Chapter Ten

Rooted in Myth? Scotland's Images from Late Modern Times to the Third Millennium

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Abstract

This contribution discusses how Scotland's languages and cultures have been represented and how a certain image of Scotland may seem to be rooted in myth, while at the same time it may be of relevance for Scotland's future. In order to investigate these issues, special attention is paid to representations of Scotland in nineteenth-century North American journals, in addition to other documents pertaining to both literary and non-literary sources. The aim is to assess whether mythical representations may have actually contributed to knowledge dissemination. Although this may seem paradoxical, the contribution of the arts and indeed of artefacts that have become emblematic of local culture, regardless of their authenticity, is hardly negligible when knowledge is propagated, especially in diasporic contexts. Within this framework, linguistic discussions occupy a very relevant place, as issues of antiquity and 'authenticity' have underpinned the debates of language codifiers since Late Modern times.

Keywords: myth-making, lexicography, Jacobitism, criticism, knowledge dissemination

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1 Introduction

Throughout the nineteenth century, journals, magazines, books and the popular press more in general played a very important part in the popularization of scientific contents (Dossena 2014). In addition, such materials were invaluable for the dissemination of knowledge concerning literature, history and cultural issues. Circulating libraries, inexpensive books and even broadsides were sources of information among a readership whose level of schooling was not always very high. Similarly, expatriates could employ the same kind of documents to expand their knowledge of topics that pertained to 'the Auld Country', regardless of their status as recent immigrants or as people who had already begun to develop a more distant relationship with the land of their ancestors, but who were still interested in its cultural background and indeed wished to retain links with it, so as to enhance or preserve their sense of rootedness (see Dossena 2012a).

Within this framework, it may be of interest to investigate if and how Scotland's languages were discussed in journals and other printed materials aiming to reach a wide audience, especially in North America. The articles printed in both US and Canadian journals place themselves in the context of a relatively widespread interest in the origins of languages that pervaded Late Modern times: an interest that underpins the development of philological studies, certainly, but which on the other hand was also often tarnished by mythical interpretations of religious and literary presuppositions, particularly as distance increased from original materials whether diachronically or geographically.

This contribution discusses to what extent such articles reflect well-established ideas or whether they have any innovative traits. Since my approach will be mostly qualitative, key items will be the object of investigation in a critical discourse analytical perspective (van Dijk 1995; Wodak and Meyer 2001). Relying on an overview of the distribution of

articles on Scotland's linguistic history in various journals, which may indicate how extensive the readers' interest was, and whether it concerned Scots more than Gaelic, or the other way round, I will focus on the indebtedness of these articles to views of Scotland's past that could be traced to literary sources. The discussion will centre on how such sources may have reinforced perceptions that were not necessarily true, but which instead were based on very popular (and carefully constructed) kinds of discourse. In the closing section, some concluding remarks will be offered.

2 One country, many images

In representations of Scotland, fact and myth have often coexisted at least since Late Modern times.[1] In these representations, some important keywords appear to be particularly relevant in diasporic contexts, such as emigration, exile, but also settlement. In fact, a certain degree of 'imperialist nostalgia' (Sorensen 2000) might be gleaned in some literary and non-literary representations of an idealised past which modernity has contributed to destroy, but which it now evokes in idyllic terms. This is seen also in cultural artefacts like songs, the most popular example probably being a very well-known slow march, the *Skye Boat Song*, which has had at least three lives in the past two centuries and which will be discussed below. In addition, the more or less overt political agenda of such representations is also worth discussing. In that respect, distinctiveness and assimilation, antiquity and modernity, are apparently contrasting ends of a continuum – a cline which is synthesised in the historical paradox of going from the prohibition of the Highland dress as a result of the Act of Proscription (sometimes called 'Disarming Act') of 1746–47 to the exaltation of kilted regiments in various

[1] By Late Modern times recent scholarship generally means the eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – i.e. the time span between the Union of Parliaments (1707) and the end of the First World War (1918) (see Mugglestone 2006).

artistic contexts throughout Victorian times. It is a framework in which the role of cultural linguistics is particularly relevant and fruitful for the investigation of phenomena which encompass different modes of expression.

2.1 A turning point in 1745

The coexistence of contrasting images in representations of Scottish culture may find its origins in what is probably one of the most important events in post-Union Scotland: the last Jacobite uprising in 1745, when Charles Edward Stuart attempted to regain the throne for the Catholic branch of the Stuart family.

Famously, the attempt failed. However, it is very interesting to see how this initiative has been memorialised and represented through myths that are still persistent, and that emphasise the validity of the narrative. The monuments at Glenfinnan, where 'Bonnie Prince Charlie'[2] landed on 19th August 1745, and indeed at Culloden, on Drumossie Moor, where the last, decisive battle was fought on 16th April 1746, testify to how the story of dramatic defeat has in fact been rewritten in heroic terms that are greatly indebted to nineteenth-century interpretations. Indeed, the cairn at Culloden was raised in 1881 and the following epigraph was inscribed:

> The graves of the gallant Highlanders who fought for Scotland and Prince Charlie are marked by the names of their clans.
> (www.ambaile.org.uk/asset/34666/1/)[3]

As a matter of fact, this epigraph perpetuates two myths. First of all, it was not just Highlanders who fought in the Jacobite uprising; and secondly, they were not fighting for Scotland per se: they were fighting in a dynastic war,

[2] The use of nicknames and labels for indirect evaluation is discussed by Dossena (2019).

[3] Unless otherwise indicated, all the websites mentioned in this essay were last accessed in March 2023.

not in a war of independence, although it is true that if the outcome had been different the history of Scotland would have taken a different turn (Pittock 1991 and 2009).

Constitutional matters aside, the most important consequence of the defeat of the Jacobite uprising was the substantial change that took place in the Scottish way of life and, more specifically, in the Highlands. The Act of Proscription (19 Geo. 2, c. 39), which came into effect on 1 August 1746 and would not be repealed until 1 July 1782, stated that:

> From and after the first day of August, one thousand seven hundred and forty seven, no man or boy, within that part of Great Briton called Scotland, other than shall be employed as officers and soldiers in his Majesty's forces, shall on any pretence whatsoever, wear or put on the clothes commonly called Highland Clothes (that is to say) the plaid, philibeg, or little kilt, trowse, shoulder belts, or any part whatsoever of what peculiarly belongs to the highland garb; and that no tartan, or partly-coloured plaid or stuff shall be used for great coats, or for upper coats; and if any such person shall presume, after the said first day of August, to wear or put on the aforesaid garments or any part of them, every such person so offending, being convicted thereof […], shall suffer imprisonment, without bail, during the space of six months, and no longer; and being convicted for a second offence before a court of justiciary or at the circuits, shall be liable to be transported to any of his Majesty's plantations beyond the seas, there to remain for a space of seven years.
> (www.electricscotland.com/history/other/proscription_1747.htm)

In addition to being forced to give up all weapons, Scots were forbidden to wear traditional clothing and patterns, unless they joined the Hanoverian army and swore allegiance to the king that some of them had actually fought, in a sadly ironic twist of fate. Any transgression was punished with incarceration and indeed deportation if the offence was repeated.

In order to be as clear as possible, the Act included anglicised forms of Gaelic lexical items, such as 'philibeg', which is glossed as 'little kilt'.

Indeed, the first edition of Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary,* published in 1755, but actually planned around the time of the Jacobite rebellion in 1746, had included several entries on specific features of Highland life, such as *dirk* ('A kind of dagger used in the Highlands of Scotland'), *firecross, skean* and *morglay* (i.e., 'claymore'), possibly also in line with Johnson's interest in Gaelic (Dossena 2004; Strabone 2010):

> **FI'RECROSS**. *n.s.* [*fire* and *cross*.] A token in Scotland for the nation to take arms: the ends thereof burnt black, and in some parts smeared with blood. It is carried like lightning from one place to another. Upon refusal to send it forward, or to rise, the last person who has it shoots the other dead.
>
> **SKEAN**. *n.s.* [Irish and Erse; *sagene*, Saxon.] A short sword; a knife.
>
> **MORGLA'Y**. *n.s.* A deadly weapon. *Ains*. *Glaive* and *morte*, French, and *glay môhr*, Erse, a two-handed broad-sword, which some centuries ago was the highlander's weapon.
> (https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com/)

Interest in language relationships and folk lore had also underpinned the compilation of John Jamieson's *Etymological Dictionary of the Scottish Language*, published in two volumes in 1808 (Rennie 2012). However, it is in works by Sir Walter Scott that the *Oxford English Dictionary* observes the first occurrences of lexical items like *clansman* and *sporran*; moreover, Scott is also credited with the invention of the short-hand term 'the Forty-Five' to indicate the last Jacobite rising – see the quotations below from entries in the *OED* (s.vv. *clansman*, n., *sporran*, n. and *forty-five*, n):

> 1810 W. SCOTT *Lady of Lake* II. 68 A hundred clans-men raise Their voices.
>
> 1817 W. SCOTT *Rob Roy* III. vii. 209 I advise no man to attempt opening this sporran till he has my secret.

1832 W. SCOTT *Redgauntlet* II. xi. 247 Ye have heard of a year they call the *forty-five*

Arguably, the prominent role that Walter Scott played in the circulation of Scottish lexical items is clearly attributable to the success of his novels, which resulted in readers submitting quotations for inclusion in the *New English Dictionary on Historical Principles* that James Murray was compiling in the years between his appointment as Editor in 1879 and his death in 1915. Even to this day, Walter Scott is one of the most frequently quoted sources in the *OED*, ranking third after *The Times* and William Shakespeare and preceding the *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society* and *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.[4]

In addition, Walter Scott greatly contributed to the creation of a mythical image of Scotland when he rediscovered the Crown Jewels of Scotland in Edinburgh Castle and – very importantly – when he orchestrated George IV's visit to Scotland in 1822, the first royal visit since the mid-seventeenth century.[5] The event was memorable in many respects and both artists and caricaturists offered their own images of the king in Highland garb. On the one hand, there was Sir David Wilkie's official (and rather flattering) portrait;[6] on the other, there were vignettes that ridiculed the king's tartan outfit.[7] Newspapers, however, drew up their own overviews in rather glorifying terms. *The Caledonian Mercury* said:

[4] According to data recorded in July 2022, Scott features in 17,055 quotations (about 0.45 per cent of all *OED* quotations), 430 of which provide first evidence of a word and 2,027 provide first evidence of a particular meaning. These figures are subject to change as entries are updated.

[5] See https://digital.nls.uk/scotlandspages/timeline/18222.html.

[6] See www.rct.uk/collection/search#/39/collection/401206/george-iv-1762-1830.

[7] See https://repository.library.brown.edu/studio/item/bdr:232593/ and https://georgianera.files.wordpress.com/2015/06/george-iv-scotland-geordie-and-willie.jpg.

> His Majesty was superbly dressed in the Highland costume, with trews of the Stuart tartan. […] the manly and graceful figure of His Majesty was finally displayed in this martial dress.
> (https://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/2014/01/george-iv-in-highland-dress.html)

A martial dress that had actually been proscribed eight decades before, and which was now being worn as an emblem of pacification.

The Morning Post, a London newspaper, wrote: 'His Majesty was dressed in a full Highland uniform and wore the broadsword, pistols and philebeg' (https://blogs.bl.uk/untoldlives/2014/01/george-iv-in-highland-dress.html); like in the Act of Proscription, the paper actually used the Gaelic word (*philibeg*), possibly to make the representation sound more authentic.

James Hogg (under his pen name of Ettrick Shepherd) also celebrated the royal visit with a somewhat ironical 'Scottish Mask', *The Royal Jubilee* (Hogg 1822), in which the use of Highland English is also represented, as the character of Archy Campbell is shown to employ the stereotypical features of Gaelic-influenced phonology and syntax:

> Oh Cot! pe plessing you all; she pe the Guardian Genius of the High-street of Edinburgh, and has more nor eneuch to pe tooing without coming out amang the cliffs, and the crags, and the mhountains to pe contending with madcaps. Cot's tamn! is it not a pold matter that men and dhevils should all have gone mhad at the very same time. The shentles are gone mhad, and the phoor people are gone mhad: the wives are all gone mhad, and the wee, wee pairnies are mhaddest of all. But is it not an awsome thing that the very bogles of the hill should have risen out of the earth and gone mhad too? (Hogg 1822: 38–39)

If 'the king's jaunt' (Prebble 1988) and all its pageantry aimed to reconcile England and Scotland from the political point of view, the romanticisation of the Jacobite cause became a feature of literature, song and art, where even loyalist representations could be reinterpreted. The clearest example is

probably seen in a very popular painting by David Morier, generally known as *The Battle of Culloden*, but the official title of which is actually *An Incident in the Rebellion of 1745*.[8] The scene is set against a background of storm-gathering clouds, in which what appears to be most striking is the mirror image of the two armies: on the right, there is one consisting of well-equipped and orderly Redcoats, while on the left there is a group of 'wild Highlanders'. The visual organization of the painting forebodes the inevitable defeat of the Scots, but at the same times it may elicit an impression of desperate bravery even in the face of an impassable enemy.[9]

This image is diametrically distant from another painting which also offers a mythical representation, Robert Gibb's *The Thin Red Line* (1881),[10] concerning an episode in the Crimean War, the battle of Balaklava, fought on 25th October 1854. The latter painting, which is now in Edinburgh Castle, includes the same stormy clouds, but this time centre stage is given to a line of Scottish soldiers wearing kilts, sporrans and the typical red coats of the British army. The transformation is basically complete, and the mythical image overcomes the tragic blend that this transformation has entailed: the coexistence of two emblematic pieces of clothing (the kilt and the red coat, once metonymies of formidable antagonists) has brought about a new image that will persist well beyond the days of the British empire (Clyde 1994).

[8] Morier's 1746 painting is currently in the Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh (see www.rct.uk/collection/401243/an-incident-in-the-rebellion-of-1745).

[9] To some extent, this is found also in John Everett Millais's 1852–53 painting *The Order of Release 1746*, in which the wounded Jacobite buries his face on his wife's shoulder as he leaves prison, while his wife's gaze conveys dignity as she gives the order of release to the gaoler while holding her child like a Renaissance Madonna – see www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/millais-the-order-of-release-1746-n01657.

[10] See www.nms.ac.uk/explore-our-collections/stories/scottish-history-and-archaeology/the-thin-red-line/.

2.2 Bardolatry beyond borders

In addition to figurative arts, as we mentioned before in the case of Walter Scott, literature definitely played a considerable part in the creation of a certain mythical image of Scotland and its multilingual cultures. James Macpherson's *Fragments of Ancient Poetry*, published in 1760, gave rise to the Ossianic fashion that would sway the whole continent and which associated Homeric-sounding poetry with an idea of antiquity characterising Scottish poetry and Scottish heroes (Kidd 1995). This went hand in hand with a search for the picturesque and the sublime which persisted through the times of the Napoleonic wars and peaked during the Victorian age. For the Romantics the chief attraction in Scotland was possibly the isle of Staffa, first discovered a few decades before and inevitably associated with the Ossianic cult through 'Fingal's Cave',[11] an impressive grotto that was to inspire painters like Joseph Mallord William Turner[12] and musicians like Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, who visited Scotland in the summer of 1829.

After Ossian, another bard would become emblematic of Scotland's languages and cultures, this time with a specific focus on the Lowlands, rather than the Highlands and Islands: Robert Burns. Indeed, Burns is possibly the author who has given the greatest contribution to the creation of a certain mythical image of Scotland and its culture, not least in diasporic contexts, as he is the historical figure who is supposed to have the third largest number of statues around the world after Christopher Columbus and Queen Victoria.[13] However, representations of Burns himself are mythical to a great extent.

[11] Joseph Banks announced his discovery in *The Gentleman's Magazine*, in a section of the Historical Chronicle for 19th November 1772, stating that 'There is a cave […] which the natives call the Cave of Fingal' (Banks 1772: 540). This was probably a misunderstanding, but it met the public's expectations and Bray (1986/1996: 97) even suggests that Banks' discovery may have played a part in Johnson's decision to visit Scotland the following year.

[12] See https://interactive.britishart.yale.edu/critique-of-reason/360/staffa-fingals-cave.

[13] See www.scotland.org/inspiration/commemorations-of-robert-burns-around-the-world.

Famously, Henry Mackenzie labelled him 'the heaven-taught ploughman' and stressed the supposed obsolescence of the Scots language:

> One bar, indeed, his birth and education have opposed to his fame – the language in which most of his poems are written. Even in Scotland, the provincial dialect which Ramsay and he have used is now read with a difficulty which greatly damps the pleasure of the reader: in England it cannot be read at all, without such a constant reference to a glossary, as nearly to destroy that pleasure.
> (Mackenzie in Cochrane 1897: 278)

However, Robert Burns was self-educated and quite well-read (Currie 1846), and his poems are generally far from incomprehensible: mostly, they are not only in Scots, but also in Scottish English. Besides, his letters are typically in English, as the rules of the time prescribed very clearly.[14] It was in fact the kind of image that was created around him (and that to some extent Burns himself also helped create) that made him the epitome of the 'rustic bard', as he also had an 'informal education' based on the oral folk tradition and sound knowledge of the older Scottish literary tradition, not least of Robert Fergusson's poems in Scots. Robert Burns thus became an emblem of patriotism, of pride in linguistic specificity and independent thought, to the point that American critics linked Scottish and American literature in his name and in that of Allan Ramsay, whose pastoral comedy *The Gentle Shepherd* would prove fundamental in the history of Scottish literature (see Dossena 2012b). In an anonymous article on 'American language and literature', dating from 1815, the author stated:

[14] Apparently, there is only one surviving letter which Burns wrote in Scots, and it is the one he addressed to William Nicol in 1787 (see www.nls.uk/treasures/explore/burns-letter/). The jocular tone is reminiscent of the Scots that Robert Louis Stevenson and Charles Baxter employed in their Thompson/Johnson letters (see Dossena 2002: 112–121).

> The remotest germs of literature are the native peculiarities of the country in which it is to spring. […] [Ramsay and Burns] are essentially original. They not only give us manners, which are but practical, intellectual operations, but give them to us in the language, that was made for them, and which only can give them their true form and pressure.
> (*North American Review* 1/3, Sept. 1815, p. 308)

Moreover, Burns's songs, just like ballads, circulated through inexpensive publications.[15] In the United States, an instance of such collections is the *Beadle Half-dime Singer's Library, '100 Favourite Songs of All Nations'* (1878), an affordable collection, on the title page of which there is the image of a piper in a typically Victorian outfit: a red coat, a kilt, and a blue bonnet – i.e., the unmistakeable trademark of what is expected to be both original and traditional.[16]

2.3 The role of periodicals

In addition to inexpensive publications, such as collections of songs, other text types could contribute to the creation and maintenance of a certain (often idealised) image of Scotland. Most importantly, journals and magazines offered instances of discourse, through which literary representations could be both echoed and popularised. In what follows, this contribution presents a preliminary exploration of discussions that were conducted in journals,[17] both in relation to language attitudes and in relation to literary and historical figures. Among the latter, special attention is paid to Charles Edward Stuart, because (like Mary, Queen of Scots) he is one of the most recognisable figures

[15] On ballads see Gilchrist (1815) and Dossena (2013 and 2023); for a recent investigation of performances based on Burns's works see Brown and Carruthers (2021).

[16] https://dimenovels.lib.niu.edu/islandora/object/dimenovels:273282#page/1/mode/1up.

[17] https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/browse.journals/.

outside Scotland, and – as we saw above – he was a crucial protagonist of one of the most dramatic events in Scottish history.

The items selected for investigation here concern languages, authors, and topics pertaining to historical events – notably, the Highland Clearances – to which however no reference is made, although comments on land-owning policies are found in private correspondence (Dossena 2001 and 2011). As for the corpus taken into consideration, the investigation relies on the digital collections available in the *Making of America* website (https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moagrp/). Tables 1 and 2 show the frequency of selected lexical items in journals spanning the years 1830–1902.

Table 1: Labels identifying linguistic and cultural specificity

Item	**No. of matches**	**In how many records?**
Saxon	4690	2459
Scotch	3672	2331
Scottish	2188	1164
Celtic	1530	659
Saxons	1017	563
Teutonic	874	505
Scots	809	486
Gaelic	692	215
Celts	475	241
Celt	364	233
Teutons	178	122
Teuton	177	151
Erse	68	62

Table 2: Labels identifying figures and phenomena of cultural relevance

Item	**No. of matches**	**In how many records?**
Walter Scott	1323	984
Ossian	281	184
Robert Burns	179	130
Jacobites	85	56
Robert Louis Stevenson	75	58
Celtic languages	27	9
James Hogg	23	12
Scotch dialect	21	19
Young Pretender	14	13
Scottish dialect	10	10
Bonnie Prince Charlie	8	8
Highland Clearances	0	0

A merely quantitative investigation of frequencies, however, is always insufficient; it needs to combine with a qualitative investigation that may indicate where occurrences are found, in addition to their frequency. For example, labels like *Teutonic*, *Saxon* and *Celtic* typically occur in essays that discuss the history of languages and cultures in the British Isles. More specifically, the largest number is recorded in a series of six articles with the title 'Are we Celts or Teutons?', which John Fisk wrote between October 1869 and January 1870 for *Appletons' Journal: A Magazine of General*

Literature, published in New York.[18] In practice, this series of chapters places itself in the context of the early stages of philological studies that began at the end of the eighteenth century and continued to grow and expand throughout the nineteenth century (Dossena 2006).

Other instances are found in essays pertaining to folklore. In an article published anonymously in the *Princeton Review* in 1868, we find a reference to the frightful experience of a traveller who slept in a supposedly haunted room:

> Dr. Ferriar tells us of a traveller in the highlands of Scotland, "who was put into a room which was reported to be haunted by the spirit of a man who had there committed suicide. In the night, he awoke from a frightful dream, and found himself sitting up in bed with his pistol in his right hand. On looking round by moonlight, he discovered a corpse, dressed in white, standing up against the wall, close by the window. The features and grave-clothes were seen distinctly. On recovering from his first affright, so as to be able to scrutinize the phantom more closely, it was found to be produced by the moonbeams shining askance through the window."
> (Anon. Spectral Appearances; their Causes and Laws.
> *The Princeton Review* 40(2), Apr. 1868, 293–317, p. 310)

In the end, the apparently Gothic story is debunked, but – perhaps predictably – it is notable that it is set in the Highlands of Scotland, a well-known context of such narratives for the reading public of the time (Davison and Germanà 2017; Dossena 2021).

[18] Details are as follows: Part I: Volume 2, Issue 28, Oct 9, 1869, pp. 243–245. Part II: Volume 2, Issue 29, Oct 16, 1869, pp. 278–279. Part III: Volume 2, Issue 31, Oct 30, 1869, pp. 336–338. Part IV: Volume 2, Issue 36, Dec 4, 1869, pp. 499–501. Chapter V: Volume 3, Issue 41, Jan 8, 1870, pp. 42–43. Chapter VI: Volume 3, Issue 44, Jan 29, 1870, pp. 129–131; see https://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/browse.journals/appl.html.

Another example concerns the Stuart dynasty. Instances of 'Young Pretender' are found in an article on the mausoleum of the last Stuarts in St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome, which was published in 1897 in a journal called *Catholic World*. The article offers an accurate description, in which the lexical choices are quite sympathetic, and Hanoverian labels are highlighted between inverted commas – see the quotation below:

> […] he pauses at last before some sepulchral urns with a long inscription placed above them; then lifts his torch high aloft, so that all may see to read, and points out silently the inscription recording the last resting-place of the Stuart princes:
>
> JACOBO III.
> Magnae Britt: Scott: Franc:
> Rex.
> Vixit annos LXXVII. Menses VI. Dies XI.
> Obit. Kal: Jan: MDCCLXVI.
>
> The "Old Pretender," the "Young Pretender," and the Cardinal Duke of York– James III., Charles, Edward, and Henry; the last scions of the hapless Stuart race, whose beautiful marble monument is in the church above, lie here in peace at last. Rome was kind indeed to these royal exiles, for she gave them a shelter here in life when all things earthly failed them, and in death a sepulchre close to the Prince of the Apostles. "Sic transit gloria mundi!" is our reflection as we turn away from the ashes of those whose lives, despite their exalted station, were one long struggle against the adverse fate which pursued them even to the confines of eternity.
> (Anon. In the Crypt of St. Peter's.
> *Catholic World* 65(390), Sept 1897, 738–750, p. 744)

Linguistic representation and discussion of Scotland's languages also appear in an anonymous review of Catharine Sedgwick's *Live and Let Live*, published in 1837. More particularly, the commentator focusses on

Scotticisms (Dossena 2005), or 'solecisms', as he calls them. He argues that these solecisms would be regarded with respect and affection 'if they came from kind hearts and lovely lips' – i.e., if their usage were restricted to the language of idealised 'gentle shepherds', offering again a mythical representation of Scots as a rustic, idyllic language, pertaining to the past and only viable in literature;[19] see the quotation below:

> By association with good characters and pleasing incidents, [solecisms] might at length become even agreeable, instead of odious. Accustomed to view them as coming from kind hearts and lovely lips, the far off reader would regard them with respect and affection: they would seem a *patois* – a simple, rustic style – connected in his thoughts with a thousand beauteous and delightful images. Such, it is well known, was the effect in England of that familiarity with the Scottish dialect, which followed the rising and diffusion of the reputation of Burns, and which was consummated by the witchery of Scott. The early prejudices against everything *Scottish*, which had lasted through centuries, and which stand out so fiercely in the pages of Junius,– have almost wholly vanished before the magic of literature, acting by one, natural expedient: and it was but yesterday, that the phrases of North Britain were perpetually heard, as classical, in the fashionable conversations of the sister kingdom.
> (Live and Let Live. Southern Literary Messenger
> [Richmond, Virginia] 3(11), Nov 1837, 693–698, p. 693)

It may be interesting to note that, although Henry Mckenzie had said that Burns was impossible to understand without a glossary, Sedgwick's reviewer appears to contradict that view. Moreover, the reviewer refers to 'the witchery' of Scott, hardly an accidental term to use in reference to 'the Wizard of the North'. It is remarkable, however, that the commentator doesn't talk

[19] This is what Derrick McClure has aptly named 'the Pinkerton syndrome', from the name of the eighteenth-century commentator who notoriously stressed the dichotomy between literary and non-literary usage (McClure 1995 [1985]).

about 'Scotland', but uses 'North Britain', which is a Unionist label and could be employed as a marker of loyalty.[20] In practice, what is stressed is the way in which literary representations can reconcile linguistic differences in a unifying (albeit idealised) approach.

In some respects, this evokes Robert Louis Stevenson's comments on those mythical representations which seem particularly relevant for expatriates, as he points out in *The Silverado Squatters* (1884):

> Scotland is indefinable; it has no unity except upon the map. Two languages, many dialects, innumerable forms of piety, and countless local patriotisms and prejudices, part us among ourselves more widely than the extreme east and west of that great continent of America. When I am at home, I feel a man from Glasgow to be something like a rival, a man from Barra to be more than half a foreigner. Yet let us meet in some far country, and, whether we hail from the braes of Manor or the braes of Mar, some ready-made affection joins us on the instant. It is not race. Look at us. One is Norse, one Celtic, and another Saxon. It is not community of tongue. We have it not among ourselves; and we have it almost to perfection, with English, or Irish, or American. It is no tie of faith, for we detest each other's errors. And yet somewhere, deep down in the heart of each one of us, something yearns for the old land, and the old kindly people.
> (RLS, The Silverado Squatters 1884: 61–62)

3 As time goes by

The new millennium has witnessed an even greater increase in the international attention paid to Scotland, on account of various reasons, not least the renewed interest in Scotland's place in Europe and indeed in the world. On the geopolitical level, this interest derived first from the 2014 referendum on Scottish independence, which failed, and (only two years later)

[20] The complex relationship between unionism and literature has also recently been discussed by Carruthers and Kidd (2018).

the referendum on the UK's participation in the EU, in which a majority of Scottish voters chose to remain, while the general outcome led to the notorious Brexit. This, in turn, has led to a new request for a referendum on Scottish independence, for which support is being obtained also from activists in the EU.[21]

At the same time, it is undoubted that Scotland has played a key role also further afield. In 2012–14 the Diaspora Tapestry was on display in Dundee and elsewhere in Scotland, in order to celebrate Scots abroad and their contribution to a broad range of communities all over the world.[22] The presentation of the project is quoted below:

> Scots have migrated all over the world and have often had a profound impact on the areas where they settled. This project brought together stories from more than [sic] such communities, documenting their Scottish connections in more than 300 embroidered panels. It is a remarkable and heart-felt homage to the determination, courage and achievement of Scottish migrants and their descendants across the centuries. (www.scottishdiasporatapestry.org/)

In this introduction it is immediately striking to see that attention is drawn to the 'determination, courage and achievement of Scottish migrants and their descendants across the centuries', although some issues or topics could be problematic. Ideas of empire, for instance, or of colonisation, are not actually mentioned here: they are somehow glided over in favour of a more emotional approach to a tribute that is meant to be 'heartfelt'. It is in other contexts that these issues are addressed: for example, the City of Edinburgh Council has recently launched a review on statues and monuments which may have

[21] See https://europeforscotland.com/; it should be noted, however, that it is beyond the scope of this contribution to discuss such political issues in more nuanced ways.

[22] For a very recent investigation of Scotland's contribution to modernity, see Pittock (2022).

connections with slavery and colonialism, in order to elicit critical reflections on the legacy of those times and phenomena.[23]

In the creation of idealised images of the diaspora, artefacts that date mostly from the nineteenth century appear to have played a considerable role in the process, and this applies again both to figurative arts and to music. It may not be a coincidence that many 'Jacobite' songs date from the same years and rely on traditional tunes to evoke sentimental topics of loss and nostalgia (see Donaldson 1988 and Pittock 2009). Among those, the *Skye Boat Song* is perhaps the best-known example: the original lyrics, authored by Harold Boulton and set to a Gaelic air, date from 1884 and celebrate the escape of Charles Edward Stuart after the defeat at Culloden (see Macdonald 1839). Far from stigmatising a leader who was abandoning his army, the text promised a return that would never come to pass. Famously, Robert Louis Stevenson re-wrote the lyrics in his *Songs of Travel*, of 1895, not referring to the Jacobite uprising, but evoking a time of youth and lost innocence that has disappeared forever (Stevenson 1896: 82),[24] and it is this latter version that was borrowed to become the title song of *Outlander*, the TV series based on Diana Gabaldon's books.[25]

In art, one of the most famous artefacts that have contributed to an idealised image of the diaspora is John Watson Nicholl's 1883 painting *Lochaber No More*, which bears the same title as a well-known ballad, although the ballad is not about emigration, but it is a soldier's farewell before going to war. In the painting, a middle-aged couple is shown on board a ship;

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[23] See www.edinburgh.gov.uk/museums-galleries/review-needed?documentId=13192&categoryId=20063.

[24] Both the traditional lyrics and Stevenson's version can be retrieved from the collection of Scottish songs at www.rampantscotland.com/songs/blsongs_index.htm.

[25] The series, produced by Starz, first aired in 2014 (see www.starz.com/us/en/series/outlander/season-1/21894); as for the historical fiction on which it is based, background information can be found on the official website of the author, www.dianagabaldon.com/books/outlander-series/.

the man is looking at the shoreline, probably for the very last time in his life, while the woman does not even dare look up; she is totally despondent and the family dog is by her side, adding an element of sadness as one can only imagine the previous tranquillity of this family's life.

4 Into the twenty-first century

Having seen instances of early, sentimental representations of the diaspora, it is now possible to consider modern images, such as those found on the occasion of games and festivals. Indeed, there are websites that enable users to find out where Highland games or Scottish-themed festivals are held near them, no matter where they are in the world.[26] The question is of course how 'authentic' such events may be: i.e., how close they are to what would be expected to be traditional, especially in Scotland. In many cases, they are in fact re-inventions in which, for example, pipers combine Victorian sporrans with white shirts and ties, modernising the image of a characteristic figure in Scottish culture. However, tartan is ubiquitous, to the point that sometimes the disparaging label of 'tartanry' may apply (Brown 2010).

As for the omission of any reference to the Clearances and their tragic contribution to the Scottish diaspora (Richards 2007), it appears comparable to the scarcity of discussions concerning links with people of African or Native American descent. And yet, the role of Scots in the slave trade and in the management of enslaved people is undeniable, to the point that it has become the object of recent debate (Devine 2015). On the website of the National Archives, for example, there is information on Scottish slave owners in Jamaica.[27] Similarly, it is only in relatively recent times that the contribution of Scotland to abolitionism has begun to be investigated to any

[26] See https://highlandgamesandfestivals.com/scheduled-events/# for an international directory.

[27] See www.scan.org.uk/exhibitions/blackhistory/blackhistory_2.htm.

great extent (Whyte 2006). The same could be said for Native American history and its relationship with narratives of exploration and the fur trade, although Scottish explorers contributed to that too (Calloway 2008).

In addition to these background notes, which underpin how changes have unfolded on a larger scale, discussions of the diaspora should also take into consideration the fact that through immigration networks change and new (self-) perceptions arise. When people move away from the old country and begin to create a new identity in the new country, they change perspectives, as emigrant correspondence can show (Dossena forthcoming). Indeed, that becomes apparent not just in the reinventions that are witnessed in twenty-first-century Highland Games, but also in the creation of Tartan Day, which started in Canada in the second half of the 1980s and was identified as a day to be celebrated on 6th April, i.e., on the anniversary of the Declaration of Arbroath, signed on that day in 1320, thus linking a significant event in the history of Scottish independence with the contemporary reality of diasporic communities.

From Canada, Tartan Day has spread to other countries that host Scottish expatriates and where celebrations can be held on different days. A very interesting example of how identities conflate in diasporic contexts is seen in the logo of the New York City Tartan week,[28] which combines the Scottish thistle with the crown of the Statue of Liberty, thus blending emblems associated with the double affiliation of the participants and linking the past with the present.

5 Concluding remarks

Over the centuries, expatriates have relied on a range of sources for the establishment of (at least symbolic) continuity between their old identity and their new one. In addition to familiar correspondence, they have maintained

[28] See www.nyctartanweek.org/.

knowledge and awareness of their original specificity through literary and non-literary materials which have often provided simplified, perhaps stereotypical and certainly idealised images, the advantage of which was that they were both consolatory and easy to remember. This is true also of cultural artefacts like paintings and pieces of music in which the idealisation of the past and of what is distant is remarkable. Almost paradoxically, as Robert Louis Stevenson pointed out, distance from the place of origin appears to enhance proximity with fellow expatriates, and it does not matter if emigration was forced or if it was the consequence of (self-imposed) exile.

However, it is not necessarily true that 'distance makes the heart grow fonder' in all cases. Emigrant letters show that criticism of 'the Old Country' was actually possible. Idealisation may therefore be less a function of geographical distance than it is of temporal distance. The latter appears to create a new psychological proximity with a mythical, global Scotland that is reinvented, reimagined as a virtual 'locus amoenus', not least from the linguistic and cultural point of view.

This may appear to ignore differences and distinctiveness, which are nonetheless present. In literature, speakers of different languages or varieties often reflect the ambivalent attitudes that authors, critics, and the reading public shared towards those cultures and languages and varieties. In Late Modern times, grammarians and lexicographers promoted linguistic assimilation and uniformity, recommending that speakers should get rid of their Scotticisms and 'improve' their accent. At the same time, compilers of glossaries and novelists made sure that lexical and phraseological items could be preserved as relics of ancient eloquence. Both approaches could result in the fabrication of myths. 'Ancient eloquence' is imagined in the same way as 'purity' and 'standard regularity' are assumed to exist in a world where instead variation has always been the norm at all levels.

Idealisations of the past, where in fact attempts were actively made to suppress linguistic variation (Jones 1995), seldom account for the multi-

layered complexity that characterises any setting. In the case of Scotland specifically, its polyhedric culture is neither a fossil nor 'a dragonfly in amber' (Gabaldon 1992), as multilingualism and language contact have been constant features throughout Scottish history. Since the Middle Ages, the coexistence of different languages and varieties has often been highlighted, albeit indirectly and often to stigmatise supposedly non-standard usage, but it is only in recent times that this phenomenon has been acknowledged in a more descriptive way, not least in literature.[29]

Late Modern sources, however, appear to suggest that over time there has been the virtual obliteration of linguistic and cultural diversity, and that Highland culture and Lowland language have been conflated, which has resulted in the creation of mythical, unifying images. The outcome would be problematic, if it were not for the fact that it may actually have a silver lining. Late Modern views appear to have brought about the creation of a new global identity, immediately recognisable outside Scotland, even though it relies on myths. Although this might seem paradoxical, it may in fact be fruitful, because overcoming differences, instead of stressing them, might contribute to the creation of a new, consistent image. Differences could be both acknowledged and overcome for the sake of a more accessible image that everybody, both in Europe and beyond, could learn to recognise and appreciate.

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[29] Today, in the *Outlander* series, for example, the protagonists speak Gaelic, Scots, French and Scottish English, and can interact using all these languages almost simultaneously.

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