its becoming part of Britain<sup>198</sup>. Eighteenth-century Scottish historians, such as William Robertson and David Hume for instance, have

sought to adapt their use of Tacitus, adopted from earlier defensive patriotism, to propound the idea of the 'personal liberty and independence' of the Germanic peoples as a whole, the 'freedom and independence' of the Huns and Alans and so on.<sup>199</sup>

The Whig tendencies of both historians should be taken into account, for a clearer understanding of their works. Hume refers to himself as an Englishman<sup>200</sup>, and writes from an English perspective: he opposes his views to those of the 'Scottish' historiographers, ignoring their expressions of defensive patriotism<sup>201</sup>. His opinion of the Irish is that of a barbaric population, and Scotland he sees as uncultivated, especially in the Highlands where incivility is the predominant characteristic of its population. Only recently, according to Hume, have these countries with a distinct penchant for fanaticism become "a useful conquest to the English nation"<sup>202</sup>. Robertson presented English history as a triumphant escalation towards liberty and balance, while Scotland before the 1707 Union he describes as stagnant, oppressed and feudal<sup>203</sup>. These views were not shared by everyone in Scotland, of course, but whether out of sheer enthusiasm or lack of a satisfactory alternative, many members even of the Scottish intelligentsia, especially during the Enlightenment, ended up embracing a philo-English attitude<sup>204</sup>. So much so that even Scottish scholars such as John Millar tended to use the terms "English" and "British" almost as synonyms.

In time, the effect of this inequality of attitudes has been an imbalance in the seriousness given to the study of the history of the different nations. This is certainly the case for Jacobitism: as Daniel Szechi points out,

Political movements which fail are always more stringently analysed for the seeds of their own destruction than successful ones are for the rickety tendencies which they nevertheless overcame. Consequently, analyses of Jacobitism have been dominated by

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<sup>198</sup> William Robertson, *The History of Scotland*, ed. by Dugald Stewart, in 2 volumes (London: Jones and Co., 1827).

<sup>199</sup> Murray Pittock, 'Historiography', in *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. by Alexander Broadie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 258-279 (p. 265).

<sup>200</sup> Colin Kidd, *Union and Unionisms: Political Thought in Scotland, 1500-2000* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 29.

<sup>201</sup> Pittock, 'Historiography', p. 268.

<sup>202</sup> David Hume, *The History of England*, in 6 volumes, reprint (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1983), reprint of the 1778 edition, vol. 1, p. 345.

<sup>203</sup> Kidd, *Union and Unionisms*, p. 146.

<sup>204</sup> Pittock, 'Historiography', pp. 259-260.

a feeling of impending doom and futility, and this has masked the impact of their activities or consigned them to the dustbin of history as unimportant. [...] This dismissive attitude has generally been rationalised on the grounds of failings in the sources, the unreality of the Jacobites themselves, the difficulty of researching underground organisations with any accuracy and the ultimate irrelevance of it all.<sup>205</sup>

The consequence of this superficiality of insights has been an imprecise, distorted view of history, and the simplistic reduction of complex phenomena. Jacobitism has in fact played a key part in the construction of Scottish identity over the past three centuries, and has often been depicted in rather misleading terms. Confusion arises as to who actively participated in the movement, how well equipped they were, how they operated and so forth. Many ‘common-knowledge’ notions about Jacobitism are in fact frequently covered in myth and legend, rather than facts. This has lingered on to form a net of misinformation, aiming at depicting the movement as what has been described by nineteenth-century historian Henry Buckle as “the last struggle of barbarianism to take over civilisation”<sup>206</sup>.

Scotland and its inhabitants were mostly stereotyped and generalised as Jacobites and Highlanders, and hence disloyal to the Crown. This produced a cultural construction of the stranger: particularly late-seventeenth-, and eighteenth-century English literature and Hanoverian propaganda portrayed a backward nation populated by people who are either described as uncommonly big, virulent, with unhealthy habits and instincts, or sick, pestilent, and die-hard. In the first case, “making the Jacobites huge and hairy stressed the British pluck needed to face them, and surreptitiously excused British failures to beat them earlier”<sup>207</sup>, as Murray Pittock explains; while in the second case, in Peter Womack’s words,

the invaders were not powerful and hard, but cold, hungry and lice-ridden. Not that the denunciation is tempered by any sympathy: on the contrary, it’s exactly the destitution of the Highlanders, their bestial neediness, which makes them hateful. [...] This extravagantly sordid person is not only repellent but dangerous: if he survives on little more than mud, it’s hard to see how he can be conclusively defeated, and impossible to guess what he might do on reaching London.<sup>208</sup>

Whether he is seen as virulent or pestilent, the Scot/Jacobite/Highlander appears, in literature and satire alike, as a dangerous character; a potential threat to the social order. Politically, the Scottish ‘threat’ was emblematised with the Jacobite.

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<sup>205</sup> Daniel Szechi, *Jacobitism and Tory Politics 1710-14* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1984), p. 1.

<sup>206</sup> Neil Davidson, *Discovering the Scottish Revolution 1692-1746* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 174.

<sup>207</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>208</sup> Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance* (Houndmills and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989), p. 15.

## Perceptions of the Jacobite

The commonly accepted ‘truths’ about Jacobitism clearly show how even such a historically important movement has failed to receive a just analysis and consideration. Before James Macpherson and his artful way of connecting Celts and Saxons in a possible common desire for liberty, Enlightenment authors tended to ignore the wide spectrum of society involved in the risings and reduced the events to the mere tumultuous remonstrance of a bunch of badly-armed, disorganised roguish Catholics and Highlanders. Catholics, because the Jacobites were followers of the Stuarts, who were themselves Catholics; ‘popery and slavery’ was a popular binomial in late seventeenth-century Whig language<sup>209</sup>. This was due to the Germanic connotations attributed to Protestantism as a ‘religion of the free’; in opposition to this, non-Germanic peoples (i.e. Highlanders, ‘ethnically’ Celtic) were stereotyped as Catholic and (moral) slaves. Works such as the 1693 *Chuse what you will, Liberty or Slavery: or, An impartial Representation of the Danger of being subjected to a POPISH PRINCE*<sup>210</sup> quite eloquently give an idea of the state of affairs. The rather grossly-formulated concept “gave rise to the view that such slavery was in some cases a voluntary condition of the Catholics”; this, as a consequence, implied that “their religion was a signifier of an inferior stage of development”<sup>211</sup>. The standard connotation of the Highlander was complementary and consequential: being Celts, Highlanders did not have the Germanic desire for political liberty, and were on the contrary subdued to the tyrannical Stuart dynasty. Highlanders were described as having been subjected for so long that they “have lost almost all Sense of Liberty, and given up their Understanding and Will, to follow blindly the Dictates of Tyrant-Chiefs”<sup>212</sup>. In 1651 the Cromwellians had described them as “an inexhaustible Magazeen of Auxiliaries” to be expended in war<sup>213</sup>; a society certainly not fit to mingle with the English.

A Tory connotation also emerges. It is in fact true that the Jacobites at Westminster were Tories, and mostly remained so throughout (there had been Jacobites in Parliament since 1688, and there remained some until into the 1760s)<sup>214</sup>. It is also true that Parliamentary Jacobitism was inseparable from British Jacobitism as a whole. What is not so widely considered is that, though admittedly they shared the interests of the rest of the party, they nevertheless represented an “extreme of the political spectrum”<sup>215</sup>; they were but one of the many interest groups in Parliament. As I have briefly anticipated in

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<sup>209</sup> Eveline Cruickshanks, *The Glorious Revolution* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 33.

<sup>210</sup> Richard Armes, *Chuse which you will, Liberty or Slavery* (London: Printed for R. Stafford, 1692), p. 1.

<sup>211</sup> Murray Pittock, “‘To See Ourselves as Others See Us’, the Scot in English Eyes since 1707”, in *European Journal of English Studies*, 13, issue 3 (2009), 293-304 (p. 295).

<sup>212</sup> Anon., *The Rise of the Present Unnatural Rebellion Discover’d* (London: Printed for J. Collyer, 1745). Now in the NLS, ABS. i.86.46, pp. 21-22.

<sup>213</sup> Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image*, p. 26.

<sup>214</sup> Szechi, *Jacobitism and Tory Politics 1710-14*, p. 196.

<sup>215</sup> Daniel Szechi, *Jacobitism and Tory Politics*, p. 3.

Chapter 1, Womack defines the Tory connotation as the Tory-Jacobite-Scot-Highlandman “associative web”, and explains it thus:

since Tory die-hards had presumably welcomed the prospect of a Jacobite restoration, they could be linked to the beggarly Highland army too. This association spread easily to all Tories, and then to all and any opponents of the ruling Whig oligarchy.<sup>216</sup>

This view, which unites very different concepts into monolithic ideological ‘blocks’, emerges on many occasions. Quite eloquent is, for instance, the case of an anonymous pamphleteer referring to the Tory party as being “generally composed of secret Papists, Jacobites, Non-Jurors, and such bigoted Churchmen”<sup>217</sup>. This kind of discourse has ended up over-simplifying the issue of Jacobitism and the political situation in Scotland.

It is also commonly yet erroneously thought that the Jacobite movement involved only the lower classes of the Highlands, since the strata who were profiting from the new post-Union economic asset would only view the risings as unpleasant disruptions<sup>218</sup>. This picture is limited and biased: the Jacobite movement included professionals, tradesmen, merchants, and members of the middle class; Scottish élites were also heavily Jacobite<sup>219</sup>. The Stuart vs. Hanover cause often took nationalistic forms, and was conceived in many cases a *tout-court* Scottish-English one<sup>220</sup>. The last stanza of the 1745 song by Aonghas Mac Dhomhnuill ‘Oran Brosnachaidh do na Gàidheil’ (‘An Incitement for the Gaels’) is particularly eloquent in this sense:

Gach aon neach a chasas ruibh Grad-thugaibh buaidh air; Feuchaibh d’fhir Shasuinn Nach tais anns an ruaig sibh, Fàgaibh ‘sna claisibh Gach fear dhiubh a bhuaileas, Horo togaibh an aird.	Whoever opposes you Quickly o’erpower him; Show the English In the rout you’re not gentle, Leave in the ditches Each one that resists you, Horo, make ready to go. <sup>221</sup>
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It is not a coincidence that Aonghas Mac Dhomhnuill should use the *brosnachadh* form. It is a traditional, typically Scottish Gaelic poetic form, and it is much employed in works against the English: Mac Dhomhnuill is deliberately turning to a traditional versification to make a statement of Scottishness, and as such of anti-Englishness. There was a considerable tradition of Gaelic poetry inciting to “unite all Scotland against

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<sup>216</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 17.

<sup>217</sup> Anon., *The Balance; or, the Merits of Whig and Tory Exactly Weigh’d and Fairly Determin’d* (London: Printed for J. Payne, 1753), p. 3.

<sup>218</sup> Roy Hutcheson Campbell, *Scotland since 1707* (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1985), p. 7.

<sup>219</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, pp. 83–84.

<sup>220</sup> Whyte, *On the Trail of the Jacobites*, p. xviii.

<sup>221</sup> John Lorne Campbell, ed., *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1984), pp. 18–19.

England. It was a traditional belief, clearly intensified by the Union of 1707, that there could be a national uprising in Scotland against the “Auld Enemie” in a Gaelic guise – a sort of pan-Celtic revival, embracing all of Scotland”<sup>222</sup>. There were nevertheless pro-Hanoverian companies in the Highlands, just as there were tartan-clad Jacobite groups in England. It would be limiting to describe the men who fought in the Jacobite risings as simply Highlanders *vs.* English. The main leaders of the Jacobite army were often in fact Lowlanders, the Highlanders being but a minority in military and political authority roles<sup>223</sup>.

Jacobitism took different shapes in the three kingdoms. As Murray Pittock explains:

In England, it [Jacobitism] was strongly associated with country values, high Anglican royalism tending in some cases to caesaropapism, xenophobia, nostalgia and, on occasion, Catholicism. Its radical elements centred on cross-class alliances between the disaffected and the dispossessed; its ideology, songs and even dress were often borrowed from Scottish patriot historiography. The spread of tartan in England in the 1740s was a sign of the limited options available for a domestically English language of Jacobitism, which in its turn demonstrated the restricted and declining support mechanisms for English Jacobitism. Welsh Jacobitism was deeply engaged in the English political system, while Irish Jacobitism, with its emphasis on restored Catholicism, a just settlement for Ireland under the Stuart Crown, the end of the dominion of the stranger and close relations with France and Spain, was difficult to reconcile with the Anglican insularity of its south British counterpart. Irish Jacobitism was nationalist in tone: but often the nation it sought to restore had never existed.

In Scotland, things were different again. There was a messianic tone, as in Ireland, but also some clear-cut political thinking. [...] The Scotland the Jacobites wished to see might have a Stuart monarch, a restored Episcopalian Church and an ‘ancient constitution’ restored, but it would not be a divine right monarchy. Indeed, in the event of a restoration in Scotland alone, it was inconceivable that the Stuarts would not be beholden to powerful magnate interests, while those same interests might expect to govern in the event of a restoration in three kingdoms and a rescinded Union.<sup>224</sup>

As it is possible to see from the above, the constitutive elements of Jacobitism in Britain were various, and often in conflict with each other. It was not always easy to conciliate, even for the sake of the common cause of the Stuarts, the English and Scottish nationalist factions; equally incompatible were the Roman Catholic faith and the Tory High Church<sup>225</sup>. When such clashing forces were seen united under the same common denominator of Jacobitism, it was easy to distort the true picture of the movement, and to present it as an incoherent, disorganised jumble, without considering its internal logic and propulsive dynamics. It was also for this reason that the word ‘Jacobite’ triggered superficial mental associations which grouped whole ‘categories’ of people indistinctly

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<sup>222</sup> Cheape, ‘Gheibhte Breacain charnaid’, p. 28.

<sup>223</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, p. 81.

<sup>224</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, pp. 149–150.

<sup>225</sup> Szechi, *Jacobitism and Tory Politics*, pp. 14 and 20.



under the same definition – hence Peter Womack’s above-mentioned “Tory-Jacobite-Scot-Highlandman associative web”<sup>226</sup>.

The perceived image of the Jacobite Army was that of a militia mainly composed of forced members<sup>227</sup>. This does not wholly correspond to the facts. Forcing was indeed quite common, and it has been so in most battles, on any side. Undeniably there were forced men in the Jacobite Army, but their presence has often been largely exaggerated, both at the time and by later historians, unjustly implying a supposed indifference of the population to the cause and giving *lieu* to doubts as to the credibility of the faction<sup>228</sup>. Indeed, though other elements such as family links also concurred, “the main Jacobite recruiting agent was, clearly, widespread discontent”<sup>229</sup>. The available Jacobite regimental lists testify to a well-structured organisation of the regulars. This organisation was in fact attested and accepted at the time, while later historiography has tended to ignore it, preferring to promote an image of incompetence.

Nevertheless, the numbers and evidence contained in official records do not suggest an unskilled clan-run organisation of the armed forces. In spite of the Disarming Act which passed in the wake of the 1715 rising, and which aimed at depriving the Highlands and Islands of their weapons, the Jacobites were in fact well-armed. Not all the clans with Jacobite inclinations had conformed to the imperative, and in fact many had kept their weapons and arranged to get hold of old and broken arms to be turned in for recompense. As a result, what happened was that the loyal clans were effectively disarmed, while the disloyal ones were relatively well-equipped<sup>230</sup>. The predominant imagery of the Jacobite Army sees the soldiers armed with little else apart from broadswords or backswords. This idea suited the tradition of a large part of Gaelic poetry which praised the sword as being the weapon of a true leader, and celebrated it as a heroic weapon of status. It also fitted the paradigms of Whig historiography which, on the one hand, tended to stress the boldness of the mission and its protagonists, and on the other hand its futility, especially given the total lack of hope of these *passé* forms of weapons when facing the British Army and its firearms (though it would appear that the conditions of the British Army equipment were not altogether particularly brilliant)<sup>231</sup>. It is true that among the arms used by the Jacobites the sword indeed played the most important role for its above-mentioned symbol of status (swords were not in fact used by the generality of the Army, but only by the leaders and the officer caste). The broadsword

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<sup>226</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 17.

<sup>227</sup> This is the opinion shared by historians such as John Prebble. See John Prebble, *Culloden* (London: Pimlico, 2002), pp. 53-54.

<sup>228</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, pp. 86-93.

<sup>229</sup> Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain, 1689-1746* (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1980), p. 136.

<sup>230</sup> Robert Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero, The Image of the Highlander, 1745-1830* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1995), p. 8.

<sup>231</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, pp. 163-167.

was hugely important from a symbolic point of view, but the Jacobite weaponry was largely composed of more up-to-date arms.

As we have seen, a whole apparatus of iconography, signifiers and symbolic values revolved around Jacobitism. The January 1745 issue of *The Gentleman's Magazine* contains a poem 'To Mr Urban, on his Compleating the 15<sup>th</sup> Volume of this Magazine', eloquent of the general attitude towards the Scots:

[...] But when the Scots advance, a desperate band,  
By right divine to desolate the land,  
To root up Freedom, to dethrone the King,  
To stop for ever the Pierian spring,  
In popish night to bid the world forget  
The fruits of learning, and the flow'rs of wit,  
The lighter themes forgot, you fill the page  
With heav'n-born ardour, and an honest rage;  
In Britain's cause exerting all your art,  
Rouse English virtue in English heart [...]<sup>232</sup>

Indeed the view of the Scots as a “desperate band” engaged in an equally desperate mission was very wide-spread. In these lines we find virtually all the elements the Hanoverian regime was flagging to denigrate the Jacobite movement: from the fear of the uncouth Highlander who will strip English civilisation of its freedom to the “popish night” and its bigotry. In Peter Womack's words, “the romance is not simply the aggregate of the things; it is a message which the things carry”<sup>233</sup>. In fact, the perceived image of the Jacobite did not simply exaggerate the traits of a supposed common inventory of characteristics: it also added – and invented – completely fictitious elements. This alimented the construction of a veritable myth, in the Barthesian sense, whereby special values and symbols were attributed to all things concerning – or supposedly concerning – Jacobitism, seen in its pejorative terms as the worst possible expression of Scottishness. Jacobitism became a concept “colonised by the empire of signs”<sup>234</sup>, to use a formula of Womack's.

For better or worse, Sir Walter Scott is said to be the author of an eloquent proverbial phrase “Twelve Highlanders and a bagpipe make a rebellion” (though the proverb does not actually appear in any of Scott's published works)<sup>235</sup>. In fact bagpipes form an integral part of the Jacobite-related imagery – and with reason. As we have seen, pipers were present in Scottish armies long before the Battle of Culloden, but their status was at best semi-official, if at all. But now pipers were regularly employed in the Jacobite

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<sup>232</sup> 'Britannicus', 'To Mr Urban, on his Compleating the 15<sup>th</sup> Volume of this Magazine', in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, vol. 15 (1745), front matter.

<sup>233</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 1.

<sup>234</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 1.

<sup>235</sup> Francis M. Collinson, *The Bagpipe* (London: Routledge&Kegan Paul Ltd., 1975), p. 166.

regiments, and received standard payment just like all other members of the army: 9d. daily, which was on average as much as a sergeant earned<sup>236</sup>. In military society, a sergeant's status would be an intermediate rank. And yet, the words of many Jacobite poems and songs attribute to the piper a much higher role. The instrument, and particularly the piper as an emblematic figure in Gaelic society, had a much greater symbolic status than was actually in the profession, as it was a legacy of the role of the Clan piper.

The official recognition and enrolment of pipers in the British Army in the nineteenth century, albeit in the rank of privates<sup>237</sup>, will be a key phase to elevate the status of the instrument in the eyes of the Establishment. The 'exotic' addition to the Army certainly had a symbolic value. This acquires particular significance, especially considering that the British Army was actually imitating a characterising trait of the Jacobite army, and acknowledging the pipers' military status.

### **Piping in the Jacobite world: external vs. internal perceptions**

The following pages of this chapter will be dedicated to analysing the role of the bagpipe in the literature and satire of the Jacobite era. It is possible to distinguish two, understandably very different strands which identify either side of the 'ideological' and political conflict: the anti-Jacobite 'faction' and the pro-Jacobite one. Each develops its own views and attitudes towards the instrument, cultivating the separate arguments in strikingly different terms. For anti-Jacobite propaganda, the bagpipe constitutes a colourful pretext to vilify the Highland enemy. The dispraise at times takes up fierce religious tones, or pungent irony towards political figures, such as Lord Bute and his influence on the British order, as is exemplified in satires such as the 1768 'The North Star' illustrated further on in the chapter. Clearly the terms used by Scottish authors are radically different, and the bagpipe is used to convey images of status, dignity, and patriot values – for instance the "Highland Laddie" of the homonymous song was described as a piper, and possessing "princely blude"<sup>238</sup>. The corpus of Jacobite songs is vast, and both Anglophone and Gaelic literature celebrate the national instrument with pride, with recurring themes which tend to stress Scotland's individuality towards England and its rule. I will dedicate a separate section to each perspective.

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<sup>236</sup> Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, p. 164.

<sup>237</sup> "Until 1919, everyone holding no other rank or appointment - NCO, bandsman, drummer, piper, bugler or trumpeter - was officially and legally a 'private'. This applied to all arms". See David Murray, *Music of the Scottish Regiments* (Edinburgh: The Pentland Press Limited, 1994), p. 140f.

<sup>238</sup> James Hogg, *The Jacobite Relics of Scotland*, ed. by Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), Second Series, p. 513.

## The Jacobites and their pipes: external reception

The Woodhouselee MS<sup>239</sup> gives a contemporary factual account of the bagpipe and piper's role during the various stages of the Rising: during the Highlanders' advance on Edinburgh "on they came with there bagpipes and plaids, rusty rapiers, matchlokcs [...]"; at Edinburgh Cross the "mountain officers [...] with their bagpipes and loosie crew they maid a large circle [...] the pipes plaid pibrowghs when they were making ther circle thus they stood rownd 5 or six men deep". At Edinburgh Cross, Chalmers the herald states that "I cowl'd hear at my distance distinctly, and many much further, for there was profownd silence after all these military dismissed with bagpipes playing". After Prestonpans,

The Prince lay at Pinkey House on Saturday night, and came to the Palice on Sabath evening with bagpips playing, and the body of the armie remained at Dueston. [...] I saw a parte go in cartes for Dueston escorted by Highland detachment with bagpipes and collowrs. [...] One Sabath morning they [the Army] marched off from Greenlaw with pypers playing &c towards Peebles. [...] A poor Italian prince C. Stewart, from Lochqwaber in the obscurest corner of Britain, with any ill-armed mobb of Highlanders and a bankrupt Twedall laird his secretary, and bagpypes surprising Edinburgh o'rrunning Scotland at Cockeny, defeating a Royall armie [...] A popish Italian prince with the oddest crue Britain could produce came all with plaids, bagpips and bairbuttocks, from the Prince to the baggage man.<sup>240</sup>

This extravagant – to the eyes of many an author – military 'gang', as we can see, is described marching with pipers a number of times; so much so, that the mere sound of a bagpipe was often a warning that a Jacobite troop was approaching. The presence of a piper – if not a whole group of pipers – in a Jacobite regiment was so well established that at John Reid's trial (as mentioned in Chapter 1) the judge went as far as saying that "a Highland regiment never marched without a piper", and for this reason "his bagpipe, in the eye of the law, is an instrument of war"<sup>241</sup>. This sentence, as we have seen, also gave the bagpipe the inaccurate reputation of 'instrument of war', and therefore eligible for proscription. There are no documents confirming such a theory, and no-one has even been accused or punished in any way for the mere act of being in possession of or playing a bagpipe. Reid in fact was sentenced for high treason for being a Jacobite occupying Carlisle, not for disobeying the Disarming Act<sup>242</sup>.

Government broadsheets and satires during and after the '45 campaign promoted a vision of the Jacobite in caricatured, anti-Highland terms, derisively using elements of

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<sup>239</sup> Woodhouselee, *The Woodhouselee MS: A Narrative of Events in Edinburgh and District during the Jacobite Occupation* (London and Edinburgh: W. & R. Chambers, Limited, 1907), printed from original papers in the possession of C. F. S. Chambers.

<sup>240</sup> Woodhouselee, *The Woodhouselee MS*, pp. 20, 26, 29, 39, 41, 88, 3.

<sup>241</sup> John Graham Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping, 1745-1945* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2005), p. 33.

<sup>242</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, pp. 32-34.

Scottish identity such as, for instance, tartan and Highland dress. In Jonathan Faiers' words,

In the years leading up to Culloden and those immediately following it, tartan was a convenient visual shorthand in the English vilification of the Scots, and the Highlander in particular. Caricatured as the sign of the barbaric, primitive and licentious Highlander, tartan's ignominy was cemented by the Act of Proscription.<sup>243</sup>

The bagpipe underwent, in many ways, the same fate. From the 'side' of the English government, the reception of the instrument was not enthusiastic, as like tartan it represented a cultural identifier. As I have mentioned before, the bagpipe has often been the object of scorn and derision. The rivalry between English/Whigs and Scots/Jacobites, and the strong connection between the latter and the pipes, offered a brilliant opportunity for abuse. The comments about bagpipes made by authors with Whig, Hanoverian, or more generally with Scotophobic tendencies could often be unflattering. Tribal or quasi-tribal characterisations for instance were typical of anti-Scottish discourse. Scotland received the same distancing treatment of non-Englishness as England's colonies, and as such orientalism and tribalism were all part of the same coin, attributable indistinctly to the populations of India, Africa, Ireland and Scotland (particularly Highland) alike. Depictions of colonial populations stressed their particular differences, and much the same happened with descriptions of the Highlander<sup>244</sup>. Such implications can be detected in the scene suggested by Mrs. Aphra Behn in her 1689 play *The Widow Ranter, &c.*, in which during a celebration "Enter the Bagpiper, playing before a great Bowl of Punch, carry'd by two Negroes, a Highlander dancing after it"<sup>245</sup>. In an entry of 29 November 1762, James Boswell in his *London Journal* reported a conversation he had had with Lord Eglinton, who apparently claimed that

a savage had as much pleasure in eating his rude meals and hearing the rough notes of a bagpipe as a man in polished society had in the most elegant entertainment and in hearing the finest music<sup>246</sup>

We can see how Lord Eglinton does not give any further specification about the "savage": he is nationless, a prototypical barbarous creature, whose characteristic habits are eating "rude meals" and enjoying the sound of the bagpipe. These features set him as farther apart as is possible from refined society. Bad hygiene, another mark of lack of civilisation,

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<sup>243</sup> Jonathan Faiers, *Tartan* (New York: Berg, 2008), pp. 45-46.

<sup>244</sup> Janet Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 37-38.

<sup>245</sup> Mrs. Aphra Behn, "The Widow Ranter, &c.", in *The Works of Mrs. Behn*, in 3 volumes (London: Printed for R. Wellington, 1711), vol. 2, 326-399 (p. 347).

<sup>246</sup> James Boswell, *Boswell's London Journal, 1762-1763*, ed. by Frederick Pottle (Yale: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 56.

was also a trait attributed to savages – and as such also to the Scots (and the Irish). William Congreve, a staunch Whig, traced a derogatory parallel between bagpipes and bad breath in his 1700 masterpiece *The Way of the World*: “Horrible! He has a Breath like a Bagpipe ----- Ay, ay, come will you march, my *Salopian*?”<sup>247</sup>.

Thomas Brown, Grub Street writer and satirist, published in 1702 his *Letters from the Dead to the Living*. In this work the author invents correspondence between various well-known characters. Particularly interesting in this context is the correspondence between Baroque organists and friends Henry Purcell and John Blow. From Hell, where Brown for some reason relegates him, Henry Purcell writes to John Blow about many people: composers, musicians etc., and the lifestyle they and he himself lead in this music-filled Hades. At one point, Purcell writes about Doctor Stag\_\_\_\_s, identifiable with Dr. Nicholas Staggins, Master of the King’s Music and Professor of music at Cambridge<sup>248</sup>. According to Purcell, Staggins is all the better for his permanence in Hell, where “his Business is to compose *Scotch* tunes for *Lucifer’s* Bag-piper”<sup>249</sup>. In his response to Purcell’s letter, upon commenting on the erroneous epitaph on Purcell’s marble stone (which assigns him a place in Heaven) and the relativity of perspectives towards attributed virtue or vice, Blow states that

The Fanaticks especially are very highly offended at it [the epitaph] and say, It looks as if a Man could Toot himself to Heaven upon the Whore of *Babylon’s* Bagpipes, and that Religion consists only in the true setting of a Catch, or composing of a Madrigal.<sup>250</sup>

It is interesting that Brown should imagine the devil himself to have a piper play for him. The way in which the pipes are presented in Blow’s letter, as the ‘lowest of the low’ in the hierarchy of musical instruments, is also fascinating, and is charged with religious connotations – which, as we shall see, recur in a number of occasions. The bagpipes in this context represent Catholicism in its most corrupt version; as seen by the “Fanaticks”. It is very interesting that bagpipes should have such a strong religious implication connected to them.

Edward Ward, better known as ‘Ned’ Ward, makes some extraordinary remarks concerning the bagpipes, similar to Brown’s. His detailed biography remains obscure, but

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<sup>247</sup> William Congreve, *The Way of the World*, second edition (London: Printed for Jacob Tonson, 1706), p. 51. Originally published in 1700.

<sup>248</sup> George Grove, Eric Blom and Denis Stevens, eds., *Grove’s Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001), s.v. “Staggins, Nicholas”.

<sup>249</sup> Thomas Brown, ‘Letters from the dead to the living, and from the Living to the Dead, both Serious and Comical’, in *The Works of Thomas Brown*, ed. by Sam Briscoe, in 4 volumes (London: Printed for Sam Briscoe, 1719), vol. 2, p. 298.

<sup>250</sup> Brown, *The Works of Thomas Brown*, p. 300.

he was a Grub Street poet, pamphleteer, story-teller and landlord of a public-house<sup>251</sup>. In 1710 he published his *Nuptial Dialogues and Debates*: as the title describes, they are a series of conversations and arguments on various topics made by different married couples. In Volume I, 'Dialogue XXVII Between a High-Church Gentleman and his Low-Church Lady, about the difference of their Opinions', a High-Church husband tries to convince his wife to follow his creed: the Anglican faith. Upon this intimation, the reformist wife fiercely reacts:

D'ye think I'll go to Mass, not I, indeed,  
I'll be no Convert to a Popish Creed:  
No, Satan, I defy thy wicked Power,  
No *Babylonian* Whore shall draw me to her;  
I hate her Smock, her Porridge, and her Pipes,  
Her Butcher's-Sleeves, her Crosses, and her Types<sup>252</sup>

In the same way she carries on listing the series of traditions and customs typical of the Catholic tradition, of which she disapproves. The element of Scottishness is conveyed, in the Low-Church lady's discourse, by the merging of the Anglican faith into the Catholic one, which she identifies with Scotland (i.e. "I hate her Smock, her Porridge, and her Pipes"), 'traditionally' seen as a Roman Catholic nation following king James' belief, though in eighteenth-century Scotland Catholics were but a minority – estimates state probably not more than 2 per cent of the overall population<sup>253</sup>. It is quite a recurring theme to identify Highland Scots as Catholics when it is functional to mark an opposition with the English rule. Bagpipes, in this context and view, become a religious symbol related to the Anglican faith seen as closely following Roman Catholic Church practices.

An analogous reference can be found in another dialogue in the second volume of his *Nuptial Debates*. Dialogue XV is 'Between a Dissenting Alderman, and his High-Church Lady': the Alderman asks the High-Church lady:

Why to St. *Paul's*, my Dear? What make you chuse  
A Church that *Jacobites* and *Papists* use,  
Where *English* Mass is lyric'd o'er by Boys,  
And *Popish* Bagpipes make a hideous Noise?  
How can a sober Christian be devout  
Amidst such Fa-la-la, and Toot-a-Toot?  
A Jargon that profanes the Sabbath-Day,  
And makes you fitter far to dance, than pray?<sup>254</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Howard William Troyer, *Ned Ward of Grub Street* (London: Frank and Cass Company Limited, 1968), pp. 3–5.

<sup>252</sup> Edward Ward, *Nuptial Dialogues and Debates*, in 2 volumes (London: printed for C. Hitch et al., 1759), vol. 1, p. 238.

<sup>253</sup> Allan Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1996), p. 175.

<sup>254</sup> Ward, *Nuptial Dialogues*, vol. 2, p. 199.

Here the idea is even further stressed, and again the Anglican faith shares, in the view of the dissenting husband, the traits attributed to the Roman Catholic faith, and therefore to Jacobites also. The appreciation or depreciation of bagpipes and their music is clearly a pretext to criticise and condemn the two different faiths, with the intent to try and prove the supremacy of one over the other. The husband, very much irritated by his wife's speech, responds to her opinions on the church and bagpipe music in very harsh terms: her "Heathen Bag pipes" should be of use in *Smithfield*<sup>255</sup> Booth, or *Wapping*<sup>256</sup> Musick-house", because such a "*Babylonian Noise*" and "Jargon Sound" is not fit for Church. In fact he defines them as "filthy", "odious", "noisy Pipes, that do in Brothels stand", and it is a "great Abuse" to use "those wicked Instruments", as their "Whistles roar aloud in Fairs and Brothels": the pipes are used in "ill Houses", and "Moorfields Bawdy-houses"<sup>257</sup>. The dispraise is very heavy: bagpipes are defined as being enjoyed by the lowest strata in society, and therefore their use in church cannot be acceptable. According to Ward, the bagpipes are the instrument of brothels. This statement is of no small sociological consequence. Although in Scotland bagpipes were indeed seen as an instrument to accompany merriment, it would be extremely difficult to find in the works of a Scottish author an assertion similar in tone and tenor to Ward's, as will emerge from the passages analysed below.

A certain contested 'hierarchy' in classifying musical instruments has always been present, especially in the contraposition between string and wind instruments; it is also a recurrent leitmotif in the figurative arts (e.g. Titian's *Concerto Campestre*). But in the case of the bagpipe this distinction appears to go further. Particularly worthy of notice is the vilifying role of the "Whistles". Since Medieval times whistling was considered as morally inappropriate, especially for women, since it is considered to be an immodest act. Eloquent in this sense is the proverb "A whistling maid and a crowing hen are neither fit for God nor men", which is why "A whistling woman never marries" – yet another popular saying. The context Ward describes is suggestive of the bagpipe being unsuitable for receiving the word of God, and that its sound should be equated with a whistle is not a coincidence. The 'ungodliness' of bagpipes is not a trait attributed to Scottish bagpipes alone: also elsewhere in Europe the bagpipe could (and still can) be seen portrayed being played by devilish creatures, and even built in the shape of a goat – famously one of the possible symbolic representations of the devil<sup>258</sup>. Below are but a few examples of these representations: the first image is a *Pan Silvanus* from an anonymous Italian fourteenth-

<sup>255</sup> Smithfield is a locality in London, where cattle and other livestock were sold. John A. Simpson, and Edmund S. C. Weiner, eds., *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), s.v. "Smithfield".

<sup>256</sup> Wapping is also a locality in London, in the Docklands area. *O.E.D.*, s.v. "Wapping".

<sup>257</sup> Ward, *Nuptial Dialogues*, vol. 2, pp. 202–204.

<sup>258</sup> Hope Werness, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Animal Symbolism in Art* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2006), s.v. "goat".



century manuscript<sup>259</sup>; the second one is a fresco of a devil-goat piper found in a fifteenth-century church in Härnevi, Sweden<sup>260</sup>, and the third one is a fifteenth-century misericord of a devil-piper punishing an alewife, found in the St Laurence's Church in Ludlow<sup>261</sup>.



As we can see, the devil-and-bagpipe dichotomy is indeed a well-rooted one; Ward is using it to stress the ungodliness of the instrument for its bawdy associations, which make it unworthy of the church. The dialogue is obviously aiming to try to throw the defects of each faith in each other's faces, and the bagpipes seem to incarnate these defects – or rather, they appear to be the perfect means to deal with them; their symbolism and characteristics are used by both sides to attack the other.

The dissenting husband then explodes in a very strong expression: "I'd rather hear the *Tower* Lyons roar; I tell thee they're the Bag-pipes of the Whore"<sup>262</sup>. The "Lyons" Ward refers to are precisely the lions that used to be kept in the Tower of London, and which became a symbol of the Crown: the authority of Protestant succession, and as such the emblem of the opposition to the Roman Catholic faith – the Whore of Babylon. The dissenting husband shows all his wrath and disgust towards music, and towards bagpipes especially – almost exclusively. It is as if the bagpipe was in itself is an evil, corrupt instrument, much in the same way as the flute in the song 'The Old Orange Flute', which would keep playing the tune 'The Protestant Boys' even as it burned in front of the Catholic priests who ordered its destruction<sup>263</sup>. The last sentence of this previous reply, "I tell thee they're the Bag-pipes of the Whore", is a strong statement,

<sup>259</sup> Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Ms. Ashb. 1166, c. 18r. By concession of the Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo. Reproduction by any other means is not permitted.

<sup>260</sup> Photo © Index of Christian Art, Courtesy of Lars-Olof Albertson. Reproduced with permission.

<sup>261</sup> Photo © Adrian Fletcher, paradoxplace.com. Reproduced with permission.

<sup>262</sup> Ward, *Nuptial Dialogues*, vol. 2, p. 204.

<sup>263</sup> See Matthew John Caldwell Hogart, ed., *The Faber Book of Ballads* (London: Faber & Faber, 1965), pp. 216-217.

which firmly links the bagpipes to the Catholic faith, the ‘whore’ being a symbol of corrupt Catholicism.

In order to further tighten the bond he sees between what truly appears as a trichotomy – Scotland, Catholicism, and bagpipes – the husband declares his position even more overtly, and furiously exclaims:

Am I possest with an infernal Sprite,  
You Witch of *Endor*, nay, you *Jacobite*?  
[...] I'm a true Low-Church Protestant, and hate  
To hear your Pipes, in whose Defence you prate:  
Their odious Sound shall never take with me;  
Their very Breath smells strong of Popery;  
And when their Anti-Christian Toots I hear,  
I fancy that the scarlet Whore is near.<sup>264</sup>

The connection with religion is incredibly strong in this passage. Bagpipes are, to the dissenter's eyes, evil to the extent of being anti-Christian. The essence of all evil is enshrined in the symbol of the bagpipes, together with their apparatus of signifiers. The wife's answer still keeps the topic of bagpipes as very marginal, as if she does not understand that her husband's rage is mostly against *them*, and only partly towards organ or other music – a behaviour which makes one wonder whether she is merely ignoring the matter because she finds it irrelevant, or whether she herself cannot wholly justify it. The dialogue ends with the husband leaving for his own business, and letting the question drop unsolved.

An alternative interpretation of the symbolic meaning and value of the bagpipe cannot be altogether ruled out as regards the two latter passages – Thomas Brown's and Ned Ward's. The word ‘bagpipe’ may in fact have been used by the two authors as a derogatory term to identify the organ, whose constitutive elements do include a form of bag – the bellows – and pipes. This perspective is more literal, but cannot be excluded. Henry Purcell and John Blow were organists; and playing the organ in church was and still is a Catholic tradition, while it is difficult to find references to bagpipes being played in Catholic services in church. A late seventeenth century British traveller in Holland describes the Dutch custom of playing the organ in church, saying that “it seemed to be a reproach to our dissenters, who exclaim with so much vehemence against these church bagpipes as they style them”<sup>265</sup>. Ned Ward refers to the bagpipe being played in brothels: in his opinion the “noisy Pipes, that do in Brothels stand”, as we have seen, have “profan'd” the Church. The allegorical sexual implication of these references is evident, though one cannot exclude the possibility that the author is hinting at the use of organs,

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<sup>264</sup> Ward, *Nuptial Dialogues*, vol. 2, pp. 206-207.

<sup>265</sup> Anon, *An Account of My Two Voyages beyond Sea* (New Haven: Yale University, Beinecke Library, MS Osborn, n.d.), p. 20.

or also portative organs, which could be transported freely wherever needed – in brothels, churches, or fairs, as Ward also suggests. The sound of a portative or positive organ is more suited to the onomatopoeic “Toot”, “Toot-a-Toot” and “Fa-La-La”s which both Thomas Brown and Ned Ward refer to. Indeed, a portative organ was on many occasions, such as mass, processions or private entertainment, a possible alternative to the better-known church organ (or ‘kist o’ whistles’, as it was also called in Scotland<sup>266</sup>, whence possibly the reference to the “vile unhallow'd Whistles”). Church organs are also known to have ‘found their way’ to taverns and music houses during the Commonwealth<sup>267</sup>, which may have appeared deplorable to Ward’s angry Low-Church husband.

Wherever the truth may lie, and whatever the authors meant – symbolically or literally – by their references to bagpipes, both points of view further stress the connection between this instrument and the Roman Catholic faith. Whether Brown and Ward were actually referring to bagpipes all along, or whether the term was being employed as a derogatory ‘synonym’ for the organ, the connection with the Roman Catholic faith is all the more confirmed. In both cases, the bagpipe appears as the perfect icon to represent popery and Catholicism.

But the Catholic-Highland connotation, so preponderant in Ward’s *Dialogues*, is not consistent, which confirms the notion explained above that Scottishness, as well as Jacobitism, is subject to contradictory forms of cultural identification. Authors such as the Scottish John Arbuthnot identify Scotland with Presbyterianism rather than Catholicism. In *The History of John Bull*, first published in 1727, John’s sister Peg represents Scotland; in Arbuthnot’s words, “a poor girl [...] bred up under the influence of a cruel stepdame, and John [...] the fondling of a tender mother. [...] Miss looked pale and wan, as if she had the green sickness [...]”<sup>268</sup>. She is described as being a queer character, with “odd humours” (namely, the Presbyterian faith), and John Bull would tease her:

"What think you of my sister Peg," says he, "that faints at the sound of an organ, and yet will dance and frisk at the noise of a bagpipe?" "What's that to you?" quoth Peg. "Everybody's to choose their own music." Then Peg had taken a fancy not to say her Paternoster, which made people imagine strange things of her. Of the three brothers that have made such a clutter in the world—Lord Peter, Martin, and Jack — Jack had of late been her inclinations. Lord Peter she detested, nor did Martin stand much better in her good graces; but Jack had found the way to her heart.<sup>269</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> *O.E.D.*, s.v. “kist”.

<sup>267</sup> Geoffrey Cox, *Organ Music in Restoration England*, in 2 volumes (New York: Garland, 1989), vol. 1, pp. 16–17.

<sup>268</sup> Arbuthnot, John, *Law is a Bottomless Pit, or, The History of John Bull* (Glasgow: printed for Robert Urie, 1766), p. 87.

<sup>269</sup> Arbuthnot, *The History of John Bull*, pp. 89–90.

The mentioned Peter, Martin and Jack each represent a branch of Western Christianity (i.e. the Roman Catholic Church, the Church of England, and the Presbyterians). Yet it is not Peter that Peg is inclined to, but Jack, and her disaffection for organ music comes from the Presbyterian's dislike for the practice of playing music in church

Arbuthnot's reference to Peter, Martin and Jack is a clear intertextual connection to Jonathan Swift's 1704 *A Tale of a Tub*, one of his better-known satires, which deals with religious excesses, together with *The Battle of the Books* and *A Discourse concerning the Mechanical Operations of the Spirit*. The *Tale of a Tub* is the tale of three brothers, Peter, Martin and Jack: precisely the three above-mentioned branches of Christianity. Towards the end of *A Tale of a Tub*, the author makes an interesting remark about a peculiar reaction of Jack's:

He was troubled with a disease the reverse to that called the stinging of the tarantula, and would run dog-mad at the noise of music, especially a pair of bagpipes. But he would cure himself again by taking two or three turns in Westminster Hall, or Billingsgate, or in a boarding-school, or the Royal Exchange, or a state coffee-house.<sup>270</sup>

His reaction to the bagpipes is most interesting, being paralleled to the opposite of the trouble deriving from the sting of a tarantula – an ancient legend linked to demonic possession of southern Italian origin, according to which the affected person dances his possession away in a craze to the sound of a *tarantella*. The reason for this extreme reaction is the loathing of music, especially during services and in church in general, which characterised the attitude taken by dissenting religious tendencies. So, while the *tarantati* would dance frantically to music in order to be purified and liberated from the devilish presence, Jack would escape from such a contingency, evidently for fear of being 'contaminated' by the music's sinful nature.

His remedies against this potential contamination are precisely the most representative of anti-popish and anti-monarchical ideology. Coffee-houses for instance were notoriously considered as places of idleness and free discourse, where the disaffected met and spread scandal about the King, producing "very evil and dangerous effects", as a 1675 Proclamation declared<sup>271</sup>; for this reason they were close to being suppressed during the reign of Charles II. The other quoted places – Westminster Hall, Billingsgate, the Royal Exchange etc. also bear the same connotations of disaffection. Another relevant reference Swift makes about bagpipes in connection with religion and its deriving political implications can be found in *The Mechanical Operations of the Spirit*. Swift

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<sup>270</sup> Jonathan Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, ed. by Adolph Charles Guthkelch and David Nichol Smith (Oxford: Clarendon press, 1958), pp. 195-196.

<sup>271</sup> Markman Ellis, *The Coffee House: a Cultural History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004), p. 86.

mockingly analyses the many different ways through which the spirit functions. He explains some of the most striking habits and attitudes of religious nature, particularly those he relates to Puritan enthusiasm. Canting, for instance, is in his opinion an “art”, as he derisively terms it, peculiar to the Puritan faith, and he describes it thus:

among all improvements of the spirit wherein the voice hath borne a part, there is none to be compared with that of conveying the sound through the nose, which, under the denomination of snuffling, hath passed with so great applause in the world”.<sup>272</sup>

Upon explaining the origin and history of this “art” of snuffling he reveals that

All agree, that it first appeared upon the decay and discouragement of bagpipes; which, having long suffered under the mortal hatred of the brethren, tottered for a time, and at last fell with monarchy.<sup>273</sup>

According to Swift, the explanation to this attribution of the birth of canting through “snuffling” to the decay of bagpipes can be found in an episode which happened to a “Banbury saint” (a Puritan fanatic) when snuffling (canting) was not yet ‘fashionable’ – while bagpipes were. As he was in “tabernacles of the wicked”, he felt “pricked forward by odd commotions; an effect very usual among the modern inspired”. Given the awkward timing of the “odd commotion”, he could not engage in praying or lecturing to alleviate his distress, and so he “wrestled with the flesh [...] coming off with honourable wounds all before”. In spite of the surgeon medicating the affected areas, the “disease”, as Swift calls it, “driven from its post, flew up into the head”. Now, “the naturalists observe” that the more the nasal passages are occluded, the more people are inclined to talk. “By this method, the twang of the nose becomes perfectly to resemble the snuffle of a bagpipe, and is found to be equally attractive of British ears”. Thus, henceforth, doctrines sounded more credible when “delivered through the nose”.

The “mortal hatred of the brethren” which in Swift’s opinion shook the bagpipes’ status, refers to the abhorrence evidently felt for the instrument by Calvinist sects which, in this work, constitute the main target of Swift’s satire; their aversion is actually addressed to the Scottish radical sects which, at the time, must have been connected, if not to bagpipe playing, to canting – speaking “through the nose”. It is most interesting that Swift should talk about a “decay and discouragement of bagpipes”; the reference is to the Glorious Revolution. The monarchy which according to Swift declined together with the bagpipes is clearly James II’s: the bagpipe, in the author’s opinion one of the truest

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<sup>272</sup> Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, p. 280.

<sup>273</sup> Swift, *A Tale of a Tub*, p. 280.

symbols of Scotland, is the emblem of what is lost with the 1688 Revolution. They represent all that is left of the Stuart dynasty.

What is striking in Brown's, Ward's, Arbuthnot's and Swift's works is the extent to which religion becomes a cultural signifier. Whichever political faction, religious belief or general behaviourism is aimed at, if it concerns Scotland then the bagpipe seems to incarnate an ideal means for derision or reproach. So much so, that John Couper chose the title 'Bag-Pipes no Musick'<sup>274</sup> for his 1720 broadside, a satire on Scots poetry – "Sooner shall ABEL teach a singing Bear / Than *ENGLISH* Bards let *SCOTS* torment their Ear", he protests!

A Whig song contained in James Hoggs' *Jacobite Relics* called 'The right and true History of Perkin', first printed in 1716, is a humorous reference to the "warming-pan story", which suggested the illegitimacy of James II and VII's son, James Francis Edward<sup>275</sup>:

[...] Ye whigs, and eke ye tories, give ear to what I sing,  
Then to begin the show, Lord Mar, that never was upright,  
To summon all his bagpipe-men to Scotland took his flight.

Ye whigs, and eke ye tories, give ear to what I sing,  
He sent his bailie jockey round, to summon all his clans,  
With a concert of bagpipes – it should have been warming-pans. [...] <sup>276</sup>

The lack of seriousness bagpipes receive, and the unflattering parallel with the "warming-pans" and everything they represent, clearly shows how the instrument is symbolic of a 'faction', and by being derogatory towards the pipes the author is aiming at the very core of Scottish – or in this case specifically Tory which, as we have seen was often perceived, through a distorted syllogism, as a synonym of Jacobite – pride.

A similar explicit Tory connection with the bagpipe – inseparable, it appears, from religious implications – appears in Scottish author Tobias Smollett's novel *The Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves*, the first instalment of which appeared in 1760. The work was written along the lines of Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quijote*, and the plot is in fact constructed around the adventures of an eighteenth-century knight, Sir Launcelot, and Timothy Crabshaw, his amusing squire. It was nevertheless not a very highly considered

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<sup>274</sup> John Couper, *Bagpipes No Musick: A Satyre on Scots Poetry, an Epistle to Mr. Stanhope*, broadside (Oxford: 1720).

<sup>275</sup> Murray Pittock, *The Invention of Scotland* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 20.

<sup>276</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, p. 446. Perhaps to understand the words better it should be pointed out that the first stanza recites as follows (italics are mine):

Ye whigs, and eke ye tories, give ear to what I sing,  
For it is about the chevalier, that silly would-be king:  
He boasts of his nobility, and when his race began,  
Though his arms they are two trowels, *and his crest a warming pan.*

work, as is almost inevitably the case with authors trying to imitate or let alone surpass the Cervantinian masterpiece. Chapter IX (sub-titled ‘Which may serve to shew, that true patriotism is of no party’) of the work begins with the knight’s awakening after a very light and short repose at an inn: he is

disturbed by such a variety of noises, as might have discomposed a brain of the firmest texture. The rumbling of carriages, and the rattling of horses’ feet on the pavement, was intermingled with loud shouts, and the noise of fiddle, French horn, and bagpipe<sup>277</sup>.

This tumult was caused by a procession of demonstrators who were holding banners and a blue standard with a white writing: “Liberty and the Landed Interest”. The crowd of protesters was shouting “No foreign Connections – Old England for ever”. This slogan received counter-cries from the populace: “No Slavery, - No Popish Pretender”, upon which the two parties started squabbling and bickering, and throwing things at each other. When another parade of dissenters approached the scene, carrying signs bearing the motto “Liberty of Conscience and the Protestant Succession”, they were greeted with cheers and support from the population.

To fully understand the meaning of the passage it is important to contextualise the episode and identify the parties in question. The first group of demonstrators was led by Sir Valentine Quickset, a fox-hunter popular among the upper-middle class gentry and freeholders; while the leader of the second group was Mr. Isaac Vanderpelft, a rich stock-jobber and contractor with Jewish connections, known to have distributed large sums of money in order to secure votes from the yeomanry and of the country, many of whom were dissenters and weavers. The two parties, identifiable respectively as Tories and Whigs (as will later be explicitly confirmed by the author himself), were getting ready for a public political debate, in view of oncoming elections. The Tory group, Sir Quickset’s, obviously has conservative tendencies (even the specification of his main characterising activity – fox-hunting – is indicative of a typical English custom normally associated with conservative ‘ideology’), and the leader’s means to win votes and public interest is to boast anti-foreign and pro-English proclamations and political programs. He claims he is an “unworthy son of the church”<sup>278</sup>, and would appear to be a fervent Christian Catholic, or a high-flying Anglican, as the anti-Popish cries against him coming from the population suggest. Peculiarly, it is precisely this group that enters the scene accompanied by the sound of bagpipes. The strong national sentiment which the bagpipes carry in their deeper symbolism is applied to reinforce Englishness – since no mention is

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<sup>277</sup> Tobias Smollett, *The Life and Adventures of Sir Launcelot Greaves*, ed. by Robert Folkenflik and Barbara Laning Fitzpatrick (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 2002), p. 69.

<sup>278</sup> Tobias Smollett, *Sir Launcelot Greaves*, p. 71.



made at all to ‘Britishness’, let alone ‘Scottishness’: the emphasis is on the strictly English aspect – the nationalistic effect that Quickset intends to give to his parade of protesters, and which bears the charge of representing the upper-middle class, nationalism, conservative attitudes, and with Catholic implications. The other party, on the other hand, represents the Whigs, supporters of King George and Protestantism. Although, in reference to bagpipes, it is not possible to trace a ‘Sir Quickset *vs.* Mr. Vanderpelft’ type of conclusion, the facts which emerge from the related fictitious events certainly draw attention to the political and religious implications which the bagpipes tend to acquire.

A 1745 satirical print, ‘The Chevaliers Market, or Highland Fair’<sup>279</sup>, is an attack on, and a warning about, the characteristics which a Scottish dominion under the Pretender might bring, and which would ruin English civilisation. The title is a reference to Joseph Mitchell’s 1731 ballad opera *The Highland Fair*<sup>280</sup>, in which “he intended to display the comical humours of the highlanders”<sup>281</sup>, as Henry Fielding explained after he had seen the opera.



<sup>279</sup> BM 1867,0511.54. Use of the image is authorised by the BM. See Michael Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner* (Cambridge: Chadwick-Healey, 1986), pp. 148–149.

<sup>280</sup> Joseph Mitchell, *The Highland Fair, or, Union of the Clans* (London: Printed for J. Watts, 1731).

<sup>281</sup> As cited in David Erskine Baker, Isaac Reed and Stephen Jones, eds., *Biographia Dramatica*, in 3 volumes (London: Printed for Longman, 1812), vol. 2, p. 301.



In satirical display are symbols of popish corruption, superstition and bigotry, imported French and Italian foods with the most unappetising names (e.g. “Fine Plump Frogs for a Fricassee”), while the English liberties, with religion, credit etc., are swept away in the form of torn pages from a book.

Amongst all these symbols of ‘acquired’ Scottishness it would almost be surprising not to find a reference to a bagpipe; and in fact on the lower left-hand corner, beneath the balcony where the Pope, Cardinal Tencin and a monk are standing, is a piper, dressed in tartan, who plays and dances merrily as he looks at the miserable scene, quite at ease in the context. The artist is evidently playing on the *chiaroscuro*, and the dark qualities of the Gothic. This art term was employed in the literary Gothic to define the play of light which enhances the extremes of good and evil. As it is possible to see, the piper is in the half-light, almost a concealed figure subtly operating its evil together with the religious characters. The artist is craftily implying the subterranean power of the Church: the piper, like the Pope and monk and cardinal, is a satisfied spectator. Though he is certainly a minor character, who does not dominate the scene but is rather a hint, a half-figure creeping out from the corner, probably the picture would not have been complete without him. The perspective created by the artist leads the observer’s eye to focus towards the immediate vicinities of the centre of the scene, which is lighter: the more discernible elements constitute almost a ‘curtain’ to the hazy hustle and bustle of the market. This leaves the sides – especially the left one where the piper emerges – darker, and truly marginal; nevertheless the detail of the piper completes the feel of pervading Scottishness.

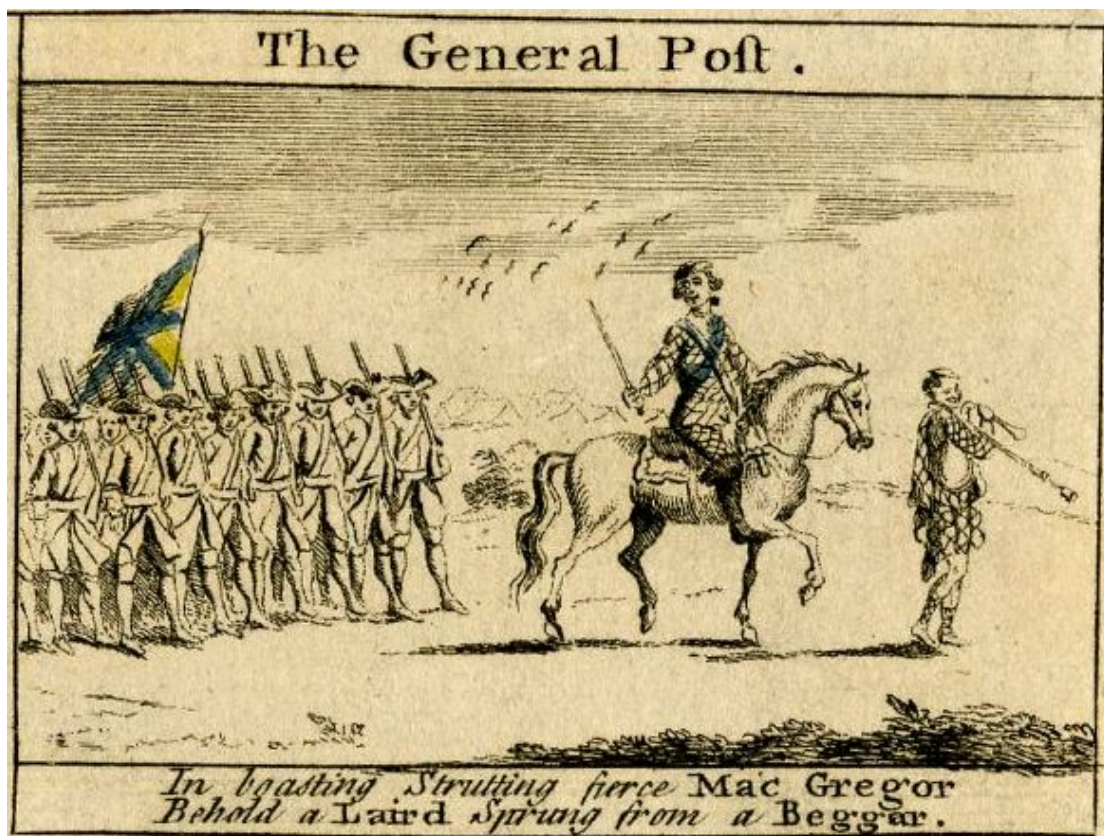
### **The dark side of the pipes: the bagpipe in print**

The end of the Jacobite risings did not immediately coincide with an improvement of the image of the Scot in English eyes. The political events, particularly those related to Lord Bute, clung on and stung for decades. Bute’s proceedings and particularly his position of political favourite with a soft-spot for his native country (Scotland) made him an easy target for anti-Scottish humour. In 1762 an etching was published in London with the title ‘The LAIRD of the Posts or the BONNETT’S EXALTED’<sup>282</sup>, as well as a series of engravings with the title ‘The Posts’<sup>283</sup>. These are both satires on Lord Bute’s accession to the “Post” of Prime Minister, which he was appointed *de facto* in 1760. The criticism is particularly sour since Bute was also accused of having favoured fellow Scots from his position of Prime Minister. In the first print, apart from Lord Bute, it is possible to recognise William Pitt, Earl Chatham, as a pit.

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<sup>282</sup> BM 1868,0808.4181. Use of the image is authorised by the BM.

<sup>283</sup> BM 1867,0309.734. Use of the image is authorised by the BM.



The disconcerted Englishmen eloquently comment on the scene, while very pleased Highlandmen dressed in tartan fly to their posts while a smiling piper chants “Come awa my bony Lads / Wi yr Bonnetts & yr Plaids / We will dance & we will play / Oer the Hills & far away”. This last verse is a reference to “Over the Hills and far away”, by 1710 often used as a Jacobite air with erotic implications. It became widely popular, and a version of it was also used in John Gay’s *The Beggar’s Opera*, as a cant with Jacobitical



overtones<sup>284</sup>. Its appearance in the caption further stresses the debauchery associated with Bute and a potential Scottish rule.

There must certainly still be a bit of confusion about what a Highland bagpipe looked like, since the instrument is depicted with the drones almost trumpet-like protruding before the piper and leaning on his forearm. A similar remark could be made for the second print, 'The General Post' out of the 'Posts' series of engravings. In it, a Scottish general rides in front of a troop, preceded by a piper. Indeed the confusion about the shape of the instrument seems to arise from the associations made by the authors to the Continent, which had its own autochthonous bagpipes which were often very different from the Scottish varieties. The following comparison between a portrait of 'Gaspard de Gueidan playing the *musette*'<sup>285</sup> by Hyacinthe Rigaud (1738) and a mezzotint of a supposed 'Scottish Highland Bagpiper'<sup>286</sup> printed by Robert Sayer (c. 1760) is striking:



Clearly Sayer's print is inspired by Rigaud's. The posture of the two characters, their expression, their flowing hair and garments, the bagpipe they're playing, and even the purse – they are almost identical. Sayer without doubt knew the portrait of de Gueidan. The idea the London printer has about a bagpipe evidently comes, as I explained above, from the Continent – and in the case of Scotland the association with France easily follows, as the two countries were at that time bound by strong political alliances.

<sup>284</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, First Series, pp. 442-443.

<sup>285</sup> Musée Granet, Communauté du Pays d'Aix, Cliché Bernard Terlay; image reproduced with permission. Gaspard de Gueidan was a contemporaneous politician from Aix-en-Provence, known and criticised for his vanity, frivolity and scandals.

<sup>286</sup> BM 2010,7081.2076. Use of the image is authorised by the BM.

Bute is attacked, again together with William Pitt, in the 1768 London etching 'The North Star'<sup>287</sup>.



The two infamous politicians are shown as the *Dei ex machina* of an anti-constitutional government. The characters, apart from Britannia, Bute and Pitt, include the Marquis of Granby; Baron Grantley; the Earl of Mansfield; the Earl of Northampton; Earl Rochford; the Bishop of Gloucester; Viscount Weymouth; John Wilkes, and the Earl of Wincheslea. On either side of, and at the same height as Bute and Pitt, are a fiddler with a wooden leg standing on the English Constitution, and a piper, perched on the Bank of England India House and merrily playing a set of bagpipes. He is smiling, and certainly enjoying the goings-on. The sound of the bagpipe seems to be the perfect means to deliver and accompany the political intrigues.

<sup>287</sup> BM 1868,0808.9783. Use of the image is authorised by the BM.



In 1762 the print ‘The Scotch Broomstick & the Female Beesom’<sup>288</sup> was published. It is a sexual allegory involving Lord Bute and the Princess of Wales.



Amongst the witnesses of the scene is a “Scotch cupid”: a tartan-clad piper, who sings about “the broom, the bonny bonny broom...with broomstick stout & strong” – a reference to the famous seventeenth-century Scottish song ‘The Broom of Cowdenknowes’<sup>289</sup>. The sexual implication of this sentence is blatant. The potential phallic connotation of the protruding chanter further stresses the trait often attributed to the Scot of unusually marked sexual appetite.

The bagpipe also appears with a sexual implication in the 1762 etching 'A Sett of Blocks for Hogarth's Wigs'<sup>290</sup> (a response to Hogarth's 'Five Orders of the Periwigs'). It is an attack on Lord Bute: in the picture he is made up of various emblems such as the jackboot; while the function of the bagpipes does not need interpreting: they are unmistakeably positioned to form his genitalia.

<sup>288</sup> BM 1868.0808.4262. Use of the image is authorised by the BM. See Herbert Atherton, 'George Townshend, Caricaturist', in *Eighteenth Century Studies*, vol. 4, n. 4 (1971), pp. 437–446 (441).

<sup>289</sup> Peter Cunningham, ed., *The Songs of England and Scotland*, in 2 volumes (London: James Cochrane and Co., 1835), vol. 2, pp. 125-127.

<sup>290</sup> BM 1904,0819.710. Use of the image is authorised by the BM. See David Bindman, *Hogarth and his Times: Serious Comedy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 187.





The symbolic value of the pipes as a representation of Scotland is given by the reference to the “Month of June”: a ‘Jacobite’ month for its connection with the date of birth of James Stewart the “Old Pretender”, on June 10<sup>th</sup>. The same date over thirty years later is associated with the Battle of Glen Shiel. The stereotypical elements portrayed (including haggis, whisky, oatmeal etc.) are employed to create the derisive effect, which contrast heavily with the print ‘Saint George for England’<sup>292</sup>. The unicorn is substituted by a mighty lion, and the presented symbols are of plenty and abundance: beef, plum pudding, beer, and the symbolic oak leaves. Wales and Ireland are also portrayed in two other prints of the same series, and it is perhaps needless to say that the characters are heavily desecrated, the traits of rusticity and misery being the only ones present.

Benjamin Wilson, a leading portrait painter of his day, in 1766 produced an interesting etching, apparently to please Lord Rockingham who had promised him his patronage<sup>293</sup>. The title of the print is ‘The Tomb-Stone’<sup>294</sup>, and it shows the tomb of the Duke of Cumberland, with military trophies and weeping figures in bas-relief, including Britannia and America.



The epitaph on the tombstone laments the loss of him who “twice Sav’d” his country, “by overcoming the joint forces of France and S\_\_\_\_d, at the Battle of CULLODEN” – a sentence with very clear political implications. While the carvings and bas-reliefs on the

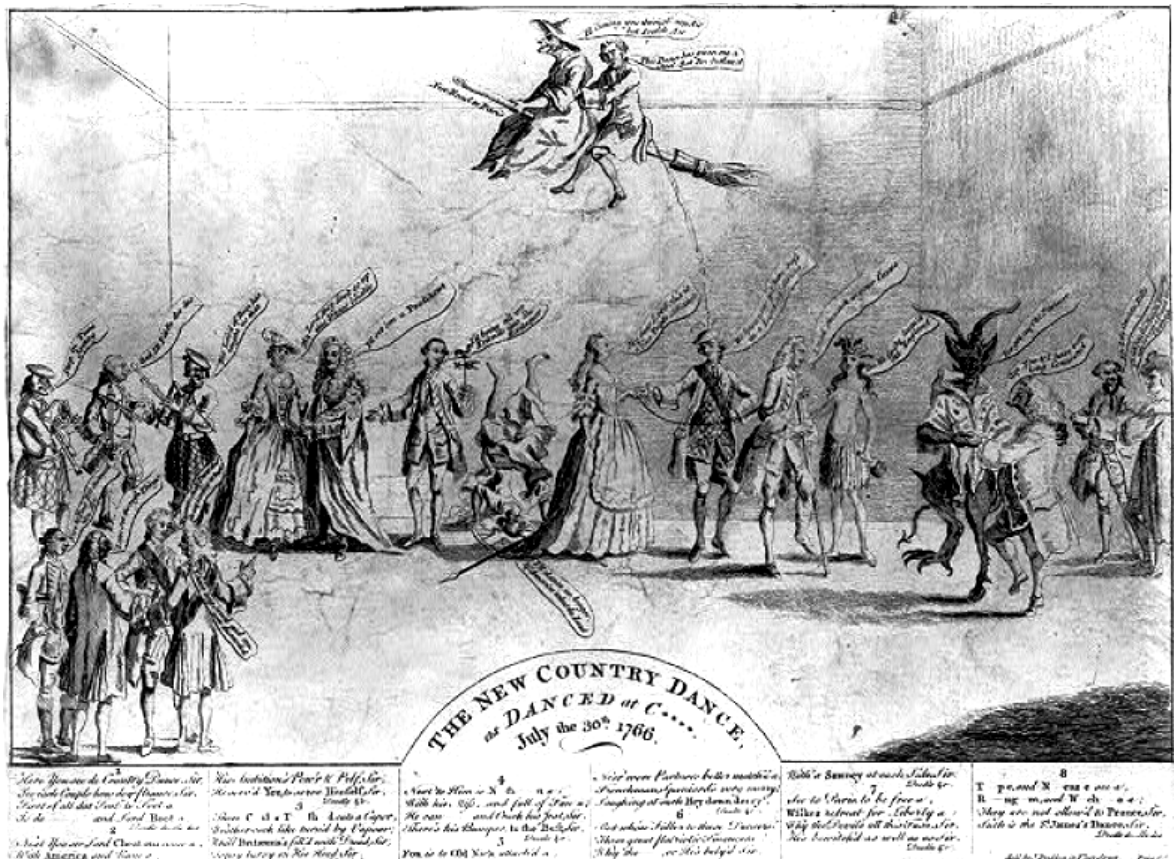
<sup>292</sup> BM 1868,0808.4739. Use of the image is authorised by the BM. See Duffy, *The Englishman and the Foreigner*, pp. 256-257.

<sup>293</sup> Dorothy George, *English Political Caricature to 1792* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 134.

<sup>294</sup> BM 1867,0309.804. Use of the image is authorised by the BM.



stone show scenes of mourning and lost military glory, the picture concentrates on what happens all around. On top of the tomb are Lord Bute “Sejanus” and his friends Bedford and Grenville; they are dancing merrily and celebrating. The tomb appears like something between an altar and a stage. Various characters, identifiable as Lord Temple, Halifax, and even two bishops, linger around it and cheerfully contemplate the scene. To accompany this *danse macabre* is no less than a monstrous tartan-clad devil, which squeezes a bellows-blown bagpipe under its arm as it stares at the scene with an open mouth – disquietingly deformed into a sort of ugly grin. The whole scene suggests the triumph of evil: the saviour of the Country, as the inscription on the tombstone suggests, is dead; the one who had defeated “the joint forces of France and Scotland” is no more, and now perdition – Scotland, a devil piping away in a loosely-fastened plaid – is sure to overcome. But this is far from being the only case of a devil-piper. In the same year another etching was produced, called ‘The New Country Dance, as Danced at C\*\*\*\*’<sup>295</sup>.



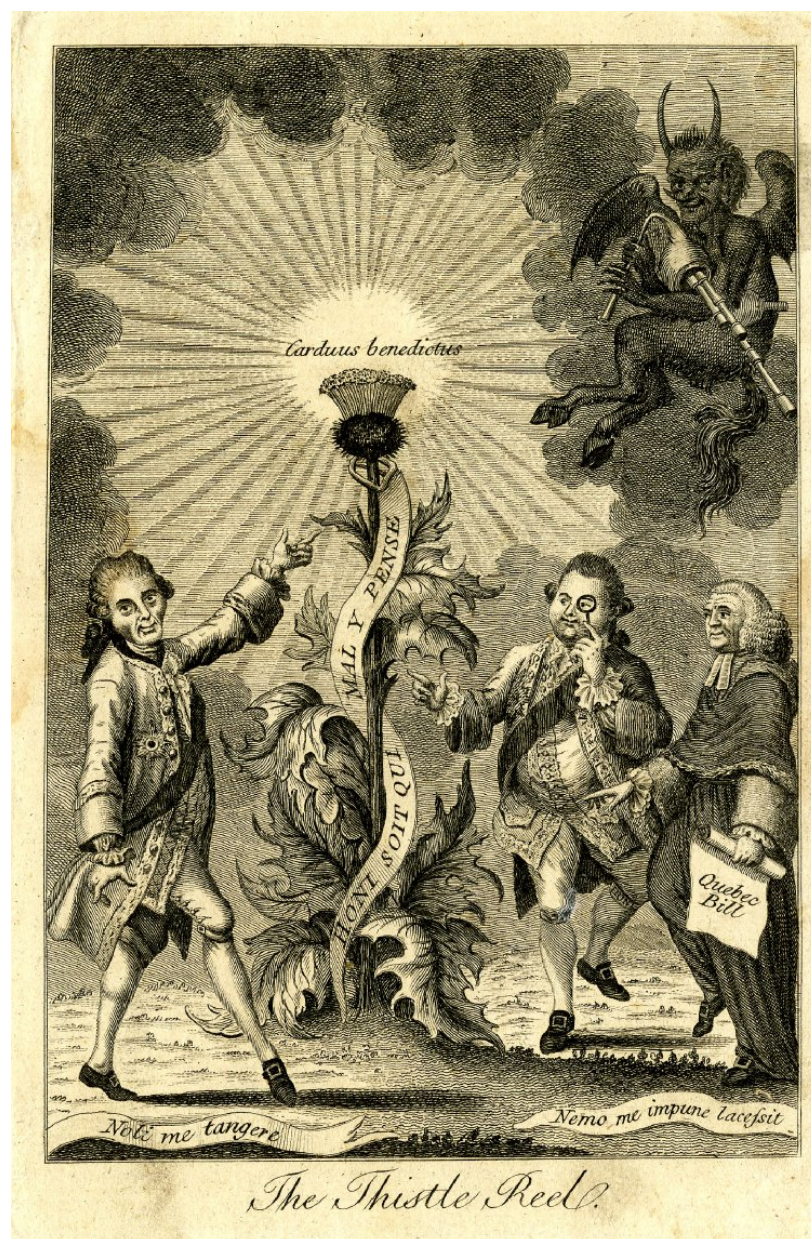
The picture shows a group of dancing people: among them are John Wilkes, the Earl of Bute, the Prince of Wales, William Pitt, Lord Holland, Charles Townshend, the Earl of Northington and various others, including America in the form of a half-naked Indian lady. A devil is also frisking about with the rest of the dancers, while a witch is flying a

<sup>295</sup> BM 1868,0808.4386. Use of the image is authorised by the BM.



man to the “New Road to Paris” on her broomstick “through a Scotch air”. The music is in fact provided by a fiddler “With a Sawney at each Side”: two kilted pipers are smiling at the merry scene, and each playing sets of *uilleann*-like pipes – something which “The Lord of Boot” has taught them to do, according to the speech bubbles.

‘The thistle reel’ is another interesting engraving on a similar theme, published in the February 1775 edition of *The London Magazine* (together with a dissertation on the theme, called ‘The thistle reel: a Vision’)<sup>296</sup>. It depicts three noblemen (identifiable as Lords Bute, North and Mansfield) dancing around and pointing at a thistle in the shape of a Holy Chalice. The thistle bears a garter with the motto *honi soit qui mal y pense*, while in the top right-hand corner a devil plays a (rather ugly) set of bellows-blown bagpipes. In the bottom left corner a banner reads *Noli me tangere* and in the bottom right corner a banner reads *Nemo me impune lacessit*.



<sup>296</sup> 'The Thistle Reel, a Vision', in *The London Magazine, or Gentleman's monthly*, 44 (1775), 56-58 (p. 56). Reproduced with permission from an image produced by ProQuest LLC for its online product, *British Periodicals*, 1681 - 1920. [www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com).

This image is a satire on the Scottish influence on the Quebec Bill (held by the nobleman on the far right). The Quebec Act of 1774 guaranteed French law code, religion and status in the Canadian region. The smiling devil witnessing the whole scene and playing for the noblemen evidently represents the legitimisation of immorality. The bagpipe, emblem of Scottishness, is handled by no less than the master of all evil; it is almost as if the sound of the pipes, the echo of Scotland, dominated the situation making the three Lords dance – and commit the evil deeds. ‘The Mitred Minuet’<sup>297</sup> is another engraving, dated 1774, on the topic of the Quebec Bill, and it is treated in a very similar way to ‘The Thistle Reel’.



Four bishops cross hands over a copy of the Bill, while three ministers (including Lords Bute and North), one of which is playing a set of bellows-blown bagpipes, witness the scene. Hovering over the ministers is, yet again, the devil, quite at ease in this context. What emerges from these images is that the essence of Scottishness does not just reside in the symbolic icons such as the thistle or the bagpipe: the conveyed message is that the tendency to malevolence is an integral part of the national behaviour.

As I explained earlier on in the present chapter, the fascination of the devilish associations in connection with bagpipes has ancient roots, and it is widespread through Europe in literature and figurative arts alike. Devil-pipers in art and literature are not

<sup>297</sup> BM 1868,0808.10061. Use of the image is authorised by the BM.

infrequent; it is an imagery which endures to this day. Probably one of the better-known examples in literature is Robert Burns' famous 'Tam O' Shanter', in which

There sat auld Nick, in shape o' beast;  
A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,  
To gie them [ghosts and witches] music was his charge:  
He scre'd the pipes and gart them skirl!<sup>298</sup>

The bawdy connotations and devilish implications stress the concepts of misrule, of lawless confusion which results in immorality in everyday conduct and family life. Metaphorically, the bagpipe appears to be the element through which Evil operates, making witches, ghosts and spirits dance.

After Culloden, many scholars and authors wrote accounts of the rebellion: Jacobitism, Highlandism and banditry were depicted as being practically inextricable. This connection can be found both in hostile and romanticised interpretations of the events:

at the time, it provided an excuse for alienizing part of Scotland as unredeemably barbarous [...]; later it fed a romantic image of a glamorous and remote 'other', safely removed from any relevance to either eighteenth-century international politics or Scottish nationalism.<sup>299</sup>

The idea of the uncouth, barbaric population of Scotland (and the Highlands especially) in need of progress and civilisation was very widespread. A 1756 letter found in the *Monthly Review* expresses it perfectly:

That spirit of industry which begins to take place among them, together with a more free and liberal education, will soon, it is to be hoped, polish their manners, take off the rust of barbarity, sloth and ignorance, and convert the uncouth savage into an industrious and useful member of society.<sup>300</sup>

The author can envisage how the savage Highlander could be transformed into a "useful member of society" thanks to the "spirit of industry" which has begun to take place. This article is particularly interesting as it is clearly a typical case such as Womack explains:

In order to decide what to do about the Highlands, it was first necessary to have some definite picture of what they were actually like. Accordingly, the legislative programme was accompanied by a flurry of reports, articles and speeches analysing the state of the region. Ironically, the government's determination that the Highland

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<sup>298</sup> Robert Burns, *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. by James Kinsley, in 3 volumes (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1986), vol. 2, p. 561.

<sup>299</sup> Murray Pittock, *Jacobitism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1998), p. 114.

<sup>300</sup> Anon., 'Art. xlii: Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland', in *The Monthly Review* (1754), vol. xi, 342-356 (p. 343).

difference should end led to its representation, with unprecedented concreteness and detail, within official discourse.<sup>301</sup>

## Rehabilitating the Gael

Initially the measures taken to inspire loyalty to the House of Hanover were such that gained the Duke of Cumberland the title of 'butcher'; this was soon understood to be a counterproductive approach. A series of Acts were enforced, such as the Act of Attainder of 1746, a further emendation of the Disarming Act; Highland dress was proscribed, and the Vesting Act of 1747 imposed the turning to the Crown of everything that belonged to those connected to the rebellion. With the Annexing Act of 1752 thirteen 'forfeited' estates were to be managed by a Board of Commissioners. Though on the one hand the Act took the responsibility for introducing new 'improving' measures for agriculture, industries, communications and so forth, it also proposed the eradication of Roman Catholicism, the crushing of sedition, and the imposition of the English language<sup>302</sup>.

Forty years had passed since Culloden, when James Boswell published his *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson*. An interesting passage exemplifies a change in attitude which will characterise the approach toward the Scot, the Highlander and the Jacobite (all elements of a single Celtic superstructure) and which in a certain measure can still be detected to this day:

The very Highland names, or the sound of a bagpipe, will stir my blood, and fill me with a mixture of melancholy and respect for courage; with pity for an unfortunate and superstitious regard for antiquity, and thoughtless inclination to war; in short, with a crowd of sensations with which sober rationality has nothing to do.<sup>303</sup>

The *tout-court* dispraise is replaced by an almost sublime feeling of fear and fascination, of lack of understanding yet of appreciation of the set of values attributed to a culture which puts the author in touch with his inner, 'primitive' self. Bagpipes are pure emotion. Even through their sound, or that of the Gaelic language, Boswell, seems to live a sort of epiphany – as if there was a hidden part of him which recognised the "sensations" beyond the barrier of rationality – bringing out the 'inner Scot' in him. The author receives such a stirring effect from listening to the bagpipe that the latter appears permeated with qualities which go beyond that of a mere musical instrument. The traits Boswell attributes to the pipes configures them without doubt as a war instrument; but their sound does not evoke the plain imagery of battle and combat *per se*. The bagpipe triggers feelings of nostalgia, and it is a melancholy which Boswell can, through ancestral

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<sup>301</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 5.

<sup>302</sup> Clyde, *From Rebel to Hero*, pp. 21-22 and 27-28.

<sup>303</sup> Samuel Johnson, and James Boswell, *Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and Boswell's Journal of a Tour of the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson*, ed. by Robert William Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 249.

perceptions, understand and make his own, in spite of himself. The author seems suddenly to participate with the irrationality of sentiment so often attributed to the Scots and particularly the Highlanders, since it is in the Highlands that the heart of the martial spirit was seen to lie.

It is as if Boswell had created a window onto what he perceives to be the Scottish feeling thanks to the epiphany created by the bagpipe's music; all at once an irrational sympathy, in its primeval sense of *syn-patheia*, sweeps him unwittingly into that mythical (and mythicised) world. Parallel to Boswell's publication was also the restoring of the Forfeited Estates to their owners and the legal readmission of Highland dress: as Womack explains, "the implication was that the region's integration into the polity and economy of Great Britain could now be left to proceed under its own steam"<sup>304</sup>.

In 1802 John Home published his *History of the Rebellion in the Year 1745*<sup>305</sup>. In this work, though not actually differing in his opinions from his predecessors in that he too labelled the Jacobites and Highlanders as generally "ignorant" and "careless" of religious and civil disputes, the author asserted that the Jacobite cause was not merely a pretext of a bunch of savages to extend barbarity and banditry, but that there was good faith underlying the Stuart cause. It was, after all, as he explained, their ignorance that brought them to view Charles I as an "injured chief" to whom they were "naturally inclined" because of his belonging to the Stuart dynasty. Home also accuses the Hanoverian of not having done enough to reconcile the Jacobites with the English government<sup>306</sup>. Though Home's view is far from being impartial, this last concept somehow reveals a certain openness to a dialectic attitude, which questions the role of the British in solving the Jacobite issue.

### **The Scots and Jacobites and their pipes: the internal perspective**

Regardless of how the bagpipe was received and perceived in narrowly 'political' quarters, the eighteenth century constituted a key century for its musical development, and for its presence on the national and European music scene. Fiddle-*pìobaireachd* is a concrete effect of musical research and experimentation in Scotland. From the early 1700s bagpipe music was being transferred onto the fiddle: it recoups elements of typically Scottish musical tradition – *pìobaireachd*<sup>307</sup> – and adapts them to the fiddle technique. One typical

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<sup>304</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 115.

<sup>305</sup> John Home, *History of the Rebellion in the Year 1745* (London: Printed by A. Straham, 1802).

<sup>306</sup> Home, *History of the Rebellion*, pp. 14–18.

<sup>307</sup> As explained in Chapter 1, *pìobaireachd* or *ceòl mòr* is known as the 'classical' form of bagpipe music, distinguish it from other forms of piping repertory which consist of dance music, airs and military music. See Grove, *Dictionary of Music and Musicians*, s.v. "pibroch".



early surviving fiddle text is probably the rant ‘The gum-ga’d aiver’ (‘The old horse with sore gums’) from the Gairdyn manuscript, of c. 1710<sup>308</sup>.

Fiddle-*piobaireachd* is an ingenious attempt to offer a Scottish perspective on the great Italian violin tradition, which reached the height of its fame during the eighteenth century thanks to composers such as Arcangelo Corelli. Allan Ramsay hints to this in his 1721 poem ‘To the Music Club’:

And show that music may have as good fate  
In Albion’s glens, as Umbria’s green retreat:  
And with Correlli’s soft Italian song  
Mix “Cowden Knows”, and “Winter nights are long”:  
Nor should the martial “Pibrough” be despis’d;  
Own’d and refin’d by you, these shall be more priz’d.<sup>309</sup>

Ramsay suggests the union between Corelli and traditional, typically Scottish tunes. The result of the merging is striking, and this deliberate policy of drawing certain elements of the bagpipe repertoire into the orbit of Baroque music is significant of the esteem in which some music of the pipes was held: in Scotland, the bagpipe repertoire finds its way into art music. Bagpipe music is brought into an environment normally reserved for music of the highest urban status – to do this, it has to be on an ‘appropriate’ instrument: the fiddle.

As the fiddle-*piobaireachd* tradition took off, in 1760 Joseph MacDonald was working on his *Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe*, which was to constitute a turning-point in the musical history of the bagpipe. His was the first attempt to write down from oral tradition the bagpipe repertoire, as it was actually played on the pipes. During Joseph MacDonald’s time,

The great movement to collect and publish traditional Scots songs and tunes, which was to culminate in Robert Burns and James Johnson’s *Scots Musical Museum* (Edinr., 1787-1803) was already gathering momentum. The final volume of William McGibbon’s *Collection of Scots Tunes* (Edinr., 1742, 1746, 1755) appeared when Joseph was still in the south [Edinburgh], and he may actually have heard MacGibbon play. Collections like Robert Bremner’s *Scots Reels or Country Dances* (Edinr., c. 1757), Neil Stewart’s *Collection of the best Reels or Country Dances* (Edinr., 1761-4) and David Herd’s *Ancient and Modern Scots Songs* (Edinr., 1769) would also have been in active preparation and no doubt the subject of interested discussion in musical circles in the city. These may have fired Joseph’s ambitions to do something similar for the Highlands<sup>310</sup>

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<sup>308</sup> David Johnson, *Scottish Fiddle Music in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1997), p. 119.

<sup>309</sup> Allan Ramsay, *The Poems of Allan Ramsay*, ed. by George Chalmers and Alexander F. T. Woodhouselee, in 2 volumes (London: printed by A. Strahan, 1800), vol. 1, p. 358.

<sup>310</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, p. 24.

Joseph's idea of putting into writing the tunes of the bagpipe repertoire was to be taken up on a wider, more rigorous scale by the Highland Societies on the occasion of the piping competitions after 1781. These are significant steps which helped consolidate the culture of the pipes, and impose them as a strong presence not only locally, but on a national and European level.

The words of both Anglophone and Gaelic poets and songwriters give one an idea of how the bagpipe was perceived, and the idea it embodied. In Pittock's words:

there was the phenomenon noted by the Scottish patriot Fletcher of Saltoun, who observed that the support of a country's songs was better than that of its laws, a view still arguably true in the eighteenth century, and reflected in the distribution of Jacobite songs in Scotland and Ireland.<sup>311</sup>

The bagpipe was an instrument with a specific status and role among the Jacobites, as the works I analyse below exemplify. It was the instrument which accompanied the Jacobites in battle; it gave merriment to the soldiers, and its mere presence was a symbol of national unity and pride. Furthermore, pipers would play Jacobite songs to traditional tunes, thus avoiding sedition.

The 1784 Jacobite song 'On the Restoration of the Forfeited Estates', though dated somewhat later than the main events, gives us a clear idea of the symbolic value the pipes bore:

The martial pipe loud pierc'd the sky,  
The song arose, resounding high  
Their valour, faith, and loyalty,  
That shine in Scottish story.<sup>312</sup>

Given the prominence of the instrument in the life of the Jacobites at war – a topic which I shall approach in detail in the next chapter – it is not surprising that they are mentioned in much Jacobite literature, especially in song. Their bond with Scotland, and especially with the Highlands, was so strong that a "Donald the piper" becomes an allegory for the Highland clans in the song 'Kirk-Milk Geordie'<sup>313</sup>, while England is represented by "Jockie" and the Scots Lowlanders by "douce Sawnie" (according to James Hogg's interpretation<sup>314</sup>, which is generally accepted).

The pipe's military value is most heavily stressed in songs such as 'The Auld Stuarts back again', composed probably on the eve of the 1715 rebellion, and in which the

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<sup>311</sup> Pittock, *Jacobitism*, p. 68.

<sup>312</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, Second Series, p. 207.

<sup>313</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, First Series, pp. 96-97.

<sup>314</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, First Series, p. 278.

Whigs are “dared” to come “afore the bagpipe and the drum”<sup>315</sup>. The song ‘The Lusty Carlin’, collected in Hogg’s *Jacobite Relics* and for which unfortunately we do not know the date, was written to commemorate the escape of Lord Nithsdale to France in 1715, and describes the joy of the Nithsdale peasantry at the news:

Make the piper blaw, carlin,  
Make the piper blaw,  
And make the lads and lasses baith  
Their souple legs shaw.  
We’ll a’ be glad,  
And play ‘The Stuarts back again’,  
To put the Whigs mad.<sup>316</sup>

As one can see, being a Jacobite song it is far from being free of political implications. James Hogg suspects that the song ‘The Piper of Dundee’ was set on the eve of one of the annual fairs of Amulree, in Perthshire. The scene describes merriment and high spirits: common people and leaders of the Jacobite faction were both present, and dancing to the piper’s tunes as “he ga’e his bags a squeeze / and played anither key” – a remark which suggests that the piper was playing a bellows pipe. The song deals with the Jacobite custom of playing pro-Stuart propagandist tunes and airs for “recruitment and morale-boosting purposes”<sup>317</sup>.

And wasna he a roguay,  
A roguay, a roguay?  
And wasna he a rougey,  
The piper o’ Dundee?  
He play’d “The Welcome owre the main”  
And “Ye’se be fou and I’se be fain”  
And “Auld Stuarts back Again”  
Wi’ muckle mirth and glee.

And wasna, &c.  
He play’d “The Kirk”, he play’d “The Queer”  
“The Mullin Dhu” and “Chevalier”  
And “Lang Awa’ But Welcome Here”  
Sae sweet, sae bonnilie. [...] <sup>318</sup>

As James Hogg explains, there is a hint of mischief in the described piper – he is in fact described as a “rogue”. He is trying to ingratiate the present laird (he played “a spring the laird to please [...] new frae ‘yont the seas”); after which he plays some markedly

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<sup>315</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, First Series, p. 122.

<sup>316</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, Second Series, p. 36.

<sup>317</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, Second Series, p. 490.

<sup>318</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, Second Series, pp. 43–44.



Jacobite tunes<sup>319</sup>, almost as if to try and understand, or even influence, the feelings and tendencies of the chiefs.

This particular song is descriptive of quite a common situation: pipers were employed to 'spread the word', yet avoiding sedition. Traditional songs were often adapted to Jacobite ballads, and playing them in public clearly was a nod towards Jacobitism, but given the traditional origin of the tune, prosecution was impossible<sup>320</sup>. The conveyed message would hardly have been subliminal, for the bystanders would certainly all have been aware of the political implications of the tunes the piper was playing, but it would still have been impossible for anyone to charge him with any offence.

The song 'Turn the Blue Bonnet wha can' (which Hogg assures us is ancient, though he is unable to provide a date for either lyrics or music<sup>321</sup> and there are actually indications which hint to a possible post-Jacobite events, sentiments and linguistic traits)<sup>322</sup> is descriptive of the instrument's charisma on the battlefield; in this context, it also becomes part of a pan-Scottish atmosphere, where the pipe exemplifies an idea of Scottishness in its most marked traits, together with tartan plaids and "trews":

The tartan plaid is waving wide,  
The pibroch's sounding up the glen [...]  
And there I saw the king o' them a',  
Was marching bonnily in the van;  
And aye the spell o' the bagpipe's yell  
Was, Turn the blue bonnet wha can, wha can.<sup>323</sup>

The picture is unquestionably evocative. There is something both magical and human about the bagpipe which, with its "yelling", casts a spell which enforces the command to "turn the blue bonnet". The bagpipe is the symbol of a force which must be feared, and its visual impact concurs with its sound to create a deeply meaningful symbolism.

In the song collected in Hogg's *Jacobite Relics* 'Up an' waur them a', Willie' (Willie being the Viscount Kenmure, Brigadier of horse in 1715<sup>324</sup>) the refrain goes as follows: "While pipers play'd frae right to left, / Fy, furich Whigs awa', Willie"<sup>325</sup>. The refrain is generally the most captivating part of a song: by placing the pipers in this reiterated part of the tune the author not only stresses the great consequence and charisma of the bagpipe's presence on the battlefield, but he also gives an evocative description of a war-

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<sup>319</sup> I.e. "The Welcome owre the main", "Ye'se be fou and I'se be fain", "Auld Stuarts back Again", "The Kirk", "The Queer", "The Mullin Dhu", "Chevalier", "Lang Awa' But Welcome Here".

<sup>320</sup> Pittock, *Jacobitism*, p. 69.

<sup>321</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, Second Series, pp. 301-302.

<sup>322</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, Second Series, p. 506.

<sup>323</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, Second Series, p. 96.

<sup>324</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, Second Series, p. 483.

<sup>325</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, Second Series, pp. 18-20.

scene, where the sound of the pipes can be heard all around. The image is manifestly charged with symbolic value: the sound of the pipes is a sound of triumph, and its spreading “frae right to left” is a clear hint to a glorious propagation of the Jacobite word. The song actually ends with neither of the two parts winning, since in the last stanza the author writes that “We baith did fight, and baith were beat, / and baith did rin awa”; should the refrain have been repeated after this conclusion then one may have sensed a certain degree of irony; but the refrain changes right in this last stanza, leaving the charm of the pipes intact, and mindful of a more glorious circumstance.

The status of the bagpipe was undoubtedly high among the Jacobites. The above-mentioned song ‘The Highland Laddie’ – impossible to date with precision though a reference to “the butcher” is a give-away ascribing it to the post-1746 period<sup>326</sup> – is an example of the instrument’s rank: the “Highland Laddie” is described as having “princely blude” in his veins, and his hand “the braid sword draws”. As we have seen, the sword is the heroic arm destined to leaders; this is not a small detail. It should not be forgotten that the reference to the sword has also sexual implications – a trait which it shares with the bagpipe, as we have seen. Such a noble character as the “Highland Laddie” is in fact described as being “the best piper i’ the north”, and “soon at the Tweed he mints to blaw [...] There’s nae a Southron fidler’s hum [...] Can bide the war-pipe’s deadly strum [...] and the targe and braid sword’s twang”. The Highland Laddie and his bagpipes are given an important task, which the author seems to assume beyond doubt that they will carry it out: “he’ll raise sic an eldritch drone [...] He’ll wake the snorers round the throne [...] Till frae his daddie’s chair he blaw [...] “To your ain, my true men a””<sup>327</sup>.

The pipes become part of an almost apocalyptical context in ‘Will ye go to Sherifffmuir’, which deals with the 1715 rising but thought to have been composed at a later date, possibly by James Hogg himself<sup>328</sup>:

There you’ll see the banners flare,  
There you’ll hear the bagpipes rair,  
And the trumpets deadly blare,  
Wi’ the cannon’s rattle.<sup>329</sup>

It is possible to consider these four verses as two (inextricably connected by the textual logical connector “and”) couplets: particularly the first two lines are syntactically coupled by a common “There”, while the four verses, seen in pairs, appeal to different conceptual fields. In the first two lines, the words “banners” and “bagpipes” can be seen as two

<sup>326</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, Second Series, p. 513.

<sup>327</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, Second Series, pp. 125-126.

<sup>328</sup> William Donaldson, *The Jacobite Song: Political Myth and National Identity* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), p. 108.

<sup>329</sup> Hogg, *Jacobite Relics*, First Series, p. 150.

hyponyms of the same semantic chain, as both are charged in this context with the connotative element of 'display'. The banners are a visual icon of identity, while the bagpipe is the musical one. Its value goes beyond that of a mere war-instrument: it has an *iconic* significance. This is also noticeable in the Romantic song 'The Standard on the Braes o' Mar', where the first stanza endeavours to express the visual impact of the gathering of the Highlanders:

The standard on the braes o' Mar  
Is up and streaming rarely,  
The gathering pipe on Lochnagar  
Is sounding loud and sairly,  
The Hieland men frae hill and glen,  
Wi' belted plaids and glitt'rin blades,  
Wi' bonnets blue, and hearts sae true,  
Are comin' late and early.<sup>330</sup>

Again bagpipes, mentioned in the same context as banners and standards, seem to share the same function. The author of the song uses a series of visual elements which do not render the *feeling* of the episode, but its appearance, as in a painting. Though the "pipe" is "sounding loud and sairly", the aim of the author is not to convey the sonorous effect of the instrument: he is rather adding iconic elements to recreate the scene of the gathering. The adjectives used confirm the intent: the reader can clearly see the colours, the scenery, the people arriving from all directions, and can almost imagine the weather, which makes the standard stream and the swords glitter. The importance of the bagpipe in this context is again given by its symbolic, *visual* value. It is an element in the scene which means something: it is an instrument of display, and its presence a signifier.

The theme of the bagpipe in connection with the standard/flag/banner is also widely employed in Gaelic poetry and song. There appears to be a considerable thematic and semantic correspondence between Scottish Anglophone and Gaelic works, and this is a very clear example of the connection. Bagpipes and standards appear together in a poem – or song, since its title is *Òran*, Gaelic for 'song' – by Mairghread nighean Lachlainn. Little is known about the author. There are poems attributed to her which date from 1692 to 1750, and these are the only elements which give us an idea of when she was born. Nevertheless, she has left us with a considerable corpus of verses celebrating the accomplishments of the Macleans, Jacobites contemporary to her time. The eighth stanza of 'Òran' recites as follows:

'N àm togail le gàirdeachas,  
Caismeachd bu ghnàthach leibh:

When excited to rejoicing your  
practice was the war-march: you

<sup>330</sup> Frank Adam, *The Clans, Septs & Regiments of the Scottish Highlands* (Baltimore: Genealogical Publishing Co., 1970), p. 63.

Bhiodh pìob is sluagh màrsail leibh  
 ‘S bhiodh brataichean gan sàthadh,  
 Aig sliochd Mhànais Òig gan rùsgadh.

would have pipes and marching  
 troops, and flags flying in place  
 displayed by the sons of Mânas  
 Òig.<sup>331</sup>

The war-march, in which the bagpipe is an essential element and plays a key role as a martial instrument, is a means of celebration; the ostentation of victory and triumph in battle is given, yet again, by the binomial flag-bagpipe. Iain Mhic Fhearchair, also known as John MacCodrum, and supporter of the Stuart cause, also employs the same topic in his song ‘Òran do Shir Seumas MacDhomhnaill’ (‘A Song to Sir James MacDonald’). A forlorn scene depicts pipes and banners sharing the same unhappy decadent fate, lamenting the loss of James MacDonald:

Cha sùgradh ri chlaistinn  
 Bhith dùsgadh do chaismeachd,  
 Bhith rùsgadh do bhratach  
 Gu h-aigennach stàtail;  
 Pìob thollach ‘g a spalpadh,  
 Sior phronnadh nam brasphort,  
 Fraoch tomach nam badan  
 Ri Bratchann ‘g a chàradh [...]

‘Tis no pleasure to hear thy war-tune  
 being awakened, thy banners being  
 unfurled, sprightly and stately; a  
 bored pipe being hitched up, steadily  
 pounding out martial airs, while tufted  
 heather in clusters is attached to the  
 flagstaff.<sup>332</sup>

The two elements, bagpipes and standards, appear twinned in good and bad fate. Together, they are symbolic of melancholy in times of sorrow; in triumph, they share the glory they represent. The same author will write, in the song ‘Moladh Chlann Domhnaill’ (‘The Praise of Clan Donald’) that the family of Keppoch “would rise and fight with us in strife with their pipes and their silken banners” (“Dh’éireadh lenn a sìos an aisith / Le ‘m pìob ‘s le ‘m brataiche sròlta”)<sup>333</sup>, and in the ‘Òran do Mhac ‘Ic Ailein’ (‘A Song to Clanranald’) he writes that “When thy silk is shown on flagstaff pipes and drums are heard” (“N uair nochdar ri crann do shìoda / Chluinntear pìob is drumachan”).

Though I have mentioned Sìleas na Ceapaich and her poem ‘Do dh’ Fheachd Mhorair Màr’ (‘To the Army of the Earl of Mar’) in the previous chapter, the thematic coherence of the poem with the bagpipe/standard binomial leads me to refer to it again in this context. The tenth stanza goes as follows:

Thighearna Shrùthain o Ghiùthsach nam beann,  
 Thug thu tamull a’ feitheamh ‘s an Fhraing;  
 Tog do phìob is do bhratach –  
 So ‘n t-àm dhuit bhith sgairteil –

Laird of Struan from the mountainous  
 Giùthsach, you have spent some time waiting  
 in France. Raise your pipe and your flag – now  
 is the time for you to be active – and send the

<sup>331</sup> Mairghread Nighean Lachlainn, *Mairghread nighean Lachlainn*, ed. by Colm Ó Baoill (Llandysul: The Scottish Gaelic Text Society, 2009), pp. 52–53.

<sup>332</sup> Iain Mhic Fhearchair (John MacCodrum) *The Songs of John MacCodrum*, ed. by William Matheson (Edinburgh: Published by Oliver & Boyd for the Scottish Gaelic Text Society, 1938), pp. 110–111.

<sup>333</sup> Matheson, ed., *The Songs of John MacCodrum*, pp. 128–129.

‘S cuir na caimbeulaich dhachaidh ‘n an deann.

Campbells home in full flight.<sup>334</sup>

The author’s intentions are precisely the ones hitherto illustrated, and the recurrent association reappears once again to stress the visual impact of a precise moment: the start of a battle.

The bagpipe-standard is plainly a very popular binomial. Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, the Clanranald bard, also uses it in various works, such as his two songs “to the Prince”: ‘Òran do’n Phrionnsa’, which I have briefly mentioned in the previous chapter:

Torman do phìoba ‘s do bhrataich  
Chuireadh spiorad bras ‘san t-sluagh,  
Dh’ éireadh ar n’ardan ‘s ar n-aighe,  
‘S chuirte air a’ phrasgan ruaig.

The music of thy pipes and banners  
Would fill thy folk with reckless fire,  
Our proud spirits would awaken,  
And we’d put the mob to rout.<sup>335</sup>

And ‘Òran Eile do’n Phrionnsa’:

An raoir a chunnaic mi ‘m bruadar.  
Teàrlach Ruadh thigh’n thar sàile,  
Le phioban, ‘s le chaismeachd,  
‘S le bhrataichean sgàrlaid.

Methought the golden-haired Charles  
Crossed the seas, in my dreaming,  
With his pipes and his war shouts,  
And his scarlet flags streaming.

Le phioban, ‘s le chaismeachd,  
‘S le bhrataichean sgàrlaid  
Moch ‘s a mhadainn ‘s mi dùsgadh,  
‘S mòr mo shunt ‘s mo cheol-gàire.

With his pipes and his war shouts,  
And his scarlet flags streaming  
Came the tidings of gladness,  
In the morn on my waking<sup>336</sup>

The “folk” are “filled with reckless fire” at the sound of the pipes just as much as they would be at looking at the banner: this is how deeply the pipes are embedded in the imagery of identity. Banners and bagpipes remind the soldier of the reasons for their battle; they stir the fighters’ consciences into being mindful of their cause. They are also the icons which indicate the commencement of battle and bellicose intentions. Two adjacent stanzas in Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair’s ‘Brosnachad nam Fineachan Gaidhealach ‘s ‘a Bhliadhna 1745’ (‘Incitement to the Highland Clans in the Year 1745’) present the same topic:

‘S binn leinn plapraich nam bréid bhratach  
Srannraich bras ri mòr-ghaoith,  
An glacan gaisgich nan ceum staidheil,  
Is stuirteil, sgairteil *motion*;

Welcome sound of rustling banners  
Streaming in the humming breeze,  
Which stately warriors of grim visage,  
Stepping proudly, seize:

<sup>334</sup> Sileas Nighean Mhic Raghnaill (Sileas MacDonald or Sileas Na Ceapaich), *Poems and Songs by Sileas MacDonald*, ed. by Colm Ó Baoill (Edinburgh: published by The Scottish Academic Press for The Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1972), pp. 22-23.

<sup>335</sup> Campbell, ed., *Highland Songs*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>336</sup> Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald, Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair*, ed. by Angus MacDonald and Archibald MacDonald (Inverness: Printed by the Northern Countries Newspaper and Printing and Publishing Company, 1924), pp. 70-71.

'S lann ghorm sgaiteach de shàr shlacan,  
Geur gu sracadh shròn aig',  
Air bac cruachain an fhir-bhrataich,  
Gu cur tais air fògradh.

A blue sharp weapon, best of blades,  
Keen edge to hack and slay,  
The standard bearer buckled wears  
To banish fear away.

'S fuirbidh tailceant', 's cùmpa pearsa,  
Treun laoch spraceil, dòid-ghéal;  
Piob 'g a spalpadh suas 'n a achlais,  
Mhosglas lasan gleòis duinn:  
Caismeachd bhras-bhinn bhrodadh aigne,  
Gu dian chasgairt slòigh leis;  
Chuireadh torman a phuirt bhaisgeil,  
Spioraid bras 'n ar pòran.

And there, too, he of valiant mien,  
A white-handed stately man,  
Shoulders his pipe and sounds the note  
Out warlike fires to fan:  
A martial animating strain,  
Inciting us to strive  
And slay the foe, while the rousing tune  
Our spirits would revive.<sup>337</sup>

The themes of the streaming standard and of the bagpipe are again united. The effect is made even more imposing by the presence of the sword. The status of the bagpipe, in such a context, is stressed not only by the visual impact which the author recreates, but also by the nexus with the heroic weapon. The soldier uses it at his best under the inciting effect of the bagpipe's notes – a few stanzas later the author will write that “The loud clashing of steel blades / Echoes the chanter's shouting” (“Sliocraich, slacraich nan cruaidh shlachan, / Freagradh basgar shionnsar”).

The display-value of the pipes, again expressed in the banner/bagpipe parallel, is also noticeable in Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's 'Òran nam Fineachan Gaidhealach' ('Song to the Clans'):

Gur foirmeil, pròiseil, òrdail,  
Thig Tòisichean 'n an rang,  
A' mairsail, stàtail, còmhnard,  
Gu pìobach, bratach, sròl-bhuidh;  
Tha rioghaltachd is mòrchuis,  
Gun sòradh anns an dream:  
Daoine làidir, neartmhor, cròdha,  
'S iad gun ghò gun mheang.

Clan Mackintosh the haughty  
Will come in stately file,  
Steps orderly and swinging,  
Flags floating, pibrochs ringing;  
Men lacking not but bringing  
A proud, royal style:  
The heroes warlike, strong and bold,  
Unblemished, without guile.<sup>338</sup>

Though the salient verses are but a couple, the full stanza gives us the complete picture of the bagpipe's role through the description of the portrayed magnificence of the Mackintosh Clan in their march. It is without doubt an instrument of status: no reference is made to the bagpipe's sound (though, as we have seen, Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair also wrote very powerful verses on bagpipe music and its effects on the soldiers), but the status is exhibited through the banners, and also through the pipes, displayed in orderly array in Clan Mackintosh's march.

<sup>337</sup> MacDonald, ed., *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald*, pp. 90-91.

<sup>338</sup> MacDonald, ed., *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald*, pp. 82-83.

The sound of the pipes triggers fierce ecstasy which Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair powerfully describes in the above-mentioned song ‘Tearlach Mac Sheumais’ (‘Charles Son of James’):

Mì eadar an talamh 's an t-athar a' seòladh,	Between earth and heaven in the air I am sailing,
Air iteig le h-aighear, misg-chath' agus shòlais,	On the wings of exultance, battle-drunken,
'Us caismeachd phìob-mòra bras-shròiceadh am	[enraptured,
[puirt	While the notes of the great pipes shrilly sound
	[out their tune <sup>339</sup>

These words are extremely powerful: the bagpipe contributes to a complete rapture of the senses which reminds the reader of the Berserker warriors: the author needs nothing except the sound of the bagpipe, together with the thought of his leader Prince Charles, to work himself into a battle-thirsty, ravening rage. Similar feelings are conveyed in his ‘Òran Nuadh’ (‘A New Song’):

'S fuirbidh tailceant', 's cùmpa pearsa,	A warrior stout, of sturdy build,
Treun-laoch spraiceil, dòid-gheal,	White-handed, vigorous, active,
Pìob da spalpadh suas 'na achlais,	With bagpipes thrust beneath his arm
Mhosglas lasan gleòis duinn;	Awakes our warlike passions,
Caismeachd bhras-bhinn, bhrodadh aigne	With tunes both sweet and spirit-rousing
Gu dian-chasgairt slòigh leis,	Urging us to slaughter,
Chuireadh tornam a phort baisgeil	The music of his stirring airs
Spioraid bhras 'nar pòraibh. [...]	Would fire our reckless spirits. [...]
Sliocraich, slacraich, nan cruaidh-slachan	Let slashing, clashing blades of steel
Freagradh basgar shionnsar,	Answer skirl of chanter;
'N uair a théid an ruaig gun stad libh,	When you've set the headlong rout,
Gura fad' a chluinntear	Far and wide re-echo
Feadraich bhuilleann, sgoltadh mhullach	Whistling blows, which smite to sever
Sìos gun bun an rùmpuill,	Bodies clean asunder;
Ruaig orr uile, mar mhaoim-tuile,	To flight they'll take in panic-spate,
Chaidh cha n-urr iad tionndadh.	And ne'er again turn on you. <sup>340</sup>

Again the author exhorts to frenzy, which the bagpipe on its own, unaided by any other element, is capable of producing. The sword-blows appear the natural consequence – “answer” – to the pipe’s notes: the soldier is almost compelled to ferociousness. Particularly worthy of notice in this context is Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair’s ‘Moladh air Pìob-Mhor Mhic Cruimein do ‘n ainm an Oinseach’ (‘In Praise of McCrimmon’s Pipe called the Idiot’). Angus MacDonald explains that *Oinseach* is the Gaelic word for “a foolish woman”, and that it was a name often amicably applied to the bagpipe in the Highlands<sup>341</sup>. The whole poem is composed of a brief introduction of one stanza by a personified Bagpipe (a lady who loves the protagonist MacCrimmon piper who will praise

<sup>339</sup> Campbell, ed., *Highland Songs*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>340</sup> Campbell, ed., *Highland Songs*, pp. 66-69.

<sup>341</sup> MacDonald, ed., *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald*, p. 56.

him all her days), while the rest of the work is a Bard's long tribute and eulogy to the pipes. The Bard gives the bagpipe female, human characteristics, so that the notes come out of her "throat" ("sgòrnain"), and her drones receive a "vital breath" ("anail-beatha"); her ropes and bag-cover are described as an actual dress and her bag as "smooth-skinned" ("mìn-chraicneach"). After a brief description of the pipe's sounds as it is played in the morning, the Bard passes on to illustrating the instrument's great value and gallantness in battle, and the courage it inspires in war:

'S mòr tha 'mhaise 's de mhisnich, 'S de dheagh ghibhtean ad ùrlainn: Pròiseil, stuirteil, fìor-sgibidh, 'S gur neo-mheata cur giùig ort: Goic nam buadh 's àghmhor gruaim, A dh' fhàgas sluagh creuchdach; Gu marbhadh 's gu reubadh, Le caithream nan geur-lann; Pìob 's i suas, 's dìonach nuall, Meur-chruinn, luath, leumnach; Toirm thrileanta, bhlasda, 'S fìor bhasdalach beucail.	Great grace and courage Are on thy fair front blending, Proud, sulky, and most smart, Not feeble with head bending: Vaunting and joyfully grim When leaving foemen gory, Slaughtering and rending with keen blades, Shouting in warlike glory: Pipe struck up clear and loud, Fingers swiftly springing, Congenial quavering sounds, Most cheerful high and ringing.
'Nuair a nochdar a' bhratach, B' ait leam basgar do sionnsar; Le d' bhras-shiùbhlaichean cnapach, Teachd le cneatraich bho d' chrùnluath: Caisimeachd dhlùth 's pronn-mhìn lùth, Teachd le rùn reubaidh, Ghearradh smùis agus fhéithean, Le d' sgál-ghaoir ag éigheach; Co de 'n t-sluagh nach cinn luath, Fo d' spor cruaidh, gleusta? Cha 'n 'eil anam an creubhaig, Làn de mhisnich, nach séid thu. [...]	To me, when the standard floats, Thy chanter's shout gives pleasure, Sighing thy bold variations Through every lively measure; The war note intent on rending, White fingers deft are pounding To hack both marrow and muscles With thy shrill cry resounding; Who of the host but would swiftly march Spurred by thy strains inspiring? All souls that are alive, With ample courage firing. [...]
B' ait bhi 'g amharc ad eudann 'N am bhi séideadh do shròine; Tha Mars gaisgeil 'n a éideadh; Ri sior-shéitrich fo d' chòtan. 'N uair chuirear suas do ghlaodh cruaidh, Roimh 'n bhras-shluagh chòmh- [stritheach, Cinnidh daoine 'n an leòghanna Fuileachdach, beòtha. Bidh bras ruaim ghuineach, ruadh, Anns gach gruaidh fheòlmhoir; 'S le mòr lasgar do bhras-phort, Cha 'n ath iad bhi deònach.	'Tis pleasant to see thy face With thy bag by breath-inspired; Mars puffing 'neath thy vest In warlike robes attired: Thy loud cry raised in front, As hosts rush to the strife, Make men like lions bold, Blood-thirsty, and full of life; With a war-like flush on each cheek, Keen for the onset they go, Urged by thy loud stirring strains, Undaunted they rush to the foe. <sup>342</sup>

The martial feature of the pipes dominates the scene through the whole of the poem: it is present in almost every stanza. The bagpipe/standard theme reappears in more than one occasion throughout the work, as do Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's typical suggestive words

<sup>342</sup> MacDonald, ed., *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald*, pp. 58-63.



on the fierceness of the soldiers at the bagpipe's sound. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, occasionally the author feminised and generally heavily reduced the harp when comparing it to the bagpipe: in this poem it is in fact an example of his opinion on the matter:

Rinn thu òinid de 'n chlàrsaich,	You shamed the harp,
Searbh mar ràcadal fìdhle;	Like untuned fiddle's tone,
Ciùil bhochd, mhosgaideach, phràmhail,	Dull strains for maids
Air son sheann-daoine 's nìonag;	And men grown old and done:
Rì uchd goil', b' fheàrr aon sgàl,	Better thy shrill blast
Bho d' thuill mhear, fhìnealt',	From gamut brave and gay,
'G am brosnadh 's g' an griosaich,	Rousing up men
Ann an caithream, thoirt griosaich.	To the destructive fray;
Toirm do tholl pronnadh phong,	Thy loud voiced grace-notes,
Cruinn-chruaidh, lom-dhionach;	When banners are unfurled,
B' fheàrr 's an am sin do bhrollainn	Surpass all other
Na uil' oirfeid na Criostachd.	Music in the world. <sup>343</sup>

The *clàrsach* is denigrated to such a point that it is equalled to the fiddle – one of the country instruments *par excellence*. This peculiar attitude towards what for centuries had been Scotland's national instrument, and which therefore can hardly be seen as deserving such derogatory words, may be seen as part of Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's progressivism and desire for renovation for his country.

A number of scholars have noticed Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's at times contradictory or ambiguous attitude towards certain elements of Scottish culture: let us think, for instance, about the fact that in spite of his apparent promotion of Scottish Gaelic (he is in fact considered one of the most important Gaelic poets, and is the author of the first secular book printed in Scots Gaelic), he was actively engaged in eradicating the language from the Highlands, being schoolmaster and translator for the SSPCK, a missionary society with this specific aim. This was and continues to be a rather controversial point in the history of Scottish literature. David Daiches terms Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's approach "cultural schizophrenia"<sup>344</sup>, and Kenneth Simpson employs the expressions "multiplicity of voice" and "fragmentation of personality"<sup>345</sup>.

Janet Sorensen on the other hand argues that what may be mistaken for "cultural schizophrenia" may rather be an expression of "intentional hybridity"<sup>346</sup>. Sorensen regards the topic as follows:

MacDonald's work signals the adoption of Anglo-British notions of a single standard language and an affiliated cultural identity in the production of notions of Gaelic and

<sup>343</sup> MacDonald, ed., *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald*, pp. 60-61.

<sup>344</sup> David Daiches, *The Paradox of Scottish Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964), p. 66.

<sup>345</sup> Kenneth Simpson, *The Protean Scot* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988), p. 2.

<sup>346</sup> Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire*, p. 56.

British identities. [...] While Anglo-British administrators hoped to spread English in the Highlands and connect the English language to British authority and cultural identity, MacDonald's involvement in that process allowed him to help standardize Gaelic and link it to a new Gaelic national identity.<sup>347</sup>

It is quite difficult to trace the boundary between so-called "cultural schizophrenia", mere negotiation between the two cultures, and more simply lack of alternatives, in a country where Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair already had difficulties keeping a stable working position. In 1741, for instance, the author was obliged to write a formal letter asking leave from his teaching job because of "the scarcity of the year", which made it necessary for him "to go from home to provide a meal for his family"<sup>348</sup>.

Whatever his attitude may have been towards linguistic and literary traditions, what appears from his works is that when Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair writes about war and battle he is referring to Jacobite rebellions; in this light, at least in the author's opinion, the bagpipe is not simply a Scottish, or Highland, or Gaelic instrument: it is a Jacobite, and in this sense *patriot* instrument. The *clàrsach* is outmoded together with the bard, and they will not be recovered until the nineteenth century, as an emblematic response to the Enlightenment dismissal of Gaelic culture<sup>349</sup>. For Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair, the Celtic harp is unfit to describe the contemporary feeling since it is symbolic of an old world (of "men grown old and done"), while the bagpipe, instrument of war, of the *Jacobite* war, symbolises the present.

In most of Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's poems, the bagpipe carries strong political implications. There are nevertheless some exceptions, such as the 'Òran do Allt an t-Siùcar' ('The Song to Allt an t-Siùcar'), in which the bagpipe is not necessarily endowed with warlike symbolism. A true mark of identity, the bagpipe is present in association with tartan in the author's praise to the plaid, 'Am Breacan Uallach' ('The Proud Plaid'):

Fìor-chulaidh an t-soighdeir,  
'S neo-ghloiceil ri h-uchd na caismeachd,  
'S ciatach 'san *adbhàns* thù,  
Fo shranraich nam pìob 's nam bratach.

True dress of the soldier,  
Practical, when sounds the war-cry,  
Graceful in the advance thou art,  
When bagpipes sound and banners flutter.<sup>350</sup>

The soldier, bagpipes, standard and tartan: this short stanza contains in a nutshell what appear to be the most significant symbols of Scottishness for the author. Bagpipes and tartan often appear together in a common context. To a considerable extent they share the same social and cultural 'fate', in that they are both elements which constitute a mark of differentiation of the Scot, and particularly the Gael, from their neighbour country.

<sup>347</sup> Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>348</sup> MacDonald, ed., *The Poems of Alexander MacDonald*, p. xxviii.

<sup>349</sup> Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. xi-xii.

<sup>350</sup> Campbell, ed., *Highland Songs*, pp. 154-155.

They signify a visual representation of non-Englishness: as such, they symbolise an alternative tradition to the one suggested by the English rule, and for this reason they have been (and in a way still are) a potential subject for Scotophobic sentiment<sup>351</sup>.

As emerges from the texts analysed above, for many authors the political symbolism of the bagpipe and its use in battle was a predominant feature for the instrument's characterisation. This was not always necessarily true, as poets such as the above-mentioned Iain Mhic Fhearchair describes piping at a wedding celebration in his song 'Banais Mhicasgail' ('Macaskill's Wedding')<sup>352</sup>. Though the song in itself does contain a superficial political hint, embedded in a brief reference to a toast to "the health of King George the Third, of every family that was esteemed and cherished, and of every person of position in Alba", the pipes do not have any deeper implication, if not that of simply describing a ball and merriment. Another interesting example of a non-political reference to bagpipes is Mhic Fhearchair's 'Diomoladh Pìoba Dhomhnaill Bhàin' ('The Dispraise of Donald Ban's Pipes'), a song which has little to do with affairs of any particular political consequence as its main aim was in fact to ridicule Dhomhnaill Bhàin (Donald MacAulay) and his bagpipes<sup>353</sup>. In doing so he could not be more flyting. Similar dispraise was not unpopular, as descriptions of the sort can be found, for instance, in Uilleam MacMhurchaidh's 'Diomoladh': 'Moladh maguidh air Droch Phibaire agus air a Phib' ('Mock Elegy to a bad Piper and his Bagpipe'), c. 1750.

Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir was a poet who fought for the House of Hanover during the 1746 rising, but evidently without great sympathies, as is demonstrated by the tone of poems such as 'Òran don Bhriogais' ('Song to Trousers'), inspired by the 1746 Disarming Act. Donnchadh Bàn was, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter, for six years the winner of a Gaelic poetry contest organised by the Highland Society of London on the occasion of the yearly piping competitions, the theme of which was "Poems in Praise of Gaelic and the Great Pipe". The link, so clear right from the theme of the poetry contest, between language and music is in itself worthy of notice, as we shall have the chance to see. In 1781, the year of the first piping contest, the poet won with words about the pipe that certainly stress its status and appreciation among the higher ranks of society: "Cinn-chinnidh is daoine'-uaise / Ard mhòralachd nam fineachan" ("chieftains and gentlemen, / the aristocracy of the clans").

Bagpipes are an instrument of status, and he mentions them on the same level as the *clàrsach*; they are a manly instrument, played with "cliù" ("honour")<sup>354</sup> by worthy men.

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<sup>351</sup> Ian Brown, 'Tartan, Tartanry and Hybridity', in Brown, ed., *From Tartan to Tartanry*, p. 5.

<sup>352</sup> Matheson, ed., *The Songs of John MacCodrum*, pp. 178-179.

<sup>353</sup> Matheson, ed., *The Songs of John MacCodrum*, pp. 63 and 250-252.

<sup>354</sup> Duncan Ban Macintyre, *The Songs of Duncan Ban Macintyre*, ed. by Angus MacLeod (Edinburgh: Published by Oliver & Boyd for the Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1952), pp. 270-275.

Their natural ‘habitat’ is in the Gàidhealtachd, and particularly among the aristocracy of the clans. The poet also traces a parallel between the Gaelic language and bagpipe music: the two seem to mingle. Language mutates into song; words mutate into notes. Gaelic *is* “ceòl nam pìob ‘s nan clàrsach” (“the music of the pipes and *clàrsach*”)<sup>355</sup>; they represent an alternative language; the non-verbal expression of a nation. A nation *is* its song; it finds a powerful vehicle of communication through music. Music renders one of the possible languages of identification; the linguistic identity of the nation finds clear correspondence in its music. So strong must this language-music connection have been considered, especially in the given context, to inspire the theme for the above-mentioned contest. Notes and words, in the poet’s writing, seem to be ambivalent and equally powerful in expressing nationhood, belonging, and the personality of the Scottish Highlands as a whole.

One can also perceive that the author shares the idea, quite common among his contemporaries, that the bagpipe was going through a revival, also thanks to the Highland Societies. This, as we have seen, does not correspond to the truth, given the fact that piping was never in danger of disappearing: Dhonnchaidh Bhain was probably induced into thinking this because of the general opinion which had formed around the above-mentioned deceptive introduction to Patrick MacDonald’s *Highland Vocal Airs* written by John Ramsay of Ochtertyre.

A more descriptive and metaphorical approach to the pipes can be found in the poem Dhonnachaidh Bhain wrote for the contest the following year, which I have transcribed almost in full in the previous chapter. A similar description is present also in the poem the author wrote for the contest the following year. In it the bagpipe, much in the fashion of Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair’s ‘Praise of MacCrimmon’s Pipe’ mentioned above, is personified as a lady, in this case to be conquered. The gendering of the pipes gives an idea of unity of the instrument with its nation, since Scotland was often celebrated and allegorised as a lady. In this poem the martial principle, the military value of the pipes, acquires greater importance even than its potential political – Jacobite – significance. This is hardly surprising, since it was typical of the Highland Societies, hosts of the event, and also of many Enlightenment scholars and intellectuals, to take a position of distance from Jacobitism, in order to fit comfortably into the newly-forming wider picture of Britishness. The same feelings and ideas of the above-mentioned poem are conveyed in the fifth stanza of Dhonnchaidh Bhain’s 1789 work – the last of the series of the author’s poems which won the poetry contest:

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<sup>355</sup> MacLeod, *The Songs of Duncan Ban Macintyre*, p. 275.

Pìob a chuireadh sunnd gu mire, Fonn is faram, Air gach diùc is àrd cheann-cinnidh, 'S oighre fearainn; Bidh gach duin'-uasal 'ga sireadh Gu togail a shluaigh 'sa' charraid, 'N am tharraing a suas gach fine Dhol a bhualadh nan cruaidh lannan.	Pipe that would put in mood for mirth, cheer and revel, each duke, high chief of clan, and heir of lands; every gentleman will seek it, to raise his people for the conflict, in time of mustering each clan to go a-smiting with hard blades <sup>356</sup>
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It is clear that the bagpipe serves the purpose of encouraging and inciting men in battle, but rather than enhancing the concepts of honour, blood and value, Dhonnchaidh Bhain stresses the gentility of the instrument, sought by gentlemen, dukes, chiefs and heirs of land – ideas certainly more suited to the Highland Societies' environment. It is striking that the author, through the gentlemanly quality of the smiting and the swords, emphasises a nostalgic invocation of valour. The tone of Dhonnchaidh Bhain's poetry is very different from Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's, in that the dimension of valour acquires strong tints of nostalgia, and feelings which lead us more and more towards Romanticism.

From the satires and literature analysed in the present chapter it emerges that Jacobitism, and Jacobite-related events and characters, have heavily influenced the perception of the bagpipe in the various authors' eyes. As one can see, the bagpipe's 'fate' in literature, caricature and art follows the history and politics of Scotland, and the dynamics of its relationship with England. It is easily understandable that English pens would have regarded and described the instrument in very negative terms, extending by synecdoche proverbial traits associated with individual characters, such as Lord Bute, or with human 'races', such as the Highlanders, to the instrument itself. On the other hand, the views partaken by the majority of Scots and/or Jacobites are of course in many cases very different, as the bagpipe is associated with other landmarks of Scottish identity in a common coalition stating Scottish individualism and independence. The most common binomials – namely bagpipe-tartan, bagpipe-standard and bagpipe-sword – endow the instrument with status, and feelings of national pride.

This chapter started off with diabolical connections between Scotland and the bagpipe. The imagery and terms employed, by early eighteenth-century English authors particularly, are universally negative towards the instrument. The essence of Scotland is concentrated in a few, highly symbolic icons – particularly tartan, the kilt, and the bagpipe. These same terms become a mark of identity, belonging and pride in the words of Scottish authors.

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<sup>356</sup> MacLeod, ed., *The Songs of Donald Ban Macintyre*, pp. 298-299.

By the end of the century, though, the terms have considerably changed, taking up decidedly less brutal and more heroic connotations – eloquently exemplified in Boswell’s reflections about the “melancholy and respect for courage” he felt at the sound of the bagpipe. The defeat at Culloden and the subsequent reinterpretation of the figure of the Scot, gradually becoming less of an enemy and more of a ‘north-Briton’, certainly played a substantial part in this change of perspectives. In fact, as Richard Sharp notes,

Although [...] Jacobitism retained more than a merely nostalgic appeal for some for several years after Culloden and the Peace of Aix-la Chapelle (1748), other images were already doing much to reduce the Stuart cause to the level of sentiment and fantasy. Thus, for example, while some prints of Flora Macdonald were serious and handsome enough, others trivialized her exploits with sentimental verses, or hinted at an entirely fictitious romantic liaison between her and the Prince.<sup>357</sup>

As many examples in literature and art testify, after the defeat at Culloden the fear of the Jacobite subsided; the events were romanticised, and so were the icons and figures related to them – such as Bonnie Prince Charlie, Flora Macdonald (as we saw Sharp’s quote), tartan, and the bagpipe.

The Highland Societies undoubtedly also played a role in ‘polishing’ the bagpipe’s imagery, but particularly important for the subsequent change of attitude towards the instrument was played by the inclusion of the piper within the British Army. The iconic figure – no longer a ruthless Jacobite ready to shake the basis of British civilisation, but a proud soldier ready to give his life for (Britain’s) freedom – was heavily romanticised. Precisely this aspect I will describe in the following chapter.

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<sup>357</sup> Richard Sharp, *The Engraved Record of the Jacobite Movement* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996), p. 31.

## Chapter 3

### Military pipers

As I have pointed out in the previous chapters, the presence of Scottish military pipers is testified to long before Jacobitism – as is the case, for instance, of the French historian of 1549 mentioned in Chapter 1, who spoke about the “savage Scots inciting themselves into battle with the sound of their bagpipes”<sup>358</sup>. However, the greater involvement of Highland regiments in international warfare from the eighteenth century onwards gave the Highland soldier greater prominence and visibility. Particularly prominent was the role played by the Highland regiments during the Seven Years’ War (1756-1763). The Highlanders achieved great military success, especially in their actions in North America; but the war had also the ‘symbolic’ value of seeing Scotland and England joining forces against France, proverbially the former’s ally and the latter’s enemy, to promote the interests of the British Empire.

Of course the increasing military bond between England and Scotland under the common denominator of the British Army did not instantly dissolve the old antipathy towards Jacobitism. Anti-Scot and anti-Jacobite references in literature, satire and prints can still be found well into the end of the eighteenth century; examples include Charles Churchill’s satirical poem ‘The Prophecy of Famine’<sup>359</sup>, or prints such as the 1762 ‘The Caledonians Arrival, in Money-Land’<sup>360</sup>. At the same time, the acceptance of tartan in military attire played a role in rehabilitating the Scot. Even during the enforcement of the 1746 Disarming Act, which stated that “no Tartan, or party-coloured Plaid or Stuff shall be used for Great Coats, or for Upper Coats”<sup>361</sup>, those serving the Army were still permitted to wear tartan. The military sphere served as a unifying ground. With the acceptance within the British Army of the ideology represented visually by tartan, the Scot was gradually making his way towards rehabilitation.

Because of the eccentricity of the visual – from the tartan kilt to the bagpipe – the Highland soldier became an iconic figure which was hugely appealing worldwide, with porcelain figurines, artworks and earthenware being produced as far away as China, thus setting the basis for the industry of snow globes, pencil-tops and shot glasses present in most Scottish souvenir shops today.

In this section I will focus on the pipers’ involvement in the Army, and the consequences this had on their role and symbolism. As we have seen in the previous chapter, the martial side of piping was a prominent feature in the Jacobite rebellions, with

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<sup>358</sup> Francis Collinson, *The Bagpipe* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1975), p. 140.

<sup>359</sup> Charles Churchill, *The Prophecy of Famine: a Scots Pastoral* (London: printed for E. Cabe, 1763).

<sup>360</sup> BM 1868,0808.4176.

<sup>361</sup> Quoted in Jonathan Faiers, *Tartan* (New York: Berg, 2008), p. 107.

poets and authors, both Anglophone and Gaelic, describing the piper's role and celebrating his charisma in battle. Hanoverian propaganda, on the other hand, vilified and made fun of him, enhancing in his icon the stereotypical traits of roguishness and backwardness attributed to the Scot, in order to promote anti-Jacobite feelings. Military piping is a topic worthy of a whole dissertation in itself, partly because the establishment of its practice happened in various steps: from the pipers' unofficial presence in Scottish regiments to obscure mentions under vague denominations (such as 'pipers' or even 'drummers'), and from the formation of pipe bands to their recognition in the British Army in 1854. The history of military piping is therefore difficult to trace back with certainty. As if obscure mentions and unofficial, or semi-official presence in the regiments for decades – centuries, even – weren't enough to confuse the modern scholar, to further complicate the matter is the aura of myth which surrounds the military piper to this day; a true emblem of Scottishness, and the object of national pride – and with reason.

The myth has produced a corpus of literature infested with nostalgia and parochialism, which is very hard to break through. This sub-category of tartanry and Highlandism and its often superficial and sentimental talk about valour, heroism, honour, patriotism, clans and chiefs, is certainly very appealing and has its charms, though in most cases it is an end in itself. Reading Seton and Grant's *The Pipes of War* or Maj. Mackay Scobie's *Pipers and Pipe Music in a Highland Regiment* is certainly very inspiring, and their enthusiasm is palpable; I myself do not refrain from quoting them, but it is admittedly a complex task to cherry-pick the facts from the sometimes over-exalted personal opinions. I share Andrew Mackillop's view about the 'regimental histories' which proliferated particularly during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that this kind of literature tends to convey "a false and twee image of the Highlands and Scotland as a whole"<sup>362</sup>; a colourful veil of haziness around what is in fact a complex issue which has, ultimately, given shape to one of the most striking characteristics of Scotland.

Much literature about the bagpipe still promotes distorted ideas about the history of military piping. Such is the case, for instance, of the supposed banning of the bagpipe with the Disarming Act<sup>363</sup> which I mentioned in the previous chapter; or the unascertainable notion of the instrument reaching Britain because it was played by the Roman Army<sup>364</sup>. Scholars today are trying to rectify such beliefs, but unfortunately there still tends to be a preference for legend, and for the colourful appeal detectable in mainstream literature and media, rather than for fact and better-documented sources. Trying not to fall into the many traps set by inaccurate sources, unclear successions of

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<sup>362</sup> Andrew Mackillop, *'More Fruitful than the Soil': Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715-1815* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), pp. 1-2.

<sup>363</sup> E.g. Josephine Buchanan, *Insight Guide Scotland* (Berlin: Langenscheidt Publishing Group, 2003), p. 78.

<sup>364</sup> E.g. Denis Brook and Phil Hinchcliffe, *North to the Cape* (Milnthorpe: Cicerone Press Ltd., 1999), p. 97.



events and authors' moments of quasi-fanaticism, I will trace the steps of the formation of the British Army, the role of the Scottish regiments in this context, and the international fascination with the Highland soldier.

The main aim of this chapter is to analyse the process which led to the romanticisation of the piper. One of the stages of this process, after the Jacobite characterisation of the instrument, is undoubtedly that of piping in the British Army. After an *excursus* of British military history from the seventeenth century, and the formation of a notion of Britishness within it, I will focus on Scotland's regiments. I will analyse their changes and history as they become more and more inextricably connected to the wider context of Britain. Of course my focus will be particularly on the role of the piper, and his reception both in the national and colonial contexts. The piper as a military icon for a long time bears the aura of Jacobitism, but particularly after the '45 this is set aside. As the Jacobite threat was seen to wane, the 'savage Highlander' gradually acquired 'noble' characteristics, which developed right through into the Romantic Era. The iconic features of the Highland piper, modified from mere 'savage' to 'noble savage', have left a strong impact which, as I have pointed out, carries on to present day. It is precisely this legacy which I wish to focus on.

### **Creating a notion of a British Army**

In Britain, soldiers in the sense of an organised body of men under the regimental command of a Sovereign or Head of State, did not exist in large numbers before the seventeenth century: Standing Armies were in fact expensive to keep. These armies were mainly bodies raised as feudal levies, and they existed both in England and Scotland. Early developed militias were formed in England during the sixteenth century. There was no Militia Act in Scotland until 1797, though from 1603 to 1760 various Independent Highland Companies, progenitors of the subsequent Highland Regiments originally raised as local gendarmerie forces, were raised and disbanded<sup>365</sup>. Generally, most of the armed forces in Britain were made up of militia rather than full-time professionals. England and Scotland possessed a Standing Army, though there was a certain degree of hostility towards employing them, as peacetime armies were generally distrusted and seen as potentially threatening civil equilibrium with the fear of tyranny. Parliamentary estimates referred to "guards and garrisons" rather than an army: this was the traditional formula since the reign of Charles II<sup>366</sup>. With the 1603 Union of the Crowns English and Scottish Armies, though under one King, maintained separate establishments. Scots

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<sup>365</sup> Peter Simpson, *The Independent Highland Companies 1603-1760* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1996), p. ix.

<sup>366</sup> Correlli Barnett, *Britain and Her Army 1509-1970* (London: The Penguin Press, 1970), pp. 165-166.

served both Charles I and the Commonwealth, though the raising of Scottish troops for internal defence was not viewed positively, since the Scots were by that stage already seen as a potential threat to England<sup>367</sup>. The first armed force led by professionals was the army of the Covenanters, which was established in Scotland in 1638 in response to King Charles I's attempt to impose the Church of England liturgy and the Book of Common Prayer on the Scots.

In 1645 the New Model Army of England was set up – an organised, permanent military force created by a Parliamentary ordinance – but it was far from being a *British* body<sup>368</sup>. It can be seen as a precursor of the British Army, since in 1661 the remnants of the New Model Army set the basis for regular forces in Britain: the Coldstream Guards and the Life Guards. The 1<sup>st</sup> Scots Regiment of Foot or Royal Scots also claim their precedence over the Coldstream and Life Guards for being the first regiment of the British line<sup>369</sup>. Wherever the truth may lie, it is in the late seventeenth century that the first regular Scottish forces were included in the Army which before the Union was still predominantly, or rather exclusively, English. Regular forces became increasingly important, especially since European armies such as France and Prussia's were already professionally organised while England only possessed a skeleton of a Standing Army and an undrilled Militia. It was not until 1755 that the first list of the continuous series of army lists was published, thus giving the army a more official recognition<sup>370</sup>.

### **Scotland and her soldiers**

Since 1690, under the suggestion of the Earl of Breadalbane, Highland regiments for the British service were formed and disbanded for internal security, according to contingent military necessities<sup>371</sup>, in the form of Independent Highland Companies commanded by Highland chiefs. In May 1725 four Independent Companies were re-established, followed by two more in 1729. In 1739 four other Companies were added, and together they formed the Highland Regiment of Foot, or 43<sup>rd</sup>. This ensured the start of an active relationship between a Highland and a centralised British military. It was initially created to destabilise the Jacobite movement, and to develop a certain political and economic integration. The 43<sup>rd</sup> in 1749 became the 42<sup>nd</sup>, also known as the Black Watch: it is the oldest surviving Highland regiment<sup>372</sup>. It was also the first British regiment to wear the plaid and not conform to the English red-coat uniform<sup>373</sup>. What's more, the soldiers

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<sup>367</sup> Diana Henderson, *Highland Soldier* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers Ltd., 1989), p. 1.

<sup>368</sup> Stephen Wood, *The Scottish Soldier* (Liverpool: Archive Publications Limited, 1987), pp.7 and 18.

<sup>369</sup> Henderson, *Highland Soldier*, p. 1.

<sup>370</sup> Barnett, *Britain and Her Army*, p. 166.

<sup>371</sup> Nicholas Maclean-Bristol, *From Clan to Regiment* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword Aviation, 2007), p. 133.

<sup>372</sup> Henderson, *Highland Soldier*, p. 4.

<sup>373</sup> Wood, *The Scottish Soldier*, pp. 29–30.

would wear a dark-pattern plaid (hence the name “Black” Watch; only thin red, yellow and white lines were used to distinguish between the regiments), while, as army officer and writer of the Scottish Highlanders David Stewart of Garth explains in his 1820 work *Sketches of the Character, Manners and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland*, pipers wore a bright red tartan, so as to be seen clearly from a distance<sup>374</sup>. It is worthy of notice that since early stages of the history of tartan red dyes were favoured and probably denoted status, and Gaelic praise poetry celebrated the red of the kilts and plaids as a symbolic mark of heroism<sup>375</sup>. This reference regards the Black Watch between 1787 and 1804 – the years Stewart of Garth was serving in it.

The Cameron Highlanders were the first to break the convention of the dark tartan: on their formation in 1793 they invented a tartan of their own, since the predominant red colour did not harmonise with the scarlet coat of their uniform<sup>376</sup>. The image of the tartan-clad Highland soldier became the object of great fascination, and was used as an iconic emblem of Scottishness in prints, statuettes, posters and literary works alike, from the eighteenth century to this day. It is worthy of notice that although, as we shall see, the pipers’ role was unofficial until the nineteenth century, they were nevertheless so established a presence to have their own distinctive uniform, at least in the Black Watch.

Wearing the plaid was quite exceptional, since the Disarming Act would only be repealed in 1782: while civilian Highlanders were forbidden to wear their traditional garb, soldiers were instead entitled to do so. In later days the soldier’s uniform became mostly a ‘variation on the theme’ of the Highland garb, since it was often invented by the local colonels rather than taken from the actual tradition, but it served the purpose, to use an expression of John Keegan’s, of resisting “against the creeping Anglicisation of Scottish urban life”<sup>377</sup>. The tartan, a relic of the Jacobite army uniform which sinks its truer roots in the more ancient martial identity of patriotic Scotland, was an important element of the Highland regiments, and symbolically unified the tradition of Scottish valour with the ambitions and desires of the British Army. Eventually this led to the identification, apart with Jacobite loyalty, with the new Scottish allegiance to the British Crown, hence misplacing the interpretation<sup>378</sup>.

To wear tartan was to make a political statement, which is why the 1746 Disclathing Act represented a serious slight to the dignity of Scotland, and a strong

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<sup>374</sup> David Stewart of Garth, *Sketches of the Character, Manners and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland*, in 2 volumes (Edinburgh: Printed for Archibald Constable & Co., 1822), vol. 1, pp. 229 and ff.

<sup>375</sup> Hugh Cheape, *Tartan: the Highland Habit* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 1995), pp. 13 and 23.

<sup>376</sup> Cheape, *Tartan*, p. 44.

<sup>377</sup> John Keegan, *Six Armies in Normandy* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1982), p. 168.

<sup>378</sup> Murray Pittock, *Jacobitism* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, Inc., 1998), p. 74.

symbolic form of subjection. Even before Jacobite times, tartan was seen as the putative badge of old Scotland. Wearing the tartan was tantamount to expressing a belonging to Scotland, with all the political, social and cultural implications this entailed. This is confirmed by the fact that even Lowland Jacobites ended up wearing plaids and tartan, just like subsequently the Lowland regiments of the British Army. Tartan became more than a traditional garb: it was the visual representation of Scottish independent cultural identity. Opinions were divided as to the acceptance of these new eccentric-looking soldiers who, as Scots, until a few years earlier were fighting on the other side as ‘the enemy’.

It should however be noted that recent studies on the cultural history of tartan point out how the original anti-Hanoverian functions of tartan were soon eradicated, as, as Faiers puts it, the “residual qualities of collective identity could be tapped and adapted to make uniforms that signalled obedience rather than dissent”, and that not only in the military sphere but also, for instance, in civilian uniforms and fashion<sup>379</sup>.

Measures were taken from time to time to standardise the appearance of the Army. In 1795, for instance, Sir John Sinclair, Bart. Colonel of the Rothsay and Caithness Fencibles, requires some special notice to be taken regarding the dress of the soldiers in the camp of Aberdeen:

Attention to the dress of a soldier is extremely material; by which I mean, not so much that the dress should be smart and showy, as that it should be warm and convenient. In that view, the usual Highland dress is liable to some objections. I thought it necessary, therefore, in my two Battalions of Fencibles, instead of the phillibeg and the belted plaid, to adopt the *trews*, which had been formerly worn by the Scottish Highlanders, and seemed to me particularly convenient for a soldier. Perhaps there is at present too great a diversity of dress in British military establishments, every Colonel following his own fancy, particularly in new corps [...]<sup>380</sup>

From Sir John Sinclair’s words it emerges that there was “too great a diversity” between the uniforms of the various corps, which ultimately, in his opinion, gave the Army a ‘disorderly’ appearance. He also does not seem to particularly approve of the phillibeg – the ‘short kilt’ – thinking the “trews” would be a more adequate option as he appears to think them to be less inconvenient, and warmer. Interestingly, he ideally would prefer the soldiers’ uniform to conform to the trews and abandon the kilt altogether.

In less than a century – from the 1700s to 1800 – thirty-seven units of Highlanders were raised for British service. From c. 1700, a considerable number of Scots were in the service of the English East India Company – not least Joseph MacDonald, the young

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<sup>379</sup> Faiers, *Tartan*, p. 116.

<sup>380</sup> J. Rider, ed., *The British Military Library* in 3 volumes (London: printed for R. Phillips, 1799), vol. 1, p. 182.

author of the *Compleat Theory of the Scots Highland Bagpipe* who left Scotland for Calcutta in 1760, where he died three years later of a malignant fever<sup>381</sup>. In a letter to his father, Joseph, a piper himself, wrote:

There is nothing brings to my mind a more natural and soothing joy, than the playing and singing our sweet Highland Luinigs, Jorrams, &c. when by myself, for alas! I have none capable of sharing the pleasure with me. They paint afresh the many innocent and sweet scenes of my rural and puerile life, far beyond description. What would I give now, far from the theatre of those delightful scenes, for one night of my beloved society, to sing those favourite, simple, primitive airs along with me? It would bring me back to the golden age anew. O! That I had been at more pains, to gather those admirable remains of our ancient Highland music, before I left my native country, It would have augmented my collection of Highland music and poetry, which I have formed a system of, in my voyage to India, and propose to send soon home, dedicated to Sir James M'Donald, or some such chieftain of rank and figure in the Highlands, in order that those sweet, noble, and expressive sentiments of nature, may not be allowed to sink and die away: and to shew, that our poor remote corner, even without the advantages of learning and cultivation, abounded in works of taste and genius. [...] If Sir James M'Donald is not prejudiced, and rendered cold to the Highlands, by his corrupt English education, I hope he will duly prize it. [...] Since I could do no more, I set the wrights to work, in a town on the coast of Persia, where we put in at, and got the black fellows, some of whom are very ingenious, to make me two or three whistles, *feadain meaghra*<sup>382</sup>, which have answered so well as to enable me to preserve all my pipe music. My good friend Mr. M. at London, has been so kind as to send me a fine Highland bagpipe, and a suit of Highland cloaths, which, I hear, have arrived at a town on the coast of Malabar, with which I expect yet to make a conquest of an Indian princess.<sup>383</sup>

The touching nostalgic words of the home-sick young author show how big a part in the young man's mind the bagpipe plays in characterising his native Scotland. Joseph Macdonald's letter is even more heart-breaking when we think that he would not live to see his homeland again. It is in fact the sad truth that many, if not most of the British soldiers who were sent to India never came back, and died there of various diseases; for this reason it was a very unpopular destination. The risk was often taken because, according to contemporary opinion, the great riches of the East Indies would make it easier for one to make a fortune<sup>384</sup>.

By the 1780s, in order to fill the ranks of certain regiments such as the 74<sup>th</sup> and 75<sup>th</sup>, the Company had to resort to recruiting prisoners and old soldiers (or out-

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<sup>381</sup> Henry C. G. Matthew, and Brian Harrison, eds., *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), s.v. "MacDonald, Joseph".

<sup>382</sup> The exact meaning of *feadain meaghra* is difficult to establish. *Feadan* is without doubt a pipe or chanter, but the spelling of *meaghra* is obscure. Its etymology may be a reflex of the Old Gaelic *meda(i)r* ('merriment'), or it may be an early construction of the modern *meur* ('finger'). This information I have gathered from private correspondence with Roibeard O Maolalaigh, John Purser, Hugh Cheape, Colm O'Boyle, and William Donaldson. Correspondence with Roderik Cannon, on the other hand, has enlightened me on the possibility of the pipes Joseph describes might be actual whistles, similar to our recorders, which though they do not sound like Scottish reed pipes they could be easily modified by adjusting the holes to be in tune with the bagpipe scales.

<sup>383</sup> Patrick MacDonald, *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs* (Edinburgh: Corri and Sutherland Bridge Street, 1784), pp. 1-2.

<sup>384</sup> Thomas Martin Devine, *Scotland's Empire 1600-1815* (London: Penguin Books Ltd., 2003), p. 252.

pensioners)<sup>385</sup>. The majority of Scots in India serving in the Company were ordinary soldiers, whose levels of literacy were such that few records have been left behind, apart from a few wills and some Gaelic poetry<sup>386</sup>. Most of the soldiers enrolled out of sheer necessity rather than actual belief in a given cause. Other Scots in India and the Caribbean were career emigrants, who often left their homeland with the intention of returning to it someday. The minimum age for entering the East India Company was sixteen. The hopes were, as a young lad of the Dalrymple clan wrote to his family patron in 1752, for the service “to be fifteen or twenty years at least. In that time I may be made Governour. If not that, I may make a fortune which will make me live like a gentleman”<sup>387</sup>.

These temporary emigrants were mostly single males of middle class backgrounds, normally possessing educational and occupational skills but little prospect back home<sup>388</sup>. Although Scotland had only one-tenth of the overall British population, the percentage of Scots serving the army and civil service in the East India Company was far higher than that of the English<sup>389</sup>.

### **Being Scottish in a British Army**

The military achievements of the Highlanders, especially during the Seven Years’ War happened to coincide with Macpherson’s publication of his Ossianic fragments. The fortuitous contemporaneity of these two elements summed up to create an image of the Highlander as loyal, but with a fierce military nature – aspects which served the purposes of the British imperialist politics of the time. The Highlander presented in imperial poetry was shaped as a “parallel type of the colonial opponent who showed the Afghan or Zulu what they might become, in the shape of this once antagonistic people who now displayed the virtues of British domestication”<sup>390</sup>, as Murray Pittock puts it.

An interesting aspect of the Highland presence in India is the heritage the culture has left. Somewhat aided by the common denominator of the savage – more or less ‘noble’ – certain aspects of the Scottish and particularly Highland culture have been physically and conceptually transferred to the Indian population. For instance, the military piper: today regiments in India have players of the Great Highland bagpipe in their companies. Also the idea of the ‘martial race’: Trevor Royle explains this exhaustively:

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<sup>385</sup> Wood, *The Scottish Soldier*, p. 40.

<sup>386</sup> Andrew Mackillop, ‘Europeans, Britons, and Scots: Scottish Sojourning Networks and Identities in Asia, c.1700-1815’, in *A Global Clan: Scottish Migrant Networks and Identities since the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by Angela McCarthy (London, Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), 19-47 (p. 19).

<sup>387</sup> Quoted in Peter James Marshall, *East Indian Fortunes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 215.

<sup>388</sup> Mackillop, ‘Europeans, Britons and Scots’, p. 20.

<sup>389</sup> Devine, *Scotland’s Empire*, pp. 250-251.

<sup>390</sup> Murray Pittock, ‘To See Ourselves as Others See Us, the Scot in English Eyes since 1707’, in *European Journal of English Studies*, 13, issue 3 (2009), 293-304 (p. 297).

To a certain extent the belief that Highlander possessed superior military virtues had been conditioned by romanticism and by the contemporary notion that Highlanders were 'noble savages' but it was also backed by evidence of their conduct while fighting for the Jacobite cause. In 1715 and 1745-6, clan soldiers had demonstrated their ability to handle weapons and to make full use of what would now be called field craft. They were also amenable to accepting orders provided they came from their own superior officers and they were used to being disciplined. It is instructive to compare this belief to contemporary attitudes to the so-called 'martial races' in British India. This was an official designation created by senior officers who, having observed that the Scottish Highlanders had the reputation of being hardier in battle than other classes of men in Britain extended the concept to India, where they classified each ethnic group into two categories. 'Martial races' were rated as ideal warriors, held to be brave and robust as a result of their upbringing, while 'non martial races' were believed to be unfit for the rigours of soldiering because they came from comfortable backgrounds or led sedentary lifestyles.<sup>391</sup>

The parallel drawn between the colonised in British India and Scottish Highlanders in establishment discourse of the time is evident. A common physical characteristic attributed to the Highlanders and the colonised was for instance their supposed ape-like features. This idea developed about the Scots and Irish already in the 1700s, and presented them in cartoons and literature alike as hairy, dirty and clumsy. This is testified in prints such as 'The Scrubbing Post'<sup>392</sup>, in which four rough-looking Scots in short kilts take turns to rub against a post to relieve themselves of itchiness.

At the same time, the Highlander also bears common traits with the mountaineer: a hardy rustic man, with muscular build, who in his most positive representation is also endowed with heroic associations – an icon which can be paralleled with that of Swiss patriot depictions of William Tell, and the Landsknechts.

The bagpipe in many ways was made a part of the Highlander-colonised parallel, as one can gather from certain reports about experiences in the colonies. The following is an excerpt from an article in the *Critical Review*, 'A Narrative of the Military Operations on the Coromandel Coast'; it narrates the impressions on various themes given by a Mr. Munro upon arriving in Madras:

It is truly surprising to behold how charmed these creatures [snakes] are with the sound of any instrument, but particularly the bagpipe, raising their heads with seeming joy, and moving their bodies in concord with the musical notes. As the time quickens, they appear more and more delighted; and at last get into such an ecstasy, that you see them extend their beautiful bells, and quicken the motion of their heads, whilst their eyes sparkle with increased lustre. Those gentlemen, whose residence was next to the 73<sup>rd</sup> regiment, used often to allege, in a jocular manner, that our bagpiper drew every snake in the country to his neighbourhood by the charms of his music; which was certainly the case, for he has often discovered them dancing round his feet, whilst he entertained the soldiers with a few Highland reels. The bagpipe

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<sup>391</sup> Trevor Royle, 'From David Stewart to Andy Stewart: the Invention and Re-Invention of the Scottish Soldier', in Brown, ed., *From Tartan to Tartanry*, 48-62 (pp. 52-53).

<sup>392</sup> BM 1868,0808.4206.

appears also to be a favourite instrument amongst the natives. They have no taste indeed for any other kind of music, and they would much rather listen to this instrument all day than to an organ for ten minutes.<sup>393</sup>

The last words of this passage are particularly significant: the sound of the organ, therefore music fit for church and, consequently, for educated minds and ears, the natives cannot endure, while their uncultivated ears are very much at ease with the sound of the bagpipe – just like their snakes are. The diabolical connections of the snake should certainly not be ignored in the context. Bagpipes constitute in this case a common denominator between the colonised Indians, snakes, and Highlanders. They all appreciate the sound of the instrument, and the description of the snakes as they enjoy the music coincides with the rousing effect it has on Scots in battle.

“The issue was perhaps the most explosive single element in the entire history of the Highland clearances”: these are the words employed by Eric Richards to describe British Army recruiting in the Highlands between 1715 and 1815<sup>394</sup>. In Andrew Mackillop’s words,

These regiments and the processes that created them have been all but buried under a whole corpus of material from both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries which can be generally described as regimental histories. This literature has overly romanticised such levies; [...] it descends into almost racial stereo-typing of the Gael as an enthusiastic, undisciplined warrior whose natural fighting genius only found full expression once contained within the disciplined framework of the British army. Generally, this genre emphasises the direct Highland connections and traditions of such regiments and ensures that the whole issue is represented largely from the army’s perspective, with little or no reference to the wider social and economic context. Often written by army or ex-army officers, such regimental histories continue to reinforce an interpretation that many would describe at best historically inaccurate and, at worst, as conveying a false and twee image of the Highlands and Scotland as a whole.<sup>395</sup>

This is in fact the attitude I referred to in the introduction to the present chapter, and which is easily found, when not in print, certainly in everyday talk. The often de-historicised accounts of ex-officers and patriots tend to give a very emotional, partial view about being a soldier, highlighting the national pride in the missions and the sentimental aspects of military life. Stress on the ‘martial race’ of the Scots Highlanders and discourse about Republican values of military hardiness and loyalty tend to obfuscate issues which were perhaps less picturesque, but more truthful. The primary material, such as the above-mentioned letter by Joseph Macdonald and the 1752 letter by a young Dalrymple, and also an evaluation of what was often the fate of the protagonists of the wars and

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<sup>393</sup> Innes Munro, ‘A Narrative of the Military Operations on the Coromandel Coast’, in *The Critical Review* (London: issue 68, November 1789), 366-375 (p. 367).

<sup>394</sup> Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances*, in 2 volumes (London: Croom Helm, 1982), vol. 1, p. 147.

<sup>395</sup> Andrew Mackillop, *More Fruitful than the Soil*, pp. 1-2.



Imperial policies, show how often expectations were not met, and how the picture of real military life was far from the glossy one described in the 'regimental histories' mentioned by Mackillop.

Diana Henderson observes that one of the factors which contributed to Highland recruiting is the fact that in Scotland "gone for a soldier' simply did not have the same connotations as in England and Ireland": it was looked upon as a respectable profession, and a great part in this difference was played by history, literature and culture:

The close link with bagpipe music, whose development in the nineteenth century was largely fostered through Army pipers, the Gaelic bardic tradition of an heroic romantic culture, the works of Sir Walter Scott, the influence of the Highland Societies and the active support of a Monarch who came to associate herself with Scotland and in particular with the Highland Regiments, all affected Scottish attitudes to the Army and recruiting.<sup>396</sup>

Scottish military life and piping did in fact go together and have strong connections. Recruitment, for instance, often happened to the sound of the bagpipe, as Robert Burns will remember in a 1787 letter to Dr Moore (a letter which has provided much key evidence for the author's biographical details): he narrates of how he was inspired by his school reading of *The Life of Hannibal*, and remarks on how "Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bag-pipe, and wish myself tall enough to be a soldier"<sup>397</sup>.

It has been argued that a certain sense of Britishness and belonging to a wider European reality can be detected amongst the communities abroad thanks to the positive experience of Empire which brought together the peripheral areas of Great Britain under the common denominator of 'colonisers'. George III in 1762 could quite happily state that he gloried "in the name of Briton"<sup>398</sup> (a statement which was picked up and used as a title for a government-promoted publication, *The Briton*. Symptomatically, *The North Briton* was soon to present itself as its radical counterpart). Obviously a feeling of closeness also sprang from the common perception of being far away from anything one could call 'home'. As civil servant in Calcutta George Bogle of Daldowie explains in his 1770 letter to a Mrs Brown:

Whenever a few persons are together and secluded from society with the rest of the world, they are naturally more attached to each other. The natives are so different in their manners, language and religion that it is impossible to have any intercourse

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<sup>396</sup> Henderson, *Highland Soldier*, p. 44.

<sup>397</sup> Robert Burns, *The Complete Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. by John De Lancey Ferguson, rev. edn. by George Ross Roy, in 2 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), vol. 1, p. 136.

<sup>398</sup> Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 205.

with them but on business. So you see the Europeans are obliged to keep to themselves.<sup>399</sup>

Imperial politics helped, to a certain extent, reconfigure the notion of identity. Expatriate communities tended to persevere in keeping their own customs and traditions, accentuating them in an understandable common desire to hold on to their roots, while the distance from home blended the common cultural, religious, racial basis into a recognisable perception of belonging. A feeling of a certain cultural and racial affinity developed among all European sojourners in the colonies, though this did not quench old resentments such as that between England and France<sup>400</sup>. Anti-French sentiments, such as are expressed in ‘The Garb of Old Gaul’<sup>401</sup>, were frequent sources for prints, paintings, poems and ceramics. The Napoleonic wars had brought turmoil throughout Europe; such strong feelings of disquietude, fear, repulsion (and in some cases of sympathy) found various ways of being publicly expressed. As Stuart Allan and Allan Carswell explain, “It was with defeat of Napoleon’s French army in Egypt in 1801 that the presence of Highland regiments came to be celebrated broadly as a talisman of British military success”.<sup>402</sup>

The growing London market at the time requested prints and paintings to commemorate the British military heroes, and certainly the image of the Highlander contributed in conveying an element of picturesque, which was much appreciated in the imminent Romantic cultural climate. A c. 1803 satirical transfer-print on a jug held by the National War Museum of Edinburgh caricatures the defeat of Napoleon’s troops precisely during the Egyptian campaign<sup>403</sup>. A laughing soldier of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Royal Highland Regiment holds a disconsolate-looking Bonaparte under his arm, and plays him like a bagpipe: the Frenchman’s legs up in the air for the drones, and an arm for a chanter. The ‘tune’ Napoleon is singing is ‘God Save the King’, and a caption on the side reads as follows: “An Old Performer playing on a new Instrument or one of the 42<sup>nd</sup> toutching [sic] the Invincible”.

It is particularly significant that it should be one of the 42<sup>nd</sup> playing Napoleon like a bagpipe, in an evident act of vilification. The Black Watch was in fact especially known for its service to the Duke of Cumberland and against France, in notable battles such as Fontenoy (1745). So while the Jacobites asked for French assistance for their risings, the Black Watch was an emblem of Scottish loyalty to the Crown.

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<sup>399</sup> 25 December 1770, GCA, Bogle Papers, Box 25, Calcutta.

<sup>400</sup> Mackillop, ‘Europeans, Britons and Scots’, pp. 26–27.

<sup>401</sup> “We’ll bravely fight, like heroes bright, for honour and applause, / And defy the French, with all their arts, to alter our laws”. John MacLeay, *War Songs and Songs and Ballads of Martial Life* (London: Walter Scott Limited, 1900), p. 22. I mention this song in greater detail below.

<sup>402</sup> Stuart Allan and Allan Carswell, *The Thin Red Line: War, Empire and Visions of Scotland* (Edinburgh: NMSE Publishing, 1988), p. 20.

<sup>403</sup> NMS 000-180-002-320-C. Reproduced with permission.



The events of the French Revolution played a crucial role in recasting European socio-political equilibrium. The ideological and civil turmoils, the overthrowing of the Ancien Régime, the proclamation of the Republic in 1792, the populist mass-upheavals of peasants and left-wing radicals, the assassination of Marat, the instauration of the regime of Terror, the rise and violent fall of Robespierre and the Jacobins – all contributed to shake people's confidence throughout Europe. The concern was mainly among the aristocracy, as the widespread exasperation among the lower-classes led to the assassination and execution of members of nobility and royalty, including Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.

The cultural symbols of French aristocracy were so far from the culture and customs of ordinary citizens that soon the lower-classes across Europe violently rose against them. Soon, similar action was seen as a threat across the European upper-classes, not least in Britain, whose aristocracy had a proverbial penchant for Continental taste. Forms of sedition were seen in any expression which did not coincide with complete and unquestioned devotion to the Government in London. As a consequence, as Clare Nelson explains,

The British nobility were faced with the choice between adopting a significantly more patriotic stance, in line with the middle and even lower classes, or continuing their overtly extravagant, continental lifestyles and facing rebellion and possibly the fate of their French contemporaries. [...] With the changing political situation during the second half of the eighteenth century, the need to present Britain as a cohesive entity grew. Philosophical trends suggested the adoption of a native culture, as opposed to high culture (symbolised by modes of dress, art and music) that was perceived to have pan-European similarities. The apparent lack of distinctive national culture in Britain had been determined by the Europhile tastes of the majority of upper classes prior to at least the middle of the eighteenth century [...]<sup>404</sup>.

According to this perspective, the cultivation of continental tastes in the long run ended up thinning the concept of a native culture, especially where England was concerned. Having long followed the trends coming from Italy or France, England was seen to have 'forgotten' its origins and traditions, not only in music but in art, fashion, style, and even cookery.

Notwithstanding this point of view, there is also another side to the issue which should be taken into consideration. Alongside the fashionable imitation of Continental taste, there was also in fact a tradition in English society, including the upper-class, of xenophobia. The Continent was indeed seen in some cases as decadent, compared with British civilisation – the Grand Tour was, for many, not simply a study and illuminating contemplation of the artistic heritage of Italy, France, Spain etc., but also a warning about what could become of Britain, should it succumb to Popery. Particularly French and Italian culture was seen as backward and oppressive, compared with Britain. As Rosemary Sweet observes,

Roman imperial decadence could be contrasted with the principled integrity of Britain who avoided territorial conquest. The experiences of the French Revolution and the subsequent collapse of the Napoleonic Empire, with its deliberate evocation of republican Rome, only served to emphasise the fragility of temporal power.<sup>405</sup>

Countries like Italy and France were much admired, but were subject to criticism in order to assert the superiority of modern Britain<sup>406</sup>. A city like Rome exercised a great attraction on writers and travellers, but as Timothy Webb notes, most accounts

qualify the celebratory with the sense of something darker, more challenging, less amenable to classification. Rome was self-contradictory, discordant, a city of the dead tainted, despite its superficial animation, by the odour of mortality.<sup>407</sup>

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<sup>404</sup> Claire Nelson, *Creating a Notion of 'Britishness'*, DMus thesis, in 2 volumes (London: The Royal College of Music, 2003), vol. 1, p. 5.

<sup>405</sup> Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: The British in Italy, c. 1690-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 125.

<sup>406</sup> Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour*, p. 125.

<sup>407</sup> Timothy Webb, "City of the soul": English Romantic Travellers in Rome', in Michael Liversidge and Catherine Edwards, eds., *Imagining Rome: British Artists and Rome in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Bristol City Museum and Art Gallery in association with Merrell Holberton, 1996), 20–37 (p. 20).

A decadent, ruined exoticism was part of the appeal of such countries for the British travellers on the Grand Tour.

Scotland, on the other hand, was seen as a ‘reservoir’ of ancient values and traditions. Augustus Frederic Christopher Kollmann, English music theorist and organist of German birth, thus comments in 1796 on British national music:

Though I cannot say to have found a particular national style of composition in England, where some of the greatest musicians of all nations reside, and where consequently all Styles are so much intermixed, as hardly to leave room for an original English style; yet the Scotch style is so much at home in England, that it may at present be considered as belonging nearly equal to both Nations [...]<sup>408</sup>

Therefore, while there was not much trace left of a distinctively English style from a pan-artistic and social point of view, Scotland’s attachment to its roots was seen as a stronghold of native culture. As Macpherson’s Ossianic paradigm made its way across Europe and the charisma of the Highlander (often expressed in visual terms of exotic appeal) offered itself to an international public, Scotland was re-discovered as a ‘reservoir’ of national identity: it filled a gap in the British music scene.

Much emphasis was placed on ideas of religion, monarchy and liberty. These aspects, at least until the 1800s, were not so evident in the British communities abroad<sup>409</sup>, where communication with the far-away island was very scarce and often took over a year to reach its final destination – if it ever arrived at all. In many respects, the East India Company created an Anglo-centric pedigree for the sojourning – in the sense attributed to the term by Karras<sup>410</sup> – culture. Because of this Anglicised nature of the Empire, there was no alternative but to make England the base for all major contacts. The English connection was advantageous politically and financially. It is partly because of the convenience in business partnerships that the national *British* identity, which post-Culloden England had allowed and encouraged, became possible.

Also, from the 1770s the East India Company published annually a list of all its civil and military servants: it was a hierarchy which grouped together Scots, English, Irish and Welsh on the basis of a common professional identity. This globalising process did not mean that separate identities were no longer discernible: on the contrary, the symptomatic flourishing of a large number of Highland Societies across the colonies, such as the Highland Society of Canada (est. 1818), of Madras (est. 1814), of Bombay (est.

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<sup>408</sup> Augustus Frederic Christopher Kollmann, *An Essay on Practical Music Composition*, ed. by Imogene Horsley (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), p. 12.

<sup>409</sup> Mackillop, ‘Europeans, Britons and Scots’, p. 30.

<sup>410</sup> Alan Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun: Scottish Migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake, 1740-1800* (London: Cornell University Press, 1992).

1822), of Nova Scotia (est. 1838), of Prince Edward Island (est. 1838), to mention but a few, played a considerable counterbalancing role, in that they promoted Scottish and particularly Highland culture abroad.

On a political level, feelings of Britishness abroad started to become discernible from the 1760s. Sir Archibald Campbell, for instance, in 1787 explained that: “I have tried all countries and scruple not at this hour to give so strong a preference to old England, that I long most seriously to return to it”<sup>411</sup>. “Old England” had by that time acquired the wider meaning of ‘Britain’, which it was to retain until the twentieth century; it is therefore in that sense that one should interpret these words. It is precisely through the experience of being abroad, and away from home, that Campbell can feel his belonging to “Old England”.

At the same time that the feeling of belonging to a British whole was developing, a parallel Scottish Diaspora was also taking place. Late eighteenth-century events, such as the Highland Clearances, the potato famine and the so-called ‘Year of the Sheep’, led to a phenomenon of mass-emigration to Europe and North America, which were seen as an escape from the hardships and economic upheaval back in Scotland. Landowners and the government in some occasions had all the interest to discourage emigration, since from their point of view a higher population meant greater economic potential and military foundation. Discouragement was actively attempted, but hardly successfully<sup>412</sup>.

It so came to be that many Scottish, and Gaelic-speaking communities ended up in North America, where they settled into areas such as Nova Scotia – “New Scotland”. With them they took their language, traditions and, of course, music. As John Gibson explains,

[...] in the Old World Gàidhealtachd, tradition, where it was confident and defiant, ignored and/or struggled against forces of change. In instrumental and vocal music, this change – call it improvement if you like – expressed itself as changing perceptions of the importance of literacy and the tempered scale. In dance, the introduction of outsiders’ dances was combined with the invention of refined variations of once-traditional dances. Where piping is concerned, competition and monetary reward were intruded as incentives from the time of the 1795 Edinburgh piping competition. Similar competitions spread through the Highland Games phenomenon in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, touching a large number of pipers even in out-of-the-way corners. [...] in the most Gaelic corners of Highland Scotland, the old ways survived behind the barrier of an ancient inflexing and aspiring language, rich in idiom [...] piping in those Gaelic areas went on being traditional until the changes became unavoidable or until there were simply not enough representatives of the old ways left to maintain the ship on course. At the

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<sup>411</sup> Sir Archibald Campbell, *Letter to David Scott (London)*, 1787 (EUL, Campbell of Inverneil, Madras Papers, Mic. M. 920), p. 44.

<sup>412</sup> Joshua Dickson, *When Piping was Strong* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 2006), p. 59.

same time, Gaelic tradition in the rural New World found itself largely ignored and capable of self-generation.<sup>413</sup>

Ironically, in many areas where the Highlanders had settled, the traditions and customs of the native homeland remained more intact and uncorrupt than even they did in the *Gàidhealtachd*. It is only natural that a community will try and recreate a feeling of home when homeland is so far away. This is certainly part of the reason why ‘old-style’ piping was preserved for longer in North America than in Scotland itself, where the influence of the Highland Societies and the establishment of piping competitions in 1781 was felt more strongly and had its impact on the performance and repertoire.

### The piper at war

As has previously been mentioned, pipers were already present on the battlefield at the battle of Pinkie of 1547, as a French military officer related in his account of the *guerre d’Écosse*<sup>414</sup>. There are various mentions of pipers included in Scottish contingents in the seventeenth century: for instance, in 1627 two hundred Scotch bowmen were ordered to France by Charles I, to defend Protestantism; this is therefore the first mention of pipers in the service of the Crown. It is known that the contingent included both harpers and pipers (“our baggyperis”). Not much is known about the musicians; the piper, “Allester Caddel”, is only mentioned because he contributed to lifting the soldiers’ spirits during a confrontation with a French war ship. His presence would otherwise have remained unaccounted<sup>415</sup>. This is one of the various examples of the century; in none of these the piper appears in his own right, officially listed as a member of the troop.

A description provided by James Grant in 1633 would rank the piper in a medial position between officer and man<sup>416</sup>. Sir James Turner, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Scottish soldier, wrote that

In some places a Piper is allowed to each company: the Germans have him, and I look upon their Pipe as a Warlike Instrument. The Bagpipe is good enough Musick for them who love it; but sure it is not so good as the Almain Whistle<sup>417</sup>. With us any Captain may keep a Piper in his Company and maintain him too, for no pay is allowed him, perhaps just as much as he deserveth<sup>418</sup>.

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<sup>413</sup> John Graham Gibson, *Old and New World Highland Bagpiping* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002), pp. 193-194.

<sup>414</sup> Francis M. Collinson, *The Bagpipe* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1975), p. 140.

<sup>415</sup> John Graham Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping, 1745-1945* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2005), p. 67.

<sup>416</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping, 1745-1945*, p. 68.

<sup>417</sup> Possibly a fife, an instrument designed to cut across canon fire. Information gathered from private correspondence with Elizabeth Ford.

<sup>418</sup> Sir James Turner, *Pallas Armata: Military Essayes of the Ancient Grecian, Roman, and Modern Art of War*, originally published in 1683, reprint (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1968), p. 219.



According to Turner, the bagpiper received little or no pay, and was mainly granted benefits from the Captain. The reference to German military pipers is indeed bizarre, as it makes one wonder whether the military piping tradition may not be exclusive to Scotland alone, though there is precious little material which would confirm this conjecture. A couple of sixteenth-century Austrian prints show a military *ensemble* with distinctly non-Scottish soldiers playing on a rather exotic variety of bagpipes<sup>419</sup>.



The author of these prints produced a series of etchings about the Habsburg campaigns against the Turks and Hungarians (c. 1591-93). The above are supposedly Hungarian soldiers, and the fact that they are using a bagpipe in a clearly military context gives scope for reflection about the possibility of the existence of a tradition for military piping also outside Scotland.

Officers and foot-soldiers were (more or less) regularly paid; but the piper's situation was rather different. John Gibson explains that

the piper's allegiance to his chief, chieftain, or perhaps even tacksman was presumably binding enough for him to take his chances as an active supernumerary in his superior's chosen wars. This could only have worked because the piper already enjoyed respect and status in his own society and had enough of a rent break as a musician to eliminate any potential grousing at ill usage.<sup>420</sup>

It is clear that a greater recognition of the role of the piper, which began to take root with the Jacobites and became official in 1854 with the British Army (when the fife was

<sup>419</sup> BM 1933,0610.12.51 and 1933,0610.12.27. Use of images is authorised by the BM.

<sup>420</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 73.



abolished in favour of the bagpipe)<sup>421</sup>, constituted a substantial change. Until then there was only one regiment, the Royal Regiment of Foot or Royal Scots, which included an official rank for a “piper major” which appeared as early as 1679, though in 1769 “the regiment petitioned for the re-establishment of the ranks of drum major and piper, which had lapsed for some years, but without success”<sup>422</sup>.

It is to be wondered whether the Army pipes at such an early stage were the Great Highland pipes we know today, since by the eighteenth century there was still a great variability in the forms and kinds of bagpipes and not all Scottish regiments necessarily came from the Gàidhealtachd, where the Great Highland pipe is indigenous. Nevertheless, a painting titled ‘The Destruction of the Mole of Tangier’<sup>423</sup> by the Dutch artist Dirk Stoop, shows a scene of the event, which took place in 1684<sup>424</sup>. In the scene, which shows a wide view of the harbour in Tangier, are four kilted pipers:

In the middle distance four pipers wearing the ordinary uniform of the regiment, *i.e.*, broad-brimmed hat, long red coat, white cravat, breeches and stockings, are to be seen, evidently playing to enliven the workers.<sup>425</sup>

The mentioned “workers” were involved in the destruction of the “New Mole”, a very expensive work which was never completed, and therefore became necessary to destroy<sup>426</sup>.

In 1680 sixteen companies of Royal Scots regiment were in fact sent to Tangier, for the siege of the city by the Moors<sup>427</sup>. The Scots parliament passed the responsibility for paying that particular regiment to the English parliament, so it features in the English Calendar of Treasury Books, according to which it had 40 drummers, a drum major and 1000 soldiers. It also had a piper specifically attached to the Colonels Company, and he received one shilling and eightpence, the same as the corporals and drummers. This is the man who ‘mysteriously’ mutates into four pipers in Highland dress (not worn by the regular Scottish regiments at that time) in the picture<sup>428</sup>. The artwork was painted not long after the destruction of the Mole, and it shows the Royal Scots Regiment, present at the incident and also the only Scottish regiment serving abroad at

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<sup>421</sup> Major Iain Mackay Scobie, *Pipers and Pipe Music in a Highland Regiment* (Dingwall: The Ross-shire Printing and Publishing Co. Ltd., 1924), pp. 1-2.

<sup>422</sup> Lawrence Weaver, *The Story of the Royal Scots* (London: Published at the offices of “Country Life”, 1953), p. 115.

<sup>423</sup> The painting belongs to the Dartmouth Heirloom Trust. This information I gathered from private correspondence with Mr Rupert Legge. Unfortunately I am unable to provide a printable version of the painting.

<sup>424</sup> John C. Leask and Henry M. McCance, *The Regimental Records of the Royal Scots* (Dublin: Alexander Thom and Co., Ltd., 1915), p. 26.

<sup>425</sup> Leask and McCance, *The Regimental Records of the Royal Scots*, p. 38.

<sup>426</sup> Leask and McCance, *The Regimental Records of the Royal Scots*, p. 26.

<sup>427</sup> Weaver, *The Story of the Royal Scots*, p. 35.

<sup>428</sup> This information I gathered from private correspondence with Mr Keith Sanger.

the time, accompanied by four pipers in Highland costume playing sets of three-droned pipes very similar to today's Great Highland bagpipes. Should this painting be authentic it would be of primary importance since it would be the first depiction of military pipers, and of pipers playing in concert. David Murray points out the possibility of the little pipers having been added at a later date, since they are not drawn to scale<sup>429</sup>.

Besides this remarkable episode, which as we can see is dubious and open to debate, pipers were mostly associated with Scottish regiments, and as I have illustrated in the previous chapter they mainly came to be identified with the Jacobite cause. Anglophone and Gaelic literature celebrated the piper's role in the community, both for the value of his incitement in battle and for his role in propaganda, while English government press would scorn and despise him and his instrument as being evil. As we can see and as I will show below, this negative aura will wane as the piper becomes more and more an established figure in the Army, particularly after the second half of the eighteenth century.

Now, apart from the great wave of Highlanders who emigrated to overseas destinations such as North America and Canada out of necessity, many Highlanders were sent there while serving the British Army. Along with Highland regiments often went the pipers. Their presence in a Scottish-related military context was so strongly established that it became a conventional literary icon and topic. The song 'Òran do na Gàel a bha sa cuir do America, san bhliadhna 1778' ('Song to the Gaels sent to America in the year 1778') is an eloquent example of the use of the theme:

Na'm faicinnur Suaicheantas	Were I to see your standard
'G a nochda ri fuar chrann,	Being unfurled to the hard pole
Scal siunsair ga's buaireadh cuir fearg oribh <sup>430</sup>	Chanter's shriek provoking you to
	[put on fierceness <sup>431</sup>

The leitmotiv of the standard in connection with the bagpipe returns; they are both symbols of the values of home. By seeing the standard, and listening to the shrill sound of the bagpipe, the soldier realises it is in the name of Scotland – though at the service of Britain – that he is fighting for, and is incited into battle. The author evidently includes the piper as an integral part of the body of soldiers sent to fight in North America.

There is in fact documentation, though not very ample, of military pipers abroad: such is the case, for example, of Fraser's 78<sup>th</sup> Highlanders, who fought the second battle of Quebec in 1760. On that occasion they lost "the intrepid Captain Donald Macdonald,

<sup>429</sup> David Murray, *Music of the Scottish Regiments* (Edinburgh: The Pentland Press Limited, 1994), pp. 49-50.

<sup>430</sup> Alexander Stewart and Donald Stewart, *Cochruinneacha Taoghta de Shaothair nam Bard Gaèlach* (Edinburgh: Charles Stewart, 1804), p. 524.

<sup>431</sup> As translated by John Gibson; see Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 97.

Lieutenant Cosmo Gordon and 55 non-commissioned officers, pipers and privates”<sup>432</sup>. Also the Black Watch, which in 1776 was engaged in actions near the New York community; Stewart of Garth reports that in September a piper and two drummers were wounded, and only one month later during a feint on Fort Washington a piper “who began to play when he reached the point of a rock on the summit of the hill, was immediately shot, and tumbled from one piece of rock to another till he reached the bottom”<sup>433</sup>.

In spite of the wars, living in America was generally not altogether unpleasant for the soldiers. One letter by a William MacKenzie, dated 1777, states that “if it had not been for this war this is the Best Country in the World”. MacKenzie’s letter is also interesting as it gives us an insight on what might be a regimental piper’s pay:

I am still in Capt Patrick Campbell’s of Glenmuir’s Company I am Piper to the 2 Battn 71 Regt I am as well as ever I was in my Life my Pay is as Good as 1 Shilling & sixpence Per Day and I hope my fortune within two years will be as Good that I will have 200 Acres of free Ground of my own in this Country<sup>434</sup> [...]

This particular piper earned 1 shilling and sixpence per day. The amounts are nevertheless not consistent. In the same year 1778 John MacDonald, pipe-major to the MacKay of Bighouse Company of the Gordon Fencibles, is reported to receive a pay of one shilling per day<sup>435</sup>. In 1794 Captain Duncan Campbell, who was recruiting for Argyll’s Highlanders, wrote: “If you can meet with one or two good pipers, handsome fellows and steady, you might go as far as 30 guineas<sup>436</sup> for each [per annum]”<sup>437</sup>. John Gibson explains that

The flexible bookkeeping system used by the army, the deductions from men’s pay by officers, [...] and the payment to a regiment by establishment numbers rather than actual numbers of active men allowed plenty of room to remunerate extranumeraries.<sup>438</sup>

Soon after the ’45, the government had great numbers of Scottish soldiers, obviously still feared to be potential Jacobites, shipped to war abroad, hence reducing the possibility of a new rebellion. This phase also coincided with the government’s necessity of employing men who would be ‘savage’ enough to compete with France’s American Indian allies over

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<sup>432</sup> Col. Ralph Harper, *The Fraser Highlanders* (Montreal: Society of the Montreal Military and Maritime Museum, 1979), p. 103.

<sup>433</sup> Stewart of Garth, *Sketches*, vol. 1, p. 363.

<sup>434</sup> Letter from William MacKenzie, piper, 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 71<sup>st</sup> Regiment, to Petter, Scottish Records Office, GD 170/3158, 1778. See Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, pp. 273-374.

<sup>435</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 83.

<sup>436</sup> In the late eighteenth century, one guinea corresponded to twenty-one shillings. Thirty guineas per annum therefore corresponded to 1.72 shillings per day.

<sup>437</sup> Charles Alexander Malcolm, *The Piper in Peace and War* (London: John Murray, 1927), pp. 5-6.

<sup>438</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 83.

in America for the Seven Years War; a task for which the Highlanders, notorious for their – by that time proverbial – viciousness in battle, seemed perfect<sup>439</sup>. The values of belonging to a clan, and of faithfulness to the chief, were widely employed in regimental history to explain the continuance of military service through the medium of the British army. The idea which was being encouraged was that the regiments were raised by “clan attachments and through this instinct”<sup>440</sup>: the influence of clanship was made to appear as the determining factor for the raising of the various Highland battalions.

The idea of the innate bellicose nature of the Scot (particularly the Highlander and Gael) derived from Scottish patriot historiography, and survived well into the nineteenth century. David Stewart of Garth, in his above-mentioned *Sketches*, observed that the military character of the Highlander was formed “no more favoured by nature, but by the social system under which he lived”<sup>441</sup>. The general acceptance of the effectiveness of military clanship ensured that late eighteenth century government administrations would adopt specific enrolment forms to ‘make the most’ of this characteristic.

The Jacobites were therefore steadily proceeding towards rehabilitation; their involvement in the army certainly facilitated the process. As Andrew Mackillop notes,

Outwith the Highlands, the uprising of 1745 was seen as a final proof of the innate bellicosity of the population, and it is ironic that Jacobitism was, in effect, the advert for Highland society that stimulated its involvement with the empire in the specialised form of proprietary regiments.<sup>442</sup>

By 1815 the record of military service gave the Scots, Gaels and Highlanders a very positive aura of loyalty and exemplariness in defending their homeland – Britain. This rehabilitation has been highlighted as one of the reasons for the heavy Highland recruitment on the occasion of the Seven Years War and the American revolutionary war. The need to raise a great number of men induced the government to adopt a strategy of Highland recruitment, of which the 1745 army was an appealing example.

In 1854 an establishment was created for five pipers and a Pipe-Major in Highland Regiments<sup>443</sup>. Until then, pipers were tolerated but not officially recognised: to find references to them one must turn to unofficial documentation. According to Stewart of Garth, in many instances they were taken “for granted as a *sine qua non* of all Highland regiments”<sup>444</sup>, and would only be remarked upon in exceptional circumstances. It is

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<sup>439</sup> Wood, *The Scottish Soldier*, p. 36.

<sup>440</sup> John Mackay, *The Reay Fencibles* (Glasgow: Printed and published for the Clan Mackay Society by C. Mackay, 1890), p. 9.

<sup>441</sup> Stewart of Garth, *Sketches*, vol. 1, p. 218.

<sup>442</sup> Andrew Mackillop, *Military Recruiting in the Scottish Highlands 1739-1815*, unpublished Ph.D. thesis (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 1995), p. 365.

<sup>443</sup> Henderson, *Highland Soldier*, p. 246.

<sup>444</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 77.

estimated that a company was associated with two pipers<sup>445</sup>, though they were often enlisted in the official Rolls as simple duty men, paid and clothed like ordinary soldiers. At most they were enlisted as “drummers”; or, as in the case of the Scottish Horse and the Lovat Scouts, as “trumpeters” – in their case, this continued until 1914<sup>446</sup>. The only musicians mentioned in the records are in fact “fifers”, “trumpeters”, “drummers” and “kettle-drummers” – though, as has been pointed out, these terms could ‘conceal’ a piper, just like in the transcript of the records of the music and musicians for the King between 1460 and 1700<sup>447</sup> pipers were often simply classified under “windy Instruments”, “musicians” and “minstrels”. Interestingly, in the ‘Military Dictionary’ included in the *British Military Library* of 1799 and 1801 there are no entries for “bagpipe” or “piper”, but there are for “drum”, “trumpet” and so forth.

Lewis Winstock thus summarises the function and responsibilities of the piper in the Army:

The role of the pipers in Highland regiments at this time [after Waterloo] was unconventional and peculiar, bearing comparison with no other institution on the Army. They were, in a way that no ordinary regimental band could be, a link with home and an integral part of a socio-economic pattern, albeit one that was already in a state of dissolution. Historically, the piper was closely leagued with its chief, well versed in the lore of his clan, and with a repertoire carefully chosen for its significance. Each piece had a proper time and place for performance, and many had associations and histories. The same piper played in triumph and disaster, at births and deaths, and he knew the correct, almost ritualistic, moment for any given tune., He was more than a mere minstrel; in battle it was his duty to animate his clansmen and to be with them where the blows fell the thickest, so that he assumed something of the role of a standard bearer.<sup>448</sup>

It was therefore the piper’s duty to play music for all occasions, and ensure moments of leisure with lively jigs and reels, honour poignant occasions with melancholy tunes, mark the main times of the day with set *piobaireachds*, and incite the soldiers into battle with inspiring marches. Martial functions excepted, these were roles normally covered by the town minstrel; and in the case of Scotland, particularly Lowland, by the town piper<sup>449</sup>. Town minstrels (or, in the case of England, town waits) were public figures maintained by public funds who served towns or burghs from the late fifteenth century<sup>450</sup>. Town

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<sup>445</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 82

<sup>446</sup> Malcolm, *The Piper in Peace and War*, p. 4.

<sup>447</sup> Henry C. De La Fontaine, ed., *The King’s Musick, A Transcript of Records Relating to Music and Musicians, 1460-1700* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973).

<sup>448</sup> Lewis Winstock, *Songs & Music of the Redcoats* (London: Leo Cooper, 1970), p. 136.

<sup>449</sup> Keith Sanger warns us against the excessive ‘compartmentalisation’ between Highland/military and Lowland/town pipers. See Keith Sanger, ‘From harvest to market’, in *Common Stock* (vol. 22, 2012), 22-25 (p. 22).

<sup>450</sup> Collinson, *The Bagpipe*, pp. 93-98. In 1487 a record of the Canongate burgh mentions a “common pyperis of the Toune”, and from the accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland it would appear that in 1497 a “piparis of Abirdene, be the Kingis command” was paid “xviiij s.”. Unfortunately it cannot be ascertained whether they were *bag*-pipers. See John MacKay, *History of the Burgh of the Canongate* (Edinburgh: Oliphant

pipers originated as being mostly a Lowland institution: they are often in fact depicted playing Lowland bagpipes. Town pipers were normally local, and went about handsomely dressed alongside the crier, drummer and officer(s)<sup>451</sup>. They are celebrated in a substantial corpus of literature, the most famous example of which is probably Robert Sempill's *Epitaph of Habbie Simpson*<sup>452</sup> - the poem which gave the name to the famous 'standard Habbie' stanza.

By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, many companies within given regiments had their own piper; such is the case, for example, of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion Seaforth Highlanders, which was raised in 1778 as the 78<sup>th</sup> Battalion Seaforth Highlanders and had ten companies, each of which had its own piper who was maintained by the captain<sup>453</sup>; this coincides with the above-mentioned statement by Sir James Turner, who in 1670 claimed that "any Captain may keep a Piper in his Company and maintain him too"<sup>454</sup>. There was no official provision for pipers in government-funded Highland regiments until Duncan Forbes of Culloden raised his Independent Companies in 1745<sup>455</sup>. Soon a Pipe Fund was set up, to which the officers contributed annually.

This was a time when soldiers, though certainly equipped with a dignified uniform, were paid a pittance: for instance, a private soldier of the line infantry received between six and eight pence farthing per day, from which food, garb, kit-cleaning and so forth were to be subtracted. It was only after 1797, after the mutinies of the Fleet, particularly those in Spithead and Nore, that pay was doubled or more<sup>456</sup>. The main demands of the mutineers were in fact an increase of the wages, which had remained unvaried since 1652, better quality and quantity of victuals, and more effective treatment of the sick and wounded; not to mention issues such as the right to leave in port, equitable distribution of prize-money, standing pardon for returning deserters and so forth<sup>457</sup>.

Ranks were formed within the military piping community, so the 'Head Piper' (in the case of the 78<sup>th</sup> Battalion Seaforth Highlanders, now 1<sup>st</sup>, the Earl of Seaforth's Piper) became known as the Pipe-Major – a non-commissioned officer, at least until 1854, when the positions of pipers were defined and given official status in the ranks of the British Army. The Pipe-Major would carry the Regimental Banner on great occasions, and have other pipers under his command for music; while the Drum-Major took care of

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Anderson & Ferrier, 1900), p. 73, and Sir James Balfour Paul, ed., *Accounts of the Lord High Treasurer of Scotland*, in 11 volumes (Edinburgh: H. M. General Register House, 1900), vol. 2 A.D. 1500–1504, p. 128.

<sup>451</sup> Iain MacInnes, 'Taking Stock: Lowland and Border Piping in a Highland World', in Joshua Dickson, ed., *The Highland Bagpipe* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2009), 169–190 (p. 175).

<sup>452</sup> Robert Sempill, *The Life and Death of the Piper of Kilbarchan*, broadside, NLS, Ry.III.a.10(017), 1701.

<sup>453</sup> Scobie, *Pipers and Pipe Music*, p. 7.

<sup>454</sup> Turner, *Pallas Armata*, p. 219.

<sup>455</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 80.

<sup>456</sup> Wood, *The Scottish Soldier*, p. 45.

<sup>457</sup> Nicholas Rodger, *The Command of the Ocean: A Naval History of Britain 1649–1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2004), pp. 445–447.

discipline<sup>458</sup>. Pipers in the Highland corps wore the uniform of the rank and file, though armed with the broadsword. Until the *ceòl beag* was introduced in the military repertoire, the only music permitted was the *piobaireachd*.

John Dalrymple records a reference to an event probably relating to the 1715 rising:

When Argyll's Highlanders entered Perth and Dundee, for they were upon the van of the Army, they entered in three companies, and every company had their distinct pipers, playing three distinct springs or tunes, apposite enough to the occasion. The first played that tune "The Campbells are coming, oho, oho", the second "Wilt thou slay me fair Highland laddie", and the third "Stay and take the breeks with thee", and when they entered Dundee, the people thought they had been some of Mar's men, till some of the persons in the Tolbooth, understanding the first spring, sung the words of it out of the window, which mortified the Jacobites there.<sup>459</sup>

According to these words, each unit played its own tunes, "apposite" for the occasion – and each tune doubtless indicated belonging to this or that faction. By the 1800s particular tunes were associated with particular units; for instance Line Regiments were associated with 'The Highland Plaid'; the 42<sup>nd</sup> and 73<sup>rd</sup> Highlanders with 'Highland Laddie' and so forth. Though it cannot be assumed that these tunes were always unquestionably played on the bagpipe, it is certain that by the early nineteenth century pipe marches were well-established<sup>460</sup>.

There were specific pipe tunes for the various standing orders, the earliest list of which dates back to 1778. Though there is no indication of marching tunes peculiar to specific regiments, it is documented that by the 1800s particular tunes are associated with particular units: Line Regiments, for instance, are associated with 'The Highland Plaid'<sup>461</sup>. The duties in camp and on manoeuvre were also marked by the sound of the pipes; each regiment had its own list of tunes illustrating what to play on every occasion. For instance, an Order Book of the old 78<sup>th</sup> Battalion Seaforth Highlanders (now 1<sup>st</sup>), was instructed to play, for the corresponding occasions, the following tunes (though they were subsequently replaced by shorter, simpler tunes):

- *Cruinneachadh*, the Gathering, or Turn out: 'Tulloch Ard' ('The High Hill')
- *Fàilte*, or Salute (when the Chief or Colonel appears on the field): 'Fàilte Mhic-Choinnich' ('Mackenzie's Salute')
- Slow March: 'An Cuilfhionn' ('Fingal's Weeping')
- Quick-step: 'Caisteal Donan' ('Castle Donan')
- Charge: 'Cabair Féidh' ('Deer's Horns')

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<sup>458</sup> Scobie, *Pipers and Pipe Music*, p. 1.

<sup>459</sup> John Graham Dalrymple, *Musical Memoirs of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Thomas G. Stevenson, 1849), p. 23.

<sup>460</sup> Roderick Cannon, *The Highland Bagpipe and its Music* (Edinburgh: John Donald Publisher, 2002), p. 123.

<sup>461</sup> Cannon, *The Highland Bagpipe*, pp. 119-124.

- Stimulus during the engagement: 'Blàr Sron' ('Battle of Strone')
- *Cumha*, or Lament, at funerals: 'Cumha Mhic-Choinnich' ('Mackenzie's Lament')
- Sunset: 'Suibhal Chlann Choinnich' ('The Mackenzies' March')
- Tattoo: 'Ceanndrochait Aluinn' ('The Head of the High Bridge')
- Warning before dinner: 'Blàr Ghlinne Seill' ('Battle of Glensheil')
- During dinner: 'Cath sleibh an t'Shiora' ('Battle of Sheriffmuir')<sup>462</sup>

Various songs used by the Scottish regiments were of Jacobite origin. It was in fact generally not infrequent to find a certain persistence of Jacobite music, language and behaviour in regiments of Jacobite areas until World War II. Starting from the 1740s it is possible to see a particular flourishing of prints and porcelains depicting Highland soldiers, in their full attire.

Highlander-related ceramics started to appear in more copious numbers especially in relation to Jacobitism. 1743 was the year of the Black Watch mutiny: this was caused by the threat of sending the Highlanders to fight in Europe, when they had been told they would only have to serve in the British Isles. The episode also triggered the production of this type of merchandise: the moulds for the Mutiny ceramics were then used for modelling Jacobite Highlanders after the '45. Though the fear of a new Jacobite upheaval led the English military world to look at any Scottish (re)action with suspicion, the mutiny did not have anything to do with the Stuart cause. This said, it cannot be denied that it affected the perception about the Highland soldier; so much so that in 1745 the Black Watch was kept for duty in southern England, out of fears and doubts about their loyalty.

But in spite of the pomp and glory we can attribute to the military icon today, at the time the Army was not one of the most appealing options for a piper. In spite of the progressive decay of the clan system, it was still possible in the late-eighteenth/beginning of the nineteenth century to find jobs in the civilian sector as personal pipers to chiefs, lairds and magnates, in keeping of old traditions of the *Gàidhealtachd*, and burgh or town pipers. The tradition of the town pipers gradually withered during the nineteenth century, as town clocks were introduced and the growing industrialisation substituted many once manned jobs, thus making the role of the town musician superfluous<sup>463</sup>. The last town piper of the old succession was appointed in Haddington in 1824.

The Highland Societies even proposed to set up a military school of piping, under the direction of Donald Roy MacCrimmon, prestigious piper and soldier who had served

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<sup>462</sup> Scobie, *Pipers and Pipe Music*, p. 6.

<sup>463</sup> MacInnes, 'Taking Stock', p. 186.



in the American wars. The plan had been discussed for years, and finally in 1808, “the cultivation of Pipe Music being necessary for the Highland Regiments”<sup>464</sup>, the General Committee proposed to establish a College of Highland Pipe Music. But the Highland Society was counting on governmental funding, which never was to be conceded, and the plan was simply abandoned<sup>465</sup>. It was with the Piobaireachd Society, to which many authoritative Highland officers belonged, that the Army School of Piping was finally set up – a project which became operative in 1910<sup>466</sup>.

In spite of the alteration of the piper’s status in the nineteenth century, the official recognition of which may be seen as a positive step as it finally acknowledges the role of the piper in the life of the British Army, John Gibson remarks on an interesting aspect of the change:

It was not really until Gaeldom had been thoroughly tamed in the nineteenth century [...] that this Gaelic military overlap was accommodated and the term “piper” was accorded official acceptance. By that time the average piper, whatever his social status, no longer stood haughtily aloof; he joined the ranks.<sup>467</sup>

This point is interesting indeed, as it is undeniable that, once the piper regularly joined the military forces, his status was ‘standardised’ to that of his fellow-soldiers in the regiments. In spite of this, it is nevertheless undeniable that the piper remains to this day an iconic figure, surrounded by an aura of awe and myth, and the imagery connected with him goes beyond that of a mere ‘soldier’.

### **The Highlander as an icon**

Stephen Wood describes the 1743 picture of a piper of the 43<sup>rd</sup> (Lord Sempill’s) Highland Regiment of Foot, ‘A Highland Piper in his Regimentals’,<sup>468</sup> as “the popular view of a Highland Soldier”<sup>469</sup>. The image by George Bickham shows a tartan-clad piper playing a not terribly Scottish-looking set of thick conical-bored-chanter bagpipes, with two thin drones, one tenor and one bass; from the latter hangs a fluttering standard or *bratach*, a feature which became common in nineteenth- and twentieth-century military ceremonial<sup>470</sup>. The engraving circulated widely, and it was based on a genre piper portrait by Abraham Bloemaert, Dutch artist<sup>471</sup>. It is true that bagpipes with two tenor drones

<sup>464</sup> Highland Society of London Papers, NLS, Dep. 268, Minute Book, 1802-1808.

<sup>465</sup> William Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society 1750-1950* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), pp. 90-96.

<sup>466</sup> Henderson, *Highland Soldier*, p. 252.

<sup>467</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 74.

<sup>468</sup> NMS A.1947.124. Reproduced with permission.

<sup>469</sup> Wood, *The Scottish Soldier*, p. 30.

<sup>470</sup> Hugh Cheape: ‘The Piper to the Laird of Grant’, in *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, cxxv (1995), 1163–73 (p. 1169).

<sup>471</sup> Hugh Cheape, *Bagpipes* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland, 2008), p. 53.

and no bass drone were customary in some districts in the eighteenth century<sup>472</sup>, and that for part of that century the shape of the Highland bagpipe was still in the process of being standardised, but the shape suggested in the print is certainly more the fruit of a copy of the genre piper print than of actual awareness about what was being played in the British Army. A close look at Dutch and Flemish artworks featuring bagpipes would also confirm this notion.



The piper's posture is dynamic; almost on tiptoes, as if he were dancing; the movement causes his short plaid to move about well above the knee. From the side hangs a sword, which bears ennobling symbolism deriving from Gaelic poetry and culture: the sword is the weapon of heroes, of leaders and, above all, gentlemen. Whoever wears it is worthy of these characteristics, as we have seen is the case for the 'Highland Laddie' protagonist of the Jacobite song mentioned in the previous Chapter: with "princely blude" in his veins he draws a "braid sword"<sup>473</sup>, and Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair pictures Charles Edward

<sup>472</sup> Grove, ed., *Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), s.v. "bagpipe".

<sup>473</sup> James Hogg, *The Jacobite Relics of Scotland*, ed. by Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), Second Series, pp. 125-126.

Stuart carrying a sword in ‘Òran do’n Phrionnsa’ (‘Song to the Prince’)<sup>474</sup>. What’s more, in the British Army the sword is the mark of the status of officer, and by late Victorian times it was carried by Colour Sergeants: a claim of no small consequence, for the rising importance of the military piper. The portrait conveys positive imagery of elegance and dignity, though the frisky position of the soldier possibly betrays a folksy-like overall picture of dance and entertainment, quite different from the one found in similar pictures only a few decades later where the piper stands gravely, full of sublime charisma. It would almost appear as if the role was not yet taken quite as seriously as it was in later days.

A smiling expression and a tense posture, with a similar two-droned set of pipes bearing a fluttering standard, and dressed in analogous attire, can be found in the portrait of Piper Donald MacDonald, 42<sup>nd</sup> Highlanders<sup>475</sup>. I will compare this image to a colour print, again dated 1743, by the English engraver George Bickham, depicts ‘A Private man of the Black Watch [...] at the time of the Mutiny in the Regiment’<sup>476</sup>.



As one can see, the bagpipe seems to be very much of ‘Dutch’ inspiration – the author must have had Bloemaert’s model in his mind when he produced this. And, again, the posture is tense, the sword present, and the piper is virtually smiling – an attitude which,

<sup>474</sup> John Lorne Campbell, ed., *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1984), p. 48.

<sup>475</sup> Image as seen in Malcolm, *The Piper in Peace and War*, p. 94.

<sup>476</sup> NMS 000-000-100-236-C. ‘A Private man of the Black Watch’, engraved by G. Bickham, published by William Mayer, 30 April 1743. Reproduced with permission.

in a way, lacks seriousness. On the other hand, the Private of the Black Watch, in full attire and without a bagpipe, gives the viewer a very distinguished impression of the soldier. His look is stern, superior, proud; it would almost appear as if the bagpipe had been the ‘perturbing’ element of the otherwise perfectly decorous scene in the pictures of the piping soldiers.

The *c.* 1743 print ‘A Highland Piper. A Highlander in his regimentals. A Highland Drummer’<sup>477</sup> by John Sebastian Muller portrays three soldiers of the 43<sup>rd</sup>. In this print, again the piper appears to be the fruit of the same common inspiration. His bagpipes are two-droned and have a fluttering standard attached to the bass drone; his attire is also similar to that of the former two pipers, with a short plaid partly covering the sword. His head is tilted and hints to a smile, and the overall position is tense, dynamic: his legs are slightly apart, suggesting movement. Just as the ‘Highlander in his Regimentals’ and the ‘Highland Drummer’ are not simply standing, yet they are clearly not marching or walking: they appear to be dancing, especially the middle Highlander who, not being engaged in playing any musical instrument, has the most dynamic posture of the three.

A Highland soldier and a Highland piper constitute the theme for a Chinese porcelain plate destined for the European market<sup>478</sup>.



<sup>477</sup> NMS, M.1966.109, 21307. Reproduced with permission.

<sup>478</sup> NMS 000-000-100-220-C. Reproduced with permission.



A grave-looking Highlander stands composedly, resting a gun with its butt on the ground, and looks at a smiling piper, who is holding a set of bagpipes much in the style of the ones described above, and is portrayed in a dancing position, just like the pipers hitherto illustrated.

The '45 stood out as a colourful, albeit tragic, episode in Scottish history. Since then there was a great request for the type of merchandise hitherto described, and it also triggered the production of images of the Mutiny. So showy and interesting was the episode that it even reached markets as far away as China.

The artist William Dent in 1787 published an amusing print which he called 'The Battle of Hastings'<sup>479</sup>, in reference to Warren Hastings, the first Governor-General of India.



“To be or not to be, Impeachment is the question”, says a speaker; Hastings stands on a table placed in the centre of the scene. The “Ayes” (the British Battalion) are led by Edmund Burke, fighting against the “Noes” (the Bengal Battalion). Opposite Burke is Henry Dundas, in Scottish attire according to his origins. He is witnessing the battle-scene with a preoccupied expression; in his hands is a rather fat set of bagpipes which bear the label “Music hath charms to sooth &c.”<sup>480</sup>. He is pretending to play, but in actual

<sup>479</sup> BM 1868,0808.5617. Use of the image is authorised by the BM. See Nicholas Robinson, *Edmund Burke, a Life in Caricature* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), pp. 93-95.

<sup>480</sup> “Music hath its charms to soothe the savage breast / To soften rocks, or bend a knotted oak”. Quote from William Congreve, *The Mourning Bride* (Edinburgh: Printed and sold by J. Robertson, 1774), p. 1.

fact the bag is filled with coins. Although Dundas is not himself represented as a warrior, the bagpipe appears in a context of colonial battle, and with very negative connotations. Scotland appears on the scene, according to the picture, to take advantage of the situation, and is solely preoccupied about its own wealth and commodities.

### **Pipers as heroes**

Many tales are told about the bravery of pipers at war. Many of these are collected from oral sources, and for this reason they are not always reliable. Nevertheless, as untrustworthy as these stories are, they constitute a corpus of pseudo-myths which are eloquent of the role and status of the army piper, and the esteem in which he was held. It is a kind of imagery which dates from the late eighteenth century and endures, almost unaltered in our highly un-sublime society, to this day. They are the result, though perhaps only partly realistic, of the social construction of an emblematic figure in the building of the nation's identity, and which was to flourish particularly from the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The act of supreme bravery for the piper was to play for his fellow-soldiers in all circumstances: even when in danger, even if wounded. Many soldiers are said to have stood their ground and played till their own or their comrades' last breath. Mackay Scobie tells us that

In 1782, several sanguinary battles in Indian Waters were fought with the French fleet. In one of these engagements, on 3<sup>rd</sup> August, Seaforth's Regiment was represented by detachments who acted as marines, the men being encouraged by their pipers who played during the action<sup>481</sup>.

Also, he relates the story contained in Sir John Graham Dalyell's *Musical Memories of Scotland*: in 1783, at the attack on the French lines in front of Cuddalore, during the bitter fighting which took place, which lasted from about four o'clock in the morning until nearly five in the evening, the weary men "were renovated by the sound of the bagpipe, leading them to victory"<sup>482</sup>.

A G. W. Anderson, whose identity is difficult to trace, also tells us that in Madras, in 1783,

after fording the river at the close of a long day's march, when the other troops were flinging themselves on the ground incapable of further exertion, the pipers of the Seaforth Highlanders struck up a lively tune and the men of the regiment began to dance reels to the amazement of the onlookers<sup>483</sup>.

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<sup>481</sup> Mackay Scobie, *Pipers and Pipe Music*, p. 8.

<sup>482</sup> Mackay Scobie, *Pipers and Pipe Music*, p. 8.

<sup>483</sup> George W. Anderson, *Seaforth Songs: Ballads and Sketches* (Dublin: Printed by R. Chapman, 1890), p. 19.

As one can see, stories of this sort abound. William Henry Grattan Flood also narrates a few interesting episodes. In 1780 Sir Eyre Coote did not think the bagpipe was so important for the MacLeod Highlanders (or the 73<sup>rd</sup>), then serving in India, but he was proved mistaken when the year after the troops were animated to fierceness by the sound of the pipes during the battle of Porto Novo. He was so appreciative that he presented the regiment with a set of silver pipes<sup>484</sup>, apparently worth £50. It would also appear that in 1793 at Pondicherry Colonel Campbell, in command of the trenches, was under thick fire with his troops. He therefore ordered the Seaforth Highlanders to tune up some pibrochs, upon which the enemy fire immediately ceased<sup>485</sup>.

A field officer reports, in his autobiographical work, that during the battle of Vimeira (or Vimeiro, according to modern spelling), in 1808,

the 71<sup>st</sup> were ordered to oppose the enemy with the point of the bayonet. The pipers of the regiment, in the advance of the charge, struck up a national Scottish air, as is generally their custom, and in the middle of it, one of them, a Highlander named George Clerk, received a severe wound in the groin, which brought him to the ground; but he supported himself in a sitting posture, exclaiming, with apparent indifference, "The deil tak ye, if ye hae disabled me frae following, ye winna keep me frae blawing for 'em," and he continued to play and encourage his comrades until the enemy fled. This gallant soldier recovered from his wound, and was promoted to the rank of serjeant and pipe-major by Colonel Pack; the Highland Society in Edinburgh also presented him with a pair of very valuable pipes.<sup>486</sup>

It is interesting that the officer states that Clerk was promoted to the "rank of serjeant and pipe-major", as these two ranks are seldom combined. George Clerk (or Clark) and this heroic episode have been immortalised in various prints and drawings.

In 1816, for instance, Edward Orme published a colour print called 'Anecdote of the Bravery of the Scotch Piper of the 71<sup>st</sup> Highland Regiment, at the Battle of Vimeira'<sup>487</sup>. The wounded piper George Clerk sits by a rock playing his pipes, with enemy soldiers engaged in fighting right behind him. His comrades suggestively turn towards him, evidently uneasy about leaving him there, but his look is quite undisturbed: he carries on playing, sword by his side, as he looks up towards his fellow-soldiers who must return to battle.

Interestingly, the set of bagpipes he is playing is certainly a more faithful likeness to a Great Highland bagpipe compared to, for instance, the 1743 Highland pipers'

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<sup>484</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, pp. 98-99.

<sup>485</sup> William Henry Grattan Flood, *The Story of the Bagpipe* (London: Walter Scott, 1911), pp.165-167.

<sup>486</sup> Harry Ross-Lewin, *With 'The Thirty-Second' In the Peninsular and other Campaigns* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1904), p. 111.

<sup>487</sup> NMS 000-000-100-263-C. Reproduced with permission.

described above – in spite of an unlikely bell-bored chanter. This shows a greater awareness towards what kind of instrument pipers were really playing in the Army.



Clark is also portrayed in a print held by the National Museum of Scotland, titled 'The Highland Piper George Clarke'<sup>488</sup>. In this case he is not depicted in the context of the battle of Vimeira. He is standing in the full 71<sup>st</sup> Highlanders' uniform, Great Highland bagpipe under his arm, in what appears to be a camp: fellow-soldiers are resting in the background, in the midst of a natural landscape with a few white tents, barely sketched, so as to not distract the viewer from the main object of the picture. Clark's posture and attitude are very different from those of the Highland pipers depicted in the mid-eighteenth-century: he is standing, gravely and self-possessed, with not a hint to a dance-step, proudly holding his silver set of prize-pipes. His look is far from amused: he is gazing into the distance, with a very solemn expression.

British portraiture considerably developed from the early eighteenth century onwards, partly as a consequence of the growing market and partly thanks to the popularity of the Grand Tour; and from the 1760s new radical approaches to art were

<sup>488</sup> NMS 000-000-579-550-C. Reproduced with permission.



being explored, in direct inspiration of poetry<sup>489</sup>. The faraway, inspired look we find in Clark's eyes will characterise many portraits of pipers, both in literature and visual art, for the following centuries.



The theme of the visionary artist is strongly connected with the leitmotiv of blindness as a conscious detachment from the human, material world: the blind are

thought to enjoy the compensations of enhanced sensitivity to music and to words. This compensation becomes associated with the loss and gain inherent in the modernity of a post-bardic age. In particular, poets may learn to value such mastery of sound and association and find richness in these which compensates for, and even surpasses, the lost intensity of inner vision.<sup>490</sup>

<sup>489</sup> Duncan Macmillan, *Scottish Art 1460-2000* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 1990), pp. 91 and 113.

<sup>490</sup> Edward Larrissy, *The Blind and Blindness in Literature of the Romantic Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. i.

This gives the artist and musician a prophetic quality, which played a strong part in the Ossian poems and was particularly dear to the Romantics, as I shall discuss in the following chapter. Clark's charisma and his heroic gesture have inspired artists over a century later. Paintings such as the one by William Skeoch Cumming, dated *c.* 1905, portray him in a close-up on the battlefield<sup>491</sup>: he dominates the scene as he sits on the ground, looking very inspired and staring into the void as he plays his pipes.



The surrounding scene is a whirlwind of impressionistic brushwork. Even the dusty grass he is lying on bears the tension and the dynamicity of the situation and is wildly ruffled; his fellow-soldiers don't have the time to think about him, and are scattered on the close background. One has fallen dead almost in front of the piper, but he doesn't seem to notice. The viewer's eye cannot rest on any element on the scene except the broad-shouldered George Clark: the only stable, self-assured character in the picture.

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<sup>491</sup> NMS 000-000-607-299-C. Reproduced with permission.

But clearly pipers are only humans, and beside these stories of great bravery are also documentations of rather more disgraceful behaviour. Such is the case of a piper mentioned in an account of the 1759 charge against the French near Quebec during the Seven Years' War, related in the diary of Sergeant Thompson of Captain Donald Macdonald's grenadier company in the 78<sup>th</sup> Fraser Highlanders:

Our company had but one piper and he was not provided with arms and the usual means of defence like the rest of the men as to keep aloof for safety. When our time advanced for the charge, General Townshend observing that the Piper was missing, and he knowing well the value of one on such occasions [charging the enemy with the broadsword], he sent in all directions for him and was heard to say aloud, "Where's the Highland Piper? And "Five pounds for a piper," but de'il a bit did the Piper come forward. However, the charge by good chance was pretty well effected without him as all those that escaped could testify. For this business the Piper was disgraced by the whole of the Regiment and the men would not speak to him, neither would they suffer his rations to be drawn with theirs [...]<sup>492</sup>

From Sergeant Thompson's statement that the company had "but one piper" we can infer that it was customary for a Highland company to have one or more pipers – two may also have been normal, as John Gibson suggests. The above-mentioned Captain Duncan Campbell in fact in 1794 required "one or two good pipers" when recruiting for Argyll's Highlanders, and David Stewart of Garth claimed that both Fraser's 78<sup>th</sup> Highlanders and Mongomerie's Highlanders had "thirty pipers and drummers"<sup>493</sup>, for regiments of respectively fourteen and thirteen companies. It can be inferred that each company had at least one piper.

Evidently pipers were not always provided with arms when in battle: their function therefore revolved almost entirely on the *brosnachadh*, and within Highland regiments it was more than well-established that it was a valuable role. About this 1759 charge with the missing piper Gibson points out that

Captain Donald MacDonald's grenadier company piper went unarmed and, at least in this instance, unpunished for not facing the enemy. Had he been a private in 1689, he would have been put to death under article 16 of the "Laws and Ordinances Touching Military Discipline" for refusal to obey an order; there is no reason to think that greater leniency would be shown to (ex-) Jacobites in 1759. All that happened to MacDonald's absent piper was that he was sent to Coventry by his fellows, which suggests that the piper in a Gaelic-speaking regiment as late as 1759 was then at the dictate, and possibly the expense, of the Gaelic officer-gentleman [...]<sup>494</sup> and was not subject to the disciplinary articles.<sup>494</sup>

This explanation would suggest that the piper's situation was, until 1759 at least, relatively flexible. Perhaps this was due to the fact that the position of regimental piper

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<sup>492</sup> See Harper, *Fraser Highlanders*, p. 90.

<sup>493</sup> Stewart of Garth, *Sketches*, vol. 2, pp. 64 and 59.

<sup>494</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 85.

had not yet been fixed, and therefore the officer in command would grant him certain liberties. It may not be a coincidence that this episode happened in a Gaelic-speaking regiment, as the piper probably still maintained the aura of high-status from the Clan piper tradition of the *Gaidhealtachd*.

### Piping competitions

The first piping competition organised by the Highland Society in Edinburgh was in 1781. Piping competitions had a distinctly military trait to them, which with time became more and more visible and showy. The competing pipers would charge around the room marching dressed in military attire, or at times even in Roman garb to emphasise the connection with the martial values of Republican Rome, as I will explain below.

In 1782 the competition was won by a John MacAlister, first Piper to the West Fencible Regiment and town piper of Campbeltown<sup>495</sup>. There are various surviving prize-pipes kept in museums and collections. One of them, once part of the Duncan Fraser Collection and now owned by the National Museum of Scotland, was won in July 1802 by Pipe Major John Buchanan of the 42<sup>nd</sup> Highlanders<sup>496</sup>. They are made of cocus wood, mounted in ivory, with a conventional decorative finish of beading and cowling.



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<sup>495</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 90.

<sup>496</sup> NMS 000-000-579-584-C. Reproduced with permission.

The expressed intention of the Highland Society regarding the piping competition was “the keeping up of the Martial Spirit”<sup>497</sup>. John Knox will describe the Society and its function in his *Tour through the Highlands of Scotland* as follows:

The Highland Society at London had been established several years before: it was partly a convivial club, who met to enjoy themselves according to the customs of their country, to hear the bagpipe, drink whisky out of the clam-shell, &c. and, partly, an institution for the encouragement of collections and publications in their native tongue, and of their native music, and similar objects.<sup>498</sup>

The whole performance of the competition aimed at imitating scenes of battle: whether preparation, actual fighting or mourning. This the performers expressed through every possible means: from dress to countenance and gestures. The show – for it became more than a simple performance – was so clearly war-inspired that even an unaccustomed viewer would soon figure out the intentions of the players, and the meaning of each tune. In 1784 a friend of Adam Smith’s, Barthélemy Faujas de Saint-Fond, attended the competition under the economist’s invitation. His experience he published in his work *Voyage en Angleterre, en Écosse et aux Îles Hébrides*.

[...] a folding door opened at the bottom of the room, and to my great surprise I saw a Scottish Highlander enter, in his costume of Roman soldier, playing upon the bagpipe, and walking up and down the empty space with rapid steps and a military air, blowing the noisiest and most discordant sounds from an instrument which lacerates the ear. [...] He made incredible efforts both with his body and his fingers to bring into play at once the different pipes of his instrument, which made an insupportable uproar.<sup>499</sup>

Besides relating his impressions on the episode, Saint-Fond interestingly managed to distinguish the various movements within the *piobaireachd*: he understood that it was “a kind of sonata, divided into three parts”. After listening to the eighth performance, both the sounds and the “pantomimical gestures” he witnessed induced him to “suspect that the first part was connected with a warlike march and military evolutions: the second with a sanguinary battle”, while in the third part he “he became sad and overwhelmed in sorrow” as “the sounds of his instrument were plaintive, languishing, as if lamenting the slain who were being carried off from the field of battle”<sup>500</sup>.

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<sup>497</sup> Iain MacInnes, ‘The Highland Bagpipe: the Impact of the Highland Societies of London and Scotland’, unpublished M.Litt. Thesis (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University, 1989), p. 18.

<sup>498</sup> John Knox, *A Tour through the Highlands of Scotland, and the Hebride Isles* (London: Printed for J. Walter, 1787), p. lxxv.

<sup>499</sup> Barthélemy Faujas de Saint-Fond, *A Journey through England and Scotland in the Hebrides in 1784*, ed. by Archibald Geikie, in 2 volumes (Glasgow: Hugh Hopkins, 1907), vol. 2, pp. 246-249.

<sup>500</sup> Faujas de Saint Fond, *A Journey*, vol. 2, pp. 248-249.

The whole performance must have been a striking experience for someone not accustomed to the typical Scottish bagpipe music, though the military spirit of the performance must have been so clearly marked in the pipers as to be understood by inexperienced ears. The Roman soldier display has a long history, which originates from Tacitus' *Agricola*. Scots are often identified with Republican Rome: the Rome of stoicism, of valour, of heroic impetus and gestures, as opposed to the frivolities of Imperial Rome. Clearly, already by 1784 the competitions resembled more a nationalist show than a mere assessment of piping skills; this process reached its apogee in the 1820s.

That the performance should end up being almost secondary to the context and display is also due to the fact that many members of the jury in piping competitions did not actually always possess piping skills: all it took to be a judge, especially during the early years of the competitions, was to be a 'gentleman' and an 'enthusiast'<sup>501</sup>. The "fine disorder" which the author finds unbearable is on the contrary very much appreciated by the audience, composed by men and women; and the stirring effect (whether driven by the 'media' of the time or genuine; it matters little) is so strong that Saint Fond tells us that it brought tears to the listeners' eyes.

### **The Britishness of military pipers**

One of the quotes in the 'Military Maxims' list, contained in the first volume (dating 1799) of the *British Military Library*, is: "When an enemy once turns his back, the sound of a blown bladder will make him run"<sup>502</sup>. It is clearly quite an established fact that pipers co-operate in the Army to form a British whole: when the enemy retreats, the 'sound of the British Army', represented by the "blown bladder", is what will make him run away in fear. Certainly there is a certain coarseness in the epithet "blown bladder", which may derive from military goliardic language or from a possible residual substratum of ill-appreciation of the instrument. The positive implication of the bagpipe being the means of making the enemy flee would confirm the former hypothesis. The absence of the bagpipe in any other official report of the same volume is quite possibly eloquent of the fact that the position of the instrument was at that stage not yet well-defined.

A post-Culloden recruitment song, 'The Garb of Old Gaul', is an eloquent example of the themes and topics which contributed to emphasise the idea of the rehabilitation of the Scot. The words are attributed to Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Erskine 5<sup>th</sup> Baronet<sup>503</sup> serving with the Black Watch, and it was composed by the General John Reid, also a well-known flute-player:

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<sup>501</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Bagpipe*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>502</sup> Rider, *The British Military Library*, vol. 1, p. 354.

<sup>503</sup> MacLeay, ed., *War Songs and Songs and Ballads of Martial Life*, pp. 21-22.



In the garb of old Gaul, with the fire of old Rome,  
From the heath-covered mountains of Scotia we come;  
Where the Romans endeavoured our country to gain,  
But our ancestors fought, and they fought not in vain.

Such our love of liberty, our country, and our laws,  
That, like our ancestors of old, we stand by freedom's cause;  
We'll bravely fight, like heroes bright, for honour and applause,  
And defy the French, with all their arts, to alter our laws.<sup>504</sup>

The usual themes which characterise the discourse of Scottish pride remain unaltered: emphasis is put on the “love of liberty”, a concept which was being made to sink in. The parallel with ‘old Rome’ – Republican Rome – returns, to celebrate the valour, strength and honour of heroes past and present. What has changed is the attitude towards the old ally of Scotland, France: from military collaborator to enemy. This is due to the colonisation politics in Canada and North America, which saw Britain in conflict with France.

No effeminate customs our sinews embrace,  
No luxurious tables enervate our race;  
Our loud-sounding pipe bears the true martial strain,  
So do we the old Scottish valour retain.<sup>505</sup>

The bagpipe maintains its “true martial strain”: it is a symbol of the retained “old Scottish valour”, and it is opposed to the “effeminate customs” and “luxurious tables” attributed to France. The pipes represent a strongly masculine imagery.

Lieutenant-General Erskine was well aware of the use of pipers in the British Army: though official documents may not report much at all in the way of pipers and their role, off the records they were an established presence.

As a storm in the ocean when Boreas blows,  
So are we enraged when we rush on our foes;  
We sons of the mountains, tremendous as rocks,  
Dash the force of our foes with our thundering strokes.

We're tall as the oak on the mount of the vale,  
Are swift as the roe which the hound doth assail,  
As the full moon in autumn our shields do appear,  
Minerva would dread to encounter our spear.

Quebec and Cape Breton, the pride of old France,  
In their troops fondly boasted till we did advance;  
But when our claymores they saw us produce,  
Their courage did fail, and they sued for a truce.<sup>506</sup>

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<sup>504</sup> MacLeay, ed., *War Songs*, p. 21.

<sup>505</sup> MacLeay, *War Songs*, p. 21.

<sup>506</sup> MacLeay, *War Songs*, pp. 21-22.

The “pride of old France” has been snatched from the French by the Scots; traits such as height and animalesque associations, much employed by English propaganda to criticise and place a negative aura on the ‘northern neighbour’, is now used in a positive light: the characteristics once seen (or merely depicted) as so threatening are now the same ones which make the Scot so appealing in warfare. Their rage of “thundering strokes” when rushing on the “foes” was once seen as gratuitous violence deriving from a savage nature; now it is justified by the intentions of the battle. Their supposed great height was for centuries seen as another mark of the Scots’ physical strength deriving from their natural inclination to warfare: something the brave English soldiers had to have the boldness to face.

The bestial connotations expressed by the parallel with the fastness of the roe takes the animal traits further, but in a way which sheds a positive light on the Highland soldiers. Furthermore, the deer is a symbol of Jacobitism: the icon is taken from the image of the deer hunt found in Sir John Denham’s ‘Cooper’s Hill’<sup>507</sup>, which allegorises the challenge to Charles I: the hounds which chase the stag represent vice. The deer, roe or stag is traditionally viewed as a symbol of legitimacy and authority not only in Gaelic culture, but also Christian and Classical<sup>508</sup>. The nature of the Scots’ ‘martial race’ is no longer something to fear, but a positive aspect to cultivate when directed towards a just cause: something to be proud of, as long as it serves the purpose of a common cause.

In our realm may the fury of faction long cease,  
May our councils be wise and our commerce increase,  
And in Scotia's cold climate may each of us find,  
That our friends still prove true and our beauties prove kind.

Then we'll defend our liberty, our country, and our laws,  
And teach our late posterity to fight in freedom's cause,  
That they like our ancestors bold, for honour and applause,  
May defy the French, with all their arts, to alter our laws.<sup>509</sup>

The song appeals to ancestral values and sentiments right through to the last stanza; the concepts of dignity, loyalty, homeland, bravery and freedom are repeatedly highlighted, together with the opposition towards France. Scotland is not referred to in terms of “Britain”, but the Scots the song is addressed to are serving the King.

The battles fought by Highlanders, and the icon they represented internationally, clearly generated widespread interest in their contemporaries. They featured prominently in

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<sup>507</sup> Pittock, *Jacobitism*, p. 73.

<sup>508</sup> Murray Pittock, *Material Culture and Sedition, 1688-1760* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2013), chapter 2.

<sup>509</sup> MacLeay, *War Songs*, p. 22.



literature, and inspired many a work of art – from prints to Chinese crockery. The sentiments were not always consistent: irony was often enough a counterpart of the fascination they were wrapped in. To a foreign eye, events such as piping competitions were close to being incomprehensible, as we've seen from Saint-Fond's account. Humour about the bagpipe has been present virtually throughout the instrument's history, and exists to this day. By the end of the eighteenth century, the once bestial connotations of the Scot tend to be blended into milder terms, which speak of bravery and pride rather than pointless devotion and blood-thirstiness.

The Romantic era was key to the taking off of a heavy idealisation and romanticising of the Highlander. Particular emphasis was drawn on the piper: whether proudly standing his ground in battle, or enjoying a tranquil landscape, or accompanying tourists to sublime views of sweeping Highland mountains, the piper incarnated the values and ideals of Romantic feeling, which I will discuss in the following chapter.

## Chapter 4

### The bagpipe in the Romantic era

In the previous chapters we have seen how the Jacobite risings had an impact in reinforcing the stereotypical idea of the Scot as a savage, blood-thirsty brute with unhealthy, potentially dangerous habits. These ideas took up such strong terms that devilish associations were made, connecting the Highlander to corrupt Catholicism and mindless devotion to the Stuart dynasty, and subsequently to a hopeless, de-stabilising cause. Gradually after the Battle of Culloden, once the Jacobite threat was seen to wane, it is possible to find literary and artistic references which look to the Scot with more benevolent eyes. The defeat had meant that the Scot did no longer constitute a danger for England; rather, he could be a valuable addition in military campaigns and in battle. His faithfulness to his chief, and to the Jacobite cause, became a mark of loyalty and virtue. The bagpipe, as an essential cultural signifier, underwent the same change in status: from the “bagpipes of the Whore” as they were termed by Edward Ward<sup>510</sup>, to the instrument of war-heroes such as George Clarke, the piper mentioned in the previous chapter who received a prize-pipe in 1808 for heroically piping in spite of having been injured in the groin<sup>511</sup>. The difference between these attitudes is enormous, and it will become more and more marked as Jacobitism becomes an event of the past. Almost simultaneously, in 1760 James Macpherson published his Ossianic Fragments. This brought the culture of Scotland to the fore, and gave prominence to the nation worldwide.

In this chapter I will explore the literature and art of Scottish Romanticism. As Macpherson’s Ossianic fragments, Sir Walter Scott’s charismatic descriptions of Highland landscapes and lifestyles, and the Highlanders’ military achievements gave increasing international prominence to the nation and its culture, the Highlander as an icon also received a great boost. The Romantic cultural climate saw Scotland emerging as the quintessential nation of northern Romanticism discussed by Madame de Staël. As I will argue further on in this chapter, de Staël attributed the origin of all northern literature to the Scottish bards and fables<sup>512</sup>. Her equation of Romanticism with the Ossianic North was fascinating for authors and intellectuals across Europe, from Giacomo Leopardi<sup>513</sup> to the Marquiza de Alorna<sup>514</sup>. As much as there were those who

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<sup>510</sup> Edward Ward, *Nuptial Dialogues and Debates*, in 2 volumes, (London: printed for C. Hitch et al., 1759), vol. 2, p. 204.

<sup>511</sup> Harry Ross-Lewin, *With ‘The Thirty-Second’ In the Peninsular and other Campaigns* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1904), p. 111.

<sup>512</sup> De Staël, M.me Germaine de, *Oeuvres Complètes de Madame la Baronne de Staël-Holstein*, s. n., in 2 volumes (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères et C<sup>ie</sup>, Libraires, 1837), vol. 1, p. 252.

<sup>513</sup> Isidoro Montiel, ‘Ossian en la Obra de Leopardi’, in *Italica* vol. 46, n. 4 (1969), 390-401 (p. 392).

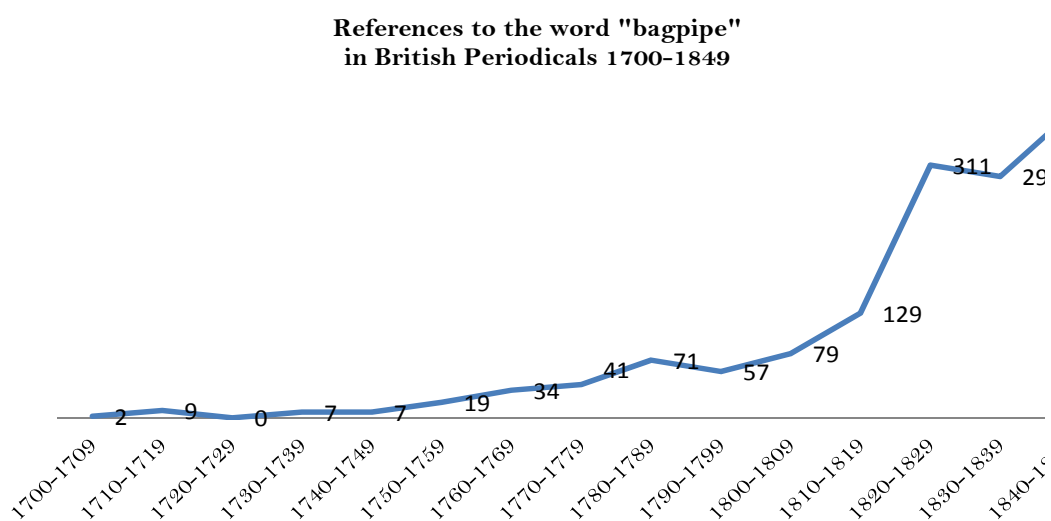
<sup>514</sup> Howard Gaskill, *The Reception of Ossian in Europe* (Trowbridge: The Cromwell Press, 2005), p. 373.

rejected this idea (William Wordsworth was “irked” by her equation of Romanticism and Northernness<sup>515</sup>) de Staël’s view was hugely influential, and contributed greatly to shaping Romanticism, and Scottish identity within this context. So much so, that it is possible today to talk about a veritable Ossianic or Macpherson ‘paradigm’<sup>516</sup>.

With the heavy idealisation of the Highlander as an icon of the Romantic North, also came the romanticisation of the piper. The bagpipe, we have seen, embodied ideals of nationhood, independence, and military valour: these, combined with the epic grandeur of the Ossianic fragments, concurred to create a very charismatic aura: the piper could be seen to incarnate the essence of Romantic principles and values. We have already seen in the last chapter how the piper as an icon became a fascinating ‘object’ to represent on statuettes and Chinese crockery. This trend continued, and if anything it was reinforced by the new inputs constituted by Scotland’s military and literary presence across Europe.

In this chapter I will analyse the role of the bagpipe and piper in literature and art in the Romantic era. This I will do by examining the references to the instrument by some of the most popular writers and artists of the period – focusing particularly on authors such as Sir Walter Scott, Robert Burns, Lord Byron, John Wilson and William Wordsworth, and on some of the artworks which illustrate recurring key themes, such as street pipers and blindness.

The bagpipe is among the most colourful emblems of Scottishness, and it received attention from many authors and artists. Its increasing presence on the online database ‘British Periodicals’<sup>517</sup> is indicative of this process.



<sup>515</sup> Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 73.

<sup>516</sup> Expressions employed, for instance, by Gaskill in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, p. 57; and also William Donaldson, who uses the phrase “Ossian and the Macpherson Paradigm” for Chapter I of his work *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society 1750-1950* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000).

<sup>517</sup> <http://britishperiodicals.chadwyck.co.uk/marketing.do> accessed on the 12<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

As we can see, in the corpus of texts which form the database, each decade between 1700 and 1749 hardly ever include more than 7 articles which mention the word “bagpipe”, with the only exception of a peak of 9 articles between 1710 and 1719. In the decade 1750-1759 we find an increase to 19 articles; 34 by 1769. By the 1780-1789 decade the articles which feature references to bagpipes peak to 71. The presence of the bagpipe in British periodicals will increase consistently throughout the nineteenth century, and even though these data should be viewed also in connection with the proportional increase in printed periodicals, the figures are too high not to be indicative of a tendency. It is clear from the numbers that there was an intensification of the interest towards this particular icon of Scottishness.

As regards the printed word, my focus will not only be centred on periodicals, but also, and chiefly, on Romantic literary prose and poetry. Romanticism is a literary and artistic movement of great complexity. The ideologies of the French revolution, colonial expansion, the industrial revolution and the social, cultural and political turmoil which derived from these events worked together to create a ‘new’ frame of mind – in many ways influenced by Enlightenment aesthetics and forms. In fact, according to a more traditional approach to the subject, the construction of Romanticism has been seen to clash with the climate of the ‘age of reason’, but more recent studies argue the ‘new’ current may have existed in dialogue with dominant discourses of the Enlightenment. Romanticism in fact shows a concern for many Enlightenment issues and questions. The relationship between knowledge, imagination and reason, and matters of progress, technology, and development are common to both the Enlightenment and Romanticism, though the approach to them may in some cases differ, as Romanticism puts greater emphasis on the individuality and genius of the artist. As Marshall Brown argues,

Enlightenment values persisted despite the changed atmosphere of the nineteenth century. Voltaire’s ideal of tolerance continues in the writings of the Schlegels, of Shelley, and of French revolutionary thinkers [...]. Popean satire is not only reborn in Byron, but also strongly colors Blake’s prophecies and leaves traces in some of Shelley’s works and even a few of Keats’s. Neoclassicism, which was a formative element in the Enlightenment, remained a powerful if variable current in Goethe [...], Schiller, the later Schlegels, the artists of the French Revolution, Shelley, Keats, and the later Wordsworth [...]. The mythological works of Keats, Shelley, and Hölderlin in many respects remain faithful to the syncretic (comparatist) and euhemerist (historically rooted) traditions of the Enlightenment [...] the main forms of Romantic drama [...] grow continuously out of eighteenth-century traditions [...]<sup>518</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> Marshall Brown, ‘Romanticism and Enlightenment’, in *The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism*, ed by Stuart Curran (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, first edition 1993), 34–55, (p. 36).

From literary genres to philosophical approaches and ideals, we can see from these words that the Enlightenment supplied the ideological basis for Romantic cultural formation: its themes and concerns, from the elevation of sentiment over reason to issues of social progress to the “location of collective identity in an ancestral past”<sup>519</sup>, to use a phrase of Ian Duncan’s, were re-elaborated and re-thought over the subsequent decades.

Scott’s novels claimed the authority of Enlightenment human sciences: as Ian Duncan argues, the “philosophical authority for the claim on fiction as the medium for reality, instead of its antithesis, was developed in Scottish Enlightenment empiricism”<sup>520</sup>, as the Waverley novels will find within them the realisation of Hume’s theoretical basis for the “fundamental practice of modern ideology – acquiescence without belief, crediting without credulousness”<sup>521</sup>. In my analysis I will focus on some of the key authors of Romanticism and analyse the thoughts, subtexts and implications of the figures who have determined the canon of British Romantic literature, accompanied by a selection of artworks which further illustrate and explain my argument.

While the continued contacts with the colonies had opened the view to new, fascinating worlds, the long war with France had inspired a feeling of nationality. The new Romantic genres originated from the cultural nationalism of peripheries, in which Scotland, Ireland and Wales play a primary part<sup>522</sup>.

### **The shaping of Romantic Scotland**

Issues of culture, alterity, tradition and change were key to the Romantic climate, and the ‘Celtic nations’ were the perfect nest for the newly-born search and quest for ancestral origins and a remote past. For the English poet of the Romantic mind Scotland, Ireland and Wales constituted worlds which were fascinating for their differences, and yet close enough “to represent a link to their own origins”<sup>523</sup>; this encouraged the formation of an Anglo-Celtic model of literary nationalism. I take Katie Trumpener’s view when she compares the relation between England and Scotland to that between Augustan Rome and Greece, in that

just as Rome’s cultural life depended on the wholesale appropriation of Greek literary traditions and the learnedness of Greek slaves, so too the English expect to harness captive traditions of Celtic learning and poetry, harps and bards, for the cause of an imperial state.<sup>524</sup>

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<sup>519</sup> Ian Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow* (Princeton and Cambridge: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 48.

<sup>520</sup> Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow*, pp. xi-xii.

<sup>521</sup> Catherine Gallagher and Stephen Greenblatt, *Practicing New Historicism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2000), p. 169.

<sup>522</sup> Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. xi.

<sup>523</sup> Fiona Stafford, ‘England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales’, in *Romanticism: An Oxford Guide*, ed. by Nicholas Roe (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 114–125 (p.121).

<sup>524</sup> Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, pp. 7–8.

From this perspective, there was a change in the relationship between England, Scotland and Ireland. England ended up absorbing certain characteristic traits of what it had hitherto considered to be its peripheries.

In this sense, Scotland constituted fertile terrain for the building of a *British* identity, in the light of the Anglo-centric point of view frequently adopted to determine British history. In this way, it supplied the raw material England was to draw from to re-construct its image – which was somewhat blurred by decades of emulation of continental habits and customs, as was the case, for instance, in music. As music theorist and organist Augustus Frederic Christopher Kollmann stated in 1796:

[In England] where some of the greatest musicians of all nations reside, and where consequently all Styles are so much intermixed, as hardly to leave room for an original English style; yet the Scotch style is so much at home in England, that it may at present be considered as belonging nearly equal to both Nations [...]<sup>525</sup>

This passage contains, in embryo, what became quite common during the nineteenth century: that is, for Scotland and its culture to be seen as a contribution to England. Certain Scottish cultural traits – in this case, music – are absorbed and made part of an *English* ‘heritage’.

In literature, several elements and characteristics of ancient non-English culture, such as the bard, were adopted and re-evaluated by English authors<sup>526</sup>. The bagpipe also received similar attention in this sense, as we shall see below and as has already been hinted in Chapter 3 with the example of Kane O’Hara’s *Midas*. Eloquently, in 1866 the *London Reader* even published an article bearing the title ‘The bagpipe an English Instrument’, which reports a speech of the Lord Advocate. On the occasion of “early closing” in Edinburgh, the Advocate, “in the course of an address on music”, gives a series of argumentations, based chiefly on Shakespearian quotes, for which it “could be demonstrated that the bagpipe is an English instrument – essentially English – that the English were the original bagpipers”<sup>527</sup>. Although it has been argued that the bagpipe *did* in fact reach England before it reached Scotland, such a strong statement seems like more of an appropriation than a simple matter-of-fact.

The ‘peripheries’ of Britain, on the contrary, maintained their indigenous cultural characteristics through the centuries, and retained marked traces of non-Englishness. Peripheral British literature and art stood in its own right, creating a web of artistic production which was highly successful especially during the early nineteenth century,

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<sup>525</sup> Augustus Frederic Christopher Kollmann, *An Essay on Practical Music Composition*, ed. by Imogene Horsley (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), p. 12. See also Chapter 3 of the present work.

<sup>526</sup> Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 7.

<sup>527</sup> ‘The Bagpipe an English Instrument’, in *The London Reader*, 6:142, January 27 (1866), p. 387.

and particularly in the genre of the novel. As Trumpener explains, the extent of the phenomenon was such that

the growing nationalization and national bifurcation of the novel, and the enormous popular success of the Scottish novel in particular, led to an increasing dilemma of identification for English novel readers and novelists.<sup>528</sup>

Antiquarian scholarship in Ireland, Scotland and Wales had the merit of having awakened a sense of historical consciousness, which in several parts of Britain developed into new, powerful means of expressing a sense of national identification.<sup>529</sup>

The idea of degeneration being a natural consequence of luxury, developed from pre-Enlightenment theories deriving from the ancient contrast between Republican and Imperial Rome, led eighteenth-century intellectuals to seek for their origins, and all things primeval, since

if civilized man fails to discover and follow the laws of nature as perfectly as primitive man, it is because his mind and heart have become corrupted by the vices of civilization<sup>530</sup>

The once scorned industrial, technical and, supposedly, cultural underdevelopment of Scotland became more and more the reason for its appeal, as I have specified in Chapter 3. It cast the country apart from the “green sickness of the soul”, as ‘Civis’, an author writing in the *London Magazine*, termed in 1754 the research for wealth for the sake of luxury<sup>531</sup>. The remedy against this ailment of the spirit was in fact to turn to primitive simplicity, as Rousseau was explaining in the same year in his theory on the state of nature, contained in his work *Discours sur l'origine et les fondements de l'inégalité parmi les hommes*. This position had its roots in the interpretation of classical republicanism, and which also became one of the core Jacobite themes. The primitivism in Celtic nostalgia implied that, in Murray Pittock’s words, “a controlled use of the Celt’s primitive ferocity could be used as a fighting-machine for the Empire”<sup>532</sup> – this gave a decisive input towards the ‘rehabilitation of the Gael’.

The primitive and simple, embodied in the ideas and values of republican Rome, was also considered to be the trustworthy and true – honourable features in many respects embodied by the faithful to the Stuart cause, and in marked opposition with the model of imperial Rome. Historiography based on Tacitean inheritance was hugely

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<sup>528</sup> Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 17.

<sup>529</sup> Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, pp. 24–25.

<sup>530</sup> Lois Whitney, *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress* (New York: Octagon Press, 1973), p. 42.

<sup>531</sup> ‘Civis’, *The London Magazine* (London: Printed for R. Baldwin, 1754), vol. XXIII, pp. 409–410.

<sup>532</sup> Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 43.

influential in the shaping of Scottish Enlightenment patriotism. Whig Gothic theories drew heavily on Tacitus, often re-interpreting his works to create the myth of a virtuous, freedom-seeking Germanic ancestry of Britain.

A substantial input in the change of attitude towards the Celt was given by James Macpherson's work. The 22-year-old author claimed he was in possession of fragments of poetry in the Gaelic language by the bard Ossian, son of Fingal. Macpherson translated the Fragments into English, and they were published in 1760 with the title *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*. The work contained no more than fifteen pieces of prose, yet it was a tremendous success. Macpherson saw Highlanders as the true direct descendants of the Celts: as such, they were the heritors of the ancient Celtic culture. He was convinced that it was possible that an ancient epic poem, or relics of it, could still be enshrined in the memory and oral tradition of these areas.

Soon after the publication of his *Fragments*, he was urged by the many interested scholars of his time, especially Hugh Blair, to set off for these regions to search for other pieces of ancient poetry, especially that regarding the epic of Fingal. He returned successfully from his various journeys, having collected a conspicuous amount of Gaelic material which he had gathered from various sources such as manuscripts and oral transmission. He reordered this material and wove the fragments together with passages of his own to create a unitary whole, which was soon translated into most European languages<sup>533</sup>.

Not only was his Ossianic material important from a literary point of view, but also from a 'political' one: such a discovery meant that the Celts, like the Romans or the Greeks, possessed a foundation epic – unlike England. Hardly surprisingly, the English intelligentsia and authors such as Samuel Johnson strongly questioned the authenticity of Macpherson's fragments, especially in view of his frequent personal interpolations. According to Macpherson an accurate transliteration of the Gaelic material would make it unsuitable for Edinburgh literature circles. Unfortunately these potentially good intentions caused the Highland Society to accuse the author of having altered and added passages according to his own taste, refining and bowdlerising Gaelic poetry for an English audience with an appetite for sentimentality and lyricism<sup>534</sup>. As Peter Womack explains:

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<sup>533</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, pp. 11-14.

<sup>534</sup> Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988), pp. 96-132. Also Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, pp. 15-17.



What Macpherson had really produced, on the most charitable interpretation of his activities, was a drastic *Improvement* of the ancient poetry of the Highlands. Dignity, delicacy, softness, refinement, elevation – the criteria by which Ossian was prepared for the press are not merely ‘modern’ ones in general, but specifically those by which the Edinburgh lawyers and divines who were the project’s patrons measured their own country’s emergence from its native barbarism. [...] The third-century Highlands were rendered genteel.<sup>535</sup>

What is undeniable is that, in his work, Macpherson declared and presented to the world the importance of Celtic culture and heritage in British society, in a way which emptied it of all previous negative connotation<sup>536</sup>, especially since he connected Celts and Saxons in a common history of struggle for liberty<sup>537</sup>.

### **A national instrument: the Scottish point of view**

In this section I will analyse the works of Scottish Romantic authors. It is no coincidence that the two key figures of Scottish Romanticism – Sir Walter Scott and Robert Burns – have contributed significantly in characterising the traditional, historical associations connected with the instrument. They not only refer to the bagpipe frequently, but they also endow it with a variety of connotations, many of which are still relevant today. Scott in many of his works stresses the military aspect of the bagpipe, and enhances its performative value on the battlefield and in Gaelic society in connections with Jacobitism, as well as its connotations as a ‘northern’, ‘Romantic’ and ‘Celtic’ instrument. Burns, on the other hand, while connecting the bagpipe to the military sphere mainly from childhood memory, is particularly well-known for his poem ‘Tam O’ Shanter’. In this particular poem, Burns deals with the bagpipe’s centuries-old submerged demonic and sexual symbolism common to many – if not most – European countries. In other works, like Scott, he identifies it as a typically Scottish instrument: it is the voice of the nation, thus marking a contrast with other instruments and sounds – perhaps more refined, but not authentically ‘national’.

Thus, a large part of the following section will be devoted to these two authors, although I will also refer to a number of other writers and artists in order to give a more exhaustive picture of the bagpipe in the Scottish Romantic context.

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<sup>535</sup> Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance* (Houndmills and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989), p. 107.

<sup>536</sup> Pittock, *Celtic Identity*, p. 36.

<sup>537</sup> Murray Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 11.

## Sir Walter Scott

Sir Walter Scott played an important part in shaping Scotland's identity, as Pittock explains:

Sir Walter Scott, as well as subscribing (in novels such as *Waverley* and *The Antiquary*) to the Teuton/Celt distinction in Scotland, suggested through his pageantry and presentation of Scotland to England a more subtle reading: that Celticism was the emotional side of the Scot, and Teutonism its intellectual corrective.<sup>538</sup>

The division into Teuton and Celtic Scotland was very influential, though its accuracy is limited. Highlanders and Lowlanders were ideally made to merge into a unitary 'race', internally torn and divided between an emotional Celtic side and a more composed Teuton one.

Scott portrayed a heavily 'Highlandised' Scotland to King George IV in his memorable visit in 1822 – the first visit to Scotland by a British monarch since king Charles II's in 1650. It has been argued that this was felt as a sort of 'masquerade' by the citizens, both Highland and Lowland. Some of the latter (or at least the non-Highlanders), on the one hand, felt they were being moulded into an identity that was not theirs. An Edinburgh citizen on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1822 complained that

[...] Sir Walter Scott has ridiculously made us appear to be a nation of Highlanders, and the bagpipe and the tartan are the order of the day.<sup>539</sup>

The organisation of the event of king George IV's visit was in the hands of David Stewart of Garth (a friend of Sir Walter Scott's) and his Celtic Society of Edinburgh. According to Trevor Royle:

Scotland's capital went tartan-mad during the ten days that George IV graced it and under the direction of the novelist Sir Walter Scott who acted as a pageant-master, an invented mythology of Highland customs, replete with clan gatherings and balls, was represented as solid historical fact. [...] the visit left a hangover from which Scotland never fully recovered. It cemented the kilt as the national dress and created a bogus tartan caricature which became the accepted and increasingly acceptable face of Scotland.<sup>540</sup>

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<sup>538</sup> Pittock, *Celtic Identity*, p. 56.

<sup>539</sup> Thomas Creevey, *The Creevey Papers*, ed. by Sir Herbert Maxwell, in 2 volumes (London: John Murray, 1904), vol. 1, p. 45.

<sup>540</sup> Trevor Royle, 'From David Stewart to Andy Stewart: the Invention and Re-invention of the Scottish soldier', in *From Tartan to Tartanry*, ed. by Ian Brown (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 48-62 (pp. 59-60).

This is certainly an interesting position, of which Royle is not the sole supporter, and which has its basis of truth, since undeniably Scott was taking advantage also in his literary works of certain colourful aspects of Scottish culture. On the other hand, it may be a bit too simplistic to attribute the whole responsibility of today's Highland 'pedigree' for Scotland to a ten-day royal visit. It is hardly likely that the image of a whole nation could undergo such a dramatic change in so short a time, no matter how strong the impact on the media – which in any case certainly did not have at its disposal the means it has today, and news did not circulate as easily as it does in the twenty-first century.

The Highlanders, for their part, disliked the Lowland co-opting of the Highland garb, also as a military uniform – the whole army was in fact in Highland dress during Jacobitism, and as a military uniform it survived the ban enforced in civil society until 1782, “as a token of Celtic heroism”<sup>541</sup>. Alasdair Macdonell of Glengarry said, about the 1822 visit, that he had never in his life seen so much tartan “with so little Highland material”<sup>542</sup>; though it should be noted that his opinion was bound to be biased since Garth's Celtic Society was favoured over his own company of the True Highlanders to organise the event<sup>543</sup>.

Be the dispute what it may, the aggravated gentleman attributes to Scott the choice of bagpipe and tartan as elements most visually descriptive of a broadly recognisable Scottishness – as they are in fact to this day. A 1839 stoneware jug, the ‘Waverley Jug’<sup>544</sup>, displays the symbols of Scotland and Scottishness which Scott and his Waverley novels promoted. On one side are thistles, oak leaves, mistletoe, bow and arrows, a shield, jester's cap, a helmet, boars' head, spear and dagger. Each of these elements represents an aspect of Scottishness: the thistle is famously the ‘flower of Scotland’, and a national symbol; the oak leaves were the Stuart clan badge, and part of a distinctively Jacobite imagery after 1688. Oak leaves were also linked to the Druids, as was mistletoe. Then there are various emblems of warfare: the shield and helmet represent defence and invulnerability, while the spear and the dagger are icons of honour, virtue, and knightly service. The bow-and-arrow symbolism is a general mark of war and power, while the boar is an animal which will fight even at the cost of giving its life: the Scot was invested with this form of heroism, with his faithfulness to his chief and to a cause. On the other side is an open book with the words WAVERLEY / CHAP / XII and a musical trophy of horn, pan pipes (symbol of rural life) and, of course, a bagpipe – an icon into which military valour, national pride, and rural entertainment converge. The ensemble is interspersed with a lyre, the classical instrument of poetry, thistles, and oak

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<sup>541</sup> Pittock, *The Myth of the Jacobite Clans*, p. 40.

<sup>542</sup> Brian Osborne, *The Last of the Chiefs* (Glendaruel: Argyll Publishing, 2011, p. 33.

<sup>543</sup> Royle, ‘From David Stewart to Andy Stewart’, p. 59.

<sup>544</sup> BM 2009,8049.36. Use of the image is authorised by the BM.

leaves. The bagpipe does indeed appear often in Scott's works, frequently in very picturesque situations.



It is hardly surprising that a novel on the 1745 rising should copiously (over twenty times) mention the instrument which played such an important role in Jacobite society, as explained in Chapter 2. In fact, in the above-mentioned *Waverley* the timid Rose Bradwardine relates an episode of the feud between the house of Tully-Veolan and the Highlanders:

Three of the Highlanders were killed, and they brought them in, wrapped in their plaids, and laid them on the stone floor of the hall; and next morning their wives and daughters came, clapping their hands, and crying the coronach and shrieking, and carried away the dead bodies, with the pipes playing before them.<sup>545</sup>

The convulsive reaction of the Highland women to the loss of their men – wrapped, of course, in their plaids – truly startles Rose for its violence; and the pipers are present to accompany the fallen. It is almost possible to imagine the ear-splitting incident, with the screaming women, and the blaring bagpipes – a moment charged with pathos, and disorderly commotion. The description of the Highland women in their wild distraction fits in perfectly with the emotional, irrational image of the Scot, and it recurs throughout Scott's works. The wake is a common trait in Scottish and Irish culture, and involved

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<sup>545</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 71.

practices between genuine frantic grieving and performance<sup>546</sup>. As Stiofán Ó Cadhla argues, “In the thesaurus of imperial rhetoric terms like primitive, traditional, vulgar, ancient or aboriginal are all euphemisms for non-Englishness”<sup>547</sup>, so such displays of discomposure as those Scott described of the Highland women were seen as a mark of backwardness in Scottish and Irish stadial development towards civilisation.

In ‘The Highland Widow’, an episode included in *Chronicles of the Canongate*, the widowed Elspat

was roused from her stupor at length by female voices, which cried the coronach, or lament for the dead, with clapping of hands and loud exclamations; while the melancholy note of a lament, appropriate to the clan Cameron, played on the bagpipe, was heard from time to time. [...] There were females in the hut who were swathing the corpse in its bloody plaid before carrying it from the fatal spot.<sup>548</sup>

It is interesting how Scott refers to the women as “females”; the enhanced animalesque trait somewhat justifies the irrational reactions and the primordial traditions, which seem dictated by instinct.

A very different view about the same situation can be found in Tobias Smollett’s *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*:

Yesterday we were invited to the funeral of an old lady, the grandmother of a gentleman in this neighbourhood, and found ourselves in the midst of fifty people, who were regaled with a sumptuous feast, accompanied by the music of a dozen pipers. [...] we had committed a small oversight, in leaving the corpse behind; so we were obliged to wheel about, and met the old gentlewoman half way, being carried upon poles by the nearest relations of her family, and attended by the coronach, composed of a multitude of old hags, who tore their hair, beat their breasts, and howled most hideously.<sup>549</sup>

...Certainly two very different perspectives! The only trait which is discernible in both Scott and Smollett is the portrayal of the irrationality of the situation, and of the reactions. Scott describes these characteristic moments in such a way that the reader is amazed, and stands in wonder in front of something incomprehensibly primordial; while Smollett’s reader will find in the author’s dry descriptions only a reason for amusement and irony. Smollett often leaves room for irony when talking about the bagpipe, and

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<sup>546</sup> Claire Connolly, *A Cultural History of the Irish Novel, 1790-1829* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 188-191.

<sup>547</sup> Stiofán Ó Cadhla, *Civilizing Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), p. 173.

<sup>548</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *Chronicles of the Canongate*, ed. by Claire Lamont (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 110.

<sup>549</sup> Tobias Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, ed. by James Thorson (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1983), p. 225.

indeed the sound of the bagpipe has such qualities which are used by various authors to describe, often ironically, certain musical (or noise) characteristics.

The bagpipe often appears in connection with the plaid in Scott's works. In the epic poem *Marmion* the battle-scene is thus depicted:

Next, Marmion marked the Celtic race,  
Of different language, form, and face –  
Avarious race of man;  
Just then the chiefs their tribes arrayed,  
And wild and garish semblance made  
The chequered trews and belted plaid,  
And varying notes the war-pipes brayed  
To every varying clan; [...]   
Loud were their clamouring tongues, as when  
The clanging sea-fowl leave the fen,  
And, with their cries discordant mixed,  
Grumbled and yelled the pipes betwixt.<sup>550</sup>

The verbs Scott employs are thoroughly descriptive of the bagpipe's sound, with its high-pitched chanter notes and the low drones "grumbling" in the background. Though it should be noted that the episode Scott is relating is the famous Battle of Flodden Field of 1513; he is therefore taking for granted that there were *Highland* bagpipes being used in that event (Lowland or Northumbrian pipes not being used in battle). By doing so, he is conveying a distinctively Highland connotation to the battle of Flodden, although the battle took place nowhere near the *Gàidhealtachd*. Of course this does not mean that because of the distance from the *Gàidhealtachd* there were no Gaelic-speaking troops employed at Flodden: Highlanders were indeed involved in the battle<sup>551</sup>. Clearly the author is giving the bagpipe a univocal identity, and that of Gaelic origin.

The piper of Scott's novels is an essential presence in a Highland clan. He would

perambulate the court before the door of his Chieftain's quarters, and as Mrs Flockhart, apparently no friend to his minstrelsy, was pleased to observe, "garring the very stane and lime wa's dinnle wi' his screeching:"<sup>552</sup>

Evan Dhu, the chieftain's lieutenant, describes to Edward Waverley the "tail" of the chief when he goes to visit "those of the same rank":

There is the *hanchman*, or right-hand man, then his *bhaird*, or poet; then his *bladier*, or orator, to make harangues of the great folks whom he visits; then his *gilly-more*, or

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<sup>550</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *Marmion*, ed. by Thomas Bayne (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1889), pp. 119-120.

<sup>551</sup> John Sadler, *Flodden 1513: Scotland's Great Defeat* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2006), p. 28.

<sup>552</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 211.

armour-bearer, to carry his sword, and target, and his gun; then his *gilly-casflue*, who carries him on his back through the sikes and brooks; then his *gilly-comstraine*, to lead his horse by the bridle in steep and difficult paths; then his *gilly-trusharnish*, to carry his knap-sack; and the piper and the piper's man, and it may be a dozen young lads beside, that have no business, but are just boys of the belt to follow the laird, and do his honour's bidding.<sup>553</sup>

Scott gives an account of the people who are to follow the clan chief on his visits – and the piper even has a “piper's man”, generally there to carry his pipes. After this conversation, Evan went along “whistling part of a pibroch as he reloaded his piece” – something Edward Waverley also does much later on in the novel, to satisfy the curiosity of his friend Frank Stanley about the “manners of the Highlands”<sup>554</sup>.

What emerges is the status of the piper in Highland society – which was high, since the chief will not part from him during his visits to people of high rank, who would therefore comprehend the ennobling value of the presence of the many *gillies*. What also emerges is how deeply the bagpipe culture and repertoire are rooted among the Highlanders: so much that Evan Dhu nonchalantly whistles a pibroch as he works just as anyone today would hum a radio tune or a jingle. After all, as Scott describes further on in the novel, the sound of the pipes accompanied most of the daily routine in a Highland clan, from military exercise (“the charge, the rally, the flight, the pursuit, and all the current of a head fight, were exhibited to the sound of the great war pipe”<sup>555</sup>) to the call for meals (“But come, captain, the sound of the pipes inform me that dinner is prepared”<sup>556</sup>) to the gathering of the “tribes” after a hunting match (“The various tribes assembled, each at the pibroch of his native clan”<sup>557</sup>). The bagpipe marks the main events of the day, and also provides the entertainment for the clan and the Chief's guests:

But hear ye not the pipes, Captain Waverley? Perhaps you will like better to dance to them in the hall, than to be deafened with their harmony without taking part in the exercise they invite us to.<sup>558</sup>

...Not to mention their use as a musical accompaniment during meals, which Scott describes as a very noisy habit which the ear of an Englishman (or “unworthy southern”, as Edward describes himself to Flora<sup>559</sup>), was not accustomed to:

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<sup>553</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>554</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 293.

<sup>555</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 94.

<sup>556</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 95.

<sup>557</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 119.

<sup>558</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 112.

<sup>559</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 104.

The bagpipers, three in number, screamed, during the whole time of dinner, a tremendous war-tune; and the echoing of the vaulted roof, and clang of the Celtic tongue, produced such a Babel of noises, that Waverley dreaded his ears would never recover it.<sup>560</sup>

Although it is not impossible to witness a scene with three pipers playing under a vaulted hall, it is quite likely that Scott is portraying an exaggeration to create an impression of exoticism, in order to enhance a 'feeling of Scotland' which is incompatible with English Edward's senses. Smollett also describes a similar scene with Scott's same attitude, through the words of his character Sir Watkin Phillips:

Mr Campbell himself, who performs very well on the violin, has an invincible antipathy for the Highland bag-pipe, which sings in the nose with a most alarming twang, and, indeed, is quite intolerable to ears of common sensibility, when aggravated by the echo of a vaulted hall.<sup>561</sup>

In the (ironic) words of both authors, English ears are described as being particularly affected by the sound of the bagpipe when enhanced by the echo in a vaulted hall.

Scott's notions on the great presence of the bagpipe in Gaeldom are very true. As Gibson notes, detailed observations on piping practices in late eighteenth-century *Gàidhealtachd* are in truth rather sparse, but this is likely to be because these practices were common, and therefore not remarkable enough to record them. The changing of the traditions was so gradual and the pattern varied so much that it went almost unnoticed<sup>562</sup>.

Edward Waverley is a surrogate for the English reader. As Murray Pittock points out:

the Ossianic hero's capabilities as a man of action were undercut by the elegiac mode of commemoration which was all that either Primitivism or Romanticism offered to the Celt. Just as Scottish history (for example) was detached from its British present and reformulated as harmless pageant, so the Celtic hero existed only to be 'sad but lovely' and to stimulate 'the joy of grief'. [...] Flora MacIvor sings to the novel's English hero and surrogate tourist a lay of the last bard in suitably Sublime surroundings. The eighteenth-century bard is not absent, and a woman sings his song: Celticism is in transition from the last phase of heroic recollection to the first of Romantic charm.<sup>563</sup>

Waverley has the same alien view towards Scotland and its 'other' culture as any English reader would – or at least this is the effect Scott aimed for. Waverley is curious,

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<sup>560</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>561</sup> Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, p. 224.

<sup>562</sup> John Graham Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping, 1745-1945* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2005), p. 139.

<sup>563</sup> Pittock, *Celtic Identity*, p. 61.



estranged, and yet the bagpipe, with its sound and role, sinks so deeply into the Englishman's subconscious that, after having resided a while in the Highlands, he ends up half-dreaming them: Waverley dreams of Glennaquoich and a "festal train":

The pibroch too was distinctly heard; and this at least was no delusion [...] Of course it soon became too powerful for Waverley's dream, with which it had at first rather harmonized.<sup>564</sup>

Though waking to the bagpipes may not be the most soothing of experiences, the author conveys the idea of the sound becoming pleasurable in the dreamer's mind. The pibroch harmonises with Waverley's reverie and, almost to the protagonist's surprise (as the adverb "rather" denotes), the sound once described as "a Babel of noises" now intimately becomes the protagonist of happy thoughts.

It is as if the bagpipe – Scotland – had the power to change the English reader's mind with its sound, and with the fascinating cultural values it implies. The young English gentleman is now naturalised to a Gaelic world, a world which to him was once wrapped in exoticism, with its autochthonous language, its often incomprehensible customs, and its almost instinctive passion for the "wild" instrument the bagpipe represents – quite an acquired taste!

Nevertheless, as happy as the thoughts may be for Waverley, the martial connection with the bagpipe is present in most of Scott's works. Bagpipes and pibrochs of war are mentioned over ten times in *The Lady of the Lake* alone also in connection with broadswords and banners, the themes which characterised much Gaelic poetry: "The pibroch sounds, the bands advance, / The broadswords gleam, the banners dance"<sup>565</sup>. In *A Legend of Montrose* the author describes Highland pipers as "warlike minstrels" quite astonishing for a Lowlander, used to bagpipes of softer tones: "the most astounding part of the assembly, at least to a Lowland ear, was the rival performance of the bagpipers"<sup>566</sup>.

It is quite clear how Scott racially typifies the bagpipe: the identity of the Lowland bagpipe is suppressed, and is supplanted by the instrument's Highlandness, as demonstrates the fact that the vast majority of Scott's allusions to bagpipes refer to the Great Highland pipes. In *Waverley*, on the day the army of the Highlanders set off for their march from Edinburgh,

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<sup>564</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 211.

<sup>565</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *The Lady of the Lake*, in *Scott's Poetical Works*, ed. by Andrew Lang (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1898), p. 455.

<sup>566</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *A Legend of Montrose*, ed. by John Huston (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1995), p. 55.

The rocks, which formed the back-ground of the scene, and the very sky itself, rung with the clang of the bagpipers, summoning forth, each with his appropriate pibroch, his chieftain and clan.<sup>567</sup>

Scott reinforces the idea of the bagpipe as a typically Gaelic instrument: this cultural typifying is indicative of the author's intentions in characterising the Highlands ethnically and socially. In much of his work a peaceful Lowland context is often shown as a contrast with the Highlands, in turmoil with internecine clan conflicts. This tension derives from the idea of an ethnically divided Scotland, composed of Teutonic Lowlanders and Celtic Highlanders. Scott encouraged this type of construction based on the theories of Hume and Robertson, who stressed the Germanic character of Scotland in their works<sup>568</sup>.

At the basis of the incompatibility between Lowlanders and Highlanders lies the ethnic difference of their origins. The love of liberty of the Germanic populations (which included the Lowlanders), in itself an inheritance of the rather partial Enlightenment interpretation of Tacitus' works (seen to state Anglo-Saxon supremacy), was part of much Enlightenment patriotic discourse. It marked a contrast with the Celtic peoples, seen as irresponsible, uncivilised, and unable to develop into a civil society unless they can discard their feudal, Highland, Catholic past and conform to a Germanic model of civility.

The view from Arthur's Seat is described with great pathos, and is filled with the electricity of a battle about to begin. Had the author chosen the form of poem for the story, and with it the quality of conciseness, doubtless the line after the mention of the pipers would have contained a description of the banners, thus re-creating the much-reiterated dichotomy referred to in Chapter 2. The "mountaineers" are in fact portrayed as they gather under the respective banners of their clans:

After forming for a little while, there was exhibited a changing, fluctuating, and confused appearance of waving tartans and floating plumes, and of banners displaying the proud gathering word of Clanronald [...]<sup>569</sup>

These words are highly descriptive and evocative; the soldiers themselves are a mass of fluctuating, floating plumes and tartans. The impression is of something like a colourful dreaminess. But when the line was in motion,

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<sup>567</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 212.

<sup>568</sup> Murray Pittock, 'Historiography', in *The Cambridge Companion to Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. by Alexander Broadie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 258-279 (p. 266).

<sup>569</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 212.

A wild cry of joy from the advancing battalions rent the air, and was then lost in the shrill clangour of the bagpipes, as the sound of these, in their turn, was partially drowned by the heavy tread of so many men put at once into motion. The banners glittered and shook as they moved forward [...] <sup>570</sup>

The banner-bagpipe dyad maintains its symbolic consequence, as I explain in Chapter 2: the clangour of the bagpipe and the effect it provokes is the acoustic counterpart of the banners for the listener and viewer. But when the battle commences, the spurring effect is left to the bagpipe alone:

Waverley felt his heart at that moment throb as it would have burst from his bosom. It was not fear, it was not ardour, - it was a compound of both, a new and deeply energetic impulse, that with its first emotion chilled and astounded, then fevered and maddened his mind. The sounds around him combined to exalt his enthusiasm; the pipes played, and the clans rushed forward, each in its own dark column. <sup>571</sup>

The description is reminiscent of Alasdair Mac Mhaighstir Alasdair's poetry, with the maddening fury excited by the sound of the bagpipes: the soldier in 'Tearlach Mac Sheumais' ('Charles Son of James') are described as *misg-cath* ("battle-drunken"), *shòlais* ("enraptured") <sup>572</sup>, as the great pipes sound their tunes.

A famous illustration to the Waverley Novels is that by William Turner, called 'Edinburgh – March of the Highlanders' <sup>573</sup>, engraved in 1836; and it depicts the view from Calton Hill – not exactly Edward's perspective, which was from Arthur's Seat, but certainly a very panoramic and scenic one. It is difficult to say why Turner decided not to remain faithful to the text. The view from Calton Hill includes a glimpse of Edinburgh Castle, which we can in fact see in the misty background: since it is also a military objective, it is possible that the artist thought it a more descriptive perspective than the one Arthur's Seat would have provided. According to Gerald Finley, on the other hand, Turner may be depicting a more recent event, which he had had the chance to witness: the parades for King George IV's 1822 visit <sup>574</sup>. Turner blurs "the boundary between literature and life, representing a novel and a nation in a single image". <sup>575</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 215.

<sup>571</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 225.

<sup>572</sup> John Lorne Campbell, ed., *Highland Songs of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh: The Scottish Gaelic Texts Society, 1984), pp. 52-53.

<sup>573</sup> William Turner, 'Edinburgh – March of the Highlanders', 1836, no. 4953: © Tate Britain, London 2013. Reproduced with permission.

<sup>574</sup> Gerald Finley, *Turner and George the Fourth in Edinburgh 1822*, exhibition catalogue (London: Tate Gallery, 1981), pp. 27-29.

<sup>575</sup> Thomas Ardill, 'Edinburgh Castle: March of the Highlanders c.1834-5', catalogue entry, June 2011, in David Blayney Brown, ed., *J.M.W. Turner*, December 2012, <http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/edinburgh-castle-march-of-the-highlanders-r1136449>, accessed 29<sup>th</sup> December 2012.



As the Rev. Wright described the painting:

No drawing can be more correct, no filling-up more perfect, no colouring more warm or deep: the calm scene of nature is exquisitely touched; the continuous motion of the legions advancing solemnly towards the field of battle powerfully narrated; the sound of the departing feet seems to vibrate to the ear. The painter, finding his art incompetent to convey ideas of sound, has devoted his attention to those of sight with greater assiduity, borrowing the prudent practice from the deaf and blind.<sup>576</sup>

And, I would add, the watery nuances of the misty background, or possibly dusty with the treading of hundreds of feet, create a strong contrast with the warm, lively colours in the foreground. The “fluctuating”, “floating” motion of the soldiers is portrayed almost futuristically in the distance; the feathered heads, the weapons, sweep across the hill and follow its curves. And, to complete the picture, just as Scott describes, the piper: a dark patch in the midst of the moving colours, “summoning forth” with his “appropriate pibroch”. He is not portrayed with colourful tones like the rest of the soldiers, though he is wearing their same uniform: he is the one the whole clan, including the chieftain, has to follow. He stands out from the rest of them all for his charisma. The soldiers are uniformly placed to the right of the picture – a sea of moving heads. Two colourful leaders in somewhat unnatural positions stand to the left in the immediate foreground, and the piper shares with them the focal point of the picture, and for an instant

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<sup>576</sup> Rev. George Newenham Wright, *Landscape-Historical Illustrations of Scotland, and the Waverley Novels*, in 2 volumes (London: Fisher, Son, & Co., 1836), vol. 1, p. 12.

monopolises the scene while the viewer discerns the splayed element lying on his shoulder: the three drones of the bagpipe.

After the episode on Calton hill Edward joins the Highlanders, and the bagpipe becomes a reassuring element: when he loses the sound of them, something “yet more unpleasant” happens: he hears the “unwelcome noise of kettle-drums and trumpets”. This sign of the presence of the “English cavalry”<sup>577</sup> creates a strong opposition with the reassuring, though bellicose, sound of the bagpipe.

In Scott’s works, the bagpipe represents the voice of Scotland. The author often portrays the bagpipe as a Gaelic instrument: he attributes a Highland pedigree to the notion of true Scotland. The essence of Scotland is Highland, and by synecdoche Highlandness becomes the mark of the essence of the nation. On more than one occasion the voice of Scotland, expressed through the bagpipe, marks a contrast with the voice of England, as the example above shows. Furthering the above-mentioned notion of the Teuton/Celt divide in Scott’s discourse as explained by Pittock, the concept of ‘sounds of England’ in opposition to ‘sounds of Scotland’ can be found in several of the author’s works. For instance, in *The Monastery* English courtier Sir Piercie Shafton yearns for his native country and describes Scotland in no uncertain terms:

I [...] have, as it were, exchanged heaven for purgatory, leaving the lightsome sphere of the royal court of England for a remote nook in this inaccessible desert [...] exchanging the lighted halls, wherein I used nimbly to pace the swift coranto, or to move with a loftier grace in the stately galliard, for this rugged and decayed dungeon of rusty-coloured stone—quitting the gay theatre, for the solitary chimney-nook of a Scottish dog-house—bartering the sounds of the soul-ravishing lute, and the love-awaking viol-de-gamba, for the discordant squeak of a northern bagpipe—above all, exchanging the smiles of those beauties, who form a gay galaxy around the throne of England, for the cold courtesy of an untaught damsel, and the bewildered stare of a miller’s maiden.<sup>578</sup>

The passage makes a frightful portrayal of Scotland as an uncouth, desolate, discomforting land, in opposition with the great civilisation of England. To convey this feeling of an inhospitable country Scott resorts to the visual impact of poverty and degradedness, making unlikely parallels between, for example, theatres and dog-houses; but the sound factor is also significant.

Shafton’s statement that the sounds of England are the lute and the viola da gamba implies that those who appreciate, let alone cultivate, the sound of the bagpipe cannot but be musically illiterate, rough and uncultured; nevertheless, there is also

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<sup>577</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 279.

<sup>578</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *The Monastery*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000), p. 154.

another aspect to be considered. In Shafton's words, England is typified in terms of imported virtues: to illustrate the gentility of English culture he mentions the *coranto*, the *gailliard* (certainly an imported court dance, but hardly a "stately" one, as Shafton defines it: on the contrary, it's a dynamic, sprightly dance), and the *viola-da-gamba*. These are all loan-words from the French and the Italian, and they identify foreign dances and instruments; the lute is also not a British instrument but has a long history which traces its origins back to the Middle East.

None of the mentioned elements Shafton so sorely misses bear any distinctive mark of Englishness. On the contrary, the bagpipe *is* representative of a nation – obviously Scotland, but more specifically Highland Scotland – and along with the "untaught damsels" and the "miller's maids" they are perhaps rustic, but authentic; primitive, but genuine. The very essence of Scotland on many occasions in Scott's narrative is Highland, and it plays a great role in the construction of British identity. Once accepted that the bagpipe is a positive icon, it is even superior to the 'fineries' Shafton mentions, as it is autochthonous; it 'belongs', and this is something to be proud of. Scotland does not have to rely on any foreign icon to construct its identity: it has enough resources within itself, and its own cultural patrimony.

In spite of Shafton's strongly negative view, the bagpipe constitutes a reassuring presence for Captain Thornton, officer of the English army, in *Rob Roy*. They are the pipes of the "friendly Highlanders" who have come to assist them in capturing Robert MacGregor, the famous cattle drover: they are the "wild strains" of a "martial melody"<sup>579</sup>. The instrument is almost personified: it shares the Highlander's feelings, and when it is not inciting the soldiers or frightening the enemy its notes are no longer shrieks, but laments. Not so Shafton's above-mentioned "viol-de-gamba" or lute: they are instruments which do not speak for a nation. They are adopted symbols of a cosmopolitan elevated culture, but there is no Englishness in them – even their names are not English. Their voice is that of culture and art music.

The subtext in Scott's words is that England enjoys what is known to be cultured music, but this does not speak for the nation, unlike Scotland and its bagpipes. England does not have a 'voice' of its own, but it relies on foreign, continental culture for its personal entertainment and expression. The instruments Shafton mentions are "soul-ravishing" and "love-awaking"<sup>580</sup>, but devoid of a national character – of a veritable personality. The same attitude can be found in a poem published on the *Edinburgh Magazine*, 'To a Bagpipe', by an unidentifiable author who signs him/herself "M.":

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<sup>579</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*, ed. by David Hewitt (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1995), pp. 277 and 290.

<sup>580</sup> Scott, *The Monastery*, p. 154

Hail! Bagpipe, hail! misca'd by some,  
Who on guittars an' fiddles thrum,  
Wha duets an' cantatas hum,  
In foreign twang [...] <sup>581</sup>

The long poem is a praise of the Highland bagpipe and its great role in Scottish society, particularly celebrating its value in battle and its inspirational role. The first verses, which I have recorded, are an apology of the pipes, “misca'd by some” who only enjoy the “foreign twang” – these words almost appear as an accusation of having abandoned one's roots to favour fashion.

When Rob Roy's Highlanders lose to Captain Thornton's army,

The pibroch sent forth occasionally a few wailing notes, expressive of a very different sentiment from triumph. [...] the pipes again sent forth the same wild and melancholy strain. <sup>582</sup>

It is as if it were the bagpipe itself lamenting the unhappy event: the taking of Rob Roy. It seems as though the pipes have a will of their own, which accompanies the Highlanders in every emotion. Not the pipers, but the *pibroch*, and the *pipes*, send forward the wails, “the wild and melancholy strains”. “Wild” is an adjective Scott often employs in connection with bagpipes, just as “wild and melancholy” is the tune that the wind pipes as the sky blackens in *Redgauntlet* <sup>583</sup>, which I will mention more extensively shortly.

Scott also mentions the MacCrimmon piping dynasty: Rob MacGregor tells young Francis Osbaldistone that

Helen made a Lament on our departure, as weel as MacRimmon himsell could hae framed it, and so piteously sad and waesome that our hearts amaist broke as we sate and listened to her [...] <sup>584</sup>

Scott adds a note to the name of MacRimmon, specifying that they “were hereditary pipers to the chiefs of MacLeod”, and an acclaimed piping dynasty. It is interesting that the author has felt the need to add this annotation. By Scott's time the average reader – which obviously included non-Scots – had probably never heard of the surname that for so long had played such an important role in the piping world; and Scott was well aware of it.

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<sup>581</sup> ‘M’, ‘To a Bagpipe’, in *Edinburgh Magazine*, July issue (1799), 55-56 (p. 55).

<sup>582</sup> Scott, *Rob Roy*, . 291.

<sup>583</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *Redgauntlet*, ed. by G. A. M. Wood and David Hewitt (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 24.

<sup>584</sup> Scott, *Rob Roy*, p. 335.

But if he knew that certain notions about piping and pipers could be obscure for many readers, they were certainly not for him, and his journals testify that bagpipe music was a presence in daily life, also since his cousin James Scott was a piper, and would attend the writer's house with his bagpipes for entertainment<sup>585</sup>. On 7<sup>th</sup> June 1826 he records that

I passd a piper in the street as I went to the Dean's and could not help giving him a shilling to play 'Pibroch a Donuil Dhu' for luck's sake. What a child I am!<sup>586</sup>

The author at the time was in Edinburgh; it seems as though not much has changed since then, and pipers were an established presence in the streets of the capital, for the delight (or annoyance!) of tourists and passers-by. The words to the song "Pibroch a Donuil Dhu" were written by Scott himself, which accounts for the irony he expresses about paying a piper to play it. The same *piobaireachd* was played in Scott's honour as part of an improvisation at a concert by pianist and composer Ignaz Moscheles, on 26<sup>th</sup> January 1828; a concert which Scott attended<sup>587</sup>.

Clearly Scott mentions the bagpipe profusely throughout his work, but particularly interesting is the case of 'Wandering Willie's Tale' in *Redgauntlet*. Wandering Willie, a blind fiddler, tells the tale of Steenie Steenson, itinerant piper and Willie's grandfather. Steenson is the tenant of Sir Robert Redgauntlet, thought to have "a direct compact with Satan". Steenson

could play weel on the pipes; he was famous at "Hoopers and girders" – a' Cumberland couldna touch him at "Jockie Lattin" – and he had the finest finger for the back-lilt<sup>588</sup> between Berwick and Carlisle. The like o' Steenie wasna the sort that they made Whigs o'. And so he became a Tory, as they ca' it, which we now ca' Jacobites, just out of a kind of needcessity, that he might belong to some side or other.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> William E. K. Anderson, ed., *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott* (Edinburgh: Canongate Classics, 1998), p. 292.

<sup>586</sup> Anderson, *The Journal of Sir Walter Scott*, p. 178.

<sup>587</sup> Moscheles, Ignaz, *Life of Moscheles, with Selections from his Diaries and Correspondence*, ed. by Charlotte Moscheles (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1873), p. 205.

<sup>588</sup> George Grove, Eric Blom and Denis Stevens, eds., *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2001), s.v. "lilt": "[...] 15th- and 16th-century usage hinted at pastoral associations. Richard de Holand's *Buke of the Howlat* (1450) includes the 'lilt-pipe' in a list of musical instruments, perhaps suggesting a shepherd's pipe such as the stock-and-horn, cognate with the Dutch *lullepijp*, a bagpipe or shepherd's pipe. A. Hume (*Hymns*, 1594) writes more specifically in this respect: 'The beastes ... which soberly they hameward drive, With pipe and liltin horn'".

As clarified over correspondence with Hugh Cheape, the 'lilt' in this case indicates the thumb hole of the (Lowland) bagpipe: by halving the hole with the thumb, it was possible to move up a tone or semitone.

<sup>589</sup> Scott, *Redgauntlet*, pp. 87-88.



It is not a surprise that the character Steenie Steenson should be a Jacobite and a Tory, for the “Tory-Jacobite-Scot-Highlandman associative web” defined by Womack<sup>590</sup> and explained in Chapter 2. That he should also be a piper is also not surprising, given the strong symbolic value the bagpipe had for the Jacobite movement as a mark of belonging to a nation, a common objective, and a cultural and social group.

In order to produce a receipt for the unregistered payment of his rent, Steenson goes to the gates of Hell to find Robert, who had died suddenly in mysterious circumstances, and who would give him the receipt. Thus he ends up in a replica of Redgauntlet Castle:

The whole front of the house was lighted, and there were pipes and fiddles, and as much dancing and deray within as used to be at Sir Robert’s house at Pace and Yule, and such high seasons.<sup>591</sup>

The scene reminds the reader of the debauched company in Robert Burns’ ‘Tam O’ Shanter’, which Scott was bound to know as he was a deep connoisseur of Burns’ work and “Burns’ work operates as an important intertext for Scott”<sup>592</sup>, as Alison Lumsden points out. As I shall discuss further on, in the poem Tam witnesses a frightful sight: ghosts, witches and spirits dancing to the sound of the devil playing the bagpipe – a scene filled with sexual and diabolical implications. Upon seeing him, Sir Robert, “or his ghaist, or the deevil in his likeness”, asks him to play the tune ‘Weel hoddled, Luckie’. But Willie explains that

this was a tune my gudesire learned frae a warlock, that heard it when they were worshipping Satan at their meetings; and my gudesire had sometimes played it at the ranting suppers in Redgauntlet Castle, but never very willingly; and now he grew cauld at the very name of it, and said, for excuse, he hadna his pipes wi’ him.<sup>593</sup>

But Robert has for Steenson “a pair of pipes” that “might have served the piper of Donald of the Isles”<sup>594</sup>. Steenson will not play them, as he sees the steel chanter burning white, so Redgauntlet lets him go; but before the piper could walk out of the door

Sir Robert roared aloud, “Stop, though, thou sack-doudling<sup>595</sup> son of a whore! I am not done with thee. HERE we do nothing for nothing; and you must return on this

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<sup>590</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 17.

<sup>591</sup> Scott, *Redgauntlet*, pp. 95–96.

<sup>592</sup> Alison Lumsden, ‘Burns, Scott and Intertextuality’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Burns*, ed. by Gerard Carruthers (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 125–136, (p. 127).

<sup>593</sup> Scott, *Redgauntlet*, p. 97.

<sup>594</sup> Scott, *Redgauntlet*, p. 97.

<sup>595</sup> The term “sackdoudling” is an adaptation of the German *Dudelsack*, ‘bagpipe’ – see Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, eds., *Deutsches Wörterbuch* (Leipzig: Verlag von S. Hirzel, 1854), s.v. ‘Dudelsack’. Scott breaks up the

very day twelvemonth, to pay your master the homage that you owe me for your protection”.<sup>596</sup>

To this speech Steenson replies, with a sudden upsurge of nerve: “I refer mysell to God’s pleasure, and not to yours”. In the light of the heavy diabolical implications hitherto explained, by refusing to play the bagpipe Steenson is purified and redeemed. From being the piper of the devil himself (or his personification) for whom he had, though supposedly unwillingly, played sinful tunes taken from obscure rituals, Steenson entrusts himself to God and refuses to homage the devil with his playing. What’s more, to drive out any possibility of the demonic *liaison* returning, the poor bewildered piper refuses to touch his alcohol – the possible cause of the weird visions – and pipes – the possible reason for the devil to approach him in the first place – for over a year.

### **The bagpipe: an instrument of ‘northernness’**

So far, as we have seen, the majority if literary references to the bagpipe have dealt with the military sphere – whether narrating the instrument’s actual presence on the battlefield, or symbolically connecting it with martial sentiments, or Republican Roman values. To this day no other form of bagpipe, British or continental, has been employed in martial contexts like the Highland bagpipe has. As I have mentioned in Chapter 3, there is very little material which could make us think that the bagpipe has been employed in warlike circumstances at all in any other nation than Scotland. Indeed, it seems to be a characteristic of Scotland alone.

And yet, interestingly, it would appear that Scott attributed the use of the bagpipe in a military context not only to Scotland. In fact in his 1821 novel *Kenilworth*, set in the sixteenth century, he describes a Danish attack to the English forces:

[...] the Danish cavalry and infantry, no way inferior to the English in number, valour, and equipment, instantly arrived, with the northern bagpipe blowing before them in token of their country, and headed by a cunning master of defence [...]<sup>597</sup>

This is indeed strange, especially since the Danish bagpipe tradition is rather dubious and certainly not strong enough to term a “northern bagpipe” a “token” of the country. It is difficult to establish where Scott got this notion from. It may be possible it is entirely fictional, but in the light of the above-mentioned term “sack-doudling”, it could well be

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word and creates a neologism. Given Scott’s knowledge of this continental bagpipe-related fact, it may also be possible that he knew that in many central- and Eastern-European regions the devilish connotation of the bagpipe is particularly marked.

<sup>596</sup> Scott, *Redgauntlet*, p. 98.

<sup>597</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *Kenilworth*, ed. by J. H. Alexander (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p. 364.

that he typifies the bagpipe as a northern instrument. This would be further confirmed by the way he almost completely fails to acknowledge the presence of any other form of bagpipe other than the Highland one, with the exception of a very few cases<sup>598</sup>. In this light, the Highlands become an archetypal model of the “Northern Europe” which according to Madame Germaine de Staël is the very home of Romanticism, as I have briefly mentioned above. In her opinion, Northern poetry is appropriate for the feeling of a free people<sup>599</sup>. Madame de Staël makes a statement which Scott could not have ignored, much as he disliked her (as he states in a letter: “as I tired of some of her works, I am afraid I should disgrace my taste by tiring of the authoress too”<sup>600</sup>):

Les ouvrages anglais, les ouvrages allemands, et quelques écrits des Danois et des Suédois, doivent être classés dans la littérature du Nord, dans celle qui a commencé par les bardes écossais, les fables islandaises et les poésies Scandinaves.<sup>601</sup>

Northern literature, according to Madame de Staël, commenced with the works of the Scottish bards, together with Icelandic and Scandinavian literature. She attributes it great antiquity, and in her opinion it gave rise to “Northern literature” as readers knew of it in her day. In a note, she adds that:

En appelant Ossian l'origine de la littérature du Nord, j'ai voulu seulement [...] l'indiquer comme le plus ancien poète auquel on puisse rapporter le caractère particulier à la poésie du Nord. Les fables islandaises, les poésies Scandinaves du neuvième siècle, origine commune de la littérature anglaise et de la littérature allemande, ont la plus grande ressemblance avec les traits distinctifs des poésies erses et du poème de Fingal.<sup>602</sup>

For Madame de Staël, Ossian constitutes the very origin of Northern literature. Therefore, from this point of view, Scotland can be considered the cradle of Northern literature – which, according to Madame de Staël, is the home of Romantic feeling.

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<sup>598</sup> Such as *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*, in which Scott attributed martial value to the border-pipes as well as the Great Highland pipes. See Sir Walter Scott, *The Poetical Works of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by James Logie Robertson (London: Oxford University Press, 1913), pp. 26 and 34.

<sup>599</sup> Catherine Jones, ‘Madame de Staël and Scotland: *Corinne*, Ossian and the Science of Nations’, in Stuart Curran, ed., *Romanticism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, October 2009), vol. 15, 239-253 (p. 244).

<sup>600</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by Herbert J. C. Grierson, in 12 volumes (London: Constable, 1932-1937), vol. 3, p. 391.

<sup>601</sup> De Staël, *Oeuvres Complètes*, vol. 1, p. 252.

“English, German, and a few Danish and Swedish works must be classified as Northern literature, as that which commenced with the Scottish bards, the Icelandic fables and Scandinavian poetry”. My translation.

<sup>602</sup> De Staël, *Oeuvres Complètes*, p. 252.

“By identifying Ossian as the origin of Northern literature, I simply intended [...] to indicate him as the most ancient poet whom it is possible to relate the particular character of Northern poetry. The Icelandic fables, the Scandinavian poems of the ninth century, common origin of English and German literature, have the greatest resemblance with the distinctive traits of Erse poetry and the poem of Fingal”. My translation.

If this were the case, and Scott attributes a general ‘Northern-ness’ to the bagpipe, it should be noted that this opinion is shared by other authors as well. Thomas Pennant wrote in his *Tour in Scotland* that

Bagpipes are supposed to have been introduced by the *Danes*; the oldest are played with the mouth, the loudest and most ear-piercing of any wind-musick; the other, played with the fingers only, are of *Irish* origin: the first suited the genius of this warlike people, roused their courage into battle, alarmed them when secure, and collected them when scattered.<sup>603</sup>

Also according to Pennant, therefore, the Highland bagpipe has Danish origins, to suit the martial disposition of the Scots; while the bellows-blown pipes “played with the fingers only” are native of Ireland. A 1788 article in the *Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure*, called ‘The Effects of Military Music’, states that the bagpipe was “introduced into Scotland at a very early period by the Norwegians”<sup>604</sup>, as seems to be the opinion also of Thomas Newte, who asserts that “the favourite instrument of the Scotch musicians has been the bag-pipe, introduced into Scotland, at a very early period, by the Norwegians”<sup>605</sup>. Also, a correspondent of Scott’s, geologist John MacCulloch, wrote him an interesting letter sometime between 1811 and 1821 in which he gives an extensive account on the bagpipe and its history. It is unfortunately too long to quote in full, but the particular section I am referring to – a short history of the bagpipe – rejects the general theory that the instrument arrived with the Roman invasions and reads as follows:

[...] the Highlanders, at least, had little or no communication with the Romans; and it would be more reasonable to trace it [the history of the bagpipe] immediately, either to Ireland, or to the common Celtic source of both people, or, possibly, to the invading Northmen, among whom it is also known to have existed. As to its Irish origin, I must, however, remark, that it is not mentioned by Giraldus Cambrensis as an Irish instrument, though he names it as in use in Scotland and Wales [see Chapter 1 for Cambrensis and the *chorus*]. It is found to this day, even in Lapland; but it must be supposed that this anomalous people derived it from their Hunnish or Sclavonian ancestors. It is probable that the Highland bagpipe is originally derived from the east, the source of all knowledge, and the apparent source of the Celts themselves; since instruments of similar construction are known in China [?] and India. But there are no hopes of illustrating so obscure a subject, nor of determining, either the period at which it was introduced, or the origin of its present form. It must be observed, however, that it is not noticed in any of the ancient Gaelic poems. That

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<sup>603</sup> Thomas Pennant, *A Tour of Scotland, and Voyage to the Hebrides*, 1772, in 2 parts (London: Printed for B. White, 1790), part 1, pp. 348-349.

<sup>604</sup> Anon., ‘The Effects of Military Music, an Anecdote’, in *The Universal Magazine of Knowledge and Pleasure* (London: 83:580, November, 1788), p. 260.

<sup>605</sup> Thomas Newte, *Prospects and Observations; on a Tour in England and Scotland* (London: printed for G. G. J. and J. Robinson, 1791), p. 27.

is a remarkable circumstance, and may be used as an argument for the antiquity of these compositions, if Highlanders please; but they must then admit the pipe to be a modern instrument: they cannot be allowed antiquity for both.<sup>606</sup>

Whatever may be the opinions MacCulloch has about Ossian (the debate about the authenticity of Macpherson's works was fierce), these theories essentially justify the typifying of the bagpipe as a Northern instrument – though the Highland variety may be “modern”, as MacCulloch puts it, which is relatively true compared to the antiquity of the bagpipe-family of instruments. Therefore piper Steenie Steenson was “sack-doudling”, and the Danes went to war with the “northern bagpipe” because the bagpipe shares with Scotland the heritage of the Northern people. Bagpipes almost seem to become the quintessential instrument of Romanticism and, in Scott's hands, of romance, of the spirit of freedom in Europe. The Northern connection takes one back to the idea of the freedom of mountaineers – a concept which also had wide scope in defining Jacobitism – and which gives the bagpipe the acquired statute of ‘instrument of the free’.

### **Robert Burns**

Robert Burns, a poet studied and translated worldwide, is considered to be Scotland's national bard. He played a prominent role in promoting Scottish identity, particularly through language. By using Scots as his main vehicle of communication in his poetry he awarded it dignity, and the form he used for his works spoke strongly of, and yet elevated, Scotland's folk culture and heritage.

Generally speaking, the majority of the references Scott makes to bagpipes are connected with war, Highland clans and Scottish history. Burns also refers to the bagpipe in a military circumstance, in spite of the fact that when he mentions bagpipes it is more often in a bucolic, Lowland context. In his ballad ‘A Fragment’ on the American War he writes that when the Saxon lads called on “Chatham's boy” “Scotland drew her pipe, an' blew, / “Up, Willie, waur them a', man!” [...] An' Caledon threw by the drone, / An' did her whittle draw, man”<sup>607</sup>, clearly referring to the Jacobite song “Up an' Waur 'em, a', Willie”. After all, as he explains in his letter to Dr Moore, dated 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1787, the pipes constitute a strong childhood memory for the poet:

The first two books I ever read in private, and which gave me more pleasure than any two books I ever read since, were The Life of Hannibal, and The History of Sir William Wallace. Hannibal gave my young ideas such a turn, that I used to strut in raptures up and down after the recruiting drum and bag-pipe, and wish myself tall

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<sup>606</sup> John MacCulloch, *The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland*, in 4 volumes (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1824), vol. 2, pp. 381–382.

<sup>607</sup> Robert Burns, *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. by James Kinsley, in 3 volumes (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1968), vol. 1, p. 51.

enough to be a soldier; while the story of Wallace poured a Scottish prejudice into my veins, which will boil along there till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest.<sup>608</sup>

The inspirational value of the bagpipe was very strong in Burns' young mind, and the stories of the Carthaginian commander and of the famous Scottish knight and leader were perfectly in tune with the feelings aroused. This passage also tells us that in the late eighteenth century the practice of recruiting soldiers by going around the cities with a drum and pipe was still in use. It is probably also what is happening in a 1793 lithograph called 'View of Glasgow from the South'<sup>609</sup>.



The perspective the artist adopts was quite a widely represented one and can be found in various works by different authors, such as John Knox's 'Old Glasgow Bridge'<sup>610</sup>, which dates *c.* 1816. The urban periphery landscape shows the two banks of the river Clyde with the city centre in the distance, and marching towards the bridge is a small group of people. Though very small it is evident that they are well-dressed, and a red figurine suggests military attire. Parading before him are a drummer, and a Highland piper, and ahead of them all is a man with what appears to be a gun lying on his shoulder. It would

<sup>608</sup> Robert Burns, *The Complete Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. by John De Lancey Ferguson, ed., rev. edn. by George Ross Roy, in 2 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), vol. 1, pp. 135-136.

<sup>609</sup> Mollison, Ness & Co., Lithographers, Glasgow. The author's own collection.

<sup>610</sup> Ian McClure, ed., *Catalogue of the Exhibition John Knox Landscape Painter* (Glasgow: Glasgow Art Gallery & Museum, 12 July-September, 1974), plate n. 3.

seem like a small military parade, similar to the one Burns describes from his childhood memories.

But Burns often does not employ the bagpipe in military-related contexts, and the bagpipe is not necessarily the missing link between Scotland and feelings of the sublime, grandeur, fear, or disquietude. The setting Burns adopts for many of his “pipes” is rural, though he often mentions them just as “pipes”, which makes it difficult to establish whether he intends *bagpipes*, or other wind instruments. Nevertheless, in a few poems (as well as prose works and letters) he is unmistakably referring to the bagpipe. For instance, his fragment ‘Amang the Trees’, also known as ‘A Fiddler in the North’, which certainly does not allude to the martial sphere – it is almost bucolic in its first couple of lines. Like Allan Ramsay’s ‘To the Music Club’, the poet states the worthiness of Scottish music compared with the effeminate voices of the more celebrated and famous Italian castrati:

I.

Amang the trees, where humming bees  
At buds and flowers were hinging, O,  
Auld Caledon drew out her drone,  
And to her pipe was singing, O;  
’Twas pibroch, sang, strathspey, or reels,  
She dirl’d them aff fu’ clearly, O,  
When there cam a yell o’ foreign squeels,  
That dang her tapsalteerie, O.

II.

Their capon craws and queer ha ha’s,  
They made our lugs grow eerie, O;  
The hungry bike did scrape and pike,  
’Till we were wae and weary, O;  
But a royal ghaist wha ance was cas’d  
A prisoner aughteen year awa,  
He fir’d a fiddler in the north  
That dang them tapsalteerie, O.<sup>611</sup>

The (not so implicit) hint is to the masculinity of Scotland’s music *versus* the Italian “capon craws and queer ha ha’s”. The difference between Burns’ and Ramsay’s poem is that Ramsay tries to elevate Scottish music to the status of Corelli; Burns simply states his weariness from listening to the “foreign squeels”. It is not a question of the listener being elevated by classical music and moved by traditional music, as in ‘To the Music Club; it is rather a *tout-court* irritation at camp Italian music, to which Scotland’s music is the antidote.

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<sup>611</sup> Burns, *The Poems and Songs*, vol. 1, p. 354.

But possibly one of the most original poems by Burns, and certainly one of his most famous accomplishments, is ‘Tam O’ Shanter’. In the poem Tam, a man who enjoys his ale too much for his own good, on his way home one stormy, drunken night (a night when “The de’il had business on his hand”), finds himself witnessing an “unco sight”<sup>612</sup>: Alloway Church is alive with lights, and dancing of witches and warlocks:

Nae cotillion brent new frae France,  
 But hornpipes, jigs, strathspeys, and reels,  
 Put life and mettle in their heels:  
 A winnock-bunker in the east,  
 There sat auld Nick, in shape o’ beast;  
 A towzie tyke, black, grim, and large,  
 To gie them music was his charge;  
 He screw’d the pipes and gart them skirl,  
 Till roof and rafters a’ did dirl. [...]   
 As Tammie glowr’d, amaz’d, and curious,  
 The mirth and fun grew fast and furious;  
 The piper loud and louder blew;  
 The dancers quick and quicker flew;  
 They reel’d, they set, they cross’d, they cleekit,  
 ‘Till ilka carlin swat and reekit,  
 And coost her duddies to the wark,  
 And linket at it in her sark!<sup>613</sup>

Not French, but strictly Scottish music sets fire to the spirits’ heels, and none but the devil himself provides the music for such ghastly merriment. In fact, as hinted above, the bagpipe for centuries in many European countries has had diabolic and phallic connotations. Since the Middle Ages at least, it is possible to find frescoes of devilish creatures playing the bagpipe; and the piping Miller in Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales* mentioned in Chapter 1 is a clear example of how the bagpipe represented vices of various nature. Francis Grose, in his *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, under the entry ‘Bagpipe, to bagpipe’ simply writes “a lascivious practice too indecent for explanation”<sup>614</sup>. In 1787 an article was published in the *European Magazine* describing a poetical exhibition, and it would appear that one of the candidates entered playing a bagpipe (“which occasioned the company to make diverse wry faces”<sup>615</sup>), and in the light of what has been said it is perhaps not a coincidence that the poem he recited was an ‘Address to the Nymph Obscenity’.

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<sup>612</sup> Burns, *The Poems and Songs*, vol. 2, p. 560.

<sup>613</sup> Burns, *The Poems and Songs*, vol. 2, pp. 560-561..

<sup>614</sup> Francis Grose, ed., *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue* (London: Printed for S. Hooper, 1785), s.v. ‘bagpipe, to bagpipe’.

<sup>615</sup> Calepinus, ‘The Poetical Exhibition’, in *The European Magazine* (London: 12, August 1787), 97-101 (p. 97).



The demonic side of the bagpipe truly sank its roots in Burns' imagination, since in a letter dated 7<sup>th</sup> July 1787 he wrote to his friend, the writer John Richmond, the following lines:

I am all impatience to hear of your fate since the old confounder of right and wrong has turned you out of place, by his journey to answer his indictment at the bar of the other world. [...] His chicane, his left-handed wisdom [...] will, now the piratical business is blown, in all probability turn the king's evidences, and then the devil's bagpiper will touch him off "Bundle and go."<sup>616</sup>

The bagpipe and the devil seem to feature prominently in Robert Burns' imagination. As we have seen in Chapter 2, it is a kind of imagery which has a long lineage. Bagpipes appear in a similar diabolic and debauched context in William Dunbar's 'Dance of the Sevin Deidly Sins' (late fifteenth century):

I will na preistis for me sing  
*Dies illa, dies ire,*  
Na yit na bellis for me ring,  
*Sicut semper solet fieri,*  
Bot a bag pipe to play a spryng  
*Et unum ail wosp ante me,*  
Instayd of baneris for to bring  
*Quatuor lagenas cervisie,*  
Within the graif to set sic thing  
*In modum Crucis juxta me,*  
To fle the fendis, than hardely sing  
*De terra plasmasti me.*<sup>617</sup>

The sinful nature – or rather, symbolism – of the bagpipe is the theme for various representations in works of art since the Middle Ages. In the Flemish artist Pieter Bruegel the Elder's highly symbolic interpretation of the Seven Deadly Sins, which he represents in seven different prints, the bagpipe features both in 'Gula' (Gluttony)<sup>618</sup> (where a bagpipe dangles from the branches of a tree) and in 'Luxuria' (Lust)<sup>619</sup> (where, on the left-hand side, we can see a monk with his robe almost undone from the waist downwards playing it as he smiles at a screaming frog-demon).

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<sup>616</sup> Burns, *The Complete Letters*, vol. 1, p. 127.

<sup>617</sup> William Dunbar, *The Poems of William Dunbar*, ed. by Priscilla Bawcutt, in 2 volumes (Glasgow: Association of Scottish Literary Studies, 1999), vol. 1, p. 92. The Latin phrases are translatable as follows: "That day, the day of wrath", "As is the custom", "And an 'ail wosp' before me", "Four jugs of beer", "By me, in the shape of a cross", "You created me from the earth".

<sup>618</sup> Hieronymus Cock. Bibliothèque Royale, Cabinet Estampes, Brüssels, Cat. no. 131.

<sup>619</sup> BM 1880,0710.636. Use of the image is authorised by the BM.



The bagpipe is a frequent feature in scenes of degeneracy, and Pieter Bruegel is but one of the artists who use it in similar allegories<sup>620</sup>. The presence of the bagpipe in contexts such as above-mentioned, from ‘Tam O’ Shanter’ to Scott’s *Redgauntlet*, from Grose’s Dictionary to Bruegel’s prints, alludes to debauchedness, rowdiness, and those “lascivious practices” Grose found “too indecent for explanation”.

### Further configurations of the bagpipe in literature and art

During the Romantic era there was a wide circulation of reprints of traditional ballads and songs. In Belfast a broadsheet was published in the 1800s, of the old ballad ‘Maggie Lauder’<sup>621</sup> – a song which dates to the seventeenth century and whose authorship is attributed to Francis Sempill. The accompanying picture shows the two protagonists of the song: Maggie Lauder, a peasant lady who is portrayed as she dances beside a piper – for whom “the lasses loup as they were daft / when I blaw up my chanter”.

<sup>620</sup> John Planer, ‘Damned Music: the Symbolism of the Bagpipes in the Art of Hieronymus Bosch and his followers’, in *Music from the Middle Ages through the 20th Century*, ed. by Carmelo Comberati and Matthew Steel (New York: Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1988), 335-353 (p. 347).

<sup>621</sup> BM 1983,0625.13. Use of the image is authorised by the BM.



# MAGGIE LAUDER.



Wha wadna be in love  
 Wi' bonnie Maggie Lauder?  
 A piper met her gaun to Fife,  
 And spier'd what was't they ca'd her!  
 Right scornfully she answer'd him,  
 Begone, ye hellan-shaker!  
 Jog on your gate, you blither-skate,  
 My name is Maggie Lauder.  
 Maggie, quo' he, and by my bage,  
 I'm fiddin' fain to see thee;  
 Sit down by me, my bonnie bird,  
 In trawth I winna steer thee;  
 For I'm a piper to my trade,  
 My name is Rab the Ranter;

The lasses loup as they were daft,  
 When I blaw up my chanter.

Piper, quo' Meg, hae ye your bage,  
 Or is your drone in order?  
 If you be Rab, I've heard o' you,  
 Live ye up to the border?  
 The lasses a', baith far and near,  
 Hae heard o' Rab the Ranter;  
 I'll shake my foot wi' right guid will,  
 Gin ye'll blaw up your chanter.

Then to his bage he flew wi' speed,  
 About the drone he twist'd;

Meg up and wallow'd i' the green,  
 For brawley she could frisk it.  
 Weel done, quo' he; play up, quo' she:  
 Weel bob'd quo' Rab the Ranter;  
 It's worth my while to play, indeed,  
 When I hae sic a dancer.

Weel hae ye play'd your part quo' Meg,  
 Your cheeks are like the crimson;  
 There's nae nae in Scotland plays sae weel,  
 Sin' we lost Habbie Simpson.  
 I've lie'd in Fife, baith maid and wife,  
 For ten years and a quarrier;  
 Gin ye sold come to Hatter fair,  
 Spier ye for Maggie Lauder.

Belfast: Printed by JOSEPH SMYTH, 34, High-Street.

The sexual implications throughout the poem are as explicit as decency would permit. The piper is playing the Highland pipes, since the ballad is originally Scottish, and the naïve woodcut illustration shows him as he plays them under a tree in a bucolic landscape, in tartan from head to foot.

An interesting engraving (of which there exist various versions) is the 'Inauguration of Robert Burns as Poet-Laureate'<sup>622</sup> at the Canongate Masonic Lodge No. 2 Kilwinning Edinburgh. The poet was a member from 1781 until his death. The engraving dates to 1846, and is by Stewart Watson. That Burns was ever made Poet-Laureate of the Lodge it is not confirmed; still the artist portrays him with a hand on his heart, in front of the pulpit. There are many men scattered in the room; each one of them is identifiable as a relevant public figure of the time. In the background, in a niche

<sup>622</sup> Courtesy of the National Trust for Scotland, 000-000-136-262-R.

occupied by organ-pipes, is a small orchestra, of which a cellist, a fiddler and a piper are discernible.



The piper is holding a form of bellows-inflated pipes. He is not playing, since he is looking at Burns – though the general crowd seems quite distracted and appears to be engaged in a whole series of different activities. This keeps the viewer's eye from settling until it reaches the figure of Burns, and ultimately the dark niche. In this context, the bagpipe adds a rustic 'hint': Burns' rural background certainly could not have escaped the artist's attention, and the presence of a Pastoral pipe served the purpose of enhancing this important detail of the poet's life.

It is not altogether strange to find a bellows-blown pipe together with other instruments (which are not percussion): the softer tones of these pipes were perfect for chamber music and light opera. That of fiddle, cello and pastoral pipe was in fact quite a widely-employed 'neo-Baroque' line-up. The inclusion of the bagpipe in an orchestral ensemble started with the French *musette* found in Lully's compositions; it continued with Rameau and various other composers, and also reached Britain. In an engraving representing a small orchestra playing for the *mise en scène* of John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera*<sup>623</sup> in London in 1728 it is possible to see a quartet which includes a piper.

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<sup>623</sup> NMS, 000-000-579-622-C. Reproduced with permission.

In *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, by the famously “half a Scot by birth, and bred / a whole one”<sup>624</sup> Lord Byron, the bagpipe is contained in an extremely dramatic scene, filled with pathos, distress, and evocation of an ancient, yet living tradition. John Cam Hobhouse described Canto III of *Childe Harold* as having “an air of mystery and metaphysics about it”<sup>625</sup>. The scene starts from stanza XXI in Canto III, when a grandiose ball in “Belgium’s Capital” is abruptly interrupted by the distant sound of “the cannon’s opening roar”. “Brunswick’s fated chieftain”, Frederick William, the “Black Duke”, immediately fled, since he “knew that peal too well / Which stretched his father on a bloody bier, And roused the vengeance blood alone could quell”<sup>626</sup>. The dancing crowd try to disperse as quickly as possible in fear, as they realise the foe is rapidly approaching. It is the very eve of the Battle of Quatre Bras, only four days before the battle of Waterloo.

And wild and high the “Cameron’s Gathering” rose!  
The War-note of Lochiel, which Albyn’s hills  
Have heard, and heard, too, have her Saxon foes.  
How in the noon of Night that pibroch thrills,  
Savage and shrill! but with the breath which fills  
Their mountain-pipe, so fill the Mountaineers  
With the fierce native daring which instils  
The stirring Memory of a thousand years,  
And Evan’s – Donald’s fame rings in each Clansman’s ears!<sup>627</sup>

The activity of the Highlanders at Waterloo and in the Napoleonic wars is also present in other well-known poems, such as Scott’s ‘The Field of Waterloo’ and Southey’s ‘The Poet’s Pilgrimage to Waterloo’. William Makepeace Thackeray in his well-known *Vanity Fair* talks about the “shrill pipes of the Scotch” awakening the city of Brussels as “a bugle from the Place of Arms began sounding clearly”<sup>628</sup>, and about Jos Sedley snoozing “in spite of all the drums, bugles, and bagpipes of the British Army”<sup>629</sup>. It is interesting that he should use such an expression, since the novel was published in 1848 when the position of the piper was not yet officially recognised by the British Army (an occurrence which did not take place until 1854, as remarked in Chapter 3)!

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<sup>624</sup> Byron, Lord George G., *The Complete Poetical Works*, ed. by Jerome McGann, in 7 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), vol. 5, p. 442.

<sup>625</sup> Lady Charlotte Carlton Dorchester, *John Cam Hobhouse: Recollections of a Long Life*, in 2 volumes (London: John Murray, 1910), vol. 2, p. 11.

<sup>626</sup> Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, vol. 2, pp. 84–85.

<sup>627</sup> Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, vol. 2, p. 86.

<sup>628</sup> William Makepeace Thackeray, *Vanity Fair* (London: Oxford University Press, 1864), p. 360.

<sup>629</sup> Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*, p. 370.

Apart from these collateral considerations, it should be noted that it is Byron who stresses the Gaelic presence on the battlefield<sup>630</sup>. The “Saxon foes” were but too aware of the sound of the *piobaireachd* – and particularly “Cameron’s gathering”. The “Evan” and his successor “Donald” Byron refers to are in fact Camerons of Lochiel: Evan fought in the 1715 rebellion, and Donald followed Prince Charles to France after Culloden. The Duke of Brunswick and Colonel John Cameron of the Gordon Highlanders both perished at Quatre Bras.

Byron’s superb verses resound with sibilants; the description of the sound of the *piobaireachd* is powerful. The suspense is filled with anxiety, with memory and fear; the bagpipe has within it all of these elements. The effect of the sound of the bagpipe is incredibly stirring:

Byron emphasises the ‘shrill’ note of the bagpipes. In one version of warfare, armies such as the Roman and navies such as the British pride themselves of their Apollonian self-control in the face of Dionysiac hordes of adversaries. [...] But Byron is interested in the male shriek which has something of the nature of a battle cry and is ritualised in the bagpipe-playing before and during a battle.<sup>631</sup>

It is no wonder that the “foe” trembles at the sight – or rather, primarily, the sound – of the Highlanders, or “tartaned troops”, as William Lisle Bowles defines them in his “Grave of the Last Saxon”: “The broadswords glitter as the tartaned troops / March to the pibroch’s sound”<sup>632</sup>. The author is in fact treating the same subject as Byron, as he also explains in the introduction to the poem; the Highlanders could not but be accompanied by the sound of their bagpipes.

In *Childe Harold* Byron also mentions the “Albanians”, “rugged nurse of savage men”<sup>633</sup>:

Fierce are Albania’s children, yet they lack  
Not virtues, were those virtues more mature.  
Where is the foe that ever saw their back?  
Who can so well the toil of war endure?  
Their native fastnesses not more secure  
Than they in doubtful time of troublous need:  
Their wrath how deadly! but their friendship sure,  
When Gratitude or Valour bids them bleed,  
Unshaken rushing on where’er their chief may lead.<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>630</sup> Bernard Beattie, ‘The force of ‘Celtic memories’ in Byron’s thought’, in *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*, ed. by Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 112–113.

<sup>631</sup> Beattie, ‘The force of ‘Celtic memories’’, p. 113.

<sup>632</sup> William Lisle Bowles, *The Poetical Works of William Lisle Bowles*, ed. by Rev. George Gilfillan, in 2 volumes (Edinburgh: James Nichol, 1855), vol. 2, p. 86.

<sup>633</sup> Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, vol. 2, p. 56.



As one can gather from the above verses, the adjectives and themes employed by Byron to describe the “children” of Albania are echoes of the discourse often adapted to the children of Alba – Gaelic word for ‘Scotland’. The pun is not a coincidence. The author plays on various levels to trace a parallel between Scots and Albanians. Apart from the *double-entendre* with Albania and Alba, Byron also plays on the Latin *albus*, ‘white’<sup>635</sup>, and in this sense this too is a reference to Scotland, as the white land: of purity, republican simplicity, snow-capped mountains, misty landscapes – an imagery which dates back to Charles I’s times.

Not less importantly, the “Albanians” are described as “wild”, “proud”, indefatigably and defiantly resilient to any form of submission – terms and concepts largely employed to describe the Scot and the Gael, and of Tacitean tradition. The description is a real shrine of primitive virtues: Highlanders are described as a stronghold for valour, honour and faithfulness to their chief, their past, their homeland and moral integrity – to be pursued through every possible means. And to Byron his dear Scotland is a land which has suffered; a theatre of injustice and suppression, where battles have been fought and where blood has been shed. This is in fact the impression one gets also from the poem ‘Oscar of Alva’. The author describes a heroic past of war, bloodshed, marked with the glory of the days of the chieftains. Now, he says, the “noble race” of Alva is “faded”, and her heroes no longer “urge the chase”; and he wonders why there grows moss, symbol of decay and oblivion, on “Alva’s stone”. But as he recalls the past times of the chieftain Angus when his first-born Oscar was born, the description is charged with archaic splendour and primitive ardour:

Fair shone the sun on Oscar's birth,  
When Angus hail'd his eldest born;  
The vassals round their chieftain's hearth  
Crowd to applaud the happy morn.

They feast upon the mountain deer,  
The Pibroch rais'd its piercing note,  
To gladden more their Highland cheer,  
The strains in martial numbers float.

And they who heard the war-notes wild,  
Hop'd that, one day, the Pibroch's strain  
Should play before the Hero's child,  
While he should lead the Tartan train.<sup>636</sup>

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<sup>634</sup> Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, vol. 2, p. 64.

<sup>635</sup> Peter G. W. Glare, ed., *Oxford Latin Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), s.v. “albus”.

<sup>636</sup> Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, vol. 1, p. 55

These lines are highly evocative. The pibroch possibly in this context is a synecdoche for the bagpipe, although many editors and reviewers argue the poet might simply have made a mistake. Such is the case, for instance, of Henry Brougham, who in 1808 criticised Lord Byron's use of the word "pibroch", saying that he "might have learnt that pibroch is not a bagpipe, any more than duet means a fiddle"<sup>637</sup>. The criticism in Brougham's review led Byron to the publication of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*: this work constitutes

evidence that Byron's earlier deployment of what Pittock calls 'the taxonomy of glory' was strategic rather than deeply felt. This poem, whatever its other merits, plays a part on occluding Byron's place in any Scottish tradition of Romantic writing or in a Scottish national culture. In its Manichean structure, 'bards' are English and are virtuous, whereas reviewers – critics – are Scottish and uncreative parasites.<sup>638</sup>

Byron's attitude in *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* in fact problematises the issue of the author's national identity, as he uses the works of Robert Southey and Francis Jeffrey as templates of cultural degeneration, and quotes lines charged with anti-Scottish sentiment by Alexander Pope<sup>639</sup>. The author's relationship with Scotland should not be ignored when analysing his works. Byron in fact was brought up in Scotland and lived there for almost ten years, and though he never went back to live there his feeling for and attachment to the country comes up frequently in his literature. In spite of his relatively brief time in the country, a number of his works ring of a nostalgic feeling towards it, and his Scottish ancestry. His feelings about national belonging at the same time are far from linear, as the case of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* shows. To quote but another example, many years after the publication of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* he wrote to Count Alfred D'Orsay, in 1823, and he bid him wishes as an "Englishman – I suppose, – but it is no treason, – for my mother was Scotch – and my name and family are both Norman – and as for myself I am of no country"<sup>640</sup>.

In the particular case I have quoted from 'Oscar of Alva', the bagpipe provides a means of entertainment inextricably connected with the martial spirit of the clan, also appears to be an omen of the feud which will ensue between the two sons of Angus – as Byron relates, Allan was in fact born one year after Oscar. The merriment and the joy of the event seem somewhat dimmed by the notion of war which the "piercing note" brings with it.

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<sup>637</sup> Henry Brougham, 'Art II, Hours of Idleness', in *The Edinburgh Review*, vol. 11 (January 1808), (285–288), p. 287.

<sup>638</sup> Brean Hammond, 'Byron', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. by Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 150–165 (pp. 151–152).

<sup>639</sup> Hammond, 'Byron', p. 152.

<sup>640</sup> *Byron's Letters and Journals*, ed. by Leslie A. Marchand, in 13 volumes (London: John Murray, 1980), vol. 10, p. 156.



The years went by, and Oscar claimed the fair Mora, daughter of Glenalvon, for his bride, and as they great news is spread,

Hark to the Pibroch's pleasing note,  
Hark to the swelling nuptial song,  
In joyous strains the voices float,  
And still the choral peal prolong.

See how the Heroes' blood-red plumes  
Assembled wave in Alva's hall;  
Each youth his varied plaid assumes,  
Attending on their chieftain's call.

It is not war their aid demands,  
The Pibroch plays the song of peace;  
To Oscar's nuptials throng the bands  
Nor yet the sounds of pleasure cease.<sup>641</sup>

The plaid and the bagpipe, two of the brightest displays of Highlandism, are once again used together to form a unitary picture – of past tradition, and long-lost magnificence in the simplicity of the event. Yet somehow the feeling of disquietude lingers: it feels as though the martial symbolism of the bagpipe cannot leave the instrument even in such a joyous context, and the author even has to specify that “it is not war” that the pipes are being played for, but peace.

The sound of the bagpipe marks the main events of the poem, and again they play when, after three years of Oscar's disappearance, Allan is to marry Mora. But just on their wedding-day, Oscar's ghost returns, and reveals the truth about his disappearance. To the rupture of all virtuous schemes and honourable values Byron attributes the fall of Alva. The harp – the instrument to which the narration of the events is left, in spite of the predominance of the bagpipe throughout the poem – remains “unstrung” and “untouch'd”, for “who can strike a murd'rer's praise?”<sup>642</sup>.

In ‘Oscar of Alva’ the bagpipe is the instrument for action and entertainment, while the harp remains the instrument of meditation, and the narrating voice of the bard. Not necessarily so in ‘Lachin y Gair’, which shows that the poet was well aware of the various functions of the bagpipe. In this poem Byron talks about Scotland in a deeply intimate tone, and gives a personal, sentimental account of the impressions, memories and feelings for the country of his childhood. As in ‘Oscar of Alva’, he stresses the ill fate of the nation, wrecked and shaken by conflict and a lost cause: Jacobitism:

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<sup>641</sup> Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, vol. 1, p. 57.

<sup>642</sup> Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, vol. 1, p. 66.

Ill starr'd, though brave, did no visions foreboding  
 Tell you that fate had forsaken your cause?  
 Ah! were you destined to die at Culloden,  
 Victory crown'd not your fall with applause:  
 Still were you happy, in death's earthy slumber,  
 You rest with your clan, in the caves of Braemar;  
 The Pibroch resounds, to the piper's loud number,  
 Your deeds, on the echoes of dark Loch na Garr.<sup>643</sup>

The deeds of Scotland are left to be sung by the bagpipe: it is the *piobaireachd* which resounds through the land. Its voice is charged with everything that is conveyed in this stanza: a tragic past, scarred by a burning defeat; brave heroes, and ancestral values. It is not a cheerful sound, but it is proud, and bears the memory of defeat with dignity and fatalistic decorum.

A similar sense of a glorious past now reduced to a mythicised ruin can be found in a passage by Christopher North – alias John Wilson, writer for *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*. His description of a stroll in the Highland mountains is highly evocative: Wilson addresses the reader, as he leads him/her around a lonely scene where the only house to be seen is a “ruined shieling – a deserted hut, or an unroofed and dilapidated shed”<sup>644</sup>;

But now the sun has inflamed all the western heaven, and darkness will soon descend. There is now a muteness more stern and solemn than during unfaded daylight. List—the faint, far-off, subterranean sound of the bagpipe! Some old soldier, probably, playing a gathering or a coronach. [...] The martial music is more distinctly heard—loud, fitful, fierce, like the trampling of men in battle. Where is the piper? In a cave, or within the Fairies' Knowe? At the door of a hut. His eyes were extinguished by ophthalmia, and there he sits, fronting the sunlight, stone-blind. Long silver hair flows down his broad shoulders, and you perceive that, when he rises, he will rear up a stately bulk. [...] The old soldier turns himself towards the voice of the Sassenach<sup>645</sup>, and, with the bold courtesy of the camp, bids him enter the hut. [...] The imagination dreams of the earliest days of our race, when men harboured, like the other creatures, in places provided by nature.<sup>646</sup>

The “martial music” of the bagpipe carries within it the sound of “trampling men in battle” – and yet the military world is but a memory, an echo, now far away from the life of the described blind piper. The piper lives with and through the recollection of his days as a soldier; he lives primitively, surrounded by nature, but everything about him, from his countenance to his education “of the camp”, breathes military values, achievements,

<sup>643</sup> Byron, *Complete Poetical Works*, vol. 1, p. 104.

<sup>644</sup> John Wilson, *Recreations of Christopher North*, in 3 volumes (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1868), vol. 1, p. 167.

<sup>645</sup> The Gaelic term for “English”.

<sup>646</sup> Wilson, *Recreations of Christopher North*, vol. 1, pp. 167–168.

and honour. Rev. William Gilpin and Dorothy Wordsworth both promoted the idea of a place of natural beauty acquiring deeper meaning and charm when associated with historical or literary facts<sup>647</sup>. This was a lesson Wilson had well absorbed: the description of the landscape and character is inextricably bound together with feelings of the past, though it is an unidentifiable, un-localisable, a-historical past. The portrayal may as well have come out of a fairy-tale. The landscape is as if enchanted, crystallised in a timeless moment charged with ancient memories, when stout, proud, hospitable men dwelled, “like the other creatures”, in communion with nature. There is something almost magical about the piper, who sits unaware yet comfortable, self-assured, in the ‘enchanted’ Highland forest. Before the author can give the reader the answer to where the music is coming from, he hypothesises the piper might be “in a cave, or within the Fairies’ Knowe”. Wilson himself suggests a connection with the supernatural: the bagpipe in the midst of the forest seems to cast a spell on the listener, who is compelled to find the source of the sound. The piper’s blindness enhances this idea: blind pipers have a substantial symbolic tradition particularly during Romanticism, as I shall explain further on in this chapter. The seemingly remote location is made accessible and warm by the laws of hospitality of the piper, who welcomes the “Sassenach” without questioning who he or she may be – a true act of tolerance, if not brotherly acceptance, as was traditional in Highland society.

As one can gather from this passage, no matter how idyllic the setting, in Wilson’s words the bagpipe still retains its martial ground. The old man is not just a piper, but an old soldier: he is playing a gathering, or a coronach, and the music is “loud, fitful, fierce, like the trampling of men in battle”. The sense of melancholy is inextricable from the bagpipe’s semantic chain: it is an instrument which bears the memory of past heroes, lost ideals, and great bloodshed. The author in fact stresses this feeling in another passage in the same work:

a mile off is the sullen sound of the bagpipe!—music which, if it rouse you not when heard among the mountains, may you henceforth confine yourself to the Jew's harp. [...] So swept of old the Highlanders—shepherds and herdsmen—down the wooded cliffs of the pass of Killiecrankie, till Mackay's red-coats lay redder in blood among the heather, or passed away like the lurid fragments of a cloud. "The Campbells are coming"—and we will charge with the heroes in the van. The whole clan is maddening along the Moor—and Maccallum More himself is at their head. But we beseech you, O'Bronte! not to look so like a lion—and to hush in your throat and breast that truly Leonine growl—for after all, 'tis but a bagpipe with ribands  
 "Streaming like meteors to the troubled air,"<sup>648</sup>

<sup>647</sup> James Holloway and Lindsay Errington, *The Discovery of Scotland* (Edinburgh: NGS, 1978), p. 57.

<sup>648</sup> Wilson is quoting the poem ‘The Conquest of Quebec’, the attribution of which is uncertain. See George Huddesford, ed., *The Wiccamical Chaplet: a Selection of Original Poetry* (London: Printed for Leigh, Sotheby and Son, 1804), p. 148.

and all our martial enthusiasm has evaporated in—wind.<sup>649</sup>

The whole passage is permeated with memories of battles: the mere sound of the bagpipe brings back to mind past wars and conflicts. It is almost a physical feeling – which ultimately crashes back to reality as the “martial enthusiasm” evaporates – just like the Jacobite cause, and the ideological unity which it represented. The feeling becomes so physical, and the spirit contained in the bagpipe’s music so overwhelming, that Wilson will go as far as saying that

The boat in a moment is a bagpipe; and not only so, but all the mountains are bagpipes, and so are the clouds. All the bagpipes in the world are here, and they fill heaven and earth. 'Tis no exaggeration—much less a fiction—but the soul and body of truth. There Hamish stands stately at the prow; and as the boat hangs by midships on the very point that commands all the echoes, he fills the whole night with the "Campbells are coming," till the sky yells with the gathering as of all the Clans. His eyes are triumphantly fixed on ours to catch their emotions; his fingers cease their twinkling; and still that wild gathering keeps playing of itself among the mountains—fainter and fainter, as it is flung from cliff to cliff, till it dies away far—far off—as if in infinitude—sweet even and soft in its evanescence as some lover's lute.<sup>650</sup>

In these lines there is none of that sense of history the reader can find in authors such as Lord Byron. This de-historicised perspective is the essence of what Thomas Richards calls “kitsch”<sup>651</sup>. The complex identity of Scotland is reduced to an eccentric ‘experience’, in this case represented by the bagpipe. The landscape itself is ‘bagpipical’ (to use a neologism employed by Robert Southey, though in another context<sup>652</sup>) and people-less: the only character Wilson includes, Hamish, is empty of any historical background: he is the echo of a long-lost, charismatic past, which in itself is no longer history, but a concept, an ideal.

The history of the people is devoid of meaning: it simply doesn’t exist. What remains is the de-peopled, ‘pan-bagpiped’ landscape; the way the territory is characterised is made to coincide with that landscape. This passage Wilson wrote to explain to the reader how and why Macpherson’s work is poetry: it encapsulates the true, deep feeling of Scotland: in spite of the doubts about its authenticity and the suspicions of plagiarism,

are we not made [...] to forget that there is any other world in existence, save that which glooms and glimmers, and wails and raves around us in mists and clouds, and

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<sup>649</sup> Wilson, *Recreations of Christopher North*, vol. 1, pp. 306–307.

<sup>650</sup> Wilson, *Recreations of Christopher North*, vol. 1, p. 385.

<sup>651</sup> Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 88.

<sup>652</sup> Robert Southey, *The Life and Correspondence of Robert Southey*, ed. by Charles Cuthbert Southey, in 6 volumes (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1850), vol. 2, p. 248.

storms and snows [...] with a sky as troublous as the earth—yet both at times visited with a mournful beauty that sinks strangely into the soul [...]?<sup>653</sup>

It is particularly interesting that the author should use such a parallel: to him, Macpherson is the quintessential example of the ‘feeling of Scotland’, and this to him is expressed in a world in which the sound of the bagpipe dominates every corner of the landscape (nowhere in Macpherson’s work is the bagpipe mentioned: the voice of Scotland is instead conveyed through the *clàrsach*). But to Wilson this is not the point: as he talks about “Fingal the Red Reaver, with his head aloft on the look-out for deer” he suddenly addresses the reader: “and hark! you hear the bagpipe play—the music the Highlanders love both in war and in peace”<sup>654</sup>.

Wilson continually jumps between the mythical past and the present – a present which, according to the author’s words, is in itself heavy with myth. The point is that the predominance of myth is so overwhelming that it virtually eclipses history. There’s practically no difference between the deeds of Ossian and Fingal, the battle of Killiecrankie, and a walk in the Highlands: the language of sentiment registers the presence of history in the narration, and yet empties it of its implications. The past is united with the present in an illimitable historical and mythical chain, and everything, every element in Scottish history and legend blend together to form...a *feeling*.

### **Realism and the bagpipe**

Thus far in this chapter we have seen how the bagpipe has evoked Romantic feelings of martial valour, of nationhood and pride. Its major connection has been with the *Gàidhealtachd* and clan life; it has contributed to the construction of Scotland’s identity as a Romantic nation of northernness. We have also encountered its darker side, with its devilish, bawdy and sexual implications. But almost none of the references analysed thus far have dealt with Scottish day-to-day life, common episodes or ordinary customs. Of course, though, being a piper in Romantic Scotland did not always imply feelings of grandeur and idyll. Indeed, there is also a counterpart to this idealised, iconic figure of the bagpipe and piper. This is expressed in terms of realism, and is particularly evident in visual art.

An engraving such as Walter Geikie’s ‘The Highland Piper’<sup>655</sup> conveys feelings which are very far from the unsettling contexts portrayed by Sir Walter Scott, and more in line with a realistic representation of daily-life Scotland. Geikie, deaf and mute artist, represents what may be a street of Edinburgh in the 1830s. The scene, much in the genre

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<sup>653</sup> Wilson, *Recreations of Christopher North*, vol. 1, p. 385.

<sup>654</sup> Wilson, *Recreations of Christopher North*, vol. 1, p. 403.

<sup>655</sup> NMS, 000-000-579-549-R. Reproduced with permission.

painting style, shows a piper playing to entertain a small crowd of shabby-looking passers-by. He is accompanied by a child, who shows an empty hat in which he is evidently hoping the listeners will drop a coin or two; and one of the listeners looks as if he's rummaging through his pockets to find something to offer.



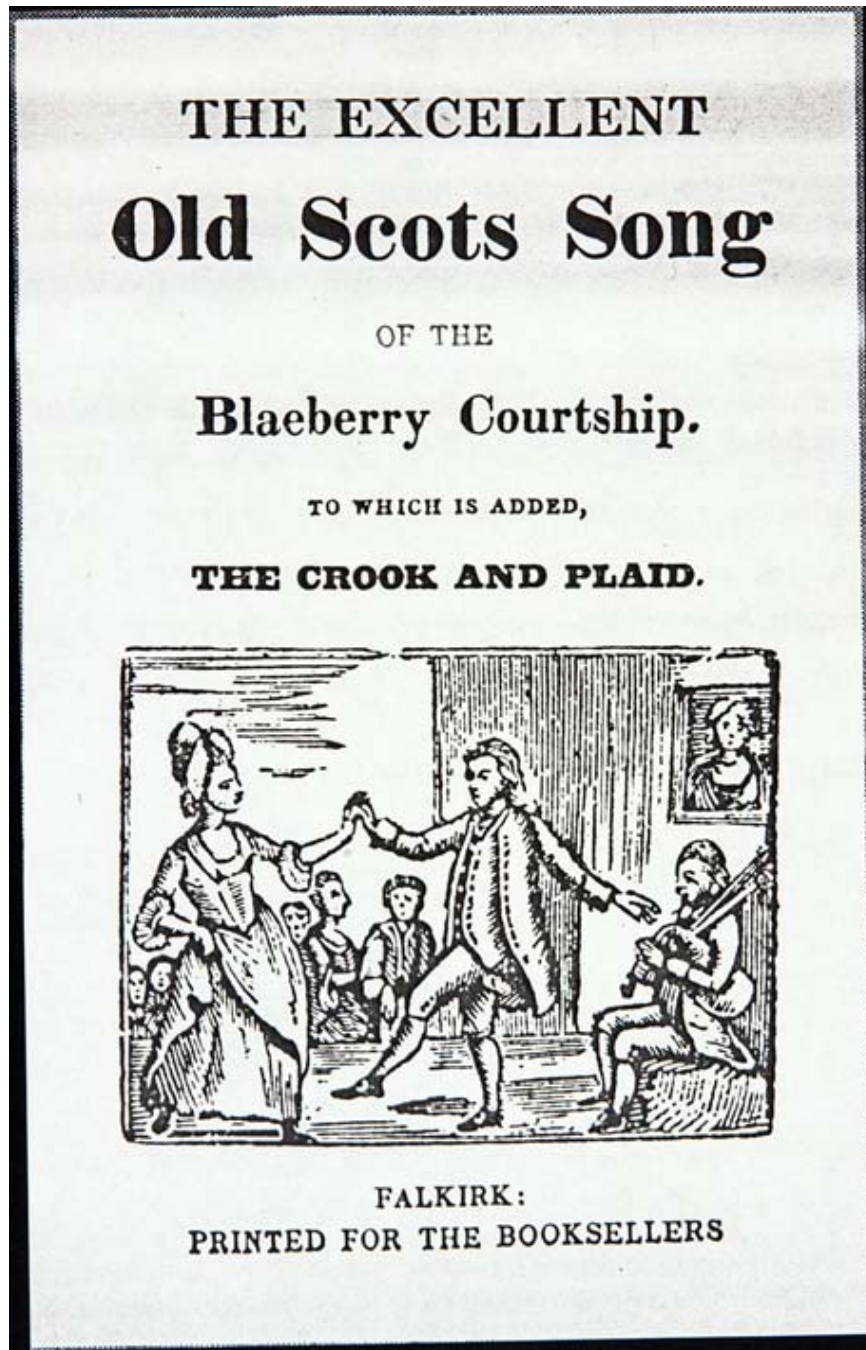
There is nothing of the majestic feeling of Knox's landscape; the piper does not have anything of the grand attire Scott describes. No plaid or tartan to be seen; his jacket and trousers are out of shape. The Glengarry hat may be an indicator of a possible military past – Glengarry hats were in fact part of the attire in certain regiments when in undress uniform. But this piper bears nothing of the military elegance: his occupation may well be that of begging for a living.

An equally intimate feeling, though certainly not as low-key as Geikie's depiction, is conveyed in the title page of a chapbook circulating in Scotland about 1800, called 'The Excellent Old Scots Song of the Blaeberry Courtship'<sup>656</sup>. Chapbooks were one of the main features in Scottish Romanticism: many authors such as Burns and Scott themselves looked to chapbooks and ballads for inspiration, and often imitated these popular genres

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<sup>656</sup> NMS, 000-000-579-575-R. Reproduced with permission.

themselves<sup>657</sup>. To describe and decorate this title the publisher has employed a black-and-white woodcut representing a dancing couple, clearly of high society, dancing to the music of a piper. The musician is also well-dressed, and is sitting composedly beneath a portrait, on what may be a carpeted step, or a broad chair.



Clearly the two pictures are very different, especially in the portrayal of very different social strata, but there is a common feeling of homeliness, of hearty entertainment, though the social contexts may vary.

<sup>657</sup> Steve Newman, 'Ballads and Chapbooks', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. by Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 13-26 (p. 14).

Hitherto, the analysed authors have been Scottish, or at least largely identified with Scotland. Of course, non-Scottish writers also talked about the bagpipe in their work. In the following section of this chapter I will focus particularly on William Wordsworth, not only for his importance within the Romantic literary context, but also because he refers to the bagpipe profusely and in such a way that it helps shed further light on the instrument's iconic value at the time. As I will show, when mentioning the bagpipe Wordsworth and his contemporaries deal with issues such as that of the Egyptian origin-myth of the Scots and Irish, blindness and the inward eye.

### **William Wordsworth**

Unlike his co-author of the *Lyrical Ballads* Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Wordsworth refers to the bagpipe quite a number of times. His mentions are very evocative, and are not always in direct connection with Scotland. This is the case, for instance, of the poem 'The Female Vagrant', 1798. It is a tale, based on a true story, of the widowed wife of a sailor who, alone in the world, wanders in search of refuge. She finally meets a group of itinerant traders, who help her and give her shelter. They are rough people, and she is not accustomed to their lifestyle. However, before she takes leave of them she describes them as follows:

Semblance, with straw and panniered ass, they made  
Of potters wandering on from door to door:  
But life of happier sort to me pourtrayed,  
And other joys my fancy to allure;  
The bag-pipe dinning on the midnight moor  
In barn uplighted; and companions boon  
Well met from far with revelry secure  
In depth of forest glades, when jocund June  
Rolled fast along the sky his warm and genial moon.<sup>658</sup>

Wordsworth is not talking about Scotland at all; he is describing the lifestyle of a group of itinerant traders, who live a rough but genuine life on the moor, though full of risks, and often dishonest (the widowed lady relates about how she is little-used to "midnight theft", the "black disguise" and the "warning whistle drill"). And yet the reader cannot be brought to frown at the scene: the travellers trade "soberly", and the lady feels the "joys" of this kind of life: the cheerful company gathering under the moonlight, and the bagpipe sounding at night for entertainment in the barn.

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<sup>658</sup> William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 57.



It is not unusual for vagrant people and gypsies to be depicted playing a bagpipe; they are often linked with a bucolic tradition, or more simply with the profession of the itinerant musician. Although it is a kind of imagery which is spread all over Europe, in this context the mythical Eastern origin of Scotland and the *Scoti* is brought to mind. According to this origin-myth, Scotland's roots are to be traced back to Scota, daughter of Pharaoh. This gives the nation a Graeco-Egyptian genesis, whence also the term 'gypsy' derives – aphetic for the adjective 'Egyptian'<sup>659</sup>. In the light of this supposed Eastern origin of Scotland, gypsies can be seen as the custodians of ancient values; this gives the bagpipe a further connection as a native signifier. The anonymous author of the 1725 *New Canting Dictionary*, for instance, locates the origin of the "Gypsies, Strowlers and Fortune-tellers" in Bohemia; then he traces their steps from the Mediterranean to Ireland and the Highlands<sup>660</sup>.

It is possible that Wordsworth was aware of this origin-myth. The poet talks of them with benevolence, and though not denying their roguish behaviour and dishonesty, seems willing to accept the means for the sake of simple life, and a deeper contact with nature. After all, it had been one of the key concepts of the *Lyrical Ballads* to exalt the spirit of the people in the poorer and most remote regions of England as the true voice of the human spirit. Wordsworth and Coleridge saw these people from developing societies as free, a true cradle of the spirit of liberty<sup>661</sup>.

It is in fact a Scottish "Wanderer" who is one of the main characters of *The Excursion*, a poem in nine books and published in its first edition in 1814. He is not really a wanderer, since he does have a home he stays in especially for the sake of a dear person's memory. But he still likes to journey away, and re-visit the places he used to frequent before he found the shelter. The description of this "Wanderer" is charming: an old friend of the author himself, as the first-person narrative suggests; he is a pious, poor, virtuous man from Athol, educated by his parents "With strictness scarcely known on English ground"<sup>662</sup> and in reverence of God and the Scottish Church. His life is the apotheosis of freedom, and of wisdom: with no ties, earthly boundaries or possessions, in innocence, he has wandered everywhere, lived in every context, known struggle and sorrow – his spirit is nourished by the deepest knowledge of the human soul.

In Book II the author laments the long-lost days when itinerant minstrels – harpists, as he specifically mentions – would roam the land and be respected and taken in

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<sup>659</sup> John A. Simpson and Edmund S. C. Weiner, eds., *The Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), s.v. "gypsy".

<sup>660</sup> Anon., *A New Canting Dictionary* (London: Printed and Sold by the Booksellers, 1725), Preface.

<sup>661</sup> Pittock, 'Scott and the British tourist', in *English Romanticism*, ed. by Carruthers and Rawes 151-166 (p. 154).

<sup>662</sup> William Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, ed. by Sally Bushell, James Butler, Michael Jaye (London: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 52.

great esteem by everyone, from royal to outlaw. The emblematic icon of the bard is seen with nostalgia; it was not uncommon for English authors to reflect upon the bard as a symbol – of Celtic origin – of a past time of cultural magnificence. The wanderer sets off with the company of the author, who drinks from the same sources of happiness that have constituted the pleasures of the wanderer's life. On a broad vale they see a crowd of people. They hear "blithe notes of music" of pipe and tabor<sup>663</sup> in the distance: it's the annual Wake. The author asks whether they would stay and join the festivity; but the wanderer points to the "craggy summits"<sup>664</sup>, and assures him that there he will receive ample recompense for the day's toils. Wordsworth hints to the concept of the truer, worthier experiences being those 'hidden' by the mountain-tops: in the heart of the most inaccessible part of Scotland, there is concealed the 'secret' only the wanderer, and those beings closer to nature, can know of.

The vagrant then describes the person he intends to meet there, "The Solitary", a man with many a sad tale to tell. He tells the story of his life: a lonesome, secluded man, from a poor family, who was born "Where many a sheltered and well-tended plant / Upon the humblest ground of social life, / Doth at this day, I trust, the blossoms bear / Of piety and simple innocence"<sup>665</sup>. Being a promising child and a keen student he was prepared

[...] to the Ministry be called; which done,  
Partly through lack of better hopes – and part  
Perhaps incited by a curious mind,  
In early life he undertook the charge  
Of Chaplain to a Military Troop  
Cheered by the Highland bagpipe, as they marched  
In plaided vest, - his fellow-countrymen.<sup>666</sup>

It is clearly not unusual, to associate Highland bagpipes with "a Military Troop"; that they should appear together with mentions of a plaid is also not surprising. The context is not of *grandeur*, as in Scott's works, but almost playful. His "curious mind", his "fellow-countrymen", and the "Highland bagpipe": these are the elements described in his profession of chaplain; evidently, they are also what contributed to debauch him. In fact "by native power / And force of native inclinations" he went about "Gay", "Lax, buoyant", until he met a "blooming Lady", whom he married<sup>667</sup>.

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<sup>663</sup> Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, p. 80.

<sup>664</sup> Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, p. 81.

<sup>665</sup> Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, p. 81.

<sup>666</sup> Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>667</sup> Wordsworth, *The Excursion*, p. 81

Whenever the Solitary exposed himself to the wider world, he always received a disappointment: his wife died, and soon after did the hopes he treasured for the French Revolution. Wordsworth underlines the happiness of primitive life: exposure to external impulses will systematically contaminate the purity – and therefore the happiness – of the simple-minded soul. The bagpipe represents the fun in the life in the military; as soon as he was exposed to it, the Solitary received his first disappointment. There can be no real pleasure, once one has strayed outside the world of primitive simplicity. He no longer wants any contact with that world which has filled him first with so much hope, and then with so much pain, despair and disillusionment. Learning about and meeting the Solitary is one of the steps of the author's "Excursion" into the depths of true knowledge.

A similar topic Wordsworth adopts for his 1800 pastoral poem 'Michael'. It is set in Greenhead Ghyll, in the Grasmere region of the Lake District. The author exhorts the reader to take an uphill path. There, "Upon the Forest-side of Grasmere Vale"<sup>668</sup> lives Michael, an old, stout shepherd. His mind is described as "keen", "intense" and "frugal"; and as he zealously works surrounded by nature, he has learned to listen to its sounds:

Hence he had learn'd the meaning of all winds,  
Of blasts of every tone; and often-times  
When others heeded not, He heard the South  
Make subterraneous music, like the noise  
Of Bagpipers on distant Highland hills.  
The Shepherd, at such warning, of his flock  
Bethought him, and he to himself would say,  
"The winds are now devising work for me!"<sup>669</sup>

The sound-quality of the rumble of distant Highland bagpipes in the background, but especially its menacing implications of battle and upheaval, is compared with the stormy threat of a south wind, the warmth of which proverbially brings tempest. The sound of the bagpipe is compared with a natural element – it is threatening, and disquieting, and it feels like something unavoidable, irrepressible; almost sublime. It is also the only element in the passage which implies any degree of exoticism: Wordsworth even purifies Michael's language from any trace of Cumbrian dialect, which would have been more natural to him; the only hint he leaves of it can be found in the expression "Clipping Tree", which he describes in the poem as being of "our rustic dialect" and unpacks it in a note, explaining that "Clipping is a word used in the North of England for shearing"<sup>670</sup>.

But the icon-bagpipe is so heavily charged that it is not merely pastoral and rustic. On the contrary it is highly suggestive: its presence conveys an element of exoticism and

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<sup>668</sup> Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 254.

<sup>669</sup> Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 254.

<sup>670</sup> Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads*, p. 258.

distancing. In Michael's Arcadia, the bagpipe is the "ego" of the famous phrase "Et in Arcadia ego" first found in Giovanni Francesco Guercino's homonymous painting<sup>671</sup>: it is a disturbing presence, which reminds the reader that even the rural haven of the Cumbrian countryside is not free from an elegiac mood, melancholy, disquietude, and mortality.

The 'subterraneousness' of the bagpipes' sound was also used by John Wilson, as we have seen in the above-mentioned passage about the blind piper. It is an unusual adjective for this kind of description, and I am not aware of any other author who has employed it in connection with the sound of the bagpipe, which renders it at least possible that this example is an intertextual citation, made even more plausible by the fact that Wordsworth and Wilson were close friends and would be therefore aware of each other's writings. Their friendship started in May 1802: when he was only seventeen Wilson wrote a letter of homage to Wordsworth, and their early correspondence about the *Lyrical Ballads* served Wordsworth as a means of understanding how his poetry and his vision of the role of the poet were being appreciated by the wider audience<sup>672</sup>. His letter in response to Wilson's in fact illustrates some of his poetic intentions, as he answers Wilson's questions about the "influence of natural objects in forming the character of nations"<sup>673</sup>. Interestingly, in this context Wordsworth remarks about how in the past the "Highlands of Scotland" there was a "uniformity of national character", though "we cannot perhaps observe much of it in our island at the present day", due to interaction and exchange between people "even in the most sequestered places". At the same time this does not "prevent the characters of individuals from frequently receiving a strong bias not merely from the impressions of general nature, but also from local objects and images"<sup>674</sup>.

Wilson admired Wordsworth greatly and poetically aimed at imitating the Lake Poets – though he dreaded Wordsworth knowing that – and was arguably the first to argue against the criticism Wordsworth received especially from the *Edinburgh Review*<sup>675</sup>. The authors' reciprocal esteem did not prevent mutual, at times bitter criticism later on in maturity, but this only confirms that they followed each other's work assiduously<sup>676</sup>.

An even stronger pastoral feeling than the one described above is conveyed in Anna Seward's sonnet XXIII 'To Miss E. S.', in which the poet, as she tries to console the

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<sup>671</sup> As Erwin Panofsky points out, the elliptical sentence is a warning to the viewer/reader: a *memento mori*, a reflection on human transitoriness, even within the perfection of Arcadia. See Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), pp. 306-307.

<sup>672</sup> Stephen Gill, *William Wordsworth: a Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 197-198

<sup>673</sup> William and Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Letters of William and Dorothy Wordsworth*, ed. by Ernest Sélincourt, in 6 volumes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), vol. 1, p. 353.

<sup>674</sup> William and Dorothy Wordsworth, *The Letters*, p. 354.

<sup>675</sup> Elsie Swann, *Christopher North: John Wilson* (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1934), pp. 33 and 122.

<sup>676</sup> Gill, *William Wordsworth*, pp. 347-348.

addressee of her composition from a “cruel wrong”, tries to evoke the typical sounds and feelings of spring: the song of a blackbird, the greenness of the vale, and also

[...] the gay viol dinning in the dale,  
With tabor loud, and bag-pipe's rustic drone [...]  
To merry Shearer's dance [...] <sup>677</sup>

There is not the slightest hint of disquiet in these verses: the bagpipe is very much a symbol of pastoral entertainment, which serves as a background for a shearer's toils. When the author refers to the “dale” the context is that of the Derbyshire dales, where she was born. She seems to imply that the bagpipe is one of the rustic sounds of the *English* countryside, where it is plausible to think the bagpipe was still known and played<sup>678</sup>. It is interesting the way Seward unites the bagpipe with the tabor. The latter is normally associated with the pipe, and the combination is mostly known to be typical of English music (Scott in *Old Mortality* will go as far as writing that youths of both sexes will find an irresistible temptation in “the pipe and tabor in England, or the bagpipe in Scotland”<sup>679</sup>). The symbol of the bagpipe here is a literary trope which aims at evoking the pastoral world; it is a signifier of primitive purity and rural simplicity.

Probably among Wordsworth's works the most evocative reference to the bagpipe is found in ‘The Blind Highland Boy: a Tale told by the Fire-side’, dated around February 1807. The poet depicts a homely atmosphere of a father and his family sitting around the fire. He tells them the “strange adventure which befell / A poor blind Highland boy”<sup>680</sup> who lived by Loch Leven. Here the contact with nature takes its extreme form in the quality of blindness. The boy had never seen the light of day since he was born, and yet he was never unhappy, “For God took pity on the boy”<sup>681</sup>. And it did not matter that he could not see: his mother took great pride in taking him to church on Sundays, “clad / in crimson stockings, tartan plaid / and bonnet with a feather gay”<sup>682</sup>. The child *looked* like a Highlander, even when he had not the means of knowing it. And, to complete his Highlandness,

[...] the bagpipes he could blow;  
And thus from house to house would go,  
And all were pleas'd to hear and see;

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<sup>677</sup> Anna Seward, *Original Sonnets on Various Subjects* (London: Printed for G. Sael, 1799), p. 25.

<sup>678</sup> This information I have discussed with Hugh Cheape over e-mail correspondence.

<sup>679</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *Old Mortality*, ed. by Douglas Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), p. 14.

<sup>680</sup> William Wordsworth, *Poems, in Two Volumes, and Other Poems, 1800-1807*, ed. by Jared Curtis (New York, Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 221.

<sup>681</sup> Wordsworth, *Poems*, p. 222.

<sup>682</sup> Wordsworth, *Poems*, p. 222.

For none made sweeter melody  
Than did the poor blind Boy.<sup>683</sup>

Blindness (and deafness) and its cognitive consequences were topics which greatly interested Enlightenment intellectuals, and in popular culture (to which this poem largely appeals) these physical impediments are often imagined to be intimately connected with different, sensorial talents<sup>684</sup>. There is also a long history of blind pipers, and blindness in a musician is a quality which has been narrated since antiquity.

Another Romantic example is that of the above-mentioned blind piper described by John Wilson in the midst of a Highland forest. Blindness is regarded as an inward sight, and the visionary world deeply interested Wordsworth. The inward eye, in more than one occasion expressed in the form of sensory impairment (e.g. the Blind Beggar of his *Prelude*, the Blind Dalesman and the Deaf Dalesman, who feature in *The Excursion*, the blind musician in 'Power of Music', as well as the above-mentioned Blind Highland Boy), constitutes a quality in many examples of Wordsworthian characters. Inward sight in many instances also makes up for the inadequacy of words. As Edward Larrissy explains,

Wordsworth's primary intention is disturbance of 'sight' by the divine voice, but this voice may awaken Platonic vision [...] the Platonic vision may be dressed in words which are indebted to Enlightenment philosophical discourses, words which may sound confusingly similar to the superficial language of 'sight'. [...] he constantly questions the adequacy both of voice and sight [...]<sup>685</sup>

In Wordsworth's work the 'bodily eye' is often rejected in favour of the 'inward eye': the visionary. In his poem 'A Night-Piece' he talks about an "unobserving eye / Bent earthwards": it is an expression of the poet's withdrawal to an internal perspective. An eye which does not observe is devoid of its purpose: the author relies on a different, though more powerful form of sight<sup>686</sup>.

In literature, the icon of the blind musician or prophet has a long lineage – among the most widely-known examples are Homer, and Ossian<sup>687</sup>. Wordsworth, as Fiona Stafford has argued that, was not convinced by the Ossianic 'phenomenon', but he was indeed fascinated by his evocations of the darkness gathering around a once strong gift<sup>688</sup>.

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<sup>683</sup> Wordsworth, *Poems*, p. 222.

<sup>684</sup> Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, pp. 96-97.

<sup>685</sup> Edward Larrissy, *The Blind and Blindness in Literature of the Romantic Period* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), p. 104.

<sup>686</sup> Helen Regueiro, *The Limits of Imaginations: Wordsworth, Yeats, and Stevens* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1976), p. 45.

<sup>687</sup> A separate mention should also go to Milton, who having developed total blindness wrote extensively about the impairment, also endowing it with allegorical meaning as in the case of Samson in *Samson Agonistes*.

<sup>688</sup> Fiona Stafford, "'Dangerous Success': Ossian, Wordsworth, and English Romanticism", in *Ossian Revisited*, ed. by Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), 49-72 (pp. 62-63).

Larrissy defines that of the “Blind Highland Boy” an “example of a blind Celtic visionary”<sup>689</sup>. The inability to see what is outside enables the blind person to have an acute inward sight – “that inward light / With which his soul had shone so bright”<sup>690</sup>. It is seen as a greater consciousness and sensitivity, which is rendered only the more acute by the ability to produce music – the fruit of that inward self. The reference to his piping skills only occurs once throughout the text. The bagpipe serves as a distinctive mark of Highlandness *per se*, but his musical abilities convey a deeper introspective faculty which to Wordsworth cannot have been secondary.

Rather than the introspective gaze, it is second sight which constitutes the theme for the ballad ‘The Moody Seer’ by Joanna Baillie. Macvorely, the “Moody Seer”, is not blind – he “stares upon the harmless ground / As ‘twere the mouth of hell”<sup>691</sup>, and indeed a supernatural ability shows him things that the eye alone can’t see. On “Hallow-e’en” he is invited to celebrate with his cousin’s family, but the old man cannot take part in the merriment because he can see a death-warning cast on young Malcolm: the shroud, which according to tradition people gifted with second sight can see on the feet of those who are going to die within a year. The Halloween party proceeds gaily:

Then gay strathspeys are featly danced  
To the pibroch’s gallant sound,  
While the sighted man like one intranced,  
In the honour’d chair is found.<sup>692</sup>

In this case the pipes correspond to the exact opposite of what they represent for Wordsworth: they represent worldliness, and all that is tangible and real. In a way, they represent blindness in the sense of unawareness: no-one pays attention to old Macvorely’s fear for young Malcolm. Macvorely tells the boy what he can see, and only then

Dull grew the sound of the crowded hall,  
Yet Malcolm danced again,  
And did for rousing pibrochs call,  
But pipers piped in vain.<sup>693</sup>

The fear of Macvorley’s verdict dims Malcolm’s enjoyment of the party: the pipes do not blend in with the old man’s sight, and create an almost grotesque juxtaposition.

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<sup>689</sup> Larrissy, *The Blind and Blindness*, p. 49.

<sup>690</sup> Wordsworth, *Poems*, p. 227.

<sup>691</sup> Joanna Baillie, *The Dramatic and Poetical Works of Joanna Baillie*, unknown ed. (London: Longman, Brown, Green, and Longmans, 1853), p. 801.

<sup>692</sup> Baillie, *Dramatic and Poetic Works*, p. 802.

<sup>693</sup> Baillie, *Dramatic and Poetic Works*, p. 802.

There is a whole string of artworks in the nineteenth century which have blind pipers, chiefly Irish, for an object. For practical reasons, it was quite usual at the time for people with visual impairment to take up musical professions, from musician to piano-tuner, for the obvious reason that these occupations did not require a good sight. This ensured some extra income which was particularly important for poorer families to whom a non-working member of the family was especially cumbersome. The painting 'Blind Piper'<sup>694</sup> by George Grattan, dated 1801 and sold in the James Adam auction in Dublin in 2001, is representative of this condition.



The hobbling, straggling piper bears an expression of suffering, and the predominant brown tones give an impression of scruffiness, of dusty suburban alleys. The setting is

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<sup>694</sup> Image reproduced with permission of Adam's Fine Art Auctioneers & Valuers, Dublin.



bare, and the status of the piper is certainly low. Several authors have depicted scenes of this sort, which probably indicates in itself that scenes like the one illustrated by Grattan were quite common.

On the other hand, another current of artists and authors such as the Irish Joseph Patrick Haverty and (as we shall see farther below) Wordsworth, seem to have made a virtue of necessity. The crude, unglamorous realism subsides to give place to a romanticised perspective. In fact, in visual art and literature blindness has often attracted benevolence, and in 'The Blind Piper'<sup>695</sup>, one of Haverty's most celebrated masterpieces (1841), the artist exemplifies these feelings.

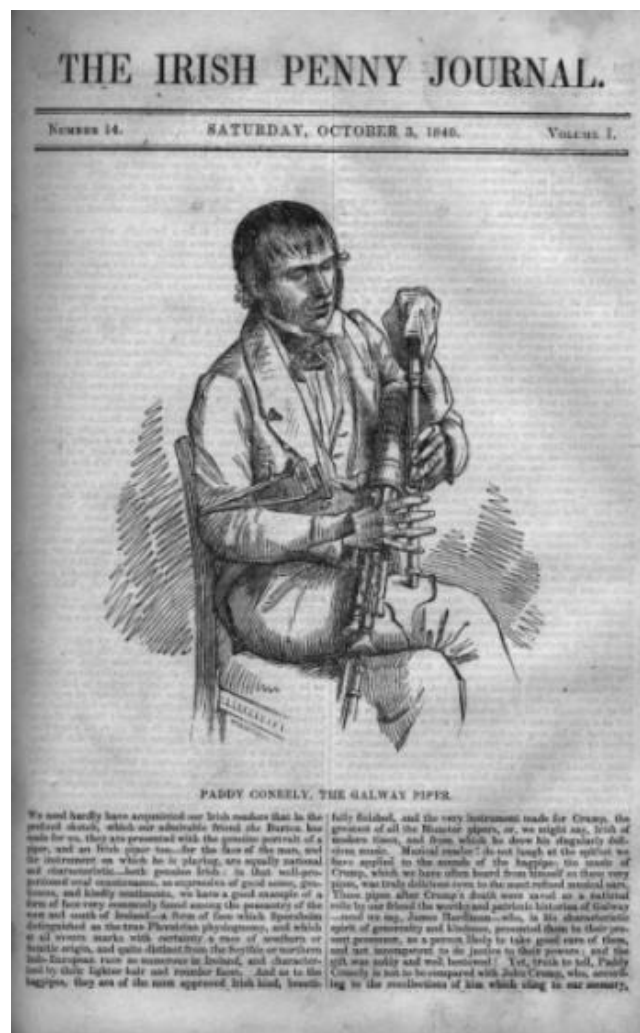


Haverty's art is describable as sentimental and patriotic. This painting, which depicts a rugged late middle-aged man playing the Irish bagpipes with his eyes shut to a (rather

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<sup>695</sup> 'The Blind Piper', Joseph Patrick Haverty, 1794–1864; Irish, 19th century, 1841, Oil on canvas, 76 x 59 cm. Photo © National Gallery of Ireland, NGI.166.

bored-looking) little girl, is evocative of strong Romantic pathos. He looks like a poor country fellow, and he is sitting and leaning in an unidentifiable natural space – maybe a tree, or a rock – in the midst of an idealised, undefined country context, to which a somewhat ethereal light in the distance gives a sublime, almost perturbing feel, in the extreme calmness which pervades the whole scene. In this picture we can see how the piper's blindness does not constitute a form of disability, but it is probably the character's strong point: a possibility for introspection, of further understanding; a source of deeper knowledge. Perhaps as a symptom of this interest, the reality of blind pipers also acquired greater visibility thanks to an article which appeared in *The Irish Penny Journal*. In issue 14, of October 3, 1840, a whole page was dedicated to Paddy Conneely, blind piper of Galway, thus spreading his fame through Ireland. His portrait also appears in the article. It was originally painted for George Petrie by Frederic William Burton, Irish artist known for having engaged in the re-discovery of the culture and history of his country<sup>696</sup>. The painting was subsequently engraved to appear on the Journal.



<sup>696</sup> Raymond Gillespie and Brian Kennedy, *Ireland: Art into History* (Dublin: Town House, 1994), p. 63. Reproduced with permission.

The article presents Paddy and his bagpipe in very rewarding terms, which strongly appeal to Irish national sentiment and identity: the readers

[...] are presented with the genuine portrait of a piper, and an Irish piper too - for the face of the man, and the instrument on which he is playing, are equally national and characteristic - both Irish: in that well-proportioned oval countenance, so expressive of good sense, gentleness, and kindly sentiments, we have good example of a form of face commonly found among the peasantry of the west and south of Ireland - a form of face which Spurtzheim distinguished as the true Phoenician physiognomy, and which at all events marks with certainty a race of southern or Semitic origin, and quite distinct from the Scythic or northern Indo-European race so numerous in Ireland, and characterized by their lighter hair and rounder faces. And as to the bagpipes, they are of the most approved Irish kind, beautifully finished and the very instrument made for Crump, the greatest of all Munster pipers, or, we may say, Irish of modern times and from which he drew his singularly delicious music. Musical readers! do not laugh at the epithet we have applied to the sounds of the bagpipe: the music of Crump, which we have often heard from himself on these very pipes, was truly delicious often to the most refined musical ears.

The Eastern origins of Ireland are stressed and bear the heritage of the theories such as the philologist General Charles Vallancey's. Through linguistic and cultural studies, Vallancey traced a series of parallels between Ireland, Persia, Arabia and Phoenicia, re-conducting their peoples to a common origin. This "defensive orientalism", as Pittock terms it<sup>697</sup>, served the purpose of creating a racial origin for Ireland which was separate from and devoid of any Anglo-Saxon discourse.

Not uncommonly, Irish authors such as William Carleton include gypsy or Eastern characters in their works. This foundation myth had considerable impact with Irish patriots until the early nineteenth century, and clearly constitutes motives for national pride, as one can gather from the words in the article above. The author of the article immediately corrects any reader who might disagree with the appreciation of the sound of the *uilleann* pipe, which is described as "singularly delicious" – an epithet which evidently does not necessarily correspond to a universal opinion. Piper Paddy Conneely was under the patronage of landlords, and for this reason led a rather comfortable life.

Certainly the point of view which saw the blind musician as a sort of 'prophet' of inward sight comes from the fascination the Scot, and more generally the Celt, had for the English (as well as international) public. So much so, that the icon of the Scot was, often, enough to convey a whole set of feelings and emotions, of which the piper was a particularly colourful example. It is in fact not a coincidence that the broadside ballad 'Kathleen O' More'<sup>698</sup>, printed in Newcastle in the 1870s, shows a woodcut illustration of

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<sup>697</sup> Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*, p. 102.

<sup>698</sup> NLS shelfmark L.C.1269(88b)/L.C.1269(149), DOD ID. 74459283. Reproduced with permission.

an elegantly-dressed Highland piper, accompanied by a lady dressed in tartan sitting in the open air at a spinning-wheel.



# KATHLEEN O'MORE.

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Sold by B Stewart, Botchergate, Carlisle.

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My love still I think I sae her once more ;  
But, alas ! she has left me her loss to deplore,  
My own little Kathleen, my poor lost Kathleen, O.

Her hair glossy black, her eyes were deep blue,  
Her colour still changing, her smile ever new ,  
So pretty was Kathleen, my sweet little Kathleen, my  
Kathleen, O.

She milk'd the dun cow that ne'er offered to stir,  
Tho' wick'd it was it was gentle to her,  
So kind was my Kathleen, my poor little Kathleen, my  
Kathleen, O.

She sat at the door one cold after noon,  
To hear the wind blow and to look at the moon ;  
So pensive was Kathleen, my poor little Kathleen, my  
Kathleen, O.

Cold was the night breeze that sigh'd round her bower,  
It chill'd my poor Kathleen ; she drooped from that hour.  
And I lost my poor Kathleen, my own little Kathleen  
my Kathleen, O.

The bird of all birds that I love the best,  
Is the robin that in the church-yard builds his nest,  
For he seems to watch Kathleen, hops lightly on  
Kathleen, my Kathleen, O.

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W. R. Walker, Printer, Royal Arcade, Newcastle.

The song tells the story of an unidentified man who laments the loss of his beloved one, Kathleen. There is no connection whatsoever between the text and the picture – the Highlander and the Scottish lady would seem to be made to ‘fit in’ the text because of a sentimental, romantically tragic aura which surrounded Scotland and its figures in the aftermath of the success of Macpherson and Scott’s works.

Clearly this does not mean that bagpipes bore a universally Romantic or romanticised imagery. For centuries it had been the object of ridicule, also in connection with its sexual symbolism, and this was not just going to fade away simply for a development in ‘Celtophilia’.

The quotes and references here presented are clearly a small portion of the examples to be found in the corpus of British Romantic literature. I have chosen to pay particular attention to the works of Scott, Burns, Smollett and Byron as they are major figures in Scottish Romanticism, and can therefore be indicative of Romantic literature from a Scottish point of view. I have also chosen Wordsworth as an emblematic example of English Romantic writer, while pointing out the themes which recur with greater frequency, such as blindness, the icon of the Scot in broadsheets, and the Scottish (and Irish) Eastern origin-myth. If I have not mentioned other core figures of English Romanticism (such as, for instance, Samuel Taylor Coleridge<sup>699</sup> or John Keats<sup>700</sup>) it is because their works either do not refer to the bagpipe at all, or the references are not particularly significant.

It is clear from these excerpts that the bagpipe has received a great variety of interpretations and has been the object of a whole range of themes and contexts. As was the case Highlander and the kilt, the bagpipe as an icon and its significance have undergone a noticeable transformation over a century of Jacobitism – whether actual, threatened, or remembered. We have seen how during the first part of the eighteenth-century it was mostly – if not only! – Jacobite propaganda which spared positive words for the instrument; political, and even religious implications dominated the opinions of all ‘factions’. We see now how by the end of the eighteenth and further on into the nineteenth century these rather more ‘factual’ historical aspects are overshadowed by the emotional side of the instrument. As the Jacobite threat to Great Britain and the House of

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<sup>699</sup> Coleridge, for instance, does mention a “bagpipe buz”, but this is the only reference to a bagpipe in the whole corpus of his work. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *The Complete Poetical Works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, ed. by Ernest Hartley Coleridge, in 2 volumes (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912), vol. 1, pp. 1068–1069.

<sup>700</sup> John Keats’ opinion about the bagpipe is univocally negative. One can gather from a letter he wrote to his brother from Glasgow that the instrument seems to haunt him right from his arrival in Scotland: “[...] the Lake was beautiful and there was a Band at a distance by the Castle. I must say I enjoyed two or three common tunes—but nothing could stifle the horrors of a solo on the Bag-pipe—I thought the Beast would never have done [...]”. See John Keats, *The Letters of John Keats*, ed. by Hyder Edward Rollins, in 2 volumes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1958), vol. 2, p. 336.

Hanover drifts farther into the past, the heroic aspects of the Scottish 'race', promoted particularly by Macpherson and further enhanced by Scott, added a nostalgic tinge to the 'lost cause', of which the bagpipe, as we have seen, had been a protagonist.

The bagpipe, from 'sound of the enemy', is turned into the expression of a nation; through it, authors have given voice to concepts of Scotland's mythical past, which often prevailed over issues of national history. As I have shown throughout the chapter, realist depictions have expressed the conditions of Scotland's gritty rural background and peasant life, as well as the final decline of bardic pipers which cast the figure of the piper into sometimes degrading contexts. On the other hand, the concept of the picturesque shaped the piper as an icon of prophetic introspection, and gave the instrument an aura of ancestral values and communion with nature. To find the piper in natural contexts somehow 'civilises' the surroundings, not only for the actual human presence *per se*, but for the moral icon he constitutes; this characteristic is particularly accentuated in depictions of blind musicians. And yet, as we have seen, though a 'disciplining', 'domesticating' element in nature, the piper is exotic, sufficiently colourful and 'different' to be fascinating and, in himself, poetic. The martial aspect of the bagpipe also remains vivid, as it is today: it is a trait which authors described with great pathos. Of course this did not stop irony from seeping through occasionally, but this feature does not prevail over the emphasis which is put on the value of the bagpipe as a national instrument, with its own musical repertoire which is seen to represent the voice of Scotland. All the above aspects are taken further in musical and artistic representations of Scotland, by both British and foreign authors; and also in performance, as 1781 marks the beginning of the annual 'appointment' with bagpipe competitions. I shall explain these spheres and their impact in the piping world in the following chapter.

## Chapter 5

### The bagpipe in Romantic music, art and performance

Chapter 4 of this work focused mainly on the Romantic literary references to the bagpipe: I have analysed the imagery the instrument inspired to authors all over Britain since the publication of James Macpherson's Ossianic fragments. The military aspect which, as I discussed in Chapter 3, acquired very positive terms towards the end of the eighteenth century, is further emphasised in these Romantic works. At the same time, the employed discourse shows that Jacobitism – the issue behind much bagpipe-related literature of the time – is very much a thing of the past. The terms are romanticised; the risings are no longer something to be feared, but a memory of an event which has shown the valiant, military character of the Scot. Wordsworth's words about the "subterraneous music" of the South wind like "bagpipers on distant Highland hills"<sup>701</sup> in the poem 'Michael', analysed in the Chapter 4, are eloquent: the South wind is a bringer of storm, and its rumbling brings disquietude to the pastoral scene. Yet the "bagpipers" are on "distant Highland hills": they convey a memory, an idea, but it is far away; it poses the *feeling* of a danger by means of its associations with Jacobitism and the threat it represented.

The final section of my work will focus on music, performance and the figurative arts. Scotland acquired international visibility as a nation embodying Romantic ideals, and to demonstrate this in greater depth I will analyse the role and impact of Scottish music in Britain and abroad. I will also focus on the music about Scotland, particularly on Felix Mendelssohn: his perception of Scotland has been 'exported' worldwide thanks to his *Scottish Symphony*. The Highland Societies, and events such as the Northern Meeting also featured prominently in the shaping of Scottish identity. By promoting the bagpipe as they did, as the musical expression of the Scottish "martial spirit"<sup>702</sup>, they also contributed to defining performance and repertoire in the light of the developing scenario of the piping competitions, the first of which took place in 1781<sup>703</sup>. The rapid transformation from simple piping-skills competition to flashy display of Highlandness<sup>704</sup> – which Grant Jarvie calls "the romantic Hollywood of the Highlands"<sup>705</sup> – was probably one of the most colourful aspects of the piping performing world in late eighteenth- and

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<sup>701</sup> William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797-1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 254.

<sup>702</sup> The "preservation of the Ancient Music of the Highlands" and the "keeping up of the Martial Spirit" were two of the objects stated by the Highland Society of London. See William Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society 1750-1950* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), p. 64.

<sup>703</sup> Kenneth McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007), p. 1.

<sup>704</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society*, pp. 81-82.

<sup>705</sup> Grant Jarvie, *Highland Games: the Making of the Myth* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991), p. 2.

early nineteenth century Britain. In this chapter I will show how this was noticed and perceived by travellers and visitors.

I will also give an account of the presence of the bagpipe outside the ‘competitive arena’. Everyday use of the bagpipe often enough also included piping for tourists – anecdotes and references to the bagpipe abound in travel-books and memoirs of the time. A number of authors, allured by the antiquity of the culture described in Macpherson’s work, give a report of the history of Scotland and certain characteristic cultural aspects, of which the bagpipe is one of the most interesting examples. A few, such as Thomas Pennant, Thomas Newte and John MacCulloch, as I have mentioned in Chapter 4, trace the history of the bagpipe back to the Danes or the Norwegians. Others, such as a writer of the *Critical Review*<sup>706</sup>, maintain that it is original of Grecian and Roman culture; others again, such as the Pole Krystyn Lach-Szyrma<sup>707</sup> and Thomas Garnett<sup>708</sup>, simply record the opinions of previous authors, or relate known anecdotes, or marvel at the stirring effect of bagpipe music on Highland troops. I will focus on those references which give us an insight into the travellers’ perceptions of the bagpipe: their impressions, the impact the instrument had on them, and the imagery it brought to their mind, give us an idea of the instrument’s ‘status’ in the music and art of the long-eighteenth century.

Finally, I will dedicate a section to the visual arts. The evocative paintings by artists such as John Knox, Edwin Landseer, David Wilkie and David Allan show the development of Romantic and picturesque taste. In this aesthetic context, the bagpipe embodies a nostalgic feeling: its presence is enough to convey thoughts about a long-lost idyllic rural life; virtuous simplicity, community life and spirit, contact with nature, honour, and dignity. Much like what happened in literature, any bellicose feeling or threat is only present (if at all) as a memory, an exotic distancing element. It is a ‘tamed’ characteristic of a past which has gone, and will only come back in romanticised fantasies.

### Scotland and its music

According to David Johnson, great interest was developing in the eighteenth-century for national song, particularly in, and about, Scottish music. As mentioned previously, he points out that explains the origins of the interest in Scots tunes and national song began in the 1770s, when national song tunes were introduced into sonatas and concertos. Particularly, J. C. Bach started off the trend, with his publication of a piano concerto the

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<sup>706</sup> Anon., ‘Fragments of Scottish History’, in *The Critical Review, or, Annals of Literature*, issue 28, February (1800), 141–149 (p. 147).

<sup>707</sup> Mona Kedsle McLeod, *From Charlotte Square to Fingal’s Cave* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2004), pp. 219–220.

<sup>708</sup> Thomas Garnett, *Observations on a Tour through the Highlands*, in 2 volumes (London: John Stockdale, 1811, first edition 1800), vol. 1, pp. 162–163.



slow movement of which was a variation on ‘The yellow-hair’d laddie’<sup>709</sup>. Johnson’s claims are supported by the appearance of a number of publications on Scottish music, especially collections. Among these are James Johnson and Robert Burns’ *Scots Musical Museum* (first volume published in 1787), George Thomson’s *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice* (first volume published in 1799), James Oswald’s *Caledonian Pocket Companion* (1759), Robert Bremner’s *Collection of Scots Reels or Country Dances* (1757), Patrick McDonald’s *Collection of Highland Vocal Airs* (1784), Alexander McGlashan’s *Collection of Scots Measures, Hornpipes, Jigs, Allemands, Cotillons* (c. 1781). These are but a few of the collections of Scottish songs circulating at the time, and they show a keen interest for national music. William Napier’s *Original Scots Songs* and William Whyte’s *A Collection of Scottish Airs* acquired particular fame, since the collectors sought for Joseph Haydn’s collaboration for their settings. Haydn had in fact offered his cooperation to Napier and Whyte’s (rival) projects, and at the same time also composed Scots songs for Thomson’s *Select Collection*<sup>710</sup>.

A certain attraction towards Scottish music was developing, but it was far from being confined to Britain alone. Beethoven in 1809 began working on setting Scottish tunes for George Thomson’s *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice*, to which Haydn had also collaborated until his death in the same year. Macpherson’s reception played a great part in the promotion of Scotland’s music, as his works swept through Europe inspiring authors, critics, artists and musicians: from Thomas Gray to Franz Schubert, from Gotthold Lessing to Melchiorre Cesarotti. Ossian was soon attributed the epithet of “Homer of the North” by figures such as Hugh Blair; Madame de Staël and Chateaubriand considered him to be the father of Germanic poetry<sup>711</sup>. In Adrienne Tedeschi’s words,

Ossian introduit ses adeptes dans le royaume romantique: décor et âme, action et expression, tout annonce l’aube nouvelle. Sous l’inspiration de Loda les poètes parlent sapins, cavernes, nuages, palais aériens, dans un langage aussi vague et aussi exalté que les sentiments de leurs héros et héroïnes.<sup>712</sup>

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<sup>709</sup> David Johnson, *Musica Scotica III* (Glasgow: University of Glasgow, 2000), p. 196.

<sup>710</sup> Sarah Jean Clemmens, *The Highland Muse in Romantic German Music*, Ph.D. thesis (Yale University: authorized facsimile, 2007), pp. 65-68.

<sup>711</sup> Adrienne Tedeschi, *Ossian “L’Homère du Nord” en France* (Milan: Tipografia Sociale, 1911), pp. 12 and 56.

<sup>712</sup> “Ossian introduced his followers into the Romantic realm: décor and soul, action and expression: everything announces the new dawn. Undjer Loda’s inspiration, the poets talk fir-trees, caverns, clouds, ethereal palaces, in a language as vague and exalted as the sentiments of their heroes and heroines”. Tedeschi, *Ossian*, p. 57. My translation.

The Ossian phenomenon led scholars and intellectuals to reflect upon the “cult of folk-poetry”<sup>713</sup>: Johann Wolfgang Goethe, for instance, collected Germanic folk-songs, together with Johann Gottfried Herder. The latter was particularly interested in the study of primitive poetry, and consequently found much fruit for thought in Macpherson’s work: for Herder “the appeal was immense, and Ossian momentarily became the archetype of primitive poet”<sup>714</sup>. In ‘The North’, according to Herder, poetry and its magical value was never lost, as opposed, for instance, to Rome – which is why Scotland, where the bards never ceased to be an important part of society and culture, never succumbed to the Empire<sup>715</sup>. This contributed to configure Scotland as the archetypal Northern European country, in the sense attributed by Madame de Staël to ‘the North’ as the fulcrum of Romanticism, as I have discussed in Chapter 4.

The fascination for all things traditional, national, and ‘folk’ (with all the limitations the term implies) included, as we have seen, literature and art more in general:

Allied to wider philosophical and anthropological concerns, nations, especially smaller ones on the periphery of Europe, were deeply engaged in discovering and disseminating information about their local and national musical and literary traditions. [...] European composers of the period were fascinated by the opportunities provided them by Scotland’s newly published poetic and musical traditions. [...]

Although one of the smaller nations in Europe, Scotland presented three key characteristics that were to make a huge impact on Romantic musical imagination: sublime landscape and suitably dramatic climate; a newly emerging body of national epic and ‘folk’ literature; and a reactivated musical life which relied heavily on an existing and developing national tradition of instrumental music (bagpipe and fiddle).<sup>716</sup>

There certainly was intellectual musical research in Scotland. As a result of the ascendancy of the violin and the huge popularity of Italian musicians and composers such as Arcangelo Corelli, in the eighteenth century one of the nation’s most typical forms of native music, *piobaireachd*, was set for the fiddle, and by the nineteenth century it had found its way to keyboard instruments as well – from harpsichord to piano.

This focus on Scotland and its distinguishing characteristics was also visible in art; exemplary in this sense is William Bell Scott’s 1872 ‘Nativity’<sup>717</sup>.

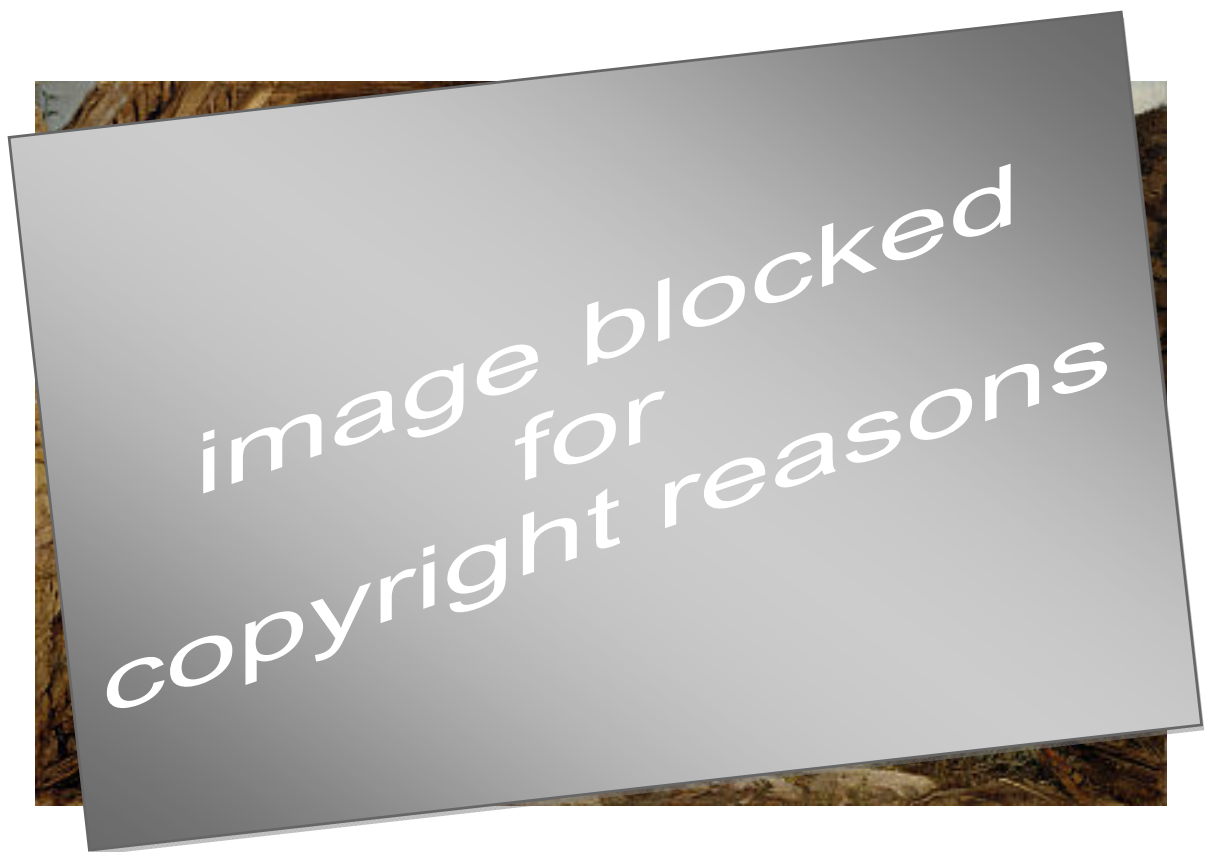
<sup>713</sup> Alexander Gillies, *Herder* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1945), p. 39.

<sup>714</sup> Gillies, *Herder*, p. 43.

<sup>715</sup> Robert Clark, *Herder: his Life and Thought* (Berkeley: University of California), 1955, p. 253.

<sup>716</sup> Kirsteen McCue, ‘Scottish Song, Lyric Poetry and the Romantic Composer’, in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. by Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), 39–48 (p. 40).

<sup>717</sup> NGS, 000-000-016-090-C. Reproduced with permission.



The setting is a ruined barn set in a rural landscape. The vanishing point converges to the left, where the Holy Family sits, framed by the ginger patch of the cow's back, the old wooden rafters supporting a group of angels, and the dry-stone pillar. What makes this canvas different from other Nativity scenes is the fact that the author sets the action near Penkill Castle; not only that, but the shepherds are playing a set of Highland bagpipes to the infant Christ.

It is not altogether unusual to find bagpipe players in depictions of the Nativity: the Italian tradition in particular connects the *zampognari* with the adoration of the shepherds. The *zampogna* influence was also present in music, where the distinctive sound of its Christmas tunes was reproduced with the orchestra by composers such as Giuseppe Torelli, Arcangelo Corelli, J. S. Bach and George Frideric Handel. In the field of the visual arts, artists such as Jacopo Bassano, Bronzino and Domenichino, as well as painters all over Europe (including Scots such as David Wilkie), and anonymous prints, portray shepherds playing the *zampogna* to the Infant, or even to statues and icons of the Nativity. But William Bell Scott has re-interpreted a symbol of Italian culture, and transformed it into a product which speaks of Scotland only. Just like the 'imported' violin music of Italian inspiration was adapted for *piobaireachd*, so another typical icon of the Italian tradition is transformed into what is unique to Scotland: the Highland bagpipe. This was part of a desire to show that Scotland could stand in its own right, a nation which didn't have to draw its models from other cultures: it had enough substance and material to create its own, distinctive fiddle music, as well as its own Nativity iconography. Highland-based iconography was very common with British Romantic

painters; the trend persisted well into the Victorian age. For this reason various artists bridge the two eras, and many works of art appeal to both the Romantic and Victorian cultural climate.

It is also thanks to these reflections about Scotland's cultural individuality that Joseph MacDonald began writing his *Compleat Theory*. After this publication, many other works had been written about Scottish music, the bagpipe and *piobaireachd*. Experiments were being made to render bagpipe music accurately, both on different instruments and with different notation styles. Donald MacDonald in his *Ancient Martial Music of Caledonia* (c. 1822) established a form of notation which was to be used by most music writers after, and which consisted in writing all the melody-note stems pointing down, and all the gracenote stems pointing up, in order to facilitate reading<sup>718</sup>. Researches reached a great level of complexity with one of the most fascinating bagpipe-related works undertaken in the nineteenth century: John Francis Campbell's 1880 *Canntaireachd: Articulate Music*. Campbell has sought throughout his life to track down the ancient traditions of the *Gàidhealtachd*, including the songs, tales, and particularly the *canntaireachd*: the bagpipe's own special syllabic notation, orally sent down from generation to generation and put in writing by Campbell, in such a way that would not leave any doubt as to the performance of the tune, gracenotes included.

It is clear that Scotland, maybe more acutely than other European countries, was experiencing a *gusto* for its own national song, and what it was perceived to be. The country's recent visibility abroad inspired a number of composers to write Scottish-inspired music – J. C. Bach, as mentioned above, had also woven a Scottish popular song into one of his piano concertos<sup>719</sup>, and this encouraged other composers, such as Haydn and Beethoven, to do the same. Europe therefore was becoming more and more musically conscious of Scotland; but not only through variations on actual original Scottish themes. Felix Mendelssohn's, for instance, spoke about Scotland not through traditional, national tunes, but through emotional musical depictions of its landscapes, as I shall argue in the following section.

### **Felix Mendelssohn: the Scottish fascination**

Possibly the essence of Scotland in Romantic music, or at least the quintessential representation of Scottish music to the European audience, is Mendelssohn's *Scottish Symphony*, and his *Concert Overture No 2: Die Hebriden* or *Fingalshöhle*, Op. 26. The father of the young composer had organised for him a tour of Britain in 1829, in the hope of

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<sup>718</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, pp. 105–107.

<sup>719</sup> 'Concerto in B flat, Op.13, No.4'. The third movement is made up of a set of variations of the popular Scottish tune 'The Yellow-haired Laddie'.

broadening his horizons, experience, and extending his reputation abroad before he chose where to settle for his career<sup>720</sup>. His letters give us an idea of the musical intuitions and impressions he was gaining from the visit. He had started off full of enthusiasm and on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1829 wrote to his friend Klingemann:

NEXT AUGUST I AM GOING TO SCOTLAND, with a rake for folksong, an ear for the lovely, fragrant countryside, and a heart for the bare legs of the natives.

Klingemann, you must join me; we may lead a royal life! Demolish the obstacles and fly to Scotland. We want to take a look at the Highlanders.<sup>721</sup>

The voyeuristic curiosity clearly shows the appeal which Scotland and its natives had on visitors and researchers. Mendelssohn reached Scotland by the end of July 1829, and was in fact fascinated by the Scottish landscape, and could hardly think of anything equally beautiful in his Swiss reminiscences.

Although Mendelssohn travelled to England before he reached Scotland, it was clear to him that his inspiration would probably come from Scottish music rather than English, for the reasons explained in Chapter 4 through the words of Kollmann: although in England resided some of the greatest musicians, this meant that “all Styles are so much intermixed, as hardly to leave room for an original English style”<sup>722</sup>. Scotland, on the other hand, was aware of the distinctiveness of her music. Clare Nelson identifies the role of aristocrats, publishers and philosophers in the spreading of popularity of Scottish music in the eighteenth century:

While the musical enthusiasts of the Scottish aristocracy and gentry could convince their English counterparts of the value of this music as pure entertainment, Scottish publishers identified market trends and provided raw materials for these upper-class enthusiasts, and Scottish philosophers spread their reasoned ideas on the role of Scotland in the relationship between primitive and ‘civilised’ societies amongst the English literati. In turn, various sections of the English public – all of whom had upper-class or educated backgrounds – seized upon Scottish culture, and in particular music, as the identifier of the way forward in their need to create a cohesive culture for the entire nation.<sup>723</sup>

The fact that England had arguably ‘lost’ its musical distinctiveness therefore contributed to establishing Scottish music as a representation of Britishness. For these reasons

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<sup>720</sup> Jack Werner, ‘Felix and Fanny Mendelssohn’, in *Music & Letters*, Vol. 28, No. 4 (1947), 303–337 (p. 307).

<sup>721</sup> Translation as found in David Jenkins and Mark Visocchi, *Mendelssohn in Scotland* (London: Chappell & Company Limited, 1978), p. ii.

<sup>722</sup> Augustus Frederic Christopher Kollmann, *An Essay on Practical Music Composition*, ed. by Imogene Horsley (New York: Da Capo Press, 1973), p. 12.

<sup>723</sup> Claire Nelson, *Creating a Notion of ‘Britishness’* DMus thesis, in 2 volumes (London: The Royal College of Music, 2003), vol. 1, p. 87.

Scotland stood out, apart from its literary achievements of international resonance, also for its intact, unique musical repertoire.

On June 7<sup>th</sup> 1829 Mendelssohn wrote a letter to his family, in which he describes his state of emotional turmoil at the sight of a lady called Louise, and then went on to say that “As soon as I find some peace and quiet, either here or in Scotland, I will write various things, and the Scottish bagpipe shall not exist in vain”<sup>724</sup> – a rather *ex abrupto* remark to make in the context, but certainly indicative that he felt he would give the Scottish bagpipe a ‘reason of existence’ by making it the inspiration for his music.

Indeed this keen interest in Scottish music was not peculiar to Mendelssohn alone: as we have seen above, many publications were circulating at the time, by Thomson, Burns, Napier, Whyte, to name but a few. The above-mentioned Beethoven, whom Mendelssohn as we have seen mentions with his *Nationallieder*, in 1809 began his work for George Thomson’s *Select Collection of Original Scottish Airs for the Voice*. But Mendelssohn composed his piece inspired by his *journey* to Scotland, rather than by Scotland’s tunes: as Matthew Gelbart points out, he does not tap “into the universal *via* the local as Beethoven had”, but instead limits all locality so that none of his techniques sounded “so jarringly Other in the way that some of the experiments in Beethoven’s song-settings are”<sup>725</sup>.

The young composer’s journey was seen as a memorable opportunity by many composers of the time. Carl Friedrich Zelter, for instance, wrote to Mendelssohn on 9 June 1829, asking him, should he find the opportunity, to take notes about the peculiarities of Scottish and Irish music, such as tempo and accent. Zelter’s opinion was in fact that not enough was known about Scottish music, since the majority of those pieces were unknown in Germany and what was known derived from re-interpretations by Haydn and other (non-Scottish) composers<sup>726</sup>.

In spite of the excited start, from the words of one of Mendelssohn’s letters, written from Wales on the 25<sup>th</sup> August after his tour of Scotland, it is quite clear that his Scottish masterpiece sprung from feelings which have little to do with his enjoyment of traditional music:

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<sup>724</sup> Sebastian Hensel, ed., *The Mendelssohn Family (1729-1847)*, translated by Carl Klingemann and an American Collaborator (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, & Rivington, 1882), vol. 1, p. 187.

<sup>725</sup> Matthew Gelbart, *The Invention of Folk Music and Art Music* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 248.

<sup>726</sup> “Solltest du Gelegenheit finden Schottische und Irische Nationaltänze oder Lieder zu hören so schreibe sie genau nach Bewegung, Akzent u.d.gl. Eigenheiten auf. Die meisten Stücke dieser Art sind ungeschicht verzeichnet und was Haydn und Geringere daraus machen wird zu einem Zweiten und Dritten wodurch die erste Eigenheit aufhört; es ist Haydensch und nicht heidnisch”. See Thomas Christian Schmidt, *Die Ästhetischen Grundlagen der Instrumentalmusik Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdys* (Stuttgart: Verlag für Wissenschaft und Forschung, 1996), p. 95.

Anything but national music! May ten thousand devils take all folklore. [...] Scottish bagpipes, Swiss cow's horns, Welsh harps – all playing the Huntsmen's Chorus with ghastly variations or improvisations, not to mention the lovely songs in the lobby – it's the only real music they have! It's beyond comprehension! Anyone like myself, who can't abide Beethoven's *Nationallieder*, should come here and hear them being howled by shrill nasal voices, accompanied by doltish bumbling fingers, and then try to hold his tongue.<sup>727</sup>

Mendelssohn was evidently not among those who appreciated the fashionable research into traditional music, of which the *Volksliedern* became the classical counterpart. His complaint was that in his journeys he could not find music which went far beyond the popular national musical genre. As John Purser writes, "Scotland never had a Schubert. She had her own body of incomparably lovely and lively melodies"<sup>728</sup>.

Mendelssohn, though not fascinated by popular music, mastered exceptionally musical pictorialism. On August 7<sup>th</sup> 1829, he wrote a letter to his father "auf einer Hebride" – "from one of the Hebrides", and in this letter is the first draft in piano reduction of what will be the famous *Ouverture*. This is what he wrote:

In order to make clear what a strange mood has come over me in the Hebrides, the following occurred to me:<sup>729</sup>



<sup>727</sup> Rudolph Elvers, ed., *Felix Mendelssohn: A Life in Letters*, trans. by Craig Tomlinson (London: Cassell, 1986), p. 89.

<sup>728</sup> John Purser, *Scotland's Music* (Edinburgh and London: Mainstream Publishing, 2007), p. 200.

<sup>729</sup> Elvers, *Felix Mendelssohn*, p. 87.

The manuscript records twenty-one bars of music, full of instrumental indications and orchestral cues: this gives us the idea of just how vivid the composer's project for this work was. Mendelssohn

proves fascinated with the possibility of describing a locale in music, not simply a synaesthetic translation of sight into sound, but a musical mapping out of complex emotional topography.<sup>730</sup>

The *Overture* is in fact not only the rendering in music of a visual experience. The notes do not only speak about the landscape, about the raging sea and the tall basaltic walls: they are peopled with Gaelic heroes, bards, Fingal, and Macpherson's words. Mendelssohn translates the feeling of the Ossianic fragments into music: literature and music are brought together at the sight of the Cave, under the common denominator of emotion.

To a number of composers, the *idea* of Scottish music was more important than the musical characteristics specific to it. Musicians from a German background in particular composed Scottish-inspired works, but those who actually quoted or imitated Scottish music were but few – Beethoven being one of them. Scottish fragments and ballads, especially the Ossianic material, played a considerable role in the development of German Romanticism, as it constituted an alternate heritage to the Greco-Roman artistic tradition. It has been argued in fact that Celtic culture and antiquities were employed to bolster the emerging notion of German nationalism in contraposition with the Italian heritage. Scotland, representing “the North”, set an example and inspiration for a sense of nationality when an alternative to the Italian predominance was needed<sup>731</sup>.

Mendelssohn, like the many visitors Scotland received, was certainly intrigued by the local habit. Upon his arrival in Edinburgh, he remarked on a group of Highlanders gathered for a piping competition:

Everything here looks so stern and robust, half wrapped in haze or smoke or fog. Moreover, there was a bagpipe competition. Many Highlanders came in costume from church [...] with long red beards, tartan plaids, bonnets and feathers, naked knees, and their bagpipes in their hands. [...] I feel as if the time went at a very rapid pace when I have before me so much that was and so much that is.<sup>732</sup>

This letter is dated 30 July 1829: the young composer had therefore only just arrived, and was charmed rather than perturbed by the frequent displays of national ‘folklore’, as it would have appeared to him. The young composer was fascinated by these exotic

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<sup>730</sup> Peter Mercier-Taylor, *The Life of Mendelssohn* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 85.

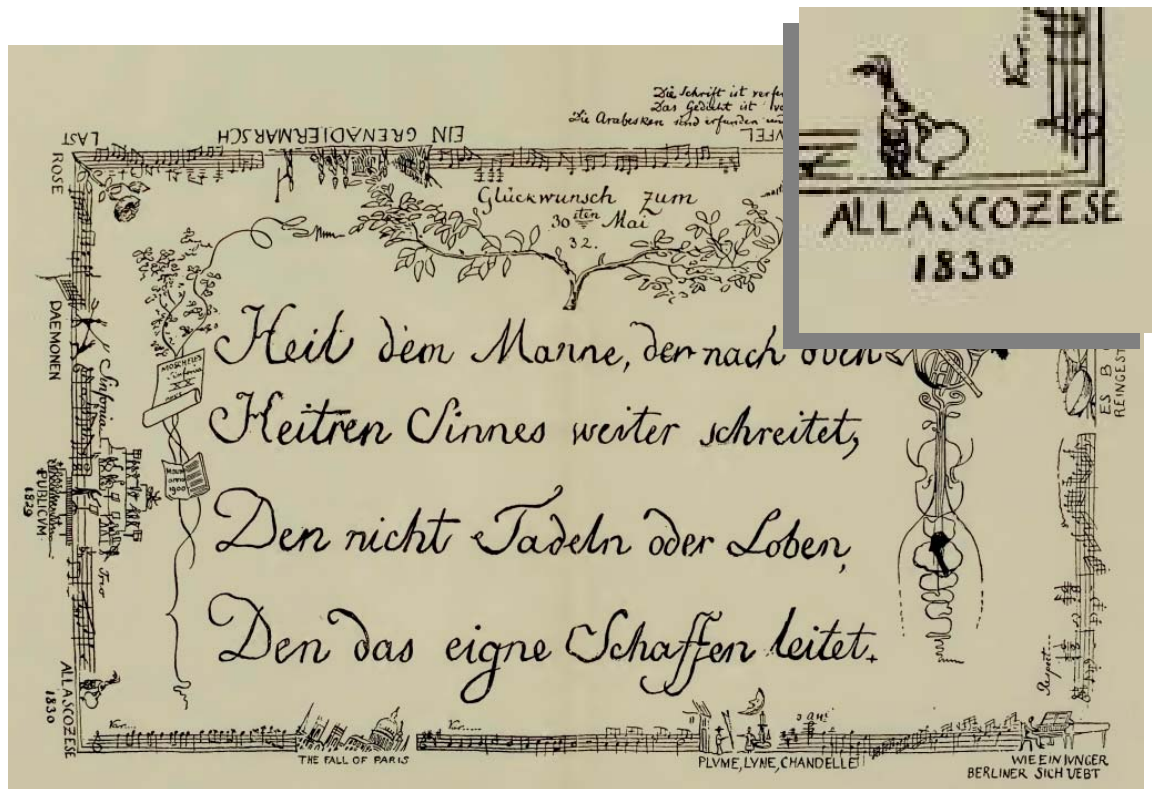
<sup>731</sup> Clemmens, *The Highland Muse*, pp. i and 18.

<sup>732</sup> Jenkins-Visocchi, *Mendelssohn in Scotland*, p.50.



experiences, and since he was witnessing a gathering for a bagpipe competition, he is bound to have seen the showiest display of Scottishness the late 1820s could offer.

It is curious to see how the composer caricatured the bagpipe in a 1832 birthday-drawing he made for his friend Ignaz Moscheles: on the bottom-left corner, above the caption “Alla Scozese”, a “Scotchman with his bagpipes illustrates the “Anticipations of Scotland”, a piece dedicated to Sir Walter Scott”<sup>733</sup>:



The little figure looks like a native Indian inflating an enormous bag which seems propped up (perhaps on the chanter?) and in a way which reminds one rather of a cello! Mendelssohn must have been struck by the bag-element of the instrument (in many ways the most characteristic feature of the bagpipe), and also by the Scottish attire. His witnessing, as we have seen, of a piping competition (at least the parade of it, if not the whole performance) may well have shaped the young composer’s perception of the instrument and its players.

The competitions organised by the Highland Societies were in fact becoming more and more a general show of supposedly quintessential Scottishness. The experience clearly had an impact on young Mendelssohn, as indeed it had on many travellers who happened to witness them. But besides the visual/sound impact on the visitor, the competitions also had a considerable impact on the performing world, as will emerge from the next section of the present work.

<sup>733</sup> Mendelssohn, Felix, *Letters of Felix Mendelssohn to Ignaz and Charlotte Moscheles*, ed. by Felix Moscheles (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1888), p. 20. Drawing on pp. 21–22. Image on archive.org is public domain.

### Competitions, the Highland Societies, and the performing world

The first piping competition was set up in 1781. It became a regular event, which attracted larger and larger audiences throughout the whole of Britain; the comments of foreign visitors are also very interesting, as we will have the chance to see below, as they provided a spectacle which was certainly exotic and unusual.

During the nineteenth century, the circuit increased. As time went by, the *ceòl mòr* competitions started to include all sorts of popular variations, such as dancing. Normally all the performers were men, though on one particular occasion in 1799 a woman was brought in to entertain. Even the pipers were among the dancers. Highland Reels were generally the preferred ones, but sword dancing and other dances were also included. By 1799 specialists were introduced, and the Highland Societies are known to have received at least one complaint for allowing non-Highlanders to pipe for the dancing<sup>734</sup>.

By 1826 the accompaniment alternated between pipe music and orchestra<sup>735</sup>; from 1832 the accompaniment for the dancing was provided by an instrumental band<sup>736</sup>. John Dalrymple relates in fact that during dancing competitions “the competitors are aided by an ordinary instrumental band”, as “connoisseurs of the saltatorial art do not relish it [the bagpipe] as much as stringed instruments”, since “time and emphasis are neither so well marked as by the violin”<sup>737</sup>. In 1838 new prizes were offered: for the best-dressed, and the best-dressed in home-made tartan<sup>738</sup>.

Although, as Grant Jarvie points out, the modern Highland Gatherings developed from a variety of pre-existing cultural forms linked to Highland recreational pastimes<sup>739</sup>, of course all of the above-mentioned concepts were alien to the traditional Gaelic world; but that soon enough became ‘not the point’. As Gibson explains, the competitions were “directed to contend in a superficial and condescending way with the generally unappealing idea of Scotland as North Britain, which had been seeded in 1707”. These events became “the modern model and springboard for an expanding network of formal cultural and sporting events run in the Highlands”<sup>740</sup>.

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<sup>734</sup> John Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping, 1745-1945* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2002), p. 136.

<sup>735</sup> Angus MacKay, ed., *A Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd* (Wakefield: E.P. Publishing, 1972), p. 19.

<sup>736</sup> Joan and Thomas Flett, ‘Some Early Highland Dancing Competitions’, *Aberdeen University Review*, 36, no. 115 (1956), 345-358 (p. 354).

<sup>737</sup> John Graham Dalrymple, *Musical Memoirs of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Thomas G. Stevenson, 1849), p. 106.

<sup>738</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 177.

<sup>739</sup> Jarvie, *Highland Games*, p. 37.

<sup>740</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 177.

Jarvie identifies three factors which influenced and shaped the Highland Gatherings between 1740 and 1850, namely:

- a) a process of cultural marginalisation which resulted in the relative destruction of the original Highland way of life and the cultural artefacts which contributed to it;
- b) a process of emigration which resulted in many Highland customs being transported with the *émigré* to North America in particular and
- c) an initial stage of cultural transformation during which many Highland and Friendly Societies actually encouraged the further development of a number of Highland Gatherings.<sup>741</sup>

From this point of view, from Jarvie's words the Gatherings appear to be the fruit of policies of cultural marginalisation and late eighteenth-century flow of mass-emigration. His opinion is that they have virtually sprung from the *ruins* of original Highland life, and from cultural *transformation*; concepts which are far from making us think of a process of revival and revitalisation of tradition.

The first proper Highland Games<sup>742</sup> emerged from the Glengarry "gymnastic games" and the Edinburgh piping competitions of the Highland Society of London, and were born as a sort of Gaelic counterpart of the Northern Meeting of Inverness. The Northern Meeting was inaugurated in 1788; it was an English-speaking game-event which had no practical connection with Gaelic culture<sup>743</sup>. The general public for this kind of show included

Half the London world of fashion, all the clever people that could be hunted out from all parts, all the north country, all the neighbourhood from far and near, without regard to wealth and station.<sup>744</sup>

When the Edinburgh competitions came to an end in 1844, the Northern Meeting became the most important piping event. Many similar realities were scattered all over Scotland, with events such as the ones in Inverary, Lochaber, Aberfeldy, as well as the games in Braemar, Cowal and Portree, to name but a few of the better-known gatherings. On these occasions, piping was not always a core part of the event<sup>745</sup>.

The moment of greatest expansion for the games was around and after the 1860s, as the growth of the railway network helped connect the country more easily, working hours were reduced, and incomes rose. By this time, the games and competitions were being accused of being vulgarly commercial, even culturally fraudulent. There were

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<sup>741</sup> Jarvie, *Highland Games*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>742</sup> According to William Donaldson the Highland Games started in 1838. See Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, p. 198.

<sup>743</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 179.

<sup>744</sup> Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus, quoted in Iain Colquhoun and Hugh Matchell, *Highland Gatherings* (London: Heath Cranton, 1927), pp. 117-118.

<sup>745</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, pp. 198-199.

movements to boycott games and gatherings, since they were seen as vain exhibitions of pseudo-Highlandness, set up to please a voyeuristic audience made up of people of fashion who had no competences whatsoever in piping or Highland traditions<sup>746</sup>. In 1885 Caroline MacDonnell wrote to the *Oban Times* complaining about the situation of the Highland Gatherings:

Various efforts are being made to revive the old Highland games, but it seems to be either unknown, or entirely overlooked, that they were the pastime of the people – whereas now, several persons endeavour to gain a livelihood by them, which materially alters their character, and has introduced a theatrical style of dancing, quite foreign to the real Scotch steps and mode of executing them. [...] You will therefore see that instead of perpetuating these old games and costume, the gatherings (as now conducted) are only producing a very singular burlesque – which is generally received as the old style.<sup>747</sup>

The author of the article is clearly frustrated at the degeneration of the games, which are no longer the expression of Highland customs but have become a “burlesque”: a masquerade, quite alien to true Highland traditions. This is because the games and gatherings were more often than not organised and attended by people who had no real notion of Highland practices. The phenomenon reached such an extent that formal education, as well as wealth, was often enough all it took to be part of the judge panel in piping competitions. Quoting Angus Fairrie, Donaldson makes a list of those present at the Balls of the Northern Meeting: Princes, Dukes, Ducs, Marquises, Earls, Counts, Comtes, Barons, and even Indian Grandees and Maharajas certainly set the events far apart from popular, ‘folk’ culture<sup>748</sup>.

An early nineteenth-century engraving shows the Strathfillan Highland Games<sup>749</sup>: the first focus of the picture is on the action in the centre of the background. The darker ‘frame’ in the foreground soon draws the attention of the viewer. To the left is a small group of elegantly-dressed Highlanders, resting by the trees in the shade. On the right another, smaller group of Highlanders points at the performers, and a piper stands with his pipes and looks at his colleagues as he plays.

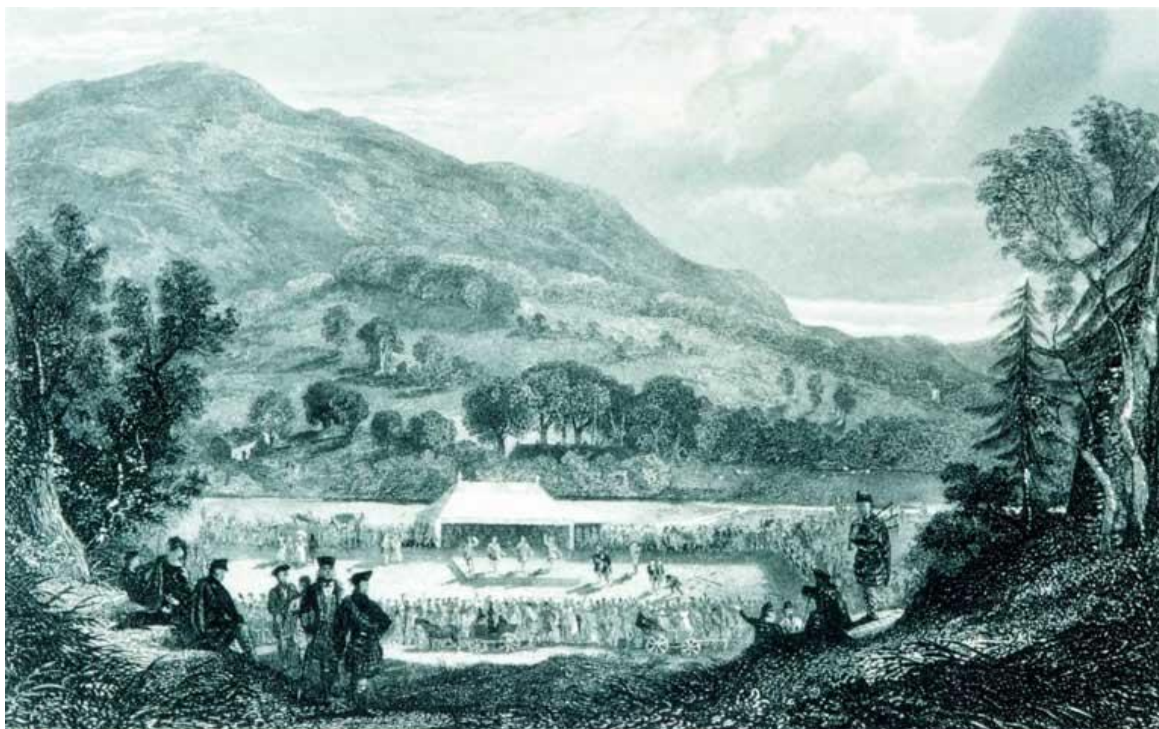
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<sup>746</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, p. 202.

<sup>747</sup> Caroline MacDonnell, ‘Highland Gatherings’, in *Oban Times*, February 22<sup>nd</sup> (1885), p. 3.

<sup>748</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, p. 200, and 202–204.

<sup>749</sup> NMS, 000-000-579-552-R. Reproduced with permission.



John MacCulloch, Scottish geologist, wrote extensively to Sir Walter Scott about his journeys to the Highlands and the Western Isles. His letters elaborate his considerations on a series of topics, from politics to culture, including a strongly opinionated section on music and bagpipes. He describes a piping competition between Donald Abroch, descendant of a hereditary piper, and John Macdonald, who had piped for the Emperor of China – a detail which in itself denotes an interest in Scottish culture even beyond the European borders.

MacCulloch's opinions in the subject-matter of competitions were likely to be dictated by those of his up-to-date friends "whose piping tastes [...]", according to Gibson, "were shaped by the Highland Society of London, and even the Highland Society of Scotland"<sup>750</sup>:

As etiquette demanded that each should be heard in turn, the Imperial piper, having the preference, as of divine right, put forth all his energy on the advent of his rival, as the cock crows a louder defiance should some neighbour chanticleer intrude on his hereditary domain. [...] It was now necessary that they should play together a duet, composed of different pibrachs in different keys, in which it was the business of each to outscram his neighbour by the united force of lungs and elbows. [...] The chanters screamed, the drones grunted, and as the battle raged with increasing fury, Donald's wind seemed ready to burst its cerements, while the steam of the whisky distilling through the bag dropped as from the nozzle of a worm-pipe.<sup>751</sup>

<sup>750</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 120.

<sup>751</sup> MacCulloch, *The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland*, in 4 volumes (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1824), vol. 2, pp. 374–375.

This is an interesting, and of course ironic, insight into the practice of a piping competition. MacCulloch doesn't specify on what occasion he has witnessed this performance of "duelling chanters". It would appear to be an unofficial event, which nevertheless acquires quite a degree of seriousness and follows the "etiquette" of formal piping competitions.

By the time MacCulloch was writing, many chiefs were severed from Gaelic tradition<sup>752</sup>. There was also no longer room in Highland society for pipers to exercise their profession without the aid of an extra source of income: social and economic change modified the relationship between piper and laird dramatically. Land proprietors, preoccupied with maximising the income deriving from their properties, were no longer willing to keep a "professional piper" whose only contribution could be his piping. The following passage, written by Duncan Warrand in 1821, gives us an idea of the requirements of the time:

[...] Col. Grant asked Lieut. Col. Gordon, when on his way to Inverness, to let him know in case he should happen to hear of a man of good character, who could, when occasion required, play a good tune on the Bag Pipe, and who, if he were disposed to come and settle there, could be rendered useful either as a workman or as a tradesman. A person to be his piper and nothing but a piper he did not wish for. Colonel Gordon, however, mistook Colonel Grant, and sent to Cullen House a professional piper, who, although he pleased his employer could do nothing else, and piping could only occupy a very small part of his time. He was therefore sent back to Inverness, to have his account settled and a sum paid in compensation.<sup>753</sup>

The piper was therefore expected to fill extra positions, such as valet, gamekeeper, fisherman, chauffeur and so forth; certainly not an attractive prospect, for those pipers who had reached the highest degrees of their profession<sup>754</sup>.

Relevant to this is John Knox's description of the fisheries on Loch Earn:

In this day's voyage, we observed a number of Highland boats, with four oars, and containing, generally, six or seven men.— They were returning from the fishery in Loch Urn to the south coast of Sky. [...] They sing in chorus, observing a kind of time, with the movement of the oars. Though they kept close upon the shore, and at a considerable distance from our vessel, we heard the sound from almost every boat. Those who have the bagpipe use that instrument, which has a pleasing effect upon the water, and makes these poor people forget their toils.<sup>755</sup>

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<sup>752</sup> Gibson, *Traditional Gaelic Bagpiping*, p. 125.

<sup>753</sup> Quoted in Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, p. 193.

<sup>754</sup> Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe*, pp. 192-193.

<sup>755</sup> John Knox, *A Tour through the Highlands of Scotland, and the Hebride Isles* (London: Printed for J. Walter, 1787), p. 91.

As we can see, the bagpipe is described as a picturesque element, livening up the toil of fishermen. St. Kilda and Loch Broom also appear to have resounded with bagpipes:

His [Captain MacLeod's] vessels being at the fisheries, one at St. Kilda, and the other at Loch Broom, we embarked in the largest boat that remained in the harbour, and were accompanied by a pinnacle, well manned, one of whom was equally qualified for managing the sails, or the bagpipe, which he carried with him.<sup>756</sup>

It is interesting how, from the author's words, it would appear that the requirements of one of the sailors was to possess skills both in sailing and piping! This is a further proof that often enough piping skills just were not enough for pipers to sustain themselves financially, and they had to develop extra expertise in parallel.

A description similar to the ones above can be found in William Gilpin's 1776 *Observations on Several Parts of Great Britain*, in which he gives particular attention to the Highlands of Scotland from the point of view of the picturesque. The next two references will somewhat echo the idea of the ungodliness of the bagpipe. Gilpin describes the activity on fisheries: his illustration of the herring-boats on Loch Fyne is very gracious, and he remarks on how

[t]he crews of these boats seem generally to be a cheerful, happy race. Among the implements of each boat, the bagpipe is rarely forgotten; the shrill melody of which you hear resounding from every part; unless all hands are at work. On Sunday, the mirth of the several crews is changed into devotion: as you walk by the side of the lake, if the evening be still, you hear them singing psalms, instead of playing on the bagpipe.<sup>757</sup>

On Sundays the bagpipe-playing is substituted with psalm-singing. It is almost as if the sound of the bagpipe were unworthy of a day dedicated to devotion.

What also emerges from the passage is that the bagpipe was often an accompaniment to labour. From both Knox's and Gilpin's descriptions it seems that fishermen and bagpipes are quite inseparable. What's more, they almost appear like the *alter ego* of the fishermen on Sundays, when the cheerfulness expressed by the bagpipe gives way to great sobriety and moderation. James Fittler also seems to suggest the same: again in describing Loch Fyne, he writes that

on the week-days, the cheerful noise of the bagpipe and dance echoes from on board [the herring fisheries]: on the Sabbath, each boat approaches the land, and psalmody

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<sup>756</sup> Knox, *A Tour*, pp. 166-167.

<sup>757</sup> William Gilpin, *Observations on Several Parts of Great Britain*, in 2 volumes (London: Printed for T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1808), vol. 1, p. 183.



and devotion divide the day; for the common people of the north are disposed to be religious [...] <sup>758</sup>

Again the potential devilish associations described and analysed in the previous chapters emerge. Although Gilpin is far from hinting to the bagpipe being an instrument of the devil, or any such notion, the instrument is nevertheless not considered suitable for the ‘day of God’: the Lord must be praised with psalms, but strictly not with bagpipes.

### **Travel books and the tourist’s perception of the bagpipe**

The idea of Scotland’s uncontaminated, wild landscape contrasted strongly with the genteel, tidy views of the English countryside. Visitors and tourists felt the fascination of the high mountains, of the rugged cliffs; the simple, unspoiled natural elements tickled the imagination of the viewers who could plunge into the very sentiments of the sublime as staked out by Edmund Burke and Immanuel Kant, or of the picturesque which, as intended by William Gilpin, transformed the simple traveller into a veritable explorer <sup>759</sup>. Furthermore, Stephen Copley and Peter Garside agree that

The Picturesque aesthetic emerges as strongly in literary narratives (in written tours and in fiction) as it does in visual art or practical landscaping. [...] Even within the British Isles the discourse of the Picturesque intersects with and is shaped by the discourses of colonialism at various points. In the case of the Scottish Highlands, for instance, the combination of political repression, economic exploitation, and aesthetic sentimentalisation of the Scottish landscape in the early nineteenth century clearly renders the Picturesque ‘invention’ of the region a hegemonic cultural manifestation of the English colonising presence. <sup>760</sup>

The picturesque aesthetic is in fact the science of “minute accommodations between the human and the natural in the harmony of the visible world” <sup>761</sup>: it is the fascination for ‘domesticated wilderness’. The oxymoron is made possible by the anthropocentric view of nature, the hint of civilisation in an otherwise sublime context. The wild, rugged Scottish landscape is made picturesque by the improving presence of civility.

Various travel books were written between the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century, quite a few of which included journeys to Scotland. Accounts of the travellers vary greatly in style, and range from elaborate travelogues to sketchy diaries and letters <sup>762</sup>. The fascination for Scotland had already begun in the eighteenth century (“It is

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<sup>758</sup> James Fittler, *Scotia Depicta* (London: Printed by T. Bensley, 1804), plate XVIII.

<sup>759</sup> William Gilpin, *Three Essays* (London: Printed for R. Blamire, 1792), pp. 47–48.

<sup>760</sup> Stephen Copley and Peter Garside, *The Politics of the Picturesque* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 6–7.

<sup>761</sup> Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance* (Houndmills and London: The Macmillan Press Ltd., 1989), p. 62.

<sup>762</sup> Martin Rackwitz, *Travels to Terra Incognita* (Münster: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, 2007), p. 19.



now become fashionable to make a tour into Scotland for some weeks or months”, we read in a January 1772 issue *The Weekly Magazine*<sup>763</sup>), and tourism effectively increased in the early nineteenth century, also in the new form of antiquarian tourism, interested in the discovery of the wonders described in the works of, for instance, James Macpherson, Robert Burns and Sir Walter Scott.

Examples of travel books about Scotland are Samuel Johnson’s *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (1775) and James Boswell’s *Journal of a Tour of the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson* (1785), Dorothy Wordsworth’s *Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland* (1803, but published in 1874), Barthélemy Faujas de Saint Fond’s *A Journey through England and Scotland in the Hebrides in 1784*, and Alexander Campbell’s *Journey from Edinburgh through parts of North Britain* (1802); these presences denote a keen interest. After having faced yet another “Tour through Scotland”, a reviewer in 1809 wrote to the *Quarterly Review* that

There is Johnson’s Philosophic Tour, Pennant’s Descriptive Tour, Gilpin’s Picturesque Tour, Stoddart’s Sketching Tour, Garnet’s Medical Tour, Mrs Murray’s Familiar Tour, Newte’s Nautical Tour, Mawman’s Bookselling Tour, Campbell’s Crazy Tour, Lithsie’s Insipid Tour, and Boswell’s fantastic Tour [...] From collating these, the curious may learn without straying from the sound of Bow bell, the depth of the unfathomable Loch-Ness, the four wonders of Loch Lomond, the height of Fingal’s cave, and all those Caledonian memorabilia which the more desperate visit in person [...] <sup>764</sup>

These certainly sound like the words of an exasperated and saturated reviewer!

Part of the reason for the increase of journeys to Scotland, particularly after the 1790s, was also the fact that Europe was in turmoil with the Napoleonic Wars. This kept the artists and literati from going on the *Grand Tour*; at which point, Scotland and the peripheries of Britain in general constituted a valid alternative<sup>765</sup>. This should not be viewed as a mere fallback when all other options were out of the question: there was a whole stratum of British upper-class tourists who had the means and time to set off on holidays to satisfy their interest in the different, landscapes, in the antiquities and ruins, not to mention their amateur curiosities in various fields, such as botany, natural history, geology, and so forth<sup>766</sup>.

As Peter Womack points out, there is a substantial difference between the Grand Tour and going on holiday:

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<sup>763</sup>Philantropos, ‘To the Publisher of the Weekly Magazine’, in *The Weekly Magazine*, vol. 15, January 30<sup>th</sup> (1772), pp. 139–140.

<sup>764</sup>Anon., ‘Art. XVI: Caledonian Sketches’, in *The Quarterly Review*, 1.1 (1809), 178–193 (p. 182).

<sup>765</sup>Alastair Durie, *Scotland for the Holidays, a History of Tourism in Scotland, 1780–1939* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2003), pp. 36–37.

<sup>766</sup>Durie, *Scotland for the Holidays*, pp. 37–38.

the Grand Tour is the model for the lesser tours – it's a part of the tourist's education. A holiday, on the other hand, is a gesture, not of enquiry into the world, but of playful refusal of it; not an extension of one's practical experience but a licensed truancy from it. [...] travelling [...] is not so much a Grand Tour as a sentimental journey.<sup>767</sup>

This difference, which turns the visitor into a holiday-maker, also changes the perspective towards the visited country, which becomes the “setting for a pleasurable and circumscribed narrative”<sup>768</sup>. It is easy to romanticise a location chosen to spend an enjoyable few weeks: it is as if the visitor could paint his own picture of the moment and ornate it with the preferred connotations, as far apart as desired from the real life of the visitor – and the visited.

Besides English and international tourism, Scotland was also being discovered by Scots themselves, aided amongst other things by the improvement and expansion of the road network. This development had already begun after the 1715 Jacobite rising, when the poor quality of the roads in Scotland made it necessary for the Hanoverians to improve them for logistic and strategic reasons. Between 1725 and 1736, 250 miles of road and 40 new bridges were built; and after Culloden 750 further miles were added<sup>769</sup>. Furthermore, the original wagonways used to handle coal traffic in the mid-eighteenth century were improved and expanded, and translated into steam railway<sup>770</sup>, and began to be used for tourism in the early nineteenth century. By 1834 the rail company Glasgow & Garnkirk, originally established for transporting coal, ran what may be considered the first British excursion train<sup>771</sup>.

Especially the urban professional and middle class began to make yearly summer tours of their country, whether to sea or country destinations<sup>772</sup>. Not less important was the fascination generated by the Ossianic paradigm in the eighteenth century, which brought tourists from all over to trace ancient manuscripts, view the sceneries described, and breathe the air of heroism and simplicity the epic poems evoked. The spirit of the place was probably more important than the specificity of the location: given the lack of definite coordinates in Macpherson's work, much could be left to imagination and, in Pittock's words,

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<sup>767</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 150.

<sup>768</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 150.

<sup>769</sup> John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, *Imagining Scotland: Tradition, Representation and Promotion in Scottish Tourism since 1750* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1995), p. 39.

<sup>770</sup> David Turnock, *An Historical Geography of Railways in Great Britain and Ireland* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p. 112.

<sup>771</sup> Durie, *Scotland for the Holidays*, p. 61.

<sup>772</sup> Durie, *Scotland for the Holidays*, pp. 40–41.

the spirit of the place was important, but by rendering his Ossian poetry relatively Macpherson had made it extensible: its extension was not one of address, glen or township, but one of feature. Wherever the sublime or the picturesque could be found, wherever sensibility could raise a tear to faded glamour, there was Ossian's Scotland.<sup>773</sup>

It is precisely this type of almost pictorial imagination, together with the feelings produced by Sir Walter Scott's works, which triggered John Bowman's considerations about his boat trip on Loch Lomond in 1825:

The bagpiper on board our vessel was playing some Jacobite tunes and Gathering pibrochs; and we could not help peopling the neighbouring glens and mountains in our imaginations, with hundreds of kilted highlanders, whose common practice it was, within the memory of old persons still living, at such a summons from their chief, to rush down from their retired dwellings to the appointed place of rendezvous, to pillage and slaughter any hostile clan.<sup>774</sup>

The bagpipe on board the writer's vessel is reduced to a tourist facility to add an extra dimension to the feeling of Scottishness of the lake tour. The same treatment is reserved to what is now the memory of Jacobitism, expressed through the icon of the piper himself, and particularly through the tunes he plays: Bowman specifies they are in fact *Jacobite* tunes, not just pibrochs. Their significance is devoid of their original 'burdensome' historicity, and they can now be re-evaluated, re-interpreted and re-invented in different, romanticised shapes.

The historical perspective is toned down to the fanciful, kitsch form of novel-like imagination. Under the influence of Scott's views on Highland society, projected into the audience's imagination through the novels, Bowman can freely revive and re-live the past – and its tragedies – through the notes of the pibrochs.

It is precisely to pamper this form of pseudo-historical 'colouring of imagination'<sup>775</sup>, if I may reapply Wordsworth's famous quote, that it was possible for the bagpipe, together with the whole paraphernalia of 'Celtophilia', to become a characteristic feature for many a tourist experience. Samuel Johnson on more than one occasion recalls how his dinners were "exhilarated by the bagpipe"<sup>776</sup> during his *Journey to the Western*

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<sup>773</sup> Murray Pittock, 'Scott and the British Tourist', in *English Romanticism and the Celtic World*, ed. by Gerard Carruthers and Alan Rawes (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2003), 151–166 (p. 155).

<sup>774</sup> John Bowman, *The Highlands and Islands: A Nineteenth-Century Tour*, ed. by John Eddowes (Gloucester: Sutton, 1986), p. 38.

<sup>775</sup> William Wordsworth, *Lyrical Ballads and Other Poems, 1797–1800*, ed. by James Butler and Karen Green (London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 743f.

<sup>776</sup> Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, *Johnson's Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and Boswell's Journal of a Tour of the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson*, ed. by Robert William Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 93.

*Islands of Scotland* in 1775; Johnson apparently did not dislike the sound of the instrument, as one can gather from James Boswell:

We had the musick of the bagpipe every day, at Armidale, Dunvegan, and Col. Dr Johnson appeared fond of it, and used often to stand for some time with his ear close to the great drone.<sup>777</sup>

Apart from Johnson's approval of the sound of the bagpipe (which Boswell may have been over-embroidering to create a comical effect), what emerges from reading Johnson and Boswell's journals is just how largely present the bagpipe was throughout their tour, often as a simple tourist attraction...or indeed how much it was noted by both authors during their travels, for being such a striking characteristic of the visited culture. John Leyden wrote a *Journal of a Tour in the Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland in 1800*, and in a letter addressed to a Dr Robert Anderson on August 11<sup>th</sup> he describes himself and the context surrounding him as he writes the letter:

Dear Sir, — Here am I in great spirits, listening to the sound of a bagpipe and the dunning of some very alert Highlanders dancing the Highland Fling with great glee. Though I have acquired a few Gaelic words and phrases, I am really in considerable danger of mistaking the house where I write for the tower of Babel, for such a jargon of sounds as that produced by a riotous company bawling Gaelic songs and chattering something very like Billingsgate, blending with English oaths and the humstrum of a Highland bagpipe, seldom assails any ears but those of the damned.<sup>778</sup>

Leyden seems to enjoy the sound of the bagpipe, or at least appreciates the novelty-value of it. He certainly finds it characteristic of the place, and the music and dance contribute to his "great spirits". In another letter, this time to Dr Thomas Brown and dated August 15<sup>th</sup>, he writes the following considerations:

Dear Sir, — How eventful is the life of man in these western regions: one moment he is tossed by the most tremendous roaring waves; another, he is capering to the roaring of a bagpipe.<sup>779</sup>

Indeed the bagpipe seems to be omnipresent in the nineteenth-century tourist experience in Scotland. Whether playing in the street, or accompanying labour, or setting up an enhanced feeling of Highlandness in the middle of the countryside, the piper is there to represent Scottish culture, tradition and history – in the vaguest, loosest sense of the word.

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<sup>777</sup> Johnson and Boswell, *Johnson's Journey*, p. 372.

<sup>778</sup> John Leyden, *Journal of a Tour in the Highlands and Western Islands of Scotland in 1800*, ed. by James Sinton (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1903), p. 80.

<sup>779</sup> Leyden, *Journal*, p. 100.

Leyden in fact records a few instances in which the piper was an additional feature in a visit to Staffa, and Fingal's Cave – itself a product of Romanticism, since it was named after the legendary hero only after its 'discovery'. In an entry dated July 23 Leyden wrote about a couple of Germans he had met on his journey, and who were also touring Scotland:

As the mist was exceedingly close we did not accompany our German friends to Staffa, who, however, set out with true German intrepidity, carrying a piper along with them, whose notes we heard long after they had ceased to be seen, and fortunately stumbled upon the island of Staffa.<sup>780</sup>

The verb "to carry" in reference to a piper is significant, as it gives the idea of the way in which the piper's presence was valued, precisely, as a commodity, to be disposed of as a tourist 'facility'. Leyden takes up his German friends' idea, as he explains in the following entry on July 24<sup>th</sup>:

As the morning seemed to promise a clear day, we set out when the beams of the sun were beginning to break through the fog, sailed to the island of Ulva to take up our bagpiper, and soon beheld the white clouds of vapour rolling away in confusion and the lofty top of Benmore [...]<sup>781</sup>

Evidently it was quite a common thing to do, to sail to Staffa and visit Fingal's Cave, and enhancing the experience of the essence of Scottishness by taking a piper to play for the tourists. In fact, once on Staffa, Leyden tells us that

After collecting various specimens and viewing the island on every side, we seated ourselves on a rock, and the piper playing a martial pibroch, we soon saw ourselves surrounded with sheep, cows, and among the rest of animals we saw three deer which had been placed on the island, and which seemed perfectly tame. This formed no bad illustration of the story of Orpheus. In Fingal's Cave the sound of the bagpipe, almost drowned by the roaring of the waves and the echo of the cave, exceeded in grandeur and wildness any union of sounds I ever heard.<sup>782</sup>

It is worthy of interest that the author seems to imply that the mere sound of the bagpipe attracted the attention and friendliness of the surrounding animals – it is as if the bagpipe were an instrument so in touch with nature that its sound is enough to befriend it. Also, although the bagpipe is never mentioned in the Ossianic fragments – as indeed their presence in literature of such antiquity would have been an anachronism – it is the bagpipe that is 'summoned' to complete the feeling of the sublime at the sight of Fingal's

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<sup>780</sup> Leyden, *Journal*, p. 36.

<sup>781</sup> Leyden, *Journal*, p. 37.

<sup>782</sup> Leyden, *Journal*, pp. 41–42.

cave. The *clàrsach* would perhaps have been more appropriate, since the instrument is actually referred to in Macpherson's work as the instrument of the bards; but by Leyden's time the bagpipe's sound was more inspirational, in its whole iconology and apparatus of connected imagery, than the Celtic harp.

Because of the bagpipe's representativeness, any historical and cultural incongruence could be overlooked, reduced to a "simple commodity". The same anachronism can be found in Alexander Runciman's 1772 fresco of "The Spey and the Tay", in the Hall of Ossian in the Penicuik House<sup>783</sup>: between the two rivers, symbolised by two men, is a *tondo* with a bagpipe.



The icon is certainly representative of Scotland, but hardly of Ossian!

Whether in its role of tourist attraction or as a milestone of Scottish culture connected with actual national customs, the presence of the bagpipe obviously had an impact on the Romantic tourist, particularly in the light of the iconology it was representative of. So much so that, as I have mentioned in Chapter 2, Boswell felt that the sound of the bagpipe stirred his blood and filled him "with a crowd of sensations with which sober rationality has nothing to do"<sup>784</sup>.

### The bagpipe in art

James Macpherson and Sir Walter Scott in particular had charmed their readers with wild descriptions of Highland life, which as we have seen were largely influential, and typical Scottish landscapes, such as the one portrayed in *Waverley* when Flora Mac-Ivor leads young Edward to her "favourite haunt" among the crags<sup>785</sup>. These settings were not always taken from real life, but were nevertheless lifelike, as in not unrealistic; and 'felt' typically Scottish – they responded to the viewers' 'visual' expectations of Scottishness. As John Glendening remarks, Scott and his works made Scotland "not merely acceptable

<sup>783</sup> Image reproduced by permission of Sir Robert Clerk of Penicuik. The first laird of Penicuik was John Clerk, who acquired the home in 1654. Runciman's frescoes were destroyed in a fire in 1899.

<sup>784</sup> Johnson and Boswell, *Johnson's Journey*, p. 249.

<sup>785</sup> Sir Walter Scott, *Waverley*, ed. by Claire Lamont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 104–106.

to England but powerfully desirable”<sup>786</sup>; this he accomplished also by taking advantage of the extensible Macphersonian features, and spicing them up with more direct notions of Jacobitism, as in *Waverley*<sup>787</sup>.

An impressively evocative example of the perceived and much sought-for Scottish landscape can be found in one of John Knox’s early nineteenth-century landscapes, ‘Landscape with Tourists at Loch Katrine’<sup>788</sup>.



The sweeping scenery is Lorrainian: it is picturesque<sup>789</sup>. A landscape fitting this description “ought to contain, the near and the far, the rough and the smooth, the gentle and the harsh”<sup>790</sup>, all elements which we can find in Knox’s painting. The Trossachs appear luxuriant, green and florid in the misty distance. The clouds are thick, fluffy, yet incumbent, as if they were mountains of a different shade. After focusing on the peaks and the clouds, the eye wanders round the details in the corners and lower part of the canvas:

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<sup>786</sup> John Glendening, *The High Road* (New York: St Martin’s Press, 1997), pp. 104–105.

<sup>787</sup> Pittock, ‘Scott and the British tourist’, p. 156.

<sup>788</sup> NGS 000-000-016-267-C. Reproduced with permission.

<sup>789</sup> French painter Claude Lorrain (c. 1600–1682) gave much inspiration to the artists of the picturesque. In his works, glamour of classic scenes mixes with dramatically varied landscapes. See Pittock, ‘Scott and the British tourist’, p. 158. The Italian Salvator Rosa (1615–1673) was also very influential, and is seen as a proto-Romantic artist, amongst other things, for the impression conveyed in his works of the vastness of nature in contrast with the smallness of man. Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring develops the topic of the influence of both these authors in the eighteenth-century in her work *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England* (London: Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., 1965).

<sup>790</sup> John Morrison, *Painting the Nation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1920), p. 85.

“barren rocks” form the wings of the scene – they almost bear the sound of Flora Mac-Ivor’s voice in their appearance (“He who woos [the Celtic Muse] must love the barren rock more than the fertile valley”<sup>791</sup>). A small stone house surprises the viewer as an unexpected detail; it is perched like a solitary Italian *trullo* on a crag. A horse and cart appear in the opposite end of the picture; these humble elements create a contrast with the portrayed figurines.

A group of two or three plainly non-Scottish tourists look around, possibly brought to that spot to visit the setting of Sir Walter Scott’s 1810 work *The Lady of the Lake*. One of them points at Ellen’s isle, and the slender lady – strikingly bright in her light dress – follows the direction of the indicating arm with her eyes. A little boat has come to pick them up, and a pair of interested fishermen on a rock watch it as it approaches, possibly more concerned about it frightening off their fish. Just behind the gazing tourists is a piper, who accompanies the visitors and blends in perfectly with the scene. He is playing in the direction of the tourists, with his back to the painter/viewer, in full Highland attire. Although he has probably less business there than the visitors (he is clearly there to enhance the feeling of Scottishness of the visiting experience, rather than for a spontaneous choice), the piper seems to fit naturally in the general picture; a lot more so than the travellers, who don’t appear to take any notice of him and somehow noticeably ‘don’t belong’.

The piper is presented as one of the quintessential icons of Scottishness. This role is established by the painter, who skilfully places the character in such a way that he seems only natural; but most of all it is established by the tendencies of the time, of which John Knox is our narrating witness. The uncontaminated setting is strikingly different from the English landscapes one can find in, for example, some of John Constable’s works, such as ‘Wivenhoe Park’, where the idyllic rural scene is comforting and reassuring. It is precisely the idea of uncorrupt nature that fascinated the tourist, who sought a return to the innocence of nature.

The rehabilitation in the Primitivist sense of Scotland and all things Celtic was one of the stages of “domestication and reconciliation” with the alien ‘other’; Primitivist aesthetics emptied differences of any more profound implication<sup>792</sup>. The Celtic and Scottish revival gained some of its popularity from its role, in Murray Pittock’s words, of “tourist commodities, pieces of local charisma which could be explored, experienced or bought”<sup>793</sup>. As Pittock then explains, the borderline between charisma – of which Knox’s painting is full – and kitsch, is in such cases rather thin. Through the tourist experience,

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<sup>791</sup> Scott, *Waverley*, p. 107.

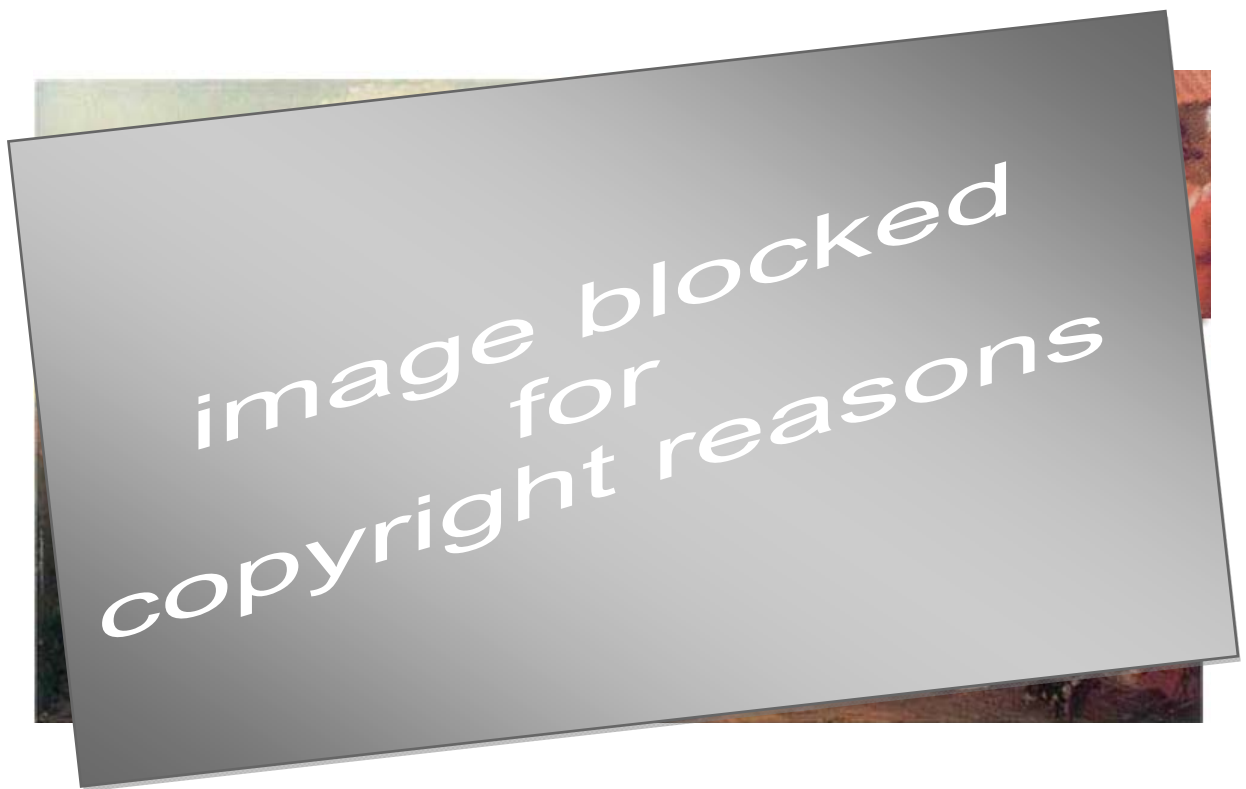
<sup>792</sup> Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 42.

<sup>793</sup> Pittock, *Celtic Identity*, p. 41.



the complex political and cultural identities are reduced to a “simple commodity” – in this sense an expression of kitsch. And the piper does in fact become a tourist commodity, in the true sense of the word, as one can gather from the above-mentioned words of John Leyden, who enjoyed his visit to Fingal’s Cave with the musical accompaniment of a piper.

As a counterpart, there were of course more down-to-earth views of the bagpipe, closer to real life and less imbued in Ossianic myths. Sir David Wilkie, for instance, stands out as a narrative painter; this quality is evident right from his early works. He painted ‘Pitlessie Fair’<sup>794</sup> the same year he left the Trustee’s Academy, in 1804: he was nineteen years old. This work, a humorous genre painting with evident echoes of the Dutch school, is the pictorial description of the Pitlessie May Fair.



Many of the figures present in the picture were identifiable, which connects the work with real life. A variety of human types is on display, making up the population of the village:

Wilkie could convey a sense of real people in the grip of real emotions. It was the recognition of truth in the situations that he created that allowed the humour to flourish.<sup>795</sup>

Real people, emotions, truth and humour are also characteristics of the works of the Flemish school. Many Dutch artists depicted similar situations, in which confusion,

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<sup>794</sup> NGS 000-000-016-011-C. Reproduced with permission.

<sup>795</sup> Morrison, *Painting the Nation*, p. 22.

disorder and bawdiness dominated the scenes. A number of these Dutch paintings include bagpipes and rough peasant pipers, representing promiscuity and havoc as explained in the previous chapters. And here in Wilkie's painting is also a bagpipe – only hinted to, as all we can see are the drones – partly to symbolise the disorder of the situation, much in the Flemish school fashion; but in this case it is an icon indicative, if not of locality (Pitlessie is in Fife, while the bagpipe is without a doubt a Highland set), of status. The drones seem to rest on the shoulder of a soldier who is having a drink; the soldier standing next to him on the right is the most composed figure of the whole scene. Wilkie, rather than placing the instrument in the hands of a villager as one often sees in Dutch paintings, is attributing it to the military sphere – that is, above the plethora of peasants and country-folk – although in truth the piper is drinking more intently than he is playing.

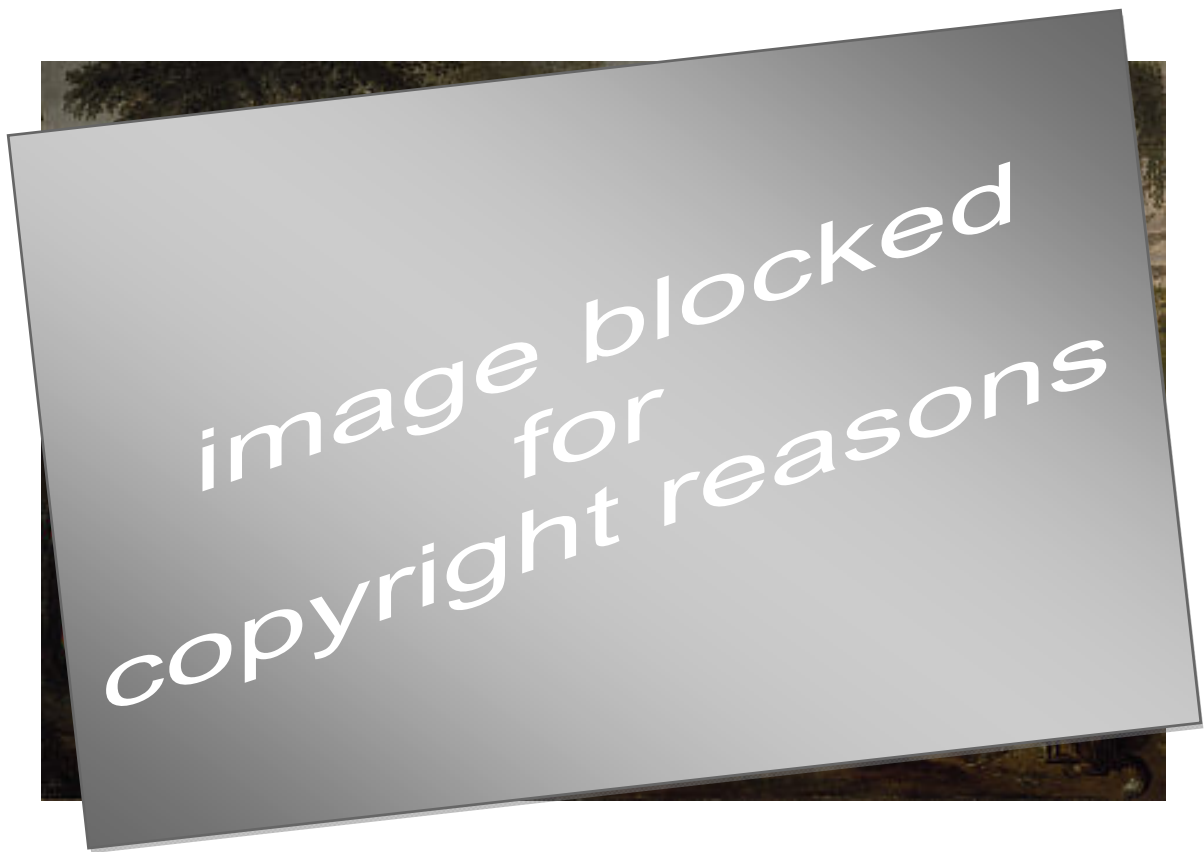
Fairs are common contexts in which to find a bagpipe; equally common are wedding celebrations. In 1780, David Allan depicts a 'Highland Wedding at Blair Atholl'<sup>796</sup>. This work, though representing a country entertainment, is very different from Wilkie's Fair. It is profoundly humanised, which sets it apart from any sublime feeling; and together with the great variety of the natural elements of the landscape, it contributes to enhance notions of the picturesque. Rather than simply embody the picturesque of William Gilpin and Sir Uvedale Price, it seems to foreshadow Victorian genre-painting. Although the context is bucolic, the guests are well-dressed: it does not look like a penny-wedding, where bagpipes are often testified to have played. In this case, while a strings duet plays and entertains the dancers and viewers, a Highland piper seems to be taking a break to enjoy a drink. Fiddlers and pipers were in fact known to take turns during these kinds of celebrations.

Interestingly, David Allan decided to include one of the key figures of Scottish music of his time: the fiddler is Niel Gow, also because his services were retained by the Duke of Atholl. The setting is clearly rustic and exotic, and yet peopled by characters who appear sufficiently bourgeois to be reassuring: the middle class eye can view them with fascination and curiosity, and still not struggle to identify itself in them. Or rather, to modify slightly the point of view Womack gives about Romantic literature, "the character is identifying with the reader"<sup>797</sup> – in this case the viewer – in that the romanticised notions the viewer may have about a Highland wedding are pampered, and the characters reflect what he or she would expect to see. The trews are a definite mark of gentility: the portrayed people are country folk, but not bumpkins.

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<sup>796</sup> NGS, NGL 001.81. Reproduced with permission.

<sup>797</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 154.



The men are well-dressed, and the women are dainty; their white dresses are not dazzling, but clean and tidy. Although the scenery in the distance melts almost into infinity, with a certain haziness suggesting the presence of far-away mountains, the foreground is deeply humanised: this gives the scene a distinctive picturesque trait.

The rural landscape is another feature worthy of notice in the painting, since the countryside and its settings acquire particular significance in nineteenth-century Scottish art, as John Morrison explains:

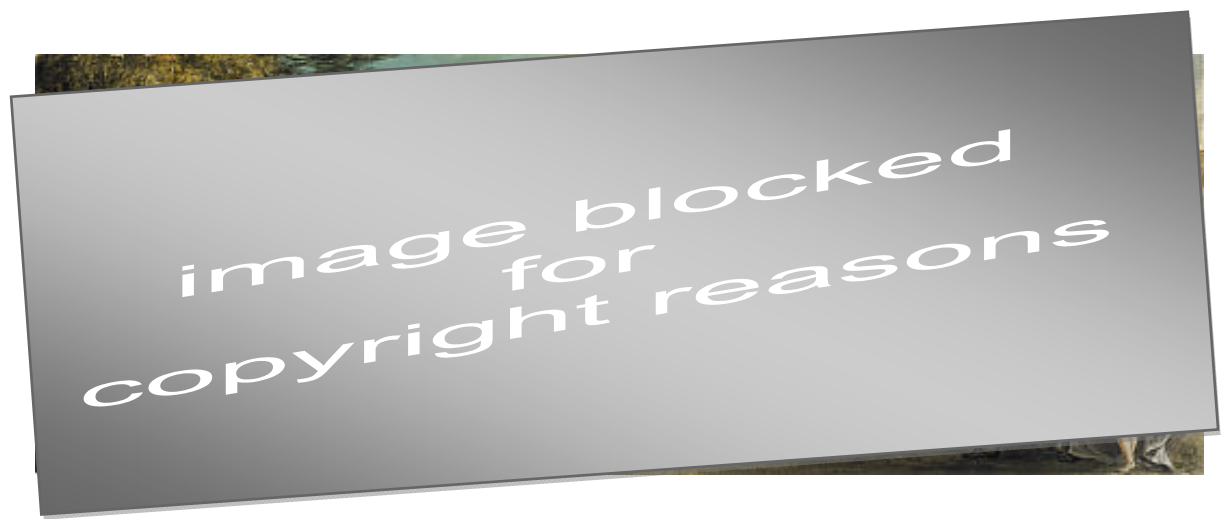
In common with all western cultures Scotland has invested considerable emotional baggage in its land identity. As is the case with other nations, the land has become synonymous with the nation's history and also its identity. [...] Through the evolution of the depicted Highland landscape, artists not only reflected the developing unionist-nationalist values of the country, they also contributed to their creation and dissemination. A major stimulus in the development of Highland landscape's symbolic importance was undoubtedly the significance which was accorded landscape identity in England.<sup>798</sup>

Although this landscape is peopled, and is not therefore the only protagonist of the scene, it still bears an “emotional baggage”, and represents what was seen at the time, and to a certain extent to this day, as a visual significant for the country as a whole. Allan repeats the ensemble in another of his works: again, a ‘Highland Wedding’<sup>799</sup>:

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<sup>798</sup> Morrison, *Painting the Nation*, p. 78.

<sup>799</sup> NGS, D 5185. Reproduced with permission.



The landscape, again, is rural, but the light colours, the airiness of the dancers' dresses and the liquid tones of the scenery give this painting a levity which the other 'Highland Wedding' lacks. At a first glance the viewer fixes on the dancers, and particularly on the couple on the right; their light-heartedness, and the weightlessness of their dresses, are almost Watteauesque<sup>800</sup>. Their slightly de-centralised position makes the eye restless, and the look strays to the second dancing couple, and then to the peripheral elements.

The elongated shadows, which tell us the scene is set in the late afternoon, seem to point towards a group of drinkers on the left. They remain in the half-light, almost conveying a sense of melancholy; while the family-scene on the right is in full light, looking at the dancing with approval. And there, perched on a rock between the dancers and the family group, are two pipers: the profusion of obtruding drones gives them an almost untidy appearance. They don't seem to be playing at the same time: the younger piper on the left does not even have the drones positioned on his shoulder. Allan was, again, depicting a scene which may well have occurred in real life: the work is a mixture of genre-painting, showing the daily activities in the Scottish countryside, and feelings of the picturesque. The picture is peopled with plausible, rustic characters, but they are genteel; it is 'purified' from any hint of true country life. Even the houses in the distance – the only proof of human presence discernible in the landscape – are not country shelters, but look more like stately homes, towering at the same level as the tall trees.

Although in some ways the works presented by David Allan in this context give a romanticised view of Highland life in general, the function of the pipers specifically is descriptive, rather than sentimental. Very different implications are to be found in works such as Sir Edwin Henry Landseer's 1829 'Highland Music'<sup>801</sup>. The image this highly

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<sup>800</sup> Antoine Watteau was particularly known for his depictions of *fêtes galantes*: in them, romantic landscapes form the shrine for frivolous pastimes, idle afternoons, and courtships between aristocrats. As Antoine de La Roque maintained, in 1721, "In his [Watteau's] compositions it is above all the variety of drapery, of headwear and clothing that gives the greatest pleasure". Translation as found in John Sunderland and Ettore Camesasca, eds., *The Complete Paintings of Watteau* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1971), p. 10.

<sup>801</sup> Sir Edwin Landseer, 'Highland Music', 1829, no. 0411 © Tate Britain, London 2013. Reproduced with permission.

influential English painter gives in his many Highland-based works (Landseer visited the Highlands a number of times from 1824 onwards<sup>802</sup>) are strongly romanticised, and arguably influenced by his acquaintance with Sir Walter Scott. Through his 'selective vision' (condemned by many critics), the Highlands are portrayed as a shrine of sublime natural wonders, although the Highlands were in truth in full turmoil with rural crisis and economic collapse. In the words of Thomas Christopher Smout, "Landseer could depict poverty and cruelty without flinching, though the poverty shown in his scenes of Highland life has no obvious cause in injustice [...]"<sup>803</sup>.

Indeed in this particular genre scene he gives an emotional view of Highland domestic life: the ideas which spring to mind are of solitude, poverty, simplicity and, almost surprisingly, warmth.



The interior is a cluttered room. Although the viewer can hypothesise the presence of a window somewhere out of the field of vision, the light seems to spring from within the scene in an almost Caravaggesque way; warm shades of ochre give a cosy feeling to the otherwise dismal scene. The chiaroscuro is achieved with the addition of black to the

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<sup>802</sup> Thomas Christopher Smout, 'Landseer's Highlands', in Richard Ormond, ed., *The Monarch of the Glen: Landseer in the Highlands* (Edinburgh: Trustees of the NGS, 2005), p. 13.

<sup>803</sup> Smout, 'Landseer's Highlands', p. 13

colour; the background is so dark it is almost impossible to discern the architecture and the additional elements. The piper is sitting in solitude, with the sole company of his dogs – who do not seem to approve of their owner's pastime.

Landseer was famous especially for his portraits of animals; in this case, as Richard Ormond points out, "His Highlanders and their dogs stand for loyalty, sturdy self-reliance, physical hardiness, courage and a simple Christian faith"<sup>804</sup>. Three of them stare at him and growl, howl, or look frightened, while the only dog gazing elsewhere appears restless, as if looking for somewhere to escape from the noise, while a dark one, almost a shadow, almost hides beside it looking dejected. But the piper doesn't seem to notice. He is wearing a kilt, and the only visible elements are a couple of bottles on the wooden chest, a few utensils scattered here and there, a blanket, and a tartan plaid hanging on the back of a chair on the left. The Highlandness the title of the painting suggests is immediately detectable, but the notion is left to very few elements: namely, the player's kilt, the tartan plaid, and the Highland bagpipe. So representative are these elements that any setting is contextualised enough just by their presence.

The desolation of the portrayed scene, and the idea of poverty, add to the sentimental perspective of the author's intentions. Ormond argues that

The artist's vision of a primitive people leading simple lives in close communion with the natural and animal world stirred the imagination of his audience. [...] the artist contributed to that vision of Highland society as one untainted by the corrupting influence of modern industrialisation and materialism, living the good and simple life in the wild. It reinforced the idea that Highland rather than Lowland traditions were the defining character of the Scots, at the very time that the glens were emptying and Highland society changing out of all recognition.<sup>805</sup>

'Highland Music' is in fact diametrically apart from any form of materialism, and in his evident poverty the piper appears comfortable. The lone piper in particular is iconic of a whole imagery, and the Highlandness conveys an extra dimension to the empathy the artist is putting across.

The evidently rural context and the poverty correspond to an indefinite idea of Highland life, and precisely this Highlandness somehow deepens the idea of solitude, of melancholy, simplicity. In spite of the undoubted dejection of the setting, the general picture is heart-warming: the piper's introspective calmness contrasts with the dogs' restlessness. The homeliness pervading the situation brings the viewer to look beyond the appearance of misery, and focus on the musician's apparent emotional fulfilment. He

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<sup>804</sup> Ormond, *The Monarch of the Glen*, p. 60.

<sup>805</sup> Ormond, *The Monarch of the Glen*, p. 59.



seems mindless of the world surrounding him: he has company enough with his dogs, and his bagpipe. As Womack points out,

the more elevated the Highland image becomes, and the more poignantly gratifying its evocations of human nobility, the more ruinously it pays for its moral splendour by its separation from practical life.<sup>806</sup>

By “practical life” is meant everything that is outside of the Highlands: Landseer’s old piper is so far apart from any experience of factual life that he almost belongs to a fairy-tale land, to a remote ‘bracket’ of society which is all the more edifying and appealing for its peripheral quality.

The pathos conveyed in Landseer’s painting is timeless. There is no historical significance connected with the scene: it is pure feeling, emotion. This is indicative of the mythical value of the bagpipe within the equally mythical past and history of Scotland. The Highlander is, in himself, poetical<sup>807</sup>. In John Morrison’s words:

They [myths] explain and interpret the world as it is found and both assert values and extol identity. [...] A myth is a highly selective ‘memory’ of the past used to stimulate collective purpose in the present. With no collective purposes, there can be no national identity and therefore no nationalism. Myths are central to the very existence of nationalism. The word ‘myth’ implies fabrication but to have evolved at all a myth must have some connection to reality. That is not to imply that ‘myths’ are at some basic level objectively true. Rather they must be conceived by those to whom they relate as expressing a broader allegorical truth about themselves and their identity. The objective truth or otherwise of a myth is irrelevant and myths are not subject to destruction by dispassionate ‘proof’ that they are false.<sup>808</sup>

It is clearly to the sphere of myth that Landseer appeals to in his Highland works. ‘Highland Music’ does have some ‘connection to reality’, but most importantly it is an ‘allegory’ of what Highland life is perceived to be; and the same may be said about ‘Return from the Staghunt’<sup>809</sup> (c. 1837), by the same artist. This canvas develops horizontally in a procession of Highlanders crossing a bridge after a successful day’s hunting.



<sup>806</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 169.

<sup>807</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 128.

<sup>808</sup> Morrison, *Painting the Nation*, pp. 8–10.

<sup>809</sup> Image courtesy of Sotheby’s.

An ethereal light envelopes the colourful parade. The insubstantiality of the air, which forges the languid pastel colours and gives the atmosphere the crystalline quality of Northern landscapes, becomes an invisible protagonist of the scene. The setting is Loch Laggan, where Landseer often stayed, but it could be any corner of the Highlands: the concept of Highlandness lies in the snow-capped mountains, the hazy ochres and siennas of the rocky hills, and in the barren wilderness of the countryside which, other than the peopled path leading to the bridge, bear no trace of human modification. Landseer was never a landscapist, and yet the almost ‘unfinished’ feeling of the background scenery only adds to the overall effect of the picture: “the Highland landscapes were delightfully free from the heavy hand of obligation, and the ever-detailed finish [...]”<sup>810</sup>.

In the foreground are three groups of people; others are scattered along the winding track. The main focus is on the horses, being led with the dead stags in a horrible contortion on their backs. Men, women and children are dressed in typical Highland attire, and the figure which strikes as being the most composed and elegant is the piper. He is leading the hunters, standard and tassels streaming in the breeze. His countenance is almost military; the icon-piper, in the ‘myth’ explained above by Morrison, bears a military aura which does not abandon him even when the situation does not require it. There is in truth a longstanding connection between venery and military pastimes, which is by no means exclusive to Scotland alone. Such is the case, for instance, for the ‘Caccia del cinghiale calidonio’<sup>811</sup>.



This third-century bas-relief shows a scene of boar-hunting. The hunters appear almost engaged in a battle, with shields and spears, and a markedly military appearance. The scene is evocative of values of military valour, physical strength, and masculinity.

<sup>810</sup> Campbell Lennie, *Landseer: the Victorian Paragon* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1976), p. 46.

<sup>811</sup> Photograph © Jastrow, Sarcophago di Meleagro, Rome, Musei Capitolini, MC 917.



Much the same can be said about Landseer's piper. His painting is "drawn from the romantic past, celebrating the ideals rather than the actualities of Highland life"<sup>812</sup>. Landseer is in fact appealing to a whole set of values, which are detached from any particular worldly, material factor, and which constitute the 'myth' of Scotland. This vagueness gives the work a halo of sentiment, which is thoroughly unbound from historical perspectives.

Awareness about Highland issues can be detected in the 1859 painting 'Coronach in the backwoods'<sup>813</sup>.



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<sup>812</sup> Richard Ormond, *Sir Edwin Landseer* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1982), p. 86.

<sup>813</sup> NMS, 000-000-579-758-C. Reproduced with permission.

The artist, George W. Simson, doesn't simply depict an affecting scene, but he invites the viewer to reflect upon a particular historical event: The Highland clearances, and the mass-emigration of the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries. As explained in Chapter 3, an enormous number of Scots, particularly Highlanders, were forced to leave their homeland for America, Canada, and the colonies, as a consequence of agricultural changes, the landlords raising the rent, and lower wages. In Simson's painting all these events, and most of all their consequences on the people, are evoked. It is a work of great charisma and impact. The piper stands playing his half-size Highland bagpipe; his appearance is proud, dignified, composed and solemn. His look is fixed on something beyond and above the viewer: it is an expressionless gaze into the void, or perhaps towards the sky. And yet it is precisely this composedness, this self-control, which is so poignant about this painting. The piper's wife has broken down, and is crying as she nurses a baby; below her arm, which is left dangling in a fit of emotional exhaustion, is a crumpled letter, evidently bearing bad tidings from home, Scotland. The nature surrounding them is dark and seemingly hostile, represented as a blurry-edged mass in shades of black.

The artist is far from giving an objective vision of the moment: he wants the viewer to feel with – and in this sense sympathise with – the portrayed characters. He wants to bring the viewer to think about the personal tragedies which occurred so many times to the dismembered Highland families. The icon of the piper is emblematic of Highland bravery: bravery for leaving his homeland, and for bearing the pain of the bad news with dignity. His feelings are all expressed through the voice of his bagpipe playing the *coronach* – a lament.

Throughout Europe and beyond, the bagpipe has come to represent a wide variety of traits, some of them antithetical: from the pastoral to the military world, from the devil to fairyland, from Nativity to debauchery, from courtly entertainment to peasant pass-time, from primeval simplicity to disorder and madness. It can be seen depicted played by angels, pigs, monks, aristocrats, monkeys, soldiers, peasants, pixies and devils.

Much of the imagery associated with the bagpipe to this day had already been 'gathered' by the time it reached Scotland – except from, perhaps, the military aspect. As we have seen, there is very little material which would testify to a military-bagpipe tradition anywhere else, and this makes the relation between Scotland and the Highland bagpipe quite unique. The instrument's symbolic value in relation to its 'home-country' has altered dramatically with the times, and according to socio-political circumstances.

The Jacobite risings, as an expression of a movement which went heavily against the House of Hanover, raised greater awareness of Scotland as a separate cultural and ethnic entity. As the issue became more urgent and pressing with the effects of the Jacobite risings, landmarks of identity became the means to stress individuality and distinctiveness. Much like tartan, the bagpipe, with its distinctive sound and visual presence, was employed, as we have seen, by the British government as a means of dispraise and vilification. Stereotype concurred to create the image of an underdeveloped nation of brutal, disorderly savages. Enlightenment theories of stadial development saw the social order established by clan ties as the expression of a nation with a vocation for submissiveness and pointless servility. This concept extended to religion, particularly Catholicism, as we saw from Ned Ward and Thomas Brown's words. However, the notion could 'fluctuate': Arbuthnot, for instance, attributed Presbyterian significance to the bagpipe. That this could happen demonstrates the extent to which any proper notion of Scottish life was ignored; it also shows that the bagpipe represented the means to attack Scotland *per se*, rather than any specific aspect. Politics, particularly Tory (as has been shown in Tobias Smollett), and culture in general were also affected by forms of vilification. The theme of an underdeveloped nation playing an underdeveloped instrument as opposed to the rest of Europe, where instead 'genteel' instruments such as the violin were enjoyed, long remained a literary topic.

On the other hand, in Scotland precisely this perspective was subverted. For Scots and Jacobites, in fact, the bagpipe constituted a reason for national pride. What for many in Britain was a rough instrument fit for the underdeveloped, for Scotland and its authors was the voice of the nation, as is shown by the words of authors such as Allan Ramsay and Sir Walter Scott. Recurring themes, such as the bagpipe-standard and the bagpipe-tartan dichotomies, also demonstrate that the visual impact of the instrument was just as important as its sound, as many Jacobite songs have clearly shown.

The strong, evocative language frequently used in Jacobite propaganda more often than not placed the bagpipe in a central role in battle: its role in inciting the soldiers, in stirring them into action, and in lamenting the fallen, is powerful and at times disquieting. But it is precisely that kind of discourse which gradually after the Culloden disaster turned the piper from an uncouth savage into, above all, a potential fighter for the British Army. To this day the martial value of the Highland piper is one of the Army's main characteristics: what was once the mark of Jacobite presence turned into a common element in the British Army, and was accepted together with a corpus of Jacobite songs.

This stage of inclusion in the Army was pivotal in the history of the bagpipe in Scotland. It has had an impact on repertoire and on the status of the instrument, but also it implied the 'rehabilitation' of the Scot. The original concept of employing Scots in wars

both abroad and at home and thus ‘putting to good use’ their ‘natural’ inclination to violence gradually changed. In much the same way as can be found in Tacitus and his *Agricola*, the ‘enemy’ subdued was fit to be romanticised, and what was mindless faithfulness to a chief became devotion and loyalty; what was barbaric violence became bravery: the savage turned noble. As we have seen, the bagpipe and its reception underwent the same form of romanticisation, also aided by the frame of mind encouraged by the publication of the Ossianic fragments, and subsequently of Sir Walter Scott’s novels. The perception of Scotland as a quintessentially Romantic nation helped the change of attitude towards all things Scottish – and this process, of course, included the bagpipe, just as it did tartan. It is thanks to this process that we end up with exalted passages about Highland life such as the one we have encountered by John Wilson<sup>814</sup>, or with picturesque paintings such as the one by John Knox portraying the tourists by Loch Katrine accompanied by a piper.

Late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Scotland is heavily imbued in myth, whether it is the external view of a German composer on Scottish music, the perspective of travellers in search of the picturesque in the Highlands, the make-believe Highlandist show of the Gatherings and Games, or the perception of Scottish life, entertainment and landscape rendered through the means of visual art. The bagpipe – being, like tartan, one of the most colourful, striking elements of Scottish culture – plays a major role in this myth-making, and represents more than itself in the various contexts in which it is portrayed. Its presence in literature, satire, and art is never one-dimensional, but always symbolic of further meanings. Poetry, imagination, landscape, and de-historicised past all converge and contribute to make of Scotland a mythical land which starkly contrasts with ‘real life’. As Peter Womack observes:

to move back across the Highland line is to leave Fancy’s land and re-enter, sadly or thankfully but in either case inevitably, the realm of factual truth.

This fantastic opposition is intimately associated with a material one – namely, that in the system of late eighteenth-century British capitalism, the Highlands are in the *periphery* and the non-Highlands are the *core*.<sup>815</sup>

In this light, the myth is the shape that the core gives to the ‘periphery’, and it is in this sense a “function of domination”<sup>816</sup>. This perspective often turns the bagpipe into a Romantic tourist commodity. The ghostly presence of the Jacobite, of which the bagpipe is evocative, becomes an attractive addition to the Highland tour, adding the fourth

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<sup>814</sup> E.g. “The boat in a moment is a bagpipe; and not only so, but all the mountains are bagpipes, and so are the clouds”. John Wilson, *Recreations of Christopher North*, in 2 volumes (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1868), vol. 1, p. 385.

<sup>815</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 166.

<sup>816</sup> Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 167.

dimension of historicity and yet keeping it implicit and hidden enough not to disturb the visitors' sensitivity. Ossian, Jacobites, tartan, Celtic decorations, Bonnie Prince Charlie, thistles, Clans, Lochs, heather, oatcakes and whisky: all these elements are free to gravitate into a common notion of Scottishness nuanced with Highland essence, of which the bagpipe provides the signature tune.

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