

The Idea of Antiquity in Visual Images of
the Highlands and Islands
c. 1700-1880

Anne Margaret MacLeod

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Department of History (Scottish), Faculty of Arts, University
of Glasgow

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Abstract

Ideas about the landscape and inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands have already attracted a considerable amount of historical research. This thesis addresses the textual bias inherent in the historiography by exploring the value of visual images as a source of evidence for cultural perceptions of the Gàidhealtachd. In doing so, it takes its cue from the ‘visual turn’ which has been observable in other fields of cultural history in recent years, but which has as yet made little impact in a Scottish context.

Visual images stood at the sharp end of the means by which stereotypes were forged and sustained. In part, this was a direct result of the special role afforded to the image in the cultural and intellectual climate of Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment Europe. This thesis looks at the evolution of visual interest in the Highlands and Islands on two fronts, documentary and aesthetic, and pays particular attention to the way in which the two main functions of the image in society came to be intertwined.

The existing historiography on cultural perceptions of the Gàidhealtachd from the later medieval period to the nineteenth century has stressed the duality and deep ambivalence of ideas about the region – ideas which often coexisted comfortably side by side. Various constructs have been put forward to explain this ambivalence, including contemporary discourses on race and the idea of primitivism. This thesis argues that the concept of antiquity was the single most powerful influence driving the visual representation of the Highlands and Islands during a long period from c. 1700 to around 1880, and indeed into the twentieth century. If something could be regarded as ancient, aboriginal, dead, or even dying, it acquired both documentary and aesthetic value. This applied to actual antiquities, to customs and manners perceived as indigenous and ‘traditional’ to the region, and, ultimately, even to the physical landscape. Successive chapters explore what might now be classified as the archaeological, ethnological and

geological motives for visualising the Highlands and Islands, and the bias in favour of antiquity which resulted from the spread of intellectual influences into the fine arts.

The shadow of time which hallmarked visual representations of the region resulted in a preservationist mentality which has had powerful repercussions down to the present day. Drawing sharp lines between internal and external perspectives in the period examined has not been a central concern of this study, not least because the process of image-making can be seen to criss-cross cultural boundaries in anything but a clear-cut manner. However, the body of evidence considered – which embraces maps, plans, paintings, drawings, sketches and printed images by both professionals and amateurs – must be viewed as a rich and valuable companion to the written word, having played an integral part in the process of imagining and reimagining the Highlands and Islands since the beginning of the eighteenth century.

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Abbreviations

AAGM = Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museum
AM = Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
BL = British Library, London
ECL = Edinburgh Central Library
EUL = Edinburgh University Library
FWAF = Fleming-Wyfold Art Foundation, London
GM = Glasgow Museums
GUL = Glasgow University Library
MG = McManus Galleries, Dundee
MMAG = McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Greenock
NAS = National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh
NGS = National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh
NLS = National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh
NMS = National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh
NPG = National Portrait Gallery, London
NTS = National Trust for Scotland
RC = Royal Collection, Windsor Castle
SNPG = Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh
SSAM = Stirling Smith Art Gallery and Museum
V & A = Victoria and Albert Museum, London
YCBA = Yale Center for British Art, USA

AJ = The Art Journal

ILN = The Illustrated London News

f. = folio

n.d. = no date

n.p. = no page

n.s. = new series

pl. = plate

Note on References

References to illustrations appear in the form [*Fig. x*] within the text. Images which are referred to more than once are cross-referenced to the relevant figure number. All illustrations can be found in the appendix at the end of volume two.

First citations for oil paintings are given in the following format: Repository, Reference Number, Artist, *Title*, Medium, Dimensions, Date. Subsequent citations give the reference, artist and a shortened title only. All dimensions are in centimetres. References for individual drawings and sketches are given in the following format: Repository, Reference Number, Artist, *Title*, Medium, Date. Shortened titles are again used for subsequent citations. Sketches which are bound within a larger volume are given within single inverted commas and are identified by number or folio page within the volume wherever possible.

N.b. For some art collections, it has not been possible to supply a reference number; this affects a limited number of oil paintings and some individual prints.

References for manuscript maps and plans are given in the following format: Repository, Reference Number, Surveyor/Draughtsman, 'Title', Date.

Images in published sources are cited according to the usual conventions for printed material. To safeguard accuracy, illustrations are referenced to the original plate number (prefaced by the abbreviation pl.), where this exists, or to the number of the facing page (in the form, pl. facing x). Where possible, page references for published works are given in Arabic format (viz. 1, 2 ...) throughout. References which appear in Roman numerals (viz., i, ii ...) indicate citations from prefaces or introductions for which a separate paging system has been used in the original work.

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Introduction

Today, ideas about the Highlands and Islands are conditioned by sets of powerful visual images, from the established stereotypes of postcards and tourist brochures to more 'original' and artistic engagements with the region's landscape and culture. In the twenty-first century, it is common to speak of our image-saturated culture, and the amount of visual material devoted to the portrayal of the present-day Highlands and Islands could be seen as no more than a wider manifestation of this trend. From an historical perspective, however, the evolution of artistic interest in the Highlands has an ancestry stretching back to the beginning of the eighteenth century, when some of the subjects which still feature in visual impressions of the region were first documented. This thesis is an attempt to understand the emergence of what, by the later nineteenth-century, had become a pool of stock scenes, symbols and themes out of which visual representations of the region were invariably constructed. It aims to add to what is already known about artistic activity in the Highlands and Islands at an empirical level by considering the explosion of visual material across all genres as a phenomenon which requires explanation within its own historical context. In addition, it seeks to bring into a Scottish frame of reference some of the methodological debates surrounding the historical value of images which have been exercising the discipline at large. Although inspired by a body of recent work on cultural perceptions of the Highlands,¹ this study sits somewhat uneasily within a historiographical tradition more comfortable with the analysis of textual sources. It is my contention that our understanding of the Highland myth and its creation has suffered by a failure to consider the term 'image' in its most obvious sense, to the extent that artists have been marginalised in a story to which they were in fact central.

¹ I am particularly indebted to Robert Clyde's short summary of artistic images in *From Rebel to Hero: the Image of the Highlander 1745-1830* (East Linton, 1995), 137-9. This first opened my eyes to the potential of the theme for further study.

Although it has been necessary to impose some form of chronological boundary on the material to be considered, much of it has ramifications which require a longer view, and the period 1700-1880 should be viewed loosely. By the same token, the concept of the 'Highlands' is notoriously difficult to define. The Highland-Lowland divide has been variously identified as topographical, separating the literally higher, or more mountainous, land from the flatter territory to the south; geological, following the line of the Highland boundary fault from Dumbarton via the Grampians to the Moray Firth; and linguistic, equated with the distinction between the Gaelic and English-speaking areas of Scotland.² In the present day, the linguistic definition is no longer tenable, although the cultural legacy of formerly Gaelic-speaking areas is more difficult to quantify. In the period studied, the traveller's sense of crossing a boundary when entering the geographical Highlands was very pronounced, and a wealth of definitions of the precise distinction between the two zones could be presented. Often, linguistic and cultural factors were brought in to support the more visual sensation of passing through the mountains.³ Travellers who reached the very far north had the additional problem of accommodating Caithness and the Northern Isles within a simple north-south divide. In 1805, Robert Forsyth was very precise on this score, distinguishing Caithness, the districts adjoining the Moray Firth, and part of Ross-shire as Lowland territory.⁴ In the map which accompanied David Stewart of Garth's *Sketches of the Highlanders* (1822), on the other hand, Caithness was coloured as part of the adjoining Highland zone [Fig.1].⁵ Despite the problem of Caithness and the more easterly parts of Sutherland, Ross and Inverness-shire, Stewart's map can be taken as a convenient index to what was perceived to be the limits of the Highland zone

² Charles W. J. Withers, 'The Scottish Highlands Outlined: Cartographic Evidence for the Position of the Highland-Lowland Boundary', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 98, 1982, 143-4.

³ For a selection of definitions, see Edward Burt, *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland to his Friend in London* (2 vols., London, 1754), II, 3; Thomas Newte, *Prospects and Observations, on a Tour in England and Scotland, Natural Economical and Literary* (London, 1791), 74; William Roy, *The Military Antiquities of the Romans in North Britain* (London, 1793), 58; Thomas Garnett, *Observations on a Tour through the Highlands and Part of the Western Isles of Scotland* (2 vols., London, 1800), I, 70; Anon., *The Traveller's Guide Through Scotland and its Islands* (Edinburgh, 1808), 1-2.

⁴ Robert Forsyth, *The Beauties of Scotland* (5 vols., Edinburgh, 1805), V, 553-4.

⁵ In David Stewart, *Sketches of the Character, Manners, and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland: with Details of the Military Service of the Highland Regiments* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1822).

during our period, and most of the visual material considered falls roughly within these geographical bounds.

The study of mentalities or cultural perceptions is a form of history which has gained ground in recent years, and has to some extent entailed the study of a range of 'non-traditional' evidence. In tracing out ways in which the Highlands and Islands have been construed through time, historians have frequently been drawn to source material of an overtly subjective nature to support their research. Novels, stage-plays, poetry, songs, travel accounts and newspaper columns are all self-consciously literary forms from which an authorial stance or point of view can be extracted. Evidence from such sources has also, however, been blended with material from the more conventional quarrying grounds of the historian: administrative archives, government reports, private correspondence, and contemporary essays and treatises. As this implies, 'official' records are often equally infiltrated with the cultural prejudices of their age. Traditionally, as Charles Withers points out, such bias or exaggeration might have been viewed as mere 'chaff' which had to be discarded in order to get at 'the factual grain of Highland history'.⁶ But, as Peter Womack concurs, the 'quantities of colourful nonsense' which invade the sources are themselves the product of an historical process worth studying in its own right.⁷

Previous studies of perceptions have tended to focus on the period from 1745, although, more recently, the image of Gaelic society portrayed by early modern writers has also been documented. For the later period, the most comprehensive accounts include Peter Womack's *Improvement and Romance*, Robert Clyde's *From Rebel to Hero* and Charles Withers' essay, 'The Historical Creation of the Scottish Highlands'.⁸ A prominent theme in each of these studies is the invention and adoption of a Highland identity by the Scottish nation as a whole. More detailed attention is paid to aspects of this process by Hugh Trevor-Roper

⁶ Charles Withers, 'The Historical Creation of the Scottish Highlands', in *The Manufacture of Scottish History*, edd. Ian Donnachie and Christopher Whatley (Edinburgh, 1992), 143.

⁷ Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (London, 1989), 2.

⁸ *Ibid.*; Clyde, *Rebel to Hero*; Withers, 'Historical Creation'. It should be noted that Withers sees the 'creation' of the Highlands as much more than an eighteenth-century phenomenon, setting his material in the context of earlier centuries.

and Leah Leneman as they consider the ‘invention’ of Highland tradition, and Lowland romanticisation of the Jacobite Highlander respectively.⁹ Other historians, such as T. C. Smout and E. Mairi MacArthur,¹⁰ contribute a closer look at a particular point of view – that of the traveller as he or she evolved from eighteenth-century pioneer to modern-day tourist – or, like Chapman and Withers, consider attitudes to a particular aspect of Highland culture: the Gaelic language.¹¹ In *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture*, and in a subsequent study, *The Celts*, Chapman was also concerned with the role of ideas about race and ethnology in processes of mythmaking.¹² Perceptions of the Highlander from an ethnological and racial perspective have been the subject of more recent research, forming an important strand in Colin Kidd’s analysis of ethnicity and Scottish national identity from the seventeenth century.¹³ This takes the long view characteristic of other work on ideological appropriations of Gaeldom in a political context, with the early modern period being represented in further essays by Edward Cowan and Roger Mason.¹⁴ Into the nineteenth century, Krisztina Fenyő has portrayed racialist type-casting as central to the development of conflicting perceptions of the Gael during the famine decade from 1845-55, while James MacLeod draws on the same background to illuminate mounting

⁹ Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘The Invention of Tradition: the Highland Tradition of Scotland’, in *The Invention of Tradition*, edd. Eric Hobsbawn and Terence Ranger (Cambridge, 1983), 15-42; Leah Leneman, ‘A New Role for a Lost Cause: Lowland Romanticisation of the Jacobite Highlander’, in *Perspectives in Scottish Social History*, ed. Leah Leneman (Aberdeen, 1988), 107-24.

¹⁰ Christopher Smout, ‘Tours in the Scottish Highlands from the Eighteenth to the Twentieth Centuries’, *Northern Scotland*, 5, 1983, 99-121; Mairi MacArthur, ‘Blasted Heaths and Hills of Mist: the Highlands and Islands through Travellers’ Eyes’, *Scottish Affairs*, 3, 1993, 23-31; E. Mairi MacArthur, ‘Among Sublime Prospects: Travel Writers and the Highlands’, in *The Polar Twins*, edd. Edward J. Cowan and Douglas Gifford (Edinburgh, 1999), 171-86.

¹¹ Malcolm Chapman, *The Gaelic Vision in Scottish Culture* (London, 1978); Charles W. J. Withers, *Gaelic in Scotland 1698-1981: The Geographical History of a Language* (Edinburgh, 1984); Charles W. J. Withers, *Gaelic Scotland: The Transformation of a Culture Region* (London, 1988).

¹² Malcolm Chapman, *The Celts: The Construction of a Myth* (Basingstoke, 1992).

¹³ Colin Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World, 1600-1800* (Cambridge, 1999), esp. ch. 6. See also Colin Kidd, ‘Teutonist Ethnology and Scottish Nationalist Inhibition, 1780-1880’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 74, 1995, 45-68.

¹⁴ Edward J. Cowan, ‘The Discovery of the Gàidhealtachd in Sixteenth Century Scotland’, *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 61, 1998-2000, 259-84; Edward J. Cowan, ‘The Invention of Celtic Scotland’, in *Alba: Celtic Scotland in the Middle Ages*, edd. Edward J. Cowan and R. Andrew MacDonald (East Linton, 2000), 1-23; Roger A. Mason, ‘Civil Society and the Celts: Hector Boece, George Buchanan, and the Ancient Scottish Past’, in *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, edd. Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay (Edinburgh, 2002), 95-120.

disunity in the Victorian Free Church – a split, he argues, between Highland and Lowland factions articulated by contemporaries in racial terms.¹⁵

Taken together, this body of research presents two principal models within which attitudes towards the Gàidhealtachd can be understood. The first, developed in relation to the post-Culloden period, presents a picture in which universal hostility and contempt gave way under the influence of Romanticism to transformed perceptions of both landscape and people.¹⁶ The second interpretative model does not discount evidence for ‘rehabilitation’ in the later eighteenth century but emphasises the survival of a considerable degree of ambivalence from an earlier period. Cowan, Kidd and Mason all explore the complex legacy of the early modern period with this in view, highlighting a split in attitude which coupled idealisation of ancient Gaelic institutions with a considerable degree of hostility towards contemporary Gaeldom.¹⁷ Several studies of the post-Culloden period follow a similar argument, showing that contempt for the Highlander could comfortably coexist with more romantic sentiments. As in the early modern era, romanticism tended to settle around ideas of ancientness and the survival of tradition. There was also a new ingredient in the emergence of a taste for wild landscape, which brought with it its own contradictions. The celebration of emptiness often meant an instinctive rejection of the region’s native inhabitants as legitimate occupants of this landscape; moreover, the contemporary fashion for improvement often flourished uneasily alongside a romantic rejection of modernity and change.¹⁸

¹⁵ Krisztina Fenyő, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance: Lowland Perceptions of the Highlands and the Clearances during the Famine Years, 1845-1855* (East Linton, 2000); James Lachlan MacLeod, *The Second Disruption: The Free Church in Victorian Scotland and the Origins of the Free Presbyterian Church* (East Linton, 2000).

¹⁶ For this type of analysis, see esp. Clyde, *Rebel to Hero*; Smout, ‘Tours’; Leneman, ‘New Role for a Lost Cause’. These concentrate particularly on the type of romanticism that flourished on the back of the failed Stewart cause.

¹⁷ Cowan, ‘Discovery of the Gàidhealtachd’; Cowan, ‘Invention of Celtic Scotland’, esp. 5-11; Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, ch. 6; Mason, ‘Civil Society and the Celts’.

¹⁸ For comment on the split between perceptions of real Highlanders and romanticisation of the landscape, see Smout, ‘Tours’, 105; MacArthur, ‘Among Sublime Prospects’, 175; Fenyő, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance*, 168. On the mythologising of emptiness as the secret face of improvement, see Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 61-86; Withers, ‘Historical Creation’, 152; Fenyő, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance*, 6, 167.

That no contradiction was perceived in these positions constitutes an historical blind spot which has been accounted for in several ways. Most of these explanations centre on the idea that both contempt for and romanticisation of the Gael were two sides of essentially the same position: a tendency to characterise the Highlander as 'other' and therefore the opposite of both good and bad in Anglicised culture. An important qualification within this was that the good in Gaelic culture was necessarily of ancient origin, part of the virtue attributed to all primitive societies. Womack argues that apparently conflicting attitudes towards the Highlands were in fact twin threads, linked by an underlying symmetry or 'covert complementarity'.¹⁹ This double-sided discourse brought with it a suitably ambiguous language. In descriptions of the Highland landscape, for example, the terms 'desert', 'desolate', 'gloomy', 'horrible', 'hideous', and 'melancholy' came to be used interchangeably for the expression of admiration or distaste, to the extent that it becomes unclear which emotion they were intended to convey.²⁰ Chapman makes use of the same idea, describing the existence of 'a rich verbal and metaphorical complex' out of which the Gael was both praised and denigrated for what amounted to the same qualities. Within this construct, violence was simply the obverse of emotion; animal characteristics, of closeness to nature; lack of civilised manners, of naivety; and disregard for property, of unworldliness. Whether the attitude was favourable or otherwise proved largely irrelevant, the Gael being reduced in either case to a collection of stock characteristics – 'the primitive who is ever-departing, whether his exit be made to jeers or to tears'.²¹ This explanation for the coexistence of conflicting perceptions has also been applied to later periods. Looking at Lowland perceptions of the Highlands during the famine decade from 1845 to 1855, Fenyö uses a similar model to account for polarities in the attitudes of contemporary journalists. Setting their observations within a context of pseudo-scientific racial theory, she connects the sympathetic, the romantic and the hostile on the grounds of a common refusal to see Highlanders 'as equal, fellow human beings'.²²

¹⁹ Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 77.

²¹ Chapman, *Gaelic Vision*, 18.

²² Fenyö, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance*, 184.

An important aspect of this distancing was the belief that the Gaelic world belonged to a different era. The primitivist philosophy of prominent Enlightenment figures built on the kind of admiration for Spartan virtues expressed by earlier historians and chroniclers. In 1751, Adam Smith began a series of lectures in Glasgow which gave influential expression to the idea that societies develop in a series of progressive stages, passing from hunting to pastoral to agricultural and finally to commercial economies. According to this analysis, Highland difference could be explained by the fact that the region belonged to an earlier stage of society than its Lowland neighbour. 'To the urbane philosophe of the late eighteenth century', writes Withers, 'the Highlander was a contemporary ancestor, the Highlands the Scottish past on the doorstep'.²³ Out of this sprang two conflicting inferences: one, that everything Highland was necessarily ancient and therefore worthy of preservation *per se*, and secondly, that the region was not inherently or irredeemably backward and could be helped into the commercial stage of society by intensive improvement. On paper, this involved a split between perceptions of contemporary Highlanders and the glorification of their past. In practice, however, the loyalty to 'tradition' evinced by Highland Society members and antiquarians was able to proceed unchecked alongside schemes designed to lift the Gael out of his seemingly endemic poverty and squalor.²⁴

During the nineteenth century, the growing currency of racial theories which mitigated the prospects of redemption for the Celtic peoples coincided with increasingly desperate economic circumstances in the Highlands and Islands. Whereas primitivism had held out the possibility that the Highlander could be redeemed from backwardness by advancing towards another stage in society, racial theory explained this backwardness as something native to the Celt and therefore beyond recovery. As Kidd describes, this ideology originated in the writings of men like Lord Kames and John Pinkerton in the later eighteenth

²³ Withers, 'Historical Creation', 147; cf. Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 23.

²⁴ The Highland Societies of London and Scotland, part of whose remit was to preserve the dress, language, literature, customs and music of the Gael, counted many prominent 'improvers' among their membership: Clyde, *Rebel to Hero*, 134. On Improvement and Highlandism as they came together in single individuals, see Brian D. Osborne, *The Last of the Chiefs: Alasdair Ranaldson Macdonell of Glengarry, 1773-1828* (Glendaruel, 2001); Rosalind D. Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John: The Life of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, 1754-1835* (London, 1962).

century.²⁵ Pinkerton's agenda was to attribute the progress of civilisation in Scotland to the Gothic or Teutonic origins of Lowlanders, which made them 'acute, industrious, sensible, erect [and] free'. Highlanders, on the other hand, were condemned as 'indolent, slavish, strangers to industry'.²⁶ Into the nineteenth-century, vitriolic attacks on Celtic character continued in the work of anatomist Robert Knox, author of *The Races of Men* (1850), who believed that the Celt remained the same under every circumstance, 'unaltered and unalterable'.²⁷ Both Fenyö and MacLeod trace out the manner in which such attitudes permeated the thought of Lowland commentators from the middle years of the nineteenth-century. As with the concept of primitivism, ideas about race permitted ambivalent perceptions of the Gàidhealtachd, fuelling strands of romanticism alongside contempt.²⁸ Racially-based romanticism reached its fullest extent in the ideas of nineteenth-century Celtic scholars, particularly Matthew Arnold, whose work Chapman discusses in detail. Arnold characterised the Germanic races with solid, useful virtues – 'industry', 'well-doing', 'patient steady elaboration of things' – but considered these weighed down by a tendency towards the humdrum in language, form and feature. The essence of the Celt, on the other hand, was 'to aspire ardently after life, light, and emotion, to be expansive, adventurous, and gay'.²⁹ Rather than construing this temperament as a cardinal sin which had forfeited the right of the Gael to remain on British soil,³⁰ Arnold rather saw it as an essential balance to the utilitarian, materialist trope which weighed down Anglo-Saxon character.³¹

The background to and intellectual justifications for such conflicting perceptions of the Highlander are essential to an understanding of the cultural milieu in which visual representations began to come on stream during the eighteenth century. What we can take from the literature reviewed here is extremely

²⁵ Kidd, 'Teutonist Ethnology', 51.

²⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 52.

²⁷ Quoted in MacLeod, *Second Disruption*, 142. Cf. Susan Collinson, 'Robert Knox: Anatomy of Race', *History Today*, 40, 1990, 44-9; Kidd, 'Teutonist Ethnology', 57-8.

²⁸ Fenyö, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance*, 6-7.

²⁹ Quoted in Chapman, *Gaelic Vision*, 93-4.

³⁰ In *The Races of Men, A Fragment* (London, 1850), Knox went so far as to call for an expulsion of the Celt from British shores: 'The race must be forced from the soil; by fair means, if possible; still they must leave. England's safety requires it'. Quoted in Fenyö, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance*, 41.

³¹ Chapman, *Gaelic Vision*, 95.

valuable, not only in its presentation of clear explanatory models against which the evidence of images can be measured, but also in suggesting strands of visual material which merit much deeper exploration. Several historians make at least a passing reference to the role of images in shaping or purveying the perceptions they discuss.³² Where the existing historiography is weak, however, is in a detailed, contextualised analysis of visual sources. A reluctance to deal with visual material still overshadows historical practice generally, although there have been some recent shifts in attitude. Advocating a more visual approach to history in 1998, Roy Porter complained that ‘in their workaday practice the vast bulk of historians remain latter-day iconoclasts’.³³ Among the reasons for this, he cited the emphasis of historical training on the superior reliability and representativeness of written records as a means of access to the past. He also traced a tendency to consider visual evidence as a merely decorative supplement to more serious history based on written documents. Both of these observations provide food for thought. Behind the perception that images are inherently unreliable and unrepresentative witnesses to the past lie deeper cultural attitudes towards the relative functions of visual and verbal communication. The latter – be it the spoken or the written word – could be construed as more transparent and potentially less ambiguous than the visual: reducible to recognised lexical and grammatical structures. Images, on the other hand, have been described as ‘treacherous’,³⁴ following a set of conventions which may dissociate their content from the reality of the outside world. The irony of visual evidence is that nothing, on the one hand, brings us closer to ‘seeing’ the past in a material sense, but nothing, on the other, is so fraught with difficulties as to how far we can depend on the apparent innocence of incidental details.

David Perlmutter identifies two principal tendencies in the historical use of images: to ‘uncover facts’, and ‘to understand ideological ways of seeing

³² Clyde, *Rebel to Hero*, 137-9; Withers, ‘Historical Creation’, 149, 151-4; MacArthur, ‘Among Sublime Prospects’, 174. See also the discussion of landscape aesthetics in Smout, ‘Tours’, 101-6, and the illustrations in Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, and Fenyo, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance*.

³³ Roy Porter, ‘Seeing the Past’, *Past and Present*, 118, 1998, 188.

³⁴ Peter Burke, *Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence* (London, 2001), 31.

things'.³⁵ The problem with the first of these is the need to disentangle the illusion of material reality which is presented in many historic images from the cultural codes and patterns of intention which govern representation. Sometimes seemingly transparent, realistic portrayals of everyday objects conceal a rhetorical purpose, such as the richly detailed interiors and genre scenes painted by seventeenth-century Dutch artists. In *The Embarrassment of Riches*, which drew extensively on such material, Simon Schama announced his intention to view the art of the period 'not as a literal record of social experience, but as a document of beliefs', focusing on the ways in which images 'filter the perception of the eye through the lens of moral sensibility'.³⁶ Discussing the problem of meaning in the visual arts, Arthur Marwick also cautions against the possibility of mistaking iconographical conventions for social customs, using the example of eighteenth-century peasants consuming a meal of bread, garlic and wine as a potential instance of religious iconography subsuming social realism in painting.³⁷

Taking the image on its own terms as a rhetorical device seems on first sight a more fruitful line of enquiry. This does away with the problematic assumption that realism in art must reflect historical 'reality' and sets up alternative standards of reliability. As Peter Burke points out, the historian's 'pictorial turn' fits into a theoretical context in which the possibility of a linear relationship between reality and representation has been increasingly challenged.³⁸ This issue is addressed further in W. J. T. Mitchell's study, *Iconology*, which is concerned with the idea of imagery on a broad spectrum ranging from graphic representations to verbal metaphors. In his introduction to the problem of defining the image, Mitchell writes:

Language and imagery are no longer what they promised to be for critics and philosophers of the Enlightenment – perfect, transparent media

³⁵ David Perlmutter, 'Visual Historical Methods: Problems, Prospects, Applications', *Historical Methods*, 27, 1994, 179.

³⁶ Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London, 1988), 10.

³⁷ Arthur Marwick, *The New Nature of History – Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (Basingstoke, 2001), 188.

³⁸ Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 31.

through which reality may be represented to the understanding. For modern criticism, language and imagery have become enigmas, problems to be explained, prison-houses which lock the understanding away from the world. The commonplace of modern studies of images, in fact, is that they must be understood as a kind of language; instead of providing a transparent window on the world, images are now regarded as the sort of sign that presents a deceptive appearance of naturalness and transparency concealing an opaque, distorting, arbitrary mechanism of representation, a process of ideological mystification.³⁹

Mitchell, writing from a postmodernist perspective, inserts a distinction between reality and representation, arguing that no form of image – visual or linguistic – can provide a transparent window on the world. For the historian in search of cultural perceptions, this is good news, as it is the opaque layers which hold the most valuable evidence of ideologies and attitudes. Over the past decade, there has been a shift towards a more sustained and sensitive engagement with visual sources among a small group of historians, mostly working in the field of cultural history. In 1995, a new series of monographs was launched under the title ‘Picturing History’, with series editors Peter Burke, Sander L. Gilman, Ludmilla Jordanova and Roy Porter. Volumes in the series, covering a wide range of periods and topics, are linked by their use of pictures as direct evidence about the past, and by a critical approach which construes images ‘as active tools of negotiation, parody and resistance – as spaces in which history is made and enacted, as well as recorded’.⁴⁰ This stance is highly significant, as it places visual material at the centre of a new kind of historical research, prioritising such issues as power and identity, constructions of race, gender and ‘otherness’, and perceptions of taboos like death, illness and punishment. Such history, whatever its precise methodological standpoint, clearly emerges from the post-modern emphasis on ideology and discourse: elements which not only invade the sources,

³⁹ W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago and London, 1986), 8.

⁴⁰ See http://www.reaktionbooks.co.uk/list_picturinghistory.html (accessed 29 August 2006) for background information on the series and a full list of titles. See also Peter Burke, ‘Picturing History’, *History Today*, 51, 2001, 186-205.

obscuring and entangling 'pure' facts, but which are in essence facts (and therefore subjects of legitimate research) themselves.⁴¹

It is of course necessary to probe the methodological implications of using visual material. On one level, there are many parallels with the interpretation of texts. Both, as Burke points out, raise 'problems of context, function, rhetoric, recollection (whether soon or long after the event), second-hand witnessing and so on'.⁴² Moreover, although history is often caricatured as a quest for 'facts', this does not necessarily entail the suspension of all critical faculties. In defence of history, Richard J. Evans contends that 'the language of historical documents is never transparent, and historians have long been aware that they cannot simply gaze through it to the historical reality behind'.⁴³ Likewise, Cowan and Finlay contend that historians 'have for long been happily deconstructing material, all too conscious that what is not stated in a document may be just as crucial as what actually appears'.⁴⁴ Such critical tools can without doubt be cross-applied to the problem of decoding visual rhetoric.

Art-historical approaches to visual material may also be useful. In his recent overview of the uses of images as historical evidence, Burke devotes a chapter to iconography – a method of translating visual meaning into words.⁴⁵ The principles of iconography were most famously codified by Erwin Panofsky (1892-1968), who specified a series of analytical steps via which it might be possible to arrive at the intrinsic meaning of a painting. This he defined as 'the underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion – qualified by one personality and condensed into one work'.⁴⁶ Accessing such attitudes is the natural goal of any

⁴¹ Although this thesis is emphatically not an experiment in postmodern theory, the influence of these ideas on the visual turn in history, and on the research topics to which visual evidence is being applied, is something of which I have become increasingly aware. See Callum G. Brown, *Postmodernism for Historians* (Harlow, 2005) for an accessible overview.

⁴² Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 15.

⁴³ Richard J. Evans, *In Defence of History* (London, 1997), 104.

⁴⁴ Edward J. Cowan and Richard J. Finlay, 'Introduction', in *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, edd. Cowan and Finlay, 5.

⁴⁵ Burke, *Eyewitnessing*, 34-45.

⁴⁶ Erwin Panofsky, 'Iconography and Iconology: An Introduction to the Study of Renaissance Art', in Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts: Papers in and on Art History* (London, 1955), 55.

quest for cultural perceptions, which makes iconography of immediate relevance to this type of study. Despite criticisms of its insistence on hidden meanings and the need to find a text behind each image,⁴⁷ iconography has been applied creatively to a range of imagery beyond the Renaissance subjects to which Panofsky first referred. Such work embraces maps, landscape paintings and realist images which may not have been intentionally symbolic, but which were nevertheless suffused with the attitudes and outlook of their culture.⁴⁸ In order to safeguard the accuracy of interpretation, Panofsky recommended the consultation of as many other documents – political, poetical, religious, philosophical or social – as possible.⁴⁹ This makes dialogue with textual sources a key feature of any iconographical analysis.

Although iconography is primarily concerned with image content, art historians have also established a connection between style and the mental world of a society or culture. In his seminal work, *Art and Illusion* (1960), E. H. Gombrich probed what he described as ‘the riddle of style’, asking, ‘Why is it that different ages and different nations have represented the visible world in such different ways?’⁵⁰ Gombrich surmised that the different representative codes adhered to by different cultures provide a key to the psychology of pictorial representation, or the interpretative mechanisms which have filtered the perception and portrayal of external reality in all ages. Other art historians have followed his lead. In *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy* (1972), Michael Baxandall explored the relationship between experience and visual perception, arguing that the mental equipment with which we order visual experience is determined by the cultural and social milieu which has influenced it.⁵¹ In the light of this, he concluded that the form and style of paintings can be quarried for insights into

⁴⁷ Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago, 1983), xix-xx.

⁴⁸ Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels, ed., *The Iconography of Landscape: Essays on the Symbolic Representation, Design and Use of Past Environments* (Cambridge, 1988); J. B. Harley, *The New Nature of Maps: Essays in the History of Cartography*, ed. Paul Laxton (Baltimore and London, 2001).

⁴⁹ Panofsky, ‘Iconography and Iconology’, 65.

⁵⁰ E H Gombrich, *Art and Illusion: A Study in the Psychology of Pictorial Representation* (London, 1960), 3-4.

⁵¹ Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford, 1972), 40.

social history which may not be available from written documents.⁵² Likewise, the realist style of seventeenth century Dutch art formed the basis for Svetlana Alpers' exploration of cultural attitudes in the Republic during the so-called 'Golden Age'.⁵³

Aside from isolated essays like Trevor Pringle's examination of Queen Victoria's patronage of Sir Edwin Landseer at Balmoral,⁵⁴ there has been little attempt to connect depictions of the Highlands, or indeed of Scotland, to a wider pool of cultural attitudes. This is not to discount the contribution of exhibitions like *As an Fhearann* (1986), which highlighted the disparity between appearance and reality in images documenting a century of 'clearance, conflict and crofting' since 1886. John Morrison's incisive critique of Highlandism in Scottish art and its relationship to national identity is also worth mentioning here.⁵⁵ In the main body of this thesis, overt theoretical content has been kept to a minimum, although the foregoing discussion of methodological issues should be borne in mind. Owing to the range of source material examined, the boundaries of several disciplines – including cartographic, literary, and scientific history as well as that of art – have been trespassed upon. Within these disciplines, some of the sources have already amassed a degree of critical attention, much of which has proved invaluable to this attempt at a more integrated approach.

Across the early part of our period, the most important impulse driving visual representations of the Highlands and Islands could broadly be described as topographical. Travel illustrations are the first class of material which fall into this category. Travellers to the region took their cue from the culture of empiricism fostered by the Royal Society of London (established in 1660), using the image as an aid to first-hand documentation. During the eighteenth century, scientific travel was interrupted by the unsettled political climate, but the work of

⁵² *Ibid.*, 152.

⁵³ Alpers, *Art of Describing*.

⁵⁴ Trevor R. Pringle, 'The Privation of History: Landseer, Victoria and the Highland Myth', in *The Iconography of Landscape*, edd. Cosgrove and Daniels, 142-61.

⁵⁵ Christopher Carrell and Malcolm MacLean, edd., *As an Fhearann/From the Land - Clearance, Conflict and Crofting - A Century of Images of the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh, Stornoway and Glasgow, 1986); John Morrison, *Painting the Nation: Identity and Nationalism in Scottish Painting, 1800-1920* (Edinburgh, 2003).

men like Thomas Pennant (1726-98), who toured the Highlands after the pacification, continued the tradition instigated by Edward Lhuyd (1660-1709) and Martin Martin (c. 1660-1718). The visual dimension of early scientific travel to the region has attracted little comment to date, although Stuart Piggott's sketch of the evolution of archaeological illustration allows us to set the Highland material in a wider context.⁵⁶ Frank Emery also discusses the visual aspect of Lhuyd's work in his biographical account of the scientist.⁵⁷ Towards the close of the eighteenth century, the emergence of geology as an individual discipline deepened the traveller's engagement with the physical landscape. Martin Rudwick identifies three different types of visual material which emerged from this: the geological map, the diagrammatic section, and the landscape view.⁵⁸ Images of this nature can be found in a variety of sources: in scientific travels and treatises, papers published in the *Transactions* of newly-established geological societies, and within manuscript field notes and sketchbooks. Geological depictions of the Highland landscape have proved the most attractive form of scientific imagery for historians of art and culture, although their interaction with other genres such as antiquarian illustration has also been recognised. The influence of geology on fine art opens up a further category of material through which broad trends and themes can be traced across different genres.⁵⁹

Maps and plans are the second major category of material which come under the topographical umbrella. The political and economic context to map-making in early modern Scotland has been well-served by Withers' study of the interaction

⁵⁶ Stuart Piggott, *Antiquity Depicted: Aspects of Archaeological Illustration* (London, 1978).

⁵⁷ Frank Emery, *Edward Lhuyd, 1660-1709* (Cardiff, 1971), 65-9.

⁵⁸ Martin J. S. Rudwick, 'The Emergence of a Visual Language for Geological Science, 1760-1840', *History of Science*, 14, 1976, 149-195.

⁵⁹ Michael Shortland, 'Darkness Visible: Underground Culture in the Golden Age of Geology', *History of Science*, 32, 1994, 2-61; James G. Paradis, 'The Natural Historian as Antiquary of the World: Hugh Miller and the Rise of Literary Natural History', in *Hugh Miller and the Controversies of Victorian Science*, ed. Michael Shortland (Oxford, 1996), 122-42; Charlotte Klonk, *Science and the Perception of Nature: British Landscape Art in the Late Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth Centuries* (New Haven and London, 1996), 67-99. On the crossover between antiquarianism and geology in a European context, see also Barbara Maria Stafford, 'Toward Romantic Landscape Perception: Illustrated Travels and the Rise of "Singularity" as an Aesthetic Category', *Art Quarterly*, 1, 1977, 89-124.

between geography, science and national identity since 1520.⁶⁰ What has absorbed less attention, however, is the place of cartographic material in a much wider story of visual representation, and in particular the way in which maps encode mentalities and cultural perceptions. Although this approach to historical cartography is gaining ground elsewhere,⁶¹ it has as yet made little impact in a Scottish context. Owing to the enormous influence of the Jacobite rebellions on attitudes towards the Highlands, the maps and plans which resulted from attempts to police the north from c. 1689 to 1746 constitute an obvious starting point. An accessible introduction to this material is available in Historic Scotland's publication on fortification and the Jacobites, compiled by Chris Tabraham and Doreen Grove.⁶² Military mapmaking has also received some attention from art historians, owing to the importance of the Roy Survey of Scotland (1747-55) in the discovery and visual representation of the Scottish landscape generally. The 1978 exhibition, *The Discovery of Scotland*, curated by James Holloway and Lindsay Errington at the National Gallery of Scotland, discussed the contribution of the Survey's chief draughtsman, Paul Sandby, to the appreciation of Scottish scenery. His work has also been fitted into a wider set of essays on the links between cartography and art.⁶³

Mapping and art come together in a further class of cartographical material – the estate plan. In 1760, the Forfeited Estates Commission, set up to administer the Highland estates annexed to the Crown following the 'Forty-Five Rebellion, finally became operational.⁶⁴ The earliest large-scale surveys of the region were commissioned under the auspices of the Annexed Estates Board. One of the Forfeited Estates Commissioners who took a close interest in these surveys was Colonel David Watson, who had also been the overall commander of the Military

⁶⁰ Charles W. J. Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity: Scotland since 1520* (Cambridge, 2001).

⁶¹ J. B. Harley is generally recognised as a pioneering scholar in this field. For a representative selection of his essays on mentalities and mapping, see Harley, *New Nature of Maps*, ed. Laxton.

⁶² Chris Tabraham and Doreen Grove, *Fortress Scotland and the Jacobites* (London, 1995). See also <http://www.nls.uk/digitalibrary/map/military/index.html> (accessed 31 August 2006) for digitised maps and plans from NLS.

⁶³ James Holloway and Lindsay Errington, *The Discovery of Scotland: The Appreciation of Scottish Scenery through Two Centuries of Painting* (Edinburgh, 1978), 33-46. See also Jessica Christian, 'Paul Sandby and the Military Survey of Scotland', in *Mapping the Landscape: Essays on Art and Cartography*, edd. Nicholas Alfrey and Stephen Daniels (Nottingham, 1990), 18-22.

⁶⁴ Annette M. Smith, *Jacobite Estates of the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh, 1982).

Survey.⁶⁵ From the 1760s and '70s, many private landowners in the Highlands were also employing surveyors to map their lands, including Sir James Grant in Strathspey, Sir Alexander MacDonald of Sleat in Skye, the Duke of Atholl, and the Countess of Sutherland.⁶⁶ The sheer volume of material which falls into this category places a detailed examination of estate plans and their visualisation of an 'improved' landscape beyond the scope of this thesis.⁶⁷ Despite this, an interesting aspect of land surveying which deserves more attention is the level of draughtsmanship which went into the making of the final plans. This frequently spilled over into decorative cartouches, vignettes and marginalia which can provide illuminating links with other types of visual material, and are a valuable resource for studying cultural perceptions in their own right.⁶⁸

Besides commercial objectives, an aesthetic agenda lay behind some of the planning activity on Highland estates. Landscape gardening and the shaping of the 'policies', or estate grounds, were heavily influenced by fashions in painting.⁶⁹ Traditionally, genres of art had been conceived as falling into a hierarchy of categories, in which history painting and portraiture filled the highest levels, after which came landscape painting, genre (narrative scenes drawn from everyday life) and still life.⁷⁰ Since the seventeenth century, however, landscape painting had been rising in status. In France, the work of

⁶⁵ Ian H. Adams, 'The Land Surveyor and his Influence on the Scottish Rural Landscape', *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 84, 1968, 254. On individual surveys and surveyors associated with the Forfeited Estates Commission, see Ian H. Adams, ed., *Papers on Peter May, Land Surveyor, 1749-1793* (Edinburgh, 1979).

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 250; Chris Fleet, 'James Stobie and his Surveying of the Perthshire Landscape, 1780-1804', *History Scotland*, 5, 2005, 40. In 1774, John Home was commissioned to undertake a survey of the farms of Assynt in Sutherland at the behest of the infant Countess' tutors, among whom were counted the Duke of Atholl: R. J. Adam, ed., *John Home's Survey of Assynt* (Edinburgh, 1960), xix.

⁶⁷ For a sample of illustrated plans in NAS, see Ian H. Adams, *Descriptive List of Plans in the Scottish Record Office* (4 vols., Edinburgh, 1966-88).

⁶⁸ The only discussion of such decoration I am aware of in a Scottish context is B.R.S. Megaw, 'Farming and Fishing Scenes on a Caithness Plan, 1772', *Scottish Studies*, 6, 1992, 218-23. This concentrates on the value of such drawings as evidence for northern ploughing and yoking methods in the eighteenth century. John Home's vignette sketches of buildings in Assynt are also used as empirical evidence in Alexander Morrison, 'Rural Settlement in the Scottish Highlands, 1750-1850: A Comparative Study of Lochtayside and Assynt' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 1985). On the symbolic significances of map decoration in an different context, see G. N. G. Clarke, 'Taking Possession: the Cartouche as Cultural Text in Eighteenth-Century American Maps', *Word and Image*, 4, 1988, 455-74.

⁶⁹ Holloway and Errington, *Discovery of Scotland*, 13-21; A.A. Tait, *The Landscape Garden in Scotland, 1735-1835* (Edinburgh, 1980).

⁷⁰ See Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (San Marino, 1959), esp. 57-73.

Claude Lorrain and his followers popularised an idealised treatment of nature, depicting ruined buildings, shady trees and distant mountains bathed in a glow of warm Mediterranean light. In Italy, the name of Salvator Rosa came to be associated with an alternative style, portraying torrents, caves and mountainscapes populated by romanticised *banditti*. Roughly speaking, the Claudeian style became abstracted into a formula for painting known as the picturesque; Rosa's, on the other hand, held the degree of *frisson* or danger necessary for the sublime. Andrews sees these developments as central to the rise of landscape art in Britain during the eighteenth century, a movement which eventually embraced the Highlands.⁷¹ During the later eighteenth century, professional artists began to paint real scenes in the southern fringes of the region, particularly lake scenery such as Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, in the idealised manner made fashionable by Claude.⁷² At the same time, the policies on great Highland estates like Inveraray, Blair Atholl, Taymouth and Mar were reshaped to fit the dictates of changing aesthetics.⁷³ These sites in turn became key stopping points on the Highland tour route, and 'landscape tourism' began to compete with the scientific rationale which had initially attracted visitors. This type of tour was stimulated by published travelogues like Rev. William Gilpin's *Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty* (1789).⁷⁴ Gilpin not only charted the choicest views, but also offered detailed instructions as to how they should be sketched and coloured.⁷⁵ In the wake of Gilpin, touring the Highlands in quest of the picturesque became a fashionable pleasure, one which resulted in an unprecedented spate of images. Although the texts of eighteenth and nineteenth century travel accounts have been extensively quarried by historians, their illustrations have so far received little attention from scholars in any discipline. In part, this may be due to the repetitive and unoriginal quality of much of the material. The visual content of published travel journals, guide books, and collectors' sets of prints, all churning out formulaic images,

⁷¹ Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Aldershot, 1989), 26-28.

⁷² David and Francina Irwin, *Scottish Painters at Home and Abroad, 1700-1900* (London, 1975), 139.

⁷³ Tait, *Landscape Garden*, 7.

⁷⁴ William Gilpin, *Observations, Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1776, on Several Parts of Great Britain; Particularly the Highlands of Scotland* (2 vols., London, 1789).

⁷⁵ Gilpin, *Observations*, I, 131.

nonetheless influenced the perceptions of subsequent travellers to a profound degree.⁷⁶ Some valuable insights into the circulation of such hackneyed views, and their reproduction by amateur artists, can be gathered from a perusal of manuscript travel diaries and sketchbooks.⁷⁷ These can also contain some flashes of originality and local surprises, harking back to the scientific thread which inspired early travel to the Highlands and Islands.

Landscape tourism was also stimulated by literary imagery, initially spawned by James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* (1760), an English 'translation' of supposedly ancient Gaelic poetry collected from oral tradition in the Highlands. *Fingal* followed in 1761-2, *Temora* in 1763, and a collected edition – *The Poems of Ossian, the Son of Fingal* – in 1765.⁷⁸ The influence of Ossian on both European and Scottish painting has already amassed a significant amount of art historical research, dwelling in particular on the decorative scheme designed by Alexander Runciman (1736-85) for Sir John Clerk of Penicuik.⁷⁹

⁷⁶ Published guides to the Highlands began to appear during the 1790s (the period of the Napoleonic wars), James M'Nayr's *Guide from Glasgow, to Some of the Most Remarkable Scenes in the Highlands of Scotland, and to the Falls of Clyde* (Glasgow, 1797) being an early example. Sarah Murray's *Companion and Useful Guide to the Beauties of Scotland* (London, 1799), which had reached its third edition by 1810, followed on its heels. Neither of these works was illustrated. Commercial illustrated guides really began with the age of steam travel, and included Lumsden's *Steam Boat Companion, and Stranger's Guide to the Western Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1820) and George Anderson's *Guide to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (London, 1834). Both went through successive editions. Collectors' sets of prints generally took the form of engraved, aquatinted or lithographed views financed by subscription lists. Paul Sandby's *Virtuosi's Museum* (London, 1778) was probably the earliest example to include images of the Highlands. See also William Daniell, *A Voyage Round the Coast of Great Britain* (8 vols., London, 1814-26); James Fittler, *Scotia Depicta* (London, 1804); David Octavius Hill, *Sketches of Scenery in Perthshire* (Perth, 1821); John M. Leighton, *Swan's Views of the Lakes of Scotland* (2 vols., Glasgow, 1834-6); William Beattie, *Scotland Illustrated in a Series of Views* (2 vols., London, 1838); John Parker Lawson, *Scotland Delineated* (2 vols., London, 1850-4). In all of these, the image was the primary focus and any descriptive text of merely supplementary significance.

⁷⁷ The National Library of Scotland holds an extensive collection of illustrated travel diaries, some of which were exhibited in *Wish You Were Here! Travellers' Tales from Scotland 1540-1960*, NLS, Edinburgh, 1 June to 31 October 2003.

⁷⁸ The most accessible account of the controversy which erupted over the authenticity of the poems is Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: A Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh, 1988). For a modern critical edition of the collected poems, see James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian and Related Works*, ed. Howard Gaskill (Edinburgh, 1996).

⁷⁹ Henry Okun, 'Ossian in Painting', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 30, 1967, 327-56; Duncan MacMillan, 'Truly National Designs: Runciman at Penicuik', *Art History*, 1, 1978, 90-8; Duncan MacMillan, *Painting in Scotland: The Golden Age* (London, 1986), 43-62; Murdo Macdonald, 'Scotland into Europe via Rome', in *The Reception of Ossian in Europe*, ed. Howard Gaskill (London, 2004), 393-404. I am also grateful to Professor Macdonald for sending me a copy of his paper, 'Art and the Scottish Highlands: An Ossianic Perspective', delivered at *Ossian Then and Now: An International Conference*, Université Paris 7, 19 November 2005.

Illustrations to early editions of the poems constitute a body of lesser-known material, some of which are touched on by Sam Smiles in his study of the Romantic appropriation of ancient Britain.⁸⁰ Besides direct visual responses, *The Poems of Ossian* influenced the depiction of the Highlands in other ways. Discussing the influence of Ossian on interpretations of Highland culture outside the Gàidhealtachd, William Donaldson has argued that Macpherson set in place a paradigm which coloured all subsequent perceptions of Celtic art forms. One element within this was the manner in which 'pure' artistic expression came to be associated with rugged natural settings.⁸¹ Endorsement of Ossian consequently meant endorsement of the wild, gloomy settings in which the poems were staged. Malcolm Andrews has traced the emergence of an 'Ossianic Sublime' in accounts of Highland travel during the latter half of the eighteenth century, presenting evidence for the poems' role in altering perceptions of bleak and barren scenery.⁸² Ossian also kindled interest in material antiquities, to the extent that archaeological sites in the Highlands and Islands took on a romantic significance as relics of a heroic age. From the later eighteenth century, antiquaries began to move away from classical preoccupations towards the study of native archaeology and artefacts. *Archaeologia Scotica*, the journal of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, founded in 1780, provided a forum for the dissemination of visual material similar to the *Transactions* of the geological societies.⁸³ Scholarly images of antiquities also continued to appear in travel accounts during the later eighteenth century, alongside specialised productions dealing with such topics as weapons, armour, and the history of costume.⁸⁴

The second major literary influence on images of the Highlands was of course Sir Walter Scott. Scott is a landmark figure for any interpretation of ideas about

⁸⁰ Sam Smiles, *The Image of Antiquity: Ancient Britain and the Romantic Imagination* (New Haven and London, 1994).

⁸¹ William Donaldson, *The Highland Pipe and Scottish Society, 1750-1850: Transmission, Change and the Concept of Tradition* (East Linton, 2000), 19.

⁸² Malcolm Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, ch. 8. See also Leah Leneman, 'The Effects of Ossian in Lowland Scotland', in *Aberdeen and the Enlightenment*, edd. Jennifer J. Carter and Joan H. Pittock (Aberdeen, 1987), 357-362.

⁸³ Stuart Piggott, 'The Ancestors of Jonathan Oldbuck', in Stuart Piggott, *Ruins in a Landscape: Essays in Antiquarianism* (Edinburgh, 1976), 133-59.

⁸⁴ Sam Smiles, 'British Antiquity and Antiquarian Illustration', in *Producing the Past: Aspects of Antiquarian Culture and Practice, 1700-1850*, edd. Martin Myrone and Lucy Peltz (Ashgate, 1999), 55-66.

the region, although it is important to remember that he did not write exclusively about the Gàidhealtachd.⁸⁵ Scott's writing can be linked with several categories of visual material. The most obvious are the illustrations commissioned by his publishers to accompany the novels and poems themselves. These, particularly Turner's contribution to Cadell's 1833-36 edition of the poetical and prose works, have been extensively discussed in art historical literature.⁸⁶ In fine art, Scott's influence has also been traced in three different areas: the emergence of a school of history painting which celebrated heroic aspects of the Scottish past; in genre paintings dwelling on aspects of Scottish life and character; and in Romantic landscape art, often portraying scenes from Scott's poems and novels.⁸⁷ Given the scope of the author's work, this type of imagery embraced the culture and landscape of the Lowlands as much as that of Highland Scotland. Several points in relation to Scott and the Highlands nevertheless deserve some further attention. The first is the author's personal role as antiquary and collector, and how this fits into historicised portrayals of Highland scenes. During the nineteenth century, Scott's style of romantic antiquarianism informed many ostensibly 'scholarly' approaches to Highland antiquities. These largely bogus productions were hallmarked by powerful images which deployed the tangible authenticity of material objects to bolster their imaginative interpretations of the past.⁸⁸ The second point to notice is the claim that Scott's writing inspired a school of landscape art in which a celebration of the wild and

⁸⁵ Only eight works of poetry and prose within an extensive oeuvre: *The Lady of the Lake* (1810); *Waverley* (1814); *The Lord of the Isles* (1815); *Rob Roy* (1817); *A Legend of Montrose* (1819); *The Highland Widow* (1827); *The Two Drovers* (1828); *The Fair Maid of Perth* (1828). *Redgauntlet* (1824) dealt with Jacobite themes, but in a Lowland context.

⁸⁶ Catherine Gordon, 'The Illustration of Sir Walter Scott: Nineteenth-Century Enthusiasm and Adaptation', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 34, 1971, 297-317; Hamish Miles, 'Wilkie's Illustrations for the Waverley Novels', *Scottish Art Review*, 13, 1971, 1-6; Gerald Finley, *Landscapes of Memory: Turner as Illustrator to Scott* (Ilkley, 1980); Gerald Finley, *Turner and George the Fourth in Edinburgh, 1822* (London, 1981); Catherine M. Gordon, *British Paintings of Subjects from the English Novel* (New York and London, 1988), 141-209.

⁸⁷ Lindsay Errington, 'Sir Walter Scott and Nineteenth-Century Painting in Scotland', in *Scotland Creates: 5000 Years of Art and Design*, ed. Wendy Kaplan (London, 1990), 121-35. On Scott and history painting, see also Morrison, *Painting the Nation*, 111-46.

⁸⁸ Examples include James Logan, *The Scottish Gael; or Celtic Manners, as Preserved among the Highlanders* (London, 1831); John Sobieski Stuart, *Vestiarium Scoticum* (Edinburgh, 1842); R. R. McLan and James Logan, *The Clans of the Scottish Highlands* (2 vols., London, 1845); John Sobieski Stolberg and Charles Edward Stuart, *The Costume of the Clans* (Edinburgh, 1845); C. N. McIntyre North, *The Book of the Club of True Highlanders* (2 vols., London, 1892 edn.).

desolate automatically meant the elimination of all human reference.⁸⁹ This argument gathers point from the apparent disjunction between the representation of the Highlands in art, and real social and economic circumstances. The work of Horatio McCulloch (1805-67) and Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-73) – both of whom popularised huge sweeping landscapes where the human element is minimal – is often cited as the visual equivalent of Scott’s literary evasion of sensitive themes.⁹⁰ Critiques of Victorian art owe much to the modern expectation that one of the duties of the artist is to take on a crusading role, highlighting the abuse of wealth and power, and campaigning for social justice. Within the social and economic structures of the times, however, such an approach was scarcely politic.⁹¹ Rather than looking for direct social comment, it is perhaps more illuminating to read the content and prevailing themes of nineteenth-century images against the grain of actual circumstances.⁹² Although Landseer is best known as the father of what Macmillan calls the “‘Stag at Bay’ school’ of painting,⁹³ his fascination with the Highlands in fact began with a number of closely-observed genre or narrative scenes portraying people and local customs.⁹⁴ The proliferation of this type of work throughout the nineteenth century, and its links with the ethnographic strand present in travel illustrations, is a virtually untouched topic which merits further exploration.

Rather than constituting an isolated body of material, it is evident that fine art was intimately connected with ‘lesser’ genres of visual imagery across the whole

⁸⁹ Alexander Moffat, ‘Beyond the Highland Landscape’ in *As an Fhearann*, edd. MacLean and Carrell, 65.

⁹⁰ For criticisms of Scott’s failure to represent the contemporary Highlands, see Lorn MacIntyre, ‘Sir Walter Scott and the Highlands’ (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 1976), 556-60; Clyde, *Rebel to Hero*, 129. On parallels between literary and visual representations of Gaeldom, and their dual neglect of social and economic realities in the nineteenth-century Highlands, see Douglas Gifford, ‘Myth, Parody and Dissociation: Scottish Fiction 1814-1914’, in *The History of Scottish Literature*, ed. Cairns Craig (4 vols., Aberdeen, 1988), III, 235.

⁹¹ The reception of Sir David Wilkie’s *Distraint for Rent* (1815), interpreted as a blunt commentary on the harsh commercialism which accompanied the agricultural revolution, is a case in point. His subject was objected to on the grounds of its realism and liability to political interpretation: Macmillan, *Painting in Scotland*, 167-9.

⁹² John Morrison takes this approach to landscape images incorporating sheep and deer, reading them as a silent witness to depopulation: Morrison, *Painting the Nation*, 108-10.

⁹³ Duncan Macmillan, ‘Gaelic Art in Modern Times’, in *The Companion to Gaelic Scotland* ed. Derick S. Thomson (Oxford, 1983) 12.

⁹⁴ Several of these were recently exhibited in *Monarch of the Glen: Landseer in the Highlands*, NGS, Edinburgh, 14 April to 10 July 2005. For further comment on Landseer, McCulloch and the evasion of social circumstances, see T. C. Smout, ‘Landseer’s Highlands’, in Richard Ormond, *The Monarch of the Glen: Landseer in the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 2005), 13-17.

period. Indeed, so interconnected were many of the strands of evidence outlined above that they are best understood in terms of broad cultural influences which infiltrated a range of genres rather than self-enclosed categories. Queen Victoria's love affair with the Highlands, which began with the royal visit of 1842, is a good example of the intersection of fine art with other media. The Queen's reception in Scotland held many similarities with that of George IV two decades earlier, with the display of Highlandised 'tradition' much in evidence.⁹⁵ *The Illustrated London News*, which covered several of the Queen's visits in detail, provided one vision of the royal infatuation with the Highlands: images which are documentary in purpose, but from an uncritical stance which reveals much about external perceptions of the region during this period. From 1848, when the Queen and Prince Albert took the lease of Balmoral Castle and estate, royal patronage of all things Highland took on an institutional permanence. The Queen employed several artists, including Landseer, to paint idealised images of the royal retreat at Balmoral and of the family engaged in various outdoor pursuits.⁹⁶ In 1865, the miniature painter Kenneth MacLeay was also commissioned to undertake watercolour portraits of the Balmoral staff – mainly ghillies, stalkers and pipers – which were eventually lithographed and issued as a complete set, entitled *The Highlanders of Scotland*, in 1872.⁹⁷ These images followed out the obsession with antiquarian minutiae which characterised earlier costume books.

In the Balmoralist pastiche of Highlandness, we can observe the ramifications of much older trends in the cultural construction and visual representation of the Gàidhealtachd. It constituted a summation of the excesses to which such trends could ultimately lead. Artists continued to paint in this mode into the closing decade of the nineteenth century, and although fresh strands of Celticism can be traced in the work of William McTaggart (1835-1910), John Duncan (1866-

⁹⁵ The fullest contemporary account of the 1842 visit is Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, *Memorial of the Royal Progress in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1843). This is an illustrated work.

⁹⁶ Delia Millar, *Queen Victoria's Life in the Scottish Highlands Depicted by her Watercolour Artists* (London, 1985). Balmoralism was also the theme of a recent exhibition curated by Jeanne Cannizzo: *Our Highland Home: Victoria and Albert in Scotland*, SNPG, Edinburgh, 18 March to 5 June 2005.

⁹⁷ Kenneth MacLeay, *The Highlanders of Scotland* (London, 1872). The original watercolours are in the Royal Collection at Windsor Castle.

1945) and others,⁹⁸ the need for chronological boundaries precludes the study of their imagery here. In a thesis of this kind, where an overview is being attempted, difficult decisions have to be made concerning the volume of material it is possible to cover. Even within the period studied, certain types of visual material have not been drawn upon extensively. Maps fall into this category, as do photographs. Some military maps and plans have been brought in as examples of early visual responses to the Highlands. Decorative cartography is also discussed in places where the subject matter complements the theme of other images. Yet, while acknowledging the many points of crossover between mapped images and other forms of representation, extensive research into primary cartographic sources has not been ultimately possible. The richness of this material for the study of cultural perceptions is immense, and, in a Highland context, would merit a discrete project in its own right.

A detailed consideration of photographs has been omitted for similar reasons. Although photography was well established by the close of our period, with famous names like George Washington Wilson (1823-93) and James Valentine (1815-79) dealing with Highland subjects,⁹⁹ the importance of photography as a phenomenon, and the circumstances – social, cultural and technical – which accompanied its development, again appear to merit more special consideration than there has been space for here. To follow out the photographic tradition would necessitate lengthening our chronology into the twentieth century, when a further art-form – film – could be added to the list of source-types. Even a superficial acquaintance with photographic and cinematic images of the Highlands and Islands suggests that they were deeply influenced by the legacy of older art-forms, and the fruits of further research in these fields would bear interesting comparison with the conclusions of this thesis.

Keeping in mind the limits imposed, what follows is an attempt to explore the web of source material identified as an integrated corpus. The extent of

⁹⁸ Morrison, *Painting the Nation*, 185-23.

⁹⁹ For background, see Charles W. J. Withers, 'Picturing Highland Landscapes: George Washington Wilson and the Photography of the Scottish Highlands', in *Scottish Geographical Studies*, ed. Andrew H. Dawson et al. (Dundee, 1993), 206-17; Robert Smart, 'Famous Throughout the World: Valentine & Sons Ltd., Dundee', *Review of Scottish Culture*, 4, 1988, 75-87.

crossover between the themes addressed in different categories of material has necessitated a closer look at the context in which such imagery was created, and the opportunities for influences to travel across genres. In consequence, the opening chapter pays particular attention to the art-science dynamic already traced in the visual culture of this period, seeking to understand how it evolved out of the intellectual and cultural milieu in which the image-makers moved. Although this study makes no pretensions to being a social history of art, such information as has been gathered on training, mutual contact between artists, and their audience and patrons is documented in this section.

The three ensuing chapters, in which the bulk of visual analysis is concentrated, deal with the theme of antiquity in images of the Highlands and Islands from c. 1700 to 1880. As has been noted, historians working with written evidence have traced a long-running emphasis on the ancient and 'primitive' in perceptions of Highland history and culture. The first of these sections, which looks at the depiction of literal antiquities, seeks to demonstrate the influence of antiquarian culture on the construction of an iconography in which relics and ruins predominated. The evolution of scholarly, documentary styles of imagery into a more aesthetic, romantic idiom was a prominent agent in this process, and has not yet been fully explored in the Highland sphere.

The ethnographic strand in images of the Highlands and Islands is dealt with next, paying particular attention to the claim that artists consistently ignored the circumstances of ordinary people across a period of sweeping change. In the course of this chapter, it is argued that artists did in fact display an insatiable curiosity about the region's inhabitants and native culture, but one which was strongly marked by a primitivist and preservationist mentality. The urge to visualise the Gael and Gaelic culture was frequently motivated by the perception that the survival of a distinctive way of life was under threat; this can be shown by looking at ethnographic themes in art across the whole period in the light of actual agricultural, industrial and social change.

The final chapter, which examines the theme of time in the landscape, takes a step away from the human sphere, looking at the impact of geological science on

the appreciation and representation of the more barren, and quintessentially 'Highland', portions of the region's scenery. While this approach borrows from art-historical analyses of landscape art, it seeks to go beyond stylistic matters, connecting geological ideas about time with the antiquarian mentalities already noted in previous chapters. This will build into some conclusions about the extent to which we can expect a strong native presence in landscape images. Although not every artist adopted the uniformitarian theories which were becoming current in contemporary science, many were strongly influenced by their visual implications, consequently creating representations of an environment in which all forms of human impact – including the 'improvements' of their own century – were both recent and negligible.

The Ideal and the 'Real': The Making of the Image

The function of visual images can generally be divided into two (not always mutually exclusive) categories: to document, describe, or convey information, and to give pleasure, as an object of ostentatious beauty and display. Across our period, when images portraying the Highlands and Islands first appeared in significant numbers, a tension can be traced between these two alternative functions. In subsequent chapters, the significance of this tension for understanding why certain visual stereotypes emerged the way they did will be elucidated in greater depth. What concerns us here is to contextualise it by looking at the forces impelling both documentary and aesthetic images during our period, the blurring of the boundaries as time progressed, and the circumstances which allowed the Highlands and Islands to become an acceptable and desirable subject for visual representation. In the main, this followed a pattern in which the universal, classical ideal of traditional art practice gave way before a more particularised and local aesthetic.

The Classical Ideal in Art

The classical ideal impinged on the visual depiction of the Highlands in two ways. In the first place, it dominated the training and outlook of professional artists in such a way as to restrict the representation of the local or particular, so that they were unlikely to look northwards, or even to their own immediate setting, in search of inspiration for painting. Secondly, it also governed an important class of documentary imagery during the early part of our period: the antiquarian drawing or engraving. These influences were not unrelated, as well-known antiquaries, such as Sir John Clerk of Penicuik (1676-1755), were often active collectors of Old Master paintings, and enthusiastic patrons of the fine arts. Rome was the centre around which notions of cultural achievement gathered: its ruins and buildings the tangible evidence of a once universal power;

its paintings, sculpture, and artistic legacy the envy of all 'civilised' nations. Prior to the establishment of art academies on home soil, aspiring Scottish artists made their way to Italy to learn at the feet of the masters. All the great names in the Scottish tradition could have been found in Rome at some point during the early part of our period: William Aikman (1682-1731), Allan Ramsay (1713-84), Gavin Hamilton (1723-98) and Alexander Runciman (1736-85), to name but a few examples.¹ The first official art institution to open in Scotland in 1729 was named the Academy of St. Luke – a significant choice, after the famous Accademia di San Luca in Rome. Although the Academy is thought not to have lasted more than two or three years, it marked the beginnings of formal art education in Scotland.² To a degree, the Academy's Roman aspirations were offset by the fact that one of the six professional artists to sign its charter was James Norie (1684-1757), the founder of a firm of decorative painters responsible for some of the earliest paintings of the Highland landscape.³ If we can take this as evidence of a rising interest in native subjects among patrons and painters during this period, it is significant that it coincided with efforts to establish a system of art education on home soil. Such as they were, however, even recognisably Scottish scenes continued to be viewed, and portrayed, through classically-influenced spectacles. In 1731, when Norie sent his two sons to London to take up an apprenticeship, it was to the workshop of George Lambert, a specialist in classical landscapes after the manner of seventeenth-century Roman artists.⁴

In 1753, a second attempt was made to open a formal school of art and design in Scotland, this time situated in Glasgow. The Foulis Academy was founded by brothers Robert (1707-76) and Andrew (1712-75) Foulis, who also ran a publishing and bookselling business at the University. The new academy was

¹ Macmillan, *Painting in Scotland*, 9-62.

² *Ibid.*, 15.

³ Norie's *Taymouth from the South*, commissioned by Lord Glenorchy in 1733, was partially repainted by Jan Griffier in 1739: SNPG, PG 2359, James Norie and Jan Griffier, *Taymouth Castle from the South*, Canvas, 66 x 133, 1733-39. Norie's son Robert (after 1711-1766) later painted a decorative landscape with a view of Ben Lawers. For further details on the Nories, see Holloway and Errington, *Discovery of Scotland*, 13-31; James Holloway, *Patrons and Painters: Art in Scotland, 1650-1760* (Edinburgh, 61-7). James Norie was born in Morayshire - at Knockando on the Spey - and was thus no stranger to mountainous scenery.

⁴ James Holloway, 'Robert Norie in London and Perthshire', *Connoisseur*, 197, 1978, 58-60.

endowed with funds by two local patrons, John Glassford of Dougalston (1715-83) and Archibald Ingram (1704-70). Some of the money was subsequently used by Robert Foulis to purchase paintings, drawings, prints and other teaching materials from continental Europe. The continental influence was maintained in his choice of drawing masters, imported from France and Italy. Teaching methods were based on the copying of original paintings, drawings, prints and sculpture, and history painting (the depiction of scenes from classical texts) was prioritised in the curriculum.⁵ The institution nonetheless catered for the applied arts, teaching such skills as landscape painting, the principles of architecture, and engraving techniques. In a notice published in *The Glasgow Journal* in August 1755, it was suggested that such accomplishments might prove useful to young gentlemen intending to follow a variety of careers, including the army, navy, and manufacturing industries.⁶ Within an institution whose founding ethos was the provision of a classical art education, there was therefore some room for a utilitarian element.

The most important and enduring of Scotland's art institutions was the Trustees' Academy in Edinburgh, established in 1760. This took its name from the Board of Trustees for Improving Fisheries and Manufactures in Scotland. Although the original aim of the institution was to encourage manufactures by teaching design to apprentice craftsmen, the Board always appointed a fine artist as Master.⁷ Successive appointees included Alexander Runciman, who spent time in Rome during the late 1760s,⁸ and David Allan (1744-1796), a former Foulis pupil, who had also studied in Rome under the Scottish painter Gavin Hamilton.⁹ As Lindsay Errington describes, no firm distinction existed at this period between a course of instruction designed to equip students for the manufacturing industries, and for a career as a professional painter. Because of the scarcity of other training opportunities in Edinburgh, many Trustees' students were in fact prospective painters, which inevitably affected the ethos of the school. Teaching methods were in any case traditional. From 1798, the Academy began to

⁵ George Fairfull-Smith, *The Foulis Press and the Foulis Academy: Glasgow's Eighteenth-Century School of Art and Design* (Glasgow, 2001).

⁶ Irwin and Irwin, *Scottish Painters*, 89.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 90-97.

⁸ Macmillan, *Painting in Scotland*, 49.

⁹ Fairfull-Smith, *Foulis Press*, 71.

accumulate a collection of plaster casts of antique Greek and Roman sculpture, from which students were expected to begin the study of life drawing. The idea of beginning with sculpture in preference to live models was to inculcate a sense of beautiful or ideal forms, which after all was what painters were expected to aspire to in their art.¹⁰ By holding an *a priori* conception of ideal beauty, they were the better equipped to study nature with a view to abstracting or selecting her most 'universal' lines and forms.

During the later eighteenth century, the most influential voice calling for the preservation of the universal ideal in art was that of Sir Joshua Reynolds, inaugural president of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. The Academy was established in 1769 as the principal centre for art education in England, with students recruited from across England and from Ireland. It would appear that the Scottish contingent remained relatively small due to the existence of separate institutions in Glasgow and Edinburgh.¹¹ Holger Hoock has characterised the teaching at the Academy as 'conservative neoclassical theory' which emphasised the traditional hierarchy of genres, the precedence of history painting and the pursuit of what was known as the 'grand style' in painting.¹² Reynold's *Discourses on Art* – lectures delivered to the students and members of the Academy at the annual prize giving – have been described as 'tantamount to a statement of policy for the young institution',¹³ and a perusal of their contents can shed further light on the prevailing character of art education during this period. The idea of 'improving' nature by creating a composite portrait of her most general principles comes to the fore throughout the lectures, and is explicitly set down in Reynold's third discourse, delivered on 14 December 1770:

All the objects which are exhibited to our view by nature, upon close examination will be found to have their blemishes and defects. The most beautiful forms have something about them like weakness, minuteness, or

¹⁰ Lindsay Errington, *Master Class: Robert Scott Lauder and his Pupils* (Edinburgh, 1983), 10.

¹¹ Holger Hoock, *The King's Artists: the Royal Academy of Arts and the Politics of British Culture 1760-1840* (Oxford, 2003), 60-1.

¹² *Ibid.*, 54.

¹³ Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, xvi.

imperfection. But it is not every eye that perceives these blemishes. It must be an eye long used to the contemplation and comparison of these forms; and which, by a long habit of observing what any set of objects of the same kind have in common, has acquired the power of discerning what each wants in particular. This long laborious comparison should be the first study of the painter, who aims at the greatest style. By this means, he acquires a just idea of beautiful forms; he corrects nature by herself, her imperfect state by her more perfect. His eye being enabled to distinguish the accidental deficiencies, excrescences, and deformities of things, from their general figures, he makes out an abstract idea of their forms more perfect than any one original, and what may seem a paradox, he learns to design naturally by drawing his figures unlike to any one object.¹⁴

Although Reynolds placed landscape lower down the hierarchy of genres than history painting, this principle was expected to apply to the study of landscape as well as to the human figure. In this respect, he held the work of Claude Lorrain, the French landscapist associated with the popularisation of the picturesque, to be worthy of particular commendation. Claude, according to Reynolds, 'was convinced, that taking nature as he found it' seldom produced beauty. His pictures are a composition of the various draughts which he had previously made from various beautiful scenes and prospects'. Simply producing a faithful representation of a given spot, in the manner of the Dutch School, was not, in Reynold's eyes, fulfilling the elevated purpose of art.¹⁵ 'The painter', he had stipulated in an earlier discourse, 'must divest himself of all prejudices in favour of his age or country; he must disregard all local and temporary ornaments, and look only on those general habits which are every where and always the same'.¹⁶ On this front, he again found fault with the Dutch on the grounds that their view of a history-piece was to construct 'a portrait of themselves', whereas it ought properly to deal with 'the great events of Greek and Roman fable and history', or with 'the capital subjects of scripture history': subjects which, given the classical

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 48-9.

and Christian bent of education in the West, transcended time and place, and could form the basis for general moral lessons.¹⁷

In such a climate, there would seem to have been little opportunity for professional painters to consider the representation of Highland, or even identifiably Scottish subjects as a viable goal for art. Outside the field of landscape painting, there were, however, two notable exceptions during the later eighteenth century, both linked by the cultural influence of James Macpherson's *Ossian*. The first of these was Alexander Runciman's decorative scheme for the great hall at Penicuik House.¹⁸ The second was David Allan's series of representations of a Highland dance at Blair Atholl in Perthshire [Fig.2].¹⁹ By virtue of their Ossianic connection, these purportedly 'national' scenes in fact fitted into the deeply-entrenched classical culture of the period. As Fiona Stafford has observed, Macpherson's education at Aberdeen University was itself the product of this culture. While at Aberdeen, he came under the influence of such men as Thomas Blackwell and William Duncan, both classical scholars of considerable repute. Blackwell, the author of *An Enquiry into the Life and Writings of Homer* (1735), perceived a natural connection between the freedom of unsophisticated societies like early Greece and the kind of spontaneous creativity associated with the poet Homer. Duncan, who became Macpherson's tutor in 1754, betrayed a similar sympathy for the virtues of primitive society in his preface to a translation of *Caesar's Commentaries*, published in 1753; like many classical scholars of his day, well versed in the tale of decadence which presaged the fall of the Roman Empire, the dangers of a modern parallel were all too apparent. Stafford suggests that Macpherson turned this teaching inwards to the culture and society of his native Highlands, deemed backward and uncivilised by the modern world, but the guardian of hidden strengths.²⁰ To some extent,

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁸ Commissioned by Sir James Clerk of Penicuik in 1766 and completed by 1772. The originals were destroyed by fire in 1899: Macmillan, "Truly National Designs", 90-7.

¹⁹ Allan received patronage from two Highland landowners during the 1780s: Sir James Grant of Grant and the Fourth Duke of Atholl. His 'Highland Dance' scenes were executed around 1780, when he also painted a family portrait for the Duke of Atholl. For a discussion of Allan's Highland work, see Grier Robertson Gordon, 'Scottish Scenes and Scottish Story: The Later Career of David Allan, Historical Painter' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Glasgow, 1990), 113-38.

²⁰ Fiona Stafford, 'Introduction', in Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, ed. Gaskill, x-xi.

therefore, *The Poems of Ossian* can be seen bridging the gap between the universal and the local, suggesting that ancient traditions preserved in Gaelic culture were analogous to the state of all primitive societies. Grier Gordon draws attention to the size of Allan's largest Highland dance scene,²¹ painted on canvas, as evidence that it was conceived on a scale more usually reserved for history paintings in the 'grand style'. He argues that this portrait of particular manners may allude to the post-Ossian characterisation of the Highlands as a Scottish Arcadia, and that its living traditions were consequently as much a subject for high art as a scene from Homer or Virgil.²² This kind of fusion, in which the portrayal of local custom was legitimised by virtue of being filtered through the lens of antiquity, is something of which we will see more in subsequent chapters.

The Virtuoso and Naturalist: The Image as Document

In describing the objectives of the true landscape painter, Reynolds had stated that 'he applies himself to the imagination, not to the curiosity, and works not for the Virtuoso or the Naturalist, but for the common observer of life and nature'.²³ This introduces another tradition of visual imagery which was to prove of profound significance for the depiction of the Highlands and Islands. In referring to the 'virtuoso', Reynolds invoked the tradition of travel and collecting among cultured gentlemen, often inaugurated by the Grand Tour which completed a young man's education during this period, and continued over a lifetime. Iain Gordon Brown has described the Grand Tour phenomenon with reference to one Scottish baronial family – the Clerks of Penicuik – whose experience he describes as an 'epitome' of its legacy in Scotland. On one level, collecting was focused on the acquisition of luxury goods such as paintings, books, silver, furnishings and fabrics. On the other, however, it also took in less valuable (and sometimes macabre) relics, such as a sprig of laurel plucked from Virgil's tomb, or a 'piece of an old Roman's skin', purportedly filched from a body in the catacombs of Naples. More serious antiquarian study was also fostered by first-

²¹ NGS, NGL 001.81, David Allan, *A Highland Wedding at Blair Atholl*, Canvas, 102 x 156.

²² Gordon, 'Scottish Scenes', 130-2.

²³ *Ibid.*, 99.

hand encounters with the ruins of ancient Rome, sometimes prompting the creation of a visual record in the form of field sketches.²⁴

Although the Clerks of Penicuik could count aspiring professionals among their relatives,²⁵ basic instruction in drawing was also seen as an important element of polite education from the late seventeenth century. This had especial application to the Grand Tour. In 1693, John Locke had written that he considered drawing 'a thing very useful to a gentleman on several occasions, but especially if he travel, as that which helps a man often to express, in a few lines well put together, what a whole sheet of paper in writing would not be able to represent and make intelligible'.²⁶ The skill of drawing might also be applied to the depiction of portable artefacts brought home. As cabinets of travel curiosities were built up, they were frequently organised like a private museum, with the objects classified and listed in catalogues. These catalogues were sometimes illustrated.²⁷ This type of imagery had a very different purpose to the selective, idealising principles of fine art. Its intention was the creation of a faithful, documentary record of objects and monuments which could, if required, be made to stand in for the original.

The importance of images to travellers, antiquaries and natural scientists (roles which were frequently combined in a single individual) cannot be divorced from the rise of empiricism during the later seventeenth century. Locke, already cited above, is generally associated with the emergence of a culture in which the eye and the eyewitness were privileged above aural or verbal testimony. In a European context, Adler has charted a shift in the rationale of travel from the seventeenth century which paved the way for the notion of sightseeing. Prior to this, she argues, 'the aristocratic traveller ... went abroad for *discourse* rather than for picturesque views or scenes. The art of travel he was urged to cultivate

²⁴ Iain Gordon Brown, "'On Classic Ground': Records of the Grand Tour', *Scottish Archives*, 2, 1996, 1-12.

²⁵ William Aikman, cousin to the second Sir John Clerk, and Alexander Clerk, his half brother: *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁶ Quoted in Ann Bermingham, "'An Exquisite Practice": the Institution of Drawing as a Polite Art in Britain', in *Towards a Modern Art World*, ed. Brian Allen (New Haven and London, 1995), 55.

²⁷ Piggott, *Antiquity Depicted*, 27-31.

was in large measure one of discoursing with the living and the dead – learning foreign tongues, obtaining access to foreign courts, and conversing gracefully with eminent men, assimilating classical texts appropriate to particular sites, and, not least, speaking eloquently upon his return'.²⁸ From the early 1600s, however, 'the eye found favour as affording a more detached, less compromising form of contact than the ear'.²⁹ In 1642, for instance, James Howell described the eye as 'a clear christall casement', through which 'wee discern the various works of Art and Nature, and in one instant comprehend half the whole universe'.³⁰

As this suggests, faith in the authenticity of sight was based on the idea that the eye presented a more unmediated, and thus less biased, picture of the world than the ear. Simply by recording what he saw, the traveller believed he could create a mirror image of an actual sight or scene. The problem with this approach was that visual experience required 'translation' into verbal form if it was to be communicated to others in the usual written way. Initially, this was attempted through the adoption of a simple, unornamented style which minimised rhetoric and excessive narrative.³¹ Gradually, however, the role of the image as a means of conveying precise information became more widely recognised. Utilitarian uses for the image remained fairly specialised in extent until the end of the seventeenth century, with the exception of cartography and illustrations in anatomical works and technical manuals.³² Gentlemanly antiquarianism, such as that practised by the Clerks of Penicuik, was nevertheless one of the first fields to follow suit. William Camden's *Britannia* – a county-by-county description of the British Isles, first published in 1586 – can be seen as a summary of changing attitudes towards the image in microcosm. Compared to later editions, the original work was, as Piggott points out, an unprepossessing entity: a 'dumpy little quarto in Latin, with no maps and a woodcut of a medieval inscription as its only illustration'.³³ Gibson's editions of 1695 and 1722

²⁸ Judith Adler, 'Origins of Sightseeing', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 16, 1989, 11.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 12.

³⁰ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

³² Sam Smiles, *Eyewitness: Artists and Visual Documentation in Britain 1770-1830* (Aldershot, 2000), 23.

³³ Stuart Piggott, 'William Camden and the *Britannia*', in Piggott, *Ruins in a Landscape*, 42.

progressively expanded the visual content of the work, with engraved plates of British and Roman coins, further inscriptions, some county maps, and illustrations of Stonehenge and other field monuments.³⁴ By this time, prominent antiquaries were beginning to speak out openly in favour of the image. In 1717, William Stukeley recorded, in the minutes of the Society of Antiquaries of London, his belief that 'without drawing or designing the study of Antiquities or any other science is lame and imperfect'.³⁵ The precise nature of its contribution was articulated in greater detail by the antiquary and naturalist William Borlase (1696-1772), who, in a letter of 1749, wrote:

The materials, style, measurement and appurtenances of monuments are things not to be new moulded by, or made to comply with every fanciful conjecture, but remaining always the same, will be impartial authorities to appeal to, invariable rules to judge of and decide the customs, rites and principles as well as monuments of the ancients; and therefore it is much to be lamented that all curious travellers and writers in antiquity did not draw, as well as travel and write, it being in my opinion next to an impossibility to convey an adequate idea of the simplest monument by words and numerical figures, or indeed to find out the justness and extravagance of a conjecture without seeing what the monument really is.³⁶

In this analysis, the image takes on the burdensome role of the eyewitness: a direct, unmediated, on-the-spot record untrammelled by the interpretative mechanisms of words. More than this, it could even be seen as an adequate substitute for the original object, such that 'the justness and extravagance of a conjecture' might be measured by a remote audience using the objective witness of the visual record.³⁷

³⁴ William Camden, *Camden's Britannia, with Large Editions and Improvements*, ed. Edmund Gibson (London, 1695); William Camden, *Camden's Britannia, with Large Editions and Improvements*, ed. Edmund Gibson (2 vols., London, 1722).

³⁵ Quoted in Piggott, *Antiquity Depicted*, 7.

³⁶ Quoted in Smiles, *Eye Witness*, 26.

³⁷ On the growing value of the image as an independent witness during the later eighteenth century, see also Rosemary Sweet, 'Antiquaries and Antiquities in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34, 2001, 181-206.

The potential of this documentary style of imagery for the visual depiction of the Highlands was initially limited by two factors: the weakness of rationales for travel outside the established Grand Tour circuit, and the inbuilt classical bias of antiquarian culture. Although some chinks in the armour can be traced from the later 1690s, it is useful to summarise here prevailing attitudes to 'native' archaeology from a Rome-centred perspective. Until the middle of the eighteenth century, most antiquaries saw early British history as significant only so far as it was Roman history, sometimes ascribing native monuments and artefacts to the genius of the former Empire. This naturally inhibited the study of Anglo-Saxon and Viking monuments as well as those attributed to the 'aboriginal' inhabitants of the British Isles: the ancient Britons. Such attitudes were often linked to a perceived link between the physical appearance of artefacts and monuments and the behaviour of their creators. Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, for instance, considered the monuments of the Danes and Saxons as crude and ugly as their reputed conduct, and thus unworthy of serious study.³⁸

Perceptions of the ancient Britons, including the original inhabitants of northern Scotland, partook of similar sentiments, and the conquest of Britain during the first century B.C. was widely construed as less of a humiliation than a blessing. As Jane Stevenson has described, the study of ancient Rome often drew strength from the way in which the lessons of antiquity were believed to bear application to contemporary politics.³⁹ Analogies were drawn between the potential power of a united Britain and that of the once-great Roman Empire. 'Since the invasion of Britain by Julius Caesar', wrote Clerk of Penicuik in 1730, 'it was the constant endeavour of all the greatest princes in this island to have all the people in it united under one and the same government, and our neighbours of Europe were affrayed of nothing so much'.⁴⁰ The difficulty with this construct was that the geographical areas which had proved most problematic for Roman conquest seemed no more easily absorbed by eighteenth-century Britain. The resistance of

³⁸ Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London, 2004), 5.

³⁹ Jane Stevenson, 'Scott, Scotland and the Roman Past', *Scotlands*, 4, 1997, 21-40. Cf. Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 160-1.

⁴⁰ Quoted in Stevenson, 'Scott, Scotland and the Roman Past', 30.

the ancient Scots, or *Caledonii*, made legendary by Tacitus, was a thorny point; despite clear evidence of Roman activity north of the Tweed, the permanence of military conquest remained under question. The significance of Hadrian's Wall as a political frontier was particularly problematic, as unionist Scots like Clerk of Penicuik, and his contemporary Robert Sibbald (1641-1722), were anxious to prove that Scotland had participated in the civilising benefits of Roman rule. Sibbald's solution to the problem was to emphasise the difference between Highland and Lowland Scotland, moving the frontier of Roman government as far north as Perth, and determinedly reading any trace of a camp or fortress as evidence for a settled population.⁴¹ 'The thrust of Sibbald's work', writes Stevenson, was 'to confine the barbarian *Caledonii* to the Highlands, and to move the frontier of settled and Romanised Britain up to the very edge of the Highland line'.⁴² In the context of union politics and debates concerning the ethnic ancestry of the Lowland Scot, this had its own significance. For our purposes, however, the point to note is that resistance to Rome implicitly placed the Highlander beyond the pale for any serious antiquarian attention. As on the maps of the ancient world, the lands north of the Tay could still be perceived as *ultima thule* – the point 'where the world and all created things come to an end'.⁴³ This had implications for antiquarian images. Piggott describes one instance of a Highland targe being mistaken for and listed in a private museum catalogue as a Roman shield.⁴⁴ In Gibson's first edition of Camden, the visual content in the Scottish sections, such as it was, also betrayed a Roman bias. This volume contained a draught of 'the Roman wall in Scotland', by which was meant Graham's Dyke, purportedly copied from a sketch in the papers of Timothy Pont, the late-sixteenth-century mapmaker; to this were added some further inscriptions from the Roman wall, contributed by Sir Robert Sibbald, and an illustration of 'Arthur's Oven', a Roman temple located near Larbert in Stirlingshire.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Robert Sibbald, 'Concerning the Walls', in Robert Sibbald, *A Collection of Several Treatises in Folio, Concerning Scotland, as it was of Old, and also in Later Times* (Edinburgh, 1739).

⁴² Stevenson, 'Scott, Scotland and the Roman Past', 32.

⁴³ The quotation is from Tacitus' version of Agricola's speech to his troops before the battle of Mons Graupius in AD. 84: Tacitus, *The Agricola and the Germania*, transl. H. Mattingly (Harmondsworth, 1970), 85.

⁴⁴ Stuart Piggott, 'Ruins in a Landscape', in Piggott, *Ruins in a Landscape*, 106-7.

⁴⁵ Camden, *Britannia*, ed. Gibson (1695 edn.), 958, 1101-1104.

Despite its very real influence on antiquarian perceptions, it is important to note that the privileging of Rome was not an entirely one-sided story. Even in Clerk's disapprobation of the tribes who had resisted Rome's 'humanity', there lay an undercurrent of ambivalence. In the same passage, he also betrayed a covert admiration for their martial vigour and patriotic fervour,⁴⁶ mirroring the attitudes of earlier writers who castigated the Celts for barbarity and backwardness while lauding their supposed hardiness and valour. For such as Clerk, the benefits of civilisation ultimately outweighed a heroic stand for freedom, but others were not so persuaded. Alexander Gordon, who published an illustrated account of Roman remains in Scotland in 1726, argued that 'from the Tenor of the whole *Roman History in Britain*, it cannot be shewn, that the *Scots* and *Picts* ever suffered the least Part of their Country to lie under Subjection, any considerable Time, without re-possessing themselves thereof, and taking a just Revenge upon their Enemies and Invaders'.⁴⁷ While conceding such victories as Mons Graupius, Gordon laid emphasis upon their temporary nature, contending that 'the very Year following, namely, the Fourth Summer, [Agricola] was forced to return back, to secure the Possession of those Countries which he acknowledges he had but cursorily over-run'.⁴⁸ The key to Scottish freedom, in Gordon's view, was its distinctive geography, which prevented the Romans from progressing northwards from the Tay, and complicated their ability to build a permanent foothold from temporary gains:

It is indeed no new Thing to hear People speak, with Contempt, of the barren Soil and bleak Mountains of *Scotland*; but if their Situation is such, that these very Mountains seem by Nature to have been placed as so many Bulwarks, for the better defending their Independancy and Freedom, and preserving them from the griping Tallons of the grand Plunderers of the World, in that Case, the Advantages accruing from

⁴⁶ Piggott, 'Ancestors of Jonathan Oldbuck', 142; Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 121.

⁴⁷ Alexander Gordon, *Itinerarium Septentrionale: or a Journey thro' most of the counties of Scotland, and those in the North of England* (London, 1726), 135.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 136.

them, are much more eligible than the precarious Possession of a terrestrial Paradise without Liberty.⁴⁹

The association of freedom and liberty with the wilder parts of Britain was not a new idea. Gibson's translation of Camden's *Britannia*, published in 1695, had drawn parallels between the retreat of the ancient Britons to Wales and Cornwall during the Saxon invasions and that of their Pictish counterparts during the Roman wars: 'Rather than be brought under slavery (the very worst of evils) they shifted to these northern parts, frozen by excess of cold, horrible in its rough and craggy places, and imbogued by the washing of the Sea, and the fens in it; where they were defended not so much by their weapons, as by the sharpness of the air and weather'.⁵⁰ In the political climate of the early eighteenth century, the idea of a liberty and distinctiveness preserved by geography had particular applications to perceptions of the predominantly Jacobite Highlands. This, as we will see, spilled over into the visual records created by military draughtsmen working in the region during this period. Within the world of scientific travel, however, the idea of a culture which had maintained its independence from the rest of Britain since Roman times was beginning to hold, for some, a peculiar fascination.

Geography, Empiricism and the Exotic Image

As Gibson's attempt to update Camden's account of Scotland demonstrated, valid descriptions of the country's topography were still few and far between in 1695, and their comprehensiveness remained extremely limited.⁵¹ During the same period, however, the lack of precise knowledge regarding Scotland's natural assets came to be seen as an economic disadvantage and also something of a national disgrace. In 1682, Robert Sibbald was appointed Geographer Royal for Scotland, and began planning a *New Atlas and Description of Scotland*.⁵² On one level, the proposed atlas harked back to older, classical traditions, with the

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 137.

⁵⁰ Camden, *Britannia*, ed. Gibson (1695 edn.), cx.

⁵¹ See *ibid.*, n.p., for Gibson's 'Catalogue of Books and Treatises'.

⁵² Sibbald's 'Materials for the Scotch Atlas' were in fact one of the sources cited in Gibson's 'Catalogue'.

first volume, covering history, native customs and antiquities, to be composed in Latin. On the other hand, the second, written in English, was to contain a comprehensive survey of the country's resources (with a bearing on their economic potential), arranged on a county-by-county basis.⁵³ In preparation for the atlas, Sibbald also drew up a list of 'general queries'. Set questionnaires were a popular method of gathering topographical information during this period, often based on the example published by Robert Boyle in the Royal Society *Transactions* of 1666.⁵⁴ These both directed the gathering of information, allowing it to be more easily classified, and also added to the authority of evidence by being circulated to a network of socially credible sources among the clergy and the aristocracy. Sibbald's questionnaire was divided into twelve sections, ranging from natural history to local and ecclesiastical government. In keeping with the intellectual culture of his times, the phraseology of Sibbald's sections on antiquity particularly stressed the importance of striking or unusual facts. 'Curiosities of Art', 'great Battels', 'Memorable Action' and 'peculiar Customs' were, for example, set against straightforward 'Forrests, Woods, Parks ... Springs, Rivers, Loughs ... Roads, Bayes, Ports for shipping ... the Government of the County ... the names of the Towns' and so on.⁵⁵

This implicit coupling of curiosity with the past was to prove of great significance for the topographical description of the Highlands. Although the atlas project was never completed, Sibbald established contacts with several correspondents who were able to supply him with information about the Highlands, and in particular the Western Isles. One of these was the mapmaker John Adair (1660-1718), who published his own set of *Queries, in Order to a True Description; And an Account of the Natural Curiositys, and Antiquities* in 1694. As its title suggests, the questions followed established practice in prioritising unusual information, probing sightings of 'strange Appearances', 'uncommon substances', or men or women 'attended by any thing not

⁵³ Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, 72.

⁵⁴ Robert Boyle, 'General Heads for a Natural History of a Country, Small or Great', *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, 1, 1665-6, 186-9.

⁵⁵ Sibbald's queries are reproduced in full in Withers, *Geography, Science and National Identity*, 78-9 (my italics).

common'.⁵⁶ Although a set of these queries were sent to Kintyre by Robert Wodrow in 1702,⁵⁷ Adair's contribution to knowledge about the Highlands and Islands was sketchy. He is known to have accompanied Martin Martin on a voyage to the Western Isles during the summer of 1698,⁵⁸ which nonetheless resulted in no published work. Similarly, his commission to produce the maps for Sibbald's projected atlas was dogged with difficulties, finally seeing the light as *The Description of the Sea-Coast and Islands of Scotland* (1703), which covered only the east coast.

Less enigmatic than Adair were the Welshman Edward Lhuyd (1660-1709), and Skye-born Martin Martin (c. 1660-1718), both of whom travelled in the Highlands and Islands during the 1690s. Prior to his Highland tour, Lhuyd had risen to prominence in both scientific and antiquarian circles, succeeding Robert Plot as Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford – a burgeoning scientific collection – and contributing fresh notes on southern Wales for the 1695 edition of Camden. In the wake of this, Lhuyd conceived his own scheme for a comprehensive survey of all the Celtic countries: Wales, Ireland, Gaelic Scotland, Cornwall and Brittany. Armed with a questionnaire, but visiting each area in person, he intended to cover an eclectic range of subjects, including natural history; geology, history, archaeology and philology.⁵⁹ Of his proposed survey, only a single volume, covering linguistics, was in fact published,⁶⁰ and the journals covering his tour of the Argyllshire Highlands in 1699-1700 are now unfortunately lost. From scattered letters, however, it is possible to reconstruct something of Lhuyd's perceptions of the region, and particularly his take on the relationship between antiquity and curiosity. On 12 March 1700, he wrote from Sligo:

⁵⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 87.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 86.

⁵⁸ John Moore, 'Martin Martin and John Adair: Two Approaches to Landscape Recording at the End of the Seventeenth Century', in John Randall et. al., *Martin Martin - 300 Years On* (Port of Ness, 2003), 33.

⁵⁹ J. L. Campbell and Derick Thomson, *Edward Lhuyd in the Scottish Highlands 1699-1700* (Oxford, 1963), xiii.

⁶⁰ Edward Lhuyd, *Archaeologia Britannica* (Oxford, 1707).

One half of my time, since I left you, has been spent in places quite remote from all correspondence, amongst the Hebrides, and other highlands of Scotland with whom their neighbours seem to have less commerce than they have with either of the Indies. They are nothing so barbarous as the Lowlanders and English commonly represent them; but are for what I could find a very hospitable and civil people: and the main reasons of the contrary character I take to be their adhering too much to their antient customs, habit and language; whereby they distinguish themselves from all their neighbours; and distinctions always create mutual reflections.⁶¹

Although Lhuyd was keen to distance himself from the views of ‘Lowlanders and English’, his equation of Highland distinctiveness with an adherence to ‘antient customs, habit and language’ is both perceptive and significant. As in the phrasing of Sibbald’s questionnaire, the assumption is that the past, and what belongs to the past, can always be relied on as a ready source of quirks and eccentricities. For his part, Lhuyd displayed an active interest in recording contemporary customs, which, though less barbaric than their reputation, could be conveniently summarised as ‘antient’, or fossilised survivals from an earlier age. Similarly, his work on Gaelic philology laid the foundation for serious consideration of the language on a scholarly basis; a basis, nonetheless, which was strongly antiquarian in character.

The link between curiosity, antiquity and the contemporary Highlands was fuelled by Martin Martin’s *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (1703), the earliest first-hand account to be written by a native islander. Martin’s narrative was split between sober reflection on the rich natural resources and economic potential of the islands and a strong emphasis on the marvellous, incorporating tales of the supernatural, second sight, strange customs, and outlandish remedies. A taste of the volume’s contents can be gathered from the first edition’s title page, which promised, among other things, ‘A Full Account Of [The Islands’] Situation, Extent, Soils, Product, Harbours,

⁶¹ R. T. Gunther, ed., ‘Life and Letters of Edward Lhuyd’, in *Early Science in Oxford*, ed. R. T. Gunther (15 vols., Oxford, 1923-67), XIV, 427-8.

Bays, Tides, Anchoring Places, and Fisheries, the Ancient and Modern Government, Religion and Customs of The Inhabitants, particularly of their Druids, Heathen Temples, Monasteries, Churches, Chappels, Antiquities, Monuments, Forts, Caves, and other Curiosities of Art and Nature'.⁶² Martin set contemporary customs and manners alongside tangible antiquarian remains such as monuments, battlefields and temples, and blended description of the human and natural worlds with a determined emphasis upon the curious. In the text itself, a striking feature was the inclusion of many customs which, by Martin's own admission, were passing or had already passed away. This was most marked in the chapter dealing with 'The Ancient and Modern Customs of the Inhabitants', in which he listed many superstitious practices 'laid aside of late', or 'now abolished'. His purpose in including such relics has been interpreted as an attempt to demonstrate the advance of the Gael out of 'primeval darkness'. Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart nonetheless suggests that this intention backfired, the contents of the *Description* being seized on by an urban audience to whom 'Martin's subjects remained primitives, at worst barbarous, at best picturesque'.⁶³

In establishing a context for the images which resulted from Captain Cook's successive voyages to the South Pacific, Bernard Smith has discussed the function of drawing as a vehicle for recording and expressing the exotic. He argues that empirical images, drawn accurately from life, performed a particularly invaluable tool for travellers confronted with strange plants, animals and birds for which there were no existing visual copies.⁶⁴ With reference to nineteenth-century images of the Arctic, Robert David has also highlighted the importance of visual representation in describing scenes for which no adequate vocabulary or artistic convention existed in the explorer's culture.⁶⁵ While telescoping forward in time to some degree, these comments on the imagery of exploration have considerable relevance to the 'discovery' of the Highlands. Of particular interest here are the observations of Edward Burt, believed to have been an engineer posted in the Highlands during the late 1720s. While technically

⁶² Martin Martin, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (London, 1703), title page.

⁶³ Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart, 'The Life of Martin Martin', in Randall et. al., *Martin Martin – 300 Years On*, 9.

⁶⁴ Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (Carlton, 1992), 4.

⁶⁵ Robert G. David, *The Arctic in the British Imagination, 1818-1914* (Manchester and New York, 2000), 12.

fitting into a military category, Burt's *Letters from a Gentleman in the North of Scotland* in essence followed on from the descriptive tradition inaugurated by empirical science. His awareness of the empirical value of illustration also chimes with Smith and David's comments. Attempting to describe the physical geography of the Highlands, he found himself baulked by the ruggedness of its terrain, an idea he found impossible to convey in language to his purported 'friend in London', to whom the letters are addressed: 'how to describe them to you, so as to give you any tolerable idea of such a rugged country – to you, I say, who have never been out of the south of England – is, I fear, a task altogether impracticable'. Despairing of the power of language, Burt went on to assert:

If it had been possible for me to procure a Landskip (I should say Heathskip or Rockskip) of any one tremendous View among the Mountains, it would be satisfactory and informing at one single Cast of the Eye; but Language, you know, can only communicate Ideas, as it were, by Retail; and a Description of one Part of an Object, which is compos'd of many, defaces or weakens another that went before: Whereas Painting not only shews the whole intire at one View, but leaves the several Parts to be examin'd separately and at Leisure by the Eye.

From Words we only receive a Notion of such unknown Objects, as bear some Resemblance with others we have seen; but Painting can even create Ideas of Bodies, utterly unlike to any Thing that ever appear'd to our Sight.⁶⁶

Such a philosophy of representation is pure Locke, and demonstrates the importance of empiricism in impelling a visual record of subjects which in no way conformed to classical ideals of art. As Smith describes, the essence of the exotic was that it conformed in no sense to ideal forms of beauty.⁶⁷ While Reynolds was later to instruct his artists to iron out nature's deformities, it was this very deformity which demanded, in the cause of science, visual expression. By the same token, local or idiosyncratic customs and manners – which Reynolds rejected in favour of universal narratives – were also of value to the

⁶⁶ Burt, *Letters*, II, 3-4.

⁶⁷ Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 9.

scientist. Images of this sort took longer to follow the visualisation of antiquities and natural curiosities. Lhuyd's tour of Argyll, for instance, while resulting in a number of images of field monuments, sculptured stones, crosses and curious artefacts, produced no extant images of the human sphere. He did however note that he had 'fill'd about three sheets of paper' with a record of customs while in Kintyre at the turn of the year 1700.⁶⁸ The published edition of Burt's *Letters*, which appeared in 1754, brought in a more ethnographic strand. It contained engraved plates after drawings by an unknown artist, the majority of which depicted living and working conditions and customs. This foreshadowed a prominent element in later voyages of exploration, in which artists served the needs of the human as well as natural sciences.⁶⁹

Although the figures in the Burt illustrations are by no means technically proficient, the ethnographic element in travellers' images could be limited by the skill and training of the artist. During the later eighteenth century, when engaging the services of a draughtsman for a scientific tour became an established practice, there is evidence that the talents of these artists may have been more suited to the depiction of landscape phenomena. The career of Moses Griffith (1747-1819), who was engaged as Thomas Pennant's personal draughtsman in 1769, is instructive in this respect. Griffith remained in Pennant's service throughout the latter's lifetime, and produced most of the drawings for his second tour of Scotland in 1772. He seems to have received no formal lessons, and was described by Pennant's son, David, as 'an ingenious and self-taught artist'. All his surviving work is in pen, pencil or watercolour – none on canvas – which not only reflects the utilitarian character of his engagements for Pennant, but may also suggest the extent of his capabilities. A surviving notice advertising his services to the public during leisure hours reveals the usual parameters within which he worked: 'a landscape or ruin, from fifteen to twenty inches in length ... for the margin of a book, from four to five inches ... a plain coat of arms'. It has also been observed that 'human figures do not appear frequently in Moses Griffith's works, and when they do, they are usually

⁶⁸ Campbell and Thomson, *Lhuyd in the Scottish Highlands*, xxi. This turn of phrase suggests a written rather than a visual record.

⁶⁹ Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 43-7.

conventional expressions of scale'.⁷⁰ The ability to draw the human figure well required instruction in anatomy and practice in life drawing. Because the mastery of figures was the key to successful history painting, this was prioritised in formal art schools. Artists without this education were less likely to have alternative opportunities of learning figure drawing, and were consequently disinclined to tackle any major images of figures in their work. This is something to bear in mind when considering the relative insignificance of people in many visual representations of the Highlands, although it is true that the human element was not ignored altogether by traveller-artists, and that even poorly drawn or 'staffage' figures are not without their own importance.

As well as recording the exotic and curious, depictions of lifestyle and customs – such as Griffith's view of waulking cloth and grinding with the quern in Skye [Fig.3], or his copy of an Islay cottage interior [Fig.134]– may have been prompted by a desire for preservation. In antiquarian circles, long before the discovery of photography, drawings and prints were given the role of preservative records. As Smiles points out, an ideal illustration was one which could, if called upon, be made to stand in for the original object, to the extent that 'a monument was "preserved" if an accurate drawing of it was made, whether or not it suffered further physical damage or even total destruction'.⁷¹ This kind of thinking can be traced in Gough's *Anecdotes of British Topography* (1768): a summative review, or catalogue, of existing work on British antiquities, including listings of drawings, prints and maps, where such could be found. A patriotic duty to preserve the country's native heritage lay at the heart of Gough's much-quoted complaint that 'we penetrate the wilds of Europe, and the deserts of Asia and Africa, for the remains of Grecian, Roman and earlier architecture, while no artist offers himself a candidate for fame in preserving those of our forefathers in their own country'.⁷² As an example of this type of preservation in action, he pointed to Elizabethan manuscripts containing draughts of many

⁷⁰ Donald Moore, et.al., *Moses Griffith: Artist and Illustrator in the Service of Thomas Pennant* (Caernarfon, 1979), 10, 15, 18.

⁷¹ Smiles, *Eye Witness*, 19.

⁷² Richard Gough, *Anecdotes of British Topography, or an Historical Account of what has been done for Illustrating the Topographical Antiquities of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1768), xx-xxi.

public buildings which had long since been razed to the ground, and were otherwise without record.⁷³

Planning an expedition to the Highlands in 1776, the Rev. Charles Cordiner, Episcopal minister at Banff in Morayshire and an ex-Foulis Academy student, could be found following out Gough's thinking. Cordiner is an interesting figure because, despite his academic art education, his visual output concentrated on the depiction of antiquities and natural history. His first book on the north, *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland*, was structured as a series of letters to Thomas Pennant, thus clearly orientated within the topographical tradition. In his introductory 'letter', dated from Banff on 5 May 1776, Cordiner set down his view of the importance of his mission:

The path which you have more particularly prescribed to me, in that ample field which you have been pervading, appears altogether a romantic, and far from an unpleasant one. You may depend upon it, that neither resolution nor perseverance shall be wanting in my endeavours to penetrate into the deepest recesses of the northern mountains: and I trust to send, from the wild environs of *Dornadilla*, some authentic representations of the majestic scenery and singular buildings of that remote corner... Those ruins on the way, to which you particularly bend my attention, shall be faithfully copied in some of their most expressive views. The necessity I shall thus be under, of being much conversant with the remains of deserted temples, and palaces renowned of old, promises a fund of solemn meditation: and it will greatly dignify my labours, to reflect, that in these drawings I shall deliver over to you as their preserver, the most venerable and ancient monuments of the nation's former grandeur.⁷⁴

Not only does this endorse the idea of the image as preserver, it also creates a tacit link between remoteness – 'the deepest recesses of the northern mountains'

⁷³ *Ibid.*, xxviii.

⁷⁴ Charles Cordiner, *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland, in a Series of Letters to Thomas Pennant, Esq.* (London, 1780), 2-3.

– and the possibility of finding hidden treasures worth preserving. It was not merely the disintegration of monumental architecture which concerned the traveller to the Highlands during this period. When Dr Johnson arrived in the north in 1773, hoping to find evidence for ancient social structures in a harmonious union between chief and clan, he was forced to own that on the whole he had arrived too late. ‘Of what they had before the late conquest of their country’, he concluded, ‘there remain only their language and their poverty’.⁷⁵ This view of Highland culture followed out the observations made by James Macpherson in successive ‘Dissertations’ published alongside his *Poems of Ossian*. In 1763, he held up the ‘mountains and inaccessible parts of a country’ as a place where pure tradition could be depended on, ‘among a people, from all time, free of intermixture with foreigners’.⁷⁶ In 1765, however, he confessed that ‘the genius of the highlanders has suffered a great change within these few years’, owing to the fact that ‘communication with the rest of the island’ was by then open.⁷⁷ In the immediate aftermath of Culloden, it was perhaps inevitable that change should be construed as both a recent and externally enforced phenomenon, and the longer disintegration of clan society overlooked. By an ironic twist however, many of those who came north most anxious to preserve and visualise ‘tradition’ in the later eighteenth century were facilitated in their quest by the very literal openings through the mountains created by military engineers.

Military Engineers and Draughtsmen

Although military engineering was not fully professionalised until the eighteenth century, when formal training academies could be found throughout Europe,⁷⁸ the relationship between drawing and military science was always a close one. In a recent paper, Bruce Lenman emphasised the ongoing interaction between art and science traceable in the rise of the profession, from its origins among

⁷⁵ Samuel Johnson, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* (London, 1775), 128.

⁷⁶ James Macpherson, ‘A Dissertation’, in Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, ed. Gaskill, 205-6.

⁷⁷ James Macpherson, ‘A Dissertation concerning the Antiquity &c. of the Poems of Ossian’, in Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, ed. Gaskill, 51.

⁷⁸ See ‘Table 1’ in M. H. Edney, ‘British Military Education, Mapmaking, and Military ‘Map-Mindedness’ in the Later Enlightenment’, *The Cartographic Journal*, 31, 1994, 14-20.

Renaissance architects, through its spread in the Netherlands during the 'Golden Age' of Dutch painting, to the establishment of formal schools where drawing and painting formed an essential part of the curriculum, as at the academy founded by Marshall Vauban (1633-1707) in Paris.⁷⁹ During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the superior sophistication of military science on the continent meant that the Board of Ordnance often imported outside talent from Europe. John Slezer (fl. 1650-1717), who was appointed Chief Engineer for Scotland in 1671, exemplifies this trend, having received his early training in the Netherlands under the House of Orange. Slezer also illustrates the multiple talents of the military engineer of this period. As well as producing detailed plans for the improvement of Scottish fortifications, drawn with geometric precision, Slezer is perhaps more famous for the *Theatrum Scotiae*: a volume of engraved plates illustrating the towns and buildings of Scotland, published in 1693.⁸⁰ The military character of his artistic training comes out strongly in the elevated, almost aerial perspective of the majority of views, which carry a strong map-like flavour. The military engineer's ability to express the relationship of architecture to topography is also well-exhibited in several images, such as the prospects of Dumbarton and Dunnottar Castles [Fig.4]. Slezer's portrayal of Scotland was otherwise notable for the manner in which it carefully skirted the Highland line, including views of Dumbarton, Dunkeld, Inverness and Fortrose, but being otherwise focused on central and eastern Scotland. In some small details, however, we can trace similarities with later images, particularly those in Burt's *Letters*. Almost all Slezer's town and castle views are populated scenes, showing figures going about their daily business on land and water. Of particular interest are his depictions of agricultural tools and practices, a topic which fuelled many of Burt's most caustic comments on Highland backwardness. Although they appear in Lowland scenes, it is instructive to compare the horse-drawn sledge-cart in Slezer's prospect of Arbroath [Fig.5], and again in the view of Dunblane Cathedral with representations of the same implements in Burt. The image of Dundee women trampling clothes in open tubs out of doors also

⁷⁹ Bruce Lenman, 'The Military Engineers: A Key Profession in the Making and Mapping of Early Modern Europe', Presented at *Muskets and Mapping: Military Engineers and Maps in Jacobite Scotland*, A. K. Bell Library, Perth, 22 April 2006.

⁸⁰ For background on this project, and on Slezer generally, see Keith Cavers, *A Vision of Scotland: The Nation Observed by John Slezer, 1671-1717* (Edinburgh, 1993); Tabraham and Grove, *Fortress Scotland*, 28-32.

foreshadows Burt's image of a similar scene in Inverness to a remarkable degree [Figs. 150-1].⁸¹

As the *Theatrum Scotiae* suggests, social observation was not incompatible with the drawing practice of military personnel during this period. In their official capacity, draughtsmen were nevertheless more immediately concerned with two matters: the accurate delineation of topography, and the design of fortifications. These objectives combined the skills of architect and landscape artist, and intersected with map-making on many levels. In several early Board of Ordnance plans, there was in fact a fine line between the act of picturing and that of mapping. John Henry Bastide's prospect of the barracks to be built at Bernera, for instance, first sketched in 1720, combined a naturalistic sense of horizon and perspective with a stylised, exaggeratedly flat representation of the ground adjacent to the river mouth [Fig.6].⁸² In another Bastide draught, this time of the proposed new barracks at Inversnaid, the mapped perspective dominates, with the exception of the backing mountains which are seen from the side as if in a naturalistic sketch [Fig.7].⁸³ This two-way tension can also be seen in representations of fortifications. When Lewis Petit was dispatched to Mull in 1714 to map Duart castle, he created three simultaneous images: a view of the castle from the front, focusing on architecture, from the sea, displaying its topographical setting and strategic significance, and an aerial plan, depicting the interior [Fig.8].⁸⁴

Both Petit and Bastide, despite French origins, were probably associated with an emerging school of British military drawing, centred in the Tower of London. This is thought to have been functioning from the late seventeenth century, although records are sparse prior to 1717. The Tower Drawing Room may have originated as a storage depot for fortification plans, but evolved as a base for

⁸¹ See Burt, *Letters*, I, pls. facing 52, 86; John Slezer, *Theatrum Scotiae* (London, 1693), pls. 27, 39, 40.

⁸² NLS, MS.1647 Z.03/07a, John Bastide, 'A Prospect of that Part of the Land and Sea Adjacent to ye Barrack to be Built in Glen Elg', 1720.

⁸³ NLS, MS.1648 Z.03/15a, John Bastide, 'A Draught of Innersnait, in the Highlands of North Brittain, nere the Head of Loch Lomend with Part of the Country Adjacent', n.d.

⁸⁴ NLS, MS.1648 Z.03/28a, Lewis Petit, 'Prospect of the Front of Castle Dwart; Prospect of Castle Dwart from the Sea; Plan of Castle Dwart in the Island of Mull', 1714.

copying military maps and plans and eventually became a training centre for prospective draughtsmen. Through repeated copying of earlier work, Board of Ordnance draughtsmen developed a fairly uniform and distinctive style. Following J. B. Harley's assessment of American military mapping during the eighteenth century, Douglas Marshall has drawn attention to the increasingly decorative and aesthetic appearance of Board of Ordnance maps in the same period. Marshall argues that this can be attributed to the internal politics of the Drawing Room, in which the copying of maps and plans came to serve as a tool in the individual draughtsman's striving for promotion within the armed services.⁸⁵ There is certainly evidence within the National Library of Scotland's Wade Collection for repeated copying of maps, often over a considerable time period, with the later copies demonstrating a more sophisticated handling of colour and other visual effects [Figs.9-10].⁸⁶ Whatever the politics behind this shift, it illustrates once more the fineness of the line dividing utilitarian from aesthetic images during this period. In this connection, Marshall reports the existence of a military satire which 'suggested that a commander could spare the cost of buying pictures for his home if he could employ instead an engineer with drawing ability'. During the later eighteenth century, the ability to produce 'detailed, *decorative* pen and ink washes' was also highlighted as a key asset to any military officer.⁸⁷

The practical dimensions of military drawing could also be applied in other utilitarian spheres. A particularly interesting link is with antiquarianism. While planning his great tour of the Celtic lands in 1696, Edward Lhuyd stated his intention to take with him William Rowlands, a man with 'tolerable skill in surveying and designing'.⁸⁸ Although it was not in fact Rowlands, but a William Jones who eventually accompanied Lhuyd, the mention of 'surveying and

⁸⁵ Douglas W. Marshall, 'Military Maps of the Eighteenth-Century and the Tower of London Drawing Room', *Imago Mundi*, 32, 1980, esp. 33-4.

⁸⁶ Compare, for instance, NLS, MS.1648 Z.03/13a, John Henry Bastide and John Dumaresq, 'The Roads between Inversnait, Ruthven of Badenock, Kiliwhiman and Fort William, in ye Highlands of North Brittain', with later copies: NLS, MS.1648 Z.03/14a-c. Compare also NLS, MS.1649 Z.03/32a, John Archer, 'Survey of the Road...in Brae Marr...', 1749, with a more elaborate copy: NLS, MS.1649 Z.03/32b. The latter, in addition to heightened colour, adds a decorative cartouche.

⁸⁷ Marshall, 'Military Maps', 33; Edney, 'British Military Education', 17 (my italics).

⁸⁸ Emery, *Edward Lhuyd*, 67.

designing' as desirable skills for a scientific draughtsman has obvious cross-applications to the military context. It is therefore unsurprising to see several military personnel employing their technical expertise to the depiction of antiquities. Given implicit parallels between the ancient Caledonians' resistance to Rome, and that of the Jacobite Highlands to the Hanoverian Crown, military interest in antiquities took a predictably Roman turn. Much of the fieldwork for William Roy's *Military Antiquities of the Romans in North Britain* (1793) was carried out during the years he supervised the Military Survey of Scotland (1747-1755): a justifiable digression, he asserted, due to the fact that while the technicalities of warfare had evolved with the passage of time, the shape of the landscape, and thus the most advantageous positions of defence and attack, had not.⁸⁹ Roy implied that by seeking light on the movements of the Roman armies all those centuries ago, His Majesty's forces might learn many a useful lesson applicable to current attempts to neutralise the Jacobite threat. In preparing the plates to the *Military Antiquities*, Roy made full use of his technical skills, producing medium-scale maps of the terrain in which the bulk of Roman works were concentrated, large-scale plans of the forts themselves, and, in a single concession to naturalism, a perspective view of the Eildon hills.

While still in manuscript, Roy's work received a mention in a new edition of Camden, edited by Richard Gough, and published in three volumes in 1789.⁹⁰ Gough added to this an account received from General Robert Melville, a friend of Roy's who was in Edinburgh in connection with military duties in 1751 and again in 1754. On the latter occasion, returning from a walking tour of the Highlands, he was informed by a Perthshire gentleman of the location of some nearby earthworks attributed to the Picts (which were in fact correctly Roman). Melville communicated this discovery to Roy, then employed on the Military Survey, along with several sketches; Gough notes that the latter then made accurate drawings of this and other camps in 1755, which were then recorded on the 'government map of Scotland'.⁹¹ As this suggests, the content of military

⁸⁹ Roy, *Military Antiquities*, i.

⁹⁰ William Camden, *Britannia: or, a Chorographical Description of the Flourishing Kingdoms of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and the Islands Adjacent; from the Earliest Antiquity. Enlarged by the Latest Discoveries*, ed. Richard Gough (3 vols., London, 1789), III, 417.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, III, 414-17.

maps could often extend beyond what was strictly required by their intended function. Tabraham and Grove have drawn attention to the prominence of an early-discovered Roman camp, at Ardoch in Strathallan, on a Board of Ordnance map produced in 1731 by Clement Lempriere [Fig.11]; Lempriere was at this time senior draughtsman in the Tower of London Drawing Room. The implication is that Lempriere may have been 'drawing an analogy between his own imperial majesty's attempt to subjugate the troublesome Highland clans and the much earlier conquest of the ancient tribes by imperial Rome'.⁹² Parallels with Roy's cross-application of antiquarian lessons are certainly a clear possibility.

There is also evidence, on the other hand, that military drawing skills were applied to non-Roman archaeology. Roy himself included two plans of native 'British' posts in Strathmore, which he attributed to the Picts, in his *Military Antiquities*.⁹³ Going back to the barrack building schemes of the 1720s, there is also an established link between Andrews Jelfe (d. 1759), an architect employed by the Board of Ordnance to oversee the work at Ruthven, Bernera, Kiliwhimen and Inversnaid, and the antiquary William Stukeley. Stukeley is well known for his interest in native antiquities as opposed to the emphasis on ancient Rome which had dominated enquiries into early British history. He is particularly notable for popularising the association between megalithic structures like Stonehenge and the druids. This did not preclude an interest in Roman antiquities, and Stukeley published an account of Arthur's Oven, the Roman temple in Stirlingshire, for which Jelfe supplied measured drawings in 1721.⁹⁴ According to Richard Gough's *Anecdotes of British Topography* (1768), Stukeley was also responsible for sketches of several archaeological sites in the Highlands, including cairns and stone circles in west Argyll, and a broch and stone circle near Glenelg in western Inverness-shire.⁹⁵ There is, however, no

⁹² Tabraham and Grove, *Fortress Scotland*, 12; NLS, Acc.11104. Map Rol.a.42., Clement Lempriere, 'A Description of the Highlands of Scotland, the Situation of the Several Clans and the Number of Men Able to Bear Arms, as also ye Forts Lately Erected and Roads of Communication or Military Ways Carried on by His Majesty's Command', 1731; Marshall, 'Military Maps', 22.

⁹³ Roy, *Military Antiquities*, 205.

⁹⁴ Stuart Piggott, *William Stukeley: An Eighteenth-Century Antiquary* (London, 1985 edn.), 79-109, 58-60.

⁹⁵ Gough, *Anecdotes of British Topography*, 640, 647.

evidence of his having travelled as far as Glenelg in any of his tours, and it is tempting to conjecture that Jelfe's presence there while working at Bernera barracks in 1719 may have provided an opportunity for the supply of further drawings.⁹⁶

If military activity in the Highlands indirectly furthered the progress of antiquarian image-making, its most enduring legacy was undoubtedly the visualisation of the landscape. The career of Paul Sandby allows us to view the flexibility of draughtsmen's skills from another angle, ultimately rejoining the stream of aesthetically-motivated imagery. Sandby, along with his brother Thomas, was born in Nottingham, although both went south to London to train in the Tower of London Drawing Room at a young age. Both found themselves in the Highlands during the 1740s, and a surviving drawing suggests that Thomas probably witnessed the Battle of Culloden in 1746. Thereafter, he applied his surveying and designing talents to architecture and landscape gardening, effecting extensive improvements for the Duke of Cumberland at Windsor.⁹⁷ Paul's enduring fame comes from his role as chief draughtsman to the Military Survey, and his subsequent career as a landscape painter. In relation to fine art, Charlotte Klonk has interpreted his work as following in the Dutch and Flemish tradition of faithful accuracy, which, as we have seen, was frowned on by the British art establishment by virtue of its failure to reflect an ideal view of nature.⁹⁸ In the military context, faithful accuracy was of course a prerequisite for topographical drawing, as field sketches performed a key role in the surveying process. In his account of the Military Survey, published in 1808, the mapmaker Aaron Arrowsmith recorded that each surveyor kept a sketchbook in which he 'delineated his Stations and the face of the Country'. From these, along with the mathematical angles and measurements taken at each station, the eventual map was collated. Arrowsmith further attributed the shading of the 'Mountains and Ground' on the finished map to Sandby, a feat which Christian suggests drew more on the latter's ability for 'artistic improvisation' than on any

⁹⁶ On Jelfe's career and work for the Board of Ordnance, see Howard Colvin, *A Biographical Dictionary of British Architects, 1600-1840* (New Haven and London, 1995), 542.

⁹⁷ Christian, 'Paul Sandby and the Military Survey'; Colvin, *Biographical Dictionary*, 842.

⁹⁸ Klonk, *Science and the Perception of Nature*, 71.

aspect of his cartographic training.⁹⁹ Before the advent of contour lines, a means of expressing the precise gradations of relief with any visual accuracy was not available, and we can presume that topographical sketches of hills and other prominent natural features would have proved crucial to Sandby's ability to complete his task.

In a short memoir published after his father's death, Sandby's son suggested that the challenge of reducing the Highland landscape to a two-dimensional plane provided his father with an unrivalled training ground which set up his future career:

As circumstances are the great governors of men, and may in most instances be said to be the makers of them; perhaps the destination of Mr Sandby to the Highlands was the source of his eminence as a landscape painter, at least in the formation of his peculiar style, as, though he there saw nature in her wildest form, the necessity under which he lay of attending to particular accuracy in filling up the plans, may be supposed to have formed in him that correct and faithful habit, with which he after viewed and delineated her.¹⁰⁰

By 1811, when this memoir was published, it is clear that the 'correct and faithful' depiction of nature could hold its head high in a catalogue of artistic achievements. Perceptions of correctness could, however, vary, and there is evidence of discrepancies between Sandby's original drawings and their engraved versions. The best known of these concerns a view of Strathtay originally sketched in 1747, and later published in *The Virtuosi's Museum* (1778). In the drawing, the hills appear more or less simply as they are: not particularly dramatic, gently-rolling specimens which frame the valley floor and fill the distant horizon. In the print, on the other hand, the prospect has been narrowed, foreshortened and darkened, the hills made steeper and craggier, and a

⁹⁹ Christian, 'Paul Sandby and the Military Survey', 19-20.

¹⁰⁰ The memoir is reproduced in full in Paul Oppé, 'The Memoir of Paul Sandby by his Son', *Burlington Magazine*, 88, 1946, 143-47.

kilted herdsman added to the foreground.¹⁰¹ This, therefore, appears to be an almost classic example of the scale of nature being enlarged a little beyond nature to make nature look like herself.¹⁰² It suggests, moreover, the emergence of a new category of 'ideal' nature – the wild landscape – towards which artists could aspire. From his experience of the Highlands as a whole, Sandby appears to have created a retrospective amalgamation of 'Highlandness' which was then superimposed upon the contours of an actual scene.

Given his later influence in the fine art sphere, there can be no doubt that Sandby played a key role in bringing Scottish scenery to the attention of a wider audience. There is considerable incidental evidence for the circulation of his drawings in a variety of spheres. Gough's *Anecdotes of British Topography*, for instance, listed Sandby among the handful of those who had contributed to the delineation of Scottish topography by 1768. 'Those [drawings] given us by Mr Paul Sandby', Gough wrote, 'serve but to make us wish for a further acquaintance with the many wild prospects of this country from his pencil'.¹⁰³ Within the military context, we might also note an anecdote from the career of Captain John Bernard Gilpin (1701-76), father to the William Gilpin who later popularised the concept of the picturesque tour. From 1723, John Bernard's regiment was stationed in various locations throughout Scotland, including Stirling, Fort William, and the Isle of Skye. Although an ordinary officer and not a draughtsman, he is known to have drawn casually while on active service. On his retirement, Captain Gilpin set up a studio room in Carlisle and gave lessons, and it was from him that his son, William, received his earliest instruction. Carl Barbier has traced evidence for contact with Sandby's work in the form of a watercolour signed 'J. Gilpin' and labelled 'North View of Tyrim Castle in Loch Moidart from a drawing of Mr Paul Sandby'. The Captain also had links with Thomas Pennant, who travelled to the Highlands in 1769 and 1772, supplying him with drawings of Roman antiquities found at Netherby near Carlisle. Another possible acquaintance was Sir John Clerk of Eldin (1728-1812), eighth

¹⁰¹ For comment on these alterations, see Holloway and Errington, *Discovery of Scotland*, 37; Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (London, 1995), 467.

¹⁰² Cf. Gilpin, *Observations*, II, 148.

¹⁰³ Gough, *Anecdotes of British Topography*, xvii.

son to the antiquarian Sir John of Penicuik.¹⁰⁴ Clerk of Eldin was himself an admirer and collector of Sandby's work, and an amateur artist of considerable talent. Writing in 1763, he reported on a visit to Mount Stuart in Bute where he had been shown a drawing of Bothwell Castle by Sandby. In the same letter, he recorded the existence of about thirty Sandby drawings in his own collection.¹⁰⁵

The Amateur Artist

Like the line drawn between utilitarian and aesthetic images, it is often difficult to establish a division between amateur and professional artists in practice. It may be helpful to borrow definitions of amateurism from a different sphere. Roy Porter has classified the amateur geologist as one who dabbled in the exploration of the earth but did not specialise narrowly in it, did not devote his time exclusively to it, and 'derived practically no income from it'.¹⁰⁶ We might apply the same criteria to defining the amateur artist, but this can be complicated by the association of professionalism with skill and vice versa. While skill was undoubtedly necessary for anyone to make a living from art, it does not follow that the 'amateur' was necessarily less proficient or talented. Another problem is distinguishing between amateurs who dabbled in sketching and painting merely for pleasure, or as a fashionable accomplishment, and those (such as the gentleman-scientist) for whom drawing was a more serious, utilitarian enterprise. Often the same talent could be turned to both accounts. While rigid categorisation is therefore difficult, it is nonetheless true that amateur artists tended to concentrate on landscape rather than figure studies and worked mainly in pencil, ink and watercolour as opposed to oil. A preference for ink and watercolour was also of course the hallmark of the military draughtsman and artist-traveller, as the required materials were easily transported and dried quickly.¹⁰⁷ Travel artists were also frequently working with a view to engraving, which meant that strong lines and a clear distribution of light and shade were

¹⁰⁴ Carl Paul Barbier, *William Gilpin: His Drawings, Teaching, and Theory of the Picturesque* (Oxford, 1963), 4-8.

¹⁰⁵ NAS, Clerk of Penicuik Papers, GD 18/5486/4, Sir John Clerk to Margaret Adam, 4 September 1763.

¹⁰⁶ Roy Porter, 'Gentlemen and Geology: The Emergence of a Scientific Career, 1660-1920', *Historical Journal*, 21, 1978, 812.

¹⁰⁷ Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*, 3.

more important than texture and fine detail. Their images therefore share some of the hallmarks of amateur art, although, learning a living from their craft, they could otherwise be classed as professionals.

It is important to emphasise the disorganised character of art education throughout our period, even after formal schools became established in the major cities. Practising artists frequently offered drawing lessons to supplement their income, and there is no evidence of a clear division in clientele between those who went on to attain professional status, and those who remained content to exercise their talent at an amateur level. Some of those who became well known drawing masters, such as William Gilpin, gathered their knowledge by a distinctly piecemeal route, and his experience yields some instructive insights into the progress of an amateur. Gilpin received his earliest lessons in drawing from his father, who also taught outside students on an occasional basis from 1750; Barbier reports that William Gilpin learned from his father how to handle pen, pencil and simple washes before going south to Oxford to take his degree. While in Oxford, Gilpin continued his study of art, visiting picture collections to soak up Old Master paintings, and attending auctions in search of prints for his own private collection.¹⁰⁸ These were not merely the activities of a budding connoisseur. As the Foulis collection of teaching materials indicates, copying paintings, prints and book illustrations was central to academic art instruction.¹⁰⁹ These could also form an avenue of self-instruction for those without the benefit of formal teaching, and copying engravings of Old Masters or seventeenth-century landscapes was an affordable way for the amateur to improve his or her style.¹¹⁰ In 1752, Gilpin took over a school for boys at Cheam, where he was able to pass on his skills in the form of drawing lessons; in this he was assisted by his brother Sawrey, also an artist. Surviving evidence suggests that pupils were initially set to work copying their master's drawings, and even maps, before being allowed to try their hand at sketching from nature.¹¹¹ As in the academic

¹⁰⁸ Barbier, *William Gilpin*, 8, 16-19.

¹⁰⁹ Fairfull-Smith, *Foulis Press*, 23-6.

¹¹⁰ For further instances of this practice among amateurs, see Francina Irwin, 'Lady Amateurs and their Masters in Scott's Edinburgh', *Connoisseur*, 187, 1974, 230-7. See also Peter Bicknell and Jane Munro, *Gilpin to Ruskin: Drawing Masters and their Manuals* (Cambridge, 1988), 7.

¹¹¹ Barbier, *William Gilpin*, 37.

art world, students were expected to master a sense of ideal forms before going on to apply these to what they saw in nature.

From 1768, Gilpin undertook a series of tours to locations throughout Britain, beginning with Kent, taking in the English Lakes and North Wales, and finally reaching Scotland in 1776. Several of these tours formed the basis for publications on picturesque scenery, illustrated with aquatint plates made up from Gilpin's own sketches. During this period, Gilpin also wrote his *Essays on Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape* (eventually published in 1792), which contained more direct practical guidance than any of the general tours. After he gave up Cheam School in 1778, Gilpin found that the popularity of his writings on the picturesque had placed him in demand as a source of advice on matters of art and taste. Among his admirers was the Countess of Sutherland, with whom he exchanged drawings, and who was later to create a pioneering record of the landscape of northern Sutherland.¹¹² It is important to note here that Gilpin was a devotee of the ideal landscape school, and believed in the possibility of 'improving' nature by selecting the most general lines and best combination of effects. In his observations on Highland scenery, Gilpin attempted to prove that the region could be made to fit the received conventions of aesthetic taste, but was forced to admit that in his travels he had indeed encountered many scenes which failed to fall 'within the rules of composition'. There was, however, as he explained in an appendix to his two volume work, a simple way around this difficulty:

With regard to the prints, which adorn these volumes, I can only say, what I have said of those in other publications of the same kind; that few of them pretend to be exact portraits. They in general only characterise the countries, through which the reader is carried. They were slightly taken in the course of a hasty journey; and at best meant only to preserve the great lines of the country: and even this, I fear not always accurately.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 41-66, 148-71; Michael Clarke, *The Tempting Prospect: A Social History of English Watercolours* (London, 1981), 111; Francina Irwin, 'Across Sutherland with its Duchess', *Country Life*, 194, 2000, 52-3. Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland (1765-1839), was a pupil of the English watercolourist Thomas Girtin. Two volumes of views based on her sketches were privately printed: a set of etchings, *Views in Orkney and on the North Coast of Scotland* (1807), and a collection of aquatints, *Views on the Northern and Western Coasts of Sutherland* (1833).

I have heretofore made confession to the public, that when I have seen a line out of place, I have a great propensity to correct it by one that is more picturesque.¹¹³

In this, Gilpin echoed received academic parlance, already noted in the thinking of Sir Joshua Reynolds. The best-known and most-widely available landscape prints at this time were a collection of two hundred sepia mezzotints – the *Liber Veritatus* – after the drawings of Claude, and that this approach should spill over into amateur practice was unsurprising.¹¹⁴ As well as clergymen like Gilpin and the well-known Scottish painter, Rev. John Thomson of Duddingston (1778-1840), amateurs in the main belonged to the aristocratic and landowning classes.¹¹⁵ As they themselves helped to forge academic taste through collecting and connoisseurship, it was inevitable that their own attempts to draw should follow such work as was considered most desirable of imitation.

In the age of Gilpin, the fashion for drawing among this class cannot be dissociated from the vogue for picturesque travel. Gilpin of course did not invent the picturesque tour; he was merely responsible for codifying and applying the thinking of earlier writers like Sir Edmund Burke and Sir Uvedale Price. A taste for British scenery was in part fostered by the necessity of travelling at home during the era of the Napoleonic wars, when the usual European tours became out of the question.¹¹⁶ In this context, it is interesting to note burgeoning opportunities for drawing lessons during the 1790s, particularly for aristocratic ladies. In Edinburgh, Mrs Schetky began a drawing class for ladies in which her son, later appointed Marine Painter in Ordinary to George IV, helped with the teaching. The daughters of Alexander Nasmyth, sometimes assisted by their father, also offered drawing classes from their home in Edinburgh, which it became extremely fashionable to attend.¹¹⁷ Classes for amateurs were in the

¹¹³ Gilpin, *Observations*, II, n.p. This extract can be found in the appendix entitled 'Account of the Prints'.

¹¹⁴ Bicknell and Munro, *Gilpin to Ruskin*, 7.

¹¹⁵ Clarke, *Tempting Prospect*, 104.

¹¹⁶ Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 35; John R. Gold and Margaret M. Gold, *Imagining Scotland: Tradition, Representation and Promotion in Scottish Tourism Since 1750* (Aldershot, 1995), 41.

¹¹⁷ Irwin, 'Lady Amateurs', 233.

main aimed at the mastery of landscape drawing. Around 1800, however, manuals began to appear containing ready-made groupings of figures which could be copied and added as accessories to a view. These fitted into the contemporary enthusiasm for British scenery by guiding the student as to the most suitable type of figure for different kinds of landscape, often along national lines. In practice, this often served to reinforce visual stereotypes, such as the distinction between Scottish, Welsh and English modes of washing made by William Henry Pyne's *Microcosm* (1806), or the costume studies in his *World in Miniature* (1827). In the latter, the choice of figures to illustrate Scotland – 'Scotch peasant girl', 'Scotch piper', 'Scotch shepherd' and 'Highland chieftain' – reveals much about the potential impact of such manuals on perceptions of national 'types' and their representation in visual images.¹¹⁸

For the general traveller, pencil and watercolour could be construed as the equivalent of the modern tourist's camera: a means of capturing a record of scenes and views to which written description could not do justice, and of creating a tangible, attractive memento in the form of illustrated albums and journals. Sketches were sometimes worked up into drawings and pasted in at leisure after a tour was over, or cut out of original sketchbooks to form a balanced written and visual record. Spaces might also be left in a journal for the addition of drawings which, for one reason or another, were never completed. Although they imitated, quoted and echoed well-known published travelogues, most were never intended for more than private perusal or circulation.¹¹⁹ By contrast, not all journals which did see their way into print contained illustrations, despite the fact that sketching formed an important part of the tour. Sarah Murray Aust, for instance, the author of one of the best-known early

¹¹⁸ Bicknell and Munro, *Gilpin to Ruskin*, 71-5; William Henry Pyne, *The World in Miniature: England, Scotland and Ireland, Containing a Description of the Character, Manners, Customs, Dress, Diversions, and other Peculiarities of the Inhabitants of Great Britain* (4 vols., London, 1827), IV.

¹¹⁹ These general observations are based on examples of illustrated manuscript diaries in the National Library of Scotland, dating from the later eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. Some further MS. travelogues from this period have been rediscovered and published in recent years: see esp. J. E. Bowman, *The Highlands and Islands: A Nineteenth Century Tour*, edd. Elaine M. E. Barry and Celia Miller (Gloucester, 1986); David A. Quine, ed., *Expeditions to the Hebrides by George Clayton Atkinson in 1831 and 1833* (Lusta, 2001). The MSS. on which these publications are based were bound and illustrated.

guides to the Highlands, made numerous references to her attempts to capture views, but none of these were reproduced in the published volume.¹²⁰

By the 1820s, the well-to-do lady sketching from nature had clearly become an established sight on the Highland tour route. This is conveyed visually in several images from this period, such as that of a lady drawing in the park at Taymouth in David Octavius Hill's *Sketches of Scenery in Perthshire* (1821) [Fig.12], and another seated on a rock with an open sketchbook in John Knox's *South Western View from Ben Lomond* [Fig.13].¹²¹ Later in the century, Queen Victoria was to join the ranks of lady amateurs sketching in the Highlands. At Balmoral, she received lessons from the Glasgow-born painter William Leighton Leitch (1804-33), and was recorded by Landseer sketching at Loch Laggan in 1847.¹²² In this painting, the Queen's drawing book reveals her attempt to capture the loch and mountain scene before her in a naturalistic style. Her Highland diaries, published in 1868, also gave voice to a faith in the power of the image to capture picturesque effect. Following a fishing expedition to Loch Muich in August 1848, she reflected: 'I wish an artist could have been there to sketch the scene; it was so picturesque – the boat, the net, and the people in their kilts in the water, and on the shore'. Two years later, having been treated to an exhibition of salmon leistering at Balmoral, the Queen opined: 'The scene at this beautiful spot was exciting and picturesque in the extreme. I wished for Landseer's pencil'.¹²³

Besides the Queen, other members of the new generation of Highland landowners could be found exercising their artistic talents on subjects inspired by their immediate surroundings. Of particular interest in this respect are the albums of Katharine Jane Ellice, daughter in law to the politician Edward Ellice (1781-1863), who purchased Glenquoich estate in Inverness-shire in 1839. The drawings in Katharine's albums date from 1844, and include contributions from

¹²⁰ Murray, *Companion and Useful Guide*, passim. This was first published in 1799.

¹²¹ 'Taymouth Castle' in Hill, *Scenery in Perthshire*. There are two pairs of Knox's panoramic views from Ben Lomond, both almost identical in detail. For the first, see GM, 448, John Knox, *South-Western View from Ben Lomond* and GM, 460, John Knox, *North-Western View from Ben Lomond*, Both Canvas, Both 62.3 x 157.5.

¹²² Irwin, 'Lady Amateurs', 230; RC, Sir Edwin Landseer, *Queen Victoria Sketching at Loch Laggan*, Panel, 34.1 x 49.5, 1847.

¹²³ Queen Victoria, *Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands from 1848 to 1861*, ed. Arthur Helps (London, 1868), 113, 126.

several amateurs in the Ellice circle, illustrating the prominent role which drawing played in the family's leisure practices and among their social network.¹²⁴ Although a large number of the drawings feature scenes in and around Glenquoich, including some studies of local people and their social circumstances, there is also a series of light-hearted portraits of the artists at work. One, entitled 'Mrs R. Ellice, Miss Mary Ellice', dated 1858, shows the two women at work with drawing boards in the open air [Fig.14]. Their subject is a harvest field beside a loch with mountainous scenery beyond. Others, mainly of women friends, depict the artist working indoors with watercolours, in some cases making up coloured drawings on the basis of existing sketches. A further portrait, this time of a male friend, Sir John Leslie, shows him seated by an open window, probably in Glenquoich Lodge, sketching the vista beyond.¹²⁵ The Ellice circle maintained contact with the professional art world in the person of Sir Edwin Landseer, who stayed at Glenquoich during the stalking season on several occasions. In one of Katharine's albums there is a sketch in dark brown ink of a stag looking backwards across a loch, labelled 'Glenquoich, 1845, sketch by Sir E. L. Landseer'.¹²⁶

Another amateur artist who straddled several worlds was Jemima Blackburn, wife of Hugh Blackburn, Professor of Mathematics at Glasgow University. In 1854, the Blackburns purchased Roshven Estate in Moidart, thereafter putting in motion plans to rebuild the house and extensively landscape the grounds. Robert Fairley has compiled a comprehensive account of Jemima's status as an artist, covering her work as a book illustrator, her contacts with several of the leading professionals of her day, and the content of her personal albums. In many ways, she was typical of the female amateur, lacking the technical expertise to experiment with oil painting, and electing to portray homely subjects and scenes. Besides numerous sketches of family life, Fairley reports her interest in the people of the West Highlands, which echoes the focus of the Ellice drawings. A surviving anecdote provides an insight into possible responses to the intruding eye of the artist. On a visit to St. Kilda, Jemima's efforts to sketch some local

¹²⁴ NLS, MSS.15170-4, Albums of Katharine Jane Ellice of Invergarry, c. 1845-63.

¹²⁵ NLS, MS.15174, ff. 7, 11, 12, 16, 30, 31, 33.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 64.

women and children were thwarted by her prospective subjects, one of whom, in turning away, attempted to hide her child.¹²⁷ A sense of tension between artist and subject is also reflected in two sketches in the Ellice albums: one, by Mrs Norton, entitled 'Manners of the Natives when Travellers Pass by', shows a young girl and boy seated beside some rocks, with watchful, apprehensive eyes; the second, by Mr H. J. Wells, is a pastiche of 'entering a Highland cottage', depicting an interior with two male figures leaning around the edge of the door [Fig.15]. In the foreground, a young woman appears lifting her apron to her mouth with a startled expression, with an assorted group of children cowering in the corner.¹²⁸

Fairley notes a further aspect of Jemima's work which connects with scientific draughtsmanship. Her surviving drawings contain several examples in this genre, an approach to nature in which truth and accuracy were the primary goals.¹²⁹ As already indicated above, scientific travels in the later eighteenth century trod a fine line between professionalism and amateurism so far as their artistic element was concerned. In relation to botanical illustration, it is interesting to observe that instruction in flower drawing formed a part of some programmes of lessons for amateurs.¹³⁰ When attempting larger landscape compositions in the field, truth to nature might also be encouraged through the use of optical drawing instruments, such as the camera obscura. Alexander Nasmyth is known to have employed this in his lessons, and Michael Clarke also draws attention to a drawing by Paul Sandby of Lady Frances Scott using a camera obscura at Roslin Castle around 1770.¹³¹ This device worked by projecting an image of the object viewed onto a sheet of paper, which could then be the more easily traced.¹³² Not only was this a clear advantage to the amateur, it also provided the scientific draughtsman with a means of ensuring his sketches remained true to nature's outlines. By the early years of the nineteenth century,

¹²⁷ Robert Fairley, ed., *Jemima: The Paintings and Memoirs of a Victorian Lady* (Edinburgh, 1988), esp. 50-2, 71. See also Duncan Macmillan, *Scottish Art, 1460-1990* (Edinburgh, 1990), 214-15.

¹²⁸ NLS, MS.15170, ff. 11, 38.

¹²⁹ Fairley, ed., *Jemima*, 28.

¹³⁰ Irwin, 'Lady Amateurs', 235-7.

¹³¹ Clarke, *Tempting Prospect*, 121.

¹³² Edward Lucie Smith, *Dictionary of Art Terms* (London, 1984), 39.

the budding science of geology gave impetus to the study of the landscape as an integrated whole. During this period, a series of individuals can be found applying their drawing talents to the furtherance of personal scientific interests. Although geologists had been employing draughtsmen on a semi-professional basis since the 1780s, the work of men like John MacCulloch (1773-1835), Thomas Dick Lauder (1784-1848), and John Francis Campbell of Islay (1821-1885) provides an insight into the application of personal skill to scientific ends.

MacCulloch, a native of Guernsey, studied medicine at Edinburgh University before going on to a polymathic career in science, which included presidency of the newly-founded Geological Society of London. In 1819, he published his classic *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, illustrated with plates from his own drawings.¹³³ He also contributed regularly to the *Transactions* of the Geological Society, likewise providing his own illustrations. MacCulloch has been described as an artist of near-professional calibre, and it has been suggested that he made use of a camera lucida in order to guarantee the accuracy of his field sketches.¹³⁴ Although primarily concerned with the natural sciences, his images also reveal an interest in architecture and antiquities, something he shared with both Lauder and Campbell. The latter had several points in common: besides amateur dabbling in geology, which resulted in published books and papers, both had a fascination with tales and legends, and with folk customs. All of these interests are reflected in their writings, sketches, and published prints, although Campbell's scholarship was undoubtedly more original and rigorous. His understanding of Highland life was enhanced by his Islay upbringing and a knowledge of Gaelic, while Lauder inclined towards the romantic vision of fellow Lowlanders like Sir Walter Scott. Although his work is uneven, Campbell was also probably the better artist. The sketchbooks of both men nevertheless provide a fascinating insight into the applications of an amateur talent to the depiction of subjects in which more than merely picturesque effect

¹³³ John MacCulloch, *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland, Including the Isle of Man: Comprising an Account of their Geological Structure; with Remarks on their Agriculture, Scenery and Antiquities* (3 vols., London, 1819).

¹³⁴ Rudwick, 'Emergence of a Visual Language', 153, 175.

was aimed for. In published form, many of their images were also influential in shaping the perceptions of a wider audience.¹³⁵

Prints and Printmaking

Prints performed such an essential role in the dissemination of visual images of the Highlands that a short digression into the world of printmaking may be useful here. The visual discovery of the Highlands coincided with rapid advances in print technologies, which made image reproduction more affordable, and also gradually more flexible, approximating more closely to the artist's original drawing. Such flexibility was facilitated by the processes of aquatint and lithography in particular, both of which permitted colour images. Prints surfaced in a wide variety of contexts. Their use in teaching has already been noted, as has the acquisition of collections for personal instruction and pleasure. Prints could also form a cheap substitute for original paintings, and might be framed and hung in homes accordingly. Illustrated books became more common in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and the rise of the popular illustrated press provided another forum for the dissemination of printed images. The cost of a printed image, and consequently its affordability, varied according to the processes involved; Patricia Anderson averages the cost of those for sale in dedicated print shops at around 2s. 6d. each, thus limiting their accessibility to the middle strata of society and above.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ For specimens of Lauder's original drawings, see AAGM, 8404-9, Albums of Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, 1802-31. For examples of prints after his drawings, see his 'Account of the Parallel Roads of Lochaber', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 9, 1821, 1-64; *Account of the Great Floods of August 1829, in the Province of Moray and Adjoining Districts* (Edinburgh, 1830); *Highland Rambles, and Long Legends to Shorten the Way* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1837). See also the plates in James Wilson, *A Voyage round the Coasts of Scotland and the Isles* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1842). For a selection of Campbell's original work, see NGS, D 4126, Album of John Francis Campbell of Islay, c. 1845-8; NLS, Adv.MSS.50.2.2, 50.3.23, 50.4.2, 50.4.4-6, 50.4.9, Travel Journals of John Francis Campbell of Islay, c. 1862-71. For printed images, see his *Frost and Fire: Natural Engines, Tool-marks and Chips, with Sketches taken at Home and Abroad by a Traveller* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1865); 'Something from "The Diggins" in Sutherland' Offprint in NLS, BL.9/3.3 (1-11), 1869; *My Circular Notes* (2 vols., New York, 1875); *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (4 vols., London, 1860-2), esp. IV.

¹³⁶ Patricia Anderson, *The Printed Image and the Transformation of Popular Culture, 1790-1860* (Oxford, 1991), 19. The plates in Sandby, *Virtuosi's Museum*, were in fact advertised at 1s. 1d. each; the preface to the collected edition explicitly drew attention to their low cost in comparison to the usual 2s. 6d., or even 5s. For an analysis of print collecting in Scotland during the eighteenth century, see Stana Nenadic, 'Print Collecting and Popular Culture in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *History*, 82, 1997, 203-22.

The cheapest form of image reproduction available in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was also the oldest. This was the woodcut, made using a wooden block on which the artist's design was first drawn, then cut out of the wood by hand using a knife. Once inked, the design could be transferred to a flat surface, on which only the raised lines of the original drawing should leave an impression. During the eighteenth century, a more sophisticated method of printing using wood evolved, known as wood engraving. Rather than cutting material away to leave raised lines, a graving tool, or burin, was used to incise the picture design on the surface of the block. This allowed finer lines and a much greater degree of detail. Wood engraving became the established method of image reproduction used by the illustrated press from the middle decades of the nineteenth century, and was also widely employed by book illustrators of this period. Prior to the invention of this cheap method, the technique of engraving was more usually applied to metal plates, generally of copper, but also sometimes made of steel. While harder to engrave, steel plates were more durable than copper, and so survived the friction of the printing process longer. After inking, engraved plates were wiped clean so that only the incisions held the ink; this was then forced onto dampened paper by being squeezed horizontally between two rollers.¹³⁷

In each of these processes, transferring the design to the block or plate was a highly skilled process, and required a considerable degree of experience and expertise. Professional engravers were generally responsible for this task, although it also required artistic skill. When reproducing a painting, monochrome, scaled-down copies were often commissioned from an intermediary draughtsman; these copies were then marked off with squares to aid their accurate transferral to the printing plate.¹³⁸ As William Ivins describes, images reproduced in this way were, with few exceptions, 'at one and two removes from the visual statements made by their titular makers'.¹³⁹ The

¹³⁷ Antony Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking: An Introduction to the History and Techniques* (London, 1980), 13-56.

¹³⁸ Susan Lambert, *The Image Multiplied: Five Centuries of Printed Reproductions of Paintings and Drawings* (London, 1987), 46.

¹³⁹ William M. Ivins, *Prints and Visual Communication* (London, 1953), 88.

insertion of middlemen into the process doubtless increased the chance of distortion or error. Printing conventions, such as the framing of a work within an embellished, decorative border could also affect the way in which a work was read. Several examples of this occurred in Sandby's *Virtuosi's Museum*, in which figures were sometimes superimposed on the landscape compositions from the edge of such a border [Fig.16].¹⁴⁰ Artists should not of course be separated from the print-making process, and proofs were often returned to the engraver with corrections and suggestions for improvement.¹⁴¹ It is also important to remember that engraving formed part of some artists' education and training. The Foulis Academy was particularly notable in this respect, its students producing and selling prints from their own work, as well as from standard illustration manuals and old master paintings.¹⁴² Into the nineteenth century, artists like Horatio McCulloch and Daniel Macnee found early employment in the workshop of the Edinburgh engraver W. H. Lizars. Lizars, himself the son of an engraver, had studied at the Trustees Academy before giving up his prospects as a painter to continue the family business.¹⁴³

Closely related to engraving was the technique of etching, which differed in using acid rather than a cutting tool to mark the plate with the picture design. During preparation, the artist or etcher covered the plate with a waxy ground, which then protected all but the lines of the design from the biting effect of the acid. Unlike engraving, this process did not require the mastery of graving tools, as the design could simply be drawn onto the ground, which consequently made it popular with amateurs.¹⁴⁴ John Bernard Gilpin and his son William both experimented with etching, the Captain producing illustrations by this method for a family biography published in 1752.¹⁴⁵ Sir John Clerk of Eldin, another amateur, is well known for his etched views of Scotland, in which he imitated the

¹⁴⁰ See esp. pl. 37, of Snowdon in Wales, with a blind harper, and pl. 44, of Dunstaffnage castle, which includes a figure in Highland dress and a set of pipes.

¹⁴¹ Landseer, for instance, maintained close contact with his engravers, frequently retouching proofs by over-drawing: Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 101. Written suggestions for improvement might also be added, as in NGS, RSA 1284, S. Williams, after William Simson, *Highland Chief*, Engraving, n.d.. Annotations in the margin read 'touch of light on the eye', and 'the ear wants a little more form'.

¹⁴² Fairfull-Smith, *Foulis Press*, 39-46.

¹⁴³ Sheenah Smith, *Horatio McCulloch, 1805-1867* (Glasgow, 1988), 11.

¹⁴⁴ Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 56-74.

¹⁴⁵ Barbier, *William Gilpin*, 9.

experiments of Sandby in the same medium.¹⁴⁶ Lady amateurs also dabbled in etching, with varying degrees of success. The Duchess of Sutherland's highly professional *Views in Orkney and on the North-Eastern Coast of Scotland*, each individually initialled, and privately printed in 1807 [Figs.17-18], might be contrasted with a less accomplished collection of views by Eliza Constantia Campbell.¹⁴⁷ The practice of etching also surfaced among scientific draughtsmen. James Skene of Rubislaw (1775-1845), for instance, who served as artist to the geologist George Greenough on a tour of the western Highlands and Islands in 1805, later produced a volume illustrating topographic scenes from Scott's *Waverley Novels*, etched from his own drawings.¹⁴⁸

Each of these processes allowed the reproduction of simple lines, with tonal effects conveyed by hatching or by intensifying the concentration of lines. Mezzotint permitted a more subtle achievement of tone by roughening the entire plate and then cutting out 'burnishes' of graduated smoothness. The rougher the plate, the more ink it will hold, which allows a broad distribution of tones from dark to light. This mirrors the effect of a watercolour wash much more closely than any of the line printing processes. Also akin to watercolour is the process of aquatint, which fuses particles of acid-resistant resin to the printing plate. 'Since this plate is porous', Griffiths explains, 'the acid bites into the plate in tiny pools round each particle. These tiny depressions retain the ink when the plate is wiped, and when printed give the effect of a soft grain'.¹⁴⁹ Both of these processes were particularly applicable to the reproduction of landscape images, and Turner and Constable could both be found turning to mezzotint for this purpose.¹⁵⁰ Paul Sandby is generally credited with the popularisation of aquatint

¹⁴⁶ For a collection of Clerk etchings, published posthumously by the Bannatyne Club, see John Clerk, *A Series of Etchings, Chiefly of Views in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1855).

¹⁴⁷ NGS, Non-Accessioned, Eliza Constantia Campbell, *Scottish Scenery: Sketches from Nature*, Inscribed 9 June 1835. The majority of views are of locations on the Highland tour route, taking in Loch Lomond, the Trossachs and Loch Fyne.

¹⁴⁸ James Skene, *A Series of Sketches of the Existing Localities Alluded to in the Waverley Novels* (Edinburgh, 1829). On Skene's connections with Greenough, see M. J. S. Rudwick, 'Hutton and Werner Compared: George Greenough's Geological Tour of Scotland in 1805', *British Journal for the History of Science*, 1, 1962, 117-35.

¹⁴⁹ Griffiths, *Prints and Printmaking*, 85-99.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 89. Turner's most famous print project, *The Liber Studiorum* (1817-19), contained several mezzotints after his Highland drawings, including a view of Ben Arthur, a 'Peat Bog' with figures in Highland dress, and a river scene near Blair Atholl: Gillian Forester, *Turner's 'Drawing Book': The Liber Studiorum* (London, 1996).

in Britain and, during the 1770s, amateur watercolourists like Clerk of Eldin and Gilpin were anxious to penetrate his secret for application to their own drawings.¹⁵¹ All Gilpin's published tours, including his account of the Highlands, eventually made use of this method to reproduce his drawings as illustrations. Thomas Garnett's *Observations on a Tour through the Highlands* (1800), was likewise illustrated with aquatint plates after drawings by W. H. Watts.¹⁵² Garnett's tour is nonetheless interesting in that it incorporates a small number of wood engravings within the text; these, unlike the landscape aquatints, were mainly devoted to objects of scientific or antiquarian interest, which required the finer detail of a line process rather than tonal or atmospheric effects. Probably the best-known and most attractive record of the Highland landscape in aquatint was created by William Daniell in the three central volumes of his *Voyage Round Great Britain* (1818-21). His uncle, Thomas Daniell, had been one of the pioneers of aquatint in Britain, and William later perfected his technique to approximate as closely as possible to his own watercolour drawings. He used several shades of ink to imitate foundation washes, later adding tints by hand to mirror the delicate effect of his original medium.¹⁵³

Colour printing as such was not available until the development of lithography in the nineteenth century. Lithography was invented in Munich in 1798, and initially made use of stone blocks on which the design was drawn using a greasy medium. When brushed with water, the marks of the design were left clear and the unmarked areas protected from the ink on the principle that grease repels water. For this to take effect, the ink employed also had to be of a greasy nature. By using separate stones for individual colours, it became possible to create attractive colour images by mechanical process; this came into effect in Britain during the high Victorian period, and was used for lavish book illustrations.¹⁵⁴ Chromolithography, as this colour process was known, was exploited by several

¹⁵¹ Barbier, *William Gilpin*, 67.

¹⁵² Garnett, *Observations*. At the time of his Highland tour, Garnett (1766-1802), held a professorship at Anderson's Institution in Glasgow, one of the precursors of the present-day University of Strathclyde: S. G. E. Lythe, 'Thomas Garnett: A Doctor on Tour in the Highlands', in *A Sense of Place: Studies in Scottish Local History*, ed. Graeme Cruickshank (Edinburgh, 1988), 100-8.

¹⁵³ Thomas Sutton, *The Daniells: Artists and Travellers* (London, 1954), 14, 88.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 101-13, 120-1.

of the publications on clans and tartans which emerged during the 1840s. This included the plates illustrating tartan setts in John Sobieski Stuart's *Vestiarium Scoticum* (1842), James Logan and R. R. McLan's *Clans of the Scottish Highlands* (1845) and *Picturesque Gatherings* (1848), and several cheaper publications, such as William Eagle's *Clans of Scotland* (1850). In terms of reproductive quality, the success of chromolithography is well illustrated in Kenneth MacLeay's *Highlanders of Scotland* (1872), in which the delicacy of the original drawings is preserved almost verbatim in the plates.¹⁵⁵ Owing to its closeness to the act of drawing, lithography could also be used for more authentically scholarly ends. John Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, for instance, was illustrated with lithographed drawings by a Mr. Jastresbski, a Polish artist, and Alexander Gibb. This allowed for the more accurate representation of inscriptions and figures which were often worn and sometimes scarcely distinguishable. In such contexts, the harsh, definite lines of an engraving or etching would have misrepresented the original object.¹⁵⁶ While Jastresbski and Gibb were both responsible for transferring their own drawings to stone, this might sometimes be left in the hand of the printer. In 1865, John Francis Campbell expressed dissatisfaction with the manner in which his drawings had been handled by the Edinburgh firm W. & A.K. Johnstone. In a pencil note added to his personal copy of *Frost and Fire*, he observed: 'The map is tolerable but the lithographs on the margins are very weak. They were drawn on the stone by one of Keith Johnston's men from rough sketches of mine. See sketch books for the originals'.¹⁵⁷ Even where the artist was responsible for the finished prints, inexperience might mean that satisfaction was not always guaranteed. Archibald Geikie, the well-known Scottish geologist, illustrated his *Scenery of Scotland* (1865) with lithographs and woodcuts traced from his field notebooks. In the preface, he nonetheless confessed: 'Owing to my inexperience

¹⁵⁵ For comparisons, see Delia Millar, ed., *The Highlanders of Scotland: The Complete Watercolours Commissioned by Queen Victoria from Kenneth MacLeay of her Scottish Retainers and Clansmen* (London, 1986).

¹⁵⁶ In his preface to the first volume, Stuart commented on these issues, observing, 'In both cases these gentlemen transferred their drawings to stone, and thereby avoided one considerable source of mistake. On some stones, indeed, the weather-worn lines are so faint that they will present different appearances in their details to the same person in different lights, although the general design of the work cannot be matter of doubt': John Stuart, *The Sculptured Stones of Scotland* (2 vols., Aberdeen and Edinburgh, 1856-67), I, xvi.

¹⁵⁷ Campbell, *Frost and Fire*, I, endplate: the annotated copy is in NLS, Campbell 1.b.11.

in lithography, they have sadly failed in the printing, and are very far from what I had hoped they would be'.¹⁵⁸

Book illustrations, collections of views, and the images in the periodical press were clearly of significance in shaping travellers' perceptions of the Highlands. Andrews reports that, during the 1790s, when the fashion for picturesque travel had caught on, print shop windows were crowded with views of various parts of Britain, and that tourists bound for a specific area would equip themselves with a selection of such prints as a guide to its beauty spots.¹⁵⁹ Later in the nineteenth century, when printed images were more cheaply available and of convenient size, they were sometimes pasted as illustrations to a personal travel album. Popular sources of Highland images were Swan's *Views of the Lakes of Scotland* (1832-4), Beattie's *Scotland Illustrated* (1838), and Menzies' *Vignette Views*.¹⁶⁰ 'Swan' and 'Beattie' were standard topographical collections, published in quarto volumes of engravings accompanied by a descriptive letterpress. The majority of the views in Swan were done by the Greenock artist John Fleming (1794-1845) in collaboration with the publisher, who was a Glasgow engraver. The Beattie volume advertised its artists as Thomas Allom, W. H. Bartlett, and Horatio McCulloch, all of whom contributed views 'taken expressly' for the work. These were printed in London for George Virtue, and illustrate the commercial opportunities which opened up to professional artists in the wake of the fashion for the picturesque. The Menzies collections differed in format, being issued in small sets of thirteen views, marketed to accommodate a variety of pockets. The cheapest, priced at 2s. 6d. per set, were loose and packaged in ornamental wrappers. At 3s. 6d, they could be had mounted on cloth and designed to unfold like a map. A more sumptuous edition, done up in Royal Stewart tartan silk covers, was also available at a cost of 5s.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁸ Archibald Geikie, *The Scenery of Scotland, Viewed in Connexion with its Physical Geology* (London and Cambridge, 1865), xi.

¹⁵⁹ Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 35.

¹⁶⁰ Examples from each of these sources can be found in NLS, MS.8926, *Journal of a Tour in Scotland by Charles Mansfield Ingleby, 1842*; MS.8927, *Journal of Sarah Taylor, 1842*; MS.9233, Anon., 'Journal of a Few Days from Home in the Summer of 1856'.

¹⁶¹ See advertisement in *Menzies' Vignette Views of the Picturesque Scenery of Scotland* (Edinburgh, c.1855).

Travellers who had their expectations raised in advance by views and guidebook descriptions were sometimes disappointed by reality. Next to a view of Loch Lomond from Swan, cut and pasted into his personal album, Charles Mansfield Ingleby wrote in 1842: 'I am no great admirer of Loch Lomond. The scenery about is certainly pretty, but there is little that is bold'. Glencoe was an even greater disappointment:

Our expectations had been raised by a number of combining circumstances; our guide book describes it as the most sublime and terrific pass in all Scotland, the hills on each side of which almost touch each other at the summits as nearly to exclude the daylight. Such descriptions as this could not fail to make us anxious to see this most celebrated pass... On entering the glen we were all on the lookout for the grandeur and magnificence spoken of in the guide book – and I can assure you that we were on the look out throughout the whole glen, but could not discover any of the terrific grandeur we expected... I have no doubt Glenco on a fine day is very grand, but if those who see it are to be crammed with the *lying jargon* of guide books, they will be mightily disappointed.¹⁶²

While the appreciation of scenery was always subjective, guide books could provide a useful source of information on technical and historical matters. Sarah Taylor, for instance, on a journey through the Highlands in 1842, had recourse to Anderson's *Guide to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (1834), which contained appendices on geology and botany, for a description of the structure of Staffa. She also made botanical and geological observations on the Cairngorm mountains, attempting a sketch of the range's outline from near Aviemore. From the point of view of imitation, the most notable aspect of her journal is the number of images cut from the pages of *The Illustrated London News (ILN)*; this was a brand new publication in 1842, and devoted much of its inaugural number to covering Queen Victoria's visit to Scotland. Although the Queen did not reach the Highlands until 3rd September, by which time the Taylors were in

¹⁶² NLS, MS.8926, ff. 13, 53-5.

Aviemore, Sarah's own sketches and accounts of scenes like Taymouth and Dunkeld were interspersed with cuttings from the *ILN* depicting the Royal reception. Even in retrospect therefore, one tour could be reinvented in the steps of another. As well as the *ILN* cuttings, some other pasted prints reveal that well-known images were being recycled and reproduced in cheaper form during this period. Sarah's account of the southern Hebrides included wood-engravings of shielings in Jura (after Griffith's drawing, originally engraved for Pennant's 1772 tour) and of Sgurr Eigg (based on William Daniell's aquatint of 1818). Her journal also gives evidence of amateurs basing their own drawings of the scenes they visited on the style of earlier prints. This can be seen in a sketch of Loch Oich and Invergarry Castle, which mirrors the composition of the Beattie engraving of the same subject.¹⁶³

While most of this recycling of print material concentrated on landscape imagery, another manuscript journal reveals the influence of a different genre of material. The account was compiled in 1856, in the wake of a rash of publications on clans and tartans, and included several prints from William Eagle's *Clans of Scotland* (1850), from *Hay's Clans of Scotland* (c. 1850s), drawn and engraved by A. Ritchie, and from McIan and Logan's *Picturesque Gatherings* (1848). The express aim of the latter volume was to 'place on record the games, the sports, the pastimes, the social and domestic employments of the Gaelic tribes, inasmuch as in the progress of improvement and change they may at last be swept away'.¹⁶⁴ This use of the visual as a means of freezing the effects of time created a situation in which images of the 'traditional' could be read as accurate portrayals of Highland society in the here-and-now. Thus the anonymous author of this travel journal was happy to paste McIan's tartan-clad Highland shepherd as a real (or ideal) reflection of his own experience on the slopes of Ben Lomond: 'A pleasing prospect it was, to look up, and see the sheep grazing on the very mountain top, and a shepherd with his dog passing up to the summit to attend to them'.¹⁶⁵ Although clearly able to afford access to

¹⁶³ NLS, MS.8927, esp. ff. 76-7, 89v, 105, 110. See also MS. 9842, Anon., *Sketches of Scenery in Scotland*, in which a view of Tummel Bridge mirrors the composition of a print by J. M. W. Turner in Lawson, *Scotland Delineated*, II, pl. facing 298.

¹⁶⁴ McIan and Logan, *Picturesque Gatherings*, n.p; the quotation is taken from the introduction.

¹⁶⁵ NLS, MS.9233, f. 45.

sumptuous publications like McLan's, the quantity of more cheaply-produced images in this journal hints at the wider audience to which Highland travel, and its iconography, were available by 1856. Indeed, the writer explicitly commented on this issue, highlighting his own status as a member of the middle classes:

What a change a century has wrought; a century since, and the only men of Kent who visited this wild district were those who did so in their military calling. In that day, even to men of fortune, the journey would not only have been one taking up much time, and involving considerable expense; but would likewise have been attended with much personal danger, especially in the wild district which we were working through at that period overrun by the wild McGregors, and here were we, plain middle class men, but a few days from home, and at a trivial expense (thanks to the railways and steam) walking through Rob Roy's country with as much safety, as we could walk from Dover to Riven. Let men prate as they will about the good old early times, I am thankful that I live so late.¹⁶⁶

The development of rail and steamer transport, with its consequent impact on the ease and relative expense of travel, thus coincided with the availability of cheaply-produced imagery. This did not merely relate to landscape views. *The Illustrated London News* carried a regular 'Fine Arts' feature, in which paintings from current exhibitions were sometimes reproduced in the form of wood engravings. In 1843, McLan's *Highland Feud*, then on show at the British Institution in London, appeared in this way; this painting was later lithographed for *Picturesque Gatherings*, along with the 'Highland Shepherd' image already cited above.¹⁶⁷ In May 1856, the summer our middle class tourist made his trip north, the shepherd theme was again to the fore; on this occasion, the *ILN* selected Richard Ansdell's *Highland Shepherd* from that year's Royal Academy exhibits for reproduction, commenting that the subject represented 'one of those happy transcripts of Highland life that has made Mr Ansdell a favourite artist

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, f. 39.

¹⁶⁷ *ILN*, 2, 1843, 199.

beyond the limits of his native Lancashire'.¹⁶⁸ This 'democratisation' of the fine arts indicates that something very profound had changed in British painting by this point, in terms of subject matter, audience and taste. The shift of art patronage and criticism to the public sphere, and its consequences for the visual depiction of the Highlands, is thus the final matter which requires consideration here.

Art in the Public Sphere

As the *ILN*'s fine art column would suggest, public exhibitions had become an accepted outlet for visual culture by the mid nineteenth-century; moreover, a painting was more likely to be judged on its merits as a 'transcript' of real life than expected to transcend it. While public consumption of art undoubtedly fuelled a shift in taste towards a less intellectual and more accessible form of painting, artists themselves were instrumental in setting up the institutional structures which allowed this to take place. The voice of William Hogarth, for instance, had been prominent in promoting the interests of a British school of painting since the 1730s, arguing that connoisseurship was stifling the development of modern art. In 1760, the Society of Artists of Great Britain inaugurated a series of annual exhibitions at Spring Gardens in London, the exhibition catalogue for 1761 carrying a design by Hogarth which explicitly caricatured the dead, transplanted culture favoured by the connoisseur. In 1767, following the formation of the Royal Academy of Arts, this cultural tension became institutionalised. The Academy, headed by Sir Joshua Reynolds, promoted an intellectual, idealised form of art through its teaching and the content of its annual exhibitions, while the Society of Artists endorsed a greater emphasis on naturalism and modern life. In the early RA shows, classical titles and history paintings in the grand manner predominated; at Spring Gardens, on the other hand, surviving exhibition notices suggest a preference for genre and conversation pieces inspired by actual experience.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ *ILN*, 28, 1856, 509.

¹⁶⁹ David H. Solkin, *Painting for Money: The Visual Arts and the Public Sphere in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven and London, 1993), 247-76.

In Scotland, attempts to establish exhibiting societies in the early years of the nineteenth century betrayed a similar tension. In 1808, the Society of Incorporated Artists was formed in Edinburgh, with annual exhibitions of pictures by local artists held until 1813. Duncan Forbes has interpreted this development as 'an insurgent effort by Edinburgh's aspirant artists to carve out a realm of autonomy for themselves in an otherwise hostile, dominantly aristocratic, cultural field'. It was, however, thwarted by a provincial economy where wealthy elites continued to pull the main strings. The bourgeois market which would make artistic autonomy financially possible took some time to become established; in the case of Edinburgh, not in fact until the 1840s.¹⁷⁰ In 1819, aristocratic patrons reasserted their authority on the dissemination of culture through the Institution for the Encouragement of Fine Arts in Scotland. The Institution originally intended to exhibit Old Master paintings rather than the work of living artists; from 1821, however, contemporary painting was admitted on the grounds that local collections were not sufficient to support an annual exhibition of fresh works. Although this gave further opportunity to modern artists to gain recognition by exhibiting their work, in the running of the Institution's affairs they were largely ignored. The directors – mainly nobles and aristocrats – had been bred in an aesthetic world in which private patrons led the way and artists were trained to reproduce their tastes and aspirations. Frustrated with the scant regard given to their work, twenty-four artists mooted plans for an independent Scottish Academy, which was established in 1826. First on the list of its aims was the holding of an annual exhibition, 'open to all artists of merit'. Although the Institution was able to use its aristocratic influence to gain a royal charter in 1827, while the Academy was forced to wait until 1838, it was the latter which held most dynamism as an exhibiting body, eventually superseding its rival as the main forum for public art displays in Scotland.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Duncan Forbes, 'Art and Anxiety in Enlightenment Edinburgh: the Society of Incorporated Artists, 1808-1813', *Scotia*, 21, 1997, 1-18.

¹⁷¹ Esme Gordon, *The Royal Scottish Academy of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture, 1826-1976* (Edinburgh, 1976); Nick Prior, *Museums and Modernity: Art Galleries and the Making of Modern Culture* (Oxford and New York, 2002), 140-6.

Exhibitions were not solely confined to the capitals.¹⁷² In 1821, The Glasgow Institution for Promoting and Encouraging the Fine Arts in the West of Scotland was founded, holding an inaugural exhibition with over two hundred and fifty works from British artists. These included contributions from John Knox, well-known for his picturesque renditions of scenes in the southern Highlands, including Loch Lomond, Arran and the Trossachs. Although this Institution did not survive past a second exhibition in 1822, it was replaced by the Glasgow Dilettanti Society in 1825. This began exhibiting in 1828, and showed work by John Knox, Horatio McCulloch, the engraver Joseph Swan, and John Fleming, with whom Swan was to collaborate on *The Lakes of Scotland*.¹⁷³ These developments were paralleled in the north east, where the short-lived Aberdeen Artists' Society (later revived in 1885) was founded in 1827. James Giles (1801-70), a local artist, played a key role in the Society's administration, but left for Edinburgh in 1829, where he became a member of the Scottish Academy.¹⁷⁴ Giles was later to paint for the second Duke of Sutherland, and for Queen Victoria at Balmoral, and also travelled extensively throughout the Highlands, sketching deer, mountain landscapes, specimens of the Highland cottage and antiquities.¹⁷⁵ By the 1830s, members of the Scottish Academy – whether full academicians or merely associates – could count among their ranks artists who regularly submitted Highland material to the annual exhibitions. Besides Giles, these included George Harvey, David Octavius Hill, Robert McLan, Kenneth MacLeay, his brother MacNeil MacLeay, Horatio McCulloch, William Simson, Alexander Fraser, Arthur Perigal, John Adam Houston and Edward Thornton Crawford. The work of these artists covered landscape, history and genre, and while private commissions remained important to their income and reputation, sales generated from public exhibitions was growing in importance.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² Although the examples elaborated here refer to Scottish cities, exhibiting societies sprung up in provincial centres all over Britain, particularly in the industrial north of England. For comparison, see Paul Usherwood and Kenneth Bowden, *Art for Newcastle: Thomas Miles Richardson and the Newcastle Exhibitions, 1822-1843* (Newcastle, 1984).

¹⁷³ George Fairfull-Smith, 'The Glasgow Dilettanti Society', *Journal of the Scottish Society for Art History*, 3, 1998, 8-15.

¹⁷⁴ John Morrison, *Particles of Light: A History of Aberdeen Artists' Society 1827-2000* (Aberdeen, 2000), 11-14.

¹⁷⁵ AAGM holds an extensive collection of Giles' work. For a summary listing, see Aberdeen Art Gallery, *Concise Catalogue: Paintings, Drawings and Sculpture* (Aberdeen, 1996).

¹⁷⁶ Gordon, *Royal Scottish Academy*, 78-97. See Charles Baile de Laperriere, ed., *The Royal Scottish Academy Exhibitors 1826-1990* (4 vols., Hilmarton, 1991), for exhibition entries.

Scottish artists also contributed to the Royal Academy shows in London, which had become *the* event of the summer season, and were frequently so thronged that proper examination of the paintings on display was almost impossible.¹⁷⁷ Between 1813 and 1826, Alexander Nasmyth exhibited several works there, including a view of the Pass of Glencoe in 1819; Sir Henry Raeburn had done so on a regular basis from 1792 until his death in 1823, submitting a portrait of Sir Alexander MacDonell of Glengarry in 1812 and of Francis MacNab in 1819 (both garbed as Highland warriors in full tartan costume).¹⁷⁸ From 1806, the Scottish artist who created the greatest sensation each year in Somerset House was undoubtedly Sir David Wilkie. Wilkie was neither a landscape artist nor a portraitist, nor was he a history painter in the grand style. Instead, he focused on genre scenes from low life, painted in vivid detail and incorporating a sophisticated degree of narrative complexity. Although he worked to commission for private patrons, Wilkie's work was widely admired among middle-class exhibition goers, and Solkin has traced a split in contemporary appraisals of his work. Despite the fact that academic art appreciation was biased towards Italianate models of culture, the later eighteenth century also witnessed a rising market for old masters from the Dutch and Flemish schools. It was in this tradition that Wilkie's titled patrons situated the young Scot's work, tracing lines of influence from seventeenth-century painters like David Teniers the younger. Although the content of such works was 'vulgar' in the sense of being drawn from low life, aristocratic devotees maintained their elite status as connoisseurs by focusing on technical virtuosity of style which, in their eyes, the common man could not be expected to grasp. For contemporary journalists, on the other hand, it was the content of these genre scenes which merited most praise, on the grounds of their perceived fidelity to nature.¹⁷⁹

Although Wilkie made an expedition to the southern Highlands in 1817, and was one of the official painters engaged to record King George IV's visit to

¹⁷⁷ David H. Solkin, 'Crowds and Connoisseurs: Looking at Genre Painting at Somerset House', in *Art on the Line: The Royal Academy Exhibitions at Somerset House, 1780-1836* (New Haven and London, 2001), 157-171.

¹⁷⁸ Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1904* (8 vols., London, 1905-6).

¹⁷⁹ Solkin, 'Crowds and Connoisseurs', 160-2.

Edinburgh in 1822, his contribution to the visual depiction of the region was not extensive.¹⁸⁰ His *Death of a Red Deer* (1821) [Fig.19],¹⁸¹ a sporting scene inspired by a stalk at Blair Atholl, nevertheless foreshadowed the type of material which would establish the reputation of Sir Edwin Landseer. From 1828, Landseer showed a successive series of Highland works at the RA, and at the British Institution, which had been established in 1806 and also held an annual exhibition.¹⁸² Like Wilkie, Landseer maintained a mix of aristocratic and wealthy middle class admirers. His career illustrates the growing significance of exhibitions as a marketing venue and source of revenue for uncommissioned works. In 1827, his *Highlanders Returning from Deerstalking* was purchased by the fourth Duke of Northumberland, after having been exhibited on spec at the Royal Academy. While the Duke continued to collect old masters alongside the work of living artists, Landseer's style of naturalism had manifestly found a niche in a widening market.¹⁸³ *Highlanders Returning from Deerstalking* played on the emotional appeal of its narrative elements: the patient, plodding ponies, dead deer strapped awkwardly at a deformed angle, inquisitive deerhounds, and two plaided gillies absorbed in confidential conversation. Depictions of Highland life in a similar formula followed throughout the 1820s and 1830s. Into this category fell several interiors, *An Illicit Whisky Still in the Highlands* (1826-9), some poaching scenes, and representations of more 'honest' labour, such as *The Drovers' Departure* (c.1835). It is significant that a number of such works found a home in the collections of wealthy entrepreneurs. Foremost among these were Robert Vernon, who ran a successful livery stable in London, William Wells of Redleaf in Kent, a former shipbuilder, and John Sheepshanks, a Leeds cloth manufacturer. Vernon and Sheepshanks later donated their collections to public institutions (the National Gallery and the South Kensington Museum, respectively), an altruistic act which illustrates the commitment of

¹⁸⁰ H.A.D. Miles and David Blayney Brown, *Sir David Wilkie of Scotland, 1785-1841* (Raleigh, 1987).

¹⁸¹ Blair Castle, Perthshire, Sir David Wilkie, *Death of a Red Deer*, Wood, 24.1 x 34.3, 1821.

¹⁸² Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts*; Algernon Graves, *The British Institution 1806-1867 : A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work From the Foundation of the Institution* (London, 1908).

¹⁸³ Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 50.

middle-class collectors to widening access to the fine arts and their belief in the educational and moral value of modern British painting.¹⁸⁴

Dianne Sachko MacLeod has explored the collecting activities of men like Vernon and Sheepshanks in the context of economic and political change, highlighting the impact of the industrial revolution on the availability of surplus wealth for luxury goods among the middle classes; she further points to the political confidence prompted by the Reform Bill of 1832 as a catalyst to cultural assertiveness. An interesting parallel is also drawn with the burghers of seventeenth-century Holland, whose wealth had stimulated the rich vein of realist painting represented by the likes of Teniers.¹⁸⁵ In his *Discourses on Art*, Sir Joshua Reynolds had looked down on the Dutch school because of what he called its 'locality'. 'With them', he wrote, 'a history-piece is properly a portrait of themselves; whether they describe the inside or outside of their houses, we have their own people engaged in their own peculiar occupations; working, or drinking, playing, or fighting'.¹⁸⁶ Notwithstanding Reynolds' disdain, the Dutch emphasis on uniqueness and individuality – its introspection, and concern with nationality – holds instructive lessons for the understanding of Victorian taste. It betokens a successful mercantile economy prepared to gaze inwards on itself towards a 'reality' which was, paradoxically, replete with otherness. Images of the poor and their behaviour could be read as real and natural precisely because to do so reinforced the distance between the middle and lower orders of society. By filling their homes with such work, the nouveau riche were presented with a perpetual confirmation of their rise.¹⁸⁷

The popularisation of science may also be construed as a factor impelling a rising taste for realism. Stana Nenadic has stressed middle class participation in the philosophical, scientific, literary and debating societies which sprung up in urban

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 99-101. On the Victorian belief in art as an agent of social reformation, see further John Morrison, 'Victorian Municipal Patronage: The Foundation and Management of Glasgow Corporation Galleries, 1854-1888', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 8, 1996, 93-102.

¹⁸⁵ Dianne Sachko MacLeod, 'Art Collecting and Victorian Middle-Class Taste', *Art History*, 10, 1987, 328-50.

¹⁸⁶ Reynolds, *Discourses*, ed. Wark, 69.

¹⁸⁷ Cf. Solkin, 'Crowds and Connoisseurs', 163.

centres during the later eighteenth century.¹⁸⁸ Scientific and professional men could certainly be found patronising Landseer's Highland work. Sir Roderick Impey Murchison (1792-1871), the Scottish geologist, commissioned an historical canvas from the artist in 1855, which eventually emerged as *Rent Day in the Wilderness* in 1868 [Fig.20].¹⁸⁹ This featured the reported exploits of Donald Murchison, factor to the Earl of Seaforth, who continued to collect rents for his exiled and attainted chief in the wake of the 1715 Rebellion. Prominent in the foreground of the painting was Donald Murchison's snuffbox, which had been handed down through the family and was sent to Landseer in 1867 in an attempt to spur him on to complete the work.¹⁹⁰ This level of verisimilitude, with its emphasis on period detail, owed much to an older tradition of antiquarian illustration, and was central to history painting during the Victorian period.¹⁹¹ Another Landseer admirer was Sir John Fowler (1817-98), an engineer now best remembered for his contribution to the design of the Forth Bridge. The Fowlers were Highland landowners, running a sporting estate at Braemore near the head of Lochbroom in Ross-shire. Campbell of Islay stayed there with the family in September 1867, en route to Assynt where he compared field observations with Murchison and Geikie's recently published geological map. Campbell was back with the Fowlers in the autumn of 1869, taking occasion to sketch the distinctive glacial geology of the Inverbroom valley and the Fannich hills, of which the old lodge commanded a panoramic view. Fowler had made his first Landseer purchase, a mountain-top scene entitled *The Ptarmigan Hill*, that same year, and it is interesting to conjecture what a geologist would have made of the artist's treatment of the shattered boulders which dominate the composition.¹⁹²

The foregoing discussion has emphasised the contexts out of which a rising taste for realism in British art emerged. With the exception of the classical crossover

¹⁸⁸ Stana Nenadic, 'Businessmen, the Urban Middle Classes, and the 'Dominance' of Manufacturers in Nineteenth-Century Britain', *Economic History Review*, 44, 1991, 74.

¹⁸⁹ NGS, NG 586, Sir Edwin Landseer, *Rent Day in the Wilderness*, Canvas, 122 x 265, 1855-68. Murchison's father was a surgeon who accrued his fortune in the service of the East India Company, thereafter purchasing Tarradale in Easter Ross. Roderick was knighted in 1846.

¹⁹⁰ Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 37-9.

¹⁹¹ On this point, see Smiles, *Eyewitness*, 48-76.

¹⁹² Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 105. *The Ptarmigan Hill* is reproduced in *ibid.*, 128. See NLS, Adv.MS.50.4.2, f. 199 for Campbell's reference to Murchison in Assynt and NLS, Adv.MS.50.4.5 for the best of his Braemore sketches. Murchison and Geikie's *First Sketch of a New Geological Map of Scotland* was published in 1861.

made possible by Ossian, realism was the only vein in which the Highlands could be expected to make a significant impact on the fine arts during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This was because peculiarity and difference – whether in human character or in the landscape – were perceived to be the region's essence, and were thus resistant to idealised approaches. An index to enthusiasm for Highland imagery during the mid-nineteenth century can be gathered from the pages of *The Art Journal*, a periodical begun in 1839 as *The Art Union*. This was an emphatically middle-class publication, and one of its founders, the publisher Henry Graves, was also influential in the establishment of *The Illustrated London News*.¹⁹³ *The Art Journal* carried exhibition reviews, book notices and advertisements, art-related news from all over Britain, obituaries, topical articles, and a host of other ephemera. Importantly, it also provided access to popular paintings through a regular series of engravings. From 1849, it began a series of prints based on pictures from the Vernon gallery, gifted to the nation in 1847. Among these were several Highland subjects, including Landseer's *Highland Music*, Alexander Fraser's *Highland Cottage*, and *Death of the Stag*, again by Landseer.¹⁹⁴ Exhibition reviews, which covered the RSA shows in Edinburgh besides the main London venues, give an illuminating insight into the reception of such works, the criteria by which they were judged, and perceptions of Highland 'reality'. On *The Interior of a Highland Inn*, exhibited by A. Cooper at the RA in 1849, the reviewer observed: 'Two apartments are shown, the nearer is common to man and beast, as we find it occupied by a horse, goats, and other animals, together with human members of the family. In the other apartment are seen two sportsmen, refreshing themselves. It has the appearance of a reality'.¹⁹⁵ Horatio McCulloch's *Highland Stronghold*, shown at the RSA the same year, was described as 'so intensely true to nature as to be almost an illusion. The eye watches to see the storm-charged masses roll down the mountain slopes, and the ear listens to catch the whistling of the wind as it prostrates the ferns and tosses about the dwarfed and scanty-foliaged trees, and the hiss and roar of the waves as they cleave themselves into spray on the rock which juts into the water from the natural

¹⁹³ MacLeod, 'Art Collecting', 329; Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 104; Paul Oppé, 'Art', in *Early Victorian England, 1830-65*, ed. G. M. Young (2 vols., London, 1934), II, 119-20.

¹⁹⁴ *AJ*, 11, 1849, 6; *AJ*, 12, 1850, 274; *AJ*, n.s., 3, 1851, 4.

¹⁹⁵ *AJ*, 11, 1849, 169.

mound on which the old grey fortress is perishing'.¹⁹⁶ Such verbal excess, which reads like a caricature of the 'Romantic' Highlands, reveals the extent to which painting was expected to provide a surrogate for actual experience. In tandem with the fashion for visiting the physical Highlands, exhibition goers could treat themselves to a rush of sublime emotion at second-hand. When viewing historical paintings, a sense of distance from the scenes portrayed could be dissolved in an equally vivid manner. Of the protagonist in R. R. McLan's *Highland Coronach*, shown in London in 1850, the reviewer enthused: 'the action of this figure is most energetic, and the dire oath even reaches the ear of the spectator'.¹⁹⁷

Nick Prior has drawn attention to middle class exposure to Romantic representations of the Highlands in novels, engravings, fine art books, travel and tourist literature, guide books, and other media, viewing these as crucial to an appreciation of the type of imagery on display in public exhibitions by the 1830s.¹⁹⁸ Certainly there remained a close relationship between the activities of professional artists and a widening market for Highland tourism. In 1831, for instance, *Lumsden's Steam Boat Companion* contained an illustration of Loch Lomond engraved from a painting by Horatio McCulloch.¹⁹⁹ It is important to understand the visual representation of the Highlands as something which emerged from a fluid world, in which a host of influences might be brought to bear on the creation of particular images. In 1827, when the surgeon Samuel Solly (1805-71) travelled through the Highlands, eventually reaching Skye, his perceptions of the Cuillin had been already moulded by two sources, one scientific, the other artistic. The first was John MacCulloch's account of the geology of Skye, published first as a paper in the *Geological Society Transactions* in 1816, then more fully in *A Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (1819). Neither of these publications contained any images of the Cuillin ridge or of Loch Coruisk, so Solly's impressions from MacCulloch were confined to the vivid descriptions in the text. He also mentioned, nevertheless, having seen some 'beautiful drawings' of Skye by the English watercolourist

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁹⁷ *AJ*, 12, 1850, 139.

¹⁹⁸ Prior, *Museums and Modernity*, 156.

¹⁹⁹ Smith, *Horatio McCulloch*, 14.

George Fennell Robson. Solly himself exhibited on occasion at the RA in an amateur capacity,²⁰⁰ and would have been well acquainted with the London art scene. While some travellers expressed disappointment with the way in which reality failed to live up to second-hand descriptions, Solly recorded the opposite experience: 'although our ideas of the grandeur of the scenery were raised to the highest pitch, by the beautiful drawings we had seen of it by Robson and the magnificent description by Macculloch, still we were surprised and wonderstruck at its wildness'. To attempt his own description he viewed as 'folly', instead contributing several watercolour views to his album.²⁰¹ Despite his careful draughtsmanship, none of these, we might conjecture, would have approximated to either Robson's drawings or MacCulloch's description. They present a subjective record of Solly's own experience. By the 1820s, when academic art had joined antiquarian and scientific illustration in a quest for the elusive entity called 'truth', the relationship of visual representation to nature remained as problematic as ever. The 'real' had simply been transformed into another form of ideal.

²⁰⁰ Graves, *Royal Academy of Arts*, VII, 205.

²⁰¹ NLS, Acc.11734, Illustrated Travel Journals of Samuel Solly, 1827; John MacCulloch, 'Sketch of the Mineralogy of Sky', *Transactions of the Geological Society*, 3, 1816, 1-111; MacCulloch, *Description of the Western Islands*.

Chapter Two

Relics and Ruins

The discovery of the image as a handmaid to archaeology was to prove of great significance for the visual depiction of the Highlands. Although historic sites and artefacts were later absorbed into Romantic imagery, antiquarians had begun to break visual ground long before the region was seen to possess any aesthetic importance. In this chapter, three categories of material will be examined: depictions of ancient monuments, which were among the earliest Highland antiquities to be recorded visually; images of medieval architecture, particularly the castle; and finally, a slightly later development, representations of Highland dress and arms. In each section, examples of all three subjects as they were taken up by the professional artist and invested with a new imaginative power will also be discussed.

Ancient Monuments

Stones and monuments were among the first subjects for which antiquaries perceived the usefulness of drawing. The earliest Highland travellers with an empirical agenda – Lhuyd and Martin – both made use of the visual record to record archaeological remains. Lhuyd's sketches of crosses and slabs in Argyll are classic examples of visual transcripts, reproducing written inscriptions and pictorial content as accurately as possible, with front and reverse sides shown in many cases. Where inscriptions have worn away so as to be illegible, the gaps are represented in a series of dots. All of these figured stones are of Christian origin, but Lhuyd was also interested in older monuments, such as the mounds and stone circles scattered throughout Argyll and its adjacent islands. For these, he used a different style of representation, focusing on the irregular shape of individual stones and their arrangement on the ground by adopting an aerial,

more diagrammatic perspective [Fig.21].¹ Martin Martin's representation of Calanais in Lewis ran in the same vein, emphasising the regular layout of the main circle, the points leading off from it, and the long avenue of thirty nine stones which forms the shaft of the cross-like formation. By using a uniform set of geometric shapes for each stone, the regular arrangement of this pattern was in fact exaggerated, suggesting that Martin believed the layout of the whole structure of much greater significance than the shape, form or height of individual megaliths.²

The fact that this sort of subject was considered valuable enough to draw can tell us something about the rise of interest in ancient Britain at the close of the seventeenth century. In his account of Calanais, Martin quoted from local tradition supportive evidence for its association with Druidical worship.³ The activities of the Druids were a topical issue in antiquarian circles during this period, stimulated by the work of John Aubrey and William Stukeley. Aubrey was involved in a controversy over the origin of well-known English monuments like Avebury and Stonehenge. While he contended they had been built and used by the Druids, others attributed them to various invading forces, such as the Phoenicians, Romans, Saxons or Danes. Aubrey's view was taken up by Stukeley in the eighteenth century, who published his ideas as part of a work on 'Patriarchal Christianity' during the early 1740s.⁴ Stone circles were not the only ancient monuments to be associated with the Druids. In his description of the islands, Martin had mentioned the existence of several brochs or *dùin*, circular towers generally situated on coastal promontories. In 1726, when Alexander Gordon published his account of the Romans in Scotland, speculation was evidently rife over their origin. In his discussion of examples in Glenelg, Gordon asserted that while 'some have supposed them to be the old Temples of the *Druids* ... so many standing in so small a Space, destroys that Conjecture'. He took the view that 'they were either built as Places of Strength against foreign Enemies, or, which is still more likely, when those Parts were divided into many

¹ Copies of these sketches survive in BL, Stowe MSS.1023-4. For a complete list of those relating to the Highlands, together with reproductions, see Campbell and Thomson, *Lhuyd in the Scottish Highlands*, 304-8, plus appendix.

² Martin, *Description*, pl. facing 9.

³ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁴ Piggott, 'Ruins in a Landscape', 116-17; Piggott, *William Stukeley*, 79-109.

Clans, and they made frequent Inroads into each others Territories, those Fabricks seem to have been thus contrived for the Security of the Inhabitants thereabouts'. The Druidic connection was nonetheless slow to die. Listing similar structures to be found elsewhere in Scotland, Gordon mentioned one 'which goes by the Name of King *Dornadilla's* Castle', situated in 'Lord Reay's country', or northern Sutherland.⁵ This particular example recurred in Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides* (1774-6), and while reporting that the structures in Glenelg had been 'attributed to the Danes', Pennant included a lengthy extract from *The Edinburgh Review* describing Dun Dornadilla as both 'Druidic work' and 'the greatest piece of antiquity in this island'. In his own account of Glenelg, he also noted 'a small circle formed of rude stones, which was called the foundation of the Druid houses' close to the entrance of one of the towers.⁶

Illustrations of these edifices by Gordon and by Pennant's artist Moses Griffith emphasised two features: strength and a kind of rough-hewn craftsmanship. Although, as Gordon put it, the ruins possessed 'nothing of Roman elegance', the creation of such intricate structures with only the most basic tools and materials, so well-built as to have stood the test of more than a thousand years, commanded a certain degree of admiration. In Gordon's drawings of Dun Troddan and Dun Tellve [Fig.22],⁷ the defensive function of the towers is emphasised by the inclusion of a wild, mountainous backdrop. Even in their half-ruined state, the sheer size of the buildings conveys an image of impregnability, underscored by walls of double thickness and the absence of any significant point of entry. Griffith's depiction of a broch overlooking Loch Bracadale in Skye similarly draws attention to its defensive properties, perched on the top of a rock and commanding an extensive view.⁸ In his discussion of brochs in Skye, Martin had observed that 'all these Forts stand upon eminences, and are so disposed, that there is not one of them, which is not in view of some other; and by this means, when a Fire is made upon a Beacon in any one Fort, it's in a few Moments after

⁵ Gordon, *Itinerarium*, 167-8.

⁶ Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*, 1772 (2 vols., Chester, 1774-6), I, 337-41; pl. 41.

⁷ Gordon, *Itinerarium*, pl. 65.

⁸ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, pl. 36.

communicated to all the rest, and this hath been always observed upon sight of any number of foreign Vessels, or Boats approaching the Coast'.⁹ Both Gordon and Griffith's sketches of Dun Troddan incorporate views of another tower standing at some distance from the main subject, thus suggesting the existence of a network of structures such as Martin had described.

In terms of craftsmanship, Gordon was somewhat ambivalent about the skill and effort which went into each building. Although he wrote that he 'found [the forts] composed of Stones, without Cement, not laid in regular Courses, after the Manner of elegant Buildings, but rudely, and without Order',¹⁰ his drawings give an impression of remarkable regularity, both in the sloping grade of the outer and inner walls, and the smooth roundness of the entire structure. Similar qualities can be traced in Griffith's sketches of the same buildings in Glenelg, and of the one at Bracadale. Griffith's draughtsmanship was often clumsy when dealing with topography, but he excelled himself in the detailed observation of a single object, such as in his botanical, zoological or antiquarian illustrations. Plate XLI in Pennant's *Voyage to the Hebrides* contains four close-up studies of the towers in Glenelg [Fig.23], each in a different state of repair, but all portrayed with the same emphasis on smoothly sloping exterior walls and a uniform interior. Pennant was freer than Gordon in praising the quality of their construction, writing that 'the whole is built with dry walls, but the courses most beautifully disposed'. At Struan, he described 'a beautiful Danish fort on the top of a rock, formed with most excellent masonry', again suggesting an alternative standard of elegance to classically-inspired models.¹¹

The proximity of the Glenelg brochs to the government barracks at Bernera, built in 1723, had its own significance. Despite the lapse of centuries, each site was chosen for its defensive qualities, commanding an extensive view of the sea passage up the Sound of Sleat. From 1723, the existence of the barracks – an outpost of 'civilisation' in potentially hostile territory – was doubtless of importance in attracting scholars like Gordon, who noted that he had procured

⁹ Martin, *Description*, 153.

¹⁰ Gordon, *Itinerarium*, 166.

¹¹ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, 338, 292.

guides from there to the brochs.¹² The idea of a network of ancient fortresses may also have held resonances for those engaged in supervising the construction of new barracks throughout the Highlands during the 1720s, also distributed on a 'network' principle, if much more scattered.

It is worth noting that all the brochs discussed above are depicted in perspective, and in some sort of landscape setting, although it was standard antiquarian practice to draw fortresses to scale in an aerial plan; Gordon's and Pennant's volumes contain many illustrations of Roman forts, all in the latter style. As far as the Romans were concerned, the origin and function of their earthworks needed no explanation: they were familiar territory, requiring only such detail as position and relative size to give antiquaries a clearer view of the armies' movements in Scotland. Faced with the strange round towers of the north, however, antiquaries could make no clear assumptions, thus adopting a naturalistic style which could simulate the act of viewing the original objects. On first sight, these images may seem to have little to say about perceptions of the Highlands, past or present, scarcely transcending their role as utilitarian records. In the absence of written history, however, they formed part of an attempt to come to terms with the civilisation which built them, emphasising this society's genius for defensive strategy and its sophisticated understanding of the stonemason's art. Pennant's astonishment at the geometric precision of the structures recalls Martin's depiction of Calanais, which drew attention to its ordered layout by using a set of uniformly shaped triangles to indicate each stone. For a pre-literate society, without instruments or mathematical knowledge, such feats seemed more than extraordinarily accomplished.¹³

Despite the uncertainties of chronology, there appears to have been a tendency to place druidic sites and the origins of bardic poetry in roughly the same period: a kind of murky prelude to the dawn of written history. Travelling in Arran in 1772, Pennant concluded that 'by the immense *cairns*, the vast monumental stones, and many relics of druidism, this island must have been considerable in

¹² Gordon, *Itinerarium*, 166. Incidentally, General Wade's name appears on the book's subscription list.

¹³ Cf. Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 134, for evidence of similar responses to Stonehenge in the eighteenth century.

very antient times'.¹⁴ In the next breath he went on, 'Here are still traditions of the hero *Fingal*, or *Fin-mac-coul*', thus invoking the still-fresh controversy over sources for Macpherson's Ossian. Where such poetry survived, it followed that it could be seized on as a kind of verbal commentary on the society which built the *dùin* and erected the stone circles, and consequently, that it could be quarried for clues as to their function. Like these stone relics, *Fragments of Ancient Poetry* and its successors surprised the English-speaking world with a strange mix of warlike savagery and curious artistry. As Hugh Blair wrote in his 'Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian' (1763), part of the enigma created by the poems was that 'we find the fire and the enthusiasm of the most early times, combined with an amazing degree of regularity and art'.¹⁵ While used by some to question the authenticity of Macpherson's work, Blair appealed to historical evidence for the existence of learned orders in ancient Celtic society:

Wherever the Celtae or Gauls are mentioned by ancient writers, we seldom fail to hear of their Druids and their Bards; the institution of which two orders was the capital distinction of their manners and policy. The druids were their philosophers and priests; the bards their poets and recorders of heroic actions; and both these orders of men seem to have subsisted among them, as chief members of the state, from time immemorial. We must not therefore imagine the Celtae to have been altogether a gross and rude nation.¹⁶

Although there was no substantiated link between the archaeological sites labelled 'Druidic' and the Celtic orders discussed by the ancients, circumstantial evidence seemed to favour it. Given this connection, it is not surprising to find many ancient monuments explicitly linked to the imaginative world of Ossian. The Rev. John Walker, for example, who travelled extensively in the Highlands and Islands between 1761 and 1771, stumbled upon one such site: 'a circle of Druidical stones which alone would almost authenticate his poems were there

¹⁴ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, 172.

¹⁵ Hugh Blair, 'A Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian', in Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, ed. Gaskill, 349.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 349-50.

nothing else'.¹⁷ Similarly, Charles Cordiner linked his impressions of the landscape and the ancient architecture of Sutherland with reference to Ossian. Visually, this is most obvious in his engraving, 'Cascade near Carril', in which Ossian himself is depicted with his harp beside a moonlit stream [Fig.24].¹⁸ Before coming on Carril (located above Loch Brora), Cordiner had just examined a *dùn* in the upper reaches of the strath, and while soberly attributing these structures to the Picts, his imagination was struck by the applicability of Ossianic lament to their present condition. Looking on the scene at Carril, he reflected:

The noise of the torrent echoing in a lofty and deep cavern; the cavern shagged with shrubs and aged trees, among which the wild-fowl make their nests; the rivulet murmuring round insulated piles of rock; and the distant prospect of these halls and monuments of antient heroes, forcibly recall to mind the images of the *Ossian* song ... But the light and joy of the song are fled; the halls of the renowned are left desolate and solitary, amidst rocks that no more echo to the sound of the harp, amidst streams which murmur unheeded and unknown.¹⁹

Proceeding westwards, Cordiner embarked on an epic journey over the shoulder of Ben Hope to reach Dun Dornadilla. More than once during this trip he regretted his resolve, as when 'far beyond the sight of habitation, but those of eagles; or of inhabitant, but wild-fowl; and involved in these horrid swamps, I shuddered at the rash procedure; even to see the halls of *Fingal*, or of higher chiefs than him! nor knew the premium that would have made me return by the same way again'. On arrival in Strathmore, however, he was rewarded by the sublimity of its setting, which, like the scene at Carril, seemed to chime perfectly with his mood of loss and longing for past glories. This is reflected in his sketch, which is less an antiquarian study of the *dùn* itself than a depiction of its lonely setting [Fig.25].²⁰ Against a backdrop of steep mountains, a solitary figure is seated by the ruins, dressed in a kilt and feathered bonnet. His head is resting on

¹⁷ Margaret M. McKay, ed., *The Rev. D.r John Walker's Report on the Hebrides of 1764 and 1771* (Edinburgh, 1980), 4.

¹⁸ Cordiner, *Antiquities and Scenery*, pl. 13.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 77.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pl. 19.

his hand, as if in reverie: perhaps an embodiment of Cordiner's regret that 'now no plaintive bard sits listening "by the tree of the rustling leaf"' and that the lost world of the past is as forgotten as its ruins.²¹

Although previous depictions of *dùin* had included some suggestion of their setting in order to emphasise the probability of a defensive origin, Cordiner's inclusion of the landscape on such a scale indicated something deeper. The title to his 1780 work – *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland* – set out an agenda which sought to balance landscape and architectural remains as complements to each other. Cordiner was more than a self-taught amateur, having attended classes at the Foulis Academy in Glasgow, and was thus well-versed in the aesthetic standards of his day. By this time, prehistoric monuments and wild scenery were beginning to penetrate the lesser genres of antiquarian illustration and topographical drawing, but remained below the notice of the higher arts. Cordiner's work is highly significant in its attempt to introduce an imaginative element into the depiction of non-canonical subjects, albeit via the medium of engraving. His aesthetic rationale for doing so was an emerging taste for the sublime, which transformed visual approaches to wild landscapes and primitive antiquities alike. The key to its appreciation was a sense of grandeur, immensity, nobility, or whatever seemed to transcend the realm of ordinary human experience.

By this definition, mountains or moorland could become aesthetically pleasing due to their immensity, Ossianic poetry by its nobility of sentiment, and ancient monuments by the almost superhuman strength which seemed to have gone into their building. 'Many of the Stones are of such bulk that no number of the present Inhabitants could raise them without an Engine',²² wrote Martin of the Skye brochs, while Pennant referred to standing stones in Islay 'of a stupendous size', the largest being 'seventeen feet high, and three broad'.²³ Not even the Romans, with all their knowledge, skill and elegance, had attained to such displays of sheer vigour. In his study of the Romans in Scotland, William Roy

²¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

²² Martin, *Description*, 153.

²³ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, 224.

appended (almost apologetically) a short description of two native Caledonian defences located in Strathmore. What caught Roy's attention was the latent strength suggested by their manner of construction. 'The most extraordinary thing that occurs in this British fort', he wrote, 'is the astonishing dimensions of the rampart, composed entirely of large loose stones, being at least twenty-five feet thick at top, and upwards of one hundred at bottom, reckoning quite to the ditch, which seems indeed to be greatly filled up by the tumbling down of the stones. The vast labour that it must have cost to amass so incredible a quantity, and carry them to such a height, surpasses all description'.²⁴ Although such structures could make no claim to an aesthetic merit based on elegance, the sublime accommodated them perfectly. In his *Enquiry into the Origins of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke had included the idea of 'difficulty' in his definition of the concept. As he explained:

When any work seems to have required immense force and labour to effect it, the idea is grand. Stonehenge, neither for disposition nor ornament, has any thing admirable; but those huge rude masses of stone, set on end, and piled each on other, turn the mind on the immense force necessary for such a work. Nay the rudeness of the work increases this cause of grandeur, as it excludes the idea of art, and contrivance; for dexterity produces another sort of effect which is different enough from this.²⁵

Sam Smiles has used this extract to argue that the doctrine of the sublime allowed megalithic sites to become paintable by adopting them into a received aesthetic. It is important to recognise that the acceptance of such subjects into the artistic canon was a British-wide phenomenon, with examples from England, Wales and Ireland, as well as Scotland. What is significant about the Scottish instances, however, is a persistent association with Ossian, or Ossianic sentiment, and some of the examples discussed in Smiles' work might be enumerated here. The earliest of these is Elizabeth Harvey's *Malvina Mourning the Death of Oscar* (c. 1806) in which a tableau of figures with bows and harps is portrayed

²⁴ Roy, *Military Antiquities*, 205.

²⁵ Quoted in Smiles, *Image of Antiquity*, 173.

against a mythic landscape. Prominent ingredients in this landscape are the megalithic structure looming behind the figures, and the depiction of Staffa on the horizon, with a dark shadow showing the entrance to its legendary 'Fingal's Cave'. Here the three ingredients which played in Cordiner's imagination are united in a single composition: real places with associative nomenclature, mysterious antiquities, and tales of loss from a purportedly ancient tradition. Also of significance was John Sell Cotman's *Weird Scene: We bend towards the voice of the King* (1803), which took its title directly from Ossian, and shows a moonlit, mountainous landscape with four ghostly figures kneeling before a tomb. The monument is a single upright monolith, hewn at one end into a roughly-shaped cross, placing the worshippers somewhere midway between pagan and Christian rituals. Equally dramatic in its manipulation of setting was W. A. Nesfield's drawing of a stone circle at Tormore in Arran [Fig.26]. While ostensibly a topographical representation of a real place, the stormy sky, riven by lightning, snowy peaks, and plaid-wrapped shepherd all contribute to a heightened atmosphere: the sublime surroundings now seen as an essential ingredient in the depiction of megalithic sites.²⁶

Besides these examples, Smiles also cites a canvas by James Giles, *The Weird Wife o' Lang Stane Lea*, which was submitted as his Diploma piece on becoming a full member of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1831 [Fig.27].²⁷ The stone circle featured in the painting is situated near Castle Fraser in Aberdeenshire, and is thus not technically a Highland scene. Giles nevertheless portrayed a looming, heightened horizon, and created a strong visual association between the silhouetted stones and the distinctive cone-shaped peak of Bennachie in the distance. It is a work which looks west, both literally and in the Romantic supernaturalism which underlies it. In his personal sketchbooks, Giles continued to record an interest in the dramatic potential of stone circles into later life. In December 1863, he sketched one circle, in pencil, with the note, 'a beautiful sunset'; on the same page of the album appears a second drawing of a different circle, dated January 14 1864. This is possibly Lang Stane Lea again, as the hill

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 72, 165-93; V & A, 986-1901, W. A. Nesfield, *Circle of Stones at Tormore, Isle of Arran*, Watercolour, 25.4 x 30.5, 1828.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 87; RSA Diploma Collection, Edinburgh, James Giles, *The Weird Wife O' Lang Stane Lea*, Canvas, 81.6 x 116.6, c. 1831.

in the background resembles Bennachie, which would suggest it was a favourite haunt with the artist.²⁸

Images of prehistoric sites continued to be produced during the nineteenth century in a variety of contexts. Some had a clear antiquarian purpose, such as James Skene of Rubislaw's drawings of stone circles in Arran (including Tormore), at Kilchattan, Bute, and of the 'Pictish towers' in Glenelg.²⁹ Skene's images nevertheless made a very explicit connection between such antiquities and contemporary Highland life. Something similar had been hinted at in Nesfield's image of a shepherd or drover with a flock of sheep passing the stones at Tormore: a figure who is of 'modern' times, yet timeless. In 'Glenelg', sketched in 1804, Skene juxtaposed a row of thatched cottages with the brochs in a striking manner, perhaps alluding to a continuum of antiquity in what was widely construed to be a backward way of life [Fig.28].³⁰ The same feature appears in his view of Tormore, which included a group of smoking cottages and two tartan-clad figures in the vicinity of the standing stones. This might be compared with Cordiner's plate of Dun Dornadilla, which again combined the trio of ancient monument, contemporary housing and Highland dress. In William Daniell's *Voyage Round Great Britain* (1814-26), there are two images of stone circles in the volumes covering the Highlands and Islands. In 'Rassella, near Kilmartin', a figure on horseback, clad in a red plaid, and seated above creel panniers, is pictured on the road adjacent to the stones. Daniell commented that, while 'objects of this kind' (ie. inland antiquities) did not strictly fall within the remit of his work, 'the introduction of them may be allowed, as affording evidence of the character of its primitive inhabitants'.³¹ Although the 'primitive' nature of the contemporary Highlands is implied rather made explicit in the text, it is instructive to compare his second view of a single monolith – Clach an Truiseil – on the west side of Lewis [Fig.29]. In Daniell's print, some of the local inhabitants are portrayed cutting peat in the lee of the stone: another

²⁸ AAGM, 8423, Volume of Drawings by James Giles, 1862-8.

²⁹ ECL, 211-12, James Skene, Highland Album, Nos. 7, 47, 52, 75, 1805-33.

³⁰ Representations of the Highland cottage which provide evidence for such perceptions will be discussed further in the following chapter.

³¹ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, III, 25.

striking juxtaposition of current living and working conditions with antiquity.³² Again, no comment is made on the figures in the text, highlighting the value of visual evidence as a window on perceptions which may never have been articulated in written form.

George Clayton Atkinson, an amateur artist, also completed sketches of prehistoric antiquities in Lewis during a visit in 1833, including the Calanais Stones, Dun Carloway, and Clach an Truiseil. The latter two subjects were both worked up into finished drawings by Thomas Miles Richardson (1784-1848), a Newcastle-born professional who specialised in picturesque views of Scotland and the Lake District. Richardson's watercolours were used to illustrate Atkinson's manuscript journal, alongside the latter's personal sketches and drawings by other professional artists.³³ In the productions of artist-travellers like Atkinson, we can observe something of a compromise between a truly empirical approach to antiquarian drawing, and the more aesthetic pretensions of fine art images. In compiling his journals, Atkinson was certainly motivated by a desire to entertain and provide a degree of visual pleasure; on the other hand, he also continued to take the duty of creating a preservative record seriously. Half apologetically, he appended his description of Calanais with the following observations:

I have been at more pains than I should in this somewhat dry matter, and subjoin a perhaps unnecessarily exact sketch of the different relics we saw, because I think it likely they may be in a more perfect, unmutilated state, than any thing of the kind in a comparatively more civilised country. For as no change (or at any rate a trifling one) has taken place in this remote people for a great length of time, so the vestiges of antiquity have escaped from dilapidation and the baleful effects of change and innovation.³⁴

³² *Ibid.*, IV, pl. facing 64.

³³ Atkinson's tours were never published in his lifetime, but have been reproduced, complete with illustrations, in Quine, ed., *Expeditions to the Hebrides by George Clayton Atkinson*.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 141-3.

This statement echoes the sentiments expressed by earlier travellers like Cordiner, who observed that although many remains of antiquity might be found in regions such as Caithness, it was in the more mountainous and inaccessible districts that the best specimens had been preserved.³⁵ The urge to record these treasures laid the first plank in the creation of a visual identity for the Highlands and Islands – one in which antiquities featured disproportionately. Such remains could be used to blur the boundary between past and present in depictions of the contemporary scene, creating a timeline in which distinctive aspects of Highland life were seen as appropriate visual companions to the relics of the distant past.³⁶

This emphasis was especially strong in the Romantic antiquarianism of the nineteenth century, evidenced in individuals like James Logan. Logan was born in Aberdeen and had a chequered career, studying briefly at the Royal Academy of Arts in London, holding an equally brief secretaryship of the Highland Society of London, and eking out a living for himself as a writer on antiquarian subjects. In 1831, he published his ‘magnum opus’ – *The Scottish Gael, or Celtic Manners Preserved Among the Highlanders* – which aimed to catalogue ‘the inhabitants, antiquities, and national peculiarities’ of northern Scotland. This was illustrated with plates and vignettes from his own drawings.³⁷ The second volume of *The Scottish Gael* opens with a chapter on Celtic architecture, headed by a vignette of Dun Troddan in Glenelg, and ending with a view of Dun Dornadilla in Strathmore. The latter includes a kilted shepherd or herdsman viewing the ruins, with cattle and sheep grazing alongside, thus following out the iconographical formula of earlier images. In common with other antiquarian publications from this period, such as those published by the Sobieski Stuart brothers, Logan’s programme was to rehabilitate the supposed backwardness of the Celt by pointing to past achievements in art and culture. Remains like Dun Troddan and

³⁵ Cordiner, *Antiquities and Scenery*, 80.

³⁶ For further images of stone circles produced outside a strictly antiquarian context, see the prints of Strath Fleet in NLS, R.287.c, Elizabeth, Duchess of Sutherland, *Views in Orkney and on the North Coast of Scotland*, Etchings, 1807; NGS, D 5140, William Simson, Sketchbook, Untitled Sketch of a Stone Circle in Bute, August 1849. Simson’s entries to the RSA exhibitions reveal a parallel preoccupation with contemporary Highland life: de Laperriere, ed., *RSA Exhibitors*.

³⁷ For biographical information, see James Logan, *The Scottish Gael, or Celtic Manners, Preserved among the Highlanders*, ed. Alexander Stewart (2 vols., Inverness and Edinburgh, 1876); McIntyre North, *Book of the Club of True Highlanders*, viii-ix; Donaldson, *Highland Pipe*, 152-61.

Dun Dornadilla were there to be gazed at in awe, as the tiny size of the figures in his vignettes suggests.³⁸ A much later work in the same vein, C. N. McIntyre North's *Book of the Club of True Highlanders* (1881), continued this emphasis on Celtic achievement. McIntyre North went further than Logan, using a considerable degree of imaginative licence to reconstruct a portrait of 'an ancient Keltic town'. This was reproduced as the sixth plate in the 1892 edition of the book, and portrayed a compact, village-style enclosure, incorporating specimens of a *dùn*, dwelling-houses, round towers, and a stone circle [Fig.30].³⁹ McIntyre North's visual licence was echoed in the text, which was written in the form of a guided tour of the village in the present tense. In this quest to bring the past to life, visual images could play a powerful role, presenting a reconstruction in the form of documentary fact. This absolutism, and its implications for perceptions of the 'real' Highlands, is something of which we will see more when we come to look at visual representations of costume.⁴⁰

The Medieval Landscape

Viewed as ruins, prehistoric monuments fitted somewhat uneasily into an established visual genre. 'Other buildings fall by piecemeal', wrote the author of a 1776 guide to Stonehenge, 'but here a single stone is a ruin'.⁴¹ The concept of ruin had always been an acceptable subject for western art, owing to its moralising power as a *memento mori*. In Rome, the Forum, the Colosseum, the Capitoline Hill, or, in Athens, the Areopagus, the Parthenon, and Mars Hill were all symbolic of the empires which had built them, and built them so as to last for almost two thousand years. Pilgrims to these scenes of secular glory were instilled with the notion that ruins were more than simply wastes of crumbling stone: they were moral lessons, there to be learned from, studied, contemplated.⁴²

³⁸ Logan also echoed the observations of earlier writers on the strength and skill of the society which built such structures: Logan, *Scottish Gael*, ed. Stewart, II, 15-17.

³⁹ McIntyre North, *Book of the Club of True Highlanders*, I, pl. 6. The round towers are of the type illustrated by Gordon in his *Itinerarium* from specimens at Abernethy and Brechin. Gordon noted their similarity to towers in Ireland, thus suggesting a Celtic rather than Pictish origin: Gordon, *Itinerarium Septentrionale*, 164, pl. 62.

⁴⁰ On this point, cf. Smiles, 'British Antiquity', 56.

⁴¹ Quoted in Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 134.

⁴² On the fascination for ruins in western culture, see Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (London, 2001).

During the seventeenth century, when landscape began to feature as an independent subject in the art of painters like Claude Lorrain, classical-style ruins were often included in a composition. Because high art had always aimed at a level above the mere imitation of nature, these were idealised, imaginary landscapes. As specimens of classical architecture, the ruins conferred the intrinsic dignity of origin on the entire painting, thus fulfilling the criteria for acceptance into the artistic canon. As landscape painting gained strength in Britain during the eighteenth century, artists were faced with a dilemma. Even allowing for artistic licence, paintings which purported to be of real British scenes could not make indiscriminate use of imported classical ruins.⁴³ While antiquaries like Stukeley were leading investigations into the archaeology of ancient Britain, interest in medieval architecture was also rising. Up to this point, medieval antiquities had shared a similar fate with those of prehistoric times – written off as products of a barbarian and uncivilised age. This was especially true of Gothic art and architecture, which was seen as dark, heavy and ponderous, full of cluttered detail, and without any proper sense of proportion. From the 1740s, however, a fashion for garden follies in the Gothic style began to manifest itself, combined with a new willingness among antiquaries to submit original examples of the style to study and scrutiny. Out of this, inevitably, grew a body of visual material devoted to the accurate depiction of medieval architecture, much of which, in turn, was used as a guide for neo-Gothic designs. Most importantly of all, the growing taste for medieval as opposed to classical antiquities paved the way for a new style of British landscape painting, in which medieval ruins were able to provide a home-grown answer to the demands of the picturesque.⁴⁴

In England and Lowland Scotland, the discovery of the middle ages tended to centre on ecclesiastical architecture: the vast cathedrals, abbeys and former monasteries – some still standing, some ruined since the Reformation – which bore testimony to the wealth and power of the medieval church.⁴⁵ Examples of

⁴³ The Scottish painter Alexander Nasmyth did attempt this in a Highland context by superimposing a classical temple on a view of Loch Katrine: GM, 2561, Alexander Nasmyth, *Landscape, Loch Katrine*, Canvas, 68.6 x 90.2, c. 1810 (Fig.31).

⁴⁴ Piggott, 'Ruins in a Landscape', 118-19; Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 36.

⁴⁵ Woodward, *In Ruins*, 108-35

similar structures could be found on the fringes of the Highlands, as in the cathedral towns of Dunkeld, Inverness, Dornoch and Fortrose, or the Ross-shire village of Beaully, which housed the remains of a medieval priory. Yet, while widely illustrated in travel accounts and antiquarian works, these northern sites never achieved the same status in the artistic canon as, for example, Melrose Abbey in the Lowlands, or the cathedrals of northern England. Some of the small medieval chapels in the west Highlands were to attract some attention from artists, as in William Daniell's print of Galston in Lewis (1818), or Horatio MacCulloch's depiction of St Blane's chapel in Bute (c.1830-3), set against the backdrop of the Arran hills [Fig.32].⁴⁶ Nevertheless, (with the one great exception of Iona) it was the secular castle which dominated artists' fascination with the medieval Highlands. This was despite the fact that Highland castles owed little to the Gothic style which dominated antiquarian interest in the Middle Ages elsewhere and, indeed, possessed few architectural embellishments. In this, they contrasted with the more conventional elegance of popular Lowland sites like Roslin Castle, with its grand Norman arch, and the Gothic intricacies of its nearby chapel.⁴⁷

The importance attached to Iona, and the choice of ruined fortresses as an adjunct to landscape compositions point to a quest for something unique about the medieval Highlands which professional artists were to pick up and develop into a settled iconography. Ecclesiastically, Iona lay at the centre of the legend of Columba, the spread of Christianity in Scotland, and the development of a 'Celtic' church which came to be portrayed as distinct from, and even in opposition to, that of Rome. Since the Reformation, the image of Iona had muddied the stereotype of pagan darkness applied to the Highlands and Islands.⁴⁸ In his *De Unione Regnorum Britanniae Tractatus* of 1605, Sir Thomas Craig had used the example of Iona to counter the insinuation that Scottish learning and

⁴⁶ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, IV, pl. facing 62; Bute Museum, Horatio McCulloch, *St Blane's Church*, Panel, 18.4 x 34.4, c. 1830-3. There is also a lithograph of St. Blane's in Stuart, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, II, pl. 73.

⁴⁷ For a series of images of Roslin, dating from the 1770s, see Holloway and Errington, *Discovery of Scotland*, 64, 71-86.

⁴⁸ Mason, 'Civil Society and the Celts', 112-18. Mason distinguishes between the attitudes of late medieval chroniclers, who emphasised the closeness of the Scottish church to Roman orthodoxy, and post-Reformation writers, like George Buchanan, who sought to trace within the Celtic church a precursor of Presbyterian organisation and discipline.

culture was inveterately inferior to that of England. 'Uncivilised and barbarous as the Scots may have been', he argued, 'it was among them, if anywhere, that learning and Christianity took root, and did so in spite of the English ... Even from the Hebrides, barbarous as they were supposed to be, Christianity and the humanities went forth to the rest of the world, and yielded stout resistance to the spread of Roman tyranny and superstition'.⁴⁹ Early antiquaries, like Lhuyd, were fascinated by the material remains of Celtic Christianity, particularly the rich legacy of monumental sculpture which could be found clustered around spiritual centres like Iona or further south in mainland Argyll. Of particular interest were the distinctive crosses, with their intricate pattern of interlaced knots. Lhuyd's field drawings of Argyll antiquities included several examples of such crosses, in addition to incised burial slabs and one small diagrammatic sketch of the cathedral at Iona.⁵⁰

Like scientific illustrations, true antiquarian images tended to display their subjects abstracted from any background setting, focusing entirely on the immediate structure. A good example of this style is Richard Pococke's sketch *The Church at I Colm Kill* (1760), which showed the roofless cathedral and its adjoining chapel from as close an angle as possible, the only addition being a pair of foreground figures to give a sense of scale.⁵¹ The following decade, however, when Moses Griffith, John Cleveley and John Miller visited the island to draw for Thomas Pennant and Joseph Banks, approaches to the ruins had shifted in favour of displaying much more of the surrounding landscape or other features of local colour. In Griffith's 'General View of Iona' (1772) [Fig.33], for instance, the cathedral and its adjacent ruins were depicted in a line with the Mull coastline visible across the sound, thus moving towards the combination of

⁴⁹ Thomas Craig, *De Unione Regnorum Britanniae Tractatus*, ed. C. Sanford Terry (Edinburgh, 1909), 369. This extract is also quoted in Cowan, 'Discovery of the Gàidhealtachd', 278.

⁵⁰ Copies of the monumental sculpture are in BL, Stowe MS.1024. See also Stowe MS.1023, f. 33 for the sketch of the cathedral. Reproduced in Campbell and Thomson, *Lhuyd in the Scottish Highlands*, appendix.

⁵¹ BL, Add.MS.14256, f. 163, Richard Pococke, *The Church at I Colm Kill*, Pen and Wash, 1760. Reproduced in Jessica Christian and Charles Stiller, *Iona Portrayed: the Island through Artists' Eyes, 1760-1960* (Inverness, 2000), 8. I am indebted to Christian and Stiller's work for drawing together many of the images of Iona discussed here. An associated exhibition was mounted at Edinburgh City Art Centre, 20 March to 19 June 2004.

topography and antiquity which was the hallmark of the picturesque.⁵² Miller's view of the nunnery (1775) [Fig.34], while showing less of the landscape, included a thatched cottage in the foreground of the composition, with a kilted figure, a woman and two children grouped near the entrance. The details of this structure were carefully observed, including the ropes weighted with stones securing the thatch, the low entrance, and the implements leaning against the wall at its end gable. Cleveley's drawing of the cathedral (1772) also included a kilted figure leaning on a stick as part of a small foreground group [Fig.35].⁵³

These examples demonstrate that, from an early stage, artists were keen to move away from static images of crumbling stone divorced from setting or context. The message these images convey is that the ruins' setting – whether dramatic seascape or domestic curiosity – was as much a part of their interest as architectural value or historical significance. Medieval architecture was by this time very much a part of the scenic effect sought after by landscape artists. In 1824, the geologist-traveller John MacCulloch referred to Iona's ruins as 'the soul and centre of the Painter's Landscape. Without them, the landscape is nothing; with them, it is every thing; because, in it, they are, themselves, everything'.⁵⁴ MacCulloch suggested that the landscape was anchored or qualified by the presence of the ruins in a such a way as would be meaningless without them; by the same token, the ruins also required a landscape backdrop to attain their full visual potential. The important point about medieval antiquities was their local or national character. While the ruins of Greece and Rome stood for general sentiments such as mortality, the fall of human ambition, and the decay of man's endeavour, British antiquities were portrayed as more rooted to the soil on which they stood – part of the nation's history, and part of the ongoing story of its inhabitants.⁵⁵ Arriving in Iona in 1773, Samuel Johnson responded to the associations of the ruins by comparing their effect to that of Marathon in Greece – significantly, a landscape rather than an individual building:

⁵² Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, pl. 21.

⁵³ BL, Add.MS 15510, f. 5, James Miller, *North West View of the Nunnery*, Pen and Wash and Watercolour, 1775; *Ibid.*, f. 2, John Cleveley, *The Great Church of Iona*, Pen and Wash and Watercolour, 1772. For background, see Christian and Stiller, *Iona Portrayed*, 10-14.

⁵⁴ Quoted in *Ibid.*, 15.

⁵⁵ On antiquarianism and national identity, see Sweet, 'Antiquaries and Antiquities', 192.

We were now treading that illustrious Island, which was once the luminary of the *Caledonian* regions, whence savage clans and roving barbarians derived the benefits of knowledge, and the blessings of religion. To abstract the mind from all local emotion would be impossible, if it were endeavoured, and would be foolish, if it were possible. Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses; whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future predominate over the present, advances us in the dignity of thinking beings. Far from me and from my friends, be such frigid philosophy as may conduct us indifferent and unmoved over any ground which has been dignified by wisdom, bravery, or virtue. That man is little to be envied, whose patriotism would not gain force upon the plain of *Marathon*, or whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of *Iona*!⁵⁶

Following Johnson's cue, it is possible to conjecture one of the subconscious reasons why Iona's ruins were to prove such a magnet for artists over the century from 1760 and why they were invariably depicted as inseparable from their distinctive West Highland setting. During the eighteenth century, the image of 'savage clans' and 'roving barbarians' was a prominent ingredient in popular perceptions of the region, beside which the associations of Iona, with its history of missionary endeavour, learning, and artistic excellence, stood out in stark contrast. The very unlikeliness of their setting thus gave the ruins a curiosity factor which – despite some Gothic elements – outstripped their architectural value. John Stuart's *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, published in the mid-nineteenth century, provides further evidence of the perception that Iona's relics required a sense of place in order to be fully comprehensible. This is all the more striking given the detailed, antiquarian focus of the illustrations, which are in no sense picturesque in intention. A good example of the landscape formula is the print of St. Martin's Cross in Iona, which superimposes a front and rear view of the cross on a backdrop incorporating the cathedral, some figures, and the cliffs of Mull [Fig.36]. In the rest of the work, the combination of cross and

⁵⁶ Johnson, *Journey to the Western Islands*, 346-7.

setting occurs in only five other plates: one at Keils, in Knapdale, Argyllshire [Fig.37]; two at Kildalton in Islay; and another two in Canna. In the latter, and in the image of the cross at Keils, the contrast between the rugged, rocky nature of the terrain and the level of artistry in the sculpture is particularly prominent. The fact that all these instances portray island or West Highland locations suggests that the intention was to highlight the wonder of this level of craftsmanship having emerged from such rugged and improbable settings.⁵⁷

The apparent disparity between Iona's past and the state of its current community also attracted visual and verbal comment, particularly among travellers. Tartan and the black house were prominent ingredients in constructions of Highland 'backwardness' during our period, and Miller and Cleveley's inclusion of both in their drawings of Iona is unlikely to have been incidental. Similar juxtapositions have been noted in the images of brochs and standing stones discussed above. In 1805, when James Skene of Rubislaw visited the island, he sketched the cathedral and the ruins of Reilig Odhráin from above the village, thus incorporating groups of thatched cottages within what is very much a landscape view [Fig.38].⁵⁸ The main human interest in the drawing is provided in a funeral procession, which can be seen making its way towards the burial ground beyond the chapel ruins. Funeral practices were frequently commented on by travellers, and formed a fertile source of ethnographic comment. In Skene's image, it is only the men (dressed in kilt and plaid) who form part of the procession, women and children remaining behind.⁵⁹ Taken as a whole, the funeral scene reinforces the atmosphere of loss and decay engendered by the ruins; there is something poignant about the fact that their only use to the present community is as a place to bury the dead. The cathedral's substantial, imposing bulk also contrasts

⁵⁷ Stuart, *Sculptured Stones of Scotland*, II, pls. 32, 36-7, 40-1, 50-1.

⁵⁸ ECL, 211, Skene, Highland Album, No. 1, 'Iona', 1805.

⁵⁹ On travellers' reports of funeral customs in the Highlands and Islands, see Martin Rackwitz, 'Travels to Terra Incognita: The Scottish Highlands and Hebrides in Early Modern Travellers' Accounts c. 1600-1800' (Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Kiel, 2004), 561-71. Highland funerals formed the subject of several nineteenth-century oil paintings. Sir George Harvey's *Highland Funeral* (1844), and R. R. McLan's *Highland Funeral in the Braes of Lochaber* (1849) are listed in de Laperriere, ed., *RSA Exhibitors*; note also the review of Francis Danby's *Mountain Chieftain – Funeral in Olden Times* in *AJ*, 11, 1849, 78, and *GM*, 1060, James Guthrie, *A Highland Funeral*, Canvas, 129.5 x 193, 1882.

sharply with the humble dwellings, close to the earth, in which the current population make their homes.

In Iona, material conditions among the native population were often attributed to inadequate spiritual and educational provision. In 1773, Johnson reported: 'The inhabitants are remarkably gross, and remarkably neglected: I know not if they are visited by any Minister. The island, which was once the metropolis of learning and piety, has now no school for education, nor temple for worship, only two inhabitants that can speak *English*, and not one that can write or read'.⁶⁰ In 1818, Daniell quoted and echoed Johnson's sentiments, reflecting that 'few places of ancient renown have been subjected to a more signal degradation than this':

According to the testimony of a recent tourist, Iona now forms part of the parish of Ross, in Mull, the minister of which visits this isle once a quarter, to perform divine service; and this is the principal religious instruction dispensed upon a spot where formerly the incense of worship was continually ascending, and where missionaries were trained for the conversion and guidance of surrounding communities.⁶¹

In some later images, such as Henry Graham's 'View from MacLean's Cross' [Fig.39], lithographed for his *Antiquities of Iona* (1850), the theme of ecclesiastical and educational provision was similarly prominent, although by this time the tables had been turned. Here, a new Free Church manse occupies a prominent place in the composition, balancing the more usual dominance of the ruins. In another of Graham's images – 'View from Port Sliganach' [Fig.40] – the schoolhouse is also visible, 'peeping round the corner of the *Sliabh*, or Rocky Hill'.⁶² The neat appearance of the houses in this print, with heightened doorways, windows and proper chimneys, contrast with the rough 'hovels' in earlier images. Such improvements might be construed as bearing witness to a new age, in which moral and material regeneration went hand in hand.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 127.

⁶¹ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, III, 55.

⁶² Henry Davenport Graham, *Antiquities of Iona* (London, 1850), 26; pls. 4, 50.

As this suggests, interest in medieval ruins were was often marked by a strong ambivalence. While Graham's 'View from MacLean's Cross' suggested a strand of ecclesiastical continuity by portraying the manse, the chapel and the cathedral in an unbroken line, the pre-Reformation origins of the latter, and its association with monasticism, strained the analogy to some extent. In 1818, referring to Iona, Daniell articulated this ambivalence succinctly:

If monasteries were the safeguards of religion and literature during ages of barbarism, they were also strongholds of spiritual despotism, in which were forged the fetters of superstition, and the weapons of bigotry; and though we may deplore the excesses of that indiscriminating zeal which doomed them to utter desolation, we must derive solace and even gratitude from the reflection that their ruins, like those of a feudal castle, are monuments which commemorate the abolition of slavery.⁶³

Daniell's language echoes the views of earlier writers on the picturesque, such as Sir Uvedale Price. In 1794, Price reflected on the value of the ruined castles and abbeys of medieval England, concluding that they were a matter for national pride precisely because of their decayed condition: 'we may glory that the abodes of tyranny and superstition are in ruin'.⁶⁴ Castles and ecclesiastical antiquities thus shared an uncertain status: objects of admiration to some extent, but with a sense of relief that their original function was moribund. Perceptions of baronial antiquities were particularly complicated due to the castle's associations with a lost age of heroism and chivalry. In 1786, when Sir Joshua Reynolds delivered his thirteenth annual discourse to the Royal Academy of Arts, he explained the growing predilection for medieval architecture in landscape painting thus: 'as we have naturally a veneration for antiquity, whatever brings to our remembrance ancient customs and manners, such as the Castles of the Barons of ancient Chivalry, is sure to give this delight. Hence it is that *towers and battlements* are so often selected by the Painter and the Poet, to make a part of the composition

⁶³ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, III, 55.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Piggott, 'Ruins in a Landscape', 120.

of their ideal Landskip'.⁶⁵ Perceptions of Highland castles shared in this ambivalence. On the one hand, the castle represented the stoic virtues which had been admired for centuries as a by-product of Gaelic society; on the other, it stood for a lawless way of life, when mutual defence was necessary, and external regulation by the state well-nigh impossible. As opposed to baronial ruins in the south, representations of Highland castles were coloured by the perception that this state of affairs had been relatively recent. While Reynolds pointed out that Gothic architecture was 'not so ancient as the Grecian', he claimed that it appeared 'more so to our imagination', because of its supposed barbarity and remoteness from the civilised present.⁶⁶ In the Highlands, a sense of distance from the middle ages was not so marked, owing to the belief that it was not until Culloden that clan tradition, unbroken since ancient times, had met its demise. Touring the Hebrides in 1773, Samuel Johnson drew a sharp contrast between the medieval fortresses inhabited by former chiefs and the baronial-style mansions which he observed had frequently replaced them. Moves towards modern comfort had in fact been at foot among Highland chieftains since the first half of the seventeenth century,⁶⁷ although it was convenient to men like Johnson to associate such 'progress' with the more recent pacification. 'I have seen no houses in the Islands much to be envied for convenience or magnificence,' he wrote, 'yet they bear testimony to the progress of arts and civility, as they shew that rapine and surprise are no longer dreaded, and are much more commodious than the ancient fortresses'.⁶⁸ This view was echoed by subsequent travellers, who also used the visual language of the picturesque to emphasise the benign and emphatically ruined nature of former strongholds. In 1791, for instance, Thomas Newte accompanied an illustration of Kilchurn Castle, labelled 'The Antient Seat of the Earls of Breadalbane', with the following commentary:

This, in barbarous times, was the antient den or strong-hold of the family, from which they issued forth, at the head of their retainers, like the princes and heroes of Homer, and like those of all uncivilized times and countries, to commit occasional depredations on their neighbours. The

⁶⁵ Reynolds, *Discourses*, ed. Wark, 241-2.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 242.

⁶⁷ W. R. Kermack, *The Scottish Highlands: A Short History* (Edinburgh and London, 1957).

⁶⁸ Johnson, *Journey to the Western Islands*, 359.

present possessor has the happiness to live in a milder age, and one more suited to the natural benignity of his disposition. The sculking place of his remote ancestors is abandoned. The Earl of Breadalbane, following the example of his noble predecessor, while he opens his eyes and his fortune to the general good of every part of the country, exercises an elegant hospitality in his charming residence at Loch-Tay, in Perthshire, which shows how much the beauty and magnificence of nature may still be improved by art and cultivated taste.⁶⁹

Kilchurn and Taymouth were among the most illustrated of Highland subjects in the late eighteenth century, together representing a classic split between old and new, war and peace, barbarity and civilised taste. By the 1770s, the picturesque value of sites like Kilchurn was tacitly enhanced by the knowledge that its original defensive purpose was now only a memory. Standard depictions of Kilchurn, like the one in Newte's volume, conveyed no visual suggestion of a turbulent history. Paul Sandby, one of the earliest artists to draw Kilchurn, also created a benign portrait of the castle reflected in mirror-image from the waters of Loch Awe [Fig.41], a composition echoed by Newte's artist, Callender, and by a generation of subsequent painters and printmakers.⁷⁰

Highland castles differ from other categories of antiquity in that it is not possible to trace such a clear line of development from utilitarian studies to aesthetic representations. Purely documentary images, where they exist, were mostly produced in a military context during the first half of the eighteenth century, as strongholds like Eilean Donan, Tioram, Duart and Invergarry were commandeered to serve as barracks by government soldiers. Lewis Petit was commissioned by the Board of Ordnance to produce plans of all these fortresses in 1714, each of which serves as a utilitarian study of situation and

⁶⁹ Newte, *Prospects and Observations*, 86-7.

⁷⁰ See Sandby, *The Virtuosi's Museum*, pl. 50; Newte, *Prospects and Observations*, pl. facing 86. There are further views of Kilchurn in Leighton, *Swan's Views*, II; Beattie, *Scotland Illustrated*, II, pls. facing 104, 106; Lawson, *Scotland Delineated*, II, pl. facing 272. See also de Laperriere, ed., *RSA Exhibitors*, for an indication of the frequency with which Kilchurn featured in the annual exhibitions.

accommodation [Fig.8].⁷¹ By 1748, on the other hand, a surviving plan of Duart and Tioram by Paul Sandby shows that even a documentary image could double as a scenic view, indicating a dawning appreciation of the picturesque potential of these strongholds [Fig.42].⁷² Other military structures associated with Highland lawlessness also became absorbed into the picturesque tradition as the eighteenth century progressed. These included former garrisons in the eastern Highlands, such as Corgarff and Braemar Castles in Aberdeenshire, and the more extensive barracks at Fort George, Fort Augustus and Fort William. Both Pennant and Cordiner, among the earliest travellers to the north following pacification, illustrated examples of these structures in their published tours. Of Braemar, Pennant wrote that it was 'formerly a necessary curb on the little kings of the country; but at present serves scarcely any real purpose, but to adorn the landscape',⁷³ while Cordiner, referring to the Jacobite wars, described Fort George as 'a mere useless memorial of the state of that turbulent period'.⁷⁴ In his *Remarkable Ruins and Romantic Prospects* (1788), Cordiner also expanded on the picturesque qualities of former garrisons like Corgarff. 'They are now altogether superfluous in these views', he wrote, 'the discipline of civil society being thoroughly understood and cheerfully followed in the most inland regions of every county ... [The castle] embellishes the present landscape, presented as a specimen of the picturesque beauty of some of these mountainous regions'.⁷⁵ From this point of view, superfluity becomes a kind of stepping stone to acceptance into the canon of the picturesque, giving the relationship between the cessation of hostilities in the Highlands and the visual discovery of its ruins and fortresses an added dimension. Visiting Glenelg in 1820, Daniell was even more explicit: 'Let this tranquillity be permanent and prosperous, and the military establishment of Bernera may be left to decay, and thus share the common doom of the tumuli, the duns, the druidical circles, the idolatrous altars consecrated by barbarism, as well as of all the feudal fortifications of the empire, monuments too

⁷¹ NLS, MS.1648 Z.03/25a-28b, Lewis Petit, 'Plans, Prospects and Elevations of Castles Tioram, Duart, Eilean Donan and Glengarry', 1714. There are two versions for each fortress.

⁷² NLS, MS.1648 Z.03/28e, Paul Sandby, 'Plan of Castle Tyrim in Muydart; Plan of Castle Duirt in the Island of Mull', 1748.

⁷³ Thomas Pennant, *A Tour in Scotland, 1769* (Chester, 1771), 106, pl. 5.

⁷⁴ Cordiner, *Antiquities and Scenery*, 120.

⁷⁵ Cordiner, *Remarkable Ruins*, I, n.p.

frequently of tyranny and oppression, and interesting only as ruins'.⁷⁶ The link drawn here between 'feudal fortifications' and 'druidical circles' bears interesting comparison with an image in James Browne's *History of the Highlands and of the Highland Clans*; this was first published in 1836, a fuller, illustrated edition following in 1840. In the latter, a small woodcut vignette of Finlaggan in Islay portrays the castle from a distance, so that in silhouette its fragments bear a striking resemblance to a group of standing stones [Fig.43].⁷⁷ The cycle of antiquity would keep on turning.

Despite the dependence of the picturesque on a state of ruin or redundancy, images of the castle often betrayed a lingering nostalgia for lost values. Newte explicitly identified the fortress with such virtues as hardiness and fortitude, drawing an analogy between the natural rampart of mountains bordering Loch Lomond and a literal stronghold. 'This is the fortress', he exclaimed, 'which has enabled the natural hardiness and valour of the antient Caledonians to transmit, from the earliest records of their history, the dignity of an unconquered and independent nation, to their latest posterity'.⁷⁸ The landscape-fortress parallel was a popular trope in images of Highland castles, often conveyed by exaggerating the similarities between natural rock forms and humanly-constructed masonry. At Brochel Castle in Raasay, the geologist John MacCulloch created a dramatic image which elongated the height of the foundations, showing the castle rising as if by nature out of a crow's-nest summit [Fig.44].⁷⁹ William Daniell's depiction of the same site, published in his *Voyage Round Great Britain* the following year, gave the upper end of this spur of rock a rough-cast finish to blend with the still-standing walls of the main structure [Fig.45]. Daniell's representations of other castles like Eilean Donan and Duntulm achieved a similar effect, using dark, shadowed tones to blur the points at which the castle walls meet their foundations; both silhouettes are also rounded and softened in places so that they resemble the contours of slowly

⁷⁶ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, IV, 7.

⁷⁷ James Browne, *A History of the Highlands and of the Highland Clans* (4 vols., Edinburgh and London, 1840), II, 22.

⁷⁸ Newte, *Prospects and Observations*, 74.

⁷⁹ MacCulloch, *Description of the Western Islands*, III, pl. 2.

weathered rock more closely than the angular structure of crumbling masonry.⁸⁰ The fortress image could also be applied to the landscape by playing on similarities in form, as in an illustration of Inverlochy Castle by James Melville, engraved to illustrate Scott's *Legend of Montrose* in 1836 [Fig.46].⁸¹ In it, Melville aligned the castle against the outline of Ben Nevis so that its battlements resemble the position of the mountain's peaks. Even the clouds are carefully arranged so that the summit of the mountain appears ragged and detached out of the mist, paralleling the flag which flies from the castle's main tower.

As far as ruins were concerned, the landscape-fortress parallel had geological implications which will be discussed in a later chapter. It is nevertheless worth noting here the bearing of this visual exchange on perceptions of Highland character. While Newte had credited the landscape with an ability to preserve and defend the qualities of independence and fortitude, this power was also attributed to the dark, damp strongholds formerly inhabited by clan chieftains. Daniell accompanied his images of Brochel and Duntulm with reflections on the strength and endurance exhibited by the islanders of an earlier age, although he was keen to distance himself from overt romanticisation of past glories. At Duntulm, he observed that 'the chieftains and vassals who held it in all its pride and strength must have excelled their posterity in one cardinal virtue – that of fortitude under every sort of privation'. In Raasay, he reported that the last tenant of Brochel was reputed have lifted a stone of such weight that 'two of the stoutest islanders now living would scarcely be able to move it'. 'This', Daniell went on, 'is possibly one of those unquestionable data from which the vulgar are always disposed to deduce, as a necessary inference, the gradual degeneracy of the human race'.⁸²

Fortresses, real and imagined, were also of significance in an historical context, as antiquaries tried to reconstruct the links between tenuous literary sources like the poems of Ossian, and real archaeological evidence. As already noted, the mysterious round towers or brochs scattered across the Highlands and Islands

⁸⁰ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, IV, pls. facing 2, 24, 46.

⁸¹ In G. N. Wright, ed., *Landscape-Historical Illustrations of Scotland and the Waverley Novels* (2 vols., London, 1836-8).

⁸² Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, IV, 24, 46.

had been interpreted as tokens of a heroic society which, though possessing few ideas of architectural splendour or elegance, was capable of building structures of surprising complexity and durability. Even while antiquaries debated their origin, the idea of a thread of continuity connecting the characteristics of the society which built them with the feudal independence of more recent times was to prove tempting. By comparing the Breadalbane chieftains to Homeric princes, Newte effortlessly shifted the boundaries of time so that the heroic age associated with the world of Ossian became analogous to that of the men who occupied Kilchurn. In the poems themselves, there are many references to the halls of the heroes – including several with the prefix ‘dun’ – but few precise details. One of these, Balclutha, is described as having ‘walls of towers’ and ‘windows’, which suggests Macpherson had in mind more sophisticated strongholds than windowless single towers like the brochs. Elsewhere, dramatic coastal settings are evoked. In *The Death of Cuchullin*, the poet urges his muse: ‘Attend to the murmur of the sea: it rolls at Dunscaith’s walls’, Dunscaith being Cuchullin’s seat in Skye.⁸³ A comparable description of Mora appears in *Conlath and Cuthóna*: ‘A distant steep bends over the sea, with aged trees and mossy rocks: the billows roll at its feet ... There the towers of Mora rise’.⁸⁴ As brochs and medieval castles were built in similarly defensive positions – often on a cliff edge or coastal promontory – such settings could equally apply to either form of structure. The text, therefore, gave artists little to go on. In contemporary illustrations to the poems, buildings appear only spasmodically, generally conforming to a vaguely medieval style with square towers and rounded window arches as in an engraved drawing by James Barralet, *The Fall of Agandecca* (1783). In *Fainasollis Borbar and Fingal*, illustrating another scene from the poems, Barralet’s castle is more elaborate in style, incorporating an arched façade supported by pillars.⁸⁵ One of Richard Corbould’s illustrations in Cameron and Murdoch’s complete edition of the poems mixes architectural allusions, bringing in a druidic element. ‘Fingal and Fillan discovering Cuthullin’ shows the two protagonists emerging from a hall with sculpted stone

⁸³ The ruins of Dunscaich are situated near the mouth of Loch Eishort on the west side of the Sleat peninsula.

⁸⁴ Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, ed. Gaskill, 125, 135.

⁸⁵ Reproduced in Smiles, *Image of Antiquity*, 66; see *ibid.*, 67 for comment on the anachronisms in costume and architecture in these images.

details along its upper wall [Fig.47]. In the background, however, can be seen a low mound and the outlines of a megalithic structure.⁸⁶ A different edition of the poems, published by Lackington, Allen & Co. in 1806, included yet another style of fortress, resembling the form of a prehistoric broch, or very early type of castle. Atkinson's image, illustrating the dramatic poem *Comala*, portrayed the heroine against a coastal scene, with a simple tower rising from a cliff top in the distance [Fig.48].⁸⁷ While these details may seem incidental to the artist's main purpose, which was to visualise the poems' dramatic action, they indicate how the symbolic significance of different styles of architecture was used to inject atmosphere into an illustration. The fact that so many of these styles could be fitted into the amorphous world created by Macpherson bears witness to the ease with which the poems could be twisted to accommodate symbols of heroic virtue from any age.

In his essay on Sir Walter Scott and nineteenth-century painting, Lindsay Errington draws attention to a passage from *The Antiquary*, in which a ruined fortress is used as a metaphor for the decaying mind of an old woman, Elspeth Mucklebackit. In the mouth of Scott's comic character, Edie Ochiltree, Elspeth is described as being 'like some of the ancient ruined strengths and castles that ane sees amang the hills. There are mony parts of her mind that appear, as I may say, laid waste and decayed, but then there's parts that look the steever, and the stronger, and the grander, because they are rising just like to fragments amang the ruins o' the rest'.⁸⁸ Cross-applied to what we have seen of the castle as a shorthand symbol for the strength, endurance and clannish spirit of the Highlander, Scott's image sheds light on the romantic resonance of ruins. Lowland romanticisation of the Highlander fed on an historical tableau of lost causes and dying traditions, but it was out of this apparently ruined and fragmented world that the Gael emerged as a symbol for an undaunted and indomitable spirit, ready to fight the battles of the Empire. Horatio McCulloch, an artist whose vision of the Highland landscape has often been associated with

⁸⁶ James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian* (2 vols., Glasgow, Cameron and Murdoch, 1796-7), I, pl. facing 60. See also *ibid.*, I, title page, for a vignette illustration to *Fingal* incorporating a Gothic castle.

⁸⁷ James Macpherson, *The Poems of Ossian* (2 vols., London, Lackington, Allen & Co., 1806), I, pl. facing 116.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Errington, 'Sir Walter Scott and Nineteenth Century Painting', 124.

Scott, painted a series of canvases of castles, including Dunstaffnage, Lochaline, and Inverlochy, during the 1850s [Figs.49-50].⁸⁹ Discussing the symbolism of *Lochaline Castle*, Morrison takes the view that the fortress 'makes direct reference to both the antiquity of culture and to that culture's inherently combative nature'. In the 'smoke drifting from an almost hidden dwelling abutting the ruined keep', he suggests that there is also an implied continuity between past and present embedded in the painting, with a living community clinging to, and rising as it were out of, the ruins.⁹⁰ McCulloch's Highland landscapes seldom omit a human point of reference, however concealed, and the juxtaposition of smoking cottages with castles in all three of the works cited above is striking; this formula recurs in *My Heart's in the Highlands*, an imaginary composition of 1860 [Fig.51].⁹¹ William Daniell, whose penchant for combining antiquities with tokens of contemporary life has been observed in other places, repeated this device in a view of Aros Castle (1818) [Fig.52]. In it, a woman can be seen working at a tub out of doors beside a low stone cottage at the foot of the castle promontory.⁹² On the one hand, such benign details might be read as no more than a subtle enforcement of the abandoned and now obsolete nature of the ruins in a society which has moved away from its past. It is nevertheless important to note the manner in which the relationship between castle and community was perceived during this period. Two accounts, both published during the 1840s, are illuminating. In 1845, the Sobieski Stuart brothers introduced their *Costume of the Clans* with a lengthy essay defending the achievements of the Gael in literature, architecture, crafts and sculpture. In the course of this, the proliferation of literal ruins throughout the Highlands and Islands was presented as part of a much wider process of cultural destruction, traced back to the Statutes of Iona. The brothers' lament for the tangible remains of Gaelic culture extended to humble dwellings as well as the more imposing strongholds:

⁸⁹ GM, 997, Horatio McCulloch, *Dunstaffnage Castle*, Canvas, 66.3 x 121.2, 1854; GM, 3122, Horatio McCulloch, *Lochaline Castle*, Canvas, 53.3 x 76.2, 1856; NGS, NG 288, Horatio McCulloch, *Inverlochy Castle*, Canvas, 91.6 x 152.8cm, 1857.

⁹⁰ Morrison, *Painting the Nation*, 106-7.

⁹¹ GM, 1001, Horatio McCulloch, *My Heart's in the Highlands*, Canvas, 84.5 x 135.9, 1860.

⁹² Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, III, pl. facing 66.

Of old every castle of the chiefs had their castle-town, or little village of black houses, which clustered under the shelter of the baronial fortress. Most of these are now obliterated with the ruin of the towers by which they were protected; but a few still remain, and may be recognised in Grant-town, Inverara, Golspey, Cluny, and the castle-town of Braemar – which originally were the vassal hamlets of Castle-Grant, Inverara, Dun Robin, Taymouth, and the residences of the chiefs of Clan Chattan and the Earl of Mar. In all these dependent villages lived the artizans who supplied the wants and manufacturers of the great domestic garrison to which they pertained ...⁹³

In August 1847, *The Illustrated London News* carried a report of Queen Victoria's Scottish tour, commenting in passing on the sights and scenes observed by the way. At Ardtornish in Morvern, recently purchased by the sheep farmer Patrick Sellar, the contrast between the latter's new residence and the ruins of the ancient castle prompted an oblique reference to the impact of the clearances:

The ruins of Ardtornish, once the stronghold of the Lords of the Isles, were next passed; where the present proprietor, Peter Sellar [*sic.*], the notable sheep farmer of the Highlands, and the agent of the Sutherland estates, has built himself an unsightly abode, of glare and whitewash. In every mile or two were passed ruins of castles that it has been found more difficult to destroy than the ruins of cottages, but we may be assured that the castles did not flourish without the cottages. The latter are forgotten, and they have not been replaced, while the former are passing fast through all the stages of decay.⁹⁴

This account of loss and abandonment, heavily tinged with romanticism, sat side by side with enthusiastic reports of the Queen's reception at Inveraray, Fort William and Ardverikie by kilted clansmen bearing antique arms, and her

⁹³ Stolberg and Stuart, *Costume of the Clans*, xxxv.

⁹⁴ *ILN*, 11, 1847, 137. On Sellar's purchase of Ardtornish and his earlier role in the Sutherland clearances, see Eric Richards, *Patrick Sellar and the Highland Clearances: Homicide, Eviction and the Rise of Progress* (Edinburgh, 1999).

attendance at the Laggan Highland games. Visually, it was this aspect of her tour which dominated the coverage, with the shadow of Sellar, and its implications for social criticism, swiftly passed by. Nevertheless, this account, along with Sobieski Stuart's, portrays an intimate connection between the decay of the castle – a symbol of clanship – and the demise of communities. In this light, the artist's insistence on what might be seen as an older order of things could be read as another instance of deliberate historicism.

Dress and Arms

Although we have been considering the visual depiction of antiquity by theme, there are many points of intersection between the categories. In one of Sandby's prints of Dunstaffnage Castle, published in 1778, a figure in Highland dress with a set of bagpipes at his feet is seen looking from the edge of an oval frame across to the ruins [Fig.53].⁹⁵ By his side is a small boy in ordinary clothes, and while the proscription of Highland dress was lifted only four years later, the print implied that the chance of the distinctive garb being passed on to a succeeding generation was as doomed as the rebuilding of Dunstaffnage's ruins. Over the following century, preserving dress and arms was to become a key priority for many antiquaries, resulting in a plethora of visual images. The history of Highland dress and its pictorial record have been well served by the work of John Telfer Dunbar, who quarried the evidence of written documents, prints, map decoration, portraits and costume books in a quest to elucidate its past. Despite the efforts of romanticists to prove a longer ancestry, it would appear that Highland dress attracted little observation as a distinct form of garb before the sixteenth century. From 1538, when a Lord High Treasurer's account recorded details of a 'Highland' costume to be made for James V, evidence becomes thicker. A costume book published in Paris in 1562, *Receuil de la Diversité des Habits*, contained two Scottish figures, male and female, both dressed in a plaid-like garment. Dunbar suggests that their outfits are probably fanciful and drawn from second-hand description rather than life; the images nonetheless imply that the plaid had become identifiable as a 'national' form of costume. In 1581,

⁹⁵ Sandby, *Virtuosi's Museum*, pl. 44.

George Buchanan's *Rerum Scoticarum Historia* explicitly linked the plaid to the Highlander's reputation for lawlessness, suggesting that its colour allowed more effective camouflage among the heather. In keeping with his ambivalence towards Gaeldom, however, Buchanan also emphasised its amenability to feats of hardihood and endurance, providing a shelter from the harshest storms and even allowing the wearer to sleep out of doors in snow. Ambivalence towards the dress also came from within Highland society. Around 1620, Sir Robert Gordon advised his nephew, the Earl of Sutherland, to make every effort to do away with all 'reliques of the Irishe barbaritie' among his people, specifying language and 'habit'.⁹⁶

By the later seventeenth century, aspects of traditional dress were evidently passing out of use within the Gàidhealtachd. Martin Martin, for instance, stated that some of historically distinctive elements were no longer to be seen in the Western Isles. The saffron shirt had been laid aside since a century, footwear made out of animal hide had been replaced by proper shoes, and the *earasaid*, or female version of the plaid, was worn only by the 'vulgar', or the very old. Many of the people, he reported, wore trews, although coats, waistcoats and breeches were also common as elsewhere. He described the arrangement of the belted plaid at length, but made no comment as to the extent of its use.⁹⁷ Martin's account of the islands was not published until 1703, and reports of dress outside the Gàidhealtachd tended to preclude the possibility of change. In the introduction to his 1695 edition of *Britannia*, Edmund Gibson was happy to present Sidonius' description of a Goth as 'the fair draught' of a contemporary Highlander: 'They shine (says he) with yellow; they cover their feet as high as the ancle with hairy untann'd leather; their knees, legs, and calves are all bare. Their garment is high, close, and of sundry colours, hardly reaching down to their hams'. The Irish parallel, and the associations of this form of dress with lawlessness, were also retained, unedited, from Camden's original edition.⁹⁸

⁹⁶ John Telfer Dunbar, *The Costume of Scotland* (London, 1981), 21-39. See also John Telfer Dunbar, *History of Highland Dress* (London, 1962), 22-46 for a full account of documentary references to tartan during the early modern period.

⁹⁷ Martin, *Description*, 88, 206-9.

⁹⁸ Camden, *Britannia*, ed. Gibson (1695 edn.), cxviii, 934.

The Jacobite struggle lent a new dimension to perceptions of Highland dress, and sowed the seeds of further ambivalence. According to Murray Pittock, tartan was established as token of Jacobite identity by the close of the seventeenth century.⁹⁹ Two portraits of prominent Jacobites – Kenneth Sutherland, third Lord Duffus, and John Drummond, fourth titular Duke of Perth – painted in the first half of the eighteenth century, portray the sitters in elements of Highland dress [Figs.54-5]. The latter is dated 1739 and the former is an earlier picture by Richard Waitt, probably completed around 1712.¹⁰⁰ In the run up to the ‘Forty-Five, propaganda portraits of Charles Edward Stuart were also circulated, many of them earlier likenesses made ‘Highland’ by the addition of bonnet and plaid.¹⁰¹ Attachment to Highland dress could not be read as a simple badge of political affiliations, however. Probably the most remarkable series of tartan portraits to survive from the early eighteenth century were commissioned by the Grant family in Strathspey, who were Presbyterians and Hanoverian supporters.¹⁰² Major James Fraser of Castle Leathers (1670-1760) was another Hanoverian follower who had himself painted in tartan trews and plaid; this portrait is undated and by an unknown artist, although from Fraser’s age in the picture it would seem to date from his later life [Fig.56].¹⁰³ These images fit into an older tradition of portraiture among the Highland elite, in which tartan was deployed as a token of conspicuous consumption and status. This use of the garb can be seen in John Michael Wright’s well-known portrait of Sir Mungo Murray (1668-1700), of which there are several copies, and Charles Jervas’ depiction of John Campbell, Lord Glenorchy (1696-1782), when he was still a child in 1708 [Figs.57-8].¹⁰⁴ Thus, although tartan could be used as a shorthand symbol of

⁹⁹ Murray G. H. Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester and New York, 1999), 86.

¹⁰⁰ SNPG, PG 1095, Richard Waitt, *Kenneth Sutherland, Third Lord Duffus*, Canvas, 203.2 x 140.6, c. 1712; SNPG, PG 1597, Domenico Dupra, *John Drummond, Fourth Titular Duke of Perth*, Canvas, 61.5 x 46.6, 1739. For the dating of the Waitt portrait, see Cheape, *Tartan*, 21.

¹⁰¹ Dunbar, *Highland Dress*, 82. See also Robin Nicholson, *Bonnie Prince Charlie and the Making of a Myth: A Study in Portraiture, 1720-1892* (London, 2002).

¹⁰² On Grant patronage, particularly the family’s relationship with the painter Richard Waitt, see Holloway, *Patrons and Painters*, 69-83; also Dunbar, *Highland Dress*, 58-62. Photographs of the Grant portraits in private collections can be viewed in the SNPG library’s costume files.

¹⁰³ SNPG, PGL 276, Anon., *Major James Fraser of Castle Leathers*, Canvas, 220.5 x 134.7, n.d.

¹⁰⁴ Murray was the fifth son of the second Earl of Atholl. SNPG, PG 997, John Michael Wright, *Sir Mungo Murray*, Canvas, 224.8 x 154.3, c. 1683; GM, TBA.505, John Michael Wright, *Lord Mungo Murray*, Canvas, 224.8 x 154.3, c. 1680s; SNPG, PG 2934, Charles Jervas, *John Campbell, Third Earl of Breadalbane*, Canvas, 152.4 x 96, 1708.

commitment to the Jacobite cause, it also held a much wider pool of associations for members of the Highland elite.

Such displays of costume as appear in early portraits may reflect the image these gentlemen wished to present to an external audience. By the early eighteenth century, Highland gentlemen were well known for ostentatious dressing, particularly on visiting the 'low country'.¹⁰⁵ Writing in the 1720s, Burt suggested that Highland gentlemen wore a particular form of costume – consisting of trews, plaid, and full set of arms – when visiting the Lowlands. 'This', he wrote to his purported correspondent, 'you have seen in London'. Although his attitude was hostile in the main, Burt's comments on dress reveal a degree of ambivalence. 'To a well-proportioned man, with any tolerable air', he admitted, the full dress might make 'an agreeable figure'. Much more dubious, however, was the kilted plaid, worn by most ordinary men, and by gentlemen when travelling on foot, as its short length made clambering through rocks and bogs and wading rivers easier. Echoing earlier writers, Burt saw the belted plaid as a potential catalyst to insurgency, in that 'it distinguishes the natives as a body of people distinct and separate from the rest of the subjects of Great Britain ... [and] renders them ready at a moment's warning, to join in any rebellion, as they carry continually their tents about them'; he also reported that its proscription in Ireland by act of parliament had resulted in no great loss to 'the mountaineers of that country'.¹⁰⁶ In published form, Burt's *Letters* included several images of the plaid in use, including the manner in which it was arranged by women; all of these images depict individuals from the lower end of society, and only one is fully armed with targe, dirk, musket and pistol [*Figs.59-60*].¹⁰⁷

The military bearing of this figure recalls another milieu in which Highland dress became widely known. Among the earliest visual representations of tartan in a martial context occur in what is known as the 'Stettin print' (1631), which shows soldiers in Lord Reay's regiment who fought under Gustavus Adolphus during

¹⁰⁵ Cheape, *Tartan*, 25.

¹⁰⁶ Burt, *Letters*, II, 184-9.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, I, pls. facing 60, 86; II, pls. facing 120, 183.

the Thirty Years' War.¹⁰⁸ The military use of Highland dress continued. In 1667, the first of the Highland Independent Companies were raised, in which soldiers wore the plaid and a tartan coat as a kind of uniform; a report of 1709 nevertheless stated that these differed little from the ordinary clothing of the 'natives'. These Independent Companies served as a military police and were reformed in 1725 into what became known as the Black Watch, whose designated duties included the prevention of cattle thieving and its associated practice of blackmail. The Black Watch was regrouped as the 43rd Regiment in 1739, ultimately evolving into the legendary 42nd.¹⁰⁹ The military associations of tartan thus formed another facet of the complex and often contradictory web of perceptions which had gathered around Highland dress by the 1740s. In 1746, following Culloden, this came to a head in a Disarming Act which prohibited the wearing of any item of clothing peculiarly belonging to the Highland garb, including 'the Plaid, Philebeg, or little Kilt, Trowse, Shoulder Belts', and coats made out of tartan. Within the Act, provision was nonetheless made for the officers and soldiers serving in government regiments, so that between 1746 and 1782, military uniform was the only legally acceptable form of Highland costume.¹¹⁰

During the years of proscription, portraits of gentlemen in an explicitly military form of Highland dress began to multiply. Among these can be counted George, 3rd Lord Reay, by an unknown artist (c. 1760), William, 18th Earl of Sutherland, by Allan Ramsay (1763), and John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore, by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1765) [*Fig.61*]. The latter wear the uniforms of the 1st Sutherland Fencibles, and of the 3rd Regiment of Foot Guards, respectively.¹¹¹ Tartan portraiture also continued in a civilian context. William Mosman's portrait of John Campbell of Ardmaddie, painted in 1749, subtly presents the sitter's status as a man straddling two worlds. Campbell had begun his career as a lawyer, afterwards rising to a position of influence in the Royal Bank of Scotland in

¹⁰⁸ Dunbar, *Highland Dress*, 165, pl. 10; the original is in the British Museum. On MacKay's regiment abroad, see Ian Grimble, *Chief of MacKay* (Edinburgh, 1993 edn.), 81-105.

¹⁰⁹ Dunbar, *Highland Dress*, 155-76.

¹¹⁰ Dunbar, *Costume of Scotland*, 50-1.

¹¹¹ Photographs of the Reay and Sutherland portraits can be viewed in the SNPG library costume subject files under 'Highland Dress'; for Murray, see SNPG, PGL 163, Sir Joshua Reynolds, *John Murray, 4th Earl of Dunmore*, Canvas, 238.1 x 146.2, 1765.

Edinburgh.¹¹² The Scottish National Portrait Gallery's costume files catalogue other instances from the early days of proscription, such as Allan Ramsay's portrait of Norman MacLeod of Dunvegan (1748), painted in tartan trews, stockings, short coat and plaid, and armed with a dirk and broadsword.¹¹³ The two MacDonald sons of Sleat, Alexander and James, were also painted in a landscape setting by Jeremiah Davison around 1749, both dressed in tartan costume [Fig.62]. Davison's depiction of Sir James echoes Jervis's portrayal of Lord Glenorchy as a child in 1708, and clearly belongs to a continuing tradition.¹¹⁴

All of these portraits, and many more, raise fascinating questions about the self-representation of the Highland elite, and the messages which an espousal of tartan was intended to convey. By 1760, it appears that the need for the outlawing of Highland dress had died its own death, and Dunbar reports no instances of the Proscription Act being enforced after this date.¹¹⁵ The following decade, in 1778, the Highland Society of London was formed by a group of twenty five gentlemen, with Simon Fraser of Lovat as President. The Society held as its objects the preservation and promotion of the dress, music and literature of the Highlands, and campaigned against proscription, which was repealed in 1782. The Highland Society's activities brought dress and arms into the realm of cultural preservation, alongside other forms of tradition which were perceived as being under threat. It involved itself in the patronage of piping and Gaelic poetry, and published a Gaelic edition of Macpherson's *Ossian* in 1807. The Highland Society of Scotland, founded in Edinburgh in 1784, was exercised with similar concerns, although it also had a wider interest in economic improvement, and established agricultural competitions to that end.¹¹⁶

Although the formation of the societies endorsed antiquarian research into Highland dress and arms in a public manner, queries as to their origin and the extent of their antiquity had been current for some decades. During his travels in

¹¹² Royal Bank of Scotland Collection: reproduced in Cheape, *Tartan*, 22.

¹¹³ See SNPG library costume subject files, 'Highland Dress'.

¹¹⁴ SNPG, PG 2127, Jeremiah Davison, *Sir Alexander MacDonald with Sir James MacDonald*, Canvas, 176.5 x 147.3, c. 1749.

¹¹⁵ Dunbar, *Costume of Scotland*, 53.

¹¹⁶ I. F. Grant and Hugh Cheape, *Periods in Highland History* (London, 1997 edn.), 244-46.

Argyll in 1699-1700, Lhuyd sketched a specimen of a targe alongside the crosses and monuments which were his main field of visual interest [Fig.63].¹¹⁷ Although Lhuyd was a pioneer of British, as opposed to Roman, archaeology, the similarity of the Highland targe to a legionary's shield had led to some confusion in antiquarian circles in the past.¹¹⁸ In some circles, it was even conjectured that aspects of Highland dress and arms had been borrowed direct from the Romans. In 1742, William Maitland wrote to Sir John Clerk of Penicuik, recounting an expedition to Roman sites north of the Tay: 'Sir, Being at a loss concerning some parts of the Highland Dress and arms, I humbly entreat you'd be pleas'd to favour me with your opinion, which of them you take to be Roman'.¹¹⁹ Travellers to the region post-1746 continued this theme. In Glen Lyon in 1769, Pennant met a gentleman who, he recounted, 'favoured me with the sight of a very ancient brotche, which the Highlanders use, like the *fibula* of the *Romans*, to fasten their vest'.¹²⁰ In the 1790 edition of the tour, an illustration of this brooch, alongside a 'curious walking staff' belonging to an ancestor of the same gentleman, was contributed by Moses Griffith. When in Skye in 1772, Pennant was also shown a sword of a type he asserted to be 'common to the Romans, Scandinavians, and Britons', citing examples of others found elsewhere in Scotland, in Wales, and in the Scandinavian countries.¹²¹ Similarly, William Gilpin, who embarked on his picturesque tour of the Highlands in 1776, drew an analogy between a Highland gentleman in full dress and a Roman general. 'To see the plaid in perfection', he declared, 'you must see the highland gentleman on horseback. Such a figure carries you into Roman times; and presents you with the idea of Marcus Aurelius. If the bonnet were laid aside (for the elegance of which but little can be said) the drapery is very nearly Roman'.¹²²

Parallels with Roman dress required a certain degree of selectivity, becoming especially complicated in the face of historical evidence that the far north had

¹¹⁷ BL, Stowe MS.1024, No. 91; Campbell and Thomson, *Lhuyd in the Scottish Highlands*, appendix.

¹¹⁸ Piggott, 'Ruins in a Landscape', 106-7.

¹¹⁹ NAS, Clerk of Penicuik Papers, GD 18/5058, William Maitland to Sir John Clerk, 1 October 1742.

¹²⁰ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland, 1769*, 85.

¹²¹ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland, 1772*, I, 290.

¹²² Gilpin, *Observations*, II, 138: quoted in Smiles, *Image of Antiquity*, 67.

remained free of Roman control. According to one version of the argument, this could account for the survival of the region's distinctive language, manners and traditions, uncorrupted by the influences which had transformed the rest of Britain. Logically, the antiquary would expect dress and arms to have retained a similar uniqueness, and in his description of contemporary Highland weapons, we find Pennant reneging on his Roman parallels to stress comparative inferiority. Referring to the claymore, or two-handed sword, he wrote that 'the enormous length of weapon has been found useless against the firmness of determined troops, from the battle of the *Mons Graupius*, to the recent victory of *Culloden*. The short swords of the forces of *Agricola*, and the bayonets of the *British* regulars, were equally superior'.¹²³ Thus, while Maitland had implied a specifically Roman origin for Highland dress and arms, other evidence suggests that the comparison may often have had a merely nominal significance. Rome was the epitome of the ancient world for British antiquaries, and as such could be made to stand as shorthand for an aura of indefinite antiquity when applied to any object.

Pompeo Batoni's portrait of Colonel William Gordon of Fyvie, painted in Rome in 1766, provides a striking instance of the classical parallel on canvas [Fig.64].¹²⁴ Batoni's composition showed Gordon dressed in a military jacket, tartan hose and plaid against a backdrop of relics from the ancient world: the Colosseum, a marble courtyard, fragments of carved stonework and a classical sculpture. The plaid is arranged so as to resemble the folds of a Roman toga, but is also prominently striped, recalling Camden's description of the 'striped mantles of divers colours' worn by the Irish and the Highlander during the sixteenth century.¹²⁵ In Batoni's portrait, the associations of the garb are given a universal, timeless significance, hinting at a parallel between Gaelic and classical antiquity.

In 1766, such allusions would have been underscored by the contemporary furore over Ossian. Further instances of Highland dress being mingled with classical

¹²³ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, 290.

¹²⁴ NTS, Fyvie Castle, Pompeo Batoni, *Colonel William Gordon of Fyvie*, Canvas, 258.2 x 186.1, 1766.

¹²⁵ Camden, *Britannia*, ed. Gibson (1695 edn.), 934.

imagery can be traced in illustrations of the poems themselves. During this period, artists tended to work within familiar idioms, looking to past examples of their chosen genre for models of style or content. Because Ossian was hailed as a northern answer to Homer or Virgil, it followed that artists seeking to illustrate the poems would draw on the established iconography of classical history painting. While this was often the case – as in Runciman’s Ossianic sketches¹²⁶ – some artists concocted a dress-style for their warriors which blended elements of eighteenth-century Highland dress with classical arms and drapery. Smiles has drawn attention to Barralet’s paintings of Ossianic scenes, *Fainasollis Borbar and Fingal* and *The Fall of Agandecca* (engraved in 1783), in which the warriors’ fighting garb resembles that of Homeric or Virgilian heroes, with feathered helmets, short-skirted tunics, and flowing mantles. In the case of Fingal and his band, however, both tunic and mantle have been given a checked pattern, so as to resemble contemporary ideas of tartan. Moreover, in *Fainasollis Borbar and Fingal*, only the two protagonists wear the classical-style helmet, the rest of the band being kitted out in flat bonnets of the type despised by Gilpin.¹²⁷ This kind of chronological confusion was echoed in illustrations to published collections of the poems, such as Morison’s edition of 1797, Imray’s of 1800, and Lackington and Allen’s of 1806. In all of these, examples of Ossianic heroes dressed in tartan plaids, combined with upper body armour and the ubiquitous feathered helmet, proliferate [Figs.65-7]. In Imray’s edition (1800), an illustration of Fingal and Fillan discovering Cuthullin also shows Fillan in a flat tartan bonnet resembling those used by Barralet [Fig.47].¹²⁸

The poems of Ossian were of profound significance in providing a connecting rationale between antiquarianism and the romantic imagination. Several historical paintings played with the link between ‘modern’ Highland dress and its supposedly ancient origins. The most important of these was Sir Benjamin West’s *Alexander III of Scotland Saved from the Fury of a Stag by the Intrepidity of Colin Fitzgerald* (1786), which was commissioned by Francis Humberston

¹²⁶ See esp. *The Death of Oscar*, reproduced in Macmillan, *Painting in Scotland*, 55.

¹²⁷ Smiles, *Image of Antiquity*, 67.

¹²⁸ The editions consulted here are Morison’s (2 vols., Perth, 1795), with illustrations by David Allan, Imray’s second edition (2 vols., Glasgow, 1800), and Lackington and Allen’s (2 vols., London, 1806).

MacKenzie for Brahan Castle in Ross-shire [Fig.68].¹²⁹ The subject was a scene from MacKenzie legend, showing Alexander III of Scotland being rescued from near death by one Colin Fitzgerald, the supposed ancestor of the clan. The painting has been interpreted as a plank in the Seaforth MacKenzies' attempt to rehabilitate the family's political reputation in the years following attainder for Jacobite affiliations at Culloden. An important element of this strategy was military service. Although the third Earl of Cromartie had supported Charles Edward Stuart with a body of men in 1745, his son, Lord MacLeod, raised a regiment for government service in India in 1777. The clan motto, 'Cuidich an Rìgh' (Save the King), which arose from the story of Alexander III, could be reworked in an eighteenth century context to demonstrate the allegiance of the MacKenzie clan to George III. Visually, the painting hints at this by including elements of regimental uniform, such as the chequered band on the protagonists' bonnets. Cheape has also identified details in the weaponry which reveal it to have been of contemporary manufacture and use.¹³⁰ A later historical painting by John Martin, portraying Macbeth's encounter with the three weird sisters on the heath near Cawdor Castle, also drew on regimental uniform for the costume of the principal figures, thus making Shakespeare's tragedy an anachronistically 'Highland' affair [Fig.69].¹³¹

In 1801, West was commissioned by the Highland Society of London to design a medal commemorating the contribution of the 42nd Highlanders to General Abercrombie's victory at Alexandria [Fig.70]. The Highland soldier in the medal was cast in the pose of a classical warrior, his plaid, kilt and military bonnet melting when viewed at a distance into the garb of a Roman legionary. This echoes the classical overtones already noted in illustrations to the poems of

¹²⁹ NGS, NG 2448, Sir Benjamin West, *Alexander III of Scotland Saved from the Fury of a Stag by the Intrepidity of Colin Fitzgerald*, Canvas, 366 x 521, 1786. This painting was recently cleaned and restored in situ at NGS, where a study day, *Benjamin West in Focus*, was held to mark the completion of the work on 25 February 2005.

¹³⁰ Helen Smailes, 'The Seaforth MacKenzies: Their Patronage and their Jacobite Affiliations' and Hugh Cheape, 'The Changing Image of the Highlands after 1745', Papers Presented at *Benjamin West in Focus*, NGS, 25 February 2005. On Lord MacLeod's recruiting activities, see also Eric Richards and Monica Clough, *Cromartie: Highland Life, 1650-1914* (Aberdeen, 1989), 99-101. 'MacLeod's Highlanders' were later re-numbered in the Army List as the 78th Regiment.

¹³¹ NGS, NG 2115, John Martin, *Macbeth*, Canvas, 50.1 x 71, c. 1822. A version of *Macbeth* was exhibited at the Northumberland Institution in Newcastle in 1822: Usherwood and Bowden, *Art for Newcastle*, 91.

Ossian, and in the Batoni portrait of Colonel Gordon, and Cheape has observed a similarity in pose with the figure of Fitzgerald in *Alexander III Saved from the Fury of a Stag*.¹³² In 1805, West executed a further commission for the Highland Society, designing the crest for its diploma, or certificate of membership [Fig.71].¹³³ At the centre of the composition sits Britannia, enthroned against a hilly landscape, and gathering her subjects (including Ossian) around her feet. Above her head are three united crowns: the thistle, the shamrock and the rose, signalling the union of Scotland, Ireland and England. Most importantly, the two tartan-clad figures flanking the central orb appear as though holding up this vision of Britannia, one with military bonnet and drawn sword, the other depicted as a fisherman, with gaffe and salmon. The position of these figures recalls the military iconography on some earlier maps and plans, including Murdoch MacKenzie's chart of the south-east coast of Lewis (1750) and William Morison's plan of Ardshiel in Appin, Argyll, commissioned by the Forfeited Estates Commission in 1773.¹³⁴ The chart of Lewis is dedicated to Sir Alexander MacKenzie of Gairloch, and contains a dedicatory cartouche with two armed Highlanders flanking the MacKenzie crest [Fig.72]. Unlike the Earl of Cromartie, Sir Alexander had not supported the Jacobite side at Culloden,¹³⁵ and the reference undoubtedly invokes the loyalist connotations gathered by tartan in a military context. The cartouche in Morison's plan of Ardshiel could also be interpreted as a symbol of loyalty. The lands of Ardshiel had been forfeited to the Crown in 1746 as a result of Charles Stewart's Jacobite affiliations. In 1771, however, his widow Isabel was granted the lease of Glen Duror, thus regaining a foothold in the family's forfeited property. In the meantime, the head of another branch of Stewarts – Alan Stewart of Invernahyle – had successfully negotiated a personal rehabilitation through military service. Like Charles, Alan had fought on the Jacobite side at Culloden, had fled to France, but later returned to Achara (part of Ardshiel estate) in 1765 as a retired officer of the British army.¹³⁶

¹³² Cheape, 'Changing Image of the Highlands'. See also Cheape, *Tartan*, 45.

¹³³ NGS, P 714, Luke Clennell, after Sir Benjamin West, Diploma of the Highland Society, Wood Engraving, 1805.

¹³⁴ Murdoch MacKenzie, 'The South-East Coast of the Lewis', in Murdoch MacKenzie, *Orcades* (London, 1750); NAS, RHP 3484, William Morison, 'Plan of the Estate of Ardsheall lying in the Parish of Appin and County of Argyll', 1773.

¹³⁵ Osgood MacKenzie, *A Hundred Years in the Highlands* (London, 1949 edn.), 34.

¹³⁶ James Hunter, *Culloden and the Last Clansman* (Edinburgh and London, 2001), 191-3.

Morison's cartouche – which shows an army encampment and soldiers shooting at a target in the background – no doubt refers to this element of Stewart's career, and provides an insight into the relationship between land, empire and Highlandism in the later eighteenth century.

The triumph of tartan as a loyalist symbol was hallmarked by Sir Walter Scott's orchestration of King George IV's visit to Edinburgh in 1822. This has been written about extensively elsewhere,¹³⁷ and it is its antiquarian dimension which particularly concerns us here. Plans for the reception of the King in Edinburgh were supported by a committee which included James Skene of Rubislaw (whose interest in Highland antiquities we have already noted) and Colonel David Stewart of Garth. From 1814, Stewart had taken a leading part in plans for a collection of tartans, writing to chiefs and heads of families requesting samples of the sett distinctive to their clan. These were then registered alongside the chief's seal with the Highland Society in London.¹³⁸ Some of Garth's correspondents were dubious about the scheme's assumptions. Colonel Robertson of Struan, for example, replied: 'It does not appear to be ascertained, either by tradition or authentick history, that the different Clans in the Highlands of Scotland, wore any distinctive pattern or tartan. It is well known that they all had particular Colours, or Standards, emblematical of some of their most honourable attachments, but as far as I have been able to discover, they wore no uniform Garb'.¹³⁹ Despite this caution, the idea of patterns forming a kind of distinctive uniform for every clan caught hold. In his own *Sketches of the Highlanders of Scotland* (1822), Stewart asserted that 'a Macdonald, a Campbell, a Mackenzie, &c. was known by his plaid; and in like manner the Athole, Glenorchy, and other colours of different districts, were easily distinguishable'.¹⁴⁰ During the king's visit to Edinburgh, representatives of the different clans appeared clad in their supposedly ancestral tartan, with a display of 'ancient' arms. In the wake of the collecting process had come an antiquarian

¹³⁷ See esp. Finley, *Turner and George the Fourth*; Dunbar, *Costume of Scotland*; Prebble, *King's Jaunt*; Morrison, *Painting the Nation*.

¹³⁸ Robertson, *The First Highlander*, 73-81, 134-40.

¹³⁹ Quoted in *ibid.*, 77.

¹⁴⁰ Stewart, *Sketches*, I, 76.

fastidiousness about detail, and Stewart of Garth was appointed to advise on the 'correct' form of dress to be worn during the visit.

Also in 1822, his contemporary, Colonel Alasdair MacDonell of Glengarry, recorded a full list of the dress and weaponry members of the Society of True Highlanders (established by Glengarry in 1815) were expected to wear. The weaponry constituted a formidable list, including 'a Gun (or Fusee) with a sling, A broad Sword and Shoulder Belt, a Target and Slinging Belt, A Brace of Highland Pistols and belt, A 'core Dubh' or Hoc knife called the "Skian", a powder Horn with Chain or Card'.¹⁴¹ Glengarry's advertisement for the Society of True Highlanders, published in *The Inverness Journal* in June 1815, referred to Highland dress as 'the graceful garb in which the Roman legions overcame all but the Sons of Caledonia', an ambiguous allusion which simultaneously asserted its antiquity, but cast doubt upon its native origins.¹⁴² Around 1811, Sir Henry Raeburn painted Glengarry in a full version of the garb, with the less portable items of weaponry – such as the targe, broadsword and powder horn – arrayed on the walls behind him [*Fig.73*].¹⁴³ In the Raeburn portrait, the regimental, and therefore 'modern' appearance of his costume nevertheless remained paramount.¹⁴⁴

As the nineteenth century progressed, a quest to prove the antiquity of the garb exercised the imaginations, and artistic talents, of several gentlemen. Foremost among these was James Logan, who published *The Scottish Gael, or Celtic Manners, as preserved among the Highlanders* in 1831. In his introduction, Logan was anxious to refute the idea that Highland dress, along with other cultural forms, had been borrowed from any non-native source. 'It will be proved', he promised, 'that this primitive costume, so well suited to the warrior, so well adapted for the avocations of the hunter and shepherd, has not only been the invariable dress of the Highlanders from time immemorial, but is to be derived from the most remote antiquity; and that neither their clothing, arms,

¹⁴¹ Quoted in Robertson, *The First Highlander*, 74.

¹⁴² Quoted in Osborne, *Last of the Chiefs*, 186.

¹⁴³ NGS, NG 420, Henry Raeburn, *Colonel Alastair Ranaldson Macdonell of Glengarry*, Canvas, 241.2 x 149.9, c. 1811.

¹⁴⁴ On Glengarry's military career, see Osborne, *Last of the Chiefs*, 55-81.

language, poetry, nor music, has been adopted from any nation whatever, but received from the primaeval people whence they sprang'. Likewise, he rejected the notion that certain clans – such as Grant, Chattan, Gordon, Fraser, and Menzies – had a French, and therefore Norman, origin.¹⁴⁵ As if to emphasise his point, he selected Gordon along with Stewart for a frontispiece illustration of two 'Highland chiefs' dressed in the supposed tartan of their clans. This was in essence a documentary image, designed to display the arrangement of the plaid and details of costume by showing one figure from the front and the other from the rear. Like the costume books which were to follow, however, its vision of dress was heavily influenced by romanticism, and the figures could in no sense be construed as drawn from life. The frontispiece to the second volume followed in this vein, this time picturing a 'Highland bagpiper dressed in the tartan of the 42nd regiment' against a stylised backdrop of a castle and mountain peak.

Logan's *Scottish Gael* was followed by a sumptuous folio volume entitled the *Vestiarium Scoticum*, edited by John Hay Allan and his brother Charles. The Allans were flamboyant and controversial figures who averred descent from Charles Edward Stuart, eventually taking on the latter's surname in various forms. In 1842, the *Vestiarium* was published under the pseudonym 'John Sobieski Stuart', who claimed to have rediscovered an ancient manuscript of tartan patterns which had once belonged to John Leslie, the sixteenth-century Bishop of Ross, and author of an important history of Scotland. In 1829, while living in Morayshire, the Allan brothers showed Sir Thomas Dick Lauder a copy of this manuscript, who was immediately enthusiastic, writing about the discovery to Sir Walter Scott. Sir Thomas had made his own manuscript copy of the document, which was then hand-illustrated by Charles, and sought Scott's opinion on the desirability of publication. 'In these times of rage for Tartans when the most uncouth spurious modern "*coats of many colours*" are every day invented manufactured christened after particular names and worn as genuine, a book of this kind containing authority so invaluable must become extremely popular', he wrote in June 1829. In reply, Scott was much more sceptical, warning that the Allen brothers were possessed of 'an exaggerating imagination,

¹⁴⁵ Logan, *Scottish Gael*, ed. Stewart, xxxv-vi.

which possibly deceives even themselves', and that 'their authority as antiquaries must necessarily be a little apocryphal when the faith of MSS. rests upon their testimony'.¹⁴⁶ Despite Scott's caution, the *Vestiarium* was published in Edinburgh in 1842.

The illustrations in the book can be divided into two halves. The first documented the pictorial evidence of historic artefacts, which John then used to support his observations on the history and antiquity of tartan. The second, and main part of the book, reconstructed the setts of tartan described in the text of the manuscript. These plates were reproduced in colour. Here again we have the combination of 'authentic' and imaginary visual evidence already observed in Logan. The Stuarts ranged far and wide in their attempt to establish an authentic ancestry for elements of Highland dress. A bronze figure, 'discovered in tumuli in the desert between Tobol and Irtysh' was illustrated as evidence for a conical bonnet 'once universally worn from Tibet to St Kilda, still continued in China and Albania, and not extinct among the Highlanders until the beginning of the eighteenth century'. Figure two in the volume is described as an illumination from an Anglo-Saxon manuscript of the eleventh century, showing a figure in red and white checked hose: 'exactly similar to a pattern still retained in the Highlands, and universally adopted in the modern regimental regulations'. The content of more recent portraits, including those of Sir Mungo Murray and Lord Duffus, was also invoked as evidence for the existence of separate hunting tartans.¹⁴⁷

In 1845, the Stuarts published a second work, *The Costume of the Clans*. In the introductory address (issued with a Gaelic translation) the brothers outlined the prospect of a future age when the language and material culture of the Gael would have vanished so completely that works such as *The Costume of the Clans* would constitute its only memory:

¹⁴⁶ See Dunbar, *Highland Dress*, 112-24, where the correspondence between Lauder and Scott is reproduced at length.

¹⁴⁷ Stuart, *Vestiarium Scoticum*, 27, 39, 55.

These pages may perhaps descend to a period still more destitute – when the name of those by whom they were written, and the language of those for whom they wrote, shall have ceased to exist, or exist only on another soil. But when time shall have drawn its veil over the present as the past – when the last broadsword shall have been broken on the anvil, and the shreds of the last plaid tossed to the winds upon the cairn, or bleached within the raven’s nest – posterity will look back with regret to a people who have marked the history, the poetry, and the achievements of a distant age; and will consecrate, among the relics of antiquity, the tatters of your native mantle and the fragments of your ancient arms, which we have collected out of the dust already gathering over your ruins.¹⁴⁸

As well as creating a preservative record for the future, the Sobieski brothers set out to rehabilitate the image of Gaelic society in the medieval period. Using a quasi-archaeological approach, the pair aimed to demonstrate from surviving material objects that the Highlander had once ‘possessed a high proficiency in letters, architecture, sculpture and carving; the fabrication of arms, and the manufactures of dress’.¹⁴⁹ Although replete with bogus claims and defective methodology, the brothers’ work on Highland costume fitted into an antiquarian climate which treated dress and arms on the same level as more conventional antiquities. Costume books with serious antiquarian credentials had begun to appear during the second half of the eighteenth century, followed by the first attempt to visualise what had been worn by the country’s aboriginal peoples: *The Costume of the Original Inhabitants of the British Islands* (1815) by Samuel Rush Meyrick and Charles Hamilton Smith.¹⁵⁰ All of these publications were heavily dependent on visual images to carry their point. This raised the question of source material, particularly when dealing with very early periods, for which artists were forced to rely on imaginative reconstruction rather than documented records. In *The Costume of the Clans*, the Stuart brothers nevertheless presented every illustration as a copy of an authentic, traceable artefact. This caused problems for the period up to the later seventeenth century, when, as modern

¹⁴⁸ Stolberg and Stuart, *Costume of the Clans*, v-vi.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, i.

¹⁵⁰ Smiles, ‘British Antiquity’, 56-7.

historians of costume have proved, there is so little pictorial evidence for a distinctive form of dress belonging to the Highlands. It appears that the Stuarts' response was to invent it, and plates three to six in the volume, 'dated' to the time of Charles I, carry highly suspicious credentials; the originals have never been traced. The eighth plate - an adaptation of John Michael Wright's portrait of Sir Mungo Murray - was backdated to the time of Charles I, but is otherwise an authentic copy [Fig.74]. The same applies to the remaining portraits, most of which can be matched to surviving originals.¹⁵¹ The practice of copying portraits for reproduction in costume studies was widespread, and can be seen in the work of John Francis Campbell.¹⁵² On a visit to Castle Grant in 1831, Sir Thomas Dick Lauder also made a copy of a portrait of Robert Grant of Lurg, a Grant warrior known as 'Old Stachcan'. This was later etched by William Dyce as a frontispiece to Lauder's *Highland Rambles* (1837), a collection of tales and legends [Fig.75].¹⁵³

In 1845, James Logan collaborated with the artist Robert McLan on an elaborate study of dress and arms, entitled *The Clans of the Scottish Highlands*. In this work, items of dress and arms were effectively removed from their museum cases and restored to active life by McLan's colourful imagination. Data for the project was cobbled together from a variety of sources: portraits, monumental effigies, specimens of arms from antiquarian collections, the evidence of written histories, and clan tradition. The publication received the official sanction and sponsorship of the Highland Society of London, and conformed to its ideals of prescriptive correctness. In the letterpress to the volume, Logan took pains to back up each element in McLan's illustrations with reference to its source, creating an antiquarian aura for the entire volume. This was particularly the case

¹⁵¹ On the Stuarts' sources, see Dunbar, *Highland Dress*, 103-111. Several of the original portraits are in NGS; photographs of others can be viewed in the SNPG library costume files.

¹⁵² NGS, D 4126, ff. 26v, 28v, 88. These sketches are copies of Sir Mungo Murray by John Michael Wright, the MacDonald boys of Sleat by Jeremiah Davison, and a soldier of the Black Watch from *A Representation of the Cloathing of His Majesty's Household and all the Forces upon the Establishment of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1742). Sir Mungo and the Black Watch soldier are reproduced as wood engravings in Campbell, *Popular Tales*, IV, 365, 377.

¹⁵³ AAGM, 8409, Lauder, Album No. 5, 'Robert Grant of Lurg Surnamed Old Stackan or Stubborn Sketched from an Original Portrait at Castle Grant', 14 June 1831; Lauder, *Highland Rambles*, I, frontispiece. See also a copy of the same in Stolberg and Stuart, *Costume of the Clans*, pl. 26. Lauder's album contains a sketch portrait of Charles Allan Hay dated 13 June 1831, so the two men may have visited Castle Grant together.

when the images showed older or more unfamiliar aspects of the costume, such as the quilted tunic in MacIvor ('frequently seen on the monumental effigies of Highland chiefs in the burial grounds throughout the country') [Fig.76], and the bow in MacLaurin ('found in a moss and now preserved at Inch, in Lochaber'). Where McIan copied from earlier portraits, Logan was careful to point out that the unfamiliarity of the costume had often resulted in 'mistakes'. For instance, in a portrait of William, Earl of Sutherland, by Allan Ramsay, used as the basis for Clan Kennedy, Logan noted that 'the plaid is represented as being fastened on the back in such a manner as we never saw, nor can well understand ... The old artists made sad blunders in depicting the costume'. He protested similarly against the recent innovation of wearing the sword belt over the plaid, and the adoption of the 'Glengarry' bonnet: both fashions were illustrated in his plate for MacDonell of Glengarry, with the codicil that 'Mr McIan must be exonerated from any acquiescence in its propriety'.¹⁵⁴ Like the Stuart brothers, who affected to despise the parade of tartan as a mere 'fancy costume',¹⁵⁵ McIan and Logan held up the ideal of a time when it had been the everyday wear of ordinary Highlanders as well as gentlemen. To this end, gillies, fishermen, hunters and shepherds fill the pages alongside images of fighting clansmen and warrior chiefs. In several of the plates, McIan incorporated symbols of a lost age alongside his interpretation of costume. In 'MacPharlain', for instance, an old man is seen cooking a fish on an open fire beside a rock. In Logan's words, 'the figure represents an aged man, who having caught a fish, has lit a turf fire, and is broiling it for a plain repast. Since the abolition of clanship, the poor Highlanders do not receive that patriarchal protection which was neither given nor accepted as an almsgift'. 'MacAllaster' provided opportunity for comment on the destruction of communities and the associated evil of emigration: the figure has his back to a row of thatchless homes, a pack on his back, and a box labelled 'J. Macalister, Passenger, Canada' [Fig.77]. The classic tragedies of Highland history – Glencoe and Culloden – are also recorded in the plates of MacDonald of Glencoe and Farquharson, in which the figures are seated by an explanatory 'monument', with Gaelic inscriptions. In such images, costume

¹⁵⁴ McIan and Logan, *Clans of the Scottish Highlands*. The pagination in the original edition is not continuous, and the reader is best guided by the plates to which the quotations refer.

¹⁵⁵ Stolberg and Stuart, *Costume of the Clans*, 145.

becomes bound up with memory and with a way of life: its loss, symbolic of the loss of something more profound and irreplaceable.

McIan was of course a professional artist, and the theatrical figures of *The Clans* sometimes strayed into later paintings. 'MacGregor', for instance, shown swearing on the dirk in the 1845 volume, reappeared in *A Highland Coronach*, exhibited at the National Institution in London in 1850, and engraved for the *Illustrated London News* in June of that year.¹⁵⁶ McIan was admired for the veracity and immediacy of his historical works; following his death in 1857, a reviewer commended his *Highlanders Secreting Arms*, then on show at the National Institution, declaring that 'in the spirited and characteristic representation of Highland customs and historical incident, no artist has ever approached the late R. R. McIan'.¹⁵⁷ In the wake of Scott, scenes from Highland history became popular among professional artists, requiring a mastery of period detail. Because of the martial image projected onto Highland society, battles and other forms of conflict were much to the fore, which made authentic representations of weaponry of paramount importance. Collections of topographical views, such as Beattie's *Scotland Illustrated* (1838), often enlivened the scenery with representations of historical incidents: in the latter, the chosen subjects included a reconstruction of the Battle of Culloden, a violent incident between two members of the MacKenzie and MacDonell clans, the Battle of Inverlochy, the passage of the Highland army along the side of Loch Eil in 1745, the Massacre of Glencoe, and a battle in the Pass of Awe between Robert the Bruce and a party of Argyll men.¹⁵⁸ In Lawson's *Scotland Delineated* (1850-4), there is also a lithograph of the Battle of Prestonpans, showing the death of Colonel Gardiner, by Sir William Allan. In the print, Gardiner is about to be cut down by a Highlander wielding a Lochaber axe.¹⁵⁹ Allan's original picture was exhibited at the RSA in 1842, along with a description which drew on Robert Chambers' recently-published *History of the Rebellion* (1840); many of the figures, such as Rob Roy's son, and Samuel Cameron, the miller of

¹⁵⁶ See review of the National Institution exhibition in *AJ*, 12, 1850, 139; the *ILN* print is reproduced in Belinda Morse, *A Woman of Design, A Man of Passion: The Pioneering Mclans* (Lewes, 2001), 193.

¹⁵⁷ *AJ*, n.s., 3, 1857, 103.

¹⁵⁸ Beattie, *Scotland Illustrated*, I, pls. facing 55, 65, 68, 85, 102; II, pl. facing 47.

¹⁵⁹ Lawson, *Scotland Delineated*, I, pl. facing 183.

Invernahyle, who dealt the fatal blow, were identified in person, rooting the details of the painting in historical 'fact'.¹⁶⁰

Another Scottish artist with a penchant for Highland history was Kenneth MacLeay (1802-78). One of his sketchbooks contains a watercolour drawing of the 'miller of Invernahyle', a label for a missing sketch entitled 'interior of a cottage on the Moor of Culloden', and a series of West Highland castles, including Inverlochy, Dunstaffnage and Auchnacary. Besides a scattering of landscape views, the remaining drawings focus on aspects of Highland dress and arms. Most of these sketches date from the middle period of MacLeay's life, from the early 1820s up to 1851. Some pasted engravings testify to visual influences. These include a copy of Landseer's *Scene at Abbotsford*, which had been published in *The Keepsake* in 1829, and a portrait of Sir Walter Scott at Abbotsford, by Sir William Allan.¹⁶¹ The presence of these images in MacLeay's album is extremely significant, given the prominence of weaponry in both paintings. Scott's personal museum was a treasure for any artist with an interest in historical artefacts, and reflected the author's own fascination with the material objects of the past. In his description of a Saxon hall in *Ivanhoe* (1819), we read of rafters and beams encrusted 'with a black varnish of soot', while the sides of the main apartment are hung with 'implements of war and of the chase'.¹⁶² Within the Gothic grandeur of Abbotsford, Scott attempted to recreate the atmosphere of an ancestral hall, decorating his apartments with a collection of arms and armour, hunting trophies and historic memorabilia, including many items of Highland origin. Allan was a close friend of Scott's, and painted several portraits of the author against the backdrop of his collection at Abbotsford. In *Sir Walter Scott in his Study at Abbotsford* (1831) Allan showed his subject reading the proclamation of Mary Queen of Scots previous to her marriage with Henry Darnley [Fig.78]. The room is dark and cluttered, with shafts of light

¹⁶⁰ Jeremy Howard, *William Allan: Artist Adventurer* (Edinburgh, 2001), 86.

¹⁶¹ NGS, D 4874, Scrapbook/Sketchbook of Kenneth MacLeay, c.1823-51. MacLeay was later to produce his own form of costume book, *The Highlanders of Scotland* (London, 1872), at the behest of Queen Victoria. This was made up of portraits of her Balmoral staff in full Highland dress. Although primarily a portrait painter, he also exhibited a profuse number of Highland landscapes at the RSA. Some of the historical sketches in the NGS album were preparatory studies for exhibited works, such as *The Miller of Invernahyle, 1745* (RSA, 1856). See de Laperriere, ed., *RSA Exhibitors*, for a complete list of titles shown between 1828 and 1878.

¹⁶² Sir Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe* (London, Penguin edn., 1994), 31.

picking out various objects of significance: a pair of Highland targes, Rob Roy's sporran and long gun, and, at Scott's feet, the deerhound Maida, bred by MacDonell of Glengarry. In addition, the keys of the Tolbooth in Edinburgh, an ancient Border bugle, James the Sixth's travelling flask, Montrose's sword, and Claverhouse's pistol all form part of the tableau.¹⁶³ In a slightly later portrait of Sir Walter and his daughter Anne (1844), Allan made use of a similar backdrop, with a targe, broadsword, pistols, a Lochaber axe, pieces of body armour and some arrows adorning the walls.¹⁶⁴

In paintings such as these, Scott's literary world was squeezed into the associative power of objects, however apocryphal their attributions: the Tolbooth keys recalling *The Heart of Midlothian*, Claverhouse's pistol, *Old Mortality*, the gun and sporran, *Rob Roy*, Montrose's sword, *A Legend of Montrose*, and the collection of Highland arms, the lost world of the clans recounted in *Waverley*. The still life in Allan's 1831 portrait, though 'painted from the original in Abbotsford', might also have come straight from Scott's description of Jonathan Oldbuck's study in *The Antiquary*:

It was a lofty room of middling size, obscurely lighted by high narrow latticed windows. One end was entirely occupied by book-shelves, greatly too limited in space for the number of volumes placed upon them, which were, therefore, drawn up in ranks of two or three files deep, while numberless others littered the floor and the tables, amid a chaos of maps, engravings, scraps of parchment, bundles of papers, pieces of old armour, swords, dirks, helmets, and Highland targets...¹⁶⁵

Although the character of Oldbuck is a humorous caricature of the antiquary's reputation for tedious pedantry, it is worth noticing the importance of the artefact as a foundation for both Oldbuck and Scott's attempts to reconstruct (and surround themselves with) the past. Artists who tackled the illustration of

¹⁶³ NPG, 321, Sir William Allan, *Sir Walter Scott in his Study at Abbotsford* Board, 81.3 x 63.5, 1831; Howard, *William Allan*, 94.

¹⁶⁴ NTS, Haddo House, Sir William Allan, *Sir Walter Scott and his Daughter Anne*, Canvas, dim. unknown, 1844. Exhibited SNPG, Edinburgh, *Our Highland Home: Victoria and Albert in Scotland*, 18 March to 5 June 2005.

¹⁶⁵ Walter Scott, *The Antiquary* (Oxford, World's Classics edn., 2002), 32.

Scott's works were to attach a similar prominence to details of dress and armour as a means of capturing some period authenticity and truth. In George Cattermole's engraving of the guard room at Stirling Castle (c. 1836-8), for instance, illustrating a scene from *The Lady of the Lake* [Fig.79],¹⁶⁶ an array of arms is mounted on the wall beneath a pair of antlers, while Thomas Willement constructed a still life of Highland arms alongside a battle standard, plaid and fiery cross to illustrate the same poem in 1825 [Fig.80].¹⁶⁷ Similarly, John Blake MacDonald's 'Hold of a Highland Robber' (1865), depicting a scene from *Waverley*, highlighted various military objects strewn around a gloomy cave, such as the targe leaning against the table in the centre, a sword in the wall by the doorway, a drape made out of a tartan cloth or plaid, and a rifle, powder horn and second targe almost concealed by background shadows.¹⁶⁸

From the middle decades of the nineteenth century, professional Scottish artists played a prominent role in the formation of museum collections. Foremost among these was James Drummond (1816-77), an historical painter who served as librarian to the Royal Scottish Academy from 1857 until his death. In 1858, the collection of the National Museum of Antiquities was transferred to the Academy building at the foot of the mound, where construction was also under way on a new National Gallery, of which Drummond would become the curator.¹⁶⁹ During his time there, Drummond completed a series of watercolour drawings, amounting to a visual catalogue of the fledgling museum collection [Fig.81]. These were eventually lithographed and published under the title *Ancient Scottish Weapons* in 1881. Despite the generic title, the Highland bias of the content was overwhelming, covering not only dress and arms, but also Celtic jewellery, musical instruments (the harp and the bagpipe), and agricultural and domestic implements. Several of the items of weaponry depicted were credited to the collections of contemporary Scottish artists, such as Sir Joseph Noel Paton

¹⁶⁶ In Wright, ed., *Landscape-Historical Illustrations*.

¹⁶⁷ EUL, P.4807, Thomas Willement, Heraldic Illustration for *The Lady of the Lake*, Watercolour, 1825.

¹⁶⁸ This forms part of a set, *Eight Engravings in Illustration of Waverley*, produced for the members of the Royal Association for Promotion of the Fine Arts in Scotland in 1865. The prints are not widely available, and I am grateful to the Gaelic Society of Inverness for permission to consult the copies in their library.

¹⁶⁹ Gordon, *Royal Scottish Academy*, 129-30.

(1821-1904), and Gourlay Steell (1819-1894), further illustrating the close link between art and antiquarianism during this period.¹⁷⁰ Some light on this relationship is cast by the introduction to *Ancient Scottish Weapons*, written by the then custodian of the museum, Joseph Anderson. According to Anderson:

The distinctive character of the dress, the military equipments, and the personal ornaments of the Highlanders of Scotland, has given a peculiar aspect to the most picturesque phases of our national history. It is the presence of these features which imparts intensity of local colouring and dramatic effect to the narrative of the historian, and inspires our imaginative literature of the old nationality of Celtic Scotland; and as they are distinguished from all other objects of the same kind by certain peculiarities of form and ornament, they form a group of relics which is specially national and wholly unique.¹⁷¹

Anderson's reference to the usefulness of artefacts in lending 'local colour' and 'dramatic effect' to historical writing and fiction could equally be applied to painting, and, in this scheme of things, the more faithful the representation, the more vivid the effect. By harnessing truth to the imagination, the past could be recreated before one's eyes. Despite the evocative power of these objects, and their use in romanticised portrayals of the past, is important to recognise the continuation of a serious antiquarian strand in Drummond's work. Besides the drawings for *Ancient Scottish Weapons*, he also completed a series of studies of sculptured monuments in Iona and the West Highlands, which were published posthumously by the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1881. This was prefaced by an essay on West Highland monuments written by the artist some years before. Drummond concluded his remarks with a plea for veracity in the last detail when making drawings of any class of antiquities:

Let all such be made lovingly and earnestly, adding nothing, leaving out nothing; let every weather-worn feature, every chip, and every break, be

¹⁷⁰ On Noel Paton's collecting activities, see Hugh Cheape, 'The World of a Nineteenth Century Artist in Scotland', *Review of Scottish Culture*, 3, 1987, 77-90.

¹⁷¹ Joseph Anderson, 'Introduction', in James Drummond, *Ancient Scottish Weapons &c: A Series of Drawings* (Edinburgh and London, 1881), 1.

honestly jotted down; and of all things, shun restoration, as we all know how much easier it is to do this than to copy faithfully what we see before us. It is only by working in this spirit that such drawings acquire value as guides to the antiquary, historian, or artist.¹⁷²

Besides this appeal for scientific accuracy, Drummond brought other aspects of antiquarian image-making full circle, echoing, for instance, the call for greater attention to native as opposed to foreign curiosities: this was a plea which first began to raise its voice in the empirical climate of the late seventeenth century. His study of monumental sculpture for evidence of medieval costume in the West Highlands (on which he noted the conspicuous absence of anything resembling the belted plaid) also owed much to the archaeological methods pioneered by Lhuyd.¹⁷³ Drummond combined the role of a successful 'academic' artist with a style of draughtsmanship which slotted equally well into the lower genre of antiquarian illustration. By 1881, the two were no longer incompatible.

As we have tried to show, the relationship between art and antiquarianism across our period was not always directly linear, with borrowing going on on both sides. Brochs, stone circles, and medieval architecture and sculpture first entered the visual record in a documentary context, only later becoming absorbed into a more aesthetic discourse. With costume, on the other hand, it was fine art, in the form of portraiture, which came first, and was later recycled as a form of 'document' by antiquaries and historians. The visualisation of Highland antiquities cannot be separated from wider trends in scholarship and culture. The rising importance of the artefact in understanding and interpreting the past, the role of the image in recording and disseminating material evidence, and the desire for verisimilitude among an exhibition-going audience well-versed in popular history and Scott, but increasingly indifferent to the obscure iconography of the classics, are all factors which came into play in the formation of the images discussed in this chapter. What concerns us next is their suggestion of an historical continuum, in which aspects of the everyday, contemporary Highlands

¹⁷² James Drummond, *Sculptured Monuments in Iona and the West Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1881), 18.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 6. See Sweet, *Antiquaries*, 125-6 on Lhuyd's role in recognising the value of artefactual evidence and challenging the hegemony of the written word in historical research.

could be juxtaposed with the relics and ruins of antiquity. Although a preservationist mentality may not always have been consciously thought through, the Highlands and Islands emerge from the visual record as a location where tradition – economic, domestic, social and cultural – could, in the words of James Macpherson, ‘be depended upon’.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷⁴ Macpherson, ‘A Dissertation’, in Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, ed. Gaskill, 205.

Chapter Three

The Living Tradition

The discovery of non-textual artefacts as credible forms of evidence about the past embraced not only physical monuments in earth and stone, but also less tangible objects, such as customs, social rites, music, legend and poetry. Creating an accurate visual record of this material took its genesis from the same kind of scholarly rationale as transcribing monumental inscriptions or surveying brochs and battlefields. This chapter will examine the concept of a 'living tradition' as it appears in the visual record during the century from 1750. By looking at the whole period, it is possible to trace a junction between the older, scholarly strand of utilitarian imagery and the imaginative licence of artists working in a more romantic idiom. Frequently, it is the same subjects which appear in both genres, suggesting an under-recognised connection between the scientific 'value' of Highland tradition, and the part which this tradition came to play in the forging of the visual identity we recognise today. Moreover, by charting the emergence of stock elements in this identity against a background of social and economic change, it will be argued that the artist's urge to visualise the contemporary Highlands was often guided by a preservationist mentality. As indicative of a way of life which was perceived to be under threat, the most prosaic scenes could gather a nostalgic, and thus aesthetic, value. In such images, chronology is frequently (and perhaps deliberately) uncertain, so that it can be unclear whether images of everyday life in the Highlands and Islands were intended as retrospective records of the past, or portraits of lingering traditions in the present day.

For the purposes of discussion, images of everyday life have been grouped into three main subject categories: those which relate to economic activities, such as agriculture, fishing, droving and distilling; those which depict domestic life, particularly living conditions and household tasks; and those which portray forms

of communal entertainment, especially music, dance, and games and sports distinctive to the Highlands.

The Highland Economy

The visual discovery of the Highlands gathered pace at a time when state intervention in the region's economy intensified. Agencies such as the Annexed Estates Board, the British Fisheries Society (which emerged on the back of its demise), and, later, the Highland Roads and Bridges Committee, commissioned reports and surveys, allocated resources, and outlined a vision for the improvement of supposed backwardness. Agriculture, fishing, communications, and, to a degree, manufactures, were the central targets of this vision. The achievements and shortcomings of such interventionist agencies, and their part in the process of 'exemplary civilising' which followed Culloden, have been charted extensively elsewhere, and need not concern us in detail here. State interference in Highland affairs was matched on the other hand by an internal dynamic. As Allan Macinnes has shown, a shift towards commercial landlordism among the Highland elite can be traced to the Restoration era, rather than being an eighteenth-century phenomenon. The House of Argyll, for instance, was involved in the development of coal and salt mining, fishing, and quarrying for lime and slate during the later seventeenth century. Afforestation was also promoted on both commercial and aesthetic grounds, and the Earl of Breadalbane could be found exploiting his timber resources for commerce in the same period. During the eighteenth century, the introduction of the potato as an alternative to grain cropping, kelp manufacture, and the shift to commercial sheep-farming were hallmarks of a quest to maximise return from thickly populated, impoverished, and frequently marginal land. From the 1770s, the runrig system of landholding began to be broken up, with tenants allotted individual holdings rather than communal farms worked in strips. This touched the southern Highlands first, slowly penetrating into the north-west and the islands by the first decades of the nineteenth century. On some estates, and most notoriously in Sutherland, the separation of people from land was construed as the best incentive to industry; this assumption lay behind the creation of planned villages, in which the allocated portions of land were too small to support a

family by subsistence, thus forcing them to shore or to sea. The improvement of agricultural methods was a further target, taking its cue from the south. Enclosure, better made, less labour-intensive implements, crop rotation, summer fallowing, the growing of winter feed crops such as hay and turnips, and improved drainage and fencing were all promoted by both public agencies and private landlords.¹

Although drawing hard and fast lines between ‘old’ and ‘new’ is fraught with difficulty, economic expansion inevitably impacted on customary ways of doing things, on the relative importance of traditional sources of wealth, and, above all, on the physical appearance of the landscape. In an English context, John Barrell has suggested that landscape artists used their craft as a form of visual resistance to the changes which were sweeping across the countryside between 1730 and 1840.² The validity of this argument as concerns the representation of the Highland landscape will be considered more fully in the next chapter. What concerns us here is the human dimension of economic activity, and the manner in which artists chose to record working practices as emblematic of a way of life. Four aspects of ‘labour’ – all prominent within the visual record – have been selected to illustrate this: agricultural tools and methods, fishing, the practice of illicit whisky distillation, and the trade in Highland cattle. As concerns agriculture and fishing, three broad categories of image can be traced: those which documented the status quo with a view to stressing the need for improvement; those which celebrated existing improvements; and those which looked back on older ways of doing things with something of nostalgia and regret. Broadly speaking, the balance from the first to the third category shifts as the period progresses, suggesting that, as with other aspects of Highland ‘antiquity’, traditional economic activities acquired aesthetic value in proportion

¹ Malcolm Gray, *The Highland Economy* (Edinburgh and London, 1957); A. R. B. Haldane, *New Ways Through the Glens* (Newton Abbot, 1973 edn.); A. J. Youngson, *After the Forty-Five: The Economic Impact on the Scottish Highlands* (Edinburgh, 1973); Jean Dunlop, *The British Fisheries Society, 1786-1893* (Edinburgh, 1978); Smith, *Jacobite Estates*; Allan I. Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart, 1603-1788* (East Linton, 1996), esp. 142-8, 217-28; Robert A. Dodgshon, *From Chiefs to Landlords: Social and Economic Change in the Western Highlands and Islands, c. 1493-1820* (Edinburgh, 1998).

² John Barrell, *The Dark Side of the Landscape: the Rural Poor in English Painting, 1730-1840* (Cambridge, 1980).

to their decline in active life. Images of distilling and droving fall almost entirely into the nostalgic class.

Agriculture

Prior to (and frequently in despite of) attempts at improvement, agricultural implements in many parts of the Highlands and Islands were labour-intensive and roughly made, mainly of wood, and requiring little specialised craftsmanship. Due to the state of the roads, iron-wheeled carts were uncommon, a slatted 'sledge' or basket creel being employed as a substitute form of transportation. Iron ploughs – expensive, and often unsuited to steep and marginal ground – were similarly scarce. Instead, the ground was turned using a wooden version which required a team of up to four men and four horses, with an ordinary spade, or with a foot-plough (the *cas-chròm*). Harrows were also simply made, with wooden rather than iron teeth.³ As Dodgshon reports, such methods were widely criticised by the improvers of the eighteenth century, often presented as primitive cultural survivals, and as evidence of the innate conservatism and backwardness of the Highlander. In Skye in 1799, the people were castigated for adherence to 'the antedeluvian stile of their forefathers', continuing in laborious agricultural methods. In their defence, Dodgshon points out that such criticism often overlooked the fact that traditional methods were a logical response to circumstances: a plentiful supply of labour, limited cash resources for importing better implements, and the possibility of making arable use of land which would be inaccessible to the modern plough. He further suggests that rather than primitive survivals, such methods 'may have been phased in step with fluxes in population pressure, phases of low population pressure being associated with greater use of extensive strategies and phases of heavy population pressure being based on more labour-intensive strategies'.⁴ Whatever the case, contemporary perceptions are the key to interpreting the visual record. Beginning with Burt's *Letters* in 1754, there is a body of images in which the more material aspects of agricultural practice were used to symbolise the nature of the Highland system as a whole. Moving into the

³ Gray, *Highland Economy*, 34, 46-7, 81-3, 173; I. F. Grant, *Highland Folk Ways* (Edinburgh, 1995 edn.), 91-120; Alexander Fenton, 'Early and Traditional Cultivating Implements in Scotland', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 96, 1962-3, 264-317.

⁴ Dodgshon, *Chiefs to Landlords*, 217-18.

nineteenth century, the same objects gradually progressed from being construed as backward and obsolete to a more valued status as hallmarks of a threatened tradition.

Burt's main contribution to this genre was an illustration of three types of simple cart: a slatted version with wooden wheels, a sledge, and a basket creel, also mounted on wooden wheels [Fig.82]. In the print, attention is drawn not only to the rude construction of the carts themselves, but also to the poor condition of the horses drawing them, and the ragged appearance of their attendants. In the middle and lower sections of the image, the position of each cart close against the horse's tail illustrates Burt's observation that its motion often led to the flesh of the tail being rubbed quite raw, 'without any Care being taken to prevent it, or to ease the Hurt when discovered'. These illustrations were also designed to show the primitive state of craftsmanship in the Highlands: the shafts and frame of each structure were made of rough-hewn branches, the harness, of twisted twigs, and the wheels were mere discs of wood, worn to an irregular shape due to uneven wear and tear. Burt explained this as a defect in construction: 'Having some Part of the Circumference with the Grain and other Parts not, it wears unequally, and in a little Time is rather angular than round, which causes a disagreeable Noise as it moves upon the Stones'. Another target for criticism was the small size of the carts, which he regarded as a sign of inefficiency, as their loads, 'if Compact, might be carried under [the carter's] Arm'. Even the largest, used for carrying peats, were uneconomical with space: 'as they too are very small, their Numbers are sometimes so great, that they fill up one of the Streets, (which is the market for that Fewel) in such Manner, it is impossible to pass by them on Horse-back, and difficult on Foot'.⁵

Nearly one hundred years after the publication of Burt's *Letters*, the size and style of Highland carts was still attracting adverse visual comment. In Francis MacKenzie's *Notes for the Use of Highland Tenants and Cottagers* (1838), published with parallel texts in both Gaelic and English, a graphic frontispiece

⁵ Burt, *Letters*, I, 86-90; pl. facing 86. The references here are of course to Inverness, and are thus arguably unrepresentative of the Highlands generally, although Burt's criticism of tools and working methods extended to more rural areas.

illustrated the changes MacKenzie wished to see implemented on his Gairloch estate [Fig.83]. On one side, entitled 'Old Times', the artist showed a creel-type cart with wooden wheels beside an open midden. One of the cart-wheels has in fact broken off and is lying unrepaired at the edge of the field; in its place, a woman is shown carrying a load on her back by creel. In 'New Times', on the other hand, an ox-drawn cart appears with proper spoked wheels, large enough to transport a load of considerable size and weight, and is attended by two male figures.⁶

To observers like Burt, the volume of manual work performed by women was a further example of the inefficiency of the Highland system. 'Another Thing, besides the bad Weather, that retards their Harvest,' he complained, 'is, they make it chiefly the Work of the Women of the Family. Near the Lowlands I have known a Field of Corn to employ a Woman and a Girl for a Fortnight; which, with proper Help, might have been done in two Days'.⁷ Visually, his *Letters* reinforced these criticisms by including several images of women performing heavy manual work. In the top section of the cart print, for example, the sledge and pony are led by a woman. The middle sketch depicts a woman bent under the weight of an enormous load of corn or hay, exaggerated in relation to her height in order to emphasise the brunt of the labour borne; the male figures in the drawing, by contrast, stand idly by. Similarly, in a sketch of the market cross in Inverness, it is a woman who is shown bent almost double under the weight of a loaded pack, while two men stand by in animated conversation, one leaning nonchalantly on a stick.⁸

While on surveying duty in the Highlands in 1747, Paul Sandby also made several sketches of ordinary scenes, three of which drew attention to the role of women in performing heavy, laborious tasks. In one of his sketchbooks, a town scene, reminiscent of Burt's, depicts a woman passing through the street bent double under the weight of a creel [Fig.84]. Another sketch contains a closer study of a female carrying a creel loaded with seaweed. Her costume – a large

⁶ Francis MacKenzie, *Hints for the Use of Highland Tenants and Cottagers* (Inverness, 1838), frontispiece.

⁷ Burt, *Letters*, II, 140.

⁸ *Ibid.*, I, pls. facing 60, 86.

shawl, apron and loose brown dress, with a close-fitting white cap – is minutely observed, and in the background is the suggestion of an open, Highland landscape. A third drawing, again recalling the themes illustrated by Burt, is a roadside scene showing three women with a pony and a loaded cart [Fig.85].⁹ While Burt and MacKenzie's images were manifestly critical of female labour, the absence of textual commentary makes Sandby's point of view more difficult to determine. Some nineteenth-century travellers were later to record the involvement of women in agricultural tasks and manual labour as a form of local curiosity, and it is possible that Sandby's images also fall into this category. George Clayton Atkinson, for instance, included a sketch of a Skye woman carrying a creel of peats on her back in his Hebridean journal for 1831, and commissioned a sketch of Lewis women pulling the harrows from the artist Henry Perlee Parker in 1833. In contrast to Burt, Atkinson was prepared to see in the latter a unique form of elegance. 'This ingenious implement', he wrote, 'is always drawn by women, who do it in that graceful way, which characterises all their movements, and gives a tone of elegance and refinement to the ruralities of Lewis, which I may conscientiously say I have never seen elsewhere'.¹⁰

A similar shift in attitude towards the more primitive aspects of material life can be discerned in oil paintings. Landseer's *Scene in the Grampians: The Drover's Departure* (c.1835) incorporated a wooden-wheeled cart identical to the style which Burt and MacKenzie wished to see swept away [Fig.86].¹¹ An examination of the fine detail in two works by Horatio McCulloch reveals some further instances of these transport methods being elevated to the level of high art. *The Cuillins from Ord* (c.1854) [Fig.87] shows a group of figures gathering sea-ware on the shore of Loch Eishort in Skye, among them a woman carrying the traditional creel, and a wheel-less sledge-cart of the type illustrated by Burt can be seen harnessed to the pony in *Loch Lomond* (1861).¹² Richard Ansdell (1815-1885), an imitator of Landseer, included another basic form of

⁹ All three drawings are in NGS, D 5339a, Paul Sandby, *Sketchbook of Drawings Made in the Highlands*, c. 1747.

¹⁰ Quine, ed., *Expeditions to the Hebrides by George Clayton Atkinson*, 18, 128-9.

¹¹ V & A, FA.88[O], Sir Edwin Landseer, *A Scene in the Grampians: The Drover's Departure*, Canvas, 125.8 x 191.2.

¹² GM, 1052, Horatio McCulloch, *The Cuillins from Ord*, Canvas, 71.1 x 121.9, c. 1854; GM, 1053, Horatio McCulloch, *Loch Lomond*, Canvas, 86.5 x 137.5, 1861.

transportation – a ‘slype’, used for moving large stones – in his *Quarrying in the Highlands, Loch Laggan*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1875.¹³

As forms of local curiosity or hallmarks of tradition, these forms of transport surfaced in other contexts. Of particular interest in this respect are sketches by John Claude Nattes, most of which record the architecture of rural and upland Aberdeenshire. Juxtaposed with several of the buildings are careful studies of tools and implements, such as the cart and two different types of sledge in a view of a farm house at Keithmore in Glenfiddich [*Fig.88*]. This is of course on the very edge of the Highlands, but effectively contrasts a gradation of old and new in both architecture and transportation. The two-storey farmhouse with dormer windows and solid chimney sits across the yard from a thatched barn, and on a hilltop in the middle distance are the ruins of Achindoun Castle. Similarly, the iron-wheeled cart contrasts with the more primitive slatted sledges.¹⁴ In a more picturesque vein is a drawing in one of Katharine Ellice’s albums, probably a local scene around Invergarry; this shows a kilted child riding on a sledge identical to the one in the upper section of Burt’s print, and would appear to have been sketched from life [*Fig.89*].¹⁵

The image of a woman and creel also slowly settled into the iconography of Highland life. An early version appears in Alexander Kay’s print of a Skyewoman going for peats (c. 1812) [*Fig.90*]. Although the origin of the Kay aquatints is obscure, it has been conjectured that they were prepared with a publication, possibly a travelogue, in mind. The age of the figure, and the fact that she is also shown spinning with the distaff, reinforces the emphasis on traditional customs.¹⁶ In McIan and Logan’s *Picturesque Gatherings of the Scottish Highlanders* (1848), the prospect of women carrying heavy loads of peat

¹³ Reproduced in Malcolm Innes Gallery, *Richard Ansdell R.A. 1815-1885: A Centenary Exhibition* (Edinburgh, Lytham and London, 1985), 28. For a description of the slype, see Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*, 204, 281-2.

¹⁴ NLS, MS.5205, f. 38, John Claude Nattes, ‘Old house of Keithmore with Achindown Castle from the Window of the New House’, 21 October 1799; see also *ibid.*, ff. 3, 8, 18 for further images of transport methods.

¹⁵ NLS, MS.15172, f. 86. This is undated but follows sketches of a tour of Assynt made in 1859, so is probably from around 1860.

¹⁶ NMS Library, 12655, Edward Mitchell, after Alexander Kay, *Portraits Taken from Nature*, Aquatint, c. 1811-12. For further details on the prints, see Hugh Cheape, ‘Portraiture in Piping: Part I’, *Scottish Pipe Band Monthly*, 6, 1988, 20-4.

by creel was given a more explicitly romantic turn [Fig.91]. By combining youth with a dramatic landscape setting, McIan was able to idealise the toil of his protagonists, also illustrating the amenability of the creel to transportation on steep, pathless ground.¹⁷ This alternative way of looking at what had earlier been construed as backwardness can be traced in other examples of McIan's work. In *The Clans of the Scottish Highlands* (1845), for instance, the artist's representation of the Clan MacNeil included a Highland pony or garron whose harness was composed of 'withies, or twisted hazel rods'. A century earlier, Burt had noted the use of the same type of harness, made out of 'sticks of birch twisted and knotted together', with incredulity.¹⁸

By 1853, *The Illustrated London News* was commenting openly on the tourist's penchant for stock images of Highland life, including the woman with the creel and the 'peasant' digging with the *cas-chròm*: 'It interests them to observe a man turning the ground with the "Caschrom", for they have come expressly to see what they have never seen before. The old woman leaning on her staff, with her "creel of peats" on her back, is charmingly picturesque; and forthwith figures in half-a-dozen portfolios'.¹⁹ Despite the writer's sympathy with the very real toil of such a life, the thrust of the article was to endorse the inevitability of emigration as a solution to the Highland problem. The accompanying illustrations, by Samuel Reed, also perpetuated the same stock images as are criticised in the text: an old woman with a creel, an man operating the *cas-chròm*, and the interior of a black house [Fig.92]. It is worth noting here the recurrence of similar themes in the attempts of early photographers to create an ethnographic portrait of island life. In the latter, the focus remained centred on uniqueness, on survival: on the material object as symbolic of cultural values out of step with the modern world. By the mid-nineteenth century, and even more so by the early-twentieth, this could be seen as a positive virtue.²⁰ One further instance of the cultural associations of agricultural methods might be cited from the work of John Francis Campbell. Campbell illustrated most of his own books,

¹⁷ McIan and Logan, *Picturesque Gatherings*, pl. facing 4.

¹⁸ Burt, *Letters*, I, 87.

¹⁹ *ILN*, 22, 1853, 39.

²⁰ See esp. *As an Fhearann*, edd. MacLean and Carrell; Michael W. Russell, *A Poem of Remote Lives - Images of Eriskay, 1934 - The Enigma of Werner Kissling, 1895-1988* (Glasgow, 1997).

and designed an intriguing frontispiece for the fourth volume of his *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1860-2). Alongside a mass of mythical creatures and other elements of folkloric tradition appeared the now-familiar figures of a man working the *cas-chròm*, and a woman bent under a creel [Fig.93].²¹ Campbell believed that there was an intimate connection between a simple, slow-paced life and the richness of its oral culture, writing around 1871: 'In these distant islands, where men live slowly, and live long, probably because they do not live fast, - in queer rude hovels built of turf and boulders, where men of fourscore years have spent the most of their quiet lives, - in these quiet still pools in the current of life, old thoughts accumulate like gold dust in a Sutherland burn, and there they are preserved'.²² Given Campbell's geological background, this is a striking image, suggesting a parallel between folklore and the slow garnering of precious metal by the action of water on rock (the 'gold rush' in the strath of Kildonan in Sutherland was of course contemporary). In the frontispiece to his *Popular Tales*, the laborious methods of traditional Highland agriculture – part of what went towards the making of 'quiet, still pools in the current of life' – were presented as essential guardians of a creative process which was unique and irreplaceable.

Besides a slower, richer pace of life, images of the *cas-chròm* hinted at other positive virtues. In 1774, when John Home carried out his survey of Assynt for the Sutherland estate, the implement was much in evidence. Home combined a tacit admiration of the strength and tenacity required to cultivate the ground with such primitive equipment, with exasperation at its inefficiency. 'Much labour and time is consumed here', he complained, 'for want of labouring Tools and other Implements necessary for carrying on with facility the ordinary business of life'. Home nevertheless considered the *cas-chròm* enough of a curiosity to include a diagram of it in use on one of his plans [Fig.94].²³ Although coming from the period of proscription, the figure operating the implement is dressed in tartan. On the one hand, this implied a link between traditional dress and

²¹ Campbell, *Popular Tales*, IV, frontispiece; see also the original design in NGS, D 4126, f. 92.

²² NLS, Adv.MS.50.4.6., f. 331, Campbell of Islay, Journal, 1871. This is quoted from an undated paper by Campbell, 'On Current British Mythology and Oral Traditions'. See also *ibid.*, f. 123v for a rough sketch entitled 'Skye, west side, using the cas chròm'.

²³ NLS, Dep. 313/3585, John Home, Survey of Assynt, No. 1, 'Observations on the Farm of Oldernay', 1774; Adam, ed., *Home's Survey of Assynt*, 42-43.

antiquated agricultural practices; on the other, it is important to remember the legitimacy of Highland dress in a military context during this period. Moving forward to 1811, the frontispiece in James MacDonald's *View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides* confirms a perceived link between military dress and the *cas-chròm*, depicting a figure in a uniform similar to that worn by the soldiers of the Black Watch [Fig.95].²⁴ While some observers were apt to criticise the slow progress made by men working with the foot-plough,²⁵ others, such as Dr. Walker, were more willing to praise their strength and industry in the face of difficult circumstances. In his report to the Board of Annexed Estates, he argued that 'the Culture of their Fields, carried on by the Spade, with the Strength of their Arms, instead of that of Cattle, and many other Operations, in their rude System of Husbandry, exhibits powerfull though indeed ill directed Efforts of Industry'.²⁶ Rather than castigating the Gael for backwardness, Walker was prepared to see something almost sublime in the image of industrious peasants tilling the soil against considerable odds. In Home and MacDonald's images, the link between primitive implements and military uniform may thus have been intended to show that a laborious agricultural system could also produce hardy recruits for the service of the British Empire. MacDonald's illustration was echoed (and perhaps copied) by James Logan in *The Scottish Gael* (1831), though with a different bonnet and the substitution of a tartan jacket [Fig.96]. This may have been a self-consciously antiquarian measure, as Logan had noted in the first volume that the Black Watch originally wore pure tartan, the red jacket being a later adaptation of the uniform.²⁷

Some improvers were less than sympathetic to the hidden merits of the foot-plough. Whereas MacDonald had conceded its uses on small farms and on rocky or boggy land,²⁸ Francis MacKenzie, in his *Hints for the Use of Highland Tenants* (1838), singled it out for an unusually vitriolic attack. 'I repeat', he

²⁴ James MacDonald, *General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides, or Western Isles of Scotland, with Observations on the Means of their Improvement* (Edinburgh, 1811), frontispiece; see *ibid.*, 150 for MacDonald's comments on the implement.

²⁵ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, 288; John Christian Schetky and Lord John Manners, *Sketches and Notes of a Cruise in Scottish Waters, on Board His Grace the Duke of Rutland's Yacht Resolution, in the Summer of 1848* (London, 1850), 68.

²⁶ McKay, ed., *Walker's Report on the Hebrides*, 35.

²⁷ Logan, *Scottish Gael*, ed. Stewart, I, 240; II, 55.

²⁸ MacDonald, *General View*, 151.

wrote, 'that your antique instrument is totally inadequate for cultivating your lands properly – its very name, crooked foot, implies deformity, and it should only be retained as an object of curiosity for posterity, since it is a relic of that barbarism which, I rejoice to think, is fast vanishing'.²⁹ In the frontispiece to the book [Fig.83], the *cas-chròm* was included alongside the broken down cart, creel and other elements of the old system which MacKenzie wished to see swept away. In 'New Times', it has been replaced by a modern plough with two-handed stilts and an iron coulter, capable of turning deep and regular furrows.

Despite this vision of changes for the better, MacKenzie's suggestion that the foot-plough might survive as an 'object of curiosity for posterity', lent it an antiquarian value. As relics of pre-improved agriculture, implements like the *cas-chròm* could, like Highland dress and oral tradition, be seen as a living link with periods of remote antiquity.³⁰ While in Lewis in 1833, the traveller George Clayton Atkinson tapped into this in his account of agricultural implements and their use. Parker's drawing of women pulling the harrows also incorporated a one-handed plough, drawn by four horses, and a foot-plough. On the one hand, Atkinson viewed such tools as clear evidence for the backwardness of Hebridean society. 'The use of such utensils as these', he recorded in his journal, 'may probably convey to my reader a more correct notion of the primitive and unimproved state of being of our countrymen in Lewis, than anything else which I could state'. On the other hand, we can trace a dawning appreciation of the pictorial value of 'quaint' or outmoded practices. Describing the single-handed plough, he observed that the ponies were led 'by a picturesque old man or boy', and concluded that 'altogether the "turnout" is by no means common-place, and decidedly picturesque'. In this respect, it is worth noting that Parker illustrated the implements in watercolour, in a naturalistic landscape setting, giving the sketch an aesthetic aspect which moved away from the documentary or didactic function of other agricultural images.³¹

²⁹ MacKenzie, *Hints for the Use of Highland Tenants*, 94.

³⁰ Cf. MacDonald, *General View*, 151: 'It has been in general use from the most ancient times, and is still retained in the Long Island, Skye, and many of the continental parishes of Ross, Sutherland, and Inverness-shire'.

³¹ Quine, ed., *Expeditions to the Hebrides by George Clayton Atkinson*, 129-130.

Like the creel, the foot-plough had become absorbed into romantic imagery by the mid-nineteenth century; indeed, as we have seen, the two often went together. In McLan and Logan's *Clans of the Scottish Highlands* (1845), for example, the plate of the clan Rose incorporated a depiction of the *cas-chròm* in use, operated by a kilted figure [Fig.97]. In the letterpress, Logan described it as 'an ancient agricultural implement, now seldom to be seen', and its manner of use as 'one of the most picturesque exhibitions'.³² It is interesting that McLan should have chosen the clan Rose – which traditionally occupied the lands adjacent to Kilravock Castle in Nairnshire – to illustrate this particular tool. Although traditional implements like the wooden plough and the 'kellach' sledge were still in use in the county at the close of the eighteenth century, the formation of a Farming Society in 1798 and the instigation of ploughing matches in 1800 encouraged the adoption of more modern methods.³³ By identifying the *cas-chròm* with this district – where it was, truly, seldom seen in 1845 – McLan was able to fit it into his project of preserving and cataloguing aspects of Highland tradition which were in danger of extinction. Further west and in the islands, the foot plough survived into the twentieth century, although in 1881 Charles McIntyre North, a romantic like McLan, classed it along with the wooden plough, the ristle and similar tools as items which were only 'until lately' used in the Highlands [Fig.98].³⁴ Again, the visual value of such objects was enhanced by the suggestion that they had passed out of active use.

Even more closely allied to the rationale of preservation were some plates of agricultural implements in James Drummond's *Ancient Scottish Weapons* (1881). Although, like McLan and McIntyre's work, these related to the museumisation of dress and arms, Drummond's drawings were more scholarly in character, displaying each subject in close detail and with no background setting. The first plate of agricultural implements, devoted to spades, depicted two wooden varieties, a peat-iron, and a flaughter-spade; the second was a more miscellaneous grouping composed of a flail, a *cas-chròm*, and a distaff [Fig.99]. This plate, curiously, also included an item of purely military interest: a 'Swyn-

³² McLan and Logan, *Clans of the Scottish Highlands*, notes to 'Rose'.

³³ George Bain, *History of Nairnshire* (Nairn, 1893), 582-5.

³⁴ McIntyre North, *Book of the Club of True Highlanders*, I, pl. 27.

feather, or Swedish feather, a kind of light and slender *ranseur* carried by musketeers in the 16th century'.³⁵ In depicting an object like the *ranseur* on the same page as ordinary domestic and agricultural implements, Drummond's work reveals how far the more prosaic aspects of material culture had become accepted as objects of serious scholarly attention by the later nineteenth century, joining the time-honoured ranks of weaponry, costume, and personal ornament. In the same way as we have seen these Highland 'art forms' being absorbed into historical paintings exhibited at the highest levels, so tools and implements began to perform the same function. In 1853, Drummond contributed an entry to the RSA exhibition under the title *A Highland Stone Sledge*, thus linking him to the works by Landseer, McCulloch and Ansdell already noted above.³⁶ Unlike McLan and McIntyre North, Drummond did not depend on the obsolescence of his material for effect in *Ancient Scottish Weapons*. One type of wooden spade, for instance, was recorded as being in living use in Islay, from where the museum specimen was taken. Yet in spite of this temporal perspective, it is significant to see what were still living traditions in certain parts of the Highlands and Islands in the 1880s being absorbed into museum heritage: surviving instances of that 'art and industry which gave distinctive character and individuality to the story of the old Scottish life'.³⁷

Fishing

Like agriculture, fishing had been part of the subsistence economy of the Gàidhealtachd before the drive for improvement. Fishing in coastal communities was, however, intermittent, directed at household consumption, and carried on using only the most basic equipment. Several families might join together to outfit a boat worked by four to six men or boys, although this was never a full-time commitment, and the land remained essential to survival. State sponsorship of the industry was geared towards competition with the Dutch, who had traditionally laid claim to the fishing grounds of the east coast. During the eighteenth century, a bounty system was introduced, subsidising the fitting out of large decked vessels, or busses. These came from Clyde ports like Greenock,

³⁵ Drummond, *Ancient Scottish Weapons*, notes to pl. 14.

³⁶ de Laperriere, ed., *RSA Exhibitors*.

³⁷ Anderson, 'Introduction', in Drummond, *Ancient Scottish Weapons*, 26.

Rothesay and Campbeltown, descending on the lochs of the north-west during the herring season, and were capable of carrying a vast quantity of equipment, including salt and barrels for curing. Distance from central markets, the price of salt, and the unpredictability of the herring shoals hampered the development of the industry in the north-west. In addition, those least set to profit were the small fishermen, operating in family networks in open boats, which did not qualify for a bounty and were forced to compete with the larger busses for a share of the catch.³⁸ Although members of the old elite had been dabbling in the development of the fisheries since the later seventeenth century, such enterprise was concentrated in the south, around the Clyde estuary. Further north, incentives to investment were much more limited, and MacInnes reports that in the Western Isles, 'the *fine* were traditionally content to exact landing and storage dues from Lowland or Ulster fishing enterprises'.³⁹ During the second half of the eighteenth century, interventionist agencies like the Annexed Estates Board attempted to encourage local projects in the north and west, granting loans to various individual enterprises, though with patchy results.⁴⁰ In 1786, the British Fisheries Society was established for the purpose of establishing fishing stations in key areas, which could act as suppliers of boats and gear and as centres for the dispersal of catches. By the close of the eighteenth century, fishing stations existed at various points down the west coast, including Loch Inver, Loch Broom and Loch Torridon. In the islands, Stornoway, Rodel in Harris, and Tobermory in Mull were established centres for the industry, although its most effective organisation remained concentrated in the sea lochs adjacent to the Clyde. Independent fishing on a subsistence basis also continued as a by-employment, particularly along the coast northwards from Kintyre to the Isle of Skye. The success story of the east coast fisheries came later, between c. 1810 and 1840, and involved a network of centres stretching from Caithness down to Morayshire and eastern Aberdeenshire. Sutherland ports like Helmsdale, which grew on the back of the clearance of inland straths for sheep,

³⁸ Gray, *Highland Economy*, 107-13.

³⁹ McInnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart*, 224.

⁴⁰ Smith, *Jacobite Estates*, 159-60.

shared in this boom, and there was also a considerable migration of population eastwards on a seasonal basis for employment at the Caithness fishing.⁴¹

All of this forms a background to visual representations of the Highland fisherman, frequently an adjunct to landscape images which were picturesque in essence, but nonetheless carefully crafted. In such images, we can observe a tension between the older, individual style of subsistence fishing traditional to the Highlands, and its newer, commercialised form. There is little overt criticism of this form of change and its impact on communities; rather, through the use of various visual devices, artists were able to naturalise commercial fishing as an evolution, rather than a replacement of, older traditions. As with agricultural tools, visual images of the Highland fisherman begin with Burt. His illustration of fishermen being carried to shore dry shod by way of their wives' backs was designed to sum up impressions of an industry characterised by indolence [Fig.100]. 'The Fishermen', he complained, 'would not be mentioned, but for their remarkable Laziness; for they might find a Sale for much more Sea-Fish than they do; but so long as any Money remains of the last Marketing, and until they are driven out by the last Necessity, they will not meddle with Salt Water'.⁴² The illustration, showing the women with their garments tucked up 'to an indecent height' is simultaneously a study of local peculiarity and a disparagement of the system. As on land, creels are portrayed as the method of transporting the catch to shore, and the part played by women in heavy physical work emphasised. Although the location is not specified, what Burt's artist was showing here was the old, haphazard, family-based tradition of subsistence fishing, in small open boats, with a crew of four men. In conjunction with the text and other illustrations in the volume, we can categorise this image as one which documented the status quo with a view to stressing a need for improvement and change.

In 1772, when Pennant embarked on his extended tour of Scotland, several of the sea lochs of the west provided evidence of more organised and sustained fishing activity. In Loch Ranza, Arran, for example, Griffith captured a sketch of a

⁴¹ Dunlop, *British Fisheries Society*; Gray, *Highland Economy*, 119-20, 150-70.

⁴² Burt, *Letters*, I, 130; pl. facing 130.

boatload of men harpooning a basking shark [Fig.101]. In the text, Pennant noted that this brand of fishing had been recently stimulated by financial input from the Annexed Estates Board, albeit the recipient of this assistance had ‘shamefully abused their goodness’.⁴³ Pennant’s interest in schemes supported by the Board provides a link between this print and another of Loch Hourn, adjacent to the forfeited estate of Barrisdale in Knoydart. During the 1760s, the factor of Barrisdale, Henry Butter, had received financial assistance from the Board in order to purchase a ready supply of salt and casks for sale to the local fishermen. In the engraving of Loch Hourn [Fig.102], fishing forms an element of the scene, but, as with Loch Ranza, it is the landscape which predominates: one characterised, in Pennant’s words, by an ‘Alpine wildness and magnificence’. On one level, it is possible to see the popularity of fishing scenes in landscape images as no more than a picturesque device, adding variety and foreground interest in such a way as to preserve the impact of the surrounding scenery. Travellers like Pennant were nevertheless acutely sensitive to the vision of improvement: ‘that there is no part of our dominions so remote, so inhospitable, and so unprofitable, as to deny employ and livelihood to thousands’.⁴⁴ As in Iona, where the wildness of the scenery made the island’s ecclesiastical remains all the more striking as emblems of learning and civilisation, the juxtaposition of landscape and industry in views like Griffith’s Loch Hourn achieved a similar end.

The activity observed by Pennant and Griffith in Loch Hourn was commercial herring fishing from a fleet of busses, and thus had little to say about the local population. The same is true of a vignette illustration on Murdoch MacKenzie’s sea chart of the north part of Lewis, published along with other surveys of the northern and Western Isles in *Orcades* (1750) [Fig.103]. MacKenzie’s image shows two busses anchored in the bay, with smaller boats fishing out of them closer to shore.⁴⁵ The vignettes in John Home’s *Survey of Assynt* (1774) also include several fishing scenes, most of which represent herring busses [Fig.104]. An exception appears on his plan of Stoer, Clachtoll and Achmelvich, which

⁴³ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, 170; pl.13.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 343-4; pl. 42. On the Annexed Estates’ support of fishing in Loch Ranza and Barrisdale, see also Smith, *Jacobite Estates*, 159-61.

⁴⁵ Murdoch Mackenzie, ‘The Lewis, or North Part of the Long Island’, in Mackenzie, *Orcades*.

includes a kilted figure fishing from the rocks with a rod [Fig.105].⁴⁶ Such decoration was not merely incidental to the surveyor's purpose. Maps were recognised as central to the development of fishing in the north. Martin's *Description of the Western Islands* had included a large-scale map as a frontispiece, engraved by the mapmaker Hermann Moll, which plotted the location of dangerous rocks. Moll published his own map of the islands in 1725, on a more detailed scale, including more information on the fishing grounds.⁴⁷ John Adair, who sailed to the Western Isles on a surveying trip in 1698, had also been closely interested in the condition of the fisheries.⁴⁸ If effectively exploited, the bounty of the northern seas could make a significant contribution to the national economy; Martin had also argued that the industry could serve as 'a nursery of stout and able seamen in a very short time, to serve the government on all occasions'.⁴⁹ Although the images in Pennant's tour and on MacKenzie and Home's maps portrayed the large, decked busses which at that time were fitted out and crewed in the south, developments in the 1780s increased incentives for local fishermen to compete with the larger boats. The most important of these came in 1786, when a bounty for barrels of herring caught by small boats was finally granted.⁵⁰ In 1789, John Ainslie published a new map of Scotland, with a vignette of three ragged figures in Highland dress (one wearing a military-style cocked bonnet) dragging a loaded net to shore [Fig.106].⁵¹ While still in need of some civilising, the 'indolent' Highlander could now be portrayed pulling his weight in the service of the Empire.

The progress of civilisation in the north-west could be judged in material terms at the level of lime and mortar. While indicating plenty of fishing activity, neither Home nor MacKenzie had depicted anything in the way of harbours, curing houses or organised settlement in connection with the industry. By 1798, when

⁴⁶ NLS, Dep. 313/3585, John Home, Survey of Assynt, 1774. For images of buss fishing, see No. 4, 'Plan of the Farms of Brackloch, Inver, Torbreck, Baddedaroch and Batachrianan'; No. 7, 'Plan of the Farms of Unapool and Reintraid'; No. 13, 'Plan of the Farms of Knockneach, Culach and Inverchirkag'. For the angler, see No. 3, 'Plan of the Farms of Store, Clachtoll and Auchmelvich'.

⁴⁷ Hermann Moll, *A Map of the North-West Part of the Western Islands* (London, 1745).

⁴⁸ Moore, 'Martin Martin and John Adair', 37; Rackwitz, "'Terra Incognita'", 474.

⁴⁹ Martin, *Description*, 341.

⁵⁰ Dunlop, *British Fisheries Society*, 22-3.

⁵¹ John Ainslie, *Scotland Drawn and Engrav'd from a Series of Angles and Astronomical Observations* (Edinburgh and London, 1789).

James Barret painted a view of Stornoway for MacKenzie of Seaforth, he was able to show the recently-constructed harbour thronged with fishing vessels and new stone-built, slated dwelling houses lining the bay [Fig.107]. This painting was designed as a companion piece to a second view, entitled *The Village of Stornoway with a Shooting Lodge*, incorporating Seaforth Lodge, the MacKenzie residence, across the bay from the village.⁵² The trope of juxtaposing a gentleman's residence with the evidence of improved estates was not confined to Lewis. Its most archetypal expression can be seen in successive images of Inveraray, where developments had been begun by the third Duke of Argyll in 1744, and were ultimately completed by his grandson in the 1780s. When Pennant visited Inveraray in 1769, plans for a new village were only half-implemented. 'This place will in time be very magnificent', he wrote, 'but at present the space between the front and the water is disgraced with the old town, composed of the most wretched hovels that can be imagined'.⁵³ His second tour of 1772 contained an illustration of Inveraray, by Griffith, in which the 'hovels' fronting the castle were still visible [Fig.108].⁵⁴ Around 1801, however, Alexander Nasmyth completed a canvas for the fifth Duke which showed the space between the castle and the bridge cleared of all sign of human dwelling. In the painting, the new town, with its substantial buildings, quay and steeped town-house, appears in its current location west of the castle grounds.⁵⁵ In W. H. Watts' view of Inveraray, aquatinted to illustrate Garnett's Highland tour of 1800, the castle and the village were again portrayed in conjunction, with an avenue of trees connecting the source and the product of improvement in an almost straight line.⁵⁶

Transferring a population from 'hovels' to civilised dwellings was one of the perceived advantages of the fishing industry. The planned villages designed by the British Fisheries Society were explicitly intended to abolish 'dark smoky

⁵² SNPG, PG 3291, James Barret, *View of the Village of Stornoway*, Canvas, 84 x 117.5, 1798: on loan to Museum nan Eilean, Stornoway. For background on the painting, see Anon., 'Early Landscapes of Stornoway Unveiled at Museum nan Eilean', *West Highland Free Press*, 14 November 2003, 15.

⁵³ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland, 1769*, 189.

⁵⁴ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland, 1772*, II, pl. 1.

⁵⁵ Reproduced in Macmillan, *Painting in Scotland*, pl. 31. On Nasmyth at Inveraray, see also Morrison, *Painting the Nation*, 37-9.

⁵⁶ Garnett, *Observations*, I, pl. facing 77.

cabins indisposed for industry and work': a summative description of housing conditions throughout the Highlands and Islands during this period.⁵⁷ William Daniell's *Voyage Round Great Britain* provides the most sustained visual eulogy to material improvements connected with the fishing industry. From the Western Isles might be cited views of Stornoway, Rodel [Fig.109] and Tobermory, showing properly constructed harbours and substantial slated buildings of several storeys.⁵⁸ Tobermory was a British Fisheries Society development, instigated in 1787. Daniell's print of the village in 1818 shows two-storey houses fronting the new pier, with a stone-built bridge and good road following the shoreline in the foreground. His emphasis is on the material benefits which accompany progress, and his comments on the superior level of 'civilisation' attained by Tobermory's inhabitants is doubly significant: they were, he reported, more attentive to personal neatness and cleanliness than other Hebrideans, and also spoke a much purer dialect of English.⁵⁹ On the west coast, Daniell also portrayed recently-established fishing stations on the island of Tanera in Loch Broom, and at Culag in Assynt. As in Griffith's image of Loch Hourn, the magnitude of the surrounding landscape offsets the hive of activity brought to the region by the industry: an activity which the building of piers and curing houses had made a more permanent feature of these 'lonely' scenes by 1820.⁶⁰

As well as depicting the more established stations, Daniell also produced some prints of the industry in Sutherland which have a silent significance. This is especially true of two images: one of a salmon-station at the mouth of Strathnaver on the north coast, and another of the village of Helmsdale in the east [Figs.110-11]. These settlements were a direct consequence of improvement policies on the Sutherland estates, designed to carry some of the surplus population cleared from the interior. In his *Account of the Improvements on the Estates of the Marquis of Stafford* (1820), the estate factor, James Loch, defended the benefits brought about by such changes, contrasting the 'miserable' turf huts formerly inhabited by the inland tenants with the good houses 'of stone

⁵⁷ Quoted in Smith, *Jacobite Estates*, 143.

⁵⁸ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, III, pl. facing 70; IV, pls. facing 48, 56.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, III, 70; Dunlop, *British Fisheries Society*, 80-7.

⁶⁰ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, IV, pls. facing 72, 74. See Dunlop, *British Fisheries Society*, 42-3, 96-8 for background on Tanera and Culag.

and lime' under construction in Helmsdale.⁶¹ On the north coast, on the other hand, prospects were bleaker. As Hunter writes, even had the boats and equipment required for herring fishing been within the reach of the evicted tenants, 'a worthwhile north-coast fishery would have remained, in any case, elusive – places like Bettyhill and Strathnaver being bereft of the sheltered inlets or harbours which any such fishery has always required'.⁶² Daniell's images, perhaps unconsciously, underline this contrast: at Bettyhill (the head of Strathnaver), the row of cottages above the shore is squeezed between the cliffs and the sea, with fishermen landing salmon from small boats directly onto the beach. Cultivation is limited to small strips of land cut out of the steep hillside. Helmsdale, on the other hand, displays more signs of prosperity, with a cluster of buildings bordering the quay, several vessels in port, an expanse of flat land backing the village and a substantial bridge crossing the river in the foreground.⁶³

The timing of these prints is significant, as evictions were still being carried out in Kildonan (up river from Helmsdale) and Strathnaver until the spring of 1820, the year that Daniell completed his tour of the north coast.⁶⁴ If indirectly, the artist's images were thus an up-to-the-minute record of one of the bitterest episodes in modern Highland history. In his view of Helmsdale, a reassuring token of antiquity was nevertheless invoked in the form of a ruined castle brooding over the village from an adjoining cliff top. In an earlier view of the Cuillin from Loch Slapin, Daniell had also added a kilted figure to the foreground, and commented on the sail of the nearest fishing boat, which, being 'chequered after the manner of a tartan, formed a singular and consistent accessory to the scene'.⁶⁵ The ruin-tartan formula was to become a recurrent motif in images of fishing throughout the nineteenth century, particularly in the sea-lochs bordering the Clyde where the industry was most intensively commercialised. An early version can be seen in J. M. W. Turner's *Inveraray, Loch Fyne* (c. 1803), in which a group of kilted and plaided fishermen are shown

⁶¹ James Loch, *An Account of the Improvements on the Estates of the Marquess of Stafford* (London, 1820), 51-3, 128.

⁶² James Hunter, *Last of the Free: A Millennial History of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1999), 261.

⁶³ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, IV, pl. facing 90; V, pl. facing 23.

⁶⁴ Youngson, *After the Forty-Five*, 178.

⁶⁵ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, IV, 40; pl. facing 40.

unloading their catch in the foreground of the picture [Fig.112]. Against this vestige of 'antiquity', the newness of the town is visibly evident, the steeple of the church still covered with scaffolding and incomplete.⁶⁶ In some images, such as John Claude Nattes' 'Port of Inveraray' (1804), Highland dress is present, but not predominant, being confined to a single figure [Fig.113]. This motif recurs in Joshua Cristall's *Shore of Loch Fyne at Inveraray* (c. 1818) [Fig.114], and in Frank Dillon's 'Toun and Castle of Inveraray' (1852), and may have been intended to provide a sense of 'Highlandness' where a ubiquitous tartan garb would have been evidently false. Edmund Crawford, on the other hand, had no such compunctions, clothing the protagonists in his 'Tarbert Castle' (1854) in a kilt and Highland bonnet [Fig.115].⁶⁷ Crawford's juxtaposition of intensive fishing activity with a ruined castle recalls Daniell's Helmsdale, and has other parallels. Griffith's 'Loch Ranza Bay', for instance, had included a view of Loch Ranza castle in the distance, James Skene of Rubislaw combined the Loch Fyne industry with ruins in drawings of Castle Lachlan [Fig.116] and Tarbert (1833-34), and there is also a view of Loch Ranza Castle by an unknown amateur which shows herring nets drying and numerous boats in the harbour.⁶⁸

Besides these very obvious symbols of Highland tradition, artists sometimes edited aspects of the scene portrayed so as to give a less organised, and thus more picturesque impression. Nattes and Cristall's drawings of Inveraray were taken from a similar stance and avoided the main town. While contemporary with Turner's bustling watercolour of the port, Nattes conveyed a much smaller, less developed settlement, although elements of civilisation (like the railings and decorative pillar) are visible to the left of the composition. Crawford's lithograph of Tarbert Castle, noted above, participated in this trend, carefully excluding the more substantial buildings of the main village and showing only a

⁶⁶ Manchester Art Gallery, 1917.108, J. M. W. Turner, *Inveraray, Loch Fyne*, Watercolour, c. 1803. This drawing was engraved for J. Mawman, *Excursion to the Highlands of Scotland* (London, 1805).

⁶⁷ J. C. Nattes, 'The Port of Inveraray', in Fittler, *Scotia Depicta*, pl. 18; AM, WA1915.20, Joshua Cristall, *The Shore of Loch Fyne at Inveraray: Sunset*, Watercolour, c. 1818; Frank Dillon, 'The Toun and Castle of Inveraray', and Edmund J. Crawford, 'Tarbert Castle', in Lawson, *Scotland Delineated*, II, pls. facing 308.

⁶⁸ ECL, 212, James Skene, Highland Album, No. 51b, 'Castle Lachlan, Argyleshire, 6 Aug 1834'; *ibid.*, No. 60, 'Tarbert, Argyleshire, 27 July 1833'; NLS, MS.9842, Anon., 'Loch Ranza, Arran'.

small thatched cottage with frames for drying nets on the shore. In contrast to the stark white town houses in Turner's view, the buildings in Cristall's Inveraray are also unobtrusive: low, thatched, and blending into the wooded hillsides. In the latter, there is also no sign of the ornamental tower on the summit of 'Duniquaich' (obscured by cloud), nor of the bridge over the Aray. Notwithstanding the quay, 'improvement' has been otherwise reversed.

Contemporary reviews and exhibition listings reveal that the fisherman's cottage had become a popular subject among professional artists by the 1850s. These works focused on the tumble-down 'bothy' associated with the traditional Highlands as opposed to the improved dwellings of the planned villages. As *The Art Journal* commented in 1857, 'discomfort and the picturesque are almost essentially conjoined: the houses we prefer to paint are not often those we desire to inhabit'. Alexander Fraser (1827-1899) submitted a painting of a fisherman's cottage on Loch Fyne to the RSA in 1855 which was reviewed in *The Art Journal*; in 1857, the same journal also noted an entry by John Mogford (1821-1885) at the British Institution, entitled *The Highland Fisher's Home*. The subject was described in appreciative terms: 'a bothie with all the outward signs of the vocation of its inmates, and situated on the pleasant shore of a narrow arm of the sea shut in by mountains'.⁶⁹ Images of the individual fisherman operating in lonely settings also occur during the nineteenth century, perhaps harking back to the older tradition of subsistence fishing. Among these might be cited Hugh William Williams' *Fishermen with Boats and Nets in the Highlands* (by 1829), and Horatio McCulloch's 'Coast of Sleat, Isle of Skye' (1850), both of which show small family groupings, and suggest fishing for household consumption only [*Figs.117-18*].⁷⁰

Illicit Whisky Distillation

⁶⁹*AJ*, n.s., I, 1855, 75; *AJ*, n.s., III, 1857, 69, 165.

⁷⁰NGS, D (NG) 359, Hugh William Williams, *Fishermen with Boats and Nets in the Highlands*, Watercolour, n.d.; Horatio McCulloch, 'Coast of Sleat, Isle of Skye', in Lawson, *Scotland Delineated*, II, pl. facing 308.

In his description of the Western Isles, Martin had described the practice of distilling spirits from grain, identifying three kinds: common 'usquebaugh'; 'trestarig', three times distilled; and 'usquebaugh-baul', four times distilled.⁷¹ Although he made no reference to the marketing of this product, its importance as a means of increasing the value of grain for rents had been established in some parts of the Highlands and Islands during the seventeenth century, and grew during the eighteenth. By 1768, there were fifty distilleries on the island of Tiree; in Jura, Skye and Breadalbane, there were also malt barns and change houses which permitted tenants to dispose of their grain in return for cash. In some areas, most notably Kintyre, illicit production was perceived to be a growing problem, resulting in attempts by the Duke of Argyll to stamp out the practice.⁷² From 1786, a series of legislative measures rendered traditional production increasingly difficult to carry out in a 'legal' fashion. As Devine describes, the irony of these laws was that they stimulated illicit production north of the Highland line, where the majority of small outfits were located; these were frequently too small to qualify for the legal still capacity of forty gallons. Illegal stills were, however, known for a higher quality of finished product as licensed outfits attempted to reduce their overheads by distilling raw, unmalted grain (taxation was calculated according to the quantity of malt used in production). This disparity stimulated the smuggling trade further, and by the early nineteenth-century, the dependence of certain districts on revenue from illicit distillation was widely acknowledged as a bastion against destitution for many families.⁷³ In the wake of this, however, came anxiety about the moral evils of the trade, and in particular its impact on the rising generation. Referring to Aberdeenshire, Sir George MacKenzie of Coul commented in 1822 that 'the lower orders almost breed their children to it as a sort of profession; ... they must do it or starve'. Similar concerns exercised observers in Ross-shire, where it was claimed that 'children ... see their parents live in constant breach of the laws and thus pay no regard to the laws themselves'.⁷⁴ In the context of economic improvement, distilling was also seen to engender indolent and profligate habits:

⁷¹ Martin, *Description*, 3.

⁷² Dodgshon, *Chiefs to Landlords*, 11-12.

⁷³ T. M. Devine, 'The Rise and Fall of Illicit Whisky-Making in Northern Scotland, c. 1780-1840', *Scottish Historical Review*, 54, 1975, 154-77.

⁷⁴ Quoted in *ibid.*, 162, 173.

in 1820, Loch described a former state of affairs in Sutherland, when the ‘great proportion’ of the men’s time ‘when not in the pursuit of game, or of illegal distillation, was spent in indolence and sloth’.⁷⁵ Following two commissions of enquiry, fresh legislation in 1822 and 1823 effectively sounded the death-knell for the illegal side of the industry, although licensed stills continued to flourish.⁷⁶ The effects of this on families who had depended on a limited income from small private stills were often severe. In the *New Statistical Account* for Aberdeenshire, written in 1843, it was recorded that ‘a considerable number of families, formerly supported by illicit distillation, have been obliged to remove to towns and other parishes; a good many families also, have emigrated to America’.⁷⁷

Against this background, the theme of the illegal still was to inspire a small group of paintings from 1819. Here again, as with subsistence fishing and agricultural methods, we can observe the artist seizing on something which was under threat as a subject for romantic elegy. Visual references to whisky during the eighteenth century are sparse, although it is possible that the sheaves of grain, black pot, tankard and ram’s horn in the cartouche to a MacKenzie chart of Lewis (1750) may allude to brewing [Fig.119].⁷⁸ Around 1799, John Claude Nattes also produced a documentary sketch of a distillery at Callander, a composition which includes a good deal of the surrounding landscape besides a detailed study of part of the still apparatus itself. This would have been a legal outfit [Fig.120].⁷⁹ The earliest of the later paintings – Sir David Wilkie’s *Highland Whisky Still at Lochgilphead* (1819) – preceded the final crackdown on smuggling by a few years, but was completed in the context of ever-shifting legislation and much official dialogue on the theme.⁸⁰ The location of Wilkie’s still – at the northernmost end of the Kintyre peninsula – tied it to a spot well-known for illicit production during the early nineteenth century, and where rents had been raised on the strength of spirit revenue for centuries. Some other

⁷⁵ Loch, *Account of Lord Stafford’s Improvements*, 51.

⁷⁶ Devine, ‘Illicit Whisky-Making’, 173-7.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Gavin D. Smith, *The Secret Still: Scotland’s Clandestine Whisky Makers* (Edinburgh, 2002), 16.

⁷⁸ Murdoch MacKenzie, ‘The South-East Coast of the Lewis’, in MacKenzie, *Orcades*.

⁷⁹ NLS, MS.5205, f. 61, John Claude Nattes, ‘Distillery of Callander’.

⁸⁰ Private Collection, Sir David Wilkie, *A Highland Whisky Still at Lochgilphead*, Panel, 64.8 x 95.9: reproduced in Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 60.

details in the painting are also historically authentic. Although illicit stills often made do with home-made apparatus, in some areas illegal production was surprisingly well-organised, with small kin-based groups pooling resources to purchase custom-made equipment. Wilkie's still is a relatively elaborate affair, clearly purpose-made, while the mix of ages in the three figures suggests the kind of kinship grouping common in Kintyre.⁸¹ Wilkie's stance in this painting is somewhat ambiguous, although there are traces of Highlandism in the costume of the two main figures, in the dirk resting on a small table in the foreground, and in the broadsword hanging from a nail beside the window. The room is nevertheless more strongly lit than many of Wilkie's interiors, revealing the apparatus of the still in sharp, documentary detail; there may also be a nod to the skill of the Highland smuggler as he holds up a sample to expert scrutiny, and a hint of sympathy for the precarious circumstances of a genuine craft driven underground by circumstances. The bright, clear lines of this painting can be contrasted with a later representation of an Irish still, in which the ragged clothes of the participants, the presence of very young children (including an almost naked boy stoking the fire), and the cluttered debris of the apartment convey a stronger tone of moral criticism.⁸²

The next major artist to turn to the theme of illicit distilling was Landseer. Most of Landseer's Highland work was set in, or inspired by, his knowledge of the upland parts of Perthshire and Aberdeenshire, both areas with a long history of production, although the latter had become particularly well-known for smuggling by the early nineteenth-century.⁸³ Landseer's *Illicit Whisky Still in the Highlands* [Fig.121], exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1829, depicts a much less prosperous outfit than Wilkie's Lochgilphead painting.⁸⁴ It is concealed in a makeshift turf hut in the hills with battered, home-made apparatus. Hollowed-out sections of bark are used to channel rain water into an open barrel, and, in contrast to Wilkie's built-in fireplace, the copper still rests only on blocks of stone over an open fire. Clearly, Landseer's intention was to capture the kind of

⁸¹ I. A. Glen, 'Robert Armour: A Maker of Illicit Stills', *Scottish Studies*, 14, 1971, 67-83.

⁸² NGS, NG 2130, Sir David Wilkie, *The Irish Whiskey Still*, Panel, 119.4 x 158, 1840.

⁸³ Devine, 'Illicit Whisky-Making', 167.

⁸⁴ English Heritage, Apsley House, London, Sir Edwin Landseer, *An Illicit Whisky Still in the Highlands*, Panel, 80 x 100.4, 1826-9.

small, family-run operation which had most to lose from the 1822-23 legislation, having no capital resources to weather the loss of any source of income: the small bucket of potatoes and pair of swedes lying at the entrance to the hut carry clues as to the frugal diet of a population on the edge of poverty.

In some respects, the painting seems to pander to official condemnation of the trade as a moral evil: the link with poaching, for example, is present in the dead stag, and in the game bird hanging from the boy's hands. The latter, along with the dejected pose of the young girl looking on, could also be said to hint at the concern that children throughout the smuggling districts were being bred to perpetuate a vicious circle of lawlessness and poverty. Nevertheless, the timing of the painting, together with the fact that social criticism was not Landseer's usual approach to Highland themes, suggest that this is not the core of his meaning. In a subsequent painting, *The Poacher's Bothy* (c. 1831), the artist returned to the issue of lawlessness, including a link with the world of the illicit still in the empty whisky bottle which rests beneath the window.⁸⁵ Rather than seeing these works as expressions of 'moral judgement',⁸⁶ I would argue that what Landseer is really interested in is the Highlander's conception of law. The Gael's proverbial right to a deer from the hill or a salmon from the river belonged to an older view of things in which the classification of game as private property was an alien concept; likewise, the art of whisky-making in its truest and purest form predated the legal tangle of more recent times by several centuries. By implication, activities classed as 'lawless' in contemporary parlance could also be viewed as part of the Highlander's faith to his own tradition, whatever the cost. *Rent Day in the Wilderness* (1855-68) [Fig.20], the Murchison commission discussed in a previous chapter, portrayed another aspect of this ability to keep faith with ancestral codes of conduct in the face of pursuit and the threat of punishment. The clean-cut, highly respectable appearance of Wilkie's Highland smugglers may also have drawn on this construction, with its attendant opportunities for romanticising heroism.

⁸⁵ Hamburger Kunsthalle, Germany, Sir Edwin Landseer, *The Poacher's Bothy*, Panel, 45.2 x 61, c. 1831: reproduced in Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 70.

⁸⁶ The phrase is Richard Ormond's: *ibid.*, 70.

In the course of his tours of the Western Isles in the early 1830s, George Clayton Atkinson also made several observations on illicit distillation, and included a sketch entitled 'Smugglers in their shop at Sligachan' in his journal for 1831. Although there is no sign of a still in this case, the proffered product having come from Strathglass in Inverness-shire, Atkinson was treated to a view of a working operation in Lewis during his visit of 1833. While there he noted the home-made character of the still itself, in which only the copper head and worm had been specially made, all other elements 'being convenient articles of household economy'. In contrast to the whisky 'shop' in Skye, he noted that the Lewis product was seldom sold, being for private use only, but that fear of being informed on had led to a marked decline in smuggling throughout the island.⁸⁷ Although this decline was mirrored across the former smuggling districts of the mainland Highlands, images of whisky stills continued to appear in exhibitions during the 1840s and 1850s. In 1843, R. R. McLan showed a painting entitled *A Highland Whisky Still* at the RSA, a version of which was published to illustrate *Picturesque Gatherings* in 1848 [Fig.122]. In his commentary, James Logan stressed the superiority of the results from small-scale operations, and the experienced judgement of the people as an effective safeguard against a poor product. He spoke, however, of the heyday of the trade in the past tense, marking it as another aspect of tradition which had to be garnered and preserved.⁸⁸ Besides McLan, other historical painters could also be found painting clandestine whisky making during this period. John Crawford Brown, for instance, exhibited *A Highland Whisky Still on the Black Mount, Argyllshire* at the RSA in 1846, which was followed by James Drummond's *Whisky Still* in 1855.⁸⁹ At the Old Society of Watercolour Painters Exhibition in London in 1851, F. W. Topham showed a work entitled *Highland Smugglers Leaving the Hills with their Whiskey*, which was reviewed in *The Art Journal*. 'The scene', we are told, 'is a passage of wild hill scenery, with a disposition of appropriate figures of all ages, with direct allusion, in more ways than one, to the running whiskey'.⁹⁰ In 1868, a final flourish to the smuggling theme was given by John Pettie (1839-1893), whose *Tussle for the Keg* (1868) depicts a struggle between a

⁸⁷ Quine, ed., *Expeditions to the Hebrides by George Clayton Atkinson*, 96-7, 139.

⁸⁸ McLan and Logan, *Picturesque Gatherings*, 17.

⁸⁹ de Laperriere, ed., *RSA Exhibitors*.

⁹⁰ *AJ*, n.s., 3, 1851, 162.

Highland freebooter and an exciseman [*Fig.123*].⁹¹ Clothed in a deerskin tunic, tattered kilt and hide sandals, the smuggler seems to have been borrowed straight from one of McIan's medieval costume plates. Like the tradition he fights for, he has been placed outside of time.

Droving

Visual images of droving follow a similar pattern to those of illicit distillation, in that it was not until the cattle trade was in decline that artists began to pay attention to it. The droving trade experienced an upsurge during the first half of the seventeenth century due to increased demand from Lowland towns, and also from England. During the 1680s, the size of the droves was such as to necessitate the establishment of a new market at Falkirk to supplement the annual trysts at Crieff and Comrie. This, being further south, was also better placed to cater for the English market.⁹² Traditionally, cattle were important at every level of Highland society. Not only did they form a source of ready cash to support chiefly display, they were themselves a prestige item, often playing a prominent role in marriage agreements. At a lower level, raising and selling cattle provided tenants with necessary cash for rents. Chiefs and landowners played an important role in setting up the organisational structures necessary for the marketing of tenants' cattle, frequently negotiating with dealers and drovers on their behalf; on some estates, the beasts were also used as a form of internal currency, with rents being paid in hoof rather than cash.⁹³

According to Haldane, the men who actually drove the beasts south to market might be in the employ of a dealer – often a small laird or tacksman – or themselves combined the functions of a dealer and drover in one. Droving – generally done in the summer and early autumn – provided some with seasonal employment at a time when work on the land was slack. Before the days of proper roads, a network of well-known tracks threaded its way through the hills, often identifiable by little more than swathes of turf packed close by the passage of thousands of hooves. Along the way were stances, or stopping grounds, where

⁹¹ AAGM, 4104, John Pettie, *Tussle for the Keg*, Canvas, 56.2 x 45, 1868.

⁹² Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart*, 142-3.

⁹³ Dodgshon, *Chiefs to Landlords*, 91, 112-14.

beasts could graze and rest for the night. In early times, these were generally used without payment, although facilities became more organised during the later eighteenth century, particularly in the Lowlands, where enclosed fields were more widespread; charges for grazing and the accommodation of drovers thus became increasingly common.⁹⁴

Other changes to the drover's livelihood were also afoot during this period, the most significant being the introduction of sheep farming to the north. Although native sheep were kept in small numbers throughout the Highlands, mainly for domestic wool, experimentation with the larger Border breeds – Black-faces and Cheviots – began in the 1760s. As a commercial enterprise, sheep farming required space and capital, inevitably breaking up the old, multiple-tenant farms and grazing systems geared to cattle. Gray reports that in two parishes of Sutherland – Creich and Assynt – the number of cattle fell sharply between 1790 and 1808 in proportion to escalating sheep numbers, citing pressure on hill grazings as the principal cause.⁹⁵ Trade in black cattle did not of course disappear overnight; districts such as Skye, the Outer Isles and parts of the west coast continued to export the traditional breed until well into the nineteenth century, although prices fell away after 1815. With improving communications, the possibility of transporting sheep on the hoof preserved the drover's livelihood for a time, although sheep were slower, less robust, and required more herding than cattle. Other factors were also impinging on the tradition. Improvements in communications, while sometimes helpful in the form of bridges over fast-flowing rivers, resulted in many miles of made roads, some of which adopted the line of the old droving tracks. These were much harder on bovine feet than turf, meaning that cattle had to go through the time-consuming and costly process of being shod for their journey south. The advent of steamer transport meant that, by 1836, cattle were being shipped south from north-east ports such as Aberdeen, Banff and Wick; although this method did not become the norm in the west until the 1880s, the volume of beasts travelling on the hoof became incrementally less. Equally significant was the spread of the railway

⁹⁴ A. R. B. Haldane, *The Drove Roads of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1997 edn.), 20-44.

⁹⁵ Gray, *Highland Economy*, 97; see also Macinnes, *Clanship, Commerce and the House of Stuart*, 222-3.

network, which began to take over sheep transport from the middle of the nineteenth century.⁹⁶

Although cattle were a popular form of ‘staffage’ in picturesque views, images which focused on droving itself, or on the specific features of the west Highland breed, can be chronologically linked to the decline of the cattle trade. These represent further examples of the artist’s tendency to engage with Highland subjects in a retrospective way, so that whatever could be made to symbolise a threatened way of life gathered a proportionate aesthetic value. In 1827, Sir Walter Scott gave the historical significance of droving a romantic flavour in a short tale, *The Two Drovers*, which was set in the late eighteenth century. Scott presented the drover as a man of resourcefulness and fortitude – qualities which fitted contemporary stereotypes of Highland character; he also hinted at the prestige and status symbolised by cattle under the old economy, contrasting this with the relative insignificance of sheep:

The Highlanders in particular are masters of this difficult trade of driving, which seems to suit them as well as the trade of war. It affords exercise for all their habits of patient endurance and active exertion ... The Highlander, a child among flocks, is a prince amongst herds, and his natural habits induce him to disdain the shepherd’s slothful life, so that he feels himself nowhere more at home than when following a gallant drove of his country cattle in the character of their guardian. At night, the drovers usually sleep along with their cattle, let the weather be what it will; and many of these hardy men do not once rest under a roof during a journey on foot from Lochaber to Lincolnshire.⁹⁷

The Two Drovers undoubtedly influenced artists’ perceptions of the subject, and all major paintings of Highland cattle and droving post-date its publication. Landseer’s *Scene in the Grampians: The Drovers’ Departure* (c. 1835) [Fig.86] followed Scott’s description in many details, such as the ram’s horn being filled

⁹⁶ Gray, *Highland Economy*, 155, 175-6; Haldane, *Drove Roads*, 199-219.

⁹⁷ Sir Walter Scott, ‘The Two Drovers’, in Sir Walter Scott, *The Two Drovers and Other Stories* (Oxford, World’s Classics edn., 1987), 222-3.

with whisky for the journey, and the dirk and cudgel which are the drover's only visible form of arms.⁹⁸ McIan's drawing of cattle drovers, lithographed for *Picturesque Gatherings* (1848) [Fig.124], also picked up on some of the points emphasised by Scott, in particular the frugality of the drovers' diet. Rather than on the move, McIan showed the men preparing brose over a makeshift fire lit in the open; Logan's notes described how oatmeal and water, together with 'a few onions and a little butter' constituted their staple fare, echoing the opening paragraphs of *The Two Drovers*.⁹⁹

McIan's image, with its pale light and long shadows, suggests that the drovers have reached one of their nightly stances, the rocks forming an open-air shelter while the cattle graze and rest nearby. In another painting, begun around this time but not completed until 1860, Landseer portrayed the more organised form of stance-letting common in populated agricultural districts.¹⁰⁰ Although Ormond describes it as a 'psychological study of the effects of fear and despair induced by a natural catastrophe',¹⁰¹ *Flood in the Highlands* [Fig.125] has much to say about tradition and change in a regional context. Its surface inspiration was a sudden flash flood which devastated the valleys at the foot of the Cairngorm and Monadhliath mountains in August 1829, an event which was catalogued in detail by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder.¹⁰² In Landseer's painting, there is a board which reads 'Alick Gordon, Up-putting: Stance, Mile East', indicating that the couple sheltering on the roof of their cottage had made a living from providing drovers with accommodation for themselves and their beasts. By 1845, when the work was first conceived, the great overland droves he had depicted in *Scene in the Grampians* were, as we have seen, being supplanted by more efficient transport methods. It is possible, therefore, to read the flood in this case as a metaphor for the changes threatening the 'traditional' Highlands,

⁹⁸ V & A, FA.88[O], Landseer, *Scene in the Grampians*.

⁹⁹ McIan and Logan, *Picturesque Gatherings*, 30; Scott, 'Two Drovers', 223.

¹⁰⁰ AAGM, 2312, Sir Edwin Landseer, *Flood in the Highlands*, Canvas, 198.5 x 311.2, c. 1845-60.

¹⁰¹ Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 79.

¹⁰² Lauder, *Account of the Great Floods*; see also his field sketches of the damage in AAGM, 8407, Lauder, Album No. 4, 1828-30. Lauder's representation of 'Old Cumin's Family During the Flood' may have inspired Landseer's treatment of the subject. The flood was still a topic of discussion in 1842, when Sarah Taylor visited the Cairngorms, thereafter pasting Lauder's image of Cumin and family into her travel diary: NLS, MS.8927, f. 79v.

represented by the survivors on the rooftop. *Scene in the Grampians* had shown a mixed grouping of animals, including goats and sheep along with cattle. In the *Flood*, however, it is the goats and cattle which are represented as dead or drowning, while the sheep remain safe on the rooftop. Relics of proscription are also exposed near the dead goat at the water's edge: a targe, dirk, and tartan-wrapped broadsword. Among the figures, it is the old man who wears full tartan dress, while the young boy – the future generation – is wrapped in a grey-checked shepherd's plaid. The iconographic significance of these details, including a broken egg in the immediate foreground, displays not only Landseer's virtuosity as an animal painter, but also his under-recognised role as a commentator on social and economic change, albeit cast in the romantic terms appreciated by his generation.

Landseer's *Flood in the Highlands* was the nearest admission on canvas to a change in the fortunes of the cattle trade. Artists preferred a more amorphous perspective, focusing on tradition in a manner which was largely divorced from the specifics of time or place. A popular theme in this vein was the drove road itself. Military and civil engineers from Wade to Telford adopted the line of many droving tracks for the construction of proper roads, with the result that as communications improved, the old routes became a kind of endangered species. Exhibition listings for the second half of the nineteenth century reveal that the drove road was a particularly popular subject from the 1850s.¹⁰³ Many of these images played up the isolated, half-formed nature of what were little more than cart-tracks threading their way around bogs and pools. John Milne Donald's *The Drove Road* (1857), depicts a more solid road, but the emphasis on emptiness and loneliness – of only the sparsest traffic – remains [Fig.126].¹⁰⁴ In George Paul Chalmers' painting of a drove of sheep in Skye [Fig.127], the road along which they pass is virtually invisible, as is the worn track in Edward Hargitt's *Drovers' Road* (1893) [Fig.128].¹⁰⁵ In these examples, the road has been

¹⁰³ Note, for example, Horatio McCulloch, *The Drove Road* (RSA, 1852), Edward Hargitt, *Drove Road – Highland Cattle Going South* (RSA, 1857), Sir George Harvey, *A Drove Road* (RSA, 1866), William Simson, *Highland Drove Road* (RSA, 1880): all listed in de Laperriere, ed., *RSA Exhibitors*.

¹⁰⁴ MG, 19/53, John Milne Donald, *The Drove Road*, Canvas, 24.1 x 31.7, 1857.

¹⁰⁵ NGS, NG 1629, George Paul Chalmers, *The Eagle's Nest, Isle of Skye*, Canvas, 64.8 x 95.3, by 1878; FWAf, Edward Hargitt, *The Drovers' Road*, Canvas, 89 x 134.5, 1893.

absorbed into the landscape – neither a scar nor an intrusion, but of the same hue and texture as the surrounding earth. The drove road was thus presented as a central part of the ‘unspoilt’ Highlands: distinctive because inaccessible to modern traffic, a passage only to the old, slow, timeless tread of beasts and men.

Another theme in art which can be read against a backcloth of change was the nature of the traditional breed. Like native sheep, Highland cattle were universally small, a feature noted by Pennant while travelling in Sutherland in 1769.¹⁰⁶ Agricultural improvers blamed Highlanders for failing to learn the lessons of persistent overstocking, and for indifference to the improvement of their stock by selective breeding.¹⁰⁷ In 1822, the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland began to organise fatstock shows to stimulate better breeding; as Haldane observes, larger, heavier beasts were in fact unsuited to transportation on the hoof, so that improved farming methods were another blow in the coffin of the droving trade.¹⁰⁸ As early as 1804, the characteristics of ‘pure’ Highland cattle were being described with something of a romantic air. In his long poem, *The Grampians Desolate*, which lamented the decline of a patriarchal age, Alexander Campbell appended detailed notes on the breed: ‘A Cow, of the Sky or Kintail breed, is a remarkably handsome animal; it carries its head erect, which gives it a deer-like air, peculiar to the cattle of those districts. Besides a straight, thick back, deep in the rib, elevated head and neck; small blue or clear yellow horns, tipt with black and sharp-pointed; the hide of a dark brown colour, short legs, and large bushy tail, - are marks truly characteristic of a cow, ox, or bull, of the real Highland breed of black cattle’.¹⁰⁹ In the poem itself, Campbell created a rose-tinted vision of a time when deserted tracts of countryside would be repopulated:

Your humble sheds forsaken, shall again
Enliven every hill and narrow plain;
Your heath-clad mountains and your sea-girt shore
Shall be restored, to quit them never more:

¹⁰⁶ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland, 1769*, 146.

¹⁰⁷ Youngson, *After the Forty-Five*, 168.

¹⁰⁸ Grant and Cheape, *Periods in Highland History*, 245; Haldane, *Drove Roads*, 61.

¹⁰⁹ Alexander Campbell, *The Grampians Desolate: A Poem* (Edinburgh, 1804), 219.

Then joyfull will ye climb the hoary steep,
 To tend your breeds of kine and *native sheep*;
 While stores in common, shall your wants supply,
 In quest of finny myriads swift ye fly,
 With which the rivers, lakes, and seas abound,
 That lave your glens, and hills sublime surround.
 Thus, while secure from civil broil or feud,
 The Patriarchal Age will be renew'd.¹¹⁰

Here we see the idea of purity and authenticity being applied to livestock, so that the unchanging character of the native breed becomes a kind of deposit box for conceptions of an aboriginal social order. One is reminded of anxieties over the 'correct' manner of wearing Highland dress, and the desire to freeze its inevitable evolution and adaptation to circumstances. Cattle of a distinctly Highland breed infiltrate landscape images from the 1830s. The group in John Fleming's *Loch Tay and Ben Lawers* (1832) [Fig.129] shows the traditional range of colours from dark brown through to a pale gold, as do the more rugged specimens in several of Horatio McCulloch's works.¹¹¹ Close-up studies of the breed also appeared at the annual RSA exhibitions. Among these could be cited *West Highland Heifers* and *A Family of West Highlanders*, by David Octavius Hill, both submitted to the RSA in 1857. The animal painter Gourlay Steell (1819-1894) also exhibited paintings of prize west Highlanders at the RSA in 1859, 1862 and 1863.¹¹² During the 1870s, the aesthetic profile of the breed took a new turn in the work of Joseph Denovan Adam, who constructed a field studio at his home in Stirling so that he and his students could paint the cattle from life.¹¹³ Adam's *Highland Cattle* (1878) [Fig.130], while bearing testimony to long hours of careful observation in the studio, was nonetheless another variation on the theme of droving, with cattle winding their way along a clearly defined

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 15-16.

¹¹¹ MMAG, 1977.809, John Fleming, *Loch Tay and Ben Lawers*, Canvas, 12.5 x 17.5, 1832; GM, 997, Horatio McCulloch, *Dunstaffnage Castle*, Canvas, 66.3 x 121.2, 1854; GM, 999, Horatio McCulloch, *Loch Achray*, 80.8 x 125.6, 1865; GM, 1002, Horatio McCulloch, *Loch Maree*, Canvas, 111.4 x 183.2, 1865. See also the herd of cattle in the background of NGS, NG 987, John Milne Donald, *A Highland Stream, Glenfruin*, Canvas, 64.8 x 89.9, 1861.

¹¹² de Laperriere, ed., *RSA Exhibitors*.

¹¹³ Maria Devaney, *Mountain, Meadow, Moss and Moor: Joseph Denovan Adam, RSA, RSW, 1841-1896* (Stirling, 1996).

track in a moorland landscape.¹¹⁴ Adam had several imitators, including Louis Bosworth Hurt (1856-1929) who similarly kept a small herd of Highland cattle for use as models in his paintings. Adam and Hurt, together with Peter Graham (1836-1921) and Alfred de Breanski (1852-1928), were the leading architects of the 'moorland and mist' genre in which the visual depiction of the Highland landscape drew its last gasp in the closing decades of the nineteenth century.¹¹⁵

Given the enduring significance of the old West Highland breed as a symbol of regional identity today, it is easy to treat it as an iconographical given, overlooking the historical events which first secured its picturesque status. The chronology of the paintings discussed here nevertheless suggests that, as with many other aspects of Highland life, the cattle trade gathered aesthetic value only after it had fallen into decline, threatening to take with it things esteemed for their association with centuries of tradition: the breed itself; the hardy, independent spirit of the droving class; and the old ways through the glens, unmarred by wheeled traffic, mapped only in local and droving memory. Adam and Hurt's 'collections' of Highland cattle could in many respects be compared to the antiquarian activities of some of their contemporaries: the likes of Sir Joseph Noel Paton and James Drummond, for example, who amassed miscellaneous collections of arms and armour so as to have a convenient supply of authentic period detail for use in history paintings. In so far as they were seen as typical of the Highland past, even living beasts, it seemed, could also become museumised.

Living Conditions and Domestic Tasks

The symbolic value of the thatched house has already been observed in a variety of contexts: juxtaposed with the relics of the past, such as brochs, standing stones and ruined castles, it became part of the continuum of antiquity applied to the

¹¹⁴ SSAM, 6094, Joseph Denovan Adam, *Highland Cattle*, Canvas, 104 x 171, 1878.

¹¹⁵ On Graham, who also kept a herd of Highland cattle at his studio in Buckinghamshire, see Irwin and Irwin, *Scottish Painters*, 362-3. Examples of Hurt and de Breanski's work can be seen in the McLean Museum and Art Gallery, Greenock: MMAG, 1977.903, Louis Bosworth Hurt, *Rising Mists, Loch Eck*, Canvas, 76.8 x 127.8, n.d.; MMAG, 1977.672, Alfred de Breanski, *A Scotch Lake at Eventide*, Canvas, 76.5 x 127.5, n.d. For Hurt, see also MG, 9/53, Louis Bosworth Hurt, *Highland Cattle*, Canvas, 61 x 101.6, n.d.

region as a whole, thus gathering a romantic significance. Set against the commercialisation of the fishing industry, with the improvements in housing associated with the planned villages, the thatched cottage could also be invoked as a memorial of an older way of life. The earliest images of housing in the Highlands and Islands were, however, documentary in character, and conveyed nothing desirable about such living conditions. In his *Letters*, Burt included an illustration of a Highland township which emphasised the haphazard arrangement and construction of the houses: their low roofs, uncut timbers and general air of misery [Fig.131]. 'A Highland Town,' he reported, 'is composed of a few Huts for Dwellings ... all irregularly placed, some one way, some another, and at any Distance look like so many Heaps of Dirt'.¹¹⁶ In 1769, Pennant was no more complimentary; travelling through Highland Aberdeenshire, he described the houses of the inhabitants as 'shocking to humanity, formed of loose stones, and covered with clods ...: they look, at a distance, like so many black mole-hills'.¹¹⁷ Even worse were the interiors. Without chimneys or proper windows, inadequately waterproofed, and with no separate entrance for the animals, they were portrayed as damp, dark, smoky and insanitary. Griffith contributed drawings of an Islay cottage and of shielings in Jura to Pennant's tour in 1772 [Fig.132]. These were more documentary than Burt's, noting such details as the web of ropes securing the thatch, the low entrances, minimal lighting, and the use of faggots of sticks bound together in place of a proper door. The shielings were an object of special curiosity, constructed using sods of turf laid over a frame of rough branches. Some had a conic shape like a wigwam, others an igloo-like dome. In the foreground of his drawing, Griffith included a half-derelict example, partly to show its inner structure in more detail, partly to demonstrate the insubstantial nature of this building method.¹¹⁸ The vignettes on John Home's plans of Assynt (1774) carried further sketches of these turf shielings, each with its own peculiar shape and size [Fig.133].¹¹⁹

¹¹⁶ Burt, *Letters*, II, 120-1; pl. facing 120.

¹¹⁷ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1769, 109.

¹¹⁸ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, pl. 15.

¹¹⁹ NLS, Dep. 313/3585, Home, Survey of Assynt, No. 5, 'Plan of the Farms of Loch Beanoch, Nedd, Drumbeig and Culkein'; No. 10, 'Plan of the Farms of Inch-na-daff and Tubeg'.

Besides the structure of these dwellings, interior conditions were also an object of interest to travellers. Griffith's 'Interior of a Weaver's Cottage in Islay' [Fig.134], engraved for Pennant's second tour, can justly be seen as the precursor of a genre which was to achieve great popularity during the nineteenth century. The print is rich in ethnographic detail, from the boxed-in bed to the iron pot-chain, or *slabhraidh*, hanging above the fire in the centre of the floor. A round opening directly overhead suggests some kind of opening for the smoke to escape through the roof. Although the furnishings are sparse, with large stones serving for seats around the fire, and despite the presence of hens roosting in the rafters, discomfort rather than filth and fecklessness is Griffith's main emphasis. Some token of industry is present in the form of a young boy working a loom to the extreme left of the picture. Pennant described the inhabitants of Islay with sympathy: 'a set of people worn down with poverty: their habitations scenes of misery... with a pot pendent over a grateless fire, filled with fare that may rather be called a permission to exist, than a support of vigorous life: the inmates, as may be expected, lean, withered, dusky and smoke-dried'.¹²⁰

Another scientific observer was the chemist Thomas Garnett, who illustrated the exterior of a blacksmith's house in the Highlands as an example of local construction [Fig.135]. This, he conceded, was 'better than they generally are', some poorer instances being roofed with turf instead of thatch.¹²¹ The one illustrated, like Griffith's Islay cottage, is built of loose stone, with a single window, smoke-hole in the roof, and thatch weighted down with ropes and stones. It is significant that Garnett's illustration was a simple woodcut printed on the same page as the text, differing from the aquatint plates he used for scenic views. Two old trees with curious roots and branches and a quernstone were also illustrated in this way, thus separating the visual side of Garnett's tour into two distinct spheres of interest: scientific curiosities and picturesque scenery.

The English artist Joseph Farington, who travelled to Scotland in 1788 and 1792, also had diverse interests, embracing social circumstances as well as scenery. In

¹²⁰ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland, 1772*, I, 229; pl. 16.

¹²¹ Garnett, *Observations*, I, 160.

Glenorchy, he connected the two, commenting that the valley was ‘an almost untouched specimen of the ancient appearance of Highland scenery’:

The Cottages are in the rudest state that has been described, built of rude stones, and the coarse thatch is bound by ropes of Hay or straw. We entered two of them, each of which had only one door at which were admitted the family, and the Cattle, a slight division separated their apartments, and the little stalls, of which there were seven in one of the Cottages, were not much inferior to the Bed places for the people.¹²²

Prior to this, at the entrance of Loch Goil, he had seen the ‘skeletons of several cottages on each side of the lake’, the result of the inhabitants having been cleared to make way for sheep.¹²³ Farington travelled through parts of the Highlands at a time of visible experimentation and change. On Blair Drummond estate near Stirling, he paused to examine a new settlement on a stretch of unbroken moss, which had been set apart as a colony for Highlanders, and was intended to prevent emigration. Farington admired the industry of the colonists, and had nothing adverse to say about female labour, observing that the women were ‘employed in digging and removing the moss with as much vigour and effect as the men’. He was particularly fascinated by the process of constructing moss cottages, which he described as ‘the first step on taking possession of a tract of this dreary waste’. These were dug out of the turf, leaving a sufficient thickness for the walls, on which rough timbers were then laid and finished with thatch. Farington included a small diagram of this process in his notes, and also made pencil sketches of houses under construction and following completion [*Fig.136*]. In his journal, he made clear that the moss-houses were not intended as permanent dwellings, but as a stop-gap until proper brick houses had been erected. Yet although some inhabitants of the colony had already removed to more permanent dwellings at the time of his visit, it was the more curious moss structures which attracted his pencil.¹²⁴ Farington’s status as a member of the art

¹²² ECL, qYDA 1861.792, f. 20, Joseph Farington, Tours in Scotland, Typescript of MS. Notebook, 6-26 July 1792.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, f. 19.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, ff. 9-12; for the drawings, see ECL, qYDA 865, Nos. 8-9. For further comment on Farington’s tour, see also Rackwitz, “‘Terra Incognita’”, 459.

establishment makes this concern with ethnographic themes especially interesting. His observation of Highland building practices in the context of migration and change was also significant.

By the 1830s, the Highland cottage had become a popular subject among professional exhibiting artists. Like other elements of Highland tradition which made their way into the visual canon, this must be read in the light of efforts to eradicate the insubstantial and insanitary living conditions of the poorest classes. Despite his sympathy for many aspects of tradition, Alexander Campbell had no place for the custom of erecting dwelling-houses from turf; this he equated in barbarity with the practice of tying the harrows to a horse's tail; and other primitive agricultural methods. In the notes to his poem, *The Grampians Desolate* (1804), Campbell described the improvements he had overseen on his son-in-law's estates in Lochaber while the latter was abroad with his regiment. A small premium was offered as bait to the first person who would build a stone house by the spring of a given year.¹²⁵ We have already noted the advance in living conditions which planned fishing communities were intended to effect. Loch's defence of the Sutherland improvements also recorded that in areas which had escaped clearance – including Knockan in Assynt, and the districts of Lairg, lower Strathfleet and the Kirk of Rogart in central and eastern Sutherland – a new stipulation in the leases required the erection of stone houses within easy reach of the main roads.¹²⁶

The wretchedness of life in a traditional hut would appear to have held few mitigating circumstances. From the Western Isles, James MacDonald reported in 1811:

Three fourths of the forty thousand cottagers of these Isles live in hovels which would disgrace any Indian tribe ... At least seven thousand of the natives of Lewis know nothing of a chimney, gable, glass window, house flooring, or even hearthstone, by their own experience at home; and what

¹²⁵ Campbell, *Grampians Desolate*, 275.

¹²⁶ Loch, *Account of Lord Stafford's Improvements*, 103.

we call their furniture, is, as may be imagined, wretched, and scanty beyond description, corresponding with their shabby exterior.¹²⁷

From Gairloch in 1838, Francis MacKenzie presented improvements in housing as a key priority for his tenants. This was visualised in the frontispiece to his *Hints for the Use of Highland Tenants*, already discussed above [Fig.83]. The house in 'Old Times', built off the level, with a broken gable, ragged thatch, and smoke issuing anyhow out of windows and gaps in the roof has been replaced in 'New Times' with a neat cottage, complete with chimney, glazed window and exterior porch, surrounded by an enclosed yard. There is also no sign of the midden which was located just outside the door of the former dwelling, and the beasts are now accommodated in a separate byre.¹²⁸ In 1841, however, when James Wilson and Sir Thomas Dick Lauder embarked on a cruise of the western Highlands and Islands with the secretary of the Fisheries Board, little appeared to have changed on parts of the estate. Near Loch Maree, Wilson recorded passing clusters of traditional huts, with a large number of natives 'grouped about them, like Indians round their wigwams'. With reference to the planned settlement at Ullapool, he also noted: 'It is probably much more difficult to plant people than potatoes, and a village won't necessarily increase and prosper merely because a certain quantity of stone, lime, and timber, has been laid down in the form of houses on a given point of land, which some one may have fondly deemed an "admirable site"'.¹²⁹ Like wooden tools, subsistence fishing, droving and illicit distilling, there was no question of the black house becoming extinct during the period when artists were first attracted to it as a theme for painting. As MacKenzie's frontispiece made clear, however, housing conditions were part and parcel of an overall system which improvers sought to bring into step with the modern world. While travelling in Lewis in 1820, William Daniell echoed James MacDonald in his observations on the people's circumstances, commenting on the absence of proper doors or windows and the extremely basic structure of the houses. 'A stranger', he went on, 'might take these structures rather for rustic sepulchres than dwellings, unless he saw, as was the case on the present

¹²⁷ MacDonald, *General View*, 94.

¹²⁸ MacKenzie, *Hints*, frontispiece.

¹²⁹ Wilson, *Voyage Round the Coasts of Scotland and the Isles*, I, 302, 311-12.

occasion, some of the inmates looking forth from their battlements, and presenting, with their unshaven chins and matted locks, no faint image of the aboriginal Britons, who combated against Agricola'.¹³⁰ Daniell's reference to the ancient Caledonians and Wilson's to wigwams and Indians belonged to the same discourse, situating the living conditions of nineteenth-century Highlanders within the standard constructs of primitivism. This set the Highland cottage in an amorphous zone where it could be condemned as a vestige of backwardness and at the same time idealised as a source of social and cultural virtues. It was in the latter guise that professional artists were to demonstrate most interest in the black house, particularly its interior.

The earliest cottage interiors to appear in a fine art context were produced by David Allan, whose interest in Highland folk culture has already been observed. The examples traced remain in watercolour and pencil, although it is possible that they represent studies for a larger painting [Fig.137].¹³¹ The artist's illustrations for the 1789 edition of Allan Ramsay's poem, *The Gentle Shepherd*, depict several Lowland interiors and the cottage interior was by no means an exclusively Highland subject. As a scene of obscure but honest virtue, the idea of the cottage gained popularity during the second half of the eighteenth century, with well known literary works such as Thomas Gray's *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* (1751) and Oliver Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* (1770) idealising the 'homely joys' and 'humble bowers' of the rural poor. Contemporary with David Allan, the poet Robert Burns also created a more intimate, Scottish version of this idyll, positing in *The Cotter's Saturday Night* (1785-6) that 'in fair virtue's heavenly road, the cottage leaves the palace far behind'. One of Allan's illustrations to *The Gentle Shepherd* [Fig.138] shares several features with his 'Scottish Highland Family', including the hens roosting in the rafters, the black pot over an open fire, and the simple furnishings.¹³² In the Highland example, however, there are several elements which specifically emphasise the cultural distinctiveness of the setting. Among the more obvious symbols can be counted the targe, broadsword and pistol hanging from the wall,

¹³⁰ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, IV, 65.

¹³¹ There are three examples, two watercolours and one pencil drawing, in NGS, DLOAN 1, ff. 91-3, Album of David Allan, n.d.

¹³² NGS, D 2306, David Allan, *Scene from 'The Gentle Shepherd'*, Watercolour, 1789.

the piper, an array of tartan cloth, and the set of Ossian's poems on a high shelf. The proximity of animals is also stressed, including not only the domesticated cat and fowls, but also a goat, and, through the adjoining byre door, a cow. The fire is a much simpler affair than in the *Gentle Shepherd* image, arranged on a stone slab in the centre of the floor (with no chimney), the furnishings are sparser, and a pair of rats are pictured running along a rough opening in the partition wall. Yet despite the basic nature of the accommodation, Allan portrayed a scene of domestic harmony and cultural richness. Besides the allusion to Ossian, creativity is represented in the figure of the piper. There is also a strong emphasis on self-sufficiency – the hare and fish in the foreground suggesting a wholesome, if frugal, diet, and the woman spinning and boy knitting allude to domestic manufactures. In this interior, Allan drew attention to certain stock elements which would recur again and again in similar works by other artists during the nineteenth century. In these, the cottage would act as a channel for emphasising certain beliefs about Highland life: its close-knit family bonds and the importance of kinship; its organic cultural vivacity; and its resourcefulness and self-sufficiency in terms of homecrafts and food provision.

The first element of this iconography – the family circle – can be traced back to Griffith's Islay interior, which portrays three generations and the motif of the mother nursing her youngest child. The mother and child image recurs in Landseer's *Highland Breakfast* (c. 1834), and in William Simson's *Interior of a Highland Cottage* (1833); clusters of other young children also appear in Alexander Fraser's *Highland Sportsman* (1832), and in some sketches from the Ellice family albums; the older generation reappears in John Phillip's *Highland Home* (1845), and in several drawings by Katharine Ellice [*Figs.139-44*].¹³³ Such images of generational continuity and family unity might be contrasted with Thomas Faed's iconic emigration scene, *The Last of the Clan* (1865), in which it is the old who are to be left behind as the young gather their belongings

¹³³ V & A, FA.87 [O], Edwin Landseer, *A Highland Breakfast*, Panel, 50.8 x 66, c. 1834; NGS, D (NG) 378, William Simson, *Interior of a Cottage at Killin*, Watercolour, 1833; NGS, NG 2134, Alexander Fraser, *A Highland Sportsman*, Panel, 78.1 x 109.3, 1832; NLS, MS.15170, f. 38, H. J. Wells, *Entering a Highland Cottage*, c. 1850s; NLS, MS.15173, f. 22, Katharine Jane Ellice, *Highland Interior*, n.d.; NLS, MS.15174, ff. 69, 70-4, *Various Interiors*, c. 1847-60; AAGM, 4138, John Phillip, *The Highland Home*, Panel, 44.7 x 60.8, 1845.

for departure.¹³⁴ Although women predominate in interior views, there is also the presence of the male figure as provider, as in Fraser's *Sportsman*, or Landseer's *Interior of a Highlander's House* (c. 1831), which shows another sportsman with his kill.¹³⁵ The bounty of nature was a popular theme in romantic ideas of Highland life. In 1849, *The Inverness Courier* carried an account of a Scottish Fete held in London, in which it was reported that 'one of the most gratifying features of the exhibition was the sight of so many stout, well-made, handsome Highlanders, with plenty of bone and muscle, but no fat'. Their appearance was attributed to a combination of oatmeal, 'heather-fed mutton, a deer from the hill-side, and a salmon from the loch'.¹³⁶ This version of Highland diet coincided, as Fenyo points out, with a time of widespread famine and destitution. McLan and Logan's *Picturesque Gatherings* (1848), another publication from the famine period, anticipated the *Courier* with a series of plates showing Highlanders garnering a variety of fish and game from loch, moor and hill; such images undoubtedly helped to shape the perceptions reproduced in newspaper accounts. According to Logan, 'the love of field sports, for which the country is admirably adapted, is so strong in the Highlander, that it may be said to be innate ... The nature of the country leads to the frequent use of gun and rod, and hence the dexterity acquired by the natives'.¹³⁷ Although several of McLan's images portray these skills being deployed in a modern context, depicting gillies on sporting estates, some traditions were cast in a more nostalgic light. This included the practice of spearing salmon. In Cordiner's *Remarkable Ruins* (1788), there is an image of a waterfall in Glenmoriston which shows this fishing method [Fig.145], although the print focuses on the landscape rather than the documentation of local customs.¹³⁸ McLan's 1848 illustration was a night-time scene, lit with blazing torches of bog-pine, thus enhancing the drama of the action. Logan described the custom as having fallen prey to the changing times: 'It is a scene the more interesting, as among other effects of refined civilisation,

¹³⁴ GM, 3366, Thomas Faed, *The Last of the Clan*, Canvas, 101.2 x 50.5, 1865.

¹³⁵ Private Collection, on loan to the Ashmolean Museum, Oxford: AM, L.05.25, Sir Edwin Landseer, *Interior of a Highlander's House*, Panel, 69.8 x 85, c. 1831. Reproduced in Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 67.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Fenyo, *Contempt, Sympathy and Romance*, 167.

¹³⁷ McLan and Logan, *Picturesque Gatherings*, 19.

¹³⁸ Cordiner, *Remarkable Ruins*, I, n.p.

spearing salmon may be among those things which once have been'.¹³⁹ Its status as a museum piece of Highland tradition was underscored by the fact that a display of salmon leistering by night was put on for Queen Victoria while she was staying at Balmoral in 1850.¹⁴⁰

Besides the process of gathering, methods of preserving and cooking food were also visualised in some images of the Highland cottage. In Landseer's *Drover's Departure*, fish can be observed drying under the eaves of the foremost building. The same feature is repeated in *Interior of a Highlander's House*, although this time they are strung up above the fire to smoke. In a drawing by McIan entitled *Donald Fraser's Cottage* (1840), hams are shown hanging from a beam directly above the chimney piece [Fig.146].¹⁴¹ The depiction of a chimney in Highland interiors was highly unusual. Fires were generally in the centre of the floor, with simple utensils suspended on the chain, including the ubiquitous black pot, kettle (as in Simson's drawing), or a cast-iron girdle. The girdle was a particularly popular object in such paintings, perhaps standing in for the oatcakes which formed such a central part of the Highlander's diet. Examples can be seen in the Simson interior cited above, in Landseer's *Highland Breakfast*, Phillip's *Highland Home*, and a number of Katharine Ellice's drawings. For visitors to the north, opportunities for observation were plentiful; the experience of entering such cottages and being treated to simple hospitality became a central part of the tourist experience. This can be traced back to Johnson, and continued throughout the nineteenth century. In July 1862, for instance, one lady-traveller recorded in her diary: 'We all went into a sheiling which though poor enough looking outside, was very comfortable and clean within, and sat down to a small table covered with a clean cloth and partook of some bannocks, made expressly for us, which with some good butter and milk we refreshed ourselves and having good appetites much enjoyed our repast'.¹⁴² The simplicity of the fare – its freshness,

¹³⁹ McIan and Logan, *Picturesque Gatherings*, 22.

¹⁴⁰ Queen Victoria, *Journal*, 126. The Queen was delighted with the display and enthused: 'I wished for Landseer's pencil'. There is an extant oil painting of salmon leistering by Landseer, although its precise date is uncertain: private collection, exhibited SNPG, Edinburgh, *Our Highland Home*, 18 March to 5 June 2005.

¹⁴¹ NMS, Scottish Life Archive MS_1995_23, R. R. McIan, *Donald Fraser's Cottage*, Ink, 23.5 x 27, 1840.

¹⁴² NLS, MS. 29498, f. 66v, Anon., *Journal of Tours to France and Scotland*, 1862.

and sense of being taken straight from its source – conformed to the traveller’s desire for new experiences, and also fitted the stereotype of Highland wholesomeness. One further feature in relation to cooking which deserves mention appears in several images and demonstrates the level of ethnographic observation which went into these paintings. Rather than being in the true centre of the floor, fires were sometimes constructed against an interior wall, and while having no proper chimney, a stone plinth was erected to protect the partition. This is pictured in Landseer’s *Highland Breakfast* and *Interior of a Highlander’s House*, Phillip’s *Highland Home*, and in a watercolour of a ‘bothy’ in Strathglass by Robert Thorburn Ross [Fig.147].¹⁴³

Improvisation and the ability to make the best of locally available materials was another concept tied to the simple furnishings of these homes. Some exterior views, such as Ross’s bothy in Strathglass, and James Skene’s ‘Kilmory Knap’ (1833) returned to the theme of agricultural tools, both picturing specimens of a sledge-cart adjacent to thatched houses [Figs.148-9].¹⁴⁴ These, like the *caschròm*, could be used as evidence for the Highlander’s capacity to match materials to circumstances with a considerable degree of ingenuity.¹⁴⁵ Images of home manufacturing, particularly the preparation of wool for cloth, were also prominent in interior views. Allan’s depiction of an old woman spinning with the distaff in his *Scottish Highland Family* can be read as an early instance of this emphasis. Spinning wheels feature in the paintings by Fraser, Phillip and Katharine Ellice discussed above, and in a Ross-shire interior by another lady amateur, Mary Webster, who appears to have been staying at Brahan Castle in the autumn of 1847.¹⁴⁶ Images which drew particular attention to the distaff, or spindle, might also be cited. Alexander Kay’s print of ‘Mary Macpherson Going for Peats’ in Skye [Fig.90] showed the woman with a spindle in her hand and a creel on her back: two facets of a labour-intensive economic system. In 1833, William Simson exhibited a painting entitled *An Old Woman of the Isle of Skye* at

¹⁴³ NGS, D 3625R, Robert Thorburn Ross, *Interior of a Highland Bothy*, Watercolour, n.d. Ross’s dates are 1816-76.

¹⁴⁴ NGS, D 3626v, Robert Thorburn Ross, *A Highland Bothy*, Watercolour, n.d.; ECL, 212, Skene, Highland Album, No. 63a, ‘Kilmory Knap, 28 July 1833’.

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Logan, *Scottish Gael*, ed. Stewart, I, 210: ‘The Highlanders are naturally very ingenious, and of a mechanical turn of mind’.

¹⁴⁶ ECL, 5238, Mary Webster, *Interior of a Cottage, Ross-shire*, Watercolour, 29 Oct 1847.

the RSA. This carried an explanatory note, 'the distaff is still universally used by the natives', the word 'still' emphasising the visual value of such disappearing practices.¹⁴⁷ By 1881, the distaff had gained an established place within the antiquarian record, sharing a plate with the flail, a 'swyn-feather' and the *caschròm* in Drummond's *Ancient Scottish Weapons*.¹⁴⁸ Like so many aspects of tradition in which artists were interested, spinning and other homecrafts must be read in the light of historical circumstances. I. F. Grant records that use of the spindle was discouraged during the later eighteenth-century as a result of attempts to introduce spinning for a commercial market.¹⁴⁹ Spinning wheels were thus a relatively modern innovation in certain parts of the Highlands, and while featuring in several paintings, this may explain the greater emphasis on the distaff. It was this method, rather than the wheel, which was illustrated in McIan and Logan's *Picturesque Gatherings* in 1848. Another plate in this volume depicted a woman carding wool with a young girl watching, suggesting the passing on of tradition. Other examples of handcraft can be seen in the picture, such as a woven basket on the wall, and a pair of leather boots and a last, indicating the making or repair of footwear. Logan explicitly associated these practices with an older way of life, linking the introduction of mechanised procedures with devalued products. This recalls the contention that whisky from illegal stills was superior to that made by commercial distilleries:

Before the application of machinery for carding and spinning wool, these operations were most efficiently performed by manual labour: they are among those primitive domestic occupations of the Highland females which have not yet been superseded. If in the march of improvement carding could be accomplished with greater expedition, it could not certainly be done in greater perfection by artificial process. The superiority of home-wrought materials is well known, and the people

¹⁴⁷ NMS, Library 12655, Mitchell, after Kay, *Portraits Taken from Nature*; for Simson, see de Laperriere, ed., *RSA Exhibitors*. Note also some further RSA entries, including Alexander McInnes's *Young Highland Wife – Rock and Spindle* (1842) and John Blake MacDonald's *Spinning-Wheel* (1867). McInnes was based in Inverness for all that can be traced of his short career, and may have been the A. McInnes responsible for the frontispiece in MacKenzie's *Hints*. If this was the case, an interesting duality between the improving and romantic take on aspects of Highland tradition can be traced in the work of a single artist.

¹⁴⁸ Drummond, *Ancient Scottish Weapons*, pl. 54.

¹⁴⁹ Grant, *Highland Folk Ways*, 222.

very industriously prosecute carding, spinning, weaving, and waulking or fulling linen, tartan, and other cloth, in preference to sending it to the mill or the manufacturer, where, as old women will say, 'the heart is taken out of it'.¹⁵⁰

Besides the better quality of the finished product, Logan also idealised the lifestyle of which manual processes were part. 'The whole', he concluded, 'furnishes very ingenious and useful employment for the female inmates of a Highland farm-house during the winter nights, producing scenes of joyous industry and content'. He also drew attention to the costume of the figure in McIan's illustration of carding wool, identifying her as 'an aged woman, called Kirsty MacCail, the wife of an old Isles-man, who adheres to the fashion of a century back'.¹⁵¹ Elsewhere, the survival of traditional dress in its purest form was also linked to the arts of spinning, weaving and dyeing, as practised in a domestic setting. In *The Costume of the Clans*, John Sobieski Stuart painted a portrait of erstwhile self-sufficiency, with which the survival of tartan was bound up:

In the old time, when the Highland dress was universally worn, the cloth was spun and dyed by the women, and woven by the weaver of the glen. The leather was dressed with the bark of the birch from the hill, and made into brogues by the inmates of each house. The brooch, the check-tops for the purses, the dirk, and every tool and implement, was fabricated by the neighbouring smith; and each man could make his own kilt and hose, better than most tailors can make them now. But, after the lapse of two generations, these domestic arts had died away, and not only the faculty, but the material, were lost.¹⁵²

In the *Vestiarium Scoticum*, Stuart had elaborated on the impact of the Disarming Act, arguing that its repeal came too late to save the production of tartan in its authentic and original form: 'The public looms, where alone tartan was

¹⁵⁰ McIan and Logan, *Picturesque Gatherings*, 13.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 14. Note also an unfinished painting of a young girl carding wool (c. 1830) by Landseer: private collection, reproduced in Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 62.

¹⁵² Stolberg and Stuart, *Costume of the Clans*, 143-4.

fabricated, supplied only a fine, expensive, and indurable material – unsuited to labour, inadequate for defence, and inaccessible in price'.¹⁵³ While this line of reasoning was underwritten by a concern to bolster the romantic, elegiac status of tartan, Gray cites evidence from the New Statistical Account to document the gradual invasion of factory-made cloths to certain parts of the Highlands and Islands, including remote regions like Sutherland. Rather than being raised and processed from scratch, some households, as in the parish of Lochs in Lewis, could be found buying in wool by the early decades of the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁴ Domestic manufactures were thus another instance of practices in the throes, or on the cusp, of change, and it was this which enhanced the value of older ways in the eyes of the artist. The initial stages of wool preparation formed a particularly popular theme, standing in for a time of complete self-sufficiency and isolation from the outside world. Read in the context of other images from the same period, these prints and paintings tie into a more general obsession with craft and culture, elegising the losses engendered by the levelling tendency of modernity.

Besides the making of cloth, one further domestic custom frequently observed by artists was the practice of washing out of doors. This was by no means exclusive to the Highlands: in 1806, W. H. Pyne's *Microcosm* illustrated washing practices from different parts of Britain, including Welsh women beating sheets or blankets in a rural stream. The text, however, noted that trampling the clothes in a tub, necessitating shortened skirts, was a peculiarly Scottish custom.¹⁵⁵ This is borne out by the earliest images of washing in Scotland, which originated in a military context. John Slezer's view of Dundee in the *Theatrum Scotiae* (1693) [Fig.150], already cited in chapter one, was the first of these, followed by an illustration in Burt's *Letters* (1754) [Fig.151], and a chalk drawing by Paul Sandby, entitled 'A Scotch Washerwoman'.¹⁵⁶ All three depicted women trampling clothes in wooden tubs, sometimes in pairs with joined hands for balance. Martin Rackwitz has traced commentary on this practice in travellers' accounts from as early as 1635, noting that this was one of the first things to attract comment on arrival north of the border. He also quotes several

¹⁵³ Stuart, *Vestiarium Scoticum*, 65.

¹⁵⁴ Gray, *Highland Economy*, 177-8.

¹⁵⁵ W. H. Pyne, *Microcosm* (London, 1806), 6.

¹⁵⁶ The Sandby drawing is described in Dunbar, *Costume of Scotland*, 62.

descriptions of washing in the Highlands, including an account by one of the Duke of Cumberland's volunteers, written in 1746. According to this soldier, those who could not afford a tub trampled the clothes on a large stone in the river, a system he had observed in Inverness. On the evidence of travellers' observations, washing out of doors would seem to have been confined to rural areas by the end of the eighteenth century; in the larger towns and in cities like Glasgow, public wash houses were established, which provided the necessary facilities at a fixed price.¹⁵⁷ Perhaps for this reason, nineteenth-century images of washing in Scotland tend to be concentrated in the Highlands, where it was more immediately visible to the artist. In Beattie's collection of views, *Scotland Illustrated* (1838), a print of Inverness incorporated women and children washing clothes in the river as a picturesque foreground detail [Fig.152]; this motif was echoed in an engraving of Cawdor castle, situated on the fringe of Highland territory.¹⁵⁸ In Joshua Cristall's watercolour of Inveraray, a woman and two children are shown washing at the loch edge, with a large tub half-submerged in the water [Fig.114].¹⁵⁹ McLan, characteristically, also depicted washing methods in an illustration for *Picturesque Gatherings* (1848), including a large pot set over a fire in the open air to indicate the means of heating water [Fig.153]. Although early travellers had reacted with distaste to the lack of modesty observed by Scottish women in tying up their skirts while at this work, McLan's image is a sanitised version, the girls' skirts falling well below the knee in each instance. His composition was duplicated by a French artist, Sulpice Guillaume Chevalier Gavarni, in an lithograph for Michel Bouquet's *Artist's Ramble in the North of Scotland* (c.1850) [Fig.154]. In both prints, the practices of trampling in a tub, and below water on a stone, were illustrated together, thus forming a kind of composite record of the full range of customs.¹⁶⁰ A review of Bouquet's collection in *The Art Journal* criticised his selection of 'commonplace subjects', but other artists were also turning to this theme in oils. William Dyce's *Scene in Arran* (1858-9) [Fig.155] and Thomas Miles Richardson's *Scottish Peasants*

¹⁵⁷ Rackwitz, "Terra Incognita", 530-3.

¹⁵⁸ Beattie, *Scotland Illustrated*, I, pls. facing 40, 157.

¹⁵⁹ AM, WA1915.20, Cristall, *Shore of Loch Fyne*.

¹⁶⁰ McLan and Logan, *Picturesque Gatherings*, pl. facing 9; AAGM, 5427, Sulpice Guillaume Chevalier Gavarni, *Girls Washing Clothes*, Lithograph, 1849. Although the location in Gavarni's image is not specified, its clear links to McLan, and the suggestion of a tartan pattern on one of the girls' skirts, indicates that it was intended to represent Highland customs.

Washing on the Banks of the Lochy, Killin, Perthshire (n.d) – replicated McIan and Gavarni’s idyllic portrayals of rural life.¹⁶¹ Like spinning, this mode of washing stood in for an older, slower pattern of existence, overtaken in Lowland cities by less distinctive, if less laborious methods. As seen in the north in the middle decades of the nineteenth century, it represented a survival of what had once been common in the rest of Scotland. This provided another avenue through which the Highlands could be construed as ‘the Scottish past on the doorstep’.¹⁶² However, according to Logan in 1848, change was also creeping northwards. ‘This simple practice’, he wrote, ‘once equally common in more southern towns, is giving place to genteeler modes of executing a work indispensable in Highland housekeeping’.¹⁶³ By connecting trampling with distinctive working songs, Logan suggested that, as with other features of domestic life, the slow seepage of modernity threatened a web of cultural forms which were unique and irreplaceable. This fits again into Campbell of Islay’s conception of folklore as something intimately connected with material life, already noted in the frontispiece to his *Popular Tales of the West Highlands*. In this view of Gaelic culture, entertainment and recreation was not something separate from the domestic, workaday world, but in fact grew out of it. Ironically, however, it was the artificially preserved, museumised version of this culture, dished up in piping competitions, dancing displays and Highland games, which came to dominate the visual record.

Entertainment and Recreation

In some interior views, the perceived connection between art forms, such as piping, and a humble setting was made very explicit. This can be seen in Allan’s *Scottish Highland Family*, already discussed above, and in Landseer’s *Highland Music* (c. 1830) [Fig.156].¹⁶⁴ In a portrait of Angus MacKay, painted shortly before he entered the service of Queen Victoria, the piper was portrayed against a

¹⁶¹ *AJ*, 12, 1850, 96; AAGM, 3213, William Dyce, *A Scene in Arran*, Board, 35.4 x 50.7, 1858-9; Sotheby’s, Catalogue of Scottish Pictures sold at Hopetoun House, September 1998, Lot No. 1380, Thomas Miles Richardson, Jnr., *Scottish Peasants Washing on the Banks of the Lochy, Killin, Perthshire*, Watercolour and Bodycolour, n.d..

¹⁶² The phrase is Withers’: Withers, ‘Historical Creation’, 147.

¹⁶³ McIan and Logan, *Picturesque Gatherings*, 9-10.

¹⁶⁴ Tate Britain, London, NOO411, Sir Edwin Landseer, *Highland Music*, Panel, 47 x 59, c. 1830.

backdrop of low thatched cottages, again emphasising a link between the richness of Highland culture and modest material circumstances.¹⁶⁵ William Donaldson has compiled a fascinating account of the interaction between perceptions of tradition and the evolution of pipe music over two centuries from 1750. He discusses the place of musicians like MacKay within an environment in which piping became absorbed into the public symbolism of the nation. An important stage in this process was the establishment of open competitions, first held in 1781 at Falkirk under the auspices of the Highland Society of London. From 1783, the contests were held annually in Edinburgh, managed by the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland. Donaldson draws a comparison between the improving ethos of the Highland societies, as evidenced in its members' commitment to agricultural and economic reforms, and their attempt to 'improve' culture by introducing a competitive spirit. 'Highland bulls and heifers, draught horses, ploughmen, sheep-shearers, poets and pipers – all might be made to compete and be subject to the disciplines of the market'.¹⁶⁶ The idea of competition had a mixed rationale. On the one hand, it was motivated by the perception that indigenous musical tradition was in decline, and so needed to be artificially motivated and preserved. In part, this rose out of the view of Highland culture engendered by Macpherson and the poems of Ossian. The idea that 'the mechanisms of tradition were failing', and that 'modern "tradition" must be inherently degenerative and unable to sustain itself without the intervention of external mediators' was one element in what Donaldson describes as the 'Macpherson paradigm'.¹⁶⁷ Another factor was militaristic. Against the backdrop of the Napoleonic wars, Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster remarked that, but for the efforts of the Highland Societies in establishing annual competitions, 'there would not perhaps have been a single piper now living, qualified to rouse by his martial strains, the enthusiastic spirit of his Countrymen'.¹⁶⁸ A further issue was the desire for spectacle and display. Although pipers had competed at the early Society meetings in ordinary clothes, full Highland dress was later made mandatory. In the early 1820s, pipers were also required to perform against a painted landscape backdrop set up like theatrical scenery. As

¹⁶⁵ SNPG, PG 2675, Alexander Johnstone, *Angus MacKay*, Canvas, 90.2 x 70.5, 1840.

¹⁶⁶ Donaldson, *Highland Pipe*, 67.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 19.

¹⁶⁸ Quoted in *ibid.*, 81.

Donaldson comments, 'this led directly to an ethos in which piping was seen first and foremost as a spectacle, with music coming a distant second to theatrical razzmatazz'.¹⁶⁹

All of this must be borne in mind when we come to look at the visual representation of piping during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Piper portraiture constituted something of an independent genre during this period; considered together, we can trace certain stock elements within these paintings which go back as far as Richard Waitt's depiction of William Cumming, piper to the Laird of Grant, in 1714 [Fig.157].¹⁷⁰ Waitt painted extensively for the Grants between 1713 and 1726, including several portraits of the household retainers. Cumming was a member of a Strathspey family who provided the Grants with hereditary pipers over a period of about one hundred and seventy years. Although the role of musician within the chief's retinue had been traditionally filled by a harper, pipers were in the ascendancy from the first half of the seventeenth century. Cheape quotes a reference to a Donald Cumming, piper to the Laird of Grant, from a letter of 1624. The last member of the family to receive a salary from the Grants was John Cumming, who also competed at early Highland Society competitions in 1784 and 1785.¹⁷¹ The Waitt portrait constituted a kind of prototype for later piper portraits. Cumming's tartan livery, set of Highland arms, heraldic banner, and the landscape/castle backdrop were echoed in numerous examples of the genre during the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These images all post-dated the Highland societies' preservationist activities, and there is no known instance of a piper portrait in the intervening period. In 1784, the Highland Society of London appointed Neil MacLean, a native of Mull, as its official piper, commissioning a portrait from the artist William Craig [Fig.158]. Craig's image follows Waitt in several details, including the tartan livery, the sword and dirk, the castellated house behind the piper, and even the position of his feet, with one sock higher than the other.¹⁷² From the same time came a portrait by John Kay, the Edinburgh

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 75-96.

¹⁷⁰ NMS, H.OD 69, Richard Waitt, *The Piper to the Laird of Grant*, Canvas, 213 x 154, 1714.

¹⁷¹ Hugh Cheape, 'The Piper to the Laird of Grant', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, 125, 1995, 1166-7.

¹⁷² NMS, GA.1998.1.79, William Craig, *Neil MacLean*, Engraving, c. 1784.

caricaturist, entitled 'McArthur, Piper to Ranald MacDonald of Staffa' [Fig.159]. There is no landscape setting in this image, and the costume is more decidedly military (particularly the bonnet), although the heraldic banner on the pipe drones again goes back to Waitt.¹⁷³ Similar features recur in McLan's imaginary portrait of a MacCrimmon piper, lithographed for *The Clans of the Scottish Highlands* in 1845 [Fig.160]. In this image, the piper's back is turned so as to display the targe mounted on his back and the detail of the banner. The shield was of course an element of Cumming's weaponry, although it would not appear to have survived in the 'baggage' of later pipers. McLan and Logan's concern was to catalogue features of costume which were deemed authentic and original, and the figure itself was intended as an historical re-enactment, 'saluting his chief, who is supposed to be approaching in his biorlin, or galley'.¹⁷⁴ Cheaper costume books like William Eagle's *Clans of Scotland* (1850) included a piper which conformed to type, in this case a representative of the Clan MacLeod, complete with a banner bearing the clan motto – 'Hold Fast' – portrayed against the backdrop of Fingal's cave [Fig.161].¹⁷⁵

From the outset, the music of the pipe was represented as inseparable from costume, tying it into antiquarian obsessions with the minutiae of dress and arms. The remarkably static quality in all these portraits also reflected prevailing ideas about the nature of tradition. Prefatory essays in published collections of piobaireachd stressed the antiquity of the form, precluding the possibility that it was still an ongoing artistic enterprise, with new tunes being composed by the current performer community. With publication came an increasing emphasis on standardisation, with players judged on their ability to reproduce the 'accepted' (ie. transcribed) version of a tune rather than a more fluid and personal interpretation.¹⁷⁶ Visual images of the piper sum up this conception of tradition, using stance, dress and material artefacts to convey the expectation that the performers themselves be frozen in a time warp, with the Waitt portrait of Cumming acting as a universal reference point. Donaldson has identified a

¹⁷³ John Kay, *A Series of Original Portraits and Caricature Etchings; with Biographical Sketches and Illustrative Anecdotes* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1837-8), II, No. 101. The print is dated 1810.

¹⁷⁴ McLan and Logan, *Clans of the Scottish Highlands*, notes to 'MacCruimin'.

¹⁷⁵ W. Eagle, *The Clans of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1850), n.p.

¹⁷⁶ Donaldson, *Highland Pipe*, 98, 119-20.

pattern in collections of pipe music published from the 1780s through the nineteenth century. Although the musical element was usually the work of an established authority or practising performer, introductory material was frequently provided by enthusiasts who could dilate with literary panache on the glories of Highland tradition, but were guided by romantic stereotypes rather than a true knowledge of their subject. Such introductions nevertheless framed the reception of the work, and perceptions of piping as an art form.¹⁷⁷ Their vision was rubber-stamped by the visual imagery of some title pages, including the vignette illustration on Angus MacKay's *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd* (1838) [Fig.162]. This was in exhibitionist style, portraying MacKay piping for a group of dancers in the grounds of a castle.¹⁷⁸

Dancing displays were introduced to the Society competitions during the early 1820s, partly to increase the appeal of the events (which were open to the public) to an uninitiated audience. As the *Edinburgh Advertiser* remarked in 1822: 'The peculiar music of the Piobrach ... perhaps may have something monotonous to an ear unaccustomed to it. The dancing, however, is at once relished by strangers, as well as by natives'.¹⁷⁹ Such displays intensified the image of piping as a form of entertainment in which the visual took precedence over the aural. This impression climaxed during Queen Victoria's first visit to the Highlands in 1842, when members of the old elite, including Lord Glenlyon and the Marquis of Breadalbane, treated the monarch to extravagant tableaux of kilted clansmen, piping recitals and exhibitions of Highland dancing. Although the political and cultural impact of George IV's visit to Scotland in 1822 has attracted a significant amount of attention from historians, Queen Victoria's much more sustained affair with all things Scottish has been viewed less seriously, at least until very recently. Richard J. Finlay and Alex Tyrrell have made some contribution towards reassessing the historical importance of 1842 and its consolidation of Highlandism.¹⁸⁰ The visual material associated with

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, esp. chs. 3, 6, 8.

¹⁷⁸ Angus MacKay, *Collection of Ancient Piobaireachd or Highland Pipe Music* (Edinburgh, 1838), title page.

¹⁷⁹ Quoted in Donaldson, *Highland Pipe*, 83.

¹⁸⁰ Richard J. Finlay, 'Queen Victoria and the Cult of Scottish Monarchy' in *Scottish History: The Power of the Past*, edd. Cowan and Finlay, 209-24; Alex Tyrrell, 'The Queen's "Little Trip": The Royal Visit to Scotland in 1842', *Scottish Historical Review*, 82, 2003, 47-73.

Balmoralism is immense, ranging from the coverage of the royal visits in popular periodicals like *The Illustrated London News*, to the Queen's own sketchbooks and the paintings and watercolours she commissioned from a range of artists.¹⁸¹ In comparison with the material produced as a result of George IV's brief visit in 1822, this has received very little critical attention, perhaps owing to the fact that the reputations of Victoria's artists have weathered the test of time less well than those of Wilkie and Turner. Time and space permit only a brief consideration of some key strands of imagery here.

The Queen appears to have accepted the version of the Highlands dished up by her aristocratic hosts uncritically. At Taymouth in September 1842, she recorded in her diary:

There were a number of Lord Breadalbane's Highlanders, all in the Campbell tartan, drawn up in front of the house, with Lord Breadalbane himself in a Highland dress at their head, a few of Sir Neil Menzies' men (in the Menzies red and white tartan), a number of pipers playing, and a company of the 92nd Highlanders, also in kilts. The firing of the guns, the cheering of the great crowd, the picturesqueness of the dresses, the beauty of the surrounding country, with its rich background of wooded hills, altogether formed one of the finest scenes imaginable. It seemed as if a great chieftain in olden feudal times was receiving his sovereign. It was princely and romantic.¹⁸²

Within this passage, the classic elements of Highlandism are effectively summarised: elaborate costumes, militarism, romantic landscape and antiquity. The aural effects – the pipers playing, the firing of the guns, the cheering of the crowd – form a submerged soundtrack to what is essentially a visual experience. The Queen's first day at Taymouth was rounded off with a display of dancing by torchlight. Again, the intention was to create a dramatic visual spectacle,

¹⁸¹ For an introduction to some of this material see Millar, *Queen Victoria's Life in the Scottish Highlands*.

¹⁸² Queen Victoria, *Journal*, 23-4.

described to good effect in Sir Thomas Dick Lauder's *Memorial of the Royal Progress in Scotland* (1843):

At each corner, one of the Clan Campbell Highlanders supported a standard, and there too were placed colossal Celts, bearing torches, that threw a strange glaring light on the serried phalanx of tartan figures surrounding three sides of the platforms, together with those forming the lane kept open as a communication with the great entrance. On these stages commenced a series of Highland reels, in which some of the most active dancers performed their wild and manly steps to the shrill and spirit-stirring notes of the bagpipes, their whole action being rendered more picturesque by the red glare flaring and flashing from the torches, and more interesting by the joyous shrieks of the performers and spectators.¹⁸³

Following their lease and subsequent purchase of Balmoral, the Queen and Prince Albert set about recreating some of this spectacle for themselves. As early as 1843, Victoria secured the services of Angus MacKay as her personal piper. MacKay was later painted at Balmoral by William Wyld, a portrait which followed the conventions of earlier specimens in composition and detail [Fig.163].¹⁸⁴ William, or Uilleam, Ross replaced MacKay in 1854, following service with the Black Watch. In 1866, Ross was painted by Kenneth MacLeay for *The Highlanders of Scotland* [Fig.164], along with another royal piper, William MacDonald.¹⁸⁵ These images present an almost comical excess of carefully manicured costume. In each case, however, the piper's stance, display of arms, heraldic banner, and the pseudo-feudal symbolism of the castellated house hark back to the stock elements of the piper portrait instituted by Richard Waitt in 1714. In 1869, Ross issued his own collection of pipe music, introduced by the Rev. Dr. Norman MacLeod, a frequent visitor to Balmoral and friend of the Queen's. In this introduction, MacLeod confidently declared: 'The Music of the Highlands is the Pibroch of the Great War Pipe, with its fluttering pennons,

¹⁸³ Lauder, *Memorial of the Royal Progress*, 307-8.

¹⁸⁴ RC, RL 26227, William Wyld, *Angus MacKay*, Watercolour, 1852.

¹⁸⁵ MacLeay, *Highlanders of Scotland*, pls. 3, 7.

fingered by a genuine Celt, in full Highland Dress, as he slowly paces a Baronial Hall, or amidst the wild scenery of his native mountains'.¹⁸⁶ Here, the visual spectacle of piping, as seen at Highland Society concerts and reproduced in paintings, is once again presented as the hallmark of genuine tradition.

Other images by the Queen's artists reveal the extent to which she modelled her Highlandism on the kind of spectacle and theatricality she had witnessed during the 1842 visit and subsequent tours. In 1854, Carl Haag painted a scene entitled *Evening at Balmoral*, in which Prince Albert and guests are shown bringing home stags from the day's stalking, greeted by the Queen at the castle entrance [Fig.165].¹⁸⁷ The display is lit with burning torches, held aloft by three stalwart figures in Highland dress: an echo of the dramatic lighting effects she had admired during the dancing exhibition at Taymouth in 1842. In 1858, the Queen also instituted what became known as the Gillies' Ball, represented by Egron Lundgren in a watercolour of 1859 [Fig.166].¹⁸⁸ In this image, a figure can be seen performing the sword dance in the sumptuous surroundings of Balmoral. This dance, often referred to as the 'Gille-Callum', was one of the first witnessed by the Queen on her arrival in Dunkeld in 1842. In Lundgren's drawing, the displays of Highland arms and stags' heads lining the walls of the ballroom also echoed the heraldic decorations she had observed at Taymouth Castle during the same tour.¹⁸⁹

The Highland games attended by the royal party at Laggan in 1847 were the source of a further wave of images. *The Illustrated London News* carried a full report of the games, accompanied by illustrations of individual competitions, including tossing the caber, putting the heavy stone, leaping the bar, throwing the hammer, and the hill race. The artist's depiction of the throwing and jumping

¹⁸⁶ Quoted in Donaldson, *Highland Pipe*, 169. MacLeod's introduction to Joseph Denovan Adam, *Mountain Loch and Glen, Illustrating 'Our Life in the Highlands'* (London, 1869), echoes sections of this passage.

¹⁸⁷ RC, RL 22033, Carl Haag, *Evening at Balmoral*, Watercolour, 1854.

¹⁸⁸ RC, RL 19531, Egron Lundgren, *The Gillies' Ball*, Watercolour and Bodycolour, 1859.

¹⁸⁹ Lauder, *Memorial of the Royal Progress*, 260, 280-4. Besides the stags' heads on the stairwell, Lauder described 'demi-suits of armour, shields, lances, two-handed swords, and various other curious specimens of ancient weapons' arranged on the walls of the Great Hall. The Marquis had in fact hired an English firm to supply decorative heraldic panels, banners, and suits of armour specially for the Queen's visit: Cannizzo, *Our Highland Home*, 20.

events conformed to stereotypical ideas of the strength, agility and animal energy of the Highlander [*Figs.167-8*]. All are kilted, including the hill-runners, with rough, shaggy hair. The *ILN*'s correspondent was particularly impressed with the hill-race as a display of resilience and endurance. Of the winner, he wrote: 'I expected to see him panting and blowing and half dead. Not a bit of it: the Highlanders are rare fellows for wind; and the winner of this Mountain Derby appeared just about as much distressed as I should be after a saunter through the Burlington Arcade'.¹⁹⁰ The image of the Highlander as a member of a 'hardy and intrepid race' went back to the qualities attributed to the ancient Caledonians, and of course held the more immediate connotations of military prowess in the present day. Highland dancing was also believed to exemplify these qualities. In 1822, Sir John Sinclair was reported to have observed that, 'if there is not much elegance in Highland dancing, - strength, agility, and spirit are abundantly displayed'.¹⁹¹ A similar anecdote was reported by Dick Lauder following the Queen's tour of 1842. After watching a Highland gentleman dance a reel at the close of a long day's stalking, Prince Albert reputedly asked him if he felt tired. 'To which Monzie replied, "No – not at all, your Highness". Upon which the Prince turned to the Queen, and said – "There, - you have seen him dance, - you see how he dances, - and yet he has been with me all day on those wild hills – and he says he is not tired – It is wonderful!"'.¹⁹²

The Highland games arranged by the St. Fillans Highland Society in Perthshire in 1819 are generally recognised as the earliest organised games in Scotland. A society was established in Glengarry county, Ontario, for similar purposes the same year.¹⁹³ This may have drawn its inspiration from Colonel Alasdair MacDonell's Society of True Highlanders, which began to hold Highland fetes in 1816, at which it was reported that 'the ancient Garb of Caledonia, and the pastimes of her Mountain Race', would be the order of the day. In 1822, the fete

¹⁹⁰ *ILN*, 11, 1847, 156-60.

¹⁹¹ Quoted in Donaldson, *Highland Pipe*, 83.

¹⁹² Lauder, *Memorial of the Royal Progress*, 407.

¹⁹³ Edward J. Cowan, 'The Myth of Scotch Canada', in *Myth, Migration and the Making of Memory: Scotia and Nova Scotia, c. 1700-1900*, edd. Marjory Harper and Michael E. Vance (Halifax and Edinburgh, 1999), 62. For historical background, see also David Webster, *Scottish Highland Games* (Edinburgh, 1973); Grant Jarvie, *Highland Games: The Making of the Myth* (Edinburgh, 1991).

came under criticism for its barbaric and outlandish interpretation of traditional 'pastimes', such as throwing an 18 stone boulder over a five foot high bar, and wrestling the carcass of a cow to pieces with the bare hands.¹⁹⁴ Some years previously, in 1804, Alexander Campbell had recorded a more rosy and nostalgic vision of a style of recreation he believed was giving way to corrupting modern influences:

The rural sports and pastimes of the Gael are fast hastening into disuetude. Of the very few of those gymnastic exercises that still remain, wrestling, putting the stone, and shinny, or shinty, (creatan) are practised occasionally... Raffles, or shooting-matches, are now the favourite sports of the highlanders, which serve generally as preludes to serious drinking: and I am sorry to say that many have fallen into habits most unworthy of their character for sobriety, and particularly, since the innocent mirth and rural festivity of former times have so much declined; the young men, too, have become greatly attached to card-playing; a circumstance the more to be lamented, as it not only consumes their winter-evenings leisure, but also fosters a spirit of low avarice, so incompatible with those virtues that ought ever to adorn our peasantry, and such as are engaged in the humble, yet honourable employments of the field and fold, throughout the empire.¹⁹⁵

In the light of this assessment, the organised Highland games movement must be seen as yet another instance of the perception that genuine tradition, and the virtues that went with it, were under threat and required artificial stimulation. The visual representation of these events predated Queen Victoria's attendance at Laggan. In 1839, Elisabeth Fussell, an amateur sketcher, made some drawings of the St. Fillans games while on a summer tour. The competitors depicted included dancers performing the reel and the sword dance [Fig.169], throwing the sledge hammer and tossing the caber.¹⁹⁶ In December 1842, John Francis Campbell also captured a watercolour sketch of games in Islay, showing two

¹⁹⁴ Osborne, *Last of the Chiefs*, 189.

¹⁹⁵ Campbell, *Grampians Desolate*, 256.

¹⁹⁶ NLS, MS.29496, ff. 19-23v, Sketches by Elisabeth Caroline Fussell of Anwoth Castle, 1839.

hammers and a caber on the ground, a figure preparing to putt the stone, a parade of soldiers on a hillside led by a piper, and other martial figures in the foreground armed with Lochaber axes [Fig.170].¹⁹⁷ Campbell also sketched an individual figure preparing to putt the heavy stone, probably on a different occasion as this drawing comes much later in the album.¹⁹⁸ The same album contains a rough sketch of a shinty match – another of the traditional games listed by Alexander Campbell – in which some of the participants wear Highland dress [Fig.171]. Another small sketch shows three pipers with a small boy holding a shinty stick, again perpetuating the web of cultural associations.¹⁹⁹ There is a small group of shinty images dating from c. 1835-45, all of which are closely connected and possibly modelled on each other.²⁰⁰ The first which can be clearly dated appeared in *The Penny Magazine* in January 1835, depicting a melee of caman-waving ruffians in a hilly landscape [Fig.172].²⁰¹ The grouping of the players bears a strong resemblance to an undated painting of uncertain attribution, which was reproduced as a frontispiece to Rev. J. Ninian MacDonald's history of shinty in 1932. This combined a more fully-painted landscape in the picturesque mode, a piper, a display of Highland arms and exotic costume, with the game itself only one element within the entire tableau.²⁰² In 1845, McLan incorporated shinty into his plate of 'Grant' in *The Clans of the Scottish Highlands*; the figure has his back to the artist, and is holding a caman and a raised ball [Fig.173]. Logan's description brought out the military allusions of the image, from the 'glibed' hairstyle of the model, 'represented in some prints of the Black Watch', to the martial appearance of a match in fully cry: 'When there is a numerous meeting, the field has much the appearance of a battle scene; there are banners flying, bagpipes pealing, and a keen melee around the ball'.²⁰³ Like Highland games more generally, shinty was exportable. Also in 1845, *The Illustrated London*

¹⁹⁷ NGS, D 4126, f. 11 (B), John Francis Campbell, 'Games, Islay, Dec 29 1842'.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 48v (A), n.d..

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, ff. 88, 112, n.d..

²⁰⁰ A comprehensive listing of visual material on shinty can be found in Hugh D. MacLennan, 'Shinty: Some Fact and Fiction in the Nineteenth Century', *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 59, 1994-6, 161-6.

²⁰¹ 'The Game of Shinty', in *The Penny Magazine of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, January 31 1835, 33.

²⁰² J. Ninian MacDonald, *Shinty: A Short History of the Ancient Highland Game* (Inverness, 1932). This painting was also reproduced on the jacket to Roger Hutchinson's more recent *Camanachd! The Story of Shinty* (Edinburgh, 1989). As yet, I have been unable to trace the location of the original.

²⁰³ McLan and Logan, *Clans of the Scottish Highlands*, notes to 'Grant of Glenmoriston'.

News carried a report of a match held on Blackheath in London, under the auspices of the Club of True Highlanders. The report was illustrated with a wood engraving of the event [Fig.174]. In the centre of the field a flag can be seen, held aloft like a battle standard, all the players and most of the spectators wear versions of Highland dress, and a piper was reported to have 'kept up the hilarity of the day by performances of celebrated Scotch airs'.²⁰⁴ The Club of True Highlanders survived into the 1880s, when C. N. McIntyre North compiled his preposterous account of Highland history and customs. Shinty featured in two of his illustrations. The first combined a depiction of two camans in antiquarian mode, one identified as having come from Badenoch. In the centre of the plate North placed a copy of the *Penny Magazine* illustration, labelled a 'supposed sketch by Landseer', although there is no evidence to corroborate this. North added two sets of flags as 'goals', and thinned the number of players, but otherwise copied the print more or less intact. In the text, he followed Logan's emphasis on the antiquity, and martial associations of the game. According to him, it had formed part of Celtic military education, calculated to promote 'agility, speed, presence of mind, endurance, truth of eye, and sureness of foot'. In the final plate, entitled 'Crioich' ('End') [Fig.175], shinty takes its place alongside the other visual hallmarks of supposedly authentic culture: tartan costume, a piper and Highland dancer, a hammer and putting stone, and the twin symbols of Scottish identity – the Saltire and the Lion Rampant.²⁰⁵

Taken together, the most dominant trait in these images is their emphasis on setting and community, and also a more subtle military edge. Perhaps because of its documentary character, the *ILN* illustration was alone in showing shinty as something which could be taken out of a Highland setting and organised along institutional lines. When we compare some further images of games and sports, particularly the throwing events replicated on the Highland games circuit, similar patterns emerge. Although the visual impact of more organised competitions continued to attract artists, others took a retrospective approach, portraying such contests as the informal community gatherings they were reputed to have been. McIan illustrated a stone throwing contest in this way for *Picturesque*

²⁰⁴ *ILN*, 7, 1845, 32.

²⁰⁵ McIntyre North, *Book of the Club of True Highlanders*, II, 50, pls. 69-70.

Gatherings [Fig.176], emphasising its harmony with the natural environment: the challenge, to throw the missile beyond an adjacent stretch of water, arises out of the terrain, as does the stone itself. In the letterpress, Logan drew an analogy between Highland games and the Olympiads of ancient Greece, invoking the language of primitivism:

Athletic sports form one of the favourite pastimes of people in a state of society similar to that of the Scottish Highlanders, the inhabitants of mountainous countries delighting in the perils of Alpine adventures and the trials of strength and hardihood. These are the most congenial amusements to those of masculine, agile frames, and impetuous spirits, and they greatly promote both mental animation and warlike prowess.²⁰⁶

As with piping competitions, the artificial stimulation of these sporting contests had something of a military rationale. The parade seen in Campbell's Islay drawing, and the visibility of 'ancient' weapons like the Lochaber axe, heightened this link, and its supposed sanction by antiquity. It is also worth recalling here William Daniell's account of trials of strength involving a huge boulder in Raasay, which he connected with the glory days of Brochel Castle.²⁰⁷ At Balmoral, Queen Victoria's patronage of Highland games went hand in hand with the image of the loyal Highland soldier. This can be seen in one of Kenneth MacLeay's drawings for *The Highlanders of Scotland* (1872), in which Archibald and Alexander Mackintosh are pictured with a putting stone and caber [Fig.177]. Both have Glengarry bonnets, and Alexander is armed with a dirk and broadsword. In other plates in the collection, military figures are often coupled with references to civilian employments such as gillieing, thus implying a link between the athletic, outdoor life of the 'traditional' Highlander, and military prowess.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁶ McLan and Logan, *Picturesque Gatherings*, 41-2. For another image of this contest which echoed McLan in many respects, see AAGM, 5430, Michel Bouquet, *Putting the Stone*, Lithograph, 1849.

²⁰⁷ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, IV, 46.

²⁰⁸ MacLeay, *Highlanders of Scotland*, pl. 22.

The Queen was an enthusiastic patron of the annual Braemar Gathering, hosting it at Balmoral on several occasions. Several images of these events survive, including Egron Lundgren's detailed portrayals of individual competitions at the 1859 games. His *Tossing the Caber* echoed the illustration in *The Illustrated London News*' coverage of Laggan in many respects [Fig.178].²⁰⁹ Sam Bough's *Highland Gathering at Balmoral* (1869) was a more general portrait of groups of spectators clustered on open ground in front of the castle, with the latter forming the centrepiece. Kilted gentlemen with feathered bonnets can be seen among the foremost group.²¹⁰ Also in 1869, the Queen commissioned the Viennese sculptor, Joseph Edgar Boehm, to produce a set of bronze figurines commemorating the four main sporting events of the gathering: throwing the hammer, tossing the caber, putting the stone, and the race.²¹¹ The static, frozen quality of sculpture, perpetually arresting a split second of fluid motion, is perhaps a fitting coda to a visual process whereby what had once been the pastimes, tasks, and material reality of everyday life in the Highlands and Islands became translated into an unchanging iconography of what the region had been, was, and would always be. In 1874, the Queen reacted indignantly to a lack of enthusiasm among some local gentlemen regarding attendance at the annual Braemar Gathering: 'What is National is so valuable in these days of levelling, and of absence of all that is exclusively National in spirit or romantic or poetic – especially when the love of low sports – like Pigeon shooting, & of gambling & racing & new foolish & even cruel ones like Polo &c are on the increase – that everything ought to be done to keep it up'.²¹²

Preservation was thus explicitly the keynote of this cultural agenda – one in which artists were increasingly called to participate. Although the visual evidence considered in this chapter suggests that artists did recognise and even chart to some extent the effects of social, and particularly economic, change in the Highlands and Islands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, their primary response was to catalogue those aspects of contemporary life which

²⁰⁹ RC, RL 19489, Egron Lundgren, *Tossing the Caber*, Watercolour, 1859.

²¹⁰ AAGM, 2328, Sam Bough, *Highland Gathering at Balmoral*, Watercolour, 1869.

²¹¹ Forbes Collection, New York: exhibited SNPG, Edinburgh, *Our Highland Home*, 18 March to 15 June 2005.

²¹² Quoted in Millar, *Queen Victoria's Life in the Scottish Highlands*, 82.

appeared unique in comparison to the rest of Britain, and which were in danger of being lost to material progress. Perceptions of everyday life were also influenced by the antiquarian legacy of early travellers, which, together with the reverence for antiquity which continued to characterise the fine arts during this period, had a profound effect on the subjects selected for painting and illustration, and the manner in which they were portrayed. As part of an unbroken line of tradition, handed down from generation to generation, even the most prosaic skills and objects could be elevated to the status of art.

Time in the Landscape

Positive interest in the Highland landscape – once construed as barren, ugly and repellent – cannot be separated from the rise of geological science, which was established on serious foundations during the latter half of the eighteenth century. The prominence of geological forms in visual images of the Highland landscape must be read against artists' apparent failure to record visible changes in land use and settlement, a consequence of the eighteenth-century drive for improvement. As we will notice, several of those responsible for geological images were in fact intensely interested in agricultural improvement. The vision of wild, barren, and largely untouched landscape which emerged from these images must therefore be explained in one of three ways. The first of these was the legacy of older ideas about the earth, construed as a once-perfect work of art now falling into ruin. In the light of this, the metaphors of architecture and sculpture were frequently applied to landforms, and it was isolated phenomena fitting into this model which were most often selected for artistic representation. The second important point is the historical emphasis of early geological studies, in which a quest to elucidate the origins of the earth with reference to empirical evidence was the guiding focus. This entailed a detailed study of the surviving data – only to be found in the arrangement and markings of bare rock. The idea that human use and control of the earth was, in relative terms, both recent and superficial, became a central tenet of historical geology. Because of this, and its implications for the position of humankind within the wider universe, minute, accurate depictions of rock forms gathered an aesthetic edge which could be translated into painting. This shades into the third explanation of the wilderness image to be presented here, which was the extent to which geology chimed with the demands of the Romantic imagination. Conceived in geological terms, human activity, and its power to change the face of the landscape, could be interpreted as reassuringly minimal. Arguably therefore, what was taking place in the 'real' Highlands, among its human population, was only a ripple in the grand scheme

of things. The artists who flocked to the north during the heyday of British geology preferred to overlook the evidence that the region was no more immune to change than the rest of the country, focusing instead on the comparative and consoling stability of the ‘everlasting’ hills. The influence of geology on visual representation was thus far-reaching and profound, providing another avenue through which the region could be viewed as a kind of natural museum.

Order and Chaos in a Ruined World

Described in 1791 as ‘a country *consisting* of mountains without intermission’,¹ the Scottish Highlands possessed what had once been a peculiar aesthetic problem. Until the later eighteenth century, mountains were often classed along with other landscape ‘blemishes’ like deserts, canyons and volcanoes as scars imposed upon the surface of an originally perfect earth.² An influential treatise on this subject, first published in Latin in 1681 and then in English in 1684, was Thomas Burnet’s *Sacred Theory of the Earth*. In this work, Burnet equated literal smoothness with a moral universe free from the taint of sin:

In this smooth earth were the first scenes of the world, and the first generations of mankind; it had the beauty of youth and blooming nature, fresh and fruitful, and not a wrinkle, scar, or fracture in all its body; no rocks nor mountains, no hollow caves, nor gaping channels, but even and uniform all over. And the smoothness of the earth made the face of the heavens so too; the air was calm and serene; none of those tumultuary motions and conflicts of vapours, which the mountains and the winds cause in ours: it was suited to a golden age, and to the first innocence of nature.³

¹ Newte, *Prospects and Observations*, 74.

² Roy Porter, *The Making of Geology: Earth Science in Britain, 1660-1815* (Cambridge, 1977), 41-6. On cultural perceptions of mountains, see also Marjory Hope Nicolson, *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory: The Development of the Aesthetics of the Infinite* (Ithaca, 1959); Schama, *Landscape and Memory*; Robert MacFarlane, *Mountains of the Mind: A History of a Fascination* (London, 2003).

³ Thomas Burnet, *The Sacred Theory of the Earth* (London, 1816 edn.), 76.

Current earth forms, he went on to argue, were the result of a catastrophic deluge, which broke open the surface of this smooth earth and hurled it into a vast abyss. Thereafter, the original structure settled itself into 'plains, and valleys, and mountains, according as the pieces of this ruin were placed and disposed'.⁴ Within this new disorder, mountains stood as the archetypes of chaos. 'These' Burnet wrote, 'are placed in no order one with another, that can either respect use or beauty; and if you consider them singly, they do not consist of any proportion of parts that is referable to any design, nor that hath the least footsteps of art or counsel'.⁵ Conceived as antithetic to the neoclassical ideal of art, mountains represented one of the greatest challenges to visual representation. This was all very well for artists, who could ignore them. For the mapmaker, however, forced to grapple with reducing landforms which were anything but smooth and regular to a smooth and regular plane, things were not so simple. In his *Sacred Theory of the Earth*, Burnet drew attention to this problem. 'The smooth globes that we use', he wrote, 'do but nourish in us the conceit of the earth's regularity; and though they may be convenient enough for geographical purposes, they are not so proper for natural science'. Instead, he suggested the construction of large, rough-surfaced globes, on which the mountains and islands would stand out 'in their solid dimensions', and real sand and stones be used to indicate the presence of deserts and rocky places.⁶ Although there is no evidence that Burnet's proposal was ever acted on, the work of successive generations of mapmakers and cartographic draughtsmen indicates a clear struggle with the insistently vertical character of Highland geography.

Although digressing slightly from the chronological dimensions of this study, no survey of maps and mountains is complete without some mention of Timothy Pont. Pont travelled through Scotland during the 1580s and 1590s, plotting, drawing and describing topographical features and compiling lists of place-names. Besides the maps in Blaeu's *Atlas Novus* (1654), several of which were

⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 171.

based on Pont's surveys, some of the original manuscripts survive.⁷ What makes these so valuable is the unprecedented amount of information they include about mountains. Ian R. Mitchell has discussed Pont's mountain drawings in the context of his own extensive climbing experience, identifying the surveyor's probable routes through the hills, the identity of individual peaks, and his purpose in sketching them with such accuracy and detail. Discounting those which belong to the 'molehill' or 'triangle' school (the conventional mountain symbol in early cartography), Mitchell notes that the hills were invariably sketched from the south, and that the drawings cover only the most prominent and noticeable peaks (not always the highest). While conjecturing that Pont may have been 'captivated by their stunning forms', he concludes that it is more likely that the sketches were intended for directional purposes.⁸ There is certainly nothing elegant about many of Pont's mountains, and there is no reason to suppose that he held anything other than a utilitarian view of landscape. Beneath the sketch of An Teallach is a note which reads 'excell: Hunting place where are deir to be found all the year long as in a mechtie Parck of nature'.⁹ Similarly, the sides of Ben Lawers are shown riven with watercourses which feed Loch Tay in the valley below. The loch itself is recorded as a source of all kinds of riches, including salmon, trout, eels and pearls.¹⁰ Although their jagged forms made them aesthetically repellent, mountains could still be seen as part of the natural order and life-cycle of the earth. More than a century later, Burt drew on similar data to Pont in an attempt to justify their existence, arguing that 'they contain minerals ... and serve for the breeding and feeding of cattle, wild fowls, and other useful animals, which cost little or nothing in keeping. They break the clouds, and not only replenish the rivers, but collect great quantities of water into lakes and other vast reservoirs, where they are husbanded, as I may say, for the use of mankind in time of drought'.¹¹ The deformed peaks in one of the illustrations in his volume had something in common with Pont's, the presence

⁷ The original Pont manuscripts are in NLS, now digitised at <http://www.nls.uk/pont/> (accessed 4 August 2006). See also Jeffrey C. Stone, *The Pont Manuscript Maps of Scotland: Sixteenth Century Origins of a Blaeu Atlas* (Tring, 1989).

⁸ Ian R. Mitchell, 'Timothy Pont and Scotland's Mountains', in *The Nation Survey'd: Timothy Pont's Maps of Scotland*, ed. Ian C. Cunningham (East Linton, 2001), 102.

⁹ NLS, Pont 4 (1), Wester Ross, c. 1583-96.

¹⁰ NLS, Pont 18 (1), Loch Tay, c. 1583-96.

¹¹ Burt, *Letters*, 158.

of a cow ascending the heights suggesting that they were not entirely without usefulness.¹²

Burt's status as a military engineer gave mountains an added significance. As the natural fortress which had effectively walled out the Romans, the facts of Highland geography were no less frustrating to the progress of Hanoverian armies. Perceptions of the hills as a stronghold for rebel forces did not endear them to military draughtsmen, as their portrayal on successive maps and plans makes clear. Not only do these representations lack any sense of aesthetic beauty, they also demonstrate the difficulty of fitting mountains into the symbolic language of cartography. Pont had resorted to naturalistic sketches, adopting an almost consistently southern perspective. This can be seen on a number of eighteenth-century maps, such as Robert Johnson's plan of Fort William (c. 1710) [Fig.179].¹³ The geometric precision with which the fort is portrayed reveals the sophistication of military drawing when dealing with man-made defences. This contrasts with the crude presentation of the mountains, aligned as they would have appeared from the fort itself, or from the main navigation channels. Further images of mountain territory resulted from the 1719 Rising, played out in the heart of the west Highlands at the Battle of Glenshiel. Battle plans and victory paintings were a common genre of material during this period, some produced by eyewitnesses, some reconstructed after the event. A large canvas of the Battle of Glenshiel [Fig.180] was painted by Peter Tillemans around 1719.¹⁴ In view of the widely-held aversion for mountains, one of the striking things about this painting of Glenshiel is the remarkable symmetry imposed on the scene. The hills on either side of the glen are depicted so as to appear of similar shape and height, bisected by the river and a smoother hill at the further end of the valley. This image of the battle, with the General occupying a prominent position on a hilltop in the foreground, suggests not only order and command in a military sense, but also a certain subjugation of the landscape. Looking more closely at some fine details, there is nevertheless some suggestion of just how much of a problem geography posed to the policing of the

¹² *Ibid.*, II, pl. facing 120.

¹³ NLS, MS.1646 Z.02/24a, Robert Johnson, 'Plan of Fort William with the Country Adjacent', c. 1710.

¹⁴ SNPG, PG 2635, Peter Tillemans, *The Battle of Glenshiel*, Canvas, 118 x 164.5, 1719.

Highlands during this period. Although the battle was decided through the skirmishes fought on the lower slopes of the mountains, some files of Jacobite spectators can be observed occupying the summits. If we compare information from a battle plan sketched by the Board of Ordnance draughtsman John Bastide, we learn that the defeated Highland army retreated over the rocky summit of a peak identified as 'Sgururan', or Sgurr Fhuaran, the highest point of the ridge now known as the Five Sisters of Kintail. The key further notes that, in their flight, the Highlanders 'still continued their fire and defended the places of difficult access'. In a detail from the plan, we can see the craggiest portion of the ridge forming a rallying point for the scattered Highland soldiers and their Spanish accomplices [Fig.181].¹⁵ The point to note here is the lurking fear and suspicion of 'places of difficult access' in the minds of the army command and the draughtsmen in its employ. The theme of access was therefore to loom large in government plans for the Highlands during the following decades.

In 1724, a young George Wade was dispatched north to report on the current situation and to suggest some possible remedies. In his report, Wade emphasised 'the great Disadvantages Regular Troops are under when they engage with those who Inhabit Mountainous Situations', recommending an urgent need for proper roads and bridges.¹⁶ Perceptions of communications in the Highlands up to this point were eloquently expressed in a Board of Ordnance plan dating from 1718 [Fig.9]. This showed the existing routes between the established garrison at Fort William and the new barrack sites at Inversnaid, Ruthven, and Killiwhimen. Following the glens and river valleys through which the main routes run, the mountains were depicted like literal chains closing in the known world, or walling out the entirely blank interior. Aside from individual portraits of Ben Nevis and Ben Lomond, the hills were portrayed as an indiscriminate series of mounds thrown up like defensive earthworks.¹⁷ Another Bastide map, showing the country surrounding the barrack-site at Inversnaid, also emphasised the

¹⁵ These observations are based on NLS MS.1648 Z.03/22b, John Bastide, 'Plan of the Field of Battle that was fought on ye 10th of June 1719, at the Pass of Glenshiels in Kintail', 1719. The rectangular area shaded in yellow indicates the position of the 'rebel' forces.

¹⁶ Tabraham and Grove, *Fortress Scotland*, 71-2.

¹⁷ NLS MS.1648 Z.03/13a, John Henry Bastide and John Dumaresq, 'The Roads between Inversnait, Ruthven of Badenock, Kiliwhiman and Fort William, in ye Highlands of North Brittain', 1718.

fragility of the new fortresses in the shadow of dark, towering mountains [Fig.7]. The orientation of this map, with the barrier of hills viewed from the south, reinforced a pattern of representation which goes back to Pont.¹⁸

Between 1725 and 1736, General Wade supervised the construction of around 250 miles of road and 40 bridges in the Highlands, directed at connecting this network of forts and barracks. Major new lines of road covered the links from Fort William to Inverness, Dunkeld to Inverness, Crieff to Dalnacardoch, and Dalwhinnie to Fort Augustus.¹⁹ One of Wade's most symbolic triumphs was the breaking of a route over the notorious Corrievaraick Pass, which lay between Ruthven and Fort Augustus. In Bastide and Dumaresq's road map of 1718, the path over Corrievaraick was a mere thread tracing a barely visible ascent over the summit of the ridge of hills which lies at right angles to the Great Glen. In a map of 1731, on the other hand, a thick band can be seen cutting its way across country from Dalwhinnie, bisecting Corrievaraick in an almost straight diagonal line [Fig.182].²⁰ Although the route over Corrievaraick appeared on the map with all the straightness of a Roman way, the steep ascent was in fact negotiated via a series of tortuous hairpin bends. A later map of military roads published in 1746 showed this to good effect, as did the backdrop to a portrait of Wade by the Dutch artist Johan van Diest [Figs.183-4].²¹ In the latter, the scene behind the General is believed to be a depiction of Corrievaraick and the crossing of the Spey at Garva. In the portrait, Wade's position head and shoulders above the highest hills symbolised the conquest of geography which his roads and bridges were seen to represent. A semblance of order had been imposed on chaos.

The context in which these early images of the Highland landscape were produced heightened the association of mountains with disorder: not only were

¹⁸ NLS, MS.1648 Z.03/15a, John Henry Bastide and John Dumaresq, 'A Draught of Innersnait, in the Highlands of North Britain, nere the Head of Loch Lomend with Part of the Country Adjacent', 1718.

¹⁹ Tabraham and Grove, *Fortress Scotland*, 72.

²⁰ NLS, Acc.11104, Map Rol.a.42, Clement Lempriere, 'A Description of the Highlands of Scotland, the Situation of the Several Clans and the Number of Men Able to Bear Arms, as also ye Forts Lately Erected and Roads of Communication or Military Ways Carried on by His Majesty's Command', 1731.

²¹ Thomas Willdey, *A Map of the King's Roads, Made by his Excellency General Wade in the Highlands of Scotland* (London, 1746); SNP, PG 2416, Johan van Diest, *Field Marshall George Wade*, Canvas, 75 x 63.2, n.d.

they the exact opposite of the geometric precision and mathematical lines of military engineering, they also resisted effective policing and the maintenance of law. Part of the problem was a limited extent of knowledge. The first full-scale survey of the Scottish mainland was not set in motion until 1747; prior to this, large tracts of interior country in the Highlands remained unmapped. On some Board of Ordnance plans, the vague textual description - 'all this part barron hills' - might be seen as the eighteenth-century equivalent of 'here be dragons'.²² The Military Survey of Scotland (1747-55) was a landmark for the visual depiction of mountain territory. To convey an adequate sense of relief, the draughtsmen adopted a scheme of shaded hachures, a forerunner of the modern contour system. This gave the map a more consistently aerial perspective, in contrast to the earlier convention of representing mountains in a side-on view. The Roy map nevertheless contained some interesting anomalies, and it is in these that I would argue we can trace the first sense of something which was more than utilitarian recording and more than fear, approximating closer to wonder and astonishment. In his posthumous work on the Roman archaeology of Scotland, William Roy offered his opinion on what he counted Scotland's most singular landscapes, viewed at first hand during his work with the Military Survey. The first of these was Rannoch Moor, described as a morassy desert twenty miles square, 'wholly without inhabitants or cultivation'. The second was a larger area in the far north-west, taking in part of the parishes of Coigach, Assynt and Eddrachilles. 'This', Roy wrote, 'though appertaining to the mountainous region of the country, is nevertheless very different from the adjoining Highland districts; for without being so remarkably high, it is infinitely more rugged and broken than any other part of Britain. In order to convey any tolerable idea of a country so very extraordinary in its nature, we may suppose some hundreds of the highest mountains split into many thousands of pieces, and the fragments scattered about'.²³ When we look at the representation of this district on the map, some striking departures from the visual system of the survey can be observed. Although most of the terrain in Assynt and Coigach was sketched from an aerial perspective, three of the lower peaks - Suilven, Stac

²² For 'barron hills', see NLS, Acc.10497 Wade.58d, Anon., 'Plan of the Murray Firth and Cromarty Firth, with Parts of the Shires of Inverness, Sutherland, Ross, Nairn, and Elgin', 1730.

²³ Roy, *Military Antiquities*, 59.

Pollaidh and the north summit of Beinn an Eoin – all appear in profile, as seen from the south-west [*Figs.185-6*].²⁴ Even the distortions in outline do not diminish the immediacy of these sections as an impression of the region's topography. It is as if the impact of the landscape has burst the ordered framework of cartographic convention, with a return to the naturalistic style of representation adopted by much earlier surveyors like Pont. Significantly, this region was to feature prominently in geological research during the nineteenth century.

Into the 1770s, images of mountains began to multiply in a range of contexts. The vignette images on Home's plans of Assynt were in no sense geological, although his observations on Stronchrubie farm contained a brief reference to an ascent of Breabag, a long, whale-backed ridge blocking the passage eastwards. Scientists like Lhuyd had been climbing mountains in quest of botanical information from the late seventeenth century,²⁵ and Home's observations, if lacking in precision, fitted loosely into this scientific model:

The Top of Braeback Hill is almost one continued Cairn of loose Stones along the Summit of the Hill, which is reckoned the March with Balnagowan. There is not so much as a Pile of Grass, or Heather, among the Stones but here and there a few Plants of Sea thrift, and a sort of slimy Weed like Dulse, which the Country People say has remained there since Noah's Flood.²⁶

Passing through the same district in 1772, Thomas Pennant had observed a similar extent of barrenness: 'I never saw a country that seemed to have been so torn and convulsed: the shock, whenever it happened, shook off all that vegetates'.²⁷ Like Pennant, Home was cautious about putting forward a

²⁴ BL, Maps CC.5.a.441/33-4, William Roy, 'A Very Large and Highly Finished Coloured Military Survey of the Kingdom of Scotland, Exclusive of the Islands', 1747-55. On sheet 33 [*Fig 185*], Stac Pollaidh is erroneously identified as 'Coul Mor'.

²⁵ Emery, *Edward Lhuyd*, 33-7. Lhuyd's climbs probably included Beinn Mòr in Mull. On the role of science in finding a use 'for the apparently unusable', thus altering perceptions of the Highland landscape, see Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 71-2.

²⁶ Adam, ed., *Home's Survey of Assynt*, 46.

²⁷ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, 315.

definitive explanation for the appearance of the landscape, coupling Noah's Flood with the apocryphal botany of the 'Country People'. It is nevertheless significant that first-hand contact with dramatic landforms like the Assynt hills was prompting reflection on their origin in a manner which rich, cultivated farmland was much less likely to do. Climbing the hills – whether in the cause of science or cartography – also opened the way for a new kind of scenic appreciation. From the summit of Breabag, Home described 'a vast extent of view, of part of the several Counties of Ross, Inverness, Murray, and the head of Banf Shire, as well as the East and West Coasts of Sutherland'.²⁸ Although his language was muted, some of his contemporaries were more openly impressed by their mountaineering experiences. Notable climbs included Rev. Dr. John Walker's conquest of Beinn an Oir in Jura in 1764, a repeat ascent by the naturalist Thomas Pennant in 1772, and a further ascent by the latter of Beinn na Caillich in Skye.²⁹ On all three occasions, the men were struck with the contrast between the barrenness and savagery of the mountains themselves, and the awe-inspiring experience of seeing vast tracts of landscape spread out like a map beneath their feet. In the case of Beinn na Caillich, this experience was visualised by Pennant's artist, Moses Griffith, whose sketch of its western panorama was engraved for the published *Tour* [Fig.187].³⁰ On the one hand, Griffith's imagery, with its cairn of foreground stones and jagged chaos, drew on the theme of ruin and devastation which had underpinned perceptions of mountains during earlier centuries. On the other, however, simply enclosing such a scene within the confines of a picture frame revealed a shift in attitude towards wild landscape.

The other significant mountain portrait in Pennant's volume was a view of An Teallach from Dundonnell [Fig.188] – one of the mountains sketched by Pont, although his drawing was taken from the other side, in Strath na Sealg. Despite some exaggeration of the summit pinnacles, Griffith's image was remarkably accurate. In the foreground, it is important to note the depiction of rigs suggesting arable land use; on landing at Little Loch Broom, Pennant had

²⁸ Adam, ed., *Home's Survey of Assynt*, 46.

²⁹ McKay, ed., *Walker's Report on the Hebrides*, 7; Pennant, *Tour in Scotland, 1772*, I, 216-18, 286-7.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, I, pl. 40.

described a ride of about a mile to 'a small but fertile plain, winding among the vast mountains, and adorned with a pretty river and woods of alder'. 'Here', he went on, 'we were rejoiced with the site of enclosures long strangers to us: the hay was good, the bere and oats excellent'.³¹ As in Home's images of Assynt, the mountains are offset with evidence of industry; 'enclosure' in this context may refer to the still-growing hedge or screens of trees running along the edge of the cultivated ground. At dinner in Dundonnell House, Pennant also noted that the cloudberry they ate for dessert grew on 'the adjacent mountains', so that even the more barren regions were not without some use. Reading his description of An Teallach, it is difficult to determine whether the adjectives employed were meant to convey real horror, or a more aesthetic sense of the sublime: 'To the west is a view where the awful, or rather the horrible predominates. A chain of rocky mountains, some conoid, but united by links of a height equal to most in North Britain, with sides dark, deep, and precipitous, with summits broken, sharp, serrated, and spiring into all terrific forms; with snowy glaciers lodged in the deep-shaded apertures'.³² Some clues might be gathered from his similar description of the view from Beinn na Caillich: 'The prospect to the west was that of desolation itself; a savage series of rude mountains, discoloured, black and red, as if by the rage of fire'.³³ It was this 'desolation' which was chosen for Griffith's illustration, and it is the bulky profile of An Teallach which dominates his depiction of Dundonnell. It is thus safe to conclude that mountains and mountain views were becoming absorbed into the visual and aesthetic dimension of a Highland tour. Despite the prevalence of a utilitarian mindset, which demanded a solid scientific purpose for climbing hills, it was in the course of such functional exercises that these men found themselves becoming beguiled by the sublimity of altitude.

By 1800, a quest for knowledge and scenery sat more easily together. On a tour of the western islands, the mineralogist Robert Jameson made a repeat ascent of Beinn na Caillich, commenting, 'we knew from Mr Pennant, that from its

³¹ *Ibid.*, I, 326.

³² *Ibid.*, I, 327-8.

³³ *Ibid.*, I, 287.

summit, there was a vast display of mountainous scenery'.³⁴ Jameson's artist, Charles Bell, also followed Griffith in his depiction of the view from the summit, in which the range of peaks resembles the waves of a petrified ocean [Fig.189].³⁵ Although the *Mineralogy* contained a disclaimer to the effect that the illustrations were not intended as picturesque representations, but as mineralogical delineations, the boundaries in Bell's images, and in Jameson's descriptions, were often blurred. As Martin Rudwick has pointed out, landscape views played an important part in the emergence of a visual language for geological science.³⁶ A landscape view could give expression to the sublime emotion felt when in close contact with earth forms which seemed altogether outside the orbit of ordinary human experience. A sectional diagram could record and explain their structure more accurately, but it could not communicate the type of wonder voiced by Jameson on the summit of Beinn na Caillich. Even in the chaotic, wave-like crest of the Cuillin, Jameson discerned an underlying order, exclaiming at 'the mighty and eternal power of him who framed so great a work'.³⁷ Guided by higher hands, the process of ruin and decay observable in landforms could be construed as a creative force, sculpting phenomena which bore an uncanny resemblance to human architecture. Such marvels were most in evidence in the vicinity of water, particularly on exposed coastlines. Pennant's 1772 tour of the Hebrides contained several images of architectural landforms. Griffith's 'View in Cannay' [Fig.190], for example, depicting the ruins of a fortress on a coastal promontory, visibly blurred the boundary between masonry and native rock so as to stress the striking, tower-like formation of the cliff stack. The title page to the first volume also carried a vignette entitled 'Singular Isle off the East Side of Lismore' [Fig.191], which featured a columnar rock formation like the Canna illustration.³⁸ Title vignettes and frontispieces play an important role in summing up the gist of any work, and it is significant that Pennant should choose this uncelebrated mass of naked rock to encapsulate the Hebrides. Barbara Maria Stafford's work on illustrated travel literature from 1760 to 1840

³⁴ Robert Jameson, *A Mineralogy of the Scottish Isles; with Mineralogical Observations made on a Tour through Different Parts of Scotland, and Dissertations upon Peat and Kelp* (2 vols., Edinburgh, 1800), II, 92.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, II, pl. facing 94.

³⁶ Rudwick, 'Emergence of a Visual Language', 172-82.

³⁷ Jameson, *Mineralogy*, II, 94.

³⁸ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland, 1772*, I, title vignette; pl. 32.

reveals some interesting traits in the European scene into which this approach to the Highland landscape can be fitted. The most important of these was an ongoing debate over the relationship between nature and art, which affected the visual representation of both humanly-constructed and naturally-occurring phenomena. Art and artifice could be manipulated to resemble nature, as in an image of the Colosseum by Piranesi, distorted, as Stafford describes, to look 'like the gaping crater of some extinct volcano'.³⁹ Nature, on the other hand, could also be rearranged so as to resemble art. One of the best-documented examples of this process is a series of images of Fingal's Cave in the island of Staffa, the first of which was drawn by Joseph Banks' artist, John Cleveley, and subsequently engraved for Pennant's tour [Fig.192]. By manipulating the vertical columns which line the cave into smooth pillars, heightening the roof, and shifting the island land mass to extend behind rather than alongside the cave, Cleveley created a visual echo of Banks' eulogy to its cathedral-like structure. This image formed the prototype for subsequent versions, such as the frontispiece to Faujas de St. Fond's *Voyage en Angleterre* (1797), which distorted the height and regularity of the basalt columns still further in order to enhance the cave's resemblance to the nave of a cathedral.⁴⁰ The fact that it was a specifically Gothic style of architecture on which visual responses to the cave were modelled is significant. The move away from classical preoccupations in European aesthetics affected ways of looking at the landscape as well as at antiquities, matching a taste for 'barbarian' styles of architecture with a new relish for unpolished natural forms.

Although Fingal's Cave became one of the best known geological marvels in the British Isles, the Gothic parallel was not a specifically Hebridean or Highland phenomenon. This can be illustrated from the work of Charles Cordiner, who included several views of the Moray and Banff coastline in both *Antiquities and Scenery of the North of Scotland* (1780) and *Remarkable Ruins and Romantic Prospects of North Britain* (1788-95). For millennia, North Sea storms had been

³⁹ Stafford, 'Toward Romantic Landscape Perception', 90.

⁴⁰ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland, 1772*, I, pl. 28; Barthelemy Faujas de St. Fond, *Voyage en Angleterre, en Ecosse et aux Iles Hebrides* (2 vols., Paris, 1797), II, frontispiece. For a discussion of these images from a variety of angles see Rudwick, 'Emergence of a Visual Language'; Shortland, 'Darkness Visible'; Klonk, *Science and the Perception of Nature*, 67-99.

carving this coastline into spectacular landforms like the Bow Fiddle Rock near Portnockie, together with countless caves, natural arches and sea stacks – all of which provided ample material for Cordiner’s pencil before he even reached the Highlands. In the 1788 volume, clear Gothic allusions can be traced in plates such as ‘The Coast of Moray’ [Fig.193], with its array of caves stretched cloister-like behind each other, and ‘Rock of Dunby’, a set of arches and columns surrounded by the sea just south of Peterhead. Writing about the cloistered cliffs at Causie, Cordiner explicitly asserted that ‘to one within the cavern they seem the remains of broken shapeless windows in a gothic ruin, shedding a dreary light into the recesses of the vaults that yawn beyond’. At Dunby, he referred to the ‘hideous charms’ of a ‘most majestic and ponderous arch’, which made sailing in its vicinity a sublime, if terrifying, experience. In the Highlands, Cordiner applied the ruin metaphor in several illustrations of waterfalls, most notably at Lothbeg in Sutherland, and in Glen Quoich [Figs.194-5]. In both images, the rocks around the cataract were exaggerated so as to appear like blocks of crumbling masonry – irregular and formless, but hinting at some original artifice and structure. In his description of Loch Lomond, Cordiner also suggested that the pieces making up the view illustrated had once belonged to a larger whole, likening the islands to fragments rent from the surrounding mountains ‘by some violent convulsion’.⁴¹

In Glenmore at the foot of the Cairngorms, even the trees seemed to participate in the ruin theme. This was a thickly wooded area which saw some commercial forestry activity, and a sawmill can be seen in the background of one of Cordiner’s prints [Fig.196]. In the foreground, however, a picturesque screen has been formed out of the roots of an upended tree. More roots can be seen protruding from the subsiding river bank opposite. Cordiner described the spot as an ‘inviting subject to convey some general idea of these strange wilds. Over the mentioned deep chasm, in the declivity of the mountain, worn down with the floods of ages, some immensely large decayed trees are fallen; and now withered to a silver grey, stripped of their bark and foliage, form a species of bridges of

⁴¹ All the images and quotations cited here are in Cordiner, *Remarkable Ruins*, I. This volume is unpaginated, and the reader is best referred to the notes accompanying the cited plates.

most singular and romantic appearance'.⁴² Here, the process of natural degeneration and decay is again portrayed as a creative force, forming structures of almost artistic quality. This extension of the ruin metaphor to trees might be compared with an image in Garnett's Highland tour (1800). This showed the remains of the parish church of Torosay in Mull, where several ash trees had twisted their roots and branches around the ruined walls [Fig.197].⁴³ Although the trees in this case were living, they had become in essence one with the crumbling structure. Garnett took this as evidence that the church must have been ruined for several centuries. Ageing was thus again the process by which natural and human artifice could join in harmony, creating a hybrid subject automatically viewed as picturesque.

Historical, antiquarian and architectural metaphors lay at the heart of many of the landscape images looked at thus far. Conceived as the remains of a vast work of art, the ruins of the earth held a certain tragic fascination and nobility. Observers were simultaneously repelled by the horror of its chaos, and drawn by the possibility of imagining a state of original perfection and harmony. Studying the earth became akin to the perusal of man-made antiquities, the ruins of both containing clues about a past age. In 1699, one English gentleman contended that the geography of Scotland should be placed on a par with the classical antiquities of Italy, asking: 'If all our *European* Travellers direct their course to *Italy*, upon the account of its antiquity, why should *Scotland* be neglected, whose wrinkled surface derives its Original from the Chaos?'.⁴⁴ Although some image-makers, such as Pont, Griffith and Home, strove to create combined portraits of bounty and barrenness, it was the barest, rockiest landscapes which came to hold the greatest artistic appeal. On the one hand, this was because they came closest to the architectural properties of stone; on the other, because they seemed more primitive, more aboriginal, less alterable by man, and thus closer to the point of creation. Reading history in the face of the rocks grew into something of a fashionable pleasure.

⁴² *Ibid.*, n.p.

⁴³ Garnett, *Observations*, I, 161.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Andrews, *Search for the Picturesque*, 199.

‘Antiquaries of the World’⁴⁵

The theme of ruin and decay and the architectural parallels noted above remained accessible routes into the description and depiction of the Highland landscape in an age obsessed by history. This did not mean that theories of the earth stayed in the mould cast by Burnet. James Hutton (1726-97), a founding member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, is often dubbed the father of modern geology. Hutton challenged the notion of a once-perfect world gradually falling into ruin, suggesting that while the earth was subject to progressive decay as a result of erosion, it was also capable of self-renewal through the action of subterranean fire throwing up molten rock which subsequently cooled. Hutton’s now-famous theory was published in various forms from 1785, culminating in a two-volume *Theory of the Earth, with Proofs and Illustrations* (1795). Its lynchpin, and most controversial aspect, was the vast period of time required for the processes Hutton described to mould the earth into its current form. By discounting sudden, non-repeatable catastrophes such as the Biblical flood, Hutton based his interpretation of the past on the evidence of extant processes. The implications of this were immense, and at the close of a paper read to the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 1788, he famously concluded: ‘The result, therefore, of our present enquiry is, that we find no vestige of a beginning – no prospect of an end’.⁴⁶

Among Hutton’s acquaintances in scientific Edinburgh, the response to his findings was enthusiastic. In particular, it was the theory’s non-conclusive stance on the question of beginnings which both staggered and intrigued. Looking back on a field excursion he shared with Hutton in 1788, John Playfair (1748-1819) recalled sensations of mental vertigo as he contemplated the implications of Hutton’s ideas: ‘The mind seemed to grow giddy by looking so far into the abyss of time; and while we listened with earnestness and admiration

⁴⁵ Hugh Miller, *Scenes and Legends of the North of Scotland; or, the Traditional History of Cromarty* (Edinburgh, 1835), 48: ‘Let us survey the landscape a second time, not merely in its pictorial aspect, nor as connected with the commoner associations which link it to its present inhabitants, but as *antiquaries of the world*, - as students of these wonderful monuments of nature, on which she has traced her hieroglyphical inscriptions of plants and animals that impart to us the history, not of a former age, but of a former creation’.

⁴⁶ James Hutton, ‘Theory of the Earth; or an Investigation of the Laws observable in the Composition, Dissolution, and Restoration of Land upon the Globe’, *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, I, 1788, 304.

to the philosopher who was now unfolding to us the order and series of these wonderful events, we became sensible how much farther reason may sometimes go than imagination can venture to follow'.⁴⁷ Joseph Black (1728-99), professor of chemistry at Glasgow University, was also overwhelmed by the gulf which Hutton's theory opened between human and natural history:

In this system of Dr Hutton there is a grandeur & sublimity by which it far surpasses any that has been offered. The boundless preexistence of time and of the operations of Nature which he brings into our View, the depth & extent to which his imagination has explored the action of fire in the internal parts of the Earth strike us with astonishment... The short lived bustle of Man remotest reach of History or tradition or of the inquisitive antiquarian appear as nothing when compared with an object so great.⁴⁸

As Alexander Broadie has stressed, Hutton's conception of geological time did not preclude the idea of a beginning *per se*, nor did it exclude the hand of God in ordering the revolutions in the earth. In the phrase, 'we find no vestige of a beginning', Broadie traces 'a noteworthy holding back – not that there was no beginning, only that no such vestige has been found' – found, that is, in the empirical evidence to which Hutton, as a scientist, confined his investigations. The *Theory of the Earth* contained frequent references to an underlying order in natural systems, which Broadie deploys to argue that Hutton acknowledged the intelligent, designing hand of a Supreme Being.⁴⁹ Thus, although Black placed

⁴⁷ John Playfair, 'Biographical Account of the Late Dr. James Hutton, R.R.S. Edin.', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh*, 5, 1805, 73.

⁴⁸ Quoted in G. Y. Craig, ed., *James Hutton's Theory of the Earth: The Lost Drawings* (Edinburgh, 1978), 3. The quotation is from a manuscript letter, hence the defective punctuation and syntax.

⁴⁹ Alexander Broadie, *The Scottish Enlightenment* (Edinburgh, 2001), 216-17. The passage from Jameson quoted above, referring to 'the mighty and eternal power of him who framed so great a work' is a more explicit rendering of the same idea. For the design argument in the writings of later figures who simultaneously adhered to Hutton's theory of deep time, see John MacCulloch, *Proofs and Illustrations of the Attributes of God from the Facts and Laws of the Physical Universe* (3 vols., London, 1837); John Ruskin, 'Of Mountain Beauty', in *The Works of John Ruskin*, edd. E. T. Cook and Alexander Wedderburn (39 vols., London, 1903-12), VI; Hugh Miller, *The Testimony of the Rocks; or, Geology in its Bearings on the Two Theologies, Natural and Revealed* (Edinburgh, 1857), esp. 219-66. Miller draws some remarkable comparisons between the evidence of design in the fossil record and the principles of engineering and architecture.

the history of the earth outside of human memory, and so beyond the reach of the most inquisitive antiquary, antiquarian metaphors continued to be used in the description and visual representation of the earth. If anything, they were intensified, as scientists began to see natural phenomena as pieces in a vast jigsaw-puzzle stretching backwards through time. Rather than arbitrary happenings thrown anyhow by chaos, rocks held the clues to a hidden order of things, meriting precise and careful study.

During the seventeenth century, theories of the earth tended to be divorced from practical fieldwork, being based on abstract mathematical principles. As Porter writes, 'the certainties of Cartesian mechanism' or 'the truths of Newtonian celestial physics' were seen to transcend 'the uncertain world of empirical evidence from the ruins of the earth'. The opposite method, practised by Lhuyd and some of his contemporaries, was to amass field data with no reference to any interpretative framework.⁵⁰ Hutton's achievement was to combine the two approaches, using empirical observation to test and build a unified theory. As for fieldworkers in other spheres, creating a visual record of these observations became central to his methodology. For our purposes, Hutton's most immediate significance lay in his excursions to the Highlands. Besides exploring the geology of Edinburgh and its surroundings, and of Lowland sites like Jedburgh and Siccar Point, Hutton travelled north to Glen Tilt in 1785, and to Arran in 1787. On each occasion, drawings were made by his friend Sir John Clerk of Eldin.⁵¹ In 1785, their business in Glen Tilt was highly specific. Hutton was aiming to find a junction between two seams of rock which would confirm his theory that granite had originated in a molten form. If this were the case, evidence for the action of 'subterranean fire' in laying new beds of rock would be assured. In a section of the River Tilt, Hutton found what he was looking for, with seams of granite breaking and displacing older schistus in such a way as could only be explained by their having been poured over the existing strata in a

⁵⁰ Porter, *Making of Geology*, 78-9.

⁵¹ During his lifetime, Hutton prepared a manuscript to supplement the 1795 edition of his *Theory*, containing a full account of his excursions to Glen Tilt and Arran in 1785 and 1787. This manuscript was not in fact published until 1899, when it was edited by Sir Archibald Geikie. The whereabouts of Clerk's drawings were by this stage unknown, and languished undiscovered among the Clerk family papers until 1968. A full account of the drawings can be found in Craig, ed., *Hutton's Theory of the Earth*.

molten state.⁵² Clerk's efforts to visualise this discovery resulted in a series of drawings chronicling the composition of rocks and boulders exposed by the passage of the Tilt. Several of the sketches were semi-naturalistic depictions of waterfalls, and might be contrasted with Cordiner's architectural approach to similar subjects. Clerk's *View Looking Upstream from Dail-an-eas Bridge* stressed the continuity between the rocks on either side of the river and a mid-stream boulder, showing the alignment of the strata in flowing parallel lines [Fig.198]. Cordiner, on the other hand, had presented cataracts surrounded by a jumble of individual blocks and slabs, showing no interest in their internal structure. In another view taken near Dail-an-eas bridge, Clerk made no attempt to draw a visual analogy between art and nature, portraying the bridge and the rocks as clearly separate entities [Fig.199].⁵³

These geological images are particularly interesting because they focus on a subject (the waterfall) for which there was already an established visual tradition in fine art. An important painting was Charles Steuart's *Black Linn: Fall on the Bran* (1766) [Fig.200], one of the first full-scale depictions of a Highland waterfall, although a spate of engraved views followed the rise of tourism within the region.⁵⁴ Macdonald has noted the significance of the fact that Steuart's view of Black Linn was painted from the spot at which the fourth Duke of Atholl created his Ossianic viewing chamber during the 1780s.⁵⁵ The poems provided a literary lens through which perceptions of landscape could be filtered. Cordiner's 'Cascade near Carril', a product of his tour in Sutherland in 1776, made an explicit connection between the poems and a physical place, picturing Ossian himself with his harp on the banks of the stream [Fig.24].⁵⁶ Given the importance of Macpherson's work as a frame into which so many facets of the ancient could be fitted, the question of its influence on the perceived antiquity of

⁵² Donald B. McIntyre and Alan McKirdy, *James Hutton: The Founder of Modern Geology* (Edinburgh, 1997), 33.

⁵³ The original drawings are in the collection of Sir John D. Clerk. See Craig, ed., *Hutton's Theory of the Earth* for full-scale facsimiles, or digital reproductions at <http://www.scran.ac.uk/> (accessed 9 August 2006).

⁵⁴ Blair Castle, Perthshire, Charles Steuart, *Black Linn: Fall on the Bran*, Canvas, 208.4 x 179, 1766. In the Lowlands, a series of images of the Falls of Clyde by artists like Sandby, More and Nasmyth should also be noted: see Holloway and Errington, *Discovery of Scotland*, 47-55, for examples.

⁵⁵ Macdonald, 'Art and the Scottish Highlands', 2.

⁵⁶ Cordiner, *Antiquities and Scenery*, pl. facing 76.

Highland landscapes is an appealing theme. Ossianic imagery, with its emphasis on natural violence, fragmentation and decay, was in some ways the ideal imaginative counterpart to geology. Following out this thread, it is interesting to observe Clerk of Eldin's comments on an ascent of Goatfell in Arran in 1763:

We went on Sunday with an Intention to go up to the high hill called Gete fell or the Windy hill altho it was cloudy on the Top. It did not clear, but we were as highly pleased to see the dark clouds & fogs rolling in the deep glens below us, as if we had got to the Top, and you may Trust Ossian that his descriptions of these things are not exagirated, we threw or rather pushed over Great Stones, and were I to tell you there size, you would not believe me, as it was darker than ordinary we saw great quantity of fire fly from the stones as they bounded and broke.⁵⁷

From a geological perspective, it is noteworthy that Clerk's sense of an Ossianic sublime was connected with the 'great stones' which he and his companions sent crashing down the mountain side. On a tour of the Highlands in 1779, he recorded a similar astonishment at the 'great blocks of stone' which had fallen from the mountains near the pass of Ballater. Here, nature appeared 'in a perfect fury, tumbling every thing topsy turvey'.⁵⁸ While in Glen Tilt with Hutton in 1785, he sketched a view of Forest Lodge in which enormous boulders can be seen littering the near side of the glen [Fig.201]. Although these had a geological significance, Clerk's representation carries an aesthetic edge which dominates its scientific intent. The visual impact of the boulders, which dwarf the tiny lodge, and the sheer sides of the glen disappearing beyond the edge of the frame convey a sense of magnitude on the scene; along with this comes a feeling of the insignificance of man in an environment of such evident scale and power.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ NAS, Clerk of Penicuik Papers, GD 18/5486/4, Sir John Clerk to Margaret Adam, 4 September 1763. This letter is also quoted in Craig, ed., *Hutton's Theory of the Earth*, 16.

⁵⁸ NAS, Clerk of Penicuik Papers, GD 18/2118, Sir John Clerk of Eldin, *Diary of a Journey to the North of Scotland*, August 1779.

⁵⁹ For further comment on the artistic quality of this image, see Craig, ed., *Hutton's Theory of the Earth*, 16.

This brings us closer to the question of how far the type of scenery in which geological fieldwork was conducted stimulated a view of landscape from which man was excluded. In part, this could be seen as growing from the cardinal importance of bare rock to the geologist's investigations. Hutton himself reflected on the necessity of choosing sites where nature herself had done the work of stripping the rocks of soil and other disguises: 'to a naturalist who is reading in the face of rocks the annals of a former world, the mossy covering which obstructs his view, and renders undistinguishable the different species of stone, is no less than a serious subject of regret'.⁶⁰ In this respect, the very barrenness and thinness of the soil in many parts of the Highlands and Islands made it something of a geologist's paradise. On the other side, and of particular relevance in an age of 'improvement', were the agricultural applications of geological knowledge. Withers has charted an intimate connection between Hutton's geological interests, and his concern with the practice and theory of agriculture. Withers' discussion centres on an unpublished treatise by Hutton, entitled 'The Elements of Agriculture', which he compares with the conclusions of the *Theory of the Earth*.⁶¹ It emerges that soil played a key role in Hutton's vision of the patterns of degeneration and repair traceable in the earth's crust. As a deist, Hutton believed that the ultimate purpose of the earth was to maintain life, and to this end, a continued supply of fertile soil was vital. Agriculture was thus a product of the cycle of renewal and decay which his geological investigations set out to prove. 'For this great purpose of the world', he had written in the *Theory of the Earth*, 'the solid structure of this earth must be sacrificed; for, the fertility of our soil depends upon the loose and incoherent state of its materials'.⁶² The decay – or 'ruin' – of the rocks was therefore an essential part of the great agricultural machine. By dint of time, however, even this matter would be gradually swept into the sea, putting an end to life unless the cycle of renewal could be maintained by the gradual uplift of new rocks from beneath the earth's crust. Hutton's thinking on geology and agriculture thus fitted together to form an ingenious and fascinating scheme – one in which the

⁶⁰ Quoted in *ibid.*, 48.

⁶¹ Charles W. J. Withers, 'On Georgics and Geology: James Hutton's 'Elements of Agriculture' and Agricultural Science in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', *Agricultural History Review*, 41, 1994, 38-48.

⁶² Quoted in *ibid.*, 46.

needs of man and other life-forms remained the guiding mechanism of explanation.

In many parts of the Highlands and Islands, where the quality of the soil was such as to support only the most basic subsistence, the great machine would nevertheless appear to have broken down. While there were plenty signs of disintegration and decay, there was much less evidence of the conversion of this into soil. Paradoxically, therefore, geological and scenic interest came into conflict with agricultural productivity. Exploring the Firth of Clyde for his mineralogical tour of 1800, Robert Jameson was struck with the contrast between the island of Bute and its neighbour, Arran: 'Although this island be destitute of fine mountainous scenery; yet, the extensive cultivation, and the general appearance of bustle and life, form a striking contrast to the lone wastes of the island of Arran'.⁶³ Despite its comparative barrenness, Arran possessed the more varied geological structure, thus meriting a range of visual representations; Bute, on the other hand, remained unillustrated. Considered in didactic terms, there was good reason why the rockier, less cultivated districts of the Highlands should maintain a higher profile in geological imagery. It was after all the solid, as yet undisintegrated portions of the rock which preserved the most valuable evidence of what, in Hutton's words, 'had been transacted in a former period'.⁶⁴ This was what geologists were seeking to explain, and in so far as their deployment of visual material held a utilitarian purpose, the exclusion of man and his activities from what were intentionally selective images is unproblematic. Nevertheless, in an age when geological research was touted as a handmaid to agricultural improvement,⁶⁵ it was somewhat ironic that scientific images should consistently home in on the least cultivable territory, and, moreover, that they should present it as a form of beauty. Sublime aesthetics had an important role to play in this, and the influence of Ossian in shaping perceptions of what was typical in Highland landscape should not be discounted. Besides the value of rock as a record of the earth's history, uncultivated landscape held an added temporal

⁶³ Jameson, *Mineralogy*, I, 129.

⁶⁴ Quoted in Craig, ed., *Hutton's Theory of the Earth*, 31.

⁶⁵ On this point, see also the introductory material in R. C. Boud, 'Agriculture and Geology: The Cartographic Activities of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland, 1832-1875', *Bulletin of the Society of University Cartographers*, 20, 1986, 7-15.

significance. In his 'Critical Dissertation on the Poems of Ossian' (1763), Hugh Blair deployed internal evidence from the poems to demonstrate that Macpherson's warriors had not evolved much beyond the earliest stage of society, in which hunting was the chief means of procuring subsistence:

Pasturage was not indeed wholly unknown; for we hear of dividing the herd in the case of a divorce, but the allusions to herds and to cattle are not many; and of agriculture, we find no traces ... in Ossian's works, from beginning to end, all is consistent; no modern allusion drops from him; but every where, the same face of rude nature appears; a country wholly uncultivated, thinly inhabited, and recently peopled. The grass of the rock, the flower of the heath, the thistle with its beard, are the chief ornaments of his landscapes. "The desert", says Fingal, "is enough to me, with all its woods and deer".⁶⁶

Clerk of Eldin's association of the enormous boulders littering Goatfell with Ossian demonstrates that enthusiasts found no difficulty in equating poetical descriptions of reputed antiquity with the contemporary scene. Elsewhere within the Highland zone, however, Clerk found the landscape anything but thinly inhabited or uncultivated. In his travel journal for 1779, he recorded that 'the populousness is much greater from the Pass of Moffat entering the Highlands than below in what is called the Lowlands', and that this intensity of population – subsisting on a mixture of agriculture and pasturage – was general in the Highland counties.⁶⁷ Thus, although plaided huntsmen, shepherds and cowherds were popular as 'staffage' in picturesque depictions of the Highlands, the virtual excision of the agricultural landscape from the visual record deserves more general comment.

A good example of this occurs in a view of Strathtay by Paul Sandby, engraved for *The Virtuosi's Museum* in 1778 [Fig.202]. Sandby's original sketch (1747) contained no figures, but showed clear evidence of arable land use in the wide valley floor. In the print, however, the criss-crossed pattern of the rigs has been

⁶⁶ Blair, 'Critical Dissertation', 353-4.

⁶⁷ NAS, Clerk of Penicuik Papers, GD 18/2118, Clerk of Eldin, Diary of a Journey to the North.

removed, and a plaided shepherd added to the foreground with some scattered sheep.⁶⁸ Agriculture had apparently reverted to pasturage, not on the intensive level which might suggest an allusion to modern sheep-farming, but in a Virgilian mode. That agriculture was antithetic to mental images of Highlandness is supported by Robert Heron's comments on the region around Loch Lomond in 1799. 'The whole landscape', he recorded, 'exhibited a face of cultivation which left nothing but the Gaelic speech of the people whom I met, and the Gaelic garb which the peasants wore, to remind me, that I was yet within the confines of the Highlands'.⁶⁹ This observation suggests a reluctance to consider the Highlands as a region within which variety might exist, something which was reinforced by visual images. Although it was possible for nuances to be introduced into a written account, artists necessarily worked within a simplified, selective code of reference. Arriving in the Highlands with preconceived ideas of wildness and backwardness, it was all too easy to bypass such scenes of cultivation or 'improvement' as might be seen anywhere, and focus on the unique and supposedly primitive.

Some exceptions to this trend exist, such as the sketches made by a military officer, John Brown, while on a tour of the north in 1791. While most of the drawings in Brown's sketchbook are standard antiquarian and picturesque subjects, he also made a study of farm land adjacent to the river Ness, showing a regular patchwork of enclosed fields [Fig.203].⁷⁰ Although the carefully framed composition is picturesque in essence, the extent of arable land pictured is unusual. Some other images of the fertile landscape of Easter Ross appear in later travel sketchbooks. In 1852, Thomas Oliphant included two such sketches in a collection of drawings covering most of the northern counties. One is a harvesting scene between Dingwall and Beaully, in which a fence running along the side of the cut field provides evidence of enclosure. The second is a view from Knockfarrel above Strathpeffer, in which a regular patchwork of enclosed

⁶⁸ The original drawing is in the National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth, and is reproduced in Holloway and Errington, *Discovery of Scotland*, 39. For the print, see Sandby, *Virtuosi's Museum*, pl. 73.

⁶⁹ Robert Heron, *Observations made in a Journey through the Western Counties of Scotland, in the Autumn of 1792* (2 vols., Perth, 1799), I, 344-5.

⁷⁰ NLS, MS.8026, f. 69, John Brown, *Sketches in Scotland*, 1791.

fields is visible below [Fig.204].⁷¹ It is perhaps significant that these more obvious references to agricultural activity are found in private sketchbooks, rather than a source designed for the market. Looking at some print collections published in the 1820s and 1830s, it becomes obvious that where cultivation could not be removed from the landscape, it was often modified. David Octavius Hill's *Sketches of Scenery in Perthshire* (1821) contains several images which record the spread of enclosure, depicting roadside fencing in 'The Vale of the Garry' [Fig.205] and 'Loch Tummel'.⁷² The latter is, however, a droving scene, and the former incorporates a bucolic image of a plaided shepherd playing on a pipe. In *Swan's Views of the Lakes of Scotland* (1832), the fertility of the region around Loch Tummel is portrayed in a view looking east [Fig.206]. While the valley floor is chequered with neat squares of cultivated land, wildness is restored to the foreground in the form of two sportsmen with their dogs.⁷³

Looking at the 'staffage' in geological images, some similar patterns can be traced. In 1805, the English geologist George Greenough (1778-1856) set off on a tour of Scotland, intending to compare Hutton's ideas about the earth with those of a rival theorist, Abraham Werner. Greenough's route took him through the west Highlands via Callander and Inveraray and on to the inner Hebrides. For much of his trip, he was accompanied by the artist James Skene, whose work we have already noted in previous chapters. Greenough visited most of the major geological phenomena on the western tour route. These included Staffa, the Sgurr of Eigg and the Parallel Roads of Glen Roy, all of which were sketched by Skene.⁷⁴ The first of Skene's Eigg drawings was more picturesque than geological, and included a herdsman in Highland dress with a flock of goats on the high ground adjacent to the Sgurr [Fig.207]. Likewise, his depiction of Glen Roy was bathed in the glowing light typical of picturesque landscape paintings [Fig.208]. In the foreground, Skene added a small group of figures with a dog, and a flock of sheep below. The bearing of these figures on contemporary theories about the stages of society is worth reflecting on. Like Fingal's Cave in

⁷¹ NLS, MS.10990, ff. 83-83a, Thomas Oliphant, *Views in Scotland*, 1852.

⁷² Hill, *Scenery in Perthshire*.

⁷³ Leighton, *Swan's Views*, I, pl. facing 83.

⁷⁴ For an account of Greenough's tour, see Rudwick, 'Hutton and Werner Compared'; Skene's drawings are in ECL, 211, Skene, *Highland Album*, No. 3, 'Staffa', No. 4, 'Scur Egg', No. 5, 'Scur Egg, Columnar Porphyry', No. 24, 'Parallel Roads of Glen Roy', 1805.

Staffa, the 'parallel roads' for which Glen Roy was celebrated had Ossianic resonances. In his journal, Greenough scornfully observed: 'As everything that is wonderful is attributed to Fingal they are distinguished among the common people by the name of Fingal's roads'. Although cold water was poured on this suggestion, he also cited a paper in the Royal Society of Edinburgh *Transactions* which concluded they had been formed as hunting roads.⁷⁵ Given the association of hunting with the earliest stage of human society, this supposition created a fluid link between land phenomena and an amorphous prehistoric world. Although Greenough believed that the roads were natural, formed by the shorelines of a gradually receding lake, the actual existence of this lake was of course as lost in the mists of time as the heroes of Fingalian legend. As a true empiricist, Greenough considered fieldwork the only route to authentic natural history, but the parallels drawn with antiquarian methods are telling:

I consider a valley of this kind as an intaglio cut and fashioned by the hand of nature for the information of the studious, and the wonder of the common man in all ages. Let the works of the hero and the statesman be commemorated in the works of men like themselves in books, gems, medals, statues or paintings. These are sufficient to acquaint us with the revolutions of empire – but nature is her own historian and to her alone can we trust for any authentic documents which may explain to us the revolutions of our globe.⁷⁶

As artefactual evidence for the history of the earth, phenomena like the parallel roads required careful documentation. Visual images played an important role in the dissemination of scholarly ideas about such phenomena because they allowed a remote audience to engage with the evidence as well as the interpretation offered. Discussing the extensive use of 'documentary landscapes' in the early volumes of the Geological Society of London's *Transactions*, Rudwick suggests that they were seen as a means of conveying 'an unbiased factual impression of geological phenomena to those who had not had the opportunity to see them with their own eyes'. The geologist John MacCulloch, an able draughtsman and a

⁷⁵ Rudwick, 'Hutton and Werner Compared', 131.

⁷⁶ Quoted in *ibid.*, 132.

frequent contributor to the *Transactions*, is believed to have used a camera lucida in order to safeguard the accuracy of his landscape sketches.⁷⁷ In 1817, he published his own account of the parallel roads – a version of a paper read to the Geological Society in January of that year. Appended to this paper were four landscape views, intended, in MacCulloch's own words, to 'render intelligible that which words alone cannot describe'.⁷⁸ MacCulloch's most important, and best known, contribution to geological illustration was the third volume of his *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland* (1819). This gathered together an assortment of landscape views, maps, plans and sectional diagrams, keyed to relevant points in the first two volumes of narrative. Although primarily a geological work, both text and image in the *Description* blended the curious mixture of science, antiquarianism and agricultural theory outlined above. Of the first ten plates, two featured antiquarian subjects: Brochel Castle in Raasay, and Dunvegan Castle in Skye.⁷⁹ MacCulloch was not, however, overly impressed with the antiquities of the Western Isles, commenting on the lack of ornamentation in their style and generally disappointing character. The mere enumeration of brochs and cairns he counted a fruitless enterprise.⁸⁰ What appeared lacking in art was nevertheless more than made up for by nature. MacCulloch's images and descriptions of geological phenomena replicated the architectural emphasis of earlier travellers, although he combined this with a more subtle and exact rendition of the subjects illustrated. Three studies are particularly noteworthy in this respect: a view of the Sgurr of Eigg, of the Storr in Skye, and of a gneiss section in Lewis [*Figs.209-11*].⁸¹ In the case of the Sgurr, the allusion was to a tower; viewed side on, MacCulloch also noted its resemblance to 'a long irregular wall'. Similarly, the 'squared and pinnacled outlines' of the Storr presented 'vague forms of castles and towers; resembling, when dimly seen through the driving clouds, the combinations of an ideal and supernatural architecture'. In Lewis, MacCulloch referred to the frequency with which 'arches and pillars detached by the power of this turbulent sea' appeared

⁷⁷ Rudwick, 'Emergence of a Visual Language', 175.

⁷⁸ John MacCulloch, 'On the Parallel Roads of Glen Roy', *Transactions of the Geological Society*, 4, 1817, 319.

⁷⁹ MacCulloch, *Description*, III, pls. 2, 9.

⁸⁰ For samples of MacCulloch's comments on antiquities, see *ibid.*, I, 289; II, 323-4.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, III, pls. 1, 5, 8.

along the coast, similar to the specimen illustrated.⁸² In the images themselves, the architectural references made explicit in the text are equally obvious, from the notched surface of the Storr rocks to the narrowed, elongated height of the Sgurr. What is also striking is their composition: each feature illustrated is placed within the frame against a background setting much in the same way as architectural remains might be. It is as if they are an addition to, or imposition on, the landscape rather than a part of it. In Eigg, MacCulloch commented on this directly. The Sgurr, he observed, 'forms no natural combination of outline with the surrounding land, and hence acquires that independence in the general landscape which increases its apparent magnitude and produces that imposing effect which it displays'.⁸³

As this quotation suggests, MacCulloch was acutely sensitive to the scenic value of the subjects he selected for illustration. The coastal rocks of Lewis, for instance, formed 'a series of objects from which a painter might select detached parts with great effect; but the whole is unpleasing to a cultivated eye'.⁸⁴ In Skye, likewise, nature's attempts at composition frequently fell short: 'There is little throughout all this range of the interior country to attract the attention of the painter. If the distant outline is often grand or picturesque, the want of objects in the middle ground leaves the landscape barren, naked, and meagre: the artist searches in vain amid the wearisome repetition of brown, smooth, undulating moor, for the dark wood, the bushy ravine, the rocky torrent, or the intricacy of broken hills, to contrast with the distance and to fill his picture'.⁸⁵ Of the Long Island generally we are told: 'Nothing indeed can well be conceived less interesting in a picturesque view, than the whole of this chain of islands'. Geology was in large measure to blame for this, affecting the decay of rock, and thus the variety of the scenery. The Long Island, stretching from the Butt of Lewis to Barra was composed of a particularly resilient form of gneiss. 'The difficulty with which this rock decomposes into earth, is the evident cause of the

⁸² *Ibid.*, I, 173, 270, 508-9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, I, 508.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, I, 173.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, I, 269.

nakedness of the surface', wrote MacCulloch. Peaty deposits formed on top of the rock, became waterlogged, and were of as little agricultural as scenic value.⁸⁶

Agriculture was a major theme throughout the *Description*, complementing more detailed commentary on rocks and minerals. Persistently, MacCulloch highlighted the backwardness of the islands in this respect, citing lingering usage of antiquated implements like the quern and the *cas-chròm*, and the failure of the inhabitants to improve even low-lying pastures by enclosure, drainage and top-dressing with manure. Yet despite recognising an intimate connection between the soil of a country and its geological structure, agriculture did not feature in any of MacCulloch's scenic views. Instead, as we have seen, it was the sculptured, architectural side of nature which was construed as most amenable to visual representation. In the more diagrammatic plates in volume three of the *Description*, the *cas-chròm* was pictured, but as an object of antiquarian curiosity. It shared a page with illustrative figures documenting the arrangement of the Calanais stones and a *birlinn* from a grave-slab in Iona [Fig.212].⁸⁷ Between 1811 and 1826, MacCulloch served as Chemist to the Board of Ordnance, and it was in connection with these duties that he was able to carry out much of his fieldwork in the Highlands and Islands. Besides the visual dimension of his *Description of the Western Islands*, the data gathered was also put towards a projected geological map of Scotland. Crossover with the activities of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland is observable here. In the winter of 1832-3, the Society proposed offering a premium for an accurate mineralogical and geological map of Scotland. When the advanced state of MacCulloch's work became known, the Society was instrumental in pushing the Treasury towards publication. The complete map was finally published in 1836.⁸⁸ MacCulloch's ability to combine the functions of draughtsman and surveyor with an artistic approach to landscape composition places him at an interesting juncture between aesthetic and utilitarian uses of the image. His mapping work, tied as it was to the economic and improving

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, I, 80.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, III, pl. 30.

⁸⁸ Boud, 'Agriculture and Geology'; Derek Flinn, 'John MacCulloch, M.D., F.R.S., and his Geological Map of Scotland: His Years in the Ordnance, 1795-1826', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London*, 36, 1981, 83-102.

concerns of organisations like the Highland and Agricultural Society, recorded the effects of time on the landscape, but in a manner directed at the application of this knowledge to the here-and-now. In contrast, his scenic approach to geological forms, seen in the first ten plates of the *Description*, presented a vision of rocks as art on a grand scale, dwarfing the spectator, and indeed outside the orbit of human control. The concept of geological time contributed to MacCulloch's sense of the sublime in rock forms which had stood the test of epochs. Faced with the resilient gneiss of the Long Island, for instance, he found his imagination 'lost in reflecting on the slowness of those changes by which many parts of the rocky globe were first made fit for the habitation of plants and animals'. Similar sensations impressed him on examining the outline of the Black Cuillin in Skye.⁸⁹ If rocks of such evident intransigence could be worn into forms as striking as the arched gneiss on the coast of Lewis, or the jagged crest of the Cuillin, then the mind grew dizzy at the length of time which Hutton's scheme of gradual change required.

There was a sense in which the visual impact of these landforms demanded a more naturalistic style of representation than the more abstract plane of a map or section. Jumping forward in time, we might compare the content of J. A. Knipe's *Geological Map of Scotland* (1859).⁹⁰ Of particular interest is the illustration running along the base of the map, which shows the rock structure of the British Isles stretching from the far north to London. While predominantly diagrammatic, it is significant that several island phenomena – including Fingal's Cave, the Storr and the gneiss in Lewis – and some of the mountains were sketched in a naturalistic style [Fig.213]. In geological imagery generally, there was thus a tension between an abstract style of representation which could elucidate, explain and reduce to broad patterns, and the uniqueness of landscape features which demanded individualised attention. One is reminded of the response of Board of Ordnance draughtsmen to the Coigach and Assynt hills during the Military Survey of 1747-52. The intimate connection between geology and scenery lay at the heart of this tension. MacCulloch recognised that,

⁸⁹ MacCulloch, *Description*, I, 80; John MacCulloch, 'Sketch of the Mineralogy of Skye', *Transactions of the Geological Society*, 3, 1816, 14.

⁹⁰ J. A. Knipe, *A Geological Map of Scotland* (London, 1859).

while studying the surface appearance of the landscape was only a means to an end for the geologist, it was by no means negligible, and required an ability in landscape drawing. In an article of 1823, he stated:

If geology is not so purely concerned with the descriptions of visible objects as some other branches of natural history, it is still very conversant in these. There are innumerable cases in which no powers or minuteness of description can convey to a reader clear ideas of the subject under review; where three or four strokes of a pencil are more descriptive than many pages of letter-press.⁹¹

It was essential, he went on, that anyone attempting the visual depiction of geological subjects should himself be a geologist: 'The very essence of these appearances is often of so delicate a nature so as to evaporate in ordinary hands; nor can any artist, in any department of painting, represent truly that which he does not know radically'.⁹² As this suggests, an awareness of the need for scientific study of the earth as an adjunct to academic landscape painting was growing. It would be some time before *The Art Journal* would categorically state: 'To the artist and to the amateur, to everyone who would attempt to delineate the landscape in its truthfulness, some knowledge of geology is necessary'.⁹³ From the second decade of the nineteenth century, geological influences can nevertheless be traced in a body of more mainstream landscape images. These are particularly valuable for testing the trend observed in Clerk and MacCulloch's explicitly geological drawings, in which human use of, or presence in, the landscape was minimised.

Of particular relevance here are the prints in William Daniell's *Voyage Round Great Britain*; the volumes covering the north west were published between 1818 and 1821, and, as we saw in previous chapters, combined antiquarian and economic concerns. Daniell was also interested in geology, and an avid reader of

⁹¹ Quoted in David A. Cumming, 'A Description of The Western Islands of Scotland: John MacCulloch's Successful Failure', *Journal of the Society for the Bibliography of Natural History*, 8, 1977, 273.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 273.

⁹³ *AJ*, n.s., 1, 1855, 275.

MacCulloch's contributions to the *Transactions of the Geological Society*. Besides the prints in the *Voyage* itself, Daniell's views of Staffa were issued in a separate volume in 1818. Owing to the geological interest of the island, this collection was explicitly marketed at a scientific audience. In 1814, John MacCulloch had published an account of Staffa in the second volume of the *Geological Society Transactions*, including a critique of earlier visual representations of the island.⁹⁴ Daniell, who gathered much of the information for his geological descriptions from this paper, was careful to advertise the empirical foundation of his own images: 'Care has been taken to avoid the errors of former delineators, and to render the views faithful and accurate; and if through these merits the work shall obtain the favourable regard of the geologist and the general lover of nature, its purpose will be fully answered'.⁹⁵ Daniell's 'Island of Staffa from the South West' [Fig.214] shows most clearly the influence of his geological reading, clearly differentiating between the beds of rock making up the cliff-face: its sandstone base, visible only at low water, the basalt columns, and an upper layer of alluvial fragments. In this way, the print performs the functions of a geological section without sacrificing its status as an attractive view. Commenting on the architectural appearance of Fingal's Cave, Daniell was quick to rationalise the traditional comparison between nature and art:

It is an object that excites wonder and astonishment most certainly, and these feelings are heightened by our conjectures as to the mysterious process which effected this resemblance to the productions of human skill and labour. But, with such productions, this process, whatever it may be, has no farther affinity; it is an emanation of those laws, and a part of that sublime scale of operations by which the world itself was created, and is upheld. Contemplated in this point of view, it enters into that infinite series of wonders by which the Omnipotent has manifested himself; and which may be traced equally in the crystallisation of minerals, the structure, organisation, and economy of plants and animals, the formation

⁹⁴ John MacCulloch, 'On Staffa', *Transactions of the Geological Society*, 2, 1814, 501-9.

⁹⁵ William Daniell, *Illustrations of the Island of Staffa, in a Series of Views, Accompanied by Topographical and Geological Descriptions* (London, 1818), 11.

of the globe which we inhabit, and of the system of the universe of which it constitutes a part.⁹⁶

In this light, even the most startling phenomena could be viewed as part of a system ordered to maintain a sustainable habitat. While the nine plates of Staffa were selected for separate publication owing to the high profile of the island as a scientific phenomenon, Daniell's depiction of other sections of coastline displayed an equal attention to geology. In many prints, the definition of detail in cliffs and mountains is such that the background intrudes upon and swallows up the foreground. Notable in this respect are the images of Gribune Head in Mull [*Fig.215*] and Smoo Cave on the north coast of Sutherland; in both, every fold and crease in the cliff face is detailed so that the rocks appear like compressed layers stacked one above the other.⁹⁷ This effect was clearly achieved through careful observation, and loses nothing in the way of naturalism. In the shape of fishing boats, human activity forms an adjunct to both scenes, although in each case the boats and figures are dwarfed by the magnitude of the landscape. This is a common feature in Daniell's images, and may have had a metaphorical significance. Although his work on Staffa demonstrated considerable anxiety to achieve topographical accuracy, there was more than one way to exaggerate. The microscopic detail in which he portrayed the outline and distinctive horizontal scoring of the Assynt hills is deceptive until one realises that we have been given what amounts to a zoomed-in view placed in a landscape of ordinary dimensions. Thus, while his depictions of Suilven and Quinag are 'accurate' in essence, they are out of all proportion to the rest of the setting.

The brooding immediacy of the hills bears witness to Daniell's conception of man's place within this environment. Describing Assynt in general, he regretted that the district was 'rather deficient in those relics of antiquity which impart a mournful dignity to a lonely and neglected territory'. Nevertheless, he went on, 'its inmost recesses have perhaps a more impressive effect, because they disclose so few traces of the hand of man; and the wanderer who explores them may feel

⁹⁶ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, III, 38.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, III, pl. facing 60; IV, pl. facing 84.

something sublime in the reflection, that they retain nearly the same aspect which they bore to the first human eye that beheld them'.⁹⁸ The view of Unapool which accompanies this description incorporates small signs of settlement and agricultural land besides fishing activity [Fig.216]. Over it all, however, looms the bulk of Quinag, scarred by time, but in comparison to the swift passage of human history, essentially unchanged. Despite his enthusiasm for 'improvement', Daniell evidently remained circumspect about its power to alter the overall face of the landscape. This prerogative belonged to slower, invisible forces over which man had no control.

Contemporary with Daniell, the Duchess of Sutherland compiled her own record of the north in watercolour, selecting similar subjects. The drawings date from around 1820, subsequently aquatinted by F. C. Lewis in 1833.⁹⁹ Her views are starker, even less marked by the hand of man, but more concerned with outline and general contours than the details of rock structure. The second image in the print collection – portraying the mountains Foinaven and Arkle [Fig. 217] – nevertheless conveys some sense of the skeleton of the landscape, documenting dips, folds and ridges in the expanse of moorland with close attention. With no trees, buildings or figures to break the overall monotony, it is the bones of the landscape which have been deployed to create the interest and variety necessary for aesthetic effect.¹⁰⁰ This method would be used with greater aplomb by later, professional painters, so that the most barren scenes became legitimate subjects for art. In later collection of etchings, the Duchess exploited the greater flexibility of this print medium to create even more textured evocations of the landscape.¹⁰¹ Although these images are not geological in any theoretical sense, they are remarkable for the way in which they juxtapose cliffs and mountains cut and carved by the weather and the sea with antiquarian remains like standing stones and castles. It should be pointed out that the volume makes no visual

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, IV, 80. There are two images of Quinag in the volume. The one referred to here is 'Unapool in Kyles-cu, Assynt': *ibid.*, IV, pl. facing 78.

⁹⁹ See Irwin, 'Across Sutherland with its Duchess', for background.

¹⁰⁰ NGS, P 2952, No. 2, 'Funovin, Arkle in Reay Forest', in Frederick Christian Lewis, after Elizabeth, Duchess of Sutherland, *Views of the Northern and Western Coasts of Sutherland*, Aquatint, 1833.

¹⁰¹ NLS, R.287.c, Elizabeth, Duchess of Sutherland, *Views in Orkney and on the North-Eastern Coast of Scotland*, Etchings, 1807.

distinction between scenes in the true Gàidhealtachd, and those in Caithness and the Northern Isles. The image of antiquity applied to Gaelic culture tied neatly with perceptions of an antique landscape, but it would be facile to argue that the ruin theme did not extend to other areas with equally striking, if geologically different, scenery. In the Duchess's etchings, time can be traced scratching and eating at a variety of surfaces, from the peaks of Sguraben to the sea stacks at Duncansby Head, the worn megaliths at Stennis in Orkney, and the slowly crumbling remains of Helmsdale Castle [Figs.218-19].

Following the agenda set by early travellers like Pennant, a combination of antiquities and landscape curiosities dominated the work of many nineteenth-century amateurs. Enthusiasm for geology percolated down to the general traveller, as is illustrated in one watercolour drawing of Dunollie Castle outside Oban [Fig.220]. The composition is framed by an isolated pillar of rock near the foreground, which the artist identified as 'dry stone, breccia and micaceous schistus'.¹⁰² James Skene, another artist with a dual interest in geology and antiquities, incorporated the same pillar into a view of Dunollie, probably painted while on tour with Greenough in 1805.¹⁰³ The wide appeal of the science is illustrated by the fact that popular guide books contained geological information; Anderson's *Guide to the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (1834), for instance, devoted an appendix to the subject. In 1842, Sarah Taylor copied information on the geology of Staffa from Anderson's guide into her personal travel journal. In the Cairngorms, she also made passing observations on geology and mineralogy, noting that the mountains were composed of granite, and that crystals were often to be found near the summits. Her sketch of the pass of Cairngorm looking towards Aviemore is all rough rock and boulders, recalling the geological sublime in Clerk's drawing of the littered lumps of granite near Forest Lodge in Glen Tilt, sketched for Hutton in 1785.¹⁰⁴

MacCulloch's *Description of the Western Islands* clearly inspired some amateurs to follow in his footsteps. John Bowman, a banker from Wrexham, carried his

¹⁰² NLS, MS. 9842, Anon., Sketches of Scenery in Scotland.

¹⁰³ ECL, 211, Skene, Highland Album, No. 8, 'Dunolly Castle'.

¹⁰⁴ For the quotation from Anderson, see NLS, MS.8927, f. 110, Journal of Sarah Taylor; for the descriptions and drawings of the Cairngorms, see *ibid.*, ff. 76-7.

interest in geology and botany to the Highlands in 1825, thereafter compiling a manuscript account of his travels. Illustrations were provided by his son Eddowes and daughter Elizabeth, again focusing on antiquities and landscape phenomena. Several images – including those of Staffa and Glen Roy – were copied directly from MacCulloch's work. Another drawing of Ben Arthur from Loch Lomond highlighted its curiously eroded summit. According to Bowman, 'His top is dreadfully rended, as if by the explosion of some mighty subterranean power, and is composed of huge pointed and shattered blocks, piled on end like a vast and complicated Druidical remain, which absolutely curl and overhang the frightful crater within'.¹⁰⁵ This is an extension of the architectural metaphors traced in so many images of Highland landforms, although in this case Bowman seized on the most primitive allusion possible. The drawing itself is amateurish and contains no explicit geological content. The choice of subject, may, however, be significant. In 1819, J. M. W. Turner published a mezzotint print of Ben Arthur as part of his *Liber Studiorum* series. Turner was a friend of John MacCulloch's, and is known to have possessed at least two volumes of the Geological Society's *Transactions*.¹⁰⁶ The influence of geology on Turner's innovative approach to mountain landscapes is well documented, and is a theme to which we will return. His view of Ben Arthur was taken from the slopes of the mountain itself, a stance which had become common enough in scientific illustrations, but did not lend itself to compositions in the picturesque school. Turner, however, made use of torn roots, broken boulders, cloud formations, and the natural sweep and texture of the landscape to create a sense of movement and drama.¹⁰⁷ Rather than drawing explicit antiquarian parallels, he allowed the effects of time on the landscape to speak for themselves.

Turner's 'Ben Arthur' was not a static, topographical rendering of a given spot, rather inviting the viewer to participate in the emotional impact of a true mountain landscape. It was this power to unite science with the imagination which made geology such a potent influence on fine art during the nineteenth

¹⁰⁵ Bowman, *Highlands and Islands*, edd. Barry and Miller, 41. My comments on the illustrations are based on the examples reproduced in this edition; the manuscript remains in private hands and was never published in Bowman's lifetime.

¹⁰⁶ James Hamilton, *Turner and the Scientists* (London, 1998), 115-19.

¹⁰⁷ Tate Britain, London, A01145, J. M. W. Turner, *Ben Arthur*, Etching and Mezzotint, 1819: reproduced in Forrester, *Turner's Drawing Book*, 131.

century. It answered the demand for 'truth' and realism which, as we saw in chapter one, became such a hallmark of Victorian aesthetics. At the same time, it did not sacrifice the need for art to stretch beyond mere documentation, engaging the spectator with issues of universal significance. During a period of rapid change and upheaval in the human sphere, the theme of time and its relationship to human transience held a particularly relevant appeal.

Time and the Imagination

The work of Thomas Dick Lauder provides a useful introduction to the intersection between time and the imagination in landscape images. Lauder was a talented amateur rather than a professional artist but straddled several worlds. Like MacCulloch, he published and illustrated his own geological papers, including one on the parallel roads of Glen Roy, read to the Royal Society of Edinburgh in March 1818.¹⁰⁸ On the original drawing for the fifth plate – a view of the head of Glen Roy – Lauder noted the site 'where a battle was fought between the Macdonalds of Keppoch and Macintosh'.¹⁰⁹ This reference was not reproduced in the published version, but indicates the extent to which Lauder viewed the landscape as a record of both human and natural history. His personal sketchbooks contain an extensive number of geological and antiquarian studies, besides some images of the characters and traditional practices he encountered on his travels through the Highlands.¹¹⁰ Many of these tie into the themes discussed in previous chapters, but it is their bearing on a composite vision of antiquity, embracing land and people, which concerns us there. Of particular interest in this respect are the illustrations in two of Lauder's published works: his *Account of the Great Floods of August 1829* (1830) and *Highland Rambles, and Long Legends to Shorten the Way* (1837). The Morayshire flood of 1829, which inspired Landseer's *Flood in the Highlands* (c. 1845-60) was – on a regional level – a catastrophe of considerable extent and magnitude. Lauder's account operated on three planes, documenting material damage to

¹⁰⁸ Lauder, 'On the Parallel Roads', 1-64, pls. 1-7.

¹⁰⁹ In AAGM, 8405, Lauder, Album No. 2, 1816-20. In AAGM 8404 there is a sketch of the Glen Roy roads dated 30 August 1816, which suggests this was the date of his first visit. The ink drawings in AAGM 8405 were probably done later in preparation for the published paper. One of Loch Treig in this series is dated 1 June 1819.

¹¹⁰ AAGM, 8404-9, Lauder, Albums Nos. 1-6. These cover the period 1801-31.

homes, roads and bridges, the humanitarian impact, and the physical changes made to the face of the landscape. Although the book was directed at a popular audience, and therefore minimised scientific theorising,¹¹¹ the geological bearing of this sudden catastrophe was clearly at the back of Lauder's mind. The title page carried a Biblical epigraph – 'The waters prevailed' (Genesis 7:18) – and while this was never made explicit, the interest of the 1829 flood doubtless gained strength by dint of its bearing on current geological debates. By a strange coincidence, John Martin (whose 1822 canvas *Macbeth* was discussed in chapter two) exhibited one of a series of paintings of the Biblical deluge in Edinburgh in the summer of 1829. Although there is some confusion over the precise identity and chronology of Martin's paintings, the first was shown at the British Institution in 1826, and a new pair, *The Eve of the Deluge* and *The Assuaging of the Waters*, at the Royal Academy in 1840.¹¹² The outlandish mountainscape in *Macbeth* [Fig. 69] could be read as an extension of the artist's penchant for apocalyptic horror. If scarcely a rendition of any recognisable Highland landscape, it provides a stage for the supernatural theme of the painting – dark clouds clearing to reveal a chaotic scene as if fresh from the assuaging of the waters.¹¹³ The Deluge, and its effects, was thus a topical theme in art as well as science during this period; being a Biblical subject, it also fitted the criteria of traditional history painting.

The illustrations in Lauder's *Account of the Great Floods* were for the most part documentary, based closely on field sketches made in late September 1829.¹¹⁴ One of these sketches, reproduced as plate two in the *Account* [Fig. 221], featured an enormous boulder at Clava in Inverness-shire – incidentally the site of a cairn and stone circle which were also illustrated and described within the volume. Lauder's image shows a tiny figure seated in the lee of the stone, echoing an earlier drawing of the Shelter Stone at Loch Avon in the Cairngorms, made in

¹¹¹ See Lauder, *Account of the Great Floods*, 10: 'As I conceive the present to be a work of too popular a nature to be loaded with geological details, I shall confine my remarks on this subject chiefly to the changes produced by rivers in their channels and courses'.

¹¹² For an account of the paintings, see Christopher Johnstone, *John Martin* (London, 1974), 74-5.

¹¹³ NGS, NG 2115, Martin, *Macbeth*.

¹¹⁴ For the originals, see AAGM, 8407, Lauder, Album No. 4, 1828-30.

July 1816.¹¹⁵ In both, the insignificance of man against the enormity of nature is the central theme. In the Clava example, the geological history of the boulder forms a subtext. Following his description of the cairns, Lauder continued: 'A mile farther down the valley, and on the same side, we found a huge cubical boulder of conglomerate, resting on the gneiss, but within thirty horizontal yards of the out-crop of a stratum of what may be supposed its native rock. It stands in an ancient river bed, about 100 feet above the present channel of the Nairn'. Despite its status as a fragment of geological history, the boulder had attained a place in human tradition. Lauder recorded its Gaelic name as 'Clach-mhor-a-chruaidh-ghorston', translated as 'the big stone of the rough ground'.¹¹⁶ In the tradition of scientific travel, Lauder was intensely interested in local lore, and traditional nomenclature formed an element of this. Although both text and image are required to gain its full significance, the boulder illustrates how much interest could gather around a single element of the landscape. Even as an isolated image, the appeal of Lauder's subject was not lost on subsequent travellers. Visiting Skye in 1831, George Clayton Atkinson made a very similar sketch of a huge stone near Loch Coruisk, again including a tiny figure to lend scale and to focus the sublimity of the scene.¹¹⁷ It is impossible to believe that he was not aware of the illustration in Lauder's book, published the previous year.

In the *Account of the Great Floods*, several of the plates documenting domestic damage incorporated the trunks and branches of uprooted trees [Fig.222]. Frequently placed in the foreground, the repetition of this device lends it a symbolic dimension. On a more intimate scale than rock, trees made an important contribution to perceptions of an ancient and decaying landscape. This was to a large extent due to the belief that Scotland had once been covered with thick forest, of which the pockets of Caledonian pine to be found in parts of the Highlands were only the forlorn remnant. En route to Assynt in 1772, Pennant observed that 'roots of pines filled all the moors', although he saw none of the species standing.¹¹⁸ Cordiner's use of the twisted roots of trees as a picturesque

¹¹⁵ In AAGM, 8404, Lauder, Album No. 1, 1807-17: reproduced in Ian R. Mitchell, *On the Trail of Queen Victoria in the Highlands* (Edinburgh, 2000).

¹¹⁶ Lauder, *Account of the Great Floods*, 16, pl. 2.

¹¹⁷ Reproduced in Quine, ed., *Expeditions to the Hebrides by George Clayton Atkinson*, 100.

¹¹⁸ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland, 1772*, I, 315.

device has already been discussed above. Much later, in 1825, John Bowman compiled an illuminating account of the historical and cultural associations accrued by pine. Having attended the Highland Games at Strathfillan, he continued his journey east:

I therefore pushed on; and the first thing I observed was a great quantity of the trunks of large fir trees plentifully scattered over the turbaries and on the uliginous sides of the mountains. They are the remains of the ancient forests which originally claimed so large a portion of Scotland, and are supposed to have been cut down by the Romans when they first crossed the Forth under Agricola. Though this will admit of very strong doubts, they evidently bear marks of having been felled by the hand of art. The bitumen they have imbibed from lying so long in the mosses makes them so inflammable that the Highlanders here dig them up for fuel instead of candles; and it will be recollected that the torches which lighted up McAulay's Castle when the Cumberland squires came to decide the wager of the Silver Candlesticks, were of 'split bog pine'.¹¹⁹

This web of connotations, from the Romans to the legend of the Chieftain's Candlesticks – the latter popularised by Scott in *A Legend of Montrose* (1819) – illustrates the historical 'mileage' which could be got out of what amounted to pretty dreary scenery. The value of the historical imagination in investing such landscapes with a new interest finds perfect expression in Lauder's *Highland Rambles* (1837). This, as its title suggests, was a rambling, semi-humorous account of a supposed journey through the Highlands, in which the author and his companions entertain themselves with tales and legends associated with the terrain through which they travel. The first of these, entitled 'The Burning of MacFarlane's Forest of Ben Laoidh', was invoked to explain the desolate condition of the moor between Grantown and the valley of the Findhorn:

A scene apparently less calculated to furnish food for remark or conversation, can hardly well be conceived. But when the imagination is

¹¹⁹ Bowman, *Highlands and Islands*, edd. Barry and Miller, 68.

not altogether asleep, a very trifling hint will set it a working; and so it was, that the innumerable grey, ghastly-looking pine stocks of other years, that were everywhere seen pointing out of the peat-mosses, from amidst tufts of the waving cotton grass, and wiry rushes, and gaudy ranunculuses, quickly carried our minds back to former ages by a natural chain of connection, filled them with magnificent ideal pictures of those interminable forests which completely covered Scotland during the earlier periods of its history, and immediately furnished us with a subject for talk.¹²⁰

The tale itself was a typical concoction of mists, sunsets, scenic glories, chieftains and reiving caterans, centred around an instance of second sight. This vision, in which an old woman foresees the burning of the great forest, accompanied by a terrible tragedy in the laird's family, was selected for illustration by the artist William Dyce [Fig.223]. In the background to this supernatural scene appears a skeletal pine tree, a lonely survivor in a charred landscape. Examining the remains of the trunks found on the moor, Lauder noted their curious appearance, the upper part being hollowed like a spout, and the lower left almost entire. This he attributed to the action of the flames, 'which naturally continued to smoulder on the upper surfaces of the fallen trunks, whilst the moisture of the ground where they fell extinguished them below'.¹²¹ Through the imagination, an empirical archaeology of nature could thus be reconciled with legend.

The year 1837 saw at least two entries at the RSA exhibition in Edinburgh devoted to the theme of the ancient Caledonian forests. These were the lengthily-titled *Scene in the Remains of the Ancient Caledonian Forest at Inveroran in the Braes of Glen Urchy, Argyleshire, Loch Tulla in the Distance*, by MacNeil MacLeay (brother to Kenneth), and Horatio McCulloch's *Glen in Badenoch, with the Remains of the Old Pine Forests*.¹²² The importance of bog-pine in several images of Highland 'tradition' should also be noted. Two

¹²⁰ Lauder, *Highland Rambles*, I, 3.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, I, 5.

¹²² de Laperriere, ed., *RSA Exhibitors*.

interiors by Alexander Fraser, for instance, feature a length of bog pine burning in the central hearth [Fig. 141].¹²³ Around 1828, Landseer painted *The Bogwood Gatherers*, one of a series of works devoted to portraying everyday life in the Highlands.¹²⁴ The tableau of tartan-clad clansmen bearing pine torches with which Queen Victoria was entertained at Taymouth, and subsequently sought to replicate at Balmoral [Fig. 165], should also be recalled here. The ruins of the Caledonian forests were therefore an important variation on the theme of time in the landscape, and could be linked with other remnants of tradition to deepen the aura of antiquity cast over Highland scenes. As a symbol for entry into Highland territory, the windswept pines in D. O. Hill's 'Pass of Killiecrankie' (1821) were much more than incidental [Fig. 224].¹²⁵

The endless brown moor of which John MacCulloch had complained in the Western Isles was, along with rock, one of the principal challenges to scenic appreciation in the Highlands and Islands: perhaps even more so, as the power and variety of rock held a sublime quality which mile upon mile of waterlogged peatlands could not match. As the custodian of Scotland's erstwhile sylvan glories, even peat, however, could appeal to the imagination. Rock and decaying forests combine in the work of an artist who trod a fine line between scientific 'truth' and aesthetic appreciation. In 1814, the English painter George Fennell Robson (1788-1833) published a collection of forty soft-ground etchings, entitled *Scenery of the Grampian Mountains*.¹²⁶ Within the collection, the prints were arranged topographically, beginning with Ben Lomond and gradually working north to Cairn Gorm, allowing the viewer to follow Robson in his journey from the wooded lake scenery of the south-west to the bare upland passes of the Aberdeenshire hills. As the landscape grew more barren, the geological allusions in the text thickened. Having left the familiar guidebook territory of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, Robson was clearly experiencing some difficulties with his subject. Describing the vicinity of Beinn a' Bhuid, for instance, he observed:

¹²³ NGS, NG 2134, Fraser, *Highland Sportsman*; *AJ*, 12, 1850, 274. The latter is an engraving of *A Highland Cottage*, from the Vernon Gallery series.

¹²⁴ Private Collection, Sir Edwin Landseer, *The Bogwood Gatherers*, Panel, 31.8 x 61, c. 1828: reproduced in Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 65.

¹²⁵ In Hill, *Scenery in Perthshire*.

¹²⁶ George Fennell Robson, *Scenery of the Grampian Mountains* (London, 1814).

The forms of the mountains in this part of the Grampian chain, are heavier than those we have already described in the South West; their summits being more obtuse, and often disfigured by rocky protuberances like those on Ben Avon: neither are their situations so insulated, for they crowd upon each other, and have no extensive lakes or valleys between them. These, it must be admitted, are serious disadvantages, but they are nearly counterbalanced by those tremendous precipices which give such sublimity of aspect to the Aberdeenshire hills. The awful chasms which we here behold, are as interesting to the geologist as to the painter, disclosing, at one view, the rocky bowels of the mountain, which consist entirely of granite.¹²⁷

In many places, the nakedness of this 'remote and dreary tract' was only relieved by the mosses which grew over the boulders which had fallen from the precipices. Some glens contained some scattered woodland, but, in keeping with the theme of ruin and devastation, Robson emphasised the age of the trees and evidence of progressive decay. In Glen Lui, looking up at the slopes of Ben MacDhui, he described 'a scattered wood of aged and weather-beaten pines, many of them little inferior in size to those in the forest of Dalmore; but their ranks have been thinned by the havock of the tempest, which has overthrown or rent in pieces some of the largest, as is evident by the huge trunks and scattered limbs that strew the bottom of the glen'. In the accompanying plate, several of these fallen trunks can be seen scattered among the rocks in the foreground [Fig.225]. Proceeding up the glen, 'among the ruins of the pine forests', Robson offered to 'point the way to scenes of yet more awful sublimity'. Climbing out towards Loch Avon, he observed that 'not the slightest vestige of cultivation is visible, or any thing that indicates the abode of man'.¹²⁸ This description culminated in a view of the loch itself, with the summit of Ben MacDhui again visible in the distance. Despite his ambivalence towards the territory, Robson's *Scenery of the Grampian Mountains* was pioneering in several ways, not only in its choice of subject, but also in its standard of topographical accuracy. In his

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, notes to pl. 33.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, notes to pl. 34.

introduction to the collection, Robson stated that ‘the object of the draftsman has been to convey information, not to elicit praise; “to hold the mirror up to nature”, not to “body forth the form of things unseen”’. Although a professional artist, primarily interested in scenery, rather than a geologist who could forgo beauty in the cause of science, the standard of Robson’s work attracted interest from the scientific community. Among the subscribers to the volume was the Rev. William Buckland, an English clergyman later known for his work on the fossil record.¹²⁹ In his paper on the parallel roads of Glen Roy, Lauder also praised Robson for his ‘faithful outline’ of Loch Avon, commenting that he was, to his knowledge, ‘the only person who has had the merit of noticing this desert and desolate, but magnificently gloomy spot’.¹³⁰

The year in which Robson’s *Grampian Mountains* was issued – 1814 – was something of a landmark for the merging of geological and artistic perceptions of landscape. The desolate gloom of Loch Avon was more than matched by that of Loch Coruisk in Skye, an inland bowl of water cradled by the Black Cuillin. Loch Coruisk took on iconic status as a result of two important voyages in the summer of 1814: one by John MacCulloch, the other by the emerging wizard of the north, Sir Walter Scott. Both men could be credited with discovering the loch for the outside world, although it was undoubtedly Scott’s description in *The Lord of the Isles* (1815) which exerted most influence on the popular imagination. Behind this lay the raw impressions recorded in his journal for 1814, in which he described his party’s search for ‘a fine romantic loch’ recommended to them by MacLeod of Dunvegan. In this account (published in the notes to the first edition of the poem), Scott combined a relish for the elemental savagery of the scene with precise geological details:

Stones, or rather large massive fragments of rock of a composite kind, perfectly different from the granite barriers of the lake, lay upon the rocky beach in the strangest and most precarious situations, as if

¹²⁹ William Buckland, *Reliquiae Diluvianae* (London, 1823). As the title of this work suggests, Buckland was also an apologist for geology in the context of the Biblical record. On this theme, see further William Buckland, *Vindiciae Geologicae: Or the Connexion of Geology with Religion Explained* (Oxford, 1820).

¹³⁰ Lauder, ‘On the Parallel Roads’, 16. Lauder himself visited and sketched Loch Avon in July 1816. For these drawings, see AAGM, 8404, Lauder, Album No. 1, 1807-17.

abandoned by the torrents which had borne them down from above; some lay loose and tottering upon the ledges of the natural rock, with so little security that the slightest push moved them, though their weight exceeded many tons. These detached rocks were chiefly what are called plum-pudding stones. Those which formed the shore were granite.¹³¹

For Scott, these boulders were symbolic of the immense powers latent in this environment of naked stone: forces which operated altogether beyond and outside the world of human affairs. 'We returned', he wrote, 'and often stopped to admire the ravages which storms must have made in these recesses when all human witnesses were driven to places of more shelter and security'.¹³² In such a world, nothing could grow: 'vegetation there was little or none'. The slopes of the mountains were so sheer they seemed unscaleable; their colour, an arid, monotonous brown. Visiting Loch Coruisk the same summer, John MacCulloch remarked on similar qualities: the silence, the stillness, the blackness of the water, the scale of the mountains, the absence of all life and colour.¹³³ Not only was the rock 'inimical to vegetation', it was so hard that it precluded any possibility of decomposing into soil. 'The nakedness of the rocks is not poetical', he concluded – somewhat ironically, given that the most famous passage in Scott's *Lord of the Isles* was already in the bud. In these lines from the third canto of the poem, Scott created an evocative image of Loch Coruisk as a trophy of events far back in the mists of time:

No marvel thus the Monarch spake;
For rarely human eye has known
A scene so stern as that dread lake,
With its dark ledge of barren stone.
Seems that primeval earthquake's sway
Hath rent a strange and shatter'd way
Through the rude bosom of the hill,
And that each naked precipice

¹³¹ Sir Walter Scott, *The Lord of the Isles* (Edinburgh, 1815), lxxx-lxxxi.

¹³² *Ibid.*, lxxx.

¹³³ MacCulloch, 'Sketch of the Mineralogy of Sky', 23.

Sable ravine, and dark abyss,
Tells of the outrage still.¹³⁴

This idea of rock as a memorial, bearing witness to its own history, recalls Greenough's description of Glen Roy, and looks forward to the language of later geological writers like Hugh Miller and Archibald Geikie. Scott's translation of this concept into poetry gave it a new imaginative depth, which in turn influenced the approach of artists to Loch Coruisk and the Cuillin. William Daniell's prints of Loch Scavaig and Loch Coruisk [*Figs.226-7*], published as part of his *Voyage Round Great Britain* in 1820, were accompanied by extensive quotations from Scott's journal.¹³⁵ Like most of Daniell's images of mountain scenery, that of Loch Scavaig combined keen geological observation with a sense of the sublime. The broken rocks in the foreground were coloured so as to convey the marbled effect of 'pudding-stone', and at the top of the picture space the peaks of the Cuillin were squeezed into the frame – enough to give a sense of their jagged grandeur, but leaving height to the imagination of the viewer. Daniell's party visited Loch Scavaig on a clear day, and patches of strong sunlight chequer the loch and hillside in the print. Moving inland to Loch Coruisk, however, the sense of darkness became greater, the mountains vertically stretched so as to prohibit the entry of the rising sun. In his depiction of both scenes, Daniell fortified himself against their solitude by including his usual plethora of boats and figures. His own party had in fact embarked on an early-morning fishing trip on Loch Coruisk; despite catching nothing, the attempt had at least been made to turn its desolation to some purpose. Faced with the 'Alpine' surroundings of Loch Hourne in 1772, Pennant had taken consolation from the fact that 'there is no part of our dominions so remote, so inhospitable, and so unprofitable, as to deny employ and livelihood to thousands'.¹³⁶ Somewhere like Loch Coruisk, however, challenged such assumptions irrevocably. Scott's perception of it as a product of ongoing forces which excluded not only human power but even the human witness was echoed in Daniell's *Voyage*:

¹³⁴ Scott, *Lord of the Isles*, 98-99.

¹³⁵ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, IV, pls. facing 34, 36.

¹³⁶ Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, 344.

The contemplation of such a wilderness, even under the mild aspect of a summer's day, is sufficiently appalling; but what must be its horrors in the agitation of a midnight tempest, when the lightning blazes upon the dark bosom of the lake; when the thunder bellows and reverberates among the mountains, scaring the fox in his covert and the eagle in her nest; when the winds howl, and the rains beat, and the swollen torrents rush down impetuously, bearing along huge fragments of rock, as if the strife of elements had caused some convulsion of nature, and the demons of the storm had met in conflict too terrible to be witnessed by any living creature of earth.¹³⁷

In this description we can trace again the necessity of the imagination in the appreciation of desolate scenery. In his published accounts of the geology of Skye, MacCulloch included no visual impression of either the loch or the surrounding mountains. The reason for this might be deduced from the following assertion: 'He who would paint Coruisk must combine with the powers of the landscape-painter those of the poet: it is to the imagination, not to the eye that his efforts must be directed'.¹³⁸ During the late 1820s, Robson attempted several views of the loch. One of these included a trio of historical figures in Highland dress, probably an allusion to *The Lord of the Isles* [Fig.228]. The figures are arranged among a screen of foreground rocks, painted, like the mountains, with an eye for geological detail.¹³⁹ In another view of the exact same scene, this time without figures, the largest of these rocks were removed altogether, or broken into smaller fragments.¹⁴⁰ Klonk suggests that this easy shift in detail reveals that the rocks, for all their evidence of careful study, were merely a 'studio product', designed as a stage-set for the theatrical figures.¹⁴¹ While this could well be the case, Robson's artistic licence may also betray a

¹³⁷ Daniell, *Voyage Round Great Britain*, IV, 37.

¹³⁸ MacCulloch, *Description of the Western Islands*, I, 284. This indicates a shift from his earlier impression that the nakedness of the rocks was not poetical. The publication of Scott's *Lord of the Isles* in the intervening period no doubt influenced this alteration in perception.

¹³⁹ V & A, 1426-1869, George Fennell Robson, *Loch Coruisk and the Cuchullin Mountains*, Watercolour and Bodycolour, c. 1828.

¹⁴⁰ YCBA, B1977.14.6254, George Fennell Robson, *Loch Coruisk, Isle of Skye – Dawn*, Watercolour, Gouache, Scraping out and Gum, c. 1826-32.

¹⁴¹ Klonk, *Science and the Perception of Nature*, 93.

consciousness of the effects of weathering and time. For comparison, we might return for a moment to his work on the Grampians. Like Clerk of Eldin, Robson observed clear evidence of nature's violence on travelling through the pass of Ballater. 'Each side of this defile', he wrote, 'is covered with huge stones and masses of rock, the tremendous effects of elemental strife, and the ruins of the mountain'.¹⁴² Similar impressions greeted the visitor on arrival at Loch Coruisk. Although the impact of such ruin on the mountains was scarcely traceable through time, the gradual disintegration of the smaller boulders around the loch could be more easily posited. Even as a theatrical stage-set therefore, Robson's imaginative recreation of the shoreline as it might have looked to Scott's warriors centuries before lay within the bounds of geological probability.

Despite the frequency with which these men indulged in descriptions of the elemental strife and chaos responsible for landscapes like Loch Coruisk, only one artist came close to recreating such a scene in paint – Turner. As noted above, Turner was a friend of MacCulloch's, and it was perhaps because of this that the geologist knew his work well enough to write in 1819 that he, and he alone, was capable of doing justice to the light, motion and power of scenes like the cliffs of North Rona.¹⁴³ Although he never tried his skill on North Rona, Turner's association with Scotland had begun in 1797. In 1818, he was commissioned to produce illustrations for Scott's *Provincial Antiquities and Picturesque Scenery of Scotland* (1819-26), and, in 1831 and 1834, obtained further commissions to illustrate the author's poetical and prose works. The later projects took Turner to much more remote locations than he had visited on earlier tours, including Staffa, Glencoe and Loch Coruisk. These trips resulted in a series of remarkable images in which rocks, and the theme of geological change, ranked high.¹⁴⁴ As opposed to the architectural emphasis in early images of Fingal's Cave, Turner's vignette played on the irregularity and broken nature of the columns [Fig.229]; rather

¹⁴² Robson, *Grampian Mountains*, notes to pl. 30.

¹⁴³ MacCulloch, *Description of the Western Islands*, I, 206: 'Numerous caverns, some of considerable magnitude, are seen in these cliffs; while the contrast between the green foam of the waves that break into them and the pitchy darkness of their deep abysses, united to the grey mist of the driving sky speckled with the bright wings of innumerable sea fowl, produces effects fitted for the pencil of Turner and of him alone'.

¹⁴⁴ On Turner's relationship with Scott, see Finley, *Landscapes of Memory*. Klouk also discusses Turner's images of Staffa and Loch Coruisk in *Science and the Perception of Nature*, 87-8, 93-4.

than sitting squarely on the sea, the cave walls are blended with the waves, suggesting a natural correlation between the cycle of storms and tides and the hollowing out of the interior.¹⁴⁵ Turner was not the first artist to move away from architectural imagery in his treatment of the cave. John Claude Nattes contributed a view of the exterior to James Fittler's *Scotia Depicta* in 1804, which allowed the rocks – irregular formations of varying thickness, bulging and leaning in places and broken off at the seaward end in countless places – to carry the impact of the scene [Fig.230]. Nattes, incidentally, had also visited Glen Roy and sketched the parallel roads in 1799, a possible testament to geological interests.¹⁴⁶ His view of Staffa was nevertheless, like Robson and Daniell's Coruisk, conventionally static, contrasting with Turner's vivid evocation of motion. Although travellers like Scott and Daniell indulged in imaginative reconstructions of cataclysmic storms tearing the mountains, the majority of travellers visited scenes like Loch Coruisk in the most benign weather; certainly Staffa was inaccessible on all but the calmest days. Michael Shortland has pointed out that the precise viewpoint of Turner's 'Fingal's Cave' is in fact impossible, as the sea prevents access to the right-hand-side of the cavern.¹⁴⁷ Even in Turner's rendering, anyone standing in this spot would be in danger of being swamped by the incoming waves. In quest of the sublime, artistic licence was permissible, but what is striking is the extent to which this licence works with, rather than against the properties of nature. Like Robson's screen of rocks on the shore of Loch Coruisk, the geological detail in the walls of the cave cements the illusion of truth.

Turner's watercolour of Coruisk, which was engraved as a companion frontispiece to the vignette of Fingal's Cave, played with the same merge of precise geological observation and impossible viewing points [Fig.231].¹⁴⁸ It was a recreation of the violent storms imagined by Scott, in which boulders can be seen hurtling from the mountainside into the loch below. But whereas Scott

¹⁴⁵ Sir Walter Scott, *The Complete Poetical Works* (12 Vols., Edinburgh, 1833-4), X, title vignette.

¹⁴⁶ Fittler, *Scotia Depicta*, pl. 26; NLS, MS.5204, f. 54, John Claude Nattes, 'View in Glen Roy, with Part of the Parallel Roads'.

¹⁴⁷ Shortland, 'Darkness Visible', 10.

¹⁴⁸ Scott, *Poetical Works*, X, frontispiece; for the original drawing, see NGS, D (NG) 861, J. M. W. Turner, *Loch Coruisk, Skye*, Watercolour, c. 1831.

had admired the 'ravages which storms must have made in these recesses when all human witnesses were driven to places of more shelter and security',¹⁴⁹ Turner included two such witnesses in the immediate foreground of his drawing. Their presence in this scene of elemental strife gives the age-old contrast between human transience and the comparative endurance of the landscape a geological significance. Comparison might be made with a later image of Glencoe, engraved for Scott's *Tales of a Grandfather* in the collected *Prose Works* of 1834-6 [Fig.232].¹⁵⁰ In the foreground, two figures can be seen kindling a fire in the lee of a boulder which has fallen from the sheer cliffs above. Although the figures themselves are tiny in comparison to the whole landscape, this motif sets up a scale of contrasts which suggest relative rather than absolute degrees of permanence. We have the smoke of the fire, a ragged plume whipped by the wind, which is evidently less substantial than the figures who tend it. Then we have human life in contrast to the boulder, still likely to be sitting at the foot of the cliffs long after they have passed on their journey or are dead and gone. There is the boulder itself, merely a fragment of a much greater, far more solid rock formation from which it has been broken. But finally, the wall of rock which seems such a permanent fixture in the landscape is portrayed under assault from the sculpting power of wind and weather: those very forces which, given enough time, as Hutton and Lyell argued, were capable of effecting the most profound changes in the appearance and underlying structure of the landscape.¹⁵¹ Nothing, in such a wheel of motion, was immune to time.

In his treatise on mountain beauty (1856), the Victorian critic John Ruskin used Turner's *Loch Coruisk* as evidence for the artist's ability to capture what he called 'mountain anatomy'. 'Note', he observed, 'the way in which Turner leans on the *centre* and body of the hill, not on its edge; marking its strata stone by stone, just as a good figure painter, drawing a limb, marks the fall and rise of the joint, letting the outline sink back softened; and compare the exactly opposite

¹⁴⁹ Scott, *Lord of the Isles*, lxxx.

¹⁵⁰ Sir Walter Scott, *The Prose Works* (28 vols., Edinburgh, 1834-6), XXV, frontispiece.

¹⁵¹ Charles Lyell (1797-1875), the most influential nineteenth-century exponent of uniformitarianism, or the belief that geological processes observable in the present are the key to past changes. See Charles Lyell, *Principles Of Geology: Being an Attempt to Explain the Former Changes of The Earth's Surface, by Reference to Causes Now in Operation* (3 vols., London, 1830-3).

method of Claude, holding for life to his outline, as a Greek navigator holds to the shore'.¹⁵² In Ruskin's scheme of things, this was important, as it was the internal structure of a mountain, not its ever-changing, weather-beaten outline, which held the ghost of its original form. 'For it is evident', he reflected, 'that through all their ruin, some traces must exist of the original contours. The directions in which the mass gives way must have been dictated by the disposition of its ancient sides; and the currents of the streams that wear its flanks must still, in great part, follow the course of the primal valleys. So that, in the actual form of any mountain peak, there must usually be traceable the shadow or skeleton of its former self'.¹⁵³ In Turner's drawing, an immediately striking feature is the way in which the foremost peaks seem to lean inwards on each other, overlapping like upended slabs weathered and broken by the force and motion of the elements. Although Ruskin did not draw attention to the parallel, there is an interesting correspondence here with one of the illustrations in his treatise [Fig.233], in which the structure of a mountain range is compared to a series of books resting obliquely on other books, forming miniature precipices with their backs and sides. As a metaphor for mountain forms, the book held an added, metaphysical significance, the beds or layers of rock corresponding to its individual pages; according to Ruskin, every one of these pages was 'written over, though in dim characters, like those of a faded manuscript, with history of departed ages'.¹⁵⁴ In his discussion of artistic approaches to mountains through the centuries, Ruskin conceded that the most geologically truthful drawings were not necessarily those which appeared the most 'realistic'.¹⁵⁵ If the didactic purpose of art was to be reached, and the book of nature to be opened, the artist was under obligation to use the greatest tool at his disposal – his imagination – to achieve this end. Turner's wild visions of the Highland landscape were essentially abstractions, containing enough geological detail to convey the skeleton of the terrain, but losing all sense of fixed, enduring forms in a great tidal wave of atmosphere and matter. In this, he achieved the goal of great landscape art, which was to transcend the mere copying of a given scene by

¹⁵² Ruskin, 'Of Mountain Beauty', 268-9.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 180.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 269, fn.

introducing a subject induced by the imagination.¹⁵⁶ While demanding more of the artist than landscape art had ever done before, the imaginative possibilities inherent in a geological approach liberated the genre from its debilitating origin as ‘mere topography’ or ‘mapwork’.

Ruskin’s drawings and writings must be seen as a keystone in the arch connecting art and science during this period. His exploration of mountain beauty formed part of an extended treatise on landscape painting, published in five volumes between 1843 and 1860 under the title *Modern Painters*. From 1855 until 1858, Ruskin taught drawing at a Working Men’s College in London, publishing his own drawing manual, *The Elements of Drawing*, in 1857. His cultural influence, particularly among the rising middle classes, was wide-reaching and profound, shaping both public taste and a generation of younger artists.¹⁵⁷ One of the artists he took under his wing was John Everett Millais (1829-96), whom he took with him to Glenfinlas in the Trossachs in 1853. Millais had already exhibited a Jacobite scene at the Royal Academy that summer – *The Order of Release, 1746* – and, under Ruskin’s supervision, turned his attention to the Highland landscape. Although the two men’s friendship ended in disaster the following year, the visit of 1853 resulted in Millais’ famous portrait of Ruskin standing at the edge of the River Finlas. The entire canvas was painted from nature in the open air, a cardinal principle in Ruskin’s quest for truth to nature.¹⁵⁸ It is a curious portrait, not least because, in conception and execution, the backdrop is as important, if not more so, than the sitter. In the top left-hand corner is a bank of lichen-covered rock which Ruskin himself had sketched while sitting for the portrait [Fig.234].¹⁵⁹ This was intended for reproduction in the next volume of *Modern Painters*, although in the event a

¹⁵⁶ On this point, cf. *ibid.*, 27.

¹⁵⁷ Christopher Newall, ‘“The Innocence of the Eye”: Ruskin and the Landscape Watercolour’, in *Victorian Landscape Watercolours*, edd. Scott Wilcox and Christopher Newall (New York, 1992), 29-40.

¹⁵⁸ Private Collection, John Everett Millais, *Ruskin at Glenfinlas*, Canvas, 78.7 x 68, 1853: reproduced in Holloway and Errington, *Discovery of Scotland*, pl. 9. See also AM, 1965.85.8, John Everett Millais, *Study for Ruskin at Glenfinlas*, Pencil, 1853. For background, see Alastair Grieve, ‘Ruskin and Millais at Glenfinlas’, in *Ruskin’s Artists: Studies in the Victorian Visual Economy*, ed. Robert Hewison (Aldershot, 2000), 71-87. Further discussion of Millais’ Highland landscapes can be found in W. J. Eggeling, *Millais and Dunkeld: The Story of Millais’ Landscapes* (Printed for Dunkeld and Birnam Historical Society, 1994).

¹⁵⁹ AM, WA.RS.REF.089, John Ruskin, *Study of Gneiss Rock, Glenfinlas*, Pen and Ink with Wash, 1853.

daguerreotype photograph of 'Slaty Chrystalline' rock near Chamonix in France was engraved instead.¹⁶⁰ This illustration – which bears a strong resemblance to Ruskin's gneiss study – was intended to support his assertion that 'there are no natural objects out of which more can be learned than out of stones'. 'A stone, when it is examined', he went on, 'will be found a mountain in miniature. The fineness of Nature's work is so great, that into a single block, a foot or two in diameter, she can compress as many changes of form and structure, on a small scale, as she needs for her mountains on a large one'.¹⁶¹

While Ruskin's aesthetic was not confined to, or even primarily inspired by, Highland scenery, the key point was that it embraced it on open terms. On an earlier trip to Perthshire in 1847, he could be seen experimenting with the aesthetic possibilities of pure rock, completing a dramatic sketch of a splintered outcrop which mirrored Turner's *Ben Arthur* in effect, but on a more microscopic scale.¹⁶² Percolating outwards, the impact of geology on academic landscape painting became more obvious in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. An early example is Thomas Creswick's *Scene on the Tummel* (1844) [Fig.235], completed the year after the first volume of *Modern Painters* was published. Although the composition is conventional, the rocks adjacent to the stream bear evidence of careful study.¹⁶³ The painting originally formed part of the collection of John Sheepshanks, the Leeds manufacturer who bought several of Landseer's paintings of ordinary Highland life, including *A Highland Breakfast* and *The Drovers' Departure*.¹⁶⁴ The appeal of 'realism' for middle class patrons like Sheepshanks was touched on in the opening chapter, and must be taken into account when considering the attraction of geological accuracy in landscape painting. At its most superficial, truth to nature could be pursued as an end in itself, with geology merely a means to that end. A series of articles published in *The Art Journal* between 1855 and 1863 demonstrate, on the other hand, that

¹⁶⁰ Grieve, 'Ruskin and Millais at Glenfinlas', 77-8.

¹⁶¹ Ruskin, 'Of Mountain Beauty', 368, pl. 48; Grieve, 'Ruskin and Millais at Glenfinlas', 77.

¹⁶² David Thomson Collection, John Ruskin, *Crossmount, Perthshire: Study of Crag, Trees and Thistle*, Pencil, Pen and Brown Ink Heightened with White, 1847. For a reproduction and commentary, see Paul Walton, *Master Drawings by John Ruskin: Selections from the David Thomson Collection* (London, 2000), 67-74.

¹⁶³ V & A, FA.61[O], Thomas Creswick, *Scene on the Tummel, Perthshire*, Canvas, 118 x 99, 1844.

¹⁶⁴ Ormond, *Monarch of the Glen*, 100.

time and landscape history remained intimately bound up with the application of the science to art. Discussing the relationship between geology and scenery in 1855, the *Journal's* writer described not only the 'peculiar character' which different rock types gave to individual landscapes, but also the processes which shaped them: 'Water, ice, winds, and storms, slowly upheaving or depressing forces, the mighty volcano, or the terrific earthquake, have worn, and rent, and moulded our earth into that surface form, which now presents such an infinite variety to the eye of man, and affords to the artist those charms which it is his delight to place upon his canvas'.¹⁶⁵ In 1863, a set of articles by Professor Ansted under the general title 'Science and Art' considered the subject in more detail. Water, in Ansted's opinion, should be viewed as the key to all landscape forms, and as such demanded the artist's special study. Moreover, the effects of water on the landscape held an intrinsically historical element, and it was the artist's ability to interpret and convey this history which allowed painting to transcend photography:

Nature is embellished – sometimes it is re-created, by the intelligent, far-seeing, and instructed mind of one man, and a host of other men and women will continue for ages afterwards to derive instruction from the representation of a scene which the same men and women would otherwise have passed by or stared at vacantly.

Whether, then, we consider water in its relations to the atmosphere and the earth, or the earth in its adaptation to its living inhabitants; whether we study the horizontal limestones and sandstones or the uplifted granite; whether we watch the torrent as it descends the mountain side, or the river as it flows over the plain, we shall everywhere trace the parts of one great and connected history. To know nature we must study this history, and he who would rightly represent nature must understand it rightly.¹⁶⁶

Within this history, time was the key to grandeur. The greater the period of time associated with any landform, the closer it approached to the sublime. For this reason, Ansted asserted, volcanoes 'lack the depth of grandeur that belongs to

¹⁶⁵ *AJ*, n.s., 1, 1855, 275.

¹⁶⁶ *AJ*, n.s., 2, 1863, 152.

rocks raised slowly by the action of irresistible force acting through thousands of centuries, and presenting to our view the work that has gone on in the great depths of the earth, and that has itself required myriads of years for its production'.¹⁶⁷ In consequence, the final article concluded, 'there is clearly no antagonism between accuracy of detail, the result of the closest study of nature, and the freest exercise of the imaginative powers'.¹⁶⁸

In her discussion of the relationship between geology and landscape painting, Marcia Pointon has argued that the science 'opened up new areas to the landscape painter that had hitherto been ignored'. Moreover, the study of rock could provide more than a superficial pictorial clarity or realism: it also supplied 'visual metaphors for metaphysical concerns centred on man's knowledge of himself and the world about him'.¹⁶⁹ A series of images of the Highland landscape produced during the 1850s and 1860s illustrate the extent to which faithfulness to topographical detail in the most barren scenes enjoined no loss of aesthetic power. In 1856, John William Inchbold – a protégée of Ruskin – exhibited *The Burn, November – The Cucullen Hills* at the Royal Academy in London [Fig.236].¹⁷⁰ On the surface, Inchbold's painting was a simple study of a stretch of moorland, framed by the peaks of Sgurr nan Gillean on the skyline. The fact that moorland could be rendered interesting by focusing on microscopic foreground details was in itself significant. The theme of water, and its impact on the landscape, nonetheless dominates the canvas, from the still-flowing burn to the frozen summits. In 1863, Ansted was to assert: 'Even the mountain top, jagged and rough, piercing the sky and rising above the eternal snow around, owes all its vigour of outline, all that is most characteristic, to the same cause. Every artistic effect, in a word, on the earth's surface, points to water as its near or ultimate cause'.¹⁷¹ In the 1978 exhibition, *The Discovery of Scotland*, Inchbold's painting was coupled with a later work by John Milne Donald,

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 151.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹⁶⁹ Marcia Pointon, 'Geology and Landscape Painting in Nineteenth-Century England', in *Images of the Earth: Essays in the History of the Environmental Sciences*, edd. L. J. Jordanova and Roy S. Porter (Chalfont St. Giles, 1979), 94-5. Pointon includes a discussion of the Ansted articles.

¹⁷⁰ AM, A326 WA 1901.1, John William Inchbold, *The Burn, November – The Cucullen Hills*, Canvas, 51 x 69, 1856. On Inchbold's association with Ruskin, see Christopher Newall, *John William Inchbold: Pre-Raphaelite Landscape Artist* (Leeds, 1993), 11.

¹⁷¹ *AJ.*, n.s., 2, 1863, 15.

entitled *A Highland Stream, Glenfruin* (1861) [Fig.237].¹⁷² Here again, the visual impact of the image is carried by the foreground detail, in which the patterns worn by water on the rocks are the central focus.

Inchbold's painting had included a few scattered sheep but no human figures. In Donald's *Glenfruin*, on the other hand, a man can be seen picking his way through the rocks on the right hand side of the canvas. There is also a group of Highland cattle on the opposite hillside. These tokens of life remind us that the relationship between man and his environment could never be separated from visions of the landscape filtered through a human medium. Although Horatio McCulloch's work is not generally recognised for any explicit geological content,¹⁷³ his landscapes should be placed within an orbit in which refusal to rearrange the detail of the most barren scenes could provide a stage for meditation on tradition, change, and the course of human history. In *Loch Maree* (1866) [Fig.238], for instance, comparison with a modern photograph reveals minimal departure from the contours of the actual scene, down to the rocky outcrop at the base of the nearest hillock. The foreground is strewn with looser boulders and the decaying limbs of trees, but does not preclude life, including a group of cattle, and, closer to the loch, some low thatched buildings.¹⁷⁴ Murdo Macdonald has recently offered a reinterpretation of *My Heart's in the Highlands*, an earlier McCulloch painting, arguing that the artist presents not a dream of wilderness, but a beautiful landscape with sufficient resources for life, betokened by the tiny figures, boats, smoking cottages and deer dotted throughout the canvas.¹⁷⁵ Although both of these paintings were static, tranquil scenes, apparently precluding change, two images of Glencoe produced at an interval of more than ten years present an alternative vision. The first view, lithographed for Lawson's *Scotland Delineated* in 1850 included McCulloch's

¹⁷² NGS, NG 987, Donald, *Highland Stream*; Holloway and Errington, *Discovery of Scotland*, 120.

¹⁷³ There is currently some rethinking of McCulloch's work in art historical circles. In a recent lecture, 'Art, Maps and Books: Visualising and Revisualising the Highlands', Murdo Macdonald of Dundee University suggested that some of McCulloch's landscapes should be viewed more as 'geological essays' than evocations of romantic scenery: lecture delivered at *The Lie of the Land: Scottish Landscape and Culture*, University of Stirling, 28 July 2006.

¹⁷⁴ GM, 1002, McCulloch, *Loch Maree*. The buildings pictured are the site of a farm to the present day.

¹⁷⁵ GM, 1001, McCulloch, *My Heart's in the Highlands*; Macdonald, 'Art, Maps and Books'.

favourite details: a figure making its way along the road in the distance, some smoke from a concealed dwelling, and a flock of sheep close to the foreground boulders [Fig.239]. In a later canvas, painted in 1864, McCulloch used an identical mountain background but sidestepped the road, creating a more rugged foreground in which the sheep have been replaced by deer [Fig.240]. The smoke has also gone, there are no human figures, and three ragged Scots pine have been added in the middle distance.¹⁷⁶ This is a very visible shift in favour of a wilderness image, and it has been suggested that the artist was intentionally commenting on the replacement of sheep walks with deer forests in many Highland glens.¹⁷⁷ If this is the case, it is striking that McCulloch's conception of wilderness should be presented as something created within the sphere of land use and its human exploitation, rather than being inexorably dictated by geological fact.

In other images, the land-people relationship was dealt with more conservatively. Several of McCulloch's most geological landscapes juxtapose the evidence of change in nature with tokens of cultural survival and tradition in the human sphere. This can be seen in *The Cuillins from Ord* (c. 1854), and in *Coast of Sleat, Isle of Skye*, again lithographed for Lawson in 1850 [Figs.87 & 118].¹⁷⁸ In the former, the waves pounding the shore mirror the jagged wave-crest of the Cuillin: dark, forbidding and inhospitable territory, but again harbouring human life, as is seen in the boats in the loch, and the woman gathering seaweed by creel on the beach. *Coast of Sleat* is a study of coastal rockforms on a smaller scale, reminiscent of the type of subject which had attracted the geologist MacCulloch's attention in 1814. The destructive power of the sea is also presented as a source of life, supplying the human population with usable products such as fish, driftwood and seaweed. Traditional practices – such as transportation by creel, and subsistence fishing on a small-scale, local basis – are nonetheless presented as a natural adjunct to the evidence of time on the landscape. Another print in the same series, taken from J. D. Harding's *View from the Summit of Goatfell* [Fig.241], is at once the most dramatic and desolate

¹⁷⁶ Lawson, *Scotland Delineated*, II, pl. facing 307; GM, 1003, Horatio McCulloch, *Glencoe*, Canvas, 112 x 183.3, 1864.

¹⁷⁷ Smith, *Horatio McCulloch*, 89.

¹⁷⁸ GM, 1052, McCulloch, *Cuillins from Ord*; Lawson, *Scotland Delineated*, II, pl. facing 308.

view in the whole volume. Here again, however, groups of cattle suggest the survival of traditional patterns of husbandry, the high ground being redeemed for use as pasture during the summer months.¹⁷⁹

Although all of these images deliberately minimised life within the overall cycle and scale of nature, one further painting should be cited in the context of tradition and geology. This was William Dyce's *Highland Ferryman* (1857), which compiled portraiture, science and ethnography in an evocative summation of a way of life [Fig.242].¹⁸⁰ In 1848, McLan and Logan had included 'Waiting for the Boat' among their catalogue of customs and traditions distinctive to the Highlands, commenting that 'one of the great inconveniences of a Highland and insular life, is the necessity in traversing the country for crossing rivers, lochs, and arms of the sea'.¹⁸¹ Dyce's painting was less concerned with the significance of a specific transport method, hinting instead at an analogy between the stoic figure of the boatman and his rugged setting. The influence of geology on Dyce's work is well documented, and the verisimilitude of the foreground in the *Ferryman* no exception to his habitual style. Having studied natural philosophy at Marischal College in Aberdeen, the artist was well placed to apply the discoveries of science to his work. Discussing another Dyce painting – *Welsh Landscape with Two Women Knitting* (1860) – Pointon remarks on the placing of the figures within a setting entirely constituted of 'ancient rock formations'. One of the women is young, the other very old, and yet, as Pointon comments, 'her age is as nothing compared to the age of the rocks on which she is seated'.¹⁸² The Welsh painting is useful in helping us to read *A Highland Ferryman*. Both images present native inhabitants, traditional employments, and a tranquil, but ageing landscape. The ferryman appears almost moulded to the rock on which he is seated, his clothes are worn, his hair white, and some of the tackets are missing from his boots; but, like the Welsh women, he is both of the landscape - part of its history - and yet in terms of age and of endurance, apart from it.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, II, pl. facing 295.

¹⁸⁰ AAGM, 3212, William Dyce, *The Highland Ferryman*, Canvas, 51.1 x 61.1, 1857.

¹⁸¹ McLan and Logan, *Picturesque Gatherings*, 43.

¹⁸² Pointon, 'Geology and Landscape Painting', 102-3, pl. 8.

While the location of *A Highland Ferryman* has not been definitively identified, the cone-shaped hill in the background strongly resembles Ben Stack in north-west Sutherland. There is no evidence that Dyce visited the area, although he was known to work from photographs, and his association with Thomas Dick Lauder, who travelled to the north west in 1831, should also be borne in mind.¹⁸³ Ben Stack and its adjacent sheet of water, Loch More, were of specific geological interest, evidenced in a sketch made by Campbell of Islay in 1848 [Fig.243].¹⁸⁴ This almost aerial drawing, taken from the slopes of an adjacent hill, illustrates the fjord-like character of the loch, blocked at one end by the cone-shaped peak of Stack. The 1840s were a landmark in the history of geology as the theories of Louis Agassiz regarding glaciation spread. Along with William Buckland and Roderick Impey Murchison, Agassiz visited Lochaber in 1840, discovering deposits and landforms (including the parallel roads of Glen Roy) which appeared to support his theory that the whole area had once been glaciated.¹⁸⁵ In his travels through the Highlands in quest of folktales and geological data, Campbell came increasingly to view the landscape in terms of the clues it yielded about the extent and impact of glaciation. The 1848 sketch of Loch More must be seen as an early instance of this thinking, and contains coincidental parallels with an illustration in Philip Gilbert Hamerton's *Isles of Loch Awe* (1855) [Fig.244]. Hamerton was an art critic and the biographer of Turner, and, in *The Isles of Loch Awe*, attempted his own concoction of geological observation and artistic truth. Despite the low quality of the poems in the volume, his description of the pass of Awe is noteworthy for its bearing on glaciation:

The Loch is scarcely younger than the hills,
 And they grew slowly. Twenty thousand years
 Might be to them the years of infancy.

¹⁸³ This information is derived from a discussion with Jennifer Marshall, Keeper of Fine Art, Aberdeen Art Gallery, March 2006. For Lauder's drawings of north-west Sutherland, see AAGM, 8408, Lauder, Album No. 5, 1830-31. Dyce was responsible for the illustrations in Lauder's *Highland Rambles*.

¹⁸⁴ NGS, D 4126, f. 49v (A), John Francis Campbell, 'Loch Stack, Fri 9 Sep 1848'. Although Campbell identifies the subject as Loch Stack, the fjord-like stretch of water in the foreground is in fact Loch More.

¹⁸⁵ Robert Price, *Highland Landforms* (Aberdeen, 1991 edn.), 54.

Slowly the mighty subterranean fire
 Thrust up the porphyry peak of Cruachan!
 Ere then the tribute of a hundred streams
 Filled the great valley, and the waters found
 One outlet only, which their force enlarged;
 And those fair Isles which I do consecrate
 To be for ever sacred unto song,
 Emerged as they subsided – barren rocks,
 Glittering with white quartz crystals here and there,
 Scattered like spots of snow upon the hills.¹⁸⁶

The illustration itself is almost a reverse mirror image of Campbell's Loch More, a fact which probably owes more to similarities in the original landscapes rather than any explicit borrowing. The shadow of a possible ice age cast a new light on the relationship between landscape and the sustainability of human life. In Campbell's journal for 1869, there is a sketch of Beinn Clibreg from Loch Shin – another long, narrow sheet of water in central Sutherland – showing the terrain as it then appeared, and what it might have looked like during the ice age [Fig.245].¹⁸⁷ It is an eerie scene, wrapping up a habitable, navigable zone in a negating, frozen uniformity. In a paper setting down his theories on the probable source of gold which had been discovered in Kildonan in Sutherland, Campbell included a panoramic view of the Coigach and Assynt hills [Fig.246]. This was entitled 'Rock sculpture on a large scale on the west coast of Sutherland'. Onto this diagram he superimposed a line demonstrating what he conjectured to have been the height of the ice sheet which carved out the landscape.¹⁸⁸ This image, which has similarities with a diagram in MacCulloch's *Description of the Western Islands*,¹⁸⁹ presented ice as a creative force, carving and moulding the landscape into artistic forms, and also depositing mineral wealth which could be exploited for the use of man. Two years earlier, Campbell had also stopped by the roadside near Kinlochewe to capture a view of the Torridon mountains,

¹⁸⁶ Philip Gilbert Hamerton, *The Isles of Loch Awe, and other Poems of my Youth* (London, 1855), 86.

¹⁸⁷ NLS, Adv.MS.50.4.5, f. 112.

¹⁸⁸ Offprint in NLS, BL.9/3.3 (1-11), John Francis Campbell, 'Something from "the Diggins" in Sutherland', 1869, 32.

¹⁸⁹ MacCulloch, *Description of the Western Islands*, pl. 31.

struck by their definitive outlines [Fig.247]. 'There can be no question about these forms', he wrote beneath the sketch. 'The whole structure of the country is perfectly seen as in a carved model, and there are surfaces of denudation'.¹⁹⁰ The boulder in the foreground of this drawing is a common motif in Campbell's geological drawings. Although such fragments had featured in images of the Highland landscape since the eighteenth century, summing up ideas of ruin or of elemental forces rending the mountains, Campbell used them as markers for the conjectured flow of the ice sheet, taking rubbings of the grooves on original specimens, and indicating their general direction on his field sketches (north-west in the Torridon example). In other words, every aspect of the landscape could be viewed as part, as Ansted put it, 'of one great and connected history'.¹⁹¹

The theory of glaciation created something of a reversal in perceptions of landscape on two fronts. On the one hand, seen in terms of the slow, grinding, levelling effect of ice, a new sense of order could be posited when looking at scenes which had previously been written off as formless and chaotic. Campbell's description of the Assynt hills as 'sculpture' for instance, contrasts with Pennant's impression of a country 'torn and convulsed'.¹⁹² In his popular work, *The Scenery of Scotland*, published in 1865, the geologist Archibald Geikie drew attention to the remarkable regularity of mountains when viewed with an objective eye:

Much has been said and written about the wild tumbled sea of the Highland hills. But, as he sits on his high perch, does it not strike the observer that there is after all a wonderful orderliness, and even monotony, in the waves of that wide sea? ... From the cairns on Ben Nevis this feature is impressively seen. Along the sky-line the wide sweep of summits undulates up to a common level, varied here and there by a higher cone, and there by the line of some strath or glen, but yet wonderfully persistent round the whole panorama.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ NLS, Adv.MS.50.4.2, f. 193v.

¹⁹¹ *AJ*, n.s., 2, 1863, 152.

¹⁹² Pennant, *Tour in Scotland*, 1772, I, 315.

¹⁹³ Geikie, *Scenery of Scotland*, 103.

The reason for this, Geikie argued, was that the summits of the hills had once formed the floor of a very ancient sea. In this conjecture lay the deepest implication of historical geology: the hypothesis that the earth was much older than man, and that human use and control of the landscape was, in relative terms, both recent and superficial. The restoration of order to perceptions of the earth thus in some ways meant a farewell to a human-centred view of natural processes. Nevertheless it was this, in turn, which could release the imagination. Picturing himself seated on a headland in the Firth of Clyde, looking towards the Argyllshire hills, Geikie recounted numerous instances of the 'human power which is everywhere changing the face of nature': ships from every corner of the earth, towns and villages, steam from the railways, woods and cornfields, coal-pits and iron-works. To pass from these, he wrote, to an earlier time, 'when these waters had never felt the stroke of oar or paddle, when these hillsides had never echoed to the sound of human voice, but when over hill and valley, over river and sea, there had fallen a silence as of the grave, when one wide pall of snow and ice stretched across the landscape ... is an employment as delightful as man can well enjoy'.¹⁹⁴ Geology, he claimed, could be counted among the most logical and yet the most imaginative pursuits in science, and it was this imaginative element which extended its attraction to the artist and poet.

The impact of earth science on the perception, visual representation and gradual appreciation of the Highland landscape was thus wide-reaching and profound. Initially viewed as dreary and uninteresting, large tracts of the region were ignored, visualised for purely documentary purposes by mapmakers and scientific travellers, or adapted to fit the dictates of conventional aesthetics. In 1862, however, when Hamerton published a critique of visual approaches to the Highlands, he asserted that the landscape, being 'wild, and grand, and mighty, and utterly unconventional', could not 'be forced into the common composition patterns, without losing all its significance'. 'When I paint a picture of the Highlands', he continued, 'I would have it Highland all over, and as unlike any other country as possible'.¹⁹⁵ Faithfulness to geology was one method of

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 170.

¹⁹⁵ Philip Gilbert Hamerton, *A Painter's Camp in the Highlands, and Thoughts about Art* (2 vols., London, 1862), I, 277-8.

capturing this 'Highlandness', refusing to bend the landscape into compositional patterns devised with other types of scenery in view. The recognition that 'each rock gives its own peculiar character to the landscape which it forms'¹⁹⁶ dealt an irrecoverable blow to the ideal, universal landscapes of the picturesque school. Two views of Glen Sannox in Arran – one by John Knox (1778-1845), the other by John Houston (1813-84) – perfectly illustrate the shift in attitude which had taken place by the 1850s. Allowing for different media, the austerity of Houston's view, lithographed for Lawson in 1850, contrasts with Knox's painting, in which a river scene with extensive woodland fills the lower half of the picture space [Figs.248-9].¹⁹⁷ Houston's image is essentially a zoomed-in view of Knox's wider, almost panoramic composition, coming not only closer to the mountains, but also penetrating their structure in much more authentic detail. With landscape therefore, we have almost a reversal in the pattern traced in antiquarian images, in which the isolated object – such as a building, monolith or individual artefact – later became absorbed into a larger, contextual setting. The trend in landscape images was to move closer, inwards and even downwards, conveying a sense of the bones or skeleton of the earth. As we have tried to demonstrate, the relationship of geology to visions of man's place within the landscape was complex. On the one hand, the desolation of iconic scenes like Loch Coruisk, the intransigence of certain kinds of rock, and the wide soggy expanses of the peatlands brought the careful observer into contact with a region which seemed to minimise man, teaching universal lessons about his transience and insignificance. On the other hand, artists could not altogether ignore the fact that this was an inhabited landscape, capable of sustaining life in spite of itself. Viewed on the grand scale of being, of which artists were themselves a part, the inhabitants of the Highlands and Islands were only one element within the vast machine, and as thus scored marginally in landscape images. Insofar as human history was tied to setting, however, and in view of the image of 'antiquity' applied to Highland culture, an analogy between the slow, gradual wearing of the rocks and resistance to the current pace of social change was a tempting theme for many image-makers. Visions of time in the landscape thus close the circle of

¹⁹⁶ *AJ*, n.s., 1, 1855, 275.

¹⁹⁷ Lawson, *Scotland Delineated*, II, pl. facing 294; FWAf, John Knox, *Arran, Glen Sannox*, Canvas, 89.5 x 125, n.d.

antiquarian ideas which dominate representations of the Highlands and Islands during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Conclusion

Between c. 1700 and the opening decades of Queen Victoria's reign, the sheer volume of visual material featuring the Highlands and Islands draws attention to itself as an integrated historical phenomenon. Rather than an explosion of interest which took place all at once, the visual discovery of the region should be seen as a process with deep and wide roots, gradually gathering momentum during the course of the eighteenth century. The chronological limits of this study have been bounded on the one hand by the need to explore the impact of empirical science and fieldwork on visual representation – seen in embryo in the travels of Martin Martin and Edward Lhuyd in the 1690s – and on the other by the work of the two best-known nineteenth-century exponents of Highlandism in the fine arts – Horatio McCulloch (1805-67) and Sir Edwin Landseer (1802-73). As noted in the introduction, some major categories of visual material – notably maps and photographs – have not been considered in any detail, thus forming one of the more obvious avenues through which the overview attempted here could be extended and deepened.

The vast majority of images examined in this thesis fall into a stylistic category loosely definable as 'depictive realism'. The words 'realism', and 'reality' have been employed at many points throughout this study, and some clarification of what is understood by these admittedly loaded terms may be useful here. A distinction must be made between the different strands of imagery examined. Documentary images, for instance, such as the antiquarian, topographical, and geological material discussed above, make, by virtue of their genre, certain claims about the veracity of representation which fine art does not. For this type of illustration, where the primary function is to convey information, reflecting or mirroring external 'reality' is after all its *raison d'être*. Without becoming embroiled in philosophical debates over the existence and nature of 'reality', it is nonetheless clear that any representation can only capture shades or aspects of it to a limited degree. There is an inevitable process of selection and interpretation.

In the realm of fine art, 'realism' can be defined by its opposite – the 'idealism', or universalising philosophy of the academic schools. Sir Joshua Reynolds' view of the artist's responsibility to correct the 'defects' and 'blemishes' observable in nature might be recalled here, together with his disparaging comments on the Dutch School of painting – notable, he commented, for constructing portraits of their own people and nation instead of history pieces based on scripture or classical lore.¹ It is evident, however, that so-called 'realist' paintings are constructions in themselves, and can no more be taken at face value than their idealist counterparts. As with documentary images, their surface claims must be subjected to careful reading and analysis.

During the later eighteenth century, image-making in an idealist vein absorbed the Highlands and Islands to a degree. Scenes from Ossian, Claudian landscape compositions, and individual subjects treated in the 'Grand Style' – like Sir Benjamin West's *Alexander III Saved from the Fury of a Stag* – all fall into this category. While certain elements in such images – such as details of dress and arms, the general lie of the terrain, or the outline of a ruin – might be based on the study of 'reality', the duty of the artist working in this style was to generalise the particular. Throughout this thesis, it has been argued that one of the keys to understanding the evolution of stock elements in representations of the Highlands and Islands is the fluid liaison which existed between documentary and aesthetic images. The concept of realism, we might say, acted as a kind of lubricant between the two genres. Over the course of our period, the claims of the particular gradually gained the ascendancy over universalising principles, so that by c. 1820 the artist's quest for 'truth' had become not so very different from the scientist's. This does not mean that later images reflect what one might call the 'real' Highlands any more accurately. In his work on artists and visual documentation in Britain from 1770 to 1830, Sam Smiles has summed up the implications of the departure of 'realism' as a style from 'real' circumstances. He writes:

¹ Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, 44, 57.

Naturalism..., while it provided artists with the means and inspiration to study nature with a seemingly objective and quasi-scientific rigour of observation was also representative of an anti-realism, a refusal to engage with the social world, the urban environment and labour that constituted the real, everyday, observable surroundings of those artists and their audience.²

Transferred to the context of our own field of study, Smiles' idea of an 'anti-realism' has consequences for interpretation and method. If we cannot search for the 'real' Highlands and Islands within these purportedly 'real' images, then what becomes the central object of our quest, and how is it possible, using the methodological tools at our disposal, to reach it? In approaching the vivid naturalism of seventeenth-century Dutch Art, Simon Schama cautions against being deceived into viewing it as a transparent record of actual experience.³ He argues that symbolic meanings were purposefully intended by the artist, so that everyday scenes and objects can be analysed iconographically – read as parables of moral meaning in much the same way as paintings of the 'ideal', or Renaissance school. In this model of interpretation, the 'reality' sought is the artist's original intention, the superficial reality of the image acting as a mere vehicle for communication. In my own study, the question of meaning has been dealt with on a more oblique level. The scope of interpretation is wider than a search for intended meaning in individual images, as the majority of the material examined in this thesis is not self-consciously iconographical. It is only in retrospect that we can trace a canon of 'icons' emerging in the corpus, and, in an age when naturalism, rather than abstraction, had become the pinnacle of aesthetic achievement, it is doubtful whether artists themselves articulated the full significance of the earthy themes they selected for their images. However, by examining patterns of representation across the whole period, I have sought to elucidate the degree to which even the most scientific image-makers were engaged in a form of 'anti-realism', to the extent that the canon of symbols created was as unrepresentative of the Highlands and Islands then as now.

² Smiles, *Eyewitness*, 145.

³ Schama, *Embarrassment of Riches*, 10.

Another term which is central to the conclusions, and indeed the title, of this thesis is the concept of antiquity itself. As portrayed in the sources, ideas about age and time were multi-faceted and complex, and though 'antiquity' has been used as a convenient umbrella term, the ways in which it manifested itself were not homogenous. In chapter two, we showed how literally 'ancient' things – relics and ruins – came to feature heavily in romanticised ideas of Highland history and culture. The visual appeal of these objects and structures lay in the light they were believed to shed on aboriginal Gaelic culture – an age when architecture was primitive but pure, when craft and sculpture flourished in the most rugged territory, and when dress could be at once flamboyant and functional. Their defining essence, however, was a remoteness from the present which made them symbols of a lost and irrecoverable age. In chapter three, material objects – such as the *cas-chròm*, the apparatus of key industries like fishing and distilling, household plenishings and musical instruments – feature to some extent, but the emphasis is on their use and function within a living human culture. This vision of 'antiquity' differs from that discussed in chapter two because there is a less visible line drawn between past and present. 'Tradition' is something which is of the past and yet still present, although the irony of the visual record is that so many of the 'traditions' chosen as representative of life in the Highlands and Islands were already shrinking fast. Somewhere between these two extremes lay the concept of geological time. Geological change can be construed as a continuum, so that even its earliest and most distant phase is linked to the current state of the earth beneath our feet. In Hutton's scheme of things, ruin was not the path to irrecoverable death and decay, but to renewal and rebirth – a cyclical process whereby the earth could go on replenishing itself *ad infinitum*.

Despite these shades of difference, it must be asked whether the constructions of age, decay and 'pastness' which recur in images of the Highlands and Islands unite to form a composite idea of antiquity. In this respect, it is significant that the different strands of antiquity outlined above were often linked in the work of single individuals. The visual output of polymathic amateurs like Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, George Clayton Atkinson and John Francis Campbell of Islay, to choose a few examples, covered literal antiquities, 'traditions', and geology to an

almost equal degree. Castles and monuments, geological phenomena, and, to a lesser extent, traditional customs, also featured concurrently in the prints of William Daniell. The geologist John MacCulloch created distinctly architectural images of landscape features, and was also interested in antiquarian remains throughout the Highlands and Islands. His acquaintance, the great J. M. W. Turner, was responsible for images of local industries and conventional antiquities besides his geological depictions of sites like Ben Arthur, Fingal's Cave, Loch Coruisk and Glencoe. Not only does this suggest an underlying connection between archaeological, ethnographic and geological conceptions of antiquity, it is also important to remember how far the visual value of Highland themes was enhanced, and indeed driven, by perceptions of age and time. Ultimately, it was the reach of time traceable in so many facets of Highland life and lore and in the landscape which attracted artists' interest, whether their aim was to document it for posterity, or to create a more poetic reflection on change, decay, and the human condition. For both science and 'pure' art, the lure of antiquity came back to its bearing on origins – the origins of society, of culture, and of the earth itself. This lent subjects which had not fallen within the bounds of traditional aesthetic criteria a new fascination, and it was in large measure a result of this that the wealth of visual material which has made this study both worthwhile and possible came into being. It was impelled by conceptions of antiquity which knitted together to reflect cycles of life, death and rebirth in the material world – a pattern which mirrored, and was given meaning by, the cycle of mortality itself.

Methodologically, this project has been informed by a range of approaches. Its central goal – to examine the perception and representation of a place and people through time – places it in an orbit where disciplinary currents meet. Under the influence of postmodernist philosophy, issues of ideology and representation have become central to many branches of mainstream history. For historians dealing with written evidence, this has engendered not so much a shift in method as a shift in focus. In order to identify bias and hidden agendas in the sources, ideology and representation have in a sense always been taken into account. What has changed is the extent to which these biases are not just stripped away in order to get at the kernel of truth, but studied as evidence about

the cultural outlook and social prejudices of an era. This has necessitated something of a reverse in traditional historical methods, as what Womack calls the 'colourful nonsense'⁴ in the sources is privileged over hard fact. Essentially, however, the same tools of interpretation and analysis are employed in both instances. Where things become more complex is when we add visual material to the mix. As outlined in the introduction, a greater awareness of visual evidence among historians has gone hand in hand with a widening of the research agenda. Images are perceived as particularly valuable witnesses to the norms of cultural perception, testifying to what may not have been explicitly put into words. At the same time, questions of meaning and intention are necessarily more complex, owing to the inherent ambiguity of visual communication. These problems are ones with which art historians – the received 'specialists' in image studies across the disciplines – themselves wrestle, and there are no easy answers.

My approach to the body of sources used in this study has been deliberately flexible, guided by practical rather than rigidly theoretical concerns. At a macro level, the aim of interpretation has been to elucidate broad trends and themes with reference to a wider narrative. The ensuing jostling of material operates in several directions. In the first place, traditional distinctions between material of different genres – as between maps and paintings – or of different qualities – as between professional and amateur output – can be more easily broken down so as to examine what unites the images rather than what divides them. This is crucial to an historical study because of the extent to which cultural products emerge from a broadly (and, I emphasise, broadly) shared pool of aspirations and assumptions within a given era. In order to assess the penetration and extent of these aspirations and assumptions, it is necessary to examine as wide a range of material as possible. Images offer the historian an economic access point to the study of mentalities, partly because they crystallise perceptions which are otherwise scattered through a much more diffuse, and, in essence, endless range of sources.

⁴ Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, 2.

This introduces the second kind of jostling evident in my use of the visual record, which is the deployment of associated texts. Despite the philosophical attraction of debates on the relative strengths of visual and verbal communication, the fact remains that we live in a world where both interact in such a way as to complement rather than exclude each other. In highlighting historians' neglect of images, there is the danger of swinging to the opposite tendency, which is to place the image on a pedestal and ignore the equally valid and valuable evidence of surrounding texts. It is in this context that Rosemary Mitchell's work offers a particularly inspiring and balanced model of interpretation, summed up in the subtitle to her *Picturing the Past: English History in Text and Image* (2000).⁵ By concentrating her analysis on illustrated books, Mitchell deals with a controlled situation in which to privilege one mode of communication above another would be to give the lie to the manner in which the original works were designed and read. Many of the sources dealt with in this thesis fall into a similar category. Literary, newspaper, and travel illustrations can all be counted in this group, and in such cases I have used the immediate text to shed light on the content and also the perceptions traceable within the image. In terms of the relative value of text and image to the historian, admitting the indispensability of written material in interpretation does not disprove the necessity of wrestling with the visual. To the contrary, the very fact that both were intended to be read in tandem places an obligation upon the historian to consider both in tandem when attempting any kind of analysis. Having said this, there is no doubt that the capacity of an image to shed its immediate context and 'travel' in a new disguise necessitates an awareness of its ability to take on a life of its own. This can be seen literally in the practice of copying illustrations from well-known publications verbatim into manuscript travel diaries, or simply cutting and pasting the original print. In such cases, a new textual context is added which is at one remove from the original image but may nonetheless elucidate its continuing relevance and power.

Other forms of material exist for which there is a less clear-cut relationship with text. The most obvious is a painting, which, aside from its title, is conceived as a stand-alone object, speaking on its own terms. For this reason it depends for its

⁵ Rosemary Mitchell, *Picturing the Past: English History in Text and Image, 1830-70* (Oxford, 2000).

effect on the viewer comprehending the web of associations with which the subject portrayed resonates. Panofsky's injunction that interpretations of any work of art should be validated with reference to as many documents as possible – political, poetical, religious, philosophical and social – has relevance here.⁶ The point of iconographical meaning is its interaction with context, and in the light of this, it is perhaps inevitable that the interpretative approach of this study often leans towards a form of iconography. When dealing with intentionally symbolic images, such as a map cartouche, some book frontispieces, or designs like West's Highland Society diploma, the necessity for decoding is obvious. First the individual elements must be identified, their symbolic importance ascertained, and the complete image 'read'. This cannot be done without reference to the intended function of the image, but, in essence, the making of a symbol belongs to the wider context of its times. Although iconography was originally devised as a method of identifying the text or texts behind an image, the majority of Highland symbols are not literary, but rooted in the material world. Even such elements as were made literary – such as the harp or the waterfall, by virtue of Ossian – have a 'real' existence outside the world of the poems. This makes the process whereby material things were invested with abstract significance as much the object of our quest as the 'meanings' themselves. In chapters two to four, the principal, recurring motifs in representations of the region have been abstracted and analysed: brochs, standing stones, castles, items of dress and arms, agricultural tools, fishing boats and fishermen, drovers and cattle, the illicit still, the black house and its interior, the piper, dancer, the participant in Highland games, the lone pine tree, the dramatic mountainscape or hollowed cliff-face – all in themselves innocuous enough, but adding up to the great question of why such things were selected as typical of the region, and why others were rejected.

In order to answer this question, it has been necessary to explore the significance attached to these particular objects. Texts can provide us with very specific statements of their associations for a contemporary audience. Travel narratives are particularly valuable in this respect, as images across all genres often add up

⁶ Panofsky, 'Iconography and Iconology', 26-54.

to a condensed version of the tourist gaze, homing in on what were perceived to be the most unique, distinctive, or representative sights within the region. It is also important to be aware of the meaning which accrued from visual juxtapositions. When the associations of one object in a composition, such as a broch or megalith, are very clear, then this prompts questions about the other things included in the frame: Daniell's peat-cutters at Clach an Truiseil in Lewis spring to mind here, as do the cottages in Cordiner's view of Dun Dornadilla, or in Skene's drawing of the Glenelg brochs. Kenneth MacLeay's formulaic coupling of a military figure with a shepherd, stalker or gillie in *The Highlanders of Scotland* is another example of this, as is the herdsman figure in views of geological curiosities like the parallel roads of Glen Roy. Persistent linkage of the same motifs in a large number of images can tell us something about the way in which both were perceived by image maker and audience, and probing why certain themes should be viewed as natural bedfellows can throw up some illuminating insights.

Other types of visual context have also been explored. As concerns prints or illustrations in a single volume, even if based on the work of different artists, patterns and continuities can be examined. The geological focus of many of the landscape prints in Lawson's *Scotland Delineated*, for example, balances a subset of images which present activities like droving or fishing in conjunction with a ruined castle. Together, all add up to a composite image of antiquity. When pondering the significance of a particular image, an artist's wider oeuvre can also be helpful. For amateur artists, there may be limited opportunities to explore this, although comparing the subjects treated in even a single album or portfolio of drawings can yield valuable clues as to the scope of the individual's interests and possible links between them. Amateurs who have left a larger body of work, such as John Francis Campbell of Islay or Sir Thomas Dick Lauder, do, on the other hand, provide a fascinating vision of how the three categories of antiquity explored in this study – literal ruins, surviving traditions, and geological phenomena – met in the mind of a single artist and fed off each other. For professional painters, the wide scope of this study, and the frustrating dispersal of material, has not made a detailed, artist-by-artist analysis of individual oeuvres possible. However, contemporary exhibition listings have

been drawn on in many cases to help place individual images or recurring themes in context. Whether or not artists continued to work for private patrons or were forced to take the more risky path into the open marketplace, public exhibitions were, by the nineteenth century, the place to see and to be seen, particularly the annual academy shows in Edinburgh and London. Exhibition listings can provide a ready index to the popularity of key subjects at certain times and with certain individuals, the relative importance of Highland scenes across an artist's career, and, in general, a flavour of the vastness and depth of a field from which the material excavated for this study forms only the tip of the iceberg.

Besides the immediate contexts which shed light on the selection and significance of key themes, there is also the need to place the visual record within some kind of historical narrative. One of the dangers of working with visual material in a study of this kind is the temptation to simply document and interpret the testimony of the image within a closed world, identifying the perceptions encoded, but failing to relate them to the course and pattern of events. It is here that the relationship between histories of mentalities and a more empirical approach to 'facts' comes into play. In order to highlight the relationship of representation to reality, I have relied heavily on empirical accounts of social, cultural and economic trends in the Highlands and Islands during the period surveyed. Taking these as a baseline, artists' departures from observable 'fact' have been collated, and an explanation offered which pays close attention to chronological patterns. This approach has thrown up some particularly valuable insights in chapter three, where artistic interest in aspects of tradition can be index-linked to the decline of, or attacks on, these traditions in active life.

As well as the subject matter, the images themselves arose out of a specific set of circumstances. In focusing on the tartan shawl cast around the shoulders of Scottish identity, it is possible to become closed in to the idea that visual responses to the Highlands were inspired by something unique to this specific culture or setting. Responses were in fact guided by a variety of fashions and agendas which had little to do with the region in their inception, and one of the questions we must wrestle with is precisely how the image of uniqueness they

perpetuated came about. The urge towards eyewitness documentation which accompanied the rise of empirical science during the later seventeenth century was one facet of the wider picture. The extent to which Highland material was fitted into an externally-devised agenda is illustrated by the use of questionnaires among scientific travellers. The idea that a universal set of questions could be applied to any location, resulting in roughly comparable data, did not, however, preclude a quest for uniqueness. Robert Boyle's 'General Heads for the Natural History of a Country, Small or Great', a prototype questionnaire produced in the early years of the Royal Society, contained, for instance, 'Inquiries about Traditions concerning particular things, relating to that Country, as either peculiar to it, or at least, uncommon elsewhere'.⁷ The questionnaire approach was subsequently employed in further efforts to codify the Highlands and Islands, most notably in Sir John Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland* (1791-99). As research into the visual aspect of worldwide scientific travel demonstrates, the empirical agenda combined a superficially universal scope with a determined quest for peculiarity and difference.⁸ Indeed, the visual record was especially likely to be used to document things which were perceived to be uncommon elsewhere. In the same vein, scientific responses to the Highlands were pre-programmed to emphasise uniqueness, and the composite image which emerged was determined as much by the questions asked as by the data supplied.

The antiquarian bent of intellectual culture was another factor which impinged on the direction of visual representation. The legacy of the Renaissance meant that, around 1700, the classical ideal permeated not just the world of academic art, but also archaeological studies, architectural fashions and tastes in ruins. Among antiquaries, a rising challenge to this hegemony, pioneered by the likes of Lhuyd, Stukeley and Gough, drew the Highlands into a climate in which the local and vernacular pulled equal weight. Again, this was much more than a response to regional circumstances, and provided a British-wide rationale for the study of non-Roman antiquities. Interest in all things medieval was a further facet of changing antiquarian taste. In 1786, Sir Joshua Reynolds compared the

⁷ Boyle, 'General Heads', 189.

⁸ See esp. Smith, *Imagining the Pacific*; Barbara M. Stafford, *Voyage into Substance: Art, Science, Nature and the Illustrated Travel Account, 1760-1840* (London, 1984).

deployment of Greek and Gothic architecture in painting, commenting that the Gothic, 'though not so ancient as the Grecian, is more so to our imagination'.⁹ The association of more 'barbaric' styles with older periods of history suggests an avenue through which we might explain what distinguished the Highland image of antiquity from that of other parts of Britain. Baronial and ecclesiastical remains built in the Gothic style became fashionable subjects for antiquarian draughtsmen during the second half of the eighteenth century. However, as Adam de Cardonnel's *Picturesque Antiquities of Scotland* (1788-93) demonstrated, this fashion still excluded large tracts of the Highlands. In Cardonnel's volumes, Iona Abbey and Beaulieu Priory were the only buildings within the Highland line deemed worthy of depiction.¹⁰ Precisely because they were not easily classifiable architecturally, castles and chapel remains elsewhere within the Highlands and Islands opened the way for a more regional idea of antiquity – one which was tied to the trend towards vernacular, non-classical concerns elsewhere in Britain, but more sharply demarcated. As John MacCulloch commented in 1819, 'architectural ornament' was extremely rare in Highland castles.¹¹ Even more so than the Gothic therefore, this bland, utilitarian approach to building crystallised impressions of an unsophisticated and culturally 'older' age.

The picturesque and the sublime, and the vogue for landscape tourism which they stimulated, were further examples of the manner in which visual approaches to the Highlands were filtered through more general sensibilities – in this case schema transplanted from French and Italian painting. On the surface, such an approach would seem to resist the development of a unique idea of Highland scenery, and on one level it did have this effect. Alexander Nasmyth's landscapes, for example, were not only extremely similar to each other; they also conveyed much more of Italy than what Hugh Blair termed 'the mists, and clouds, and storms of a northern mountainous region'.¹² Theoretically, the picturesque permitted the readjustment of nature to fit aesthetic norms, although within reasonable limits. Tone, lighting, and foliage were the usual variables

⁹ Reynolds, *Discourses*, ed. Wark, 241.

¹⁰ Adam de Cardonnel, *Picturesque Antiquities of Scotland* (2 vols., London, 1788-93).

¹¹ MacCulloch, *Description*, I, 289.

¹² Blair, 'Critical Dissertation', in Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, ed. Gaskill, 384.

deployed to create an Italianate effect. Some artists explicitly played with the moveability of certain natural features. In John Fleming's 'Loch Ness', for instance, engraved for *Swan's Views of the Lakes of Scotland* in 1836 [Fig.250], two woodmen were portrayed in the foreground, ostensibly in the act of cutting up the tree which would have blocked a clear view of Urquhart Castle.¹³ In a view from Knockfarrel in Ross-shire, drawn by Thomas Oliphant in 1852, three thick tree stumps frame a vista which standing wood would have rendered invisible [Fig.204].¹⁴ These examples could be read as silent metaphors for the artist's right to acts of compositional licence. On the other side of the coin, trees could be just as easily added to a foreground to create a Claudeian repoussoir, a trope which belied the notoriously backward state of Highland silviculture. In a concession to regional character, Fleming's 'Loch Naver' included some particularly battered specimens in a foreground screen [Fig.251].¹⁵ Across the loch in the distance can be seen the ruins of a simple tower, which, from the text, we learn is 'one of those interesting remains of antiquity, called Pictish towers or forts'.¹⁶ There is in fact little to distinguish it visually from later styles of castle, partly because of the distance, and partly because it has been slotted into the spot where, in a loch scene, the picturesque has led us to expect a medieval castle.

This extremely formulaic approach to scenic representation had other ramifications. In the last chapter, we noted numerous parallels between representations of the physical earth and humanly-created structures. Visually, the image of natural architecture took strength from the art-nature tension inherent in the picturesque. Beattie's collection of Scottish views, published in 1838, drew an explicit parallel between variety in scenery, and distinct classes of architecture.¹⁷ In the light of this observation, it is interesting to trace the predominance of close-up, architectural views in those sections of the work which cover Lowland Scotland, while in the Highlands, architectural remains (if part of the image at all) are only one feature of a greater landscape setting. A similar pattern can be traced in Lawson's collection of Scottish scenes (1850-

¹³ Leighton, *Swan's Views*, II, pl. facing 149.

¹⁴ NLS, MS.10990, f. 83, Thomas Oliphant, 'View from Knock Farrell', 1852.

¹⁵ Leighton, *Swan's Views*, II, pl. facing 184.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, II, 184.

¹⁷ Beattie, *Scotland Illustrated*, I, 11.

4).¹⁸ The distortions evident in early images of Fingal's Cave, therefore, could be seen as a direct result of a codified approach to landscape representation which demanded certain elements. In the absence of any vast number of architectural specimens in the human sphere, nature could be bent to fit the same conventions. Even in the work of John MacCulloch, whose quest for accuracy extended to the use of optical devices like the camera lucida, geological phenomena were placed within their setting in what we might call the 'architecture slot' of picturesque composition. The idea of a unique and extraordinary landscape which emerged from this approach was thus an indirect result of a generic formula which had dominated landscape imagery all over Britain since the eighteenth century.

The thirst for mimetic realism and minimal distortion which became the hallmark of Victorian art was yet another broad force which, while wider than the Highlands, reinforced ideas of regional distinctiveness. Where so-called realism became particularly subtle and dangerous was in the recreation of historical subjects. The absolutism of the image is a theme which Smiles has highlighted in relation to costume illustration. In publications like Meyrick and Smith's *Costume of the Original Inhabitants of the British Isles* (1815), wildly conjectural reconstructions of what the aboriginal Britons might have worn were presented under the illusion of actual fact.¹⁹ McLan's illustrations for *The Clans of the Scottish Highlands* (1845) fell into the same category. In part, this cognitive gap arose out of the inability of the image to carry shades of conjecture or inference. What is absent cannot be inferred; what is present is indissolubly there – recreated before our eyes – with no way of conveying visually the possibility that historical fact and the artist's imagination may not be one and the same thing. The degree of verisimilitude in historical paintings, achieved through detailed studies of armour and other material artefacts, lent an air of authenticity to the canvas, even where details may have been chronologically misplaced or just plain wrong. The depiction of eighteenth-century military uniform and weaponry in West's *Alexander III Saved from the Fury of a Stag* (a medieval subject) was one instance of this, although there were many parallels

¹⁸ Lawson, *Scotland Delineated*.

¹⁹ Smiles, 'British Antiquity', 56.

outside the Highland context. Sir William Allan's *Heroism and Humanity* (c. 1840), featuring Robert the Bruce, relied on sixteenth-century arms for its heraldic detail, despite the fact that these were two centuries younger than the event portrayed.²⁰ Historical glitches aside, however, it was in images of everyday life that the realist genre exerted its greatest power. Where the artist's perceived duty to truth was reflected in the adoption of a realist style, this could mask the relationship of the image to actual fact. Meticulously observed interiors and equally meticulous portraits of ordinary people engaged in 'traditional' tasks took on a life of their own. Being 'realistically' portrayed, it could be assumed that an external reality existed which related to the internal reality of the image. People came northwards in quest of those scenes which fitted into their idea of the real Highlands, rejecting, or editing out those which did not conform to type. Thus was the cycle of accepted themes perpetuated.

While visual approaches to the Highlands cannot be understood outside the framework of broad currents in art and intellectual culture, the personal influence of individual image-makers must also be taken into account. At times, we can observe this influence forming chains of intersecting loops through which it is possible to explain the manner in which iconographic details travelled across genres. Owing to the polymathic nature of the times and the absence of clearly demarcated strands of visual culture, the portability of some of these details can be more easily understood. There was, for instance, a very close connection between military activity in the Highlands during the eighteenth-century and the study of antiquities. On a utilitarian level, this was facilitated by the expertise of military engineers in surveying and drawing ground plans, and their grasp of fortification logistics generally. William Roy immediately springs to mind in this context, as does the link between Andrews Jelfe, architect of the Ordnance barracks in the 1720s, and William Stukeley. Alexander Gordon was also guided to the Glenelg brochs by personnel stationed at Bernera. By providing the necessary skills and access points, the military occupation of the north was thus indirectly responsible for furthering knowledge of archaeological sites which would later become absorbed into the visual catalogue of typically Highland

²⁰ GM, 1233, William Allan, *Heroism and Humanity*, Panel, 127 x 196.9, c. 1840.

scenes. In the person of Paul Sandby, a duality between utilitarian and aesthetic approaches to both landscape and fortress can also be observed. Although many of the subjects sketched in 1747 had a documentary focus in keeping with his military training, Sandby was later able to recycle their content in a picturesque mode. This allowed the ‘wild prospects’²¹ and rugged architecture of the north – initially represented in the visual record at a documentary level only – to become absorbed by the norms of academic landscape painting.

The emphasis of academic art training was in itself flexible. Despite its underlying ethos of classicism, the Foulis Academy advertised instruction in landscape drawing and architecture with a view to attracting young gentlemen who might find such accomplishments ‘useful in the future business of their lives, whether they chance to be brought up in the army, navy, or apply themselves to the study of manufactures or arts’.²² Within the bounds of classical culture, there was also space for antiquarian studies. In 1767, the Academy accepted a commission from Glasgow University to draw and engrave its collection of Roman inscribed and sculptured stones. These drawings were completed in the exact, documentary style characteristic of antiquarian practice.²³ The career of one Foulis student – Charles Cordiner – illustrates the variety of uses to which this training could be put. Cordiner’s work, as we have seen, sat midway between the genres of picturesque imagery and scientific travel. He could provide transcripts of inscriptions and symbol stones, close-up architectural studies, or more general landscape views. The second volume of his *Remarkable Ruins and Romantic Prospects of North Britain*, published in 1795, also contained an extensive number of botanical and zoological illustrations. In this way, he followed in the tradition established by Pennant, who had added scenic imagery to the range of subjects visualised by earlier travellers like Lhuyd. Pennant, incidentally, used some of Sandby’s drawings as illustrations for his *Tour in Scotland, 1769*,²⁴ thus establishing a further link between the chains of military, scientific, and aesthetic imagery. Into the

²¹ Gough, *Anecdotes of British Topography*, xvii: ‘Those given us by Mr Paul Sandby serve but to make us wish for a further acquaintance with the many wild prospects of this country from his pencil’.

²² Quoted in Irwin and Irwin, *Scottish Painters*, 89.

²³ Fairfull-Smith, *Foulis Press*, 46.

²⁴ Holloway and Errington, *Discovery of Scotland*, 42.

nineteenth century, further cross-currents can be traced. James Skene, for example, drew geological subjects, architecture, archaeological remains and scenery. John MacCulloch, likewise, both pictured and described antiquities alongside geological diagrams and landscape images in his published work. George Fennell Robson and William Daniell were trained, professional painters whose work was simultaneously accessible to scientific and artistic audiences. Antiquarian interests among professional artists were also common. William Allan, R. R. McLan, Kenneth MacLeay and James Drummond all employed the didactic image as a tool to further the authenticity of more subjective forms of art.

The Highland Society of London's sponsorship of McLan and Logan's *Clans* introduces another mechanism through which ideas and imagery could travel through the genres. Ambiguous images like the kilted figure operating the *cas-chròm* in James MacDonald's *General View of the Agriculture of the Hebrides* (1811) circulated in an environment where they could be taken in one of two ways: a vestige of backwardness justifiably doomed to extinction, or an heroic act of labour worth preserving for its value as a lesson in human fortitude. MacDonald's report was drawn up under the direction of the Board of Agriculture, then headed by Sir John Sinclair, who was also prominent in Highland Society circles, and anxious to promote the introduction of improved farm tools throughout the northern counties.²⁵ Sir Francis MacKenzie of Gairloch, who joined another London-based society – the Club of True Highlanders – in 1843,²⁶ was deeply hostile to all tokens of traditional agriculture, and included the *cas-chròm* in the caricature of Highland backwardness which prefaced his *Hints for the Use of Highland Tenants* (1838). James Logan, on the other hand, a fellow member of the same club, echoed MacDonald's allusion to military prowess in his depiction of the implement in 1831.²⁷ Climbing the genres, McLan's full-colour plate for the *Clans* in 1845 was a modified version of the same image, and illustrates the manner in which

²⁵ Smith, *Jacobite Estates*, 94.

²⁶ See McIntyre North, *Book of the Club of True Highlanders*, I, v, for an account of membership.

²⁷ Logan, *Scottish Gael*, ed. Stewart, II, 55.

something which was the topic of so much debate at a practical level could acquire a significance which elevated it to the status of art.²⁸

Logan is a good example of an amateur's capacity to operate on the fringe of a variety of worlds. He was in fact an aspiring professional who failed to make the grade at the Royal Academy schools in London. According to McIntyre North, the reason for his failure was the 'severe and repressing classical shade' of the Academy atmosphere, which was 'ill-suited to the taste of one whose life was bound up in the glorious traditions and monuments of our Islands'.²⁹ The role of the non-professional in pioneering an approach to subjects which then filtered up through the visual ranks is a theme which bears consideration. In several instances, there is a clear line of development from documentary responses to aspects of Highland life and landscape which in no way met the criteria of traditional painting, but which were later treated by 'academic' artists. It seems equally certain, however, that such images required the undergirding of a scientific or antiquarian rationale to gather the authority which allowed them to travel in this way. A large number of amateurs were content to echo the compositional formulae of their drawing manuals and masters, and influences were more likely to travel in this direction than the other. Works like Burt's *Letters*, Pennant's tours, and MacCulloch's description of the islands attained, on the other hand, almost canonical status, and through the mechanism of print, their images achieved a wide circulation. Advice to the Highland tourist written by Rev. Norman MacLeod in 1869 provides an illuminating insight into the range of publications which could shape a visitor's perceptions. MacLeod's recommendations can be found in the introduction to a collection of views by Joseph Denovan Adam, the Highland cattle specialist:

We should advise all tourists to the Highlands, in addition to Black's "Guide-Book" and Sir Walter Scott, to have also in their knapsack Dr Johnson's "Tour", as being the best account of Highland society in its best time. Dr MacCulloch's "Travels" should be added, as containing the best descriptions of the scenery ever written; with Mr Campbell of Islay's

²⁸ McLan and Logan, *Clans of the Scottish Highlands*, 'Rose'.

²⁹ McIntyre North, *Book of the Club of True Highlanders*, I, viii-ix.

“Tales of the Highlands”; and Mr Geikie’s work on the “Scenery and Geology” of the country.³⁰

Aside from Black and Scott, the directly scientific slant of this collection of titles is noteworthy. Via Turner’s illustrations to Cadell’s collected edition of Scott, a more poetic geological aesthetic could be added to the mix. Turner, as we know, was acquainted with MacCulloch, and possessed at least two volumes of the Geological Society’s *Transactions*, which were of course illustrated.³¹ Complex trails of association can be traced in other contexts. George Clayton Atkinson’s sketch of a huge stone at Loch Coruisk, for instance, can be linked to a very similar image in Sir Thomas Dick Lauder’s *Account of the Great Floods* (1830).³² Although Atkinson made his own drawings during his Hebridean tours of 1831 and 1833, he also employed professional painters to work up his drawings. Thus we have subjects like agricultural proceedings in Lewis, a standing stone, *dùn*, and various rock formations dealt with by leading Newcastle artists like Thomas Miles Richardson, his son George, and Henry Perlee Parker. The influence of Lauder’s flood imagery on Landseer’s *Flood in the Highlands* (1845-60) may also be conjectured, although Landseer was already painting scenes of Highland ‘low life’ from the later 1820s.

The richness and complexity of ‘antiquity’ as a unifying discourse linking visual responses to the region across our period has already been touched on above. A quest for origins and for things ancient was not of course confined to the Highlands. What made perceptions and representations of the region distinctive can be attributed to the persistent association of antiquarian ideas with an autonomous district. The notion of a Highland line was many centuries older than attempts to express it visually, but this inevitably meant that artists were preconditioned to expect a very different world to that which they had left ‘outside’. Gateway points, such as the Pass of Killiecrankie, featured frequently in landscape views, articulating the visitor’s sense of moving from one zone to another. The concept of time was bound into perceptions of Highland autonomy

³⁰ MacLeod, ‘Introduction’, in Adam, *Mountain, Loch and Glen*, 6.

³¹ Hamilton, *Turner and the Scientists*, 115.

³² Quine, ed., *Expeditions to the Hebrides by George Clayton Atkinson*, 100; Lauder, *Account of the Great Floods*, pl. 2.

from the beginning. Historians and chroniclers had been distinguishing the region and its people from the rest of Scotland since the fourteenth century, and the longevity of this division meant that its origins – or the things which marked the Highlands and Islands as independent territory – might be expected to have an equally distant ancestry.

The appeal of the remote past as a source of undiluted tradition, and the value of geography in preserving it, undoubtedly gathered strength from the eighteenth century obsession with 'primitive' culture. The importance of Ossian as a mediating mechanism, providing a unifying rationale for so many facets of the Highland image as it emerged throughout our period, cannot be underestimated. In the first place, the poems created an avenue through which vernacular culture could enter the classical realm. Stafford's analysis of the teaching experienced by James Macpherson at Aberdeen indicates that primitivist ideas were by no means a challenge to the hegemony of ancient Greece and Rome.³³ Instead, they legitimised the vernacular by positing societies with a creative genius and heroic spirit to match the cultural sophistication and military prowess of the great empires. Most importantly, they suggested that in regions which remained untouched by the universalising finger of progress, this creative genius and heroic spirit could be traced to the present day. That Ossian fitted eighteenth-century ideas of culture was confirmed by the swiftness with which the poems' influence could be traced in academic art – whether directly, as in Runciman's decorative cycle at Penicuik House, indirectly, as in Allan's Highland dance scenes, or more obliquely, in West's commission for Francis Humberston MacKenzie of Brahan in 1786.

Besides these obvious responses, the version of antiquity served up by Ossian provided a connecting rationale for visual responses to the Highlands in a much wider sense. Mysterious antiquities like brochs and stone circles gathered Ossianic associations, which in turn facilitated their acceptance into the frame of sublime aesthetics. The ruins of medieval strongholds were likewise linked to the strength and fortitude of an heroic age: on occasions, artists were happy to

³³ Stafford, 'Introduction', in Macpherson, *Poems of Ossian*, ed. Gaskill, x-xi.

incorporate the architecture of the middle ages in illustrations to the poems, and Newte's description of the Earl of Breadalbane and his clansmen 'issuing forth' from Kilchurn 'like the princes and heroes of Homer' was a further example of this associative chain.³⁴ In representations of Highland dress, classical allusions and the image of the warrior hero combined in a manner which gathered meaning from the cultural debates surrounding Ossian.

The model of culture which the poems seemed to confirm nevertheless set up a cycle of entrenched ambivalences. These can be traced most clearly in images of everyday life, in which a successive set of symbols appeared in sharply polarised contexts. Among them can be counted the *cas-chròm*, labour-intensive methods of transportation like the creel, subsistence fishing, living conditions and some household customs such as washing out of doors. While each of these elements became absorbed into the romantic iconography of Highland life, their debut in the visual record was less clear-cut. The spectrum of perceptions might range from open hostility to incredulity, or rest at mere curiosity. Primitivism was a supremely flexible ideology, and allows us to account for the manner in which these symbols attracted such polarised responses. To the improver, such cultural survivals were the hallmarks of backwardness; to the romantic, it was their status as emblems of an earlier age which gave them an intrinsic value. To a lesser extent, images of the Highland landscape displayed their own form of ambivalence. Again, we find certain iconic symbols like mountains entering the visual record in a climate of hostility or incredulity. To appreciate this fully, the evidence of eighteenth-century maps is vital, particularly military material, although Home's survey of Assynt, and the illustrations in Burt and Pennant are also important in this regard. To the extent that perceptions of landscape crystallised around ideas of ruin and decay, time was also a factor in conflicting attitudes towards Highland territory. On the one hand, the concept of ruin carried with it notions of abandonment – of something which was no longer habitable or usable by man. During our period, however, this came into conflict with the optimism of improvement – the vision that there was no corner of the earth so barren and abandoned that it could not be reclaimed by industry. At the

³⁴ Newte, *Prospects and Observations*, 86.

same time, the wilderness concept appealed to artists in quest of Ossianic experiences, which demanded ‘a country wholly uncultivated, thinly inhabited, and recently peopled’.³⁵ Weaving between these extremes we have the pastoral imagery of the picturesque, the Fingalian associations of key geological sites like Staffa and Glen Roy, and the supposedly Ossianic qualities of bare rock.³⁶ What there is less of – at least so far as naturalistic imagery is concerned – is a post-improvement record. Where this does exist – as in representations of the fishing industry, for instance – it is often modified with references to other tokens of tradition.

How then must we weigh the evidence of the visual record with the conclusions of an existing historiography based on written sources? As outlined in the introduction, historians have traced a deep and persistent ambivalence in attitudes towards the Gàidhealtachd which runs from the later middle ages to the close of the nineteenth century, and perhaps beyond. In accounting for this, various constructs have been invoked, including racial discourse and the ideology of primitivism. In this study, no attempt has been made to apply the methods of L. Perry Curtis or Mary Cowling, who have analysed the influence of pseudo-sciences like phrenology and physiognomy on Victorian representations of various ‘others’, such as the Irish, those of black origin, or the lowest social classes.³⁷ Although Highlanders do feature in a significant body of images, I would suggest that it was the material world with which they were associated, rather than type or character *per se*, which carried the weight of visual meaning. From being recorded as relics *of* the past, material objects became touchstones *to* the past, inhabiting a timeless, frozen world by dint of which the human population was placed equally outside of time. In effect, the people simply became models for the display of artefacts or stage props qualifying the locality of a landscape view.

³⁵ Blair, ‘Critical Dissertation’, 354.

³⁶ On ‘Ossianic’ rock scenery, see Quine, ed., *Expeditions to the Hebrides by George Clayton Atkinson*, 130.

³⁷ L. Perry Curtis, *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature* (Newton Abbot, 1971); Mary Cowling, *The Artist as Anthropologist: The Representation of Type and Character in Art* (Cambridge, 1989).

Perceptions of race and character were in a sense subsumed by the construct of primitivism. It was the historic isolation and supposed freedom from intermixture with foreigners enjoyed since early times which were believed responsible for the preservation of so many unique customs and antiquarian remains within the Highlands and Islands. The idea of antiquity was the most powerful thread uniting visual approaches to the Highlands, and in this our evidence complements the conclusions of the existing historiography. Nevertheless, although primitivism provided a rationale for conflicting perceptions and representations of key symbols, the depth of ambivalence revealed in the written record is less overt in visual sources. Hostility and incredulity are much more manifest, for instance, at the beginning of our period, and there is a much more linear progression towards romance than is apparent in other forms of evidence. In this we must concede the incompleteness of the visual record as an index of perceptions when viewed in isolation. As has been pointed out, however, it is not our purpose to maintain that the image should be seen as an isolated and privileged path to historical understanding. The direction which visual representation took is something which demands explanation in its own right, with reference to what we can learn from texts about trends across the period. From such sources, we know that deep contempt for, and invective against, the Gael continued into the second half of the nineteenth century. Although superficially poles apart, romantic imagery was in fact closely associated with this – the flip-side of the same coin. The impact of a ‘civilising’ and improving agenda drove certain things into the category of endangered species; as a result of this, they joined the array of relics washed up on the beach of history, waiting to be catalogued and preserved within what had become a kind of visual museum.

The role of the image in preservation, and the fact that it was seen as specially adapted to deal with subjects brushed by the hand of time, can be attributed to two factors. The first was the importance of antiquity within the classical framework which had gripped visual culture since the Renaissance; the other was the importance of antiquarian studies in providing a field in which the empirical applications of drawing could be experimented with. As a result of this, visual material constitutes a valuable and almost unique resource for exploring the

influence of a cultural obsession on perceptions of a particular place and people. If we accept its special conditions, and keep in mind the insights to be gathered from alternative sources, our grasp of the mechanisms of representation cannot but be enriched.

If any further justification for delving into this rich and fascinating vein of evidence were needed, its relevance beyond the chronological boundaries imposed here is certainly a factor to bear in mind. Once firmly entrenched, stereotypes not only reflect historical circumstances, but may also govern them. In the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, policy decisions and brakes imposed on economic development in the Highlands and Islands are often heavily influenced by aspects of the image created in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Protests at the creation of a bridge-link to Skye, which effectively ended its island status – the perception that winding, single-track roads are the best, because the authentically ‘Highland’, routes from which to view the scenery – and, above all, the ongoing fracas over wind farms and pylon lines – all owe something to entrenched ideas about an environment in which change and the despoliation of the isolationist, wilderness image are frequently ranked alongside one another. The energy debate in fact goes back to the 1890s, when a hydro-electric scheme involving the Falls of Foyers – a key site on the tourist itinerary, and one of the most visualised waterfalls in the Highlands – brought a storm of disapproval.³⁸ The irony of these discussions is that we owe so many notions of the unique, unspoilt Highlands, untouched and untouchable, to visual representations which were a response to the inroads of commercialisation and modernity in earlier centuries.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, these images had crystallised into a kind of composite portrait. As well as asking why this happened where and when it did, we should also be probing who was responsible for the version of Highlandness purveyed in the visual record. This is not an easy issue to categorise, and requires more research into the biographies of individual artists,

³⁸ Emma Wood, *The Hydro Boys: Pioneers of Renewable Energy* (Edinburgh, 2002), 18-19; for more detail on this particular case, see Janice Helland, ‘Artistic Advocate: Mary Rose Burton and the Falls of Foyers’, *Scottish Economic and Social History*, 17, 1997, 127-47.

and their relationship with patrons, especially the Highland elite. Studies of perceptions often fall back on the notion of the 'other' in classifying the perspectives identified, but, in representations of the Highlands and Islands, a black-and-white division between internal and external points of view was not always clear cut. Duncan Macmillan speaks of a 'gap between true Gaelic culture and its reflection in the visual arts', attributing it to the fact that most images of the region were created by outsiders, and that people therefore remained of secondary importance.³⁹ Although people *do* appear in visual images more often than Macmillan gives nineteenth-century artists credit for, this is fair comment in the sense that Highlanders are frequently typecast, nameless, and qualified by their surroundings. In this respect, comparison might be drawn with the approach of some early-twentieth-century photographers. As *an Fhearann*, the 1986 exhibition staged at An Lanntair gallery in Stornoway, showcased some powerful photographic portraits of ordinary Hebrideans, in which it is the human face, rather than the particular task engaged in, which is the central focus. Paul Strand and Werner Kissling – both outsiders to the islands – both made some memorable contributions to this genre. By contrast, Dan Morrison, a Lewisman, photographed scenes like peat-cutting, carting with the creel, and other agricultural tasks which have surface links to an older stock of typical images.⁴⁰

Within the chronological limits of this study, further knots in the internal/external string emerge. Discussing seventeenth-century patronage, Macmillan notes that 'such painting as was carried out for the leaders of Highland society was usually done by outsiders', and that 'it seems that no significant artist of the time came from a Highland background'.⁴¹ Jumping forward in time, however, some of the most enthusiastic purveyors of Highlandism during the nineteenth century did have authentic Highland roots. R. R. McIan, for instance, was born in Inverness-shire and Kenneth MacLeay in Oban. On his mother's side, MacLeay's grandfather was Rev. Patrick Macdonald (1729-1824), born in the Durness manse in northern Sutherland and an authority on the indigenous musical

³⁹ Macmillan, 'Gaelic Art in Modern Times', 11-13.

⁴⁰ MacLean and Carrell, ed., *As an Fhearann*; Russell, *Poem of Remote Lives*; Fionnlagh Macleòid, ed., *Nis Aosmhor: The Photographs of Dan Morrison* (Stornoway, 1997).

⁴¹ Macmillan, 'Gaelic Art in Modern Times', 11.

tradition of his native county and that of his adopted homeland in Argyll. Macdonald published a book of tunes – *A Collection of Highland Vocal Airs* – in 1784, based partly on his younger brother Joseph's research. In Donaldson's assessment, this was the earliest in a series of productions in which authentic tradition was mediated to the outside world via an editor who had embraced an Ossianised, doomed vision of Highland culture.⁴² While Donaldson distances Macdonald from this perception, it is ironic that we should find MacLeay producing classically ossified examples of the piper stereotype for Queen Victoria in the 1860s. Further examples of artists with Highland origins or connections might be cited here, including John Milne Donald (1819-66), who produced some standard droving and cattle scenes, and also the geological study of Glenfruin. Donald was born in Nairnshire, a region where the shifting boundary between Highland and Lowland, Gaelic and English, was still a reality in the mid-nineteenth century. Horatio McCulloch, judged to have been a formative influence on Donald,⁴³ was another artist with indigenous connections. In 1848, he married a woman from Sleat in Skye, Marcella McLellan, whose mother, according to census records, came from South Uist.⁴⁴ All of McCulloch's carefully peopled Highland landscapes postdate his marriage, although it is impossible to make a verifiable connection between the two events.

The issue of patronage is another factor to take into account. The question of elite self-representation and its influence on images of the Highlands demands much more detailed assessment than it has been possible to undertake here. Tartan portraiture was one strand within this, which later became recycled in antiquarian costume books, and was thus brought to bear on the perceptions of a wider audience. The role of the elite in Highland societies and the committees which organised events like piping competitions and Highland games constituted a more indirect influence on visual representations. The version of Highland culture served up to Queen Victoria on her visit of 1842 was a further exercise in self-representation, and spawned a flood of derivative imagery from Balmoral

⁴² Morse, *A Woman of Design, A Man of Passion*, 8; Smailes, *Kenneth MacLeay*, 4; Donaldson, *Highland Pipe*, 44-62.

⁴³ Paul Harris and Julian Halsby, *Dictionary of Scottish Painters, 1600-1960* (Edinburgh, 1990), 48.

⁴⁴ Smith, *Horatio McCulloch*, 22, fn. 62.

Castle in later years. Again, it is difficult to compartmentalise this idea of the Highlands along 'internal' or 'external' lines. Whether the anglicised, outward-looking majority of the elite can be conceived as indigenous in anything other than lineage by this point is, of course, questionable. Someone like Campbell of Islay, however, complicates matters further. He was a landowner's son, a member of the lesser gentry, and yet in possession of a key to native culture – the Gaelic language. Despite the amount of time he spent conversing with ordinary people throughout the Highlands and Islands in quest of folktales, the absence of these people from his visual output is noteworthy. An exception is the striking and unsentimental portrait of a storyteller in Mingulay – 'Rory Rum' – pictured in 1871 at 85 years of age [Fig.252].⁴⁵ In Campbell's case, it is impossible to link the omission of people from his drawings to a lack of interest in, or understanding of, the native inhabitants. His foreign travels in Scandinavia, by contrast, contain a much higher proportion of human figures, and it is possible that the absence of Gaels from his drawings can be attributed to the fact that he himself was semi-naturalised within the culture, and that the folk did not, in consequence, appear as specimens of tradition in the manner that the Lapp clearly did.⁴⁶

Discussing modern Gaelic poetry, Chapman has addressed the problem of distinguishing between a self-representation which is true to its source, and one which is influenced by the majority culture. According to Chapman:

The appropriation of Gaelic culture has had such manifold effects upon the relationship between Gael and Gall over the last two hundred years that to sort out a simple truth or an unambiguous stance is perhaps impossible. [Derick] Thomson speaks of 'an ìomhaigh tha cumail smachd air na h-ìomhaighean breige' ('the image that keeps control over false images'). It must be admitted, however, that the relationship between these, between the fact and the fiction, the authentic and the inauthentic, the controlling image and the false image, is, from the very first, dialectical. Somewhere within this long running literary conspiracy

⁴⁵ NLS, Adv.MS.50.4.6, f. 119v, John Francis Campbell, 'Rory Rum the Story Man', 1871.

⁴⁶ See esp. NLS, Adv.MS.50.4.4, Campbell, Journal, 1868, for images of Lapps.

stands 'Gàidheal calma le a chànan' ('a stout Highlander with his language'), ever elusive, and ever recreating himself from the tenacious immutability that another world ascribes to him.⁴⁷

Chapman's analysis suggests that even an indigenous hold on language and lineage provides no easy passport to an authentic, unmediated vision of culture. Reflecting on the demise of his native community in Sanna, Ardnamurchan, the poet Alasdair Maclean recounted his own response to a 'Highland' television programme in the Balmoral vein. According to Maclean: 'All present by me enjoyed the programme thoroughly; all were Highlanders; all believed themselves to be watching something authentically native. The room was crowded and I was the only scowler there'.⁴⁸ Although Maclean's polemic could be cited at length, the point of including this extract here is to illustrate the continuing relevance of the image-making process discussed in this thesis. 'Most probably', Maclean asserted, 'if a people have begun to talk about preserving their culture – perhaps if they have begun to talk about their culture at all – it is already moribund'.⁴⁹ Harsh words, but as concerns the vast preservation project in which the visual record was embroiled between c. 1700 and 1880, and indeed beyond, perhaps a fitting postscript to the legacy with which we continue to wrestle.

⁴⁷ Chapman, *Gaelic Vision*, 161.

⁴⁸ Alasdair Maclean, *Night Falls on Ardnamurchan: The Twilight of a Crofting Family* (Edinburgh, 2001 edn.), 193.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 192.