

*Romantic Travellers
in the Highlands
1770–1830*

*Literary Impressions
of Five Scottish Writers*

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Abstract

This dissertation looks at five Scottish writers who toured the Highlands in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and recorded their impressions in prose and/or verse. An attempt is made to place them in either of the two established ways of approaching the Highlands between 1770 and 1830. The earlier one of these approaches, the ‘philosophical’ or Johnsonian tour, is predominantly learned or scientific, and its objects are the ‘savage’ inhabitants of the Highlands, their culture and ways of life. This is what preoccupies James Boswell, who toured the Highlands in 1773 with Dr. Johnson, the most influential of the ‘philosophical’ tourists. Boswell is, however, compared to his travel companion, more ‘Rousseauesque’ in his appreciation of the natural ways of life in the Highlands. He also, as a Scot, shows patriotic responses to scenes of historical importance, which can make him see the surrounding landscape in a picturesque or sublime light.

This points ahead to the travel mode which was to succeed the ‘philosophical’ one. The picturesque tour became fashionable in the 1780s, at a time when Robert Burns toured the Highlands, and it was mainly concerned with scenery and tended to see it in a painterly manner, as a composition of contrasting and preferably ‘rough’ parts. Burns is clearly a tourist in this mould, although not a superficial one, for his picturesque evaluations of places often go hand in hand with their patriotic-historical importance, and he also shows a pre-romantic and mystical understanding of nature.

James Hogg, travelling just after 1800, is also a picturesque tourist, but yet more romantic in his sublime and mystical responses to the Highlands. The two other 19th century tourists discussed, John Leyden and Sir Walter Scott, are picturesque travellers, though understandably with ‘philosophical’ interests, as both were learned antiquarians and humanists.

Introduction: Highland Tours

In the late 18th century Highland tours became an established way of experiencing wild and uncultivated landscape, along with what was thought to be the savage life of the inhabitants. In the period 1770–1830 an ever increasing number of tourists from England and the Continent came to Scotland in search of this unique experience, among them some important writers and artists whose works record their responses, such as Samuel Johnson, William and Dorothy Wordsworth, John Keats, J. M. W. Turner and Felix Mendelssohn. The travels of these foreigners or non-Scots have been the subject of many a book or article in recent times, from popular accounts like Maurice Lindsay's *The Eye is Delighted: Some Romantic Travellers in Scotland* (1971) to recent critical studies like Malcolm Andrews's *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760–1800* (1989).¹ But less has been written on the corresponding tours of important Scottish writers and artists and the impressions and ideas to be gathered from their extant accounts.² Yet the Highlands naturally play a more significant part in the works of Scottish authors than in those of any foreigner. These native writers were also the ones who presented the Highlands most effectively to the world: the period

¹ Among other general studies of interest are R. H. Coats, *Travellers' Tales of Scotland* (Paisley, 1913), D. Cooper, *Road to the Isles: Travellers in the Hebrides 1770–1914* (Glasgow, 1979, repr. 1990), and Holloway & Errington 1978 (see Works Consulted).

² Derek Cooper, in his aforementioned book, touches on some of the Scots who will be discussed in this dissertation, but does so without any attempt at analysing their tour approaches. Malcolm Andrews, in his above mentioned study on the picturesque, makes casual remarks on one of the Scottish travellers, Robert Burns, though without claiming him to be the picturesque traveller he will presently be seen to be. Sir Walter Scott and his Highland representations are brought up in the excellent and useful study by Holloway & Errington 1978 (*The Discovery of Scotland*).

may be said to begin with Tobias Smollett's influential description of the Loch Lomond area as an Arcadian refuge in *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) and to be brought to a close by Sir Walter Scott's novels, where the Highlands acquire a legendary aura yet also historical importance as a locality. Between these two there were other Scottish writers of importance who visited the Highlands and were profoundly affected by their experience. It is interesting to look at what may be called their literary responses and descriptions, whether they be written journals, letters or poems, composed during a tour or afterwards. The Scottish writers and Highland travellers who will be discussed in this dissertation are James Boswell, Robert Burns (each in a separate chapter), John Leyden, Sir Walter Scott and James Hogg (all in one chapter). The word 'Romantic' in the title is not used in the present critical-ideological sense (of these writers only Hogg can be claimed to be a true Romantic), more as an era indicator, and perhaps justified by the writers' own frequent use of it in describing the Highlands. But let us first look at the various ways in which other literary and artistic tourists, mainly English and French, approached and experienced this mountainous and wild country during our period.

* * *

Despite the fairly constant appeal of the Highlands during the period 1770–1830 (though they only became a large scale tourist attraction after 1810) there were clear changes in the interest and approach of the travellers. The favoured tour, say, around 1800 had perhaps the same route as a tour around 1780 (partly because they were dependent on the same main road through the Highlands) but the interest was different. In an excellent study of accounts by Frenchmen travelling in Scotland during our period, *Les*

Voyageurs français en Écosse 1770–1830 et leurs curiosités intellectuelles (1931), Margaret I. Bain identified two main approaches. The earlier one she called “le voyage philosophique” and the one that followed “le voyage pittoresque” (1931: 20–22, 54–5). Although the French picturesque tour of Scotland is quite belated in comparison with the corresponding British tour (beginning only after 1815 instead of towards 1790), mainly because of the interruption of Anglo-French relations during the French Wars, Bain’s division is also based on British tours and travel literature during this period and is therefore relevant to our study.

The philosophical or Johnsonian tour, as Bain also labelled it, was influenced by the account given by the famous Doctor who travelled with James Boswell through the Highlands and the Isles in 1773 and published two years later as *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*. Dr. Johnson was less interested in wild and uncultivated nature (which he did actually find revolting in general as we shall soon see) than in the simple and primitive life and culture he thought might still exist to some degree in the Highlands. Needless to say, this interest is characteristic of the Enlightenment, its best known example being Rousseau’s belief in the benefits of savage life, in the natural goodness of man. Johnson’s approach is though by no means tinged with Rousseauesque pre-Romanticism, but strictly philosophical in the old sense of being ‘learned’ or ‘scientific’: “The height of mountains philosophically considered” (Johnson 1985: 30) thus signifies the scientific way in which mountains are to be measured. This passage is also quite typical of his approach: he is perfectly clinical towards mountains as scientific objects and not at all prepared to let them impress him by their overwhelming size or shape (in Chapter One we will see how Johnson suppresses Boswell’s impressionable responses to the mountains on this occasion). Johnson’s account is always enlightened, rational and sceptical, especially towards such alleged relics of ancient

Highland culture as *The Poems of Ossian*, which had been published during the previous decade and had achieved sensational fame on the Continent.³ Johnson found no evidence, despite enquiries among the inhabitants, that these poems had ancient Gaelic origins, and he therefore considered himself justified in his opinion that the man who claimed to be their translator, James Macpherson, was in fact their ‘only begetter’. As for the overall conclusion of Johnson’s ‘field study’ of the supposedly primitive form of life still surviving in the Highlands, it was negative: “We came thither too late to see what we expected, a people of peculiar appearance, and a system of antiquated life” (Johnson 1985: 46). There were other travellers, some French for instance and accounted for in Bain’s book, who during the next decade or so went into Dr. Johnson’s footsteps on a similar tour through the Highlands, but soon the philosophical approach gave way to a new mode of perception and travelling, the picturesque tour.

Notwithstanding their debated origins, *The Poems of Ossian* had already made the Scottish Highlands attractive in the eyes of the world as a wild and romantic country, embodying the melancholy of a long-gone heroic age, a glory of which little remained except the sublime scenery, the mountains and lochs which seemed to impart the shapes of the past through their often misty appearance. This is what preoccupied the picturesque tour of Scotland, which became fashionable (in British circles) in the late 1780s: the ways in which the striking landscape affects man aesthetically and seems to be equally capable of arousing in him pleasant or unpleasant

³ These poems, despite influencing some of the English pre-Romantics and later poets such as Blake and Byron, generally got a cool reception in England and, in fact, became an issue in the North- vs. South-Briton debate that centred on Lord Bute, the all-influential Scot in the British Government and patron of James Macpherson, who was responsible for *The Poems of Ossian* (see Stafford 1988: 166 ff.). Dr. Johnson’s investigation into the origins of these poems was therefore of political, as well as scientific, importance.

thoughts and feelings by its very appearance. As the word implies, the picturesque had its origins in the visual arts, whose laws and ideas of artistic composition it applied to natural landscape. In the most extreme form of picturesque tourism, the aesthetic viewer travels around the countryside and tries to seek out prospects which gratify the eye and conform to the rules of art. The picturesque traveller is preoccupied with line, foreground, perspective, colour, form, light and darkness, with nature as landscape. This is, however, not entirely true of the greatest exponent of the Highland picturesque, William Gilpin, whose *Observations on the Highlands of Scotland* were published in 1789, but based on a tour made as early as in 1776 (Gilpin's 1782 book on the river Wye and South Wales is traditionally credited with having initiated the vogue for picturesque tourism in Britain). Although Gilpin sometimes goes to extremes in his picturesque speculations (he can for instance try to decide whether a certain species or a flock of Scottish animals has more picturesque potential than another), he is basically very appreciative of nature as it is. And he manages to argue convincingly in aesthetic terms for the 'alternative beauty' of the wild and mountainous Highlands, whose beauty was not of the conventional kind that was associated with fertility, productivity and general usefulness of the land in question. Gilpin criticises Dr. Johnson strongly for giving a picture of Scottish landscape "with all it's defects; but none of it's beauties" (1973: II, 119). It may not excel in prettiness, but Gilpin points out that it has a much grander scenery than is, for instance, to be found in England. He is against uniformity and praises natural roughness (roughness is a key factor in the theoretical picturesque), and says that "an eye, like Dr. Johnson's, which is accustomed to see the beauties of landscape *only in flowery pastures, and waving harvests*, cannot be attracted by the great, and sublime in nature" (1973: II, 120). Of the Scottish views he says: "At present, unadorned grandeur is their

characteristic; and the production of *sublime ideas*, the effect. — Yet such views are by no means void of the picturesque” (1973: II, 122). Gilpin is here and elsewhere clearly influenced by Edmund Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757). Burke had distinguished the Sublime from the more conventionally Beautiful as an impressive and awe-inspiring experience, arising from objects of infinity, vastness, power, magnificence and obscurity, even “*general privations*” such as “*Vacuity, Darkness, Solitude and Silence*” (1958: 71). The Sublime was an aesthetic effect that could involve feelings of fear and inferiority simultaneously with those of joy and exultation: a horrid cataract could produce the effect, a boundless ocean, a huge mountain, an overcast sky, especially if the viewer was alone amidst those scenes. For Gilpin the picturesque is a third category, an aesthetic effect brought about chiefly by what he calls variety and roughness, as opposed to the smoothness which he saw as being the main source for the Beautiful. But in practice these categories are not as distinct as in theory. They supplement each other, and to a certain degree Burke’s Sublime can be said to be incorporated into the picturesque. In Gilpin’s view Scotland is very picturesque in parts, especially the Highlands, but they also provide its greatest asset: sublime scenery.

Perhaps the practical difference between the philosophical and the picturesque approach to the Highlands themselves is best defined by an example. Dr. Johnson saw Loch Lomond in 1773 and this was his response:

Had *Loch Lomond* been in a happier climate, it would have been the boast of wealth and vanity to own one of the little spots which it incloses, and to have employed upon it all the arts of embellishment. But as it is, the islets, which court the gazer at a distance, disgust him at his approach, when he finds, instead of

soft lawns and shady thickets, nothing more than uncultivated ruggedness (1985: 133).

Thirty-odd years later Dorothy Wordsworth, along with her brother William and their friend Coleridge, visited the loch and was overwhelmed by its natural beauty: “we were stopped by a sudden burst of prospect, so singular and beautiful that it was like a flash of images from another world” (de Selincourt 1941: I, 251 ff.). It is a long and interesting description, characterised by such typically picturesque expressions of Highland scenery as “without beginning and without end” (i.e. the islands on the lake), “sunny mists”, “in gloom”, “the lake was lost”, “the islands lost in the lake”, “dark shadows under rainy clouds”, “the land seemed endless”, “an outlandish scene”, “stormy promontories”, “solitary hut”, “unsheltered and desolate” (i.e. the hut), “a small ruin”, “the ghostly image of Dumbarton Castle”; and Dorothy sums up by saying the scene “was throughout magical and enchanting — a new world in its great permanent outline and composition”. The last words underline the visual emphasis of the picturesque and its appreciation of landscape as an artistic composition by Nature itself. Where Johnson asks for the embellishment of nature and its cultivation (and subjugation) by man, Dorothy celebrates the natural state as it is and is prepared to let it — through the picturesque, as an aesthetic *sight* — influence her mind and feelings:

The whole was indeed a strange mixture of soothing and restless images, of images inviting to rest, and others hurrying the fancy away into an activity still more pleasing than repose; yet, intricate and homeless, that is, without lasting abiding-place for the mind, as the prospect was, there was no perplexity; we had still a guide to lead us forward (1941: I, 253).

This of course recalls Burke's Sublime, the disturbing yet pleasing effect achieved by scenes of darkness, solitude, vastness, infinity and other such attributes which are in abundance in the descriptive passage above and impress the viewer; again, the picturesque and the Sublime turn out to be closely connected.

These, then, are the two established ways to approach and experience the Highlands in the late 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. The philosophical approach is predominantly rational, even scientific, and is interested in Man and his culture, whereas the picturesque approach tends towards the sensitive, even artistic, and seems to be less interested in Man than in Nature or external landscape. Although Dorothy Wordsworth is deeply interested in people and the ways of life — and is therefore certainly not a 'picturesque traveller' in the sense of being a narrow prospect-hunter (neither was Gilpin, pioneer of the picturesque!) — she shares the common picturesque lack of much sense or enthusiasm for history. James Reed has compared her in this respect to Sir Walter Scott: "Unlike Scott, she rarely sees or feels history; she seems only mildly aware of the ambience of the past; castles, ruined and preferably unrestored, form an interesting part of the view, but do little to rouse her to extended comment" (1980: 19). Although Reed does not consider Dorothy Wordsworth to be a picturesque tourist in the narrow sense (Andrews 1989: 236 maintains that her Scotland journey "begins as a routine tour in search of the Picturesque" but that she gradually becomes disillusioned with this limited mode of perception), this is if anything a picturesque attitude. Not that the picturesque mode of perception necessarily excluded a sense of history. Gilpin had often accompanied his picturesque descriptions of the Highlands with bits and pieces of local — even national — history, presumably to lend more colour and character to the scenery.

But it needed Scott to give the picturesque a distinctively historical dimension, fully to integrate history and landscape or locality.

Not only did Scott bring historical subjects to narrative poetry and, more importantly, to novel writing, but also an original way of describing character and a whole historical era in an interaction with landscape and locality. In his first novel, *Waverley* (1814), he has the hero travel through changing landscapes and localities, which each time place him in a new cultural-sociological context as he moves from the ‘tame’ landscape of Hanoverian England to the wild scenery of the Highlands, which embodies the ‘wild’ and romantic ways of life which tempt him there. The landscape — not only symbolically, but also in much more concrete terms — thus plays a part in turning his romantic mind away from Hanoverian duties towards a more adventurous life of feudal loyalties and royalist sympathies. But Scott had earlier on, in one of his popular narrative poems, introduced the Highlands through more purely picturesque descriptions — within a historical context, though, and made in such an impressive way that “After the publication of *The Lady of the Lake* in 1810, it became impossible for anyone to see Scotland again as Dorothy and William saw it” (Reed 1980: 18). With this poem, which is set around Loch Katrine in the reign of James V, the Highlands really became the enormous tourist attraction they still are. Scott opened up, so to speak, the Highland way of life to the world, the clans, the costumes, the manners, the feuds, the loyalties, the bagpipes, and the rest, all within the framework of the local landscape, rendered in striking picturesque descriptions. The Highlands weren’t simply scenery any more, but *scenes* of a known, if somewhat fabricated, history. Perhaps *legend* is a more accurate word when defining Scott’s invention and popularisation of the national past, legend in the sense of ‘romanticised history’. In any case, the landscape had now

acquired a distinct historical-legendary dimension which it did not have before.

Another important factor in Scott's use of landscape is his linking it with national sentiment, what we usually call patriotism (love for one's native land). In his first original composition, *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), this is already evident in the famous apostrophe to Caledonia (Canto Sixth), which is "no abstract national patriotism" (Reed 1980: 39), but channelled through the land itself in picturesque terms (with the familiar emphasis on roughness):

O Caledonia, stern and wild,
Meet nurse for a poetic child!
Land of brown heath and shaggy wood,
Land of the mountain and the flood,
Land of my sires! what mortal hand
Can e'er untie the filial band,
That knits me to thy rugged strand!

Another famous example of this 'Scottish' fusion of the picturesque and the patriotic, of place and history, is Lord Byron's "Lachin Y Gair" (1807).⁴ This Jacobite poem associates the high mountain of "dark Loch na Garr" with the proud but melancholy destiny of the Highlanders who had lost their lives fighting for independence against the English, and contrasts Scotland's "wild and majestic" aspects (Byron uses the words "sublime, and picturesque" in his note to the poem) with the "tame and domestic" appearance of Hanoverian England. The various ways in which these poets, primarily Scott of course (Byron may well be under his influence here), make us feel history and national identity through landscape, are

⁴ Lord Byron, who was only half Scottish by birth but spent his youth in Aberdeenshire, made much of his Highland background in his first book of poems, *Hours of Idleness*, in which "Lachin Y Gair" appeared (see Byron 1980–91).

interesting in view of recent studies of the picturesque tour and its relation to history. Alan Liu has written a book, *Wordsworth: The Sense of History* (1989), in which he suggests that in such a tour history may not in fact be a “supplemental delight or ornamental interest” to the scenery (1989: 12). The real antithesis, he suggests, may not be between the self (‘I’) in the foreground and nature, which occupies the middle ground in his view, but “between background historical convention and foreground self” (1989: 11). Even in nature man cannot cease to be a historical being, Liu seems to be saying — the scenery in front of him is only a mediation between him and history. Although Liu is here particularly alluding to contemporary history, the French Revolution in Wordsworth’s case, it is important to have this in mind when considering the responses to scenery we will discuss later on. Be it contemporary or past history — present through ‘historical places’ or features in the landscape such as ruins — it is bound to influence even the most picturesque of travellers. It is an influence that will often pronounce itself through silences and even denials, such as in the witty but unconvincing assertion the table-talking Coleridge is recorded to have made on August 4, 1833, about his immunity to the sense of history of even places where great or important events had happened:

Dear Sir Walter Scott and myself were exact, but harmonious, opposites in this; — that every old ruin, hill, river, or tree called up in his mind a host of historical or biographical associations, — just as a bright pan of brass, when beaten, is said to attract the swarming bees; — whereas, for myself, notwithstanding Dr. Johnson, I believe I should walk over the plain of Marathon without taking more interest in it than in any other plain of similar features (Coleridge 1990: 246).

This is of course an allusion to what Dr. Johnson had said in his *Journey*: “That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force

upon the plain of *Marathon*, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of *Iona!*” (1985: 124). Even the good Doctor, who had serious reservations about natural landscape, did not deny that it could have an impressive effect on man through historical associations. And Coleridge, even if he is not as interested as Scott in ‘battles long ago’, simply cannot be honest about places like the plain of Marathon not having a historical appeal to him, especially when we consider that the *contemporary* struggle for Greek independence was still fresh in everybody’s mind in 1833 (Lord Byron had lost his life in it in 1824). The truth is that history speaks to us through landscape and locality and often affects the way in which we perceive the scenery.

In the following chapters we will look at the Highland impressions of the five Scottish writers already mentioned, James Boswell, Robert Burns, John Leyden, Sir Walter Scott and James Hogg. On the one hand we will try to decide whether their accounts fall into the ‘foreign’ categories of the philosophical and the picturesque tour. We will use the term ‘picturesque’ as it has been used in recent scholarly studies on tour literature (cf. Andrews 1989 and Liu 1989), covering by it related sublime and poetic responses to the appearance and composition of scenery. On the other hand we will try to see whether these travel accounts anticipate or endorse (in Scott’s case) what got to be known as the definitely ‘Scottish’ way of seeing the Highlands, the dialectics of landscape and history, of the picturesque and the patriotic, to which Scott gave currency in the second decade of the 19th century. Then we will draw conclusions from our tour of the Highland journals.

Chapter One: James Boswell

The Philosophical Mould

James Boswell kept a journal during his Highland tour with Dr. Johnson in 1773, the greater part of it being written on a day-to-day basis, the rest having to be filled in afterwards as Boswell had run out of writing-paper while still on tour. It was only after the death of his revered travel companion eleven years later that Boswell thought it fitting to have his diary printed. It was published in 1785, or ten years after the issue of the Doctor's account, as the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D., 1773*. This printed version did, however, differ in many respects from the written one, which is still extant in manuscript. Boswell revised and prepared his manuscript for publication under the supervision of a disciplined scholar by the name of Edmond Malone. Boswell found himself, for instance, forced to censor his personal reflections, many of his descriptive passages and in general all the frank and informal things which make the manuscript diary — just as his earlier *London Journal* — such an interesting read. As F. A. Pottle says in the Preface to his edition of Boswell's manuscript, "every sentence was scanned for informal syntax and inelegant phraseology" (Pottle 1963: xxi). He rightly points out that the manuscript version "is certainly more intimate and more detailed than the book, and to modern taste will seem fresher and more picturesque" (1963: xi). These picturesque and informal qualities accorded ill with 18th century conventions of formality, decorum, lettered and 'civilised' presentation etc. (even after the Malone-guided and radical revision of the manuscript

journal, Boswell was criticised and ridiculed in print by his contemporaries for the self-indulgence and naivety he was thought to betray in parts of his published *Tour*, cf. Pottle 1963: 223, note 1). Before it could be made public, Boswell's diary had therefore to be recast, under the firm guidance of a learned and scholarly man, in what we could call the Augustan-philosophical mould.⁵

The preferences of the original manuscript *Tour* are, though, by no means predominantly picturesque. Although its subject is not solely the usual philosophical tour subject of (savage) Man and his culture, it defines itself in relation to that very tradition by being preoccupied with what we can call the archetype of the 'philosophical' man. Dr. Johnson has a main object, which is the Highlanders and their manners; Boswell has a main subject, which is Dr. Johnson. One carries out a critical research of the supposedly savage life of the Highlands; the other gives a sympathetic description of the 'philosophical' man among supposed savages. But Boswell is of course also writing about the Highlands and the people living there, and perhaps this twofold subject is best defined by Boswell's maxim, that "the great thing is to bring objects together" (Pottle 1963: 331). His purpose in getting Dr. Johnson to come to Scotland is not only to have him investigate it philosophically, but to 'bring together' the great man and his (i.e. Boswell's) native country, so to speak. This is what Boswell says on seeing Dr. Johnson in Iona (we will discuss that scene in more detail later on), but it could also stand "as a general summary of his aims and methods" (Turnbull 1987: 171). In his 'bringing together', Boswell is combining and comparing the two great and contrasting factors of his life,

⁵ This included the generalising, rationalising and de-personalising of the original journal: "Malone, more than Boswell, subscribed to the Eighteenth Century view, best expressed by Sir Joshua Reynolds, that 'the beauty of art consists in being able to get above all singular forms, local customs, particularities, and details of every kind'" (Pottle 1963: 9, note 11).

factors which are so playfully alive in his *London Journal* and which include the elements English vs. Scottish, Father vs. Son (Dr. Johnson was clearly a father-figure to the father-ridden Boswell), Civilised vs. Wild etc. (see Turnbull 1987 for an interesting discussion of these and other elements of personal identity and national history in Boswell's biographies). This is what seems to lie behind many cryptic but charged remarks in the *Tour* such as this:

To see Mr. Samuel Johnson lying in Prince Charles's bed, in the Isle of Skye, in the house of Miss Flora Macdonald, struck me with such a group of ideas as it is not easy for words to describe as the mind perceives them (1963: 160).

Here the civilised, English father-figure of Dr. Johnson is at peace in the wild bed of Scottish nationalism: it is a 'Union' (as Gordon Turnbull would term it, alluding to the Union of Scotland and England in 1707) of many contrasting factors in Boswell's troubled life. His *Tour* has a strong if somewhat latent autobiographical element, which was suppressed in the published version, and this gives the reconstituted manuscript version an added interest. If Dr. Johnson is the declared subject of the *Tour*, it is also an account of Boswell himself and his attitudes to his native Scotland. In this respect the famous Englishman is something of a catalysator, bringing about an interaction between the Scot and his country. But again, in the printed *Tour*, Boswell had to suppress the 'Scottish' elements of his manuscript diary, especially his pro-patriotic expressions and Jacobite sympathies, which we will soon return to.

Boswell says the purpose of their Hebrides tour is to see if there is in fact to be found, as older travel accounts had suggested, "a system of life almost totally different from what we had been accustomed to see; and to find simplicity and wildness, and all the circumstances of remote time or

place” (1963: 3). This is identical with what Dr. Johnson alludes to as their travel aim, but Boswell’s interest in the Highland way of life is, though, somewhat closer to a Rousseauesque appreciation of Natural Man than the good Doctor’s ever sceptical approach.⁶ Boswell is, for instance, quite taken by the innocent simplicity and happiness of the Macleod family on the island of Raasay. It seems to him that they live in an earthly paradise, in an order of life that is feudal but yet close to being natural. Some of the signs he gives of their happiness are amusingly Boswellian:

Not one of the family ever had the toothache. They dance every night all the year round. There seemed to be no jealousy, no discontent among them. I asked Miss Flora, “Why, you have no idea then of the unhappiness of life that we hear so much of?” “No,” said she. . . . I must set him [Dr. Johnson] to inquire if evil has place in Raasay. They can never have the sufferings of savages by being in want of food, for they have plenty. And they have not the uneasiness which springs from refined life (1963: 153).

It is as if Boswell is here prepared to challenge the pro-civilised Dr. Johnson with this Rousseauesque example of the goodness of simple and natural life, when he talks of setting him “to inquire if evil has place in

⁶ Boswell was a great admirer of Rousseau (Dr. Johnson loathed him), whom he had visited in Switzerland in 1764 and had interesting discussions with him. He recorded the following exchange between them: “Rousseau. ‘Yes, you will find great souls in Spain.’ Boswell. ‘And in the mountains of Scotland. But since our cursed Union, ah —’ Rousseau. ‘You undid yourselves’” (Pottle 1953: 218; the conversation was originally conducted in French). It is interesting that Boswell already in 1764 thinks of the Highlands in terms of Rousseau’s idea of ‘great souls’, an impression he seems to have got confirmed during his 1773 tour, especially in the ‘Rousseauesque’ island of Raasay. It is also of interest that Boswell prepares himself for the 1764 meeting with the ‘wild philosopher’ by strolling “in a beautiful wild valley surrounded by immense mountains, some covered with frowning rocks, others with clustering pines, and others with glittering snow. The fresh, healthful air and the romantic prospect around me gave me a vigorous and solemn tone” (1953: 215). Boswell’s association of wild mountains and the spirit of Rousseau can also be felt in the later Highland tour.

Raasay”. Boswell is clearly very fond of the feudal order of things, and he argues against Johnson on this issue: “I said I believed mankind were happier in the ancient feudal state of subordination” (1963: 77). He even regrets he is not “head of a clan” (1963: 103).⁷ Accordingly, Boswell is a royalist in political views and has warm feelings for Prince Charles Edward who had led the 1745 uprising and tried to regain the throne on behalf of the Stuarts. In the printed version Boswell had, however, to check the Jacobite sympathies which he expressed so ardently in the manuscript version, where he had admitted his strong liking for the Jacobite cause in a very candid statement (1963: 162–3; cf. Pottle’s note no. 6). Although Dr. Johnson was something of a Jacobite sympathiser himself, he did not have Boswell’s Scottish pride in the Stuart lineage nor the nationalistic sentiments invited by the venture of the Highland army against the predominantly English forces in ’45. It is interesting to see how these historical-patriotic feelings affect Boswell’s experience of the landscape and scenery in the Highlands.

The Genius Loci

Boswell is thoroughly ‘philosophical’ in the sense that he does not consider landscape a serious subject, so to speak, although spectacular places can have an interest for him as a curiosity.⁸ He quotes Dr. Johnson on this point:

⁷ Boswell was never to become ‘head of a clan’, but he knew he was to become ‘laird of Auchinleck’ after his father’s death, and this must have enhanced his “high notions of male succession” (1963: 163) and his liking for the old feudal values.

⁸ In the 19th century, by contrast, writers like John Ruskin would actually fill entire volumes with serious considerations of landscape. In his *Modern Painters* (1843–60), Ruskin was to analyse the presentation of Highland scenery, not only in painting but also in literary works like Scott’s narrative poems (see Holloway & Errington 1978, especially the chapter ‘Truth of Foreground’).

He always said that he was not come to Scotland to see fine places, of which there were enough in England, but wild objects — mountains, waterfalls, peculiar manners: in short, things which he had not seen before. I have a notion that he at no time has had much taste for rural beauties. I have very little (Pottle 1963: 81).

Boswell has some very interesting things to say upon their arrival on Iona or Icolmkill. This small island, just off the southwestern tip of Mull, was of course famous for its importance in the history of religion, especially for being the place from which the Irish (Scot) St. Columba began to convert the inhabitants of what is now Scotland to Christianity. The visit to Iona was intended to be something of a glorious finale in the island-hopping of Boswell and Dr. Johnson. This is interesting, because, despite what is said of “wild objects” above, the travellers clearly chose spots where the forces of religion and civilisation had established a toehold in the wilderness; the soft, low-lying Iona is the “venerable place” which is preferred to the sublime ‘emptiness’ of, say, Skye:

As we were landing, I said to Mr. Johnson, “Well, I am glad we are now at last at this venerable place, which I have so long thought that you and I should visit. I could have gone and seen it by myself. But you would not have been with me; and the great thing is to bring objects together.” “It is so,” said he, with a more than ordinary kind complacency. Indeed, the seeing of Mr. Samuel Johnson at Icolmkill was what I had often imaged as a very venerable scene. A landscape or view of any kind is defective, in my opinion, without some human figures to give it animation. What an addition was it to Icolmkill to have the Rambler upon the spot! (Pottle 1963: 330–31).

Here we have the philosophical-Augustan view *par excellence*. There has to be a man in the landscape, scenery needs the human element for

animation.⁹ This is of course a perfectly sound argument in picturesque terms, as everybody knows who has photographed a scene that looked picturesque but turned out to be an uninteresting snapshot because there were no “human figures to give it animation”. But there is much more here. Boswell’s insistence on human presence in landscape is characteristic of both his Augustan humanism and the dramatic nature of his *Tour*, Dr. Johnson of course being the polemical main character of the drama. The human factor in landscape finally reminds us of the presence of history in nature, to which we will soon return. But if Boswell cannot take landscape seriously as a subject, at least not *per se*, he nevertheless has latent leanings towards the picturesque and the sublime. The literal-minded Dr. Johnson is, however, quick in ridiculing every such imaginative and impressive appreciation of nature. The exceeding sobriety of his philosophical approach, as opposed to Boswell’s more picturesque and sublime tendencies, articulates itself amusingly as the companions pass through Glen Shiel, with high mountains on each side:

Mr. Johnson owned he was now in a scene of as wild nature as he could see. But he corrected me sometimes in my observations. “There,” said I, “is a mountain like a cone.” “No, sir,” said he. “It would be called so in a book; and when a man comes to look at it, he sees ’tis not so. It is indeed pointed at the top. But one side of it is much longer than the other.” Another mountain I called immense. “No,” said he, “but ’tis a considerable protuberance” (1963: 107).

⁹ John Barrell, in his book *The Dark Side of the Landscape: The Rural Poor in English Painting 1730–1840*, describes how a contemporary painter “could get forty guineas for a full-length landscape without figures, but twice that amount for a peopled landscape of similar size. His customers, clearly, looked *at* the subjects in eighteenth-century landscapes, as it has now become the custom to look *through* them” (1980: 17).

The latinate diction in the concluding remark bespeaks an almost papal learnedness and authority, and the rather easily influenced Boswell is only too happy to have himself ‘corrected’ in his imaginative deviations (although one can’t rule out that there is an element of irony here on Boswell’s part). His sublime or picturesque responses to the Highlands are indeed very few in his *Tour*. But those that are there are very interesting, and they show how subjective these phenomena essentially are, that they are, in fact, as much a product of the imagination as the eye.¹⁰ When the travel companions are, for instance, sailing towards the island of Mull, the wind starts blowing and gets ever stronger and the sea gets very rough. Boswell, who becomes very frightened, then looks at the “prodigious sea with immense billows coming” and suddenly feels there is “something grandly horrible in the sight” (1963: 249). The sea-scenery becomes, in other words, a sublime sight through the danger it presents to him. But personal dangers are not the only subjective trigger for the sublime effect of scenery. The awareness of a historical association of a place, especially if it has been a scene of a legendary incident, an event of romanticised history, can open Boswell’s eyes for its sublime and picturesque qualities. When sailing past the Isle of Muck he is reminded that the Pretender landed there when on his way to Scotland to reclaim the crown in ’45. This awareness of the scenery as a place of patriotic importance gives rise to one of the rare descriptions of sublime landscape by Boswell:

On the same quarter I saw Loch Moidart, into which the Prince entered on his first arrival, and within which is a lesser loch called Lochninua, where the Prince actually landed. The hills around, or rather mountains, are black and wild in an uncommon degree. I gazed upon them with much feeling. There was a rude

¹⁰ Or, to quote well-known lines from Coleridge’s “Dejection: An Ode” (stanza IV): “O Lady! we receive but what we give, / And in our life alone does Nature live: / Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!”.

grandeur that seemed like a consciousness of the royal enterprise, and a solemn dreariness as if a melancholy remembrance of its events had remained (1963: 247).

Here we encounter what is so characteristic of the attitude towards Highland scenery, at least ever since *The Poems of Ossian* were published: it is in a sense a legendary-literary landscape. The scenery is, to be sure, often striking in itself, be it rocky islands, firths, lochs, glens or mountains. But its significance and impressiveness are greatly enhanced, it seems, if it has some literary or legendary (i.e. romanticised history) associations. The viewer's perception of its character and appearance is, as it were, affected by the *genius loci*, the 'spirit' of the place. The responses of Scottish writers to the scenery of their native country are more interesting as far as this is concerned than are the corresponding responses of non-Scots travelling in Scotland. There is always the added interest of patriotic sentiments and often a greater awareness of the relevance of a place to the history of the nation. This interaction of national history and place, of landscape and legend, isn't perhaps fully realised until the arch-Scot (or, as some might say, the *arch* Scot), Sir Walter, comes along and manages to connect the picturesque and the patriotic in an impressive way. But Boswell, despite being shaped in the philosophical mould and therefore not prepared to lend much weight to landscape, shows that even for an Augustan Scot the Highland scenery could achieve sublime and visually arresting qualities simply by having been the scene of a patriotic incident. Because the exiled Prince Charles had first landed on a certain island in his attempt to regain the throne and rekindle the glory of feudal Scotland, as Boswell saw it, this certain island had a significant character written all over its face.

To sum up, then, Boswell is a tourist largely in the philosophical mould. He is preoccupied with Man and his culture, his subject in fact

being the field-studying philosophical man himself, Dr. Johnson. He is, however, capable of appreciating natural scenery and differs in this from his more purely philosophical subject and fellow traveller. He is also more inclined to a Rousseauesque appraisal of Natural Man, and this along with his feudal preferences make him recognise something of a paradise on earth in the patriarchal simplicity of the Highland society and culture. As a Scot he has, in contrast to his English travel companion, patriotic sentiments which the Scottish Highlands arouse in him. This is particularly true of the locations in which events of the Jacobite uprising of 1745 took place. For the royalist Boswell, these places become a sublime and striking scenery through their historical associations. This dialectical understanding of landscape and history, of the picturesque and the patriotic, points ahead to such Scottish travellers as Robert Burns, who toured the Highlands in 1787, or two years after Boswell published his journal. By then the philosophical journey had begun to give way to a more picturesque kind of tour.

Chapter Two: Robert Burns

Highland Anger

Robert Burns toured the Highlands twice, and made both tours in the same year, 1787, the year of the Edinburgh edition of his poems. About the first one very little is known. Burns kept no diary during this tour and his letters disclose very little about it. What they indicate, however, is that this was a business trip around the West Highlands in the early summer of '87. The business was, judging from the famous autobiographical letter Burns wrote to Dr. John Moore, to collect subscriptions that were still due to him for his published poems (Ferguson 1985: I, 133). This was apparently not a very pleasant trip for Burns, rambling lonely on his horse through the wild and rough country, trying to collect his money. His few extant comments regarding the land and its inhabitants are unsympathetic. In a letter to Robert Ainslie, which is just about the only documentation that we have of the first part of his tour, Burns says: "I write you this on my tour through a country where savage streams tumble over savage mountains, thinly overspread with savage flocks, which starvingly support as savage inhabitants" (Ferguson 1985: I, 124). In a tavern in Inveraray he wrote epigrams which are equally unsympathetic towards the subject (Kinsley, no. 159):

There's naething here but Highland pride,
And Highland scab and hunger;
If Providence has sent me here,
'Twas surely in an anger.

In the only letter which says anything about the rest of the tour, Burns gives a picaresque account of his drunken (and hostile) horse-racing with a Highlander on the banks of Loch Lomond (Ferguson 1985: I, 125, 128). We, therefore, hardly hear from the poet on this tour without his deploring the land and its inhabitants. Burns's tone and attitude towards the Highlands was to change dramatically when he returned to them later this summer. But that was a tour he went on willingly, not a financial errand he had to undertake.

'Les Environs Picturesque'

Burns's second tour, to the Central Highlands in late summer 1787, was of an altogether different kind. It is also better recorded, for now he kept a journal of the tour. This time he was on a pleasure trip, where he enjoyed the gentlemanly conveyance of a chaise and was accompanied throughout by a friend. His companion and, in fact, initiator of the tour was William Nicol, a somewhat disreputable and irascible High school master from Edinburgh. His impatience made the journey more hasty than Burns would probably have wanted, and the journal suffered presumably also because of this haste, in brevity as in lack of depth. Burns extended some of the journal entries afterwards, and these additions are printed in square brackets in Raymond Lamont Brown's edition of the journal (1973: 16–24). Despite the haste of the journey, Burns managed to see much of the Central Highlands, and went all the way to Loch Ness in the north and back to Edinburgh by the East Coast.

Burns's journal is quite short, consisting rather of staccato jottings than a continuous narration. It is, however, supplemented by quite a few descriptive tour poems by him, which he often refers to in his journal, e.g. "Taymouth — described in rhyme" or "Aberfeldy — described in rhyme" (Lamont Brown 1973: 19). Although he does not quote these poetic

descriptions in full in his journal, it is clear he intends them to act for the corresponding journal descriptions he leaves out. We will give due weight to these poems in the following discussion of Burns's tour. Some of his letters concerning the tour are furthermore of help in filling out his journal.

The journal is, however, a very significant and noteworthy document in its own right, and it unequivocally spells out the real nature of Burns's tour. Where the journal entries become more than mere place-names, they seldom fail to grow into such picturesque comments as "charmingly rural, retired situation" (Lamont Brown 1973: 17), "the most charming little prospects" (1973: 18), "fine prospect" (1973: 19), "*les environs* picturesque" (1973: 20), "a grandeur effect at first glance" (1973: 21), and so on. As a farmer he of course makes occasional agricultural references, but the preferences of the tour are clearly picturesque, as his tour poems show beyond doubt. It seems that critics have been slow in acknowledging this picturesque preponderance. Perhaps they feel that the picturesque Burns of the Highland tour is not the 'real' Burns they know, or that this fashionable way of seeing nature is 'shallow' and unbecoming for the 'heaven-taught ploughman', or that it is somehow foreign to his 'homegrown' rural genius. "He was interested in human nature, not in scenery", says Franklyn B. Snyder of the Highland tours (1968: 253), and Donald A. Low, equally unconvincingly, maintains that Burns, as a journalist, "jots down brief notes on the appearance of crops — rather than of landscapes" (1986: 20). Even Raymond Lamont Brown, when discussing Burns's second Highland tour, talks of "his forced cultivation of the upper-class cult for the picturesque" (1973: 63). Who was forcing Burns? He simply had a strong liking for the picturesque qualities of landscape, he was delighted and stimulated by striking scenery, just as a companion of his witnessed during the Highland tour:

I had often, like others, experienced the pleasures which arise from the sublime or elegant landscape, but I never saw those feelings so intense as in Burns. When we reached a rustic hut on the river Tilt, where it is overhung by a woody precipice, from which there is a noble waterfall, he threw himself on the heathy seat, and gave himself up to a tender, abstracted, and voluptuous enthusiasm of imagination (R. Chambers (ed.), *The Life and Works of Robert Burns* (1856), II, 120 [quoted by Andrews 1989: 219]).

The picturesque preferences of Burns's second tour are nowhere more pronounced than in "The Humble Petition of Bruar Water to the Noble Duke of Athole" (Kinsley, no. 172). This is a poem Burns composed after being entertained as an honoured guest at Blair Atholl and seeing the spectacular Bruar Falls nearby. In his note to the poem, Burns wrote: "Bruar Falls, in Athole, are exceedingly picturesque and beautiful; but their effect is much impaired by the want of trees and shrubs". Burns almost exceeds Gilpin himself here in the particularity of the picturesque embellishment he is asking for through his mouthpiece, the Bruar Water. Thus in the tenth stanza:

Let lofty firs, and ashes cool,
 My lowly banks o'erspread,
 And view, deep-bending in the pool,
 Their shadows' wat'ry bed:
 Let fragrant birks, in woodbines drest,
 My craggy cliffs adorn;
 And, for the little songster's nest,
 The close embowering thorn.

Here everything is designed so as to enhance the picturesque effect, the arresting visual composition of a rural scene. Burns, in other words, wants to apply the art of embellishment to improve nature, wants to 'dress it up' a

little.¹¹ This is, however, not to say that the poet is just a superficial picturesque tourist, but rather to emphasise that his preferences during this tour *are* picturesque, albeit not of the superficial kind of that mode of perception and touring.

Earlier on this tour Burns had come to Stirling where he had seen the old palace of the Scottish royalty, now ruined (“converted into barracks” according to Gilpin 1973: I, 82). The poet had a deeper awareness of the historical importance of such arch-picturesque delights as ruins in a landscape than had the ordinary tourist travelling through the Scottish countryside. In this case, his nationalistic-Jacobite feelings are instantly aroused “on seeing the Royal Palace in ruins”, as Burns explains in a note to his “Lines on Stirling” (Kinsley, no. 166). His reactions in the poem to the view of the ruined palace are indeed so strong, so outspokenly hostile towards the “outlandish” (Hanoverian) “idiot race” that now fills the throne of the old Stuarts, that the poet, then seeking a position in the Excise service, had later to do “a lot of explaining” (Daiches 1975: 139). For Burns, the ruins of Scotland weren’t only a picturesque nicety, they were also a living reminder of the national history, of the ruined glory of the past, and could evoke strong Jacobite or patriotic sentiments in him. Sometimes, however, as when seeing the Palace of Linlithgow, also an old seat of the Scottish kings and ruined by Hanoverian forces in 1746, Burns was only moved to make purely picturesque remarks in his journal: “the old royal palace a tolerably fine, but melancholy, ruin — sweetly situated on a small elevation by the brink of a Loch” (Lamont Brown 1973: 17). His was predominantly a picturesque tour, and only occasionally did the views and scenes encountered give rise to historical comment or

¹¹ One could, perhaps, compare Pope’s advice “To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington”: “In all, let Nature never be forgot. / But treat the goddess like a modest fair, / Nor overdress, nor leave her wholly bare; / Let not each beauty everywhere be spied, / Where half the skill is decently to hide” (Price 1973: 353).

nationalistic response by him. On the other hand, one can sometimes feel his historical evaluation behind laconic comments on landscape. On seeing the Pass of Killiecrankie, where James VII's general, John Graham of Claverhouse or Viscount Dundee, had defeated the troops of William III in a famous battle in 1689, where Dundee received his death wound, Burns makes no mention in his journal of the important history of the place. But it clearly made a strong impression on him, for he was later to write a Jacobite song, "Killiecrankie", on the pass and the battle.¹² It is notable that an intense emotion is worked up in the song through the use of a landscape-refrain, "On th' braes o' Killiecrankie, O" (Kinsley, no. 313). And in retrospect, one can sense how this historical event enhanced the sublime landscape when Burns noted in his laconic journal that he was struck by the "wild grandeur of the pass of Gilliecrankie" (1973: 19). — It goes without saying that he became very hot-blooded when seeing Bannockburn, the Stirlingshire scene of Robert the Bruce's victory over the English army of Edward II in 1314, and sent forth gushes of patriotic rhetoric (they are actually added to the journal afterwards, and are in such a florid vein that they have been thought to be fabrications by the hands of Burns's early biographers; cf. Snyder 1968: 244).

Despite his often acute sense of history in landscape, Burns seems to be willing to 'escape' history and seek refuge in nature during his tour. This is at least the impression one gets from his tour poem proper, "Written with a Pencil over the Chimneypiece, in the Parlour of the Inn at Kenmore, Taymouth" (Kinsley, no. 169). It is not written in Scots but English, and although this is by no means uncommon in other reflective poems of his, the metre being heroic couplets, that quintessentially Augustan form of

¹² This was, however, not a clear-cut event in a nationalistic sense, for the conflict was not only between Scottish and English sides, but also a Highland vs. Lowland and a catholic vs. protestant conflict.

poetry, one gets the feeling that Burns is here adapting an English way of articulating his thoughts and responses to the landscape (Kinsley 1968: III, 1244 points to the anglicised Scot James Thomson, author of *The Seasons*, as his model). As to the mode of perception indicated in the poem, it is clearly the one then fashionable in English circles, the picturesque. The poetical merit of the piece may be questionable, but its relevance to the tour makes it worthwhile to quote the first part in full:

Admiring Nature in her wildest grace,
 These northern scenes with weary feet I trace;
 O'er many a winding dale and painful steep,
 Th' abodes of coveyed grouse and timid sheep,
 My savage journey, curious, I pursue,
 Till fam'd Breadalbaine opens to my view. —
 The meeting cliffs each deep-sunk glen divides,
 The woods, wild-scattered, clothe their ample sides;
 Th' outstretching lake, imbosomed 'mong the hills,
 The eye with wonder and amazement fills;
 The Tay meandering sweet in infant pride,
 The palace rising on his verdant side;
 The lawns wood-fringed in Nature's native taste;
 The hillocks dropt in Nature's careless haste;
 The arches striding o'er the new-born stream;
 The village glittering in the noontide beam —

That this is a truly picturesque description is evident from the emphasis on the visual contrast between cliff and glen, lake and hill, palace and river, the tasteful natural ornament of wood on cliff and lawn, the curving lines of river and arch, and so forth. It is a *view*, that amazes the *eye* as a tasteful composition of contrasting elements and variety. Burns is writing to a certain prescription here, and he isn't being particularly original. The poem is, to quote James Kinsley, "a weak contribution to the popular 'prospect' genre" (1968: III, 1244). Malcolm Andrews, in his book on the

picturesque, says that “Burns’ poem enumerates most of the conventional components of a Claudean landscape, but leaves them unorganised” (1989: 220). But soon the human presence, the self (‘I’) in the beginning of the poem, comes more to the fore, and in the middle part it records how the picturesque sight and the solitude give rise to “Poetic ardours in my bosom”. The final part of the poem is very interesting, for here we get a definition of the relationship between Nature on the one hand and on the other hand History or all that which belongs to the world of Man:

Here Poesy might wake her heaven taught lyre,
And look through Nature with creative fire;
Here, to the wrongs of Fate half reconcil’d,
Misfortune’s lightened steps might wander wild;
And Disappointment, in these lonely bounds,
Find balm to soothe her bitter rankling wounds:
Here heart-struck Grief might heavenward stretch her scan,
And injured Worth forget and pardon Man.

This is of course a reminder that Burns is not only capable of a farmer’s attitude towards nature, as is often maintained, but also of its poetical and spiritual appreciation, and for that matter, years before Wordsworth and Coleridge had even begun to develop the thing.¹³ But what is it that Nature and Solitude — for Burns had mentioned “Lone wandering by the hermit’s mossy cell” in the middle part of the poem (it was an *artificial* hermitage — an example of the cult of the Highland picturesque — designed by Lord Breadalbane, cf. Andrews 1989: 223) — are supposed to mend? Nothing less than Fate, Misfortune, Disappointment, Grief and injured Worth. It is

¹³ Not that Burns was the earliest writer to show such a spiritual understanding of nature; one could mention Shaftesbury, author of *The Moralists*, and Walpole and Gray in their letters describing the Alps (the relevant excerpts from these writings are all printed in the chapter ‘The Garden and the Wild’ in Price 1973). Gray, for instance, writes on his journey up to the Grande Chartreuse, that there is “not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry” (1973: 636).

as if being alone in nature or, more exactly, being alone amidst such a picturesque scenery, one is not only able to become a poet (cf. the “heaven taught lyre”), but to be partly reconciled with one’s fate, to have one’s misfortunes and disappointments made lighter, one’s grief uplifted, and to have one’s “injured Worth forget and pardon Man”. This last line of the poem is interesting, for it may suggest that the ‘I’ itself is not happy in the world of Man, that it doesn’t consider itself esteemed enough, that Man has done something to it that has to be pardoned and/or Man forgotten. The ‘picturesque solitude’ offers an escape from Man and his world, and it even seems to have absolving powers: it renders it possible to “pardon Man” (the spiritual, even religious, attributes are also present in its capability to sublimate one’s grief).¹⁴ To be alone in picturesque scenery is, thus, not to be the beholder of a glossy picture, but to enter a realised beauty and harmony, where one’s sufferings are more or less neutralised or sublimated. This is all very far from the conventional idea of the picturesque, and it shows that Burns is by no means a conventional picturesque tourist. *His* picturesque is both patriotic, as we have seen earlier, and transcendental, as we have now realised. These extra-dimensions of the picturesque are what concerns us here. Whether there are any personal reasons for Burns to wish for this picturesque sanctuary from the world of Man and History is not of primary importance. It is Lamont Brown’s guess that “Burns’s choice of William Nicol [who was universally disliked in Edinburgh] as a travelling companion . . . may very well have been a deliberate snub by Burns on the Edinburgh ‘gentry’, who treated

¹⁴ One is reminded of Wordsworth’s famous “Lines Written in Early Spring” (1798): “To her fair works did Nature link / The human soul that through me ran; / And much it grieved my heart to think / What man has made of man”. Wordsworth concludes the poem in a similar way as Burns did eleven years before him, by suggesting that the pleasure and belief he experiences in nature may “from heaven be sent” and “be Nature’s holy plan”.

him so patronisingly” (1973: 13). Despite the success which Burns had enjoyed this first winter of his in Edinburgh, arriving there in the previous autumn a virtually unknown Ayrshire laddie and now leaving it a famous poet, he had suffered “a succession of genteel attempts [by the Edinburgh *literati*] to advise him, lionise him, and impress him with the trappings of city and university culture” (Low 1986: 18). Whether this bitter-sweet experience of City Man is the reason for Burns’s preferences for the ‘picturesque solitude’ in the Highlands is difficult to say. It is at least interesting that he never seems to have had any aspirations to become a City Poet like his ‘elder Brother in the muse’, Robert Fergusson, despite, or perhaps because of, his intimate knowledge of the Edinburgh life.

It is significant how Burns sums up his second Highland tour in a letter: “I have done nothing else but visited cascades, prospects, ruins and Druidical temples, learned Highland tunes and pickt up Scotch songs, Jacobite anecdotes, &c. these two months” (Ferguson 1985: I, 166). In his own view, the tour combines the search for the picturesque and an interest in the traditional expression of Scottish identity and national feeling in song and narrative (as far as the songs were concerned, Burns was working for James Johnson on the *Scots Musical Museum*). Contrary to his first tour of the West Highlands, an unpleasant trip of money-collecting which perhaps made him unsympathetic towards the land and its inhabitants, his second tour, a pleasure trip to the Central Highlands, reveals a clear liking for the picturesque aspects of the country. But Burns often stands out from the ordinary picturesque tourist in his strong sense of history-in-landscape and his Jacobite-nationalistic sentiments that are associated with the picturesque (Stirling ruins) and the sublime (Pass of Killiecrankie). He also shows attitudes to nature which are related to the transcendental understanding that the Romantics were to develop, an appreciation of nature as a beneficial and powerful presence for man and poet. Burns’s

picturesque can thus be said to include both the nationalistic and the transcendental. James Hogg, who was no stranger to transcendence and spirituality in nature, was later to walk into Burns's footsteps in the Highlands.

Chapter Three: Three 19th Century Travellers

The Early 19th Century

We have now established how two Scottish writers, James Boswell and Robert Burns, conform in general to the two received ways of touring the Highlands in the late 18th century. Boswell is a traveller largely in the philosophical mould, and Burns, on his second Highland tour, is basically a picturesque tourist. However, they both show common deviations from these received approaches, deviations which seem to arise from the fact that it is their native country they are travelling about, in contrast to the non-Scottish tourists of the Highlands we have compared them with, such as Dr. Johnson and William Gilpin. Boswell and Burns repeatedly show strong patriotic responses to the landscape, and their awareness of the historical importance of a place can affect the way in which they see the surrounding scenery. In other words, they experience the dialectical relationship of (romanticised) history and locality, of the patriotic and the picturesque, which Sir Walter Scott was later to develop in his narrative poems and historical novels. Although Boswell and Burns are working here mainly in the non-fictional genre of journal-writing, their responses to the landscape have of course as much to do with the imagination as those of Scott in his poetical and fictional works. This imaginative or subjective approach to the scenery becomes more prominent in the Highland journals written by Scots in the early 19th century. It continues along the patriotic-historical lines of the late 18th century, but turns increasingly towards the transcendental, which we encountered in Burns's tour poem proper. This is

surely a romantic characteristic. Amongst other things, the exaltation of nature was a response to growing uncertainties about the existence of God and the rational powers of man or, perhaps rather, a stronger belief in his intuitive capacities. The transcendental view of nature is therefore not at all in discord with the overall sensual bias of the increasingly popular picturesque tour of Scotland, into which it is often incorporated (we could call this the picturesque-romantic tour, but a new label is quite unnecessary). What is interesting, though, in respect of the Romantic era, is that the *philosophical* tour of Scotland continues to appeal to literary Scots well into the 19th century, at a time when it is out of fashion in even such a belatedly picturesque-romantic country as France.¹⁵ Admittedly, it merely exists as a supplementary and subordinate part of the all-encompassing picturesque tour, but its influence can still be felt. Two of the accounts we will look at in this chapter show this long-lived philosophical interest of Scottish writers, but the remaining one is a more mainstream kind of Highland journal of the early 19th century, a variation of the picturesque tour proper.

John Leyden

In the year 1800, Dr. John Leyden, poet, antiquarian and orientalist, toured the Highlands, mainly on foot. He gave an account of his travels in a journal he kept during the first part of the tour and in letters to various friends he wrote during the rest of the tour. Leyden's account is interesting and in some ways unique, because he toured wilder and more remote parts of the Highlands than most travellers, but it was little known until it was first published, in the beginning of this century (see Leyden 1903). He is

¹⁵ French travellers did, in fact, return to the philosophical tour after 1830, as far as their objects were concerned, although their sentiments and expressions were mostly romantic (cf. Bain 1931: 194).

such a tireless and dedicated walker that one is reminded that this was part of the new *Zeitgeist*, that travels on foot were greatly favoured by romantic tourists (see Robinson 1989 on *The Walk: Notes on a Romantic Image*). Three years later, Coleridge, after parting with the Wordsworths at Arrochar, was to go on a long, solitary and often desperate walk through the Highlands, trying to rid himself of his addiction to opiates (see Coburn 1957–73, Vol. 1, for *Notebooks*, and Griggs 1956–71, Vol. 2, for *Letters*; for good comments see Holmes 1990). And in 1818, Keats was to walk through the Highlands, having to cut off his tour at Inverness, because this exposed way of travelling in often wet and difficult conditions had taken its toll of his health (see Rollins 1958, Vol. 1, for *Letters*; furthermore Gittings 1985 for a discussion of the tour).

Leyden's tour is a strange blend of philosophical and picturesque elements, combining a scientifically orientated research into everything from Highland antiquities to geological strata of mountains, and at the same time showing such full-fledgedly picturesque and impressionable responses to the landscape that it can be somewhat perplexing. As far as tour literature is concerned, Leyden's account is a mixture of these two sub-genres, although the picturesque clearly prevails, especially when we take his characteristic sentiments and expressions into account, which are often very romantic and inspired.¹⁶ In a philosophical sense, though, he produces something of a reversal of Dr. Johnson's arch-tour: he travels around the Highlands and gathers evidence that *proves* the originality, as he sees it, of the Ossianic poetry. But Leyden is not only preoccupied with Ossian philosophically (i.e. as a scientific object) but also picturesquely or romantically. He is just like those French travellers of the Romantic period,

¹⁶ Leyden gave some poetical responses to the Highlands, all of which are lost (cf. 1903: ix), except an interesting ballad on the story of Macphail of Colonsay and the Mermaid of Corrievrekin, which Scott published in the third volume of *The Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1803).

discussed by Margaret I. Bain in her book, who are almost ‘translated’ on Highland mountain tops by the Ossianic sublime, swept off their feet in a soulful union with the melancholy glory of a past heroic age through the impressive landscape and the solitude.¹⁷ Leyden experiences this in the sublime Glencoe (1903: 135–6), which was thought to be the birthplace of Ossian, the blind poet of old, but there he also comes into contact with the divine or transcendental in nature, a landscape that impresses a “devotional feeling on the mind” (1903: 130). His description of the perpendicular wall of the mountain which closes the one end of the glen, as an architectural ruin of immense proportions, is a textbook example of the picturesque tour response to this place (see Andrews 1989: 226–7), even in its transcendental view of it as “the temple of the god of nature”, on which a pillar of mist seems to be descending from heaven (Leyden 1903: 133). This is also true of the rest of his tour, for it is strewn with descriptions and evaluations of landscape which are typically, even orthodoxly, picturesque. But the philosophical interest is there as well, albeit in a subordinate way, and its continuing appeal to Scottish tourists in the new century seemed to be confirmed fourteen years later in a journal written by a much greater literary figure than Leyden.

¹⁷ High mountains were, of course, the ultimate places for encountering the Sublime in nature. Romantic poets made some very interesting responses to this experience. Wordsworth celebrates on Mount Snowdon, in *The Prelude*, XIV. Book, the sublime and spiritual power in nature and the workings of the imagination. Shelley, in his “Mont Blanc”, is more sceptical as to the significance of this power and asks what it would be without the imagination. Keats, surrounded by mist on the top of Ben Nevis, is almost ironical towards all this in his sonnet “Read me a lesson, muse”, and greatly doubts if he knows anything at all about that which is above him or, even, that which is below. (For a useful discussion of mountains and the Sublime see Leighton 1984, chapter 3.)

Sir Walter Scott

Another early 19th century traveller showing a certain penchant for the *démodé* philosophical tour is, oddly enough, Sir Walter Scott, himself the prime populariser of the picturesque tour of Scotland. Amidst all the picturesque havoc he has caused in the Highlands with the publication of *The Lady of the Lake* in 1810, he enters on a coastal trip around the region in 1814 that is in many ways philosophical, both in tone and substance. What F. A. Pottle, in his interesting article on ‘The Power of Memory in Boswell and Scott’, says he misses in the extant diary of the tour (the manuscript is lost but Scott’s biographer had published it, somewhat ‘edited’, in his *Memoirs* [see Lockhart 1914]), is the presence of Scott the poet. What is lacking is what Pottle calls the ‘romantic perception’ which we are used to associate with Scott, what we have previously defined as the imaginative dialectics of landscape and (romanticised) history.¹⁸ Although Scott, in his journal, “gives a great deal of space to remarkable and terrific scenes” and “several extended and serious attempts at picturesque writing”, Pottle points out that this is just about what they remain — purely picturesque descriptions (1945: 173). He maintains that Scott’s ideas about romance and fiction as purely imaginary things, things one shouldn’t take too seriously, prevent him from including the ‘romantic perceptions’ belonging to them in such a documentary and matter-of-fact genre as a journal. Pottle is not denying that Scott had ‘romantic perceptions’ during the tour, but that he didn’t think it fit to record them in his journal:

He could hardly have written his description of Loch Coruisk without seeing it as sympathetic landscape for the meeting of Bruce and Cormac Doil . . . and it is safe to infer that when he

¹⁸ Pottle, when comparing the journals of Boswell and Scott, uses the contrasting terms ‘neo-classic’ vs. ‘romantic’ (1945: 173), where we would rather apply the tour terms ‘philosophical’ vs. ‘picturesque’, but they are roughly equivalent in this context.

saw Earl Patrick's ruined castle at Scalloway he was conscious of the lively presence of that rapacious prince in a way that Boswell would have considered enthusiastic. He does not *record* the romantic perception because he is recording fact, and he believes the romantic perception to be make-believe. It is very interesting to see at the basis of his artistic activity this clear, sharp, undistorted, 'realistic' perception of things, and his determination to keep it clear from the play of free imagination (1945: 174).

An example of a strong perception Scott had during the tour which he did not record in the journal (although Pottle doesn't mention this in his article) is the eerie experience he had in the 'haunted room' in the Castle of Dunvegan on the Isle of Skye. He did not describe it until 16 years later, in the last of his *Letters on Demonology*: through the window of the room, it is as if a preternatural presence makes itself felt through the picturesque-sublime scenery and wild weather or, in Scott's own words, "the view was such as to correspond with the highest tone of superstition" (Lockhart 1914: 419, note 2). Such imaginary things did not find their way into Scott's documentary journal. One feels inclined to agree with Lockhart when he comments that in the journal we have before us Scott "the antiquary, the magistrate, the planter, and the agriculturist; but everywhere the warm yet sagacious philanthropist" (1914: 464). This is a list (I left out "the poet," at the beginning of it, because I don't agree with it any more than Pottle does) which could almost equally apply to a philosophical journalist like Dr. Johnson. And the overall tone of the journal is not 'romantic' at all: "Scott's throughout has the shrewd, humane, humorous tone of common sense that we associate with the eighteenth century" (Pottle 1945: 174).

This is not to say that the picturesque fashion is not easily felt when the journal is read over; in places it is so manifest that nobody would take

the journal for an 18th century philosophical account. But the lack of what Pottle calls 'romantic perception', despite the picturesque descriptions, is equally conspicuous in the journal once we know that Scott is its author. He may offer some strikingly picturesque scene-depictions, but he seldom strikes the imaginative concord of landscape and history. He is in essence the same sort of tourist-journalist as John Leyden (Scott was actually one of the recipients of his Highland letters, as of James Hogg's, which we will discuss afterwards). They are both picturesque travellers who are inclined to a philosophical approach to the Highlands, Scott the more so of the two, if we take his matter-of-fact presentation, so surprisingly free of romantic sentiment, into account.

Why is it that literary Scots continue to cling to the philosophical view of things well into the 19th century? My guess is that, on the one hand, the literary and ideological attitudes of the 18th century proved on the whole more long-lived in Scottish than, for instance, in English literary circles (although, paradoxically, some earlier Scots, such as James 'Ossian' Macpherson, had been influential in the development of Romanticism, both English and, still more, European). This seems even to apply to Sir Walter Scott, because, despite his being the 'master romancer' of Britain and, in fact, a major figure in contemporary Romanticism in Europe, he is in many ways an 18th century man, as often has been pointed out. This seems to be true of his ideas on what was worthy of serious consideration and presentation and what wasn't, what was reality and what wasn't — ideas that are unromantic in the highest degree. On the other hand, I think that Scots found it harder than non-Scots to see the Highlands in an exclusively picturesque-romantic light, indeed that their perception of it was more complicated because it was their native country. They were just as interested in learning about it, defining it, improving it, and so on, as they were in enjoying its picturesque beauty and romantic aspects. Its history

was in a sense their history, its present condition mattered to them; their own identity was bound up with it all. They could not as easily distance themselves from it as the foreign tourists could (including the English) and make it *just* an aesthetic or fanciful object, a far-away land of romance and battles long ago. This, I think, causes them to be somewhat ‘philosophical’ in their approach to the Highlands, although they may be on a picturesque tour (even the picturesque Burns makes some Johnsonian, critical-rational remarks on such matters as agriculture and Highland manners). But this element of identity bound up with the land and its history is also what makes Scots so interesting as travellers in the Highlands, as we have seen in the previous chapters.

There is, however, an important factor we haven’t considered yet in our accounting for this ‘philosophical’ inclination, and that is the role of education. The relevance of this factor will become still more evident if we have in mind the last Highland traveller we will discuss, James Hogg. The Ettrick Shepherd was, as we will presently realise, essentially a picturesque tourist, pretty much in the same mould as Robert Burns. Neither of these two men had much formal education, both being hard-working countrymen from a very young age, although their alleged lack of learning is no doubt sometimes overstated. The rest of our Highland tourists were all learned men, Boswell and Scott educated lawyers and humanists and Leyden an academic. It is, therefore, perhaps not surprising that these three were inclined to learned, critical and humanistic attitudes and interests on (and off) their tours, that their approach was bound to be ‘philosophical’, even if they weren’t consciously embarking on a Johnsonian research tour (which Boswell, of course, was, and Leyden to a degree, in his Ossianic inquiries). To the Ettrick Shepherd, however, such a learned approach was foreign; he could easily have quoted the famous lines of a fellow Romantic (and later

friend), who had rebelled against it in 1798 (Wordsworth's "The Tables Turned"):

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Mis-shapes the beauteous forms of things: —
We murder to dissect.

The Ettrick Shepherd

James Hogg went on three tours through the Highlands in three consecutive years, 1802–04; he had also visited the area at an earlier date and was to visit it later in his life, but did not record his responses as he did during the three consecutive tours. He did not, however, write a journal on these tours, but wrote letters to Sir Walter Scott, which pretty well cover the whole of his 1802–04 travels in the Highlands. Scott had these letters published in the *Scots Magazine*, and they have since been reprinted all in one book (see Hogg 1983).

Hogg, as we have already mentioned, is in essence a picturesque tourist. He writes to Scott in the beginning of his first tour, "I will endeavour to lead your eyes to every scene over which mine wander with amazement — whether of majestic deformity, or natural elegance" (1983: 11), and again states this picturesque purpose early in his second tour, i.e. that he has "set out with a mind so intent on viewing the scenery of the Highlands" (1983: 49). His third tour is of a somewhat different kind, as was Burns's first tour. It is a 'business' journey, dictated by Hogg's intent to get to his destination, Harris, where he meant to settle down (which was, however, not to be). The picturesque intent is confirmed throughout the earlier tours: Hogg is preoccupied by landscape and it can affect him very strongly. Scenery can, for example, both cheer him up and fill his mind with melancholy ideas (1983: 12), and flat countries give Hogg, who was

born and bred in hilly Ettrick, a headache! (1983: 29). He goes out of his way for a “charming prospect” (1983: 53), and shows a picturesque evaluation of scenery, such as at Inveraray, where he complains of the *sameness* (a picturesque idea) of the view around the lake, and accordingly complements the *contrast* of the castle and the village, “and a distant view of the majestic mountains in a circular range beyond it”, which makes up the background (1983: 65). Compared to the more purely picturesque Burns, however, Hogg’s preferences tend rather towards the sublime.¹⁹ Although Burns had composed a sublime tour poem, “Written with a Pencil, standing by the Fall of Fyers, near Loch-Ness” (Kinsley, no. 174), with the “horrid caldron” (line 12) boiling below him as he stood on the brink, he preferred distant, aesthetic views to being in the precarious presence of such a powerful body. Hogg, like many 19th century Highland travellers, was prepared to let the overwhelming and terrifying Sublime affect his thoughts and emotions, and it is this, rather than the more harmoniously picturesque (as in Burns’s case in Taymouth), which arouses his sense of the divine or transcendental in nature, as we shall see. Hogg is in other respects a picturesque tourist in the ‘Scottish’ mould, showing all the patriotic-Jacobite attitudes to landscape we have come to expect (e.g. his romantic comment, that the trees the Cumberland forces put fire to in ’46, “although the heart was burnt out of them, still continued to flourish”, 1983: 72).²⁰ Furthermore, as a shepherd, he shares Burns’s interest in the sheep, cattle, pasture and soil of the Highlands, and this often gives his

¹⁹ He is more inclined to use such Burkean expressions as ‘beautiful’ and ‘sublime’ than ‘picturesque’, although he shows many clear signs of seeing landscape as a picture, as a composition of contrasting elements.

²⁰ Hogg further on states how the picturesque scenery enhances his Jacobite feelings: “While traversing the scenes where the patient sufferings of the one party [Prince Charlie’s], and the cruelties of the other [Cumberland’s forces], were so affectingly displayed, I could not help being a bit of a Jacobite in my heart, and blessing myself that, in those days, I did not exist, or I should certainly have been hanged” (1983: 73).

picturesque descriptions a refreshingly down-to-earth quality, compared with the often idealised and lifeless depictions of many other picturesque tourists. He shows, for instance, every inch of Leyden's sublime and soulful appreciation of Glencoe, but winds it up with an anticlimatic and amusingly practical comment: "Glencoe is, however, stocked with excellent sheep . . ." (1983: 154). He seems, in fact, closer than Burns to being the 'natural man' on foot, the native Rambler, comparatively free of affectation (although he is in a sense *posing* as the 'Ettrick Shepherd' for Scott).²¹ Hogg is, in other words, basically like Burns in his picturesque preferences, but more romantic, especially in his sublime, rather than purely picturesque, tendencies, and his transcendental view of nature, which is of particular interest.

We have already noticed how even the early 19th century tourists with strong 'philosophical' inclinations, Leyden and Scott, show themselves to be susceptible to the supernatural or transcendental in the Highlands. The Highlands were, of course, known for their mystical and supernatural associations and character, popularised as early as Shakespeare's play *Macbeth* (written for the audience of the 'anglicised' Scottish king James VI, by then James I of England), with its future-telling Weird Sisters and all the gory fatalism surrounding the central characters of the usurping King and his haunted Queen.²² The heath east of Nairn, on

²¹ Hogg is very conscious of Scott's 'presence' throughout the tours. On the first one (1802) Hogg thinks of cutting the tour off before it is completed as it seems to bring him no profit and be "not only *vanity* but *vexation of spirit*" (the Biblical undertone, here from Ecclesiastes, is already evident and will grow more prominent as we shall see). Then Scott appears to him in a dream, dressed in a glorious costume, and reprimands him with great effect — so that Hogg decides to continue the tour after all (see 1983: 40–41).

²² Many of the Highland tourists inquire into supernatural matters, such as the so-called second sight of the inhabitants (i.e. telepathic powers), and the Highlanders themselves are often associated with superstition in the literature of our period, e.g. in the novels of Sir Walter Scott (*Waverley*) and John Galt (*The Entail*). Hogg wrote various works in which he touched on the subject of Highland superstition and seems to have viewed it

which tradition held that Macbeth had met the kingdom-promising witches, had been a place of great attraction since Highland tours began in earnest in the late 18th century. But travellers of a more romantic bent didn't even need a Shakespeare or an Ossian to open up the otherworldliness of the Highlands — the sublime, the supernatural, even the pantheistic often presented itself to the solitary traveller through the impressive scenery and the elements surrounding him. The song of a Highland girl against this background, sung in Erse and therefore foreign to the poet's ears, was enough to stimulate mystical, almost *Lorelei*-like thoughts in Wordsworth (on the origins of "The Solitary Reaper" see Gill 1990: 245–6).

The impressive scenery made Burns respond in this way in his picturesque poem on Taymouth, and this is also true of the Ettrick poet who saw himself to be Burns's younger brother in the muse. In the beauty and whole being of nature, Hogg sees and feels the presence of a transcendental power, which he alternatively sees in Biblical terms or simply as a more pantheistic 'Deity'. The Ettrick Shepherd was in all probability, to quote an article by Thomas Crawford, "the most Romantic Scottish author of the Romantic age" (1988: 103), and his romantic traits are abundantly clear in his attitudes towards nature. It goes without saying that he gives such a standard romantic performance as to sit down by a cascade "to contemplate" (1983: 67). But, what is more, his responses have an interesting spiritual side that reminds one sometimes of Blake and his mythological fusion of the Romantic and the Biblical. To Hogg, the

with a tolerant eye: he was, in the phrase of David Groves, prepared "to accept mystery as a condition of life" (1988: 90). The English poet Collins had in 1749–50 written an interesting "Ode on the Popular Superstitions of the Highlands of Scotland, Considered as the Subject of Poetry", although it remained unpublished until 1788. Alluding to supernatural scenes in *Macbeth*, Collins maintains that if they are not realistic they at least keep our imagination alive (stanza XII): "In scenes like these, which, daring to depart / From sober truth, are still to Nature true, / And call forth fresh delight to Fancy's view" (Price 1973: 655).

Trossachs are a Biblical land or creation: the sublime scenery is shaped by the Flood — “the impetuous torrent had carried all before it saving the everlasting rocks, which yet remain, the shattered monuments of that dreadful breach” (1983: 51).²³ Hogg, in other words, reads theological-moral (“that dreadful breach”) signs out of the sublime scenery (on the moral and theological tradition underlying the ideas of the sublime and beautiful see the chapter ‘The Theodicy of the Landscape’ in Abrams 1973).²⁴ Amidst all this Old Testament terrifying sublimity, with chasms, ravines and an overcast sky, “Every species of the winged creation that frequent the woods and mountains of Caledonia, were here joined that day in a grateful hymn in praise of their great Creator” (1983: 49). This transcendental view of the landscape, and at the same time its historical nature, are somewhat related to Hogg’s great visionary poem “Kilmeny” (in *The Queen’s Wake*, 1813), which, incidentally, is set in or, rather, departs from the Highlands (near Loch Earn in Perthshire). The vision of Kilmeny, the blameless virgin who has been taken away to heaven (or the land of thought) so that she may never know sin or death, moves

²³ It is interesting to compare this passage with the one already quoted from Burns’s poem on Taymouth about “The hillocks dropt in Nature’s careless haste”, a line which reveals a more 18th century-like attitude towards the picturesque (nature as shaped by art and not by a divine power) and which can be shown to be influenced by Thomson’s *The Seasons* (cf. Kinsley 1968: III, 1244).

²⁴ Abrams points to Thomas Burnet’s *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* (1684) as an important influence on Wordsworth and other Romantics in their moral and religious understanding of landscape. It may well be that this popular book was a direct influence on Hogg (cf. Groves’s Introduction in Hogg 1986: x), but his only reference to his reading of it, in his *Memoir of the Author’s Life*, is problematic, for he seems to confuse this (Thomas) Burnet with the better known Bishop (Gilbert) Burnet: “The only one [of the books which a certain lady lent Hogg while he was in his eighteenth year], that I remember any thing of, is ‘Bishop Burnet’s Theory of the Conflagration of the Earth’” (Hogg 1972: 9, cf. note). If not a direct influence, however, *The Sacred Theory* did at least indirectly affect Hogg’s attitudes towards nature. His description of the Trossachs as shaped by the Flood, i.e. the sublime aspects of the Earth as terrible yet wonderful signs of the wrath of God, does for instance accord well with Burnet’s influential theories.

progressively from the Highland scenery to Scottish, then European history, and finally to the kingdom of heaven on earth (with a joyful gathering of God's creatures, as in the Trossachs scene).

Later on the second Highland tour, Hogg's companions, "perceiving that my attention was much taken by the uncouth scenery", take him to Craigtullich, close to Letterewe and Loch Maree, a black rock of infernal sublimity and terror, "everywhere distorted by dark slits, gaping and yawning chasms, with every feature of a most awful deformity, conveying to the attentive spectator ideas of horror which could scarcely be excelled by a glimpse of hell itself!" (1983: 99). The landscape can thus be both divine and hellish to Hogg's inner eye, the eye of the romantic imagination, and he is equally drawn to its picturesque beauty and sublime terror. His sublime-and-transcendental approach to the Highlands, which is original and yet within the framework of the aesthetics of landscape with which the picturesque tour was concerned, reaches its culmination on a boat on a quiet sea under a starry night sky, half-way between Lewis and the mainland, where Hogg composes his "Verses Addressed to the Deity". "The whole scene", he says, "tended to inspire the mind with serenity and awe" (1983: 106), and he stays on deck all night, completely under the spell of the elements, aware of the tall crescent moon hovering low above, an ocean of heaving crystal, the utter silence and his own solitary vigil. His 'Deity' has clear pantheistic qualities, in the sense that it is identical with the material universe and the power of nature. It is above all the God of the Sublime, the Deity of the magnificent, terrifying, encompassing, wild power which Hogg senses in nature, as is evident in almost every line of the first half of the poem:

Great source of perfection, and pole of devotion!
 Thy presence surrounds me wherever I roam;
 I see Thee as well in the wild heaving ocean

As in the most sacred magnificent dome.
 While viewing this scene with amazement and wonder,
 I see Thee in yonder moon's watery gleam.
 Thy voice I have heard from the clouds burst in thunder;
 Now hear it from wild fowls which over me scream;
 Oh! teach me to fear, to adore, and to love Thee
 As Sovereign of earth and those heavens I see.

If somewhat closer to Christian than Wordsworthian mysticism, Hogg's responses to the sublime nature of the Highlands are, on the whole, undoubtedly romantic. Gilpin, in his book on the picturesque tour of Scotland, had promised the traveller sublime, as well as more purely picturesque, experiences in the Highlands. Hogg is of course too natural and unpretentious to be an altogether typical tourist of the early 19th century, but the range of his responses during his tours, from purely picturesque appreciations to more sublime and even mystical reactions, is nevertheless suggestive of the changing sensibility of a new age. To the romantic traveller, the Highlands weren't only an object of aesthetic delight, but also an otherness of sublime power and treasured mystical presence.

Conclusion

Thomas Crawford has recently written an interesting book on *Boswell, Burns and the French Revolution* (1990), where he discusses their different and revealing responses to this greatest of contemporary events. It is important to put these and other Scottish writers into the cultural context of their own time, not only British but also European (even American, as Crawford does in his book). But it is also important to realise that the writers of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, a time of increasing interest in nature and the environment, are often responding to their more immediate surroundings and localities, as Jonathan Bate argues in his new book on *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (1991). Scott is the obvious example here, with his strong local attachments and awareness of natural scenery. Perhaps these two important factors, cultural and environmental, come nowhere as clearly into effect as in the tour literature of the period. When the literary man goes on a 'wild tour', he betrays cultural influences and preferences by his approach and interests, be they picturesque, Jacobite, Rousseauesque or of the other kinds we have examined in this dissertation. At the same time, he is responding to nature and landscape, localities, sights, vegetation, precarious elements, the *genius loci*, and so on. The tour shows him, somewhat paradoxically, to be both a cultural and a natural man. The Scottish writers we have discussed here show common as well as individual attitudes and responses on their Highland tours. Either way, they are revealing and they help us understand them better as men and writers.

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