

PROGRESS IN THE PERIPHERIES: IMPROVEMENT
AND NATIONAL IMAGE IN THE FICTIONS OF IRELAND, SCOTLAND
AND WALES, 1780 - 1830

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis presents my original writing and is the result of my own research.

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the relationship between improvement and national image in Irish, Scottish and Welsh novels published between 1780 and 1830. Given the social, economic, and physical impacts of the agricultural and industrial revolutions in this period, the project focuses on texts that illuminate the tension between engaging with popular portrayals of picturesque landscapes, rural tradition and Celtic primitivism, and advocating or accepting the need for economic modernization that may compromise those national images. Exploring the dialogical nature of the ‘national tale’, a genre whose parameters are extended here to include regional focuses within the relevant national settings, this study contextualizes literary representations of landscape and estate management by incorporating analysis of contemporaneous non-fiction accounts found in tours and agricultural surveys.

This thesis is presented in four sections. The introduction examines the usefulness of ‘national tale’ as a genre label in current scholarly debate and explores the influence of writers such as Daniel Defoe, William Marshall and Tobias Smollett on textual representations of landscape and tourism. Chapter one focuses on English-language Welsh novels from the 1780s and 1790s, highlighting the potential ideological disconnect between sustaining a public image of Wales as a picturesque idyll and acknowledging the signs of industrialization. Chapter two explores Maria Edgeworth’s approach to antiquarianism, tradition and the travelogue in her post-Union presentations of benevolent improvement in Ireland. Chapter three examines the way writers such as Christian Isobel Johnstone and Alexander Sutherland negotiate the popular image of the Romantic Highlands while exploring the sustainability and consequences of improvement.

INTRODUCTION

NATIONAL IMAGE, IMPROVEMENT, AND THE NOVEL

Agricultural writer and improving landlord John Sinclair once observed of the ‘*spirit of improvement*’ that, ‘whilst in general the people seem to consider it as sinful and sacrilegious to deviate from the practices of their ancestors, little improvement can be expected; however, where a sincere good proselyte can be made, to him proffers of encouragement are never wanting.’¹ The ideology of improvement – in so far as such a nebulous term could be considered to have a characteristic set of principles - was a contentious one throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Beyond tracts concerned with education and moral improvement, the dissemination of articles on husbandry and estate management alone spawned debates over the social, economic, and political ramifications of the major events of the agricultural revolution, from enclosure and the conversion of arable lands to the length of leases and the merits of subsistence farming. One of the oft-repeated concerns expressed by proponents of improvement, whether their focus was on economic modernization or on moral reform, was that an ‘irrational attachment’ to the past was an encumbrance to progress. In a period that saw the Union between Great Britain and Ireland and the development of the Irish national tale, the resurgence of Welsh bardism, and the upsurge of international interest in Scotland due to the immense popularity

¹ Cited in Sir George Steuart Mackenzie, *A General View of the Agriculture of the Counties of Ross and Cromarty* (Edinburgh, 1810), p. 350.

of the *Ossian* poems, it is clear that the creation of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh nationalisms depended on an engagement with the past. Considering the transnational scope of improvement in Great Britain and Ireland, suggestions that historical custom must, like wasteland, be cleared away before any appreciable progress can take root contain potentially Anglocentric imperialist implications that must be explored.

As Katie Trumpener so convincingly established in her seminal *Bardic Nationalism* (1997), ‘the measurement and mapping of land’ in Britain and Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, ‘the remaking of rural topography, in the name of agricultural improvement, reawakens and renews questions of ownership, tradition, and occupation’.² Given the common rhetorical juxtaposition of cultivation and civilization, it is perhaps unsurprising to see a range of genres address issues as varied as agricultural reform, moral improvement, ancestral loyalty, and the relationship between England and its Celtic peripheries.³ Helen O’Connell argues that ‘improvement was a stabilizing discourse, seeking consensus and coherence in the public sphere in order to prepare the ground for modernization and progress.’⁴ In choosing the core texts for this study, I have not only considered their engagement with the discourse of improvement and their approach to national image but also their position in relation to contemporary publications and historical events. By analyzing them within their historical and literary contexts - from the shift in landscape

² Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), p. 25.

³ On the use of the terms ‘Celtic’ and ‘Celtic fringe’ throughout this project, see Murray Pittock’s *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), p. 2.

⁴ Helen O’Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 3.

aesthetics from the 1770s onwards, the Act of Union, and the economic modernization of Ireland and Great Britain to the development of the Welsh sentimental novel, the Irish national tale, and the Scotch novel - the dialogic nature and generic hybridity of these selected texts becomes apparent.

Building on critical studies of national identities and literatures by Trumpener, Linda Colley, Murray Pittock and others, this project will focus specifically on the different facets of land and estate improvement, the tension between tradition and modernization, and the promotion of national image in fictional representations of Irish, Scottish and Welsh spaces.⁵ By using the term *national image* I intend to draw attention to the public consumption of the various nationalisms portrayed in these texts. While characters within these texts confront national stereotypes and prejudices, questioning identity, Britishness, modernization, and the relationship between England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the authors are presenting the reader with their approximation of the public face of a nation. Thus where *national identity* implies an individual's endorsement of belonging to a wider national community and *national character* implies assigning generalizations regarding moral, physical, or sociopolitical attributes to an entire population, my use of *national image* in this study is meant as a reminder of the constructed and public nature of the representations of nationalisms found in these texts.

This approach to national image demands a consideration of the audience of the texts I will be discussing. For example, Richard Lovell Edgeworth's

⁵ For more on nationalism and identity in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Murray Pittock's *Inventing and Resisting Britain* (1997), *Celtic Identity and the British Image* (1999) and *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (2008); Linda Colley's *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707-1837* (1992); and Damian Walford Davies's *Presences That Disturb* (2002).

preface to *Castle Rackrent* advertises the volume's inclusion of a glossary for 'the information of the *ignorant* English reader'.⁶ 'The Editor' resurfaces in the final paragraphs of the text, saying that 'he lays it before the English reader as a specimen of manner and characters, which are, perhaps, unknown in England' (121). It may be argued that, as Maria Edgeworth's first attempt at a text set in Ireland, *Castle Rackrent* was aimed specifically at an English audience whereas her subsequent Irish novels were written with a broader audience in mind. Certainly, her didactic critique of absenteeism throughout her Irish works suggests that Edgeworth particularly hoped to influence fellow Anglo-Irish landlords. But even when the authors in this study are explicit about their intended readership, as Christian Isobel Johnstone is when expressing the desire to 'lead back the memory of any wandering son of Scotland' with *Clan-Albin* (1815), all of the novels discussed in this study were published in London and advertised to English readers.⁷ Thus, when I refer to an English audience, I am neither making claims as to the *intended* audience nor speculating on the demographics of the readership, but rather focusing on a certain subsection of it to which the texts were most marketed and available as evidenced by their publication histories.

In presenting this study of improvement and national image in three relatively discrete sections devoted to Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, I do not intend to elide either the interconnections between them or the 'British'

⁶ *Castle Rackrent and Ennui*, ed. Marilyn Butler (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 62.

⁷ *Clan-Albin; a National Tale*, ed. with introd. by Andrew Monnickendam (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2003), p.1.

dimensions of the issues discussed here.⁸ I share Linda Colley's concern that the Four Nations approach can be 'an incomplete and anachronistic way to view the British past and, also, a potentially parochial one,' particularly when a pluralist view of British cultural nationalism focuses on the relationships between a hegemonic England and its 'Celtic fringe,' to the depreciation of those interconnections, the regional differences within Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and the possibility of multiple identities and nationalisms.⁹ Yet more pertinent to this study are the arguments of Colley's critics who have pointed out the gaps in *Britons*, from the exclusion of Ireland from the constructed community of a Protestant Britain to an underestimation of the influence of Anglicization. Although I agree with Colley's suggestion that 'identities are not like hats,' and that one could perceive oneself as both Scottish and British, I am less interested in redefining terms such as 'Celtic', 'British', 'nation', and 'identity' than I am in examining what Murray Pittock calls the 'cultural packaging' of those terms, specifically in the use of the novel and travel literature to promote a public national image.¹⁰ By dealing with each locale separately, I hope to draw attention to similarities in the negotiations of Irish, Scottish and Welsh nationalisms in relation to a perceived English hegemonic control as well as to the divergent approaches in promoting a public image of distinct national

⁸ When referring to 'Welsh', 'Irish', and 'Scottish' novels in this project, I am using Patrick Parrinder's helpful definition of the English novel: 'a definition not by language or authorial nationality but by subject matter.' While several of the texts in this study are written by authors claiming some Welsh, Irish, or Scottish heritage, my primary criteria are setting and subject rather than authorial nationality or language. See Parrinder's *Nation & Novel: The English Novel from its Origins to the Present Day* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 4.

⁹ Linda Colley, 'Britishness and Otherness: An Argument', *The Journal of British Studies*, 31: 4 (Oct., 1992), pp. 309-29.

¹⁰ Colley, *Britons*, p. 6; Pittock, *Celtic Identity*, p. 5.

character within a composite British community. In particular, my aim is to examine the different ways in which history, primitivism, Anglicization, antiquarianism, and even Celticism are incorporated into texts involving regional or national improvement and identity.

1. A QUESTION OF GENRE

In the last few decades, scholarship has recovered the crucial impact of ‘Celtic’ literatures on the development of national genres, British cultural nationalisms, and the literary historiography of the long eighteenth century. Genre-defining studies of the national tale and the historical novel suggest an approach to the English, Irish and Scottish public national spheres as an interconnected field, and only recently has Welsh writing in English been recontextualized in the history of literary nationalism. By exploring generic hybridity within this expanded and recontextualized field, I aim to highlight the nuances and dialogical qualities of specific Irish, Scottish and Welsh texts that are in danger of being overshadowed by restrictive approaches to genre and nationalism. This study owes a great deal to Katie Trumpener’s *Bardic Nationalism* (1997). Trumpener offers an intelligent and much-needed view of the Romantic novel within a greater British historiographical framework, and her influence can also be read in the works of other critics of eighteenth-century literature and cultural history, particularly Sarah Prescott, Ina Ferris, and Murray Pittock. She usefully steps back from the English canon and emphasizes the ‘centrality, interconnection, and international influence’ of Irish, Scottish and

Welsh literary cultures.¹¹ Yet the Welsh novel is sadly absent in a study so focused on bardism, as Trumpener instead provides a detailed study of the Irish national tale and the Scottish historical novel. Beyond the removal of the Welsh novel from the consideration of national(ist) literatures, which Prescott goes some way to redress in her important study *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales* (2009), the trend in the past decade to overuse genre labels such as ‘national tale’ and ‘historical novel’ has led to a somewhat insular view of the works of major figures in those genres, such as Lady Morgan and Sir Walter Scott. One of the difficulties inherent in the term ‘national tale’ in particular is that it immediately suggests a nationalist or colonial framework for interpretation, and one built on an Irish/English dichotomy. Prescribing a two-nation template risks not only casting the sentimental or improvement plots of these texts as secondary to an assumed unionist or nationalist agenda but also of ignoring the non-Anglo multilateral aspects of the novels, such as the influence of Ireland, Scotland and Wales on each other. This is, of course, a common concern in any genre-specific literary study, but the recourse to such restrictive labels seems particularly problematic when dealing with texts that address nation, identity, improvement, modernity, and progress – all dynamic terms, highly contested and constantly evolving, within the Romantic period and even now.

In her examination of the debate over the parameters of the national tale genre, Miranda Burgess asks, ‘Should membership of the group be identified by resemblances in theme or literary form or by matters of historical situation or

¹¹ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. xi.

rhetorical effect?'¹² A critical approach to the national tale as a genre is complicated even more by the fact that the term 'national tale' came into some vogue after the publication of Lady Morgan's paradigmatic *The Wild Irish Girl: A National Tale* in 1806, resulting in a spate of novels which replicate major plot devices such as the Irish tour and marriage-as-Union. As Katie Trumpener astutely observes, the genre could be interpreted 'partly as a marketing phenomenon' in light of the influence of Henry Colburn and other publishers in attaching the 'national tale' subtitle to several Irish, Scottish, and regional English novels.¹³ Ina Ferris has made strides in identifying the characteristics of the national tale by pointing out the trend for Morgan's contemporaries to use similar tropes either in reaction against or in emulation of her pioneering work, and provides a compelling reading of their significance in relation to travel literature and political discourse.¹⁴ But Ferris virtually ignores Colburn's calculated attempts at building a new style of novel to be represented by his publishing house in her arguments that the national tale is, almost prohibitively, a female Irish genre. The use of *The Wild Irish Girl* as a genre standard is understandable considering it was the first time the term 'national tale' appeared in print and the subsequent reproduction of plot elements such as the English traveller marrying a female embodiment of Ireland in an idealized representation of union. Yet Ferris's repeated reliance on a Morganesque paradigm, resulting

¹² Miranda Burgess, 'The national tale and allied genres, 1770s-1840s' in *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*, ed. John Wilson Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 42.

¹³ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 324 n 7.

¹⁴ See Ina Ferris's *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) and 'Narrating National Encounter: Lady Morgan and the Irish National Tale', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, 51: 3 (Dec., 1996), pp. 287-303.

in a somewhat reductive approach to the scope of the national tale as a genre, threatens to gloss over the very differences and idiosyncrasies that make a study of the genre's individual examples so useful.

For example, Ferris is very interested in the way the national tale displaces the Irish tour, which she sees as an English genre, by shifting the sight of enunciation and bringing the traveller *into* Ireland for the moment of disclosure rather than having the stranger observe or recall from a space removed from it. This, she claims, is the 'macro level' concern for writers such as Morgan and Edgeworth in their negotiations of the Irish tour genre. Ferris thus relegates their allusions to specific travelogues and histories to a 'micro-tactic,' with the notable exception of John Carr's *A Stranger in Ireland*.¹⁵ Yet as I later demonstrate, Edgeworth's references to writers from Edmund Spenser to Arthur Young and her evolving fictionalized treatments of Irish antiquarian Sylvester O'Halloran present an intriguing glimpse of the ways her views about national image and her role in promoting it changed throughout her career. By underestimating the importance of context, particularly in the relationship between individual examples of national tales and published tours and other non-fictional representations of place, one can overlook instances of generic hybridity that inform a fuller reading of a text's portrayal of national image. In Ferris has helpfully suggested that the national tale inhabits the space of encounter between 'foreign' and 'native', casting the English (or metropolitan, or imperial) presence as the foreign one. Her argument that, unlike typical Irish tours, the national tale's appropriation of the travel plot 'defines the outsider as the one whose perceptions and conduct require alteration' is key to the readings

¹⁵ Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale*, p. 49.

presented in this study.¹⁶ Conceding that, I wish to move beyond Ferris's focus on defining a genre and instead provide a closer consideration of specific authors' fictionalization of travel as a vehicle for publicizing a national image and offering practical suggestions for national improvement. By concentrating on a small sample of texts containing improvement narratives and approaching them as case studies for correlating socio-political issues in Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, this study also aims to revise the history of the romantic, regional, and national novel.

According to Miranda Burgess, the precursors to the national tale in the 1780s and 1790s were 'the exotic or "Oriental tale"' and the 'historical tale,' distinct from Georg Lukács's conception of the later historical novel genre in that 'it paid more attention to fragmented material evidence and ancient texts than to the kinds of history that can be understood as seamless national narratives'.¹⁷ Two more types of tales were those by English writers set in Scotland, Ireland or Wales as exotic locales, and didactic novels that were 'tales of the times'. What makes the national tale distinct from these, Burgess argues, is that it 'is dialogical, reproducing diverse accents, vocabularies and sometimes languages as it attempts to provide an overview of a national community – a national community that is continually in contact with representatives from other nations' (40). The dialogical nature of the texts analyzed in this study is key to my examination of their portrayal of improvement and national image. Not only are the authors engaging with various discussions about progress, modernity, patriotism and national character conducted across multiple genres, but the

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁷ Burgess, p. 41; Georg Lukács, *The Historical Novel* (1937), trans. H. and S. Mitchell (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983).

characters within these novels are also constantly informed by and reacting against competing representations of their surroundings. Burgess's conception of 'national community' here is perhaps too uncomplicated for the purposes of this study, resulting as it does in her exclusion of Welsh novels of the 1780s. By allowing for the inclusion of regionalism within the national tale genre, I have chosen a range of texts whose authors treat their settings not simply as non-English exotic locales but as nations, communities, or regions with distinct cultural histories, unique statuses within the British Empire, and differing needs in terms of improvement.

K. D. M. Snell, defining the parameters of his study of the regional novel, explains that 'a "nationalist" novel, say of Wales, lacking clear regional specificity within Wales would not be included here; but a Welsh regional novel might in some cases be open to interpretation as a "national" novel' (2).¹⁸ Snell's emphasis on the approximation of local dialect as a key component of the regional novel might not hold well for all of the novels considered in this project, but nevertheless there are strong regional aspects to most of the texts. The perceived regional differences between the mountainous North and the more agrarian and perhaps Anglicized South Wales become apparent in the selected texts in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 focuses on Maria Edgeworth's Irish canon, which, though more concerned with a unified Irish national image, is very much centered around the history of Edgeworth's own home county of Longford, moving to western Ireland for the more "wild" imagery found in *Ormond's* Black Islands and to Dublin for portrayals of urban Ireland. Lastly, Chapter 3 considers how the geographical and cultural distinctiveness of the Scottish

¹⁸ *The Regional Novel in Britain and Ireland, 1800 – 1990*, ed. K. D. M. Snell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 2.

Highlands informs the creation of a recognizably manufactured regional and national image.

Beyond acknowledging the regional differences within Ireland, Scotland and Wales, I am interested in expanding on the observation made in recent Scottish studies that texts traditionally viewed as ‘national’ should also be considered as ‘regional’ when positioned within a wider British context. Robert Crawford and Liz Bellamy have highlighted Walter Scott’s position as a regional writer, or ‘a writer examining Scotland as a region of the greater entity of Britain – rather than a national – a Scottish – writer’.¹⁹ Focusing on the national tale’s convention of tracing a character’s movement from England to Ireland, Scotland, or Wales may force an Anglocentric approach to these texts. A parallel reading of these national tales as regional novels will allow for the consideration of not only regional differences within a given nation but the inclusive conception of Ireland, Scotland and Wales as regions within the British nation. In particular, this study examines the presence of ‘Britishnesses’ in Irish, Scottish and Welsh texts; the way selected writers negotiated concepts of economic and imperial inclusiveness; the nationalist implications of cultural inclusiveness; and the extent to which these texts define their settings as part of a wider British community rather than against England.

2. TRAVELLERS AND TOURISTS, STRANGERS AND SURVEYORS

Travel, improvement, and national image are intricately linked in many national and regional novels of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

¹⁹ See Robert Crawford, *Devolving English Literature* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) and Liz Bellamy, ‘Regionalism and nationalism: Maria Edgeworth, Walter Scott and the definition of Britishness’ in *The Regional Novel in Britain and Ireland, 1800 – 1990*, p. 75.

Certainly, movement, either of individuals or of ideas, is integral to the majority of texts discussed in this study. The dialogical relationship between these novels, travelogues, improvement tracts and agricultural surveys demands that attention be paid to the ways writers within these genres approached the gathering of data and the dissemination of knowledge. Whether the authors favour understanding gleaned from experience, education, oral tradition, or a combination of sources, the transnational exchange of ideas and practices is central to their engagement with the discourse of improvement and to the crafting of national image. Such ideas and practices, which were not limited to Great Britain and Ireland despite my focus on those locales, included debates on concepts of the Picturesque, methods of agricultural and industrial development, and matrices for the promotion of improvement and of cultural nationalism. Beyond the movement of information between England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the movement of people was also a common plot feature of these novels. Outbound travel – absenteeism, Clearances, military service, emigration, economically and socially motivated relocation to London and other cities – features prominently in my discussion of regionally-specific aspects of improvement. Meanwhile, accounts of travel *to* Ireland, Scotland and Wales suggest a reading that focuses on an outsider’s perspective. For this purpose, I am interested in exploring how selected novelists utilized the structure of travel texts to frame representations of Ireland, Scotland and Wales, and to what extent they negotiated the limitations of subjective narration in their portrayals of national image and improvement.

Throughout this study, I will make repeated use of the terms ‘traveller’, ‘tourist’, and ‘stranger,’ even when the journey undertaken is a one-way trip.

Although I use these terms interchangeably, generally guided by precedents within the texts being discussed, it is important to recognize that these labels were highly contested in the long eighteenth century and imbued with connotations regarding class, education, and politics. As Carl Thompson argues in *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination* (2007), the ‘Romantic traveller,’ epitomized by Byron, had nothing but disdain for ‘tourists’ who depended on manuals, scripted itineraries, well-worn routes and formulaic responses to every pre-planned experience. For Byron, a true traveller must live spontaneously, journey far, be susceptible to danger and open to the transformative power of being transplanted into a life and setting completely foreign to everything s/he knows. Yet Thompson makes a compelling observation when he notes that while the Romantic traveller may see himself as the antithesis of the tourist in his disregard for guides, he ‘is making in diverse ways subtle idealizations, projections, and anticipations, all of which work to some degree to script in advance the journey and the experience’.²⁰ It is these ‘idealizations, projections, and anticipations’ that I wish to examine within the context of the fiction of Ireland, Scotland and Wales. I will focus not only on the fictional traveller’s expectations of place and people and the ways in which they are or are not met, but also on how various authors manipulate their imagined audience’s expectations to comment on regional and national issues ranging from land and estate management to economic modernization, from national identity to the use of history in the creation of a public national image.

To this end, I will not restrict myself to any one type of traveller or tourist. As Thompson observes, there were several sub-species of tourists,

²⁰ Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 22.

including ‘the Grand Tourist, the picturesque tourist, and the female tourist’.²¹ There were ‘sentimental tourists’ after Laurence Sterne, utilitarian tourists after Arthur Young and, perhaps predictably, anti-tourism tourists who strove to deviate from itineraries popularized by travelogues. Due to the scope of this study and my intention to restrict myself to novels dealing with the issue of improvement, several of the supplementary texts discussed here will tend towards the utilitarian and picturesque schools of travel, but the project will not be bound by Thompson’s somewhat monolithic categorizations. Indeed, as the labels Thompson uses depend so much on self-description and the individual’s motives for travel, several characters in the following chapters would, as I have hinted, be considered neither ‘Romantic travellers’ nor ‘tourists’, but instead as strangers with shared experience of those ‘idealizations, projections, and anticipations’ engendered by popular images of Ireland, Scotland and Wales found in travelogues, novels, prints, and other popular media. My use of ‘stranger’ here is distinct from Ina Ferris’s model, wherein ‘to be a stranger is to suspend one’s own identity – to become an “unknown” – and to enter what we might call the rim of another’s space’.²² Not only is Ferris focusing on the reader’s position as stranger, but her usage also suggests that the assumption of the stranger role is an act of self-identification and, in a way, self-negation. In my use of the term, I am assuming no such self-awareness on the reader’s part.²³

²¹ Ibid., p. 32.

²² Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale*, p. 57.

²³ The word ‘stranger’ is commonly found in the titles of eighteenth-century travelogues, particularly guides to London such as *The Ambulator; or, the Stranger’s Companion in a Tour Round London* (London: J. Bew, 1774), *The London Companion, or the Citizens and Stranger’s Guide through the Metropolis and its environs* (London: W. Lowndes, 1789), and Catharine Kearsley’s *Stranger’s Guide, or Companion through London and Westminster, and the Country Round* (London, 1791).

The uniting factor of these travellers, then, is not gender (though most are male), or class (though most are middle- to upper-class), but destination: the so-called Celtic fringe. Domestic tourism, as I will discuss in the following chapters, encountered an upswing in popularity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The most obvious reasons are practical ones; road conditions steadily improved in this period, making domestic travel cheaper, and the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars made travel to the Continent difficult. With travel narratives and even agricultural surveys becoming increasingly politicized as the century progressed, scholars have argued that domestic tourism or, more accurately, the publication of domestic tours can also be read as an assertion of patriotism, or plural patriotisms, during a time of national upheaval. Thompson focuses on the ways domestic tours were positioned against aristocratic Grand tours when he argues ‘they could also be more easily constructed as a patriotic exercise, in keeping with a self-image that identified the middle classes as the moral and economic heart of the nation’.²⁴ The domestic tour was seen as a vital step in preparing for a journey abroad as it secured, or perhaps engendered, the proper ‘patriotic pride’ that would serve as an inoculation of sorts against foreign influences.²⁵ Ina Ferris contends that the Irish tour was a predominantly English genre, and it may be argued that the use of the travelogue in nationalist literatures is designed to cast the targeted English audience in the role of stranger.²⁶ Yet the fictional travellers discussed in this

²⁴ Thompson, *The Suffering Traveller*, p. 34.

²⁵ See Robert J. Mayhew, *Enlightenment Geography: The Political Languages of British Geography, 1650-1850* (London: Macmillan, 2000), p. 143.

²⁶ Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale*, pp. 26-27.

study represent a range of identities, unionisms, and Britishnesses, just as the nature of their experience in the visited locales varies.

In her analysis of the travel plot in the eighteenth-century novel, Aileen Douglas suggests that ‘travel does not always lead to the recognition or development of identity; it can also have an abrading effect, softening distinctions and allowing new identities to emerge’.²⁷ This ‘abrading effect’ in some cases involves the dissolution of the traveller’s Anglocentric perspective on the nation as a whole; the ‘new identities’ range from the recognition of Irish, Scottish, Welsh or hyphenated origins in the case of homecoming plots to the acceptance of a more encompassing *British* national identity. In some cases, absentees, nabobs, or foundlings are returning to their native lands after years of separation, bringing their adopted culture’s ignorance or prejudices with them. In other instances, an individual is experiencing the regional differences within a single country (for example, between the Scottish Highlands and the Lowlands). My point is that the ‘patriotic exercise’ of domestic tourism in this period was not restricted to English travellers.

A brief examination of Josiah Tucker’s *Instructions for Travellers* (1758) offers insight into the emphasis on improvement and national image in early travel texts. Tucker, curate of St. Stephen’s in Bristol, was a Welsh economic theorist and political writer noted for his disagreement with Edmund Burke over the regulation of the American colonies. Although *Instructions* is ostensibly aimed at preparing those going abroad to ‘read’ foreign soils and socio-political infrastructures accurately, it also reads as a catechism for tour writers, using

²⁷ Aileen Douglas, ‘The novel before 1800’ in *The Cambridge Companion to the Irish Novel*, ed. John Wilson Foster (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 25.

England as its subject. Tucker offers an interesting categorization of travellers that is echoed throughout this study:

Persons who propose to themselves a Scheme for Travelling, generally do it with a View to obtain one, or more of the following Ends, *viz.* *First*, To make curious Collections, as Natural Philosophers, Virtuoso's, or Antiquarians. *Secondly*, To improve in Painting, Statuary, Architecture, and Music. *Thirdly*, to obtain the Reputation of being Men of Virtue, and of an elegant Taste. *Fourthly*, To acquire foreign Airs, and adorn their dear Persons with fine Clothes and new Fashions, and their Conversation with new Phrases. Or, *Fifthly*, To rub off local Prejudices (which is indeed the most commendable Motive, though not the most prevailing) and to acquire that enlarged and impartial View of Men and Things, which no one single Country can afford.²⁸

Tucker focuses on this fifth goal in *Instructions*, offering advice to those who wish travel to be an edifying experience. He recommends various books on religion, English law, and commerce to be read in preparation for going abroad, 'for an ignorant Traveller is of all Beings the most contemptible' (6). Tucker contends that analysis of a region is just as important as observation and that the 'grand Maxim' of a discerning traveller is that:

the Face of every Country through which he passes, the Looks, Numbers, and Behaviour of the People, their general Clothing, Food, and Dwelling, their Attainments in Agriculture, Manufactures, Arts and Sciences, are the Effects and Consequences of some certain Causes; which Causes he was particularly sent out to investigate and discover. (15)

To aid the traveller in this goal, Tucker breaks the 'causes' into four categories - Natural, Artificial, Political, and Religious - and offers the potential traveller a series of 'Queries' to ask.²⁹ The majority of *Instructions* consists of Tucker's

²⁸ Tucker, p. 3. In delineating these classifications of travellers, Tucker admits he is dismissive of those who go abroad 'because they are tired of staying at Home, and can afford to make themselves as ridiculous every where as they please' (4).

questions and answers applied to England, effectively becoming a guide for travellers to, rather than from, England. Taken in parts, the text reads as a predecessor to the template followed by agricultural reporters and travel writers such as Arthur Young and by fictional tourists such as Tobias Smollett's Matthew Bramble. More significantly, this amalgamation of a range of topics from agriculture to religion to law within the framework of a stranger's survey will later form the basis of the genre commonly understood as the national tale.

By focusing on novels that include some element of the travelogue trope, my aim is to highlight how different authors treated the character and cultural authority of the stranger. How does this person influence the local or national community, and vice versa? To what degree are travelogues, histories and surveys referred to, and in what ways? How is the process of historical change reflected in stories of absence and return? And to what extent is the stranger in nationalist texts the surrogate for an English reader's introduction to a 'sister nation'? Carole Fabricant has discussed British domestic tourism, particularly estate house tours, in terms of 'the public consumption of private property,' and though hers is an interesting argument about eighteenth-century hegemony and the application of marketing and promotion to previously private locales, her case is weakened by its lack of attention to Ireland, Scotland and Wales.³⁰

²⁹ While his 'Political' and 'Religious' categories are unambiguous, Tucker's use of 'Natural' and 'Artificial' require further explanation; 'Natural' includes the composition of the soil, weather conditions, fertility and infant mortality rates, geographical position relative to neighbouring countries, and possibilities for state-sponsored improvements. Conversely, 'Artificial' encompasses 'the Exercise and Progress of the *peculiar Genius* and inventive Powers of the Individuals in a State, considered in their *private Capacity*' (21). These include manufacture, agriculture, and improvements typically overseen by private landowners.

³⁰ Carole Fabricant, 'The Literature of Domestic Tourism and the Public Consumption of Private Property', in *The New Eighteenth Century: Theory, Politics and English Literature*, eds. Laura Brown and Felicity Nussbaum (New York, 1987), pp. 254-75.

Fabricant presents a dichotomy between ‘foreign’ and ‘England’ and persistently locates ‘domestic tourism’ within England despite relying on travel narratives by Daniel Defoe, Richard Joseph Sullivan, and Daniel Carless Webb, all of whom incorporated journeys to Scotland and Wales in their tours. Rather than simply expanding her narrow scope to incorporate Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, my concern is to move beyond Fabricant’s focus on the public consumption of private lands and deal with the public consumption of national images.

Travel literature has a rich history and, as Percy G. Adams suggests, it is entangled with the development of the novel.³¹ In a chapter titled ‘The Truth-Lie Dichotomy,’ Adams discusses the various modes of deception in travel literature, from fictitious tours both fantastical and believable to the more mundane uses of plagiarism, second-hand accounts, exaggeration, and willful deceit about routes and personal experiences. For example, in a review of travelogues featuring the Highlands and Hebrides, Martin Rackwitz describes the apocryphal *John English’s Travels Through Scotland*, published circa 1760, as ‘an utterly ridiculous account of a fictitious tour of Scotland’.³² Plagiarizing earlier ‘views’ and ‘tours’ of Scotland, chiefly Thomas Kirk’s 1679 diatribe *A Modern Account of Scotland; Being an exact Description of the Country, And a True Character Of The People and their Manners*, the titular ‘John English’ primarily repeats prejudiced views of the Scottish people as filthy and the land itself as a place of danger for its southern neighbors, for ‘robbing an *Englishmen*

³¹ See Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983).

³² Martin Rackwitz, *Travels to Terra Incognita: The Scottish Highlands and Hebrides in early modern travellers’ accounts, c. 1600 to 1800* (Waxmann Verlag GMBH, 2007), p. 124.

counted no Crime in that Country'.³³ Though not all fabrications in travellers' accounts were made with such malicious intent, the veracity of the various tours made publicly available in the domestic tourism boom must be considered, and not only by those interested in them as sources for geographical or cultural histories.

3. 'IT MUST BE OBSERVED': THE LIMITS OF EMPIRICISM IN DEFOE AND SMOLLETT

Textual representations of travel have long been a popular way of 'seeing' the world, and traveller's tales have a history of being approached critically. Discerning readers recognized the subjectivity of first-person narratives, not to mention the fact that chronicles of exotic lands may be difficult to verify. Percy Adams likens the literary or fictitious qualities of travelogues to novels promoting a true-to-life authenticity, which brings to mind the subtitle to Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent, An Hibernian Tale taken from facts and from the manners of the Irish squires before the year 1782*. 'This tension between the personal and the impersonal, the romantic and the realistic, the fanciful and the useful,' he argues, 'is as important in the evolution of travel literature as it is in the evolution of the novel, and to study it in one form is to study it in the other'.³⁴ Thus, when analyzing the use of travel texts in novels, from

³³ John English's *Travels Through Scotland*, p. 59.

³⁴ Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*, p. 109.

referencing previously published works to relocating the tour in a fictional framework, one must take care to remember that the authors were more than likely aware of the somewhat dubious reputation of the genre they were manipulating. Perhaps the most significant literary example of this awareness is found in Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771) and his negotiation of the travelogue precedent set by Daniel Defoe's *Tour thro' the whole island of Great Britain* (1724-26).

Daniel Defoe's *Tour* was perhaps the most influential domestic tour of the eighteenth century, on its way to being considered a genre standard, but Defoe's claims to originality and objective realism are complicated by charges of inaccuracies and plagiarism. As J. H. Andrews observes, Defoe included several second-hand reports and borrowed from previously published sources, some of which he cited as in the case of William Camden's *Britannia* (1586), and some plagiarized, such as John Macky's *A Journey Through England* (1722).³⁵ Though his use of Macky's work can be seen as a direct response to the ill-planned and poorly-written *Journey*, Defoe's deliberate misrepresentation of how up-to-date his tours were is perhaps more contentious, in the context of his own views on the limitations of the survey mode:

No Description of *Great Britain* can be what we call a finished Account, as no Cloaths can be made to fit a growing Child; no Picture carry the Likeness of a living Face; the Size of one, and the Countenance of the other always altering with Time. (Vol. 1, p. 4)

While Defoe claims that his observations were contemporaneous with publication, Andrews shows that several legs of the tour were conducted at least

³⁵ J. H. Andrews, 'Defoe and the sources of his "Tour"', *The Geographical Journal*, 126: 3 (Sept., 1960), pp. 268-77.

a decade earlier, as demonstrated by inconsistencies in routes, inns, and the particularities of landscapes lost to the passing of time.

This does not diminish the text's importance to either historical geographers or students of British nationalism. Geoffrey M. Sill helpfully calls attention to Defoe's 'London-centered' imperial perspective when he quotes Defoe's opening assertion that 'It will be seen how the whole kingdom, as well as the people, as the land, and even the sea, in every part of it, are employed to furnish something...the best of everything, to supply the city of London with provisions.'³⁶ And Betty A. Schellenberg offers a persuasive reading of *Tour* as 'a struggle between nationalism's requirement of formal coherence and what the writer is only too able to imagine either as disorder defying any ordering vision, or as all-consuming, self-destructive form.'³⁷ Yet Defoe's eighteenth-century readers such as Tobias Smollett questioned not only the veracity of specific scenes in the *Tour* but also the method used to obtain and report his information. Daniel Defoe's text stands, then, as an intriguing precedent for the travelogues discussed within and in relation to the novels in the following chapters, not only in terms of the author's engagement with issues of community and national image but also in consideration of genre, authorship, and the purpose of national and regional novels.

Examining the influence of Defoe's work on subsequent eighteenth-century travel narratives, from regional agricultural surveys to fictional representations of tours, offers valuable insight into the literary lineage of the

³⁶ Geoffrey M. Sill, 'Defoe's *Tour*: Literary Art or Moral Imperative?', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 11: 1 (Autumn, 1977), pp. 79-83.

³⁷ Schellenberg, 'Imagining the Nation in Defoe's *A Tour Thro' the Whole Island of Great Britain*', *ELH*, 62: 2 (Summer, 1995), pp. 295-311.

national tales discussed in this study. Arguably, Defoe's *Tour* played a large role in the increased popularity of documenting internal tourism. But it is the reaction to Defoe's assumption of authority over his subject matter, his confidence that he had ably characterized the 'whole island of Great Britain', that has the most resonance for the analysis of the tour or travel plot in these novels, particularly when so many of them feature internal debate about both the travelogue and the novel as a genre. Whether they are explicitly reacting to published accounts or more subtly engaging with popular literary representations of their nations, the authors in this study are writing in a period when the availability of tours, surveys, and pictorial renderings almost demanded a certain level of realism when it came to the delineation of a locale's social and topographical characteristics. The expectations fostered by published tours are often a key element to the travel plot for the simple reason that the ability of any single author to capture accurately the essence of an entire nation and its people was questioned from the outset of the travelogue and the novelistic genres that followed.

A prime example of this reaction to the tour's efforts to define a nation is Tobias Smollett's *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771). Samuel Richardson's updated editions of Defoe's *Tour*, which included expanded Scottish sections incorporating the 1745 Jacobite rebellion and redressing Defoe's lack of attention to the Highlands, ensured its popularity and position as a genre standard well into Smollett's lifetime.³⁸ Tom Keymer convincingly suggests that *Humphry Clinker* should be read as 'a direct and sceptical riposte'

³⁸ Tom Keymer, 'Smollett's Scotlands: Culture, Politics and Nationhood in "Humphry Clinker" and Defoe's "Tour"', *History Workshop Journal*, No. 4 (Autumn, 1995), pp. 118-32.

to Defoe's *Tour*, specifically 'the naive empiricism that underpins its reports'.³⁹

Loosely overlaying the structure of Defoe's *Tour* on the picaresque and epistolary novel,

Smollett relinquishes the naive ambition of objectively documenting the world, and documents instead those more unstable and uncertain things, subjective perceptions of the world. Eschewing Defoe's confident overview, he divides his narrative among five competing narrators, whose conspicuous failure to agree allows single scenes to appear, adjacently, in bafflingly different ways. (124)

Smollett's fictional journey through Great Britain allows for plural nationalisms and challenges the overwhelming Anglocentricism found in Defoe's work. In effect, Smollett's use of multiple voices affirms Defoe's warning that 'No Description of *Great Britain* can be what we call a finished Account' in a way that Defoe's *Tour* itself does not, but as a contemporary reviewer observed:

The inimitable descriptions of life, which we have already observed to be so remarkable in our author's works, receives [sic], if possible, an additional force from the epistolary manner, in which this novel is written; which is farther enhanced by the contrast that arises from the general alternate insertion of the letters of the several correspondents.⁴⁰

Forcing the reader to approach conflicting accounts with discernment actually enhances the text's ability 'to correct many wrong notions' about unfamiliar locations (84).

Despite its wariness of 'naïve empiricism', *Humphry Clinker* still stands as a precursor to the national tale and regional novel - genres that set out to offer as complete an account of their setting as possible within a fictional framework.

³⁹ Keymer, p. 122, 124.

⁴⁰ 'Article I. The Expedition of Humphry Clinker', *The Critical Review, or, Annals of literature*, 32 (Aug., 1771), p. 82.

Thus writers such as Maria Edgeworth, Richard Graves, and Sydney Owenson adopt Smollett's allusion to travelogues as a means of acknowledging the limitations of existing textual representations of landscapes and populations.⁴¹ Beyond introducing a critical awareness of the tenuous divide between objective and subjective documentation to the regional novel, *Humphry Clinker* touches on several topics that would become common features in national tales. Smollett's description of the picturesque, his challenge to Defoe's concept of improvement, his approach to the mutability of identity, and his use of multiple perspectives and dialogue in discussing national images and stereotypes, commercialism, luxury, and the 1707 Union are echoed in the Irish, Scottish, and Welsh texts discussed in this study.

Cairns Craig argues that 'Smollett enacts the discovery of regional diversity as the counterpoint to political integration.'⁴² While most of his descriptions of regional and national characteristics are located in the Scottish portion of Bramble's tour, Smollett incorporates England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales in his assessment of eighteenth-century Britishness. Tackling the 'critical blind spot' when it comes to analyzing the implication of Matthew Bramble's Welsh identity, Sarah Prescott recently suggested that Smollett uses Wales as 'a symbol of self-sufficiency, political independency and the regeneration of

⁴¹ In *Humphry Clinker*, Smollett also acknowledges the fact that travelogues, including his own, have been flooding the market: 'Then there have been so many letters upon travels lately published – What between Smollett's, Sharp's, Derrick's, Thickness's, Baltimore's and Baretti's, together with Shandy's Sentimental Travels, the public seems to be cloyed with that kind of entertainment' (2-3).

⁴² 'Scotland and the regional novel' in *The Regional Novel in Britain and Ireland, 1800-1990*, p. 225.

national virtue these states imply'.⁴³ And though Ireland in this pre-Union novel is chiefly represented by the comical fortune-hunter Sir Ulic Mackilligut and the fraudulent political pamphleteer Lord Potato, Smollett alludes to a comparable standing of the Scottish Highlands, North Wales, and Ireland in relation to their positions within the British empire:

Though all the Scottish hinds would not bear to be compared with those of the rich counties of South Britain, they would stand very well in competition with the peasants of France, Italy, and Savoy – not to mention the mountaineers of Wales, and the red-shanks of Ireland.⁴⁴

Humphry Clinker's approach to nationalisms builds on the vision Smollett presented in 1762 as editor of the political periodical *The Briton*: 'Let us lay all prejudice, all party aside: let us unite as Britons, as fellow-subjects, and fellow-citizens.'⁴⁵ Though Smollett's portrayal of Britain's mountainous regions as 'more wild and savage' than southern England is an example of the stigma which improvers in those regions had to contend with, his arguments for a united British community with common political and economical goals deliberately exclude calls for the complete Anglicization of its Welsh, Scottish and Irish components, allowing for the possibility of multiple localized identities.⁴⁶ While

⁴³ Sarah Prescott, *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2008), p. 128.

⁴⁴ Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, ed. with introd. by Lewis M. Knapp, revised by Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 214. 'Red-shank' is a phrase with transnational implications; it was used as a derogatory term for natives of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, and originally referred to mercenary soldiers from the Highlands hired by Irish chieftains in the 16th century during the Tudor re-conquest of Ireland.

⁴⁵ *The Briton*, Number XVIII (25 Sept., 1762), p. 108.

⁴⁶ Smollett, *Clinker*, pp. 238-39. 'This country appears more and more wild and savage the further we advance; and the people are as different from the Lowland-Scots, in their

Matthew Bramble suggests that ‘the Scots would do well, for their own sakes, to adopt the English idioms and pronunciation’ if they wish to ‘push their fortunes in South-Britain’, he also praises the fact that ‘they are far from being servile imitators of our modes and fashionable vices’ (231, 222). This statement highlights two key concerns that would resurface in the national tale genre: the mutability of an individual’s sense of national identity, and the ways in which Irish, Scottish and Welsh authors negotiate Britishness and the influence of England when presenting their conception of national image.

The first issue centers on Smollett’s use of the possessive pronoun ‘our’ in this context. His characters are often self-contradictory when outlining the parameters of their Welshness in geographical and cultural terms. For example, Matthew Bramble highlights the similarities between the mountain communities of North Wales and the Scottish Highlands while his nephew Jery Melford focuses on the ‘strong presumption, that the Lowland Scots and the English are derived from the same stock’ (240). In Jery’s observations on the relationship between Gaelic and Saxon communities, he is less concerned with the regional differences within Wales, claiming ‘every thing I see, and hear, and feel, seems Welch’ in the Highlands. These differing approaches to national identities support Tom Keymer’s reading of *Humphry Clinker* as a reaction to Defoe’s too uncomplicated version of Britishness. Smollett’s characters’ interpretation of Scotland is filtered through their experiences of Wales, yet acknowledgement of their Welshness is sporadic throughout the text. That Bramble aligns himself with South-Britain is understandable, coming as he does from Monmouthshire. Yet he also frequently assumes the identity of ‘an Englishman’ and his use of

looks, garb, and language, as the mountaineers of Brecknock are from the inhabitants of Herefordshire.’

terms such as ‘our country’ most certainly refer to England, or the Anglo-Welsh region of the south, rather than a discrete Welsh community.⁴⁷

While Matthew Bramble and his family occasionally identifying themselves as English can read as Smollett either forgetting or Anglicizing their assigned Welsh origins, it is also possible that this is a self-reflexive choice of national affiliation that demonstrates the degree to which the Welsh have supposedly been assimilated into a wider British identity, with ‘English’ a synecdochical term for ‘British’. The recurrence of orphan or changeling plots and of strangers travelling *incognito* offers many opportunities for national and regional writers to examine the potential instability of national identity in an age when movement between communities is so common. The assumption of multiple national identities is particularly common when characters leave Great Britain for Ireland or the Continent. For example, in Christian Isobel Johnstone’s *Clan-Albin: A National Tale* (1816), Norman Macalbin is consistently called English while his Highland regiment is stationed in Spain and never corrects the misconception, despite the comparison of the Highlands to the mountainous regions of Spain pushing national markers to the forefront of the narrative. Johnstone’s work is invested in presenting the Highlands’ unique position within the wider British empire, which leads me back to Smollett’s second concern highlighted in that description of Scotland – the struggle to preserve (or manufacture) a unique national image in the face of growing English influence, while simultaneously trying to become an integrated part of Great Britain or the United Kingdom.

⁴⁷ Consider this observation of Matthew Bramble to his correspondent, Dr. Lewis: ‘The first impressions which an Englishman receives in this country, will not contribute to the removal of his prejudices; because he refers every thing he sees to a comparison with the same articles in his own country’ (231).

When Matthew Bramble and the Scottish Lieutenant Lismahago argue about the relative merits of the 1707 Union for England and Scotland, Lismahago contends that England has always reaped the majority of the economical, political, and martial advantages of the Union:

There is a continual circulation, like that of the blood in the human body, and England is the heart, to which all the streams which it distributes are refunded and returned: nay, in consequence of that luxury which our connection with England hath greatly encouraged, if not introduced, all the produce of our lands, and all the profits of our trade, are engrossed by the natives of South-Britain; for you will find that the exchange between the two kingdoms is always against Scotland; and that she retains neither gold nor silver sufficient for her own circulation. (279)

As Janet Sorenson observes, Lismahago is suggesting that ‘the core / periphery relationship deprives the periphery of its own extensive circulation’.⁴⁸ Yet while Sorenson reads Bramble’s subsequent critique of luxury as evidence of Smollett’s view that commerce itself is ‘horrific’, I suggest that Smollett was more interested in redressing that imbalance of power and seeing a moderated commercial economy thriving throughout Great Britain and Ireland. For Smollett, the ‘vices’ of England certainly stemmed from the morally corruptive ‘tide of luxury’ that emptied out villages and threatened domestic and economic stability (36). While this aversion to luxury leads Smollett to present Wales as a romantic idyll rather than a burgeoning industrial nation, Bramble is also able to thrive there as a self-sufficient freeholder. Bramble’s interest in touring the manufactures of Glasgow and in seeing the adoption of enclosure and modern agricultural practices shows that Bramble reflects Smollett’s desire to see Scotland, Ireland and Wales enjoy the same amount of commercial success and

⁴⁸ Janet Sorenson, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 118.

‘moderate cultivation’ as England without compromising their ‘national character’ with luxury (119).

Treating the agricultural and commercial improvement of Ireland, Scotland and Wales as a priority for the strengthening of Britain is a crucial concern in *Humphry Clinker* and Smollett’s political magazine, *The Briton*. Matthew Bramble observes, ‘our people have a strange itch to colonize America, when the uncultivated parts of our own island might be settled to greater advantage’ (255). Sarah Prescott argues that ‘whereas Matt makes an “anti-colonial” case here for national self-sufficiency, the Scottish Lismahago makes the “internal” colonial connection explicit by asking in whose interests such developments will be made’ (131). I suggest that Smollett views the treatment of Ireland, Scotland and Wales as internal colonies as a hindrance to Great Britain’s capability of successfully overseeing colonies overseas, calling instead for a more balanced relationship between England and its immediate peripheries in the name of *British* national unity. Countering the use of the Romans as a template for the expansion of the British Empire, Smollett asks:

But how is Great Britain qualified to make or retain extensive conquests? She has no such reservoir of men - She has but an handful of people, daily diminishing; and instead of strengthening our numbers by naturalizing foreigners, we seem rather inclined to weaken our own hands still further, by affecting a disunion with a whole nation of our fellow-subjects, whom, some among us, have spared no sarcasms, no abuse, no falsehood, to provoke and exasperate.⁴⁹

It is not only the cultivation of Ireland, Scotland and Wales Smollett calls for; he contends that both economic and cultural inclusiveness will strengthen the whole amalgamated nation, while *Humphry Clinker* demonstrates his belief that the

⁴⁹ *The Briton*, p. 107.

British national image could in time encompass both distinct and hybrid nationalisms.

Despite Smollett's mistrust of the 'naïve empiricism' in Daniel Defoe's *Tour* and its ability to delineate the complexities of its subject, travel itself is still advocated as the best way to form a more reliable, well-rounded view of one's surroundings. Specifically, Smollett promotes the sort of 'improving' travel described by Josiah Tucker. While Matthew Bramble expresses an appreciation of the romantic views of Scotland, aligning himself with early Picturesque tourists, his primary interest lie in surveying the economic infrastructure of the places he tours, visiting 'all the manufactures' upon his arrival in Glasgow (237). To that end, travel in *Humphry Clinker* is presented as a patriotic duty: 'I have never travelled farther that way than Scarborough; and, I think, it is a reproach upon me, as a British freeholder, to have lived so long without making an excursion to the other side of the Tweed' (66).⁵⁰ Smollett's specific juxtaposition of Britishness, land ownership, and civic duty highlights a growing ideological relationship between improvement discourse and late eighteenth-century conceptions of patriotism.

4. 'SUGGESTIONS OF PATRIOTISM AND OF PUBLIC VIRTUE': ANALYZING THE MODE OF SURVEY

⁵⁰ See also pp. 213-14. Reflecting on Tabitha Bramble's confusion about the geography of Scotland, or even where it is in relation to England, Jerry Melford conceded: 'If the truth must be told, the South Britons in general are woefully ignorant in this particular. What, between want of curiosity, and traditional sarcasms, the effect of ancient animosity, the people at the other end of the island know as little of Scotland as of Japan.'

K. D. M. Snell links the development of the regional novel with the ‘interest in the more realistic portrayal of regional topographical, economic and cultural traits’ (8). This interest, exemplified by the boom in internal tourism and the publication of county and region-specific agricultural surveys such as the *General Views*, fostered an assessment of ‘regional specialisations’ that fed into the appearance of the regional novel (14). The eighteenth century saw the rise of the agricultural society. The *Society of Improvers in the Knowledge of Agriculture in Scotland* was established in Edinburgh in June 1723, the first of its kind in Europe.⁵¹ The *Dublin Society* was given its charter and grant during Lord Chesterfield’s term as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in 1749.⁵² The most prominent of these societies was the *Board or Society for the Encouragement of Agriculture and Internal Improvement*, hereafter referred to as the Board of Agriculture. Following a request in Parliament by Sir John Sinclair, the Board was granted a royal charter in August 1793, dissolving in June 1822. These societies, as well as several local organizations, were dedicated to the promotion of modern agriculture and husbandry, particularly the Board of Agriculture, which regularly published *General Views* by agricultural writers and surveyors in several counties throughout Britain. Although Richard Brown suggests that ‘the early societies probably had very little direct impact on improvement’ and that even the Board of Agriculture ‘proved ineffective as a means of accelerating agricultural progress,’ John Barrell is correct in insisting that ‘the Board did

⁵¹ James E. Handley, *The Agricultural Revolution in Scotland* (Glasgow: Burns, 1963), p. 74.

⁵² Anne Plumtre mistakenly referred to the Dublin Society as ‘the first association ever formed, in the British dominions at least,’ for the purposes of promoting and improving agricultural modernization. See *Narrative of a Residence in Ireland during the Summer of 1814, and that of 1815* (London, 1817), p. 24.

come to represent the various opinions and interests of those who, though properly progressive in their attitudes to agriculture, were not represented among its members.’⁵³ That is, through its system of making each county’s *General View* available to the public for annotations before publishing them in the collected *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*, professional farmers, those with the most practical experience of the land, were able to express themselves on a subject of national importance.

A cursory review of the publications of the Board of Agriculture, from the *General Views* reporting on individual counties to the collected seven volumes of *Communications to the Board of Agriculture*, published from 1797 to 1813, will turn up several references to the Board as a patriotic project. Concluding his *General View* of Denbighshire, George Kay expresses his hope that ‘the improvements suggested by the Board of Agriculture may extend to the most remote parts of the island. They are the suggestions of patriotism and of public virtue, and tend to exalt the national character and credit’.⁵⁴ Although the phrase ‘Internal Improvement’ in the Board’s official name suggests an insular concern, land improvement was also seen as an issue vital to Great Britain’s and Ireland’s national reputation abroad. Finding the state of agriculture in Great Britain in comparison to that of the United Provinces ‘disgraceful and humiliating to Britons,’ Robert Beatson of Kilrie posits that the kingdom’s leaders had ‘been so misled and blinded with the ideas of foreign conquests and

⁵³ Richard Brown, *Society and Economy in Modern Britain 1700-1850* (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 59; John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), p. 66.

⁵⁴ George Kay, *A General View of the Agriculture and Rural Economy of Denbighshire* (Edinburgh, 1794), p. 37. In future references, titles of individual reports will be shortened to *General View* followed by the county name, unless otherwise noted.

extensive colonies, that they have never yet seriously turned their thoughts towards improving the mother country, or to colonizing at home'.⁵⁵ Beatson not only considers the creation of the Board auspicious for a kingdom-wide interest in turning attention towards more local milieus, but echoes Smollett in the belief that agricultural improvement will become a source of national pride:

It is moreover to be hoped, that by their truly patriotic exertions, the time is now at hand when every possible attention and encouragement will be given towards the improvement of those extensive tracts, which, in their present state, are a reproach on the character of so opulent and so powerful a nation.⁵⁶

Whereas the recourse of pointing to local or domestic concerns has long been used in rhetoric responding to calls for extending philanthropy or military aide to foreign shores, the call here for an accurate survey of the state of British agriculture in support of improving the land and livelihoods of its citizens was seen as a proactive rather than prohibitive gesture.

Agricultural writers frequently couched their work in patriotic terms, viewing the expansion of knowledge and the promotion of improvement as an undertaking of national importance. Indeed, given the repeated reference to the Board's mission as a patriotic one, I would argue that the agricultural and industrial revolutions from the 1780s were almost as vital a component in the creation of a British national identity as Linda Colley's unifiers: Protestantism, imperialism, and war. The resultant demographic shifts, increased influence of the middle class, and expansion of urban centers of industry contributed to the reconstitution of local communities, and travel within Britain lead to a more

⁵⁵ See *Communications to the Board of Agriculture; on subjects relative to the Husbandry and Internal Improvement of the Country*, Vol. 1 (1797), p. 127.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

inclusive concept of national identity. The growth of Britain's agricultural and industrial economies also had implications for its image as a wealthy and socially influential imperial power. As Josiah Tucker observes in *Instructions for Travellers*, the understanding and judgment of other nations and cultures is dependent on the comparison to one's own, which in turn is dependent on the sort of comprehensive knowledge that the Board of Agriculture aimed at providing.⁵⁷ As this study will demonstrate, agricultural texts play as vital a role as less specialist travelogues in contextualizing national and regional novels, particularly regarding their approach to improvement and the composition of national images. The framework suggested by the agricultural survey for representing a landscape and community in words influenced writers such as Maria Edgeworth, Richard Graves, and Alexander Sutherland. An examination of the differing approaches to place, improvement, and the mode of survey within various non-fictional improvement genres leads to a fuller understanding of the novels discussed in this study and their place within the discourse of improvement.

Throughout this study, I will make references to the *General Views* published by the Board of Agriculture, and though these reports offer an interesting look at the state of husbandry and estate management in the settings of various novels, one cannot ignore that they were also read skeptically.

⁵⁷ See Tucker, p. 5. 'Now Travelling into foreign Countries for the Sake of Improvement, necessarily pre-supposes, that you are no Stranger to the Religion, Constitution, and Nature of your own. For if you go abroad, before you have laid in a competent Stock of this Sort of Knowledge, how can you make useful Comparisons between your own and other Countries? [...] Therefore let a young Gentleman begin with the Tour of his own Country, under the Guidance of a skillful Instructor: Let him examine the general Properties of the Soil, the Climate, and the like: And attend to the Characteristics of the Inhabitants, and the Nature of the several Establishments, Religious, Civil, Military, and Commercial; and then, and not till then, is he completely qualified to make Observations on foreign Countries.'

Perhaps the most tenacious of agricultural critics was William Marshall.⁵⁸ It was Marshall who first suggested the formation of a board of agriculture dedicated to making a detailed survey of the state of agriculture throughout Britain, only to be denied due credit by John Sinclair when the Board was officially established in 1793. Marshall discusses his disappointment over this and Sinclair's decision to appoint his rival Arthur Young as the Board's official Secretary in *The Review and Abstract of the County Reports to the Board of Agriculture*, a multi-volume series first published in 1808 reviewing the various *General Reviews* published by the Board.⁵⁹ It is this *Review* that I would like to briefly examine, particularly the commentary on Arthur Young's own submissions to the board. While Marshall's name does not appear in any of the novels I discuss in this project, Arthur Young is a crucial figure, especially in regards to Edgeworth's and Morgan's use of the Irish tour. Marshall's critique of his methods of reporting raises interesting questions about textual representations of land and the qualifications necessary for a writer hoping to contribute to an undertaking seen as necessary to national progress.

One of Marshall's greatest concerns about the *General Views* was the lack of a rigorous standard for the methods used by individual surveyors in compiling data for their reports, particularly the amount of time these writers invested in gathering their information.⁶⁰ In his early career as a surveyor, Marshall had noted 'the inutility of a *transient view*', and the inefficiency of

⁵⁸ William Marshall (1745 – 1818) was a Yorkshire-born agricultural writer who had a prolonged professional rivalry with Arthur Young. See G. E. Mingay, 'Marshall, William (*bap.* 1745, *d.* 1818)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004). Web. 24 Nov. 2010.

⁵⁹ Reprinted in 1968, (New York: August M Kelley Publishers).

⁶⁰ Marshall, *Volume 1: Northern Department*, p. xxvi.

accounts based on limited experience of a given locale.⁶¹ Thus, Marshall proposed living in a district for an entire year in order to ‘minutely observe and register the living practice which surrounds him: not the practice of theoretical, but of professional farmers,’ a suggestion he made to Sinclair in their early consultations before the formation of the Board.⁶² Marshall argued that an agricultural reporter must distinguish himself from the ‘mere tourist’ by demonstrating an intimate knowledge of the land, along with standard qualifications such as education in math and modern husbandry:

A mere tourist, it is true, may catch certain facts which pass under his eye in travelling: and, in this way, he may gather some general ideas of the nature of a country, and a few particulars of practice that may happen to be going on, *at the time of his tour*; and such facts may be entitled to public notice, *as far as they go*. But let him not claim, on such slight pretensions, a right to make a *general Report* of the nature and practice of the country or district thus passed over: even though he may be fully possessed of the qualifications set forth foregoing. For what a man, even of such acquirements, can collect from *enquiries*, is beneath public attention. An ENQUIRING TOURIST, without a large portion of practical knowledge to assist him in directing his judgement, must be liable to be led into error at every step, and to be imposed upon by every one with whom he may happen to converse.⁶³

William Marshall’s review of Arthur Young’s *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Lincoln* (1799) in the *Review*’s third volume is perhaps the most scathing of all of his attacks on the Secretary’s methods as an agricultural writer. Conceding that the public must be all too aware of Young’s ‘qualifications’ based on his lengthy list of publications – namely tours -, Marshall sets about criticizing his ‘execution,’ and finds it lacking. It is perhaps unsurprising, then,

⁶¹ Ibid., p. xviii.

⁶² Ibid., p. xx.

⁶³ Ibid., pp. xxxii-iii.

that Marshall's harshest jab at Young is when he argues that Young's 'mode of survey ... is almost purely that of an enquiring tourist,' a severe condemnation which he supports by adding a footnote referring to the lengthy passage I have just reproduced from Volume One.⁶⁴ The transformation from 'enquiring tourist' into someone with a vested interest in and more extensive experience of a locality is central to many of the texts in this study, including Richard Graves's *Eugenius, or, Anecdotes of the Golden Vale* (1785) and Maria Edgeworth's *Ennui* (1809). In both cases, the travellers initially rely on information gleaned from published tours, histories, and conversation with local residents, but through practical experience with estate management over a lengthy stay in the new community these 'enquiring tourists' become improving landlords and are presented as trusted commentators on national and regional characteristics.

Arthur Young's experience as an agricultural writer and land agent gave him the tools to understand certain aspects of the places he toured more keenly than career tourists such as John Carr and the like, which likely accounts for his appeal to novelists concerned with presenting their portrayals of national image as accurate or true-to-life. As John Barrell notes, 'according to Young, an observant tourist is able to come to a valuable understanding of the places he visits, and indeed (the implication is) a better one than could be derived from books'.⁶⁵ Marshall makes it clear that he is not condemning any situation wherein a tourist takes interest in agricultural improvement:

In every situation, let a *novice*, or a *stranger* in it take a ride round his neighbourhood, and learn what course is taken by men who thrive on a soil, in a situation, and under circumstances,

⁶⁴ Marshall, *Volume Three: Eastern Department*, p. 65.

⁶⁵ Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape*, p. 93.

similar to his own; and let him pursue that, until, by experience on his own lands, he finds that he can *improve it*.⁶⁶

More than attacking tourism and tourist accounts as a genre, Marshall's antipathy towards Young's method speaks to his concern about the trend in travel literature of presenting pseudo-scientific observations about agriculture and improvement without having enough 'practical' and detailed knowledge of the region to be considered reliable. Novelists such as Edgeworth and Morgan replicate the structure of travelogues, refer to them in order to bolster a sense of literary realism, and simultaneously advocate personal experience over the reliance on published tours. It is therefore useful to analyze how the allied genres of the national tale, the agricultural survey, and the travelogue negotiated the presentation of observation as *fact*. While Tobias Smollett's critique of Defoe's brand of empiricism paved the way for the multiple voices and nationalisms later found in the national tale, William Marshall's critique of Young has particular resonance for the genre when considering his concern over the presentation of second-hand information as fact.

One of Marshall's oft-repeated complaints about Young's methods is his reliance on interviews or '*conversation*,' opening what should be a scientific survey up to the interference of men neither qualified nor disinterested. 'Every man of experience and observation,' he argues, 'must be aware of how little is to be *depended upon*, in conversation: - even when the talkers have neither interest nor prejudice to induce them to deceive'.⁶⁷ Marshall, of course, preferred that an agricultural surveyor live and labor in an area for an entire year before

⁶⁶ Marshall, *Volume Three*, p. 138.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

submitting a comprehensive report on the state of agriculture, depending on his own experience more than that of others', no matter how efficient they may be in their own professions. In Marshall's view, Young relied too much on 'undigested' conversation, claiming that 'it were as well to *dissertate* from the imagination, alone, as from confused heaps of unauthenticated "Facts," collected in conversation'.⁶⁸ As Marshall frequently argues, conversation is tantamount to hearsay until corroborated, and Young both failed to observe a critical distance in his reporting and withheld his source material, thus making it difficult for readers to judge the qualifications of men being quoted for their supposedly expert opinion.⁶⁹

This skepticism towards conversation, along with acknowledgement of a disconnect between a tourist's expectations of an unknown land and the realities of it, are major components of the moments of transcultural encounter described in many of the texts I will be discussing. In relation to the texts discussed in this study, Young was ultimately more of an influence than Marshall, with his tours offering a broader focus than Marshall's chiefly agricultural concern. Nevertheless, the fact that Britain's two most prominent agricultural writers working within a supposedly objective field were so at odds regarding the proper way to record and publicly present an accurate portrayal of a place highlights the contested nature of textual representations of land, which is amplified in an imaginative genre such as the novel.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 146.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 67.

5. THE SPIRIT OF IMPROVEMENT

In his study on the relationship between the improvement and romantic discourses in the Scottish Highlands, Peter Womack broadly defines improvement as ‘the cultivation of an asset in order to profit from it’.⁷⁰ Despite the fact that this study examines several strains of improvement, from specific and localized examples of land development to the introduction of a commercial industry within a nation, this definition holds true. Improvement, in essence, represents the harnessing of resources. Although the management of a private estate might call for a different approach to improvement than the establishment of a wool or iron mill, a similar language can be seen throughout this study when it comes to the promotion of progress and economic modernization. Aspects of the estate model, such as the quasi-feudal relationship between landowner and tenant, were often adapted in improvement tracts aimed at more commercial or national endeavours. Even moral improvement, particularly education sponsored by local landowners and businessmen, can be interpreted as ‘cultivation of an asset’ in several of the texts discussed in this study. From ‘practical education’ in sewing or labour to a more general focus on the moral benefits of industry, it was likely hoped that lessons taught in such schools would instill a sense of loyalty to the patron as well as prepare a future workforce. Thus, despite the differing needs and potentials in terms of specific programs of improvement in multiple locations and across a fifty-year time span, this comparative study shows the similar ways improvement was packaged and

⁷⁰ Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1989), p. 3.

how it was indelibly linked to the promotion of national image in Irish, Scottish, and Welsh national fictions and travelogues of this period.

The late eighteenth century saw a boom in published tours of Wales, from William Gilpin's work on the Picturesque to Arthur Young's agricultural surveys and *Northern Tour*, the rise of bardic nationalism in the London-Welsh circles and the flood of improvement literature. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that many novels set in Wales during that period feature characters who are drawn in by the highly-publicized romance of 'wild' Wales but stay to buy, marry into, or reclaim *improvable* Welsh estates. Critics such as Sarah Prescott have pointed out the scarcity of Welsh cultural nationalism in eighteenth-century fiction, but in light of the well-established link between the travel genre and the creation of the Irish national tale in the early nineteenth century, it is productive to read fictionalized journeys to Wales in relation to paradigms set by the nationalist literatures of other Celtic peripheries. A focus on agricultural improvements and references to the potential for industrialization in such novels set in Wales could be read as what Mary Louise Pratt calls 'territorial surveillance' by English prospectors and speculators, keen on expanding their estates by buying up (or marrying into) floundering Welsh manor houses or towns.⁷¹ Yet in these novels, with personal relationships and domestic concerns so dominant in their plotlines, there is a sense of reciprocity, critical in a 'human-centered, interactive narrative,' that involves a mutual appropriation, where the observer/tourist is absorbed into the scene.⁷²

⁷¹ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 39.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

In Chapter 1, I build on Prescott's useful work on eighteenth-century Welsh fiction and consider the figure of the transplanted English, or Anglo-Welsh, landowner in Wales. Focusing on Richard Graves's *Eugenius, or, Anecdotes of the Golden Vale* (1785) and Edward 'Celtic' Davies's *Elisa Powell, or, Trials of Sensibility* (1795), I analyze these resident tourists' introduction to the land and people as compared to their expectations of Wales formed from earlier representations found in travelogues. After a brief summary of the popular tours of Wales available at that time, measured against the publications of the Board of Agriculture and modern historical studies, I will examine how these landowners introduce their English ideas of estate management and improvements, practical and moral, redefining what Jane Zaring calls 'the romantic face of Wales' into a successful business and aesthetic venture for their Welsh tenants and their English audiences.⁷³ Finally, I will conclude the chapter with an analysis of female-centric Wales-related sentimental novels, in particular Anna Maria Bennett's *Anna, or Memoirs of a Welch Heiress* (1785) and the anonymously published *The Fair Cambrians* (1790), and explore how the treatment of Welsh heiresses and their roles in estate inheritance and 'romantic benevolence' translates into concerns over national loss in the face of Anglicization and British imperial expansion.

While the Welsh novels discussed in my first chapter engaged with the primitivism and bardic tradition at the center of the Celtic revival, the national tales discussed in Chapter 2 grapple with the popularity of Irish antiquity and its relationship with both progress and Irishness. Maria Edgeworth, working in

⁷³ Jane Zaring, 'The Romantic Face of Wales', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 67: 3 (Sept., 1977).

close connection with her landlord father Richard Lovell Edgeworth, was, not surprisingly, the most interested in promoting agricultural improvement and enlightened estate management of her contemporary Anglo-Irish novelists, though writers such as Lady Morgan and Charles Maturin touched on those subjects as well. It is little wonder that the national tale's discourses on identity and progress were so tied to the land and its improvement, when the image of the 'wild Irish' fostered by the earliest chroniclers of that land was both contested and appropriated in a genre so reliant on authenticity, public image, and Celtic exoticism. Leerssen argues that 'the idea of Irish nationality is, in its origin and in its expression, governed no less by literary than by political parameters.'⁷⁴ Throughout the texts surveyed here is a seemingly symbiotic relationship between land and civility, or between the reading of the land and the perception of civility. Following an holistic review of Edgeworth's treatment in her Irish works of travel texts and histories, I aim to analyze the relationship between her chosen exemplars for Enlightenment survey and tourist narratives and her ideas about national improvement.

Although my readings of selected Welsh and Irish novels primarily focus on the introduction of improvement, in Chapter 3 I will look at the responses in early nineteenth-century Scottish fiction to the process of agricultural and industrial modernization, starting in earnest in 1782 with the clearances in Balnagowan and Glenquoich. The popularity of Scotland as a tourist destination and romantic setting occasioned a backlash of satires. For example, Robert Couper's *The Tourifications of Malachi Meldrum, Esq. of Meldrum Hall* (1803)

⁷⁴ Joep Leerssen's *Mere Irish & Fior-Ghael: Studies in the idea of Irish nationality, its development and literary expression prior to the nineteenth century* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 1986), p. 452.

and Sarah Green's *Scotch Novel Reading; or, Modern Quackery* (1824) satirize, respectively, the proliferation of Scottish travelogues and romances published by the nineteenth century. Apart from satires, gothic tales and romances, there are comparatively few fictional representations of the English stranger's introduction to Scotland in relation to the tourist trope found in turn-of-the-century Irish and Welsh novels. There are exceptions, of course, the most influential of which is Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814), but its historical setting in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745 presents a Scotland removed from most of the socially destructive effects of improvement, particularly the wide-scale clearances of the Highlands in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

Considering the nature of the Clearances, the emphasis on travel and tourism in Chapter 3 will include outward movement as Highlanders are displaced from their hereditary lands as well as the cross-regional and transnational exchanges featured in the fictional stranger's introduction to Scotland. Saree Makdisi offers a compelling reading of Scott's *Waverley* against the Highland Clearances in 'Waverley and the cultural politics of dispossession,' arguing that it 'simultaneously acknowledges the historical transformation of the Highlands, and negates this transformation by keeping the Highland space intact as the space of the past' (98).⁷⁵ A comprehensive study of improvement in the Scottish novel would include analysis of historical novels and both Highland and Lowland settings. My intention here, however, is to examine texts that engage with historical loss, displacement, and Scotland's position within British imperial expansion in a setting relatively contemporary with publication and major events in the Scottish agricultural revolution. First, I

⁷⁵ Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 98.

will look at the international and local implications of the Highland Clearances, analyzing Christian Johnstone's *Clan-Albin: A National Tale* (1815), with its themes of emigration and improvement in Scottish-Irish settings. Following an examination of the appropriation of Highland culture and landscape in the creation of a public Scottish national image, Chapter 3 concludes with an exploration of Alexander Sutherland's 'The Bride of Ulladale' (1827), which effectively elides that national image in its discussion of improvement, signaling the waning influence of the national tale template.

By recontextualizing instances of generic and national hybridity, it is possible to see the nuances and dialogical qualities of specific Irish, Scottish and Welsh texts and to understand the importance improvement played in the creation of national image. In order to address as broad a spectrum as possible without losing focus on the intricacies of individual texts, the following chapters have a roughly chronological structure. Although this organization was initially suggested by significant historical and cultural events or processes in Wales, Ireland and Scotland, it also broadly follows the generic development of national and regional literatures. While my primary concern is the trajectory of improvement in fiction, by focusing in detail on the wider social and genre issues of selected novels and recovering texts not often discussed in critical studies of national literature, I seek to redress the critical inattention to texts and themes seen as peripheral to current genre focuses and literary histories.

CHAPTER ONE

RESIDENT TOURISTS: THE TRANSPLANTED ENGLISH LANDOWNER IN WALES

We are most delighted, when some grand scene,
tho perhaps of incorrect composition, rising before
the eye, strikes us beyond the power of thought...
every mental operation is suspended... We rather
feel, than *survey* it. – *William Gilpin*¹

In view of the increase in published accounts of Wales in the late eighteenth century, from descriptions of the picturesque landscape to statistical surveys of agriculture and burgeoning industrial endeavors, it is not surprising that many of the Anglo-Welsh and Wales-related novels of the period feature English tourists drawn in by the romance of ‘wild’ Wales.² Describing the popularity of Wales-set sentimental novels published by the Minerva Press in the 1780s and 1790s, Jane Aaron suggests that Wales was treated as ‘a fashionably “sublime” backdrop, against which the “uncorrupted” native inhabitants of the wild “fringes” could feature in travellers’ tales as embodiments of that still very influential Rousseauesque ideal of the “Noble

¹ William Gilpin, *Three Essays: - on Picturesque Beauty; - on Picturesque Travel; and, on Sketching Landscape: to which is added a Poem, on Landscape Painting* (1792), pp. 49-50.

² Here, Anglo-Welsh refers both to novels written by English-born authors of Welsh descent, such as Richard Graves, and Welsh authors writing in English, such as Edward Davies.

Savage”.³ Yet while a certain element of Celtic primitivism was common in fictional representations of Wales in this period, so too was the inclusion of improvement narratives that complicated the image of a population and landscape untouched by modernity. Several novels centered on English tourists in Wales who were initially attracted by the ‘untamed’ landscape conclude with them staying to buy and *improve* Welsh estates. These first-contact narratives with Welsh settings corresponded with the raised profile of Wales as a suitable tourist destination, and the travel trope is an ideal form for examining projected and perceived national images and the issue of improvement.

Aaron has argued that the ‘brief period of Celtic frenzy’ in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, including the *Ossian* craze, the popularity of Maria Edgeworth and Sir Walter Scott, and the early Romantic poets’ interest in Snowdonia, was part of the ‘wooing process’ involved in the incorporation of the Irish, Scottish, and Welsh into a conglomerate British identity.⁴ In her reading of nineteenth-century women’s writing, Aaron intimates that the influx of Wales-related romances and sentimental novels in the 1780s and 1790s was linked to a greater historical process: ‘the provincialization of a small stateless nation by a neighbouring nation-state’ (32). Novelists attempted to ‘reassure the Welsh gentry’ of their place in Britain by balancing a ‘general approval of the process of anglicization’ with praise of Welsh landscape, music, poetry, and rustic simplicity (35). As intriguing as that

³ Jane Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women’s Writing in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 9.

⁴ Jane Aaron, ‘A national seduction: Wales in nineteenth-century women’s writing’, *New Welsh Review*, 27 (1994), pp. 31-38.

argument is, it does not detail the shift in landscape aesthetics that made Wales so appealing in this period, or the influence that primitivism, bardism, the London-Welsh circles, and the travelogue genre had on the popular perception of Wales as the birthplace of the Ancient Briton. Furthermore, several of the novels I examine in this study present a more ambiguous view of both Anglicization and the preservation of national pride in the face of progress.⁵ In my analysis of Richard Graves's *Eugenius, or, Anecdotes of the Golden Vale* (1785) and Edward 'Celtic' Davies's *Elisa Powell, or, Trials of Sensibility* (1795), I shall focus on how the fictional introductions to Wales in these novels measure against expectations fostered by the budding tourist industry. Contextualizing these proto-national tales with contemporaneous Welsh tours, publications of the Board of Agriculture, Celtic primitivism and modern historical studies, I will examine how these resident tourists introduce their English ideas of improvement, transforming what Jane Zaring calls 'the romantic face of Wales' into a successful business and aesthetic venture for their Welsh tenants and their English audiences. The chapter concludes with a reading of Anna Maria Bennett's *Anna, or Memoirs of a Welch Heiress* (1785) and the anonymously published *The Fair Cambrians* (1790), in the context of the Welsh heiress's role in national inheritance, Anglicization, and benevolent improvement.

In 'Romantics, explorers and Picturesque travelers,' John Whale suggests that William Gilpin's treatment of what he liked to imagine as the 'undiscovered' and wild landscapes of Britain 'not only raises the spectre of

⁵ See Linda Colley, *Britons* and Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan Gentry 1640 – 1790* (Cambridge, 1983) for discussions on the distinction between becoming Anglicized and incorporating a new British identity.

looking at certain parts of Britain with the imperial eyes of a leisured aesthetic (“discovering” North Wales, for example), but also gestures towards a rewriting of the landscape, a “making it strange” (177).⁶ Whale’s use of a term made famous in critical studies by Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* brings to mind Pratt’s model of the ‘anti-conquest’ and its hero, the ‘seeing-man’, ‘an admittedly unfriendly label for the European male subject of European landscape discourse – he whose imperial eyes passively look out and possess.’⁷ Pratt observes the trend in both travel writing and European literature for ‘the imperial metropolis’ and the periphery to engage in symbiotic acts of determination (6). Although Wales, as a principality with political representation in Parliament, was not a British colony, a great number of its businesses and estates were under English management in the late eighteenth century, as the beginnings of the industrial revolution reached even the ‘undiscovered’ parts of Wales, and, as Gwyn Williams argues, ‘this core of British imperial economy was itself colonial.’⁸ Wales was certainly at a disadvantage in popular English publications prior to the shift in aesthetic values towards the picturesque. When it was mentioned at all, Wales was often likened to a backwater or wilderness or, in William Richards’s 1682 satire *Wallography*,

⁶ John Whale, ‘Romantics, explorers and Picturesque travelers’ in *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, landscape and aesthetics since 1770*, ed. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 175-95.

⁷ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992; reprinted 1998), p. 7.

⁸ Gwyn A. Williams, *When Was Wales?* (London: Penguin Books, 1991; first published 1985), p. 145. For a more detailed history of industrialization in Wales, see A. H. Dodd’s *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1971), Gareth Elwyn Jones’s *Modern Wales: A Concise History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), and Trevor Herbert’s and Gareth Elwyn Jones’s *The Remaking of Wales in the Eighteenth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996).

‘the very *testicles* of the Nation’. According to some ‘seeing-men,’ Wales was inferior to England on an economic, political, and cultural scale, and little more than a resource to be cultivated and exploited. In his *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (1732), Daniel Defoe, as Shannon Rogers observes, thought ‘the chief measure of Welsh worth is derived from its commercial usefulness or similarity to England.’⁹ Of course, Defoe’s tour was made fifty years before the publication of Gilpin’s *Observations of the River Wye* and the influence of the Picturesque school on ideas of landscape. Soon, Wales became a stronghold in the romantic imagination, with publications such as *Gentleman’s Magazine* feeding prospective travellers tales of untamed landscape, and just in time for the increase in domestic tourism as roads within Britain improved and unrest in the Continent made Grand Tours less appealing.¹⁰

As the popular interest in published tours of mountainous regions such as Wales increased in the latter half of the eighteenth century with the creation of the Picturesque landscape aesthetic, leisure tourists frequently travelled to Wales with the aim of eventually publishing their tours. Those who could afford it came equipped with their own professional artist, on hand to help them embellish their accounts of wild Wales.¹¹ While Jane Aaron’s suggestion that ‘such travellers necessarily participated in the Anglicization of the Celtic

⁹ Shannon L. Rogers, ‘From Wasteland to Wonderland: Wales in the Imagination of the English Traveler, 1720 – 1895’, *North American Journal of Welsh Studies*, Vol. 2, 2 (Summer 2002), p. 18.

¹⁰ Jane Zaring, ‘The Romantic Face of Wales’, p. 403.

¹¹ Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760 – 1800* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1989), p. 114. Henry Wyndham with Samuel Hieronymous Grimm, Henry Wigstead with Thomas Rowlandson, and Robert Fulke Greville with John ‘Warwick’ Smith and Julius Caesar Ibbetson are some of the writer/artist teams that published their portraits of North Wales in the last few decades of the eighteenth century.

countries' does not fully take into account the tourist's desire to preserve the Celtic otherness of these locations, the public image of Welsh landscape was reliant on a predominantly English aesthetic movement.¹² Writers of Picturesque travelogues typically made editorial decisions that emphasized the most visually dramatic landscapes, often at the expense of accuracy. Just as painters of the Picturesque school used their Claude glasses to exaggerate or obscure, William Gilpin used his 'imperial eyes' to choose wilderness and Romantic solitude over market towns, quarries, and other signs of the commercial economy in Wales. The desire to depict Wales as an undiscovered country, to create in it the Picturesque ideal and to be explorers or pioneers of sorts, led to a selective blindness, which Jane Zaring convincingly exposes in "The Romantic Face of Wales":

Seekers of picturesque landscapes felt that "as cultivation is brought too near the eye, it becomes rather offensive." They were therefore studiously blind to the new crops and enclosures with which the agriculturists were changing the face of Wales by the end of the eighteenth century, and could comfortably view the area as a mythical "Wild Wales."¹³

The latter half of the eighteenth century saw not only an increase of interest in Wales as a tourist destination, but also as a testing ground for the rhetoric of progress, especially in the areas of agricultural improvement and commercial investment. Although David W. Howell finds that 'no general marked improvement took place in Welsh districts,' individual landlords and what John Barrell provisionally refers to as the 'rural professional class', particularly in

¹² Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 9.

¹³ Zaring, 'The Romantic Face of Wales', p. 96.

South Wales, ‘were influenced by the beneficial effects which the Brecknock Agricultural Society [...] was having on the farmers in the county.’¹⁴ Jane Zaring estimates that the Norfolk ideas of husbandry had started seeping into Welsh agricultural practices by the 1770s.¹⁵ In addition to improving husbandry and the growth of agrarian commercial industries such as the woolen manufactories throughout the country, the first iron works in Merthyr Tydfil opened in 1759, and by the 1770s the transcultural exchange with the influx of migrant English workers there created a demand for church services to be given in English for the first time.¹⁶ By the 1780s the four major Welsh iron works - Cyfarthfa, Dowlais, Penydarren and Plymouth – had all been established and were importing workers from other industrialized areas in neighbouring English counties and Scotland.

With the introduction of turnpikes to Wales making travel that much easier, by the 1790s Wales was no longer Gilpin’s ‘undiscovered’ land, and many tourists came armed with the imperial eyes not only of a ‘leisured aesthetic’ in search of a picturesque ideal, but of an improver, copies of both Gilpin’s and agriculturist Arthur Young’s tours in hand. Although the idea of ‘Wild Wales’ continued into the nineteenth century with George Borrow’s account of his walk through Wales, by the last decade of the eighteenth century it was getting harder and harder to ignore the signs of cultivation and commerce, not to mention the poverty and ill-effects of industrialization. The Board of

¹⁴ David W. Howell, *The Rural Poor in Eighteenth-Century Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2000), p. 4. John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape*, p. 64. Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites – The Gentry of South-West Wales in the Eighteenth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 1986), p. 76.

¹⁵ Zaring, ‘The Romantic Face of Wales’, p. 414.

¹⁶ Linda Colley, ‘Whose Nation? Class and National Consciousness in Britain 1750-1830’, *Past and Present*, 113 (Nov., 1986), pp. 97-117.

Agriculture and Improvement was established in 1793 and immediately began to compile a survey, or *General View*, of the state of agriculture and husbandry throughout all counties in England and Wales. As Zaring points out, the majority of agricultural writers submitting reports on Welsh counties ‘were Welshmen, who knew their country in all seasons, and were therefore less inclined to the Romantic exaggerations of tourists on their summer sorties into the strange and wild.’¹⁷ They did not ignore the busy agricultural trade between Wales and the London market in favor of the image of Wales, particularly the north and west, as remote and isolated. It was not only the public image of the landscape that fluctuated in this period. The Welsh in eighteenth-century literary representations vacillated from being ‘obsessed with genealogy, leeks, and cheese’ (in Sarah Prescott’s words) to being living monuments to the Ancient Briton’s primitive simplicity, hardiness and innocence, a type of Bardic revisionism promoted by Iolo Morganwg’s Anglo-Welsh antiquarian circle in London.¹⁸ The former, more comedic caricature is an echo of a long tradition of anti-Celtic satire in English literature; the latter ‘romantic’ vision of the Welsh people as ‘a hardy, fearless, mountain breed, guardians of the ancient British heritage, who lived an unspoiled, noble, peasant life enjoying nature’s bounty in charming simplicity’ was just as hyperbolic and possibly a greater hindrance to progress.¹⁹ Such Romantic primitivism was contradicted by reports of the food crises of the 1790s, the escalating Poor Rate, and the squalid state of many rural buildings, and was itself the cause for at least some part of the stagnation in the

¹⁷ Zaring, ‘The Romantic Face of Wales,’ p. 413.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Zaring, ‘The Romantic Face of Wales,’ pp. 414-15.

cultivation and development in agrarian communities. Both Richard Graves and Edward ‘Celtic’ Davies use themes of improvement and progress to redress some of the counterproductive aspects in the popular image of eighteenth-century Wales, whether by championing the value of industry and labor or by fighting to find a balance between respect for Welsh antiquity and the progress of agricultural improvement.

1. RICHARD GRAVES’S *EUGENIUS, OR, ANECDOTES OF THE GOLDEN VALE*

Richard Graves’s opening letter to the reader suggests his novel is more suitable for those who ‘read merely for amusement,’ rather than those who might read ‘Hume’s, Robertson’s, or Gibbon’s amusing histories’ and other works of nonfiction for self-improvement.²⁰ Yet Graves begins his novel, the story of a young Englishman who journeys to Wales and ultimately buys an estate there, with a frame narrative that draws on Edward Gibbon’s *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* in its argument focused on improvement, industrialization, and Ovid’s Four Ages – hardly a ‘light, harmless evening’s repast’ (iv). *Eugenius* opens with the title character asserting to his companion that they are living through ‘the *Silver Age* restored,’ characterized by ‘the bright polish of modern improvements’ coupled with the ‘innocence’ of the pastoral scenes of an agrarian society (11). Although Cassilde Tournebize suggests that this argument is merely subterfuge and reads *Eugenius* as a vehicle

²⁰ Richard Graves, *Eugenius: or, anecdotes of the golden vale: an embellished narrative of real facts. ...* In Two Volumes (London, 1785), I, ii-iii.

for cultural primitivism as ‘it expresses modern man’s uneasiness [sic] when faced with the advance of civilization,’ Graves seems less interested in glorifying the past than in applying moderate industrial improvements to communities that display superficial pastoral innocence but are potentially prey to poverty and idleness.²¹ Echoing Gibbon’s description of Servius Sulpicius’s hypothesis of a universal commonwealth, Eugenius expresses hope that Europe ‘may in time be formed into one grand commonwealth,’ and that the modern spirit of industry may be adopted worldwide (20).²²

When asked to defend his position that the present age is preferable to the past, Eugenius recounts his travels through Wales when he was a young man twenty years earlier and the mixture of innocence and improvement he found there. He sets the scene by reminding his audience of his ‘romantic turn of mind’ as a boy, highlighting the intrinsic incongruity between reality and the perceptions of a romantic imagination:

I saw things in a different light, I believe, from that of the rest of my school-fellows [...] What they called a hill, I called a mountain; an old wood or copse, I considered as a sacred grove; and a neighbouring heath, over-run with broom and birch-trees, appeared to me a wild forest, which I fancied to be inhabited by nymphs and fawns, or by robbers and outlaws. (24-25)

As a child he dreamed of living ‘in solitude and a savage retreat’ and believes he is offered a chance to indulge the fantasy when he reaches some level of independence at university, using his free time and money to visit the ‘wildest and least frequented parts of England’ (25, 26). One summer, his college friend

²¹ See Cassilde Tournebize’s edition of *Eugenius* (Toulouse: Presses Universitaires du Mirail, 1996), p. xiii.

²² See the London 1791-2 twelve-volume edition of Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*, Vol. 8, Chp. XLIV on Roman jurisprudence for similarities in rhetoric when discussing generational progress and the search for contemporary genius comparable to that of previous ages.

Williams invites him to his father's house in North Wales, 'whither hardly any Englishman, till within these few years, and very few Welshmen, had ever penetrated; and which had escaped the sagacity even of the inquisitive and philosophical Mr. Pennant himself' (27).²³ The sequestered Golden Vale, a three-day ride from Shrewsbury, is in a mountainous region that opens to the sea, 'at the mouth of which seemed to be a small sea-port, or fishing town; and only here and there a farm house or two, or rather cottages, shaded by a few hawthorns, on the sides of the hills' (30).²⁴ Taking in this first view of the region, Eugenius feels that the promise of picturesque landscape and isolation, made by both Williams and the books he has read about the region, is not met:

Though I was afraid this was the end of our journey and felt my expectations greatly disappointed, yet being unwilling to shock my friend's good-nature, I observed that there was a noble view of the sea; and though the external appearance of the mountains was not very fertile or alluring, yet they *might* probably contain some *rich* veins of lead or copper in their bowels. (30)

Having his imperial eyes thus disappointed in his search for the picturesque, Eugenius has moved on to his secondary concern: utility. Temporarily robbed of a chance to soliloquize on the aesthetic value of Wales, he resorts to the only other language of appreciation he possesses – that of an English capitalist/spectator. Eugenius represents Wales as a source for exploitation of

²³ This is one example of the ambiguity of Graves' treatment of time within the narrative. Thomas Pennant's *A Tour in Wales* was published in 1784, one year before the publication of *Eugenius*, but the narrative of Eugenius's initial tours in Wales takes place at least twenty years prior to the frame story, as Eugenius now has two grown daughters.

²⁴ The Golden Vale is the name immigrant English gentleman gave the area, not being able to pronounce the original Welsh, Llan-dryffyd Dwr Lliffen (33). Graves makes no commentary on the failure of the English settlers to embrace, or at least understand, the Welsh language, which from this point on is ignored.

natural resources that, when it cannot make for rich viewing, can at least have the potential to make for rich pocketbooks.

Williams assures Eugenius that the Vale improves from a different vantage point and they ‘kept winding along the sides of the hills towards the left, where the road led us amidst a vast ridge of craggy rocks, which seemed to be the very boundaries of the creation; but instead of terminating in Milton’s chaos, they opened on a sudden into a terrestrial paradise’ (31). If Eugenius’s earlier acknowledgement of the potential for mining the Welsh mountains demonstrates at least a grudging willingness to accommodate both practical and picturesque interests, his use here of ‘terrestrial paradise’ truly marks the beginning of a shift from a purely ‘romantic turn of mind’ into one that will soon embrace the spirit of agricultural improvement and industry. As John Barrell asserts, ‘No real reconciliation of course is possible between the interests of the practical farmer and the picturesque writer, although this technique of [Arthur] Young’s does allow them to coexist, and indeed insists that they do’ (83). It is telling, then, that Richard Graves’s description of the Golden Vale bears such a striking resemblance to Arthur Young’s description of a valley near the fall of the River Tees in County Durham. It, too, ‘would have taken for the favourite spot of nature, a sample of terrestrial paradise’.²⁵ Young’s passage has more imagery of the sublime and Graves’s has a greater variety of trees, yet both scenes are punctuated with signs of cultivation. In County Durham, ‘within the banks of this elysian stream, the ground is most sweetly varied in waving slopes and

²⁵ Arthur Young, *A Six Months Tour through the North of England* (London, 1770), p. 200. It is impossible to tell if Richard Graves looked to Young’s tour for inspiration, and indeed the phrase ‘terrestrial paradise’ was not Young’s creation. It does seem unlikely, however, that Graves would have been unfamiliar with Young’s work, and having never lived in Wales himself, could conceivably have used previously published source material for evocative descriptions of picturesque landscape.

dales, forming five or six grass inclosures of a verdure beautiful as painting can express.’ In the Golden Vale, ‘the woods on the side of the hills seemed only to have been cleared away to make room, every half mile, for tolerably neat buildings, farms, or cottages, which gave the whole an habitable, and yet a retired, romantic air’ (33).

The tonal shift in the language in the *Eugenius* passage, from ‘the very boundaries of creation’ to ‘an habitable, and yet a retired, romantic air’ demonstrates the tension between the aesthetic appeal of uncultivated landscape and the utility of practical improvement, as Malcolm Andrews observes in *The Search for the Picturesque*:

The Sublime negligence – ‘the very Rubbish’ – from which the earlier [Augustan] travelers shrank was exactly to the taste of the later Picturesque tourist. For him, negligence on any scale was to be relished, after half a century of relentless ‘improvements’. The landscape of North Wales had resisted the improver’s hand just as its inhabitants, the true Britons, were supposed to have preserved their cultural integrity from the invasions of the Romans and, later, the English under Edward I.²⁶

Here, the ‘improvements’ Andrews alludes to are the superficial cosmetic alterations to estate gardens in the vein of Capability Brown’s school of design, a ceaseless taming of nature into neat pleasure gardens. The phrase ‘the very Rubbish’ comes from the anonymous *A Trip to North-Wales* (1701): ‘The Country looks like the fag End of the Creation; the very Rubbish of *Noah’s* Flood; and will (if any thing) serve to confirm an *Epicurean* in his Creed, That the World was made by Chance.’²⁷ Andrews suggests that this reference to

²⁶ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, p. 110

²⁷ Sarah Prescott attributes *A Trip to North-Wales: Being a Description of that Country and People* to Ned [Edward] Ward (1701). See *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales: Bards and Britons* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2008), p. 88.

Noah's flood alludes to Thomas Burnet's *The Sacred Theory of the Earth*, which posits that antediluvian Earth was smooth, and after flood waters erupted from the surface and then subsided, the shrapnel of the crust settled like refuse, forming continents and mountains. And though, as Sarah Prescott notes, *A Trip to North-Wales* was written in a 'satirical travel-writing vein' and full of 'anti-Welsh satire,' the accidental byproduct of natural forces that Ward views by early eighteenth-century standards as desolate wasteland was, by the time Eugenius arrived, imbued not only with the romance of the Picturesque and the burgeoning Celtic chic, but also with the more practical idea of an exchange of Welsh resources for English improvements.

Associating the Creation with Wales constructs a space for Eugenius virtually untouched by either the improver's hand or the passing of time, at least until the prospect opens upon those 'tolerably neat buildings'. One must, then, address the reference to 'Milton's chaos' and the implication of finding a 'terrestrial paradise' in its place. In *Paradise Lost* (1667), chaos is home to the raw materials for creation, yet it is described as a 'wild abyss' and a 'wasteful Deep' (II. 917, II. 961). For a man craving the wild and solitude, Eugenius seems pleased to find that he was mistaken in his expectations. The Golden Vale is, instead, 'Eden rais'd in the vast Wilderness,' and this 'terrestrial paradise' regained has been cultivated by labor.²⁸ As Anthony Low argues, 'after the fall [...] labor becomes man's hard lot, both his punishment and, transformed by grace, a means for his redemption.'²⁹ Throughout the rest of the

²⁸ Milton, *Paradise Regained* (1671) I. 7.

²⁹ Anthony Low, 'Milton, *Paradise Regained*, and Georgic', *PMLA*, Vol. 98, No. 2 (Mar., 1983), pp. 152-69.

novel, Eugenius struggles to reconcile his youthful passion for the picturesque Wales in travel narratives with encroaching signs of development and industrialization. Ultimately, his association with a leading figure in the local wool manufactory creates such an appreciation for the improving effects of labor on the natives of the Golden Vale that he, like Young, finds a way for aesthetics and utility to co-exist.

Williams gives a brief history of the vale, which, ‘till within these few years, was inhabited merely by peasants, chiefly rack-renters; my father, and one or two more, being the only freeholders’ (43). Having declared at the start of his tour a preference for solitude within a romantic locale to making the social rounds and meeting the gentry, Eugenius is not impressed with the collection of ‘titular grandees’ presented to him: a lieutenant going by the title of Admiral, a captain going by the title of General, a parson going by the title of Archbishop, an attorney going by the title of Chief Justice, and the sole landed Welsh gentleman, ‘governor’ Howel, who has only moved back to Wales to avoid debtor’s prison in London. The Vale seems to be a place where Englishmen come to elevate their status, and easily get away with doing so because they are living in remote North Wales, where the insinuation is that no *real* admirals, generals or arch bishops would settle so far out of the world, and the local population would scarcely be in a position to tell the difference. The inclusion of this group of characters, who only remain in the novel over the course of a few pages, is a rebuke against English immigrants who, taking advantage of the comparably low cost of living, come to Wales only to sap the local resources and give nothing back to the community in return except for examples of profligate waste.

Finding little merit in these dubious ‘distinguished gentlemen’ to moderate his aversion, Eugenius spends his holiday associating with Williams’s family and sketching the landscape (73). During his excursions, he notices a mansion house ‘which discovered a taste superior to any thing I had seen in the neighbourhood’ and is told it belongs to Mr. Hamilton, ‘who had lately purchased a small estate there; but as no one knew any thing of the family, and as they seemed to avoid any sort of intercourse with their neighbours – and had moreover encouraged poachers (which is high treason amongst sportsmen) – they were looked upon with an evil eye’ (64). While Cassilde Tournebize argues that Mr. Hamilton ‘represents modern England, an England in transition, on the eve of the industrial era,’ I suggest that Graves’s example of a successful English *improving* landlord and industrialist acts as a counterbalance to the other transplanted Englishmen in the novel who represent the more lamentable aspects of modern living, such as gross materialism, *ennui*, and an unwise overvaluation of rank. Discussions of benevolence and industry in *Eugenius* echo Gibbon’s chapter on Sulpicius, who ‘mildly excludes’ from the universal commonwealth ‘the skeptics who refuse to believe, and the epicureans who are unwilling to act. The latter disdain the care of the republic; he advises them to slumber in their shady gardens’ (27). The titular grandees who only socialize with each other are failing in their responsibility towards their community, just as Mr. Hamilton would have done if his sole interest in his Welsh estate were its scenic view. Instead, with his enthusiasm for both picturesque prospects and promoting industry as a means of moral improvement, Hamilton becomes a mentor to Eugenius upon his return to Wales after a four-year absence and provides a template for estate management when Eugenius buys his own Welsh estate.

In that absence, while Eugenius makes a Grand Tour, the beginnings of the turnpike project reach the Golden Vale:

On my approach to the Golden Vale, I was surprised to see a great improvement in the roads. Those which before were hardly passable for a single horse, were now widened so as to be practicable for carriages of every kind: and where one hardly saw a traveler in a month, I now met several pack-horses, and two or three busy people, going to or coming from the Vale [...] I saw several new cottages and other buildings lately erected; which, though they added little to the beauty of the prospect, gave it an appearance of cheerfulness and industry. (96-97)³⁰

When Eugenius made his first trip to Wales four years earlier, he had described the journey as easy and pleasant. Only now, after gaining experience with foreign roads and growing an appreciation of improvement, does Eugenius lose the first blind spot that allowed him to maintain his status of picturesque tourist – that selective blindness that once made bad roads pleasant because of a preference for art over utility, and that erased people from descriptions of the land.³¹ The sight of cottages in a place he could once imagine as a wilderness still offends Eugenius's 'romantic turn of mind,' and he 'should have inveighed bitterly against the encroachments of art on the prerogative of nature, - and have condemned several aukward buildings and straight-lined garden walls which had been lately erected' (101). Yet age and experience lend importance to the idea of industry, especially as he is educated about Mr. Hamilton's role in planning and financing the local woolen manufactory, owned by a Mr. Jackson. Although a large portion of the novel from this point centers on the love story between

³⁰ Allowing for discrepancies in the timeline, a reasonable estimation of the year of Eugenius's return to Wales would be circa 1770, when several roads in North Wales were being repaired or laid.

³¹ According to A.H. Dodd, 'even road-making in North Wales owes something to the Englishman's zest for travel and his untiring eagerness for new worlds to colonize' (34).

Eugenius and Flora Williams, I intend to focus on the lessons Eugenius learns from Mr. Hamilton on estate management and the influence of the woolen manufactory on the community, particularly in terms of Mr. Hamilton's views of industry, or labor, as both an economic and moral improver.

Moira Dearnley suggests that *Eugenius* is the first Welsh industrial novel. Although the amount of attention paid to the woolen manufactory pales in comparison to the need to overcome all obstacles to a union between Eugenius and Flora, Graves does provide us with several polemical passages on the promotion of the 'habit of industry' in order to 'civilize' the poor, to engender moral improvements, and to teach people previously dependent on charity how to provide for themselves through labor, since the work ethic and moral rectitude go hand in hand in this early representation of industrialization and merchant capitalism in North Wales. Nominated by Eugenius's narrative as the definitive 'seeing-man' and commentator on the state of Wales, Mr. Hamilton is an especially convincing role model for Eugenius (and any English readers contemplating buying a Welsh estate) because he can celebrate the implementation of improvements in order to create a financially viable estate while still maintaining an appreciation for the picturesque beauty of Welsh landscape:

"He repeated [...] that no one was a greater admirer of the beauties of nature than himself; and that his principle motive for purchasing the little estate and mansion where he lived, was the richness of the prospect, and the picturesque scenes which the country afforded. – "But," says he, "I found this and the neighbouring vallies peopled by a set of wretched, idle, unemployed, and of course thievish inhabitants; many of whom had been rendered more dissolute and corrupt by the gentlemen who lately inhabited the Golden Vale. Yet, upon trial, I found that these poor people might easily be civilized, and converted to useful members of society: there were plenty of hands; and their labour, I knew, would be cheap [...] In short, these poor

creatures, who were before idle and dirty, and starving amidst these fruitful vales, are now well fed and well clothed, and live in health and plenty; and what is more, are brought to an habit of sobriety and honesty.” (143-45)³²

Again, we see the distaste for those ‘titular grandees’ whom Eugenius so effectively dismissed on his first tour of Wales, but this time with a stronger condemnation of the ill effects of the failure of English gentlemen to institute moral and practical improvements when it was in their means to do so.

Hamilton’s rhetoric here may have imperialist undertones but the resolution that the best act of charity is to teach a man to be a productive member of society is one seen time and again in eighteenth-century novels dealing with the relationship between landlords and their tenants, as well as in agricultural writings.³³ Also key in this passage is that Hamilton’s rhetoric of progress does not denigrate the aesthetic interest Wales can hold. Despite Eugenius’s respect for the social impact Hamilton’s manufactory has made in the Golden Vale, it is doubtful he would have turned to Hamilton as a role model had it not been for the other man’s similar taste for the picturesque. Indeed, Hamilton had apologized to Eugenius for the ‘uncouth and artificial appearance’ of the newly erected buildings associated with the presence of the manufactory, but insisted that ‘matters of taste should be only of secondary consideration, and must frequently give way to convenience and utility’ (102). Utility here is not simply a means of making money, but rather an acknowledgement of the need to

³² See A.H. Dodd’s *The Industrial Revolution in North Wales* for a study of the wool industry in Wales.

³³ See Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape*, p. 94.

create a stable demand for industry in order to improve the lives and characters of the Welsh.

In his study of the ‘factory village’ in the Industrial Revolution, Sidney Pollard suggests that factory owners established themselves, or their agents, as moral leaders/enforcers of the community, extending the idea of discipline in the workplace to discipline in private life.³⁴ Although the size of the woolen manufactory in the Golden Vale was not yet at the stage where it dominated the countryside so much as to turn the vale into a ‘factory village,’ it is fitting to read Mr. Hamilton’s role in the community in this light, as the public extension of Mr. Jackson, the true owner of the manufactory. According to Pollard, the leader of a factory village ‘was forced to take account of the worker’s behaviour outside working hours, of his family, the likelihood of his migration, and of his attitude to the industrial system as a whole, often called by contemporaries his “moral outlook”’ (521). Installing a ‘habit of sobriety and honesty’ did not merely entail giving the labouring poor jobs at the manufactory. The Hamilton ladies, as Moira Dearnley notes, patronize ‘an early version of an Industrial School.’³⁵ Here, both girls and boys receive their first lessons in practicing habits of industry, learning to read, ‘till they were able to do some kind of work suitable to their different destinations’ (164).³⁶ As Mr. Hamilton earlier inveighed against elevating people above their accustomed sphere, these

³⁴ Sidney Pollard, ‘The Factory Village in the Industrial Revolution’, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 79, No. 312 (July, 1964), pp. 513-31.

³⁵ Moira Dearnley, *Distant Fields: Eighteenth-century Fictions of Wales* (Cardiff: University of Wales, 2001), p. 110.

³⁶ Graves had experience in education, having supplemented his income for forty years running a school near Bath and acting as a private tutor for students such as Thomas Malthus.

gendered ‘destinations’ were limited to ‘labour’ for the boys, while the girls ‘were improved in sewing and needle-work, and qualified for servants, as well as to spin or knit for Mr. Jackson’ (165). The school at which these girls create textiles is supported by the product of their work, and, although it is not implicitly stated, this creates a child-labour market with the goal of fostering a future workforce custom-made for the local factory owner, with built-in gratitude and obedience to the patron of their youth. The public display of these children at work is a rewriting of *Eugenius*’s introduction to Wales four years earlier. Instead of searching for solitude in the sublimity of the Welsh landscape and viewing potential mineral wealth as a secondary resource, *Eugenius* seeks out local society upon his return to Wales, marveling at the children’s industry as sign of moral fortification and appreciating their potential as resources in commercial labour.

The novel’s second volume focuses primarily on the romance between *Eugenius* and Flora Williams, sister of his Welsh *cicerone*, along with a secondary courtship of Louisa Hamilton by Sir Charles Highworth, another visitor to Wales.³⁷ Both storylines progress in a fashion fairly common in sentimental novels. Financial and social barriers arise, along with family concerns, and it is a testament to Mr. Hamilton’s influence on him that *Eugenius*, melancholic after parting from Flora’s company, occupies himself by surveying the small farm his mother owns and ‘talking with the hind about improvements’ rather than resorting to idle ennui (75). Although *Eugenius* does not display the typical benchmarks of a national narrative, such as the

³⁷ ‘Cicerone’ here is a commonly used term in eighteenth-century travel texts referring to one’s guide.

incorporation of Welsh history, language, or nationalist figureheads, the resolution of these courtships in a final act double wedding is an early example of the familiar trope in national tales wherein transcultural marriages are symbolic of socio-political union across borders.³⁸ While both Louisa Hamilton and Sir Charles are presumably English by birth, their courtship takes on a particularly pan-British quality, beginning with their first encounter at Mr. Hamilton's ornamental Druid Hall and featuring Louisa's performance of the Scottish ballad 'Through the Wood, Laddie' (31). Sir Charles infuses an element of rank into the model middle-class Hamilton family, as well as the Golden Vale, which previously could only boast those derided 'titular grandees'.

Sir Charles is also responsible for staging the double wedding at the Druid Hall, which is decorated with 'union roses' for the occasion (188). The hall itself is an interesting feature indicative of Graves's penchant for blending an appreciation for stylized tradition with modernization, in that it calls to mind ancient Welsh and British heritage, yet is clearly the attempt of an English industrialist to manufacture a tribute to a lost culture purely for aesthetic reasons. The celebration at the hall was the seed for other unions in the novel, most notably between Williams and the eldest Hamilton daughter (thus securing that family's tie to Wales). The most significant marriage is, however, between Eugenius, whose ideas of land management, benevolence, and industry have been refined over the course of the novel, and the Welsh Flora Williams, who also has a strong philanthropic presence in the community. This relationship prompts Eugenius to purchase an estate in the Golden Vale and allows him to exercise his new interests in a Welsh setting.

³⁸ Graves himself was Welsh on his mother's side.

Although Eugenius, under Hamilton's tutelage, ultimately acknowledges the precedence of utility and progress over aesthetic taste, he also retains his appreciation for the picturesque beauty of Wales, knocking down walls on his new estate there to open his prospect of 'a fine sloping lawn down to the river, and a view of the hanging woods and hills which rose above its banks' (176). Eugenius's house, symbol of the continuing union between Welsh resources and English improvement, is named *Vallombrosa* by 'an ingenious friend', and this is accompanied by an annotation that 'Mr. E - of Sarum, who, with Mr. W - , are almost the only English gentlemen who have visited the monastery of Vallombrosa in the Apennines' (189). This echoes the novel's first description of North Wales as a place 'whither hardly any Englishman...had ever penetrated' (27) and goes some way in reestablishing that original sense of Romantic solitude attached to Wales and its position as an ideal retreat for country gentleman. In reality, the integrity of the abbey of Vallombrosa's supposed seclusion had already been threatened by literary tourists following John Milton's allusion to it in Book I of *Paradise Lost*: 'Thick as Autumnal Leaves that strow the Brooks / In *Vallombrosa*, where, th' *Etrurian* shades / High overarch't imbowl'.

Yet Graves does not end his description of the Golden Vale with an image of a Welsh pastoral scene segregated from England, but rather with a portrait of a community participating in British commercial concerns as Eugenius subscribes to the ideas of industry promoted by Hamilton. Not only has the local manufactory established a sense of industry and financial stability in the Golden Vale, but the endeavour's influence has also spread to surrounding neighbourhoods:

As I have endeavoured, in some measure, to imitate Mr. Hamilton's example, in which my friend Williams and Mr. Jackson also (who employs near four hundred people in different branches of his manufacture) concur, we have hardly an idle or vicious, and of course hardly a poor person, within some miles of the Golden Vale. (194)

It is no accident that *Eugenius* lists the defense against idleness and viciousness above the control of poverty as the virtues of industry. Rioting, particularly over corn prices, was widespread in eighteenth-century Britain, exacerbated by 'expanding population, poverty, and underemployment'.³⁹ David Jones argues that Wales was particularly vulnerable to rioting because of the comparative lack of law and order (496). Despite increased competition for employment and the rising cost of food offering obvious external causes for riotous behavior, unemployment was often read as symptomatic of an innate tendency towards idleness, which was still commonly viewed as a moral failing that invited violence. As Arthur Young observes in his tour through Wales, 'it was always my opinion, and experience confirms it; that sober and industrious workmen of any sort, *never* riot' (249).

Of course, industrious workmen *did* riot. Two years before the publication of *Eugenius*, lead miners in Aberystwyth rioted over corn prices, and Sharon Howard observes that a great number Welsh rioters throughout the century were 'artisans and labourers'.⁴⁰ Jones notes that 'the industrial revolution quickly created a new body of workmen gathered in mining villages and manufacturing towns, all quite alien to traditional social patterns and modes

³⁹ David J. V. Jones, 'Law Enforcement and Popular Disturbances in Wales, 1793-1835', *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 42, No. 4 (Dec., 1970), pp. 496-523.

⁴⁰ Sharon Howard, 'Riotous community: crowds, politics and society in Wales, c.1700-1840', <http://www.earlymodernweb.org.uk/archive/riotous_community.pdf>, p. 12.

of control' (496). There is of course a distinction between industrial towns and agricultural communities, with the Golden Vale retaining at least a veneer of the pastoral, but food riots occurred across thirty counties in Wales and England in the latter quarter of the eighteenth century and on throughout the Napoleonic Wars. Howard's study suggests that food rioting had been particularly severe in northwest Wales in the 1750s when people were reacting to bad harvest years and price inflation. The food shortage was exacerbated by 1793 as the exportation of grain to support the war effort led to several localized riots in rural Wales.⁴¹ Jones argues that the frequency of riots in Wales was in part due to the 'absence of a significant class of resident noblemen and large landowners' (497). In *Eugenius*, that absence is filled by Mr. Hamilton, and while there is no hint of a food shortage in the Golden Vale, Richard Graves acknowledges the danger of unemployment and violence lurking beneath the pastoral representations of Wales by establishing a successful industrial model there. As Hamilton frequently argues, the most moral and practical form of benevolence is in offering employment.

Eugenius concludes his narrative with the hope 'that the next generation at least may see, if not the *golden age*, or paradisiacal state, yet at least the *silver age* of the world again restored,' suggesting that improvement is an ongoing project that must be maintained in order to prevent stagnation or degeneration. It is also a widespread one, as Eugenius expresses his belief that 'the same

⁴¹ See Howard, p. 12. 'It has been suggested that there were distinctive types of food riot closely related to specific geographical circumstances: in particular, those blocking exports, associated with small towns and villages in producing areas and arising from beliefs that locals should be supplied before any surplus could be exported, and the (more sophisticated) price-fixing riot in larger towns and cities at times of shortage and high prices.'

benevolent spirit and moral improvement are diffusing' throughout other parts of England and the Continent.⁴² Perhaps this stated wish for a European, or even worldwide, 'grand commonwealth' mitigates the features of *Eugenius* that prevent it from being considered a true *national* tale as defined by Ferris; although he has a home in Wales and can no longer be considered a stranger to that land, the frame narrative takes place in London, as does a majority of the novel's second volume. Yet, for all of the references to the Golden Age as the 'paradisiacal state,' Ovid's description of that time does not involve a voluntary Romantic solitude, but rather a seclusion enforced by ignorance. Without travel there was no exploration, and no exchange of ideas. Moira Dearnley argues that 'there is nothing elegiac about the tone of this novel' (106). Graves's treatment of the Silver Age as a model for industry and improvement, one which must first be *restored* before being refined into a hybrid of 'the bright polish of modern improvements, joined to the innocence and simplicity of those primitive times', suggests some concern over the degeneration and dissipation found in modern life (11). Yet Dearnley is certainly correct in noting that, for Graves, the lack of industry in the Golden Age was more a barrier to happiness than a proof of it, and that a 'terrestrial paradise' is preferable to a mythical, unattainable one.⁴³

⁴² Graves occasionally uses 'England' as a synecdochic representation of Britain and, rarely, of Wales.

⁴³ See Richard Graves, *Sermons...* (London, 1799). In describing the 'possibility and the nature of human happiness' across all ranks of life, he advises: 'let him be regular in his devotions, prudent and temperate in the government of himself, just and charitable to his neighbours; kind to his domesticks [sic], and if blest with children, breeding them up in habits of industry and sobriety' (147). See also Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Book XII: 'And while the dread of judgement past remains / Fresh in thir mindes, fearing the Deitie, / With some regard to what is just and right / Shall lead thir lives and multiplie apace, / Labouring the soile, and reaping plenteous crop' (ln 14-18). As Jonathan Richardson annotates in his *Explanatory Notes and Remarks on Milton's Paradise Lost* (London, 1734), and is reprinted in Thomas Newton's 1778 edition of *Paradise Lost*,

Richard Graves may have been ignorant of or willfully blind to the pitfalls of the woolen industry in Wales, particularly its factory conditions, but he did go some way in addressing the folly of relying on the romantic face of Wales as portrayed in contemporary travel narratives to give an accurate impression of the possibility for improvement under the right management, while his use of Arthur Young's example allowed for an eighteenth-century Wales that could retain its picturesque allure without sacrificing the need for labor and utility to the 'wild abyss' and 'wasteful Deep'. Yet Graves goes about arguing for progress by divorcing Wales from its history, challenging the prevailing interest in Welsh antiquity by offering nothing but praise for the so-called 'silver age' of the Golden Vale, represented by English-implemented improvements, and failing to mourn the mythical 'golden age' of a pre-industrialized Wales. With *Elisa Powell*, Edward Davies directly engages with the antiquarian Welsh interest and its influence on the acceptance of progress and improvement.

2. EDWARD 'CELTIC' DAVIES'S *ELISA POWELL, OR, TRIALS OF SENSIBILITY*

Edward 'Celtic' Davies, an antiquary and author from Radnorshire, anonymously published *Elisa Powell, or, Trials of Sensibility* (1795) while London-Welsh societies were following Iolo Morganwg in revitalizing the Bardic tradition and Wales was experiencing 'a decade of virtually continuous

this section 'answers to the Silver Age of the Poets, the Paradisiacal State is the Golden One. That of Iron begins soon' (510).

disturbance' thanks to the war and sporadic riots over famine prices.⁴⁴ Befitting the mood of the time and Davies's professional interest in Welsh antiquity, *Elisa Powell* has a more active engagement with the relationship between an English estate owner and his Welsh tenants in terms of charity, responsible husbandry, and nationalism than Grave's *Eugenius*. Set in the spa town of Builth⁴⁵ on the western bank of the Wye in South-East Wales, *Elisa Powell* is the story, told in a collection of letters, of English reverend Henry Stanley, who has come to Wales to take possession of an estate that 'consists of four farms, amounting altogether to about 500l. per annum. This will place me in a respectable rank among the freeholders of Brecknockshire' (4).⁴⁶ Moira Dearnley accuses Henry Stanley of acting more like a tourist than a resident landlord of Wales: 'While his estate is being surveyed and mapped, Stanley spends a holiday in Builth, which is viewed, therefore, through the eyes of an English tourist, not by one for whom this was home.'⁴⁷ It is faulty logic to assume that, because Stanley leaves his estate for the nearest market town and subsequently leaves there for another estate in his county, his role as a new resident of Wales has changed. Though Stanley might not have behaved any differently had he used his own estate as a permanent base throughout the narrative, it is true that he is a stranger to South Wales and must, by necessity, employ any means available to him to acquire practical knowledge of his surroundings. He is assisted in his attempts to

⁴⁴ Gwyn A. Williams, *When Was Wales?*, p. 160.

⁴⁵ See Moira Dearnley for the identification of Builth as the town, which is referred to as "B – " in the text.

⁴⁶ Edward Davies, *Elisa Powell, or trials of sensibility: a series of original letters, collected by a Welsh curate ...* (London, 1795) Vol. 1 of 2.

⁴⁷ Dearnley, p. 162.

familiarize himself with his new community by an old friend, the antiquarian Dr. Pemberton. Pemberton, born in Wales but having lived in England most of his life, has returned in order to tour the southern counties and to visit Llewelyn's grave.⁴⁸ While Stanley is more concerned, in the first volume of the novel, with surveying his land and discussing agricultural improvements, Pemberton is primarily there to indulge his interest in antiquity, yet the two men's interests are neither divergent nor incompatible. In his presentation of these two characters, Edward 'Celtic' Davies provides an interesting view of the state of Welsh national identity as seen through the lens of romantic antiquarianism and agricultural improvement.

Playing off the 1770s boom in travel literature on Wales, *Elisa Powell* makes explicit references to the evolving public image of Welsh landscape, with Stanley admitting his admiration of 'the landscapes of the principality, as exhibited to us in the tours of Wyndham, Gilpin, and others' (3). But unlike Eugenius, Stanley does not set out to take in the prospects, and Wales in fact was not *his* choice of location for his new estate. Instead, he is heir to an uncle who, fearing the financial strain felt by other relatives following 'the general shock last year,' took out £50,000 from his stocks and set in motion the sale of the 'pretty freehold estate' in order to allow Stanley some financial security and independence (85).⁴⁹ His uncle's choice of Wales is never explained, but the low cost of living and Stanley's relative consequence in the neighborhood as a

⁴⁸ Note that this refers not to Llewelyn the Great but Llewelyn the Last, the last prince of Wales before it lost independence to England.

⁴⁹ See Julian Hoppit, 'Financial Crises in Eighteenth-Century England', *Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 39, No. 1 (1986), pp. 39-58. This 'general shock' in public credit presumably refers to the crisis of 1793, when a combination of a poor wheat harvest and price increases the previous year, the 'fall in price of assets in public finance' when war with France was threatened, and a subsequent fall in private finance once war was declared, led to a 'very general failure of paper credit' (55).

moderately wealthy Englishman must be considered a plausible motivation. While *Elisa Powell* focuses more on local agricultural improvements than the fostering of more commercial industries such as mining or wool, which was suffering from raised prices and restricted trade routes during the war, it nevertheless has national and transnational implications as the spirit of improvement seeps from bordering English counties into south Wales. It is in his letters as seeing-man to his English audience that Henry Stanley exhibits his participation in a sort of territorial surveillance of Wales, and the novel itself both engages with and appropriates the legacy of travel literature and the newly available scientific tracts of the Board of Agriculture in its treatment of improvement, progress, and tradition.

Despite Dearnley's condemnation that he is acting more like a tourist than an engaged landowner, one of Stanley's first acts upon his arrival in Wales was not hiring a local bard to show him the sites of ancient Cambria, but rather sitting down to a meal with his tenant farmers and discussing the terms of their leases, which were up for renewal. He finds the farmers to be 'intelligent in their line, and capable of conversation; industrious, thrifty, and skilful husbandmen,' particularly his chief tenant, Mr. Thomas, whose library includes Arthur Young and who is a member of the Brecknock Agricultural Society (6). Stanley had arrived in Builth with a healthy knowledge of estate management, and resolves to 'have the whole estate surveyed and accurately mapped' in his determination to have a detailed accounting of the bounties of his new estate:

I will not leave it till I have made myself intimately acquainted with every gate, every road, every turn of the hedge. Thus shall I be enabled, when any repairs are wanted, to keep up an intelligent correspondence with Mr. Thomas, whom I consider as a great acquisition. (14)

Although he describes Thomas as an ‘acquisition,’ there is a level of skepticism leveled at his chief tenant and would-be land steward, as indicated by Stanley’s insinuation that Mr. Thomas’s surprising amount of understanding of land management was the impetus behind this urgent surveillance of his estate. Though this reaction may indicate a sense of competition with and insecurity about the more successful Welsh tenants who may have the allegiances of the indigenous population, the desire to take an active interest in his own estate is understandable given the popularity of agricultural tracts urging landowners to take more responsibility for their land and their tenants by being their own stewards, which is what Stanley is resolved to do (14).

Although we are not told where Henry Stanley’s experience with land management stems from, his references to high-picturesque tourists Gilpin and Wyndham are balanced by his familiarity with Arthur Young and the Brecknock Agricultural Society, which speaks to an interest in agricultural improvement as well as an appreciation of the aesthetic appeal of the region. Certainly Stanley would have had a variety of agricultural tracts available to him in his quest to be both a responsible landlord and his own steward. The dissemination of information regarding agricultural improvements and the particular surveys of counties throughout England and Wales flourished in the 1790s following the creation of the Board of Agriculture in 1793. Professionals with backgrounds in husbandry and surveying, such as John Clark, a land surveyor from Builth and author of *A General View of the agriculture of the county of Brecknock, with observations on the means of improvements* (1794), would submit reports on the

details of agricultural production in a given county.⁵⁰ These would include the types of crops grown, the cycle of crop rotation, the types of livestock, methods of improvement, acreage, prices, the ration of enclosed land to commons, soil types, common pests, etc. Also included were critiques of the improvements which had already been made in the county by major landowners and the more wealthy freehold tenants, along with recommendations for more efficient land management, particularly in the form of responsible crop rotation and drainage and, where applicable, enclosure.

As for the responsibilities of a steward, starting from the mid-century there were dozens of tracts delineating the qualities needed in an honest and competent land steward, many reproducing the same text as their predecessors. A prominent example is Edward Laurence's *The Duty and Office of a Land Steward* (1743), which was cannibalized by several other agricultural tracts throughout the eighteenth century. Land stewards, having sovereignty over the management of large landed estates, particularly when the lord of the manor was absent, were often responsible for overseeing improvements to the grounds and Laurence's essay was, as the subtitle suggests, 'Represented under Several Plain and Distinct ARTICLES; wherein may be seen the INDIRECT PRACTICES of several STEWARDS, tending to LESSEN, and the several Methods likely to IMPROVE their Lords Estates.'⁵¹

⁵⁰ For a discussion of John Clark's struggle with the 'corruptive' influence of the Picturesque, see John Barrell's *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840*. In his review of Clark's report on the agriculture of Herefordshire, Barrell notes that Clark 'finds it impossible to pretend that the notions of taste and of utility are anything but antagonistic towards each other' (80). See also William Marshall's *A Review of the Reports to the Board of Agriculture on the Several Counties*, Vol. II (*Western Department*), p. 262.

⁵¹ From Edward Laurence's *The Duty and Office of a Land Steward: The duty and office of a land steward: represented under several plain and distinct articles; ... To*

These articles demanded mastery in all aspects of husbandry. Although the steward was not expected to perform these tasks, Laurence did expect him to supervise all manner of activity on the estate, from the felling and doling out of trees to the slaughter of livestock (and conveniently enough for noblemen suspicious of enterprising stewards, the sheer amount of time an *honest* steward was expected to devote to his Master's business would necessarily prevent him from owning his own estate). The steward had a managerial position, making sure that employees of the lord of the manor performed their tasks in accordance with Laurence's ideas of efficiency. Before any improvements should be made, according to Laurence, who was himself a surveyor, it was vital to have an accurate survey of the estate drawn up in order to assess the value and boundaries of the land and to estimate potential value in order to calculate a reasonable 'proportion of rent' (146). The fact that improvements and enclosure were often followed by a hike in rent rates accounts for some of the wariness with which small farmers approached such developments.

In addition to supervising, Laurence's ideal stewards were also charged with the responsibility of educating tenants on ways of improving their plots and maintaining any improvements and repairs financed by the landlord, 'forasmuch as it is highly convenient to have a living Instructor amongst many ignorant Farmers, to teach them, if possible, both by Example and Precept, the readiest Way to *improve* their Farms, and to *enrich* themselves' (6). When the steward's other duties prevented him from this task, Laurence suggested that a landlord bring up 'one or two Tenants out of the *South*, and most improved Countries, to shew others the Way by their Example,' assuming that said landlord held

which is added, an appendix, ... The third edition, with alterations and additions (London, 1743).

multiple estates. The logic of importing skilled workers from other areas already thriving under the improver's management was applied in the industrial boom in Wales, and several of the novels set in the late eighteenth century feature not only migrant workers from all over Britain and Ireland, but also English and Scottish overseers with experience in either agriculture and modern husbandry or in industry. It is in elucidating the particular impediments to educating Welsh tenants that Edward Davies marries the interest in preserving some respect for Welsh tradition and the need for the populace to embrace change in order to adapt to the growing commercial economy eighteenth-century Wales, or at least remain self-sufficient.

According to John Clark, the farms in Builth are, 'in general, very small. There are not, in the whole district, ten farms that rent for more than one hundred pounds a year' (32). Stanley's income of £500 for his four farms would, indeed, place him in the ranks of successful freeholders. The negotiations over the lease renewals at the start of the novel are early demonstrations (to the tenantry, the landed families in Builth, the reader of his letters, and the readers of the novel) of Henry Stanley's rational and fair character. Conceding that a twenty percent increase in rent may be too much to ask of farmers trying to maintain a subsistence and hopefully save enough money to support their families after their retirement, but conscious of the fact that there is no profit in renewing the leases at the old terms, Stanley strikes a bargain in which the farmers pay the old rents but cede him a portion of Mr. Thomas's land for extensions to his manor house, hunting rights on all four farms and an agreement that the tenants will repair any hedges Stanley and his friends might break while hunting (10). Stanley writes to his correspondent, a Rev. James Wilson back

home in Worcestershire, that he refuses to be of the old order of manorial lords, rack-renting his tenants and demanding duties:

What man, that has a competency, could purchase more real pleasure for fifty pounds a year, than I shall enjoy by seeing my estate in good condition, and securing the comfort of four industrious, worthy families? Ask those lords of a neglected wilderness, who are obliged to seize on a few ill-favoured, half-famished beasts, for the payment of their enormous rent, while the squalid tenant startles at the sight of his landlord's steward, or shudders at the thoughts of a jail. (12-13)

According to David Howell, 'in addition to the payment of a money rent either upon fine or at rack, tenants had to render certain duties primarily in the form of food payments and labour services, a part-survival of the manorial economy emphasizing the still relatively servile nature of the Welsh tenantry' (41). Stanley recognizes that forcing his farmers into financial distress is against his own interests, just as he recognizes that, taking into account Mr. Thomas's familiarity with modern husbandry, the most responsible thing he can do as a landlord is to make sure that he has an equal knowledge of his own estate. He also sees that absenteeism only fosters neglect of a potentially valuable resource. As Pratt argues, 'it is the task of the advance scouts for capitalist "improvement" to encode what they encounter as "unimproved" and, in keeping with the terms of the anti-conquest, as *disponible*, available for improvement' (61).

Although southeast Wales was, when compared to the north, generally seen as less exotic and more Anglicized, Henry Stanley is still initially considered a stranger to the community and throughout the novel he negotiates his experiences of Wales and the story's peripheral characters as an outsider and, in part, as one of Pratt's 'advanced scouts' for improvement. Not long after arriving in Wales, Stanley removes himself from the center of Builth, so 'thinly inhabited by gentlemen' with whom he can share any 'communicable ideas,' and

takes lodging in a manor house which used to be the ‘country seat of a distinguished family’ but is now occupied by a tenant who rents out rooms to visiting gentry and anglers, effectively using an old Welsh estate house as a bed and breakfast for tourists to the Wells (20, 32). Here he meets his old acquaintance, Dr. Pemberton, who Dearnley suggests is a stand-in for author Edward Davies, sharing his strong interest in antiquity and the ancient princes of Wales.⁵² His scorn for a Welshman’s ignorance of authentic Welsh history is matched only by his contempt for gentlemen who capitalize on the tastes of the day and genuine Welsh heritage by erecting fake castles and ruins. ‘You need not be told how much I am disappointed and disgusted at the false taste shewn in the deception’ (43). The issue of celebrating an authentic Ancient British past plays an important role in Davies’s treatment of history and progress, and will later inform a more detailed conversation between Dr. Pemberton, Henry Stanley, and a Welsh estate owner about the state of agriculture and land management in Wales.

While Dr. Pemberton’s search for the grave of Llewelyn⁵³ and his commission of a local bard, Morgan ap Dewi, to show him famous historical and picturesque locales seem to place him in the category of tourist, the doctor’s concern that his fellow Welshmen should know their own history as well as engage with the present ideas of improvement lead to polemical discussions with Stanley and Mr. Powell, an estate owner from Pembrokeshire, which echo the concerns expressed in several of the Board of Agriculture’s publications, not to mention social commentaries on the relationship between landlords, their

⁵² Dearnley, p. 183.

⁵³ Spelled ‘Lywelyn’ in the text.

tenants, their land, and their nation. Dr. Pemberton's interest in both antiquity and progress show the inherent difficulties in addressing tradition in the age of improvement. While antiquity and the so-called romantic face of Wales were the building blocks for Iolo Morganwg's efforts to revitalize Welsh nationalism in his London circle of Bards, Davies intimates that the perpetuation of the myth of a wild Wales by picturesque tours, primitivism and the theory of 'an imaginary yoke,' was potentially a great hindrance to genuine social and economical growth.

Morgan ap Dewi wears 'the sky-blue of the ancient bards,' what Iolo Morganwg called 'the emblem of peace (colour of the serene skies),' belonging to the Graduated Disciple, the most learned order of the Bards.⁵⁴ According to Iolo's description of the ancient bardic code, Bards were ambassadors of peace, unarmed, marked by suffering and neutral in issues of religion, politics, and even nationality, with the identity of Bard superseding all pre-existing affiliations. Yet Iolo was writing of the ancient Bards, and Morgan ap Dewi acknowledges that difference when he offers to share his transcriptions of 'primeval bardism' with Dr. Pemberton and Henry Stanley (183). Iolo Morganwg's attempt to revitalize the bardic culture incorporated some of the customs of antiquity that he described in his essay on the ancient British bard, but lost was the idea that the values of the bard and his allegiance to truth and

⁵⁴ From Iolo Morganwg's unpublished *A Short Account of the Ancient British Bards* (1794), p. 248. Archived online at <http://iolomorganwg.wales.ac.uk/> Though there is no evidence that Edward Davies would have had access to this material, Iolo Morganwg did have other published work on Bardism. There is a mention of azure robes in his "Ode on the Mythology of Ancient British Bards" including a note explaining their association with the pacifist character of the Bard. This poem was recited in London in 1792 at a "meeting of British Bards," or Iolo's *gorsedd*, and published in *Poems, Lyric and Pastoral* in 1794. See also his foreword to William Owen Pughe's *The Heroic Elegies of Llywarc Hen* (1792). In Iolo's *Gorsedd Beirdd Ynys Prydain*, blue was the color of all Bardic robes.

theocratic authority must necessitate an identity with no national ties. Iolo's new eighteenth-century Bardism was most assuredly Welsh, as Iolo claims that only the Welsh (particularly those in South Wales) have kept the British bardic (or druid) tradition alive.

Considering that Iolo Morganwg was later discovered to be a literary forger, crafting his Ancient British histories from both fact and fiction and publishing his own purported primeval bardism under the name Dafydd ap Gwilym, one wonders at the inclusion of anti-nationalist philosophy in his planned "history" of the Ancient Bard. Although there is disagreement about how much, if any, of Iolo's bardism was based on pre-existing traditions, it is interesting to think that Iolo might have fabricated the Ancient Bard's code of neutrality only to create a highly politicized Bardism as a commentary on the necessity of these agents of truth and peace being vocal proponents of republicanism in the 1790s. Iolo, Ned of Glamorgan, was concerned with rehabilitating the Welshness of South Wales, which, due to its comparatively thorough incorporation of English influence, was seen as more Anglicized than the North. The London Welsh societies, before his arrival on the scene, had often located the authentic Welsh cultural tradition in the north, and as Malcolm Andrews observes, 'most later eighteenth-century travellers made a broad distinction between north-western and south-eastern Wales: between the awesome Sublimity of the one and the pastoral beauty of the other.'⁵⁵ That distinction was largely based on the way topographical differences were judged according to contemporary aesthetic standards, with the uplands in North Wales resistant to cultivation, yet there had long been an insinuation that the more

⁵⁵ Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque*, p. 111.

populous South Wales had adopted the English language and had been tamed by English prospectors, thus in effect shedding its uniquely Welsh cultural identity. This image of South Wales is one that Iolo Morganwg fought against with his image of the Bard, the embodiment of Welsh tradition, alive and well in South Wales.⁵⁶

As Helen Braithwaite aptly summarizes, ‘The Welsh bards, as presented by Iolo, were poets, seers, law- and lore-givers, moral guardians, trenchant state critics beholden to no authority but God, reason and nature, purveyors of “the most authentic histories of the Welsh” and defenders of ancient British liberties.’⁵⁷ Ironically enough, Iolo’s Bardism, which held truth as a sacred tenet and was promoted as a celebration of authentic British identity, was in part based on very convincing forgeries, and Davies was taken in by Iolo’s forged ‘transcriptions’ of Dafydd ap Gwilym’s poems, going as far as to include his English translation of one of them in *Elisa Powell*. Yet in *The Mythology and Rites of the British Druids* (1809), Davies sides with the growing number of men with antiquarian interests who see Iolo Morganwg’s Bardism as having a distinctly Jacobin, and therefore inauthentic, flavor. As Damian Walford Davies says, Edward ‘Celtic’ Davies had ‘doubts regarding the historicity of Bardic doctrine’ in William Owen Pughe’s *The Heroic Elegies of Llywarc Hen* (1792) and its foreword by Iolo Morganwg, ‘and drew attention to the debt Williams’s Bardic philosophy owed to the revolutionary spirit of the age’ (166).

⁵⁶ For further reading on Iolo Morganwg and Anglicization, see Cathryn Charnell-White’s ‘Barbarism and Bardism: North Wales versus South Wales in the Bardic Vision of Iolo Morganwg’ (Aberstwyth: University of Wales Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies, 2004).

⁵⁷ Helen Braithwaite, ‘From the See of St David’s to St Paul’s Churchyard: Joseph Johnson’s Cross-Border Connections’ in *Wales and the Romantic Imagination*, p. 57.

Davies presents his contemporary bard as proof of the degradation of those ancient bardic principles, as ap Dewi, a ‘Cambrian Ossian,’ seems incapable of living up to Iolo’s idea of reclaimed Bardism or, as Damian Walford Davies calls it, ‘Bardic Jacobinism’, let alone restoring those ancient traditions.⁵⁸ Morgan is good-natured enough, taught to read and write in Latin, Welsh and English and to play the harp, but is ultimately too worldly and too modern to sustain Iolo’s ideal of bardism. Sarah Prescott suggests that ‘Davies appears to be satirizing English expectations of what the “Cambrian Ossian” should be, rather than the bard himself,’ though ap Dewi caters not only to English tourists but to a local populace in want of entertainment (152). Stanley’s initial description of him as a ‘Cambrian Ossian’ invokes thoughts of Celtic Romantic folklore and oral tradition. Yet Morgan ap Dewi’s recital of his ‘primeval bardism’ – ‘Let sorrow be drown’d, / And pleasure resound, / All around.’ - ultimately calls to mind the taint of suspected forgery and Samuel Johnson’s judgment that James Macpherson’s Ossian poems could have been written by children and, more damning, constituted ‘a Scotch conspiracy in national falsehood’.⁵⁹ Unlike Homer, Morgan ap Dewi is only half blind, having been pressed into service in the American Revolution where he had lost an eye and foot at Bunker Hill, ‘and, without taking away the power of playing a tolerable strum on his favourite instrument, new modelled his hand into the shape of an Ourang Outang’s paw’ (187). Certainly, his wounds and the ceremonial laying down of arms to don the Bardic ‘emblem of harmony and

⁵⁸ Damian Walford Davies, *Presences That Disturb: Models of Romantic Identity in the Literature and Culture of the 1790s* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2002), p. 136.

⁵⁹ James Porter, “‘Bring Me the Head of James Macpherson’: The Execution of Ossian and the Wellspring of Folkloristic Discourse’, *The Journal of American Folklore*, Vol. 114, No. 454 (Autumn, 2001), p. 416.

peace' are in accordance with Iolo Morganwg's ideology, but Morgan is forced into his career choice by the fact that 'owing to some informality in my application, and a mistake in my surname,' he was denied a war pension. Morgan, who at one point faced the legal repercussions of a debt at his local pub, is saved by his role as bard, or rather the fact that he is the only decent entertainment available for weddings and wakes.

Morgan's war wound, specifically his deformed hand, plays a vital role in his newfound popularity. While his pre-Revolution performances 'were civilly endured,' before his 'countrymen saw this hand (extending his poor distorted member) producing music on the harp, they never knew I could work miracles' (190). Henry Stanley's earlier description of that hand as 'an Ourang Outang's paw' has interesting connotations of the primitivism so popular in the eighteenth century and propagated by several scholars of Celtic antiquity, including James Macpherson and Iolo Morganwg, who thought that he could counter long-held beliefs that early Celtic societies were barbaric by promoting Wales as the birthplace of an authentic British identity and culture. In Francis Moran's analysis of the tenth note in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men* (1755), he explains that Rousseau 'raises the question of whether the *orangs-outang* – a group of anthropomorphic animals who had been described by European travellers – might not actually be a race of "savage men"'.⁶⁰ Prescott posits that 'the mutilated body of ap Dewi thus functions as an implicit critique of empire, as he is a victim of imperial violence,' yet it could be argued that his audience's ready

⁶⁰ Francis Moran III, 'Of Pongos and Men: 'Orangs Outang' in Rousseau's "Discourse on Inequality"', *The Review of Politics*, Vol. 57, No. 4 (Autumn, 1995), p. 641.

acceptance of Morgan as a miracle worker and genuine Bard, rather than an amateur poet with a talent for playing the harp, represents both a mild fetishization of the figure of the wounded British soldier and the need for sympathy in the creation of national spirit. More importantly this suggests that Davies had reservations about relying on primitivism to promote Wales in a modern setting, as the wound is demystified and given an imperial, logical, contemporary and commercial context.

Having already demonstrated his affinity for Welsh antiquity and even condemned his contemporaries for failing to appreciate their rich cultural heritage, Davies rejects the notion that primitive humans were God's intention for the human race. He does so by creating in Dr. Pemberton both a champion of antiquity and a proponent of progress. Moira Dearnley argues that Pemberton 'is in effect laughed off the stage of the novel' when he abruptly ends his tour in order to pursue a Dublin associate's discovery of a complete copy of Aneurin's *Y Gododdin*, an epic which he describes as 'the most ancient British poem now extant'.⁶¹ I argue that Pemberton, who leaves Wales in search of a genuine artifact of early Welsh tradition after being disappointed in ap Dewi's feeble attempt at reclaiming bardism, is an embodiment of Edward Davies's antiquarian pastime. Pemberton (and Davies) is not easily seduced by a 'bard' of the sort that offered their services to uninformed tourists looking for a taste of the purportedly *authentic* British experience. Rather, an interest in genuine artifacts of antiquity and in Welsh cultural history is a worthy pursuit for an educated man.

⁶¹ Dearnley, *Distant Fields*, p. 170; Davies, *Elisa Powell*, vol. II, p. 151. Note that the only available version of *Gododdin* is a thirteenth-century Welsh manuscript, but describes sixth or seventh-century events in Scotland.

Sarah Prescott suggests that in writing *Elisa Powell*, Edward Davies discovered the inherent difficulties of incorporating the ‘concerns of antiquarianism and Welsh bardic nationalism’ into ‘the generic frame of eighteenth-century fiction’ (146). Certainly, what remains for the second volume of the novel is an author attempting, with varying degrees of success, to incorporate the expected romance into what could be considered the first Anglo-Welsh national novel. Yet *Elisa Powell* does not fit within the tradition later established by Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan in the Irish national tale, where union between nations is represented by a transnational marriage. While Davies laments Anglicization to a certain extent, his appreciation for the proliferation of both agricultural advancements and interest in Welsh history does not extend to any separatist movement, political, cultural, or otherwise. Where then is the symbolized union in *Elisa Powell*? Is there even a need for union in a novel set in South Wales, which, as Iolo Morganwg abhorred, was already seen as effectively Anglicized, or at a time when Welsh national identity was so tied in with *British* national identity?

Perhaps the union needed to incorporate this text within the current conception of the national tale is not one between the Welsh and the English, but between an increasingly industrialized Wales and the romanticized birthplace of the Ancient Briton. Davies leaves the obsession with antiquity to an academic who, though his enthusiasm for Welsh history does at times result in social awkwardness, displays and engenders a well-rounded curiosity about both ancient Welsh tradition and eighteenth-century progress.⁶² It is no mistake that

⁶² See Andrew Davies’s “‘Redirecting the Attention of History’: Antiquarian and Historical Fictions of Wales from the Romantic Period’ in *Wales and the Romantic*

Davies combines the story of Morgan ap Dewi in a chapter with a discourse on Pemberton's microscope, including Henry Stanley's lecture on the physical adaptability in 'every tribe' of insects 'to administer to the wants and discharge the functions of their nature' (173). Dr. Pemberton facilitates both discussions, and here is the true union in *Elisa Powell*. Tradition has a vital place in Welsh identity. As Andrew Davies argued regarding the interest in Welsh antiquarianism and the promotion of the Welsh as descendents from Ancient Britons, 'this reminder that collective national political identity, organized under the sign of the nation-state, gathers to itself older, discrete cultural-national identities, installed Wales and Welshness as highly significant components of British political nationalist discourse' (107). But tradition must not stand in the way of progress, and Davies uses Dr. Pemberton as a mouthpiece for his ideas of the responsible agricultural improvements that must be carried out in Wales.

Builth, according to Clark's *General View*, is not ideal farmland, with a large amount of wetlands or waste, and is not self-sufficient in grain production, buying grain from neighbouring towns in Brecknock. Clark attributes the failure of local farmers to drain the wetlands to superstition, a stubborn adherence to tradition, and, ultimately, to an unfortunate habit of idleness. 'The farmer *hero* suffers the water to keep possession of his *ancient freehold* with a kind of superstitious, and, seemingly, conscious reverence' (34). Mr. Powell begins a discussion on enclosure, drainage of wasteland, and the state of agriculture in Wales as compared to England by relating news of a Mr. Jones who was in negotiations with freeholders to enclose a common: 'It is a tract of Moorish land, which, according to this great farmer, may, by proper draining and manuring, be

Imagination for a persuasive analysis of the fictional Welsh antiquarian in a Scottish context.

converted into excellent meadow. To his judgment in his own profession, I freely submit: but it is rather unaccountable how a man of Mr. Jones' liberal sentiments, can rob the poor of their privilege of common' (114). Powell is making use of the moral arguments attached to anti-enclosure platforms, and while not questioning Mr. Jones's opinion that enclosure will lead to agricultural improvements, he is concerned that the loss of common right will increase the poverty among small farmers and cotters. The sentiment attached to rights to the common can be seen in John Cowper's "An essay, proving, that inclosing commons, and common-field-lands, is contrary to the interest of the nation," a reply to Edward Laurence's *The Duty and Office of a Land Steward*, which instructed stewards to attempt to buy and bully freeholders off land with the potential for enclosure and improvement in order to consolidate profits for the employing landlord.⁶³ Cowper argues that the inevitable creation of a class of small farmers completely dependent on the charity of others is unchristian:

Christianity teaches us Compassion and universal Benevolence; and not to watch, to seek for, and to take all Opportunities of supplanting and ruining the *Poor*. I know no Set of Men, that toil and labour so hard as the smaller Farmers and Freeholders, none who are more industrious to encrease the Product of the Earth; none who are more serviceable to the Commonwealth; and consequently none who better deserve Encouragement: And yet these are the men that are to be sent a starving as soon as possible. Thus *Industry* is discountenanced, *Parishes* are depopulated, and many Families reduced to One. (18)

Dr. Pemberton takes issue with Howell's concerns, arguing that the failure to cultivate the commons was more damaging to the poor than not, and Stanley observes that an English gentleman farmer once said the same but that, 'in

⁶³ John Cowper, 'An essay, proving, that inclosing commons, and common-field-lands, is contrary to the interest of the nation: in which some passages in the New system of agriculture, by J. Laurence M.A. and in the Duty and office of a land-steward, by E. Laurence, ... are examined' (London, 1732).

Wales, they are suffered to remain wild and desolate, to the disgrace of the inhabitants, and the perpetuity of their proverbial poverty' (115).

What follows is Dr. Pemberton's lengthy speech on the state of Welsh agriculture, a portion of which I reproduce here:

"Give me leave to hint to you," says he, "that neither the English nor Welsh have attained such a degree of consistency in their plan of agriculture as will justify them in reproaching the absurdity of their neighbours. Yet so deeply rooted is prejudice in favour of long-established custom, that many a farmer on this side of the Severn would, with equal confidence, assert, that his countrymen act upon the most rational principle, in cultivating, with the utmost care, their vallies and plains, while they abandon to their sheep and young cattle the hills and barren grounds only, as less likely to reward the husbandman's toil". (116)

In *The Rural Poor*, David W. Howell supports Pemberton's prediction of alternative farming techniques being seen as absurdities, emphasizing both the reliance on tradition and the fear of ridicule as barriers to improved husbandry. 'Reluctance to adopt new practices also sprang from "ignorance" and the "prejudice" which was rooted in their stubborn attachment to the ways of their forefathers. They hung back from trying out new English techniques, too, lest they should invite their neighbours' ridicule and be seen by the community as getting above themselves' (43). A similar reaction is seen in Arthur Young's tour in Wales, when:

One farmer from *England*, in the latter parish [in Glamorganshire], sowed two acres, and was at great pains to hoe them well, and keep them clean; the neighbouring ones ridiculed him infinitely, and really thought him mad; but were surprised to see what a crop he gained, for it was very considerable, and he sold it by the sack to all the neighbouring towns to vast profit: this practice he has since continued; but strange to tell, it has never been copied! (116-17)

It is not precisely this fear of ridicule that John Clark and Dr. Pemberton so lament in Welsh agricultural practice, but rather the use of tradition as an excuse for idleness and/or stagnation that Clark sees as a pervasive retardant to viable and profitable farm lands in Builth. ‘It must,’ he writes, ‘at first view, excite some degree of astonishment, that a class of men, endued by nature with a *keenness of penetration*, and a *solidity of judgment* [...] should, from *father to son*, persevere so *stubbornly* in a practice so *destructive to themselves*. They all insist, that no *other mode of husbandry* would agree with *their* land; and that their *fathers did so* before them.’ Clark goes on to say that the *real* reason for their reluctance to embrace modern husbandry is that ‘they are, from the habit of *idleness*, very averse to *labour*’ (35-36). Idleness and aversion to industry is, according to Clark, not a genetic marker of the Welsh people; rather, it is a demonstration of the practical ramifications of clinging to tradition merely because of a romanticized notion of the past.

As in *Eugenius*, idleness is repeatedly seen in *Elisa Powell* as the enemy of industry, more so than ignorance or inferior farm equipment or limited access to coal for manufactories or lime for fertilizer. Dr. Pemberton insists that, ‘unless you enable the poor to support themselves by their labour, you must support them in idleness’ (122). By ‘support,’ he means both passively encouraging stagnation and actively supporting them financially through the Poor Tax. Returning to the original subject of their discussion, Pemberton argues that enclosure creates small and manageable parcels of land for the poor, and holding any amount of land makes them respectable to others and gives them a certain measure of self-respect, while also allowing financially distressed families to become self-sufficient, as ‘the freeholders would relieve their tenants

of great part of the poor tax' (123). Thomas Baird's *General View of the Agriculture of the County of Middlesex*, like Clark's report on Brecknock, associated agricultural improvement with the improvement of morals and character, and the failure to adopt modern husbandry with a failure to meet the needs of a nation. Just as proponents of enclosure had long been using the argument that it would be better for the nation as a whole (for, according to Baird, 'it is certainly a national loss, to suffer as fine land as any in the kingdom, to lie almost totally waste') agricultural writers of the period often appealed to the notion of self-improvement as a private virtue in their focus on education, industriousness, rationality, and civility (23). There is a sense in these agricultural tracts that working the land was a noble pursuit with national importance. Davies gives Pemberton the last word on the subject, concluding the novel's polemic on responsible land management with a look outward to the industrialization of Wales, which, as we have seen, was beginning already: 'to us and to every other country capable of improvement in agriculture, and of being rendered more adequate, by its natural produce, to the support of its inhabitants, commerce can claim but a secondary importance' (130). Of course, Pemberton is focusing on *export* when he speaks of commerce, and the trend of major industrial investors spending capital made on Welsh industries in England rather than Wales.

In *Elisa Powell*, Edward Davies, as Moira Dearnley observes, made uncharacteristically early nationalist critiques of the English presence in Wales. The most explicit criticism comes when Henry Stanley, upon hearing the phrase 'nothing but an Englishman,' laments that:

Five centuries ago, we Englishmen robbed the Welch of their national independence. [...]

The gentlemen of the principality have, indeed, in a great measure, forgotten their nationality, and now enlist, with a tolerable grace, under the banner of their conquerors; but the populace still retain sufficient greatness of mind to condemn a refinement, which they consider as a badge of slavery, and to glory in their descent from the ancient Britons.

What is this Liberty, for which a whole people could so pertinaciously contend, and the loss of which they so inveterately resent! The Welch are not worse lodged, worse clothed, nor worse fed than they were under their native princes; and, for some ages, their persons and properties are, perhaps much better secured. Still they pine, under an imaginary yoke, and are dwindled down to about one half of their former population. (21-23)

Here we have the romanticizing of the Welsh as an ancient warrior race – the image of the authentic Briton that was at the center of the Iolo's *Gorsedd Beirdd Ynys Prydain* in London. We also have an Anglicized South Welsh gentry that has grudgingly embraced English imperial influence by forgetting or suppressing national heritage, but a populace that uses the mythology of Welsh antiquity to resist progress. Henry Stanley views the moment of transcultural impact as being rooted in the past, unable or unwilling to concede that his own presence as an English speculator in Wales may be part of the reason that he senses a lingering tension between himself and the local Welsh population in Builth. According to him, whatever damage may have been done to Welsh national identity when the reign of the last Welsh princes ended, the eighteenth-century Welsh are not at a material disadvantage for it and the only thing preventing them from enjoying the benefits of a modern commercial relationship with England and the global community is, it seems, either a lingering idleness

caused by the psychosomatic trauma of colonization or a misguided belief in the lasting effects of the ‘Norman Yoke’.⁶⁴

With Henry Stanley, English improver, and Dr. Pemberton, Welsh antiquarian, Edward Davies tells the natives of South Wales that, though they honor those ancient princes who so long withstood foreign invasion and who fostered a rich and lasting culture, the idea of an ‘imaginary yoke,’ where English landowners are akin to the Norman invaders and that rights to the commons must be preserved at all cost, is an impediment to progress. In her analysis of his attempts to position bardism against barbarism in his promotion of a Welsh national heritage, Cathryn Charnell-White notes that, for Iolo Morganwg, ‘the “Norman Yoke”, bane of Anglo-Saxon historiographers and curse of literary primitivists and patriots alike, was brushed aside in a more positive interpretation of the post-Conquest colonization of Glamorgan’.⁶⁵ In a similar attempt to find balance between national progress and national pride, Davies suggests that if the ‘gentlemen of the principality’ do not reclaim pride in their national past and if the general population does not embrace the spirit of improvement, they risk losing to negligence everything they, and tourists, hold dear about Wales. After all, while landlords and tenants agreeing to preserve saplings and prevent deforestation does, of course, have practical ramifications, maintaining the picturesque beauty of the county can also be presented as a point of national pride (and a concession to the fiscal reality of the tourist industry in Wales in the last decades of the century).

⁶⁴ See Christopher Hill, ‘The Norman Yoke’, *Puritanism and Revolution* (London, 1969), pp. 58-125. See also Thomas Spence’s ‘The Real Rights of Man’ (1793) for the use of the idea of ‘Norman yoke’ in his argument for retaining common rights under the authority of parishes acting as corporations for distribution.

⁶⁵ ‘Barbarism and Bardism’, p. 13.

Ultimately, there is no lasting Welsh-English marriage/union in this novel. Elisa Powell dies, and even Henry Stanley's future as the steward of his own Welsh property is left in question as he contemplates leaving Wales to mourn. Sarah Prescott argues that the novel's denouement represents a failure of 'the national experiment of an Englishman becoming successfully naturalized in Wales (as opposed to colonizing it)' (154). While that may be true, I would suggest that Davies was not condemning the effort Stanley made in taking on a Welsh freehold, but rather the fact that he fell prey to the seduction of an Anglicized (and victimized) image of Wales, as embodied by the titular Elisa Powell. As Prescott notes, Elisa is represented as an Anglicized member of the Welsh gentry, stripped of any defining national characteristics, and alluring to the sentimental side of Stanley's character as she suffers from an attempted rape, the death of her father, and her own consumptive illness. Upon meeting Elisa, who 'is more lovely in her grief,' Stanley abandons his interest in surveying his estate, focusing his attention on her (108). Yet more than cautioning against Anglo-Welsh union, their sad end reminds the readers of the other choice; the true Welsh heroine of the novel is Maria Jones, who is the daughter of an improving Welsh freeholder, is familiar with the national literature of Wales, and rescues *herself* from an attempted rape by the son of a nabob, symbolic of imperialist expansion.⁶⁶

Rather than being a complete subversion of the typical marriage plot found in later national tales, it could be argued that Elisa's demise suggests more about Davies's antipathy for Anglicization as a reaction to English influence. By treating Welsh nationalism, in the form of Maria, as a spectacle while

⁶⁶ See Prescott, *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales*, pp. 153-55.

attaching himself to a weakened, Anglicized family, Stanley fails to secure any form of happiness and in turn denies the community his influence as a responsible and benevolent land owner. Even Dr. Pemberton, who represented a near ideal marriage of Welsh nationalism and modernization, left Wales in search of a copy of *Y Gododdin*, which Ernest Rhys describes as ‘the heroic song of defeat’.⁶⁷ Perhaps the lesson for all is that Wales must divorce itself from the role of the victim of empire before its participation *in* imperialism and the influx of English influence can occur without the loss of Welsh national identity. Davies ultimately proves to be what Katie Trumpener calls a ‘nationalist improver’. He wanted ‘a future in which a history of cultural achievements was at once honored, preserved, and rejoined’ with progress.⁶⁸

3. WELSH HEIRESES AND ‘ROMANTIC BENEVOLENCE’

Many ‘first contact’ narratives, including those found in Wales-related fiction of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, follow a male traveller to exotic locales and his introduction to new prospects and populations. Yet the female presence in Welsh novels of the period, both in authorship and in plot,

⁶⁷ See Ernest Rhys, *Readings in Welsh Literature* (Wrexham: Hughs & Sons, 1924), Chapter IV: ‘The heroic song of defeat called ‘Y Gododin’ (sometimes spelt Gododdin) is the nearest thing to an epic poem that we have in early Welsh poetry. It is so called after a district on the north side of the Firth of Forth, Manaw Gododin, where one of the strongest of the Welsh tribes had their strong-hold; and it tells of their fierce raid and desperate fight in another region, where they were beaten. The battle probably took place at a spot called Cattrath, which was much further south. The “Greater Wales” of that day lay in dispersed colonies from the Firth of Forth to the sea of Severn, and many of the events, like this fatal battle of Cattrath, which we read of in the Four Old Books, mark the gradual driving-back of the British until their final homing in Wales as we know it.’

⁶⁸ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 30.

should not be ignored, particularly in the context of the actual role Welsh heiresses often played in the survival or loss of major Welsh estates. Jane Aaron's studies of Welsh women's writing suggest that Wales, by the final decades of the eighteenth century, had 'become a fashionable location in which to set novels' aimed at satisfying the popular demand for 'the sensational and the sentimental'.⁶⁹ Andrew Davies observes that the majority of Wales-related 'sentimental novels and novels of sensibility' published in that period feature 'female central focalisers,' often displaced, disinherited, or orphaned heiresses.⁷⁰ Sarah Prescott argues that this trend may have been a response to a demographic shift undergone in Britain in the eighteenth century and applies the observations made by Linda Colley, David W. Howell, Philip Jenkins and others regarding what Jenkins calls the 'demographic crisis' in eighteenth century Wales – namely the failure of the male line of the Welsh gentry – to Anna Maria Bennett's Wales-related novels.⁷¹ As Howell notes, 'a significant number' of Welsh estates 'passed *via* heiresses'.⁷² While the 'female central focalisers' in many of these Welsh novels act as an embodiment of Wales itself, it follows that

⁶⁹ 'Seduction and Betrayal: Wales in women's fiction, 1785-1810', *Women's Writing*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1994), p. 65. See also Jane Aaron, 'A national seduction'.

⁷⁰ Andrew Davies, "'The reputed nation of inspiration": representation of Wales in fiction from the Romantic period, 1780 – 1829' (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Cardiff, 2001), p. 64. Quoted in Sarah Prescott, p. 134.

⁷¹ Prescott, *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales*, p. 132-33. See Philip Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class*, p. 39.

⁷² David W. Howell, *Patriarchs and Parasites: The Gentry of South-West Wales in the Eighteenth Century* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1986), p. 26. Howell's chapter "The Structure of the Landed Class" is perhaps more statistically accurate regarding eighteenth-century Welsh demographics than Colley's *Britons*, and more wide-ranging than Jenkins's study of the Glamorgan gentry. Howell offers a far more complicated picture of marriage and estate inheritance, particularly in the case of Welsh landowners marrying English heiresses for their dowries, than may be found in the majority of the period's Wales-related sentimental novels discussed by Prescott, Davies, and Dearnley.

they are also often implicated in the Anglicization of Wales or the corruption of Welsh lineage via marriage, as ‘some local heiresses, frequently well-endowed ones, fell to Englishmen or Scotsmen and in this way new families came to settle in the region’ (26).

In her survey of Wales-related fiction by female authors, Jane Aaron notes that many of the novels in her study were published by William Lane of the Minerva Press and humorously imagines his instructions to his writers: ‘make it picaresque, sentimental, mildly Gothic, and set in Wales!’⁷³ Anna Maria Bennett’s *Anna; or, Memoirs of a Welch Heiress* (1785) and the anonymously published *The Fair Cambrians* (1790) were both printed for William Lane. They both feature heroines being introduced to Wales either as heiresses or potential heiresses to Welsh landed estates. And though they both basically conform to the Welsh romance vogue fostered by Lane’s publishing house, the Welsh setting serves a much more vital role than merely catering to a popular trend. Both novels treat the appreciation of Wales and its landscape as metaphorically representative of moral character. And while their heiresses’ roles in improvement and estate management are often relegated to aesthetic decisions and the promotion of benevolence and industry, the ways in which the stories of these women are used to address issues of tradition, succession, Anglicization, and modernization are an integral part of an examination of national image and improvement in Wales.

In Anna Maria Bennett’s *Anna*, the eponymous heroine is orphaned

⁷³ Jane Aaron, ‘A national seduction’, p. 34.

during her infancy and left with no established identity.⁷⁴ Much of the novel takes place in England, either in Wiltshire where Anna spends her early adolescence under the protection of the Melmoth family, or in London, but for four years Anna lives in the village of Llandore in Wales, having followed her former governess there.⁷⁵ The Herberts and Edwins, landed families with ancient Welsh lineage, are her acquaintances in South Wales and a majority of the plot is focused on the interpersonal relationships between Anna and these families, culminating in Anna's marriage to Charles Herbert and the reinstatement of her birthright as Lady Ann Trevannion, heir to the Earl of Trevannion's estate and member of the Edwin family.⁷⁶ Jane Aaron suggests that, in installing a markedly pro-establishment couple who temper the Edwins' anti-British sentiments, Bennett presents both a Welsh peasantry and gentry that are, 'in a sense, orphaned by the historical development' of the making of Britain and its resulting Anglicization of its Celtic components.⁷⁷

Sarah Prescott provides a compelling counterargument to Aaron's interpretation of the novel's concluding marriage union, reasoning that, because both Anna and Charles descend from respectable Welsh families, Bennett is focusing less on 'the wider process of Anglicisation' and more on 'an anachronistic fantasy of Wales as able to uphold its traditions' in the face of

⁷⁴ Anna Maria Bennett, *Anna; or, Memoirs of a Welch heiress. Interspersed with anecdotes of a nabob, In four volumes* (London, 1785).

⁷⁵ In *Distant Fields*, Moira Dearnley suggests that, based on geographical clues, Llandore may be modeled on Merthyr Tydfil 'some years before it became the first boom town in industrial Wales' (134).

⁷⁶ There are textual inconsistencies in the spelling of Anna's surname, fluctuating from 'Trevannion' in the first and third volumes to 'Trevanion' in the second and fourth. Following Dearnley's precedent and the prominence of the Trevannion family in Cornwall, I will use the former spelling throughout.

⁷⁷ Aaron, 'Seduction and Betrayal', p.74.

overwhelming internal pressure to become a major component of British identity.⁷⁸ Yet Prescott highlights Bennett's apparent awareness that maintaining a unique Welsh identity following the infusion of English (or Scottish, or Irish) influence *is* romantic fantasy, and uses the novel's many failed marriage plans and seductions as examples of its ultimately 'ideal but precarious vision of Welsh-British coexistence' (139). Certainly, Anna herself faces several challenges throughout the narrative, particularly when she is forced by the death of her governess, Mrs. Mansel, to leave Wales. Anna suffers the ignominy of being accused of being secretly engaged to Mr. Wilkinson, partner in Mr. Herbert's iron works, of being the kept mistress of Hugh Edwin, and of being a thief and imposter. But though analyzing Bennett's treatment of Welsh national identity via the novel's domestic plot and subplots is appropriate, focusing on the management of estates and on the exchange of money and titles in addition to marriage vows enriches the exploration of issues of improvement, image, and Anglicization.

Anna's introduction to the Welsh landscape does not show an appreciation for its dramatic sublime qualities, but rather emphasizes its exoticism, with its 'almost barren mountains, which bore no traits of inhabitants, except the numerous stocks of sheep' (V. I, 204). Rather than undergoing a shift in aesthetic sensibilities or enacting her own project of improvement, Anna's first impression is instead negated once her hostess, Mrs. Mansel, introduces her to Llandore village and demonstrates the good works she, her reverend husband, and the prominent gentry families do there, for 'no place could be barren or uncultivated where philanthropy lived, and where benevolence thrived' (206).

⁷⁸ See Prescott, *Eighteenth-Century Writing from Wales*, p. 138.

The village is distinguished from the surrounding mountains, nestled in 'the most beautiful valley nature ever formed,' and just as the landscape viewed on her journey there was imbued with otherness, Llandore seems to Anna a 'fairy land'. Contributing to this sense is the utopian state of the village itself. In contrast to the dilapidated Irish villages found in Maria Edgeworth's fiction, Llandore features 'white-washed neat dwellings,' where 'the meanest hut vied in hue with the best house there' (209). Rather than being a blot on the landscape or a monument to a degenerated Cambrian line, Llandore Castle is judged to be 'an enchanting addition to the pleasant prospect from the parsonage' (212) and, despite its ties to the local iron works, the castle is incorporated neatly into the valley's woods as if both nature and the surrounding village sprang up around it. It is here that Anna is introduced to the Herberts and the Edwins, families with strong ties to the community and ultimately to Anna herself.

In the context of the critical debate on the degree and characterization of Anglicization in *Anna*, it is appropriate to catalogue the sources of influence in Llandore in determining the treatment of Welshness in general and national inheritance and administration in particular. Both Moira Dearnley and Sarah Prescott have noted the ambivalence with which Bennett treats the stereotypical Welsh 'pride in family' – the value placed on tracing one's lineage – and the issue of Welsh separatism, be it cultural, political, or economic in scope. Much is made of Lady Edwin's insistence on her children marrying into other Welsh families, prominent or not: 'so attached was she to the Cambrian stream in her veins, she would, as she often declared, rather have chose to marry her children to the peasant of her own wild hills, than to nobles of any other country' (V1, 234). While marriage, seduction, and the various attempts at preserving Welsh

lineage are the primary focus of *Anna*, estate finances and benevolence are major components of not only the domestic plot, but of the novel's national concerns as well.

Prior to her arrival in Wales, Anna's experience with charity and estate management was limited to her association with the Melmoth family in Wiltshire, who adopted Anna after her first protector, Reverend John Dalton, balked at the expense of taking in an orphan. Mr. Melmoth saw to her early education and was responsible for molding much of her moral character, yet he was hardly an ideal landlord, as Anna's introduction to her new home included the intelligence that the Melmoth Lodge was on the verge of financial ruin: 'there's one estate gone already; all the timber cut down, and the lodge over head and ears in debt, pulling down one house, and putting up t'other, from country to town, and racketing all over the kingdom' (45). Melmoth is not the only major male character to usher his family into financial troubles; Mr. Herbert kills himself in debtor's prison after spending his fortune on his mistress and the diversions of London and spa towns, while Hugh Edwin gambles away his portion of the Edwin estate. Just as the 'demographic crisis' in Wales resulted in major estates being transferred via marriage or inherited along the matrilineal line, *Anna* portrays the Welsh heiress, particularly Lady Edwin, as serving both the interest of tradition in the form of appreciation of ancestry and the interest of the viability of the estate and surrounding community. Sir William Edwin allows his wife to manage both his and her estates, and Bennett describes these estates and their tenants as 'thriving,' with Lady Edwin promoting 'cheerful industry' and the proper care of properties under lease by refusing to raise rents as neighboring estates had done (237). Lady Edwin demonstrates prudence in

the 'prompt payment of their bills' and benevolence in 'well timed' and 'general' acts of charity. Although Lady Edwin may suffer from an over-attachment to 'family pride', she is also described as 'a benevolent spirit; a soul that scorned an act of meanness; a princely rewarder of merit; a general benefactor to the needy; disinterested and generous' (232). Benevolence and industry are recurring themes of the novel, and it could be argued that they do more to preserve the integrity of Welsh identity than any recourse to romanticizing tradition.

Fearing that her benefactors the Melmoths would not be able to support her long, Anna's governess, the future Mrs. Mansel, insists on teaching her pupil practical skills such as domestic needlework in addition to ornamental in case Anna should ever need to 'make her an useful member of society' (68). Mrs. Mansel becomes Anna's first guide in the practice of benevolence when Anna joins her in Wales, and under her tutelage 'Anna became the cheerful dispenser of charity; her youth and vivacity made the learning the Welch language easy and useful; she soon became the interpreter of the poor to her maternal friend' (214). Her early attempts to forge connections within the community by learning Welsh and aiding Mrs. Mansel in her acts of charity, coupled with her eventual identification as 'the real heiress of Trevanion,' result in Anna later being embraced by 'the tenants and vassals of her estate' (Vol. IV, 269). In a parade of sentimental attachment, her return to Llandore is met with the 'unfeigned joy of the honest unconquered, tho' uncultivated, Cambrians' (270). Jane Aaron argues that Anna's tenants only embrace her return because they are unaware 'the Trevanion gentry...have switched sides' and become materially and politically less anti-English. 'Given the changed allegiance of the leaders

whom they unquestioningly follow,' she suggests, 'these Cambrian "vassals", for all their joy, are unwittingly undergoing the process of being ideologically "conquered".'⁷⁹ Yet Anna is an uncorrupted Welsh heiress who has saved her family's name from the pro-London Edwin children, and her husband Charles Herbert is set to rehabilitate the family estate following his father's dissipation in the metropolis. This scene of 'unfeigned joy' ultimately serves as a counterpoint to the novel's only explicit nod to national loss, where the few ruins peppering the valley are described as 'the sad memento of the faded glory and sunk dignity of the ancient inhabitants of Cambria' (Vol. I, 207). Considering the characterization of Llandore as an ideal Welsh village, due in large part to the valley's natural resources and the influence of the Edwins and Herberts, *Anna* does not contain scenes wherein tenants lament their absentee landlords and improvers decry the systemic mismanagement of Welsh resources. Anna's integration into the community reads not as a dangerous acceptance of English hegemony, but as validation of political and economic progress under moderate and benevolent Welsh landowners who will insure the continuing perception of Llandore as a 'fairy land'.

Despite her apparent ambivalence regarding the process of Anglicization in Wales, Bennett often reduces nationalist nostalgia to a stereotype of the Welsh being ancestor-mad, as demonstrated by the older generation of Edwins. That is not to say that *Anna* is unsympathetic to the idea of national pride or, indeed, national loss, particularly when it comes to practical concerns such as the weight of history holding back potential progress. Before she returns to Wales to marry and assume the Trevannion estate, Anna is aided by a retired

⁷⁹ Aaron, 'A national seduction', p. 33.

soldier going by the name of Mr. Bently, and this man accompanies her back to Llandore as a guardian and partner in benevolence. Speaking on the virtues of committing charitable acts as a ward against depression, Bently lays down the following guide for Anna to follow in her new role as a benevolent Welsh heiress:

I have enough and enough, for the purchases of generous charity, not to the clamorous beggar, not to the hardened wanderer, but to the modest few, whose pride of heart, inspired by the honest dignity of inward rectitude, shrinks from the offered alm, will we turn our eyes. The dumb sorrow of those who recollect, with deep regret, the better fate of their earlier days, and who feel, in the sad reverse, pangs, to which the starving mendicant is a stranger, shall speak a language we will teach our souls to understand.⁸⁰

Bennett may be speaking of personal loss here, and certainly *Anna* features several reversals of fortune, yet the parallels between these lamented ‘earlier days’ and the ‘sunk dignity’ of the ancient Cambrians, and between the Welsh ‘family pride’ that features throughout the novel and this ‘pride of heart’ that favors industry over assistance, are striking. Ultimately, it is not upholding Welsh tradition that marks a model landlord, but rather acting in accordance with the general good of the public, which in the eighteenth century included accepting Wales’s role in the wider British community.

In viewing the national and international implications of monetary gain and exchange, there are several points of ambivalence in Bennett’s work. Though the Edwin family pride is characterized as a weakness, proven by the ruin of both Cecilia and Hugh Edwin’s reputations, Lady Edwin’s thinly veiled request that her niece Anna choose a Welsh husband who will adopt *her* Trevannion name and become ‘a chief worthy of such vassals’ results in seating

⁸⁰ Vol. IV, p. 15.

Charles Herbert at the head of the Edwin estate, the Trevannion estate, and what is left of the Herbert estate, including a share in Llandore's ironworks.⁸¹ London is seen as a corrupting influence, but chiefly for those preoccupied with high society's frivolous pastimes; Anna's moral upbringing and her ability to support herself by sewing act as defense against the metropolis, resources which were not cultivated in Cecilia Edwin, the novel's other Welsh heiress. Economic separatism and imperial influence are also points of ambiguity in the text. Lady Edwin is portrayed as an ideal estate manager, and embedded in this description is an observation that she refuses to outsource, hiring only Welsh laborers for service and trade. But this is balanced by the fact that the ironworks Mrs. Herbert, Sir William Edwin's sister, inherited from her grandmother is managed by Mr. Wilkinson, who was born in London and marries into the Herbert family as well.⁸²

Even the nabob mentioned in the novel's title can not be seen as a total condemnation of imperial expansion. Colonel Gorget, the half-Irish nabob whose attempts at seducing Anna cause a great many of her hardships, is certainly villainous, and when it is revealed that he is the father of Mr. Wilkinson, who like Anna only learned of his origins in the latter half of the novel, Bennett observes that the money Wilkinson earns at the ironworks is

⁸¹ Volume IV, p. 264. See also Howell, p. 20 – 'there were a number of instances where the continuity of an estate passing by female inheritance was to some extent preserved by the owner stipulating in his will that the husband-to-be or the children of the marriage should take the additional surname of the bride's family.'

⁸² The Wilkinson surname may be a reference to Isaac and John Wilkinson, the famous father and son ironmasters of the eighteenth century who managed the ironworks in Bersham, North Wales. Isaac Wilkinson also had interests in Glamorgan's iron industry, with shares in the Dowlais Iron Company in Merthyr Tydfil (the model for Llandore and Anna Maria Bennett's alleged birthplace), as well as a founding role in the creation of the Plymouth and Cyfarthfa ironworks. See W. H. Chaloner's 'Isaac Wilkinson, Potfounder' in *Studies in the Industrial Revolution*, ed. L.S. Pressnell (London: University of London, 1960), pp. 23-57.

‘more acceptable, and far more honourable’ than Gorget’s wealth. (Vol. IV, 276) Yet it is primarily Gorget’s function as a fortune-hunter, by way of blackmail and seduction, that casts him in a negative light, rather than his business ventures abroad. Indeed, nothing negative is said of the £30,000 that Anna inherits, representing her father’s share of the profits earned in a business he established with his brother-in-law, Mr. Mordant, in Jamaica. The final pages of the novel focus on Charles rather than Anna, as she has chosen him to take up the name Lord Trevannion, and Bennett’s description of him as ‘a watchful and independent guardian of the privileges and benefits of the nation at large, and his own county in particular’ suggests favoring a strong concern with local politics but not at the expense of ‘the general good’ of British interest (Vol. IV, 279). Ultimately, Llandore’s interests are best served by a Welsh family that is ‘beloved and honoured by their Country,’ an English industrialist who is aligned with that family via marriage and disapproves of absenteeism, and the application of responsible resource management and prudent benevolence (280).

The Fair Cambrians, anonymously published in 1790, takes a different approach to the issue of female inheritance. Rather than following the ‘orphan nation’ trope discussed in Davies and Prescott, *The Fair Cambrians* features Wales as both a haven from the ‘dissipated part of the world’ and as a testing ground for moral character.⁸³ Throughout the novel is a pronounced dichotomy between the natural purity of the Welsh countryside and the artifice and corruption of London, and the author privileges characters who express an aesthetic appreciation for the Welsh landscape, which is described as a

⁸³ *The Fair Cambrians. A Novel. In Three Volumes.* (London: Printed for William Lane, 1790), I, p. 4.

picturesque vision as ‘grand as the warm imagination of a painter could have wished’ (2). The Kidwelly estate, located in Glamorgan in South Wales, is not introduced as a utopia in stasis, but rather as undergoing improvement to recover from years of disrepair blamed on the failure of the male line. The original Kidwelly Castle, once ‘sacred, and respected, if not beloved,’ would have continued to be held in such regard had the estate ‘not devolved to a female’ and become the property, presumable through marriage, of ‘a family who had not been taught, in early infancy, to revere its venerable gloom’ (3). The lack of sentimental attachment to the ancient family seat led to its ruin, and by the time Colonel Dorville, the only son of the heiress to Kidwelly, comes into possession, it is uninhabitable.

Dorville is so enamored of the surrounding landscape that he decides to improve the estate rather than furthering its decay by remaining an absentee landlord in London, thus he works with the help of ‘a first rate artist’ and in less than two years the castle is replaced by a modern ‘elegant mansion’ named Beechwood after the surrounding ancient trees. Despite the familiar sentiment that Wales is ‘out of the world’ and that removing them from London will damage their social connections, Dorville wants his teenaged daughters Arabella and Maria to have a moral education in addition to being accomplished according to metropolitan terms. Believing that an acquaintance with and appreciation of ‘the sublime and beautiful of nature’ in Wales will lead to religious devotion of ‘its Divine Author’, Dorville brings his family to Kidwelly, and dies two years later (6). This sentimental novel follows Arabella Dorville’s entry into the marriage market as she comes of age to inherit her own estate, and more interestingly for this study, her role in continuing her father’s project of

improvement and reinstating an appreciation for Wales in her position as the new heiress of Kidwelly.

Unlike the other Wales-related novels discussed in this chapter, *The Fair Cambrians* makes no mention of the industrialization of Wales, and beyond the early description of the original Kidwelly Castle, there is no motif of national loss in the face of progress.⁸⁴ Yet *Fair Cambrians* has a decidedly nostalgic tone aimed at an idealized pastoral age, and Wales itself is used as a representation of an Edenic microcosm. Protagonists are distinguished from their frivolous or morally questionable counterparts by their preference for rural life in retirement. Arabella Dorville is pitted against the English fortune-hunter Mrs. Harley and the native Welsh heiress Miss Julia Courteney. Prior to his death, Col. Dorville had ‘ornamented and improved...the whole country, looking upon every beautiful object, which his eye commanded...with as much delight as if it had been his exclusive possession’ (48). Arabella’s influence and her aesthetic tastes had guided the ‘formation of his grounds,’ and after his death she ‘amused herself with superintending the improvements which he had left unfinished’ (49). Although Arabella’s efforts at land improvement are primarily superficial and entail directing workmen to cut down trees, plant shrubberies, and clear a path to a ‘neglected dell’ in order to perfect the estate’s grand prospect, her association with the land is coupled with her position as a moral model of disinterested benevolence for the laboring class. Meeting a nine year old boy who regrets that he is too young to handle tools, Arabella says ‘it is a pity...to repress the first dawnings of so valuable a quality as industry’ and

⁸⁴ For more on authorship, see Andrew Davies’s “‘The Gothic Novel in Wales’ Revisited: A Preliminary Survey of the Wales-Related Romantic Fiction at Cardiff University”, Cardiff Corvey: *Reading the Romantic Text*, Issue 2 (June 1998).

employs the boy and his siblings in planting sweet-briars, snow-drops, and daffodils for sixpence a day (51). Her acts of benevolence are much more practical, including the foundation of a charity school which teaches work skills, and it is in securing employment for graduates of her school that Arabella has the most impact on the Glamorganshire community.

With the limited society available in the community, it is perhaps to be expected that each major female character is considered a romantic rival for the attention of the few eligible gentlemen. Arabella in particular, with her natural beauty and promised dowry, is treated with a thinly veiled hostility by Julia Courteney and Mrs. Harley, who wage smear campaigns against her in the company of potential suitors such as Sir George Brudenell, who stops in the neighbourhood during his general tour of Wales. Where Arabella is painted as being emotionally invested in landscape viewing, Miss Julia Courteney, living on the neighboring Llangorwel estate, constantly criticizes the remoteness of their village and the lack of decent society and diversions. She boasts what she considers a modern and fashionable opinion that ‘prospects are to me, at best, but lifeless, uninteresting things’ and prefers London to her native Wales, which she later calls a ‘savage country’.⁸⁵ It is in her attempts to mock Arabella in front of Sir George that Miss Courteney grudgingly admits that Arabella had ‘established a school for all the brats in the parish,’ where she educates them and places them in the workforce (152). Miss Courteney sneeringly calls it ‘romantic benevolence,’ implying that Arabella in her preference for solitary contemplation and remote landscapes has divorced herself from the realities of the modern age. Yet these very qualities cement Sir George’s attraction to her,

⁸⁵ Volume I, p. 76 and Volume III, p. 185.

and he and Arabella ultimately marry and divide their time between two estates in Wales and one in Dorsetshire.

Despite her faults, Julia Courteney is in essence a frivolous character, while Mrs. Harley is a much more malicious antagonist to Arabella's heroine. The sister of Major Berkley, the novel's chief seducer and fortune hunter who attempts to elope with Maria Dorville once it becomes clear Arabella cannot be won, Mrs. Harley is a widow who is explicitly interested in landing herself another rich husband (193). The interactions between Harley and Arabella accentuate the merits of nature versus artifice, or pastoral versus metropolitan life. This dichotomy is seen both in their appearance in dress and in their views on landscape theory. Mrs. Harley's argument that Arabella's lack of vanity and her extreme interest in nature are affectations is followed with comedic effect by conversations about wardrobe and makeup. In preparing for a ball, Mrs. Harley is painted and preened to the point where almost every visible part of her visage is artificial, while Arabella shocks her by needing only an hour to dress, relying on her inherent beauty (124). This is paralleled with Mrs. Harley's play at being a friend to the family, all the while encouraging Maria Dorville to elope with Major Berkley and lying to George Brudenell about Arabella's romantic entanglements. Again, attempts to highlight Arabella's interests in landscape design fail to discourage Sir George. Leading him to Arabella's dell, which is represented as her personal project of improvement, Harley asks for Sir George's opinion on Arabella's aesthetic taste. Arabella has by this point been so thoroughly associated with the Welsh landscape and Wales, which Mrs. Harley and Miss Courteney frequently denigrate as being out of the world in comparison to social hubs like Bath and London, that their chancing upon a

natural grotto boasting a purer picturesque beauty than the many artificial grottos being constructed in the gardens of English gentlemen, solidifies his appreciation of Arabella's romantic qualities.⁸⁶ Ignorant of Sir George's tastes in this regard, Mrs. Harley professes a dislike for the grotto and the unhealthy solitude it fosters:

"O, GLOOMY, melancholy to excess," cried the Widow. "I swear it is enough to moop any living soul to sit here alone, as Miss Dorville does, reading, contemplating, and listening to the monotonous roar of that tremendous torrent. Commend me to the light of the sun, and the sight of my fellow-creatures. Take my word for it, these ladies who delight so infinitely in the *pensoroso*, are but dismal companions in a journey through life."
(22)

This condemnation of romantic solitude may have carried more weight throughout the text had it not been for Arabella's (and Sir George's) role as benevolent and moral landlord.

Despite the author's attempts to accentuate Arabella's perfections by having all criticisms of her come from characters with ulterior, usually financial, motives, there is occasionally an element of truth to them, particularly when her ideas of improvement are questioned. Responding to Arabella's criticism of the majority of London society as 'idle and luxurious,' her uncle Mr. Stanley condemns Arabella as 'an Arcadian shepherdess' who would do well to 'recollect that the pastoral age is long since over, and not ridiculously attempt to revive the manners of it' (21). Arabella's counterargument that she is far from a 'romantic visionary' and that the happiness she finds in Wales is 'comparative, not perfect' is weakened by the overwhelming description of the paradisiacal quality of the landscape in South Wales and the success of Col. Dorville's attempts at using

⁸⁶ Volume II, p. 21.

the relative seclusion of the Kidwelly estate to instill in Arabella a sense of duty to moral rectitude and benevolence. This benevolence is mocked at one point by Mrs. Harley, who highlights the decidedly paternalistic strain in Arabella's ideas of improvement. When the possibility is raised that Arabella may marry Lord Charles, heir to the Duke of Dunbeath's seat and Scottish estate, Harley teases:

You, that are so fond of conversing with, and benefitting, the lower class of people, will there have an ample field for your benevolence. Why, the place will become a little Utopia under your forming hand; and its inhabitants, modelled by their benefactress, will again revive the manners of the golden age. New Ossians shall arise to celebrate you; and, but that Lord Charles will with difficulty find an enemy, he should be a second Fingal.⁸⁷

Arabella's response to this is a characteristic display of modesty, as she claims Harley has an exaggerated opinion of Arabella's ability and her influence over Lord Charles, and the conversation ends there. The claim itself, however, has merits within a Welsh setting, as Arabella's extreme, and perhaps untenable, standards of charity and Sir George's generosity in his position as landlord lead to their marriage being celebrated 'not only in the neighbourhood of Beechwood, but at each of their different seats' (237).

Arabella argues that anyone 'who has not such necessaries, and even comforts, of life, as his situation in it requires, and can prove that it is not absolutely his own fault, has a natural claim upon his rich neighbour, to reduce his own luxuries, and supply them' (135). Sir George follows this philosophy when he displaces a rackrenting landlord at his newly purchased Monmouth estate and offers his new tenants not only a vacant farm at an 'easy rent' but pays for their moving expenses and has his steward stock the farm to save them

⁸⁷ Volume II, p. 59.

the start-up cost (142). These heights of charity only serve to reinforce Harley's reference to the feudalist loyalty found in the *Ossian* cycle, and the novel concludes with Sir George and Lady Brudenell securing the male line of an Anglo-Welsh family by having a son, who will presumably be raised in Wales and take after this 'fortunate and virtuous pair' (240). Rather than closing with the Anglo-Welsh union between Arabella and Sir George, *The Fair Cambrians* ends with a nation-neutral salute to benevolent improvers: 'long may your felicity continue; long may ye drink from its genuine, its only unfailing source, *philanthropy*, the pure waters of real happiness' (240).

Jane Aaron suggests that the critical neglect of novels set in Wales in this period 'may have to do with the fact that, from the contemporary, twenty-first century point of view, these texts, paradoxically, are not Celtic enough'.⁸⁸ Yet the novels discussed in this chapter have several elements in common with texts traditionally categorized as national tales, including the appropriation of the tour from earlier picaresque novels, negotiations of tradition and progress, and gestures towards transnational unions. Anna Maria Bennett's popularity in particular only increased the public interest in Celtic settings, which no doubt had some influence on the success of the Irish national tale. Although Aaron argues that 'nation-building in a Welsh context cannot really be said to begin until the 1820s,' the increased interest of critics such as Sarah Prescott and Andrew Davies in the national dimensions of eighteenth-century Welsh literature has helped reestablish the Welsh novel's place in the interconnected field of British and Irish literary historiography. Both Richard Graves and Edward Davies present portraits of Wales in which gentlemen and landowners,

⁸⁸ Aaron, *Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender and Identity* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2007), p. 10.

be they English or Welsh, are complicit in the degradation of national pride and the reluctance of their tenants to embrace improvements. In *Eugenius*, it is because the ‘titular grandees’ are only interested in capitalizing on their elevated social status and offer little in return. In *Elisa Powell*, it is because they have the power and means to educate the community and themselves in both antiquity and modern land management but do not always make the most of such opportunities for improvement. In both cases, the English ‘seeing-men’ and resident tourists refocus their imperial eyes once an acquisition is made, be it a Welsh bride or a modest freehold. At that point, they are forced to recover from their selective blindness as picturesque tourists and see Wales not merely in terms of aesthetic taste and expectations of uncharted wilderness, but as an investment ripe for cultivation – all for the greater good of the Welsh people and the nation. Graves and Davies appropriate the travelogue medium and re-imagine the public face of Wales by balancing the reputation for strangeness or wilderness with the possibility of reshaping neglected prospects into arable farmland or picturesque landscapes into veins of mineral wealth. They thus firmly advocate Wales’s role in a pan-British vision of progress. *Anna* and *The Fair Cambrians* are perhaps less explicitly concerned with estate improvement than they are with estate inheritance, but in their portrayal of national nostalgia, ‘romantic benevolence’ and the feminine hand in shaping Welsh landscape and preserving Welsh lineage, both novels offer a reading of Wales as a nation struggling to maintain its image as Britain’s Eden while moving forward into an industrial modern age.

CHAPTER TWO

MARIA EDGEWORTH AND THE IRISH TOUR

Nations as well as individuals gradually lose attachment to their identity, and the present generation is amused rather than offended by the ridicule that is thrown upon its ancestors. -
Richard Lovell Edgeworth, introduction to *Castle Rackrent*

Although its tourist industry benefited from the same shift in landscape aesthetics and the limitations placed on Continental travel during the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars, Ireland did not receive the same degree of interest that saw Wales become a haven for eighteenth-century picturesque and leisure tourists. That is not to say that Ireland had no tourist hot spots; Giant's Causeway and the Lakes of Killarney were fashionable destinations, thanks in part to Richard Twiss's popular picturesque guide, *A tour in Ireland in 1775*.¹ Yet the amount of late eighteenth-century Irish tours seems low in comparison to published tours of Wales and Scotland, with distance, cost, and, more importantly, the perceived threat of violence keeping the tourists away. After all, as the Picturesque tourists prized untamed isolation, illusionary or no, it may have been difficult to adopt a selective blindness to the agrarian violence instigated by groups such as the Whiteboys and Defenders from the 1760s through to the end of the century. The growing number of middle-class tourists

¹ For a more detailed history of tourism in Ireland, see Andrew Hadfield's and John McVeagh's *Strangers To That Land: British Perceptions of Ireland from the Reformation to the Famine* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe Ltd., 1994).

also would have been alienated by the threat presented by the United Irishmen Rebellion of 1798, including the landing of nearly a thousand French troops on Irish shores in August of that year. Yet these events and the subsequent Act of Union, which came into effect in January 1801, spurred interest in Ireland as England's sister nation and saw an increase in both travelogues and statistical accounts. Using Arthur Young's *Tour in Ireland* (1780) as a template for the methodical analysis of a nation's land, resources, and population, and more tourist-orientated texts such as Twiss's *Tour as scenic guides*, post-Union travel writers capitalized on this renewed interest in Ireland.

Travel texts were not, of course, the only published accounts of Ireland in the years surrounding the Union. Just as in Wales, antiquarianism had become a popular approach to literary and cultural Irish history in the latter half of the eighteenth century. Interest in the *Ossian* debates spawned a number of publications of traditional Irish poetry, songs, and sagas, such as Charlotte Brooke's *Reliques of Irish Poetry* (1789), while readers inclined towards history, cultural artifacts and theories of the origins of the Irish could look to works such as Sylvester O'Halloran's *Insula Sacra* (1770) and *A General History of Ireland* (1778). Yet there is a distinction between the strains of antiquarianism in Wales and Ireland, particularly in relation to their approach to England and British national identity. Iolo Morganwg's version of antiquarianism sought to promote the unique cultural history of Wales *within* a wider British community and national consciousness by positioning the Welsh as living representatives of the Ancient Britons. Irish antiquaries, on the other hand, were more reactionary against Ireland's colonial relationship with England and put forth a revisionist history of a pre-Conquest Milesian civilization, simultaneously demarcating

Irishness from Britishness and undermining the ubiquitous Ascendancy claim that the English *brought* civilization to Ireland. As travel texts strove to offer contemporary analyses of Ireland and antiquarian studies glorified Milesian history in order to shape a uniquely Irish cultural identity, the province of both genres merged in perhaps the most effective means of discussing national image, economic modernization, identity and tradition: the national tale.²

Whether intended for an Irish or English audience, for Anglo-Irish landowners or their tenants, the national tales and Irish-set novels of authors such as Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson moved beyond the stereotypical ‘stage Irish’ for a more realistic and multi-dimensional representation of the nation. Ireland and its people were still painted with the brush of exoticism in many of these texts. Owenson favored picturesque settings and scenes of national loss in her tales of the ‘wild Irish’ struggling to balance tradition with progress, while Edgeworth veered away from romanticizing the land and instead located Ireland’s exoticism in dialect and the vestigial sense of feudalism on its estates.³ Yet beneath the spectacle of Irish exoticism, these works demonstrate a keen interest in crafting a new public image of Ireland, and often used the Irish

² As discussed above, I am wary of overusing the ‘national tale’ label and risking reducing these texts to the genre patterns laid out by critics such as Ina Ferris. Despite my reservations that it often assigns a nationalist agenda to novels with more international or even supernational concerns, I will use the term ‘national tale’ throughout this chapter to refer to novels which are set primarily in Ireland in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and use the fictionalization of the Irish tour as a means of exploring the idea of national image.

³ In *Maria Edgeworth: a Literary Biography*, Marilyn Butler observes that Edgeworth’s Irish novels ‘often suffer from the lack of physical setting,’ and that Edgeworth had neither the inclination nor the talent for describing landscape evocatively, adding that ‘Maria had little visual imagination, and knew it’ (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972) pp. 431, 143.

tour as a template for introducing a potential agent of change to a country long thought inaccessible.

In 'Narrating Cultural Encounter: Lady Morgan and the Irish National Tale,' Ina Ferris discusses the influence of 'the proto-ethnographic discourse of travel' on the development of the national tale as a genre that 'relocates the scene of cultural encounter, confounding the distinction between "over here" and "over there"' (288).⁴ Ferris and Joep Leerssen have argued that the Irish tour is an English genre, regardless of the author's nationality.⁵ The presence of England as both the light against which Ireland was contrasted and as the personified spectator of these scenes of cultural encounter meant that the Ireland in these travel texts would always be presented as an exotic space. Ferris sees Owenson's and Edgeworth's critiques and employments of specific travel narratives as a 'micro-tactic' when compared to the greater agenda of intervening in a prohibitively 'English genre' by relocating what she calls 'authorial enunciation' to a demystified Ireland (49). Yet any comprehensive study of the use of these travel narratives, which are not only referenced in the margins of texts in order to re-create the authority of the travel genre but also appear in the body of the texts as proof of characters' knowledge or ignorance of Ireland, must include an analysis of this 'micro-tactic'. Mary Louise Pratt suggests that 'the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery [...] it habitually blinds itself to the ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis – beginning, perhaps, with the latter's obsessive need

⁴ Ferris, *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (Dec., 1996), pp. 287-303.

⁵ Joep Leerssen, 'Fiction Poetics and Cultural Stereotype: Local Colour in Scott, Morgan, and Maturin', *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (Apr., 1991), pp. 273-84.

to present and re-present its peripheries and its others continually to itself.’⁶

While the imperial center and its peripheries engage in such symbiotic acts of determination within travel texts, so too do the Irish national tale and the Irish tour.

Travel texts that went beyond simple itineraries and practical suggestions for tourists frequently provided social commentary on local customs and manners, often in an attempt to delineate the Irish national character. While tradition, language, and poverty were obvious focal points for such cultural scrutiny, the land itself, particularly the upkeep, cultivation and potential of agricultural landscape, was often seen as a reflection on its population. As William H. A. Williams suggests, ‘character and landscape became twin themes in many travel narratives’.⁷ In *Tours*, Arthur Young, informed by his role as agent in Mitchelstown for a year, articulated the idea that the character of a people can be linked to the quality and the development of the land on which they live:

In a country changing from licentious barbarity into civilized order, building is an object of perhaps greater consequence than may at first be apparent. In a wild, or but half cultivated tract, with no better edifice than a mud cabin, what are the objects that can impress a love of order on the mind of man? He must be wild as the roaming herds; savage as his rocky mountains; confusion, disorder, riot, have nothing better than himself to damage or destroy: but when edifices of a different solidity and character arise; when great sums are expended, and numbers employed to rear more expressive monuments of industry and order, it is impossible but new ideas must arise, even in the uncultivated mind; it must feel something, first to respect, and afterwards to love; gradually seeing that in proportion as the

⁶ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 6.

⁷ Williams, *Tourism, Landscape, and the Irish Character* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), p. 128.

country becomes more decorated and valuable, licentiousness will be less profitable, and more odious. (Vol. 1, 463)

As tour writers rhetorically conflated the cultivation of land with the cultivation of its people, a perceived wildness of the landscape was reflected in the description of the wildness of the ‘mere’ Irish.⁸ This pervasive association between landscapes and character surfaces in Maria Edgeworth’s Irish novels, her concern with agricultural improvement intricately linked with her agenda for fostering moral improvement; often the cicerones encountered along her fictional Irish tours had a degree of professional interest in the one and were responsible for promoting the other. Ina Ferris argues that, in their reproduction of terms like ‘savage’ and ‘barbarous’, which were found in the earliest travel texts on Ireland, eighteenth-century ‘ethnographic tropes defined the Irish as outside modern historical time altogether [...] Ireland thus did not operate in the historical temporality that would allow it to move into the genre of the state, but at the same time it had to be related to that temporality’ (30). But if the Irish in travel texts exist outside of historical temporality, as Ferris suggests, how then does one incorporate them into a national tale with a progressive view of historical change?

Castle Rackrent (1800) is the only one of Edgeworth’s major Irish works not centered on a traveller, but is instead told from the first-person position of an unreliable cicerone, Thady Quirk, who acts as the reader’s guide to the Rackrent estate. The editorial material, including a preface, footnotes, and a detailed glossary, replicate some of the staples of travel writing, but the plot itself has

⁸ Note that, according to Leerssen, in the 1170’s Giraladus Cambrensis called the Irish ‘*gens silvestris*,’ or the people of the woods, and the terms ‘*silvestri Hiberne*, *Wilde Irish*, and *Mere Irish* occur interchangeably.’ See ‘Wildness, Wilderness, and Ireland: Medieval and Early-Modern Patterns in the Demarcation of Civility’, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 56, No. 1 (Jan., 1995) 30.

little to do with the Irish tour. Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth's co-written *Essay on Irish Bulls*, published in 1802, includes references to and satires of travel texts, while *Ennui* (1809) is Edgeworth's first lengthy attempt at fictionalizing the tour, with the absentee Lord Glenthorn traveling from London to his Irish estate. Unlike Glenthorn, whose journey is largely restricted to his arrival in Dublin and his time spent on his own estate, Lord Colambre of *The Absentee* (1812) makes an expanded tour, expanding the scope of his enlightened survey on his quest to become a competent landlord. Finally, *Ormond* (1817) eschews the hackneyed trip from England to Ireland, instead focusing on the journey from one sort of Irish estate to another, or one type of Protestant Ireland to a microcosmic Catholic Ireland, before branching out to a pre-revolution Paris.

Moving beyond end material and footnotes, *The Absentee* was the first of Edgeworth's Irish texts to mention published Irish tours and histories within the main body of the work since *Essay on Irish Bulls* was published in 1802. Along with her anonymous review of John Carr's *A Stranger in Ireland* (1806), it provides the best foundation on which one can build a study of Edgeworth's use of the travel genre. Lord Colambre, son of the eponymous Irish absentee, returns to Ireland determined to learn about the condition of his father's estate, which had been left to the management of agents. Unlike Lord Glenthorn in *Ennui*, Colambre is not a hero in need of reformation, but Edgeworth sends him on a similar tour through Ireland as befits any successful landowner.

Colambre's journey begins in Dublin, where he meets an English officer named Sir James Brooke, who acts as cicerone in providing the Irish tourist with his opinions about writers on Ireland. At this early stage of Colambre's journey

through Ireland, recommended accounts written by and for English travellers still take precedence over conversing with the indigenous Irish and forming his own opinions about the state of the nation, though he will later be convinced of the importance of the Enlightenment survey in his effort to become an effective estate manager. James Brooke, who shares a surname with Charlotte Brooke, ‘without doubt the most outstanding mediator of her time between Gaelic literature and an Ascendancy audience,’ discusses Edmund Spenser, John Davies, Arthur Young and Daniel Augustus Beaufort with Colambre, though Edgeworth does not provide the details of this conversation (78).⁹ Although she had stated in the concluding editor’s note to *Castle Rackrent* that ‘Mr Young’s picture of Ireland, in his tour through that country, was the first faithful portrait of its inhabitants,’ this list acknowledges the long history of the Irish tour and, more importantly to Edgeworth, a history of progress since the Elizabethan reconquest of Ireland and a historiographical precedence for the promotion of a public national image (121).

According to Heidi Thomson, these histories, political tracts and travelogues ‘represent successive policies towards Ireland’.¹⁰ Though Edgeworth did not see these works as representative of post-Union Ireland, she nevertheless highlights them as accurate and responsible portrayals of Ireland at the time of their composition, and Young, Spenser, and Davies were pointed to as authorities on Irish history in her other Irish works. In order, then, to

⁹ Joep Leerssen, *Mere Irish & Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the idea of Irish nationality, its development and literary expression prior to the nineteenth century* (Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986), p. 422.

¹⁰ Edgeworth, *The Absentee*. Ed. Heidi Thomson (London: Penguin, 1999) n. 5, p. 266.

understand Edgeworth's idea of improvement, progress, and the function of the Irish tour as social commentary, one must examine the work of the men whom she is, in many respects, emulating and endorsing. Joep Leerssen has suggested that 'national stereotypes are intertextual constructs: the conventions and commonplaces inherited from a pre-existing textual tradition fully overshadow the experience of reality.'¹¹ Edgeworth, who inconsistently invokes national stereotypes in order to challenge them, rationalize them, or use them for spectacle, often relies on the colonial and conventionally English 'textual tradition' of the Irish tour to authenticate her portrayal of the Irish and to position her tales in an historical framework.¹² These references include both early travel texts that relegated the so-called 'wild' Irish beyond the pale and thus beyond the reach of cultivation, and post-Union accounts that were increasingly incorporating the antiquarian discourse and its representations of a pre-British Ireland. As I analyze the various influences on Edgeworth's brand of national tale, I will examine the ways in which her use of travel texts and histories indicate her evolving views on national improvement and identity and how best to represent them within the national novel genre. This chapter will explore Edgeworth's attempts at reconciling the legacy of imperialist doctrines found in early tours and accommodating the popularity of the antiquarian discourse while serving her own interest in promoting an image of Ireland as an improvable nation.

¹¹ Leerssen, 'National Identity and National Stereotype', *Images*. Humanities Faculty of the University of Amsterdam. 18 Dec. 2003. Web. 1 Feb. 2010.

¹² For an analysis of Edgeworth's use of the Stage Irishman stereotype, see Joanne Cordon, 'Revising Stereotypes of Nationality and Gender: Why Maria Edgeworth Did Not Write *Castle Belinda*' in *New Essays on Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Julie Nash (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 131-60. See also Marilyn Butler's introduction to Volume I of *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999).

1. WRITING A 'FAITHFUL PORTRAIT': EDGEWORTH ON ARTHUR YOUNG AND JOHN CARR

Arthur Young, whose *Tour in Ireland* (1780) was praised by Edgeworth as the 'first faithful portrait' of that nation, had arguably the most profound impact on her conception of improvement of all the writers discussed in this chapter. When Young toured Ireland in 1776 and 1777 he recorded his observations on the management of several estates, including tables on rents, livestock, expenditures and incomes, as well as reports on agricultural improvements and land development undertaken by owners and tenants. This comprehensive agricultural survey, along with Richard Lovell Edgeworth's interest in bog reclamation and his involvement with the Lunar Society, would form the basis for the estate reforms carried out in Edgeworthstown once the family settled there in 1782.¹³ Edgeworth's didacticism in regards to agricultural improvement is undeniably couched in Youngian terms, 'advocating local economic reform and an improved paternalism as the solution to Ireland's problems'.¹⁴

Yet while Young's *Tour* was intended to be a detailed survey of the land rather than a travelogue or tourist guide, it also included a sketch of the Irish national character and a discussion of the prominent social issues of the day,

¹³ For a detailed reading of improvement in Edgeworthstown see Tom Dunne's "'A gentleman's estate should be a moral school': Edgeworthstown in Fact and Fiction, 1760 – 1840," in *Longford: Essays in County History*, ed. Raymond Gillespie and Gerard Moran (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1991), pp. 95-121.

¹⁴ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 49.

such as the oppression of Catholics and the question of Union. Katie Trumpener has observed that Maria Edgeworth uses Young's *Tour* as 'a principal inspiration for contemporary Irish fiction' and follows his 'model of a literature of utility' in her novels' didactic concerns, particularly with estate management and moral education (44). Young's 'literature of utility' became an exemplar by which other travelogues were judged, and Edgeworth's evocation of Young's practical model of the Irish tour was often balanced by a disdain for John Carr's sensational one as seen in his *The Stranger in Ireland* (1806). By analyzing Edgeworth's most explicitly stated opinions on travel writing as a genre and the texts she was responding to, one can see how vital Edgeworth considers an accurate survey of Ireland to the creation of both an improving landlord and an improved national image.

In 1802, inspired by a comment by Jonathan Swift on the '*laughable confusion of ideas*' often attributed to the Irish, the Edgeworths published their *Essay on Irish Bulls* (1802).¹⁵ Co-written by Maria and her father, *Irish Bulls* is, in effect, a satire on popular travel narratives, focusing ironically on that genre's propensity for portraying the national character of an exotic land. As Marilyn Butler explains in her edition of *Irish Bulls*, Edgeworth's animosity towards the imprecise compilations of bulls and prejudices that passed as travel narratives on Ireland was in this essay focused on Richard Twiss, whose *A Tour in Ireland* was published in 1776. In marked contrast to Arthur Young's *Tour*, both in its survey of agriculture and in its general remarks on the state of Irish society, Twiss's account opens with the warning that 'nothing is to be expected in making the tour of Ireland, beyond the beauties of nature, a few modern-

¹⁵ See Volume I of *The Novels and Selected Works of Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Marilyn Butler (London: Pickering & Chatto, 1999).

antiquities, and the ignorance and poverty of the lower class of the inhabitants' (10). Edgeworth's response is not to write her own travel text, but to revisit the Irish bull in an attempt to create a more realistic portrait of Irish culture and character than was made available by writers like Twiss.

One of Edgeworth's most overt critiques of the specious conception of tour writers as cultural authorities and the genre's frequent reliance on questionable methodology is found in the latter half of *Irish Bulls*, which revolves around a fictional conversation between an Irishman, Englishman, and Scotchman in a coach to Bath. It is in this 'Bath coach conversation' that the Edgeworths single out Arthur Young's *Tours* as the only reliable contemporary source on Ireland while simultaneously advocating the need for personal observation in forming a complete mental picture of Ireland and the Irish. The argument that first-hand objective analysis is a crucial step in responsible estate management, let alone in offering a published account of a nation, is repeated to the protagonist tourists in *Ennui* and *The Absentee* by their local guides, and one advocated by Arthur Young. In the coach conversation, the Englishman claims that his knowledge of the country came through direct surveillance, which put to rest expectations of squalor, violence, drunkenness and the infamous Irish bull that he'd garnered from less reliable travel narratives and histories. The Irishman in the coach then insists that 'little peculiarities in my countrymen' and 'little defects in the Irish government' still deserved the ridicule of a foreign audience, placing the English and Scottish travellers in the unusual position of defending the public image of Ireland. While the focus is, of course, the stereotypical Irish bull, which they argue is universal rather than unique to Ireland, the

conversation also introduces a view of ‘national character’ as a potentially collaborative construct.

The Bath coach conversation between the Irish, Scottish, and English travellers culminates with the Irish passenger relating the story of ‘The Irish Incognito,’ a tale about an Irishman traveling incognito as an English gentleman, only to have his identity betrayed by his speech. Despite having mastered an English accent, he gives himself away with his choice of words and his wit. While Edgeworth sets Irish wit against the comical ignorance of the English language often associated with the Irish bull, ‘The Irish Incognito’ speaks more to the issue of an audience’s expectations than that of the language itself. It demonstrates that a listener, upon hearing a bull, will automatically suspect it of having an Irish origin – a prejudice shared by an English, Scottish, and Irish audience in this story. The Edgeworths argue it is unjust that ‘the blunders of men of all countries, except Ireland, do not affix an indelible stigma upon individual or national character’ (89). In its discussion of Irish bulls and the demarcation of national identity, the Bath coach conversation unites the representatives of England, Scotland and Ireland. It is Edgeworth’s argument that the responsibility of creating an accurate portrait of the Irish national character is now to be shared by the countries bound to it by Union and that the former exoticism or otherness of Ireland should give way to a rational analysis of its strengths and weaknesses and the public reception of them.

Although Marilyn Butler’s observation that Edgeworth deemed herself ill-equipped to describe Ireland’s landscape in stylized Picturesque terms perhaps explains the lack of descriptive landscape scenes in her Irish novels, Butler also refers to occasional letters wherein Edgeworth attempted it, in

however ‘consciously derivative’ a manner.¹⁶ That she chose not to do so in her novels save when describing the dilapidation of abandoned estates seems a deliberate decision rather than a concession to lack of talent. While contemporaries Owenson and Charles Maturin peppered their texts with evocative descriptions of ‘the savage desolation of its uncultivated heaths, and boundless bogs, with those rich veins of a picturesque champagne,’ Edgeworth avoided associating savagery with the land itself and instead attached whatever exoticism found in her novels to the Irish themselves, specifically the dialect of the tenantry.¹⁷ The very idea of uncultivated land would be an embarrassing testament to the failure of both the colonial presence in Ireland since the sixteenth century and her father’s generation of Ascendancy landowners, while the Picturesque view of desolation and the untamed would be anathema to a writer advocating progressive land improvement. Though these subjects would be examined in the central theme of absenteeism, they are addressed in utilitarian rather than aesthetic terms and, apart from the feudalistic microcosm of the Black Islands in *Ormond*, the land itself became less and less a spectacle and more a proving ground for estate improvement with each of Edgeworth’s Irish novels. Yet while the land itself might not be resistant to cultivation in Edgeworth’s fiction, with bog reclamation never failing as it did in reality, she still saw potential obstacles to her brand of utilitarian benevolent improvement that may not easily be surmounted. Tom Dunne argues that Edgeworth’s use of dialect ‘represented the climate which the model landlordism of her father had to

¹⁶ Marilyn Butler, *Maria Edgeworth*, p. 143.

¹⁷ Sydney Owenson, Lady Morgan, *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806). Oxford World’s Classics Paperback edition, Ed. Kathryn Kirkpatrick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 18.

overcome, the psychological barrier to improvement' (109). For Edgeworth, the systematic denial of education to Catholics only perpetuated a retardant attachment to the familiar and traditional, including outdated and inefficient modes of husbandry.

Despite the attempt in *Irish Bulls* to remove language as a 'stigma upon individual or national character,' *Essay on Irish Bulls* in fact increased John Carr's expectation of hearing bulls when he went on his Irish tour, chronicled in *The Stranger in Ireland or, A Tour in the Southern and Western Parts of that Country, in the year 1805*. Like Young in *Tours* and Edgeworth in *Irish Bulls*, Carr begins *Stranger* by acknowledging the fallibility of the genre in which he is working while claiming that his own account of the state of Ireland will come from first hand observation and research rather than hearsay, cultural prejudice, and the 'ridiculous misrepresentations' available in popular tours, where:

In Spencer's time, the wild Irish were believed to have wings sprouting from their shoulders, and it was lawful to shoot them like any other wild winged animal; and even to the present moment, the genuine character of the Irish is but little known to their brethren on this side of the water. (32-33)

Carr explains that his purpose in writing *Stranger* was 'to sketch the modern Irish, and principally to describe what I saw' (34), which granted him the authority of witness and distinguished his style from Young's more methodical approach of reporting on Irish agriculture and Edgeworth's explicit agenda in *Irish Bulls* to correct Twiss's 'ridiculous misrepresentations' of the Irish. Carr's travel narrative is more eclectic in form, traversing several discourses and including his own sketches of landscapes and ruins, along with poems, excerpts of speeches by famous Irish orators, and general comments on the state of roads, education, towns, and of the people.

Critics, including Maria Edgeworth, panned *The Stranger in Ireland* for its overly florid language, bathos, and reliance on second-hand reports. Like his other travel books, *Stranger in Ireland* was seen as superficial, but the light style and lack of alternatives meant it sold well. Edgeworth's overt attempts to undermine its influence on the public image of Ireland are seen in *Ennui* and *The Absentee*, as well as in her critique in *Edinburgh Review* (1807). Favoring Young's tour as the epitome of the travel genre, she ridiculed Carr, going so far as to accuse him of mimicking a previously published pamphlet, *Epistle to Gorges Edmond Howard* (1771). Carr's travel writings were generally seen as frivolous and poorly written, and the Edgeworths' review focuses on the disappointed expectations of an updated post-Union quarto on the state of Ireland.¹⁸ They promote Arthur Young's *A Tour in Ireland* as 'a faithful and lively picture of that kingdom when he saw it, but that was nearly thirty years ago' (329). Specifically, the Edgeworths argue that the union necessitated a new survey of Ireland in order to provide an honest and thorough account of its progress and, more importantly, the areas that needed improvement:

The union has certainly created a demand for a statistical, economical, moral and political view of Ireland, with a clear explanation of the causes which have, for nearly three centuries, impeded its progress in civilization, and a statement of such remedies as sound policy and practical humanity suggest for its improvement. (327)

It is doubtful that the Edgeworths believed that Carr would be the one to provide this new view of Ireland, considering the shortcomings of his earlier tours proved him a 'hasty traveller, and an incorrect writer'. That initial

¹⁸ See the anonymous review article by R. L. and Maria Edgeworth of John Carr's *The Stranger in Ireland* (London: 1806), *Edinburgh Review* 10 (April 1807), pp. 40-60. Reprinted in *Castle Rackrent and Ennui*, ed. Marilyn Butler (London: Penguin, 1992), pp. 324-42.

impression is sustained, and they deem *Stranger in Ireland* a ‘book of stale jests, and fulsome compliments’ (329).¹⁹ Particularly offensive to them was Carr’s style, which ‘is both careless and affected, trivial and inflated [...] and his high-flown descriptions, which are neither prose nor poetry, frequently terminate in striking instances of bathos’ (330). It is the arbitrary placement of examples of Irish humor in the midst of these various subjects that garners the Edgeworths’ accusation of bathos. From the outset, Carr makes clear that one of the prominent tourist attractions he wishes to encounter is, in fact, the Irish bull, acknowledging the influence Edgeworth had on his expectations by alluding to

Essay on Irish Bulls:

The Irish will have a fair retaliating laugh at us, when they hear that the secretary of a celebrated English agricultural society, received orders from its committee to procure several copies of Mr. and Miss Edgeworth’s *Essay on Irish Bulls*, upon the first appearance of that admirable book, for the use of the members, in their labours for improving the breed of cattle. (31)

Carr is ever in search of hearing a genuine Irish bull, and throughout the book he imitates the rhetorical style employed by the Edgeworths in their essay, recounting bulls told to him and demonstrating that, more often than not, they were not of Irish origin (123-24). Carr repeats the chief argument of *Irish Bulls* that though ‘an Irishman and a bull form a twin-thought in an Englishman’s mind,’ they are just as common in the lower classes of all foreign nations (270). Yet the final sentence of the book (before an appendix of “General Remarks”) is, ‘I was disappointed only in one instance; I quitted Ireland without hearing one bull.’ (506) Though this statement could be read as an ironic commentary on

¹⁹ See Ferris’s *Romantic National Tale* for further analysis of the Edgeworths’ review: ‘At a deeper level than triteness and incompetence, it is this indiscriminate “want of order” that offends the Edgeworths because it points to a cavalier attitude to discursive authority that undermines the seriousness of the question of Ireland’ (40).

the expectations raised by inaccurate depictions of Ireland in early travelogues, the persistent return to the subject serves more to reinforce Carr's earlier acknowledgement that the Irish bull is a 'twin-thought' in the mind of a stranger to Ireland and, whatever that thought's merits, the bull remains part of the perceived cultural experience for a tourist despite Edgeworth's efforts.

Like Edgeworth, Carr seems to have been aware of the marked difference between his style of writing and that of Arthur Young's. Although he dabbles with agricultural reports throughout his narrative, he often makes a deliberate attempt to highlight the differences between his type of Irish tour and Young's, going so far as to produce a lengthy excerpt of *Tour* to provide a contrast to his own expressive style. After describing the Dargle and the Lover's-leap as places where 'the imagination wandered through all the witchery of fable, and invoked the naiad and the wood nymph,' he reproduces Young's description of the same place – a description in which Young eschews his occasional appreciation of the Picturesque and focuses on deforestation and a statistical report on Protestant and Catholic populations in the area (143).²⁰ Carr's observation that there are now more trees there highlights the fact that Young's material is thirty years out of date, and his choice of the driest of Young's material can be read as a conscious effort to distance himself from the Enlightenment survey.

²⁰ The deforestation of Ireland, as portrayed by Young, is mainly due to the irresponsible agricultural practices of landowners and to theft by cottiers, but it does have a richer history. Young points out that the bog in Ireland is formed on the remains of burnt forests, and in *Strangers to That Land*, John McVeagh explains that woods were removed in certain areas in the seventeenth century because of their potential to conceal Irish rebels. This change in Irish topography is reflected in Edgeworth's correction of a quote from Edmund Spenser as she replaces 'thick woods' with 'black bogs' in *Castle Rackrent*.

The Edgeworths' review of Carr was not concerned solely with his style, nor was it completely censorious. They praised his comments on the education system, agreeing that education should be provided to all, regardless of religion, in order to enlighten the poorer classes. They also agreed with calls for the reform of the justice system and his condemnation of the workhouses in Ireland and the poor laws in England. It is when the review article turns from specific commentary on Carr's book and branches into their own social agenda that the Edgeworths define their chief disappointment with this high-profile post-Union account of Ireland: its timidity. As they call for complete Catholic emancipation, they condemn Carr's avoidance of contentious issues as an effort to retain popularity:

His pride should be, to stand forward in the cause of truth, to do his utmost to serve his fellow-creatures, disdaining the clamours of ignorance and prejudice, secure of his reward from the good and wise; or, if disappointed of this honest fame, able to rest satisfied with his own approbation. (339)

Ina Ferris argues this 'charge misses the point' of Carr's cautious forays into political commentary, pointing out that the 1798 rebellion, 'which surfaces on several occasions in Carr's own text, remains a point of constant *irritation*, neither fully confronted nor yet completely banished.'²¹ Although Carr *did* indeed address some of the 'many questions on which parties run high in Ireland' which the Edgeworths claim he avoided, such as the 1798 rebellion, the Union, and the penal laws, this censure emphasizes the socio-political underpinnings of travel narratives in that period and speaks to the blurred boundaries of genre, particularly in travel-books and the national tale (339).²² In

²¹ Ferris, *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland*, p. 22.

Carr's preface to *Stranger in Ireland*, he specifically addresses his intention when it comes to contentious political and social issues: 'Upon those unsettled subjects which have too long excited *party animosity*, I have advanced nothing which can have the remotest tendency to inflame the public mind' (v). This calculated avoidance of sensitive subjects so as not to instigate some sort of hypothetical party violence did not spare Carr from Edgeworth's criticism and part of that may stem from the notion that authors writing on Ireland have a social responsibility to address such concerns while they have the attention of an educated audience.

It is worthy of note that, by the end of their review article on *Stranger in Ireland*, the Edgeworths remain convinced of Arthur Young's superiority over Carr when it comes to portraying the *people* of Ireland, never mind their preference for his more scientific style and attention to agriculture and estate management. Consider Young's sketch of the Irish lower class:

Lazy to an extent at *work*, but so spiritedly active at *play*, that at *hurling*, which is the cricket of savages, they shew the greatest feats of agility. [...] Warm friends and revengeful enemies, they are inviolable in their secrecy, and inevitable in their resentment; with a notion of honour, that neither threat nor reward would induce them to betray the secret or person of a man, though an oppressor whose property they would plunder without ceremony. Hard drinkers and quarrelsome; great liars, but civil, submissive, and obedient. (147)

Young repeats that general description of hospitality that Edgeworth seems to find so insipid in portraits of the Irish, but of greater interest in this character sketch is the tension between 'savage' and 'submissive'. There is a connotation

²² 'Parties' here most like refers to political and sectarian organizations invested in issues of Irish nationalism, Union, and Catholic Emancipation, such as the Society of United Irishmen and the Orange Order, rather than the traditional political parties forming the British Parliament.

of irrationality active at play, a lack of reason or control, in words such as ‘inviolable’ and ‘inevitable,’ which might suggest an insurmountable resistance to improvement. Yet Young balances this suggested intractability with the conclusion that the peasantry, or general population of Ireland, is ‘civil, submissive, and obedient,’ which presents Ireland and the Irish people as capable of being tamed by paternalistic English sensibilities and, more importantly, an English infrastructure.

Interestingly, although Young ends this general character sketch on a positive note for readers interested in improvement in Ireland, the treatment of native culture and language within this section ends with mistrust. While he acknowledges Irish humor (beyond the bull), the idea of secrecy is rooted in a suspicion of the Irish language, which is common for a colonial text. This is a striking contrast with the tone of Carr’s more sentimental description of the Irish peasantry:

With few materials for ingenuity to work with, the peasantry of Ireland are most ingenious, and with adequate inducements laboriously indefatigable; they possess, in general, personal beauty and vigour of frame; they abound with a sensibility, although all the avenues to useful knowledge are closed against them; they are capable of forgiving injuries, and are generous even to their oppressors [...] I appeal not to the affections or the humanity, but to the justice of every one to whom chance may direct these pages, whether men so constituted present no character which a wise government can mould to the great purpose of augmenting the prosperity of the country, and the happiness of society. (292)

Carr’s portrait can be read as both incredibly enthusiastic and patronizing. The ease with which he acknowledges the oppression of this class of people and, in the same sentence, praises their submission to it because of the ruling class’s ‘superior merit’ makes obvious the fact that he is writing from a position of

cultural superiority within an imperial, and according to Ferris and Leerssen, *English* genre. Young and Carr both point to the oppression of Catholics and the subsequent lack of education under the Penal Laws as causes for whatever general faults they assign to the Irish peasantry, and both allude to an obedience or pliability that would allow a responsible government to mould them into model citizens. But Young's treatment of the stereotypical violence, dishonesty, and drunkenness found in eighteenth-century accounts of Irish characters is seen by Edgeworth to be a more realistic representation of that class than Carr's patronizing praise. Despite acknowledging that Young's account of the nation was dated and that surely changes must have occurred since the 1770s, the lower class characters of *Ennui* (set in the 1790s) and *The Absentee* (set post-Union) conform to Spenser's, Davies's, and Young's general description of wild Irishness needing to be tamed by Anglo-Irish, British, and cosmopolitan influence, and in recreating the tour of Ireland in both of those texts, she repeatedly fights against the lack of discipline and critical acumen she sees in Carr's work while treating Young's as an exemplar.

The history of the Irish bull in travel writing and the contrast that Edgeworth sees between Carr and Young is worked into her first 'national tale' *Ennui* as two tourists in Ireland undertake two very different journeys. Marilyn Butler's introduction to the Edgeworths' review touches on the relationship between Carr, with his reliance on previously printed and questionable sources, and *Ennui*'s English tourist, Lord Craiglethorpe, who was presumably added in the redrafting stage of the novel following the publication of *Stranger in Ireland* in 1806 (325). Craiglethorpe, whose tour consisted of 'posting from one great man's house to another' and jotting down the sensational lies fed to him in jest

by Lady Geraldine, was recognizable as a caricature of Carr, who had been involved in what Butler calls a ‘literary *cause celebre*,’ involving a case of libel, in the two years preceding *Ennui*’s publication in 1809.²³

While Lord Craiglethorpe is clearly an indictment of Carr’s brand of tourism, Edgeworth was quick to praise Young’s type of travelogue, making use of his advice on the rehabilitation of absentee landlords: the first phase in their education on proper estate management is a tour of not only their property but also neighboring estates. In *Ennui*, Lord Glenthorn is advised by his agent, M’Leod, that no improvement should be undertaken without first surveying the state of the lands and the needs and character of the tenantry. It is vital, however, that such surveys are conducted in a studious manner, unlike Craiglethorpe’s collection of second-hand reports and his own first impressions. For Edgeworth, responsible citizens - especially those who had a role in local economics by running a landed estate, in national politics by holding a seat in Parliament, or who had influence in the public sphere with published works – should focus on the state of husbandry, labour, and industry in Ireland, rather than spending an inordinate amount of time reporting on the beauties of picturesque landscapes and recounting Irish bulls.

Part of Glenthorn’s self-diagnosis of *ennui* hinged on the symptom of apathy when it came to such matters of national importance. ‘In fact, it never

²³ See *Appendix of Castle Rackrent and Ennui*, ed. Marilyn Butler (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 326. In 1807, satirist Edward Dubois published *My Pocket-nook, or Hints for ‘A Right Merrie and Conceited Tour, in quarto, to be called, “The Stranger in Ireland”, in 1805. By a Knight Errant’*. Carr responded by bringing the publishers to court for libel, but lost the case when Lord Ellenborough decided that this literary send-up did not have malicious intent. Contemporary reviewers observed the similarities between Craiglethorpe and Carr. The reviewer for *Universal Magazine* observes ‘in this character of Lord Craiglethorpe, we shrewdly suspect that our authoress means to ridicule the insignificance of the travelling bookmaker, Sir John Carr.’ See ‘*Tales of Fashionable Life*,’ in *Universal Magazine*, Vol. 12, No. 70 (Sept., 1809), p. 217.

occurred to me that it became a British nobleman to have some notion of the general state of that empire, in the legislation of which he has a share; nor had I the slightest suspicion that political economy was a study requisite or suitable to my rank in life or situation in society' (254). This self-reproach is made after Glenthorn recalls how he once thought that visiting those picturesque scenes of Killarney and the Giants' Causeway, made popular by published travels, meant that he had seen all there was to see of Ireland.²⁴ Being a passive spectator, however, is not enough for a traveller to form an accurate idea of this 'general state.' Describing his tour of the country, Glenthorn writes that he'd thought he knew the Irish character because he was familiar with the Irish accent and had laughed at Irish bulls. When he witnessed Irish labourers burning bog peat on a summer day, he extrapolated and thought this evidence of a *practical bull* until M'Leod explained that they were driving away insects. This mistake aligns Glenthorn with Craiglethorpe, a weakness that he admits is all the more alarming for being present in a gentleman of influence in Ireland:

Had I been sufficiently active during my journey to pen a journal, I should certainly, without further inquiry, have noted down, that the Irish labourers *always* light fires in the hottest weather to cool themselves; and thus I should have added one more to the number of cursory travellers, who expose their own ignorance, whilst they attempt to ridicule local customs, of which they have not inquired the cause, or discovered the utility. (253)

Although Lords Glenthorn and Colambre are *not* true tourists, having come to Ireland for the expressed purpose of returning to their family home and thus avoiding many of the staged scenes and pre-planned routes found in popular

²⁴ See William Gilpin's *Three Essays: On Picturesque Beauty; on Picturesque Travel; and on Sketching Landscape: to which is added a poem on Landscape Painting* (London: R. Blamire, 1792). 'The *Giant's causeway* in Ireland may strike [the picturesque eye] as a novelty; but the lake of Killarney attracts its attention' (43).

tours, these characters are, in effect, strangers to that land. Knowing that published travelogues were among the most influential texts in the creation of a public national image for Ireland, Edgeworth casts her reformed absentees in the familiar role of traveller, using that genre's conventions in order to promote the ideal method of seeing Ireland.

Ideally, a tourist in Ireland should have read trustworthy accounts of that country, from Spenser to Young. A tourist should be willing to converse with the lower ranks in order to form a well-rounded portrait of national character, should discuss all observations with someone who can speak with authority on the local customs of Ireland. A tourist should educate themselves on the socio-political history of the regions visited. Finally, a tourist should, if able, present their findings to an audience in dire need of accurate accounts of Ireland, whether that audience is an English one looking for a true picture of their sister country, or an Anglo-Irish one looking for a model of responsible estate management. As my analysis of Edgeworth's use of travelogues and histories shows, the re-imagining of public national image and a consideration of the emotional ties to tradition in Ireland were integral to Edgeworth's promotion of improvement and progress in her Irish novels.

2. 'THAT SALVAGE NATION': EDGEWORTH AND THE COLONIAL TRADITION

Maria Edgeworth's endorsement of Edmund Spenser's *A View of the present state of Irelande* (1596) seems, on the surface, a surprising choice for an

author purporting to advocate a peaceful union between England and Ireland. Heidi Thomson characterizes Spenser's tract, consisting of a dialogue between Eudoxus and Irenius, as an argument for subjugation, and Tom Dunne argues that *Veue* is the prime example of the Irish tour's 'colonist tradition'.²⁵ Even Spenser's own publisher, Sir James Ware, expressed a 'wish that in some passages it had bin tempered with more moderation,' perhaps explaining the delay in publication until 1633.²⁶ Christopher Ivis has noted that Ware, an Irish antiquarian, indeed *did* 'temper' Spenser's original manuscript, which was written in the midst of the Elizabethan re-conquest and possibly at the start of the Nine Years' War.²⁷ Ware's edition, which sanitized the most overtly anti-Irish sentiments such as a penchant for prefacing 'Ireland' with 'wretched', was the version of the text most widely available in the eighteenth century. Regardless of Ware's editorial interventions, his edition of Spenser's *Veue* remained a call for complete colonial domination in Ireland and an influential text for Edgeworth's Irish oeuvre.

Edgeworth gives Spenser pride of place in her first national tale, *Castle Rackrent*, by referencing his work in her first footnote in order to explain the history of the Irish mantle. Following an acknowledgment of one of the glaringly inaccurate misconceptions of the Irish in the Bath Coach conversation

²⁵ *The Absentee*, n. 5, p. 266 and Tom Dunne, "'A gentleman's estate should be a moral school': Edgeworthstown in Fact and Fiction, 1760 – 1840" in *Longford: Essays in County History*, ed. Raymond Gillespie and Gerard Moran (Dublin: Lilliput Press, 1991), p. 98.

²⁶ Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, eds. Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley, "Introduction" (Oxford and Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), p. xxiv.

²⁷ Christopher Ivis, 'Review of *A View of the State of Ireland: From the First Printed Edition (1633) by Edmund Spenser*, eds. Andrew Hadfield and Willy Maley', *Renaissance Quarterly*, Vol. 52, No. 1 (Spring, 1999), pp. 259-62.

in her *Essay on Irish Bulls*, when the English traveller observes that, ‘it is surprising [...] how ignorant we English in general are of Ireland: to be sure we do not now, as in the times of Bacon and Spenser, believe that wild Irishmen have wings,’ Edgeworth references Spenser in the review of John Carr’s *The Stranger in Ireland*. The review praises Spenser and his contemporary John Davies as men who ‘left full and able accounts of the state of that country in their times’ (327). This pronouncement stands as her most explicit judgment of Spenser, but before firmly placing her in Spenser’s colonial tradition a comparative analysis of their treatments of language, national character, and improvement is necessary.

Although he did not invent the term or the tendency to denigrate the native population of Ireland, Edmund Spenser certainly propagated the stereotype of the ‘wild Irish’.²⁸ The native Irish in *Veue* ‘steale, they are cruell and blodie, full of revenge and delighting in deadly execution, licentious swearers, and blasphemers, common ravishers of woemen, and murtherers of children.’²⁹ Why, then, did Edgeworth, who was resistant to glorifying the wild Irish image, turn to Spenser’s essay as a prototype for a ‘full and able’ account of Ireland? The most obvious answer was that Spenser was *not* a primitivist, and the so-called wildness of Ireland was rooted in its lack of agricultural cultivation. His *Veue*, beginning *in medias res*, opens with this quandary:

But if that country of Ireland whence you lately came, be so goodly and commodious a soyle as you report, I wounder that no

²⁸ Nicholas Canny, ‘Edmund Spenser and the Development of an Anglo-Irish Identity’, *The Yearbook of English Studies*, Vol. 13, Colonial and Imperial Themes Special Number (1983), pp. 1-19.

²⁹ All quotations from *A Veue of the present state of Irelande* are taken from an e-text prepared by Risa S. Bear at the University of Oregon (January, 1997) and based on a draft of the text prior to Sir James Ware’s editorial interventions.

course is taken for the tourning therof to good uses, and reducing that salvage nation to better government and civillity.

Spenser was, like Edgeworth herself, once driven from his home by Irish rebels, and his animosity towards the Irish and Irish culture is reflected in his *Veue*, particularly in Irenius's suggestions for the English reclamation of Ireland. In order for England to have 'absolute dominion', the 'evills' of Ireland must, in Spenser's view, be eradicated, and as he explains in the opening pages of his text, those evils that 'seme to be most hurtfull to the comon-weale of that land' are also the 'most ancient and long growne,' namely its laws, customs, and religion. Later in the piece, he reduces these earmarks of Irish tradition into mere 'defectes and inconveniences' standing in the way of English-led progress, implying that only martial law and strict surveillance can overcome their corrosive effects on the land and its populace. Though she does not go as far as to praise the cultural violence in Spenser's solution to the Irish question, Edgeworth's treatment of Spenser suggests a corresponding attribution of the beginning of Irish civilization and improvement association to the introduction of strong English legislation and cultural influence in Ireland.

The majority of the dialogue lists Irish traits and customs which Spenser views as retardant to improvement, and though Edgeworth's concept of benevolent improvement would not condone the violent removal of the native Irish population to make way for English expansion beyond the pale their concept of land management is not wholly dissimilar. The figures of the 'wild man' and the 'salvage nation' in *Faerie Queene* are marked by their refusal to practice agriculture or, in *Veue*, to advance from subsistence pasturage to responsible husbandry, which 'is "painefull" but also mandated by God. Instead, as Benjamin Myers argues, they are parasites that feed off the hard work

of others (407).³⁰ The suggestion of *Veue* is that the Irish have brought about their own ruin by refusing to accept agricultural advancements. Their lack of civilization is blamed both on the failure of the Irish to act as steward to the land by cultivating it and the lack of a monarchial presence to enforce the culling of Irish wilderness. In Edgeworth's fiction, there is a similar link between the land and character, but rather than focusing on the lack of martial law as Spenser does, Edgeworth offers a more up-to-date and Youngian critique of absenteeism as the reason behind agricultural and even moral mismanagement of Irish estates.

In the absence of a competent paternalistic and *resident* landlord, responsibility for the state of the land fell on the absentee, negligent or inept landlords, the agents they appointed to manage their estates in their absence, and the tenants living in idleness and ignorant of methods of agricultural improvement - something that should be corrected by education and leadership by example. Absenteeism could have devastating effects on Irish estates and the surrounding towns, particularly when management of these estates was left to agents who took advantage of the lack of supervision and themselves became absent managers, moving to Dublin or taking on multiple agencies and renting the bulk of the estate to middle-men, who would in turn sublet the land at higher rents, or rack rents. One section of Young's *Tours* that resonates in Edgeworth's Irish novels is the chapter on absenteeism and its deleterious effects on productivity and development. Landlords who abandoned their estates for more fashionable locales robbed Ireland not only of their power as

³⁰ Benjamin Myers, "Such Is the Face of Falshood": Spenserian Theodicy in Ireland', *Studies in Philology*, Vol. 103, No. 4 (Autumn, 2006), p. 407.

consumers but also of guidance that Young saw as crucial for the creation of a self-sufficient tenantry:

It is not the simple amount of the rental being remitted into another country, but the damp on all sorts of improvements, and the total want of countenance and encouragement which the lower tenantry labour under. The landlord at such a great distance is out of the way of all complaints, or, which is the same thing, of examining into, or remedying evils; miseries of which he can see nothing, and probably hear as little of, can make no impression. All that is required of the agent is to be punctual in his remittances; and, as to the people who pay him, they are too often, welcome to go to the devil, provided their rents could be paid in his territories. (Vol. 2, 116-17)

Here, the agent is represented as someone with no interest in implementing improvements, which were slow to generate profit and often required an initial investment of money and time. Without the pressure to improve, or even maintain, the lands and properties on the estates of absentee landlords, agents could foster a middleman system that would see the countryside sub-divided into less and less commercially viable plots. Absentee landlords ‘abandon their tenantry to oppression, and their property to ruin’ and the corrupt agents overseeing the property preferred tenants who could afford higher rents to those who were skilled in improving the land.³¹

The tour itself functions in Edgeworth’s tale as a framing narrative for the return of the absentee to Ireland, particularly in *Ennui* and *The Absentee*. In her fictionalized accounts of such journeys, Edgeworth would re-create the sense of dilapidation and degeneration her family was met with on their return to Longford in 1782. Julia Reinhard Lupton argues that ‘the key word in Spenser’s Irish plot is *waste*: Spenser’s tract defines Ireland as wasteland (desolate, depopled, and unpossessed) in order to defend an active policy of further

³¹ *The Absentee*, p. 156.

wasting followed by restorative “plantation.””³² Though their improvement policies differed, Edgeworth was similarly troubled by waste and desolation, and portrayed these as the most damning consequences of Ireland’s dearth of landlords offering themselves as models of Enlightenment progressivism for agricultural and moral reform. Joep Leerssen argues that ‘we are wild or civil to the extent that we behave wildly or civilly; yet at the same time this behavioral articulation of a cultural ethos will also define spaces and spatial circumscriptions of where such behavior is to be found’.³³ If the supposed wildness of the Irish furthered the perception of Ireland’s landscape as being wild and resistant to cultivation and the land itself could be read as an encroaching bog threatening the English pale with degeneracy, as in Spenser’s history, for the Edgeworths, improving landlords with both practical and academic interests in modern husbandry, the first step at improving the lives, minds, morals, and public image of the Irish *had* to begin with taming the land. This relationship between the perceived civility or barbarity of a culture and the cultivation of a country is one of the reasons why Edgeworth’s use of ‘improvement’ has both socio-political and pragmatic dimensions, encompassing the moral and practical education of the population.

Spenser’s *Irenius* does offer up some practical suggestions for improvement after the Irish are finally subjugated. While a majority of Spenser’s plans involve increased security against potential Irish rebels and thus

³² Lupton, ‘Mapping Mutability: Or, Spenser’s Irish Plot,’ in *Representing Ireland: Literature and the Origins of Conflict, 1534-1660*, eds. Brendan Bradshaw, Andrew Hadfield, and Willy Maley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 93.

³³ ‘Wildness, Wilderness, and Ireland: Medieval and Early-Modern Patterns in the Demarcation of Civility’, pp. 26-27.

remind readers that the text was composed in the midst of war, many may have appealed to Edgeworth's utilitarian nature. Irenius suggests the English clear paths through the woodlands for the safety of travellers; build and secure bridges over all rivers; establish watch points in bogs and valleys and build fences along all highways in order to defend against rebels; and establish towns along high-traffic routes, with some to be given the 'privilege of a market...for nothinge doth cause civillitye in any countrye then many market townes.' The most important change for this 'salvage nation', however, would be the move towards modern husbandry and agriculture, which would have been particularly interesting to Edgeworth in that it was still a major concern in Irish improvement discourse two centuries on.

Arguments about the merits of grazing versus subsistence farming are not prevalent in Edgeworth's novels, though Richard Lovell Edgeworth certainly had opinions about the 'garden culture of Ireland', which 'renders each family in some degree independent as to mere subsistence; but at the same time it prevents growth of corn and retards agricultural improvement.'³⁴ In a letter to Lord Selkirk after R.L. Edgeworth's 1806 appointment to a Board of Commissioners to look into Irish education, he touches on the relationship between the improvement of the land and the poverty of the labouring classes, including the differences between advances in Scotland and Ireland in the field of agriculture:

Here, the rich pastures are dug up to produce potatoes for families, whose wretchedness and sloth do not impoverish the owner of the soil; because he receives more for his land when

³⁴ See *The Black Book of Edgeworthstown and Other Edgeworth Memories 1587 – 1817*, eds. Harriet Jessie Butler and Harold Edgeworth Butler (London, Faber & Gwyer, 1927), p. 196.

employed in this sort of tillage than when it fattens beef and mutton; as long as the lazy inhabitant of a cabin can provide for his family “meat, fire, clothes”, he will not be tempted from his dear hut, his home. (194)

This charge of sloth and laziness is an echo of the labels applied to the native Irish in earlier travel texts and essays on the state of the nation, particularly in the popular works of George Berkeley, whose name is found in both Young’s and Edgeworth’s lists of great Irish writers. Berkeley’s *The Querist*, originally published as a serial in the late 1730s, posed a series of rhetorical questions that implied that, while Ireland was perhaps, due to natural resources, the most improvable of countries, the chief roadblock to any progress were the ‘natural’ or ‘common’ Irish.³⁵ He followed this with “A Word to the Wise: An Exhortation to the Roman Catholic Clergy of Ireland by a Member of the Established Church,” (1749) which argued that the native Irish are dirty and lazy, ‘wedded to dirt upon principle’ (551). While this phrasing implies choice, Berkeley suggests that there is a genetic determinism at play along with an irrational or ignorant attachment to custom. Though unsure whether the tendency towards barbarity stems from Catholicism or the fact that they may descend from the Spanish, Berkeley is certain that the *mere* Irish are to blame for the lack of improvement.

From texts such as these, it is perhaps understandable that Edgeworth and a certain school of Irish antiquaries refused to embrace primitivism. Not only was the resonating image of the ‘native’ or ‘savage’ Irish persistently linked to ‘wretchedness and sloth’ rather than nobility, but the suggestion of a genetic or religious determinism would be anathema to an improver. While

³⁵ *The Works of George Berkeley*, Vol. IV, ed. Alexander Campbell Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1901).

there are some characters in Edgeworth's texts that seem impervious to improvement, it is always an individual rather than a racial failure, and more often than not depends on the type or degree of improvement attempted. Unlike Berkeley and Spenser, who blamed the native Irish for the economic stagnation, Edgeworth's stories strive to show that it is the lack of education and moral example of an interested landlord that enables laziness and irrational attachment to outdated methods of subsistence farming. Edgeworth's focus on moral and practical education suggests that she privileges nurture above nature. This is revealed in her domestic plots, which repeatedly revolve around fostering, and , to a lesser degree, in her approach to Irishness.

When Richard Lovell Edgeworth claimed in the introduction to *Castle Rackrent* that 'nations as well as individuals gradually lose attachment to their identity' and predicted that Ireland would 'lose her identity by an union with Great Britain,' it is not written with regret, or with nostalgia. Yet this cannot be read as a Spenserian desire to obliterate Irishness from Ireland. Indeed, much of Edgeworth's Irish canon involved an effort to present an accurate, rehabilitated, and lasting representation of Irishness or, as she refers to it in *The Absentee*, Ireland's 'national manners'.³⁶ Instead, 'identity' is seen in the *Castle Rackrent* preface as a shared consciousness still strongly rooted to a potentially retardant Milesian tradition. There is also a suggestion throughout *Castle Rackrent* that this version of Irish identity has links with feudal loyalty, religion, and

³⁶ Note that Edgeworth's attempts at rehabilitating her audience's conception of the Irish character were met with varying degrees of success. One reviewer argued that, 'while the design and tendency of Miss Edgeworth's fable cannot be sufficiently approved and enforced by all classes of readers, to whom the interests of Ireland, the real interests of the British empire, are dear and valuable, we think her obnoxious to the charge of over-colouring her picture and caricaturing her subject to an extent which may, we fear, essentially detract from the utility of her labours.' Review of *The Absentee* in *Critical Review*, 4th ser. 2 (Aug. 1812), p. 122.

hereditary ties to land. The prediction of loss of identity following the political union with Great Britain signals the Edgeworths' view of the unsustainability of a 'mere' or 'wild' Irish microcosm in the age of improvement and empire, an idea developed in Edgeworth's final Irish novel, *Ormond*. Yet *Castle Rackrent* was drafted before the Union, and by the time *Ennui* was published, Edgeworth had reevaluated her belief that legislation would reconfigure Irish identity, particularly when the potential infusion of British and Anglo-Irish influence on Irishness was still hampered by continual absenteeism and the broken promise of Catholic emancipation. I will later discuss this reevaluation involved the gradual incorporation of antiquarian references and a more forgiving (though still critical) view of old Milesian tradition into her Irish texts. First though I will focus on Edgeworth's fictional treatment of fostering, identity, and marriage in relation John Davies and the Irish national tale.

3. 'A STRONGER ALLIANCE THAN BLOOD': JOHN DAVIES AND THE FOSTERING OF IMPROVEMENT

In 1786, a collection of John Davies's essays, including his most well known *A Discovery of the True Cause why Ireland was Never Entirely Subdued* (1612), was published under the title *Historical Tracts*. In addition to labeling his works 'full and able,' the Edgeworths' review of *The Stranger in Ireland* calls Davies 'a true friend of Ireland' in his position as Attorney General and speaker of the House of Commons in Ireland when he wrote his account. Edgeworth calls attention to how Davies 'obliterated, as far as possible, the

remembrance of antient feuds and party distinction' and 'did his utmost to obtain some education for the poor of the country' (328-29). Although Davies's form of obliteration did not necessarily call for repressing all remaining Irish traditions, like Spenser's, it too argued that any English success in Ireland relied on the creation of a clean slate there – one that could only be achieved by war and rule. Edgeworth's praise of John Davies in the Carr review and his presence in the margins of *Ennui* establish a base from which stems Edgeworth's views on the roles of England, heredity, and identity in the history of Irish improvement discourse.

The central argument of this 'true friend of Ireland' was that King Henry II failed to thoroughly conquer the Irish in his campaign there and subsequent monarchs, until the Tudor re-conquest of Ireland, were content to do little more than defend the established English colonies within the pale from native Irish attacks. In using analogy and euphemism to explain the importance of strong government in Ireland and the complete martial suppression of the native Irish population in the creation of a functioning colony, Davies turns to terms of husbandry:

For the husbandman must first break the land before it be made capable of good feed: and when it is thoroughly broken and manured, if he do not forthwith cast good feed into it, it will grow wild again, and bear nothing but weeds: So a barbarous country must first be broken by a war, before it will be capable of good government; and when it is fully subdued and conquered, if it be not well planted and governed after the conquest, it will often return to the former barbarism. (3-4)

Davies, with his imperialist discourse, was writing well before the eighteenth-century Irish antiquarian movement set out to campaign for the idea of a pre-colonial sophisticated civilization, and before the picturesque idea of the

‘wild’ with its connotations of an inherent resistance, or immunity, to cultivation. Rather, a strong hand could easily develop the potential richness of the land. In terms of his simile, the Irish themselves are reduced to weeds, and it is unclear whether the guiding hand of English cultivation would treat them as flowers to be admired as exotic spectacles, as crops to be cultivated as a source of profit, or would root them out to clear the land. Certainly, history shows that the Elizabethan re-conquest held little concern for the preservation of Irish culture. English-rule ‘plantations’ were populated with transplanted English, Scottish, and Welsh settlers with a remit to enforce English laws and custom.

Edgeworth’s post-Enlightenment strain of benevolent improvement bypasses the cultural violence suggested in Davies’s text, and physically violent confrontations between the Irish and English are in the main elided in her promotion of Anglo-Irish reconciliation. Yet Edgeworth’s improvement plots echo Davies’s fear of a return to barbarism in the absence of responsible management. In *Ennui*, Lord Glenthorn’s idea of estate improvement included remodeling his Irish nurse’s cottage.³⁷ Ellinor’s ‘hovel’ as he calls it is a ‘wretched-looking, low, and mud-walled cabin’ (186). He shows impatience with the labourers as he tries to renovate the cottage, rushing through the job in his hurry to make a spectacle of his generosity. ‘I would not wait till the walls were dry before I plastered, and papered, and furnished it. I fitted it up in the most elegant style of English cottages; for I was determined that Ellinor’s habitation should be such as had never been seen in this part of the world’ (189). Glenthorn recognizes his own habitual laziness and even the possibility that his

³⁷ Ellinor O’Donoghoe is one of Glenthorn’s tenants, and nursed him when he was a child. Later in the novel, Glenthorn discovers that Ellinor is his mother and had switched him in infancy with the true heir to the estate.

version of charity might be injudicious, but this does not keep him from continuing as planned:

The method of doing good, which seemed to require the least exertion, and which I, therefore, most willingly practised, was giving away money. I did not wait to inquire, much less to examine into the merits of the claimants; but, without selecting proper objects, I relieved myself from the uneasy feeling of pity, by indiscriminate donations of objects apparently the most miserable. (189)

But Ellinor's cottage soon reverts to 'a scene of dirt, rubbish, and confusion' (199). Part of the failure of Glenthorn's renovations is due to his own incompetence, as the walls that had not been allowed to dry before being papered become covered in mold. But Glenthorn interprets the incident as a demonstration of a fundamental difference in manner and character between himself and Ellinor. He reacts to her treatment of his renovations with resentment and 'reproached Ellinor with being a savage, an Irishwoman, and an ungrateful fool,' resolving to cease his attempts at 'improvements' (200). Once he takes the time to deliberate, he observes, 'so easily is the humanity of the rich and great disgusted and discouraged! as if any people could be civilized in a moment, and at the word of command of ignorant pride or despotic benevolence,' demonstrating the tenuous and protracted nature of the entire project of improvement (201). Even when self-critical, Glenthorn here still views the management of an Irish estate as a colonial project and has yet to learn the Edgeworthian practice of benevolent paternalism dependent on a reasoned assessment of his tenants' needs and capabilities.

Glenthorn's invocation of the Wild Irish image and the suggestion of an inherent and irrepressible savagery may be read as symptomatic of the prejudice and ignorance he brought with him from England. Nonetheless, it is jarring

language in a text advocating the *improvability* of Ireland, and subsequently its people. Yet Edgeworth does not follow Davies in advocating more war to ‘break the land’ and clear the way for cultivation. Rather, Glenthorn’s failure to implement a lasting improvement is, for Edgeworth, proof of a basic lack of understanding of both handiwork and the needs of his tenants. Richard Lovell Edgeworth’s insistence that an effective landlord have some level of dialogue with his tenantry to best estimate their needs translates into M’Leod’s advice on how to go about improving the estate responsibly:

My wife and I went among them, and talked to them in their cottages, and took an interest in their concerns, and did not want to have everything our own way; and when they saw that, they began to consider which way was best, so by degrees we led where we could not have driven; and raised in them, by little and little, a taste for conveniences and comforts. (215)

Crucial here is M’Leod’s claim that improvement is, at least superficially, a collaborative project. M’Leod, heralded as a model agent, advises against monetary gifts, long leases, and raised wages, suggesting that the poor tenantry could easily take advantage of their landlords and that catering to them too much will only encourage a tendency towards laziness and dishonesty.

It is possible to read Ellinor’s acceptance of, even preference for, a house in a shambles as a recapitulation of the imperialist strains in Spenser’s and Davies’s texts, which suggested that the Irish in their natural state were content to live in squalor. This interpretation, however, ignores the historical context Edgeworth provides in setting *Ennui* around the time of the 1798 rebellion and the years leading up to the Union. For Edgeworth, Ellinor’s lack of civility is a symptom of the systematic disenfranchisement of the Catholic rural poor and of the ill effects of absenteeism. With complete Catholic emancipation years away,

what remained for Edgeworth was to institute small-scale local measures of improvement while promoting such concerns on the international stage, not only in her Irish tales but also by acting as patron to Mary Leadbeater and making sure her improvement pamphlets reached their intended rural Irish audience and beyond.³⁸

Ellinor's denial of Glenthorn's efforts and, more crucially, the failure of those efforts also reflect a common concern of improvers: degeneration, or regression. Agricultural improvements often had a speculative quality, particularly bog reclamation, and failed investments were costly. The worry that Ireland could regress into barbarity without capable guiding hands was not limited to Edgeworth's generation, or to the discourse of improvement. Davies's fear about Ireland's return barbarity, and the accompanying fear that English settlers there would somehow 'go native,' is rooted in the strain of degeneracy he saw as characteristic of Irishness and spread through Anglo-Irish marriage. Davies argued that the complacency of English settlers following Henry II's campaign in Ireland left governing in the hands of Irish chieftains who had little interest in conforming to English law or, in the pockets of English colonies, to descendants of the English landlords and freeholders who built their fortunes by oppressing their Irish tenants.

These men married and started families with the Irish, 'so as within one age the English, both lords and freeholders, became degenerate and mere Irish in their language, in their apparel, in their arms and manner of fight, and all other customs of life whatsoever' (23). Davies, like Spenser, blamed this corruption of the English blood in Ireland, caused by intermarrying and by greed, for the

³⁸ Helen O'Connell, *Ireland and the Fiction of Improvement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

failure to establish an effective English-run civil government. This failure, combined with the lack of a finalizing war to solidify control over the entire island, led to a drawn-out conflict that consisted of suppressing rebellion and resulted in a wasted opportunity to exploit Ireland for all of its resources. Edgeworth, of course, does not repeat Davies's trope of degeneration as a result of Anglo-Irish unions, preferring to endorse them as a step towards collaborative and sympathetic estate management. Nonetheless, the composition of the family, specifically the landed family, was central to Edgeworth's texts and her views on the qualities expected in a responsible estate manager, and to this end she made use of one of Davies's observations on the Irish family: fostering.

Ennui is the story of the absentee Lord Glenthorn's return to his Irish estate and the subsequent unveiling of a changeling plot. This is not the first instance of a changeling in Edgeworth's Irish work; *Essay on Irish Bulls* begins with an example of a potential Irish bull involving a changeling. Ostensibly, the accompanying discussion of 'personal identity' is meant to serve as an allegory for the entire project of the essay, which hinges on universalizing bulls.³⁹ Yet given that the changeling plot resurfaces in *Ennui* and that the concept of fostering and apostasy is prevalent throughout her Irish works, this early conflation of personal identity with *national* identity deserves a closer look. The 'bull' in question consists of a 'Hibernian' observing his former nurse and asserting, 'I hate that woman, for she changed me at nurse' (16). Edgeworth then applies 'the mysteries of metaphysics' to demonstrate the fluid nature of 'the common words *I*, or *me*.' To that end, she turns to a quotation of John Locke, who argued that personal identity 'consists not in the identity of

³⁹ *Essay on Irish Bulls*, Third Edition, Corrected (London: J. Johnson, 1808), pp. 16-18.

substance, but in the identity of consciousness'. Extrapolating from Locke's example, wherein Socrates asleep is not the same as Socrates awake, group identity relies more on a communal consciousness than tangible shared traits, such as blood. This distinction is vital to a reading of what Robert Tracy calls the 'Glorvina solution,' or the 'intermarriage/assimilation of Irish and Anglo-Irish, of modern efficiency and ancient tradition, of legal right and traditional loyalty', found in Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806).⁴⁰ And though Edgeworth often complicates Owenson's model of Anglo-Irish marriage cum union with changeling plots or questions of legitimacy, her treatment of fostering relies on a theory of mutable identity, which in turn informs her view of nationalism's role in progress and improvement.

In an early footnote in *Ennui*, Edgeworth quotes Davies in order to explain the weight fostering has on familial ties, as he suggests that 'fostering hath always been a stronger alliance than blood' and that the bonds of love and loyalty between foster-families and clans are stronger than those between kindred.⁴¹ This note is perhaps complicated by the fact that the novel's supposed foster relationship between an injured Glenthorn and his old Irish nurse, Ellinor, is later revealed to be a concealment for the fact that Glenthorn is

⁴⁰ 'Glorvina' refers to the title character of Sydney Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl*. See Robert Tracy's 'Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan: Legality Versus Legitimacy' *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, Vol. 40, No. 1 (June, 1985), pp. 1-22.

⁴¹ See *Ennui*, 159 n.: "For fostering, I did never hear or read, that it was in use or reputation in any country, barbarous or civil, as it hath been, and yet is, in Ireland...In the opinion of this people, fostering hath always been a stronger alliance than blood; and the foster-children do love and are beloved of their foster-fathers and their sept (or *clan*) more than of their natural parents and kindred; and do participate of their means more frankly, and do adhere unto them, in all fortunes, with more affection and constancy...Such a general custom in a kingdom, in giving and taking children to foster, making such a firm alliance as it doth in Ireland, was never seen or heard of in any other country of the world beside." – Davies.'

Ellinor's son. Yet the entire tone of *Ennui* suggests that Edgeworth believed in the supremacy of fellow feeling, common interests, and proper education to accidents of birth and blind loyalty to ancestry. It is a sentiment repeated in *The Absentee*. Having been raised and educated in England, all that Lord Colambre feels for Ireland at the start of the novel is 'a sense of duty and patriotism' (6). This alone is not enough to prepare him for his eventual role as an estate owner, and his rehabilitation from the son of an absentee to an improving landlord must include a deeper knowledge of the state of Ireland and his tenants, which can only be obtained by first-hand surveillance and a trustworthy cicerone. Irishness in Edgeworth's tales need not be reliant on a blood-based historical continuity, and fitness to act as an improving role model is merit-based.⁴²

Murray Pittock argues that the 'point' of *Ennui*, particularly the changeling plot, is that Edgeworth felt it would take a 'miracle' of that nature for an 'ascendancy nobleman to understand and sympathize with those about him'.⁴³ However, it seems the key to sympathy here is not dependent on the revelation that Glenthorn was not born into his Ascendancy identity, but rather the sudden shift in class and status that follows this revelation. This shift is not wholly miraculous considering that Glenthorn began the novel on the verge of being defrauded by his London agent. Whereas Pittock questions the traditional reading of *Ennui* as a text focused on Anglo-Irish reconciliation, the trials Edgeworth puts her landowning characters through in order to prove them worthy of guiding Anglo-Irish relations suggests that she found reconciliation a

⁴² See also Esther Wohlgenut's 'Maria Edgeworth and the Question of National Identity', *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, Vol. 39, No. 4, The Nineteenth Century (Autumn, 1999), pp. 645-58.

⁴³ See Murray Pittock's *Scottish and Irish Romanticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 184.

crucial and attainable factor in the political and economic success of post-Union Ireland. The Earl of Glenthorn's transformation into Christy O'Donoghoe calls for a crash course in self-sufficiency, and it is only when he is forced to improve himself and train for a career in law that he begins to understand the lessons his old steward, M'Leod, had tried to teach him regarding estate management. Blacksmith Christy's transformation into Glenthorn, however, demonstrates Locke's theory that Socrates asleep has a distinct identity from Socrates awake. As Edgeworth argued in *Irish Bulls*: 'We may presume that our Hibernian's consciousness could not retrograde to the time when he was changed at nurse; consequently there was no continuity of identity between the infant and the man who expressed his hatred of the nurse for perpetrating the fraud' (17). There is no 'continuity of identity' to prepare Christy to assume the role of a landed aristocrat who had access to the same level of education that he would have had as a birthright.

Katie Trumpener suggests that, with *Ennui*, Edgeworth is 'defending the fostering system as a means of transcultural reconciliation,' refuting Davies's fear that fostering 'posed a threat to English hegemony'.⁴⁴ The resolution of the changeling plot was also, in part, a defense against nationalist arguments against Anglo-Irish land ownership. The *ennui* that plagued him at the start of the novel proved to be a character flaw specific to Glenthorn the individual, not an indictment of all ascendancy noblemen. Indeed, if the charge of *ennui* was meant to be made against any segment of the audience, it would apply to all absentee landlords and all critics of Ireland who allow apathy, frivolity, or prejudice to keep them from making an enlightened survey of England's sister

⁴⁴ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, pp. 214-15.

country. But in case there is any doubt as to Glenthorn's fitness to manage the estate, he *does* marry Cecilia Delamere, legal heir to the Glenthorn estate, thus combining his foster identity as an Anglo-Irish aristocrat and his 'wild' Irish heritage with a legal right to the land. Christy O'Donoghoe surrenders control of the castle to Glenthorn and Cecilia after nearly burning it to the ground, proving that traditional claims to the land are not enough to insure responsible management of Irish resources (322).

Identity also features in *The Absentee*, though in the more quotidian adoption plot. While the main drive of the novel is Lord Colambre's tour of Ireland and the reformation of the absentee, the latter half of the story focuses on Colambre's romance with Grace Nugent, the adopted ward of his uncle. The surname of Nugent alludes to the displaced Catholic family once based in the same county as Edgeworthstown, transplanted from England in the time of Henry II, and Grace is associated with the Irish bard Carolan's ballad 'Gracey Nugent'. Yet when her legitimacy is questioned, threatening her character and suitability for marriage, enquiries ultimately prove that, while her parents *had* been married, Grace Nugent is no longer the last in the original Catholic bloodline who once owned the Clonbrony estate, but instead an English heiress (12). Following the death of her husband, an English officer named Reynolds whose family refused to acknowledge her or her child without proof of marriage, Grace's mother, also English but, with a St. Omar as a surname, coded Catholic, married Nugent. Just as in *Ennui*, fostering is an important element to *The Absentee*. Grace had been unaware, until Colambre's investigations led to her paternal grandfather acknowledging her birthright, that she was *not* Nugent's daughter by birth, as he had adopted her at a young age. Though it is suggested

that time had erased all memory of the fact that Grace was not a member of the Nugent bloodline, it seems unlikely, given Edgeworth's characterization of the native Irish as long-remembering and *loquacious*, that no one on the main Clonbrony estate near Nugent's Town would be aware of Grace's origins, or, at the very least, that the Nugents were descendants of an old English line.

Robert Tracy argues that Edgeworth foiled her own attempt at a 'Glorvina solution' by denying a marriage between an Ascendancy landowner and a representative of a once-powerful Irish Catholic dynasty.⁴⁵ Yet the tenants on the Clonbrony and Colambre estates *do* accept Grace Nugent, striking up the bardic song 'Gracey Nugent' in her honor upon the family's resettlement in Ireland. Larry Brady, Colambre's *cicerone* on the final leg of his tour through Ireland, even expresses a reluctance to call her by her new name of Reynolds, 'which she did not want in my eyes' (256).⁴⁶ As in *Ennui*, where, in Marilyn Butler's terms, 'ethnicity' was not the source of Irish identity and the manners in which Lord Glenthorn and Christy O'Donoghoe were fostered meant more to

⁴⁵ Tracy, 'Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan: Legality Versus Legitimacy.'

⁴⁶ For a reading of Grace's new name, see Marilyn Butler's chapter 'Edgeworth, the United Irishmen, and "More Intelligent Treason"' in *An Uncomfortable Authority: Maria Edgeworth and her contexts*, eds. Heidi Kaufman and Christopher J. Fauske (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2004), pp. 33-61. Butler sees a connection between 'Grace Nugent Reynolds' and George Nugent Reynolds, a Protestant gentleman known for the United Irish song 'The Exiled Irishman's Lamentation'. Though Butler notes that by 1812 even Irish readers may not have seen a link between the two, it is interesting to read Larry Brady's reluctance to against the lyrics to 'The Exiled Irishman's Lamentation' and the chorus of 'Ireland, my darling, for ever adieu!':

At length came the day when our lease did expire,
And fain would I live where before lived my sire;
But al! well-a-day, I was forced to retire,
Erin ma vourneen! slan leat go brach!

As Edgeworth was against life-long leases and uncomfortable with romanticizing the emotional attachment to resettled Irish lands, any coded support for the United Irish is overshadowed by her improvement agenda.

their fitness as landlord than any perceived birthright or tradition, Grace Nugent's childhood in Ireland, her kindness to the tenantry and the early alliance with the memory of the original Catholic owners were enough to establish the sentimental, if unfounded, claim to the estate and the loyalty of the Irish tenants there.

Tom Dunne argues that the 'repeated pattern' of apostasy and name changes 'suggests Edgeworth may have regretted that some way had not been found of combining modernization with the traditional loyalty given by the people to the old native families, even when they changed religion.'⁴⁷ Yet even as she grafted a modified version of that traditional loyalty onto progressive landlords in her novels, Edgeworth would never romanticize Old Irish chieftains as truly capable leaders. In Edgeworth's portrait of Ireland's past, it is made clear that John Davies was not inventing the oppression the Irish tenantry lived under when those old chieftain heroes reigned. Hugh O'Neill, instigator of the Nine Years' War, pressed his tenants into serfdom in order to build standing armies to fight against the English schemes to appropriate land for plantations, and this mismanagement is what Edgeworth focuses on in her treatment of old-guard Irish rule, even in the rare instance of sentimentality she attaches to King Corny in *Ormond*. O'Neill is not glorified as an Irish hero fighting against *English* mismanagement, but is instead presented as a caricature in a folk story, and possibly a harbinger of rebellion. In *Ennui*, the story of O'Neill, or 'the Irish black-beard,' was one Ellinor told Glenthorn 'at least six times' during his convalescence before he travels to Ireland, where he bears witness to a thwarted

⁴⁷ Dunne, "'A gentleman's estate should be a moral school': Edgeworthstown in Fact and Fiction, 1760 – 1840', p. 99.

rebellion (160). Both O'Neill and the old English landlords failed to manage their estates by Edgeworthian standards, just as Glenthorn's attempt to realign himself with his birth-family and hand control of his estate to the genuine Ascendancy lord, rendered ill-prepared for such responsibilities by his upbringing, was a failure.⁴⁸

Davies sees the English victory in the Nine Years' War (or Tyrone's Rebellion) in 1603 as the moment when the Irish chieftains and the 'degenerate or rebellious English' descending from the original colonizers in the unfinished Norman conquest are, at last, thoroughly subdued:

whereupon the multitude, who ever loved to be followers of such as could master and defend them, admiring the power of the crown of England, being beat, as it were, in a mortar, with the sword, famine, and pestilence altogether, submitted themselves to the English government, received the laws and magistrates, and most gladly embrace the King's pardon and peace in all parts of the realm, with demonstrations of joy and comfort, which made, indeed, an intire, prefect, and final conquest of Ireland. (58)

Davies does not address the potential cultural war against the Irish. Indeed, the common Irish, those who Davies argues had been unjustly oppressed by English landlords and Irish chieftains alike, are portrayed as being eager to submit to *strong* English rule, when it finally came.

For her part, Edgeworth agreed that improvement could not be achieved in half measures, commending that Davies 'had the sagacity enough to predict,

⁴⁸ Note that the surname O'Neill resurfaces in *The Absentee*, and this time as a symbol of reuniting native Irish peasants with their Anglo-Irish landlords. The widow O'Neill provides shelter for the incognito Lord Colambre, who in turn saves her from being evicted from his father's estate by a corrupt agent. Far from being a signpost of rebellion, the widow faints with happiness when the absentee landlords return home, and a second O'Neill, a blind harper of the bardic tradition, re-endorses the Irishness of Colambre's intended fiancé, Grace Nugent, by playing 'Gracey Nugent' before the assembled crowd at their return, despite her having been acknowledged as an English heiress.

that unless measures of liberal policy were adopted for the government of the country, “Ireland *civil* would become more dangerous than Ireland *savage*.”⁴⁹ Even prominent nativist and nationalist antiquaries expressed agreement that old Brehon laws were detrimental to Ireland’s progress towards modernization. Though some efforts were made to rehabilitate their reputation, all that virtually ended with the increasing violence associated with the agrarian unrest of the 1790s. Spenser and Davies were, according to Clare O’Halloran, ‘often mediated through Enlightenment scholarship concerning the process of civilization, but the message remained the same: the claim of a glorious pre-colonial civilization could not be reconciled with the fact of recent Irish barbarism.’⁵⁰ For both Maria and Richard Lovell Edgeworth, the only way to continue along the road to improvement was to move forward under responsible, rational, well-educated leadership, be it on the national level or on the microcosm of the landed estate, and that was predicated on an accurate assessment of the nation, the estate, and the needs of the people therein.

In my focus on Edgeworth’s work on improvement and national identity, I do not mean to suggest that her contemporary novelists who used the ‘Wild Irish’ image to promote a romanticized exoticism and to appeal to a general interest in the Celtic revival ignored the potential clash between tradition and progress. Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) is the story of Horatio M, banished to his absentee father’s Irish estates, whose prejudices about a ‘semi-barbarous, semi-civilized’ Ireland are challenged by his association with

⁴⁹ Review, p. 328.

⁵⁰ Clare O’Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations: Antiquarian Debate and Cultural Politics in Ireland, c. 1750-1800* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2004), p. 132.

the displaced Prince of Inismore, his daughter Glorvina, and their Catholic priest (10). *The Wild Irish Girl* may have spawned a cult of Glorvina and popularized the marital union as an allegory for union between England and Ireland, but her ‘wild Irish’ symbol was a safer, more sophisticated, more *palatable* version of the ancient Milesian line than could be found in travel texts that also used the term ‘wild Irish’. This comparative tameness in Glorvina is not blamed on a dilution of Irish identity under English oppression but is instead the result of a continental education and an enlightened rationality that allows Glorvina to condemn the more ‘superstitious’ tenets of Catholicism and other charges typically laid against the *mere* Irish.⁵¹

While the re-education of the returned absentees in Edgeworth’s fiction revolved around an enlightenment survey of the estate, Horatio’s training is centered in the ruins of the old Milesian seat and consists primarily of a crash course in the subjects his English father would have hidden from him – Irish antiquity and language. But even the Prince, with his nationalist zeal and enthusiasm for antiquity, has ‘peevish complaints’ about the ‘degeneracy’ of his country (63). Although that degeneracy is attached to the decay of his ancestors’ castle and legacy, the Prince is portrayed as a failure in terms of land management, being labeled an ‘agricultural spectator’ who likes to own more than he can or cares to manage. Milesian pride, or the irrational attachment to the legacy of the Irish princes which Glorvina condemns, ‘is the source of innumerable disorders, by promoting idleness, and consequently vice’ (118). In the face of the need for improvement, boasts of ancient heritage mean little and

⁵¹ Compare the cosmopolitan influence in *The Wild Irish Girl* to Charles Maturin’s *The Wild Irish Boy* (1808). Not only was the eponymous hero born in France and educated in England, but his uncle, the old Milesian chieftain De Lacy, had ‘passed much of his youth abroad’ and spoke French, Italian, and Spanish.

fraudulent claims of distinguished lineage must not be used to excuse the very idleness and sloth that writers such as Spenser and Davies accused the *mere* Irish of. Beyond that, carrying hatred for the English colonizers into the new century can be just as harmful to a nation in need of economic and socio-political stability. The Prince may have been weakened by age, but he dies of shock when it is revealed that he'd unwittingly formed a friendship with the descendants of the man who murdered and disenfranchised his ancestors. While Earl M had recognized that any plans for estate improvement would have to be endorsed by the old Milesian figurehead if there was to be any hope for them to flourish amongst the Irish tenantry, the Prince's reluctance to accept the Earl's friendship and his subsequent death put such schemes at jeopardy (240).

In Edgeworth's strand of estate improvement, the presence of oppressive and exploitative stewards is a condemnation of absenteeism and the solution is either to bring the Irish or Anglo-Irish landlord back to his estates or to place a well-educated steward in his stead. It may be surprising, then, that bringing an English landlord to Ireland to manage his supposedly ill-gotten estates would offer the same resolution in a pro-Irish nationalist text such as *The Wild Irish Girl*. Owenson leaves the last word on estate management and improvement to Earl M, who is leaving his Irish estate in his son's hands on the condition that he follows this Youngian advice:

Act not with the vulgar policy of vulgar greatness, by endeavouring to exact respect through the medium of self-wrapt reserve, proudly shut up in its own self-invested grandeur; nor think it can derogate from the dignity of the *English landholder* openly to appear in the midst of his Irish peasantry, with an eye beaming complacency, and a countenance smiling confidence, and inspiring what it expresses. (250)

The final lesson, then, is one advocating an open communication with the Irish population in order to best know how to implement changes and how to inspire confidence and fealty. Structuring the national tale around the return of an English absentee almost forces the marriage union between Glorvina and Horatio if any measure towards the reclamation of an Irish national identity is to be met; the contested authority over the land *cannot* revert to the Prince and the Milesian line he represents, and not just because of his death. Owenson has established that his pride has led him to ignore schemes for agricultural improvement in the few struggling farms that he owned or rented, and is thus no better fit to fill the role of improving landlord, despite any ancient hereditary claim. It is a resolution much more similar to Edgeworth's *Ennui* than is perhaps normally acknowledged.

In her post-Union texts, Maria Edgeworth seems to have conceded that Anglo-Irish landlords, no matter how improving they may be, *must* be conciliatory towards some aspects of Catholic or Celtic tradition, no matter how superficially, if they wish to enact a sustainable plan of utilitarian progress. Nevertheless, the repeated fostering plotline emphasizes that it is character, not bloodline, that defines a person's fitness to lead, and when emotional attachment to the past is rendered unreliable due to an inaccurate remembrance or representation of that past, the only logical recourse is to acknowledge the legitimacy of an improving landlord, be he of Irish, English, or Anglo-Irish descent. In the case of *The Absentee*, the instatement of Lord Colambre represents not only a turning point in estate management, but also a rehabilitation of the degenerated and locally popular Catholic Nugent line; under the watch of rackrenting agents, enabled by absenteeism, both Nugent's Town

and Grace Nugent's portrait in Clonbrony Castle had become almost unrecognizable in their decay. For Edgeworth, the ideal Anglo-Irish landlord is an inoculation against degeneration and not, as in Spenser's account, a victim of it. If *The Absentee* is, as Tracy suggests, a denial of Owenson's 'Glorvina solution,' it may also be Edgeworth's way of presenting this sort of 'traditional loyalty' as tenuous and superficial - a bit of flash needed to market untested improving landlords to a tenantry irrationally concerned with tradition.

4. 'AMOR PATRIAE': EDGEWORTH, TRADITION AND THE ANTIQUARIAN DISCOURSE

As a reader of several non-fictional accounts of Ireland, Edgeworth must have known that Spenser and Davies, writing at a time when English surveyors rarely ventured beyond the pale, were ill-equipped to provide accurate accounts of Ireland as a whole. I would argue that her suggestion that they had left 'full and able accounts of the state of that country in their times' can be read as a backhanded complement, an acknowledgement of the limitations of travelogues written in a time of turmoil and before the Enlightenment survey. Rather than falling on the side of historical relativism and openly conceding that perhaps Spenser's analysis of the Irish in the sixteenth century was tinged with imperialist rhetoric and prejudice, Edgeworth endorses his assessment of the national character *at that time*, claiming that 'neither in prose or verse could the history of these marauders be told with grace or dignity.'⁵² In spotlighting

⁵² Review of *The Stranger in Ireland*, p. 327.

Spenser's concerns about the mantle, while making a cunningly unsubtle correction of his 'thick woods' to her 'black bogs', Edgeworth effectively establishes a framework for her own texts in terms of style, genre, and historicity. This para-textual commentary provides more insight into Edgeworth's craft than it does any censure against Spenser's lack of moderation in his quest for colonial control. Clare O'Halloran observes that Spenser and others used the imperial discourse 'as a justification for colonial policy which was portrayed as a necessary civilizing instrument' (72).⁵³ Edgeworth's undermining of Spenser's spectatorial authority in the *Castle Rackrent* footnote and her defiance of Davies's invective against Anglo-Irish marriages suggests an awareness of and engagement with the early travel genre's limitations. Although Edgeworth acknowledges that Spenser's, Davies' and even Young's accounts of the nation were outdated in a post-Union Ireland and Great Britain, her novels often reaffirm their general descriptions of wild Irishness needing to be tamed by Anglo-Irish, British, and cosmopolitan influence.

For all of the imperialistic undertones of her praise of Spenser and Davies, the discourse of degeneration in Edgeworth's Irish novels is not a treatise on the corruption of English *or* Irish blood post-conquest, but instead a critique of the failure of trusteeship to responsibly manage Ireland's resource potential. Sympathetic attachment to the old Irish chieftains as featured in Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* often reads as a nativist appreciation of pure Milesian culture, no matter the cosmopolitan or pan-British influence on their supposedly 'wild Irish' characters. While reluctant to follow Owenson's

⁵³ Clare O'Halloran, 'Irish Re-Creations of the Gaelic Past: The Challenge of Macpherson's Ossian', *Past and Present*, No. 124 (Aug., 1989), pp. 69-95.

example, Edgeworth seems to have come to the conclusion after *Irish Bulls* that simply fictionalizing Arthur Young's Irish tour in her novels would have led to an incomplete assessment. As Trumpener observes, Young's overwhelming focus on agriculture and his avoidance of Milesian tradition in his civic discourse at the tour's conclusion meant 'a sense of historical tradition, attachment, or agency is almost necessarily absent' (43). To reincorporate that tradition, without over-romanticizing it or using it as a basis for a revisionist history, Edgeworth introduces Daniel Augustus Beaufort and Sylvester O'Halloran to round out her list of travel and history writers in *The Absentee*, and her treatment of their antiquarian and nationalist strains is a concession towards the passage of time and the need to update Young's version of Ireland.

Unlike Spenser, Davies, and Young, Daniel Augustus Beaufort and his *Memoir of a Map of Ireland* (1792) are not found elsewhere in Maria Edgeworth's oeuvre, so there is little evidence of the regard she held for his work other than the company he keeps in the list of travel writers in *The Absentee* and the family connection. Daniel Augustus Beaufort was the father of Rear-Admiral Sir Francis Beaufort, who married Honora Edgeworth, Maria Edgeworth's sister. Beaufort's *Memoir of a Map of Ireland* is the most contemporary account James Brooke references, though it is still pre-Union and thus insufficient for an accurate portrayal. Nonetheless, it is easy to see aspects in his *Memoir* that would have appealed to Edgeworth's vision of the Irish tour. Contrary to some other late-eighteenth century accounts, Beaufort sees an increase in population in Ireland over the previous one hundred years, 'in a great measure owing to the progressive improvements in agriculture and

manufactures; since the most industrious counties are the most populous'.⁵⁴ Glenn Hooper's analysis of the cartouche of Beaufort's map, which features trade and colonialism in the foreground in the form of a British galleon at port with a Gaelic abbey in the background, suggests that Beaufort was offering 'a commentary on the then parlous state of Anglo-Irish relations.'⁵⁵ Hooper argues that the marginalized position of the abbey and tower indicates Beaufort's progressive view of Irish history. 'They are fine as archaeological or antiquarian artifacts and relics, but they have no role in an Ireland increasingly linked to a superior trading economy' (31). This is certainly in keeping with Edgeworth's privileging of economic modernization above the nationalist concern with cultural conservation.

Of more interest is Beaufort's stance on the work of those prominent eighteenth century Irish antiquaries regarding pre-conquest civilization in Ireland, of which Sylvester O'Halloran was a major proponent. O'Halloran was numbered in that group of historians who, according to Beaufort, argued that Ireland was 'populous and civilized, long before the days of St. Patrick; and having sunk, afterwards, into a state of almost savage ignorance and barbarism' (v). Clare O'Halloran notes that antiquaries such as Sylvester O'Halloran 'invented a glorious pre-colonial past which contrasted with their present perceived situation as colonial subjects,' a past that included the origins of chivalry and knighthood, which then spread to France and other parts of

⁵⁴ Daniel Augustus Beaufort, *Memoir of a Map of Ireland* (Dublin, 1792), p. 142.

⁵⁵ See Hooper's chapter 'Planning Control: Cartouches, Maps and the Irish Landscape, 1770-1804' in *Landscape and Empire 1770-2000*, ed. Glenn Hooper (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), pp. 17-43.

Europe.⁵⁶ Beaufort's response to this is echoed in several of Edgeworth's writings:

Without entering here into a disquisition of so nice a question; or attempting to decide between zealous champions for her ancient grandeur, and the sceptical antiquaries, who endeavour, by learned arguments and reasoning, to confute long-credited traditions; I shall only observe, that if, in the warmth of national enthusiasm, one party seems to raise the glory of ancient Ireland too high; the other, perhaps, through an honest indignation against the legendary tales and fiction, that so often sully the page of early history, too much depress its former condition. – The truth may probably lie between them. – And an intimate acquaintance with the face of this country, joined to an attentive observation of the changes it has undergone, and of the various monuments of antiquity which still remain in every part of it, is essentially necessary to the philosophic enquirer, and his surest guide in the investigation of its true history, during the times which preceded the reign of Henry II and the three succeeding ages. (v-vi)

Beaufort's call for a moderate view of Irish history, a happy medium between Spenser's *Veue* and tracts promoting pre-conquest Ireland, can be seen as a template for Edgeworth's engagement with the antiquarian discourse as she strove to promote the possibility of a nation united with Britain not only in name but in the common interest of progress. Yet this interest in incorporating figures like Sylvester O'Halloran into her national tales did not surface until *Ennui* (1809), after Owenson's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) had had years to work on the imagination of an audience captivated by Milesian exoticism. Indeed, a certain mistrust of, or at least skepticism towards, traditionalist antiquaries and their romantic attachment to the past is something that surfaces most overtly in *Essay on Irish Bulls* with her first reference to O'Halloran.

⁵⁶ 'Irish Re-Creations of the Gaelic Past: The Challenge of Macpherson's Ossian', p. 72. See Sylvester O'Halloran's *An introduction to the study of the history and antiquities of Ireland* (Dublin, 1772) for his comments on the earliest origins of Irish culture: 'Ireland had its arts and letters from the country of Cadmus; as her traditions uniformly support' (172).

In the conclusion to *Irish Bulls*, the Edgeworths interrupt to break the tone of irony that pervades the text and to clarify their appreciation for the merits of Irish culture and language. This editorial interlude references Voltaire's revision of an earlier claim about English superiority over the Irish in that 'the Irish no longer yield to the English, either in industry or in information' (261). This allusion is followed by a jibe at Sylvester O'Halloran, a critic of Voltaire who, Edgeworth imagines, might be appeased by that line:

unless the *amor patriae* of the historian, like the *amour propre* of some individuals, instead of being gratified by congratulations on their improvement, should be intent upon demonstrating that there never was anything to improve. As we were neither *born nor bred* in Ireland, we cannot be supposed to possess this *amor patriae* in its full force: we profess to be attached to the country only for its merits. (262)

As a degree of meritocracy is at the center of the Edgeworths' model estate it is perhaps not surprising to see it here in *Irish Bulls*. It is telling, though, that nationalism is tentatively associated with Rousseau's idea of socially destructive self-aggrandizement, just as the qualification of the Edgeworths' own Irishness is paired with a superficial denial of their ability to possess that sort of Irish nationalism.⁵⁷ Marilyn Butler suggests that this attack on O'Halloran is meant to 'challenge the "nativist" precepts that genuine Irishness is to be sought in the history of the Dark Ages, or that ethnicity is the key to Irish identity' (344).⁵⁸ O'Halloran's *An Introduction to the Study of the History and Antiquities of Ireland* (1772) and *A General History of Ireland from the Earliest Accounts to*

⁵⁷ In *The Absentee*, Edgeworth's description of Lady Clonbrony, a character whose social aspirations are at odds with what she sees as her burdensome Irish heritage, as 'an Henglishwoman *bawn*,' explicitly echoes Edgeworth's own attempt to distance herself from the Irish in the conclusion of *Irish Bulls* when she and her father remind us that they "were neither *born nor bred* in Ireland" (152).

⁵⁸ See Marilyn Butler's edition of *Castle Rackrent and Ennui*, n. 29.

the Close of the Twelfth Century (1778) were read with renewed interest by antiquaries and nationalists post-union, which likely prompted Edgeworth's negative response in *Irish Bulls*. By assuming the positions of informed outsiders and dismissing the obsessive interest in genealogy which had become a national stereotype in Wales and was now pervading historiographies of Ireland, the Edgeworths were perhaps trying to establish a critical distance to bolster their authority as objective social commentators.

Clare O'Halloran argues that Ireland couldn't embrace primitivism, that idea so popular to Welsh antiquaries in the Celtic revival discussed in the previous chapter, because any glorification of a 'noble savage' Irish figure would be 'too close to the traditional and disparaging English view of native Irish culture' (72). Primitivism, she suggests, 'was always mediated through the ongoing colonial debate,' which is understandable in light of the reliance on perceived barbarism in Spenser's and Davies's accounts to justify English domination in Ireland.⁵⁹ Instead, Irish antiquaries portrayed a revisionist version of a pre-colonization past that was sophisticated, a past consisting of what Joep Leerssen called an 'image of Gaelic Ireland that was inherently characterized by its pastness: the most genuine and least adulterated form of Gaelic culture was that of the past, before the contamination of the English presence in Ireland'.⁶⁰ For Sylvester O'Halloran, whose interest in antiquarianism began after the *Ossian* debate and perceived theft of ancient Irish culture by James Macpherson, it seemed imperative that the Irish not divorce themselves from a Milesian past

⁵⁹ O'Halloran, *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations*, p. 98.

⁶⁰ Leerssen, 'Fiction Poetics and Cultural Stereotype: Local Colour in Scott, Morgan, and Maturin', p. 282.

because that would be an acceptance of colonial loss, but they must also show that they are not the barbarous Wild Irish found in Spenser's histories and countless popular representations.

Like O'Halloran, Maria Edgeworth could not have supported primitivism because she saw any sentimental attachment to ancient Irish tradition, particularly in the arena of land use, as largely irrational and anathema to progress and improvement. Yet her goal of promoting enlightened management of Irish estates made O'Halloran's 'nativist' texts and their insinuation that the English influence under Henry II's reign was the start of Irish degeneration equally distasteful.⁶¹ Though Edgeworth deplored the lack of education available to Irish Catholics as a result of the Penal Laws, she acknowledged with the resolutions of her novels that, in the context of the social and political reality of Ireland in the years surrounding the Union, it was only reasonable that the traits she valued in a responsible landowner would be found in characters of English or Anglo-Irish stock. Edgeworth also, unlike Owenson, refused to enter into the antiquarian debate over Irish origins, saying 'it is a matter of indifference to us whether the Irish derive their origin from the Spaniards, or the Milesians, or the Welsh' when an examination of the present state of the Irish condition was more pragmatic and pressing (263).

Why then, after criticizing him and his ilk in *Irish Bulls*, was Sylvester O'Halloran, advocate of an idealized pre-English past, re-incorporated into the post-Union texts *Ennui* and, more significantly, *The Absentee*? In *Ennui*, he is represented by an unnamed physician, 'a collector of curiosities' including a

⁶¹ See Lois Whitney's *Primitivism and the Idea of Progress in English Popular Literature of the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1934).

moose-deer skeleton excavated from the bogs (276). Although he is a minor character here, he serves an important role: it is his confirmation of an early childhood injury which convinces Lord Glenthorn that he was, indeed, born Christy O'Donoghoe. Sylvester O'Halloran returns in *The Absentee* as Count O'Halloran as what Robert Tracy calls 'the guarantor of formal legality', again serving to reveal or confirm the true heritage of Grace Nugent in the novel's denouement.⁶² That a Catholic antiquarian is instrumental in clearing the way for an allegorical union between England and Ireland via marriage is interesting considering the reprobation Edgeworth earlier expressed towards Sylvester O'Halloran's writings on *Ireland's* heritage. It also speaks to the way Edgeworth uses allusions to antiquarian texts, along with travelogues and histories, in order to construct a picture of Irish improvement compatible with multiple discourses and versions of Irishness. Marilyn Butler describes O'Halloran, in both of his guises in *Ennui* and *The Absentee*, as 'an interpreter and wisdom figure for the Gaelic-Irish plot.'⁶³ Yet O'Halloran does not merely serve as a mediator between the English, Anglo-Irish, and Irish, or between Protestants and Catholics. Count O'Halloran in *The Absentee* also serves as a platform for a conversation about accuracy in national representations and about an aspect of the Irish landscape vital to both nationalists and improvers: the bog.

Katie Trumpener argues that 'travel writing, for Edgeworth, represents literary work of the highest political consequence' (58). It is crucial then that any 'misrepresentations' of Ireland within travelogues *and* national tales are corrected. Count O'Halloran is responsible for providing an accurate source of

⁶² Tracy, 'Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan: Legality Versus Legitimacy', p. 12.

⁶³ Butler, 'Edgeworth, the United Irishmen, and "More Intelligent Treason"', p. 53.

information on the present state of, and possibilities for, estates in Ireland; he formally introduces Colambre to Lord and Lady Oranmore, improving landlords who redress the smear campaign against Ireland waged by Lady Dashfort. When he moves beyond Dublin and conversations with James Brooke about eminent tour writers, Colambre submits to the tuition of Lady Dashfort, an English gentlewoman who takes advantage of her position of authority in the Irish social scene (one granted to her by Irish peers and the nouveau riche *because* she is an English gentlewoman in Ireland) by laughing at people's susceptibility to her suggestions and putting on the Irish brogue to entertain her English guests. She takes it upon herself to act as tour guide to Colambre, but as she wishes him to marry her daughter Lady Isabel and then return to London and remain an absentee, she resolves to show him what she sees as the worst aspects of Ireland in an effort to dissuade him from relocating, treating the poverty of cottagers on an ill-managed estate as spectacle and demonstrating a patronizing benevolence that went against Edgeworth's ideas of charity via moral improvement:

No one could, with more ease and more knowledge of her ground, than Lady Dashfort, do the *dishonours* of a country. In every cabin that she entered, [...] she could distinguish the proper objects of her charitable designs, that is to say, those of the old uneducated race, whom no one can help, because they will never help themselves. To these she constantly addressed herself, making them give, in all their despairing tones, a history of their complaints and grievances; then asking them questions, aptly contrived to expose their habits of self-contradiction, their servility and flattery one moment, and their litigious and encroaching spirit the next: thus giving Lord Colambre the most unfavourable idea of the disposition and character of the lower class of the Irish people. (104)

In *Strangers to That Land*, John McVeagh lists as one of the reasons for the increased interest in the Irish tour, 'the rising awareness among English writers

of the poverty spread throughout the ordinary population of Ireland, and visibly on the increase' (239). While many tour writers used scenes of poverty as springboards for a civic discourse on social, economic, or political reform, Lady Dashfort takes advantage of the precedent of reducing human beings living in such poverty to parts of the overall spectacle of Ireland as a barbarous nation resistant to improvement, a rhetorical technique which Colambre may have come to accept in his familiarity with the travel narratives by Spenser and Davies.

Dashfort manipulates the narrative and absorbs the authenticity of the Irish voice by directing 'the old uneducated race' to recount their history 'in all their despairing tones,' thus convincing Colambre of the authority of her claims that these people 'will never help themselves.' With the scene focusing on Dashfort's manipulation of Colambre's (and the reader's) introduction to the rural Irish poor, Edgeworth does not actually give voice to the cottagers' complaints and grievances, and Dashfort's easy success in predisposing Colambre against the Irish lower class, coupled with her easy success in getting the cottagers to 'expose' themselves, demonstrates a need for mistrust when confronted with performative national narratives, particularly in attempting to get an authentic portrayal of Ireland post-Union. It is only when Colambre discovers Dashfort's motivations and recalls James Brooke's warning about her penchant for causing mischief that he leaves her company for O'Halloran's. Thanks to his introduction to the Oranmores, whom he had previously met in London when Lady Oranmore made a defiant speech extolling the virtue of her country in the company of anti-Irish society ladies, Colambre is shown 'the neat cottages, and well-attended schools, in their neighborhood. They showed him

not only what could be done, but what had been done, by the influence of great proprietors residing on their own estates, and encouraging the people by judicious kindness' (123). Following this revelation, Colambre finally sets out to see his father's estate to complete his Enlightenment survey of Ireland and prepare himself to assume control of the estate.

As I suggested in the introduction, Edgeworth's inclusion of an Irish Catholic aristocrat with interests in mediating between the Milesian lines and English influence may have been, in part, a concession to the popularity of the post-Union readings of Sylvester O'Halloran's histories and other antiquarianist texts. It also may signify what Edgeworth saw as a necessary allowance towards the sympathetic pull of Irish tradition given the bitterness over the unfulfilled promise of Catholic emancipation, which would not be kept until 1829. Yet the character of Count O'Halloran in *The Absentee* did more than pave the way for the marriage between Lord Colambre and Grace Nugent and introduce reliable guides for a tour of post-Union Ireland. Although the didactic passages regarding agricultural improvement and estate management are, in general, restricted to the conversation between Colambre and Mr. Burke, his father's land agent, O'Halloran calls attention to a common concern for both nationalist and utilitarian discourses: the bog. In her chapter 'The Bog Itself,' Katie Trumpener argues that the bog is 'the locus of a long-running struggle between improvers and nationalists'.⁶⁴ Where improvers such as Arthur Young wanted to drain the bogs to reclaim land and institute progressive husbandry, for nationalists, any improving design 'that would erase the surface of the country, to create an economic and political tabula rasa' would be a threat to 'the vestiges of cultural

⁶⁴ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 46.

memory' (53). There was also an added pressure from authors of romantic tours, like John Carr, who looked on the bog as a preserving mausoleum for the artifacts of an authentic Irish culture and promoted it as a curiosity. The bog and the reclamation of potentially arable land was certainly of great personal interest to Richard Lovell Edgeworth, and Maria Edgeworth's arguments about land improvement, specifically in relation to the bogs, must be addressed before one can come to a fuller understanding of O'Halloran's appearance in *The Absentee*.

As improvers, the Edgeworths agreed with Arthur Young's condemnation of a landlord's failure to drain and reclaim bog land as a failure to practice modern husbandry. In his analysis of Richard Lovell Edgeworth's ideas about draining the bogs on his estate and developing the land, Brian Hollingworth writes that, 'when comparing Ireland with England, to the Edgeworths nothing symbolized Irish backwardness more clearly than the Irish bog.'⁶⁵ On his first tour of Ireland with his friend Thomas Day, Richard Lovell Edgeworth noted how Day equated the vast stretches of bog with the general impression of poverty and wildness beyond the pale. 'As we passed through the country, the hovels in which the poor were lodged, which were then far more wretched than they are at present, or than they have been for the last twenty years, the black tracts of bog, and the unusual smell of the turf fuel, were to him never-ceasing topics of reproach and lamentation.'⁶⁶ R.L. Edgeworth saw the potential of the bog land, and was uniquely qualified to undertake the draining of

⁶⁵ Brian Hollingworth, *Maria Edgeworth's Irish Writing* (New York: St. Martin's, 1997), p. 84.

⁶⁶ Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *A Selection From His Memoirs*, ed. Beatrix L. Tollemach. (London: Rivington, Percival & Co, 1896).

it thanks to his experiences in France helping to build dams in order to redirect the Rhone, but there were two obstacles to such a project: money and law.

There were no guarantees that reclaimed bog land would be viable farming or grazing ground profitable enough to offset the cost of the draining, and if it should be a success, litigation over property rights seemed likely. R.L. Edgeworth did eventually reclaim a small section of bog near his estate and continued to speak on the great resource this land could be, but Maria Edgeworth explained the difficulties in this process:

Parts of different estates pass through extensive tracts of bog, of which the boundaries are uncertain. The right to cut the turf is usually vested in the occupiers of adjoining farms; but they are at constant war with each other about boundaries, and these disputes, involving the original grants of the lands, hundreds of years ago, with all subsequent deeds and settlements, appear absolutely interminable. [. . .] It may not be at present a question of much interest to the British public, because no such large decisive experiment as was proposed has yet been tried as to the value and attainableness of the object; but its magnitude and importance are incontestable, the whole extent of peat soil in Ireland exceeding, as it is confidently pronounced, 2,830,000 acres, of which about half might be converted to the general purposes of agriculture.⁶⁷

Like John Davies, whom she praised for obliterating, ‘as far as possible, the remembrance of antient feuds and party distinction,’ Maria Edgeworth’s post-Union Irish texts avoid both representations of land feuds between Anglo-Irish landlords and the displaced Catholic gentry and, on a smaller scale, disputes between any landholder and his tenants or neighbours following bog reclamation or enclosure. Considering her criticism of Carr’s light treatment of the 1798 Rebellion and other politically contentious topics, the absence of any detailed description of the agrarian protests in Ireland from mid-century on seems a

⁶⁷ See *Memoirs of Richard Lovel Edgeworth, begun by himself and concluded by his daughter, Maria Edgeworth* (1819), pp. 319-20.

particularly conspicuous evasion of the traditional rights to commons, and one that emphasizes her family's position as Anglo-Irish landowners.

Yet there is a noticeable progression of consideration for the nationalist concern over bog land from *Castle Rackrent* to *Ormond*. The proposed correlation between preserving the bog and the preservation of Irish heritage was portrayed as an irrational attachment to tradition in *Castle Rackrent*. Thady Quirk, acting as tour guide to Sir Kit Rackrent's wife, a stranger to Ireland, explains when they are viewing the estate and looking at the newly planted trees bordering the bog:

they are very well grown for their age, and you'll not see the bog of Allyballycaricko'shaughlin at-all-at-all through the screen, when once the leaves come out. But, my lady, you must not quarrel with any part or parcel of Allyballycaricko'shaughlin, for you don't know how many hundred years that same bit of bog has been in the family; we would not part with the bog of Allyballycaricko'shaughlin upon no account at all; it cost the late Sir Murtagh two hundred good pounds to defend his title to it and boundaries against the O'Leary's who cut a road through it. (78)

Lady Rackrent's reaction to the bog land is first to complain about the aesthetics and express concern that the trees don't yet block out the sight, and then to laugh at the Irish name of the bog, demanding Thady repeat it for her entertainment. In this early work, the tourist in Ireland associates the waste of the bogs with the backwardness of Irishness itself, much as Thomas Day did in his visit to the country. In *Ennui* the bog is the setting for what Glenthorn mistakenly labels a 'practical bull,' and though he is corrected and a subsequent reference to recovered artifacts transforms the bog into a receptacle of Irish history, it is still initially a source of amusement and spectacle. It is not until the inclusion of Count O'Halloran in *The Absentee* that Edgeworth gestures towards

a conciliatory combination of the nationalist's and the improver's view of the bog.

The reference to Sylvester O'Halloran in the character of Count O'Halloran, whose bog included a moose-deer skeleton, along with 'golden ornaments and brass-headed spears, and jointed horns of curious workmanship,' is suggestive of the incorporation of Irish tradition into a progressive text. Even as she recognizes the sociopolitical implications of an allusion to the Catholic Sylvester O'Halloran, Maria Edgeworth utilizes his name in her own agenda for agricultural improvement. Count O'Halloran expresses an interest in renovating those portions of his estate that have fallen to ruin over time and, most importantly, an interest in keeping the peace between the native Irish and the English interlopers – something of little concern to *Sylvester* O'Halloran in his histories of Ireland. This fictionalized antiquary, open to improvement, presents the bog in *The Absentee* as a place of union between tradition and utility: in reclaiming the bog, it is possible for nationalists to find artifacts that may further their claims for a pre-Norman sophisticated civilization and for improvers like Edgeworth to get improvable land.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ The allusion to Catholic antiquary Sylvester O'Halloran is also balanced by James Brooke, who shares a surname not only with Charlotte Brooke but also her father, Henry Brooke, a Protestant antiquary who authored both 'A Brief Essay on the Nature of Bogs, and the Method of Reclaiming Them' (1772) and the anti-Jacobite alarmist tract 'The Farmer's Letter to the Protestants of Ireland' (1745). Brooke's main concern about threat of Catholic invasion in the second Jacobite rising seems to be maintaining Britain's constitutional monarchy and its parliamentary independence from Rome and the 'papal hierarchy,' as it is 'impossible to be a *Papist*, without being a *Slave*' (Letter 2, p. 7). An invasion would not only threaten the nation, but also undo the narrator farmer's improvements and disrupt domestic harmony, even destroy the family line. In his alarmist vision, the farmer 'see[s] my fields in flames, my house a heap of rubbish, my wife rent from me bosom, and my infants quartered by war' (L 2, p. 2). Further study of Brooke's treatment of Irish Catholics in this time of threat may be of interest in any consideration of Edgeworth's pro-Catholic sympathies: 'Up then, my brave Countrymen! gird on your Arms! be strong to defend your Rights, be valiant to repel the

Maria Edgeworth's final Irish novel, *Ormond* (1817), does not contain a fictional representation of Sylvester O'Halloran. Nevertheless, *Ormond* is her most successful attempt at reconciling the tension between self-identified nationalists and improvers. It incorporates antiquarianism and agricultural modernization, fostering and international scope, and is the least didactic of her Irish tales.⁶⁹ *Ormond* features another foster son, with the eponymous Harry Ormond being fostered by Sir Ulick O'Shane on his estate until jealousy over marriage prospects and scandal surrounding a drunken act of violence convinces Sir Ulick to foist Ormond off onto his cousin, Cornelius O'Shane. This self-crowned King of the Black Islands is a throwback to the old paternalistic Milesian chieftain, preserving the hereditary customs (from advocating antiquated herbal remedies to retaining his Catholicism where Ulick had converted for financial and social gain). Yet King Corny is also portrayed as an agent of improvement, and Edgeworth finally presents her argument that the bog can be successfully reclaimed and turned into pasture. On a visit to the Black

Invaders! – Yet, we will do no Wrong, we will commence no Violence against our *intimate Enemies*, while they prefer Peace to War, and the Administration of Justice to Rebellion: But we will provide against their Treason; and we will save them also, if possible, from the Slavery to which they are prompt; as we would preserve a *mad Brother*, that runs into the Flames' (L. 2, 8).

⁶⁹ For a critical response to Edgeworth's move away from the overt didacticism that occasionally detracted from the plots of her earlier novels, see *Monthly Review*, 2nd series, 89 (July 1819), pp. 330-31: 'We are aware of the extreme difficulty of making every incident, or even the whole tenor, of a history tend towards the support of one hypothesis; and we have some doubt of its utility when effected. Such a warping of every fact must destroy, in a great measure, the probabilities of the general story; and in proportion with its want of similarity to common life must be the inefficacy of its moral. All that is required, in such compositions, is that the general morality of the book should be preserved; and that the reader should feel, on rising from its perusal, that sort of impression which should acknowledge the identity of the picture, and stimulate to an imitation of that conduct which has excited his amiable propensities. All this Miss E. has done; and we care not whether she has kept precisely to the one moral that she had in view, or not.'

Islands, Sir Ulick wonders about the longevity of reclaimed bog, saying he ‘understand[s] that after a short time it relapses, and is worse than ever, like most things pretending to be reclaimed.’⁷⁰ King Corny replies:

You ought to know, certainly, for some thirty years ago, I think you pretended to be a reclaimed rake [...] But see, my poor bog, without promising so well, performs better; for it's six years, instead of six months, that I've seen no tendency to relapse. See, the *cattle* upon it speak for themselves; an honest calf won't lie for any man. (275)

King Corny is the only throwback to the ancient (and in Edgeworth's usual parlance, irrational) Milesian chieftains to be treated with any appreciable level of sentimentality and respect in her Irish tales. Yet he is also the only character to advocate bog reclamation for utilitarian reasons. Just as in *The Absentee*, a character associated with the pre-Union Irish identity is somehow tempered by an interest in improvement.

In her final Irish novel, Edgeworth has more successfully allegorized union between the old Milesian landlords and their Anglo-Irish successors via this marriage of modern husbandry and Irish tradition than in any of her attempts at a ‘Glorvina’ plot resolution. While part of the nostalgia expressed towards the paternalistic King Corny may have stemmed from the fact that Richard Lovell Edgeworth was dying at the time of *Ormond's* composition (and indeed, Edgeworth's father wrote the novel's most sentimental scene: the wake of King Corny), part of the latitude Edgeworth has in her last Irish novel to express her guarded appreciation of the old Milesian ways is granted by the historical setting. Unlike *Ennui* and *The Absentee*, which were set only a few years before their composition dates, *Ormond* takes place in the 1760s, well before the Union

⁷⁰ Maria Edgeworth, *Ormond* in *Tales and Novels*, Volume 9 of 10 (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1870), p. 274.

and decades before the Constitution of 1782 gave the Irish Parliament a brief period of legislative independence. It is only in this historical framework that Edgeworth, ever the improver, can let the primitive microcosm of Wild Ireland exist, and even then King Corny brings a measure of taming civilization in his schemes for drainage and grazing.

In the course of the novel, Ormond, who had used his time in the Black Islands to enact a series of moral improvements on himself by developing his mind and controlling his stereotypical Irish temper, is presented with three models of landlordism. Corny is a representative of pre-conquest Ireland, reigning over the Black Islands as king of a self-contained feudal microcosm divorced from modern Ireland and the wider British economy. Sir Ulick, with all of the resources available to a wealthy Protestant landowner, uses his position to further lawlessness, fraud, and rackrenting. The quintessential bad landlord, Ulick ignores his lands and tenants as long as the high rents are paid, while he presses for votes in his race for political and financial influence. Finally, Sir Herbert Annaly is an English-educated improving landlord who ‘valued justice over generosity’ and sought to reestablish order on an estate plagued by looters (433). Marilyn Butler argues that Corny’s Gaelic model and Ulick’s plantation model ‘are equally discredited, and it is only the rational, modern-minded Annaly who has either the will or the ability to improve the lot of the Irish as a whole’ (384). Yet all three landlords die, suggesting that all three models unaltered may be untenable for the future to come, including agrarian riots, the 1798 Rebellion, the Union, a series of failed potato crops and the drop in agricultural prices at the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars. Ulick bought his tenants’ loyalty by letting them live lawlessly as long as they gave him rents and

votes. Corny commanded feudal loyalty and introduced unsophisticated agricultural advancements but was too paternalistic and kept the Black Islands from joining in the wider Irish socio-economic community. And Annaly, while still sympathetic to the Catholic cause and treating his tenants with considered benevolence, ultimately failed to secure the fidelity of a sizable portion of his tenantry, who left for Ulick's neighboring estate and its more lenient views towards looting and piracy.

At the novel's end, Ormond is given the choice between purchasing Sir Ulick's estate, which had gone into hock following Ulick's bankruptcy, or Corny's estate, which was in the hands of a son-in-law who did not wish to leave the social scene in France. Ormond chooses the Black Islands, where:

he might do a great deal of good, by carrying on his old friend's improvements, and by farther civilizing the people of the Islands, all of whom were warmly attached to him. They considered Prince Harry as the lawful representative of their dear King Corny, and actually offered up prayers for his coming again to *reign* over them. (528)

While it seems as though this improving strand is tainted by the specter of paternalistic, if enlightened, despotism, the novel's solution rejects Ulick's model and combines the traditional fealty expected in the Black Islands with the spirit of improvement demonstrated by Annaly, whose sister Ormond marries in another nebulous version of the 'Glorvina solution'. Sir Herbert saw his tenants not as subjects, but as 'reasonable beings, and as his fellow-creatures, whom he wished to improve' (432). As testament to that allegorical union of influence, 'Ormond's heart on this point was often with King Corny, when his head was forced to be with Sir Herbert; but, by degrees, head and heart came together' (433). This is perhaps the strongest echo of Beaufort's argument for bringing

together the sentimental strand of nationalist historiography and a utilitarian interest in ushering Ireland into a partnership in the modern British economy.

5. ‘UNITED SYMPATHY’: ALTERNATIVE SOURCES AND THE LEGACY OF THE IRISH NATIONAL TALE

One of the most striking differences between Maria Edgeworth’s use of travel texts and histories and the way Owenson and Maturin approached Milesian heritage was, ultimately, the level of sentimentality and nostalgia attached to a pre-conquest past and the use of Irish antiquarian studies as models for Irish history. The choice of source material is also significant in any comparison between Edgeworth and Owenson, particularly when applied to a study of how they approached the legitimacy and accuracy of written histories. When praising Edmund Spenser’s and John Davies’s late sixteenth / early seventeenth-century accounts by arguing that ‘neither in prose or verse could the history of these marauders be told with grace or dignity,’ Maria Edgeworth was ignoring a popular source used by Owenson and Irish antiquaries to demonstrate a pre-Norman Irish civility. Writing against what Colin Kidd calls Spenser’s and Davies’s ‘literature of denunciation’, Geoffrey Keating’s *Foras feasa ar Eirinn* (1634), or *Compendium of Wisdom About Ireland*, ‘emphasized that the New English critiques of Irish values had dwelt on the customs of common people to the exclusion of the nobility, thus presenting a necessarily diminished picture of the country’s culture’.⁷¹ Keating insisted, like Sylvester O’Halloran, that that

⁷¹ Colin Kidd, ‘Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland’, *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 109, Mo. 434 (Nov., 1994), p. 1199. Keating’s history, originally written in Early Modern Irish, was translated into English

‘the old *Irish* before the *English* invasion were a generous and brave people,’ and his arguments on both national character and the nature of historiography are compelling in and of themselves, but it is perhaps more interesting to consider his presence in Owenson’s footnotes, and his complete absence from Edgeworth’s novels.⁷²

Keating argues in his preface that the English chronicles show obvious bias, ‘commend[ing] the Country, but despis[ing] the People,’ and that a year of traveling in Ireland is not enough time to gather sufficient information and experience in order to publish a faithful account, never mind the inherent difficulties in writing the history of a country when you cannot speak the native language. Indeed, Keating seems to have been keenly aware of the limitations of written and oral histories and issues of authority and authorial responsibility. Critical of the discourse he was working within, Keating laments that the auto-history of Ireland was written ‘in the Times of Paganism and Idolatry’ and that, after the advent of Christianity and its fight against ‘Clouds of Superstition and Ignorance,’ the study of antiquity in several countries was tainted by the proliferation of ‘many strange and romantick Accounts [that] have been delivered with an Air of Truth’ (268). Aware that his status as a Roman Catholic priest would throw a light of suspicion on the veracity of his history, Keating charges, ‘let it be consider’d that I have no Temptation to be unjust, being myself originally of an *English* Extraction’ in an effort to stem accusations

in 1723 by Dermot O’Connor, under the title *The General History of Ireland*, and was, according to Kidd, ‘highly influential’.

⁷² From *The General History of Ireland*, ‘translated faithfully from the original Irish’ by Dermot O’Connor (London, 1723).

of revisionism or pro-Catholic Jacobite bias (xx).⁷³ Of course, Keating's account is not without inconsistencies, aside from the perhaps expected historical inaccuracies. In discussing the contentious nature of delineating national character, Keating chides writers like Camden for leveling the charge of savagery against all of Ireland based on isolated incidents and unverified observations. His defense is largely class biased, arguing that too often Ireland is judged solely by the character of the peasantry, and he counters that 'it is barbarity for a whole Nation to be aspers'd for the Guilt of a few, and those the very Dregs of the People' (xvii). Yet Keating consistently refers to the invading Danes as savages, proving himself guilty of condemning a nationality based on the actions of a select, and long dead, subset.

Owenson made use of 'the learned Keating' in her footnote to *The Wild Irish Girl* (perhaps surprisingly referring to his work as *The General History of Ireland* instead of using the original Irish title).⁷⁴ Eighteenth-century translator Dermot O'Connor writes, in his preface, that 'human compositions, notwithstanding all imaginable care, can never claim a Right to infallibility' (i). That sense of the fallibility of written histories would, of course, appeal to Owenson, who saw the ways in which historical narratives could be used as a colonial tool. It is surprising that Edgeworth did not also make use of Keating's

⁷³ English extraction here meaning he descends from an Old English or Anglo-Norman family.

⁷⁴ Sylvester O'Halloran also references Keating in his own *General History of Ireland*, but is insistent on using the original Irish edition, calling attention to the omissions in O'Connor's English translation. In *Golden Ages and Barbarous Nations*, Clare O'Halloran calls Dermot O'Connor's translation 'careless and defective, even by the relaxed standards of the time' and he made obvious concessions to his Protestant audience by substituting 'Christian' for 'Catholic' (21). I use his translation here not for its faithfulness to the original but because that is the version most likely used by Owenson, since the next English translation, by William Haliday, was not published until 1811.

history, particularly in *The Absentee* and *Ormond*. Despite a perhaps too unpalatable pro-Catholic and republican strain, Keating's text, with its praise of the landed gentry and its concern that Ireland be as accurately portrayed as possible in a discourse with inherent flaws, would have fit well in Edgeworth's last two Irish works. It also could be argued that Keating would have been a more logical choice than O'Halloran in Edgeworth's attempt to incorporate Irish Catholic antiquarian interest. After all, Keating, who was endorsed by O'Halloran, was writing from a seventeenth-century perspective and, whatever his failings as a historian, his text could have been used as an acknowledgment of nativist concerns while still being made palatable by the buffer of time. However, Keating's support of the Stuart line aligned him with a spirit of rebellion that had no place in Edgeworth's improving agenda, and O'Halloran's status within the Catholic middle class ultimately proved a safer recourse than Keating's poet priest.

Katie Trumpener argues that, for Edgeworth, 'antiquarian traditionalism weighs down Irish consciousness with a spurious ancestor worship and an impossibly idealized sense of the old Ireland' (60). An Irish national identity rooted in pre-Conquest Ireland, essentially based on pastness and thus predisposed to viewing English influence as a corrosive, would be severely detrimental to a system of change that would, *because* of that past, be driven by English and Anglo-Irish forces. Edgeworth's treatment of the passing of regressive Milesian generations, particularly in *Castle Rackrent* and *Ormond*, suggests an awareness of the impact historical change can have on national character. Whatever her ideas on the necessity of the English influence for the creation and maintenance of a modern Ireland free from pre-Elizabethan

savagery, it was crucial to her schemes for improvement that the post-Union Irish be re-presented as trainable, open to the tutelage of educated leaders and able to overcome any corruptive attachment to the past. Marilyn Butler argues that ‘the Edgeworths were regarded as reformers and radicals of a rather older provenance and with an international rather than a nationalist agenda.’⁷⁵ Certainly, in her pragmatic approach to both political and agrarian instability, Maria Edgeworth reads at times as an early to mid-eighteenth century patriot, *pre-nationalistic* and defined by George Berkeley in 1750 as ‘one who heartily wisheth the public prosperity, and doth not only wish, but also study and endeavour to promote it.’⁷⁶ Thus, the nationalist tones of O’Halloran and novelists like Owenson were, in practical terms if nothing else, untenable for someone who valued improvement above reclaiming a glorified Irish national heritage.

If Irish tours are comprised of snapshots (and staged ones, at that) that temporalize an Ireland from the surveyor’s perspective, Maria Edgeworth did not take advantage of being able to write an account of the landlord’s experience of Ireland once he ceases being a stranger to that land. Perhaps the travelogue genre is subdued by the improver’s agenda at the tour’s end. Having established the evils of absenteeism, the Irish estate must be the final destination, and detailing the realization of improvements under new or re-educated landowners

⁷⁵ Butler, ‘Edgeworth, the United Irishmen, and “More Intelligent Treason”’, p. 47.

⁷⁶ See *Maxims Concerning Patriotism* in George Berkeley’s *Works*, Volume 4 of 4, ed. A.C. Fraser (Oxford: Clarendon, 1901), p. 562 and Joep Leerssen’s *Mere Irish & Fior-Ghael*, p. 347. For a similar use of patriotism in Edgeworth’s work, see *Ennui*, wherein, in the midst of the rebellion, Glenthorn laments ‘How few act from purely patriotic and rational motives!’ (246). *The Absentee* also concludes with hopes that Lord Colambre’s ‘patriotic views will extend with his power to carry wishes into action,’ emphasizing utility over nationalist zeal (252).

with any degree of realism would create a new set of problems. Thus, we never see failed attempts at bog reclamation (which were both common and expensive), and only in the short story 'Rosanna' – presumably set in England and lacking the colonial dimension associated with improvement in Ireland - does she address the fact that improvement does not equal immediate economic revitalization.

Helen O'Connell writes that 'improvement was a stabilizing discourse, seeing consensus and coherence in the public sphere in order to prepare the ground for modernization and progress' (3). In her national tales, Edgeworth offers her readers a portrait of Ireland that weighs Irish national myth against pan-British Enlightenment values, re-imagines the discourse of degeneration found in Spenser and Davies, and provides a guide to improvement and progress. Glimpses of thriving estates and admirable characters of varying social backgrounds are Edgeworth's proofs of Ireland's ability to move past its colonial history and the degeneration chronicled by Spenser and Davies. But with such a disparity between Ireland's potential as a sister country in the United Kingdom and its reality of poverty, illiteracy and sociopolitical divisiveness, Edgeworth's fictional journeys towards improvement were on-going rather than realized, and by 1834 Maria Edgeworth would declare:

It is impossible to draw Ireland as she now is in a book of fiction – realities are too strong, party passions too violent to bear to see, or care to look at their faces in the looking-glass. The people would only break the glass, and curse the fool who held the mirror up to nature – distorted nature, in a fever.⁷⁷

Ultimately, for Edgeworth it was not the potentially dangerous and seductive lure of Gaelic Ireland that impeded a nation-wide drive towards progress.

⁷⁷ From Maria Edgeworth to Michael Pakenham Edgeworth, letter begun 14 Feb. 1834. Quoted in Marilyn Butler's *Maria Edgeworth*, p. 452.

Instead, disillusioned by Daniel O’Connell’s Catholic campaign against Ascendancy landlords and the family’s failure to control the votes of Edgeworthstown tenants in the 1832 elections, it seems as if Edgeworth finally lost hope in the ability of Anglo-Irish landowners to secure the sort of *rational* loyalty needed for her model of improvement.⁷⁸

In response to a description of an Independence Day celebration in America in 1840, she lamented that Ireland could never meet ‘with united sympathy and for the keeping alive a feeling of national patriotism. No such point of union can be found, alas! in Ireland; no subject upon which sects and parties could coalesce for an hour, or join in rejoicing or feeling for their country!’⁷⁹ Ireland had become too sectarian for there to exist the consensus necessary for a national endeavour towards improvement. Yet while the utilitarian goal of her didacticism may not have been met to her satisfaction, Edgeworth’s approach to the novel as a genre - the combination of travelogues and histories and the focus on presenting an accurate national image – helped bring about the age of the national novel. It also spurred readers and reviewers to expect a new level of literary realism incorporated into otherwise romantic portrayals of the ‘Celtic fringe’.

⁷⁸ See Butler, pp. 450-52.

⁷⁹ Maria Edgeworth to Mr. Ticknor, Nov. 19, 1840. Quoted in *The Life and Letters of Maria Edgeworth*, ed. Augustus J. C. Hare.

CHAPTER THREE

WANDERING SONS AND STEADIER MEN: HIGHLAND

EMIGRATION AND IMPROVEMENT

Man, in a state of nature, is taught by his more civilized brethren a thousand new wants before he learns to supply one. Thence barter takes place; which in the first stage of progression is universally fatal to the liberty, the spirit, and the comforts of an uncivilized people. – *Anne Grant*¹

As has been made evident, ‘romance’ and ‘improvement’ often have a strained, if not oppositional, relationship in the national texts discussed throughout this study. This tension is most obvious when considering their varied approaches to the Picturesque when describing landscape. As Gilpin argues:

Moral, and picturesque ideas do not always coincide. In a moral light, cultivation, in all its parts, is pleasing; the hedge, and the furrow; the waving corn field, and rows of ripened sheaves. But all these, the picturesque eye, in quest of scenes of grandeur, and beauty, looks at with disgust. It ranges after nature, untamed by art, and bursting wildly into all its irregular forms.²

If it is fair to judge by the comparatively few Welsh ‘national’ novels produced in this period, Wales was perhaps considered too uncomplicated – neither

¹ Anne Grant, *Memoirs of an American Lady, with Sketches of Manners and Scenery in America, as they Existed Previous to the Revolution* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1808), Vol. I, p. 219.

² William Gilpin, *Observations Relative Chiefly to Picturesque Beauty, Made in the Year 1772, on Several Parts of England’ Particularly the Mountains, and Lakes of Cumberland, and Westmoreland*, 2 vols. Third Edition (London, 1792), vol. II, pp. 44.

culturally ‘alien’ enough nor posing enough topographical challenges to improvers— to be seen as a British preserve against commercial modernity, despite growing interest in the picturesque qualities of its landscapes and in the bardic and antiquarian approaches to nationalism. Ireland, on the other hand, was often viewed as *too* ‘other’ to sustain a non-threatening romantic image and, with its widespread and highly publicized rural and urban poverty, the imperative for improvement ultimately resonated more than romance for authors such as Maria Edgeworth. Comparatively, Scotland presented a more challenging testing ground for the tension between Celtic romance and the discourse of improvement. This tension is most apparent when considering the portrayal of the Scottish Highlands in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.

In the decades between Samuel Johnson and James Boswell’s tour of the Hebrides and the popular success of Sir Walter Scott’s *Waverley* novels, a series of synecdochic associations gradually positioned the Highlands as the symbolic cornerstone of British romance and improvement discourses, while Scotland became an integral part of the British Empire. In discussing the advantages reaped by England following its 1707 Union with Scotland, Tobias Smollett’s *Lismahago* argues:

They got an accession of above a million of useful subjects, constituting a never-failing nursery of seamen, soldiers, labourers, and mechanics; a most valuable acquisition to a trading country, exposed to foreign wars, and obliged to maintain a number of settlements in all the four quarters of the globe.³

³ Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker*, ed. with introduction by Lewis M. Knapp, revised by Paul-Gabriel Boucé (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 278.

The Highlands, singled out as the chief ‘nursery’ of soldiers, came to represent the public national image of Scotland; ‘improvement’ came to signify the Clearances; the Clearances prompted a frenzied discussion of emigration; emigration suggested a loss of Highland soldiers, which in turn denoted a threat to British safety. The link between Scottish cultural nationalism and improvement is evident in some of the earliest societies formed to promote Highland interests. In contrast to the antiquarian Welsh societies like Iolo Morganwg’s *Gorsedd Beirdd Ynys Prydain* in London, the early Highland equivalents – the London-based Highland Society founded in 1778 and the Edinburgh chapter founded in 1784 – combined an interest in preserving and promoting Gaelic literature and music with the consideration of how to modernize the Highlands’ economy. As popular interest in the romantic image of the Highlands grew, thanks in no small part to literary representations by writers like Anne Grant and Sir Walter Scott, the Highland Society focused more and more on commercial and agricultural development.

In his persuasive *Improvement and Romance* (1989), Peter Womack suggests that the Scottish Highlands became a ‘myth’ in reaction to improvement and romance in the eighteenth century, constructed as an imagined community with ‘the role of representing Scotland *for the English*’.⁴ Womack, broadly defining improvement as ‘the cultivation of an asset in order to profit from it,’ argues that any society successfully completing a ‘programme of Improvement’ is transformed into something ‘artificial,’ a representation of ‘the

⁴ Peter Womack, *Improvement and Romance: Constructing the Myth of the Highlands* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1989), p. 148.

general principles and systematic knowledge of the Improvers'.⁵ Womack focuses mainly on the creators of the Highland myth, from travel writers like Thomas Pennant to literary figures such as Robert Burns, James Macpherson, and Walter Scott. Scott, certainly, was a major contributor to the romanticization of Scotland and what Kenneth McNeil calls 'highlandism,' or the appropriation of Highland culture and customs into a composite Scottish national identity.⁶ For the most part, Womack's study centers on the outsider's perception of the Highlands, how visitors or readers from the Lowlands and England applied their ideas of improvement, economics and aesthetics to create an imaginary romantic space. In doing so, it fails to detail the reaction to the 'myth' as myth *within* the Highlands, either in improvement tracts, travelogue, or in fiction. This chapter will focus on the ways selected writers negotiate the implications of an increasingly romanticized Highland landscape and cultural identity while acknowledging the need for improvement that may compromise that image. In my study of Christian Isobel Johnstone's *Clan-Albin: A National Tale* (1815), I am interested in examining the ways Johnstone attempts to reconcile the imagining of the Highlands as a pre-modern picturesque microcosm and a 'nursery of soldiers' with the effects of agricultural and industrial improvement, particularly emigration.⁷ *Clan-Albin* is an ideal text for a case study of the treatment of the Highlands and Scottish improvement within the national tale template. In contrast, my analysis of Alexander Sutherland's

⁵ Ibid., pp. 3, 174.

⁶ Kenneth McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire: Writing the Highlands, 1760-1860* (Columbus: Ohio State University, 2007).

⁷ Thomas Douglas Selkirk, *Observations on the present state of the Highlands of Scotland, with a view of the causes and probable consequences of emigration, by the Earl of Selkirk* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees and Orme, 1805), p. 72.

short story ‘The Bride of Ulladale’, published in his collection *Tales of a Pilgrim* (1827), highlights his near avoidance of romance and Highland culture in exploring the impact of one of Scotland’s most prominent agricultural improvers.

The Highland landscape offered a unique challenge to improvers. The most mountainous regions were unsuitable for commercial agriculture and, considering the restrictions to transportation, manufactures were generally impractical. ‘Improvement’ in these regions came to imply Clearances – the removal of freeholds, commons, and the subsistence farmers dependant on them for the introduction of sheep farms. The coastal regions offered different options for development, including fisheries and kelp farming, but not enough to support all of the families displaced by the Clearances. Subsequently, emigration became an integral consideration for anyone commenting on improvement in Scotland. The practical difficulties posed by the Highland landscape were not, of course, unique to Scotland. The mountains of North Wales and the bogs of Ireland came with their own sets of obstacles for land management. Rural depopulation too was a widespread concern throughout Great Britain and Ireland, as expressed in Oliver Goldsmith’s ‘The Deserted Village’ (1770) and Tobias Smollett’s *Humphry Clinker* (1771). The success of Edinburgh and Glasgow as commercial centers may have perhaps eased the pressure on ‘national writers’ to advocate improvement in their romantic portrayals of the Highlands, as Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan did in their Irish works, had emigration not become a byword in non-fictional analyses of the state of the Highlands from the 1760s well into the nineteenth century. As the popular image of the Highlander had a distinctly martial resonance,

transatlantic emigration became a national concern and contributed to the increase in attention paid to improvement in the Highlands.

While writers such as Walter Scott were constructing a Scottish national image largely evocative of the regional characteristics of the Highland communities, the Highlands were often seen as the last stronghold against the potentially corruptive influence of modern commercial society and as a living portrait of England's past. A reviewer of the Earl of Selkirk's *Observations on the present State of the Highlands of Scotland* (1806) calls the Highlands 'the seat of antient manners, where a spirit prevailed and an economy was pursued extremely different from those which distinguished the other parts of the empire.' Thanks to the shift in agricultural practices, due in part to 'intercourse with the South', the Highlands are seen as finally undergoing the same changes that England had 'as early as the time of Henry VII'.⁸ As the popularity of Scott's Scotland grew, so did the association between the Highlands and its *pastness*, particularly as the historical novel developed as the most prevalent Scottish literary genre in the first half of the nineteenth century. Although Scott's novels, such as *Waverley* (1814) and *Rob Roy* (1817), address improvement, travel, and national image, the historical setting precludes a detailed account of the transformation of Highland landscape and communities during the Clearances. Concentrating on accounts of the Highlands set in a period relatively contemporary with their publication dates, this chapter focuses on two texts that stray from Scott's *Waverley* template. But in order to contextualize Johnstone's use of the national tale paradigm and Sutherland's

⁸ See 'Art. X. Observations on the present State of the Highlands of Scotland', *Monthly review*, 50 (1806: Aug.), p. 411.

engagement with contemporary improvement discourse, it is first necessary to examine the major influences on Scottish national image that they were writing against, from the countercurrents in travel and improvement texts to the influence of men such as David Stewart of Garth over the presentation of Highland pageantry to King George IV.

1. ‘A HACKNEYED SUBJECT’: LITERARY HIGHLANDS CONTEXTUALIZED

In the opening pages of *The Expedition of Humphry Clinker* (1771), Tobias Smollett observes that ‘there have been so many letters upon travels lately published,’ including his own *Travels through France and Italy* (1766), that ‘the public seems to be cloyed with that kind of entertainment’.⁹ Yet despite the increasing availability of travelogues in the latter half of the eighteenth century, Jery Melford contends that ‘South Britons in general are woefully ignorant’ of their northern neighbours (213). Predating Samuel Johnson’s popular *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland* by four years, *Humphry Clinker* was published at a time when, according to Jery Melford, ‘the people at the other end of the island know as little of Scotland as of Japan’

⁹ Smollett, pp. 2-3. With the exception of Samuel Derrick’s *Letters Written From Leverpoole, Chester* (1767), the travel texts Smollett lists in this passage describe tours in countries outside of Great Britain and Ireland.

(214). Nearly forty years later, tours of Scotland would be so common that Sir Walter Scott would call them ‘a hackneyed subject’.¹⁰ Scott suggests:

It would, perhaps, be somewhat difficult to bring us news from Scotland. Formerly indeed, we knew Scots, and, as we thought, to our cost; but we knew little of Scotland; and most plain London citizens would have made their wills before they ventured into a country where the fair sex dispenses with the use of shoes and stockings, and the males with that of a still more necessary integument. But that time is gone by. (182)

The popularity of Scotland as both a tourist destination and a setting for historical romances would only grow with Scott’s publication of *Waverley; or, ‘Tis Sixty Years Since* in 1814. As Ian Duncan describes, a ‘proliferation of cheap knockoffs’ modeled on *Waverley* saturated the market, and the glut of Scottish tours and Scottish novels was satirized in works such as Robert Couper’s *The Tourifications of Malachi Meldrum, Esq. of Meldrum Hall* (1803) and Sarah Green’s *Scotch Novel Reading; or, Modern Quackery* (1824).¹¹

Christian Isobel Johnstone’s *Clan-Albin: A National Tale* (1815) was one of the ‘Scotch novels’ published after Scott’s influential *Waverley*, yet this four-volume national tale is hardly a ‘cheap knockoff’, as Johnstone took pains to advertise. Indeed, the Advertisement to the first edition claims that ‘the first half of this Tale was not only written but *printed* long before the animated historian of the race of Ivor had allured the romantic adventurer into a track, rich, original, and unexplored, and rendered a second journey all but hopeless’ (1). Although Scott’s immensely popular ‘Lady of the Lake’ was a clear influence for any of his contemporaries writing about the Highlands, Johnstone seems eager to

¹⁰ See the review of ‘Carr’s Caledonian Sketches.’ Article XVI, *Quarterly Review*, 1:1 (Feb., 1809), p. 178-93, co-attributed to Walter Scott and William Gifford.

¹¹ Ian Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 32.

distance her novel from *Waverley*, perhaps foreseeing the score of imitators who would appropriate the historical romance and settings of Scott's work. In a footnote in Volume Four of *Clan-Albin*, which was written after the publication of *Waverley*, Johnstone apologizes for the 'abrupt disappearance' of a minor character, Hector the hunter, who had served as a throwback to defunct feudal clan hierarchy in the first two volumes. Johnstone intimates that she had excised Hector's back-story because of the intervening publication of *Waverley*: 'It related to a very interesting period of Highland society, 1745. Since the first part of this tale was printed, the *fanciful* story of those times has been told with spirit and grace which only one pen can reach' (503). While Johnstone was partially indebted to Scott for the interest he created in literary depictions of the Highlands, she was very much aware that *Clan-Albin* had a different focus to *Waverley*. She was particularly interested in delineating a relatively contemporary portrait of the Highlands from 1783 to 1810, rather than using the historical model favoured by Scott.

Considering its near-contemporary nature, the third volume's Irish setting, and the generic alliance with the national tale, it is perhaps more useful to read *Clan-Albin* as a response to Maria Edgeworth's influence on the genre.¹²

¹² Despite a positive allusion to Edgeworth in *Clan-Albin*, Johnstone would later question her classification as an Irish writer. In addition to publishing novels, Christian Isobel Johnstone had a successful career as a journalist and was the editor of *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine* from 1834 to 1846. Prior to this, Johnstone's review "Miss Edgeworth's Works" was published in *Tait's* in June 1832. Apart from finding 'a slight tinge of pedantry, as well as prudery' in her prose and wishing for more '*romance*' to balance her didacticism, Johnstone was generally appreciative of Edgeworth's style (281). The main, and most interesting, points of contention centered on the role of the novelist as social commentator and, in Edgeworth's case, as representative of a national literature. Johnstone argues that Maria Edgeworth ignored opportunities to issue a more serious indictment of social and political evils in Ireland and is not, contrary to her reputation, a true national Irish writer: 'Though her heart, and good wishes, and excellent understanding, may have been in Ireland, her imagination and fancy are, so far as is seen in her works, clearly absentee: - they are essentially English' (282).

Similarly, in *Waverley*'s 'A Postscript, which should have been a preface', Maria Edgeworth is perhaps the most prominent literary figure in Walter Scott's list of his influences and inspirations in completing his novel for publication.

Scott expands on her impact in his General Preface to the 1829 edition:

I felt that something might be attempted for my own country of the same kind with that which Miss Edgeworth fortunately achieved for Ireland – something which might introduce her natives to those of her sister kingdom in a more favourable light than they had been placed hitherto, and tend to procure sympathy for their virtues and indulgence for their foibles.¹³

Though this is an interesting insight into Scott's perception of audience, Peter Garside has noted the complications surrounding Scott's reference to Edgeworth as a direct influence on *Waverley*, given its various composition dates, the publication dates of Edgeworth's Irish works, and when Scott is thought to have read them.¹⁴ Scott also acknowledges 'the traditional records of the respectable and ingenious Mrs Grant of Laggan,' *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland: To which are added Translations from the Gaelic; and Letters Connected with those formerly published* (1811). Anne Grant - Glaswegian, poet, travel writer, and self-identified Highlander - is a good example of an author whose works exhibit the tension between romanticizing the Highlands and advocating their improvement. Her narrative poem 'The Highlanders', according to Peter Womack, is anti-improvement in so far as it criticizes enclosure in aesthetic terms. However in her reading of Grant's *Essays*, Betty Hagglund argues that Grant was 'keen to emphasize that the

¹³ Walter Scott, *Waverley*, ed. Andrew Hook (London: Penguin, 1972), p. 523.

¹⁴ Peter Garside, 'Popular Fiction and National Tale: Hidden Origins of Scott's *Waverley*', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, Vol. 46, No. 1 (June 1991), pp. 30-53.

Highlanders, although ‘primitive’, were not complete savages, but were, in fact, in the process of progressing towards civilization’.¹⁵ *Essays* has an undeniable primitivist tone and favors the picturesque aesthetic that generally treats cultivation as anathema, yet Grant also claims to find progress ‘soothing’:

But among a people, whose progress towards civilization, is so far advanced, that the feelings of the heart, and the powers of the imagination have been called forth, preceding the light of science, as the morning star and the dusky dawn do the effulgence of the sun. Among such people, the mind finds something to dwell on that is soothing and satisfactory.¹⁶

This somewhat incongruous position begs the question of whether the value of improvement as spectacle acts here as compensation for the fact that progress is viewed as inevitable, or rather unstoppable once initiated, and is something that informs my reading of Johnstone’s *Clan-Albin* and Sutherland’s ‘The Bride of Ulladale’.

Even more germane to this study is Scott’s reference to the ‘great precision and accuracy’ of the Earl of Selkirk’s *Observations on the present state of the Highlands of Scotland, with a view of the causes and probable consequences of emigration* (1805).¹⁷ Though Scott’s allusion treats Selkirk’s pamphlet as a ‘political and economical’ history of the Highlands since the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion and the subsequent dissolution of the clan structure, *Observations* is best known as Selkirk’s propaganda promoting transatlantic emigration. This choice is even more striking when considering Scott’s review

¹⁵ Betty Hagglund, *Tourists and Travellers: Women’s Non-fictional Writing about Scotland, 1770-1830* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2010), p. 93.

¹⁶ Anne Grant, *Essays on the Superstitions of the Highlanders of Scotland: To which are added Translations from the Gaelic; and Letters Connected with those formerly published* (London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme & Brown, 1811), Vol. 1, p. 5.

¹⁷ Scott, *Waverley*, p. 492.

of John Carr's *Caledonian Sketches*, where Scott refers to emigration as an 'unfortunate drain of a population invaluable for hardihood and military spirit'.¹⁸ Scott suggests that the introduction of fisheries, kelping, and cottage farms as described in Carr's tour is 'the best and possibly only cure' for emigration – a far cry from the thrust of Selkirk's *Observations*, and from Johnstone's approach to emigration in *Clan-Albin*. Selkirk deflects blame for the potential loss of Highland soldiers from transatlantic emigration to the almost inevitable agricultural revolution following the loss of feudal clan system of tenancy: 'A few years more must, in all probability, complete the change in the agricultural system of the Highlands, and bury in oblivion every circumstance that distinguishes the Highlands, as a nursery of soldiers, from the rest of the kingdom' (72). Though critics were divided on Selkirk's advocacy of emigration, most agreed that the issue itself was 'a subject of momentous importance, involving not only the prosperity of the Highlands, but the safety of the British empire'.¹⁹ While Johnstone shows more consideration to the threat emigration poses to a community, she and Selkirk have similar views on the historical causes leading up to the perceived population crisis in the Highlands and on the national importance of improvement and emigration.

2. MILITARY EMIGRATION AND CLEARANCES IN CHRISTIAN

ISOBEL JOHNSTONE'S *CLAN-ALBIN*

¹⁸ 'Carr's Caledonian Sketches.' [co-attributed to Walter Scott and William Gifford] Article XVI, *Quarterly Review*, 1:1 (Feb., 1809), p. 184.

¹⁹ 'Review of Eight Letters on the Subject of the Earl of Selkirk's Pamphlet on Highland Emigration, as they lately appeared under the Signature AMICUS, in one of the Edinburgh Newspapers and of Robert Brown's Strictures and Remarks' *Farmer's Magazine*, 7:26 (1806: May) p. 242.

A contemporary reviewer astutely describes *Clan-Albin* as a novel about ‘Highland manners in their state of decay, as they are rapidly supplanted by the empire of wealth, and by all the habits of commercial society.’²⁰ *Clan-Albin* tells the story of Norman Macalbin, whose mother dies after giving birth to him in the hamlet town of Dunalbin in the Western Highlands. Despite his mother having been a stranger to the Highlands, the community welcomes Norman and raises him collectively, with the old nurse Moome, the piper Hugh, and Lady Augusta Macalbin taking particular interest in his upbringing. The narrative, taking place over a thirty-year span from 1780 to 1810, follows Norman from his childhood through to his career in a Highland regiment, which leads him to Ireland and Spain. It also follows the history of Dunalbin and the emigration of the majority of its population after the introduction of commercial sheep farms by the new owner of the estate. Johnstone appropriates and adapts picturesque landscape aesthetics, national stereotypes and the image of the romantic Highlands in her critique of military emigration and of imperialist cultural violence. Taking into account her criticism of the Clearances, the mass eviction of Highlanders by their own chiefs to be replaced by ‘four-legged clansmen,’ it is unsurprising that Edinburgh-born Johnstone concludes her national tale by attempting to replace signs of encroaching commercialization with a sanitized version of romantic clannish feudalism.²¹ Of more interest is the way Johnstone presents the effects of emigration on the Highlanders and the space they leave

²⁰ ‘Scottish Review’, *Scots Magazine and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany* (November 1815), pp. 849-50.

²¹ John Sinclair, *Address to the Society for the Improvement of British Wool*. Given in Edinburgh, 31 January, 1791. 2nd edition (London, 1791), p. 12.

behind, the rejection of specific improvement narratives in her adaptation of the pastoral, and the choices she makes regarding historical context.

Juliet Shields offers a compelling reading of military service and the depopulation of the Highlands in *Clan-Albin* as representative of Johnstone's concerns for 'Britain's moral integrity as a sentimental community and its military strength as a growing imperial power' in the wake of the Clearances (926).²² The waves of mass emigration from the Highlands not only disrupted local communities and domestic clan and familial bonds but also deprived the nation of a population of potential soldiers. Although Johnstone's description of Norman Macalbin's military career expresses a certain amount of pride in the Highlander's popularly conceived martial strength, it is also a vehicle for a critical examination of Scotland's role in British imperial exercises abroad.²³ Norman's initial surprise and disappointment at finding the 'Highland regiment' he joins as a volunteer is 'composed of English, Irish, and Lowland Scots, and these not always the free-born, lofty-minded Englishmen of his fancy' speaks to the concern that emigration to North America was thinning the ranks and potentially threatening national safety (253).²⁴ Yet Lady Augusta's characterization of the army as 'a poor resource for a Highlander, - a poor exchange for the glen of his fathers, domestic joys, and kindred charities' highlights Johnstone's positioning of emigration alongside enlistment as the most common and damaging threats to

²² Juliet Shields, 'From Family Roots to the Routes of Empire: National Tales and the Domestication of the Scottish Highlands', *ELH*, 72 (2005), pp. 919-40.

²³ See Murray Pittock, *Celtic Identity and the British Image*, p. 43. 'The Primitivist message of nostalgic Celticism had always had an imperial subtext: that the bravery of the "wild Highlander", once undisciplined in its noble savagery, could now be formed and tamed into a formidable fighting machine in the cause of Empire. The controlled use of the Celt's primitive ferocity in these conditions was a necessary part of his improvement and serviceability.'

²⁴ Johnstone, *Clan-Albin; a National Tale*, ed. with introduction by Andrew Monnickendam (Glasgow: Association for Scottish Literary Studies, 2003).

the Highlands' social and economical integrity (57). Shields's argument that Johnstone, speaking through Lady Augusta, believed 'forced emigration is a far lesser evil than military service' calls to mind Samuel Johnson's response to the potential problems associated with an increase in population in a region with resources limited by years of bad harvests and irresponsible land management (927).²⁵ Both Johnstone and Johnson drew military service into their discussions of emigration and both conceded that, however damaging forced emigration was to local communities it at least allows for the potential for 'entire communities to transplant their familial ties intact' (927).

Johnson's *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*, written in 1773 and published in 1775, reflects on the period of emigration after the failed Jacobite rebellion of 1745 but prior to the most violent and wide-spread evictions that took place in the later phases of the Highland Clearances, such as the so-called Year of the Sheep in 1792 or the Sutherland clearances beginning in 1807. Colin Calloway estimates that up to two-thirds of the nearly 40,000 Scots who emigrated to North America between 1760 and 1775 were Highlanders.²⁶ Johnson's *Journey* points to the punitive laws passed after the failed Jacobite rebellion as a root cause for the 'epidemick desire of wandering, which spreads its contagion from valley to valley' and highlights the relationship

²⁵ Although I use the term 'depopulation' throughout this chapter to refer to site-specific examples of forced or coerced evictions, to apply it to the general shift in Highland demographics in this period would be misleading. As owners of large estates evicted the landless and consolidated small lettings into larger leases for graziers, many of the dispossessed remained in the Highlands but relocated to larger villages or coastal regions. The population continued to grow throughout the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, even taking into account increased emigration to the Lowlands, England, North America and Australia. Nevertheless, the fear of depopulation was tied to the concern over national defense from the start of the American Revolution throughout the Napoleonic wars and agricultural improvement was often blamed.

²⁶ Colin G. Calloway, 'Sir William Johnson, Highland Scots, and American Indians', *New_York History* (Spring 2008), pp. 163-77.

between improvement, military imperialism, and the concern over population in the Highlands (102).²⁷ The Heritable Jurisdictions Act of 1746 stripped lairds of judicial authority over their tenantry, while the Act of Proscription aimed at crushing the clan system, bolstering the 1715 Disarming Act with stricter penalties and incorporating a new Dress Act banning ‘Highland clothes,’ including the kilt.²⁸ Conceding that military service was viewed as a popular profession for Highlanders, Johnson suggests that part of the appeal the army might have for them is a restoration of the rights stripped away by the Act of Proscription, particularly the access to arms and ‘the continuance of their national dress’ (103). Judging that the ‘epidemick desire of wandering’ must be contained, Johnson wonders if those same concessions would keep Highlanders from joining the mass emigrations to North America.

Christian Johnstone develops this link between the breakdown of the clan system and the loss of Highlanders to military service in *Clan-Albin*. Incorporating the exiles following the Forty-five Jacobite rebellion and the Clearances into a narrative that recasts Oliver Goldsmith’s ‘The Deserted Village’ (1770) in a Highland setting, Johnstone paints a picture of the destruction of a community in the name of so-called improvement and progress.²⁹ Juliet Shields offers a convincing reading of Johnstone’s novel as an

²⁷ Samuel Johnson and James Boswell, *A Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland and The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, ed. by Peter Levi (London: Penguin Classics, 1984).

²⁸ Under this law, a first conviction for wearing Highland dress carried a maximum term of six months; a second conviction would insure transportation for seven years. The ban ended in 1782. Discussing the ban on kilts, Smollett suggested that ‘the government could not have taken a more effectual method to break their national spirit’ (*Clinker*, 240).

²⁹ For more on the links between the Clearances and the discourse of improvement, see Sari Makdisi, ‘Colonial Space and the Colonization of Time in Scott’s *Waverley*’,

exploration of Scotland's role within British military and imperial operations. Yet *Clan-Albin* presents a more complex view of military emigration and the commercial pastoralization of the Highlands when one takes into account the British state's 'paradoxical' stance in regards to the region's population concerns.³⁰ Whereas Chapters One and Two focused on travel to Wales and Ireland, the Highland Clearances suggest an outbound trajectory. To that end, additional attention must be paid to the unwritten history of Highlanders settling in the Mohawk Valley at the time when Johnstone sends her dispossessed Macalbins there in order to contextualize the spread of improvement in Highland communities.

While the scene of mass emigration from Dunalbin circa 1796 is the focus of the novel's most explicit condemnation of the Clearances, it is not the only example of exile in *Clan-Albin*.³¹ The glen is portrayed as undergoing a conversion from small tenements to sheep farms as early as the first chapter. Lady Augusta Macalbin is described as 'the last of her race,' her family having lost power, money and lands following the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 and moved to France (16). Sir Archibald Gordon becomes the *de facto* owner of the glen, and though he 'affected the Chieftain' while in London to capitalize on the vogue of Highland dress, he is not of Highland descent and has little clannish sympathy

Studies in Romanticism, 34:2 (Summer 1995), pp. 155-87. Makdisi argues that 'the Highland Clearances were not only justified by an ideology of improvement, but by a discourse of colonialism, in whose terms the victims of the clearances - the Highlanders - could only be capable of "improvement" once their old way of life had been annihilated' (182).

³⁰ For a more detailed account of military emigration from the Highlands, see Andrew Mackillop, *'More Fruitful than the Soil' Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715-1815* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2000), p. 201.

³¹ To clarify the geography of *Clan-Albin*, Glen-Albin is a valley located in the Western Highlands; Dunalbin is the hamlet within the valley where the remnants of Clan-Albin were concentrated at the start of the novel.

(193).³² Though Lady Augusta returned to the community from France, a living ruin ‘like a column in the melancholy waste...pointing out the spot where feudal greatness had risen, and flourished, and faded,’ the breakdown of feudal clan sovereignty after the Forty-five led to a power vacuum drawing in any improvers, industrialists, or investors with ready cash. One such individual was Daniel Macpherson, former butler to the Gordons while in Glasgow and current proprietor of the *New Inns* in Glen-Albin, who had saved up his wages and ‘had stocked an extensive sheep farm, while its former numerous tenants, now on the banks of the Mohawk river, - “languished for their native glen”’.³³ It is later explained that these former tenants had been ‘driven out from Kenanowen and Dunulladale, the south side of Glen-Albin’ by their landlord many years before the beginning of the narrative (57). Given the narrative’s 1780 start date, it is likely this opening displacement took place some time between the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War in 1763 and the 1775 banning of emigration from Scottish ports that lasted throughout the American Revolution. The fact that ‘fifty smokes had been put out in one morning’ suggests an abrupt and perhaps violent eviction, but it is equally possible that the tenants of Kenanowen and Dunulladale escaped the brutality associated with later phases of the Clearances and relocated to the banks of the Mohawk river because of the increase in rents described by Samuel Johnson and the tales of the ‘rich, though uncultivated land’ available to Highlanders in America (57).

³² Though Juliet Shields describes Gordon as Anglo-Scottish, the most specific Johnstone is about his family’s origins is that they are not originally from the Highlands, they have spent time in England, and that they were once based in Glasgow. Yet while it is possible to argue that Archibald Gordon is a Lowland Scot rather than Anglo-Scottish, it is fair to say that the Scottish Highlands and Lowlands are culturally distinct enough in *Clan-Albin* for him to be considered a ‘stranger’ or outsider in Glen-Albin.

³³ *Clan-Albin*, p. 8. Johnstone quotes here from Walter Scott’s *Marmion*, Canto III: 12.

Andrew Mackillop describes a balancing act in which the British government intervened with legislation to prevent mass Highland emigration in order to support landed interests but also fostered what he calls ‘military emigration’ with the ‘imperial settlement policies’ implemented at the end of both the Seven Years’ War and the American Revolution (169). Despite what the word suggests, not all Scottish landlords equated clearance with depopulation. Though tenants were forced to leave lands deemed suitable for pasturage, many landowners attempted to relocate their tenants to less ideal areas of their estates, such as rocky coastal regions. Emigration, after all, threatened to deprive landlords of a cheap labour source and, as Johnstone notes, the political currency of having influence over a population ripe for military recruitment. The 1775 ban on emigration from Scotland for the duration of the Revolution was one step taken to curb depopulation; another was the Passenger Vessels Act of 1803. Aimed specifically at limiting Highland emigration, the Passenger Act raised the prices of transport on transatlantic routes. While this act was promoted as protection against the gross levels of Irish and Scottish fatalities on ‘coffin ships’ transporting the dispossessed to North America by raising the standards of hygiene and rations, in effect it raised the price of passage to such an extent that Highlanders were forced to remain in Scotland as a cheap source of labour for landlords and industrialists.

As Mackillop points out, the timing of this legislation was no coincidence; the Passenger Act was not only sold on the basis of humanitarianism but also as a safeguard for national defence and maintaining recruitment levels for the renewed conflict with France (198). Johnstone recognized the hypocrisy of legislation that tied Highlanders to a community

that could no longer sustain them in the age of transformative commercial modernization, as Lady Augusta argues:

Through the representations of interested individuals, government at length seems aware of some bad consequences from the rapid depopulation of the Highlands. An act has been passed to restrain emigration. Our people are condemned to starve at home, or to exhaust, in conveying themselves to a more fortunate soil, the slender savings which might establish them in a mode of life similar to that which they are forced to renounce in this country. The mind revolts at a measure which so cruelly aggravated the sufferings of the Highlanders. A feeble and spurious humanity pretends to alleviate the consequences, while the cause exists and gains strength. Emigration is restrained, but the oppressions of landholders must be tolerated.³⁴

These ‘oppressions of landlords’ included not only rackrenting but also the economic coercion that forced their tenantry into military service as the most common alternative to starvation and eviction. Lady Augusta views landlords ‘affording men to the army’ to further their own political and financial interests just as harshly as she views those ‘remorselessly driving the people from a farm adapted for a sheep-walk, while those on a grazing farm were furiously persecuted for indicating the slightest wish to accompany their expatriated neighbours’ (87). For Lady Augusta, each form of exile ‘strives to dissolve every bond of social affection, and to eradicate every natural sympathy,’ and throughout *Clan-Albin* military service is subtly tied to the clan’s resettlement in New York.

Mackillop suggests that to a Highlander, faced with rising rents and failing prospects, ‘colonial military service as practiced by Britain in the last half of the eighteenth century must have seemed almost tailor-made: a cheap, state-subsidised form of emigration’ (185). Service was ‘form of state social

³⁴ *Clan-Albin*, pp. 86-87. Although Lady Augusta’s speech here takes place circa 1796, the act she refers to is most likely the Passenger Act of 1803.

provision' that offered financial security in the form of land in the colonies (198). After the Seven Years' War, soldiers in incoming Highland regiments were gifted with tracts of land; 'captains received 3,000 acres, subaltern officers 2,000 acres and ordinary soldiers 50 acres' (186). Of course, not all members of Highland regiments serving in North America went willingly, as Johnstone describes. Allan first surfaces in *Clan-Albin* as the absent lover of Mary, one of the women who raised Norman Macalbin. Hailing from a neighbouring village, Allan had been pressed into conscription by his laird, 'with the alternative of seeing an aged father, a widowed sister, and her infant children dispossessed of the little patch of land from which they derived a scanty subsistence, and thrown on an unknown, unfriendly world' (22). This first description of military service, a prominent theme of the novel, highlights its threat to Highland domesticity, and not just on the familial scale.

While Allan returns from America after the Revolution and thus does not immediately take advantage of the economic opportunities available there, this soldier-exile does become the symbol of the entire hamlet of Dunalbin. Allan represents the village at the failed negotiations to renew the lease of the 'conjunct' farms that once comprised the hereditary Macalbin estate and then again acting as 'agent of the emigrants' by going to America in advance to secure new lands once their landlord decides to convert their farms into pasture for sheep (57). Despite her aversion to military service, which she saw as 'a poor resource for a Highlander, - a poor exchange for the glen of his fathers, domestic joys, and kindred charities; - the freedom of the citizen, and perhaps the virtues of the man,' it is this mass emigration that forces Lady Augusta to consent to Norman volunteering for the Highland regiment. She had been

setting aside money to give Norman ‘a medical education’ but ‘the emigration intervened’ and she instead ‘gave that sum to the necessities of her poor neighbours’ preparing for a transatlantic journey (68). Norman’s tour of duty in Spain ultimately leads to the discovery that he is Lady Augusta’s grandson, thus establishing his paternal rights to the Dunalbin estate.

While the resolution of the inheritance plot leads to the improvement and limited repopulation of the glen, the cycle of military service and emigration robs Dunalbin of nearly all the Highlanders who settled in America. When the villagers of Dunalbin leave their traditional homeland, the ‘affections of the Highlanders naturally pointed to the spot inhabited by their kinsmen and former friends’ and they join the former inhabitants of Kenanowen and Dunulladale on the banks of the Mohawk (57). While this decision reflects a desire to transplant a sense of community and preserve the social bonds threatened by the transformation of the Highlands, as I will discuss shortly, the dispossessed clan’s choice of the Mohawk Valley must first be considered in its historical context. Although there are relatively few references in *Clan-Albin* to either the valley or the Highlanders who relocated there after the description of their farewell, Johnstone does note that ‘many little colonies of Highlanders were scattered over the continent of America,’ suggesting that the destination of Clan-Albin was not an arbitrary one.

3. ‘TRANSATLANTIC GLEN-ALBIN’: HIGHLANDERS IN AMERICA

By the time the villagers of Dunalbin left the glen in the late 1790s, Canada would have been the most popular destination for Scottish emigrants.

Johnstone's choice of the Mohawk Valley in New York would have been an ideal setting for a parallel story of exile, military service, land improvement and the attempts to foster a feudalist clan society in the New World.³⁵ Instead, Johnstone's emphasis on Norman Macalbin's role in the Peninsular Wars and the threat that military and civilian emigration represents to Highland culture rather than the history of the Mohawk Valley and the emigrants' position there is in itself a sort of imperial blindness, if not violence. Johnstone erases the Native American tribe from which the Mohawk Valley takes its name in a potentially problematic recapitulation of the untempered expansionism she later critiques in relation to the treatment of the Irish at the hands of the British. As Betty Hagglund and others have observed, it was not uncommon for writers to draw parallels between the Highlanders and Native Americans, either as examples of clannish and primitive social groups or as noble savages and vestigial reminders of a pre-industrial age (89). In *Letters from the Mountains: Being the Real Correspondence of a Lady Between the Years 1773 and 1803*, Anne Grant frequently makes comparisons between Highlanders and Native Americans, and though she is not consistent in identifying which tribe she is referring to with the term 'Indian', she specifically mentions Mohawks when likening their 'furs and wampum' to Highland 'plaids and faltans'.³⁶ Johnstone herself draws parallels between Native American Indians and Highlanders in *The Edinburgh Tales*,

³⁵ Both Katie Trumpener and Ian Duncan mistakenly situate the Mohawk settlement in Canada despite the Mohawk Valley's location in north-central New York and Johnstone's explicit reference to the 'little colony of clansmen' residing in the United States and not Canada (418). See Trumpener's *Bardic Nationalism* (266) and Duncan's *Scott's Shadow* (99).

³⁶ Grant, Vol. 1, p. 73.

particularly in respects to their clan structures and their physiognomies.³⁷ In *Clan-Albin*, however, Johnstone excises the Native American presence, and with it the legacy of economic and military links between the Mohawks, the British Crown, and the Irish colonial official who was influential in establishing a Highland population in the Mohawk Valley.

Sir William Johnson of county Meath emigrated to the Mohawk Valley in 1738 and by the 1760s, through sound land speculation and trade agreements with the local Mohawk tribe, he had become the most wealthy landowner in the valley. Having established an alliance with the Mohawks and fostered relationships with neighbouring Iroquois tribes, Johnson was named superintendent of Indian affairs in 1756 and used his influence to raise Mohawk forces to fight with the British in the Seven Years' War.³⁸ Following the war, Sir William built Johnson Hall, a manor house on lands purchased from the Mohawks, where, according to Daniel Richter, 'he presided over a remarkable neo-feudal, multiracial community, more reminiscent of the imperial Ireland of his birth than reflective of trends elsewhere in the middle colonies.' Colin Calloway offers an intriguing glimpse of this estate and its 'legions of Euro-American tenants and Native American retainers.' As mentioned above, Highlanders having served in the Seven Years' War often stayed in the Colonies and took advantage of the comparatively cheap lands available. With more than 50,000 acres at his disposal, Johnson had an excess of lands to rent. According to Calloway, he 'considered Highland Scots industrious people' and offered them

³⁷ See 'Nighean Ceard; Or, the Tinker's Daughter' in *The Edinburgh Tales* (Edinburgh: W. Tait, 1845-46).

³⁸ Daniel K. Richter, 'Johnson, Sir William, first baronet (1715?-1774)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online ed., Jan 2008).

his patronage, encouraging them to send for their families to join them (165). Hundreds of Highlanders from several clans settled on Johnson's property along the Mohawk river – perhaps more than he had bargained for, as 'Johnson complained that the influx of Highlanders placed him under "a verry heavy burthen."' Yet Johnson had faith in the industrious character of his Highland tenants and, according to Finton O'Toole, he may have been aiming at 'a kind of nostalgic Gaelic chieftaincy in the Mohawk Valley.'³⁹

This multicultural Eden collapsed after the British defeat in the American Revolution. When William Johnson had died in 1774, his son took the reigns of an estate comprised chiefly of Highlanders and Mohawks, two groups who generally fought with the loyalists in the Revolution. The Mohawks, threatened by settlers encroaching on the lands they retained in the region and tied to Britain by treaties signed during the Seven Years' War, upheld the relationship forged by Johnson. As Thomas Anburey, a British soldier serving in the Revolution, describes, 'The Mohawk nation, which are called Sir William Johnson's Indians, as having their village near his plantation, and who, in his life-time, was continually amongst them, were driven from their village by the Americans, and have joined our army'.⁴⁰ Scottish settlers in North America, unlike the majority of the Irish immigrants of that period, typically joined the Loyalists. While this may be a reflection of the military background of many of the pocket Scottish colonies, which were often formed around ex-members of Highland regiments serving the Crown in earlier conflicts, Linda Colley suggests that the overwhelming support for the Loyalist cause may be interpreted as 'further

³⁹ Finton O'Toole, *White Savage: William Johnson and the Invention of America* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), p. 308.

⁴⁰ From Thomas Anburey's *Travels through the interior parts of America. In a series of letters. By an officer* (London, 1789), I, p. 396. Anburey goes on to describe the Mohawks' physiognomy and martial characteristics such as war cries and scalping.

evidence that Scots, even the very poor, had become much more reconciled to the British polity since the rising in '45, and deeply attached as well to a British empire that afforded them so many opportunities.'⁴¹ Assuming that military service was one of the only 'opportunities' available to dispossessed Highlanders, Colley's argument is convincing, if perhaps lacking in nuance. It is difficult to establish an ideological or sympathetic reconciliation with the British government when the motives behind military service may also have been mercenary.

When the British were defeated in 1783, Johnson's former tenants and allies – the Highlanders and Mohawks who had become militant loyalists – were forced out of the Mohawk Valley. Some would resettle in upstate New York, while a great many left the former colonies and went to Canada.⁴² Christian Johnstone's choice, then, to have a large portion of Clan-Albin settle in the Mohawk Valley is potentially problematic. While the location itself would most likely have been recognizable as one repository for the waves of Highlanders emigrating to America, Johnstone strips the valley of its colonial and historical contexts. In ignoring the displacement of an indigenous population due to imperial influence, in effect Johnstone echoes both the domestic disruption of the Clearances and the selective blindness often applied to romanticized and picturesque 'wilderness'.

⁴¹ Linda Colley, *Britons*, p. 140.

⁴² See Calloway: 'The British government set aside land for the Mohawks and their allies at the Grand River in Ontario, now known as the Six Nations Reserve. It set aside lands for Highlanders at Glengarry' (174). Glengarry County is located in Ontario, and most of the loyalist Highland population that resettled there were from Clan MacDonnell.

The Mohawk Valley, at once ‘uncultivated,’ ‘the land of exile,’ and ‘the land of plenty,’ is portrayed as a blank canvas waiting to be remade in Dunalbin’s image.⁴³ When Samuel Johnson writes of Highland communities voluntarily emigrating en masse to America, perhaps lured by ‘accounts sent by the earliest adventurers’ or by retired soldiers, he describes the relocation as a way to ‘preserve their ancient union’: ‘they carry with them their language, their opinions, their popular songs, and hereditary merriment: they change nothing but the place of their abode; and of that change they perceive the benefit’ (102). Yet Johnson cautions that any accounts of prosperity in the ‘sylvan wilderness’ of America must be viewed critically, particularly given the hardships involved in taming that wilderness into a viable agricultural or commercial community. Christian Isobel Johnstone, too, was reserved in her hopes that Highland culture could survive once divorced from the land that fostered it and pragmatic in her evaluation of potential hardships the emigrants would face in America. When Norman expresses his hope that they will ‘long retain those ancient manners’ that distinguish Highlanders, including ‘the national tongue, and the war-like garb,’ Lady Augusta counters that this is ‘extremely improbable.’ ‘That state of society which originally formed, and afterwards preserved, our national character, can never be realized in the new world.’ (86).

That is not to say that Lady Augusta, or Johnstone, is wholly pessimistic about the Mohawk settlement. Rather, it is acknowledged that the land itself is

⁴³ *Clan-Albin*, pp. 58, 86. For more on the ‘agrarian myth’ of America, see Alfred Lutz’s ‘The Politics of Reception: The Case of Goldsmith’s “The Deserted Village”’, *Studies in Philology*, 95, No. 2 (Spring, 1998), pp. 174-96. ‘The current debate about whether one can indeed talk about a subsistence economy in eighteenth-century America, dominated by the self-sufficient yeoman and pre-modern, pre-capitalist modes of production, or whether agricultural production was already organized along capitalist lines’ (192). See also Joyce Appleby’s ‘Commercial Farming and the “Agrarian Myth” in the Early Republic’, *The Journal of American History*, 68, No. 4 (Mar., 1982), pp. 833-49.

an integral component of whatever national character or shared history bound the community of Dunalbin together and, though the resources of America may in time prove compensation enough for that loss of home, emigration can never result in stasis:

America opened her arms to the exiles of Scotland! – Much of hardship was to be encountered, many cherished feelings were to be sacrificed; but Lady Augusta indulged a well-founded and cheering hope, that the honest pride of property, the advantage of a rich soil, and above all, a free government, would, in that land of the exile, abundantly compensate her expatriated clansmen for all they were forced to abandon. (58)

Johnstone twice admits an explicit nostalgia for homeland when she refers to the Highland settlement as the '*Transatlantic Glen-Albin*' and later simply 'Glen-Albin'. But when the emigrants decline Norman's invitation to return to Scotland, having worked through the hardships anticipated by Lady Augusta and created a thriving community in the Mohawk Valley, Johnstone's last words on them describe a new hybrid: 'The pride of Highland descent was grafted on the vigorous stem of American independence; it was still the golden age of the colony' (557).

The use of 'colony' here is problematic in a post-Revolution American setting, as is the negation of the loyalist history of Scottish immigrants in a sentence referencing the end of British colonial rule in America. Johnstone ultimately presents emigration as a chance for Highlanders to break away from a morally compromised land and class system where 'luxury must be a very fine thing indeed, if the accumulation of wealth be an object of greater importance to the welfare of states than a numerous, and above all, a *happy* population' (84). While the phrase 'grafted on the vigorous stem of American independence' signifies the imperial blindness towards the Native American population, which

has no presence in the concept of American independence, it also has an agricultural resonance that suggests where the transplanted Highlanders will find most success. The name '*Transatlantic Glen-Albin*' – italicized by Johnstone – occurs during a description of the difficult winter of 1807-8 following a particularly bad harvest. The Craig-gillian family, noted as benevolent improving landlords in contrast to those who participated in the Clearances in the name of improvement, imported supplies from America to help ease the resulting famine:

the produce of the *Transatlantic Glen-Albin* wheat, and Indian corn, sent down the Mohawk and Hudson rivers, re-shipped at New York, landed at Fort-William early in spring, and conveyed across the country by long trains of panniered little horses, nourished the people of Glen-gillian and the surrounding districts, while too many Highlanders suffered all the miseries of famine. (455)

In some respects, the need for assistance from the *Transatlantic Glen-Albin* echoes Smollett's objection that 'our people have a strange itch to colonize America, when the uncultivated parts of our own island might be settled to greater advantage.'⁴⁴ Yet the success of the Highlanders in America also highlights their industrious character and their ability to contribute to the welfare of the nation. The view of the Highlands and its population as a national asset is a central concern in Johnstone's treatment of both emigration and military service.

4. 'A KINDRED LAND': BRITISH PATRIOTISM AND IRISH TIES

Considering the portrayal of the Highlands as what Johnstone calls the 'nursery to the British army,' it is of little surprise that criticism of the Clearances

⁴⁴ Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*, p. 256.

often contained an appeal to patriotism that was rarely aimed at Lowland landowners involved in the same practices (86). Mackillop notes that ‘improvement as practised in the Lowlands was considered beneficial and patriotic while in the Highlands it destroyed a vital sector of the nation’s military resources, and was thus to some extent questionable on the very same patriotic grounds’ (191). Despite Johnstone’s reservations regarding Scotland’s role in the British military, her criticism of the depopulation of the Highlands plays on these concerns over national defence and the potential loss of patriotic loyalty in a dispossessed community. In Chapter XI’s description of the villagers’ final procession out of Dunalbin, Johnstone links this wave of emigration with the gradual emptying out of the Highlands after the Forty-five and with the exiles preceding the novel’s narrative, ending the chapter with the song “A Farewell to Kenanowen”: ‘But banished the race who would dote on thy charms, /Who would love thee in peace, and defend thee in arms.’ (66). While the British army is then presented as a possible corruptive influence over the Highland character, given ‘the contagious brutality, in the ranks of an English regiment,’ Johnstone maintains the image of the martial character of the Scots and “A Farewell to Kenanowen” is not only an elegy for the loss of community and tradition but a warning of the perceived threat to national safety posed by depopulation (54).

Norman Macalbin goes so far as to suggest that the isolated nature of Highland communities is the cause of the strength of patriotism he observes in his neighbours:

The patriotism of our countrymen is much stronger than that of any other class of the British public. What must be a feeble sentiment amid the bustle of a crowded society, is a vehement passion in our insulated glens. But oppression gradually weans the affections of our countrymen from that land from which it is driving them forth. (86)

Juliet Shields argues that ‘*Clan-Albin* represents military service as a form of untenable exploitation, implicating Celts in the very imperial corruption that has caused the Clearances, and tarnishing virtues hitherto preserved in pristine purity among the sheltered northern mountains’ (927). Shields’s argument about the treatment of the military in *Clan-Albin* centers on the loss of domesticity and community, and while she aptly captures the ways Johnstone weighed various causes and repercussions of the Clearances, Shields fails to address the possible class-bias in Johnstone’s depiction of military service. For example, Lady Augusta has fewer reservations about Norman enlisting as an officer than she does about him joining the ranks of common men as a volunteer in the Highland regiment. Norman counters her concern that he will become common by association and lose his good breeding by teaching these commoners how to read. Norman virtually makes a new community of Irish and Scottish soldiers, and there *is* something domestic about the school he runs in the tents, reciting ‘select stories from the Cheap Repository, the Evenings at Home, and the Popular Tales of Miss Edgeworth’ before reading is banned in the camp (260).⁴⁵ Yet the positioning of the Highlands as a resource for military recruitment has a more threatening consequence than the loss of a distinctive Highland culture when read alongside Johnstone’s treatment of Ireland in *Clan-Albin* as ‘a kindred land’ (239).

When his regiment is stationed in Ireland, Norman observes that ‘the Highlander was wiser and more gentle than the Irishman, only because he had been less unfortunate’ (240). Though he sees a great many similarities between rural Ireland and the Scottish Highlands, from the landscape and village huts to

⁴⁵ Johnstone refers to Hannah More’s *Cheap Repository Tracts* (1803), Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s *Evenings at Home: or the juvenile budget opened* (6 volumes, 1792-96), and Maria Edgeworth’s *Popular Tales* (1804).

cultural links such as language and manners, ‘the resemblance was striking, but it was not complete. The sterile hills and gloomy valleys of the Highlander had never tempted the rapacity of the stranger.’ Norman specifies the lack of English subjugation, or ‘foreign domination,’ in Scotland and an absence of religious oppression as scars of imperial ascendancy that distinguished the Irish from the Scots.⁴⁶ Yet Johnstone’s emphasis on the divergent paths of Ireland and the Highlands being separated by the ‘rapacity’ and ‘domination’ of strangers to some extent echoes the ill-treatment of the Highlanders at the hands of their rapacious landlords, specifically Sir Archibald Gordon. Holding the leases of the Dunalbin estate in *wadset*, Gordon was the landlord whose decision to lease his lands to graziers like Macpherson instigated the Highlanders’ emigration.⁴⁷ Gordon’s own regiment is then stationed in Ireland concurrently with Norman’s and while there he is literally rapacious, forcing himself on Dora Tracey and prevented from raping her by Norman’s intervention (297). More importantly, Dora Tracey had previously been at the center of a romantic rivalry between Sir Archibald Gordon and Irish soldier Phelim Bourke that ultimately saw Bourke transformed into a traitor to the service, symbolizing the threat to

⁴⁶ Contrary to Norman’s argument, Johnstone *does* portray an element of religious oppression in the Highlands, particularly against Catholics. Macpherson is described as having ‘warned away’ Catholic families from the lands he leases from Gordon, and the Catholic Craig-gillian family is shown to be benevolent for offering these dispossessed families leases on their estate on easy terms.

⁴⁷ Gordon acts as landowner throughout the novel but in the final volume Monimia discovers that his family merely holds the mortgage of the Macalbin estate, which can be redeemed for a relatively small sum. During his tenure as landlord, Macpherson was Gordon’s chief tenant and perhaps his factor, converting his lands into sheep farms and convincing others, including Monimia’s English brother-in-law, Mr. Montague, to take on leases and follow suit (124).

national safety posed by irresponsible application of imperial power and military discipline.⁴⁸

Bourke, a member of Norman's Highland regiment, is court marshaled and sentenced to death after an altercation with Gordon following Bourke's being whipped and publicly humiliated over his relationship with Dora Tracey. Bourke avoids execution by faking his own death and escaping, and ultimately joins the French Imperial Guard. As Bourke explains to Norman when they meet in battle in Spain, Gordon's treatment of him was merely the last indignity in a history of systematic oppression:

I am that Bourke whose country, kindred, family, and faith, have for six hundred years suffered at the hands of the English every species of cruelty, indignity, and oppression; massacred in hot, murdered in cold blood, - proscribed, - exiled, - tortured. I am that Bourke who shed my blood for the destroyers of my race, whose heart lacked gall to make oppression bitter, till their chains corroded my individual soul. (442)

Though Bourke, on the morning of his scheduled execution for treason, expresses regret at having 'so rashly engaged in the service of France,' he is adamant that there had been 'no alternative between the degradation of living a scourged slave, or redeeming his honour at the expense of becoming a daring outlaw' (537). Johnstone takes pains to show that Scottish landlords have been complicit in the Clearances, and that the situation in the Highlands was not as extreme as that in Ireland. Yet references to corruptive English ideas of luxury and military service, to the treatment of Highland soldiers as tools for imperial expansion, and the sympathetic link between Ireland and Scotland caution that there is an alternate path for dispossessed Highlanders who are prevented from emigrating: rebellion.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ This is not Sir Archibald Gordon's first tour in Ireland; it is later revealed that Gordon was involved in the suppression of the 1798 Irish Rebellion and, according to Bourke, 'had led that party which a few years before razed his father's house' (537).

⁴⁹ Referring to agricultural uprising in Ross in 1792, Selkirk observes: 'It has been the good fortune of Scotland, that, from the gradual manner in which the new system of

Johnstone ultimately challenges the dissimilarities Norman sees between Ireland and Scotland, particularly the lack of exploitable natural resources in Scotland's 'sterile hills and gloomy valleys' and religious tensions. Not only did the Highlands prove to be a resource to the military but the final chapter of *Clan-Albin* also introduces sustainable improvements such as manufactures and mills, and the pro-Catholic streak throughout the narrative culminates in the landowning Craig-gillian family becoming a prominent Catholic influence in the Highlands. The union between Irish Monimia and Norman Macalbin, whose maternal Irish family had been involved in the 1798 rebellion, represents an enlightened and improving influence over the Highlands that ushers in a repopulation of the community. Johnstone never goes so far as to question the patriotism of the Highlanders in *Clan-Albin*, even when criticizing the landed interest that valued wealth over the good of the population, but her depiction of Ireland stands as a dark alternative for the Highlands if the alienation and deprivation associated with the Clearances should escalate. For Johnstone, the best preventive for another Highland rebellion is a moral and practical policy for economic improvement.

5. 'AN AGGREGATE OF ADVANTAGE': INDUSTRY, PROGRESS AND ADAM SMITH

management had advanced, this has happened in different districts, at different times; and by means of the emigrations, the discontented people of one have been removed, before the same causes of discontent had produced their full effect in another. What must we think, then, of the policy which would impede this salutary drain, and would prevent a population infected with deep and permanent seeds of every angry passion, from removing and making way for one of a more desirable character?' (124-25)

While Johnstone casts emigration as preferable to military service, if only for the fact that it offers a way to keep family groups intact, for her there is an even more distasteful option for Highlanders who have lost access to the land. On his journey south to join the Highland Regiment in England before being dispatched to Ireland, Norman Macalbin encounters Morag, a woman who had once lived in Glen-Albin. Her large family had not been able to go to America with the rest of the clan, most likely because of the expense, and instead ‘at the time of the emigration she had gone to a cotton mill in the Lowlands’ where her children ‘grew up among the crowd of yon mill, without the benefits of education, and corrupted by evil example’ (238-39). This antipathy towards manufacturing, specifically industrialization and factory towns rather than small-scale cottage industry, encompasses a critique of the exportation of Scottish goods and labor and of the potentially scarring effect industry would have on the landscape, as Lady Augusta contends:

The dark lanes of a manufacturing town appeared even worse than the army. The present generation of Highlanders could never be made manufacturers, and her generous heart revolted at the idea of her high-spirited countrymen sinking into the abject condition of hewers of wood and drawers of water to a people they had hitherto shunned and despised. (58)

The simplicity and pastoral innocence of the Highlands, afforded by its physical isolation, is threatened not only by the influx of commercially minded gentlemen from the south, like Sir Archibald Gordon, but also by the emigration to America. Despite Johnstone describing the Mohawk settlement as having a largely agricultural economy, Lady Augusta expresses her fears that the Highland emigrants will renounce ‘every legitimate claim to a real superiority’ when they leave their insulated community and will ‘condescend to vie with overgrown tradesmen, and bloated contractors’ in the New World (84). Perhaps

most interesting is the way Johnstone's elegiac framing of subsistence farming, adapted from Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village' (1770), excludes the Highlands from not only economic modernization but the very idea of stadial progress.⁵⁰ While Johnstone qualifies that 'the present generation of Highlanders' are unfit to engage in commercial enterprises, whether because a lack of capital would necessarily cast them as an exploitable work force or because of a more basic national characteristic makes them unsuitable for it, throughout *Clan-Albin* industrialization is vilified and the idea of progress in the Highlands is questioned.

Norman Macalbin recalls Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* when observing evidence of stadial progression on his journey south to join the Highland regiment, from the relatively barren Highlands to the cultivated countryside bordering Glasgow, the commerce of the city and finally the industrial towns in northern England. When Norman reaches England, he is met with the sight of industrial pollution permeating a manufacturing town:

As he looked round on the numerous smoky manufactories which rose in this prosaic region, and saw every stream polluted by the dirty puddle of some dye-vat or fulling mill, and regarded the "Mange-rotis" of the plains, as at the warning of a bell they marched to labour or refreshment, - a Highland feeling of contemptuous pity took possession of his mind. - "Man cannot live by bread alone!" was his indignant exclamation; and he recalled all he had heard of the "division of labour," and the "Wealth of Nations," with an asperity which succeeding years softened down but never removed. (237)

⁵⁰ See Penny Fielding's *Scotland and the Fictions of Geography: North Britain, 1760-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 'Scotland not only developed stadial history - the movement of peoples from tribal hunting, through agriculture, to commercial modernity - the very geography of the nation demonstrated it. The bleak landscape and clan society of the Highlands, the agricultural improvements of the Lowlands and the flourishing cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, bourgeois centres of commerce and the professions, could be read as a kind of living museum in which all stages of society could be exhibited to the historical observer' (3).

The ‘division of labour’ which Norman views so harshly was not, according to Smith, something seen in the Highlands; ‘In the lone houses and very small villages which are scattered about in so desert a country as the Highlands of Scotland, every farmer must be a butcher, baker, and brewer for his own family.’⁵¹ Smith, however, advocated a system of economy that incorporated agriculture, manufacture, and trade, which is something Norman tentatively embraces once he gains possession of the Dunalbin estate, opens roads and establishes a mill.

It is useful to compare his reading of Smith with the one found in Maria Edgeworth’s *Ennui* (1809) in terms of the influence of Scottish Enlightenment figures in literary discussions of improvement. *Ennui* features a Scottish character named M’Leod, one of Edgeworth’s ideal land agents that pepper her Irish novels. As Ian Duncan observes, ‘citing Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, promoting gradual progress through programs of tenant education and market-based reform, M’Leod personifies the values and precepts of the Scottish Enlightenment’.⁵² In his role as the ideal agent, M’Leod attempts to reform the former absentee Lord Glenthorn and educate him in the basics of responsible estate management. Interestingly, the lesson in which M’Leod invokes Adam Smith is in response to Lord Glenthorn’s attempt to make the town on his estate self-sufficient:

At all events, I thought my tenants would grow rich and *independent*, if they made every thing *at home* that they wanted: yet Mr M’Leod perplexed me by his ‘doubt whether it would not be better for a man to buy shoes, if he could buy them cheaper than he could make them.’ He added something about the division of labour, and Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*; to which I could only answer – ‘Smith’s a Scotchman.’⁵³

Where Johnstone frequently romanticizes subsistence farming, perhaps the ultimate form of economic self-sufficiency, Edgeworth’s interest in the Scottish

⁵¹ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry Into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* (Chicago: Encyclopædia Britannica, Inc., 1980), p. 8.

⁵² Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow*, p. 76.

⁵³ Edgeworth, *Ennui*, p. 191.

Enlightenment saw her embrace the idea that access to a free market economy would benefit the entire nation. Knowledge of Smith is not the only Scottish legacy M'Leod brings with him to Ireland; when Glenthorn proposes to 'encourage population' on his estate by offering marriage incentives, M'Leod argues that '*it might be doubted* whether it were not better for ten to live, and be well fed, than for twenty to be born, and to be half-starved' (191). Given the attention paid to the population of Scotland in this period, M'Leod's opinion on the matter certainly carries the weight of experience. Ian Duncan argues that '*Ennui* casts national improvement as a Scottish topos and Scotland as Ireland's future' (76). Yet the fitness of those expected to lead Scotland in national improvement was highly contested in *Clan-Albin*, and the parallels Johnstone draws between the two nations suggest that if the Highland population continues to be strained by the sort of improvement represented by the Clearances then Ireland's present, with its socio-political and economic instability, will be Scotland's future.

Though Johnstone is not wholly uncritical of clan structure, pointing to the despotic nature of the Chief's 'unbounded power' and the retardant effects of 'clannish pride,' she nevertheless attaches a romantic primitivism to the pre-Culloden Highlanders *because* they were 'a race which society in its progress seemed to have forgotten' (89, 22). One reviewer of the novel suggests that the suppression of the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion and the installation of an 'empire of law' in place of feudal chieftains ended violent feuds between clans:

the character of these tribes was thus purified from all its harshest features, and what was good and admirable only remained. But could this last? Must it not follow, that the same system of law, government, and external circumstances, should gradually assimilate them to the other subjects of the British empire? Yet though this, to which the lovers of the Highlands are so fondly attached, could not remain, it is not wonderful that they should deplore its loss, and should wish that some memorial of it might still survive.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ *Scots Magazine* review of *Clan-Albin* (Nov. 1815), p. 850.

The use of ‘memorial’ here suggests a perceived inevitability when it comes to the loss of tradition in the face of progress, a basic concern for several of the ‘national’ writers in this study, including Johnstone, Scott and Sutherland. For Johnstone, the best that could be hoped for was to hold off the most negative aspects of progress, such as the immoral effects of luxury, for as long as possible. Despite the dissolution of the clan structure following Norman’s paternal grandfather’s involvement in the Jacobite Rebellion, Dunalbin had retained that idealized pastoral quality until Sir Archibald Gordon had introduced sheep-farming, having relied on subsistence farming that ‘just gave what life required’ – a description Johnstone borrows from Goldsmith’s ‘The Deserted Village’ (22). According to Alfred Lutz, many of Johnstone’s contemporaries, capitalizing on the popularity of ‘The Deserted Village’, ‘used it as a convenient point of reference in debates on enclosure, depopulation, and related issues’.⁵⁵ Like Goldsmith, Johnstone attacks the corruptive influence of trade when introduced to a community whose ‘unaccommodated lives’ and physical isolation had insulated it from progress, leaving it ‘undebased by its corruptions, unimpressed by its usages, still bearing the lofty character of heroic times’ (22). Yet unlike Goldsmith, whose poem references England but may also incorporate his childhood recollections of Ireland, Johnstone adds an explicit element of nationalism to her adaptation of the pastoral, characterizing the Highlanders’ simple, clannish ‘romantic virtues’ and subsistence economy as examples of the

⁵⁵ Lutz, p. 182. Lutz’s study of contemporary readings of Goldsmith’s poem includes an interesting discussion on the ways ‘The Deserted Village’ was associated with political radicalism: ‘The concept of freehold tenure of land has a long and respectable history in British thinking on agriculture. It could become an element of a politically radical position when agricultural capitalism was observed to worsen the position of large segments of the rural population and to take away their (partial) independence’ (181).

‘pleasing peculiarity of national manners, which then marked them a distinct people’.

In Johnstone’s rendering, not only is progress anathema to tradition and communal cohesion, but commercial modernization is also a threat to the cultural distinctiveness of the Highlands. It is particularly telling that this paragraph on clan unity, community and progress is followed by an assessment of agricultural improvement in Dunalbin:

It might indeed have been easy to find a people who practiced a more improved mode of agriculture, who better understood the qualities of soil, and the uses of manure; and who could avail themselves of local advantages with skill infinitely superior. But for purity of manners, warmth of affections, kindness, and courtesy – for every social virtue, and fire-side endearment, - for that untutored elegance of sentiment, and love of music and song, which embellish all these, even in the lowliest condition? – No! – it was impossible! – The last of the clan were a chosen people, with whom peace and love took refuge. (22-23)

As enclosure, one of the blatant physical markers of the transformation of the Highlands into commercial sheep farms, had long been singled out in eighteenth century anti-improvement discourse as particularly disruptive to tradition, it is perhaps unsurprising that Johnstone views improvement with suspicion, and indeed with ambivalence. Condemnation of the Clearances and of trade is balanced by praise for the individual industriousness of the Highlanders, and though she expresses regret that the idyllic aspect of clan life cannot truly be recaptured in the Highlands, Norman Macalbin’s strain of restorative benevolent improvement goes some way in reclaiming the people and the landscape scarred by ill-conceived progress.

6. 'THE FRIEND OF PROSPEROUS AND ACTIVE MEN': IMPROVEMENT AND IMPROVERS

For the most part, Christian Johnstone's narrative corresponds with Peter Womack's observation that the commercial sheep farmers in the Clearance era generally came up to the Highlands from southern Scotland (117). Sir Archibald Gordon and Daniel Macpherson are not native to the Highlands and their status as strangers or outsiders to the community highlights the Gaelic/Saxon cultural and geopolitical divide. Yet unlike Maria Edgeworth, who balanced criticism of absenteeism and exploitative landlords with didactic descriptions of model improvers, Johnstone rarely provides detail on what constitutes economically and culturally responsible estate management. Even Lady Augusta, who is treated with an almost idolatrous reverence by Norman Macalbin and her former tenants, is not only denied the power once held by her father as chief of the Macalbin clan by his political alliances but she is physically removed from the community itself, living in virtual seclusion in a castle on an island in a lake. There is a suggestion throughout the novel that, though they may have been corrupted by 'the manners of wealthy England,' Highland landlords bear a fair share of responsibility for the socially destructive transformation of the Highlands into sheep farms, considering that it was popularly viewed as a direct result of the Jacobite rebellion (85). As Murray Pittock notes, 'the Highland Clearances, in many respects the ultimate challenge to the way of life Primitivism celebrated, were unchallenged (and indeed conducted) by those who

liked to celebrate the glorious past of Highland heroism.⁵⁶ For Johnstone, this complicity is not limited to those who have succumbed to the temptations of luxury. As Lady Augusta argued, ‘an imprudent attempt to reconcile the modern style of living, with an indulgent treatment of dependents, has ended in the ruin of several families in this country’ (89). Not only did the previous generation’s perhaps short-sighted involvement in the Jacobite rebellion risk the destruction of the clan system, but that system itself could not successfully incorporate the encroaching modernity associated with the eighteenth century.

That is not to say that there is a complete lack of responsible Highland landlords, or indeed praise of improvement, in *Clan-Albin*. Lady Augusta concedes that there are some Highland gentlemen, like the Craig-gillians, who are laudable examples of improving landlords, but her description of the few ‘honourable instances of high birth’ are couched in paternalistic and even feudal terms. For Augusta, the ideal ‘Highland gentlemen are the genuine representatives of the ancient Chieftain’ only ‘stripped of his unbounded power’ (89). Benevolence is perhaps the most crucial quality for a model landlord, but adherence to traditional familial fidelity is also praised: ‘With them the claim – “My father, and my father’s father, lived under you and yours,” is more powerful than – “I will give you a pound more of rent.”’ While this emphasis on maintaining the hereditary feudal bond of the clans may appear to be antithetical in a discussion of modern estate management, Johnstone does add the caveat that these families holding small farms on Highland estates must be ‘industrious,’ and that their landlords ‘encourage every practical plan of liberal

⁵⁶ Murray G. H. Pittock, *Inventing and Resisting Britain: Cultural Identities in Britain and Ireland, 1685-1789* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1997), p. 158.

improvement; they stimulate the industry of their tenants, and they enjoy their success.’ Yet even the Craig-gillians, the only native landed Highland family described in terms of benevolent improvers, were in danger of being too ambitious in their improvements, having spent all of their money on building and planting and thus having to hurriedly raise the capital to import supplies from the Mohawk settlement (455). Although Craig-gillian’s act of importing food for his tenants is meant to highlight the struggle facing the nation following the winter of 1807-8, to show the comparative prosperity of the Mohawk settlement, and to present an example of benevolent landownership, the financial burdens associated with feeding a starving population were promoted as one of the justifications of the practice of clearance.⁵⁷ Ultimately, Norman Macalbin and his wife, Monimia, are the only characters in the novel that seem fit to apply agricultural and commercial modernization to the Highlands in a fiscally responsible manner, yet this Scotch-Irish-Franco-Spanish couple create a more culturally diverse community in Glen-Albin than what existed before the Clearances.

Johnstone’s studied use of the term ‘industrious’ is made with reservations. Lady Gordon, in discussing the lease of more Glen-Albin lands with her nephew Sir Archibald, recommends Macpherson as a tenant because ‘he is really an industrious kind of person’ (177). As Macpherson was already involved in commercial sheep farming at this point in the narrative, having

⁵⁷ According to A. J. Youngson, ‘economic circumstance changed so unpredictably, and the build-up of population was a serious drain on resources well before the end of the eighteenth century. Thus the removal of tenants was sometimes the only way to avoid the ruin of an estate, for if a famine occurred the landowners had to help, and thousands of pounds had to be spent on food supplies which, if not an outright gift, constituted a loan with very poor prospects of repayments. The result was severe financial pressure on landowners and tenants alike’ (178).

presumably bought or leased land from Gordon after the Kenanowen and Dunulladale clearances prior to the Dunalbin clearance, Lady Gordon's use of 'industrious' here carries a literal connotation of industry as an economic endeavour rather than a work ethic. In contrast, Lady Augusta and Norman Macalbin are more concerned with the moral and national dimensions of industriousness as a character trait, particularly in countering the stereotype that Highlanders are prone to indolence. Norman protests 'how often has my blood boiled to hear my countrymen stigmatized with idleness and laziness,' and observes that outsiders mistakenly read emigration resulting from forced eviction as 'a roving, unsettled disposition' or an aversion to labor (88).⁵⁸ Lady Augusta expands this into a challenge of national stereotypes:

No one thinks of accusing the French and Sicilian peasant of laziness, though he be wretched in the midst of nature's abundance. The blame is frankly imputed to the genius of the government, and to want of education; - Ireland, - that unfortunate country which God has made, and man has marred, - Ireland alone and the Highlands of Scotland, are the soils of original and indigenous laziness and idleness. (88)

Following a critique on social services, Lady Augusta's shift to the natural world with a juxtaposition of what 'God has made, and man has marred' is somewhat jarring, a deceptively anti-interventionist view of land management when read against Johnstone's wider negotiations of improvement discourse. While Johnstone later demonstrates the benefits of certain strains of cultivation, the interconnection between socio-political leadership, improvement and national image highlighted in this passage is a running theme in *Clan-Albin*. This extract also establishes the sympathetic attachment Johnstone sees between the Irish and

⁵⁸ A prominent example of this stereotype can be seen in Elizabeth Hamilton's *The Cottagers of Glenburnie* (1808), which features the cottagers' repeated use of the phrases 'coud'na be fash'd' and 'it'll do weel eneugh' in response to suggestions of labour and improvement.

the Highlanders as 'a kindred people' (409). The portrayal of the Highlanders as an industrious, if simple, community is also vital to Johnstone's analogy of the Clearances with Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village'.

As in 'The Deserted Village', the emotional impact of the depopulation of the Highlands is narratologically dependent on the juxtaposition of the abandoned hamlet with representations of a once thriving community. The poignancy of the Highlanders' farewell to their glen would have been diluted by any insinuation of squalor or abject poverty in Dunalbin, or indeed by any impugnation against the moral character of the villagers. Instead, Lady Augusta describes Dunalbin as a pre-industrial haven for honest, if poor, communal farmers:

I have seen my native land populous and happy, and I now behold it a desert. From the castle of Dunalbin I have seen a wide tract of country gaily diversified with cottages, where humble worth, and humble happiness found shelter. I have seen a hundred blue smokes rise in this desolate glen. Wherever I turned my eyes images of felicity rose to greet them. I beheld a poor, but contented people, peacefully enjoying the fruits of their labour, and ready to drain their dearest veins in defence of those to whom they owed the blessing of security. (85)

Johnstone's descriptions of Dunalbin following the mass emigration to America are consistently framed in Goldsmith's terms, as 'trade's unfeeling train / Usurp the land and dispossess the swain' (63-64). Whereas the depopulation of the Highlands was due more to the profit-driven decision to turn arable lands and the commons into sheep farms than to the transformation of land into deer parks and gardens as in 'The Deserted Village', for Johnstone there is a shared cause for both scenes of exile. Prizing the wealth of the nation's 'great proprietors' over the good of the entire population leads to situations where 'there could exist a difference between political prosperity, and individual welfare, - relative

ascendancy, and solid internal strength' (84).⁵⁹ Thus Lady Augusta, though professing that she is no expert in economics, ironically states 'let the Highlands be made grass parks for England,' mocking those who believe in the trickle-down theory that the landed class are supposedly keeping more wealth in the region by consolidating small holds and leasing their lands to fewer, and more commercially-minded, tenants, increasing their rents (84).⁶⁰

Beyond the causes of depopulation, Johnstone borrows the imagery Goldsmith uses to describe the abandoned village. Specifically, Johnstone applies the poem's allusion to the precarious nature of human progress to her Highland setting in an interesting appropriation of arguments found in eighteenth-century improvement discourse. Where those advocating agricultural improvement used the theory that land, once improved, was always on the brink of falling back into wilderness as a motivation for continuing their project of advancement, Johnstone shows that Glen-Albin was 'consigned to its original wildness' after the exodus of its population (95). Indeed, 'every trace of cultivation was almost effaced' *because* of the shift from subsistence to commercial farming:

Every trace of society that now remained exhibited the gloomy image of desolation. The decayed cottage wall, the mouldering roof, resting in heaps on the cheerless hearth, where the hare had left her young; - the grass-grown path, and the grey stone of the

⁵⁹ See Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village': 'Ye friends to truth, ye statesmen, who survey / The rich man's joys increase, the poor's decay, / 'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand / Between a splendid and a happy land' (265-68).

⁶⁰ For a modern reading of the economics of the Clearances, refer to A. J. Youngson, who asks 'what, after all, was the alternative to removal? To say that there were too many people trying to make a living in the Highlands is another way of saying that there was too little land or too little capital for them to work with. Those who simply kept their tenants and continued to parcel out their properties in tiny lots to people who, they knew very well, had neither the capital nor the skill to improve them, were merely perpetuating stagnation and starvation' (177).

dead, were all the vestiges of man that could now be seen in Glen-Albin; - emblems at once of his power and mutability.⁶¹

Interestingly, the loss of clan hierarchy is described in similar terms, with Dunalbin castle's 'mouldering grandeur conveying to the mind a fine image of the fallen fortunes of those who for ages had been its proud possessors' (19). Whereas it took an armed rebellion to instigate the decay of the castle and the hereditary feudal jurisdiction of the Macalbin family, its surrounding community is brought down by the violent introduction of 'progress'. Regardless of her reliance on Goldsmith's template, Johnstone is more optimistic regarding resettlement in America and does not leave her village deserted at the novel's end. The repopulation of Dunalbin depends on stemming, if not reversing, the progress of modernization in the Highlands - the commercial failure of the sheep farmers and the restoration of limited paternalistic authority to the Macalbin line.

Despite the fact that commercial sheep farming continued to spread throughout Scotland in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Johnstone writes a version of the Highlands where graziers tear communities apart and then go bankrupt. By the novel's end, Sir Archibald Gordon scrabbles to sell the estate to pay off mounting debts and 'the sheep-farmers, for whom Gordon drove out the native tribes, have to a man become bankrupt' (532). Johnstone does not explain the causes of the sheep-farmers' bankruptcies, but in declaring 'thus are the exiled Highlanders revenged' she insinuates a moral victory over those who value the accumulation of wealth or material goods above the

⁶¹ *Clan-Albin*, p. 95. See Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village': 'Sunk are thy bowers, in shapeless ruin all, / And the long grass o'ertops the mouldering wall; / And, trembling, shrinking from the spoiler's hand, / Far, far away, thy children leave the land' (47-50).

happiness of the population. It cannot be assumed, however, that the graziers renting from Gordon failed because they shared his propensity for gaming. As A. J. Youngson explains, ‘the competition for farms became in time excessive, and many farmers were so foolish as to offer rents which they could never pay, and many landlords were so greedy as to accept them.’⁶² Where successful landowners who turned to sheep farms thrived by leasing their lands at reasonable rates and then re-investing their profits in improvements, Gordon is certainly one of the greedy landlords Youngson describes and his financial downfall is helped along by Daniel Macpherson, his chief tenant and ‘worthy adviser’ (532). Macpherson, no doubt guided by self-interest, advises Gordon not to follow the example of his fellow proprietors in reducing the rents once his sheep-farming tenants started having financial difficulty, ‘and accordingly he lost all’. Gordon refuses to sell the estate to Macpherson on principle and advertises the sale of Dunalbin with all its ‘red deer and roe deer, grouse and ptarmigan, caperkailie and salmon, extensive moors, and fine trouting streams, peculiarly suitable for an English gentleman of fortune,’ demonstrating to the last his view of the Highlands as the leisure park for Lowland and English men of property (531). It is at this point that Johnstone intervenes with a *deus ex machina* contract, drafted and misplaced in 1745, which allows the Macalbin heir to recover the Dunalbin estate ‘for the trifling sum of three thousand pounds’ (533). This is a generic convention of the national tale reminiscent of the denouement of Maria Edgeworth’s *The Absentee*, where a letter discovered in the final chapters clarified the birthright of Grace Nugent, clearing the way for the symbolic Anglo-Irish wedding between her and Lord Colambre. Yet in

⁶² A. J. Youngson, *After the Forty-Five* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1973), p. 174.

Johnstone's novel, the potential financial barriers preventing a union between Macalbin and Monimia had already been overcome when Norman inherits his father's Spanish estate, and the marriage itself is secondary to the restoration of the Macalbin estate to a fit overseer.

Prior to the last chapter of the novel, Johnstone provides little in terms of positive instruction on responsible estate management. As the 'Advertisement by the Editor' promises a tale that 'neither usurps the privileges of the moralist nor the preacher,' this could reflect Johnstone's effort to avoid didacticism, but it also carries the implication that Norman Macalbin is the only character fit to meet that responsibility (1). Apart from the indictment of the Clearances, of manufactories and fisheries, of superficial cosmetic changes and of emparkment, Johnstone reserves her ideas on what constitutes socially-conscientious improvement until Norman and Monimia take possession of the Dunalbin estate at the novel's conclusion. Despite having expressed regret throughout the narrative at the absence of strong Highland landlords in the glen, Norman and Monimia winter in Edinburgh, a habit Johnstone seems to justify with the fact that they constantly observe their surroundings for ideas to bring back to Glen-Albin; 'he never saw a well-managed farm without reference to Glen-Albin, and Monimia never beheld a neat cottage but it was sketched for the rising hamlet' (556).

Norman attends lectures at the University of Edinburgh, complementing his limited Highland education, and 'the improvement of his estate, and the consequent happiness of his people' are described as 'the chief object of his life,' distinguishing him from those great proprietors who would rather indulge in the luxuries of the city than concern themselves with the comfort of their

tenants (556). When Macalbin was in residence, he instituted some telling improvements:

Mills were constructed, roads were opened, trees were planted by millions, implements of labour were improved, and every mode of useful cultivation quietly exemplified on his own farm, for the advantage of his people... A fair was also established in the Glen for the sale of black cattle and sheep, and those household manufactures which afford employment to females; and it was a holiday also. (556)

While these seem like basic improvements and are reminiscent of those recommended in Maria Edgeworth's Irish fiction, taken point by point and applied to *Clan-Albin's* Highland setting they suggest an interesting tension between recapturing Dunalbin's pre-Clearance pastoral character and creating a financially stable community within a modern economy. The mills here could be corn mills, but considering that there are enough surplus cattle and sheep to sell it is possible that Norman retained a portion of the sheep farmers' stock and constructed wool mills. If only 'twenty cottage smokes' out of the original fifty can be counted at this stage of Dunalbin's revitalization, it is conceivable that the area could support both sheep and Highlanders.

The opening of roads and planting of trees have both practical and aesthetic applications. The indiscriminate destruction of woodlands due to improper land management had long been a problem in the Highlands, one that was exacerbated by the 1760s when felled trees were being exported south for sale.⁶³ As Peter Womack notes, 'Scotland's treelessness was after all a long-standing reproach, notoriously revived by Johnson: planting was the privileged type of enlightened Highland estate management. Trees are the cultivated landlord's visible signature on the land, the means by which he at once

⁶³ Youngson, *After the Forty-Five*, p. 38.

acknowledges, enhances and appropriates – in a word, improves – its virtue’ (67). Again, the reforestation of the glen has multiple and ambiguous connotations, from its undeniably commercial aspect if those mills are sawmills, to its aesthetic appeal. Norman Macalbin is aware that in trying to retain the pastoral simplicity of his estate he is limiting himself to small-scale agricultural improvements; ‘there were some estates far more populous, and many far more productive of the temporary means of an absentee’s luxurious enjoyment; but none was better stored with well-chosen, and good, and happy human creatures’ (556). Although Johnstone makes some concessions to the economic realities facing the Highlands in acknowledging that more could be done with the resources available without resorting to forced evictions, she ultimately favors a culturally conservative resolution to the breakdown of the Highland community initiated by the failed Jacobite rebellion of ’45 and brought to a head by the Clearances: ‘The hamlet had been rebuilt exactly on its old site, under its old trees; and tenderness united with good taste, in making the Lord of the Glen preserve its ancient, straggling and picturesque disposition.’ This disposition was, of course, a vital component of the image of the Highlands for late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century visitors.

Though roads obviously facilitate trade and construction, one cannot ignore the aspect of granting access to outsiders and perhaps compromising the romantic attempt to keep Dunalbin a sort of pre-modern microcosm. The Highlands were first opened to tourists and travellers when the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 saw a spate of military road construction.⁶⁴ By the

⁶⁴ For more on the function of the Scottish military roads as a means of preventing rebellion, see Walter Scott’s ‘Culloden Papers’, pp. 322-23. In discussing the measures taken against further violence following the 1715 Jacobite rebellion, including

time *Clan-Albin* was published, travel in the Highlands was still difficult but, thanks to *Ossian* and writers like Scott, it was also immensely popular with tourists. Although Monimia's appreciation of Highland scenery and culture is presented throughout the novel as a mark of her moral virtue, Johnstone is critical of tourists who view the Highlands as a spectacle and do not contribute anything of value to the community. While she frequently refers to the natural beauty of the Highlands, echoing popular travelogues like Thomas Pennant's two tours of Scotland and thus contributing to the image of the Highlands as an ideal location for Picturesque tourism, Johnstone seems to regret the fact that 'the Highland moors were become so very fashionable, that many gentleman annually travelled North; and immediately the ladies were smitten with a taste for the picturesque, the sublime, and the dreary' (132). Gentlemen hunters and ladies of fashion are particularly looked down upon as frivolous intruders in a landscape which is at its best when its wild nature is punctuated with demonstrations of human industry rather than 'tittering parties, peeped at through opera-glasses, nor copied into red morocco porte-feuilles' (192). The distaste for crowds of tourists is touched on, without irony, as Norman and Monimia themselves take in 'a landscape of wild and picturesque beauty, not the less attractive that it had hitherto escaped the vigilance of tourists,' all the while following the example of fellow Picturesque tourists in sketching their views, embellishing the scenes with a cozy cottage here, a mill and smithy there. 'To

disarmament and legislation aimed at regulating the Highland clans, Scott calls the creation of military roads 'by far the most effectual precaution,' and 'of all others the most certainly tending to civilization. The effect of these measures was considerable upon the highlands; and there can be little doubt, that their gradual operation would, in the course of years, or ages, perhaps have tended to unite their inhabitants with those of the lowlands of Scotland, as the tribes of Wales, of Ireland, and of the borders have gradually been blended with the rest of society. But the system of clanship was destined to a more sudden and violent dissolution,' in the fallout from the 1745 rebellion.

Monimia no scene was so lovely as the picture of human happiness,' even if the picture was a fiction, yet the difference between Monimia and other tourists is her focus on labour and industry rather than romantic ruins.

While the ladies of fashion are an allegorical indictment of the corruptive nature of luxury as seen in Goldsmith's 'The Deserted Village', Johnstone consistently portrays Monimia as having an interest in promoting industry amongst the Highlanders remaining in Glen Albin, thus contributing to the growth of the community rather than treating it as a commodity. Part of Johnstone's mistrust of tourists seems to stem from a distrust of the duration of their interest in Scotland. Monimia has already shown an interest in becoming part of the community rather than a mere observer by learning to speak Gaelic (123). For the more fickle visitors, however, 'it was impossible to gaze forever on huge rocks, dark lakes, foaming torrents, and mountains in endless expansion' (132). The solution was the staging of a 'Northern Meeting,' a sort of Highland fling organized by local gentry so their daughters could socialize with travellers from the south and save the expense of a journey to London. Monimia distinguishes herself from these characters when, rather than spend money on a dress for the Northern Meeting, she buys wool; 'this wool was to be fabricated into coarse stockings; and spinning and knitting was expected to afford an humble domestic employment to the women and girls scattered over the district' (152). Later, Monimia goes to the local country fair in order 'that her presence might encourage the rude manufacture she had endeavoured to establish,' as opposed to the curiosity that attracted tourists there (190). Ultimately it is her interest in promoting industry and improvement that sets

Monimia apart from leisure tourists, but Johnstone makes it clear that the romance of the Highland landscape remains alluring for those with taste.

John Whale suggests ‘the very rarity value of the Picturesque would be lost once the roads were jammed with bourgeois tourists’ (177).⁶⁵ So although Johnstone describes a hypothetical traveller coming across Dunalbin on one of these newly opened roads, the fact that it is still depicted as a ‘remote Highland valley’ shows that its picturesque isolation has been preserved (559). But, as mentioned earlier, Dunalbin is not an exclusively Macalbin or even Highland community at the novel’s conclusion, ‘now occupied by MACS of all clans and kindreds’ including the discharged Irish soldier Pat Leary (557). While the acceptance of Irish crofters in what Katie Trumpener calls ‘a new transnational British community’ is not unexpected in the light of Johnstone’s portrayal of the sympathetic ties between Ireland and the Highlands, the positioning of English characters in the conclusion of her national tale is somewhat surprising and merits further examination.⁶⁶

When Norman Macalbin assumes ownership of the Glen-Albin estate and moves into Dunalbin castle, he appoints Ellis, an English soldier whom he served with in the Highland regiment and ‘who had been trained to husbandry,’ his bailiff (556). Mr. Montague, Monimia’s English brother-in-law from her first marriage who had been a sheep farmer when he had rented Dunalbin castle from Archibald Gordon, becomes Norman’s ‘shrewd and vigilant agent’. These two Englishmen, along with Ellis’s wife, take up residence on the outskirts of

⁶⁵ John Whale, ‘Romantics, explorers and Picturesque travellers’ in *The Politics of the Picturesque: Literature, landscape and aesthetics since 1770*, ed. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 175-95.

⁶⁶ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p. 266.

the hamlet in a cottage. The piper Hugh refers to this property 'in a certain tone' as 'Roast-beef Palace' and 'the English colony' (559). Any sense of irony attached to these labels being applied to a residence housing only two Englishmen is dampened by the geographical positioning of the cottage and the fact that it becomes 'a pattern to the whole country' in terms of 'rural beauty and good management'. Considering the layout of Glen-Albin again suggests a way of parsing the awkwardness of Johnstone's conclusion, which may be symptomatic of the difficulties she faced in trying to combine conflicting discourses of improvement, nationalism, and the Picturesque.

When Lady Augusta resettles in Glen-Albin after her family lost its fortune and property in the Jacobite Rebellion, she takes up residence on Eleenalin. This island in the center of a lake was the traditional burial ground of the clan's chiefs and Lady Augusta's decision to live there reinforces the passing of the feudalistic clan structure. Her family's ancestral home, Dunalbin castle, is situated at the eastern edge of the glen, and the village is between these two structures. For the majority of the novel, then, Dunalbin village rests between a monument to Highland past and, under Montague's management and Gordon's ownership, a symbol of superficial English improvement and of socially destructive Scottish improvement. Once Norman comes into possession of Dunalbin castle, the symbolic layout of the glen is complicated by 'the English colony', 'which fronts the traveller when he passes through the hamlet, and follows the natural sweep of that well-frequented foot-track which leads to the castle' (559). Disconcertingly, this traveller's 'delighted surprise' at finding a neat example of 'rustic comfort' in a Highland setting is abated with the explanation that 'this cottage is an Englishman's castle'. Although the use of

‘surprise’ may be a critique of the preconceptions outsiders may have made about the Highlands from various literary sources, Johnstone ultimately turns the scene into an advertisement for the success of a transplanted English colony in the Highlands, echoing the success of the transplanted Highland community in America. The addition of ‘an Englishman’s castle’ between the hamlet village and the reclaimed Dunalbin castle effectively shifts the eye’s focus away from Eleenalin’s pastness and towards a model of leadership that combines the architectural façade of clan history with more modern concepts of estate management. Yet ‘the English colony’ also separates Dunalbin castle from Dunalbin village, and there is something incongruous about Johnstone’s description of this cottage as the ‘pattern to the whole country’, especially when the most explicit example of ‘good management’ by the tenantry is associated with English, rather than Scottish or even Irish, crofters.⁶⁷

In addition to being a template for an orderly and well-run household, the English-occupied tenement also serves as school-house, where Montague ‘spends some hours there every day in teaching the elder children writing and accounts’ (559). Montague’s positioning here is remarkable considering how he’d been portrayed earlier in the novel, when he had lived in Dunalbin castle. Though he was presented as a comical figure, rude without being malicious and obsessed with food, he was also bigoted against Highlanders, friends with Daniel Macpherson, and a grazier. He was used as a vehicle for Johnstone to mock English ideas of improvement as being ill planned, short-lived, and aesthetically absurd in a Highland setting. Montague presents his addition of ‘a

⁶⁷ Johnstone specifically contrasts Ellis’s property with Pat Leary’s in terms which reinforce national stereotypes: ‘After all, Leary’s household, though abundantly gay and happy, is but a *hugger-mugger* kind of establishment, when contrasted with that of his old comrade, English Ellis’ (559).

poultry yard and piggery' as 'a splendid trophy of tasteful improvement,' but it is his idea of whitewashing Dunalbin castle that is met with most derision (118). While Norman protests that it 'would be sacrilege,' Monimia's response is built on the idea of site-specific improvement: 'The tastes of my brother, like the opinions of many worthy persons, though in themselves just and excellent, become absurd and ridiculous, when applied indiscriminately to every variety of circumstance and character.' This takes on a national dimension when she adds that 'the first hard rain would forever efface that superb monument of English improvement, - a white-washed castle' (119). Not only are English improvements incongruous with the needs of the Highlands throughout most of *Clan-Albin*, but they are also transitory.

Unlike Maria Edgeworth's reformed absentees, Montague's conversion from a comical figure into someone qualified to assume the responsibility of schoolmaster and agent seems arbitrary in its suddenness, appearing to stem from his emasculation following an injudicious marriage. Ellis's role as bailiff is also an interesting choice as it places a representative of English military strength in a position of influence over the Highland community. Though these English characters are by no means exerting hegemonic control over their Highland neighbours, Johnstone's transformation of Dunalbin from a culturally and racially distinct Highland hamlet into a more pan-British community may be in keeping with the conventions of the national tale and a concession towards the need for the Highlands to become integrated into a modern global economy. Communal farming and kitchen gardens insure the pastoral quality of Dunalbin, but Norman Macalbin's improvements, however small-scale, represent an

acknowledgement that the Highlanders are no longer ‘a race which society in its progress seemed to have forgotten’ (22).

Murray Pittock contends that ‘a sentimental attitude, particularly a sentimental attitude towards the past, was one of the luxuries permitted by Enlightenment and improvement’.⁶⁸ As the century progressed and ‘highlandism’ spread with every publication of a ‘Scotch novel’, the call for improvement in fiction set in the Highlands seems to lose ground to the romantic image of the Highlands, even as the region itself continued to be transformed by agricultural and commercial modernization. Yet the tension between the promotion of a picturesque Scotland and the aftereffects associated with improvement and the Highland clearances was something many of the day’s keenest proponents of the Highlands were conscious of, as is evident in an examination of the figures responsible for King George IV’s introduction to Scotland.

7. SIR WALTER SCOTT, DAVID STEWART OF GARTH, AND THE KING’S VISIT

Katherine Haldane Grenier suggests that ‘Scots actively participated in the creation of their country’s tourist identity and thereby claimed a role in defining their country’.⁶⁹ In the ultimate staging of a public Scottish national

⁶⁸ Pittock, *Inventing and Resisting Britain*, p. 157.

⁶⁹ Katherine Haldane Grenier, *Tourism and Identity in Scotland, 1770-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 5.

image, Walter Scott choreographed King George IV's visit to Scotland in 1822.⁷⁰ Scott's employment of a pageant of Highlanders (real and imitators alike) to stand as a synecdochic representation of Scotland for this premier tourist is certainly evidence of a Scot-led creation of a cohesive 'tourist identity'. Informed witnesses to the king's visit to Scotland were aware, however, that the national image Scott was presenting was a construct, and a misleading one at that. John Gibson Lockhart, Scott's biographer and son-in-law, noted the disproportionate representation of the Highlands in the proceedings; 'it appeared to be very generally thought, when the first programmes were issued, that the Highlanders, their kilts, and their bagpipes, were to occupy a great deal too much space in every scene of public ceremony connected with the King's reception'.⁷¹ Lockhart wondered if Scott's over-reliance on the Highland image was not 'a cruel mockery' considering that the Clearances had steadily reduced their numbers throughout the preceding decades:

With all respect and admiration for the noble and generous qualities which our countrymen of the Highland clans have so often exhibited, it was difficult to forget that they had always constituted a small, and almost always an unimportant part of the Scottish population; and when one reflected how miserably their numbers had of late years been reduced in consequence of the selfish and hard-hearted policy of their landlords, it almost seemed as if there was a cruel mockery in giving so much prominence to their pretensions. But there could be no question that they were picturesque [...] (516)

This criticism highlights an interesting tension between the improvement and the romanticization of the Highlands, and between Highland and Lowland sensibilities in the promotion of a cohesive national identity. Despite his role in

⁷⁰ See John Prebble, *The King's Jaunt* (Glasgow: Fontana, 1989).

⁷¹ John Gibson Lockhart, *Memoirs of the Life of Sir Walter Scott, Bart. A New Edition Complete in One Volume* (Edinburgh: Robert Cadell, 1844), p. 516.

promoting the romantic image of the Highlands, it is a tension Walter Scott acknowledged.

In his review of ‘Culloden Papers,’ Scott condemns the worst of the Highland Clearances as the result of ‘an unrelenting avarice, which will be one day found to have been as short-sighted as it is unjust and selfish. Meanwhile, the highlands may become the faery ground for romance and poetry, or subject of experiment for the professors of speculation, political and economical’ (333).⁷² Scott concludes “Culloden Papers” by quoting from the scene in which Highlanders are forced to leave their homes in Christian Isobel Johnstone’s *Clan-Albin; a National Tale* (1815): ‘*Ha til, ha til, ha til, mi tulidh!* - “We return – we return – we return – no more!” Yet in his historical novels, such as in *Waverley* and *Rob Roy*, Scott ‘glosses over the clearances’ in focusing on historical settings such as the Jacobite rebellions of 1715 and 1745 ‘as the catastrophic terminus of Highland history’.⁷³ Johnstone’s use of a more contemporary setting allows for an emphasis on the conditions surrounding the emptying out of Highland communities around the turn of the century that is lacking in Scott’s fiction. For better or worse, Scott is often seen as ‘Scotland’s foremost tourist guide’, and the king’s visit was meant to be the culmination of the rehabilitation of the Highland *cum* Scottish national image.

An examination of the key organizers behind George IV’s visit to Edinburgh reveals an intriguing intersection of the emergent national branding of Highland tartanry and military prowess and of the ongoing debate

⁷² Walter Scott, ‘Culloden Papers’, *The Quarterly Review*, (Jan. 1816), pp. 283-333. Refer to Chapter One for more on the term ‘speculation’.

⁷³ See Ian Duncan, *Scott’s Shadow* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 242.

surrounding land policies throughout Scotland. While Walter Scott was the leasing impetus behind the ‘overwhelmingly militant and male’ spectacle that welcomed the king to Scotland, he was aided in this display of the popular martial image of the Highlander by David Stewart of Garth, professional soldier and leading expert on Highland customs.⁷⁴ Stewart, ‘Scott’s drillmaster and costume authority, his “Toy Captain,” in Lockhart’s words,’ had recently published the moderately successful *Sketches of the Character, Manners, and Present State of the Highlanders of Scotland; with details of the Military Service of the Highland Regiments* (1822) when he was chosen to serve on Scott’s committee.⁷⁵ Stewart had been a member of the Society of True Highlanders, which was established in 1815 by Alasdair Ranaldson MacDonell, chief of Glengarry.⁷⁶ The Society was, in effect, a social club whose members gloried in the romance of Highland culture, dress, and music. Stewart became estranged from the Society, however, ‘due to his bitter discovery of what was happening to Glengarry’s clansmen while the man was play-acting his role as their chief.’⁷⁷ Nevertheless, his interest in Highland custom and dress, and his ability to train Highland regiments to march in stately formation before the king, suited Scott’s vision of the royal visit and Stewart himself was charged with dressing the king in his somewhat controversial Highland costume. As John Prebble observes that

⁷⁴ McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire*, p. 83.

⁷⁵ McNeil, *Scotland, Britain, Empire*, p. 84.

⁷⁶ It has been suggested that Glengarry, with his taste for flamboyant Highland dress and his family’s mass-eviction of traditional tenants, was Scott’s model for Fergus Mac-Ivor of *Waverley*. Indeed, Glengarry bears a striking resemblance to Scott’s description of Mac-Ivor: ‘He was too thorough a politician, regarded his patriarchal influence too much as the means of accomplishing his own aggrandizement, that we should term him the model of a Highland Chieftain’ (170).

⁷⁷ John Prebble, *The King’s Jaunt*, p. 39.

Sketches brought Stewart both ‘modest fame and some unpleasing notoriety,’ principally for his scathing indictment of wealthy landowners who evicted their tenants under the new system of agricultural improvement, I am interested in exploring Stewart’s stance on improvement in the Highlands in greater detail, particularly as they echo several of Christian Isobel Johnstone’s concerns (87).

Major-General David Stewart’s *Sketches* is divided between a general view of the Highlands in the style of Arthur Young’s Irish tour and a more detailed (and historically accurate) account of the military record of Highland Regiments, bolstered by his thirty-five years of experience in the British military. The two sections, however, are not entirely discrete, as his service in the Black Watch during its deployment in the Highlands greatly influenced his opinions on land policy and the treatment of tenants there. The Black Watch, later the 42nd Royal Highlanders, was initially established as an informal militia charged with patrolling the Highlands for crime following the 1715 Jacobite Rebellion. In 1792, the so-called *Bliadhna nan Caorach*, or Year of the Sheep, Highlanders in Ross-shire and neighbouring counties were faced with forced evictions following the introduction of the Cheviot breed to those areas, thanks in no small part to John Sinclair. The resulting sheep riots in Ross-shire saw the arrival of the 42nd regiment, including David Stewart, to oversee the clearances and prevent violence. Stewart describes the sheep riots as an understandable expression of ‘their grief and rage, when driven from their ancient homes,’ and goes so far as to praise the non-violent methods with which the select band of cottagers protested their treatment:

A few month after these cold-hearted wholesale ejectments, those who were permitted to remain as cottagers rose in a body, and, collecting all the sheep which had been placed by the great stock farmers on the possessions which they themselves had formerly

held, they drove the whole before them, with an intention of sending them beyond the boundaries of the country; thinking, in their simplicity and despair, that, if they got quit of the sheep, they would be again reinstated in their farms. In this state of insurrection they continued for some time, but no act of violence or outrage occurred; nor did the sheep suffer in the smallest degree beyond what resulted from the fatigues of the journey, and the temporary loss of their pasture. Though pressed with hunger, these conscientious peasants did not take a single animal for their own use, contenting themselves with the occasional supplies of meal or victuals which they obtained in the course of their journey.⁷⁸

Stewart takes pains to specify that these acts of civil disobedience were ‘a circumstance somewhat novel in these regions,’ and ‘one of the first *symptoms of the effects of that kind of civilization which is practised in the Highlands*’ (417). The fact that a Highland regiment, with several soldiers native to Ross-shire, had been charged with enforcing the clearances was particularly galling to Stewart given his stance that it was a destructive policy geared more toward profit than improvement.

Peter Womack classifies Stewart, along with Queen Victoria, as one of ‘the authors of nineteenth-century Highland sentimentality,’ whose writings ‘express a powerful if precious delight in the place which certainly affected landlords’ behaviour and must have mitigated on an individual level the disastrous passage of Highland economic history to which they contributed as a class’ (177). Although the level of sentimentality and preciousness in his account of the Highlands regiments is debatable, David Stewart was certainly influential in alerting his audience to the dire circumstances of several Highland communities. While his culpability in the charade of George IV’s attempt at donning traditional highland garb may have undermined his credibility as an

⁷⁸ *Sketches*, Third Edition (Edinburgh: Archibald Constable, 1825), p. 416.

authority in the eyes of already resentful landowners present at the royal visit, *Sketches* continued to sell well in subsequent editions and Stewart was generally regarded as the foremost expert on the Highlands until his death in 1829. David Stewart encapsulates the most common arguments made against the Highland Clearances, echoing Johnstone's emphasis on community, loyalty, patriotism, and the destructive influence of the pursuit of wealth for wealth's sakes:

The consequences which have resulted, and the contrast between the present and past condition of the people, and between their present and past disposition and feelings towards their superiors, show, in the most striking light, the impolicy of attempting, with such unnatural rapidity, innovations which it would require an age, instead of a few years, to accomplish in a salutary manner; and the impossibility of effecting them without inflicting great misery, endangering good morals, and undermining loyalty to the king, and respect for constituted authority.

[...] These people, blameless in every respect, save their poverty and ignorance of modern agriculture, could not believe that such harsh measures proceeded from their honoured superiors, whose conduct had hitherto been kind and paternal, and to whom they themselves had ever been attached and faithful. (164-66)

Stewart's anger at Glengarry and other landed gentlemen associated with various Highland societies centered on their hypocrisy; while they exploited the fashionable accoutrements of a virtually destroyed clan system, they disregarded what remained of their tenants' loyalty in the most violent, selfish, and socially irresponsible of ways. Even landowners who attempted to ameliorate the situation by offering coastal plots of land, unsuitable to their own aims of establishing sheep farms, are taken to task, 'for if the advantages of the people were so evident, and if more lenient measures had been pursued, vindication could not have been necessary' (167). A similar hypocrisy is noted in Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering* in one of the few examples of clearances in his *Waverley* novels, and one referenced by Stewart in his description of the clearance of Ross-shire.

In discussing the practice of burning down houses to drive tenants from estates being cleared for pasture, Stewart quotes Scott's 'admirable description' of the eviction of a 'lawless race' from Derncleugh in the first volume of *Guy Mannering* (1815).⁷⁹ While Derncleugh is likely set in the Galloway area of southwest Scotland, readers no doubt conflated this eviction with the Sutherland clearances that took place from 1806 to 1820. The 'lawless race' of Derncleugh was a colony of gypsies who had long resided on the Ellangowan estate, and while the Laird's protection was once earned by military service and 'plundering the lands of those neighbouring barons with whom he chanced to be at feud,' by the early 1780s, when the Laird is pressured to evict his traditional 'tenants' to save political face, the gypsies had offered services of a more 'pacific,' or domestic nature (37).⁸⁰ The exchange of protection and access to the commons for voluntary aid in household chores and animal husbandry was more characteristic of a feudal relationship between laird and tenant than the parasitic one imagined by the Laird's political rivals. The laird's hypocrisy is clear as 'certain qualms of feeling had deterred Ellangowan from attending in person to see his tenants expelled' (42). Scott's description of the eviction itself is relatively unsentimental, particularly when compared to the protracted farewell of the Dunalbin cottagers in Johnstone's *Clan-Albin*:

At length the term-day, the fatal Martinmas, arrived, and violent measures of ejection were resorted to. A strong posse of peace-officers, sufficient to render all resistance vain, charged the inhabitants to depart by noon; and, as they did not obey, the officers, in terms of their warrant, proceeded to unroof the cottages, and pull down the wretched doors and windows, - a

⁷⁹ Stewart, *Sketches*, p. 167.

⁸⁰ Scott, *Guy Mannering*, ed. Peter Garside (London: Penguin Books, 2003), p. 37.

summary and effectual mode of ejection still practised in some remote parts of Scotland, where a tenant proves refractory. (41)

It is this passage that Stewart quotes as an ‘admirable description,’ asking that readers moved by a ‘picture of fictitious distress’ turn their attention and sympathy to the true victims of the Highland Clearances: ‘what heart shall withhold its sympathy from real distress, when faithful, blameless, and industrious beings are treated in the same manner, without the same provocation, and without any cause except the desire of increasing an income, and where, instead of "thirty hearts that wad ha'e wanted bread before ye wanted sunkets," more than twice thirty thousand have been turned adrift in different parts of the North?’ (167). Christian Isobel Johnstone used this evocative image of Highlanders cast adrift from their homeland to great effect, but the Clearances did not encapsulate all forms of Highland improvement, and not all Highland landlords left their dispossessed tenants to find their own way. Sir John Sinclair is a prime example of an improving landlord who strove to provide alternative livings for his tenants once his estates were converted to sheep farms, and such alternative agricultural experiments are the focus of Alexander Sutherland’s ‘The Bride of Ulladale’ (1827).

8. SIR JOHN SINCLAIR AND ALEXANDER SUTHERLAND’S *TALES OF A PILGRIM*

As mentioned in the Introduction, one of the major figures of British agricultural improvement in this period was Sir John Sinclair. Born in the Scottish Highlands and an improving landlord of his Caithness estate, Sinclair

had initiated the Statistical Account of Scotland in 1790 and the British Wool Society in 1791 prior to becoming the founding member and first president of the Board of Agriculture. Today, Sinclair is often credited for having introduced the Cheviot sheep to the Highlands. Although he had argued that ‘sheep farming, when conducted upon proper principles, is not so great an enemy to population as is commonly imagined,’ many have pointed to the wild success of the Cheviot breed as a significant contributor to the population shifts in the Highlands, as subsistence farmers were replaced by ‘four-legged clansmen’.⁸¹ Sinclair’s reaction to this development seems to have wavered between regret that Highlanders were denied participation in the improvement of Scottish husbandry and rationalization that the dispossessed clansmen could thrive in Scotland’s fisheries better than they ever could have subsistence farming.

Eric Richards suggests that ‘Sinclair eventually became the classic apologist of Highland landlordism in the age of clearances.’⁸² Nevertheless, Sinclair was critical of landlords who converted their estates into sheep farms without providing an alternate means of support to the displaced tenants. Given the concern about transatlantic emigration, Sinclair was keen to advocate alternatives in his dealings with the various improvement boards he was associated with, including the British Fisheries Society. As Johnstone noted, emigration was not always an option for large families already financially burdened, and though she highlighted industrial towns as a distasteful alternative for dispossessed Highlanders there was also a growing problem of

⁸¹ John Sinclair, *Address to the Society for the Improvement of British Wool*. Given in Edinburgh, 31 January, 1791. 2nd edition (London, 1791), p. 12.

⁸² Eric Richards, *A History of the Highland Clearances, Volume 2: Emigration, Protests, Reasons* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 30.

overpopulation and poverty in coastal Highland towns as the interior of the north was converted into sheep farms. Sinclair suggested two possible solutions to combat the emigration trend and to ease the economic burden on the few scattered coastal towns: developing Scottish fisheries and establishing planned towns and villages.

Christian Johnstone does not allude to John Sinclair in *Clan-Albin* by name, but she is critical of the suggestion that turning to fisheries for sustenance and income would solve the problem of poverty in the Highlands. ‘The fisheries might, indeed, through time, become a means of improving their condition,’ Lady Augusta concedes, ‘but will the ocean spontaneously yield up its treasures to beings cut off by poverty to all the means of availing themselves of the local advantages which Providence has placed in their power?’ (88) Although it is not explicitly stated, it is possible that the immediacy of the problem and this lack of start-up capital to establish commercial fisheries are also the reasons behind Lady Augusta’s earlier claim that ‘the present generation of Highlanders could never be made manufacturers’ (58). The potential of the fishing industry as a viable resource for the Highlands had long been a point of contention, and Johnstone here echoes Smollett’s reservations as expressed in *Humphry Clinker*:

The sea is an inexhaustible fund of riches; but the fishery cannot be carried on without vessels, casks, salt, lines, nets, and other tackle. I conversed with a sensible man of this country, who, from a real spirit of patriotism, had set up a fishery on the coast, and a manufacture of coarse linen, for the employment of the poor Highlanders. (255-6)

Smollett specifies that fisheries would only succeed under ‘proper management,’ but the thrust of his argument is that Scotland had untapped natural resources which could be harvested for the good of a struggling population. Johnstone,

writing in the midst of the Clearances and thus witness to what she considered a socially irresponsible and rapacious exploitation of the Highland landscape, was even more cautious in her consideration of the establishment of fisheries given the negative connotations ‘improvement’ suggested for Highlanders. It is a concern shared by John MacCulloch, who cautioned that forced and rushed schemes of improvement would be detrimental to both investors and the general population of communities experiencing the shift from agricultural to mercantile economy in his *The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland...in Letters to Sir Walter Scott* (1824):

To attempt the establishment of manufactures or fisheries by force, are projects only for inconsiderate benevolence. Whatever is to be done, must be done gradually; by following, as much as leading, the changes of opinion and practice which time and circumstances produce, and by presenting new motives and creating new wants. This is the natural order in which alone improvements can proceed, without exciting pain, inconvenience, or discontent, on one hand, and without producing ill humour, loss, and disappointment, on the other.⁸³

‘Inconsiderate benevolence’ is not a motive Johnstone attaches to the clearance of Dunalbin, of course, but it is apparent in her discussion of other examples of ‘improvement,’ particularly gratuitous charity that stifles the impulse of industry and self-sufficiency. Charity, education, and the introduction of manufactories and fisheries all require a deeper knowledge of the wants and abilities of the Highlanders than Sir Archibald Gordon and the other strangers to their community possess.

Christian Johnstone had other concerns about the practical implications of a reliance on fisheries for the economic revitalization of the Highlands. One

⁸³ John MacCulloch, *The Highlands and Western Isles of Scotland...in Letters to Sir Walter Scott*. Volume 4 of 4 (London, 1824), p. 237.

objection was that such a time-consuming endeavour would be tantamount to absenteeism in a community traditionally sustained by communal farming:

But I forget our patrons of the fisheries, - and they seem to forget that the proper cultivation of land, by demanding continual attention, is incompatible with the successful prosecution of fishing. Should our poor people give exclusive attention to the fisheries, - for a few months of employment, at best precarious, they forfeit the hopes of the year, and ensure no adequate provision for their families.⁸⁴

Another dimension to Johnstone's criticism of fisheries is the forced relocation of dispossessed Highlanders to the coast and the creation of planned fishing villages to house them. As mentioned above, landowners who converted their lands to sheep farms did not set out to depopulate their estates, which would decrease their rent income and deplete their potential workforce. As T. C. Smout points out, 'if by planning villages on their estates, they could rehouse the population whose life on the land they had disorganized, they would then enjoy the best of the old world of heavy population and paternalism and of the new world of efficient farming and larger rent rolls' (77).⁸⁵ These villages could not, of course, practically rely on large-scale agriculture as all suitable lands were relegated to sheep farming, so landlords would establish various trades or manufactures depending on what was most suitable to the area and community.

Textile production was one popular option, but fishing was the popular solution in the Western Highlands where Dunalbin is located, in Sutherland (which saw the most infamous example of the Highland Clearances), and in

⁸⁴ Johnstone, *Clan-Albin*, p. 88.

⁸⁵ T. C. Smout, 'The Landowner and the Planned Village in Scotland, 1730-1830' in *Scotland in the Age of Improvement*, eds. N. T. Phillipson and Rosalind Mitchison (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1970), pp. 73-106. Note that while Smout distinguished between a hamlet and a village, particularly in terms of arrangement, Johnstone does not, alternately referring to Dunalbin as both.

Caithness where Sir John Sinclair held estates. Early templates for planned villages, which involved a balance of cottage farms, mills, and fishing, were judged commercial failures by funding bodies like the Highland Society, and more specialized focus on fishing was suggested. The British Fisheries Society built four model villages to promote commercial fishing as a viable option for Highland improvement, and independent landlords like John Sinclair followed their example. Sinclair designed New Town of Thurso and had a hand in the planned villages Halkirk and Sarclet, favoring the blend of cottage farm and fishery to varying success. Allotting one or two acres to each resident was not enough to provide a living, while the time constraints of a blended crofter/laborer/fisherman lifestyle mean that all three endeavors suffered, and Johnstone's concerns over the speculative nature of the fisheries showed remarkable foresight, as the many fledgling fisheries in the Highlands floundered after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars.⁸⁶ The failure of one such planned village is the center of a short story in Alexander Sutherland's *Tales of a Pilgrim* (1827), an interesting post-*Waverley* representation of improvement in the Highlands.

Sutherland's collection of short stories begins with an Introductory Tale establishing the premise that the stories are being told by the unnamed titular Pilgrim to two Englishmen touring France.⁸⁷ Travelling *incognito*, he only admits to being British, though contextual evidence suggests he is Scottish and possibly a Highlander: 'a Frenchman who had recently returned from Scotland,

⁸⁶ Smout, 'The Landowner and the Planned Village in Scotland, 1730-1830', p. 97.

⁸⁷ Sutherland served as the editor of the *Edinburgh Observer* for several years prior to his untimely death at the age of 37 in 1831.

in which he had been a sojourner at the period of George IV's visit to his northern capital, strenuously insisted that he was the far-famed chieftain of Glengarry'.⁸⁸ Glengarry, known for 'his medieval pomp and ruthless evictions', had made such a spectacle of himself and his flamboyant Highland dress at the king's visit that the image he presented resonated as a stereotypical Highland chief, to the chagrin of several of the visit's organizers.⁸⁹ Sutherland's reference to Glengarry is most likely meant to signify that stereotype rather than as a more symbolic allusion to Glengarry's reputation as a Highland landlord associated with the ill-treatment of his tenants during the Clearances, but the first story following the Introductory Tale suggests that Sutherland was critical of certain forms of 'improvement' being implemented in the Highlands. In his introduction, the pilgrim claims 'misery has gifted me with the diseased eye of a fatalist, and the various shades of human destiny are my constant study' (30). Though the obvious element of fatalism in 'The Bride of Ulladale' is centered in the tale's domestic plot, applying that sense of destiny or inevitability to the improvement discourse running throughout the story highlights an interesting use of contemporary events and generic conventions.

The domestic plot of the 'The Bride of Ulladale' is familiar. The titular bride, Marion, is the daughter of Nial Sinclair, principal tacksman and distant relative of the largely absentee laird of Ulladale. When the laird decides to erect a planned township in the glen, he recruits an Englishman going by the name Calvert as chief advisor and overseer of the improvements. Calvert and Marion fall in love and plan to marry, but the engagement is broken when Marion

⁸⁸ Alexander Sutherland, *Tales of a Pilgrim* (Edinburgh: William Hunter, 1827), p. 24.

⁸⁹ Womack, *Improvement and Romance*, p. 117.

discovers that Calvert is already married. Coming from an 'elevated' family, he had been seduced at a young age and, upon discovering his wife's affair, had killed her lover in a duel and fled, assuming a false name and supporting himself as 'a common labourer' (71). Once the truth is discovered, Marion becomes progressively weak before dying and Calvert presumably kills himself, his body washing up on shore weeks after her funeral. The plot is familiar, yet it is the concurrent improvement plot that makes this story a unique representation of the Highlands. 'The Bride of Ulladale' is somewhat reminiscent of Maria Edgeworth's *Ennui* and *The Absentee* in its use of hidden identity as a possible threat to marriage and in its treatment of imprudently ambitious plans for agricultural improvement. But rather than seeing barriers to union overcome and the promise of economic growth in the community, the story features the failure of an Anglo-Scottish marriage union and the subsequent severe repercussions for the attempts at improvement in the Highland community of Ulladale, offering an intriguing inverse of Edgeworth's marriage plots. Furthermore, Sutherland's use of the Sinclair surname and his choice of the boundary between the counties of Caithness and Sutherland as a setting also suggests a tempting reading of 'The Bride of Ulladale' as a critique of Sir John Sinclair's approach to Highland improvement, thus turning the focus back on *Scottish* land management rather than the Anglo-Scottish partnership.

Sutherland begins 'The Bride of Ulladale' with a rather picturesque description of the landscape between the counties of Sutherland and Caithness, punctuating his portrayal of a hypothetical traveller's view of this isolated setting with commentary on the improvements undergone in that region:

Now-a-days, thanks to the liberality of government, and the prodigious improvement in road-making, a traveller may be

transported from Inverness to Thurso with as much ease and comfort, and almost with as much expedition, as from London to Portsmouth. The naturally stern aspect of that mountain barrier, however, was not to be softened by tracing a more level line of road, by building bridges, or by planting mile-stones, - those landmarks of the progress of civilization. Heath, and heath alone, vegetates on the moorland slopes; and the summits of the hills are as bare and bleached as if they had but yesterday emerged from the waters of the deluge. (37-38)

Sutherland presents a juxtaposition between civilization and untamed nature that is reminiscent of Richard Graves's description of north Wales in *Eugenius*, with the Golden Vale being encapsulated by hills and craggy rocks 'which seemed to be the very boundaries of creation' (31). And just as a visitor to the Golden Vale would be pleasantly surprised by the 'terrestrial paradise' it presented when set against its more wild surroundings, 'more minute observation' of the border between Sutherland and Caithness would allow a traveller 'to discover that it embraces several smiling glens, enlivened by the smoke of household fires' (38). Reference to fires, as demonstrated in Johnstone's *Clan-Albin*, recalls the Clearances, signifying that these glens, of which Ulladale is one, have escaped forced relocation. Instead, the small community of crofters subsists at the start of the story on cottage farms, shepherding, and fishing, as 'only one individual in the glen had sufficient land under the plough to afford constant employment to himself and his family' (39).

The 'mountain barrier' or 'natural barrier' against the 'landmarks of the progress of civilization' not only represented a separation between agrarian and commercial economy but also preserved communal domesticity from luxury, leaving the 'tribe of some thirty or forty rustics...a simple, and, on the whole, a happy people' (39). Beyond this slightly nostalgic description and an aside that 'few things obtain more respect than honourable descent', there is a complete

absence of the by now stereotypical romantic portrayal of Highlanders (41). Sutherland, himself a former soldier with a Highland regiment, does not offer descriptions of martial strength. There is no reference to tartan or pipes or Ossian. The positioning of the Highlands as the public image of a distinctive Scottish identity within Britain was dependent on Highland dress and the romance of clan loyalty just as it was dependent on the visual branding provided by Highland topography.

Taking into account the immense popularity of Scott's *Waverley* novels and the fact that Sarah Green had published *Scotch Novel Reading; or, Modern Quackery*, her satire on the glut of Scott imitators, three years earlier, it seems likely that the image of the Highlander had virtually been normalized by the time Sutherland published *Tales of a Pilgrim*. Subsequently, the Highlanders themselves are for the large part absent from 'The Bride of Ulladale', and the effect of this is that the story reads very much as a *regional* text rather than a national one, despite some affinity with Edgeworth's works. The national tale, or texts labeled as such, had waned in popularity by the time *Tales of a Pilgrim* was published. Two years after Johnstone published *Clan-Albin*, Maria Edgeworth released her final Irish novel, *Ormond* (1817), and Lady Morgan's last national tale, *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys*, appeared in 1827. Barring references to lairds and 'feudal vassalage', the population of Ulladale could be seen as representing any small agrarian community, rather than a specifically Highland one. Despite its departure from national tale conventions and its refusal of the popular historical romance template in favor of a contemporary setting, 'The Bride of Ulladale' is not a generic tale of romance and improvement. Instead, what grounds the story firmly in the Highlands is the

realistic, rather than romantic, description of Caithness and the allusion to perhaps the most prominent improver of that county, Sir John Sinclair.

Though the mentioned introduction of roads was obviously of national importance, Sutherland was quite regionally specific in his use of place: 'Ulladale was one of the fairest of these mountain nooks. Its fertility was the boast of the district, for, speaking comparatively, the soil was generous; and it rarely suffered from the blighting winds that almost perpetually blow over Caithness' (39). This fertility allowed for a mixed agrarian and fishing economy that was similar to the infrastructures of Sinclair's earliest attempts at planned villages, initially founded to support families he had removed from his main estate in order to convert arable lands in sheep farms. While the Sinclair surname is attached to the tacksman and father of the bride, Nial Sinclair, Sutherland notes that 'the whole tribe were either lineally or collaterally connected; and, with one or two exceptions, bore the same name' and Nial is related to the absentee laird of Ulladale (39). It is in his description of this laird that Sutherland delivers his first explicit critique of gentlemen whose attempts at improvement read as an expression of ego:

The laird of Ulladale resided in a distant part of the kingdom, and seldom visited that portion of his estate. He bore the character of a generous landlord; but having been, from his youth upwards, a keen theorist in agricultural affairs, he had often harassed his tenants, and seriously dilapidated his property, by an over-passion for innovation. The rapidity with which he adopted and carried into execution every new system which his fertile brain projected, was inconceivable, and subjected him to the scoffs of more prudent, but less intelligent men. He inserted some novel stipulation into every lease he granted; and frequently purchased, at an exorbitant rate, the concurrence of refractory tenants to fanciful innovations on their mode of farming. In short, to use his own words, he did not despair of physicking the barrenest parts of the earth into fertility; and, like a true enthusiast, looked forward with certainty to having a monument raised to his memory as an universal benefactor. To do him justice, in the course of a long

and laborious life he *did* effect some important changes in agriculture, and originated many hints on useful subjects, which steadier men successfully illustrated; but, alas, for the ingratitude of man! barren thanks and empty coffers were his only rewards. (43-44)

The parallels between this portrait and Sinclair's biography are striking, from the life-long enthusiasm for 'agricultural affairs' and the positive influence in the field to the 'empty coffers' that interest brought; according to Rosalind Mitchell, 'it was certainly mainly his farming expenses that involved Sinclair so heavily in debt later on, enhanced by his frequent absences and failure to keep an eye on things'.⁹⁰ Sinclair was absent from his Highland estate for long stretches of time, dividing his time between London, where he served on several parliamentary committees and chaired the Board of Agriculture, and Edinburgh, where he was living when Sutherland, editor of the *Edinburgh Observer*, published *Tales of a Pilgrim*. Likewise, the laird of Ulladale was generally absent from his estate while his tenants 'continued to slumber in all the ignorance and penury of feudal vassalage. Their laird had either forgotten them, or was sufficiently occupied in spreading intelligence and wealth over happier districts' (45). When the laird returns to Ulladale, accompanied by 'engineers, masons, carpenters, slaters, dykers, smiths, and labourers innumerable,' the similarities to Sinclair are even more prominent, particularly when his tenants assume he is 'preparing a site for the flourishing town of Thurso, which, they doubted not, he intended to remove thither from its remote situation on the Pentland Firth' (46).

⁹⁰ Rosalind Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John: The Life of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster, 1754-1835* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1962), p. 187.

The laird's latest innovation is instead an expanded version of Sinclair's planned town, New Thurso, with the aim of 'locating some five or ten thousand inhabitants in a township in the glen, and bringing into tillage about the same number of acres of the adjacent moorlands' (46). While Nial Sinclair, the only resident agricultural expert on the estate, concedes that his experience could not prepare him to understand the 'statistical jumble' that were the plans for the city itself, he is adamant that the proposed scheme for reclaiming the moorlands is unrealistic:

So satisfied was he of the absurdity of the scheme, that he had the contumacy to contradict his laird point blank on the subject; and got sour looks and snappish remarks for his pains. In that hour honest Nial predicted that the whole speculation was a bubble (46).

Though the immediate surroundings of Ulladale are described earlier in the story as fertile, the attempt to convert five to ten thousand acres of moorland in Caithness would have been foolhardy, as John Sinclair discovered when he hired laborers from Westmoreland to 'pare and burn peat wastes' on his Langwell estate; 'after all this trouble the soil was too thin for cultivation and the land went back to heath'.⁹¹ Despite Nail Sinclair's objections, the laird hires Calvert, who had gained some 'agricultural knowledge... while a hireling among the mountains of Westmoreland', to oversee the improvements (71).

The disintegration of Marion Sinclair and Calvert's relationship ultimately leads to the disintegration of the laird's plans for 'the rise and progress of this city', revealing not only a lapse in management but also the underlying impracticality of the scheme (46). When Marion breaks their engagement, Calvert's listlessness distracts him from his duties and 'the

⁹¹ Mitchison, *Agricultural Sir John*, p. 189.

mercenary crew, whom his surveillance had hitherto kept in subjection, took advantage of his inertness, and neglected their work, while they ridiculed the shaken mind that could no longer play the taskmaster over them' (54-55). Some of the crew are ambitious enough to report Calvert's dereliction to the laird, 'but the laird, far from the spot, and pursuing some new delusion, which for the time exclusively dazzled him, gave the accusations no further heed than by curtailing the necessary remittances for carrying on the work' (55). This lapse in payment 'decided, if it remained to be decided, the fate of his Ulladale settlement,' and by the time Marion Sinclair dies, 'the absurdity of the experiment' has been publicly acknowledged, 'even by the persons who had advocated it in the outset' (75). Unlike Sinclair's New Thurso, which thrived as a planned town, when the laird's planned improvements failed and the workers left the glen for more stable employment, 'Ulladale gradually relapsed into that state of quietude which their invasion had interrupted' (75).

Sutherland's use of 'relapse' here is particularly resonant in the context of a story engaging with improvement discourse. Relapse as seen in Edgeworth's Irish novels was a constant concern for improvers, from the degeneration of society to the occasionally Sisyphean task of draining bog land. Christian Isobel Johnstone described the 'decayed cottage wall' and 'the grass-grown path' of the abandoned Dunalbin village as 'emblems at once of [man's] power and mutability'.⁹² Relapse for Sutherland has no such negative connotations, just as the failure of a potential Anglo-Scottish marriage union had no broader implications beyond the immediate effect on an isolated community. Unlike the reclaimed Dunalbin community in Johnstone's *Clan-Albin*, which

⁹² Johnstone, *Clan-Albin*, p. 95.

absorbed an English and Irish influence and made steps towards economic modernization with the introduction of a mill, Ulladale in effect defies the inevitability of stadial progress.

Given that the frame narrative's Pilgrim, the constructed author of the stories in *Tales of a Pilgrim*, claims to have the 'diseased eye of a fatalist', this relapse could read as a surprisingly conservative and romantic conclusion. Yet despite Ulladale's reversion, Sutherland offers a realistic acknowledgement of time and historical progress, or, more specifically, decay. 'The Bride of Ulladale' is bookended by descriptions of the physical demonstration of the transient nature of human impact: architectural ruins. One is the ancient and abandoned tower that had once housed the laird's ancestors, where 'several generations of brogued chieftains had gone down to the dust since the ragged walls had been resigned to the owl and the hill-fox' (44). The other is in the cemetery where Marion Sinclair is buried, where 'the sacred edifice, which had originally stood within its confines, had been long a ruin. Hardly one stone of the building remained upon another, and a luxuriant crop of docks and nettles concealed the rubbish and foundations' (75). While the tower symbolizes the breakdown of the clan system in the Highlands and the cemetery ruin can be read as a Gothic convention advertising the brevity of human life, the fact that both structures are partially or wholly concealed by flora and fauna is indicative of Sutherland's approach to improvement throughout the story.

Although a surface reading of 'The Bride of Ulladale' may suggest that Sutherland was anti-improvement, it is more accurate to describe the story as a parable on the transient impact improvement could have on both nature and a community if not undertaken responsibly and maintained faithfully. In 1809,

Walter Scott suggested that improvements instigated by a ‘worthy and patriarchal landlord’ will still be celebrated when individual men and legends ‘shall have faded from the memory’.⁹³ Regardless of his selective nostalgia for the past represented by the Highlands, Scott often demonstrated a firm belief in the inevitability of stadial progress. Twenty years later, he applied that belief to national character:

That there is such a thing as a national character, as well as an individual one, no one can doubt, any more than that there is such a thing as family resemblance. But though this may in part be owing to qualities derived from parents, yet the national character, and the family face too, are perpetually subjected to the most extraordinary changes. Why else are the modern Italians less warlike than the conquerors of the world? - they share the blood of heroes, but it no longer warms heroic hearts.⁹⁴

The advancement of ‘progress’ into the Highlands challenged the constructed national image presented by Scott and others of a commercially, culturally, and intellectually Enlightened Scotland balanced by a pre-modern, traditional, romantic Scotland. For Christian Isobel Johnstone, it also threatened the regional and cultural cohesiveness of the Highland diaspora. In Sutherland’s tale, national identity is virtually divorced from the issue of improvement in the Highlands. Despite these differing approaches, both works reflect the persistent association between the Highlands, the Picturesque, and the discourse of improvement in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, adding to our understanding of regional and national texts of this period. Comparing *Clan-Albin* to Edgeworth’s Irish texts and ‘The Bride of Ulladale’ to Welsh novels

⁹³ ‘Carr’s Caledonian Sketches’, Article XVI, *Quarterly Review*, 1:1 (Feb., 1809), p. 185.

⁹⁴ Walter Scott, ‘Ancient History of Scotland’ [rev. of *Annals of the Caledonians, Picts, and Scots...* by Joseph Ritson, *Quarterly Review*, 41 (1829), p. 154.

such as *Elisa Powell*, it becomes apparent that the narrative of improvement and national image does not follow a straight line from sentimental novel to national tale to historical novel, and that the various strands of improvement discourse did not all emanate outwards from England. Rather, the distinctive regional and national interests of Ireland, Scotland and Wales informed an interconnected approach to Celticism, antiquarianism, Anglicization and landscape aesthetics in corresponding national literatures.

CONCLUSION

Alexander Sutherland is not unique in viewing improvement as an essentially speculative venture. Viewing the strains of improvement I have highlighted in this thesis outside of their historical contexts, one can see a continuous anxiety running through various national narratives. The improver faces a constant threat of failure: untamable nature, a resistant population, human error, and degeneration. Fear of transience is an essential underpinning of improvement ideology, centering as it does on an historical process. Richard Lovell Edgeworth's belief that 'nations as well as individuals gradually lose attachment to their identity' and Walter Scott's claim that 'the national character, and the family face too, are perpetually subjected to the most extraordinary changes' suggest that the perception of transience also helps shape the creation of national image in this time of unions, empire, and revolution.¹ This study has sought to assess the instability of both genre and national labels, to reincorporate regional settings and issues into the broader category of national literatures, and to trace the trajectory of improvement discourse and national image from early travelogues to national tales and beyond.

Scholars such as Katie Trumpener and Ina Ferris made a huge impact in the field of long eighteenth century literary studies, not only in adding to the canon but also identifying the basic characteristics of the national tale genre. But it is only recently that Welsh fiction from this period has really been considered critically and in depth, a good indication that the four nations approach to British and Irish Romanticism is gaining interest. To that end, I

¹ Richard Lovell Edgeworth, *Introduction to Castle Rackrent*; Walter Scott, 'Ancient History of Scotland', p. 154.

hope that this project expands the scope of texts commonly considered in studies of national literatures, particularly by drawing attention to national, regional, and proto-nationalist novels from Wales and Scottish texts that are often overlooked in favor of historical novels and works by more established literary figures. I have also attempted to narrow the focus of my readings to draw attention to the treatment of improvement - particularly estate and land management - and how it functions in terms of public relations for national image. In taking an interdisciplinary approach to improvement and national image, I hope to have extended the understanding of the historical and literary contexts that inform and are often alluded to in the novels discussed in this study. While each text and location approaches the subject of improvement and nation in different ways, there is a clear link in these Irish, Scottish and Welsh novels between the representations of land and people, the potential cultivation of both, and the effort to package and promote a cohesive portrait of a nation in part to foster economic revitalization.

Despite my frequent use of the wide-reaching term ‘improvement discourse,’ specific applications of improvement theories are highly localized at a regional, national, and topographical level. That, combined with my emphasis on the relationship between improvement genres and national image, requires an attention to place. The common use of the tour as a template for national tales also draws attention to movement from England to Ireland, Scotland, or Wales. Yet as I have shown in my analysis of *Clan-Albin*, there are alternative examples of transnational movement between the four nations, suggesting that further examination of improvement in transnational settings would lead to a fuller understanding of the interconnections between the approaches to improvement

and national image in Irish, Scottish and Welsh novels. A comparative reading of internal and external colonialism in these texts contributes to the critical understanding of regional and national literatures and the role literary landscapes play in the formation of national images and identities. In analyzing the reverberations of national and regional elements of selected improvement narratives, a more comprehensive view of the history of the romantic novel is revealed and improvement discourse moves beyond local implications and becomes a global story.

By using close readings of a small selection of texts as a starting point for the exploration of the wider implications of improvement and land management, I aimed to provide a fuller consideration of the historical and literary contexts that informed the way these writers went about publicizing a national image. Despite a focus on the novel as a medium of social commentary, it must be acknowledged that these novelists were professional writers and thus could not be wholly disinterested when it came to at least one aspect of the improvement discourse – its relationship to the public promotion of a given locale to an audience of prospective tourists and investors. Even repetition of potentially exotic or romantic settings, plots or personalities would have added allure to a text meant for public consumption. But this is not to say that the authors discussed in this study idealized their chosen locales. On the contrary, their varying approaches towards landscape and improvement reflect the expectations commonly held by strangers to their countries, and highlight the potential disconnects between these expectations, reality, and the circumstances needed to foster improvement in an age of economic modernization. For example, the tension seen between improvement and the Picturesque in Chapters

One and Three speaks to the popular imagining of the romantic landscape and character of Wales and Scotland in travelogues and verse. Conversely, many visitors toured post-Union Ireland specifically to observe the spectacle of poverty and alcoholism, thus the Picturesque is virtually absent from Maria Edgeworth's Irish texts. I have purposefully avoided suggesting that there is a grand narrative at play in the approach to improvement and national image in Celtic literatures. To do so would undermine the geographically, historically, culturally, and politically specific aspects of the texts discussed in this study. But in positioning these analyses side by side, I hope to draw attention to the similarities and interconnections present in the chosen works, and to demonstrate the relationship between improvement and the 'cultural packaging' of Irish, Scottish and Welsh national images.

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