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Enlightened Fictions and the Romantic Nation: Aesthetics of
Improvement in Long-Eighteenth-Century Scottish Writing

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Abstract

This thesis participates in the current scholarly reassessment of Scottish Romanticism. Working across conventional Enlightenment and Romantic paradigms, it argues for a 'long eighteenth century' view of this writing with salient roots in the Union of 1707. Framed by the rapid economic and social change experienced by Scotland over much of this period, it proposes that Scottish Romanticism is best understood as a modal series of material that engages in various ways with ideas of 'improvement', the Enlightenment's ubiquitous doctrine of progress. This engagement is significantly translated through a negotiation of alternative national identity structures available to Scots at the time: Britishness and forms of Scottishness. As these formations become implicated in a pervasive 'dialectics of improvement', Scottish writing develops a series of innovative aesthetic strategies that probe the complex political function of literature. Coordinated around a hegemonic Britishness that is laying claim to the priorities of improvement, forms of Scottishness are repeatedly pushed into alternative roles, including the model of the 'romantic nation'.

Chapters address many of the key Scottish writers of the period as well as some of their less well-known contemporaries, using local case studies as a means to connect and focus the study's broader concerns. In Chapter One a sequence of fundamentals pertaining to the analysis of Scottish culture is addressed, exploring issues of nation, identity, class and institutional context, alongside the complementary evolution of aesthetic ideologies and cultural nationalisms. Chapter Two turns to Robert Burns as a prime mediator between cultural formations, his sophisticated poetry and self-presentations positioned as crucial to the developing relationship between Scottishness and improvement, while he innovatively heralds future, aesthetic constructions of nationhood. Moving into the early nineteenth century, Chapter Three traces the full emergence of 'aesthetic nationalism', primarily in the novels of Walter Scott. Always a contested process, such tension is magnified via the work of James Hogg, before the effects of a pervasive irony in this literary formation are examined. In Chapter Four the improvement problematic in long-eighteenth-century Scotland is further developed, John Galt's fiction offering extensive reflections, with an ancillary focus on Elizabeth Hamilton shedding light on some key ideological dilemmas and the important role of gender within this trajectory. Finally, a thematic coda uses a reading of Thomas Carlyle to reflect on these aesthetic components of a profound experience of modernisation, their subsequent mediation and continuing relevance.

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Introduction

In 1759 Edinburgh's Nor' Loch was drained, having become an odious impediment within the heart of a city taking the first steps towards rapid modernisation. A central feature of the capital's dramatic scenery, the loch had been for several centuries at the heart of Edinburgh's social life. Yet as an initial step in the construction of the New Town, this body of water was removed from beneath the Castle walls. Given the 'improving' attitudes prevalent among Edinburgh's élite, the loch might well now be viewed in an unsavoury light. The noxious and intoxicating state of the water aside, it had served a variety of compromising purposes during its three-hundred-year history, including: the testing and execution of witches, the drowning of criminals and the dumping of human waste, besides having been a popular suicide spot. Artificially constructed in the first place as a strategic military defence, the loch was now an offensive archaism in one of Europe's leading metropolitan centres. Since the quelling of the Jacobite rebellion in 1746, Scotland's civil society had quickly sought to throw off the air of militancy and backwardness it had acquired in the eyes of London. Yet though the site of the Nor' Loch would eventually be converted into ornamental gardens, it remained marshy and at risk of flooding for some time, with wet conditions threatening the drained expanse.¹

This act of municipal development is nicely indicative of the wider experience of Scotland over the long eighteenth century, not least regarding attitudes to Scottish culture and identity. This period saw a striking level of development, 'improvement' and modernisation. In cultural terms this involved

¹ See Hamish Coghill, *Lost Edinburgh: Edinburgh's Lost Architectural Heritage* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2005), pp. 73-75; and *Minor Antiquities of Edinburgh* (Edinburgh: Chambers, 1833), pp. 279-284.

a complex and often contradictory journey as the Scots attempted to define and re-define their collective identity, with the varying claims of local, regional, national and imperial loyalties in dynamic interplay. These dramatic processes of change are acutely registered in Scottish literature, not least in conspicuous examples such as Walter Scott's *Waverley Novels*. At the core of Scott's fiction, and throughout much of the literature of the period, there is a set of conflicts taking place that are directly related to this developmental trajectory. Time and again this literature concerns itself with narrating the battle between opposing social, cultural and political constructs: between Scotland and North Britain; between the Lowlands and the Highlands; between traditional agricultural social formations and the pressing demands of industrialisation; and between diverse factional groups within the country. As with all great social transitions this period raises the problematic question over what is lost and what is gained. The steady march of 'progress' towards British modernity is often confidently assured in these narratives, yet residual cultural identities and evolving oppositional forms of cultural impetus are never far away. Like the abandoned Nor' Loch they are ready to re-emerge at the first opportunity.

Scottish literature of the long eighteenth century – much of which this study somewhat guardedly refers to as Scottish Romanticism, alert to the ideological loading of the term 'Romanticism' – displays remarkably complex forms of social and political consciousness.² Dissecting these ideological

² It should be noted that the material referred to as 'literature' in this study is largely that which would be recognised as such in a modern context, i.e. creative writing. However, the much wider historical definition of the term impacts on the period's understanding of literary endeavours and should be kept in view.

frameworks is a problematic task.³ Over the last fifteen years a critical consensus has begun to emerge that in order to achieve a proper understanding of this work, Scottish Romanticism requires to be dealt with as a linked, yet in many ways discrete phenomenon from a still-hegemonic English formulation.⁴ The momentum in studies of this material reveals Scottish writing as a fruitful case study for critics interested in the political, social and historical functions of literary culture; while the Scottish context is increasingly pivotal to our understanding of broader developments during the period.⁵ Given the considerable insight achieved by recent work in the field, there is a timely impetus for a study such as this one to synthesise and build upon these scholarly efforts, sharpening our picture. This is performed here with a specific interest in the nature of the political and social engagements present in this writing: termed here 'polemical' material. These range from sustained polemical commentaries of the most overt form, to explicit attempts to distance the work of literature as much as possible from such concerns. Exploring the manner in which Scottish writers develop and deploy notions of the aesthetic in their interaction with

³ The terms 'ideology' and 'ideological' are used throughout this study in the broad, non-pejorative sense of a body or system of ideas, normally contained within a discrete theoretical unit, and often directed towards some kind of active political, social or cultural purpose.

⁴ This developing critical view is climactically represented by the recent publication of *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. by Murray Pittock (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011).

⁵ An awareness of the importance of Scottish material to a Romantic literary paradigm displayed by scholars such as Marilyn Butler in *Romantics, Rebels and Reactionaries: English Literature and its Background 1760-1830* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981) offered a new impetus to the field. Key texts in this development include Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Ian Duncan, *Scott's Shadow: The Novel in Romantic Edinburgh* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007); and Murray Pittock, *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

social and political debate, this study addresses a key voice within the European intellectual culture of the time. The investigation retains a particular focus on issues surrounding national identity formations, reflecting existing emphases on this territory in the primary literature. The myriad of challenges these developing structures presents to writers creates a situation of considerable relish for a critical project such as the present one.

Though the focus here is primarily on a politics of nationhood, this is navigated alongside other linked political determinants like class, gender and the radical/conservative divide within Scotland's modernising experience over the long eighteenth century. The fundamental role of creative literature in such questions undergoes a series of marked developments during this period, with striking new attempts to define the agency and nature of a literary aesthetic. In some respects this can be viewed as a time when creative literature significantly breaks away from other types of intellectual material. It is possible to detect a divergent pattern, with the spheres of formal political discourse and creative literature more narrowly defined in opposition to one another. Tracing the emergence of innovative rhetorical techniques and journalistic mediums in the forty years between 1780 and 1820, John Klancher argues that, 'The new space between "politics" and "literature" was evident'.⁶ Indeed the separation of literature from the political domain could be a key strategy in affixing a particular kind of cultural capital to writing: constructing an aesthetic territory aggrandised in relation to its distance from politics. Yet this is perhaps only half the story, as in other respects literature during our period can be seen

⁶ John Klancher, 'Prose', in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age: British Culture 1776-1832*, ed. by Iain McCalman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 279-286, (p. 285).

developing an increasingly sophisticated toolkit for addressing political and social concerns, incorporating and interacting with various discourses, including those of: belletristic essaying; political rhetoric; journalism; historical scholarship; and moral philosophy. With a rapidly expanding readership throughout Britain, the literary sphere displays a marked consciousness of its potential role in political and social debates, contributing to an on-going contest over the character of the aesthetic. This dynamic feeds into an important historical debate in the field of Romantic studies that this introduction addresses in more detail subsequently, criticism having played out a polarising theoretical argument. Yet with our attention firmly on Scotland, the polemical character of literature is granted a particular nuance, potentially carrying an extra weight as a result of unusual historical circumstances. With the removal of parliament to London as part of the Union settlement, Scotland's civil society provided an intriguing set of conditions for literature to achieve a resonant public function, the exercise of which is attested to throughout the material under analysis here.

Our inquiry into the relationship between art and politics requires the establishment of a basic critical framework. Raymond Williams's proposition of the 'dominant', the 'residual' and the 'emergent' as the three 'elements' that are 'active in the cultural process' can be useful here. He offers an interpretative method of particular application where we can lucidly cite a number of conflicting cultural structures. If British culture is increasingly dominant during the period – particularly from the mid-eighteenth century – then our analysis of cultural strategies in Scotland can be usefully configured in relation to this. Of course the dominant British culture is internally contested, is rapidly developing and is clearly Scottish to an important degree. Yet with a sophisticated and

flexible usage this structure can help to navigate this unstable situation.

Williams's definition of the residual is immediately redolent of a number of important strains in long eighteenth-century Scottish literature:

The residual, by definition, has been effectively formed in the past, but it is still active in the cultural process, not only and often not at all as an element of the past, but as an effective element of the present.⁷

Authors at this period are repeatedly found wrestling with notions of a residual Scottish culture that can challenge or displace British hegemony. This 'residual Scottishness' may be located in a variety of contexts, with historical accuracy sometimes less important than cultural efficacy. Indeed, often as not questions over this residual culture's origin can rise to the surface, seen in particular in Gothic fiction's constant toying with notions of authenticity, and most famously with the controversy surrounding Macpherson's Ossian poetry.⁸ We should certainly remain aware that in many instances such material may be retroactively imagined or at least transformed.

Williams further subdivides the residual between that 'which may have an alternative or even oppositional relation to the dominant culture', and that 'which has been wholly or largely incorporated into the dominant culture'; again an interesting notion when we consider the incorporation of, for example, problematic Jacobite imagery into the ideological apparatus of the Hanoverian monarchy during our period. As regards emergent culture, he points out the difficulty in securely defining what is genuinely emergent and thus 'substantially

⁷ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 121-127.

⁸ Questions of authenticity are almost a permanent fixture of James Hogg's excursions into the Gothic, most famously in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, ed. by P. D. Garside (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002).

alternative or oppositional to' the dominant culture, 'rather than merely novel' (Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, pp. 122-123). Such a decision is perhaps ultimately a subjective one of degrees – our analysis will find dominant and potentially alternative forms elaborately intermixed. Yet in the Scottish milieu, often most interesting are the alliances between cultural innovation and residual forms, as representations of the past are incorporated into new attempts at self-definition.

In addition to Williams's tripartite structure, Pierre Bourdieu's formulation of 'cultural capital' also proves helpful here. Identifying the social and economic imperatives surrounding the production of cultural material, Bourdieu allows us to read art as involved in a nexus of determined social relationships. For Bourdieu this is importantly divided between what he terms 'bourgeois art' and 'art for art's sake', the latter of which is identified with a particular kind of 'Romantic' aesthetic imperative. While the former has ambitions of economic success and political influence, the latter lays claim to a kind of reversed economics, in which 'artistic production' becomes 'a "creation" devoid of any determination or any social function'.⁹ Apparently released from such imperatives, in this context art presents itself as transcending what it sees as vulgar concerns, and formulates its own worth as relative to its distance from them, in an intellectual system which Bourdieu terms 'the economic world reversed'.¹⁰ The tension between these two representations of art is one at the heart of literary theory during the period in question. As various writers lay

⁹ It is worth bearing in mind that this latter model can often provide a means to better achieve the goals of the former.

¹⁰ Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field Of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, ed. by Randal Johnson (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 40, p. 114, p. 36, p. 164.

claim to forms of cultural capital, they move unstably between the poles of these opposing positions. Yet it is this fundamental interaction between a model that lays claim to an impact on the social and political world, and one that proposes to escape or transcend it, which represents the crux of the debate. By combining the theories of Bourdieu and Williams together, we can develop a framework allowing us to examine with some efficacy the nature of literature's development during the period; addressing the ways in which writers wield developing forms of cultural capital in the context of the struggle between dominant, residual and emergent cultural forms.

The social and political agency of literature is an exceptionally complicated subject. There are of course many forms of political comment: a satire on a contemporary politician is not the same kind of manoeuvre as a work which bemoans the imbalanced distribution of wealth or one which abstractly hopes for human equality. If abstraction and specificity (or transcendence and immanence) form the poles of one axis in the makeup of literature, these by no means correspond to its political character – either is capable of different forms of agency. Indeed, the notion that a piece of literature *could* be entirely non-polemical – completely removed from any political or social agency whatsoever – is itself a conservative fantasy, leaving us to discuss rather the degree and nature of such a function. In this sense works which might appear to have no polemical drive – sentimental nature poetry for example, or literature which encourages private and reclusive virtue – must be read all the more carefully, as polemical strategies are often more effective in relation to their subtlety. Yet the present study is less concerned with categorising cultural products in terms of the level or types of political or social engagement they display, as identifying some key

ideological strategies involved in this relationship. Addressing these strategies we will examine writers' negotiation of cultural struggle through their configuration of literature's role in the social and political world.

Periodisation

The concepts of 'Romanticism' and a 'Romantic period' are highly problematic ones, and given this study is consciously aligning itself within a critical paradigm that is challenging the scope and definition of these terms, a discussion of them is necessitated here. All too often such labels are wielded with an imprecision that only muddies the theoretical water, uncritically invoking the taxonomic assumptions of previous scholarship. As brands affixed to a body of literature at a later date, and at times almost hopelessly caught up in particular ideological positions, any effective usage must deconstruct them to some degree. The etymology of these terms lends itself to critical inaccuracy. This complexity is nicely registered in the *OED*'s treatment of the word 'romantic', encompassing several discrete ideas. Consider, for example, the following descriptions: 'Of the nature of, having the qualities of, romance'; 'having no foundation in fact'; and 'readily influenced by the imagination', all importantly different notions.¹¹

Indeed, differing usages of the adjective occur in much of our primary literature, particularly novels of the early nineteenth century. In some cases it is almost entirely interchangeable with terms such as singular or fantastical, a condition of the extraordinary that can shade towards the supernatural. Thus James Hogg can state: 'This will be viewed as a most romantic and unnatural story, as

¹¹ *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn, prep. by J. A. Simpson and E. S. C. Weiner, 20 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), XIV, p. 65.

without doubt it is'.¹² Yet sometimes this version of the romantic takes on a slightly less esoteric quality and comes closer to the Burkean sublime in describing something overpowering and terrific without necessarily the same element of the uncanny.¹³ It is predominately in this sense that Walter Scott portrays the scenery of the North of England as 'romantic and wild'.¹⁴ Scott, however, is also prone to a usage that refers to the literary genre of Romance, and is therefore bound up with a series of ideas tied to that material, such as chivalry, honour and bravery, particularly when carried to feckless extremes. This inflection is present in his description of the Jacobites' 'tales of bloody battles fought against romantic odds'.¹⁵ Crucially for Scott's literary ideology, the term romantic is also closely associated with a childish or adolescent state of the mind and a negation of the demands of reality, both through an attachment to the literature and stories of Romance and a particular predisposition to being enthused by strong and intoxicating stimuli. In this sense a romantic psychology would make a character more inclined to rash, impulsive, and though stirring, probably ill-advised behaviour. This is also a gendered character-trait, aligning with a dubious view of women as child-like and over-susceptible to emotion. Scott alerts us to this feminised category through the acute observations of Julia Mannering, feeling stereotyped by her temporary guardian Mr Mervyn: 'He thinks me, I fancy, a simple romantic Miss'; while in the same novel reminding us

¹² James Hogg, 'The Laird of Cassaway' in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, ed. by Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. 179-199, (p. 199).

¹³ See Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*, ed. by Adam Phillips (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 36-37.

¹⁴ Walter Scott, *Rob Roy*, ed. by Ian Duncan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 100.

¹⁵ Walter Scott, *Redgauntlet*, ed. by Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 10.

that 'women [are] ever delighted with the marvellous'.¹⁶

However, unsteadily coalescing around an opposition to the mundane, emphasising the unusual and the imaginative, a volatile semantic matrix of romance is indeed fundamental to the literary ideologies deployed in this writing, though it must be dissected with considerable syntactic care. Given such varying and slippery usages in the literature of the time – and the extensive critical battle ever since over what exactly Romanticism as a literary movement or the capitalised adjective Romantic represents – it is clear that such concepts cannot be employed without considerable caution. Ideas of romance will emerge as a key element in our submission of a broad literary movement, yet we must not allow the historical colouration of terminology to inappropriately prejudice our readings. This elaborate body of meaning has a tendency to reach out and contaminate critical analysis.

Recent years have seen a sustained challenge to an idea of British Romanticism cemented during the twentieth century and based entirely around English textual models and English historical paradigms. While Scottish literary history shares many of the same developments and is in continued dialogue with English writing, it is importantly distinctive. This requires any study looking to examine Scottish writing in this period with anything like a credible intellectual framework to interrogate its notion of periodicity. An Anglocentric British model, usually beginning with the publication of *Lyrical Ballads* set against the background of the French Revolution, and ending with either the radical disillusionment surrounding the Reform Bill in 1832 or the accession of Queen

¹⁶ Walter Scott, *Guy Mannering*, ed. by P. D. Garside (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999), p. 93, p. 338.

Victoria in 1837, is well-established in textbooks, anthologies and other reference sources.¹⁷ Yet the failure of this brief Romanticism to account for many writers without whom it cannot be understood (and who must then be clumsily labelled with terms like 'proto-Romantic') questions its viability even in a restricted English context. Of course the very notion of a Romantic period, as an ideological and aesthetically driven formation, leaves itself open to issues of historical indeterminacy, given the organic nature of such developments. Yet in some respects it was this very aesthetic bias that gave the Romantic period its tightly regimented canonical form, as a model based on ideological trends could be more stubbornly resistant to other kinds of writing than one simply occupying a historical period.

More recently the mapping of Romanticism for Scottish material has been addressed with considerable success. Murray Pittock addresses the issue of periodicity in his *Scottish and Irish Romanticism*, seeking a model that allows for the differing historical and ideological trajectory at work outside England.

Rather than simply opting for an ideologically neutral time-frame, he argues that:

The definition of a Romantic period operating within a national literature must encounter and incorporate the stress on the subjective and aesthetic dimensions of 'Romanticism' held so dear by a previous critical paradigm, rather than merely overthrowing them. Paradigmatic reversal merely invites revisionism. (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 3)

Though the threat of revisionism is not perhaps the strongest argument for this developmental approach, the model Pittock constructs is nevertheless a useful one. The originary point of his Scottish Romantic period is in the work (both

¹⁷ William Wordsworth & Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by Michael Mason (London: Longman, 1992). See, for example, the entry on 'Romantic revival', in *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory*, ed. by J. A. Cuddon, 4th edn, rev. by C. E. Preston (London: Penguin, 1999), p. 771.

artistic and civic) of Allan Ramsay, and explicitly its patriotic ideological drive (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 32).¹⁸ Ramsay is pivotal in facilitating later literary trends: without him, there can be no Robert Fergusson, no Robert Burns and so forth, this argument goes.¹⁹ With Ramsay as an advocate for a distinct Scottish public sphere and a key creative talent, this model helps to account for Scotland's discernibly national literature during the period, but it is not merely historical coincidence that leads Pittock to label this tradition Romantic. Indeed he sees many of the currents running through the Scottish (and Irish) literary traditions of the time – 'The bard; the Aeolian harp; the 'real language of men', and what this means; the inflection of genre; the move away from classical reference' – as key to what later became the Anglo-British model of Romantic literature (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 142). It could be argued that Pittock over-states the importance of Ramsay to the literary tradition he is tracing. Colin Kidd stresses the widespread publication of patriotic ballads in Scotland both before and during this period, 'evidence of the confident continuity of a traditional historical form of Scottish patriotism', rather than 'post-Union anxieties about the loss of a Scottish identity'.²⁰ If indeed Ramsay's work is more in keeping with established

¹⁸ As Pittock himself notes, the assertion of Ramsay as a key founder or facilitator of a Romantic movement has noteworthy precedence in the literary criticism of the first half of the twentieth century, for example in W. J. Courthope's *History of English Poetry*, 6 vols (London, 1895-1910), VI, pp. 53-54.

¹⁹ Nigel Leask has broadly supported this view of Ramsay's role, commenting that, 'Ramsay's ingenious neoclassical defence of Scots [...] proved immensely enabling in legitimizing the poetic idiom of his successors Fergusson and Burns, and in establishing Scots as the dominant non-standard literary language of the Anglophone world'. See Nigel Leask, *Robert Burns and Pastoral: Poetry and Improvement in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 59.

²⁰ Colin Kidd, *Subverting Scotland's Past: Scottish whig historians and the creation of an Anglo-British identity, 1689-c. 1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 76-77.

cultural trends, the present study is nonetheless inclined to endorse his role in the first half of the eighteenth century as a significant 'stage-setter' for an important strand in the Scottish literary tradition. This indeed is borne out by Burns's own recognition of Ramsay's legacy.²¹ Yet perhaps the most valuable element of Pittock's model is its acknowledgement of the institutional background to Scottish writing over the long eighteenth century. The particulars of the Union settlement and the manner in which Scottish civil society developed and was organised are fundamental to our understanding of literary endeavour during this period. Thus, though the body of our textual analysis is clustered around the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, a teleology stretching back to this earlier period indicates the importance of a long historical experience that underpins this writing. In this sense Ramsay's role in the public sphere and his contribution to the creation of an institutional structure for the arts – including opening in 1725 what may have been the first circulating library in the British Isles – is indeed foundational.²²

When discussing the nature of a literary period based in Scotland around this time, the inescapable and perhaps even defining feature is the proximity and influence of the Scottish Enlightenment. While the Enlightenment as an intellectual movement was active across Europe and beyond, in Scotland it took

²¹ Burns's inclusion of Ramsay in a Scots poetic tradition alongside Robert Fergusson is an important statement, sketching out a historical lineage within which he contextualises his own work. See the first 'Epistle to J. L[apra]ik, An Old Scotch Bard', in Robert Burns, *Poems and Songs*, ed. by James Kinsley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), K 57, XIV. 79-84. The texts used for Burns's poems throughout the present study are taken from this single volume edition of the works, given with references to Kinsley's numbering system.

²² See Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 59; and Pittock, *Scottish and Irish*, p. 38.

on a particular nuance within the work of national self-definition. This can be tied into the question of a form of civic nationalism, part of the operation of a distinct public sphere that rendered the Scottish Enlightenment 'in part an assertion of national identity in a country which had lost its statehood'.²³ The operative phrase in that sentence being, of course, 'in part', as such a claim is undoubtedly complicated by the Anglicising tendencies and the determined cosmopolitanism of many of the most prominent Enlightenment Scots. Perhaps crucially, however, the Scottish context seems consistently to undermine the critical commonplace that Romanticism comes after, and is indeed a response to, or rejection of, the Enlightenment. This point is nicely illustrated by Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen when dealing with Scotland's liminality to an Anglo-dominated Romanticism:

In Scotland, 'Classical' and 'Romantic' cultural forms occupy the same historical moment and institutional base, rather than defining successive stages or periods. Macpherson's *Fingal*, founding document of a global Romanticism, is not just contemporary with the scientific projects of the Scottish Enlightenment but one of its typical inventions.²⁴

The point is borne out by even the most cursory of glances through the literature of the time. Scotland's potential Romantics – from Macpherson through Burns to Scott, Hogg and Galt – write literature infused with the theories and attitudes current in the intellectual flourishing now documented as the Scottish Enlightenment. Whether indeed such a break between paradigms can be effectively argued in the English model is another question, yet there can be no doubt over an integral relationship in Scottish writing.

²³ Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Enlightenment', in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age*, ed. by McCalman, pp. 299-311, (p. 299).

²⁴ Ian Duncan, with Leith Davis and Janet Sorensen, 'Introduction', in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. by Leith Davis, Ian Duncan and Janet Sorensen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 1-19, (p. 3).

If the Enlightenment in Scotland is traditionally considered to have peaked for a decade or two around the mid-eighteenth century, its influence can be felt throughout a much longer historical period. As this thesis demonstrates, the broad intellectual drive of this movement – encapsulated in the term ‘improvement’ – is very much at the heart of Scotland’s concomitant literary tradition. The dialectical nature of this process, as improving ideologies continually negotiate an attendant body of contestation and alternatives, is a crucial key to what distinguishes Scottish material within a wider British and European context; the resonances of Scotland’s historical experience manifested through its literary tradition. The (albeit uneven) rapidity with which Scottish society was transformed during this period is ever-present, with authors employed in exposition, praise and censure of the arrival of modernity. Furthermore, the evolving, large-scale identity structures of the period are very often understood via this debate, with conceptions of Scottishness and Britishness deeply implicated in the issue of improvement and its alternatives. If the dominant British culture often managed to monopolise discourses of improvement, this could press ideas of residual Scottishness into various kinds of alternative positions; constructing a seductive and recurring pattern, albeit one that does not go unchallenged. These stresses in fact affirm the ‘dialectics of improvement’ as a salutary framework within which to consider this writing: a literary tradition that is profoundly involved in the polarising nature of this trajectory. However, Pittock’s recommendation that scholars retain the Romantic label is supported in the citation above, noting the originary status of much of this material to what is generally recognised as literary Romanticism on a global scale. Though the present study is somewhat inclined towards a more

neutral long-eighteenth-century model, with a view towards escaping from problematically loaded terminology, perhaps to do so would undersell the role of ideas of romance and risk losing some informative resonances. Thus a Scottish Romanticism placed carefully and discriminatingly within the long eighteenth century, and which remains attuned to the ideological and aesthetic implications of such a structure, is perhaps a sufficient framework in which to address this literature.

The cost of progress

Enlightenment theory pervades, inspires and explains much of the literature of long-eighteenth-century Scotland, providing important elements of both its context and its intellectual toolkit. Among the many features of this diverse movement that resonate in the period's creative writing, stadialism seems to have struck deep into the contemporary psyche. Theorised by some of the most prominent men of the Enlightenment, this conceptual framework, with its range of inbuilt conclusions and problems, is put to work across numerous key texts. Producing a model of progress towards capitalist modernity, the assumptions and challenges of this formula are a potent generative field.

Though in the hands of different theorists the specifics of stadialism go through some variation, its basic assumptions remain generally intact.²⁵ The theory postulates that all human societies go through corresponding

²⁵ Smith is usually cited as the primary source of the 'four-stage' theory. See Adam Smith, *Lectures on Jurisprudence*, ed. by R. L. Meek, D. D. Raphael and P. G. Stein (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978). Important versions are also found in Adam Ferguson, *An Essay on the History of Civil Society*, ed. by Fania Oz-Salzberger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); and John Millar, *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks; or, An Inquiry into the Circumstances which give rise to Influence and Authority, in the Different Members of Society* (Bristol: Thoemmes, 1990).

developmental stages from hunter-gathering through to commercial modernity. Thus, the social historian could look around their contemporary world and identify societies at a previous stage: effectively allowing them to encounter their own society's past. We can recognise that this process involves the imposition of an artificial teleology, as capitalist modernity dismisses all alternatives to itself as merely its own infant germs. Yet the potential to transpose historical developmental time onto geographical space nonetheless brought major implications for the understanding of inter-societal relations. A hierarchy based in a fictive evolutionary construct could be applied to render alternatives to the dominant culture fatal remnants from a previous epoch. Subsuming residual Scottishness, for example, as merely a historical precursor to metropolitan British life could be a formidable political manoeuvre.

This formula of societal development is often found in operation via the concept of improvement, encapsulating the processes by which progress is propelled along. Becoming a linguistic commonplace, the term provides shorthand for stadialist assumptions. Improvement remains a persistent feature of intellectual discourse during the period, a pivotal concept that Scots employ in a variety of contexts: economic, agricultural, legal, social, political and cultural. In his *Improvement and Romance*, Peter Womack makes the point, however, that the word retains an economic thrust throughout its diverse applications in the period. This reflects Raymond Williams's notation of 'the complex underlying connection between "making something better" and "making a profit out of something"', finding a crucial 'overlap' between economics and other discourses

via this term.²⁶ Womack comments that, 'The primary meaning of the word, etymologically and historically, is the narrowly economic one'. He then continues:

The ramifications of eighteenth-century usage [...] are transferences of that basic idea. The growth, in this semantic field, of the vaguer sense which is current now – the process of making something better – is thus quite specifically an instance of capitalist ideology: it makes managing a stock so that it increases in value the universal type of beneficent change.²⁷

Thus in the historical proliferation of the term, we can trace an element in capitalism's evolving hold on the shared consciousness. Improvement: literally making something more *profitable*. The lexical ascendancy of improvement is in this sense precisely the ideological outcome of a burgeoning commercialism. Plotting the diverse facets of contemporary life within a newly rigorous monetary framework, activities as varied as crop rotation and elocution lessons could be perceived as the workings of improvement, helping Scotland on its journey towards commercial modernity.

Yet notions of stadial development contain a double-edged cultural impetus. Inherent in such processes of improvement is a recurring anxiety that what is left behind may be of real value. For if 'progress' saw society shrugging off the violence and ignorance associated with barbarism, perhaps something was lost in the process, perhaps commercial modernity lacked the purity, innocence and natural virtue of older social forms. Such oppositional positions are sometimes cited as symptomatic of imperial and nationalist ideologies respectively (See Trumpener, p. 72). Though with some merit, that model is far

²⁶ Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A vocabulary of culture and society*, rev. edn (London: Flamingo, 1983), pp. 160-161.

²⁷ Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989), p. 3.

from comprehensive – in truth both ideologies demonstrate a capacity to encompass the contestation. Yet this fundamental conflict between a favourable march of ‘progress’ and a lamentable loss of ‘nature’ is a crucial dynamic. Indeed, if processes of improvement dominate the period, John Dwyer’s *Virtuous Discourse* amply demonstrates that attendant moral concerns form a major, alternative discursive realm in contemporary debate.²⁸ These preoccupations are partly a result of how directly and explicitly stadialism was applied to both the contemporary and historical situation of Scotland. It is perhaps fitting that its most overt application to the Scottish context is given to us by William Robertson, the eighteenth century’s most influential Scottish historian, and as simultaneously the Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland and the Principal of Edinburgh University, the country’s most powerful intellectual.²⁹

In his *History of Scotland* Robertson traces the country’s development from a vague, distant past. When he describes that, ‘Truth begins to dawn in the second period’, he leaves us in no doubt that the developmental curve he is to narrate will be a confidently upward one. However, like many of his contemporaries, Robertson had applied his notion of stadialism to the world around him, and had come to view wealthy England as a positive civilising force on her more backward neighbour. This belief is implicit a few lines later when

²⁸ John Dwyer, *Virtuous Discourse: Sensibility and Community in Late Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Edinburgh: Donald, 1987). Dwyer makes this point throughout his study, but see in particular pp. 1-7. In fact, he offers the claim that moral imperatives are the dominant discourse of the period, though this may be excessive.

²⁹ For a brief biography of Robertson see *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English*, ed. by Ian Ousby (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 844-845.

he states that, 'In the third period, the History of Scotland, chiefly by means of records preserved in England, becomes more authentic'.³⁰ Here the word 'authentic' seems to slip from its initial meaning as *factual* (e.g. we can know of events with more certainty due to better written records) and slides towards an implication that Scotland's history is *authenticated*, granted historical relevance, even dignified, through its contact with England. Discussing Robertson's historiographical project, Pittock has commented on the way in which it involves the 'infantilization of the national past' (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 65). Backward and barbaric, historical Scotland (alongside areas of contemporary Scotland) was literally childish in societal terms, occupying an earlier stage of development from its wealthy southern neighbour. This leads Colin Kidd to describe the 'unusable' nature of Scotland's past, as it became seen as an inappropriate complement to contemporary attitudes and ambitions (*Subverting*, p. 129). The political corollaries of such a view are manifest. If historical Scotland and parts of contemporary Scotland are infantile, then their complete incorporation into a prosperous British modernity is not only favourable, but merely the logical extension of a developmental process.

This attitude to Scotland's past, with its naturalisation of Anglo-British homogenisation and its consequent stress on the propriety of adopting English cultural and political norms, ran even beyond 'infantilization' in one view, leading to the complete deletion of Scotland's history from the sphere of historical relevance. This is the argument posited by Cairns Craig, who suggests

³⁰ William Robertson, *The History of Scotland during the reigns of Queen Mary and of King James VI till his accession to the crown of England: with a review of the Scottish history previous to that period*, 2 vols (London: Jones, 1827), p. 5.

that the rapidity of Scotland's economic boom combined with virulently negative views of the past to prompt the outright abandonment of Scottish history:

Scotland's sudden emergence into this modern, commercial world, out of what those theorists saw as a dark and fanatic past, incorporates Scotland into a history whose shape no longer derives from the particularities of its own experience; rather, the past of its present is the evolution of English experience and Scotland's own past becomes the arena of local narrative no longer teleologically connected to its future.³¹

Here swift development rendered historical Scotland both unrecognisable and undesirable to the men of the Enlightenment, leading theorists to appropriate English historical narratives in its place; dooming the Scottish past to the status of isolated and extraneous 'locality'. England's experience represents an 'organic' developmental process while Scotland's seems disconnected, 'inorganic' and irrelevant.³²

Yet the denigration of residual Scottishness (whether rendered actually ahistorical or merely fatally historical) was never a secure move. Mark R. M. Towsey has explored, for example, the manner in which some contemporary readers were able to destabilise the Unionist historiography of the period,

³¹ Cairns Craig, *Out of History: Narrative Paradigms in Scottish and English Culture*, (Edinburgh: Polygon, 1996), p. 39

³² We should note here David Craig's older, holistic diagnosis of Scottish culture, in which the eighteenth century crystallises a fundamental 'alienation from things native', finding a detached, Anglophone culture of Enlightenment juxtaposed against a parochial, indigenous Scottishness. In Craig's view this situation explains a literary tradition that is variously 'incomplete' and 'bitty', falling short of the 'mature, "all-round"' tradition that could be found in England and elsewhere. This negative analysis of Scottish literature is one that more recent criticism has worked hard to overturn. As the present study stresses, while it remains useful to consider the conflicts in Scottish culture, it is more productive to consider these as a potent, generative force. Furthermore, as is reinforced in Chapter One, we must also be careful to avoid undue exceptionalism on elements of division in the Scottish context. See David Craig, *Scottish Literature and the Scottish People, 1680-1830* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1961), p. 14, p. 63, p. 140.

bringing their own interpretations to bear upon the hegemonic discourses emanating from metropolitan Edinburgh:

Filling their notebooks with anecdotes, transcripts and lists of events that celebrated various aspects of the Scottish past [...] they disrupted the narrative strategies so carefully constructed by the Scottish *literati* (whether deliberately or subconsciously), rebelling against the notion that only English history could adequately explain contemporary Scotland.³³

The existence of such counter-hegemonic reading activities flags up the instability around the dominant narratives emerging from the pages of men like Robertson. While the Anglo-British emphasis of mainstream historiography increasingly exercised a stranglehold upon discourse, alternative ideological positions remained available. Indeed, the active subversion of the Scottish past could itself involve an inconsistent tendency, one particularly visible in literary terms. Viewing such conflict, Cairns Craig contests that:

Those 'barbarian' modes of society which 'history' would appear to have consigned to the past are always lurking, in the depths of the mind, across the boundaries of geography, waiting to erupt back into the present and disrupt the progressive narrative of the historical. (*Out of History*, p. 71)

So often in the literature of this period, we can see this dynamic at work, as residual cultural forms repeatedly 'erupt back into the present'. This Scottish material, suppressed by mainstream historical narratives, can nonetheless exercise an agency of disruptive heterogeneity upon the fictions of modernity. Indeed, stadial historiography, by its very nature, must continually invoke its primitive subordinates. Even the most confident developmental narrative has no choice but to concern itself with what is progressed *from*. If maligned as 'local', this may render Scottishness better equipped to express the virtues of humanity

³³ Mark R. M. Towsey, *Reading the Scottish Enlightenment: Books and their Readers in Provincial Scotland, 1750-1820* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), p. 260.

and folk-cultural authenticity; if rejected as pastness, it may become the recurrent *unheimlich* of progressive modernity.

While residual Scottishness was being suppressed within elements of the British historical narrative, it could nevertheless (arguably it had no choice but to) lay claim to an aesthetic existence: 'It could be a childhood tale, a story, a romance, but not modernity not reality' (Pittock, *Scottish and Irish*, p. 65).

Removed to the realm of romance, elided from the improving priorities of British modernity, Scotland's historical identity could be an aesthetic commodity if not 'reality'. Secured within a terrain of irrationality and imaginative play, time and again in contemporary writing we find conceptions of residual Scottishness construed as an alternative to the dominant concerns of commerce and improvement. Peter Womack identifies the importance of such an ideological dichotomy to the period, tracing the emerging location of the romantic in opposition, or rather as unthreatening complement, to commercial modernity: 'a kind of reservation in which the values which Improvement provokes and suppresses can be *contained* – that is, preserved, but also imprisoned' (p. 3). Womack's thesis provides a compelling illustration of this pattern; yet his suggestion is that the process of romanticisation centres almost exclusively upon the Highlands, as that region becomes 'the privileged home of subjectivity' (p. 169).³⁴ While the synecdochical use of the Highlands as an emblem of Scottishness – returned to in subsequent chapters – justifies this focus to a degree, it does tend to elide the broader role of what we are terming here

³⁴ Matthew Wickman has further explored the notion of the Highlands as a domain of 'experience', beyond Enlightenment rationalism. See Matthew Wickman, *The Ruins of Experience: Scotland's 'Romantick' Highlands and the Birth of the Modern Witness* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

residual Scottishness. The romanticisation of Scotland may often have centred upon the Highland area, yet a more spacious construction of the 'romantic nation' emerges in the pages of contemporary writing. This construct is often, and perhaps necessarily, nebulous with regard to real geographical concerns; while the regionally sensitive work of writers like Burns, Scott, Hogg and Galt also demands an expansion of the frame. Indeed, the basic significance of the Scots language within the paradigm indicates the insufficiency of a purely Highland reading. Instead, we need to be sensitive to a larger body of cultural material in Scotland – tied to modes of local cultural particularism and to the identity of the historical Scottish nation – which finds itself construed as the romantic counterpoint to an evolving, dominant Britishness.

This production of an aestheticised nationhood remains a tense process, and throughout the present study we will see instances in which the dynamic is questioned, disrupted and even flatly denied. Yet the pattern is stubbornly visible, with varying ideological consequences. Womack focuses on a process of containment, yet perhaps even more interesting is the degree to which Scotland can acquire a resilient agency, even a political vigour, by virtue of its status as romance. Rendered an aesthetic object, Scottishness takes on all the complex political resonances of art itself – with national identity negotiating the fluid polemical topography implicit in artistic production. Demonstrating the theoretical potency of such an existence, Craig comments that, 'The Scotland which had been divorced from history, and so became the place of romance, was also the place where history encountered those forces which could not be made to submit to historical amelioration' (*Out of History*, p. 44). Such disruptive 'forces' are present throughout the work of the period, taking a variety of shapes,

including: aggressive linguistic heterodoxy, focuses on problematic historical episodes and the more insidious disruptive power of the uncanny in Gothic narratives. Yet overriding such features is the tricky upshot of a persistent aestheticisation of Scottishness. Though sometimes a dismissive move, an aesthetic existence is one that this study finds to be potentially quite formidable.

Literature's engagement with ideas of Scottishness, then, could serve very different ideological ends. While the nationalist impetus of Pittock's criticism leads him to focus on defensive cultural forms, representing what he terms (borrowing from Franz Fanon) a 'literature of combat', there exists an important strain that is more than tacitly involved in the formation and support of British cultural forms (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 164). Robert Crawford has explored in detail some of the ways Scottish writers are enthusiastically engaged in constructing a British culture capable of including and dignifying Scotland.³⁵ In a move simultaneously entrepreneurial and self-defensive, these writers attempt to forge an inclusive Britishness as a platform for Scotland's developing ambitions. This cultural manoeuvre exists alongside – and often in an uncomfortable marriage with – autonomous sentiments, creating a tense discursive terrain at the heart of the literary psyche. Leith Davis has stressed the role of 'acts of union and dislocation', from which she claims Britain, as a 'site of contest', 'was forged', enlisting the work of Mikhail Bakhtin to view literary texts as dialogic 'embodiments' of a tense cultural conversation.³⁶ Such conflict is developed by Susan Manning, who argues that eighteenth-century Scottish writing displays a

³⁵ Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature*, 2nd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

³⁶ Leith Davis, *Acts of Union: Scotland and the Literary Negotiation of the British Nation, 1707-1830* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), pp. 1-8.

kind of compunction, a subconscious obsession with the notion of 'union', and consequently its equal and opposite agency, fragmentation. Manning's study is strong on linguistic issues, suggesting a faceoff between an Anglo-British progressive cultural impetus and a residual Scottish one in the Anglicising projects of the Enlightenment literati:

They all went to great lengths to remove the linguistic evidence of their pre-Union national origins from the surface of their writing, but there was always a danger that traces of their personal and national origins lurked, resistant, like a virus in the deep structures of their language-use.³⁷

This characterisation of non-standard language, of Scots terms, as 'like a virus' suggests an interestingly automatic, uncontrollable form of residual cultural disruption. While it is problematic to assert that Scots cultural difference *necessarily* forms a political protest, there is a case to be made that certain kinds of difference, particularly in the important sphere of language, bear an inextricable polemical agency. This idea is supported by Pittock's (also Bakhtinian) description of Walter Scott's use of Scots in his novels as 'unruly beyond the limits assigned by the text', seeing the language itself as carrying a polemical clout which is potentially outside the control of a text's ostensible direction (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 202).³⁸ As this sentiment suggests, when discussing the polemical agency of cultural forms the notion of authorial intention can occupy something of a fluid role.

³⁷ Susan Manning, *Fragments of Union: Making Connections in Scottish and American Writing* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), p. 20.

³⁸ Bakhtin writes that, 'At any given moment of its historical existence, language is heteroglot from top to bottom: it represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth, all given a bodily form.' See M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 291.

If the project of establishing British hegemony – incorporating both political and cultural homogenisation – represented the dominant ideological trend in long-eighteenth-century Scotland; the limitations, shortcomings and weaknesses of such a move are habitually manifested. Many of such questions can be profitably understood as spatial concerns. As both cultural and political metaphor, and an immediate political concern, geography is central during the period. ‘Civilising’ the Highlands, for example, was at least as much an ideological, symbolic project, as it was a practical one. For Penny Fielding the proliferation in Scotland of the Enlightenment impulses towards measurement, recording and classification only bring into focus alternative and liminal formations. She discusses in spatial terms the ‘post-Enlightenment’ qualities of a form of what she terms Romantic ideology, which deals explicitly in the immeasurable:

The investment in spatial modernity that produced the *Statistical Account*, or a stadial history that could be scientifically predicted through geography, does not exclude forms of Romantic or amorphous space. Indeed, [...] it is the very impulse to know the world geographically that produces imaginary spaces that cannot be accounted for. (*Fictions of Geography*, p. 184)

This notion of ‘amorphous’, ‘Romantic’ or ‘post-Enlightenment’ space is a suggestive one. In polemical terms such a space can represent a domain in which political possibilities, and social and cultural forms beyond those of the dominant culture, can be realised – if only in an explicitly ‘irrational’ context. Fielding theorises the act of measurement, the attempt to control, carrying with it its own nemesis, this ‘post-Enlightenment’ (perhaps ‘supra-Enlightenment’) spatiality, in which the hegemonic culture can be disrupted and overthrown. There is some risk of a reduced handling of this formulation over-simplistically

equating the ideological drive of the Enlightenment with an Anglo-British cultural impetus. Yet as a description of one of the key aesthetic manoeuvres of the period, it identifies a central technique employed to open up narrative possibilities beyond the dominant cultural discourse. Time and again it is in the context of a particularly 'post-Enlightenment', anti-rational form of aesthetic territory that counter-hegemonic cultural forms find their expression. Such literary conditions are vital to a series of on-going cultural skirmishes, as authors strain between oppositional paradigms: Britishness and Scottishness, or improvement and its Other. Positioned both within and without the improving hegemony, Scottish writers seem granted a special clarity of vision on the key historical narratives of modernisation. We can begin, then, to suggest a form of Scottish Romanticism as a modal series of systematic disruptions to improving Britishness. Certainly the application of the nation as romance could provide a powerful means to challenge improving trends, yet we need to remain aware of a conflicted, dual vision in this work. If, as Saree Makdisi writes, 'Romanticism can be partly understood as a diverse and heterogeneous series of engagements with modernization', then this is borne out particularly well in the Scottish context.³⁹

The lasting appeal of the tradition, indeed, is largely a parallel sympathy to both the grand trajectory of modernisation and its suppressed alternatives.

Contemplating the nature of the 'romantic nation', reflecting on the ideological

³⁹ Makdisi continues that, 'Romanticism was not merely a response to this transformation. It was a key constitutive element'. The present study, however, is stressing a broader scope for Romanticism than the 'romantic critique' of modernisation emphasised by Makdisi here. See Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 6-7. In a frequently useful book, his chapter on Scott unfortunately suffers from a lack of engagement with some of the recent work in the field (pp. 70-99).

loadings of both Scottishness and Britishness, this literature attempts to both modify and understand Scotland's role in the historical emergence of modernity.

The linguistic terrain

The heteroglossic nature of Scottish writing during this period has a major impact on its polemical character. A frequently sophisticated deployment of languages and registers can seem to strikingly pre-figure a postmodern literary aesthetic. These texts often feature multiple voices, including Standard English, archaic English, Latin, vernacular Scots, forms of literary Scots and Gaelic.⁴⁰ The interplay between these is a key vehicle of ideological signification, and criticism of this material must remain sensitive to such manoeuvres. This has historically been rendered more difficult by the recurrent and deceptive characterisations (often self-characterisations) of some of the most prominent Scottish writers of this period as ill-educated, natural geniuses. Though Burns is the quintessential exemplar here, Robert Fergusson and James Hogg (not to mention Macpherson's fictional avatar Ossian) also fall into this category. Such perceptions can encourage critical insensitivity to what is often highly strategic writing. Remaining aware of the subtleties behind the deployment of languages in these texts is fundamental to identifying their polemical devices, many of which are often lodged in that very deployment.

Attitudes to language over the period in question are dynamic and often inflammatory, as differing tongues are infused with contrasting forms of cultural capital. Janet Sorensen has argued for a possible ideological dichotomy here,

⁴⁰ The present study is unable to stretch to an analysis of the Gaelic literary tradition, yet it is important to remain aware of this alternative sphere. See Thomas Owen Clancy, 'Gaelic Literature and Scottish Romanticism', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. by Pittock, pp. 49-60.

between the role of English as the language of imperial expansion and the consequent role of subordinated local tongues. For if English was the language of universal intelligibility and rational discourse, a kind of imperial Esperanto, she proposes that it could be viewed as lacking the nativity of subordinate tongues. Locality itself could be seen as symbolic of this tension, its very specificity balanced between the poles of parochialism and folk-cultural authenticity. Sorensen argues that, 'Embodied, historied, affective, Gaelic promised the suturing linguistic powers that English lacked.'⁴¹ A claim on English as 'unhistoried' would unfairly ignore, among other things, the awareness of literary history in the period: the monolithic status of figures like Shakespeare and Milton in long-eighteenth-century British culture reflecting a clear sense of the language's rich heritage.⁴² Yet in a context where Standard English was positioned as the language of officialdom and not of traditional cultural expression, it is possible to understand why such a divide might be perceived. The sense of specificity is interesting, suggesting that subordinate languages could be seen to reveal a more intimate cultural history by way of their greater localised affinity with particular groups. 'Embodied', partly by way of an ideological stress on the oral tradition, the highly physicalised characterisation of these tongues could also feed into the aesthetic question, rendering them apparently capable of particular effects.

⁴¹ Janet Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 23.

⁴² Among the most conspicuous examples of this recognition of literary heritage is the canon-negotiating project of Samuel Johnson, *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; with Critical Observations on their Works*, ed. by Roger Lonsdale, 4 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Characterisations of respective tongues vary considerably throughout the literature under focus. Scott's tendency in his fiction is to describe Standard English as 'pure' and Scots as a vulgar deviation from this purity (at least in part figuring the divide as class-based rather than geopolitical). The following passage exemplifies this attitude with anecdotal clout:

The language of passion is almost always pure as well as vehement, and it is no uncommon thing to hear a Scotchman, when overwhelmed by a countryman with a tone of bitter and fluent upbraiding, reply by way of taunt to his adversary, 'You have gotten to your English.' (*Rob Roy*, p. 412)

English is taken as the medium of fluency and expressive purity. Yet such a position is counterpointed by the unassuming intelligence and morality often shown by his Scots-speaking characters, contrasted against Scott's occasional utilisation of a dishonest Standard English-speaking stereotype. Bailie Jarvie in *Rob Roy* is typical of the former, Gilbert Glossin in *Guy Mannering* of the latter. Probably the quintessential example of this doubled attitude to Scots is found with the character Jeanie Deans in *The Heart of Midlothian*, whose simplicity and regional 'vulgarity', located largely in her speech, is nonetheless the assurance of her moral integrity:

Jeanie had a voice low and sweetly toned, an admirable thing in woman, and eke besought 'her Luddyship to have pity on a poor misguided young creature,' in tones so affecting, that, like the notes of some of her native songs, provincial vulgarity was lost in pathos.⁴³

Here aligned with Scots song, the pastoral pathos of Jeanie's musical language reveals her uncorrupted humanity (though this is complicated by Scott's exploration of her severe Presbyterian moral compass). While confirming his

⁴³ Walter Scott, *The Heart of Midlothian*, ed. by Claire Lamont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 366.

association of Scots with the lower classes, Scott's mischievous review of his own work affirms this sense of emotional clarity:

The Scottish peasant speaks the language of his native country, his *national* language, not the *patois* of an individual district; and in listening to it we not only do not experience even the slightest feeling of disgust or aversion, but our bosoms are responsive to every sentiment of sublimity, or awe, or terror which the author may be disposed to excite.⁴⁴

Scots may be the language of peasants, yet this evocative tongue is capable of producing 'every sentiment of sublimity'. If English operates as the dominant language in Scott's fiction – a significant element in his portrayal of the dawning of British modernity – still the hierarchy can be at least temporarily overturned, allowing for incisive polemical effects. The improbable English diction of many of Scott's protagonists may be primarily an issue of readership, yet his novels set up a tense dynamic between linguistic alternatives, one in which the 'unimproved' Scots tongue retains an occasional power to challenge the prevailing ideological direction.

James Hogg's writing frequently takes a quite different, more unequivocally positive approach to the Scots tongue. The recurring tensions in his work surrounding narrative authority and the idea of genuine folk culture often converge around a particular aggrandisement of the Scots tongue. We find the linguistic medium presented as central to the project of capturing (or indeed failing to capture) the essence of residual cultural forms. Language becomes an untranslatable, localised system of signification for Hogg, prompting statements like, 'Such scenes, and such adventures, are not worth a farthing, unless described and related in the language of the country to which they are

⁴⁴ Walter Scott, with William Erskine, review of *Tales of my Landlord*, *Quarterly Review*, 16.32 (January, 1817), 430-480, (p. 470).

peculiar'.⁴⁵ In his tales of Scottish folk experience, Scots is necessarily central to Hogg's narrative procedure – regardless of its aesthetic qualities, which he is never slow to praise – as the only vehicle through which his subject matter can be communicated with any value. Affixing a localised, evanescent quality to language, Hogg imposes a stress on representational accuracy that is vitally a linguistic question.

Literary representations of Gaelicised English are also found in both Hogg and Scott, drawing on what Peter Womack cites as a well-established tradition of 'Stage Highlandese'. At times this material provides dubious comic relief that registers a difficult relationship with the Highlands (revealing of both men's Borders roots) – though Womack's comment that such styling is more normally 'farcical rather than vituperative' following 1745 probably applies here (p. 9).⁴⁶ Albeit carrying a stinging undertone of cultural mockery, at moments this form attains to an odd kind of energised pathos. The manic dialogue Hogg rehearses through the character Davie Duff in the post-Culloden sequence of *The Three Perils of Woman* strikes a bewildering line between mocking comedy and searing emotion. Davie's stylised speech helps to destabilise the tone of Hogg's writing, forcing an unsettling readerly position. Consider Davie's description of arriving in the aftermath of the battle:

But, when I came south to Culloden, I nefer peheld so praive a sight. Tere were tey lhying tier above tier, and rhank pehind rhank; but te tevil a clhan of tem had a reid-coat mixed out through and through tem but te Mackintoshes. Tere was she lhying in hundreds apove te reid-coat.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ James Hogg, *The Brownie of Bodsbeck*, ed. by Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976), p. 146.

⁴⁶ An example of this effect can be found in *Rob Roy*, p. 259.

⁴⁷ James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Woman; or, Love, Leasing, and Jealousy, a series of Domestic Scottish Tales*, ed. by Antony Hasler and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), p. 363.

Himself simultaneously the subject of scorn and pity, Davie's observations have a visceral power and a naïve emotional clarity that is partially owed to this Gaelicised form. The tonal disruption created by these speech patterns gives a writer like Hogg a gleeful opportunity for experimentation, while also carrying a difficult cultural baggage and a tendency towards sneering. Blending suspect caricature with a disarming sensitivity, this 'Highlandese' moves in an ambiguous landscape between sympathy and disdain.

Of course, above and beyond the subjective estimations of particular tongues, persistent heteroglossia reinforces the status of Scotland as a multi-lingual state. While John Galt's ability 'in modulating through various degrees of "Scotsness" from unadulterated Ayrshire dialect to quasi-literary English' is remarkable, without doubt the most celebrated practitioner of this element in the Scottish tradition is Burns, whose heteroglossic fluidity is one defining element of his poetics.⁴⁸ This component in Burns's arsenal is characteristically open to multiple ideological interpretations. On one hand his potent usage of the Scots tongue can be viewed as a defensive cultural manoeuvre, and there is plenty of scope to read him as championing the language's particular qualities. For the Ayrshireman Burns, as with so many Scottish writers of the period, this is inflected with special force towards his powerful regional identity. Yet above the regional frame, Burns's poetry, like his later song collecting, is invested in a project of national vindication. That said, the interweaving of Scots and English through his work can also be read as a particularly British project, marrying the

⁴⁸ J. Derrick McClure, 'Scots and English in *Annals of the Parish* and *The Provost*', in *John Galt 1779-1979*, ed. by Christopher A. Whatley (Edinburgh: The Ramsay Head Press, 1979), pp. 195-210, (p. 196).

two languages together on the page. This is the way in which Robert Crawford reads Burns: 'Burns often writes as if the political Union of 1707 has affected a linguistic union, giving him an enlarged territory in which to operate.

Linguistically, he is the most brilliantly distinguished eighteenth-century example of a British poet (*Devolving*, p. 106). While this is not the most popular view of Burns, Crawford is correct to identify the importance of the poet's ability to 'broker' between cultural spheres, expertly manoeuvring around a spacious artistic landscape (*Devolving*, p. 88). Of course, for Burns to be engaged, as Pittock terms it, in putting the two languages 'on a level, both human, both equal', itself involves an assertive celebration of the Scots tongue (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 150).

The well-documented Anglicising culture of eighteenth-century Scotland clearly politicised the use of Scots, albeit by the later eighteenth century the embattled status of the language had been countered by a resurgent tradition of Scots poetry and song. Figures like Ramsay and Fergusson provided a reference point for Burns, having bolstered the literary standing of Scots. It is important to remember that Anglicising was a significant feature of Scottish society well before the eighteenth century (both the Reformation of 1560 and the Regal Union of 1603 signal important watersheds in this process), though the institutional and cultural impact of the Union of 1707 appears to have invigorated the trajectory. Thus Scots-language cultural production at this later period has a revivalist character, alongside that of cultural guardianship. Though active Anglicising (through elocution lessons, for example) may have been largely restricted to the élite, its assumptions nonetheless pervaded contemporary intellectual life. For Crawford, eighteenth-century Scotland's

improving culture sees the formation of the University subject of 'English Literature' (*Devolving*, p. 44). The discourse of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres he refers to encouraged improvement towards a metropolitan standard with a stress on tasteful linguistic discrimination.⁴⁹ A belletristic linguistic ideology demonised 'Scotticisms' as anathema to polite usage – their irregularity (from the viewpoint of the metropolitan standard) an aesthetic affront with inescapable political undertones, as the categories of linguistic and political conformity blurred together.

This phenomenon needs to be understood within the political manoeuvrings of eighteenth-century Scotland. Anglicising was a part of the polite culture that came to dominate the principal Scottish institutions, and underpinned early approaches to the modern study of literature. With the vernacularisation of a previously classical university curriculum, the conditions were set for English to cement its status as the language of the élite. As the Moderate party rose to power in the Kirk and their investment in a cosmopolitan, improving culture made itself felt, polite cultural activity in clubs and societies complemented the evolution of intellectual discourse.⁵⁰ Within the assertion of Anglophone propriety, the supposedly disinterested stance of Addison and Steele's *Spectator* was idealised as a gentlemanly model both stylistically and by virtue of its apparent detachment from incendiary factional politics; with the ideological terrain of 'disinterest' ironically serving the objectives of a particular

⁴⁹ Arguably the key text here is Hugh Blair, *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (London: Baynes, 1824).

⁵⁰ For a useful background to this discussion, see Thomas P. Miller, *The Formation of College English: Rhetoric and Belles Lettres in the British Cultural Provinces* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997), pp. 144-177.

group in contemporary Scotland.⁵¹ Shifting linguistic stratification was one part of a process in which ‘Hugh Blair and William Robertson began to teach [...] from a depoliticized perspective that upheld assimilated Scots’ authority as disinterested spokesmen for self-improvement and social progress’ (Miller, pp. 173-174). The successful machinations of the Moderates – including such central Enlightenment figures as Robertson, Smith and Blair – to establish an English-language syllabus emphasising taste and gentlemanly civility was an integral part of the assertion of British cultural hegemony, and indeed the fundamental rise of capitalism (stressing the economic imperatives of cosmopolitanism). Not only a pivotal moment in the development of the modern study of English literature which acted (if incompletely) to align metropolitan English with social progress, the core thrust of this Anglicising culture was also key to distancing the work of literature from the political sphere. Laying claim on the terrain of ‘disinterest’, an illusorily non-polemical discourse that championed the metropolitan standard was part of a long movement relegating linguistic alternatives, and played a major role in the production of the modern category of literature.

Somewhat counter-intuitively, despite these Anglicising tendencies, this intellectual culture often asserted its patriotic goals for Scotland (or perhaps

⁵¹ Towsey describes how, ‘Derived from Addison and Steele’s ubiquitous *Spectator* magazine, and from the Earl of Shaftesbury’s more cerebral philosophical works, politeness represented a revolution in manners, consigning partisan controversies to the past and expounding the refined virtues of intelligent dialogue and structured, sociable interaction’ (p. 86). Miller narrates how the spate of literary societies in the early eighteenth century forming to ‘imitate the taste and style of the *Spectator* [...] often proscribed discussions of politics and religion’ (p. 152). Yet the success of this ideology at least in the long run appears to have been dubious, as in the case of the Speculative Society, which Miller notes saw ‘political topics [...] becoming increasingly problematic as public unrest intensified in the last quarter of the century’ (p. 171).

rather North Britain). As Chapter One explores in more detail, Scottish civic leaders were keen to secure a distinct and dignified public sphere for the nation. In broad terms, whether we read Anglicisation as Scottish cultural self-denigration resulting from a class differential being imposed on a geographical one, or an entrepreneurial move to facilitate Scottish economic and political advancement (it was almost certainly both), the linguistic culture this created greatly impacted on the work of literature.⁵² Nigel Leask notes that the improving culture could have a remarkable impact on individual writers:

For all the literary-critical achievements of the Scottish enlightenment, linguistic 'improvement' rendered comic writing difficult, creating the often-remarked 'disembodiment' of eighteenth-century Scottish prose. [...] In complete contrast was Burns's triumphal assertion of the comic and satirical potential of the demotic language. (*Burns and Pastoral*, p. 53)

Perhaps indeed the efforts of the Enlightenment literati to achieve linguistic propriety produced an impersonal writing style, a 'disembodiment' obviously opposed to Burns's rollicking poetics. In the interests of politeness, universality and economic opportunity, he suggests their use of English became somehow mechanical. Perhaps indeed such a mechanical usage contributed in some degree to the success of the Scottish literati, giving them an appropriate linguistic framework for formal essaying, yet one lacking a lyrical character properly attuned to the demands of other kinds of literature.

While issues like Anglicising may be far from simply a feature of the distant past, in long-eighteenth-century Scottish writing, the politics of language

⁵² Sorensen observes that by positing linguistic variation as attributable solely to class, Scots could remove a social barrier (*Grammar*, p. 150). Such a move assumes the same linguistic identity for a poorly educated Londoner as it does for a sophisticated and highly literate user of the Scots language.

carry a special intensity.⁵³ Such questions may not be quite so pivotal in Scottish self-definition as they are for Welsh, yet they remain prominent. As the dialectics of improvement play out in the pages of this literature, the political tension existing around constructions of residual Scottishness and dominant Britishness are very often explored via the juxtaposition of tongues. It is often noted that there is a certain irony in the fact that Hugh Blair, the champion of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres, passionately supported James Macpherson's 'recovery' of ancient Gaelic verse. It is perhaps a touch surprising that the chief advocate of Anglophone propriety should also have been fascinated by the literary culture of the Celtic Highlands. Yet this supposed conflict of interests is really quite indicative of the complex nature of linguistic politics at this time, as Scottish society navigated an uneven and changing cultural landscape.

Romanticism: the historical debate

The historical nature of Romantic writing has been a key question in critical discourse at least since the 1980s. In its aim to refocus the study of literature towards historical context, the 'New Historicism' has acted to produce two opposed readings of Romanticism. Due to the nature of the British Romantic canon during the twentieth century, these tend to take their cues from English textual material. Yet they remain relevant in the connected Scottish context, especially if continuity with older Romantic critical norms is to be maintained. A

⁵³ The endless correction of the Scots term 'aye' for the English 'yes' by teachers at all primary and secondary age-groups in Scotland stands testament to Anglicising's continuing hold. A resurgence in Gaelic-language education over the last thirty years may be set to revitalise the political impact of language issues: 'The number of pupils who are in Gaelic Medium Education at primary school level has risen from 24 in 1985 to 2312 in the school year 2010/2011'. *Bòrd na Gàidhlig*, <<http://www.gaidhlig.org.uk/bord/en/our-work/education>>, [accessed 9 February 2012], (para. 2 of 7).

brief contemplation of this debate will aid in contextualising the work of subsequent chapters, raising tensions with particular significance for our approach to the conceptualisation of Scottish Romanticism. In some respects these opposing readings conform to the division cited earlier in the theory of Bourdieu, between art that explicitly engages itself in the social and political world, and art that narrates an escape from it. An immanent or historicist, as opposed to a transcendent aesthetic mode, as we have already intimated can both engage in polemical activity. For our present purposes these impulses could serviceably be described as 'Historicist Romanticism' and 'Transcendent Romanticism' respectively.

Reflecting on earlier twentieth-century criticism, Butler, McGann and other like-minded scholars suggested that older generations of critics (notably René Wellek and M. H. Abrams) had bought into the ideological assumptions of the central canonical (English) Romantic poets, primarily the later periods of Coleridge and Wordsworth. These assumptions were characterised by a stress on the individualistic, the subjective and the universal almost to the point of abstraction. The New Historicists argued that Romantic literature had been read through the ideological framework of a selection of its foremost exponents, and had thus been seen in a restrictive light as fundamentally an ahistorical, apolitical phenomenon. Reinscribing the texts of Romanticism to their historical location, they did not reject this reading outright, but instead they viewed the transcendent impulse as a highly politicised (and primarily conservative) ideological manoeuvre inspired by contemporary circumstances. Recognising the polemical significance of a retreat from society is one of the most valuable

achievements of this school.⁵⁴ Subsequently, James Chandler applied a corrective to this position. Chandler continues the historicising process, reading Romantic writing in relation to contemporary social and political circumstances. Yet he identifies an opposite impulse, one that sees writing consciously and aggressively locating itself within a historical moment, openly attuned to contemporary social and political concerns. Using the specific example of the year 1819, Chandler concludes that, 'Much literary work of England in 1819 [...] seems concerned with its place *in* England in 1819'.⁵⁵ This critical work has been useful in demonstrating the inevitable coexistence of these impulses within the canon – what we are terming the 'historicist' and the 'transcendent'. The polarity perhaps suggested here is misleading, as a pure textual example of either form is in all likelihood a practical impossibility. Furthermore, the demands of genre clearly impinge on the kinds of social, political and historical consciousness a work displays, yet aesthetic techniques moving towards either pole exist across the literary spectrum.

The image of Romanticism as fundamentally a transcendent aesthetic concern was inspired in no small way by the literary theory of Coleridge (to some degree channelling Kant and Schelling), the most sophisticated theorist of the six-poet canon cemented in the twentieth century. Nigel Leask has traced the

⁵⁴ McGann writes that, 'The polemic of Romantic poetry [...] is that it will not be polemical; its doctrine, that it is non-doctrinal; and its ideology, that it transcends ideology'. See Jerome J. McGann, *The Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), p. 70.

⁵⁵ James Chandler, *England in 1819: The Politics of Literary Culture and the Case of Romantic Historicism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 5. Though in the service of elegant phrasing, Chandler's use of the term 'England' here, given the importance of Scott to his thesis, is a good example of the inaccuracies that plagued twentieth-century criticism, necessitating projects like the present one.

increasingly conservative trajectory of Coleridge's thought towards an idealist rejection of the social world, finding that 'the efficacy (and historical durability) of his 'theory of culture lay in its appeal to disinterestedness, its claim to political impotence and its transcendence of the realms of rhetoric and ideological coercion'.⁵⁶ This position is backed up by many of the works of Anglo-British Romanticism. When Keats writes that, 'The faint conception I have of Poems to come brings the blood frequently into my forehead – All I hope is that I may not lose all interest in human affairs', we can see this transcendent notion in full effect.⁵⁷ The historicist impulse too is thoroughly exemplified in the conventional canon, not least the example Chandler chooses as the centrepiece for his thesis, Shelley's sonnet *England in 1819*, with its impassioned and direct treatment of contemporary political and social circumstances.⁵⁸

When we transfer the focus onto Scottish writing, these same opposing impulses are at work, yet these are inflected by a distinctive cultural and historical experience. Indeed, Pittock suggests that the exclusion of Scottish material from an Anglo-British Romantic canon may have been in part due to a perceived non-conformity with respect to the historical question:

Paradigmatically, it became seen as a mixture of 'lachrymose Ossianism' and the 'aridly rational' social culture of its periodicals, on the one hand an inadequately aestheticized (and indeed 'forged') approach to history; on the other an attempt to impose the very social and historico-contextual pressures from which 'true' Romanticism was an escape. (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 91)

⁵⁶ Nigel Leask, *The Politics of Imagination in Coleridge's Critical Thought* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988), p. 5.

⁵⁷ John Keats, 'To Richard Woodhouse, 27 October 1818', in *Selected Letters*, ed. by Robert Gittings, rev. by John Mee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 147-149, (p. 148).

⁵⁸ Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'England in 1819' in *The Major Works*, ed. by Zachary Leader and Michael O'Neill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 446.

Insufficiently ahistorical and inappropriately historical, Scottish writing was seen as failing to fit the aesthetic mould in a reductive reading. On a cursory view, many of the central Scottish texts of this period display a remarkably historicist approach; a phenomenon perhaps registering the enormous and unavoidable social change charted at the opening of this thesis and given its memorial in *Waverley*'s programmatic subtitle, *'Tis Sixty Years Since*.⁵⁹ This is not to claim that such a consciousness is at all exclusive to Scottish writing, the process of rapid improvement being familiar in much of Western Europe during the period. Yet the dynamism of this experience in Scotland perhaps helped to sharpen the focus. Alongside the distinct environment produced by the Scottish Enlightenment and other cultural differentials, this may have caused an amplified sensitivity to the process of history as improvement to emerge as a distinguishing feature. Framed against this background, however, powerful and innovative appropriations of a transcendent aesthetics are brought into stark relief. Ultimately Scotland produces nuanced examples of both historicist and transcendent modes attuned towards the contested grounds of the national experience, revealing an aesthetic palette built for, and hedged within, the dialectical patterns of improving discourse.

The heightened sense of locality and community in much of Burns's work, conjoined to his frequent addressing of contemporary political and social issues gives it an unmistakeably historicist feel. In many respects it is a sense of the living world that yields Burns's enduring poetics. Yet immediacy and locality are often employed only as a sophisticated launch pad into a characteristic strain of

⁵⁹ Walter Scott, *Waverley; or, 'Tis Sixty Years Since*, ed. by Claire Lamont (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

universal reflection, while his self-characterisations can stress a distance from and disdain for the everyday. This gives his work a persistent ideological duplicity that accurately discloses a routine element of Scottish writing.

Movement between the specific and the general may be a feature of all literature, yet the texts under study display a forthright sensitivity to an overlapping of frames, with local and national issues tracing broader narratives. As Fielding comments, 'Burns still finds himself with a double reputation for being the most famous local poet who is also expected to deliver sentiments of universal application' (*Fictions of Geography*, p. 44). Indeed, Burns's very treatment of the local can tend to explode the concept, while the continuous switching of frames in his work – including transitions between region and nation, the local and the universal, simplicity and sophistication – challenges any one-dimensional reading. Pertinently, positioned right at the crucial pressure points in his poetics is an approach to Scottishness, as we will see. Producing an innovative recalibration of residual cultural forms, the poet's construction of rustic cultural capital is the crux of his doubled aesthetic platform – an element that coalesces around issues of nationhood, part of why his works operate so naturally as emblems of national identity.

In the 'theoretical histories' of John Galt, literature is put to the task of tracing in minute and expert detail the incremental developments that propel society along and together constitute improvement. Galt's narratives patiently explore the ground-level workings of history, giving an impressive insight into the developmental trends at work in his contemporary Scotland. Clearly genre plays an important role here, as the generic constraints of prose fiction must encourage a kind of historicist writing in a way that poetry does not necessarily.

Yet, particularly in the case of Galt, his explicit determination to inscribe his work with a powerful sense of the historical goes above and beyond the dictates of generic form. His characteristic style, perhaps more than any other writer in the period, is one which is staunchly and proudly historicist. Ian Duncan has suggested that in his literary manifesto Galt wilfully positions his work in opposition to Scott's Waverley Novels: 'Reasserting the traditional antithesis between romance and history, Galt refuses to acknowledge the dialectical and deconstructive play between them in the Waverley novels, which are thus reduced to the inauthentic pole of romance' (*Scott's Shadow* p. 216).

Emphasising a dualistic conflict between these realms, Duncan reads Galt as attempting to appropriate a particular kind of narrative authority for his work as contrasted against Scott, one based on a lack of true fictionality. Yet notable points of tension see this position strain and collapse, allowing a transcendent aesthetics to break its (perhaps only notional) bondage and surge into Galt's writing. Once again issues of national history provide the primary discursive terrain for such conflict. Demonstrating the inharmonious relationship between residual Scottishness and improvement, Galt's confidently 'progressive' prose stages a limit at which ideas of nationhood help to produce a vivid aesthetic seizure. If his work provides a remarkable approach to a historicist mode, invested in charting the confident progress of improvement, aesthetic alternatives haunt the edges of this writing, triggered by another, pessimistic reading of the eighteenth century.

It is true that Galt's ostensible disavowal of Scottian romance unfairly simplifies the nature of the historical consciousness in the Waverley Novels themselves. Reflecting preoccupations with stadialism and social progress,

Scott's historical novel form (adapting the national tale as developed by writers like Maria Edgeworth) provides an extended meditation upon the processes of British modernisation. Within this structure, transcendent and historicist aesthetic modes are placed in a dynamic interplay, as his reinterpretation of the national subjectivity navigates the tense polemical capacity of prose fiction.

Analysing Scott's role within the developing form of the novel, Duncan has argued for an intellectual debt to Humean empiricism:

Hume's case, that all representation is a fiction, a *poesis*, since all experience is mediated through the imagination, provides a stronger and more comprehensive theoretical base for fiction than any that had appeared hitherto, delivering it from the sentence of inauthenticity, of categorical opposition to reality. (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 133)

In positing the fictive as the cognitive mode of human experience, Hume's philosophy may indeed provide an important complement to, and generative element in, the emergence of the novel.⁶⁰ Translated through the levelling conduit of the laws of psychological association, Hume produces a model of the intellect in which a radical destabilisation of truth and fiction is an enduring possibility. While his reworking of the past into new forms is itself a neat metaphor for the Associationist mind, Scott's bold reinterpretation of Scottish history may see just such a destabilisation enacted in literary form. This element is arguably the most significant legacy of Scott and (what we will term) the

⁶⁰ The key text here is Hume's seminal 1739-1740 *Treatise*. See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by Ernest C. Mossner (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969). For more on the relationship between Humean empiricism and Scottish literature, see the interventions of Susan Manning, including in *Fragments of Union*; and 'Historical Characters: Biography, the Science of Man, and Romantic Fiction', in *Character, Self, and Sociability in the Scottish Enlightenment*, ed. by Thomas Ahnert and Susan Manning (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), pp. 225-248. Also important are John MacQueen's, *The Enlightenment and Scottish Literature: Volume 1, Progress and Poetry* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1982); and *The Enlightenment and Scottish Literature: Volume 2, The Rise of the Historical Novel* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1989).

‘aesthetic nationalist’ school he champions, producing a newly fictive model of national identity. Of course, the literariness of history itself is implicit in Enlightenment ‘theoretical’ or ‘conjectural’ historiography, reflecting a ‘persistent awareness of the *literary* nature of all historical writing and historical interpretation’ (Craig, *Out of History*, p. 67). If such historiographical practice employed the imagination in the service of history, Scott can be read as turning this inheritance upon its head, deploying the historical within his new imaginative terrain.

Yet this destabilised relationship between the imaginative and the historical can produce some tricky polemical effects. This becomes a pressing issue in Scott’s fiction with regard to his treatment of Scottish history, as residual Scottishness is potentially transposed into a transcendent aesthetic space – generating the hollow, romanticised nationhood that many critics have blamed Scott for. Taking this a step further, however, if Scott’s fictional method embraces Humean scepticism as Duncan suggests – ‘[in *Waverley*] designating fiction as the mode in which we imaginatively inhabit the present’ – then what happens at a fundamental level to literature’s relationship to ‘reality?’ (*Scott’s Shadow*, p. 136). Could an endemic ironic detachment lead towards an acute relativism that automatically evacuates the political in all contexts? Or equally could the consciousness that a performative suspension of disbelief structures the totality of existence raise this literature’s sense of itself as a polemical tool, now no less *real* (and hence ideologically potent) than any other epistemological mode? It is to a large extent such tensions upon which the interest of Scott’s writing hinges.

Any reading of literary aesthetics in long-eighteenth-century Scotland

must also be sensitive to discourses of the social intellect current in a culture abounding with societies, clubs and periodical publications. This element is perhaps made most explicit later in the century by thinkers like Thomas Reid and Dugald Stewart, with their 'Common Sense' philosophy (the term 'common' having a doubled meaning: indicating a focus on social truths as much as basic or apparent truths).⁶¹ Common Sense philosophy firmly encouraged the work of the human mind – and consequently imaginative literature – to be situated in as social a context as possible, with Stewart pertinently suggesting that genius is undesirable if it cannot be accommodated within a positive social and moral framework: 'It ought not to be the leading object of any one, to become an eminent metaphysician, mathematician, or poet; but to render himself happy as an individual, and an agreeable, a respectable, and an [sic] useful member of society' (*Elements*, I, p. 23). Adam Smith had earlier stressed the importance of a perception of 'utility' to the sense of the beautiful, a pragmatic and outward-looking conception of the aesthetic that we can trace at the heart of this ideal.⁶² The stringently moral directive of the Common Sense philosophers endorsed a social, civic context for intellectual endeavour, tied very much to ideas of collective improvement. We can certainly trace this emphasis in Scottish writing – the recurrent imagining of collective and brotherly activity in Burns's poetry being a good example. In the early nineteenth century, the second *Edinburgh Review* can be seen mobilising Stewart's stress on a socially and morally salutary

⁶¹ See Thomas Reid, *An Inquiry into the Human Mind, on the Principles of Common Sense*, ed. by Derek R. Brookes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997); and Dugald Stewart, *Elements of the Philosophy of the Human Mind*, 6th edn, 2 vols (London: Cadell and Davies, 1818).

⁶² Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 209-211.

intellectual practice – represented in its pages as a national imperative.⁶³ There Scotland's intellectual work is a communally self-reflective process central to the growth and stability of the national community. Such views of literature are significant during the period, and provide another example of a deeply historicist aesthetic tendency, profoundly self-aware of its material location. Again, however, this is only part of a complex framework, in which historicist elements provide a fascinating counterpoint to notable examples of transcendent aesthetic phenomena; like the delocalised, pseudo-mystical settings of Macpherson's Ossian poetry, or the 'post-Enlightenment' spaces of Hogg's uncanny narratives. Indeed, in their approach to nationhood, we will find the historical attention of Scottish writers repeatedly serving only to produce a powerfully transcendent aesthetic understanding of Scottishness – generating models of Scotland as a 'romantic nation'. While, as we noted above, such postures of aesthetic transcendence are well-established with regard to the poets of the conventional Romantic canon, we can usefully extend their application to the national subjectivity in the Scottish context. Navigating this terrain is a delicate task, yet one that is pivotal to our understanding of the ideological makeup of Scottish Romanticism.

This summary is one that will necessarily be deepened and complicated throughout the following chapters. The question of historical consciousness remains in view throughout as an important complement to the question of social and political consciousness. This writing is everywhere engaged in complex negotiations of its historical location, producing a series of aesthetic

⁶³ This point is argued by Alex Benchimol in 'Periodicals and Public Culture', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. by Pittock, pp. 84-99, (pp. 98-99).

manoeuvres that achieve intricate polemical effects. Keeping such dynamics in view, and having established the basic terms of our discussion, Chapter One addresses in more detail the implications of studying this literature within an explicitly Scottish context, deepening our intellectual framework with regard to a series of key issues, including: the nation as concept, identity politics, civil society and forms of cultural nationalism. Subsequently, Chapter Two mounts a detailed study of Burns as a key player in the theoretical implication of national identity within the dialectics of improvement, mobilising his pastoral vision as a means of national definition. Via his control of rustic cultural capital, Burns is read as a precursor to the influential aestheticising processes of Scott and others. Then, in Chapter Three, we examine the full-fledged aesthetic transformation of Scottishness. Discourses of aesthetic nationalism are explored across both Scott and James Hogg, examining the conflicted valuation of oppositional cultural forms in the period, and the vital ideological potential of construing the nation as art – arguably productive of a fundamentally modern (or even postmodern) conception of national identity as ironic fiction: relativistic and radically unstable. Finally, Chapter Four explores the on-going and paradoxical relationships sustained by improvement, drawing together the writing of Galt and Elizabeth Hamilton. We find Elizabeth Hamilton's fiction addressing itself to the education and improvement of poor Scots, struggling to reconcile the stubborn relationship between improving ideologies and residual identity that discomfit the period and after; while also mounting an early feminist critique. Then, Galt's fiction emerges as an expansive diagnosis of Scotland's historical experience, rendering in vivid detail the rapid transformation of Scottish society and the varying

pressures this brings to bear, including a perceptive analysis of the literary tradition itself.

Chapter One – Approaching Scotland: National Identity and Cultural Politics

Scotland is a complicated place, writers and commentators have been telling us for hundreds of years. Today the ideological battle between supporters of Celtic and Rangers football clubs, Scotland's premier cultural intrigue, can seem emblematic of the difficult nature of Scottish identity. The social polarisation of Glasgow's Old Firm derby is hardly representative of the real state of politics in what is now largely a progressive social-democratic country. Yet this sporting rivalry touches at the heart of a divergent cultural landscape. On one side Irish Tricolours dominate a spattering of green Saltires, Basque, Catalan and Palestinian flags; Scotland cast primarily as the imperial British enemy of Irish republicanism, though complicated by a broader Celtic ideology of resistance. On the other side the wall of Union Jacks reveals a peppering of Saltires, Ulster and indeed England flags; reaching for a vision of hegemony that fails to quite cohere. But of course collective cultural identities on this scale are never simple things. The flag as a visual metaphor serves these constructions well, rarely lacking hidden depths and meanings. The use, for example, of the Irish Tricolour in such partisan terms belies its clear visual message: a white peace line drawn between rival factions in orange and green. In the Union Jack, the eye is drawn between the Saltire's position as a subordinate symbol – pressed to the background by St. George's cross – and its partner status, filling out and completing the image. Though few agree exactly on the nature of the Scottish experience, discussions are almost unanimously agreed on the element of conflict. Whether characterised in dualistic terms – those of the now well-worn 'Caledonian Antisyzygy' – or still more fragmentary ones; Scotland never quite

seems to fit a simplistic mould.⁶⁴ The use of the sporting metaphor above is not accidental, as the question of sport often dominates discussion of modern identities in a way which literature does (certainly retrospectively) for the long eighteenth century. The present chapter tackles a selection of the central issues that inevitably arise in an exploration of Scottish culture during this period, addressing them discretely here before turning the focus onto the specifics of our literary analysis.

The political Union with England in 1707 marks the beginning of the historical period this study is primarily interested in, while itself raising a number of important issues. Although the Union settlement may not have impacted on the practicalities of life in Scotland to a great degree until the second half of the century, clearly its ideological impact was momentous from the outset.⁶⁵ For Colin Kidd, the Union was a messy political manoeuvre lacking popular support. He suggests that, 'Not only was Union not accompanied by any ideological consensus, but there was no real attempt to build a bridge between Scottish and English political nations to create a common British Revolution culture' (*Subverting*, p. 50). This lack of a generally audible voice in favour of the Union – which the pro-Union spy Daniel Defoe claimed the 'rabble of Glasgow made the most formidable attempt to prevent' – helped the issue retain a

⁶⁴ See G. Gregory Smith, *Scottish Literature: Character & Influence* (London: Macmillan, 1919), p. 4.

⁶⁵ Finlay points out that, 'In the first half of the eighteenth century there were only three major pieces of legislation which had a major impact on Scottish society'. See Richard J. Finlay, 'Caledonia or North Britain? Scottish Identity in the Eighteenth Century', in *Image and Identity: The Making and Re-making of Scotland Through the Ages*, ed. by Dauvit Broun, R. J. Finlay and Michael Lynch (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1998), pp. 143-156, (p. 145).

divisive power.⁶⁶ The economic opportunities of Union provided grounds for considerable retrospective approbation as the century wore on and Scotland exploited a global market, with imperial conquest and free trade with a wealthier southern partner producing remarkable growth. Yet if Britain was increasingly central to Scotland's self-image, still the sense that it was based on a piece of political legerdemain, an imposition, remained capable of nursing patriot sensibilities. Throughout the long eighteenth century a patriot discourse featuring William Wallace, Robert Bruce and the Wars of Independence is never quite submerged in pro-British ideological forms. Functioning often to defend Scotland's position within Union, such material could carry a more broadly counter-hegemonic clout.⁶⁷ Autonomous Scottish material displayed an uneven

⁶⁶ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain*, abridged & ed. by Pat Rogers, (Middlesex: Penguin, 1971), p. 606. T. M. Devine points out a lack of support among some of the greatest potential benefactors of Union. He claims that, 'Even some of those who did gain spectacularly from empire in the course of the eighteenth century, such as the Atlantic merchants of the Clyde, were robustly opposed to the treaty. Empire was not seen by Scots at the time as a consolation prize for the loss of Scottish sovereignty.' See T. M. Devine, *Scotland's Empire 1600-1815* (London: Allen Lane, 2003), p. 62.

⁶⁷ It may be useful here to give a sense of the ideological diversity in the sporadic instances of such patriotic discourse that we find across the period. Pittock narrates the use of this material in a 'taxonomy of glory' used by figures including Allan Ramsay to 'justify the [Scottish] past to a present which was beginning the process of discarding it in favour of a new, Anglo-British history'. In Pittock's reading, Ramsay's *The Gentle Shepherd*, for example, is revealed as charged with oppositional symbolism that is at once Jacobite and stringently national (*Scottish and Irish*, pp. 54-57). We do also need to be sensitive to the role such patriotic strategies could play in what Kidd describes as a "whiggish" association of the national character with libertarianism and the Scottish past with the history of liberty'; enlisting patriot history in a defence of Scottish liberties significantly aimed at defending them within the British polity (Kidd, *Subverting*, pp. 70-77). By the later eighteenth century, as Chapter Two explores in more detail, Robert Burns can be found explicitly linking the martial history of the Wars of Independence with the contemporary radical politics of the 1790s, drawing a continuity between these historical contexts as struggles for political liberty. Such examples flag up not only the variety of uses made of this patriotic material across the period, but also how these were adapted to the

but resilient tenacity, no matter how successful Britain became. The writers this study is concerned with display a variety of attitudes towards the national question, veering from defensively Scottish to proudly British sentiment, sometimes in the space of a single page. Perhaps the two are not as incompatible as they can sometimes appear, though this literature seems frequently to flag up that very incompatibility.

James Hogg's 1803 *Tour in the Highlands* stages a characteristically mischievous example of the kinds of tension existing around these questions. After hearing descriptions of the sites of famous battles between England and Scotland from a fellow traveller, Hogg expresses his hope for the suturing properties of British homogenisation. He writes, 'I wish from my heart that the distinctions of Englishmen and Scot were entirely disannulled and sunk in that of Britons'. Yet, much in keeping with Hogg's fictional style, this sentiment is immediately undermined in the next sentence, as he continues, pokerfaced, 'I will tell you a story which was told by one in the coach'. Unsurprisingly for those familiar with Hogg's sense of humour, this story turns out to be just exactly an exploration of the above-mentioned 'distinctions', in their most acrimonious form. The story concerns a conversation between an Englishman and a Scot, and concludes thus:

'Aye, aye, I did not know these things,' said the Scot, 'and were the English too hard for them at a fair engagement?' 'Indeed sir, they were. The best and bravest of the Scots allowed of that.' 'Aye, aye, I'm unacquainted with history, but it is believed to have been otherwise where I live.' 'Where,' said the Englishman, 'do you live?' 'At Bannockburn!' 'Hem-.' Not another

contemporary political landscape. See Allan Ramsay, *The Gentle Shepherd, A Pastoral Comedy*, ed. by Burns Martin and John W. Oliver, in *The Works of Allan Ramsay*, ed. by Burns Martin and others, 6 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1953), II, pp. 205-277.

word ensued. The subject entirely dropped, and the shrewd Caledonian sat squirting in the fire as if he had meant nothing by the answer.⁶⁸

On this reading the 'shrewd Caledonian' pretending that he 'had meant nothing by the answer' of course turns out to be Hogg himself, immediately pressing the issue of national divisions as a counter to his expression of Unionist sympathy. Hogg's ploy here is symbolic of more than his own cute sense of irony. It also alerts us to the nature of this issue, the tendency of modes of autonomous Scottishness to flare up and disrupt developing British cultural forms. Given cues far less tempting than the memory of Bannockburn, Scottishness cultivates a stubborn vocabulary of protest. Once again however, if 1707 fed a particular kind of defensive patriotic feeling, that is far from the full story. Britain was a Scottish project to a significant degree, some argue even more than it was an English one – an argument made during the period itself, as suspicion fell on alleged Scottish opportunism. Yet the tension between politico-cultural forms is never resolved in literature of the period, and as in the above citation from Hogg, consistently retains its power as an open sore.

The particulars of the Union settlement need also to be addressed, creating the societal arrangement extant in post-1707 Scotland. Central here are the kinds of social formation and cultural expression feasibly encouraged by the nature of what Tom Nairn calls Scotland's 'state-less society'.⁶⁹ The removal of parliament (but not of other key public institutions) coincided with the flowering of Scotland's apparent period of intellectual ascendancy. With Edinburgh as its cultural hub, Scotland occupies an interesting role over the long eighteenth

⁶⁸ James Hogg, *A Tour in the Highlands in 1803: A Series of Letters by James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, addressed to Sir Walter Scott* (Edinburgh: Mercat Press, 1986), pp. 6-7.

⁶⁹ Tom Nairn, *The Break-Up of Britain*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 1981), p. 31.

century, as simultaneously one of the key intellectual heartlands of Western Europe, and a political province ruled from London. While it would be trivial to wholly explain the country's intellectual work with recourse to the political situation, perhaps we can trace the impact of this singular makeup in literature of the period. Literature and literary life seem consistently central in providing self-definition for the 'state-less society'. In Burns's words, 'When Political combustion ceases to be the object of Princes & Patriots, it then, you know, becomes the lawful prey of Historians & Poets.'⁷⁰ Retaining a strong public culture and a flourishing arts sector, alongside the enormous influence of the Kirk, it can be argued that post-Union Scotland becomes a 'cultural nation' in a particular way: something flagged by the consistent development of innovative national-cultural ideology in Scottish writing. With the neat socio-political apex provided by parliament withdrawn to a distance, we can suggest that culture itself is invested with a more urgent polemical efficacy.

Indeed, it is possible to regard literature as stepping into the shoes of a political nationalist movement during this period, developing a discourse of literary patriotism. This is the view taken by Pittock, who claims this in the context of a patriotic tradition of Scottish historiography stretching back to Hector Boece and beyond, describing how this 'ancient historiographical tradition survived in literature, a taxonomy of glory displaced from politics into the imagination' (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 61). Such defensive impulses provide a significant strain in this writing, preserving a politics of Scottish military resistance and counter-tyrannical insurrection. Yet the literary tradition is also

⁷⁰ Robert Burns, 'To Mr Alexander Cunningham, 11th March 1791', in *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. by J. De Lancey Ferguson, 2nd edn: ed. by G. Ross Roy, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), II, pp. 80-82, (p. 82).

deeply involved in the project of British cultural integration – the (at least partially) Unionist politics of the Waverley Novels being the archetypal if problematic example. At this later point, the development of a cultural nationalist discourse radically inflects earlier stresses on a cultural approach to nationhood. Ian Duncan cites the appropriation of German models by the Edinburgh élite as a pivotal moment, the politics of which this chapter will begin to unpick (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 27, pp. 56-57). Taking such diverse examples together and placing them on a long trajectory over the period, we can reveal a consistently key role for literature in the debates over Scottish identity, with letters becoming a hotly contested ideological battleground.

Beginning with a discussion of the basic issue of nations and nationalism, this chapter then explores Scottish identity politics in more detail. Subsequently a discussion of the public sphere looks at Enlightenment constructions of patriotic cultural activity and further examines the potential bearing of Scotland's unusual social structure. Finally, we turn to the introduction of a new aesthetic identity politics, driven by the *Blackwood's* literati in the early nineteenth century.

Nations and nationalism

The present study largely concerns itself with the literature of Scotland – a methodological approach that raises a number of questions. Thus in the interests of thoroughness and critical accuracy it is necessary to interrogate briefly the root concepts of nationalism and the nation. As such monolithic ideological structures, cemented so firmly at the heart of the modern world, all too often these terms are taken for granted. To attempt to talk about national issues in literature without questioning quite what such a tag implies would be a

serious shortcoming. Critical discussion is primarily divided into two camps on this issue. The first and currently the most popular theory of nations and nationalism stems from a broadly Marxist reading of the nation as tied to the agency of modernisation.⁷¹ In this view, nations and nationalism are not only strictly a phenomenon *of* modernity, they in some respects *are* modernity. The second, and at least partially opposed view, maintains that there is much less of a paradigmatic shift: that these concepts, or something very like them, are in operation much earlier. A sweeping survey of these views, sometimes described as constructionist and primordialist, should help to outline the issues of importance here.

The authoritative version of the first theory is that of Benedict Anderson and his concept of the 'imagined community'. The fundamental hinge of Anderson's argument is as follows: he proposes that developing usages of vernacular languages combined with the spread of print capitalism to allow large numbers of people to 'imagine' themselves as members of a community with a certain number of people who they might never meet (the 'nation'), and *not* in a community with other groups of people (other nations). Hence the literate population conceives, in a sense, the nation. Anderson recognises the limitations of a simple linguistic line on nationalism, South America's plethora of Spanish-speaking nationalisms a case in point, and accounts for this primarily though the economic insufficiency of that area to facilitate one large nationalism.

Anderson's thesis is unsurprisingly influential, being largely alert to the level of

⁷¹ Reflecting, in various ways, Marxist stresses on the rise of the bourgeoisie as the origin of the age of nations. See Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, ed. by David McLellan (Oxford: Oxford World's Classics, 1992), p. 7.

subtlety required in approaching this problematic area. The figure of the newspaper (alongside the novel) is interestingly crucial to his argument, providing a vernacular instrument through which readers can engage in this act of communal 'imagining'.⁷² The newspaper also serves as a communal calendar, as well as a means of recording the activities of the nation. Dating, measuring and structuring the modern world, the newspaper is both the means and the diary of the nation. Writing as part of an influential collection of essays on the subject, Timothy Brennan concurs with this broadly materialist understanding of nationalism. He claims that:

It was the *novel* that historically accompanied the rise of nations by objectifying the 'one, yet many' of national life, and by mimicking the structure of the nation, a clearly bordered jumble of languages and styles. Socially, the novel joined the newspaper as the major vehicle of the national print media, helping to standardize language, encourage literacy, and remove mutual incomprehensibility.⁷³

This argument is much in line with Anderson's thesis, focussing on the social and material developments associated with the modern era. Early nineteenth-century Scotland, however, provides an example in which we might want to further emphasise an active role for the novel. There, the form can be vividly seen not only 'accompanying' the development of the modern nation, but also engaging in the very work of defining (or perhaps re-defining) the national community; in this case negotiating the super-imposed complexity of Scotland and Britain. Becoming more than just a 'mimic', the novel, and literature more broadly, is involved in a reciprocally defining relationship with society.

⁷² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 1991), p. 63, pp. 35-36.

⁷³ Timothy Brennan, 'The national longing for form', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 44-70, (p. 49).

Neil Davidson applies a similar methodology to these issues, looking specifically at the Scottish context. Concluding, like Anderson, that the nation is a phenomenon deeply rooted in modernity, he suggests that, 'The Scottish nation was not only formed in the late eighteenth century, so too was the British nation, and these two processes were not simply chronologically coincident, but structurally intertwined'. Here Britain and Scotland emerge as twin children of the same historical process. Davidson's reading is basically a consensual one, based on a 'subjective feeling of identification', which for him excludes earlier time periods from any worthwhile definition of the nation. He discusses Scotland before this time as displaying some of the features of a nation, but not in sufficient depth, leading him to conclude that:

The basis for Scottish nationhood was laid between 1746 and 1820. Identifiable components pre-existed the former date, but they were no more constitutive of nationhood in themselves than eggs, flour and butter separately constitute a cake: certain processes have to be undergone first.⁷⁴

Davidson's formulation here is surprisingly late, seeing the events surrounding the Jacobite Uprising as the first passage into 'nationhood'. However, though in different hands this theory goes through considerable variation, the modernity equals nationalism model is the one now most commonly referred to in critical discussions of nations and nationalism. Yet there is far from being a consensus on the issue. Indeed there have been numerous important attacks on this model from within the sphere of Scottish literary studies itself.

As part of a scathing critique of *Imagined Communities* across multiple publications, Cairns Craig suggests a fatal inability in Anderson's work 'to

⁷⁴ Neil Davidson, *The Origins of Scottish Nationhood* (London: Pluto Press, 2000), p. 4, p.9, p. 200.

distinguish between the nation as agent, enacting its imagined possibilities through political institutions, and the nation in imagination, in its cultural self-reflections'.⁷⁵ This is certainly a distinction worth making, as anyone who has attempted to 'imagine' their way out of prison or an international warzone will presumably be able to firmly attest. For Craig, Anderson's view is that of a 'disenchanted Marxist', in which 'politics [...] disappears from the community and erases opposition, conflict and dispute'. No longer 'places of debate', nations are 'places of religious communion', while nationalism 'is a matter of belief, not of argument'.⁷⁶ Despite Anderson's remonstrance to the contrary, Craig views his thesis as ultimately producing a negative construction of the nation as a mystifying, fictive construct. This is set in pertinent contrast to the process of Scott's 'national imagining', dealt with in Chapter Three, which for Craig provides 'the scene of a debate' and is 'projective as well as retrospective' ('Scott's Staging', p. 27).

Approaching from a slightly different angle, Katie Trumpener takes Anderson to task for failing to understand the defensive, antiquarian aspects of nationalism properly. She claims that 'he tends to miss its moment of radical critique, from its prophetic analysis of modern alienation to its recognition of the way in which Enlightenment progressivism overlaps with imperialist demands for social control and cultural pacification'. Here nationalism is an ideology of necessity that mobilises an antiquarian sensibility to form a bulwark against the dual forces of 'progressivism' and imperialism. Crucially, for Trumpener, the

⁷⁵ Cairns Craig, 'Scott's Staging of the Nation', *Studies in Romanticism*, 40 (2001), 13-28, (p. 18).

⁷⁶ Cairns Craig, *Intending Scotland: Explorations in Scottish Culture since the Enlightenment* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 41-52.

development of nationalism is less a process of 'imagining' a community than it is of utilising that community. The antiquarian agents central to her interpretation of nationalist practice are active in 'explaining the historical bases and the historical fate of ethnic identities', but importantly 'what they did not do, and did not need to do, was to establish identity itself'. Trumpener's reading of Scotland, with its focus on the depredations of the Highlands, can perhaps lead to that oppression becoming unfairly synecdochical for the country's wider experience. Yet her thesis is strong in its insistence that social demarcations can have a material existence that supersedes processes of interpretation or reflection. As she comments, 'In an imperial situation that functions by categorical exclusions, in a climate of long-standing political and religious antagonisms, it does not take the advent of a census taker to make visible the lines of demarcations between various groups' (pp. 23-25). For Trumpener, forms of Scottish national identity are not strictly dependent on the advent of print capitalism or the democratisation of power; they are reinforced through the means of exclusion. Being discriminated against for being something, these groups come to know themselves as such.

In his *Celtic Identity and the British Image*, Murray Pittock has also attacked the Andersonian model. For Pittock, much older forms of community merit the national label, with the changes associated with modernity rather a development than a complete shift in social paradigm. He argues that:

Too much emphasis is laid on 'contractual' nationalism with its constitutional and documentary formats, and too little on collectivist culturalist nationalism which identifies its chosen people-nation as unique, and possessed of unique qualities, qualities not simply tribal, but national and territorial, 'true Scots' for example defending the nation of 'Scotland'.

Pittock's reading of nationalism includes forms of society existing in Scotland long before the Union of 1707 or the development of mass media. Older, feudal social structures represent for him the constituent parts of a nationalism that is different from those found in the modern era, but nonetheless merits the title. Thus he claims that 'the Declaration of Arbroath, [is] one of the earliest statements of anti-colonial nationalism in the world'. Pittock attacks the consensual aspect to the Andersonian model, claiming that this anachronistically expects a level of social consensus that was not in fact a feature of society at the relevant periods.⁷⁷ His attack on the consensual side to nationalist theory as a postmodern anachronism suggests that it fails to recognise the real, inherited substance of national identity as an expression of collective experience.⁷⁸ This is perhaps the crux of the divide here, between nationalism as a largely fictive construct of the modern world, or something older and more tangible.

In his seminal text on (primarily Scottish) nationalism, *The Break-Up of Britain*, Tom Nairn gives a different slant to a Marxist reading of this issue. Nairn associates nationalism with modernity, but more directly with the explosions of economic prosperity experienced by Western Europe from the late eighteenth century onwards; in this respect his is ostensibly a more orthodox Marxist view. For Nairn, nationalism is generally a response to imperialism, the kind of defensive reaction later suggested by Trumpener, an almost automatic by-product of the pressures of 'uneven development'. Nationalism is mobilised 'in societies confronting a dilemma of uneven development – "backwardness" or

⁷⁷ Murray G. H. Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 21, p. 87, p. 130.

⁷⁸ Indeed, the notion of a fully-fledged 'consensual' nationalism is questionable even in the modern era – such elements of cultural choice must be limited even where they are present.

colonization – where conscious, middle-class élites have sought massive popular mobilization to right the balance’ (p. 42). In this context, Nairn accounts for the lack of a coherent political nationalist movement in Scotland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (when in some respects it appears to have provided the perfect circumstances) primarily on the grounds of the level of economic participation enjoyed in the British state, leaving ‘no real, material dilemma of under-development’ (p. 117).⁷⁹ Applying this thesis, we might expect to find a nationalist movement in the relatively under-developed Highlands of Scotland, but for Nairn these areas were exploited and oppressed too efficiently to provide the required conditions (pp. 167-168). Importantly, Nairn identifies the role of a particular kind of antiquarian cultural manoeuvre – which he terms ‘Romantic’ – in the construction of nationalism, and how much of this had its roots in long-eighteenth-century Scotland. This involves ‘resurrecting past folk-heroes and myths about themselves and so on’ (p. 348).⁸⁰ He claims that this ‘Romanticism was the cultural mode of the nationalist dynamic’, providing for a mobilisation of a national body of historical cultural material, something explicitly developed in the work of writers like Macpherson and Scott. Yet, for Nairn, Scott’s work turns the nationalist potential of this mode on its head and attempts to neuter its latent ideological possibilities in a political context (p. 104, pp. 150-151). Chapter Three returns to this notion, as we see Scott engaged in constructing a national aesthetic, whilst apparently ensconcing it within an apolitical realm. Yet this

⁷⁹ Anderson’s explanation for the Scottish enigma also stresses economic inclusion, in addition to lacking the conditions for a ‘vernacular-specific movement’ (pp. 88-90).

⁸⁰ This is partly a scornful version of Pittock’s ‘taxonomy of glory’ (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 61).

separating of the nationalist heart from the imperialist head may not be nearly as secure as Nairn assumes.

Understanding nations and nationalism is an issue that encourages critical polarisation. Anthony D. Smith's *Nationalism and Modernism* makes an unusual effort towards an intellectual middle ground that should help in summing up. Aiming between constructionist and primordialist perspectives, Smith states for example that although he does not 'deny the many instances of attempted "construction" and "fabrication" [...] to be successful, these attempts need to base themselves on relevant pre-existing social and cultural networks'.⁸¹ Smith is well aware of the challenges facing a definitive and exhaustive theory of the subject, and recognises the need for a compound view. Very often discussions of this question reveal an underlying conflict over the debated merits of nationalism. Marxist critics tend to view nationalism as a mystifying ideology, performing a kind of religious function in distracting the populous from their real class-based problems; while for nationalists it is itself the means of social liberation.⁸² Class is clearly a vital issue in the above debate, with certain views on the nation question ultimately coming down to enfranchisement. Are a group of feudal warlords and their vassals a nation? Clearly not in the same way that a modern society of vote-wielding citizens is. Yet does this exclude the use of the

⁸¹ Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A critical survey of recent theories of nations and nationalism* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 130.

⁸² There are of course exceptions to this general polarity, Nairn being a case in point, as an avowed Marxist who supports the nationalist cause. As regards the former view, the cultural nationalist discourses of early nineteenth-century Scotland provide some interesting examples of ideological manoeuvres normally associated with religion: iconography (Jacobitism), the sacrosanct nature of the text (residual Ossianism, the Waverley Novels), hero-worship (Burns and Scott) and the pilgrimage (nineteenth-century literary tourism). More is said on this subject in the Coda.

term? Indeed, must nations and the ideology of nationalism necessarily emerge at the same historical moment?

Among many different approaches to the subject, it is signal that all commentators agree that the societies of Western Europe, and that of Scotland in particular, underwent a series of dramatic changes around our historical period. Thus it is possible to see the argument as largely a question of terminology; a debate over the flexibility of the words 'nation' and 'nationalism' themselves. Modern Scotland is clearly very different from ancient Scotland; even eighteenth-century Scotland was dramatically altered from the seventeenth century; but one is nonetheless a development from the other. The difference is one of degrees rather than kind. To avoid confusion the present study uses the terms (and especially nationalism) in as qualified and careful a manner as is appropriate, opting for more neutral phrasing when suitable, particularly in reference to earlier periods – though substitutes like 'patriotism', if often more congruous, cannot always capture the correct sense. Given the importance of the crucible of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Scotland to the development of the subject, clumsy usage does risk analytical imprecision. However, this is chiefly a question of syntactic clarity, recognising that social and political structures are experiencing dynamic changes during the period, yet continuities undoubtedly exist.

Identity

When discussing cultural and political identities there is a danger of assuming that such things are of perpetual conscious relevance to the individual. These may be predominantly situational trappings, albeit the well-established notion of an almost subliminal influence – as in 'banal nationalism' – offers a framework

for inferring a more consistent role.⁸³ However, certainly in a situation where such constructs are openly contested, we need to be sensitive to their effect. As the Introduction explained, historiographical developments over the long eighteenth century played an important role in shaping the way both historical and contemporary Scotland were viewed in the academic mainstream. We have seen how some influential discourses came to discredit the value of the Scottish past. In this context the English parliamentary tradition became fetishised as the spring of political freedom, something the Scots could share in through the Britain project (see Kidd, *Subverting*, p. 140). Such a view had momentous and widespread implications. If Anglicisation is the source of development and economic prosperity, then the denigration of Scottish cultural material naturally follows. England becomes progress, Scotland backwardness. Yet, literature bears out both the instability of this binary and the potential for its implied hierarchy to be reversed, or collapsed.

Such tensions can appear to suggest a particularly incoherent body of attitudes to Scottishness over the long eighteenth century. However, this is perhaps the fundamental nature of such structures, simply receiving a particularly visible exemplification in the Scottish situation. All too often critics appear flabbergasted at the apparent contradictions implicit in Scottish identities, perpetrating Edwin Muir's reading of Scotland's supposedly inorganic, conflicted culture: the Scots as the 'fanatics of the frustrate and the half', representing a 'sham nation'.⁸⁴ Though there are compelling reasons for a

⁸³ The term has its origins in Michael Billig's *Banal Nationalism* (London: Sage Publications, 1995).

⁸⁴ Edwin Muir, 'Scotland 1941', in *Selected Poems*, ed. by Mick Imlah (London: Faber and Faber, 2008), pp. 16-17, (25, 30). The key rehearsal of this argument

conflicted view of Scottish culture – indeed Douglas Gifford has argued that this conflict is one of its greatest assets – Muir’s line tends to assume a consequent level of organicism in the English culture it takes for granted which is simply nowhere to be found.⁸⁵

Any discussion of Scottish national identity is obliged to compass Adam Smith’s notion of ‘sympathy’, central as it is to developing notions of collective social organisation in the period, both domestically and internationally. Smith’s contention famously concerns the ability to imaginatively place oneself in another’s position, a moral function that he reads as fundamental to human relations. There is an infectious element to sympathy, as ‘passions, upon some occasions, may seem to be transfused from one man to another, instantaneously’, suggestive of its integrating role in a communal context (*Theory of Moral Sentiments*, pp. 11-13). Smith uses the pre-eminence of the immediate milieu in the workings of sympathy to explain patriotism. Our native ‘state or sovereignty’ contains ‘all the objects of our kindest affections’ and is ‘by nature, therefore, endeared to us’ (*Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 268). Hume takes a similar line, also arguing for a uniting agency:

The propensity to company and society is strong in all rational creatures; and the same disposition, which gives us this propensity, makes us enter deeply into each other’s sentiments, and causes like passions and inclinations to run, as it were, by contagion, through the whole club or knot of companions.

is in Edwin Muir, *Scott and Scotland: the predicament of the Scottish writer* (London: Routledge, 1936).

⁸⁵ See Douglas Gifford, ‘Sham Bards of a Sham Nation? Edwin Muir and the Failures of Scottish Literature’, *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 35/36 (2007), 339-361. It should be noted that Muir is picking up on a tradition of ‘organic’ readings of English culture, notably propagated by Coleridge in his criticism of Shakespeare. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Coleridge on Shakespeare: the text of the lectures of 1811-12*, ed. by R. A. Foakes (London: Routledge, 1971).

The implications of this position are clear, assuming that we can extrapolate towards a much larger 'knot of companions' (i.e. 'this propensity' can operate beyond personal relationships), perhaps through the workings of imagination *à la* Benedict Anderson. Yet supposing this to be the case, lines of demarcation still raise a problem, for just where do the limits of sympathy lie? Hume goes on to distinguish the Scots from the English, famously claiming that the English, 'of any people in the universe, have the least of a national character', as a result of their unusual form of mixed government and religious pluralism.⁸⁶ This is an instructive point. Both Smith and Hume alert us to a cutting tension, one that it might not be entirely speculative to suggest reflects their own unusual position between Scottishness, Britishness and transnational cosmopolitanism. On one hand a 'sympathetic' reading of nationhood would tend to suggest the natural breakdown of such allegiances in the context of increased international interaction (within Britain, for example), promising a growing cosmopolitanism as the global economy opens up. Yet on the other hand, as long as stable communities remain, the sympathetic function could be instrumental in maintaining prejudicial ties.⁸⁷ Smith is sensitive to this issue when he observes that national prejudice tends not towards the most alien states but rather those

⁸⁶ David Hume, 'Of National Characters', in *Selected Essays*, ed. by Stephen Copley and Andrew Edgar (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 113-125, (p. 115, p. 119).

⁸⁷ This question is explored at length in Evan Gottlieb's *Feeling British: Sympathy and National Identity in Scottish and English Writing, 1707-1832* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007). It is worth noting here the argument that Smith's famous 'impartial spectator' itself invokes a British self-consciousness, not least via the possible allusion to Addison and Steele's *Spectator*. See Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland: Aesthetics, politics, and the colonial sublime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 98; and Stephen J. McKenna, *Adam Smith: The Rhetoric of Propriety* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), p. 68.

of proximate threat, undermining the notion of simple, immediate 'contagion'. He recognises that 'the love of our country' can 'dispose us to act inconsistently' with 'the love of mankind'; a serious qualification (*Theory of Moral Sentiments*, p. 270). However much they struggle against it, both philosophers recognise the difficulty facing a transnational cosmopolitanism based in sympathy, rendering Hume's famous declaration to be a 'Citizen of the World' a fairly sanguine statement, even theoretically. Hume produces this assertion when discussing his own experience of aggressive national distinctions, pouring scorn on a chauvinistic, faction-torn Englishness – a telling context.⁸⁸ Bringing people together only to oppose them against other groups – potentially divisive by the very means that it could be cohesive – sympathy nicely exemplifies the challenging situation existing around the conflicting claims of Scotland and Britain during our period. Indeed, we need to be receptive to a matrix of centrifugal and centripetal forces more complex than the conventional claims of region versus nation – with regional, national and imperial frameworks in an unsettled rapport. The binds, alongside the limits of sympathy, give a sharp contemporary insight into the fundamentals of this problematic situation.

⁸⁸ 'I do not believe there is one Englishman in fifty, who, if he heard that I had broke my Neck to night, woud not be rejoic'd with it. Some hate me because I am not a Tory, some because I am not a Whig, some because I am not a Christian, and all because I am a Scotsman. Can you seriously talk of my continuing an Englishman? Am I, or are you, an Englishman? Will they allow us to be so? Do they not treat with Derision our Pretensions to that Name, and with Hatred our just Pretensions to surpass & to govern them? I am a Citizen of the World; but if I were to adopt any Country, it woud be that in which I live at present, and from which I am determin'd never to depart, unless a War drive me into Swisserland or Italy'. See David Hume, 'To Gilbert Elliot of Minto, Paris, 22nd September 1764', in *The Letters of David Hume*, ed. by J. Y. T. Greig, 2 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1932), I, pp.467-471, (p.470).

Linda Colley's *Britons*, now a well-established text as an account of the emergence of a British identity following 1707, argues that the primary cohesive factors in constructing Britishness over the period were the respective claims of a shared Protestantism and the exigencies of war, alongside economic advantage.⁸⁹ Colley's notorious elision of Ireland from her thesis clearly undermines its authority, while her core argument also has its flaws. Indeed, querying the religious angle, Davidson has pointed out the frequently divisive agency of Scottish Presbyterianism (p. 87); while Pittock argues for the 'disposable' nature of Scottish troops, indicating serious (if not perhaps fatal) shortcomings to a shared Britishness based upon war (*Celtic*, p. 26). There is no doubt that developing British cultural forms held considerable sway in Scotland – significantly driven by an alignment with the broad exigencies of improvement – yet the primary literature of the time suggests that the respective claims of Scottishness and Britishness were rarely comfortably co-existent.

When discussing Anglo-Scottish conflict during the period, the unavoidable name is that of John Wilkes. Wilkes's Scotophobia is often discounted as an example of populist political vulgarity, yet it yields important clues regarding the identity-politics dynamic. Firstly, the hate-filled characterisations of the Scots peddled by the Wilkesites in the 1760s cannot be discounted on account of their marginality to mainstream discourse. Pittock reminds us that, 'They represented a broad strand of opinion' (*Celtic*, p. 31). In one early-nineteenth-century view it had been for a time 'no safe thing for a man even to shout "Wilkes and Liberty" with a Scottish accent in the streets of

⁸⁹ Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 18, p. 5.

London'.⁹⁰ However, the key point is neither the degree to which these views were influential, nor the specifics of the invective itself. It is in fact in the details of their motivations. In the context of the Bute administration's apparently partisan patronage of Scots, Wilkes was motivated by the alarming notion that the Scots were running Great Britain – which to him meant Toryism, arbitrary power and a restricted press.⁹¹ Thus, as both Davidson and Colley do, we can read Wilkes's campaign as using its Scotophobic antagonism as an indignant response to the increased level of penetration of the British state by these supposedly illiberal Scots. As Colley suggests, 'its extremism was testimony to the fact that the barriers between England and Scotland were coming down, savage proof that Scots were acquiring power and influence within Great Britain to a degree previously unknown' (p. 121).⁹² Wilkes's diatribes alert us to a new level of Scottish opportunity in the British state, though they still seem influenced by a sense of ethnic superiority. An ingrained prejudice against Scots is tangible, but is given a violent inflammation by the perception that these supposed inferiors are no longer appropriately subordinated.

Identity: the Empire

By the 1760s, Scottish penetration of the British state structure was seen to be dramatically on the rise. Yet Scotland's involvement in the imperial project

⁹⁰ Allan Cunningham, *The Songs of Scotland, Ancient and Modern; with an Introduction and Notes, Historical and Critical, and Characters of the Lyric Poets*, 4 vols (London: Taylor, 1825), III, p. 348. 'Wilkes and Liberty' being the 'mob cry' of Wilkes's supporters. See Peter D. G. Thomas, *John Wilkes: A Friend to Liberty* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 33.

⁹¹ See Audrey Williamson, *Wilkes: 'A Friend to Liberty'* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), pp. 43-59.

⁹² See also Davidson, p. 84. Wilkes's ideology is read as a form of English nationalism in Gerald Newman's *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), in particular pp. 177-178.

remains something of an awkward topic. Towards the end of John Galt's *The Entail*, as the British imperial state writhes under the continental threat from Napoleon, there is a scene in which the young scion of the text's central family fantasises upon future military escapades. Indulging a boyish fiction that his raising of troops in the Highlands will soon bring to consummation, the imagery Galt employs for James Walkinshaw's imaginative play is suggestive:

The young soldier marched briskly along, whistling courageous tunes, and flourishing his stick with all the cuts of the broadsword, lopping the boughs of the hedges, as if they had been the limbs of Frenchmen, and switching away the heads of the thistles and benweeds in his path, as if they had been Parisian carmagmols, against whom, at that period, the loyalty of the British bosom was beginning to grow fretful and testy.⁹³

Scything down the foliage as pretend foes, James briefly embodies the 'British bosom' rising to a state of 'testy' military clamour. The battle for the continent of Europe, and indeed effective control of the world, is played out in the young man's mind here, traversing the battles of a long conflict that remains a persistent off-stage presence throughout Galt's oeuvre. Yet Galt is far too subtle for the inclusion of thistles in James's vegetable targets to be accidental, particularly in a novel that extensively queries the relationship of residual Scottishness to British modernity – raising the question of how the country stood within the imperial project, whether victim, progenitor or both?

This question has been treated disingenuously for too long. Recent historiography has begun to rectify a persistent historical tendency to excuse Scotland's imperial past, focussing instead on examples of victimhood. The eighteenth century is increasingly understood as Scotland's century of Empire, an epoch aptly symbolised by the veritable inundation of wealth experienced

⁹³ John Galt, *The Entail; or, The Lairds of Grippy*, ed. by Ian A. Gordon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 293.

through the tobacco trade in Glasgow. The presence of rum and limes in *The Entail* are emphasised by Galt as nods to the dramatic influence of the Caribbean plantations upon the West of Scotland (*Entail*, pp. 303-304). Glasgow's ascendancy formed a key part of a wider imperial narrative that is well reflected in the novel's stress on 'sordid bargaining' (*Entail*, p. 109). Addressing this history, Devine describes 'the relentless penetration of Empire by Scottish educators, doctors, plantation overseers, army officers, government officials, merchants and clerics', reflecting the seismic impact the Empire had on Scottish society and opportunities (*Scotland's Empire*, p. xxvii). Male Scots were pouring into imperial jobs abroad (especially in India), while their English peers stayed at home in greater proportional numbers. These careers were dangerous – disease and war took a massive toll – yet to disadvantaged Scots they often provided an alluring, perhaps the only, road to economic success. A ten-minute stroll through the grandeur of Glasgow's Merchant City drives home with force the material benefits of Empire, the imposing facades of the tobacco lords' personal palaces still standing. Colley even suggests that following the Seven Years War, 'Scots played a leading part in making British imperialism what it was', revealing of an 'unscrupulous side' to 'Scottish endeavour' (p. 132). Given such a history of enslavement, exploitation and slaughter, it is understandable that Scotland's role in the Empire has been a sensitive issue. On the emotive issue of slavery, Devine comments that, 'The full and enthusiastic engagement of Scots at every level of the slave system is beyond doubt', yet this must be balanced against the fact that 'many of the great figures of the Scottish Enlightenment were building the intellectual case against it' (*Scotland's Empire*, p. 246). To what degree, if at all, contributions to abolitionist discourse palliate this appalling history is a

massively overburdened moral question. While blame and remorse are not in of themselves useful, we need to continue to revise Scottish self-awareness around these topics in order to embrace and utilise the lessons of the past. It is unnecessary to elide our celebration of the abolition movement, yet dirty money was central in shaping Scotland's extraordinary development during this period and the more this is recognised the better we can achieve a mature historical perspective.

The Empire could be a means not only for Scots to participate in the rapine of the globe; it could in fact be a source of specifically Scottish pride. Ideas of Scottish imperial pilotage are frequently apparent in the work of Allan Cunningham (1784-1842), a polymath born in Nithsdale in the South of Scotland. As a poet, sculptor, antiquarian, forger, editor of Burns, personal friend of Hogg and acquaintance of Scott, Cunningham has an interestingly central and understudied role within the Scottish cultural sphere.⁹⁴ His lyric poem 'The Thistle's Grown Aboon the Rose' makes clear the way in which imperial conquest could be reflected within chauvinist constructions of Scottish identity. The unashamedly triumphalist listing of gory imperial victories in this poem may be morally unsettling, yet it is for his appropriation of the Empire as proof of Scottish superiority that Cunningham is interesting here. Indeed, he specifically links the activities of imperial conquest with the prowess of pre-Union Scottish military heroes:

From matchless Bruce to dauntless Graeme,
From swarthy Spain to Siber's snows;–

⁹⁴ A modern scholarly biography of Cunningham would be most welcome. At present, the best available is: Rev. David Hogg, *Life of Allan Cunningham, with Selections from his Works and Correspondence* (London: Hodder and Stoughton; Dumfries: Anderson; Edinburgh: Grant, 1875).

The Thistle's grown aboon the Rose.

The explicitly racial sentiment here, with Scottish heroes triumphing over black and white alike, moves well beyond Scotland over-stepping England in the figure of their symbolic flowers, to a ludicrous aggrandisement of the Scots as a global chosen-race of invincible warriors. The Scots are characterised as 'Too rough to bloom in lady's bower', as compared to the presumably more sophisticated English, yet in military terms they are gloriously predominant.⁹⁵ Cunningham's narrow appropriation of the activities of the Empire is suggestive of a marked imperial conceit. Soft English refinement is trumped by rustic Scottishness in a pointed, militaristic invocation of the dialectics of improvement that upturns its typical implied hierarchy to favour untamed aggression. Not only is Scotland here a partner in Empire; it is the leading light.

These herculean warriors reflect a contemporary commonplace that posed the Scots – with Highlanders as their symbolic archetypes – as fearsome (or fearless) warriors, based in part on tales of the '45 and spurious suppositions about northern hardiness. By the early nineteenth century, this perception had been strengthened by the importance of the Highland regiments upon Britain's imperial battlefronts, cementing an apotheosis of the Highlander as the ideal warrior.⁹⁶ Yet if Scottish troops were now celebrated as the invincible heroes of imperial might, Pittock argues that this perception went hand-in-hand with their

⁹⁵ Allan Cunningham, 'The Thistle's Grown Aboon the Rose', in *Poems and Songs, with an Introduction and Notes by Peter Cunningham* (London: Murray, 1847), pp. 116-117, (II. 18-20, I. 6).

⁹⁶ Womack nicely explicates this phenomenon in his chapter entitled 'Warriors' (pp. 27-60), while the authoritative text on Highland militarism during the period is Andrew MacKillop's *'More Fruitful than the Soil': Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715-1815* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2000).

sacrificial deployment in battle situations, leading to striking casualty figures.⁹⁷

We should not ignore the possibility of institutional prejudice, and assumptions about Celtic valour may have provided a convenient basis for such strategies, yet there are other contributing factors.⁹⁸ For one thing, the Scots were proportionally over-represented in the military to a considerable degree. 'By the 1750s something like one in four of all regimental officers in the army were Scots', explains Devine (*Scotland's Empire*, p. 296). He explores a number of explanatory angles on this phenomenon, yet economic necessity remains the overriding theme. Lower wages in Scotland, combined with fluctuating and uncertain economic growth, rendered Scots tellingly less secure than their southern neighbours. Furthermore, 'As agricultural improvement spread throughout the [Lowlands], farms were consolidated, subtenancies and cottar holdings removed and the terms of access to land became more rigorous and regulated' (*Scotland's Empire*, p. 301). This increasing concentration of capital in the hands of a few pushed considerable swathes of the population into positions of uncertainty. A growing class of landless labourers, intensely vulnerable to the capricious movement of economic markets (and especially so in the Highlands), increasingly viewed the military as a relatively attractive option, if not an absolute necessity.

⁹⁷ 'In the Seven Years War the Scots casualty rate was almost four times as high as that of the English or American troops involved' (Pittock, *Celtic*, p. 86, p. 27).

⁹⁸ As regards such prejudice, note the famous words of General Wolfe, who wrote to a correspondent regarding his military activities in North America: 'I should imagine that two or three independent Highland companies might be of use; they are hardy, intrepid, accustomed to a rough country, and no great mischief if they fall. How can you better employ a secret enemy than by making his end conducive to the common good?' See James Wolfe, 'To Captain Rickson, 9th June, 1751', in Beckles Wilson, *The Life and Letters of James Wolfe* (London: Heinemann, 1909), pp. 139-145, (p. 141).

While the notion that Scotland was primarily a victim of imperial exploitation is now defunct, serious outrages were of course perpetrated domestically. The cataclysmic Highland wasteland painted by Hogg in his treatment of the post-Culloden period in *The Three Perils of Woman* is a chilling reminder of this fact, his text involved in a 'journey over guns, bayonets, pistols, and holsters, for several miles' that extreme horrors have rendered so habitual as to be 'tedious' (p. 337). Hogg's novel accurately registers a confusion surrounding the national question in this context, as the text stages an on-going struggle over to what degree such an event can stand as nationally representative. We need to remain attuned to the pressing determinant of class throughout our historical analysis, as the victims of the Highland Clearances have, for example, infinitely more in common with the swelling poor of industrial Manchester than they do with Scottish imperial magnates and career-soldiers; yet at times it is possible to detect the national question making itself felt, at least in cultural responses. The events of the Clearances, alongside the massacre of the Jacobite army and the proceeding devastation of the Highlands provide the period with its most extreme domestic examples of cruelty to Scots.⁹⁹ Davidson has asserted that the majority of the worst crimes were committed by Lowland Scottish officers in these instances, arguing for a domestic rather than a national reading (p. 104). Yet national identities are so often mingled with other ideological structures, that while the merciless retribution of 1746 may have been perpetrated by Scots to a significant degree, this did not prevent the

⁹⁹ It is worth noting here that the notion of 'domestic' incidents may suggest a social parity or cultural coherence not necessarily always present in a country containing markedly different cultural groups (i.e. Gaelic and Anglophone cultures).

Jacobite Uprising casting suspicion on ‘*all* Scotland as potentially disloyal’ (Pittock, *Celtic*, p. 27). Reading specific elements of Scottish (or British) society as synecdochical for Scotland is certainly a dangerous mistake to make; yet the very fact that this was done contemporaneously has lasting significance. It is important to recognise the symbolic potential of events like the Clearances or Culloden, not least in the context of contemporary views that often rendered Highland society nationally representative. As Kidd explores, the cultural appropriation of the Gàidhealtachd for the whole of Scotland (alongside practical antipathy) had deep roots in Lowland practice throughout the early modern period.¹⁰⁰ This pattern is continued throughout the long eighteenth century as Highland culture is increasingly cemented *as* Scotland.¹⁰¹ Thus, though in factual terms it is spurious to appropriate these tragedies as straightforwardly national, we need to keep their ideological potential in view. Particularly when apportioning responsibility or attaching blame, the subtleties in collective identities do not always translate into interpretations of history.

Identity: nomenclature

Scotland’s imperial role is marked by the simple test of vocabulary, with the predominance of the label ‘British Empire’ over ‘English Empire’ after 1707 reflecting a newly co-operative endeavour. Issues of naming cannot be overlooked as inconsequential, especially given the importance of theories of language in the intellectual culture of the time. Thomas Reid’s attitude is typical

¹⁰⁰ Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 123-145.

¹⁰¹ Womack usefully points out that the Wilkesite propaganda of the 1760s played a significant role in this on-going formula, drawing on a potent if artificial ‘associative web’ that conflated ‘Tory–Jacobite–Scot–Highlandman’ and lasted beyond its role in ‘the campaign of vilification’ (pp. 16-20).

of Scottish Enlightenment discourse in his use of linguistic phenomena as infallible proofs for his intellectual propositions. He argues, for example, for the objectivity of 'beauty', simply because this is how the English language expresses it. Reid says, 'Why should I use a language that expresses the contrary of what I mean?'¹⁰² Such attitudes held that the specifics of language were a primary key to the workings of the human mind. In this light, the term 'North Britain' must also be seen as an important signifier, current in a society so concerned with the ideological nuance of language. The alternative and oftentimes predominant label for the country, North Britishness holds many of the keys to understanding contemporary identity politics.

'If countries have their ages with respect to improvement, *North Britain* may be considered as in a state of early youth', announces the preface to the first edition of the short-lived *Edinburgh Review* of the 1750s. This is the sole appearance of the term North Britain in the preface, a switch that signifies more than the simple recognition of a change in the official status of the country. The reviewers seem to reach for the name as a lexical embodiment of the improving trajectory. Although North Britain may be juvenile with regard to improvement, it is at least on an upward path. This contrasts against historical Scotland, painted in bleak terms as having been in a 'state of languor and retardation in every species of improvement', from which the seventeenth century brought only 'a series of more dreadful evils'. Saved by the Revolution and the Union, the

¹⁰² Thomas Reid, 'Of Taste', in *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man*, ed. by Derek R. Brookes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2002), pp. 573-614, (p. 577).

loaded use of nomenclature signals the progressive trajectory narrated by the reviewers.¹⁰³

In its widespread manifestations, the implications of the term North Britain are complex. It could be a means of Scottish aggrandisement, a terminological route for Scotland to be a genuine partner in Britishness, if not even the superior partner. Fielding alerts us to this potential dynamic, drawing on environmental determinist theories which held that the 'North' produced physical strength and intellectual clarity. Thus 'the idea that Britain was itself a Northern country, of which Scotland was the most northerly part, continued to grow in strength as a form of cultural location' (*Fictions of Geography*, p. 19). In fact Kidd suggests that Britishness itself had, in the mid-eighteenth century, a powerfully Scottish association (*Subverting*, pp. 205-206). Such a link was involved in the potential flipside to the North Britain label: Britishness *per se* could be read as a Scottish imposition on England. In the context of the historiographical procedures of the Scottish literati, Kidd claims that North Britishness was an attempt to appropriate an English identity: 'North Britishness was an aspiration towards full British participation in English liberties; a set of intellectual approaches to the history of English liberty' (*Subverting*, p. 214). Involved in the shedding of Scottish roots, in this view the term becomes an explicit disavowal of a residual culture. If England was clearly the dominant partner in Union, then it is easy to see why the compound category of Britain could hold a special appeal to Scots. Indeed, suspicions of Scottish opportunism are reflected by the title of the *North Briton*, the newspaper mouthpiece for John

¹⁰³ 'Preface', *Edinburgh Review*, 1 (1755), i-iv, (p. ii).

Wilkes's agenda.¹⁰⁴ Certainly it is possible to trace elements of Scottish primacy in the mobilisation of cultural Britishness across the period, not least via the considerable authority of Edinburgh's printing culture: the strident, Tory imperialism of *Blackwood's Magazine* and its associates being a primary case in point. Such a pattern can be seen stretching across and well beyond the long eighteenth century. For example, by the period of the First World War, when discussing *Blackwood's* imperial swagger, David Goldie flags 'the construction of a British cultural imperium in which [Scots] could trade ideas on advantageous terms', reflecting on an economically-driven interest in the pursuit of Britishness – with *Maga* now 'enjoying an astonishing ubiquity in every corner of the imperial world'.¹⁰⁵ Involved in setting out both the leitmotifs and tenor of British imperial culture, Scotland may often as not have been a driving force. Whether aspirational, entrepreneurial or merely self-defensive, as demonstrated above in the *Edinburgh Review* the swapping of Scotland for North Britain could certainly be a strategic move. We must remain sensitive to such multiple adjectival possibilities. The instability of North Britishness is another salutary example of the way in which contemporary identity structures remain so definitively unresolved, and its interchange with alternative nomenclature (e.g. Scotland, Scotia, Caledonia) can be a significant ideological manoeuvre.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas explains that, 'Wilkes had named his paper not so much in derision of [Smollett's] the *Briton* but so as to adopt the satirical guise of Scottish approval of Lord Bute's political take-over of England, to the prospective benefit of his own nation' (Thomas, p. 19).

¹⁰⁵ David Goldie, 'Scotland, Britishness, and the First World War', in *Beyond Scotland: New Contexts for Twentieth-Century Scottish Literature*, ed. by Gerard Carruthers, David Goldie & Alastair Renfrew (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), pp. 39-57, (p. 41).

Identity: education

Despite its malleable ideological position within the British imperial polity, Scotland's remaining institutional framework clearly differentiated the national experience in providing a separate legal and educational system. The latter of these strikes at a central pillar of Scottish identity that we need to address briefly. Midway through Galt's *Entail*, Girzy Hypel (or 'the Leddy', as she comes to be known) makes a self-important announcement that she will oversee the education of her granddaughter Mary:

Am sure ye would na wis to see her any better brought up than was our Meg, Mrs Milrookit, who could once play seven tunes and a march on the spinet, and sewed a satin piece, at Embrough, of Adam and Eve eating the forbidden fruit under the tree of life. (*Entail*, p. 170)

The Leddy's outline of home schooling for a girl is both amusing and revealing, invoking class and moral tensions alongside an obvious gendering in the provision of education. The question of what exactly education looked like over the period is an important one. The well worn figure of the 'lad o' pairts' – a gifted but underprivileged male able to take advantage of the nation's unusual schooling system – is key to the somewhat nebulous perception of Scotland as an intrinsically egalitarian society, in particular by comparison to England. The system of parochial schools stretching across the nation is cited as having facilitated a Scottish educational boon – with various Education Acts across the seventeenth century key to this – feeding into a wider picture of the cultural benefits of Scotland's Presbyterian identity. Crucially, in providing open access to education, the Kirk's network of parish schools is supposed to have allowed for a much more porous social hierarchy, alongside a remarkable level of general literacy.

Unsurprisingly, as with most cultural commonplaces, the facts do not quite stack up. R. A. Houston has made the most sustained effort to challenge the common perception of Scottish education in the period. He forcefully states that, 'Scottish literacy is legendary. It has reached the status of a myth.' Though his investigation finds that in the mid-nineteenth century Scotland did indeed enjoy disproportionately good levels of literacy as compared to most parts of Britain, the fact that this was shared with the North of England somewhat undermines the national parochial argument – though this did not prevent the Scottish system being 'the focus of envy and admiration in England'. In his pursuit of the lad o' pairts, Houston finds instead 'a firmly elitist emphasis', even making the suggestion that an egalitarian perception may have been encouraged by the ruling classes in order to quell social discontent. If the availability of a route to social ascent, however rare, is a perpetual mechanism in the buttressing of hegemony, certainly any suggestion of a wilful, politically motivated neglect of lower-class education would be somewhat at odds with what emerges as the dominant approach to the issue in the period, co-opted by conservatives as a central tool in the maintenance of stability. As Anand C. Chitnis narrates, 'In the opinion of writers such as Henry Brougham and J. R. McCulloch [...] the pursuit of knowledge by working men would make them reluctant to support rash and sudden innovation'; an opinion also demonstrated by Adam Smith, who argued that educating the lower classes rendered them 'less apt to be misled into any wanton or unnecessary opposition to the measures of government'.¹⁰⁶ Houston

¹⁰⁶ Anand C. Chitnis, 'The Scottish Enlightenment in the Age of Galt', in *John Galt 1779-1979*, ed. by Whatley, pp. 31-50, (p. 48). Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. by R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner, 2 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), II, p. 788.

suggests that until the mid-nineteenth century in Scotland a 'consensus' was maintained on this position, in contrast to England, where an opposing school of thought, fearing that education would introduce the working classes to new political possibilities, was more prominent.¹⁰⁷

It hardly requires to be said that opportunities were more limited for girls and women (even if they were perhaps increasing). Lindy Moore explores the eighteenth-century divide, explaining that although both genders would generally receive 'the core curriculum [...] of learning to read and spell from the Bible and the memorising of psalms, prayers, graces and the catechism [...] at home or school', the situation requires to be further analysed:

It [...] seems likely that in the eighteenth century almost as many girls as boys were taught to read, but probable that a higher proportion of women became only semi-literate, as there were more objections to women reading non-religious works, and men had more frequent opportunities to use their reading skills.

If provided with the same basic grounding, females would quickly find their educational opportunities limited, as gender was implicated within a broader series of sociocultural divisions, with linguistic and religious differentials also making significant impacts (for example, an increased gulf between male and female education in Catholic communities). Following the (still unequal) basic early education, the Leddy's programme of home schooling brings us towards the rather more institutionalised separation of the genders, in which, 'Boys

¹⁰⁷ R. A. Houston, *Scottish Literacy and the Scottish Identity: Illiteracy and Society in Scotland and Northern England 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 11, pp. 2-3, p. 240, p. 248, pp. 231-232. Benchimol also discusses such contrasting views on education across England and Scotland in some depth, significantly propelled in his view by the influence of distinct public spheres. See Alex Benchimol, *Intellectual Politics and Cultural Conflict in the Romantic Period: Scottish Whigs, English Radicals and the Making of the British Public Sphere* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), pp. 99-107.

might be sent on to learn writing, arithmetic and possibly Latin at the parochial or burgh school, while most girls went to (or remained at) schools taught by women, to learn needlework and knitting'. With the genders definitively parted at an early age, social expectations of adult gender roles begin here to make their full force felt. Domestic activities form the spine of the feminine path, something we saw in the Leddy's outline of a wealthy girl's secondary education. Useful household skills like sewing, (from which extra income could be sought if necessary), combine with a set of accomplishments designed to produce suitably polished young women, fit to win, entertain and dignify their future husbands. Domesticity and a closely guarded construction of proper femininity form the glass ceiling in operation through this educational paradigm. Yet both formal and informal educational opportunities appear to have opened up considerably around the turn of the nineteenth century for socially respectable women. Examples like Glasgow's Anderson's Institution reflect a strain of liberal thought on education across the gender divide in Scottish life, leading to striking figures such as the fact that, 'In the mid-nineteenth century, Scottish women had a higher literacy rate than both English women and English men'.¹⁰⁸

In broad terms, though at pains to debunk the 'myth' of Scottish education, a study like Houston's nevertheless provides sufficient evidence to justify why adulatory perceptions have gained a hold – and perhaps his lack of patience with cultural hyperbole is a touch over-stated. A position of ultimate compromise is generally accorded with by Donald J. Withrington, also finding that though the

¹⁰⁸ Lindy Moore, 'Education and Learning', in *Gender in Scottish History since 1700*, ed. by Lynn Abrams, Eleanor Gordon, Deborah Simonton and Eileen Yeo (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), pp. 111-139, (pp. 114-115, p. 132). Anderson's Institution is returned to in Chapter Four.

boldest claims are too strong, nevertheless they are based on a diminished reality (while stressing declining conditions in the industrial centres towards the mid-nineteenth century).¹⁰⁹ What is clear from all the literature on the topic, however, is that the period saw the consistent revision and innovation of teaching methods and curriculums, with education a consistently prominent issue – a topicality in no small part prompted by the near-crisis of teachers' wages lagging seriously behind inflation.¹¹⁰

Identity: closing thoughts

Before leaving the subject, it is worth noting that any dialogue on Scottish identity (and national identity more broadly) must obviously be complicated by the complex regional affiliations underpinning and sometimes undermining it. Of course, by the logic of Smithian sympathy, regionalism is necessarily more powerful than nationalism, higher up the sympathetic food chain, so to speak. It is perhaps difficult from a modern perspective to fully comprehend quite how much more localised life in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Scotland was. The difficulty and expense of travel, poor communications and highly localised government rendered Britain on the whole a far more fragmented place than studies such as the present one may be tempted to assume – a situation that was exacerbated by the divide between the Lowlands and the Highlands in

¹⁰⁹ Donald J. Withrington, 'Schooling, Literacy and Society', in *People and Society in Scotland: Volume I 1760-1830; A Social History of Modern Scotland in Three Volumes*, ed. by T. M. Devine and Rosalind Mitchison (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1988), pp. 163-187, (pp. 173-174, p. 185).

¹¹⁰ See Donald J. Withrington, 'Education and Society in the Eighteenth Century', in *Scotland in the Age of Improvement: Essays in Scottish History in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by N. T. Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1970), pp. 169-199, (pp. 191-192); and Maisie Steven, *Parish Life in Eighteenth-Century Scotland: A Review of the Old Statistical Account* (Aberdeen: Scottish Cultural Press, 1995), pp. 53-54.

Scotland. With significant parts of the country remaining practically inaccessible until late in the eighteenth century, alongside Scotland's highly localised cultures, regionalism may often as not overwrite national identity, yet this is not to say that the latter is consequently rendered unimportant. Indeed, the long eighteenth century is a key period for the progressive imposition of larger national structures upon regional ones. Approaches to the enigma of the underdeveloped Highlands, for example, see innovative efforts to open up, incorporate and exploit these areas.¹¹¹ Such activities partly betray a conscious attempt to expand the scope of Scotland's prevailing, Lowland political and cultural hegemony. Yet even on a broader front, new institutional, cultural and economic networks are linking Scottish communities together on an unprecedented scale. This dynamic is registered in much contemporary literature, an exemplary case being John Galt's fiction, not least his *Annals of the Parish*. In that work the narration of Micah Balwhidder, minister of Dalmalling, charts the progressive nationalisation (and globalisation) of a small Scottish community: perhaps offering a partial endorsement of the 'nationalism-equals-modernity' equation. The opening of communications, the expansion of trade and the impact of international conflict sees the minister's small parish 'brought

¹¹¹ Fredrik Albritton Jonsson has recently argued that during a process of 'Internal Colonization', 'improvement projects between 1750 and 1820' reveal the Highlands functioning as 'a laboratory for the Enlightenment'. While government concerns over 'security provided the initial impetus' – partly exercised through the state management of the Annexed Estates – later in the eighteenth century the 'enlightened science' of 'voluntary associations' such as the Highland Society of Scotland was in the vanguard. See Fredrik Albritton Jonsson, *Enlightenment's Frontier: The Scottish Highlands and the Origins of Environmentalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 2, p. 12, p. 46.

more into the world'.¹¹² In a move arguably reflected in Burns's projection from Ayrshire to the 'national bardship' (discussed in the next chapter), Galt reminds us that while regionalism is undoubtedly crucial to our understanding of the period, the national (and international) question is making itself increasingly felt.

In light of the discussion above the complexity of Scottish (or North British) identity during the long eighteenth century becomes clear. Scotland is consistently adept in evading critical finality. Nevertheless, as scholars of Scottish identity-politics we should be careful of assuming exceptionality in this regard: such ideological structures have a natural tendency to fragment under the critical eye.¹¹³ It is important that we attempt to keep much of this multifarious framework in view when discussing the literature of the time. All of the problematic relations cited above, plus many more, are in fluid operation in this work. Exploring identity-politics in the context of literature is perhaps a strangely resonating task here, as returning to Reid's notion of the importance of language, we are reflecting a characteristically long-eighteenth-century attitude when we assert that identities and attitudes are produced and reflected in the subtleties of literature.

Civil society

Returning to the issue of Scotland's 'state-less society', it is worth addressing in fuller detail the significance of this structure. Though there are a series of potential examples of 'state-less' nations in Europe at this period (including both

¹¹² John Galt, *Annals of the Parish*, in *Annals of the Parish & The Ayrshire Legatees* (London: Macmillan, 1895; repr., with an introduction by Ian Campbell, Edinburgh: Mercat, 1994), p. 139.

¹¹³ In fact, Colley provides figures which suggest that military volunteers in the years leading up to 1798 were more inclined to opt to defend their 'nation' in Scotland (and to a lesser degree Wales), as compared to more regional and local affiliations in England (pp. 293-294).

Germany and Italy), the situation may offer some informative resonances in the Scottish context. Perhaps a country divested of its ancient political apparatus could provide the conditions for other areas of civil life to enjoy a nuanced status. Without discounting the function of Scotland's forty-five elected representatives in London, after the removal of parliament to Westminster the triumvirate of the Universities, the Kirk and the Legal system can be seen as occupying something of a surrogate role. In particular the influence of the General Assembly, combined with the penetration of Scottish society by its ministers – represented in the census-like project of the *Statistical Account* – appears as a kind of quasi-governmental framework.¹¹⁴ Moreover, the interaction in personnel terms between these three institutional bodies is further suggestive of a unitary ruling group. This is not to say that these institutional bodies were not hugely powerful pre-Union, or that the rarely meeting Scottish parliament had previously occupied all the roles they now performed, only that in the long-eighteenth-century context this structure appears to operate in such a manner. Indeed, it can be argued that the key date for this 'state-less society' is really the Union of the Crowns in 1603, yet even that argument would concede that 1707 represented a further step in the process. In this environment, with a form of ruling élite taken from these remaining institutions, we may be able to account to a degree for the intensely social and public role attributed to cultural discourse.

In his seminal *Essay on the History of Civil Society*, Adam Ferguson gives us a sense of the stress laid on cultural activity in contemporary social theory.

¹¹⁴ For the dates we are concerned with, relevant is the first *Account*, commonly known as Sinclair's *Old Statistical Account*. See *The Statistical Account of Scotland: Drawn Up From the Communication of the Ministers of the Different Parishes*, ed. by Sir John Sinclair, 21 vols (Edinburgh: Creech, 1791-1799).

Ferguson emphasises the role of associational culture in the maintenance and promotion of a national society:

In the bustle of civil pursuits and occupations, men appear in a variety of lights, and suggest matter of inquiry and fancy, by which conversation is enlivened, and greatly enlarged. The productions of ingenuity are brought to the market; and men are willing to pay for whatever has a tendency to inform or amuse. By this means the idle, as well as the busy, contribute to forward the progress of arts, and bestow on polished nations that air of superior ingenuity, under which they appear to have gained the ends that were pursued by the savage in his forest, knowledge, order, and wealth. (*Essay on the History of Civil Society*, p. 175)

This 'bustle of civil pursuits' suggests a (notably urban) variegated and multifaceted associational culture, which for Ferguson is key to the work of national aggrandisement. It is worth noting here the qualification of Ferguson's approval of 'progress' signalled by the phrase 'appear to have gained'. Elsewhere he is more obviously ambivalent, discussing how, 'The boasted refinements [...] of the polished age [...] open a door, perhaps, to disaster, as wide and accessible as any of those they have shut' (*Essay on the History of Civil Society*, p. 219). The *Essay* is perhaps best known for its enunciation of an incompatible or at least potentially fraught relationship between civic virtue and modern commercialism, fearing that the division of labour may erode collective sentiment: 'To the ancient Greek, or the Roman, the individual was nothing, and the public every thing. To the modern, in too many nations of Europe, the individual is every thing, and the public nothing' (*Essay on the History of Civil Society*, p. 57).¹¹⁵ However, albeit within the context of Ferguson's famously equivocal attitude to modernity, association is central to his national-commercial

¹¹⁵ Ferguson's Highland background should be taken into account here. Glossing Duncan Forbes, Womack reflects that the *Essay*'s 'tracing of an ethically ambiguous progression from barbarism to civility was [...] a theoretical representation of [the Highland's] recent history' (p. 40).

(and trans-national-commercial) paradigm in producing economic stimulus, intellectual advancement and civil order. The role of 'conversation' is crucial here (which in this context can be read as incorporating literary as well as verbal exchange), not merely as a recreation which variety 'enlivens', but also as a formidable medium for the advancement of the national condition. This attitude, placing a diverse associational culture right at the heart of the nation's progress and international repute, is highly characteristic of contemporary attitudes in Scotland – a priority which may partly reflect the condition of the 'state-less society'.

Recent work in this area by Alex Benchimol has built on a characterisation of Scottish civil society formulated by Nicolas Phillipson. Benchimol discusses 'a Scottish Enlightenment public sphere based in the literary clubs, Kirk assemblies, university and debating societies of Edinburgh' (*Intellectual Politics*, p. 40). He makes clear his interpretation of the political function of this public sphere:

Participants in the new Scottish public sphere were [...] forging a unique concept of modern national identity both in and through these intellectual gatherings, where the cultivation of taste helped to define a new form of cultural association in response to what Phillipson calls 'the problem of discovering alternative modes of participation to that which parliament had once provided'. This response encouraged the compensatory development of an innovative practice of cultural politics; one which attempted to sustain older traditions of political leadership through the new forms of intellectual association provided by the liberal public sphere. (Benchimol, 'Periodicals and Public Culture', p. 87)

Replacing the 'participatory' function of parliament, the Scottish public sphere emerges here as a domain in which cultural discourse has taken on a particularly social and politicised role. Benchimol's case renders the developing public sphere as the crucible in which a new ideology of nationhood is born – one now

explicitly operating around cultural discourse and located in a sociable, civic context. While the North British and cosmopolitan leanings of the Enlightenment clearly complicate its relationship to Scottishness in terms of content, this argument offers a well-defined formal structure of patriotic national activity.

We should be careful not to suggest that such phenomena were exclusively Scottish. Examples of vibrant liberal publics are found elsewhere in the period, including in England, which produced Addison's influential ideas on sociability. Yet it is nonetheless plausible to suggest that circumstances in a now-provincial Scotland produced a specific patriotic impetus that acted to inflect or amplify the national function of this formation. Phillipson claims in a 1981 essay that:

Throughout the eighteenth century Scottish intellectual life, and that of Edinburgh in particular, was to be meshed into a complex and constantly changing network of clubs and societies devoted to the improvement of manners, economic efficiency, learning and letters. For it was believed that those who took part in such activities would help to secure their country's independence and acquire a sense of civic virtue.¹¹⁶

Here pursuing cultural endeavour is visible as a means not only of personal cultivation or improvement, but also of the formation and maintenance of a sophisticated and moral society. Culture becomes the means of sustaining and promoting Scotland's national dignity, facilitated by an ideology of association and its expression in clubs and societies, alongside a developing national periodical press. Again we need to avoid exaggerated Scottish special pleading as regards the associational paradigm in of itself, although Barton Swaim does

¹¹⁶ The use of the word 'independence' in this citation refers more to a sense of national dignity and self-sufficiency, rather than full political autonomy (which would be unusual at this period).

trace how a particular ‘affinity for periodicals’ facilitated a Scottish ‘dominance’ in the British public sphere from the ‘latter half of the eighteenth’ and into the nineteenth century. This dominance, with Scots more ‘at ease with the idea of a public sphere’ than ‘most English writers, apart from the radicals and Dissenters’, was used partly to drive an active Scottish claim on Britishness.¹¹⁷ Yet it may nonetheless reflect a distinctive national formation expressing itself on a broader front. Elaborating the argument for a heightened national-political agency in the Scottish Enlightenment public sphere, Phillipson describes how:

The literati found themselves directing an aristocratic and politically minded society whose para-parliamentary functions had grown out of its members' primary interest in literary debate. The pursuit of literature had been established as an acceptable alternative to political participation for those seeking a life of civic virtue.¹¹⁸

Of course, literature here is a broad term encompassing many kinds of writing besides creative literature. Yet the notion of a ‘para-parliamentary’ public sphere located largely in cultural discourse is a fascinating one for our purposes, perhaps offering a nuanced environment for politicised authorship. In keen examples of a politicised letters across the period, perhaps we can trace the influence of the ‘state-less society’. Burns’s self-appointed role as spokesperson for Scotland, explored in Chapter Two, certainly provides a tantalising example of a fulsome polemical engagement that is highly attuned to the formations of Scottish institutional culture. In addition, if individual activity was acutely linked to the national condition in the way these critics believe – Ben-Chimol describes the ‘fundamental assumption that self-improvement was necessarily wedded to

¹¹⁷ Barton Swaim, *Scottish Men of Letters and the New Public Sphere, 1802-1834* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2009), pp. 11-21, p. 70.

¹¹⁸ Nicolas Phillipson, ‘The Scottish Enlightenment’, in *The Enlightenment in National Context*, ed. by Roy S. Porter and Mikuláš Teich (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 19-40, (p. 27, p. 32).

the wider social advancement of Scotland' – then the project of Scott's *bildungsroman* historical novel, deploying the individual developmental narrative as synecdoche for the wider national community, becomes legible as merely an extension of this public cultural ideology (*Intellectual Politics*, p. 59).

If socially and morally outward looking, the question of this associational public sphere's relevance for the wider Scottish community remains. The élite metropolitan culture in Edinburgh was an exclusive domain, though perhaps meritocratic by the standards of the time. In this respect, Scotland's 'para-parliamentary' formation still had a heavily limited franchise – one working along both class and gender lines. With a privileged few operating at the apex of society, Marxist historian James D. Young is at pains to point out the dangers of assuming that this 'Enlightened' period was some halcyon age of social responsibility:

In the 'golden age' of the Scottish Enlightenment the colliers were still serfs; and the philosophes were indifferent to the inhuman conditions in the coal mines in the Athens of the North. This applies to all of them, and the Scottish reality of forced industrialisation persuaded them to frown upon trade unions, 'democratic' rights and any questioning of the sacred rights of property and capital.¹¹⁹

In this familiar narrative, the overwhelming preoccupations of improvement could produce a sacrificial progressivism, with capitalist exigency favoured above social responsibility, a pattern that has so often dominated world history. Young's assertion of 'indifference' perhaps undervalues the social and moral conscience of men like Smith and Hume, albeit the society they originated in was far from egalitarian. Such tensions became more pronounced later in the eighteenth century as the literati consciously distanced themselves from

¹¹⁹ James D. Young, *The Rousing of the Scottish Working Class* (London: Croom Helm, 1979), p. 48.

'levelling' principles in the context of the anti-Jacobin conservative backlash. Intellectuals like Dugald Stewart, whose quasi-democratic Moral Philosophy placed him under severe scrutiny, were keen to deny such tendencies. Stewart's repeated attacks on 'scepticism' are telling, with Jacobin political principles at least partially the implicit target (*Elements*, I, pp. 33-43).

Still, if the head of the social strata was relatively exclusive, through the examples of reflected associational forms in provincial areas the broader sweep of this culture becomes apparent. Towsey describes, for example, 'Provincial farmers, merchants, artisans and tradesmen [...] subscribing to associational libraries in their droves'. Opportunities for involvement in the intellectual activities of the Enlightenment were manifested far beyond the élite echelons of Edinburgh's polite social circles, so that 'some of the most challenging books of the Enlightenment reached readers quite far down the social scale' (p. 296). Thus, while the issue of exclusivity complicates any comprehensive national framework based solely in the élite public sphere, we can nonetheless trace reflections of this structure in operation throughout Scottish life, reinforcing the intense role of the Enlightenment and its characteristic formations as a key national factor. Indeed, while Towsey's study does not attempt the comparison, it is possible that the popular reach of Enlightenment may have been broader in Scotland than in England.¹²⁰ However, certainly signal within this culture is the widespread stress in contemporary thought and practice on a programme of

¹²⁰ Though he is engaged in building the evidence basis for such a judgement, Towsey notes that the claim for the Scottish Enlightenment as 'distinctive' in this respect has been made elsewhere (p. 9). See Donald Withrington, 'What was Distinctive about the Scottish Enlightenment?', in *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment: Proceedings of a conference held at the University of Aberdeen*, ed. by Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1987), pp. 9-19, (p. 15).

salutary cultural activity framed as a means of expressing political virtue in the furtherance of collective improvement.

This position is exemplified nowhere better than in the preface to the first *Edinburgh Review*. The reviewers describe their motivations as follows:

It occurred to some Gentlemen, that, at this period, when no very material difficulties remain to be conquered; the shewing men the gradual advances of science, would be a means of inciting them to a more eager pursuit of learning, to distinguish themselves, and to do honour to their country.

Above and beyond mere rhetoric, this represents an important theoretical platform. The periodical's surveying of literature is located here within the explicit context of national improvement, positing the *Review* as a significant tool in the advancement of Scottish society. In figuring Scotland's literary practice thus, the reviewers typify the national-cultural ideology we have been surveying. Literary culture both crystallises and dignifies the developing community, their reading and writing engaged in a developing notion of civic Scottishness, one conceived as intellectual, participatory and patriotic. Personal achievement in the 'pursuit of learning' naturally leads to collective 'honour', though the reviewers are subsequently keen to downplay their own reward, further enforcing the overarching concern of national betterment (albeit we may be able detect an element of faux-humility):

The authors expect no praise to themselves for a work, in which, to be useful, is their only design: In the conducting of it, they hope, they shall merit no blame. The success of the work is what they principally have at heart; as it may possibly be attended with a national benefit. ('Preface', pp. iii-iv)

Setting out to periodically structure, interpret and stimulate Scotland's literary culture, the first *Edinburgh Review* provides a key distillation of an ideology in which letters become the means of a nationally-representative improving

activity. Although the Union may have reduced Scotland to the status of a merely 'cultural nation', here such an identity is appropriated and aggrandised as a crucial feature of its path to modernity. Cultural discourse is given a special priority, situated as a primary agent within the formation of 'state-less' Scotland, in a move that resonates as the period develops.

Yet this formula cannot escape the internal problematic brought about by the investment of Scotland's alternative identities within the dialectics of improvement. To the extent that Scottishness is positioned as the Other of British modernity, a trade-off between national specificity and sophistication rears its troubling head. In the context of not only British homogenisation but also wider globalisation, it may be that activities of cultural improvement naturally align themselves away from a residual cultural identity associated with a state of unimprovement. Thus in stressing a cultural programme aimed at 'progress' and improvement, this idea of patriotism – what we shall term 'civic nationalism' – gets itself involved in a tricky opposition to residual cultural forms; an opposition that is as much a structural reflection of the dialectics of improvement as it is an issue of active North British or cosmopolitan predispositions. This mismatch between the improving manifesto of the North British intelligentsia and residual Scottish culture produces one of the period's most resonant anxieties; a conflict that we will find recurring throughout the pages of contemporary literature.

Towards an aesthetic order

The paradigmatic feasibility of a Scottish Romanticism signals the recognition of an important inter-relation between cultural and national-political ideologies. As discussed in the Introduction, from the cultural activities of Allan Ramsay

onwards, a significant strain in long-eighteenth-century literature is involved in keenly navigating the uncertain political relationships existing around Scottishness and Britishness. Tying this to the reflections on Scottish civil society in the preceding section, we can begin to formulate a notion of a body of complex yet stringently cultural discourses of national identity visible (for the purposes of the present study) from this early period. Politicised and formative, cultural discourse obtains a powerful role in the question of national definition; one that is deeply complicated by the conflicting claims of autonomous-Scottish, Anglocentric, and British identities. Wielding changing forms of cultural capital through the development of genre, the use of language and innovative aesthetic manoeuvres, writers are involved in a fascinating cultural dynamic: interpreting and suturing the 'state-less society' through their work.

Later in the century and into the early nineteenth, this dynamic is developed and given a particular inflection by sections of the Edinburgh literati. Taking on the civic notion of a polymath, improving cultural sociability as a defining process through which the national community is produced (an ideology importantly reflected in this period in the work of the second *Edinburgh Review*), writers of the *Blackwood's* circle transpose this cultural focus onto a specific kind of aesthetic discourse – replacing the primacy of a shared cultivating practice with an investment in the qualities of a particular national aesthetic. Duncan argues that:

This shift involved the displacement – bitterly contentious – of an oligarchic and republican ideal of citizenship based on civic virtue, developed by the moral philosophy of the Scottish Enlightenment and sustained by the Edinburgh reviewers, to an aesthetically based cultural nationalism promoted by the *Blackwood's* literati. (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 14)

The *Blackwood's* circle breaks from the older model of community for one which figures aesthetics as the new politico-cultural motor, importantly looking to the work of Friedrich Schiller in Germany for inspiration (*Scott's Shadow*, pp. 56-57). This epochal shift supplants a focus on collective improvement with a (more or less consciously ironic) communal investment in an understanding of Scottish nationhood as an aesthetic concern – mediated through the work (production, possession and appreciation) of canonical literature. What emerges here is a pivotal redefinition of the term 'culture' from a developmental notion of improvement, towards an aesthetic construct in which the enigmatic figure of national identity resides. This is achieved through an engagement with, and aesthetic appropriation of, culture as improvement's problematic other: residual Scottishness. In carefully implanting the materials of residual Scottishness into their aesthetic programme, the Blackwoodians manage to set up a sentimental and celebrative relationship with this material as the new basis of national cohesion.

Though Duncan narrates this phenomenon as the emergence of modern cultural nationalism, for the present study this shift represents the inflection rather than the formation of a cultural nationalist discourse, the new ideology significantly building on what we have already seen to be a culturally driven understanding of nationhood. While the term 'nationalism' (whether cultural or otherwise) may not have been available to the earlier period, this intellectual inheritance remains cogent. Put simply, if the national community is already prominently defined through forms of cultural rather than political discourse then the work of Scott (and others) is to alter the *kind* of discourse. To this end, they employ a tense ideological system that frames residual Scottishness within

an innovative aesthetic environment: that of the 'romantic nation'. Engaging with the dialectics of improvement, they exploit the pattern to premise a revised, aesthetic model of Scottishness upon the idea of unimprovement. One potential outcome of this is an answer to the stubborn relationship between Britishness and residual Scottishness, offering a strategy by which residual identities can be negotiated alongside the imperatives of the dominant British culture. Construed in a particular aesthetic manner, perhaps the antagonistic elements of residual Scottishness within Britain can be defused, while the problematic of its structural opposition to improvement is overcome, releasing it to function as a complement to the modernising imperial paradigm. This aesthetic objectification apparently turns upon a profoundly depoliticising effect, though as we will find, a tenacious polemical instability surrounds it.

Earlier in the eighteenth century, it is possible to view Robert Burns as performing a not dissimilar move in his equation of Scotland with the pastoral, or more broadly, the unimproved. As Chapter Two explores, though with quite different politics, Burns provides a noteworthy precursor to the later aestheticisation of Scottishness. He produces a model of nationhood based in the aesthetic supremacy of the unimproved, positioning himself as the champion of a national subjectivity predominantly understood through an aesthetics of 'rusticity'. Channelling existing stresses on a culturally defined national identity, Burns significantly moves this inheritance in the direction of a representative aesthetic form. Yet the ideological shift is given its definitive consummation by the *Waverley Novels*, in which Scott vividly aestheticises residual Scottishness, exploiting the ideological potential of a transcendent aesthetic space. In doing so, Scott as historical novelist brings the much-maligned material of residual

Scottishness into mainstream British culture in bestselling fashion, yet on a newly aesthetic basis. This process is nicely symbolised by Harry Bertram in *Guy Mannering*, whose recollection of a ballad (an ‘auld sang’?) is the signifier of his Scottish heritage and the clue to his ultimate, highly symbolic restoration. ‘I have forgot it all now – but I remember the tune well’, says Harry, establishing the pure aesthetic medium of melody as the emotional, quasi-mythical substance of nationhood (*Guy Mannering*, p. 248). Literally a work of art, the half-remembered ballad emblematises an aesthetic Scotland here employed in the settlement of an Anglicised British modernity. Armed with his figurative cultural inheritance, Bertram’s rightful return to privilege signals the birth of a new order, one in which the exigencies of improvement press Scottishness into an aesthetic existence.

Scott’s reconstruction of an identity politics sees an excruciating climax in 1822 with the voguish aristocratic-posturing episode known as the King’s Jaunt. George IV visited Scotland in August of that year, to engage in an extended pageant of Highlandism and Jacobitism (George to be presented as heir to the Stuart dynasty) more or less single-handedly organised by Scott.¹²¹ Newly invented tartans, highly theatrical processions and ceremonial posturing; all seemed to consummate a reconfigured, aesthetic vision of Scottishness for the British establishment. The Jaunt performs a refiguring of nationhood that Duncan reads as centred upon the city of Edinburgh, which becomes ‘a new kind of national capital – one constituted not upon politics or finance but upon

¹²¹ Murray G. H. Pittock, *The Invention of Scotland: The Stuart myth and the Scottish identity, 1638 to the present* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 88-90.

cultural production and aesthetic forms'.¹²² Alongside its prominence as a publishing centre, Edinburgh is promoted as the beautiful capital of this new kind of 'romantic nation'. Though the earlier national discourses operated importantly around cultural endeavour and the pursuit of collective refinement, now the essence of Scottishness has been transposed into a particular aesthetic mode. While mobilising an apparent refusal of the political, this manoeuvre is permeated by the political inclinations (Unionist, Tory and Moderate-Presbyterian) of Scott and his disciples. Indeed, crucial to their agenda is a desire to reject the mores of eighteenth-century Whiggism, tainted by association with the radical revolutions in America and France: it is germane that the pageant's intervention comes only two years after the Radical War of 1820.

This process can be understood as a strikingly modern kind of branding (or perhaps rebranding) manoeuvre, the efficacy of which is visible in nationalist methods the world-over. In specific political terms, Scott attempts a piece of dexterous legerdemain in appropriating some of the most problematic features of residual Scottishness and deploying them within his new cultural-nationalist paradigm. The figure of the Hanoverian George IV dressed as the returning Jacobite King stands testament to the skill and audacity of this process. Yet the aesthetic shift was not unchallenged. Chapter Three finds Hogg exploring the capacity and suitability of the new language of identity-politics, finding ways to deconstruct, question and explode it. Furthermore, if Hogg's work features a vibrant and mischievous critique, even Scott's own fiction provides an internal contestation. Though works like *Guy Mannering* helped to cement an image of an

¹²² Ian Duncan, 'Urban Space and Enlightened Romanticism', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Scottish Romanticism*, ed. by Pittock, pp. 72-83, (p. 73).

Anglocentric establishment that accessorises Scotland, still the polemical endpoint of Scott's project remains somewhat equivocal. Despite Harry Bertram's polished English speech (being the legitimate heir to an emblematic Scottish inheritance) and his family ancestry (following a significant cultural transition from the Mac-Dingawaies to the Bertrams) – alongside the patriarchal attentions of the Englishman *Mannering* – still room remains in Scott's novels for this direction to be challenged, not least by the tricky potential of the aesthetic treatment itself (*Guy Mannering*, p. 8). Once the act of aesthetic transcendence has been established and residual Scottishness has been firmly categorised as the pure substance of art, then perhaps it achieves the unstable polemical potential that art maintains, capable of moving dynamically between historicist and transcendent poles with a fluctuating rhetorical purchase. Furthermore, operating around a marked cultural irony, the new mode – what we are terming aesthetic nationalism – acts to produce a radical epistemology based around fiction and performance, one that may destabilise any cultural hierarchy it apparently invokes.

The discussion above has covered some of the most emotive territory in contemporary Scottish studies. All this should aid in contextualising the literary analysis of subsequent chapters. Over the long eighteenth century an intellectual trajectory involves the highly original and culturally driven interpretation and reinterpretation of multiple identity structures. We have established a whole series of alternative models of nationhood in operation across the period, from residual Scottishness to North Britishness, and from civic to aesthetic nationalism. While the work of Scott and others in the early nineteenth century proves a critical moment in the history of cultural nationalist discourse, this is

one step in a long trajectory of charged cultural approaches to nationhood. From the Union of 1707, Scotland provides the circumstances for a series of ideological and aesthetic events with major consequences for the modern world. Clarifying the nature of these in more specific terms, the following chapters trace more specifically how literature engaged with the task of writing Scotland.

Chapter Two – Robert Burns: Rustic Nationhood and the Manufactured Self

Robert Burns announced himself to the wider world with his 1786 volume, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*.¹²³ This edition, published in Kilmarnock, set in motion a chain of events which would see the Ayrshireman become Scotland's foremost cultural icon. Yet despite his 'chiefly' status Burns remains so often misunderstood. Perhaps indeed his very popularity has added to the confusion. Various selective and partisan readings have never quite managed comfortably to appropriate him. In fact the preface to the Kilmarnock edition itself goes some way to complicating the two main historical characterisations of Burns: those of the simple peasant poet and the defiant Scottish patriot. In the space of four short paragraphs Burns smoothly implies his depth of literary sophistication and refers to 'our nation', meaning Britain.¹²⁴ This is not to say that such notions are completely unfounded; in fact there are obvious (sometimes misleading) reasons for both. Yet they are symbolic of the way in which Burns, on closer inspection, defies two-dimensional portraiture. In addressing the way his work is involved in the foci of the present study, a careful path must be chosen through what is dangerously reductive territory.¹²⁵

The case of Burns is indicative of the historical problem of Romanticism. Both aiding and resisting the construction of a Romantic critical paradigm, he is a reminder to critics to remain flexible in our interpretations of literary history.

¹²³ Robert Burns, *Poems, Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (Kilmarnock: Wilson, 1786).

¹²⁴ Robert Burns, 'Preface to the Kilmarnock Edition' [1786], in *The Poems and Songs of Robert Burns*, ed. by James Kinsley, 3 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), III, pp. 971-972.

¹²⁵ This chapter evolves some earlier thoughts on Burns. See Gerard McKeever, 'Enlightened Fictions and the Romantic Nation: Contesting Ideological Formations of Scottish Writing over the Long Eighteenth Century', (unpublished masters thesis, University of Glasgow, 2011), pp. 96-124.

On one reading an archetypal British Romantic – with his undoubted lyrical prowess – in other respects Burns punctures such normative characterisations, not least in his linguistic identity, obviously breaking any constricted Anglo-British mould. His fluctuating reception provides an insight into the working of canonical trends. Popular in his own lifetime, then subsequently undergoing the dangerous experience of institutionalisation as Scotland's 'national bard' – with all the clumsy reductionism this has involved – Burns's legacy is often one of enthusiastic but unsophisticated celebration. If he occupies a somewhat removed (and unique) canonical space, still Burns's Romantic standing suffered by the emergence of a narrowly focussed canon over the twentieth century. However, recent scholarship has worked to re-emphasise his importance as one of the most influential and problematic poets of his era.

Burns's posthumous, iconic status within Scottish culture can encourage a dangerously ahistorical view of his work. This goes hand-in-hand with the risk of allowing the poet's adept self-characterisations to dictate our readings. In recent work both Leask and Pittock have sought to penetrate through the considerable layers of Burns mythology. Leask suggests that, 'The pastoral myth of the "Heav'n taught ploughman" has occluded Burns's proximity to [a] branch of the "rural professional class", effective executors of the social and economic transformation of late eighteenth-century rural Scotland' (*Burns and Pastoral*, p. 32). We need to see beyond such personas to address the realities faced by Burns in the social and cultural milieu of late eighteenth-century Scotland, alongside his sophisticated negotiation of literary genre, patronage structures and textual allusion. Pittock is also at pains to reveal the poet's unreliable self-presentations, his command of language and register, and the subtle dialogue

between his poetry and contemporary cultural practice (*Scottish and Irish*, pp. 144-165). The present chapter builds upon this work, tackling Burns's appropriation of intricate forms of cultural capital in his negotiation of a developing identity-politics. Well attuned to the ideological subtleties of his contemporary Scotland, and capable of both amalgamating and contrasting diverse cultural forms, Burns's work is a key link between developing cultural theory and literary practice in the period.

Returning to the alternative literary impulses we established in the Introduction, the intensity of social and political engagement in Burns can suggest that his is an especially historicist poetics. His work often powerfully aggrandises the social, running contrary to the reclusiveness (or melancholic individuality) traditionally considered synonymous with Romanticism. Indeed, the word 'social' frequently crops up as a positive adjective, asserting sociability as a morally salutary force, as when praising the men of Edinburgh with, 'Thy Sons, *Edina*, social, kind'.¹²⁶ Yet also key to Burns's poetics is the mobilisation of a discourse of socio-economic 'independence' that underpins much of his self-presentation. With the poet always keen to imply a manly self-direction, this somewhat aspirational drive shades into an aesthetic ploy. In an important sense the poetic character Burns constructs for himself is one in which literary practice is a means of transcending the material world. This is implicit in the Kilmarnock preface when he explains that his literary motivation is 'to find some kind of counterpoise to the struggles of a world, always an alien scene, a task uncouth to the poetical mind' ('Preface', [1786], p. 971). Of course this raises a doubled possibility, as such 'counterpoise' may be more of an active than an

¹²⁶ Robert Burns, 'Address to Edinburgh' [K 135, III. 17].

escapist agency – the discourse of independence a springboard into a local, national and transnational politics based in the assertion of ‘liberty’. However, as Leask has noted, there is an element here that accords with Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of ‘art for art’s sake’, cited in the Introduction to the present study (*Burns and Pastoral*, p. 93). Bourdieu’s notion is of an aesthetic ideology that de-emphasises the worldly nature of art, constructing a ‘reversed-economics’ in which artistic autonomy trumps economic success. An impulse that distances artistic production from, even opposes it to, the demands of the material world, has a salience when we consider Burns’s work, where rejections of economic necessity go beyond anti-materialism and form a strain of transcendent aesthetics, celebrating an artistic freedom from the day-to-day world. This provides a foil to the keenly historicist material that litters his work. In fact, reading his social and political focus through the lens of this ‘reversed-economics’ posturing, we can suggest that Burns constructs a poetic persona which gives him polemical authority by virtue of its own apparent universality (while it is also legible as an assertion of intellectual and moral autonomy on behalf of his social class).¹²⁷ The paradigmatic figure of ‘the Bard’ may be heroically ‘unfitted for the world’, yet especially when combined with the affective wisdom promised by his ironic ‘relish of its Pleasures’, this offers an élite perspective.¹²⁸ Accessing some higher realm, this poetic voice claims the ability to interpret the

¹²⁷ The issue of Burns’s class is a tricky one, in part as modern labels often fail to account for the social strata of late eighteenth-century Scotland. The blanket label of ‘plebeian’ underestimates his position as a struggling tenant farmer, and subsequently as a successful man of letters and excise officer. Tracing an uneven social trajectory and sensitive to his own self-consciousness, probably the most useful appellation is the contemporary notion of the ‘middling sort’ – though he undoubtedly experienced periods of serious economic hardship.

¹²⁸ Robert Burns, ‘On Fergusson’ [K 143, II. 6-7].

social and political world from a purified vantage. Applying the polemical leverage thus attained, Burns achieves devastating effects. This dynamic often complicates simple notions of spatiality and historicity, creating a poetics that appears simultaneously localised and universal, narrating its transcendence of the sphere it directly addresses.

Behind this aesthetic framework, Enlightenment stresses on a social aspect to cultural practice loom large. Too often the role of Scottish cultural theory gets lost among a focus on egalitarian politics or social disadvantage. While Burns was sensitive to the associational practice of the Scottish literary élite – not least through his reading of Smith and Reid, among others – scholarship renders increasingly visible a provincial public sphere in which the young Burns was very much involved.¹²⁹ In this ‘Ayrshire Enlightenment’, libraries, convivial clubs and Masonic Lodges formed elements of a cultural groundswell in the Scottish Lowlands.¹³⁰ This supports Towsey’s contestation that associational culture, as significantly mediated through libraries, vitally impacted on the provincial Scottish life of ‘country lairds and tenant farmers, as well as urban professionals, merchants, manufacturers and tradesmen’ (p. 294). Towsey cautions that this activity might reflect broader British trends as much as it does the influence of the Scottish literati, yet penetrating at least as far as the middling sort, an Enlightenment culture of association was a demonstrable presence in Burns’s world (p. 299). Such a context is perhaps most clearly

¹²⁹ Burns’s makes clear his familiarity with both thinkers in the verse poem, ‘Letter to James Tennant, Glenconner’ [K 90, I].

¹³⁰ Gerard Carruthers describes a ‘satellite Ayrshire Enlightenment, taking its cue from the metropolitan Scottish versions of this milieu in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen’. See Gerard Carruthers, *Robert Burns* (Tavistock: Northcote, 2006), p. 7. Leask discusses Burns’s involvement in the ‘Tarbolton Bachelor’s Club’, the ‘St James Lodge’ and the ‘Ayr Library Society’ (*Burns and Pastoral*, pp. 11-13).

flagged up in his epistolary poetry, where a communitarian aspect to literary practice is clearly and consciously invoked. Poignantly, as Leask suggests, the importance of this social context to Burns's work undermines his own anti-materialistic posturing: 'Despite the sentimentalized image of worldly incapacity, Burns's poetic self-fashioning depended on identification with the social networks of his native country as well as the new opportunities afforded him by eighteenth-century Ayrshire's provincial enlightenment' (*Burns and Pastoral*, p. 84).¹³¹ Utilising developing social formations, Burns's poetic persona is as much a product of the possibilities of his proximate community as it is an invention of an ideology of aesthetic autonomy.

The present chapter steers a course between Burns's aesthetics and his treatment of nationhood, suggesting clearly defined and productive links between the two. Burns's poetics are structured around a vivid engagement with forms of residual Scottishness. In his impassioned defence of the Scots language and elsewhere, he provides a key counter-hegemonic voice. Crucially, however, this is nuanced by his investment in some of the dominant characterisations of such culture, particularly with regard to Scottishness as 'unimprovement'. Appropriating and re-constituting its attitudes, Burns can be seen turning the weapons of Anglicisation against itself. This is centred upon an aggrandisement of the 'rustic', as he studiously mobilises a national aesthetic formula, drawing on his self-proclaimed class identity. The previous chapter saw discourses of an improving civic nationalism emphasising patriotic cultural

¹³¹ Likewise Butler notes the importance of this local culture on Burns's work. See Marilyn Butler, 'Burns and Politics', in *Robert Burns and Cultural Authority*, ed. by Robert Crawford (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1997), pp. 86-112, (p. 105).

activity in the work of national self-definition. Burns develops this stress and produces a model of a cultural nationhood that importantly locates Scottishness in the aesthetic supremacy of the unimproved, bringing the logic of his 'reversed-economics' to bear. The poet is himself positioned as a pastoral spokesman for, and vital emblem of, this formation. Yet, despite this emphasis on a framework of Scottish nationhood, it is often Burns's subtle negotiation between disparate cultural forms that is most resonant. Posthumously appropriated as the figurehead for a potentially Anglophobic version of Scottishness, the poet's own navigation of conflicting structures is rarely so obtuse.

The chapter begins by addressing Burns's poetic self-fashioning, largely via the prefatory material to his two major publications, tracing his construction of an ideologically effective persona. This is followed by reflections on the cultural vogue for primitivism that Burns is drawing on in this manoeuvre, shedding light on its broader political resonances. The importance of his sophisticated approach to language is then addressed in the first 'Epistle to J. Lapraik', identifying his nuanced control of rustic cultural capital. Subsequently we see him wielding the polemical weight of his authorial persona in 'The Author's Cry and Prayer' [K 81] and 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' [K 72]. A discussion of his antiquarian role expands the frame, investigating the politics of 'collection' in a developing treatment of national culture. This leads into an extended analysis of 'Tam o' Shanter' [K 321], that work providing a final case-study that exemplifies Burns's subtle negotiation of national-cultural forms.

Towards the national bardship

Burns's self-fashioning is a crucial element in his approach to nationhood. As suggested above, he plays a coy game in constructing a literary persona, his

primitive guise a carefully manufactured facade. The prefatory material to both the Kilmarnock and Edinburgh editions of his works give us an insight into his subtle understanding of both literary vogue and class politics. The dominant feature of this self-representation is immediately established in the epigraph to the Kilmarnock volume:

The Simple Bard, unbroke by rules of Art,
He pours the wild effusions of the heart:
And if inspir'd, 'tis Nature's pow'rs inspire;
Her's all the melting thrill, and her's the kindling fire.¹³²

The stress here is on 'natural' poetic talents stemming from an intimacy with Nature, rather than a refined scholarly approach. Alongside and despite his manifest sophistication, this idea would become central to the nineteenth-century figure of Burns, popularised early on by Henry Mackenzie in his *Lounger* review and encouraged – if complicated – by James Currie in his edited works of the poet.¹³³ With these short lines the poet introduces himself as a model autodidact, with a narrative appeal that many readers have found overpoweringly attractive. The assertion that he is 'unbroke' by literary erudition (completely unsustainable against the knowing allusions and careful

¹³² Robert Burns, 'Epigraph to the Kilmarnock Edition' [1786], in *The Poems and Songs*, ed. by Kinsley, III, p. 970.

¹³³ See Henry Mackenzie, 'Unsigned Essay in *The Lounger*, 9 December 1786', in *Robert Burns: The Critical Heritage*, ed. by Donald A. Low (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1974), pp. 67-71; and James Currie, *The works of Robert Burns; with an account of his life, and a criticism on his writings. To which are prefixed some observations on the character and condition of the Scottish peasantry*, ed. by James Currie, 4 vols (Liverpool, 1800). Marilyn Butler disagrees with this interpretation of Mackenzie's label, claiming that, 'The adjective [heaven-taught] had a special significance at the time: it conveyed the rationalist and intrinsically democratic precept that right reason was universally available (without of course implying, as some modern commentators appear to think, that Burns was uneducated)' ('Burns and Politics', p. 90). Certainly the opinion that Burns was fully 'uneducated' could only have been held by the most rigidly uninformed. Nonetheless, perhaps Butler goes too far in outright denying what seems to have been a powerful element in the mix.

use of genre in the poetry) seems to bear a double-meaning, hinting that a more sophisticated poet would not only be 'broken-in' but actually 'broken' – implying the precedence of the 'Simple' condition. While the idea of simplicity as a poetic benefit would receive its most celebrated Romantic iteration later in Wordsworth's Preface to *Lyrical Ballads*, in this context it carries explicitly national-political implications, as we will see.¹³⁴ This characteristic approach, abjuring scholarly knowledge and faux-humbly attributing any genius in his work to the bardic mediation of Nature, is part of a highly conscious strategy with which Burns plays on reader expectations. Leask explains how the epigraph mounts a double-appeal to contemporary literary vogue: 'Burns astutely played to the taste for poetic primitivism in the epigraph to the Kilmarnock volume, tactically dropping Scots (despite the volume's title *Poems Chiefly in the Scottish Dialect*) for the fashionable idiom of sensibility' (*Burns and Pastoral*, pp. 3-4). In a measured ploy, the primitivist element here is balanced by the use of polished Standard English – allowing Burns to exploit this primitive appeal but on terms accessible to a polite readership. The two couplets of the epigraph hit upon both the fashion for primitivism in their content and the popular 'idiom of sensibility' in their language; displaying Burns's market-savvy self-publishing. Crucially for his poetics, the primitive persona also provides Burns with a form of aesthetic *carte blanche* to mount otherwise risky polemical attacks, hiding behind a mask of unsophistication.

Much the same negotiation of these positions is sustained in the Kilmarnock Preface. Burns characterises his poetic endeavour thus:

¹³⁴ William Wordsworth, 'Preface' [1802], in *Lyrical Ballads*, ed. by Mason, pp. 56-87.

THE following trifles are not the production of the Poet, who, with all the advantages of learned art, and perhaps amid the elegancies and idlenesses of upper life, looks down for a rural theme, with an eye to Theocrites or Virgil [...] Unacquainted with the necessary requisites for commencing Poet by rule, he sings the sentiments and manners, he felt and saw in himself and his rustic compeers around him, in his and their native language. ('Preface', [1786], p. 971)

Again he claims a lack of literary education, undercut by the obvious allusion to – through disavowal of – classical example. Here the emphasis is firmly on the language of the volume, supposedly in the 'native' tongue spoken among his 'rustic compeers'; offered as the vehicle for a true representation of rural life. Of course the poetry of the Kilmarnock volume actually moves between English and Scots, and through a number of literary registers therein, with varying levels of authenticity regarding Burns's 'native' Ayrshire language. Again we find him shrouding a complex literary scheme in the trappings of a fashionable project. Yet the insistence on using the Scots tongue – and indeed the implication in this prefatory material (and in much of the poetry) that it aids the production of better, more emotionally authentic poetry – becomes a distinctly geopolitical inflection of the pastoral mode. Aggrandising the simple or the rustic here takes on both a regional and national shading. The emphasis on a natural condition is key, as Burns promotes the Scots medium of his work as providing a sociological insight into rustic life, a rustic life which is simultaneously Ayrshire, Scottish and by the logic of pastoral, socially pure.

By the following year, with the publication of the Edinburgh edition, Burns's message has developed. Here we see him mobilising a knowingly obsequious patriot discourse in a quest for lucrative patronage. Raising the stakes, in the Edinburgh dedication Burns directly appeals to the Caledonian

Hunt.¹³⁵ The following passage exhibits this approach in full flow:

I come to claim the common Scottish name with you, my illustrious Countrymen; and to tell the world that I glory in the title. — I come to congratulate my Country, that the blood of her ancient heroes still runs uncontaminated; and that from your courage, knowledge, and public spirit, she may expect protection, wealth, and liberty.

Invoking Scotland's 'ancient heroes' in order to 'congratulate' the members of the Hunt, this is a bold and emotive tactic. The claim that Burns 'glor[ies] in the title' of Scotsman reads as something of riposte here, suggesting that this identity might sometimes be considered by 'the world' as less than 'glorified'. In this overdone gesture towards the Scottish landed gentry, Burns is rejecting any shame 'North-Britons' might attach to their provincial status. The apparent betrayal of his egalitarian values in an appeal to 'the illustrious Names of his native Land' is surely balanced here, to a degree, by his intention to 'claim the common Scottish name' with them. He is keen to avoid the taint of a 'venal soul', insisting, 'I was bred to the Plough, and am independent'.¹³⁶ Any support the poet might receive from noble benefactors is framed rather as the impersonal defence of Scotland itself, the 'protection' of the national spirit he claims to represent. Moreover, despite the strong aroma of flattery, the poet is still careful to place himself more or less among the stellar ranks of the Hunt. A shared national pride reaches towards overwriting the obvious class differential between Burns and these noblemen, both living proof of an 'uncontaminated'

¹³⁵ 'An association of noblemen and country gentlemen who shared a common interest in field sports, races, balls and social assemblies.' See the entry on 'the Caledonian Hunt' in *The Burns Encyclopedia*, ed. by Maurice Lindsay, 3rd edn (London: Hale, 1980), p. 62.

¹³⁶ Robert Burns, 'Dedication: To the Noblemen and Gentlemen of the Caledonian Hunt' [1787], in *The Poems and Songs*, ed. by Kinsley, III, pp. 977-978.

heritage.¹³⁷

Significantly, it is the original identification in the Kilmarnock preface with a natural, rural Scotland that provides the framework upon which Burns mounts this grander appeal. Indeed, the stress on his natural poetic condition is continued into the Edinburgh dedication. It is his 'wild, artless notes' that underpin this call for patronage. Burns suggests that there is an obvious logic in this appeal to the grand names of Scotland, given that his poetry is a pure distillation of a Scottish rural life, inspired by what he calls 'The Poetic Genius of my Country' ('Dedication', [1787], p. 977). The visible development between the Kilmarnock and Edinburgh prefaces nicely exhibits the crucial ideological strategy in Burns's self-fashioning: establishing his bardic roots in a natural, local base that validates the subsequent projection towards a larger representational role.¹³⁸ This canny navigation of the contemporary cultural field is a vital element of Burns's career, striking in its calculated execution. By establishing this effective poetic persona and delivering it into a progressively broader section of the Scottish public sphere, he carefully achieves the remarkable literary trajectory which has so often been misrepresented or simply wondered at. Far from being an example of 'heaven-taught' fortune, the pitching of this

¹³⁷ Kinsley notes that Burns is mirroring an earlier dedication by Ramsay to the Duke of Hamilton and the Royal Company of Archers. See Burns, *The Poems and Songs*, ed. by Kinsley, III, pp. 982-983. The legacy thus evoked itself underpins the patriotic gesture.

¹³⁸ The transition from a 'local' to a 'national' self-characterisation in the interlude between the Kilmarnock and Edinburgh volumes is noticed by a number of commentators, including Gerard Carruthers and Richard Sher. See Gerard Carruthers, 'Introduction', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Burns*, ed. by Gerard Carruthers (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), pp. 1-5, (p. 3-4); and Richard Sher, *The Enlightenment and the Book: Scottish Authors and their Publishers in Eighteenth-Century Britain, Ireland and America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 231.

rural identity is played out across this early self-exposure. Formulating a powerful manifesto that mobilises (and indeed defends) a modest class identity as part of an aesthetic reading of the national subjectivity, Burns mounts a sustained penetration of the contemporary marketplace.

This strategic projection from the local and the natural to the national is a tactic that we can also see in action in 'The Vision' [K 62]. The bid for national bardic status enacted in the Edinburgh dedication through the poet's Scottish muse, who he writes 'bade me sing the loves, the joys, the rural scenes and rural pleasures of my natal Soil, in my native tongue', is in 'The Vision' explicitly an outcome of his regional standing ('Dedication', [1787], p. 978). As is consistently the case, the claim on simplicity is again ironically undercut here. Suggesting complex literary resonances for the poem, including nods to Macpherson, Ramsay and James Thomson, Carruthers comments that, 'Curiously, it is in this most highly synthetic context for a poem that Burns performs his most self-conscious act of identification as a "simple bard"'; once again revealing a persistent doubling of frames (*Robert Burns*, p. 16). Appropriating simplicity in the same moment as confirming complexity, he almost seems to make the juxtaposition intentionally explicit.

The poem finds an exasperated Burns depressed with his wasted youth, which has been spent 'stringing blethers up in rhyme | For fools to sing' [K 62, IV. 23-4]. This prompts the appearance of 'Coila', Ayrshire's 'native Muse' to encourage the poet [K 62, XXIV. 140]. Initially there appears a strong element of class deference here, as Coila is allocated to Burns because she is of the 'lower Order' of Muse, thus engaging with 'The humbler ranks of Human-kind' [K 62, XXX. 175-176]. This humility is also tied to the regional location of both Burns

and Coila, representatives of rural Ayrshire. Yet this lowly station proves nonetheless capable of delivering a route into the grander territory of Scottish patriot history. This mobility is represented in the device of Coila's mantle – 'Her *Mantle* large, of greenish hue,' – an enchanted crown, the symbolic tool of Burns's figured trajectory [K 62, XII. 67]. The mantle provides a kind of cinematic insight into the echelons of Scottish patriot glory, but one importantly beginning in the rustic Ayrshire domain. Images of the Doon river and the local towns of Irvine and Ayr expand visually into a panorama of Scotland. The nation's status as the sum of such parts is emphasised to legitimise a projection from the regional to the national – an ability that is finally gifted to the poet himself in the form of the mantle [K 62, XXXXVI]. As Leask states, "The device of Coila's mantle embodies Burns's claims as a "rustic poet" to both inhabit and transcend his "humble sphere", via his regional self-identification as a poet of Ayrshire first, and of Scotland second' (*Burns and Pastoral*, p. 106). The power represented by the crown, now possessed by Burns, is a daring statement of intent, signalling his national goal and laying out the terms of its achievement.

Throughout the poem, this trajectory has been mirrored by the use of changing class rhetoric. In the final stanzas the previous indications of deference give way to a discourse of egalitarianism, as Burns talks of the 'UNIVERSAL PLAN' [K 62, XXXXV. 269]. This change in social attitude goes hand in hand with a shift in aesthetic valuations, as Coila commends Burns's poetic practice:

And trust me, not *Potosi's mine*,
 Nor *King's regard*,
 Can give a bliss o'ermatching thine,
 A rustic Bard. [K 62, XXXXIV. 261-264]

Far gone is the earlier mood in which a rustic aesthetic appeared to be merely a

distracting plaything, a trivial dalliance. Burns's 'humble' poetics are now equal (or even preferable) to the agency of wealth and power, as his pastoral cultural capital suddenly explodes in value. Coila's advice, 'Strive in thy *humble sphere* to shine', is given a typically Burnsian twist, now in fact an encouragement towards unqualified glory [K 62, XXXXIV. 260]. Though the early successes of his work garnered the poet literal as well as cultural capital, the statement here is of a rustic artistry, counterpointed to worldly glory and standing proud. The political accompaniment to this dynamic gives it an added polemical weight, as the aggrandisement of a rustic aesthetic rides on the back of the turn to human equality; simplicity and the common man elevated in the same breath.

Connecting his pastoral inversion with a democratic politics, Burns makes a Rousseauian link between egalitarianism and a state of 'nature' that is found throughout his canon – most famously in 'To a Mouse' with its reflections on the fragile condition of 'Nature's social union' [K 69, II. 8] – implying the natural logic of the statement, both aesthetic and political. In a performance completed by the subsequent addition of stanzas that concentrate on the Edinburgh gentry, Burns enacts in poetic form the ideological strategy established by his prefatory material. Drawing on a vogue for the pastoral, he creates a fashionable persona that he can project from its local setting into the national sphere. Despite the occasional downplaying of the rustic, it is the claim on natural power that ends up underpinning his ascendancy, purporting to channel an authentic simplicity that is at once intensely localised and at the heart of the national subjectivity.

Pretending towards social deference, Burns pulls the rug away in both social and aesthetic terms, as his 'reversed-economics' makes its full force felt.

Cultural syntheses: mobilising the primitive

Burns's self-fashioning is consciously drawing on a particular literary and cultural vogue for primitivism. Engaging briefly with the political resonances of this cultural trend should help to tease out the significance of such a move on his part. The publications of James Macpherson's Ossian poetry in the 1760s can be seen invigorating a tradition reaching back significantly to the popularity of Ramsay, in particular *The Gentle Shepherd*. In political terms there is a general critical consensus that the quelling of the Jacobite rebellion at mid-century facilitated the mainstream popularity of a bardic, Celtic primitivism. Perhaps, with the immediate political threat of the domestic Other suitably muted, Celtic culture could now be enjoyed as an absorbing curiosity.¹³⁹ Obviously the Lowland emphasis of Burns's poetry gives something of a different slant to his work, yet the wider cultural milieu in which Ossian was such a potent force can be nonetheless felt. Indeed, given the popularity of Macpherson across Europe and the resulting explosion in primitivist research, publishing and tourism, a Scot publishing supposedly autodidactic literature in the 1780s must necessarily be contextualised thus – even regardless of Burns's avowed passion for the Ossian poetry.¹⁴⁰

Sketching out a broader background to Burns's primitivist work, Duncan Macmillan expands a familiar literary lineage (featuring names like Ramsay,

¹³⁹ Pittock makes this argument in *Celtic*, p. 36. Trumpener goes even further, suggesting that Ossianism provided 'reassurance [...] of the obsolescence of Highland clan culture' (p. 8). As with Scott, however, such readings must remain in tension – perhaps Macpherson is merely realistic about the devastation of his beloved Highlands, while the elegiac mode itself brings a volatile politics to bear.

¹⁴⁰ Burns describes Ossian as 'prince of Poets' in a letter. See Robert Burns, 'To Mrs. Agnes McLehose, 18th March 1788', in *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. by De Lancey Ferguson, I, pp. 264-265, (p. 265).

Macpherson and Fergusson) into the artistic sphere, focussing in particular on David Allan, whom the later Burns would work with in his song collecting for George Thomson. Macmillan cites the poet expressing creative kindred with Allan, who trained at the prestigious Foulis Academy in Glasgow, and successfully locates the two men within a cross-disciplinary primitivist-pastoral vogue across the period.¹⁴¹ Again the 'Heav'n taught ploughman' emerges as a historically attuned position. With Burns variously describing Allan as a 'brother brush' and commenting that, 'He is the *only* artist who has hit *genuine* Pastoral costume', a consciousness of belonging to a vibrant cultural wave materialises. Discussing the invention of his personal Heraldic arms, Burns discards the 'nonsense of Painters of Arcadia' in favour of the style in which Allan has represented a shepherd's accoutrements in his illustrations for *The Gentle Shepherd*.¹⁴² Here we find Burns distancing his personal brand of pastoral from an overtly idealised method he rejects as saccharine, allowing us an insight into the careful self-awareness of his pastoral career. Burns's intelligent representations, even when they are of a very high order – and perhaps even bearing upon realism – should not be misconstrued as naïve self-revelation.

In context, this primitivist background underpins Burns's characteristic elevation of the rustic. As we have seen this message is consistently nuanced to have specifically Scottish implications. His poetry is punctuated with the message of simplicity's pre-eminence, captured in the famous line: 'The *Cottage* leaves the *Palace* far behind' [K 72, XIX. 168]. Burns's cottages, however, are so

¹⁴¹ Duncan Macmillan, *Painting in Scotland: The Golden Age* (Oxford: Phaidon Press, 1986), pp. 63-73.

¹⁴² Robert Burns, 'To Alexander Cunningham, 3rd March 1794', in *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. by De Lancey Ferguson, II, pp. 284-287, (pp. 285-286).

often noisy with a residual Scots culture, while the rafters of the palace ring with gentrified and lifeless metropolitan norms. It is worth mentioning that this determined association of Scottishness with pastoral themes invokes a knotty potentiality: capable of locking its subject matter in an idealised halcyon past. As Janet Sorensen states, 'Popular characterizations of the Scots as pastoral, virtuous, and simple confined them to a golden age long superseded by a developing Britain.' Such a possibility should be kept in view, albeit in Burns this seems largely negated by the tangible urgency and polemical mettle of his use of Scottishness. It is also important for us to note that Scots-language writing is not necessarily or inherently primitivist in any respect; indeed to view it as so would be to buy into a set of dangerous cultural assumptions. Yet in Burns's poetics so often the celebration of residual cultural forms is achieved via the logic and terminology of such discourse. This reflects more than just a personal inclination – if Burns's application of the pastoral to issues of national character is bold and innovative, still it is building upon a healthy tradition of Scottish pastoral. Indeed, by the time of Burns the sweeping characterisation of a rustic aesthetic (associated with balladry) under either the vague appellation of 'Northern' or specifically that of 'Scotch' was a well-established trope.¹⁴³

Burns plays the primitivist game expertly but he is also well attuned to the cultural mores of the improving hegemony, and balances these in his creation of a poetic persona. Of course, for all his mobilisation and embodiment of the unimproved, we must remember the complexity of the poet's politics, nicely borne out in his declared affinity with the modernising Moderates on

¹⁴³ See Janet Sorensen, 'Alternative Antiquarianisms of Scotland and the North', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 70 (2009), 415-441, (p. 423).

religious issues.¹⁴⁴ Robert Crawford identifies a dualistic capacity in Burns, an ability to maintain and negotiate multiple ideological appeals. He describes Burns as a 'cultural broker' for this facility. 'Brokering' between a residual South-West Scottish culture and the discourses of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres emanating from Scotland's ancient universities, Burns formulates an impressive synthesis of disparate eighteenth-century phenomena:

He drew on, and negotiated between, the Scots folk-culture of his family and background, and the officially dominant Anglicized culture of his formal education and of most of the metropolitan values with which he came into contact. He moved between the plough and Hugh Blair. (*Devolving*, pp. 88-89)

Cultural syntheses are apparent throughout his works, signalled by the vibrant layering of literary sophistication and apparent simplicity, combined with the poet's impressive ability to perform multiple switches in register within individual poems. While demonstrating an expansive awareness of the cultural field, this element is also integral to the quality of his work. Indeed, it is often his heteroglossic fluidity that gives Burns his dynamic control over pacing, responsible for the way his poetry lends itself so naturally to oral performance.

An important intersection between the axes of primitivism and cultivation in this system of cultural brokering is found with the label of 'Scotch bard', providing an attractive means for Burns to package his figuring of residual Scottishness. Robert Crawford explains the contemporary significance of the term 'bard' among the Anglicising literati:

¹⁴⁴ This position is nicely reflected in the sarcastic onslaught of 'The Holy Tulzie' [K 52]. There the Evangelical Presbyterian desire for presbyteries to elect their ministers is described with, 'And get the Brutes the power themsels | To chuse their Herds', a striking use of pastoral imagery in the service of the Moderates' patronage agenda [K 52, XV. 89-90]. For a neat discussion of the patronage dispute and the Moderates more generally see Chitnis, pp. 38-45.

It was a term fashionable in the 'high' culture of men like Blair, whose preferred language was decorous formal English. For that culture to recognize a contemporary bard who used Scots was double-edged. On the one hand, it constituted an acknowledgement that Scots, the vestiges of which the teaching of Rhetoric and Belles Lettres was designed to eradicate from polite society, might still have some worth. On the other hand, it served to categorize Burns rather patronizingly as a belated primitive curiosity. (*Devolving*, p. 95)

This tension is one Burns appears to be sensitive to and indeed exploits to his own advantage. In the prefatory material above we saw the poet acting the part of the 'primitive curiosity'. Yet any suggestion of inferiority was revealed as only a temporary posture to be used then cast off, Burns reversing the power-balance at will. The same pattern shines through in his appropriation of the term 'Scotch bard'. Laying claim to an identity that had patronising inferences in the mouths of the élite, Burns attaches to it a soaring prestige. Thus we end up with the statement, 'The appellation of, a Scotch Bard, is by far my highest pride; to continue to deserve it is my most exalted ambition.'¹⁴⁵ The character of a 'Scotch bard', then, is only as lofty as Burns's own 'exalted ambition' – hardly much of a qualification. Accessing the hegemonic discourses of the Edinburgh literati, tapping into their interest in bardic culture, he severs the pejorative undertones from this label. In combination with his wider cultural strategy, the very suggestion of the primitive is active in placing this bardic identity on a level, if not even above, the polished cultivation of metropolitan norms. Reversing the dominant logic of Anglicisation, employing and reconstituting its own patronising terminology, the 'Burns brand' offers a revalued Scots culture back to the polite mainstream in his swaggering construction of a literary persona. A consummate showman – who was apparently in fact keen on displaying his

¹⁴⁵ Robert Burns, 'To Mrs Dunlop of Dunlop, 22nd March 1787', in *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. by De Lancey Ferguson, I, pp. 100-102, (p. 101).

unusual physical strength – Burns so often appears completely at ease in his conscious negotiation of the tricky terrain of eighteenth-century cultural politics, displaying a facility in cross-cultural ‘brokering’ rarely matched in any tradition.¹⁴⁶

‘My natal Soil, in my native tongue’: language and the rustic

As has become apparent, much of Burns’s literary ideology is based in his navigation of a contested and hybrid linguistic field. We should not underestimate just how significant such choices are in writing of this period (perhaps any period), so often themselves the medium of political contention. Certainly Burns’s celebrated heteroglossia is rich in signification. ‘Holy Willie’s Prayer’ [K 53] provides a quintessential example of this, as the poet dexterously flits between poses, impersonating and ridiculing his subject by turns, moving in and out of the hypocrite Minister’s first-person narrative. ‘O THOU that in the heavens does dwell!’, opens the work, immediately sending up Willie’s overblown religious pomposity. Attacking his parishioners, Burns’s subtle prose is able to turn the focus back onto the Minister himself. The sonorous material is interspersed with the more colloquial admissions of the self-righteous Willie – ‘At times I’m fash’d wi’ fleshly lust;’ – the familiarity of Scots perfectly communicating a barefaced attempt to downplay and excuse his own transgressions [K 53, I. 1 & VII. 38]. As the poet switches between registers (or languages) mid-verse, so often we find this element dictating not only the dynamic pacing of his work but also its polemical outlook. In broader terms,

¹⁴⁶ ‘He was of great physical strength, and proud too of displaying it; and I have seen him lift a load with ease which few ordinary men would have willingly undertaken.’ See Allan Cunningham, ‘Robert Burns and Lord Byron’, *London Magazine*, 10 (August, 1824), 117-122, (p. 117).

Pittock is correct to remind us that, given the poet's sophistication, we need to remain attuned to the use of Scots as a choice, 'a poetic option for him, not an educational certainty' (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 147). As we saw earlier, both Pittock and Robert Crawford take the broader view that the *balancing* of Scots and English in his poetry is crucial, a kind of linguistic levelling which, given the disparate power-values of the two languages, is a charged statement. Often however, this re-evaluation goes further than levelling, actually placing Scots (and the culture for which it becomes synecdochical in this poetry) on a superior footing, by way of the kind of logic explored above.

An illustration of this is found in the first 'Epistle to J. Lapraik, An Old Scotch Bard'. Note again the use of the term 'Scotch Bard', particularly significant in a work that has as its primary function a panegyric on a Scots-language poetic tradition. Burns's use of the title – his 'highest ambition' – is here contextualised in a literary tradition stretching back to Ramsay and the immediate post-Union period. This simultaneously underwrites the term with a historical lineage, while also imbuing that lineage with the honour that the poet attaches to the label. 'Lapraik' is also of course a strong example of Burns's epistolary mode, the associational element to which has been touched upon earlier. Writing to a fellow 'Scotch Bard', Burns places his literary ambition in the context of an 'imagined community' consisting of fellow Scots-language practitioners, living and dead. The localised public sphere presented by the 'Ayrshire Enlightenment' is invoked here, as a subordinate element within a larger community, with Burns figuring a select group of brother bards into whose ranks he faux-humbly introduces himself.

Burns vociferously celebrates the language and the historical figures of

Scots poetry in 'Lapraik'; an apposite mood in addressing a fellow-practitioner. This self-congratulating camaraderie is, significantly, all couched in the broad aesthetic context established above: Burns's characteristic primitivist-pastoral reversal of power structures. The well-known lines, 'Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire, | That's a' the learning I desire', touch the same note of unlearned 'rusticity' found in the prefatory material, presented here not as a modest necessity but an advantageous situation. Claiming to want no formal literary education, instead the poet trusts in the power of Nature, this inspirational 'fire' invoking a formidable, even aggressive alternative to polite training – the descent of a kind of rustic Holy Spirit, channelled through the appropriate vessel of the Ayrshireman [K 57, XIII. 73-74]. Burns uses the address to another 'Scotch Bard' to train his sights on the academic establishment, producing a mocking critique of educational sophistication, as opposed to this natural 'spark':

What's a' your jargon o' your Schools,
 Your Latin names for horns an' stools;
 If honest Nature made you *fools*,
 What sairs your Grammars?
 Ye'd better taen up *spades* and *shools*,
 Or *knappin-hammers*. [K 57, XI. 61-66]

Moving beyond a celebration of rusticity, Burns attacks what he suggests is a culture of wasted and impotent erudition. While the conditionality of the significant 'If' allows for the possibility of such learning having an application (in the hands of others than '*fools*'), the sneering energy of the verse pulls towards outright dismissal. A double-sense is cleverly mounted here, suggesting that those unfit for literary pursuits might be better suited to manual labour, but also that taxing physical work could help in the production of better literature. Once again rustic experience emerges as a fundamental requirement for the poetry

that Burns celebrates. The assertion that sophistication (located here in the knowledge of Latin) can only offer an excess, useless vocabulary is juxtaposed against the authentic insight to be gained from hard work.¹⁴⁷ There is also a particular political implication here, resonating with concerns over the effects of the division of labour like those we saw earlier in Adam Ferguson: 'sophistication' reads as a feminised notion of both physical and aesthetic weakness that the poet mockingly rejects.

The fourteenth stanza locates the aggrandisement of aesthetic rusticity within a Scots tradition, sketching a succession of Scottish poets as a kind of hall of fame towards which Burns aspires:

O for a spunk o' ALLAN's glee,
Or FERGUSON's, the bauld an' slee,
Or bright L[APRAI]K's, my friend to be,
If I can hit it!
That would be *lear* enough for me,
If I could get it. [K 57, XIV. 79-84]

While the suggestion of any limit on Burns's ambition rings somewhat falsely, in trumpeting this inheritance from Ramsay through to himself he again nationalises the recommended aesthetic mode. Contextualised within a nationally-inflected assertion of rustic superiority, this celebration of a Scots-language tradition moves beyond a patriotic desire to be considered alongside his domestic literary heroes and daringly posits a control of Scots as a key element in the production of outstanding literature. The sustained attack on erudition (admittedly playful and patently misleading) envisages a divide, with

¹⁴⁷ This attitude can be framed against a common eighteenth-century suspicion of classical education as an impractical and even counter-productive pursuit (albeit again we need to remember Burns's duplicity). For a discussion of shifting stresses in the curriculum and other developments in Scottish education, see Withrington, 'Education and Society in the Eighteenth Century', pp. 169-199.

Burns and his fellow bards set against their 'learned foes', whom he sarcastically asserts 'may be wrang' to doubt the value of uneducated writing [K 57, X. 59 & 60]. A '*Rhymer*', as Burns characterises himself, the power of this literary persona is an explicitly physicalised one, the ability to 'touch the heart' [K 57, IX. 50 & XIII. 77]. 'Rhyming' is moving, genuine and aesthetically robust, while polite literary production is decorative and vacuous. It is almost tempting to infer an environmental determinist angle in this context, the very Scottishness (and thus 'Northernness') of this literary production key to its physicalised hardiness. Such a move may indeed be less speculative than it immediately appears, given contemporary notions of the physical effects of 'Northern' language, with its increased level of guttural and rasping consonance (See Fielding, *Fictions of Geography*, pp. 60-61).

This association of Scottishness and the Scots language with a rugged aesthetic supremacy crops up again and again in Burns. We can see the same ideas in operation in a very different context in the well-known 'To a Haggis' [K 136]. There it is once again the simple, rustic delights of Scottishness that rise above more polished cultural forms. It is the 'honest, sonsie face' of Scotland's representative member of the 'Puddin-race' that places it 'Aboon them a" [K 136, I. 1-3]. The steaming insides of the Haggis – 'Warm-reekin, rich!' – seem an appropriate symbol for the pastoral character Burns is trying to attach to his country, the natural subject matter of a '*Rhymer*' [K 136, III. 18]. While in 'Lapraik' Scottishness emerges triumphant against the efforts of 'learned foes', here we find the national dish conquering a litany of continental delicacies,

'French *ragout*', '*olio*' and '*fricasse*' [K 136, V. 25-27].¹⁴⁸ While it is 'the Rustic' who is '*haggis-fed*', again the class distinction fades into an assertion of national character; it is 'Scotland' who 'wants nae skinking ware' [K 136, VIII. 45]. Again we find Burns taking the notion of Scotland as unimprovement and using it as the platform upon which to promote the relevance and vitality of residual culture.

To say that a straightforward acclamation of the Scots language and its residual cultural basis is the totality of Burns's linguistic politics would be misleading. His frequent use of Standard English clearly undermines such a simplistic view. Indeed, the absence of this parallel stylistic from many interpretations of Burns is an embarrassing necessity, undermining as it is to attempts to pigeonhole his work within a Scottish patriotic frame. Yet in material such as 'Lapraik', and indeed 'To a Haggis', we can see the fascinating linguistic underpinning to Burns's aesthetic defence of the rustic. Powerfully advocating the continued use and contemporary relevance of the Scots language, as part of the larger value of a Scottish tradition, Burns deploys the pastoral logic established from the very first lines of the Kilmarnock Epigraph. In 'Lapraik', this is resonantly configured within a social context, as he narrates a healthy and continuing tradition of bardic excellence that represents and dignifies the nation: the assertion of aesthetic supremacy as confident as it is localised.

A poetics of politics

Moving on to two very different approaches to Scottish identity politics, in 'The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer' and 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' we can see

¹⁴⁸ Note similarities with the use of untamed Scottishness we saw in Cunningham earlier, such assertions having also been expedient to a militaristic imperialism.

the poet exercising the scope of his adopted national bard status. Having gone to considerable lengths to establish the terms upon which his figuring of Scotland is to be based, and his own prominent role within this, these works find Burns now exploring the polemical leverage thus attained. In the 'Cry and Prayer', he raises his head above the political parapet, directly addressing Scotland's Westminster delegation, as laid out in the full title, 'The Author's Earnest Cry and Prayer, to the Right Honorable and Honorable, the Scotch Representatives in the House of Commons'. Such a move signals not only the historically attuned and politically forward tone here, but is indicative of the broader literary possibilities of the period (while it also indicates the limits on a 'civil society' reading of Scotland at this period). Poetry as protest or political satire: these are for Burns artistic options, ones that the anti-Jacobin backlash at the end of the century would render far less acceptable. Figuring himself as the spokesman for the indignant Scottish people, Burns tackles a resonant controversy over alcohol taxation, candidly protesting government policy. Challenging the authorities over their increase in the whisky tax – with whisky's symbolic role for Scottish society perhaps more critical here than its economic one – imminent retribution is aggressively threatened.¹⁴⁹ This tax-hike was particularly offensive as it appeared to betray the terms of the 1707 Union. Indeed, when addressing the subject in his 'John Barleycorn' letter, Burns refers to the situation as an 'insidious' disloyalty to the terms of the Union on the part of some 'powerful

¹⁴⁹ It is worth mentioning Butler's point that, 'By the time the poem appeared in 1786, other protests from Scotland had secured a new Distilleries Act more to Scottish liking.' Thus she claims that, 'A poem already essentially light-hearted and familiar has lost any appearance of threat that it may have had', though this may undervalue the serious undercurrent in the work, asserting a determined political will ('Burns and Politics', p. 93).

between the pastoral, himself and Scotland, he can now effortlessly draw on this associative web. Indeed, the premise has been established so successfully that there is an ease, an almost natural logic to the process, as Burns's rustic persona speaks out for the broader national-cultural base. An emanation and champion of the true Scottish character, the poet has an incontrovertible authority, while any suggestion of impertinence is muted by his vulgar trappings. Both national spokesman and beneath noble retribution, the bard is here able to have the best of both worlds.

Employing the characteristically Burnsian identification of Scottishness with alcohol – in particular whisky – the poem culminates with the toast, 'FREEDOM and WHISKY gang thegither, | Tak aff your whitter' [K 81, XXXI. 185-186]. This final couplet links together Scotland's cultural and politico-economic freedom, in one sense in fact figuring Scotland *as* freedom. The significance of the latter move will become further apparent below. Yet while reinforcing the centrality of the consumption and sale of whisky to Scottish liberty, on closer examination Burns strikes something of a darker note with this closing sentiment. Referring back to the bargaining element, the idea that Burns is volunteering the lives of young Scotsman to military service in return for economic terms seems, certainly from one perspective, a sinister demonstration of freedom. Yet in the 'Cry and Prayer' we not only see Burns's poetics approaching contemporary politics head-on, but we also get a glimpse of how his construction of Scottishness and his own bardic role can be deployed. Carefully equating his own highly wrought persona with that of the wider country – '*Scotland and me's* in great affliction' – mobilising the potential of his aesthetic framework, suddenly the Ayrshire smallholder is battling it out with the British

government for his suffering Scotland [K 81, III. 14].¹⁵¹

The vigour of the 'Cry and Prayer' is in direct contrast to the mood pervading 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' [K 72], one of Burns's most influential works. There the portrayal of rural family life predominantly strikes a sombre note of domestic bliss. The Cotter's close-knit household is a model of simple manners, evoking piety and modest, hard-working satisfaction:

His clean hearth-stane, his thrifty *Wife's* smile,
The *lisp*ing infant, prattling on his knee,
Does a' his weary kjaugh and care beguile,
And makes him quite forget his labour and his toil. [K 72, III. 24-27]

The peaceful oasis of his home life mitigates and justifies the manual labourer's exertions during the day, familial support offering vital nourishment. The Cotter's household signifies a dependable 'social union', producing an image of domestic felicity that would go on to have powerful national resonances. Reflecting on the poem's reception, Leask has pointed out both the importance of this sentimentalised image of rural manners (construed as autobiographical) to the subsequent hagiography of Burn as national bard; while also noting the historical context of the rapid vanishing of the 'Cotter-class' in the social upheaval of the 'Lowland clearances' (*Burns and Pastoral*, pp. 210-211, p. 220). As Devine relates, though Cotter families were commonplace in Scotland up to the 1760s, during this decade the social structure underwent major changes, wrought in part by the economic influence of Empire (*Scotland's Empire*, p. 322). This background provides a little-recognised elegiac edge to the poem. Above and beyond the levels of idealisation in a poem that can border on the maudlin,

¹⁵¹ The position of national spokesman on this issue is one that, as already noted, is also found in the 'John Barleycorn' letter. There Burns takes it upon himself to represent the community of Scottish distillers, and consequently the nation, in a stinging polemical attack.

the fundamental social observation of the Cotter's life was becoming a retrospective image even in Burns's own lifetime – one perhaps given an extra appeal in an era of war and social unrest. Read as illustrative of the poet's personal experience, this image meshed itself with his own self-fashioning and became key to later constructions of the bard. If early nineteenth-century literary theory focused on the ideal and the emotive, then perhaps this helps to explain the important role assigned to this work. Yet it also became involved in a conservative political interpretation of Burns, allowing for a sanitised Burns who offered an unthreatening image of happy domesticity. Regardless of the poet's ambiguous politics, in 'The Cotter' could be found the contented, hard-working and humble poor that John Barrell cites as crucial to conservative propagandists like Hannah More; an ideal poor that reflected anxieties of political unrest and rising class consciousness.¹⁵² If the lower classes were increasingly unruly, images of settled contentment could be inviting, both as aspirational models imposed on the actual poor, and reassuring ones for the wealthy.

The ideological dynamic constructed here is clear. Having thoroughly linked up himself, the rustic and Scotland as the terms upon which he demands to be read, this poem offers an easy identification of the poet with the Cotter – and of the amorphous image of rustic manhood thus created with the nation. These connections are implicitly available in the work, taken as part of Burns's oeuvre, even if it would require a host of critics to cement the move. Through its role in the Burns narrative, 'The Cotter' is then a key feature of the poet's 'nationalisation'. Yet it is not simply this oblique linkage or a dubious

¹⁵² John Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 220-221.

autobiographical reading that renders the poem a key piece in his approach to nationhood. The work itself builds upon this manoeuvre to make a direct thematic jump into a broader Scottish context, figuring an invigorated history of national liberty.

This is begun with the dramatisation of religious worship, in which the kinds of linkage we have flagged up above set the stage for a journey into the Scottish past. The poem mobilises a patriotic defence of Scottish aesthetic robustness not dissimilar to that seen in 'Lapraik'. Here, 'SCOTIA's holy lays' are contrasted with 'tame' *'Itallian trills'*, the latter of which apparently only undermine true religious sentiment [K 72, XIII. 114-115]. Again we have Burns's characteristic tendency to inflect his inversion of class taxonomies towards the national question: the 'native feelings strong' of 'The Cotter' equate humble life with Scottishness, and again this move turns on a form of aesthetic judgement, one of simplicity versus cultivation [K 72, I. 7]. In the final three stanzas the poet shifts his attentions to a more aggressively patriotic discourse. The enthusiasm of lines such as 'O SCOTIA! my dear, native soil!' fly into a patriotic euphoria, the poet apparently almost overwhelmed by his love for Scotland [K 72, XX. 172]. This is given a martial edge with the introduction of William Wallace, invoking a militaristic idea of Scottish nationhood that counters English 'tyrannic pride' [K 72, XXI. 183]. Though it would be excessive to view this passage as an example of autonomous Scottish agitation – Kidd argues that in Burns's period Scottish nationalism was 'virtually a dead letter' and that thus 'the passing of Scottish nationhood provided convenient matter for satire and sentiment' – we should

not underestimate the value of such discourses in cultural self-definition.¹⁵³

The tone here accords with that found in works such as 'Robert Bruce's March to Bannockburn' (Scots Wha Hae) [K 425], or the 'Lament of Mary Queen of Scots on the Approach of Spring' [K 316], the latter of which has Mary prophesying a gory death for her English antagonist, Elizabeth I. In 'The Cotter', such oppositional sentiment is channelled through the defence of Scottish moral purity. This device, however, is given a complicated twist by the mention of the 'much-lov'd ISLE', appearing to figure Scotland's moral character as an emblematic trait for the whole of Britain – somewhat incongruous in the context of the Anglophobic mood perhaps indicated by the inclusion of Wallace [K 72, XX. 180]. Indeed, in one reading Burns appears to be appropriating the Scottish patriot tradition as a buttress to developing Britain: her '*virtuous Populace*' providing the 'wall of fire' that protects the island empire [K 72, XX. 179-180]. Yet despite such geographical obscurity, the invoking of Scotland's martial tradition in the context of her praiseworthy moral character makes a powerful link between social harmony and national vigour. The patriot tradition emerges as inextricably tied to Scottish piety, forming a significant conceptual intersection. An idealised portrayal of rural life which leads into an encomium on a Scottish anti-tyrannical tradition, this poem shows Burns approaching the issue of Scottish nationhood from a quite different perspective than in the 'Cry and Prayer', but interestingly to something of the same end.

If the 'Cry and Prayer' makes the link between Scotland and freedom (however much that is complicated by its political bargaining), it is a link made

¹⁵³ Colin Kidd, 'Burns and Politics', in *The Edinburgh Companion to Robert Burns*, ed. by Carruthers, pp. 61-73, (p. 70).

in striking fashion here. This move is immediately suggestive of a conscious revivification of Scottish history, working against perceptions of the ‘unusable past’ noted by Kidd in eighteenth-century historiography. Burns’s emphasis on an anti-tyrannical history of Scottish freedom fighting (with Wallace as its figurehead) harks back to the influential narratives of sixteenth-century historian George Buchanan. The Buchananite tradition ‘emphasised [...] the freedom of the nation and limitations on the monarchy, and depicted these in martial rather than procedural terms’ (Kidd, *Subverting*, p. 70). According with what Pittock describes as a ‘taxonomy of glory’ utilised by writers ‘to explain and justify the [Scottish] past’, in reaching for this register Burns makes a substantial ideological gesture (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 57). Wrenching the Scottish past from the hands of a self-denigrating Scottish historiography, he figures Scotland as the source of the liberty that protects and dignifies the country – making this tradition available either to Scotland in isolation, or to Britain by extension. Reading against the grain of eighteenth-century historiographical norms, he elevates Scotland’s history alongside his defence of her culture.

A letter to the Earl of Buchan neatly sums up this conception of a Scottish history of liberty, as Burns explains his enthusiasm for the story of Bannockburn:

On the one hand, a cruel, but able Usurper, leading on the finest army in Europe, to extinguish the last spark of Freedom among a greatly-daring and greatly injured People; on the other hand, the desperate relics of a gallant Nation, devoting themselves to rescue their bleeding Country, or perish with her.¹⁵⁴

Scotland is possessed of a proud history, and by re-associating contemporary liberty with the Scottish past, Burns attempts to mend an ‘inorganic’ national

¹⁵⁴ Robert Burns, ‘To The Earl of Buchan, 12th January 1794’, in *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. by De Lancey Ferguson, II, pp. 276-277, (p. 276).

narrative which looked to England to explain historical progress. Both the 'Cry and Prayer' and 'The Cotter' make this ideological statement, however differing their approaches may be. Burns's characterisation of both himself and Scotland as happily possessed of rustic qualities moves into a broader defence of Scottish nationhood as the source of modern liberty. The terms of the former argument importantly allow for the latter: simple and virtuous, Burns's Scotland is consequently the location of freedom.

'Quite Frantic in his Country's cause': Burns and liberty

Burns's personal politics are notoriously difficult to pin down, albeit staying relatively consistent with a form of eighteenth-century Whiggism. Certainly simplistic egalitarian readings of him fall short; however the treatment of an anti-tyrannical tradition that we have been examining is resonant with radical possibilities. Wallace becomes representative of a Scottish Monarchomach legacy, and through this potentially a powerful republican figurehead.¹⁵⁵ A link between Scottish martial history and radical politics may seem initially odd, yet as the period develops it seems to be well grounded. The famous postscript of the 1793 letter to George Thomson containing 'Scots Wha Hae' makes this link clear, as Burns suggestively claims that his 'recollection of that glorious struggle for Freedom' was 'associated with the glowing ideas of some other struggles of the same nature, *not quite so ancient*', obviously indicating contemporary

¹⁵⁵ Burns does address the issue of republicanism directly in a letter. Laying claim to some interest in the notion, he nonetheless says that 'as to Britain, I abjured the idea'; instead emphasising a Whig position upon the need to preserve and reform the 'glorious Constitution'. Of course, given the on-going stresses of this chapter, such comments should not be read as definitive proofs. See Robert Burns, 'To John Francis Erskine of Mar, 13th April 1793', in *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. by De Lancey Ferguson, II pp. 207-210, (p. 208).

agitation as events in France unfold.¹⁵⁶ The 'struggle for Freedom' becomes a universal impulse here, easily translatable from the Wars of Independence into a current context.

As we move towards the early nineteenth century, the material of Jacobinism and Jacobitism often in fact appear hand in hand in contemporary discourse, despite their ill-fitting political principles. This striking interplay between Jacobitism (alongside older patriot resources) and Jacobin ideology is noticed by a number of commentators – with perhaps a form of nationalism the suturing element. James Young describes 'the very threatening coalescence of Jacobite and Jacobin political sentiments among industrial workers' (p. 53). In Young's account the appropriation of Scottish martial symbolism by the radical movement goes beyond Jacobitism to an almost indiscriminate use of Covenanting, Jacobite and medieval Scottish materials (pp. 58-59). If this convergence of symbolism was detectable in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Pittock notes of 'the period of the French Revolution', that 'the feeling that there was something rotten in the state of Scotland [was] common to Jacobite and Jacobin alike' (*Invention of Scotland*, p. 79). Neil Davidson also observes that Thomas Muir (1765-1799), the most famous of the Scottish Jacobins, blended this ideology with a Scottish nationalism, even if this was a 'minority position' (p. 156). Perhaps here we can detect some early glimmers of a later trend in the national bent to Muir's thought. Leask too stresses his atypicality, but his account in a recent article is arresting in identifying this crossover, in which 'Muir's agitation for parliamentary reform in the early 1790s

¹⁵⁶ Robert Burns, 'To George Thomson, about 30th August 1793', in *The Letters of Robert Burns*, ed. by De Lancey Ferguson, II, pp. 235-236, (p. 236).

was tinged by a Scottish and Irish patriotism'. Leask notes how Muir's thoughts on 'constitutional reform' melded with 'a particularly Scottish form of the "ancient constitution" argument' – again hearkening back to Buchanan – with Muir attempting to translate the 'republican nationalism' of the United Irishmen into a Scottish context.¹⁵⁷

Of course, it is possible to suggest that a fundamental politics of opposition facilitated the potential intermixture of elements of Renaissance Buchananite patriot discourse, Jacobitism, Jacobinism and republicanism: the only necessary continuity being opposition itself. It is commonplace to cite cultural transfers in this period, notably in the case of Jacobitism, which David Daiches suggests functioned as 'an expression of frustrated Scottish national feeling'.¹⁵⁸ Overlaps of this kind feed into the somewhat fluid structure this study is terming 'residual Scottishness', Jacobitism acting as one possible outlet for national sentiments. We should not, indeed, underestimate Jacobitism's intimate though complex history as an expression of Scottish patriotism: it is worth remembering that one of Charles Edward Stewart's actions on taking Edinburgh had been to abolish the Act of Union by decree.¹⁵⁹ Likewise, the degree of real nationalistic intent surrounding the Radical War of 1820 is an on-going debate.¹⁶⁰ Yet certainly by the early nineteenth century, we can observe a

¹⁵⁷ Nigel Leask, 'Thomas Muir and *The Telegraph*: Radical Cosmopolitanism in 1790s Scotland', *History Workshop Journal*, 63 (2007), 48-69, (pp. 50-53).

¹⁵⁸ David Daiches, 'Robert Burns and Jacobite Song', in *Critical Essays on Robert Burns*, ed. by Donald A. Low (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), pp. 137-156, (p. 141).

¹⁵⁹ See Bruce Lenman, *The Jacobite Risings in Britain: 1689-1746* (Aberdeen: Scottish Cultural Press, 1995), p. 253.

¹⁶⁰ See F. K. Donnelly, 'The Scottish Rising of 1820: A Re-interpretation', *Scottish Tradition*, 6 (1976), 27-37; offering a corrective to Peter Berresford Ellis and

fascinatingly broad utilisation of historical material in an overriding message of protest. The use of 'Scots Wha Hae' as a radical anthem both north and south of the border is a fine example of this (Young, p. 82; Davidson, p. 192).¹⁶¹ Such examples may well be indicative of a larger pattern. As many commentators allow, the process of mining historical reserves was a key element of developing ideological practice, a significant element in the gestation of modern nationalism. Nairn describes the 'utilization of historical materials which generally marked the formative, ascendant phases of nationalism in Europe', a coordination of political materials that may often have been less concerned with strict coherence than it was with efficacy (p. 145).

The sporadic visibility in Burns of a politics that draws on a variety of Scottish historical resources is then perhaps not so surprising. He constructs a broad politics of freedom that mobilises the symbolism of a Scottish martial tradition within a larger ideological framework that is at once locally patriotic and broadly universal. An interesting later work serves to coagulate some of the parallel strands in this political synthesis. Firstly however, it should not be forgotten that, despite occasional expressions of a Scottish patriotism that appears defensive or anti-English, elsewhere Burns engages in a vigorous British patriot discourse, notably in 'The Dumfries Volunteers' [K 484]. It may be possible to infer some notes of irony in that work's high-energy chauvinism – which includes a reference to 'a foreign tinkler-loun' – yet the song is strategically negotiating a patriotic Britishness in which a loyalist defence of the

Seumas Mac A' Ghobhainn, *The Scottish Insurrection of 1820* (London: Gollancz, 1970).

¹⁶¹ This also raises a question about the role of Scottishness in England (particularly in the north) – perhaps a Scotocentric take on liberty could have reverberations further afield.

monarchy is qualified by pointed reminders of tyrannicide, the final stanza alternating between eruptions of 'GOD SAVE THE KING' and references to the authority of 'THE PEOPLE' [K 484, III-IV]. It would probably be incorrect to suggest that these ideologies – defensive Scottish and British patriotism – are comfortably co-existent for the notoriously malleable poet, yet in 'On Glenriddel's Fox breaking his chain' [K 527], we see how an elastic Whiggism acts to facilitate a complex political disposition. Playing with the idea of his firmly Whig friend Robert Riddell keeping a fox in captivity, Burns springboards into what could be described as a potted history of liberty, taking in Jacobitism, Magna Carta and ancient Rome along the way [K 527, X. 31-56]. Riddell himself is an interesting pointer here, the antiquarian having 'shared Burns's sympathies for Jacobite as well as Jacobin politics' (Leask, *Burns and Pastoral*, p. 260). In a section that deals directly with Riddell, Burns teasingly paints a picture of the aristocrat as a near-demented political ideologue:

The staunchest Whig Glenriddel was,
Quite Frantic in his Country's cause;
And oft was Reynard's prison passing,
And with his brother Whigs canvassing
The Rights of Men, the Powers of Women,
With all the dignity of Freemen.— [K 527, IX. 25-30]

Marching around near the fox's confinement, the caricatured Riddell compasses a liberal approach to both class and gender issues, part of his 'Frantic' exertion 'in his Country's cause'.¹⁶² Sharing Burns's ideological promiscuity, Riddell is sent up as a desperate proponent of the various causes of freedom. If the 'Country' referred to here remains slightly oblique, a British patriotism

¹⁶² Although, as regards the wider poem, the dubious reference to Semiramis's imposition of 'hen-peck fetters' may undermine a mood of gender liberality, while confirming the facetious tone operating in parts [K 527, X. 39-42].

resurfaces later in the poem with a sneering reference to 'Billy Pit' (William Pitt) [K 527, X. 54-56]. Yet this is built upon the Scottish focus demonstrated by the 'Highland filly' who personifies the poem's critical subject, 'Liberty'. Thus this work manages to perform the expansion of frames that is characteristic of the poet, the hint of defensive Scottishness in the 'sturdy, stubborn' Highland girl overwritten by the broad brushstrokes of this history of liberty [K 527, I. 6-7]. Begging of Riddell, 'Couldst thou enslave a free-born creature', Burns pens a work that laughs at the hybrid elements that we find in his own politics [K 527, III. 19]. 'On Glenriddel's Fox' demonstrates a Whig investment in a notion of freedom shared by the nobleman and the poet, the very flexibility of which the poem's own race through history exemplifies in style. This omnivorous celebration of liberty is a recurrent element in Burns, who is adroit at exploiting its possible applications to both modern British capitalism and its alternatives, whether historical or otherwise.

This politics of freedom chimes with Burns's aesthetics of rusticity – itself interestingly poised between the localised and the universal. As the Introduction suggested, Penny Fielding has explored this paradoxical relationship in Burns's poetic character. She observes that:

Burns is universal *because* he is local, each singular locality being alike in its very singularity, untouched by the differentiating and alienating forces of history and politics. Burns speaks, to put the matter in the most commonplace of eighteenth-century terms, with the voice of nature. (*Fictions of Geography*, p. 44)

Both the universal poet of the common man, and very much the localised Ayrshire bard, Burns is so often poised between the frames of the local and the universal. Occupying a position that is perhaps characteristic of all literature (is arguably one defining characteristic of literature itself), the interplay between

frames is very much a dynamic process in Burns. It is through his very specificity that he achieves universality, mobilising the apparent ubiquity of a 'simple' state of being. This tension in his work appears mirrored in his political ideology. Moving between the frames of a Scottish patriot discourse and a transnational egalitarianism, Burns draws on the interplay between the local and the general, between theory and (occasionally perhaps ill-fitting) example, moulding these into a complex ideological framework. The stories of Scotland, and Burns's own poetic persona, expertly bridge the divide between the localised and the universal, creating a rich poetic chemistry.

The politics of collection

The importance of Burns to the Scottish literary canon goes well beyond the margins of his poetic career. As an enthusiast for, collector, editor and sometimes re-writer of folk songs, his contribution to the development of a national body of material is highly significant. Indeed Burns's antiquarian career may go some way to explaining the complexities of his politics, bearing out his investment in a hybridised conception of national culture. The scale of the present study prevents an in-depth exploration of Burns's antiquarian projects; undoubtedly the nuances of minor textual alterations, musical settings, ordering and selection would shed much light on his polemical approach. Yet the antiquarian process more generally offers us some important questions. Practices of popular antiquarianism play a critical role in the formation and political utilisation of national culture during the period. Indeed, the very act of 'collection' is an intriguing one, carrying loaded potentialities.

The two major collections of national song to which Burns contributed exhibit contrasting ideological tendencies. The men responsible for these, James

Johnson and George Thomson, approached their work upon perceptibly different grounds. As Leask comments:

Both Johnson and Thomson were important pioneers in transforming ‘popular’ into ‘national’ song, but the latter term has a slightly different inflection in each case. Compared to Johnson’s ‘patriotic inclusivity’, Thomson’s collection was in its very conception an ‘act of union’ presenting alternative Scottish and English lyrics to each of its elaborate set melodies. (*Burns and Pastoral*, p. 254)

Though both collections of song act to produce a national canon, they appear to have done this towards divergent political ends. The at least nominally Scottish-patriotic quality of Johnson's *Scots Musical Museum*, with its dedication to the 'Society of Antiquaries of Scotland', locates his collection in an inwardly looking Scottish cultural sphere interested in celebrating its artefacts and constructing a unitary national canon.¹⁶³ Hamish Mathison's insightful essay on Burns, from which Leask borrows the notion of 'patriotic inclusivity' above, teases out the national imperative of the collection, driven by a complex desire to 'fashion a "social Music"' both representing and serving Scotland. *The Scots Musical Museum* 'aimed to be [...] a text simultaneously anchored by its use value [both portable and inclusive] and its appeal to a patriotic inclusivity, to a "social" music'. Indeed, by the second volume of the collection, the term 'patriotic exclusivity' might be more appropriate, given the stringent editing-out of any non-Scottish material.¹⁶⁴ In stark comparison, the translation-based format of Thomson's *Select Scottish Airs* makes an explicitly British statement on the page. Indeed, the provision of English translations may even reach towards the

¹⁶³ See James Johnson and Robert Burns, *The Scots Musical Museum: 1783-1803*, 2 vols (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1991), I.

¹⁶⁴ Hamish Mathison, 'Robert Burns and National Song', in *Scotland, Ireland and the Romantic Aesthetic*, ed. by David Duff and Catherine Jones (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), pp. 77-92, (p. 81, p. 83).

fundamental assumption of a non-Scots readership, rather than merely ensuring intelligibility in both countries.¹⁶⁵

This contrast touches on a fundamental tension that inheres within the antiquarian process, one that is particularly visible in a national context. Is the act of collection a culturally defensive manoeuvre, rendering coherent a tradition that can then be celebrated? Or, alternatively, is collection a depoliticising act, a classifying procedure that deflates the vitality of a hitherto covert and heterogeneous folk culture? There are reasons for suggesting both and critics are divided in their loyalties to these positions. Paul Henderson Scott gives us a clear enunciation of the former position:

Scott's collection of ballads, like Burns's work on the songs and the anthologies of James Watson and Allan Ramsay at the beginning of the century, was a patriotic endeavour, an act of defiance against the threats to the Scottish identity.¹⁶⁶

For Paul Henderson Scott, the antiquarian procedure defends Scottishness against the encroachments of a homogenising Anglo-British cultural hegemony. 'Preservation' is perhaps the key idea here, with this position reading collection as an alternative to an externally influenced cultural decline. In contrast, the opposing view sees collection as puncturing the vitality of an orally centred folk tradition. This opinion is expressed in poetic form by Edwin Muir in his 'Complaint of the Dying Peasantry':

Till Scott and Hogg, the robbers, came
And nailed the singing tragedies down
In dumb letters under a name

¹⁶⁵ *Select Collection & Scottish Airs*, ed. by George Thomson, 5 vols (Edinburgh & London, 1793-1818).

¹⁶⁶ Paul Henderson Scott, *Walter Scott and Scotland* (Edinburgh: The Saltire Society, 1994), p. 70.

And led the bothy to the town.¹⁶⁷

Here the collection of folk material only serves to erode its vivacious orality. Figured as the act of writing down an oral performance, collectors of folk material inadequately capture their subject, resulting in a 'dumb' evacuation of a living tradition. Scott and Hogg are 'robbers', pilfering from folk culture and asserting ownership 'under a name' in a procedure that Muir explicitly characterises as urban, associating it with modern dehumanisation and anomie. Arguably Muir is overly sentimental about the supposed organicism of oral culture (itself often a problematic category given the prevalence of text), while we might contend that particularly in the long-eighteenth-century milieu, with the growing dominance of Anglophone culture, even a 'dumb' recording is preferable to complete extinction. Yet feasibly classifying and publicising can serve as controlling mechanisms under certain circumstances. For an imperial polity seeking to impose cultural homogeneity, perhaps the introduction of alternative culture into the public domain as a safe commodity provides a means to neutralise its political threat.

These opposing positions on antiquarianism appear largely irreconcilable, espousing contrasting views which result predominantly from differing characterisations of this cultural process: as either internal and defensive or external and oppressive. Leask and Pittock fall broadly on either side of this divide. While Leask follows Marilyn Butler in concentrating on popular antiquarianism during the period as a counter-hegemonic cultural procedure which was '*marginal*' to mainstream discourses of scholarship and

¹⁶⁷ Edwin Muir, 'Complaint of the Dying Peasantry', in *Selected Poems*, p. 76, III, 9-12.

taste'; Pittock discusses an Anglocentric cultural 'colonization' of the 'British periphery' which sees folk culture 'bowdlerized by the collectors in such a manner as to challenge neither the ruling sentiments nor politics of Britain' (*Celtic*, p. 36).¹⁶⁸ The construction of a developmental narrative is important here, as for Pittock the collecting impulse provides a means to safely incorporate Scottish culture into a British modernity, once it has been suitably depoliticised. In contrast, Leask's argument draws on Susan Manning's 'union' and 'fragmentation' theory to suggest that the heterogeneous, fragmented nature of antiquarian collections denies the possibility of narrative coherency, resisting a characterisation of the cultural homogenising process as 'inevitable'. Leask cites the tastes of Burns's onetime friend Robert Riddell in support of his position, finding an intersection of popular antiquarianism and cultural nationalism typical of British practice outside England in the period (*Burns and Pastoral*, pp. 257-260).

As we will see, the tensions flagged up by these differing readings are ones that Burns appears to be quite sensitive to. His playful toying with notions of antiquarianism in 'Tam o' Shanter' suggests an awareness of this conflict as he dances around the politics of collection. The commissioner of that poem, the antiquarian Francis Grose, certainly conforms in some respects to the notion of popular antiquarianism as a counter-hegemonic cultural procedure. His *Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, for example, reeks of subversive cultural practice, containing as it does much that remains startling by today's standards. Consider for example, the grotesque imagery of 'Oyster': 'A glob of thick phlegm';

¹⁶⁸ See Marilyn Butler's essay 'Antiquarianism (Popular)', in *An Oxford Companion to the Romantic Age*, ed. by McCalman, pp. 328-338.

or his flatly shocking definition of the term ‘Cunt’ as ‘a nasty name for a nasty thing’.¹⁶⁹ In ‘Tam o’ Shanter’, we find Burns appropriating Grose’s subversive mode and using it to parody the antiquarian impulse more broadly. The poet teases his reader with the notion of antiquarianism as shrouding a (somewhat sinister) controlling impulse. This is done in the same breath as the disclosure of a boisterous and wilfully synthetic piece of folk culture, producing a masterpiece drenched in ironic self-consciousness.

‘Tam o’ Shanter’

‘Tam o’ Shanter’ is probably Burns’s best-known work, and is consequently well positioned to exemplify some of the problematic features of his canonical centrality to Scottish literature. The poem’s continuing status is reflected by its pivotal role in a recent publication entitled *Scottish Folk and Fairy Tales from Burns to Buchan*.¹⁷⁰ This book places it right at the core of a Scottish folk tradition; a move not a little ironic given the dubious attitude of the poem itself towards such a paradigm. The staunchly duplicitous nature of ‘Tam o’ Shanter’ – a multi-layered literary production that satirises its own ostensible purpose – reminds us of the guile of the bard himself. On the surface a rehearsal of a genuine Scottish folk tale, the poem actually goes to considerable lengths to question not only its own validity, but indeed the broader possibility of folk-cultural authenticity. Arguably Scotland’s national literary work, ‘Tam’ deserves an extended consideration here, representative of both Burns’s literary expertise and the self-awareness of long-eighteenth-century Scottish literature: a literary

¹⁶⁹ Francis Grose, *A Classical Dictionary of the Vulgar Tongue*, 3rd edn (London: Hooper and Wigstead, 1796).

¹⁷⁰ *Scottish Folk and Fairy Tales from Burns to Buchan*, ed. by Gordon Jarvie (London: Penguin, 2008).

tradition so often aware of itself as a tradition.¹⁷¹ If Scott's novels attempt to rewrite a notion of Scottishness, decades earlier Burns was exploring the fascinating qualities of emblematic culture.

The poem as 'national tale' is fairly well travelled critical ground, yet it will help us get to the heart of what is really interesting here. Douglas Gifford describes 'Tam' as 'on the surface a traditional folk tale about human exuberance embedded in the hearts of all Scots' ('Sham Nation?', p. 355). His notion of a sweeping national characterisation is correct, as although the work was commissioned by the Englishman Grose, it addresses itself to a familiar 'imagined community' – the repeated 'we' of the work. This community reveals itself as a Scots-cultural base conceived as masculine, members of the select society to which the poem gives voice. Tam, the eponymous hero of the poem, becomes the avatar for this particular 'we'. It is 'we' who 'sit bousing at the nappy', putting off the return to Kate, 'our sulky sullen dame' [K 321, 5 & 10]. Thus the entire poem is written in the context of a communally imagined experience of the Scottish folk tradition, as Burns narrates the travail of this 'we' through the events of his supernatural tale. This third-person narration is a modulation on Burns's typical deployment of the rustic-bard-nation compound via a direct address, although the parochial figure of Tam retains some of this associative potential as part of the poet's oeuvre (while the hints of autobiography surrounding this comedic protagonist found flirting in an Alloway pub cannot be entirely ignored). Certainly the expansion of frames between

¹⁷¹ A 2012 YouGov survey found that 'Tam o' Shanter' was 'Scotland's favourite poem'. See *The Scottish Government*, <<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2012/01/Burns23012012>>, [accessed 28 October 2014].

rural Ayrshire and Scotland is still very much present, Tam serving as an archetypal Scotsman, a role that might be more readily understood if he was called 'Jock'. Predictably a drinker, Tam is to explore the darker domains of the folk tradition on behalf of Burns's 'we', venturing out into the 'lang Scots miles' in a journey of national-cultural exploration [K 321, 7]. This 'imagined community' is reinforced in the final section, addressed to 'wha this tale o' truth shall read', the act of reading Scots figuring a public which becomes both subject and primary object of the text (more on an implied but subordinate English-language readership shortly) [K 321, 219]. Tam, himself a Scots reader – who we see 'crooning o'er some auld Scots sonnet' – centres the action in a poem very much about Alloway first, and Scotland second [K 321, 84]. Burns's bagpipe-playing devil drives this home with a sinister, though burlesque emphasis.

'Tam o' Shanter': morality

Tam's emblematic Scottishness is bound up in one of the major foci of the work: Presbyterianism. In one respect this is simply part of the national stereotyping, enforcing a Scottish archetype. But this element also reveals another side to Burns's poem. In addition to his reading above, Gifford proposes that the work 'is also a sly allegory, which could carry the subtitle "the Presbyterian's Nightmare", satirizing the Scottish propensity to see joy as something which will inevitably be paid for' ('Sham Nation?', p. 355). In this context it is tempting to infer significance for Tam's 'gude blue bonnet', resonant with Cameronian imagery – although this is probably negated by the item's status as standard headwear in the contemporary Lowlands [K 321, 83]. Yet a Presbyterian angle is undoubtedly in play throughout the work. Indeed, we cannot ignore this component in the pivotal scene at Kirk-Alloway. That climactic episode

undoubtedly contains a critique of superstitious, fanatical Presbyterianism, with the ceilidh dramatising religious xenophobia in playing up the character of the devil as a Popish antichrist. Tam finds Satan directing an uproarious worship among the ruins of a pre-Reformation church in a joyful burlesque of anti-Catholicism. Burns certainly had no love for foolish religious dogma, as his Kirk satires reveal, and 'Tam' deserves to be considered alongside works like 'Holy Willie's Prayer' and 'The Holy Fair' [K 70] in their critique of religious hysteria and hypocrisy.

Yet as a morality tale in the manner that Gifford is suggesting, 'Tam' fundamentally fails. Let's not forget that the drunken lecher gets away Scot-free, his female mare taking the only punishment for his late-night revelry with the loss of her tail – the 'tale's displaced castration [K 321, 216-218]. The narrator's closing warning that 'ye may buy the joy's o'er dear', rings with a hollow significance, reminding us that Tam's Alloway – and the Scotland it figures – is a masculine playground [K 321, 223]. The 'imagined community' ranged behind Tam is very much a male public, and the poem does little to challenge that hegemony. Thus while Carruthers is correct to suggest that the work 'essays [...] male irresponsibility and "fear" of the female', this seems more of a light-hearted, even celebratory process, than it is an ethically charged or introspective one (*Robert Burns*, p. 87). In a text structured by female characters (Kate, Jean, the possibly imaginary Nannie and of course Meg), Tam's indiscretions are carried off with exuberance, famously escaping serious retribution. To borrow Thomas Crawford's choice phrase, 'Tam's alcoholic glow' somehow bundles him through

the events of the night.¹⁷² If ‘sulky’ Kate opens the poem, ‘Gathering her brows like gathering storm’, there is little confirmation of actual female power [K 321, 11]. Nannie may be able to give Tam a scare, but the ultimate misdirection of her rage upon his obedient ‘mare’ is a chilling image; while the use of a witch’s traditional inability to cross water (to confront him) is a striking means of displaying female repression – whether by way of any critique remains significantly less clear.

‘Tam o’ Shanter’: collection

Returning to the disparity in readings of antiquarianism identified above, we can trace Burns’s sensitivity to this argument. ‘Tam’ is highly self-conscious of itself as a manufactured slice of folk culture. Indeed, even the poem’s early publication as a footnote to Grose’s *The Antiquities of Scotland* seems itself to provide a layer of comment. Offered by Grose as an example of the colourful background to his discussion of ‘Alloway Church’, Tam dominates the portion it appears in, the footnote smothering Grose’s actual article entry to only a few lines per leaf. In one view, ‘Tam’’s occupation of a position habitually given over to factual and background detail seems to render its very subjectivity (and indeed length) a matter of near-comedy, a self-consciously gross assertion of narrativity within the antiquarian realm (though of course anecdotal and winding footnotes were not unusual at this period). Grose’s brief introduction locates the poem within a ‘famous’ history of ‘infernal meetings’ featuring ‘the muckle-horned Deel’, delighting in the blurry interplay between folk tradition and the historical record. Placed here, the poem laughs at po-faced claims on authenticity, while playing up

¹⁷² Thomas Crawford, *Burns: A Study of the Poems and Songs*, rev. edn (Edinburgh: Canongate Academic, 1994), p. 225.

the narrative element and the role of imagination within antiquarian collections. By its relegation to the role of (bloated) supplementary matter, this appearance ironically amplifies the artifice of the work, framed as a natural backdrop to a discussion of the locale, producing a knowingly synthetic piece of folk-cultural heritage.¹⁷³

Certainly the work is capable of bearing out a variety of interpretations of the antiquarian process. While for Leask it displays popular antiquarianism's counter-hegemonic cultural agency, Pittock reads it as satirising a controlling impulse in the collection process, dramatising its own refusal to be thus contained. To this end, Leask suggests that the footnote form literally echoes the 'marginality' of this counter-hegemonic antiquarian sphere (*Burns and Pastoral*, p. 265); while Pittock finds a sarcastic reflection in the poem's affected conclusion, 'Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare', suggesting that, 'The extraction of a commonplace moral from a supernatural encounter is precisely the collecting act: the reduction of the individuated self and intensely realized locality to a humorous anecdote with a generally applicable moral' [K 321, 224] (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 157). Though these positions seem essentially contradictory, this in itself should alert us to Burns's complex ideological manoeuvre. Mobilising the counter-hegemonic discourse of the Grosean mode – with its self-conscious investment in the bathetic and the peculiar – Burns crafts his narrative to subtly mock antiquarianism itself, satirising the knowledge-seeking impulse towards categorisation and qualification.

The first line of the work informs us that the action contained within

¹⁷³ See Francis Grose, *The Antiquities of Scotland*, 2 vols (London: Hooper, 1789-1791), II, pp. 199-201.

occurs in a sphere inaccessible to antiquarian eyes – the purview of the ‘chapman billies’ – the paradoxical relationship of this occlusion to the poem’s commissioned purpose serving only to highlight Burns’s technique [K 321, 1].¹⁷⁴ In some respects giving the antiquarian exactly what he wants – and revelling in the potency of the supernatural ‘artefact’ – Burns also sarcastically turns the reader’s gaze back onto Grose, with his fatal desire to contain and understand the all-too secret and heterogeneous folk culture of the Scottish countryside. This is, then, archetypal parody, appropriating the terms of its target. Yet, as Leask suggests, there is a significant strain of self-mockery in the tradition of popular antiquarianism, and thus ‘the act of defiance is itself made in the subversive spirit of Grose’s antiquarian irony’ (*Burns and Pastoral*, p. 274). Though still forceful, Burns’s attack mirrors a comic fatalism that is already implicit in Grosean discourse. Alongside his friends Francis Grose and Robert Riddell, Burns’s work in the antiquarian sphere – of which ‘Tam’ can be considered a cultivated outcome – gave him an insight into the contradictions involved.¹⁷⁵ Without going as far as to suggest that Burns is mocking a personal weakness, the attack on cultural control here should perhaps be construed more as the reflections of a knowing insider, than the rejection of an outsider (i.e. the English Grose). Burns gives the antiquarian his tale of the uncanny, cheekily altered to laugh *at*, but also along *with* Grose; mocking the desire to possess (even understand) such subject matter. Engaging with a counter-hegemonic antiquarianism, he utilises this sphere to reflect back on and mock the larger impulses underpinning collection *per se*.

¹⁷⁴ The ‘chapman billies’ invoking not only local peddlers of chapbooks but their producers and the antiquarians fanatically intrigued by the folk material within.

¹⁷⁵ See Leask for Riddell’s influence on Burns (*Burns and Pastoral*, pp. 256-261).

'Tam o' Shanter': text and speech

'Tam' gives us arguably the finest example of Burns's heteroglossic linguistic modulation. The suggestion made above that it is this heteroglossia that allows him to achieve his characteristic verse pacing is well borne out in this work. Standard English plays an interruptive role here, providing time for breath and reflection in a poem written largely to achieve the effect of startling speed. Burns works through various linguistic registers, ranging from the cryptic vernacular of 'drouthy neebors', to the literary English of, 'But pleasures are like poppies spread – | You seize the flow'r, its bloom is shed' [K 321, 2, 59-60]. Modulating the frequency of his Scots terms, he is able to regulate the vernacular-driven speed of the lines, while on a broader scale seeming to dip in and out of a full-Scots persona as the story unfolds. This in turn creates the effect of mediated narration, giving the sense that he is translating between alternative linguistic spheres. Thus the poem further asserts its own larger mediated, even 'brokered' status, self-consciously delivered across cultural boundaries.

This modulating tonal range is given a definite puncturing by the largely Standard English passage that heralds Tam's departure from the pub – from which the 'poppies' quote above is taken. This section abruptly strangles the pace of the work, switching it into a meditative mood and providing a clever textual mirroring of the deflating realisation that home time has come for Tam. Allowing pause for thought and open moralising, this break precedes the crescendo that leads us into and beyond Kirk-Alloway. Burns sets the rasping quality of Scots (seen nowhere better than in his own hands) against the decorous language of this pausing section to construct a tonal arc. Not merely a

sophisticated poetic technique, this move bears larger ideological significance. Scots becomes the mode of energy and experiential immediacy, while English is assigned to abstraction and cool, ponderous reflection. As Pittock has it, one is 'the intimate tongue of participation', the other the 'language of distance, judgment, and reportage' (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 159). According with the distinction drawn earlier, Scots is here physicalised – in Sorensen's words 'embodied' – while English is rendered analytical and discarnate (*Grammar*, p. 23). As readers of Burns we are of course well aware that both languages are fundamental to his stylistic. Yet in 'Tam' he poses an exclusive Scots community, their language the means through which the action of the poem is actually experienced, while the English lines only reflect, viewing events from an secondary, objective distance. Of course, these implied readerships do not necessarily map onto national communities. The poem vividly appropriates a dynamism and energy for the Scots-speaking community that sets them against an Anglophone alternative – whether neighbours, countrymen or even selves. Yet we cannot altogether ignore Burns's consistent use of Scots as a national emblem. If Scotland's translation into a pastoral nation in his poetry is significantly channelled through the rustic qualities of her language, here she may be closer to the 'burlesque nation', as Burns's national aesthetic veers into boisterous territory. Scots-users ride with Tam, drunk and infatuated alongside him, while English-users consider the consequences, worried about the late hour and conscious of the dangerous journey home.

The most studied moment of the poem comes with Tam's only spoken line, "Weel done, Cutty-sark!" [K 321, 189]. Unable to resist, sexually aroused and considerably inebriated, Tam gives himself away with this vocal outburst.

There is potentially a danger of over-determining the significance of this line, pivotal as it appears to the work. It might be tenuous to suggest that there is a dramatisation of Scots-language repression here, the only example of its oral enunciation followed by histrionic and hellish reprisal. Yet in a poem that concerns itself with delivering up a fragment of folk culture into the hands of antiquarian scholarship – not to mention the singularity and narrative-importance of the line – it is difficult not to feel the weight of this moment. With the spoken word otherwise eluding the antiquarian gaze of the poem (even if the whole work is in fact staged as beyond the ‘chapman billies’), this is a charged and isolated example. For Pittock the line signals the transient eruption of the oral tradition into the work, providing a brief glimpse through the complex and mediated textual fabric as Tam encounters a cultural ‘hidden world’ (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 162). Such a reading would align with Cairns Craig’s notion of the power of residual culture – prone to ‘erupt[ing] back into the present’ – with a threatened Scots indigeneity temporarily renouncing its irrelevance or pastness (*Out of History*, p. 71). However, this line of argument may have a tendency to assign too much importance to quotation marks, given that most of the poem is narrated in a fairly conversational style. Furthermore, there may be a danger here of unfairly identifying orality with cultural authenticity, especially in the context of a society with such high literacy rates.¹⁷⁶ Still, the limitation of the spoken word may offer a comment on the transience and intangibility of certain

¹⁷⁶ Thomas P. Miller states, ‘Scotland was actually more broadly literate than the country whose language it studiously imitated. [...] Literacy was rising from just over 30 percent in the last quarter of the seventeenth century to around 75 percent in 1750 and then to almost 90 percent by the end of the century, levels of literacy that were attained in this period only by areas such as New England and Sweden that were staunchly Calvinist and intensely committed to literate piety’ (p. 147).

forms of culture, if not even culture itself; such would be in keeping with the sense of fatality around cultural possession pervading the work. Certainly Burns utilises this sexually charged outburst as some kind of ‘eruption’, providing a divisive break in the narrative. The very noise of the scene Tam looks onto, with the demonic ceilidh in full swing, gives a strange potency to the impact of his words, as if by speaking he suddenly alters the terms of the narrative itself: his voice a truly supernatural element in the poem. His four words somehow drown out the hellish cacophony of proximate bagpipes and create a deafening, pitch-black silence before the onrush of his pursuers. In as much as the narrative hinges on the agency of this one moment, certainly Burns does appear to assign a particularly compelling agency to the power of the spoken word.

‘Tam o’ Shanter’: Kirk-Alloway

The poem drives inexorably towards the glowing insides of Alloway’s ruined place of worship. The *mise-en-scène* of the Kirk provides us with much food for thought. The play on anti-Catholicism noted above alerts us to the presence of a Celtic, Highland element, and sectarian tensions are an appropriate part of what we will find this scene achieves. Crucially, however, by the same cultural smudging that we find so frequently in the period, the vision of devilish revelry becomes powerfully Scottish, drawing on many of the icons of residual culture. Burns produces a parade of national imagery, from the bagpipes to the dances themselves – with Scottish traditional dance putting ‘life and mettle in their heels’, where presumably ‘cotillions brent new frae France’ would have failed [K 321, 118 & 116]. Even the focal figure, the beautiful witch Nannie, is draped in symbolism (this time literally): the ‘cutty-sark’ Tam uses to name her made ‘o’ Paisley harn’ [K 321, 171]. The interior of the Kirk provides the culmination of a

poem already saturated in national themes, while also delivering a number of its most significant ideological manoeuvres.

The sacrificial altar at the heart of the scene is worthy of examination, suitably decorated with items of horrific import; some of which Burns tell us ‘even to name wad be unlawfu’ [K 321, 142]. It is tempting to suggest that this selection is making a comment on the antiquarian process, providing what Carruthers calls a ‘catalogue of curiosities’ (*Robert Burns*, p. 92); or what Leask terms a selection of ‘antiquarian *collectibles*’ (*Burns and Pastoral*, p. 270). Indeed, an allusion to antiquarian discourse is flagged up by the simple fact that Tam stares in ‘curious’, given the importance of the concept of curiosity to the field [K 321, 143].¹⁷⁷ Perhaps then the poet is again satirising the antiquarian impulse, suggesting that such collection engages in an amoral delectation of cultural material, dehumanising its subject matter through a detached intellectual curiosity. There may well be a jocular dig here at Grose here, whose own interests were far from culturally sanitised. Indeed this particular joke is one Burns makes elsewhere, as he mocks the sinister and obscure miscellany Grose carries with him in ‘On the Late Captain Grose’s Peregrinations thro’ Scotland, collecting the Antiquities of that Kingdom’ [K 275, VI-VIII]. In ‘Tam’, however, the specifics of the collection on the altar of Kirk-Alloway suggestively expand beyond a Scottish frame to include objects of explicitly imperial significance. ‘Tomahawks’ and ‘scymitars’ broaden the frame to allude towards a global violence that the altar-display unearths [K 321, 135-136]. Noting this, Leask

¹⁷⁷ This background to the term is nicely captured in the definitions of ‘curio’ as ‘An object of art, piece of bric-à-brac, etc., valued as a curiosity or rarity’, and ‘curiosity’ as ‘Scientific or artistic interest; the quality of a curioso or virtuoso; connoisseurship’ (*OED*, IV, p. 144).

suggests that Burns 'rejects the distancing teleology of Scottish enlightenment historiography [...] insisting that these relics of violence be displayed, inventorized, and acknowledged' (*Burns and Pastoral*, p. 270). Reinstating a traumatic human element to historical narratives, perhaps the Kirk scene forms a poetic museum that drives against the grain of polite culture. The corpses standing in open coffins around the room reveal these objects by the individual candles they hold, seeming like a chilling confirmation of this idea, as the dead (perhaps the wronged) accusatorily point us to this gruesome still-life [K 321, 125-130]. In a poem that is saturated with national themes, Burns makes a careful point here about a history of continuing violence, pointing to a chequered past with the ghostly fingers of the dead.

Yet it is the supernatural machinery of the scene that provides surely its most powerful dynamic. The supernatural mode – centred upon an aggressively Scottish articulation of hellish machinery – provides a crucial piece in the poem's exploration of nationhood. As Tam approaches and observes the satanic ceilidh in Kirk-Alloway, Burns gives us a fine example of how a 'post-enlightenment' (or perhaps rather 'pre-enlightenment'), anti-rational aesthetic territory can function in the figuration of Scottish culture. Tam stumbles upon a scene that is at once pseudo-comical burlesque and serious political tableau (given the glimmers of imperial violence). Yet, this tonal variety may be ultimately less important than the simple, massed presence of residual Scottishness here, the portrayal of the Kirk framing a microcosm of national themes. Communing in the revelry with his spoken outburst, Tam signals his invasion – on behalf of the reader – into a realm of nationhood that Burns stages as literally the stuff of another world, of fantasy and even drunken reverie. As the reader-voyeur

watches the ceilidh unfold – complete with doses of piping, traditional dance and folk-tale thrills – we are viewing one of the most dramatic literary representations of Scottishness as the Other of improvement (including its feminisation in Nannie). Hidden in a deserted and ancient Kirk, the icons of nationhood are found occupying an uncertain ideological domain, beyond the boundaries of the modern world and of political hegemony – one that is, above all, an aesthetic space. Objectified by Tam’s lusty gaze (with its sectarian tensions), these emblems are framed in a snapshot of national character, the poem catapulting from its powerful sense of location in Alloway into this national terrain. Operating in a transcendent, supernatural area outside the political, social and cultural norms of Anglo-British culture, this realm of Scottishness is figured as a function of the imagination, as conceived through Tam and the text’s implied readerships.

However, within this image there is a cutting tension. The presence of the ‘curios’ of imperial violence pulls in two directions – on one hand, aligning unimproved Scottishness with the ‘primitive’ societies experiencing imperial aggression worldwide; on the other, implicating this parade of Scottishness in Empire’s crimes, perhaps even critiquing the potential role of a jingoistic simplification of national character in foreign affairs. It does seem fitting that at the heart of this powerful image of Scotland we should find a littering of the contradictions and global casualties of the dialectics of improvement. If Burns’s rustic nationhood could be construed as selectively extracting ideas of Scottishness to be ranged against the structures of modernity, this image seals his sense of the ironies and complexities in this relationship, the way in which Scottish identity in the period must straddle a boundary between improvement

and its adversaries. The whole picture is disrupted by a sharp modulation between horror and humour, historical sincerity interchanging with an ironic self-consciousness that refuses a static message, insisting instead on a dynamic web of meaning. Yet it is clear that our access to this image is contingent on the disruptive agency of the supernatural, nationhood located in the shadowy confines of a haunted ruin – the perfectly rustic locus, of course, for this unruly, conflicted and deeply ironic emanation of Scottishness as unimprovement. Revealed as a figment of the imagination, literally a fiction, Scotland steps into a new aesthetic order here. A moment of tricky national self-revelation becomes one of transformation. In this sense, the temporary escape of the party in order to chase Tam is given a new, poignant angle: Scottishness seeking to throw off the potential limitations of its existence in this aesthetic world. Perhaps the onrush of the demonic party looks to demonstrate the charged political potential of existing as a ‘romantic nation’, even if the river is finally a step too far.

Tam o’ Shanter: conclusion

If Burns’s later work with song culture is one of the most important acts of cultural collection in Scottish history, ‘Tam’ finds him reflecting uneasily upon such processes. His most celebrated work delivers into the hands of Francis Grose a folk narrative of supernatural intrigue, but in the process laughs at the notion that anyone could ever actually possess such a thing. While the narrative pun leaves a frustrated Nannie in possession of an inert ‘tail’, the ‘tale’ itself demands intangibility. The duplicitous Burns is on top form here, luxuriating in the vernacular boisterousness of the Grosean artefact, using this platform to mock the broader impulses towards cultural collection, categorisation and possession. As stated above, it is not a little ironic that a poem that concerns

itself to such a degree with the politics of collection has become so central to the Scottish literary canon. Stuck at the heart of Scottish literature, ‘Tam o’ Shanter’ asks us to reconsider quite what we mean when we suggest that a cultural item is in any way representative. Aggressively and self-consciously artificial, this poem deconstructs the impulse to historicise, undermining the assumption that we can know about a place or a people from fragments of writing.

A highly wrought production that goes to lengths to ironise its own role as an emblem of Scottishness, ‘Tam’ produces a model of nationhood that mines the reserves of the folk tradition and reboots these within its irrepressibly literary form. If, as Chapter Three suggests, the famous painting in Scott’s *Waverley* plays a major role in the aestheticisation of Scottishness – delivering nationhood as an artefact, an aesthetic object – perhaps the window-frame of Kirk-Alloway through which Tam peeps is a significant precursor. By the logic of Cairns Craig’s now-familiar argument, the painting of Edward Waverley and Fergus Mac-Ivor acts to pull the events of the Jacobite Rising ‘out of history’ and into an explicitly artistic space – the transposition of Scottishness into an aesthetic register that this entails suggestively paralleling the effect of the prospect accessed by Tam (*Out of History*, p. 39). Indeed, via this reading, Tam’s enraptured praise of Nannie’s dancing suddenly comes into its own as an apposite statement of aesthetic judgement. Standing on tiptoes to peer through the rustic opening in the Kirk at a knowing image of Scottishness as unimprovement, Tam glimpses into the future, Burns brilliantly heralding subsequent developments. In this sense, the irony surrounding Burns’s refiguring of Scottishness, rather than undercutting the move as a statement of serious ideological intent, confirms it as a forerunner of later cultural practice,

producing a distinctly modern understanding of identity as ironic self-awareness that we will explore in more detail via Scott. The squared-off view inside the Kirk consummates the poem's toying with ideas of emblematic Scottishness. The reader is asked to gaze in and find nationhood construed as a notional aesthetic prospect, occupying a liminal ideological space both literally and metaphorically. While this treatment of Scotland might appear to render it an impotent, romantic dream, this space may contain a special form of latent power. Perhaps, by altering the terms upon which cultural conflict is to be based, Scotland can introduce a new era in which identity constructs are played out in aesthetic terms, levelling the playing field. Nannie cannot cross the Doon, yet the potential vigour of an aesthetic existence is still hinted at by 'Tam', as the hordes launch out into the night.

Resonances

Given this chapter began by enforcing the danger of making simplistic assessments of Burns, it should come as no surprise that we are left predominantly with illustrations of complexity. The overriding characteristic of his work is its ability to balance multiple, often oppositional, ideological structures. His linguistic heteroglossia may be key to his writing, but his ideological duplicity is no less so. Throughout his reception history, many readers have tended to miss this complexity, producing reductive and convenient models of the poet (partly endorsing his own self-constructions). Not only is such a move incorrect or incomplete, but it also undersells its subject, missing some of Burns's truly impressive features. His navigation of eighteenth-century cultural politics is consistently nuanced and understanding this allows us to better analyse both his literary output and the contemporary milieu.

Burns's posthumous reception is sometimes described as a kind of Romanticisation, in as much as simplistic characterisations of him drew on key elements of a developing cultural ideology often understood as Romantic. While at the beginning of the nineteenth century, Allan Cunningham complained of the poet that he was not quite romantic enough – 'His rapture is without romance; and to the charms of his composition he has not added that of chivalry' – this perhaps equally disingenuous judgement would not prevent a long process of critical obfuscation (*Songs of Scotland*, I, p. 234). Commentators stressed a watered-down version of Burns's biography, drawing on the growing cult of the personality, attempted to mute his sexual vulgarity, and wilfully removed his work from its local immediacy, laying the emphasis on his lyrical universality.

However, within the Scottish Romantic tradition we are tracing around the dialectics of improvement, Burns's role has been firmly established here, offering as it does a nuanced engagement with key questions around improving ideology in Scotland. As part of this, he has been read as performing a key cultural manoeuvre which nicely links him to later writers. The repeated aestheticisation of Scotland in Burns's work – as his treatment of national identity is read through his aesthetic politics – is suggestive of the kind of national-cultural discourse that would see its full flowering in the work of Walter Scott and others. Powerfully aligning his self-image, the pastoral mode and Scottish nationhood, Burns's work stresses an aesthetically understood formation of the national subjectivity, thus prefiguring the intervention of the *Waverley Novels* in a very different generic mode. We have seen how his rustic ideological matrix penetrates through his work, crystallising the associative field of rustic-bard-nation in his on-going elevation of Scottishness; while 'Tam o'

Shanter' also ultimately produces a self-consciously aestheticised understanding of Scotland.

While this chapter has frequently confirmed the notion of Burns as a highly 'historicist' writer, it has also flagged up the limitations of such a view. Following the line of James Chandler in citing a literature which is highly aware of its historical locatedness (as compassed in the Introduction), Burns is among the strongest long-eighteenth-century specimens: his 'Elegy on the Year 1788' [K 250] a resonant example of a poetics engaged in overtly rooting itself in a historical moment. Yet, beyond just a constant spatial doubling, in which the frames of the local and the universal are placed in a dynamic and interchangeable relationship, his work does feature an on-going stress on literature as a kind of transcendent force. This feature of his writing is epitomised in decorous fashion at the close of 'The Brigs of Ayr' [K 120]. For most of its length the work is a strong example of Burns's openly polemical mode, as the conservative ideology of the 'Auld Brig' faces off against the modern Whiggism of the improved 'New Brig'. Their argument – partly construed as generational – covers a series of key contemporary debates including aesthetics and religion. Exploring the conflict, Burns largely resists taking sides in his personal narrative voice. Yet the stalemate that results is trumped in an intriguing fashion.

The incursion of the 'fairy train' introduces a stylised mode that appears to render polemical discussion obsolete [K 120, 195]. The acrimonious debate is overwhelmed by this sudden onslaught, hearkening back to a florid Augustan verse reminiscent of Alexander Pope – though the fairy festivities themselves are definitively Scottish [K 120, 202-208]. The Brigs immediately forget 'their

kindling wrath' and drop the argument, interestingly positing an overt 'literariness' or the manifest workings of art as transcending the political domain [K 120, 234]. Suspicious of a fault in 'design and general proportion', Thomas Crawford describes the sudden switch in direction as Burns 'produc[ing] from nowhere a fairy band' – yet the abruptness of the shift acts to emphasise the capacity of the new mode (pp. 197-198). Perhaps here Burns figures a national aesthetic as a new modality in which modern Scottish identity can be productively located, leaving behind the fraught fissures of historical domestic politics. Of course, moving into the nineteenth century – the Disruption of 1843, escalating religious sectarianism – such a hope would appear forlorn. We have already suggested Burns's influential position leading into nineteenth-century cultural procedure. Yet as the idealised image of the national bard himself attains to greater and greater consequence following his death, feasibly we can detect a kind of aesthetic solution in play, as the national community seeks a cultural counter-weight to such forces of division. Perhaps in the dramatic apotheosis of the poet, there was a desire to provide a relatively inclusive locus for nationalist energy.

As subsequent chapters progress across the historical period, it is important that the role of Burns remains in focus. He provides a significant contribution to the negotiation of Scottishness and Britishness that emerges in contemporary thought, embedding these identity structures within the terms of improvement and its alternatives. Whether specifically reading residual Scottishness via the 'pastoral nation', or more broadly as unimprovement, Burns adds vital pieces to this dialectical narrative, though he also undercuts and critiques it. The links between his literary project and that of later writers will

become increasingly clear. Within the long trajectory traced here, Burns provides an important staging post between eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century Scottish literary culture. His investment in the cultural theory of the Enlightenment combines with his innovative foreshadowing of later aesthetic developments to place him right at the heart of this narrative. While his apotheosis as the national bard may have been problematically based on less-than-judicious interpretations of his work, in the context of the present study he is justifiably pivotal to a revised canon of Scottish Romanticism.

Chapter Three – ‘Taking the Plaid’: Aesthetic Nationalism and the Modern

Condition

Open any tourist brochure for Scotland and one image above all is likely to confront you. Impossibly poised upon its miniscule island to frame a backdrop of Highland grandeur – with arrow-slits the remnants of a tempestuous past – Eilean Donan Castle has become the quintessential image of the nation. Anecdotally known as the most photographed castle in Scotland, this iconic structure appears to fulfil for many an ideal image of Scottishness; certainly the never-ending stream of tour buses throughout the high season appears to suggest as much. Yet, perhaps like all such icons, Eilean Donan ultimately begs the question of authenticity and highlights the role of aesthetics in local- or national-cultural paradigms. Decimated in 1719 at the tail end of the first Jacobite Rising, the castle was a derelict – if picturesque – pile of rubble throughout the ages of Burns and Scott. When it was re-built and modernised based on surviving plans in the early twentieth century, the scene was set for the ‘new’ structure to become a central feature of the national heritage.¹⁷⁸ Of course, far from denying its fragmented history, tourist information on the castle avidly expounds on this narrative, its Jacobite history counter-intuitively a key element of its immemorial, feudal mystique.¹⁷⁹ History, aesthetic impact, flaunted re-fabrication and an ironically-invoked antique continuity all combine in a complex

¹⁷⁸ Roger Miket and David L. Roberts explain how the castle was ‘picturesquely restored by Farquhar MacRae of Auchtertyre, to whom its “original” appearance was said to have been revealed in a dream’, suggestive of the way the castle embodies a self-consciously idealised notion of Scotland. The inevitable use of a picture of Eilean Donan on the cover of their book also registers the iconic status of the building. See Roger Miket and David L. Roberts, *The Mediaeval Castles of Skye and Lochalsh* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2007), p. 93.

¹⁷⁹ See *Eilean Donan Castle*, <<http://www.eileandonancastle.com/visitor-information/history.htm>>, [accessed 3 June 2014].

ideological web, finally constituting a particular form of 'tradition'. At the risk of over-determining the consequence of an isolated historical moment, the hotly-contested emergence of self-conscious approaches to cultural forms – especially national identity – around the beginning of the nineteenth century in Scotland appears to prefigure some of the procedures implicit in the immortalisation of Eilean Donan. Consciously engaged in narrating, reproducing and indeed selling an idea of Scottishness, the fiction of this period confronts us again and again with the process of national-cultural production and the multiplicity of often fragile or aggressively performative ideological procedures involved.

'Once more, will you take the plaid, and stay a little while with me among the mists and the crows, in the bravest cause ever sword was drawn in?' (*Waverley*, p. 141). Fergus Mac-Ivor's famous invitation in Walter Scott's 1814 bestseller is not simply an offer to the protagonist, or even to the reader, but is a wider appeal to the national and transnational community, invoking a developing culture of aesthetic nationalism. The previous chapter saw Burns driving at these ideas, linking together his construction of nationhood and his rustic poetics, before 'Tam o' Shanter' demonstrated the production of a transcendent aesthetic Scottishness. Moving into the early nineteenth century, this chapter traces the contested production of aesthetically based ideologies of nationalism, primarily in the novels of Scott, addressing some linked reflections and contestations by James Hogg. As was introduced in Chapter One, this period sees a marked turn towards a new investment in aesthetics as a medium of cultural identification. Scott's novels are undoubtedly central to this process, though it is important that we seek to understand them within a broader culture that is both context for, and product of, this literature.

The long eighteenth century sees the crystallisation of Scotland as a 'romantic nation', a perception that remains current today: it follows a rigid cultural logic that J. K. Rowling's unlikely hero must journey to Scotland in order to enter the domain of magic and adventure. As Scott's historical romance emerges, the question of the relationship between art and politics begins to take new and interesting directions. What exactly are the ideological implications of re-interpreting national history under the banner of fiction? How are contemporary political anxieties addressed by this procedure (a particularly pointed issue in the context of counter-revolutionary pressure)? What indeed is the ideological significance of truth in the modern world? These issues are among the many that this period raises, appearing in numerous ways to represent an originary point for what we habitually (if not unproblematically) recognise as elements of a modern, or perhaps rather postmodern condition. Whether this is characterised by cultural irony, ideological relativity or simply by an all-pervading consumerism, time and again Scottish fiction around the Regency period eerily charts and problematises these structures. Self-consciously leading us 'among the mists and the crows', and always querying the possibilities and the limitations of aesthetically oriented cultural identities, this writing is fortuitously gifted with the historical and artistic acuity to register, while also establishing, some of our most interesting habitual cultural practices.

The paradigmatic emergence of aesthetic nationalism in the early nineteenth century is meaningfully visible as a development from Scottish cultural forms associated with the Enlightenment and inflected by the specific political circumstances of the nation. This phenomenon also takes place against a backdrop of contemporary social and political unrest, very much a product of

the counter-revolutionary years and thus generally imbued with a strong Tory political bias. The link to the culture of the Scottish Enlightenment is more than simple precedence; rather the work of Scott (and indeed Hogg) is predicated on a continuing investment in many of the key ideologies associated with that period, not least: the prominence of intellectual clubs and societies, the academic discourses of moral philosophy and conjectural history, alongside inescapable class, gender and political tensions. This is accurately registered by Duncan's decision to refer to an 'Edinburgh post-Enlightenment', a modulation or reinterpretation rather than a break from earlier cultural forms (*Scott's Shadow*, p. xiii). Duncan's work helps to reveal the society of early nineteenth-century Edinburgh as a cultural powerhouse fostering the emergence of a recognisably modern approach to literature, including the literary marketplace as a commercially competitive site of cultural production, and a 'professionalized intellectual class' (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 20). As unfashionable as it may (still) be to characterise literature as a commodity, we need to be extra sensitive to this angle in a period when such questions were dynamic and as yet unresolved. A changing marketplace brought a set of concerns around publication, commercial success and social reputation that could have a dramatic influence on literary practice – even though occluding the commercial aspect is often a key feature of literature. Located somewhat uncomfortably within this moment – arguably a key birthplace of literary modernity – the discourses of Scottish aesthetic nationalism tackle the thorny issue of national identity, following a dialectic of improvement between multiple sets of apparent contradictions, including: Scottishness and Britishness; organic cultural tradition and professional authorship; partisan politics and polite aesthetics; and conflicting class interests.

The tenuous political status of Scotland is never far from the surface in the full emergence of its aesthetic existence, begging perhaps one question above all: is an explicitly literary subsistence merely a complacently elegiac and ultimately neutralised excuse for a 'real' nationhood? Or alternatively, is this a potent means for invigorating and dignifying an autonomous culture? As this chapter explores, these polarised possibilities are in consistent tension throughout the novels of Scott and Hogg, taking their part in a wider cultural conversation on the status and potential of a contested Scottishness poised within the umbrella of an increasingly hegemonic Britishness. Finally, as the closing section argues, the presence of a pervasive cultural irony in this formation may ultimately act to destabilise the nature of that geopolitical contest itself.

The crystallisation of a professional literary culture provides a context that should justify – if any justification is indeed required – the elements of comparison between Scott and Hogg in the following pages. Engaged in a competitive marketplace, their works are involved in a (sometimes aggressive) cultural interrelation more direct than simple historical coincidence, shared heritage or subject matter. Of course, the two authors knew each other and indeed collaborated together – not least upon the significant early project of Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*.¹⁸⁰ Both men had deep interests and investments (both emotional and economic) in the production, preservation, dissemination and re-writing of Scottish history. As the analysis of their work in this chapter shows, we find important features of a shared endeavour, alongside significant differences. Both figures provide substantial links between a residual

¹⁸⁰ Walter Scott, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, ed. by T. F. Henderson, 4 vols (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1932).

cultural inheritance and an increasingly commercialised literary marketplace. Thus while the prerogatives of class identity and other ideological disparities can encourage a picture of Scott and Hogg as wildly divergent, the present chapter chooses to read their fiction as part of a tense yet meaningful literary formation.

These authors have received increasing levels of critical attention recently, the latest twist in what has been for both, although in quite different ways, a tempestuous reception history. Popular to an unprecedented degree in his own period, appreciation of Scott dropped away towards neglect in the later-nineteenth and early twentieth century, only to be salvaged by an initially shaky but gradually influential tradition spearheaded by George Lukács in 1937 and at mid-century by David Daiches.¹⁸¹ In contrast, Hogg's success in his contemporary world was more limited (if still significant); the bulk of his works fading to a pretty conclusive obscurity from which the last few decades have plucked him with accumulating enthusiasm.¹⁸² In addressing these figures together, the present chapter is careful to avoid caricaturing either for the sake of argument – a risk that such a procedure must always run. For example, although earlier criticism habitually complained of Scott's slack, lazy writing, when juxtaposed against the wildly-irregular style of Hogg, the temptation may arise to view him suddenly as an imperious model of suffocating aesthetic unity.¹⁸³ However, a

¹⁸¹ See George Lukács, *The Historical Novel*, trans. by Hannah Mitchell and Stanley Mitchell (Middlesex: Penguin, 1981); and David Daiches, 'Scott's Achievement as a Novelist' and 'Scott's *Redgauntlet*', both in *Walter Scott: Modern Judgements*, ed. by D. D. Devlin (London: Aurora, 1970), pp. 33-62, pp. 148-161.

¹⁸² This trend is perhaps in some sense consummated by the recent publication of *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg*, ed. by Ian Duncan and Douglas S. Mack (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

¹⁸³ These objections against Scott in the later nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century are registered by Devlin, who comments that, 'the complaints

recent wealth of encouraging work on both authors gives a study such as the current one much to build upon. The overall argument at stake necessities retracing a certain degree of what is perhaps familiar ground, yet this is moved through as quickly as possible in order to explore more revealing territory.

The Waverley Novels

The socio-political ideology of Walter Scott's fiction is a subject that prompts interesting levels of critical anxiety.¹⁸⁴ Deeply enmeshed in the emotive domains of imperialism and nationalism, his work offends and enthuses with considerable ease. What tends to emerge, however, from a thorough reading of Scott and his associated secondary criticism, is the sheer capaciousness of this writing. Even when a particular point seems most clearly to be carried in these novels, breathing space generally remains for alternative possibilities or interpretations. Apparently characterised by unresolved (or rather uncomfortably-resolved) tension, his works can appear internally awkward, yet this is finally where their real interest lies, rather than their artistic shortcomings. For the current study this tension expresses itself in two main sets of pressures: formal and thematic respectively.

The first sees an on-going conflict over the political character of art. Scott's fiction is shot through with pointed reminders of the unreality of a romance aesthetic, regular allusions being made to literature as an idealistic and fatally-isolated activity; merely quixotically-loaded indulgence. Though this

against the tales are of shapelessness, wooden heroes and comic characters who exist *in vacuo* and are not responsible for the plot'. See D. D. Devlin, 'Introduction', in *Walter Scott: Modern Judgements*, ed. by Devlin, pp. 11-23, (p. 16).

¹⁸⁴ Though the current chapter addresses Scott solely via his prose fiction, it is worth pointing out that a number of the issues raised here are further problematised by his successful poetic career.

characterisation is one that we must remain consistently suspicious of, it nonetheless appears to jar against the considerable political and social concerns of his work, habitually choosing subject matter of a volatile nature. Importantly, Scott's work is contextualised within a developing theoretical tradition formulating the importance of fictional literature as a medium for historical explanation – imbued with the sociological acuity to strike at the heart of the human condition (this was at least in part a response to genre-status anxieties). A prominent contemporary articulation of this notion is found in William Godwin, who claims that:

The writer of romance then is to be considered as the writer of real history; while he who was formerly called the historian, must be contented to step down into the place of his rival, with this disadvantage, that he is a romance writer, without the ardour, the enthusiasm, and the sublime licence of imagination, that belong to that species of composition. True history consists in a delineation of consistent, human character.

While finally Godwin pessimistically finds romance equally as flawed as history – both 'almost infantine' representational modes – his radical destabilisation of the conventional epistemological hierarchy is indicative of an important developing perspective.¹⁸⁵ Of course, the notion that literature provides a specialised platform for social, historical and political debate is today so taken for granted as to hardly require articulation. Though less explicit than Godwin's essay, Scott's own argument about the universality of core human experience and thus the broad applicability of literary narratives (the main thrust of which he inherited from Enlightenment conjectural history) can be read as amounting to much the same thing:

¹⁸⁵ William Godwin, 'Essay of history and romance' in *The Political and Philosophical Writings of William Godwin*, ed. by Mark Philp, 7 vols (London: Pickering, 1993), V, pp. 291-301, (p. 301).

The passions [...] are generally the same in all ranks and conditions, all countries and ages; and it follows, as a matter of course, that the opinions, habits of thinking, and actions, however influenced by the peculiar state of society, must still, upon the whole, bear a strong resemblance to each other.¹⁸⁶

However, this justification of literature as a sociological tool sits somewhat uncomfortably alongside Scott's perhaps self-deprecating habit of invoking the frivolity of romance. In one sense, indeed, the recurrence of trope-heavy plotting in his works can be read as hijacking conjectural history's attention to replicable human narratives, one element of a tense relationship between constructions of history and romance that produces some of his most important effects. Though mimetic (and of course productive) of psychological and circumstantial archetypes, in dealing with real historical and social phenomena this writing may at times turn out to have a profoundly de-historicising effect. Engaged in complexly balancing contrasting notions of the work of literature, Scott's fiction moves in a sense between the poles of a 'historicist' and a 'transcendent' aesthetic, producing fascinating results.

The second key set of tensions in his work operates around the unresolved question of national identity, as the pages of the *Waverley Novels* ruminate on the status of Scottishness whilst exploring the ideological capacity of the British present. This discursive concern penetrates through Scott's fiction, providing the key motivator for, and distillation of, his intellectual preoccupation with ideas of historical process. Combined with the formal question, these parallel pressures act to produce the nervous power of his novels, whose pages

¹⁸⁶ Walter Scott, 'Dedicatory Epistle to the Rev. Dr Dryasdust, F.A.S.', in *Ivanhoe*, ed. by Ian Duncan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 13-23, (p. 19).

attempt complex balancing acts which may often as not leave the reader convinced of their utter un-workability.

The dominant critical view of Scott remains that of the sentimentally inclined pragmatist: that although he flirts deeply with ideas of residual Scottishness, this is finally done only to more securely consign them to the past: intoxicating historical detail, not a contemporary political issue. Thus Daiches memorably discusses 'a tragic sense of the inevitability of a drab but necessary progress' ('Scott's Achievement', p. 36); Nairn reflects that 'the purpose of [Scott's] unmatched evocation of a national past is never to revive it' (p. 115); and for Pittock, Scott's 'past may be magnificent, but it is over'.¹⁸⁷ This view is indeed carried quite vigorously in large parts of Scott's novels, though it is probably most clearly borne out in *Waverley*. An exploration of this dynamic will allow us to compass many of the most important issues here. Of course, it was through the guise of the 'Author of Waverley' that much of Scott's momentous cultural impact was mediated. The narrative appeal of that moniker may have contributed to a critical tendency to focus on the first novel as an overture, and the proceeding series as more or less successful variations. This tactic risks missing some of the complexities of his oeuvre, yet provided we remain attuned to these, beginning with the novel of 1814 remains an instructive method.

¹⁸⁷ Murray Pittock, 'Introduction: Scott and the European Nationalities Question' in *The Reception of Sir Walter Scott in Europe*, ed. by Murray Pittock (London: Continuum, 2006), pp. 1-10, (p. 2).

The Waverley Novels: *Waverley* and 'real history'

Edward Waverley is a romantic adolescent, as Scott takes six opening chapters to assure us.¹⁸⁸ Autobiographically an image of Scott's young reading (so he later confirmed), the early part of the novel finds Waverley 'like a child amongst his toys, culled and arranged, from the splendid yet useless imagery and emblems with which his imagination was stored' (*Waverley*, p. 18).¹⁸⁹ His attachment to the literature of Romance is powerfully associated with this sense of idealistic dreaming, 'splendid yet useless', as Scott lays the groundwork for the narrative arc of the novel.¹⁹⁰ As the action progresses through the Jacobite Uprising and the *bildungsroman* unfolds, these early sequences have prepared us to understand and sympathise with Edward's silly involvement in the 'unfortunate civil war' (*Waverley*, p. 338).¹⁹¹ This leads us towards the brink of adulthood – coinciding with a famously censored version of the failure of Jacobitism – and what are for many the most important lines in any Scott novel, 'He felt himself entitled to say firmly, though perhaps with a sigh, that the romance of his life was ended, and that its real history had now commenced' (*Waverley*, p. 283).

Applying some of the logic of stadial historiography, this personal developmental

¹⁸⁸ This work evolves some preliminary thoughts on *Waverley*. See McKeever, 'Enlightened Fictions and the Romantic Nation [2011]', pp. 46-54.

¹⁸⁹ See Walter Scott, 'General Preface to the Waverley Novels, January I, 1829' in *Sir Walter Scott On Novelists and Fiction*, ed. by Ioan Williams (New York: Barnes & Noble; Great Britain: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 409-427, (p. 411).

¹⁹⁰ The continental European Romance that is prominent within Waverley's reading contributes to a significant strand in the novel, part of an associative web that ties together ideas including: Jacobitism, Catholicism, romance and emotional susceptibility. Notable in this context is the Mac-Ivor's French education (involving of course their mingling among the Jacobite hierarchy), a key explanation for their mind-frames (*Waverley*, p. 14, p. 71, pp. 91-93, pp. 99-102).

¹⁹¹ It is worth noting the use of the term 'civil war' here, as opposed to 'rebellion', signalling a level of sympathy with the Jacobite project.

tale has been tied into a projection of the process of modernisation, with Highland clan society a noble but impotent relic of a previous stage that has no logical claim to a place in the present.¹⁹² Presented as the stuff of 'splendid uselessness', Edward's Jacobite dalliance is a foolish attempt to divert an inevitable evolution, an ageing process. This project is so irrelevant to the modern world that it represents the imposition of romance upon 'real history'. Indeed, by a compelling stratagem, the narrative structure places Jacobitism – and the residual Scottishness it significantly figures – into a double bind, fatally aligned with both history and romance: at once hopelessly past, and the juvenile stuff of fairy-tales. This move is buttressed by the logic of Enlightenment historical accounts of the progressive advent of the rational. The yoking of the young man's maturation to this historical narrative also provides a neat exemplar of the Scottish Enlightenment's civic assumptions about the national implications of personal improvement. The young Brit, in his own adolescent 'progress', figures the painful yet compulsory national-imperial coming-of-age.

Following this line, the apex towards which the novel drives is the London-manufactured painting in which Edward's activities during the '45 are captured, idealised and commodified. Even his weapons, in action only a few pages earlier, are now consigned to the status of cultural artefacts, to be 'generally admired' (*Waverley*, p. 338). Within the stated context of 'civil war', the persistent overlap between the causes of Jacobitism and residual Scottish patriotism allows the painting to render Scotland itself a specific kind of

¹⁹² By affixing the historical process to Edward's ageing, arguably Scott produces an element of inevitability not actually present in the conjectural histories of the Enlightenment: Rome and Athens were unforgettable reminders that 'progress' was not inexorable.

aesthetic object, saleable and politically impotent. Indeed, the plot trajectory even borders on the 'just a dream' trope beloved by twentieth-century cinema, so sudden is the transport from civil war to polite civilities. In Cairns Craig's influential view, the painting is the consummation of a narrative process which expunges its subject altogether from the domain of politico-historical reality:

His life in history has been turned into art; it has been 'framed' and removed from the flow of events, its static form matching the lack of causal connection between that primitive world and his modern condition. Waverley's Jacobite sympathies have been shown to be a romantic perversion of the true course of history, a reversion to a narrative which will have no connection with the future. (*Out of History*, p. 39)

Fulfilling the thematic trail established by the early linking of art and juvenile idealism, the painting secures the events of the '45 within a powerfully transcendent aesthetic space, a material counterpart of the 'splendid yet useless imagery and emblems' of Edward's imagination. Scott mirrors (and capitalises on) the annulment of the teleological link between Scotland's modern prosperity and the national past that we saw driven at by William Robertson in the Introduction. Extracting this historical narrative from the 'true course of history', the painting renders Jacobitism historically and politically supererogatory. Thus from Edward's now mature perspective (having undergone sufficient development or improvement to recognise the proper place for such material) the conclusive and total investment of residual culture into the realm of romance is achieved, finally pulling it out of the historical framework altogether, to be literally framed as a transcendent aesthetic object. That this manoeuvre threads a novel which begins and ends by asserting a serious historical purpose in its apology to the reader (that of 'tracing the evanescent manners of his own country') provides a remarkable example of the tense and productive

relationship between Scott's trivialising stresses on romance and his claim on historical relevance (*Waverley*, pp. 4-5, pp. 339-341).

By a neatly linear logic, *Waverley's* childish love of Romance leads to his brief Jacobitism; the two finally bound up inextricably in the terms of the painting. Jacobitism (and via the associative contingency: 'old Scottish patriotism') is a 'childhood story' and must give way to 'Britishness', which is 'a matter of adult responsibility' (Pittock, *Scottish and Irish*, p. 187). Fatally doomed to an unfamiliar past from where it can be recovered only as an aesthetic object, residual Scottishness emerges as the idealised colour of unimprovement, mooted to the demands of Anglo-British modernity in all 'real', pragmatic terms. As this chapter goes on to explore, the establishment of aesthetic distance so key to controlling this evacuation of national agency turns out ultimately to be the most important element of Scott's work, an element that may destabilise as much as it supports any view of his political rationale. Yet as *Waverley* bundles into its conclusion and the themes of chivalrous Romance, puberty and idealising cultural appropriation come to fruition, the association of residual Scottishness with 'splendid uselessness' is made with unmistakable force. Political vigour appears to have been sacrificed at the altar of aesthetic iconisation; or rather aesthetic iconisation appears to have been offered as a recompense for political submission.

It is worth keeping in view the fact that *Waverley* appeared in 1814, only a year before the Battle of Waterloo signalled the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Given the impact of European war and its cessation on British society, there are compelling reasons to interpret Scott's first novel as a key text in the long-term ideological shoring up of British imperial hegemony invigorated by conflict and

continued during the post-war years, especially given the significant role served by Highland soldiers in those wars. Indeed, if Pitt the Elder's original raising of the Highland regiments in 1757 served the consolidation of British culture, perhaps *Waverley* needs to be located as part of the same historical narrative. While military deployment erased the residue of disloyalty surrounding Scots, Womack identifies a strain in conservative thought from the American War of Independence onwards, in which (with a neat historical irony) 'sentimental Jacobitism' was part of the appropriation of a stereotyped Highland loyalty in an appealing 'sublime of *compliance*' (pp. 49-55). A terrifying historical enemy now deployed on the imperial fronts, famed Jacobite devotion could be safely admired as part of the lustre of Britishness, a counterpoint to both domestic radical unrest and international threats. In a similar vein, perhaps the textual production of a dignified yet politically attenuated Jacobite-Highland Scotland in *Waverley* could further incorporate residual Scottishness into the imperial fold. Then, via this act the contemporary radical-revolutionary threats to the British state could also be implicitly addressed, in an expansive outmanoeuvring of dissent. Indeed, perhaps the focus on Jacobitism, a distant threat by Scott's day, offered a comfortable displacement of the terms of conflict; its symbolic recovery part of a grand spectacle, a welcome distraction that promised ideological security by auxiliary means. Scott's novel emerges here as an expedient enactment of imperial seizure, providing problematic elements of a suggestive domestic Other with a strictly monitored place in the British pantheon. Framed against such contexts the approach to residual Scottishness in this work appears to tread a misty line between (albeit politically neutralising) incorporation and thorough exploitation.

Robert Crawford suggests that, 'Scott's compositional strategies challenged an audience used to thinking of itself as monocultural and monolingual. [...] He sought a devolution of sensibility' (*Devolving*, p. 133). Yet for many readers the invitation of residual culture into a British paradigm staged here may rest upon objectionable terms. The high price of this devolution is apparently (to borrow Pittock's phrase) an 'infantilization of the national past' all the more pervasive for appropriating the logic of both stadial history and individual psychological development (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 65). Conceiving residual Scottishness as a sealed antiquity juxtaposed against the progress of society, the production of an aesthetic national character understood as romance becomes a sentimental necessity; the existence of this new romantic nation being contingent, however, upon a strict assertion of British hegemony. Given his propensities for self-denigration and playful flippancy, Scott's own comments on his work must always be held at arms-length. Yet in light of the above view, his famous suggestion that he sought to mirror Maria Edgeworth's work on Ireland in 'completing the Union' can appear to reference a project with unacceptably reductive politico-cultural implications for residual Scottishness ('General Preface to the Waverley Novels', p. 413). Employing the trope of the inter-cultural marriage familiar to his contemporary readership from the genre of the national tale, *Waverley* puts the 'unpleasant scenes' of the rebellion to bed with the marriage of Edward to the suitably submissive quasi-Jacobite Rose Bradwardine; selecting a symbolically Lowlandish partner (tinged with a Highland aura) over the overbearing Highland rebel Flora (*Waverley*, p. 339, p. 332).¹⁹³ As is apparent, the sexist feminine, irrationalised and fatal picture of

¹⁹³ It is worth mentioning Alexander Welsh's argument that Rose represents the

civil unrest produced in this picture resonates with the class motivations of Sir Walter, Tory defender of the Peterloo massacre and patriarchal Laird of Abbotsford.¹⁹⁴ With the memories of revolution in France still fresh and threatening, political uprising clearly remains a topical issue. Decorum, it seems, must be maintained at all costs.

In as much as this formula – rendering residual Scottishness a castrated aesthetic accessory to a dominant Anglo-Britishness – is present in the *Waverley* Novels, it is produced through the use of certain primary compositional strategies. These deserve a passing note before some of the complications and outright contradictions to this reading are addressed. Bearing in mind the *Spectator*-influenced stress on literary disinterestedness in eighteenth-century polite Scottish cultural theory (qua Hugh Blair), the final disavowal of political foment in *Waverley* can be seen as building on a link between literary sophistication and apoliticality already very much present in the culture which produced Scott. This ‘moderatism’ – if it can be called as such – is navigated for us through the novels by a series of effects, the first and perhaps most significant being Scott’s protagonists. The series of apparent ciphers through which we experience the action of these novels has been long recognised, one explanation being perhaps that the less ‘character’ the hero possesses, the more readily he can be infused with the reader’s own persona. Scott informs us that these

‘light’ or ‘blonde’ heroine that appropriately corresponds to ‘the passive hero’, as opposed to the ‘dark heroine’ (Flora). See Alexander Welsh, *The Hero of the Waverley Novels: with new essays on Scott* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), pp. 48-55.

¹⁹⁴ The text of a letter likely authored by Scott on the subject of Peterloo is reproduced as an appendix in Graham McMaster’s book on the author. See ‘To the Editor of *The Edinburgh Weekly Journal*’, in Graham McMaster, *Scott and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), pp. 228-240.

'insipid sort of young men' serve to facilitate narrative U-turns by their pliability and are normally English in order for him to introduce Scotland in a manner that would be otherwise inappropriate ('review of *Tales of my Landlord*', pp. 431-432). Daiches suggests that these figures are of a 'middle-of-the-road' caste, concluding that Scott's protagonists (or rather protagonist, singular) are the image of the 'humane, tolerant, informed and essentially happy man', explaining their apparent vacuity as merely a sign of inoffensive balance ('Scott's Achievement', p. 60). A focal point around which the narratives develop, these characterless characters provide the voice of sober reason in their worlds of political turbulence.

There are two problems with such a theory. The first is that it applies with any vigour whatsoever only to a limited selection of the protagonists (and even that is contestable).¹⁹⁵ The second and more important is that it tends to elide those characters' real polemical agency. What is at work in Scott's and Daiches's estimation is a prototypical conservatism, the assumption that ultimately conformity is the reality of good sense or 'tolerance'.¹⁹⁶ Though these characters become entangled in political action, ultimately their retiring conservatism – at the end of a nationally symbolic process of inevitable

¹⁹⁵ Taking the most widely read 'Scottish novels', this argument can probably be made most effectively in the cases of Edward Waverley, Frank Osbaldistone and Henry Morton (in his case becoming more problematic following Chapter Thirteen and the 'instantaneous revolution in his character'). See Walter Scott, *Old Mortality*, ed. by Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 160.

¹⁹⁶ Albeit that Scott's attack on Waverley as a 'sneaking piece of imbecility' seems to suggest a more active role. See Walter Scott, 'To John B. S. Morritt, 28th July 1814', in *The Letters of Sir Walter Scott*, ed. by H. J. C. Grierson, assisted by Davidson Cook, W. M. Parker and others, 12 vols (London: Constable, 1932), III, pp. 477-481, (p. 478).

bildungsroman maturation – is perniciously characterised as ideologically

neutral. Alexander Welsh comments that:

[Scott's] hero is not a neutral. [...] He represents the modern and conservative model of a member of civil society. The hero is not precisely Everyman, but every gentleman – not in some supercilious social sense, but in the profound conviction that society is a compact of independent owners of property. (p. 38)

Representing a conservative ideology in fundamental defence of capitalist accumulation, the polemical agency of these reader-avatars is mystified under the banner of wavering indeterminacy: that quintessential means of defending the status quo. This is co-opted to a suggestion that modernity (post-1688) represents the state in which wholesale political action has ceased to have any justifiable motivation. As Duncan suggests:

Scott stands, with Burke and Wordsworth, for a complex transition between Whig and 'Conservative' cultural hegemonies, affirming the establishment of 1688, when domestic history was supposed to have culminated. [...] For the ideal of 1688 was a revolution without further revolutions.¹⁹⁷

Therefore, through the subtle agency of these young conservatives, the view of residual Scottishness – indeed all possible challenges to the British imperial and commercial hegemony – as ultimately a fatal politics is brought to bear upon these narratives. Their established viewpoints render it as such without the need of anything more than the exertion of their civil decency. Political action may be a romantic dream, an attractive aesthetics, yet its fundamental irrelevance to contemporary reality necessitates it remaining in a strictly temporary realm of irrationality.

¹⁹⁷ Ian Duncan, *Modern Romance and Transformations of the Novel: The Gothic, Scott, Dickens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 53.

This ideological trajectory also often utilises the figure of tourism, which in a number of these novels (including *Waverley*, *Guy Mannering*, *Rob Roy* and *Redgauntlet*) provides an important structural or thematic framework. Taking, for example, the first sentence of *Guy Mannering*, we can see how the narrative is immediately oriented:

IT WAS in the beginning of the month of November, 17—, when a young English gentleman, who had just left the university of Oxford, made use of the liberty afforded him to visit some parts of the north of England; and curiosity extended his tour into the adjacent frontier of the sister country. (*Guy Mannering*, p. 3)

Motivated by the crucial discourse of touristic ‘curiosity’, the Oxonian Mannering fills his leisure with the indulgence of Scotland as curio.¹⁹⁸ The theme of the tour gives Scott his formal excuse for narrating in detail the specifics of Scottish society, such information justified by the perspective of the inquisitive observer. Yet the format of the journey to and within Scotland – concluding with symbolic marriages and the attainment of property – performs an episodic observation, excavation and appropriation of the Scottish nation as an aesthetic commodity. Indeed, Scott’s favoured touristic narrative tone tends towards such an end even when the tour itself is less explicit or is adapted (such as its inversion in the central passages of *The Heart of Mid-Lothian*, when although Jeanie travels to England, her own character remains largely the object of the narrative’s curiosity). The souvenir of the trip – whether it be Waverley’s painting and weapons, symbolically-loaded manor homes and estates such as the New Place of Ellangowan, or simply the obtainment of a Scottish bride – leaves us with a

¹⁹⁸ For a recent evaluation of the discourses of ‘curiosity’ in long-eighteenth-century travel literature, see Nigel Leask, *Curiosity and the Aesthetics of Travel Writing, 1770-1840: ‘From an Antique Land’* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

sense of the procurable nature of Scottishness; a sense which becomes unavoidably poignant as the dust cover of a Waverley Novel is closed and it is replaced among its collectable set (*Guy Mannering*, p. 353). Key to securing this perspective is the self-conscious fictionality of these works: novels which are at considerable pains to remind us of their status as such. Scott's narrative interjections disrupt our suspension of disbelief; even his short and epigraphed chapter divisions reinforce the 'art' at play. Combined with his thematic focus on the flippancy of literary pursuits – for example Dominie Sampson's comic suspicion of 'belles lettres, poems, plays, or memoirs', which merit only 'the implied censure of "pscha," or "frivolous;"' – the effect is profound (*Guy Mannering*, p. 109). Set within this framework, the subject matter of Scottish history is persuasively framed as the stuff of 'splendid uselessness'; perhaps once the domain of the 'ponderous tome[s]' favoured by the Dominie, but in the hands of Scott apparently transfigured into light entertainment (*Guy Mannering*, p. 302). When combined with the rendering of the nation as a tourist's curio, this imposition of art produces a powerful sense of aesthetic objectification. Filling the pages of these bestselling collectables in a virtuoso act of cultural control, Scottishness is captured as a suggestive and romantic domain that can be accessed and possessed as a modern artistic product. Cleansed of gravitas and import, this material is rendered unchallenging to the hegemony of British society and culture, fit to be consumed on the mass market by an expanding readership desperate for the thrilling and ultimately unthreatening tales of Scottish history.

The Waverley Novels: exceptions and alternatives

The above view of Scott's fiction has considerable grounds of support, yet is far from conclusive. It relies too heavily on textual selectivity and a questionable gesture of faith in the ideological stability of fiction. Albeit that Scott's reader may be forgiven for barely stifling a groan when the irascible Highlander, the Captain of Knockdunder, appears towards the end of *The Heart of Mid-Lothian* apparently wearing the consummated Union of 1707:

His piper was in the bow of the boat, sending forth music, of which one half sounded the better that the other was drowned by the waves and the breeze. Moreover, he himself had his brigadier wig newly frizzed, his bonnet (he had abjured the cocked-hat) decorated with Saint George's red cross, his uniform mounted as a captain of militia, the Duke's flag with the boar's head displayed – all intimated parade and gala. (*Heart of Mid-Lothian*, pp. 471-472)

On a similar note, it is possible to consider *Redgauntlet* as Scott's most obvious amplification of a theme of Scottish political emasculation, with Edward Redgauntlet's heartbroken wail in the novel of 1824 the final death knell in a process begun a decade earlier. As if *Waverley* did not make the point explicitly enough, now we can be certainly sure that 'the cause is lost for ever!'; or at least lost forever outside the pages of fashionable literature (*Redgauntlet*, p. 396). The exclamation figures Scott reduced to yelling at his reader, publishing again and again in a dogged attempt to convince us of this state of affairs. However, as bitterly amusing as this might be, things are not quite so simple. Take *The Antiquary*, for example, where although the target Other is rendered explicitly as the contemporary, radical-revolutionary threats to Scott's post-political Britishness; a persistent, almost compulsive disintegration of all cultural and historical 'truths' seems at least to probe any assured celebration of the

prevailing order (more on Scott's unremitting irony below).¹⁹⁹ Indeed, even if we restrict ourselves to a core selection of the most widely read novels, exceptions abound.

Rob Roy is an interesting case here, acting to problematise at least as much as it confirms the national formula above. The symbolically loaded marriage of the text ends in widowhood for Frank Osbaldistone (thus perhaps querying the outcome of 'union'), while Douglas Mack suggests that the relocation of the Jacobite headquarters to Northumberland represents 'a significant and assertively Scottish alteration to the *Waverley* pattern, [which] helps Scott to enhance and *deepen* [emphasis added] the positive aspects of the Highlanders'.²⁰⁰ This does not perhaps entirely negate the implications of the novel's undoubted use of aestheticisation. Yet perhaps as much as any Scott novel, *Rob Roy* pays focussed critical attention to these processes, teasing the reader with familiar ideas that are established and overturned in a powerful exhibition of ironic self-awareness. The protagonist Osbaldistone seems to establish Scotland within a typology of romance, commenting that, 'from an early period, they [the Scots] had occupied and interested my imagination' (*Rob Roy*, pp. 93-94). Such ideas recur throughout the text, only to be consistently challenged. For example, in Frank's words (albeit a character whose opinions should certainly not be taken without caution) the Highlanders are an inherently 'romantic' race. Such is his reaction to the highly wrought breakfast appearance of the MacGregors and their adherents by a dramatic waterfall:

¹⁹⁹ Walter Scott, *The Antiquary*, ed. by Nicola J. Watson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

²⁰⁰ Douglas S. Mack, *Scottish Fiction and the British Empire* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 111

With the natural taste which belongs to mountaineers, and especially to the Scottish Highlanders, whose feelings I have observed are often allied with the romantic and poetical, Rob Roy's wife and followers had prepared our morning repast, in a scene well calculated to impress strangers with some feelings of awe. (*Rob Roy*, p. 410)

Yet, the typical national-cultural implications of this characteristic ploy are limited here, in a novel that is reluctant to employ the Highlands as synecdoche for Scotland; in fact taking the country's divided nature as one of its most prominent themes. Earlier on, the omniscient narrator tells us that, 'The Scotch, it is well known, are more remarkable for the exercise of their intellectual powers, than for the keenness of their feelings; they are, therefore, more moved by logic than by rhetoric' (*Rob Roy*, p. 243). Indicating a Lowland cultural formation typified by the narrow tropes of Enlightenment rationalism, this alternative generalisation insists on a coeval divided Scottishness. The city of Glasgow is poised in the text as a cultural conduit between distinct formations. Although 'kin', the relationship between Lowlands (embodied in Bailie Jarvie) and Highlands (*Rob Roy*) fails to reveal itself as the normative emanation of stadialism, with entry to the latter realm a journey into an unredeemable (except by aestheticisation) past. Instead, the figure of the two kinsmen places these cultural formations firmly within the Scottish present, providing the revelation that, 'savagery and commerce sustain rather than cancel one another, constituting the uncertain, cryptic field of the present' (Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 110). In fact, this synchronous mixing of stages goes further and unravels even the aggregate characterisation of Scotland's constituent parts: the Highlanders, for example, are at once 'shaggy, dwarfish', and the 'foundation of [Glasgow's] future prosperity' (*Rob Roy*, p. 237). Improvement and unimprovement are interrelated functions of the present, coexisting across geopolitical divides in a

manner that dissolves unrealistic, unitary national-cultural moments and resists an easy alignment of residual Scottishness (whether as pastness or aesthetic colour) against Britishness.

However, despite such deconstructive insights, still the novel delights in exploring the unsubtle application of national paradigms. This strained interaction between instantiation and idea is epitomised in Andrew Fairservice's disgruntled obsession with the national tragedy of the Union. Yearning for a visionary pre-Union paradise, references to 'his country' mock Andrew's possessive attitude towards Scotland, only to be undercut by his casually bigoted (if familiar) views on the Highlands; not least the catch-all image of 'Donald', standing for 'a wheen kilted loons that dinna ken the name o' a single herb or flower in braid Scots' (*Rob Roy*, p. 223, p. 316). Religious and regional bias is exaggerated within Andrew's patriotic template, vividly rendering the nation as a lopsided and insufficient construct. His desire for a cultural past also further undercuts the *Waverley* stadial model, the Highlands that should offer him a journey into the unimproved merely a cause of fear, as 'to gang into Rob Roy's country is a mere tempting o' Providence' (*Rob Roy*, p. 332). While Andrew's vanished nationhood is clearly a matter of comic relief, still the point is clear: neither in the past nor the present can simplistic ideas of national character be substantiated. Instead the text offers a general confusion, saturated in a cacophony of opposing suppositions: "You are a Scotchman, sir; a gentleman of your country must stand up for hereditary right," cried one party. "You are a Presbyterian," assumed the other class of disputants; "you cannot be a friend to arbitrary power" (*Rob Roy*, p. 97). Interacting in a conflicting and unpredictable loop, Scotland is a complex image, the figure of the estranged, extended family

perhaps not quite capturing the incongruent overlapping of sameness and difference. Different sets of eyes apply their own preconceptions with a near-instinctual indelicacy, most notably in Rob Roy's ambiguous mobility between gentility and savagery, established in his ability to switch between linguistic registers (*Rob Roy*, pp. 254-257). 'Romantic region' and 'romantic nation' are set in chafing interplay. At once disrupting the neat location of Scottishness within a symbolic residual figure (whether it be the Highlands, Gypsy culture or Jacobitism), the sophisticated terrain of *Rob Roy* nonetheless demonstrates how such procedures carry on regardless, interacting with, perhaps even delivering a pastiche of, the *Waverley* model.

Pursuing incongruities through the series, a number of studies have made concerted attempts to significantly qualify, even outright deny, the dominant reading of Scott. Firstly, we should consider the volatile history of his reception. Even accepting the national burden of, for example, *Waverley*'s use of Jacobitism, the outcome of this treatment is debatable. It is worth remarking that the presentation of national culture as an ahistorical, transcendent affair could be a key device within active political movements, giving the nation an impregnable and eternal existence. Terry Eagleton nicely captures this idea, commenting that:

As Marx and Engels recognize in *The German Ideology*, to conceive of forms of consciousness as autonomous, magically absolved from social determinants, is to uncouple them from history and so convert them into a natural phenomenon.²⁰¹

Rendering Scottishness a potentially malleable phenomenon, perhaps Scott's consecration of the nation as aesthetic object could be deployed in the service of

²⁰¹ Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction*, 2nd edn (London: Verso, 2007), p. 59.

a more active politics. As we have found, Scott's production of an ahistorical, aesthetic nationhood interacts with, and perhaps finally trumps, a somewhat crippling historicisation, in which Scottishness epitomises a detached 'pastness'. Yet whether completely 'out of history' or merely 'stuck in history', the textual framework undermining an active politicisation may be less than omnipotent. Particularly when removed from a domestic context, it seems that much of the subtle detail that secures this dynamic was quite simply lost. Pittock writes that:

Scott presents the spectacle of a literature of combat repressed by the very historiography used to display it; but remove that historiography from its British context, and his European readers saw in him the most intensely political Anglophone writer of his age. (*Scottish and Irish*, pp. 189-190)

Freed of the systematic controls applied to the treatment of residual Scottishness, the stipulation of a detached, sentimental appreciation could be lost, rendering Scott's work a flaming celebration of oppositional culture. Aside from alerting us to the ideological instability of his writing, open to such flexible readings, this issue also raises the question of the importance of authorial intention. Even if it appears that Scott is making a particular point, if a significant proportion of the readership misses this, must we favour his supposed position in our analysis? Indeed, if these novels do in fact embrace a nationalist or an otherwise counter-hegemonic position only to excavate it of political agency, questions must remain over the dependability of this process. How overwhelmingly can the framing of a piece of fiction dictate the reader's experience? Even if the novel has from page one been establishing a certain dynamic, when the dust settles on Edward Waverley's new-found domesticity is the power of the quasi-nationalist crisis so successfully undermined? For some critics, the answer to this question is emphatically no, and it has been suggested that that is exactly what Scott intends.

The most determined attempt at reading Scott in this manner comes in a fairly recent publication by Julian Meldon D'Arcy, whose *Subversive Scott* is at pains to revise the above-summarised view, which he goes as far as to suggest has a kind of stranglehold on the field, readers unknowingly 'programmed' to discover only the dominant reading. D'Arcy's major contestation is that the Waverley Novels are subversive carriers of clouded meaning, nationalist propaganda shrouded and glossed for political delicacy. He contests that, 'Any nationalism [Scott] wished to express could not be flaunted with impunity, it would have to be very obliquely and subtly infiltrated into his fiction so as to be subliminally accepted by his audience'. The notion of Scott's novels as subliminal political tools is interesting, if perhaps excessive. Ultimately D'Arcy's project is handicapped by his over-zealous insistence on a nationalist Scott. Regarding the painting of Waverley and Mac-Ivor discussed above, he concludes that, 'The painting does not [...] "celebrate" the rising – it mocks it'. The image 'is an insult to his memory and to all of those who died at Culloden [...] a reminder to all Scottish readers of the ignominy and disgrace of the nation's defeat'. What emerges here and elsewhere is a disbelief that Scott could in all seriousness be engaged in such historical indelicacy – for D'Arcy, Scott is quite simply incapable of it – and that thus he must be satirising the very move he appears to be making. 'Mocking' the '45, the painting is in such ludicrously bad taste that the reader is being prompted to question the narrative and find the secret, 'dissonant' nationalist perspective.²⁰² Scott's work, particularly via its ironic self-awareness, does indeed destabilise its own ideological content, but to suggest that it does so

²⁰² Julian Meldon D'Arcy, *Subversive Scott: The Waverley Novels and Scottish Nationalism* (Hagatorgi: University of Iceland Press, 2005), p. 48, pp. 29-30, p. 73.

in order to imply a decisive, hidden nationalist agenda is tendentious.

Nonetheless, D'Arcy's investigation of the availability of 'dissonant' positions does credit to the scope of the Waverley Novels. Capacious and polyphonic, these novels generally allow for alternative readings to be at least partially feasible.

Moreover, it has been suggested that the apparently confident Britishness of Scott's writing declines towards the end of his life, finally coming much closer to the wholehearted 'dissonance' D'Arcy detects. Thus Pittock claims that while Scott's early work was fuelled by the Napoleonic Wars and the symbolic role of Scottish troops within those conflicts, 'A further bout of British centralization [...] combined with Scott's own ageing and bankruptcy to render his latter work somewhat more pessimistic about Scotland's place within the Union' (Pittock, 'Scott and the European Nationalities Question', pp. 4-5). The keystone text in this view of Scott tends to be the 1826 'Malachi Malagrowther' letters, which find an older Scott incensed over the issue of Scottish banknotes, the threat upon which he saw as endangering Scottish dignity within the Union. The aggressive mood of the letters finds him performing the role of incendiary pamphleteer to good effect, revealing a proud and threatened investment in both the country's wellbeing and status. Albeit within the framework of Union (Scott uses the term 'North Britain' and also refers to the entire polity as 'England'), the patriotic mood pulls beyond the purview of the topical political issue to become a defensive assertion of Scottishness. Scott frames the proposed measures as a betrayal of Scotland's deserved role in Empire and an affront to the ancient honour of the country. He reflects on 'an union between two kingdoms, or an

incorporating union, in which one enjoys the full advantage and supereminent authority', before continuing:

I do not suppose this farce will be continued long. We shall in due time, I suppose, be put all under English control, deprived even of the few native dignitaries and office-holders we have left, and accommodated with a set of superintendants in every department.²⁰³

Thus while it is perhaps a little strong to claim the Malagrowth letters as an example of autonomous political nationalism, Scott's characteristic playfulness certainly signposts the tensions and sticking-points in his treatment of Britain and the advent of modernity. Crystallising a tricky patriotic investment in Scottishness that rears its head throughout his oeuvre, the letters are an instructive reflection of such emotional conflict.

Of course, in assessing this treatment of nationhood, we must attempt to reconcile Scott to his historical moment. In this light, P. H. Scott is keen to assert that the finally pessimistic treatment of Jacobitism in this fiction (with its patriotic import) reflects merely the contemporary redundancy of the cause, not an 'insincere' behaviour on Scott's part (*Scott and Scotland*, p. 21). Remaining well short of the nationalist-subversive line of D'Arcy, this view finds a patriotic Scotsman doing his utmost to dignify his beloved nation's tempestuous history under the restrictive circumstances of the time. Perhaps indeed the somewhat constricted figure of the romantic nation was the best Scott could offer, an imperfect alternative to an even less vigorous existence. However, regardless of the weighting we feel ultimately emerges on this issue (perhaps finally a subjective question), the great allure of these novels inheres in the actual

²⁰³ See the facsimiles provided in Walter Scott, *The Letters of Malachi Malagrowth*, with a preface and essay by P. H. Scott (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1981), p. 40, p. 44, p. 47, p. 141.

complexity of the mediation between alternative cultural trajectories. If Scott is often engaged as an apologist for a British modernity, his writing succeeds in shedding at least temporary light on the alternatives to, casualties of, and contradictions implicit in the process. The very process of taking his readers into a vividly realised world of residual Scottishness may ultimately provide a reading experience that is more important than the subtleties of ideological framing. Perhaps indeed Scott's fiction is capable of betraying its own ostensible commitment, narrative control undermined by the force of his subject matter, the resonances of Scottish history infiltrating among the text with a Bakhtinian dialogic inevitability. Going further, Craig argues that not only the individual narratives but the entire series of the Waverley Novels represent a long, circular failure of a 'civilised linear' history', each novel's necessary re-engagement with residual cultural forms a denial of the previous instalment's supposed disarming or neutralising effect. He writes that, 'In every novel, and *between* the novels (if we imagine them as an account of a continuous history), the forward movement of progressive history is continually undone' (*Out of History*, pp. 70-72). It is the fundamental interplay between ideological alternatives, and historical possibilities, that provides the charge in Scott's fiction. Marriage-resolutions ('unions') not only fail to dominate the troublesome elements of the novels which they conclude, but are fated only to be broken apart as the political intrigues of the next in the series begin and the captivating debate continues: an iterative process condemned to fall short of closure.

In 1820 the ever-perceptive John Galt made a playful joke about the tense ideological dynamic of Scott's fiction. The simple-natured Dr. Pringle of Garnock voices his concerns about the potentially subversive nature of *Waverley*

(misrecognising it as a conventional rather than novelistic history), which although he finds 'wonderful interesting', nonetheless appears to be 'no so friendly to Protestant principles'.²⁰⁴ As Duncan rightly comments:

The joke goes against Pringle as a naïve reader, unaccustomed in his saintly simplicity to what the world recognizes as the conventions of romance; but it also raises questions about the political and ideological meanings carried by those conventions, and the conditions under which those conventions and those meanings become legible. (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 222)

Pringle's naïveté is a comic device that nonetheless strikes at the heart of the ideological tension in Scott's fiction. The feckless doctor's anxiety about the import of the novel is, as we have seen, indicative of a broader instability surrounding the apparently depoliticising narrative framework Scott deploys in his revival of residual cultural forms. The celebration of Scottish history may be largely secured by the complex mesh of aesthetic and historical techniques within which it is implanted, asserting controls based on the interlinked historical redundancy and romantic unreality of this material, yet this process remains only partially cohesive; remove or ignore these controls and suddenly this fiction becomes 'no so friendly' indeed. In rendering Scottish history an aesthetic commodity Scott may be cleverly facilitating its emotional enjoyment without endangering the British present (in which he personally had such an extensive investment), yet this dynamic consistently retains its own internal contestation as the residual heart swells to challenge the dominant head. Indeed the tension is such that the iterative process of these novels seems at times almost more concerned with imagining the limits rather than the triumph of Britishness. As we will find subsequently, however, what ultimately emerges

²⁰⁴ John Galt, *The Ayrshire Legatees*, in *Annals of the Parish & The Ayrshire Legatees*, p. 6.

from this relationship is the manner in which Scott's fiction finally appears to disavow the contradictions it is most famous for, wrapping its polemical excursions in a web of irony which may defuse the problematic situation at play, effectively 'curing' the Antisyzygy.

Hogg and national aesthetic horror

'But where are they now? A' mouled! a' mouled! – But the druckit blood winna let them rot!' (*Brownie of Bodsbeck*, p. 93). Mourning the (supposed) violent deaths of her husband and son, Nanny Elshinder's impassioned declaration in Hogg's *The Brownie of Bodsbeck* strikes with emotive power at the important question of national memory. Her insistence that the brutal treatment of the Covenanters renders their history immortal – as the 'druckit blood' spilled by their persecution resists the forces of decay – is a powerful emblem for Hogg's stubborn refusal to ignore the problematics of Scottish history and identity. While Scott's conception of national culture established itself as a dominant discourse across early nineteenth-century Europe, closer to home the implications and limitations of an aesthetic nationalism were explored in force through Hogg's vibrant prose. As the discussion above has indicated, Scott's fiction contains its own extensive internal contestation which acts to query and disrupt the ostensible ideological direction of the Waverley Novels; yet this tension spreads beyond his own writing to become a larger discursive territory in Scottish literature. Engaged in reflecting, parodying and competing with Scott, Hogg's fiction is particularly instructive, producing both a dialogic reworking and a systematic criticism of Scottish aesthetic nationalism. If he performs his own version of the process, we can also find Hogg striking at the weak points and polemical heavy-handedness inherent in Scott's rewriting of Scotland under the

sign of romance, examining such vulnerabilities for both comic and serious effect. This forms part of the evident, if finally inconclusive, oppositional aspect in Hogg's relationship to Scott: differing class sympathies, Hogg's less sceptical approach to their folk-cultural inheritance; both manifesting themselves in a suspicion of perceived historical casuistry. A straightforward characterisation of Scott's fiction as an ideological tool of British modernity – employing a restrictive aesthetics of romance as the key part of a political safeguard in order to celebrate residual Scottishness at a well-defined distance – falls short of satisfactory. Yet as much as this element in present, it is in the works of Hogg that we find the most interesting challenge to the formula. Perhaps engaged in unfairly caricaturing Scott, Hogg's works repeatedly set themselves up to challenge the politically loaded cohesion of residual Scottishness and dominant Britishness at least partially aimed at by the Scottian historical romance.

Pittock notes that, 'If Scott did much to render Scotland's identity both primitive and respectable, Hogg cultivated the primitive as a disrespectable and forceful survivor from the past' (*Invention of Scotland*, p. 91). Both appropriating and attacking, this correctly identifies Hogg's qualified acceptance of Scott's influential national-cultural paradigm. Significantly acquiescing in Scott's model of the romantic nation – now irrevocably associating Scotland with a particular kind of aesthetic space – Hogg tends to treat the politics of such a space quite differently, and indeed can in places be seen concluding unfavourably on the competence of an aesthetically-based nationalism. This disruptive role is one that is regularly identified as an image of his own personal status among the echelons of literary power in 'post-Enlightenment' Edinburgh. Perpetually situated somewhere on the fringes of social normativity as a working-class

intellectual navigating professional literary life, Hogg's irregularity reflects the ambiguities current in an as-yet unresolved field of cultural production.

Consistently both within and without the Edinburgh literary elite, his multifarious career signals remarkable levels of both opportunity and restriction: at once among the most prominent members of the *Blackwood's* circle and the perpetual butt of their jokes. Caroline McCracken-Flesher has observed that, 'as shepherd, Spy, *Blackwood's* persona, Burnsian inheritor, and Scott competitor [...] Hogg stood to Scotland as [...] the excess that undoes the reductive coherences of state nationalism, and reveals the nation as a hearty soup of roiling differences'.²⁰⁵ In his life and work, Hogg sets a fascinating challenge to the literary and social strata, undoing stereotypes and bridging between apparently disparate spheres.

In textual terms, this interrogatory fiction is powerfully exhibited in a number of Hogg's works. Yet a dramatic contestation of the ends, and finally the terms, of Scott's aesthetic nationalism is offered by his novel of 1823, *The Three Perils of Woman*. There we find Hogg at his most aggressively revisionist, explicitly panning the susceptible elements of the mode established by *Waverley* nine years earlier, ranging through a near-bewildering variety of literary forms in order to examine exactly what the results of reading nationhood through the lens of a politically partisan aesthetic ideology might be. In a novel riddled with textual fragmentation, miscommunication, historical uncertainty and episodes of genuine horror, Hogg challenges Scott's figuration of the nation by way of

²⁰⁵ Caroline McCracken-Flesher, 'Hogg and Nationality', in *The Edinburgh Companion to James Hogg*, ed. by Duncan and Mack, pp. 73-81, (p. 81).

emphasising the elements of violence, unpredictability and extreme, unresolved suffering within the national aesthetic range.²⁰⁶

The Three Perils of Woman

The Three Perils of Woman is increasingly recognised as among the very finest of Hogg's works.²⁰⁷ This is however a contemporary trend, as from its first appearance until very recently it was almost unanimously represented as an unqualified disaster. Even Douglas Gifford, normally a Hogg enthusiast, described it in his 1976 study as a 'complete failure'. He is disappointed that the division of the novel into three 'perils' seems arbitrary and lacks narrative coherence, writing that, 'the link between "peril" and story is often vague and artificial'. 'Peril Third', titled 'Jealousy', receives special censure, Gifford frustrated that, 'Here are cheap laughs at lecherous ministers, oddly adjacent to Highland atrocities [...] Its episodes are arbitrary in number, and at the end characters and mysteries are forgotten and unexplained'.²⁰⁸ It can and has been argued more recently that the novel coalesces across its sections upon a larger thematic structure. David Groves has suggested, for example, that the novel is built upon a grand allusion to Euripides's *Ion*.²⁰⁹ Yet to some degree it is this very

²⁰⁶ A potential complement to this discussion may be found in Meiko O'Halloran's essay on Scott and Hogg's differing approaches to a Joanna Baillie play. See Meiko O' Halloran, 'National Discourse of Discord? Transformations of *The Family Legend* by Baillie, Scott, and Hogg' in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, ed. by Sharon Alker and Holly Faith Nelson (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 43-55.

²⁰⁷ This section evolves some earlier thoughts on *Perils of Woman*. See McKeever, 'Enlightened Fictions and the Romantic Nation [2011]', pp. 76-93.

²⁰⁸ Douglas Gifford, *James Hogg* (Edinburgh: The Ramsay Head Press, 1976), p. 8, p. 126, p. 132.

²⁰⁹ David Groves, 'Stepping Back to an Early Age: James Hogg's *Three Perils of Woman* and the *Ion* of Euripides', *Studies in Scottish Literature*, 21 (1986), 176-196. See also Antony Hasler, 'Introduction', in James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Woman*, ed. by Hasler and Mack, pp. xi-xliii, (p. xv).

narrative fragmentation that increasingly cements the work's canonisation, typifying the peculiarly postmodern aspect of Hogg's writing – something long recognised in the context of *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, the work immediately preceding *Perils of Woman* in Hogg's oeuvre. The conceptual doubling and narrative unreliability in that work is reflected and enlarged here as Hogg pushes his experimental idiom to new extremes. Rather than condemning it as a sign of 'failure', the fragmentation of the novel needs to be taken on its own terms, seeming to deconstruct the possibility of narrative coherency in the face of history's turmoil. While it is possible that there is some element of accident in this, there are good reasons to infer a conscious ideological ambition, as we will see. In a more recent study John Barrell has commented on the way the novel 'pretends to consist of three novellas', alerting us more fruitfully to the formal complexities and self-conscious fictionality of the work.²¹⁰ Travestyng both the genres of the national tale and the historical novel, Hogg performs structural disintegrations that deny the possibility of narrative resolution and thus (in the context of both those genres) an articulate national-explanatory process.²¹¹ Scottish history, in this context, is simply too problematic to be satisfactorily mediated.

Many of the familiar tropes of the three-volume historical romance as popularised by Scott are present here, in what is in some respects Hogg's

²¹⁰ John Barrell, 'Putting Down the Rising', in *Scotland and the Borders of Romanticism*, ed. by Davis et al., pp. 130-138, (p. 130).

²¹¹ Douglas Mack notices the contribution of Hogg's declared formal structure to this disruptive mode. He states that, '[*Waverley*] offers a linear narrative in which a civilised future replaces a backward past. In contrast, *The Three Perils of Woman* offers a circular narrative, a fact which is stressed by the division of the narrative into "Circles" rather than the expected "Chapters"' (*Scottish Fiction*, p. 107).

clearest echo of the form (there are reasons to suggest that the novel is, in parts, specifically a response to *Waverley*). This includes, perhaps most importantly, the journey through historical unrest understood as the crucible of national identity. If this literary process tends towards the aesthetic evacuation of Scottishness, reconfiguring national memory as a zone of the imagination (as in *Waverley's* painting), *Perils of Woman* is very much aware of the trajectory and may even deliver it, though not without deep levels of scepticism. Indeed, framed by Hogg's characteristic style – the text shot-through with narrative interjections and playful formal experimentation that disrupt the readerly position – the production of an explicitly literary understanding of nationhood may be exaggerated to the point of critique here, placing the process itself under the microscope. Sharp juxtapositions between idealised sentimental passages and moments of brutal violence seem to mark the insufficiency of an aesthetic treatment (not least a politically loaded one) to capture the national past. As Antony Hasler points out, Hogg is also playing off another 'dimension' of Scott, 'amplfy[ing] it until it completely swamps the narrative' ('Introduction', p. xxvi). Hasler cites Hogg as appropriating the agency of arbitrary fortune that so often determines Scott's plots, taking this to a ludicrous extreme, constructing a world of confusion, disarray and disaster. The apparently chaotic events of Scott's historical romance – which tend (with informing predictability) towards crucially trope-heavy Romance resolutions – are appropriated by Hogg, who denies his telling of Scottish history the comfort of plot inevitability, rendering his aesthetic terrain rather a capricious one where the conventions of genre erupt and cross-mingle with a dangerous fluidity.

Establishing the provocative enterprise of the text within the first of its

three 'Perils' (each purporting to explore a particular moral danger to women: love, leasing (lying) and jealousy), in *Peril First* Hogg registers a clear subversion of the national tale, with its concluding emphases on marriages and 'union'-consummating births. The unsettling episodes concerning the Lowlander Gatty's troubled marriage to the Highlander McIon – including her catatonic or possibly un-dead period of pregnancy and labour – challenge the stock formula of the mode, transposing its domestic tropes into a register of uncanny disorientation. The delivery of a child who figures the nation (for Britain, the literal birth of modernity) is rendered a spectacle of monstrosity; a tone of dissent that lingers beyond the hasty resolution of Gatty's recovery (*Perils of Woman*, pp. 155-224). However, it is in *Peril Third* that we find much of the most direct interaction with Scottish aesthetic nationalism. Drawing the focus closer, Hogg explores the Highland countryside in the immediate aftermath of the battle of Culloden in 1746, moving among the depredations carried out in that part of the world by the King's forces. This in itself is a key signifier, given the notorious elision of the period in *Waverley* – a move habitually read as both central to, and indicative of, Scott's political agenda in the *Waverley* series. The simple fact that Hogg addresses this bloody episode may be enough for us to suspect that he is working against the grain of Scott's historical displacement, yet this actually seems to be flaunted in the text itself. At the end of *Peril Second*, it appears that he is going to replicate the vivisection, claiming that:

I am now compelled, both from want of room, and want of inclination to the task, to desist from the description of some dreadful scenes that followed the events above narrated. But, as they are they disgrace of the British annals, it is perhaps as well that I am obliged to pass over them, although it makes a breach in the tale that has always been one of the deepest interest to me. (*Perils of Woman*, p. 357)

Hogg does not narrate the battle as it unfolds, but that is the unforgiving limit of his sympathetic 'breach'.²¹² Certainly the suggestion of historical delicacy rings laughably false as an introduction to *Peril Third*, with its voracious appetite for the gruesome. In this context it appears that the events during and after Culloden are not simply the 'disgrace of the British annals' in terms of actual historical violence, but also in a subtler ideological sense. Perhaps Hogg insinuates that Culloden is also the 'disgrace' of the *project* of the 'British annals', condemning a loaded historiography that might downplay these events. A key passage in *Peril Third* reflects Hogg's procedure here:

There were many things happened to the valiant conquerors of the Highlands in 1746 that were fairly hushed up, there being none afterwards that dared to publish or avow them. But there is no reason why these should die. For my part, I like to rake them up whenever I can get a story that lies within twenty miles of them. (*Perils of Woman*, p. 332)

The 'raking' image is an allusion to a passage from John Home's 1756 tragedy *Douglas* in which the protagonist Lady Randolph pleads:

Oh! rake not up the ashes of my fathers:
Implacable resentment was their crime,
And grievous has the expiation been.²¹³

These lines had been notably quoted by Scott in *Old Mortality*, clarifying Hogg's allusion here (*Old Mortality*, p. 36). In context Hogg is referring to 'raking up' the tales of embarrassing defeats sustained by King George's troops – the 'valiant conquerors of the Highlands' – yet the narrator's obsessive 'raking' suggests a traumatised national-historical gaze, endlessly committed to re-living the

²¹² Also perhaps alluded to here is Pennant's famous remark on Culloden, 'Let a veil be flung over a few excesses consequential of a day, productive of so much benefit to the united kingdoms'. See Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland, 1769*, 2nd edn (London: White, 1772), p. 145.

²¹³ John Home, *Douglas*, ed. by Gerald D. Parker (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1972), p. 27, (84-86).

disturbing events of 1746. Such material appears to build a scornful critique of the apologetic element in a historiography like Scott's, perhaps unfairly ignoring the pervasive tensions in Scott's own work. Of course, in the nine years since *Waverley* much had changed (including, perhaps, the tenor of Scott's own work, as we saw suggested above) and Hogg's position may be in part a product of the different political climate of the early 1820s. With the threat of Napoleon an increasingly distant memory perhaps the ideological space for a critique of the project of Britishness became more readily available.

Large parts of *Peril Third* are not for the light-hearted – bewildering as this may be in the context of a novel that begins with titillating insights into guilty youthful female sexuality, reminiscent of Richardson's *Pamela*.²¹⁴ The Highlands of Scotland are depicted as an apocalyptic wasteland, a countryside littered with the dead and the dying – categories themselves which the novel interrogates with its numerous reanimating corpses. The character of Davie Duff becomes gradually more significant through this section, as his own descent into madness and butchery appears to figure the nation's experience. Davie's increasing glee in the horrors of burying mutilated corpses forms a sinister mirror to the narrator's 'raking' obsession, one delighting in interment, the other in exhumation, as Scotland becomes a writhing mass grave.²¹⁵ In a text punctuated by death, Duff's sickening pleasure in his work is rarely denied for long. Nightmarishly, we are told that Davie 'even loved better to inter a remnant of a human body than the whole', his gory infatuation forming a bleak pattern of

²¹⁴ Samuel Richardson, *Pamela*, ed. by Thomas Keymer and Alice Wakely (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

²¹⁵ See also Barrell on Davie as 'a kind of anti-type of Old Mortality' ('Putting Down the Rising', p. 135).

detachment and perversion that echoes against his textual counterpart, Dr Frazer, whose 'better feelings were all withered' (*Perils of Woman*, pp. 391-393). The matter-of-fact manner often extant here toys with the morality of mediated history, juxtaposing an inappropriate emotional detachment against scenes of genuine horror. The imposition of an unsympathetic mediation is part of the strange framing of the piece, seeming to challenge the capacity of literature to regulate this material. Compared to Scott's self-conscious artifice this feels like a subversive assault from within the historical romance form, forcing its project into a disturbing light. The literary-Gaelicisation of Davie's language also creates an unsettling and inappropriate light-heartedness, abandoning the reader to a consistent moral unease. This stylised speech, offering Davie as a damaged version of the Highlander *par excellence*, feels like an unusually insensitive move amongst the sustained, catastrophic focus of the text at this point. As Davie wanders the Highlands cutting off the ears of children (some living) for piece-meal payment from the Dragoons – finally content to cash in his own mutilated lobes, and considering it 'not a very bad speculation' – the romantic nation descends into vivid nightmare (*Perils of Woman*, p. 395). The act of cutting off ears, indeed, seems itself an important symbol for what Hogg is telling us here. These events are too horrific to be heard – with Davie's twisted actions a kind of hellish censorship – as the national community relinquishes the possibility of totalising comprehension, reduced to self-mutilation in the place of narrative closure.

Lowland attitudes towards the Highlands prove an integral feature of the narrative's disconcerting tone, part of a strange emotional vacillation that acts to destabilise meaning. If the text seeks to depict 'both the *lights* and *shadows* of

Scottish life', it devolves towards a bipolarity that threatens chronic cultural schizophrenia (*Perils of Woman*, p. 25).²¹⁶ As we penetrate 'among a savage people', deeper into an unimproved Highlands described as 'the wilds' – and thus towards a familiar national imaginary – the occasional visibility of pejorative attitudes belies a concerned fidelity to what is seen as primarily, though not exclusively, a Highland tragedy (*Perils of Woman*, p. 366). This uneven ethical context leaves Hogg's staged moments of highly wrought pathos somehow glaring, rendering any offer of sympathetic national resolution an uncomfortable and sometimes ridiculous prospect. Emblematised in Davie Duff, representations of the primitive operate with an ambiguous, even crazed force among a hellish scenery of human degradation. Perhaps indeed the novel stages a *reductio ad absurdum* of such perceptions, the 'wild' and 'savage' erupting to dominate the geographical zone of their ideological quarantine. The high-minded Peter Gow and Alexander Mackenzie complement this element as the flipsides of a figurative Highlands clash, the tropes of violence and honour populating a brutal landscape overwhelmed by symbolism.²¹⁷ Whilst Peter and Alexander engage in sentimental outpourings, when juxtaposed against the

²¹⁶ This comment is a clear reference to the work of John Wilson, whose highly sentimental *Lights and Shadow of Scottish Life* provides a partial source, or perhaps target, for Hogg's text. See John Wilson, *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life: A Selection from the Papers of the Late Arthur Austin* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1822). Discussions of the connections can be found in Antony J. Hasler, 'The Three Perils of Woman and John Wilson's *Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life*', *Studies in Hogg and his World*, I (1990), 30-45; and in Douglas Mack, 'Lights and Shadows of Scottish Life: James Hogg's *The Three Perils of Woman*', in *Studies in Scottish Fiction: Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Horst W. Drescher and Joachim Schwend (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1987), pp. 15-27.

²¹⁷ Womack discusses the importance of a 'warrior idyll' to contemporary representations of the Highlands, in which 'courage, endurance' and 'loyalty' existed alongside perpetual violence within a militaristic pre-Modern society (pp. 39-44).

burlesque horror of Davie's narrative, the former is rendered absurd, the latter peculiarly disturbing (*Perils of Woman*, pp. 390-394). If this sequence is aimed at the historical romance, the process of figuration appears to be distorting rather than explaining its subject. Both these historical events and Hogg's mode of representation seem to stubbornly resist the imposition of any redemptive grand narrative. Unimprovement and improvement cannot be aptly negotiated as 'national history' collapses into a violent travesty and the aesthetic model of nationhood unravels from the inside.

Certainly Hogg's post-Culloden panorama seems to suggest little prospect of any sentimental national (let alone British imperial) unity; unless this is to be predicated upon a simple recognition of common suffering between Lowlanders and Highlanders, Covenanting and Jacobite histories. The divided nation is perpetually in focus across the final section, with mutual incomprehension between Gaelic- and Scots-users a recurrent theme. Even when the tragic Lowland heroine Sally is found 'singing over the body of a dead female infant' in the novel's closing image, still communication is blasted by the linguistic differential (*Perils of Woman*, p. 407). Rocking the unfortunate infant in her own last moments, this passage channels the harrowing trajectory of Peril Third, refusing any easy answers. Instead Hogg persistently chips away at the horrendous human cost of the '45, its integral role in the consummation of modern Britain surely a glaring subtext. The nation's wounds and divisions are squeezed together here for an accelerated closing Peril that is dwarfed by the previous two, with Hogg choosing to unleash his subject in a concentrated burst. Peter Gow's broken memory seems to figure a disturbed collective subjectivity, 'so full of holes, that it is actually like a sloggy riddle, letting through all that's

good, and retaining what is worthless' (*Perils of Woman*, p. 374). Looking in upon this scene, certainly the narrator's focus on the horrific leaves no doubt over his memory for such details – clinging to historical calamity. Yet as the text impulsively gestates between its conflicting moods, what really is 'good' and 'worthless' seems to have become confused and uncertain within a downward spiral of war. The energy of Hogg's ghastly appetite evidently asserts that the horrific material is of paramount, even if sinister, import. Despite the tonal disorientation, perhaps indeed brutal accounts of violence need to be considered as the salutary 'good' of the historiographical process, rejecting the 'worthless' narratives of apologists. Barrell suggests that 'raking' is framed as an ethically ambiguous exercise; yet the narrative seems to revel more than it winces ('Putting Down the Rising', p. 137). If Hogg proffers a disturbed gaze, challenged by these terrible events, he may also deliver an assertion of journalistic fearlessness. As part of his closing words, the narrator makes an antiquarian interjection immediately reminiscent of the end of *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, similarly relating a visit to the text's climatic grave. As in *Confessions*, the grave has been disturbed, the national history it figures 'raked up', concluding a startling novel that abandons nicety to insist on, even luxuriate in, the fullness of a grim passage in history (*Confessions*, p. 171; *Perils of Woman*, p. 406).

An anecdote given in the first section of the novel serves perhaps to sum up some of what Hogg attempts here. The narration of a British naval gunner's reaction in the heat of battle offers a compelling symbol for the ideological project of *Perils of Woman*:

The man continued for a while quite unsettled and insensible; but at length, in the utmost desperation, he seized a paint-pot, clapped it on his head for a helmet, and under this ideal safeguard, all fear vanished in one

moment. (*Perils of Woman*, p. 97)

This young Brit is obliged to blind himself to violent reality in order to face his task. There are clear reasons why British historiographical narratives might attempt to gloss the problematics of the Scottish past, clapping a 'paint-pot' upon their readers' heads. The traumatic events surrounding Culloden are undoubtedly troublesome for the construction of a cohesive British identity. Yet Hogg's fiction consistently refuses to gloss, denying his reader the 'paint-pot' and portraying Scotland in all its disruptive intricacy. In the era of nation building, this text makes an emphatic call for honesty.

The Three Perils of Woman undoubtedly postulates itself as a kind of nationally explanatory fiction, but does this only to deconstruct and problematise what the possibilities of such a form might be. Hogg denies his reader the suturing properties of the model partially propagated by Scott, undermining the historical romance's claims to either satisfactory mediation or resolution. The neat remedy of the conventional *bildungsroman* hero, for example, who can cure and objectivise the violence of the past by his own entry into adulthood, is nowhere to be found. Instead, exploiting the counter-hegemonic potential of the Gothic – with rising corpses and images of suffering that haunt the narrative – the novel mounts a historical corrective that is also a literary critique. Emphasising the disruptive elements of violence and intense, unresolved (even unresolvable?) suffering; exaggerating and destabilising the careful aesthetic distance of the historical romance; Hogg throws his reader into a world of confusion and suffering where there is little to no chance of a lesson or a moral. He travesties the conventions of genre underpinning Scott's project, depicting the inadequacy of allowing an ideological structure like national

identity to be interpreted through a restrictive and politically partisan literary mode. If Scotland is to become an aesthetic form, Hogg tells us, then this must not be restricted to polished Regency romance or the sophisticated sentimental novel of manners, but it can, and must, veer into the harrowing territory of horror.

Read through Hogg's literary lens here, national history dissolves into a disturbing chaos, leaving his reader in little doubt over the darkness that must remain within an aesthetically based nationalism. In fact, framed amongst the capricious terrain of Hogg's most startling work, the hopeless violence of the Scottish past seems only to be exacerbated by the inadequacy of the form. Isolation, confusion, unpredictability and pointless violence appear to be symptomatic of aesthetic Scotland, as Hogg traces the negative potential of contemporary cultural developments to their brutal margins. If the highly-wrought image of a mother and child lying in the snow provides a bold aesthetic snapshot to close the text, it does so only to encapsulate a deep scepticism towards developing literary processes of understanding and consuming the past. When Davie encounters the rehearsal of the final set-piece a few pages earlier and tries to loot Sally's body, she grabs him, the text's version of *Othello's* 'tragic loading' reaching out and shaming the viewer for thus objectifying it (*Perils of Woman*, pp. 405-406).²¹⁸ Then on the closing page, finally consenting to be emblematised, both mother and baby are dead – the image bleakly culminating a text in which romance struggles to escape history, seeming rather to disfigure it.

²¹⁸ William Shakespeare, *Othello*, ed. by E. A. J. Honigmann, Arden Shakespeare, Third Series (Walton-on Thames: Thomas Nelson, 1997), V. 2. 361.

At the edges of hegemony: language and the supernatural

Contested both intra- and inter-textually, Scottish aesthetic nationalism is largely expressed in struggle. Attempting to negotiate the role of Scottishness within a developing imperial context, this conflict tends to be concentrated around particular sites of ideological controversy, some of which deserve further mention. In a multilingual country under linguistic duress, the discussion in previous chapters has repeatedly stressed the importance of language as a site of cultural contestation. This is comprehensively the case in the fiction of Scott and Hogg, as the interplay between tongues captures some of their most important underlying tensions. As we have noted, Pittock makes the Bakhtinian proposal that in Scott's novels the use of Scots has a counter-hegemonic resonance that ranges beyond his authorial control (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 202). Beyond the tricky question of intention, certainly it is in his Scots dialogue that we often find the clearest sites of disruptive energy; and the degree to which this is nullified by context and plotting is up for debate. The subordinate eloquence of a character like Meg Merrilies may not finally possess the plot centrality to significantly undermine the bittersweet yet necessary sweep towards British modernity.²¹⁹ Yet, perhaps lacking the power to render her narrative properly pessimistic, her monopoly on the best lines is nonetheless challenging. Consider the well-known passage in which Meg berates the flawed improver Godfrey Bertram: "Ride your ways," said the gypsy, "ride your ways, Laird of Ellangowan – ride your ways, Godfrey Bertram! – This day have ye quenched seven smoking hearths – see if the fire in yer ain parlour burn the blyther for that" (*Guy Mannering*, p. 44). If

²¹⁹ The term 'subordinate' is used here rather than that of 'subaltern' (used by Mack in *Scottish Fiction*, for example), as this study is suspicious of the binary thinking on class issues a heavy-handed application of the latter may encourage.

Meg's speech falls short of a fully radical outburst (she retains her ultimate loyalty to the family), still its lyrical violence employs the cutting energy of its Scots terms to stage a protest (of course invoking the Clearances) perhaps more successful than the ultimate closing of the work. Harry Bertram's restoration may only provide an ineffectual panacea to the societal shift Meg's redundant feudalism betrays. Her power is characteristic of the Waverley Novels, in allowing a Scots-speaking, alternative position at least a temporary ability to challenge the emotional trajectory of the work. Language has this ability in Scott to challenge hegemonic discourses, its apparent proximity to the emotional core of Scottish culture preventing its docile enlistment in the cause of 'progress'. 'Impure' as it may be characterised, this perhaps only further serves its troublesome status as hints of an elevated and determined unimprovement emerge.

In Hogg's novels the linguistic question can be even more potent, language not only a formidable means of establishing moral authority in the hands of subordinate peoples, but also key to what he considers as the sacred accuracy of folk representation. During John Hoy of Muchra's interrogation by Hogg's famously evil Graham of Claverhouse (here speaking Standard English), the author delights in the confusion arising from the linguistic differential, as thick regional Scots becomes a divisive instrument setting Clavers firmly outside the positive moral enclave of the book:

'How did it appear to you that they had been slain? were they cut with swords, or pierced with bullets?' 'I canna say, but they were sair hashed.' 'How do you mean when you say they were hashed?' 'Champit like – a' broozled and jermummled, as it war.' [...] 'I do not in the least conceive what you mean.' 'That's extrodnar, man – can ye no understand fock's mother-tongue?' (*Brownie of Bodsbeck*, p. 61)

Claverhouse's temporary inability to 'understand fock's mother-tongue' acts here as a truly damning signifier, alerting us to his lack of humanity and underpinning the portrait for which the novel is often remembered. In a work concerned with the moral supremacy of the simple and the rural – 'the side o' human nature; the suffering and the humble side' – it is language that provides the primary means of asserting this hierarchy (*Brownie of Bodsbeck*, p. 163). Hogg's focus on a cross-sectarian historical sympathy based in a Borders vernacular community frequently attaches a pivotal role to Scots in its construction of ethical merit. *Brownie of Bodsbeck* figures this base memorably in the person of Walter Chapelhope, whose lax religious tolerance emerges as the glorious antidote to a divided national community plagued by ideological fanaticism, rolling out in his gruff brand of the 'mother-tongue'. *Perils of Woman* sees farmer-patriarch Daniel Bell's vindication of Scots, assigning the language with a heightened representative quality:

Now, if ye daur haud me, ye maun mind that I write Scots, my ain naiteve tongue; and there never was any reule for that. Every man writes it as he speaks it, and that's the great advantage of our language ower a' others. (*Perils of Woman*, p. 42)

The language, in Hogg's fiction, is time and again the primary signifier for the Borders cultural base with which the author is so often concerned; and while the Gaelic Highlands which occasionally feature in his texts problematise the simple symbolic 'nationalisation' of this society, it is nonetheless frequently tempting to infer a synecdochical role. In Daniel's words, Scots is deeply personalised through its lack of standardised form, each user achieving an in-depth intimacy with the tongue; the language thus the accurate and democratic mediator of the collective psychology. Of course, examples of Unionist sentiment in Scots are

frequent in Hogg (interestingly more common in his songs and poetry), though the language's ties to the moral and rural cultural base of his imagination can produce a potent cultural nationalist energy. In his advice to his daughter Gatty, Daniel affixes Scots with a resilience, stubbornly persistent despite the best efforts of an Anglicising culture:

But dinna be ower the matter punctual about catching the snappy English pronunciation, in preference to our own good, full, *doric tongue*, as the minister ca's it. It looks rather affected in a country girl to be always snap snapping at the English, and at the same time popping in an auld Scots phrase [...] for it is impossible to get quit o' them. (*Perils of Woman*, p. 11)

Any attempt by Gatty to rid her speech completely of the trace of Scots will be futile, with the language possessing a pervasive and enduring power – a 'doric' power, mining a similar ideological reserve to that we saw in Burns.

Improvement, in this situation, is a hopeless denial of a cultural identity based in the rustic. The Introduction compassed Susan Manning's theory of the troubled role of the Scots language for the Enlightenment literati, acting 'like a virus' in its subtle resurgences throughout their work (*Fragments of Union*, p. 20). In the fiction of both Scott and Hogg language certainly possesses this viral quality. In lesser or greater degrees of accord with the ostensible ideological direction of these texts, language represents a vulnerability at the edges of hegemonic cultural formations.

Another key site of ideological instability operates around the containing category of the supernatural, closely tied to its more nebulous bedfellow, the romantic. Frequently in the works of both Scott and Hogg major elements of residual Scottish identities are located in this modal territory. To take an example, *Guy Mannering* sees Scott forcefully asserting the thematic potential of the journey to Scotland – perhaps once again 'among the mists and the crows' –

as the reader enters a nation of apparently fantastical possibilities; a land of romance that is resistant to the measuring, controlling forces of rationality. Scott writes, 'If there had been light to consult the reliques of a finger-post which stood there, it would have been of little avail, as, according to the good custom of North-Britain, the inscription had been defaced shortly after its erection' (*Guy Mannering*, p. 4). The joke is of course aimed at celebrating the supposed intractability of the Scots (or rather North Britons) – who in a similar vein never give a straight answer to a stranger's questions – yet it also follows the logic of envisaging Scotland as a space exempt from the normal rules of Enlightenment hegemony.²²⁰ Drawing on Penny Fielding's notion of 'post-Enlightenment space', the 'Romantic, amorphous' zone in which Scottishness is deposited may in fact have powerful polemical implications (*Fictions of Geography*, p. 184).

At the core of this issue is the question of the cultural uncanny: as either an entertaining triviality or an area of serious ideological contestation. It is worth returning to Craig's comment that, 'The Scotland which had been divorced from history, and so became the place of romance, was also the place where history encountered those forces which could not be made to submit to historical amelioration' (*Out of History*, p. 44). Perhaps the romanticisation of Scotland could contain a doubled possibility, carrying it towards either an irrelevant artistic stasis or a subversive, transmutable resilience. Fielding's placing of this tension in the context of geo-cultural representations of Scotland

²²⁰ The cliché about evasive Scots can be traced at least as far back as Johnson, who styles a particular brand of 'Highland information', in which 'what was told so confidently was told at hazard [being] either the sport of negligence, or the refuge of ignorance'. See Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, ed. by Mary Lascelles, in *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958-), IX (1971), pp. 50-51.

provides a useful framework for thinking about the issue. She argues that:

Scotland's geography, at least from the mid-eighteenth century, always divides itself between a mapped, political space and its Romance alternative and then proceeds to blur these spaces at their edges. [...] A tradition of stadial history [...] simultaneously tracks the growth of the nation as a modern, commercial system and requires acts of the imagination to construct the 'primitive' prehistory of the modern nation. (*Fictions of Geography*, pp. 185-186)

Scotland, it seems, is the perennial *locus classicus* of an interaction between the known and the unknown; and between the modern and its Other. Contesting its own productions of the discourses of modernity, Scotland provides a consistent examination of the dialectic and equivocal nature of 'progress'. In this context we can return to the notion of Scottish Romanticism as a modal series of systematic disruptions to the discourses of developing Britishness. Yet of course, as is well borne out in the novels of Scott and Hogg, such 'Romantic, amorphous' constructions of Scottishness as unimprovement can tend towards differing varieties and levels of political resonance.

Pervading Scott's work is a repeated, thematic and topical act that represents ideas of Scottishness as perpetually on the boundaries of the cultural and political mainstream. Even the simple technique of employing Jacobitism and Covenanting as symbols for the nation tends towards this end. In his hands residual Scottishness becomes a suppressed, idealistic notion located somewhere beyond the edges of hegemony – from where it can be recovered in diluted form. Isolated, subordinate social groups are time and again given national status, leaving the reader with a sense of Scotland as a squeezed, fragile construct. In many cases this is performed through a more or less forceful deployment of the supernatural. A fine example is once again the fascinating character of Meg Merrilies, whose Gypsy society is given Scott's characteristic

role as threatened representative of residual Scottishness – a remainder from the feudal past treated to an ambiguous yet determined elegy.²²¹ If Meg's supernatural aura partly reflects how she is misperceived by others in the narrative – whose xenophobia leads them to superstitious assumptions – still this element makes a larger point. Defender of feudal relations, fluent and dynamic user of the Scots language – perhaps, even, living embodiment of the folk tradition – Meg personifies a threatened and romantic national subjectivity operating in society's liminal spaces. Scott continually plays with her supernatural mystique, particularly with reference to her physical size. In the scene cited above when Meg delivers her admonitory diatribe, Scott describes how, 'She was placed considerably higher than Ellangowan, even though he was on horseback; and her tall figure, relieved against the clear blue sky, seemed almost of supernatural stature'; while a later example employs the language of possession, wondering, 'whether it was Meg, or something warse in her likeness, for it seemed bigger than ony mortal creature' (*Guy Mannering*, p. 43, p. 65). Of course, the final and characteristic dismissals of supernatural hints in the body of Scott's work need to be considered. After all, Meg merely 'seemed bigger' and was only '*almost* of supernatural stature [emphasis added]'. In what Gifford terms his 'subtle deflation of romance by a caustic realism', perhaps this liminal rendering of Scottishness is finally shelved – evaporating into the air like the hints of witchery clinging around Meg ('Sham Nation?', p. 351). Or, more pointedly, if Scottishness has been sufficiently implanted in this realm, is the 'deflation' itself a kind of national dismissal, pressing the romantic nation aside

²²¹ This can be seen building upon the foundation myth that traces the Scots back to 'Scota', the daughter of an Egyptian Pharaoh. See Pittock, *Celtic*, p. 15.

in order to get back to the 'real history' of British concerns? Even if we choose to follow this latter reading, however, still the simple recurrence of this rendering (and indeed the inconsistency of Scott's 'enlightened' dismissals) may act to arm residual Scottishness with a tricky type of Gothic ideological resilience.²²²

Perhaps this idea of the nation ends up in a nebulous terrain from where it can impose its alternative possibilities upon the epistemological structures of British modernity. In making Scottishness a matter of romance and the abnormal, the Waverley Novels invoke problematic ideas of ubiquity and indeed haunting which their familiarly trite conclusions may be insufficient or unwilling to entirely diffuse. After all, how does one defend against the imagination and the unknown?

Hogg's far more prominent use of the supernatural may be even more politically ambiguous. His treatment ranges from a proud assertion of the importance of a (still living) tradition as a facet of culture that accesses deep realms of human experience; to an express disavowal of 'rational' explanations.²²³ His framing material tends to be illustrative of such positions. In the opening sequence of the short story 'Mary Burnet', he gives us an ornate example of the former sense:

As all my legends hitherto have been founded on facts, or are of themselves traditionary tales that seem to have been founded on facts, I should never have thought of putting the antiquated and visionary tales of my friends, the Fairies and Brownies, among them, had it not been for the

²²² The White Lady of *The Monastery* is probably Scott's best example of a full-blown supernatural mode lacking the characteristic 'deflation'. See Walter Scott, *The Monastery*, ed. by Penny Fielding (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

²²³ For more on Hogg's approach to folk tradition (with particular comparison to that of Scott) see Suzanne Gilbert, 'James Hogg and the Authority of Tradition', in *James Hogg and the Literary Marketplace: Scottish Romanticism and the Working-Class Author*, ed. by Alker and Nelson, pp. 93-109.

late advice of a highly valued friend, who held it as indispensable, that these most popular of all traditions by the shepherd's ingle-side, should have a place in his Calendar. At all events, I pledge myself to relate nothing that has not been handed down to me by tradition.

'Tradition' is the key term with which Hogg justifies the inclusion of material that he indicates is quite clearly not 'factual'. The cultural authority of folklore validates the toleration of such 'antiquated and visionary' material because it reflects a long line of human experience. The 'most popular of all', this material strikes at the core of the socio-cultural inheritance the project of *The Shepherd's Calendar* announces. The sympathetic scepticism of this sociological justification is almost neutralised by the passage immediately following it, in which folk material powerfully embodies the quasi-spiritual 'visions' that elevate 'the soul of man'; yet Hogg is finally asserting merely that what he calls the 'breathings of superstition' are the breath of his ancestors – and thus merit their place among the miscellany of the *Calendar*.²²⁴ Elsewhere in the collection, however, he is more categorically ambivalent about the factual authenticity of such material, of which he comments, 'It is certainly little accordant with any principle of nature or reason, but so also are many other well authenticated traditionary stories; therefore, the best way is to admit their veracity without saying why or wherefore' ('The Laird of Cassaway', p. 199). Here we see him reaching for a fully engaged supernatural mode; explanations and dismissals are to have little role by the logic of this formula; rather the authority of tradition should be accepted at face value. After all, 'Why should any body despise a dream, or any

²²⁴ James Hogg, 'Mary Burnet', in *The Shepherd's Calendar*, ed. by Mack, pp. 200-222, (p. 200).

thing whatever in which one seriously believes?’²²⁵ As Hogg moves between the poles of these positions, the supernatural elements that fill his work find themselves poised on a knife-edge between tolerated irrationality and a more confidently asserted reality. Crucially, this use of the supernatural impacts – often unnervingly – upon Hogg’s depictions of a modernising national paradigm, as the primitive appropriates its own representative forms and emerges into the world of the present. If he occasionally engages in the same ‘deflations’ largely characteristic of Scott – the explanation of *Brownie of Bodsbeck* being probably the most prominent example – elsewhere he insistently denies such finality (*Brownie of Bodsbeck*, pp. 160-161). The case of Gil-Martin’s true identity is by far the best-known specimen of this evocative uncertainty, about whom the Editor’s tentative conjecture is well short of overwhelming; leaving the reader to an ambivalence reminiscent of *Macbeth*’s supernatural machinery (*Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, pp. 174-175).²²⁶ At the far end of the spectrum, the anarchic events of *The Three Perils of Man* probably display Hogg at his most supernaturally ‘engaged’, that work a chaotic and loving exploration of the possibilities of the mode in the modern novel.²²⁷ To varying degrees, such supernatural elements provide Hogg with a significant means of contesting both cultural and political hegemonies. This ranges from a simple, temporary discovery of alternate ideological possibilities, to a full-blooded assertion of

²²⁵ James Hogg, ‘Story of Adam Scott’, in *Contributions to Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine, Volume 2 1829-1835*, ed. by Thomas C. Richardson (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 112-121, (p. 121).

²²⁶ William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, ed. by Kenneth Muir, Arden Shakespeare (London: Methuen, 1951).

²²⁷ James Hogg, *The Three Perils of Man; or, War, Women, and Witchcraft, A Border Romance*, ed. by Judy King and Graham Tulloch, with an essay on the manuscript by Gillian Hughes (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012).

counter-hegemonic resilience – asserting that the residual cultural base captured in this mode may be a valid and potent contemporary force, that perhaps the romantic is not so visionary after all. Thus, as noted above, while Hogg can sometimes be read as demonstrating the insufficiency of an aesthetic reading of nationhood, this must remain in conflict with a pretty enthusiastic embracing of the romantic nation, imbuing the form with a critical urgency. Certainly the Gothic-subversive potential of the supernatural, with its re-awakening corpses and historically charged ghosts, becomes a wonderfully entertaining language in his writing, one loaded with political potential. The series of re-animating corpses that percolate a novel partly about the destruction of Highland culture (*Perils of Woman*) is a fine example of how such elements can betray a controversial approach to British history.

Simultaneously representing a fading past and a suppressed present, the uncanny is a key terrain for approaches to residual nationhood, offering Scottish authors a means of addressing some of the threatened elements of their culture. The transcendent aesthetic spaces that are envisaged through the application of these ideas provide a modal position outside, or rather counter to, the framework of ‘progress’. Pittock traces the parallel existence of two very different renderings of residual Scottishness, a Gothic tradition counterpointed to processes of controlling and elegiac aestheticisation:

Just as those dimensions of Scottish culture incompatible with Britishness were aestheticized as picturesque in the generation after they had been defeated or dismissed as barbaric, so their survival in terms of threat rather than regret is a feature of Scottish Gothic. (*Scottish and Irish*, p. 215)

It seems from the discussion above that both of these possibilities are capable of operating and intermingling within the work of individual authors, even texts.

Representations of Scottish culture can balance uneasily between the functions of 'regret' and 'threat', involved in an unstable negotiation of political agency. Whether ghostly or monstrous, during this period residual Scottishness takes on an ambivalent existence with which it remains associated, implicated in the equivocal potentiality of romance – this despite attempts from within this literature to critique the process. If Scott and Hogg tend to be situated at different points in their handling of this conceptual space – coordinates that can appear to reflect the two authors' respective proximities to the cultural mainstream – both ultimately and instructively provide a spacious textual setting for the process to be both performed and surveyed. Perhaps most crucially, however, as the next section goes on to conclude, this rendering of nationhood can be read as performing a larger ideological shift. While understanding the negotiation of Scottishness and Britishness as an opposition of epistemologies, the construction of the romantic nation may have a contagious potential, acting to dissolve any cultural hierarchy via the introduction of a new paradigm, in which cultural identity itself becomes a transcendent aesthetic construct.

Ironic nationalism

Articulating an innovative and exceptionally popular approach to national identity, the work of Scottish aesthetic nationalism channels its subject material through an aggressively literary, self-conscious idiom. Straining between the political possibilities of elegy (exorcising or invigorating?) and pushing formal boundaries, the broad aestheticising effect is unavoidably profound, if not unchallenged. The solidification of the romantic nation is one of the most remarkable aspects of early nineteenth-century Scottish fiction. The improbable collage of symbolism in Captain Knockdunder's attire; *Waverley's* painting; even

the hellish flippancy of the post-Culloden episodes in *Perils of Woman*; in different ways, all reflect a changing understanding of a Scottishness negotiating the complexities of Britain's rise to world dominance. Forming a model of the national subjectivity which is obviously and self-consciously performative – based on a sympathetic relationship to a fictionalised, stridently literary idea of nationhood – perhaps the crucial achievement of this formation is the production of an ironic intellectual mode. This literature appears engaged in the creation and dissemination (and indeed criticism) of a modern or possibly rather postmodern condition: a commodity-based, self-conscious and somewhat relativistic philosophy. Yet to suggest so initially raises some awkward questions. Firstly, how original is such a phenomenon, and do we risk historical snobbery to suggest that pre-modern societies were somehow more unselfconsciously bound within identity structures? In connection, is it a fault of an over-determined Romanticism to assume that our period sees the emergence of such ideas; are not Shakespeare's works full of self-conscious and performative approaches to political and cultural forms? And finally, is such irony even really a cogent feature of the present, or is it merely intellectual indulgence to assume so? Yet, remaining attuned to the possible limitations and qualifications on our investigation invoked by such questions, the perceived emergence of the aesthetic nationalist paradigm here is an alluring critical prospect.

As the historical romance places its fictionalised national history in the hands of an expanding reading public, the potential for a flaunted yet comfortable awareness of artistic licence in national culture may be one of the most dramatic achievements of the period: identity as a matter of obvious

'playing' – the term suitable for both its psychological and literary connotations. Yet, if indeed Scottish aesthetic nationalism tends towards such an ironic formulation, the nuance and implications of this are widely open to interrogation. It can be argued that an ironic turn provides a somewhat cynical means of preserving a social order which would be otherwise unworkable: thus perhaps serving to facilitate an otherwise impossible juncture between oppositional forms of Scottishness and Britishness, irony suturing the necessary intellectual leaps or elisions. On the contrary, perhaps this ironic element only signals a degree of mature scepticism towards the functioning of identity structures. At an extreme, could we be seeing the introduction of a marked intellectual relativism in the operation of collective identities – an ironic recognition of the new aesthetic premise offering a universal, fluid platform for national-cultural interaction?

Scott's 1824 'Essay on Romance' sets out a conjectural history of literature and national identity. Narrating a long tradition of Romance with its origins in a primordial past, Scott alerts us to his notion of the development of narrative in national self-construction, providing us with a useful insight into his own practice. While the primal 'father' of the nation may communicate its origins 'with no other deviation from truth, on the part of the narrator, than arises from the infidelity of memory, or the exaggerations of vanity', such relative accuracy soon fragments across the generations:

The vanity of the tribe augments the simple annals from one cause – the love of the marvellous, so natural to the human mind, contributes its means of sophistication from another – while, sometimes, from a third cause, the king and the priest find their interest in casting a holy and

sacred gloom and mystery over the early period in which their power rose.²²⁸

This generational development from the original tribal patriarch of Scott's imagination sees a kind of cultural 'Chinese whispers', as historical truth is slowly infiltrated by fiction.²²⁹ Forgetfulness, hyperbole, conceit and dogma all contribute to render national history a hybrid territory. Placed in this context, suddenly Scott's historical romance appears a less audacious project. Replicating the established, organic developmental trajectory of national culture, he simply speeds up the process. This attitude to history is indicative of Scott's Enlightenment inheritance. As the Introduction suggested, conjectural historiography placed a special stress on the literary, informing a sense of a blurry divide between truth and fiction. Craig observes that, 'It was this sceptically purged conception of history that Scott inherited from the Scottish Enlightenment'. Thus, he concludes:

The power of narrative to compose an order would, for Scott, always cast in doubt any assertion that it has thereby uncovered an equivalently composed reality. It was for this reason that his narratives were hedged around with so many prefaces, false narrators, scholarly footnotes and self-reflexive ironies. (*Out of History*, p. 69)

In this view, Scott's textual machinery reflects an approach to history as much as it does a literary or artistic consciousness. In fact the two are inextricably unified by the author's investment in a pervasive conception of the storytelling

²²⁸ Walter Scott, 'Essay on Romance', in *The Miscellaneous Prose Works of Sir Walter Scott*, 28 vols (Edinburgh: Cadell; London: Whittaker, 1834-36), VI, pp. 127-216, (pp. 134-135).

²²⁹ Leask discusses Scott's distrust of oral transmission, in which popular tradition involves the gradual deterioration of material. See Nigel Leask, "'A degrading species of Alchemy": ballad poetics, oral tradition, and the meanings of popular culture', in *Romanticism and Popular Culture in Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Philip Connell and Nigel Leask (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 51-71, (pp. 60-67).

function, securing his championing of the aesthetic nationalist paradigm as a direct outcome of his debt to Enlightenment historiography. Narrative, plotting and the visible devices of fiction – even if they can act to modulate his historical subject matter into a problematically ahistorical, transcendent aesthetic space – may owe their presence to a dominant historiography in which they played a significant role, indicative of the unchanging work of human self-construction. As in *The Antiquary's* endless layers of myth and fabrication, certainly Scott is at pains to establish the structural prevalence of such imaginative processes. In this sense superseding a division between romance and 'real history', perhaps his novels disclose a fundamentally ironic approach to knowledge.

A number of commentators have ruminated on the ironic element in Scott's work, sensing a sophisticated relationship between fact and fiction. Yoon Sun Lee places Scott in a triumvirate of prominent British conservatives whom she identifies as appropriating the complex and useful workings of irony towards the furtherance of their historically challenged political agenda. For Lee the power of irony in the hands of men like Scott, Edmund Burke and Thomas Carlyle is its fundamental ability to both 'reveal and legitimate the connections between incompatible knowledges, contradictory feelings, and competing interests'. The value in this for political and social conservatives confronted with the prospect of radical unrest hardly requires elucidation. Aiming at collective ideological coherence based not on rational logic, but rather on a 'conventional' acceptance of obvious intellectual incompatibilities, this process could provide succor to a threatened establishment. Though Lee claims not to want to link this procedure with the divided national consciousness perceived in the terms of the

Antiszygy, her argument nevertheless provides an insight into the famously problematic relationship of Scottishness and Britishness in Scott's fiction:

Scott promotes the fellowship of incompatible things and unequal entities as though such fellowship were spontaneous rather than calculated, free rather than forced, exuberantly irrational rather than coldly logical – while showing us the logic, the calculation, and the humiliation that have to be disavowed.²³⁰

In this light, perhaps the pedestrian endings often found in the Waverley Novels encourage an ironic acceptance of the apparently inharmonious historical settlement the reader is confronted with. As Harry Bertram, Edward Waverley, Darsie Latimer and others come into inevitable possession of their property, maybe the bittersweet elements of the narrative should be interpreted through the complex workings of a kind of readerly 'doublethink': the ability to fully confront and yet remain oblivious to, the unacceptable victims of 'progress'. The casualties of these works tend to be those incapable or unwilling to engage in such casuistry (such as Fergus Mac-Ivor, Redgauntlet and John Balfour of Burley), characters too ideologically rigid to embrace the ironic mode, a shortcoming that renders them terminally 'fanatical'. Confronted with the example of these sacrificial icons – failing to perform the delicate, ironic balancing of British and residual Scottish alternatives – the reader does seem to be offered a powerful statement on the prerequisites for successful navigation of the new era.

Pursuing this sceptical or ironic angle, the Introduction highlighted Duncan's assertion that Scott appropriates the philosophical scepticism of David Hume, whose *Treatise of Human Nature* provided a theoretical basis for that "fundamental practice of modern ideology – acquiescence without belief,

²³⁰ Yoon Sun Lee, *Nationalism and Irony: Burke, Scott, Carlyle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 7, p. 24.

crediting without credulousness," that would find its technical realization in the Waverley novels' (*Scott's Shadow*, p. xii). The centrepiece of this interpretation of Scott is the memorably hybridised novel of 1824, *Redgauntlet*, which becomes the textual consummation of the ideological agenda given its embodied, public airing in 1822 at the King's Jaunt:

Seeing that it is only a show, the public is invited freely to take part, rather than coerced into believing in something 'real.' [...] In proffering the authenticity effect as the very device that yields the recognition of fictionality, Scott invokes a quintessentially modern, liberal ideology of reception. (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 279)

A shared suspension of disbelief is the premise upon which the pageant proposes to build national-imperial modernity, its over-wrought fictionality the crucial key to its efficacy. This analysis renders the event a radical augmentation of the kind of consensual nationalist idiom that we compassed in Chapter One – here audaciously predicated on a barrage of incongruity. With George IV at its epicentre, Scott's meticulous theatre of Highlandism delivers its conspicuous residual national artifice into the imperial fold. Extrapolating from the Andersonian 'imagined community' – with its dynamic processes of collective figuration – this is a community based in the self-conscious performance and celebration of fiction: a pageantry of the openly fantastical. Rather than purporting to imagine the marriage of dominant Britishness and residual Scottishness as any kind of 'reality', it is imagined as a *romance*. Construed thus, perhaps these dual concerns need no longer be antagonistic after all: the antagonism dissolved in the consensual irony that the spectacle elicits. Or, going further, if the transcendent aesthetic formula of the romantic nation has now spread to encompass both residual Scottishness *and* Britishness in this ironic parade of Jacobite-Hanoverian hybridity – collapsing the conceptual division

between British 'real history' and its romantic Other – then perhaps we enter a newly volatile scenario in which the whole relationship can be as polemically unstable as art.

In *Redgauntlet* the emphatic fictionality in Scott's work is more inescapable than usual, the novel a complex of intercalated sequences and literary genres (in this sense perhaps not accidentally replicating the feel of a collected canon, Scott exploring processes of literary-national self-awareness). As the plot meanders towards its startlingly downbeat conclusion, the themes of Scott's work devolve into one of clearest examples of his ironic mode – asserting the inescapable necessity of a sceptical attitude to national culture in contemporary society. When General Campbell arrives to break up the discordant Jacobite schemers, sending them home like chastised children, perhaps the most obviously 'artistic' of any of Scott's works announces the principles upon which modernity is to be based. Campbell explains how fundamentally inappropriate it would now be to embrace the unsceptical position of active treason:

His Majesty will not even believe that the most zealous Jacobites who yet remain can nourish a thought of exciting a civil war, which must be fatal to their families and themselves, besides spreading bloodshed and ruin through a peaceful land. (*Redgauntlet*, p. 395)

Not feeling it necessary to interfere with the personal opinions and motivations of these men, the King's mouthpiece condescendingly assumes that they can now see the necessity of joining him in the world of sceptical or ironic nationalism. Subversive political activity is a ludicrous and antiquated idea (whether anti-Union or, more pertinently, the reformist and revolutionary movements threatening Scott's period); irony must provide the ideological glue within the

new national-cultural umbrella. Of course, a 'dissonant' element still lurks here, as the bittersweet passing of Jacobitism's relevance becomes irrefutable, yet the overriding sense is that the terms of contest have now inalterably changed.

Duncan glosses the process thus:

Redgauntlet will justify literature itself as the institution that provides a sentimental and aesthetic replenishment of traditional relations threatened with oblivion in modern society, but by advertising, rather than trying to conceal, the skeptical knowledge that these are imaginary and not real relations. (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 260)

As Scott's irony washes over the stains of history and those capable of survival take their complex, loudly performative place in the present, the true victor of the struggle is in fact neither the hegemonic British culture nor the residual Scottish culture. It is of course the aesthetic mode itself, now asserting an intense control over the vocabulary of the argument. 'Taking the plaid' has become a matter of opening a book, as the pen asserts its mighty superiority over the sword. While this aesthetic refashioning of identity structures may offer an easy negation of conflict amongst competing formations by appearing to refuse the political; equally perhaps it provides a new, radically destabilised context for it. Thus, though in this circumstance serving the stability of the Hanoverian establishment, it is possible that the triumph of aesthetic irony has in fact finally rendered Scottishness equal to Britishness – *neither* more than working fictions now, selected at will.

The fulsome emergence of aesthetic nationalism in early nineteenth-century Edinburgh presents a tantalising example to the cultural historian, displaying what may be a truly significant passage in the trajectory from early-modern to modern cultural forms. It is tempting to infer at least some element of an epochal shift, though the more modest option would be to suggest that this

literature signals a philosophical conflict between co-existent options rather than a true developmental evolution. However, given its foremost emblem in Scott's *Waverley Novels*, a broad pattern is undoubtedly suggestive of the resolute depiction of national identity predicated in explicitly aesthetic terms. Without suggesting that this approach achieves any kind of exclusivity within the national-cultural paradigm, it is a remarkable element of this complex fabric. This phenomenon is deeply embroiled within the context of a rapidly growing reading public, as the mass-produced novel becomes the critical commodity and medium of national self-identification. Drawing on residual cultural material and mediating this for consumption in a modern literary marketplace, Scott and Hogg are positioned at the heart of some of the key tensions in Scottish writing at this period. Their works offer a range of reflections upon the often-uncomfortable relationship between geopolitical formations in the period, ranging from an impassioned defence of Scottishness to a confident assertion of British hegemony. The genre of the historical novel displays a heightened self-consciousness over its role as a conduit for the preservation, adaptation and dissemination of residual culture in a modern context and this can be read expressing itself in a recurrent set of concerns over the loss of tradition. Acutely self-aware, the aesthetic nationalist formation dramatises as precarious and morally dubious a process for which it is a key vehicle: modernisation.

As the next chapter moves to explore in fuller detail the concept of improvement and the tensions this produces in the period, we should aim to keep the phenomenon of aesthetic nationalism in view. Perhaps the most interesting, even admirable, element of this process is the quality and sophistication of its ever-present self-contestation. Expressing anxieties over

‘progress’: concerns about the value of what is being left behind in the perceived transition from belief to irony; worries about the social and moral results of the long trajectory of modernisation; Scottish aesthetic nationalism articulates many fears that remain persistent in contemporary society. As Hogg’s *Perils of Woman* ruminates on the horrors of national history, it also senses the destabilising and dissociating impact of an aesthetic order that this period establishes as a central feature of modernity. Framing the paradox of ‘progress’ that the Scottish experience renders so visible, the novels of both Hogg and Scott remain ultimately unable to pass definite judgement on this process. Are peace and prosperity to be bought only at the price of perceived cultural integrity? Is ideological fanaticism only to be traded for a situation lacking hierarchies of meaning, with history and identity rendered usable fictions, the modern subject cast adrift on the capricious tides of literary invention? As Edward Waverley turns away from the loaded scaffolds at Carlisle and moves towards the self-conscious finale of Scott’s first novel, the troubled existence of the romantic nation is felt in suitably muted tones.

Chapter Four – The Paradox of Improvement

A recurring set piece in John Galt's novel of 1823, *The Entail*, emblematises the protagonist Claud Walkinshaw's tortured obsession with the ancestral lands that it has been his life's work to regain:

On gaining the brow of the hill, he halted, and once more surveyed the scene. For a moment it would seem that a glow of satisfaction passed over his heart; but it was only a hectic flush, instantly succeeded by the nausea of moral disgust; and he turned abruptly around, and seated himself with his back towards the view which had afforded him so much pleasure. In this situation he continued some time, resting his forehead on his ivory-headed staff, and with his eyes fixed on the ground. (*Entail*, pp. 147-148)

Claud's 'nausea of moral disgust' prevents him from being able to look upon the estates he has idolised – at the cost of sacrificing social values and practices.

Holding the 'ivory-headed staff' that we learn is adorned with the meaningful symbol of a lone silver eye, this pedlar-turned-Glasgow-grandee experiences a profound moral unease towards the end of a single-minded life of what Galt calls 'gathering' (*Entail*, p. 183, p. 150). Claud's accumulation of wealth is importantly motivated by his fanatical pride in hereditary status, and the sense of 'just desserts' in this passage is aimed primarily at that weakness via the one of simple avarice. Yet both faults are serving here as parts of a wider meditation on the development, successes and failings of an explicitly national narrative. This moment of moral outrage and of self-disgust, as Claud questions the course his life has taken, is one significant and disturbing example from a novel that resonates deeply with the concerns of the Scottish literary tradition. Exploring the social, political and moral questions raised by the experience of the long eighteenth century, it deals in striking fashion with a whole series of anxieties occasioned by the preceding period in national history.

As is now well established, from the mid-eighteenth century onwards Scotland experienced a period of accelerated economic and social change. Over approximately two generations, changes in agricultural practice, access to broadening imperial trade markets, urbanisation and early industrialisation were among a network of forces which produced a 'period of economic growth little short of miraculous for its speed and intensity' (once again, Scott's *'Tis Sixty Years Since* is instructive).²³¹ A key foundation of the argument at stake has been that a matrix of linked concerns is at the heart of an attendant literature. Continuing to tackle this relationship, the present chapter focuses in detail on the notion of improvement as a term of paradigmatic importance for the period. Centred on this vital keyword used by Scots in many areas of contemporary life, discourses of improvement can appear to emblemise the ideological pressures produced at this early phase of modernisation and globalisation. They provide a cohesive point around which a whole range of intellectual positions are located: from the most optimistic forecasts and celebrations of the march of 'progress', to deeply pessimistic attitudes.

Accordingly this chapter mounts a study of two figures for whom it suggests improvement is especially pertinent: Galt and Elizabeth Hamilton. Hamilton's *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* (alongside the educational writing the novel in a sense merely fictionalises) takes a provocative approach to the national condition, while allowing us to explore key sites of improving tension in

²³¹ N. T. Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison, 'Introduction', in *Scotland in the Age of Improvement*, ed. by Phillipson and Mitchison, pp. 1-4, (p. 1). Dwyer seeks to qualify this narrative, stressing that in the period from 1763 until the later eighteenth century economic growth proceeded only 'modestly' (pp. 1-2).

the period, notably those of gender and education.²³² This is executed alongside a discussion of Galt, whose Scottish novels can be usefully read as a series of meditations on the material, social and cultural implications of the improving trajectory. His writing ambitiously essays a long Scottish historical experience and engages with many of its core ideological anxieties.

The issue of passing judgement on progress or improvement, addressed via Scott and Hogg in the previous chapter, remains controversial here. This is an age when technological and agricultural advances, new educational strategies, cultural refinement and broad social demography – notably the work of John Sinclair of Ulbster, architect of the celebrated *Statistical Account of Scotland* – were prominent and popular issues. Yet while there are plenty of voices in favour of many different strains of improvement, the narrator of Galt's *Annals of the Parish*, Micah Balwhidder, hits a suggestive note when reflecting on the fate of his rural parish: 'We were doubtless brought more into the world, but we had a greater variety of temptation set before us' (*Annals*, p. 139). Balwhidder's fears chime with that significant pessimistic strain in the Scottish intellectual tradition Galt inherited, epitomised by Adam Ferguson, who fretted that 'many of the boasted improvements of civil society, will be mere devices to lay the political spirit at rest, and will chain up the active virtues more than the restless disorders of men' (*Essay on Civil Society*, p. 210). Ferguson is famously wary of social decay, the falling away of his ideal of patriotic citizenship in the face of a corrupting 'civility' – reading the progressive division of labour as a dangerous force. However, it is important to recognise that in many cases the decline

²³² Elizabeth Hamilton, *The Cottagers of Glenburnie; and Other Educational Writing*, ed. by Pam Perkins (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2010).

feared at in the face of improvements is not merely with regard to universal values, but is contextualised by an endorsement of what are taken to be specifically Scottish characteristics. Running throughout the texts under examination is an underlying tension that perhaps progress inevitably or necessarily involves a dilution of national character. The historian William Robertson wrote that, 'Commerce tends to wear off those prejudices which maintain distinction and animosity between nations. It softens and polishes the manners of men.'²³³ Robertson couches this process largely in positive terms, yet the dilemma is clear. Must the 'polishing' of 'manners' and the supersession of 'prejudice' come at the price of national identity?

At the heart of this debate is the term 'culture' itself, described by Raymond Williams in his magisterial *Keywords* as 'one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language'. It is worth revisiting Williams's influential etymology of the term. In its earliest forms the word was 'a noun of process: the tending of something, basically crops or animals', then, 'From eC16 the tending of natural growth was extended to a process of human development'. There are close affinities between this usage and the eighteenth-century notion of improvement: both share important associations with agriculture, while they are almost interchangeable in a human context, the process of 'culturing' an intellect. Williams goes on to explain that, 'Culture as an independent noun, an abstract process or the product of such a process, is not important before lC18 and is not common before mC19. But the early stages of this development were not sudden.' Here we see the germs of culture as a relatively static entity, the

²³³ William Robertson and William H. Prescott, *History of the Reign of Charles the Fifth; with an Account of the Emperor's Life after his Abdication*, 2 vols (London: Routledge, 1857), I, p. 47.

‘product’ of a process, though Williams’s caution that such changes do not happen overnight is useful – the example he gives from Milton providing an instructive reminder not to oversimplify. For the full emergence of the usage which facilitates, for example, the notion of Scottish culture – that of the ‘independent noun, whether used generally or specifically, which indicates a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, a group, or humanity in general’ – Williams looks to what he terms the ‘Romantic movement’, and particularly a ‘decisive change of use in Herder’. The particular advance credited to Herder is the assertion of “‘cultures” in the plural’, allowing for not only the description of national, but other kinds of individuated cultural groupings (pp. 87-90).

Working along similar terrain in a reading of Lockhart’s *Peter’s Letters to his Kinsfolk*, Ian Duncan dramatises the further development that we have compassed as a major achievement of early-nineteenth-century Scotland. Attendant at a rural religious ceremony, Lockhart’s Welsh narrator Peter Morris observes, appropriates and reconstitutes Scottishness as an aesthetic concern.²³⁴ Duncan suggests that through the agency of culture as improvement (e.g. the narrator’s own improved state), Lockhart is able to evacuate the national condition from one definition of culture: that of ‘an empirical way of life belonging to the natives’; and reproduce it in another, aesthetic form: culture now ‘the property of our reading, the “soul and spirit of a national literature”’ (*Scott’s Shadow*, p. 63). The previous chapter explored such processes, seeing the transposition of representations of the national condition into an aesthetic

²³⁴ The relevant episode can be found in John Gibson Lockhart, *Peter’s Letters to his Kinsfolk*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1819), III, pp. 301-338.

register. However, crucial to the discussion here is the way culture as improvement remains available in this complicated milieu and variously conflicts against notions of culture as a complex, yet relatively static category (models of Scottishness). In both Hamilton and Galt, writing before, during and after Scott's major intervention, a tension between models of national character and the impetus of progress is ever-present. It is possible to propose the aesthetic nationalist mode as a cure for the problem created by improvement in the Scottish national context (if uneasily and perhaps no more than superficially), creating an umbrella national aesthetic capable of subsuming both 'empirical' ethnographic and improving paradigms. Such a rationale might suggest that the previous chapter would more naturally follow on from the present. However, while Galt offers a severe critique of aesthetic nationalism, there is a compelling broader argument that as we move through the nineteenth century, discourses of improvement and the tensions they bring to bear display an invigorated (or at least sustained) urgency, with industrialisation quickening and class divisions continuing to foment. This is not to underestimate the lasting and pervasive influence of the aesthetic ideology typified by Scott, only to reaffirm a continuing and problematic relationship between improvement and nationhood. Exploring this area, we begin with a discussion of how the improving context inflects our authors' appropriation of cultural capital, before moving into an analysis of Hamilton's work. A complementary section on the key issue of gender follows this, and the chapter ends with an examination of Galt's novelistic practice.

Cultural capital

Writing in the early decades of the nineteenth century, both Galt and Hamilton are working in a period marked by shifting cultural taxonomies. The evolving

field is reflected in Galt's Scottish novels, through characters' regular comments on recent changes in taste. These often-comedic observations serve as a reminder of this unstable, though potentially lucrative context. Particularly prone to a sneering brand of this is the Walkinshaw matriarch, 'the Leddy', arguably the ultimate heroine of *The Entail*, who responds to the love intrigues of her young family by regretting 'thir novella and play-acting times' (*Entail*, p. 261). Expounding on what she considers to be a sea change in the attitudes of the upcoming generation, the Leddy is characteristically self-assured in attributing insubordination to the influence of literary vogue:

When we refleik how the mim maidens now-a-days hae delivered themselves up to the Little-gude in the shape and glamour o' novelles and Thomson's Seasons, we need be nane surprised to fin Miss as headstrong in her obdooracy as the lovely young Lavinia that your sister Meg learnt to 'cite at the boarding-school. (*Entail*, p. 230)

Devilish and intoxicating, the power of literature takes on a sinister role in this fairly commonplace judgement.²³⁵ With particular fears for the supposedly more vulnerable psychology of young women, the Leddy (who hypocritically admits her own interest in literature with the reference to Lavinia) voices an important position in the contemporary debate.²³⁶ Suspicions of moral impropriety are an element persistently commingled in the working-out of authorship status and the valuation of genres. Such doubts were exacerbated by the gendered contemporary perception of the novel. As Alan Richardson suggests, 'Writers on female behaviour and education in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries

²³⁵ See Swaim on Scotland's distrust of imaginative literature, lingering on beyond the eighteenth century (pp. 27-28).

²³⁶ Lavinia being the daughter of Latinus in Virgil's *Aeneid*, the subject of a prophecy advising her father to reject all Latin suitors (allowing her to ultimately marry Aeneas). See Virgil, *The Aeneid*, trans. and notes by Frederick Ahl, introduction by Elaine Fantham (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 160-161.

were much concerned with the novel, a genre which had become widely identified with women as both its principal consumers [...] and producers'. This situation led to a variety of ideological defences on the part of writers, some of whom found themselves in fairly awkward rhetorical positions. For example, Jane West, Hannah More and Mary Wollstonecraft all 'wrote novels while condemning the genre as a whole'.²³⁷ Though, as we will see in Hamilton, moral pedagogy was itself a possible means of defending literary work – attempting to turn the issue on its head – this itself should be read as in part a reflection of these pressures, with authors negotiating negative perceptions. Relevant here is Helen O'Connell's exploration, from an Irish perspective, of a whole field of improvement discourse in which didactic prose fiction flaunted its opposition to the dubious material of the 'literary' as transmitted through popular literature. This occasioned a set of contradictions, as such improving fiction consistently reveals itself as disingenuously 'literary' in its sensibilities. Furthermore, for female authors in particular, the counter-revolutionary stimulus of this writing brought about a further paradox, with authors being 'perturbed by the democratization of literary forms': the very process that was granting them a public voice. Such tensions contributed to a pervasive 'aesthetics of plainness' that railed against both political radicalism and aestheticism, seem as constituent parts of a general and threatening culture of idealism.²³⁸ Such liberal improving rhetoric, invoked as a didactic counter-revolutionary mechanism, needs to be considered against all literary approaches to improvement in the period.

²³⁷ Alan Richardson, *Literature, Education, and Romanticism: Reading as Social Practice, 1780-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 185-186.

²³⁸ Helen O'Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 5-6, pp. 19-20, p. 202.

As the book trade enters the capitalist commercial realm and authorship begins to unhook itself from the sanctioning practice of patronage, a variety of responses to the problem of appropriating cultural capital emerge. Well on the way to fully substituting the moral endorsement, aesthetic recommendation and economic backing of a respectable patron for a free market model, authors are forced to find new ways to justify themselves and appeal to the public. Still predating the comfortable model of a professional man of letters, figures like Scott and Galt suffer from an acute concern over the potential reflection of their endeavours upon their social class.²³⁹ Indeed, while largely lacking the aristocratic pretensions of Scott, Galt was nonetheless almost equally at pains to distance himself from the tarnishing image of a lower-status trade. After all, as Gaye Tuchman and Nina E. Fortin remind us, 'The eighteenth-century book trade was a barter industry that had once been associated with the stationers' guild. Booksellers frequently commissioned volumes, particularly novels, and paid by the word.' It is important to remember the novelty of a man like Scott, able to navigate the social strata of hereditary privilege while earning a living as a working writer.²⁴⁰

Entering upon this environment, the role of Scott's publisher (and the man behind the *Edinburgh Review*), Archibald Constable is significant. Paying high fees, Constable was influential in dignifying the profession, functioning as a kind of socio-economic buffer between a fading patronage system and the free

²³⁹ Swaim's discussion of 'amateurism' may be useful here (p. 110).

²⁴⁰ Gaye Tuchman with Nina E. Fortin, *Edging Women Out: Victorian Novelists, Publishers, and Social Change* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 25-26.

market.²⁴¹ Affording a good level of economic independence to his writers, and thus the opportunity to cut a respectable figure in social life, Constable's influence can be seen as a key point in the development of literary culture. Indeed, as free-market economics penetrated more deeply into Scottish society at all levels, the literary field provides us with a useful criterion for studying the process. The burgeoning marketplace emerges as an improved system, replacing patronage as part of the same historical motor as changes in land ownership or agricultural practice. Itself a hostage to, and beneficiary of, the same great processes of improvement, the literary marketplace is no exception to the general rule in the narrative of long-eighteenth-century Scotland.

Faced with this changing and competitive market, Galt approaches his work with an especially noteworthy, sometimes incoherent, set of self-presentations. His writings are rife with examples of him apparently belittling creative writing, in one respect affirming the distrust of literature expressed by some of his key characters. Faced with these denigrating comments, Eric Frykman concludes that they are either 'probably due to a sense of failure' on Galt's part, or that 'he was trying to sport the traditional gentlemanly attitude of superiority with regard to literary pursuits'.²⁴² If Frykman's first suggestion is pretty unhelpful, his second comes closer to the mark in emphasising Galt's seeming discomfort with authorship. Class resonances may well be at play for an upwardly mobile sea captain's son from the West of Scotland. Yet far more interesting is the specific aesthetic strategy Galt's attitude informs. These

²⁴¹ Constable's 'liberal payment policy' is commented on by Alexander Murdoch and Richard B. Sher in their essay on 'Literacy and Learned Culture', in *People and Society*, ed. by Devine and Mitchison, pp. 127-142, (p. 133).

²⁴² Eric Frykman, *John Galt's Scottish Stories: 1820-1823* (Uppsala: Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1959), p. 44.

dismissals underpin his contention that certain of his works should not be considered as novels at all. Indeed, commenting on his literary productions, Galt claims that 'the best of them are certainly deficient in the peculiarity of the novel', lacking 'a consistent fable' or 'story'.²⁴³

Writing in his *Literary Life*, Galt explains: 'I think no ingenuity can make an entirely new thing. Men can only combine the old together; join legs and arms and wings as he may, only the forms of previously created things can be imitated.'²⁴⁴ This brings us to the notion of Galt as a particularly 'historicist' writer. Distancing himself from the quasi-divine power of the creative imagination so central to the familiar, Anglo-centric Romantic tradition for which Coleridge is a key spokesman, he enunciates what could be described as a type of pure Associationist aesthetic.²⁴⁵ True creation is discarded as an idealistic myth; rather the work of the writer is in reworking pre-existing materials into new configurations, however monstrous. This position flaunts Galt's well-recognised debt to the strain in Enlightenment philosophy for which Hume represents a vanishing point. He takes the logic of association in the workings of human psychology and applies it relatively directly to his theorisation of the creative process. Reading the mind as tasked with reconstituting, reorganising and reinterpreting experience – rather than the divine act of initial creation – Galt logically produces the above judgement. Though for some this might appear to

²⁴³ John Galt, *The Autobiography of John Galt*, 2 vols (London: Cochrane and McCrone, 1833), II, p. 219.

²⁴⁴ John Galt, *The Literary Life and Miscellanies of John Galt*, 3 vols (Edinburgh: Blackwood; London: Cadell, 1834), I, p. 229.

²⁴⁵ Galt's idea of the creative process is closely aligned with what Coleridge would term the 'fancy'. See Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria; or, Biographical Sketches of My Literary Life and Opinions*, ed. by James Engell and W. Jackson Bate (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983), p. 305.

involve a diminution of art, and of the human mind *per se*, elsewhere Galt makes it clear that he believes quite the opposite, and that the form of literary endeavour he outlines deserves to be considered extremely highly.²⁴⁶ Moreover, this renunciation of the properly 'creative' faculty remains in tension for Galt, as demonstrated in instances where he seeks to reintroduce the element of 'art' into his practice:

It is imagined that I have drawn entirely on my recollection, both for the incidents and characters of my most valuable pictures; and it has been alleged that I have had very little recourse to that kind of invention, composition, which constitutes the vitality of art [...] There is a universal harmony in Nature, and in the imitation and perception of this divine impress consist the excellence and the glory of art. One may extract by observation the elements, as it were, of works of art, but the discernment of the eternal and universal harmony is essential to their formation.

Here we find Galt struggling to find an adequate vocabulary to describe his work. Anxious to protect himself from accusations of mere 'recollection', an ambiguity in his aesthetic ideology and self-representation begins to become evident. 'Harmonising' emerges as a possible solution, in a passage where Galt also significantly disclaims having first-person experience of his novels' lower-class subject matter – a point that carries both a social and a creative defence (*Literary Life*, I, pp. 144-146). The stress is very much on 'representation' rather than 'creation', yet the tension is clear. Keen to appropriate a form of cultural capital predicated on his works' lack of pretension to a transcendental creativity which he discredits, yet reluctant to entirely downplay the artistic endeavour clearly so central to his writing, he is led into some difficult positions.

A core feature of Galt's position is his claim on the innovative literary form that he terms 'theoretical history' (*Autobiography*, II, p. 219). Resonating

²⁴⁶ With reference to *Annals*, Galt comments that, 'No doubt it has what my own taste values highly, considerable likeliness' (*Literary Life*, I, p. 155).

with the conjectural historiography of which it is in some respects the most palpable literary descendent, this term neatly encapsulates his proposed aesthetic programme. His theoretical histories, then, are to perform a speculative interrogation of social, political and cultural conditions; one not strictly based on specific, 'factual' examples, yet striking at a particular kind of certifiable reality. In contrast to the Coleridgean or Keatsian nod to the creative imagination as a guarantor of some form of truth, Galt often justifies the validity of his tales by way of the same arguments which were applied to Enlightenment reconstructions of ancient history: a reasoned likelihood of truth based on a careful examination of macroscopic human patterns. We have already compassed the importance of Enlightenment historiography to Scott's theoretical practice, yet Galt's approach is to lay claim to a more complete or faithful conjectural methodology. As Galt himself stated, 'It is not in this age that a man of ordinary common sense would enter into competition in recreative stories, with a great genius who possessed the attention of all. I mean Sir Walter Scott' (*Autobiography*, II, p. 210). The term 'recreative stories' is interesting, seeming to confirm his claim regarding the limits of the mind: even the already monolithic Scott is only capable of secondary 'recreation'. The assertion that direct competition with Scott would be suicide (whether economic, aesthetic, or both, is unclear), prompts Galt to formulate a rival position, the work of 'a man of ordinary common sense' (note the resonances with Common Sense philosophy), carving out a space in the contemporary literary field as the producer of fiction-as-science; a form of robust social analysis.

Regardless of the degree to which Galt's wilful rejection of 'story' is carried through in his works (at best incompletely, as we will see), it becomes a

central element of his theoretical practice. Rejecting the overarching and complex plotting of romance as purveyed by Scott:

Galt cleaves to a *trompe-l'oeil* mimicry of those secular narrative forms, admitted to the fold of historiography in the late Enlightenment, that have transmitted the historical record without the conspicuous imposition of a plot: memoir, anecdote, local annals or chronicle, the 'statistical account'. (Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 217)

The previous chapter explored the importance of Scott's overt fictionality to his writing, finding it to be a central device dictating his labyrinthine engagement with the Scottish past. In the terms of this comparison, then, Galt further emerges as a faithful novelist of improvement, his work concerned with replicating not only the subject material but also the key non-fictional textual forms of the improving trajectory (we should add periodicals to Duncan's list). Galt's limitation of the fictional is far from watertight in its textual instantiations – indeed the proximity between romance plotting and conjectural history's faith in archetypal experience, already noted with regard to Scott, may prefigure the studied collapse of Galt's aesthetic framework in *The Entail* – yet he is resolute in his assertion of an 'Enlightened' fictional method. Regina Hewitt stresses his 'sense of obligation to contribute to society', with a linked suspicion of literature and writers as pompous and socially redundant.²⁴⁷ This may underestimate the canny element to his approach, which was at least partially a sound judgement seeing Galt 'capitalise on the growing interest in social history' in contemporary society.²⁴⁸ Galt was of course also a businessman. However, as seen in Susan

²⁴⁷ Regina Hewitt, 'John Galt, Harriet Martineau, and the Role of the Social Theorist', in *John Galt: Observations and Conjectures on Literature, History, and Society*, ed. by Regina Hewitt (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2012), pp. 345-372, (p. 347, pp. 358-359).

²⁴⁸ Kenneth G. Simpson, 'Ironic Self-Revelation in *Annals of the Parish*', in *John Galt 1779-1979*, ed. by Whatley, pp. 64-91, (p. 88).

Ferrier's complaint, his rejection of the 'creative' faculty in favour of the 'recreative' opened him to criticism:

We see quite enough of real life without sitting down to the perusal of a dull account of the commonplace course and events of existence. The writer who imitates life like a Dutch painter, who chooses for his subjects turnips, frauds, and tables is only the copyist of inferior objects; whereas the mind that can create a sweet and beautiful though visionary romance, soars above such vulgar topics and leads the mind of readers to elevated thoughts.²⁴⁹

Ferrier's frustrating and single-minded insistence on a particular kind of writing sounds reassuringly out-dated to a modern ear, yet it is representative of a significant historical view of Galt. Attention to the 'commonplace' is construed as a vulgar and underwhelming substitute for the subject matter of 'visionary romance'. Also potentially mistaking a set of aesthetic choices for a shortcoming in ability is Eric Frykman, who offhandedly assumes that his 'imagination was limited', commenting that, 'He was embarrassed by an uneasy feeling that invention was dishonest. It was not only that his imagination was limited: he also distrusted the higher power of creative, as opposed to documentary, truth' (p. 220). The comfortable assertion of a nebulous concept like Frykman's 'higher power' should put us on guard, and while it may well be possible to attack Galt for instances of poor writing, these programmatic criticisms are misguided. Aside from ignoring the complex artistic construction in many of his tales, such obtuse responses also miss the point. It would be naïve to fully accept Galt on his own terms, yet his work is most valuable when considered with regard to his nuanced aesthetic strategy, allowing it to emerge as the fascinating product of an unorthodox literary programme. Key to the appeal of Galt's writing is its patient

²⁴⁹ Frank Hallam Lyell, *A Study of the Novels of John Galt* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1942), p. 223.

approach to the social, political and cultural machinations of contemporary and historical society, bound up in his tense rejection of 'story'. His texts establish a distinctive methodology that deploys a set of knotty aesthetic values to capture the experience of improvement, and in doing so deserve to be a central fixture of the Scottish literary canon, while suitably culminating the formation of long-eighteenth-century writing traced here.

Galt's theoretical history proposes itself as a 'vehicle of instruction', a scholarly handbook to the processes of improvement. Without anything like an equivalent stress on an express instructive purpose, or political employ, this nonetheless may indirectly reflect the anti-literary posture in the improving writing of figures like Maria Edgeworth, as cited by O'Connell (*Autobiography*, II, p. 210; O'Connell, p. 5). Yet Elizabeth Hamilton's response to the challenge of possessing cultural capital in early-nineteenth-century Scotland is modulated significantly by her gender, helping the pedagogical justification attain to principal importance. Literary activity provided an alluring opportunity to women in an overwhelmingly patriarchal society. Capitalising on the relative informality of novelistic practice, and employing the defence of anonymity, women with sufficient leisure time and education were able to engage with the novel and avoid 'cultural mandates against earning money' (Tuchman and Fortin, p. 6). Perhaps inevitably, the perception of the novel as an inherently feminine genre around the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries fed into its widespread devaluation, part of a highly-contested yet identifiable 'construction of gender difference in romantic genre', favouring the high-status and more

classically attuned genres of poetry and drama.²⁵⁰ While the growing professionalisation of the industry, combined with the instrumental success of Scott's historical romance, would act to advance the standing of the novel, gendered perceptions continued to be an issue. In the case of Galt, for example, the insistence on dismissing romance and representing his practice as a kind of historical sociology can be viewed as partly an attempt to masculinise the form – emphasising it as a site of pseudo-scientific enquiry. Though making reference to a later period, Tuchman and Fortin's narration of the developing concept of 'realism' as central to a masculine construction of the novel has traction here (p. 10). This is not to claim that realism was not also important for female authors, but accentuating the field of rational enquiry within his work, an element of Galt's self-representation may indeed hinge on a gendered cultural politics.

However, as Pam Perkins notes in the introduction to her edited volume of Hamilton's work, '*The Cottagers of Glenburnie* is as thoroughly grounded in her life-long interest in educational theory as any of her more overtly ambitious books on the subject'. The ideological underpinning of this 'uncompromisingly didactic' text, however, indicates a sensitivity to cultural norms, above and beyond simply mirroring Hamilton's intellectual interests.²⁵¹ Writing in the early years of the nineteenth century (significantly before Scott's turn to publishing prose fiction), her pedagogical stance emerges as a gender-attuned response to the novel's poor status. Embracing the posture of an educator (one of the few, though still limited, areas of intellectual endeavour available to women), Hamilton's fictional endeavour is couched in a discourse that simultaneously

²⁵⁰ Anne K. Mellor, *Romanticism & Gender* (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 6-7.

²⁵¹ Pam Perkins, 'Introduction', in Hamilton, *Cottagers*, ed. by Perkins, pp. 1-44, (p.1).

appeals to a value beyond flippant entertainment, while allowing her to exploit the gendered social opportunities presented to her. This is not to suggest that the pedagogical drive of *Cottagers* was necessarily a tactical decision, but certainly that it may have aided its ultimate, if short-lived, contemporary success. Contemporary reviewers were attuned to this formula: Tuchman and Fortin cite the *Edinburgh Review* describing Maria Edgeworth's 'design of offering 'instruction"' as having 'entitled her novels to more consideration than is usually bestowed on works of this description' (p. 46). Raising the form from its associations with frivolous pleasure and moral dubiety, yet staying largely within the constrictive bounds of social decency, the pedagogical defence provides a writer like Hamilton with a clever means to the possession of cultural capital. Occupying a safely feminine role as an educator of children (the key figured infants of *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* being poor Highlanders), Hamilton is able to exploit the literary cachet thus attained.

As the preceding discussion has made apparent, both Galt and Hamilton deploy a set of measured ideological supports to their artistic endeavour. Moving into the body of our analysis, the manner in which these theoretical underpinnings function in textual approaches to improvement requires closer examination. Beginning with Hamilton, we will see that her most prominent work instances this in memorable fashion, her brand of improving novel vividly articulating a controversial position within the contemporary milieu.

Elizabeth Hamilton

The Cottagers of Glenburnie has an interesting status in modern criticism. Its critics are often keen to imply the paucity of the work (aware of the approval that academic notice can be taken to automatically denote), yet are nonetheless

drawn to it. Hamilton's writing raises issues of such vitality for the period that her particular strain of haughty evangelicalism ends up being repeatedly apologised for, then gleefully dissected. Intriguingly, the present study also follows in a somewhat established tradition of linking together an analysis of Hamilton and Galt. Though divergent in many ways, a common, motivating concern around improvement makes itself felt in this pattern, if often only to use Hamilton as a foil to the comparative quality of Galt's engagement. Ian Campbell notes that, 'Galt is much too subtle to indulge in this black-and-white view of change in society [à la Hamilton]'; while W. M. Parker also feels the need to de-emphasise Hamilton's achievement in order to bolster Galt's, claiming that she merely sought 'to expose the dirt and squalor that were typical of many a Scottish village [...] in order to voice her views on a practical branch of reform', while Galt achieved a deeper social understanding.²⁵² Attacks on *Cottagers* as a dogmatic ideological exercise are familiar and indeed perhaps merited, encouraged by Hamilton's pedagogical stance from the very first pages. She proposes the novel as a tool for the improvement of Scottish national habits, and interestingly, significant numbers of her contemporaries considered it as an effective one (Perkins, p. 3). Francis Jeffrey, writing in the *Edinburgh Review*, finds that due to the 'strong current of improvement' existing in the country and the fact that '*our cottagers are reading and reasoning animals*', it is not 'altogether visionary [...] to expect that some good may actually be done by the circulation of such a work as this among the lower classes of society' (more on

²⁵² Ian Campbell, 'Town and Country: *The Ayrshire Legatees*', in *John Galt 1779-1979*, ed. by Whatley, pp. 92-106, (p. 101); W. M. Parker, *Susan Ferrier and John Galt* (London: Longmans, Green, 1965), p. 41. For other examples of the juxtaposition of Galt and Hamilton, see Lyell, pp. 63-65; and Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, pp. 70-95.

the sinister appropriateness of Jeffrey's use of the term 'animals' shortly). He even suggests to Hamilton that she should consider shortening and printing the text on cheaper paper to make it available to the poor.²⁵³ However, it may be that the relative success of the work had less to do with readers hungry for self-improvement than those keen to indulge in the portrayal of unimproved Scottishness – as is suggested by the popularity of the catchphrases Hamilton coined for her stubborn cottagers.²⁵⁴

Dominating the first third of Hamilton's novel is Mrs Mason's autobiography, a kind of potted *bildungsroman* that acts as an overture to the broadening range of the text. As recipient of improvement and then improver, Mason is first subject and then agent of the novel (*Cottagers*, pp. 60-96). Hamilton employs a trope current in the improving, didactic fiction of the period, the 'restrained' protagonist embodying a stress on practical diligence as a defence against the variety of hazards threatening to pervert the lower classes, including: 'lyric poetry, classical education, popular literature, revolution, and "thought"', that is, 'all pointless and oftentimes dangerous speculation' (O'Connell, p. 19). Hamilton's faith in the general outcomes of education nuances this picture for our purposes, although she certainly feared the effects of erroneous or inappropriate learning. However, against such perils, Mason's chastened experience is to be the measuring rule of the novel, setting out the

²⁵³ Francis Jeffrey, review of *The Cottagers of Glenburnie*, by Elizabeth Hamilton, *Edinburgh Review*, 12 (July, 1808), 401-410, (p. 410, p. 402); the review is also provided as an appendix in Hamilton, *Cottagers*, ed. by Perkins, pp. 341-352. Barrell notes the practice of marketing literature to the poor to encourage 'them to aspire to the virtues it taught' in the context of Hannah More (*Spirit of Despotism*, p. 215).

²⁵⁴ See Gary Kelly, *English Fiction of the Romantic Period 1789-1830* (London: Longman, 1989), p. 92.

terms in a text best remembered for the lazy Mac-Clartys and their slovenly mantras: '*I cou'd no be fashed*' and 'it does just weel eneugh' (*Cottagers*, p. 118, p. 114). Implicit in Mason's life-story is the archetypally conservative notion that the miserable poor are so through their own neglect. This familiar 'by the bootstraps' defence of privilege underwrites the depiction of poverty in the novel, as Hamilton repeatedly demeans the cottagers of Glenburnie in stunning fashion:

And here let us remark the advantage which our cottages in general possess over those of our southern neighbours; theirs being so whitened up, that no one can have the comfort of laying a dirty hand upon them, without leaving the impression, an inconvenience which reduces people in that station, to the necessity of learning to stand upon their legs, without the assistance of their hands, whereas in our country, custom has rendered the hands in standing at a door, or in going up or down a stair, no less necessary than the feet, as may be plainly seen in the finger marks which meet one's eye in all directions.

Some learned authors have indeed adduced this propensity, in support of the theory which teaches, that mankind originally walked upon all fours.

Demonstrating her familiarity with contemporary scientific discourse, Hamilton raises the possibility here that the Simian inhabitants of Glenburnie can in fact account for their social backwardness with reference to the evolutionary process; while she subsequently ponders Pictish heritage as an explanation, rendering their degeneracy an exhibition of racial inferiority concentrated in Northern Scotland (*Cottagers*, p. 107). Such offensive material is not scarce in the text: previous to the arrival of Mason, the people of Glenburnie have thought nothing of their children wading ankle-deep in pig excrement in order to enter the schoolhouse (*Cottagers*, p. 208). Almost comically, in the face of this evidence, Jeffrey is impressed by 'the skill with which a dramatic representation of humble life is saved from caricature and absurdity' ('review of *The Cottagers of*

Glenburnie, p. 402). Extreme class prejudice and indeed racial tension are part of an unsavoury palette, boiling under the surface of Hamilton's improving romance.

Yet at the heart of the text is a profound ideological quandary. Hamilton's method of representing national specificity leads her into an artistic trap, finding the aesthetic allure of unimproved residual Scottishness ranged against the drive of improvement. When Mason first arrives in Glenburnie, Hamilton deploys an extended metaphor to muse on national character. A contrast is set up against 'the lazy and luxuriant streams' of 'the fertile valleys of the south'. Employing the Highland synecdoche (an important element in the novel), these are compared to a Scottish stream described as, 'Alert, and, impetuous [...] proud and resolute [...] untinged by the fat of the soil; for in truth the soil had no fat to throw away'. The juxtaposition acts to justify the following announcement: 'That our burn had a character of its own, no one who saw its spirited career could possibly have denied.' The native environs and people are poised somewhere between a blissful, Arcadian state of nature and a vulgar condition of primitive wildness, a picture reinforced by the description of local attempts at agriculture:

The meadows and cornfields, indeed, seemed very evidently to have been encroachments made by stealth on the sylvan reign: for none had their outlines marked with the mathematical precision, in which the modern improver so much delights. *Not a straight line was to be seen in Glenburnie* [emphasis added]. (*Cottagers*, pp. 100-101)

The haphazard face of the countryside is a glaring signifier, the land itself betraying the character of its inhabitants. Resonantly locking the nation into a typology of unimprovement, the novel construes residual Scottishness as the child subject of Hamilton's and Mrs Mason's educational work – an element sitting alongside, without being entirely subsumed by, the obvious class

implications. The device of the wilful stream, embodying the untrained condition of the natives, involves a particularly direct application of the infantilising logic of stadialism, Glenburnie a site of primitive potential to be shaped in the image of the commercial hegemony. Still, a Burnsian rustic inversion is a nagging presence here, summoning the sentiment also expressed by Blake: 'Improvement makes straight roads, but the crooked roads without improvement, are roads of genius.'²⁵⁵ Hamilton's chosen method of locating the residual national subjectivity may at times invoke an unspoiled, authentic nature that improvement might contaminate. Yet even if such potential undertones could be ignored, the act of using unimprovement to signify national character gives Hamilton's improving romance an obvious problem – irrevocably positioning its goals against its primary understanding of Scottishness.

This tension remains in play throughout, as Mrs Mason moves through the village, leaving improvements in her wake. Duncan recognises the paradox, in which the dirt that mars the superbly filthy house of Mason's most intractable pupils – the Mac-Clartys (literally the sons of dirtiness) – is itself the unimproved material of nationhood (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 71). Covering the finger-marked walls and sludgy floors of the Mac-Clarty's home, national 'culture' is revealed as the antithesis of Mason's janitorial evangelicalism, stubbornly cultivated among the murky compost of unimprovement. The problem is a familiar one, hearkening back to the tensions we saw raised in Chapter One by the patriotic, improving construction of the nation prevalent in mid-eighteenth-century Scottish cultural theory. Subsumed within a metropolitan hegemony that often required

²⁵⁵ William Blake, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, in *The Complete Illuminated Books*, introduction by David Bindman (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000; repr. 2009), pp. 107-133, (p. 116).

refinement to be a journey towards London, Scots were forced to navigate some extremely tricky positions. Patriotic improvers were 'periodically unnerved by the nagging suspicion that improvement was being achieved at the cost of national identity' (Phillipson and Mitchison, p. 3). Disciplining the infant national state might involve its cultural evaporation. Hamilton seems sensitive to this problem in the introductory passages to the text, where she lays claim to a patriotic agenda, calling the 'well-wishers to the improvement of their country' her most important critics (*Cottagers*, p. 48). Marking her inheritance of Scottish Enlightenment thought, she aligns herself with a civic nationalist discourse that, like its historical precedents, bears an uneasy relationship with national identity. She takes a swipe at a form of patriotic inertia current in 'vulgar minds', in which, 'Every hint at the necessity of further improvement is [...] deemed a libel on all that has already been done' (*Cottagers*, p. 48). Hamilton wants to assure us that improvement is compatible with Scottish patriotism, and that it is merely ignorant to claim otherwise, or to want to preserve the unimproved condition. Yet this jars against the text's investment in a kind of bathetic Scottish picturesque adequately summed up as the effusive representation of 'dirt'. This emerges from what can be understood as an imposition of 'culture' as what Williams terms 'the tending of something' and thus, as Duncan notes, 'the antithesis of a national character anchored in a local way of life' (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 72). In co-opting two incompatible, alternative definitions of the term, Hamilton's text is spinally broken across paradigms, attempting to project both 'culture' as culturing and 'culture' understood as relatively static. Lacking Scott's nuanced romance methodology, which offers this static culture a negotiable position alongside a dominant process of culturing, the tension between residual

identity and improvement will not go away. Hamilton's vision of the residual culture's modernisation and maturation – rather than its celebration as a romantic addendum – cannot negotiate the conflict. Her evocation of national character as unimprovement acts to raise this paradox time and again, puncturing the confident dismissal with which the novel opens.

Mrs Mason arrives in Glenburnie and begins her work, in a short time coming to recognise the specific challenges presented by the village and announcing that: 'this *fear of being fashed* [i.e. laziness] is the great bar to all improvement' (*Cottagers*, p. 134). Indolence provides a deep-rooted obstruction to achieving the hierarchies and behaviour appropriate to commercial Britain, a goal mirrored in the school system Mason arranges, with the pupils 'divided into three distinct orders, viz. landlord, tenants, and under-tenants' (*Cottagers*, p. 209).²⁵⁶ Significantly, though born in Scotland, Mason has spent considerable time south of the Border, allowing her to return with the required expertise (*Cottagers*, p. 134, pp. 80-95). With Mason speaking and writing perfect English, it has long been recognised that her relationship with the cottagers constructs a strict cultural hierarchy, leaving those speaking a stylised Scots firmly subordinate. Instructing the villagers in social decorum, central to Mason's agenda is the eradication of irrational behaviour based on habit. Gary Kelly notes that, 'Mrs Mason uses reason and personal example to counter the dead hand of "custom", the basis of traditional culture' (p. 90). Her lecturing speeches go to lengths to assert the importance of judgement and foresight, ultimately achieving the widespread improvement of the village (with the exception of the

²⁵⁶ Hamilton makes a special nod to the schoolmaster David Manson in the construction of Mason's system (*Cottagers*, p. 204, p. 209).

Mac-Clartys, who remain gloriously uneducable), dragging her subjects into stadialism's modernity, defined here by rational thought patterns and an amenable conservatism. Despite its conflicting enjoyment of the nation as unimprovement, Mason's introduction of reason to the social practices of Glenburnie mounts a sustained attack upon residual cultural forms, one characterised by the imposition of a studied Englishness upon the vigorously satirised Scottishness of the novel. The cleaning up (both literal and metaphorical) of Glenburnie sets the village on an improving trajectory confidently characterised as positive. While such explicit cultural domination is surely a discomfiting spectacle, Duncan is correct to point out the contemporary context that renders Mason's work even more sinister:

It is hard not to read Mrs. Mason's hygienic intervention as an idealized compensatory version of the Clearances – the forced migration of populations in the name of improvement – at the very moment that these were entering an intensified, violent phase on the Sutherland estates. (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 71)

John Barrell has elucidated the use of images of idyllic or ruined cottage life across late eighteenth-century Britain, from élite fantasy to improving didacticism, becoming common shorthand in the political battles of the 1790s and evolving into a 'thoroughly politicized' terrain as a metaphor for British society (*Spirit of Despotism*, pp. 210-223). Yet Highland rural domesticity seems employed in another, more personal struggle here. A branch of the same ideological environment that occasioned the Clearances, Hamilton's fantastical vision of a spectacularly quick cultural reprogramming carries a decided menace. Instead of replacing the locals with sheep, here it is the original 'animals' which must be ameliorated.

Interestingly, the challenge set to Mason is not primarily to impose a desire for self-improvement, but rather to reconfigure the villagers' misguided aping of their superiors towards a more deserving role-model (herself). The Mac-Clarty's foolish, redundant stockpiling of expensive linen demonstrates an important facet to the unimproved culture of the text: wasteful and foolish rather than actually deprived (*Cottagers*, pp. 108-109).²⁵⁷ This is also reflected in Mr Stewart's complaint about the Flinders family, who he sees as having corrupted his daughter:

It is them, and such as them, who, by giving a false bent to ambition, have undermined our national virtues, and destroyed our national character; and they have done this, by leading such as you to connect all notions of happiness, with the gratification of vanity. (*Cottagers*, p. 191)

The inappropriate performance of gentility forms an alternative, self-defeating strain of social ambition in the text, a wrong-headed emulation that has corrupted humble, native 'virtue' read as inherently sober and spiritual. This must be challenged and reconstituted in order to achieve the goals of Hamilton's patriotic Christian pedagogy. If the social organisation of cottage life in Burns's 'The Cotter's Saturday Night' was already a historical retrospective by the 1780s – offering a form of potentially opportune idyll – Hamilton's text fears that the rural domestic piety associated with it has now been thoroughly eroded. Indeed, Hamilton's novel acts as a kind of thematic inversion of Burns's poem, one picturing domestic piety as a means to celebrate national liberty, the other relishing a bedraggled cottage life as a means to stimulate national recovery.

²⁵⁷ J. H. Treble provides an overview of the condition of the working classes in Scotland between 1760 and 1830, concluding that although some amelioration had taken place by the later date, 'poverty itself still remained an endemic feature of Scottish society'. See J. H. Treble, 'The Standard of Living of the Working Class', in *People and Society*, ed. by Devine and Mitchison, pp. 188-226, (pp. 205-206).

Through this element the improving trajectory is inflected towards a kind of cultural salvage, appealing to a proper, virtuous original Scottishness that must be recovered from its dirty bastardisation in the Mac-Clarty household. Interesting here is the consistent invocation in Irish writing of what O'Connell calls 'a traditional, organic past' that improvement needed to excavate; something that is quite clearly based in literary representation rather than historical fact. O'Connell's study is insufficiently plugged into stadialism to reveal the depth of the contradiction sustained by this nod to a halcyon past against the progressive assumptions of the civilising process. Still she usefully notes the paradox between an improving didacticism that is partly a protest against early capitalism as destabilising, while being involved in the same modernising drive (O'Connell, pp. 3-4). Certainly in Hamilton we find alternative forms of Scottish 'pastness' – one dirty and proliferating, the other clean and possibly retrievable – providing ideal aesthetic poles that can be traversed by the work of personal diligence. Yet, if the element of cultural recovery partly resists improvement as a journey away from Scotland, then this renders the aggressively Anglicised nature of Mason's imposition rather more difficult to square.

Ultimately, despite Hamilton's attempts to locate the improving hierarchy comfortably within a Scottish frame, the text cannot resist its systemic opposition of Scottishness and refinement, falling foul of its nationalisation of the dialectics of improvement. This difficult relationship becomes more apparent in a linguistic context. The rich textual representation of national character is primarily located in the Scots language; yet as is so often the case in long-eighteenth-century writing, improvement speaks here with an Anglophone voice.

Perkins mounts a fairly sustained defence of Hamilton in this context. While accepting that 'the reformer's perspective is explicitly English', she claims that:

Scots might be the language of peasants in this book, but it is not the language of the past: the Morisons, who exemplify the way forward for the working classes, are Scots speakers themselves, even if Hamilton does not mark their use of the language quite as strongly as she does that of the Mac-Clartys. More to the point, perhaps, by its use of Scots, the book addresses itself to Scottish readers in a way that, at that time, relatively few other novels had. (p. 35)

Perkins is keen to dissociate Hamilton from those who represent residual national character as a historical phenomenon, and thus doomed inevitably to collapse into modernity (excepting what little can be recouped). While there may be an element of truth in this, the invocation of evolutionary stages as an explanation for filthy habits (if perhaps intended as jocular) bears upon a pretty sinister version of the same. Furthermore, we could suggest that the humble Morisons' watered-down Scots merely denotes an incompletely improved state – though in their context it does begin to imply some of the positive virtues of rusticity. Hamilton's improving novel may resist the same drastic contrasts found in O'Connell's Irish models, where the 'antithetical' relationship of the indigenous language to improvement requires it to be represented merely as 'static' (O'Connell, pp. 20-21). Yet we cannot ignore the ideological loading of a sliding scale between a lazy and irrational full-blown Scots, and Mason's productive and politically sound Standard English. Juxtaposed on the page against the aesthetic overabundance of stylised Scots, Mason's formal English diction seems the very embodiment of practical and plain improving virtue. Continuing in a similar vein, Perkins assures us that the text, 'Does not assume that one has to be educated out of regionalism or into a uniformly English cultural life' (pp. 38-39). While the text's and its readership's enjoyment of the

unimproved seems at the very least a lucid instantiation of Bakhtinian dialogism, perhaps Perkins has a point in suggesting that the improvement imposed upon Glenburnie is not entirely a set of south-looking directives. We have the assurances of Hamilton's explicitly Scottish patriotic endeavour, alongside the invocation of a virtuous original Scottishness. Of course, the improving perspective here is, indeed, essentially a bourgeois Scottish one, yet is serving to bring out some of the unresolved cultural tensions around Anglicisation inherent in that position. Within such a frame, perhaps the Anglicising elements are merely pragmatic – doing the best for a state-less nation operating within a hegemonic power. Yet these arguments can only serve to qualify or contextualise the stubborn problematic here.

The text presumes that the preservation of residual Scottishness can be effected alongside its improvement, yet from the very moment in which that same Scottishness is located in a state of backwardness, Hamilton is forced into a cul-de-sac. The unresolved relationship between improvement and national character implicit in the civic nationalism of the Scottish Enlightenment is brought to a head. Improving mores conflict here against an investment of national identity in residual cultural forms that is at once ethnographic and aesthetic. While the ethnography is clearly dubious, the text's structural problem arises from the sociological urgency of Hamilton's aesthetic residual Scottishness: a picturesque socio-political problem, rather than hollow romantic prospect. We should observe the point that Hamilton also wrote poetry in Scots and it is clear that she had a genuine, if problematic interest in notions of a residual national character (Perkins, p. 37). Yet improving, civic nationalism and identification with residual Scottishness remain at loggerheads here, apparently

incompatible forms of patriotism. Arguably Scott's full-blown aesthetic nationalist paradigm would provide the solution – allocating residual culture a feasible position within British modernity. Yet in insisting that Scottishness as unimprovement must be *acted* upon, instead of simply canonised, *Cottagers* is unable to negotiate this problem, leaving improvement fatally antagonistic to national character.

'The politeness of a nation': improvement and women

If Hamilton's approach to national improvement in *Cottagers* falls flat against the problem of residual national identity, her writing makes a determined attempt to navigate another significant and problematic relationship sustained by the period's improving paradigm. Women's roles within this grand narrative are consistently difficult, at times even contradictory, and are an issue that again bears distinctive resonances in the Scottish context. Unafraid to challenge social convention and at times espousing radical positions, Hamilton is an intriguing figure in gender debates. As Kelly notes, the role of Mason in *Cottagers* reflects a significant trend in British sexual politics: 'Excluded from public, political, and national life [...] women working at the local level and within their "traditional" spheres of activity could perhaps effect a social transformation' (pp. 90-91). A series of emergent female public activities have long been cited in discussions of the period, the ideological potential of the domestic reaching even beyond such limited 'spheres', with women's perceived role as 'moral arbiters' providing 'authority and legitimation for initiatives outside the home' (Colley, p. 276). The production of an expedient ideal – which Anne K. Mellor describes as the 'rational, just, yet merciful, virtuous, benevolent, and peace-loving female' – could provide women with a platform for public engagement, including the

means to a specifically 'literary authority'. For Mellor this pattern sees 'the values of the private sphere associated primarily with women [...] infiltrating and finally dominating the discursive public sphere during the Romantic era'; with the changing status of domesticity yielding new horizons for female activity.²⁵⁸ If Hannah More's literary career and social campaign provides the most prominent illustration of this narrative, thus should also be seen Hamilton's varied work, summoning a position of moral guardianship to engage in the masculinised public sphere with self-assurance.

Hamilton's personal view on gender pivots around the assertion of an important female role in public life – not the *same* role as men, but one nevertheless fundamental – seeking to rectify a general 'contempt of the female nature'.²⁵⁹ This is at the heart of her 'work of feminizing "masculine" discourses', in which the goal was 'to intellectualize women's culture by popularizing, novelizing, and thereby disseminating philosophy, theology, and history'.²⁶⁰ Her stance is very much tied in with women's traditional role as educators of children, read by Hamilton as arguably the single most significant social function – in *Cottagers* referring to child rearing as 'the greatest of all possible trusts' (*Cottagers*, p. 92). Given this, the supreme importance of female cultivation follows, leading to what Perkins terms 'her most original and important assertion [...] that not only is a basic grasp of the philosophy of the mind within the reach of most women, but also that cultivating such an understanding is a

²⁵⁸ Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), p. 142, p. 11.

²⁵⁹ Elizabeth Hamilton, 'from *Letters on the Elementary Principles of Education* (2 vols, 1801)', in *Cottagers*, ed. by Perkins, pp. 220-288, (p. 245).

²⁶⁰ Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution 1790-1827* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 265.

basic female duty' (p. 25).²⁶¹ We have seen how in *Cottagers* Hamilton's pedagogical bent bleeds into a dubious national discourse, yet this can also take on a different political slant, in which radical unrest is more attributable to lax parenting than political pamphleteering: children are not being brought up in a suitably submissive mould, due to women's lack of enlightenment (Perkins, p. 19). Finally, Hamilton's basic position on gender – one deeply rooted in her penchant for educational theory – is definitive. She bundles sexism together with racism (she was staunchly anti-slavery) as simply 'prejudices which originate in early association', and assures us of her commitment to a genetically-distinct yet equal model of gender relations:

Had nature, indeed, made no distinction in the mental endowments of the sexes, the prejudice alluded to would long since have yielded to conviction; but the distinction made by nature, which is merely as to render each sex most fit and capable to fulfil the duties of its peculiar sphere, confers neither superiority on the one, nor degradation on the other. Of all that is truly worthy, of all that is truly estimable, in the sight of God and man, both sexes are capable alike. (*Elementary Principles*, p. 245)

If such assertions of equality sit somewhat awkwardly against Hamilton's treatment of Highlanders – which offers a potentially racial tinge to an overwhelming class prejudice – still she is in a decisive mood here. The assertion of gender difference is assured, yet has no bearing upon her confidence in equality. It should be mentioned that at times she seems to suggest that women should be thankful they are oppressed, as this is productive of Christian values (*Elementary Principles*, p. 250). Yet, underlying her engagement with the

²⁶¹ Arianne Chernock traces the history of domestic obligations within discourses on female education, finding such arguments being used both to defend the female claim, and sometimes to 'contain' its broader political implications for the gender divide. See Arianne Chernock, *Men and the Making of Modern British Feminism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), pp. 51-54.

idea of national improvement is a fairly sophisticated approach to the gender divide, a pattern that reflects the established role of this subject within the debate.

The role of women within the long historical phenomenon we broadly refer to as the Enlightenment is a thorny subject. Several of the most prominent Scottish figures display a famously equivocal attitude – with women key to the theoretical framework of intellectual discourse but largely excluded from actual participation in it. A ‘feminization of discourse’ across the eighteenth century, in Terry Eagleton’s familiar phrase, forms an element of this complex history.²⁶² If by late in the century new cults of sensibility had seen what Alan Richardson calls a ‘virtual colonization of the feminine on the part of male writers’, the question of how this impacted on actual women is a difficult one (p. 169). Certainly the feminine is absolutely central to constructions of civility in the period, with Hume striking a representative note in commenting on, ‘The free intercourse between the sexes, on which the politeness of a nation will commonly depend’ (‘Of National Characters’, p. 125). Gender relations were implicated in the same general sweep of progress – improvement – which the Scottish Enlightenment used to explain history, allowing the treatment of women to emerge as a test of national refinement. This judgement is given probably its best-known enunciation by William Alexander in 1781, who wrote that, ‘The rank and condition in which we find women in any country, marks out to us with the greatest precision, the exact point in the scale of civil society to which the

²⁶² Terry Eagleton, *The Rape of Clarissa: Writing, Sexuality and Class Struggle in Samuel Richardson* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982), p. 13.

people of such country have arrived.'²⁶³ Yet such attitudes sit somewhat uncomfortably against the social makeup of the eighteenth-century Scottish public sphere, in which women were marginalised when at all visible. Criticising this agenda as vacuous, Siân Reynolds complains that:

Their approach was in any case largely concerned with politeness and the 'civilising influence' of women, and had little to do with the intellect (indeed, women's influence is often thought to have inhibited intellectual liberty), nor did it connect with plans to provide more education for women.²⁶⁴

In this context Alexander's position can be read as merely patronising. Central to constructions of, and pride in, national identity, women nevertheless faced a struggle to engage in the emergent national forum.

In fact, women seem to have been less directly active in Scottish intellectual society than they were in equivalent formations in France and Germany, for example, where more established salon cultures flourished.²⁶⁵ Though by no means limited to Scotland, restrictive theorisations of femininity are instrumental here. Tending to confine women in the same breath as they venerated them, the tenor of discourse helps in explaining the disparity between women's topicality in the clubs and debating societies, and their meagre opportunities. While 'Scottish moralists [...] would sometimes go so far as to imply that the ultimate responsibility for the integrity of the moral community rested with the female sex', this 'responsibility' came hand-in-hand with heightened social restriction (Dwyer, p. 118). Mary Wollstonecraft's indignant

²⁶³ William Alexander, *The History of Women, from the Earliest Antiquity to the Present Time*, 2 vols (Bath: Thoemmes, 1995), I, p. 151.

²⁶⁴ Siân Reynolds, 'Gender, the Arts and Culture', in *Gender in Scottish History*, ed. by Abrams et al., pp. 170-198, (p. 179).

²⁶⁵ Seyla Benhabib usefully elucidates the social opportunities presented to females by the European salon culture of the period. See Seyla Benhabib, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt* (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 1996), pp. 14-21.

attack on the prescriptive conduct advice provided by Scottish moralists like James Fordyce (1720-1796) is symbolic of this tension, railing at what she sees as a hollow apotheosis of the feminine – one that has an enslaving effect, consigning women to a life of righteous anonymity.²⁶⁶ Indeed, comparing the Union period and the mid-eighteenth century, Rosalind Carr finds that public opportunities for women actually contracted over this interval. Thus by the later date ‘the practice of political agency was more gendered; more men and fewer women had political agency (narrowly defined)’, in a trajectory propelled by ‘a homosocial public intellectual-political sphere for the construction and performance of the masculine identity of the refined gentleman’.²⁶⁷

However, it is possible to detect some progress as the eighteenth century wore on, in instances such as ‘women beg[inning] to appear at special chemistry lectures’ (Murdoch and Sher, p. 132). The pioneering Anderson’s Institution, founded in Glasgow in 1796, allowed women access to a striking range of subjects: ‘astronomy, electricity, magnetism, hydrostatics, hydraulics, and optics’, and played an important role in legitimising the higher education of females (Chernock, pp. 49-53). The unusual opportunities presented to women by creative writing have already been mentioned, yet examples such as these reveal a growing penetration of women into other areas of public discourse – domains more vigorously represented as masculine. Particularly towards the later

²⁶⁶ The relevant texts here are: James Fordyce, *Sermons to Young Women* (London: Millar and Cadell, 1766) and Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in *The Political Writings of Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. by Janet Todd (London: Pickering, 1993), pp. 67-296. Both Fordyce’s work and Wollstonecraft’s attack are nicely explicated by Dwyer (pp. 117-140).

²⁶⁷ Rosalind Carr, ‘Gender, national identity and political agency in eighteenth-century Scotland’, (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008), p. 363, p. 18.

eighteenth century, a fairly paradoxical pattern can be discovered, in which 'separate sexual spheres were being increasingly prescribed in theory, yet increasingly broken through in practice' (Colley, p. 250). In one respect, indeed, we may be able to trace a pattern of reactionary gendering emerging as a controlling response to the earliest glimmers of feminism. Certainly a tense payoff is discernible between social constraint and new opportunities, in a society where the female gender was viewed as both vulnerable and morally powerful. While Mellor notes that the ideal of 'the virtuous Christian mother of the nation' so important to women's engagement in public life around the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries became instrumental in social restriction by the mid-nineteenth century, such double binding effects of gender discourse are demonstrably features of a much longer historical period (*Mothers*, p. 144).

As constructions of civility mined the ideological potential of the feminine, and British society underwent what Mitzi Myers terms 'a bourgeois reinvention of womanhood in the stylish new mode of enlightened domesticity', many women found themselves increasingly stereotyped.²⁶⁸ A somewhat paradoxical narrative of societal improvement accorded them a principal, yet often voiceless role. The idealisation of femininity may – like the contemporary attitudes towards Highland culture – have had disappointingly limited direct benefits for women. However, for some that were willing and able to exploit women's dubious apotheosis, new possibilities did open up; while later in the eighteenth century advances in areas like education began to gain pace, as part of the

²⁶⁸ Mitzi Myers, 'Impeccable Governesses, Rational Dames, and Moral Mothers: Mary Wollstonecraft and the Female Tradition in Georgian Children's Books', *Children's Literature*, 14 (1986), 31-59, (p. 34).

trickling emergence of calls for women's liberation. Involved in larger British gender narratives, the particular interest of the Scottish Enlightenment in the relationship between women and 'progress' helps to grant the issue a distinctive character for the Scottish public, while the separate educational structure explored in Chapter One also significantly modulated women's experience. The textual strategies and self-presentation of Elizabeth Hamilton begin to make more sense against this background: capitalising upon perceptions of her gender as a launching platform into the public sphere – something which evangelicals would continue to exploit through the nineteenth century.²⁶⁹ If Hamilton's improving romance struggles to square its relationship to Scottishness, her work is at pains to elevate the active role of women within a paradigm of national improvement that frequently maximised their ideological potential, while it minimised their practical relevance. Mason's diligent and Anglicised activities among the villagers of Glenburnie attempt to reconfigure the liminal space occupied by real women in Scotland's improving narrative, the middle-class heroine repositioned as the hands-on agent of historical development. Rational and religious orator, provider of self-assured enlightenment to the savage corners of the imperial psyche, Mason is a kind of humdrum female superhero: 'Where she could do most good, there did Mrs Mason think it would be most for her happiness to go' (*Cottagers*, p. 165). In broad terms, however, the development of gender ideology over the period certainly serves as a reminder to scholars not to buy into a reductive view of history as steady liberalisation, as

²⁶⁹ For further reading on the opportunities presented to women by evangelicalism, see Moore, p. 126; and Callum G. Brown, 'Religion', in *Gender in Scottish History*, ed. by Abrams et al., pp. 84-110, (p. 97).

encouraged by eighteenth-century stadial assumptions. 'Progress' is seen to be a complex and non-linear event.

Hamilton's writing attempts to manage a complex national narrative, generating a dialogue on some of the most difficult relationships constructed within the period's popular celebration of progress. With varying degrees of subtlety, she reflects a dynamic historical trajectory that applied a special emphasis to discourses of improvement in the Scottish context, accurately reflecting the problematic role played by both femininity and residual national identity in this area. Switching the focus back onto Galt, the next section proceeds to a further analysis of the working-out of this historical narrative in literary culture. Galt applies his powerful literary methodology to generate one of the most sophisticated interpretations of Scotland's rapid developmental experience.

John Galt and the novel of improvement

Galt's Scottish novels are remarkable for their application to the economic, political, social and cultural processes of improvement, tracing the evolution of society in the face of commercialisation and early industrialisation. Yet lurking in the shadows of this writing is a whole matrix of national-cultural phenomena – character, allegiances and tradition – which sits in uneasy relation to the march of progress. Swaying between an investment in the value of residual cultural forms and a confidence in modernisation, these texts dovetail and exemplify the conflicting pressures which improvement brings to bear. Galt explores this dynamic but perilous space with a fragile optimism, occasionally yielding to a Gothic typology of haunting – as the stifled narratives of residual Scottishness resurface to challenge British hegemony, calling its integrity into question.

Reflecting on the vigorous encroachments of capital into a society understood as a series of symbiotic localities, residual culture can offer Galt a stubborn and effective theme of protest, citing the moral ambiguities inherent in a new, dominant network of macroeconomic power. Yet while Scottish national character can function as a subtle moral security in Galt's portrayal of the brink of modernity in the West of Scotland, it can also be reduced to a sinister, twisted force percolating through the new commercial world.

If Scottish literature of the early nineteenth century owes much to the cultural influence of the city of Edinburgh, Galt is a writer for whom Scotland's western urban centre is still more important. Besides his own roots in Irvine and Greenock, Galt's work particularly reflects the experience of the west, concentrated around the emerging imperial trading hub of Glasgow. As Glaswegian merchants gorged themselves on the profits of colonial markets – becoming 'an oligarchy, as proud and sacred, in what respects the reciprocities of society, as the famous Seignories of Venice and Genoa' – a rapid transformation of the west seemed to focus the broader trajectory of the Lowlands (*Entail*, p. 109). This influx of wealth is reflected in the frequent appearance in Galt's texts of 'Nabobs' – men who have gained vast riches in India and returned home to enjoy the spoils.²⁷⁰ These figures form an inescapable motif in his writing, securing a symbolic resonance. This element partly contrasts against the dominant aristocratic inheritance plot in Scott (where such inheritance is legitimised as inevitable by the form of the historical romance). Indeed, Galt's 'new-money' men could be construed as key to an alternative vision of the nation.

²⁷⁰ See especially John Galt, *The Last of the Lairds; or, The Life and Opinions of Malachi Mailings Esq. of Auldbiggings*, ed. by Ian A. Gordon (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1976).

Challenging the persistent buttressing of hereditary power, perhaps Galt's Scotland is a land in which the profound thrust of commercial society cannot be patched over by feudal nostalgia.²⁷¹

Relatively popular during his lifetime, Galt's reputation sank across the nineteenth century, before experiencing a patchily upward trajectory towards the late twentieth century. P. H. Scott explains this Victorian decline as a reflection of 'the increasing gentility, "starched manner", and evangelical religiosity of the age'.²⁷² Certainly Galt's writing makes little apology for its broad sweep of the social spectrum and its vernacular agility. Yet perhaps his unorthodox stylistic also acted to alienate a readership increasingly habituated to the *bildungsroman* form, with its stress on the individual. As a novelist of diffuse improvement, Galt's concern resides primarily with a network of causation: individual will is unusually vividly incorporated within a vast matrix of interlocking and inextricable connections. Within this context the inappropriate and inflexible exercise of personal agency can be rendered a fatal, unnatural activity – as the case of Claud Walkinshaw, returned to below, vividly confirms. Such efforts, in these texts, are impossible, misguided, or quickly subsumed within the general development of a universal narrative – 'progress'. Individual activity is far from irrelevant, yet it must remain a cog within a larger

²⁷¹ Scott's portrayal of the rising bourgeoisie must of course challenge a reading of his work in this way; while he does address the issue of nabobs in Walter Scott, *St. Ronan's Well*, ed. by Mark Weinstein (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press; New York: Columbia University Press, 1995).

²⁷² P. H. Scott, *John Galt* (Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press, 1985), pp. 110-114. A succinct survey of trends in recent Galt criticism can be found in Regina Hewitt, 'Introduction: Observations and Conjectures on John Galt's Place in Scottish Enlightenment and Romantic-Era Studies', in *John Galt: Observations and Conjectures*, ed. by Hewitt, pp. 1-29, (pp. 8-17).

system.²⁷³ If this partly offers an endorsement of conformity, it also feeds a sophisticated, broad view of social history as a kind of mass kinesis. Drawing on his intellectual precedents, Galt exemplifies the Enlightenment idea that:

The mechanisms of progress from one historical stage to another included man's active powers, his efforts to improve his condition. Another was heterogeneity of ends, that in attempting to secure one objective man, in fact, set in train another unintended end. (Chitnis, p. 35)

Operating within an overarching structure of means and ends, Galt's characters move through a composite narrative realm, a broader context in which they remain hostage. Heroism is an unlikelyhood; a myth towards which his characters are best advised not to strive.

This intersects with religious doctrine in a manner too labyrinthine to be fully investigated here, yet there is a frequent and meaningful slip in this writing between the exigencies of fate as controlled by inescapable material circumstances and the will of God as understood by predestinarian Christianity. John MacQueen suggests that, 'Galt saw himself as a consistent predestinarian who, when he analysed the hypotheses to which he gave willing intellectual assent, was forced to deny the doctrine of a particular providence.' That is, that although God may have originally set events in motion, Galt's acute awareness of the multitudinous factors acting to modify human experience may have negated the idea of divine intervention in the everyday world of cause and effect; for MacQueen making Galt 'a predestinarian within the Newtonian system of mechanics'.²⁷⁴ It should be noted, however, that Galt can be read as more broadly

²⁷³ See also Trumpener, p. 152.

²⁷⁴ John MacQueen, 'Ringan Gilhaize and Particular Providence', in *John Galt 1779-1979*, ed. by Whatley, pp. 107-119, (pp. 108-109, p. 113). Of course this leads us into a paradox, as if God has set the original chain of cause and effect in motion, then his hand is necessarily present throughout.

suspicious of religious faith: *Ringan Gilhaize* is of course partly a meditation on the dangers of fanatical Presbyterianism.²⁷⁵ Furthermore, the light – if not satirical – treatment of Micah Balwhidder’s faith in ‘particular providence’ in *Annals of the Parish* may be suggestive of a facetious approach to theological discourse. P. H. Scott is correct to note the irony in Galt’s channelling the Enlightenment’s (here Ferguson) secular, mass systemic reading of society through the understanding of a parochial minister with ‘a simple faith in Providence’ (*John Galt*, p. 36). Indeed, doubts have been cast upon whether Galt was himself religious at all.²⁷⁶ Yet certainly the relationship between these opposing forms of fate – one spiritual, one secular – can be a productive artistic tension within his writing, aiding the complex narrative layering that enriches this work. Material and theological determination find themselves occupying the same patch of ground in Galt, who is capable of interchanging these frames without ever conclusively eliminating one or the other.

As we saw above, in methodologically appropriating a position of historical ratiocination, Galt (problematically) announces his fiction as non-fiction. Frykman provides a useful appendix detailing the holdings of Galt’s local Greenock library, indicating the wide selection of authors within his reach as a young man, including names like Hume, Smith and Ferguson (pp. 225-226). Yet the debt to Sinclair’s *Statistical Account* may often be pre-eminent in Galt’s ‘Enlightened fiction’, both in terms of subject matter and narrative style. This is

²⁷⁵ John Galt, *Ringan Gilhaize, or The Covenanters*, ed. by Patricia J. Wilson (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1995).

²⁷⁶ Gordon describes Galt’s views as ‘basically secular’ and comments that, ‘Certainly, in his final days, when a visiting clergyman pressed him to declare his Christian beliefs, Galt remained obdurately silent.’ See Ian A. Gordon, ‘Galt and Politics’, in *John Galt: Reappraisals*, ed. by Elizabeth Waterson (Guelph: Ampersand, 1985), pp. 119-128, (p. 121).

certainly the case in *Annals of the Parish*, partly a direct fictional reflection of the *Account*. Appropriating the *Account*'s formal narrative mediation through the eyes of parish ministers, Galt replicates its miscellaneous concern with detailed local enquiry – expanded into a lifetime's survey of incremental improvements – producing a striking textual echo, even ironic replica, of this key contemporary work. If the *Account* was designed as a tool of improvement, *Annals of the Parish* allows us to view these processes dynamically unfolding. Although the mode of *Annals* is never exactly replicated, it provides an informative basis for Galt's ensuing literary career (even when only as an overruled model), something reflected in his publication of subsequent important texts under the moniker of the 'Author of *Annals of the Parish*'.²⁷⁷

Enlightened fiction: *Annals of the Parish*

At the beginning of Galt's best-known novel, Micah Balwhidder is placed as the parish minister for Dalmailing. It is 1760, the year of George III's ascension to the British throne.²⁷⁸ This contiguity, remarked upon by Micah and his parishioners, is key to the construction of the work, in which small-scale local events are linked to wider national and global affairs, all part of the same interlocking system (*Annals*, p. 1). Balwhidder's appointment is a contentious one, reflecting the agitation over patronage that remained a source of widespread disaffection throughout the period. A member of the Moderate party in the Kirk, he is selected by a patron, conflicting against the popular Evangelical desire for parishioners to choose their own minister. As Balwhidder comments, 'I was put in by the patron, and the people knew nothing whatsoever of me'

²⁷⁷ This practice is glossed by Gordon ('Galt and Politics', pp. 120-121).

²⁷⁸ This work evolves some preliminary thoughts on *Annals*. See McKeever, 'Enlightened Fictions and the Romantic Nation [2011]', pp. 54-62.

(*Annals*, p. 5). The controversy occasioned by the Moderates' dominant minority exercising its power over local congregations is a notable signposting here at the opening of the text, establishing the terms of a contest between residual culture and improvement, the novel presenting itself as a history of this encounter. The perceived imposition of the placing quickly gives way to acceptance, yet the suggestion that Balwhidder represents the modernising wing of the Kirk at this stage is interesting, as we will see his ideological position subsequently struggle to comprehend or endorse the pace of social change. For the body of the narrative he is marked out as a reflex social conservative. This is apparent in episodes such as his complaint about a young minister's 'Englified' language: by this point Balwhidder's taste for the 'plain auld Kirk of Scotland' has lost touch with 'the younger part of the congregation' (*Annals*, p. 122). A significant generational gap has opened up in Scottish society, alienating the minister's investment in residual cultural forms. While, often after the fact, Balwhidder achieves a largely positive outlook on improvement during the epoch traced by *Annals* – his providentialist faith in God's plan affording significant reassurance – his attachment to expressions of residual Scottish particularism pull him further from the institutional drive of Edinburgh's metropolitan élite that he initially embodies. Though by no means a defensive Scottish patriot (note the personal identification with George III), the minister is consistently troubled by the relationship of improvement to national character, even if, as Martha Bohrer argues, he himself is 'unconsciously' improved along with his community.²⁷⁹

Surveying this pattern, the novel is the elderly Balwhidder's retrospective

²⁷⁹ Martha Bohrer, 'John Galt's *Annals of the Parish* and the Narrative Strategies of Tales of Locale', in *John Galt: Observations and Conjectures*, ed. by Hewitt, pp. 95-118, (pp. 106-113).

meditations upon his time in Dalmailing, laying particular emphasis on cumulative improvements. A hostage to the growing forces of a globalised imperial market, the village experiences a steady penetration of its rural way of life by technological, cultural and political innovation.

Galt subtly commingles human agency in among the apparently inexorable material forces drawing Dalmailing into British modernity. When Lord Eglesham is catapulted from his coach to land head-first in a midden, this occasions the improvement of the road; yet the human prompt is soon subsumed within the text's litany of similar occurrences, becoming increasingly incidental in a general trend that perhaps all along rendered the process inevitable.²⁸⁰ Balwhidder, of course, sees the agency of providence at work here, with God having abashed Eglesham's pride (*Annals*, pp. 40-42). Yet as the reader is invited to perceive, the true invisible forces at work in Dalmailing are those of modernisation and globalisation, products of a comprehensive scheme of constituent agents. Charting the globalising economy of the west of Scotland – particularly exposed to such influences through its pivotal imperial trade position – Galt's text narrates the evolution of a local community slowly establishing firmer links with a broader geographical zone.

Confronted by this steady change, Balwhidder's sporadic verdicts on the process sway between bouts of optimism and a more sceptically inclined position, wrestling between his instinctive conservatism and a somewhat lagging respect for innovation. Although it would be fallacious to identify Balwhidder

²⁸⁰ Trumpener remarks of *The Provost* that Galt shows 'how the machinery of change, once put into operation, camouflages [human] agency as the movement of history' (p. 156). See John Galt, *The Provost*, ed. by Ian A. Gordon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982).

with Galt, nonetheless the text exhibits a deep sensitivity to the dilemma of improvement:

At the time, these alterations and revolutions in the parish were thought a great advantage; but now when I look back upon them, as a traveller on the hill over the road he has passed, I have my doubts. For with wealth come wants, like a troop of clamorous beggars at the heels of a generous man, and it's hard to tell wherein the benefit of improvement in a country parish consists, especially to those who live by the sweat of their brow. (*Annals*, p. 48)

Significant here is the description of improvements under the rubric of 'alterations and revolutions', the latter term particularly invoking the political unrest that at various points plagues Balwhidder's ministry. In certain lights, improvement can be as disquieting as radical discontent for the rural minister, equally threatening to the established culture. Duncan is correct to point out the text's demonstration of the positive influence of commercialisation: in one instance offering a demonstration of Adam Smith's theory of capitalism's 'invisible hand' at work (the historical precursor to the dubious 'trickle-down effect') (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 227). At points Galt displays an optimism that we may feel is unwarranted. Yet as the quote above insists, improvement also brings 'wants' and could have a morally dubious effect on hard-working rural life: populations trading the honest simplicity of 'the sweat of their brow' for the uncertainty of 'alterations'. Of course, Smith himself flags such concerns when discussing the potentially detrimental social impact of the division of labour. Specialisation is capable of producing workers 'as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become', while also incurring a worrying decline from the collective martial responsibility Smith cites in classical models (*Wealth of Nations*, II, pp. 781-788). Furthermore, as Balwhidder's complaint about 'Englified' language makes clear, elements in the improving trajectory may

again pose a threat to a localised, rustic life associated with residual Scots-cultural integrity.

Galt foregrounds a vacillation over the effects of improvement when discussing the writing of *Annals* in his autobiography:

The alteration was undoubtedly a great improvement, but the place seemed to me neither so picturesque nor primitive as the old town, and I could not refrain from lamenting the change, as one sighs over the grave of an old man. (*Autobiography*, II, p. 227)

If ultimately convinced of the beneficial effects of the changes seen in Dalmailing, adequate space remains in the ideological framework of the text to register their threatening aspects. This sense is further confirmed by P. H. Scott's relation of the Rousseau essay Galt associates with his endeavour, concerning the question: 'Has the progress of the arts and sciences contributed more to the corruption or purification of morals?' (*John Galt*, p. 28). Diminishing the 'picturesque' and the 'primitive', processes of 'alteration' exert a disquieting agency upon this figuring of a national heartland. While Balwhidder's own conservation of national character seems to offer a level of assurance on the improving trajectory, still the potential antagonisms cannot be ignored. Bohrer argues that the minister 'illustrates the moral sentiments necessary for the humane functioning of *laissez faire* capitalism', yet there is a threatening suggestion that this ethical stability is a direct product of the local system that is acted upon by modernisation (p. 101). Thus Galt's faith in residual Scottishness maintains the power to upset the positive trend, the fading of the 'old man' of traditional practice a cause for ambivalence.

The structuring of the text is significant, above and beyond facilitating Galt's charting of the on-going, local manifestations of global improvement. The

fidelity to the form of the yearly record also allows Balwhidder to create narrative suspense, in that, 'developing situations can quite defensibly warrant a tantalisingly brief mention in one annal, only to be more fully recounted later' (K. G. Simpson, p. 67). In addition, this element is also a material reflection of Galt's publishing experiences. Seeming tailor-made for serialisation (though *Annals* was not itself published in serial form), Galt's theoretical history flaunts the shaping influence of his role writing for *Blackwood's*, with compact, relatively self-contained units unfolding the story. Lyell notices this point with regard to Galt's vocal denials of the novel form (p. 50). Certainly the segmented format helps to underwrite the refusal of a 'consistent fable' across the scope of a longer piece, even if the ideological bent of these linked annalistic passages has less to do with their length and more to do with an assault on the romance contents of prose fiction *per se*. That said, recent criticism has focussed on Galt's usage of short pieces as a rebuttal to the increasing dominance of the novel and its characteristic tendencies. His stressing of community above individuality is contextualised by Bohrer within the generic form of 'tales of locale', which deny the 'romantic reconciliation of class differences as advanced in the novel', instead 'asserting the continuing importance of the interpersonal exchange of sentiments as enacted within a community that functions as part of a material, global economy' (p. 114). Also coordinating Galt's denial of novelistic romance via genre is McCracken-Flesher, who focuses on the even more fragmentary form of the 'sketch', where 'inadequate narrators' combine with 'shifting perspectives' to illustrate 'the wonderful impossibility of plot, or of "fable" with its limitations to meaning'. Certainly the motivation for such a project is nicely captured in Galt's distaste at the King's Jaunt, the pageant symbolic of a kind of

individualistic, overdetermined storytelling that he considers redundant.²⁸¹

However, if the open-ended short fiction most acutely epitomised by the 'sketch' sits alongside the theoretical history as another rebuttal of the novelistic vending of romance, then perhaps a work like *Annals* partakes of something of both forms. While not as radically disrupted as McCracken-Flesher's models, *Annals* offers an integral, even flagship example of Galt's undercutting of the rising *bildungsroman*: a process at once generic, ideological and thematic.

Annals's structure is also a pivotal layer in Galt's careful mirroring of the textual apparatus of improvement. The contemporary periodical press, alluded to both directly and obliquely by the work, was a key site for such debates. Not least in this was Balwhidder's own preferred reading material, *The Scots Magazine*, whose 'eclectic mix of subjects' and 'annual January summary of the foregoing year's foreign affairs' are far from coincidental (Bohrer, pp. 105-106). Across this yearly unfolding of the minister's life, however, we find a profound stylistic debt to Sinclair's *Statistical Account*, and not merely in terms of improving ideology, statistical enquiry or segmented analysis. The imposition of Balwhidder's slightly eccentric narration is also a subtle nod to Galt's source, punctuated as it is with an entertaining variety of personalities. For example, in her study of the *Old Statistical Account* (Galt is writing a decade before the appearance of the second *Account*), Maisie Steven finds that the contributor for Fala and Soutra in the Lothians 'resorts to sarcasm', complaining that: 'It is only fashionable for the lower classes of people to attend the church. The higher

²⁸¹ Caroline McCracken-Flesher, 'The Sense of No Ending: John Galt and the Travels of Commoners and Kings in "The Steam-Boat" and "The Gathering of the West"', in *John Galt: Observations and Conjectures*, ed. by Hewitt, pp. 73-92, (p. 74, pp. 87-89).

orders are above the vulgar prejudice of believing it is necessary to worship the God of their fathers' (p. 165). Through the visibility of Balwhidder's persona – with his religiously centred opinions – Galt is able to demonstrate the interaction between an individual mind and the world. The framework of the text allows the reader to navigate in between the alternative worldviews on offer: Balwhidder's religious assurances of the work of providence in the community, and the emphasis on productive material circumstances. If the minister is at times the subject of mockery on this count, then it also offers a familiar and sympathetic image of humanity at large. The text's readerly position, allowing for an ironic recognition of Balwhidder's intellectual processes and how these interact with his environment, provides an exposition of 'the imaginary relation to social history and cultural systems that we call ideology' (Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 226). Furthermore, himself vacillating between an acknowledgment of the importance of human activity and a faith in God's plan, the minister functions as a caricatured and inverted version of our own experience in reading the novel, as we explore the available positions. It is this fluid, ironic perspective that permits *Annals* its complex judgemental framework, as both local community and global influences are treated with a combination of approval and scepticism. Faced with the minister's position as a conduit between alternatives, K. G. Simpson suggests that, 'With his manifest contradictions and complexities, [Balwhidder] may well represent the double vision of Scottish Presbyterianism with its conflicting emphases on pre-determination and practical energy' (p. 80). Certainly *Annals* deftly manoeuvres us through a doubled perspective, chronicling how a worldview fits itself to circumstances, alongside the limitations, inconsistencies and consolation inherent in this process.

Mathew Wickman suggests that Balwhidder's attempts to rationalise a hugely complex global system are presented as *necessarily* imperfect, that the text ultimately explodes a systematic understanding of the world. Alongside a recurrent element of narrative irresolution in *Annals*, this produces, for Wickman, a refutation of the union equations of *Waverley*, in which '1 + 1 = 1' (England and Scotland forming Britain) and 'national culture is the effect of narrative closure'. A denial of simplicity certainly rings true as part of Galt's assertion of vast involvedness in place of the unambiguous threads of 'story', and Wickman correctly identifies the ironic limitation imposed on Balwhidder's worldview. Yet while he argues that the rendering of localised experience *within a coherent network per se* must resolve itself as an insufficient kind of mythmaking, this perhaps underestimates the power of globalisation itself: the complexity of which may be inconceivable without rendering it illusory.²⁸² Indeed, we may be inclined to insist that *Annals*'s notion of a 'great web' only signals an inevitable and primordial condition being rendered more tangible: the idea of a truly isolated system on earth, whether economic, ecological or otherwise, being a fantasy (*Annals*, p. 180). Perhaps more pertinently, however, Galt's thematic focus on interconnectedness may provide a subtle, even inadvertent, reflection back onto his programmatic literary approach. In this purest emanation of the theoretical history, perhaps the globalising imperial economy becomes itself the methodological suppressor of romance – consuming, by demystifying, the enigmatic ideological and imaginative spaces it requires.

²⁸² Matthew Wickman, 'Of Tangled Webs and Busted Sets: Tropologies of Number and Shape in the Fiction of John Galt', *Romantic Circles: Praxis Series*, April 2013, <<http://romantic.arhu.umd.edu/praxis/numbers/HTML/praxis.2013.wickman.html>>, [accessed 3 June 2014], (paras. 1-10 of 14).

Galt's literary agenda clearly attempts to seize cultural capital based on a dismissal of flippancy, perhaps even of dangerous idealism; insisting instead on a non-fictional paradigm that is partly a didactic space, partly a historical record, while also offering an accountable aesthetic 'harmony'. Yet in this rendering of an age of limitless connection, ideas like 'story' and mystery may be posed as a faded possibility, as much as a redundant superfluity.

Perhaps dramatising the ideological demands of modernity – excavating the role of imagination in a process of constant, worldwide revelation – Balwhidder's statistical account of Dalmailing does stay remarkably faithful to its manifestly historicist aesthetic mode, disclaiming the frivolities of art to attempt an unsullied theoretical history. Emblematising Galt's denial of plotting, the text formulates an innovative narrative methodology by appropriating the discourses of empirical analysis found in its non-fictional precedents. Duncan comments that:

Annals of the Parish [...] works out a new, modern rhetoric of typology, what might be called an empirical or statistical typology, in relation to an older allegorical mode. Allegory claimed to provide a view of a cultural system by plotting a discursive position outside that system – hence *allos*, other – whereas the new typology does not transcend the world it represents. (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 223)

Refusing allegory, repudiating the imposition of an external meaning upon events, *Annals* navigates the world according to Balwhidder through a methodical, journalistic sequence of events – exploring the complex terrain of a globalising economy described through Newtonian rubric. Thus the parallel running of Balwhidder's ministry and the reign of George III merely follows the crucial logic of the text. As Duncan rightly points out, although *Annals* pokes fun at Balwhidder for his self-importance, the integral relationship between a king

and a country minister is actually pivotal to the aims of the narrative. Therefore, although, 'Galt associates allegorical typology with the "simplicity" of his narrator [...] events in the parish are indeed typical, representative of larger historical processes' (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 224). Balwhidder's own attempts at allegory – his faith in the workings of providence – form a pseudo-comic foil to the text's own ideological position, in which meaning is an internal, metonymic product of the complex workings of economic and social progress. Yet while *The Entail* will see Galt's refutation of 'story' vividly collapse, there are also studied chinks in the non-fictional armour of *Annals* (above and beyond the necessary shortcomings in Galt's paradoxical literary ideal), as in the baleful imagery of orphaned children waiting 'on the green' as 'innocent lambs', which Duncan reads as a reflection of the relationship between capitalism and war threatening to impose itself as a sinister grand narrative (*Annals*, p. 182; *Scott's Shadow*, pp. 228-230). However, despite such tensions and Balwhidder's alternative viewpoint – itself a form of romance, religion seen as partly motivated by an archaic need for 'story' – the novel goes to lengths to ensure a secular, rational explanation for itself. Indeed, early reviewers immediately documented the supposed realism of *Annals*, including John Wilson, who described it pithily as 'not a book but a fact'; while, somewhat following Galt's assertion of documentary truth based on conjectural probability, P. H. Scott is himself moved to announce that, 'The 20 volumes of the *Statistical Account* are a substantial confirmation of the essential accuracy of the *Annals*' (*John Galt*, p. 31). This is a rather contentious assertion, and risks buying too deeply into Galt's self-advertisement, though undoubtedly the novel does chart important 'real-life' experiences (as perhaps all do). Certainly the term 'essential' should be

emphasised – indicating a general, rather than specific brand of historical accuracy – as Galt has clearly exercised artistic licence with the details of the community that provides Dalmailing's model.²⁸³

Annals of the Parish is probably the text which best exemplifies Galt's literary ideology in practice, his ideal of a non-fictional fiction. Indeed, looking back on the work, Galt later claimed that he 'had no idea it would ever have been received as a novel', and is 'as different from a novel, as a novel can be from any other species of narrative'. Instead he describes it as a 'treatise on the history of society' (*Literary Life*, I, p. 155; *Autobiography*, II, pp. 219-220). Appropriating a mode of empirical enquiry from influences including the *Statistical Account*, Balwhidder's tale charts the dramatic experience of improvement in a pinpointed area of the west of Scotland – marking its emergence as a new form of locality, a segment or circle of influence amongst an ever-expanding network of consolidating imperial power.²⁸⁴ Seeing beyond Balwhidder's stubborn faith in God's plan, the reader is faced with a far more ambiguous moral situation. Partly construed as the loss of the local as a site of cultural particularism, of stability – perhaps even of imaginative and narrative freedom – imperial globalisation brings an uncertain energy to bear. Dramatising the visible rise of a network of constant interrelation, or 'history', the theoretical history of *Annals* seems to intertwine its topical focus and methodological basis: a global awareness suppressing the shadowy ideological space for romance or 'story'. There is a

²⁸³ See Christopher A. Whatley, 'Annals of the Parish and History', in *John Galt 1779-1979*, ed. by Whatley, pp. 51-63.

²⁸⁴ As Martin Fitzpatrick explains, 'Enlightened accounts of cosmopolitanism drew on the classical notion of spreading circles of affections so that true citizens of the world would necessarily retain strong affections for their own community' (p. 300).

certain unavoidable irony, of course, in that this supposedly naked image of history constantly resolves itself into one of the most significant grand narratives of all: the inexorable rise of commercialism. However, like its inspiration in the *Account*, Galt's text ably demonstrates a distance between the 'Enlightened' project of Balwhidder's ostensible aim and the interjection of his personal urges, prejudices and opinions. In this respect, the critique of improvement is granted a human touch, allowing us to recognise the impact of rapid social progress upon an individual. As the minister moves from a position of perceived dangerous novelty at his appointment to become a cultural relic, the text exemplifies the dizzying speed of improvement in this period and begins to hint at the intellectual and moral problems this brings.

National crisis: *The Entail*

'LET GLASGOW FLOURISH!', runs the civic motto that closes *The Entail* (p. 364). The city is especially central here – and not merely as a location – with its accelerated admittance into the spoils of a globalising empire providing Galt with rich illustrative potential. The novel frequently asserts that if Edinburgh is the legal and cultural capital of Scotland, Glasgow is its commercial powerhouse – a town of 'Fatted calves, and feasting Belshazers' – marking it out as a representative site for the period's rapid economic development (*Entail*, pp. 355-356).²⁸⁵ Galt retains his focus on documentary authenticity, stressing in his correspondence with Blackwood that this was to be 'a true narrative in the main' with 'every

²⁸⁵ The reference to the biblical story of Belshazzar introduces some of the moral questions the novel addresses, not least the corrupting influence of material goods.

character and incident founded on realities'.²⁸⁶ The historical subject to be treated thus faithfully is ambitiously represented as the entire post-Union period, although this text complicates and finally subverts Galt's familiar literary stylistic. Just beyond its halfway point, the novel informs us that 'a general spirit of improvement [...] was then gradually diffusing itself over the face of the west country' (*Entail*, p. 205). Change is foregrounded here, within a text that charts in detail an entire historical trajectory and asks a series of difficult questions about what this narrative means for Scottish (and indeed British) identities. In her excellent work on the text, Alyson Bardsley theorises that *The Entail* 'criticizes the fervor of collective identity it associates with nationalism and renders its pursuit tragic and ridiculous'.²⁸⁷ In parts such 'fervor' is dramatically shown as a septic and ironically self-serving expedient, one that leads to isolation and social breakdown. Yet if this represents a dismissal or critique of nationalism *per se*, it is at least equally concerned to demonstrate the incongruous ideological marriages that fissure this collapsing framework: rendering an articulate national identity either sinister or unattainable. Unfolding a series of personal and collective crises in a text that porously reflects and ridicules the state of the literary tradition, this novel is Galt's extended essay on the Scotland of his day. Improvement and progress, alongside residual-cultural conservation or nostalgia, all take on a very ambivalent character indeed.

The Entail wastes no time in beginning to construct the intricate framework that regularly threatens to form the text into a full-blown allegory of

²⁸⁶ John Galt, 'To William Blackwood, 23rd June 1822', in *The Entail*, ed. by Gordon, pp. 370-371, (p. 370).

²⁸⁷ Alyson Bardsley, 'Novel and Nation Come to Grief: The Dead's Part in John Galt's *The Entail*', *Modern Philology*, 99 (2002), 540-563, (p. 540).

national history. Indeed, the story of the Walkinshaw family is so roundly figurative that it might seem heavy-handed, if this density was not in itself exactly the point. The saturation of the novel with touchstone historical episodes and allusions creates a realm in which such superstructural evocations become an obsessive and counter-productive language; while normal social ties appear to have become unachievable. A victim of his father's involvement in Scotland's attempt to become an independent imperial power through the Darien project, Claud's rise to regain his ancestral estate charts a long and flawed journey of improvement, with attendant moral emergencies. Given Darien's position as a key perceived motivator behind the Act of Union, Claud's poverty and subsequent 'gathering' place a heavy national-symbolic load on his person. In her role as early protector of Claud, the lingering servant Maudge Dobbie embodies the final vestige of his family's standing, and is the provider of 'goblin lore and romantic stories' of the national past. However, at this early stage the boy displays a predilection for the (here Anglocentric and metropolitan) fiction of economic accumulation: he 'early preferred the history of Whittington and his Cat to the achievements of Sir William Wallace' (*Entail*, pp. 3-4). Yet the description of patriotic Scottish history as a quasi-mythical romantic area to which Claud's avaricious taste is disinclined is slightly misleading. For central to the problem of his life is an infatuation with his family's lost status that is profoundly represented as irrational or foolishly idealistic. As Galt writes, 'avarice with him was but an agent in the pursuit of that ancestral phantom which he worshipped as the chief, almost the only good in life' (*Entail*, p. 76). A 'phantom', Claud's fixation hints at the Gothic undertones to the text's treatment of national identity – becoming a haunting presence – which we will see in more

detail subsequently. His sacrificial pursuit of former glories occasions the disinheritance of his favourite and eldest son – transgressing against ‘the natural way’ – as only the most prominent example in a life where emotional ties and personal social gratification are muted (*Entail*, p. 57). A throwback to a period of feudal allegiance – or as the Leddy puts it, the sinister ‘papistical and paternostering’ times – Claud’s goal places an inappropriate historical burden upon the commercial environment of modernising Scotland (*Entail*, p. 259). Keith M. Costain notes that a whole ‘group of monitorial characters’ warn Claud against the unnatural ‘disinheritance scheme’, his actions forming an anachronistic, even otherworldly imposition.²⁸⁸ With his eldest and youngest sons demarking the alternative possibilities presented to eighteenth-century Britain – Hanoverian George and Jacobite Charles – Claud’s motives depict a fatal misalignment of the ideological framework in contemporary society, with his family emblematising a culture divided between incompatible and antagonistic polarities: ‘humanity’ (incorporating cultural and social ties) appears to be ranged against ‘economy’ (financial and emotional) by virtue of a miscarrying historical narrative. In this context, history as improvement seems to be an extremely painful prospect.

The world of the novel is one in which the strictures, terminology and attitudes of an arid legal culture are exercising a suffocating influence. This is, after all, a text narrated by a lawyer, one that takes as both its title and its central plot device a constrictive legal fiction – the entail. The entailing of land was a highly relevant issue around the early nineteenth century, by which time

²⁸⁸ Keith M. Costain, ‘Mind-Forg’d Manacles: *The Entail* as Romantic Tragicomedy’, in *John Galt 1779-1979*, ed. by Whatley, pp. 164-194, (p. 182).

approximately fifty per cent of Scotland was held under this method. With the Abolition of Heritable Jurisdictions Act of 1746, following the Jacobite Rising, the reform of land law represented a key thrust of the modernisation of society. Yet entails provided an interesting succour to this process, providing, 'a grant binding heirs through a legal device to the same degree that feudal law had bound them, but on the terms of the new commercial society'.²⁸⁹ In a sense, then, the entail is itself a throwback to a former time – perhaps even a Gothic remnant – and is thus the appropriate tool for Claud's retrospective passion. Bardsley points out that, 'To some degree, entails hinder improvement of the land, since it is impossible to borrow money against land that cannot be sold', and so could be further seen as a regressive (or at least counter-progressive) historical device (p. 550). Indeed the legal fiction was explicitly attacked by Adam Smith as a sacrifice of the future to the past, in a passage that may have provided significant inspiration for Galt's novel: 'They are founded upon the most absurd of all suppositions [...] that the poverty of the present generation should be restrained and regulated according to the fancy of those who died perhaps five hundred years ago'. Awkwardly locking land into large estates, the device is a direct impediment to the modernisation of the land for Smith, who notes: 'It seldom happens [...] that a great proprietor is a great improver' (*Wealth of Nations*, I, pp. 384-385). An 'instrument that articulates the trace of the feudal in the commercial', the entail represents the problematic culture clash with which the novel is concerned – being one of its dangerous, even monstrous results (Schoenfield, p. 62). If the medieval English fable of Dick Whittington is featured

²⁸⁹ Mark Schoenfield, 'Family Plots: Land and Law in John Galt's *The Entail*', *Scottish Literary Journal*, 24 (1997), 60-65, (pp. 62-63).

as offering a narrative seed for modern British commercialism, the entail as a pre-British leftover inverts this perspective. Positioned as the symbol of a historical crux, it is the unifying emblem of the text's epistemological battles, variously expressed as emotion versus commerce, religion versus law, romance versus history or nature versus its abomination. Such conflict is exemplified in the lawyer Keelevin's attempts to persuade Claud not to pursue his plan, complaining that, 'There's no Christianity in this'. Claud's reply is simple and succinct: 'But there may be law, I hope' (*Entail*, p. 57).

Galt is partly engaging upon a bleak exploration of the workings of capitalism in the absence of Smith's succouring agency of sympathy. Among its striking framework of legalese, the novel is punctuated by commercial modes of expression, with even metaphysical machinery described under the rubric of commerce: 'Life is but a weaver's shuttle, and Time a Wabster, that works for Death, Eternity, and Co. great whole merchants' (*Entail*, p. 279). Yet if one of the divisions the text makes is between a modernising commercial society and a residual Scots culture, endless legal disputation is seen to be an element of both – reinforcing the roundly pessimistic tone, which poses no simple juxtaposition between right and wrong alternatives.²⁹⁰ While unrestrained commercialism emerges as a weaponised form of self-interest, so too more traditional social relations – such as family lineage – are tainted in a bleak Hobbesian image of human motivations. Lawyers are shown to have a pretty unethical power, positioned at the heart of the social model: 'grasping, as they do, the whole concerns and interests of the rest of the community' (*Entail*, p. 55). Duncan

²⁹⁰ Malachi Hypel nicely represents this baleful residual Scots culture of legal disputation (*Entail*, p. 18).

makes the observation that Galt's sustained attack on legal casuistry forms part of a broader statement:

The Entail articulates a sharp critique, from the empirical-realist perspective of a West-country merchant class, of an Edinburgh *noblesse du robe* which misrecognizes commercial society through its promotion of an ideology of feudal nostalgia. This (crypto-Jacobite) Edinburgh ascendancy includes not just the law but the literary culture which disciplines the city's professions and institutions, exemplified by the cultural industry of romance revival. (*Scott's Shadow*, pp. 238-239)

We should stress that this 'West-country merchant class' are themselves targeted in a text that is also suspicious of excessively financial motives.²⁹¹ Yet Duncan rightly identifies the thematic element that demonises an Edinburgh-based foil to a Glaswegian commercial ideal, incorporating the law and literature in a denunciation that it is hard not to sense may be aimed personally at Scott.²⁹² While this attack partly plays on a broader suspicion of Edinburgh as 'the intellectual city' – invoking the city's academic culture and 'metaphysical refinement' in a sweeping mockery of east-coast pretentiousness – a particular component does shine through (*Entail*, p. 179, p. 187). Mirroring Claud's inappropriate commingling of feudalism and commercialism, the 'awfu' folk wi' the cloaks o' darkness and the wigs o' wisdom frae Edinbro" signify a sinister incursion into the present, one element defiling the ideological contiguity of Scottish society (*Entail*, p. 203). Figured by the act of writing as centred on the entail itself, which is '(in effect) a literary revival of a premodern cultural form', this 'romance revival' invites an anachronistic worldview into the domain of

²⁹¹ The criticism of a more purely commercial ideology is focussed around the character of George.

²⁹² The following passage in particular seems sarcastically calculated against Scott's writing: 'Our fair readers, in whose opinion the eloquence of the Parliament House of Edinburgh, no doubt, possesses many charming touches of sentiment, and amiable pathetic graces' (*Entail*, p. 188).

improving Scotland (Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 238).²⁹³ Consequently Claud's dismissal of the anxious Keelevin with, 'Ye're, as I would say, but the pen in this matter', ends up in fact emphasising rather than scorning the lawyer's problematic agency – stressing the caustic literary act of the novel's principal emblem (*Entail*, p. 72). In a sense, then, *The Entail* can be said to mount a dual attack on a culture of legalism: at once the vulgar servant of a ruthless commercialism, and the sinister remnant of a previous epoch. Within this blighted context, the division between Scotland's two main urban centres is a significant device: commercial Glasgow and romantic Edinburgh symbolising a fragmented national subjectivity. Whether by virtue of an inappropriate historical nostalgia or an absence of sympathetic emotion, the social framework through which *The Entail* moves is stiflingly insufficient. The recurring slogan of the text – 'sufficient for the day is the evil thereof' – ironically enunciates its ideological problematic, with a flawed present little able to suffer the baggage of a fading past (*Entail*, p. 14).

Operating in this bleak environment, many of Galt's characters appear to be suffering from emotional dysfunction, whether manifesting itself in an anaesthetised repression of sentiment, an awkward misdirection or excess of the same. Following Galt's penchant for suggestive nomenclature, Claud ('clod' indicating both the land of his obsession and his miscalculated emotional suppression) is only one of a whole cast of figures struggling with such imbalance. Even the narrator claims, with ambiguous comic intent, to have no experience or understanding of love (*Entail*, p. 305). Claud's ungrateful

²⁹³ Duncan's comments have absorbed Schoenfield's earlier assertion that, 'Galt suggests the entail's narrativity by highlighting the writtenness of its production' (Schoenfield, p. 63).

treatment of his carer Maudge (he later repents having ‘stifled the very sense o’ loving kindness within me’) signals the first of a chain of failed or overloaded sympathetic ties in the work (*Entail*, p. 150). In a text with such aggressive national allusions, it is impossible not to feel this pattern as reflecting a broad social condition. In particular the souring or breakdown of mother-child relationships (repeated through the Leddy’s sequence of family feuds) acts to signal a national emotional crisis, close familial ties rendered poisonous and inoperative. As the text’s vessel for the romantic stories of national history, Claud’s specific neglect of Maudge, indeed, seems to hint at broader betrayals – perhaps the Act of Union, or residual cultural alienation over the period. Claire A. Simmons also notes an irony here, in that despite his ‘feudal ambitions’, Claud’s treatment of Maudge goes against his traditional feudal obligation to her, another result of the text’s systematic mismarriages.²⁹⁴ Yet while the Faustian resonances of Claud’s misaligned affections are wrapped up in a warped ideological field – for Galt actually displaying ‘a spectacle of moral bravery’ – his wife appears to be more simply devoid of human sympathy (*Entail*, p. 140). A remarkably shallow woman who only performs the roles of compassion with a theatrical compunction, even in the face of a son’s serious illness her concern is superficial (*Entail*, p. 134).

Furthermore, indicating a growing dissociation of sensibility in the social entropy of modernising Scotland, the three Walkinshaw sons variously represent potential cultural predicaments. As Duncan notices, ‘Romantic Charles, “natural” Watty, and commercial George, represent different ideological formations of

²⁹⁴ Claire A. Simmons, “‘Feudal Days’: John Galt’s Ambivalent Medievalism”, in *John Galt: Observations and Conjectures*, ed. by Hewitt, pp. 169-197, (p. 181).

post-Union civil society, none of which constitutes an adequate principle of virtue' (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 241). This structure is broadly supported by the text, though it is not without challenges. For example, George is seen to distil the financial greed trajectory, with his character 'not elevated by any such ambitious sentiment as that which prompted Claud' (*Entail*, p. 110). Yet George too is motivated by the pride of name and family status that the novel construes as Claud's fatal, 'romantic' flaw, even if, like Costain claims, this may have become more a 'self-regarding desire for social status' than the feudal retrospective of Claud's 'almost mystical reverence of family' (Costain, p. 190). The Leddy herself observes to George: 'ye hae gotten your father's bee in the bonnet, anent ancestors and forbears' (*Entail*, p. 257). However, bearing in mind such subtleties, the Jacobite line of Charles and his family (for the majority of the text dispossessed and problematically over-sympathetic or 'romantic'), alongside the fascinating mental condition of Watty (returned to shortly) completes this picture of the nation, constituting what Gifford believes is the novel's 'central theme': 'the dissociation of insensitive thought and excessive feeling, suggesting that too often Scotland has lost the ability to reconcile its opposite values' ('Sham Nation?', p. 354). Later in the text James Walkinshaw provides a kind of internal critique, complaining of his family's destructive selfishness – emblematised in the suitably economic term 'interest' – yet he only registers a fraction of the novel's wider problematic (*Entail*, p. 239). This is a text in which widespread dissociation seems to have rendered the national community a barren and self-defeating construct, falling short in various directions. The dynamic trajectory of improvement has undermined the cultural order and isolated the modern subject. The characters are sectioned off into incompatible groupings that fail

alone, whether divided along regional and ideological lines, or in miniature amongst one utterly incompatible family. This situation is nicely summarised in Watty's picture of the last man eating a solitary meal: 'for ye ken if a' the folk in the world were to die but only ae man, it would behove that man to hae his dinner' (*Entail*, p. 147).

Modulating upon the literary manifesto of the theoretical history best exemplified in *Annals of the Parish*, in *The Entail* Galt's self-conscious meditations upon plot become more openly conflicted. Claud's self-defeating hereditary project is only the most obvious example in a text that explores contrasting epistemological systems by way of opposing narrative modes, introducing a pattern of 'romance' fatality that inverts what Duncan calls the 'modality of contingency and accident' that we recognise from *Annals* (*Scott's Shadow*, p. 240). An alternate, wilful form of 'story' escalates to counterpoint the Newtonian evolution of society (which we have seen can itself collapse into an overarching narrative of improvement). While this alternative mode is immediately signalled by the simmering allegorical matrix of national imagery, it is principally signified by the entail itself, which figures 'a teleological desire for origins that works itself out in a systematic, overdetermined contradiction of human agency' (Duncan, *Scott's Shadow*, p. 239). Reflections upon this relationship pepper the text, contemplating a difficult liaison between fate and desire, and between historical narratives and erratic human efforts. Claud sets the stage for this conflict with his early neglect of Maudge, an act that resonates throughout the novel. There is a fatal misreading in his behaviour, neglecting the real, personified (and thus negotiable) bearer of residual culture as romance for an illusory, destructive ideal of the same. While rejecting William Wallace for the economic and social

ascendancy myth of Dick Whittington appears to signal disinterest in romantic ideas of Scottish nationhood, the text resolves Claud's status obsession into the most intransigent kind of national idealism, an inflexible grand narrative that imbibes the charged feudal romance of Whittington's archetypal rise. Fixating on a hollowed-out version of his cultural inheritance, he misses the human, sympathetic element that could have sutured the national condition, inviting in a dark version of Scottishness that haunts the text thenceforth. In ideological terms, he steps beyond the critical paradigm of theoretical history in engaging with the substance of romance at all, but the situation is rendered truly ruinous by the impersonal, debased version that Claud brings to the narrative, permanently souring the unfolding of historical detail. Thus, while Balwhidder's flexible and sympathetic imposition of 'story' via his religion proves a harmless superfluity in modern Scotland, Claud's invocation of a static and iconic form of imagined nationhood brings catastrophic results for the nation as family.

The substance of Galt's literary project cannot tolerate Claud's abstract, feudal ideal, and the damaged version of theoretical history produced is a dangerous terrain for all concerned. The shadow of narrativity in the conjectural form is expanded into an aggressive force. Thus in the novel characters are killed off by the impact of important revelations, the workings of 'story' resurfacing as a malevolent influence.²⁹⁵ Notably susceptible is a character like Charles Walkinshaw who displays a 'romantic' inability (expressed in acute emotional sensitivity) to engage in the commercialising bourgeois society – an association with the imaginative thread that Claud has defiled putting him at

²⁹⁵ Mrs George Walkinshaw offers a particularly abrupt example of this (*Entail*, p. 282, p. 288).

odds with the world (*Entail*, pp. 125-142). Ultimately, extreme flexibility is required to navigate this deformed modernising trajectory, apparent in a character like the Leddy, whose infinite capriciousness allows her to maintain 'a firmer grip on mundane reality' (Costain, p. 184). Free from the constraints of a concrete will, the Leddy transcends the fatal machinery – signified in her frequent reworking of historical detail (see especially *Entail*, pp. 285-287). The novel's organisation of a bipolar narrative environment between theoretical history and warped romance is too entrenched for a sequence of characters on the wrong side of the divide. Thus while the Leddy moves effortlessly within the narrative – protected by the elastic fabric of theoretical history – Claud and Charles Walkinshaw are suffocated by a tragic modality that is owed to the destructive feudal revival, so that Claud 'suffers tragically in an essentially comic world' (Costain, p. 169). Indeed, the sporadic incursions of a visible narrative presence – using a direct address to the reader – themselves seem to figure the text's intermittent disruption of the theoretical historical form, scything across its generational unfolding of national history with a jolt of the fictive (see *Entail*, p. 99). Galt cleverly emphasises the profoundly literary bent to these epistemological concerns throughout, seen for example in Lady Plealand's inability to read her psalm-book on Charles's death – the performances of literature (whether reading or writing) inextricably involved in the text's core consideration of 'story' and history (*Entail*, p. 142).

The alternate romance mode erupts within the final volume of the novel, the part that has traditionally tended to baffle or disappoint critics.²⁹⁶ A strange and evident change in tone for this sequence has often been put down to the interference of Blackwood, yet whether or not there is any merit in this view, we must consider how the text's ideological agenda develops.²⁹⁷ The suppressed family line stemming from Charles – linking together Jacobitism, Highlandism and emotional susceptibility – comes into closer focus as the narrative leaves Glasgow and travels north. By this point, the text has established its main opposition of family formations by the residences at Kittlestonheugh and Camrachle. The former hints at modern, Unionised Scotland, 'where every thing was methodized into system', the latter traces of a residual national experience, where 'the fields were open, and their expanse unbounded' (*Entail*, p. 220). As the novel continues, Mrs Eadie's comedic yet accurate oracular predictions play upon the incursion of the alternative modality into the world of commercial life, as the increased prominence of the 'romantic' branch of the family seems to impose its own narrative forms (*Entail*, pp. 340-341). Claud's inappropriate process of national idealisation seems at once parodied and brought to dubious fruition, the text removing into a Highland landscape saturated with the trope-heavy material of romance. Eadie's observation that her sightseeing 'gift' stands in contrast to the rational, material world is cogent. She explains that 'it comes not to us till earthly things begin to lose their hold on our affections', signalling the continuing location of forms of residual Scottishness as fundamentally

²⁹⁶ Frykman, for example, complains of 'concessions to popular taste' in the heightening of melodramatic and supernatural elements, suggesting Galt is attempting to cash in on Scott's popularity (p. 137, p. 158).

²⁹⁷ See Ian A. Gordon, 'Introduction', in Galt, *The Entail*, ed. by Gordon, pp. vii-xvi, (p. xiii).

antithetical to life in the intractable material revolutions of the modernising world – maintaining the text’s fatal dichotomies (*Entail*, p. 283). Indeed the idea of ‘Second Sight’ is cited by Womack as a recurrent formula for such oppositions, a (particularly Hebridean) tradition contributing to the Highlands’ suitability ‘as a refuge from the tyranny of the evidential’ (pp. 89-94). Paralleling Claud’s attempted imposition of ‘will’ (in both senses of the word), Mrs Eadie’s Second Sight is rendered equally so anachronistic as to require death, another strain in the fruitless concoction of Scottishness as romance. Firmly establishing the territory of the ‘romantic nation’ in this sequence, Galt explores the darker potential to such a space: a fatal severance from or debasement of reality, rather than imaginative addendum. Yet if the faulty ideological archaism of both Mrs Eadie and Claud are targets of Galt’s critique, we must remember that this is only a fraction of his larger, pessimistic analysis of Scotland’s improving trajectory. Nostalgia, greed and haplessness have come to dominate a society failing to resolve a sense of itself against processes of rapid change, gravely disempowered by the effects of macroscopic historical narratives.

As the third volume’s modal deviation draws to a close, the comment upon the national chronicle is fairly ambiguous, eddying amongst sneering parody and settled comic resolution. The final inheritance of James may be designated as a suturing union – recombining the dissonant ideological formations of the text’s fragmented national portrait – yet the vigorous irony of the treatment in this final section renders this suspect. If Scott’s final ‘unions’ can seem awkward, the variation upon Galt’s method here is so wild as to demand reflection. The narrative closes with the Leddy’s final interference via the outcome of her will, that textual device a closing, correcting likeness of the

entail itself (*Entail*, pp. 362-363). The Leddy's ideological triumph, then, apparently counters the text's fatality as experienced by Claud and others, in which 'human power [is] set at nought by the natural course of things' (*Entail*, p. 115). In one sense, *The Entail* finally attains the coherence its world has so lacked, allowing for the marriage of the Jacobite, residual past, to the commercial present, with James's inheritance and the Leddy's success our key cues. Yet this outcome is at best half-heartedly indicated. The imbrication of the final inheritance plot within the problematised, even ridiculed Highland narrative – not to mention its entanglement within Galt's chronic distrust of 'story' – acts to question whether this should be felt as a resolution of the national-ethical quandary, or merely a perpetuation of the problematic. If Scott's writing is a nagging presence, then the novel seems partly engaged in a vicious critique of the aesthetic nationalist mode. Building on the earlier distrust of 'romance revivalism', the hollow affixing of residual colour to the present reveals itself as a devastating miscalculation: one that can only exacerbate an already lopsided ideological landscape. The trope-heavy materials of aesthetic nationhood flare up in caricatured form only to confirm their own inadequacy, yet another deficient modality in Scottish life. Far from cleanly resolving itself, the disparate experiences of the text have established the terms of an ideological incongruity that is undermining the nation – rendering the Leddy's fairly unattractive ethical flexibility crucial to its navigation. The cast of self-interested relatives at the reading of her will provides a final mockery of any potential national coherence (*Entail*, pp. 358-361).

In fact, *The Entail* leaves us with the overpowering sense that Scottishness has become (or perhaps always was) a deformed and macabre construct. This

position is exemplified in the fascinating progress of Claud's second son, deserving of consideration before we leave Galt's text. Published in the same year as *The Three Perils of Woman*, *The Entail*'s treatment of Watty undertakes elements that resonate with the darkly Gothic mode of Hogg's writing (while the chaotic amplification of the third volume is also a shared feature). The question of Watty's unpredictable mental condition – veering between that of an established 'natural' (indicating mental illness) and a surprising acuteness – destabilises the narrative, an erratic element within the Walkinshaw's representative status.²⁹⁸ If his situation partly reflects a skewed distillation of emotional virtues repressed elsewhere among the family, his volatile presence equally condenses the 'accidental' formula of theoretical history. In this role he often functions as a medium for, and embodiment of, Claud's frustrated plans, a figure of the modality his father foreswore, which can now only impact on Claud as unsolicited 'story'.

However, a series of crucial episodes for the novel's engagement with nationhood surround Watty's abnormal attitude to death. If Hogg's *Perils of Woman* employs ideas of death and reanimation as problematising elements of a national allegorical framework, so Galt's *Entail* flirts with such ideas. The rapidity with which Watty moves from intense grief upon his wife Betty's demise in childbirth, to an unfeeling disregard for her corpse, is genuinely shocking. Only pages after displaying an 'astonishment of sorrow', he resolutely announces his disinterest in the body: "'There's nane o' my Betty Bodle here. [...] I canna understand [...] what for a' this fykerie's about a lump o' yird? Sho'elt intil a hole,

²⁹⁸ This pattern is noticed by the character Dr Denholm, who comments upon Watty's 'glaiks and gleams o' sense' (*Entail*, p. 193).

and no fash me.” Requesting that her body is unceremoniously shovelled away, Watty refuses or is unable to engage with the death, instead demanding that her being has transferred into the person of his infant daughter (*Entail*, pp. 114-117). The subsequent passing of the child, his second ‘Betty Bodle’ (a death Watty refuses to acknowledge until confronted by ‘a kirkyard smell frae the bed’) occasions the subsequent re-imagining of his wife upon another proximate vessel, this time a niece (*Entail*, p. 167). This pattern of death, repressed grief and imaginary reincarnation forms a bleak reflection on the national community so loudly figured by the Walkinshaw family.

Usefully linking Watty’s fractured attitude with Claud’s sacrifice of his offspring to the ancestral past, Bardsley suggests that one is a ‘perverse parody’ of the other, ‘highlight[ing] the disordered relationship Claud has established between dead and living, idea and person’ (p. 560). The ‘imagined communities’ of Watty’s multiple Betty Boodles, or Claud’s deceased line of honourable antecedents, paint a dark figuration of the nation-state in which central processes of death and remembrance have become warped, and sympathetic ties have given way to a haunting social presence. Bardsley argues that, ‘*The Entail* develops the theme of a reciprocal inadequacy between categories and their exemplary instance and the bearing of that philosophical problem on the constitution of collectivities’ (p. 562). Certainly Galt’s text appears suspicious of the act of figuration that it takes as one of its most prominent themes, as example and idea fissure and collapse. Yet this critique is crucially located within the knotty historical context the novel paints for its national subject. Transported across the rapidly improving landscape of the long eighteenth century, Scottishness seems to have become all too disjointed; so incoherent, in fact, that

its very imagining is now plagued by delusions, hauntings and mouldering corpses. If George Walkinshaw's wife spends 'nearly twenty years almost as much dead as alive', her situation seems to be an appropriate reflection of a crisis in the national condition (*Entail*, p. 303). Going a step further, Bardsley is keen to assert that 'the fatal problem is not how the land is figured but that it is figured at all', that the text displays a larger suspicion of ideological constructs like nationalism (p. 557). It seems that the conflict inherent in the Scottish experience is paramount whether or not this fully communicates into such a universal critique. However, cogent is her assertion that Galt's treatment of figuration bears self-consciously upon the novel's own role in a process of imagining – its thematic goals acting to 'query' the genre's burgeoning claims to national self-definition (Bardsley, p. 542, p. 544). Partly a (somewhat reductive) pastiche of Scott, *The Entail*'s rich and varied engagement with issues of national identity compulsively denies a simple process of literary national remediation. As James Walkinshaw enlists Highland troops to fight Napoleon *en route* to the 'just' inheritance of the Kittlestonheugh estates, Galt may well be laughing in the face of such mythic ideological processes (*Entail*, p. 340). The enthusiastic appropriation of a Highland Scottishness for the imperial project is revealed as a farcical and bewildering scheme. Instead, Galt's most ambitious theoretical history refuses to produce any answers, with the Walkinshaw family blackly indicative of a tricky national history. Prefiguring Marx's insight into the unrelenting and ominous great plot of bourgeois commercialism, Galt presents this as only one of a series of miscarrying historical narratives in contemporary Scotland.²⁹⁹ Tracing the impact of new, global imperial milieu upon an already

²⁹⁹ Marshall Berman nicely summarises Marx's point: 'The modern bourgeois

complex and flawed culture, he produces one of the most pessimistic and relevant novels of the period.

As processes of improvement gathered pace across our period, a series of debates about 'progress' arguably came to characterise Scottish intellectual life. This emerges as the case, at least, from an examination of writers like John Galt and Elizabeth Hamilton, reflecting upon this epoch from the vantage point of the early nineteenth century. This chapter has outlined some compelling reasons why this era has been described as the Age of Improvement; with the literary tradition we are terming Scottish Romanticism an integral feature of that ideological context. Highlighting a key thread running throughout this study, the analysis of Galt and Hamilton brings out some particularly potent examples of the impact of improving discourses upon the cultural mind-set of contemporary writers. Consciously navigating this environment with regard to their publishing and self-representations, individual texts are also rife with meditation upon the issues of improvement. At times loudly optimistic about the course and future of 'progress', these texts also reflect (whether implicitly or explicitly) a set of anxieties occasioned by the impact of rapid change upon the community. Caught in a problematic situation in which Scotland's improving trajectory could be perceived as leading away from its native cultural identity, they field an on-going sequence of dilemmas – raising and sometimes discrediting possible solutions to the process. To return to the opening image of this chapter, Claud's difficult

were generally banal in their desires, yet their unremitting quest for profit forced on them the same insatiable drive-structure and infinite horizon as any of the great romantic heroes – as Don Giovanni, as Childe Harold, as Goethe's Faust.' See Marshall Berman, 'Tearing Away the Veils: The Communist Manifesto', *Dissent: A Quarterly of Politics and Culture*, 6 May, 2011, <http://www.dissentmagazine.org/online_articles/tearing-away-the-veils-the-communist-manifesto>, [accessed 3 June 2014], (para. 9 of 27).

relationship with his land is an extreme, yet arresting emblem for the paradoxes of improvement. His 'nausea of moral disgust', brought about by an unresolved set of ideological affiliations, is indicative of the potential difficulties occasioned by rapid change. Both Galt and Hamilton are largely vocal exponents of improving ideologies, yet cultural issues remain a particular sticking point, one this writing is unable to comfortably resolve. The language and culture of residual Scottishness are uncomfortably balanced against the prospect of improvement, providing us with a remarkable contemplation of a challenging historical experience.

Coda – ‘There is no end to machinery’: Romantic Nation, Modern World

On Sunday the eleventh of July 1790, Joseph Black and James Hutton presided over the burning of some manuscripts belonging to Adam Smith. Smith was probably unhappy with the condition of this material and it was a source of considerable anxiety to him that it should be destroyed in view of his quickly approaching death. As the fire in his Edinburgh lodgings at Panmure House consumed these papers, the conditions for a powerful and somewhat mythic story about Scottishness were shorn up. The actual loss remains unknown (likely to have been a selection of lecture notes), but the act stands regardless as a symbolic moment in Scottish culture.³⁰⁰ Despite Smith’s other publications, this episode bears the burden of regret about an uncompleted, totalising ‘Science of Man’ that would suture the intellectual monoliths of his career: *The Wealth of Nations* and *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*. Perhaps an implausible project, still the idea of such a work continues to resonate, offering negotiating bonds between political economy and the liberal arts (and indeed the theory of jurisprudence), between economics and morality, and between profit and sympathy. If these difficult binaries could feed into the somewhat unhelpful notion of the Caledonian Antisyzygy, they really signal problems continually sustained by a global social order that has significant roots in long-eighteenth-century Scotland. As has been rendered vividly apparent by the economic crisis of the late-2000s, and looks to be approaching a severe climax via the effects of climate change, understanding the nature and flaws of western capitalist

³⁰⁰ Useful accounts of Smith’s final days are found in Ian Simpson Ross, *The Life of Adam Smith*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 431-451; R. H. Campbell and A. S. Skinner, *Adam Smith* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 213-224; and Nicholas Phillipson, *Adam Smith: An Enlightened Life* (London: Allen Lane, 2010), pp. 255-284.

hegemony is a more urgent task than ever. With the free market dictating the relentless monetisation and privatisation of our society, the profit narrative of improvement has only grown in pertinence. Having been granted a particular historical perspective at a germane early stage in this history, Scottish literature offers us a series of meaningful insights, illustrations and critiques.

Almost thirty years after Smith's death, Thomas Carlyle published a sequence of influential essays that capture some of the large trajectory that we have traced in Scottish culture. The Nor' Loch was by this time wholly reinvented (or rather, improved) as Princes Street Gardens and Scott was trying to write his way out of bankruptcy. Our working definition of Scottish Romanticism – a literary consciousness crucially positioned around discourses of improvement – must necessarily refuse neat historical closure. Bearing that in mind, however, Carlyle can offer a means of reflection. He mounts a full-scale corrective to the national-cultural paradigm, approaching what we have seen is an on-going compound between transcendence and immanence in aesthetic approaches to the nation. Channelling the idealism of Kant, Schelling and the Critical Philosophy, Carlyle seeks to reframe the Scottish tradition, amplifying certain elements and downplaying others. A vulnerable move; still it clarifies elements of this literature itself, and not merely how it would be received into the unfolding nineteenth century.³⁰¹

If proud of his intellectual debt to the Scottish Enlightenment, Carlyle's iconoclastic agenda in these essays is established in the 'State of German Literature' [1827]. Written for the *Edinburgh Review* – 'the most visible residual

³⁰¹ Thomas Carlyle, 'State of German Literature', 'Burns', and 'Sign of the Times', in *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays: Collected and Republished*, 3 vols (London: Chapman and Hall, 1887), I, pp. 23-73, pp. 231-283, pp. 469-492.

cultural product of the Scottish Enlightenment in the nineteenth century' – this essay forms an early intervention in a bold attempt to reconfigure Scotland's dominant philosophical and institutional inheritance from the inside (Benchimol, *Intellectual Politics*, p. 144). He narrates the historical emergence (or re-emergence) of an understanding of the given basis of 'Truth' and 'Virtue', and the existence of the soul, predicated upon faith in God (pp. 66-69). This, for Carlyle, is a kind of epochal awakening that rallies to the salvation of industrialising early-nineteenth-century Britain: 'an era of such promise and such threatening' (p. 26). The atheistic threat personified by Hume (who is predictably cast as the *ne plus ultra* of Lockean associationism) is displaced by this re-connection with a transcendental ontology that provides a framework in which to locate the work of art, and of the national subjectivity. Such a philosophical basis contextualises Carlyle's assertion that he seeks to find the 'truth' of German literature and that this is the vital key to revealing national character (pp. 28-31). The literary canon is offered as the decisive marker of 'national taste', cementing the developing aesthetic conception of the nation that we have seen evolving in literary works across long-eighteenth-century Scotland (p. 40). Quoting generously from Schiller, Carlyle demands of great art that it transcends its historical location and reveals higher truths, illuminating what we might consider as the national soul along the way (pp. 48-49). German authors are read as a kind of stadial re-playing of the Elizabethan models of Milton and Shakespeare who provide a fundamental measuring-rule for Carlyle (though now mixed with modern 'French clearness'). Indeed, 'so closely are all European communities connected, that the phases of mind in any one country, [...] are but modified repetitions of its phases in every other'. In Goethe, the heroic figure of

this narrative, the 'ideal world' of great art reveals the 'secret significance' of the 'real world', divulging the 'Spirit of the Age'. In art – that is, in a pure, transcendent aesthetic realm offered by the sanctity of faith – is to be found the 'mystery of Nature' (pp. 55-58). Scottish Enlightenment stresses on aesthetic 'utility' are a misapplication; rather art must be worshipped as the 'soul of all Beauty' (p. 48). Now, if Carlyle conceptualises a kind of post-North-Britishness in his intellectual corrective to the Scottish Enlightenment, in which national identity is nicely summarised by 'we of England', still it is possible to sense the presence of Scotland behind his stadial reading of the literature of Germany: whom the unenlightened regard exclusively as a 'but half-civilised muse'. The outstanding achievements of this romantic '*belle sauvage*', Germany arriving at its echoed Elizabethan highpoint, seem partly a displaced image of a Scottish nation that – could it but shake off Enlightenment misdirection – might aspire to the glories of English culture as it so vehemently does her prosperity (p. 41, p. 32). This leads us towards the figure by which Carlyle's refiguring of the national-cultural paradigm is mediated as a specific model of Scottishness: Robert Burns.

Following Currie, in his 1828 tract on 'Burns' Carlyle approaches the poet with a kind of regretful admiration, portraying him as having lived fatally out of balance. His oeuvre represents only 'a poor mutilated fraction of what was in him', a qualified tragedy that Carlyle will explain as a combination of social inequality, economic hardship and personal weakness (p. 240). Putting Burns in the same sentence as Shakespeare is Carlyle's highest praise, yet our sympathetic engagement with him as a national icon requires a tinge of regret, of self-examination and of moral censure; all summed up in the phrase, 'We love Burns,

and we pity him' (p. 245, p. 237). Loving and pitying Burns provides the intellectual and emotional basis upon which post-North-Britishness is to be based, a sentimental approach to a sacrificial genius whose shortcomings and victories determine our own; are, in the last measure, our own. Identifying the switching of frames that we have noted is so central to Burns's work, for Carlyle the interplay of the 'Ideal world' and the 'Actual' operate in order to bring out the truths of 'Eternity' (p. 244). The richly articulated historical world in Burns's work is construed as the mediator of a transcendent aesthetic plateau. Without discounting the vital locatedness of Burns's work, for Carlyle it is very much the auxiliary vehicle of some higher plane: the airy world of the national spirit.

'Perhaps no British man has so deeply affected the thoughts and feelings of so many men', Carlyle writes, the poet beginning to embody the global sweep of empire itself. Yet as the introduction of a proper distinction between Scotland and England in this essay nicely dramatises, Burns's influence, especially in Scotland, is a fundamental 'increase of nationality'; an effect that goes beyond the poet's own interest in national themes and speaks to his singular personification of national character itself (p. 257). While the Scottish Enlightenment was singularly un-Scottish ('almost exclusively French'), the cultural expansionism of the Burns cult offers a sympathetic national spirit to the world. Indeed, Carlyle's attack on Enlightenment philosophy partly serves an attempt to figure a newly coherent imperial Britishness in which Scotland's 'increase in nationality' is a sympathetic bolstering of, rather than problematic challenge to, the total image: England. Within this structure, his zealous Francophobia requires any such alien influence to be exorcised. Seeking to leave the problems of North Britain and Caledonia behind, we may of course suggest that this is little more than a

rhetorical gesture, merely reproducing the same tensions. However, the un-Scottishness, indeed sinister otherworldliness of the Enlightenment is again notoriously exemplified in Hume, who did not really exist in the normal sense at all, rather occupying a metaphysical space in which, 'he not so much morally *lived*, but metaphysically *investigated*'. Framed against national political unrest and this emotionless intelligentsia, Scottish literature is a vacuum that Burns erupts into, his genius significantly stripped of its cultural location. If its historiography had undersold Scotland's pre-Union history as a kind of blank spot on the historical map, here it is the Enlightenment that is itself an absence, waiting for Burns's re-engagement of 'human affection' (p. 258). This will take on a particular ideological edge from the vantage point of subsequent work; something that begins to become apparent in complaints against the society that failed to appreciate Burns's talent.

A construction of the divided vision of Scottish literature is clarified via Burns's inability to devote himself to either the material or the spiritual (i.e. artistic) world: 'Burns was nothing wholly, and Burns could be nothing, no man formed as he was can be anything, by halves' (p. 277). This is partly a class issue, Burns's trip to Edinburgh having opened horizons that would remain unfulfilled and thus prove a galling source of dissatisfaction (p. 268). Yet perhaps even a royal pension might not have saved the greatest ever songwriter in Britain, again as a result of this 'want of unity in his purposes' (p. 256, p. 277). Carlyle does finally appreciate that Burns's life challenges may have contributed to his art, yet the tragedy is all part of the narrative appeal (pp. 279-280). It becomes clear across the course of the essay that a satisfied, wealthy Burns would not suffice. Hints of religious scepticism, of course, must be both condemned and excused as

the results of drink and dissipation, being a deviation from his embodiment of truth (p. 264). Similarly, radical politics are swept under the rug (p. 271). Yet in his emerging role as the mediator of sympathetic post-North-Britishness, the neglect of Burns (specifically that by the 'Edinburgh Learned') is finally a central element in his messianic channelling of national truth. The fault is 'chiefly' his own, but the 'dissocial' world at large must take its share in the blame.

Juxtaposed against the cold, unfeeling intellect of the Enlightenment – indeed against an entire 'age' of 'scepticism, selfishness and triviality' – our 'pitying admiration' is deserved by this 'true Poet and Singer' (pp. 276-277, p. 282).

Further distilling this broad historical critique, Carlyle's best-known essay, 'Sign of the Times' [1829], brings these considerations to a head. In this work the suspicions of contingent intellectual scepticism and inhumanity blend into a razing depiction of modernity summed up in the term 'machinery'. This is a condition of spiritual, intellectual and material waywardness: a great 'Age of Machinery' in which 'all is by rule and calculated contrivance' (pp. 473-474). Thus cultural institutions are 'hives'; products of the same dystopian reliance on system at work in the industrial complex and spearheaded by the Enlightenment philosophers – the early-nineteenth-century world thoroughly perverted by a protracted trajectory (p. 476). If Reid and the Common Sense school had 'a dim notion that much of this was wrong', their intervention (itself 'mechanical') is a hopeless panacea against the full-blown scepticism of Hume, with its 'bottomless abysses of Atheism and Fatalism' (p. 478). 'The time is sick and out of joint', Carlyle complains, figuring a national, even global state of crisis based in the unfeeling imposition of system. A balance must be struck between the two sweeping epistemologies he outlines: the 'Dynamical' and the 'Mechanical'. The

first signifies ideal, penetrative truth as expressed in art, politics or elsewhere; the second merely knowledge as systems. Too much 'Dynamical' and we get fanaticism and superstition; too much 'Mechanical' and the current problem is perpetuated: 'In the management of external things we excel all other ages; while in whatever respects the pure moral nature, in true dignity of soul and character, we are perhaps inferior to most civilised ages' (p. 485).

Confronted by this, Carlyle's answer is significantly *not* Smith's sympathetic social function, the associational paradigm of virtue. Rather society must look to its potential arbiters of ideal truth: religion and its virtuoso disciple, literature. The Church is definitely not redundant, and indeed Carlyle rails against the transplanting of religious enthusiasm with the role of 'printed communication'. Yet this is channelled by his attack on the quality of literature at this point, merely 'a fierce clashing of cymbals', a materialistic 'image of Strength'; falling short of the 'liquid wisdom' that could promise a true means of spiritual revelation. The absence of such 'pure melodies' is symptomatic of a larger, religious and social predicament (p. 488). Thus atheism is appropriately cast as a vulgar 'calculation of the Profitable', a suitably commercial apogee for the 'Age of Machinery' (p. 485). The modern world needs to recognise the fundamentally 'dynamical' nature of 'Science and Art', to reconnect with a higher intellectual practice sustained by outstanding individual achievement. As Carlyle writes, 'These things rose up, as it were, by spontaneous growth in the free soil and sunshine of Nature. They were not planted or grafted, nor even greatly multiplied or improved by the culture or manuring of institutions' (p. 482). The heroic individual mind needs to be resuscitated, stripped of the claustrophobic influence of institutions and allowed to freely operate as the mediator of the

organic national spirit and higher truths. Interrogating the intellectual foundations of the *Edinburgh Review*, railing against a perceived lop-sidedness in a culture overwhelmed by the 'mechanical', Carlyle demands a new conduit for the Scottish Enlightenment's interest in ideas of progress; switching the focus and the primary site of salutary activity onto idealist self-reflection: a process of spiritual and aesthetic, more than social or economic, national improvement.

Juxtaposed against this influential critique, we begin to get some flavour of why Scottish literature of the long eighteenth century has occupied such a difficult, liminal role until its recent re-evaluation. Though, via Burns, Carlyle is sensitive to a vividly historicist aesthetic, this is finally mutable to the onrushing truths of aesthetic idealism. Combined with his wrath against the Enlightenment and intellectual systems, significant elements in Scottish writing must end up devalued. Indeed, in a sense Carlyle's millennial use of Burns and German idealism articulates a type of problematic Romanticism, vividly stipulating the division from Enlightenment thought that is so clearly untenable in the Scottish context. If Carlyle has sympathy for what he would consider as the finer, ideal national spirit found in a Burns or Scott; his critical framework applies an unsustainable aesthetic bias to the reading of this work. We can recognise the potential for this ultimately to nourish the construction of an Anglocentric Romantic canon supervised by the cultural theory of Coleridge and limited to a pavilion of heroic male poets (a bias that of course also marred the reception of English writing). Fundamentally lacking in organic cultural unity, Scottish literature emerges as the imperfect product of a 'sham nation'. Not least as a result of its disparity from metropolitan, received linguistic norms, it appears as an insufficiently transcendent body of work, clouded with regional colouration

and historical emphases that only distract from our contact with universal truth. John Galt, for example, becomes a kind of artistic abomination within this context: his very practice aiming at the systematic aesthetic immanence that Carlyle would construe as vulgar materialism. Of course, Galt's own work remains in tension and his angling towards the perception of 'harmony' in his literary theory might have more in common with Carlyle than first appears (while they both also share a suspicion of flippant romance), yet still the point is valid: the imposition of this Kantian framework mutilates the Scottish tradition, while Carlyle's notorious Celtophobia and prudishness mutilate it still further (Galt, *Literary Life*, I, pp. 144-146).

From another point of view, however, Carlyle is merely seizing and crystallising a set of alternate stresses in this work, a repeated act of national aesthetic transcendence that we have read as contributing to the image of the 'romantic nation'. While the logic of the romantic nation locates Scottishness as art (via unimprovement), Carlyle's all-out proffering of national idealism sets up national aesthetic truth as a timeless and universal form of ontological deliverance, a spiritual counterpoint to the inhuman, threatening forces of modernity. That is, it construes national literature – under the heroic banner of a Burns, Goethe or Shakespeare – as a redemptive medium of religious faith in the modern world. Carlyle performs a kind of displacement or reconfiguration of the period's radical political energy, declaring that in the transcendent euphoria of great art is to be found the uplifting spiritual certainties challenged by anomie. This is a logical move for a literary culture that we have already noted featured a series of phenomena normally associated with religious practice: iconography, textual sanctity, hero-worship and the pilgrimage of literary tourism.

Recognising and appreciating the literary canon becomes an act of national religious worship. Building on the simmering apotheosis of the artist, Carlyle clarifies how exactly literature must stake its claim to holy status: as the infallible mediator of the divine national soul. This fundamentally undersells the historicist aesthetic strategies prevalent in Scottish literature, placing the stress on ideal truths towards which everything else must be merely a means. Yet it does at least reflect on a long process by which literature attempted to negotiate the problematic status of residual Scottishness within an improving paradigm, through laying claim to a nebulous aesthetic subjectivity. Carlyle's work also nicely apprehends the fundamental pace of change in contemporary Scotland, and Britain more generally. We have noted his multiplicity of frames: seeking to capture a post-North-Britishness in which Britain is a more stable sum of its parts, while perpetuating a fragmented vision. Yet what he dramatically terms 'a boundless grinding collision of the New with the Old' reflects an experience intensely reflected on, and mediated by, the Scottish literary tradition ('Sign of the Times', p. 492).

This study has built upon a strong body of recent work in the field of Scottish Romanticism to offer an overarching historical model in which this writing can be understood. Synthesising the contributions of Duncan, Cairns Craig, Pittock, Leask and others as a foundation, it has reframed the subject within a long historical trajectory that is modified by the institutional conditions of the nation and continuously plugged into a matrix of improving discourse. The dialectical patterns of improvement are, as we have seen, the dominant feature of this literature, framed against a swift historical process. Tracing innovative constructions of the literary aesthetic in Scottish literature, a variety

of polemical strategies have been identified. Scottish authors submit a series of politicised attempts to negotiate the changing face of a national identity that is hostage to a profound experience of modernisation. Both within and without the improving priorities of hegemonic Britishness, Scots offer up a provocative angle on the character and pitfalls of 'progress'. Their narratives are readily applicable across a whole variety of contexts, historical and contemporary, due to the predictable configurations of hegemonic improvement in capitalist society. Ranged around a congealing set of assumptions that construe Britain *as* civilisation, they develop and challenge the dialogic framing of Scottishness as various forms of Other. Within this, we have noted the consistent prominence of a certain aesthetic response in the compelling idea of the romantic nation. Yet, as is consistently apparent, once that act of national aesthetic transcendence has been offered, and Scotland has been firmly shaped as art, then the romantic nation gains the unstable political potential that all artworks have. Furthermore, this process may finally involve a radical reshaping of the broader environment, invoking a pervasive condition of epistemological irony. Finally, and despite such aesthetic manoeuvres, the stubborn and often perilous dialectics of improvement refuse to be foresworn, reproducing their hierarchical tensions across and beyond the period.

It is perhaps grandiose to claim to be tracing a clear literary movement or tradition, but we have illuminated some cogent patterns in Scottish literature of the long eighteenth century. Regional stresses may frequently appear to undercut as much as they underpin national self-reflections in this work, yet our focus on a Scottish experience of improvement offers a consolidating angle. If Scottish Romanticism has emerged at points in this thesis as a body of critiques

aimed at an improving Britishness, then this should not be allowed to overshadow its other key feature: the improving bias and indeed very Britishness of this work. It is ultimately most useful to consider Scottish Romanticism as a varied, modal series of literary works centred around the idea of improvement, encompassing: intellectual conception, vivid endorsement, response, critique and alternatives. Within this paradigm, we have been dealing with a number of different national identity formations. In play have been: the civic nationalist, improving North-Britishness of the Enlightenment; hegemonic Britishness; and the especially nebulous construct of residual Scottishness. Chapter One located these in and around the institutional formation of 'state-less' Scotland, opening up the ideological complexity around national-cultural issues in the period, addressing a set of fundamental identity problematics, and drawing initial conclusions about how these impacted on the work of literature. This involved tracing out the patriotic associational culture of the period, alongside developing aesthetic ideologies, as alternative forms of cultural nationalism. Subsequently, Chapter Two found Burns taking the stress on patriotic cultural activity from the civic nationalists and applying it to a glorification of the unimproved, amplifying an existing primitivist element in Enlightenment discourse. He was positioned as a key motor in the transition towards an aesthetic order, figuring residual Scottishness via an aesthetic of unimprovement in his pastoral poetry and self-presentations. This was a central feature of a loaded 'brokering' between British and Scottish cultural forms, in an impressively hybridised body of work that is nonetheless at pains to reveal a particularly Scottish history of liberty. In Chapter Three the full emergence of aesthetic nationalism was cited in Scott's *Waverley Novels*, where the tense

formation of the romantic nation was revealed straining under the weight of a vulnerable imperial apologetics. The political potential of the romantic nation was explored in more depth, underscoring the volatile nature of an aesthetically based system and tracing this pattern towards possible outcomes in an ironic modern order. The work of James Hogg was posed as taking on Scott's refinement of the romantic nation, but stressing it more as a site of potent cultural contest, while on occasion taking the system itself to task. Finally, Chapter Four provided a broad historical perspective largely navigated by the fiction of John Galt. His Scottish novels offered a capacious means of assessing the improving trajectory and the social, political and cultural tensions it invokes. Galt's practice demonstrated not only the narrative grandeur and complications of the historical experience itself, but also offered an innovative aesthetic critique. Alongside this, Elizabeth Hamilton provided a further means of exploring the complex relationship sustained by improvement across both national and class contexts, her evangelical didacticism a marker of a cultural conflict continuing to gain pace well into the nineteenth century. Her self-presentations and early feminist criticism also helped us address the role of gender within the whole debate, flagging up a set of contradictions that would otherwise only have been implied by a canon of celebrated male authors.

Regardless to say, covering so much historical ground has necessitated only a limited selection of works being chosen to navigate the argument. Working from and nuancing the framework we have established, there are many supplementary case studies that future work needs to address. In order to mark significant and influential moments in Scottish culture – besides being interested in the very process of literary iconisation – we have largely focussed on a

selection of the foremost authors of this period. Yet, our critical framework could be usefully tested across a much larger range, including Gaelic-language work; while it could be also taken further beyond the confines of creative writing and into political, philosophical and other non-fictional discourses. There are a few particular omissions that deserve a brief apology, if representing only a fraction of promising further directions. Robert Fergusson is a conscious absence, his work making an important contribution despite its frequent eclipse by the more popular vernacular stylings of Burns, providing a distinctively urban approach to the poetic construction of rustic Scottishness. The novels of Tobias Smollett would help to flesh out the connections between the ideological concerns we have addressed here and the larger history of the British novel, particularly the dominant realist tradition that Smollett influences into the nineteenth century. *Humphrey Clinker* in particular has been claimed as an especially foundational text for the Scottish context – offering ‘a discursive instrument [...] for mapping the heterogeneous cultural spaces of the new United Kingdom’ – while as a Scot living in England Smollett also offers up diasporic concerns that we have not had the space to address.³⁰² Equally, James Beattie’s *The Minstrel* is also a potentially fruitful case study; an influential work that reverberates around the eighteenth century and would grant new perspective on

³⁰² Ian Duncan, ‘Altered States: Galt, Serial Fiction, and the Romantic Miscellany’, in *John Galt: Observations and Conjectures*, ed. by Hewitt, pp. 53-71, (pp. 57-58). See Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker*, ed. by Lewis M. Knapp, rev. by Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

our concerns via a rich tradition of English-language poetry by Scots across the period.³⁰³

The end of Carlyle's 'Sign of the Times' strikes a note of optimism somewhat at odds with the tenor of his work. Despite the catastrophic image of spiritual degradation, he affixes a familiar sense of historical amelioration to his discussion of a new idealist order, claiming that, 'the happiness and greatness of mankind at large have been continually progressive'. As captured in his reminder of the 'wise adage': 'the darkest hour is before the dawn', he is confident that some coming transition will rebalance society (pp. 490-491). If our historical perspective renders this something of a hollow prophecy, still it is worth considering whether the long trajectory cited here offers up any fruitful endpoints. If Scotland's potential acuity on issues of progressivism and free market economics often issued in a disappointingly limited domestic critique of British imperialism, perhaps this improved nation might still contain the materials to influence an on-going debate about western hegemony. Elements of Scottishness are not yet free of the restrictive aspects of romantic nationhood, and can still be found functioning as passive aesthetic colouration to the stubborn ambitions of British world domination; the tartantry of a nuclear superpower. If the romantic mode can itself offer a political critique, then equally it needs to be continually reassessed and challenged. Furthermore, it is crucial that we continue to contest the deep and pervasive construction of autonomous Scottishness as a counter-progressive formation; a task rendered all the more difficult by the insidious hierarchies encouraged by linguistic

³⁰³ James Beattie, 'The Minstrel; or, The Progress of Genius', in *The Minstrel, in Two Books: with Some Other Poems, a New Edition* (London: Dilly; Edinburgh: Creech, 1784), pp. 1-64.

differentials and social inequality. Yet the increasing mobilisation in recent years of a new nationalism in Scotland that might accord with the social democratic bias of the nation is a hopeful pattern. Offering a consensus around a pragmatic and civic basis for a national agenda that has also grown in inclusive cultural self-confidence, this may have taken important steps to suturing (or rather mobilising) the supposed fissures in Scottish culture. Let us hope that future emanations of Scottishness can build upon the lessons and insights of the long eighteenth century and contribute to a much-needed reassessment of the dominant order.

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