A Highland Tour of Victorian Travel Writing

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Ten Voices on Scotland

By

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ABSTRACT

Notwithstanding the geographical proximity of the Scots to the English metropolis, during the first quarter of the eighteenth century, Scotland was persistently viewed as a peripheral region, inhabited by savage Highlanders, epitomising the sublime and the grotesque as well as the distance of the Scottish Other from civilised Europe.

After the defeat of the Highlanders at the Battle of Culloden and the subsequent cessation of all power to the English ruler, the Scottish manners and mores were again subject to the scrutiny of the Western travellers, yet for a different reason: the rediscovery of the Ossianic tradition, the Scottish link to the Norman invasion and the increasing appeal of Scottish historical narratives to the average Victorian set the pattern for the reconstruction of a literary utopia, in which the concept of the wild Highlander was readjusted to suit the purposes of the masculine and freedom-loving British Empire.

Facing the risk of racial segregation due to their Celtic background, a significant number of Scottish writers and theorists succumbed to the rising Anglo-Saxonism, seeking every means to prove their Anglo-Saxon background at the expense of their Celtic roots.

This volume includes a set of travel narratives and essays on Scotland, covering a period of more than two centuries (1722-1907). The travellers who flocked into Scotland were either driven by their literary aspirations or were on a mission to explore the country's wild inhabitants, the Highlanders. In their attempt to define Scottish identity in accordance with the cultural, ideological and political standards of their epoch, English, Scottish and American travel writers often adhered to the Othering of the Scottish people, promoting images of backwardness and the sublime.

Introduction

The present volume draws the reader's attention to travel narratives and texts pertinent to Scottish society and culture. In particular, owing to the seminal role of Scotland in the amalgamation of the nineteenth-century British Empire, a bulk of texts was produced to strengthen the ties between metropolitan England and its insular periphery. In this volume, therefore, I seek to prove that, at times, some of the writers included also utilised the Scottish landscape and the Highland trope to further boost the British nation-building agenda at a time when the British Empire reached its apex, namely to lessen the gap between the predominant Englishness and the rising Scottishness under the veil of British collective identity.

Regarding this book's relation to previous texts, I should mention Elizabeth Hagglund's work *Tourists and Travellers: Women's Non-Fictional Writing about Scotland 1770-1830* which has served as a significant source of inspiration, mainly through the analysis of the female travelogues produced by Dorothy Wordsworth, Anne Grant and Sarah Murray.

In addition, the present text has used as vital sources Robert J. C. Young's *The Idea of English Ethnicity* that touched directly upon the racial discourses that contributed to the formation of English, Scottish and British identities as separate entities within the imperial space, as well as Linda Colley's text *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837*, addressing the efforts of the British Empire to forge a new identity after the annexation of Scotland.

As regards the notion of Britishness, despite the frequent belief that it constituted an English invention to include all the insular peripheries of Britain, Young purports that the term "'British' has always been a particularly Scottish thing, precisely designed to distinguish between citizenship, nationality and ethnicity" (12). Based on this argument, Scottish identity was not antithetical to the construction of a nineteenth-century national identity for the British empire and, at times, Scotland assumed a significant role in the formation of a collective identity.

With reference to the status of Scotland as a travel destination, English tourists persistently treated this insular periphery as a terra incognita, notwithstanding its relative proximity to the centre of the British Empire and it was not until the late eighteenth century that English travellers became fascinated with the Scottish setting. As suggested by Hagglund,

English tourism to Scotland, particularly to the Highlands and Islands, had its origins in the eighteenth century, although it was not until the early nineteenth century that the physical and economic infrastructures necessary *for* the operation of a tourist industry were in place. Before 1745, Scotland was an unknown land to many people in England, with a reputation for barrenness and savagery. Even to many Lowland Scots, the Highlands remained a mystery, so much so that in 1773, Samuel Johnson was to remark that 'to the southern inhabitants of Scotland, the state of the mountains and the islands is equally unknown with that of Borneo or Sumatra'. (16)

Drawing upon Hagglund's comment on the sudden emergence of Scotland into a popular tourist destination at the threshold of the nineteenth century, mainly due to the attractive primitive properties of the Scottish Highlands and their inaccessible geographical position compared to the southern regions of the British Empire, one could also affirm that a gradual Scottish utopia was promoted in the writings of late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century travel authors for a variety of reasons.

According to John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, the transformation of Scotland into a popular travel destination, at least at the close of the eighteenth century, was manifest due to a combination of three reasons: scientific curiosity, national pride and aesthetic experience, asserting that

The search for domestic locations for travel reinforced a new interest in exploring Britain as a suitable pastime for the upper classes. The new travellers could be said to be influenced by a mixture of three sets of motives: curiosity, scientific and otherwise; national pride; and aesthetic experience. (Gold and Gold 41-42)

Apart from the attractive aesthetic and scientific criteria for which English travellers started to view Scotland from a utopian perspective, Robert Crawford refers to the heated debate that emerged on the reevaluation of primitiveness encountered off the beaten track during the Enlightenment, placing emphasis on the most outward locations which were perceived as uncorrupt from the erosive spirit of civilisation:

Discussions of the primitive and the refined were a major element of the Enlightenment, not only in a Montesquieu-fuelled Scotland but also across Europe and in North America. Yet the debate was particularly intense in, and pertinent to, Scottish culture, because, rightly or wrongly, the small country of Scotland could be seen in various ways as strikingly divided between the barbarically primitive and the confidently sophisticated. (16)

As Crawford puts it, Scotland could become the proper hotbed for the Rousseauesque study of the antithesis between the noble savage and the civilised man, given that its historical conditions reinforced the division between the wild Highlanders and the refined Lowlanders, who were culturally interrelated but symbolised the dichotomy between the savage and the enlightened aspects of a given nation.

With the rediscovery of the Old Norse texts that rekindled the British cultural ties with the Viking context, Scotland served as the ideal locus for the investigation of this kinship by travellers, owing to its cultural and geographical proximity to both England and Scandinavia. In the light of the surge of interest in the sagaic tradition of their Northern brethren, English scholars flocked to Scotland in the wake of the nineteenth century to pay pilgrimage to the sites that were mentioned in the Old Norse texts or to explore the linguistic and historical remnants of the alleged Scotto-Nordic cultural connection. As Richard M. Dorson claims, the folkish elements of the Scottish culture along with the unspoiled peasantry of the Scottish Highlands became a tourist attraction that could explain the infatuation of late eighteenth-century travellers with the specific cultural context:

> In Norway, Finland, Hungary, Serbia, and elsewhere, scholars found special national qualities in the history, literature, language, and folklore of their terrain. Now the folk are transformed from a superstitious, backward peasantry to a pastoral people attuned to nature and glowing with a natural morality. (10)

This argument is also substantiated by Claire McKeown, who maintains that Anglo-Saxonism in Britain, at a scholarly level, should be seen as a cultural movement that did not rely exclusively on the ancestral links between the English and the Nordic world but rather extended to the paramount role of the Scots as a nation racially related to Scandinavia. This impacted the mapping of Scotland and created favourable conditions for the view of the Scots as members of the same Anglo-Saxon stock with their Southern neighbours:

> In the late 18th and early 19th centuries a similar interest in cultural links with the Nordic countries developed in Britain, with a significant contribution from Scottish writers. In Scottish writing, or writing on Scotland, there is often a specific emphasis on unifying Scottish and Scandinavian cultures through a specific Northern landscape mythology, linked with a proximity to the sea. (Hagglund 1)

An additional factor that contributed to the reading of Scotland as a utopian society was the association that early nineteenth-century travel writers tended to draw between the Highland chieftains and the Viking rovers, a fact which prompted these travellers to embark on solo pedestrian explorations across the Scottish Highlands to address this imagery:

> The idea of the noble Highlander was widespread among English tourists to Scotland and to be a 'complete Highlander' required more than mere birth and residence in the Highlands. (Mc Keown 147)

The stock view of the Highlander as a specimen of the Nordic heritage of Scotland tinged British travellers' accounts with racial and historical remarks and increased the parallel contemplation of the Scottish case "as a more familiar North, in order to give readers a clearer image of Nordic specificities. Many focus on the landscapes" (McKeown 3).

In addition to the rising tide of Anglo-Saxonist studies as an indispensable nation-building strategy of the British Empire, Hagglund also mentions another key reason of Scotland's transformation into a cradle of the Anglo-Scandinavian culture, that is, literary tourism that flourished thanks to the works of Shakespeare, Ossian, Robert Burns and Walter Scott (26).

With regard to Walter Scott's instrumental role in the promotion of Celticism and the subsequent reconciliation of the Celtic and Saxon racial background of the Scottish identity, H. j. C, Grierson stresses that he was the first to reconcile

> Highlander and Lowlander and you must now make a little study of Scottish history to learn how bitter were the feelings that for centuries divided them. He was the first to do full justice to that strange, sensitive, passionate devout, chivalrous people, the Scottish Highlanders, while doing justice also to his own Lowland countrymen more shrewd, less poetic, but as passionate, as loyal to a cause. (23)

Grierson raises a crucial point, suggesting that a thorny aspect of Scottish racial, as well as cultural, identification was the binary opposition between the Highlanders and the Lowlanders, which was often addressed in the travel accounts of late eighteenth century up until the 1850s. By introducing a positive image of the Highlanders and the Lowlanders, Scott succeeded in diminishing, to a certain extent, the rising Scottophobia in England and the ontological conflict between Lowland Scots and their Highland countrymen. The dysfunctional relationship between the Lowlands and the Highlands is also corroborated by Linda Colley who purports that

Lowland Scots traditionally regarded their Highland countrymen as members of a different and inferior race, violent, treacherous, poverty-stricken and backward. They called them savages or aborigines, labels that some Lowlanders continued to use well into the 1830s. (15)

What is more, owing to the increasing involvement of the Scottish politicians to the internal affairs of the British Empire after the Union of 1707, it is notable that a major number of eighteenth-century travellers detested the idea of Scottish overrepresentation in the British Parliament, considering the relatively recent clashes of the Highlanders with the English. The brutality of this event was either demonised or further nurtured the wild Highlander motive. As argued by Colley,

> Runaway Scottophobia in England after 1760 was not the product of a traditional antipathy between two peoples, but a response to something much more recent. […] Englishmen had only to think back to the Highlanders' march on Derby in 1745, or glance at the beacon towers still strung along the hills of Cumberland and Westmorland, erected over the centuries so as to give warning of impending Scottish raiders. As for Scotsmen, the genocide that had reputedly followed the Battle of Culloden was reminder enough of the English capacity for racialism and hate. (117)

If a Scottophobic spirit often characterised the eighteenth-century English traveller's interaction with the Scottish landscape prior to Walter Scott's introduction of the concept of the noble Highlander, one could also refer to the positive impact of the Ossianic poems on the change of the status of Scotland from a savage land into an enlightened nation.

On the basis of the Ossianic tradition after the publication of James MacPherson's *The Poems of Ossian* (1760, the Scottish national awakening was more vehemently phrased, seeking to reconcile the Scots with their Celtic cultural past. In the light of this resurgence of Celtic tradition which also brought to light the cultural connection of the Scots with the ancient Scottish tribe of the Picts (David McCrone 157), English travellers ventured to Scotland, anxious to trace vestiges of the Ossianic poetry in Scottish nature, along with a parallel admiration for the work of Robert Burns, whose poetry served as another major reason for a visit to the Scottish Highlands:

> Interest in the poet Robert Burns was of a different sort. While Ossianic travellers came in search of sites linked to the poems, those with an interest in Burns sought out sites connected with his life. The pastoral nature of many of Burns' landscapes did not lend themselves to pilgrimage and,

> although some of his poems did indeed describe wild scenery, most of his work was domestic rather than sublime. (33)

Given all the above, the present volume addresses all the aforementioned issues attached to the representations of Scottishness.

Regarding the first chapter of this volume, it pertains to Edmund Burt's *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London*. Burt's introductory text introduces the reader to a dystopian and peripheral Scottish Other, establishing an early trope relevant to Scotland as a savage land, beset with perils and loosely connected to England at a cultural level.

As regards the second chapter of this volume, Anne Grant's *Letters from the Mountains* was written in response to Edmund Burt's dystopian depiction of Scotland. Challenging the image of the Scottish periphery, Grant gives a minute account of the national character of the Highlanders at the close of the eighteenth century, pointing to their cultural superiority amongst Britain's peripheral regions.

With reference to the third chapter, Sarah Murray's *A Companion and Useful Guide to the Beauties of Scotland, to the Lakes of Westmoreland, Cumberland, and Lancashire, and to the Curiosities in the District of Craven, in the West Riding of Yorkshire* constitutes the first guidebook on Scotland. In her travel account, the writer also discusses the issue of gender based on her own depiction as an English traveller in a terra incognita. The Scottish scenery sparks debates on womanhood and the writer's self-fathoming as a solitary traveller and an adventure heroine.

Concerning the fourth chapter, Dorothy Mae Wordsworth's *Recollections of a Tour made in Scotland* recounts the English writer's Scottish Tour, during which she inaugurates a more utopian reading of Scotland in her Ossianic reading of the Scottish landscape. Bestowing significant attention on Scotland's chivalric tradition, the writer sets the pace for a further exploration of the attractive properties of Scottish culture for the antiquarians and aficionados of historical narratives.

With regard to the fifth chapter of the volume, its principal focus is on William Forsyth's *The Beauties of Scotland*. At the threshold of the nineteenth century, Forsyth constructs a Scottish identity that differs from the collective spirit of Britishness, concentrating on the negative effect of the Union on the national character of the Scots. Forsyth's text mirrors his Scotto-centric approach, endeavouring to forge Scottishness independently of the British nation-building agenda.

As per the sixth chapter, it pertains to David Stewart's narrative *Sketches of the character, manners, and present state of the Highlanders of Scotland – With details of the military service of the Highland regiment.*

Stewart's text is permeated by a Celticist spirit, foregrounding the racial connection of the Highlanders with Eastern Europe and the ancient Picts, deviating from the Anglo-Saxon nationalist discourse. Stewart's text also constitutes a fine specimen of early nineteenth-century Scottish antiquarianism.

With regard to the seventh chapter, it focuses on Robert Chambers' *The picture of Scotland* which explores the Viking origins of Lowlander Scots based on the literary and cultural vestiges of the Norse invaders still encountered in nineteenth-century Scotland.

With respect to the eighth chapter, Henry Blake McLellan's *Journal of a Residence in Scotland*, published posthumously (1834), addresses the notion of Americanness in his study of the Scottish nature and people. Embarking on a Scottish tour, the Scottish-American author attempts to construct an American utopia, drawing the reader's attention to the chivalric past of Scotland in the texts of Scott and Ossian, throwing a comparative glance at the British context as a whole.

As pet the ninth chapter of the volume, Jacob Abbott's *A Summer in Scotland* underlines the importance of the folkish elements in Scotland, stressing the idea of a distinct Scottish culture from the dominant English cultural paradigm in the light of Herder's theory of the *Volksgeist*. In his travel account, Abbott also attacks the British Empire, presenting the Scots as a nation on the verge of extinction due to the oppressive institutions of Victorian Britain, as opposed to the liberal federal system of the United States.

The last chapter of this volume is concerned with Elizabeth Grierson's book for children *Peeps at Many Lands: Scotland,* in which she attempts to provide her juvenile audience with a concise image of early twentieth-century Scotland. In her travelogue, the writer fosters an image of Scotland as a backward and peripheral Other, not fully incorporated into the British imperialist agenda.

CHAPTER ONE

EDMUND BURT

*LETTERS FROM THE GENTLEMAN IN THE NORTH OF SCOTLAND
TO HIS FRIEND IN LONDON; CONTAINING THE DESCRIPTION
OF A CAPITAL TOWN IN THAT NORTHERN COUNTRY,
WITH AN ACCOUNT OF SOME UNCOMMON CUSTOMS
OF THE INHABITANTS*

Edmund Burt was an early eighteenth-century English author who is best known for having worked as a rent collector for the British government (Stephen Moreton and David I. Green 16). Also known with the pen name Edward Burt, the author cooperated with General George Wade to sell the Scottish estates forfeited after the Jacobite rising of 1715 (Moreton and Green 16). In 1729, Burt worked as a manager of the lead mines in Argyll until 1741 (David Stevenson 20). During his long residence in Scotland, Burt produced the travelogue *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London* in an epistolary form, covering the period from 1727 to 1728. In his letters, the writer related the road-building improvements in the Highlands. Due to his severe judgment of the Scots, his letters were published anonymously in 1754, a year prior to his death (Moreton and Green 17). The authorship of the travel account was given to Burt a few months after his death in London on the fourth of January 1755 (Stevenson 20).

With regard to the first chapter of this volume, it revolves around Burt's travelogue *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London.* Burt's text could serve as a significant introductory account, given that he was an eye witness to several military events prior to the Battle of Culloden, which consolidated the British dominance over the Scottish chieftains. In addition, his text is of major significance, if one considers that he wrote his letters a few years after the Union between England and Scotland (1707).

Owing to the historical proximity of the letters to the key events that established the Union with England, Burt's text should be read in the light

of the historical context of which the English writer acquired an eye-witness experience. As can be expected, Burt's reading of Scotland does not remain unbiased, since his active involvement in the selling of the forfeited Scottish estates of the Scottish Jacobites contributed to the creation of a text which is permeated by an intense anti-Scottish spirit.

Being an early eighteenth-century traveller in the Scottish Highlands, Burt could be regarded as a pioneering and groundbreaking figure, given that he was one of the first authors to venture to the Scottish Highlands during a tumultuous period of the Anglo-Scottish relations. Therefore, in his introductory statement, Burt stresses the image of Scotland as a terra incognita that few travellers would visit:

> In looking upwards to what I have been writing, I have paused awhile to consider what it was that could induce me to detain you so long about this trifling matter ; and at last I have resolved it into a love of truth, which is naturally communicative, and makes it painful to conceal the impositions of falsehood. But these islands are so remote and unfrequented, they are a very proper subject for invention; and few, I think, would have the curiosity to visit them, in order to disprove any account of them, however romantic. (180)

Comparing his journey as an errand into wilderness, Burt immediately foregrounds the view of Scotland as a British periphery that poses a threat to the average traveller. As argued by Hagglund, until the late eighteenth century, Scotland held a peculiar status in English imagination, being a wild place of exploration where there was not "a fully-organised tourist infrastructure in place" (138). At the same time, Burt also stresses the use of Scotland as a "proper subject for invention", that is, a new locus of investigation where one can encounter novel scenes and wild customs.

With reference to earlier travel accounts in northern latitudes, Jini Rawlings purports that British male writers often adopted an imperialist voice, framing their texts "in terms of conquering the unknown from a position of cultural imperialism" (44). This applies neatly to Burt's text, considering his tendency to denigrate every aspect of Highland culture that he encounters throughout his journey. As an imperial beholder, who persistently treats the Highlanders as a backward, subaltern Other, Burt touches upon several topics that underlay Scottish identity in early eighteenth century, such as the Highland dress, the Scottish Gaelic language, the vague ethno genesis of the Highlanders and their propensity to anarchy.

Writing his travelogue at a time when the clan system was still in full vigour, Burt is anxious to stress the Highlanders' devotion to their

chieftain, which he identifies as the principal cause of their proneness to rebellion:

> The ordinary Highlanders esteem it the most sublime degree of virtue to love their chief, and pay him a blind obedience, although it be in opposition to the government, the laws of the kingdom, or even to the law of God. He is their idol; and as they profess to know no king but him (I was going further), so will they say they ought to do whatever he commands without inquiry. (2-3)

Having glanced at the Highlander chieftains as a defect of the Scottish political matters, Burt expresses an imperialist concern that no other traveller of this volume expresses, owing to his publication of the account prior to the abolition of the clan system after the battle of Culloden, where the Scottish chieftains were forced to surrender their powers to the British crown. In that sense, Burt's text is replete with instances of the Scottish Other and the possibility of producing an account that promotes the expansion and conquest rhetoric, often encountered in British travel discourse (Dimitrios Kassis 103).

In the following fragment, the blind devotion of the Scots to their chief is again contemplated as a token of their barbarous disposition, and as an aspect that the English expansionist agenda needs to eradicate. Burt tinges his discourse with imperialistic nuances, fostering an animalistic and backward nature of the Scots:

> Next to this love of their chief is that of the particular branch from whence they sprang; and, in a third degree, to those of the whole clan or name, whom they will assist, right or wrong, against those of any other tribe with which they are at variance, to whom their enmity, like that of exasperated brothers, is most outrageous. (3)

Based on the above remark, Burt's firm belief in the animalistic and subordinate status of the Highlanders introduces the reader to the idea of the Scottish Other which needs to be domesticated in order to be incorporated into the British imperial apparatus. What is more, he dwells on the barbaric disposition of the Scottish clans, which are capable of committing atrocious acts to obey their chieftains. This empowered position of the English author over the primitive natives constitutes a frequent convention of the English travel canon, overstressing the masculinity of the indigenous population with the aim of representing them as a subaltern tribe. In that regard, Burt's focus on the Highlanders' bestial masculinity is aligned with Kevin Kenny's argument that imperial discourse often applied engendered perspective to the colonial subjects:

The colonial subject could be cast not only as feminine and weak but also, at times, as aggressively masculine—as worker or dispossessed tenant, simonized subaltern or simpleton, agrarian rebel or nationalist agitator— the difference being that masculinity in this case signified bestiality and an innate capacity for violence. (17)

Hence Burt's remark on the violence with which Highlanders defend their clanship as an indispensable part of their own identity:

The great antiquity of his family, and the heroic actions of his ancestors, in their conquest of enemy clans, is the inexhaustible theme of his conversation; and, being accustomed to dominion, he imagines himself, in his usky, to be a sovereign prince; and, as I said before, fancies he may dispose of heads at his pleasure. (168)

Owing to the writer's insistence on the representation of the Highlanders as a barbarous race, his travel account is far from romancing the Highlander culture, as later travelogues attempted to do so. As explained by Young, the gradual transformation of Scotland and the Highlands into a utopian locus with the rediscovery of the bardic poetry of Ossian and the writings of Walter Scott constitutes a later development, stating that

It is striking, in fact, how many of those who developed the racial romance of Saxonism were themselves Scottish- so much so, that, taking Scott's Ivanhoe (1819) on board, as well, you could plausibly claim not only English Literature but also racialized English Saxonism as a Scottish invention. (30-31)

Given the above comment, Burt's attention is only confined to the evidence of primitiveness and savagery that Highlanders epitomise. As he notes in another episode

The Highlanders, in order to persuade a belief of their hardiness, have several rhodomontades on that head; for, as the French proverb says, Tous les Gascons ne sont pas en France. "There are vain boasters in other countries besides Gascony." It is true, they are liable to great hardships, and they often suffer by them in their health and limbs, as I have often observed in a former letter.(15)

If Highlanders are described as people who can undergo unfathomable hardships for their land, Burt further reinforces their image as backward by dwelling on their idleness due to their backward economy. As the writer purports, based on his personal experience he considers them lazy, having hired them in the past:

> It is a received notion (but nothing can be more unjust) that the ordinary
> Highlanders are an indolent, lazy people: I know the contrary by
> troublesome experience; I say troublesome, because in a certain affair
> wherein I had occasion to employ great numbers of them, and gave them
> good wages, the solicitations of others for employment were very earnest,
> and would hardly admit of a denial: they are as willing as other people to
> mend their way of living; and, when they have gained strength from
> substantial food, they work as well as others; but why should a people be
> branded with the name of idlers, in a country where there is generally no
> profitable business for them to do ? (20)

The above emphasis on the idleness of the Highlanders is not a mere
coincidence, considering the negative connotations attached to such a
characterisation in British society. According to Hildor Arnold Barton,
laziness and the lack of industriousness are typical qualities attributed to
subaltern nations by British travellers. In Burt's text, however, one can
also notice that the writer, speaking from an imperialist position, dispels
every possibility to employ the Highlanders as servants or slaves within
the imperialist framework, precisely because they are uncooperative and
inactive. Admittedly, his view of the Highlanders is a utilitarian one,
treating them as colonial subjects who need to serve the Empire, and they
are assessed according to this model.

Another major component of Scottish nationhood that is subject to the
writer's scrutiny is the Gaelic tongue of the Highlands. Having a language
of their own and customs peculiar to themselves, the Highlanders are again
perceived as barbaric, and in this case the issue of language comes to the
foreground as significant evidence of their depiction as a savage Other:

> Strange encomiums I have heard from the natives upon the language of
> their country, although it be but a corruption of the Irish tongue; and, if
> you could believe some of them, it is so expressive, that it wants only to be
> better known to become universal. But as for myself, who can only judge
> of it by the ear, it seems to me to be very harsh in sound, like the Welsh,
> and altogether as gutteral, which last, you know, is a quality long since
> banished all the polite languages in Europe. (81)

Drawing upon Burt's patronising approach to Scottish Gaelic, he
immediately demonises the language of the local people precisely because
it does not conform to his Anglo-centric outlook on civilisations. With the
aim of deconstructing the value of the Scottish language, constituting a
significant nation-building component of Scottish nationhood, Burt
remarks that it is harsh language that could not be classified as a language
of a superior culture. According to Gina Wisker, the narrative strategy of
Orientalism underpins earlier travel accounts of English travellers to

insular and overseas peripheries, aiming at "legitimizing civilizing mission, essentialism, expansionism and imperialism and on the other hand, convincing natives of their own inferiority" (10).

That Burt's text is tinged with imperialist nuances that seek to depict the Highlanders as an Oriental, subaltern Other, is best expressed in his other comment on the efforts of the locals to master English, which he again deems as primitive, defective and feeble:

> In writing English, they seem to have no rule of orthography, and they profess they think good spelling of no great use; but if they read English authors, I wonder their memory does not retain the figures or forms of common words, especially monosyllables; but it may, for aught I know, be affectation. (84)

Apart from their inferior language and savage devotion to their chieftains, the Highlanders are also accused of vindictiveness, a characteristic that adds to their contemplation as a savage, Celtic Other. As noticed by Burt

> The ordinary natives are, for the most part, civil when they are kindly used, but most mischievous when much offended, and will hardly ever forgive a provocation, but seek some open or secret revenge, and, generally speaking, the latter of the two. (26-7)

Burt's persistent stress on the mischievous and deceiving disposition of the Scottish inhabitants, who are in constant search of revenge, is closely related to his earlier comments on the dystopian aspect of the Highlanders as idle, savage and bellicose. Given that Scotland was a virtually unknown travel destination up until the 1750s, Burt inevitably rests on "the well-established dystopian tradition in British literature related to northern latitudes as one of the most perilous destinations in Europe" (Kassis 135).

Owing to his capacity as a rent collector for the British Crown after the confiscation of the lands of the Scottish Jacobites, Burt goes as far as to associate Scottish vindictiveness with their reluctance to be expulsed from their lands:

> This kind of cruelty, I think, arises from their dread of innovations, and the notion they entertain, that they have a kind of hereditary right to their farms; and that none of them are to be dispossessed, unless for some great transgression against their chief, in which case every individual would consent to their expulsion. (75)

Given the above description, Burt's hostile rhetoric directed to the Highlanders deconstructs the myth of the noble savage that prevailed in

late eighteenth-century travel literature, since he tends to overemphasise the revengeful and cruel intentions of the common people in Scotland. His overall depiction of the Highlands as a dangerous zone harmonises with the pre-modern and eighteenth-century views of Northern Europe: as Nina Chordas puts it, the element of the grotesque plays a pivotal role in the construction of new utopias, "exemplified in descriptions of bizarre creatures, is a feature common to pre-modern travel writing, the creation of an imaginary 'other' on the margins of the known" (40).

Persistently portraying the Highlands as a barbarous zone, inhabited by savage and animalistic people who pose a threat to the very existence of an individual coming from a more refined culture, Burt undoubtedly constructs a new dystopia that accords with Chordas' argument on the grotesque and repulsive properties of the unknown world, symbolised by the Highlanders. One is struck by the writer's formulation of the idea that the Highlanders can never adopt the customs of the civilised English and that they are far more primitive than the Hottentots:

> I am far from thinking there is anything in the nature of a Highlander, as such, that should make him cruel and remorseless; on the contrary, I cannot but be of opinion that nature in general is originally the same in all mankind, and that the difference between country and country arises from education and example. And from this principle I conclude, that even a Hottentot child, being brought into England before he had any knowledge, might, by a virtuous education and generous example, become as much an Englishman in his heart as any native whatever. But that the Highlanders, for the most part, are cruel, is beyond dispute, though all clans are not alike merciless. In general they have not generosity enough to give quarter to an enemy that falls in their power; nor do they seem to have any remorse at shedding blood without necessity. (76-7)

Based on this comment, it is noteworthy that Burt's discourse never departs from his systematic treatment of the Highlanders as a violent and peripheral Other, diametrically opposed to the civilised English. In addition, the writer's intention to orientalise the Highlanders and present them as a nation loosely connected to his own definition of British culture both at a cultural and a racial level becomes apparent, when he draws a comparison between the Highlanders and the Mediterranean cultures in terms of vindictiveness:

> I must again apologize, and say, I make no doubt you will take this account (as it is intended)to be a piece of historical justice done upon one who is lawless, and deserves much more, and not as a sample of a Highland chief, or the least imputation on any other of those gentlemen.

> Yet truth obliges me to confess, that in some parts there remains among the natives a kind of Spanish or Italian inclination to revenge themselves, as it were, by proxy, of those who they think have injured them, or interfered with their interest. (157)

Interestingly enough, the characteristic of cruelty with which Burt associates the Highlanders is linked to his attempt to describe the Scots as an alien nation, shifting their origins to the Mediterranean Sea. His racial comment derives from the gradual change that occurred in the mapping of Europe, seeking to depict the European West as the cradle of the European culture as opposed to the corrupt South. Burt's effort to associate the Highlanders with the European South signifies their peripheral and corrupt state.

Regarding the ambiguous use of the notion of race in the European travel canon, Bill Schwarz contends that

> Race itself is a powerful symbolic force, profoundly and incessantly imbricated in the makings of social identity. It establishes territorial boundaries, sometimes of intoxicating power, differentiating us from Others, all the while categorizing and demarcating a vertiginous abundance of human groups into recognizable, classifiable social units. At one level this is achieved-in the cultural formations of modernity-by the equation of white with reason, order and civilization. At another level, on the terrain of lived experience, these structures of inclusion and exclusion are achieved and reproduced by means of a heady chaos of fantasy, irrationality and unconscious desire. (11)

Obviously Burt's travel text is beset with instances that highlight the ontological difference between the superior English and the peripheral Highlander, based on the supposed inferiority that he encounters in all vestiges of Scottish culture. Hence Burt's purposeful remark that, in addition to their previous negative qualities, the Highlanders are also inhospitable:

> There is one gasconade of the people hereabouts, which is extraordinary: they are often boasting of the great hospitality of the Highlanders to strangers; for my own part, I do not remember to have received one invitation from them, but when it was with an apparent view to their own interest: on the contrary, I have several times been unasked to eat, though there was nothing to be purchased within many miles of the place. (99-100)

The writer's antipathy for anything that is not akin to his perception of Britishness is also manifest in his representation of the Highland dress, that he treats as part of the Highlandrs' rebellious disposition and

inadaptability to the imperial apparatus, resenting their effort to become distinct and separate from the rest of the subjects of the British Empire:

> Various reasons are given both for and against the Highland dress. It is urged against it, that it distinguishes the natives as a body of people distinct and separate from the rest of the subjects of Great Britain, and thereby is one cause of their narrow adherence among themselves, to the exclusion of all the rest of the kingdom; but the part of the habit chiefly objected to is the plaid (or mantle), which, they say, is calculated for the encouragement of an idle life, in lying about upon the heath, in the day-time, instead of following some lawful employment. (88)

Based on the above observation, the reader is struck by Burt's reluctance to witness cultural elements that challenge English supremacy over the colonial subject. Treating Scotland as an insular colony, Burt does not depart from his narrative position of the imperial beholder who constantly assesses and stigmatises peoples who do not adhere to the English definition of culture. In a similar vein, Burt challenges the originality of the Highland national dress, in an effort to deconstruct the uniqueness of their culture, asserting that

> From this simple account of the Highland dress, it will be seen that it has in itself nothing peculiar to one country more than another; as the different improvements upon the manner of girding the loins, and trussing up a blanket, can hardly be called a national costume.(104)

Burt's project to undermine the core elements of Scottish identity is associated with his overall narrative position as an empowered, imperial beholder who is entitled to formulate ideas on a nation's cultural status. Nevertheless, as can be discerned in his travel account, besides his constant outlook on Scottish culture as backward, he also attempts to eradicate every national sentiment or expression of the Highlanders, based on the premise that "folklore, myths, folksongs, dances, rituals, customs are vital clues to a nation's 'collective personality', its political sense of affinity" (Barnard 150). It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that Highlander children are also Othered by Burt, who goes as far as to compare them to animals or miserable objects:

> young children of the ordinary Highlanders are miserable objects indeed, and are mostly overrun with that distemper which some of the old men are hardly ever freed of from their infancy. I have often seen them come out from the huts early in a cold morning stark naked, and squat themselves down (if I might decently use the comparison) like dogs on a dunghill, upon a certain occasion after confinement. And at other times they have

but little to defend them from the inclemencies of the weather in so cold a climate: nor are the children of some gentlemen in much better condition, being strangely neglected till they are six or seven years old: this one might know by a saying I have often heard, 'That a gentleman's beams, are to be distinguished by their speaking-English.' (96)

On the basis of this description, children do not escape Burt's persistent gaze upon the Highlands as a dystopian locus, since he projects them as part of the grotesque world that coincides with his journey to the Highlands. The view of the Highland children as a nuisance is not particular to Burt's travelogue but rather extends to later travelogues on the Scottish Highlands, signalling the stock view of the Highlands as a dystopian society. According to Hagglund, "Highland children are repeatedly described as shy and silent, with descriptive language that seem to belong as much to forest animals as it does to human beings" (146).

As regards the funeral customs of the Highlanders, they are also ridiculed by Burt, as can be seen in the sarcastic tone with which he depicts the process of burial and the mourners that accompany the dead:

> The upper class hires women to moan and lament at the funeral of their nearest relations. These women cover their heads with a small piece of cloth, mostly green, and every now and then break out into a hideous howl and Ho-bobo- bo-boo, as I have often heard is done in some parts of Ireland. (108)

If Scottish cultural elements are overwhelmingly and systematically demonised by Burt, when it comes to his self-image, he constantly alludes to the role of the adventure hero. According to Rawlings, the association that male travellers keenly drew of their travelling process with a heroic mission, beset with perils (45) typifies voyages to Scotland. Yearning to fathom himself as an adventure hero, who is constantly engaged in activities not easily undertaken by the average male traveller, Burt emphasises the perilous character of crossing Loch Oich:

> The dangers of this part of the old way began at the top of a steep ascent, of about fifty or sixty yards from the little plain that parts this lake and Loch-Ness; and, not far from the summit, is a part they call the Maidens-Leap, of which they tell a strange romantic story, not worth the remembrance. There the rocks project over the lake, and the path was so rugged and narrow that the Highlanders were obliged, for their safety, to hold by the rocks and shrubs as they passed, with the prospect of death beneath them. (214-5)

Upon reaching a Scottish cavern, Burt again tinges his peregrination with images of his masculine status in which he does not only master the elements of nature but also travels in areas abundant with thieves:

> The name of Slock-Moach is interpreted by the natives, a den of hogs, having been, as they say it was formerly, a noted harbour for thieves; who, in numbers, lay in wait within that narrow and deep cavity, to commit their depredations upon cattle and passengers. I suppose this name was given to it when swine were held in abomination among the Highlanders. (216-7)

Discussing the masculine undertones of male travel discourse, Colley argues that

> More noteworthy than these British climbers' almost exclusive attention to gear, as well as to themselves, was their participation in the fantasy of their nation's superiority. When celebrating their mastery in mountaineering or touting their self-importance, these climbers eagerly appropriated the language of conquest and adventure. (50)

Given all the above, one is tempted to identify the real reason why Burt produced a travelogue at a time when there was political turmoil in the Highlands, that is, when Scotland had not fully succumbed to the English political agenda. Burt clearly refers to the need to further domesticate the Highlanders and force them to intermingle with the other subjects of the British Crown. At the same time, the author suggests a repopulation of the Highlands by more civilised ethnic groups, which reveals his desire to create a text that fosters the expansion and conquer theme commonly found in English travel literature on the peripheral world:

> These advantages, it was said, would invite inhabitants to settle there, not only from the Lowlands, but even from England, and make it the principal mart of the Highlands, by which means the natives would be drawn thither as to the centre; and by accustoming themselves to strangers, grow desirous of a more commodious way of living than their own, and be enabled by traffic to maintain it. And thus (it was said) they would be weaned from their barbarous customs. But surely this scheme was as wild as the Highlanders whom it was proposed to tame by it; yet it was entertained for some months with fondness. But anger blinds and deceives the judgment by the promised sweets of revenge, as avarice does by the pleasing thoughts of gain, though unlawful. And I think I may premise to what I am about to say, that successful revenge is wicked; but an impotent desire of it is not only wicked, but ridiculous. Perhaps you will say I moralize, and you do not yet see the application; but you will hardly believe that this utopian town had no other foundation than a pique against

two or three of the magistrates of Inverness, for whose transgression their town was to be humbled by this contrivance. (224)

The extirpation of the Scottish Highlanders and the repopulation of the areas with colonial settlers is not only confined to Burt's text, given that a great deal of travel narratives of the eighteenth and nineteenth-centuries also promoted the spread of the Anglo-Saxons to all the peripheries around the globe. It is also worth noticing that, during the early stages of the forging of British nationhood, the Anglo-Saxon blood, Protestantism, and hatred of the Celtic race constituted the key elements which English travellers addressed to construct a new identity (Young 51).

Despite the fact that Burt never departs from his original plan to ridicule and deconstruct every trait of Scottish identity and foster an image of Scotland as a barbaric zone, inhabited by cruel and primitive people, Burt's travelogue serves as a fine specimen of an early eighteenth-century text where Scotland was still viewed as a terra incognita by the average English reader and traveller. His anti-Highlander observations precede the Ossianic fervour that dominated later travelogues and should be seen in the light of the war events that surrounded Burt's text. What is more, Burt's text summarises the deterministic ideas often formulated by British travellers in their voyages to the North, at a time when Scandinavia and the other Nordic areas were not accessible to mass tourism.

CHAPTER TWO

ANNE GRANT

LETTERS FROM THE MOUNTAINS:
BEING THE REAL CORRESPONDENCE OF A LADY
BETWEEN THE YEARS 1773 AND 1807

One of the most pace-setting travel writers of this volume, the Scottish-born American writer Anne Mac Vicar Grant, was born in Glasgow in 1755 to the army officer Duncan Mac Vicar. In 1758 her family moved to America, after her father had left Scotland to participate in the Seven Years War (Grant 34). During her residence in America, Grant lived in Albany, New York, and the family was in close communion with the local Scottish Highlander community.

After the end of war, the family moved to Vermont, having purchased land in the New York province (William Upcott 27). However, in 1768 the family relocated to Fort-Augustus, where Grant married the Fort's chaplain, James Grant, a few years later (1779). Upon her return in Scotland, Grant became well-versed in the Gaelic language and also focused extensively on Scottish lore. During her lifetime, she produced collections of poems such as *Poems on Various Subjects* (1803). However, she achieved popularity with her travel narrative *Letters from the Mountains* (1806) which led to the publication of two subsequent volumes, a memoir (*Memoirs of an American Lady: with Sketches of Manners and Scenery in America as They Existed Previous to the Revolution)* (1808) and a book on Scottish lore and superstitions entitled *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland: To Which Are Added, Translations from the Gaelic; and Letters Connected with Those Formerly Published* (1811). In 1810 she moved to Stirling where she pursued her literary activities, publishing an additional book entitled *Eighteen Hundred and Thirteen: a Poem* (1814). Owing to her reputation as an acclaimed writer, Grant befriended Sir Walter Scott Thomas DeQuincey. She died in Edinburgh in 1838.

Regarding this chapter, I have selected Anne Grant's travelogue *Letters from the Mountains,* published in two different volumes between the years 1773 and 1807 because she was one of the first to address Scottish identity from a variety of angles, paving the way for the construction of a Scottish utopia at the threshold of the nineteenth century. Moreover, her dual capacity as an American-Scottish travel writer allowed her to adopt a comparative perspective while delving into the Scottish manners and mores. Consequently, a minute study of her travelogue suggests that "in both places, Grant had a peculiar position as simultaneously outsider and insider, both participant and observer" (Hagglund 87).

The success of her travel narrative stems precisely from her interplay between the American and Scottish conditions, considering the fact that

> Anne Grant's response to the Highland landscape and to the Highland people was coloured not only by her own identity as a Lowland-born Scot of Highland parentage but, perhaps even more significantly, by her early experience of another culture and people, as a young adolescent in the British colonies in Albany, New York. (Hagglund 87)

Despite the indisputable qualities of her writing as well as her unique narrative position, in the prefatory part of her travel account Grant points to the amateurish procedure of her constructing the travel account in question:

> Lest any of my readers should indulge the expectation of meeting, in the ensuing: pages, either ingenious fiction or amusing narrative, it is but candid to undeceive them. The simple and careless letters here offered to the public, carry in themselves the evidences of originality. They are genuine, but broken and interrupted sketches of a life spent in the most remote obscurity. Of the little interest such sketches might possess, much is lost by the necessity of withholding those parts which contained most of narrative and anecdote. Why letters should be published at all comprehending so little to excite interest or gratify curiosity, is a question that naturally suggests itself. It cannot be truly said that the gratification of the reader could form an adequate motive for their publication: and, from the nature of them, it is obvious that the unknown author could have no purpose of vanity to answer by it. (Vii-viii)

Drawing upon this passage, one can detect the writer's insecurity on her status as a woman travel writer, whose letters may be subject to the severe scrutiny of the male audience. The projection of a travel narrative as an amateurish work, which retains its originality as well as its advantage of eye-witness experiences is not only confined to Grant, given that most travel writers of her epoch tended to express feelings of

insecurity or humility in the introductory pages of their texts. This self-deprecatory attitude is entwined with the gendered conventions attached to the women travel writers of Grant's time, whose writings were often labelled as inaccurate or unprofessional. As explained by Hagglund, women writers often opted for the diary or epistolary form in travel literature, which retained a subjective tone:

> 'women have historically made use of diaries and letters, private and personal forms, to record their lives and opinions', these forms providing 'a convenient form of communication and an approved one for women even when writing about public matters'. (6)

Acknowledging the impact of gendered conventions on the assessment of her writings, Grant moves on to justify her undertaking by referring to the real cause of her decision to publish her letters, that is, the desire to convey a true picture of Scotland based on her own capacity as a native of the country described, permeated by native feeling:

> When the writer of these letters was impelled to submit them to the public eye, unknown, unpatronized, nameless, without partial review or favourable critic, or any prop visible or invisible, her prospect of succeeding was very faint and dubious. Her only hope, of even partial attention, was founded upon that love of truth, which, or the best moral purposes, is implanted in the human heart; that generous instinct, which lives in the unsophisticated mind, and which feels and acknowledges the language of nature and native feeling, wherever it is heard. (ix)

Strongly influenced by the late eighteenth-century travel canon, Grant moves on to explore the Scottish landscape in conjunction with the aesthetic strategies of her time, that is, an overemphasis on the notions of the sublime, the solitary travelling and the Arcadian view of the off the beaten track regions.

As regards the concept of the solitary traveller, this recurrent idea permeates Grant's narrative position, as can be observed in her eagerness to posit herself as a traveller who journeys in solitude, crossing mountains at a time when mountaineering is still regarded as a predominantly male activity:

> I think I see you smile, and hear you compare me to the fox in the fable; while from this solitude I rail at the lost pleasures of the dear town. I arrived here last night at eleven, after a tedious journey, in a very rainy day, through the Mona Lin or grey mountain, an endless moor, without any road, except a small foot-path, through which our guide conducted the horses with difficulty. The height of the mountain is prodigious. Crossing