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Out of Johnson's Shadow: James Boswell as Travel Writer

PhD (Literature)

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MA (Cantab) English Literature

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ABSTRACT

James Boswell has generally been regarded as a key figure in the evolution of the biography via his work on Samuel Johnson. Ranging over his public, published writing, his private-public unpublished journal writing (read by his friend John Johnston), and his private-private unpublished writing (his personal journals) this thesis sets out to address how he should also be seen as a travelogue writer of note. The most important contention is that the rise of Boswell as a travel writer is key to understanding his prowess as an auto/biographical writer – with the topography of the man-monument central. The principal aim is to stress that he was ‘Corsica Boswell’ long before he was ‘Johnson Boswell’.

Key Words: Boswell, Johnson, travelogue, autobiography, Grand Tour, Scotland, Corsica, London

CONTENTS

Introduction:	The Plan of the Thesis	4
Chapter 1:	James Boswell as Travel Writer - A Life Beyond the Life of Johnson	9
Chapter 2:	Curious Reading - Boswell and Travelogue	36
Chapter 3:	A Voyage Around the Self - the Discovery of ‘James Boswell’ in the <i>London Journal</i> 1762-3	59
Chapter 4:	“My mercury is again put in motion” - Boswell on the Grand Tour 1763-6	92
Chapter 5:	Corsica Boswell: From the Grand Tour to Fratritism	117
Chapter 6:	A Voyage Around My Father Figure - Travelogue on the Fellow-Traveller in the published <i>Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson, LL.D</i>	141
Chapter 7:	Conclusion - Travel Writing and the Boswellian Legacy	164
Bibliography		184

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Introduction: The Plan of the Thesis

James Boswell is a writer who has been picked over for the last two hundred years, overwhelmingly so as the author of the *Life of Johnson*. Whilst there has been some attention paid to him as a writer of travelogue there is nothing that represents a unified portrait of a travel writer's evolution, with a style developing which would later lend itself to very effective life writing. It is my contention that Boswell was neither a writer who travelled, nor a traveller who wrote (both familiar figures in the publishing world of the eighteenth century), but a hybrid of both. In many ways Boswell was always travelling, both metaphorically and literally, and in his collected travel writing (both published in his lifetime and in the aftermath of the discovery of his private papers in the early 1920s) the reader has a wide-ranging portrait of travel, tourism, and travelogue in the latter part of the eighteenth century, and a key marker in the evolution of travel writing. Throughout the thesis my emphasis is on seeing works which have been regarded as auto/biographical and leading inevitably to the *Life of Johnson*, and refocusing them as illustrations of Boswell as a skilled author of travel writing. The core argument is centred on the *London Journal* of 1762-3, the private journals of his travels on the continent for the study of Law, followed by the Grand Tour, and his two published travel works on Corsica and the Hebrides.

In the first part of Chapter 1 I focus on eighteenth-century critical responses to Boswell's published travel writing, largely positive in relation to the Corsican book, more muted in relation to the *Tour to the Hebrides* because of questions over his revelations of Johnson's character and perceived breaches of decorum. I go on to look at the long nineteenth century responses to Boswell, and the general neglect that his travel writing faced until the discovery of his private papers at Malahide Castle, followed by the rise in Boswell studies, particularly via the Yale 'factory' of Frederick Pottle, through the move to studying Boswell from a

perspective of travel, politics and the Scotocentric. I finish by considering published responses by modern tourists to his travel works, those literary pilgrims who have trodden the path he beat for them.

Chapter 2 provides an overview of the conventions for travel writing in the eighteenth century, taking as its starting point the travel reading available in the Boswell library, documented in the sale catalogue of 1825, and the presence of travellers' tales in his published works and private journals, and I set out to establish the context of travelogue that Boswell was both familiar with and knowledgeable about. It is my contention that travel reading was a major part of Boswell's library and consciousness, both of the fictional and literal kind. As with many readers in the eighteenth century, Boswell can be seen as reading, consuming, and consulting travel works that represent three key strands of movement and record in the eighteenth century: the Grand Tour, domestic travel, and Pacific exploration. It is my view that Boswell's travel reading shows a man, much like his contemporaries, who had a taste for traversing frontiers, both literally and metaphorically.

Chapter 3 focuses on the private-public journal that he wrote during his travels around the Lowlands of Scotland in 1762, but primarily addressing his *London Journal* of 1762-3 which he sent back to Scotland in written up form to his older university friend, John Johnston. I argue that this self-editing process illustrates a conscious effort to provide a shaped narrative for a known reader, and therefore the first real example of a methodology that would later be used for the published travel works, but also shows an experimentation with narrative form and the unreliable first-person narrator persona – indeed, the role-playing that Boswell indulges in an effort to discover who 'James Boswell' is. I go on to discuss how travel for Boswell becomes a trope for self-discovery, the journal a pocket-atlas of 'civilised' manners in the eighteenth century.

In Chapter 4 I chart Boswell's transition from tourist (following his legal studies in Holland with the gentleman's tourist route through Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and France) to traveller and travel writer of originality in Corsica (where he was the first Briton to go into the interior of the island). Boswell's Grand Tour was as much a lion hunt for the great and the good of the European Enlightenment as an aesthetic and political experience, and his private journals show a definite tour of men as monuments (Frederick the Great, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Pascale Paoli), developing the Boswell persona into what would become 'Corsica Boswell' – long before he ever became 'Johnson Boswell'.

Chapter 5 picks up the idea of how Boswell was evolving as a writer of travelogue, but also the impact that his travelling had upon him as a person and the political end that his Corsican work had as a subtext to his written agenda, that in fratricidal feeling a Scot brought up in the atmosphere of the Scottish Enlightenment could develop a sense of cause. I also look at how the text moves beyond the conventional and faintly orientalist Grand Tour reflection on the journey through Catholic Italy (very commonplace in the Grand Tour narratives of the eighteenth century) to travelogue as political cause centred on the political lion of Paoli. I will also focus on the paratext of the published work, looking at how it presented itself to the general reader, evolving a style of writing and the representation of experience that would create a significant impact across Europe, and cement Boswell's position as a man of letters.

In my chapter on the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* I look at how Boswell's final published travel work was as much a tour of Samuel Johnson as it was the islands and Highlands of Scotland. Whilst this does naturally lead many to see it as a precursor to the *Life of Johnson* (and it does, indeed, advertise itself as such to the reader), what Boswell actually wrote was a highly sophisticated piece of meta-travelogue. It successfully focuses on the third party fish-out-of-water in the act of travel, comments on travel writing precursors; and complements Johnson's own account of the journey to the point of parallel narrative. The study

of the text and its construction reveals how Boswell was evolving as a collaborative writer, but also how Boswell the travel writer naturally evolved into the biographer. The metaphor of the biography as a voyage around the subject may be well-entrenched, but in this case it is a very apt one.

My final chapter focuses on the various impacts and legacies of Boswell's travel writing. It starts with the difficult aftermath of living as a published man of letters as Boswell started to tread his own beaten path, almost to become a tourist following his own trail. I then move to look at the ways in which Boswell's impact and legacy as a travel writer transcends, or at least circumvents, the transitory nature of travel writing by revealing the human face of the traveller. Finally I consider the ways that modern readers have used his writing, particularly the Tour as a text for travel – the source for a secular pilgrimage. My final contention is that Boswell's importance as a travel writer is that, as well as writing about a vast network of travels and experiences, he evolved a self-reflexive meta-travelogue style familiar to the modern televisual world, a travel writer who is still a good travel companion.

Chapter 1

James Boswell as Travel Writer: A Life Beyond the *Life of Johnson*

There is an irony in the fact that James Boswell, a writer so fascinated by travel writing of the fictional and non-fictional kinds, and whose copious journals depict over thirty five years of travel around the European continent, should be so neglected as an author of travelogue, with his published travel books placed in the shadow of Johnson himself, and in the shadow cast by the *Life of Johnson*. Working through a bibliographical text like Anthony E. Brown's *Boswellian Studies: A Bibliography* the balance of criticism in favour of Boswell as a biographer is evident.¹ Criticism of the travel books (*An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to that Island, and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (1768), and the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson LL.D* (1785)) has tended to see them as precursors to a terminal point in the *Life of Johnson* or as derivative juvenilia. This representation of the *Tour to the Hebrides* as leading to the *Life of Johnson* did not begin with Croker's integration of it into the text of the *Life*. Even Boswell set up the connection with what amounts to a teaser-trailer at the end of the first edition. As E. Mathew Goyette has noted: 'Conceiving of the *Tour* as a Prelude to the *Life*, Boswell began work, in early January 1785, on a combined advertisement for both the *Tour* and the *Life*. The advertisement, the first copy that Boswell prepared especially for the 1785 *Tour*, announced that the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* "speedily will be published" and will be "a Prelude to a Large Work for which Mr. Boswell has been collecting materials for upwards of twenty years." Boswell stressed the "minute accuracy" of his *Tour* and the "authenticity" of the *Life*, and claimed "the intimate friendship of

¹ Anthony E. Brown, *Boswellian Studies: A Bibliography*. 3rd edn (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1991).

DR. JOHNSON” as the basis for his special fitness as biographer.’¹ The conditions of composition and his decision to publish after Johnson’s death in response to Hawkins and Thrale should not prevent us, however, from seeing the *Tour* as independent of the *Life*, at least in its original composition, nor should Boswell’s apparent intention in 1785 limit how the work can be seen as independent travelogue. Whilst there has always been a steady stream of pilgrims ready to tread in the footsteps of Johnson and Boswell in the Highlands of Scotland, in recent years there has also been a trickle of criticism emerging to revive interest in the travel books and to produce, in particular, a more critical appraisal of the full text of the Corsican volume. What a study of the critical heritage of the texts shows is a transition in Boswell’s reputation as a writer, and an increasing understanding of his complexity as an observer and author in his own right, rather than merely as a hanger-on of Samuel Johnson. If anything, the trajectory of Boswellian criticism shows how Boswell’s reputation has moved on and allowed the travel books (published and unpublished) to come out of the shadows and be assessed as independent works – though this is an area where analysis has so far been sketchy at best, and primarily focused on the *Tour to the Hebrides*.

1. Eighteenth Century Responses

Initial responses to Boswell’s Corsican work were highly positive, seeing Boswell as bringing to the British reader a story of a people fighting against oppression:

Mr Boswell was impelled by a noble, but unusual, spirit of curiosity to visit the infant state of liberty among the Corsicans; and he is to be envied that he saw it to greater advantage than any British subject, perhaps, ever can view the same *in futuro*. He found it in all its native, genuine, charms before faction could spring from security, luxury from plenty, or corruption from luxury; evils which so soon engender in a settled constitution.²

¹ E. Matthew Goyette, 'Boswell's Changing Conceptions of His Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides', *PBSA: Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 73 (1979), p. 312.

² *Critical Review*, March 1768. See Lyle Larsen, *James Boswell as His Contemporaries Saw Him* (Cranbury: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), p. 49.

This was also a response matched by *The Scots Magazine* of February 1768 (where Boswell was praised for his ‘instructive account’ with ‘Liberty for its object’), *The Gentleman’s Magazine* of April (which argued that it glowed ‘with a spirit of liberty’), and *The Monthly Review* of July/August (which admired ‘the extravagance of his love of liberty, and his extreme regard for the brave Corsicans’, which it believed, eventually, would allow Boswell ‘to make a considerable figure in polite literature’.¹ Boswell was delighted by this response to his first major success as a writer, writing to William Johnson Temple:

My book has amazing celebrity. Lord Lyttelton Mr Walpole Mrs Macaulay Mr Garrick have all written me noble letters about it. There are two dutch translations going forward & Zelide translates it into French. Pray tell me how I can send you a copy of the *second* edition which is already printed.²

Some critics, however, focused on the personality of Boswell rather than the nature of the work, something that would become typical in the years ahead. John Wilkes (whom Boswell met, befriended, and with whom he communicated in Naples) in the *Poetical Register* of March-April 1768 chose to mock Boswell for his apparent hypocrisy, knowing full well Boswell’s affairs in Italy and, as Frederick Pottle notes, particularly ‘because of his relationship with Mrs Dodds at the time he wrote the section of the book’:

In the *Account of Corsica*, page 217, he says, *better occasional murders than frequent adulteries*. Surely, Sir, never any harm but an Italian with the stiletto [sic] in his pocket, and a highlander with the dirk by his side, ever talked so lightly of murder. I therefore wonder at such an assertion from a gentleman, a man of humanity, and an Englishman, for so I call him, as he chose to be our countryman abroad, though not at home.³

Thomas Gray went even further in a letter to Horace Walpole on 25 Feb 1768, seeing the book as a triumph, but an accidental one where the subject (Paoli) was clearly much more significant than the ‘fool’ who wrote about him - a perception that would continue in relation to Boswell’s work about Johnson:

¹ See James Boswell, *An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to That Island, & Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 227-9.

² Letter to Temple, 21 April 1768. James Boswell, *The Correspondence of James Boswell and William Johnson Temple 1756-1795*. Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 231.

³ See James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France 1765-1766, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: Heinemann, 1955), p. 162, and Larsen, p. 50.

The pamphlet proves what I have always maintained, that any fool may write a most valuable book by chance, if he will only tell us what he heard and saw with veracity. Of Mr Boswell's truth I have not the least suspicion, because I am sure he could invent nothing of this kind. The true title of this part of his work is, 'A Dialogue between a Green-goose and a Hero.'¹

Samuel Johnson did write to Boswell to give his opinion, but refused to formally review it saying, "No, one ass [should not] scratch [another]":

...I have forbore to tell you my opinion of your Account of Corsica. I believe my opinion if you think well of my judgement might have given you pleasure but when it is considered how much vanity is excited by praise I am not sure it would have done you good. Your History is like other histories but your journal is in a very high degree curious and deligh[t]ful. There is between the history and the journal that difference which there will always be found between notions borrowed from without, and notions generated within. Your history was copied from books. Your journal rose out of your own experience and observation. You express images which operated strongly on yourself and you have impressed them with great force upon your readers. I know not whether I could name any narrative by which curiosity is better excited or better gratified.²

What Johnson saw in the journal section of the *Account* was what Gray was also praising: his observations and awareness of their effects on him. However, Johnson did also sound a note of criticism in an earlier letter, which would strike another dominant chord in relation to critical responses to the *Tour to the Hebrides*:

I have omitted a long time to write to you, without knowing very well why. I could now tell why I should not write, for who would write to men who publish the letters of their friends without their leave?³

This idea of Boswell revealing too much of private conversation would help to dog his reputation for immorality and regular breaches of decorum over the next hundred years, particularly with reference to the *Tour to the Hebrides*.⁴ Initial critical responses were mixed between the celebration of a lively, entertaining book - though one largely seen as biography rather than travelogue - and overt censure for the way in which Boswell had not only revealed private conversation with Johnson which could show the latter in a less than favourable light, and his unflattering revelations about those who were still alive. *The Critical Review* of

¹ Larsen, p. 52.

² See James Boswell, *Boswell in Search of a Wife 1766-1769, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: William Heinemann, 1957), p. 177 for Pottle's insertions, and *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*. 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), volume 1, p. 328-9.

³ Letter to James Boswell 23 March 1768. Johnson, *Letters*, volume 1, p. 298.

⁴ Two particular combatants in this view were Thomas Babington Macaulay and Thomas Carlyle in reviewing Croker's edition of the *Life* in 1832, the former attacking Boswell for his personality and morality in 'revealing all', the latter defending Boswell's veracity, saying, 'He who speaks honestly cares not, needs not care, though his words be preserved to remotest time.' (Thomas Carlyle, 'Boswell's *Life of Johnson*', *English and Other Critical Essays* (London: Dent, 1925), p. 20.

November 1785 regarded Boswell's *Journal* as 'lively, and often a pleasant account of both men and their opinions' but felt that there was sometimes 'servility' in the way that Boswell wrote of Johnson, particularly questioning the value of some of the revelations, indicating that all he would be revealing, (the reviewer implying a destruction of Johnson's name and reputation) were the ashes of something that nobody truly wished to see, saying that the 'The reporter rather resembles the chamberlain of an inn in ruins; the badge of office is preserved, the keys are numerous, but nothing valuable is discovered on applying.'¹ *The Gentleman's Review* saw it as 'an excellent commentary on the Doctor's own Journey to the Western Isles', already recognising the intertextual reliance of the two texts (which would be built upon by twentieth century editors from R.W. Chambers onwards, seeing them as a joint text), but noted that whilst it was full of 'pleasure and profit' there were 'some errors of style'.²

The key issue for a number of reviewers was the legitimacy of the revealing of private conversation and habits. *The English Review* of November 1785 felt that the reader would see the merits of Johnson, but also the 'trifles and trash' with which Boswell filled out his text – though he did acknowledge, that this was also partly Johnson's own fault:

... we should have laid the blame of those trifles and trash, wholly on Mr Boswell if it did not appear that he was in the habit of reading his diary to his gigantic companion, who did not discountenance, but was flattered and pleased with it.³

This was a view supported by *The European Review* of December, arguing that Johnson's views were 'sure to be reported, and most probably with disadvantage and misconstruction', seeing them as public property in a man of Johnson's position in intellectual society, 'and posterity will certainly be pleased with the knowledge of them.'⁴ However, if Boswell's revelations were publicly controversial, in some of the private communications about his book

¹ *The Critical Review*, November 1785. See Larsen, p. 108.

² *The Gentleman's Magazine*. See James Boswell, *Boswell: The Applause of the Jury 1782-85, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: Heinemann, 1981), p. 350.

³ *The English Review*, November 1785. See Larsen, p. 112.

⁴ *The European Review*, December 1785. See Larsen, p. 115.

he fared little better. Beilby Porteus, Bishop of Chester, wished ‘many things...had been omitted’, feeling that all of Johnson’s early biographers (his ‘friends’ – presumably Hawkins, Piozzi, as well as Boswell) would work to destroy Johnson’s reputation or ‘absolutely kill him with kindness.’¹ James Beattie could disapprove of, but understand, Boswell’s disclosure of Johnson’s conversation, since ‘Johnson, it seems, knew, that the publication would be made, and did not object to it’ (a case of a man being careful of what he utters, and to whom he utters it), but could not countenance publishing ‘the sayings and doings of other people, who never consented to any such thing; and who little thought, when they were doing their best to entertain and amuse the two travellers, that a story would be made of it, and laid before the public.’² For Beattie, Johnson was fair game, others not so. As one reviewer argued, against those who berated Boswell for his indelicate exposure of ‘private’ conversation, ‘when a great man is exhibited in those moments in which he forgets his dignity, we rather blame the historian who records his weakness, than the hero, who in common life is no more than a common man.’³

Another of Boswell’s correspondents, Anna Seward, could also see how the *Tour to the Hebrides* operated beyond the breach of decorum, pointing a way to critical views of it as travelogue, rather than simply indiscreet biography:

I have written...my other literary correspondents upon the merits of your Tour; and in a spirit of warm encomium upon the gay benevolence, characteristic traits, scenic graces, and biographic fidelity which adorn its pages; observing also how valuable a counterpart it forms to Dr Johnson’s Tour to the Hebrides. In one we perceive, through a medium of solemn and sublime eloquence, in what light Scotland, her nobles, her professors, and her chieftains appeared to the then august wanderer; in the other how the growling philosopher appeared to them. If the use of biography is to ascertain and discriminate character, its domestic minuteness is its most essential excellence.⁴

It is, however, worth noting that Seward had an anti-Johnson agenda of her own, and felt that Boswell’s Journal, as Adam Rounce has argued, was ‘something of a whitewash’ (ironically,

¹ Beilby Porteus, Bishop of Chester, to James Beattie, November 1785. See Larsen, p. 128.

² James Beattie to Robert Arbuthnot, November 1785. See Larsen, p. 113.

³ The Monthly Review, April 1786. See John Kerr Spittal, *Contemporary Criticisms of Dr Samuel Johnson* (London: John Murray, 1923), p. 179.

⁴ Anna Seward to Boswell, March 1786. See Larsen, p. 134.

in the *Life of Johnson* Boswell actually edited Seward's unflattering verbatim record of Johnson's quarrel with Quaker Mary Knowles because it might be seen as too uncouth and damaging to Johnson's reputation).¹ What Boswell could not see, though, was that however the 'revelations' were criticised (and however they might result in threats from Lord Macdonald and refutation by Mrs Thrale), the book sold, his comments on Rowlandson's satirical caricatures called 'Picturesque Beauties of Boswell' suggesting that all publicity is good publicity: 'Ten prints in burlesque of my Tour to the Hebrides were published this morning. This enlivened the demand for the book.'² Boswell produced a more belligerent response to some of the criticism of his revelations in the 'Advertisement' to the rapidly produced third edition of 1786, reinforcing his veracity:

It would be an idle waste of time to take any particular notice of the futile remarks, to many of which, a petty national resentment, unworthy of my countrymen, has probably given rise; remarks which have been industriously circulated in the publick points of shallow or envious cavillers who have endeavoured to persuade the world that Dr Johnson's character has been *lessened* by recording such various instances of his lively wit and acute judgement, on every topick that was presented to his mind.³

The reputation for indiscretion would be a difficult one to shift, however, particularly after his death in 1795 when he could no longer reply, and would clearly be a source of embarrassment for his family, who hid his papers away.

2. Before Malahide

The years after Boswell's death in 1795 indicate the neglect of his travel works: the *Life of Johnson* was seen as the principal work, largely because of who it was about, rather than who it was by, echoing Gray's view of *Corsica*. Croker's integration of the *Tour to the Hebrides* in his edition of the *Life* (1831) was partly done because it was seen as the logical continuation of

¹ See Adam Rounce, *Fame and Failure 1720-1800: The Unfulfilled Literary Life* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 137.

² James Boswell, *Boswell, the English Experiment, 1785-1789, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: Heinemann, 1986), p. 69.

³ James Boswell, *A Tour to the Hebrides*. 3rd edn (London: Charles Dilly, 1786), 'Advertisement', pp. iv-v.

the *Life*, to ‘fill up the long and frequent chasms which exist in Boswell’s narrative’ rather than a work of travelogue in its own right, and partly because Croker could legally include it, whereas this had been prohibited to Boswell for copyright reasons, even if he had wished to see it as a constituent part of the *Life*.¹ Croker was also writing in ignorance of the differences between the published version of the *Tour* and the manuscript version which would not be discovered at Malahide Castle for another ninety years. Thus his lamentation desiring more on the travels of Charles Edward Stuart is thrown into sharp focus when the reader realises that Boswell added those details to the published version, whilst at the same time removing comments prejudicial to the Hanoverian monarchy, and omitting any reference to Culloden despite passing by the battlefield in the transit from Nairn to Fort George:

The foregoing account is by no means so full, or so curious, as might have been expected from Mr Boswell’s activity of inquiry, and his means of information. It relates only to a *few days* of the Pretender’s adventures, which, however, lasted *five months* [...] We should particularly have liked to know, from [Flora Macdonald’s] own report, the particulars of her examination and reception in London.²

In his efforts to inlay extra passages to the *Life* Croker was helped in the annotation of the *Tour* section by Sir Walter Scott, who added some anecdotal evidence, elaborating on the fight between Johnson and Lord Auchinleck. What seems constant, however, is that the additions were more geared to expanding the knowledge of Johnson than Boswell.

The next major edition of the text of the *Tour* was edited by Robert Carruthers of Inverness (1852).³ Carruthers’ identity as a Scot was important to this version of the text (indeed, it would be Moray McLaren’s preference for an edition when he was to revisit the Highland Jaunt in

¹ Croker’s Advertisement to the 1848 edition. James Boswell, *Boswell’s Life of Johnson: Including Their Tour to the Hebrides* (London: John Murray, 1848). As Brian Finney observed in 1982, the fact that the *Tour* represents a quarter of the time Boswell spent in the company of Johnson makes it logical that Boswell deliberately chose to publish separately: ‘No wonder Boswell chose to publish his narrative of their Scottish jaunt separately [...] Apart from anything else, Boswell’s *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* is a chronological account of the deepening and soldering of a famous literary friendship which began in inequality and ended in mutual admiration and affection.’ Brian Finney, ‘Boswell’s ‘Hebridean Journal’ and the Ordeal of Dr Johnson’, *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, 5 (1982), p. 319.

² Croker, p. 331.

³ James Boswell, *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (London: New Illustrated Library, 1852).

1954). Carruthers, however, still maintained the focus on Johnson as subject rather than Boswell as author:

This Journal could hardly fail to gain immediate popularity. Both the subject and the plan of the work were attractive. No author, perhaps, ever stood higher with his contemporaries, or was regarded with greater interest as a man, than Johnson. His writings were in all hands, and his Dictionary was looked upon as a national triumph [...] The chief interest of Boswell's Journal lies in the central figure so fully developed – in the sage of Bolt Court exploring the wilds of the Hebrides.¹

Further to this Carruthers saw the *Tour* as being lesser than Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*:

Boswell's journal is, of course, pitched in a lower key. How far he was justified in relating all he saw and heard in the course of the Tour, is a question not likely to be very nicely weighed by those who have derived so much genuine pleasure from his revelations. We judge the case from the parties he visited, many of whom were dragged into unwelcome and unenviable notoriety.²

Carruthers, however, could see the benefits of revelation to entertainment, even if he maintained the adverse moral judgement on his fellow Scot. Many of Carruthers' notes to the edition are to clarify Scottish details of landscape, language (such as Boswell's Gaelic inaccuracies), and personality, particularly on the disappeared Highland life post-Culloden and post-clearances:

Notwithstanding the novelties of their journey, Johnson said they had gone too late to the Hebrides to see a people of peculiar appearance and a system of antiquated life [...] The last gleams of romance in Highland life had been extinguished at Culloden...³

There were however, signs of a sea-change in Boswellian studies, primarily in relation to the *Life*, but also in terms of the travel books with the work of George Birkbeck Hill. Hill is most renowned as the editor of the first truly scholarly edition of the *Life of Johnson*, but he also edited Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to Corsica* (1879) and retraced the Highland Jaunt (1890).⁴ Hill essentially saw the Corsican journal alongside the letters to the Honourable Andrew Erskine as juvenilia that pointed the way forward to the *Life*. He was, nonetheless,

¹ Carruthers, p. v-viii.

² Carruthers, p. x.

³ Carruthers, p. xi.

⁴ James Boswell, *Boswell's Correspondence with the Honourable Andrew Erskine and His Journal of a Tour to Corsica* (London: 1879); George Birkbeck Hill, *Footsteps of Dr Johnson (Scotland)* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1890).

amongst the first to formally acknowledge how *Corsica* had made Boswell as a literary figure, saying that ‘it was to Corsica and its heroic chief that he owed the position that he undoubtedly held among men of letters. He was Corsica Boswell and Paoli Boswell long before he became famous as Johnson Boswell.’¹ Hill did not reproduce the text of the ‘Account’, only the ‘Journal’, breaking the back of the text in two. His justification was logical, but failed to acknowledge the unity of the original text²:

Boswell, unsurpassed though he is as a biographer, admirable as he is as a writer of a Journal, yet had little of the stuff out of which an historian is made. His compilation is a creditable performance for a young man who had but lately returned home from his travels.³

W. Keith Leask (1896), in his short biography of Boswell (proof-read by Hill), produced a stout defence of Boswell (as a fellow Scot), but also started to push the idea of Boswell as a travel writer, particularly claiming that Boswell’s *Tour* was superior to Johnson’s *Journey*, and blazed a trail not just for travellers, but also for travel writers:

His *Tour* created a type; no better volume of travels has ever been written than the *Journal* [...] He has invented nothing, he has only reported. But every year sees that person at work, with his *First Impressions of Brittany*, *Three Weeks in Greece*, and the everlasting *Tour in Tartanland*. These are the creations of the note-book, but it has given them no permanence. The tourist puts in everything he sees, truly enough, or thinks he sees. But it is the art of Boswell to select ‘the characteristic’, and the typical, to group and dramatize. Ninety-four days he spent on the northern tour, and the result is a masterpiece. Pepys is garrulous, often vulgar, always lower-middle-class; but Boswell writes like a gentleman.⁴

By the turn of the twentieth century, scholars such as George Mallory (1912) and Chauncey B. Tinker (1922) were following Hill to look at Boswell in his own right rather than as a mere appendage to the ‘Great Cham’.⁵ Mallory was working from Boswell’s published material rather than any manuscript versions and saw Boswell as a moralist concerned with truth,

¹ Hill, *Corsica*, p. i.

² Morchard Bishop, in his edition of the *Journal* in 1951, pointed out the neglect of *Corsica*. Between the edition of 1768 and the OUP edition of 2006 there were only three issues of *Corsica* - in 1879 (Hill), 1923 (Roberts), and 1951 (Bishop). Only the OUP edition of 2006 has reproduced the original text in full. All of the others removed the ‘Account.’ As Bishop said in his introduction, ‘This tale of comparative neglect, when we consider the innumerable editions of the *Life of Johnson* and the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, would seem strange, and would indeed seem to indicate that the *Corsica* book, unlike its successors, had little to recommend it, were it not that far better judges than the present writer have agreed with him in thinking otherwise.’ James Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to Corsica: And Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1951).

³ Hill, *Corsica*, p. iv.

⁴ W. Keith Leask, *James Boswell* (Edinburgh and London: Oliphant Anderson and Ferrier, 1896), p. 147.

⁵ George Mallory, *Boswell the Biographer* (London: Smith, Elder & Co, 1912); Chauncey B. Tinker, *Young Boswell* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922).

reviving the argument in all of Boswell's best writing about revelation being justified, as in his view of *Corsica*:¹

The chief interest of the book is that it is the earliest example of Boswell's biographical method. The memoirs that we have here of Paoli aim at giving a picture of a man in much the same way as does the *Life of Johnson* [...] The book, at all events, had the effect of amusing people and it gave them an interest in Corsica too. Boswell had good accounts of it on all sides [...] Already we may see the great contest in his life between natural candour and commonplace ambition – the charm of the *Tour to Corsica* was the charm of candour, and it was dangerous to dreams of future greatness in the sphere of political affairs.²

Mallory, however, did still see the travel works, and the *Tour to the Hebrides* in particular, as adjuncts to the *Life of Johnson*:

The *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* must be criticised as a book along with the *Life of Johnson* and not apart from it. It is, in a sense, but a portion of the larger work. The same genius, the same art, has made two incomparable books [...] The *Tour*, however – and this is the one important difference – is concerned with Johnson in an extraordinary phase of his life, and one which is not treated in the larger work. Johnson is on a holiday.³

For Mallory the other early biographers were 'impressionists' in the artistic sense, who did not have Boswell's propensity for observation and detailing. Mallory also introduced a few tentative elements of stylistic analysis and an understanding of the methodology of the biographer:

They looked at 'wild objects' because they were unusual, and eschewed almost entirely scenery of a tamer spirit. They were interested in 'manners.' The *Journal* bears out this statement. Observations about the people of the country are part of the traveller's stock-in-trade, and they seem to be one of the *raisons d'être* of Boswell's book.⁴

Tinker's work was based more on primary sources than Mallory, since he was editing the (then) definitive edition of Boswell's correspondence, and had a useful sense of how Boswell reshaped material between the commonplace book and the *Life*. This would tie to the journals after the Malahide find, particularly the *Tour to the Hebrides*, which told a more vivid story in a more lively way than the *Life* and with a greater sense of how the text actually reflected travel.

As far as Tinker was concerned, 'More than any work of Boswell's it preserves the freshness

¹ Mallory was operating without the opportunity that Pottle et al would have to use the Boswell papers to confirm his view of Boswell: he does allude to their existence but could not get access to them. It would be another decade before the Malahide find and then the steady publication of the private papers.

² Mallory, pp. 59-64.

³ Mallory, p. 217.

⁴ Mallory, pp. 210-11.

and authenticity of his journals' with a 'unity and intimacy' lacking in the *Life of Johnson*, 'depicting Johnson in an unusual environment, likely to stimulate his powers of observation and lend point and colour to his remarks. It tells the story of a long holiday'. It was, in short, a text showing 'two friends whose chief aim, at the moment, is to have a good time.'¹The discovery and, ultimately, the publication of the papers from Malahide and Fettercairn would throw assessments of Boswell's travel writings into a sharp relief of which critics such as Hill, Tinker, and Mallory could only have dreamed – at a time when the critical sensibilities of the establishment were ready for them (and when Boswell's descendants were happy to release them to Ralph Isham and, in due course, Frederick Pottle and Yale University for academic study).

3. After Malahide: The Yale 'Factory', Biographers and the Early Search for Style

The discovery of the Boswell papers, and Yale University's gradual publication (from 1950 and ongoing), helped to re-launch his reputation and interest beyond his work as the author of the *Life*. More importantly, it allowed scholars to see into a version of James Boswell that had previously been seen only in his selected letters, commonplace book, and in the published travel books – the private 'Boswell' revealed by his jottings and writing up of his daily journal. In essence they made Boswell a fit subject for scholarly biography and analysis, helped to reveal his private responses to reviews, but also exposed a man who wrote journals beyond Corsica and the Hebrides: they showed a man who travelled widely in the eighteenth century on the Grand Tour, leaving a substantial and original account of his peregrinations from London, through Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Corsica, and France, but who also aspired to travel with Cook to the South Seas; they showed a man who read widely in the genre as well as contributing to the genre; and they showed a man who was perpetually travelling

¹ Tinker, pp. 218-9.

and rarely arriving. They also, however, created a problem of scale for the reader (thirty five years' worth of documentation to transcribe and interpret), and, as Irma S. Lustig has said, 'Boswell suffers from good fortune: the popularity of his *London Journal* since its publication in 1950 has fixed his image for many readers as perpetually immature.'¹ They opened up questions over how the reader should perceive differing versions of texts (manuscript and published versions), leading to scholarly debates over editorial practice and, logically, the benefits of parallel texts to show and review Boswell's revisions.

The greatest figure in the Yale 'factory' was Frederick Pottle, who oversaw the project until his death, and many of those who followed came through his class at Yale or the Boswell project (such as Frank Brady, Irma S. Lustig, and Charles McC. Weis). This material was obviously a boon for the Boswell biographers, yet they have had remarkably little to say about Boswell as a travel writer – instead, it seems to have fuelled more their view of his personal life or a fascination with the genesis of the *Life* as a terminal point. Pottle's concern with *Corsica* in the first volume of the standard biography (1966) was to chart the story of the text and its reception and Boswell's reaction to it, rather than to provide any real generic analysis:

In its sale *Corsica* was the eighteenth-century equivalent of a book-club selection. And the further analogy of the present-day digests was not wanting. Newspapers and reviews printed long extracts, one monthly magazine in fact giving its readers in five instalments a slightly condensed version of half the book. A great many people who never looked into *Corsica* itself must have known something about its contents.²

Brady did not take this much further in his second volume (1984), but did at least identify a difference between the two travel books and start to move beyond simply reworking the journals into a summative biography:

...it was a work that fitted customary genres and expectations awkwardly, and the critics, conscious they upheld standards of taste and judgement in an ever-collapsing world were more hesitant than the public [...] a closely connected point was the inclusion of so much minutiae. Detail was associated with low forms like the novel or comedy or satire; it had no place in an elevated or instructive work. In the *Account of*

¹ Irma S. Lustig, 'Introduction', in *Boswell: Citizen of the World, Man of Letters*, ed. by Irma S. Lustig (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), p. 7.

² Frederick A. Pottle, *James Boswell: The Earlier Years 1740-1769* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1985), p. 357.

Corsica Boswell adhered to conventional practice: his Plutarchian depiction of Paoli could not accommodate unifying detail.¹

This should not be surprising: Pottle was writing in the aftermath of his own editions of the private papers; Brady was writing in the light of much new independent scholarship, including his own PhD thesis on Boswell's political career, later published.² Pottle was the pioneer and trailblazer, and Brady and his ilk followed in the wake of Pottle's work on the editions of the journals. Successive biographers have tended to follow the same line. Peter Martin's biography (1999) passes some undeveloped judgements on *Corsica* and the *Tour to the Hebrides* and then moves swiftly on to anticipate the concerns of the *Life*:

The journal section appealed also because of its imagery, touches of immediacy, the ability to create a living scene or catch the essence of character. The public had not seen anything like this before. It was a new style of travelogue and biography, combined with an extraordinary self-portrait.³

John Radner, in his joint biography of Boswell and Johnson (2012), is probably the most focused of Boswell's biographers on his development as a writer, moving beyond narrative description to assess his aesthetics and process of composition:

When Boswell revised [the *Tour*] for publication in 1785, he described this sharing as an "ordeal" [...] But sharing the journal also allowed Boswell to pose questions, to communicate what he could not otherwise say, to present in full his vision of their friendship, and to establish his narrative authority [...] Reading the journal made Johnson a more self-conscious participant in the collaborative production of his experience, deliberately helping to shape the biography Boswell would eventually write.⁴

Radner also shows a greater engagement and awareness of the different 'Boswells' in the aftermath of the availability, publication of, and research on the manuscript versions of the *Tour*:

Besides being less dependent on Johnson's mental strength, the "Boswell" of the *Tour* is more thoughtful and reasonable, more poised and self-assured than the one in the journal [...] he cut the specific examples of this credulity. He retained his earlier assessments of Johnson's opinions and observations, at times significantly augmented his role in conversation, and in footnotes further objected to some of Johnson's assertions.⁵

¹ Frank Brady, *James Boswell: The Later Years 1769-1795* (London: Heinemann, 1984), pp. 296-7.

² Frank Brady, *Boswell's Political Career* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965).

³ Peter Martin, *A Life of James Boswell* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999), p. 219.

⁴ John B. Radner, *Johnson and Boswell: A Biography of Friendship* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2012), pp 135-142.

⁵ Radner, p. 308

In essence Boswellian biography reflects the changing scholarship and awareness of key facets in Boswell's writing and how critical taste regards it: as writer of travelogue; as literary stylist; as psychological case study; and as political and Scotocentric analysis. Boswell criticism has fluctuated with the seasons, most recently in the form of Robert Zaretsky's work on Boswell's relationship to the Enlightenment (2015).¹

Works of criticism that have focused on Boswell's style in the travel books have tended to see it as developmental towards the *Life*. Whilst William R. Siebenscuh (1972) did at least argue for seeing the published works separately there is still a focus on the development of a biographical style. This is seen in *Corsica* as 'Plutarchian' biography (the idealised representation of Paoli):

It was important to present Paoli as both a romantic and heroic extension of the virtues of his people and yet a leader both acceptable and admirable by European standards – a man with whom a country like Britain could negotiate formality.²

For Siebenscuh, Boswell's voice in the Corsican 'journal' becomes a rhetorical device to show the Corsicans to their best advantage, whilst in the *Tour to the Hebrides* he sees Boswell's style developing to 'Flemish' biography (attention to personal detail in the portrait of Johnson) that would become part and parcel of the *Life*, stressing the contrast between the public Johnson and the situations in which he found himself – but reinforcing the public perception of Johnson. Here the dominant device used by Boswell is contrast: contrast in shaping the original journal for publication; contrast to stimulate comic absurdity or juxtapositioning; problems of emphasising the contrast (diminishing and stereotyping Johnson); metaphor to emphasise the contrast; Boswell as narrator and story-teller/guide, with Johnson made to look out of place.³

¹ Robert Zaretsky, *Boswell's Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015).

² William R. Siebenscuh, *Form and Purpose in Boswell's Biographical Works* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1972), p. 14.

³ Siebenscuh, pp. 33-41. Spacks would reinforce this view of Boswell's studied persona: 'Boswell depicts himself in the text mainly as naif, always deferring to Johnson's superior wisdom and experience. But increasingly also he presents himself as author, specifically as intending biographer, asking Johnson questions about his past, copying extracts from his diary, criticizing the inadequacy of friends who fail to write down what they hear...' Patricia Meyer Spacks, 'Gossip', in *James Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986), p. 135.

For William C. Dowling (1979) a nostalgic and romanticised search for the heroic is the dominant stylistic motif of the travel books:

The Tour to Corsica [...] and the *Tour to the Hebrides* [...] are usually classified as travel books, but both are really books about heroes, men who represent what Carlyle called “superior natures” and whose moral nature Boswell found a matter of considerable fascination [...] Boswell’s great subject is the hero in an unheroic world [...] In place of retrospective denunciation Boswell gives us a fully dramatized picture of the unheroic present, but his judgement of the eighteenth century involves a similar dismay. The world Boswell describes is one in which intellectual doubt seems to have changed suddenly and mysteriously into moral doubt and where spiritual paralysis has become the price of that noble scepticism which was to have set men free.¹

In both books Boswell is searching for the living past:

If a strong sense of the historical past haunts the landscape of the *Tour*, there is also a sense in which the present reality of Hebridean life is the past [...] The Erse songs, and the simplicity of the diversion, are such as have been devised by a people shut off for ages from the outside world, and we have a sense of Johnson and Boswell as visitors from a different age. Ignorant of the language and content to observe, they gaze upon the scene as a tableau of older times.²

For Dowling, then, travel becomes a metaphor for life, a search for identity and Utopia, an escape from the self into an idealised but disappearing past. As Dowling says, ‘Boswell [...] is a Raphael Hythloday’, and his travels assume a ‘half-mythic’ status.³

4. Travel, Politics, and the Scotocentric

Analysis of Boswell as a specifically travel-oriented writer has been very limited. Patrick Anderson’s work (1969) was largely biographical, focused only on Boswell as part of three writers on the Grand Tour, and had little analysis of what sort of travel writer he was:

Boswell expected a great deal from his foreign travel: no young man can have expected more. He wanted to grow up, to prove himself strong and manly and, as we have seen, to achieve a balanced, consistent character.⁴

Scholarship turned more to Boswell as travel writer from the early 1990s onwards. Thomas M. Curley’s essay (1991) appearing in a collection to mark the bicentenary of the *Life* was the first to look in a detailed and scholarly way at Boswell as a travel writer in the context of eighteenth-

¹ William C. Dowling, *The Boswellian Hero* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1979), pp. 2-7.

² Dowling, pp. 61-63.

³ Dowling, p. 106.

⁴ Patrick Anderson, *Over the Alps: In the Steps of Boswell, Beckford and Byron* (London: Rupert Hart-Davies, 1969), p. 61.

century travelogue.¹ Even this essay, though, only looked at *Corsica*, not connecting the two published travel books together:

A comparable coverage of the flora and fauna, and inhabitants is present in Boswell's travel book, which ends with a first-person narrative of his adventures with Paoli. His description also incorporates features found in travelogues about Grand Touring [...] Boswell, in the true terra incognita of Corsica, made sure to combine encyclopaedic reporting with a Grand Tourist's journal of his political education at the hands of Paoli and his followers [...] Boswell, like Sterne and Johnson, faced the problem of standardization and happily found a solution that parallels innovations in the contemporaneous *A Sentimental Journey* for an age of sensibility.²

Curley sees how Boswell's conception of Corsica fits Rousseau's criteria in *The Social Contract*, and opens up ideas for the politicising of the text: specifically he recognises *Corsica* as being much more propagandistic and radical than the *Tour to the Hebrides* or the *Life*.³ Most importantly of all he sees indications of the Romantic within *Corsica*:

In keeping with current Romantic tastes in travel literature, there is an intimate, first-person unfolding of the tourist's gradual imaginative identification with the landscape, the inhabitants, and, ultimately, the leader of Corsica...⁴

Allan Ingram, however, in his psychologically-based assessment of Boswell (based on his PhD thesis) questioned Boswell's conscious radicalism, arguing instead that 'Boswell attempted to transfer what he had been able to do anonymously within one accepted tradition to another very different tradition, with consequent grave infringements of the rules of social and literary propriety [...] The published Hebrides journal, then, represents not Boswell's deliberate attempt to free himself from the encumbrances of eighteenth-century literary propriety, but a further miscalculation of the social role of a writer.' For Ingram, Boswell's 'radicalism' was more of a 'miscalculation' since he confused the roles and traditions of the travel writer, essayist, satirist, and biographer. For Boswell's contemporaries revealing personal and private circumstances, or conversation and peccadilloes, was seen as indiscreet and indelicate; for the

¹ Thomas M. Curley, 'Boswell's Liberty-Loving Account of Corsica and the Art of Travel Literature', in *New Light on Boswell*, ed. by Greg Clingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

² Curley, p. 90.

³ Allan Ingram, *Boswell's Creative Gloom: A Study of Imagery and Melancholy in the Writings of James Boswell* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 111-2.

⁴ Curley, p. 99.

twentieth (and now twenty-first) century reader it is a commonplace in an age when many live their private lives in public via social media, and the media in general has a 'social role' to bring to the public what would have been seen as indecorous and embarrassing in the eighteenth century, often masquerading as 'public interest'.

The first major scholarly and book-length treatment of Boswell's travel writing was written by Pat Rogers (1995), though even this is essentially a collection of varied but related essays (some actually on Johnson) rather than a consistent thesis.¹ Rogers' focus is on the *Tour to the Hebrides*, rather on the body of Boswell's travel writing, and references to his other travel book and journals, whilst not incidental, are not the main focus of his attention. In the first instance he sees Boswell's purpose in the *Tour* as a response to Johnson's *Journey*, even though the original manuscript was composed before Johnson's, and read (by Johnson) before Johnson's was written:

His own *Tour* is in part a means of supplying the deficiencies of the *Journey* – deficiencies, that is, in displaying Scottish culture as a whole. Boswell shared many of his friend's views about the Highlands and islands, where of course he was as much of a stranger as the Englishman. But he wanted the story of their trip to include the renown of Edinburgh intellectual life, perversely left out of Johnson's account, and so his own narrative spends pages at the beginning and end on this slighted portion of the tour.²

Whilst this statement is true of the published *Tour*, it is not true of the original manuscript, and opens up for debate questions of how the *Tour* should be considered in both published and unpublished forms. Rogers does, however, present the *Tour* in the context of the Grand Tour and Grand Tourists:

...grand tourists usually generally met each other: they hung around together in Rome, they attended the same soirees in Florence, they employed the same guides in Naples, they were presented to the same noblemen in Venice [...] By contrast, the travellers in Scotland, once they had passed the university cities and embarked on the main, met nobody they knew (with very few exceptions), nobody similarly engaged on such a tour, hardly anybody of their own social position, scarcely anyone with an English background [...] Underlying this difference is a more fundamental fact. The grand Tour was in essence an urban experience; though the traveller had to get from one place to another, this was regarded as a disagreeable necessity – the real point of the exercise lay in the sojourn at towns and courts.³

¹ Pat Rogers, *Johnson and Boswell: The Transit of Caledonia* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

² Rogers, p. 5.

³ Rogers, pp. 48-9.

He acknowledges Boswell's fascination with travel writing, and builds on the work of Pottle in the Yale editions of the journals to show how Boswell was seeking to network with other writers:

As an inveterate journalist, Boswell had seen the opportunity for good copy when Banks and Solander returned from Iceland and turned up in Edinburgh in November 1772, a few weeks after Pennant had passed through. Boswell had met both Banks and Solander the previous March, on one of his London jaunts, and he had discussed with Johnson the degree of credit which they should receive for the scientific side of the first Cook expedition [...] In fact, by this stage Boswell had evidently resolved to become something of an expert on travel and its literature. This may be in part because it was popular and newsworthy; in part because he had scored his only great success to date with a modified travel book, *The Account of Corsica* in 1768.¹

Rogers is also careful to make it clear that the *Tour* is travelogue, and not simply a trial run for the *Life*:²

It is worth reminding ourselves here that the title of each work does refer to an actual itinerary – *A Journey to*, not a survey of, *the Western Islands*; *The Journal of a Tour to*, not a sojourn in, *the Hebrides*. What this means in practice is that even the broader and more abstract questions of politics, society, and culture which arise in the two narratives need to be judged against the insights of the travellers opening up the contemporary picture of human achievement.³

He also looks to the comparisons between the *Tour* and *Corsica*, which pointed the way forward for those critics (especially Scottish ones) to interpret Boswell as a Scot and as politically astute. This is partly shown through his attention to Boswell's potential Jacobitism in the editorial decisions he made in the production of the published *Tour*: his detailing of 'the Pretender's flight' which has 'no basis in the private journal'; the information on Flora Macdonald, which far surpasses anything in Johnson's account; and the fact that he chose to bring Johnson to Skye with its 'strong associations with the events of 1746.'⁴ Rogers does not really focus on how Boswell's Jacobitism was, after his experiences on the Grand Tour, largely a sentimental form of affection for a 'lost cause' blown apart by 1773 with Henry Stuart's conversion to Catholicism and the priesthood, but does recognise in Boswell's writing the

¹ Rogers, p. 71.

² This has been increasingly common with the movement to parallel texts of Boswell and Johnson's Hebridean books. See, for example, Samuel Johnson, and James Boswell, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (London: Penguin, 1984), edited by Peter Levi.

³ Rogers, p. 83.

⁴ Rogers, p. 140-144.

parallels between the Corsicans and Scottish Highlanders as noble savages, with the ‘pathos’ of ancient cultures being eroded by Hanoverian progress (via punitive laws and economic realities) and Stuart decline (emigration and the passing of the clan system):

...it was not just the liberty of the Corsican people, it was the independence and freedom of James Boswell which fed both his journey through Corsica and the book he made of it. Unquestionably, the Hebridean trip was meant to provide a renewal of these gratifications. There was no live hero on the spot, as with Paoli, so Boswell adapted Johnson for his purposes and resurrected the absent Prince [...] The Corsicans briefly become idyllic Tahitians [...] It is Ossian in a warm climate.¹

This movement to seeing the travel books in the light of political comparisons is most notable in what can be seen as Scotocentric criticism. In many ways this began with Frank Brady looking at Boswell’s political career (1965), but picked up momentum in the late 1980s with critics such as Kenneth Simpson in his collection of essays focused on the developing identity of Scottish literature and, more importantly, Scottish writers in the eighteenth-century (1988).² Thomas Crawford pushed this further, seeing Boswell as a youthful traveller championing freedom fighters, an extension of the romantic ideal of a lost world of feudal Highlanders, a proto-revolutionary:

...the publication of his *Account of Corsica* (1768) and *Essays in Favour of the Brave Corsicans* (1769) makes Boswell a worthy member of that distinguished band of British writers (e.g. Byron, George Orwell, John Cornford) who have actively championed European freedom-fighters.³

Crawford draws a lot out of the Corsican journal to see an idealistic Boswell:

...it was, then, in Corsica that Boswell’s libertarianism came to the fore and its qualities were defined; and it is surely not too far-fetched to claim that heroic images, not just of the Fifteen and the Forty-five, but also of the war of Independence, of Bruce and Wallace, played their part in the feeling-structure of *the Journal of a Tour to Corsica*. The deduction follows inevitably from Boswell’s choice for the epigraph for the published *Corsica*, taken from the Declaration of Arbroath, the manifesto of his beloved Scots barons: “We do not fight for glory, wealth, or honours, but solely for that liberty without which no virtuous man will survive.”

If anything, though, this is to see *Corsica* principally as a vehicle for a political agenda (and a relatively short lived one at that), and ignore the central unity of the full work, concentrating instead solely on the ‘Journal’ rather than the ‘Account’ (with its conventional eighteenth-

¹ Rogers, pp. 159-161.

² Kenneth Simpson, ‘The Chameleon Scot: James Boswell’, in *The Protean Scot: The Crisis of Identity in Eighteenth Century Scottish Literature* (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1988).

³ Thomas Crawford, *Boswell, Burns, and the French Revolution* (Edinburgh: The Saltire Society, 1990), p. 12.

century attention to landscape, history and art) as so many writers previously had. The connection to the *Tour* is incidental and inferential. There is no attempt to see beyond the idea of the ‘Journal’ as a political tract, and no attempt to consider the text in its fullest, though, to be fair to Crawford, as has already been noted, there was no full, scholarly edition in existence until 2006, so the omission is an understandable one. It is time that the ‘Account’ was reclaimed by scholarly analysis: even if, as Johnson felt, it was derivative, it still works as part of a coherent whole.¹ What seems to be prevalent in this brand of criticism is the attempt to reclaim Boswell for the Scots – he is less the author of a travel work, and more a Scottish ‘man of letters’. This can be seen in the work of Roger Craik (1994), published under the imprimatur of the Edinburgh branch of HMSO, raising the achievement of Boswell in his account of the Hebrides in opposition to that of his travelling companion:

Since the 1920s the two accounts of their journey have been published as parallel texts. They make a fascinating contrast. Johnson’s *Journey* is matter-of-fact, philosophical, magisterial in style. Boswell’s *Journal* is bubbling, gossipy and full of day-to-day details. Johnson’s work is largely impersonal, Boswell’s is personal to the point of embarrassment. Even twelve years after the event, the publication of Boswell’s book provoked mirth, outrage, caricature and threats of violence. Both works have great merit, but Boswell’s is the living document.²

Murray Pittock (2007) also sees Boswell’s work as that of a Scottish thinker, drawing upon his ‘fratritism’ – his affinity with causes and heroic figures who correlated with Highland culture and the Jacobite cause:

It is a fact which has been little remarked that Scottish and Irish writers and public figures of the long eighteenth century (and indeed beyond) were given to adopting the national causes of other countries with a passion and vigour which might readily be interpreted as reflecting on the situation of their own: the adoption of colonized nations and cultures as a means of expressing reservations concerning the nature and development of empire, and their own place within it.³

Pittock also points to how Corsica had already been used as a ‘code in Jacobite circles for Britain under the alien occupation of Genoese/Hanoverians’, though this can be seen in the

¹ As Paul Baines said in his review of the OUP edition of 2006: ‘The editors rightly dispute the hierarchy implicit in this division, and unlike previous editors, they reprint the combined text. The distinction is less abrupt than might appear from the design, since the history is not simply a compilation of previously published accounts: Boswell is always present, noting, observing, pointing out the connection between historical process and the political situation.’ Paul Baines, ‘An Account of Corsica: The Journal of a Tour to That Island; and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli’, *Modern Language Review*, 103 (2008), p. 827.

² Roger Craik, *James Boswell (1740-1795): The Scottish Perspective* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1994), p. 107.

³ Murray Pittock, *James Boswell* (Aberdeen: AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, 2007), p. 43.

tone of Boswell's writings as less a strong statement about the present political realities, and more a sentimental attachment to the past.¹ Indeed, as will be seen, when Boswell did argue the case for the freeing of Corsica from Genoese oppression, the French takeover of the island was already a *fait accompli*, and Paoli was poised to go into exile, so Boswell was still pursuing what was largely a romantic ideal at the point when that ideal disappeared. What becomes clear is that, for the most recent Scottish critics, Boswell's travel works, but especially *Corsica*, become symbolic of the cause of Scottish independence from Hanoverian oppression, perhaps symptomatic of a growing movement to devolution and political separation from England in the twenty-first century.²

5. The Pilgrims to the Highlands and Islands

One area that has received little attention beyond the cursory is that of those who have followed in the footsteps of Boswell and Johnson, using them as guides or the foundation of their travel. Whilst they may seem to be non-literary or unscholarly in some cases (though by no means all), what they show is a marked resistance to looking at the travel works as either biographies or stepping stones on the way to the production of the *Life of Johnson*. If anything, they show the narrator-travellers engaging with Boswell in the same way that he can be seen engaging with Joseph Addison's *Remarks*, in Italy in 1764.³ They also show how Boswell's reputation has changed, as has his position as a writer in relation to his eminent colleague. The first to address this was George Birkbeck Hill (1890), whose focus was clearly on Johnson as the

¹ Pittock, p. 76. He also argues against Pottle's view that Boswell consorted with Jacobites on the Grand Tour because they were Scots, seeing some of his correspondence as verging on treason: 'less than high treason, but it was more than a game.' (p. 79)

² See Orrin N. C. Wang, 'The Politics of Aphasia in Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides', *Criticism: A Quarterly for Literature and the Arts*, 36 (1994), p. 76.

³ See Joseph Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* (Dublin: T Walker, 1723), p. 26, and Boswell, *Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica and France*, p. 45. As Frank Delaney has said, 'the exercise seems to get repeated every generation or so.' See Frank Delaney, *A Walk to the Western Isles after Boswell & Johnson* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 5.

senior partner.¹ Hill tends to see Boswell as verifying or corroborating Johnson's view of Scotland, using Boswell's narrative alongside that of Johnson's letters to Mrs Thrale and Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands*, rather than being interested in him in his own right,² Hill seems to share much of the Whig historian's view of the Stuarts, in the tradition of Macaulay:

The grandson [Charles Edward Stuart], before many years passed over his head, proved not unworthy of the grandfather – equally mean and equally selfish. The happy failure of the rebels hindered him from displaying his vices, with a kingdom for a stage. His worthlessness, which though it might have been suspected from his stock, could not have been known in his youth...³

Hill also stresses the differences between travel in 1773 and 1890, with a subtle note of criticism that seems to echo Boswell and Johnson's own melancholy observations on the passage of time:

No southerner went up to the Highlands to hunt, or shoot, or fish. No one sought there a purer air. It was after Johnson's tour that an English writer urged the citizens of Edinburgh to plant trees in the neighbourhood of their town because "the increase of vegetation would purify the air, and dispel those putrid and noxious vapours which are frequently wafted from the Highlands."...to us nursed in the romantic school, the language of Johnson and of his contemporaries about the wild scenes of nature never fails to rouse our astonishment and our mirth [...] The ordinary reader is prone to attribute to an insensibility to beauty in Johnson what, to a greater extent, was common to most of the men of his time.⁴

What is also interesting in the text is that whilst Johnson is the overt focus, Hill also provides passionate rhetoric in praise of Boswell, anticipating the transition in attitudes that would be so prevalent in the twentieth century:

It is a melancholy thing that Boswell's descendants should have seen their famous ancestor's faults so clearly as to have been unable to enjoy that pride which was so justly their due, in being sprung from a man of such real, if curious genius. Was it nothing to have written the best biography which the world has ever seen? [...] What pilgrimages have not men made from the other side of the Atlantic to the same spots! With their Boswell in their hands they have wandered by Charing Cross [...] There are thousands and ten thousands of Scotchmen who got knocked on their heads in border forays, but only one who wrote the *Life of Johnson*.⁵

¹ George Birkbeck Hill, *Footsteps of Dr Johnson (Scotland)* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1890). It is to be wondered as to whether a book called *Footsteps of James Boswell* would have sold in the pre-Malahide literary world.

² Hill makes frequent use of Boswell as a corroborating source with statements such as 'as we learn from Boswell', 'which Boswell mentions', 'Boswell is equally reticent', 'Boswell's account is no less dismal', 'in this opinion Boswell concurred'.

³ Hill, p. 182.

⁴ Hill, pp. 25-6.

⁵ Hill, pp. 285-6.

By the 1950s, in the aftermath of the publication of the trade editions of Boswell's early journals, this focus had shifted from Johnson to Boswell.¹ Moray McLaren (1954) looked at only a part of the Hebridean journey (specifically the Highland section from Edinburgh to Inverness), showing a clear sense of the romantic imagination interacting with Boswell's traveller's tale:

...ever since Boswell first published his account of the Tour and of Johnson's arrival in Edinburgh, people have delighted to call up in fancy what it was they said to each other as they went up the way to Boswell's house [...] and hundreds of Johnsonians and Boswellians have trod the modern paving stones of the Royal Mile in daytime, in dusk and at night in endeavours to recapture the atmosphere of an immortal occasion, an immortal walk.²

Like Hill, McLaren highlights the difficulty of meeting the world of 1773, echoing the thoughts of Robert Carruthers (the fellow Scot whose century-old edition of the *Tour* McLaren used as his guide):

Today, despite the fact that it is possible to fly from Glasgow to the Outer Hebrides in one hour, despite two centuries of expropriation, of enforced migration, of 19th-century sheep-farming and sporting encroachment, despite the years of "Balmorality", the curious and inquisitive modern traveller can experience all these things (even to the meeting with monoglot Gaels) that Boswell and Johnson experienced up to the point of their first night at Anoch. But he cannot join them there or thereafter; for at that place they were to enter a world and a way of living that has gone (in Scotland at least) forever.³

McLaren could see, as Boswell did, the innate rights of his natives to make of their country what they could:

What right had I to object if astute business men cashed in, as it were, on the vacuum with their tartan souvenirs, their Bonny Prince Charlie liqueurs, their bus trips in the footsteps of Flora Macdonald, and so on? What right had I to object if even the lairds chose to work up beanfeasts of loyalty from the plutocratic descendants of exiled Skyemen across the Atlantic? [...] Ye-olde-halfe-tymbered tea-rooms were proving just as lucrative for the English as were all the tartan gew-gaws for the mass-producing merchants of Glasgow.⁴

It is not quite a statement about the inability to eat scenery, but it is not far off.

¹ 'Ay, Boswell. Yon was the felly who was always going with whures and pitting it doon on paper.' See Moray McLaren, *The Highland Jaunt: A Study of James Boswell and Samuel Johnson Upon Their Highland and Hebridean Tour of 1773* (London: Jarrolds Publishers, 1954), p. 30. McLaren also made a journey to Corsica – see Moray McLaren, *Corsica Boswell: Paoli, Johnson and Freedom* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966).

² McLaren, p. 21.

³ McLaren, p. 71.

⁴ McLaren, p. 120.

From the 1980s onwards, reflections on Boswell and Johnson's journey were appearing under academic imprints, giving a degree of authority as well as endorsement to the travel works. Israel Shenker's 1982 revisiting of the Hebridean trip showed an almost anthropological attempt to reconstruct the tour:

With my wife as enthusiastic ally, I would go to the places Johnson and Boswell had been, see what they had seen, and seek out descendants of the people they had visited. If they had spoken with the local minister, so would I; if they had enquired into the customs of a country, so would I. Their interests would be mine – farming, education, religion, language, clans, emigration, the rigors of the land, the character of the race [...] I was less interested in reproducing the hardships that Johnson and Boswell faced than in seeing the changes effected by two centuries: it was the present that intrigued me.¹

Shenker also combined this travelogue with a comparative reflection on the travelogue of Boswell and Johnson – if there is such a thing as metatravelogue, then this would be it:

[Johnson's] *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* has the settled flavour of wisdom precipitated, conclusions pondered in tranquil recollection. Boswell's *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D* is livelier, chattier, several times as long as Johnson's account, and, though edited and amplified later, was written as the trip progressed, with the vividness of fresh reporting [...] Johnson dealt more single-mindedly with what they saw, and Boswell with what he heard [...] One could depend on Johnson for the account laconic, on Boswell for the narration expansive and circumstantial. In writing of their visit to the minister of Cawdor and to Cawdor Castle Johnson allowed himself fewer than ten lines; Boswell luxuriated in detail.²

The latest of Boswell's pilgrim-critics is William W. Starr (2011). Starr does not claim to be scholarly in his approach (though he does hold a PhD and his book is published by the University of South Carolina Press) in a disingenuous move to distance the text from the academic industry, and to hit his stated objective of persuading people to read Boswell and Johnson directly:

Boswell and Johnson were the reason why I flew three thousand miles to Scotland – and would add 2,789 additional miles in the country before my trip ended – in an effort to retrace their journey, as much as possible so many years later. I knew their words would be perfect travelling companions for me, refreshing my mind and my eye. I would miss conversing with those two wonderful conversationalists, of course. [...] I also believed that following Boswell and Johnson was too important and too much fun to be left solely in the hands of scholars.³

¹ Israel Shenker, *In the Footsteps of Johnson and Boswell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp ix-x. He did not always succeed in his intention to speak about Johnson and Boswell to descendants as in the case of the descendant of the reportedly stingy Lord Macdonald: 'I asked his Lordship, and the eighth Lord Macdonald replied that he had read neither Johnson nor Boswell. "Should I have?" he added, with an air of ingenuousness.' Shenker, p. 113.

² Shenker, p.60.

³ William W. Starr, *Whisky, Kilts, and the Loch Ness Monster: Traveling through Scotland with Boswell and Johnson* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2011), p. 4-5.

When he describes the vagaries of time on the joint reputations of Johnson and Boswell in Inverary and Oban (key locations on the original Hebridean tour) this is easy to justify:

I asked the clerk when I came back downstairs if she had heard of Boswell and Johnson. No, she replied, but she could get the manager for me. He might have seen them. [...] I asked her [a haircutter] if she had heard of Boswell and Johnson coming through the town, and she helpfully responded, “No I haven’t seen anyone like that lately.” When I added that they passed through in 1773, she added, “Well, I wasn’t here then.” [...] The clerk in the bookstore said he had heard of Boswell and Johnson but couldn’t tell me anything about them. Footballers perhaps? At my urging he checked his computer and found one copy of an edition containing Boswell’s *Journal* and Johnson’s *Journey* in stock. I bought it with the hope the store would have to reorder. It felt like a victory of sorts.¹

The pilgrim-critics are interesting because of the ways in which they appeal to a less specialist audience, determinedly engaging with the travel elements of Boswell and Johnson’s works. What they also show is that, whilst Boswell’s reputation has grown within the academic community, it has also maintained a value for the interested party who seeks information for travel. Perhaps this is the greatest compliment that can be paid to Boswell: other eighteenth-century travel writers (Nugent and Addison come to mind) may have fallen away from the interest of all but a few academics, their works bordering on the irrelevant beyond the historically curious, whilst Boswell’s, because they focus on human beings and human situations, can still be accessed and recognised as worthy of companionship on a lengthy journey. As Starr says:

...there can be no substitute for reading Boswell and Johnson directly, and if this book might persuade some to do so, then I will have succeeded beyond my wildest dreams. In a perfect world, this book would contain all of their entries along with my own comments and observations, making clear why these two eighteenth-century explorers still live so passionately in our minds and hearts.²

Moray McLaren provides a useful reminder of something which the critical heritage of Boswell’s travelogue forgot for some time:

Boswell’s fame during his lifetime rested on his travel books. Posterity, which really knows Boswell better than his contemporaries did, has allowed itself to be quite overcome by his magnum opus of the *Life of Johnson* at the expense of the earlier books. The *Life*, however, was written in stress and trouble caused by

¹ Starr, pp. 30-36.

² Starr, p. 12.

ill-health, mostly through drinking and wenching - though he made heroic attempts to avoid wine and lechery while writing it – and it is not his happiest book. Death and exhaustion were near.¹

The way in which Boswell has been seen by his reviewers over the past two hundred years has clearly been transformed; yet in all that time, no full-length treatment of Boswell exclusively as a travel writer has been produced. There are elements reviewing his travel writing in most works, occasionally a detailed essay on *Corsica* or the *Tour to the Hebrides*, but there is nowhere a full assessment of Boswell's place as a travel writer, nowhere an addressing of his other travel works, unpublished during his lifetime, works showing an individual fascinated by the genre of travelogue. All too often his travel works, especially before the discovery of the private papers, have been seen as dress rehearsals for the final performance in the *Life of Johnson*. If anything, Boswell was writing a new sort of travelogue, very modern in many ways, focused on the individual and his (it usually is 'his') place in the world and open to the modern tourist for whom a 'journey' is not just a physical movement from A to B, but also, to use a cliché, a metaphor for personal discovery. It can be symbolic of an idealised journey of exploration into a lost world (akin to a Grail quest) and lost values, or lost worlds of faith and heroes. Frequently Boswell is charting the changes that have taken place, much to the detriment of a wider society. Modern criticism seems more open to the ways in which Boswell is helping to change genres, but generally focuses on biography as the genre transformed, as if the magnum opus is the 'significant other' of the travel works: the survival, and renaissance of the travel works (particularly with the scholarly edition of the full text of *Corsica*) show how Boswell maintains a presence beyond the biographical.

¹ McLaren, *Corsica Boswell*, p.18.

Chapter 2

Curious Reading: Boswell and Travelogue

If all those who repeat the observations of others must be condemned without mercy, by the same sentence most books that are extant, must be doomed to the fire: for the new discoveries of a whole age would scarce fill a small volume. Every man has a different way of expressing his thoughts and of representing the subjects of which he treats; which allows him the privilege to move the business again.

Maximilian Misson (1714)¹

Among the plethora of documents and publications relating to James Boswell, one of the most interesting is the catalogue issued by Sotheby's for the sale of books from the library of James Boswell the Younger in 1825.² This document, and Terry Seymour's recent work on the various catalogues of the Boswell family books, reveal the contents of a library collected by Boswell and his family, and while it can never be definite that all of these publications were read by or influenced Boswell directly, the library inventory (as well as the reading in evidence within his writing) reveals much that suggests a man who was as much of a literary or armchair traveller as he was a physical one, and lived in the presence of travellers' tales.³ Looking further into his overt references in the journals published by Yale University it is possible to see that travel literature of the imaginative and literal kind. The reader can also see an interest that extended to worlds beyond the narrow frontiers of Europe, was very much the stuff of fascination for Boswell throughout his life, and inevitably fed into the way that he both interpreted that world on his travels, but also the ways in which he recorded those travels. From the worlds of the Grand Tour, to the newly 'discovered' territories in the Pacific, to the disappearing lands north of the Great Glen, Boswell's reading reveals a man who had a taste for traversing the frontiers of landscape and culture. In this he was very much a man of his

¹ Maximilian Misson, *A New Voyage to Italy with Curious Observations on Several Other Countries*. Vol. 1 (London: R Bonwicke et al, 1714). p.xxxii.

² Anon, *Boswell, James, Jr., Bibliotheca Boswelliana, a Catalogue of the Entire Library of the Late James Boswell, Esq. Sotheby's May 24, 1825 and nine following Days*.

³ Terry Seymour, *Boswell's Books: Four Generations of Collecting and Collectors* (New Castle, Delaware: Oak Knoll Press, 2016)

time; an age on the cusp of industrialisation, improved transportation, and imperial expansion. Between 1740, the year of Boswell's birth, and 1795, the year of his death, Britain and the wider world became smaller and less mysterious via the rise of empire and the industrial, agricultural, and print revolutions, and Boswell was fascinated by it.

As Robert DeMaria has pointed out in his work on Samuel Johnson, there were a number of ways in which readers in the eighteenth century (and beyond) read and engaged with texts, which can also be seen in the way that Boswell engaged with his reading in general, but also apposite in a study of his engagement with travelogue as reader and writer.¹ Just as there were many reasons for travelling in the eighteenth century (for recreation, out of necessity, to share knowledge, and to expand the state), so there were many reasons for reading travelogue, the forms which would encompass both travel (the move into the literal and metaphorical unknown) and tourism (the treading of a beaten path). Accordingly, reading took a number of forms to accommodate these differing habits: 'study' or 'hard reading', the territory of detailed and disciplined reading for greater meaning and extractable thought; 'perusal', the attentive but easy reading of reference books akin to what DeMaria sees as 'self-help' texts; 'mere' reading, of newspapers, advertisements, and playbills; and finally 'curious' reading, which DeMaria sees as the stuff of curiosity, inquisitiveness, and addiction, where the reader gets 'lost' in the act of reading.² As DeMaria has argued, travel writing particularly fills these categories, 'likely to engender a sort of reading halfway between the mere reading associated with newspapers and magazines and the absorbed reading most closely associated with fiction'.³ However, as DeMaria notes, whilst broadly this is true of writing and reading habits, 'any scrap of print can be the subject of an act of study' and vice versa.⁴ This mixed approach to reading can be seen

¹ Robert DeMaria, *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

² DeMaria, *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading*, p. 178.

³ DeMaria, *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading*, p. 197.

⁴ DeMaria, *Samuel Johnson and the Life of Reading*, p. 140.

in the texts in the Boswell library catalogue. It can firstly be perceived in the ‘curious reading’ of the fictional and imaginative traveller from classical mythology, through aristocratic Arthurian quest literature, to Swift and de Bergerac’s imaginative filling in of geographical gaps. Boswell’s taste for the romantic and ‘curious’ can also be seen in the Scottish patriotic or nationalist literature of Bruce, Wallace, and Ossian that charted the historical, biographical, and literary landscapes north of the border with England and the Act of Union of 1707. Texts for ‘perusal’ appear that charted and documented the geographical world of Great Britain, especially Scotland, and narratives covering the world of the Grand Tour for the discovery of classical cultures to educate the sons of the ruling classes before they took their place in society. Finally, the library catalogue lists documentary travelogue that started to chart what was then unknown, but lent itself to the imaginative engagement with the credibility of ‘mere’ reading, and the exoticism of ‘curious’ reading. Even Elizabethan and Stuart travel manuals make an appearance in the library catalogue. These materials and the record that Boswell left in his journals comprise a very representative core of travel literature as it was known in the eighteenth century, but also of how it could be read.¹

The ultimate question is what Boswell found in his travel reading experience. Within the texts in the library catalogue can be seen material representative of a cultural curiosity, which was symptomatic of a world that was casually fascinating, but not mourned as it disappeared, and texts which sought to present a guide or moral yardstick with indications of how the world could be better. There were also, however, reflections of an ignorance and charting of cultural vandalism, alongside material which anticipated the Thomas Cook package tourism of the nineteenth century and what followed (in the form of nostalgic tartan tourism in the Highlands

¹ For surveys of eighteenth century travel writing the reader should refer to Bonamy Dobree, *The Early Eighteenth Century 1700-1740: Swift, Defoe, and Pope*, *The Oxford History of English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 339-388, and John Butt, and Geoffrey Carnall, *The Age of Johnson 1740-1789*, *The Oxford History of English Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 244-308.

of Scotland from Sir Walter Scott and George IV onwards), indicative of what John Urry has described as the ‘tourist gaze’.¹

1. Travelogue, Pacific Exploration, and Tailoring the Narrative for the Reader

Boswell’s engagement with travelogue, as demonstrated by the library catalogue and citations within his writings, show him as a literal and metaphorical traveller from a relatively early age, tying in to the zeitgeist of the Augustan era and the world of travel that he inhabited. Boswell’s classical education clearly covered Virgil, Homer, and Apollonius, with their various tales of mythical travels, and fictional travellers feature in the same way as literal ones in Boswell’s reading. Travel was clearly as fascinating in the eighteenth century as in the modern world – even though it was an era when travel was largely limited to those with the luxury of time and money, the mercantile classes as a matter of necessity, and those involved in the military and naval expansion (and control) of the ever expanding British Empire. Margaret Hunt, citing Paul Kaufman’s research on borrowing statistics from the Bristol Public library between 1773 and 1784, notes how the important the idea of travel was to those who accessed circulating libraries:

Among middling Bristol readers, “History, Antiquities and Geography” (the bulk of the latter being travel) stood far ahead of any other category in popularity: 6,121 people borrowed 283 titles in this category during this eleven year period. “Belles Lettres” was a distant second with 3,313 borrowings of 238 titles, and theology and ecclesiastical history a dismal fifth, with only 606 borrowings of 82 titles. Three out of the ten most borrowed books, including the most popular book of all, were travel or exploration books. The top book was John Hawkesworth’s *Account of the Voyages...for making discoveries in the southern hemisphere* (1773), which 201 people borrowed.²

Bristol was obviously a mercantile city, with an obvious link to the slave trade, and a natural inclination to the world of transport, trade, and travel, but it also exemplifies a general interest

¹ John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*. 2nd edn (London: SAGE, 2002), pp. 2-3.

² Margaret Hunt, 'Racism, Imperialism, and the Traveler's Gaze in Eighteenth-Century England', *The Journal of British Studies* (1993), pp. 88-124 (p. 336).

in the world – especially the world as yet barely charted or ‘discovered’. It should be remembered that vicarious experience of the wider world was within the means of those who had access to a library, if not funds or the luxury of time, and suggests that the reading of travelogue was not just about a guide for future travellers, but also a means to engage intellectually and imaginatively with the world of travel. As James A. Williamson notes, Dampier’s narratives from the start of the century:

[...] had an immediate and permanent success. It was what the public wanted. The public was greatly interested in the trading prospects of Spanish America, the South Sea, and the East Indies. The jealousies aroused by the Darien scheme were at their height [...] The New Voyage catered for these tastes, for Dampier, although no trader, had an eye for the interests of commerce.¹

This desire to ‘fill in the gaps’ of the map and to build upon a fascination with travellers’ tales can be seen in the novels of Swift and Defoe: Swift (a particular favourite reference in Boswell’s *Hypochondriack* column for *The London Magazine*) situated Lilliput in the gap between Van Dieman’s Land and the northern coasts of New Holland (an area that would eventually be charted by James Cook), Brobdingnag and Balnibarbi in the North Pacific; Defoe would clearly take inspiration from the narratives of William Dampier and Woodes Rogers and their accounts of Alexander Selkirk’s marooning on Juan Fernandez for the story of *Robinson Crusoe* [1719]. Swift even has Gulliver set himself as Dampier’s cousin in the opening to *Gulliver’s Travels* [1726].² It was also possible to use the travelogue as a framework for a satirical study of European ‘civilisation’ – Swift, most obviously via Gulliver, but similarly Oliver Goldsmith’s *Citizen of the World* [1760], and Charles Montesquieu’s *Persian Letters* [1721] (read by Boswell and Lord Mountstuart on the Grand Tour), all of which used an ironic first person narrator to highlight the flaws of contemporary society.³ Travelogue could present the author with an opportunity not only to set up a history of the traveller, but also, in the case of William Kemp in his *Nine Daies Wonder* [1600], get on record the true details of what took

¹ James A. Williamson, ‘Exploration and Discovery’, in *Johnson’s England*, ed. by A.S. Turberville (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1933), pp. 88-124 (p. 89).

² Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels* (London: Folio, 1965), p. 17.

³ James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France 1765-1766* (London: Heinemann, 1955), p. 93.

place on the trip in the face of ‘lying ballad makers’.¹ Kemp furthermore demonstrated that travelogue did not have to be a simple and dry record of fact, when he documented how pickpockets accompanied the progress and presented the reader with the perils of Elizabethan celebrity:

So much ado I had to pass by the young people of Chelmsford, that it was more than an hour ere I could recover my inn gate, where I was fain to lock myself in my chamber, and pacify them with words out of a window instead of deeds: to deal plainly, I was so weary, that I could dance no more [...] At Chelmsford, a maid not passing fourteen years of age [...] made request to her master and dame that she might dance the morris with me in a great large room [...] A whole hour she held out; but then being ready to lie down I left her off.²

This conflict between the purpose of travelogue, to entertain or to instruct, would be of significant importance to the writers of the eighteenth century, particularly those non-professional writers who were exploring the South Seas, and a key critical and aesthetic issue in the way that travel was represented.

Roy Bridges provides a definition for travelogue which is very useful for looking at the narratives of the South Seas explorers of the eighteenth century:

[...] a discourse designed to describe and interpret for its readers a geographical area together with its natural attributes and its human society and culture. Travel writing may embrace approaches ranging from an exposition of the results of scientific exploration claiming (but rarely managing) to be objective and value-free to the frankly subjective description of an area and its people on the writer’s own sensibilities.³

The vast majority of the Pacific travel narratives were very much built around the professional sailor rather than the professional writer, and the dilemma, therefore, was to write something that was primarily a factual account rather than a narrative to engage the reader of fiction – though, as Michelle Burnham has noted, the Pacific narrative, whilst shorter than the actual journey, is not exactly set up to engage the non-specialist reader since it ‘often seems to drift

¹ William Kemp, *Kemps Nine Daies Wonder: Performed in a Daunce from London to Norwich* (London: AMS Press, 1968), p. 3. There were two copies of the text in the Boswell library sale, lots 1300 and 3104 (Edmond Malone’s copy).

² Kemp, p. 7.

³ Roy Bridges, ‘Exploration and Travel Outside Europe (1720-1914)’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 53-69 (p. 53).

at sea like a preindustrial sail waiting for the wind to pick up'.¹ William Dampier, aware of this problem, made a plea to his readers about his lack of professional skill in writing:

It has been objected against me by some, that my Accounts and Descriptions of Things are dry and jejune not filled with variety of pleasant Matter, to divert and gratify the Curious Reader. How far this is true, I must leave to the World to judge [...] I hope all the Defects in my Stile, will meet with an easy and ready Pardon.²

Woodes Rogers, however, was much more forthright in his choice of style:

Tho others, who give an Account of their Voyages, do generally attempt to imitate the Stile and Method which is us'd by Authors that write ashore, I rather chuse to keep the Language of the Sea, which is more genuine, and natural for a Mariner [...] Therefore without any disguise I shall publish the Copies of all our material Regulations and Agreements, and keep to the usual Method of Sea-Journals, omitting nothing that happen'd remarkable to our selves, or that may serve for Information or Improvement to others in the like Cases.³

For these professional navigators and privateers style was important; for actual adventurers, for whom deviating from fact into fiction was a major accusation, it was a matter of obsession. Neither Rogers nor Dampier was a creative writer and, for Rogers especially, to try and write like those who 'write ashore' would be to water down the authority of their books. As a consequence their work tends to be geographical in its details with matter-of-fact assessments:

Jan. 31. These 24 hours we had the Wind between S. and SW by W. At seven this morning we made the Island of Juan Fernandez; it bore WSW. Dist. About 7 Ls. At Noon W by S. 6 Ls. We had good Observ. Lat.34.10.S.⁴

Rogers, in particular, was very keen to take charge of how the factual should look. As Jason H. Pearl has said, 'At the linguistic level, the ideal of objectivity corresponded with plainness and brevity, while the distinctive marks of subjectivity were addition, expansion, and excess'.⁵ However, even Rogers could not avoid fictionalising at times, as when he described Selkirk's situation on Juan Fernandez, starkly contrasting with his former statement:

¹ Michelle Burnham, 'Trade, Time, and the Calculus of Risk in Early Pacific Travel Writing'. (University of North Carolina Press, 2011), pp. 425-447 (p. 432).

² William Dampier, *A Voyage to New Holland: The English Voyage of Discovery to the South Seas in 1699* (London: Nonsuch, 2006), p. 39.

³ Woodes Rogers, *A Cruising Voyage Round the World* (London: Cassell and Company, 1928), p.1-2.

⁴ Rogers, p. 90.

⁵ J. H. Pearl, 'Woodes Rogers and the Boundary of Travel Facts', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 31 (2007), pp. 60-75 (p.63). It should, however, be noted that Defoe also sought to present his narrative of *Robinson Crusoe* as real, and so borrowed the accoutrements of authority by claiming that his work was a 'just History of fact' without even the 'Appearance of Fiction in it'. Fact and fiction are often unshakeably linked together, occasionally working against each other.

He had with him his Clothes and Bedding, with a Firelock, some Powder, Bullets, and Tobacco, a Hatchet, a Knife, a Kettle, a Bible, some practical Pieces, and his Mathematical Instruments and Books. He diverted himself as well as he could; but for the first eight months had much ado to bear up against Melancholy, and the Terror of being left alone in such a desolate place.¹

The reality for many writers of Pacific travelogue was that narratives were very much a side-effect of more practical matters, and that the interest shown by the public for accounts of the exploration of the South Seas was an inevitable consequence of their exploits. As the author of *A Voyage Round the World* (written nominally by George Anson, but rather at his direction by Richard Walter) notes:

Notwithstanding the great improvement of navigation within the last two centuries, a voyage round the world is still considered as an enterprize of so very singular a nature, that the public have never failed to be extremely inquisitive about the various accidents and turns of fortune with which this uncommon attempt is generally attended [...] If faithfully executed, the more important purposes of navigation, commerce, and national interest may be greatly promoted.²

As a consequence, Anson's ghost-written account (read and referenced by Boswell in the *Column*) has much of what appealed to the reader of fiction: dramatic accounts of suffering (especially scurvy) borne manfully, the trials of sea life (sickness and the perils of sea travel), and the returns of travel (gold, silver, and diamonds). However, as N.A.M. Rodger has argued, the real purpose of the voyage was as part of Robert Walpole's policy of amphibious expeditions against Spanish colonies in search of popular victories and bullion (which would be paraded through the streets of London), and Anson was just a component of a much bigger plan focused on the Caribbean, the Philippines and the Pacific coast of Spanish America.³ At times it also served to reinforce cultural prejudices, particularly in reference to the Chinese:

It were endless to recount all the artifices, extortions, and frauds which were practised on the commodore and his people by this interested race. The method of buying provisions being by weight, the tricks the Chinese made use of to augment the weight of what they sold to the *Centurion* were almost incredible.⁴

The Chinese merchants are accused of stuffing chickens with gravel, injecting hogs with water when dead or feeding salted food to engender a thirst if alive. Clearly, in this narrative,

¹ Rogers, p. 92.

² George Anson, *A Voyage Round the World* (London: Dent, 1911), p.3.

³ N.A.M. Rodger, 'George, Lord Anson', in *Precursors of Nelson*, ed. by Peter Le Fevre and Richard Harding (London: Chatham Publishing, 2000), pp. 177-199 (p. 178).

⁴ Anson, p. 363.

romance was not as important to the politicians behind the scheme as money and political cachet, and a tale of drama was useful in terms of propaganda, if not cultural enrichment.

The later narratives of James Cook show, particularly in these aspects, that Anson's *Voyage* was the father of a later focus on the natives of the Pacific which showed a paternalism at best, and a racism at worst. As Bridges has noted, there was a conflict in travel writing of the time between 'civilized' and 'primitive':

[...] travel writing became increasingly identified with the interests and preoccupations of those in European societies who wished to bring the non-European world into a position where it could be influenced, exploited or, in some cases, directly controlled [...] With technological superiority came presumed intellectual superiority: Europeans could claim to be able to understand and interpret not only the terrain they entered but the inhabitants as well.¹

This fed the government's interest in exploration alongside the interest of a reader, which between the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763 and the start of the French revolutionary wars at the end of the century stimulated a 'Pacific craze'. Also, there was a demand for precise and accurate information about military, naval, economic, and scientific opportunities. The terms of Cook's instructions from the Admiralty for his third voyage point absolutely in this direction:

In case you find those islands [in the Indian Ocean], you are to examine them thoroughly for a good harbour; and upon discovering one, make the necessary observations to facilitate the finding again as a port, in that situation, may hereafter prove very useful [...] Proceed from thence to the northward, as far as, in your prudence, you may think, in further search of a north-east or north-west passage from the Pacific Ocean into the Atlantic Ocean or the North sea.²

Cook's third voyage narrative (completed by Lieutenant James King after Cook's death in Hawaii) consolidated the potential profitability of the Pacific for the imperial countries of Europe as Michelle Burnham has argued.³ In the observations of native peoples Cook maintains this sense of the conventional view of the superiority of the European, punishing a thief by confiscating canoes, and commenting upon tattooing ('It is strange that these people value themselves upon what is no distinction'), sexual habits ('It cannot be supposed that, among

¹ Bridges, p. 53.

² James Cook, *Captain Cook's Voyages 1768-1779* (London: Folio, 1997), p. 298-300.

³ Burnham, p. 431.

these people, chastity is held in much estimation. It might be expected that sisters and daughters would be offered to strangers'), gifts of iron and beads ('they seemed to set little value upon either, particularly the iron, not having the least idea of its use'), and cannibalism in New Zealand ('At this sight we were struck with horror [...] He also bit and gnawed the bone which Mr Banks had taken, drawing it through his mouth and showing, by signs, that it afforded a delicious repast').¹ Cook's comment at a dinner with Sir John Pringle, recorded in his journal by Boswell, that 'I did not say they were monkeys. I said their faces put me in mind of monkeys' is certainly uncomfortable for the modern reader.² Such dismissive comments were in tune with Johnson's view:

JOHNSON. [...] One set of savages is like another." BOSWELL. "I do not think the people of Otaheite can be reckoned savages." JOHNSON. "Don't cant about savages." BOSWELL. "They have the art of navigation." JOHNSON. "A dog can swim." BOSWELL. "They carve very ingeniously." JOHNSON. "A cat can scratch and a child with a nail can scratch".³

What this period also reveals is the way that narrative was actively opened up to the editor's hand to make it ready for public consumption. In the case of Cook's first voyage the Admiralty farmed the account out to Dr John Hawkesworth, a man of literary rather than nautical expertise, to be worked up into a proper literary form, rather than the plain and lucid style of Cook himself. Hawkesworth, however, was castigated for the liberties he took with the original journals and the way he inserted passages of interpretation and reflection, and made substantive changes to Cook's narrative and the notes of Joseph Banks, who was on the expedition as a scientific observer. Cook wrote up his second voyage himself, 'determined to give the best account he is able of his proceedings', and Boswell told Cook that he thought 'Hawkesworth has used your narrative as a London tavern keeper does wine. He has *brewed* it'.⁴ In his defence, Hawkesworth had a very fine line to tread between including specific details of scientific

¹ Cook, pp. 44, 55, 70, and 71

² James Boswell, *Boswell: The Ominous Years 1774-1776* (London: Heinemann, 1963), p. 308.

³ James Boswell, *Boswell: The Applause of the Jury 1782-85* (London: Heinemann, 1981), p. 241-2.

⁴ Cook, p.149, and Boswell, *Ominous Years*, p. 309. Hawkesworth was also criticised by John Wesley for what Frits Andersen has described as an aestheticized 'striptease', Frits Andersen, 'Eighteenth Century Travelogues as Models for 'Rethinking Europe'', *European Review*, 15 (2007), pp. 115-124 (p. 116).

observation which would allow the nation to peacock its exploratory achievements and recognising that such details were of little interest to a general reader: the success of the book with the readers of Bristol was testimony to how the reader appreciated his interpretation, and how narrative expectation in a reader increasingly familiar with the novel form had changed the dynamics of travelogue to include the scientific, theological heresies on the subject of providence, and the salacious details of South Seas beauty.¹

2. Travelogue and the Grand Tour

The second key area for travelogue in the eighteenth century, and particularly within Boswell's reading, lies in the literature of the Grand Tour. A significant proportion of Boswell's travel reading centres on this, as should reasonably be expected, since he was a Grand Tourist himself after completing his legal studies in Holland. For the ruling classes the Grand Tour represented a finishing school for those who (primarily after completing studies at Oxford and Cambridge) were preparing to take their place in society, taking in the treasured artefacts and the lessons that Ancient Rome could present for the modern state as a classical-political education. It was also a means to acquire artefacts to confirm to the world the refinement of manners of the purchaser, and the opportunity to sow 'wild oats'.² As James Buzard has said:

If knowledge is rooted in experience and nowhere else, travel instantly gains in importance and desirability. Following the great Renaissance age of colonial exploration and expansion, an articulated, systematic empiricism made travelling about the world and seeing the new and different essential [...] Merely reading

¹ See John Lawrence Abbott, *John Hawkesworth: Eighteenth Century Man of Letters* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1982), pp. 137ff.

² The Grand Tourists were not without their critics: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu talked of 'Golden Asses all over Italy', Tobias Smollett saw them as 'raw boys, whom Britain seemed to have poured forth on purpose to bring her national character into contempt', and Adam Smith saw them returning 'more conceited, more unprincipled, more dissipated, and more incapable of any serious application' (James Buzard, 'The Grand Tour and after (1660-1840)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 37-52 (p. 42). Boswell can be seen as fitting most of these descriptions. Philip Thicknesse would also identify the perils of the flesh and gambling to the young traveller in France, and cites Lord Chesterfield's advice to his son: "When you play with men (says his Lordship) know with *whom* you play; when with women, for *what* you play." – But let me add, that the only SURE WAY, is never to play at all". Philip Thicknesse, *A Year's Journey through France and Part of Spain*. 2 vols (Dublin: J Williams, 1777), p99.

about conditions elsewhere was not enough. Those who could travel, should – though of course precious few actually could.¹

The more educational use of the Grand Tour was built by James Howell into his *Instructions and Directions for Forraine Travel* [1642], providing a methodology in the conduct of the Tour, rather than a ‘simple’ itinerary as Sir Thomas Nugent did². For Howell it was necessary to be aware of the religious practices of a traveller’s own country as the ‘the basis of all *Wisdom*’; the topography, government and history of his own country; navigation ‘to observe and compare the temper of them as he shall passe along’; and a sense of his own identity and where he is, since ‘[tis most fitting] hee seriously contemplate within himself, how the eyes of the world are upon Him, as his are upon the World’.³ He advised the need to record thoughts in a diary because ‘the penne maketh the deepest furrowes, and doth fertilise, and enrich the memory more than anything else’, and thought it necessary to choose any guide books wisely, ‘as he should do his Friends, Few, but Choyce ones, yet he may have many Acquaintance’.⁴

His final practical advice centred on money:

For although Sir Thomas More wisheth one to carry always his Friends about him, abroad, by which hee meanes pieces of gold: Yet too great a number of such Friends, is an encumber and may betray him: It will make his journey all along to be a *Motus trepidationis*. And he that loades himselfe with a charge of money, when he may carry it about him with such security, and ease, in a small piece of paper, I meane a Letter of credit, or Bill of exchange; is as wise as he, who carried the coach-wheele upon his back, when he might have trilled it before him all along.⁵

From Howell’s practical advice a traveller would have consulted Joseph Addison’s *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* [1723] as a starting point and practical guide, a form of ‘you-are-there’ travelogue which Boswell read and re-enacted, illustrating his engagement with the ‘tourist gaze’, the imperative to tread the path beaten by others:

At two miles distance from Milan, there stands a building that would have been a master-piece in its kind, had the architect designed it for an artificial echo. We discharged a pistol, and had the round returned upon us above fifty-six times, though the air was very foggy. (Addison)⁶

¹ Buzard, p. 37.

² James Howell, *Instructions for Forraine Travel 1642, Collated with the Second Edition of 1650* (London: English Reprints, 1869), lot 1446 in the Boswell library catalogue.

³ Howell, pp. 16-8.

⁴ Howell, pp. 20-22.

⁵ Howell, pp. 28-9.

⁶ Joseph Addison, *Remarks on Several Parts of Italy* (Dublin: T Walker, 1723), p. 26.

I fired a pistol from the window of an upper storey opposite to a wall; the sound was repeated fifty-eight times. (Boswell)¹

The reality of Addison's work, however, was that it was less to do with contemporary Italy and more to do with focusing upon the vestiges of classical Rome, mixing, as it did, history, antiquarianism, and the anthologising of Latin poetry. For him, as for Boswell and many other guide writers for the Grand Tour itinerary, it was about having a sense of place and culture:

The greatest pleasure I took in my journey from Rome to Naples was in seeing the fields, towns, and river, that have been described by so many classic authors, and have been the scenes of so many great actions [...] It is worth while to have an eye on Horace's voyage to Brundisi, when one passes this way; for by comparing his several stages, and the road he took, with those that are observed at present, we may have some idea of the changes that have been made in the face of this country since his time.²

The principal way in which Addison did reflect upon contemporary Italy was in addressing the issue of Roman Catholicism (something to which Boswell maintained a sentimental attraction). For Addison, as for later commentators like Samuel Sharp, Italy was especially notable for a more superstitious brand of religious doctrine:³

One would wonder that Roman Catholics, who are for this kind of worship, do not generally address themselves to the holy apostles, who have a more unquestionable right to the title of saints than those of a modern date; but these are at present quite out of fashion in Italy, where there is scarce a great town, which does not pay its devotions, in a more particular manner, to some one of their own making.⁴

He also saw a comparison between ancient Roman and Christian antiquities:

There are in Rome two sets of antiquities, the Christian and the Heathen. The former, though of a fresher date, are so embroiled with fable and legend, that one receives but little satisfaction from searching into them. The other give a great deal of pleasure to such as have met them before in ancient authors; for a man who is in Rome can scarce see an object that does not call to mind a piece of a Latin poet, or historian.⁵

Patrick Brydone, in a letter to William Beckford, also saw Catholicism in Sicily as the partial reinvention of pagan images:

In some places the very same images still remain: They have only christened them; and what was Venus or Proserpine, is now Mary Magdalene, or the Virgin. The same ceremonies are daily performed before these images; in the same language, and nearly in the same manner. The saints are perpetually coming down in person, and working miracles, as the heathen gods did of old. The walls of the temples are covered with the vows of pilgrims, as they were formerly. The holy water, which was held in such detestation by the first Christians, is again revered, and sprinkled about with the same devotion as in the time of paganism

¹ Boswell, *Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica and France*, p. 45.

² Addison, p. 115.

³ See Samuel Sharp, *Letters from Italy Describing the Customs and Manners of That Country* (London: R. Cave, 1767), p. iv and pp. 121-2.

⁴ Addison, p. 29.

⁵ Addison, pp. 176-7.

[...] In short, so nearly do the rites coincide, that were the pagan high-priest to come back, and re-assume his functions, he would only have to learn a few names.¹

This suspicion about Catholicism and its associations with restriction and repression, whilst characteristic of Grand Tour narratives, was much more obvious in narratives about Spain (often a diversion from the main course of the Tour in France, and also part of Boswell's library of travel writing) which, in their discussion of an apparently backwards-looking state, were reminiscent of Elizabethan propaganda of the Spanish bogeyman, particularly in the form of the Holy Inquisition. However, this looked more like a form of primitivism by the time of the late eighteenth century, with Spain, caught, as Michael Crozier Shaw has argued, 'in a state of medieval barbarism and superstition'.² Spain presented a problem for many of the British travellers of the eighteenth century, the vast majority of whom were not on the Grand Tour, or if they were, had clearly taken a wrong turn at Perpignan. As Ana Hontanilla notes:

Visitors to Spain were not young aristocratic tourists completing their education and becoming acquainted with their enlightened Continental counterparts. Instead, travellers in Spain were merchants, appointed officials joining diplomats in time of peace, and soldiers posted in strategic locations in times of war.³

Spain was very much outside the main passageway of the conventional traveller in Europe, and, although he never went there, it did still feature very much in Boswell's reading.⁴ The representation of Spain is indicative of a nation seen from northern European eyes as 'beyond the pale' of European civilisation in the age of reason – in many ways Spain was a 'sick man of Europe' long before that title was ascribed to the decaying Ottoman Empire. Spain

¹ Patrick Brydone, *A Tour through Sicily and Malta* (London: W Strahan, 1775), p154-5. Brydone's book, composed of letters to William Beckford, seems to identify Catholicism with primitivism, perhaps unsurprising in a correspondent who was acting as a gentleman scientist in his taking of barometric readings in Sicily (Etna particularly): 'Now, pray don't you think too, that this personal kind of worship is much better adapted to the capacities of the vulgar, than the more pure and sublime modes of it, which would only distract and confound their simple understandings, unaccustomed to speculation; and that certainly require something gross and material, some object of sense to fix their attention?' (p162)

² Michael Crozier Shaw, 'European Travellers and the Enlightenment Consensus on Spain in Eighteenth-Century Europe', *Dieciocho: Hispanic Enlightenment*, 31 (2008), pp. 23-44 (p. 23).

³ Ana Hontanilla, 'Images of Barbaric Spain in Eighteenth-Century British Travel Writing', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 37 (2008), pp. 119-143 (p. 123).

⁴ Boswell read Swinburne's *Travels Through Spain* in 1780, and dined with the author in 1792 (see James Boswell, *Boswell: The Great Biographer 1789-1795* (London: Heinemann, 1989), p. 199, n.2), discussed Phillip Thicknesse's *A Year's Journey Through France and Part of Spain* with Johnson (see James Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes, 1776-1778* (London: Heinemann, 1970), p.236), and a copy of Bourgoanne's *Travels in Spain* was in the Boswell library (lot 366).

represented for the British traveller an object lesson in the decline of empires, just as Italy represented the glories of Rome, as Hontanilla goes on to say:

Italy clearly represented a way to learn the roots of civic republicanism and was the locus to find corresponding similarities between imperial Rome and the new British expansionism. Spain, by contrast, was the still living, if failing, rival empire that embodied principles England had once conflictingly emulated and since the reformation continuously sought to displace.¹

This viewpoint was linked partly to historical prejudices and partly to a feeling that the Enlightenment had stopped at the borders of Spain.² In this context, much of the narrative centred on Spain portrayed it as a country of backwards barbarism and bad roads. The Reverend Edward Clarke, chaplain to the British Ambassador to Madrid, saw this as a major problem in the representation of Spain by outsiders, and a natural contrast with Britain, producing works which were ‘superficial and jejeune’ because the local Spanish were cautious and suspicious of ‘the most industrious and inquisitive researcher’, let alone because of the influence of the Inquisition.³ Clarke could appreciate just how chauvinistic some travelogue could be:

But there is one circumstance in this publication, which affords the author no small satisfaction; and that is the giving his reader a fresh proof of the happiness, which he enjoys in being born a Briton; of living in a country, where he possesses freedom of sentiment and of action, liberty of conscience, and security of property, under the most temperate climate, and the most duly poised government in the whole world [...] Let an Englishman go where he will, to SPAIN or PORTUGAL, to FRANCE or ITALY; let him travel over the whole globe, he will find no constitution comparable to that of GREAT BRITAIN. Here is no political engine, no bastille, no inquisition, to stifle in a moment every symptom of a free spirit rising either in church or state.⁴

Whilst Philip Thicknesse even argued that it was necessary to maintain a pretence of Catholicism whilst travelling in Spain, seeing his ‘innocent frauds’ as a ‘shield [...] from the fury of religious bigotry’, Henry Swinburne could move beyond simple religious practices,

¹ Hontanilla, p.122.

² Whilst Henry Kamen, a revisionist historian of the Spanish Inquisition, has argued that Galileo never appeared on the Quiroga Index of forbidden books, that Hobbes and Descartes could be imported privately in their original languages, and that Spain, like other countries, had political institutions and restrictions, he acknowledges that intellectuals ‘faced an uphill struggle against attempts of the Inquisition to block the spread of the new learning’. *The Spanish Inquisition: An Historical Revision* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1997), p. 134-5.

³ Edward Clarke, *Letters Concerning the Spanish Nation Written at Madrid During the Years 1760 and 1761* (London: T. Beckett and P.A. De Hondt, 1763), p.ii.

⁴ Clarke, p. vii.

celebrating the Alhambra Palace and the glories of Moorish Granada, but picking up on the practical problems of travelling in Spain:¹

Thus, methinks, I have brought you very fairly as far as myself on our dreary journey; and am of the opinion, that neither the beauties of nature, nor those of art, to be met with in this kingdom, can be deemed an equivalent for the tediousness of travelling, the badness of the roads, or the abominable accommodations of the inns: certain it is, that no man has as yet undertaken this tour a second time for pleasure; and, if my advice be listened to, no body will ever attempt it once.²

Travel writing on Spain in the eighteenth century seemed to highlight how the Spanish state had moved from being a Christian kingdom into an oriental and barbarous backwater where snuff and books were seized at the border, comparable to the Ottoman Empire of Frederick Baltimore's work.³ Baltimore's view (the structure if not the substance of which would be adopted by Boswell for his Corsican work) of Ottoman ignorance and insularity has just as many echoes of travel works on Catholic Spain saying 'they look on those who differ from them as despicable as dogs, hogs, and devils. This is from want of travelling, for they are in the most deplorable ignorance of other nations'.⁴ Clearly, Boswell's reading was not always inclined to the would-be citizen of the world.

3. Transitions in Travelogue: Scotland as a Case Study

Nothing more plainly illustrates the way that travelogue transformed itself in the eighteenth century than a study of narratives of travel in Scotland, many of which feature in the Boswell library catalogue, where all the facets of the ways that the South Seas and Grand Tour were represented can also be seen. They show, much like the narratives linked to Spain and the South

¹ Philip Thicknesse, *A Year's Journey through France and Part of Spain*. 2 vols (Dublin: J Williams, 1777), p. 263-4.

² Henry Swinburne, *Travels through Spain, in the Years 1775 and 1776* (London: P. Elmsley, 1779), p. 137-8.

³ Frederick Calvert Baltimore, *A Tour to the East, in the Years 1763 and 1764, with Remarks on the City of Constantinople and the Turks* (London: W. Richardson and J. Clark, 1767). This was a view reinforced by Christopher Hervey, *Letters from Portugal, Spain, Italy and Germany in the Years 1759, 1760, and 1761* (London: J. Davis, 1785), p. 251.

⁴ Baltimore, pp. 79-80.

Seas, a fascination with the world north of the Great Glen divide in particular. As James Buzard has noted:

[...] the demise of Jacobitism as a viable political force and the dissolution of many Celtic communities in the Highlands of Scotland made safe, and ushered in, new fascinations with the Celtic fringe of Great Britain and, a bit later, new ‘Gothic’ fantasies about the countries where the dark mysteries of Catholicism held sway.¹

There were a number of travel writers who looked to voyage to more unconventional destinations like Scandinavia and Russia (such as John Bell), travelling off the beaten track. However, a major reason for the development of travel narrative in Scotland in the eighteenth century is the very simple fact that considerable areas of the continent were effectively out of bounds for a significant part of the century because of various continental wars.² As a consequence the rise of the ‘home tour’, particularly to Scotland, was a natural outcome, and the century marked the transition from a military occupation to the rise of mass tourist travel, first with the coming sheep farming (and the emigration of the Highlanders), and in the next century via the coming of the railways and package tourists.

Scottish travelogue was on the rise from Martin Martin’s native account of 1695 onwards, with a focus on Scottish identity, particularly from the moment of Union in 1707. Martin was disparaging about accounts of far-off lands, saying, ‘If we hear at any time a description of some remote corner in the Indies cried in our streets, we presently conclude we may have some divertissement in reading of it; when in the meantime, there are a thousand things nearer to us that may engage our thoughts to better purposes, and the knowledge of which may serve more to promote our true interest, and the history of Nature.’ Martin’s book, lot 1809 in the Boswell library catalogue, was a core text for Boswell and Johnson on the Hebridean tour (albeit not without criticism of its accuracy) and focused on what was under the traveller’s own nose, concluding, ‘It is a piece of weakness and folly merely to value things because of their distance

¹ Buzard, p. 43.

² John Bell, *Travels from St Petersburg in Russia to Diverse Parts of Asia* (Glasgow: Robert and Andrew Foulis, 1763).

from the place where we are born.’¹ William Duff’s narrative history, *A New and Full, Critical, Biographical, and Geographical History of the Succession of Their Kings, from Robert the Bruce, to the Present Time* [1718], lot 341 in the Boswell library catalogue, showed one of the first real attempts to maintain an individual identity in the face of political union with England. Particularly of note is the fact that Duff’s history started with Robert Bruce and ended with the death of Mary Queen of Scots, and the consequent union of crowns if not legislatures. In the wake of the Union came writers like Daniel Defoe who, as Pat Rogers has commented, wrote ‘virtually an account of the Scottish people on the eve of colonisation’.² Defoe’s *A Tour of the Whole Island of Great Britain* [1724-7] was nevertheless limited in its first-hand knowledge of the Highlands, as Rogers has noted:

[...] the mountains and glens had not yet really been brought under the remit of the Hanoverian government, despite the Union of parliaments in 1707 [...] He insisted that Scotland needed to develop its economy along the lines England had followed, so as to introduce improvements in trade, manufacturing, shipping, fishery, and agriculture.³

What Defoe was documenting, across the range of Britain, was an economic record of a state in the process of movement to industrialisation. Legislation had been passed in England to improve the road network, and much of the infrastructure of trade, and ultimately travel, was in the process of transition. This continuing process in England and Ireland would be documented by Arthur Young, in works like *A Six Weeks Tour through the Southern Counties of England and Wales* [1769] (lot 2996 of the Boswell library) a comparative study of agricultural development framed as a travel manual. What Young and Defoe illustrate is the way that the inward looking nature of domestic travel was not only key in terms of documenting change but also provided the opportunity to compare landscapes and approaches, and, in the implicit sharing of ideas, helped to make the country more uniform (if not united) as cross-

¹ Martin Martin, and Donald Monro, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland and a Late Voyage to St Kilda, with a Description of the Occidental I.E. Western Islands of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2010), p. 236.

² See Pat Rogers’ introduction to Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 33.

³ Pat Rogers, ‘Defoe’s Tour and the Identity of Britain’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Daniel Defoe*, ed. by John Richetti (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 102-120 (p. 118).

fertilisation between regions, an agricultural and economic form of cultural exchange, was facilitated.

The transitional status of Scotland from separate kingdom to ‘North Britain’, particularly after the ‘Forty-Five’ would especially emphasise the necessity for road improvement, though in the first instance the opening up of Scotland came in the wake of occupation following the rising of 1715, and the construction of military roads and fortifications under the authority of General Wade. Among the initial narratives is that of Edmund Burt.¹ He provides a ‘snapshot’ of the Highlands before the Forty-Five and the Clearances, before the emigrations and repressive regulations passed to suppress revolt north of Edinburgh. Burt documents the people of the Highlands in a similar fashion to travellers to the South Seas, sharing the common perspective of the outside representative of a colonial, occupying power – noting that ‘there has been less, that I know of, written on the subject [of the Highlands], than of the Indies’, an idea echoed by Samuel Johnson in his *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* [1775, 1st ed. 1785] saying that the Lowlanders of Scotland knew as much of the state of the Highlands and Islands as they did ‘Borneo and Sumatra.’² Indeed, the local population and landscape are described in anthropological terms reminiscent of Dampier and Rogers, by a man very much on a military frontier:

When I came to examine my cates [food], there were two or three of the pigeons mangled in the pot, and behind were the furrows, in the butter, of those fingers that had raked them out of it, and the butter itself needed no close application to discover its quality. My disgust at this sight was so great, and being a brand-new traveller in this country, I ate a crust of bread, and drank about a pint of good claret [...] And now methinks I hear one of this country say, “- a true Englishman! He is already talking of eating”.³

The houses are for the most part low, because of the violent flurries of wind which often pour upon [Inverness] from the openings of the adjacent mountains, and are built with rubble-stone, as are all the houses in every other town of Scotland that I have seen.⁴

¹ Edmund Burt, *Burt's Letters from the North of Scotland* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1998).

² Burt, p. 3, and Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971), p. 88.

³ Burt, p. 9.

⁴ Burt, p. 31.

He also acknowledged the tribal nature of the local judicial system and the corruption of the local chiefs:

[...] if one of the magistrates were a Cameron (for the purpose), the criminal (Cameron) must not suffer, if the clan be desirous he should be saved.¹

By the time of the 1745-6 rebellion the perspective of the occupying powers was even more obvious in the narrative of Michael Hughes, a volunteer from London.² He provided a chilling justification for atrocities in the immediate aftermath of the Battle of Culloden:

The road leading to Inverness was covered with dead Bodies: And many of the Inhabitants not doubting of Success, who came out of curiosity to see the Action, or perhaps to get Plunder, never went home to tell the story; for they being mixt with their own People, we could not know one from the other. This Rebel Host had been deeply in Debt to the Publick for all their Rapin, Murder and Cruelty; and since the time was now come to pay off the score, our People were all glad to clear the Reckoning, and heartily determined to give them Receipt in full.³

Soon after this, the Duke sent out a party of Fourhundred Men to the Estate of Simon Frazer Laird of Lovat, with Orders to bring off all that was moveable; and to burn down his Dwelling House, Outhouses, and all other Appertenances, which was very cheerfully undertaken and performed. Onethousand Bottles of Wine, Threehundred Bowls of Oatmeal, with a large Quantity of Malt, and a Library of Books to the Value of Fourhundred Pounds was all brought to Inverness. His fine Salmon Weirs were all destroyed; and Salmon in abundance was brought into the Camp and divided among the Soldiers.⁴

Considering the perspective of the occupier it should not be surprising that these narratives are less than sympathetic, but there is an element of the conquest, akin to the way that James King would describe the reprisals against the Hawaiians after the killing of James Cook:

Several of the Natives were shot in making escape from the flames; and our people cut off the heads of two of them and brought them on board.⁵

By the time that Thomas Pennant was to write his travelogue, only a few decades after the Forty-Five, the way that Scotland was being represented had changed, in line with the decline in active Jacobite opposition. The soldiers had suppressed the population, the disarming legislation meant that the Highland menace had been neutered, and now, in their wake, followed the scientists. The Scotland through which Pennant travelled in 1769 and 1772 was

¹ Burt, p. 26.

² Michael Hughes, *A Plain Narrative and Authentic Journal of the Late Rebellion, Begun in 1745* (London: Henry Whitridge, 1747), lot 2994 in the Boswell library sale.

³ Hughes, pp. 42-3.

⁴ Hughes, pp. 48-9. Hughes was also careful to include a copy of the rebel order to give no quarter to the Hanoverian troops. We should, perhaps, be careful of applying modern standards to the practise of war in earlier times.

⁵ Cook, p. 511.

very much a country in a state of transition. The two *Tours* (both heavily perused as reference points by Johnson and Boswell on their tour of 1773 and subsequently in the writing up of their accounts) showed the north of Scotland moving from the ancient tribal way of life towards emigration and repopulation with sheep¹. Pennant still had the element of the outsider and southerner in his attitude to Culloden and let ‘a veil be flung over a few excesses’² of the government forces, but he also illustrated how the restrictions of government policy were easing, or at least were not being enforced as stringently. The real movement in Pennant’s narrative is the introduction of the picturesque. Like Hawkesworth in applying a literary aesthetic to the narrative of Cook’s first voyage, Pennant provided a travelogue that would help to develop Scotland as a destination for those in search of picturesque landscape, folklore, and phenomena like second sight. Boswell would use Pennant’s account as a diversion during a storm on Skye; Johnson would praise his factual accuracy and entertainment value³, which is easy to see in his description of the area around Fort William and Glencoe:

The scenery begins to grow very romantic; on the west side are some woods of birch and pines: the hills are very lofty, many of them taper to a point [...] Leave on the left a vast cataract, precipitating itself in a great foaming sheet between two lofty perpendicular rocks, with trees growing out of the fissures, forming a large stream, called the water of Boan.⁴

On his second tour in 1772 Pennant would show even greater attention to scientific and systematic enquiry, taking with him a botanist, an artist, and a local translator⁵. After Pennant the travelogue of the Highlands would move towards the picturesque and the antiquarian:

¹ As Peter Levi states: ‘It was in 1773 that the first emigration ship from Fort William sailed away with 425 highlanders. In the following years, privateers and slave-ships or quasi-slave-ships worked the Hebrides. Seven were recorded in 1774 alone. The destruction of Scottish forests was already in spate, not only for ships’ timbers but for charcoal and to feed the furnaces of the big water-powered iron-works operated by southerners [...] ‘We came too late’, wrote Dr Johnson, ‘to see what we expected’’, Samuel Johnson, and James Boswell, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (London: Penguin, 1984), p. xiii.

² Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland 1769* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000), p. 103.

³ James Boswell, *Boswell’s Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, Lld. 1773* (William Heinemann Ltd, 1963), pp.182-191.

⁴ Pennant, p.140.

⁵ As Ruth Mack has said, this ‘was very much in step with [the] historical moment, with its great expeditions – the likes of James Cook, Joseph Banks, and Constantine Phipps – and the records of those travels. Indeed, some of Johnson’s accounts of the Highlands follow directly the Royal Society’s rules for scientific observation [...] “stature, temperament, government, religion, traditions, customs, and literature”, ‘The Limits of the Senses in Johnson’s Scotland’, (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), pp. 279-94 (p.282).

Francis Douglas', *A General Description of the East Coast of Scotland, from Edinburgh to Cullen. Including a Brief Account of the Universities of Saint Andrews and Aberdeen in a Series of Letters to a Friend* [1782] (lot 839 of the Boswell library catalogue), predominantly about Aberdeen, provides the eighteenth century equivalent of local history and tourist advice, funded by the mercantile subscribers of Aberdeen; Reverend John Lane Buchanan, in his *Travels in the Western Hebrides* [1793] (lot 419) would write anthropologically of the poor islanders of the Outer Hebrides in 1793:

The poor Hebridean, as well as the Highland cottager in the more sequestered parts of north-Britain, would find it impossible to effect, if he had courage to attempt, emancipation and independence on the tacksmen and petty lairds or landholders, who keep them in subjection [...] Non-residence, and various avocations on the part of the great landowners, afford opportunities to the tacksmen, among whom their estates are divided, to conceal the real state of affairs from the distant chief.¹

By this time the real world of the Highlander was gone: the clan system was broken, the emigrant ships were regularly departing, and the reinvention of picturesque and Romantic Scotland could really get under way through a kind of imaginary tourism. In the future, the ruins of Fort Augustus, pulled down by the Highlanders in 1746, would be transformed by the younger Pugin for Lord Lovat in 1867, and Fort William would become a railway station; Ossianic pilgrims would be drawn to mist and mountains, and Ossianic hosts like the Duke of Atholl would exploit the landscape to attract and impress visitors. The travelogue which centred on Scotland of the eighteenth century charted this progress all the way.

The narratives of travel in the Boswell library catalogue and Boswell's journals reveal a man who was very much interested in the mechanics of travel and how to record it. His books provided guides for the methodology of travel (including note-taking) and itineraries, the opportunity to engage intellectually with the voyages of contemporaries and to share the experience with others, an opportunity for vicarious living, and ultimately a confirmation of a

¹ Reverend John Lane Buchanan, *Travels in the Western Hebrides* (Watnish: Maclean Press, 1997), p. 25.

world view. Whilst they were not always objective, nor could they be, what the narratives illustrate is the process of human contact and colonial encounter. They were not without criticism, and there would be responses in the ironic personas of Tobias Smollett and Laurence Sterne mocking crotchety chauvinism, and the very real personas of Giuseppe Baretti and Donald McNicol trying to defend their countrymen from the criticisms of outsiders. Sometimes the record of human contact in Boswell's library benefitted the societies being explored; more often they served to chart how they were brought under the power and control of a third party. Boswell's narratives illustrate precisely that the 'natural' process in the eighteenth century seemed to be that the soldiers and sailors travelled first, then come the scientists, then the writers, and finally the 'package' tourists in search of picturesque yet lost worlds. Each eradicated a little more of the culture they conquered, studied, and painted - first by shot and shell, then by demystification, and finally by economics. What started out as a need to fill in the gaps on the map with the imaginary worlds of Lilliput and Brobdingnag ultimately ends up, at least in the case of the Highlands of Scotland, in the no less fictional reinvention of a culture that never was (in the form of Ossian and Sir Walter Scott) and a sentimental nationalism. The whole experience of travelogue comes full circle. Boswell's travellers' tales show a world that was reducing in size and mystery, but that also took, by and large, a paternalistic approach to societies that were generally viewed as 'other' - and generally inferior at that.

Chapter 3

A Voyage Around the Self: The Discovery of ‘James Boswell’ in the *London Journal 1762-3*

Thus an Author who develops the secret Springs of the human Heart, is a kind of Pilot, who having duly sounded the Bottom, lays down the Shallows and Rocks of Life; and all his Examples are, or ought to be, Beacons of Direction to steer by, or to shun. And in the Branch of Love and Gallantry, considered as they stand in Truth and Nature [...] he is so just and correct as to leave scarce any Presumption to mend his Charts. The whole Work then forms a complete Pocket-Atlas, in which the whole social World is so skilfully delineated and coloured, that no Traveller who consults it, need miss his Way.

John Cleland, ‘The Translator’s Preface’ to *Memoirs Illustrating the Manners of the Present Age*

The ancient philosopher certainly gave wise counsel when he said, “Know thyself”. For surely this knowledge is of all the most important. I might enlarge upon this. But grave and serious declamation is not what I intend at present. A man cannot know himself better than by attending to the feelings of his heart and to his external actions, from which he may with tolerable certainty judge “what manner of person he is” [...] It will give me a habit of application and improve me in expression; and knowing that I am to record my transactions will make me careful to do well.

Boswell’s Introduction to the *London Journal*, 15 November 1762

James Boswell’s first foray into travel writing centres on his private-public journal, written as a revised version of the daily record of his life in London, but sent back periodically to his older lawyer friend in Scotland, John Johnston of Grange. The published journal raises a number of questions about the view of himself that Boswell presents, and a challenge to the reader who thinks he is seeing James Boswell (the author) rather than ‘James Boswell’ (a heightened version of the author narrating to a known reader). Whilst the London journal was not composed or edited in the same way as the published Hebridean journal, or indeed the published Corsican journal, it was written up in instalments (from memoranda and notes) and sent home to Scotland for the perusal of a known audience. Thus there are elements of the eighteenth century narrative construction evident in its writing, from the creation of an unreliable first person narrator-persona, to the experimentation with form which shows a writer

evolving a pseudo-documentary style (with all the relevant caveats about truthfulness and lack of omniscience). It also represents a very powerful reflection of London in the eighteenth century.

The Boswell manuscripts contained within the Beinecke Library in Yale, include Boswell's manuscript version of the *London Journal* which was sent in packets to John Johnston of Grange periodically, but also accompanying memoranda which were used by Frederick Pottle and his fellow editors of the Yale trade and research editions of the private papers to reconstruct (with the inclusion of Boswell's recovered correspondence) the narrative of Boswell's London jaunt, his legal studies in Holland and his grand tour of Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Corsica, and France. However, studying the memoranda alongside Boswell's manuscript *London Journal* reveals the limitations of looking at the published versions as fully reflective of Boswell's actual experience, and questions are raised about the ways in which Boswell was editing his experience for Johnston, his role-playing and his editing out of information that was either irrelevant to, or likely to provoke the disapproval of, Johnston, such as his efforts to publish in London his correspondence with Andrew Erskine, or that do not fit the novelised construction of the written-up journal. What they do present are interesting questions about the recording of experience and the nature of the restrictive and unreliable narrator: the question of whether the memoranda are to be trusted because they are stripped of artifice; the issue of how reflective they are of what would actually be done in the day; and the question of whether the narrative of the *London Journal* is to be trusted because it is written in retrospect, but with an eye to its known reader. The caveats for any user of the patchwork quilt that is the Yale Trade Edition for Holland and the Grand Tour are obvious.

In the first few months of Boswell's time in London before he met Johnson (a period that encompasses his desperate lobbying of the great and the good for a commission in the Guards, the affair with 'Louisa', the recovery from the dose of gonorrhoea that followed, and the

process of publication of his correspondence with Andrew Erskine) the memoranda reveal a process which forms little part of the manuscript journal that Johnston read. There are some gaps in the manuscript but it generally forms a coherent narrative (which is why Pottle et al could use the equivalent for Holland and the Grand Tour trade edition). The memoranda point towards Boswell's daily habit, common in the eighteenth century, of writing out his notes for the day ahead, including anticipated behaviours and how he wished to present himself to others. Beyond the mundane record of domestic chores ('breakfast', 'dress hair', 'buy candles'), the equivalent of the shopping list, they also chart Boswell's planned meetings, both social and sexual, as opposed to the frequent unplanned couplings of the *London Journal*, which therefore seem much more spontaneous, or at least reflective of a man who easily falls off the sexual waggon - though, as already noted, they are written for a known audience.

These daily notes indicate a man conscious of his place in society, how he wished to be seen, and how he would consciously shape that public persona ('be retenué', 'be Digges', 'be Sr Richard Steele'). They also represent a man who is trying to improve himself in his reading ('read Hume', 'read Dryden'), but who also wishes to focus his mind on publication, and desperately seeks to use his thin connections to advance (or, as he says, 'push', which sounds much more aggressive and unrelenting in its scheming) his case for a commission in the guards via his connections to various members of society. Perhaps the reader should not be surprised that 'My Lady [Northumberland]' is increasingly out, as recorded in the *London Journal*. At times the memoranda are sometimes effusive in their planning, indicative of a wild enthusiasm for the day ahead, sometimes short and cursory, such as in the period of his confinement and recovery from sexually transmitted disease, where there seems a lack of energy, interest, and motivation – if anything these memoranda seem more of a chore or effort. What they all reveal, though, is Boswell's processing of experience from the plan to the fruition in the written up

journal. The gaps between intentions and outcomes are symptomatic of the gaps between what Boswell would want to be and what he was, or at least what he wanted to be perceived as.

As with any manuscript the reader is a hostage to fortune as far as the clarity of handwriting is concerned, and with Boswell this is no different. Unlike the manuscript *London Journal* with its carefully scribed writing, the memoranda show a hand that is sometimes rushed and unclear, but which made sense to the writer, looking to save paper by cramming in extra notes at the bottom of a sheet (which can frequently make them illegible), and where notes are sometimes cursory and truly note-form rather than continuous prose. Boswell has odd flourishes of the pen (his Ks are very elaborate and his capital Ps look more like a D), which are sometimes ink-clogged, and a habit of randomly breaking words over two lines which can lead to misconstruing meaning. There are a number of excisions (possibly by the family before the private papers were finally sold to Isham in the 1920s, since they frequently refer to Boswell's meetings with 'Louisa'), and additions by a second hand.

The process from memoranda to the manuscript version of the *London Journal* shows that James Boswell was developing a style of travel writing that was dependent not so much on the description of locations (though there is sufficient), but more a means to show the experience of the outsider travelling in that new place; indeed, travel for Boswell becomes as much a trope for self-discovery as that of simple geographical exploration, since he spends more time on exploring his own successes, failings, and view of the world than he does in noting scenery – his landscape is primarily a human one. In his search for a moral compass and a personality to be his pilot through life, the *London Journal* shows that the discovery of the self is as important as the discovery of new worlds. In the memoranda and journal Boswell can be seen to be in a state of fluctuation between libertinism and morally sentimental cosmopolitanism – a division between the selfish and the selfless – and he uncomfortably straddles these extremes like a man trying to bridge the Great Glen itself. In this he shows himself to be very much a man of his

times, reflecting a Britain that was moving from being an offshore island to a world economic, industrial, imperial, and military power, creating a pocket atlas of society and civilised manners in the eighteenth century for the reader.

1. From the Lowlands to London

Boswell's journalising began before he left Scotland, and the journal of his 'Harvest Jaunt' of 1762, appended to the deluxe version of the Pottle edition of the *London Journal*, presents the reader with a crisp picture of the Scotland that was so familiar to him, but in which he felt as alien as he would on the continent.¹ Indeed, Boswell's native Lowlands proved to be particularly unstimulating and sapping of his energy and life:

I at present find myself exceedingly dull and lazy. I write with little ease or pleasure. I want liveliness of fancy, and am at a loss for expression. I consider my journal to be a severe task which I would gladly be rid of. However, I am resolved to go on with it, and at least to show my inclination to do well, by taking the same or rather much more trouble than it would cost me to put down the productions of a fertile genius. The custom of always doing something is very useful. It keeps us from acquiring a settled dronishness. And this is certainly true, that although stupidity may sometimes prevail, yet there is often a sunshine of imagination.²

Right from the beginning Boswell shows how he is as yet an unformed mind, looking for direction and recognising that these first recordings of experience, whilst 'severe' and illustrative of 'stupidity', also provide a core of discipline and 'a sunshine of imagination'.

These are the first movements towards understanding the self, but without the prospect of the privacy of it being penetrated by any bar a few intimate friends:

It is only intended for the perusal of Dr McQuhae and Johnston, I shall be quite easy and unconcerned [...] It has an awkward and ridiculous look; and, not to wander far out of this plain road which I am now pursuing, it may be observed that a man who is found out to be changeable in his opinions, and especially in his schemes of life, is looked upon by the generality of mankind as a weak and often silly fellow [...] Sometimes I would hope it will not be deficient in good sense, and sometimes please with the brilliancy of its thoughts and the elegant ease of its language. Now and then it will surprise with an oddity and peculiar turn of humour or a vivacious wildness of fancy [...] If it shall give any pleasure to those whom I regard, I shall think myself fortunate. At any rate, I have an immediate satisfaction in writing it.³

¹ See James Boswell, *Boswell's London Journal 1762-1763, Together with Journal of My Jaunt Harvest 1762* (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1951).

² Boswell, *Harvest Jaunt*, pp. 66-7.

³ Boswell, *Harvest Jaunt*, pp. 43-4.

Boswell shows here that his first instinct is actually a reflective one, but one that already has the sense of a definite reader in the shape of McQuhae and Johnston, maintaining the privacy of thought and personal frailty, but sharing with those who would understand. He shows from the first an appreciation of his weaknesses, and already seems to be adopting the role of the persona navigating the personality as well as the landscape. He is also starting the methodology for recording experience that would bear fruit in all of his travel and biographical works – the keeping of his *Boswelliana* in imitation, he tells the reader, of Monsieur Menage's *Menagiana*, 'a miscellaneous collection of good stories and *bon mots*', a book which Boswell had brought with him from Lord Kenmure, and which would provide a receptacle 'to treasure up wit and humour'.¹ In this context, Boswell was convinced that London represented the opportunity to break away from a suffocating Lowland environment, seeing in the English capital a civilisation and chance to be a man about town, albeit via a tenuous example of justification:

I have lived so much in a town, that my attention has had little chance of being employed upon ploughs and harrows. But what I regret more is my want of taste for planting or gardening, which are really noble and elegant employments. I flatter myself that I may be able to acquire that taste by attention and study. I shall have fine opportunities of learning the best methods in and about London.²

For Lord Kames, however, a friend to both Boswell and his father, and a leading light of the Scottish Enlightenment, London represented the greatest hazards to a man like Boswell:

He told me that my greatest disadvantage was too great avidity of pleasure, by which he understood elevation of spirits and high relish of company, which rendered me idle and made me unhappy in a calm situation. Just as a man who is accustomed to fine-seasoned dishes has no taste of plain and wholesome food [...] "Now," said he, "Boswell, take care of splitting upon the same rock. You are going to London. You are very agreeable; your company will be much sought after. Be upon your guard in time. Be your own master. Keep the reins in your own hand. Resolve to be able to live at times by yourself."³

This was both prophetic and astute as an assessment of Boswell's personality and inclinations – something that he would discover about himself.

¹ Boswell, *Harvest Jaunt*, p. 55.

² Boswell, *Harvest Jaunt*, pp. 74-5.

³ Boswell, *Harvest Jaunt*, pp. 80-1.

In his first major entry in the *London Journal* we see Boswell romanticising his experience as he prepares to leave Scotland for England:

I had a long serious conversation with my father and mother. They were very kind to me. I felt parental affection was very strong towards me; and I felt a very warm filial regard for them. The scene of being a son setting out for the wide world, and the idea of being my own master, pleased me much [...] As I passed the cross the cadies and chairmen bowed and seemed to say, "God prosper long our noble Boswell" [...] I made the chaise stop at the foot of the Canongate; asked pardon of Mr Stewart for a minute; walked to the Abbey of Holyrood House, went round the Piazzas, bowed thrice: once to the palace itself, once to the crown of Scotland above the gate in front, and once to the venerable old chapel. I next stood in the court before the palace, and bowed twice to Arthur Seat, that lofty romantic mountain on which I have stayed so often in my days of youth, indulged meditation and felt the raptures of a soul filled with ideas of magnificence of God and his creation.¹

Boswell shapes the narrative like a heroic quest with himself as the hero, whose formation is to be confirmed by the expedition, turning the *London Journal* into something akin to *bildungsroman*. We see the nationalistic pride, superstition, and sensibility of the eighteenth-century Scottish knight-errant reflecting on Arthur's Seat – though it is somewhat ironic considering his desire to escape the confines and limitations of Lowland society. Clearly there is the idealisation of the 'cadies and the chairmen', but also of the 'parental affection' being displayed, since Lord Auchinleck was far from happy about his son leaving and, amongst other things, the trip to London provided another perfect opportunity for Boswell to get away from his father's overbearing attentions.² As Pottle notes in the introduction to his edition of the *London Journal*, Boswell's father was grudging in allowing him to go to London to seek a commission in the Guards - though he provided no money for the scheme (he would have settled money for a 'marching regiment' but that would not have fitted the glamour to which his son aspired), believing that ultimately he would get bored and return to take up his legal studies.³ Boswell's romanticising, though, had a more overtly literary origin:

But this proceeds from my genius for poetry, which ascribes many fanciful properties to everything. This I have great pleasure from; as I have now by experience and reflection gained the command of it so far that

¹ James Boswell, and F. A. Pottle, *Boswell's London Journal 1762-1763, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: Heinemann, 1950), p.40.

² Boswell had had a previous wide-eyed 'jaunt' to London in 1760 where he had mixed amongst royals and authors and written *The Cub at Newmarket* - the time since had seen an ongoing battle of wills between Lord Auchinleck and Boswell.

³ Boswell, *London Journal*, p.7.

I can keep it within just bounds by the power of reason, without losing the agreeable feeling and play to the imagination which it bestows.¹

The reader can see this idealisation as a young man glamorising experience for a friendly reader, or sanitising the whole event to make it reflect a semi-fictionalised desire rather than a more uncomfortable reality. The opening days of the journal continue to present the outset of the journey as akin to an adventure with fears of robbers ('I affected resolution, and each of us carried a loaded pistol in his hand, we were pretty secure').² Travel did present a number of problems and dangers, as Boswell would also find out in his travels in Italy on the Grand Tour, but which here provoked an outburst of sensibility:

In the afternoon between Stamford and Stilton there was a young unruly horse in the chaise which ran away with the driver, and jumping to one side of the road, we were overturned. We got a pretty severe rap. Stewart's head and my arm were somewhat hurt. However, we got up and pursued our way. During our last two stages this night, which we travelled in the dark, I was a good deal afraid of robbers. A great many horrid ideas filled my mind. There is no passion so distressing as fear, which gives us great pain and makes us appear contemptible in our own eyes to the last degree.³

The journey south finishes in Boswell's account with singing and joy upon reaching the promised land ('I gave three huzzas, and we went briskly in'), and planning his first 'amorous meeting with a pretty girl'.⁴

The same idealisation can be seen in Boswell's representation of the Scots Highland culture, which he would nostalgically admire and imitate through much of his salad days, anticipating his fratricidal view of the native Corsicans in their fight for independence from the Genoese. This is particularly evident in his view of James Macpherson:

I breakfasted with Macpherson, the translator of *Fingal*, a man of great genius and an honest Scotch Highlander. It did my heart good to hear the spirit with which he talked. "The Highlanders", said he, "are

¹Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 42. Boswell's 'genius' as a poet is open to conjecture. In 1760, during his jaunt to London he wrote, amongst other things, 'A Poetical Epistle to Doctor Sterne Parson Yorick and Tristram Shandy' which began,

Dear Sir! if you're in mood to whistle,
As Prologue to my slight Epistle,
I beg your audience for a minute,
In favour of whatever's in it.

See James Boswell, *Boswell's Book of Bad Verse* (London: White Lion Publishers, 1974). pp. 131-140.

²Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 43.

³Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 43.

⁴Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 44.

hospitable and love society. They are hardy, and can endure the inconveniences of life very well. Yet they are very fond of London when they get to it, and indulge as much in its pleasures as anybody.”¹

Boswell’s viewpoint here appears either hopelessly naïve or wilfully rose-tinted: since Macpherson’s ‘translation’ of Ossian was ultimately denounced as a fraud by Johnson amongst others, albeit a creative one, there is a degree of observable irony in seeing him in the eighteenth-century context as the ‘honest Scotch Highlander’;² Boswell, is revelling in a vision of his own nationality (and heritage) which would manifest itself in his famous attempted defence of his nation to Johnson, and a plan to write a dictionary of the Scots language³, but also recording how he adopted the persona of “a Scotch Highlander” to be “free and easy” with a Miss Watts at the Shakespeare’s Head tavern in Covent Garden, a role he would play on his Grand Tour.⁴ There is a further irony here since Boswell, as a Lowlander, came from a culture which largely saw those who lived above the Great Glen divide as little more than Gaelic-speaking uncivilised barbarians.

In his reflections upon Highland culture and adoption of its physical appearance Boswell was expressing a sentimental Jacobitism that would be a feature of his Grand Tour in Germany as he travelled with the Earl Marischal, but was also illustrative of the triple division within British society. Boswell, as a Lowlander, saw the attraction of London’s modern metropolis south of the border, but could also see the lure of a tribal, catholic and feudal society north of the Great Glen, even considering writing a history of the ’45 during his trip to Ashbourne with

¹Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 73.

² The idealisation is all the more noteworthy since the ‘Ossian debate’ would provide one of the most memorable episodes within the journal of Boswell and Johnson’s tour of Scotland in 1773 with Johnson pronouncing (as recorded by Boswell), “Why is not the original deposited in some public library, instead of exhibiting attestations of its existence? Suppose there were a question in a court of justice whether a man be dead or alive. You aver he is alive, and you bring fifty witnesses to swear it; I answer, “Why do you not produce the man?”” See James Boswell, *Boswell’s Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, Lld. 1773, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (Heinemann Ltd, 1963), pp. 379-381.

³ See James Boswell, and F. A. Pottle, *Boswell in Holland, 1763-1764 : Including His Correspondence with Belle De Zuylen (Zélide), The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (Melbourne, London: Heinemann, 1952), pp158-164. Pottle does, however, highlight Boswell’s ambition over substance in his annotation (p. 161). An unsigned manuscript in Boswell’s hand has in recent years been rediscovered in the Bodleian Library by Doctor Susan Rennie, covering about 800 words and phrases.

⁴Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 263.

Johnson in 1777.¹ Edinburgh and Auchinleck offered Presbyterian enlightenment, but few of the pleasures of the flesh, tribal past, or sophistication of a wide and varied cultural society:

I got from Digges a list of the best houses on the road, and also a direction to a good inn at London. I therefore made the boy drive me to Mr Hayward's, at the Black Lion, Water Lane, Fleet Street. The noise, the crowd, the glare of shops and signs agreeably confused me. I was rather more wildly struck than when I first came to London. My companion could not understand my feelings. He considered London just as a place where he was to receive orders from the east India Company [...] I was all of a flutter at having at last got to the place which I was so madly fond of, and being restrained, had formed so many wild schemes to get back to.²

Part of this attraction to London was a reflection of Boswell's sense of his progress as an individual, set in direct relation to the person he felt himself to have been on his previous visit to the capital three years earlier, and his desire to separate himself from the unsophisticated Scots who had also travelled south:

To tell the plain truth, I was vexed at their coming. For to see just the plain *hamely* Fife family hurt my grand ideas of London. Besides, I was now upon a plan of studying polite reserved behaviour, which is the only way to keep up dignity of character. And as I have a good share of pride, which I think is very proper and even noble, I am hurt with the taunts of ridicule and am unsatisfied if I do not feel myself something of a superior animal [...] After my wild expedition to London in the year 1760, after I got rid of the load of serious reflection which then burthened me, by being always in Lord Eglinton's company, very fond of him, and much caressed by him, I became dissipated and careless [...] I found myself a very inferior being; and I found many people presuming to treat me as such, which notwithstanding of my appearance of undiscerning gaiety, gave me much pain. I was, in short, a character very different from what GOD intended me and I myself chose.³

For Boswell, the glamour of the journey into England was into a world of opportunity and sophistication and, by extension, a sophisticated self and citizen of the world.

Yet if Boswell was capable of romanticising his expedition and his view of his own nation, he was also glamorising and embracing the world into which he was progressing. Boswell would resolve to be 'a true-born Old Englishman', eating beefsteak by himself to 'fulfil the charge of selfishness', and watching cock-fighting for five hours to 'fulfil the charge of cruelty.'⁴ This can particularly be seen in his representation of Garrick's attitude to him, telling him he would be 'a very great man', and that when he was he should 'remember the year 1763'.

¹ James Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes, 1776-1778, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (New York, NY; London: McGraw-Hill, 1970), p. 162.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 44.

³ Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 61-2.

⁴ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 86.

This view stimulated one of Boswell's philosophical outpourings in the journal as he sought to examine his pathway forwards:

What he meant by my being a great man I can understand. For really, to speak seriously, I think there is a blossom about me of something more distinguished than the generality of mankind. But I am much afraid that this blossom will never swell into fruit, but will be nipped and destroyed by many a blighting heat and chilling frost. Indeed, I sometimes indulge noble reveries of having a regiment, of getting into Parliament, making a figure, and becoming a man of consequence in the state. But these are checked by dispiriting reflections on my melancholy temper and imbecility of my mind. Yet I may probably become sounder and stronger as I grow up. Heaven knows. I am resigned. I trust to Providence. I was quite in raptures with Garrick's kindness - the man whom from a boy I used to adore and look upon as a heathen god - to find him paying me so much respect! How amiable is he in comparison of Sheridan! I was this day with him what the French call un etourdi. I gave free vent to my feelings. Love was by, to whom I cried, "This, Sir, is the real scene." And taking Mr. Garrick cordially by the hand, "Thou greatest of men," said I, "I cannot express how happy you make me." This, upon my soul, was no flattery. He saw it was not. And the dear great man was truly pleased with it. This scene gave me a charming flutter of spirits and dispelled my former gloom.¹

Boswell appears as a starstruck young man: he sees in platitudes prophecies of greatness, recognised by the already 'greatest of men'; and the reader can see in his effusions of neoclassical melodrama, as he describes Garrick as 'a heathen god', indications of his predisposition to the hero-worship of 'great men' (and a good scoop) which would culminate not only in *The Life of Johnson*, but also in his relations with Voltaire and Rousseau, his interview with David Hume on the latter's death bed, and his (ultimately abortive) desire to meet Frederick the Great. Boswell's lyrical metaphor develops the idea of formation and evolution of character, though not without the ominous note of melancholy and fear of failure, two very obvious motifs within his later journals; these were notable in the journals of those on literal expeditions as well as the metaphorical, personal one upon which Boswell was embarking. Like the blossom, his is a suggestion of what is to come, not the realised fruit, and the future is delicately balanced between the 'blighting' heat of the sun, his own excesses, and the 'chilling frost' (amongst other things, of the harsh Presbyterian moralism of his father and, indeed, his own desire expressed in the Holland journal to be more 'retenu', which would later be mixed with a sense of literary failure), married to a depressive 'wisdom' brought by moral failure after the event (of which the Louisa episode is such a good example). There even lurk

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 161.

fears of breakdown and mental illness in his “melancholy temper and imbecility of mind”.¹ This should not be surprising given his disposition and probable nervous collapse as a seventeen year old:

I had a very severe illness. I became very melancholy. I imagined that I was never to get rid of it. I gave myself up as devoted to misery. I entertained a most gloomy and odd way of thinking. I was much hurt at being good for nothing in life. The particular events of romantic life since then, my friends well know. My lively fancy always remained. Many a struggle was in my mind between melancholy and mirth.²

This would also become evident in the mid-point of the *London Journal* as part of the wages of transgression in the city of sin.

2. London, the City of Sin and Sinners

The London that Boswell was circulating around was not simply the world of Doctor Johnson and the Literary Club. When the surface was scratched it revealed a criminal ‘other’ world, a world which Boswell, as a lawyer, would travel both personally and professionally throughout his life, fascinated by the extremes of society, sympathising and imitating whilst remaining separate; a world, as Vic Gatrell has argued, of grandees and ‘raucous market women’, taverns and coffee-houses, bagnios (bath-houses) and bordellos – Covent Garden’s ‘thickening sleaze’.³ Herein lies one of the most dominating factors of the *London Journal* - Boswell’s habit of role-playing, delving into the seedier side of London society which coexisted alongside the public face of civilisation. For Boswell this represents in the *London Journal* a morbid fascination with the abomination of public state punishment in the eighteenth century (directly comparable with his later experience in Rome on the Grand Tour), the theatrical ritual of the

¹ Boswell’s brother, John, was subject to episodes of mental illness after 1762 - though he remained on half-pay with the army until 1798 - caused, according to Lord Auchinleck, by “a fall he got one day on guard” and maintained by Boswell in his letter of 8 February to Johnston (See James Boswell, *The Correspondence of James Boswell and John Johnstone of Grange* (London: Heinemann, 1966), p. 44). Peter Martin argues (Martin, *A Life of James Boswell*, London 1999, p. 99) that this was a necessary ruse on the part of the family to avoid limiting Boswell’s marriage prospects by association.— see Peter Martin, *A Life of James Boswell* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999). ‘Imbecility’ in the eighteenth century refers specifically to “a feebleness of mind or body” rather than its more pejorative modern meaning of “extremely low intelligence; stupidity, foolishness”. See Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*. 4 vols (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, and Brown, 1818), volume 3.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 77-8.

³ Vic Gatrell, *The First Bohemians: Life and Art in London's Golden Age* (London: Allen Lane, 2013), p. 45.

Newgate procession, with hawkers offering ballads, gaping onlookers at the prison gate, the three-mile route to Tyburn through the busiest streets, and the final ‘turning off’ in front of the gathered masses:¹

I walked up to the Tower in order to see Mr Wilkes come out. But he was gone. I then thought I should see prisoners of one kind or other, so went to Newgate. I stepped into a sort of court before the cells. They are surely most dismal places. There are three rows of ‘em, four in a row, all above each other. They have double iron windows, and within these, strong iron rails; and in these dark mansions are the unhappy criminals confined [...] Paul [Lewis], who had been in the sea-service and was called Captain, was a genteel, spirited young fellow. He was just a Macheath. He was dressed in a white coat and blue silk vest and silver, with his hair neatly queued and a silver-laced hat, smartly cocked. An acquaintance asked him how he was. He said, “Very well”; quite resigned. Poor fellow! I really took a great concern for him, and wished to relieve him. He walked firmly and with a good air, with his chains rattling upon him, to the chapel.²

There is an element of the Gothic here, in identifying mood and location in the landscape of punishment. The ‘dismal’ cells are part of ‘dark mansions’ that entrap the ‘unhappy criminals’ with their ‘rattling chains’. This contrasts with the representation of Paul Lewis – one object of the exercise in state justice – with his grand gestures of defiance and sang-froid in the face of public execution clearly admired by Boswell, with Lewis described as standing out like a West Digges. This extends to the theatricality of the execution of Lewis, reminiscent of Macheath in *The Beggar’s Opera*:

My curiosity to see the melancholy spectacle of the executions was so strong that I could not resist it, although I was sensible that I would suffer much from it. In my younger years I had read in the *Lives of the Convicts* so much about Tyburn that I had a sort of horrid eagerness to be there. I also wished to see the last behaviour of Paul Lewis, the handsome fellow whom I had seen the day before. Accordingly I took Captain Temple with me, and he and I got upon a scaffold very near the fatal tree, so that we could clearly see the dismal scene. There was a most prodigious crowd of spectators. I was most terribly shocked, and thrown into a very deep melancholy.³

As well as the theatrical nature of the execution with its ‘prodigious crowd of spectators’, the passage is also dominated by Boswell’s response via the metonymy of sensibility. Boswell clearly identified with Lewis, linked to his Macheath alter-ego; the execution obviously affected him deeply, less because of his view of capital punishment, and more because of the feeling of

¹ See Peter Linebaugh, ‘The Tyburn Riot against the Surgeons’, in *Albion’s Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Verso, 2011).

² Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 251-2.

³ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 252.

personal connection and disapproval of the suffering inflicted, as he would write in the *Hypochondriack* twenty years later:

I am persuaded that nobody feels more sincerely for the distresses of his fellow-creatures than I do, or would do more to relieve them [...] I was in a manner convulsed with pity and terror, and for several days, but especially nights after, I was in a very dismal situation [...] The best I have ever discovered is one practised in Modern Rome, which is called "*Macellare – to butcher.*" The criminal is placed upon a scaffold, and the executioner knocks him on the head with a great iron hammer, then cuts his throat with a large knife, and lastly hews him into pieces with an ax [...] The spectators are struck with prodigious terror; yet the poor wretch who is stunned into insensibility by the blow, does not actually suffer much.¹

As Gatrell has argued, for Boswell the execution that made a sympathetic hero out of a criminal did not really satisfy the requirement to act as a deterrent or 'terror'.² Indeed, Boswell's focus on Lewis in his journal and omission of any reference to Hannah Dagoë (who was executed at the same time for burglary, and violently turned herself off the scaffold after shouting and tearing off her clothes so that executioner should not have them), would indicate that Boswell felt no connection to her (with her much more morbidly fascinating execution), and more towards Lewis.³ An alternative view could be, as Katherine Ellison argues, that Boswell edits out Dagoë as a means to forget painful experience, just as he would the death of Johnson. As Ellison says, 'journal writing facilitates forgetting as much as it does remembering.'⁴ Whichever it was, whilst Dagoë was ignored, Lewis-Macheath achieved a bizarre resurrection a few days later, as Boswell consoled himself with copulating role-play and life-affirming criminal masculinity in Covent Garden:

I then sallied forth to the Piazzas in rich flow of animal spirits and burning with fierce desire. I met two very pretty little girls who asked me to take them with me. "My dear girls," said I, "I am a poor fellow. I can give you no money. But if you choose to have a glass of wine and my company and let us be gay and obliging to each other without money, I am your man." They agreed with great good humour. So back to the Shakespeare I went [...] We were shown into a good room and had a bottle of sherry before us in a

¹ James Boswell, *The Hypochondriack*. 2 vols (California: Stanford University Press, 1928), vol. 2, pp. 279-283. As Douglas Hay has argued, 'Most historians and many contemporaries argued that the policy of terror was not working. More of those sentenced to death were pardoned than were hanged; thieves often escaped punishment through the absence of a police force, the leniency of prosecutors and juries, and the technicalities of the law; transported convicts were so little afraid that they often returned to England to pick pockets on hanging days; riot was endemic. The critics of the law argued that gibbets and corpses paradoxically weakened the enforcement of the law: rather than terrifying criminals, the death penalty terrified prosecutors and juries, who feared committing judicial murder on the capital statutes.' See Douglas Hay, 'Property, Authority and the Criminal Law', in *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Verso, 2011), p. 23.

² Vic Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree: Execution and the English People 1770-1868* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 286-7.

³ Gatrell, *The Hanging Tree*, p. 291.

⁴ Katherine Ellison, 'James Boswell's Revisions of Death as "the Hypochondriack" and in His London Journals', *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, 21 (2008), p. 55.

minute. I surveyed my seraglio and found them both good subjects for amorous play. I toyed with them and drank about and sung *Youth's the Season* and thought myself Captain Macheath; and then I solaced my existence with them, one after the other, according to their seniority. I was quite *raised* as the phrase is: thought I was in a London tavern, the Shakespeare's Head, enjoying high debauchery after my sober winter.¹

In his exploits with various 'ladies of the town' we see Boswell the narrator at his most conflicted, veering between outrageous bragging and self-loathing:

I lay abed very gloomy. I thought London did me no good; I rather disliked it; and I thought of going back to Edinburgh immediately. In short, I was most miserable [...] I had been some time in town without sport. I determined to have nothing to do with whores, as my health was of great consequence to me. I went to a girl with whom I had an intrigue at Edinburgh, but my affection cooling, I had left her [...] She would by no means listen. I was really unhappy for want of women. I thought it hard to be in such a place without them. I picked up a girl in the Strand; went into a court with the intention to enjoy her in armour. But she had none. I toyed with her. She wondered at my size, and said if ever I took a girl's maidenhead, I would make her squeak [...] I afterwards trembled at the danger I had escaped.²

Here is Boswell showing the extremes of desire and regret: women are the source of relief for his strained libido after a single week in London (though his father would have been happy to see him return with his tail between his legs), and though he determines to have nothing to do with whores he compromises if there is contraception available, and failing that 'toys' with her - and adds a touch of male bravado (presumably for John Johnston's delectation) in the claim about the size of his manhood. This sense of desire outstripping his moral sensibility, what he describes as 'deviations from the sacred rod of virtue', or failing resolve, can be most evidently seen in the way he 'celebrates' the King's birthday where the drama involves role-playing the 'blackguard', 'highwayman' and 'gentleman in disguise', engaging in an orgy of drinking and serial prostitutes.³ It is also worth noting that Boswell could feel free to project his fantasies onto streetwalkers since, whilst it would be improper to talk about the sex lives of ladies, prostitutes and courtesans were fair game – evident here in the *London Journal*, but also in the works of writers like John Cleland.⁴

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 263-4.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 49-50.

³ Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 272-3.

⁴ See Gwen Brewer, and Vern Bullough, 'Women, Pornography, and Prostitution in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Sexuality & Culture*, 9 (2005), pp. 14-27. In the catalogue of books in the Boswell library sale from 1825 Cleland's *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* is listed, and Boswell met with Cleland on at least four occasions documented in his journals.

Boswell's divided persona really comes out in his relationships with women in the *London Journal*, and the pursuit of women is a dominating feature of his personal journey from bachelorhood to marriage. In this he is reminiscent of Cleland's coxcomb, Sir William Delamore, and Louisa is not far removed from Fanny Hill.¹ His contradictory urges for gratification and Presbyterian restraint played throughout his life, but found real expression here. This is centred in the *London Journal* particularly in the Louisa episode, his pursuit of an actress in order to provide a more 'constant' form of sexual gratification. It begins as a romantic subplot in the pages of the journal, with Boswell playing the role of the society ingénue (which he most definitely was not), but soon descends into farce, as Louisa strings the young Scot along, until he is on the point of satisfaction:

Yet I was not inspired by Venus [...] She might imagine me impotent [...] She behaved extremely well [...] I fanned the flame by pressing her alabaster breasts and kissing her delicious lips. I then barred the door of her dining room, led her fluttering into her bedchamber and was just making a triumphal entry when we heard the landlady coming up. "O Fortune why did it happen thus?" would have been the exclamation of a Roman bard [...] She ran out and stopped the landlady from coming up [...] We fell into each other's arms, sighing and panting, "Oh dear, how hard this is" [...] Her brother then came in.²

Boswell clearly maintains the illusion for Johnston, or the delusion for himself, that he is the one doing the pursuing here. He characterises himself as a Lovelace, manfully acting the part of the rake, Louisa the mock-Clarissa, the heroine of sensibility 'fluttering', 'sighing', and 'panting' - all the time manipulating and magnifying the sense of farcical comic timing and coincidence for the reader (Johnston), but in reality showing Louisa playing a 'jade's trick'.³

Boswell continues to establish himself as the romantic hero of his own narrative as he finally consummates the relationship, building up a sense of anticipation in his reader:

At the appointed hour of eight I went to the Piazzas, where I sauntered up and down for a while in a sort of trembling suspense, I knew not why. At last my charming companion appeared, and I immediately conducted her to the hackney-coach which I had ready waiting, pulled up the blinds, and away we drove to

¹ See John Cleland, *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* (London: The Fortune Press, 1926), pp. 232-3, and Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 135.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 117.

³ Boswell was writing up his journal from his notes and memos days after events had taken place, so in a very real sense he knew what was going to happen, and builds up tension and a sense of anticipation for his reader – Johnston. As he says for Johnston's benefit, in discussing his attempt to get permission from Lord Auchinleck to travel on to Europe and to become a man of consequence, 'So very violent an inclination could not last, as will appear hereafter.' See Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 201.

the destined scene of delight [...] Good heavens, what a loose did we give to amorous dalliance! The friendly curtain of darkness concealed our blushes. In a moment I felt myself animated with the strongest powers of love, and from my godlike vigour, I soon resumed the noble game [...] Five times was I fairly lost in supreme rapture [...] I have painted this night as well as I could. The description is faint, but I surely may be styled a Man of Pleasure.¹

Boswell as lover becomes the ‘Man of Pleasure’ with ‘godlike vigour’ partaking in a ‘noble game’ but managing to dress his narrative in false modesty for his reader: the description is anything but faint; even though it is dressed in metaphors, the meaning is unambiguous and filled with the bravado of a 22-year old discussing multiple sexual triumphs with a close friend. Boswell’s narrative tone changes, though, as the reader closes on the consequences of his dalliance with Louisa (which he knew when he was writing up), and he furthers the anticipation:

I then went to Louisa and was permitted the rites of love with great complacency; yet I felt my passion for Louisa much gone. I felt a degree of coldness for her and I observed an affectation about her which disgusted me. I had a strong proof of my own inconstancy of disposition, and I considered that any woman who married me must be miserable. Here I argued wrong. For as a licentious love is merely the child of passion, it has no sure ground to hope for a long continuance, as passion may be extinguished with the most sudden and trifling breath of wind.²

The severity of the voice of his ‘Memoranda’ comes through here, the strict moral regret and sense of what he should do: Boswell, in retrospect, cools to the woman who will mislead him about her honour, beginning to portray her as the whore to be despised rather than the Madonna to be adored; the metaphor of the flame being extinguished is a lyrical expression of his melancholic regret; but the reader is also built up for the inevitable wages of sin.

I this day began to feel an unaccountable alarm of unexpected evil: a little heat in the members of my body sacred to Cupid, very like a symptom of that distemper with which Venus, when cross, takes it into her head to plague her votaries. But then I had run no risks. I had been with no woman but Louisa.³

All suspicions were confirmed shortly afterwards as Boswell revealed the truth of his “sad case” to his landlord Doctor Douglas. Boswell had contracted gonorrhoea, though he would later consider himself ‘fairly trapped’ and describe it as a ‘chance of war.’⁴

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 137.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 145.

³ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 149.

⁴ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 161.

3. Searching for a Pilot

The battle within Boswell's divided self (the Lowland Scots Presbyterian and moralist set against the English-based hedonist and socialite, who flirted with Catholicism and libertinism) and his aesthetic values is best illustrated in the core of the *London Journal* – the search for a direction and a pilot to provide that direction. At this point in his life Boswell still has a multitude of opportunities open to him, butterfly desires made to satisfy his own whims as well as those of a demanding father-figure, and the *Journal* illustrates his capricious fluttering but also his awareness of it:

I wanted much to be a man of consequence, and I considered that I could only be that in my own country, where my family and connections would procure it [...] I considered that the law seemed to be pointed out by fate for me. That the family of Auchinleck had been raised by it. That I would soon be made Advocate Depute on the circuits and in all likelihood be made a Baron of Exchequer, and by this means have respect and yet an easy life – otium cum dignitate [...] I thought I might write books like Lord Kames and be a buck like Mr James Erskine. That I might keep a handsome machine. Have a good agreeable wife and fine children and keep an excellent house. That I might show all the dull, vulgar, plodding young lawyers how easily superior parts can outstrip them [...] So very violent an inclination could not last, as will appear hereafter.¹

Boswell contrasts the conflicting desires, the draws of Edinburgh and the law with the rewards of being a man of 'consequence', a desire that never left him, but what he is lacking at this moment is a direction from a father-figure or literary mentor whose world view is acceptable to him, a search which is within much of his travel writing from Kames and Sir John Pringle in the journal of the 'Harvest Jaunt', through Johnson, the Earl Marischal, Rousseau, Voltaire, John Wilkes, Pascale Paoli, and even Edmond Malone. In the case of Sir David Dalrymple Boswell had even gone so far as to ask him to 'take charge', and guide him over 'what books to read, and what company to keep, and how to conduct myself'.² However, as John B Radner has argued, Johnson was much more of the ultimate mentor for Boswell since he also clearly identified with Boswell, 'which none of his other mentors seem to have done.'³

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 200.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 188.

³ John B. Radner, *Johnson and Boswell: A Biography of Friendship* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 16.

The encounter on 16th May 1763 in Davies' back room in Russell Street provides the first contact with Samuel Johnson, a meeting that would be definitive in the shaping of Boswell's career as writer and man. Boswell is careful to create for his reader, Johnston, a strong reflection of Johnson's persona (albeit shaped with a degree of retrospective vigour and superiority):

Mr Johnson is a man of a most dreadful appearance. He is a very big man, is troubled with sore eyes, the palsy, and the king's evil. He is very slovenly in his dress and speaks with a most uncouth voice. Yet his great knowledge and strength of expression command vast respect and render him excellent company. He has great humour and is a worthy man. But his dogmatic roughness of manners is disagreeable. I shall mark what I remember of his conversation.¹

Already the reader can see a sense that Boswell would become the most significant of Johnson's biographers, though the episode would be heavily rewritten for the *Life of Johnson* as Siebenschuh has noted.² The first impressions are strong in primary descriptive detail and moral judgements, and there is a keen sense of Johnson's inner substance as well as his outer 'slovenliness' – certainly the opposite of Boswell's father – but there is also a faux tentativeness in the desire to conceal his nationality for fear of Johnson's prejudice which he later dismissed thirty years later as 'a light pleasantry to sooth and conciliate him', though, as Adam Rounce has pointed out, such prejudice was common in the anti-Bute popular press, focused especially in John Wilkes' writing in *The North Briton*.³ At this point Boswell is uncertain of his position since this may be his last, as well as first, meeting with the 'Great Cham'. First impressions can easily be last impressions, and the retrospect of a long-lasting friendship which would be evident until Johnson's death are not obvious at this point – so the reader can forgive Boswell's rewriting of history a little.⁴ His agitation at being taken by surprise on Johnson's entrance

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 260.

² William R Siebenschuh, *Fictional Techniques and Factual Works* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983), pp. 57-8.

³ See Adam Rounce, "'Stuarts without End': Wilkes, Churchill, and Anti-Scottishness", *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 29 (2005), p. 34. Much has been made of Johnson's supposed antipathy to the Scots, but the most famous quotation "...the noblest prospect that a Scotsman ever sees is the road which leads him to England" was revealed in context as a joke – Boswell was only critical of Johnson's lack of appreciation of the 'wild grandeur of nature' rather than any nationalistic pride. See Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 294, and *Life of Johnson*. 6 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1950). Volume 1, p. 392.

⁴ On the subject of rewriting history, Boswell became very protective of the memory of the moment and outlined in the notes to his second edition of the *Life* how another rival biographer, 'Mr Murphy', who claimed to be at the same meeting, gave a considerably different account where "his memory undoubtedly deceived him... In my note taken on the very day, in which I am confident I marked every thing material that passed, no mention is made of this gentleman; and I am sure that I could not

throws the whole moment into sharp relief.¹ However, the later meeting, on Saturday 25th June, is of much more interest in the study of Boswell's mind-set at this time: the meeting does not sound more intimate since they dine in 'the same room' rather than together, but Johnson is much more tolerant of Boswell's presence since "He was vastly obliging to favour me with his company. I was quite proud to think on whom I was with", especially after a dispute with an Irish 'Teague' which made Boswell's company more attractive as they left to go to the Mitre Tavern in Fleet Street.²

It is also here that Boswell lays out a stylistic that would become one of the dominant features of the *Life of Johnson*:

I shall mark Johnson's conversation without any order or without marking my questions; only now and then, shall I take up the form of dialogue.

This mimicry of speakers' 'precise' words is closer to the modern reader's more journalistic view of biography (though not without questions of context and accuracy, let alone editing for a particular reader), but it was very different for the eighteenth century writer, and drew criticism from Alexander Boswell after the publication of his journals of the 'London Jaunt' in a letter received earlier in the month:

James,

My last letter, which was wrote in February, let you know how much I was displeas'd with some particulars of your conduct which had come to my knowledge [...] If the thing were known, no man would choose to keep company with you, for who would incline to have his character traduced in so strange a manner [...] it was extremely odd to send such a piece to the press to be perused by all and sundry.³

Boswell was hardly unaware of the consequences of such journalism as outlined by his father, but there is also a sense in writing for his friend Johnston that he is deliberately ignoring his

have omitted one so well known in the literary world" (Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, Volume 1, p. 391, n.4). Murphy did not have the opportunity to read the pages of Boswell's journal.

¹ Frederick A. Pottle, *James Boswell: The Earlier Years 1740-1769* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1985), pp. 114-5.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 282-5.

³ Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 337-42.

father's injunction, which he described in the journal as 'a very kind letter from my father'¹, failing to mention Alexander's statement that 'I had determined to abandon you, to free myself as much as possible from sharing your ignominy, and to take the strongest and most public steps for declaring to the world that I was come to this resolution. But I have been so much importuned by your excellent mother, the partaker of my distresses and shame on your account, again to write to you.'² Clearly the publication of intimate conversation was not the stuff of which gentlemen are made, but the rejection of his father's admonitions also tied to the founding of a new paternalistic relationship with Johnson, which made him reassess his ties to Alexander:

Sir [...] your father has been wanting to make a man of you at twenty which you will be at thirty. Sir, let me tell you that to be a Scotch landlord, where you have a number of families dependent upon and attached to you, is perhaps as high a situation as humanity can arrive at [...] a father and a son should part at a certain time of life. I never believed what my father said. I always thought he spoke *ex officio*, as a priest does.³

This reinforces for Johnston, the notional reader, the correctness of Boswell's decisions: Johnson is represented in the narrative as viewing Alexander as the overbearing priest-like father that Boswell clearly sees him as; and Johnson apparently supports the idea of a separation between father and son. Boswell's ego was also clearly boosted by the loco parentis figure that Johnson represented in his glamourized recollection of the moment, and in the borrowed authority of Johnson's judgement which helped to justify his rejection of his father's values for Johnston:

I put out my hand. "Will you really take a charge of me? It is very good in you, Mr Johnson, to allow me to sit with you thus. Had I but thought some years ago that I should pass an evening with the Author of *The Rambler!*" These expressions were all from the heart, and he perceived that they were; and he was very complacent and said, "Sir, I am glad that we have met. I hope we shall pass many evenings and mornings together" [...] I went home in high exultation.⁴

As Boswell would note on 14th July, Johnson would be the mentor that he had been looking for who accepted the conflict between father and son ('there must always be a struggle between a

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 274.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 339.

³ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 284.

⁴ Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 284-5.

father and son, while one aims at power and the other at independency'), the need to read ('as inclination leads him [...] to acquire a great deal of knowledge'), and to endeavour to study.¹

Association with Johnson opened up for Boswell a world where he could be a man of letters by association, but also presented the opportunity to get bon mots out of people, to 'gently assist conversation by those little arts which serve to make people throw out their sentiments with ease and freedom', like a good interviewer, as noted by Oliver Goldsmith:

He said I had a method of making people speak. "Sir," said I, "that is next best to speaking myself." "Nay," said he, "but you do both."²

Whilst he was undoubtedly starstruck, and gushingly idolatrous in his depiction of 'the Stupendous Johnson', he reveals his own vanity via tongue-in-cheek diminutio:

In recollecting Mr Johnson's conversation, I labour under much difficulty. It requires more parts than I am master of even to retain that strength of sentiment and perspicuity of expression for which he is remarkable. I shall just do my best and relate as much as I can.³

It does reveal the piecemeal nature of recall, but also Boswell's methodology. Whilst Johnson might say that the historian (and biographer) 'has facts ready to his hand, so he has no exercise of invention' and that 'Imagination is not required in any high degree; only about as much as is used in the lower parts of poetry', as a biographer himself he would have recognised the skill, vitality, and authenticity within the *Life of Johnson*, the foundations of which were being laid as he spoke.⁴ Boswell's recording of experience in the journal was also commended by Johnson: Temple might feel that keeping the journal would prompt Boswell into 'adventure' to fill it, but Johnson encouraged Boswell's noting of minutiae:

"Sir", said he, "there is nothing too little for so little a creature as man. It is by studying the little things that we attain the great knowledge of having as little misery and as much happiness as possible."⁵

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 300-2.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 286.

³ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 293.

⁴ In *The Rambler*, No 60 of October 13th 1750, Johnson said, "We know how few can portray a living acquaintance except by his most prominent and observable particularities, and the grosser features of his mind; and it may be easily imagined how much of this little knowledge may be lost in imparting it, and how soon a succession of copies will lose all resemblance of the original." See, Samuel Johnson, *Samuel Johnson, The Oxford Authors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 207.

⁵ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 305.

In this Johnson would also represent the moral compass that Boswell needed to maintain his course through life:

Since my being honoured with the friendship of Mr Johnson, I have more seriously considered the duties of morality and religion and the dignity of human nature. I have considered that promiscuous concubinage is certainly wrong. It is contributing one's share towards bringing confusion and misery into society; and it is a transgression of the laws of the Almighty creator, who has ordained marriage for the mutual comfort of the sexes and the procreation and right educating of children. Sure it is that if all the men and women in Britain were merely to consult animal gratification, society would be a most shocking scene. Nay, it would soon cease altogether. Notwithstanding of these reflections, I have stooped to mean profligacy even yesterday. However, I am now resolved to guard against it.¹

The reader should remember that Johnson also gained in this relationship, as Radner has argued, delighting in his adopted son who 'gave Johnson a chance to use his time and talents well whilst also living vicariously.'²

4. Representing the Self

The persona Boswell presents in the *London Journal* is of interest because of the necessity of being guarded, and the subtle play involved in the fact that the journal is both private, in the sense of being a personal journal, but public because it was written for a known reader. As Patricia M. Spacks has written, 'The conventions of [scandalous first-person] narratives demand that the narrator deliberately violate his or her own privacy; their interest derives largely from the reader's capacity to believe that the text provides an opportunity to penetrate the privacies of others.'³ It is in this deliberate violation of privacy that the roots of authorial role-play and conscious self-shaping lie: partly due to the fear of reader response and restricting of information as a consequence; partly instilling silence where truth would suggest it should be reported but lied about; and changing the names to protect the guilty. This is in evidence very early on in the *London Journal*:

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 305.

² Radner, *Johnson and Boswell*, p. 23.

³ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Privacy: Concealing the Eighteenth-Century Self* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 141.

I was observing to my friend Erskine that a plan of this kind was dangerous, as a man might in the openness of his heart say many things and discover many facts that might do him great harm if the journal should fall into the hands of my enemies. Against which there is no perfect security [...] I shall be on my guard to mention nothing that can do harm. Truth shall ever be observed, and these things (if there should be any such) that require the gloss of falsehood shall be passed by in silence. At the same time I may relate things under borrowed names with safety that would do mischief if particularly known.¹

As Johnston would later comment, this made absolute sense:

When you have the occasion to mention in these sheets, any incidents in which it is improper to name the real Character, Substitute a fictitious one. As you justly observe, there can be no absolute certainty of one's most private papers not falling into the hands of those who would make a bad use of them.²

Indeed, Boswell would have good reason for such caution in relation to this problem of the world reading his words whether intentionally or not: his father was horrified to read indiscreet letters published between Boswell and Andrew Erskine later in April 1763, and his wife Margaret had cause to question him over planned infidelities recorded in his journal and left lying around.³ The other question raised is exactly how reliable the journals are as a reflection of experience, assuming that such experience could be treated as authoritative in the first place, when the speaker's voice is actively being suppressed in conjunction with the natural limitations of the observer, and which, as Joe Bray has observed, fluctuates between the recording self and the experiencing self.⁴ This tendency is evident within the form, including the private-public work of an author such as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who in her Turkish Embassy letters reworked the originals which were then compiled into albums to be shown around to visitors – indeed as Clare Brant has argued, ‘the letters’ artifice is all part of an ambiguous literariness

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 39. A good example of Boswell's editing out the indelicate can be traced via his sanitising reflections on Johnson in the *Life of Johnson*, mentioned in full in the Journal of the ‘Harvest Jaunt’: ‘Garrick told Mr Hume that Johnson passed one evening behind the scenes in the green-room. He said he had been well entertained. Mr Garrick therefore hoped to see him often. “No, David,” said he, “I will never come back. For the white bobbies and the silk stockings of your actresses excite my genitals.”’ See Boswell, *Harvest Jaunt*, p. 103.

² Boswell, *Johnstone Correspondence*, p. 62.

³ For the story of Alexander Boswell's full reaction see Frederick A. Pottle, *James Boswell: The Earlier Years 1740-1769* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1985), pp. 103-106. See also James Boswell, Charles Ryskamp, and Frederick Pottle, *Boswell: The Ominous Years 1774-1776* (London: Heinemann, 1963), p. 190, and Frank Brady, *James Boswell: The Later Years 1769-1795* (London: Heinemann, 1984), p. 122.

⁴ Joe Bray, *The Epistolary Novel: Representations of Consciousness* (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 20. A comparison can usefully be drawn here between the *London Journal*, *Boswell in Holland*, the second volume published by Yale and edited by Pottle, and the research edition of the German-Swiss journal (Marlies Danziger (ed), *The Journal of his German and Swiss Travels, 1764*, Yale/Edinburgh, 2008). These latter two reveal a less consciously shaped and self-edited text, which may well make them less coherent as narratives, but are more fascinating because of the way they illustrate the naked conflicts that Boswell must have felt, torn as he was between worlds and father-figures. The Holland journal particularly is a reconstruction based on various ‘Memoranda’, ‘Themes’, letters, and fragments of written-up journal that reveals much more of Boswell's working methods, varied viewpoints, and conflicting interpretations of what he saw and how he engaged with it: the second-person Presbyterian of the Memoranda where he outlines what he *should* do that day, constantly advising ‘retenu’; the sophisticated essayist of the French Themes; the doggerel of the ‘Ten Lines a Day’ poetry; the deliberately shaped letter writer.

attached to the genre in the eighteenth century.’¹ The fact that Boswell was sending his journal back to Johnston gives it the form of an elaborate letter – the reader may not be explicitly included in the text, but the presence cannot be ignored, any more than the presence of Johnson as a known reader could be in examining the original manuscript of the Hebridean journal. There is a clear collaborative relationship between reader and writer.

Bearing this concept in mind it is easy to see how Boswell’s journalising reaches into various fictionalising devices, stretching the literariness of his writing in a way that records experience via the various personas that he constructs for himself, seeing himself as the hero of his own narrative:

Let me consider that the hero of a romance or novel must not go uniformly along in bliss, but the story must be chequered with bad fortune. Aeneas met with many disasters in his voyage to Italy, and must not Boswell have his rubs? Yes, I take them in good part. I am now again set a-going; let me be content and cheerful and pursue the chase of happiness.²

This also ties back to another of Spacks’ arguments in the reading of autobiography and the eighteenth century novel, that the reader sees only an imitation of reality in the diary form, rather than a mimetic reality, ‘one not necessarily closer to reality’s source than artful, avowed fiction customarily is.’³ Most obviously, Boswell adopts a number of personas in his representation for Johnston of his experiences in London, essentially inventing himself, creating a series of ‘James Boswells’, rather than a coherent self-portrait of James Boswell, through the medium of a semi-fictionalised reality.

An obvious example of this lies in the representation of ‘Boswell’ in the Louisa episode. After the disastrous farce of the pursuit and its consequent bout of gonorrhoea Boswell moves into dramatic mode for recounting the episode where he finally confronts Louisa:

Louisa: My Dear Sir! I hope you are well today.

¹ Mary Wortly Montagu, *Letters* (London: Everyman's Library, 1992), p. xvi.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 206.

³ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 229.

Boswell: Excessively well, I thank you. I hope I find you so.

Louisa: No, really, Sir. I am distressed with a thousand things (cunning jade, her circumstances!). I really don't know what to do.

Boswell: Do you know that I have been very unhappy since I saw you?

Louisa: How so, Sir?

Boswell: Why I am afraid you don't love me so well, nor have not such a regard for me, as I thought you had.

Louisa: Nay, dear Sir! (Seeming unconcerned)

Boswell: Pray, Madam, have I no reason?

Louisa: No, indeed, Sir, you have not.

Boswell: Have I no reason, Madam? Pray think.

Louisa: Sir!

Boswell: Pray, madam, in what state of health have you been for some time?

Louisa: Sir, you amaze me.

Boswell: I have but too strong, too plain reason to doubt of your regard. I have for some days observed the symptoms of disease, but was unwilling to believe you so very ungenerous. But now, Madam, I am thoroughly convinced.

Louisa: Sir, you have terrified me. I protest I know nothing of the matter.

Boswell: Madam, I have had no connection with any woman but you these two months.¹

The bizarre element of this record is the delicate formality with which it is recounted, though with the interjections designed to shape the interpretation of the reader - presumably for Johnston - to stress Boswell's innocence in the whole affair. We see Louisa move from faux innocence and disingenuousness to faux outrage or, at least, that is what we are allowed to see in the narrative. The authenticity of the whole account is thrown into greater question when we see the end of the interview ('Boswell (Rising): Madam, your most obedient servant'). As Paul Fussell noted in the 1960s, Boswell seems to be adopting the role of Hamlet, confronting Gertrude in her closet and 'the abused and deceived youth upbraiding the guilty older woman', which was appropriate since she had played the role at Covent Garden in September 1762.² Whilst Boswell tells his reader 'I really behaved with a manly composure and polite dignity that could not fail to inspire an awe', it does not really seem in keeping with someone who has

¹Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 159-160.

² Paul Fussell, 'The Force of Literary Memory in Boswell's London Journal', *Studies in English Literature 1500-1900* (1962), p. 355.

just caught gonorrhoea - though perhaps it is an occupational hazard of having an affair with a married 'actress' in 1762 - nor does it tally with Boswell's final declaration:

There is scarcely a possibility that she could be innocent of the crime of horrid imposition. And yet her positive observations really stunned me. She is in all probability a most consummate dissembling whore.

In his letter to Johnston of 25 January 1763 the reader can see the exact nature of Boswell's feelings on the issue and how he created the sense of anticipation:

I have reason to mourn and to lament very sore. The fair Louisa has tip'd me a favour which I dread above everything. You will see by my journal how I traced it and you will hear further accounts of it next week [...] The infection is not bad, so I would hope that I may get rid of it soon. It really is a most unfortunate affair. However, the reasonings about it will be found at length in my journal.¹

Boswell was periodically sending the packets of written-up journal through to Johnston, and here he is trailing the next instalment - whilst providing the inevitable conclusion for his reader. He cannot resist being the hero of his narrative, albeit on the verge of melodrama. A development of this can be seen in the adoption of the sheer number of stock figures in his journalising, as Erin Mackie has noted, 'the fop, cit, rake, beau, pretty fellow, man of sense.'²

The Louisa affair was the catalyst for one of Boswell's bouts of melancholia, and it is in this phase of his writing that we see him not only self-dramatizing, but also revealing a deep-seated vulnerability. Some contemporaries suspected Boswell of manufacturing or affecting melancholia or hypochondria in imitation of Johnson, but the journals reveal the depth of his wounds before he ever met Johnson - especially in the Holland journal where he appears at his least rewritten and varnished - and the *London Journal* shows how much the depression dominated his thinking in the days and weeks after the affair:

Saturday 22 January. Calmly and considerately did I sit down in my arm-chair this morning and endeavour to call up all the philosophy that I could. A distemper of this kind is more dreadful to me than to most people. I am of a warm constitution: a complexion, as physicians say, exceedingly amorous, and therefore suck in the poison more deeply. I have had two visitations of this calamity. The first lasted ten weeks. The second four months. How severe a reflection is it! And, O, how severe a prospect! Yet let me take courage. Perhaps this is not a very bad infection, and as I shall be scrupulously careful of myself, I may get rid of it

¹ Boswell, *Johnstone Correspondence*, pp. 40-41.

² Erin Mackie, 'The Perfect Gentleman', *Media History*, 14 (2008), 353-72, p. 354.

in a short time [...] I may read all of Hume's six volumes. I may also be amused with novels and books of a slighter nature.¹

Whilst Boswell was clearly trying to see the best in the situation, the experience of previous infections meant that he could not be without fear in knowing the severity of this one. As he euphemises about his 'amorous nature' he also reflects on the 'poison' that he has once again taken into his system, and the exclamation points again at his propensity for self-dramatization. The reader can see some of his literary influences seeping through - countering his 'ignorance' by reading *The History of England* by David Hume, alongside the 'slechter' novels of his day. It is hardly surprising, therefore, to see the mixing of styles, sense, and sensibility within his self-reflection:

Sunday 23 January. I was very dull this day. I considered the Guards as a most improper scene of life for me. I thought it would yield me no pleasure, for my constitution would be gone, and I would not be able to enjoy life. I thought London a bad place for me. I imagined I had lost all relish of it. Nay, so very strange is wayward, diseased fancy that it will make us wish for the things most disagreeable to us merely to procure a change of objects, being sick and tired of those it presently has. I thought I would go immediately down to Edinburgh, and would be an advocate in the Parliament House, and so lead a comfortable life. I was vexed to find all my gay plans vanished, and I had a struggle between hope and despair [...] In the afternoon, my brother came. He brought many low old Sunday ideas when we were boys into my memory. I wanted to indulge my gloom in solitude. I wearied of him. I showed it. I was angry at myself. I was peevish. He was good enough to say he would go and come just as I chose. He left me. I remained ill.²

What is most interesting here, by contrast with the Holland journal, is that there is a clear sense of the more florid writing up of the journals which can be seen in the Louisa episodes being replaced here by the shorter, more moralistic, almost Presbyterian impatience of the 'Memoranda'. This is more than self-pity: he uses the past tense to describe the pleasures of London, like he has mentally separated himself from its attractions, its 'diseased fancy' or perils of the imagination; he articulates how he is torn between his London desires and his Edinburgh opportunities - though the reader is left wondering if these are the real 'hope and despair'. By 25 January 1763 the melancholy has become morbid, like a retreat towards a Presbyterian God:

This afternoon, by taking too much physic, I felt myself very ill. I was weak. I shivered, and I had flushes of heat. I began to be apprehensive that I was taking a nervous fever, a supposition not improbable, as I had one after such an illness when I was last in London. I was quite sunk. I looked with a degree of horror upon death. Some of my intrigues which in high health and spirits I valued myself upon now seemed to be

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 164-165.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 165.

deviations from the sacred road of virtue. My mind fluctuated, but grew more composed. I looked up to the beneficent Creator. I was resigned and more easy, and went to bed in hope.¹

As Boswell starts to recover, however, and to escape his confinement he also begins to return to his London attitudes, some of them less than attractive. He begins by berating Louisa in a letter, demanding the return of money ‘lent’ to her:

Thursday 3 February. I was not so well as yesterday. I was somewhat morose. I thought the treacherous Louisa deserved to suffer for her depravity. I therefore wrote her the following letter:

MADAM:- My surgeon will soon have a demand upon me of five guineas for curing the disease which you have given me. I must therefore remind you of the little sum which you had of me some time ago. You cannot have forgot upon what footing I let you have it. I neither *paid* for prostitution nor *gave* it in charity. It was fairly borrowed, and you promised to return it. I give you notice that I expect to have it before Saturday sennight.

I have been very bad, but I scorn to upbraid you. I think it below me. If you are not rendered callous by a long course of disguised wickedness, I should think the consideration of your deceit and baseness, your corruption of both body and mind, would be a very severe punishment. Call not that a misfortune which is the consequence of your own unworthiness. I desire no mean evasions. I want no letters. Send the money sealed up. I have nothing more to say to you.

JAMES BOSWELL

This, I thought, might be a pretty bitter potion to her. Yet I thought to mention the money was not so genteel. However, if I get it (which is not probable), it will be of real service to me; and to such a creature as her a pecuniary punishment will give most pain. Am I not too vindictive? It appears so; but upon better consideration I am only sacrificing at the shrine of Justice; and sure I have chosen a victim that deserves it.²

Boswell’s wounded pride is in evidence, but so is his hypocrisy in describing Louisa’s ‘depravity’, and there is a degree of vengeful churlishness in asking for his money back. Whilst he may say that he scorns to ‘upbraid’ her and that he feels it ‘below’ him, that is exactly what he does here, and the comments on her ‘deceit’, ‘baseness’, ‘corruption’, and ‘unworthiness’ sound as much like self-loathing as reproofs. There is, in this case, a distinct observable irony when Boswell goes on to say:

When we know exactly all a man’s views and how he comes to speak and act so and so, we lose any respect for him, though we may love and admire him.³

With his recovery returns his love of all things London, rejecting once more all things to do with Edinburgh as ‘not so high’, with a degree of vanity and snobbery:

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 172.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 174-5.

³ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 176.

I find that I ought not to keep too much company with Scotch people, because I am kept from acquiring propriety of English speaking, and because they prevent my mind from being filled with London images, so that I might as well be in Scotland.¹

The contradictions of Boswell's character are evident: an innate sense of what is right set alongside the human weaknesses that led him to near disaster.

One other consequence of his confinement becomes obvious: the growing sense of the journal as a piece of writing, albeit in a very rough and experimental shape, and a view of writing that is beginning to be formed. In discussions with his cousin, Erskine, a philosophy for writing emerges on 6th February:

I had now and then mentioned my journal to him. I read him a little of it this evening. To be sure it is very carelessly wrote, which he freely took notice, and said it might become a habit for me to write in that manner, so that I would learn a more slatternly style. He advised me to take more pains upon it, and to render it useful by being a good method to practice writing: to turn periods and render myself ready at different kinds of expression. He is very right, I shall be more attentive for the future, and rather give a little neatly done than a good deal slovenly.²

The poetic continues to evolve on 9th February:

I was very apprehensive that there would be a dreary vacancy in [the journal] for some weeks, but by various happy circumstances I have been agreeably disappointed. I think, too, that I am making a good use of the hint which Captain Erskine gave me, and I am taking more pains upon it, and consequently writing it in a more correct style. Style is to sentiment what dress is to the person.³

Whilst there is the impression of Boswell's inflated ego getting in the way of anything approaching objectivity, this could be, as Robert H. Bell has argued, the adoption of a Boswellian persona for 'sound rhetorical purposes': in the strategic use of folly, the creation of an 'artificial fool' persona acts as an ironic narrator, as in the Hebridean Journal where, ultimately, he emphasises his own ridiculousness in order to magnify the sense of Johnson's seriousness:⁴

How easily and cleverly do I write just now! I am really pleased with myself; words come skipping to me like lambs upon Moffat Hill; and I turn my periods smoothly and imperceptibly like a skilful wheelwright turning tops in a turning-loom. There's fancy! There's simile! In short, I am at present a genius; in that does my opulence consist, and not in base metal.⁵

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 177.

² Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 179.

³ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 186.

⁴ Robert H. Bell, 'Boswell's Anatomy of Folly', *Sewanee Review*, 111 (2003), 578-94, p. 579.

⁵ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 187.

The recognition that success as a writer lay in a careful shaping of text, and Boswell's awareness of 'style', is not lost on the reader when the reworking of notes, memoranda, and letters is considered.¹ It also shows that Boswell was thinking of his semi-private journal as literature. By the end of February 1763 the idea of 'truth' in reflection is clearly an issue: on 27th February he represents his desire to present a clear persona to his reader, aware of his confusion and contradictions as a speaker:

I shudder when I think of it. I am vexed at such a distempered suggestion's being inserted in my journal, which I wished to contain a consistent picture of a young fellow eagerly pushing through life. But it serves to humble me, and it presents a strange and curious view of the unaccountable nature of the human mind. I am now well and gay. Let me consider that the hero of a romance or a novel must go uniformly along in bliss, but the story must be chequered with bad fortune. Aeneas met with many disasters in his voyage to Italy, and must not Boswell have his rubs.²

Boswell sees himself as the hero of his own novel, and the connection to the figures within contemporary sentimental fiction is clear here, providing a clear rationale for his interpretation of experience – events are plot, people are characters, and gonorrhoea is a plot device. In the letter he receives from David Hume on 28th February, and in his response to it in his journal, there is a complex idea of what truthful recording actually is, and what the auto/biographer's responsibility is. Hume berates Boswell for 'pretending' and publishing what he had been told in private conversation, a criticism of Malloch's *Elvira*:

I say pretend I told you; for as I have utterly forgot the whole matter. I am resolved to utterly deny it [...] Do you not feel from your own experience that among us gentlemen of the quill there is nothing of which we are so jealous (not even our wives, if we have any) as the honour of our productions?³

Hume posits two problems that any reader of Boswell must address: how accurate can the recording of what happened be (since Hume has no recollection of what he actually said); and should an author be careful of what to omit for the sake of decorum and the consequences to himself and others? Boswell cites his journal of 4th November as the authority that Hume

¹ This is even more obvious when reading through the Holland journal and the research edition of the German/Swiss journal. There is a clear sense of the gap between Boswell's original notes, themes, and memoranda, and the more polished form that is obvious in the *London Journal*. Johnstone would comment of Boswell's letters (which he was also privileged to read), "I admire the easy method you have in writing in different Characters, particularly the letter to my Lord [Auchinleck]." (*Correspondence*, Vol.1, op cit, p. 51)

² Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 205-6.

³ Boswell, *London Journal*, pp. 206-7.

criticised Malloch's work, but admits that to report it was "using Mr Hume ungentleely."¹ As Spacks has argued, 'autobiographers [...] from the outset are dealing with fictions' and, in this example of the remembered past, the distinction between memory and imagination becomes a matter of dates, representations, and interpretations.²

Boswell's *London Journal* represents a crucial staging point in his developing writing style as both autobiographer and travel writer: the intimate reflections of the narrative voice set in a Petri dish of foreign travel (albeit in this case within the same island kingdom), a text that in its public-private nature shows a clear manipulation of identity alongside self-discovery. As Spacks has written:

James Boswell, who invents himself, in various versions, before the reader's eyes [...] epitomizes the uncertainty – not unmingled with exhilaration at the range of possibilities – that afflicts some of the century's autobiographers [...] The journals embody an endless struggle to make sense out of his life, a struggle of interpretation in which one form of self-understanding gives way to another in a conflict-ridden sequence that creates drama from the act of writing. If novelists like Richardson and Fielding assert the stability of identity, Boswell insists on the converse. Identity, he suggests, is made.³

It is in the *London Journal* that Boswell is setting out looking for a moral and intellectual compass, with travel becoming a trope for self-shaping and self-discovery. In the journal the reader can see the fluctuations between directions – principally to be a libertine coxcomb or a cosmopolitan citizen of the world - and by the end it is unclear exactly in which direction the Janus-faced Boswell is going as he prepares for study in Holland and on the Grand Tour. Nor is it entirely clear as to what he discovered about himself since the text is so dressed in the language of the fictional and the role-playing personas of 'James Boswell'; perhaps his 'pocket-atlas' (to use Cleland's phrase) is of more use to the reader than it was to Boswell himself,

¹ Compare with Professor Pierre Bayard's view of the difficulty in accurately remembering even what we have just read in print, let alone experienced. He cites Montaigne's question of the absolutely faithful memory of text, and therefore if a book you have forgotten has actually been read. See Bayard, *How to Talk About Books You Haven't Read*, London 2007, pp. 47-57.

² Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 4.

³ Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth Century England*, p. 16.

discovering the 'hero' in an unheroic world. In terms of the writing, there is a clear precedent being set in the recording and interpretation of experience which can then be set into type, moving from the private-private journals and memoranda, to the private-public *London Journal*, to what will become the public-private Corsican and Hebridean works. All told, what the *London Journal* represents is the beginnings of a geographical and personal journey rather than its self-contained achievement, as Boswell acknowledges himself at the end of the text:

THURSDAY 4 AUGUST. This is my last day in London before I set out on my travels, and makes a very important period in my journal. Let me recollect my life since this journal began. Has it not passed like a dream? Yes, but I have been attaining a knowledge of the world. I came to town to go into the Guards. How different is my scheme now! I am now upon a less pleasurable but a more rational and lasting plan. Let me pursue it with steadiness and may I be a man of dignity. My mind is strangely agitated. I am happy to think of going upon my travels and seeing the diversity of foreign parts; and yet my feeble mind shrinks somewhat at the idea of leaving Britain in so very short a time from the moment in which I make this remark. How strange must I feel myself in foreign parts. My mind too is gloomy and dejected at the thoughts of leaving London, where I am so comfortably situated and where I have enjoyed most happiness. However, I shall be the happier for being abroad, as long as I live. Let me be manly. Let me commit myself to the care of my merciful Creator.¹

¹ Boswell, *London Journal*, p. 333.

Chapter 4

“My mercury is again put in motion”¹

Boswell on the Grand Tour 1763-6

The progress and improvement of the mind in virtue depends principally upon its being properly trained and disciplined. If it be early instituted in wise and laudable pursuits, it can scarcely fail of attaining to considerable perfection; but if it be neglected, or suffered to run wild, and to follow its own imaginations, it must be next to a prodigy if it take not a vicious turn, and in time become totally depraved [...] Amongst other means adapted to this end, may, I think, be enumerated Travel, or the visiting of foreign countries: for either nature or religion or polity have so wonderfully diversified the different parts of the world, as to make them replete with instruction, and formed to excite in a reflective mind many useful observations.

From Burnaby’s Sermon VI, ‘Of Moral Advantages to be derived from travelling in Italy’²

For some years past you have been idle, dissipated, absurd, and unhappy. Let those years be thought of no more. You are determined to form yourself into a man.

From Boswell’s *Inviolable Plan* – *To be read over frequently*³

After the London jaunt of 1762-3 James Boswell completed his legal studies in Holland and proceeded to follow in the path of many contemporary gentlemen on the Grand Tour. In this he would be treading a well-worn route, occasionally veering off course, consciously recording (sometimes overly so) his experiences, charting the shaping of his character in the finishing school for gentlemen that the Tour represented, where his journals formed a kind of intellectual baggage. Boswell’s tour represented many facets of the tourist’s *modus operandi*: it was an aesthetic and political experience, looking at the centres of Europe that exemplified both spheres; it was a tour of men as monuments, as Boswell went on a literary, philosophical, and political lion hunt; and it was a personal quest for self-knowledge. In this Boswell was seeking

¹ James Boswell, *The Correspondence of James Boswell and William Johnson Temple 1756-1795*. Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 108.

² Andrew Burnaby, *Six Occasional Sermons* (London: Anon, 1777), pp. 107-9

³ James Boswell, and F. A. Pottle, *Boswell in Holland, 1763-1764: Including His Correspondence with Belle De Zuylen (Zélide)* (Melbourne, London: Heinemann, 1952), p. 375. The principal editions used are from the Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell: *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland 1764* (London: Heinemann, 1953), *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France 1765-1766* (London: Heinemann, 1955).

to fulfil his desired objective of forming himself into a man, and his mercurial nature would fluctuate between each of these objectives. It was also an opportunity to free himself from parental authority.

What Boswell's Grand Tour journals document, though, is not just the growth of a personality into notional manhood. What can also be seen is the evolution of Boswell's documentary style, as his accounts veer between the personal memoranda into the fully written-up Corsican journal which would be the printed outcome of the Grand Tour, and which would place him firmly on the stage as an original travel writer, and as a literary figure, in both Britain and Europe. However, after the refinement evident in the published *London Journal* (and unpublished manuscript sent periodically to John Johnstone of Grange), what is seen in Boswell's European journals is a more raw and piecemeal representation of his system of thought, as the free-flowing narrative of London is replaced by a more stripped down representation of his writing processes in their various forms: memoranda (the raw material for the written up journal); 'themes' (experiments or exercises in language and style); and letters (where, depending upon the recipient, he presents himself in a number of roles). A caveat should be noted, however, in that the reader must always be aware that the Yale edition (whether the trade edition, or the research edition in the case of the German and Swiss journals) is a reconstruction, a collection of disparate parts put together by the Yale editorial team under the auspices of Frederick Pottle.¹

The European journals also present a number of questions which need to be carefully considered. From the perspective of Boswell there are issues of what exactly he saw (and what did he not see), what he was looking for, and how he wanted to be seen. From the point of a

¹ The trade editions have primarily been used, which smooth out the expression, or 'round out the narrative', of some of Boswell's notes (as evidenced by comparison with the Research edition of the German and Swiss journal), and cross-referred against other research sources where there has been material integrated by Pottle et al as editor, such as the letters to Temple and Johnstone.

researcher into his writing practices, an assessment needs to be made of what exactly can be learned of the way in which he wrote, and how it anticipated his later published travel works. Finally, considering the fact of the editorial problem, a judgement needs to be made as to whether the European journals give the reader an authentic and authoritative portrait of James Boswell, or a version of him framed by Frederick Pottle and the Yale team - a 'James Boswell' persona.

1. The Realities of Travel

In many ways Boswell's journals of the Grand Tour illustrate the realities of travel for a young English 'Milord' on the continent, and the realities of the Grand Tour itself. Following itineraries laid down by writers of guides like Sir Thomas Nugent, the Tour was commonplace by Boswell's time, as Rosemary Sweet has noted:

Although Nugent (or his publisher) entitled his book, *The Grand Tour, or, a Journey through the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and France*, his target readership was self-evidently not exclusively the nobility and gentry [...] By 1760, young men from the landed elite were still being sent to Italy for the final polish to their education, although more and more writers were questioning the value of such a practice.¹

In this sense Boswell's experience is not that unusual, however there are key distinctions that can be drawn between Boswell's work and that of his predecessors. Where Nugent notes notional costs, Boswell highlights the actual cost of tourism:

I must remark that at Dresden strangers pay monstrously dear for seeing the fine things, which is shameful when they are the property of a prince. My *valet de louage* told me that I must pay a ducat to the library keeper and a florin to his man, which I was fool enough to do, as I would be genteel, forsooth. It seems, too, I must pay at the museum a Louis to the principal keeper, two ecus to another, and a guilder to the servant. Instead of this I made two guilders do the business. I know not how I divided it between the upper keeper and the servant. I forget, but no matter.²

Boswell follows Addison's itinerary (albeit he tells us, in reverse), but in comparing the *Remarks* to his own experience, such as the direct imitation of Addison when firing a shot in

¹ Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: The British in Italy, C.1690-1820, Cambridge Social and Cultural Histories* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 7-8. Sweet also notes that, whilst there was always a minority of travellers from Scotland, Ireland, or Wales, 'in the face of foreign society they tended to refer to themselves as 'English' too', hence Boswell could easily be seen as a conventional English 'Milord'.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 132.

Milan, what follows is a form of literary tourism, consciously imitating what he has read and reflecting on it in a form of metatravelogue:

I walked out a league to where is a famous echo. It is at a palace which was not finished on account of the dampness of the soil. It has three tier of pillars in front, and would have made a noble thing. I fired a pistol from the window of an upper storey opposite to a wall; the sound was repeated fifty-eight times. I then returned to the Ambrosian Library [housing drawings by Leonardo da Vinci]. I shall not be particular in describing it, after what Mr Addison has said.¹

There is also an honesty and authenticity to his reflections on his travels with which any traveller can easily empathise. Boswell undoubtedly could be appreciative of the study of fine art and antiquities, as he explained in a letter to Temple: ‘My present study is pictures. It is delightful. I am very fond of it, and believe I shall form a true taste.’² Nonetheless, the sights and sounds of the tour, rather than being culturally stimulating, could be less than invigorating, as demonstrated by Boswell’s comment in Rome on Michelangelo’s ‘Moses’ (‘Beard too long; horns, though sacred, yet ludicrous as like satyr; rest of the figure superb’), or the faded sights of Rome, where a course in antiquities with the Scottish antiquary, Mr Morison, stimulated his thoughts at the Colosseum of ‘how shocking it was to discover several portions of this theatre full of dung.’³ As ever, realism and romanticism seem inextricably linked for Boswell and his view of the world and those within it.

The journals from this time unusually give a very finely drawn portrait of what undertaking such a tour would in reality involve and by necessity be endured, going beyond a simple rendition of an itinerary, or a fictional picaresque, and producing a hybrid, becoming something that fulfils Paul Fussell’s view of successful travel writing, the mediation between two key factors – what is to be described (the transportation, the expenses, the physical consequences, the places) and what it is ‘about’ (the bigger pictures of philosophy, politics, and aesthetics), what he defines as the ‘particular and the universal’. The key thing for Fussell, and where

¹ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, p. 45.

² James Boswell, *The Correspondence of James Boswell and William Johnson Temple 1756-1795*. Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1997), p. 134.

³ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, p. 64.

Boswell's travel journals really show their strength, lies in their apparent veracity and attention to the range of the experience, what Fussell describes as 'ethical'.¹ This 'ethical' approach, linked to an honesty of reporting as far as possible the full picture, can particularly be seen in the detailing of the difficulties and distresses of travelling on the Continent, filled with discomfort and the cold, forced to wrap up and look 'quite the Egyptian mummy'.² This is further developed Boswell's account of an overnight stay in Germany:

We came at night to an inn in the territory of Hanover. Thus was I laid. In the middle of a great German *salle*, upon straw spread on the floor, was a sheet laid; here "great Boswell lay". I had another sheet and a coverlet. On one side of me were eight or ten horses; on the other, four or five cows. A little way from me sat on high a cock and many hens; and before I went to sleep the cock made my ears ring with his shrill voice, so that I admired the wisdom of the Sybarites, who slew all those noisy birds. What frightened me not a little was an immense mastiff chained pretty near the head of my bed. He growled most horribly, and rattled his chain. I called for a piece of bread and made friendship with him. Before me were two great folding doors wide open, so that I could see the beauties of the evening sky. In this way, however, did I sleep with much contentment, and much health.³

Here can be seen the 'things' to which Fussell refers: the practicalities of the tour, the freezing conditions riding on the post coach, a sense of the itinerary, and the location for his bed for the night. What makes Boswell's idiosyncratic narrative most noteworthy, though, and moves it beyond Nugent or Addison, is the sense of the personality of the writer coming through in the humour (the fantasy of killing the cockerel, the gothic detail of the mastiff with his rattling chains), married to the picturesque detailing of the open night sky. This humour is also evident in his description of fellow passengers on the tour:

The French traveller was Monsieur Bertollon [...] a great lubberly dog with a head like a British tar. He sung most outrageously. He was jolly. The German *Frow* was oldish and very fat [...] I do not remember to have met with a more ludicrous scene, for the Frenchman and the *Frow* mutually laughed at each other. I was highly diverted, though my headache still continued. It was a heavy cold. I was in a real fever. I was just transported like a sack.⁴

The absurd synchronicity of random travellers coming together in time and space also has the hint of the malcontent abroad, particularly demonstrated in the frustrations associated with the holiday souvenir gone bad – the troublesome dog given to him by Pascale Paoli, which only

¹ Paul Fussell, ed., *The Norton Book of Travel* (New York: W W Norton, 1987), p.16.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 128.

³ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, pp. 10-11.

⁴ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 161.

served to plague him and drive to such rage that he ended up beating the creature (and then guiltily excised the line describing it from his journal).¹ The fellow traveller could also be as awkward, as Boswell found out whilst travelling in the company of Lord Mountstuart (son of the Earl of Bute, a former Prime Minister) and Paul Mallet (Mountstuart's tutor):

My Lord and you on the couch till two. He said you was a most odd character. All the English disliked you [...] Pushing. Mallet said Rousseau had laughed at you. Voltaire writes to any young man well-recommended and of fire; then forgets him, "that English bugger."...MOUNTSTUART. "You are very honest, very honourable. I would do anything to serve you, and in a case of importance entrust you. Yet you may be disagreeable."²

Boswell and Mallet had a particularly difficult relationship, as he noted in his journal: 'You're to let him alone, but remember you will not suffer one joke from him.'³

Boswell's journals also show how travelling involved various perils as well as discomforts. Firstly, there was the obvious danger involved in travelling on a road system that was little better than medieval:

Sad travelling. About twelve at night as the wagon was rumbling down a hill, one of its wheels fell into a deep hole, and there we stuck fast and had almost been overturned. We could not get the horses to pull the wagon. Luckily we were within a little of our station, the village of Helsa. The postilion went to bring help. He returned with a man and a horse. Still it would not do. He went once more. He was an odd creature and mighty slow. It was dreadful rain. We remained upon the hill more than two hours. It was quite serving a campaign. The postilion, I do believe, would have allowed us to remain a-soaking till daybreak. But at last we walked to the village, and sent a man to watch our baggage. I kept my temper. I went to bed and slept pretty sound.⁴

The road network was as nothing, though, by comparison with the perils of not speaking the language for the 'Englishman' abroad, as evidenced in Boswell's experiences in Coswig:

I walked about, and, to have a little German talk, I asked every sentry, "Wie veel troepen hebt der Furst [How many troops does the Prince have]?" One soldier, whose head resembled that of his prince, had marked me with serious political attention, and, dreading that a foreign spy had got into his highness' dominions, and that a conspiracy was forming against the state, followed me close, and at last when I came to the grenadier before the castle gate, he laid hold of me, charged the sentry with me and, bringing a party, conducted me to the main Guard [...] At last a blackguard dog of a soldier said, "Dominus forsitan loquitur Latine [Perhaps my Lord speaks Latin]?"⁵

¹ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, pp. 241-3.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, pp. 98-9.

³ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, p. 103.

⁴ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, pp. 146-7.

⁵ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 102.

The essence of this anecdote is a joke against himself – the naïf abroad who innocently falls foul of the local authorities, turning ‘Boswell’ the speaker into a Peregrine Pickle. Boswell also found that provocation and disagreement could easily lead to a challenge to a duel as a matter of honour: in Berlin he became entangled in such an affair after railing against the French in the company of a French officer (who called Boswell a ‘scoundrel’ in return), though ultimately both publicly apologised:

I recalled old David, Laird of Auchinleck, my great-grandfather, and thought he called me to support the honour of my family. I also had my honour as a Scotsman, my character as a man, at stake. I must do myself the justice to say that I was fully determined for the worst. Yet I wished that the affair could be made up, as I was really in the wrong.¹

Add into all of this what even Nugent acknowledges as the dangers of robbery for the imprudent, and Boswell’s portrait of a tour around Europe becomes highly authentic and immediate, rather than falsely two-dimensional, simplistic, or even sanitized.²

2. Boswell on the Grand Tour: A Secular Pilgrimage?

Whilst the Grand Tour was largely seen as the finishing school for the sons of the gentry before assuming their place in society, in the first instance Boswell’s Tour began in Holland as an intellectual and physical detoxification (or rehabilitation) after the hedonism of his London jaunt, requiring him to play the role of the dutiful son, the man of learning, and to be ‘retenu’:

Resolve now study in earnest. Consider you’re not to be so much a student as a traveller. Be a liberal student. Learn to be reserved. Keep your melancholy to yourself, and you’ll easily conceal your joy...Prepare like father...mark this and keep in pocket. You are not to consider yourself alone.³

¹ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 93. Whilst the dual apology was very typical of eighteenth-century duelling, it was not always the outcome. Boswell would not be the last of his family to feel the need for ‘satisfaction’. His son, Alexander, was killed in one of the last duels in Scottish history, after libelling James Stuart, a dedicated Whig, in various Tory pamphlets. See John Chalmers, *Duel Personalities: James Stuart Versus Sir Alexander Boswell* (Edinburgh: Newbattle Publishing, 2014).

² Thomas Nugent, *The Grand Tour, or a Journey through the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and France*. 4 vols (London: D. Browne et al, 1756), vol. 3, pp. 37-8.

³ *Boswell in Holland*, p. 3.

This was something his father also felt most acutely, desiring that Boswell should ‘endeavour to follow out the good resolutions you set out with’, so that he might make himself a ‘man of learning’ rather than mixing with ‘odd people or with vicious people’:

Count Nassau will be of great use to you, and the professors will be good company. I beg it of you to be cautious against contracting intimacies with people you know nothing about. This is a foible you should from experience arm against. I know that you were taken in at London by that weakness and cheated of your money. In every country there are rogues who keep a sharp lookout upon every young fellow that makes his appearance, and, if they can, will take advantage of him.¹

In many ways the opening to Boswell’s European tour centred on an idea of reshaping the person he already was, turning the journey and the journals into a voyage that was both literal and metaphorical. It was initially a routine to be established after the freedom of London, requiring him to pursue his academic studies, to work on his grasp of the languages necessary for his legal work and to take his place in society (principally Latin and French), so that he would be able, as he said in a letter to William Temple, ‘to form habits of study and manly conduct which will make me happy all my life’, the twin ideas of travel and happiness crucial to understanding Boswell’s form of travelogue.² This is a seemingly genuine desire to self-improve via travel and isolation, since there was no other English student in Utrecht – though it is also possible that since he was in absolute isolation, and since he was constantly dogged by melancholy, that this was Boswell trying to make the best of the situation, particularly when contrasted with comments made in his letter to Johnstone of Grange (the principal recipient and beneficiary of his London Journal), written on the same day as the letter to Temple:

I set out on my travels with a kind of gloom upon my mind. My enthusiastic love of London made me leave it with a heavy heart. It might not have been the case had I been setting out on an immediate tour through the gay regions of Italy and France. But to comply with my father’s inclinations I had agreed to pass my first winter at Utrecht, a Dutch university town.³

Boswell’s sense of *retenu* would come under strain in Holland, however, as he wrote in a later letter to Temple, explaining his need for ‘amusement’ and the opportunity to see ‘foreign

¹ *Boswell in Holland*, p. 25.

² *Boswell in Holland*, p. 28. See Boswell-Temple Correspondence, p.69. It should also be noted that ‘regularity’ extended to other parts of life: ‘From this day follow Mr Locke’s prescription of going to stool every day regularly after breakfast. It will do your health good, and it is highly necessary to take care of your health.’ See *Boswell in Holland*, pp. 43-44.

³ *Boswell in Holland*, p. 5. See also James Boswell, *The Correspondence of James Boswell and John Johnstone of Grange* (London: Heinemann, 1966), p. 112.

manners as well as to study' because they would always be improving, in language skills if nothing else.¹

Boswell had a clear grasp of the pressure that the Grand Tour and travel beyond Holland would represent for him - financial, spiritual, and moral - and the dangers that he could incur working his way around the tempting ladies of Italy and France. As he said himself, 'let him not stay there too long [...] till his Caledonian iron is melted' - though it should be noted that Boswell, in spite of his good intentions, frequently 'fell' in Italy, suffering another dose of venereal disease in Rome, and sharing a Venetian courtesan with Lord Mountstuart.² In this he would not be very different from a number of English 'Milords', who were notoriously vulnerable on the continental tour to what Philip Thicknesse described as 'gins and man-traps'.³ The example set by Lord Frederick Baltimore (followed by Boswell in more ways than simply the structure of the *Corsican Account*) presented an image of how travel could lead to dissipation, with a hint of savagery - as Boswell recounted from a Swiss traveller, Baltimore was seen as having turned Turk in Constantinople, living a 'strange, wild life, useless to his country' which 'must soon destroy his constitution'.⁴ It is hardly surprising, therefore, to see that Alexander Boswell thought in much the same way, reiterating in his letters to his son the idea that travel, if it had to be undertaken, would be best in cooler, more restrained northern Europe, rather than in the Catholic and warmer south, with all of its temptations for the all too wilfully unwary, since 'travelling is a very useless thing, further than for one to say they have

¹ *Boswell in Holland*, p. 80.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 110. As Boswell said, 'I am uneasy to think that I am not yet master of myself, but I always hope to be better.' See *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, p. 110)

³ Philip Thicknesse, *A Year's Journey through France and Part of Spain*. 2 vols (Dublin: J Williams, 1777), pp. 92-3. When Boswell did finally fall off the sexual wagon with a soldier's wife after a year of enforced chastity it was met with resignation rather than remonstrance: '...about eight, in came a woman with a basket of chocolate to sell. I toyed with her and found she was with child. Oho! A safe piece. Into my closet [...] To bed directly. In a minute - over. I rose cool and astonished, half angry, half laughing [...] I am sorry that this accident has happened, I know not how. Let it go.' See *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, pp. 88-9.

⁴ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p.47

travelled'.¹ Primarily Alexander Boswell wished for his son to think carefully about his itinerary:

As to the course you are to follow after leaving Utrecht, I hinted my notion in my last. Travelling about from place to place is a thing extremely little improving except where one needs to rub off bashfulness, which is not your case; but to make a little tour through some of the German courts may be amusing, and a stranger is more noticed in them than at the great courts. Before you set out it would not be amiss you passed some little time to improve your connections with your Dutch relations.²

Alexander Boswell's view of travel in general, and the Grand Tour specifically, was born of more than simple penny-pinching (though that would be a concern, considering Boswell's profligacy) and the threat to an individual's moral well-being; it also linked to the isolation caused by poor communications which meant that a significant sense of disconnection could be felt by families separated from each other by the Tour. Boswell's father wanted to be kept informed, particularly about Boswell's expenses whilst travelling (since he, ultimately, was paying for them), but was also hoping 'to my infinite satisfaction to see you on your return a man of knowledge, of gravity and modesty, intent upon being useful in life.'³ The lack of communication with his son about these issues and the sense of disconnection and irritation would be magnified not only in Alexander Boswell's frustrations with his son's lack of communication via letter, but also in the fact that Boswell only found out about the death of his mother by reading of it in the *St James's Chronicle* in Paris.⁴ These passages illustrate a dimension of eighteenth century travel - the difficulty of communication is a significant, but often overlooked because it is so apparently mundane, factor. It is only in the extremity of Boswell's ignorance of his mother's death that the reader can get a true understanding of the sense of detachment that an individual could have from the 'real' world.

In Boswell's movement into the principalities of Germany, where he would represent himself as 'Baron' Boswell, there was the opportunity to break free of the restrictions of

¹ *Boswell in Holland*, p. 216.

² *Boswell in Holland*, p. 230.

³ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, p. 222.

⁴ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, p. 287.

Holland into a region which was much more cosmopolitan, and he formed his first major European connection in the company of George Keith, the Lord Marischal, whose experiences as a Jacobite exile had taken him across Europe, partially in the service of Frederick the Great. However, as Rousseau would later recount to Boswell, the Lord Marischal expressed a frustrated disdain for the reality of the Stuart cause after the Jacobite Prince Henry became ‘Cardinal York’: ‘Now our hopes are lost. Oh to think that I have sacrificed myself for that beastly family! The father is not worth six sous, which is two thousand times as much as the elder son is worth; and now the one in whom we had a little confidence turns priest!’.¹ Whilst the Lord Marischal’s old world values were approved of by Alexander Boswell, for James Boswell, his sentimental Jacobitism represented something which, in the Corsican and Hebridean works, would become romanticised expressions of fratricide and lost worlds, though, as Linda Colley has noted, the reality of such Jacobitism was that it was coloured by ‘the retrospective knowledge that it failed’ and the ‘tendency of so many Jacobites to express their allegiance only in harmless ways’:²

My Lord was eloquent in the praises of Spain, where he passed twenty years. He talked of the beautiful country, the charming climate, the excellent people, who were never known to betray their trust. My desire to go to Spain was increased. His Lordship also talked of the Scots Highlanders with respect and affection, as the most brave and most generous people upon earth, and abused the harsh absurdity of our Government for taking their clothes from them and extirpating their language, by which means they will at last be reduced to a level with the other inhabitants of Scotland, and so we shall lose the best militia upon earth. The proper method was surely not to destroy the Highlanders, but to render them attached to the Government, which would be no difficult matter, as the chiefs are no longer disaffected.³

Boswell recorded how movement into Germany, whilst allowing a foray into the cultures of the German territories, led to a degree of the inevitable sight-seeing: this was, primarily, of collections of medallions and noble and notable libraries, some of which showed the true pan-European literary interests and linguistic abilities of the German courts (assuming that they were for reading rather than for show), seemingly with a desire to imitate these back home in

¹ As Frederick Pottle noted, Boswell was entitled to do this, though to the modern reader it does smack somewhat of social pretension. See *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 159, n.2.

² Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2014), pp. 75-6.

³ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, pp. 9-10. See *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 231.

Auchinleck); and souvenir hunting (for example, the stag's foot given as a memento of the Regent of Dessau).

The relaxation of religious restrictions permitted a degree of spiritual tourism such as when, just after visiting the battlefield of Minden, Boswell worshipped in a Roman Catholic church, writing, 'My religion now is chiefly devotion. Pomp of worship aids me in this. I see a probability for the truth of Christianity'.¹ Whilst there are some questions over the exact nature of Boswell's religious beliefs, fluctuating as he did between the Presbyterianism of his parents and a flirtation with Catholicism, in his German journal he shows himself to be above simple sectarianism when in discussion with the Jesuit Pere Monier:

He asked me if I was Catholic. I told him, "No. But I hope I shall not be damned for that" (striking him gently on the shoulder) [...] I told Pere Monier that I was of no sect. That I took my faith from Jesus, that I endeavoured to adore God with fervency; that I found my devotion excited by grand worship, and that I was happy to worship in a Romish church. I said my notions of God made me not fear Him as cruel. The Pere said, "I am really sorry that you are not a Catholic." [...] I took him by the hand, and said, "Sir, I shall have the pleasure of meeting you in heaven."²

In Italy, his description in his letter to Rousseau of services in the Vatican reads more like something of which Robespierre, as a devotee of Rousseau's theology, would be proud, stripped, as it is, of the vocabulary of Christian reverence in favour of an ecumenical appreciation:

I returned to Rome for Holy Week. I grew calm. The solemn services of the Roman Catholic Church made a serious impression on me. I began to be a little melancholy and I recalled with religious regret how I had once been, like you, in the bosom of the faithful. But your Savoyard doctrines came to my aid and made me see a church even more catholic than that which I revered: the entire Universe, all souls being emanations of the Eternal Being. On Easter I was in St Peter's, and in that superb temple I saw noble and mystical adorations offered to the Supreme Being. I was penetrated with devotion [...] Let cold beings sneer; I was never more nobly happy than on that day.³

Travel did not only facilitate a sense of the spiritual world, as Boswell's experience of Frederick the Great's Prussia allowed him to comprehend a very different military and political culture from that with which he was familiar. In his description of Prussian military discipline Boswell

¹ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 10.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p.165.

³ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France* p. 6.

writes that ‘the soldiers seemed in terror’ of being beaten like dogs for minor infringements, and witnessing a deserter run the gauntlet twelve times ‘made me sick to see it.’¹ Nonetheless he questioned whether, ‘Machines are a surer instrument than men’.

Finally, the tour of Germany would also allow a form of celebrity necro-tourism, firstly in the form of the tombs of the princes of Brandenburg in Potsdam, secondly at Wittenberg:

I saw the convent where Luther lived, and I went to the old church in which he first preached the Reformation. It has been miserably shattered by the bombardments. But the tomb of Luther is still entire, as is that of Melanchthon, just opposite it [...] I was in a true solemn honour, and a most curious and agreeable idea presented itself, which was to write to Mr Samuel Johnson from the tomb of Melanchthon.²

Whilst this was a form of pilgrimage it is also representative of the secularisation of travel in the Enlightenment, as Nicola Watson has argued.³ Indeed, what can be seen in this form of travelogue is that there was a clear move to a secular pilgrimage where coin collections and libraries replaced relics, and where the pantheon of the great and the good of the Enlightenment became the saints set up as an example to be followed and revered, a pantheon that fascinated and proved a central impulse of Boswell’s travels and travel writing.

3. The European Lion-hunt

As Erik Bond has stated, what marks out Boswell’s account of the Grand Tour is that it is less about ‘flora and fauna, but a tour of people and their conversations with eighteenth-century aristocrats and celebrities’, essentially a European secular pilgrimage, a lion-hunt connecting travel, location, and celebrity status - an idea which would become more familiar in the nineteenth century, as discussed by Richard Salmon. In his determination to ‘bag’ celebrities Boswell clearly fits the type of the ‘lion-hunter’:

Early commentaries on lionism, from the 1830s and 1840s, were often attempts to categorise the figure of the lion, and to a lesser degree that of the ‘lion-hunter’, within a taxonomy of known social types, establishing a mode of visual recognition. These physiognomic descriptions are not the earliest known references to the figure of the lion as an equivalent to what later periods have designated as the celebrity –

¹ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 80.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 114.

³ Nicola J. Watson, *The Literary Tourist* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 33-4.

most notably, Byron refers to literary ‘lions’ as being writers of ephemeral reputation in several passages of *Don Juan* (1819-24) – but their significance lies in their self-conscious effort to define this new cultural persona, using a paradigm of social observation adapted from journalistic and scientific discourses of the period [...] such figures as ‘The Capitalist’, ‘The Factory Child’, ‘The Family Governess’ and ‘The ‘Lion’ of a Party’.¹

This sense of location and celebrity can be particularly seen in Boswell’s description of Frederick the Great’s study and bedroom at Sans Souci, a nicely drawn illustration of the echoes of the presence (though physical absence in this case) of the Prussian king throughout the German journal, with albeit frustratingly limited access:

After dinner we went and saw the garden and house at Sans Souci. I looked with pleasure at the king’s study, which is elegant, and has its books finely bound, as at Potsdam. In his bedchamber I found some verses on the table. We then went to the gallery, where I saw the noble room and rich pictures with true relish.²

It is this chasing of celebrity (coupled with an inability to see beyond his own largely aristocratic imaginative loyalties) that is a dominant feature of Boswell’s time in Germany and Switzerland, though with varying levels of success, which Marlies K. Danziger sees as a rapacious attempt to form continental connections with the European enlightenment, but also a desire to find a personal enlightenment.³ Whilst he managed to meet a number of minor German princes, he failed in his primary objective in Germany - an audience with Frederick the Great - his appetite first whetted by a sighting of the king in Berlin:

I saw the King. It was a glorious sight. He was dressed in a suit of plain blue, with a star and a plain hat with a white feather. He had in his hand a cane. The sun shone bright. He stood before his palace, with an air of iron confidence that could not be opposed. As a lodestone moves needles, or a storm bows the lofty oaks, did Frederick the Great make the Prussian officers [submissively] bend as he walked majestic in the midst of them.⁴

Boswell’s rapture at seeing the king for a second time led him to similar effusions, prompting General Wylich to ask him to ‘calm himself’, and an ultimately fruitless request for an introduction since it would be hard ‘to have been in Prussia and not to be able to tell my

¹ Erik Bond, ‘Bringing up Boswell: Drama, Criticism, and the Journals’, *The Age of Johnson: A Scholarly Annual*, 15 (2004), p. 164, and Richard Salmon, ‘The Physiognomy of the Lion: Encountering Literary Celebrity in the Nineteenth Century’, in *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture 1750-1850*, ed. by Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 61.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 81

³ See Marlies K. Danziger, ‘Boswell’s Travels through the German, Swiss and French Enlightenment’, in *Boswell: Citizen of the World, Man of Letters*, ed. by Irma S. Lustig (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), p. 14.

⁴ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 23.

grandsons that I paid my respects to Frederick the Great.’¹ However, once out of Berlin and the orbit of the king, by the time Boswell reached Dresden his enthusiasm had waned, particularly after seeing the consequences of Frederick’s siege four years previously: ‘It gave me great pain to see the ruins made by the Prussian bombardments. I hated the barbarous hero. He was under no necessity to bombard Dresden. It was from mere spite that he did it’.² This was a sentiment echoed by Temple in a letter to Boswell, where he took him to task for his naïve lionising of the Prussian king:

Indeed Boswell, you have a loyal heart. A king with you is everything, and I make no doubt that if you had lived in the time of the first Charles, you would have been a most zealous Royalist. When you saw Frederick the Great (for I must own he deserves that name), instead of being struck with the majesty of his presence and the splendour of his actions, you should have recollected with abhorrence his ruinous ambition, his perfidy and want of principles; you should have seen not a hero who conquers but to bless, but the tyrant of his people and the enemy of mankind.³

In Switzerland this lion-hunting would be in pursuit of the rival thinkers, Voltaire the philosophe and Rousseau the anti-philosophe, and was of a greater significance to Boswell in the way it shaped, temporarily at least, his view of the world and his relationship with the world of thought. In his pursuit of Rousseau, Boswell became the full literary tourist, reading *La Nouvelle Heloise* as preparation, turning Rousseau into something akin to a living shrine for literary pilgrimage and, as Nicola Watson has argued, making Boswell the ‘first recorded tourist brought to the locality’ by Rousseau’s novel.⁴ In pursuit of Rousseau, there can be seen an idealised anticipation of meeting one of the key thinkers of the French Enlightenment, even though many of Rousseau’s key thoughts on inequality and man’s place in the world were in direct conflict with the more optimistic worldview of the philosophes like Voltaire and Diderot. Boswell describes his approach to Motiers ‘with a kind of pleasing trepidation’, connecting one of the houses he sees to the one in *Emile*, a clear case of the literary tourist gaze.⁵ This

¹ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 44.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 129.

³ Boswell-Temple Correspondence, p. 118.

⁴ Watson, *The Literary Tourist*, pp. 134-5.

⁵ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 211.

idealisation would lead him, in a letter intended to curry favour with Rousseau, to the type of effusion he had proclaimed for Frederick the Great, but in this case with a real possibility of meeting his hero:

Your writings, Sir, have melted my heart, have elevated my soul, have fired my imagination. Believe me, you will be glad to have seen me. You know what Scots pride is. Sir, I am coming to see you in order to make myself more worthy of a nation that has produced a Fletcher of Saltoun and a Lord Marischal. Forgive me, Sir, I feel myself moved. I cannot restrain myself [...] Enlightened mentor! Eloquent and amiable Rousseau! I have a presentiment that a truly noble friendship will be born today.

This would finally be realised in his journal via sensibility, and a sense of the picturesque moment:

To prepare myself for the great interview, I walked out alone. I strolled pensively by the side of the river Reuse 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 a vigorous and solemn tone [...] This half hour was one of the most remarkable that I ever passed.¹

The meeting with Rousseau was a significant one, not only for what it provided in terms of an interview with one of the leading figures of eighteenth-century thought, but also for the way it gave Boswell his first pointer towards Corsica, a cause, and his first major work of travel writing. As proposed legislator for the Corsicans, Rousseau furnished the all-important opening to a meeting with Pascale Paoli, and offered Boswell a direction for his personal, more metaphorical journey:

BOSWELL. "Upon my word, I am at a loss how to act in this world; I cannot determine whether or not I should adopt some profession." ROUSSEAU. "One must have a great plan." BOSWELL. "What about those studies on which so much stress is laid? Such as History, for instance?" ROUSSEAU. "They are just amusements." BOSWELL. "My father desires me to be called to the Scottish bar; I am certainly doing right in satisfying my father; I have no such certainty if I follow my light inclinations. I must therefore give my mind to the study of the laws of Scotland." ROUSSEAU. "To be sure; they are your tools. If you mean to be a carpenter, you must have a plane."²

The reality of Rousseau's impact on the Corsican cause was, as Leo Damrosch has argued, much more limited than might be thought, since Paoli and Buttafoco 'probably had no intention anyway of adopting anything drawn up by Rousseau, meaning only to borrow his prestige', and, as Judith N. Shklar says, Rousseau did not even think of himself as a true legislator because

¹ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 215.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 249.

he knew he 'lacked the necessary personal qualities'.¹ Rousseau's uncompleted ideas for Corsica would be nullified by the reality of the French invasion anyway. However, in Boswell's lion hunt, the initial image of an icon was what provided the impact, at least until he had moved on to another influence, or seduced his hero's mistress.

By comparison with his meeting with Rousseau, the audience with Voltaire was by far the more spectacular coup, though more of a meeting with a celebrity rather than a meeting of minds. Boswell gained an audience with Voltaire by the usual method of letter of introduction, and was truly starstruck, as Voltaire fulfilled his conception with 'that air of the world which a Frenchman acquires in such perfection.'² Boswell worked hard in order to stay with Voltaire at Ferney, via a Christmas letter to Madame Denis (Voltaire's niece), which has a touch of desperation about it:

I must beg your interest, madam, in obtaining for me a very great favour from Monsieur de Voltaire [...] Is it then possible, madam, that I may be allowed to lodge one night under the roof of Monsieur de Voltaire? I am hardy and a vigorous Scot. You may mount me to the highest and coldest garret. I shall not even refuse to sleep upon two chairs in the bedchamber of your maid.³

Boswell's thrall at a once-in-a-lifetime chance to sleep in a lion's house (real literary tourism) and feeling of intellectual connection (whether delusional or not) was obvious, and Voltaire became for him somewhat magical, as he wrote in a letter to Temple, feeling that he had 'touched the keys in unison with his imagination.'⁴

A later meeting with John Wilkes in Naples was useful not only in providing a direction of sorts in relation Boswell's amorous ambitions concerning the clever and attractive 'Zelide' (Isabelle de Tuyll, also known as 'Belle de Zuylen') back in Utrecht ('Go home by Holland

¹ See Leo Damrosch, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Restless Genius* (Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2007), p. 387, and Judith N. Shklar, 'Rousseau's Images of Authority (Especially in *La Nouvelle Heloise*)', in *The Cambridge Companion to Rousseau*, ed. by Patrick Riley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 272.

³ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 276-7.

⁴ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 285.

and roger her') and a validation of his personality, added to a prescient awareness of the skill and entertainment value in his journal writing:

Even your compliments were excellent, and had full effect. You told me I was "the most liberal man you had ever met with, a citizen of the world, free from the prejudices of any country, who would be liked in France as much as in Britain". You called me "My old Lord of Scotland", and you said I looked as if I had a thousand men at my back. Had it been your chiefest interest to make Boswell satisfied with himself, you could not have done it better.¹

Boswell would even harbour the ambition to play the celebrity matchmaker, uniting his various heroes, stating in a letter to Rousseau, 'I propose a perfect satisfaction for myself in introducing Mr Johnson to you'.² However, Boswell's hopes of being the isthmus that would join together the disparate parties of Samuel Johnson, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Wilkes would never be realised:

JOHNSON. "It seems you have kept very good company abroad – Wilkes and Rousseau!" BOSWELL. "My dear Sir, you don't call Rousseau bad company? Do you really think him a bad man?" JOHNSON. "Sir, if you are talking jestingly of this, I don't talk with you. If you would be serious, I think him one of the worst of men; a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society as he has been. Three or four nations have expelled him; and it is a shame that he is protected in this country."³

What all of these examples illustrate is what Linda Zionkowski has noted of celebrities being 'one of us: not impossibly distant owing to gradations of status, but reassuringly available for contact', creating the 'appearance of being approachable.'⁴ In this can also be seen the origins of a fascination with celebrity that would finally manifest itself in all of Boswell's published travel works as well as the *Life of Johnson* - an early form of fan culture.⁵

¹ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, p. 73.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, p. 275.

³ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, p. 301. Johnson viewed Rousseau as, 'a corrupter: a man who comes here to milk the bull.' See *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 252.

⁴ See Linda Zionkowski, 'Celebrity Violence in the Careers of Savage, Pope and Johnson', in *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture 1750-1850*, ed. by Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009). As Zionkowski has said, 'The creation and maintenance of a normative masculine identity preoccupied Boswell throughout most of his adult life, particularly as he sought to reconcile his attractions to the competing ideals of genteel aristocrat and bourgeois man of economy: his staging of Johnson as a celebrity whose successful literary production does not entail his degradation to an item of consumption offers a conception of the English man of letters that preserved its attraction well into the following century.' Zionkowski, p. 179.

⁵ As Corin Throsby has argued, modern celebrity culture has its roots in an earlier age: 'Critics have neglected the fact that the type of fan activity that is understood as being unique to the online age has its genesis, as a major cultural phenomenon, in reading practices of the Romantic period [...] Just as twentieth-century fans have been dismissed as 'brainless consumers', so readers of Byron have typically been depicted as being interested primarily in Byron's image, with only a superficial uncritical interest in his poetry.' See Corin Throsby, 'Byron, Commonplacing and Early Fan Culture', in *Romanticism and Celebrity Culture 1750-1850*, ed. by Tom Mole (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 227.

4. Representations of the Self and an Evolving Style

Boswell's travels gave him the opportunity to escape his own identity as much as the opportunity to see sights or 'bag' celebrity lions. As Paul Fussell has written, travel was, and continues to be, an opportunity to try on a new selfhood, 'like a costume', moving in space and time, but also in a social hierarchy.¹ In line with this idea, what can be seen within the Grand Tour journals is Boswell experimenting with different voices or personas - different 'Boswells', literary poses that allow him to impose a form of order on life or, as Erik Bond sees it, a means to underwrite his identity in a form of theatricality.² He might tell John Johnstone that he 'must be Mr Boswell of Auchinleck', but he would not be able to avoid envying the gallant or the happy.³

As the man of Auchinleck, and heir to the Lairdship, Boswell had a sense of his own gentility, and fantasised that he could be a courtier, a desire that would lead him to push for a noble star from a European order of chivalry. This was something he hoped to attain from the Margrave of Baden-Durlach - a mix of celebrity-bagging and self-aggrandisement in the form of the direct favour of the local prince:

And now, let me record my talents as a courtier. From my earliest years I have respected the great. In the groves of Auchinleck I have indulged the pleasing hopes of ambition. Since I have been in Germany it has been my ardent wish to find a prince of merit who might take a real regard for me, and with whose ennobling friendship I might be honoured all my life [...] At the last court but one, my utmost wish has been fulfilled [...] He creates Knights of the Order of Fidelity. They wear a star and a ribbon hanging from their necks [...] He said, "Let me have your genealogy attested, and when you return, we shall see." Oh, I shall have it.⁴

¹ Fussell, p. 13.

² Bond, pp. 151-2.

³ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 52.

⁴ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, pp. 177-8.

Between the fact that his communication with the Margrave broke down, and the fact that he never returned to Karlsruhe, Boswell was not to have his star, and whilst his description of the potential honour is quaintly old-fashioned, it was serious.

Sometimes this role-play involved actually dressing up as well as the adoption of a style of speech:

Macpherson and I were laid upon the floor, on two hard beds and clean straw, like two immense Highlanders. Hearty we were, and as content as human existence could allow [...] I rose fresh as a roe on the braes of Lochaber. I find that if I had got a commission in a Highland corps, I should have been as stout a Donald as the best of them.¹

For Boswell this represents an opportunity to play the manly Highlander around the Lord Marischal ('a fine frolic we made of it'), maintaining the persona of the Scot speaking a 'barbarous language'.² It was, though, by this time a sentimentalised Jacobite version of the rare Scot, one of the 'very few south of the Tay'.³ However, Boswell's romanticising of the Highlander related only to the image of Jacobitism rather than the reality, as he would tell the Lord Marischal:

I am however no Jacobite. I am sorry that the conduct of our ancient Royal Family was such that the nation was obliged to choose another. But I now find the British Government properly settled. I find a sovereign to whom I can attach myself with enthusiasm, and a Court that will be pleased to own myself a Tory.⁴ Boswell's Jacobitism was sentimental, not active, and whilst he might feel a patriotic sorrow the reality of the Hanoverian ascendancy, and Boswell's (and Johnson's) place within it, meant that all that practically remained was a lamentation ('I say no more, only Alas, poor Scotland').⁵

The persona would prompt him to see connections to other peoples like the Corsicans, but ultimately this role was a costume like that of the Corsican chieftain that he adopted in Stratford in 1769, and his assumption of the role here little more than a piece of theatrical illusion.

¹ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 23.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, pp. 81-2.

³ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 83. It was at this point that the Lord Marischal gave Boswell a copy of Barbour's *Bruce*, telling him, 'Now you must read this once every year.'

⁴ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 78.

⁵ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 126.

The most contradictory of his personas was that of the rake – a manifestation of his desires, but stimulant to a frequent self-loathing. In Italy he would play the dissolute rake, much as he had in London, saying of the Venetian ladies:

My fancy was stirred by the brilliant stories I had heard of Venetian courtesans. I went to see them, et militavi non sine gloria [And I fought, not without glory], but the wounds of my Roman wars were scarcely healed before I received fresh ones at Venice.¹

He would be ‘attentive to the ladies of Sienna’ and say that there was no need to fear the stiletto of a jealous husband, but during the Tour he would see this persona as one of which to be ashamed, the persona most removed from his father, and the sterner voice of the Memoranda or ‘Inviolable Plan’ (which sound more like Alexander Boswell’s controlling adult voice to the child that Boswell represents) saying, ‘when I judged myself by the opinions of others, I was a libertine and an ignoramus. I was bashful, and distrustful of my ability to distinguish myself in my own country.’² In his ‘French Themes’ in Holland he could write of his new found desire for rigour and routine, but could not refrain from using the language of the Sadeian libertine, so familiar in the *London Journal*, and fitting to the voice of the urbane essayist he adopted for his French linguistic exercises:

At present I rise every day early, a practice which contributes much to the preservation of health, for it knits up the nerves and gives hardiness and vigour to the entire constitution [...] As soon as I am awake, I remember my duty, and like a brisk mariner I give the lash to indolence and bounce up with as much vivacity as if a pretty girl, amorous and willing, were waiting for me.³

In all of the personas what can be seen is the conscious self-shaping of Boswell’s perception of his own identity that was in evidence in the edited version of the *London Journal*, facilitated by the opportunities that travel presented. They illustrate the ways in which, stylistically, there

¹ *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, p. 11.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France*, p. 12.

³ *Boswell in Holland*, p. 36. It is worth noting that the stream-of-conscious voice of the French themes easily veers into the scatological: ‘In these themes I can never resist anything laughable that presents itself, whether there is occasion for it or not. In this I follow the example of Rabelais, Tristram Shandy, and all those people of unbridled imagination who write their books as I write my themes – at random, without trying to have any order or method; and for that reason they have acquired great reputation among people of unregulated vivacity who do not wish to give themselves the trouble of thinking even in their amusements.... I recall that when I was very young in Scotland I believed that the office of Groom of the Stole was Groom of the Stool [...] I supposed that every time his Majesty honoured the temple of Cloacina with his presence, he made use of a piece of fine cambric, or rather that it was assigned to him for such an occasion and that the gentleman of the wardrobe furnished a sufficient quantity of soft paper and took the fine cloth as a perquisite for himself, or rather for his wife.’ See *Boswell in Holland*, p. 67.

was an evolving methodology for the recording of experience which would bear fruit in all of Boswell's travel writing. They are also a way of shaping the writing to create a persona on the page connected to what Greg Clingham describes as Boswell's double consciousness, becoming 'a spectator at his own play, always observing but never quite doing', or what Allan Ingram sees as a second reality.¹ By this way of thinking, Boswell's Grand Tour journals are more than what Richard De Ritter defines as 'an intense and unrelenting level of self-scrutiny', and the beginnings of a deliberate self-shaping for a third party (Boswell the writer-reader, as opposed to 'Boswell' the voice of the narrative), converting memories to a literary resource: whilst the journals may present a factualizing form (indicating truthfulness), the fact of 'having been there' only provides a spurious authority to the version of reality (both of location and Boswell himself) presented in the text.² Between the act of writing his memoranda, which would become the journal, and the published works, the reader can also see how Boswell's travelogue, like that for many travellers, changes in its function as Marie-Noelle Bourget has noted, from a means of recording experience to a means of retrieving and representing them.³

As Patricia Meyer Spacks has argued, Boswell is inventing himself in his journals, and experimenting with a theatrical persona in a well-constructed costume, 'in which one form of self-understanding gives way to another in a conflict-ridden sequence that creates drama from the act of writing' where identity is made not inherent.⁴ This theatricality extends to the style he adopts of recording experience, most notably in the dramatized passages used to capture (and it must be said, shape the reader's interpretation of) his experience, and that of those he

¹ Greg Clingham, *James Boswell: The Life of Johnson, Landmarks of World Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 13. Allan Ingram, *Boswell's Creative Gloom: A Study of Imagery and Melancholy in the Writings of James Boswell* (London: Macmillan, 1982), p. 128.

² Richard De Ritter, 'This Changeableness in Character': Exploring Masculinity and Nationhood on James Boswell's Grand Tour', *Scottish Literary Review*, 2 (2010), p. 23.

³ Marie-Noëlle Bourguet, 'A Portable World: The Notebooks of European Travellers (Eighteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)', *Intellectual History Review*, 20 (2010), pp. 394-5.

⁴ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Imagining a Self: Autobiography and Novel in Eighteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), p. 16.

meets, such as in the ‘Dialogues at The Hague’ (written in French) or as in his reports of his courting of Madame Geelvinck in Holland:

BOSWELL. At what age, &c., did you first truly fall in love?

MME GEELVINCK. Really! That is certainly being frank.

BOSWELL. Oh, how happy I am! And since you became a widow, have you been in love?

MME GEELVINCK. No. Really!

BOSWELL. But, Madame, I am very much in love. I adore you. Will you make a distinction between Madame Geelvinck and my friend, and give me your advice?

MME GEELVINCK. Yes. But I am truly sorry. I advise you to cure your passion.

BOSWELL. But, Madame, how?

MME GEELVINCK. You have been in love before?

BOSWELL. Yes, I have been in love before, but those passions had no foundation. I always had the help of reason to cure them. But I believe I have never really been in love before now.

MME GEELVINCK. Oh, fancy that!¹

The mimic-memory involved here is indicative of Boswell’s methodology as a journalist, travel writer, autobiographer, and biographer – along with the performance involved in replaying the moment. In the dramatizing of the moment the reader is given the illusion of freedom of interpretation, of Boswell playing the role recognisable to the modern reader of a Casanova-Valmont and Madame Geelvinck as a Madame de Tourvel. Even within the passage there is a conscious request for artifice and role-play, asking her to adopt a dual persona of object of love and friend. The dramatization of the moment captures a vignette of formal eighteenth-century courtship, but leaves the reader wondering whether it is what actually happened, or what was meant to happen. In this lies the foundations of his method both in the published travel works, and also in the *Life of Johnson*. Compare, for instance, the above passage with the following from Frederick Pottle:

What happened in the revision of Johnsonian passages for the *Tour* and the *Life* was that Boswell greatly extended the use of the dramatic method. Since he had always, even when reporting in the third person, used “the very words of a great part” of what had been said, the revision generally required nothing more radical than the change of pronouns and tenses and the substitution of “JOHNSON” for “Mr Johnson said” or “Said he.” A more delicate and crucial kind of revision consisted in the occasional insertion of brief but telling stage directions: “No, Sir (Said Gwyn,) I am putting the church in the way, that the people may not

¹ *Boswell in Holland*, p. 150.

go out of the way.' Johnson. (with a hearty loud laugh of approbation,) 'Speak no more. Rest your colloquial fame upon this.'"¹

All that is missing from the passage with Madame Geelvinck is the stage directions, but the punctuation stresses the drama involved in her responses to his presumptuous attempt at love-making. What it all points to, though, is Boswell's experimentation with the dramatic form, which, as Pottle pointed out, indicates a real originality in his writing in his journals that would be polished in the published works, but which were so heavily indebted to the unpublished journals.² Pottle wondered about the influence of Malone (an obvious scholar of drama) in the use of the dramatic in the published works, but a look at the *London Journal* written up for John Johnstone would suggest that it was a feature of his style long before Malone appeared on the scene. When the experimentation of the 'themes' is added to this, Boswell's developing style as a writer of something other than conventional Augustan travel writing becomes obvious.

There are many different things that constitute a 'journey', as Tzvetan Todorov has argued:

What is *not* a journey? As soon as one attributes an extended figurative meaning to the word – and one has never been able to refrain from doing so – the journey coincides with life, no more, no less: is life anything more than the passage from birth to death? Movement in space is the first sign, the easiest sign, of change; life and change are synonymous. Narrative is also nourished by change; in this sense journey and narrative imply one another. The journey in space symbolizes the passing of time; physical movement symbolizes interior change; everything is a journey, but as a result this 'everything' has no specific identity.³

What Boswell's Grand Tour journals illustrate is all of these: they are the most travelogue of travelogues. Within them the reader can perceive not just the physical journey from A to B, but the evolution of a personality and a writing style. In Boswell's Grand Tour journals the reader can also discern the beginnings of what Carl Thompson sees as a Romantic subjectivist travelogue rather than an Enlightenment one:

Broadly speaking, the assumption is made that Enlightenment travellers prioritise fact-finding and empirical enquiry into the wider world, and that they accordingly fashion themselves on the page principally as observers, and as 'Cartesian' selves or subjectivities, detached from the scenes they survey. Romantic travellers, meanwhile, do not simply observe, they also react to the scenes around them, and

¹ F. A. Pottle, 'James Boswell, Journalist', in *The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker*, ed. by Frederick W. Hilles (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 21.

² Pottle, p. 23.

³ Tzvetan Todorov, 'The Journey and Its Narratives', in *Transports: Travel, Pleasure, and Imaginative Geography, 1600-1830*, ed. by Chloe Chard and Helen Langdon (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1996), p. 287.

record those reactions, and their reflections on them, in their accounts. In many cases, indeed, they seek out situations which arouse strong feelings and sensations of sublimity or spiritual intensity. And by allowing the scenes they observe to impinge upon them in this way, Romantic travellers are seemingly more open than Enlightenment travellers to be changed by their travel experiences and by the others that they encounter [...] the Romantic travelogue ideally records not only a literal journey but also a metaphorical 'inner' journey of self-discovery and maturation.¹

Whilst even Thompson acknowledges that this binary view of the differences between Enlightenment and Romantic travelogue is simplistic, it does provide an interesting way to look at Boswell's burgeoning travel writing as less looking backwards to the Augustanism of his idol Johnson, and more forwards to the personalised travel writings of the nineteenth century. This, then, would seem to place Boswell's travel writings at the forefront of a transition, and make them noteworthy not just to the Boswell or Johnson Scholar, but also to the student of Romanticism and nineteenth century travel writing. Boswell's Grand Tour, and the published work which would emanate from it (both in terms of style and raw material), show that his judgement was not far out:

What a singular thing do I find myself! Let this my journal show what a variety my mind is capable of. But am I not well received everywhere? Am I not particularly taken notice of by men of the most distinguished genius? And why? I have neither profound knowledge, strong judgment, nor constant gaiety. But I have a noble soul which still shines forth, a certain degree of knowledge, a multiplicity of ideas of all kinds, an original humour and turn of expression, and, I really believe, a remarkable knowledge of human nature.²

The Corsican work and the works which followed it would confirm this.

¹ Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing, New Critical Idiom* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 117.

² *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Germany and Switzerland*, p. 296.

Chapter 5

Corsica Boswell: From the Grand Tour to Fratritotism

One of the most remarkable masks upon the occasion was James Boswell, Esqr., in the dress of an armed Corsican chief. He entered the amphitheatre about twelve o'clock. He wore a short dark-coloured coat of coarse cloth, scarlet waistcoat and breeches, and black spatter-dashes; his cap or bonnet was of dark cloth; on the front of his cap was embroidered in gold letters, *Viva la Liberta* – and on one side of it was a handsome blue feather and cockade, so that it had an elegant as well as warlike appearance. On the breast of his coat was sewed a moor's head, the crest of Corsica, surrounded with branches of laurel. He also had a cartridge pouch into which was stuck a stiletto, and on his left side a pistol was hung upon the belt of his cartridge pouch. He had a fuse slung across his shoulder, wore no powder in his hair, but had it plaited at full length with a knot of blue ribbons at the end of it. He had, by way of a staff, a very curious vine all of one piece, with a bird finely carved upon it emblematical of the sweet bard of Avon. He wore no mask, saying it was not proper for a gallant Corsican. So soon as he came into the room, he drew universal attention.

London Magazine (September 1769)¹

James Boswell certainly knew how to make an entrance and, in doing so at the Shakespeare Jubilee ball of 1769, he was causing a social stir; much more than that, he was making a clear statement of affinity with a political cause. This was not simply a costume, however it may have been represented by the anonymous journalist recording the event for *The London Magazine*, but a very graphic representation of his current cause and purpose – the freeing of Corsica from the oppression of the Genoese republic, and latterly French conquest.

Corsica held an obvious appeal for the young Boswell on the continental Grand Tour after completing his legal studies in Holland. Corsica had been under the rule of the Genoese, since the fourteenth century, an occupation characterised by periodic rebellion and reprisal, as Boswell would note in his *Account*. Rousseau, in *The Social Contract*, had identified the island with a population uncorrupted by 'civilisation', and Frederick the Great, in his *Anti-Machiavel*, had seen in the islanders men as brave as 'those old Britons', going on to argue that, 'One may

¹ Lyle Larsen, *James Boswell as His Contemporaries Saw Him* (Cranbury: Farleigh Dickinson University Press, 2008), p. 58. It is worth noting that the report is almost a verbatim record of what Boswell describes as Corsican warrior dress in his *Account*, published in the previous year.

observe by the way, from the example of the Corsicans, how much the love of liberty inspires men with courage and bravery, and that in such a case oppression is as dangerous as it is unjust.’¹ For Boswell, however, the expedition to Corsica was more than a sight-seeing trip to some utopian isle, or a celebrity lion-hunt with Boswell looking to ‘bag’ Paoli; rather it provided a political education for a young man looking to return to his native country and take his place in society, as other Grand Tourists had done before him. Boswell was the first Briton to go into the interior of the island, and in this was a true traveller and not simply a tourist following others. As S.C. Roberts in his edition of the *Journal* noted, there were many notes that would have a resonance for his contemporaries in his ‘desire for novelty’ the ‘attraction of the heroic’ and in the ‘peculiar appeal of Corsica itself’, very much in keeping with the idea of ‘natural man’ so popular with explorers and philosophers in the eighteenth century.²

Corsica also represented a cause for a man brought up in the atmosphere of the Scottish Enlightenment. Liberty and patriotism were very much in the minds of eighteenth century Scots in the aftermath of the Jacobite rebellion of 1745-6, as Alexander Broadie has commented, ‘Patriotism was a common topic in the Scottish Enlightenment’, particularly for a nation that had to ‘define their position in relation to Jacobitism.’ Where patriotism could be seen as a virtue that transcended the individual.³ Indeed, Lord Kames, a friend and mentor of Boswell, would later see in the Corsican cause something noble and worthwhile:⁴

Patriotism, roused among the Corsicans by the oppression of the Genoese, exerted itself upon every proper object. Even during the heat of the war, they erected an university for arts and sciences, a national bank, and a national library; improvements that would not have been thought of in their torpid state. Alas! They have fallen a victim to thirst of power, not to superior valour. Had Providence favoured them with success, their figure would have been considerable in peace as in war.⁵

¹ Frederick II of Prussia, *Anti-Machiavel* (London: T Woodward, 1741), pp. 241-2.

² James Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to Corsica; & Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1923).

³ Alexander Broadie (ed), *The Scottish Enlightenment: An Anthology* (Edinburgh: Canongate, 1997), p. 519.

⁴ Richard B. Sher sees Kames as the Edinburgh-based father figure to Boswell, where Johnson was the London-based one, so the reader should not be surprised to see a connection in a shared thinking. See Richard B Sher, "Something That Put Me in Mind of My Father": Boswell and Lord Kames', in *Boswell: Citizen of the World, Man of Letters*, ed. by Irma S. Lustig (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2009), p. 65ff.

⁵ Broadie, p. 523.

For Kames patriotism was heroic, and the ‘great bulwark of civil liberty; equally abhorrent of despotism on the one hand and of licentiousness on the other’.¹ Added to this, he noted a decline in the standard of British patriotism, where the young were only ‘trained up to selfishness’ rather than a selfless adherence to nation: ‘Keep what you get, and get what you can, is the chief lesson inculcated at Westminster, Winchester, and [Eton].’²

The primitivistic view of the noble savage was also one that permeated through Scottish thinkers like Adam Ferguson in his *Essay on the History of Civil Society* (1767), which has a clear resonance with Boswell’s view of the native Corsicans, since, in his view, ‘Men are conscious of their equality, and are tenacious of its rights.’³ Ferguson also saw how such people were perhaps rude and unpolished, but also represented a system or culture that could counter the affectation and selfishness of contemporary Western society:

Every tribe of warlike barbarians may entertain among themselves the strongest sentiments of affection and honour, while they carry to the rest of mankind the aspect of banditti and robbers. They may be indifferent to interest, and superior to danger; but our sense of humanity, our regard to the rights of nations, our admiration of civil wisdom and justice, even our effeminacy itself, make us turn away with contempt, or with horror, from a scene which exhibits so few of our good qualities, and which serve to reproach our weaknesses.⁴

Like Kames he could see a simplicity and nobility in the unvarnished values of patriotism of the supposedly uncivilised, arguing ‘In simple or barbarous nations, when nations are weak, and beset with enemies, the love of a country, of a party, or a faction, are the same.’⁵

With this background, with this connection to Enlightenment ideas, and armed with his letter of introduction from Rousseau, it is not surprising that Boswell would have looked to travel into the interior of Corsica to see the theory in action, as Pottle notes, and jokingly present

¹ Broadie, p. 522.

² Broadie, pp. 527-8.

³ Adam Ferguson, *Selected Philosophical Writings, Library of Scottish Philosophy* (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2007), p.34.

⁴ Ferguson, p.55.

⁵ Ferguson, p. 73.

himself as “Rousseau’s Ambassador Extraordinary to Corsica”.¹ As a consequence, the *Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to that Island, and Memoirs of Pascal Paoli*, becomes something very different in the history of eighteenth century travelogue: it moves beyond a simple, and occasionally orientalist, Grand Tour reflection on the past, to become a narrative of a political lion and reflect a fratricidal view of the present and the future, which would have an impact greater than a simple social stir at a masked dance.² It would cement James Boswell’s reputation in the popular imagination as ‘Corsica Boswell’ – an identity he had long before he ever became ‘Johnson Boswell’.

1. The Paratext

The most logical place to begin an analysis of Boswell’s Corsican work is to look at how it is presented and where clear statements are made for the reader to begin interpreting the text.³ The first thing that should be noted in Boswell’s book is the title page (see p. 142), and how it shapes a reading from the outset. In the title, ‘Corsica’ is in the largest font size, followed by ‘Pascale Paoli’, with a clear focus for the eye on the key messages of the country and the personality who was in the process of leading it against oppression; it is the subject that is to sell copies of the book rather than the reputation of its author. Typographically, ‘James Boswell’ is very subdued by comparison, though it should be noted that by the second edition, printed in London by Edward and Charles Dilly, the book has ‘Boswell’s Corsica’ on the spine,

¹ James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France 1765-1766, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: Heinemann, 1955).

² As Murray Pittock has argued, ‘It is a fact which has been little remarked that Scottish and Irish writers and public figures of the long eighteenth century (and indeed beyond) were given to adopting the national causes of other countries with a passion and vigour which might readily be interpreted as reflecting on the situation of their own: the adoption of colonized nations and cultures as a means of expressing reservations concerning the nature and development of empire, and their own place within it.’ Murray Pittock, *James Boswell* (Aberdeen: AHRC Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies, 2007), p. 43.

³ The text referred to throughout is that of the third (corrected) edition, the last of Boswell’s lifetime, James Boswell, *An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to That Island, and the Memoirs of Pascal Paoli*. 3rd edn (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1769).

Boswell's reputation apparently established for the market.¹ The reader is informed that it contains a 'New and Accurate Map of Corsica,' raising awareness of the reality of Corsica for the uninitiated (the overwhelming majority of Boswell's readership) and Boswell's claims to be the first into the interior, but also providing a useful piece of intelligence for any military or naval intervention, signalling the importance of Corsica to Mediterranean security - highly important from a point of view of trade in a largely seaborne imperial transportation system.² The quotation from the Declaration of Arbroath of 1320 forges a direct link between the Scottish and the Corsican experience, both driving for independence from oppression by a foreign power, thereby creating a clear statement of fratricotic fervency. Finally there is the illustration of the armorial of Corsica, which is a claim for the authority and ancient status of the country represented pictorially; armorials traditionally were as much a statement of heritage, displayed heraldically, as they were for identification on the battlefield.

In his Dedication to the text Boswell claims to see Paoli as an object of veneration rather than sycophancy, 'admiration' rather than 'panegyrick', and himself as admirer rather than 'cringing parasite':

Dedications are for the most part the offerings of interested servility, or the effusions of partial zeal; enumerating the virtues of men in whom no virtues can be found, or predicting greatness to those who afterwards pass their days in unambitious indolence, and die leaving no memorial of their existence, but a dedication, in which all their merit is confessedly future, and which time has turned into a silent reproach [...] I am under no apprehensions of that nature, when I inscribe this book to Pascal Paoli. Your virtues, Sir, are universally acknowledged...³

¹ Also interesting is the way in which the printers of the second and third editions, and the essay collection which helped to promote the Corsican cause, the Dillys, were very much leading political publishers of an anti-governmental stance, showing how the text was taking a much more overt political position, akin to the Left Book Club published by Victor Gollancz which published the political works of George Orwell.

² This idea was particularly picked up by Essay XII of *British Essays in Favour of the Brave Corsicans*, nominally written by 'OP', but which Pottle argues was written by Boswell himself (see Frederick A. Pottle, *Boswell's Literary Career* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1929), p. 83), which sees the military potential of the Corsican interior: 'Nature, who seems to have intended Corsica for a seat of liberty, has so fortified that island with immense rocks and mountains, that artillery, properly disposed, would counteract all the efforts of the French engineers, and damp the flashy ardour of their soldiers. How dreadful must it be to an army to have a battery playing upon them, as it were from the clouds, while the explosion re-echoes among the cliffs, like the awful thunder of Heaven! Trust me, the powdered heroes of France would not be able to bear up under such a shock...'

³ James Boswell, *An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to That Island, & Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1768), p. v.

By the time of the third edition (the final one of Boswell's lifetime, and the last complete edition of the full text until the Oxford University Press edition of 2006) added a frontispiece illustration ('Engrav'd from an original Portrait of Henry Bembridge, in ye Possession of James Boswell Esqr.') of Pascale Paoli, turning the text into a hymnal of hero worship, and marketing it as centred around the man, rather than the island, the cause, or even Boswell himself. This is probably one of the main reasons why the text, originally about all three interlinked, becomes for many modern critics the prototype for the *Life of Johnson*. The removal of the *Account* from every edition for over two hundred years, turned the text into a work analysed as biography rather than travelogue or political propaganda, allowing the *Life* to be seen as the terminal point of Boswell's literary career.

Boswell was also careful to publish, in the third edition, the letter of commendation from Lord Lyttelton, partly as self-publicity via connection with a well-known man of letters, partly as political endorsement and borrowed authority, highlighting the political appeal of Corsica and the agenda of political propaganda.¹ Lyttelton's letter introduces the notion of pilgrimage to the journey to Corsica, and compares Paoli to Greek statesmen and generals, opponents to tyranny and men of undisputed integrity:

I had gained some knowledge of it, before I saw your book, from the letters of another English gentleman on that subject; but you have added many curious and interesting particulars, which I have read with much delight and admiration. If I were a few years younger, I would go on pilgrimage to Corsica (as you have done) to visit this living image of ancient virtue, and to venerate in the mind of PASCAL PAOLI the spirit of TIMOLEON and EPAMINONDAS [...] Besides sympathy of sentiment, which is a natural bond of union, we ought in policy to shew as much regard for them, as the Genoese, their oppressors, have shewn for the French, in our late wars with that nation.²

¹ As Boulton and McLoughlin note in their edition of the text, the endorsement of Lyttelton was useful for Boswell, and partially solicited by the gift of one of the first editions of the text, since Lyttelton was a Whig politician with literary connections, a patron of both Fielding and Thomson. Boswell knew of his interest in Corsica and sent him the copy with 'an eye to the main chance'. See James Boswell, *An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to That Island, & Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 5, n. 1.

² Boswell, *Account*, pp. vi-vii.

It is in his Prefaces to the texts, though, where Boswell most obviously reveals his overt motives in writing, which could be regarded as *diminutio*:

No apology shall be made for presenting the world with an Account of Corsica. It has been for some time expected from me; and I own that the ardour of publick curiosity has both encouraged and intimidated me [...] Unwilling to repeat my tale to every company, I thought it best to promise a book which should speak for me.¹

He was quick, though, to claim veracity as one of his motivating factors:

I have related his [Paoli's] remarkable sayings, I declare upon honour, that I have neither added nor diminished; nay, so scrupulous have I been, that I would not make the smallest variation even when my friends thought it would be an improvement. I know with how much pleasure we read what is perfectly authentick.²

He also set out to justify some of his Scotticisms, whilst claiming authority by association with Johnson:

It may be necessary to say something in defence of my orthography. Of late it has become the fashion to render our language more neat and trim by leaving out k after c, and u in the last syllable of words which used to end in our. The illustrious Mr. Samuel Johnson, who has alone executed in England what was the task of whole academies in other countries, has been careful in his dictionary to preserve the k as a mark of the Saxon original...³

Finally, Boswell showed how he saw the text as a springboard to personal success, which could be interpreted as either vanity or honesty:

For my part, I should be proud to be known as an authour; and I have an ardent ambition for literary fame; for of all possessions I should imagine literary fame to be the most desirable. A man who has been able to furnish a book which has been approved by the world, has established himself as a respectable character in distant society, without any danger of having that character lessened by the observations of his weaknesses [...] Whether I merit any portion of literary fame, the publick will judge. Whatever my ambition may be, I trust that my confidence is not too great, nor my hopes too sanguine.⁴

By the third edition of 1769 he would acknowledge in his preface that the book had indeed 'made' his youthful reputation, and though it gave him the success he desired, it had not satisfied his appetite for fame.⁵

¹ Boswell, *Account*, p. ix.

² Boswell, *Account*, p. xiii.

³ Boswell, *Account*, p. xix.

⁴ Boswell, *Account*, pp. xx-xxi.

⁵ 'May I be permitted to say that the success of this book has exceeded my warmest hopes. When I first ventured to send it into the world, I fairly owned an ardent desire for literary fame. I have obtained my desire; and whatever clouds may overcast

In the 'Introduction' Boswell provides the clearest focus for a reading of the text via what amounts to an essay on the principles of Liberty. The very first word of the Introduction is 'liberty', and it sets out to identify the guiding philosophy of the book, setting the text up to be travelogue as political statement of fratricide, comparable with the situation for Scotland or America:

Liberty is so natural, and so dear to mankind, whether as individuals, or as members of society, that it is indispensably necessary to our happiness. Every thing great and worthy ariseth from it. Liberty gives health to the mind, and enables us to enjoy the full exercise of our faculties. He who is in chains cannot move either easily or gracefully; nothing elegant or noble can be expected from those, whose spirits are subdued by tyranny, and whose powers are cramped by restraint.¹

Developing his theme, he sounds positively statesmanlike in his political rhetoric, the inclusive 'we' (standard practice in the eighteenth century) helping to involve the reader in the debate:

There is no doubt, but by entering into society, mankind voluntarily give up a part of their natural rights, and bind themselves to the obedience of laws, calculated for the general good. But we must distinguish between authority, and oppression; between laws, and capricious dictates; and keeping the original intention of government ever in view, we should take care that no more restraint be laid upon natural liberty, than what the necessities of society require.²

In developing his picture of the Corsicans he uses superlatives to represent the ideal: the nation is 'brave and resolute', maintaining a 'constant struggle against the oppression of the Republick of Genoa'. The 'valiant islanders' are presented as anything but 'malcontents' or a 'disorderly troop of rebels', showing how Europe now regards them, 'and with astonishment sees them on the eve of emancipating themselves for ever from a foreign yoke, and becoming a free and independent people.'³ Boswell also stresses further his authority to speak, expressing his fellow-feeling for the Corsicans:

I am the first Briton who has had the curiosity to visit Corsica, and to receive such information as to enable him to form a just idea of it; and they will readily make allowance for the enthusiasm of one who has been

my days, I can now walk here among the rocks and woods of my ancestors, with an agreeable consciousness that I have done something worthy'. Boswell, *Account*, p. xxx.

¹ Boswell, *Account*, p. 1.

² Boswell, *Account*, p. 3.

³ Boswell, *Account*, p. 7.

among the brave islanders, when their patriotick virtue is at its height, and who has felt as it were a communication of their spirit.¹

Finally, Boswell outlines the plan of the book, and makes a clear statement about the essential unity of the text and how it should be seen:

...to give a Geographical and Physical description of the island, that my readers may be made acquainted with the country which in these latter days has produced so heroick a race of patriots. To exhibit a concise view of the Revolutions it has undergone from the earliest times, which will prepare the mind, and throw light on the sequel. To show the present state of Corsica; and to subjoin my Journal of a Tour to that island, in which I relate a variety of anecdotes, and treasure up many memoirs of the illustrious General of the Corsicans – MEMORABILIA PAOLI.²

What becomes obvious is that Boswell had a vision for the text as a whole, rather than a simple sum of widely disparate parts (the way many commentators have chosen to see it), or as two separate texts divided by the notion of derivation and originality (the way that Samuel Johnson chose to see it).³ The text, as a consequence, actually moves logically from a political statement about liberty, through a history of Corsica and its geographical and topographical features, to show the figure of political heroism in that environment. The *Journal* supplies the text for liberty, the *Account* supplies the context; they are inextricably linked.

2. The *Account of Corsica*

At first sight Boswell's *Account of Corsica* appears to be very much in the convention of Grand Tour literature, being the narrative of a young man travelling around Europe seeking experiences and knowledge of antiquarian objects and cultures. On closer examination, however, what becomes obvious is that there are significant differences from the conventional literature of the time: whilst it has the form of Baltimore's *A Tour to the East, in the Years 1763 and 1764, with Remarks on the City of Constantinople and the Turks*, it seeks to embrace the

¹ Boswell, *Account*, p. 9.

² Boswell, *Account*, p. 9.

³ James Boswell, *Boswell in Search of a Wife 1766-1769, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: William Heinemann, 1957), p. 177.

foreign culture, rather than distance itself from it in a strange form of orientalism; whilst it reflects on Mediterranean islanders like Brydone's work it does not infantilise their beliefs; and whilst it, like Pennant and Burt, charts a nation on the fringes of European 'civilisation', rather than being externally distant and apparently objective, it seeks to write from within, in a way that is highly partisan and partial. In many ways, the *Account* in conjunction with the *Journal* is very different from the usual run of tourist literature, as Boulton and McLoughlin have noted, and thus showing that Boswell was an innovator as a travel writer, combining the personal account of travels with the socio-economic state of Corsica and its history. These features were common in travel accounts, but not in combination.¹

Chapter 1 ('Of the Situation, Extent, Air, Soil, and Productions of CORSICA') starts with basic geographical detail, reminiscent of the South Sea explorers, akin to the log records of navigators like Woodes Rogers or James Cook:

Corsica is an island of the Mediterranean sea, situated between the 41 and 43 degree of north latitude, and between the 8 and 10 degree of east longitude, reckoning from London. It hath on the north the Ligurian sea, and gulf of Genoa. On the east the Tuscan sea; on the south, a strait of ten miles which separates it from Sardinia; and on the west the Mediterranean. It is about 100 miles south of Genoa, and 80 south-west of Leghorn, from whence it can plainly be seen when the weather is clear. It is 150 miles in length, and from 40 to 50 in breadth, being broadest about the middle. It is reckoned 322 miles in circumference, but an exact measurement round it would extend to 500 miles, as it is edged with many promontories, and with a variety of bays.²

This technical precision allows Boswell to appear authoritative and informed, but also lends a scientific rigour to his account, which also reflects the guidelines of the Royal Society.³ Whilst much of this information was clearly derivative and not based on personal observation, unlike

¹ James Boswell, *An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to That Island, & Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. xxxiii.

² Boswell, *Account*, p. 11.

³ As Thomas M. Curley has stated, 'A comparable coverage of the flora and fauna, and inhabitants is present in Boswell's travel book, which ends with a first-person narrative of his adventures with Paoli. His description also incorporates features found in travelogues about Grand Touring [...] Boswell, in the true terra incognita of Corsica, made sure to combine encyclopaedic reporting with a Grand Tourist's journal of his political education at the hands of Paoli and his followers [...] Boswell, like Sterne and Johnson, faced the problem of standardization and happily found a solution that parallels innovations in the contemporaneous *A Sentimental Journey* for an age of sensibility.' See Thomas M. Curley, 'Boswell's Liberty-Loving Account of Corsica and the Art of Travel Literature', in *New Light on Boswell*, ed. by Greg Clingham (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 90.

the navigators of the Pacific, it grounds the reader in the specifics of location and dimension, and also starts by presenting the text as a narrative of geographical rather than sociological importance. It moves on to debunk the prejudices surrounding Corsica, partially established by the Romans:

Corsica has indeed been pretty generally represented as unwholesome, which, I suppose, has been owing to the bad report given of it by the Romans, who established their colonies at Aleria and Mariana, which from their damp situation, occasioned a great death among the inhabitants, and accordingly these colonies soon went to ruin. But all the interior parts of the Island have very good air.¹

Again, this helps to show Boswell's *Account* as transcending extant prejudices and ignorance, but also integrates elements of the picturesque, which echo descriptions of the Scottish Highlands:

The Corsican villages are frequently built upon the very summits of their mountains, on craggy cliffs of so stupendous a height, that the houses can hardly be distinguished during the day; but at night, when the shepherds kindle their fires, the reflection of such a variety of lights, makes these aerial villages have a most picturesque and pleasing appearance [...] Corte is situated part at the foot, and part on the declivity of a rock, in plain surrounded with prodigious high mountains, and at the conflux of two rivers, the Tavignano and Restonica. It hath a great deal of rich country about it, and a wonderful natural strength, being hemmed in by almost impassable mountains and narrow defiles, which may be defended with a handful of men, against very large armies.²

The topography (and the aesthetic appreciation of it that Boswell includes here and elsewhere) shows an engagement with man and landscape, connecting the inhabitants and their rugged environment. The land becomes almost as heroic as the 'handful of men' who defend it. This final point, however, also indicates another selling point in the campaign for aid to the Corsican rebels – the military details that would show how such aid could maintain a military ally in a very sensitive area of the Mediterranean:

There are, in several parts of the island, but particularly in Capo Corso, a great many ancient towers, built about three or four hundred years ago, to defend the inhabitants against incursions of the Turks and other pirates. There is there a little village called Tomino, strong by situation. The Genoese have made several attacks upon it during the late troubles, but were never able to carry it. The inhabitants are very deservedly proud of this. They shew, with particular triumph, a shell which the enemy threw into their village, to oblige them to surrender. They have placed it in a niche on the outside of their church, to serve as a

¹ Boswell, *Account*, p. 16.

² Boswell, *Account*, pp. 29-30.

memorial of their deliverance, and to inspire them with greater zeal and devotion when they go to divine worship.¹

In a very real, and political, sense Boswell outlines how the maintenance of such an ally in such a landscape could be used to Britain's advantage, illustrating the strategic importance of the island, reminiscent of the Admiralty's orders to James Cook to look for potential bases in the Pacific as part of his orders for the third voyage.²

With the geographical argument for supporting the rebels out of the way Boswell moves onto the political arguments for aiding the rebels, progressing ultimately to the position of Pascale Paoli as lead freedom fighter, but also a man of standing and civilisation with whom the British government could work. Boswell begins by outlining how the Corsicans have been subjected to, and struggled against, various political masters for millennia, arguing that 'we must have recourse to the plain and fundamental principle, that the Corsicans are men, and have a right to liberty; which, if usurped by any power whatever, they have at all times a just title to vindicate.'³ Clearly, this was a time to support those who had been subjected to political whim and to justify their rebellion against a power that neither cared for nor truly wanted Corsica; a power that could not comprehend the worth of the Corsican people. In response to this Boswell outlines his justification for supporting the rebels in what amounts to a political manifesto:

An individual, who acquires a large fortune, and a state, which acquires an increase in dominion, may be very properly compared. He who gets a large fortune thinks he cannot shew his command of riches, but by such acts of profusion, as must quickly dissipate them. And a state, which has acquired an increase of dominion, thinks its sovereignty is not sufficiently manifested, but by such acts of arbitrary oppression, as must tend to force its subjects to throw off their allegiance. For however a people may, from indolence, from timidity, or from other motives, submit for a season to a certain degree of tyranny; if it is long continued, and pushed to an exorbitant length, nature will revolt, and the original rights of men will call for redress.⁴

¹ Boswell, *Account*, pp. 21-2.

² James Cook, *Captain Cook's Voyages 1768-1779* (London: Folio, 1997), p. 298.

³ Boswell, *Account*, p. 70.

⁴ Boswell, *Account*, pp.71-2.

The rebellion of the native Corsicans is justified in Boswell's eyes by the ways in which the Genoese republic mal-administered the island, via political expediency, pragmatic treaties, and broken promises. Boswell first impeaches the Genoese for their direct repression, arguing that their principal 'system' was to reduce the Corsicans to 'abject submission'.¹ The more subtle and Machiavellian Genoese repression (of rule via the tactics of divide and conquer), however, draws much stronger criticism:

The Genoese did everything in their power to foment internal dissensions in Corsica, to which the people were naturally too much inclined. These dissensions occasioned the most horrid bloodshed. They reckon that no less than 1700 Corsicans were assassinated in the space of two years. Assassinations were, in the first place, a certain cause of hatred among the Corsicans, and often between the best families, so that they would not unite in any scheme for the general liberty. And in the second place, they could be turned to very good account, either by confiscating the estates of the assassins, or by making the criminals pay heavy compensation to the judge.²

Boswell also shows how the Genoese were not above using their diplomatic power to undermine the position of the Corsicans, using diplomatic connections in London.³ Finally, the Genoese only managed to quell the various revolts by the use of troops from France, with 'barbarous schemes' to dispose of the problematic Corsicans through transportation to the French king's colonies, with Boswell posing the question 'Could there be a more harsh, or a more absurd measure than this?'⁴ In essence the Genoese rule is represented to the British reader as dictatorial and despotic, playing against ideas of fair play and democratic right (ironic, considering the nature of British democracy at this time), and the British reader, and Government, was being roused to see the injustice of the situation.⁵ Indeed, considering the reputation of many European regimes at this time, Boswell's views reflect a wider dissent and dissatisfaction with the political status quo. His travelogue verges on radicalism.

¹ Boswell, *Account*, pp. 73-4.

² Boswell, *Account*, pp. 81-2.

³ Boswell, *Account*, p. 104.

⁴ Boswell, *Account*, pp. 115-6.

⁵ As Frank Brady argued, '*Corsica* was written with a more specific purpose than merely to expound the virtues of Paoli, liberty, and the Corsicans; it was intended to rouse the British and the Government to do something about the situation [...] *Corsica* was written to appeal to all interests; Boswell pointed out the excellence of the island's harbors, its value to England as a check on France, and the ethical appeal of the Corsican cause.' Frank Brady, *Boswell's Political Career* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 40.

The introduction of Paoli into the history of Corsican resistance turns the narrative into a Corsican heroic epic, with Paoli as the Plutarchian hero, giving the reader a focus for anti-Genoese feeling as well as a role-model who reconciles personal freedom with public respectability - an acceptable face of Corsican resistance, born in Corsica with a deep-seated 'love and attachment to his country', a liberator and saviour 'for the deliverance of his country.'¹ Boswell uses the language of the epic story-teller, building in emotive diction and a sense of the sentimental:

There was something particularly affecting, in his parting from his father; the old man, hoary and gray with years, fell on his neck and kissed him, gave him his blessing, and with a broken feeble voice, encouraged him in the undertaking, on which he was entering.²

Boswell's description of Paoli's return to Corsica (which he did not witness, though it reads as though he did) is characterised by 'his superiour judgement, and patriotick spirit', winning the hearts of the native Corsicans, and Paoli's modesty 'when called to the supreme command, was not affected'. The tribal Corsicans are all shown to bend to Paoli's justice, illustrating how he unites them all behind his authority, and against the machinations of the dastardly Genoese:

The Corsicans having long been denied legal justice, had assumed the right of revenge, and had been accustomed to assassinate each other upon the most trivial occasions [...] The disease was become so violent, that it seemed almost incurable [...] he gradually brought them to be convinced, that the power of dispensing punishment belonged to the publick; and that, without a proper submission, and a regular system of administration, they never could make head against an enemy, or, indeed, be properly speaking, a state.³

Paoli's rule, by this portrait, almost becomes a model for the Napoleonic Code.⁴

In the final chapter of the *Account*, Boswell brings the story up to date and anticipates the personal narrative of the *Journal* that is to follow shortly, presenting 'the state of Corsica as it now is.'⁵ Corsica is represented as a parliamentary democracy, akin to Westminster, a

¹ Boswell, *Account*, pp. 125-6.

² Boswell, *Account*, p. 126.

³ Boswell, *Account*, p. 132.

⁴ See Boswell, *Account*, p. 135ff. It is also worth noting that Napoleon Bonaparte, as well as being a fellow Corsican, was also Paoli's godson.

⁵ Boswell, *Account*, p.144.

university has been established in Corte against the ‘barbarous policy of Genoa, in keeping them in ignorance’, and the Corsicans are worthy of inclusion in the European community of independent states, since they ‘are men, as well as citizens; and when once they shall have entirely freed themselves from the Genoese, I cannot imagine a country more happy.’¹ Finally, before the reader is introduced to Boswell’s first-person narrative, he gives a plaintive appeal to the reader to recognise the unrealised potential of the Corsicans:

When we thus view the Corsicans gloriously striving for the best rights of humanity, and under the guidance of an illustrious commander and able statesman, establishing freedom, and forming a virtuous and happy nation, can we be indifferent to their success? Can we Britons forbear to admire their bravery, and their wisdom?²

It is with these rhetorical questions ringing out that the reader enters the *Journal*, where the statue that is the Paoli of the *Account* becomes the man, narrated and shaped by Boswell.³ The *Account* may be derivative of the work of others; it is not ‘informative for contemporary readers but uninteresting in comparison to the second part’ as Pottle said, but rather essential if the *Journal* is to be fully appreciated, and Boswell’s force as a political propagandist is to be fully understood.⁴

3. The *Journal of a Tour to That Island & Memoirs of Pascale Paoli*

When the reader finally proceeds to the *Journal* s/he is prepared for the first person narrative that comes because s/he can see Boswell’s journey into the interior and meeting with Paoli in

¹ Boswell, *Account*, p. 162.

² Boswell, *Account*, p. 225.

³ As Peter Thrasher has said in his biography of Paoli, ‘In more than one sense then, Boswell’s *Corsica* was a work of propaganda. Paoli was not only a man of flesh and blood, but at the same time a symbol and a yardstick [...] The point of view of the whole book is of course Paoli’s and the gravity of Boswell’s Augustan prose, with its talk of Senates and of Counsellors, and the heightened diction in which he always speaks of Paoli not only elevates the General, but gives a deceptively urbane, even majestic, air to the ideal Corsica Boswell saw him as creating.’ See Peter Adam Thrasher, *Pasquale Paoli: An Enlightened Hero 1725-1807* (London: Constable, 1970), p. 100.

⁴ See James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France 1765-1766, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: Heinemann, 1955), p. 154. Pottle’s view is perhaps coloured by the fact that to include the *Account* in the Yale series would have broken the auto/biographical direction of the private papers series. To follow the lead of G.B. Hill, S.C. Roberts, and Morchard Bishop was much more straightforward. Presumably copyright would not have been an issue.

its proper context. The *Journal* is undoubtedly fresher and more immediate for the modern reader, fitting especially with our knowledge of the man built upon a knowledge of his other works, both those printed in his lifetime and (more importantly) those published after his death, as Peter Martin has argued:

The journal section appealed also because of its imagery, touches of immediacy, the ability to create a living scene or catch the essence of character. The public had not seen anything like this before. It was a new style of travelogue and biography, combined with an extraordinary self-portrait.¹

What it also presents for the modern reader, however, is a tantalising glimpse into the mentality of the autobiographer, and a view of his perception of ‘truth’.² When the modern reader arrives at the text it is with a preconceived idea of what Boswell sounds like, already having a backstory provided by his journals. In many ways it is as if they already know him. As a consequence, the focus that Boswell directed in the title page – Corsica and Pascale Paoli – has changed, and the modern reader, like Pottle, is now concentrated on the romantic view of the author rather than the subject. This is one of the major reasons that the *Account* is now little read, and the *Journal* is the sole focus of every edition between 1769 and 2006; this and Johnson’s judgement. As a consequence the modern reader welcomes the return of the Boswellian narrator-persona, in this case the Boswell filled with ideas of being an adventurer and explorer:

Having resolved to pass some years abroad for my instruction and entertainment, I conceived a design of visiting the island of Corsica. I wished for something more than just the common course of what is called the tour of Europe; and Corsica occurred to me as a place which nobody else had seen, and where I should find what was to be seen nowhere else, a people actually fighting for liberty and forming themselves from a poor, inconsiderable, oppressed nation into a flourishing and independent state.³

¹ Peter Martin, *A Life of James Boswell* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999), p. 219.

² As Patricia Meyer Spacks has argued, ‘Telling stories about human lives, biography, like published letters, encourages the temptation to interpret, the lure of “finding out”, the fantasy of knowing. Unlike letters, it offers coherent narrative, product of a structuring intelligence other than the reader’s. Delineating someone who has actually lived in the world, this narrative claims the status of “truth”. Patricia Meyer Spacks, ‘Gossip’, in *James Boswell’s Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986), p. 125.

³ Boswell, *Journal*, p. 263.

The reader is pulled into a world of vicarious experience, made possible by the first person immediacy, and it is here that Boswell appears to the modern reader to be most like the narrator-persona of the eighteenth century novel. They can see, if they wish, a narrator akin to the naïf, and a direct contrast with the strength and certainty of Paoli.¹ This is most obvious in the pages before Boswell reaches Corsica, particularly on the subject of the existence of Barbary corsairs:

The only danger I saw was that I might be taken by some of the Barbary corsairs, and have a trial of slavery among the Turks at Algiers. I spoke of it to Commodore Harrison, who commanded the British squadron in the Mediterranean and was then lying with his ship, the *Centurion*, in the bay of Leghorn. He assured me that if the Turks did take me they should not keep me long, but in order to prevent it he was so good as to grant me a very ample and particular passport; and as it could be of no use if I did not meet the corsairs, he said very pleasantly when he gave it to me, "I hope, Sir, it shall be of no use to you."²

The awareness of the Barbary corsairs introduces the element of romanticised danger for the adventurer (and by extension the reader), and they were a genuine threat to travel in the Mediterranean, but the statement by Commodore Harrison that if the Turks were to capture Boswell they would not keep him long is loaded with irony – the implication is that either gunboat diplomacy or Boswell's garrulity would take care of the pirates³. Boswell can also be seen role-playing, though it is not certain whether he is James Bond or Sir Politick Would-Be, and, as Pottle has argued, 'Boswell probably cultivated this impression of himself, and he certainly took advantage of it', as most obviously demonstrated by his appearance at the Shakespeare celebration:⁴

Before I left Leghorn, I could observe that my tour was looked upon by the Italian politicians in a very serious light, as if truly I had a commission from my court to negotiate a treaty with the Corsicans. The

¹ 'Paoli was for Boswell what he was later to be for Napoleon, what every idealistic youth in every generation seeks for himself – the word made flesh, the lofty uncorrupted bearer of a noble standard who could serve as an example and inspiration. Since Boswell, however, was above all other things, even when he seems most innocent of art, an artist, his ideal man of action is contrasted for dramatic effect with a weaker vessel – Boswell himself, labouring after virtue, but all too often fatally diverted by the lusts of vanity and the flesh. Over and against Boswell as Everyman there is set the virtues of his Hero...' Peter Adam Thrasher, *Pasquale Paoli: An Enlightened Hero 1725-1807* (London: Constable, 1970), p. 99.

² Boswell, *Journal*, pp. 269-70.

³ As David Cordingly has noted of the corsairs, 'The most famous were those of the Barbary coast, who operated from Algiers, Tunis, Sale and other ports along the northern shores of Africa, and they were authorised by the rulers of Muslim countries to attack the ships of Christian countries. Less well known were the corsairs of Malta [...] sent out by the Knights of St John [...] it was not till Algiers was bombarded by the guns of a massive allied fleet in 1816 that the corsairs ceased to be a serious threat to shipping.' See David Cordingly, *Life among the Pirates: The Romance and the Reality* (London: Little, Brown and Company, 1995), p.7.

⁴ James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France 1765-1766, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: Heinemann, 1955), p. 158, n. 2.

more I disclaimed any such thing the more they persevered in affirming it, and I was considered as a very close young man. I therefore just allowed them to make a minister of me till time should undeceive them.¹

Before Boswell sailed, though, a serious warning was given to him, one that definitely resonates for the modern reader who has read the *London Journal*, if not for those contemporary readers who knew little of his nocturnal proclivities:

The worthy Corsicans thought it was proper to give a moral lesson to a young traveller just come from Italy. They told me that in their country I should be treated with the greatest hospitality, but if I intended to debauch any of their women I might expect instant death.²

Boswell's contemporaries would have had a sketchy knowledge at best of the full details of his appetites, but the modern reader who has worked through his journals and knows the full details of his sexual activity (and its frequent consequences), reads these lines with a degree of observable irony. Context is everything.

Boswell's detailing is reminiscent of the stereotypical Englishman abroad, an ironic role-play utilised by Tobias Smollett in *Travels through France and Italy* (though the Smollett version was the aging curmudgeon rather than the wide-eyed romantic naïf):

I was directed to the house of Signor Giacomini's cousin, Signor Antonio Antonetti, about a mile up the country. The prospect of the mountains covered with vines and olives was extremely agreeable, and the odour of the myrtle and other aromatic shrubs and flowers that grew all around me was very refreshing. As I walked along, I often saw Corsican peasants come suddenly out from the covert; and as they were all armed, I saw how the frightened imagination of the surgeon's mate had raised up many assassins. Even the man who carried my baggage was armed and, had I been timorous, might have alarmed me. But he and I were very good company to each other.³

This idea clearly extends into the ways in which Boswell saw the Corsicans as akin to 'noble savages', in their 'rude, uncultivated country' where 'they lived like Spartans.'⁴ This notion of an innate primitive nobility is also maintained in the way that the Corsicans regard the execution of capital punishment, the public hangman being held in 'the utmost detestation' and

¹ Boswell, *Journal*, p. 270.

² Boswell, *Journal*, p. 271.

³ Boswell, *Journal*, pp. 272-3.

⁴ Boswell, *Journal*, pp. 280-1.

an outsider to the community.¹ Even in the description of Corsican religious views, Boswell shows the natives as having a simplicity of worldview, whilst maintaining his Protestant supremacy:

While I stopped to refresh my mules at a little village, the inhabitants came crowding around me as an ambassador going to their General. When they were informed of my country, a strong, black fellow among them said, "English! They are barbarians; they don't believe in the great God." I told him, "Excuse me, Sir. We do believe in God, and in Jesus Christ too." "Um," said he, "and in the Pope?" "No." "And why?" This was a puzzling question in these circumstances, for there was a great audience to the controversy. I thought I would try a method of my own, and very gravely replied, "Because we are too far off." A very new argument against the universal infallibility of the Pope. It took, however, for my opponent mused a while, and then said, "Too far off?! Why Sicily is as far off as England. Yet in Sicily they believe in the Pope." "Oh," said I, "we are ten times father off than Sicily." "Aha!" said he, and seemed quite satisfied. In this manner I got off very well. I question whether any of the learned reasonings of our Protestant divines would have had so good an effect.²

This persona is continued in the recounting of Boswell's meeting with Paoli. The reader should be aware, however, that Boswell was definitely consciously shaping and editing his journal for publication stating, 'I shall not tire my readers with relating the occurrences of each particular day. It will be much more agreeable to them to have a free and continued account of what I saw or heard most worthy of observation.'³ However, as Pottle comments, 'Also by this method Boswell is able to give his readers the impression that he had spent a long time with Paoli. Actually he spent only about a week with him.'⁴ This is particularly evident in the first meeting where Boswell presents Paoli as the Plutarchian hero:

I found him alone, and was struck with his appearance. He is tall, strong, and well made; of a fair complexion, a sensible, free, and open countenance. He was then in his fortieth year. He was dressed in green and gold. He used to wear the common Corsican habit, but on the arrival of the French he thought a little external elegance might be of use to make the government appear in a more respectable light [...] He was polite but very reserved. I had stood in the presence of many a prince, but I had never had such a trial as in the presence of Paoli [...] For ten minutes we walked backwards and forwards through the room hardly saying a word, while he looked at me with a steadfast, keen, and penetrating eye, as if he searched my very soul.⁵

¹ Boswell, *Journal*, pp. 285-7.

² Boswell, *Journal*, pp. 289-90.

³ Boswell, *Journal*, p. 278.

⁴ James Boswell, *Boswell on the Grand Tour: Italy, Corsica, and France 1765-1766, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: Heinemann, 1955), p. 163, n. 2. The reader should note the same is true when reading the *Life of Johnson*: the actual time spent in direct contact with Johnson seems magnified into years rather than the reality of a few days here and there. They certainly were not living in each other's pockets - the tour to the Hebrides being the obvious exception.

⁵ Boswell, *Journal*, pp. 292-3.

This makes an interesting contrast with Paoli's version of the meeting, reported by Fanny Burney:

"He came," he said, "to my country, and he fetched me some letter of recommending him: but I was of the belief that he might be an impostor, and I supposed, in my mind, he was an espy; for I look away from him, and in a moment I look to him again, and I behold his tablets. Oh! He was to the work of writing down all I say! Indeed I was angry. But soon I discover he was no impostor and no espy; and I only find I was myself the monster he had come to discern. Oh – is a very good man, I love him indeed; so cheerful! So gay! So pleasant! But at the first, oh! I was indeed angry."¹

Even here, the issue of veracity is called into question, since Burney was no friend to Boswell, continuing the commonly-held belief that Boswell was always ready with pen and paper, not having access to his commonplace book or an understanding of his journal-keeping methodology, and she also notes of Paoli, 'This language, which is all spoke very pompously by him, sounds comical from himself, though I know not how it may read.'² Clearly, the first person narrative is unreliable at best, from both Boswell and Burney, but it certainly contrasts with the idealised vision of Paoli, fitted for Boswell's purpose in pushing the Corsican cause, with Paoli as its figurehead:

He smiled a good deal when I told him I was much surprised to find him so amiable, accomplished, and polite; for although I knew I was to see a great man, I expected to find a rude character, an Atilla King of the Goths, or a Luiprand King of the Lombards [...there followed a meeting between Paoli and a Corsican who had served the Genoese] from the awful darkness of his brow one could see that his thoughts of vengeance were terrible. Yet when it was over he all at once resumed his usual appearance, called out "Come along", went to dinner, and was as cheerful and gay as if nothing had happened. His notions of morality are high and refined, such as become the father of a nation.³

By the time of the latter stages of the *Journal*, Boswell's persona-narrator has 'gone native' – albeit a common conceit in travel writing - and embraced fully both cause and people, and his position as an unofficial representative of Britain:

Every day I felt myself happier. Particular marks of attention were shown me as a subject of Great Britain, the report of which went over to Italy and confirmed the conjectures that I was really an envoy. In the morning I had my chocolate served up upon a silver salver adorned with the arms of Corsica. I dined and

¹ Frances Burney, *Diary and Letters of Madame D'arblay*. 4 vols (London: Bickers and Son, 1876), vol 1, p. 441.

² Burney, *Diary and Letters*, vol. 1, p. 442. It also contrasts with what Boswell says in the *Journal* of Paoli's grasp of English: 'He has since given me more proofs of his knowledge of our tongue by his answers to the letters which I have had the honour to write to him in English, and in particular by a very judicious and ingenious criticism on some of Swift's works.' See Boswell, *Journal*, p. 300.

³ Boswell, *Journal*, pp. 302-4.

supped constantly with the General. I was visited by all the nobility, and whenever I chose to make a little tour I was attended by a party of guards. I begged of the General not to treat me with so much ceremony, but he insisted upon it [...] I enjoyed a sort of luxury of noble sentiment.¹

There is a kind of vanity in his celebration of the moment, seen, he tells us, as the ‘ambasciatore inglese, as the good peasants and soldiers used to call me’, getting the Corsican costume made which he would later wear in Stratford, with Paoli’s pistols ‘made in the island, all of Corsican wood and iron and of excellent workmanship.’² Boswell, in entertaining the natives, shows how they have embraced him, or, at least, how he wants to be perceived as having been embraced:

One day they would needs hear me play upon my German flute. To have told my honest natural visitants, “Really, gentlemen, I play very ill,” and to put on such airs as we do in our genteel companies, would have been highly ridiculous. I therefore immediately complied with their request. I gave them one or two Italian airs, and then some of our beautiful old Scots tunes [...] The pathetic simplicity and pastoral gaiety of the Scots music will always please those who have the genuine feelings of nature [...] My good friends insisted also to have an English song from me. I endeavoured to please them in this too, and was very lucky in that which occurred to me. I sung them “Hearts of oak are our ships, Hearts of oak are our men.” I translated it into Italian for them, and never did I see men so delighted with a song as the Corsicans were with the Hearts of Oak. “Cuore di qurcia,” cried they, “bravo Inglese!” It was quite a joyous riot. I fancied myself to be a recruiting sea officer. I fancied all my chorus of Corsicans aboard the British fleet.³

What can also be seen here, however, is that Boswell is creating a fratrotic link between the nations of Britain and Corsica, even including a subtle reference to how personnel could be gathered from Corsica for a British (or at least allied) fleet, an idea picked up by one of the essay writers of *British Essays in Favour of the Brave Corsicans*.⁴ Boswell even sees a meeting of minds between his two heroes; two lions to further the values and interests of Britain:

I gave Paoli the character of my revered friend Mr Samuel Johnson. I have often regretted that illustrious men, such as humanity produces a few times in the revolution of many ages, should not see each other [...] I repeated to Paoli several of Mr Johnson’s sayings, so remarkable for strong sense and original humour [...] I felt an elation of mind Paoli delighted with the sayings of Mr Johnson, and to hear him translate them with Italian energy to the Corsican heroes.⁵

¹ Boswell, *Journal*, p. 296.

² Boswell, *Journal*, pp. 319-20.

³ Boswell, *Journal*, p. 320-1.

⁴ Letter VII, which Pottle argues is written by Boswell, states with regards to the French conquerors, ‘They will be furnished with as much timber as can be wanted to build a formidable navy, with pines for masting the ships, and with at least ten or twelve thousand able seamen to man them upon any occasion.’ James Boswell, *Essays in Favour of the Brave Corsicans* (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1769), pp. 45-6.

⁵ Boswell, *Journal*, pp. 336-7.

Boswell, of course, would be the ‘isthmus which joins two great continents’, acting as the translator at the eventual meeting of his two heroes.¹

In the conclusion to the *Journal* the reader sees how it clearly sets the agenda for Boswell’s adopted cause. The representation of Paoli is definitely idealised, and sets Boswell in a positive light, but it also maintains the view of Paoli as worthy of British diplomacy:

I said I hoped that when he honoured me with a letter, he would write not only as a commander, but as a philosopher and a man of letters. He took me by the hand and said, “As a friend.” I dare not transcribe from my private notes the feelings which I had at this interview. I should perhaps appear too enthusiastic. I took leave of Paoli with regret and agitation, not without some hopes of seeing him again. From having known intimately so exalted a character, my sentiments of human nature were raised; while by a sort of contagion I felt an honest ardour to distinguish myself, and be as useful as far as my situation and abilities would allow; and I was, for the rest of my life, set free from a slavish timidity in the presence of great men, for where shall I find a man greater than Paoli?²

Boswell’s political journey is completed as he embraces the Corsican cause, particularly as exemplified by Paoli, rejecting Rousseau’s notions, and seeing Corsica as being in much safer hands; hands that would need to be helped by British means. In fact Boswell shows that the idea of Rousseau as legislator for Corsica was grossly inflated and that, if anything, the spell of Rousseau’s celebrity had worn off in the presence of Paoli:

From the account which I have attempted to give of the present constitution of Corsica and of its illustrious legislator and General, it may well be conceived that the scheme of bringing M. Rousseau into that island was magnified to an extravagant degree by the reports of the Continent. It was said that Rousseau was to be made no less than Solon by the Corsicans, who were implicitly to receive from him a code of laws [...] Paoli was too able a man to submit the legislation of his country to one who was an entire stranger to the people, the manners, and in short to everything in the island. Nay I know well that Paoli pays more regard to what has been tried by the experience of ages than to the most beautiful ideal systems. Besides, the Corsicans were not all at once to be moulded at will. They were to be gradually prepared, and by one law laying the foundation for another a complete fabric of jurisprudence was to be formed.³

¹ James Boswell, *Boswell in Search of a Wife 1766-1769, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: William Heinemann, 1957), p. 334. Boswell acted as translator at the eventual meeting between his two heroes, in October 1769.

² Boswell, *Journal*, pp. 353-4. This is an idea which is also maintained in Boswell’s envoi: ‘I take the liberty to repeat an observation made to me by that illustrious minister whom Paoli calls the Pericles of Great Britain [Pitt the Elder]; “It may be said of Paoli, as the Cardinal de Retz said of the great Montrose, ‘He is one of those men who are no longer to be found but in the Lives of Plutarch.’”’, Boswell, *Journal*, p. 384.

³ Boswell, *Journal*, pp. 366-7.

Ultimately, the *Account*, in concert with the *Journal*, becomes travelogue as evangelism, as Robert Zaretsky has argued, with Paoli becoming the man to be viewed as the monument.¹

4. Aftermaths and Afterlives

An Account of Corsica, the Journal of a Tour to That Island, & Memoirs of Pascale Paoli is the book of a young man, filled with youthful hopes and desires to fulfil, but it is also a book which had a lasting propaganda effect and caused Boswell to be remembered by the Corsicans and figures of the Italian Risorgimento as Jacques Boswell or Giacomo Boswell. For the Corsicans he was still remembered by the local population, even into the twentieth century, as recounted by Moray McLaren in 1965:

It was a refreshing experience, talking to people on the Island of Corsica who had not heard of, or were interested in, the sad tale of Boswell's later follies, but who remembered the name of Jacques Boswell as that of the generous-hearted young man of twenty-five, who had visited them, who had pleaded their cause, who had sent them aid, and who had been loved by their great Pasquale Paoli.²

Boswell would also appear as a character in the historical novel *Pasquale Paoli* (1859) by Francesco Domenico Guerrazzi, turned into a heroic figure himself. Guerrazzi read the Italian translation of Boswell's book in Corsica and used it as a source for his novel - a timely link to the past when Italy was once again subject to French invasion and desirous of a unifying figure (in this case Victor Emmanuel of Savoy). Boswell became the hero who smuggled Paoli out of Corsica, concealed in the false bottom of a barrel of beer, on a ship chartered by the English friends of Liberty. Considering the success of the book in translation, Boswell's reputation was not just made in England, and his legacy was not just the *Life of Johnson*.

¹ Robert Zaretsky, 'Upon the Rock', Southern Methodist University, 2012, p p. 252-3.

² Moray McLaren, 'Pasquale Paoli: Hero of Corsica', *History Today*, 15 (1965), p. 761. As Morchard Bishop noted, 'For the rest of his life, Boswell never quite escaped from the reputation he had acquired by the Corsican adventure. At regular intervals, letters arrived for him from eminent Corsicans who alleged they had seen him on the island, and wished to renew their acquaintance; and his friendship with Paoli waxed ever deeper, so that he had the pleasure on many occasions of being able to observe the juxtaposition, in social intercourse, of his two great exemplars, the Doctor and the General.' James Boswell, *The Journal of a Tour to Corsica: And Memoirs of Pascal Paoli* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1951), p. 36.

It should be remembered that the book was also well constructed and shaped to a definite purpose. As William R. Siebenschuh has argued, Boswell's construction of the whole Corsican text of propaganda is actually very subtle and sophisticated:

Boswell was intelligent enough to understand that his interests did not lie simply in a castigation of Britain – that was not the way to win her sympathy. The tone of the entire work is not one of outrage but one of wonder; why won't England come to the aid of a gallant people like these?'¹

Whilst it was traditional to regard Boswell as a fool or hanger-on to the coattails of Samuel Johnson, and his publicity stunt at the Shakespeare Jubilee probably did little to reduce this idea in the eyes of some, it is important to recognise that the *Account* and *Journal* made Boswell's reputation as a writer, giving him the fame he craved, even if it did not satiate his appetite for long. It also shaped him as a travel writer of both note and original talent, placing him in the company of writers like Byron and Orwell as a champion of European freedom-fighters, and stimulating a fratricotic connection to the Corsicans, endorsed by the use of the Declaration of Arbroath on the title page. As Roger Craik has noted: 'Boswell found many of the better qualities of the Scottish Highlanders in the Corsicans.'² It would be a shorter intellectual movement from Boswell's *Corsica* to the Tour to the Hebrides than might be thought.

¹ William R. Siebenschuh, *Form and Purpose in Boswell's Biographical Works* (Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1972), p. 28.

² Roger Craik, *James Boswell (1740-1795): The Scottish Perspective* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1994), p. 82.

Chapter 6

A Voyage Around My Father Figure: Travelogue on the Fellow-Traveller in the published *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson, LL.D*

We know perfectly well that life certainly isn't a story, at least not in any simple, literary sense, and we also know that a person isn't a book [...] Some version of this linked notion of self and story, nevertheless, is lurking whenever autobiographical practices are engaged, for life writing – whatever else it is or may be – certainly involves the assumption that the self and its experiences may somehow be presented in the text [...] When it comes to autobiography, narrative and identity are so intimately linked that each constantly and properly gravitates into the conceptual field of the other. Thus narrative is not merely a literary form but a mode of phenomenological and cognitive self-experience, while self – the self of autobiographical discourse – does not necessarily precede its constitution in narrative

Paul John Eakin¹

1. Boswell's Reputation and the Battle for Johnson's Memory

The published *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.*² represents a significant step in the writing career of James Boswell, evolving from the transitional nature of the *Account of Corsica*, with its split between a conventional travelogue (mixing topography, historical account, and antiquarianism) and a personal and autobiographical account which narrated the trials and tribulations of the narrator-traveller. In Boswell's *Tour* he pushes this a stage further by including not only a focus on these elements, but also on the figure of the 'fish out of water', observing his travelling companion, Samuel Johnson, and occasionally

¹ Paul John Eakin, *How Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), pp. 99-100

² The edition used for all references is James Boswell, *A Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* 3rd edn (London: Charles Dilly, 1786). This is the third and final published edition of Boswell's lifetime.

engineering situations to see how he will react, documenting the discussion and intellectual debate that ensues. First person travel accounts were common in the eighteenth century, but what makes Boswell's *Tour* most interesting as a piece of travel writing is his detailed observation of, and focus on, a third party. He narrates not only a personal journey, but also that of someone else, making the published *Tour* a form of meta-travelogue, particularly when it is remembered that there is also commentary included on travel precursors such as Pennant, Martin, and Addison, and especially since there was an extant version of the trip in Johnson's own account.¹ Boswell's account not only complements Johnson's (as evidenced by the fact that since R W Chapman's 1924 joint edition of the two texts it is common for the two to be published in tandem), but extends the viewpoint by providing a parallel view of the author of travel work in the act of travelling. It is also a more interesting read. It is, however, easy to see why this has been perceived as more like biography - indeed it does present itself as a trailer to *The Life of Johnson* in the 'Advertisement' at the end of the text - yet the reality is that it is far more a fascinating hybrid of biography, autobiography, and travelogue, looking at much more than what Eakin describes as 'self and story', being 'about' both a journey into a disappearing Highland society and a journey with and around Johnson, Boswell's *Tour* is a very successful piece of travel writing. Indeed, as Pat Rogers emphasises, regarding both Boswell and Johnson's accounts, 'even the broader and more abstract questions of politics, society, and culture which arise in the two narratives need to be judged against the insights of the travellers opening up the contemporary picture of human achievement.' There is no question that Boswell's book should principally be seen as a travel rather than biographical work.²

It is very easy to see Boswell romanticising the Highland environment in much the same way as he did the plight of the Corsicans, tracking an endangered world with emigrant natives and

¹, Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1971).

² Pat Rogers, *Johnson and Boswell: The Transit of Caledonia*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 83.

a changing aristocracy, a land which was moving from chieftain and clansman to landlord and tenant (often absentee), anticipating the clearances of the later part of the century.¹ However, whilst the two manuscripts were only written seven years apart (in 1766 and 1773 respectively), the gap in publication of seventeen years (1768 and 1785) was substantial enough to reveal a change in Boswell's focus, style, construction of text, and status as a writer. Furthermore, as well as being his collaborative text with Johnson (who read the vast majority of the manuscript during their trip, one of Boswell's claims to authority), it was also a collaborative text with an editorial figure in Edmond Malone, and would figure large in the battle for Johnson's posthumous legacy.

This change in status between the Corsican and Hebridean journals is most obvious in the title pages:

AN
ACCOUNT
OF
CORSIKA,
THE JOURNAL OF A TOUR
TO THAT ISLAND,
AND MEMOIRS OF
PASCAL PAOLI.
By JAMES BOSWELL, Esq.
ILLUSTRATED with a New and Accurate Map of Corsica
Non enim propter gloriam, devitas aut honores paganos, sed propter liber-
tatem foliis meis, quam nunc hinc et illinc cum vobis amittit.
Lut. Consul et Baron. Scotus ad Pap. A. D. 1740.
THE THIRD EDITION CORRECTED.



LONDON:
PRINTED FOR EDWARD AND CHARLES DILLY
IN THE POULTRY.
M DCC LXXIX.

THE
JOURNAL
OF A TOUR TO THE
HEBRIDES,
WITH
SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.
By JAMES BOSWELL, Esq.
CONTAINING
Some Poetical Pieces by Dr. JOHNSON, relative to the TOUR,
and never before published;
A Series of his Conversation, Literary Anecdotes, and Opinions
of Men and Books:
WITH AN AUTHENTICK ACCOUNT OF
The Distresses and Escape of the GRANDSON of KING
JAMES II. in the Year 1746.
THE THIRD EDITION, REVISED AND CORRECTED.
O! while along the stream of time, thy name
Expanded flies, and gathers all its fame,
Say, shall my little bark attendant sail,
Pursue the triumph and partake the gale? Foras



LONDON:
PRINTED BY HENRY BALDWIN,
FOR CHARLES DILLY, IN THE POULTRY.
M DCC LXXXV.

¹ As Rogers has noted, 'His own Tour is in part a means of supplying the deficiencies of the *Journey* – deficiencies, that is, in displaying Scottish culture as a whole. Boswell shared many of his friend's views about the Highlands and islands, where of course he was as much of a stranger as the Englishman. But he wanted the story of their trip to include the renown of Edinburgh intellectual life, perversely left out of Johnson's account, and so his own narrative spends pages at the beginning and end on this slighted portion of the tour.' See Rogers, *Johnson and Boswell: The Transit of Caledonia*, p. 5.

Where previously, in 1768, Boswell had been an unknown figure in the literary world, and Corsica and Pascal Paoli were the clear focus of the text, by 1785 he was well-established in the literary environment to be on almost top-billing with Johnson – the difference in type sizes for his own name is obvious. The text presents itself as providing exclusive material on the subject of the Hebrides, but, more importantly, on Samuel Johnson himself, in the ‘never before published’ poetry of the great ‘cham’, turning Johnson into a literary monument, appropriate to a text which was acting as both travel work and, more importantly, a focus in the battle for the legacy of Johnson’s memory following his death in the previous year. The armorials of Corsica and Boswell’s family crest also show how the focus has changed from the subject and towards the author. A clear sense of Boswell’s growth in status as author (even if it was only in his own mind) is clearly evident, but there still remains the hint of fratricidal connection: in *Corsica* it is clearly communicated via the extract from the Declaration of Arbroath, linking Scottish independence, given up in the Union of 1707, and the drive for Corsican independence from Genoese and French oppression; in the *Tour* it is more subtly hinted at in the politically neutral but capitalised reference to the ‘GRANDSON OF KING JAMES II’ rather than more Hanoverian ‘Young Pretender’. In one sense this reveals a move from political activism to sentimental romanticising of the past, in another that the lost Highland realms of both regions were still central to Boswell’s self-perception as a ‘Citizen of the World’. Finally, both stress veracity and truthfulness as key: *Corsica*’s ‘Accurate Map’ and the *Tour*’s ‘Authentick Account’ and the oblique Old French reference contained in the Boswell family crest - ‘Vraye Foy’ or ‘True Faith’.

Boswell himself, in the dedication to Edmond Malone, makes clear the importance of this veracity, maintaining the connection with his earlier work:

In every narrative, whether historical or biographical, authenticity is of the utmost consequence. Of this I have ever been so firmly persuaded, that I inscribed a former work to that person who was the best judge of its truth. I need not tell you I mean General Paoli; who after his great, though unsuccessful, efforts to

preserve the liberties of his country, has found an honourable asylum in Britain, where he has now lived many years the object of Royal regard and private respect.¹

For Boswell, then, establishing the ‘truthfulness’ and authority of his text was of paramount importance, emphasised by his use of Malone, a noted Shakespearean scholar, as editor and borrowed authority.² Before anyone was to read his text, they needed to understand Boswell’s perception of his right to act as quasi-biographer of Johnson in the face of anticipated criticism from the ‘official’ biographer, Sir John Hawkins, and his rival for Johnson’s reputation, Mrs Piozzi, stating clearly that only Johnson’s true ‘friends’ could act as his critics, rather than those who were thought to have abandoned him in the final years of his life:³

The friends of Doctor Johnson can best judge, from the internal evidence, whether the numerous conversations which form the most valuable part of the ensuing pages, are correctly related. To them, therefore I wish to appeal, for the accuracy of the portrait here exhibited to the world.⁴

Boswell would also stress in his advertisement in the third and final edition (of his lifetime) that truth was his greatest value and that he would refute accusations of ‘misrepresentation and calumny’ whether pointed out by ‘the kindness of friends’ or the ‘scrutiny of adversaries’.⁵

2. The Account of the Highlands and the Hebrides: Landscape

Boswell says his aim was that ‘we might there contemplate 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, so near to our native great island, [which] was

¹ James Boswell, *A Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D.* 3rd edn (London: Charles Dilly, 1786), pp. i-ii)

² ‘You have obligingly taken the trouble to peruse the original manuscript of this Tour, and can vouch for the strict fidelity of the present publication. Your literary alliance with our much lamented friend, in consequence of having undertaken to render one of his labours more complete, by your edition of Shakespeare [...] gives you another claim.’ Boswell, *Tour*, p. ii.

³ Hawkins’ *Life of Samuel Johnson* would be published in 1787, Mrs Piozzi’s *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson LL.D. During the Last Twenty Years of his Life* in 1786, and her *Letters to and from the Late Samuel Johnson LL.D. to which are added some Poems never before Printed, Published from the Original MSS. In her Possession* in 1787. Mrs Thrale/Piozzi was a particular source of competition and conflict for Boswell in regards to the *Tour* and his ‘animadversions’ in the editorial process, as will be seen.

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, p. ii.

⁵ Boswell, *Tour*, p. iv.

an object within the reach of reasonable curiosity.’¹ As Peter Levi notes, in his introduction to his joint edition of the texts, ‘Apart from his omnivorous curiosity about literature and learned institutions, what Johnson specially wanted in Scotland was to understand wild or primitive or savage life [...] he had just got for the first time into utterly wild and grand countryside.’² In essence both Johnson’s *Journey* and Boswell’s *Tour* serve to highlight Scotland’s answer to the flaws of ‘polite’ society, beyond duplicity, excessive social polish, effeminacy, pretence, and insincerity: the Highlands are divided from the Lowlands not only by the space of the Great Glen, but also by time - the Highlands becoming symbolic of an ancient, patriarchal, Catholic Scotland, a reflection of the Rousseauian disdain for modern decadence at the expense of ‘natural’ man.³ His awareness of the ‘otherness’ of the world north of the Great Glen is pronounced, but it is as a multiple outsider that he progresses: as a Lowlander (albeit a well-travelled one) he is as different from the English as the Highlanders, even though he feels an affinity with both. In the Highlands he is a Lowlander, in England he is a Scot, and on the continent he is English; in many ways his position as outsider makes him the perfect observer of the Highlanders and Johnson:

I am, I flatter myself, completely a citizen of the world. – in my travels through Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Corsica, France, I never felt myself from home [...] the English are better animals than the Scots; they are nearer the sun; their blood is richer, and more mellow: but when I humour any of them in an outrageous contempt of Scotland, I fairly own I treat them as children. And thus I have, at some moments, found myself obliged to treat even Dr Johnson.’⁴

As with his *Account of Corsica*, Boswell is very careful to provide a detailed view of the history, topography, culture, and people of the Highlands and Hebrides. This, insofar as eighteenth century travelogue was composed, was not unusual. The key difference is that he

¹ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 1.

² Samuel Johnson, and James Boswell, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (London: Penguin, 1984), p. xiv. Johnson says himself, when writing to Mrs Thrale, ‘I am now looking on the Sea from a house of Sir Alexander Macdonald in the Isle of Skie. Little did I once think of seeing this region of obscurity, and little did you once expect a salutation from this verge of European Life. I have now the pleasure of going where nobody goes, of seeing what nobody sees’ (See Johnson, *Letters*, Volume 2, p. 62)

³ Christopher F. Loar, ‘Nostalgic Correspondence and James Boswell’s Scottish Malady’, *Studies in English Literature*, 44 (2004), p. 598.

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 10.

intersperses it through his general discussion of daily events in his journal, and with observations of his travelling companion. In many ways the topography is better addressed in Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* and, indeed, it had been dealt with by Pennant in his accounts of 1769 and 1772.¹ However, Boswell's view of the landscape is connected to its interpretation by the traveller. There is little in the way of the antiquarian Grand Tourist charting temples (Johnson and Boswell were rather dismissive of the 'druidic' temple remains they came across, where Johnson's comment is that 'to go and see one druidical temple is only to see that it is nothing, for there is neither art nor power in it, and seeing one is quite enough'), and more of the 'Smellfungus' whose senses react to the environment as well as his picturesque sensibilities – even if it means that the reaction of Johnson to the environs of Edinburgh is to say "I smell you in the dark!"² The trip through the Lowlands offers little of the glamour that the Highlands will, leading Johnson to sarcastically challenge Boswell's poetic interpretation of the Firth of Forth at Leith:

When we came to Leith, I talked with perhaps too boasting an air, how pretty the Frith of Forth looked; as indeed, after the prospect from Constantinople, of which I have been told, and that from Naples, which I have seen, I believe the view of that Frith and its environs, from the Castle-hill of Edinburgh, is the finest prospect in Europe. "Ay, (said Dr Johnson) that is the state of the world. Water is the same every where."³

This is partly linked to Johnson's desire to see what he cannot see in England: 'wild objects – mountains – waterfalls – peculiar manners.'⁴ Johnson even identifies the flaws in much travelogue that indulges in poetic exaggeration when discussing Pennant's view of Fort George, complaining that the time-lag between experience and recording means that "their imagination has added circumstances."⁵ For Johnson, precision in description of topography,

¹ See Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland 1769* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000), and *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides 1772* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 1998). As Roger Craik has noted, 'Since the 1920s the two accounts of their journey have been published as parallel texts. They make a fascinating contrast. Johnson's *Journey* is matter-of-fact, philosophical, magisterial in style. Boswell's *Journal* is bubbling, gossipy and full of day-to-day details. Johnson's work is largely impersonal, Boswell's is personal to the point of embarrassment.' See Roger Craik, *James Boswell (1740-1795): The Scottish Perspective* (Edinburgh: HMSO, 1994), p. 107.

² Boswell, *Tour*, p.11.

³ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 41.

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 100.

⁵ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 112. Johnson did indulge in a more lyrical description in his letters to Mrs Thrale, however: '...we went forward, winding among mountains sometimes green and sometimes naked, commonly so steep as not easily to be climbed by

rather than the picturesque, is of paramount importance; when Boswell describes a mountain as ‘like a cone’, or ‘immense’, Johnson dismisses it as “no more than a considerable protuberance.”¹ By the time they have reached Icolmkill (Iona) even Boswell can be disappointed:

I must own that Icolmkill did not answer my expectations; for they were high [...] We were both disappointed, when we were shewn what are called the monuments of the kings of Scotland, Ireland, and Denmark, and of the King of France. There are only some grave-stones flat on the earth, and we could see no inscriptions. How far short was this of marble monuments, like those in Westminster Abbey, which I had imagined here.²

Landscape does have the power to engage the imagination, though, once they have passed Aberdeen, on the cusp of the Highlands, where Boswell can identify the true drama of the landscape at Buchan’s Buller:

We walked round this monstrous cauldron. In some places, the rock is very narrow; and on each side there is a sea deep enough for a man of war to ride in; so that it is somewhat horrid to move along [...] it alarmed me to see Dr Johnson striding irregularly along.³

His imagination connects with the environment when he can fancy himself ‘a military man’ as the drum beats for dinner at Fort George, or during a Shakespearean moment at Inverness castle, where Boswell fancies it as Macbeth’s castle with its hoarse carrion:

After church we walked down to the Quay. We then went to Macbeth’s castle. I had a romantic satisfaction in seeing Dr Johnson actually in it. It perfectly corresponds with Shakespeare’s description, which Sir Joshua Reynolds has so happily illustrated, in one of his notes on our immortal poet [...] Just as we came out of it, a raven perched on one of the chimney-tops, and croaked.⁴

Here his connection is a fanciful and literary reinvention (creating parallels with *Ossian*), though this also illustrates another of the caveats that needs to be observed of any travel writing – the traveller is not necessarily objective, or factually accurate.⁵

the greatest vigour and activity. Our way was often crossed by little rivulets, and we were entertained with small streams trickling from the rocks, which after heavy rains must be tremendous torrents.’ See Johnson, *Letters*, Volume 2, p. 73.

¹ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 130.

² Boswell, *Tour*, p. 348.

³ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 88.

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 117.

⁵ Such inaccuracies and omissions, whether real or perceived, are also a source of criticism for the readers as noted by Boswell with regards to Johnson’s view of St Andrew’s: ‘Since the publication of Dr Johnson’s book I find he has been censured for not seeing here the ancient chapel of *St Rule*, a curious piece of sacred architecture. But this was neither his fault nor mine. We were both of us abundantly desirous of surveying such sort of antiquities but neither knew of this. I am afraid the censure must fall on those who did not tell us of it. In every place, where there is any thing worthy of observation, there should be a

3. The Account of the Highlands and the Hebrides: People and Politics

Most of Boswell's account of the Erse-speaking natives of the Highlands and islands centres on the 'otherness' of their existence, from the virtually disappeared tribal system of chieftains and clansmen, to the emergence of English-educated landlords and tenants bound for the emigrant ships and clearances. His account focuses particularly on the erosion of cultural values, though Johnson does not share his idealistic view of the hierarchy, which is partly based on Boswell's romantic ideal of being a laird (which he was by at the time of publication) and his own romantic notions of his ancestry:¹

I said, I believed mankind were happier in the ancient feudal state of subordination, than they are in the modern state of independency. – *Johnson*. "To be sure, the *Chief* was: but we must think of the number of individuals. That *they* were less happy seems plain; for that state from which all escape as soon as they can, and to which none return after they have left it, must be less happy; and this is the state of dependence on a chief or great man."²

Johnson's view is that the destruction of the power of the Chieftains set the people free, but did not bring any genuine good.³ The nobility of the chieftains who are documented in the *Tour* is described in direct relation to their sense of patriarchal duty. Lord Alexander Macdonald is seen as an Eton-educated gentleman who fits in well in London but is an outsider within his own society:

But my fellow traveller and I were now full of the old Highland spirit, and were dissatisfied at hearing of racked rents and emigration; and finding a chief not surrounded by his clan. Dr Johnson said, "Sir, the Highland chiefs should not be allowed to go farther south than Aberdeen. A strong minded man, like Sir James Macdonald, may be improved by an English education; but in general, they will be tamed into insignificance."⁴

Throughout the *Tour* Boswell and Johnson continue their 'warm, and what some might call Gothick, expostulations, on this subject', but the contrast is most obvious between Macdonald

short printed directory for strangers, such as we find in all the towns of Italy, and in some towns in England.' Boswell, *Tour*, p. 49.

¹ Boswell says he regrets that he is not the head of a clan, but would wish to lead his tenants as a feudal chief, if not a patriarchal one. See Boswell, *Tour*, p. 125.

² Boswell, *Tour*, p. 94.

³ Johnson would note in a letter to Mrs Thrale (later Piozzi), 'The two great lords do not know within twenty square miles the contents of their own territories. Macdonald kept up but ill the reputation of highland hospitality, we are now with Macleod quite at the other end of the Island, where there is a fine young Gentleman, and fine Ladies. The Ladies are studying Earse.' Samuel Johnson, *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*. 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), Volume 2, p. 70.

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 138.

and the Gaelic landowners on Skye: McKinnon of Corrichtachan was a generous host, whose men spoke with respect to Johnson in Erse, and Boswell, ‘though but a Lowlander’, ‘presumed to mingle in their mirth [...] with as much glee as any of the company’;¹ Raasay ‘had the true spirit of a chief [...] a father to his people’;² Kingsburgh was the image of ‘the gallant Highlander’ dressed in tartan plaid;³ and Macleod of Dunvegan was the model of a good host whose household provided ‘admirable venison, generous wine; in a word, all that a good table has’, and Boswell finishes with the statement that ‘[t]his was really the hall of a chief.’⁴ It was hardly surprising that Macdonald threatened Boswell with violence for his new-found reputation for stinginess - a failure to extend true Highland hospitality.

As Brian D. Osborne has noted in his introduction to Pennant’s account of 1769, the perception of North Britain in the minds of South Britons as ‘wild and untamed people’ were very much shaped by accounts and memories of the ’45, and whilst Pennant had been able to see some of the last remnants of ‘tribal’ society the transition in Highland society was obvious.⁵ However, the ordinary native population still provides an obvious point of fascination with the ‘other’ for both Boswell and Johnson. This begins with the entry into the Highlands, where Boswell’s curiosity at a ‘scene that would amuse Dr Johnson’ leads the two men to enter uninvited a woman’s hut.⁶ Boswell describes it as a ‘wretched little hovel’ with a small hole for a window which has partitions, but is a world away from the fine constructions of London, and he sees in the protestations of the woman, at the point where he and Johnson wish to see where she sleeps, a ‘coquetry’ which he views as ‘ludicrous’, and which is the source of mirth

¹ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 147.

² Boswell, *Tour*, p. 163.

³ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 177.

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 206.

⁵ Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland 1769* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2000), pp. xii-xiii.

⁶ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 120ff.

later for them both. Neither see the woman's sense of threat in their casual anthropological excursion – they make a joke of it:

I said, it was he who alarmed the poor woman's virtue. –“No, sir, (said he,) she'll say, 'there came a wicked young fellow, a wild dog, who would have ravished me, had there not been with him a grave old gentleman, who repressed him [...] – “No sir, (I replied,) she'll say, 'There was a terrible ruffian who would have forced me, had it not been for a decent young man, who, I take it, was an angel sent from heaven to protect me.’

This leads to Boswell documenting what amounts to an anthropological meeting between Enlightenment civilisation and Highland, tribal simplicity, reminiscent of Cook's voyages, trading money for whiskey, as Pacific explorers would trade nails for sex with the girls of Tahiti:

Dr Johnson was pleased at seeing, for the first time, such a state of human life. She asked for snuff. It is her luxury, and she uses a great deal. We had none; but gave her six pence apiece. She then brought out her whisky bottle. I tasted it; as did Joseph and our guides. So I gave her sixpence more. She sent us away with many prayers in Erse.'

This view of the local population as akin to Pacific or North American native populations continues with the description of the McCraes of Seaforth:

I observed to Dr Johnson, it was much the same as being with a tribe of Indians [...] I gave all who chose it, snuff and tobacco [...] I also gave each person a bit of wheat bread, which they have never tasted before. I then gave a penny a piece to each child [...] Upon this being announced in Erse, there was a great stir; not only did some children come running down from neighbouring huts, but I observed one black-haired man, who had been with us all along, had gone off, and returned, bringing a very young child [...] Some were as black and wild in their appearance as any American savages whatever.¹

In these descriptions of the 'other' within the text, including further reflections on Highland table manners and the use of the knife and fork, second sight, the waning belief in witchcraft, and the literary merits of *Ossian*, the reader can see a cultural imperialism in Boswell's writing, which is not as evident in Johnson's account of the same meeting:

When our meal was over, Mr Boswell sliced the bread, and divided it amongst them, as he supposed them never to have tasted a wheaten loaf before. He then gave them little pieces of twisted tobacco, and among the children we distributed a small handful of half-pence, which they received with great eagerness [...] Honesty is not greater where elegance is less.²

¹ Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 131-2.

² Johnson, *Journey*, p. 42. Johnson would comment in a letter to Mrs Thrale on the changes in the Highland world: 'Table knives are not of long subsistence in the Highlands; every man while arms were a regular part of dress, had his knife and fork appendant to his dirk. Knives they now lay on the table, but the handles are apt to show that they have been in other hands, and the blades have neither brightness nor edge [...] They are a Nation just rising from barbarity, long contented with

Johnson does still share the view of the outsider and imperialist, though, when it comes to the ways in which the Scots have benefitted since the Act of Union:

As we sailed along Dr Johnson got into one of his fits of railing at the Scots [...] they had hardly any trade, any money, or any elegance, before the union, that it was strange that, with all the advantages possessed by other nations, they had not any of those conveniences and embellishments which are the fruit of industry, till they came in contact with civilised people. "We have taught you, (said he) and we'll do the same in time to all barbarous nations, - to the Cherokees - and at last to the Ouran-Outangs," laughing with as much glee as if Monboddo had been present...'¹

What changes within Boswell's account is a move towards a more primitivist attachment to the Highlanders, particularly via his sense of the 'lost cause' of sentimental Jacobitism and awareness of the emigrant ships.² Whilst Boswell writes in great detail about the story of Charles Edward Stuart post-Culloden, celebrating Flora Macdonald and the fact that Johnson sleeps in the same bed as the prince, he is careful to identify his own position in relation to the (by 1785) defunct Jacobite cause: 'I do not call him *the Prince of Wales*, or *the Prince*, because I am quite satisfied that the right which the *House of Stuart* had to the throne is extinguished. I do not call him the *Pretender*, because it seems to me as an insult to one who is still alive, and, I suppose, thinks very differently. It may be a parliamentary expression, but it is not a gentlemanly expression.' Boswell's 'Jacobitism' is very much of the sanitised, romanticised form, a reflection of exactly how lost the cause was by the 1770s, allowing for a more sentimental attachment, to what Christopher F. Loar has called 'archaic Scottish masculinity'.³

This begins with the meeting with McQueen, the ex-Jacobite:

McQueen had walked some miles to give us convoy. He had, in 1745, joined the Highland army at Fort Augustus, and continued in it till after the battle of Culloden. As he narrated the particulars of that ill-advised, but brave attempt, I could not refrain from tears. There is a certain association of ideas in my mind upon that subject, by which I am strongly affected. The very Highland names, or sound of bagpipe, will stir my blood, and fill me with a mixture of melancholy and respect for courage; with pity for an unfortunate

necessaries, but not arrived at delicate discriminations. Their linen is however clean and fine.' See Johnson, *Letters*, Volume 2, p. 96.

¹ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 251. Boswell is very aware of how this can be perceived by those who do not know Johnson: 'Dr Johnson expatiated rather too strongly upon the benefits derived to Scotland from the Union, and the bad state of our people before it. I am entertained with his copious exaggeration upon that subject, but I am uneasy when people are by, who do not know him as well as I do, and may be apt to think him narrow-minded. I therefore diverted the subject.' Boswell, *Tour*, p. 116.

² Boswell, *Tour*, p. 178. As

³ Christopher F. Loar, 'Nostalgic Correspondence and James Boswell's Scottish Malady', *Studies in English Literature*, 44 (2004), p. 601.

and superstitious regard for antiquity, and thoughtless inclination for war; in short, with a crowd of sensations with which sober rationality has nothing to do.¹

Boswell, via his language of sensibility, laments the consequences of the post-Culloden suppression of the Highlands and the emasculation of the Highlander, seeing the disarming act as turning spears into ‘pruning-hooks’ and shields into ‘covers to their butter milk barrels.’² Even Johnson is critical of the Disarming Act and its negative impact, seeing the local population as being ‘crushed by the heavy hand of a vindictive conqueror, whose severities have been followed by laws, which, though they cannot be called cruel, have produced much discontent, because they operate on the surface of life, and make every eye bear witness to the subjection.’³ The obvious price paid is seen to be emigration from the Highlands, caused by the rise in rents and the neglect of landlords, outlined by McQueen:

He said, all the Laird of Glenmorison’s people would bleed for him, if they were well used; but that seventy men had gone out of the Glen to America. That he himself intended to go next year; for that the rent of his farm, which twenty years ago was only five pounds, was now raised to twenty pounds. That he could pay ten pounds, and live; but no more. – Dr Johnson said he wished McQueen laird of Glenmorison, and the laird to go to America.⁴

Boswell’s sympathy with the emigrants is clear, but by the time of the tour it was well under way to becoming the accepted norm, commemorated in the culture of Skye:

We performed, with much activity, a dance which, I suppose, the emigration from Sky has occasioned. They call it *America*. Each of the couples, after the common *involution*s and *evolution*s, successively whirls round in a circle, till all are in motion; and the dance seems intended to shew how emigration catches, till a whole neighbourhood is afloat – Mrs McKinnon told me, that last year when a ship sailed from Portree for America, the people on shore were almost distracted when they saw their relations go off, they lay down on the ground, tumbled, tore the grass with their teeth. – This year there was not a tear shed. The people on shore seemed to think that they would soon follow. This indifference is a mortal sign for the country.⁵

¹ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 129.

² Boswell, *Tour*, p. 210.

³ Johnson, *Journey*, p. 89. Brian D. Osborne, noting Pennant’s view of the post-Culloden control measures, argues differently: ‘One of the measures taken after Culloden was the banning of Highland Dress, an Act not formally repealed until 1782. However the ineffectiveness of this legislation is suggested by Pennant’s interesting description of the dress of some Highlanders at a fair in Inverness [...] enforcement, although strict at first, had obviously broken down by 1769 if so much Highland Dress and tartan could be safely worn at a public event in the capital of the Highlands.’ See Pennant, *Tour*, p. xvi.

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 125-6.

⁵ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 283. Johnson also lamented the emigrations, saying, ‘We came too late to see what we expected.’ See Samuel Johnson, and James Boswell, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and the Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* (London: Penguin, 1984), p. xiii.

4. The Journal of the Tour: Travel Work on Travellers

Whilst there is no doubting Boswell's tour around Scotland as travelogue, what is obvious is that he is also taking a tour around Samuel Johnson. As Brian Finney has argued, the tour represented almost a quarter of the active time the two men spent together and was, therefore, central to 'the deepening and soldering of a famous literary friendship which began in inequality and ended in mutual admiration and affection.'¹ From the opening initial sketch he mixes the eulogy, or obituary notice, with travelogue, presenting a detailed portrait of the 'fish out of water' as part of his objective, with a deep-seated desire to document every particular for his reader:

Samuel Johnson's character, religious, moral, political, and literary, nay his figure and manner, are, I believe, more generally known than those of almost any man [...] Let me not be censured for mentioning such minute particulars. Every thing relative to so great a man is worth observing. I remember Dr Adam Smith, in his rhetorical lectures at Glasgow, told us he was glad to know that Milton wore latches in his shoes, instead of buckles; and, by-and-by, my readers will find this stick will bud, and produce a good joke.²

As a part of this portrait he prepares the reader for Johnson as outsider, the Tory abroad, building up expectations for Johnson's apparent brand of chauvinism, though as Thomas M. Curley has argued Johnson's prejudices were mainly extended to the lowland Scots rather than all North Britons - his 'reservations were less blindingly nationalist (Little Englander) in origin than they were religious (pro-Anglicanism) and political (anti-Whig Toryism)':³

The truth is, like the ancient Greeks and Romans, he allowed himself to look upon all nations but his own as barbarians: not only Hibernia, and Scotland, but Spain, Italy, and France, are attacked in the same poem ['London']. If he was particularly prejudiced against the Scots, it was because they were more in his way; because he thought their success in England rather exceeded the due proportion of their real merit; and because he could not but see in them that nationality which I believe no liberal-minded Scotsman will deny. He was, indeed, if I may be allowed the phrase, at bottom much of a John Bull.⁴

¹ Brian Finney, 'Boswell's 'Hebridean Journal' and the Ordeal of Dr Johnson', *Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, 5 (1982), p. 319. Finney also notes that Boswell was also clearly on his best behaviour around Johnson.

² Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 5-8.

³ Thomas M. Curley, *Samuel Johnson, the Ossian Fraud, and the Celtic Revival in Great Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 89.

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 9-10.

Boswell takes Johnson out of his comfort zone, far from London, confronted by the realities of rural travel in an apparently inhospitable environment, and he revels in his personal achievement in winking Johnson out of the metropolis:¹

To see Dr Johnson in any new situation is always an interesting object to me; and as I saw him now for the first time on horseback, jaunting about at his ease in quest of pleasure and novelty, the very different occupations of his former laborious life, his admirable productions, his London, his Rambler &c, &c immediately presented themselves to my mind, and the contrast made a strong impression on my imagination.²

...the Doctor was prevailed with to mount one of Vass's greys. As he rode upon it down the hill, it did not go well; and he grumbled. I walked on a little before, but was excessively entertained with the method taken to keep him in good humour.³

I was elated by the thought of having been able to entice such a man to this remote part of the world [...] I compared myself to a dog who has got hold of a large piece of meat, and runs away with it to a corner, where he may devour it in peace, without any fear of others taking it from him.⁴

Boswell's Johnson represents high Anglicanism, and his sensibilities are offended by post-reformation Edinburgh, particularly the church of St. Giles, divided up into four places of Presbyterian worship, where his comment is restricted to a dismissive "let me see what was once a church."⁵ His views of Scottish independence are little better as he condemns the Scots for letting Mary Stuart be incarcerated and executed by the English without intervention, and his perception of the dubious Scottish nation leads him to take curious precautions:

From an erroneous apprehension of violence, Dr Johnson had provided a pair of pistols, some gunpowder, and a quantity of bullets: but upon being assured we should run no risk of meeting any robbers, he left his arms and ammunition in an open drawer.⁶

Nothing could save him from Scottish table manners, however:

¹ It is worth remembering that Johnson, like many a traveller before and since, could not find a complete escape from London. Coming across Mr Janes of Aberdeen, who had been at Johnson's London house, Johnson exclaims, "It is strange that, in such distant places, I should meet with any one who knows me. I should have thought I might hide myself in Sky." See Boswell, *Tour*, p. 138.

² Boswell, *Tour*, p. 120.

³ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 133

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 213-4.

⁵ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 29. Johnson clearly has a more positive attitude, perhaps even sentimental attachment, to Catholicism, as evidenced by his view of St Andrew's and the barbarous destruction of the old cathedral when he says "Knox had set on a mob, without knowing where it would end; and that differing from a man in doctrine was no reason why you should pull his house about his ears." See Boswell, *Tour*, p. 50. As Johnson says in his letter to Mrs Thrale, there were plenty of remnants of the Catholic world: 'The floor is covered with ancient gravestones of which the inscriptions are not now legible, and without some of the chief families still continue the right of Sepulture. The altar is not yet quite demolished [...] On the other side still stands a hand bell, which though it has no clapper neither Presbyterian bigotry, nor barbarian wantonness has yet taken away.'

⁶ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 40.

... before I came in, the Doctor had unluckily had a bad specimen of Scottish cleanliness. He then drank no fermented liquor. He asked to have his lemonade made sweeter, upon which the waiter, with his greasy fingers, lifted a lump of sugar, and put it into it. The Doctor, in indignation, threw it out of the window.¹

Johnson was not prepared, though, to travel with lemons for his own lemonade, not wishing to seem either oppressive or insolent to another man's hospitality.² Finally, by the time they have landed on Coll, even Johnson is open to role play (one of Boswell's specialities, in going native as he did when dressing up in Corsica):

Dr Johnson here shewed so much of the Highlander, that he won Sir Allan's heart: indeed, he has shewn it during the whole of our Tour – one night in Col, he strutted about the room with a broad sword and target, and made a formidable appearance; and, another night, I took the liberty to put a large blue bonnet on his head. His age, his size, and his bushy grey wig, with this covering on it, presented the image of a venerable Senacht: and, however unfavourable to the Lowland Scots, he seemed much pleased to assume the appearance of an ancient Caledonian.³

It is important to see that, whilst Boswell leaves Johnson open to criticism from the Lowland Scots in particular, he is still a very important part of Boswell's personal landscape, a 'fixed object' stopping him from 'turning giddy at sea.'⁴ When Johnson is on Inch Keith, he becomes a living monument:

He stalked like a giant among the luxuriant thistles and nettles [...] Dr Johnson afterwards bade me try to write a description of our discovering Inch Keith, in the usual style of travellers, describing fully every particular; stating the grounds on which we concluded that it must have once been inhabited, and introducing many sage reflections; and we should see how a thing might be covered in words, so as to induce people to come and survey it. All that was told might be true, and yet in reality there might be nothing to see.⁵

By the time they finally reach Auchinleck, Boswell produces one of the most notable set pieces in the euphemistic description of the meeting between his father, Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck (Whig and Presbyterian), and his literary and intellectual father-figure, Samuel Johnson (Tory and High Anglican). This was a clash not engineered by Boswell (though he had stage-managed a number of similar meetings, such as with John Wilkes or Lord Monboddo, clearly meant to stimulate good copy), and in this case actually resulted in what he describes as a 'collision' between his two fathers. The argument, initially stimulated by a

¹ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 11.

² Boswell, *Tour*, p. 60.

³ Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 336-7.

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 143.

⁵ Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 43-44.

discussion of Cromwell and Charles I, but moving from Whiggism to the discussion of religion, ends up being euphemised by Boswell as ‘exceedingly warm, and violent’, and he glosses over the exact details of what took place - curious since both participants were dead by the time of publication. All Boswell tells us is that of the taboo subjects he had asked Johnson to avoid, only Sir John Pringle (President of the Royal Society) escaped discussion. Only a grudging respect is revealed by Lord Auchinleck in his ‘sly abrupt expression’ for Johnson afterwards of ‘Ursa Major’, though Boswell reveals that it was not said in Johnson’s hearing.¹ What is clear is that Johnson and everything he represents has become a central part of Boswell’s consciousness, and that he would build a monument to him:

As I wandered with my reverend friend in the groves of Auchinleck, I told him, that, if I survived him, it was my intention to erect a monument to him here, among scenes which in my mind, were all classical; for in my youth I had appropriated to them many of the descriptions of the Roman poets. He could not bear to have death presented to him in any shape; for his constitutional melancholy made the king of terrors more frightful. He turned off the subject, saying, “Sir, I hope to see your grand children!”²

That monument would be in prose and not stone, and would not lessen Johnson’s reputation, first in the published *Tour*, finally in the *Life of Johnson*:

In the opinion of every person of taste and knowledge that I have conversed with, it has been *heightened*; and I will venture to predict, that this specimen of the colloquial talents and extemporaneous effusions of my illustrious fellow-traveller will become still more valuable, when by the lapse of time, he shall have become an *ancient*; when all those who can now bear testimony to the transcendent powers of his mind, shall have passed away; and no other memorial of this great and good man shall remain, but the following Journal, the other anecdotes and letters preserved by his friends, and those incomparable works, which have for many been in the highest estimation, and will be read and admired as long as the English language shall be spoken or understood.³

4. Boswell’s *Tour*: Process and Publication

One of the most interesting facets of the *Tour* is the way in which it is constructed, often very self-reflexively, making the reader aware of Boswell’s striving for authority as writer and his attempts to show through his text his grasp of veracity. The reader should also be aware of the

¹ Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 399-400.

² Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 396-7.

³ Boswell, *Tour*, pp. iv-v.

methods he uses for reflecting upon the ‘otherness’ of those he describes, whether Highlanders or Johnson himself. Boswell’s now familiar method of keeping his journal and writing up what will eventually become the text is exposed in a way that was not quite clear in the Corsican book, as he makes clear from a very early stage, describing his way of filling in gaps in the memory (and thus improving on what Johnson described as Pennant’s flaw in his description of Fort George), saying : ‘I did not begin to keep a full journal till some days after we set out from Edinburgh; but I have luckily preserved a good many fragments of his *Memorabilia* from his very first evening in Scotland.’¹

Boswell is careful to take the narrative voice of apparent foolishness, a marked and deliberate contrast to that of his hero, akin to the ironic first person narrators of travel ‘faction’ (from Pilgrim-Chaucer, through to the narrators of Sterne in *A Sentimental Journey* and Tobias Smollett’s ‘Smellfungus’ persona in *Travels Through France and Italy*), which allows the reader to see Johnson’s seriousness in sharp relief, or, as Robert H Bell has argued, in emphasising his own ridiculousness he stresses Johnson’s seriousness, making Johnson an authoritative cover:²

I have given a sketch of Dr Johnson: my readers may wish to know a little of his fellow traveller. Think then, of a gentleman of ancient blood, the pride of which was his predominant passion [...] He had travelled a good deal, and seen many varieties of human life. He had thought more than any body supposed, and had a pretty good stock of general learning and knowledge. He had all Dr Johnson’s principles, with some degree of relaxation. He had rather too little, than too much prudence; and, his imagination being lively, he often said things of which the effect was very different from the intention.³

Here Boswell entreats the reader to engage in an act of imaginative connection to the text, and what he asks them to consider is a type rather than the individual he clearly is. Creating a ‘James Boswell’ naïf narrator-character provides a narrative mask fit to outline his hero, and enables Boswell to distance himself from his text. If anything, this separates Boswell the author from what Philippe Lejeune would regard as an essential of the autobiographical pact – that

¹ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 12.

² Robert H. Bell, ‘Boswell’s Anatomy of Folly’, *Modern Language Quarterly*, 38 (1977), pp. 578-94.

³ Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 39-40.

the ‘narrator, and the protagonist must be identical.’¹ Indeed, Boswell seems to be much closer to what Patricia Meyer Spacks thinks of as the biographical narrator:

The narrator in biography functions as a source and guardian of knowledge, in ways comparable to novelistic narrators. The novelist, however, invents characters; the biographer only interprets them. The biographical storyteller must convince the reader – particularly the reader aware of more than a single biography of a given subject – of the narrator’s right and power to control the story. Such authority and power depend not only on the forms into which narrators fit their narratives but on the distance they maintain: between biographer and subject, between biographer and reader, consequently between subject and reader.²

This distinction between Author-Boswell and Traveller-Boswell also provides moments of comic absurdity, later exploited by Rowlandson in his ‘Picturesque Beauties’, mocking Boswell for his pretensions and vanities:

We danced tonight to the musick of the bagpipe, which made us beat the ground with prodigious force. I thought it better to endeavour to conciliate the kindness of the people of Sky, by joining heartily in their amusements, than to play the abstract scholar. I looked on this Tour to the Hebrides as a copartnership between Dr Johnson and me. Each was to do all he could to promote its success, and I have some reason to flatter myself, that my gayer exertions were of service to us.³

A study of the differences between the published text and the original manuscript show how Boswell was also shaping the perception of himself as a figure within his own text. This can be seen in one of the moments ridiculed by Rowlandson:

Though we passed over not less than four-and-twenty miles of very rugged ground, and had a Highland dance on the top of *Dun Can*, the highest mountain in the island, we returned in the evening not at all fatigued, and piqued ourselves at not being outdone at the nightly ball by our less active friends, who had remained at home.⁴

The full account of this in the original manuscript would have provided Rowlandson with even more ammunition, and makes Boswell sound much more self-indulgent, the situation even more comic:

We walked briskly along; but the country was very stony at first, and a great many risings and fallings lay in our way. We had a shot at a flock of plovers sitting. But mine was harmless. We came first to a large

¹ As Lejeune says, ‘An author is not a person. He is a person who writes and publishes. Straddling the world-beyond-the-text and the text, he is the connection between the two. The author is defined as simultaneously a socially responsible real person and the producer of a discourse. For the reader, who does not know the real person, all the while believing in his existence, the author is defined as the person capable of producing this discourse, and so he imagines what he is like from what he produces [...] Autobiography (narrative recounting the life of the author) supposes there is identity of name between the author (such as he figures, by his name, on the cover), the narrator of the story, and the character who is being talked about’. See Philippe Lejeune, *On Autobiography*. trans. Katherine Leary (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), pp. 11-12

² Patricia Meyer Spacks, ‘Gossip’, in *James Boswell's Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986), p. 126.

³ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 283.

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 159.

pretty lake, sunk down comparatively with the ground about it. Then to another; and then we mounted up to the top of Duncaan, where we sat down, eat cold mutton and bread and cheese and drank brandy and punch. Then we had a Highland song from Malcolm; then we danced a reel to which he and Donald Macqueen sang.¹

What the difference between published account and the original manuscript shows is a conscious decision to edit out more picturesque descriptions which are centred directly on Boswell's experiences, especially because Johnson was absent. Clearly the focus needed to remain on Johnson rather than on Boswell, part of the editing process being to merge the travel work into something more akin to biography, focusing on the fellow traveller.²

This self-editorial process was part of the construction of the published work, though there had been a considerable amount of subtle editing taking place in the process of composition, Johnson reading the manuscript throughout the duration of the tour. This provided Boswell with a validation and endorsement from his hero, as well as a claim to authority which he is keen to exploit in the face of critical responses:

He came to my room this morning before breakfast, to read my Journal, which he has done all along. He often before said, "I take great delight in reading it." Today he said, "You improve: it grows better and better." – I observed, there was a great danger of my getting a habit of writing in a slovenly manner. – "Sir, said he, it is not written in a slovenly manner. It might be printed, were the subject fit for printing." [...] my Journal is really a task of much time and labour, and he forbids me to contract it."³

He read to-night, to himself, as he sat in company, a great deal of my Journal, and said to me, "The more I read of this, I think the more highly of you."⁴

Whilst this reviewing by Johnson provides an editorial perspective at the point of composition, it can be seen as compromising Boswell's much-vaunted attention to veracity:

He read this day a good deal of my journal, written in a small book with which he had supplied me, and was pleased, for he said, "I wish thy books were twice as big." He helped me to fill up blanks which I had left in first writing it, when I was not quite sure of what he had said, and he corrected any mistakes that I had made.⁵

The addition of Johnsonian clarifications and corrections of Boswell's 'mistakes' calls the integrity of the text into question. As John B. Radner has argued, whilst the sharing with

¹ See James Boswell, *Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides with Samuel Johnson, LL.D. 1773*, *The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (William Heinemann Ltd, 1963), p. 137.

² As Pottle notes 'The material was good, but it was not Johnsonian.' See Boswell, *Tour* (Yale 1963), p. 137.

³ Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 227-8.

⁴ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 267.

⁵ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 317.

Johnson may have been typified by Boswell as an ‘ordeal’ it also allowed Boswell to ask questions through a kind of written conversation, a special channel of communication.¹

Larger critical questions regarding the text were centred much more on the revelation of secrets and intimate conversation, which provided a taste of the forbidden and a direct contrast to the more conventional (and, to the modern reader, staid) account of Johnson himself. As Paul K. Alkon has noted in discussing the *Life of Johnson* (but which is also true of the *Tour*), the ‘ability to sustain interest is due largely to Boswell’s willingness to violate every aspect of the principle of decorum he so sweepingly enunciates.’² Boswell anticipated some of this criticism in his published text by directly quoting Johnson:

McLeod asked, if it was not wrong in Orrery to expose the defects of a man with whom he lived in intimacy. – *Johnson*. “Why no, sir, after a man is dead, for then it is done historically.”³

Boswell treads a fine line between revelation and suppression, most obviously in the case of Sir Alexander Macdonald, who threatened personal violence, and in the battle (as it would become) with Mrs Thrale/Piozzi for Johnson’s legacy. The revelation of Johnson’s comment upon his and Mrs Thrale’s inability to read through Mrs Montague’s essay on Shakespeare provoked protest in print from her in her *Anecdotes of Samuel Johnson*, and required a sizeable footnote of legal precision (as you would expect from a trained barrister):⁴

The unfavourable opinion of Mrs Montague’s book, which Dr Johnson is here reported to have given, is known to have been that which he uniformly expressed, as many of his friends will remember. So much for the authenticity of the paragraph, as far as it relates to his own sentiments. The words containing the assertion, to which Mrs Piozzi objects, are printed from my manuscript journal, and were taken down at the time. The Journal was read by Dr Johnson, who pointed out some inaccuracies, which I corrected, but did not mention any inaccuracy in the paragraph in question; and what is still more material, and very flattering to me, a considerable part of my journal, containing this paragraph, *was read several years ago by Mrs Thrale herself*, who had it for some time in her possession, and returned it to me, without intimating that Dr Johnson had mistaken her sentiments.⁵

¹ John B. Radner, *Johnson and Boswell: A Biography of Friendship* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2012), p. 142.

² Paul K. Alkon, ‘Boswell’s Control of Aesthetic Distance’, in *James Boswell’s Life of Samuel Johnson*, ed. by Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1986), p. 38.

³ Boswell, *Tour*, p. 240.

⁴ See Hester Piozzi, *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson LL.D During the Last Twenty Years of His Life* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 161.

⁵ Boswell, *Tour*, P. 247-8.

Boswell is also careful to state that he hesitated (and indeed removed Mrs Thrale's name from one edition), but was persuaded by John Courtney that Johnson had actually honoured Mrs Thrale by including her name with his own and Topham Beauclerk in the statement about the essay on Shakespeare. It is to be suspected that the offence was felt less by Mrs Thrale/Piozzi for her own person than for the challenge to her bluestocking connection to Mrs Montague.¹ Malone felt that Boswell should certainly not hold back in addressing the issue of Mrs Thrale/Piozzi since she 'does not state fairly'.² Either way, Boswell made a deliberate decision not to overly censor his work for fear of hurting feelings. By the time of the third edition his view was set very clearly:

Before I conclude, I think it proper to say, that I have suppressed everything which I thought could really hurt anyone now living. Vanity and self-conceit indeed may sometimes suffer. With respect to what *is* related, I considered it my duty to "extenuate nothing, nor set down aught in malice;" and with those lighter strokes of Dr Johnson's satire, proceeding from a warmth and quickness of imagination, not from any malevolence of heart, and which, on account of their excellence, could not be omitted, I trust that they who are the subject of them have good sense and good temper enough not to be displeased.³

Chauncey B. Tinker's view of Boswell's published *Tour* - albeit written just before the discovery of Boswell's private papers, and the more complete manuscript, read by Johnson - illustrates why the text is such a fascinating piece of travel writing, combining all the elements of travelogue with the human connection that still resonates to this day. If anything it is still eminently readable because it does go beyond topography to address universals of dramatized human behaviour:

More than any work of Boswell's it preserves the freshness and authenticity of his journals. If one of the objects of literature be to mirror human association and companionship when at their fullest and most zestful, then this book must ever be accorded a very high rank. It has a unity and intimacy denied even to the great "Life of Johnson"; for the geographical isolation of the Hebrides, and the limitation of the account to a single period in the life of the man recorded, render it, if possible, a more vivid book than the biography, which is, inevitably, more diffuse. Moreover, it has the advantage of depicting Johnson in an unusual environment, likely to stimulate his powers of observation and lend point and colour to his remarks. It tells

¹ As Riely and Ribiero have noted, the portrayal of Mrs Thrale-Piozzi 'caused dissension in the ranks of the Bluestockings'. See J.C. Riely, and Alvaro Ribeiro, "Mrs Thrale' in the Tour: A Boswellian Puzzle", *The Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America*, 69 (1975), p. 151.

² See James Boswell, *The Correspondence of James Boswell with David Garrick, Edmund Burke, and Edmond Malone*, *The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (London: Heinemann, 1986), p. 309ff. Malone was so outraged by some of the reviews that he wrote what Peter Martin has described as 'a strident 5000 word article' for the Gentleman's Magazine. See Peter Martin, *A Life of James Boswell* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1999), p. 482.

³ Boswell, *Tour*, pp. 435-6.

the story of a long holiday; and it has, therefore, the mirth and abandon of spirit characteristic of two friends whose chief aim, at the moment, is to have a good time.¹

Boswell's voice remains a good travelling companion, and the modern reader can still connect to the gossipy intimacy of his revelations, principally because they are so human, and, as Spacks has argued, encourage 'the temptation to interpret, the lure of "finding out", the fantasy of knowing.'² The landscape may have faded with modernity and rising tourism, but the legacy of two travellers and their trials on the trail remains as vivid as it ever was. It is very conventional to see the *Tour* as a precursor to the *Life*: the 'Advertisement' at the end of the published work clearly acts as a teaser trailer, connecting the two in a biographical trajectory; Croker's edition of the *Life* integrates the *Tour* into the text, previously forbidden by copyright laws; and the Hill-Powell standard edition of the text includes it as Volume 5. It is more rewarding, however, to see the *Tour* as a truly original work of travel writing, which would not only inspire those interested in Johnson, but also those who would follow the trail set down by the two companions. The timing of publication was clearly geared up to the production of a biographical work to rival both Sir John Hawkins and Mrs Thrale/Piozzi; a stopgap before the larger work that would come in 1791, with Boswell retaining his 'large piece of meat' like a mastiff. If anything, this makes it even more of a travel work because, from a philosophical perspective, it is still about a tour – both of the physical landscape, and of Johnson himself.

¹ Chauncey B. Tinker, *Young Boswell* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922), pp.218-19.

² Spacks, 'Gossip', p. 125.

Chapter 7

Conclusion: Travel Writing and the Boswellian Legacy

He that succeeds a celebrated writer, has the same difficulties to encounter; he stands under the shade of exalted merit, and is hindered from rising to his natural height, by the interception of those beams which should invigorate and quicken him. He applies to that attention which is already engaged, and unwilling to be drawn off from certain satisfaction; or perhaps to an attention already wearied, and not to be recalled on the same object [...] the imitator treads a beaten walk, and with all his diligence can only hope to find a few flowers or branches untouched by his predecessor, the refuse of contempt, or the omissions of negligence.

1

Samuel Johnson

I turned to books. Several months later I was still dissatisfied, for although there were reams of published material about Scotland, it seemed that very few writers had reached the top of a Scottish hill, looked down on the other side and seen what was actually there. Most had seen a combination of what used to be there, together with what they thought the reader would like to see. Their landscape was of crofters wearing tartan, cooking grouse, drinking whisky and playing the bagpipes, in a perpetual atmosphere of hardy merriment spiced with courageous foolhardiness. What is worst, they didn't give the country a present – and when a country itself makes a business out of people who come to it for its romanticised past, it too begins to despair of its present.²

Andrew Eames

Looking over the body of Boswell's travel writing the key question is the degree to which he was a trailblazer (in terms of style, content, and form) or whether he was the treader of a beaten path, a mere imitator, or a shadow for a more celebrated writer, though, it must be said, none of these preclude innovation. In many ways Boswell made the transition from being a grand tourist, following in the wake of other writers, to being a self-shaped traveller, both geographically, as the first Briton into the interior of Corsica, and, more importantly, stylistically, Boswell utilises what should be thought of as meta-travelogue, documenting

¹ Samuel Johnson, Adventurer 86, *The Works of Samuel Johnson*. 9 vols. Vol. 2 (Oxford: Talboys and Wheeler, 1825), p. 403.

² Andrew Eames, *Four Scottish Journeys: An Identity Rediscovered* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991), pp. 4-5.

himself as a traveller, but also the others with whom he was travelling, even setting up parallel narratives, mixing traditional documentary travel writing (akin to the journals of explorers to the South Seas as well as Europe, observing ‘otherness’) with the personal and the semi-fictional (taking his cue from novelistic and epistolary writing). Whilst there are elements of these in various writings of the time (particularly in the fictions of Sterne and Smollett) Boswell is original in his combination – experimental in a time of experimentation in narrative. Looking at the body of his published and unpublished travel accounts what becomes clear is that his work as ‘Traveller Boswell’ stands up to just as much scrutiny of literary merit as his biographical work, and though many critics have seen his travel work and journals as simply being the breeding ground for his later biographical work his travel writing still holds a resonance for readers to this day.

Although the real interest in Boswell’s travel books lies in the ways they operate as texts where journeys (of the literal and metaphorical kind) are the focus, most critical attention has persisted in analysing them as auto/biographical. The reality is that the Corsican book and his account of the Hebridean tour are much more interesting as works of travel writing than they are as simply auto/biographical works – Boswell’s work on Corsica, would be broken backed at best if it were only to be considered as auto/biographical. This is true to such an extent that there are a significant number of writers (both ‘academic’ and ‘popular’ – elastic terms, to say the least) who have literally followed in Boswell’s footsteps. Whilst these readings of his travel works are not conventional ‘studies’ they are no less important as engagements with text, and show that Boswell’s writings still have much to guide the modern reader – not in terms of looking at landscapes or lifestyles which are largely long gone, but instead showing how an individual interacts with environment and allowing the modern reader to connect with a human response which has not dated. The fate of many travel works is that they are made obsolete by the passage of time – every modern printed ‘Rough Guide’ like every printed legal text book

is out of date as soon as it is published. Boswell's legacy as a travel writer is to transcend, or at least circumvent, this limitation by revealing the human face of the traveller, rather than being a dispassionate, omniscient, but ultimately faceless presence; Boswell the traveller is fundamentally flawed, but at least he knows it, and instead reveals a persona whom the reader can connect with, commune with, and freely disagree with as an equal. He laid the foundations for three key legacies: his personal legacy as a writer and traveller/tourist (and to some extent also for Johnson); the legacy of subject matter and stylistics of travel writing; and finally (perhaps most significantly) a legacy of a path beaten for others to follow literally as well as metaphorically, for the literary pilgrims who would follow in his footsteps to see a country's present (in particular Scotland) as well as the traces of its romanticised past.

1. Impact and Legacy: Boswell's Travel Writing Post-1773

Boswell and Johnson both went on their travels again after the Hebridean tour of 1773. Johnson accompanied the Thrales into North Wales in 1774, to France in 1775, and (with Boswell) on his annual trip to Lichfield and Ashbourne in 1777. Boswell periodically went back to London. In their further travels, though, the reader only finds a sense of the anti-climactic, with Johnson saying that he was glad he had seen Wales because now he knew there was nothing to see, or that there was no world comparable to the experience of 'otherness' in the Highlands and islands of the previous year. In effect, one of the legacies of Boswell's own writing, particularly with Johnson, was a millstone of expectation. As Adrian Bristow has noted, the journey into North Wales was just as difficult but,

...the roads in North Wales were certainly not as appalling as those in the highlands of Scotland where, once one left the military roads driven in by General Wade, one was faced with what were only tracks across a vast expanse of hills and moor and bog [...] There were very few carriages to be seen in North

Wales and these, like the Thrales's splendid equipage, had to be carried across rivers in large ferry boats or had to wait for low tide to pass around disobligng headlands.¹

The roads and landscape were 'disobligng', but it was not an 'other' world to be charted.

Johnson also declined to set his French journal into print because he felt he had not seen enough of France, and that it had been done more effectively by others already:

The world is now not contented to be merely entertained by a traveller's narrative; they want to learn something. Now some of my friends asked me, why I did not give some account of my travels in France. The reason is plain; intelligent readers had seen more of France than I had. *You* might have liked my travels in France, and THE CLUB might have liked them; but, upon the whole, there would have been more ridicule than good produced by them.²

More importantly, perhaps, the French trip had provided little to suggest itself worthy of a book of travels, as he commented in a letter of 16 November 1775 to John Taylor, stressing how he had enjoyed the travel as a 'life turned upside down', comparing himself to 'a kind of ship with a wide sail, and without an anchor', but complaining that whilst the air and land of France was good, the common life of the French was 'gross, and incommodious, and disgusting' and that 'no improvement of general use is to be gained among them.'³ Even if Johnson had published an account it would still have been open to challenge, and Johnson had taken his fair share of criticism for his published version of the Hebridean tour, from foes such as Donald McNichol (who challenged his 'distorted representation of everything he saw on the north side of the Tweed'), Mary Anne Hanway (who criticised Johnson for 'how false an account he has given of a country, to the hospitality of whose inhabitants he owns himself so much obliged'), and even from members of the Literary Club like Thomas Percy who, irritated by Johnson's support for Pennant's view of Alnwick Castle, challenged Johnson's view of the true representation of familiar places, breeding resentment in the process:⁴

We talked of travels. He praised Pennant's very highly, as he did at Dunvegan. Percy, who was now returned from his visit of dutiful attachment could not sit quiet and hear the praises of a man who had

¹ Adrian Bristow, ed., *Dr Johnson & Mrs Thrale's Tour in North Wales 1774* (Wrexham: Bridge Books, 1995), p. 17.

² See Moses Tyson, and Henry Guppy, eds., *The French Journals of Mrs Thrale and Doctor Johnson* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1932), p. 6.

³ Samuel Johnson, *The Letters of Samuel Johnson*. 5 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), volume 2, p. 274.

⁴ It is worth noting that this criticism was not always even-handed in itself, as Betty Hagglund has argued. See Betty Hagglund, *Tourists and Travellers: Women's Non-Fictional Writing About Scotland 1770-1830, Tourism and Cultural Change* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2010), p. 40.

censured Alnwick Castle and of whose travels he thought poorly; treated him slightly. Dr Johnson said, "Pennant has done what he intended. He has made you very angry. The stigma of such a man will stick." Percy said Pennant had said the garden was *trim* which was representing it like a citizen's parterre [...] Percy maintained that Pennant did not describe well. That a carrier going along the side of Loch Lomand would describe it better. Dr Johnson said he described very well. "I travelled after him", said Percy. "And I travelled after him," said Dr Johnson. "But," said Percy, "my good friend, you are short-sighted and do not see so well as I do." I wondered at Percy's venturing this. Dr Johnson said nothing at the time, but inflammable particles were collecting for a cloud to burst.¹

As Johnson said himself, 'in everything but where mensuration is applied, travellers will differ.'²

For Boswell, the opportunity to accompany Johnson around Ashbourne in 1777 gave him another short trip in the company of his openly acknowledged future biographical subject, but also an opportunity to press his claims on Johnson's time, rivalling Mrs Thrale and the Streatham set. Many of the familiar events can be seen such as his fondling of chambermaids, sampling of different Christian sects and their modes of worship (Quakers in Kendal), being civil with the Duke of Argyll, but ignored by the Duchess (much as he had been at Inverary in 1773), and pondering the idea of writing a Boswellian history of the Jacobite Rebellion, prompted by being in Derby:

I observed that we were this day to stop just where the Highland army did. He said, "It was a noble attempt." I said it was a pity not to have an authentic history of it. JOHNSON. "If you were not an idle dog, you might do it, by collecting from everybody what they can tell, and by putting down your authorities." BOSWELL. "But I could not have the advantage of it in my lifetime." JOHNSON. "You might have the satisfaction of its fame by printing it in Holland; and as to profit, consider how long it was before writing came to be considered in a pecuniary view [...] I thought that I might write so as to venture to publish my *History of the Civil War in Great Britain in 1745 and 1746* without being obliged to go to a foreign press."³

Nothing could be clearer, though, that times had changed since their tour only a few years earlier: Boswell found the travelling 'dreary', 'unhappy', filled with 'tender anxiety of my wife and child', and that there was a danger that 'I thought I should be so jaded by breakfast time that I should be a wretched companion'; he was also uncertain that it was worth the 'fatigue

¹ See Donald McNicol, *Remarks on Dr. Samuel Johnson's Journey to the Hebrides* (London: T.Cadell, 1779), p. 5, Mary Anne Hanway, *A Journey to the Highlands of Scotland with Occasional Remarks on Dr Johnson's Tour* (London: Fielding and Walker, 1777), p. 65, and James Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes, 1776-1778, The Yale Editions of the Private Papers of James Boswell* (New York, NY; London: McGraw-Hill, 1970), pp. 274-5.

² Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes*, p. 237.

³ Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes*, p. 162.

and expense', though it is worth noting that he was probably hung over when he wrote this.¹ His journalising methodology lacked the vitality of the 1773 tour, Boswell saying that 'owing to "dilatary notation," as Dr Johnson well says in his Hebridean *Journey*, I find that a good deal of his conversation will not be preserved in this my journal [...] Till I come up with time, and write each day's journal immediately, I shall not attend to the chronology of Dr Johnson's sayings. It is enough to know that he said this or that at Ashbourne in autumn 1777.'² Johnson would even react angrily to Boswell's stage-management of quarrels, telling him that it was 'pernicious' and not 'civil' to create a conflict without knowing where it would end, since such a man 'has no more right to instruct himself at such a risk than he has to make two people fight a duel, that he may learn how to defend himself.'³

In Boswell's further accounts of his desire to journey to London, though, there is an even greater sense of trying to relive grander moments from earlier in his journalising, but failing to hit the same heights of spontaneity as he became a tourist following his own beaten path – reflective of the difficult relationship between publishing and living as a man of letters. Where in 1762 he had had a sense of being a knight-errant setting out on a glorious quest, here in 1778, however, there was just a feeling of going over old ground, and fighting old battles, torn between his love of London and his 'ancient feudal residence':

I talked to my father of my intended jaunt to London this spring. He did not oppose it. But seemed to hold my expectations of any good from it very cheap. He however advised me to keep close to Lord Mountstuart. I regretted that he remained in a state of ill-informed prejudice as to my great friend and instructor, Dr Johnson. For in the general notions of life I knew they were agreed, though their ecclesiastical and political systems were widely different. There are things which cannot be helped. This is one; and the want of cordiality between my father and me is another.⁴

Boswell acknowledges his discomfort at being at Auchinleck with his father, and also acknowledges that he looks 'forward to days when, according to probability, I shall have full

¹ Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes*, pp. 148-9.

² Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes*, pp. 150-1.

³ Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes*, pp. 176-7.

⁴ Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes*, p. 214.

sway over the ancient place and extensive domains, and live according to my own inclination.’¹

The major difference between the two partings of 1762 and 1778 was Boswell’s cynical use of his daughter to ameliorate his father’s disapproval:

Veronica cried enchantingly when I spoke of my going to London [...] It was agreeable to have her with me when I took leave of my father, for he never cordially approves of me going to London; and by the influence of habit since ever I remember him, I am depressed in his presence and cannot get free of the imagination that I am still a boy, or at least a youth, and that, too, pretty much “void of understanding.” Having a child of my own before me elevates me to the rank of a father and counteracts the depressing imagination to a certain degree. It is like having a little footstool to raise one.²

What can be seen here in the contrasting departures is both Boswell’s desire to demonstrate growth as an individual in the face of Lord Auchinleck, but also a desperate desire to relive the past by grasping at the nostalgic glamour of ‘the immensity of the metropolis and multitude of objects’ that London represented, and to escape the restriction of Auchinleck and family life. In his journal, travel to London becomes a cure for his melancholy, dissipating it ‘as if it had never existed in my mind’, though he shows an awareness of his temptation to giddiness and disease, determining to take his medicinal dose of London ‘as one takes mercury; to intermit the use of it whenever I should feel it affect my brain, as one intermits the use of mercury when it affects the mouth.’³ Boswell’s problem was that he could not ‘fix’ this state of mind – nor did he grasp the effects of mercury poisoning.

As it was, Boswell’s attempt to relive the past seemed to be dominated by disappointment in frustrated expectation, and a growing sense of the pastness of the past – both common complaints of the tourist who has failed to see what was expected or promised:

Francis, Dr Johnson’s black, told me his master was at Streatham with Mr and Mrs Thrale. This both pleased me and disappointed me. I was glad he was so well as to be in the country. But I felt a want in not seeing him immediately as I had expected. As I walked back again to the Poultry, I went to drink tea at Child’s Coffee-house, my constant resort every Saturday during the winter that I lived in London. But I found it was extinguished, being now turned into a private house. It was to a certain degree a melancholy regret to find an old coffee-house, well known to the wits of Queen Anne’s reign and of which I had read in *The Spectator*, no more. And its being my own old acquaintance increased the regret.⁴

¹ Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes*, pp. 170-171.

² Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes*, p. 217.

³ Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes*, p. 220.

⁴ Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes*, p. 220.

Boswell's greeting in the city was also muted, to say the least:

I then went to Westminster and called on the Reverend Dr Taylor, with whom, to my surprise, I found Dr Johnson, who had come to town for a few hours. He was writing something on which he seemed intent, so that, although there was a kind embrace, I had scarcely any conversation from him [...] I hastened to Paoli's and was received by him with that frankness and obliging civility which he has ever shown me [...] Then found Lord Mounstuart. Was hurt a little by the *nonchalance*, the indifference, of his manner. For when I came into the room, after we had had not met since summer last, he stood by the fire, and with no energy said, "How d'ye do, Mr Boswell?"¹

In this account Boswell has become the tourist, disappointed by the lack of a 'money back guarantee' on his planned tour of predictability and repetition. The places, such as the disappeared coffee-house, challenge his expectation, and the 'natives' behave as individuals with separate lives not dictated by the tourist trail, rather than being what James Buzard has described as 'mere "touristy" self-parodies.'² Boswell had ceased to be the physical traveller, the journey only providing disappointment. His travel writing would yield him a personal legacy in the form of much material for his biography of Johnson and two published travel works, but the legacy that he left for others would be greater in the form of a trail to be followed, and texts that could be read – not just as tourists, but as fellow travellers.

2. Impact and Legacy: Pilgrims, Travel, Tourism, and Change

Boswell helped to create a secular pilgrim-tourist trail for those who wished to follow in the footsteps of literary heroes. Boswell himself was an early example of this type travelling to Neufchatel to see Rousseau as a living shrine, and his work has provided Scotland with a tourist trail which many have followed, though it did take time to establish, and was boosted at key points by surges in interest in following the publication of Hill's edition of the *Life of Johnson*, the post-Malahide find and the Pottle edition of the *Tour* in 1936 based on the manuscript

¹ Boswell, *Boswell in Extremes*, pp. 221-3.

² James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture' 1800-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp.3-4.

version, and the growth of interest after the launch of the trade edition of the private papers by Yale in the 1950s. There are some who would see this literary tourism as a vice, linked into commercialisation rather than an engagement with the primary text (even being text-less in some cases). This is especially true in the climate of critical theory of the latter part of the twentieth century which proclaimed the lack of need for place or person to the reading of text, and may involve a failure to read the words on the page because the landscape is acting as a distracting supplementary text, in essence that literary pilgrimage is somehow an amateurish sideshow to academic criticism.¹ However, in the case of Boswell's travel works, and the writings of his pilgrim-readers it is possible to see a different legacy from the purely analytical, to see that there is another important way in which readers engage with the work of travel, partially facilitated by the ease of transportation and advances in infrastructure. It is also a form of reading that can be seen as a way of democratising the activity – since anyone can read a travel text in situ and have an opinion which may run contrary to that of the author or the critic, and be just as valid – and to assume that it is merely passive and without curiosity is simplistic. Anyone can have the 'tourist gaze', though it may differ from that of the person standing next to them.²

As Buzard has noted, the practicalities of travel in the nineteenth century meant that following on the literary pilgrim trail for travellers was much more arduous than it would become in the twentieth century, as exemplified by Thomas Cook's difficulties with early Scottish package tours:

A Scottish tour called for all Cook's ingenuity and demanded all his resilience. There were in 1846 no direct rail connections from England to Scotland, so, after several trying negotiations and two exploratory trips, Cook settled on a Western route that proceeded by rail from Leicester to Fleetwood, and from there by steamer to Ardrossan, where another train was arranged for Glasgow and Edinburgh [...] But in the event, the excursion was Cook's first fiasco – perhaps his last, at least of such magnitude. Passengers were not permitted to disembark at stations *en route* to use the lavatory (the train had none); a prearranged tea

¹ See Nicola J. Watson, *The Literary Tourist* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 5-7.

² See John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze*. 2nd edn (London: SAGE, 2002), p. 1.

was not provided (there was no food on board); the steamer did not have enough cabins, so many travellers slept on deck – in the rain.¹

Pilgrimage is supposed to involve endurance and suffering, however, indicative of an attitude to following in the footsteps of others. In the early days of the Boswell-Johnson trail, even those who were pilgrims by default rather than by choice, like Joseph and Elizabeth Robins Pennell (1890) still saw Boswell and Johnson as a natural point of departure, though it ‘looked a long journey on the map, and seemed a weary one in the pages of Boswell and Johnson’.² The Pennells could see a practical application rather than a romantic connection to the 1773 tour, saying that like Johnson they started in Edinburgh, but beyond that there were few similarities, arguing, ‘at least he helped us to form definite plans without weeks of hard map-study which they otherwise might have cost us.’³ However, the Pennells noted that the early days of travelling in the footsteps of Boswell and Johnson were filled with disappointments and frustrations: St James’s Court had washing hanging from what had been Boswell’s windows; Johnson and Boswell had the advantage of guides and horses, and the route was impractical to follow on foot anyway; and the passage of time meant that some of the locations experienced by Johnson and Boswell were mere crumbling ruins. George Birkbeck Hill, however, in his *Footsteps of Doctor Johnson* (1890), argued for the rise of a burgeoning tourist industry centred on the legacy of Boswell and Johnson’s tour:

He still lives among them, mainly, no doubt, by his own and Boswell’s books, but partly also by tradition. Very few of the houses remain where he visited. Nevertheless, in two of these in the Hebrides, and one in the Lowlands, I was shown his bedroom. Proud, indeed, would the old man have been could he have foreseen that an Englishman who followed on his steps one hundred and sixteen years later would be shown at New Hailes, at Rasay, and at Dunvegan, “Dr Johnson’s Chamber.” At Rasay is preserved his walking-stick [...] In his bedroom an engraving of him hangs on the wall [...] In many places I found traditions of him still remaining – some, no doubt true; others false. But whether false or true, by their vitality they show the deep mark which the man made as he passed along.⁴

¹ Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, p. 52.

² Joseph Pennell, and Elizabeth Robins Pennell, *Our Journey to the Hebrides* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1890), p.4.

³ Pennell and Pennell, *Our Journey to the Hebrides*, p.220.

⁴ George Birkbeck Hill, *Footsteps of Dr Johnson (Scotland)* (London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1890), pp. 1-2.

Hill recorded how Johnson ‘remained in men’s thoughts’, but that Scots did not like reading him, speculating that part of Johnson’s reputation in the Highlands was partly down to Boswell’s recording of his various sarcasms, rather ‘than to any passages in his own narrative.’¹ This idea, however, was challenged in the Pennells’ account where their experience suggested the decline in Johnson’s reputation north of the Great Glen:

...we asked him if he had ever heard of Dr Johnson. He shook his head and then turned to the other man, and the two began to talk in Gaelic. “Toctor Shonson, Toctor Shonson,” we heard them say to each other. But they both kept shaking their heads, and finally the old man again said they had never heard of him.²

As early as 1890 the pilgrim-tourists noted how the landscape and Scotland had changed in the intervening years. Hill lamented the transition of Scotland as a location for the gentlemanly tourist industry, being absorbed into the ocean of London, saying that in 1773 ‘No southerner went up to the Highlands to hunt, shoot, or fish.’³ Alongside this he criticised how the progress of industrialisation had had such a negative impact on Glasgow:

As we gaze on the filthy river which runs by our large city, on the dense cloud of smoke which hangs over it, on the grimy streets which have swallowed up the country far and wide, while we exult in the display of man’s ingenuity and strength, and in the commerce by which the good things of earth are so swiftly and cheaply interchanged, we may mourn over the beautiful little town among the apple trees which stood so deliciously on the banks of the fair and pure stream that ran to seawards beneath the arches of the old stone bridge. How far are those days when Glasgow was pillaged by the wild rabble of the Highlanders!⁴

By the 1930s the trail had become much more obviously one for the literary tourist, for ‘you-are-there’ reading, as in H.V. Morton’s *In Scotland Again* (1933), where he ‘lay down in the fern and read Boswell’, but best exemplified in the work of Hesketh Pearson and Hugh Kingsmill, coinciding with the publication of the Pottle version of the *Tour* (a good way to justify to the publisher Hamish Hamilton) which Pearson described as a ‘sacred pilgrimage’.⁵ Rather than being a simple following of a trail or series of map coordinates, this was a literary engagement with Boswell in particular, as guide and companion for the pilgrim-readers noting

¹ Hill, *Footsteps of Dr Johnson*, pp. 6-7.

² Pennell and Pennell, *Our Journey to the Hebrides*, p. 63.

³ Hill, *Footsteps of Dr Johnson*, p.25.

⁴ Hill, *Footsteps of Dr Johnson*, p. 265.

⁵ Hesketh Pearson, and Hugh Kingsmill, *Skye High: The Record of a Tour through Scotland in the Wake of Samuel Johnson and James Boswell* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1937), p. 116.

the sea change in attitudes to Boswell's standing as a writer, recognising the breadth of his experience of the 'varieties of human life' and 'all Dr Johnson's principles, with some degree of relaxation' – or as Kingsmill put it, 'Wine, women, and virtue. He threw a wide net'.¹ It is partly written in the form of dialogues, with Pearson and Kingsmill taking Boswell and Johnson roles in a form of parallel narrative, setting out to write 'an amusing book' which would be 'an account not only of our adventures but of theirs as reconstructed by us on the spot.'² Pearson and Kingsmill (one a popular biographer, the other a novelist, but both with a genuine interest in Boswell and Johnson that would produce further writing) brought the fictionalised construct of the original to bear as history and attitudes began to repeat themselves, even down to talking about themselves in the third person to add to the story-telling effect:

The compartment they went into had two of its seats reserved. On one of the remaining seats there was a newspaper which Pearson removed before seating himself. A porter entered and addressed Pearson: 'Did you remove this paper, sir? I laid it on that seat to reserve it.' Pearson looked at him abstractly – 'Ah, yes' – and the porter, after a moment or two, during which he seemed to be searching for some remark to prolong the conversation, retired. Drawing out a notebook, Kingsmill asked Pearson if he could bear up against the jotting down of an occasional note. 'A noble example,' Pearson replied. 'Do as much as you dam' well can.' [...] 'Without notes,' he said, 'one doesn't remember a thing for a minute. Not a minute!'³

However, they could also note that not all change was for the worse:

It was dark as they walked back along Princes Street, and Edinburgh Castle, which was floodlit, looked like a fairy city suspended in the sky. 'You curse modern inventions,' said Kingsmill, 'but if Johnson and Boswell had seen this as they were walking through Edinburgh at night, and you and I, per contra, were having chamber-pots emptied upon our heads, we'd have more reason to regret the past.'⁴

They could also acknowledge the strength of a direct experiencing of the text in situ rather than the theoretical and distanced engagement with it by Academe, a discussion stimulated by reading R.W. Chapman's joint edition of the *Tour to the Hebrides* with Johnson's *Journey* (planned by Chapman and in 'great part executed, in Macedonia, in the summer of 1918' as he

¹ Pearson and Kingsmill, *Skye High*, p. 47.

² Pearson and Kingsmill, *Skye High*, p. 15.

³ Pearson and Kingsmill, *Skye High*, p. 20.

⁴ Pearson and Kingsmill, *Skye High*, p. 46.

dreamt of the Hebrides rather than the 'stricken landscape' he was in, Boswell's travel writing becoming a definite escape from reality rather than an attempt to recreate it):¹

PEARSON: I see a note here that Dr Chapman has criticised one of Johnson's expressions. One does not, says Dr Chapman, 'take shelter' from a drove of oxen. KINGSMILL: Then Dr Chapman must be a very courageous fellow. Oxen have a habit of taking up the entire road, and I dare say that in the eighteenth century they frequently rushed recklessly down the narrow streets in a solid phalanx. Dr Chapman's heroism is certainly to be admired, but Johnson's objection to being gored and trampled under foot has my sympathy, and I must frankly admit that I should 'step aside to take shelter' with the timid Doctor, not charge the horned herd shoulder to shoulder with the brave one.²

However, if Pearson and Kingsmill could take issue with the academics, they could also take issue with Johnson, for his lack of understanding (or 'tosh') for those who would destroy 'ecclesiastical edifices' because the 'majority of men are content to live and let live, and that when a mob starts killing kings and cardinals it has been brutalised by them to breaking point.'³ This feeling was magnified by Pearson's statements about the Cathedral on Iona where he was filled with nausea at the thought of 'Columba and his rabble of Catholic Chadbands' and which was only bearable to him because Boswell had preached there, and the 'miasmatic effects' cast off by Boswell's conviviality the next evening.⁴

The point where Pearson and Kingsmill's text becomes most interesting, though, is in its dealing with the locale of Auchinleck and Boswell's local legacy, Auchinleck House still being in the family (albeit cousins), and the question of the physical legacy (or lack of) for Boswell. Where Burns and Scott were celebrated, even venerated at the shrines of Ayrshire or Abbotsford, Boswell was largely ignored:

They turned at the lodge gates and went back to the hotel, where their landlady sat with them for a while during supper. Boswell seemed to mean nothing to her; she told them that they were the first persons to come to her hotel on Boswell's account, and that if they wished for information about him they'd better consult the minister [...] PEARSON: Compare this place with Stratford! Why isn't there a Johnson Arms here, a Paoli café, a Garrick cinema, a Burke debating society, a Goldsmith reading circle, a Reynolds school of art, a Gibbon Folly, a Boswell Square, a Boswell Boulevard, a Boswell Park, a Boswell skating-rink and a Boswell swimming-pool?⁵

¹ R.W. Chapman, ed., *Tour to the Hebrides* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), pp. vii-viii.

² Pearson and Kingsmill, *Skye High*, pp. 53-4.

³ Pearson and Kingsmill, *Skye High*, pp. 81-2.

⁴ Pearson and Kingsmill, *Skye High*, pp. 209-11.

⁵ Pearson and Kingsmill, *Skye High*, pp. 231-2.

Upon entry into the house they could see where the library had been (though practically everything had been removed to Malahide Castle apart from a picture of Pascale Paoli), and ‘surveyed with interest the terrain of the altercation between Johnson and Lord Auchinleck.’¹ In fact what was obvious to Pearson and Kingsmill was that Boswell was still the ‘family skeleton’ and they felt that they were looking to drag him from the attic to ‘the head of the table’, despite the irony of the fact that whilst Boswell’s gambling grandson was admired, though he had ‘ruined’ the family, Boswell (‘the blackleg who let the monster Johnson loose in the family domains’) had saved them inadvertently through the sale of his private papers to Isham (‘PEARSON: Yes, a hundred thousand pounds for old papers relating to the family skeleton and his frowsy Fleet Street pal. A nasty jar!’).² The injustice of this was compounded on travelling to Glasgow when Pearson identified the statue of Sir Walter Scott as that of ‘a financier’ who had ‘made Scotland as a tripper’s paradise’, whereas Boswell, who had brought their money into the country had none.³

From the 1950s pilgrim-readers were following in the wake of Boswell’s legacy as produced by the publication of the trade editions of the private papers, interest particularly stimulated, as Moray McLaren stated in 1954, by the revelation of the seedier (but abominably fascinating) side of Boswell’s ‘drinking, fornications and toadying’.⁴ There has been a long line of those who have followed the trail and interacted with Boswell’s book since Pottle’s trade edition, from the reflective, associative, and imitative of Elizabeth Stucley (1956), where she literally labelled herself and her adopted son (or at least the van they were travelling in) as ‘Doctor Johnson and Mr Boswell’, but met with a number of similar pilgrims:

Instead of falling in with wild M’Craas on our road to the Isles, we had another strange encounter. In Glen Shiel, two young men, wearing brilliant red and yellow shirts, held up the van. I braked, thinking they were hikers who wanted a lift, but they ran forward crying: “You can’t be Johnson and Boswell too! Because

¹ Pearson and Kingsmill, *Skye High*, p. 236.

² Pearson and Kingsmill, *Skye High*, pp. 238-9.

³ Pearson and Kingsmill, *Skye High*, p. 251.

⁴ Moray McLaren, *The Highland Jaunt: A Study of James Boswell and Samuel Johnson Upon Their Highland and Hebridean Tour of 1773* (London: Jarrolds Publishers, 1954), p. 23.

we're Johnson and Boswell, and we're doing their tour and writing a new book about it." [...] I had then no idea that Mr McLaren was just laying his plans to set off on the Tour! [...] Everyone I met was a Boswell! I was beginning to feel the world teemed with Boswells.¹

Even academics were on the pilgrim trail, as she met L.F. Powell in the library at Raasay House, brought to Raasay by their 'mutual friends, Johnson and Boswell'.² For Stucley, following Boswell's book, engaging with and interacting with it in situ was partly down to its 'detective element [...] not just sight-seeing, but [...] also searching into the past, trying to discover what is gone, and to find out what has disappeared.'³

By the time Frank Delaney was writing in 1993 the trade edition of the private papers had been completed, and he noted how the practice of following in Boswell's steps was typical of a growth industry of 'you-are-there' readers:

Culling an egregious figure from the flock of history, and tracing any footsteps he or she may have taken, has grown into a not uncommon writerly practice. Ancient literary roads are now criss-crossed with men and women wearing notebooks; indeed, this would be my own third or fourth such enterprise [...] the exercise seems to get repeated every generation or so.⁴

Perhaps, as with his view of royal paintings at Holyrood House, it illustrates how readers want to live with their past as a means 'to affirm their future.'⁵ For the most modern day pilgrim-readers, William W. Starr (2011) and Stuart Campbell (2013), what a reading of Boswell's Hebridean travel work illustrates is just how far Scotland has changed in the last two hundred and fifty years, Starr recognising that 'For all the tangibles [...] where the footprints of Boswell and Johnson could be detected, the fact the calendar had advanced by hundreds of years was unmistakable' and that 'the reality proved a constant corrective to the myths I believed or thought about.'⁶ In all this sense of change, though, Starr still recognises the essential appeal

¹ Elizabeth Stucley, *A Hebridean Journey with Johnson and Boswell* (London: Christopher Johnson, 1956), pp. 57-8.

² Stucley, *Hebridean Journey*, p. 92.

³ Stucley, *Hebridean Journey*, p. 94.

⁴ Frank Delaney, *A Walk to the Western Isles after Boswell & Johnson* (London: Harper Collins, 1993), p. 5.

⁵ Delaney, *A Walk to the Western Isles*, p. 51.

⁶ William W. Starr, *Whisky, Kilts, and the Loch Ness Monster: Traveling through Scotland with Boswell and Johnson* (Columbia: The University of South Carolina Press, 2011), p. 200.

of the text and its modern usage for the modern reader, 'His is a book that entertains and instructs.'¹

It is in Campbell's text, *Boswell's Bus Pass*, however, where the parallelism of Boswell's world and the modern day come most to life, recognising not only the past of Scotland, but also its present. His rationale for travelling (using his bus pass to recreate the route in sections) was not just a simple reading of the text, nor a simple recreation of it:

Re-reading the accounts only added to my determination to see for myself how Scotland had changed in the intervening 237 years and if possible to insinuate myself into the minds of the original travellers. Recreating Johnson and Boswell's journey to the Western Isles is a well-established literary indulgence, but no-one has done it with a bus pass.²

For Campbell it was also about fellowship, recognising that the 'conjuring' of 'shades' was not real company, since 'communing with non-existent dead people seemed something of a psychotic risk.'³ In Campbell's pilgrim-reading there are many examples of the obvious changes in the world: the housing estates in the way of the view of Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh; the paraphernalia of modern student life in St Andrews – iPods, Pot Noodles, stolen police bollards, and condoms; and the IKEA remodelling of Monboddie House. However, Campbell also charts the ways that modern day Scotland and that of Boswell are essentially the same: reading a *Metro* report on the X58 about a 71 year old man having sex with a horse, makes him think of Johnson's early days working with *Warren's Birmingham Journal*; the indifferent pub in Banff where, like Boswell and Johnson, Campbell posits that he also tasted a pint of unsatisfactory beer from 1773; and the Castle in Inverness which is now a court for hooded youths 'stripped to the waist having escaped from Culloden'.⁴ The saddest note to Campbell's pilgrimage, though, lies in the ways in which modern life has impinged upon Boswell's world: the insidious taking over of the former New Inn in Aberdeen by the Wetherspoon's empire,

¹ Starr, *Whisky, Kilts, and the Loch Ness Monster*, p. 8.

² Stuart Campbell, *Boswell's Bus Pass* (Dingwall: Sandstone Press Ltd, 2013), p. 2.

³ Campbell, *Boswell's Bus Pass*, p. 3.

⁴ Campbell, *Boswell's Bus Pass*, p. 90.

where pensioners booze cheaply during the day, followed by office workers at twilight; the recognition that Fort George is still a barracks for the Royal Regiment of Scotland, leaving him to wonder at lost soldiers rather than dressing up in uniform; and the new colonists of Skye with their wind chimes and pottery, whilst the natives ‘scratch a living on the council owned reservations.’¹ Worst of all is how Auchinleck House has been rented out as holiday accommodation and Old Auchinleck is now a precarious ruin:

There were few signs of life and no one we could ask for a peek inside. Through which window did Boswell gaze miserably in the aftermath of the blazing row between his two fathers? [...] I clambered among the ruins [of Old Auchinleck] with David and we were struck by images of modern life in the form of empty lager cans and fag packets. The ruins are now precarious and must soon topple. Fully grown trees sprout from the remaining walls. Only their roots hold the frail edifice together as if the stones are being wrenched upwards by a huge bird holding them in its overstretched talons.²

Finally, Campbell’s reading concludes with the bastardisation of Scottish tourism via a new literary pilgrimage:

It was Boswell, ever the overeager tour guide, who suggested that they visit Roslin on the journey South [...] Johnson makes no mention of the detour, nor does he engage with passing professors on the merits of the *Da Vinci Code*. The overflow car park was full. The pilgrims clutched large blow ups of the last supper and cardboard cut-outs of the chalice. They wore *Judas Iscariot Sucks* and *Dan’s the Man* lapel badges. Film crews battered each other with clappers and empty reel cans. Lines of lawyers and litigants wielded quill pens and precedents by the score. We glanced at the cult followers of the Knights that go Neep, the stalls selling plaster casts of twisted pillars and the relatives of the murdered apprentice boy demanding justice.³

The note of lamentation is akin to Edwin Muir’s in the 1930s as he complained about the erosion of Scots identity as being hopelessly Americanised and Anglicised, or the perpetuation of the Burns myth, ‘based on a firm foundation of sanctified illusion and romantic wish fulfilment.’⁴ As Buzard has noted, ‘the place that is endangered by ease of access is a sacred precinct in danger of violation’ and subject to ‘elegiac travellers’ reveries.’⁵ As McLaren argued in 1966, there is a guilty paradox involved in any writing about specific locations, where ‘anyone who writes in praise of the appeal or beauty of any spot in Europe which is not much

¹ Campbell, *Boswell’s Bus Pass*, p. 136.

² Campbell, *Boswell’s Bus Pass*, p. 192.

³ Campbell, *Boswell’s Bus Pass*, p. 207.

⁴ Edwin Muir, *Scottish Journey* (Edinburgh: Mainstream Publishing, 2014 (originally 1935)), pp. 89-90.

⁵ Buzard, *The Beaten Track*, p. 40.

frequented is haunted by a slight sense of guilt.’¹ It is a guilt born from the stimulation of literary consumerism rather than reading – though for the Boswell pilgrim-readers it is not text-less since it centres on the following of the travel work rather than a Boswellian necro-tourism of mausoleums and Birthplace Trust museums. The idea of travelling in Boswell and Johnson’s steps without reading their books is a nonsense, unlike the experience of travelling to Stratford which can frequently be experienced without the necessity of reading, and which, as Nicola J Watson has said, solicits the tourist ‘to a theatrical experience lived in the moment and fundamentally sentimental in its effort to put the tourist into the same place and thus, by an effort of time-denying imagination, almost into the physical presence of the Poet.’²

3. Boswell’s Impact: a legacy of travel writing and travel reading

Boswell’s legacy as a travel writer goes beyond simple geographical guidance, though, as McLaren argued, much of the Corsican work still held good as a travel guide in 1966. He could even note that in meeting the local Corsicans Boswell the traveller was still remembered (ironic when he was the ‘family skeleton’ at Auchinleck).³ A more important and palpable legacy in terms of how travelogue was written clearly lies in the focus of Boswell’s travel writing on people as much as places – a clear distinction from the work of his predecessors, including Johnson – mingling observation and description of location, with the sort of personal revelation that was to bring such opprobrium, but laying a foundation that is very much the *modus operandi* of the modern travel account, particularly the televisual. What Boswell also did, through the *Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, was to introduce the idea of the moving tourist attraction, something begun within the pages of the *London Journal* and the characterisation

¹ Moray McLaren, *Corsica Boswell: Paoli, Johnson and Freedom* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1966), p. 66.

² Watson, *The Literary Tourist*, p. 62.

³ Moray McLaren, ‘Pasquale Paoli: Hero of Corsica’, *History Today*, 15 (1965), p. 761.

of Samuel Johnson, through the Grand Tour journals and the viewing of both Rousseau and Voltaire, leading to the championing of Paoli, and the final confirmation of the study of man as moving monument with Johnson in Scotland. In Boswell's writing, especially that focused on the 'fish-out-of-water' Johnson in Scotland, the reader sees that it centres not only on the narrative voice as observer and interpreter of landscape and travel experience, but focuses on another as the moving tourist attraction on tour – meta-travelogue of the most sophisticated sort, making the reader a quasi-voyeur – but transforming his journey into something more than 'by-the-book' tourism, not covered by the multitude of texts that preceded (and indeed followed) Boswell's writings.

There is a reason that readers follow Boswell's book on the Hebrides rather than Johnson's, which is that Boswell staked his claim to a different form of travelogue. It was one centred not simply on the spectacle of the foreign or 'other', but on a perceived veracity and reflection on the individual spectator in that environment (albeit from the perspective of a restrictive first person narrator), thus avoiding the patronising portrayals of other cultures because he felt both an affinity with them (as in the case of both Corsica and the Scottish Highlands). It was also because his greater critical instinct was inward-looking. Whether this critical view was that of James Boswell, 'James Boswell' the narrator-persona, or a third party as the traveller, he showed an acute observational skill that was both revelatory and against decorum for his age, offending some and reducing him to the 'family skeleton' that Pearson and Kingsmill perceived in the 1930s. He may have been seeking to escape from the apparent drudgery of his domestic identity, and in the form of the later excursions to London and Ashbourne he may even have ended up being his own tourist-reader, but he ended up returning to reality. As Paul Fussell has argued, 'the wise traveller learns not to repeat successes but tries new places all the time'.¹ Also, the precise reflection on experience, aided by the mnemonic nature of his note-taking,

¹ Paul Fussell, ed., *The Norton Book of Travel* (New York: W W Norton, 1987), p. 14.

meant Boswell's travel journals became a tool to store and relive memories and ultimately a means to retrieve them, encouraging, as Johnson said, a man to 'review his own mind.' They also mean that Boswell's writings carry an authenticity and immediacy for the reader, turning the travel book of facts and figures into a living text by a dead author, akin to any novel that comes 'alive' in the reader's imagination.

Boswell is important as a travel writer not because he wrote about the Grand Tour, or the geopolitical nature of Corsica, or the traveller's life in London, nor even because he recorded the experiences of one of the most famous men out of the urban environment in the wilds of Scotland. His importance as a travel writer is that in doing all of these things, he evolved a documentary and self-reflexive meta-travelogue style – a style which has become almost commonplace in our modern televisual world. Boswell's travel writing legacy is one of true enlightenment, and as Robert Zaretsky has recently argued, travel is very much a metaphor for the Enlightenment, an endless voyage whose 'name could well be *Sapere Aude*: "Dare to Know".'¹ Boswell's journey to enlightenment in his travel writing is both literal and metaphorical, from the first movements in his 'Harvest Jaunt' to the Hebridean *Tour*, touring Europe in the footsteps of Addison, blazing a trail as a traveller in Corsica and Scotland, exploring himself via his journalising more in hope than in expectation of ever really arriving. He also provided travel texts that can be engaged with now as freshly as when they were written two hundred years ago. Perhaps that is Boswell's greatest legacy: he was always a good companion for his fellow travellers. He still is.

¹ Robert Zaretsky, *Boswell's Enlightenment* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2015), p. 8.

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<http://beinecke.library.yale.edu/collections/highlights/boswell-collection>

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